Fragments of *Muššuʾu* incantations from the British Museum

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[The article publishes eight fragments of various incantations that were part of the *Muššuʾu* “Embrocation” book. The fragments dated to the first millennium BCE have been identified by the author during several visits to the British Museum after her publication of the principal text edition of this series in 2007.]

**Keywords:** *Muššuʾu* “Embrocation”; Sumero-Akkadian and Akkadian incantations from first millennium BCE.

The present article makes available eight fragments of incantations that were included in the cuneiform book known in antiquity under the title *Muššuʾu*, “Embrocation”. All fragments come from 1st millennium BCE libraries. It should be noted that two of the fragments published here could equally well belong to the handbook SAG.GIG, “Head disease”, since both books partially overlap. The material does not add new information about the still unknown Tablet IX of *Muššuʾu*. However, there are minor improvements and few new readings that complete the principal edition of the cuneiform text published ten years ago. Four texts come from Assurbanipal’s libraries in Nineveh; four are from Babylon; one fragment was unearthed at Sippar. As discussed in the principal edition of *Muššuʾu*, the incantations of the handbook can be reconstructed on the basis of its series tablets that give the full wording of spells belonging to one chapter and single spells that were transmitted together with medical healing recommendations. However, due to the poor state of preservation four fragments cannot be identified as belonging to a series tablet or to a medical text. Two pieces come from a school environment, which stresses how widely and commonly known was the material incorporated in *Muššuʾu* or SAG.GIG. The following table gives an overview of the incantations according to the distribution of tablet types and their provenance.

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1. I wish to thank the Trustees of The British Museum for granting the permission to publish the cuneiform texts. Special thanks are expressed to C.B.F. Walker and J.J. Taylor for their very kind and helpful collaboration.
2. For the overlapping tablets see the discussion in Böck 2007: 24.
3. Böck 2007. For additions see Böck 2009 and Jiménez 2014: 114-118. Some of the fragments have been independently identified by E. Jiménez, viz. BM 38066, K.13821 as well as K.16347.
### School text

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### Series tablet

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<th>Location</th>
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### Fragment belonging either to a series tablet or a healing recommendation

<table>
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</table>

1. **BM 37697**

Dimensions: 2.8 cm × 4.7 cm. Small fragment from Babylon.

The tablet is included as a school text in the catalogue of P. Gesche’s study on scribal education in first millennium BCE Babylon. As she remarks briefly, the obverse is literary, while the reverse is lexical in nature. The text is not published in hand-copy or further commented upon in Gesche 2001. Only the obverse is transliterated here. The reverse preserves parts of an incantation rather than a lexical text. However, the present author was unable to attribute the remaining lines to a known incantation: lines 3’ and 4’ read [...] asal].lu₂₃ḫi du[mu [...] / [...] l[i]-is-s[uḫ ...].

**Muššu’u V/a 1-3 (Böck 2007: 184)**

**Obv.**

1  [E]N₂₃nin.i₄s[i.in ama kalam.ma.ke₄]
2  [E]gu-la um-[mi mâti]
3  [E]nin.tin.u₅ga ama saģ.gi₄ga.ke₄]
4  [E]m-mi sa[l-mat qaqqadi]
5  [E]ba.u₂tu₃₄nam.[til.la šub.ba ša₂₃gi₄ga.ke₄]
6  [E]N₄a-da-[at šipat balâṭi ana kîs libbi]

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Translation\(^6\)


2. **BM 38066**

Dimensions: 3.7 cm × 3.4 cm.
Small tablet from Babylon.
The obverse is inscribed with the incantation *Muššuʾu* V/f; the remaining signs of the reverse cannot be attributed to any text and are not transliterated here.

\(^6\) The Akkadian text is set in italics.

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Obv.

Muššu’u V/fll. 112-119 (Böck 2007: 204-205)

Obv.
1. [apkal ilâni]4marduk mimma lemnu ša ina $]U-ka li-is-sułḫ
2. [ina eṛši namtarikā lik-k]is ina 3NA₂5nam-tar
3. [‘asaluḫi] lid-di-ka
4. [ina qāti] namtarka 4asaluḫī lig-mi]-ka EN₂-su ša TIN dAMAR.UTU lid-di-ka
5. [šaru ṭābu ša] 4enbilulu li-zi-qa]-ka 3SA₂-ZU ina K[KI.KA]L
6. [qāṭka l]-iš]-2bat
7. [tebîma bullût ša] 4marduk attā]T$U₆.EN₂

Translation


3. BM 72718

Dimensions: 3.8 cm × 3.6 cm.
Small fragment from Sippar.

