

An Ancient Mesopotamian Herbal Handbook

The Series URU.AN.NA and MUD-UR.MAH. Volume 1: The Tablets

by J.C. Fincke

DESCRIPTION:

The related series *uru.an.na* = *mas / Itakkal*, "*uru.an.na* means the *mas/Itakkal* plant", and *mud-ur.mah* = *mê sa libbi bini*, "*lion's blood* means the liquid from the heart of the tamarisk", both give synonyms and equivalent foreign names for plants, herbs and wood, as well as for other ingredients ancient medical practitioners used to effect cures.

This first volume, about both series, focuses on the cuneiform tablets on which the texts were written, from the British Museum, London, the Vorderasiatisches Museum, Berlin, and the Oriental Institute, Chicago. New hand copies and sketches show the physical and non-physical joins. Viewing the tablets as archaeological objects, the author provides numerous observations about format, shape, colour, 'firing holes', worm holes and trace fossils. The ways scribes marked out their tablets with horizontal lines (sometimes doubled) to separate entries or paragraphs or provide ruled tablets are described; vertical rulings defined the left edge and column divisions (sometimes replaced by a *glossenkeil*). Areas reserved for writing, layout, slanted lines of writing, alignment and indentation of paragraphs, line spacing and ductus (especially changes from middle to neo-assyrian) are carefully examined. The last chapter concentrates on scribal corrections and various correction marks, line markers and supplementary glosses. Such features illuminate the personal preferences and professional experience of the frequently anonymous scribes behind the tablets.

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