

THE WITCHCRAFT SERIES MAQLÛ

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The Witchcraft Series Maqlû

Volume Editor: Martin Worthington

# THE WITCHCRAFT SERIES MAQLÛ

*by*

Tzvi Abusch

SBL Press

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Atlanta, Georgia

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For my very dear friends  
Benjy, Steve, and Kathryn

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## SERIES EDITOR'S FOREWORD

Writings from the Ancient World is designed to provide up-to-date, readable English translations of writings recovered from the ancient Near East.

The series is intended to serve the interests of general readers, students, and educators who wish to explore the ancient Near Eastern roots of Western civilization or to compare these earliest written expressions of human thought and activity with writings from other parts of the world. It should also be useful to scholars in the humanities or social sciences who need clear, reliable translations of ancient Near Eastern materials for comparative purposes. Specialists in particular areas of the ancient Near East who need access to texts in the scripts and languages of other areas will also find these translations helpful. Given the wide range of materials translated in the series, different volumes will appeal to different interests. However, these translations make available to all readers of English the world's earliest traditions as well as valuable sources of information on daily life, history, religion, and the like in the preclassical world.

The translators of the various volumes in this series are specialists in the particular languages and have based their work on the original sources and the most recent research. In their translations they attempt to convey as much as possible of the original texts in fluent, current English. In the introductions, notes, glossaries, maps, and chronological tables, they aim to provide the essential information for an appreciation of these ancient documents.

Covering the period from the invention of writing (by 3000 B.C.E.) down to the conquests of Alexander the Great (ca. 330 B.C.E.), the ancient Near East comprised northeast Africa and southwest Asia. The cultures represented within these limits include especially Egyptian, Sumerian, Babylonian, Assyrian, Hittite, Ugaritic, Aramean, Phoenician, and Israelite. It is hoped that Writings from the Ancient World will eventually produce translations of most of the many different genres attested in these cultures: letters (official and private), myths, diplomatic documents, hymns, law collections, monumental inscriptions, tales, and administrative records, to mention but a few.

The Society of Biblical Literature provided significant funding for the Writings from the Ancient World series. In addition, authors have benefited from

working in research collections in their respective institutions and beyond. Were it not for such support, the arduous tasks of preparation, translation, editing, and publication could not have been accomplished or even undertaken. It is the hope of all who have worked on these texts or supported this work that Writings from the Ancient World will open up new horizons and deepen the humanity of all who read these volumes.

Theodore J. Lewis  
The Johns Hopkins University

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## PREFACE

My edition of Maqlû has been in the works for a long time. I started studying the tablets and fragments of Maqlû and searching for new texts around 1970 and have pursued this endeavor, on and off, for many years. With few exceptions, I have examined all the original tablets and/or their photographs.

I cannot emphasize strongly enough how much the edition has benefited from the assistance and cooperation of a number of colleagues and institutions. The reader interested in the details of my indebtedness should consult the preface to my full scientific edition *The Magical Ceremony Maqlû: A Critical Edition* (Ancient Magic and Divination; Leiden: Brill). All the same, here I would mention by name those who made repeated contributions through identifications, photographs, transliterations, and collations that they generously shared with me. They are the late Rykle Borger, Markham J. Geller, the late Wilfred G. Lambert, Erle Leichty, Christopher Walker, and especially Daniel Schwemer.<sup>1</sup> I would be remiss if I did not mention here also the late Frederick W. Geers, among whose copies at the Oriental Institute I identified some Maqlû fragments.

Maqlû tablets and fragments are found in a number of museums, and I express my gratitude to the Middle East Department (formerly Western Asiatic Antiquities) of the British Museum; the Vorderasiatisches Museum, Berlin; the Oriental Institute, University of Chicago; the Babylonian Collection, University of Pennsylvania; the Ashmolean Museum, Oxford; the Anadolu Medeniyetleri Müzesi, Ankara; the İstanbul Arkeoloji Müzeleri, İstanbul.

