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Worlds full of signs: ancient Greek divination in context

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Part II

The elements of ancient divination

4. The *homo divinans:* layman and expert

The *homo divinans* can be a layman or an expert: I consider the expert to be an individual claiming knowledge about the evocation, observation, recognition and interpretation of the signs of the supernatural. He receives money, goods or less tangible rewards in exchange for sharing this knowledge with his client. The layman usually divines for himself and receives no tangible reward.

On account of the availability of the source materials, the greater part of this chapter revolves around the expert who played such an important role in all three cultural areas: it consists of a structural comparison of the socio-economic status of certain groups of experts in Mesopotamia, Greece and Rome. Establishing differences and similarities in the socio-economic status of these divinatory experts contributes to building an understanding of their diversity in the three cultural areas – and eventually of the structures of divinatory practice.[1]

1 I use the term 'diviner' for both laymen and experts from the three cultural areas: this, in my opinion, covers the idea that anyone could divine and could be a *homo divinans*. Where the experts are concerned, I use 'expert' as a neutral term. When a particular group of experts is meant, I distinguish them by means of the name of their group within – and in the language of – the cultural area. I avoid 'seer' because this implies a presence

To Divine-It-Yourself or to consult an expert?

Every individual could divine for himself should he choose to do so – whether his divinatory session was about a matter of public or private concern. Still, many chose to consult an expert – although this required time and money. Unquestionably certain methods of divination or particular occasions did require an expert, but perhaps there were other reasons to consult such a person as well.

D-i-y

What examples of divine-it-yourself *do* we know? For Rome and Mesopotamia, not many – in the Greek sources divination by the layman is more visible. Nevertheless, divine-it-yourself practices must have occurred more often in all three cultural areas than the available evidence suggests.

A divinatory method such as cleromancy was very suitable to divination by laymen because, as far as we know, this did not require complicated rituals, materials (like the animal used during extispicy) or procedures and provided a relatively simple sign.[2] Interpretation could – but not necessarily did – follow simple rules, a lot or dice

of charisma or inspiration in modern daily sense of the word – and as we shall see often this is not the case (or a debatable matter).

2 On cleromancy in Mesopotamia see Finkel & Reade, 'Eponyms', 167-172 and pages 67-69 above; on cleromancy in Rome, interpreted by laymen and specialists see Cic. *Div.* 2 40-41.

were easy and cheap to obtain and uncomplicated to draw or throw. This is one of the most obvious examples but in theory all methods could be used without calling in an expert: it all depended on the layman's confidence in his own skills. There was no 'wrong' interpretation of the sign as such, there were only differences of opinion about this: an expert would be needed only when the individual was in doubt about a specific interpretation or uncertain of his own abilities. Whether or not the layman interpreted the sign correctly in the eyes of the expert is a different matter.[3]

At least some signs and their meanings were thought to be familiar to large numbers of individuals. The Greek soldiers in Homer's *Iliad* all knew whether the sign produced by the flight of a bird was good or bad:

> Even as he [Ajax] thus spake, there flew forth a bird upon the right hand, an eagle of lofty flight; and thereat the host of the Achaeans shouted aloud, heartened by the omen.[4]

On another occasion, when he was reluctant to accept the command of the army, Xenophon argued that there were signs so obvious that

3 E.G., Hdt. 3.65. Here the dream had been misinterpreted – according to Herodotos –, apparently by the dreamer himself who had been certain about what the dream would mean. However, from an etic perspective, misinterpretation does not exist.

4 Hom. *Il.* 13.821-823. Translation A.T. Murray.
Ὣς ἄρα οἱ εἰπόντι ἐπέπτατο δεξιὸς ὄρνις αἰετὸς ὑψιπέτης· ἐπὶ δ' ἴαχε λαὸς Ἀχαιῶν | θάρσυνος οἰωνῷ·.

anyone could interpret them: '[…] and the gods gave me such signs in the sacrifices that even a layman could perceive that I must withhold myself from accepting the sole command.'[5]

These, and many other, examples show that most laymen could probably recognize a good or bad sign when they saw or heard of one.[6] Laymen must have possessed a basic knowledge about the assumed meaning of certain signs.[7]

There are strong indications that the laymen among the elite were better informed than the average layman: extispicy is a good example. In Greece and Rome, a liver without its 'lobe' or 'head' was a bad sign.[8] Alexander the Great knew this particular sign well: 'And when the seer told that the victim's liver had no lobe, "Ah me!"

5 Xen. *An.* 6.1.31. Translation C.L. Brownson.
[…] καί μοι οἱ θεοὶ οὕτως ἐν τοῖς ἱεροῖς ἐσήμηναν ὥστε καὶ ἰδιώτην ἂν γνῶναι ὅτι τῆς μοναρχίας ἀπέχεσθαί με δεῖ.
There are more such examples, take for instance, the signs when Dareios became the Persian king: Hdt. 3.86. Cf. also Xen. *An.* 3.2.9.

6 Pestilence is another such example of an inherently bad sign in Rome and Greece.

7 As is visible in a source like Herodotos, where more laymen than experts perform divination (Hollmann, *The master of signs*, 62).

8 This cannot be checked for Mesopotamia because the unspecified Greek term *lobos* cannot be compared to any of the very specific Mesopotamian terms. Although we do not know if the signs were negative, we are aware that incidents such as the absence of an organ or the small size of a liver were thought to be ominous: SAA 13 131 and SAA 13 133.

said Alexander, "A forcible omen!"[9] Julius Obsequens, as do other Romans, reports the occurrence of a liver without a head being recognized as a negative sign.[10] Other aspects of extispicy were widely recognized as well: in Euripides' *Elektra*, Aigisthos is depicted as performing a hepatoscopy.[11]

> Aegisthus took the entrails in his hands and inspected them. Now the liver had no lobe, while the portal vein and near-by gall-bladder revealed threatening approaches to the one who was observing it. Aegisthus was angry, but my master asked, "Why are you disheartened?" "Stranger, I fear some treachery from abroad. Agamemnon's son is the man I hate most, and an enemy to my house." [12]

9 Plut. *Vit. Alex*. 73.4.2-73.5.1. Translation: B. Perrin.
ἠρώτησε τῶν ἱερῶν τὸν τρόπον· φήσαντος δ' ὅτι τὸ ἧπαρ ἦν ἄλοβον, "παπαὶ" εἶπεν, "ἰσχυρὸν τὸ σημεῖον.
Cf. Arr. *Anab.* 7.18; Xen. *Hell*. 4.7.7; Plut. *Vit. Cim*. 18.4; Plut. *Vit. Pyrrh.* 30.3; W.K. Pritchett, *The Greek state at war* 5 vols (Berkeley 1979) Vol. 3, 76.

10 Obseq. 17. In 203 one of the consuls found that the head of the liver of his first sacrificial victim was missing: (Liv. 30.2.9-13); in 118 the consul Cato sacrificed and the liver of the animal had no 'head' (Obseq. 35); Cic. *Div*. 2.13.32.

11 Although multiple organs were inspected during extispicy, during a hepatoscopy only the liver was examined.

12 Eur. *El*. 826-833. Translation E.P. Coleridge with slight adaptation.
κἀνεῖτο λαγόνας. ἱερὰ δ' ἐς χεῖρας λαβὼν | Αἴγισθος ἤθρει. καὶ λοβὸς μὲν οὐ προσῆν | σπλάγχνοις, πύλαι δὲ καὶ δοχαὶ χολῆς πέλας | κακὰς ἔφαινον τῶι σκοποῦντι προσβολάς. | χὠ μὲν σκυθράζει, δεσπότης δ' ἀνιστορεῖ· | Τί χρῆμ' ἀθυμεῖς; Ὦ ξέν', ὀρρωδῶ τινα | δόλον θυραῖον. ἔστι δ' ἔχθιστος βροτῶν | Ἀγαμέμνονος παῖς πολέμιός τ' ἐμοῖς δόμοις.

Nowhere is Aigisthos is mentioned as an expert on divination or as having acquired special skills in this field, nor is Euripides.[13] Euripides depiction of Aigisthos' proficiency in extispicy makes it seem like something he just happens to know – and probably so did Euripides. A passage from Xenophon's *Anabasis* suggests the same: the leader of the army, in this case Xenophon, could learn more about divination by observing it, although he was not an expert himself:

> Now Silanus, the divinatory expert, answered me in respect to the main issue that the omens were favorable (for he knew well enough that I was not unacquainted with divination, from being always present at the sacrifices); but he said that there appeared in the omens a kind of fraud and plot against me, manifestly because he knew that he was himself plotting to traduce me before you.[14]

Xenophon had been present at the sacrifices many times, probably more than many others in the course of their daily lives, and had had the opportunity to observe the expert at work – a normal practice

13 At least, not in the *Elektra* (see especially Eur. *El.* 805-839) nor anywhere else either, as far as I am aware. Cf. Odysseus who was not famous for his divinatory skills – but even he knew that it was a good sign when birds flew on the right-hand side: Hom. *Od.* 24.311-312.

14 Xen. *An.* 5.6.29.1-7. Translation C.L. Brownson.
'Σιλανὸς δέ μοι ὁ μάντις ἀπεκρίνατο τὸ μὲν μέγιστον, τὰ ἱερὰ καλὰ εἶναι· ᾔδει γὰρ καὶ ἐμὲ οὐκ ἄπειρον ὄντα διὰ τὸ ἀεὶ παρεῖναι τοῖς ἱεροῖς· ἔλεξε δὲ ὅτι ἐν τοῖς ἱεροῖς φαίνοιτό τις δόλος καὶ ἐπιβουλὴ ἐμοί, ὡς ἄρα γιγνώσκων ὅτι αὐτὸς ἐπεβούλευε διαβάλλειν με πρὸς ὑμᾶς. ἐξήνεγκε γὰρ τὸν λόγον ὡς ἐγὼ πράττειν ταῦτα διανοοίμην ἤδη οὐ πείσας ὑμᾶς.

according to Aeneas Tacticus: 'A soothsayer shall not make sacrifice on his own account without the presence of a magistrate.'[15] Although Xenophon seems rather overconfident of his own abilities to learn these skills, it does appear that a leader of the army could become knowledgeable about the interpretation of signs without being an acknowledged expert. It could be argued that up to a point the more advanced particularities of divinatory practice were familiar to a better-informed layman elite.[16] Nevertheless, there were occasions on which knowledge such as that of Xenophon was not quite enough – in such cases, the aid of an expert was still necessary.[17]

It then has to be assumed that there was a great deal of private divine-it-yourself going on at all times in Rome and Mesopotamia too, but the evidence is scanty. With regard to Rome, we know, for example, of the existence of private experts and individuals could claim that an occurrence was a *prodigium* (the senate would make the final decision, however). For Mesopotamia, there are clues that show there must have been private, informal divination which could be performed without the help of an expert. The methods used during this 'divine-it-yourself' were perhaps different from those used by the king. Erica Reiner has analysed Sultantepe Text 73, which provides some information about divinatory techniques not – or not

15 Aen. Tact. 10.4.4. Translation: Illinois Greek Club. Edition: Budé. Μηδὲ θύεσθαι μάντιν ἰδίᾳ ἄνευ τοῦ ἄρχοντος.

16 See also F.T. van Straten, *Hierà kalá: images of animal sacrifice in archaic and classical Greece* (Leiden 1995) 156.

17 And as illustrated by Onos. 10.25-28.

commonly – mentioned in the Mesopotamian sources of public divination. These methods are sprinkling an ox with water to observe its reaction,[18] psephomancy,[19] and, more generally, a number of ways to induce 'a sign'.[20] A method such as the interpretation of dreams should also be added to this list. Some of these methods might have been used for private divination.[21] Nonetheless, we are left with the impression that knowledge of how to divine was, as far as the sources reveal, more restricted in Mesopotamia than it was in Greece.

18 As was a custom in the Greek world before sacrifice took place, as a way of the animal giving 'consent'. Yet, this was not necessarily a divinatory sign: Van Straten, *Hierà kalá*, 33; 100-102 esp. n. 309.

19 Cf. on Mesopotamian psephomancy: E. Ebeling, *Literarische Keilschrifttexte aus Assur* (Berlin 1953) no. 137 (a review, in which this tablet dealing with psephomancy is discussed is: J. Nougayrol, *OLZ* 51 (1956) 38-42, at 41); W. Horowitz & V.A. Hurowitz, 'Urim and Thummim in light of a psephomancy ritual from Assur (LKA 137)', *JANES* 21 (1992) 95-115; I.L. Finkel, 'In black and white: remarks on the Assur psephomancy ritual', *ZA* 85 (1995) 271-276. A. Schuster-Brandis, *Steine als Schutz- und Heilmittel: Untersuchung zu ihrer Verwendung in der Beschwörungskunst Mesopotamiens im 1. Jt. v. Chr.* (Münster 2008) 56. I owe these references to L. van de Peut.

20 E. Reiner, 'Fortune-telling in Mesopotamia', *JNES* 19 (1960) 23-35.

21 Cf. J. Nougayrol, 'Divination et la vie quotidienne' in: P.W. Pestman (ed.), *Acta orientalia neerlandica: proceedings of the* [*19th*] *Congress of the Dutch Oriental Society held in Leiden on the occasion of its 50th anniversary, 8th-9th May 1970* (Leiden 1971) 28-36.

Consulting an expert

Why would a layman, if he could divine for himself or learn how to do so, still choose to turn to an expert? Ancient sources are not always clear on this matter, necessitating a more theoretical approach on this issue. An expert is presumed to have the skill, expertise and tools to perform a certain kind of divination.[22] On account of these claims, the expert is someone who can 'remove the agency and responsibility for a decision from the actor himself'.[23] If a layman performs the divination personally and on his own behalf, a perceived conflict of interests might occur: an individual cannot remove agency and responsibility from himself (although the ritual procedure and randomization create some distance) but the expert can take full responsibility for his interpretation on the basis of his authority. Furthermore, an expert is not only a mediator between the perceived supernatural and man, he also serves to mediate between men in social situations in which tensions might be present. The expert can be an outsider in a conflict and hence can

22 On tools used for divination – about which we know next to nothing for Antiquity – cf. V. Turner, *The drums of affliction: a study of religious processes among the Ndembu of Zambia* (Ithaca 1981[2]) 30-34. Here a expert performs a particular kind of divination and a description of his tools is given; for the Near East see E. Jan Wilson, 'A note on the use of *erinnu* in *bārû*-rituals', *JANES* 23 (1995) 95-98.

23 G.K. Park, 'Divination and its social contexts', *JRAI* 93 (1963) 195-209, at 197.

resolve such tensions in a seemingly unbiased manner.[24] It could be considered dangerous to have a member of local society, who might have knowledge of a client's family and affairs, perform the divination.[25] Furthermore, in ancient times, if the expert was itinerant and came from outside the region in which he worked, his knowledge could be perceived as exclusive and prestigious. An itinerant expert was an outsider, which enabled him to be more impartial. Another option in a search for impartiality and exclusivity was for the client to go to an expert or oracle-site far from his home.[26]

Since 'getting it right' was imperative, people were willing to spend time and money on an expert. The wealthier a Greek individual was, the more authoritative the interpretation he could buy by calling on the services of a more prestigious expert. Many economically less affluent members of society would have had to depend on the interpretation of signs by a local or itinerant expert. Those with a little more wealth could afford to travel to an oracle of supra-local importance, while the richer elite could consult or even employ an

24 As, for example, in the Yoruba community: Park, 'Social contexts', 197.

25 J. Jansen, *De lessen van Namagan Kanté: zanddivinatie in de Mandébergen* (*Mali-Guinée*) (Amsterdam 2007) 46-47.

26 But also note how civic oracles – close to the *polis* – were also used to make political decisions: Morgan, 'Divination and society', 17-42. Also, an individual might have wanted to go to an oracle which 'specialized' in his kind of topic. It seems that Klaros, for example, focused on plagues, earthquakes and pirates, while Didyma answered private queries (*SEG* 39 1326 for references).

expert who was famous for his skills. In the Archaic and Classical periods, members of the Greek elite could hire an expert for a longer or shorter period of time if necessary, for example, to join armies during a series of battles. In the Hellenistic period we begin to find possible references to experts being employed not only by individuals but also by *polis* communities, perhaps on particular occasions. For instance, it seems that experts would be present at the Athenian assembly.[27]

Although there is little evidence, it seems safe to assume that in Rome and Mesopotamia, as in Greece, those who could afford it consulted an expert for private divination on an ad-hoc basis.[28] A Roman would consult a private *haruspex*. A poor individual in Mesopotamia consulted an expert working 'under the city gate'.

Use of an expert for public purposes can be seen incidentally in Greece, but on a structural level in Mesopotamia and Rome: the Mesopotamian king had his own network of experts and astrologers on hand. Even King Assurbanipal needed experts although he claimed to have more knowledge of divination than many others:

> [Assurbanipal] [...] beloved of the god, whom Shamash and Adad gave insight, who learned extispicy, the secret of heaven and earth, the craft of Shamash and Adad [...].[29]

27 Flower, *The seer,* 122-123. Cf. Pritchett, *The Greek state at war*, Vol. 3, 61-63.

28 In the Old Babylonian period, on the other hand, there were letters of non-experts and non-scholars discussing extispicy.

29 Colophon A iv 46-47. Edition and translation Koch, *Secrets of extispicy,*

The Roman elite also used various bodies of experts – *augures*, *decemviri* and some *haruspices* to explain public signs – whose members were even appointed from within the elite itself. In Mesopotamia and Rome the advantages of employing experts structurally and in an institutionalized context must have been deemed more advantageous than recourse to a freelance expert, certainly for public purposes.

In Mesopotamia, as in Greece and Rome, the expert was thought to have something the layman did not: authority on the basis of more-or-less objective knowledge. This is why individuals consulted experts. Nevertheless, a perpetual tension existed between confidence in one's own ability to interpret the sign correctly ('I would – or could – have done better!') and the need to have a sense of certainty obtained by using an expert ('Would he have done better?'), whether on an ad hoc or on a structural basis.

137. Colophon A: K 3945+3986+6297+6909+10681+10960+11713+12315+82-3-23, 5213 = CT 20 43-48. This colophon is known as 'type A': H. Hunger, *Babylonische und assyrische Kolophone* (Kevelaer 1968) 97 (number 318) and the even more famous colophon on pages 100-101 (number 325).
na-ram DINGIR.[MÉŠ ša] ^{d}UTU u ^{d}IŠKUR GEŠTU.2 DAGAL-tum id-di-nu-niš-šum NAM.[AZU AD.ḪAL AN-e u KI-tim] né-me-qí ^{d}UTU u ^{d}IŠKUR
There are many other types of Assurbanipal colophons, e.g. 'type N': Hunger, *Kolophone*, 97 (number 318). There is a lot of literature on the topic of Assurbanipal's education. See for references the recent S. Zamazalová, 'The education of Neo-Assyrian princes' in: K. Radner & E. Robson (eds), *The Oxford handbook of cuneiform culture* (Oxford 2011) 313-330.

