“WHEN YOU PERFORM THE RITUAL OF ‘RUBBING’”:
ON MEDICINE AND MAGIC IN ANCIENT MESOPOTAMIA*

BARBARA BÖCK, *Consejo Superior de Investigaciones Científicas, Madrid*

*To the memory of my teacher Franz Köcher
27 December 1916–8 November 2002*

I. INTRODUCTION

“WHEN you perform the ritual of ‘rubbing’” is the first line of the so-called *Muššu* ritual tablet. The ritual instructions record ancient Mesopotamian medical and magical encounter with disease. Thus, the text ranks among the most important sources on the nature of *Muššu*. The present article aims at examining its structure, character, and setting.

The discovery of the *Muššu* series is credited to F. Köcher. When dealing with the Assur *Muššu* ritual tablet, Köcher provided in his commentary a list of manuscripts of the series as well as relevant magical-medical texts.¹ Almost thirty years later, new information about this series was made available by I. L. Finkel. While cataloguing at the British Museum, he succeeded in identifying a nearly complete set of late Babylonian *Muššu* tablets.² I am currently preparing an edition of the entire series.³

* A version of this paper was read at the XLVI^e Rencontre Assyriologique Internationale in Paris in July 2000.

The bibliographical abbreviations of journals, texts, and reference books in general follow those of R. Borger, *Handbuch der Keilschriftliteratur*, vol. 2 (Berlin and New York, 1975), pp. xi–xxxii, and those of the *Chicago Assyrian Dictionary*.

Letters in bold type refer to the incipits of incantations; roman letters indicate terms in Sumerian; italics are used to designate Akkadian words.

¹ “Die Ritualtafel der magisch-medizinischen Tafelserie «Einreibung»,” *AfO* 21 (1966): 13–20. Further information can be found in Köcher’s introduction to *BAM* 215 (VAT 13653), pp. xiii–xiv.

² “*Muššu*, Qutāru, and the Scribe Tanittu-Bēl,” in P. Michalowski et al., eds., *Velles Paraules: Ancient Near Eastern Studies in Honor of Miguel Civil on the Occasion of His Sixty-fifth Birthday* (Sabadell, Spain, 1991), pp. 91–104. Note the following minor improvements: (1) *Muššu* tablet IV (pp. 96–97): two incantations are to be added; the sequence, accordingly, reads (a) ÉN *a-nam-di-ka šip-tum ta-ri-dat kal mar-ša-a-ti*, “I am reciting the incantation for you that chases away all kinds of diseases,” (b) ÉN *at-ta-di-ki šip-tum ta-ri-dat kal mar-ša-a-ti*, “I have recited the incantation for you that chases away all kinds of dis-

eases,” (c) ÉN *maš-maš dī-gi-gi* ABGAL DINGIR.MEŠ⁴AMAR.UTU, “Conjurer of the igigi gods, wise one among the gods, Marduk,” (d) ÉN *an-ni-tú* ÉN *ša*⁴AMAR.UTU, “This incantation is Marduk’s incantation,” (e) ÉN DINGIR *gaš-ri* DINGIR.MEŠ⁴AMAR.UTU, “Powerful god among the gods, Marduk”; (f) ÉN *ú-tal-lil be-lum maš-maš* DINGIR.MEŠ, “He has been purified, lord, conjurer of the gods,” (g) ÉN *mur-šu mi-iq-tum li-²-bi di-²-i*, “Disease, stroke, *li²bu*-fever, head disease,” (h) (ÉN) *ú-tam-me-ku-nu-ši⁴ a-nim⁴ an-tum*, “I conjure you (in the name of) Anu and Antu,” (i) ÉN *id-di⁴ é-a*, “Ea recited,” (j) ÉN *kak.kib kak.kib* lugal ka.na.kak.kib, “kakib kakib, king, kanakakib.” (2) *Muššu* tablet V (p. 97): one incantation is to be dropped; the sequence, accordingly, reads (a) ÉN⁴nin.ì.si.in ama kalam.ma.ke₄, “Ninisia, mother of the land,” (b) ÉN *te-e* AN-*e* *te-e*⁴IDIM ABGAL, “Incantation formula of heaven, incantation formula of Ea, the wise one,” (c) ÉN⁴AMAR.UTU *ina qí-bi-ti-ka*, “Marduk, at your command,” (d) ÉN TA AN-*e* DÌM+AŠ.RU *ur-du-ni*, “The dimme demons have come down from heaven,” (e) ÉN LÚ DUMU DINGIR-*šú šá⁴ a-nim u an-tum šu-ú*, “Man, son of his god, he belongs to Anu and Antu,” (f) ÉN LÚ.TUR DUMU DINGIR-*šú šá* ABGAL DINGIR.MEŠ⁴AMAR.UTU, “Child, son of his god, he belongs to the wise one among the gods, to Marduk,” (g) ÉN⁴AMAR.UTU EN DINGIR *el-lu* ABGAL, “Marduk, lord, holy god, wise.” (3) *Muššu* tablet VIII (p. 99): should be read (and restored with the help of the Sultantepe duplicate *STT* 136): (a) ÉN *šim-ma-tum šim-ma-tum*, “Paralysis, paralysis,” (b) ÉN *kiš-pu zi-ru-tú*, “Hated evil machinations,” (c) ÉN *sa hul du⁸g.ù.da*,

[*JNES* 62 no. 1 (2003)]

© 2003 by The University of Chicago.

All rights reserved.

0022–2968/2003/6201–0001\$10.00.

One characteristic of *Muššu^u* is the inclusion of magical formulas from two distinct corpora: from (1) the incantations series “Evil Utukku-demons” (UDUG.ĤUL.MEŠ), “Evil will be torn out” (ĤUL.BA.ZI.ZI.MEŠ), and “Grave diseases (characterized by a headache)” (SAG.GIG.GA.MEŠ), as well as from the collection of spells “To release from oath” (NAM.ÉRIM.BÚR.RU.DA), and (2) the magical-medical compendia “Hand of the ghost” (ŠU.GIDIM) and “*Sagallu*-tendon” (SA.GAL.LA) as well as the loosely related prescriptions that deal with a variety of afflictions of the limbs.⁴ To date, in the *Muššu^u* series forty-six spells are preserved of which twenty-six are attested in magical-medical compendia⁵ and twenty-one in the incantation series.⁶

F. Köcher observed that the *Muššu^u* series is formed by incantations from other series: “auffällig ist jedoch der Sachverhalt, daß die meisten der (. . .) Beschwörungen Texte sind, die bereits in anderem Zusammenhang bekanntgeworden sind.”⁷ He further suggested that “vielleicht griff man bei der Kompilation der Serie *Muššu^u* mit Bedacht auf alte bewährte magische Texte zurück, um sie—von modernen therapeutischen Behandlungsmethoden begleitet—mit neuem Leben zu erfüllen.”⁸

II. THE *Muššu^u* RITUAL TABLET

THE TEXT

Unlike the *Lamaštu*, *Šurpu*, *Maqlû*, and *Mis pî* compendia, the *Muššu^u* series proper does not include a ritual tablet. There is no reference to a ritual tablet in the Assur catalogue VAT 13723+ as is stated for *Maqlû*, i.e., obv. i: 13'–14' *enûma nêpe[šu ša maqlû teppušu] / 8 maqlû adi nêpeši*: “When you [perform the *Maqlû* ri]tual / Eight tablets