I am indebted to and express my sincerest thanks to several graduate students in the Bible and Ancient Near East program of Brandeis University who

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1. I would also mention here that some of the translations in this volume are the result of my collaboration with Daniel Schwemer some years ago on a German translation of Maqlû for TUAT NF 4 (2008).

worked with me on the WAW edition of Maqlû. They are Molly DeMarco,<sup>2</sup> Bronson Brown-deVost,<sup>3</sup> Sung-Chun Kim,<sup>4</sup> and Robert McChesney.<sup>5</sup> Their work was supported by the Theodore and Jane Norman Awards for Faculty Scholarship of Brandeis University, the GTR/GSFR fund of the Department of Near Eastern and Judaic Studies, and the graduate fellowship program; I thank Brandeis University for its support.

I thank Martin Worthington, the editor of the volume, for his careful reading of the manuscript and for his numerous editorial notes. Those of his suggestions (as well as the suggestions of others) that I have incorporated have improved the volume. Any mistakes or defects in this volume are my responsibility alone.

I thank Theodore Lewis, the series editor of WAW, for inviting me to contribute an edition of Maqlû to WAW. I very much appreciate his patience and support. I am grateful to Billie Jean Collins and the SBL WAW production team for their work on this volume.

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2. Molly DeMarco reviewed with me the transcription and translation and did most of the inputting and formatting of the transcription; she also worked with me on a preliminary bibliography.

3. Bronson Brown-deVost completed inputting and formatting the transcription, kept track of the many things that had to be included in the volume, and assisted with proofreading.

4. Sung-Chun Kim formatted the bibliographies and reviewed them for omissions and mistakes.

5. Robert McChesney read through the first and second proofs of the volume.

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## ABBREVIATIONS

<i>AfO</i>	<i>Archiv für Orientforschung</i>
AfOB	Archiv für Orientforschung Beiheft
<i>AHw</i>	Wolfram von Soden, <i>Akkadisches Handwörterbuch</i> . 3 vols. Wiesbaden: Harrassowitz, 1959–81
AMD	Ancient Magic and Divination
ANEM	Ancient Near Eastern Monographs
AnOr	Analecta Orientalia
AOAT	Alter Orient und Altes Testament
<i>ArOr</i>	<i>Archiv Orientalní</i>
AS	Assyriological Studies
ASSF	Acta Societas Scientiarum Fennicae
BA	<i>Beiträge zur Assyriologie (und semitischen Sprachwissenschaft)</i>
BaF	Baghdader Forschungen
<i>BAL</i> <sup>2</sup>	Rykle Borger, <i>Babylonisch-assyrische Lesestücke</i> . 2nd ed. AnOr 54. Rome: Pontifical Biblical Institute, 1979
BibInt	Biblical Interpretation Series
BibOr	Biblica et Orientalia
BJS	Brown Judaic Studies
BPOA	Biblioteca del Proximo Oriente Antiguo
<i>CAD</i>	<i>The Assyrian Dictionary of the Oriental Institute of the University of Chicago</i> . Chicago: The Oriental Institute of the University of Chicago, 1956–2010
CM	Cuneiform Monographs
<i>CMAWR</i>	Tzvi Abusch and Daniel Schwemer, <i>Corpus of Mesopotamian Anti-Witchcraft Rituals</i> . Vol. 1–. AMD 8/1–. Leiden: Brill, 2011–
CNIP	Carsten Niebuhr Institute Publications
CTN	Cuneiform Texts from Nimrud
<i>GAG</i>	Wolfram von Soden, <i>Grundriss der akkadischen Grammatik</i> . 2nd ed. Rome: Pontifical Biblical Institute, 1969