Relationship client-expert

Despite the fact that experts were regularly consulted, whether ad hoc or structurally, perceptions of their interpretations were not always positive – nor were they unquestioned: disbelief and outright anger were among the possible reactions. Homer relates the story of the expert Kalchas who knows Agamemnon would not be able to keep his slave girl because her abduction had offended the god Apollo who had caused a plague to break out in the Greek camp: to appease the god, the girl had to be released. Kalchas was afraid for his personal safety and did not want to come forward with this information because Agamemnon might harm him. He only spoke up when Achilles had assured him of his protection.[30] Expert and client were in a symbiotic relationship which was, at times, tense: Kalchas was dependent on the goodwill of his employers, in this case Achilles and Agamemnon specifically and the Greeks in a more general sense. However, the Greek army, and the rulers, were also dependent on what the expert said – although the final decision rested with the leaders.[31] The same tension is revealed in the

30 Hom. *Il.* 1.75-91.

31 Literary examples of such dependence (and the strains on this relationship) are found in a great variety of sources: Hdt. 9.61; Xen. *Cyr.* 1.6.2; Eur. *Phoen.* 754-759; Soph. *OT* 300-341; 602-610; Onos. 4.5; Onos. 10.25-28; Aesch. *Sept.* 377-380; Arr. *Anab.* 7.18. It is clear that 'politicians and generals still paid respect to divination' (at least in the 4th century): R. Parker, *Athenian religion: a history* (Oxford 1996) 214. The general or leader still needed to make the decisions in the end: Pl. *Lach.* 199a; Pritchett, *The Greek*

Anabasis when the army was literally unable to move on because the experts said it could not, even though this was necessary for it to survive.

Could they be trusted? Had they got it right? Were they wrong in their interpretation or did the experts perhaps have ulterior motives? Might the leader of the army have put pressure on the experts because he had ulterior motives?[32] The expert could, after all, exert a considerable influence on future actions by providing or not providing particular interpretations.[33] In Greece, high-ranking individuals were dependent on the knowledge of their experts – although, as noted, the final decision still rested with them.

A comparable situation can be seen during the power struggles in the later Roman Republic: politicians needed experts.[34] In the

state at war, Vol. 3, 48-49; 139-140; K.J. Dover, 'Some neglected aspects of Agamemnon's dilemma', *JHS* 93 (1973) 58-68, at 64. It should also be noted that, in the Athenian *polis*, oracles were consulted but this was not an essential action: a decision by the Assembly was also valid without a consultation: Parker, *Polytheism and society*, 115.

32 Xen. *An*. 6.4.14. For an illustration of the practical problems in such a situation in which the army was stalemated or other such situations see Plut. *Vit. Arist.* 18. Cf. Pritchett, *The Greek state at war*, Vol. 3, 78-81.

33 See on demagogic powers of the divinatory expert, e.g., Plut. *Vit. Dion* 22.4-24.3; Xen. *An.* 5.6.16-19; And of divination in general, e.g., Plut. *Vit. Lys.* 22.2.

34 Just one example is the case in which Caesar and Sulla take stands, and the role of the experts in that conflict, as detailed by E. Rawson, 'Caesar, Etruria and the *Disciplina Etrusca*', *JRS* 68 (1978) 132-152. But see also the

Roman case, the situation was exceptional in the sense that client and expert might have belonged to the same peer group, or even have been the same individual. Another issue was that these experts were working on a more structural basis.

The Mesopotamian king also needed to trust his experts because they were employed to ensure his well-being – on a structural basis. They would provide him with advice, which could entail specifics about such topics as military strategy or his health.[35] The experts could restrain the king up to a point: they could tell him it was not right to go outside on a particular day or which people he should and should not meet.[36] In the end, however, it was the king who made the decision, perhaps after a discussion with his magnates.[37] The king-expert relationship can be seen as symbiotic, but was different from that in Greece and Rome: because the relationship was structural and because of the 'deep social chasm' between king and expert, the king was the empowered party. The relationship might even be characterized as one of patronage. Such asymmetry in the relationship is

perceived manipulation by *collegia* in MacBain, *Prodigy and expiation,* 41-42.

35 SAA 10 111 and SAA 10 112 are striking examples.

36 As in SAA 10 38; or they could strongly advise the king to stop fasting as in SAA 10 43; or whether or not he was allowed to see his son (SAA 10 49; SAA 10 74).

37 Yet, note that scholars also fulfilled the tasks of magnates under Esarhaddon: K. Radner, 'Royal decision-making: kings, magnates and scholars' in: K. Radner & E. Robson (eds), *The Oxford handbook of cuneiform culture* (Oxford 2011) 358-379, at 372-374.

not found in Greece to such a degree, nor in Rome where the public experts and their clients were members of the elite (patronage also played a role in these circles but this was clearly not as asymmetrical as in Mesopotamia).[38]

In short, the expert was always part of the leader's 'religious capital'[39] – but his actual worth did not go unquestioned. This is primarily visible in Greece where the leader or client *chose* to consult an expert on an incidental basis. This incidental basis was not nearly as prominent in Rome and Mesopotamia, where an expert served formally for a longer period of time. This element of choice on the side of the client must have affected the position of the Greek expert *homo divinans* in society, an enquiry which will form the greater part of this chapter.

Experts: socio-economic status

In my analysis of the position of the divinatory expert in society, the concept of socio-economic status will play a central part. All experts

38 For the quote and on the depiction of this relationship as one of patronage see Radner, 'Royal decision-making' in: Radner & Robson, C*uneiform culture*, 358-379, at 363-365; E. Frahm, 'Keeping company with men of learning: the king as scholar' in: K. Radner & E. Robson (eds), *The Oxford handbook of cuneiform culture* (Oxford 2011) 508-532, at 525. Robson, 'Empirical scholarship', 605-607.

39 J.N. Bremmer, 'Prophets, experts, and politics in Greece, Israel, and early modern Europe', *Numen* 40 (1993) 150-183, at 155.

discussed were working in the field of divination, but there is much more to be said about their socio-economic status. This term is used to determine the position of an individual in society, by placing emphasis on his occupation. The three criteria by which this position is usually measured are education, income and career.[40] At least one addition to this list must be made: the evidence shows that an expert's social background was an important element of socio-economic status in the ancient world. Consequently, extra emphasis will be placed on family ties among experts. Other important elements which can be considered in determining the social background of an expert are gender and physique. I shall begin by discussing the this

40 Introductions to socio-economic status and related issues – among other applications its use in research into health and inequality – can be found in: G. Marshall, *Oxford dictionary of sociology* (Oxford 1998²) s.v. status attainment; N.J. Smelser & P.B. Baltes (eds), *International encyclopedia of the social & behavioral sciences* (Amsterdam 2001); see for socio-economic status and health; C. Kramarae & D. Spender (eds), *Routledge international encyclopedia of women: global women's issues and knowledge* (New York 2000) see for class. See the use of the term socio-economic status – among many others – in, e.g., V. Bos, *Ethnic inequalities in mortality in The Netherlands and the role of socioeconomic status* (Enschede 2005) *passim*, but especially 88-148 and 159-161; G. Davey Smith *et al.*, 'Education and occupational social class: which is the more important indicator of mortality risk?', *JECH* 52 (1998) 153-160; B.P. Kennedy *et al.*, 'Income distribution, socioeconomic status, and self rated health in the United States: multilevel analysis', *BMJ* 317 (1998) 917-921; J.J.A. Spijker, *Socioeconomic determinants of regional mortality differences in Europe* (Amsterdam 2004) *passim*.

background of the groups of observational experts, subsequently education, income and career will be discussed in relation to one another.

The basic assumption under investigation in a comparison of Mesopotamia, Greece and Rome is that more education, more income and more fame meant an individual was higher up in the socio-economic ranking. There are, however, no quantifiable data. Whereas sociologists would use relative percentages to 'measure' socio-economic status, the data necessary to do this are not available to ancient historians. However, historians can use a comparison, a method of research which is relative – as is the use of percentages –, in order to 'measure' the socio-economic status of people belonging to various groups. The confrontation between the various experts will lead to qualitative conclusions at a high level of abstraction. On account of this, I have only used three broad categories as designations of the experts' socio-economic status in the conclusion: low, middle and high socio-economic status.

Through this analysis an insight into the comparative status of experts will be gained. This helps us to understand the various positions of the experts in their respective societies. This analysis will focus on those experts interpreting signs perceived by observation: the Greek *mantis*;[41] the Mesopotamian *ṭupšarru Enūma Anu Enlil*

41 The *teratoskopos* also divined by means of observing signs, but as there are very few records of what exactly he did and how he differed from the *mantis*. He will only be briefly mentioned in this account.

and *bārû*; and the Roman *augur*, *decemvir* and *haruspex*.[42] These experts are well attested in the material – because of their public duties and the high status of their core divinatory methods –, ensuring enough knowledge about their background and career has been passed down to be able to make a systematic comparison. Other specialists will be used as a complement and as a contrast.

Terminology

Thus far I have used the word 'expert' to refer to anyone claiming some kind of expertise in relation to the evocation, recognition and interpretation of signs thought to have been sent by the supernatural. In reality there were various kinds of experts: they were involved in public ('official') and private ('unofficial') divination and they could at the same time be either dependent ('employed') or independent ('free-lance'). In what follows I shall take a closer look at variations in the social-economic statuses enjoyed by some of the experts. In doing so, I shall focus on one particular category of experts for which sufficient data are available: those divining mainly by means of observation. Other experts are only referred to.

42 Both legendary and mythical materials about the professional expert and historically attested actions of and practicalities concerning historical experts will compared and contrasted. Together these form a view of professional experts in which mythological texts can complement historical attestations.

Terminology and areas of expertise: Greece

The experts who concerned themselves with divination were many. The terminology used for these different groups of experts is often unclear. In what follows, a brief overview is provided, bearing mind that not all kinds of experts can be discussed, only those who are encountered most frequently.

A small category of dependent experts was constituted out of the *prophētai* and *promanteis* (functioning as mouthpieces of the gods), and in Hellenistic (and Roman) times the institutionalized *manteis*. These were linked to a sacred or oracular shrine.[43] In fact, they worked at an oracular shrine – but their precise functions are often hard to define. Context is helpful: at Korope, for example, there would be a priest, a dependent divinatory expert, a secretary to the gods and representatives of the various colleges present at the oracle when it functioned,[44] while at Didyma – at least in Hellenistic times

43 J. Dillery, 'Chresmologues and *manteis*: independent experts and the problem of authority' in: S.I. Johnston & P.T. Struck (eds), *Mantikê: studies in ancient divination* (Leiden 2005) 167-231, at 171; in Hellenistic and Roman times see A. Hupfloher, 'Mantische Spezialisten im Osten des Römerreiches' in: H. Cancik & J. Rüpke (eds), *Die Religion des Imperium Romanum: Koine und Konfrontationen* (Tübingen 2009) 273-287. The most extensive study of the *prophētēs* is still E. Fascher, *Profētēs: eine sprach- und religionsgeschichtliche Untersuchung* (Gießen 1927) 1-75. These institutionalized *manteis* were thought to have worked until they died: L. Weniger, 'Die Seher von Olympia', *ARW* 18 (1915) 53-115, at 60.

44 *IG* IX 2 1109 and *Syll.*[3] 1157, lines 18-22. See Robert, 'Apollon Koropaios', 22 – where further references can be found.

– the expert appears to have been assisted by other functionaries.[45] A certain division of labour might be assumed on the basis of this evidence.

In the category of independent experts there was the *oneiropolos*, who interpreted dreams, and the *teratoskopos*, who interpreted signs, usually those appearing spontaneously without having been requested. However, the independent experts who appeared most frequently – especially in Classical times – were the c*hrēsmologoi* and independent *manteis*.[46] My use of the term 'independent' does

45 Fontenrose, *Didyma,* 78; on Claros and Didyma see pages 132 and 41-42 respectively of H.W. Parke, *The oracles of Apollo in Asia Minor* (London 1985). Cf. Morgan, 'Divination and society', 29-32. See for a much more detailed study – for which there is no space here and which is also beyond the scope of this research –, the very thorough A. Busine, 'The officials of oracular sanctuaries in Roman Asia Minor', *ARG* 8 (2006) 275-316; S. Georgoudi, 'Les porte-paroles des dieux: réflexions sur le personnel des oracles grecs' in: I. Chirassi Colombo, & T. Seppilli, *Sibille e linguaggi oracolari: mito, storia, tradizione* (Pisa 1999) 315-365, esp. 340-361. These articles also show the many complications which can arise from such a study. Note also the attention Georgoudi pays to the *Selloi* (who are not discussed here because I do not consider them to be *manteis*) at 335-340. Another group of functionaries at the oracle who are not discussed are the *Hosioi* at Delphi. See G. Jay-Robert, 'Les *Hosioi* de Delphes', *Euphrosyne* 25 (1997) 25-45.

46 The term *chrēsmologos* seems to have appeared in the 5th century: earlier chresmologues, such as Musaios and Bakis, were only referred to in these terms from the time of Herotodus. See Dillerey, 'Chresmologues and *manteis*', 184-185. For sources on some chresmologues see, e.g., Hdt. 7.6.3; 8.96.2; 9.43.2.

not imply these experts were always itinerant: it merely means they did not have permanent employment.

In practice, however, the actual occupations of these experts overlapped and their particular roles cannot always be distinguished from one another. For instance, the independent expert Lampon (480/470-410 BC) was referred to as a *chrēsmologos,* as a *mantis* (as well as an *exēgētēs*, a role not relevant here) and sometimes as both at the same time. The spheres of activity denoted by these terms seem to have overlapped.[47] In earlier times, the *mantis* was supposed to interpret both spontaneous and evoked signs and was also ascribed prophetic powers – or at least innate divine inspiration – in the literature.[48] The *chrēsmologos*, on the other hand, collected

47 Dillery, 'Chresmologues and *manteis*', 170; Flower, *The seer*, 60; Garland, 'Priests and power', 82-85; H. Bowden, 'Oracles for sale' in: P. Derow & R. Parker (eds), *Herodotos and his world: essays from a conference in memory of George Forrest* (Oxford 2003) 256-274, especially 261-264; Georgoudi, 'Les porte-paroles des dieux', 315-365, especially 327-328 but also *passim*. Especially her attempt to distinguish between *mantis, promantis* and *prophētēs* makes this article very worthwhile. Georgoudi shows that *mantis* and *promantis/prophētēs* cannot simply be distinguished in the sense that a *mantis* observed and the other two divined by means of discourse (345-347). The one distinction which can be convincingly made is that the *mantis* is not connected to a particular member of the supernatural, while the others are (331).

48 An example is Pind. *Ol.* 6.65-70. Ascribing innate divine inspiration seems like a literary feature to me. For secondary literature see Bremmer, 'Status and symbolic capital', 98 where he argues that experts based their

oracles and uttered these.[49] His trade was generally not deemed to be as prestigious as that of the *mantis* (although there were some exceptions).[50] It has been argued that this status had changed by Pausanias' time when a *mantis* seems to have been someone who based his divination on rational skills acquired through education, while the *chrēsmologos* had become an inspired speaker of oracles.[51] In reality, a division of labour between various types of expert is likely to have been less clear-cut than this neat distinction might suggest.

If a comparison of the esteem they enjoyed has to be made, experts at the oracle sites were high up in the hierarchy of the different branches of divinatory experts. The independent experts, first

knowledge on expertise in the Archaic age but were later also connected to inspirational divination; Flower, *The seer*, 38; Dillery, 'Chresmologues and *manteis*', 168-170.

49 As in, e.g., Hdt. 1.62.

50 It was, e.g., perfectly possible for a *chrēsmologos* to be honoured with a statue: *SEG* 42 1065 (Kolophon, 200-150 BC); L. & J. Robert, 'Décret de Colophon pour un chresmologue de Smyrne appelé à diriger l'oracle de Claros', *BCH* 116 (1992) 279-291. He was also allowed to advise the assembly (cf. Parker, *Polytheism and society*, 112). On the *mantis* who was held in high esteem see the discussion and references in Pritchett, *The Greek state at war,* Vol. 3, 49-56.

51 Dillery, 'Chresmologues and *manteis*', 170. The passage referred to is Paus. 1.34.4 (yet, in Paus. 2.13.7 it appears that a expert who was inspired to dream was called a *mantis*, too – matters are not clear-cut); A.W. Argyle, 'Χρησμολόγοι and Μάντεις', *CR* n.s. 20 (1970) 139.

and foremost the *mantis*, followed suit.[52] Those such as the dream expert and the *chrēsmologos* were held in lower esteem.

Terminology and areas of expertise: Mesopotamia

An example of a private expert was the *šā'il(t)u*, who interpreted both dreams and the flight of birds, and divined by smoke. A.L. Oppenheim adds lecanomancy and necromancy to his activities.[53] Much more is known about experts employed by the palace, who had the task to make sure that no harm befell the king..[54] These

52 Note that perhaps the *manteis* – but also the chresmologues – became less important over time, especially after the Sicilian expedition. See: Parker, *Polytheism and society*, 113-115.

53 Oppenheim, *The interpretation of dreams*, 223.

54 There were those who claimed to speak on behalf of the gods (and can therefore not be discussed here, because they are no divinatory expert according to my definition). The *maḫḫû* was an ecstatic figure, who provided the king with messages by interpreting dreams, speech omens, portents and signs. The *raggim(t)u* was another prophetic character with a perceived capability to communicate with the divine. Both *maḫḫû* and *raggimu* were probably connected to the temple. Although the two are distinguished in the texts, again it is impossible to draw a sharp distinction between the one and the other. Their function was that of servant of the deity, and in this capacity they could 'express demands to the king' and comment on his cultic and political functioning. M.J. de Jong, *Isaiah among the ancient Near Eastern prophets: a comparative study of the earliest stages of the Isaiah tradition and the Neo-Assyrian prophesies* (Leiden 2006) 220-236.

experts fell into the category of scholars (*ummânu*) or were 'scribe-experts' – it is often hard to distinguish between these two categories.[55] The overarching Neo-Assyrian concept of *ummânu* consisted of five different disciplines: the *ṭupšarru Enūma Anu Enlil* (celestial expert/astrologer), the *bārû* (*haruspex* – in the Assyriological literature usually translated as 'expert'), the *āšipu* (doctor/exorcist), the *asû* (medical practitioner) and the *kalû* (lamentation singer who was not involved in divination).[56] Note that the practice of the *āšipu* overlapped with, or was at least related to that of the *ṭupšarru Enūma Anu Enlil* and *bārû* but that here he is not considered to be a divinatory expert as such.[57] The following passage distinguishes the various disciplines (but leaves out the *kalû*), and adds the bird-expert (the *dāgil iṣṣūrē*, not an *ummânu*) to the list: 'The scribes, experts, exor-

55 E.g., K. van der Toorn, *Scribal culture and the making of the Hebrew Bible* (Cambridge, MA 2007) 57; Rochberg, *The heavenly writing,* 45.

