

Le Journal des Médecines

2023 n°41



- Page 1 Male Doctors and Female Patients
M. J. Geller
- Page 16 Witchcraft in Medicine: the Ashur Medical
Catalogue and Relevant Nineveh Series Reexamined
Strahil V. Panayotov
- Page 36 Mon fils Sukkukum a disparu de chez moi il y a huit ans
Adelina Millet Albà
- Page 47 The Medical Information in Ludlul Bēl Nēmeqi.
Some Notes on the Suffering and its Treatment
Kiril Mladenov

Cuneiformes

Male Doctors and Female Patients

M. J. Geller

The study of Babylonian gynaecology still awaits a comprehensive edition of relevant texts, although a forthcoming volume from Ulrike Steinert on women's diseases promises to fill this vital gap in our knowledge of ancient Babylonian medicine.¹ Recent publications by Paul Potter of a number of treatises on women in the Loeb Classical Library² add significantly to our general background knowledge of gynaecology in roughly the same period as the Akkadian texts. One cannot help but notice in these Greek texts the paucity of references to any theory of humours or bloodletting, the two signature topics of Greek medicine, as well as the fact that passages in Greek gynaecology often resemble the *Listenwissenschaften*-format typical of Akkadian texts from the same period.³

Within this framework, one tablet copied by O. R. Gurney and published in 1973 has attracted particular attention, since it was edited a decade later, in 1982 by Erica Reiner, in honour of Gurney on his 70th birthday.⁴ Reiner's edition was authoritative enough to be followed in all later editions and translations of this text.⁵

While Gurney described this tablet as prescriptions for facilitating childbirth, Reiner understood the text as a series of pregnancy tests, while pointing to Egyptian parallels likely to have influenced Hippocratic sources on pregnancy in relation to women's diseases. The difficulty is that not only are Egyptian sources are much older than any Hippocratic parallels,

¹ The transliteration of this tablet is provisional, awaiting the eventual publication of photos which will allow for collations. The present edition, however, has profited from reading the text with the online NinMed group and especially from critical comments, additional information, and astute corrections from Gilles Buisson, in his crucial role as editor of the JMC; he also to be credited for bringing to my attention many of selections from the Hippocratic corpus cited in this article.

² Potter *Hippocrates* IX [2010], X [2012], XI [2018], as well as the French edition of *Nature of Women* edited in Bourbon 2008.

³ Florence Bourbon remarks that the Hippocratic treatises *Nature of Women* and *Diseases of Women* “a conservé du matériel ancien, et des noms d'ingrédients rarement cités dans la *Collection hippocratique*” (Bourbon 2008: xlii), [ref. courtesy G. Buisson]. She also remarks (ibid.) that the treatise *Nature of Women* may be the oldest of these treatises.

⁴ Reiner 1982. While pointing out interesting parallels in other literatures, Reiner's edition was preliminary, possibly because by this time Edmond Sollberger had decided to send all published UET VII tablets in the British Museum back to Baghdad without recording any excavation numbers or photographing any of the tablets, making collating these tablets virtually impossible, from that time until now.

⁵ See Scurlock 2014: 582-585, Böck 2010: 110, and Steinert (forthcoming). Any proposed edition of this text (including this one) continues to be provisional in the without means of collating or viewing photos of the tablet.

but there is little evidence that Egyptian medical texts from the second millennium were still current in later periods, nor is there smoking gun evidence of Egyptian influence over Hippocratic medical writings. Hippocratic and Babylonian medicine, on the other hand, are roughly contemporary and display numerous common features.⁶ Some specific parallels between UET 7, 123 and Hippocratic treatises on the *Diseases of Women* have already been proposed,⁷ but other problems remain to be solved in this important text.

UET 7 123

- 1 [mal-tak-ta-šú PEŠ₄ ki-i NU PEŠ₄ 1 GÍN útar-muš] 1/2 GÍN Ú BABBAR 4-tú^{na4} gab-u
 2 [mi-šir-a-a ina sigÀKA ana ŠÀ.T]ÛR-šá GAR-an mu-šú gab-bi
 3 [ÍL-ši-ma ina GEŠ]TIN-nu BABBAR LUH-si ki-^ri sig¹ÀKA SA₅-at lu MÚD ul-lu-ha-tú
 4 [MUNUS.BI PEŠ k]i-i sigÀKA ši-i SIG₇-at MUNUS.BI NU PEŠ₄ ki-i lib-bi ŠÀ[!].TÙR-šú
 5 [ši-ru][?]-šú ki pi-it GÌR u-ši GUR[!]-ma dul-la-šá e-pu-uš šip-ru-šú
 6 [NU PEŠ₄] maš-qit NAG-šú ki-<-i> É GIŠ.NÁ-su IGI maš-šit in-na-áš-šú GÚR.GÚR
 7 LI HAR.HAR NU.LUH.HA u ILLU ^rLI<.TAR> [1-š]ú 2-šú 3-šú NAG ù BURU₈-šú PEŠ₄
-
- 8 DIŠ KI.MIN A SULLIM^{sar} ina sigÀKA NIGIN-mi ana [ŠÀ.T]ÛR-šá GAR 3-UD ÍL-^rši¹-ma
 9 šum₄-ma SULLIM^{sar} GIM ŠEŠ ib-tar-rum MUNUS.BI PEŠ₄
-
- 10 DIŠ KI.MIN Ú.BABBAR NAGA.SI ina sigÀKA NIGIN-mi ana ŠÀ.TÙR-šá GAR 3-UD ÍL-ma
 11 ina šal-šú u₄-me sigÀKA ina A LUH-si šum₄-ma sigÀKA [SA₅ MUNUS.BI PEŠ₄]

⁶ See however the counter arguments in Asper 2015.

⁷ See Geller 2021. Detailed comparisons are particularly apt in women's medicine, such as the description, 'let them dribble the milk of a woman who is nursing a male child' (*gala gunaikos kourotophon*, *Diseases of Women* 2 340 = Potter 2018: 376-377), which reflects a similar instruction in Akkadian medical texts, see Schmidtchen 2021: 34, 37, reading GA[!] ZÚG-ti šá ma-[ra] Û.TU, 'milk of an unclean woman who have birth to a son'. The reading is based upon ND 4368, copied by J. Kinnier Wilson in Iraq 18, pl. XXV and recopied in CTN 4, 72 (Wiseman/Black 1996: pl. 43). The reading ma-^rra¹ is somewhat problematic, although the damaged ra-sign (with traces visible in the eBL photograph) may be written over an erasure.

12 *šum₄-ma* ^{sig}ÀKA SIG₇-*ruq-tú* MUNUS.BI [NU PEŠ₄]

13 DIŠ KI.MIN ^{na₄}*gab-u mi-šir-a-a* GA[BA.LÀL *ana ŠÁ.TÙR-šá* GAR *šum₄-ma*]

14 ^ʾGIM¹ *a-lap me* IGI.IGI MUNUS.BI [PEŠ₄

15 [L]I NAGA.SI¹ PÈŠ [..... MUNUS.BI NU PEŠ₄]

rev.

1' [.....] x ^ʾSIKIL *zu-ut¹* x [.....]

2' [^unu.mu].un.gi *is-sa-nu* [.....]

3' [*mim-m*]a NU SUM-su 1 NINDA GÚR.GÚR SIG₇ *k[ab-ba-r]a* NINDA *sah-lé-[e*]

4' 2.^ʾTA¹.ÀM BÍL *ina* A LAG *tu-kap-par₅* GABA.LÀL Ì *hal-ša ta-sal-làh-ma ma-^ʾáš-š¹-tu¹*

5' 1-šú 2-šú 3-šú *ana ŠÀ.TÙR-šá* GAR-*an* NITA-šú NU TE-šú *a-di* UD.2.KÁM EGIR *šá iz-zi-zu*

6' *mim-ma gáb-bi* NU SUM-su *šá qer-bit-si* ZI-*hu* u ^{mi}ŠÀ.ZU LÁ-šú *mál-tak-ta-šú*

7' *ki-i* PEŠ₄ u *ki-i* NU PEŠ₄ ^u*ú-sa-pu* *ina* IZI BÍL *a-na di-ik-me-en-na* GUR-*ru*

8' *ina* Ì *hal-ša* BÍL SÚD *tu-lam lu* *ina* A *tu-kap-par₅* *ana maš-šit* DÙ-*uš* *ma-la* BURU₁₄-*tú*

9' *ta-máš-ši* *ki-i* ŠURUN-su *sah-pu-ma ta-at-tar-šu-uš* u *maš-šit šá* GÚR.GÚR SIG₇

10' *kab-ba-ra šá iṭ-pu-pu ta-ad-da-áš-šum-ma iz-zi-zu maš-šit an<-ni>-ta*

11' SUM-šum-ma ÍL-šⁱ *ki-i* ŠURUN-su *maš-šit i-man-za-qu* u *ina* IGI A.MEŠ
ta-at-tam-ha-hu

12' [MUNUS.B]I PEŠ₄ *ki-i maš-šit bal-ṭa-tú* u *ru-bu-us-su la <i->man-za-qu ul* PEŠ₄

13' [*ru-bu-u*]s-su *na-di* BAD-*e* *ki-i la sah-pa maš-šit šá* GÚR.GÚR SIG₇ *kab-ba-ra*

14' [*šá iṭ-pu-pu š*]u-*a-tú* SUM-su u [*mal-ta*]k-tú *ta-lat-tak* GABA.RI 1-*en* ^{giš}DA

15' [..... ^mGa-húl-^dT]U.TU⁸ ZI-*hi*

⁸ The name is restored courtesy of Ulrike Steinert.

TRANSLATION

- 1 [His test for (ability to) be pregnant or not pregnant]: you place [1 shekel of *tarmuš*], half a shekel of white plant, a quarter (shekel) of [Egyptian] alum, [on a wad of wool] into her vagina. [She wears it (for) the entire night, and *she washes (herself)* in white wine. When a wad is red or spotted with blood, that woman may get pregnant]. When that wad is green, that woman may not get pregnant. When from her uterus (*libbi šasūrrišu*)
- 5 her [flesh]² protrudes like a breach birth (lit. foot-opener), turn it back and do the procedure for her; her condition --
- [not (able to get) pregnant]. Give her the potion to drink. When *she sees her bedroom* -- a tampon is to be worn by her,
- you have her drink *kukru*, juniper, thyme, *nuhurtu*, *abukkatu*-resin and you have her vomit -- (ability to get) pregnant.

Alternatively, you wrap juice of *šambaliltu* in a wad, you insert into her vagina, she wears it for 3 days.

If the *šambaliltu* becomes multicoloured like *murru* (bitter)-plant, that woman is (able to get) pregnant.

-
- 10 Alternatively, you wrap white plant and horned alkali in a wad and insert into her vagina. She wears it for 3 days,
- on the 3rd day, you wash the wad. If the wad [is red, that woman can get pregnant], if the wad is (the colour) green, that woman [is not (able to get) pregnant].

Alternatively, [you insert] Egyptian alum and wax [into her vagina, if] it looks like seaweed, that woman is [(able to get) pregnant]

juniper, alkali, fig, [..... that woman is not (able to get) pregnant]

rev.

- 1' [.....]. *sikillu*, exudation of [.....]
- 2' thorn-bush, Dilmun dates [.....]
- 3' whatever is not to be provided for her. 1 *aklu* of fresh thick *kukru*, an *aklu* of

sahlû [.....],

- 4' you roast two each, you wipe (them) down in muddy water, you sprinkle wax,
pressed oil and
- 5' once, twice, three times you insert a *tampon* into her vagina. Her man should not
have sex with her until two days after that (the tampon) has been in place.
- 6' Nothing whatever is to be provided for her. That which is inside her is to be
removed and the midwife is to take note of it. Her test
- 7' for when (able to get) pregnant or not pregnant. Roast the *usabu*-plant (hyssop)
over a fire and turn it into ashes.
- 8' You roast in pressed oil, you pound, you soften or you wipe in liquid, you make (it)
into a tampon, as much as is sufficient
- 9' you use. When her muck is overflowing, you stretch her out and a tampon of fresh
- 10' thick *kukru* which is saturated you give to her, and it will be in place. That tampon
- 11' you give to her and have her wear it. When the tampon absorbs her muck and you
can dissolve it (the muck) in the surface of water,
- 12' that [woman] can get pregnant. When the tampon is fresh but does not absorb her
muck, she may not get pregnant.
- 13' Her muck being openly excreted -- when not overflowing, the tampon of fresh thick
kukru --
- 14' [which is saturated] -- give that to her and you perform the test. A copy from a writing
board.
-
- 15' [Tablet which ... Gahul]-Marduk extracted.

Notes on the text:

1 *mal-tak-ta-šú ki-i* PEŠ₄ *ki-i* NU PEŠ₄: This incipit is restored from rev. l. 6'-7', which is exceptionally not written as the start of a new section, one of the puzzling features of this tablet (see below). The restoration is confirmed by a similar line in BM 42313+, which reads (in l. 29), *ana maš-tak-ti* [MUNUS] [NU] [*e-ri*]-i, 'for a test that a woman may not become pregnant' (see Scurlock/Andersen 2005: 262). Note that this phrase in the LB parallel is at the beginning of a new line but without a ruling indicating a new section.

The 'test' in this context is not clinical but theoretical, with parallel views of potential for pregnancy in Hippocratic aphorisms:

Women do not conceive who have the womb dense and cold; those who have the womb watery do not conceive, for the seed is drowned; those who have the womb over-dry and very hot do not conceive, for the seed perishes through lack of nourishment. But those whose temperament is a just blend of the two extremes prove able to conceive. (*Aphorisms* V, Jones 1943: 175)

There is an important parallel in the Hippocratic *Nature of Women*, which introduces a *peirētērion*, translated by Potter as a 'test for fertility'.⁹ Potter's translation of 'test for fertility' is overly ambitious,¹⁰ since the idea of a 'fertility' test is a modern construct, based on advanced technology, far beyond the experience of an ancient physician. The same applies to a similar label in the Hippocratic treatise on *Barrenness*: *peirētēria ei kuēsei*, translated by Potter as 'tests whether a woman will become pregnant', which is another instance of an observation rather than a 'test', since the instruction calls for feeding the woman butter and mother's milk to determine the result (Potter 2012: 339). In any case, the basic meaning of *peirētērion* in Hippocratic contexts resembles the semantics of Akk. *maltaktu*, 'test'.

The Hippocratic *peirētērion* and the use of 'pessaries' (*prostheta*)¹¹ in *Nature of Women* follow immediately upon two instructions, *ēn boulē gunaika kuēsai*, and *ēn boulē egkuon poiēsai*, 'if you want a woman to become pregnant' and 'if you want to make a woman fertile' (Potter 2012: 300-301, Bourbon 2008: 80-81). The distinction, however, is between two key terms, *kuēō*, 'to conceive' and *egkuopoieō*, 'to impregnate', but not between becoming pregnant and fertile, as translated by Potter.¹² In effect, the Greek texts conform to the Babylonian views of whether a woman *potentially* can or cannot become pregnant, in the same way that Akkadian prognostics (in the *Diagnostic Handbook*) predict whether a person may (potentially) die or survive an illness.¹³

⁹ The term (a variant of *peiratērion*), is an 'ordeal', related to *peiraō*, 'to attempt, try' and the noun *peira* 'trial, attempt'.

¹⁰ Potter 2012: 303, but see also Bourbon 2008: 81, translating *peirētērion* simply as 'test'.

¹¹ Translated in Bourbon 2008: 82 as 'applications', and *ibid.* 81 n. 1, contrasting *prostheton* with *pessos*, another term for pessary. Potter's translation, however, remains preferable.

¹² See Bourbon 2008: 80-81, 'si vous voulez qu'il y ait une grossesse' and 'si vous voulez qu'une femme puisse engendrer', which is not the same as 'fertility'.

¹³ An indication of the similarity between Greek and Akkadian prognoses appears in the Hippocratic *Nature of Women* (Potter 2012: 210-211), commenting on an acute condition involving fever, numbness, pain, and thirst. The text then notes, 'if this disease befalls a woman who is pregnant (*ēn men kuousē epigenētai*), she will die, but if she is not pregnant, with care she recovers.'

2 [mi-šir-a-a]: Restored after l. 13. Egyptian alum is to be inserted into the vagina using a 'wad' of wool (*itqu*), which resembles prescriptions for 'pessaries' (*prostheta*) in the Hippocratic *Nature of Women*, with one instruction reading: 'Another: enclose Egyptian alum in a piece of wool and apply,' (Potter 2012: 302-303). Egyptian alum is mentioned six other times as an ingredient in Hippocratic treatises on women (information courtesy G. Buisson): *Superfetation* (Potter 2010: 349, 351), and *Diseases of Women I* (Potter 2018: 65, 135, 175, 189).

3 [GEŠ]TIN-*nu* BABBAR LUH-*si*: Although the reading GEŠTIN-*nu* for *karānu* 'wine' is not secure, there is a parallel to this procedure of 'washing' in white wine in the Hippocratic *Diseases of Women 1*, referring to rinsing the uterus:

Potter 2018: 143, 'irrigate (*kluzein*) with warm white wine'.

Potter 2018: 145, irrigate (*kluzein*) at once with new wine boiled down.

Potter 2018: 169, 'have the patient irrigate herself (*proskluzesthō*) with wine'.

Since the logogram LUH-*si* in the Akkadian context is ambiguous, it is perfectly possible that the woman washes herself in order to cleanse her uterus.

aklu: a small measure, see AHW 26.

4 SIG₇-*at*: The form indicates that *itqu* 'wad' is a fem. noun in this text. The colour 'green' indicating not becoming pregnant contrasts with the Hippocratic statement that, 'when a woman is pregnant, she will take on a general green color' (*Diseases of Women 1*, Potter 2018: 81), although this refers to the woman's body and not to a tampon.¹⁴ In another passage of this same treatise, however, the physician tests to see if the woman's menstrual blood, poured onto sand, turns green when dried, indicating that her discharge contains bile and can indicate whether she can become pregnant (*Diseases of Women 1*, Potter 2018: 65).

ŠÀ¹.TÜR-šú: 'her vagina' is written with PEŠ₄(ŠÀxA) instead of ŠÀ, which is either an error or a clever graphic pun, perhaps indicating the womb in which semen (A) is already present.

¹⁴ The translation of colours in both the Akkadian and Greek texts is somewhat arbitrary, since Gr. *xlōros* can indicate a yellow colour, as well as green, as is the case with the corresponding Akkadian term. Florence Bourbon draws attention to this problem within Hippocratic texts, remarking that 'L'adjectif *χλωρός* désigne à l'origine le vert des premières feuilles d'une plante, puis le gris pâle d'un visage humain marqué par l'effroi' (Bourdon 2008: 212, n. 3) [ref. courtesy G. Buisson]. The relevance of this observation for the present context is that a pallid or pale complexion may indicate a clinical sign of pregnancy (e.g. from anaemia). Although the Akkadian text refers to the colour of the tampon rather than the woman's physical appearance, the colour of the tampon may reflect the patient's pallor.

5 [šī-ru]²-šú ki pi-it GÌR u-ši: This is a reference to a prolapse of the womb, a theme found in the corresponding Hippocratic treatises on women, with the point being here that the prolapse resembles a breach birth, in which the foetus's foot appears instead of its head. That the Akkadian text is referring to a prolapse of the vagina is supported by Hippocratic references to this same phenomenon.¹⁵

If a woman's uterus comes forwards out of its natural position (*Barrenness*, Potter 2012: 391)
If a woman's uterus advances and moves outside (*Nature of Women*, Potter 2012: 197)
If a woman's uterus moves away from its natural position to the outside (*Diseases of Women 2*, Potter 2018: 353)
If a woman's uterus falls completely out of her vagina, it will hang there like a scrotum (*ibid.* 353)
If the mouth of a woman's uterus¹⁶ projects out of her vagina (*ibid.* 357)
If the uterus prolapses (*ibid.* 357)

GUR-*ma*: for Akk. *tāru*, reinserting the prolapse into the vagina. That this is the case is supported by evidence from Hippocratic instructions for prolapse of the uterus:

Replace the uterus with your hand, and after binding the patient's legs together in a crossed position, leave her for a day and a night like this (*Nature of Women*, Potter 2012: 199)
If the uterus moves out of the genitalia completely, it will be suspended like a scrotum, and cause pain.... When the case is such, apply cold compresses to her genitalia: clean the part outside by washing it with pomegranate peel boiled in strong dark wine, and then press it back inside (*Barrenness*, Potter 2012: 393)
Press the uterus gently back in (referring to a prolapse, *Diseases of Women 2*, Potter 2018: 359)

dul-la-šá e-pu-uš šip-ru-šú: The last word is read by Reiner (1982: 134) as *me-ru-šú*, 'her pregnancy (?)', although the term *mērú* is usually written indicating the vowel length (cf. CAD M/2 27). For the meaning of *šipru* in this context, see CAD Š/3 84.

6 *ki<-i> É.GIŠ.NÁ-su IGI*: The readings of these signs require collation but reflect Gurney's hand copy, although the signs were not read by Reiner (1982: 134) or Scurlock (2014: 582). The literal meaning would be, 'when she sees her bedroom', with an unusual *-su* suffix personal pronoun, with the meaning being that she wears the tampon before or after indulging in intercourse. The idea behind this reading is that the 'bedroom' is a euphemism for conjugal sex, possibly based upon an Aramaic calque known from literary Targumic Aramaic, in which *byt mškb* 'bedroom' is a euphemism for sex (Targum on Leviticus 20: 15 variant, see the *Comprehensive Aramaic Lexicon* s.v. *byt mškb*). Conjugal sex is frequently mentioned in the

¹⁵ References courtesy G. Buisson.

