Reviews of Books

Cursed Are You! The Phenomenology of Cursing in Cuneiform and Hebrew Texts. By ANNE MARIE
    KITZ. Winona Lake, Ind.: EISENBRAUNS, 2014. Pp. xiii + 528. $59.50.

Due to their significant role in ancient societies, curses have attracted the attention of scholars for
a long time. The ongoing interest in the field of ancient Near Eastern studies is displayed by the fact
that aside from Kitz's book two other extensive monographs on the topic have been published in recent
years, namely a book by Małgorzata Sandowicz on oaths and curses in Neo- and Late Babylonian
Legal Formulary (2012) and a monograph by the reviewer on curse, blessing, and oath formulae in the
Hittite corpus (Christiansen 2012).

Whereas the studies by Sandowicz and Christiansen focus on linguistic aspects, with particular
regard to oath formulae, Kitz's book has a much broader cultural, chronological, and thematic range.
Comprising Sumerian, Akkadian, and Hittite cuneiform sources from the third to the first millennium
B.C. as well as texts from the Hebrew Bible, it centers on cursing as a phenomenon in various areas of
social life.

The study thus gives a good overview of a great number of sources and various aspects, including
the role of human and divine beings in cursing and different curse types, as well as purposes, effects,
and means of cursing. Although this broad scope is in general welcome and meritorious, it frequently
leads the author to sketchy or incorrect analyses and oversimplification.

Among the greatest merits of the book is the fact that Kitz does not share the common view that
curses in ancient Near Eastern societies were regarded as magical or self-fulfilling wishes. Neither
does she accept the hypothesis according to which curses mentioning deities as agents are to be con-
sidered religious, whereas curses whose formulae conceal the agent (e.g., middle, passive, or nominal
constructions) illustrate the belief in magic or might be classified as secular utterances (see p. 66 and
especially chapter 7).

A further asset is that Kitz, unlike some other scholars, does not describe all oaths as conditional
self-curses (see chapters 2 and 4). Her classification of conditional curses as either externally imposed
or self-imposed is, however, imprecise since it does not sufficiently differentiate between the oath
formula and the oath as a social convention or communication type between participants with dif-
ferent roles (i.e., the person imposing the oath, the oath taker, human and divine witnesses, as well
as the punishing agents in case of an infringement). Thus, the oath formula of either an imposed or a
self-imposed oath might be construed as a conditional self-curse spoken by the oath taker as well as
a conditional curse uttered by a representative of the party imposing the oath with regard to the oath
taker (for examples in the Hittite corpus see Christiansen 2012: 104–11). This distinction is crucial,
since most oaths in ancient Near Eastern cultures as well as in others are not entirely voluntarily, but in
some way or other imposed. Among these are also oaths between people of equal rank, as in the peace
treaty between Ramses II and Ḫattušili III (see Christiansen 2012: 266), and not only those between a
superior and his underling as Kitz claims (pp. 132–33).

Given the difference between oaths as a social convention and oath formulae, the author's choice
to translate terms like *māmītu(m)*, *nīš ili(m)*, and *lingai-* by "conditional curse" instead of "oath" as
is customary seems inadequate (see esp. chapter 4). Likewise, the translation of the Hittite "ergative"
form *linkiyant-* by "curse deities" is inept (pp. 183–86).

Further, it should be noted that the oath formula can also consist of a conditional blessing, which
especially in the oath formula of the Hittite state treaties usually accompanies the conditional curse (see
Christiansen 2012: 167–286).

In addition, there are oath formulae that are composed as a solemn promise to act in a certain way
in the future or as a statement with regard to a past action or an affirmation of telling the truth. Whether

the last two always imply a curse or, respectively, a punishment by divine beings in case of an infringement, as Kitz claims, is doubtful. Thus, there are oaths whose transgression according to the sources resulted (solely) in punishment by a human institution, such as the death penalty, expulsion from the social community, a ban, or the destruction of the oath taker's city. With regard to the function of oaths, Kitz states that all oaths, either promissory or evidentiary/assertive, are attached to a promise (pp. 38–39). This, however, is based on an imprecise use of the word "promise," which in its strict sense concerns only future actions or happenings. The claim of telling the truth is therefore no promise, but an affirmation or confirmation.

The difference between vows and oaths is convincingly described (pp. 35–39). The terminology is, however, only cursorily treated and centered on the Sumerian phraseology for oaths and conditional curses. In contrast, a discussion of the Sumerian terms for unconditional curses and vows as well as of the Akkadian, Hittite, and Hebrew words for oaths, curses, and vows is missing.

A general methodological problem lies in the fact that in many cases the author substantiates her assertions regarding the respective communication types by referring only to one or two passages from the Sumerian, Akkadian, Hittite, or Hebrew corpus while other relevant data which point in another direction or give reason to doubt the author's argumentation are omitted.

An example for such an inadequate generalization is the assumption (pp. 116, 121) that the Hittite phrase *linkiya kattan . . . dāi* "to place under oath" refers to an enacted conditional curse involving animal slaughter, deduced from a single passage in a Middle Hittite treaty (KBo 16.47 obv. 15′–16′).

Striking is the fact that Kitz addresses wishes in incantation rituals like "may the evil knot unravel, may the binding be released . . ." (Šurpu) as curses (pp. 78–79). Even though such wishes are sometimes accompanied by negative wishes for the evil-doer, their basic intent is to free the ritual patron from negative forces and their harmful consequences. Therefore, they should be defined as blessings as is customary. The relation of the latter to curses as their antipodes is unfortunately not discussed. Also surprising is the definition of the river ordeal as a punishment (p. 53) and not as a means to engage a divine agent to decide if an accused person in a legal case is guilty or not.

