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Worlds full of signs: ancient Greek divination in context

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Part I

An introduction to ancient divination

1. Historiography

Divination was omnipresent in the ancient world: 'If the ancient Mediterranean world was full of gods, it was full of their messages as well.'¹ The mindset of ancient individuals might even be described as a state of 'omen-mindedness', as is testified by the amount and nature of the ancient evidence.² We know that everyone – from king to slave – was a potential user of divination. Public (official) and pri-

¹ D.E. Aune *et al.*, 'Divination and prophecy' in: S.I. Johnston (ed.), *Religions of the ancient world: a guide* (Cambridge, MA 2004) 370-391, at 371. '[...] it was full of their *signs* as well' would be more appropriate. After all, the sign is the occurrence produced by the supernatural, as perceived by man. Cf. below for the crucial role of man in the recognition and interpretation of a sign (which then becomes a message).

² The term was coined by S. Freedman in: *If a city is set on a height: the Akkadian omen series Šumma alu ina mēlē šakin*, 2 vols (Philadelphia 1998-2006) Vol. 1, 1. The word 'omen' is not used in what follows because I consider the meaning of this word to be too restricted (in Graeco-Roman studies it usually refers to unprovoked signs only) and also too wide (it can refer to a text as well as to a sign in Assyriological studies). Instead, I have opted to use 'sign'. I have still quoted the expression 'omen-mindedness' here because it so neatly captures the state of mind ancient individuals must have been in, in order to perceive the signs from the supernatural (cf. pp. 38-39).

vate (unofficial) divination, with or without an expert, was very common. If an expert was used, individuals would consult a local expert or travel great distances in order to satisfy their need for expertise.³

The principal focus of this study is divination in Greece and – to a lesser extent – in Neo-Assyrian Mesopotamia and the Roman Republic, but modern scholarship covers virtually all areas for which

3 E. Lhôte, *Les lamelles oraculaires de Dodone* (Genève 2006) 329-335; 363-406. A discussion of those consulting Klaros is H.W. Pleket, 'Tempel en orakel van Apollo in Klaros', *Hermeneus* 66 (1994) 143-151, at 147-148 – individuals from around 50 cities consulted the oracle, coming long distances but notably not from Greek cities on the islands or the coast of Asia Minor. See also *SEG* 37, 961-980 for a list of towns coming to the oracle (from 128 AD to 177 AD). J.E. Fontenrose, *Didyma: Apollo's oracle, cult, and companions* (Berkeley 1988) 104-105. For a very insightful article on Didyma see C. Morgan, 'Divination and society at Delphi and Didyma', *Hermathena* 147 (1989) 17-42. *IG IX 2* 1109 and *Syll.*³ 1157, lines 8-16. See further L. Robert, 'Sur l'oracle d'Apollon Koropaios' in: idem, *Hellenica: recueil d'épigraphie, de numismatique et d'antiquités grecques* 6 vols (Paris 1948) Vol. 5, 16-28, at 21. For parallels and on travelling to oracles more generally see V. Rosenberger, 'Reisen zum Orakel: Griechen, Lyder und Perser als Klienten hellenischer Orakelstätten' in: M. Witte & S. Alkier (eds), *Die Griechen und der Vordere Orient: Beiträge zum Kultur- und Religionskontakt zwischen Griechenland und dem Vorderen Orient im 1. Jahrtausend v. Chr.* (Göttingen 2003) 25-58; for those travelling to Delphi see M. Arnush, 'Pilgrimage to the oracle of Apollo at Delphi: patterns of public and private consultation' in: J. Elsner & I. Rutherford (eds), *Pilgrimage in Graeco-Roman and early Christian antiquity* (Oxford 2005) 97-110.