¹⁶ See BAM 240, 8' (Scurlock 2014: 609), referring to the 'opening of her womb' ¹KA₂ ŠA₃.TUR₃-š_a₂¹ [ref. court. G. Buisson].

corresponding Hippocratic texts, such as the following, which combines the use of a tampon and sex:

If you want a woman to become pregnant, first clean her and her uterus; then have her drink undiluted wine, and apply a suppository of red soda, cumin, and resin soaked in honey and wrapped in a piece of linen. When fluid runs out (scil. from her vagina), the woman should employ black pessaries as an emollient, and have intercourse with her husband. (*Diseases of Women* 1, Potter 2018: 229)

9 *šum₄-ma*: This use of 'if' in syllabic form (also in l. 12) usually occurs in medical prescriptions as an explanatory clause, but in this text it clearly contrasts with the use of *ki-i* 'when' throughout the remainder of this text, and the semantic distinction between 'if' and 'when' in this text must be understood as intentional.

14 *a-lap me*: seaweed is used as an ingredient of Hippocratic pessaries to 'clean the uterus', in a listing of therapies which is reminiscent of Babylonian *Listenwissenschaften*:

'Or boil honey, butter, rushes, fragrant reeds, and seaweed (*bruon thalassion*) in wine, filter it off, and flush with this' (*Diseases of Women* 1, Potter 2018: 202-203)¹⁷

Rev. 2' [⁴nu.mu].un.gi *is-sa-nu*: The first plant is an unusual syllabic writing for the logogram ⁴numun.gi (= *baltu*, 'thorn'), while the second plant is a late orthography for the common ingredient *asnû*, 'Dilmun dates' (see CAD A/2 338).

3' [*mim-m*]a NU SUM-*su* (also in l. 6' and 14'). The form with suffix -*su* may reflect a LB orthography of the verb *nadānu*, as reflected in von Soden, GAG §102, 1 (AnOr 33 p. 172). It should be noted that this form differs from other appearances of this verbal form with more usual -*šu* suffixes (SUM-*šum-ma* in l. 11' and *ta-ad-da-áš-šum* in l. 10').

One unusual possibility is that, the expression *mimma lā* SUM-*su* may be a calque on an Aramaic root ZWD, which means 'to provide' (food) for someone, which in the present instance would mean that the patient should not eat anything. The form of Aramaic ZWD might explain the -*su* suffix on this verb, in contrast to other instances of *nadānu* in the text, with more general meanings of to 'give' to the patient.

¹⁷ Seaweed (*bruon thalassion*) is attested in two other Hippocratic treatises, which present similar texts [ref. court. G. Buisson]: 'apply a poultice (*kataplassein*) of thin seaweed.' (*Nature of Women*, Potter 2012: 225). 'Apply a poultice (*kataplassein*) of the kind of seaweed they lay over fish' (*Diseases of Women* I, Potter 2018: 117).

k[ab-ba-r]a: restored after ll. 9'-10'. It is difficult to know if traces indicate a sign before NINDA, but this and many other details will only be resolved through collation of the tablet.

4' A LAG: *mē kirbāni*, lit. 'water of a clod (of earth)'.

ma-^láš-šī^l-tu: Although the middle two signs do not resemble this reading, the context requires an object to be inserted into the vagina, for which there is no other obvious candidate.

6' *qer-bit-si*: If the final sign is correctly copied and not an error for *-su*, one possible explanation might be vowel harmony for this exceptional form of the suffix pronoun.

7' ^u*ú-sa-pu*: This is a hapax as a plant ingredient, but related to Gr. *hyssop*, which occurs as a medical ingredient in Loeb Hippocrates VI and X (court. P. Potter). The fact that *hyssop* occurs as a medical ingredient indicates the unusual character of this text and that it may show influences from outside the normal repertoire of Akkadian medicine.

8' *ma-la BURU₁₄-tú ta-máš-ši*: if the sign BURU₁₄ as copied by Gurney is correct, it represents a writing of Akk. *erištu*, in the expression *erišta mašú*, lit. 'to reach a sufficient (amount)'. See *Diseases of Women I* (Potter 2018: 125), 'leave an interval of time you think is sufficient for the woman', which comes close to the Akkadian expression.

9' ŠURUN-*su sah-pu-ma*: This expression is key to understanding this entire text. Reiner was the first to translate this logogram as 'womb', which has been followed by subsequent translators, despite the slender evidence upon which this meaning is based. The corresponding Akkadian term is thought to be *rubšu*, which usually refers (except in Mari texts) to either animals or demons, either to their 'lair' or to their dung. The only feeble evidence for 'womb' occurs in a lexical commentary, which gives *re-e-mu* ('womb') = *ru-ub-šu* for Sum. UZU.A.SÌLA.GAR.RA (lit. 'moist flesh consigned to the street'), but in any case *not* corresponding to a logogram ŠURUN. The only other reference cited for the meaning of ŠURUN as 'womb' is our text, UET 7, 123 (see CAD R 395). Scurlock (2014: 583-585) elaborates this meaning by explaining the following term *sahpu* as 'looks abnormal (lit. "has turned over/fallen flat on its face")', probably based upon an incantation in an Akkadian medical text.¹⁸ The meaning of 'lying flat' is possible but hardly plausible in this context, since a

¹⁸ Cf. CAD S 34 citing BAM 574 iv 21 and 26, *irrū suhhuru ze-er karšu u šī riqītu buppāniša sahpat ... riqītu litrus*, the intestines are curled, belly is cramped, and the stomach itself lies flat face down -- let the stomach become straight.'

physician would not know whether the patient's womb was 'lying flat' without some sort of medical instrument or intervention, nor would this necessarily be an indication of an abnormal womb.

The alternative translation given here is based upon the basic meaning of ŠURUN as 'dung', usually corresponding to Akk. *kabūtu* or in this case to *rubšu*.¹⁹ From the point of view of a male physician, vaginal discharge may have been described figuratively as 'muck' (or German *Dreck*), without specifying whether it was primarily bile or phlegm, as in Greek texts. The adjective *sahpu* describing ŠURUN has a basic meaning to 'to cover, overwhelm' (CAD S 30), typically referring to water or flooding, which is another figurative expression for an excessive discharge of fluid from the vagina. Greek Hippocratic texts refer to excessive bile and phlegm, or excessive menstrual flows (Potter 2018: 177, et passim).

It is worth noting that there is the potential for confusion in this text between *rubšu* and *rupuštu*, 'phlegm', since *rupussu* is another possible reading. The argument against this suggestion is that there is no evidence for either U₈ or ŠURUN as a logogram for *rupuštu*, and phlegm is not often identified in Akkadian medicine as a disease vector, unlike in Greek medicine.²⁰

ta-at-tar-šu-uš: one of the procedures employed in Hippocratic texts is for the patient to lie flat.²¹

10' *maš-šit an<-ni>-ta ... ki-i ŠURUN-su i-man-za-qu u ina IGI A.MEŠ ta-at-tam-ha-hu*: Reiner's translation (1982: 136) assumed that the 'womb' absorbed' (lit. sucked up) the tampon: 'if her womb absorbs the *maššītu* and it dissolves in water,' with Scurlock (2014: 584) following suit with 'if her womb sucks the tampon and it is softened by the waters'. It is hardly possible for the vagina to 'suck in' the tampon, which is then dissolved or softened in water. Much more likely is for the tampon (as subject) to absorb the discharge and then it is tested to see if the results of the test dissolve in water; if so, the woman is pregnant. That this is correct can be seen in another line, *maš-šit šá GÚR.GÚR SIG₇ kab-ba-ra šá iṭ-pu-pu ta-ad-da-áš-šum-ma*, 'you give to her the tampon which the thick fresh *kukru* has saturated (*iṭpupu*)', again indicating

¹⁹ Based upon other references in this text to *rubussu*.

²⁰ Akkadian texts regularly refer to 'bile' (*martu*) but the Akkadian term for 'phlegm' (*rupuštu*) is difficult to distinguish from saliva and mucus (cf. *illatu* and *ru'tu*).

²¹ See Potter 2018: 355 (*Diseases of Women 2*), 'leave the patient reclining and do not give her anything but gruel until seven days have passed' and 'when she wants to go to stool, have her do so in the reclining position.' This refers to prolapse of the uterus.

that the tampon is the subject of these clauses. Another similar clause (l. 12') reads, *ki-i maš-šit bal-ṭa-tū u ru-bu-us-su la <i->man-za-qu*, 'when the tampon is fresh but does not absorb (lit. suck up) her muck (discharge).'

13' *[ru-bu-u]s-su na-di BAD-e ki-i la sah-pa*: This is another crux, not previously understood. Scurlock (2014: 583) reads *na-ṭi-pè-e* but leaves it untranslated. Our translation assumes the descriptive verb *nadû* to refer to normal condition of the discharge being excreted and obvious (lit. open, *petû*) but not overflowing (*sahpu*).

14' 1-en^{gis}DA: This formulation is not typical of colophons referring to a *lê'u*. The use of *ištēn* in this context is intended to indicate the indefinite article, i.e. *a* writing board. While well-attested in Akkadian (CAD I/J 275), this usage is also a common feature of Aramaic syntax, in which *hd'* 'one' is used for this same purpose.

General comments:

The crucial point is whether the Akkadian text re-edited here represents actual tests for pregnancy (as is usually assumed) or whether more general obstetrics-related questions were being addressed. The idea of a clinical test for pregnancy is modern, based upon advanced technology which was beyond the capabilities of ancient medicine, and in any case the matter of whether a woman was pregnant or not would soon become obvious over time. In this particular instance, comparative studies of medicine have considerable value, since roughly contemporary evidence from Hippocratic medicine engages with similar problems while supplying more detailed contextual information regarding questions of pregnancy. Hippocratic treatises on gynaecology and obstetrics suggest that the main concern was not whether a woman was pregnant, but rather whether she could get pregnant. The following extract from the Hippocratic corpus, *Aphorisms* V (Jones 1943: 175) illustrates this point:

If a woman does not conceive, and you wish to know if she will conceive, cover her round with wraps and burn perfumes underneath. If the smell seems to pass through the body to the mouth and nostrils, be assured that the woman is not barren through her own physical fault.... If menstruation be suppressed, and neither shivering nor fever supervenes, but attacks of nausea occur, you may assume the woman to be with child.²²

²² This apparent 'test' for pregnancy is well attested, that an aromatic substance (e.g. perfumes or onion) is held to the woman's vagina to see if the smell can be detected via her mouth, which assumes no internal blockages hindering pregnancy. This, however, hardly qualifies as a test.

In another Hippocratic treatise, the signs that a woman is pregnant are not determined by a specific 'test' but rather by general observation, often based upon a woman's reaction to receiving a drug::

If a woman wishes to know whether she will become pregnant, have her drink finely ground anise in water and go to bed; if she is befallen by itching around her navel, she will become pregnant, but otherwise not. Another: if you do not recognise that a woman is pregnant: if she is pregnant, her eyes will be compressed and more hollow than usual, and their whites will not have the natural whiteness, but be more livid.... Another : grind red ocher and anise very fine, dissolve in water, give (sc. to drink) and let the woman sleep. If colic comes on around her navel, she is pregnant : if this does not happen, she is not.²³

Note the opening phrase, that a woman wishes to know is she is able to conceive, which is the crucial question involved in these procedures.

As can be seen from the discussion above, the crux distinguishing this translation from that of Erica Reiner's (and those following her) is identification of *rubṣu* as an unpleasant vaginal discharge which is to be absorbed by a tampon, rather than as a hapax-synonym for the womb. This approach is generally in agreement with Hippocratic treatises dealing with the same topic, which also attempt to predict through observational 'tests' whether a woman can conceive or not, as in the following comment on false pregnancies:

If no flux follows, the woman will appear to be pregnant, and when she has intercourse with her husband she will suffer a pain that seems to indicate that some object is lying there. A weight is present in her belly and it protrudes, rising up just as in a woman who is pregnant; she suffers heartburn, particularly after the fiftieth day, and pain from time to time occupies her belly down from the navel, as well as her neck, her groin and her lower back. After two or three months sometimes her menses break out in a mass through the vagina, and what comes out has a fleshy appearance, as if it were from an abortion, and is dark in colour. (*Diseases of Women* 1, Potter 2018: 23).

Unlike our Akkadian text, the Greek passage refers to specific symptoms, but it also refers to having intercourse with her husband as well as a vaginal discharge which might represent a prolapse, all relevant to determining whether a woman can conceive or not. The point of these tests is to most likely to determine whether a woman can get pregnant after having experienced illness, miscarriage, or an aborted birth, rather than as a physical means of determining fertility.

²³ *Barrenness* (Potter 2012: 341). A similar observation also occurs in another Hippocratic treatise, *Superfetation* (Potter 2010: 329), which is concerned with whether one can predict a stillbirth, based on symptoms of oedema. See also *Aphorisms* V (Jones 1943: 169): 'If you wish to know whether a woman is with child, give her hydromel to drink [without supper] when she is going to sleep. If she has colic in the stomach she is with child, otherwise she is not.'

The overall format and structure of this text is hardly typical for Akkadian medicine. Since the subject in this case is a woman, that already changes matters, as well as the fact that the contents of this text are not recipes for getting pregnant or avoiding pregnancy, but for simply testing whether the subject may be able to get pregnant or not. The incipit has been restored on the basis of ll. 6'-7' on the reverse, 'her test when the woman is either (able to get) pregnant or not (get) pregnant'.²⁴ The fact that this key phrase introducing the main theme is also found in the middle of a line on the reverse and broken over two lines, rather than appearing as an incipit in its own right, shows that the usual textual formatting does not apply.

The other puzzling feature regards the use of *kî* throughout the text, when the usual formulation in medical texts would be *šumma* 'if'. There are three instances of 'if' clauses on the obverse of the tablet (*šum+ma*), clearly indicating an intentional distinction between clauses with 'if' and those with *kî*, which must mean 'when' rather than 'if'. This distinction is unknown from any other medical recipes or medical texts but must be a deliberate alteration in the meaning of these clauses, as temporal rather than conditional. However, the use of *kî* for 'when' rather than 'if' is a feature of another Semitic language -- Aramaic, which only employs *kî* for 'when' and not for 'if'. It may be relevant that the original text was excerpted by the scribe Gahul-Marduk from a writing board (rev. l. 15'), since the possibility exists that whoever composed this unique text concerning pregnancy was an Aramaic speaker, and that this text is an example of 'code-switching' in which one language may interfere with another, especially in oral contexts. In this way, the original text may have substituted Aramaic terms for Sumerian logograms used in the text, rather than the usual Akkadian equivalents, and the overall logic of the text may reflect that of an Aramaic speaker producing Akkadian technical literature.

²⁴ The pronoun *-šú* may alternatively refer to the owner of the tablet, Gahul-Marduk.

Bibliography

- Asper 2015 = **Asper Markus 2015**. Medical Acculturation? Early Greek Texts and the Question of Near Eastern influence, in B. Holmes, K.-D. Fischer eds., *The Frontiers of Ancient Science, Essays in Honor of Heinrich von Staden*, Beiträge zur Altertumskunde 338, Berlin/München/Boston: De Gruyter, 19-46.
- Böck 2010 = **Böck Barbara 2010**. Schwangerschaftstests, in B. Janowski, D. Schwemer eds., *Texte zur Heilkunde*, Texte aus der Umwelt des Alten Testaments N.F. 5, Gütersloh: Gütersloher Verlagshaus, 110.
- Bourbon 2008 = **Bourbon Florence 2008**. *Hippocrate. Nature de la femme*, Collection des Universités de France, Hippocrate XII-1, Paris: Les Belles Lettres.
- Geller 2021 = **Geller Markham J. 2021**. Babylonian Gynaecology in Greek (or vice versa), *Archiv für Orientforschung* 54, 343-347.
- Gurney 1973 = **Gurney Oliver R. 1973**. *Ur Excavation Texts VII, Middle Babylonian Legal Documents and Other Texts*, London/Philadelphia: British Museum Publications.
- Jones 1943 = **Jones William H. S. 1943**. *Hippocrates IV, Nature of Man. Regimen in Health. Humours. Aphorisms. Regimen 1-3. Dreams*, Loeb Classical Library 150, Cambridge (MA)/London: Harvard University Press.
- Potter 2010 = **Potter Paul 2010**. *Hippocrates IX, Anatomy. Nature of Bones. Heart. Eight Months' Child. Coan Prenotions. Crises. Critical Days. Superfetation. Girls. Excision of the Fetus. Sight*, Loeb Classical Library 509, Cambridge (MA)/London: Harvard University Press.
- Potter 2012 = **Potter Paul 2012**. *Hippocrates X, Generation. Nature of the Child. Diseases 4. Nature of Women. Barrenness*, Loeb Classical Library 520, Cambridge (MA)/London: Harvard University Press.
- Potter 2018 = **Potter Paul 2018**. *Hippocrates XI, Diseases of Women 1-2*, Loeb Classical Library 538, Cambridge (MA)/London: Harvard University Press.
- Reiner 1982 = **Reiner Erica 1982**. Babylonian Birth Prognoses, *Zeitschrift für Assyriologie* 72, 124-138.
- Schmidtchen 2021 = **Schmidtchen Eric 2021**. Demons, Deputies of the Gods, and How to Get Rid of Them?, *Le Journal des Médecines Cunéiformes*, 31-68.
- Scurlock 2014 = **Scurlock JoAnn 2014**. *Sourcebook for Ancient Mesopotamian Medicine*, Writings of the Ancient World 36, Atlanta: SBL Press.
- Scurlock/Andersen 2005 = **Scurlock JoAnn, Andersen Burton R. 2005**. *Diagnoses in Assyrian and Babylonian Medicine*, Urbana/Chicago: University of Illinois Press.
- Wiseman and Black 1996 = **Wiseman Donald J., Black Jeremy A. 1996**. *Literary Texts from the Temple of Nabû*, London: British School of Archaeology in Iraq.

**Witchcraft in Medicine:
the Ashur Medical Catalogue and Relevant Nineveh Series Reexamined**

With an appendix by Gilles Buisson

Strahil V. Panayotov¹

Introduction

This is a case study on the relationship between cuneiform medicine and witchcraft in Nineveh and Ashur during the Late Assyrian period. The close relation between ušburruda ‘anti-witchcraft’² and therapeutic series in Nineveh was described in the monumental Abusch and Schwemer 2011: 126:

‘K 3661 is a fragment of a two-column library tablet and preserves the end of an anti-witchcraft ritual closely related to a text otherwise known from ušburruda collections (see text 7.8), but also embedded in the Bīt rimki ritual. The colophon here shows that such rituals were not only transmitted within special collections of anti-witchcraft texts, but also formed part of the large medical-therapeutic series known from Nineveh, the Aššur catalogue and (later) Babylonian texts (Therapeutic Handbook).’

The colophon³ mentioned by Abusch and Schwemer cannot be of only one kind, as will be shown below. Yet, neither choice contradicts Abusch and Schwemer’s observation. Furthermore, a close association between medicine and witchcraft can be easily observed in therapeutic prescriptions which are commonly employed by both genres. I will even argue that the distinction between witchcraft and medicine is a modern one. The Babylonian taxonomy often ‘understands’ witchcraft and medicine as part of one entity, which is precisely why anti-witchcraft therapy looks in many cases exactly like common medical prescriptions, and why serialized anti-witchcraft material was part of the medical system in Mesopotamia. As will be shown below, Assyrian scholars classified anti-witchcraft techniques (like ušburruda ‘anti-

¹ Institute for Historical Studies – Bulgarian Academy of Sciences (strahil.panayotov@gmail.com). Grateful acknowledgments are due to Annie Attia, Gilles Buisson and Klaus Wagensonner.

² Diverse incantations and therapies designed to counter witchcraft and reverse the evil deeds of sorcerers. See in detail Abusch and Schwemer 2011: 13f.; also chapter 7 in <https://oracc.museum.upenn.edu/cmawro/pager> and especially 7.5.

³ I suppose that with the word ‘colophon’, Abusch and Schwemer also mean the catch-line and tablet’s designation.

witchcraft’ and zikurruda ‘cutting-of-the-throat’ magic⁴) under the general taxonomy of healing prescriptions, like bulṭu ‘remedy, cure.’

However, if we take a novel approach, we will see that a close connection finds an expression not only on the textual level, but also on the material and technical side, represented by type of tablets, incipits, catch-lines, catalogues, colophons and serialized manuscripts. These are structural instruments used by ancient scholars in order to systematize knowledge. Although holistic medical theory was never clearly expressed in cuneiform writings, among others,⁵ we can deduct it partly with structural analyses of the sources, as will be shown below. Collections of tablets developed into series, interconnecting with other series, in order to create bigger collections. Their connection and arrangement were not random but followed certain theoretical principles. We can be sure that the systematization of medical knowledge is bound to a theory, because we can observe structural similarities in the medical sources from different cities and periods. In other words, arrangements of tablets and series are not accidental.