HSS	Harvard Semitic Studies
HTR	<i>Harvard Theological Review</i>
JCS	<i>Journal of Cuneiform Studies</i>
JNES	<i>Journal of Near Eastern Studies</i>
JSRC	Jerusalem Studies in Religion and Culture
KAL	Keilschrifttexte aus Assur literarischen Inhalts
KAR	E. Ebeling, <i>Keilschrifttexte aus Assur religiösen Inhalts</i> . WVDOG 28 and 34. Leipzig: Hinrichs, 1915–23
LSS	Leipziger semitische Studien
PSBA	<i>Proceedings of the Society of Biblical Archaeology</i>
OECT	Oxford Editions of Cuneiform Tablets
Or	<i>Orientalia</i>
RGRW	Religions in the Graeco-Roman World
RIA	<i>Reallexikon der Assyriologie und Vorderasiatischen Archäologie</i>
SAAS	State Archives of Assyria Studies
SEL	<i>Studi epigrafici e linguistici sul Vicino Oriente antico</i>
SHR	Studies in the History of Religions
SMSR	<i>Studi e materiali di storia delle religioni</i>
StOr	Studia Orientalia
TAPS	<i>Transactions of the American Philosophical Society</i>
TCS	Texts from Cuneiform Sources
TStR	Toronto Studies in Religion
TUAT	Texte aus der Umwelt des Alten Testaments Neue Folge
UET	Ur Excavation Texts
WVDOG	Wissenschaftliche Veröffentlichung der Deutsche Orient Gesellschaft
ZA	<i>Zeitschrift für Assyriologie</i>

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## INTRODUCTION

This volume presents a transcription and translation of Maqlû, “Burning,” the longest and most important magical ritual against witchcraft from ancient Mesopotamia. I should preface my presentation of this Akkadian composition and ceremony with a few words of introduction about Mesopotamian magic and witchcraft and about the ancient literature that centers upon such concerns.

It is particularly important to start out with definitions, especially here in an SBL WAW volume, because magic and witchcraft are treated somewhat differently in Mesopotamia and in biblical literature. I understand as magical those Mesopotamian rites that address the human needs, crises, and desires, especially of the individual but also of the king. In contrast to some later western societies, magic in Mesopotamia was regarded as legitimate and as part of the established religion. Therefore, in a Mesopotamian context, witchcraft (e.g., *kišpū*, *ruḥû*, *rusû*, *upšāšû lemnūtu*, etc.) refers not to magical behavior as such, but to inimical behavior, that is, to the practice of magic for antisocial and destructive purposes.

Over the course of some 2,500 years (ca. 2600–100 BCE), numerous cuneiform texts written in both the Sumerian and Akkadian languages refer to personal crisis and individual suffering (e.g., letters, curses, and literary compositions that treat the problem of theodicy); but, by and large, the most important sources detailing ways to cope with illness, danger, and personal difficulties are the various types of texts that describe symptoms, provide etiological or descriptive diagnoses, and prescribe ways to deal with evil and suffering. These treatments include medical therapies, ritual prescriptions, and oral rites (prayers and incantations). Therapeutic acts on behalf of an individual may be undertaken either by the individual himself or by a professional healer. Procedural texts prescribe the treatment of problems either by means of various ritual or ceremonial therapies (*āšipūtu*) or by means of traditional herbal therapy (*asūtu*).

In the main, our texts are guides to actual performances that were consulted by magicians and herbalists and studied by scholars. The texts usually

present in varying combinations the elements crucial to the actual ritual activity or performance (oral and manual rites and preparation or applications of ceremonial/medical materials) as well as a statement describing the circumstance and purpose of the activity. At first, only the incantation was committed to writing; subsequently, instructions regarding the time, place, and manner of ritual performance as well as other types of information (particularly, an objective description of the problem, a diagnosis, and a statement of purpose) were added.

Two typical ways of recording the content of an individual ceremony are: 1) the text of an incantation followed by a rubric (an ancient classificatory label) and ritual instructions; and 2) a description of the patient's symptoms followed by a diagnosis (e.g., "that man suffers from ..."), ritual or medical instructions (e.g., instructions to create a sacred space such as a reed hut or altar, to prepare salves or potions, and/or to recite an oral rite as well as the text of the oral rite itself), and finally, a prognosis (e.g., "the man will live").