56 Cf. Rochberg, *The heavenly writing*, 95.

57 See for the distinction between divination and medicine pages 72-75 above. It is currently in vogue among a branch of Assyriology to regard the medical compendia as explicitly non-divinatory. See Heeßel, *Diagnostik*, 4-5; Cf. the use of SA.GIG in explicitly medical studies by J. Scurlock & B.R. Andersen, *Diagnoses in Assyrian and Babylonian medicine: ancient sources, translations, and modern medical analyses* (Urbana, ILL 2005) and I.L. Finkel & M.J. Geller (eds), *Disease in Babylonia* (Leiden 2007). I do not agree: I concur with U. Koch that there is an overlap in the practice and theory of expert and *āšipu*: U. Koch, lecture *āšipu and divination?* Leiden University, 12 May 2010. The *asû* and *kalû* do not seem to have been involved in divinatory practice.

cists, physicians, observers of birds and palace officials dwelling in the city'.[58]

Although a clear-cut division of roles is artificial, it is possible to make some distinctions. The *bārû* was a specialist in interpreting signs, mainly by means of inspection of *exta*. Some have argued that he was also involved in the observation of the flight of birds, lecanomancy and libanomancy. Ulla Jeyes argues that, in the Old Babylonian period, the *bārû* performed extispicy, lecanomancy, libanomancy, aleuromancy 'and a peculiar form of divination which involved observation of spots or discolouring on slaughtered and plucked fowl'.[59] However, Eleanor Robson has convincingly shown that the Neo-Assyrian *bārû*, although he did have knowledge of other areas outside his own specialization, did not practise in these areas.[60] The *ṭupšarru Enūma Anu Enlil* specialized in heavenly signs but was also involved in other areas. The *dāgil iṣṣūrē* apparently observed birds only.

Ivan Starr states that a *bārû* was held in much higher esteem than the prophet, *raggimu*.[61] This would also have applied to the *ṭupšarru*

58 Publication: R. F. Harper, *Assyrian and Babylonian letters* (Chicago 1892-1914) 33:9. Translation *Chicago Assyrian dictionary*, s.v. *dāgil iṣṣūrē*. LÚ ṭupšarru LÚ bārû LÚ mašmaššû LÚ ašû LÚ dagil MUŠEN.MEŠ manzaz ekalli āšibāli.

59 Jeyes, *Old Babylonian extispicy*, 15.

60 Robson, 'Empirical scholarship', 623.

61 At least in the Old Babylonian period: I. Starr, *The rituals of the diviner* (Malibu 1983) 5.

Enūma Anu Enlil. The reasons for this esteem were the learning and knowledge the *bārû* (and the *ṭupšarru Enūma Anu Enlil*) needed to possess, something he shared with the wise man, the *apkallu*: 'I am a expert, I am a man of learning'; 'wise [*emqu*] member of the guild of experts'.[62] The *bārû* were united in a guild, to which new members were admitted on the basis of their wisdom and learning. In contrast, the *šā'il*(*t*)*u* was qualified by 'age, social status, or a personal charisma, inherited or magically acquired'. He or she and other non-*ummânu* experts were held in lower esteem than the *ummânu* because they had no extensive scholarly training, they were not organized into a politically powerful guild like that of the *bārû* or perhaps for other unknown reasons.[63]

Terminology and areas of expertise: Rome

The public experts in Roman Republican times can be split up into three groups: first, the *augures*;[64] second, the interpreters of prodigies (that is, the keepers of the Sibylline Books – the *decemviri sac-*

62 W.G. Lambert, *Babylonian wisdom literature* (Oxford 1959) 211, line 16; J.A. Craig, *Assyrian and Babylonian religious texts: being prayers, oracles, hymns &c.* (Leipzig 1895-1897) 60, line 2.

63 Oppenheim, *The interpretation of dreams*, 221.

64 The number of *augures* at any one time is unclear – at first, there seem to have been three, later four or six and from 300 there were certainly nine.

ris faciundis[65] – and, from the middle Republic but becoming more important during the later Republic, the Etruscan *haruspices*), and third, the readers of entrails (also *haruspices*).[66] Some would argue that the *pontifices* should also be ranked among the divinatory experts but since they were only marginally involved in the interpretation of certain signs, they are not discussed in what follows.[67]

65 It should be noted that the precise role of the Sibylline books in the divinatory process can be disputed: see p. 264. First there were two men consulting the Sibylline books, then ten (from 367) and from the time of Sulla their number was fifteen and later this number was raised again. Consequently I shall call them *decemviri* here as this number was used during most of the Republic, the timeframe I deal with here. See further S.M. Rasmussen, *Public portents in republican Rome* (Rome 2003) 169-170.

66 North, 'Diviners and divination', 51; 55. Cf. Rosenberger, 'Republican *nobiles*', 293; G.J. Szemler, 'Priesthood and priestly careers' in: W. Haase (ed.), *Aufstieg und Niedergang der römischen Welt: Geschichte und Kultur Roms im Spiegel der neueren Forschung* (Berlin 1986-) Vol. 16.3, 2314-2331, at 2325; D.S. Potter, *Prophets and emperors: human and divine authority from Augustus to Theodosius* (Cambridge, MA 1994) 151-158. The dynamics and evolution in divination in this period, to a far greater extent than can be done here, have been discussed by J. Scheid, 'Le rite de auspices à Rome: quelle évolution? Réflexions sur la transformation de la divination publique des Romains entre le IIIe et le Ier siècle avant notre ère' in: S. Georgoudi, R. Koch Piettre & F. Schmidt (eds), *La raison des signes: présages, rites, destin dans les sociétés de la Méditerranée ancienne* (Leiden 2012) 109-128; and by J. Rüpke, 'Divination romaine et rationalité grecque dans la Rome du IIe siècle avant notre ère' in: iidem, 279-500.

67 Cf. K. Latte, '12a. Orakel' in: idem, *Kleine Schriften: zu Religion, Recht,*

The *nobiles* who became members of the bodies of *decemviri* or the *augures* would hold life-long tenure: they had become members of a prestigious priestly college and should be considered part of the institutions of the State.[68] The *collegium* of *augures* would be asked by the Senate to observe and explain the *auspicia* and *auguria* (interpreting augural law) and to offer explanations of errors in the performance of a ritual – while individual augures could also do this on their own accord.[69] In other words, the *collegium* examined the potential success of an undertaking. It was part of the task of the incumbent magistrates, with the assistance of their *pullarii* ('chicken-keepers'), to take the *auspicia* before any official action, mainly by using birds, but also by keeping track of thunder and lightning – expressing the favour or disfavour of the supernatural. At a later date the principal way of taking the *auspicia* would to observe

Literatur und Sprache der Griechen und Römer (München 1968) 152-192, at 179-187. Those dealing with divination in Republican Rome do not mention the *pontifices* as experts as such (except for Rasmussen, *Public portents*, 170-171). Perhaps this is because the interpretation of *prodigia* was a relatively small part of their tasks. Cf. R.L. Gordon, 'Pontifex, Pontifices' in: H. Cancik & H. Schneider (eds), *Brill's New Pauly Online*. Visited 1-4-2011.

68 Rosenberger, 'Republican *nobiles*', 293; G.J. Szemler, *The priests of the Roman Republic: a study of interactions between priesthoods and magistracies* (Brussels 1972) 21-46; Szemler, 'Priesthood', 2325.

69 Cf. J. Linderski, 'The augural law' in: W. Haase (ed.), *Aufstieg und Niedergang der römischen Welt: Geschichte und Kultur Roms im Spiegel der neueren Forschung Bd. 16.3: Religion* (Berlin 1986-) 2146-2312; Rosenberger, 'Republican *nobiles*', 298-299.

how chickens ate.[70] The feeding behaviour of the poultry would be interpreted by the *augures*. Prodigies could be remedied by consulting the Sibylline Books, which only the *decemviri* were allowed to do if requested by the Senate.[71] The *haruspices* were a different body of experts, consisting of members of the Etruscan oligarchy (and perhaps later of the Roman elite),[72] who read the *exta* (often in a military context)[73] and were consulted about lightning and prodigies which they were able explain with the help of their *libri rituales*.[74] These

70 J. Scheid, *An introduction to Roman religion* (Edinburgh 2003) 112-117.

71 Cf. on the Sibylline Books D. Engels, *Das römische Vorzeichenwesen (753-27 v.Chr.): Quellen, Terminologie, Kommentar, historische Entwicklung* (Stuttgart 2007) 739-844.

72 MacBain, *Prodigy and expiation*, 43-59.

73 North, 'Experts and divination', 55. See, e.g., *CIL* VI 2166 (reference from North) for an example of a *haruspex* in the army. It should be noted that the Roman and Etruscan ways of performing extispicy differed. Nevertheless, I deal with this as one tradition here – the sources do not allow the two to be clearly distinguished.

74 Cf. Scheid, *Roman religion*, 123-124. See MacBain, *Prodigy and expiation*, 43-59. It is not possible to provide a complete bibliography for the *haruspex* here, but see one of the – still – canonical publications dealing with the *haruspex*: C.O. Thulin, *Die Etruskischen Disciplin* 3 vols (Göteborg 1909) Vol. 3; as well as the bibliography in the recent work by M.L. Haack, *Prosopographie des haruspices romains* (Pisa 2006); M.L. Haack, 'Les haruspices II. Les haruspices romains' in: M.F. Baslez & F. Prévot (eds), *Prosopographie et histoire religieuse: actes du colloque tenu en l'Université Paris XII-Val de Marne les 27 & 28 octobre 2000* (Paris 2005) 187-206. It is not quite clear when the Etruscan haruspices were asked to come to Rome to

haruspices became more important during the first century BC. Under the Principate they too were united in an official *collegium*.[75]

In the private sphere, other *augures* and *haruspices* – often not easily distinguishable from their counterparts functioning in a public context[76] – performed extispicy, read nuptial auspices and interpreted oracles – provided by *sortileges* and *vates* – and interpreted dreams. The *hariolus* was considered to act as the possessed mouthpiece of the supernatural on occasion, and astrologers examined the heavens and read horoscopes. These individuals were not primarily concerned with divination related to State matters, but with private affairs. The elite regarded these experts in private affairs as lowly beings and their practice as unnecessary and undesirable.[77] The status of private, unofficial, experts was correspondingly low.

be consulted.

75 Note there is no consensus on the development of this *collegium*. B. MacBain argues the *haruspices* were in some way formally organized in the 3rd century but that the coherence of this organization remains unclear: MacBain, *Prodigy and expiation,* 47-50. Other *collegia* might have existed outside Rome. See *CIL* IX 1540. Reference from, and cf., Haack, *Prosopographie*, 50-51. Cf. Engels, *Das römische Vorzeichenwesen*, 733-735.

76 E.g., in the entourage of a member of the elite like Herennius Siculus (Val. Max. 9.12.6; Vell. 2.7.2). See Haack, *Prosopographie*, 61-63 where one can find further references. For the criteria which could be established to distinguish between the two see M.L. Haack, 'Haruspices officiels et privés: tentative d'une distinction', *REA* 104 (2002) 111-133. For private augurs see Cato *Agr.* 5.4.

77 E.g., Cic. *Div.* 2.24.

Terminology: conclusions

All three communities show experts involved in public and in private divination. Interestingly, the Roman and Mesopotamian sources suggest that experts would be involved in either public or private divination (although practice may have been different) while a Greek expert could potentially be involved in both. In practice, those (mainly) involved in private divination seem to be held in lower esteem.

All in all, the activities of Roman experts were restricted to a certain area of expertise – at least if they were officially employed and had a public function. The Mesopotamian *bārû* was also specialized to quite an extent (as was the *ṭupšarru Enūma Anu Enlil*, but he could also be active in more than one area). The Greek *manteis* were jacks-of-all-trades: they were active in interpreting many different kinds of signs and practised a variety of divinatory methods – but their principal work was in the field of observational divination.

Background

Gender

Divinatory experts in Mesopotamia, Greece and Rome were almost always men. There are very few female experts attested in our sources. The most eye-catching are the women who functioned as the mouthpieces of the supernatural: the female *raggintu* and *maḫḫūtu*

from Mesopotamia fit this description. Simo Parpola counts eight such individuals in the sources from the oracle of Ištar at Arbela.[78] The Greek Pythia and the Sibyls were invariably women too.[79] However, because these individuals did not *interpret* observed signs provided by the supernatural they fall outside the scope of this chapter.[80]

78 See Parpola, *Assyrian prophecies*, il-lii: Aḫat-abīša (SAA 9 oracle 1.8), Dunnaša-āmur (9 & 10), Ilūssa-āmur (1.5), Issār-bēlī-da"ini (1.7), Mulissu-Kabtat (7), Rēmutti-Allati (1.3), Sinqīši-āmur (1.5 [&2.5]), Urkittu-šarrat (2.4) and perhaps Bayâ (who might have actually been a transsexual) (1.4 [&2.2]). This would make 8 women and an 'unknown' out of 13 prophets in total. See further the comments by Weippert, '"König, fürchte dich nicht!"', 33-34; and J. Stökl, 'Gender ambiguity in ancient Near Eastern prophecy? A re-assessment of the data behind a popular theory', Unpublished paper given at SBL conference (2009).

79 For the Pythia being a woman see, e.g., Plut. *Mor. De Pyth. or.* 397bc where comments are made on how she functioned; or, for example, the relevant passages in Parke, *Greek oracles*, 28-32; for just one of the recent titles in which the Pythia and her role are analysed: Flower, *The seer*, 215-239. For the Sibyl see J.L. Lightfoot, *The Sibylline Oracles with introduction, translation, and commentary on the first and second books* (Oxford 2008); a great number of relevant articles in: Chirassi Colombo, *Sibille e linguaggi oracolari*. On the variety of different Sibyls see also sources such as Ael. *VH* 12.35.

80 This is a controversial issue. On the basis of the following literature and my ideas on how divination functioned, I adhere to the idea that the Pythia would only relate the words of Apollo – some even claim she was in a trance-like state when she did this, thereby even cancelling out her own personality. The Pythia will at least have needed an official who 'translated'

A few more references to female experts in the field of divination can be found in the literary sources: a mythological Greek woman called Manto (a name suitable for a divining woman) is found. She

her words into hexameters: she was simply the medium, just as a tree or the moon was a medium in which the sign could manifest itself. The sign, the perceived voice of Apollo, needed to be interpreted by the official. It should be noted that the way the Pythia functioned is still shrouded in uncertainty, as is the oracle in general. Many discussions are available on this topic – for a number of references (until the 4th Century BC) see the bibliography in E. Suarez de la Torre, 'Les dieux de Delphes et l'histoire du sanctuaire' in: V. Pirenne-Delforge (ed.), *Les panthéons des cités, des origines à la Périégèse de Pausanias: actes du colloque organisé à l'Université de Liège du 15 au 17 mai 1997* (Liège 1998) 61-87; see also the references in Versnel, *Transitions & reversal,* 283 n.188; B. Dietrich, 'Divine madness and conflict at Delphi', *Kernos* 5 (1992) 41-58; S. Price, 'Delphi and divination' in: P.E. Easterling & J.V. Muir (eds), *Greek religion and society* (Cambridge 1985) 128-154 is a useful introduction. For literature on the state of mind of the Pythia and issues related to this: H.W. Parke, 'A note on the Delphic priesthood', *CQ* 34 (1940) 85-89; I. Chirassi Colombo, 'Le Dionysos oraculaire', *Kernos* 4 (1991) 205-217; J.S. Clay, 'Fusing the boundaries: Apollo and Dionysos at Delphi', *Métis* 11 (1996) 83-100; D. Lehoux, 'Drugs and the Delphic oracle', *CW* 101 (2007) 41-55; L. Maurizio, 'Anthropology and spirit possession: a reconsideration of the Pythia's role at Delphi', *JHS* 115 (1995) 69-86; F. Egleston Robbins, 'The lot oracle at Delphi', *ClPhil* 11 (1916) 278-292. For examples of micro-studies see such articles as: A. Avagianou, 'Ephorus on the founding of Delphi's oracle', *GRBS* 39 (1998) 121-136; F. Quantin, 'Gaia oraculaire: tradtion et réalités', *Métis* 7 (1992) 177-199; M. Chappell, 'Delphi and the *homeric hymn to Apollo*', *CQ* 56 (2006) 331-348; P. Amandry, 'Propos sur l'oracle de Delphes', *JS* (1997) 195-210, at 195-197.

was supposedly the daughter of Teiresias and mother of Mopsos.[81] And there are more literary indications which point to the presence of real female experts. For instance, a third-century BC poem by Posidippos of Pella refers to a woman who is said to perform divination by means of birds as *mantis*:

> For aquiring a servant, the grey heron is your best
> bird of omen - Asterie the prophetess calls on it.
> From it Hieron took his cue, hiring one man
> for his fields, another - just as luckily - for his house.[82]

There is also a Greek *mantis* on a relief from around 420 from Mantinea, known as 'Diotima of Mantinea' (after the wise woman Diotima mentioned by Plato). A woman wearing a *peplos* carries a liver, with which she presumably will perform extispicy. Admittedly

81 Flower, *The seer*, 212; cf. D. Lyons, 'Manto and Manteia in the myths and cults of heroines' in: I. Chirassi Colombo, & T. Seppilli, *Sibille e linguaggi oracolari: mito, storia, tradizione* (Pisa 1999) 227-237. A word of caution, perhaps the daughter was just given a name related to the profession of the father and this might have had nothing to do with her own divinatory skills.