“To loosen the evil muscle,” (d) ÉN i.ba.ah MIN, “ibaḥ ditto,” (e) ÉN ni.ip.pa.ah MIN, “nipaḥ ditto,” (f) ÉN ab.ba ti.ra.ah, “aba tiraḥ,” (g) ÉN pa.ru.un.na, “paruna,” (h) ÉN [], “. . .,” (i) ÉN *kab-tu*?, “Honored . . .,” (j) ÉN a.ra.zi, “arazi,” (k) ÉN *kir-ri-giš di-pa-ar*, “*Girgiššû*-disease, disease called *dipar*,” (l) ÉN *šu-ú šum-šu*, “*Šu^u* is his name,” (m) ÉN *šu-ú šum-šu*, “*Šu^u* is his name,” (n) ÉN x-x-tu-um MIN, “. . . ditto,” (o) ÉN *ez-ze-ti šam-ra-ti kaš-ša-a-ti*, “You are fierce, you are angry, you are wild,” (p) ÉN *lib-li* ^dGIŠ.BAR, “May *Girra* extinguish,” (q) ÉN ka.ra.ra.tum MIN, “*Kararatu* ditto,” (r) É[N], “. . .,” (s) ^rÉN¹ ^rX¹ [], “. . .”

³ Recently, W. G. Lambert noted some duplicates of the fifth tablet, “Literary Texts from Nimrud,” *Afo* 46–47 (1999–2000): 151.

⁴ See attestations given in the conclusion with nn. 76 to 88, pp. 15–16, below.

⁵ I refrain from giving references here and, instead, list those incantations that can be found in the context of healing events (a discussion will be presented in my forthcoming study): II/b, c, d; III/c; IV/a, i, j; V/f; VI; VIII/a, b, c, d, e, f, g, j, k, l, m, o, p, q.

⁶ UDUG.ĤUL (hereafter UH) VII/d appears as *Muššu^u* VII/b as referred to by Finkel, “*Muššu^u*, *Qutāru*, and the Scribe Tanittu-Bēl,” p. 99. *Muššu^u* V/j is also

included as *Hulbazizi*, no. 20; see *ibid.*, p. 97. The overlap between SAG.GIG and *Muššu^u* has been pointed out by Finkel, in *ibid.*, p. 94. CT 4, pl. 3, constitutes *Muššu^u* VI. For the Middle Babylonian version, see J. Cooper, “Bilinguals from Boghazkoi I,” *ZA* 61 (1971): 1 ff. For the incantation *Muššu^u* V/a, see John Rylands Library, Box 24; E5 and 25, obv. l. 5. The Old Babylonian catalogue of incantations has been published by C. Wilcke, “Sumerische literarische Texte in Manchester und Liverpool,” *Afo* 24 (1973): 14 with pl. 3 (read in obv. l. 5 ama instead of azu). LB 1000 (= *MLVS* 2, pp. 3 ff.) and CT 42, 32 (pp. 41b) are included as *Muššu^u* IV/a and IV/b.

⁷ Köcher, “Die Ritualtafel,” p. 15.

⁸ *Ibid.* Recently, E. Reiner, in her study *Astral Magic in Babylonia*, TAPS 85/4 (Philadelphia, 1995), drew attention to prescriptions and strings of amulet stones that refer to famous kings of the past such as Hammurapi, Narām-Sin, and Rīm-Sin, providing more authenticity; see Reiner, *Astral Magic*, pp. 41 and 129. Note also *BAM* 322, an Assyrian tablet from Assurbanipal's library at Nineveh that claims to be partially a copy of an original from Hammurapi's palace (obv. l. 29: GABA.RI É.GAL ¹ha-am-m[u-r]a-pí LUGAL ŠÁR, “original from the palace of Hammurapi, king of the entire world”).

Maqlû together with the ritual tablet,” or for *Mis pî*, obv. ii: 16' *enûma* [*mīs*] *pî* []: “when [you perform] *Mis pî* . . .,” or for *Lamaštu*, rev. iv: 2 *enûma nēpešu ša* ^d*lamaštu* []: “when [you perform] the ritual against *Lamaštu*.”⁹ It should also be noted that the ritual tablet covers thirty-two spells of which only fifteen¹⁰ are related to the *Muššu*^u series.

The ritual instructions are preserved in two duplicates. Duplicate A (VAT 13653) from Assur has been edited and studied by both Köcher and Finkel.¹¹ The tablet was excavated at Assur in a private house belonging to the family of Bēl-Kundi-ilāya and his descendants, namely, Nabû-zēr-Aššur-ukīn, who are known as scribes of the Assur temple.¹² The one-column tablet is poorly preserved but can be restored with the help of another exemplar of the ritual tablet, K. 3996+4089+9281, as identified by Köcher. This tablet, my duplicate B, comes from Nineveh and is written in “landscape” orientation (for the autograph, see fig. 1 below).¹³ The text is presented below in transcription and translation; restorations follow F. Köcher’s edition if not otherwise stated.¹⁴ Variants of the duplicates are noted in the footnotes.

TRANSCRIPTION

- 1 *enûma nēpešu* ¹*ša*¹ [*muššu*^u *teppušu*]
 ————— (ruling only in A)
 2 *én ġá.e lú kù.ga.me.en* [*tamannu*¹⁵]
 3 *én šamnu ellu šamnu ebbu én me.šè ba.da.ri*¹⁶ *ana šamni* ¹*tanaddi*¹ []¹⁷
 4 [*én sa ħul*] *du.ğ.ù.da* 3-ta.àm *ana libbi napšalti tamannu*
 5 *én sağ.gig* ¹*é*¹.*[ku]r.ta nakkaptišu*¹⁸ / *püssu*¹⁹ *tumašša*²
 6 ¹*elpēta püssu tarakkas én sağ.gig mul an.gin*₇ *nakkaptišu tumašša*²⁰
 7 *én sağ.gig ġú.sa.a MIN kišāssu tumašša*²
 8 *én anamdika šipta qāt imittišu tumašša*²
 9 *én* ^d*nin.ì.si.in.na qāt šumēlišu tumašša*²
 10 *én úš ħul.ğál papān libbišu*²¹ *tumašša*²
 11 *én* ^d*en.ki en nam.ti.la.ke*₄²² *rapaštašu tumašša*²

⁹ M. J. Geller, “Incipits and Rubrics,” in A. R. George and I. L. Finkel, eds., *Wisdom, Gods and Literature: Studies in Assyriology in Honour of W. G. Lambert* (Winona Lake, Indiana, 2000), pp. 227 and 229.

¹⁰ There is a slight indication that the incantations *én izi ħuš* and *én me.šè ba.da.ri* might have been part of tablet 9 of the series. The number of *Muššu*^u spells would then, accordingly, total 17.

¹¹ Köcher, *BAM* 215 and “Die Ritualtafel,” pp. 13–20, and Finkel, “*Muššu*^u, Qutāru, and the Scribe Tanittu-Bēl,” pp. 100–102.