Incantations are found in various written contexts: 1) as part of short rituals; 2) in short collections of incantations (with some ritual instructions); 3) and in standardized scribal series—some of which were collections, while others represented complex lengthy ceremonies, such as Maqlû.

The personal crises that stand at the center of the therapeutic texts may play out on the physical, psychological, psychosomatic, or social plane. Especially when treated by an exorcist/incantation-priest (*āšipu*), such distress will usually be understood to be the result of the action or inaction of supernatural powers or agencies; that is, the cause of distress will be located in either personalistic or mechanistic powers within the supernatural universe. Some of these agencies are gods, demons, ghosts, tutelary gods, witches, evil omens, curses, and sins. These forces and their nefarious deeds are described in detail in the oral rites themselves.

The larger body of Babylonian and Assyrian antiwitchcraft texts—of which Maqlû is a member, actually its most important member—is itself part of this larger corpus of therapeutic texts. The relationship in Mesopotamia of antiwitchcraft texts to the larger corpus of therapeutic texts, on the one hand, and to witchcraft itself, on the other, is not dissimilar to what Stuart Clark has said about the relationship of magic and *maleficium* in early modern Europe:

One of the key reasons for the popularity of magical practices was that they were deployed to detect and counteract the harmful effects of witchcraft. Only the curing of illnesses occupied as important a place in the tasks for which magic was singled out—and, of course, many of these were attributed to *maleficium* anyway. Indeed, so intimate was the relationship between protective (or remedial) magic and malevolent witchcraft that historians have



come to see them more and more as the two inseparable halves of the world of popular culture in this period.<sup>1</sup>

The branch of the written therapeutic tradition that is directed against witchcraft includes a large body of very significant and interesting prayers, incantations, magical rituals, and medical prescriptions. These magical and medical texts attribute misfortune and ill-health to the machinations of people designated as witches and prescribe the means of combating the witch and witchcraft. They set out the various ceremonies, devices, and treatments that are to be used to dispel witchcraft, to destroy the witch (symbolically), and to protect and cure the patient.

Personal distress ascribed to witchcraft includes the individual's experience of physical, psychological, and/or social difficulties. Texts may focus on specific symptoms, such as gastrointestinal, respiratory, sexual, or psychological difficulties, on life-threatening circumstances such as childbirth and infancy, on more generalized illnesses involving systemic physical and/or psychological breakdown, or on situations involving socioeconomic loss of wealth and status as well as social isolation.

The Mesopotamian witchcraft corpus (or, rather, antiwitchcraft corpus, since we have no texts composed by witches) comprises hundreds of magical and medical texts that contain many different elements. The constituent parts of traditional antiwitchcraft documents are oral rites (prayers, incantations, utterances), symbolic rituals (e.g., burning of figurines), medical treatments (e.g., preparation of potions), descriptions of symptoms, diagnoses, and prognoses.

These traditional texts come from the early second millennium through the late first millennium BCE. A few texts are Old Babylonian; a somewhat larger number come from late second-millennium collections, mainly those of Boghazkoi and Assur. But by far, the largest number come from first-millennium collections. Pride of place goes to the royal collections of seventh-century Nineveh; but, in addition, major groups derive from both the Assyrian sites of Assur, Kalhu (Nimrud), and Sultantepe and the Babylonian ones of Uruk, Ur, Nippur, Babylon, and Sippar.<sup>2</sup>

1. Stuart Clark, "Witchcraft and Magic in Early Modern Culture," in *Witchcraft and Magic in Europe: The Period of the Witch Trials*, ed. Bengt Ankarloo and Stuart Clark (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2002), 112.

2. For an edition of the full corpus of Mesopotamian texts concerned with combating witchcraft (with the exception of Maqlû), see Tzvi Abusch and Daniel Schwemer, *Corpus of Mesopotamian Anti-Witchcraft Rituals*, vol. 1– (AMD 8/1–; Leiden: Brill, 2011–).

