



DISEASE DEMONS IN MESOPOTAMIA AND EGYPT: SĀMĀNU AS A CASE STUDY

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ABSTRACT

This article gives a brief overview about previous approaches whether the use of the term “demon” is constructive in Egyptology and Ancient Near Eastern Studies. Additionally, the similarities and differences between Egyptian and Mesopotamian representations of disease demons are compared in general, and then the demon Sāmānu/Akhu (*ḥ.w*) is analyzed as a case study.

WHAT IS A DEMON?

The term “demon” is derived from the ancient Greek word δαίμων, which has several meanings. Primarily, it means “god/goddess” or “the divine power.” Additionally, it can describe “the power controlling the destiny of individuals” or a “spiritual” or “semi-divine being.”¹ Obviously, δαίμονες had a wide range of actions and could positively as well as negatively affect persons. While the term had a neutral connotation in antiquity, over the following centuries, as Christianity spread throughout Europe and the Mediterranean world, it acquired a more negative connotation. Δαίμονες began to be associated with the devil and both their actions and their nature classified as evil. The modern term “demon” is typically used in this latter (Christian) sense.² In this paper the term “disease demon” is used to specify only these kinds of beings that cause different ailments.

THE MESOPOTAMIAN CONCEPT

There are many different ways to classify Mesopotamian beings who are not human or divine by scholars of the ancient Near Eastern studies. Karen Sonik has developed a model in which supernatural creatures are classified as *Zwischenwesen* (“in-between” beings).³ She argues that every entity that does not belong to the human or the divine sphere is a *Zwischenwesen*. These beings can then be subdivided into different groups: viziers, monsters, *daimons*, sages, heroes, witches, and ghosts. Viziers (Sumerian: *sukkal*/Akkadian: *sukkallu*) are the emissaries of the Mesopotamian major deities.⁴ Monsters—also known as creatures of chaos—and *daimons* are *Mischwesen* (hybrid creatures)⁵ whose bodies consisted of both zoomorphic and anthropomorphic elements. *Daimons* are differentiated into *genii* that were benevolent guardian spirits and “real” demons that were malevolent beings who

afflicted humans with diseases and could potentially cause death.⁶ Furthermore, there are sages (abgal/apkallu) known from Mesopotamian myths, heroes (ursaĝ/qarrādu) who were part of legends, witches who were usually involved in evil interactions, and ghosts (gidim/etemmu) of those who had died an unnatural and premature death.⁷

In this context monsters and *daimons* are of special interest because they shared a key feature: both entities were hybrid creatures whose natural habitats were desolate regions such as deserts and mountains. The difference between the beings was their sphere of interaction. Monsters only interacted with gods or occasionally with heroes (as *Zwischenwesen*; see above) and thus were limited to the divine sphere. In contrast, *daimons* were restricted to the human world with the exception of two creatures: Ašû and Sāmānu.⁸ As mentioned above, *daimons* are classified in two subcategories: genii and “real” demons.⁹

Frans Wiggerman has suggested another approach to differentiate the Mesopotamian entities that are neither human nor divine.¹⁰ He divides hybrid creatures into monsters and demons. According to his definition, the former originated from the primeval ocean, always appeared in pairs, and had apotropaic features. In contrast, he sees demons as asexual, lacking families, and without a place in the cosmic order.¹¹ In contrast to Sonik’s model, Wiggerman consolidates monsters and genii into the term *monsters*. Demons stay demons (malevolent beings).¹²

In the illustrated dictionary *Gods, Demons and Symbols of Ancient Mesopotamia* by Jeremy Black and Anthony Green, another very popular approach is presented: In modern studies of Mesopotamian iconography and art, scholars have applied the term “demon” to hybrid creatures who have a bipedal human body, whereas hybrid creatures on four legs are considered “monsters.”¹³ This definition unfortunately cannot be applied to the entire range of demonic beings because only two (disease) demons, Lamaštu and Pazuzu, are ever depicted in Mesopotamian reliefs and statuary.¹⁴

According to Manfred Hutter, “demons” can be classified as *lesser gods* or *anti-gods* who are not as powerful as major deities but are still different from human beings. They belong to the divine sphere and can interact with mankind either benevolently or malevolently. They are differentiated from gods in ancient Near Eastern texts by their otherness, i.e., their non-human elements.¹⁵ So Hutter categorizes all types of supportive and destructive hybrid

creatures as “demons”—basically as the term δαίμων was used in Greek in the classical period.

THE EGYPTIAN CONCEPT

Clear distinctions between the various Egyptian beings are also problematic. As Herman te Velde stated:

A satisfactory definition of the term demons and a consistent delimitation of what it meant in Egypt can hardly be given, since our idea of demons is not without ambiguity, and the word does not correspond to one specific Egyptian name.¹⁶

Egyptologists often call the creatures of the underworld mentioned in funerary texts¹⁷ “demons,” even though they typically played a more protective role or acted as guardians. It was their task to keep out *trespassers* who were not allowed in the netherworld. Again serving in a protective role, these *guardians* of the underworld are found on Late Period temple walls.¹⁸