ancient sources are available.⁴

4 Recent additions to the scholarship of ancient divination other than Greek, Roman or Mesopotamian are many and varied. The following serves merely to give an impression: there is a plethora of literature on the subject of Chinese divination, mainly concerned with oracle bones, but also with geomancy and divination by dice. See for example R.J. Smith, *Fortune-tellers and philosophers: divination in traditional Chinese society* (Boulder 1991); D.N. Keightley, *Sources of Shang history: the oracle-bone inscriptions of Bronze Age China* (Berkeley 1978). On cleromancy see M.E. Lewis, *Dicing and divination in Early China* (Philadelphia 2002). The prophets of the ancient Levant have also been extensively researched. For an interesting comparison between biblical prophets and their non-biblical counterparts: L.L. Grabbe, *Priests, prophets, diviners, sages: a socio-historical study of religious specialists in ancient Israel* (Valley Forge, PA 1995); J. Blenkinsopp, *Sage, priest, prophet: religious and intellectual leadership in ancient Israel* (Louisville, KY 1995); J.G. Gammie & L.G. Perdue (eds), *The sage in Israel and the ancient Near East* (Winona Lake, IND 1990). Further studies on ancient Israel and its neighbours: C. Van Dam, *The Urim and Thummim: a means of revelation in ancient Israel* (Winona Lake, IND 1997); F.H. Cryer, *Divination in ancient Israel and its Near Eastern environment: a socio-historical investigation* (Sheffield 1994); A. Jeffers, *Magic and divination in ancient Palestine and Syria* (Leiden 1996). Egyptian divination is an under-developed area of research. However, there is an excellent overview article: A. von Lieven, 'Divination in Ägypten', *AoF* 26 (1999) 77-126. One area which has recently been investigated in depth is divination by dreams: K. Szpakowska, *Behind closed eyes: dreams and nightmares in ancient Egypt* (Swansea 2003). Divination among the Hittites became an area of investigation in the latter half of the last century. For a main overview and further references see Th.P.J. van der Hout, 'Orakel (Oracle). B.

PAST SCHOLARSHIP

During the past 120 years, ancient historians have produced a large number of studies of Greek and Roman divination – these have been discussed together as well as separately. Their efforts are paralleled by those of many colleagues in the field of Assyriology who have built extensive datasets about Mesopotamian divination since the late 1890s. Nevertheless, the study of the phenomenon in the fields of ancient history and Assyriology has developed in a relatively isolated fashion: interpretations and conceptualizations of divination have only incidentally been passed on from scholars of the Graeco-Roman world to Assyriologists, and vice-versa.⁵ It is still possible to distinguish a number of similar (and different) trends in both of

Bei den Hethitern', *RLA* 10 (2003) 118-124. Articles by leading scholars in the field of Hittitology are for example A. Archi, 'Il sistema KIN della divinazione ittita', *OrAnt* 13 (1974) 131-133; A. Unal & A. Kammenhuber, 'Das althethitische Losorakel Kbo XVIII 151', *ZVS* 88 (1974) 157-180; Th.P.J. van den Hout, 'Hethitische Thronbesteigungsorakel und die Inauguration Tudḫalijas IV', *ZA* 81 (1991) 274-300; V. Haas & I. Wegner, 'Die Orakelprotokolle aus Kusakli. Ein Überblick', *MDOG* 128 (1996) 105-120.

5 Fortunately, there are indications that this is changing. I refer to publications such as A. Annus (ed.), *Divination and interpretation of signs in the ancient world* (Chicago 2010), *passim*. See also K. Beerden, 'Review of: "Divination and interpretation of signs in the ancient world"', *BMCR* 2011.01.32 (see <http://bmcr.brynmawr.edu/2011/2011-01-32.html> [visited 27-07-2011]).

these fields of research. In what follows I shall offer a brief chronological synthesis of these developments, with the dual aim of highlighting current issues and identifying relatively unexplored roads in the study of divination.