## MAQLÛ

I turn now to the Akkadian magical series Maqlû itself. The text of Maqlû was previously edited by Knut L. Tallqvist and Gerhard Meier.<sup>3</sup> This series is the longest and most important Mesopotamian text concerned with combating witchcraft. Maqlû comprises eight tablets of incantations and a ritual tablet. The Incantation Tablets record the text of almost one hundred incantations; in the Ritual Tablet, these incantations are cited by their incipit, their opening line, and alongside each citation appropriate ritual directions are prescribed.

Long thought to be a random collection of witchcraft materials, an important breakthrough in the understanding of Maqlû came with my discovery that it was a single complex ceremony. It was performed during a single night and into the following morning at the end of the month Abu (July/August), a time when spirits were thought to move back and forth between the netherworld and this world. The primary participants were the exorcist and his patient. The ceremony is even the subject of a letter written by the exorcist Nabû-nâdin-šumi to King Esarhaddon in early August 670 BCE. Here it should be mentioned that in almost all instances, the patients on whose behalf witchcraft rituals were performed were members of the male elite.<sup>4</sup> Although lists of witches include both male and female forms, the witch is usually depicted as a woman.

In the main, the incantations and rituals of Maqlû are directed against witches and witchcraft. The ceremony was intended to counteract and dispel evil magic and its effects, to protect the patient, and to punish and render ineffectual those responsible for the evil. The witch was to be executed. Overall in Maqlû she was not to be buried; rather fire and/or animals were

3. Knut L. Tallqvist, *Die assyrische Beschwörungsserie Maqlû*, 2 vols., Acta Societatis Scientiarum Fennicae 20.6 (Leipzig, 1895); Gerhard Meier, *Die assyrische Beschwörungssammlung Maqlû*, AfO Beiheft 2 (Berlin, 1937), and "Studien zur Beschwörungssammlung Maqlû. Zusammengestellt nach hinterlassenen Notizen," *AfO* 21 (1966): 70–81 and pls. 11–12. My edition will be published as volume 10 in the Brill series Ancient Magic and Divination.

In the introductory portion of this volume, I present a number of Maqlû incantations in translation. Generally, these translations are without notes. The incantations will all be found in the body of the volume, where such notes as might be useful to the reader will be included.

4. For the ceremonial nature of the series, see Tzvi Abusch, "Mesopotamian Anti-witchcraft Literature: Texts and Studies, Part I: The Nature of *Maqlû*: Its Character, Divisions, and Calendrical Setting," *JNES* 33 (1974): 251–62. For a collection of my studies on witchcraft, see Tzvi Abusch, *Mesopotamian Witchcraft: Toward a History and Understanding of Babylonian Witchcraft Beliefs and Literature*, AMD 5 (Leiden: Brill/Styx, 2002).

to destroy her corpse, thus depriving her of any possibility of burial—the ritual was intended to destroy both the body and ghost of the witch.<sup>5</sup> The series (and ceremony) was composed of three major subdivisions. The first two divisions (Tablets I–V // Ritual Tablet 1–95; Tablets VI–VII 54 // Ritual Tablet 96–137) were performed during the night, the third (VII 55–VIII // Ritual Tablet 138–179) during the early morning hours of the following day.<sup>6</sup>

The present form of *Maqlû* is, I believe, a creation of the early first millennium BCE, though a divergent proto-form may have already existed in Assur towards the end of the middle Assyrian period. Actually, this long ritual with its nearly one hundred incantations grew out of a much shorter ritual. This earlier form had been known for some time but was thought to be an extract from the longer text. But some years ago I demonstrated that the standard long text had developed from the short form by means of a series of sequential changes. This mode of composition helps explain the complexity of our present text. So, perhaps the simplest way to undertake an examination of the lengthy version would be to begin from the earlier short form, precisely because that form is shorter and less complex. Also, beginning with the short form will serve as a demonstration of how texts and ceremonies expanded and changed in the course of time. Accordingly, I shall begin with an explication of the short version.<sup>7</sup>

