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### Reading the human body

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## CHAPTER II

### TO READ STRANGE MATTERS FROM THE HUMAN BODY: PHYSIOGNOMICS IN BABYLONIAN AND GRECO-ROMAN CULTURE AND LITERATURE

#### INTRODUCTION

In the previous chapter, *4QZodiacal Physiognomy* and *4QPhysiognomy ar* were presented as physiognomic texts – in the case of *4QZodiacal Physiognomy* we possess, more precisely, the remains of a physiognomic-astrological list. How do these two texts relate to Babylonian and Greco-Roman physiognomic texts and can texts from these two cultural realms help to elucidate certain features of the Qumran texts?

What is perceived as the purpose of physiognomic inquiry in these traditions, and according to which principles and methods is the physiognomic art supposed to operate? In other words, what is signified by the human body and how is the relationship between signifier and signified rationalized? It has been argued that the Qumran texts resemble Babylonian omen lists, but closer scrutiny of the textual format in both traditions does not corroborate that observation. What does this mean for a possible Babylonian or Hellenistic origin for the Qumran physiognomic texts? If *4QZodiacal Physiognomy* is a physiognomic-astrological compendium, how does its combination of these two elements relate to Babylonian and Greco-Roman texts that also combine astrology and physiognomic learning?

From a comparative perspective, this chapter will discuss Babylonian and Greco-Roman physiognomic traditions and their cultural and social contexts. The textual evidence for physiognomic literature will be presented and the function of these texts assessed, as well as the people cultivating this knowledge. Who practiced the physiognomic art and for what purpose? Who had access to the technical physiognomic texts? How widespread was knowledge of the physiognomic art and on what level? Some of these issues will return in Chapter Five in relation to the physiognomic texts from Qumran.

## ANCIENT REFLECTIONS ON THE PHYSIOGNOMIC ART AND ITS PURPOSE

There is no explicit reflection on physiognomics in cuneiform literature, but the so-called *Esagil-kīn-apli Catalogue* does provide a definition of the physiognomic omen series *Šumma alamdimmū* (“If the form”).<sup>1</sup> This catalogue is extant in a Neo-Assyrian and a Neo-Babylonian copy, but probably dates to the eleventh century BCE. Esagil-kīn-apli was a Babylonian scholar from Borsippa active during the reign of the Babylonian king Adad-apla-iddina (1069-1048 BCE).<sup>2</sup> In the biographical section of the *Esagil-kīn-apli Catalogue* the reader finds the following statement:

*Alamdimmū* (concerns) external form and appearance (and how they imply) the fate of man that Ea and Asalluḫi/Marduk(?) ordained in Heaven.<sup>3</sup>

This definition describes the subject matter of the omen series *Alamdimmū* to have been the shape and appearance of the human body and what these mean for a person’s fate.<sup>4</sup> The definition presents Babylonian physiognomics as a divinatory art predicting people’s futures. This impression is confirmed by the omens in *Alamdimmū*. Most omen apodoses give predictions concerning health, length of life, wealth, offspring, family, and death.

On a textual level, Babylonian physiognomics was, therefore, principally a divinatory art that predicted people’s future situations on the basis of their physical characteristics. This judgment, however, needs some qualification because Babylonian physiognomics also seems to have been partially concerned with the discernment of character.<sup>5</sup> Alongside the overwhelming number of predictive apodoses there are a few that provide clues about someone’s character, for example:

If the hair on his head is red, (*variant*) he is trustworthy. (II:87)  
If there is on the right side (of his face) a *širšu*-pimple, he flourishes, he is modest. (VIII:125)

<sup>1</sup> The learned word *alamdimmū* (“form, figure”), used in scholarly texts, is a late, rare loanword from Sumerian *alan-dim*<sub>2</sub>. See F.R. Kraus, *Die physiognomischen Omina der Babylonier* (MVAG 40/2; Leipzig: J.C. Hinrichs, 1935), 1; CAD A/1 332b s.v. *alamdimmū*.

<sup>2</sup> See I.L. Finkel, “Adad-apla-iddina, Esagil-kīn-apli, and the Series SA.GIG,” in *A Scientific Humanist: Studies in Memory of Abraham Sachs* (eds. E. Leichty, M. deJong Ellis and P. Gerardi; OPSNKF 9; Philadelphia: The University Museum, 1988), 143-59; B. Böck, *Die babylonisch-assyrische Morphoskopie* (AfO.B 27; Vienna: Institut für Orientalistik der Universität Wien, 2000), 14-15, 55; N.P. Heeßel, *Babylonisch-assyrische Diagnostik* (AOAT 43; Münster: Ugarit, 2000), 13-17, 104-5.

<sup>3</sup> A 66-8/B 29’-30’, Finkel, “Adad-apla-iddina,” 148-49.

<sup>4</sup> The *Esagil-kīn-apli Catalogue* is rather unique in this regard. In Babylonian divination literature one looks in vain for introductory remarks that explicitly define the subject matter of a particular omen series and explain and justify the procedure followed in it. There is no conscious reflection on the Babylonian scholarly endeavors extant in cuneiform sources.

<sup>5</sup> See Barton, *Power and Knowledge*, 100; Böck, *Die babylonisch-assyrische Morphoskopie*, 1, 29-36.

If he is of evil heart, he is a liar. (X:41)<sup>6</sup>

Greco-Roman literature provides much more evidence for reflections, either favorable or unfavorable,<sup>7</sup> on the goal of physiognomic inquiry. The interest of Greco-Roman physiognomics was in the judgment of people's characters. The Anonymous Latin author of the *De physiognomonia liber* (fourth century CE) succinctly states that physiognomics claims "to consider and discern the character of the soul from the character of the body."<sup>8</sup> Aulus Gellius (second century CE) is more elaborate and says that physiognomics:

means to inquire into the character and dispositions of men by an inference drawn from their facial appearance and expression, and from the form and bearing of their whole body.<sup>9</sup>

To practice physiognomics was to observe the human body in detail and from that to figure out people's characters. The Pseudo-Aristotelian author of the *Physiognomonica*, a treatise written at the end of the fourth or the beginning of the third century BCE, describes the objective of physiognomic inquiry as follows:

The science of physiognomics, as its name implies, deals with the natural character traits of mental character, and with such acquired ones as on their occurrence modify the characteristic signs studied by the physiognomist.<sup>10</sup>

The Peripatetic author explicates upon which signs of the body the physiognomist based his judgment about someone's mental character. These types of signs were:

<sup>6</sup> Böck, *Die babylonisch-assyrische Morphoskopie*, 80-81, 114-15, 120-21.

<sup>7</sup> E.g. Sextus Empiricus, *Outlines of Pyrrhonism* 1.85 (favorable); Artemidorus, *The Interpretation of Dreams* 2.69; Clement of Alexandria, *Stromata* 1.135.2 (unfavorable, but cf. *The Instructor* 3.3.15 where Clement is not negative about metoposcopy, contrary to Hippolytus, *Refutation of All Heresies* 4.15.3-4). See Evans, *Physiognomics*, 50, 73-74, 78 n. 48; Barton, *Power and Knowledge*, 99; B. Isaac, *The Invention of Racism in Classical Antiquity* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2004), 155-56. See furthermore V. Tsouna, "Doubts about Other Minds and the Science of Physiognomics," *CQ* 48 (1998): 175-86.

<sup>8</sup> Anonymous Latin, *De physiognomonia liber* §2, see J. André, *Anonyme Latin: Traité de physiognomonie* (Budé; Paris: Les Belles Lettres, 1981), 50.

<sup>9</sup> Aulus Gellius, *Attic Nights* 1.9.2. Translation from J.C. Rolfe, *The Attic Nights of Aulus Gellius* (LCL 195; Cambridge, Massachusetts: Harvard University Press, 1954), 45-47. Standing in the Western physiognomic tradition, both descriptions concur with the modern definition that physiognomics is "the art of judging character and disposition from the features of the face or the form and lineaments of the body generally." See *OED*, s.v. physiognomy.

<sup>10</sup> Pseudo-Aristotle, *Physiognomonica* 806a 23-25. Text and translation, adapted, from W.S. Hett, *Aristotle XIV: Minor Works* (LCL 307; Cambridge, Massachusetts: Harvard University Press, 1980), 90-93, and T. Loveday and E.S. Forster, "Physiognomics," in *The Complete Works of Aristotle: The Revised Oxford Translation* (ed. J. Barnes; vol. 1; Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1995), 1237-50, at 1239. All translations of the *Physiognomonica* are taken, sometimes in adapted form, from Hett, unless otherwise noted.

movements, shapes and colors, and from habits as appearing in the face, from the growth of hair, from the smoothness of the skin, from voice, from the condition of the flesh, from parts of the body, and from the general character of the body.<sup>11</sup>

The assumption is that these types of signs and their appearances are mutually connected with the natural traits of mental character; through them mental character expresses and shows itself. If that is true then the types of bodily signs point the physiognomist to types of mental character. This reveals the basic premise of Greco-Roman physiognomics, namely the inherent sympathy between body and soul. The correspondence between both is the justification for practicing the science of physiognomics. This is clearly stated in the *Physiognomonica*:

soul and body react on each other; when the character of the soul changes, it changes also the form of the body, and conversely, when the form of the body changes, it changes the character of the soul. [...] Now if this is true (and it is invariably so), then it should be possible to physiognomize.<sup>12</sup>

Greco-Roman physiognomics was by and large concerned with the discernment of people's characters, whereas the predictive function was minimal.

There are some anecdotes about predictions made by metoposcopes, but few predictions occur in the learned treatises.<sup>13</sup> As Tamsyn Barton points out, this focus of Greco-Roman physiognomics on character is "in contrast to the astrology of the period. Whereas today's clients of astrologers are interested in a character analysis, the ancients were far more eager for predictions, preferably of success in all areas of life."<sup>14</sup> In the Greek *zodiologia* both aspects of physiognomics and astrology were combined. These extensive lists mention the various psychological and physical characteristics attributed to those born under each zodiacal sign, as well as predictions concerning their future welfare.

In general, therefore, one may say that the interest of Babylonian physiognomics was primarily directed at predicting people's fate, while Greco-Roman physiognomics was mainly concerned with revealing people's character. Ancient definitions of physiognomics demonstrate the different interests of physiognomic learning regarding what the human body signifies in these cultures.

<sup>11</sup> *Physiognomonica* 806a 27-34. Cf. A. Degkwitz, *Die pseudoaristotelischen 'Physiognomonica' Traktat A: Übersetzung und Kommentar* (Diss. Heidelberg, 1988), 66; Vogt, *Physiognomonica*, 309-10.

<sup>12</sup> *Physiognomonica* 808b 11-14; 805a 18, cf. also 805a 1-18. Cf. Degkwitz, *'Physiognomonica' Traktat A*, 56-58; Vogt, *Physiognomonica*, 394-96.

<sup>13</sup> See J. Mesk, "Die Beispiele in Polemons Physiognomonik," *WS* 50 (1932): 51-67, at 61-64; Barton, *Power and Knowledge*, 100 n. 37; M.W. Gleason, *Making Men: Sophists and Self-Presentation in Ancient Rome* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1995), 30, 48-51.

<sup>14</sup> Barton, *Power and Knowledge*, 100. Cf. also Evans, *Physiognomics*, 73.

BACKGROUNDS OF PHYSIOGNOMIC LEARNING AND LITERATURE:  
MESOPOTAMIA

In ancient Mesopotamia a scholarly literature of specialized omen series evolved in which physiognomic learning was handed down for almost two millennia.<sup>15</sup> Physiognomic omens were one of the many classes of Babylonian divination texts. Babylonian physiognomics should, therefore, first of all be understood against the general background of divination literature.<sup>16</sup>

*Textual Evidence*

The textual evidence for Babylonian physiognomics covers a wide range in time. The oldest evidence for physiognomic omens dates back to the Old Babylonian period (ca. 2000-1600 BCE). At the end of the second millennium the physiognomic material was collected in the standard series called *Šumma alamdimmu*.<sup>17</sup>

<sup>15</sup> In addition to the publications by Fritz Kraus, the most recent edition by Barbara Böck serves as the major reference to these texts in this study. See Kraus, *Die physiognomischen Omina der Babylonier*; F.R. Kraus, "Ein Sittenkanon in Omenform," *ZA* 43 (1936): 77-113; F.R. Kraus, "Babylonische Omina mit Ausdeutung der Begleiterscheinungen des Sprechens," *AfO* 11 (1936-1937): 219-30; F.R. Kraus, *Texte zur babylonischen Physiognomatik* (AfO.B 3; 1939; repr., Osnabrück: Biblio, 1967); Böck, *Die babylonisch-assyrische Morphoskopie*.

<sup>16</sup> See e.g. the treatments of Mesopotamian divination by J. Nougayrol, "La divination babylonienne," in *La divination: Tome Premier* (eds. A. Caquot and M. Leibovici; Paris: Presses Universitaires de France, 1968), 25-81; J. Bottéro, "Symptômes, signes, écritures: en Mésopotamie ancienne," in *Divination et Rationalité* (eds. J.P. Vernant et al.; Paris: Éditions du Seuil, 1974), 70-197; in summarized form J. Bottéro, *Mesopotamia: Writing, Reasoning, and the Gods* (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1992), 125-37 (first published as *Mésopotamie: L'écriture, la raison et les dieux* [Paris: Gallimard, 1987], 157-69); A.L. Oppenheim, *Ancient Mesopotamia: Portrait of a Dead Civilization* (Revised Edition Completed by E. Reiner; Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1977), 206-27; F.H. Cryer, *Divination in Ancient Israel and its Near Eastern Environment: A Socio-Historical Investigation* (JSOTSup 142; Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 1994), 124-215 (good surveys of Ancient Near Eastern data, but conceptually disputable); A.K. Guinan, "Divination," in *The Context of Scripture: Volume I Canonical Compositions from the Biblical World* (eds. W.W. Hallo et al.; Leiden: Brill, 1997), 421-26; S.M. Maul, "Omina und Orakel. A. Mesopotamien," *RIA* 10.1/2 (2003), 45-88; Rochberg, *The Heavenly Writing*, 44-97.

<sup>17</sup> Before the physiognomic material was gathered together in *Alamdimmû*, there must have been numerous texts. Unfortunately, only four tablets are known thus far from the Old Babylonian period. Nevertheless, it is clear that the material incorporated in *Alamdimmû* derived from these tablets written in the Old Babylonian period, although they were compiled in an adapted form. Apart from the standard series *Alamdimmû*, there were also extra-serial physiognomic omens, such as the so-called *aḫû*-texts, and commentaries on the compendium. See Böck, *Die babylonisch-assyrische Morphoskopie*, 9-14, 19-23. For a discussion of the genre of *aḫû*-texts, see e.g. F. Rochberg-Halton, "The Assumed 29th *aḫû*-Tablet of *Enūma Anu Enlil*," in *Language, Literature, and History: Philological and Historical Studies Presented to Erica Reiner* (ed. F. Rochberg-Halton; AOS 67; New Haven, Connecticut: American Oriental Society, 1987), 327-50; S.J. Lieberman, "Canonical and Official Cuneiform Texts: Towards an Understanding of Assurbanipal's Personal Tablet Collection," in *Lingering over Words: Studies in Ancient Near Eastern Literature in Honor of William L. Moran* (eds. T.

*Alamdimmû* consists of twenty-seven tablets, some of which contain more than two hundred omens.<sup>18</sup> These deal with different parts of the human body in the order from head to toe. The omens devote attention to, for example, the color, quality and shape of the hair, the color and quality of the skin, and the position and color of different sorts of body marks. Furthermore, *Alamdimmû* lists omens that characterize ways of speech and describe the consequences of utterances and habitual, involuntary, movements.

Although the name *Šumma alamdimmû* is used to denote the entire collection of twenty-seven tablets, it actually only belongs to the first twelve tablets. There are four subseries that cover Tablets XIII-XXVII. After *Alamdimmû* proper, the next series numbers two tablets, of which only a small fragment has survived. It was named *Šumma nigdimdimmû* (“If the shape”), but unfortunately its fragmentary state does not enable one to assess its content. The second series, titled *Šumma kataduggû* (“If the utterance”), describes in one tablet the consequences of utterances and habitual conduct, showing correspondences with omens from the terrestrial series *Šumma ālu* (“If a city”).<sup>19</sup> The appearance of women is described in two tablets bearing the name *Šumma sinništu qaqqada rabât* (“If the head of a woman is big”). Finally, the fourth sub-series *Šumma liptu* (“If the mole”) probably numbered nine tablets, of which eight tablets describe the position of different sorts of body marks on the male body, while one tablet is devoted to the female body. This is followed by one tablet, *Šumma šer’ān pūt imittišu ittebbi* (“If the vein on the right side of his forehead throbs”), that categorizes involuntary muscle movements.<sup>20</sup>

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Abusch, J. Huehnergard and P. Steinkeller; HSS 37; Atlanta, Georgia: Scholars Press, 1990), 305-36, at 308.

<sup>18</sup> The complete text of the series *Alamdimmû* has not survived, and some tablets are not extant at all. Fortunately, the *Esagil-kīn-apli Catalogue* makes it possible to reconstruct the sequence of the entire series and some of its contents. Cf. Böck, *Die babylonisch-assyrische Morphoskopie*, 14-18. For the Neo-Assyrian copy of the catalogue, see J.V. Kinnier Wilson, “Two Medical Texts from Nimrud,” *Iraq* 18 (1956): 130-46; J.V. Kinnier Wilson, “The Nimrud Catalogue of Medical and Physiognomic Omina,” *Iraq* 24 (1962): 52-62. This copy of the catalogue was found in the Nabû temple library, which was in continuous use from 800 BCE until its destruction around 616 BCE. For an autograph of the Nimrud Catalogue see D.J. Wiseman and J.A. Black, *Literary Texts from the Temple of Nabû* (CTN 4; British School of Archaeology in Iraq, 1996), plates 44-45. For the Neo-Babylonian duplicate, see Finkel, “Adad-apla-iddina.”

<sup>19</sup> Cf. Kraus, “Sittenkanon”; Böck, *Die babylonisch-assyrische Morphoskopie*, 40-42. For the series *Šumma ālu* see e.g. S.M. Freedman, *If a City is Set on a Height: The Akkadian Omen Series Šumma Alu ina Mēlê šakin: Volume 1: Tablets 1-21* (OPSNKF 17; Philadelphia: The University of Pennsylvania Museum, 1998); A.K. Guinan, “A Severed Head Laughed: Stories of Divinatory Interpretation,” in *Magic and Divination in the Ancient World* (eds. L. Ciruolo and J. Seidel; AMD 2, Leiden: Brill/STYX, 2002), 7-40; Maul, “Omina und Orakel,” 58-62.

<sup>20</sup> According to Böck, *Die babylonisch-assyrische Morphoskopie*, 1, the omens of the first twelve tablets refer to the male body. This is especially clear in the case of the different aspects of the male organ that are described in the tenth tablet (X:64-125). Furthermore,

The greatest part of the standard series *Alamdimmû* that has survived derives from the royal library of the Neo-Assyrian king Assurbanipal (668-631/627? BCE) in Nineveh. However, texts of *Alamdimmû* are not limited to the Neo-Assyrian period. Copies have also been unearthed from the residential area of Seleucid Uruk.<sup>21</sup> This demonstrates that the Babylonian physiognomic tradition was transmitted into the Hellenistic period. In addition to this continuing transmission of the standard series *Alamdimmû*, physiognomic learning is also attested in combination with astrology in other texts during the Hellenistic period.<sup>22</sup> Moreover, it is perfectly possible that in the Near East, Babylonian physiognomic learning was transmitted in a different form and in combination with astrology during late antique and even early medieval times, such as in the Mandaean *Book of the Zodiac* (*Sfar Malwašia*).<sup>23</sup>

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*Alamdimmû*'s third subseries is explicitly devoted to the physiognomy of the female body. However, in the third tablet of *Alamdimmû* proper, one of the omens describing the occurrence of cuneiform signs on the forehead refers to the female: "If the TAB or UB sign is written (on the forehead), one who is barren will bear children, (and) one who has difficult labors will labor well" (III:97). This allows for the possibility that other omens in *Alamdimmû* could also be applied to females, and should be understood in a more general sense as omens on the human body. I thank Eckart Frahm for bringing this to my attention.

