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Cunéiformes

Sm. 460 - Remnants of a ritual to cure the malady of *hīp-libbi*

Henry Stadhouders

The still unedited cuneiform fragment in the Ninevite collection of the British Museum tagged Sm. 460 represents the upper left quarter of a one-column tablet, which means that the lines preserved all miss their second half.¹ It is inscribed, in Babylonian script, with a therapeutic ritual for the alleviation of melancholia by means of fumigants and a potion. Partially preserved on the obverse are an instruction for the performance of a fumigation along with two Akkadian incantations to be recited in the process; the second half of the classical Enki-Asalluḫi historiola in Sumerian occupies all what is left of the reverse. Hereinafter Sm. 460 will be referred to as ms. **A**.

When doing his homework for the June 2015 Babylonian Medical Project Workshop on fumigation therapies that he had the privilege to attend,² the present author was lucky enough to identify a duplicate to the second Akkadian incantation in a fairly well preserved section of the *Qutāru* compendium BM 45393+, with the happy result that this hitherto virtually unknown spell can now be reconstructed almost completely.³ Likewise, a section of the same tablet turned out to contain a duplicate to the Sumerian incantation on the reverse of **A**. BM 45393+ will hereinafter be referred to as ms. **B**.⁴

Whereas the structure of **A** is that of a therapeutical text, giving the ingredients and the method of their application first with the relevant incantations coming next, presumably at the point of the procedure where they should be recited, **B** exhibits the scheme of a so-called incantation ritual in that it follows a reversed order of sections, each of its five fumigation chapters giving a set of consecutive incantations first, unexceptionally concluded by a one-line instruction how to implement the spells.⁵

¹ Photos of the tablet are on view in the public domain at the CDLI internet portal under CDLI-ID nr. P240271; URL: <http://cdli.ucla.edu/dl/photo/P240271.jpg>. The present author had the opportunity to study the physical artefact during a scholarly visit to the British Museum in April, 2014.

² BabMed Annual Workshop 2015: Healing through Fumigation in Mesopotamia and the Ancient World, Berlin (Freie Universität), June 21-22, 2015; organizer S. Panayotov.

³ The only reference in the scholarly literature that the present author is aware of is the one recorded in W. Mayer, *Untersuchungen zur Formensprache der babylonischen „Gebetsbeschwörungen“* (Rome 1976), p. 393: in the section “Unsicher” at the conclusion of the list of Ištar *šu’illas*, it is remarked as follows: “Sm. 460, III: ⁴Išta[r b]e-let qab-lu? [..... (Bittgebet?).”

⁴ An edition of this tablet is projected by members of the BabMed team in collaboration with I. Finkel. For the time being see I. Finkel, “Muššu’u, Qutāru, and the Scribe Tanittu-Bēl,” *Aula Orientalis* 9 (1991) [Fs. M. Civil], pp. 91-104.

⁵ The five chapters deal respectively with *Mimma lemnu*, *Lamaštu*, *antašubbû*, *hīp-libbi*, *Šulak + mišittu*. The ritual instructions all follow the same pattern, reading: number *šipātu annātu ana muḫḫi qutāru (qu₅-tar₅) ša* malady *tamannuma ina maḫrat erši tašakkan*. It is noteworthy that the tablet refrains from the use of **ka.inim.ma** and **dù.dù.bi** rubrics throughout.

Transliteration in score text format

A obverse

A 1	ŠIM.ŠEŠ Ú.GAMU[N.SAR]
A 2	<i>qu₅-tāru šá</i> GAZ [ŠÀ]
A 3	<i>ina</i> NÍG.NA <i>tu-sa[r-raq</i>]
A 4	ÉN DINGIR <i>mi-na-a</i> [DÛ-uš]
A 5	<i>ana</i> DINGIR.MU <i>m[i-na-a DÛ-uš/aḥ-ti</i>]
A 6	<i>ana</i> ^d 15.MU <i>m[i-na-a DÛ-uš/ ú-gal-lil/e-gi</i>]
A 7	GIG <i>lì[b]-bi-íá</i> [lim] [?] -[da-ma dà-lí-lí-ka lud-lul te ÉN]	
A 8	ÉN ^d X[V b]e-let qab-lu []
B ii 44	ÉN ^d iš-tar be-let qab-lu u MÈ e-pi-šat GIŠ.TUKUL <i>muš-te-pi-šat t[u-qu-un-ti]</i>	
A 9	<i>muš-te-ši-rat</i> UN.MEŠ []
B ii 45	<i>muš-te-[ši-rat te-ni-še-e]-[te]</i> <i>mu-sal-li-mat</i> DINGIR.MEŠ <i>ze-nu-ú-[ti]</i>	
A 10	<i>na-šat</i> GIŠ.BAN <i>u iš-pat</i> x []
B ii 46	<i>na-</i> [] [x x x] EDIN [?] [
A 11	<i>áš-šú</i> NENNI A NENNI ARAD-ki []
B iii 1a	ARAD-ki <i>ú-sal-li-ka</i>	
A 12	[i]-ziz-zi-im-ma []
B iii 1b	<i>i-ziz-im-ma a-lak-ta-šú li-[im-dī]</i>	
A 13	[]-[šú pu-uṭ]-[ri
B iii 2	<i>en-nit-ta-šú pu-ṭur-ri-im dà-lí-lí-ka lud-lul te</i> [ÉN]	