According to Rita Lucarelli, there are two kinds of “demons”: *guardians* and *wanderers*. The distinction derives from the context in which they appear. The former were bound to the places they inhabited, places such as passages and sacred sites in the mortal world and the netherworld. Usually, they were depicted or described as anthropomorphic hybrid creatures with animal heads. Their primary function was protective. *Wanderers* roamed between heaven and earth, throughout the human world and even beyond. These creatures, typically appearing in groups (e.g., *wpw.tjw*, *h³.tjw*), could afflict humanity with diseases and often acted as “emissaries” for certain gods (e.g., Sakhmet, Osiris) who used them to punish mankind.¹⁹ But Lucarelli argues that a definitive typology of these entities still needs to be developed.²⁰

Dieter Kurth has suggested another way to interpret the divine and the demonic in Egypt.²¹ According to him, magic and religion, which belonged to opposite poles of the same scale, could be understood respectively as *acting and examining* (*Handeln und Betrachten*).²² Further, while the power of both demonic and divine beings was beyond that of humans, the power of “demons” was restricted to a specific purpose, but divine power was a mysterious force that ran through everything. Demons were merely components of a broader divine source of power. Thus demonic

beings could produce concrete effects that originated from concrete thoughts while abstract thoughts would lead to searching, examining, worshiping and praying and this would allow people to perceive an almighty power underlying everything and thus the existence of the gods. He therefore concludes: “Dämonen bzw. Götter entspringen entgegengesetzten Ausrichtungen des menschlichen Denkens.”²³ “Demons” as components were derived from gods and acted as their emissaries even when they disturbed the cosmic order. Moreover, even if a deity was worshiped in a temple, that same deity could also function as a “demon” component, i.e., as a specific aspect, subordinate to another deity who was the major god of another temple. The actions of these “demon” components could thus be either benevolent or malevolent depending on the context.²⁴ Yet Kurth, like Lucarelli, admits that a conclusive definition of “demons” is still wanting.²⁵

These different approaches clearly show that it is not easy to categorize Egyptian entities. These entities are able to act in many ways—positively and negatively—depending on one’s perspective. For example, underworld creatures who guard doorways and gates are benevolent towards individuals who are supposed to pass through such areas, but they are dangerous adversaries to those who trespass. Thus we should be careful of broadly classifying them as “demons” because, for many modern readers, this term implies an evil nature due to the modern-day usual (Christian) connotation (as previously discussed). Therefore, it would be suitable to use another term and not the word “demon” if one is referring to them in a more general way. Perhaps the word *daimons* or “in-between” creatures should generally be applied, as suggested by Sonik for Mesopotamian entities.²⁶ Nevertheless the term “demon” for an evil being can easily be used for one category of entities in Egypt: disease demons.

DISEASE DEMONS IN EGYPT AND MESOPOTAMIA

Disease demons generally have a lot in common in Egypt and Mesopotamia (TABLE 1). However, neither Sumerian/Akkadian nor Egyptian has a generic term for demonic beings. Specific names for gangs of demons and individual types do exist in both cultures, such as Lamaštu, Pazuzu, *Utukkū lemnūtu* or *h³.tjw*, *sh³kk*, and *h.w*, etc.²⁷

Mesopotamian as well as Egyptian evil entities originated and lived in mountains, deserts, waters, and marshes—usually territories where no one lives and people only pass by.²⁸ Remote places and the unknown were perceived as uncanny. The foreign was often demonized.²⁹ Thus the Spells for Mother and Child, spell D, from Berlin P. 3027 referring to the demoness Iššiu, daughter of Ittiu, states:

šp 3m.t tn jy.t hr h³s.t nhs.yt [tn jy.t] hr mr.w

Discharge, O you Asiatic woman who has come from the foreign country! Discharge, O [you] Nubian woman who [has come] from the desert!³⁰

Similar statements—that evil beings have a foreign origin—can be found in incantations against the evil *Utukkū* who wandered through the cities at night but originate from the steppe or mountains:

*udug hul a-la₂ hul kitim hul gal₅-la
hul kur-ta im-ta-e₃ du₆-ku₃ kur-idim-
ta ša₃-ba im-ta-e₃*

Evil *utukku*, evil *alû*, evil ghost (and) evil *gallû* have emerged from the netherworld, and they came out from the midst of the distant mountain, the holy mound.³¹

*udug hul an-edin-na du-a a-la₂ hul
an-edin-na dul-la a₂-sag₃ nig₂-ge₁₇ an-
edin-na lal₂-a // [u₃]-tuk-ku lem-nu ša₂ ina
še-e-ri il-la-ku [a-lu-u le]m-nu ša₂ ina še-e-ri i-kat-
ta-mu [a-sak-ku mar-šu ša₂ ina] še-e-ri
it-te-ne₂-i-lu-u₂*

As for the evil *utukku* who walks in the steppe, (and) the evil *alû* who envelops (one) in the steppe, the dangerous *asakku* who always roams around in the steppe.³²

Furthermore, knowledge of the demonic being’s name is essential for expelling them in both cultures because knowledge of the name grants power over these creatures.³³ Demons can have more than one name, and when they do, all have to be named to exorcize the creature. Lamaštu, for example, must be addressed with her seven names:

^dDIM₃.ME DUMU AN-a šumša ištēn šanû aḥat ilī ša
sūqāti šal su patru ša qaqqada illatû rebû ša išāta
inappahu ḥanšu iltu š panūša šakšû šeššu paqid qāti
leqât Irnina sebû nīš ilī rabûti lû tamâti

“Dimme, child of An” is her first name, the second is “sister of the gods of the streets,” the third is “sword that splits the head,” the fourth is “she who lights the fire,” the fifth is “goddess whose face is *wild*,” the sixth is “entrusted one, adopted daughter of Irnina,” the seventh is “by the spell of the great gods may you be bound.”³⁴

Frequently a list of creatures is recited, if the conjurer does not know the specific demonic being:

h³=k hft.y pf.t(j) m(w)t m(w)t.t hm.wt-r^c (...)