<sup>21</sup> Böck, *Die babylonisch-assyrische Morphoskopie*, 7-9. The tablets from the private house in Seleucid Uruk belonged to the library of a family whose members held the title *āšipu*, "magician-exorcist," cf. O. Pedersén, *Archives and Libraries in the Ancient Near East 1500-300 B.C.* (Bethesda, Maryland: CDL, 1998), 212-13. I owe this reference to Geert De Breucker.

<sup>22</sup> S. Langdon, "Miscellanea Assyriaca IV," *Babyloniaca* 7 (1913-1923): 230-36; R.D. Biggs, "An Esoteric Babylonian Commentary," *RA* 62 (1968): 51-58; J. Oelsner, *Materialien zur babylonischen Gesellschaft und Kultur in Hellenistischer Zeit* (Assyriologia 7; Budapest: Eötvös University, 1986), 175; Reiner, *Astral Magic*, 77-79; Böck, *Die babylonisch-assyrische Morphoskopie*, 8, 276-79; B. Böck, "An Esoteric Babylonian Commentary' Revisited," *JAOS* 120 (2000): 615-20; E. Reiner, "Early Zodiologia and Related Matters," in *Wisdom, Gods and Literature: Studies in Assyriology in Honour of W.G. Lambert* (eds. A.R. George and I.L. Finkel; Winona Lake, Indiana: Eisenbrauns, 2000), 421-27.

<sup>23</sup> Regarding the transmission of certain forms of ancient Mesopotamian magic and celestial divination in Mandaean tradition, see C. Müller-Kessler, "Aramäische Beschwörungen und astronomische Omina in nachbabylonischer Zeit: Das Fortleben mesopotamischer Kultur im Vorderen Orient," in *Babylon: Focus mesopotamischer Geschichte, Wiege früher Gelehrsamkeit, Mythos in der Moderne: 2. Internationales Colloquium der Deutschen Orient-Gesellschaft, 24.-26. März 1998 in Berlin* (ed. J. Renger; CDOG 2; Saarbrücken: SDV, 1999), 427-43; F. Rochberg, "The Babylonian Origins of the Mandaean Book of the Zodiac," *ARAM* 11-12 (1999-2000): 237-47; C. Müller-Kessler, "A Charm Against Demons of Time," in *Mining the Archives: Festschrift for Christopher Walker on the Occasion of His 60th Birthday* (ed. C. Wunsch; BA 1; Dresden: ISLET, 2002), 183-89; Rochberg, *The Heavenly Writing*, 298-99. The Mandaean *Book of the Zodiac* merges both Babylonian and Greek material, see nn. 204, 205 below.

Regarding the survival of Babylonian (medical) learning, see M.J. Geller, "The Survival of Babylonian Wissenschaft in Later Tradition," in *The Heirs of Assyria: Proceedings of the Opening Symposium of the Assyrian and Babylonian Intellectual Heritage Project Held in Tvärminne, Finland, October 8-11, 1998* (eds. S. Aro and R.M. Whiting; MS 1; Helsinki: The Neo-Assyrian Text Corpus Project, 2000), 1-6; M.J. Geller, "An Akkadian Vademecum in



*Authorship*

The compilation of the standard series *Alamdimmû* was probably made by the Babylonian scholar Esagil-kīn-apli in the eleventh century BCE. This is based on the *Esagil-kīn-apli Catalogue*. The biographical section of this catalogue opens with an explanation for the new edition of the diagnostic compendium SA.GIG (*Sakikkû*) and the physiognomic series *Alamdimmû*.<sup>24</sup> After elaborately introducing himself, Esagil-kīn-apli says that he has produced these standard series: “(Regarding) the twin series, their arrangement is one.”<sup>25</sup> He emphasizes that he has ordered its material according to the principal “from head to foot” (*ištu muḥḥi adi šēpē*).<sup>26</sup> It is in light of this editorial work of systematically arranging the material by means of an *a capite ad calcem* classification that the claim of the catalogue to have produced a new standard series should be understood. It is in this sense that one can ascribe to Esagil-kīn-apli the editorial work of an authorized, new standard edition of *Alamdimmû* and *Sakikkû*, which he perhaps executed as head of a scribal school that collected and copied texts.<sup>27</sup>

Although the actual compilation of *Alamdimmû* was the work of Esagil-kīn-apli, there was also a tradition that ascribed authorship of the physiognomic omens to Ea, the god of wisdom and skills. The Neo-Assyrian *Catalogue of Texts and Authors* credits Ea with the authorship of works

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the Babylonian Talmud,” in *From Athens to Jerusalem: Medicine in Hellenized Jewish Lore and in Early Christian Literature* (eds. S. Kottek et al.; Pantaleon 33; Rotterdam: Erasmus, 2000), 13-32. I was unable to see M.J. Geller, “Akkadian Healing Therapies in the Babylonian Talmud,” *Max-Planck-Institut für Wissenschaftsgeschichte Preprint* 259 (2004): 1-60.

<sup>24</sup> In addition to *Alamdimmû* and *Sakikkû*, it is possible that Esagil-kīn-apli was also responsible for the ordering of “the confused and contradictory state of the astrological omen tradition around the mid-second millennium” into the astrological omen series *Enūma Anu Enlil*. Cf. U. Koch-Westenholz, *Mesopotamian Astrology: An Introduction to Babylonian and Assyrian Celestial Divination* (CNIIP 19, Copenhagen: Museum Tusulanum, 1995), 42-43, 74-76.

In the Neo-Assyrian *Exorcist's Manual*, Esagil-kīn-apli is credited not only with *Alamdimmû* but with numerous compositions ranging from ritual and liturgical incantations and medical texts to astronomical and terrestrial omen series. See H. Zimmer, “Zu den ‘Keilinschriften aus Assur religiösen Inhalts,’” *ZA* 30 (1915/1916): 184-229, at 204-29. For the most recent edition of the *Exorcist's Manual*, based on four new duplicates from the British Museum that provide additional bibliographic information about Esagil-kīn-apli, see M.J. Geller, “Incipits and Rubrics,” in *Wisdom, Gods and Literature: Studies in Assyriology in Honour of W.G. Lambert* (eds. A.R. George and I.L. Finkel; Winona Lake, Indiana: Eisenbrauns, 2000), 225-58, at 242-54, 256-58.

<sup>25</sup> A67-8/B30', Finkel, “Adad-apla-iddina,” 149. I agree with Heeßel, *Babylonisch-assyrische Diagnostik*, 105 n. 38, that this remark refers to the *a capite ad calcem* principle that underlies the structuring of both series, and that it is not a reference to the fact that both series have been organized by the catalogue as Finkel, “Adad-apla-iddina,” 149 n. 64, proposes.

<sup>26</sup> A61-2/B25', Finkel, “Adad-apla-iddina,” 149.

<sup>27</sup> M.J. Geller, “Astronomy and Authorship,” *BSOAS* 53 (1990): 209-13, at 212 n. 25; Böck, *Die babylonisch-assyrische Morphoskopie*, 14.

that belong to the so-called exorcism corpus (*āšipūtum*), saying that “[these] are by Ea.” They include the astrological omen series *Enūma Anu Enlil*, the physiognomic series *Alamdimmū*, and the diagnostic omen compendium *Sakikkū*.<sup>28</sup>

The attribution of divine authorship is understandable. Babylonian tradition regarded divinatory knowledge as of divine origin. In addition, the role of the king as an intermediary between the gods and his scholars was stressed. The Neo-Assyrian *Enmeduranki-text* tells that the gods Šamaš and Adad taught Enmeduranki, the antediluvian king of Sippar, the practice of oil and liver divination. Enmeduranki then transmits the secrets that Šamaš and Adad taught him to the men of Nippur, Sippar, and Babylon, presumably the few learned ones.<sup>29</sup> The text presents knowledge of divination practices as originating with the gods and being transmitted to the scholars through the king. The cultivated image of the king as the guardian of divine knowledge is particularly clear in the case of Assurbanipal. He is presented as actively supporting the collection of divinatory texts for his own library, and also energetically involving himself with his diviners and their reports to him.<sup>30</sup>

#### *Babylonian Scholars and Physiognomic Divination*

The different forms of Babylonian divination were the domains of different types of scholars.<sup>31</sup> Following the differentiation between artificial and natural divination in Cicero’s *On Divination*, scholars distinguish between

<sup>28</sup> See W.G. Lambert, “A Catalogue of Texts and Authors,” *JCS* 16 (1962): 59-77, at 64-65, 72. Ea was also referred to in incantations, thereby providing the conjurations with working power. It was believed that the divine origin of the incantations rendered them effective, and therefore this origin was stressed. Cf. Lambert, “Catalogue,” 72-73; B. Pongratz-Leisten, *Herrschaftswissen in Mesopotamien: Formen der Kommunikation zwischen Gott und König im 2. und 1. Jahrtausend v. Chr.* (SAAS 10; Helsinki: The Neo-Assyrian Text Corpus Project, 1999), 293-95.

<sup>29</sup> After this point the text is somewhat confused. It repeats the things Enmeduranki taught the learned men of the three cities, adding, however, astrology and related mathematics. See W.G. Lambert, “Enmeduranki and Related Matters,” *JCS* 21 (1967): 126-38; W.G. Lambert, “The Qualifications of Babylonian Diviners,” in *Festschrift für Rykle Borger zu seinem 65. Geburtstag am 24. Mai 1994: tikip santakki mala bašmu...* (ed. S.M. Maul; CM 10; Groningen: Styx, 1998), 141-58.

<sup>30</sup> See e.g. U. Jeyes, “Assurbanipal’s *bārūtu*,” in *Assyrien im Wandel der Zeiten: XXXIX<sup>e</sup> Rencontre Assyriologique Internationale Heidelberg 6.-10. Juli 1992* (eds. H. Waetzoldt and H. Hauptman; HSAO 6; Heidelberg: Heidelberger Orientverlag, 1997), 61-65; Pongratz-Leisten, *Herrschaftswissen in Mesopotamien*, 26-46, 286-320.

<sup>31</sup> The divisions in the corpus of divination texts correspond to those between types of scholars, cf. Rochberg, *The Heavenly Writing*, 94-95. It was, however, also possible that people held more than one scholarly title, see e.g. S. Parpola, “Mesopotamian Astrology and Astronomy as Domains of the Mesopotamian ‘Wisdom,’” in *Die Rolle der Astronomie in den Kulturen Mesopotamiens: Beiträge zum 3. Grazer Morgenländischen Symposium (23.-27. September 1991)* (ed. H.D. Galter; GMS 3; Graz: GrazKult, 1993), 47-59; Pongratz-Leisten, *Herrschaftswissen in Mesopotamien*, 18.

provoked and unprovoked omens.<sup>32</sup> In general, the first category, containing *inter alia* extispicy, was the domain of the *bārû* (“haruspex”), while the latter belonged to the *āšipu* (“magician-exorcist”).<sup>33</sup> The Neo-Assyrian *Exorcist’s Manual*, from the collection of the *āšipu* Kišar-Nabû from Assur, assigns knowledge of the physiognomic series *Alamdimmû* to the *āšipu*.<sup>34</sup> Surveying the numerous descriptions of the human body and observing the detail with which this is done in *Alamdimmû*, it is evident that the study of physiognomics demanded a thorough knowledge of human anatomy. Learning human anatomy began with the study of lexical lists in school, such as the Sumerian lexical list *Ugu-mu* (“My skull”).<sup>35</sup> Those who pursued their studies to become an *āšipu* had *Alamdimmû* in their curriculum.<sup>36</sup>

The divination scholars performed services for the temple and the palace.<sup>37</sup> Before the Hellenistic period they were especially closely connected with the palace. This is particularly clear in the case of the Neo-Assyrian celestial diviners, who sent reports to the king from various observatories throughout Mesopotamia and were dependent upon him for financial support.<sup>38</sup> However, a shift in cultural locus concerning celestial divination seems to have taken place sometime during the Persian period. The evidence for the intense involvement of the king with the diviners appears to decrease. During the Hellenistic period the context of celestial divination changed from the palace to the temple. The Late Babylonian temple was the

<sup>32</sup> *On Divination* 1.12, 34, 72. This distinction by Quintus has been modified because both categories, according to Quintus’ definition in *On Divination*, fall within the artificial form of divination since they are dependent on reflection and interpretation. Cf. Rochberg, *The Heavenly Writing*, 47-48.

<sup>33</sup> Cf. Bottéro, “Symptômes, signes, écritures,” 86-124; Oppenheim, *Ancient Mesopotamia*, 207-10; U. Koch-Westenholz, *Mesopotamian Astrology: An Introduction to Babylonian and Assyrian Celestial Divination* (CNIP 19, Copenhagen: Museum Tusulanum, 1995), 9-10; Böck, *Die babylonisch-assyrische Morphoskopie*, 3; Rochberg, *The Heavenly Writing*, 47-49.

<sup>34</sup> KAR 44 obv.6. Cf. Zimmer, “Zu den ‘Keilinschriften aus Assur religiösen Inhalts,’” 206-7; Böck, *Die babylonisch-assyrische Morphoskopie*, 3.

<sup>35</sup> Böck, *Die babylonisch-assyrische Morphoskopie*, 45-54. For *Ugu-mu* see B. Landsberger and M. Civil (eds.), *The Series ĤAR-ra = ĥubullu: Tablet XV and Related Texts* (MSL 9; Rome: Pontificium Institutum Biblicum, 1967), 51-73. See furthermore *Sig<sub>7</sub>-alan (Nabnītu)* in I.L. Finkel (ed. with the collaboration of M. Civil), *The Series SIG<sub>7</sub>.ALAN = Nabnītu* (MSL 16; Rome: Pontificium Institutum Biblicum, 1982). See also A. Cavigneaux, “Lexikalische Listen,” *RIA* 6 (1980-83), 609-41, at 630.

<sup>36</sup> Böck, *Die babylonisch-assyrische Morphoskopie*, 4.

<sup>37</sup> They did not, however, actually belong to the cultic or royal staff. See G.J.P. McEwan, *Priest and Temple in Hellenistic Babylonia* (FAS 4; Wiesbaden: Franz Steiner, 1981), 15-24; U. Koch-Westenholz, “Old Babylonian Extispicy Reports,” in *Mining the Archives*, 131-45, at 140.

<sup>38</sup> Cf. A.L. Oppenheim, “Divination and Celestial Observation in the Last Assyrian Empire,” *Centaurus* 14 (1969): 97-135; H. Hunger, *Astrological Reports to Assyrian Kings* (SAA 8; Helsinki: Helsinki University Press, 1992); Koch-Westenholz, *Mesopotamian Astrology*, 56-73.

principal institution supporting the celestial diviners.<sup>39</sup> This probably also applies to other forms of divination that were the domain of the *āšipu*, such as physiognomics. In the Neo-Assyrian period the *āšipu* presumably performed certain advisory services for the court.<sup>40</sup> Later, however, in Seleucid Babylonia, the *āšipu* scholar functioned within the temple and was supported by temple finances.<sup>41</sup>

The Babylonian temples remained in function during the Seleucid and Arsacid periods and were responsible for the transmission and continuation of Mesopotamian culture during this time.<sup>42</sup> That the temple was a center of knowledge and learning in the Hellenistic period is illustrated by the Babylonian priest Berossos who wrote a history of his nation and culture around 300 BCE that was probably called *Babyloniaca*. Berossos' title "priest" does not imply that he held a cultic or religious function, but that he was connected to the Esagila, which was the main temple of Babylon. When writing his *Babyloniaca*, Berossos used native, cuneiform sources from the old archives, or copies of them, to which he would have had access as a member of the temple community.<sup>43</sup>

<sup>39</sup> Cf. F. Rochberg, "The Cultural Locus of Astronomy in Late Babylonia," in *Rolle der Astronomie*, 31-45; Rochberg, *The Heavenly Writing*, 209-36; T. Boiy, *Late Achaemenid and Hellenistic Babylon* (OLA 136; Leuven: Peeters, 2004), 272-3, 297.

<sup>40</sup> The biographical section of the *Esagil-kīn-apli Catalogue* ends with an exhortation to the *āšipu* to inform the king of his investigations on the basis of the diagnostic compendium *Sakikkū* and the physiognomic series *Alamdimmū*, see Finkel, "Adad-apla-iddina," 150.

<sup>41</sup> Rochberg, *The Heavenly Writing*, 95.

<sup>42</sup> Intriguing evidence for the survival of the scribal tradition at the Late Babylonian temple is provided, for example, by the Graeco-Babyloniaca tablets. These tablets contain cuneiform on one side and transcriptions in Greek letters on the other side. See e.g. M.J. Geller, "The Last Wedge," *ZA* 87 (1997): 43-95; M.J. Geller, "Graeco-Babyloniaca in Babylon," in *Babylon: Focus mesopotamischer Geschichte*, 377-83; Boiy, *Late Achaemenid and Hellenistic Babylon*, 41-43.

<sup>43</sup> G. De Breucker, "Berossos and the Mesopotamian Temple as Centre of Knowledge during the Hellenistic Period," in *Learned Antiquity: Scholarship and Society in the Near-East, the Greco-Roman World, and the Early Medieval West* (eds. A.A. MacDonald, M.W. Twomey and G.J. Reinink; GSCC 5; Leuven: Peeters, 2003), 13-23.

Despite the shift in cultural locus of the diviners away from the palace, one should allow for the possibility that the ideology of a close relationship between the king and his scholars remained an important element of Mesopotamian culture. This is demonstrated by the transmission of the *List of Sages and Scholars*, enumerating scholars in relation to kings, from the Reš temple in Seleucid Uruk (see J. van Dijk, "Die Inschriftenfunde," in UVB 18 [Berlin: Gebr. Mann, 1962], 39-62, at 44-52, cf. De Breucker, "Berossos and the Mesopotamian Temple," 15). The temples were important instruments in the hands of the Seleucid government, and there is evidence that the Seleucid kings took an interest in the welfare of the temples, cf. S. Dalley et al., *The Legacy of Mesopotamia* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1998), 40-42; Rochberg, *The Heavenly Writing*, 231-33.

It is possible that royal interest in the learning of the Babylonian scholars did not cease completely and that Mesopotamian scholars continued to serve the Seleucid and Arsacid kings in one form or another, but evidence for their political advisory role is not traceable in these periods. The appearance of a Chaldean in the party of the Parthian envoy who predicts

*Form and Principles of Babylonian Physiognomics*

Babylonian physiognomics was transmitted in the form of omens. A general definition of an omen is an event or phenomenon that is regarded as a portent of something good or evil. The form of Babylonian omens is that of a conditional sentence. The introductory clause (*protasis*) begins with *šumma*, “if, provided that,” in which an event or a phenomenon taken to be the sign is described. The consequent clause (*apodosis*), the beginning of which is not signaled by a particle, mentions that to which the sign refers (a future event or situation). In general, the *protasis* uses the preterite (past sense) for the verb, while the *apodosis* has the durative (present/future sense). This is the formal criterion to distinguish between the two parts of the omen. At the same time it also reveals the worldview, because it implies that there is an interval between observation (*protasis*) and prediction (*apodosis*), which allows for measurements to be taken to avoid what is stated in the *apodosis* setting in (see below on the *namburbi* rituals).

The relationship between the two parts of the conditional sentence could be based on a binary system of analogy or on an association of words or ideas.<sup>44</sup> Regarding the analogies, in general the leading principle is that right is positive (*pars familiaris*) and left is negative (*pars hostilis*). In the case of the physiognomic series *Alamdimmû*, this rule is easily made clear by those omens in which the position and color of different sorts of body marks, such as moles and pimples, are described, especially in its fifth sub-series *Šumma liptu* (“If the mole”). It also shows that left as negative is both absolute and relative. The body marks themselves possess either a negative or a positive quality. According to their position and quality, the outcome described in the *apodoses* is either positive or negative. If a mark with a positive quality is positioned on the left side of a body part, the conclusion is negative. If the same mark appears on the right side, the result is positive. Consequently, if a mark with a negative value appears on the left side of the body, the outcome is positive, and if positioned on the right side, the conclusion is negative.<sup>45</sup>

With regard to the association based on the words used, the following example may suffice:

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Sulla's fate from the form and appearance of his face is suggestive but inconclusive evidence, see n. 103 below.