### EARLY SHORT VERSION

There are ten incantations in the short version—ten incantations instead of the one-hundred of the longer version. Actually, the incantations of the short version are among the most important incantations found in Tablets

5. See Tzvi Abusch, “The Socio-Religious Framework of the Babylonian Witchcraft Ceremony *Maqlû*: Some Observations on the Introductory Section of the Text, Part I,” in *Riches Hidden in Secret Places: Ancient Near Eastern Studies in Memory of Thorkild Jacobsen*, ed. Tzvi Abusch (Winona Lake, IN: Eisenbrauns, 2002), 12–19, and “Ghost and God: Some Observations on a Babylonian Understanding of Human Nature,” in *Self, Soul and Body in Religious Experience*, ed. Albert I. Baumgarten, Jan Assmann, and Guy G. Stroumsa, SHR 78 (Leiden: Brill, 1998), 374.

6. For a description of the ritual and incantation blocks, see Tzvi Abusch, “*Maqlû*,” in *RIA 7* (1987–1990), 346–51.

7. For a reconstruction of the earlier short version, see Tzvi Abusch, “An Early Form of the Witchcraft Ritual *Maqlû* and the Origin of a Babylonian Magical Ceremony,” in *Lingering over Words: Studies in Ancient Near Eastern Literature in Honor of William L. Moran*, ed. Tzvi Abusch, John Huehnergard, and Piotr Steinkeller, HSS 37 (Atlanta: Scholars Press, 1990), 1–57. Cf. Daniel Schwemer, *Abwehrzauber und Behexung: Studien zum Schadenzauberglauben im alten Mesopotamien* (Wiesbaden: Harrassowitz, 2007), 53–55.

I–V, the first division of the standard text of Maqlû. But in contrast to the longer work, this shorter ceremony was performed during the morning and contained most of the important ritual actions found in the first division of the longer work.

A magical ceremony is a performance, a lyrical and dramatic cycle. My presentation of the short ceremony will simply outline it in summary form and provide short sketches of the incantations. But even this short version can be better understood if it is simplified still further and reduced to basic actions: judging the witch, burning her representation, dousing the fire with water, and disposing of the remains. The blend of action and speech that makes up the ceremony of the short version seems to fall into four sections.

#### SECTION ONE

This section centers on the judgment and burning of the witch. Figurines of the witches are set out in a crucible.

**Incantation One.** *Šamaš annûtu ŝalmû ėpišiya*, “O Šamaš, these are the images of my sorcerer” (I 73–121).

The victim of witchcraft on whose behalf the ceremony is being performed points to the figurines<sup>8</sup> and recites the incantation, which would have read:

- 73 O Šamaš, these are the figurines of my sorcerer,  
 74 These are the figurines of my sorceress,  
 75 The figurines of my warlock and my witch,  
 76 The figurines of my sorcerer and the woman who instigates sorcery  
 against me,  
 77 The figurines of my enchanter and my enchantress,  
 78 The figurines of my male and female inseminators,  
 79 The figurines of the male and female who are enraged at me,  
 80 The figurines of my male and female enemies,  
 81 The figurines of my male and female persecutors,  
 82 The figurines of my male and female litigants,  
 83 The figurines of my male and female accusers,  
 84 The figurines of my male and female adversaries,  
 85 The figurines of my male and female slanderers,

8. So the Ritual Tablet, but based on the incantation itself and other rituals it is likely that originally he raised up the figurines while reciting the incantation and then placed them in the crucible.