¹² For the colophon, see H. Hunger, *BAK*, nos. 252–54.

¹³ I wish to thank the Trustees of the British Museum for granting me permission to publish the text. I am, as always, very grateful to C. B. F. Walker for his kind permission to study and collate the manuscripts.

¹⁴ Note that Köcher could make use of a rough copy by G. Meier that showed the tablet in a better

state of preservation; see idem, “Die Ritualtafel,” p. 13, n. 4.

¹⁵ Restored according to *Šurpu*, “Tablet I,” l. 4.

¹⁶ A omits the incantation.

¹⁷ Perhaps to be restored in A on the basis of *AMT* 67,3, l. 7' *ana šamni*(¹+GEŠ) *tanaddi*(¹ŠUB)-*ma tapaš-šaš*(¹ŠEŠ₄), “you recite over the oil and anoint.” In all likelihood, the conjurer would anoint himself; note that the reading *tappaššaš* is likewise possible. In B there does not seem to be enough space for this restoration. Note that the former incantation also appears in the ritual tablet of *Maqlû* (IX l. 142) followed by the instruction “*ša šamni*,” “concerning oil.”

¹⁸ In A.

¹⁹ In B.

²⁰ A omits the verb in ll. 6 to 15.

²¹ A reads *libbi*.

²² A reads: *én* ^d*en.ki tu.ğ.ti.la.ke*₄.

FIG. 1a.—K. 3996 + K. 4089 + K. 981, 8.5 cm × 13 cm × 13 cm, obv.

FIG. 1b.—K. 3996 + K. 4089 + K. 981, 8.5 cm × 13 cm, rev.

- 12 **én šimmatu** MIN ištu giššišu ša imitti adi kinšišu tumašša²
 13 **én kišpū zirūtu** ištu kinšišu adi šēpišu²³ tumašša²
 14 **én kima šamē u eršeti** ištu giššišu ša šumēli adi kinšišu tumašša²
 15 **én izi huš** ištu kinšišu adi šēpišu tumašša²
 16 [ištu an]nâ <tētepšu> ištu qaqqadi adi šēpišu
 17 [dām ^{geš}erēni tal]tanappat²⁴
 18 kima annâ tētepšu arkīšu abnī tukaššar
 19 **én me.šē ba.da.ri** abnī aḥi imitti u qāti imitti
 20 **én sa ḥul du.ḡ.ū.da** abnī aḥi šumēlišu
 21 **én i.ba.aḥ** MIN abnī qāti šumēli
 22 **én me.šē ba.da.ri én libli ^dgirra** abnī qabli imitti u šumēli
 23 **én šu²u šumšu** abnī sagalli gišši imitti u šumēli
 24 **én pa.ra.na.ḥu.un.na²⁵** abnī išāti kāsisti kinši imitti u šumēli
 25 **én me.šē ba.da.ri** abnī šimmati šēpi imittišu
 26 **én i.ba.aḥ** MIN abnī šimmati šēpi šumēli
 27 **én ^{geš}suḥḥuš dalla kù.ga én mu ḥul.bi sar.a**
 28 ār suḥḥuši qāti u šēpišu tarakkas
 29 **én su.ḡ.ba ki kù.ga** šipāti tamâta ša unīqi u puḥatti lā peṭiti MIN (= qāti u šēpišu tarakkas)
 30 **én an.bàra gig.ga** šipāti sāmāti ^{geš}erša talammi
 31 ištu annâ tētepšu qutārī tuqattar
 32 **én zà.ḥi.li^{sar} ^ukur.ra^{sar}** qutārī pešūti [ina] muḥḥi [. . .] tašakkan
 33 **én ^den.ki.e.ne ^dnin.ki.e.ne²⁶** ina MIN²⁷ (= muḥḥi [] tašakkan²⁸
 34 **én udug ḥul.ḡál gedim idim kur.ra** qutārī ša gizzi [ina rēš ^{geš}erši tašakkan]
 35 **én an.ki ba lú ki ba** qutārī²⁹ burrumūti ina šēpīt ^{geš}erši tašakkan
 36 **én anamdi šipta ana puḥur ilāni kalāma³⁰** mē ana ^{lú}marši tasalla²
 37 **én anamdi mē ša mašmaš ilāni idār³¹** ^{geš}erši mē tanaddi
 38 **én saḡ.ba saḡ.ba** zisurrâ ^{geš}erša teššir
 39 **én tummu bitu** mašḥata [(. . .) ta]šappakma
 40 zisurrâ bāba teššir bāba tutārma qātka ina muḥḥi dalti lā [tum]madma
 41 **én ab.ta nam.mu.un.da.ku₄.ku₄.e.ne** ana muḥḥi tamannu
 42 **bāba tepettīma kakki ēri ša ina rēš ^{lú}marši** šaknu tanaššīma ina rēšīšu³²
 43 i[] **én imin.bi an.[na]** tamannu³³

TRANSLATION

- 1 When [you perform] the ritual 'of' [Muššu²u]:
 2 The incantation "I am a pure man"—[you recite].

²³ In B in singular.²⁴ B omits ll. 16–17.²⁵ A reads **a.ra.na.**[].²⁶ A omits **^dnin.ki.e.ne**.²⁷ A reads KIMIN.²⁸ B reads **ina** MIN MIN.²⁹ A reads KIMIN.³⁰ A omits **kalāma**.³¹ B reads *itāt*.³² A: *rēši*.³³ A omits this line.

- 3 The incantation “Pure oil, holy oil” (and) the incantation “Where have you turned to?”—you recite over the oil [and you anoint yourself[?]].
- 4 [The incantation] “To loosen [evil muscle]”—you recite three times over the salve.
- 5 The incantation “Head disease from the Ekur temple”—you rub his temples/his forehead.
- 6 You bind a rush around his forehead. The incantation “Head disease, star, like in heaven”—you rub his temples.
- 7 The incantation “Head disease, neck muscle, neck muscle”—you rub his neck.
- 8 The incantation “I recite the incantation”—you rub his right hand.
- 9 The incantation “Ninisina”—you rub his left hand.
- 10 The incantation “Evil death”—you rub the area around his navel.
- 11 The incantation “Enki, lord of the life-giving spell”—you rub his hips.
- 12 The incantation “Paralysis, ditto”—you rub his right waist down to his knee.
- 13 The incantation “Hated evil machinations”—you rub his knee down to his foot.
- 14 The incantation “When heaven and earth”—you rub his left waist down to his knee.
- 15 The incantation “Fierce Fire”—you rub his knee down to his foot.
- 16 [As soon as you have done] this, you apply
- 17 extract of cedar from his head to his feet.
- 18 After you have done this, you string amulet stones together.
- 19 The incantation “Where have you turned to?”—stones for his right arm and his right hand.
- 20 The incantation “To loosen evil muscle”—stones for his left arm.
- 21 The incantation “Ibaḥ, ditto”—stones for his left hand.
- 22 The incantation “Where have you turned to?” (and) the incantation “May Girra extinguish”—stones for his right and left side.
- 23 The incantation “Šu³u is his name”—stones for the *sagallu* disease of the right and left waist.
- 24 The incantation “Araṇaḥuna”—stones for long-lasting fever of the right and left knee.
- 25 The incantation “Where have you turned to?”—stones for paralysis of the right foot.
- 26 The incantation “Ibaḥ, ditto”—stones for paralysis of the left foot.
- 27 The incantation “Date palm, bright and pure” (and) the incantation “He was named for evil”—
- 28 you bind a branch of a young date palm around his hands and his feet.
- 29 The incantation “Shepherd, on pure earth”—(you bind) woven wool from a not yet mounted kid (and) from a not yet mounted lamb (around his hands and feet).
- 30 The incantation “Broad heaven, the disease”—you wrap red wool around the bed.
- 31 As soon as you have done this, you burn incense.
- 32 The incantation “Cress, mint”—you place white fumigants over . . .
- 33 The incantation “Enki gods, Ninki goddesses”—you place over . . .
- 34 The incantation “Evil Utukku demon, tremendous spirit of the dead”—you place fumigants of the “he-goat” kind on top of the sickbed.
- 35 The incantation “In heaven and earth, man on earth”—you place multicolored fumigants at the foot of the sickbed.
- 36 The incantation “I recite the incantation for the trial of all gods”—you sprinkle water on the sick person.