<sup>44</sup> Böck, *Die babylonisch-assyrische Morphoskopie*, 38-40; B. Böck, “Babylonische Divination und Magie als Ausdruck der Denkstrukturen des altmesopotamischen Menschen,” in *Babylon: Focus mesopotamischer Geschichte*, 409-25.

<sup>45</sup> See Böck, *Die babylonisch-assyrische Morphoskopie*, 39, 174-233.

If on the back of the head (*kutallu*), on the right side, [an *umšatu*-mole] is positioned, the person who supports him (*mukīl kutalšu*) will die, (his) heart will swell with misery.<sup>46</sup>

Finally, the next cases may illustrate the use of associative ideas:

If the hair of his head is very thick, he will have satisfaction. If the hair of his head is thin, he will have dissatisfaction.<sup>47</sup>

Omens can be regarded as signs that establish links between what is potentially observed in the present and what occurs in the future. They do not seem to express causal relationships.<sup>48</sup> The omens contained signs of the gods communicating their messages to human beings; the protasis containing the divine sign, the apodosis the divine message (or the announcement of an inevitable future; inevitable, that is, if one did not pay heed to the prediction and take sufficient countermeasures, see below). Concerning physiognomics this would mean that the Babylonians probably did not think of any intrinsic relationship between the form and appearance of the human body and a person's future (or in some cases character). The human body was just one of the many places where the gods left their messages.

The notion of writing is paramount in all this. The gods were asked literally to place their answers, or, in other words, to write their signs, for example, in the entrails of animals to be deciphered by the *bārū*.<sup>49</sup> Although the metaphor "heavenly writing" (*šītir šamē* or *šīrti šamāmī*) is not used explicitly for astrology or celestial divination, "the notion of the stars as a heavenly script implies their capacity to be read and interpreted."<sup>50</sup> In *Alamdimmū* the writing of the gods is perhaps implied in a section that deals with the occurrence of signs on people's foreheads.<sup>51</sup>

<sup>46</sup> *Šumma umšatu* 1.6.

<sup>47</sup> *Alamdimmū* II:96-97. See also Geller, "New Documents from the Dead Sea," 228.

<sup>48</sup> In the case of celestial divination, however, this perhaps does not describe entirely correctly the attitude towards the heavenly bodies. These were perhaps not just signs but also exerted influence on certain affairs. The issue is disputed. For example, David Brown maintains that the Babylonians did not ascribe a direct influence to planets and stars upon earthly matters, but rather saw the heavenly bodies as signs communicating divine messages (review of Pongratz-Leisten, *Herrschaftswissen in Mesopotamien*, *ZA* 94 [2004]: 112-21, at 114-15). Erica Reiner, however, has shown that there were areas in which the Babylonians acknowledged the influence of the stars (Reiner, *Astral Magic*).

<sup>49</sup> See H.L.J. Vanstiphout, "Miḫiltum, or the Image of Cuneiform Writing," in *The Image in Writing* (VisRel 6; Leiden: E.J. Brill, 1988), 152-68, at 160; I Starr, *Queries to the Sungod: Divination and Politics in Sargonid Assyria* (SAA 4; Helsinki: Helsinki University Press, 1990); U. Jeyes, *Old Babylonian Extispicy: Omen Texts in the British Museum* (UNHAI 64; Istanbul: Nederlands Historisch-Archeologisch Instituut, 1989); P. Steinkeller, "Of Stars and Men: The Conceptual and Mythological Setup of Babylonian Extispicy," in *Biblical and Oriental Essays in Memory of William L. Moran* (ed. A. Gianto; BibOr 48; Rome: Pontificio Istituto Biblico, 2005), 11-47.

<sup>50</sup> Rochberg, *The Heavenly Writing*, 1. Cf. Reiner, *Astral Magic*, 9.

<sup>51</sup> See *Alamdimmū* III:76-121.

The entire universe could potentially carry divine messages. The Babylonian divination literature consists of various celestial and terrestrial collections covering many domains of potential signifiers. These realms were congruent. Heavenly signs were thought to signify the same things as terrestrial ones. In the words of a Babylonian diviner's manual:

The signs on earth just as those in the sky give us signals. Sky and earth both produce portents though appearing separately, they are not separate (because) sky and earth are related.<sup>52</sup>

To read, understand, and interpret these divine messages was the task of the Babylonian divination scholars. Understanding the divine messages was not just for the sake of knowing the future. Omens did not signal inevitable events. By means of countermeasures, such as the so-called *namburbi* rituals, an omen's negative outcome could be averted if known in time.<sup>53</sup> Regarding negative physiognomic omens, however, there is little evidence for apotropaic measures.<sup>54</sup>

#### *Accessibility and Exclusivity of Physiognomic Learning*

By means of certain terminology and formulas, Mesopotamian scholars expressed their concern for limiting the accessibility to divinatory knowledge and learning to their own circle. The *Enmeduranki-text* gives instructions to the master-initiate for the education of his son into the knowledge and rites of the diviner:

the learned savant, who guards the secret of the great gods (*pirišti ilāni rabūti*), will bind by oath before Šamaš and Adad by tablet and stylus the son whom he loves and will teach him.<sup>55</sup>

The practice of labeling a text secret is well known from other examples from the Neo-Assyrian period until the Seleucid period.<sup>56</sup> The colophons sometimes contain a warning to keep the content of the text secret from the uninitiated. The typical formula used was: "The initiate (*mūdū*) may show the initiate, the uninitiated (*lā mūdū*) may not see." The Neo-Assyrian copy of the *Esagil-kīn-apli Catalogue* from Nimrud is labeled "secret of Ezida"

<sup>52</sup> A.L. Oppenheim, "A Babylonian Diviner's Manual," *JNES* 33 (1974): 197-220, at 204.

<sup>53</sup> See S.M. Maul, *Zukunftsbewältigung: Eine Untersuchung altorientalischen Denkens anhand der babylonisch-assyrischen Löserituale (Namburbi)* (BaF 18; Mainz: Philipp von Zabern, 1994).

<sup>54</sup> Cf. B. Böck, "Physiognomie und Schicksal? Oder wie der altmesopotamische Mensch mit einem durch ein physiognomisches Omen angekündigtes Unheil umgegangen sein mag," *Sefarad* 62 (2002): 241-57.

<sup>55</sup> Lambert, "Qualifications of Babylonian Diviners," 152. See also H.L.J. Vanstiphout and N. Veldhuis, "Tuppi ilāni takāltu pirišti šamē u eršetim," *AUON* 55 (1995): 30-32.

<sup>56</sup> Cf. R. Borger, "Geheimwissen," *RIA* 3 (1957-1971), 188-91; P.-A. Beaulieu, "New Light on Secret Knowledge in Late Babylonian Culture," *ZA* 82 (1992): 98-111, at 98-99, 110-11.

(*niširti E[zida]*).<sup>57</sup> In the biographical section, Esagil-kīn-apli explains that he established the collections of *Sakikkū* and *Alamdimmū* for knowledge, but that there are restrictions on the use of this learning:

A62/B26' [...] Take care! Pay [attention!]  
 A63-4/B27' Do not neglect your knowledge! He who does not attain(?)  
 knowledge must not speak aloud the SA.GIG omens,  
 A65-6/B28' nor must he pronounce out loud Alamdimmū!<sup>58</sup>

The reader is urged to be careful with the learned knowledge. Someone who is negligent or not sufficiently trained in these omen series must not speak them out aloud. This suggests that only those who had acquired the appropriate level of learning were suitable to make use and speak of the physiognomic knowledge in *Alamdimmū*.<sup>59</sup>

There is some ambivalence among Assyriologists regarding the notion of secrecy and exclusivity implied by the cuneiform formulas. Some argue that there was no genre of esoteric texts and that such a characterization is mainly based on our own inability to understand these texts.<sup>60</sup> Others point out that neither secrecy or esotericism imply incomprehensibility, only exclusivity.<sup>61</sup>

The latter position aptly captures the concept of secrecy. For those claiming to have knowledge of it, the exclusive, “secret” nature of learning functions as cultural capital and bestows status and prestige on them. In

<sup>57</sup> A93, Kinnier Wilson, “Two Medical Texts,” 139-40; Finkel, “Adad-apla-iddina,” 152.

<sup>58</sup> Finkel, “Adad-apla-iddina,” 149.

<sup>59</sup> Cf. also M.J. Geller, “West Meets East: Early Greek and Babylonian Diagnosis,” *Afo* 48/49 (2001/2002): 50-75, at 51.

<sup>60</sup> Cf. Böck, *Die babylonisch-assyrische Morphoskopie*, 43-44, 68-69. Borger, “Geheimwissen,” argued that the secrecy formulas were not applied consistently. According to A. Livingstone, *Mystical and Mythological Explanatory Works of Assyrian and Babylonian Scholars* (Oxford: Clarendon, 1986), 1, the secrecy formulas and additional references “may simply indicate a scholarly pride in the value of literature and knowledge. While one need not doubt that certain texts or doctrines were only understood or held by a select few, it seems probable that many texts which appear ‘esoteric’ to a modern reader were readily understood by ancient scholars.” Cf. also Reiner, *Astral Magic*, 33; H.L.J. Vanstiphout, “The *n*<sup>th</sup> Degree of Writing at Nineveh,” *Iraq* 66 (2004): 51-54, at 53-54.

<sup>61</sup> Cf. Rochberg, *The Heavenly Writing*, 212-18. In addition, it is possible that in the context of royal ideology, stressing the divine origin of knowledge and the function of the king as intermediary, kings such as Assurbanipal wielded a politics of secrecy with regard to scholarly learning in order to check and control knowledge and those who had it, the scholars, and thereby to affirm their power. See Pongratz-Leisten, *Herrschaftswissen in Mesopotamien*, 295-320 (cf. also the review by Brown [see n. 48 above] who disagrees that divination was used in maintaining royal hegemony). Beaulieu, “Secret Knowledge in Late Babylonian Culture,” argues that the restriction alluded to in the so-called secrecy colophons might have existed in practice. His reading, however, of a Neo-Babylonian legal text to prove his argument has been refuted on grammatical grounds by M. Dietrich, “Babylonische Sklaven auf der Schreiberschule,” in *Veenhof Anniversary Volume: Studies Presented to Klaas R. Veenhof on the Occasion of his Sixty-Fifth Birthday* (eds. W.H. van Soldt et al.; UNHAI 89; Leiden: Nederlands Instituut voor het Nabije Oosten, 2001), 67-81.



order to maintain the high social value of a body of knowledge, control over tradition, learning, and people is necessary. The concept of secrecy does not so much refer to the specific content of a body of knowledge or its comprehensibility. It is better understood as a means to organize the accessibility and availability of information and learning, and this in connection with the social status that it bestows on those possessing it. Secrecy can be described as a process in which the flow of information is suppressed across any boundaries that have been erected. The kind of information that is suppressed may vary, and the reason why does not have to be clear to an outsider. Strategies of secrecy and information control, however, can be made clear.<sup>62</sup> The words of warning in the *Esagil-kīn-apli Catalogue* reflect the importance of study and learning in gaining access to knowledge of physiognomic divination. Francesca Rochberg concludes that:

the secrecy of the scholarly texts seems to be of the sort associated with trade knowledge. The scholars' knowledge was safeguarded and protected from the uninformed, and the integrity of the discipline was thereby maintained. [...] The interdiction against persons outside the circle of 'knowers' reflects the efforts of a particular scribal body to maintain control over its tradition and to protect a particular body of knowledge. The special status of the tradition in the view of the scribes, however, is expressed in the claim that the knowledge contained in the tablets was transmitted from a divine source.<sup>63</sup>

#### *Functions of Physiognomic Divination*

There is little evidence for the function(s) that Babylonian physiognomics may have had. Unlike other forms of divinatory learning, like extispicy or celestial divination, there is no evidence that the physiognomic omens in *Alamdimmū* were ever used in a divinatory practice. Regarding the relationship between omen literature and practice, scholars disagree on the character

<sup>62</sup> Cf. E.A. Brandt, "On Secrecy and the Control of Knowledge: Taos Pueblo," in *Secrecy: A Cross-Cultural Perspective* (ed. S.T. Tefft; New York: Human Sciences, 1980), 123-46; H.G. Kippenberg and G.G. Stroumsa (eds.), *Secrecy and Concealment: Studies in the History of Mediterranean and Near Eastern Religions* (SHR 65; Leiden: E.J. Brill, 1995); H.B. Urban, "Elitism and Esotericism: Strategies of Secrecy and Power in South Indian Tantra and French Masonry," *Numen* 44 (1997): 1-38; H.B. Urban, "The Torment of Secrecy: Ethical and Epistemological Problems in the Study of Esoteric Traditions," *HR* 37 (1998): 209-48; M. Douglas and G. Mars, "Terrorism: A Positive Feedback Game," *Human Relations* 56/7 (2003): 763-86; M. Popović, "Physiognomic Knowledge in Qumran and Babylonia: Form, Interdisciplinarity, and Secrecy," *DSD* 13 (2006): 150-76, at 166-76.

<sup>63</sup> Rochberg, *The Heavenly Writing*, 217. She rightly warns, however, against "too extreme a picture of an exclusive learned society," referring to an example of a fourth century BCE scribe who participated in both learned scholarship and clerical record-keeping (217-18). On secrecy of craft knowledge in late antiquity, see P.O. Long, *Openness, Secrecy, Authorship: Technical Arts and the Culture of Knowledge from Antiquity to the Renaissance* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 2001).

and practical use of the omen series. Some argue that the standard series functioned as reference works for the diviner, while others say that the diviner would not have consulted them for decision-making purposes in his actual divinatory proceedings.<sup>64</sup> Regardless of the exact connection between the standard omen series and divinatory practice, there are no cuneiform references to physiognomic omens outside the standard and extra-serial texts that could throw light on the use and function of physiognomic knowledge.

Barbara Böck argues that Babylonian physiognomics was applied as an assessment tool for deciding which persons were eligible to enter the service of the royal court. The king would thus have been protected from the negative influence of people with bad omens.<sup>65</sup> Her argument is largely based on the ending of the biographical section of the *Esagil-kīn-apli Catalogue* where the *āšipu* is urged to report to the king:

- A69/B31' [Let the *āšipu*] who makes the decisions, and who watches over people's lives,  
 A70-1/B32' who comprehensively knows SA.GIG and Alamdimmū, inspect (the patient) and check (the appropriate series),  
 A71/B33' [let him ponder], and let him put his diagnosis at the disposal of the king.<sup>66</sup>

Concerning the physiognomic omens with regard to women, however, Böck suggests their context was that of marital relations and childbirth.<sup>67</sup>

One should allow for the possibility that in Mesopotamia physiognomics functioned in a royal or cultic context. As the *Esagil-kīn-apli Catalogue* implies, the *āšipu* rendered certain physiognomic services to king and palace. The exact nature of these services, however, is not entirely clear and it

<sup>64</sup> Cf. Koch-Westenholz, *Mesopotamian Astrology*, 13-19; Rochberg, *The Heavenly Writing*, 244-86. Perhaps omens were initially based on empirical observations that through non-empirical systematization were expanded to omen lists, with the observations contained therein forming the basis for the diviner's practice, see e.g. Bottéro, "Symptômes, signes, écritures." Another interpretation is that the omen compendia mainly represent purely theoretical and speculative knowledge. This knowledge evolved steadily out of a need to systematize every theoretical possibility of an event or phenomenon. But the actual occurrence in reality was often completely impossible. As such, this knowledge had no practical use for the diviner whatsoever, see e.g. N. Veldhuis, "Reading the Signs," in *All Those Nations...: Cultural Encounters within and with the Near East: Studies Presented to Han Drijvers at the Occasion of his Sixtyfifth Birthday by Colleagues and Students* (eds. H.L.J. Vanstiphout et al.; COMERS/ICOG Communications 2; Groningen: STYX, 1999), 161-74; Brown, *Mesopotamian Planetary Astronomy-Astrology*, 108-13. According to the latter position, this means that the occurrence of the same omens in standard series and, for example, scholarly reports does not imply that the diviner had consulted the series for reaching his conclusion. It merely demonstrates that what he knew was also to be found in the scholarly tradition, which he had learned as part of his scribal curriculum as a diviner. He need not have actually checked the tablets of a standard series.

<sup>65</sup> Böck, *Die babylonisch-assyrische Morphoskopie*, 55-57.

<sup>66</sup> Finkel, "Adad-apla-iddina," 150.

<sup>67</sup> Böck, *Die babylonisch-assyrische Morphoskopie*, 58-59.

is not readily evident that most of the omens would have been of interest to the king. The predictions in *Alamdimmû* are primarily personal and concern the described subject. There are no omen apodoses that explicitly have consequences for king and country.<sup>68</sup> Some omens even predict that the king or palace will be harsh on a person.<sup>69</sup> The described subject seems, therefore, to be the party for whom most omen apodoses would have been of interest. Furthermore, the omens in *Alamdimmû* concern individual parts of the body. As Böck herself points out, there is nothing to suggest that a synthetic method was used for valuing and interpreting a group of signs from the body. From the few composite omens that have survived, it seems rather that no synthesis was attempted since no effort was made to bring contradictory apodoses in harmony with each other.<sup>70</sup> It is, therefore, not readily evident how the omens from *Alamdimmû* were used for screening court personnel.<sup>71</sup> All this also seems to apply to the cultic context that has been suggested. It has been argued that physiognomics was perhaps used in selecting candidates for religious positions as priests.<sup>72</sup> It is plausible that a physical examination was conducted as part of the admittance procedure for palace and temple. Although there is little evidence to support this, it is possible that the examination was some kind of divinatory screening by means of physiognomics, but the exact nature of it is not clear from the available sources.

#### BACKGROUNDS OF PHYSIOGNOMIC LEARNING AND LITERATURE: GREECE AND ROME

In the Greco-Roman world physiognomics was the domain of philosophers, physicians and rhetoricians. In their writings they dealt with the theoretical as well as the applied side of this art or science (τέχνη), while a physiognomic consciousness appears in literary works of history and biography,

<sup>68</sup> See, however, *Alamdimmû* II:149: "If the head is wide, he will act loyal."

<sup>69</sup> Böck, *Die babylonisch-assyrische Morphoskopie*, 32. Cf. the review by JoAnn Scurlock (*JAO* 123 [2003]: 395-99, at 397).

<sup>70</sup> Böck, *Die babylonisch-assyrische Morphoskopie*, 59-60.

<sup>71</sup> There is a letter from a Babylonian scholar, called Marduk-šapik-zeri, in which he recommends himself and twenty of his students to the service of the Neo-Assyrian king (either Esarhaddon [680-669 BCE] or his son Assurbanipal [668-631/627? BCE]) on the basis of their knowledge of and proficiency in scientific literature, cf. #160 in S. Parpola, *Letters from Assyrian and Babylonian Scholars* (SAA 10: Helsinki: Helsinki University Press, 1993), 120-24. This letter suggests that learnedness was an important, if not the most important, criterion for entering into royal service. I owe this reference to Herman Vanstiphout.

<sup>72</sup> Lambert, "Qualifications of Babylonian Diviners"; Veldhuis, "Reading the Signs," 169; Böck, *Die babylonisch-assyrische Morphoskopie*, 57-58.

drama, and satire.<sup>73</sup> One should, of course, also allow for the possibility that physiognomic ideas circulated on a more popular level, but there is very little evidence for such popular expressions.<sup>74</sup>

#### *Textual Evidence*

Four physiognomic treatises have been transmitted from antiquity. The most important one is the pseudo-Aristotelian *Physiognomonica*. From the Second Sophistic comes the Greek treatise of Polemo of Laodicea, now only extant in Arabic translations. This work was paraphrased by Adamantius around 400, which represents the third physiognomic treatise. The fourth one is by an Anonymous Latin author, probably from the end of the fourth century.