86 The figurines of my male and female evildoers,  
 87 Whom, you, Šamaš, the judge, know, but I do not know,  
 88 Who against me have performed, have had performed, have sought,  
 have had sought  
 89 witchcraft, spittle, enchainment, evil machinations,  
 90 Sorcery, rebellion, evil word, love(-magic), hate(-magic),  
 91 Perversion of justice, Zikurrudâ-magic, muteness, pacification,  
 92 Mood swings, vertigo, madness.  
 93 These are they, these are their figurines.  
 94 Since they are not present, I bear aloft their figurines (and say):  
 95 You, Šamaš, the judge, vanquisher of the wicked and the enemy, van-  
 quish them so I not be wronged,  
 96 (Those) who have made my figurines, reproduced my facial features,  
 97 Seized my mouth, made my neck tremble,  
 98 Pressed against my chest, bent my spine,  
 99 Weakened my heart, taken away my sexual drive,  
 100 Made me turn my anger against myself, sapped my strength,  
 101 Caused my arms to fall limp, bound my knees,  
 102 Filled me with fever, stiffness, and debility,  
 103 Fed me bewitched food,  
 104 Given me bewitched water to drink,  
 105 Bathed me in dirty wash water,  
 106 Rubbed me with a salve of harmful herbs,  
 107 Betrothed me to a dead person,  
 108 Laid the water of my life in a grave,  
 109 Caused god, king, noble, and prince to be angry with me.  
 110 You, O Girra, it is you who are the burner of warlocks and witches,  
 111 The annihilator of the wicked, seed of warlock and witch,  
 112 The destroyer of the evildoers.  
 113 I call upon you:  
 114 Judge my case, render my verdict.  
 115 Burn my warlock and my witch,  
 116 Devour my enemies, consume the ones who would do evil to me!  
 117 Let your raging (fire-)storm vanquish them.  
 118 May they come to an end in a trickle like water from a waterskin.  
 119 May their fingers be cut back as if smashed by stones.  
 120 By your preeminent command that cannot be altered  
 121 And your affirmative assent that cannot be changed.

The plaintiff identifies the figurines as representations of witches who have unjustly harmed him through acts of witchcraft. He then appeals to

Šamaš, the omniscient judge, to find and overwhelm these evildoers. Šamaš, the judge, the illuminating and killing sun, is asked to pronounce a sentence of death by fire, and the fire god Girra, here the hypostatization of Šamaš's destructive heat rays, is asked to execute the sentence.

Because the plaintiff does not know who the witch is, he cannot prosecute the alleged criminal in a regular court of law; instead, he appeals to Šamaš, who as an omniscient judge knows the actual identity of the witch. But the sun god appearing in this type of incantation is not the commonly met and rather colorless judge. The sun here is both an omniscient judge and a relentless executioner, a god who is able not only to identify but also to locate and destroy the culprit who has taken refuge outside the bounds of the settled community. The natural force personified is the brilliant desert sun whose bright burning rays, called here (line 117) *ūmu ezzu*, Sumerian  $U_4.HUŠ$ , “raging (fire-)storm,”<sup>9</sup> can ferret out the criminal wandering in the steppe and overwhelm and kill him. This wilderness background is further reflected in line 118: “May they come to an end in a trickle like water from a waterskin!” This natural force provides the images of the judge and executioner that dominate our incantation and others of its type; its ritual is most naturally that of burning.

**Incantation Two.** <sup>d</sup>*Nuska šurbû ilitti* <sup>d</sup>*Ani*, “O Grand Nuska, offspring of Anu” (I 122–134).

After the sentence is pronounced over the bound figurines of the witches, a stalk that will be used to set the images of the witch ablaze is lit. The speaker turns to the god Nuska, the lamp, and asks him to cause the witchcraft to rebound and seize those who sent it.

- 122 O Grand Nuska, offspring of Anu,  
 123 Likeness of the father, scion of Enlil,  
 124 Reared in the *apsû*, creation of Enanki.  
 125 I raise up a reed torch and set you yourself alight.  
 126 A warlock has bewitched me; bewitch him with the witchcraft with  
 which he bewitched me,  
 127 A witch has bewitched me; bewitch her with the witchcraft with which  
 she bewitched me,

9. I have generally replaced my earlier translation of *ūmu ezzu* in Maqlû (“brilliant red light/fiery red light/fierce rays”) with “raging (fire-)storm.” However, I am still not fully convinced that *ūmu* here must refer to storm (so, e.g., *CAD* s. *ūmu*) rather than to rays or light.