- 37 The incantation “I pour the water from the conjurer of the gods”—you pour water around the sickbed.
 38 The incantation “Oath, oath”—you draw a circle of flour [around the sickbed].
 39 The incantation “Be conjured, house”—you pile up roasted flour and
 40 you draw a circle of flour around the gate. You close the gate, but your hand does not have to touch the door!
 41 The incantation “They shall not enter through the opening”—you recite over it.
 42 You open the gate and lift the weapon of *ēru* wood that was deposited at the sick person’s head and
 43 you []. The incantation “Seven are you in heaven” [].³⁴

COMMENTARY

Köcher divided the *Muššu^u* ritual instructions into three parts: the opening ceremony (ll. 1–3), specific exorcistic as well as therapeutic measures (ll. 4–36), and prophylactic actions (ll. 37–43).³⁵ In the following, I propose a somewhat different structure and nomenclature, that is, standard opening rites (ll. 1–3), instructions that constitute the main body of the ritual (ll. 4–26), and, finally, standard concluding rites (ll. 27–43).

Lines 1–3: Standard Opening Rites

At the beginning of any encounter with the supernatural, prophylactic measures have to be taken. The incantation **én ġá.e lú kù.ga.me.en**, which is also attested in the ritual tablets of *Šurpu* and *Ili ul ide*, authorizes the conjurer to perform the ritual. The spell **én šamnu ellu šamnu ebbu**, which also forms part of *Maqlû* mentioned by Köcher, belongs to the *Kultmittelbeschwörungen* genre.

Lines 4–26: Main Body of the Muššu^u Ritual

It seems that only the incantations quoted in these lines belong to *Muššu^u* proper. Support for this interpretation comes from the line “from head to toe” found in medicinal treatments in general, in this case starting with the temples and ending with the left foot. The instruction in l. 15 of reciting the spell “Fierce fire” while rubbing the knee and foot on the left side of the body completes the rubbing therapy. Likewise, the instruction in l. 26 for magical stones for the left foot concludes the preparation of amulets. In this regard, I prefer to understand the incantations and ritual instructions that follow as measures that are no longer connected to the actual *Muššu^u* treatment. As will be shown below, these instructions are of a rather apotropaic as well as purifying nature and constitute other healing events as well as religious ceremonies. In contrast, however, Finkel suggests that all the incantations were included in the *Muššu^u* series.³⁶

The list of spells is loosely constructed according to thematic association with the body. Thus, the order of incantations quoted in the ritual tablet does not follow their order in the

³⁴ For duplicate A ll. 44–58 and the colophon, see Köcher, “Die Ritualtafel,” p. 13. Duplicate B partially preserves Assurbanipal colophon c–e, for which see Hunger, *BAK*, no. 319, pp. 97–98.

³⁵ Köcher, “Die Ritualtafel,” pp. 14–15.

³⁶ Finkel, “*Muššu^u*, Qutāru, and the Scribe Tannitu-Bēl,” p. 101.

Muššu^u series; nor are all *Muššu^u* spells covered. What we find is the following: ll. 3 and 20, *én sa ħul du₈.ù.da* = *Muššu^u* VIII/c; l. 5, *én saġ.gig 'é¹.[ku]r.ta* = *Muššu^u* I; l. 6, *én saġ.gig mul an.gin₇* = *Muššu^u* II/b; l. 7, *én saġ.gig gú.sa.a min* = *Muššu^u* III/a; l. 8, *én anamdika šipta* = *Muššu^u* IV/a; l. 9, *én ^dnin.ì.si.in.na* = *Muššu^u* V/a; l. 10, *én úš ħul.ġál* = *Muššu^u* VI; l. 11, *én ^den.ki en tu₆ nam.ti.la.ke₄* = *Muššu^u* VII/a; l. 12, *én šimmatu šimmatu* = *Muššu^u* VIII/a; l. 13, *én kišpū zirūtu* = *Muššu^u* VIII/b; l. 14, *én kima šamê u eršeti* = *Muššu^u* IX/a; l. 15, *én izi ħuš* = *Muššu^u* IX[?]; ll. 19, 22, and 25, *én me.šè ba.da.ri* = *Muššu^u* IX[?] (also included in UDU.G.ĤUL); ll. 21 and 26, *én i.ba.aḥ MIN* = *Muššu^u* VIII/d; l. 22, *én libli ^dgirra* = *Muššu^u* VIII/p; l. 23, *én šu^u šumšu* = *Muššu^u* VIII/1 or VIII/m (note that these are two different incantations); l. 24, *én pa.ra.na.ḥu.un.na* = *Muššu^u* VIII/g.³⁷

Lines 27–42: Standard Concluding Rites

The standard concluding rites include not only apotropaic rites to ward off evil, but also rites to gain back cultic purity. Often we can hardly differentiate between these two actions, since those objects or media used for the purification are apotropaic per se.

(1) Lines 27–30: Apotropaic and Purificatory Rites Using the Date Palm

The incantations *én ^ġēš^šsubḥuš dalla kù.ga*, *én mu ħul.bi sar.a* and *én an.bàra gig.ga* form part of UDU.G.ĤUL tablet XII.³⁸ There they are followed by a rubric stating the purpose of recitation; for example, “Date palm, bright and pure” (UH XII/c) is “for binding the shoot of a date palm to a sick person,” and the spell “He was named for evil” (UH XII/d) is “for binding the limbs of a sick man with a date palm frond.”³⁹ The latter instructions can also be found in the *Muššu^u* ritual tablet, but here both incantations are to be recited while binding the hands and feet of the sick person with a date palm frond.

Recently, F. A. M. Wiggermann drew attention to the magical properties of the shoot and the frond of the date palm as well as of cornel wood (for which see below).⁴⁰ The shoot was believed to eliminate sin. The frond of the date palm had apotropaic powers. Consequently, the *Muššu^u* ritual instructions from ll. 27–30 are concerned with warding off evil as well as with the purification of the person. The incantation “He was named for evil” states, as quoted by Wiggermann, that Ea advises Marduk to split a date palm frond and to bind it to the limbs of the sick person because it will guard against an evil death and disease of the head. Note that also the encircling of the sickbed as described in l. 30 has an apotropaic effect (which will be discussed below).

