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- Page 1      A Newly Discovered Drawing of a Neo-Assyrian Demon in BAM 202 Connected to Psychological and Neurological Disorders  
**Troels Pank Arbøll**
- Page 32     A Short Note on a New Join to K. 3628+  
(Epileptic and Demonic Afflictions of Infants)  
**Eric Schmidtchen**
- Page 35     *kasû(ÚGAZI<sup>SAR</sup>)* Revisited  
**Sona Choukassian Eypper**
- Page 50     The libbu our second brain? Appendix part 2  
**Annie Attia**
- Page 93     Le Journal des Médecines Cunéiformes :  
sommaires 2003-2018

# Cunéiformes

## A Short Note on a New Join to K. 3628+ (Epileptic and Demonic Afflictions of Infants)\*

Eric Schmidtchen

The new join, K. 3628 + K. 19939, was identified by the present author in April 2016 and thus did not find its way into J. Scurlock's *Sourcebook* from 2014.<sup>1</sup> Since it has been mentioned only briefly by U. Steinert in BAM 9,<sup>2</sup> it is worth presenting the lines in question in transliteration, translation and with some additional notes. Since K. 3628+ has been translated and commented upon several times, it will not be the subject of lengthy discussion.<sup>3</sup>

The join with K. 19939 adds some new information to the fragmentary rubric and colophon. It is now clear that the tablet under discussion is the second tablet of an excerpt series (*nishu*, l. 20) concerning remedies against several epileptic or epilepsy-like afflictions<sup>4</sup> and associated divine as well as demonic agents, with a special focus on their occurrence in children. Line 21 states that the two-tablet excerpt is “finished” or “completed” (AL.TIL), suggesting that the following tablet (mentioned via the catchline in l. 18f.) belonged to another excerpt or series, whose content continued the topic of epilepsy-like diseases (here *bennu*), in children of increasing age. Furthermore, the join confirms the suggested restoration of ŠU.DINGIR.RA in line 21.<sup>5</sup>

The enumeration of different sources (l. 23f., namely the diagnostic standard-series *Sakikkū*, works on epilepsy or epileptic fits, and some writing boards of unknown provenience/content) hint at another interesting aspect of this short excerpt-series, viz. that it might have formed a separate compilation in Nineveh conforming to the Assur Medical Catalogue (AMC).<sup>6</sup> Thus, there is no separate section on children’s diseases or similar conditions within the preserved material of the AMC. In contrast, some additional sections (introduced by *adī*) suggest the implementation of such material concerned with children as supplementary material, at the end of the respective sub-series.<sup>7</sup> Due to the fragmentary state of the AMC, it is possible to posit similar additional sections engaged with medical and/or ritualistic treatments of epileptic fits and demonic attacks in the second part of the AMC (viz. HAZARDS and EVIL POWERS).<sup>8</sup>

A second possible context of such material is suggested by texts such as BAM 248 from Assur, mainly concerned with difficult childbirth,<sup>9</sup> but which continues in col. iv 39-43 with a prescription for the prophylactic protection of children (i.e. an amulet) against the

\* I would like to thank Markham J. Geller as well as Ulrike Steinert for their helpful corrections and suggestions.

<sup>1</sup> Scurlock (2014), 621ff. text 2.13.1.

<sup>2</sup> Steinert (2018), 228.

<sup>3</sup> See Farber (1989), 28, 67 §15a, 126-129 §§45-46 as well as Stol (1993), 89 and Scurlock/Andersen (2005), 84 §3.272, 321 §13.200, 416 §17.165-166, 433 §19.10. For the incorporated ḤUL.BA.ZI.ZI-incantations cf. further Finkel (1976), 92-95 and pl. 25-26.

<sup>4</sup> It can be assumed that the treatments of Antašubba and Bēl-ūri-epilepsy have been listed within the excerpt’s first tablet.

<sup>5</sup> Scurlock (2014), 624 l. 21.

<sup>6</sup> For the similarities and differences of the AMC with the Nineveh medical corpus, see Panayotov (2018). For another more famous *nishu*-recension from Nineveh cf. the Uruanna *nishu*-series (see Hunger (1968), BAK 321) in whose colophons Assurbanipal himself claims to have been responsible in venturing the new structure from different sources.

<sup>7</sup> Cf. Steinert (2018), 211 AMC l. 23 (TEETH, *adī*-section, *bu’šānu*); l. 28 (BRONCHIA, *adī*-section, *suālu*).

<sup>8</sup> Cf. Steinert (2018), 215 AMC l. 74 (HAZARDS, *adī*-section between hazardous incidents and the bites of different animals) and especially l. 83 (EVIL POWERS, *adī*-section including ḤUL.BA.ZI.ZI-incantations) as well as prescriptions against evil disease agents in l. 96 (evil *Alū*), 97(?), and 98 (Lamaštu) (MENTAL ILLNESSES, *adī*-section).