Back off, you, enemy, yonder, male dead, female dead etc.³⁵

A difference can be found in the description of the shape of disease demons. The (outward) appearance of Mesopotamian entities is exactly described:³⁶

šinni imēri šinnāša pan nēši dapini panūša šaknū
kīma nimri tukkupā kalâtūša kīma kalê lēssa arqat

(Lamaštu ... with) teeth (like) donkey’s teeth, a face (like) the face of a mighty lion. The small of her back is speckled like a leopard, her cheek is yellowish pale like ochre.³⁷

In Egypt, demonic beings were typically not described.³⁸ There are only a few exceptions. For example, the demon *Sh³kk* who was not originally Egyptian is described:

sh³kk (...) jr.tj=fy m tbn=f ns.t=f m ‘r.t=f

sh³kk (...) whose both eyes are in his head, whose tongue is in his hinter parts³⁹

Another demonic being whose name is not mentioned is depicted in the Spells for Mother and Child, spell C:

fnd=f h³=f hr=f ‘n.w

His nose is (at the) back of his head (and) his face is turned.”⁴⁰

In both cases it seems more important to outline their otherness in contrast to *m³.t*, rather than to describe their shape. Additionally, Mesopotamian demonic and divine entities are easier to distinguish — the major deities always have an anthropomorphic body whereas demons always appear as hybrid creatures.⁴¹ Such a distinction does not exist for Egyptian entities.⁴²

However, the form of the Mesopotamian and Egyptian disease demons are similar. These beings are described in both cultures as a kind of *breeze* that can enter the human body through the body orifices.⁴³ In P. Edwin Smith, different kinds of demonic beings are described as a breeze coming from the outside:

ky n(.j) hsf t³w n(.j) dhr.t h³(y).tjw nds.tjw wpw.tjw
sh³m.t (...)

Another of repelling the breeze of sickness, disease demons, *nds.tjw*-beings (and) the messengers of Sakhmet. (...) ⁴⁴

In Mesopotamia it is not uncommon to classify demons as wind or storm figures, as, for example, the evil *Utukkū*:

u₄-š_u₂-uš im-ḥul dim₂-ma-a-meš u₄
ḥul im-ḥul igi-tuḥ-a-meš u₄ ḥul im ḥul
igi-du-a-meš // u₄-mu up-pu-tu₄ ša₂-a-ri lem-
nu-tu₄ š_u₂-nu u₄-mu ša₂ ḤUL-ti₃ im-ḥul-lu
a-me-ru-ti₃ š_u₂-nu u₄-mu ša₂ ḤUL-ti₃ im-ḥul-lu a-
lik mah-ri š_u₂-nu

they are clouded-over days and evil winds, they are seen to be storms which are evil, an ill-wind, they are storms which are evil, an ill wind at the forefront.⁴⁵

Demons are able to seize victims of their own accord due to their evil nature but they may also act on divine orders.⁴⁶ In Mesopotamia, a god is, in fact, always directly or indirectly involved because every Sumerian and Akkadian had a personal deity for his or her protection. This god can be viewed as a kind of divine *immune system*. When someone angered his personal god, willingly or unwillingly, this deity

TABLE 1: Comparison between Mesopotamian and Egyptian disease demons.

	MESOPOTAMIA	EGYPT
Generic Term	no	
Distribution	desert, mountains, waters	foreign countries/desert, waters, marshes
	uninhabited territories	
Names	necessary to know in order to exorcise them	
Shape	hybrid creatures	unknown
Form	wind, storm (“breeze”)	“breeze”
	entering body as “breeze”	
Instigation of Action	of their own accord or by divine orders	

could send a disease demon to punish the delinquent or could turn a blind eye when a demonic being was approaching.⁴⁷

SĀMĀNU AS A MESOPOTAMIAN AND AN EGYPTIAN DISEASE DEMON

The ancient Near Eastern disease demon Sāmānu is attested in numerous texts in Mesopotamia and Egypt. In Mesopotamia, Sāmānu is attested from the Ur III period to the Hellenistic Period (approx. 330–63 BCE) in incantations, medical texts/recipes, lexical lists, omens and astronomical diaries. As a Mesopotamian demonic being, he is able to afflict gods, mankind, animals (cattle, sheep and donkey), plants (as rust and as pest), and as an occurrence in rivers.⁴⁸ In Egypt, the demon, who is also known as Akhu (*ḥ.w*), only occurs as an affliction of men in magical-medical texts which date almost exclusively to the New Kingdom.⁴⁹