82 Number 26 (IV 36-39). Reference from Flower, *The seer*, 214. Translation by F. Nisetich in K. Gutzwiller (ed.), *The new Posidippus: a Hellenistic poetry book* (Oxford 2005) 23. Cf. B. Acosta-Hughes, E. Kosmetatou & M. Baumbach (eds), *Labored in papyrus leaves: perspectives on an epigram collection attributed to Posidippus* (*P.Mil.Vogl. VIII 309*) (Washington 2004) *passim*. Edition: C. Austin & G. Bastianini, *Posidippi Pellaei Quae supersunt omnia* (Milan 2002) 48. οἰκῆα κτήσασθαι ἐρωιδιὸς ὄρνις ἄριστος | πελλός, ὃν ’A[σ]τ̣ε̣ρ̣ίη μάντις ἐφ’ ἱρὰ καλεῖ· | ὧι πεισθεὶς ‘Ιέρ̣ων ἐκτ̣[ή]σ̣α̣το τὸν μὲν ἐπ’ ἀγροῦ | τὸν δ’ οἴκων ἀγαθῶι σὺν ποδὶ κηδεμόνα

a determined sceptic might dismiss Posidippos' poem and the relief from Mantinea as artistic representations of mythical female experts.[83] One of the few scraps of more reliable evidence is that of the woman Satyra in the third century who is referred to as a *mantis* in her epitaph;[84] furthermore the 'female astrologer' Aglaonike was supposed to have lived in the second century AD;[85] and there was another divinatory woman called Athenais.[86] All in all, Greek female *manteis* are attested, but only rarely.

There appear to have been female dream-interpreters (*šā'iltu*) and *bārû* in the Old Babylonian period,[87] but no female *bārû* or *ṭupšarru* is referred to in the Neo-Assyrian sources.[88] In public divination at

83 Flower, *The seer*, 212-214.

84 *SEG* 35.626. Cf. Flower, *The seer*, 214 n. 8.

85 She is referred to as an 'astrologer woman': Plut. *Mor De def. or.* 417a. It is uncertain whether this might be said to be a similar function to *mantis* but she is included in the argument. Cf. S. Montero, *Diccionario de adivinos, magos y astrólogos de la antigüedad* (Madrid 1997) s.v. Aglaonice.

86 Str. 14.645; 7.814. Cf. Montero, *Diccionario de adivinos*, s.v. Atenais.

87 Oppenheim, *The interpretation of dreams*, 221-222: 'In the TCL [Textes Cuneiformes Louvre] II 5 there is a reference to a female *bārû* ("We shall ask here the *sa'iltu*-priestesses, the *bārītu*-priestesses and the spirits of the dead and then Assur will treaten you!")' Note that the person posing the enquiry is a woman too.

88 Unless C.J. Mullo-Weir really has pinpointed a female *bārû* (this is, according to many, most probably not so): 'Four hymns to Gula', *JRAS* 61 (1929) 1-18, at 12-14 (K 232 rev. 11; 29).

Rome, partly because the male elite magistrates were also the divinatory experts, no females were active as public experts. In the informal realm, the existence of female *haruspices* cannot be ruled out but the sources do not provide convincing evidence.

Physical condition

No special rules decreed the physical condition of Greek experts (beyond the normal regulations applicable at sanctuaries) and the situation in Rome appears to have been similar: a member of a *collegium* had to be free of 'bodily defect'.[89] A Greek expert could, if myth is something to go by, theoretically (although this might be problematical in practice) even be blind and this handicap would actually have added to his authority.[90] Teiresias lost his eyesight, but

89 Szemler, *The priests of the Roman Republic*, 31. Cf. for different emic options of why this might be so: Plut. *Mor. Quaest. Rom.* 281c. It should be noted that although the Pythia – who, again, is here not classified as an expert – was at first always a young girl, later in time an older woman would be chosen. See Flower, *The seer*, 222; see also Eur. *Ion* 1320-1324 where she appears to be 'of motherly age' – although this might only refer to her position or the stature she had acquired in her life and not to her age.

90 See for a number of Greek blind experts and more explanation about how they functioned Flower, *The seer*, 37; 50-51. The hand of Diopeithes, a 5th-century chresmologue, was permanently injured. He was not a *mantis*, but his case seems to correspond to the mythological evidence that it was not necessary to be physically perfect in order to divine (on Diopeithes see T. Kock, *Comicorum atticorum fragmenta* 3 vols (Leipzig 1880-1888) Vol. 1,

gained an 'inner' sight in return.[91] Another – and this time historical – example is that of Hegesistratos, a *mantis* who had his foot cut off and still practised as an expert afterwards.[92]

The Mesopotamian *bārû* had to answer other requirements: 'The diviner [*bārû*] of impure descent, not without defect in body and limbs, with squinting eyes, chipped teeth, a cut-off finger, a ruptured(?) testicle, suffering from leprosy [...]'.[93] was not allowed to approach the gods of extispicy, Šamaš and Adad.

This was perhaps motivated by the practical consideration that the expert could not perfectly perform the divinatory ritual if he suf-

fr.9, gr. 10; Ar. *Av*. 987-988; Plut. *Vit. Ages.* 3.3-4.).

91 For Teiresias as being blind see e.g., Eur. *Bacch.* 210; Soph. *Ant.* 988-990; Soph. *OT* 300-303. For an – in my opinion speculative – theory which relates Teiresias' blindness to his presumed bisexuality and ability to speak to animals (these three factors make Teiresias an all-encompassing figure) see T. Carp, '"Venus Utraque": a typology of experthood', *CW* 76 (1983) 275-285.

92 On Hegesistratos see Hdt. 9.37.1; 9.38.1; 9.41.4.

93 Manuscript A: K 2486 + 3646 + 4264 + 10038(+) K 9908 + Rm II 296; manuscript C: K 11307 + 18161 (+) K 11372. Edition (adapted) and translation: W.G. Lambert, 'The qualifications of Babylonian diviners' in: S.M. Maul (ed.), *Festschrift für Rykle Borger zu seinem 65. Geburtstag am 24. Mai 1994: tikip santakki mala bašmu* (Groningen 1998) 141-155, at 149, 30'-32' & 152, 30'-32'.

mār ^{LÚ}ḪAL šá za-ru-šú la ellu ù šu-u ina gat-ti u ŠID^{meš}-šú la šuk-lu-lu zaq-tu īnī$^{II.meš}$ ḫe-šír šinnī^{MEŠ} nak-pi ŠU.SI ŠIR DIR.KUR.RA ma-le-e SAḪAR.ŠUB.BA^{e}.

fered from defective eyes, teeth and so on.[94] This theory is supported by the fact we know of no such physical requirements for astrologers (who presumably did need sharp eyesight). However, the differences between Greece, Rome and Mesopotamia could also reflect the idea that Greek and Roman experts were not perceived to be in direct contact with the supernatural during the divinatory process and therefore did not need to be in a perfect physical condition. In contrast to this, the Mesopotamian *bārû* was supposedly treading before the gods and physically close to them while performing an extispicy – this also explains why the *ṭupšarru Enūma Anu Enlil* did not, as far as is known, have to be perfect: scanning the skies for portents did not entail direct contact with the supernatural.

94 See, e.g., Enmeduranki text lines 28-37. See Lambert, 'Qualifications', 149 and 152; B. Böck, 'Physiognomy in ancient Mesopotamia and beyond: from practice to handbook' in: A. Annus (ed.), *Divination and interpretation of signs in the ancient world* (Chicago 2010) 199-224, at 218-219. This is not to say that the experts' purity was the only prerequisite for a successful approach to the supernatural: attributes such as the *erinnu* (usually translated as cedar rod) and so on played a role (Cf. on the *erinnu*: Wilson, 'Use of *erinnu*', 95-98). Objects could also play a role in Greece: a tradition of using stones to aid the divinatory process, both by layman and expert, seems to have existed – see the texts collected in R. Halleux & J. Schamp (trans.), *Les lapidaires grecs* (Paris 1985) *passim*.

Career span

Greek or Roman sources which tell us explicitly about experts' careers are scarce. What *is* known is that *augures* and *decemviri* retained their membership in the *collegia* until their deaths.[95] For *haruspices*, Roman private experts and other experts it can be assumed that they, too, worked until they died, providing there was demand for their services. This can also be assumed for wandering and institutionalized *manteis*.[96] For Mesopotamia there is more information, albeit still fragmentary. Parpola provides a table from which it appears that scholars at the court worked there for 8.08 years on average.[97] It should then be concluded that the actual period of practising at the palace was rather short. If the experts worked until their deaths, they must have been relatively old when they began to work for the palace. As experts received training before practising. This short career implies either a high death rate, a very long period of training or a long time between training and appointment

95 Szemler, *The priests of the Roman Republic*, 29.

96 Weniger, 'Die Seher', 60.

97 The table is based on 25 scholars who worked at court for a total of 202 years. The table is found at: S. Parpola, *Letters from Assyrian scholars to the kings Esarhaddon and Assurbanipa*l 2 vols (Kevelaer 1970-1983) Vol. 2, 471. The names of some scholars are known before they began to work at court. I have not used these attestations in the calculations. I have taken all the scholars Parpola mentions, including those who were not involved in divination, in order to assemble more data on which to base the calculations. I am assuming that other scholars had an equally rigorous training.

as a expert to the king (during which an expert would have been working in the undocumented realm of private, unofficial. divination, for example). This is a striking difference with the Greek and Roman situations, in which training was not regulated as such and individuals could apparently commence divining without spending time following an official training. Greek and Roman experts would probably learn on the job, becoming more skilled as they continued to practise (cf. below). Therefore, they must have been able to practise for longer – if they worked until their deaths.

Family

We know the names of five Greek 'mantic families': the Branchidai, the Iamidai, Klutiadai, Telliadai and the Melampodidai, who claimed to be descendants of such mythical experts as Melampos, Teiresias, or Kalchas.[98] Some members of these 'mantic families' were employed at oracles or other sanctuaries where the records of them being active in the divinatory business were kept – making it

98 'Biographies' of a number of mythical experts can be found in Löffler, *Die Melampodie*, 31-58. Cf. on Teiresias G. Ugolini, *Untersuchungen zur Figur des Sehers Teiresias* (Tübingen 1995). An example of a primary literary source on this topic is Hom. *Od*. 15.222-257. See for epigraphical evidence the lists of *manteis* at Olympia (late sources: 36 BC – 265 AD) published in W. Dittenberger & K. Purgold, *Die Inschriften von Olympia* (Berlin 1896) 59-141.

easy to track family relationships.[99] The sources also show that 'it was fundamentally important that the seer was believed to be what he claimed to be, literally the blood descendant of another seer.'[100] Being part of a 'mantic family' was an ideal way to gain authority (the inheritance of knowledge was implied) which prompted experts to claim dubious biological relationships with other existing experts: Herodotos describes how the *mantis* Deiphonos went around Greece claiming to be the son of the famous expert Euenios.[101] According to Herodotos this was not actually true – but this claim evidently helped Deiphonos to acquire authority.[102] A historical example of a divinatory expert who followed in his father's footsteps is the third-century BC expert Thrasuboulos, whose father was said to have been the expert Aineas.[103] A late source such as Artemidoros, who

99 For an example of such an endeavour see Weniger, 'Die Seher', 53-115. Cf. for one example of such a family – but too late in time for the scope of this study – S.B. Zoumbaki, *Elis und Olympia in der Kaiserzeit: das Leben einer Gesellschaft zwischen Stadt und Heiligtum auf prosopograpischer Grundlage* (Athens 2001) 340-341; 121.

100 M.A. Flower, 'The Iamidae: a mantic family and its official image' in: B. Dignas & K. Trampedach (eds), *Practitioners of the divine: Greek priests and officials from Homer to Heliodorus* (Cambridge, MA 2008) 187-206, at 192.

101 Kett, *Prosopographie*, 32: Deifonos (18).

102 For a discussion on the image of the expert and why it was important to claim descent see M.A. Flower, 'The Iamidae', 192.

103 Member of the clan of Iamids. On Thrasuboulos see further Paus. 6.13.11; 6.14.9.

addressed Books IV and V of the *Oneirocritica* to his son who was also an interpreter of dreams, supports this notion.[104]

'Keeping it in the family' may seem to have been the natural thing to do: by training his son the father would, first, ensure that the family business was carried on. Second, if the expert trained his biological son, this could be considered a way to provide a member of the family with skills he could use to make his own living and, eventually, support the family. However, apart from the materials discussed above, evidence for the existence of actual biological relationships between historical Greek experts is sparse. It is possible to establish *stemmata* for the families of the experts Kleobolos, Telenikos and Philochoros among others. However, none of their relatives were known as an expert themselves.[105] In addition, a family of experts which is often referred to in modern literature, the Spartan branch of the Iamidai, was only a *hypothetical* family of experts:[106] Antiochos was father of Tisamenos and of Agias. Only his name is known and the only argument for considering him a *mantis* is that he is

104 Artem. 4 Prooemium; 5 Prooemium.

105 Kleobolos' father was Glaukos; Telenikos' son was Telenikos whose son was Teleas, and his descendant Telenikos; Philochoros was married to Archestrate, had a brother called Demetrios: his father was Kuknos whose father was Philochoros. None of the family members mentioned above was a *mantis*. They lived in the 4th, 5th and 4th/3rd centuries: there are too few data available to provide a diachronic perspective. See Kett, *Prosopographie*, 79-80.

106 Some also use the word family but because the evidence of actual families is so scarce, I prefer 'clan'. Cf. Flower, 'The Iamidae', 187-206.

the father of a *mantis* – his other son, Agias (1) was not known as a divinatory expert. His son Tisamenos was definitely an expert: he is designated as such in the sources.[107] Tisamenos' son, Agelochos, is himself not known as a *mantis* but, because his father and son were, he is also assumed to have been one.[108] Agelochos' son Agias (2) was a famous *mantis*, and was even honoured with two statues, one in Sparta and one in Delphi.[109] Tisamenos (2) was probably the brother or son of Agias, but nothing is known about any possible mantic activities. The sources for this stemma are incomplete. A hypothetical reconstruction of a family of experts remains just that: hypothetical.[110]

Regardless of these evidential problems, we must bear in mind Fontenrose's suggestion that the 'family relationships' between Greek *manteis* might have been based on relationships other than those of blood: 'Whether the *Branchidae* were a clan (*genos*), extended family, or a college or association (*synodos*, *thiasos*, *koinon*) cannot be said. The terms are not mutually exclusive; an extended family may

107 Hdt. 9.33.1; Plut. *Vit. Arist.* 11.2; Paus. 6.14.13. Cf. on Teisamenus (1) A. Schachter, 'The seer Tisamenos and the Klytiadai', *CQ* 50 (2000) 292-295.

108 Paus. 3.11.5.

109 Paus. 3.11.5; Paus. 10.9.7. Kett, *Prosopographie*, 20: Agias (3); 79; Montero, *Diccionario de adivinos*, 48.

110 It is possible to argue both sides of the story and I am convinced caution should be taken here. Examples of conclusions drawn are, e.g., Schachter, 'Tisamenos and the Klytiadai', *CQ* 50 (2000) 292-295 or Weniger, 'Die Seher', 53-115.

become a clan, and associations of men engaged in a common trade or profession or activity were often organised as *genê*; new entrants were adopted into them, and they claimed descent from a common ancestor [...]'.[111] Although the sources might prefer to speak of families, potential experts to swell the ranks of these 'families' or 'clans' could have been selected on the basis of potential; those selected in this way also acquired the necessary authority.

In Mesopotamia there was a relatively large number of families of *ummanû*, consisting of members with various specializations (such as scribe, expert or physician). In view of the institutionalization of the professions, an individual could hardly have claimed descent on a false basis: he would have been found out. Unquestionably adoption of individuals into families could have taken place – but this generally only happened if the adoptive father did not have a natural son. The idea of families of *ummanû* corresponds to the literary texts which prescribe that a priest/scholar such as Enmeduranki should be born into a particular family of Nippur, Sippar or Babylon:[112] certain families brought forth the scribal elite who could specialize

111 Fontenrose, *Didyma,* 77. See also the Telmessoi Fontenrose refers to on page 78.

112 Lambert, 'Qualifications', 142. See the Enmeduranki text ll. 10-15 (BBR 1-20 1 ff = K 2834; K 2541+; K 3272+; K 10917+). In his article about the catalogue of authors, Lambert mentions one *bārû* and his ancestor, but it is unsure what the profession this ancestor was. Therefore, we do not get to know much more on this topic: W.H. Lambert, 'A catalogue of texts and authors', *JCS* 16 (1962) 59-77, at 75.

