

Editorial

Very little attention has been given to demons from a historical-religious perspective and this is particularly true for Ancient Mesopotamia. Most of the works on this topic record lists of demons or just concentrate on specific matters, such as single demonic figures. Nevertheless, a general analysis of these entities as a category of the Mesopotamian religious system has never been undertaken from a comprehensive point of view.

Taking these premises as a starting point, I planned a conference on Mesopotamian Demons, in the hope not to solve the question, but to raise and discuss it with colleagues who have devoted most of their research to this issue¹. With this in mind, the invited speakers were encouraged to advance proposals of analysis and interpretation on the topic.

The international conference “Mesopotamian Demons” took place on the 28th February 2011 at the “Sapienza” University of Rome². Five invited speakers presented their papers, while I was in charge of giving the opening paper and A.M.G. Capomacchia drew the final conclusions.

Programme:

L. Verderame (Sapienza Università di Roma), *Introduction*

F.A.M. Wiggermann (Uni. Amsterdam), *The Taxonomy of the Supernatural: Gods, Monsters, Demons*

T. Abusch (Brandeis), *Witches and Demons*

N. Heeßel (Uni. Heidelberg), *Pazuzu – The Ideal Demon in Antiquity and Modern Times?*

M.J. Geller (TOPOI Berlin), *Udug without a Face*

P. Mander (IUO Napoli), *Non-corporeal Beings in Iamblichus’ Chaldean Doctrine and in Mesopotamia*

A.M.G. Capomacchia (Sapienza Università di Roma), *Conclusion*

¹ Of course, I was not alone in the task of organising this meeting. I must thank my colleague A.M.G. Capomacchia for her constant assistance. I am grateful to A. Camplani for his help and financial support as director of «Studi e Materiali di Storia delle Religioni», that covered the expenses of the conference. The department of Oriental Studies (now Istituto Italiano di Studi Orientali) participated in the initiative and a minor fund was granted by the “Sapienza” (prot. C26C10N7P3).

² Curiously enough, a conference on a similar topic, entitled *Ancient Egyptian Demonology – A comparative perspective*, was organised at the University of Bonn the same day.

An exhibition of artworks by the students of the school of comics (“Scuola Romana dei Fumetti”, <http://www.scuolaromanadeifumetti.it>) inspired by the Mesopotamian demons took place during the conference. The exhibition was organised by Veronica Frizzo and Massimiliano Grotti. Among the artworks of the artists who participated³, the best piece presented by the artists was awarded with a prize⁴.

The proceedings of the conference are hereby published, with some changes. The opening and conclusive papers, by A.M.G. Capomacchia and myself, have been redacted as a single article. Finally, the paper that A.-C. Rendu Loisel presented at the conference *Ancient Egyptian Demonology – A comparative perspective* (University of Bonn, 28/2/2011), has also been included here since the proceedings of that conference will not be published.

³ Sara Amoruso, Andrea Aprile, Veronica Baeli, Edoardo Bernardini, Iacopo Callisti, Ivan Capelli, Christian D’Anivano, Simone D’Armini, Daniele De Sando, Daniele Di Marco, Ambra Filomarino, Veronica Frizzo, Chiara Gabrielli, Alejandro Ilicic, Cosimo Mazzoni, Fabio Tarquini, Francesca Titone.

⁴ Cosimo Mazzoni.