The demon’s shape is precisely described in the Near Eastern sources:

sa-ma-na ka piriĝ-ĝa zu₂ muš ušum-gal umbin [ḥu-ri₂]-in-na kuĝ₂ a[l]-lu₅

Sāmānu, (with) a lion’s mouth, teeth of a dragon’s snake, claws of an eagle (and) a crab’s tail⁵⁰

Additionally, the idea of *red evil* is significant because the name Sāmānu is a nominal derivation from the Akkadian word *sāmu* “red” and literally means “the red one.”⁵¹ Mesopotamian texts play with this association; so, for example:

[s]a-ma-na šu ḥuš [ĝ]iri₃ ḥuš ^den-lil₂-la₂

Sāmānu, reddish claw, reddish paw of Enlil⁵²

Another important aspect of the demon is his representation as dog. In the ancient Near East, he is usually described as the evil dog of the different deities, especially of the healing goddess Gula:⁵³

ur ḥuš ^den-lil₂-la₂ gu₂ sur ^den-ki-ka ka uš₂ tuḥ-tuḥ ^dnin-^siisin₂-na-ka ur ka tuḥ-a diĝir-re-ne

red dog of Enlil, neck-breaker of Enki, the frequently opening bloody mouth of Ninisina, dog with opened mouth of the gods⁵⁴

As is typical, the bodily form is usually not described in Egypt. Neither the redness nor the canine form occurs. In Egyptian, however, the demon can also be called Akhu (*ḥ.w*). The word *ḥ.w*

is derived from the root h_j^{55} and means “the burning/burned one.” However, it is unclear if the term Akhu is a reference in any way to the Mesopotamian tradition regarding the demon’s redness.⁵⁶ The only statement alluding to Sāmānu/Akhu as dog, can be found in P. Leiden I 343 + 345, which is the major source for this disease demon in Egypt:

[p]³ jw^{jw} wš³[{.t}] ks.w

O dog who chews bones⁵⁷

Furthermore, the origin of the entity is mentioned in the Mesopotamian sources. As is typical for such beings, he comes from the mountains:

kur-ta ġen-na kur-ta <e₄>-da sa-ma-na
kur-ta ġen-na kur-ta e₄-da [ħur-sa]ġ
ki sikil-ta du [kur-t]a e₄-da

coming from the mountains, <coming down>
from the mountains, Sāmānu, coming from the
mountains, coming down from the mountains,
coming from the [foothil]ls, the pure place,
coming from the [moun]tains⁵⁸

A similar statement is made in the Egyptian sources:

jw=k n n³ n(.j) ³.w šm³{m}.w n.ty ħr ħ³s.t

You belong to the wandering donkeys which
are in the desert.⁵⁹

The wandering donkeys, which can only refer to undomesticated animals, particularly stress the foreign origin of Sāmānu/Akhu in Egypt.

Sāmānu’s actions are a major theme in ancient Near Eastern texts. He is capable of afflicting gods in Mesopotamia which is extremely uncommon.⁶⁰

diġir an-na an-na im-mi-keše₂ diġir ki
ki-a im-mi-ib₂-keše₂ ^dutu an-ur₃-ra
i[m-mi]-ib₂-k[eše₂] ^dnanna su₄-an-n[a
im]-mi-i[b₂-keš]e₂

He has bound the god of heaven in heaven, he
has bound the god of earth in earth, he has
bound Utu in the horizon, he has bound Nanna
in the red evening sky⁶¹

But the most common victims of Sāmānu are mankind:

ṛguruš^ṛ ħaš₂-a-na-ṛta^ṛ ba-ṛni^ṛ-i[n ...] //
eṭ-lu [ina] šap^ṛ-ri-šu₂ i[š-bat]
ki-sikil GIŠ.GABA-na-ṛke₄^ṛ // [...] ṛar₂^ṛ[...] //
ina ši-ti-iq ṛir^ṛ-ti-ša₂ i[š-bat]
lu₂-tur ga-naġ-e sa gu₂-bi ba-[...] //
šer₂-ru e-niq ši-iz-bi ina la[-ba-nu iš-bat]

the man’s thigh is seized (by him), the
woman’s breastbone (?) is seized (by him), the
suckling child’s neck-tendons are seized (by
him).⁶²

Usually, humans are affected on the skin of their heads, necks, shoulders, breasts (especially those of women), and thighs.⁶³ Furthermore, this entity can afflict different animals—cattle, donkey, and sheep:

gud-e a-ub-<ba> ba-ni-ba udu umbin-
si-ba ba-ni-ba anše ġeštu-ba ba-ni-ba

The bull caught him by <his> horn’s edge. The
sheep caught him by his hoof. The donkey
caught him by his ear.⁶⁴

Additionally, the demon is attested as an occurrence in rivers as well as a plant disease in the ancient Near East. In the case of the latter, Sāmānu can afflict plants either as a fungus (rust) or as a pest. In an incantation, one of the Mesopotamian rivers is afflicted by Sāmānu:

idigna pu₂ (LAGAB)-ba ba-ni-ba

The Tigris caught him by his side (?).⁶⁵

As a plant disease—mostly attested in omens—Sāmānu usually afflicts barley:

DIŠ i-na qu₂-tu-un qer-bi MI.B.ĤI ṛsa^ṛ-mu na-di nu-
uh-ħu-ul-lu i-te-eb-ba-am-ma še-a-am sa-ma-nu
DAB-at