A Gap of 20 to 25 lines

A reverse

B iii 9-11a É[N x]šà gig.ga ... * / ...* / u₄ nu.ku.ku ge₆.e nu.ku.ku ^dasal.lú.ḥi igi :

*Too much is lost to warrant a cohesive transliteration of these lines.

A 1' a.rá [min].[kam.ma.aš ù.ub.dug₄]

A 2' a.<a> a.na íb.a[k.en.na.bi nu.zu *]

*Hardly room for a.na ba.ni.íb.gi₄.gi₄, unless it was written over the edge.

A 3' ^den.ki dumu.na m[u.un.na.ni.íb.gi₄.gi₄]

A 4' dumu.mu a.na nu.ì.zu [a.na a.ra.ab.dah.e.en]

A 5' ^dasal.lú.ḥi a.na nu.[ì.zu a.na a.ra.ab.dah.e.en]

A 6' níg gá.e ì.zu.mu ù [za.e in.ga.ì.zu]

B iii 11 níg gá.e :

A 7' gen.na dumu.mu ^d[asal.lú.ḥi]

B iii 11 gen.na du[mu.mu]

A 8' še.en.dur.gim min ḥé.[en.ti.la]

B iii 12a še.e[n].dúr.gim min ḥé.en.ti.la du₁₁.ga

A 9'. T[U₆ ÉN]

B iii 12b te É[N]

A 10'. *šá maš-qí-ti ù* [

Bound eclectic text and translation of the obverse (line count according to A)

<p>¹ <i>murru kamū[nu ...]</i> ² <i>qutāru ša hīp [libbi ...]</i> ³ <i>ina niḡnakkī tusa[rraq ...]</i> ⁴ <i>šiptu: ilu mīnâ [ēpuš ...]</i> ⁵ <i>ana ilīya m[īnâ ēpuš/aḡṭi ...]</i> ⁶ <i>ana ištarīya m[īnâ ēpuš/ugallil/ēgi ...]</i> ⁷ <i>murūš libbīya lim[dāma² dalīlīkunu ludlul tê šipti]</i></p> <hr/> <p>⁸ <i>šiptu: Ištar bēlet qablu u tāḡāzi ēpišat kakkī muštēpišat t[uquntī]</i> ⁹ <i>muštēširat nišī (var.: [tenēš]ēte) musallimat ilī zenû[ti ...]</i> ¹⁰ <i>nāšât qašti u išpat(i) [...] ... šēru² [...]</i> ¹¹ <i>aššu annanna mār annanna aradki usallika</i> ¹² <i>izizzīmma alaktašu li[mdī]</i> ¹³ <i>ennittašu puṭrîm dalīlīka ludlul tê [šipti]</i></p> <hr/>	<p>¹ Myrrh, kamū[nu ...] - ² (ingredients) for a fumigation to treat melan[cholia ...] ³ You scat[ter them] on a censer [...] ⁴ <i>Incantation.</i> O God, what [have I done ...] ⁵ Against my god, what [<i>have I done/done wrong ...</i>] ⁶ Against my goddess, what [<i>have I done/sinned/neglected...</i>] ⁷ learn² [about] my sorrow, [so that I may sing your praise. <i>Incantation formula.</i>] ⁸ <i>Incantation.</i> Ištar, lady of battle and combat, who wages war and prepares for the fray, ⁹ who guides mankind and propitiates angered gods [...], ¹⁰ who carries bow and quiver [...], [who ...] in the battlefield² [...] – ¹¹ I am beseeching you on account of NN son of NN, ¹² come stand by me and le[arn] what causes him uneasiness; ¹³ annul his guilt, so that I may sing your praise. <i>Incantation formula.</i></p>
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Selective translation of the text on the reverse