Divination has invited analysis ever since Antiquity. The earliest surviving treatise containing extensive reflections on this topic is Cicero's *De divinatione*, which is primarily concerned with, what were to him familiar, Roman practices. His influence on the classification of divinatory methods and his reflection on the validity of divination are still clearly visible today. A limited but steady output of scholarly works on divination in the Graeco-Roman world and beyond can be observed throughout the ages, reaching a peak during the Renaissance.⁶ A few hundred years later, in a response

6 I can only mention a small number of works dealing with or referring to divination in the period from Augustine to Auguste Bouché-Leclercq here. Some of these works do not deal specifically with *ancient* divination, but nevertheless are illustrative of a growing interest in the study and discussion of divination in the fifteenth century and thereafter. Augustine, *Confessiones*, Books 3 and 4 (note especially the foretelling dream God sent to Augustine's mother in Book 3 and the dismissal of astrology by Augustine in Book 4); G. Savonarola, *Tractato contra li astrologi* (Florence ca. 1495?); L. Daneau, *De veneficis, quos olim sortilegos, nunc autem vulgo sortitarios vocant, dialogus* (Geneva 1574); H. de Pisis, *Fasciculus geomanticus, in quo varia variorum opera geomantica continentur ..* (Leiden 1637); K. Peucer, *Commentarius de praecipuis divinationum generibus* (Wittenberg 1553); J. Raunce, *A brief declaration against judicial astrologie or, the diabolical art of astrologie opened, arraigned, and condemned* (London 1650);

to the innovations introduced by nineteenth-century scholarship, the study of divination was reinvigorated and a major publication appeared: Auguste Bouché-Leclercq's *Histoire de la divination dans l'antiquité*. The aim of this author was to obtain an insight into ancient mindsets by studying divinatory methods and practices in great detail, in the process of which he collected a huge amount of source material, paying particular attention to the experts involved in the divinatory process.⁷ In his work, he performed any past and present modern student of divination a great service. In fact, his work has recently been reprinted and can still be considered to be the standard work on Graeco-Roman divination.

Since the very beginnings of the discipline of Assyriology, many of its scholars have occupied themselves with the study of divination. In his *The religion of Babylonia and Assyria*, appearing less than a decade after the *Histoire de la divination*, Morris Jastrow presents one of the first great Assyriological overviews.⁸

G.M. Maraviglia, *Pseudomantia veterum, et recentiorum explosa, sive De fide divinationibus adhibenda* (Venice 1662); P. Mussard, *Historia deorum fatidicorum, vatium, sibyllarum, phoebadum, apud priscos illustrium: cum eorum iconibus. Praeposita est dissertatio de divinatione et oraculis* (Geneva 1675); G.A. Venier, *De oraculis et divinationibus antiquarum* (Venice 1624); F. Denis, *Tableau historique, analytique et critique des sciences occultes* (Paris 1842); F. Lenormant, *La divination et la science des présages chez les Chaldéens* (Paris 1875).

7 On his ideas and aspirations see A. Bouché-Leclercq, *Histoire de la divination dans l'antiquité* 4 vols (Paris 1879-1882) Vol. 1, 1-5.

8 M. Jastrow, *The religion of Babylonia and Assyria* (Boston 1898)

One of the 20th-century scholars who followed up on Bouché-Leclercq's work, William Halliday, approached the topic from a different angle, emphasizing the development of the particular divinatory methods in the contexts of 'positive magic' and irrational practices, even though divination was seen to be founded on intelligible foundations: by means of divination, humans struggled against uncertainty.⁹ After Halliday, a relative silence fell among ancient historians until the 1950s.

Developments in the field of Assyriology continued: Georges Contenau's important publication reflects the developments in scholarship in general and more specifically those in Assyriology.¹⁰ The great scholar of the generation after Contenau, A. L. Oppenheim, produced a number of sophisticated, innovative articles in which he both published cuneiform tablets and also contextualized these texts.¹¹ The early 1960s witnessed a renewed Assyriological interest in

328-407.