If a red sign lies in the constrictions of the
entrails: *Nuħħullu* (= a destructive storm)
springs up and Sāmānu affects the barley.⁶⁶

If he is addressed as pest, Sāmānu is able to
destroy any field crops:

KA.INIM.MA ʾBURU₅ mu ʾ-na ʾa-ki-la mu ʾbat-ʾti-ra
ša-ši-ri ʾsa-ma-ʾna ʾkal-mat A.ŠA₃ ina ŠA₃ A.ŠA₃ šu-
li-i

Incantation to remove locust, caterpillar, “devourer”-pest, *mub-battiru*’-pest, cricket, Sāmānu, (and) the vermin of the field from within the field.⁶⁷

In Mesopotamia, this demonic being acts as a kind of universal evil from whom nobody and nothing is safe.⁶⁸ In contrast, Sāmānu/Akhu is limited to humans in Egypt, but there he can occur on and in the entire body, not just the skin:

m p³ rd 2 n.ty hr šm.t^o m t³ mn.t(w) 2 n.ty hr šhš^o
m p³ ph.wj n.ty hr kz.t=f^o m {n³}<t³> j³.t p³ z³y(w)
<n.j> ʿ.t^o m p³y=f rmn 2 m nhb.t=f m t³y=f dr.ty
2^o n.ty [...] n=f n.ty m-ʿ=f^o m jw-d³-m^oy-n³ n.ty m
mht(.w)=f n.ty m³(.w)^o [m] gg.t 2^o hn^o p³ h³.ty m
wf³(w)=f hn^o drw.w=f m p³y=f [...] m t³y=f sp.t 2
n.ty hr md(w){w}.t^o m {rš}<šr>.t=f t³ ʿb^ob(y) [m
t³jj]=f jr.tj 2.t n.ty hr ptr(j)^o m t³ t³ z.w<t> 7 n.t
d³d³=f^o

in the two lower legs that walk, in the two thighs that run, in the back that bows, in the spine, the beam <of> the body, in his two shoulders, in his neck, in both h[i]s hands that [...] for him, which is with him in the *Jdmn* (?) which is in his entrails which are in good condition, [in] the two kidneys (?) and in the heart, in his lung and his sides, in his [two ears that hear (?)], in his two lips that speak, in his nose, the bubbling one (?), [in his] both eyes that see, in the seven orifices of his head.⁶⁹

Furthermore, he can have an impact on the cosmic order:

jn-jw jy.n=k r [wj³ ...] j[n]-j[w ... wj³] n(j) h^o r
nhm s:kd m wj³ jn-[j]w [j]y.n=k r hr(.t) jtn^o r jšf
šw.t

Did you come to [the barque ... Did you come ... to the barque] of the Millions to prevent travel in the barque? [Did] you come to keep away [the sun disk], to enlarge (?) the emptiness?⁷⁰

In the Egyptian incantations, it is far more important to enumerate the actions that are undertaken against Sāmānu/Akhu. So it is described that the demon does not act alone but commands an entire gang that has to be expelled, too:

jr n³ n.w zm³.yt jn.n=k hn^o<=k> r ʿh³ dd.tw hmt ʿš³
m d³d³.w=sn jr p³ stp(.w) n.j r(m)t jn.n=k hn^o=k r
ʿh³ h³=sn n³y=sn n³k³w st w^ort(.w)

As to the band whom you have brought with you to fight: In their heads, much copper shall be given. As to the choicest of people whom you have brought with you to fight: They abandoned their trulls (?). They have fled.⁷¹

The most important opponent of Sāmānu/Akhu is the weather god Seth/Baal. He usually defeats him in the Egyptian sources:

p³ kh(ʒ)b(w) n(j) 4th r p³ [ʿh.]w/p[ʒ s-m-n]^o p³
hndn n(j) B^oyr r=k^o p³ kh(ʒ)b n(j) p³ h³[h³.tj] jw=f
hr jb h(w)<.t> r t³ p.t r=k^o k³ ʿdn=f t³ ph.ty p³y=f
hpš 2 hr=k^o k³ dp{.t}=k n³ dp(w) p³ [...]n-m^o m
dr.t=f

The rage of Seth is against [Ak]hu/[Sāmānu]. The uproar of Baal is against you. The rage of the storm while it is thirsting for rain from the sky is against you. It shall exhaust its (bodily) strength [...] (lit. to put an end to), his two arms above you. You shall taste that which the [S]ea has tasted by his hand!⁷²

Thus the Egyptian attestations focus on the actions against the demon rather than the demon’s own actions.