With regard to the classification of different curse types (chapters 3 and 4), the author neglects to note that conditional curses aside from conditional sentences are also frequently construed as relative sentences, although several examples are cited in the book (cf. the Hittite and Hebrew formulae on pp. 87, 90–91, 108).

Besides the simile curses mentioned by the author (pp. 82–93) there is also a type in which the simile is expressed by a two-word comparison utilizing the Akkadian preposition *kī* "like, as" or its Hittite equivalent *maḫḫan* + noun. Examples of this kind are, inter alia, to be found in §§63 (2x), 80, 81, 86, 91, 92, 93, 95, and 96 of Esarhaddon's Succession Treaty (see Streck 1998: 168).

The author's assertion in chapter 8 that all curses seek a single goal, namely death, is incorrect. This view neglects the fact that a number of curses aim at an evil afterlife which, for example, is expressed by the wish that the corpse of the curse's addressee will not be buried, but eaten by animals, while his ghost will not receive libations (see, e.g., Hillers 1964: 68). Furthermore, this hypothesis does not fit wishes that the curse's addressee will lose his/her social status or gender (see, e.g., Hillers 1964: 66–68). The author's assertion should therefore be replaced by the statement that curses seek harm.

In several cases the grammatical analyses, transliterations, and/or translations are faulty. For instance, in the Hittite sentence ᵐ*madduwattan l[i]nkiyaššaš iēt* (KUB 14.1 i 13) the noun + possessive suffix *linkiyaš=šaš* is not an accusative as Kitz assumes (pp. 117–18) but a free-standing genitive. The literal translation is therefore not "he made Madduwatta his conditional curse," but "he made Madduwatta (a man) of his oath" (i.e., his sworn ally). The form *linkan[zi]* in manuscript I of §75 of the Hittite Laws (KUB 13.13 rev. 5) is not a 3. pers. sg. pres. (p. 116), but a 3. pers. pl. pres. In the sentence *nu=za kē uddār ŠÁ-PAL NI-IŠ* DINGIR-*LIM [da]išta*, the Hittite reflexive particle *z(a)* does not emphasize that the king personally placed the words under oath (p. 118), but functions as an indirect object ("he [pl]aced these words under oath for himself"; see Hoffner and Melchert 2008: 358–59). In KBo 4.10 + rev. 6–7 the cuneiform sign KA which is attached to a number of logograms stands for the Akkadian possessive pronominal suffix of the 2. pers. masc. and is thus to be transliterated by cursive capitals (cf. p. 206). In KBo 8.35 ii 28–29, read *QA-TAM-MA* instead of *QA-TA-AM-MA* (p. 116, twice). In KUB 7.41 obv. 24, read ᵁᴿᵁᴰᵁ*a-t[(e-eš-ši-it)]* (restored from KBo 10.45 i 17) instead of the impossible *ap-a-aš* (p. 428).

Conspicuously, in the footnotes the author often refers to editions which present the correct forms and analyses. Frequently, however, she refers solely to the autograph copies and/or translations, but not to the relevant critical editions. To name a few examples: for the Ulmi-Teššub treaty KBo 10.4 + (cf. p. 206), see van den Hout 1995; for KBo 8.35 (pp. 115–16), see von Schuler 1965: 109–17; for KUB 7.41 see Otten 1961.

On occasion she also omits to mention relevant literature in discussing certain topics. For instance, in contrast to the author's claim to the contrary, the use of thread and cord in Hittite texts has received much attention in the scholarly literature (for a list see Christiansen 2010). Especially in the treatment of the Hittite texts the consultation of a specialist would have been advantageous.

Although there are many other points worthy of discussion, the cited examples will suffice to illustrate the fundamental merits and weaknesses of this book.

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Hittite Logograms and Hittite Scholarship. By MARK WEEDEN. Studien zu den Boğazköy-Texten, vol. 54. Wiesbaden: HARRASSOWITZ VERLAG, 2011. Pp. xvii + 693. €128.

A comprehensive study dedicated to Akkadian and Sumerian logograms in Hittite texts, also termed Akkadograms and Sumerograms, has long been a desideratum in Hittitology—be it on the level of grammar, morphology, or phonetic pronunciation; their possible origins and diffusion across Mesopotamia and its western periphery; or the use of logograms as a tool in textual criticism (especially dating of manuscripts and as part of scribal habits). Hence, the book under review, a reworked version of the author's 2007 SOAS (London) doctoral dissertation, is already impressive by attempting to fill the gap on at least part of these topics, based on analyses of an extensive corpus of Sumerograms and Akkadograms. (Other reviews of the present volume are by Th. van den Hout, *ZA* 102 [2013]: 344–47, and G. Torri, "Hiding Words behind the Signs: The Use of Logograms in Hittite Scribal Praxis," *OrNS* 81 [2012]: 124–32.)

At the outset Weeden distinguishes two lexical corpora (pp. 39–40), resulting in his striking alphabetical catalogue in the appendix of 718 logograms, analyzed according to their relationship to paleographical criteria (pp. 429–655): 1) logograms from datable historical texts (CTH nos. 1–216); 2) anomalous logograms collected from the entirety of the Hittite textual corpus, marked as being only lexically attested (*), those attested only locally in Anatolia (**), or those used differently in Anatolia than in Mesopotamia (***). All catalogue entries are ordered according to whether the form has phonetic complementation or not (and further according to case, etc.). Each text is analyzed as to its script