The best example of a serialized, therapeutic compendium is the Nineveh Medical Encyclopedia (henceforth NME). It is an edition of therapeutic texts, especially prepared for the library in Nineveh, commissioned by the king Ashurbanipal. To date, this is the biggest collection of medical text in original manuscripts from the Ancient Near East.⁶ To the best of our knowledge, NME was divided into 12 head-to-toe, topically interconnected chapters (or series). Altogether, it consists of 50 standardized two-columned tablets.⁷ NME was preserved in multiple sets in Nineveh, witnessed by the abundant duplicates. Thanks to preserved library colophons, we recognize different editorial stages of the NME, suggesting a work in progress rather than a final product. Not all tablets are identified with certainty, but the list below represents the bigger picture for now.

1. Head: DIŠ NA UGU-šú KÚM ú-kal ‘For a person: his skull holds heat’ – 5 tablets.
2. Eyes: DIŠ NA IGL.MIN-šú GIG ‘For a person: his eyes are sick’ – 4 tablets.
3. Ears: DIŠ NA GÉŠTU ZAG-šú GÙ.GÙ-si ‘For a person: his right ear constantly rings’ – 1 tablet.

⁴ A specific witchcraft method, which made its victims helpless, see Abusch and Schwemer 2011: 3.

⁵ Note the theoretical ‘vestiges’ in causations, etiologies and metaphors employed in incantations (Geller 2007; BAMTU 10: 17, 41; Panayotov 2017).

⁶ Contrary to the Graeco-Roman heritage, which is transmitted in copies and translations.

⁷ Editions on <https://oracc.museum.upenn.edu/asbp/ninmed/>.

4. Neck: DIŠ NA SA.GÚ-šú GU₇-šú ŠU GIDIM.MA ‘For a person: his neck muscle hurt him due to ghost affliction (lit. it is ‘the hand of the ghost’)’ – 6 tablets.
5. Nose: DIŠ NA MÚD ina KIR₄-šú DU-ku ‘For a person: blood flows from his nose’ – 1 tablet.
6. Oral: DIŠ NA ZÚ.MEŠ-šú GIG ‘For a person: his teeth are sick’ – 2 tablets.
7. Bronchial: DIŠ NA KIR₄-šú DUGUD ‘For a person: his nose (breathing) is difficult’ – 6 tablets.
8. Gastrointestinal: DIŠ NA su-a-lam GIG ana ki-is ŠÀ GUR-šú ‘For a person: he is sick with phlegm (and) it turns for him into a stomach problem (lit. binding of the belly)’ – 5 tablets.
9. Abdominal area: DIŠ NA SAG ŠÀ-šú na-ši ‘For a person: his top of the belly is risen’ – 8 tablets.
10. Renal: DIŠ NA ÉLLAG-su GU₇-šú ‘For a person: his kidney hurts him’ – 3 tablets.
11. Rectal: DIŠ NA ina la si-ma-ni-šú MURUB₄-MEŠ-šú GU₇.MEŠ-šú kim-ša-šú i-za-qata-šú bur-ka-šú i-kaš-ša-ša-šú NA BI ina meš-ḫi-ru-ti-šú DÚR.GIG ‘For a person: his middle body areas (lower back and hips) keep hurting him at the wrong moment (earlier in life), his shins cause him a stinging pain, his knees gnaw at him with pain – that man has sick anus (already) during his youth’ – 5 tablets.
12. Legs: DIŠ NA SA.GAL GIG ‘For a person: he is sick with sagallu-problems (lit. big muscle)’ – 4 tablets.

Where we lack data from Nineveh we can reconstruct the structure of the NME with the help of the Ashur Medical Catalogue (hereafter AMC). A discussion in great detail can be found in BAMTU 9. What is important here is that the NME’s structure was greatly reflected in the first part of the AMC, but with several important differences around the ninth series. AMC includes material that was not part of the NME, as we know it. These discrepancies are of central concern for the present article. There, witchcraft series were interwoven in an orthodox cuneiform medicine. The break in AMC part 1 causes a lot of problems for the interpretation, but the sequence in Nineveh for the same part is clear, and will be discussed in detail below. New readings are offered for the broken part of AMC part 1, which suggest more data on medicine and witchcraft in Ashur and Nineveh. Additionally, an interesting case of anti-witchcraft tablet will be discussed. A tablet from the AMC part 1 was excluded from the NME, but it bears all the features of a standard NME tablet, showing the connection between witchcraft and medicine on a material level. Furthermore, I will discuss body parts and areas that were commonly

affected by witchcraft in Mesopotamia. Finally, special attention will be paid to the taxonomy of SAG ŠÀ in relation to the wide-spread translation as epigastrium.

Was the AMC data introduced in Nineveh?

While the exact content of each medical series differs in all Mesopotamian city-based traditions, importantly, the title (incipit or respectively catch-line) always remains the same, with some insignificant variations in different periods and cities. The structure of the NME incipits corresponds almost entirely to the incipits of the first part of the AMC. This shall be of no surprise, since Nineveh was the royal capital and Ashur its old respected predecessor in the very same Neo-Assyrian period. We know that cuneiform texts from the core places of Mesopotamian scholarship, thus Ashur certainly included, were systematically introduced into the library of Ashurbanipal in Nineveh. In this regard, observe the statement from the so-called colophon b (Hunger 1968: no. 318, Asb. Typ b):

Ashurbanipal, great king, mighty king, king of the world, king of Assyria, son of Esarhaddon, king of Assyria, son of Sennacherib, king of Assyria. According to tablets and writing boards, copies from **Assyria, Sumer and Akkad (=Babylonia)**. I have written, checked and collated this tablet in the assembly of scholars, and placed it in my palace for my royal consultation. Whoever erases my inscribed name and writes his own, may Nabû, scribe of everything, erase his name!

The evidence from colophon b is also greatly supported by the Nineveh Library Records (Parpola 1983). Among others,⁸ colophon b was designating serialized tablets belonging to the presumably earlier recension of the NME (this is one possibility for the colophon mentioned by Abusch and Schwemer, see below). Colophon b demonstrates directly that part of the data needed for the NME was introduced during the Ashurbanipal reign, among others from Ashur.⁹ Thus, we can conclude that the AMC series and structure were well known in Nineveh.

Prerequisite for further reading

Although NME was elaborated in great detail in BAMTU 9, it is obligatory to repeat some data here, since there is a confusion in the literature and among specialists, and it won't be easy to follow otherwise. The discussion below is quite technical in nature; thus the reader is strongly advised to have access to the following material:

⁸ <https://oracc.museum.upenn.edu//asbp/rlasb/librarycolophons/colophonsexplained/index.html#asbb>.

⁹ This does not mean, however, that the relevant data was not known in Nineveh before Ashurbanipal.

- a copy of BAMTU 9
- or partly misleading alternative of the NME structure, which is based on the BAMTU 9, AMC part 1 edition:
<https://oracc.museum.upenn.edu/asbp/ninmed/whatisthenme/ninevehmedicalencyclopedia/index.html>
- NME's Gastrointestinal series (also known under the misnomer Suālu):
<https://oracc.museum.upenn.edu/asbp/ninmed/>

Sadly, due to technical errors the Oracc website is currently not reliable for some series of the NME. Luckily, the data can be accessed in the electronic Babylonian Library where it was initially entered:

- Renal 1? = www.ebl.lmu.de/fragmentarium/K.11230 (BAMTU 7: 118ff.)
- Renal 2 = www.ebl.lmu.de/fragmentarium/K.2405 (BAMTU 7: 42ff.)
- Renal 3 = www.ebl.lmu.de/fragmentarium/K.2960 (note the duplicate K.4957, BAMTU 7: 88ff.)
- Abdominal area 1: <https://www.ebl.lmu.de/fragmentarium/K.7239+> (AMT 43/6)

On the sequence in NME

After the gastrointestinal series and before the renal series we have abundant information on anti-witchcraft measures in NME, as shown by the AMC incipits. Both F. Köcher and J.A. Scurlock assumed that the gastrointestinal series in Nineveh has six tablets, the last one being K.7239+(AMT 43/6) with the incipit DIŠ NA SAG ŠÀ-šú na-ši 'For a person: his top of the belly is risen' (literature in BAMTU 9: 103). However, the placement of DIŠ NA SAG ŠÀ-šú na-ši as the sixth tablet to gastrointestinal series is disproven by two points.

Point 1

From Nineveh, we are aware of the 8th tablet of DIŠ NA SAG ŠÀ-šú na-ši (K.3661(AMD 8/1 pl. 23); K.13390(AMT 44/7), see edition below). This proves that this is a separate series, which is following on K.5834+(BAM 579+), tablet 5 of the gastrointestinal series. Most other tablets of the DIŠ NA SAG ŠÀ-šú na-ši series are not yet certain, but we are also aware of the 1st tablet (K.7239+(AMT 43/6)). Note that the fragment K.3661 must be a duplicate of K.13390, and not an indirect join as speculated by Abusch and Schwemer 2011: 127. The two fragments do look different. Yet, the tiny overlap of several signs from the catch-line and the tablets' designation

suggest the following reconstruction (first recognized by N. Hessel, see Abusch and Schwemer 2011: 127):

K.3661 iv 17' DIŠ NA ṚÉLLAG-su GU₇'-šu lu ŠU DING[IR ... lu ŠU

K.13390 iv 1' [] DAB-su

Catch-line: For a person: his kidney hurts him. Either the hand of god? [... or ...] has seized him.

K 3661 iv 18' DUB.Ṛ8.KÁM' [DIŠ NA SA]G ŠÀ-šú [.....]

K 13390 iv 2' [] na-ši

Tablet 8th (of the series,) [For a person: his to]p of the belly is risen.

For the colophon I see two possibilities, based on the evidence from the NME manuscripts:

a)

K 13390 iv 3' [Ṣaš+šur-DÙ-IBILA LUGAL GAL LUGAL dan-nu LUGAL ŠÚ LUGAL
MAN^{kurA}]N.ṚŠÁR^{ki}

[Ashurbanipal, great king, mighty king, king of the world, king of] Assyria, ...
(The beginning of colophon b, see above)

b)

K 13390 iv 3' [É.GAL ṢAN.ŠÁR.DÙ.A MAN ŠÚ MAN^{kurA}]N.ṚŠÁR^{ki}

[Palace of Ashurbanipal, king of the world, king of] Assyria, ...
(The beginning of colophon q, see below)

Point 2

According to the AMC, the last tablet of the gastrointestinal series (K.5834+, BAM 579) is not called DIŠ NA SAG ŠÀ-šú na-ši, but its name is DIŠ NA ŠÀ-šú KÚM DAB(-it) 'For a person: his belly is affected by heat\fever' (BAMTU 9: p. 211: 30).

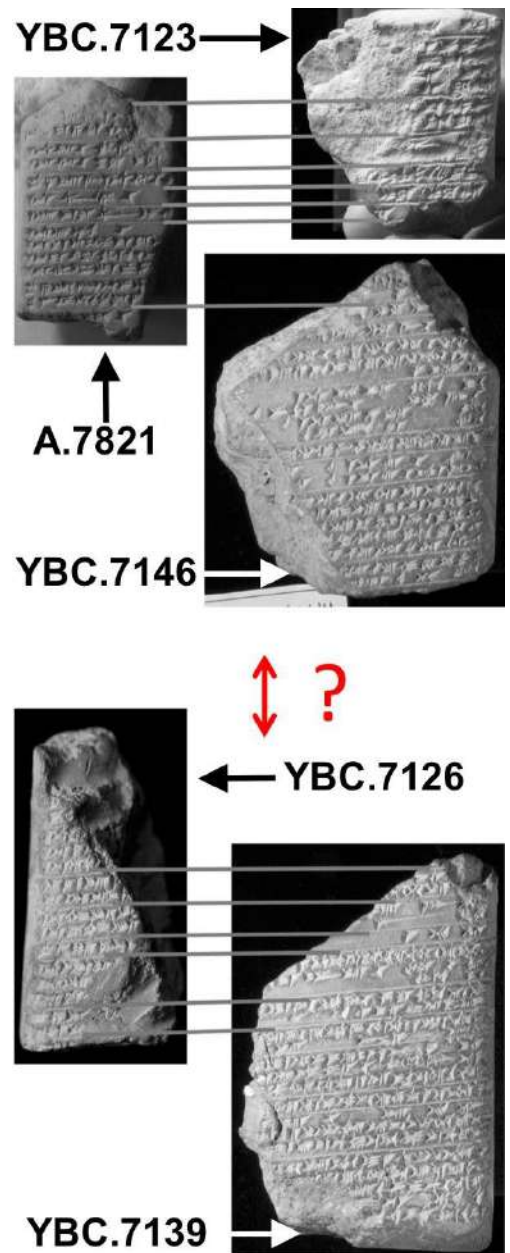
Therefore, proven by catch-lines and incipits directly from Nineveh manuscripts and indirectly from the AMC incipits, we have the series in the following sequence as part of the overall NME structure:

8. Gastrointestinal: DIŠ NA su-a-lam GIG ana ki-is ŠÀ GUR-šú ‘For a person: he is sick with phlegm (and) it turns for him into a stomach problem (lit. binding of the belly)’ – 5 tablets.
9. Abdominal area: DIŠ NA SAG ŠÀ-šú na-ši ‘For a person: his top of the belly is risen’ – 8 tablets.
10. Renal: DIŠ NA ÉLLAG-su GU₇-šú ‘For a person: his kidney hurts him’ – 3 tablets.

Exactly in these series lures the witchcraft. Note that the NME information on the Oracc website is a mix between AMC and NME, thus misleading and was not changed according to my urges. The seventh tablet¹⁰ of the DIŠ NA SAG ŠÀ-šú na-ši series under 09 Epigastrium-abdomen on the oracc website (<https://oracc.museum.upenn.edu/asbp/ninmed/pager>) is a modern fabrication. It does not belong to DIŠ NA SAG ŠÀ-šú na-ši, according to the AMC part 1, and we do not have data from Nineveh to support the oracc arrangement. Paradoxically here more anti-witchcraft measures are hidden, but more in detail below.

On the sequence in the AMC part 1

As said above, the order of the 8th-10th NME series does not correspond exactly to the structure we see in the AMC part 1. The arrangement of the AMC fragments plays a major role here. The alignment between YBC.7126 and YBC.7139 was figured out by the *Großmeister*, Franz Köcher (Beckman and Foster 1988: 1). A.7821 was discovered by I. Finkel, communicated to F. Köcher and M. Geller (BAMTU 9: 91f.). Specific challenge in the AMC reconstruction is the relation of YBC.7146 (Beckman and Foster 1988: 12 no. 9b) to YBC.7126 (Beckman and Foster 1988: 13 no. 9c). See the graphical explanation for a visual representation.¹¹



¹⁰ With the incipit DIŠ NA ZI.KU₅.RU.DA e-pu-u[s-su-m]a (K.3278(+))K.6172 (BAM 449+, AMD 8/1, pp. 407-415)).

¹¹ Adopted from <https://oracc.museum.upenn.edu/asbp/ninmed/whatisthenme/reconstructingnme/index.html>.

We suggested the summary section in AMC line 38) as D(YBC.7126) 1' (+) C(YBC.7146) 22' 'NÍGIN 4' D[UB.MEŠ DIŠ NA SAG ŠÀ-šú ...] (BAMTU 9: 212, 38).¹² Thus, assuming alignment between the end of YBC.7146 and the beginning of YBC.7126. The reading 'NÍGIN 4' D[UB is problematic. It was based on the copy and collations of Steinert in BAMTU 9: 337-342. The idea for DIŠ NA SAG ŠÀ-šú was borrowed from the order in NME, as discussed above. However, what we can certainly read in the AMC after the break on YBC.7126 does not represent a sequence we know from Nineveh until now. For the sake of convenience, I will first cite the BabMed edition in BAMTU 9: 212:

AMC part 1

C = YBC.7146; D = YBC.7126; E = YBC.7139

36) C20' [DIŠ NA SAG ŠÀ-šú na-ši : DIŠ NA (...) mi-h]i-iš ŠÀ-šú lu di-kiš
GABA TUK-ši

37) C21' [DIŠ NA? : DIŠ NA NAM.ÉRIM š]ah-hi-hu 'GIG'

38) D1'(+)C22' 'NÍGIN 4' D[UB.MEŠ DIŠ NA SAG ŠÀ-šú na-ši EN (DIŠ) ...] x 'xxx'
39) D2' ne-he-[es ^{giš}GIGIR]

40) D3' DIŠ NA GI[DIM DAB-su-ma]
41) D 4' DIŠ NA NINDA N[U GU₇ KAŠ NU NAG]
42) D5'(+)E1' DIŠ NA ZI.K[U₅.RU.DA DÙ-su] x x [x (x)]

43) D6'(+)E2' EN 8 DUB.ME[Š ... KA.INIM.MA UŠ₁₁.BÚR.RU.] 'DA'?.[KAM (x)]
44) D7'(+)E3' EN ú-š[á-an-ni na-mir-tum (u) DIŠ NA ... ina DU/KI.NÚ?'-š]ú re-hu-su
[DU-ma?]

45) D8'(+)E4' DIŠ NA ÉLLAG-su G[U₇-šú : DIŠ NA mi-na-tu-šú D]UB.MEŠ-'ka'

Note, the sequence of DIŠ NA GI[DIM DAB-su-ma] followed by DIŠ NA ÉLLAG-su GU₇-šú, which is not the case in NME, as shown above, where DIŠ NA ÉLLAG-su GU₇-šú comes after

¹² Scurlock 2014: 302 has an absolutely different restoration.

DIŠ NA SAG ŠÀ-šú na-ši. Therefore, it is not justified to use the NME order to reconstruct this section of the AMC, since they simply do not match.

The relation of YBC.7126 to YBC.7146 was suggested by the BabMed group in BAMTU 9. YBC.7126 was copied twice: by Beckman and Foster 1988: 13, no. 9c, and by Steinert in BAMTU 9: 337-342. The former detected two rests of vertical wedges after the NÍGIN, and the latter copied one rest of vertical wedge after the NÍGIN. The copy of Beckman and Foster 1988: 13, no. 9c, suggests reading 'NÍGIN 2' (Scurlock 2014: 302) or 'NÍGIN 5'. But according to Steinert's copy we have 'NÍGIN 4'. The latter comforts the BabMed placement, since this summary section seems to correspond in this way to the section on



YBC.7146 obv. 20-21, which will easily accommodate 4 incipits. In this way everything seems to fit into the BabMed reconstruction. However, by expecting diverse photographs of YBC.7126 obv. 1,¹³ I see clear rests of 2 vertical wedges after NÍGIN, but there is also another thinner wedge in between the two! This shows, per se, what an unreliable methodology the copying of cuneiform tablets is. Digital photographs and examining the artefact is much more reliable since one can decide for himself. So, to continue with the confusion, I introduce my copy here. The outer two wedges are thicker and deeper than the middle one! In other words, the rests of 3 vertical wedges after NÍGIN will respectively suggest two scenarios in my opinion:

SCENARIO A

We read 'NÍGIN 5' - in case the middle, slightly thinner tail comes from the upper row of wedges. However, this is not the case on the same side of the same fragment, YBC.7126: 14, where we read with BAMTU 9: 213 line 51) D14'(+)E10' NÍGIN 5 D[UB.MEŠ DIŠ NA ina la si-ma-ni-š]ú MURUB.MEŠ-šú GU7.MEŠ-šú ..., the summary section of the rectal series. There, I do not see a third vertical thin tail in the middle of the number 5. This makes it unlikely, but not impossible. If we opt for the number 5, a placement like in BAMTU 9 might be possible, if we assume that 5 incipits can be cited on 2 lines of YBC.7146 obv. 20-21. Note, that the 5 gastrointestinal incipits are cited over two lines on the AMC part 1, BAMTU 9: 211 lines 29) and 30). There are many 'ifs' for this placement, but it would look accordingly:

¹³ The three ends of vertical wedges are clearly recognizable especially in the first top-to-bottom open-access photos on <https://collections.peabody.yale.edu/search/Record/YPM-BC-021190>.

AMC part 1

C = YBC.7146; D = YBC.7126; E = YBC.7139

38) D1'(+)C22'	ʽNÍGIN 5ʽ D[UB.MEŠ DIŠ NA SAG ŠÀ-šú na-ši EN (DIŠ) ...] x ʽxxxʽ
39) D2'	ne-he-[es ^{giš} GIGIR ...]

40) D3'	DIŠ NA GI[DIM DAB-su-ma ...]
41) D 4'	DIŠ NA NINDA N[U GU ₇ KAŠ NU NAG ...]
42) D5'(+)E1'	DIŠ NA ZI.K[U ₅ .RU.DA DÙ-su ...] x x [x (x)]

43) D6'(+)E2'	EN 8 DUB.ME[Š ... KA.INIM.MA UŠ ₁₁ .BÚR.RU.]ʽDAʽ. [?] [KAM (x)]
44) D7'(+)E3'	EN ú-š[á-an-ni na-mir-tum (u) DIŠ NA ... ina DU/KI.NÚ [?] -š]ú re-hu-su [DU-ma [?]]

45) D8'(+)E4'	DIŠ NA ÉLLAG-su G[U ₇ -šú : DIŠ NA mi-na-tu-šú D]UB.MEŠ-ʽkaʽ
---------------	---

Note that until now, we do not have a clear example where the number of tablets in each series of NME differs from what we know from the AMC part 1. Thus, speculating that DIŠ NA SAG ŠÀ-šú na-ši had 4 or 5 tablets in Ashur, although we know with certainty that there were 8 tablets of it in Nineveh, makes little sense until we find a clear example where we see such a difference between the AMC part 1 and the NME. I do not say it is impossible, but I say we lack telling evidence, and all other preserved NME series show the opposite until now.