³⁷ The references given in *ibid.*, pp. 101–2, concerning the incantations *én kišpū zirūtu* and *én libli ^dgirra* should, accordingly, be changed (see n. 2, above). Contra Finkel’s suggestion (*ibid.*, p. 101) that those incantations that constitute the incipit of a series tablet imply the recitation of all spells included in the respective tablet, one should note that, as a rule, when more than one incantation is to be recited, their incipits are given; see, for example, *Muššu^u* ritual tablet, ll. 3, 22, and 27; *Maqlû* IX, ll. 148 and 149; *Lamaštu* III, rev. ll. 18 and 19; for which, see D. W.

Myhrman, “Die Labartu-Texte,” ZA 16 (1902): 192.

³⁸ See Geller, “A Middle Assyrian Tablet of Utukkū Lemnūtu, Tablet 12,” *Iraq* 42 (1980): 28–31. Geller very kindly informs me that what he “thought was Tablet XII years ago turns out to be a combined and very long Tablet XIII–XV.” So the three incipits here, attributed to UH XII, belong to UH XIII–XV.

³⁹ *Ibid.*, pp. 29 and 30.

⁴⁰ F. A. M. Wiggermann, *Mesopotamian Protective Spirits: The Ritual Texts*, Cuneiform Monographs 1 (Groningen, 1992), pp. 67–70.

(2) Lines 31–35: Purification by Incense

The use of fumigation as a medicinal treatment is well known.⁴¹ In addition, the burning of incense plays an important role in magical and lateutic cult because of its association with purity and impurity. Fumigation is part of the veneration of gods and, accordingly, the burning of sweet-smelling fumigants accompanies sacrifices, prayers, as well as intercessions.⁴² In contrast, malodorous fumigants are often used as apotropaic means to chase away demonic powers.⁴³ Unfortunately, we know little about the nature of the fumigants used during the recitation of the magical formulas **én zà.ḫi.li^{sar} úkur.ra^{sar}** (= UH XV/f), **én ^den.ki.e.ne ^dnin.ki.e.ne** (= UH XV/g), **én udug ḫul.ḡál gedim kur.ra** (= UH XV/h), and **én an.ki ba lú ki ba** (= UH XV/i);⁴⁴ these incantations are also included in the *Qutāru* series.⁴⁵ In a duplicate partially edited by Finkel (BM 41191), the spell “Cress, mint” is to be recited over fumigants (*šipta annita ana muḫḫi qut[āri . . .]*), and the instructions for “Enki gods, Ninkī goddesses” read: “you shall recite this spell over white fumigants and place it [= the censer?] at the doorjambs” (*šipta annita ana muḫḫi qutāri pešūti tamannūma ina sippi bābi tašakkan*), the latter instruction providing more details about the rite than stated in the ritual tablet.

(3) Lines 36–37: Purification by Water

The instructions in these lines are again of an apotropaic character because of the purifying nature of water.⁴⁶ They occur frequently, singly, or in combination with each other, in other complex rituals, such as *Ilī ul īde*, *Lamaštu*, *Maqlū*, *Šurpu*, and *Bit Mēseri*. As Köcher points out, the incantation **én anamdi šipta ana puḫur ilāni kalāma** is also included in the ritual tablets of *Ilī ul īde* (KAR 90 rev. 11) and in *Maqlū* (IX l. 98). In the latter, it is connected with the libation of water.⁴⁷

(4) Lines 38–43: Apotropaic Rites in the Sick Man's Home

The spell **én saḡ.ba saḡ.ba**, which belongs to the series ZÌ.SUR.RA.MEŠ⁴⁸ is attested in the *Lamaštu* ritual tablet, in a ritual for building a house, SpTU II 16,⁴⁹ and the *Maqlū*

⁴¹ For attestations see, CAD Q 166a s.v. *qatāru*, mng. 3 c). See also D. Goltz, *Studien zur altorientalischen und griechischen Heilkunde* (Wiesbaden, 1974), pp. 84–86, and P. Herrero, *La thérapeutique mésopotamienne* (Paris, 1984), pp. 109–10.

⁴² For the veneration of gods, see W. G. Lambert, *Babylonian Wisdom Literature* (Oxford, 1960), p. 104, ll. 135–36; for sacrifices, see F. Thureau-Dangin, *RAcc*, p. 14 ii: 16; for prayers, see H. Zimmern, *BBR*, p. 194, l. 62. For intercessions, note Gilgameš Epic, tablet III, ll. 35–46 (Ninsun intercedes for Gilgameš before Šamaš).

⁴³ Among these foul-smelling fumigants are, for example, sulphur (*Šurpu*, p. 53: 4; *Maqlū* IX, ll. 109, 115 and 117), the hair of animals (*BAM* 248 iv 41; *BAM* 183: 11), or flour mixed with the peel of an onion (*Lamaštu* II, 4R 58, i: 32).

⁴⁴ See Geller, “Incipits and Rubrics,” p. 227, ll. 24'–27'.

⁴⁵ See Köcher, “Die Ritualtafel,” p. 15; see also Finkel, “Muššu²u, Qutāru, and the Scribe Tanittu-Bēl,” pp. 101–4.

⁴⁶ See CAD S 85b s.v. *salāhu* A, mng. 1, and CAD S 98a s.v. *salā²u* C.

⁴⁷ See T. Abusch, “Mesopotamian Anti-Witchcraft Literature: Texts and Studies,” *JNES* 33 (1974): 253.

⁴⁸ The spell has been published by W. H. Ph. Römer, “Eine Beschwörung gegen den ‘Bann,’” in H. Behrens, D. Loding, and M. T. Roth, eds., *DUMU-E₂-DUB-BA: Studies in Honor of Åke W. Sjöberg* (Philadelphia: 1989), pp. 465–79. For the edition of the two-tablet series, see now W. Schramm, *Bann, Bann! Eine sumerisch-akkadische Beschwörungsserie*, Göttinger Arbeitshefte zur altorientalischen Literatur, Heft 2 (Göttingen, 2001).