COMPARISON BETWEEN THE MESOPOTAMIAN AND EGYPTIAN SĀMĀNU

The Mesopotamian concept and the Egyptian concept of the disease demon Sāmānu/Akhu diverge considerably (TABLE 2). In the ancient Near East, the entity’s shape was precisely described as was common in Mesopotamian incantations. Other Mesopotamian demons, such as Pazuzu, Lamaštu, and the evil *Utukkū*, were likewise described in their spells, too.⁷³ In contrast, descriptions of the outward appearance of Egyptian (disease) demons usually did not play a role in the Egyptian texts. The

Mesopotamian Sāmānu was also a kind of dog. He was the dog of the gods, especially the *evil* dog of the healing goddess Gula, and this theme was of major importance in the ancient Near Eastern sources. But in Egyptian incantations, the canine aspect is only mentioned once. Both cultures agree that Sāmānu had a foreign origin and came from uninhabited territories. However, this is to be expected because—as mentioned before—every demon came from such areas.⁷⁴ In Mesopotamia, the people and things that are afflicted are of major interest. Therefore, Sāmānu played an *active* part. He was a “universal evil” who could affect a broad range of victims, both animate and inanimate. In Egypt, it was more significant to describe the actions that had to be taken against the demon. So Sāmānu played a *passive* role in the textual sources, although this does not mean that he was any less dangerous. Furthermore, this entity acted alone in Mesopotamia, while in Egypt, he was the commander of an entire group that had to be expelled, too. Additionally, the address used in the incantations differed: Mesopotamian spells tended to use the third person singular with a few exceptions,⁷⁵ but Sāmānu was always addressed in the third person singular with no exceptions.

However, the Egyptian spells usually used the second person singular⁷⁶—so do the incantations against Sāmānu/Akhu.⁷⁷

In conclusion it can be stated that the disease demon Sāmānu, also known as Akhu in Egyptian, was attested in Mesopotamia and Egypt. Nevertheless, their conception of Sāmānu was completely different. Both cultures tended to utilize specific mechanics particular to their civilizations in exorcising this evil creature.

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TABLE 2: Comparison between Mesopotamian and Egyptian Sāmānu.

	MESOPOTAMIA	EGYPT
Shape	lion’s mouth, teeth of a dragon’s snake, “red appearance,” etc.	unspecified
“Dog”	dog of gods, especially the healing goddess Gula	(yes)
Origin	mountains	earth, mound
	“uninhabited territories”	
Actions	Sāmānu’s campaigns against everybody/ everything → “active”	campaigns against Sāmānu → “passive”
Address	3rd person singular	2nd person singular masculine

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- ⁶ Sonik 2013, 110–113.
- ⁷ Sonik 2013, 107–114.
- ⁸ See Sonik 2013, 115 footnote 37. For Sāmānu see below and Beck 2015a; Beck 2015b.
- ⁹ Sonik 2013, 107, 109–110, 112–115. For general information on "demons" see van der Toorn 2003; Maul 1999; Haas 1986, 109–119; Leibovici 1971; and Thompson 1903, XXI–LXV (the reading of some of the Sumerian and Akkadian words are different from today's reading).
- ¹⁰ Wiggerman 2011, 302–311.
- ¹¹ Wiggerman 2011, 302–311.
- ¹² "Demons" are worshiped neither in Egypt nor in Mesopotamia; see Haas 1986, 155; Maul 1999, 258, Wiggerman 2000, 226; van der Toorn 2003, 75, 77; Wiggerman 2001, 308 for Mesopotamia; for Egypt see Jansen-Winkel 1999; Lucarelli 2010a, 2; Lucarelli 2013, 16. Lucarelli 2010a, 7, states that from the Late Period onward, "demons" start to have private cults in certain places.
- ¹³ Black and Green 2011, 63.
- ¹⁴ This is mentioned by Black and Green (2011, 63), too. Most information on "demons" comes from the Sumerian and Akkadian incantations. Compare this to Wiggerman 2011, 309. For Lamaštu and Pazuzu see Wiggerman 2000, 217–249 (Lamaštu); Heeßel 2000a; Borger 1987. See especially Heeßel 2011.
- ¹⁵ Hutter 2007, 21, 23–24, 25–26, 28–32.
- ¹⁶ te Velde 1975, 980. For general information on "demons," see Pinch 1994, 33–46; Kákosy 1989, 66–89; Jansen-Winkel 1999, 259.
- ¹⁷ See Zandee 1960, especially 1–44, 192–226.
- ¹⁸ Lucarelli 2010b, 87–88; Lucarelli 2006, 207; Lucarelli 2011, 110, 115, 119–121; Szpakowska 2001, 75; Leitz 2004, 395. See also the PhD dissertation by Carolina Teotino, *Die apotropäischen Gottheiten des Osiris. Eine Studie zu den Schutzgöttern nach Quellen der Spät- und griechisch-römischen Zeit* (working title, in preparation).
- ¹⁹ Lucarelli 2013, 17, Lucarelli 2010a, 2–5. Compare also her statements in Lucarelli 2006, 203–212. For general information on the *wpw.tjw* and *h³.tjw* and the gods they obey, see, among others,

NOTES

- ¹ Liddell et al. 1996, 365–366.
- ² Riley 1999. See also Ahn 2006; Kousoulis 2011; Hutter 2007; Lucarelli 2010a; Lucarelli 2013, 14; Heeßel 2000a, 4–6; and Sonik 2013, 109–110.
- ³ Sonik 2013, 103–115, fig. 1.
- ⁴ Sonik 2013, 104.
- ⁵ For *Mischwesen* see Wiggerman 1994; Green 1994.