SCENARIO B



If we accept ʽNÍGIN 6ʽ or respectively ʽNÍGIN 8ʽ as a possible reading, then YBC.7126 obv. 1 cannot be the summary section of YBC.7146 obv. 20-21. Note also that Franz Köcher did not align YBC.7126 and YBC.7146. I discuss in detail the two possibilities for the numbers:

ʽNÍGIN 6ʽ is the next possibility, but note as said above: the middle vertical tail is thinner and does not look as deep as the number 6 on A.7821, the summary section on neck problems induced by ghosts: AMC line 17) B12'(+)C1' NÍGIN 6 DUB.MEŠ DIŠ NA SA.G[Ú-šú GU₇-šú ŠU GIDIM.MA? EN ...]x ..., BAMTU 9: 210.

‘**NÍGIN 8**’ is also possible. Especially, if one compares to the number 8 on the same fragment YBC.7126: 6, BAMTU 9: 212 line 43) D6’(+E2’ **EN 8** DUB.ME[Š...] The last two vertical wedges from the number 8 are written lavishly spaced apart from the first group of six vertical wedges. Thus, I presume that the last two vertical wedges were written in the broken part of YBC.7126 obv. 1.

In this case, the BAMTU 9 suggestion that YBC.7126 indirectly joins YBC.7146 does not hold true, since YBC.7146 obv. 20-21 will probably not accommodate more than 5 incipits. Again, speculating that DIŠ NA SAG ŠÀ-šú na-ši had 4, 5 or 6 tablets on the AMC and 8 tablets in NME, makes no sense until we find clear examples of such a difference. Thus, the best possible solution is to unify the traces of the numerical sign on YBC.7126 obv. 1 with the evidence from NME, where we are aware of 8 tablets. Nevertheless, only a join can prove this arrangement.

Here in this transliteration, I offer several deviations from the BabMed edition, especially in line 36), 38), 39’) and 43’) marked in bold script. For more data see the appendix.

AMC part 1

C = YBC.7146; D = YBC.7126; E = YBC.7139

36) C20’ **[DIŠ NA : DIŠ NA KÚ]M ŠÀ ù¹⁴** di-kiš GABA TUK-ši

37) C21’ **[DIŠ NA : DIŠ NA NAM.ÉRIM š]**ah-hi-hu ‘GIG’

38) C22’ **[NÍGIN 4 DUB.MEŠ]** x x x x x

BREAK of unknown length, probably not more than 4-6 lines!

39’) D1’ ‘**NÍGIN 8?**’ [DUB.MEŠ DIŠ NA SAG ŠÀ-šú na-ši ...]

40’) D2’ ne-he-[es ^{giš}GIGIR]

¹⁴ The reading **KÚ]M ŠÀ ù** is courtesy of Gilles Buisson. Steinert’s copy in BAMTU 9: 339, C(YBC 7146) dismantled the **ù** copied by Beckman and Foster 1988: 12 no. 9b obv. 20’, into **šú** and **lu**. Diverse photo collations, speak for Beckman and Foster’s copy and Buisson’s reading. This aligns also with Scurlock 2014: 299: 20’. This incipit makes a lot of sense since it is connected to the preceding series last tablet K.5834+(BAM 579+), where we find closely relevant incipit on two occasions: obv. i 30: DIŠ NA KÚM ŠÀ TUKU.TUKU-ši UD.DA SÁ.SÁ a[na TI-šú ...] and in obv. i 46: DIŠ NA KÚM ŠÀ TUKU saḡ-lé-e. It is a normal feature of NME to elaborate on similar symptoms and diseases in neighboring tablets and series.

41') D3'	DIŠ NA GI[<i>DIM DAB-su-ma ...</i>]
42') D 4'	DIŠ NA NINDA N[U GU ₇ KAŠ NU NAG ...]
43') D5'(+)E1'	DIŠ NA ZI.K[U ₅ .RU.DA DÙ-su ...] x x [x (x)]

44') D6'(+)E2'	NÍGIN! (EN) ¹⁵ 8 DUB.ME[Š ... KA.INIM.MA UŠ ₁₁ .BÚR.RU.] ʾDA [?] . [KAM (x)]
45') D7'(+)E3'	EN ú-š[á-an-ni na-mir-tum (u) DIŠ NA ... ina DU/KI.NÚ [?] -š]ú re-hu-su [DU-ma [?]]

46') D8'(+)E4'	DIŠ NA ÉLLAG-su G[U ₇ -šú : DIŠ NA mi-na-tu-šú DJUB.MEŠ-ʾkaʾ
----------------	---

With **scenario b**, after the gastrointestinal series the AMC part 1 has an unknown, possibly anti-witchcraft series of 4 tablets, with fragmentary preserved incipits on YBC.7146 obv. 20-21 (see more in the appendix); then 8 anti-witchcraft tablets of DIŠ NA SAG ŠÀ-šú na-ši, guessed by the possible beginning of the number 8 on the summary section on YBC.7126 obv. 1', and finally 8 ghost and anti-witchcraft¹⁶ related tablets of the series DIŠ NA GI[*DIM DAB-su-ma*], suggested by the fragmentary incipits on YBC.7126 obv. 3'-5' and the summary section on YBC.7126 obv. 6'. This may suggest up to 20 anti-witchcraft related tablets, spread over 3 series. A number that can easily meet the data presented in the anti-witchcraft corpus: <https://oracc.museum.upenn.edu/cmawro>. In other words, both scenarios show that the serialized anti-witchcraft material is more abundant than expected.

It is important to say that **scenario b** affects the reverse of the AMC tablet as well. Thus, the second part of the AMC has to be corrected as well in a similar manner:

¹⁵ **NB.!** I consider EN as a mistake for NÍGIN, since we have another EN on the next line. This suggestion comes from Scurlock 2014: 302, fragment 9c+d: 6'+2'. Obviously, my own unclear reasoning in BAMTU 9: 106, 7.1. is explained better in the present article. The mistake in the text (EN instead of NÍGIN) may be due to the fact that the scribe was still an apprentice, A.ZU TUR in the colophon, BAMTU 9: 219 line 127.

¹⁶ For a more detailed discussion on this, see below under 'AMC's anti-witchcraft series, which were excluded from NME.'

AMC part 2

C = YBC.7146; D = YBC.7126; E = YBC.7139

91) Dr14'(+)Er25' DIŠ NA hu-^ṛuṣ^ṛ-ša GA[Z ŠÀ TUK.TUK-ši]-^ṛú^ṛ MU.NE

92) Dr15'(+)Er26' a-na AN.TA.ŠU[B.BA ZI-hi : ana Z]I-hi

93) Dr16'(+)Er27' NÍGIN 3 DUB.MEŠ DIŠ N[A hu-uṣ-ša GAZ ŠÀ TUK.TUK-ši ...-ú
MU.N]E

94) Dr17'(+)Er28' EN DIŠ NA UZU.ME[Š-šú] x

95) Dr18' [DIŠ N]A ^ṛina KI^ṛ.N[Ú-šú HULUH.HULUH-ut / GÙ.GÙ-si^ṛ ...]

96) Dr19' [DIŠ N]A ^ṛA^ṛ.L[Á HUL DAB-su]

BREAK of unknown length, probably not more than 4-6 lines!

97') Cr1' [.....] x [.....]

98) Cr2' [.....] ^ṛana ^dDIM₉^ṛ.M[E] Z[I-hi? x x x]

This suggests, that after the so-called XVIII Mental Illness series, we might expect one more series before going into XIX Potency (BAMTU 9: 216f., and passim). It might be that the Lamaštu series is hidden here, as ^dDIM₉.ME in line 98) Cr2' suggests. It will make more sense to expect a separate series including the baby snatching Lamaštu before the series on Potency, Sex and Pregnancy. We are aware that the Lamaštu material is connected to Pregnancy (BAMTU 9: 263), and among infants, pregnant mothers are also the victims of Lamaštu. In other words, a series including Lamaštu, before the series on Potency, Sex and Pregnancy, seems very logical for the Mesopotamian system and associational arrangements of the AMC and NME, both grouping thematically related material in close proximity.

AMC's anti-witchcraft series, which were excluded from NME

The following series, DIŠ NA GI[*DIM DAB-su-ma*]¹⁷ ‘For a person: a [ghost seized him]’ (We rendered this under Abdomen in BAMTU 9: 212¹⁸) deserves special attention here. Its 6th or 7th tablet is probably called DIŠ NA ZI.K[*U₅.RU.DA DÙ-su*] ‘For a person: a cutting-of-the-[throat magic has been performed against a man]’ (BAMTU 9: 212, 42). As said before, this is the tablet erroneously included as the seventh manuscript of the DIŠ NA SAG ŠÀ-šú na-ši series under 09 Epigastrium-abdomen on <https://oracc.museum.upenn.edu/asbp/ninmed/pager>. Notably, this title is also known from an incipit in Nineveh (K.3278(+)*K.6172+...*, see Abusch and Schwemer 2011: 407-415, and BAMTU 9: 235), with an alternative spelling: DIŠ NA ZI.KU₅.RU.DA e-pu-u[s-su-m]a. Unfortunately, the catch-line and designation of K.3278(+)*K.6172+...* are broken off. Thus, we are not informed from Nineveh proper, where this tablet really belonged, but it will be wise to expect it in the series DIŠ NA GI[*DIM DAB-su-ma*], as the AMC shows. This series is not recorded in the NME sequence as we know it for the moment. However, the colophon of K.3278(+)*K.6172+* is partly preserved and identifiable, and is of a particular interest for the present article. It is the so-called colophon q (Hunger 1968: no. 329, *Asb. Typ q*):

Palace of Ashurbanipal, king of the world, king of Assyria, on whom Nabû and Tašmētu have bestowed wisdom. He (i.e. Ashurbanipal) acquired for himself shining eyes, the pinnacle of scholarship. Of the kings who came before me, none were able to comprehend these tasks. Medical prescriptions from head to toenail (i.e. the Nineveh Medical Encyclopaedia), other selections, clever instructions, (and) whatever pertains to the great medical knowledge of Ninurta and Gula, I have written on tablets, checked, collated and deposited them in the middle of my palace (in Nineveh) for my reading and recitation.’

This colophon is mainly used to designate tablets from the Ashurbanipal library, which belong to the assumingly later editorial stage of the NME manuscripts.¹⁹ Thus, we have an interesting

¹⁷ If our restoration is correct, then this is also the incipit of K.11772(AMT 94/5), courtesy of Gilles Buisson. It is not clear to me if it is a one or two-column tablet. It looks like it is a fragment of a one-column tablet, thus it might be that K.11772(AMT 94/5) was a source data, which was later edited into a two-columned tablet (similar to K.3278(+)*K.6172+...*). It has colophon c, which is related to colophon b, which we also find on NME manuscripts. We are furthermore aware of a Late Babylonian version of the same incipit: BM.47817, which interestingly also includes a drawing of a ghost, see Finkel 2021: Drawing Case 3.

¹⁸ Abdomen is a *Notlösung* in BAMTU 9, but the abdominal area includes DIŠ NA SAG ŠÀ-šú na-ši, and probably also DIŠ NA GI[*DIM DAB-su-ma*]. In this way, abdominal area as a designation is less specific than epigastrium and thus it is vague enough to illustrate the general aspect of Mesopotamian medical taxonomy.

¹⁹ Other medical material was also designated with colophon q in Nineveh which was to be seen in the AMC part 2, *SKIN*, like K.3993. Associated with colophon q are probably also K.7815+ and Sm.60. The latter looks like a variant of a q-kind colophon. Future research on colophons will certainly bring more data into consideration.

case: a tablet from an anti-witchcraft collection, DIŠ NA ZI.KU₅.RU.DA DÙ-su,²⁰ which is part of the series DIŠ NA GI[DIM DAB-su-ma], was also part of the therapeutic collection in the AMC part 1. Yet, the editorial board of Ashurbanipal did not include the series DIŠ NA GI[DIM DAB-su-ma] into the NME sequence. However, the scholars in Nineveh used colophon q to designate DIŠ NA ZI.KU₅.RU.DA e-pu-u[s-su-m]a (K.3278(+))K.6172+), exactly like colophon q was designating at least 30 NME manuscripts. This unmistakably shows that collections like DIŠ NA ZI.KU₅.RU.DA e-pu-u[s-su-m]a fall under the categories mentioned in colophon q: ‘Medical prescriptions from head to toenail (i.e. the Nineveh Medical Encyclopaedia), other selections, clever instructions, (and) whatever pertains to the great medical knowledge of Ninurta and Gula’. On top of this, the Nineveh manuscript of K.3278(+))K.6172+ is written on a two-column tablet. This is the standard format *par excellence*, which the Nineveh scribes used for the earlier (colophon b) and the later (colophon q) edition of the NME manuscripts. There are no exceptions from this rule until now. Thus, tablets from the anti-witchcraft corpus that were not included in the incipit sequence of the NME, still look exactly like tablets from the NME having colophon q and the two-column format manuscript. This proves that anti-witchcraft tablets and NME tablets were considered one entity, even if systematized in different collections.

Here, I offer two additional, unlikely possibilities as well, because without a catch line and a designation of K.3278(+))K.6172+ we do not have a real proof from Nineveh, where this tablet really belonged.

a) DIŠ NA ZI.KU₅.RU.DA e-pu-u[s-su-m]a (K.3278(+))K.6172+) became part of DIŠ NA SAG ŠÀ-šú na-ši, but this will then contradict the data from the AMC. This is implied by <https://oracc.museum.upenn.edu/asbp/ninmed/pager>, but it is not based on any evidence.

b) The NME had more recensions in Nineveh and DIŠ NA ZI.KU₅.RU.DA e-pu-u[s-su-m]a (K.3278(+))K.6172+) belongs to another recension of the NME, which includes the series DIŠ NA GI[DIM DAB-su-ma], and is thus similar to the data from the AMC part 1. However, we are not informed on such a scenario from Nineveh until now.

²⁰ Another case is K.10515, discussed in the appendix below.

Which body parts and areas are affected by witchcraft?

We have two approaches to answer this question. The first is to look into all diagnostic parts of the anti-witchcraft prescriptions and Maqlû ‘Burning’ (in <https://oracc.museum.upenn.edu/cmawro>), and systematize them. Yet the other approach, which I will argue generalizes the former, and provides a bigger picture, is to look into the structure of the AMC part 1 and NME. Since they both bear similar witness to Mesopotamian medical theory represented by the human body. Both, the Ashur and the Nineveh tradition position the anti-witchcraft material between the gastrointestinal and renal series. Thus, we can suggest that these areas are those normally affected by witchcraft. Notably, in the gastrointestinal series, especially tablets 3 and 5, witchcraft appears in connection to the body-area SAG ŠÀ or rēš libbi ‘top of the belly’. Also, in the renal series, tablet 2 and especially 3, SAG ŠÀ and witchcraft are mentioned as well. This might be the case for the first tablet of the renal series, but the data for the allegedly renal tablet one is very fragmentary. Interestingly, the NME and AMC data are greatly supported by Maqlû ‘Burning’:

Maqlû Tablet III, 30a:

šalam ṭīdi lipâ ina libbi u ē[ra ina kalâti]

A figurine of clay – (you insert) tallow in the belly, cor[nel in the kidneys].

Maqlû Ritual Tablet, 42')

šalam ṭīdi 43') lipâ ina rēš libbīša ēra ina kalâtīša tusannaš

A figurine of clay – (43') you insert tallow in her ‘top of the belly’, cornel in her kidneys.²¹

This sympathetic magic ensures that the belly, top of the belly and kidneys of the witch are affected the same way she affected those of the patient with her malevolent sorcery.

SAG ŠÀ - ‘epigastrium’ or not?

Lastly, translating SAG ŠÀ or rēš libbi as ‘epigastrium’, adopted by the dictionaries, seems logical at first sight, since SAG ŠÀ ‘top of the belly’ has similar meaning to epigastrium in Greek - epi ‘on, above’ and gaster ‘stomach’. The latter is referred to as the area above the umbilical area. However, I will argue that this is too precise, since we are not informed if this corresponds exactly to Babylonian taxonomy, which rarely matches modern body parts and anatomical areas. The body parts arrangements of the NME and the AMC part 1 are not

²¹ In Maqlû Tablet III, 30a, I translate belly and not epigastrium as in <https://oracc.museum.upenn.edu/cmawro/pager>.

exclusively vertical from head to toe, as I argued for a multilayered approach (BAMTU 9: 94). This is also true for the SAG ŠÀ body area as well. Since both the NME and AMC part 1 position SAG ŠÀ in-between internal areas, this suggests per se that SAG ŠÀ is an internal body area/part. Yet, omens observing a black spot tirku (GE₆) on the human body show that SAG ŠÀ is also an external area (Böck 2000: 208, l. 72). These observations also align with a survey from the anti-witchcraft prescriptions, where SAG ŠÀ is both internal (Abusch and Schwemer 2011: 233, 240) and external (Abusch and Schwemer 2011: 77, 119). Furthermore, potions are a common therapy for SAG ŠÀ problems in anti-witchcraft measures. Thus, drinks also suggest internal association of SAG ŠÀ, while ointments external.²² However, if we want to be precise, we shall not translate SAG ŠÀ as epigastrium, since we are not informed if they completely overlap, although they *grosso modo* do, also suggested by Annie Attia.²³ However, we better describe SAG ŠÀ as a part of the abdominal area, which is inside as well as on the outside of the body. Thus, I would like to translate it descriptively as ‘top of the belly area’ and not as epigastrium since we are not informed if it includes the umbilical area and the flanks or not. Also, in this way we are less specific, aligning more with the Mesopotamian taxonomy, which is less specific than the modern one. Moreover, SAG ŠÀ is a matter of perspective, and the one we have from the NME and AMC part 1 is multilayered in vertical and horizontal fashion. Thus, if the patient is lying on his back, as the sick-bed scenes suggest (Panayotov 2020), SAG ŠÀ designates all the belly surfaces on the skin. However, if the patient is standing, it seems similar to what we understand as epigastrium. Thus, SAG ŠÀ seems to partly but not entirely overlap with epigastrium, while being part of the bigger abdominal area.

Conclusion

Many anti-witchcraft prescriptions and series are part of the orthodox cuneiform medicine both in Nineveh and Ashur. AMC part 1 includes more anti-witchcraft series than the data we have from the NME. New analyses of the data suggest that we are dealing with more serialized anti-

²² People ate bewitched food, and thus it affected the abdominal area; therefore, potions counteract the ingested food inside the body, and ointments counteract the witchcraft effect from the outside. See descriptions in Abusch and Schwemer 2011: 1, 6 and elsewhere.

²³ Annie Attia provided additional examples where we see SAG ŠÀ in connection to lower back/hips (BAMTU 7: no. 5 lines 9/10); shoulders, however translating flanks is better here: [https://www.ebl.lmu.de/fragmentarium/K.2614: line 14](https://www.ebl.lmu.de/fragmentarium/K.2614:line14)); rupuš/ltu in the SAG ŠÀ from bewitched drinks, BAM 193, KAL 2 no. 48, Abusch and Schwemer 2011: 7.10 text O, see also BAM 190: 22-24, KAL 2 no. 48 Abusch and Schwemer 2011: 7.10 text F, etc; Also in connection with the illness dugānu STT 1, 96: 9-10, pī karši STT 1, 96 r. 7-8. All these possibilities show the association and connection of SAG ŠÀ with multiple inner and outer body parts and regions, which fall *grosso modo* in the abdominal area.

witchcraft material, than earlier proposed. This also suggests that we have more series in the AMC generally. The association between witchcraft and medicine is also apparent even if series and tablets which belonged to the AMC part 1 are excluded from the NME edition, since manuscripts are still crafted by the Nineveh scholars in the standards of the NME – a two-column tablet with the colophon q. All this shows that the anti-witchcraft material falls under the general category of *bulṭu* ‘remedy, cure’, and it is thus part of the Mesopotamian medicine.

The structure of the AMC part 1 and NME paint a big picture, showing which body parts and areas were affected by witchcraft. These observations are also greatly supported by the data from *Maqlû*. All shows that in the medical theory of Mesopotamia, witchcraft affected mainly the lower parts of the human trunk, *grosso modo* this is the inside and the outside of the abdominal area:

- a)** parts of the gastrointestinal series *DIŠ NA su-a-lam GIG ana ki-is ŠÀ GUR-šú* ‘For a person: he is sick with phlegm (and) it turns for him into a stomach problem (lit. binding of the belly)’ – both NME and AMC part 1.
- b)** possibly another extra series in the AMC part 1, with comparable data from Nineveh, see the appendix.
- c)** ‘top of the belly area’ (*SAG ŠÀ* or *rēš libbi*), exemplified by the series *DIŠ NA SAG ŠÀ-šú na-ši* ‘For a person: his top of the belly is risen’ – both NME and presumably AMC part 1.
- d)** *DIŠ NA GI[DIM DAB-su-ma]* ‘For a person: a ghost [afflicted him and]’; AMC part 1 but excluded from NME.
- e)** the kidneys, exemplified by the renal series *DIŠ NA ÉLLAG-su GU₇-šú* ‘For a person: his kidney hurts him’ – both NME and AMC part 1.

