

PERCEPTIONS AND MANIFESTATIONS OF MAGIC AMONG SOME PEOPLES OF THE OLD WORLD AND IN THE HITTITE ENVIRONMENT

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Abstract

In the framework of the article, the perception of magic in the ancient world, especially in the Hittite environment, has been focused on, considering magic as a phenomenon in comparative parallels with the perceptions of the ancient Egyptians, Jews, Armenians and other ancient Near Eastern peoples. Within the framework of the study, the origin and perception of magic will be presented, considering it from an etymological, ritualistic, operational point of view, as well as the role of magic as a negative and positive phenomenon for ancient societies, etc. will be presented. In addition, in the context of the question, an attempt is made to present the role of the sorcerer in the ancient society.

Keywords: magic, priest, magus, sorcery, heka, evil eye, rituals, mythology, Mesopotamian magic, Old Testament.

The word magus, magic, appears to originate from the ancient Greek world. When we say Greek, we should mean Athenian, because Greece was not a single state and did not reflect the universal Greek culture. Magos or makuš (old Persian)¹ were called Persian magicians, Zoroastrians². It is interesting that this term magus, Zoroastrian, (means Persian Priest or Zoroastrian), later it became the name of a tribe or nation, when Iranians were considered magus³. In ancient Greece, magical rites were given a number of names - *magos*, *mantis*, *goēs* - spell, divination, sacrifice, etc.

Early evidence of magic and sorcery has been found in cuneiform inscriptions in the region of present-day Iraq in Mesopotamia. Magic in Mesopotamia was perceived as malevolence and it could destroy a person⁴. In Mesopotamia, magic was also considered the cause of various diseases, such as indigestion, skin diseases, stroke, childhood diseases, fever, as well as mental illness. The listed diseases were caused by

¹ Ogden 2002: 33.

² Davies 2017: 18.

³ Margaryan 2023: 183.

⁴ Balentine 2020: 13.

the witch⁵. In Mesopotamia, jaundice and typhus were associated with the mythical character Lamashtu.

The witch was mostly depicted as an old woman. The sorcerer harmed the victim through indirect contact, the sorcerer made a doll, statuette with the image of the victim and buried it in the wall, or buried the doll or statuette with the victim's image with the deceased, thereby sealing a marriage between the deceased and the victim⁶.

A sorcerer in the beliefs of ancient societies was a person who possessed special abilities and was also considered a demoniac. The witch was highly respected. People were afraid of it and beware.

In Egypt, magic – Heka, was perceived as a magical life force inspired by the Sun God Ra⁷. Heka was the name of the goddess of magic. It is interesting that in ancient Egypt the god Heka did not have temples dedicated to her, but she did have shrines and the Weret Hekau, who was the female equivalent of the god Heka. The latter's name means "Elder of Magic" and was usually depicted as a cobra⁸.

In Egypt during the 1st millennium, it became more common to attribute diseases, epidemics and other misfortunes to the envy or malice of people who had the evil eye.

The Old Testament (Hebrew) mentions a number of words that symbolized magic, sorcery, such as: khartum sorcerer, hoel ob necromancer, yid'on magician, etc⁹.

In Jewish beliefs, a person who suffers from misfortune is a victim of demons. A wrongly chosen word affects like a curse and the evil eye¹⁰. The jettatori phenomenon is also associated with the evil eye. These are people, more often men, who do not physically kill, but their look has a bad effect on people, as a rule, it is noted that the latter have light blue eyes and dark black eyebrows. A famous jettatori in history was Pope Pius IX. According to the Jews, every action or word that can provoke the jealousy of the spirits has the same effect as the evil eye. There was a custom among the Jews, according to which young men with good looks were called Ethiopians, in order to avoid the evil eye¹¹. By the way, there was such an Armenian custom: when a child died young in the family they gave a Muslim name to the next born so that he would not die (according to T. Mikayelyan's oral report).

Lamashtu, who was expelled from heaven for his wickedness, was confused with Ardat Lily. Lamashtu who was regarded as an evil creation, mainly performed two magic rituals. The purpose of the first was to help the women during childbirth, the second infects the child with jaundice¹². Lamashtu tortured and killed babies. In Jewish magic, it

⁵ Davies 2017: 3.

⁶ Balentine 2020: 13.

⁷ Balentine 2020: 5.

⁸ Harris 2015: 155-156.

⁹ Davies 2017: 14.

¹⁰ Trachtenberg 1939: 40.

¹¹ Trachtenberg 1939: 46-47.

¹² Barjamovic, Larsen 2008: 1.

was believed that women who did not receive love and did not have children turned into ghosts who tempted mortal men with evil intentions and the power of the evil eye¹³.