(B iii 9.11a) *Incan[tation ...]* sorrow ... / During the day he cannot sleep, during the night he cannot sleep. Asalluḡi saw it. (A r. 2'-3') "My father, I do not know what to do about it." Enki answered his son: (...) (A 6'-8') "What I know, you, too, should know. Go, my son A[salluḡi], go, my son, as (swiftly?) as a šendur(-bird²), in order that he get well again!" (A 10') (Spell) for a potion and a [...]

Notes

A obverse

-I. 2: Cf. *TCL* 6, 34, rev. i, 5'-6': two lists of fumigants for "heart-break" (*qu₅-tāru šá GAZ lib-bi*); not mentioned in Walker's enumeration *IRAQ* 42 (1980), p. 86.

-II. 4-7: This section represents a sample of the so-called **dingir-ša.dab.ba gur.ru.da.kam** incantations, i.e. penitential prayers for the purpose of reconciling a man's angered personal gods with him, here cut back to the ultra-terse format of an ejaculatory prayer.⁶ It is not among the sections that make up the chapter of the *Qutāru* compendium BM 45393+ that deals with the treatment of *hīp-libbi*, which there occupies ll. 4-15 of col. iii.

-II. 8-13: This *šu'illa*-style prayer is to invoke Ištar to help restore peace (*musallimat*) between the client and his angered gods (*ilī zenû[ti]*); functionally, it may therefore be compared to the incantation *Ištar šurbūtu*, whose recitation forms an episode in the *ilī ul īde* ritual.⁷ The common denominator of the two Akkadian incantations on the obverse of Sm. 460 thus appears to be the concern with divine anger. The logic behind this is of course to be sought in the circumstance that *hīp-libbi* complaints typically symptomize a god's wrath, in particular that of one's personal gods.⁸ Remarkably, the *Qutāru* compendium has the spell *Ištar bēlet*

⁶ This class of prayers has recently been re-edited in a comprehensive monograph by M. Jaques, *Mon dieu, qu'ai-je fait? Les diğir-ša-dab₍₅₎-ba et la piété privée en Mésopotamie*, OBO 273, Fribourg-Göttingen 2015; for ll. 4-6 and the various possibilities of how to restore them see: p. 74, l. 71sq. with comm. p. 100; p. 80, l. 122 with comm. p. 102. The closest parallel, however, is the prayer to the personal god, edited pp. 223-225, which does not make part of the standard series but evidently derives from it; it concludes with the following supplication: *muruš libbīya limdāma dalīlikunu ludlul*.

⁷ Jaques, *Mon dieu*, p. 262, rev. 4; Mayer, *Gebetsbeschwörungen*, p. 392: ŠI Ištar 26; unfortunately, nothing of this spell's text is known beyond its incipit. For the prayer theme of the invoked god being supplicated for mediation in the process of reconciling angry personal gods with their human protégé, see pp. 93-99; 236-238; 242-243. Ištar features most prominently in this mediating role in the bilingual composition *Ištar's Elevation*, where the goddess, after being incited to show off her martial abilities, is granted the status of *Mediatrix omnium gratiarum* with the following words:

*amēlu ša ilšu šabsiš iktamluša u ištaršu iqīnušu
adi ašrāt salīm ilūtika lā ište' 'ū ilu mamman tespīssu lēmma*

"the man whose god has turned against him in anger and whose goddess has become jealous toward him - as long as he has not visited (any of) your godhead's shrines of reconciliation, every god will refuse his entreaties"

(<http://oracc.museum.upenn.edu/blms/corpus> > Literary > The Elevation of Ishtar > RA 012, 073-084 (Bod S 302), ll. 15b & 16b // VS 24, 037 (VAT 16439), rev. 2'b & 3'b).