The fragment is listed in E. Leichty’s and A.K. Grayson’s Catalogue of the Babylonian Tablets in the British Museum, Vol. VII: Tablets from Sippar 2, London 1987, as a school text. In his review of the catalogue M.J. Geller identified the fragment as an extract tablet; in his own words, the tablet contains “ll.1-7 = bilingual incantation, ll. 5-9 = Akkadian incantation.” A quick


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and provisional translation can be found in Lambert’s notebooks (p. 10003), with the help of which the present author got to know the text. After examining the fragment in the British Museum the present author has identified the two incantations as part of Muššu’u or SAG.GIG. The obverse of the fragment is badly destroyed and has traces of two illegible cuneiform signs. The reverse preserves the last lines of the bilingual Sumero-Akkadian incantation Muššu’u III/a or SAG.GIG III/a and a second Akkadian incantation that gives the beginning of Muššu’u IV/c or SAG.GIG VII/c.

Obv.

Rev.

Muššu’u III/a 39b-42 (Böck 2007: 141)

Rev.
1 [šu la₃ en.ki.ke₄ imin.na].meš [ša ᵈ ea sibitišumu]

2 [e.n].e’ ne’ .n[е šumu šušu a]p-[s]i-i it-[a-su-ni šunu abzu.ta ε₂.meš]

3 [u₃.mu.u]n ḫul [b.t]a [su₈, su₈, ne₂.meš]

4 šu-₁₃u-₃u₃ [em-n]u-tum ina tu[p₂-g₂ iṭtanaazzū šumu]

5 [zi] an.na ḫe₂, pad₃, de₃.eš [zi ki.a ḫe₂, pad₃, de₃.eš]

6 niš AN-e lu-₁₃u₂ <ta-mu-₁₃u₂> niš KI-[i lū tamū]

Translation

“They are [seven, the catchers of god Enki/Ea]. They [have emerged from the depth of the abzu ocean]. They are the evil demons [that seek hide] in the corner. Be adjured [by] the Heavens, [be adjured by the Earth]!”

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**Muššu‘u IV/c 55-60 (Böck 2007: 159)**

Rev.

7 \[^{[EN_3\text{maš-m}]ašš\text{g}i\text{g}_2\text{gi}_3\text{ABGAL.DINGIR.MEŠ}^{4}\text{[AMAR.UTU ušumgal šamē u erṣeti}\text{marduk}\]

8 \[^{\text{ilk\ Š}a_2\text{TU}_3\text{-šu}_2\text{TILE\ TU}_5\text{-šu}_2\text{[šalāmu abka šānīna la you}\]

9 \[^{\text{[A}\text{MAR.UTU} \text{in qī₂-bī-ti-ka} i{-\text{bal-luṭ mitu ipaššaḥ maraūd}\]

10 \[^{\text{i-ḥal-}t\text{iq lem-nu-[tu ŭṭbu ammar}\]

11 \[^{\text{[}x\text{ḥa-a-}t\text{u \]}

**Translation**

“[Incantation: Exorcist of the Igigi gods, sage of the gods, [Marduk. Great dragon of Heaven and Earth, Marduk. God] whose incantation brings life, whose incantation [means well-being for the castoff, who has no rival. Marduk], by your command [the patient recovers from his death bed and the sick calms down. He des]troy the evil [fate for a good destiny. …] Stroke […]”

4. **Bu 89-4-26,86**

Dimensions: 3.05 cm × 2.9 cm.

Small fragment from Assurbanipal’s libraries.

Flake of the reverse of an originally four-column tablet. Preserved are the beginning of nine lines in column iii that belong to **Muššu‘u IV/c**; the traces in column iv cannot be attributed to any text.

![Image](image_url)
Translation

“[Go away from his body 3,600 miles far! ... Remove yourself – [you are removed]. May the guilt be [...]! Like a bull (return) to [your stable], like a bird [return] to [your nest]! Ekur temple, [...] temple [...]”

Commentary

iii: 2': The signs cannot be brought in accordance with the other text duplicates of the incantation.

iii: 3': The text follows ms O (CTN IV 95 iii: 32') which should be emended to na'-a[s-ḥa-a-ta] instead of qa-a[s-ḥa-a-ta]; see Böck 2007: 201 l. 92.

iii: 4': The line is only preserved in ms O (CTN IV 95 iii: 32') which should be emended to e-ni-tu ʾl'-ni-[...] instead of e-ni-tu tu ni [...]}; see Böck 2007: 201 l. 93b. A possible restoration is linnisi rendering the phrase “may the guilt be removed”.

iii: 6': The restoration of tūr is based on the parallel expression in Muššu’u VIII/a 78 (Böck 2007: 279 l. 78); note the feminine form in Muššu’u VIII/a 78 referring to šimmatu “paralysis”.