In Jewish magic, in addition to the common forms of magic used in Egypt, the Hittite Empire, and Greece, divination by the “eye” or, as it is known, the “evil eye” was very common in Judea.

Amulets with Aramaic letters were found in the Syria-Palestinian territory of IV-VII centuries, which hung near the door threshold. The amulet protected the house from the evil eye, evil spirits and diseases. A similar custom existed in Assyria, where colorful figurines of dogs were buried in the ground near the doorway, believing that it would protect the home from misfortune and disease¹⁴.

The use of tiles to ward off evil was used not only in Mesopotamia, but also in ancient Greece and Rome. In Greece, voodoo dolls were widely used in magic, which were made from various materials: clay, bronze, copper, wax, dough, and wool¹⁵.

In Mesopotamia, black dog bile had the power of an amulet if it was smoked¹⁶.

The Hittites distinguished between black, that is evil, and white magic. Evil magic was called *alwanzatar*¹⁷. White or good magic is witchcraft, healing people from diseases, giving children to childless women, saving the devil, etc. Sorcery takes place between two people, the sorcerer and the victim of the sorcery. The Hittites tried to protect themselves from the evil eye and diseases sent by the gods through various rituals, sacrifices, and amulets. Diseases sent by the gods were treated with animals. The Hittites treated the illness caused by the god of thunder and lightning through the Zuwi ritual of magic¹⁸.

In the Hittite laws, the Edict of Telepinu clearly stated who could perform sorcery, a number of sorcery prohibitions were in use. For example, among the Hittites it was forbidden to eat dog meat. The king and queen took part in Hittite magical ceremonies. The queen personally participated in pig sacrifice rituals, such as the Kuliwišna and Hannahanna rituals. The latter was dedicated to the goddess of motherhood and fertility¹⁹.

Like many ancient cultures, Hittite magic used special objects and symbols. They could be amulets, figurines, or ritual objects believed to have protective or transformative properties. Symbols and written charms can play a role in focusing the gathering of magical powers.

Amulets were found from Hattuša, which were made of natural stones, for example, agate, and were unworked. Their purpose was to protect against the evil eye²⁰.

¹³ Johnston 2004: 399.

¹⁴ Wallis 1978: 99.

¹⁵ Ogden 2002: 245.

¹⁶ Wallis 1978: 12.

¹⁷ Mouton 2010: 515.

¹⁸ Chalendar 2019: 85.

¹⁹ Collins 2006: 162.

²⁰ Johnston 2004: 462.

Many Hittite rituals are known, involving the use of various symbols, charms, which were attributed mystical or magical properties. Hittite texts contain detailed descriptions of many rites, on the basis of which one can get an idea of their religious features, not to mention their magic prohibitions.

Armenians also engaged in practices associated with magic and sorcery. Ghevond Alishan was the first scholar who collected, systematized and offered a general picture of magic and sorcery among Armenians²¹.

In Javakhk, there was a belief that illnesses were caused by angering saints. Before treating a patient, practitioners would determine which saint was responsible for the illness. To ascertain this, they would create three small cotton bundles, wrap them around a spindle, cross and fold them, then insert the spindle into the fold and secure the ends around it. The bundles were then placed on a vessel of water, ensuring that the cotton did not come into contact with the surface of the water. After 40 minutes, the bundles were removed and unfolded. The bundle associated with a particular saint would unwind from the spindle, indicating that this saint was offended and believed to have caused the disease²².

Among Armenians magic was practiced also for the purpose of healing. For example, in the village of Lezq of the Van province, opposite the idol the wounded villagers were licked by the dogs, since they were sure that they will be cured.²³ In this regard, let us recall the legend of Ara the Handsome and Shamiram according to which by that action *aralezq* cured Ara in order to reanimate him.

Conclusion

Summarizing the article, we can conclude that all peoples practiced magic, magic was generally perceived in a negative sense, and the witch was attributed supernatural properties and separated from other members of the community. Of course, a distinction was made between black and white magic, white magic was used for the purposes of curing diseases, getting rid of evil, in many cases being identified with witchcraft and medical care, while black magic was always performed for a bad purpose and was a phenomenon punishable by law in various societies, including the Hittites. People's ideas about diseases, the occurrence of misfortune, evil and good have been almost identical. There were different types of magic prohibitions, as mentioned ancient societies fought against evil in a very similar way. Here of course ethno-cultural features and also some natural conditions should be taken into consideration.

²¹ Alishan 1895: 139; Alishan 1895: 144.

²² Lalayan 1985: 357-358.

²³ Armenian Ethnology and Folklore 2007: 135.

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