9 W.R. Halliday, *Greek divination: a study of its methods and principles* (Chicago 1913).

10 G. Contenau, *La divination chez les Assyriens et les Babyloniens* (Paris 1940).

11 E.g., A. L. Oppenheim, *The interpretation of dreams in the ancient Near East, with a translation of an Assyrian dream-book* (Philadelphia 1956) 179-373; A.L. Oppenheim, 'Perspectives on Mesopotamian divination' in: J. Nougayrol et al. (eds), *La divination en Mésopotamie ancienne et dans les régions voisines* (CCRAI 14) (Paris 1966) 35-43. For publications up to 1975 see R. Borger, *Handbuch der Keilschriftliteratur* 3 vols (Berlin 1967-1975). For publications after 1975, it is best to browse the overviews of literature in the

divination, culminating in a *Rencontre* on divination held in 1965.¹² It should be noted that during these years, many Assyriologists tended to give priority to the publication of the cuneiform tablets rather than to the analysis of their contents in a social context. Still, as a result of a steady output of publications, transliterations and translations of individual tablets, a solid foundation for the study of divinatory practices was built up in discipline of Assyriology – and the corpus of texts continues to expand each year as there is still an abundance of unpublished materials available.

In the course of the last sixty-five years or so, Greek and Roman epigraphic evidence – for example in the shape of materials from oracle sites – has also become more widely available, thereby providing new possibilities for research.¹³ Not only have in-depth studies about particular divinatory methods begun to appear, but rather more gen-

Archiv für Orientforschung series. For an overview of Mesopotamian divination and its materials, one can turn to: S.M. Maul, 'Omina und Orakel. A. Mesopotamien', *RLA* 10 (2006) 45-88. In the present work, literature mainly concerned with divination in the Old Babylonian period has not been taken into account, unless it serves to illustrate the practices we find in the Neo-Assyrian period or when it includes analyses of both periods.

¹² The publication resulting from the 1965 *Rencontre*, the annual meeting of Assyriologists, is: Nougayrol, *La divination en Mésopotamie ancienne*.

¹³ See G. Rougemont's thoughts on what epigraphical evidence can add to the study of divination in: G. Rougemont, 'Apports de l'épigraphie à l'histoire grecque: l'exemple des oracles' in: Y. Le Bohec & Y. Roman (eds), *Épigraphie et histoire: acquis et problèmes* (Lyon 1998) 71-76.

eral works of a systematic and critical nature have also been published.¹⁴ An empirical and evolutionary approach to divination has given way to a more analytical view. Scholars used to see divination as a speculative practice, but they have now begun to perceive it as a rational system: in Jean-Pierre Vernant's collection of essays titled *Divination et rationalité*, divination was, for the first time, *explicitly* studied as such by both ancient historians and Assyriologists.¹⁵ The publication of this book marks an important watershed in the study of divination because it heralds a key change in attitude. Whereas divination had generally been considered an 'irrational' feature of religious life, which could not be fully understood by modern man, it was now emphatically being seen as a practice inviting rational

14 Examples of important titles from the 1950s and 1960s are H. Popp, *Die Einwirkung von Vorzeichen, Opfern und Festen auf die Kriegführung der Griechen im 5. und 4. Jahrhundert v. Chr.* (Würzburg 1959); R. Crahay, *La littérature oraculaire chez Hérodote* (Paris 1956); R. Flacelière, *Devins et oracles grecs* (Paris 1961); H.W. Parke, *Greek oracles* (London 1967); H.W. Parke, *The oracles of Zeus: Dodona, Olympia, Ammon* (London 1967); A. Caquot & M. Leibovici (eds), *La divination: études* 2 vols (Paris 1968); R. Bloch, *Les prodiges dans l'antiquité classique: Grèce, Étrurie et Rome* (Paris 1963); P. Kett, *Prosopographie der historischen griechischen Manteis bis auf die Zeit Alexanders des Grossen* (Dissertation Erlangen-Nürnberg 1966); F. Lutenbacher, *Der Prodigien Glaube und Prodigienstil der Römer: eine historisch-philologische Abhandlung* (Darmstadt 1967²); P.L. Schmidt, *Iulius Obsequens und das Problem der Livius-Epitome: ein Beitrag zur Geschichte der lateinischen Prodigienliteratur* (Mainz 1968).

