



A variety of Babylonian amulets are among the items on display in the Sterling Library's exhibit "Magic in Mesopotamia" on view through April 28.

Exhibit features magical objects from the Babylonian Collection

An exhibit highlighting magical artifacts from ancient Mesopotamia is currently on display in the nave area of Sterling Memorial Library.

The exhibit was organized by Benjamin Foster, the William M. Laffan Professor of Assyriology and Babylonian Literature and curator of the Yale Babylonian Collection, and Karen Foster, lecturer in the Department of Near Eastern Languages and Civilizations.

"For the ancient Mesopotamians, the world was filled with threats and dangers, which could often be warded off or counteracted by magic," note the Fosters in their description of the exhibit. "Many magic spells and rituals have come down to us, primarily written in Sumerian and Akkadian, as well as numerous inscribed magical objects, including amulets, wall-hanging charms

and bowls to bury under the threshold.

"Magicians were highly respected individuals, on a level with physicians and diviners," explain the organizers. "They were called upon by people from all levels of society to cure illnesses, to help with love troubles, to drive away demons and to help a person gain respect and promotion. Sorcery or black magic was also well known, where magic was used for harmful or evil purposes. The Mesopotamians feared a cruel demoness, who was believed to commit evil acts out of pure malice, preying especially on unborn and newborn children."

The exhibit provides a representative selection of texts and objects drawn from the Yale Babylonian Collection, housed in Sterling Memorial Library. The material will remain on view until April 28.