5. K.13352*

Dimensions: 3.4 cm × 3.1 cm.
Small fragment from Assurbanipal’s libraries. The text belongs to the incantation Muššu’u VIII/a.

Muššu’u VIII/a 60-67 (Böck 2007: 276-277)

1' [limḫurki ʾEN.T][1 ʾṣikur mātī]
2' [limḫurki A.AB.B][A ta-ma-tu[m rapaštī]
3' [iššiški sī-i][lī bal-tī [u ašāgī]
4' [limḫurki GIŠIM][MAR.TUR.RA U G][I.ŠUL.HI]
5' [limḫurki “kam”-ka-du si-kur[niṭīššī]
6' [limḫurki ur-qi’][t EDIN u ba-[ma-a-tī]
7' [limḫurki “a[k-tam u “[maštašal]]

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8' [lishšiki] 𒈴[a bēli šipti]
9' [liddiki]₂₃ [ASALU₂Ḫši-pat [balāṭi]²]

Translation

“[May the Ebīḫ mountain] bold [of the land, oppose you (fem. referring to paralysis, šimmatu)! May the ocean, the [broad] sea, [oppose you! May the thorny of the thorn bushes baltu
[and ašāgu oppose you! May] date palm and šalātu [reed oppose you! May kamšadu plant, bold [of the crevices, oppose you! May the tread]ure of steppe and low [plain oppose you! May the plants] aktam and [mašṭakal oppose you! May] Ea, [lord of the incantation, expel you! May
Asal]uḫi cast the incantation [of life] on you]!”

Commentary

1. 9': Correct the reading and translation in Böck 2007: 277, 301 l. 67 accordingly.

6. K.13821*

Dimensions: 3.9 cm × 4.3 cm.
Small fragment from Assurbanipal’s libraries.
Preserved are parts of the incantations Muššu’u IV/d, IV/e and IV/f or SAG.GIG VII/d, VII/e and VII/f. The text does not join the tablet 82-5-22, 535 (published in Böck 2007: plates XIV and XV) as kindly confirmed by Jonathan Taylor.

Muššu’u IV/d 67 (Böck 2007: 160)

Rev.
1’ [š]marduk ina qibītka A]₂₃ [i-pa-a[ša-šaḫ]

Translation

“[Marduk, by your command the] patient calms [down] in his death bed.”

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**Translation**

“[Incantation: He is cleansed. Lord, exorcist of the gods.] child of [god Ea. Lord of the incantation,] spittle and spell which is yours […] He is cleansed. Marduk, who is like you, [You are like the god Adad] – you let abun[dant] water be spread over the people.”

**Commentary**

2’, 4’: The present author understands the verbal form utallīl as 3. sg. present Dt stem referring to the healed patient. Equally possible is the interpretation of a 3. sg. perfect D stem with Marduk as subject. Accordingly, the translations are: l. 2’ “[The Lord, exorcist of the gods.] child of [god Ea, has cleansed (him)]”; l. 4’: “[Marduk] – who is like you – [has cleansed (him)]”.

5’: Note the attestation of a D stem of zarū. The remaining text duplicates, namely E, F, G and H, use the G stem of the verb (tazarrū); see Böck 2007: 161 l. 71.

**Muššu’u IV/f 72 (Böck 2007: 161)**

Rev.

6’ [šiptu muššu miqtu] li-iz-bu du-”i-[u]

7’ [asakku aḫḫāzu šu-ru-up-p]u-u₂ a-šu-u[š-tum]

8’ traces

**Translation**

“[Incantation: Disease, stroke,] li’bu disease, headache, [asakku demon, aḫḫāzu catcher demon, chjill, depres[sion]].”

7. K.16347*

Dimensions: 2.4 cm × 3.7 cm.
Small fragment from Assurbanipal’s libraries. Preserved are seven lines of Muššu’u IV/g.
Muššuʾ u V/g 122-128 (Böck 2007: 206-207)

1' [ša amat qa₂t-bi-[[i^-]-k][a^-] manman là innû ... ]

2' [i-n]a si-it pi-ka [mîtu iballat]

3' [na]p-li-sa-am-ma N[ENNI mār annanna šuardu šu₃uqa]

4' [ina tēka ūmi]-d-dap-pir GIG [em-nu mimman murṣu ša ina zurni]

5' [annanna mār annanna ibaššu [i]-in-na-[s]-i-ii liṭṭarid]

6' [amēlu liiblu E][N₃₅ ul ia-ut-[tu-un]

7' [šipat ṭa ṭi]-d-dam ṭa-[da]-gu-la [d] [a bulli tīmā qīsta leqē të šipti]

Translation

“You whose [command no-one can alter ...] By pronouncing your word [the patient recovers from his death bed]. Look at me, NN [son of NN, miserable and embattled!] May the [evil] disease be expelled [by your good spell! Whatever disease is present in the body of NN son NN] may be expelled and [chased away so that the man shall recover!] The incantation is not mine, [it is the incantation of god Damu and] goddess Gula. Gula, [heal (him)9 and accept the present! Wording of the incantation].”