The pseudo-Aristotelian work *Physiognomonica* is the first systematic treatment in the Greek world devoted to physiognomics.<sup>75</sup> The *Physiognomonica* clearly stands in the Aristotelian tradition with regard to the relationship between the body, the psyche, and the characteristics of both.<sup>76</sup> The connection, however, between the *Physiognomonica* and the name of

<sup>73</sup> The basic reference for physiognomic texts and passages is still R. Förster (ed.), *Scriptores Physiognomonici Graeci et Latini* (2 vols.; Leipzig: B.G. Teubner, 1893). See further e.g. Evans, *Physiognomics*; B.P. Reardon, *Courant littéraires grecs des I<sup>e</sup> et III<sup>e</sup> siècles après J.-C.* (Paris: Les Belles Lettres, 1971), 243-48; André, *Anonyme Latin*; Degkwitz, '*Physiognomonica*' *Traktat A*; Barton, *Power and Knowledge*; Gleason, *Making Men*; F. Stok, "La fisiognomica fra teoria e pratica," in *Sciences exactes et sciences appliquées à Alexandrie (III<sup>e</sup> siècle av. J.-C. – I<sup>er</sup> siècle ap. J.-C.): Actes du Colloque International de Saint-Étienne (6-8 juin 1996)* (eds. G. Argoud and J.-Y. Guillaumin; Mémoires 16; Saint-Étienne: Publications de l'Université de Saint-Étienne, 1998), 173-87; Vogt, *Physiognomonica*; A. Touwaide, "Physiognomik," *DNP* 9 (2000), 997-98; M.M. Sassi, *The Science of Man in Ancient Greece* (trans. P. Tucker; Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2001); Isaac, *Invention of Racism*, 149-62.

<sup>74</sup> See Petronius, *Satyricon* 126.3, cf. J. Bollók, "The Description of Paul in the Acta Pauli," in *The Apocryphal Acts of Paul and Thecla* (ed. J.N. Bremmer; SAAA 2; Kampen: Kok Pharos, 1996), 1-15, at 12-15; Isaac, *Invention of Racism*, 155-56.

<sup>75</sup> See now the recent and thorough study by Sabine Vogt, *Physiognomonica*, which serves as the major reference in this study. The text is extant in medieval copies, but it has suffered some losses during its transmission, especially in its physiognomic catalogues. The amount of text included in the *Physiognomonica* and known to ancient authors, such as the fourth century Anonymous Latin author, was greater than that which has come down to us through medieval copies. See Vogt, *Physiognomonica*, 197-227.

<sup>76</sup> Cf. Förster, *Scriptores Physiognomonici*, 1:xvi-xviii; Evans, *Physiognomics*, 6-10, 22-24; Barton, *Power and Knowledge*, 101; A. Degkwitz, "Die pseudoaristotelischen 'Physiognomonica,'" in *Geschichten der Physiognomik*, 23-44, at 29-31, 37-41; Vogt, *Physiognomonica*, 133-45. The secondary literature on Aristotle's position in general on the relationship between soul and body is vast, see e.g. P.J. van der Eijk, "Aristotle's Psycho-Physiological Account of the Soul-Body Relationship," in *Psyche and Soma: Physicians and Metaphysicians on the Mind-Body Problem from Antiquity to Enlightenment* (eds. J.P. Wright and P. Potter; Oxford: Clarendon, 2000), 57-77.

Aristotle is a relatively late tradition,<sup>77</sup> and the Aristotelian authorship of the text has been doubted by scholarship since the nineteenth century. Sabine Vogt does not commit herself in identifying the author (Aristotle or Pseudo-Aristotle) and labels the *Physiognomonica* as Aristotelian in content.<sup>78</sup>

The *Physiognomonica* is made up of two parts that each by itself represents a treatise on physiognomics (Tractate A and B).<sup>79</sup> Both treatises have an introductory part explaining the reasoning and methods of physiognomics. Although the theoretical section links up with notions set forth in Tractate A, Tractate B does not present a theoretical discussion but, in general, illustrates ideas by means of examples, thus complementing Tractate A. Following the introductory discourses, both treatises give a physiognomic catalogue. The two catalogues are structured differently. The first catalogue is basically ordered according to a list of character types (“the signified”), whereas the second one principally follows the parts of the human body (“the signifier”). Following the physiognomic catalogue, Tractate B has some final thoughts on physiognomic criteria and a hierarchy of signs.<sup>80</sup>

It is not necessary to assume that different authors, either belonging to or influenced by the Peripatetic school, wrote the treatises subsequently to each other, as most modern scholars do.<sup>81</sup> Vogt argues that the different emphasis and direction of both treatises are due to the fact that they were written for different purposes and different audiences. One and the same author (or perhaps two collaborating authors) could have done this.<sup>82</sup> Both parts of the *Physiognomonica* were written at the end of the fourth century

<sup>77</sup> There are just two concrete references from late antiquity to a book called *Physiognomonica* (Φυσιογνωμονικά) by Aristotle, see Vogt, *Physiognomonica*, 285. For example, Diogenes Laertius, *Lives of Philosophers* 5.25, lists one book with that title (Φυσιογνωμονικὸν α΄) under Aristotle’s writings, cf. Förster, *Scriptores Physiognomonici*, 1: xviii; Barton, *Power and Knowledge*, 101 n. 48. Other ancient authors, e.g. Pliny, *Natural History* 11.273-74, state more generally that Aristotle wrote on physiognomics, but they do not mention the title of the book. It is therefore not clear whether they are referring to the *Physiognomonica* as such.

<sup>78</sup> Vogt, *Physiognomonica*, 192-97.

<sup>79</sup> Somewhere in the middle (*Physiognomonica* 808b 11) the text begins to explain for a second time the definition and method of physiognomics.

<sup>80</sup> Cf. Vogt, *Physiognomonica*, 187, 285-87, 393-94.

<sup>81</sup> Cf. e.g. Evans, *Physiognomics*, 7; Degkwitz, ‘*Physiognomonica*’ *Traktat A*, 1, 3-7; Barton, *Power and Knowledge*, 101; Degkwitz, “pseudoaristotelischen ‘*Physiognomonica*,” 27-29; Sassi, *Science of Man*, 35 n. 2.

<sup>82</sup> Vogt, *Physiognomonica*, 191: “Die unterschiedliche Auffassung der physiognomischen Methode in den beiden Traktaten kann demnach mit unterschiedlichen Absichten und Zielgruppen begründet werden. Während Traktat A sehr an der theoretischen Grundlegung des Faches interessiert ist und sie unter bewußtem Rückgriff auf Aristoteles’ Diskussion der logischen Voraussetzungen des physiognomischen Zeichenschlusses erörtert, richtet sich Traktat B anscheinend an ‘eingeweihte’ Experten aus der Praxis, in der Erfahrung, Gesamteindruck und Tiervergleich eine große Rolle sowohl für die Legitimation als auch für die praktische Anwendung der Physiognomik spielen.”

or beginning of the third century BCE.<sup>83</sup> The two treatises differ from each other, but there are no apparent contradictions between them, which is why it is possible to view them as complementary to each other, constituting one work.<sup>84</sup>

The Peripatetic *Physiognomonica* influenced in one way or another all further physiognomic writings in the Greco-Roman, and later Western, tradition.<sup>85</sup> Mention should be made of Loxus, an otherwise unknown physician probably from the third century BCE. The Anonymous Latin author says that he used his physiognomic work as a source, but the text of Loxus has not survived.<sup>86</sup>

The second physiognomic treatise to have been transmitted from antiquity is that of the physiognomist and rhetorician Polemo of Laodicea (ca. 88-145), representative of the city of Smyrna and beneficiary of the Emperor Hadrian.<sup>87</sup> Only one sentence by Polemo is extant in Greek. There is a Greek paraphrase by the iatrosophist Adamantius from ca. 400, and the text of his treatise is extant in an Arabic translation. The Latin translation made in 1884 is based on only one of the five Arabic manuscripts, one copied in Damascus in 1379.<sup>88</sup> A new edition is being prepared.<sup>89</sup> The third physiognomic writing to have survived is the paraphrase of Polemo by Adamantius (ca. 400).<sup>90</sup> A fourth treatise was thought to belong to Apuleius, but is now termed the Anonymous Latin author and dated to the end of the fourth century.<sup>91</sup> In the opening of his book, *De physiognomonia liber* §1, the author explicitly mentions the physician Loxus, the philosopher Aristotle, and the rhetorician Polemo as his sources.

Apart from these writings that deal entirely with physiognomics, there are many scattered references to physiognomics throughout Greek and Ro-

<sup>83</sup> Vogt, *Physiognomonica*, 197.

<sup>84</sup> Cf. Degkwitz, 'Physiognomonica' *Traktat A*, 4; Vogt, *Physiognomonica*, 192.

<sup>85</sup> Cf., for example, Degkwitz, "pseudoaristotelischen 'Physiognomonica,'" 41-43; M.M. Sassi, "Physiognomy,"  *OCD* 1181.

<sup>86</sup> On Loxus see e.g. G. Misener, "Loxus, Physician and Physiognomist," *CP* 18 (1923): 1-22; Evans, *Physiognomics*, 10-11; André, *Anonyme Latin*, 24-26; Vogt, *Physiognomonica*, 205.

<sup>87</sup> Förster, *Scriptores Physiognomonici*, 1:lxv-lxxx, 98-294; Evans, *Physiognomics*, 11-15; Barton, *Power and Knowledge*, 102-31; Gleason, *Making Men*, esp. 21-81; Vogt, *Physiognomonica*, 202-3.

<sup>88</sup> Förster, *Scriptores Physiognomonici*, 1:lxix gives 1356, but Barton, *Power and Knowledge*, 102 n. 52, rightly points out this does not correspond with the date of 757 after the Hegira, cf. Förster, *Scriptores Physiognomonici*, 1:96.

<sup>89</sup> This work is being done by Georges Boys-Stones, Peter Starr, and Simon Swain in Oxford. See Vogt, *Physiognomonica*, 202 n. 55.

<sup>90</sup> Förster, *Scriptores Physiognomonici*, 1:c-cix, 297-426; Evans, *Physiognomics*, 15-16; V. Nutton, "Adamantios," *DNP* 1 (1996), 103; Vogt, *Physiognomonica*, 203-4.

<sup>91</sup> Evans, *Physiognomics*, 16-17; André, *Anonyme Latin*, 31-39; Vogt, *Physiognomonica*, 205-8.

man literature.<sup>92</sup> Together with the use of physiognomic notions in other forms of literature, these demonstrate how widespread and influential physiognomic ideas may have been, although physiognomics as found in the treatises is less culturally salient than astrology.<sup>93</sup> References will be made to the other physiognomic treatises, but the Peripatetic treatise *Physiognomonica* is singled out in this study because it set the example.

Highly important for this study are the texts that forge a connection between physiognomics and astrology. While physiognomics remained a distinct art unto itself, evident by the transmission of the treatises, it was at the same time, from the Hellenistic period onwards, incorporated by astrology. The connection between the planets and the signs of the zodiac on the one hand and the human person and body on the other hand served as another illustration of the sympathy between the macro and microcosmos.<sup>94</sup> The numerous astrological lists that have come down to us demonstrate that the idea that the zodiacal signs influenced the appearance and shape of the human body was widespread. This is most evident from the so-called *zodiologia*, which enumerate all sorts of psychological and physical characteristics, prognostics, and more for types of people who were born under a certain zodiacal sign.

#### *The Beginning and Origin of Greco-Roman Physiognomics*

The basic notion of physiognomics, namely the signifying value of the human body, is so general that cultural influence from Mesopotamia need not have triggered this interest in the Greek world. Although in the case of astrology and astronomy some of the concepts in Hellenistic astrology clearly come from the East,<sup>95</sup> this cannot be determined in such a straightforward manner for physiognomics. Leaving aside the differences, the similarities are of too general a nature to warrant the conclusion that direct borrowing took place.<sup>96</sup>

<sup>92</sup> Cf. Förster, *Scriptores Physiognomnici*, 1:237-352.

<sup>93</sup> Barton, *Power and Knowledge*, 96; Isaac, *Invention of Racism*, 150-51. For the importance of physiognomic knowledge in e.g. Apuleius' *Metamorphoses*, see most recently W. Keulen, "Ad amussim congruentia: Measuring the Intellectual in Apuleius," in *Lectiones Scrupulosae: Essays on the Text and Interpretation of Apuleius' Metamorphoses* (eds. W. Keulen, R. Nauta and S. Panayotakis; ANSupp 6; Groningen: Barkhuis, 2006), 168-202.

<sup>94</sup> Cf. J. Schmidt, "Physiognomik," *RE* 39 (1941), 1064-74, at 1066, 1070; Sassi, *Science of Man*, 161-87.

<sup>95</sup> See e.g. Neugebauer, *HAMA*, 589-614; F. Rochberg-Halton, "Elements of the Babylonian Contribution to Hellenistic Astrology," *JAOS* 108 (1988): 51-62; Koch-Westenholz, *Mesopotamian Astrology*, 177-79.

<sup>96</sup> Cf. also Kraus, *Die physiognomischen Omina der Babylonier*, 15-18; Böck, *Die babylonisch-assyrische Morphoskopie*, 61.

Regarding the beginnings of physiognomics in the Greek world, there are different traditions crediting either the philosopher Pythagoras<sup>97</sup> or the physician Hippocrates<sup>98</sup> as the discoverer of physiognomics.<sup>99</sup> There are also Greco-Roman traditions that seem to suggest a Babylonian origin.<sup>100</sup> Cicero tells of a physiognomist named Zopyrus who physiognomized Socrates as stupid, slow of wit, and a womanizer.<sup>101</sup> The name Zopyrus is of Persian origin. This anecdote is perhaps related to another one. Diogenes Laertius says that Aristotle tells of an unnamed *magus* who came from Syria and foretold Socrates a violent death.<sup>102</sup> Such a prediction would fit the interest of Babylonian physiognomics. Babylonian physiognomists also seem to have been active during the Roman period. Plutarch tells of a Chaldean who predicted a great future for Sulla on the basis of his face.<sup>103</sup> But this passage does not provide evidence of a cultural exchange of physiognomic ideas. The references to Pythagoras and Hippocrates seem to imply that physiognomic learning was not deemed to be of divine origin as it was in Babylonian culture.<sup>104</sup> But such a general observation perhaps ignores or

<sup>97</sup> See Aulus Gellius, *Attic Nights* 1.9.1-2; Hippolytus, *Refutation of All Heresies* 1.2.5; Iamblichus, *On the Pythagorean Life* 17.71, 74; Porphyrius, *Life of Pythagoras* 13, 54. Cf. C. Riedweg, *Pythagoras: Leben, Lehre, Nachwirkung; Eine Einführung* (Munich: C.H. Beck, 2002), 35. These texts, however, do not explicitly mention Pythagoras as the “inventor” of the physiognomic art, but as one who practiced it.

<sup>98</sup> Galen, *Quod animi mores corporis temperamenta sequantur* 7 = Kühn IV 797-98. Unfortunately, the recent study by Jacques Jouanna (*Hippocrates* [trans. M.B. DeBevoise; Medicine and Culture; Baltimore, Maryland: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1999]), does not discuss the direct attribution of this skill by later tradition to the figure of Hippocrates.

<sup>99</sup> Cf. Förster, *Scriptores Physiognomnici*, 1:xiii-xv; Evans, *Physiognomics*, 5, 19, 27-28; Degkwitz, ‘*Physiognomica*’ *Traktat A*, 9 n. 43; Barton, *Power and Knowledge*, 98, 101; Vogt, *Physiognomica*, 118, 201.

<sup>100</sup> Cf. Förster, *Scriptores Physiognomnici*, 1:vii-xiii; Kraus, *Die physiognomischen Omina der Babylonier*, 14-15; Evans, *Physiognomics*, 6, 10, 42-43; Degkwitz, ‘*Physiognomica*’ *Traktat A*, 13-15; Barton, *Power and Knowledge*, 100; Böck, *Die babylonisch-assyrische Morphoskopie*, 61-62; Vogt, *Physiognomica*, 114-17.

<sup>101</sup> Cicero, *On Fate* 10; *Tusculan Disputations* 4.80.

<sup>102</sup> Diogenes Laertius, *Lives of Philosophers* 2.45.

<sup>103</sup> Plutarch, *Sulla* 5.5-6. Although the designation “Chaldean” need not necessarily indicate ethnic origin – it could also be a general indication for astrologers – here it probably refers to someone of Babylonian origin since the Chaldean came with the Parthian envoy. See Kraus, *Die physiognomischen Omina der Babylonier*, 14.

<sup>104</sup> Galen’s mention of “the divine Hippocrates” (τὸν θεῖον Ἱπποκράτη), *Quod animi mores corporis temperamenta sequantur* 7 = Kühn IV 798, does not imply the divine origin of his knowledge. Cf. Jouanna, *Hippocrates*, 10-12, 37-38; D. Zeller, “The θεῖα φῶσις of Hippocrates and of Other ‘Divine Men,’” in *Neues Testament und hellenistische Umwelt* (D. Zeller; BBB 150; Hamburg: Philo, 2006), 129-40. I owe the latter reference to Marlies Schipperheijn. The epithet “divine” can simply indicate high-level achievements (cf. the reference to divine men discovering the art of physiognomics in Adamantius’ paraphrase, see n. 167 below), or Hephaestion of Thebes’ reference to the method of “the divine Ptolemy” (see n. 236 below).



downplays statements such as that by Adamantius who implies that the art is “God-given.”<sup>105</sup>

It is in the writings of Hippocrates and his followers that the first examples of physiognomic learning appeared in the Greek world.<sup>106</sup> The Hippocratic text *Airs, Waters, and Places* from around 400 BCE deals with ethnological physiognomics. It describes the influence of geographical conditions and climate on the nature, appearance, and health of entire peoples.<sup>107</sup> Another work from the Hippocratic corpus, *Epidemics*, exhibits in some instances the kind of learning found in the later physiognomic treatises:

Those with ruddy complexion, flat nose, large eyes, are good.  
If the head is large and the eyes small, if they are stammerers, they are quick to anger.  
Those with large head, large dark eyes, thick, blunt nose, are good.  
Those with small head, thin neck, narrow chest, are equable.<sup>108</sup>

As a diagnostic method physiognomics was closely related to medicine.<sup>109</sup>

The earliest appearances of the Greek word for physiognomics, φυσιογνωμονία, are from the fourth century BCE with Demosthenes and Aristotle. In a speech against Aristogeiton ascribed to the Athenian politician Demosthenes, Demosthenes exhorts his fellow citizens to choose wisely because when they leave the courthouse those outside “will scan each one as he appears, and detect by their looks (φυσιογνωμονήσουσι) those who have voted for acquittal.”<sup>110</sup> Although the use of the term seems non-technical, it remains its earliest occurrence. Aristotle has scattered remarks

<sup>105</sup> See n. 167 below.

<sup>106</sup> This is true for the more technical, learned expressions of physiognomic knowledge. But “physiognomic consciousness” began much earlier with Homer and continued in the poetry, prose, and drama of classical authors. See Evans, *Physiognomics*, 33-35, 58-62, 67-68.

<sup>107</sup> Cf. Evans, *Physiognomics*, 19-20; Vogt, *Physiognomica*, 113-14; Jouanna, *Hippocrates*, 210-32; B. Gundert, “Soma and Psyche in Hippocratic Medicine,” in *Psyche and Soma*, 13-35, at 19-20; Sassi, *Science of Man*, 105-11; Isaac, *Invention of Racism*, 60-69.

<sup>108</sup> *Epidemics* 2.5.1; 2.6.1. Translation from W.D. Smith, *Hippocrates: Volume VII* (LCL 477; Cambridge, Massachusetts: Harvard University Press, 1994), 75, 81. See also Evans, *Physiognomics*, 20 n. 20; Barton, *Power and Knowledge*, 101.

<sup>109</sup> Cf. André, *Anonyme Latin*, 17-18; Barton, *Power and Knowledge*, 97-99. In this light it is interesting to observe that the same connection is made between physiognomics and medicine in Babylonian scholarship. The *Esagil-kīn-apli Catalogue* ascribes both the physiognomic series *Alamdimmū* and the diagnostic series *Sakikkū* to the expertise of the *āšīpu*. On the medical expertise, see E.K. Ritter, “Magical-Expert (=āšīpu) and Physician (=asū): Notes on Two Complementary Professions in Babylonian Medicine,” in *Studies in Honor of Benno Landsberger on his Seventy-Fifth Birthday, April 21, 1965* (eds. H.G. Güterbock and T. Jacobsen; AS 16; Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1965), 299-321.