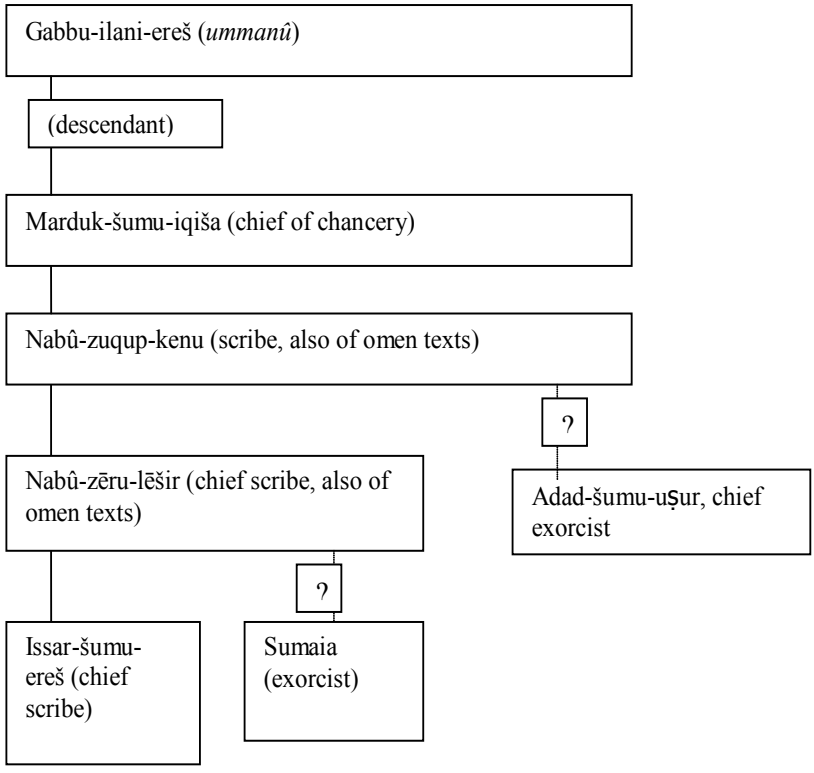
in divination, which was not to be taught to others who were born outside of these families. A goldsmith's son, for example, could not learn about divination because he was not from one of the suitable families:

> Parruṭu, a goldsmith of the household of the queen, has, like the king and the crown prince, bought a Babylonian, and settled him in his own house. He has taught exorcistic literature to his son; extispicy omens have been explained to him, (and) he has even studied gleanings from Enūma Anu Enlil, and this right before the king, my lord! Let the king, my lord, write to his servant on account of this matter.[113]

There are many families of *ummanû*, an example of which is the following:

113 SAA 16 65 (83-1-18,121 = ABL 1245) obv. 2-13. Edition and translation M. Luukko & G. Van Buylaere.

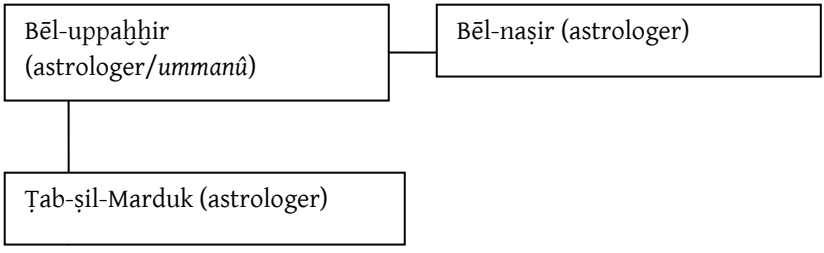
EN-iá lik-ru-ub ^{m}pa-ru!-ṭu
LÚ*.SIMUG.KUG.GI ša É! MÍ—É.GAL
ki-i LUGAL DUMU—LUGAL DUMU—KÁ.DINGIR.KI
ina ŠÀ-bi KUG.UD i-si-qi ina É ra-mi-ni-šú
ú-se-ši-ib!-šú IM.GÍD.DA
ina ŠÀ-bi LÚ*.a-ši-pu-te a-na DUMU-šú
iq-ṭí-bi UZU.MEŠ i-ba-áš-ši
ša LÚ*.ba-ru-u-te uk-tal-li-mu-šú
li-iq-te ša! 1! UD—a-na—^{d}EN.LÍL
i-ba-áš-ši lu e-ta-mar
i-na pa-ni ša LUGAL EN-iá
ina UGU da-ba-bi an-ni-e
LUGAL be-lí a-na ARAD-šú liš-pu-[ra]



This family consists, among others, of scribes, exorcists.[114]

114 This family is attested in e.g., SAA 10 294; 10 110 rev. 4; 10 294 rev. 21; 10 257 rev. 7; 10 291 rev. 2; CTN 4 45 rev. 5; CTN 4 89; CTN 4 78 rev. 9; CTN 4 74; Hunger, *Kolophone*, 302:3; 298; 301:4; 300:3; 299:3; 303:3; 306:3; 307:3; 308:2; 309:2). One more family: it appears from SAA 160 136 that Marduk-šapik-zeri (astrologer and scholar) was the son of another scholar; it appears from STT 70 rev.17 = Hunger, *Kolophone*, 372:2 that Marduk-bāni-apli (scribe and

However, if a mantic family is defined as a family producing at least two named individuals explicitly referred to as divinatory expert in two successive generations, there are few cases which fit these requirements. In the following family, two brothers were both experts and one son became an expert as well:



These three men were all active in the field of divination. [115]

bārû) was the father of [.]-ibni (apprentice scribe); it appears from CT 31 49 rev. 32 = Hunger, *Kolophone*, 503:2 that Nabû-pāšir (*bārû*) was the father of Nabû-ušallim (scribe); it appears from SAA 8 473 rev. 3; 8 536 rev. 6 that Bēl-ušallim (scholar) was the father of another scholar whose name we do not know; it appears from SAA 4 334: rev. 4 that Marduk-šumu-uṣur (chief *bārû*) was the father of a *bārû* whose name we do not know.

115 Whether or not members of these families were adopted is still debated. An introduction to the adoption of boys in Neo-Assyrian times is K. Radner, *Die neuassyrischen Privatrechtsurkunden als Quelle für Mensch und Umwelt* (Helsinki 1997) 137-140. I have not dealt with the relationship described in SAA 160 36 because it is unclear what the father of this astrologer did. It is certain, however, he was also a scholar of some kind. Sources used to track this mantic family are SAA 8 447: rev. 6; 8, 448: rev. 2; 8 448; 8 445 rev. 3. Other references to father and son relationships are, e.g., in K

In early Rome the *augures* and *decemviri* were initially chosen (by their peers) from the elite group of magistrates. This group consisted of patricians but from 300 BC (the passing of the *lex Ogulnia*) plebeians were included – putting an end to the exclusive patrician claim to religious expertise. Another change was that the later *augures* and *decemviri* could also be elected.[116] There was a restricted but still fairly large number of families which could potentially produce experts, but the group of actual experts remained small: sons would succeed their fathers in *collegia*[117] and one person could be a member of both the *collegia* of *augures* and of the *decemviri.* One restrictive rule was that two members of the same *gens* could not be in the same college.[118] Although there was a limited number of potential experts,

6055 2 = K 11097 3 (*BiOr* 14 (1957) 191; K. 9766 obv.1; K 3819+ obv. 4 (*BiOr* 14 (1957) 192.

116 Szemler, *The priests of the Roman Republic*, 29-31; J. Linderski, 'Quindecimviri sacris faciundis' in: H. Cancik & H. Schneider, *Brill's New Pauly Online.* Visited 29-03-2011; Examples of primary sources are Liv. 6.37.13; Liv. 3.32.3; Liv. 10.6.6-10; Cic. *Agr.* 2.18; Plut. *Quaest. Rom*. 287de who suggests augurs were chosen for life (even if they committed a crime they could remain an augur) because of their skill, not because they held an office. Cf. J. Rüpke, *Fasti sacerdotum: die Mitglieder der Priesterschaften und das sakrale Funktionspersonal römischer, griechischer, orientalischer und jüdisch-christlicher Kulte in der Stadt Rom von 300 v. Chr. bis 499 n. Chr* 3 vols (Wiesbaden 2005) Vol. 3, 1421.

117 Rüpke, *Fasti sacerdotum,* Vol. 3, 1422.

118 Szemler, *The priests of the Roman Republic*, 66-178; 189. In Liv. 29.38.7, for example, we find a report that Marcus Pomponius Matho had been

there do not seem to have been specifically 'mantic families' who specialized in divination.

The public *haruspices* were probably first chosen from the Etruscan elite, and perhaps later also from the Roman elite.[119] There is some evidence for families of *haruspices*, or at least for father-son relationships.[120] Owing to the late creation of a *collegium*, a great deal is unknown although at least after the creation of the *collegium* of *haruspices* the situation might have been comparable to that of *augures* and *decemviri*.[121]

Family: conclusions

In Greece the idea of biologically related experts is rather less certain than might, at first sight, be expected. Experts are known to have claimed to be descendants of a particular expert but there is little proof of actual family relationships. It would probably be more

augur ánd *decemvir* at the time of his death and must have held these offices simultaneously (in the same way that Quintus Fabius Maximus had been *augur* and *pontifex* at the time of his death: Liv. 30.26.7-10).

119 Tac. *Ann*. 11.15.

120 Haack, 'Les haruspices romains', 193. See also L. Titinius L.f. Pelagianus Arnensis and L. Titinius Vitalis (CIL XI 633, reference from Haack, *Prosopographie*, 79); L. Vibius Primus and [. Vibius] Primigenius (from Haack, *Prosopographie*, 127-128); Quintus Fabius Maximus and Quintus Fabius Maximus (Liv. 30.26.7-10).

121 MacBain, *Prodigy and expiation*, 43-59. Haack, 'Les haruspices romains', 193-195; Rasmussen, *Public portents*, 180.

realistic to see groups of experts as clans. Being a member of such a clan would imply a claim to knowledge passed on by the clan.

In Mesopotamia, the evidence of biological families is somewhat stronger: it is possible to discern a relatively large number of families of *ummanû* – but even so only one real 'mantic family' is attested there and it impossible to exclude the fact that individuals were adopted into these families. The institutionalization of the practice made it difficult for individuals falsely to claim descent from a family because their deception would be found out. Roman magistrate-experts and members of the *collegia* came from the same group of families but this could hardly have been otherwise: religious tasks were distributed among members of a relatively small number of elite families.[122]

The presence of Mesopotamian families of experts was reinforced by the education thought to have been for the prerequisite of the expert: as discussed below, the authority of Mesopotamian experts derived from scholarly instruction and learning. The best way to acquire this was to be trained from an early age. Being born into a family of scholars or perhaps being adopted at a very early age would therefore seem to have been an essential condition. In Greece, a rather less demanding training was required (cf. below), which also allowed a degree of flexibility about the age of a new clan member. A child could be introduced into the profession at a later stage or even commence its career on entering a clan as an adult. It could be

122 Just one example of an individual who held high political functions and was an augur is Marcus Aemilius Lepidus (Liv. 23.30.15).

argued that such a situation would have been practically unheard of in Mesopotamia on account of the educational demands made on the practitioner.

In short, in family status Roman and Mesopotamian experts scored 'high' on the relative socio-economic scale. They were recruited from families of known descent, which were members of the elite in Rome and were certainly not the poorest in Mesopotamia. Theoretically the Greek expert could have been born into any family before entering a divinatory 'family' or clan. Consequently, his socio-economic status should be classified as variable.

Education

Generally speaking, the more educated an individual, the higher his or her position on the scale of socio-economic status. Some education or training was required before a person could launch a career as a knowledgeable expert – unless an individual faked this knowledge. Although a Greek expert could assert his expertise by claiming the gods had taught him the art[123] and the mythical Melampus acquired his skills after snakes had licked his ears, in real life experts will have had to acquire the necessary skills in different ways – although Greek *manteis* may have claimed some degree of inspiration as well.[124]

123 E.g., Kett, *Prosopographie*, 38-39: Euenios (26).

124 On Melampus' perceived source of knowledge see Apollod. *Bibl.* 1.9.11; see also Paus. 9.10.6.

Yet, it seems that there was no 'official education' for experts in Greece.[125] Therefore the training of the Greek expert must be a topic closely linked to his membership of a group of experts, his clan. If an expert was a member of such a group, he could be trained and taught by more senior members during an apprenticeship of some sort. If not, he would have had to train himself.

In effect, there were three ways in which aspiring experts could train themselves or be trained by other people: a) empirically, on the basis of experience and common sense; b) by the oral transmission of knowledge; or c) by studying a written source containing such knowledge.[126] Naturally these options were not mutually exclusive and, in theory, could all be used simultaneously. In Greece, the first two possibilities will certainly have been available, as perhaps the third as well, but it should be noted that written text played a small part in Greek divination (as will be discussed in chapter 6) and the only, possible, Greek self-taught expert – perhaps by recourse to written texts – attested in the sources is Thrasullus, who inherited books from his guest-friend and used these in order to make

125 M. Griffith, 'Official and private in early Greek institutions of education' in: Y.L Too (ed.), *Education in Greek and Roman antiquity* (Leiden 2001) 23-84, at 31-32.

126 Leaving aside the mechanisms, either linguistic or non-linguistic, of learning. A concise introduction to important literature on this topic from an anthropological angle can be found in M. Bloch, *How we think they think: anthropological approaches to cognition, memory and literacy* (Boulder, COL 1998) 7-11.

a living (and maybe from which to learn his craft).[127] Nevertheless, it is impossible to exclude the possibility that this guest-friend had already taught Thrasullos to divine during his own lifetime.[128]

Although apprenticeships are likely to have played an important part in the transfer of interpretative skills, a Greek expert needed to know both the appropriate form and the content to be able to practise his trade. Personality was crucial as the *mantis* needed to exude charisma and inspiration. Michael A. Flower states that learning how to employ charisma and to behave with the authority of an expert was one of the most important goals of the training an expert would have received.[129] Because of the lack of objective authority (for example, based on control of a body of difficult texts) about the exact meaning of a sign, a Greek expert could improvise quite freely and flexibly, within socially accepted boundaries. His charisma would have helped him to test and stretch the boundaries – which could differ depending on time and place and, more specifically, on client expectations. Where would all these skills have been learned? Most probably in practice. Watching an expert at work allowed the expert-to-be to become acquainted with the more performative side of the

127 Isoc. *Aegineticus* 5. What exactly the contents of these books were is unknown. R. Parker does not think they were guidelines for the interpretation of signs: Parker, *Polytheism and society,* 119 n.4. I consider them to have been some kind of instructions – but in a wider sense than a book of guidelines for interpretation.

128 Flower, 'The Iamidae', 190.

129 Flower, *The seer*, *passim*.

divinatory ritual. Consequently, most of the practical side of becoming an expert was based on learning by experience and imitating an acknowledged expert – whether in the context of an apprenticeship facilitated by the clan structure or on an individual basis.

In Mesopotamia the situation was different: divination was thought of as a secret of the gods (*niṣirti bārûti*) and, at least in theory, known only to a select number of individuals belonging to particular families, usually employed by the palace, working in a relatively closed profession.[130] A prerequisite for becoming an astrologer or a *bārû* was extensive training in the scholarly literature:

> The learned savant, who guards the secrets of the great gods, will bind his son whom he loves with an oath before Šamaš and Adad by tablet and stylus and will instruct him.[131]

130 On the secrecy of divinatory knowledge (which has been contested by some) see further N. Veldhuis, 'The theory of knowledge and the practice of celestial divination' in: A. Annus (ed.), *Divination and interpretation of signs in the ancient world* (Chicago 2010) 77-91, at 79-80; and much more extensively A. Lenzi, *Secrecy and the gods: secret knowledge in ancient Mesopotamia and biblical Israel* (Helsinki 2008) 1-220. For an example of experts at the palace at a particular time (of course not the only evidence of employment of experts by the palace) see SAA 7 1 i.1-8; ii.1-6; rev.1.8-11 (astrologers, *bārû* and augurs respectively); SAA 7 7; rev.ii.7

131 Enmeduranki text: K 2487 + 3646 + 4364; K 3357 + 9941; K 13307, lines 19-22. Edition and translation (slightly adapted) W.G. Lambert, 'Enmeduranki and related matters', *JCS* 21 (1967) 126-138 at 132.

^{lú}UM.ME.A mu-du-ú na-ṣir AD.ḪAL DINGIR.MEŠ GAL.MEŠ

a-píl-šu ša i-ram-mu ina tup-pi u GI-dup-pi

Traditionally, in Mesopotamia the son of a *bārû* was taught by his (adoptive) father. Wilfred G. Lambert argues that passing on the secrets of divination to chosen sons would ensure that there would be enough work for everyone (because this was a way to determine that only a restricted number of individuals were trained).[132] Training was the first priority in the process of becoming a Mesopotamian expert.[133] It would commence with the basic scribal and literary arts, which would give the student the status of a *ṭupšarru* (scribe). He could then prepare to specialize in becoming a *bārû* or a *ṭupšarru Enūma Anu Enlil,* (or an exorcist, or a medical practitioner or someone like these). A specialized teacher would educate him in astrology and other topics:

> [As] the king last year summoned [his scholars, he did not] summon me with [them], (so) I wrote to the palace: "The apprentices whom the king appointed in my charge have learned Enūma Anu Enlil; what is my fault that the king has not summoned me with his scholars?"[134]

ina ma-ḫar ^{d}UTU u ^{d}IŠKUR ú-tam-ma-šu-ma
ú-šaḫ-ḫa-su […].

132 Lambert, 'Qualifications', 143.

133 For a brief introduction to the places were pupils were schooled see Van der Toorn, *Scribal culture*, 55-56.

134 SAA 10 171 (= K 00895 = ABL 0954) obv. 4-12. Edition and translation: S. Parpola.

šad-da-qàd [x x x x x]
LUGAL SAG LÚ.[um-ma-ni-šú i]š-šú-ú
LUGAL it-ti-š[ú-nu SAG-a ul i]š-ši
a-na É.GAL ⌜al⌝-tap-ra

These teachers were themselves experts in divination and training experts-to-be was one of their many duties:

> May Nabû and Marduk bless the king. Because of the *ilku*-duty and the corvée work we cannot keep the watch of the king, and the pupils do not learn the scribal craft. [135]

The study of both theory and written texts was the most important part of the expert's training at this stage, although it seems reasonable to suppose that he also learned such behavioural skills as how to deal with clients and crucially how to win their confidence. How long will this training have taken?[136] No attempt to answer this ques-

um-ma LÚ.ŠAMÁN.MÁL.LÁ-MEŠ
šá LUGAL ina pa-ni-iá ip$^{!}$-qí-du$^{!}$
1 UD*—AN—^{d}EN.LÍL il-ta-an-du
um-ma mi-nu-ú hi-ṭu-ú-a
LUGAL it-ti LÚ.um-ma-ni-šú

135 SAA 10 143 (Bu 89-4-26,009 = ABL 0346) rev. 1-8. Edition and translation S. Parpola. On the *ilku*-duty cf. n.113.

^{d}AG u ^{d}AMAR.UTU
a-na LUGAL lik-ru-bu
TA* pa-an il-ki
tup-šik-ki ma-ṣar-tu
ša LUGAL la ni-na-ṣar
LÚ*.di$^{!}$-da$^{!}$-bé-e
ṭu[p$^{!}$-šar-r]u$^{!}$-tu
la [i-l]am$^{!}$-mu-du

136 There are no clues to the existence of an initiation, which would have

tion can be made without making a number of assumptions. My first assumption is that in the Neo-Assyrian Empire the average age of death of a male child after it reached the age of five was 43.47 years.[137]

been helpful here. See also Koch, 'Sheep and sky', 455.