However, one of the main areas affected by witchcraft is *SAG ŠÀ* (although we are not well informed about the content of the series *DIŠ NA GI[DIM DAB-su-ma]*, which will certainly bring more data on the relationship of ghosts, witchcraft and *SAG ŠÀ*). The *SAG ŠÀ* is a multilayered body area inside and outside of the abdominal area. Its translation as epigastrium is misleading since we cannot find proof that *SAG ŠÀ* exactly and only equates with epigastrium. Thus, a descriptive translation of *SAG ŠÀ* as ‘top of the belly area’ is preferable.

K.10515²⁴ has colophon q. It was possibly part of a two-column tablet, having the catch-line: [DIŠ NA il-la-tu-š]u il-la-k[a-ma (ŠÀ-šú e-em KÚM u SED)], which is a tablet from the series [DUB.x.KÁM DIŠ NA] TÙN.ŠÀ-šú DAB.DAB-s[u]²⁵. By comparing it to an unknown tablet from Nineveh²⁶ we acquire interesting information. The Nineveh tablet in question (AfK 1, 23-25) might be a two-column one, and intriguingly has the incipit DIŠ NA il-la-tu-šu il-la-ka-ma ŠÀ-šú e-em KÚM [u SED], which belonged to a series [DUB.x.KÁM DIŠ N]A! TÙN.ŠÀ-šú [DAB.DAB-su?]. Notably, on top of this, AfK 1, 23-25 has colophon q!²⁷ In other words, K.10515 precedes the unknown Nineveh tablet (AfK 1, 23-25), both dealing with anti-witchcraft techniques. If we apply this information to the scenario b on the Ashur Medical Catalogue part 1, as discussed above, we get the following picture:

AMC part 1

C = YBC.7146; D = YBC.7126; E = YBC.7139

- | | |
|----------|---|
| 36) C20' | [DIŠ NA TÙN.ŠÀ-šú DAB.DAB-su: DIŠ NA KÚ]M ŠÀ ù di-kiš
GABA TUK-ši |
| 37) C21' | [DIŠ NA il-la-tu-šu il-la-ka-ma ŠÀ-šú e-em KÚM u SED: DIŠ NA
NAM.ÉRIM š]ah-hi-hu 'GIG' |
| <hr/> | |
| 38) C22' | [NÍGIN 4 DUB.MEŠ DIŠ NA TÙN.ŠÀ-šú DAB.DAB-su EN ...] x x x
x x |

In this respect K.10515 might be the second tablet (DIŠ NA KÚM ŠÀ ù di-kiš GABA TUK-ši), and the unknown Nineveh manuscript (AfK 1, 23-25), respectively the third tablet (DIŠ NA il-la-tu-šu il-la-ka-ma ŠÀ-šú e-em KÚM u SED) of the anti-witchcraft series DIŠ NA TÙN.ŠÀ-šú DAB.DAB-su.

²⁴ Edited by Henry Stadhouders in <https://www.ebl.lmu.de/fragmentarium/K.10515>.

²⁵ Note also BAM 397 33-36 and BAM 87.

²⁶ AfK 1, 23-25 also Abusch and Schwemer 2011: 229, T obv. 1

²⁷ Pace Abusch and Schwemer 2011: 230 note 64, who thought on Ashurbanipal colophon, type d. However, colophon q probably derived from d and c, see:

<https://oracc.museum.upenn.edu/asbp/rlasb/librarycolophons/colophonsexplained/index.html#asbn>.

Literature with Abbreviations

For typical assyriological abbreviations see:

https://rla.badw.de/fileadmin/user_upload/Files/RLA/03_Abkverz_Ende_Nov2018.pdf

- Abusch and Schwemer 2011 = **Abusch T., Schwemer D. 2011.** *Corpus of Mesopotamian Anti-Witchcraft Rituals, Volume 1*, Ancient Magic and Divination 8/1, Leiden/Boston: Brill.
- AfK 1, 23-25 = **Ebeling E., Ungar E. 1923.** Keilschrifttexte aus Konstantinopel. 1. Ein medizinischer Text aus Kujundjik, Archiv für Keilschriftforschung 1: 23-25.
- BAMTU 7 = **Geller M. J. 2005.** *Renal and Rectal Disease Texts*. Die babylonisch-assyrische Medizin in Texten und Untersuchungen 7, Berlin/New York: Walter de Gruyter.
- BAMTU 9 = **Steinert U. ed. 2018.** *Assyrian and Babylonian Scholarly Text Catalogues: Medicine, Magic and Divination*, Die babylonisch-assyrische Medizin in Texten und Untersuchungen 9, Leiden/Boston: Walter de Gruyter.
- BAMTU 10 = **Geller M. J., Panayotov S. V. 2020.** *Mesopotamian Eye Disease Texts. The Niniveh Series*, Die babylonisch-assyrische Medizin in Texten und Untersuchungen 10, Leiden/Boston: Walter de Gruyter.
- Beckman and Foster 1988 = **Beckman G., Foster B. R. 1988.** Assyrian Scholarly Texts in the Yale Babylonian Collection, in E. Leichty, M. de Jong Ellis, P. Gerardi eds., *A Scientific Humanist. Studies in Memory of Abraham Sachs*, Philadelphia: Occasional Publications of the Samuel Noah Kramer Fund 9, 1-26.
- Böck 2000 = **Böck B. 2000.** *Die babylonisch-assyrische Morphoskopie*, Archiv für Orientforschung, Beiheft 27, Wien: Institut für Orientalistik.
- Finkel 2021 = **Finkel I. 2021.** *The First Ghosts. Most Ancient of Legacies*, London: Hodder and Stoughton.
- Geller 2007 = **Geller M. 2007.** Incantations within Akkadian Medical Texts, in G. Leick ed., *The Babylonian World*, Abingdon/New York: Routledge, 389-399.
- Hunger 1968 = **Hunger H. 1968.** *Babylonische und assyrische Kolophone*, Alter Orient und Altes Testament 2, Kevelaer: Butzon & Bercker / Neukirchen-Vluyn: Neukirchener Verlag des Erziehungsvereins.
- Panayotov 2017 = **Panayotov S. V. 2017.** Eye Metaphors, Analogies and Similes within Mesopotamian Magico-Medical Texts, in J. Z. Wee ed. *The Comparable Body. Analogy and Metaphor in Ancient Mesopotamian, Egyptian, and Greco-Roman Medicine*, Studies in Ancient Medicine 49, Leiden/Boston: Brill, 204-246.
- Panayotov 2020 = **Panayotov S. V. 2020.** Healing in Images and Texts: The Sickbed Scene, in J. Cale Johnson ed., *Patients and Performative Identities: At the Intersection of the Mesopotamian Technical Disciplines and Their Clients*, University Park (PA): Eisenbrauns, The Pennsylvania State University Press, 129-158.
- Parpola 1983 = **Parpola S. 1983.** Assyrian Library Records, Journal of Near Eastern Studies 42, 1-29.

Mon fils Sukkukum a disparu de chez moi il y a huit ans

Adelina Millet Albà¹

1. Introduction

Dans le cadre de la préparation d'une étude sur les noms propres indiquant des handicaps physiques, sensoriels ou mentaux, qui se trouvent dans les textes paléobabyloniens de Mari, je suis tombée sur le texte publié par W. H. Van Soldt en 1994, également connu sous le nom d'*AbB* 13 21². Il s'agit d'une lettre datant de cette époque paléobabylonienne, découverte lors de fouilles à Larsa et écrite par le roi Hammurabi de Babylone. Ce texte a suscité un certain intérêt depuis sa publication, et divers auteurs s'y sont référés à plusieurs reprises sous différents points de vue.

Le thème principal le plus évident, et celui qui a suscité le plus de commentaires, a trait à l'enlèvement d'un jeune garçon³ et aux efforts de son père pour le retrouver.

L'autre question qui a intéressé les chercheurs est le fait que le texte montre que les rituels funéraires n'étaient pas uniquement accomplis lorsque le corps du défunt était localisé et avait été correctement enterré. De fait, ce texte nous apprend que le père du garçon aurait accompli le rituel du *kispum*⁴ dès qu'il s'était rendu compte de la disparition de son enfant, craignant ou anticipant ainsi sa mort probable. La charge émotionnelle de ce texte est « palpable » face à ce père accablé par la perte de son fils puis, vraisemblablement bouleversé, d'apprendre que son fils était encore en vie⁵.

¹ IPOA, Universitat de Barcelona.

² *Letters in the British Museum. Part 2*, Altbabylonische Briefe im Umschrift und Übersetzung 13, E. J. Brill, Leiden/New York/Köln, 1994.

³ Voir Lafont 2002, p. 69-88, texte 11.

⁴ Pour le rituel du *kispum* voir par exemple J.-M. Durand 2012, p. 33-51 avec bibliographie. La définition qu'il en donne est : « Le *kispum* représente le culte rendu en Babylonie aux morts » (p. 33). Voir aussi la thèse plus ancienne d'Akio Tsukimoto 1985.

⁵ MacDougal 2018, p. 268-269 : « This letter seems to turn any idea of *kispum* as restricted to deceased parents, elders, or special ancestors on its head. Here we have clear evidence that other (here a child) family members received the care for the dead ritual, in this case performed even without a body or burial. This father performed *kispum* for his son for eight years, which supports well the claim that the family dead were all provisioned continuously. It also proves that a skeleton in a grave was not necessary to perform spiritual care for the dead. The grammatical form of the verb used (*aktassip*) indicates that the father performed a recurring ritual. Believing in his son's death, he still interacted with and maintained a relationship with his child. The emotion, grief for a lost son, and shock at hearing the boy was alive come through poignantly in this letter. This is not a case concerned with

Cette lettre illustre également la réputation de « roi juste » d’Hammurabi de Babylone, car le père de l’enfant disparu en était arrivé à faire appel à lui pour l’aider à surmonter les obstacles qu’il avait rencontrés pour récupérer son enfant. Ayant appris où se trouvait son fils et s’étant rendu sur place pour tenter de le ramener, il avait été confronté à une forme d’hostilité de la part de la personne qui détenait son fils et à une manœuvre dilatoire pour l’empêcher de reprendre son enfant. Et l’on peut voir dans cette lettre qu’Hammurabi répond à cette sollicitation et donne une série d’instructions avec comme ordre final qu’on lui amène à Babylone les protagonistes de l’affaire, Sîn-uselli et son fils Sukkukum ainsi qu’Ibni-Ea qui le retenait à son service, c’est-à-dire en quelque sorte les deux parties adverses⁶.

Voici le texte (*AbB* 13 21, BM 93766)⁷ :

Translittération

(face)

¹ *a-na* ^dsu’*en-i-d*[*i-nam qí-bí-ma*]

² *um-ma ḥa-a*[*m-mu-ra-bi-ma*]

³ ^{ld}su’*en-ú-se-l*[*i o o o*]

⁴ *ki-a-am ú-lam-mi-da-a*[*n-n*]*i* [*u*]*m-m*[*a š*]*u-ma*

⁵ ^lgeštu₂.*lal ma-ri*

⁶ *iš-tu mu 8-kam iḥ-li-qà-an-ni-ma*

⁷ *ba-al-tú-us-sú ú-ul i-de-e-ma*

⁸ *ki-ma mi-tim ki-is-pa-am*

⁹ *ak-ta-as-sí-íp-šum*

¹⁰ *i-na-an-na i-na* ^{uru}*e-ba-ri-i*^{ki}

¹¹ *i-na é ib-ni-é-a rá-gab kù-dím*

¹² *dumu šíl-lí*^d*utu*

¹³ *wa-aš-bu-us-sú iq-bu-nim*

¹⁴ *a-na* ^{uru}*i-ik-ba-ri-i*^{ki}

(tranche)

¹⁵ [*a*]*l-li-ik-ma*

inheritance benefits; it clearly is an expression of grieving and an effort to maintain continued bonds with a deceased family member ». Voir aussi Bou Pérez 2022, p. 339.

⁶ Cf. Van De Mierop 2005, p. 93.

⁷ Translittération et traduction publiées en premier lieu dans Van Soldt (1994, p. 21), reprises dans Lafont, 2002. La translittération et la traduction reproduites ici sont celles de Lafont, 2022, p. 76-77. Voir aussi sur le site Archibab <https://www.archibab.fr/T795> (consulté le 20/11/2023).

(revers)

¹⁶ *i-na pa-ni-ia uš-ta-ar-qú-ú-š[u-ma]*

¹⁷ *it-ta-ak-ru-ni-in-ni*

¹⁸ *ki-a-am ú-lam-mi-da-an-ni*

¹⁹ *a-nu-um-ma 1 aga-ús sag*

²⁰ *ù^dsu'en-ú-se-li šu-a-ti*

²¹ *a-na še-ri-[k]a aṭ-ṭar-dam*

²² *ki-ma is-[sà-an]-qú-ni-[i]k-[k]um*

²³ *iš-te-en ta-a[k]-lam*

²⁴ *[it-ti]-šū-nu tū-ru-ud*

²⁵ *[a-n]a^{u[r]u}e-ba-ri-^{ki} li-il-li-ku-ma*

²⁶ *¹geštu₂.lal dumu^dsu'en-ú-se-li*

²⁷ *ù [ib-ni-é-a] ša geštu₂.lal*

²⁸ *[iš-tu m]u 8-k[am] i-na é-šu ik-lu-š[u]*

²⁹ *[a-na ma-aḥ-ri-k]a li-it-ru-ni-i[k]-ku[m-ma]*

(tranche)

³⁰ *[a-na ká-dingir-r]a^{ki} šu-ri-[a-am]*

Traduction

¹⁻² Dis à Sîn-iddinam, ainsi parle Hammu-rabi, ³⁻⁴ Sîn-uselli ... a porté à mon attention ceci : ⁵⁻⁶ « Mon fils Sukkukum a disparu de chez moi il y a huit ans et ⁷⁻⁹ je ne savais pas s'il était toujours vivant et j'ai continué à faire des offrandes funéraires pour lui comme s'il était mort. ¹⁰⁻¹³ Maintenant, on m'a dit qu'il se trouve à Ik-barî⁸, dans la maison du 'chevalier'⁹ Ibni-Ea, l'orfèvre, fils de Šilli-Šamaš. ¹⁴⁻¹⁷ Je suis allé à Ik-barî mais on l'a fait se cacher de moi¹⁰ et on m'a nié (sa présence)¹¹ » ¹⁸ Voilà ce qu'il a porté à mon attention. ¹⁹⁻²¹ Maintenant, je t'envoie un soldat¹² et ce Sîn-uselli. ²²⁻²⁴ Dès qu'ils t'arriveront, envoie un homme de confiance¹³ avec eux. ²⁵

⁸ La localisation de la ville ou du village d'Ik-barî n'est, à ma connaissance, pas connu.

⁹ J'ai ici réintroduit les guillemets présents dans la traduction de Van Soldt (1994, p. 23) : « the 'rider' (and) goldsmith », dans la mesure où l'expression rá.gab suivie d'un nom de fonction (ici kù.dím, l'orfèvre) n'est pas encore élucidée : la traduction de Lafont en fait un titre honorifique, une dignité (cf. Charpin 1988 p. 72 qui propose de traduire *râkib imêri* par 'chevalier' en étant « conscient de l'anachronisme d'une telle traduction », le CAD R (1999, p. 105 *sub rakbû* 'in OB — beside another title') ne donne pas de traduction. Stol (2012, p. 338, § 8 : « rá-gaba mit zwei Titeln ») à côté de possibles cas où les deux termes sont clairement dans une relation nom-complément de nom, évoque un possible cumul de fonctions ('Ämterhäufung'). Fiette (2018, p. 37) opte pour la traduction « un messenger-rakbum d'orfèvre-kutîmum ».

¹⁰ Charpin (1997-1998, p. 341) propose de traduire la ligne 16 « avant mon arrivée ils l'ont dissimulé ».

¹¹ Une autre traduction pourrait être « on m'a montré de l'hostilité ».

¹² Le terme aga-ús sag est habituellement transcrit en paléobabylonien par *qaqqad rêdim*. Le CAD R (p. 248) rend *qaqqad rêdi* par « soldier proper » ou « regular soldier » (cf. les remarques de Landsberger 1955, p. 122 et n. 9).

Qu'ils aillent à Ik-barî et ²⁹ qu'ils te ramènent ²⁶ Sukkukum, le fils de Sîn-uselli, ²⁷⁻²⁸ et Ibni-Ea qui détenait Sukkukum dans sa maison depuis 8 ans, ²⁹⁻³⁰ et fais-les conduire à Babylone.

Résumé

Dans cette lettre, Hammurabi donne mission à Sîn-iddinam¹⁴ de faire conduire à Babylone un père Sîn-uselli et son fils Sukkukum, ainsi qu'Ibni-Ea : Sîn-uselli a averti Hammurabi qu'ayant appris que son fils disparu depuis huit ans se trouvait en fait chez Ibni-Ea, il s'est rendu dans la ville de ce dernier pour le récupérer, mais on le lui a caché.

2. Notre proposition

Tous ceux qui ont étudié ce texte, ou qui l'ont abordé sous l'un des angles que nous venons de mentionner, s'accordent sur le fait qu'ils ne disposent d'aucune explication pour éclaircir les circonstances de l'enlèvement du garçon, et qu'il s'agit d'une situation pour le moins incompréhensible. Je voudrais ici faire une suggestion qui pourrait nous aider à comprendre ce qui a pu se passer. *Sukkuku* signifie « sourd », et il est très probable que cela indique que la personne ainsi nommée souffrait d'un tel handicap ; de plus, si la surdité est survenue dans la prime enfance, quelles qu'en fussent les causes et les circonstances, Sukkukum serait, selon toute vraisemblance, sourd et muet. Ce que je propose, c'est que c'est précisément le handicap de Sukkukum qui a constitué un facteur déterminant, favorisant son enlèvement et sa captivité.

Qu'est-ce qui aurait pu alors se passer ?

Lafont dans notre texte propose « soldat » et dans une autre lettre traduit *aga-ús* par « gendarme » (cf. ligne 10' de *AbB* 6 181, dans Lafont 2002, p. 73-74, texte 7). Fiette (2018) propose de traduire *qaqqad rêdîm* par « soldat titulaire » (p. 37, 221 et 386) tout en précisant que ce soldat titulaire peut « jouer le rôle de gendarme » (p. 37), d'où son recours à des traductions comme « gendarme-*qaqqad rêdîm* » (cf. p. 37 pour notre texte ou p. 41 pour la lettre *AbB* 13 14, l. 7).

¹³ Le *taklum* pourrait être une sorte d'huissier selon Lafont (2002, p. 85).

¹⁴ Sîn-iddinam est manifestement un personnage important auquel Hammurabi confie un grand nombre de missions. Comme le signale Fiette (2018, p. 37 et p. 49) le titre de Sîn-iddinam n'est pas connu. Pour Charpin (1988, p. 341) il a fait quasiment fonction de vice-roi, Lafont (2002, p. 70) parle de lui comme étant le gouverneur de Larsa, Van De Mierop (2005, p. 150) le présente comme étant basé à Larsa et le désigne comme le plus haut représentant d'Hammu-rabi pour la région sud (le Yamutbal), Stol (2011, p. 518) le voit comme l'administrateur du royaume de Larsa après sa conquête par Hammurapi. Pour la carrière et les différentes fonctions occupées par Sîn-iddinam, voir en dernier lieu l'exposé détaillé de Fiette (2018, p. 16-50) qui s'ouvre par « Sîn-iddinam, le 'gouverneur général' de la province de Larsa ».

Pour essayer de répondre en partie aux nombreuses questions que pose ce texte, je propose de passer en revue une série de scénarios possibles en intégrant mon hypothèse principale à savoir que Sukkukum¹⁵, comme son nom l'indique, était sourd-muet.

1 – Sukkukum fut emmené dans une ville proche de celle où vivait sa famille. Si, en général, la plupart des exemples d'enlèvement indiquent que les personnes enlevées étaient conduites loin de leur lieu d'origine, dans certains cas, comme celui-ci, les personnes enlevées pouvaient se trouver tout près de leur lieu d'origine¹⁶.

Dans notre cas, le fait que le père de Sukkukum ait pu localiser l'endroit où son fils était détenu¹⁷, le fait qu'il ait pu s'y rendre par ses propres moyens et le fait qu'Hammurabi ait donné l'ordre à Sîn-iddinam de dépêcher à cet endroit un soldat et un homme de confiance en compagnie du père de Sukkukum, constituent des éléments probants en faveur d'une proximité géographique entre le lieu du rapt et le lieu de détention. L'hypothèse que Sukkukum soit sourd-muet renforce l'idée de cette proximité géographique entre l'endroit où il résidait lors de son enlèvement et son lieu de détention, dans la mesure où son infirmité l'empêchait d'expliquer sa situation à quiconque aurait pu l'entendre.

2 – Pourquoi Sukkukum ne s'est pas évadé pendant les huit années de sa détention ?

La question se pose de savoir pourquoi Sukkukum ne s'est pas échappé de son lieu de détention pendant les huit années où il y a été détenu, surtout si le village où il était détenu était proche de son village natal. Outre la réponse évidente qu'il devait être sous surveillance constante, il y a le facteur additionnel de son handicap sensoriel et de son âge au moment de son enlèvement. À cet égard, deux scénarios peuvent être envisagés :

¹⁵ Dans la lettre, Sukkukum est écrit avec le sumérogramme « ¹geštu₂-lal ». À proprement parler l'expression sumérienne geštu₂-lal pourrait être rendue par « faible d'oreille » voir même par « faible d'entendement ».

¹⁶ Cf. Lafont 2002, p. 83.