<sup>110</sup> Demosthenes, *Orations* 25:98. Text and translation from J.H. Vince, *Demosthenes III* (LCL 299; Cambridge, Massachusetts: Harvard University Press, 1986), 574-75.

in his writings about physiognomics.<sup>111</sup> He mentions, for example, in *Generation of Animals* “a physiognomist (φυσιογνώμων) who in his lectures used to show how all people’s faces could be reduced to those of two or three animals.”<sup>112</sup> And in *Prior Analytics* Aristotle presents physiognomics as a form of logical inference:

It is possible to judge men’s character from their physical appearance (τὸ δὲ φυσιογνωμονεῖν δυνατόν ἐστίν), if one grants that body and soul change together in all natural character traits.<sup>113</sup>

The obviousness with which Demosthenes and Aristotle use the derivatives of the term physiognomics implies that, by their time, it was a well-known concept to their audiences, which needed no further introduction.<sup>114</sup>

The focus on character links Greek physiognomics with rhetoric’s interest in stereotype character types. From Aristotle onwards there is a connection between rhetoric and the study of characters and passions. For example, Theophrastus (ca. 370-285 BCE), who was Aristotle’s successor as head of his school in Athens, wrote a small book with thirty characters. This work was written slightly earlier than the Peripatetic *Physiognomonica* with which it shares some formal correspondences, but Theophrastus did not give physical descriptions of these types in his *Characters*. Instead he focused on the psychological signs of stock characters. Both writings can be seen as different expressions of a similar interest, namely the classification and recognition of individual set character types.<sup>115</sup> The concrete elaboration of this interest seems to have commenced with Aristotle and his school at the beginning of the Hellenistic period. There are references to earlier physiognomists, but not to physiognomic treatises. The Peripatetic *Physiognomonica* probably represents the first effort to put physiognomics systematically in writing.<sup>116</sup>

#### *Principles and Methods of Physiognomics*

The *Physiognomonica* and the Anonymous Latin author devote attention to the principles and methods of physiognomic inquiry, but our ancient

<sup>111</sup> In addition to the references cited in n. 76 above, cf. also Sassi, *Science of Man*, 43-47.

<sup>112</sup> Aristotle, *Generation of Animals* 769b 20-21. Text and translation from A.L. Peck, *Aristotle: Generation of Animals* (LCL 366; Cambridge, Massachusetts: Harvard University Press, 1963), 418-19. Cf. Vogt, *Physiognomonica*, 117-18.

<sup>113</sup> Aristotle, *Prior Analytics* 70b 6-7. Text and translation, slightly adapted, from H. Tredennick, *Aristotle: Prior Analytics* (LCL 325; Cambridge, Massachusetts: Harvard University Press, 1962), 526-27.

<sup>114</sup> Cf. Vogt, *Physiognomonica*, 37 n. 3.

<sup>115</sup> See Barton, *Power and Knowledge*, 110-11; Vogt, *Physiognomonica*, 88-107; Sassi, *Science of Man*, 76-77; Isaac, *Invention of Racism*, 162-63.

<sup>116</sup> Cf. Vogt, *Physiognomonica*, 119.

sources do not provide much information about the practical application of these methods.<sup>117</sup>

The *Physiognomonica* starts by simply stating that soul and body are mutually influenced, but it does not explain why this is so:

Mental characteristics follow bodily ones and are not in themselves unaffected by bodily impulses. [...] Conversely, [...] the body suffers sympathetically with affections of the soul [...].<sup>118</sup>

To this the author of Tractate B adds the synchronicity of the reciprocal influence between body and soul; the one follows the other immediately (808b 20-28).<sup>119</sup>

#### *Body, Character, and Humors*

The reason and cause of this relationship between mental and physical character are not explained in the *Physiognomonica*.<sup>120</sup> Tractate B mentions briefly that there are forms of the body that are influenced by heat and cold (809a 6). This reference to a humoral basis for the relationship between mind and body is not elaborated upon in the *Physiognomonica*, but the theory of humors clearly lies behind some of the descriptions,<sup>121</sup> and is al-

<sup>117</sup> Cf. Vogt, *Physiognomonica*, 145-46. Plutarch, *Sulla* 5.5-6, says that the Chaldean who examined Sulla did so according to the principles of the discipline (τὰς τῆς τέχνης ὑποθέσεις), but these are not explicated. Zopyrus is said to have based his judgment of Socrates on the latter not having a curved collarbone (Cicero, *De fato* 10). The Stoic Cleanthes, finally, recognized a kinaedic type of man by his sneeze (Diogenes Laertius, *Lives of Philosophers* 7.173). Polemo gives examples of characterizations and predictions listing the indicative bodily features (cf. Mesk, "Beispiele in Polemons Physiognomonik").

<sup>118</sup> *Physiognomonica* 805a 1-6, cf. 808b 11-14. For a discussion of the terminology used to refer to character, body, and soul in the *Physiognomonica*, see Degkwitz, '*Physiognomonica*' *Traktat A*, 17-18, 56-58, 64-66; Vogt, *Physiognomonica*, 288-94, 304-5. This claim of a reciprocal influence between body and character is not really explained but it is justified by three empirical examples, which are, however, somewhat problematic, see *Physiognomonica* 805a 3-17. Cf. Degkwitz, '*Physiognomonica*' *Traktat A*, 25; Vogt, *Physiognomonica*, 287-88.

<sup>119</sup> He takes madness as an example of a mental state that is, however, treated by physicians by purging the body with drugs. The form of the body was influenced by the disease, but changed as a result of the treatments that simultaneously freed the soul from its madness. Cf. Vogt, *Physiognomonica*, 398.

<sup>120</sup> Galen, *Mixtures* 2.6 = Kühn I 624, remarks that those who attempt the art of physiognomics do not add the reason for connections like a large amount of hair on the chest and a spirited character, or, if on the thighs, a lustful character. The Anonymous Latin author follows Loxus in taking the location of the soul in the blood and understanding the state of the blood as influencing the form and appearance of the body, cf. *De physiognomonia liber* §§2, 12.

<sup>121</sup> See e.g. the descriptions of the brave and cowardly types of men (807a 31-807b 12), cf. Vogt, *Physiognomonica*, 339-51.

ready found in Aristotle.<sup>122</sup> The theory of humors did not originate with Aristotle, but was developed before him.<sup>123</sup>

Regarding physiognomics, the physician Galen (129-ca. 216) is considered to be the one who brought together fully the different strands of previous thinking concerning people, environment, and the humors that, affected by environment, shape the form and appearance of the body.<sup>124</sup> He devoted a small book about physiognomics called *That the Faculties of the Soul Follow the Mixtures of the Body* to explaining why soul and body are mutually influenced. The mixture (κρᾶσις) of the four fluids constitutes not only the shape and appearance of the body, but also the soul. This would explain why a certain character would have been recognizable by the shape and appearance of the body. Galen was the first who “skillfully combined the Aristotelian parallelisms of men and animals in the study of physiognomy with the theory of the humours circulating in the body.”<sup>125</sup>

Philosophers and physicians in antiquity debated about the nature of the soul, whether it was a bodily or non-bodily substance, as well as its rela-

<sup>122</sup> See n. 76 above. In *On the Movement of Animals* (701b 27-33) Aristotle says that because of heat or cold or a similar affection a change is caused in the region of the heart that greatly affects the body, causing redness or paleness, shivering or trembling or the opposites of these. For example, living beings that consist of a great deal of fluid have straight hair, because the fluid advances like a stream in their hair. For the same reason, namely an abundance of moisture, the Scythians by the Black Sea and the Thracians have straight hair; both their constitutions and the surrounding air are moist. Ethiopians and other people who live in hot regions, however, have curly hair since both their brains and the surrounding air are dry, says Aristotle in *Generation of Animals* (782b 31-37). The constitution not only affected the outward appearance of people’s bodies, but also their characters. In *On the Soul* Aristotle argues that the affections of the psyche are inseparable from the body and always associated with it (*De anima* 403a 15-18). While discussing the cause for melancholy among outstanding men like philosophers, statesmen, poets, and artists, the pseudo-Aristotelian *Problems* 30 describes the influence of black bile on the forming of character as being a natural process (953a 10-955a 40).

<sup>123</sup> See e.g. G.E.R. Lloyd, “The Hot, the Cold, the Dry and the Wet in Greek Philosophy,” *JHS* 84 (1964): 92-106; R. Klibansky, E. Panofsky and F. Saxl, *Saturn and Melancholy: Studies in the History of Natural Philosophy, Religion, and Art* (London: Thomas Nelson, 1964; repr., Nendeln, Liechtenstein: Kraus, 1979), 3-66; I.W. Müller, *Humoralmedizin: Physiologische, pathologische und therapeutische Grundlagen der galenistischen Heilkunst* (Heidelberg: Karl F. Haug, 1993); V. Nutton, “Säftelehre,” *DNP* 10 (2001), 1208-10; Sassi, *Science of Man*, 152-60. The notion that illness results from an imbalance of the humors is alien to the Babylonian concept of disease, cf. n. 188 below. Nevertheless, some earlier stages of Greek medicine, especially those termed “Cnidian,” may have been influenced by Babylonian medicine, cf. Geller, “West Meets East.”

<sup>124</sup> Slightly earlier, the astrologer Ptolemy of Alexandria expressed his astrological climate theory against the background of the influence of environment on bodily characteristics based on the humors. See the recent discussion by Isaac, *Invention of Racism*, 55-109, esp. 99-101.

<sup>125</sup> E.C. Evans, “Galen the Physician as Physiognomist,” *TAPA* 76 (1945): 287-98, at 298. See also H. von Staden, “Body, Soul, and Nerves: Epicurus, Herophilus, Erasistratus, the Stoics, and Galen,” in *Psyche and Soma*, 79-116, at 105-16.

tionship to the body.<sup>126</sup> Galen admits his ignorance of the nature of the soul's substance, even after years of study, but he has difficulty accepting it as non-bodily, and states that even if this were the case, one would have to admit "at least that it is slave to the mixtures of the body."<sup>127</sup> For many there was not a strict division between body and soul, and physical and psychological states were seen as interrelated. So much so that people believed physiognomics was able to interpret the visible signs on the body as signifiers of the invisible character in the soul,<sup>128</sup> thus reflecting the absence of a firm boundary between the inner and outer body.<sup>129</sup>

#### *Physiognomic Reasoning*

The conceptual context of Greco-Roman physiognomics may have been based on the physiological theory of humors, but the *Physiognomonica* is more concerned with the correct logical procedures to draw conclusions concerning people's characters from the signs of the body.<sup>130</sup> The interest is primarily semiotic and closely follows Aristotle's reasoning at the end of *Prior Analytics* where he presents physiognomics as a form of logical inference called *enthymeme*, used to denote syllogisms that leave out one of the premises for rhetorical purposes.<sup>131</sup>

Adopting one of Carlo Ginzburg's theses, Maria Sassi has characterized the sort of reasoning in physiognomics as abductive: a "semiotic mode of inference from effect to cause where an observed fact is assumed to be the *result* (or effect) of some general *rule* (or cause), of which it constitutes a *case*."<sup>132</sup> According to Sassi the following chain of reasoning is implied in physiognomics:

|               |                                     |
|---------------|-------------------------------------|
| <i>Result</i> | Animal C has physical trait A.      |
| <i>Case</i>   | Animal C has psychological trait B. |

<sup>126</sup> See e.g. some of the articles in Wright and Potter, *Psyche and Soma*.

<sup>127</sup> Galen, *Quod animi mores corporis temperamenta sequantur* 3 = Kühn IV 776-79. Translation from Singer, *Galen: Selected Works*, 155.

<sup>128</sup> Cf. Iamblichus, *On the Pythagorean Life* 17.71. Cf. also this notion with regard to medicine in Arctinus, *Sack of Troy* fr. 1: "recognize the invisible and cure the incurable." Cf. V. Nutton, *Ancient Medicine* (London: Routledge, 2004), 45 n. 59, for references in the Hippocratic Corpus.

<sup>129</sup> Martin, *The Corinthian Body*, 18-20.

<sup>130</sup> Other physiognomic writings hardly bother about the physiological basis for the correspondence between body and soul either. Cf. Polemo 1.210.18-23F(örster), see Barton, *Power and Knowledge*, 104. See also the Anonymous Latin author in n. 120 above.

<sup>131</sup> Cf. R. Smith, *Aristotle: Prior Analytics: Translated, with Introduction, Notes, and Commentary* (Indianapolis: Hackett, 1989), 226-28; Barton, *Power and Knowledge*, 104-7; Vogt, *Physiognomonica*, 120-33.

<sup>132</sup> Sassi, *Science of Man*, xvi-xvii.63-76, at 70 (cf. Barton, *Power and Knowledge*, 134-36); C. Ginzburg, "Morelli, Freud, and Sherlock Holmes: Clues and Scientific Method," in *The Sign of Three: Dupin, Holmes, Peirce* (eds. U. Eco and T.A. Sebeok; Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1983), 81-118.

*Rule* All animals with psychological trait B have physical trait A.

The procedure of abduction is described as a creative process. The conclusion (*case*) remains conjectural and can only be validated externally. The semiotic problem is that a one-on-one correspondence (*rule*) between sign (physical trait A) and signified (psychological trait B) is hypothetical. Thus, “it is not necessarily the case that all, *and only*, the animals with psychological trait B show physical trait A, and it is thus equally not the case that B as well as A may be predicated of C.”<sup>133</sup>

Tractate A of the *Physiognomonica* introduces three methods that were practiced by physiognomists: a zoological method, an ethnological method, and a method based on analogy of characteristic facial expressions.<sup>134</sup> The zoological method is based on comparing human beings with animals and their characters, and assumes that a correspondence in physique entails one in character.<sup>135</sup> The ethnological method is rooted in the idea that peoples are classified according to physical and psychological characteristics, and that individuals can be compared to these set types.<sup>136</sup> The method based on analogy of characteristic facial expressions takes the expressions of temporary emotions as indicative of permanent ones.<sup>137</sup> The author of Tractate A admits on the one hand that each of these three methods makes it possible to practice physiognomics, but on the other hand expresses his criticism of them.<sup>138</sup>

<sup>133</sup> Sassi, *Science of Man*, 71. Aristotle attempts to validate physiognomic reasoning by granting certain assumptions (*Prior Analytics* 70b 7-38), basically transforming it into a first-figure inference that is always valid. The assumptions by which physiognomizing (φυσιογνωμονεῖν) is possible are: (1) body and soul both change under influence of natural affections, (2) there is one sign (physical trait) of one thing (psychological trait), and (3) it is possible to know the affections and signs of each class of animals. This means that a particular affect that applies to any indivisible class must have a corresponding sign with it, which enables one to deduce by the outward appearance an affect of the psyche, reasoning from effect to cause.

<sup>134</sup> Cf. A. MacC. Armstrong, “The Methods of the Greek Physiognomists,” *GR* 5 (1958): 52-56; André, *Anonyme Latin*, 12-15; Vogt, *Physiognomonica*, 151-53.

<sup>135</sup> *Physiognomonica* 805a 21-24. Cf. the unnamed physiognomist in Aristotle, *Generation of Animals* 769b 20-21. The comparison with animals also appears in Babylonian physiognomics, see Böck, *Die babylonisch-assyrische Morphoskopie*, 40.

<sup>136</sup> *Physiognomonica* 805a 26-28. Ethnological physiognomics already appears in the Hippocratic text *Airs, Waters, and Places* (cf. n. 107 above).

<sup>137</sup> *Physiognomonica* 805a 28-31.

<sup>138</sup> The third method that deduces character from affections on the basis of similar facial expressions is briefly criticized (805a 33-b 10), cf. Vogt, *Physiognomonica*, 300-1. The zoological method receives elaborate discussion, as well as a suggested solution for the criticism expressed (805b 10-27), cf. Vogt, *Physiognomonica*, 129-30, 301-7. The ethnological method is more or less ignored in the *Physiognomonica* after this. It is only referred to in two short remarks: 806b 15-18: people living in the north are brave and stiff haired, whereas people in the south are cowardly and have soft hair; 808a 31: the little-minded man looks like someone from Corinth or Leucadia. Cf. Vogt, *Physiognomonica*, 296-98, 385.

An important distinction between both treatises of the *Physiognomonica* is the methodological procedure demanded in Tractate B to distinguish between male and female characteristics. The divisions are made in conjunction with animal comparisons. Thus, sex difference and animal comparisons are the main methods used to justify physiognomic inferences in Tractate B.<sup>139</sup> The male form functions as the standard from which the female forms and characteristics deviate:

Of all the animals that we attempt to breed the females are tamer and gentler in soul than the males, but less powerful, and more susceptible to rearing and handling. This being their character, they have less spirit than the males. [...] But it seems to me that females have a more evil disposition than males, are more forward and less courageous. Women and the female animals bred by us are evidently so. [...] Moreover, this is also obvious, that in each class each female has a smaller head, a narrower face and a more slender neck than the male, as well as a weaker chest and smaller ribs, and that the loins and thighs are more covered with flesh than in the males, that the female has knock-knees and spindly calves, neater feet, and the whole shape of the body built for charm rather than for nobility, with less strong sinews and with softer, moister flesh. The males are in every respect opposite to this; their nature is as a class braver and more honest, that of the female being more cowardly and less honest.<sup>140</sup>

In addition to discussing previous methods, the *Physiognomonica* expresses methodological concerns for practicing physiognomics. Four basic rules of thumb can be distilled.<sup>141</sup>

First, bodily characteristics are valid signs only if there is an exclusive connection to permanent mental characteristics. The theoretical character of this rule is made clear by the fact that even the *Physiognomonica* does not live up to it, for mental characters have several bodily signs and one bodily trait can signify various character features.<sup>142</sup>

Therefore, Tractate B formulates a second rule directed at a more practical level: to judge someone on the basis of his general appearance (*ἀπὸ τῆς ἐπιπρεπείας*) by that bodily sign that stands out and strikes the eye. The point is to grasp that aspect typical of people's general appearance and draw a physiognomic conclusion.

The third principle is closely related to the second, because it formulates how the reader is to proceed in finding the significant feature typical of people's appearance by introducing a hierarchy of signs:

<sup>139</sup> *Physiognomonica* 809a 26-810a 13. Tractate A refers only once explicitly to the sex difference (806b 31-34), but never relates to this distinction in its catalogue. Vogt, *Physiognomonica*, 153-63, 407-17. See also Gleason, *Making Men*, 55-81; Barton, *Power and Knowledge*, 115-18; Sassi, *Science of Man*, 82-139.

<sup>140</sup> *Physiognomonica* 809a 30-809b 13.

<sup>141</sup> The following is based on Vogt, *Physiognomonica*, 146-50.

<sup>142</sup> Cf. Vogt, *Physiognomonica*, 463-80.