8. BM 45395 + BM 46413 + BM 46527 + BM 46472 + 81-7-28 unnumbered fragments

Tablet from Babylon.

Parts of the tablet are published in Böck 2007: plates VI-VII, Muššuʾ u III ms C (Böck 2007: 133-141, ll. 15-39). During revision work of the Babylon Catalogue Christopher Walker noticed that only one part of the tablet had been published by Böck 2007, viz. BM 45395 + 81-7-28 unnumbered fragments. The other three fragments, namely BM 46413 + BM 46527 + BM 46472, could not be joined to the tablet when the author copied the text in 1998 because of technical reasons. There must be at least one more fragment that is still missing according to the reading of the colophon that I.L. Finkel provides in his 1991 study of the series. With the recovery of these pieces, it is now possible to establish the original length of the cuneiform tablet, viz. 14,9 cm. Only BM 46413 + BM 46527 + BM 46472 are presented here in hand-copy.

The tablet belongs to the group of other Muššuʾ u texts and duplicates of the handbooks Qutāru “Fumigation”, Udugul “Evil demons” (Tablet II, V and XI) and Lamaštu that were written by the scholar Tanittu-Bēl who was active at least during the reign of Alexander the Great. 10 The tablet BM 45395 + shows a feature that is not attested or preserved in the corpus of the other tablets copied by Tanittu-Bēl, viz. a small inscription on the left edge of the tablet.11 The text, written in a

11. The hand-copies of the Udugul tablets of Tanittu-Bēl are published by Geller 2016; none of the tablets shows a comparable inscription. For BM 45392+ (UH 2 ms. a) see Geller 2016: 577-578 pls. 9-10, for BM 46296+ (UH 5 ms. e) see Geller 2016: 610 pl. 42, for BM 46421+ (UH 11 “Marduk’s Address to the Demons” ms. t), see Geller 2016: 392 and for BM 45377+ (UH 11 ms. n) see Geller 2016: 392. The Lamaštu tablet of Tanittu-Bēl is copied by W. Faber in his 2014 edition of the incantations against the female demon; there is no inscription (for BM 46281+ see Farber 2014: 417-424 pls. 36-43). The well-preserved Qutāru tablet BM 45393+ (unpublished), copied by the present author, does not have any inscription on the left edge. The other six Muššuʾ u tablets of Tanittu-Bēl are BM 46301 (Muššuʾ u I ms. F for which see Böck 2007: pls. Ia-IIb), BM 46330+ (Muššuʾ u II ms. J for which see Böck 2007: pl. IV), BM 45405+ (Muššuʾ u IV ms. 

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tiny script that is not as deeply impressed as the rest of the cuneiform signs of the tablet, is not fully preserved. The first line might start with the sign I₄M “tablet”, possibly referring to the series Muššu u. The second line gives the beginning of Tanittu-Bēl’s name. The information throws possibly light on the way the tablet was originally shelved in Tanittu-Bēl’s library, namely in upright position with the small inscription addressed to Bēl and Bēltija written on the upper edge on top and the tiny inscription with his name facing the outside. It seems less likely that the tablet was shelved in a downright position since then both the evocation of Bēl and Bēltija and the scribe’s name would have been hidden from sight.

BM 46413 + BM 46527 + BM 46472 (ms C)

Dimensions: 4,2 cm × 8,4 cm.

Once joined the new pieces, ms C preserves lines 1-3 and 15-40 of Tablet III of Muššu u.