15 J.P. Vernant et al. (eds), *Divination et rationalité* (Paris 1974).

analysis. This change in emphasis and approach is striking and has produced a renewed output of publications approaching divination in relation to such topics as ancient philosophy, warfare and politics.

THE PRESENT REVIVAL

In recent years another revival of the study of classical, primarily Greek, divination has been taking shape. This trend is exemplified by the articles brought together by Sarah Iles Johnston and Peter Struck in their publication *Mantikê*.¹⁶ Johnston's views on what she considers to be a general dearth of classical scholarship on divination and the reason for the current revitalization, are intriguing because of the shift in views about divination she has deduced. Her argument is that initially divination could not profit from the rising interest in Greek religion because it has often been, and sometimes still is, classified as 'magic' (my inverted commas). This classification tied in nicely with the idea which saw divination as an 'irrational' practice. Since 'magic' did not become a mainstream research area until the 1960s, scholarship on divination remained scarce. Even in the 1960s, 1970s, and 1980s, when 'magic' became more popular, divi-

16 S.I. Johnston & P.T. Struck (eds), *Mantikê: studies in ancient divination* (Leiden 2005). See also the special issue of the *Revue de l'histoire des religions* 224 (2007), among others with a very good introduction by N. Belayche and J. Rüpke.

nation remained under-examined because it was not a 'dark enough' topic for those interested in 'magic'. Recently, the view that research into 'magic' – and any phenomenon one chooses to classify as such – has to be about 'dark magic' has begun to shift. Johnston states that this change in attitude, in conjunction with the novel perception of divination as a rational part of religious systems, is the main driving force behind the present revival: scholars of both magic and of religion now regard divination as a potential object of study.¹⁷

Some issues which have recently been reinvestigated are formalized oracular practices and their role in politics and society. Did divination actually make a difference or was it a mere formality?¹⁸

17 S.I. Johnston, 'Introduction: divining divination' in: S.I. Johnston & P.T. Struck (eds), *Mantikê: studies in ancient divination* (Leiden 2005) 1-28.

18 See for Rome, where there are many studies available on this topic: J. Champeaux, *Fortuna: recherches sur le culte de la Fortune à Rome et dans le monde romain des origines à la mort de César* 2 vols (Rome 1982-1987); J. Champeaux, 'Sors Oraculi: les oracles en Italie sous la république et l'empire', *MEFRA* 102 (1990) 271-302; J. Linderski, 'Cicero and Roman divination' in: idem, *Roman questions: selected papers* 2 vols (Stuttgart 1995) Vol. 1, 458-484; J. Linderski, 'Watching the birds: Cicero the augur and the augural temple' in: ibid., *Roman questions: selected papers* 2 vols (Stuttgart 1995) Vol. 1, 485-495; B. MacBain, *Prodigy and expiation: a study in religion and politics in republican Rome* (Brussels 1982). For Greece see R. Parker, *Polytheism and society at Athens* (Oxford 2005), especially 108-123; R. Parker, 'Greek states and Greek oracles' in: R. Buxton (ed.), *Oxford readings in Greek religion* (Oxford 2000) 76-108, revised version of R. Parker, 'Greek states and oracles' in: P.A. Cartledge & F.D. Harvey (eds), *Crux: essays presented to G.E.M. de*

A connected theme is the study of scepticism about, and manipulation of, divination – which has received ample attention, especially by those concerned with Roman practices.¹⁹ Even now, compared to the formal rituals, the more private and unofficial divinatory practices are still relatively unexplored territory. Nevertheless, there have been a number of recent publications on this topic.²⁰

Ste. Croix (Exeter 1985) 298-326); V. Rosenberger, *Griechische Orakel: eine Kulturgeschichte* (Darmstadt 2001); H. Bowden, *Classical Athens and the Delphic oracle: divination and democracy* (Cambridge 2005).