⁴⁹ For these references, see Köcher, “Die Ritualtafel,” p. 20, and W. H. Ph. Römer, “Eine Beschwörung gegen den Bann,” p. 466 with nn. 9 and 10.

ritual tablet IX 149; **én tummu bitu** is quoted in *Bit Mēseri* tablets I and III–IV⁵⁰ and in the *Maqlû* ritual IX 148, where it follows **én saġ.ba saġ.ba**. Both incantations are, again, associated with the drawing of a circle of flour.⁵¹ The magical formula **én ab.ta nam.mu.un.da.ku₄.ku₄.e.ne** is included in the “zi pad” incantations, but no rubric is given.⁵² In the ritual instruction for “blocking the entry of the enemy in someone’s house” (*Šēp lemutti ina bit amēli parāsu*)—also referred to in KAR 44 l. 20—the spell is associated with the cleansing of the house during the night of the fourth day of the ritual.⁵³ As Köcher points out, this incantation as well was included in the *Lamaštu* ritual tablet.⁵⁴ The ritual instructions conclude with the incantation **én imin.bi an.[na]**, which constitutes UH XII/a, as identified by Köcher.⁵⁵ In the UDU.G.HUL tablet, this spell is followed by the rubric “incantation for putting cornel wood on the head of a sick man.”⁵⁶ As for the function and magical properties of *ēru* wood, Wiggermann concludes that “it protects the exorcist against the forces of evil, purifies the body on behalf of the gods, puts to flight evil.”⁵⁷

RUBBING

The verb *muššu²u* is translated in the dictionaries as “the act of rubbing”; the noun is used mainly as the name of the series.⁵⁸ It occurs exclusively in medical and magical-medical contexts, where it is attested as a treatment for afflicted (and, particularly, for paralyzed) limbs, i.e., hands, arms, feet, and legs, as well as a treatment for the belly of women about to deliver a baby.⁵⁹

Lines 5 to 15 of the *Muššu²u* ritual tablet recommend the rubbing treatment proper. Structured in the order *a capite ad calcem*, the whole body is rubbed, starting with the temples, then the neck and arms, followed by the abdominal area, down to the legs. During the topical application, spells are recited. This interdependency of nonmagical and magical elements, not only characteristic of the *Muššu²u* healing event, also occurs in l. 4 of the ritual tablet mentioning the healing balm. The salve was probably of medicinal benefit but was enhanced by three separate sets of magical recitations.⁶⁰

It is important to stress that the overall direction of movement is from head to toe and, in particular, from the limbs downwards. This structuring should not surprise us, since it can be observed in a whole string of texts independent of their genre: in medical

⁵⁰ See Wiggermann, *Mesopotamian Protective Spirits*, pp. 111–12, with references given.

⁵¹ For *Maqlû*, see T. Abusch, “Mesopotamian Anti-Witchcraft Literature,” p. 254.

⁵² See R. Borger, “Die erste Tafel der zi-pà Beschwörungen (ASKT 11),” in W. Röllig, ed., *lišan mithurti: Festschrift Wolfram Freiherr von Soden zum 19.4.1968 gewidmet von Schülern und Mitarbeitern*, AOAT 1 (Neukirchen-Vluyn, 1969), p. 10, §XXI, and his additions in “Neues Material zu ASKT Nr. 11,” *WO* 5 (1979): 172.

⁵³ See Wiggermann, *Mesopotamian Protective Spirits*, pp. 4 and 16, l. 159.

⁵⁴ Further attestations are quoted in *ibid.*, p. 30 n. 258^b. See, for example, R. Caplice, “Namburbi Texts in the British Museum V,” *Or.*, n.s., 40 (1971):

168–69. See text 66 (K. 3443), ll. 5′–8′, quoting also **én tummu bitu** with the instructions in the *Muššu²u* ritual tablet, ll. 40–42.

⁵⁵ He refers to VAT 9833 (= KAR 24) studied by E. Ebeling, “Zwei Tafeln der Serie utukku limnûtu,” *A/O* 16 (1952–53): 295–98.

⁵⁶ See Geller, “A Middle Assyrian Tablet,” p. 28, l. 1′.

⁵⁷ Wiggermann, *Mesopotamian Protective Spirits*, p. 68; an exhaustive collection of attestations in magical texts can be found on pp. 79–85.

⁵⁸ CAD M/II 282a, “to rub, to rub with liniments”; *AHW*. 685a, “einreiben, salben.”

⁵⁹ See references given in CAD M/II 282a.

⁶⁰ As generally assumed, the numbers three and seven are of special importance in magic.

handbooks,⁶¹ divinatory compendia,⁶² lexical texts,⁶³ and in literary compositions.⁶⁴ Thus, we may interpret the scheme of the *Muššu²u* ritual in the light of the common denominator *a capite ad calcem*.

If we recall the practice of rubbing in Western medicine, which is massaging towards the trunk, we may presume another reason for the head-to-toe order in the *Muššu²u* ritual. The downwards direction, that is, the sequence head-neck-hands and belly-back-hips-loins-feet, suggests that it is intended to expel injurious agents from the body or to induce the demon/disease inhabiting the body part to leave it by the way of an extremity. There is no question, I believe, that massage (*Muššu²u*) is a practice that is clearly therapeutic, but the centrifugal direction of its manipulation indicates a relation to the belief that disease is caused by beings that the massage is intended to expel. Once these beings are driven out, the body parts are protected by tying amulets to them.

TYING KNOTS AND AMULETS

The healing event of *Muššu²u*, as far as the ritual tablet is concerned, covers the consecration of stones. The preparation of amulets is outlined in greater detail in magical-medical texts. One important example is the Kuyunjik text K. 2542+, a four-column tablet written in Babylonian ductus.⁶⁵ The tablet includes several prescriptions and incantations; col. i gives instructions for amulets for afflictions of the neck, cols. ii–iv lists amulets for symptoms of paralysis. The tablet cites the *Muššu²u* spells VIII/d *én i.ba.aḥ min* and VIII/e *én ni.ip.pa.aḥ min* as well as the incantation *én me.šè ba.da.ri*. The following passage belongs to col. iii, which deals with paralysis of limbs on the left side of the body. Rev. iii: 6–12, 16:

na₄šēru na₄parzillu na₄šadānu šābitu na₄gišnugallu
na₄mūšu na₄šû zikar u sinniš na₄UGU ašgikû⁶⁶

⁶¹ See the 45-tablet series of prescriptions entitled “If the upper part of a man’s head is feverish” (*šumma amēlu muḥḥašu umma ukāl*), for which see Köcher, “Spätbabylonische Texte aus Uruk,” in Ch. Habrich et al., eds., *Medizinische Diagnostik in Geschichte und Gegenwart: Festschrift für H. Goerke zum sechzigsten Geburtstag* (Munich, 1978), pp. 17–39. Some of the Ninveh duplicates preserving extraserial prescriptions state in the colophon “remedies arranged from the top of the head to the toenails” (*bulḫi ištu muḥḥi adi šupri*); see, for example, *BAM* 574 iv 56 (first tablet of the chapter “If a man suffers from a cough,” *šumma amēlu suāla maruṣ*), or *BAM* 575 iv 59 (second tablet of the chapter “If a man suffers from a cough”). For a colophon (“Assurbanipal Typ q”), see Hunger, *BAK*, p. 103, no. 329.

⁶² This principle can be found in the physiognomic omen treatise *Šumma alamdimmû* as well as in the medical omen handbook *Sakikkû*; for *Šumma alamdimmû*, see my *Die babylonisch-assyrische Morphoskopie*, AfO Beiheft 27 (Vienna, 2000); for medical omens, see N. Heeßel, *Babylonische-assyrische Diagnostik*, AOAT 43 (Münster, 2000), and R. Labat,

Traité akkadien de diagnostics et pronostics médicaux (Paris, 1951).

⁶³ The lexical text referred to is ugu.mu, “my forehead,” for which see *MSL*, vol. 9 (Rome, 1967), pp. 51–73.

⁶⁴ An enumeration of afflicted parts of the body can be found, for example, in *Ludlul bēl nēmeqi* (text duplicate Si 55), for which see W. G. Lambert, *Babylonian Wisdom Literature* (Oxford, 1960), pp. 52–55, and in the Sumerian myth of Enki and Ninhursaga, for which see P. Attinger, “Enki et Ninhursaga,” *ZA* 74 (1984): 1–52 (esp. pp. 28–30).