In all selection of signs some give a much clearer demonstration of the subject than others. Clearest of all are those that appear in the most favorable position. The most favorable part for examination is the region round the eyes, forehead, head and face; secondly, the region of the breast and shoulders, and lastly that of the legs and feet; the parts about the belly are of least importance. Generally speaking, these regions supply the clearest signs, in which there is greatest evidence of intelligence.<sup>143</sup>

Finally, the author of Tractate A states that the physiognomist cannot rely on a single sign, but must base his judgment on the agreement of several signs. If several of the signs (for a particular character) coincide in one individual the probability of the inference drawn is greater (806b 37-807a 3).<sup>144</sup>

Notwithstanding these concerns with correct reasoning, it remains important to realize that “their efficacy derives, not from an exhaustive amassing of empirical data, but rather from a classification of the world oriented – and guaranteed – by ideological values.”<sup>145</sup> For example, regarding the second rule of *epiprepeia* Sassi argues that its use:

highlights certain tautological convolutions, indicative of a conscious attempt to codify notions already defined at the level of a collectively shared framework. Thus a bodily feature is judged according to the general impression produced by the individual, who is in turn influenced by that same feature and by the meaning it carries in a context clearly structured by a scale of social values [...]. [...] In other words, the social behavior of men and women, of slaves and the free, and so forth is so standardized as to become self-evident and ‘natural’ and to impose a norm.<sup>146</sup>

Although the physical descriptions seem to evolve into ever more complex and nuanced distinctions, the characterization of people stays broadly within familiar stereotypes, as known from, for example, Theophrastus. It has been argued that physiognomic literature is another reflection of the notion that the ideal human being was Greek, male, and free. This type of person is never explicitly described, but he forms the implicit point of reference against which the others, i.e. women, barbarians, and animals, are characterized as inferior. This schema structured a large part of elite thinking, and, for example, surfaces clearly in ancient rhetoric where the woman, the foreigner, and the animal present important *topoi* in invective speeches as the monstrous other.<sup>147</sup>

<sup>143</sup> *Physiognomonica* 814a 9-b 9. Cf. also 806b 34-37; Polemo 1.168.1-9F; Anonymous Latin, *De physiognomonia liber* §§10-11. See Barton, *Power and Knowledge*, 109-10.

<sup>144</sup> Cf. Vogt, *Physiognomonica*, 329-30. Vogt points out that this is “eine pragmatische Anweisung, die nichts mehr mit den theoretischeren Darlegungen zur logischen Signifikanz in früheren Abschnitten zu tun hat, sondern direkt aus der Praxis zu stammen scheint.” (329)

<sup>145</sup> Sassi, *Science of Man*, 75-76.

<sup>146</sup> Sassi, *Science of Man*, 53-55. Cf. Vogt, *Physiognomonica*, 402-5. With regard to Polemo, see Gleason, *Making Men*, 34-37.

<sup>147</sup> Cf. Barton, *Power and Knowledge*; Gleason, *Making Men*; Sassi, *Science of Man*.



*Contexts and Functions of Physiognomic Texts and Learning*

As in the case of Babylonian physiognomic texts and practice, one needs to distinguish between the context and function of Greco-Roman physiognomic texts and physiognomic practice.

Physiognomic texts and catalogues may have been transmitted, read, and studied for the mere knowledge of their content. Thus, the Anonymous Latin author's book intends to transmit Greek sources on physiognomics for his Latin readers.<sup>148</sup> Apart from transmitting this learning and providing information about it, the book need not necessarily have served another, more practical, purpose.

Polemo, however, seems to instruct his readers on the practical use of his book. He makes clear that no one could include all physiognomic material in a book, but at the same time he assures his reader that his book will enable him to make progress by himself in the art of physiognomics:

But for you, after you have learnt all the signs and made trial of all according to what has been described to you, this will be the base for physiognomics.<sup>149</sup>

Polemo seems to have intended his book as a guide and tool in the study and practice of physiognomics:

For you to master this science, it will be enough that you learn thoroughly what I have described to you and then apply what you have learned. For not even I have attained mastery of these things without much study and lengthy observation.<sup>150</sup>

He also says that for those who really try, the process of learning the art of physiognomics does not seem very long.<sup>151</sup> But, as Barton comments, these "are no more than the usual encouraging remarks. Polemo will keep his monopoly of knowledge of a τέχνη."<sup>152</sup> It has been argued that a physiognomic text like that by Polemo embodied in the first place his effort to present himself as a physiognomist. The point of this treatise was to elevate his status as one who had mastered full control of the art and to boast of his achievements. The examples of concrete cases were intended to support and illustrate this claim, as well as to inspire the reader with awe for his successes as a physiognomist. The minute subdivisions, especially with regard to the eye, are the mark of the τέχνη and intend to convey the high level of

<sup>148</sup> Anonymous Latin, *De physiognomoniam liber* §1.

<sup>149</sup> Polemo 1.120.9-12F, cf. 1.158.22-160.2F. References and translation from Barton, *Power and Knowledge*, 108.

<sup>150</sup> Polemo 1.192.14-18F. Translation from Gleason, *Making Men*, 38-39.

<sup>151</sup> Polemo 1.292.24-27F. Anonymous Latin, *De physiognomoniam liber* §3, is more straightforward in admitting that the road of study is long.

<sup>152</sup> Barton, *Power and Knowledge*, 109.

learning. The claim to educate the reader should not be taken at face value. In the case of Polemo the physiognomic text suits primarily the purpose of self-presentation.<sup>153</sup>

The treatises alone would probably not have been enough for someone to become a physiognomist.<sup>154</sup> Studying a text like the *Physiognomonica* did not yet make the reader a physiognomist:

One needs great familiarity with all the facts, if one hopes to be competent to discuss all these things in detail.<sup>155</sup>

This familiarity, the text says, could only be attained by much practice. This would most likely have happened under the guidance of a master physiognomist, for example someone like Polemo. Physiognomics purported to be an art (τέχνη) that presupposed much training and experience. Concrete information, however, about teachers, students, and the appropriation of the physiognomic art (τέχνη) is lacking.

In addition, the treatises themselves did not give clear instructions on the use of the information amassed in the catalogues. The *Physiognomonica*, for example, does not make clear when each of the four rules is to be applied.<sup>156</sup> Perhaps readers who practiced physiognomics simply took from the catalogues what suited their purposes. But since much of physiognomic knowledge received its credibility against a background of shared social values about types of people, it is not necessary to assume that the physiognomic treatises were used as tools of reference in actual practice.<sup>157</sup> Because of the importance of social values for the credibility of the art, the texts may be regarded as attempts to codify such social presuppositions.

Regarding the availability of the physiognomic treatises and the people who bought and read them, there is not much evidence. Of course, the audience for such technical writings written in an elite milieu would have been the elite itself, but there is no reason to assume that the circulation of this sort of learning was restricted on purpose. Unlike astrological treatises, which, in words reminiscent of the Babylonian secrecy formulas, have prohibitions against divulging astrological learning to the uninitiated,<sup>158</sup>

<sup>153</sup> Cf. Barton, *Power and Knowledge*, 107-8; Gleason, *Making Men*, 38-52.

<sup>154</sup> Cf. Barton, *Power and Knowledge*, 110; Gleason, *Making Men*, 38.

<sup>155</sup> *Physiognomonica* 809a 1-3. Cf. Vogt, *Physiognomonica*, 401 and n. 82 above on the possible practical background to Tractate B.

<sup>156</sup> Vogt, *Physiognomonica*, 148, 150.

<sup>157</sup> Although Suetonius shows awareness of physiognomic principles in his portrayal of emperors in *Lives of the Caesars*, there is no reason to assume direct dependence on physiognomic treatises, cf. Evans, *Physiognomics*, 51-56.

<sup>158</sup> See Barton, *Power and Knowledge*, 82-85. Such statements were probably a common *topos* used to enhance the status of the text and its author, cf., for example, the ending of Gellius' preface to his *Attic Nights*.

physiognomic writings do not impose such explicit limitations on their dissemination.

Obviously, people like Polemo, Adamantius, and the Anonymous Latin author were familiar with physiognomic writings. Perhaps they owned such writings themselves, just as Galen collected medical writings,<sup>159</sup> or they had access to them by other means, such as a library. Perhaps excerpts from the physiognomic treatises or from their catalogues were also available to a larger audience through shops that sold *mirabilia* literature. At one point Gellius tells of his time in the port of Brundisium where he bought a bundle of Greek books “filled with marvelous tales, things unheard of, incredible.”<sup>160</sup> Some of the tales concerned barbarians, magic, and the transformation of women into men; stories also told by the marvels collector Phlegon of Tralles in his *On Marvels*. It has been noted that this contemporary of Polemo in some ways matches the latter’s inquisitiveness for out of the ordinary cases.<sup>161</sup> Whether this points to a shared audience for physiognomic and *mirabilia* literature in this period cannot be ascertained, but it is possible and certainly suggestive. Another way in which the greater public could have become acquainted with physiognomics was through hearing speeches such as those by Polemo, but, although they are said to be on occasion attended by many, the audience for such speeches “remains a shadowy crowd, whose lower social limits are uncertain.”<sup>162</sup>

Besides being embodied in treatises, physiognomics could be put to use as a tool for measuring people in different contexts. Thus, it was applied in ancient rhetoric. The study of physiognomics not only instructed the orator about the correct deployment of his own body, mimicry, gestures, and voice during the delivery of a speech,<sup>163</sup> physiognomics also provided ammunition for speeches of invective by presenting set descriptions of stock characters who were easy targets of ridicule to be used in the slander of opponents, such as in the case of Polemo and Favorinus.<sup>164</sup> In a political context, physiognomics could function as a resource for attacking rivals and

<sup>159</sup> Cf. Nutton, *Ancient Medicine*, 4.

<sup>160</sup> Aulus Gellius, *Attic Nights* 9.4.3. Translation from J.C. Rolfe, *The Attic Nights of Aulus Gellius* (LCL 200; Cambridge, Massachusetts: Harvard University Press, 1968), 163. I owe this reference to Wytse Keulen.

<sup>161</sup> Gleason, *Making Men*, 39-40.

<sup>162</sup> Barton, *Power and Knowledge*, 99.

<sup>163</sup> Cf. Evans, *Physiognomics*, 39-46; H.MacL. Currie, “Aristotle and Quintilian: Physiognomical Reflections,” in *Aristotle on Nature and Living Things: Philosophical and Historical Studies Presented to David M. Balme on his Seventieth Birthday* (ed. A. Gotthelf; Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania: Mathesis and Bristol: Bristol Classical, 1985), 359-66; F. Graf, “Gestures and Conventions: The Gestures of Roman Actors and Orators,” in *A Cultural History of Gesture: From Antiquity to the Present Day* (eds. J.N. Bremmer and H. Roodenburg; Cambridge: Polity, 1991), 36-58; Barton, *Power and Knowledge*, 103-4; Gleason, *Making Men*, 101-30; Vogt, *Physiognomonica*, 92-96.

<sup>164</sup> See e.g. Gleason, *Making Men*, 55-81.

enemies since appearance was made to function as a moral indicator. Its positive use for praise (*encomium*) was less popular, or at least so it seems from our sources.<sup>165</sup>

Physiognomics as an instrument for measuring people can be, and has been, used to exercise various forms of social control.<sup>166</sup> It was claimed to help people in their social relationships and dealings with others, such as in the paraphrase of Adamantius, which offers a few words of introduction that probably derive from Polemo:

If divine men have made any discovery that can be of truly immense benefit to those who study it, it is physiognomics. For nobody would deposit in trust his financial assets, his heirlooms, his wife, or his children – or enter into any sort of social relationship – with a person whose form foretells the signs of dishonesty, lechery, or double-dealing. As if by some God-given, inerrant, and prophetic art, the physiognomist understands the character and purposes, so to speak, of all men: how to choose associates only from those who are worthy, and how to guard against the evildoing of unprincipled people without having to experience it first. For this reason, wise men should apply themselves with all their strength to working through the signs of this art.<sup>167</sup>

Not only did physiognomics enforce social classifications already shared by an elite framework of reference, it could also function more directly to exercise control over the actual make-up of groups of people. Traditions about Pythagoras and his group of followers exemplify this application of physiognomics.<sup>168</sup> Later tradition ascribes to Pythagoras the use of physiognomics as a means to admit or reject new applicants to his community.<sup>169</sup> It was clearly believed that physiognomic judgment was applied, but how it would have exactly functioned is not made explicit. Gellius says that:

<sup>165</sup> Cf. Barton, *Power and Knowledge*, 111-31.

<sup>166</sup> Cf., for example, the importance of people's physiognomy in medieval Arab slave trade, in the classification of female hysterics at the Salpêtrière and criminals by Cesare Lombroso in the nineteenth century, and in Victorian art, see T. Fahd, *La divination arabe: Études religieuses, sociologiques et folkloriques sur le milieu natif de l'Islam* (Leiden: E.J. Brill, 1966), 387-88; M. Cowling, *The Artist as Anthropologist: The Representation of Type and Character in Victorian Art* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1989); M. Gibson, *Born to Crime: Cesare Lombroso and the Origins of Biological Criminology* (Westport, Connecticut: Praeger, 2002); G. Didi-Huberman, *Invention of Hysteria: Charcot and the Photographic Iconography of the Salpêtrière* (trans. A. Hartz; Cambridge, Massachusetts: MIT Press, 2003); D.G. Horn, *The Criminal Body: Lombroso and the Anatomy of Deviance* (New York: Routledge, 2003).

<sup>167</sup> Adamantius, *Physiognomonikon* 1.298-99. Translation, slightly adapted, from Gleason, *Making Men*, 37-38.

<sup>168</sup> There is also a reference to Socrates discerning Plato's inner character through his exterior appearance before taking him as a student, see Apuleius, *On Plato* 1.1. Cf. Barton, *Power and Knowledge*, 100 n. 40.

<sup>169</sup> Riedweg, *Pythagoras*, 58, 129-36, understands the physiognomic test as part of the specific structure of the Pythagorean sect.

the order and method followed by Pythagoras, and afterwards by his school and successors, in admitting and training their pupils were as follows: At the very outset he ‘physiognomized’ the young men who presented themselves for instruction. [...] Then, when he had thus examined a man and found him suitable, he at once gave orders that he should be admitted to the school [...].<sup>170</sup>

The biographers Porphyrius (ca. 234-ca. 301) and Iamblichus (ca. 250-ca. 330) also attest that Pythagoras applied a physiognomic test in order to determine people’s natures. The signs by which Pythagoras recognized the invisible character of the soul were a person’s shape and form, walking, and entire bodily movement. Porphyrius states that Pythagoras would never have made someone his friend or pupil before physiognomizing what sort of person he was.<sup>171</sup> But, except for enumerating the signs by which people were known physiognomically, no further details are provided. In his *The Life of Apollonius of Tyana*, Philostratus (ca. 170-205) recounts the procedures of admittance into the study of philosophy in India. One of the elements is a physical examination, suggesting the same sort of physiognomic test as ascribed to Pythagoras:

The particulars of the youths themselves are duly learnt by inspection of them. For in many cases a man’s eyes reveal the secrets of his character, and in many cases there is material for forming a judgment and appraising his value in his eyebrows and cheeks, for from these features the dispositions of people can be detected by wise and scientific men, as images are seen in a looking-glass.<sup>172</sup>

These examples demonstrate the belief that physiognomics could function as a tool for exercising social control, though they do not shed much light on the actual proceedings of such a physiognomic test. One should, nonetheless, allow for the possibility that physical, or more specifically physiognomic, examinations could be used by groups to control and maintain their boundaries for new members or other people; perhaps somewhat similar to medical examinations nowadays for certain professions.

<sup>170</sup> Aulus Gellius, *Attic Nights* 1.9.1-3. Translation from Rolfe, *Attic Nights*, 45-47.

<sup>171</sup> Iamblichus, *On the Pythagorean Life* 17.71, 74; Porphyrius, *Life of Pythagoras* 13, 54.

<sup>172</sup> Philostratus, *Life of Apollonius* 2.30. Translation from F.C. Conybeare, *Philostratus: The Life of Apollonius of Tyana, the Epistles of Apollonius and the Treatise of Eusebius* (LCL 16; Cambridge, Massachusetts: Harvard University Press, 1989), 197. Cf. J.-J. Flinterman, *Power, Paideia, and Pythagoreanism: Greek Identity, Conceptions of the Relationship between Philosophers and Monarchs, and Political Ideas in Philostratus’ Life of Apollonius* (DMAHA 13; Amsterdam: J.C. Gieben, 1995), 105 n. 73. I owe this reference to Wytse Keulen.

BABYLONIAN AND GRECO-ROMAN PHYSIOGNOMICS AND THE DEAD SEA  
SCROLLS: COMPARATIVE ISSUES<sup>173</sup>

*Principles and Methods*

From the Dead Sea Scrolls it appears that the human body was believed to signify different things. *4QPhysiognomy ar* suggests the predictive value of physiognomic observation, while *4QZodiacal Physiognomy* establishes a link between the human body and certain astrological elements and, in addition, perhaps characterization.<sup>174</sup> Regarding the semiotic relationship between signifier and signified that is suggested by the Qumran texts, some options need to be evaluated. As there is no explicit reflection on this issue in Jewish texts extant from this period, the considerations below remain speculative.

*Divine Communication*

It is possible that, somewhat similar to Babylonian physiognomic divination, the signs on the human body were understood to convey God's messages; through people's bodily shapes and appearance God communicated their future. That people believed that God communicated by means of portents is corroborated, for example, by certain passages in Josephus' writings.<sup>175</sup> It is, however, also possible that the predictive value of the human body was simply taken for granted, without any notion of divine signs.<sup>176</sup> The possible references to predictions in *4QPhysiognomy ar* are, unfortunately, too fragmentary to assess their relationship to the physiognomic descriptions.

*Animal Comparisons*

Another possibility is that the relationship between the body and what is signified by it was structured according to rules of inference reminiscent of Greco-Roman physiognomics. It has been argued that the mention of the person's animal being bull in 4Q186 1 ii 9 (זהו בהמתו שור) represents in

<sup>173</sup> Cf. also Popović, "Physiognomic Knowledge in Qumran and Babylonia."

<sup>174</sup> 4Q186 1 ii 9: עני יהיה, "he will be humble."

<sup>175</sup> Josephus, *Jewish War* 6.288-310, discusses various portents prior to the First Revolt that were believed to be messages from God, and in *Jewish antiquities* 15.144, some people believe the earthquake to have been a sign communicating God's wrath. See also Philo, *On the Creation of the Cosmos* §§58-59a, who says that "there are people who have based conjectures on heavenly movements and have given indications in advance that tremors and earthquakes would occur." Translation from D.T. Runia, *Philo of Alexandria: On the Creation of the Cosmos according to Moses* (PACS 1; Leiden: Brill, 2001), 60, cf. also 205-6.

<sup>176</sup> Nor is there any explanation of the predictive value of Greco-Roman physiognomics in ancient sources, cf. the references in n. 13 above.

some form a zoological method of animal comparisons linking certain human types with certain animals.<sup>177</sup> But this is far from clear, and the description of the body in 4Q186 1 ii is too fragmentary to assess whether this method of physiognomics is used here. Nevertheless, it seems unlikely that long and slender thighs and toes – attributed to the person whose animal is bull (4Q186 1 ii 5-6) – are to be expected for a bull-like type.<sup>178</sup>

*Excursus: בהמה – Animal and Zodiacal Sign*

Most scholars render בהמה simply with “beast, animal,” but one should allow for the possibility that the term attempts to translate a foreign word and conveys the astrological concept referred to by the Greek ζῳδιον or the Latin *animal*.<sup>179</sup> The word בהמה is not known from other Hebrew texts to be a *terminus technicus* for zodiacal sign. In later Hebrew texts a zodiacal sign is referred to with the word מזל.<sup>180</sup> But it is certainly possible that at times more terms were used to refer to this concept. Thus far, only one occurrence of the word מלוש, widely used in Syriac and Mandaean sources,<sup>181</sup> is known from a Hebrew text from the Cairo Geniza in the sense of “sign of the zodiac.”<sup>182</sup> And recently, it has been argued that the term is also used in

<sup>177</sup> Alexander, “Physiognomy,” 389; Wise, “Horoscope Written in Code,” 276. Cf. Albani, “Horoscopes in the Qumran Scrolls,” 289.

<sup>178</sup> Cf. the descriptions of the bull and ox in physiognomic texts, Pseudo-Aristotle, *Physiognomonica* 807a 19; 810b 16; 811a 14; 811b 9.20.29.35 (cf. Vogt, *Physiognomonica*, 334-35.424-25); Anonymous Latin, *De physiognomonia liber* §120.

<sup>179</sup> Cf. Lichtenberger, *Studien zum Menschenbild*, 146; Bergmeier, *Glaube als Gabe*, 78 n. 430; cf. Maier, *Texte vom Toten Meer*, 2:136. For the Latin *animal* in its astrological sense, see A. Le Boeuffle, *Astronomie, astrologie: lexique latin* (Paris: Picard, 1987), 43; A. Le Boeuffle, *Les noms latins d’astres et de constellations* (Paris: Les Belles Lettres, 1977), 62. But Professor Wolfgang Hübner has pointed out to me that *animal* is rare and that *signum* is usually used to refer to zodiacal signs in Latin texts.