19 On scepticism see for Greece, among others: J.D. Mikalson, *Honour thy gods: popular religion in Greek tragedy* (Chapel Hill 1991) 97-101; and for Rome among others W.V. Harris, 'Roman opinions about the truthfulness of dreams', *JRS* 93 (2003) 18-34 or the many publications on Cicero's *De divinatione*. The diviner and his influence on the process of divination are central topics in this discussion. On the diviner see R. Garland, 'Priests and power in Classical Athens' in: M. Beard & J. North (eds), *Pagan priests: religion and power in the ancient world* (London 1990) 75-91; J.N. Bremmer, 'The status and symbolic capital of the seer' in: R. Hägg (ed.), *The role of religion in the early Greek polis: proceedings from the third international seminar on ancient Greek cult: organized by the Swedish institute at Athens, 16-18 October 1992* (Stockholm 1996) 97-109.

20 Recent contributions on informal practices (there are many more publications): F. Graf, 'Rolling the dice for an answer' in: S.I. Johnston & P.T. Struck (eds), *Mantikê: studies in ancient divination* (Leiden 2005) 51-97; W.E. Klingshirn, 'Christian divination in late Roman Gaul: the *sortes sangallenses*' in: *idem*, 99-128; C. Grottanelli, '*Sorte unica pro casibus pluribus enotata*: literary texts and lot inscriptions as sources for ancient cleromanicy' in: *idem*, 129-146. See also a number of the articles in *Kernos* 3 (Actes du

Furthermore, an apparent shift from an emic ('from the native's point of view') to a more etically orientated ('from the academic's point of view') divinatory model has occurred.²¹ In the emic model, divination is considered to be communication from the supernatural to men.²² The models using an etic orientation tend to emphasize

colloque 'Oracles et mantique en Grèce ancienne') (1990).

21 The terms etic and emic, borrowed from anthropological studies, signify the difference between the language and definitions which the researcher uses (etic) and the language the object of study uses (emic). Etic language and definitions should function as tools with which the researcher can tackle his study in a 'neutral' way. Naturally, etic language should remain closely connected to emic experience. See also, among many others, M. Harris, 'History and significance of the emic/etic distinction', *AnnRevAnth* 5 (1976) 329-350 and more recently T. Headland, K.L. Pike & M. Harris (eds), *Emics and etics: the insider/outsider debate* (Newbury Park 1990).

22 Communication is the transmission of information between two entities or from one to the other. This does not necessarily involve simultaneity. There are a number of approaches to the study of this phenomenon: most prominent are the *process school* and the *semiotics school*. For a concise summary of a number of models of communication see M. Burgoon, F.G. Hunsaker & E.J. Dawson, *Human communication* (Thousand Oaks 1994³) 18-34. For some introductions to communication, on the use of communication theory, and theory more generally see D. Holmes, *Communication theory: media, technology, society* (London 2005); J. Fiske, *Introduction to communication studies* (London 1982); on giving meaning to signs within a communicative framework see B. Aubrey Fisher, *Perspectives on human communication* (New York 1978) 266-283; U. Eco, *A theory of semi-*

divination as a religious phenomenon in which the human individual fulfils the central role. In this model, the supernatural does not play an active role in the divinatory process. The shift to stress the important position of human individuals in divinatory practice has paved the way for divination to be incorporated into studies dealing with human mentality and social issues: subjects like risk management and the seer as a religious expert spring to mind. Esther Eidinow, for example, uses two different types of epigraphic sources, oracle tablets (from the sanctuary at Dodona) and curse tablets, in order to illustrate the ways Greek individuals perceived risk, both in the present and the future.²³ Michael A. Flower takes the Greek divinatory expert as his central figure of research and analyses his role in society and the various themes related to this role, such as his actual influence on Greek warfare. At the same time, the Roman expert receives attention.²⁴

otics (Bloomington, IND 1979²).

23 E. Eidinow, *Oracles, curses, and risk among the ancient Greeks* (Oxford 2007). I do not use the term 'risk' to investigate the ancient world myself, as I do not think it a useful concept with which to pursue the study of ancient divination with. Cf. pp. 363-378.