- Kaper 2003, especially 60–63; Leitz 1994, 224–246.
- ²⁰ Lucarelli 2013, 16–17.
- ²¹ See Kurth 2003.
- ²² Kurth 2003, 45–46.
- ²³ Kurth 2003, 49, 54–55.
- ²⁴ Kurth 2003, 50–55. But even Kurth admits that there were few beings who had only one reason for their existence and this did not include any elements of a vision of god (Kurth 2003, 53).
- ²⁵ Kurth 2003, 58. Kurth states that some Egyptian creatures were pure demons whereby others were pure gods—even if this occurred very rarely.
- ²⁶ Sonik 2013, 110–111. Cf. Lucarelli 2006, 203, who argues against the use of the word *daimones*. See also Kousoulis 2011, xiv, who argues against the use of the word “demon” for any Egyptian entity.
- ²⁷ For Mesopotamia see Sonik 2013, 104; Capomacchia and Verdame 2011, 293; Heeßel 2000a, 4; Maul 1999, 258; and for Egypt see Lucarelli 2013, 12; Kurth 2003, 54; Jansen-Winkel 1999, 259; te Velde 1975, 980. Compare also the discussion by Quack 2015, 105–106.
- ²⁸ Mesopotamia: Sonik 2013, 107, 112–113; Capomacchia and Verdame 2011, 295; Maul 1999, 258; Hutter 2007, 30; Hutter 1988, 220; Haas 1986, 125–127; Leibovici 1971, 88; Weber 1906, 11; Thompson 1903, xxxvi, xxix–xli; Egypt: Jansen-Winkel 1999, 259; Pinch 1994, 35, 41; te Velde 1975, 981.
- ²⁹ For demonization of the foreign see, e.g., Hutter 2007, 30; Haas 1986, 112–114; Hutter, 1988, 220–221; Lucarelli 2011, 119.
- ³⁰ R:II7–8, Erman 2003, 16, pl. 3.
- ³¹ Tablet VII 69–70: Geller 2007, 138, 222.
- ³² Tablet VII 98–100: Geller 2007, 139, 223.
- ³³ Mesopotamia: Rendu Loisel 2011, 330; Heeßel 2000b, 78. Cf. Haas 1986, 120–122; Egypt: Beck 2015a, 93, 94 (table 1); Nunn 1996, 104; Westendorf 1992, 29, 33; Kákossy 1989, 118; Legge 1901, 42–43.
- ³⁴ LAM I 1–7: Farber 2014, 144–145.
- ³⁵ R:VI4 (spell 13), see Borghouts 1971, 21, pl. VI–VIa, 23.
- ³⁶ Compare, for example, the incantations against the *Utukkū lemnūtu* (Geller 2007), Pazuzu (Heeßel 2000a) and Lamaštu (Farber 2014, Wiggerman 2000), as well as the explanations in the following text on Sāmānu.
- ³⁷ LAM II 36–38: Farber 2014, 168–169.
- ³⁸ Beck 2015a, 93, Lucarelli 2010a, 4, 5.
- ³⁹ Composite text of O. Leipzig 42 R:1–2 (Černý and Gardiner 1957, pl. III), O. Gardiner 300 R:1 (Černý and Gardiner 1957, pl. XCI), and P. BM EA 10731 V:1 (Edwards 1968, pl. XXIV). For *sh3kk* in general, see Fischer-Elfer 2015, 230–248.
- ⁴⁰ R:19–10: Erman 1901, 12; Yamazaki 2003, 14, pl. II. The spell begins with *k.t* “another,” but it is rather unlikely that it was directed against *tmy.t* as the former spell because the disease demon is addressed as male and not as female.
- ⁴¹ Wiggerman 2011, 299; Hutter 2007, 25–26; van der Toorn 2003, 77–78; Wiggerman 2000, 232; Maul 1999, 258.
- ⁴² For hybrid creatures and their perception in general, see Fischer 1987, especially 13–21, 26, pls. I–VI.
- ⁴³ Mesopotamia: Hutter 2007, 28; Hutter 1988, 221; Haas 1986, 118; Leibovici 1971, 87, 97. Some of the Mesopotamian demons, such as Lamaštu or Sāmānu, only seized their victims. Egypt: Lucarelli 2010a, 3; Westendorf 1992, 28; Westendorf 1970, 145; Grapow 1956, 32.
- ⁴⁴ V:XVII11–12, See Breasted 1930, I, 502, II, pls. XVIII–XVIIIa. For other examples, see Westendorf 1999, 373–374.
- ⁴⁵ Tablet V 76–78 : Geller 2007, 121, 210.
- ⁴⁶ Mesopotamia: Sonik 2013, 109–110; Wiggerman 2011, 310–311 ; Hutter 2007, 21, 31 ; van der Toorn 2003, 72–73; Egypt: Meeks 1971, 21; Grapow 1956, 27, 33.
- ⁴⁷ Heeßel 2007; Scurlock 2006, 73; Jacobsen 1976, 147–164.
- ⁴⁸ For a general overview of the Mesopotamian Sāmānu, see Beck 2015b, 171–174, for the attestations, Beck 2015b, 3–91, in each case with further references.