<sup>180</sup> See e.g. the *Baraita de-Mazzalot* in Wertheimer and Wertheimer, *Batei Midrashot*, 13-37; the Cairo Genizah text T.-S. K 21.88 1/א 23; 2/א 9.22; 1/ב 11.26; 2/ב 12 in Gruenwald, “Jewish Physiognomic,” 309-16.

<sup>181</sup> For the Mandaic *maluaš(a)*, see e.g. the *Sfar Malwašia*, *Book of the Zodiac*, 147.20-148.9 in E.S. Drower, *The Book of the Zodiac* (OTF 36; London: Royal Asiatic Society, 1949), 93. Cf. also J.C. Greenfield and M. Sokoloff, “Astrological and Related Omen Texts in Jewish Palestinian Aramaic,” *JNES* 48 (1989): 201-14, at 211.

<sup>182</sup> See Schäfer, *Geniza Fragmente*, 137; Schäfer, “Metoposkopie und Chiromantik,” 93. Perhaps this text (T.-S. K 21.95.L) makes a distinction between zodiacal *constellations*, referred to with מזלות (2b/13) and zodiacal *signs*, referred to with (ת)מלוש (2b/14).

This interpretation is also proposed by K. von Stuckrad, *Das Ringen um die Astrologie: Jüdische und christliche Beiträge zum antiken Zeitverständnis* (RVV 49; Berlin: Walter de Gruyter, 2000), 195 n. 147, but rejected in favor of an interpretation according to which מלוש would refer specifically to the zodiacal sign of the ascendant that changes roughly every two hours (Von Stuckrad, *Ringens um die Astrologie*, 199-200), because of the statement in 2b/15-16 “when the child is born in these two hours” (כיון שהוא נודל הולד בבי שעות) (הלל). It seems, however, more likely that this latter statement should be understood with Schäfer, “Metoposkopie und Chiromantik,” 94 n. 55, 95 n. 57, as an elaboration on the circumstance that the child is born under the zodiacal sign *Libra* on the first day under Jupiter or the moon (2b/14-15): הנולד במזל (ב)מאונים ביום ראשון בצדק או בלבנה. It is probably a reference

this sense in Qumran Hebrew.<sup>183</sup> Since different terms were used over time, it is perfectly possible that *בְּהַמָּה* has the meaning “zodiacal sign” in *4QZodiacal Physiognomy*.

“House of Light,” “House of Darkness,” and the Appearance of the Body  
Finally, as has been noted by other scholars, with regard to *4QZodiacal Physiognomy* there seems to be a semiotic relationship between, on the one hand, the division of numbers in the “house of light” and the “house of darkness” and, on the other hand, the shape and appearance of the body as portrayed in the physiognomic descriptions. The text seems to imply that the more parts there are in the “house of light,” the better someone looked. Those born at the moment when there are more parts of light have a more attractive appearance (4Q186 1 ii), than those born when there are more parts of darkness. These latter people look less attractive (4Q186 1 iii).<sup>184</sup> This suggests that the human body is related to the division of numbers; it signifies that division. The *Genesis Apocryphon* from Cave 1 provides information on the positive appreciation of certain physical characteristics of Sarai.<sup>185</sup> She is said to have a beautiful face and lovely eyes (1QapGen ar 20:2-3); the latter possibly contrasts with 4Q186 1 iii 6, if *מִירְאָה* (“terrifying”) refers to the eyes. Sarai’s hands also have an attractive appearance; she has long (*אֲרִיכָן*) and slender (*וְקַטִּינָן*) fingers (1QapGen ar 20:5). This suggests that the long (*אֲרוּכָה*) and slender (*דַּקָּה*) thighs and toes of the type described in 4Q186 1 ii 5-6 may have been regarded as positive, attractive features, while, in contrast, the thick fingers of the type in 4Q186 1 iii 6-7 may have been seen as unattractive. Thus, the praising description of Sarai in the *Genesis Apocryphon* provides some evidence for a connection between the descriptions of the human body and the apportionment of numbers between the “house of light” and the “house of darkness.”

The Qumran physiognomic texts themselves do not in any way suggest familiarity with the Greek notion of a humoral basis for the connection between the human body and the soul<sup>186</sup> or, for that matter, between the human body and astrological notions, since the heavenly bodies and zodiacal signs were believed to be made up of a mixture of the same four elements

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to the two hours of night and day during which Jupiter and the moon hold rulership. The statement “when the child is born in these two hours” is, therefore, not related to the sense of *מְלוֹשְׁהָן*.

<sup>183</sup> M. Kister, “Three Unknown Hebrew Words in Newly-Published Texts from Qumran,” *Lešonenu* 63 (2000-2001): 35-40, at 35-36 (Hebrew). I owe this reference to Jonathan Ben-Dov.

<sup>184</sup> Due to the impossibility of Allegro’s reconstruction of 4Q186 2 i, there are no references to the division of numbers for the type of person described in that column. See Popović, “A Note,” 638.

<sup>185</sup> See Appendix II.

<sup>186</sup> See Wise, “Horoscope Written in Code,” 276.



(see below). Nonetheless, it has been suggested that the Dead Sea Scrolls provide evidence for a disease etiology similar to certain Greek expressions of the theory of humors. Joseph Baumgarten has argued that Cave 4 fragments of the *Damascus Document* that deal with the treatment of skin diseases use the word רוּחַ (“spirit”) in a way similar to the use of πνεῦμα (“spirit”) in some Greek medical writings.<sup>187</sup> If this interpretation is correct, it would demonstrate Jewish familiarity with Greek physiological theories in Palestine during the Hellenistic-Early Roman period. However, this understanding is problematic. First, the parallels that Baumgarten adduces from Greek medicine are not that strong; πνεῦμα is a vital factor in human physiology, not the cause of disease, as is the case in the Cave 4 fragments of the *Damascus Document*. Second, the spirit (רוּחַ) is said to enter, which suggests an external spirit entering the human body, an option Baumgarten also mentions. However, this is not a notion connected with πνεῦμα in Greek medicine in this way. This sort of external cause for disease seems very much in line with Babylonian medicine, but not with Greek medicine where illness has an internal cause resulting from an imbalance in the mixture of humors.<sup>188</sup>

Another possible understanding of the connection between body and soul could have been suggested by a reading of the second creation narrative where God after having formed man from the dust of the earth instills the breath of life in man by which he becomes a living being (Gen 2:7). Perhaps this verse prompted the theological justification given by the *Testament of Naphtali* for the correspondence between body and spirit as being created in resemblance to each other.<sup>189</sup>

Regarding the connection between the human body and astrological elements, *4QZodiacal Physiognomy* attests the notion of influence of the zodiacal signs on the shape and appearance of the human body.<sup>190</sup> Following Matthias Albani’s ascendant interpretation (see Chapter Three), I understand the numbers assigned to the “house of light” and the “house of darkness” to be established by the position of the rising zodiacal sign above the eastern horizon at the moment of birth (i.e. the ascendant). The “house of light” refers to the area above the horizon and contains the parts of the zodiacal sign that have risen, while the “house of darkness” refers to the area below

<sup>187</sup> J.M. Baumgarten, “The 4Q Zadokite Fragments on Skin Disease,” *JJS* 41 (1990): 153-65. Cf. Martin, *The Corinthian Body*, 166-67; C. Hempel, *The Laws of the Damascus Document: Sources, Tradition and Redaction* (STDJ 29; Leiden: Brill, 1998), 43-50; I. Werrett, *Ritual Purity and the Dead Sea Scrolls* (Diss. St Andrews, 2006), 31, 38-39.

<sup>188</sup> Cf. J. Scurlock and B.R. Andersen, *Diagnoses in Assyrian and Babylonian Medicine: Ancient Sources, Translations, and Modern Medical Analyses* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 2005), 10-12.

<sup>189</sup> *T. Naph.* 2:2. See Appendix II.

<sup>190</sup> On the relationship between astrology and physiognomics, see below.

the earth where the parts of the sign not yet risen reside. The assumption is that the more parts of a zodiacal sign that have ascended into the light, the more powerful, and presumably beneficial, its radiating influence is on the body of the people born at that moment. The idea governing the organization of *4QZodiacal Physiognomy* is that, because of this close connection, in later life the appearance of the human body (signifier) can give one clues about the position of a person's horoscope, i.e. his ascendant zodiacal sign (the signified).

*The Textual Format of Physiognomic Descriptions*

In *4QZodiacal Physiognomy* the physiognomic descriptions stand at the beginning of each section in the list. They describe the human body from top to bottom. This same structure underlies the descriptions in *4QPhysiognomy ar*. As far as can be determined from the remaining amount of text, the physiognomic catalogues only contained descriptions of the entire body. They did not enumerate individual bodily signs directly followed by what was signified by them.

Recently, some scholars have noted a resemblance in form between the physiognomic texts from Qumran and Babylonian physiognomic omen lists.<sup>191</sup> But there is no evidence for the use of conditional sentences in the Qumran texts, which, if present, would imply the same form as the omens from Babylonian divination literature.

Furthermore, the structure of the Qumran texts differs from that of the Babylonian omen lists. Babylonian omen collections were methodically ordered and organized according to their protases, and this was also the case with *Alamdimmû*. This means that the different parts of the human body were the organizing principle behind the collection. For each body part various descriptions are given, almost exhaustively, before the list proceeds to another part of the body. The sequence of the descriptions follows the order from head to toe, an organizational principle mentioned explicitly in the *Esagil-kīn-apli Catalogue*.<sup>192</sup> The first twelve tablets of *Alamdimmû* describe the human body proceeding from head to toe. Here the reader finds in sequential order descriptive omens for the head, hair on the head, and various parts of the head, such as forehead, eyebrows, eyelids, eyes, nose, lips, tongue, teeth, jaw, cheeks, ears, chin, and finally the entire facial ap-

<sup>191</sup> See Lange, "Essene Position on Magic," 387; Geller, "New Documents from the Dead Sea," 227-29. Geller limits himself to a comparison between the Aramaic text 4Q561 and the Babylonian physiognomic omens, as he thinks it likely that the Aramaic text has been influenced by this Babylonian tradition. Geller, "West Meets East," 70 n. 206, points out that the preservation of this text in Aramaic argues for a Mesopotamian origin in contrast with the Hebrew text 4Q186 which shows no Babylonian influence.

<sup>192</sup> A 61-2/B 25', Finkel, "Adad-apla-iddina," 148-49.

pearance. After the extensive treatment of the head and its various parts in the first eight tablets, the compendium moves in the ninth tablet downwards in its description of the human body, and lists accounts of the neck, and of the chest downwards to the genital area. The series continues with descriptions of buttocks and thighs, until it stops with the toes. The eleventh tablet ends with a section on ways of walking and comparisons with those of animals.

Neither the Hebrew *4QZodiacal Physiognomy* nor the Aramaic *4QPhysiognomy ar* are catalogues of the human body in the exact way that the Babylonian series *Alamdimmû* is. The Qumran texts are not structured and organized according to protases that describe a particular part of the body but contain overall descriptions of individual bodies. These descriptions themselves do follow the sequential principle *a capite ad calcem*, but this is not the same as the manner in which the entire lists of protases in *Alamdimmû* have been structured according to this rule.<sup>193</sup>

The twelfth and final tablet of the main series is not extant, but Böck suggests that it perhaps contained omens that listed several physical characteristics describing a person's entire bodily appearance. Their form may have been similar to some of the composite omens at the end of the subseries for the female.<sup>194</sup> At the end of one of the textual witnesses of this subseries, two compound descriptions of the female body are preserved, the better-preserved one reading:

If the forehead glows, a tooth protrudes (*āšītu*), the nose is straight, the lips are thin, the chin is flat, hands and feet are pointed, (and) she is covered with *ḥalû*- and *umšatu*-marks, [...] this woman ..., she is near to the god, she is cheerful, barley and silver are set in place for her, she will acquire barley and silver, her days are long, (and) a basket she will not carry before her.<sup>195</sup>

The few remaining composite descriptions of the female body stand isolated within the corpus of omens in *Alamdimmû*. There are some omens that combine two, or three, descriptions, but this is rather different from composite descriptions of people's entire bodies from head to toe.<sup>196</sup> If indeed *Alamdimmû*'s twelfth tablet listed composite omens describing the entire body of certain types of individuals it would strengthen the argument that there is a resemblance in form between the physiognomic texts from Qumran and Babylonian physiognomic omen lists. This resemblance is never-

<sup>193</sup> It is possible to regard the construction *וְאִישׁ אֲשֶׁר יִהְיֶהֱקֵן* in 4Q186 1 i 7 as the introduction of a protasis ("And if someone [whose] ... will be), but it is impossible to determine where the apodosis begins. See the section on the start of an entry in *4QZodiacal Physiognomy* in Chapter One.

<sup>194</sup> Böck, *Die babylonisch-assyrische Morphoskopie*, 16, 27-28.

<sup>195</sup> *Šumma sinništu qaqqada rabât* 250-55.

<sup>196</sup> Cf. *Alamdimmû* II:44-62; VIII:74-90.

theless very limited. The greatest part of *Alamdimmû* concerns particular omens of individual parts of the human body.

Greco-Roman physiognomic texts also have descriptions of a particular part of the human body, followed directly by a characterization.<sup>197</sup> Overall descriptions of the human body do, however, appear in Greco-Roman physiognomics too. Following the theoretical discussion, Tractate A of the *Physiognomonica* has appended a catalogue of twenty-two character types.<sup>198</sup> The text does not give definitions of the different character types. It presumes that they are familiar to the reader. For each lemma the catalogue simply strings together bodily characteristics that are the signs of a certain character.<sup>199</sup>

The bodily descriptions in the catalogue of Tractate A do not follow a specific order of parts of the body such as in the Babylonian examples of composite omens for the female where the *a capite ad calcem* principle is applied. Sometimes a description goes back and forth between the area above and below the waist. And many of the character types do not have their bodies fully portrayed. Sometimes just one or two features are described. An example of the first two types demonstrates the nature of the catalogue:

The characteristic signs of the brave man (ἀνδρείου σημεῖα) are stiff hair, an erect carriage of body, bones, sides and extremities of the body strong and large, broad and flat belly; shoulder-blades broad and far apart, neither very tightly knit nor altogether slack; a strong neck but not very fleshy; a chest fleshy and broad, thigh flat, calves of the legs broad below; a bright eye, neither too wide opened nor half closed; the skin on the body is inclined to be dry; the forehead is sharp, straight, not large, and lean, neither very smooth nor very wrinkled.

<sup>197</sup> See e.g. the first part of the catalogue of Tractate B (structured from bottom to top!) in *Physiognomonica*, 810a 14-812a 11. For a detailed discussion, see Vogt, *Physiognomonica*, 417-45.

<sup>198</sup> *Physiognomonica*, 807a 31-808b 10. The list of character types begins with eight types that form four pairs of opposites (807a 31-808a 11). The brave character is opposed to the cowardly one, the clever character is paired with the stupid one, the shameless with the decent one, and the cheerful character is opposed to the sad one. Another pair appears later in the text: the fierce type is opposed to the gentle one (808a 19-27). Vogt, *Physiognomonica*, 163, indicates that the character types listed in this catalogue are of a predominantly negative kind. Of the remaining twelve character types, seven are negative while the others are ambivalent or neutral. Negative types include the kinaedic (808a 12-16), the malignant (808a 17-19), the mean-spirited (808a 29-31), the abusive (808a 32-33), the lustful (808b 4-6), the one that loves sleep (808b 6-8), and the talkative one (808b 8). The ambivalent or neutral types are the mock modest (808a 27-28), the gamblers and dancers (808a 31), the compassionate (808a 33-37), the gluttonous (808b 2-3), and the one with a good memory (808b 9-10). For a detailed discussion of each character type, see Vogt, *Physiognomonica*, 339-93.

<sup>199</sup> See also the catalogues in Polemo 1.268-82F, and Anonymous Latin, *De physiognomonica liber* §§89-115.

The characteristic signs of the coward (δειλοῦ σημεῖα) are soft hair, a body of sedentary habit, not energetic; calves of the legs broad above; pallor about the face; eyes weak and blinking, the extremities of the body weak, small legs and long thin hands; thigh small and weak; the figure is constrained in movement; he is not eager but supine and nervous; the expression on his face is liable to rapid change and is cowed.<sup>200</sup>

*Literary Dependency of the Qumran Physiognomic Texts*

Regarding the question of how the Qumran physiognomic catalogues are related to their Babylonian and Greco-Roman counterparts, it is evident that similarities in content can be expected, as the object of descriptions is the human body. Moreover, since we are dealing with the genre of catalogues, albeit from diverse literary traditions, it is not surprising to likewise find similarity with regard to the succinct nature of the literary style used. The words describing the body are strung together.<sup>201</sup>

On the basis of the textual evidence it is difficult to argue for a direct dependence of the Qumran texts on either the Babylonian or the Greco-Roman physiognomic traditions. It has been suggested that the Aristotelian ideal of the golden mean (μεσότης) in Greco-Roman physiognomics lies behind some of the bodily descriptions in *4QZodiacal Physiognomy* and *4QPhysiognomy ar.*<sup>202</sup> Similar descriptions, mainly concerning height (“neither tall nor short”), are also found in the Mandaean *Book of the Zodiac*,<sup>203</sup> but in this case it is likely that the Mandaean tradition was familiar with the Greco-Roman one. The reference to the type of person born in the middle of *Sagittarius* being of a choleric temperament<sup>204</sup> clearly suggests the theory of humors, which eventually distinguished, in the ninth century, four types of people, *melancholici*, *phlegmatici*, *choleric*, and *sanguinei*, but the notion of these four types is older than the expressions for them.<sup>205</sup> Such familiarity, however, cannot be presumed for the Qumran texts merely

<sup>200</sup> *Physiognomonica* 807a 31-807b 12.

<sup>201</sup> A variety of new words that appear in both catalogues of the *Physiognomonica* further demonstrate this succinct nature. See Vogt, *Physiognomonica*, 188-90: “Es handelt sich dabei zumeist um Komposita, deren etymologische Ableitung klar erkennbar ist und die dem Verfasser die verbale Paraphrase eines Sachverhaltes in einem Nebensatz oder einem Partizip ersparen.” (189)

<sup>202</sup> See 4Q186 2 i 3-4; 4Q561 1 i 1-4, cf. Wise, “Horoscope Written in Code,” 278. For the golden mean in physiognomics, see Vogt, *Physiognomonica*, 163-66; Sassi, *Science of Man*, 45-50.

<sup>203</sup> Drower, *Book of the Zodiac*, 10, 13, 24, 30

<sup>204</sup> Drower, *Book of the Zodiac*, 27.

<sup>205</sup> Cf. Evans, *Physiognomics*, 18-19; Klibansky, Panofsky and Saxl, *Saturn and Melancholy*, 60. The Mandaean *Book of the Zodiac* is thus a fine example of the entanglement of both Babylonian, cf. n. 23 above, and Greco-Roman traditions in one and the same text at a certain stage in its development.

on the basis of descriptions of the body that are couched in terms of the mean between two extremes.

It has been argued that the Aramaic text *4QPhysiognomy ar* was influenced by the Babylonian physiognomic tradition.<sup>206</sup> The evidence for predictions in *4QPhysiognomy ar* seems to suggest such an influence. Then again, there are indications that the Greco-Roman tradition was also familiar with the predictive possibilities of physiognomics, as in the case of Ptolemy.<sup>207</sup> Moreover, the form of the bodily descriptions in *4QPhysiognomy ar* is, strictly speaking, not the same as that of the physiognomic omens in the Babylonian tradition. *4QPhysiognomy ar* may very well have had a Babylonian origin, but this cannot be proved on the basis of the text's form and content. It is possible to argue a Babylonian origin on the basis of other considerations. One may point out that other Aramaic texts, like, for example, *4QPrayer of Nabonidus ar* (4Q242),<sup>208</sup> or other technical texts, like, for example, calendrical texts from the Dead Sea Scrolls or the Astronomical Book of *1 Enoch*,<sup>209</sup> also have a Babylonian background. It is possible to conceive of a process of transmission of physiognomic lore from Mesopotamia against such a background. But these factors do not necessarily lead to the conclusion that there was Babylonian influence on *4QPhysiognomy ar* and that physiognomic learning came to Palestine from Mesopotamia. Caution is advised. Jewish culture in Palestine during the Hellenistic-Early Roman period was not influenced either from the East or from the West. It was not a matter of either/or, but rather, at times, of both. The important point is to compare the Qumran physiognomic texts with both traditions and not to exclude one beforehand on the basis of a presumed influence from the other.

