

The Identification of the Square Aspect in Babylonian Astro-medicine:
Some Clues from Greco-Roman Sources

In Classical astrology, groups of four signs in square relationship were known as “quadruplicities,” expressing “modalities/qualities” of the square aspect – an astrological term referring to the square relationship between planets or zodiac signs that were meaningful particularly in the medical context. The tradition that assigns quadruplicities to the zodiac is commonly traced only as far back as the Greek scholar Ptolemy (90–168 CE) and his work the *Tetrabiblos* (Book 1:13), but, thus far, they have not been recognized in cuneiform scholarship. This paper will present the first identification of the square aspect in Early Hellenistic cuneiform texts and will provide an interpretation of how such an astrological aspect may have served medical needs on the basis of a series of clues derived from Greco-Roman sources. The resulting picture is one of continuity in the application of this (and probably similar) astro-medical ideas, thus providing an historical explanation for their presence in Greco-Roman medicine.