24 M.A. Flower, *The seer in ancient Greece* (Berkeley 2008); for the central role of the *homo divinans* – but now in Rome – see also V. Rosenberger, 'Republican nobiles: controlling the Res Publica' in: J. Rüpke (ed.), *A companion to Roman religion* (2007) 292-303; J. North, 'Diviners and divination at Rome' in: M. Beard & J. North (eds), *Pagan priests: religion and power in the ancient world* (London 1990) 51-71. See for the most recent publications in the Graeco-Roman branch of divinatory studies Eidinow, *Oracles, curses,*

These recent upsurges of interest in Greek and Roman divination have been paralleled by more or less independent developments in the field of Assyriology. Because most Assyriologists are very specialized, scholarly productions in this field tend to take the form of detailed studies discussing one specific method of divination only. Extispicy has received a large amount of attention,²⁵ as has astrol-

and risk; R. Stoneman; *The ancient oracles: making the gods speak* (New Haven 2011); S. Georgoudi, R. Koch Piettre & F. Schmidt (eds), *La raison des signes: présages, rites, destin dans les sociétés de la Méditerranée ancienne* (Leiden 2012).

25 An excellent overview is offered by the following: U. Jeyes, 'The act of extispicy in ancient Mesopotamia: an outline' in: I.M. Diakonoff *et al.* (eds), *Assyriological miscellanies I* (Copenhagen 1980) 13-32; see also: J. Aro, 'Remarks on the practice of extispicy in the time of Esarhaddon and Assurbanipal' in: J. Nougayrol *et al.* (eds), *La divination en Mésopotamie ancienne et dans les régions voisines (CCRAI 14)* (Paris 1966) 109-117; I. Starr, 'In search of principles of prognostication in extispicy', *HUCA* 45 (1974) 17-23; I. Starr, 'Notes on some technical terms in extispicy', *JCS* 27 (1975) 241-247; J.W. Meyer, *Untersuchungen zu den Tonlebermodellen aus dem Alten Orient* (Kevelaer 1987); U. Jeyes, *Old Babylonian extispicy: omen texts in the British Museum* (Istanbul 1989); a very anatomically oriented study is R. Leiderer, *Anatomie der Schafsleber im babylonischen Leberorakel: eine makroskopisch-analytische Studie* (München 1990); one of the standard works of reference for study of the liver compendia is U. Koch-Westenholz, *Babylonian liver omens: the chapters manzāzu, padānu and pān tākalti of the Babylonian extispicy series mainly from Aššurbanipal's library* (Copenhagen 2000); as well as U.S. Koch, *Secrets of extispicy: the chapter Multābiltu of the Babylonian extispicy series and Niširti bārūti texts mainly*

ogy.²⁶ Lately, prophecy has emerged as a focal point of research.²⁷

from *Aššurbanipal's library* (Münster 2005). See also: U. Jeyes, 'A compendium of gall-bladder omens extant in Middle Babylonian, Nineveh, and Seleucid versions' in: A.R. George & I.L. Finkel (eds), *Wisdom, gods and literature: studies in Assyriology in honour of W.G. Lambert* (Winona Lake, IND 2000) 345-374; U. Koch-Westenholz, 'Old Babylonian extispicy reports' in: C. Wunsch (ed.), *Mining the archives: Festschrift for Christopher Walker on the occasion of his 60th birthday, 4 October 2002* (Dresden 2002) 131-145; J.C. Fincke, 'Ist die Mesopotamische Opferschau ein nächtliches Ritual?', *BiOr* 66 (2009) 519-558; J.J. Glassner, 'Le corps de la victime dans la sacrifice divinatoire' in: G. Barjamovic *et al.* (eds), *Akkade is King: a collection of papers by friends and colleagues presented to Aage Westenholz on occasion of his 70th birthday 15th of May 2009* (Copenhagen) 143-150.