<sup>9</sup> The respective sub-series or section on this topic within the AMC, and possibly the Niniveh medical corpus as well, would be PREGNANCY/OFFSPRING (AMC ll. 109-114), although none of its *adī*-sections shows any particular connection to epilepsy or demonic afflictions.

“Hand-of-a-God”<sup>10</sup> – a topic that, although fragmentary, most certainly precedes the preserved text-portions on the obverse of K. 3628+. This accompanies prescriptions for fumigation and an ointment against the *Lilû*-demon.<sup>11</sup> However, since the medical material from Assur often differs in terms of structure as well as in terms of the positioning of certain topics, the possible placing of such treatments for difficult childbirth within the Nineveh medical corpus remains rather uncertain.

### Transliteration

- 18 [DIŠ ſi]-bit be-en-ni7 šá ina MU.7.KÁM Ù.TU IGI ia-az-za
- 19 [(x)] i-ta-na-ſá-áš ina ŠUB-ſú ŠUII-ſú ana EGIR-ſú NIGIN-mi
- 20 2-ú ni-<sup>1</sup>is<sup>1</sup>-hu bul-ti ſa <sup>lú</sup>TUR AN.TA.ŠUB.BA <sup>d</sup>LUGAL.ÙR.RA
- 21 ŠU DINGIR.RA ŠU <sup>d+</sup>INNIN LÍL.LÁ.EN.NA ù A.LÁ.ḪUL DAB-su AL.TIL
- 22 ul-tu ŠÀ DIŠ ḫSA<sup>1</sup>.GIG-ki ù ſi-pir AN.ḪTA.ŠUB<sup>1</sup>.BA
- 23 ḫu<sup>2</sup> ul-tu ŠÀ ḫgiš<sup>1</sup>ZU.ḪMEŠ<sup>1</sup> ḫu<sup>2</sup> [...]
- 24 ḫGABA<sup>1</sup>.RI x [...]

### Translation

- 18f. (Catchline:) [If] the grasp of *bennu*-epilepsy can be observed in a seven-year (old child) (lit. someone who was born seven years ago), (such that) he makes unnatural noises, he is constantly upset, (and) while he is falling his hands are bend backwards.
- 20f. (Rubric:) Second excerpt of treatments for a child (in the case) *Antašubbû*-epilepsy, *Bēl-ūri*-epilepsy, “Hand of a God”-disease, “Hand of a Goddess”-disease, the “Hand” of a *Lilû*-demon or an evil *Alû*-demon has seized him. Finished.
- 22f. (Colophon: Excerpted) from (the series) *Sakikkû* and (from) the “work” of/on *Antašubbû*-epilepsy, as well as from writing boards a[nd? ...].
- 24 Copy (of an original) from [...].

### Commentary

- 18f. So far, the symptom entry of this catchline is not attested in any other source.
- 20f. For the recurring grouping of these disease agents and topically similar texts concerning children, see the short overview in Steinert (2018), 259ff (note to l. 92).
- 22f. Contra Scurlock (2014), 624 one should certainly read ù ſi-pir instead of ſi-lu-ſi-tú as proposed by J. Scurlock without further elucidation of this uncommon word. The term ſipru is more often attested with mišittu “stroke”, referring to the effects of the respective seizure or the fit itself.<sup>12</sup>

The restoration ḫIGI-ru<sup>1</sup> in l. 23 following ḫgiš<sup>1</sup>ZU. ḫMEŠ<sup>1</sup>, as suggested by Scurlock (2014), 624, is far from certain, since the traces after the presumed IGI do not look like RU but rather like KU or LU (thus the reading ù suggested here). This would provide a hint that another source followed the enumeration. Unfortunately, the provenience of the original tablet(s) referred to in l. 24, from which K. 3628+ was copied, remains unknown, since the text breaks off at this point.

<sup>10</sup> See Scurlock (2014), 626f.

<sup>11</sup> Strikingly, the last two prescriptions (BAM 248 iv 42-43) against the approaching *Lilû*-demon are paralleled in K. 3628+. There, however, the first of the remedies is prescribed against the “Hand-of-a-Goddess” (K. 3628+ obv. 10'-11'), and only the second against the approaching *Lilû*-demon (K. 3628+ obv. 17'-18'). Note that K. 3628+ obv. 16' also parallels BAM 248 iv 41'.

<sup>12</sup> Cf. for instance Kinnier Wilson/Reynolds (2007), 69f. Another possible interpretation is to see ſipru *Antašubbî* as a reference to a body of works concerning remedies against epilepsy. See for this meaning of ſipru CAD Š/3, 81f. sub 4c as well as the transferred meaning “treatment” ibid. 83f. sub 7.

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