137 38.47 is the average life expectancy, according to the Princeton Regional Model Life Tables (West mortality level 4, maximum natural growth rate 0,5%), of a child who had reached his 5th birthday. This is the level and growth rate which is usually used for the ancient world, although M.H. Hansen pleads for a lower growth rate, for example, as used by W. Scheidel: between 0.25% and 0.45%. See M.H. Hansen, *The shotgun method: the demography of the ancient Greek city-state culture* (Columbia, MO 2006) 55 n.96. However, if the growth rate is lower, the life expectancy of those over 5 years old is higher. Consequently, taking 0.5% as growth rate is taking the cautious approach. For the Life Tables see A.J. Coale, P. Demeny & B. Vaughan, *Regional model life tables and stable populations* (New York 1983²). By using the life expectancy of a 5-year-old, I have cancelled out the high mortality rate of children under 5, inclusion of which would bring down life expectancy of a newborn considerably. This is possible because I have assumed that education did not commence before the age of 5. In fact at what age children would begin to receive an education is unknown. A text commonly referred to as 'Examtext A' obv. 4 (= Rm 148; VAT 10502; VAT 7853; K 10125; VAT 10382 = Kar 111) indicates that first education of the scribe began during childhood, not specifying the age: U_4.TUR.RA ZU.TA NAM.ŠUL.LA.A.ZU.[ŠÈ] É.DUB.BA.A Ì.TI.LE.EN (= ul-tu u_4-um ṣe-ḫe-ri-ka a-di meṭ-lu-t[i-ka] ina bīt tuppi áš-bat): 'Von Kindheid an, bis du ein reifer Mann wurdest, saßest du im Tafelhause'. Translation and edition: A.W. Sjöberg, 'Der Examentext A', *ZA* 64 (1974) 137-176 at 140-141. Cf. P.D. Gesche, *Schulunterricht in Babylonien im ersten Jahrtausend v. Chr.* (Münster 2001) 219. Duration of the training for various crafts is known from sources from

Other assumptions are that an expert worked until his death,[138] for an average of 8.08 years and his education commenced at the age of 5 (the precise age at which education began is uncertain; any age between five and fifteen seems feasible). The average lifespan minus the years spent working for the palace minus the first five to fifteen years of life equals the number of years spent in training and as a junior expert. If training began at the age of five, the sum is 43.47 - 8.08 - 5 = 29.92. If the age of fifteen is adhered to, the outcome would be 19.92. This would mean that, on average, twenty to thirty years were spent in preparation for working in the palace. No division can be made between the period of education and of first work experience: if there was employment at the palace gate or as a district expert, as in Old Babylonian times, this is included in the period of approximately thirty years. But even with this caveat, it is impossible to avoid the conclusion that a Neo-Assyrian expert needed both rigorous training and experience before he was employed by the king.

There are only snippets of information about the Roman experts and these relate to those who worked in a public, official, context: for

the Late Babylonian period, but not for that of experts or other *ummānû* who had to be literate to practise their profession: H.P.H. Petschow, 'Lehrverträge', *RlA* 6 (1980-1983) 556-570 at 557-558. To give an indication: 5 years for weaving, 6 years for woodwork, 8 years for construction work. These appear to be relatively long periods of training/apprenticeship.

138 Unless he had fallen into disgrace or became infirm: blindness, deafness and so on might have rendered the expert unfit for his profession. Neither is generally visible in the sources.

example, 'in the days of the forefathers' the Senate prepared a decree to the effect that a number of young boys were to be sent to Etruria to learn their craft from Etruscan *haruspices*.[139] Perhaps this would have entailed some sort of selection and schooling of young boys so that they could learn skills they could later use to serve Rome (or transmit to their successors). However, there is no certainty about whether this was an incidental measure or whether it was a regular occurence – sources are lacking. Some think the education of *haruspices* took the form of oral instruction[140] – but this, too, remains a mystery. Those belonging to the *collegia* (*decemviri* and *augures*) did not need pre-existing knowledge but learned their crafts from their senior colleagues.[141]

The Mesopotamian craft of divination was taught on a more theoretical and textual basis than the training in Greece. The idea that only individuals from particular families were taught ties in with the belief that divination was the secret of the gods. It follows that divination in Mesopotamia was the preserve of a privileged and close-knit group. The same can be said about public divination in Rome, which was also based on written texts and traditions, only accessible to a select group – as an inheritance of old structures of political power. In Greece, there is less evidence of the need to undertake extensive scholarly training to understand the workings of divination. Instead, it is possible to detect more emphasis on the acqui-

139 Cic. *Div*. 1.41.92; Val. Max. 1.1.

140 Haack, 'Les haruspices romains', 192; 193-195.

141 Rüpke, *Fasti sacerdotum,* Vol. 3, 1422.

sition of behavioural skills. Practical apprenticeships were used for this purpose.

With respect to their education Mesopotamian experts should be regarded as having been in the 'high' category; Roman experts score 'low' on education as they did not receive formal training (however, the Roman experts were an elite-group in other ways – for example, with respect to non-divinatory education, Roman experts were probably the most learned of all experts); and Greek experts fell into the 'middle' category, because the Greek way of training by experience was obviously less systematic, theoretical, extensive and prestigious than that of their counterparts in Mesopotamia but more extensive than in Rome.

Occupation

The experts' employment, their loyalty to their clients, their hierarchical relationships among experts, not to mention competition and co-operation, were factors which helped to determine the level of socio-economic status assigned to the category of 'occupation'. Variations reveal how an expert could function in relation to his employer and among his colleagues.

Institutionalization and mobility

The divinatory work of Mesopotamian experts was relatively institutionalized. It was performed on behalf of the State and it was usual for experts to be posted to one place (although they might be moved). Therefore, their employment was relatively secure as long as they maintained good relations with the king by guarding him against potential dangers. Roman experts were semi-institutionalized, working in their *collegia* on a part-time basis. In Greece, – with the exception of those working at sanctuaries – many experts travelled from place to place and were not employed in the framework of an institution.[142] Nevertheless, more than once an expert would begin as an itinerant but later settle somewhere or find more-or-less regular employment. Compared to the situation in Mesopotamia this is a relatively non-institutionalized setting.

Still, some members of the affluent Roman and Greek elite would also employ an expert on a structural basis. When there was a regular need of an expert, one important benefit accruing from using the same expert thrusts itself forward. His good track records allied with his proven discretion towards his employer were apparently such a reassurance that, in exchange for this, clients would prefer the regular above the itinerant expert. In Greece, semi-regular employ-

142 E.g., Hom. *Od*. 17.380-386; working in the marketplace see Soph. *OT* 19-21; Ath. 13.605cd. For chresmologues knocking on doors of rich men seeking employment (admittedly not *manteis*, but the story still illustrates the circumstances with which wandering *manteis* might have had to cope) see Pl. *Resp*. 364b.

ment could be found by working for a commander in the army, at sanctuaries and, in later Hellenistic times, for the Greek *polis*.[143] The same conditions might also have applied to private Roman experts: some army leaders are known to have employed experts privately (see below).

Paradoxially, those who did not settle do not seem to have enjoyed a good reputation, at least for some of them this was certainly the case: the fact that Thrasullos was an itinerant expert of divination was used in a lawsuit to impugn his character:

> Thrasyllus, the father of the testator, had inherited nothing from his parents; but having become the guest-friend of Polemaenetus, the soothsayer, he became so intimate with him that Polemaenetus at his death left to him his books on divination and gave him a portion of the property which is now in question. Thrasyllus, with these books as his capital, practised the art of divination. He became an itinerant soothsayer, lived in many cities, and was intimate with several women, some of whom had children whom he never even recognised as legitimate, and, in particular, during this period he lived with the mother of the complainant.[144]

143 See for an example of the *mantis* in the army: *SEG* 29 361 i.4. Nevertheless, the *mantis* always hovered in the 'messy margins' of *polis* religion, according to J.N. Bremmer, '*Manteis*, magic, mysteries and mythography: the messy margins of *polis* religion?', *Kernos* 23 (2010) 13-25, at 14-16 – and I agree with him.

144 Isoc. *Aegineticus* 5-6. Translation G. Norlin. Edition: Teubner.
Θράσυλλος γὰρ ὁ πατὴρ τοῦ καταλιπόντος τὴν διαθήκην παρὰ μὲν τῶν προγόνων οὐδεμίαν οὐσίαν παρέλαβεν, ξένος δὲ Πολεμαινέτῳ μάντει γενόμενος οὕτως οἰκείως διετέθη πρὸς αὐτὸν ὥστ' ἀποθνήσκων ἐκεῖνος τάς τε βίβλους τὰς περὶ

Employment

In Rome, experts worked on a part-time basis. Magistrates with divinatory duties had many other tasks to fulfil: of the *augures* and *decemviri*, a significant number simultaneously held other magisterial offices.[145] So far it has not been possible to discover whether private divinatory experts worked in other professions apart from divination in Rome – their situation was probably comparable to that of Greek *manteis*, who are dealt with below.[146]

The Mesopotamian astrologers taught astrology and undertook both corvée and the *ilku* duty (a compulsory 'civil service').[147] Other activities were not excluded: Bēl-aplu-iddina combined his activi-

τῆς μαντικῆς αὐτῷ κατέλιπε καὶ τῆς οὐσίας μέρος τι τῆς νῦν οὔσης ἔδωκεν. Λαβὼν δὲ Θράσυλλος ταύτας ἀφορμὰς ἐχρῆτο τῇ τέχνῃ· πλάνης δὲ γενόμενος καὶ διαιτηθεὶς ἐν πολλαῖς πόλεσιν ἄλλαις τε γυναιξὶ συνεγένετο, ὧν ἔνιαι καὶ παιδάρι' ἀπέδειξαν ἀκεῖνος οὐδὲ πώποτε γνήσι' ἐνόμισε, καὶ δὴ καὶ τὴν ταύτης μητέρ' ἐν τούτοις τοῖς χρόνοις ἔλαβεν. See also how Hdt. 9.95 speaks negatively of a wandering expert.

145 Rasmussen, *Public portents*, 173-174.

146 E.g., Lucius Cafatius (*CIL* XI 6363 = *ILS* 4958. See Haack, *Prosopographie*, 38-40, where further references can be found) was a *haruspex* with other functions in the divinatory realm as well: he was netσvis, trutnvt, and frontac (*haruspex*, priest, interpreter of thunderbolts). However, this does not reveal anything about his non-divinatory functions.

147 SAA 10 143. See for general introductions on the *ilku*-duty: B. Kienast, 'Ilku', *RlA* 5 (1976) 52-59; J.N. Postgate, 'Royal ideology and state administration in Sumer and Akkad' in: J. Sasson (ed.), *Civilizations of the ancient Near East* 4 vols (1995) Vol. 1, 395-411, at 406-407.

ties in the field of extispicy with being a commanding officer.[148] A *bārû* could also be a landowner[149] as well as a money-lender (see below). This variety of activities is quite remarkable, because the Mesopotamian astrologer and *bārû* worked under institutionalized conditions – which meant that they would also have administrative and practical duties.[150] Apparently there was some room for other activities of both a prestigious and a rather less prestigious nature such as the corvée obligations. The experts even complained about having to perform too many tasks, as in one of the sources discussed above, indicating that they regarded divination as their main duty. This was perhaps the price they had to pay for their otherwise relatively safe institutional environment and subordinate position in the relationship of patronage with the king.

In Greece, with its relative lack of institutionalization, there is plenty of evidence for divinatory experts working on a part-time basis: the Greek expert Agesias, son of Sostratos, who lived in Syracuse in the first half of the fifth century, won a victory in the mule races at the Olympic Games, probably in 468.[151] Astulos also

148 A. Kirk Grayson, *Assyrian rulers of the early first millennium BC I* (*1114 - 859 BC*) (Toronto 1991) A.0.101.1. iii 20.

149 Like Nabû-aḫu-riba, *bārû* and landowner: SAA 14 271; like Marduk-šumu-uṣur SAA 10 153 obv. 6-16; and an unknown in SAA 6 12 2.

150 SAA 10 96 obv. 1-b.e. 25; SAA 10 102 obv. 8-12.

151 Kett, *Prosopographie*, 18-20: (H)Agesias (2); Pind. *Ol.* 6. Cf. on (H) Agesias; N. Luraghi, 'Un mantis eleo nella Siracusa di Ierone: Agesia di Siracusa, Iamide di Stinfalo', *Klio* 79 (1997) 69-86.

won (three times) at the Olympic games. Another is Antifon, who also lived in the fifth century, who was called a *teratoskopos* en *oneirokrites*, but was also a poet and a philosopher. He probably wrote the lost treatise 'On divination by dreams'.[152] Lampon was an expert, but a powerful politician too.[153] There are also a number of attestations of experts who fought in the army, the most famous of whom must be Kleoboulos who died in 370 and is lauded both as *mantis* and warrior in his funerary inscription.[154] All these activities are examples of accomplishments which might have been expected of an educated Greek male individual and are not particular to the divinatory expert as such. There was indubitably an overlap between being an expert and other activities – but whereas the Greek (and Roman) sources only relate the prestigious activities which experts might undertake of their own accord, the Mesopotamian expert would also certainly have had to perform less exalted jobs.[155]

152 Kett, *Prosopographie*, 23: Antifon (9).

153 See on Lampon, e.g., Bremmer, 'Prophets, experts, and politics', 157.

154 *SEG* 16 (1959) 193. See for another *mantis* who died in battle (Megistias) Hdt. 7.228; and for a *mantis* who furnished the army with a strategy see Hdt. 8.27.3. A *mantis* could have both a military and strategic role – see Pritchett, *The Greek state at war*, Vol. 3, 56-60; see 92-138 for an overview of signs in a military context; see also the discussion in R. Lonis, *Guerre et religion en Grèce à l'époque classique: recherches sur les rites, les dieux, l'idéologie de la victoire* (Paris 1979) 43-115.

155 Perhaps Greek experts did not record other, less prestigious jobs they needed to survive.

Loyalties

Institutionalized employment by the palace was particular to Mesopotamian divination. Certainly, Roman public experts were 'employed' by the Senate, but on occasion private *haruspices* and *augures* were also hired by high-ranking individuals.[156] As we have seen, in Greece from the second century BC some *poleis* seem to have employed a regular *mantis* and high-ranking individuals would certainly have hired their personal *mantis*, when they thought the circumstances required such services.[157] How did these different terms of employment influence the loyalty of experts?

Roman public experts only had one 'employer': the Senate. Their task was to help the Republic to function and their activities were narrowly defined. Because Roman experts were also members of the governing elite, there was a certain risk that they might feather their own nests as far as this was possible.[158] Even if manipulation of signs

156 There are indications in the sources which support this argument: Val. Max. 9.12.6; Sall. *Iug.* 63.1; Plut. *Vit. Mar.* 8.4; Cic. *Div.* 1.32.72; Plut. *Vit. Sull.* 9.3l; Cic. *Nat. D.* 2.10-11.

157 Flower, *The seer*, 122-123. But see also Pritchett, *The Greek state at war*, Vol. 3, 61-63.

158 However, I think it impossible for Roman divination to have existed in the way it did if it had been a mere going-through-the-motions which could be manipulated for personal gain. Cf. the many discussions about possible manipulation of divination in both the Greek and Roman worlds; on skepticism see among others Mikalson, *Honor thy gods*, 87-114, and Flower, *The seer*, 132-152. In Rome: V. Rosenberger, *Gezähmte Götter: das Prodigienwesen der römischen Republik* (Stuttgart 1998) 71-78; or on a more

or their interpretation was common, not much can be said about a sense of loyalty to the Republic – only about the methods of self-advancement within the system of the Republic.

Mesopotamian experts had one employer and he should not be betrayed. There is a letter to the king from an expert saying conspirators had forced him, the expert, to perform divination. The expert duly wrote to the king to tell him he had been tricked into this punishable offence.[159] Other experts would ask the king for justice or favours.[160] Mesopotamian ties of loyalty were clearly defined and are part of the relationship of patronage discussed above.

In Greece matters are less clear. Wandering Greek experts could begin working for one Greek army and, for some reason, switch to the opposing party or even to another nation like the Persians. Hegesistratos, for example, worked for the Spartans who were dissatisfied with him and put him in prison. Obviously desperate to

textual level studies such as K.J. Dover, 'Thucydides on oracles' in: idem, *The Greeks and their legacy: collected papers* 2 vols (London 1987-1988) Vol. 2, 65-73. The most famous example of a Roman treatise in which divination is criticized is Cicero's *De divinatione* (although this is not necessarily Cicero's own opinion). Anthropological perspectives are offered by C.R. Whittaker, 'The Delphic oracle: belief and behavior in ancient Greece - and Africa', *HThR* 58 (1965) 21-47, especially 45-47. Park argues along the same lines: Park, 'Social contexts', 195-209; W. Bascom, *Ifa divination: communication between gods and men in West Africa* (Bloomington, IND 1969) 119.

159 SAA 10 179 obv. 11-12; 18-22; rev. 19-21.

160 Astrologers: SAA 10 58 rev.4-21; SAA 10 86; SAA 10 93; *bārû:* SAA 10 178; SAA 10 180.

escape, Hegesistratos managed to free himself by cutting off his foot, after which he began working for the Persians and was their *mantis* at the Battle of Plataea.[161] Hippomarchos, too, worked (indirectly) for the Persians: he was the *mantis* of the Greeks in the Persian army.[162] Another example of an expert who was paid to work by various parties is Silanus who lived around 400 BC. He was a *mantis* of unknown descent who came from Ambracia. He was able to inspect *exta* and became the expert of Cyrus the Younger when the latter went to fight his brother Artaxerxes III. After Cyrus had been defeated, he worked as an expert in the army of Xenophon (but ran away).[163] Apparently it was possible to change employer for personal reasons or when circumstances dictated. It should be noted that ethnicity was not a decisive factor in changing employers. Moreover, it appears Greek experts could also face dismissal: Periallos, a Greek expert, is one of the few experts who is known to have been given the sack because of misconduct.[164] Where divination was not institutionalized, loyalty in the strict sense of the word – working for one employer for a very long time and keeping his best interest at heart – does not seem to have been the rule. The situation at institutionalized oracles and

161 Hdt. 9.37.1; 9.38.1; 9.41.4. See on another Elean seer being saved (and probably put to work for Dareios) Hdt. 3.132.2.

162 Hdt. 9.83.2.

163 Kett, *Prosopographie*, 69-70: Silanos (62). For references (from Kett) see Xen. *An*. 1.7.18; 5.6.16; 6.4.13; 5.6.28-34; 6.4.13; 5.6.16-18; Ael. *NA* 8.5; Philostr. *VA* 8.7.43.

164 Kett, *Prosopographie*, 66: Periallos (58). See Hdt. 6.66.2 (from Kett).

sanctuaries where a *mantis* could work for a longer time was probably different. A Mesopotamian expert would have been expected to be loyal on account of the obligations imposed by the patron-client relationship. A Roman expert might have had conflicting interests, because he was both an expert and a member of the political elite, and needed to integrate the two roles.