#### *Astrology and Physiognomics*

The relationship between physiognomics and astrology in *4QZodiacal Physiognomy* needs to be addressed in the light of other Babylonian and Greco-Roman texts that also combine astrology and physiognomics.

It has been argued that due to its rising popularity in the second half of the first millennium BCE, astrology subsumed other disciplines of learning, like magic and medicine, but also physiognomics. The combination of

<sup>206</sup> See the position of Mark Geller in n. 191 above.

<sup>207</sup> See n. 13 above.

<sup>208</sup> See F. García Martínez, "The Prayer of Nabonidus: A New Synthesis," in *Qumran and Apocalyptic: Studies on the Aramaic Texts from Qumran* (F. García Martínez; STDJ 9; Leiden: E.J. Brill, 1992), 116-36, at 135-36.

<sup>209</sup> See M. Albani, *Astronomie und Schöpfungsglaube: Untersuchungen zum astronomischen Henochbuch* (WMANT 68; Neukirchen-Vluyn: Neukirchener, 1994); J. Ben-Dov and W. Horowitz, "The Babylonian Lunar Three in Calendrical Scrolls from Qumran," *ZA* 95 (2005): 104-20.

physiognomics with astrology was another illustration of the sympathy between macro and microcosmos, the heavens and human beings.<sup>210</sup>

The details of this development are difficult to trace. The grouping of both disciplines of learning into one sort of text probably began before the Hellenistic period.

The Late Babylonian text *Esoteric Babylonian Commentary*, perhaps dating to the Persian period, juxtaposes both astrology and physiognomics.<sup>211</sup> The text can be divided into three sections. The first section lists three omen series (*Šumma izbu*, *Sakikkū*, and *Alamdimmū*),<sup>212</sup> as well as three celestial constellations (*Aries*, *Taurus*, and *Orion*). Both the reading and the understanding of this section are disputed. Robert Biggs understands the enumeration of the three omen series as a kind of heading. The culmination of the three constellations refers somehow to the physiognomic series *Alamdimmū*. Böck, on the other hand, takes both lists as a pair that serves to predict the bodily appearance. She interprets the culmination of the constellations as a reference to physical characteristics in general, not to the omen series *Alamdimmū* specifically.<sup>213</sup> Böck adduces the Neo-Assyrian *Diviner's Manual's* advice to check omens both in heaven and earth, but argues that in this Late Babylonian text astrology plays the dominant part. She suggests that the interpretation of human physiognomy is dependent on the zodiac.<sup>214</sup> It is possible that this text conveys that astrological knowledge of someone's zodiacal sign is instructive in predicting their appearance, but the exact sense of the *Esoteric Babylonian Commentary* remains elusive.

Another Late Babylonian text is more suggestive with regard to the connection between astrology and physiognomics, though it is full of difficulties. Among other things, *LBAT* 1593 is concerned in its first section with

<sup>210</sup> Cf. Schmidt, "Physiognomik," 1066, 1070; Reiner, *Astral Magic*, 77-79; Böck, "'Esoteric Babylonian Commentary' Revisited," 617, 619-20.

<sup>211</sup> See Biggs, "Esoteric Babylonian Commentary"; Böck, "'An Esoteric Babylonian Commentary' Revisited."

<sup>212</sup> Böck, "'Esoteric Babylonian Commentary' Revisited," 616, notes that only these three series, out of the wide range of Babylonian omen collections, are concerned with the human body and its appearance. The series *Šumma izbu* ("If a Malformation") is concerned with monstrous births of humans and animals (teratology), see Maul, "Omina und Orakel," 62-64.

<sup>213</sup> Biggs, "Esoteric Babylonian Commentary," 53, reads l.3 until the beginning of l.4 as *ana e-la-nu ki-i ik-šu-du ALAM.DÍM-mu-ú iq-ta-bi*. But Böck, "'Esoteric Babylonian Commentary' Revisited," 615, reads *ana E la-nu ki-i ik-šu-du alam-dím-mu-ú iq-ta-bi*. Biggs interprets *ana elānu* ("upwards") as an expression together with the verb *kašādu* ("to reach, arrive, approach," for other examples of the verb *kašādu* in an astronomical context see CAD K 273b s.v.) and translates it as "to culminate." Instead, in Böck's interpretation *ki* seems to introduce a new sentence, and before that she reads *ana E la-nu* as *ana qabē lāni* ("serving to predict the appearance"). Furthermore, Böck takes the second mention of *alam-dimmū* as a parallel of *lānu* ("form, appearance") and translates it accordingly in its general meaning "physical characteristics."

<sup>214</sup> Böck, "'Esoteric Babylonian Commentary' Revisited," 619.

determining the physical characteristics as well as some aspects of the future of those born under a certain zodiacal sign, for example:

1. Region of Libra: [(break)] narrow of forehead; variant: the nose<sup>?</sup> to<sup>?</sup> [...]
2. and red; (he will have) a long chin; red hair; he will be widowed. Region of Sagittarius: [...]
3. (in the<sup>?</sup> morning<sup>?</sup> a woman will (and) kill her<sup>?</sup> husband – in the middle of Sagittarius a follower<sup>?</sup> of the [...] constellation [...]
4. is not present<sup>?</sup>. Region of Aquarius: (the child will be) male, his eyes (or: face) red; region of Aquarius: (it means<sup>?</sup>) that the lower part<sup>?</sup> of the ears will be large, a child<sup>?</sup> to<sup>?</sup> [...]
5. female, her eyes (will be) ... and beautiful, her<sup>?</sup> forehead pinched.<sup>215</sup>

This Late Babylonian text provides two important clues for understanding the combination of physiognomics and astrology. First, it demonstrates the notion that zodiacal signs influence the shape and appearance of the human body. Second, *LBAT* 1593 shows a clear structure. The zodiacal information is provided first and only then is the conclusion regarding bodily form and the person's fate given.

The connection of astrology with physiognomics demonstrates the pervasive influence of the zodiacal signs on the human body.<sup>216</sup> In the first century BCE Cicero clearly attests to the existence of the idea that the zodiac exerts its influence on the body. When presenting the opinion of those who defend the Babylonian genethliological predictions (*Chaldaeorum natalicia praedicta*), Cicero says they argue that there is a certain force in the zodiac influencing everything both in heaven and on earth, and:

so also children at their birth are influenced in soul and body and by this force their minds, manners, disposition, physical condition, career in life and destinies are determined.<sup>217</sup>

This is especially clear in the notion of *melothesia*, the idea that the planets and the zodiacal signs each govern a specific part of the body.<sup>218</sup> In his poem *Astronomica*, probably written at the end of the reign of Augustus and the beginning of that of Tiberius, Manilius describes the parts of the body that are subject to the different signs:

<sup>215</sup> Reiner, "Early Zodiologia," 423.

<sup>216</sup> Cf. Bouché-Leclercq, *L'astrologie grecque*, 428-33; Hübner, *Eigenschaften der Tierkreiszeichen*, 190-201; Sassi, *Science of Man*, 168-72.

<sup>217</sup> Cicero, *On Divination* 2.89. Translation from W.A. Falconer, *Cicero: On Old Age, On Friendship, On Divination* (LCL 154; Cambridge, Massachusetts: Harvard University Press, 2001), 470-73.

<sup>218</sup> Bouché-Leclercq, *L'astrologie grecque*, 319-25; Gundel and Böker, "Zodiakos," 579-82; W. Hübner, "Manilius als Astrologe und Dichter," *ANRW* II 32.1 (1984), 126-320, at 237-42. For decanal *melothesia* see W. Gundel, *Dekane und Dekansternebilder: Ein Beitrag zur Geschichte der Sternbilder der Kulturvölker* (SBW 19; Glückstadt: J.J. Augustin, 1936), 286-87.



Now learn how the parts of the human body are distributed among the constellations, and how the limbs are subject each to a particular authority: over these limbs, out of all the parts of the body, the signs exercise special influence. *Aries* as chieftain of them all is allotted the head, and *Taurus* receives as of his estate the handsome neck; evenly bestowed, the arms to shoulders joined are accounted to *Gemini*; the breast is put down to *Cancer*, the realm of the sides and the shoulder blades are *Leo*'s, the belly comes down to *Virgo* as her rightful lot; *Libra* governs the loins, and *Scorpio* takes pleasure in the groin; the thighs draw near to *Sagittarius*, *Capricorn* is tyrant of both knees, whilst pouring *Aquarius* has the lordship of the lower legs, and over the feet *Pisces* claims jurisdiction.<sup>219</sup>

In the second century CE, Ptolemy of Alexandria devotes a whole chapter in his book on astrology to the influence of each planet and zodiacal sign on the form and mixture of the human body, and another chapter to their effects on injuries and diseases.<sup>220</sup> The powers ascribed to the planets are rooted in the four elements and the mixture of their qualities.<sup>221</sup> This determines their influence on the human body when they rise and set. For example:

Saturn, when he is rising, makes his subjects in appearance dark-skinned, robust, black-haired, curly-haired, hairy-chested, with eyes of moderate size, of middling stature, and in temperament having an excess of the moist and cold. [...] Mars, when rising, makes his subjects in appearance red and white of complexion, tall and robust, gray-eyed, with thick hair, somewhat curly, and in temperament showing an excess of the warm and dry.<sup>222</sup>

There was a similar system of the mixture of the four elements and their qualities for the zodiacal signs.<sup>223</sup>

The influence of the zodiacal signs on the human body have been collected and organized in astrological lists called *zodiologia*.<sup>224</sup> The *zodiologia* are arranged according to the order of the signs of the zodiac. They dis-

<sup>219</sup> Manilius, *Astronomica* 2.453-65. Translation, slightly adapted, from G.P. Goold, *Manilius: Astronomica* (LCL 469; Cambridge, Massachusetts: Harvard University Press, 1997), 118-19. Cf. also Ptolemy, *Tetrabiblos* 3.13.4-5; Sextus Empiricus, *Against the Professors* 5.21-22; Firmicus Maternus, *Mathesis* 2.24. All further translations of the *Astronomica* are taken, sometimes in adapted form, from Goold.

<sup>220</sup> Ptolemy *Tetrabiblos* 3.12; 3.13.

<sup>221</sup> See also *Tetrabiblos* 1.4. Cf. T. Barton, *Ancient Astrology* (London: Routledge, 1994), 102-11.

<sup>222</sup> *Tetrabiblos* 3.12.3, 5.

<sup>223</sup> Cf. Hübner, *Eigenschaften der Tierkreiszeichen*, 238-45.

<sup>224</sup> See the various *zodiologia* collected in *Catalogus codicum astrologorum Graecorum* (12 vols.; Brussels: Henri Lamertin, 1898-1953), for example, CCAG 4.158-69; 10.212-43; 12.173-91. For more references and discussion, see W. Gundel, "Individualschicksal, Menschentypen und Berufe in der antiken Astrologie," *JdC* 4 (1927): 135-93, at 157-76; E. Svenberg, *Lunaria et zodiologia Latina* (SGLG 16; Gothenburg: University of Gothenburg Press, 1963), 92-104; W. Gundel and H.G. Gundel, *Astrologumena: Die astrologische Literatur in der Antike und ihre Geschichte* (S.A.B 6; Wiesbaden: Franz Steiner, 1966), 269-70.

regard any planetary positions and only take into account the position of the sun, which resides in the zodiacal signs for the duration of one month. The assumption is that the influence of the zodiacal sign on the human soul, body, and fate remains the same during this period.

The *zodiologia* list under each sign the various character traits and bodily features ascribed to those born under that sign, as well as the fate that will befall them in life. The “zodiacal children,” e.g. “the boy born in the period of the zodiacal sign of *Aries*” (Ὁ γεννηθεὶς νεώτερος ἐν καιρῷ ζῳδίου τοῦ Κριοῦ), could also be referred to by their zodiacal sign in an abbreviated form, such as Λεοντιανοί, Παρθενιανοί, Σκορπιανοί, and Τοξιανοί.<sup>225</sup> Wilhelm Gundel has given the following example of a *zodiologia* from an unpublished manuscript. Many *zodiologia* are quite long, but this short one illustrates the genre very well:<sup>226</sup>

Die Widderkinder haben ein schönes Gesicht, breite etwas nach der Seite neigende Nüstern, eine Breite Stirn, die in den kahlen Vorderkopf hineinragt, schmale Lippen; sie sind ziemlich groß und rötlich. Ihre Augen sind groß, die Stimme offen, auch eine schöne Hautfarbe gehört zu ihren Naturgaben. Die Teile der Beine zwischen Knie und Knöchel sind kurz; von Natur sind sie fleischig, dichtbehaart, wollig-kraushaarig. Sie schauen zur Erde, sind feig in ihrem Herzen, scherzhaft, schöngestig, unternehmend, tapfer, roh, waghalsig und leicht veränderlich.<sup>227</sup>

Although Hippolytus of Rome, ca. 170-235/6, criticizes the idea that the zodiacal signs influence the shape of human bodies, he provides an extensive list of all the physical and psychological characteristics attributed to those born under each zodiacal sign, similar to the *zodiologia*.<sup>228</sup> For example:

Those born in *Taurus* will be of the following type: round head, thick hair, broad (and) square face, black eyes and large eyebrows – in a white man, thin, blood-red veins – long eyelids, thick, huge ears, round mouths, thick nose, round nostrils, thick lips, <short body,> strong in the upper parts,<sup>229</sup> they are sluggish from the legs. The same are by nature: pleasing, perceptive, of a goodly character, pious, just, rustic, complaisant, from twelve years hard workers, touchy, slothful. The stomach of these is small, quickly filled, they plan many things, they are sensible, sparing towards

<sup>225</sup> F. Boll, C. Bezold, and W. Gundel, *Sternglaube und Sterndeutung: Die Geschichte und das Wesen der Astrologie* (5d ed.; Darmstadt: Wissenschaftliche Buchgesellschaft, 1966), 133-34; Gundel and Gundel, *Astrologumena*, 270. Cf. Manilius, *Astronomica* 2.541-642; Sextus Empiricus, *Against the Professors* 5.95-102.

<sup>226</sup> I have been unable to trace the Greek text, which is why I give Gundel's translation.

<sup>227</sup> Gundel, “Individualschicksal,” 159.

<sup>228</sup> Hippolytus, *Refutation of All Heresies* 4.15.4-27.2.

<sup>229</sup> Cf. Ptolemy, *Tetrabiblos* 3.12.13.

themselves, generous towards others, beneficent, they are partly sad, negligent, in friendship useful on account of mind, distressed.<sup>230</sup>

In theory, the *zodiologia* may have functioned as a reference tool in ancient astrology, astrology of a perhaps more popular form as some have argued.<sup>231</sup> Having determined the solar birth sign of an individual, such texts would have provided easy access to further information concerning the physical and psychological characteristics listed under each zodiacal entry.<sup>232</sup>

Comparing the combination of physiognomics and astrology in *4QZodiacal Physiognomy* with other texts from Babylonian and Greco-Roman traditions yields two interesting results. On the one hand, it suggests that *4QZodiacal Physiognomy* likewise attests to the existence of the belief that the zodiacal signs have an effect on the appearance of the human body. But, on the other hand, the comparison demonstrates that the interest of *4QZodiacal Physiognomy* has a different direction because of its distinctive structure. The connection between astrology and physiognomics is expressed differently in *4QZodiacal Physiognomy*. The astrological data are listed subsequently to the physiognomic descriptions. As has been concluded in the previous chapter, *4QZodiacal Physiognomy* is a physiognomic catalogue in which the descriptions of the human body point the reader to astrological information concerning the types of people described. *4QZodiacal Physiognomy* is similar to other texts in that it *combines* both physiognomics and astrology, but it differs significantly in that the physiognomic descriptions of the human body *precede* the astrological data. This peculiar feature sets this Qumran text somewhat apart from other known ancient texts in which astrology and physiognomic learning are combined.

If in antiquity the belief was held that astrologers were able to predict a child's physical appearance on the basis of his nativity because of the influence of the stars on the human body, it need not surprise us that it must also have been deemed possible to reason the other way round. That is, to determine a person's horoscope from the other known factors in his life, such as his physical characteristics. For example, in Plutarch's account of the life of Romulus, the first century BCE Roman philosopher and astronomer Tarutius is credited with determining Romulus' horoscope for the moment of his conception and birth from the given facts of his life.<sup>233</sup> His

<sup>230</sup> Hippolytus, *Refutation of All Heresies* 4.16.1-11.

<sup>231</sup> Cf. M.P. Nilsson, *Geschichte der griechischen Religion: Zweiter Band, Die hellenistische und römische Zeit* (2d ed.; vol. 2; HdA 5/2; Munich: C.H. Beck, 1961), 486-89; Gundel and Gundel, *Astrologumena*, 269.

<sup>232</sup> Cf. Gundel, "Individualschicksal," 165.

<sup>233</sup> Plutarch, *Romulus* 12.3-5. See the recent and thorough discussion in K. Frommhold, *Bedeutung und Berechnung der Empfängnis in der Astrologie der Antike* (OrA 38; Münster: Aschendorff, 2004), 226-38.

friend Varro put to him this problem, arguing that this could be done just as the solutions of geometrical problems are derived:

for the same science, he said, must be capable not only of foretelling a man's life when the time of his birth is known, but also, from the given facts of his life, of hunting out the time of his birth.<sup>234</sup>

Even more interesting is an intriguing remark by the late fourth-century CE astrologer Hephaestion of Thebes:

If, at some time, from a triplicity there are two zodiacal signs above the earth to which we assume the horoscope (= the ascendant) applies, then we also pay attention to the shape of the man, which one of the zodiacal signs he resembles more, and accordingly we give our decision.<sup>235</sup>

This observation provides an important clue for understanding the relationship between physiognomics and astrology in *4QZodiacal Physiognomy*. If one cannot establish which of two zodiacal signs above the horizon represents the ascendant sign of a certain individual, it is possible, says Hephaestion, to discern this by looking at the shape of his body. And he appends a short list with the physical characteristics of those born at the moment when each of the zodiacal signs is the horoscope. Hephaestion adds that these are the signs of the zodiacal signs themselves when they happen to be the horoscope sign, but that the effects of the planets should also be taken into account, enumerating them briefly. This physiognomic method is, as he says himself, a rough method to find the horoscope, unlike the precise method of "the divine Ptolemy."<sup>236</sup>

Hephaestion thus provides evidence for the belief that astrological information, such as the ascendant zodiacal sign, could be learned through physiognomic inquiry.<sup>237</sup> By means of physiognomic knowledge a person's ascendant zodiacal sign (i.e. his horoscope sign) could be discerned accordingly. This line of reasoning is the guiding principle behind the textual structure of *4QZodiacal Physiognomy*.

<sup>234</sup> Plutarch, *Romulus* 12.4. Translation from B. Perrin, *Plutarch's Lives I: Theseus and Romulus, Lycurgus and Numa, Solon and Publicola* (LCL 46; Cambridge, Massachusetts: Harvard University Press, 1967), 122-23.

<sup>235</sup> Hephaestion, *Apotelesmatica* 2.2.27. Text from D. Pingree (ed.), *Hephaestio Thebanus: Apotelesmatica* (vol.1; Teubner; Leipzig: B.G. Teubner, 1973), 92.11-15.

<sup>236</sup> Hephaestion, *Apotelesmatica* 2.2.28-42.

<sup>237</sup> Cf. A. Bouché-Leclercq, *L'histoire de la divination dans l'antiquité* (vol.1; Paris: Ernest Leroux, 1879), 174-75, 266-69; Bouché-Leclercq, *L'astrologie grecque*, 313 n. 1.