- ⁴⁹ See Beck 2015b, 174–176, for general information and Beck 2015b, 93–169, for the sources in Egypt (with further references). The most recent attestation dates to the Ptolemaic Period.
- ⁵⁰ AO 11276 R:1–5: see Beck 2015b, 10–14 (with further references).
- ⁵¹ Beck 2015b, 172.
- ⁵² HS 1555 + 1587 R:1–2, see Beck 2015b, 6–10 (with further references). For the god Enlil see, e.g., Black and Green 2011, 76 (“Enlil”); see also Krebernik 2012, 76, who convincingly speaks against the interpretation of Enlil as a kind of storm god.
- ⁵³ Beck 2015b, 176–179.
- ⁵⁴ AO 11276 R:6–9: see Beck 2015b, 10–14 (with further references). See also cuneiform tablet HS 1555 + 1587 R:3–4 (Beck 2015b, 6–10), VAT 6819 R:1–7 (Beck 2015b, 18–19), S.U. 51/128 + 129 + 233 (= STT 178) and duplicates (R:2–7; Beck 2015b, 22–31). For the gods, see, among others, the particular keyword in Black and Green 2011.
- ⁵⁵ Erman and Grapow 1926, 223.13–20, 224.13.
- ⁵⁶ See Beck 2015b, 174, 246.
- ⁵⁷ P. Leiden I 343 + 345 V:IV9 (incantation 12 line 1–2), see Beck 2015b, 155–158 (with further references). It could be that this topic is missing due to the partially fragmentary condition of the manuscript.
- ⁵⁸ 6 NT 145 R:I1–7 (e₄ = e₁₁.d): see Beck 2015b, 3–6; compare also S.U. 51/128 + 129 + 233 (=STT 178) and duplicates (R:8–9; Beck 2015b, 22–31) with a similar statement.
- ⁵⁹ P. Leiden I 343 + 345 R:III7–8/V:VI2–3 (incantation 3 line 7): see Beck 2015b, 111–119 (with further references).
- ⁶⁰ According to Sonik’s taxonomy, *daimons* were usually restricted to the human sphere but she mentions Sāmānu as an exception to this “rule,” see above. For Sāmānu as dangerous to gods, see Beck 2015b, 181–182.
- ⁶¹ A 7885 R:5–8: see Beck 2015b, 15–17 (with further references). Compare also HS 1555 + 1587 R:5–8 (Beck 2015b, 6–10).
- ⁶² S.U. 51/128 + 129 + 233 and duplicates (Beck 2015b, 22–31). Similar statements are given in 6 NT 145 R:I8–I9 (Beck 2015b, 3–6), HS 1555 + 1587 R:10–12, V:13 (Beck 2015b, 6–10), AO 11276 R:11–15 (Beck 2015b, 10–14).
- ⁶³ For an analysis of Sāmānu as a disease of humankind from a current day perspective, see Beck 2015b, 182–193, and Beck 2015c.
- ⁶⁴ HS 1555 + 1587 V:14–16 (ba = b-a₅ (AK)): see Beck 2015b, 6–10 (with further references). For a discussion of Sāmānu as a disease of sheep, cattle and donkey, see Beck 2015b, 193–199.
- ⁶⁵ HS 1555 + 1587 V:17: see Beck 2015b, 6–10 (with further references). See also Beck 2015b, 207–208.
- ⁶⁶ AO 7539 V:72’: see Beck 2015b, 72 (with further references). Compare BM 22696 V:22’–23’ (Beck 2015b, 72), K 2162+ R:19 (Beck 2015b, 74–75), K 229 R:18’ + (Beck 2015b, 73–74), BM 46229 V:32–33 (Beck 2015b, 76), Farmer’s instructions line 71 (Beck 2015b, 70–71). For an analysis of Sāmānu as a plant disease, see Beck 2015b, 199–203.
- ⁶⁷ S.U. 52/214 V:1–2: see Beck 2015b, 77–78 (with further references). Compare also BM 45686 R:II29–31 (Beck 2015b, 81–82), tablet 81–2–4,319 R:6’–7’ (Beck 2015b, 80), BM 123370 II6’ (Beck 2015b, 80–81). For a discussion of the demon as pest, see Beck 2015b, 204–207.
- ⁶⁸ Beck 2015b, 174, 241–242.
- ⁶⁹ P. Leiden I 343 + 345 R:VII11–VIII4, O. Strasbourg H 115 R:5–11 (incantation 5 line 22–29), see Beck 2015b, 126–140 (with further references).
- ⁷⁰ P. Leiden I 343 + 345 V:IX9–10 (incantation 13 line 9–11), see Beck 2015b, 158–160 (with further references).
- ⁷¹ P. Leiden I 343 + 345 R: II4–6/V:III10–IV:2 (incantation 2 line 12–14), see Beck 2015b, 103–111 (with further references).
- ⁷² P. Leiden I 343 + 345 R:IV9–13/V:VII5–7 (incantation 4 line 1–5), see Beck 2015b, 119–126 (with further references).
- ⁷³ For these demons, see note 36, as well as above in the text.
- ⁷⁴ See table 1.
- ⁷⁵ For example, LAM II 137: *sūtāku* “I (= Lamaštu) am a Sutean woman!” (Farber 2014, 176–177).
- ⁷⁶ The first person singular is also used, usually by

the conjuror (e.g.: “It is not I saying this. It is the deity X saying this.”).⁷⁷ For this comparison see also Beck 2015a and Beck 2015b, 237–249.