Hierarchy

Little is known about a hierarchy among Greek and Roman experts, although it can be presumed that those who were perceived to be the best *manteis* and (private) *haruspices* would have been employed by the highest-ranking individuals in society. In the *collegium haruspicum*, there appears to have been a *summus haruspex,*[165] and in Greece some experts were deemed more important than others. In

165 It has been speculated that this *summus haruspex* was the head (and perhaps most senior member) of the *ordo LX haruspicum*. The famous Spurinna was perhaps a *summus haruspex*: Val. Max. 1.6.13. Cic. *Div*. 1.52; Suet. *Iul*. 81. See Haack, *Prosopographie*, 110-112, where further references can be found. Cf. Rawson, 'The *Disciplina Etrusca*', 143-145. See also the epitaph of the *haruspex maximus* (*CIL* VI 2164 = *ILS* 4951, see Haack, *Prosopographie*, 119-120, in which there are further references) and that of T. Flavius Clodianus, the 'magister har(us)p(icum) de LX' (*CIL* XIV 164. See Haack, *Prosopographie*, 49, where there are further references). The question still remains of whether one would consider the fact that an *ordo* had a head an indication of an internal hierarchy.

the *Anabasis*, Xenophon mentions a number of *manteis* by name although there were many more in his army.[166] Might these named experts have been the more important ones?[167] At sanctuaries where *manteis* were employed to examine the sacrificial animals, they had a leader, the *mantiarchos*.[168]

In Mesopotamia, sources from the Old Babylonian period give us an indication of a possible hierarchy and career path within the *bārû* profession:

> [the newly trained *bārû*] might then live and work in a team headed by either a *waklum*, 'overexpert', or a *šāpirum*, 'chief'. As a professional there was a career ladder for the expert to climb; this might be reconstructed as follows: the first practice could be at the palace gate where he could offer his services for a fee. […] Perhaps in return for having a space at the palace gate, the expert was expected to perform miscellaneous duties to the palace. The Old Babylonian extispicy reports deal almost exclusively with the experts' service to private individuals. As a next step, in the royal employ, the expert could become attached to an army garrison. There is evidence to suggest that one or more experts accompanied a campaigning army and

166 Xen. *An*. 6.4.15.

167 Later in time, there also seems to have been a ranking among dream experts, at least according to Artemidoros: those who had a 'scholarly' background were, in his opinion, higher up in the hierarchy than those working in the marketplace. D. Harris-McCoy, 'Artemidorus' self-presentation in the preface to the Oneirocritica', *CJ* 106 (2011) 423-444, at 431; 426.

168 L. Robert, 'Sur un Apollon oraculaire à Chypre', *CRAI* (1978) 338-344, at 342 (= *SEG* 28 1299. See *SEG* 30 1608 for references to other opinions). Cf. Bouché-Leclercq, *Histoire de la divination*, Vol. 2, 392.

there are references to a *bārûm* walking in front. Before entering royal service, it is very likely that the expert himself became the object of extispicy as a form of vetting.[169]

The *bārû* attached to a military unit can be – tentatively – identified in Neo-Assyrian times, for example, by his depiction on Assurbanipal's relief from Nimrud.[170] Possibly, like his Old Babylonian counterpart, the Neo-Assyrian *bārû*, after having served in the army could become a 'district expert' and finally a court expert. Although the facts about this in Neo-Assyrian times are still very uncertain, what has been established is that there was an 'elite' among the divinatory experts in the palace. This is attested by titles of individuals: there was, for example, a 'chief *bārû*'[171] and a study of titles reveals that a man could become 'chief scribe' after having been 'deputy-chief scribe'.[172] Another possible clue is provided by the way the names were listed in reports and letters. In the reign of Esarhaddon,

169 Jeyes, *Old Babylonian extispicy*, 15-16.

170 Although the individual on British Museum WA 124548 has also been designated a butcher: D. Collon, 'Depictions of priests and priestesses in the ancient Near East' in: K. Watanabe (ed.), *Priests and officials in the ancient Near East: papers of the second colloquium on the ancient Near East, the city and its life, held at the Middle Eastern culture centre in Japan (Mitaka, Tokyo), March 22-24, 1996* (Heidelberg 1999) 17-46, at 24 and figure 33.

171 E.g., [Mar]duk-šumu-uṣur ([md]AMAR].UTU.MU.PAB LÚ.GAL ḪAL. SAA 7 7 rev. ii 7; see also SAA 10 182 obv. 5-9.

172 See Parpola, *Letters from Assyrian scholars,* Vol. 2a, 467-470 (Appendix O). See also Robson, 'Empirical scholarship', 608.

one Marduk-šākin-šumi (scholar and later chief exorcist) was listed below Adad-šumu-uṣur (scholar and chief exorcist), but this order was reversed later under Assurbanipal.[173] If this indicates an estimation of importance among peers, it shows that this eminence could fluctuate. However, this idea is contested.[174] Another indication that not every expert was equal is a letter from an astrologer who has been appointed to teach the crown prince and shows his gratitude to the king for his selection; and there are also letters thanking the king because an astrologer has been permitted to join the king's entourage.[175] These must have been 'promotions'. Therefore, the most substantial evidence for a hierarchy among experts comes from Mesopotamia and this is not unexpected: hierarchy is a logical corollary of institutionalization.

Competition and co-operation

Were the relationships among the various types of experts co-operative or competitive (or both)? Mesopotamian experts regularly co-operated. In the reports to the king, some *bārû* wrote how they performed extispicies together. It also appears that Mesopotamian *ṭupšarru Enūma Anu Enlil,* but not *bārû*, worked with people from outside their own circle.[176] For example, the astrologers Nabû-aḫḫē-

173 See Parpola, *Letters from Assyrian scholars*, Vol. 2a, 113; 152.

174 Some argue the way names were listed was not systematic: Robson, 'Empirical scholarship', 608.

175 SAA 10 68.

176 See for the lack of co-operation with other groups Robson, 'Empirical

eriba and Balasî co-operated when they wrote joint letters to the king about eye-stones for the statue of the god, beseeching the king to give up fasting and eat, advising him to undertake a journey at a specific time, about conjunctions of Mars and Saturn, favourable days for the prince to visit his father and giving a reply to a question posed by the king.[177] Since their colleagues did the same, the result was a network of advice and discussion.

However, where there is co-operation there can also be competition: different experts could provide different or divergent interpretations of a particular sign, each claiming his to be the best.[178] Disputes and discussions could arise. The astrologer Balasî reports that:

> Concerning Mercury, about which the king my lord wrote to me: yesterday Issar-šumu-ereš had an argument with Nabû-ahhe-eriba in the palace. Later, at night, they went and all made observations; they saw (it) and were satisfied.[179]

scholarship', 610.

177 SAA 10 41; SAA 10 40; SAA 10 43; SAA 10 44; SAA 10 47; SAA 10 50; SAA 10 53; SAA 10 62.

178 Arr. *Anab*. 1.11.2.

179 See for similar examples of competition and showing that one's interpretation was best: SAA 10 51; SAA 10 52 obv. 6-9; SAA 10 60; SAA 10 72. SAA 8 83 (= K 01335+ = RMA 055) obv. 4 - rev. 3. Edition and translation: H. Hunger.

ina UGU M[UL].UDU.IDIM.GUD.UD
ša LUGAL be-lí iš-pur-an-ni
it—ti-ma-li ^{md}15—MU—APIN-eš

Texts such as these suggest that each expert attempted to provide the most accurate interpretation – to be 'proven' later in time –, and that experts competed in this way. Once again, it is institutionalization which paved the way for both extensive co-operation and extensive competition.

Without institutionalization, collaborations would have remained incidental. It is remarkable how little Greek evidence can be found regarding co-operation of *manteis*. Unquestionably, during military expeditions when more than one expert was available, some evidence of co-operation emerges. Xenophon's experts, like those of Alexander the Great for example, seem to have functioned as a team at times – although in Xenophon's case the evidence is not watertight.[180] The only time in the *Anabasis* where co-operation is certainly mentioned is when all experts are called together to be witness to the signs. This occurred when the army was in dire straits: there was no food left but the signs in the exta continued to be negative so the army could not move on. The experts were called together so that all of them could witness and confirm this. Nevertheless, such occasions are the exceptions in the sources. Usually just one expert, not a group, is specifically mentioned.

ina ŠÀ É.GAL ṣa-a-su
a-na ^{md}PA—PAB.MEŠ—SU ig-di-ri
i—da-a-ti ina nu-bat-ti
it-ta-al-ku gab-bi-šú-nu it-ta-aṣ-ru
e-ta-am-ru ib-tu-šu

180 E.g, Arr. *Anab*. 4.15.7-8; Arr. *Anab*. 7.11.8-9; Xen. *An*. 6.4.15; 6.4.20.

Competition must have been rife in Greek and private Roman divination. The chief priority of experts who were not structurally employed was to attract clients. They could do this by means of word of mouth or by textual advertisments such as the owl statuette with an inscription on the base advertising an expert from Rome – probably from the first century AD – now in the Museum of Antiquities at Leiden.[181] This owl has been thought to have stood outside the experts' door to attract clients. It has also been argued that Lusimachos, a fourth-century Greek expert who owned a tablet or writing table (*pinakion oneirokritikon*), used this to advertise his business.[182] However, what this *pinakion oneirokritikon* actually was is far from certain – it might have been a written textual guideline to interpreting signs. It should be noted that the 'freelance' experts were not the only ones who needed to stand out. Oracles would also need to win clients: Alexander of Abonouteichos advertised his business at the oracle site. In Lucian's satire, he is depicted as having sent

181 F.L. Bastet & H. Brunsting, *Corpus signorum classicorum musei antiquarii lugduno-batavi = Catalogus van het klassieke beeldhouwwerk in het Rijksmuseum van Oudheden te Leiden* 2 vols (Zutphen 1982) number 118 (no museum number mentioned). According to the museum website (http://www.rmo.nl/collectie/-topstukken-), the inventory number is ZM-7 (B434 is also mentioned). Text: [A]ΡΧΑΤΗΣ.ΠΕΤΡΙΟΣ.ΗΟ | ΜΑΝΤΙΣ.ΜΑΝ | ΤΕΟΑΕΤ.Δ.ΑΣ | ΣΑΡΙΩΝ (*CIG* 4 10 6848). Another such advertisement (but for an individual interpreting dreams) is known from Graeco-Roman Egypt: Guarducci, *Epigrafia,* Vol. 4, 117-119.

182 Plut. *Vit. Arist.* 27.3.

people around to spread the word about his oracle.[183] In short, from the Greek and Roman materials, it appears that experts working for themselves needed a commercial pitch or presentation.

There is little explicit evidence of competitive confrontations with the exception of the story about Mopsos and Kalchas. When Kalchas did not manage to win the 'competition', he died of grief.[184] For Rome the famous saying by Cato, as quoted by Cicero, might be considered. One *haruspex* was thought to have been laughing at the other when they met each other in the street. Interpretations of this passage could be that it arose from competition, scepticism or both.[185] Some scholars have claimed that members of Roman *collegia* were in competition with those of other *collegia* – especially the *haruspices* and *decemviri* –, chiefly for political purposes, but this cannot be demonstrated convincingly. What can be shown is that the Senate would sometimes ask the various bodies of experts to give their individual opinions about the same signs.[186]

183 Lucian *Alex*. 24. Although this source cannot be taken at face value to reveal historical facts or even be taken to indicate anything about a historical reality (as A. Bendlin argues: 'Vom Nutzen und Nachteil der Mantik: Orakel im Medium von Handlung und Literatur in der Zeit der Zweiten Sophistik' in: D. Elm von der Osten, J. Rüpke & K. Waldner (eds), *Texte als Medium und Reflexion von Religion im römischen Reich* (Stuttgart 2006) 159-208, at 202), it still reflects ideas about the possibility, at least theoretically, for someone to send people around to spread the word about an oracle.

184 Apollod. *Ep*. 6.2-4.

185 Cato *apud* Cic. *Div*. 2.24.

186 Or at least they were both consulted about the same sign and they

Worries about reliability

If an individual divined for himself, he had only his own lack of expertise to blame if it seemed he had it wrong. He would probably keep his 'failings' quiet and try again the next time around. However, if an individual consulted an expert, the dynamics of the divinatory process were completely different. When an expert seemed to have been wrong, this was far worse than a layman's mistake: after all, the expert was by definition someone who had the ability to get it right. Using an expert was of course reassuring for the client (he received an authoritative interpretation), but it was not without risk.[187] Potentially an expert should have had more knowledge than the layman himself, but did he really have the skills and could he be trusted? The expert might be prompted by hidden motives, such as pecunerary concerns which would lead him to tell his client what he wanted to hear. Perhaps a particular interpretation was to the expert's own advantage. All these fears which could beset the individual are illustrated in many literary sources. Jokes at the expense of the expert can regularly be observed. It appears that, 'by the latter half of the fifth century BC *mantis* could in comic context be used as a byword for certain forms of fraud.'[188] Experts were thought to

agreed on its meaning in Cic. *Div*. 1.43.97. Cf. MacBain, *Prodigy and expiation*, 57-59; Rasmussen, *Public portents*, 180-182; Liv. 42.20.2.

187 As is reflected in many sources, for example, in Herodotos. Cf. Hollmann, *The master of signs*, 109; 135-130.

188 R. Garland, 'Priests and power', 84. This also appears to be the way a later source such as Plutarch thinks about manteis and related experts

be lusting after money and political power: twisting the signs from the supernatural would be a good way to attain what they wanted. Sophocles' *dramatis personae* illustrate this in two tragedies: in *Antigone* it is claimed that experts are in it for gain and in *Oedipus Rex* Teiresias is depicted as a divinatory fraud who is out to make a profit. He is also accused of playing political games in a bid to gain power. These two factors are also discussed in Lucian's *Alexander*.[189] What should be noted is that all of these examples are literary representations of what must have been a widely felt concern: was the expert reliable? Nevertheless, the literary representations might be misleading: perhaps incompetence was a less pressing concern in Greece because – also in an emic sense – there was no mantic orthodoxy. How could an expert be wrong or rather, be proven wrong?

(Plut. Mor. De Pyth. or. 407c).

189 Soph. *Ant*. 1035-1039; Soph. *OT* 95-145; Soph. *OT* 605-610; See also Eur. *IA* 520; Eur. *Bacch*. 255-257; Eur. *IA* 955-958. Cf. on Teiresias in literary sources more generally Ugolini, *Teiresias*. Lucian *Alex*. *passim*; for some secondary literature on the subject see D. Elm von der Osten, 'Die Inszenierung des Betruges und seiner Entlarvung: Divination und ihre Kritiker in Lukians Schrift "Alexander oder der Lügenprophet"' in: D. Elm von der Osten, J. Rüpke & K. Waldner (eds), *Texte als Medium und Reflexion von Religion im römischen Reich* (Stuttgart 2006) 141-157. The historicity of Lucian's *Alexander* is discussed in Bendlin, 'Vom Nutzen und Nachteil', 202. However, the *Alexander* still reflects ancient ideas on these matters. False oracles were believed to exist: see Hdt. 2.174 and as appears from the story of Croesus in Hdt. 1.46-49.

Suspicions of unreliability and incompetence also pursued the Mesopotamian expert. An example is the text known as the *Sin of Sargon*.[190] The fact that Sennacherib separates the experts into groups indicates that he harboured suspicions, lest they talk to one another and influence the outcome of the extispicy (no motives why they should do this are given, although these can be speculated on):

> I w[ent and collected the haruspices], the courtiers of my palace guarding the mystery of god and king; I split them [into several groups] so that they could not ap[proach or speak to one another]. I [investigated] the sins of Sargon, my father, by extispicy, [enquiring of Šamaš and Adad] as follows: "Was it because [he esteemed] the

190 On doubts about the reliability of divination in general (not focused on the expert) see *Ludlul bēl nēmeqi*, tablet I, 49-52: iš-šak-na-nim-ma i-da-at pi-rit-ti | uš-te-ṣi <ina> bīti-ia ka-ma-a-ti ar-pu-⌈ud⌋ | dal-ḫa te-re-tu--ú-a nu-up-pu-ú-ḫu ud-da-kám | it-ti ^{lú}bārî(ḫal) u šá-'-i-li a-lak-ti ul par-sat. Translation: 'Fearful omens beset me. I am got out of my house and wander outside. The omen organs are confused and inflamed for me every day. The omen of the expert and dream priest does not explain my condition.' (Edition and translation: Lambert, *Wisdom literature*, 32-33) This does not obviate the question of whether this text implies that the expert could not help, whether the divination did not work because it was thought to be intrinsically flawed or that this was simply seen as a ritual failure caused by the supernatural (*Cf.* for this last option, more examples and a discussion if scepticism about divination: C. Ambos, 'Types of ritual failure and mistakes in ritual in cuneiform sources' in: U. Hüsken (ed.), *When rituals go wrong: mistakes, failure and the dynamics of ritual* (Leiden 2007) 25-47, at 29; 42-46).