⁶⁵ S. Langdon published in *BE* 31, pp. 57–66, transliteration and translation of parts of the text; his copy can be found on pls. 50–51. When he studied the text, the tablet consisted of fragments K. 2542+K. 2772+K. 6030+DT 85+DT 170. Köcher added the fragments K. 3300+K. 10223 (= *AMT* 29,4) and K. 13382. A photograph of the tablet can be found in W. Horowitz, *Mesopotamian Cosmic Geography* (Winona Lake, Indiana, 1998), pls. 8–9.

⁶⁶ Written UGU.AŠ.GÌ.GÌ. Recently, A. Schuster drew attention to the reading of the logogram as *agusigu*; see *N.A.B.U.* 2001/39).

na₄uqnû na₄ḫulālu na₄šurru šalmu na₄ayyartu
 na₄zibītu na₄zalāqu na₄muššaru na₄sāmtu

16 abnī šimmati ša qāti šumēli ina nīri šalmi tašakkak
 7 kišrī tarakkas ēma tarakkasu **én i.ba.ah** MIN tamannu
 ina qāti šumēlišu tarakkassu

Muššu⁷u VIII/d follows here in extenso.

KA INIM.MA ša š[imma]t[u]

A stone called snake, iron, magnetite, alabaster, a stone called *mūšu*; a stone called *šū* in its male and female variety; a stone called *agusīgu*, lapis lazuli; a stone called *ḫulālu*; black obsidian, coral; a stone called *zibītu*; a stone called *zalāqu*; a stone called *muššaru*, carnelian.

You string together (these) 16 (stone) beads on a black string for paralysis of the left hand. You tie seven knots; whenever you tie a knot you recite the incantation “*ibaḫ ditto*”; you bind it around his left hand.

Muššu⁷u VIII/d

Incantation for Paralysis

Tying a knot in magic implies hindering the actions of demons due to the symbolic relationship between its function (to bind and to tie as a practical as well as mnemonic device) and the homeopathic or imitative principle in magic.⁶⁷ Two effects of knots should be distinguished: beneficial and harmful, depending on the intention of the person who ties the knot as well as on the status of that person (witch or conjurer). Demons and their corresponding diseases were believed to be caught by knots, bands, threads, strings, or amulets that were fixed around those parts of the body possessed by the evil spirit. In the healing event, knots generally serve a benevolent purpose that can be further categorized according to its active or passive efficacy. An illustrative example for the active

⁶⁷ For the use and role of magic knots in ancient cultures, see P. Wolters, “Faden und Knoten als Amulett,” *Beiheft gewidmet Hermann Usener zum siebzigsten Geburtstag*, Archiv für Religionswissenschaft, vol. 8 (Leipzig, 1905), pp. 1–22; I. Scheftelowitz, *Das Schlingen- und Netzmotiv im Glauben und Brauch der*

Völker, Religionsgeschichtliche Versuche und Vorarbeiten, vol. 12/2 (Gießen, 1912); S. Gandz, “The Knot in Hebrew Literature, or from the Knot to the Alphabet,” *Isis* 14 (1930): 189–214; C. L. Day, *Quipus and Witches’ Knots* (Lawrence, Kansas, 1967) (esp. chap. 2, “Magic Knots,” pp. 41–79).

effect of binding is the *Šurpu* incantation V–VI, ll. 144–71: “Incantation. Uttu took the thread into her hand, Ištar made the thread of Uttu ready, made the skillful woman sit down to her piece of clothing; she spun with a spindle white wool, black wool, a double thread, a mighty thread, a great thread, a multicolored thread, a thread that cuts the oath, against the words of bad portent, an oath (caused) by men, against the curses of the gods, a thread that cuts the oath; she tied the head, the hands, the feet of this man, so that Marduk, son of Eridu, the prince, could rip it off with his pure hands. May he remove the thread (representing) the oath into the field, the pure place, may the evil oath step aside, may this man be purified, cleansed, may he be entrusted into the propitious hands of his god!”⁶⁸

It is difficult to determine the exact nature of tying amulets in the *Muššu⁷u* ritual. The stone strings might have an apotropaic, hence passive, character as hinted at in the discussion on rubbing above. It is likewise possible to understand the tying and binding of limbs as the ultimate action of catching the demon, whose grip had already been relaxed by massaging.

DRAWING CIRCLES

Knots symbolize rings, which, alternately, characterize completeness as well as protective encircling—another well-known feature of rites of magic.⁶⁹ The wrapping of red wool around the sickbed (l. 30), pouring water around the sickbed (l. 38), or drawing a circle of flour around the bed (l. 39) and the gates of the sick man’s house (l. 41) serve as a defense against demons and are intended to keep the patient safe. Demons were thought to have been unable to penetrate such a shield.⁷⁰ The symbolic meaning of such protective circles in order to avert demons and their evil influences, that is, the roundness, is a direct contrast to the assumed location of evil spirits, i.e., corners and angles.⁷¹ These places symbolized, in turn, the opposite of roundness, i.e., sharpness or acuteness, and were thought to have been preferred by demons, since, as we are told in some passages, they could leave, enter, or hide there. In the Šuila prayer to Nusku, KAR 58⁷² ll. 42–44, for example, it is said that facing the light of the Nusku Šēdu demon, watcher demon, evil Alluḥappu-net demon, Gallû demon, catcher demon, evil god, Utukku demon, as well as the Lilû and Lilitu demons are forced to step out from the hidden corners in which they had taken refuge.⁷³ Also the incantation **én ab.ta nam.mu.un.da.ku₄ku₄e.ne** conjures demons in order to block

⁶⁸ The translation is based on the translation of E. Reiner, *Šurpu: A Collection of Sumerian and Akkadian Incantations*, AfO Beiheft 11 (Graz, 1958), pp. 34–35.

⁶⁹ For the symbolism of circles see W. E. Pax, “Circumambulatio,” *Reallexikon für Antike und Christentum*, vol. 3 (1975), pp. 143–52.

⁷⁰ With regard to an incomplete design, one is reminded of a scene in Goethe’s *Faust* when Faust first meets Mephistopheles. Taking the form of a poodle, Mephistopheles could enter Faust’s study only because of an inaccurately drawn devil-charm; as Mephistopheles remarks: “Beschaut es recht! Es ist nicht gut gezogen; / Der eine Winkel, der nach außen zu, / Ist, wie du siehst, ein wenig offen.”

⁷¹ For the symbolic meaning of angles, see, for example, R. Meringer, “Spitze, Winkel, Knie im ur-

sprünglichen Denken,” *Wörter und Sachen* 11 (1928): 114–23; H. Güntert, “Weiteres zum Begriff ‘Winkel’ im ursprünglichen Denken,” *Wörter und Sachen* 11 (1928): 124–43. For the corners as locations of spirits, compare the statement of H. Weiser-Aall in E. Hoffmann-Krayer et al., eds., *Handwörterbuch des deutschen Aberglaubens* (Berlin and Leipzig, 1927–42), vol. 7, p. 1511: “Ähnlich wie die S(chwelle) gilt, auch neben dem Herd, die Ecke als Geistersitz.”