Obv.
1 EN₃ sa₃.gig gu₃ sa₃.a : di-[‘i-i <ri> mūt ahi dadānu : gu₃ sa₃.a]
2 ‘sa₃’gig igi.bi.ta : di-[‘i-u ina pānīṣu imta isallāh : u₄₃₁₁.im.ta.su₃.de₄₂]
3 [sa₃]’gig [e₂₃,kur].’ta’ : [di ‘i u ekur ittaṣā : e₂₃.kur.ta nam.ta.e₁₁]

Rev. (including transliteration of BM 45395 + 81-7-28 unnumbered fragments)
1 imin.[na].a.meš ’š[i-bit-ti-šu₂-nu si-bit]-ti-šu₂-nu : imin.na.a
2 [i[dim a]bzu.ta : i[n]a na₄-g-bi apš sibittāšunu : imin].’na.a’
3 eridu⁴ imina.a.a.meš [šu la₃⁴.en.ki.ke₄ imin.na.meš]
   ina eri-du₁₀ si-bit-ti-ši[2-nu mukassā ša ʾea sibittāšunu]
4 e.ne.ne.e : šu₂-n[u iṣtu apš iṣtu šiṭtāšunu : abzu.ta e₃.a.meš]
5 u₃₃.mu.un ḥul ub.[a su₃₃.su₃₃.ne₂₃.meš]
   šu₂ ‘u₂-lu lem-nu-tu₂ [ša tupqi ittanazzā ṣunu]
6 ’zi [an.na h]e₃₃.p[ad₃₃.de₃₃.eš : niš šamē lā tamū niš erṣetī lā tamū : zi ki.a]
   he₃₃.pad₃₃.de₃₃.eš

Translation

Obv.
“Head disease, paralysis of the arm, neck disease. Head disease [spits in front of itself. Head]
disease has [left the Ekur temple].”

(4-14)
“[…] created […] they have entered].”
Rev.

“They are seven, [they are seven. They are seven from the] depth of the abzu ocean. They are seven in the city of Eridu. [They are seven, the catchers of god Enki/Ea]. They [have emerged from the depth of the abzu ocean]. They are the evil demons [that seek hide] in the corner. Be ad[jured by the Heavens, be adjured by the Earth]!”

Obv.
Commentary

Obv. 1: The author suggests emending the obscure *mu-tum a-hi* to <ri->*mu-tum a-hi*. The expression *aḫa ramû* is well attested in literary texts (see *CAD* R 128b s.v. *ramû* 1.a). In the Old Babylonian fragment Y of Gilgamesh the phrase appears together with *dadānu* “neck disease, affliction of the muscles of the neck” to describe the feebleness Enkidu suffers from: *uštēlipā dadānīja aḫāja irmāma* “My neck muscles are knotted, my arms are weak” (George 2003b: 198, ii: 86-87; and see George 2003b: 208 commentary to l. 86). There is no exact equivalent of the expression in medical texts. However, the verb is used to describe limp feet (e.g. *BAM* II 319 obv. 2: "Gīr₃₂šu₂ pīt-ru-šu₂ ra-mu-ú₂ “his feet and his abdominal wall are limp”) or weak tendons (e.g. *TDP* 124: 18: DiŠ S₃₂šu₂ S₃₂šu₂ u Gīr₃₂šu₂ MIN (= Gīr₂₂gal TAG.TAG-at) u rīk-su-šu₂ ir-mu-ú₂ “If he constantly rubs his abdomen, his hands and his feet and his tendons are limp”). Furthermore, the healing recommendation *BAM* II 194 iv’: 5’-14’ for the treatment of the symptom *rimûtu* limping and *šimmatu* paralysis includes a *Muššu*’u incantation, namely *Muššu*’u VIII/b (Böck 2007: 54-55), which was to be recited over the arm.

The author refrains from giving a translation due to the badly understood wording of the incantation.

Colophon

10 EN₂ a-nam-d[i-ka (Finkel 1991: 95 adds šip-tum IM IV.KAM.MA E[Š.GAR₃ muš-šu-ú₂ GIN₇ SUMUN-šu₂ ba-ar₂])

11 u₃ up-p[u-uš (Finkel 1991: 95 adds IM¹ta-nit-tum₃Ε[N … ITU X])

12 U₄ 13.KAM M[U (Finkel 1991: 95 adds [n]+1.KAM¹a-lik-sa-a[n-da-ar LUGAL KUR.KUR …

Upper edge

*ina a-mat⁴EN u GAŠA[N-ia₃ lišlim]*

Left edge

1 ¹T⁴[M² ]

2 ¹ta-nit-tu[m₃bēl ]

Translation

Colophon

“Incantation: I recite the incantation [over you. 4th Tablet of the series *Muššu*’u. Checked and] writ[ten according to an older vorlage. Tablet of Tanittu-Bēl … Month …] 13th day of [the x+1] year [of Alexander, king of countries …]”

Upper edge
“[May (this work) go well] by the command of Bēl and Bēltija!”

_left edge_

“Tablet? … Tanittu-[Bēl]”

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