¹⁷ Le fait que son père ait finalement pu avoir connaissance de l'endroit où il se trouvait est sans doute imputable au hasard, au grand détriment de la personne qui le retenait dans sa maison. D'après ce qui est écrit dans le texte *AbB* 13 21, quelqu'un informe le père de Sukkukum de l'endroit où se trouve son fils, de fait le père déclare : « *iqbûnim* », « on m'a dit », ce qui signifie sûrement que la personne qui l'a informé connaissait les tenants et les aboutissants de cette histoire et que lors de sa visite à Ik-barî il aurait vu Sukkukum ou en aurait entendu parler.

Soit Sukkukum a été enlevé alors qu'il était tout petit¹⁸. Sa jeunesse et le fait qu'il soit sourd-muet peuvent expliquer qu'il n'ait pas eu assez de discernement pour savoir comment rentrer chez lui quand bien même la ville dans laquelle il avait été emmené était proche de celle où vivait sa famille : Sukkukum ne pouvait pas communiquer, ou ne pouvait pas le faire facilement, ce qui rendait difficile, voire impossible, toute demande d'aide. De plus, enlevé jeune on peut supposer qu'il n'avait pas de souvenir, ou pas de souvenir très clair de ses origines, de sa maison et de sa famille et de ce fait n'avait peut-être même pas conscience d'être retenu contre son gré.

Soit Sukkukum avait été enlevé alors qu'il était plus âgé, proche de l'âge adulte. Dans ce cas, outre les déficiences sensorielles dont il souffrait – il était probablement à la fois sourd et muet –, il faut imaginer qu'il ait pu également souffrir d'un handicap mental¹⁹ l'empêchant d'être conscient de ce qui lui arrivait ou de ne pas le comprendre suffisamment pour décider de s'enfuir.

¹⁸ Il n'est pas facile de situer cet âge avec précision. D'un côté, comme le signale Francis Joannès (2001, p. 584) « les circonstances dans lesquelles étaient attribuées les noms ne sont généralement pas connues » ; cf. par exemple, pour l'époque paléobabylonienne, Jean-Marie Durand (1984, p. 127) : « Nous ne savons pratiquement rien sur la façon dont le nom était imposé à l'enfant, ni quand cela se produisait » même si pour cet auteur il pourrait y avoir des indications indirectes permettant de faire l'hypothèse que « l'imposition du nom n'était à prendre en compte que quelque temps au moins après le sevrage », cf. aussi Stol (2000, p. 178) : « The child received a name. This happened soon but for Mesopotamia, we do not know when exactly ». On pourrait ajouter que la mortalité infantile probablement élevée à ces époques anciennes pouvait être un facteur retardant l'imposition du nom. Cependant, quelques pistes sont envisageables en s'appuyant sur les remarques de Djamilia Boutaleb (2008, p. 95-107), orthophoniste de terrain, exerçant en Algérie. Selon cette auteure, le moment où les parents en viennent à penser que leur enfant pourrait être atteint de surdité dépend de l'intensité de celle-ci : en cas de surdité sévère cela peut se faire au mieux « vers 18 mois à 2 ans environ » (en fait : « les parents suspectent non pas une surdité mais un retard de langage oral »), en cas de surdité moyenne se sera « vers l'âge de 2 ans à 3 ans » (là encore c'est « le retard de parole » qui est le plus manifeste) et ce sera beaucoup plus tard en cas de surdité légère (« vers 6 ans »). On notera également la remarque suivante : « Nous constatons souvent que les enfants sourds ne sont pas appelés par leur prénom véritable. La dénomination du sourd correspond aux parlers algériens des différentes régions, à l'Ouest, il est appelé soit "bekouch" (le muet) ou "letrach" (le sourd). Au Centre et à l'Est algérien, on l'appelle "agoun" (le retardé) ». En ce qui concerne notre hypothèse que Sukkukum est ainsi appelé parce qu'il présente une déficience auditive, possiblement sévère (et donc sans acquisition du langage articulé), les remarques ci-dessus pourraient indiquer qu'un tel nom aurait pu lui être attribué à partir de l'âge de 3 ans.

¹⁹ Cette hypothèse est plus difficile à soutenir : Boutaleb (ibid.) signale que même si « de tous temps le sourd est considéré comme "l'idiote du village" [...]. Il est établi actuellement que la surdité n'affecte en rien l'intelligence ». Il faut donc renvoyer à des cas où la surdité sans en être la cause est associée à des déficiences cognitives et/ou à des désordres neurologiques dans un contexte polypathologique plus ou moins grand (cf. Clouard *et al.* 2007). On peut aussi supposer qu'il se serait agi d'un cas d'autisme ou de trouble du spectre autistique, car, en plus des limitations liées à la surdité et au mutisme, sa capacité de communiquer avec son environnement aurait été encore plus difficile.

3 – Qu’il s’agisse du premier ou du second cas proposés ci-dessus, nous pouvons par contre être quasiment sûrs que Sukkukum n’était atteint d’aucun handicap physique. Bien au contraire, sa condition physique devait être optimale puisque, s’il a été retenu dans la maison d’un particulier, un orfèvre, dit le texte, c’était probablement en tant que travailleur asservi. Il devait avoir une certaine valeur économique qui le rendait désirable en tant que travailleur esclave, soit pour aider Ibni-Ea dans sa profession, soit pour effectuer des tâches domestiques, éventuellement à la campagne ou avec des animaux. En disant cela, on touche au motif principal de son enlèvement : Sukkukum est attrayant en tant que force de travail servile²⁰, motivation renforcée par le fait que son handicap sensoriel lui laissait peu ou pas d’option pour s’échapper ou dénoncer sa situation.

4 – Si comme on vient de le voir, il est possible de deviner pourquoi Sukkukum a été enlevé, il est plus difficile de répondre à des questions comme : qui a enlevé Sukkukum, à quelle occasion et sur ordre de qui ? Aucune certitude n’est possible en ce domaine mais plusieurs possibilités sont envisageables.

Il aurait pu s’agir d’un professionnel qui se serait consacré à l’enlèvement de personnes et à leur vente comme esclaves, éventuellement dans le cadre d’un réseau, comme le rapporte Sophie Lafont²¹.

Il pourrait s’agir d’une simple coïncidence, une sorte de kidnapping d’opportunité (« l’occasion fait le larron ») : quelqu’un en voyant (ou en ayant appris son existence) a saisi l’aubaine d’enlever Sukkukum en constatant qu’il serait facile de le vendre comme esclave, pour les raisons déjà évoquées (capacité à travailler et peu de risques qu’il ne s’échappe ou dénonce sa situation).

Il pourrait également s’agir d’un enlèvement commandité, soit sur ordre d’Ibni-Ea lui-même²², chez qui Sukkukum a été retrouvé (on peut dans ce cas supposer, vu la proximité

²⁰ Pour la mention d’enfants utilisés dès l’âge de 5 ans comme force de travail (même à haute époque), voir Henriksen Garroway (2014a, 2014b) et Reid (2017, p. 10). Ceci est à mettre en balance avec l’âge auquel Sukkukum aurait pu recevoir ce nom en raison de sa surdité (cf. supra note 17) et la notion d’après Stol (2000, p. 181 et 190) que la période d’allaitement devait durer 2 ou 3 ans.

²¹ Voir Lafont 2002, p. 83, « ... rien n’exclut non plus l’existence de réseaux d’enlèvement aux ramifications très étendues ».

²² Sans compter qu’Ibni-Ea aurait pu lui-même être le ravisseur.

évoquée entre les lieux, qu'Ibni-Ea connaissait l'existence et les « qualités » de Sukkukum), soit sur ordre de quelqu'un d'autre, au courant des besoins d'Ibni-Ea en travailleurs, et qui aurait pu se charger lui-même de la besogne ou préférer faire appel à un homme de main voire même à un réseau de ravisseurs, pour finalement amener Sukkukum à Ibni-Ea et le lui vendre.

5 – Quoiqu'il en soit, la responsabilité, pour ne pas dire la culpabilité d'Ibni-Ea dans cette affaire, ne fait aucun doute. Il ne peut en aucun cas prétendre qu'il n'était pas au courant : Ibni-Ea sait que Sukkukum a été enlevé²³ et emmené à Ik-barî contre son gré et sans le consentement de sa famille (en l'occurrence de son père²⁴). La preuve serait que lorsque le père, Sin-uselli, se rend à Ik-barî pour chercher son fils, il lui fut caché²⁵.

Si notre hypothèse est correcte, à savoir que Sukkukum souffrait d'une série de handicaps, il est compréhensible qu'il n'ait pas été nécessaire de l'éloigner de manière significative de l'endroit où il avait été enlevé. Comme il ne pouvait probablement pas communiquer facilement, le fait que Sukkukum était proche de l'endroit où vivait sa famille n'avait guère d'importance, la preuve étant que personne n'a rien su de lui pendant huit ans. Qu'il ait été retrouvé et identifié devrait être dû à un simple hasard.

Nous n'avons aucune idée de l'issue de cette affaire. Le roi Hammurabi ordonna à un homme de confiance (*taklum*) et à un soldat assurant le rôle de gendarme (*aga-ús sag*), d'accompagner Sin-uselli, le père de Sukkukum, à la maison d'Ibni-Ea pour tenter de récupérer son fils, avec ordre d'amener toutes ces personnes à Babylone. Nous ne savons pas ce qui s'est passé par la suite, si Ibni-Ea l'a laissé partir ou bien l'a caché à nouveau, ni si Sin-uselli a finalement pu récupérer son enfant, ni si les coupables ont été punis pour un si long enlèvement et une si longue exploitation de Sukkukum. Sophie Lafont craint, cependant, que le père ne soit pas parvenu à récupérer son

²³ On laisse de côté l'hypothèse d'une fugue ou d'une errance de Sukkukum qui finalement aurait atterri chez Ibni-Ea lequel aurait saisi l'occasion de s'emparer de cet enfant plutôt que de chercher à savoir d'où il venait et à quelle famille appartenait cet enfant « trouvé ».

²⁴ On laisse de côté l'hypothèse que ce soit le père de Sukkukum qui aurait confié son fils à Ibni-Ea puis se serait ravisé et aurait voulu le récupérer prétextant un enlèvement. La possibilité pour des parents de « donner » leurs enfants en esclavage pendant une période plus ou moins longue afin par exemple de pouvoir rembourser des dettes est bien documentée par Henriksen Garroway (2014b).

²⁵ Cf. la notion de solidarité rurale (Lafont, 2002, p. 84).

fils la seconde fois qu'il s'est rendu à Ik-barî accompagné des « officiels » cités plus haut²⁶. Toutefois, si cette fois le gendarme et l'homme de confiance ont réussi à amener tout ce beau monde à Babylone, Baptiste Fiette évoque la possibilité d'un procès²⁷ : selon lui, Ibni-ea risquait la peine capitale, puisque d'après le code d'Hammurabi, aussi bien le kidnapping d'un enfant que la séquestration d'un esclave sont passibles de mort, cette sentence de mort étant une prérogative royale²⁸.

En guise de réflexion finale, nous pouvons dire que dans le contexte dans lequel la lettre qui fait l'objet de cette petite étude a été écrite, la vie ne devait pas être très facile pour les personnes souffrant d'un handicap quelconque, qu'il soit physique ou mental, et que, très probablement, dans certaines circonstances, elles pouvaient être victimes d'individus peu scrupuleux qui auraient profité d'elles et les auraient exploitées, ce qui est la situation illustrée dans *AbB* 13 21. Mais il y a aussi un aspect positif que la lettre nous montre, c'est que Sukkukum n'a jamais été abandonné ou oublié par sa famille. La situation de la famille de la victime, individualisée dans la figure de son père Sin-uselli, montre que ce dernier s'est occupé de son fils alors qu'il le croyait mort, en accomplissant les rituels funéraires habituels ; et plus tard, lorsqu'il a appris que son fils était vivant, il a tout fait pour le récupérer et pour le ramener à nouveau chez lui : il est allé sur place puis n'ayant pu le ramener, il a fait appel au roi.

²⁶ Lafont 2002, p. 85 : « Le texte [11 (= *AbB* 13 21)] raconte une mésaventure semblable : le fils séquestré depuis huit ans échappe à son père avec la complicité des habitants du lieu. Le roi ordonne alors qu'on aille le chercher, sous la menace d'un soldat et sous le contrôle d'un *taklum* (peut-être une sorte d'huissier ?). Il est probable que la démarche fut un échec, comme celle du propriétaire de l'esclave du texte [7 (= *AbB* 6 181)] ». De fait, dans ce dernier texte, le propriétaire d'un esclave n'a pas réussi à le récupérer bien que s'étant rendu chez son suborneur accompagné de deux gendarmes (ici 2 *aga-ús* dépêchés par le chef de l'assemblée d'Isin).

²⁷ Fiette (2018, p. 37) « Enfin Sin-iddinam les enverra à Babylone, où l'affaire sera probablement jugée, bien que cela ne soit pas précisé. »

²⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 38. En tout cas, cette affaire n'est pas du ressort de Sin-iddinam lui-même, cf. Fiette qui la classe dans les « cas royaux » et non pas dans les cas où Sin-iddinam rend justice. Voir aussi pour la peine de mort, prérogative royale, Lafont 1997, p. 109-119.

Bibliographie

- Bou Pérez Patricia 2022.** *La vida cotidiana de los soldados en el período paleobabilónico (ca. 2002-1595 a. n. e.) / La vie quotidienne des soldats à la période paléobabylonienne (ca. 2002-1595 av. n. è.)*, Thèse de doctorat soutenue à la Universitat Autònoma de Barcelona le 23 mai 2022, sous la co-direction du Dr Philippe Abrahami (Université Lumière Lyon 2) et du Dr Jordi Vidal (Universitat Autònoma de Barcelona).
- Boutaleb Djamila 2008.** L'enfant sourd et sa famille, *Insaniyat / إنسانيات* 41, 95-107.
- Charpin Dominique 1988.** Les représentants de Mari à Ilân-šurâ (chap. 2), in D. Charpin, F. Joannès, S. Lackenbacher, B. Lafont eds., *Archives Épistolaires de Mari I/2*, Archives Royales de Mari 26, Paris: Éditions Recherche sur les Civilisations, 31-137.
- Charpin Dominique 1997-1998.** Compte rendu de Wilfred H. Van Soldt 1994, *Letters in the British Museum. Part 2*, Altbabylonische Briefe im Umschrift und Übersetzung 13, *Archiv für Orientforschung* 44-45, Leiden/New York/Köln: Brill, 339-343.
- Clouard Chantal, Roux Marc-Olivier, Seban-Lefebvre Dominique 2007.** Sourds aux apprentissages. Pour une approche plurielle des troubles d'apprentissage chez l'enfant sourd, *La psychiatrie de l'enfant* 50, 571-584.
- Durand Jean-Marie 1984.** À propos de l'imposition du nom ; remarques sur l'onomastique des gens du palais, in *MARI 3* (Mari, Annales de Recherches Interdisciplinaires 3), Paris: Recherche sur les civilisations, 127-133.
- Durand Jean-Marie 2012.** Le *kispum* dans les traditions amorrites, in J.-M. Durand, T. Römer, J. Hutzli eds., *Les vivants et leurs morts: Actes du colloque organisé par le Collège de France, Paris, les 14-15 avril 2010*, Orbis Biblicus et Orientalis 257, Fribourg: Academic Press / Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 33-52.
- Fiette Baptiste 2018.** *Le palais, la terre et les hommes : la gestion du domaine royal de Larsa d'après les archives de Šamaš-Hazir*, Mémoires de N.A.B.U. 20, Archibab 3, Paris: SEPOA.
- Henriksen Garroway Kristine 2014a.** *Children in the Ancient Near Eastern Household*, Exploration in Ancient Near Eastern Civilizations 3, Winona Lake (IN): Eisenbrauns.
- Henriksen Garroway Kristine 2014b.** Neither Slave nor Free: Children Living on the Edge of a Social Status, in B. T. Arnold, N. L. Erickson, J. H. Walton eds., *Windows to the Ancient World of the Hebrew Bible, Essays in Honor of Samuel Greengus*, Winona Lake (IN): Eisenbrauns, 120-137.
- Joannès Francis 2001.** Nom, in F. Joannès, C. Michel eds., *Dictionnaire de la civilisation mésopotamienne*, Paris: R. Laffont, 584-587.
- Lafont Sophie 1997.** Un « cas royal » à l'époque de Mari, *Revue d'assyriologie et d'archéologie orientale* 91, 109-119.
- Lafont Sophie 2002.** Enlèvement et séquestration à l'époque paléo-babylonienne, in D. Charpin, J.-M. Durand eds., *Florilegium Marianum 6 Recueil d'études à la mémoire d'André Parrot*, Mémoires de NABU 7, Supplément à NABU. Nouvelles Assyriologiques Brèves et Utilitaires, Paris: SEPOA, 69-88.
- Landsberger Benno 1955.** Remarks on the archive of the soldier Ubarum, *Journal of Cuneiform Studies* 9, 121-131.
- MacDougal Renata 2018.** Ancient Mesopotamian Remembrance and the Family Dead, in D. Klass, E. M. Steffen eds., *Continuing Bonds in Bereavement: New Directions for Research and Practice*, New York: Routledge, 262-275.

- Reid John Nicholas 2017.** The children of slaves in early Mesopotamian laws and edicts, *Revue d'assyriologie et d'archéologie orientale* 111, 9-23.
- Stol Marten 2000.** *Birth in Babylonia and the Bible. Its Mediterranean Setting*, Cuneiform Monographs 14, Groningen: Styx.
- Stol Marten 2011.** Sîn-iddinam, in M. P. Streck *et al.* eds., *Reallexikon der Assyriologie, Band 12, 7./8. Lieferung, Silim-munzal --- Spinne*, Berlin/Boston: W. de Gruyter, 517-518.
- Stol Marten 2012.** Der altbabylonische Beamte rá-gaba, in C. Mittermayer, S. Ecklin eds., *Altorientalische Studien zu Ehren von Pascal Attinger*, *Orbis Biblicus et Orientalis (OBO)* 256, Friburg: Academic Press / Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 329-352.
- Tsukimoto Akio 1985.** *Untersuchungen zur Totenpflege (kispu(m)) im alten Mesopotamien*. *Alter Orient und Altes Testament* 216, Kevelaer: Butzon & Bercker / Neukirchen-Vluyn: Neukirchener Verlag.
- Van De Mieroop Marc 2005.** *King Hammurabi of Babylon. A Biography*. Blackwell Ancient Lives, Malden (MA)/ Oxford (UK)/ Carlton (Victoria, Australia): Blackwell Publishing.
- Van Soldt Wilfred Hugo 1994.** *Letters in the British Museum. Part 2*, *Altbabylonische Briefe im Umschrift und Übersetzung* 13, Leiden/New York/Köln: E.J. Brill.

The Medical Information in *LUDLUL BĒL NĒMEQI*.

Some Notes on the Suffering and its Treatment

Kiril Mladenov¹

Abstract

The poem *Ludlul Bēl Nēmeqi* (“I Will Praise the God of Wisdom”) concerns itself with the problem of unjust punishments inflicted on a righteous and once important man Šubši-mešrê-Šakkan. Amongst the many problems which befall the hero is physical suffering. The detailed description of its progression, followed by its treatment, shows a sophisticated knowledge of the magico-medical literature. The notion in historiography that the poem has educational purposes encourages us to look for internal structures that relate to the learned literature of the time - incantations, rituals, and prescriptions. This will eventually broaden our reading and understanding of the poem’s medical information.

Ludlul bēl nēmeqi (henceforth, *Ludlul*) is one of the most popular theodicy texts from the second and first millennium Mesopotamia. It was composed in Kassite Babylonia, but the oldest surviving manuscripts date from the Neo-Assyrian kingdom.² Studies of *Ludlul* suggest that it is very probable that the author of the text was an educated exorcist (*āšipu*).³ The text was actively copied, taught and rendered so that its hero Šubši-mešrê-Šakkan became mythically paradigmatic for individuals who lived centuries after the poem’s composition.⁴ The poem is a private confession of a once mighty and influential man who suffers from different kinds of trouble and distress.⁵ He tries to understand the reasons behind Marduk’s punishment and to restore his well-being and social status. To do this, the sufferer must deal with the consequences of divine anger (*kimiltu*). Divine punishment for behavioural transgression is a common theme in Mesopotamian literature.⁶ Berlejung states that sin or moral evil describes human intentions and actions that are qualified as evil, violent, wrong, or as vices and crimes.⁷ Yet, what was ungodly and unrighteous for the deities was often a secret for the Mesopotamians, and they needed consultations with divination specialists to reveal it. Gods were unpredictable, and their justice was often beyond human comprehension.⁸ Texts referring to innocent suffering

¹ Sofia University ‘St. Kliment Ohridski’.

² List of the existing manuscripts can be found in Lenzi 2023: 52-62.

³ S. Noegel describes him as a “highly learned ritual professional.” (Noegel 2016: 614).

⁴ Lenzi 2023: 387.

⁵ See the latest publication and translation of the poem in Lenzi 2023. In 2014, Oshima proposed that there are five and not four tablets of the poem (see Lenzi, 2023: 14). The poem comprises two parts. The first part deals with the hero’s misfortune, which affects his position, prosperity, well-being, and health (Tablets I and II). The second follows his recovery after the appeasing of Marduk (Tablets III, IV (very poorly preserved) and V).

