

Brian B. Schmidt

The Materiality of Power

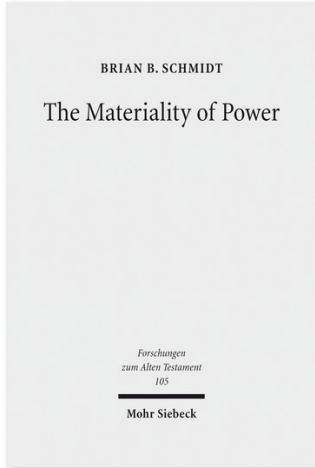
Explorations in the Social History of Ancient Israelite Magic

[Die Materialität der Macht. Untersuchungen zur Sozialgeschichte der Magie im antiken Israel.]

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Brian B. Schmidt presents five case studies in which architectural spaces, artifacts, epigraphs, images and biblical manuscripts corroborate the existence of a robust daimonic realm ruled by YHWH and Asherah in late pre-exilic Israel and an embryonic pandemonium foreshadowing later demonological constructs. The material and epigraphic data from Kuntilet Ajrud, Ketef Hinnom, and Khirbet el-Qom, along with the early manuscript evidence from Deut 32 and 1 Sam 28, indicate that this pandemonium wreaked havoc on the living and the dead. These same data also preserve a countervailing realm of apotropaism—a realm over which YHWH and Asherah, portrayed as Egypt's quintessential protective deities Bes and Beset, governed. Various other material media including amulets, inscribed blessings and decorated jars also conveyed this counteractive apotropaism. Yet, the data as a whole highlight Asherah's central role in this magical realm as YHWH's mediatrix. Alongside various protective spirits, Asherah executed divine protection for mortals, those alive and departed, from threatening demons.

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