26 A very important overview: U. Koch-Westenholz, *Mesopotamian astrology: an introduction to Babylonian and Assyrian celestial divination* (Leiden 2011). And more recently: F. Rochberg, *The heavenly writing: divination, horoscopy, and astronomy in Mesopotamian culture* (Cambridge 2004). Further literature: A.L. Oppenheim, 'Divination and celestial observation in the last Assyrian empire', *Centaurus* 14 (1969) 97-135; H. Hunger, *Astrological reports to Assyrian kings* (Helsinki 1992); E. Reiner, *Astral magic in Babylonia* (Philadelphia 1995); D. Pingree, *From astral omens to astrology: from Babylon to Bīkāner* (Rome 1997); E. Reiner, 'The uses of astrology', *JAOS* 105 (1985) 589-595.

27 S. Parpola, *Assyrian prophecies* (Helsinki 1997); J.G. Heintz (ed.), *Oracles et prophéties dans l'antiquité: actes du colloque de Strasbourg, 15-17 juin 1995* (Paris 1997); M. Nissinen, *References to prophecy in Neo-Assyrian sources* (Helsinki 1998); M. Nissinen (ed.), *Prophecy in its ancient Near Eastern context: Mesopotamian, Biblical, and Arabian perspectives* (Atlanta 2000); M. Weippert, "König, fürchte dich nicht!" Assyrische Prophetie im

Furthermore, compendia of ominous signs have been published in accessible form.²⁸ However, as already noted above, synthesis is lagging behind. To date Jean Bottéro's contribution to Vernant's *Divination et rationalité* remains the most comprehensive synthetic article on Mesopotamian divination.²⁹ During the past couple of decades, however, there has been a cautious shift in attitudes: a contextualization of divination in Mesopotamian culture has begun to take place. Scholars have started to explore the influence of extispicy on social and economic aspects, and have generally approached divination more theoretically. Ulla Koch is an excellent example of the latter approach, raising the study of divination to a new level.³⁰

7. Jahrhundert v. Chr., *Orientalia* 71 (2002) 1-54; M. Nissinen, *Prophets and prophecy in the ancient Near East* (Atlanta 2003).

28 See volumes such as E. Leichty, *The omen series Šumma izbu* (Locust Valley, NY 1970); Freedman, *If a city is set on a height*; publications of series such as *Enuma Anu Enlil* have been more scattered.

29 J. Bottéro, 'Symptômes, signes, écritures en Mésopotamie ancienne' in: J.P. Vernant *et al.*, *Divination et rationalité* (Paris 1974). Further work by Bottéro, e.g., on classification and on information about the expert: J. Bottéro, *La plus vieille religion: en Mésopotamie* (Paris 1998) 328-354.

30 The most striking article in this respect is U. Koch, 'Three strikes and you're out! A view on cognitive theory and the first-millennium extispicy ritual' in: A. Annus (ed.), *Divination and interpretation of signs in the ancient world* (Chicago 2010) 43-59 but see also the work of other scholars: N. Veldhuis, 'Divination: theory and use' in: A.K. Guinan *et al.* (eds), *If a man builds a joyful house: Assyriological studies in honour of Erle Verdun Leichty* (Leiden 2006) 487-497; S. Richardson, 'Ewe should be so lucky: extispicy

A publication such as *The heavenly writing* by Francesca Rochberg contains valuable chapters about divination in general.³¹

All in all, the focus of the study of ancient divination has fundamentally changed character. A progression from systematization and publication of materials towards a more analytical approach to divination can be discerned in both Assyriology and Classical studies. Divination has become a means to obtain a better understanding of human societies.

reports and everyday life' in: C. Wunsch (ed.), *Mining the archives: Festschrift for Christopher Walker on the occasion of his 60th birthday, 4 October 2002* (Dresden 2002) 229-235; A.K. Guinan, 'A severed head laughed: stories of divinatory interpretation' in: L. Ciruolo & J. Seidel (eds), *Magic and divination in the ancient world* (Leiden 2002) 7-40.

³¹ Rochberg, *The heavenly writing*, especially 44-97.