⁶ See Bricker 2000, Lenzi 2020: 172-178.

⁷ Berlejung 2015: 272.

⁸ Berlejung 2015: 286.

and divine anger, such as *Ludlul*, point to a lack of balance between man's deeds (behaviour) and the consequences (fate) and ask the gods to intervene.⁹ What was required from humans to stop their suffering was unconditional obedience and righteousness.

Ziegler distinguishes between Mesopotamian literary texts that treat human suffering retrospectively ('*action de grâce*') and those that treat it amidst the suffering ('*textes situés avant la rémission du souffrant*').¹⁰ *Ludlul*, part of the former category, is the poem that focuses on the patient's recovery compared to other texts. Although the plot and the messages of *Ludlul* follow common religious concepts about the sovereignty of the gods, some parts of the text describing the illness and the recovery of Šubši-mešrê-Šakkan suggest the author's solid understanding of ancient medicine. His erudition in the magico-medical scriptures and other fields of Sumero-Akkadian science led Lenzi to conclude: "*Ludlul* is not an exorcism text, a medical text, an omen text, prayer or lamentation; rather, it is a narrative poem that incorporates ideas and tropes from such texts while it recounts the various experiences of a particular man".¹¹ This is important since it allows for a multifaceted reading of the poem which reveals different aspects of its meaning.

The aim of this paper is to study how the medical information and terminology in the complex text are presented. I was inspired to look for specific structures in the text by Lenzi's insightful suggestion that the poem serves the interests of the ritual experts and accounts for the occasional failure of the divination experts in a way that "provides a literary salve to mollify the attendant emotional and existential toll such failure may have taken upon the ritual participants (the experts' clients) and an ideological tool to avert any potential professional consequences thence from their clients or among their own ranks."¹² Considering the author's education and Ziegler's note about the peculiarity of *Ludlul*, we might assume that there could be glimpses of exorcists' techniques and practice in the text. I suggest that parts of the poem presenting the hero's physical suffering testify to the incorporation of a well-known pattern in Babylonian **diagnostics**. A clue for such a conclusion is the consistent description of the body's afflictions in the text.¹³ We know that the usual proceeding towards healing in Babylonian medicine was to begin with diagnostics *qaqqassu ana šuklultīšu* ("from his head to the rest of

⁹ Berlejung 2015: 274.

¹⁰ Ziegler 2015: 218-229, Lenzi 2023: 340, n. 152.

¹¹ Annus/Lenzi 2010: xxxv-xxxvi. The poem starts with a hymn to Marduk. According to W. Moran this hymn praises Marduk's healing capabilities (Moran 1983, 258). Worthington explains the behaviour of the god as mood changes and whims, presenting him at the end as a relenting deity (*ilu muštālu*) (Worthington/Piccin 2015: 121).

¹² Lenzi 2012: 39.

¹³ To my knowledge, this observation is only marked without being studied in detail. See, for example, Abusch 2021, 133.

him”) – starting from the upper part of the body and finishing with the bottom part.¹⁴ Symptoms were checked by an *āšipu/mašmaššu* exorcist. The exorcist, a specialist in making sense of different kinds of physical appearance, including physiognomy, visits the patient at his home to examine his body and make a diagnosis.¹⁵ This principle is evident in divination and medical catalogues and series, amongst which the most important are the second chapter (Tablets 3-14) of the standard diagnostics series *Sakikkû* (“Symptoms”), the *Assur Medical Catalogue* and the *Nineveh medical encyclopedia*.¹⁶ Historiography has already shown that the poem’s vivid imagery is influenced by the exorcists’ magico-medical literature in presenting the destructive evil powers that bring diseases.¹⁷ This imagery closely resembles the one in the incantation series *Utukkū lemnūtu* (henceforth *Evil Demons*) – a collection of incantations to prevent attacks by demonic agents.¹⁸ A head-to-toe approach of presenting disease in connection to a demon is attested already in a precursor of the incantation series.¹⁹ The information in the text about ancient **therapeutics** is, however, less detailed, focusing on the result of the medical incantations, rituals and *materia medica*. The nature of the healing *šimdu* bandage, which restores the health and prosperity in the life of Šubši-mešrê-Šakkan, is unclear.

I INVESTIGATING THE CAUSES OF THE ILLNESS. DIAGNOSTICS *IŠTU MUḪḪI ADI ŠĒPĪ*

The protagonist’s suffering starts “From the day Bel punished me” (Tablet I, l. 41), after which day his protective deities and spirits abandon him. In the following year (Tablet II), the hero consults with divination specialists (II, ll. 6-9) who cannot release the divine anger from him. His social and psychological struggles increase when he is struck by an illness (II, l. 49). Šubši-mešrê-Šakkan’s physical suffering commences with a synchronous attack of different actants (II, ll. 49-58):

¹⁴ *Sakikkû* Tablet III l. 38 (Schmidtchen 2021: 250). The body examination was completed by exorcists. The principle *ištu muḪḪi adi šēpī* is explicitly mentioned by the editor of the text Esagil-kīn-apli in his editorial note (Schmidtchen 2018: 317, line 61). See Heeßel 2001: 255-261, Heeßel 2000: 24, 75.

¹⁵ KAR 44 (Exorcist Manual) first lists the priestly and cultic functions of the exorcist. Afterwards, magic is found, which includes different incantation compositions and scattering of flour rituals (Geller 2018: 293).

¹⁶ See Schmidtchen 2021, Steinert (editor) 2018, The Nineveh Medical Project: <http://oracc.museum.upenn.edu/asbp/ninmed/>, visited in December 2023.

¹⁷ See Noegel 2016.

¹⁸ Individual incantations from the series are known from the Old Akkadian to the Arsacid period. There are some Middle Assyrian witnesses to *Evil Demons* tablets and a commentary (Geller 2016: 5).

¹⁹ Tablet Ni 630, ll. 130-159. Geller 1985: 144, Couto-Ferreira 2018: 54.

“As for me, the wear[ied one], a *mehû* storm? was cast? upon me.
 Debilitating sickness (*muršu muniššu*) advanced against me,
 An evil wind (*imhullu*) f[rom the hor]izon blew against me.
 Ague (*di’u*) cropped up from the surface of the netherworld,
 A wicked demonic cough (*šūlu*) came forth from its Apsu.
 An un[rel]enting demon came forth from Ekur,
 Lamaštu c[am]e down from the midst of the mountain.
 Chills (*šuruppû*) streamed in? with the waters of the inundation,
 Debility (*lu’tu*) broke through the earth with the vegetation.
 They jo[ined] their forces, they approached me as one.”²⁰

These afflictions, described figuratively, could be organised into two categories. The first group includes malevolent supernatural forces (angry gods, demons, and elements): amongst them are *mehû* storm, *imhullu* wind, *šūlu* demon, *utukku la ne’i* demon and Lamaštu demon. All of them appear as illness bringers in *Evil Demons*.²¹ Early Assyriological studies by R. Campbell Thompson and R. Labat showed that Babylonian medicine drew on magic, that is, incantations appeared in therapeutical recipes within the medical corpus, and diseases were often thought to have been caused by various demons.²²

The second group of afflictions comprises more natural causes such as *gig munnīšu* weakness, *di’u* headache, *šuruppû* chills and *lu’tu* softness. They altogether join their forces and surround Šubši-mešrê-Šakkan. This notion reminds us of the accumulation of symptoms of a disease. Here, a short remark about the terminology is required. There are two words denoting illness in Akkadian, both of which are used in *Ludlul – muršu* (*gig*) and *sil’itu*.²³ Although they are presented as synonyms in a commentary text, they are subtly different.²⁴ Apart from *muršu munnīšu*, *muršu* is attested as something permanent and describable in Tablet II, l. 50: *šikin muršīya*, Tablet III, l. 5: *dannu murša kabta* and l. 50 and l. 80: *lazzu muruṣ qaqqadī*. We find *sil’itu* always connected to duration and time in Tablet II, l. 90: *appūnāma īterik silētu*, l. 111: *adanna sili’īya* and Tablet III, l. 49: *sili’tu iriku*.²⁵ Notably, the weakening disease of Šubši-mešrê-Šakkan came through a *mehû* storm, which, I would suggest, seems to be understood as an allusion to Marduk’s wrath (*uggatu*). The latter is described earlier in Tablet I, l. 5, as a *mehû* storm: “Whose fury *uggatu* is like a *mehû* violent storm, a wasteland.” Noegel suggests that the seven illnesses (II, ll. 49-55) – all from the first group of afflictions, including *gig munnīšu* and

²⁰ Lenzi 2023: 73/75.

²¹ See Noegel 2016: 633, n. 137.

²² Geller 2010: 8.

²³ See Tablet II ll. 110-111, Stol 2010.

²⁴ Lenzi 2023: 272.

²⁵ Stol 2010: 29.

di'u, are described with the demonic characteristics of the malevolent *Sibittu* demons, and their presentation ultimately recalls incantation texts from *Evil Demons*.²⁶ The imagery of forces of nature and hellish habitats augments the potency of the demonic agents and gives them irresistible power. This aerial imagery further accentuates the unexpected and surprising sickening touch and seizure.

Other monsters from *Evil Demons* are presented indirectly in *Ludlul*. Such is the case with the *asakku* demon, a personification of the *asakku* disease – a strictly magical disease not occurring in the medical literature, which results from committing a sacrilege.²⁷ The similarities between *Ludlul* and *Evil Demons* are complemented by the description of common symptoms and illnesses. A characteristic of the bilingual incantation series are lists of diseases in a fixed sequence, which are quoted in the spells.²⁸ Such lists in *Evil Demons* Tablet II (ll. 68-69) and Tablet VI (ll. 55-57, 63) enumerate *muršu qaqqadi*, *di'u*, *šuruppû*, *mangu*, *lu'tu*, problems with the eyes and internal disease, which torture Šubši-mešrê-Šakkan in different stages of his prolonged illness. These similarities speak of the shared intellectual environment in which *Ludlul*, *Sakikkû* and *Evil Demons* were created. As Geller notes, there is a strong relationship between the *āšipu/mašmaššu* exorcist in *Evil Demons* and the *ka.pirig* exorcist in *Sakikkû*.²⁹ All the above-mentioned words denoting diseases could be found in Assyro-Babylonian learned and related to exorcism materials, including incantations, rituals, and therapeutic texts.³⁰ Table II of *Evil Demons* seems further intertwined with *Ludlul* since it contains mainly a hymn to Marduk, describing his role against the demons.³¹ He is “the merciful one who loves to revive the dying” (Tablet II, l. 57).³² This description resembles the hymnic beginning of the poem (Tablet I, ll. 1-36), where Marduk is the one whose “bandages mollify, they revive the doomed (Tablet I, l. 22).”³³ Marduk’s rage is indeed the primal cause of all the troubles that befall the hero – physical, psychological, and social. As Stol notes on the psychosomatic suffering in

²⁶ Noegel 2016; 633.

²⁷ “Who might it have been but Marduk who abandoned me so that I was turned into Asakku-demon flesh (Tablet IV, ll. 31-32).” See Geller 2016: 81, n.62. *Evil Demons* was part of the exorcist literature listed in the Exorcist Manual. This catalogue is accredited to the 11th-century Babylonian scholar Esakil-kîn-apli (See Geller 2016: 6, Geller 2018: 292-312). For Asakku’s identification as a disease in literary texts, see CAD A/2: 325-326. Further allusions in the text mention the *eṭemmu* ghost in Tablet IV, 30 and the *gallu* demon in Tablet I, l. 85.

²⁸ Geller 2016: 28.

²⁹ Geller 2016: 41.

³⁰ Lenzi 2023: 263.

³¹ Geller 2016: 8.

³² *réme-nu-u šá m[i-tú ana b]ul-lu-tu i-r[a-]* (Geller 2016: 79).

³³ *pašhū šindūšu uballaṭū namtara* (Lenzi 2023, 64), see Abusch/Milstein 2021. For the hymnic introduction and the connection of the text to Mesopotamian liturgical scripture, see Lenzi 2015.

ancient Mesopotamia, illness is a stigma which transposes the person into the realm of social death.³⁴ During the illness, there was a distance between the patient and the community, which could make the former depressed and desperate.³⁵

The medical verses in *Ludlul* mention problems in different parts of Šubši-mešrê-Šakkan's body. Significantly, the poem employs more than 100 anatomical and pathological terms.³⁶ The verbs which describe the damage over body parts reflect the demons' actions. They act very aggressively, and opposition is evident between the potent "they" and the weak "I" (Tablet II, ll. 59-70):

“They stru[ck my hea]d, they covered my skull,
My face? darkened, my eyes welled-up.
They strained my neck muscles, they made my neck slack,
They struck my chest, they beat my breast.
They attacked my back, they cast tremors upon me,
They kindled a fire in my chest.
They roiled my innards, they twist[ed] my guts,
They afflicted [my lun]gs with coughing and phlegm,
They afflicted my limbs, they made my belly feel queasy.
My high stature they demolished like a wall,
My broad build they leveled like rushes.
I was thrown down like an uliltu-plant, cast down on my face.”³⁷

The diseased body parts could be organised into three sections from head to toe. The first one, HEAD (ll. 59-61) includes the struck (from the verb *nêrû*) head and the covered (*tê'u*) skull, the darkened (*ekêlu*) face, the flowing (*na'ālu*) eyes, the strained (*etēqu*) neck tendon *labānu* and the loosened (*ramû*) neck *kišādu*. Then, afflictions in the TORSO follow (ll. 62-67); the chest is struck (*mahāšu*) by the demonic forces, the breast *tulû* is beaten (*terû*), the back *šeru* is touched (*lapātu*), and tremors *ra'ību* are inflicted (*nadû*) on the sufferer's body. The evil forces further inflict burning *išātu* in the epigastrium *reš libbi*. Afterwards, the sufferer complains that his innards *qerbu* are disturbed (*dalāhu*), his guts *unāti libbi* are twisted (*atāku*), his lungs *hašû* are infected (*la'ābu*) with cough *šualu* and phlegm *huhhu*. His belly *pitru* feels nauseous (*nāšu*). Finally, a short description of the LIMBS *mešrêtu* is given (l. 67). According to the text, they

³⁴ Stol 2000: 68.

³⁵ “I took to a sick-bed of confinement, going out was a hards[hip], my house became my prison.” (*Ludlul*, Tablet II, ll. 95-96).

“My grave lay open, my funerary goods prepared,” (*Ludlul*, Tablet II, l. 114).

³⁶ Listed in Lenzi 2023: 241-277.

³⁷ Lenzi 2023: 75.

are affected by *li'bu* disease.³⁸ Tablet III (ll. 80-120) and Tablet IV introduce additional anatomical and pathological terminology, building upon the conditions previously delineated in Tablet II while emphasising the healing of Šubši-mešrê-Šakkan. These maladies can be categorised into the same three distinct sections:

Section 1. HEAD (Tablet III)

- ∴ constant headache (*lazzu gig sag.du*), (ll. 80-81)³⁹
- ∴ blurred eyes (*tē'āti igi.2-a*), (ll. 82-83)⁴⁰
- ∴ clogged ears (*geštu.2-a ša uṭṭami*), (ll. 84-85)⁴¹
- ∴ blocked breathing of the nose during *ummu* fever (*appī ša ina ridi ummi unappiqu nipissu*), (ll. 86-87)⁴²
- ∴ parched lips (*šaptāya ša illabrā*), (ll. 88-89) and closed mouth (*pīya ša uktattimu*), (ll. 90-91)
- ∴ clenched teeth (*šinnāya ša ittašbatā*), (ll. 92-93)
- ∴ thick tongue (*lišānu ša innebta*), (ll. 94-95)
- ∴ constricted throat (*ur'udu ša innisru*), (ll. 96-97)⁴³
- ∴ swollen gullet (*lu'ṭ ša ūtappiqu*), (ll. 98-99)⁴⁴
- ∴ loose (*ramû*) and twisted (*kepû*) neck *kišādu*⁴⁵

Section 2. TORSO (Tablet III, l. 100)⁴⁶

- ∴ empty and woven (*rakāsu*) large intestine *šammahu*

Section 3. LOWER PART (Tablet IV, Section A)⁴⁷

- ∴ bound (*kasû*) knees *birkû*.⁴⁸

Although many lines from the end of Tablet III and Tablet IV are poorly preserved or completely missing, and the detailed presentation of the body parts is unclear, the description of the

³⁸ Between lines 71-85, more specific symptoms connected with the patient's emotional condition follow. According to Lenzi, who adopts a methodological stance from the 'Harvard School' of medical anthropology and approaches the passage as a first-person account of a subjective experience of physical disease, they might refer to sleep paralysis (Lenzi 2023: 433-465). These symptoms are provoked by a malevolent attack of the *alû* demon (ll. 71-85). They lead to some physical afflictions. The entire body (*kal pagriya*) is seized by numbness *rimûtu*, the flesh (UZU.MEŠ-*ia*) suffers from paralysis *mišittu*, and the arms are seized by stiffness *mangu*. Further, the protagonist experiences softness *lu'tu* in the knees (*birkû*) and his feet can't move.

³⁹ *gig sag.du* (*murši qaqqadi*).

⁴⁰ From *tē'u*, to cover, CAD T: 377.

⁴¹ From *tummumu*, to deafen, CAD T: 126.

⁴² From *napāqu*, to become blocked CAD N/1: 277. See Annus/Lenzi 2010: 52.

⁴³ From *esēru*, to enclose, CAD E: 334.

⁴⁴ From *epēqu*, to be massive, solid CAD E: 183.

⁴⁵ This line is from a commentary text. See Lenzi 2023: 85.

⁴⁶ The text is, unfortunately, in bad condition. Lines 111-120 are entirely missing.

⁴⁷ Lenzi 2023: 84-85.

⁴⁸ The lines for legs, feet and limbs afterwards are very fragmented.

afflictions of Šubši-mešrê-Šakkan in the poem, presenting the weakening of his body, is sufficient to show a resemblance with the head-to-toe structure of *Sakikkû* (Tablets 3-14):

∴ *Structure of Esagil-kīn-apli's catalogue of Sakikkû Chapter 2* (Tablets 3-14): HEAD, TEMPLES (+FOREHEAD), EYES, NOSE (+LIPS+TEETH), TONGUE, EARS, FACE, NECK (+THROAT), HANDS, CHEST (+KIDNEY), EPIGASTRIUM (+ABDOMEN+INSIDES), HIPS (+ANUS +LOINS +THIGHS +KNEES +LEGS +FEET)⁴⁹

Taking these recurrent patterns of text organisation into account, the author's learned vocabulary suggests that the arrangement of the verses describing the physical condition of the sufferer is not only a literary choice.⁵⁰

Further attestation of the author's proficiency in magico-medical literature is the close resemblance between the poem and the prescription BAM 234 studied by Ziegler.⁵¹ Similarly, BAM 234 also describes a case of divine anger: the patient suffers from misfortune *mihru*.⁵² The listed social and physical symptoms include loss and deprivation and loose and ataxic limbs. The man is unable to sleep because of fear and constantly has disturbing dreams. The anger of the deities leads to further deterioration of his health.⁵³ *Ludlul* looks like a sophisticated version of this text. In this light, Lenzi argues that the sufferer's situation in the poem spoke to ritual experts or experts in training since students copied the poem in their curriculum.⁵⁴ It could be that structures in the text, such as the magico-medical one, were part of this indirect communication, referring to specific crucial series studied by the scribes.

After notes about the body's functioning were made, the healers were usually capable of clarifying the sickness and proceeding to its cure. However, there were many mysteries in

⁴⁹ Heeßel 2000: 24, Schmidtchen 2018, Schmidtchen 2021.

⁵⁰ See Lenzi 2023: 95-185, 241-279. For other literary texts in which the head-to-toe model of disease representation is applied, see Couto-Ferreira 2017: 53-54.

⁵¹ Ziegler 2015, Lenzi 2023: 239. For an English translation and commentary of BAM 234 see Ritter/Kinnier Wilson 1980, Stol 1993: 29, Abusch 2000: 85. See also Maul 2019: 99-109.

⁵² CAD M/2: 59.

⁵³ "Since his god and goddess are angry with him, if that *awīlum* (subsequently) becomes ill with *qāt māmīti*, *šudimmerakku*, *qāt amēlūti* or *muruš himmāte*, the iniquities of father and mother, brother and sister, of clan, kith and kin, will take hold of him" (Ritter/Kinnier Wilson 1980: 26). The ritual in the text intends eventually to release the patient who should overcome his fears, see Stol 1993: 29. Another prescription, BM 64174, differs from BAM 234 in that it does not present physical suffering (Abusch/Schwemer 2016, AMD 8.2, text 3.7). Here, again, the problem is divine anger - *šibsāt* (var.: *kimilti*) *ili u ištari elīšu bašā ilšu u ištāršu ittīšu zenū*. The *bārū* seer and the dream interpreter do not give the patient good oracles - *itti bārī u dāgīli* (var.: *šā`ili u ensi?*) *dīnšu lā iššer*. A treatment is prescribed with apotropaic leather pouches. According to Abusch, BM 64174 is a precursor of BAM 316, where witchcraft already plays an essential role in the sufferer's afflictions (Abusch 2000: 87).