⁸ In texts such as *STT* 95 (and parallels) and the *Diagnostic Handbook* (passim), where all sorts of pathological syndromes are diagnosed as the symptoms of divine wrath or the 'hand' of some god or other, the pathology is conceived of as a portent or ominous sign ('Anzeiger' in S. Maul's terminology) that reveals to the conjurer which god is at odds with his client, the sick man. In fact, it is not that the scope of texts like these is really a medical one, they rather represent a divinatory domain in its own right: that of nosomancy. The concept of omen is the key to understanding the Babylonian mode of metaphysics and their 'Eigenbegrifflichkeit' in articulating the laws of an animate universe. From an emic approach it is therefore less apposite to try and explain the relation between the affliction and the divine anger in terms of causation. The suffering of the patient is not the consequence of the divine anger but an omen pointing to it, not unlike, e.g., fungus on the walls cannot be said to have been caused by the evil to which it alerts the owner of the house. Accordingly, the therapies the conjurer is advised to resort to in these texts are more in the vein of a *namburbû* ritual than that of a physician's cure. If we are entitled to postulate a Babylonian awareness of such a thing as an ultimate cause being operative here, that cause would have been sought in the evil art of witchcraft and sorcery, for witch and warlock were especially feared for their dual power to make a man cursed before his gods, kindling hatred and anger towards him in their hearts such that they decide to abandon him, and concurrently inflict on their victim an array of repulsive illnesses of both body and mind that make him a social outcast. See Jaques, *Mon dieu*, pp. 318-319 for a brief summary of the older literature on the subject; in addition: T. Abusch and D. Schwemer, *Corpus of Mesopotamian Anti-Witchcraft Rituals I* (Leiden - Boston 2011), pp. 7; 17-18.

qablu less aptly placed in the chapter on *antašubbû*, substituting the incantation [*šaḳūtu/telītu*] *Ištar munammirat burrumu* for it as the first of the *hīp-libbi* section.⁹

-I. 12: The verb might alternatively be restored *li-[mad ...]*, provided we allow for disregard of grammatical gender on the part of the scribe, as it is more usual for the imperatives *limdī* and *limdā* to be spelled *lim-di/da*. For the meaning of *alaktu* in the phrase *alakta lamādu* “to learn someone’s predicament,” see A. George and J. Taniguchi, “The Dogs of Ninkilim, part two: Babylonian rituals to counter field pests” (*IRAQ* 72 [2010], pp. 79-148), p. 100, Nr. 14, ii, 3’.

A reverse

In the *Qutāru* compendium this spell is the second of three against *hīp-libbi*, filling a mere four lines of text (iii, 9-12) owing to its having the Enki-Asalluḫi formula in truncated format. The third is the well-known **én a.ra.zu šu.te.ma.ab**, which is found passim in rituals to reconcile a man with his gods.

-II. 7’-9’: The meaning of **še.en.dur/dúr** is less than manifest. Could it represent a bird name conflated from two separate bird names?: **še.en/še.na** is the emesal form of **sim** “swallow” and a **dur**-bird is mentioned in *Nanše and the Birds*, supposedly identical with the bird attested twice in Early Dynastic lists as **dur^{mušen}** and **dúr^{mušen}** respectively.¹⁰ Or is **dur/dúr** unsound spelling for **tur** “small”? In either case we miss the necessary **mušen**-determinative. If a bird is indeed involved, the point of comparison might be swiftness. The function of MIN is not entirely clear either. In the context it would appear to mark repetition of the phrase **gen.na dumu.mu** (^d**asal.lú.ḫi**). This makes odd phraseology, though, since otherwise this phrase is never seen repeated but is always directly followed by instructions patterned on the **u/ù.me.ni**- type of volitive. If **še.en.dur/dúr.gim** were alternatively to be analysed as an outlandish type of verbal phrase with subordinative **-gim** “as soon as,” things would get no less complicated.

-I. 9’: The **du₁₁.ga** which **B** inserts between **hé.en.ti.la** and *te É[N]* probably makes no part of the incantation -an imperative would have read **du₁₁.ga.ab-** but forms one phrase with *te É[N]*: “speaking of the incantation formula;” to be read *qabê tê šip[ti]*?; cf. the composite noun **tu₆.du₁₁.ga**, Akkadian *tuduqqû* “spoken spell.”

-I. 10’: The *Qutāru* compendium concludes the group of three spells against *hīp-libbi* with the direction: 3-TA ÉN.MEŠ ŠEŠ.MEŠ *ana UGU qu₅-tar₅ šá GAZ x lib-bi ŠID-ma ina IGI-at GIŠ.NÁ GAR-an* “You recite these three spells over the fumigants for the treatment of melancholia and then you put them (in a fumigation device) in front of the bed.”¹¹ This ‘parallel’ makes it tempting to restore [*qu₅-tāru*] in the gap, were it not for the fact that a fumigation sits not particularly well with a potion; the treatment we often do encounter in tandem with *mašqītu* is *napšaltu* “anointment,” so the gap is quite possibly to be restored as [*nap-šal-ti*].