⁷² The most recent treatment of the text is W. Mayer, *Untersuchungen zur Formensprache der babylonischen “Gebetsbeschwörungen,”* Studia Pohl, Series maior 5 (Rome, 1976), pp. 482–89.

⁷³ *šēdu ḥayyāṭu alluḥappu ḥabbilu gallû rābišu ilu lemnu utukku lilû lilitu immedû puzur šaḫāti ina pān^dnūrika šūši.*

their entrance into a house through a corner and niche.⁷⁴ A final example comes from an UDUG.ĤUL incantation stating the characteristics of evil spirits, that is, “the evil Udug-demon is destructive, the evil bailiff-demon stands near the corner, and the evil ghost and evil Galla-demon do not sleep.”⁷⁵

III. CONCLUDING REMARKS

The *Muššu²u* ritual tablet represents a complex ceremony for treating the sick. The main body of the rites deals with the topical application of healing balms and the preparation of amulets. This section is found within the prophylactic and apotropaic measures belonging to the standard repertoire of the conjurer, as evidenced in other complex rituals, such as *Lamaštu*, *Šurpu*, *Ilī ul īde*, *Bīt Mēseri*, or *Maqlū*. Both nonmagical and magical elements are juxtaposed.

If the *Muššu²u* ritual tablet is indeed the manual of a complete ceremony for treating the sick, we may ask for which illness/demons this ritual was performed. Typical examples are cited below.

The attestation of *Muššu²u* spells in magical-medical texts refers to symptoms of paralysis, (*šimmatu*) without specifying the body part,⁷⁶ as well as to paralyzed (or otherwise afflicted) arms, hands, hips, feet, ankles, and heels.⁷⁷ Numbness (*rimûtu*),⁷⁸ *maškadu* disease,⁷⁹ *sagallu* disease,⁸⁰ and fever[?], i.e., “long-lasting fire” (*išātu kāsistu*),⁸¹ are also mentioned. These ailments seem to have the weakness of limbs in common. Some *Muššu²u* spells appear in the context of migraine headaches (SAG.KI.DAB.BA);⁸² others are connected with diseases of the area of the abdomen (*papān libbi*).⁸³ One set of incantations is used in the treatment of afflictions caused by curses (*mamītu*),⁸⁴ witchcraft (*kišpū*),⁸⁵ witchcraft through *zikurudû*,⁸⁶ “Hand of the ghost” (*qāt eṭemmi*),⁸⁷ and “Everything evil” (*mimma lemnu*).⁸⁸

⁷⁴ For the spell in extenso, see Borger, “Die erste Tafel der zi-pā Beschwörungen”; p. 10, ll. 197–98 are paraphrased here.

⁷⁵ Translation follows Geller, *Forerunners to Uduḡ-Ĥul: Sumerian Exorcistic Incantations*, FAOS, vol. 12 (Stuttgart, 1985), p. 54, ll. 617–19; note that the lines are partially restored.

Since a discussion would be beyond the scope of this article, I only mention the location of foundation deposits, in particular of peg deposits, from Early Dynastic through Ur III times; see R. S. Ellis, *Foundation Deposits in Ancient Mesopotamia*, YNER 2 (New Haven and London, 1968). As Ellis pointed out in his discussion on pp. 46–93, the *in situ* findings were placed in corners, under or beside doors as well as close to the “meeting” of walls (see, for example, p. 53 Early Dynastic, Lagaš; p. 58, The Neo-Sumerian Period, Mari; p. 60, Rulers of Lagaš; p. 63, Ur III Deposits in Ur; pp. 65–66, Ur III Deposits in Nippur)—at exactly those areas where demons were believed to find entry. Compare, as one example, the already quoted incantation **én ab.ta nam.mu.un.da.ku₄.ku₄.e.ne**, although dating to the first millennium B.C.E., which mentions not only the corners and angles, but also the gate, threshold, doors, bar, bolt, and

lock of a door (see again Borger, “Die erste Tafel der zi-pā Beschwörungen,” p. 10, ll. 191–96). Note that Ellis, in his discussion “Folklore, Psychology, and Imagination,” in *Foundation Deposits*, pp. 91–93, refers to comparable rituals and to speculations about phallic symbolism. The place where something is put is not taken into account.

⁷⁶ A treatment of all relevant texts will appear in my forthcoming study. In the following, I thus quote only one example. See, for example, *BAM* 398.

⁷⁷ See, for example, K. 2752* (arm), K. 2542+ (hand), BM 98584+ (foot, hips), *BAM* 354 (ankle), *AMT* 69, 9 (heel).

⁷⁸ See *BAM* 194.

⁷⁹ See *BAM* 182.

⁸⁰ See *BAM* 128.

⁸¹ See *STT* 273.

⁸² See BM 41271+.

⁸³ See K. 2426.

⁸⁴ See *BAM* 197.

⁸⁵ See *BAM* 197.

⁸⁶ See *BAM* 159.

⁸⁷ See *AMT* 97, 1.

⁸⁸ See *BAM* 386.

The *Muššu²* ritual tablet overlaps with some of these applications but gives instructions for a cluster of symptoms that have not been attested in magical-medical texts so far: presumably, a grave disease characterized by headaches and afflictions of the limbs, and further described as paralysis, *sagallu* disease, and “long-lasting fever.”

These findings suggest different conclusions:

(1) The ritual tablet is a conflation of sources interpolating different healing events. Accordingly, it does not represent a consecutive and unified ritual.

(2) The *Muššu²* ceremony is performed in case of either headaches or afflictions of the trunk and limbs—leaving it open whether some instructions of the main body of the ritual can be dropped *ad hoc*—or in case all these ailments occur together.

Support for the latter explanation comes from external evidence. It is written by Aulus Cornelius Celsus (first century C.E.), who dedicates a whole chapter in his medical treatise *De medicina* to the therapy of rubbing, which was believed to have been invented by Asclepius. Celsus seems to answer the question of when rubbing is performed and, accordingly, how we may understand the whole ceremony of rubbing. “For both prolonged headaches,” he explains, “are relieved by rubbing of the head, although not at the height of the pain, and any partially paralysed limb is strengthened by being itself rubbed. Much more often, however, some other part is to be rubbed than that which is the seat of the pain and especially when we want to withdraw material from the head or trunk, and therefore rub the arms and legs.”⁸⁹

I would suggest, then, that the *Muššu²* ritual tablet represents a single, unified and structured ceremony that was performed for pain in the head, trunk, and/or limbs.⁹⁰

⁸⁹ Aulus Cornelius Celsus, *De medicina*, trans. W. G. Spencer (Cambridge, Mass., 1935–38), vol. 2, pp. 8–9.

⁹⁰ With regard to the attestation of *Muššu²* in the context of childbirth texts, it likewise illustrates that one of the Greco-Roman measures to induce abortion

includes vigorous massage; see R. Jackson, *Doctors and Diseases in the Roman Empire* (London, 1988), p. 108. It is certainly not a mistake to assume that this treatment has the same effect as rubbing in Babylonian prescriptions in order to facilitate the delivery of a child.