⁵⁴ Lenzi 2012: 63.

the field of pathology, medicine at that time was often a “team sport.” Šubši-mešrê-Šakkan mentions different specialists who tried to help him determine his sickness by various means. The failure of the ritual experts is one of the reasons for the sufferer’s desperation. Tablet II (ll. 6-9, ll. 108-111) and Tablet III (ll. 25-28, ll. 39-42) detail the challenges which the healers faced. The *āšipu* exorcist “did not release the divine anger against me with his ritual (II, l. 9)”, “was scared by my symptoms” (II, l. 108) and “could not reveal the nature of my sickness” (II, l. 110). The *bārû* priest “could not determine the situation with divination”, “was confused by omens (II, l. 109)” and “could not determine the duration of my illness (II, l. 111).” Finally, the *šā’ilu* diviner “could not clarify my case with incense” (II, l. 7). *Šā’ilu* is attested mainly in literary texts and was usually consulted after the *bārû*.⁵⁵ His incense, called *maššakku*, served as an offering in libanomancy.⁵⁶

II. THE HEALING POWER OF THE BANDAGE

Following a long period of suffering, Šubši-mešrê-Šakkan’s recovery is manifested in four dreams.⁵⁷ A non-human being appears in his first dream (III, ll. 9-20). The creature is clad in radiance and proclaims the patient’s healing. A second dream reveals another figure identified as a purification priest and messenger of Laluralimma, an exorcist from Nippur. The being poured water in a purifying ceremony *ubbubu* and rubbed (*umašši*) Šubši-mešrê-Šakkan’s body after reciting *balātu* incantations (III, ll. 21-28). Geller notes that the poem provides important clues regarding the end-uses of magical incantations, especially those associated with disease.⁵⁸ In a third dream (III, ll. 29-39), a female figure appears, “whose appearance was beautiful” (III, l. 31). In the last dream, a medical bandage *šindu* is brought to the sufferer by the exorcist Ur-Nintinugga, who was sent by the appeased Marduk.⁵⁹ He gave the bandage to a servant of Šubši-mešrê-Šakkan to apply it. Although there are many details concerning the symptoms in the poem, extensive information about the therapy is not given. It is, however, retrospectively already in Tablet I (ll. 21-22, ll. 25-26):

“His (Marduk’s) beatings are barbed; they pierce the body.
But his bandages mollify; they revive the one afflicted by the Namtar demon.
He is the one who makes one acquire the demon-shivering.

⁵⁵ CAD Š/1: 111.

⁵⁶ See Lenzi 2012: 48, n.40.

⁵⁷ Annus/Lenzi 2010: xxii. For the identification of the images see Lenzi 2023: 292-298.

⁵⁸ Geller 2016: 43.

⁵⁹ Lenzi 2012: 54-63. Šubši-mešrê-Šakkan experiences four dreams in which divine figures give messages to him.

But with his incantations, he expels chills and cold tremors.”⁶⁰

There are two pairs here which describe a disease and a treatment. The first pair is *šuruppû* chills and *hurbāšu* tremors, resulting in *ra’ibu* shivers from one side and *tû* incantations from another.⁶¹ The second concerns the reviving action of the *šindu* bandage against the afflictions of Namtar (Fate) demon. The vague information about the therapy could be interpreted in different ways. The most obvious one is to suppose that since the poem is not strictly a medical text, the *materia medica* used to release the suffering of Šubši-mešrê-Šakkan is a hyponym of a medicine.⁶² What is essential is the healing itself, not the means through which it has been completed: the author could have also used an ointment or a potion if he thought it suited the poetic structure of the poem better. It is tempting, however, to look for a specific reason for applying a bandage. It is well known that critical medical recipes were transmitted secretly. Their preparation was called a *niširtu* secret.⁶³ Indeed, in *Ludlul* no medical substances are mentioned.⁶⁴ The names of only a few plants are found, like *daddaru* (*būšānu*), but these have not been used in a medical context.

I propose two wordplays that concern the understanding of the pairs distinguished above. The first one refers to the water imagery in the poem and is constructed with the parallel use of the paronyms *nāšu* and *našû*. The image of the chill-provoking *mê mīli* (“water of inundation”) in which chills are streamed (*inūšu* from the verb *nāšu*) is opposed to the healing *mê šipti* (“water of incantation”), brought (*nāš* from *našû*) by a purification priest and cast (*našû*) upon the patient.⁶⁵ The linguistic interplay eventually shows the healing result of the incantations. To explain the second pair, I will direct the attention towards a case of intertextuality between *Ludlul* and *Evil Demons*, whose only reference to a bandage – *riksu*, is in Tablet VII (107-109):⁶⁶

⁶⁰ *zaqtā ništātūšu usahhalā zumra/ pašhū šindūšu uballaṭū namtara/ šū-ma utukka ra’iba ušarši/ ina tēšu ušdapparū šuruppū u hurbāšu* (Lenzi 2023: 64).

⁶¹ For *šuruppū* see CAD Š/3: 371. For *hurbāšu* see CAD H: 248. For *ra’ibu* see CAD R: 80.

⁶² I.e. a word whose meaning is included in the meaning of another word. Texts, like the “Gula Hymn of Bullutsarabi” show that the bandage was a largely popular treatment in literary texts: “I am the physician, I can save life, I carry every herb, I banish illness. I gird on the sack with life-giving incantations, I carry the texts that make (one) well. I give health to humankind. (My) clean dressing salves the wound, (My) soft bandage relieves the pain.” (Foster 2005: 587).

⁶³ CAD N/2: 276-277.

⁶⁴ A bandage recipe usually has many ingredients and detailed instructions on how to prepare the medicine. See in <http://oracc.museum.upenn.edu/asbp/ninmed/>.

⁶⁵ Finally, *agū tāmātu* (“the current of waters”, see Lenzi 2023: 146) receives the *šuruppū* chills of the sufferer. See *Ludlul* II, 56, III 23, 27, 74.

⁶⁶ Geller 2016: 23, CAD R: 348.

“Take some aromatic cedar oil,
and apply (it) to the victim’s body.

Let all of the *apkallu* and *abriqqu* purification priests bind you with one of their pure bindings.”⁶⁷

I suggest that the interplay in this case is between the healing *riksu* bandage in *Evil Demons*, the group of seven demons in *Ludlul* – described with the same word (*rikis sebet*) and the healing *šindu* bandage in the poem.⁶⁸ Namtar (Fate) demon, the vizier of the goddess of the Underworld Ereškigal, is a merciless illness bringer. His leading role is shown in *Evil Demons* where the seven *sibitti* demons serve as his *šipri* (messengers).⁶⁹

In both interplays, the opposition is between an evil image and a relieving one. The main elements from the sufferer’s dream with the purification priest (one of the two dreams – the second and the fourth, in which healing activities take place) are found in the same seventh tablet: purification with water and incantation spells.⁷⁰ What is missing is the *muššu’u* massaging.⁷¹ *Muššu’u* by itself comprises a whole series and represents the act of rubbing. It occurs only in a medical context, where it is attested as a treatment of afflicted limbs and women’s bellies.⁷² Böck notes that the attestation of *Muššu’u* spells in magico-medical texts refers to symptoms of paralysis *šimmatu* without specifying the body part, to afflicted arms, hands, hips, feet, ankles, and heels. Many of the symptoms have the weakness of the limbs in common, reminding us of Šubši-mešrê-Šakkan’s condition.⁷³ The short analysis thus proposes

⁶⁷ Geller 2016: 272. *Ludlul* does not mention to which part of the body the bandage is applied. From the medical prescriptions it is known that they are put chiefly on wounds, against feverish conditions, or to soothe gastrointestinal problems. For example, one prescription in BAM 575 (r. i 12) presents a soothing bandage therapy for an internal disease against symptoms resembling these of Šubši-mešrê-Šakkan: “If a man’s internal organs are twisted (*gannû*), he has fits of *gahhu* coughing (and) a diminished appetite for food and drink, he continually has *ru’tu* phlegm: you pound *nînu*-mint, he drinks it in oil and he will vomit... You boil down *lipāru*-tree leaf, *qutru*-plant leaf, tamarisk leaf, *burāšu*-juniper, *kukru*-aromatic, *šumlalû*-aromatic, *tūru*-opopanax (and) [. . .] in date juice, (then) you dry (and) crush (the mixture) over and over again, you mix it in fat, you spread it on a piece of leather (and) you bandage (LAL) him with it.”

⁶⁸ The polysemantic word *riksu* is used in *Ludlul* also in Tablet II, l. 104 in a still different meaning, referring to the affected joints of Šubši-mešrê-Šakkan.

⁶⁹ See Tablet V, l. 76. For *šipru* see CAD Š/3: 73.

⁷⁰ “Go, [my son, take a ...-vessel] ... [pour] red spring waters – Tigris and Euphrates water – into it, put tamarisk and *maštakal* in it, cast the Eridu spell into that liquid, and sprinkle that man with water. Pass the censer and torch over him so that the Fate-demon (Namtar) being in the victim’s body may pass like water... (*more ritual activities follow* – K.M.) ... May trouble and magic not approach him, may he be calmed by the spell from his (god’s) pure hand, may (the victim) be entrusted safely into the benevolent hands of his personal god. It is an Udug-hul incantation.” (Tablet VII ll. 80-97), see Geller 2016: 23.

⁷¹ The tablet, however, still shows considerable overlap with *Muššu’u*’s incantations (Geller 2016: 23). The compilation process of the series *Muššu’u* is unusual since most of the incantations come from other series, including *Evil Demons* and *sag.gig.ga.meš* (“*Headache*”), see Böck 2003: 2.

⁷² Böck 2003: 11.

⁷³ Böck 2003: 15.

that a probable origin of the treatment with a bandage in *Ludlul* could be found in the incantation series *Evil Demons* and *Muššu'u* and that it eventually refers to the text's educational purpose.

Conclusion

Suffering and treatment occupy a crucial place in *Ludlul*. The specific way body afflictions are presented in the poem suggests that the long narrative about the physical maladies of the main protagonist Šubši-mešrê-Šakkan follows an established approach towards describing diagnostics and healing, witnessed in the magico-medical literature. This could be explained by the social environment in which the text was created and transferred and by its educational purposes. The often-figurative presentation of the diseases strictly follows the model of symptoms organisation in the most essential Akkadian diagnostics series *Sakikkû*. Conversely, the choice of *materia medica* – a healing bandage, could be interpreted in different ways. This is because the diagnostics part in *Ludlul*, describing the symptoms and diseases the patient suffers, significantly surpasses the therapeutic one. The prescription, which was revealed to Šubši-mešrê-Šakkan in the last of four dreams, could be simply a somewhat arbitrary treatment relating to the omnipotence of Marduk since the trope of the healing bandage is also witnessed in other texts. However, similarities between *Ludlul* and the incantation series *Evil Demons* and *Muššu'u* could suggest an informed explanation and educational context for the author's choice. Therefore, it is likely that both topics of physical suffering and its treatment could eventually refer to Sumero-Akkadian written learned tradition.

Online resources and dictionaries

The Nineveh medical project: <http://oracc.museum.upenn.edu/asbp/ninmed/> (visited 12.23)
CAD 1956-2010: *The Assyrian Dictionary of the Oriental Institute of the University of Chicago*.
Volume 1 A – 21 Z. Chicago: Oriental Institute.

Bibliography

- Abusch T. 2000.** Witchcraft and the Anger of the Personal God, in T. Abusch, K. van der Toorn eds., *Mesopotamian Magic: Textual, Historical and Interpretative Perspectives*, Ancient Magic and Divination 1, Groningen: Styx, 83-121.
- Abusch T., Milstein S. J. 2021.** The Hymn to Marduk (*Ludlul bēl nēmeqi* I 1-42) Reconsidered, *Die Welt des Orients* 51, 125-135.
- Abusch T., Schwemer D. 2016.** *Corpus of Mesopotamian Anti-Witchcraft Rituals 2*, Ancient Magic and Divination 8/2, Leiden/Boston: Brill.
- Annus A., Lenzi A. 2010.** *Ludlul bēl nēmeqi: The Standard Babylonian Poem of the Righteous Sufferer*, *States Archives of Assyria Cuneiform Texts* 7, Helsinki: The Neo-Assyrian Text Corpus Project.
- Berlejung A. 2015.** Sin and Punishment: The Ethics of Divine Justice and Retribution in Ancient Near Eastern and Old Testament Texts, *Interpretation* 69, 272-287.
- Böck B. 2003.** When You Perform the Ritual of ‘Rubbing’: On Medicine and Magic in Ancient Mesopotamia, *Journal of Near Eastern Studies* 62, 1-16.
- Bricker D. P. 2000.** Innocent suffering in Mesopotamia, *Tyndale Bulletin* 51/2, 193-214.
- Couto-Ferreira M. E. 2018.** From Head to Toe: Listing the Body in Cuneiform Texts, in J. Z. Wee ed., *The Comparable Body-Analogy and Metaphor in Ancient Mesopotamian, Egyptian, and Greco-Roman Medicine*, *Studies in Ancient Medicine* 49, Leiden/Boston: Brill, 43-71.
- Foster B. R. 2005.** *Before the Muses: An Anthology of Akkadian Literature*, 3rd ed., Bethesda, (Md.): CDL Press.
- Geller M. J. 1985.** *Forerunners to Udug-hul: Sumerian Exorcistic Incantations*, *Freiburger Altorientalische Studien* 12, Stuttgart: Franz Steiner-Verlag-Wiesbaden.
- Geller M. J. 2010.** *Ancient Babylonian medicine: theory and practice*, John Wiley & Sons.
- Geller M. J. 2016.** *Healing Magic and Evil Demons: Canonical Udug-hul Incantations*, *Die babylonisch-assyrische Medizin in Texten und Untersuchungen* 8 (BAMTU 8), Boston/Berlin: Walter de Gruyter.
- Geller M. J. 2018.** The exorcist's manual (KAR 44), in U. Steinert ed., *Assyrian and Babylonian Scholarly Text Catalogues: Medicine, Magic and Divination*, *Die babylonisch-assyrische Medizin in Texten und Untersuchungen* 9 (BAMTU 9), Boston/Berlin: Walter de Gruyter, 292-312.
- Heeßel N. P. 2000.** *Babylonisch-assyrische Diagnostik*, *Alter Orient und Altes Testament* 43, Münster: Ugarit-Verlag.
- Heeßel N. P. 2001.** Diagnostik in Babylonien und Assyrien, *Medizin Historisches Journal* 36, 247-266.
- Lenzi A. 2012.** The Curious Case of Failed Revelation in *Ludlul bēl nēmeqi*: A New Suggestion for the Poem’s Scholarly Purpose, in C. L. Crouch, J. Stökl, A. E. Zernecke eds., *Between Heaven and Earth: Communication with the Divine in the Ancient Near East*, *Library of Hebrew Bible/Old Testament Studies* 566, London/New York: Bloomsbury T. & T. Clark, 36-66.
- Lenzi A. 2015.** The language of Akkadian prayers in *Ludlul bēl nēmeqi* and its significance within and beyond Mesopotamia, in R. Rollinger, E van Dongen eds., *Mesopotamia in the*

- Ancient World: Impact, Continuities, Parallels*, Melammu Symposia 7, Münster: Ugarit-Verlag, 67-105.
- Lenzi A. 2020.** *An introduction to Akkadian literature: Contexts and content*, University Park (PA): Eisenbrauns/The Pennsylvania State University Press.
- Lenzi A. 2023:** *Suffering in Babylon: Ludlul bēl nēmeqi and the Scholars, Ancient and Modern*, Orbis Biblicus et Orientalis 300, Leuven: Peeters.
- Maul S. M. 2019.** *Bannlösung (nam-érim-búr-ru-da). Die Therapie eines auf eidliche Falschaussage zurückgeführten Leidens*, Keilschrifttexte aus Assur literarischen Inhalts 10, Wissenschaftliche Veröffentlichungen der Deutschen Orient-Gesellschaft 155, Ausgrabungen der Deutschen Orientgesellschaft in Assur: E, Inschriften 9, Wiesbaden: Harrassowitz.
- Moran W. L. 1983.** Notes on the Hymn to Marduk in Ludlul Bēl Nēmeqi, in J. M. Sasson ed., *Studies in Literature from the Ancient Near East, by Members of the American Oriental Society, Dedicated to Samuel Noah Kramer*, Journal of the American Oriental Society 103-1 (Special Issue), 255-260.
- Noegel S. B. 2016.** Suffering Ambiguity in Ludlul bēl nēmeqi: on Erudition, Ideology, and Theology in Tablet I, *Bibliotheca Orientalis* 73, 614-636.
- Ritter E. K., Kinnier Wilson J. V. 1980.** Prescription for an Anxiety State: A Study of BAM 234, *Anatolian Studies* 30, Special Number in Honour of the Seventieth Birthday of Professor O. R. Gurney, 23-30.
- Schmidtchen E. 2018.** Esagil-kīn-apli's Catalogue of *Sakikkū* and *Alamdimmū*, in U. Steinert ed., *Assyrian and Babylonian Scholarly Text Catalogues: Medicine, Magic and Divination*, Die babylonisch-assyrische Medizin in Texten und Untersuchungen 9 (BAMTU 9), Boston/Berlin: Walter de Gruyter, 313-335.
- Schmidtchen E. 2021.** *Mesopotamische Diagnostik: Untersuchungen zu Rekonstruktion, Terminologie und Systematik des babylonisch-assyrischen Diagnosehandbuchs und eine Neubearbeitung der Tafeln 3–14*, Die babylonisch-assyrische Medizin in Texten und Untersuchungen 13 (BAMTU 13), Berlin/Boston: Walter de Gruyter.
- Scurlock J.A. 2014.** *Sourcebook for Ancient Mesopotamian Medicine*, Writings from the Ancient World 36, Atlanta: SBL Press.
- Steinert U. ed. 2018.** *Assyrian and Babylonian Scholarly Text Catalogues: Medicine, Magic and Divination*, Die babylonisch-assyrische Medizin in Texten und Untersuchungen 9 (BAMTU 9), Berlin/Boston: Walter de Gruyter.
- Stol M. 1993.** *Epilepsy in Babylonia*, Cuneiform Monographs 2, Groningen: Styx.
- Stol M. 2000.** Psychosomatic suffering in ancient Mesopotamia, in T. Abusch, K. van der Toorn eds., *Mesopotamian Magic: Textual, Historical and Interpretative Perspectives*, Ancient Magic and Divination 1, Groningen: Styx Publications, 57-68.
- Stol M. 2010.** "To be ill" in Akkadian: The Verb *Salā'u* and the Substantive *Sili'tu*, in A. Attia, G. Buisson eds., *Advances in Mesopotamian Medicine from Hammurabi to Hippocrates*, Cuneiform Monographs 37, Leiden/Boston: Brill, 29-46.
- Worthington M., Piccin M. 2015.** Schizophrenia and the Problem of Suffering in the Ludlul Hymn to Marduk, *Revue d'assyriologie et d'archéologie orientale* 109, 113-124.
- Ziegler N. 2015.** Le juste souffrant victime de la colère divine: un thème de la littérature mésopotamienne, in J.-M. Durand, L. Marti, T. Römer eds., *Colères et repentirs divins*, Orbis Biblicus et Orientalis 278, 215-242.

COMITÉ DE LECTURE

Tzvi Abusch, Robert Biggs, Barbara Böck, Dominique Charpin, Jean-Marie Durand, Irving Finkel, Markham Geller, Nils Heeßel, Stefan Maul, Strahil Panayotov, Daniel Schwemer, JoAnn Scurlock, Henry Stadhouders, Ulrike Steinert, Marten Stol.

COMITÉ DE RÉDACTION

Annie Attia, Gilles Buisson, Véréne Chalendar, Martin Worthington.

CONSEILS AUX AUTEURS

Les articles sont publiés sous la responsabilité de leurs auteurs.

Les auteurs doivent envoyer leur manuscrit sous format A4 par courrier électronique.

Les auteurs peuvent rédiger leurs articles dans une langue européenne en étant conscients que l'utilisation des langues de grande diffusion facilitera la compréhension par une majorité de lecteurs.

Les articles peuvent aller de quelques lignes à plusieurs pages. Les articles volumineux pourront faire l'objet d'une parution en un ou plusieurs numéros.

Un résumé de l'article est souhaité.

Les manuscrits pour publication sont à envoyer à l'adresse suivante :

AZUGAL c/o Dr Gilles Buisson, 25 rue de Noailles, 78100 Saint Germain En Laye, France.

e-mail : gilles.buisson9@orange.fr

ABONNEMENTS

Le prix de l'abonnement (deux numéros par an) est de :

30 euros pour un envoi en France

40 euros pour un envoi hors de France

Paiement par virement bancaire, à l'ordre d'AZUGAL sur le compte suivant :

(IBAN) FR76 1820 6004 4339 3711 4300 148, (BIC) AGRIFRPP882.

Paiement par chèque, compensable en France, libellé à l'ordre d'AZUGAL :

- Les chèques doivent être envoyés à l'adresse suivante :

AZUGAL, c/o Dr Gilles Buisson, 25 rue de Noailles, 78100 Saint Germain En Laye, France.

MENTIONS LÉGALES

Le Journal des Médecines Cunéiformes est publié par Azugal, association loi 1901 sans but lucratif, 25 rue de Noailles, 78100 Saint-Germain-En-Laye, représentée par A. Attia.

Imprimeur : Cydergies, 208 avenue Roland Garros, BP 136, 78531 Buc Cedex. Dépôt légal :

11-2024. ISSN 1761-0583. Directrice de la publication : A. Attia, responsable de la rédaction :

G. Buisson, secrétaires de rédaction : V. Chalendar et M. Worthington.