⁹ The *antašubbû* chapter takes up lines ii, 30 through iii, 3 and is comprised of four spells and concluded by the one-line ritual direction.

In the prayer incantation [*šaḳūtu/telītu*] *Ištar munammirat burrumu* (iii, 4-8) the supplicant asks the goddess to ban (*šussû*, *nesû* Š-stem) from his body the preponderately mental troubles of *nullātu*, *ḥuṣṣu hīp libbi*, *gilittu*, *pirittu*, *adirtu*, *ašuštu*, *ḥurbāšu*.

¹⁰ See N. Veldhuis, *Religion, Literature and Scholarship: The Sumerian Composition Nanše and the Birds* (Leiden and Boston 2004), p. 238.

¹¹ iii, 15; for the conundrum posed by -TA in cases like this, see Borger, *MZL*, pp. 302-303, nr. 248; the sign rendered as x looks like a partly erased MA or, perhaps BA; it is definitely not IB and nor is it PI.

Addendum

When this article had materialized in print its author realised that he had omitted a reference to yet another cuneiform fragment duplicating the *Qutāru* compendium BM 45393+, iii, 9-12 and consequently running parallel to the reverse of Sm. 460 likewise. The fragment concerned is BM 42542+, which was published by I. Finkel as Text 36 (p. 193) in his “On Late Babylonian Medical Training,” (in: *Wisdom, Gods and Literature. Studies in Assyriology in Honour of W.G. Lambert*, Winona Lake 2000, 137-224). The spell **é[n x] šà gig.ga** occupies ll. 1-7 of the tablet’s obverse, with about a third of the beginning of each line being lost. Its text, as far as can be told from what has been preserved, follows BM 45393+ as against Sm. 460 in that (1) it has the Enki-Asalluḫi dialogue in an abridged format (l. 5; yet differently truncated than the standard way found in BM 45393+), (2) it reads **[še.en.dúr]¹.gim** (l. 6 // **B**, iii, 12) and (3) it, too, inserts **du₁₁.ga** before the final phrase *tê šipti*. Like BM 45393+ it has this spell followed by the incantation **a.ra.zu šu.te.ma.ab**.

It could be speculated that the phrase **še.en.dúr(dur).gim** somehow represents in truncated format a therapeutic instruction involving the use of a **šen.tur** “cauldron;” it seems less plausible that it is the corrupted outcome of an original ***še.en.hun.gá**, let alone ***hé.en.hun.gá** “(in order that) he may find relief.”

In hindsight the phrase **du₁₁.ga** is most likely to be explained as an abbreviation of the formula **du₁₁.ga DN₁ DN₂ DN₃** “at the command of DN₁ DN₂ and DN₃.”¹²

As an aside, it is worth notifying that the transliteration of the BM 45393+ version of the spell **é[n ...] šà.gig.ga** as given by Finkel in fn. 42 has been revised considerably as a result of preparations and discussions entailed by the BabMed 2015 Fumigation Workshop.

In the light of the catalogue fragment he published as Text 35 in the same article Finkel convincingly reconstructed the incipit of the prayer incantation mentioned above in fn. 9 (**B**, iii, 4-8) as **ÉN [telītu] Ištar munammirat burrumu** (p. 192).

Finally, the ‘Hand-of-Gods’ diagnoses as found massively in the Handbook of Nosomancy (a.k.a. Diagnostic Handbook, footnote 8 above) have just been discussed insightfully by M. Geller, who points out, inter alia, that these diagnoses primarily function as descriptive labels in the systemization of disease names (which themselves basically cover symptoms and syndromes, not underlying causes); they do not indicate that the godhead in question has caused the illness.¹³

¹² E.g. the Sumerian **šu.du₈.a** spell *SpTU* II, 23, ll. 30-35, which concludes as follows: **du₁₁.ga^d asal.lú.hi^d utu <dingir>.mah te én**, and where the **du₁₁.ga** stands for the phrase *ina qibūt (iqbū)* innumerable incantations begin their concluding formula with (e.g. Maqlū, passim).

¹³ Review of: N. Heeßel, *Divinatorische Texte II: Opferschau-Omina* (KAL 5, Wiesbaden: Harrassowitz, 2012), AfO 53 (2015), 201-207

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