> gods o[f Assyria too much], […] The haruspices whom [I had split] into [several groups un]animously [gave me a reliable answer in the affirmative]."[191]

This might have been an exceptional situation but the suspicion of the expert expressed here was not unique. As mentioned, one Neo-Assyrian text refers to an expert being forced to perform an extispicy for the enemies of the king.[192] The expert knew this was a punishable offence – his job was to protect the king, not to work for others (this is an additional aspect which fuelled Mesopotamian suspicions – an

191 SAA 3 33 (=K 4730 (+) Sm 1816) obv. 13-17; 21-22. Edition and translation: A. Livingstone.

u pag-ri it-ti DINGIR lu-še-e-ṣi al-[lik-ma ú-pah-hir DUMU-MEŠ LÚ.HAL-MEŠ]
na-ṣir pi-riš-ti DINGIR u LUGAL man-za-[az É.GAL-ia a-na 3-šú a-na 4-ú]
a-zu-us-su-nu-ti-ma la iṭ-[hu-ú-ma la id-bu-bu it-ti a-ha-meš]
hi-ṭa-a-ti ^{m}LUGAL—GIN AD-ia ina [bi]-[ri ab-re-e-ma ^{d}UTU u ^{d}IM áš-'a-al]
um-ma a-na UGU šá DINGIR-MEŠ š[á KUR—aš-šur.KI ma-a'-diš ú-kab-bi-tu-ma]
[…]
[DU]MU-MEŠ LÚ.HAL-MEŠ šá a-na [3-šú a-na 4-šú a-zu-zu-šú-nu-ti]
[pa-a] [e]-da iš-šak-nu-[ma i-pu-lu-in-ni an-na ke-e-nu x x x x]

192 And see for another example see SAA 10 109, in which the *bārû* prevaricated a while and did not report negative signs to the king but wrote instead that the signs had been obscure and see also SAA 18 124 obv. 3-5 where something apparently has gone wrong with a report because it has been erased (reading uncertain).

expert could 'betray' his master)[193] –, and he was afraid that the king would find out. He wrote to him to reassure him that he himself was still loyal, mollifying him with the thought that perhaps the extispicy had not revealed the enemy the truth:

> […] saying: "You are an expert in divination?" (Break) He made me *love* him […] "I'll tell you this: [*the king*] has *provi*[*ded* for m]e, until *in anger he placed* (*me*) *in your service*." "Go and perform the (following) divination before Šamaš: 'Will the chief eunuch take over the kingship?" […] [By the gods of the king], my [lord]: The extispicy [which I performed was] but a colossal fraud! (The only thing) [I was th]inking of (was), "May he not kill me."[194]

In Rome, the private experts were treated with scepticism on account of the methods they used. However, in matters of public divination misgivings about ulterior motives were a much bigger worry: mag-

193 SAA 18 131 obv. 22-rev.9; SAA 16 21 obv. 9-rev.8.

194 SAA 10 179 (=83-1-18,122 + Ki 1904-10-9,169) obv. 20 - rev. 5; 19-21. Edition and translation: S. Parpola.
um-ma LÚ.ḪAL-[u]-[tu t]a!- [le!-'e!] -e! […]
ú-šar!-im-man--[ni] x[x x x x x x x x]
ši-i a-qab-bak-k[a um-ma LUGAL] in-du-[na-an-n]i
a-di ina lib-bat a-na p[a-ni]-ka ú-še-[zi]-[zu]
um-ma a-lik-ma LÚ.ḪAL-ú-ti a-na tar!-ṣi ^{d}UTU
bi-ri GAL--LÚ.SAG LUGAL-ú-tú i-na-áš-ši-i
[…]
[DINGIR.MEŠ šá LUGAL be-lí]-iá ki-I LÚ.ḪAL-ú-tú
[šá e-pu-šu] al-la šá-a-ru me-ḫu-u
[šu-ú TA ŠÀ-bi-ia a]-dab-bu-ub um-ma la (i)-du-kan-ni

istrates were accused of taking the auspices and looking the other way when it suited their purposes.[195] Whether this was true or not, in Rome – as in Greece and in Mesopotamia – there was a feeling that the expert had power over the divinatory process and that either he might abuse this power or simply get it wrong. However, this anxiety did not (positively or negatively) affect the experts' standing in society: it merely reflected their importance.

The foregoing discussion reveals that Mesopotamian experts were employed for longer periods of time by the same employer, appear to have been loyal, could rise higher up in the hierarchical ranking and did collaborate with others (this includes discussion and competition). The structured and steady nature of their work ensured they fell into the category 'high' in the 'occupation' branch of socio-economic status. The same could be said of the public Roman divinatory expert. In comparison to his colleagues, the unstructured nature of the occupation of the wandering *mantis* (and the private Roman expert) would have placed him in the category 'middle' or even 'low' socio-economic status. Always with the exception of those very few who really made it, naturally.

Income

An expert needed to live. The Mesopotamian expert employed by the palace would also have been paid by it. Although the astrolo-

195 MacBain, *Prodigy and expiation,* 41-42.

ger does not feature in the Nimrud Wine Lists – an eight-century Assyrian administrative text – the *bārû* (for LÚ.ḪAL.MEŠ) received a daily ration – in kind – of, usually, 2 *qa* of wine[196] for their group, the same as the A.ZU (*ašu*) and LÚ.MAŠ.MAŠ.MEŠ (*āšipu*).[197] The augurs from Commagene received 4 *qa* – and the Babylonian experts 6 *qa* – but it is not possible to verify whether they were part of a larger group or were entitled to larger rations.[198]

196 In the Neo-Assyrian period, the standard *qû* was about 1.842 or 1.83 litres. Kinnier Wilson assumes that among the skilled and professional workers six men would share one *qû*: J.V. Kinnier Wilson, *The Nimrud wine lists: a study of men and administration at the Assyrian capital in the eighth century BC* (London 1972) 117. Cf. *CAD* Q 288-291.

197 See Kinnier Wilson, *The Nimrud wine lists* (from now on KW). 2 qa? for LÚ.ḪAL.MEŠ in ND 6219, ob. 22 (KW text number 6); 2 qa for LÚ.ḪAL.MEŠ in ND 10047, ob. 28b (KW text number 8); ? qa for LÚ.ḪAL.MEŠ from 'Babylon' in ND 10055, 4 (KW text number 12); ditto for ND 10027 + 10028, ob. 20 (KW text number 13); 1.5 qa for LÚ.ḪAL.MEŠ in ND 10027 + 10028, rv. 8 (KW text number 13); 2? qa for LÚ.ḪAL.MEŠ in ND 10056 12 (KW text number 15); ditto for ND 10033/10050 32 (KW text number 16); 2? qa ND 10051 rv. 1 (KW text number 19); 3 qa for LÚ.ḪAL.MEŠ in 10053 obv. 10 (KW 30); 6 qa for LÚ.ḪAL.MEŠ from 'Babylonia' in ND 10038 (lower half of obverse) 5 (KW number 30); 1 sūt for LÚ.ḪAL.MEŠ ND 2489, ii, 11 (KW text number 35) (a bread list); 5 qa voor LÚ.ḪAL.MEŠ who were 'Babylonian' ND 10038 obv. 16' (S. Dalley & J.N. Postgate, *The tablets from Fort Shalmaneser* (London 1984) no. 120). Cf. Kinnier Wilson, *The Nimrud wine lists*, 75-76.

198 Augurs: 4 qa for augurs from Commagene in ND 6218, i, 4-5 (KW text no. 3); 4? qa for augurs ND 10063 3? (KW text no. 29). The experts from Commagene are but one of the examples of experts 'from abroad'

The expert Urad-Gula describes how hard he worked and, he complains that his fellow scholar seems to be taking more than his fair share of the goods which are apportioned to the scholars.

> He is taking [for himself] the prime lot of garments [which came in on the 2]2nd and today, [gu]lēnu-coats, tunics, and mak[lulu]-clothes, every single one of them, and [shows] neither the chief [exorcist] nor Adad-šumu-uṣur that he has them. But we have ended up [empty]-handed; by which means are we supposed to fill the shortage of our garments? Whence are we supposed to get (our) wages, we who have not (even) as much money as a pupil of his? And yet the king knows [that] we are his equals![199]

(which was equally usual in Greece), which K. Radner shows: K. Radner, 'The Assyrian king and his scholars: the Syro-Anatolian and the Egyptian schools' in: M. Luukko, A. Svärd & R. Mattila (eds), *Of god(s), trees, kings, and scholars: Neo-Assyrian and related studies in honour of Simo Parpola* (Helsinki 2009) 221-238.

199 SAA 10 289 (= K 00991 = ABL 0117) rev. 3-14. Edition and translation: S. Parpola.

[x TÚG.g]u-zip-pi pa-ni-i![-ú-][te] [ša UD-2]2-KÁM ù ša ú-ma-a [-e-][-ru-bu-u-ni]
[TÚG.gu]l[!]-IGI.2 TÚG[!].GADA TÚG.ma-ak-[li-li]
x [x]-šú[!] am-mar[!] gab-bu-un-ni [x x x]
i-na-áš-ši la-a a-na LÚ.GAL—[MAŠ.MAŠ]
la[!] a-na [md]IM—MU—PAB is-si-šú [ú-kal-lam]
ù a-né-en-nu TA a-hi-in-n[i[!] ra-aq-te]
né-ta-li-a bat-qu ša TÚG.gu-zip-pi-[ni][!]
ina ŠÀ mi-i-ni ni-ik-ṣur TA a-a-kar
ni-iš-ši-a ig-re-e ša am—mar LÚ.TUR-šú
a-ni-nu la ma-aṣ-ṣa-ni-ni ù LUGAL ú-da

Apart from the wine lists, we hear remarkably little about an expert ever being paid – in cash or in kind – but in one Old Babylonian example a payment of four lambs is specified. In another instance, the payment is in cash.[200] There are also indications that Old Babylonian experts could have been moneylenders and earned their living this way.[201] In a nutshell, the remuneration of Neo-Assyrian scholars seems to have consisted partly of payments by the palace which might have been supplemented by other payments in kind.[202]

Greek experts were notorious for their proverbial greed and lust for payment (if necessary in kind).[203] They were paid by their clients, whether these were city states or individuals.[204] How much a *mantis* received is unknown: it appears that this could have been anything from relatively small amounts to large sums or expensive goods. Larger amounts were earned by famous experts, thought to be the best, like Hegesistratos who was reported to have earned great sums

[ki-i] me-eh-re-e-šú a-né-en-nu-ni

200 Claims Jeyes, *Old Babylonian extispicy*, 15 (YOS 5 155.33).

201 Richardson, 'Ewe should be so lucky', 230-231.

202 Fields in the possession of experts could also have been inherited, which is why I have not mentioned them in the text.

203 Soph. *Ant*. 1055; Ar. *Av*. 594 ; Ath. 8.344ef; Lucian *Iupp. Trag*. 30.

204 It can be expected that the pay was provided by the *polis* in the case of an elected expert (if these existed), but that a high-ranking individual would pay for his private expert. See the references above for possible official funding for experts employed 'privately' by generals, as perhaps attested in Plut. *Vit. Nic.* 4.2.

and was – presumably for that reason – reportedly a very zealous worker.[205]

Some more can be deduced from the amount an individual client would have had to pay for consulting an oracle. Whilst no direct payment to the divinatory expert, this shows how much it cost to make use of his services at an oracle site. The oracle of Alexander of Abonouteichus is described as to have charged one drachma and two obols for each oracular consultation.[206] A very large sum indeed. At other Greek oracles, the sacrifice preceding the divination (*pelanos*) was later transformed into a monetary 'sacrifice' or payment to the oracle. The amount of the *pelanos* depended on where the client was from and whether he was a private individual or had consulted the oracle on behalf of a *polis*.[207] For instance, at Delphi, the *pelanos* for the *polis* of Phaselis cost 10 Attic drachmai and for a private individual 4 obols (400 BC); for the bean oracle (during which a black or white bean was drawn as the alternative to an oracle), this was 1 stater for official delegations and 2 obols for a private person.[208]

205 Hdt 9.38.1. Supposedly this also applies to Thrasullos: Isoc. *Aegineticus* 7. For the rich son of a seer: Hom. *Il.* 13.663-664.

206 Although this might have been an exaggeration on Lucian's part: Lucian *Alex*. 23.

207 Envoys were regularly sent to oracles (Delphi especially) to ask questions on behalf of their community, e.g., Hdt. 6.57.3.

208 V. Rosenberger, 'Die Ökonomie der Pythia oder: wirtschaftliche Aspekte griechischer Orakel', *Laverna* 10 (1999) 153-164, at 154-155. The oracle at Delphi had a reputation for its riches – composed principally of costly dedications, but the structural income from the *pelanos* must have

There were also different prices depending on which *polis* the client came from.[209]

There is uncertainty about other, additional, payments (not the *pelanos*) which would have had to be made to obtain an actual consultation at Delphi – but Rosenberger thinks this was 2 obols for a consultation by the *polis* (Skiathos, in this case) and 1 obol for a private person.[210] However, this could be much more, one factor being which *polis* wanted an answer.[211] Ultimately, how much exactly was paid for a consultation seems to have depended on the descent, profession and prestige of the client and the public or private purpose of his consultation, and on the prestige of the expert or oracle.[212]

helped too: see, e.g., Ael. *VH* 6.9; Hdt. 3.57.2.

209 As a comparison between the *pelanos* for individuals from two different town shows (although the first attestation is from the 6th or 5th century, and the second one is from the 4th – this might also explain the difference in price): G. Rougemont, *Corpus des inscriptions de Delphes* (Paris 1977) Vol. 1, 8-10; 23-26.

210 P. Amandry, *La mantique Apollinienne à Delphes* (Paris 1950) 102-103; Rosenberger, 'Die Ökonomie der Pythia', 155-156. However, for many sites we do not have this knowledge. For the oracle site of Korope, for example, we can only assume that a *pelanos* was paid: see Robert, 'Apollon Koropaios', 19-20.

211 P. Bonnechère, *Trophonios de Lébadée: cultes et mythes d'une cité béotienne au miroir de la mentalité antique* (Leiden 2003) 57-58.

212 And also on the particular oracle. See for the best overview of different prices Bonnechère, *Trophonios de Lébadée*, 57-58. For an overview of historical (non-oracular) experts that have been paid see Kett, *Prosopographie*,

No specific sources deal with payment of a public Roman expert, which makes sense because these experts were all high-ranking patricians, and later plebeians, – membership of a *collegium* confirmed prestige and J. Rüpke considers it plausible that, instead of being paid, potential experts paid a fee to become a member.[213] A Roman employing an expert privately would have paid him, or at least this is what has been speculated about Sulla's *haruspex* C. Postumius (who was, probably, 'a salaried official').[214] There are few sources that touch upon private experts, but the same idea of experts' greediness as that in Greece is reflected in them.[215]

This investigation of the expert's income has not shed much light on the issue of socio-economic status. The reason for this is that sources are lacking. It must be concluded that payment depended on the skill of the individual expert, unless the latter had obtained official employment as happened in Mesopotamia. Structural employment changed matters quite drastically: the Mesopotamian expert would not be poor, nor would he have grown exceedingly rich like a Greek expert could become if he was very successful.

105-109. However, it must have been tough to make ends meet as an expert for some: Ael. *VH* 10.6. Others struck it rich: Pritchett, *The Greek state at war,* Vol. 3, 71-78. Cf., e.g., Hdt. 5.45.2.

213 Cic. *Div*. 2.65.134. Cf. Rüpke, *Fasti sacerdotum*, Vol. 3, at 1461-1471.

214 Rawson, 'The *Disciplina Etrusca*', 141.

215 As in the late – for our purposes – source Apul. *Met*. 9.8.

Concluding Observations

Experts played a major role in the practice of divination. Exploring the elements of socio-economic status has provided a clearer understanding of the experts' position in society.

One conclusion which has emerged is that the Roman and Mesopotamian experts under investigation were higher up on the socio-economic scale than their Greek counterparts. The Greek expert had to use his charisma and rhetorical skills to be able to survive (which could make him either very rich or very poor but would leave most experts somewhere in between), whereas the Mesopotamian expert worked as a learned man on the basis of his schooling and his descent.[216] The public Roman expert occupied his position on the basis of his pre-existing high status in society – his function as divinatory expert simply added to this status.

Besides socio-economic status, another etic distinction is possible: that between Greek *specialists* on the one hand and Mesopotamian *professionals* on the other. The latter had to fulfil certain requirements to qualify as professionals: they had formal training and were officially and publicly recognized as qualified experts. As a group, they had a virtual monopoly on the business of public divination. Above all, they were organized. It is not possible to argue

216 Some might be reminded of a Max Weber's ideas about the different kinds of authority of prophet and a priest: charisma for prophets and institution and tradition for the priest.

the same for the majority of Greek *manteis* or for private Roman *haruspices*.[217] The public *haruspex, decemvir* and *augur* in Republican Rome embody an interesting mixture of the qualities ascribed to the Mesopotamian and Greek experts. They cannot be called either specialists or professionals in the strict sense of these words: although they did work in a clearly defined context, their employment as experts was on the basis of descent and status.

These findings are closely connected to the relatively high degree of institutionalization of divination in Mesopotamia and Rome (at least where public divination was concerned) compared to what can be gleaned from the Greek world. Institutionalization enables the creation of, for example, a curriculum which experts-to-be had to learn.[218] This structured environment accounts for many of the factors which help Mesopotamian experts to score highly on the socio-economic scale.[219] In drawing these conclusions, we must not

217 See J. Rüpke, 'Controllers and professionals', *Numen* 43 (1996) 241-262, at 255-256.

218 Cf. on the effects of institutional frameworks on scholarship Lloyd, *The ambitions of curiosity*, 126-147; G.E.R. Lloyd & N. Sivin, *The way and the word: science and medicine in early China and Greece* (New Haven 2002) 82-139; and more theoretical introductions are S.N. Eisenstadt in: N.J. Smelser & P.B. Baltes (eds), *International Encyclopedia of the Social and Behavioral Sciences* 23 (Amsterdam 2001) s.v. social institutions: the concept; A. Kuper & J. Kuper (eds), *The social science encyclopedia* (London 1996^2) s.v. institutions.

219 This is not to say that institutionalization is necessarily a 'good thing' – nor is a 'high' score on the socio-economic scale such a 'good thing' –

overlook the circumstance that public divinatory practices are over-represented in the sources from Rome and Mesopotamia. It must be assumed that there were also many experts working in private divination about whose circumstances next-to-nothing is known. These experts probably enjoyed a lower socio-economic status (comparable to that of the poorer Greek experts).

The relatively high degree of institutionalization in Mesopotamia not only entailed more bureaucratization, it also required the expert to have formal qualifications. In contrast, the lack of institutionalization in Greece led to the situation in which clients, including rulers and elite, would *choose* to consult experts when they wanted to. The upshot is that there was a lack of bureaucratization and experts did not need to have formal qualifications: their interpretations were based on their own experience and knowledge of divination and were therefore flexible. Their challenge was to build up a reputation for themselves by debate and performance – this was possible and indeed necessary, because there were no text-based mantic guidelines such as existed in Mesopotamia.[220] Every Greek expert needed to attract as many clients as possible by his charisma and personal authority.[221] He would have to entice individuals to use his services

these are not normative concepts. Institutionalization can be suffocating and negative, as well as enabling and positive.

220 By means of text. These ideas, although they are adduced about philosophers, doctors and the like, come from Lloyd & Sivin, *The way and the word*, 82-139.

221 Flower, *The seer*, *passim*.

in their attempts to solve their questions – his job was an extremely competitive one. The choice whether or not to use an expert, and if so which one, is an aspect which would probably have been absent if Greek divination had been more institutionalized. Rome is interesting in this respect: public divination was institutionalized and the experts were the members of the political and social elite.

Another consequence of institutionalization was that it affected the position of the expert in relation to the client, usually someone in power. The Mesopotamian expert was employed by the king and was therefore dependent on him: at the same time the king needed divination to make decisions. The same dependency can be seen in Rome, but here the public expert was a political power in himself: the public experts and their clients belonged to one and the same social group. It can be said that the Greek expert stood on the same level as his client: he was not structurally employed for life and could go from one client to the other, living independently. The client chose to consult him. This is one of the reasons the expert did not have any political power: decision making and divination were not closely integrated – both ordinary people and leaders *chose* to use divination instead. Consequently, institutionalization of divination mattered because it changed the model of interaction between decision making and divination.