- 128 A sorcerer has ensorcelled me; ensorcell him with the sorcery with which he ensorcelled me,  
 129 A sorceress has ensorcelled me; ensorcell her with the sorcery with which she ensorcelled me,  
 130 A woman who instigates sorcery has ensorcelled me; ensorcell her with the sorcery with which she ensorcelled me.  
 131 (Those) who have made figurines corresponding to my figurines, reproduced my facial features,  
 132 Taken my spittle, plucked out my hair,  
 133 Cut off my hem, collected a clump of dirt (over which) my feet (had passed),  
 134 May Girra, the warrior, release their incantation.

In this incantation, Nuska is evoked neither as a judge nor as an executioner but as a protective night light: “I raise up a reed torch and set you yourself alight.” (I 125). Nuska frequently appears in this role in Mesopotamian literature. In magical texts, he is said to protect the sleeping household against marauders of the night, particularly evil dreams. The incantation takes for granted that Nuska had acted as a guardian during the night, keeping a vigil over the speaker and staving off all assaults of witchcraft sent in the form of evil dreams. The incantation had its original setting in the early hours of the morning and was recited by the patient upon greeting the new day.

The victim’s impassioned request to Nuska to cause the nighttime witchcraft to recoil is the central theme of the incantation. It is repeatedly expressed in a forceful alliterative style in a series of lines that convey the meaning and force of the speaker’s wish:

- 126 *kaššāpu ikšipanni kišpī ikšipanni kišipšu*  
 127 *kaššaptu takšipanni kišpī takšipanni kišipši*  
 128 *ēpišu īpušanni ipšū īpušanni epussu*  
 129 *ēpištu tēpušanni ipšū tēpušanni epussi*  
 130 *muštēpištu tēpušanni ipšū tēpušanni epussi*

- 126 A warlock has bewitched me; bewitch him with the witchcraft with which he bewitched me,  
 127 A witch has bewitched me; bewitch her with the witchcraft with which she bewitched me,  
 128 A sorcerer has ensorcelled me; ensorcell him with the sorcery with which he ensorcelled me,

- 129 A sorceress has ensorcelled me; ensorcell her with the sorcery with which she ensorcelled me,  
 130 A woman who instigates sorcery has ensorcelled me; ensorcell her with the sorcery with which she ensorcelled me.

Thus, with the coming of morning, Nuska is asked by the patient he had protected to perform one last service: to inflict the consequences of the evil dreams that he had kept at bay during the night upon the very witches who had sent them.

**Incantation Three.** *Anašši dipāru*, “I raise up the torch” (I 135–143).

After freeing himself of the terrifying experiences of the night, the speaker turns back to the figurines of the witch. The crucible is set ablaze. The speaker sets the figurines on fire and recites the incantation *Anašši dipāru*.

- 135 I am raising the torch and burning their figurines,  
 136 (Those) of the *utukku*-demon, the *šēdu*-spirit, the lurker-demon, the ghost,  
 137 Lamaštu, *labāšu* (disease), *ahhāzu*-jaundice,  
 138 *lilû*, *lilītu*, *ardat-lilî*,  
 139 And any evil that seizes mankind,  
 140 Melt, dissolve, drip ever away!  
 141 May your smoke rise ever heavenward,  
 142 May the sun extinguish your embers,  
 143 May Ea’s son, the exorcist, cut off the terror that emanates from you.

In this incantation, the speaker executes the verdict. He states that he is putting the figurines to the torch and expresses the hope that they melt, that their smoke rise up and be lost in the sky, that the sun shine its rays upon them and thus dim their glow, and that Asalluḫi, the magician of the gods and son of the water god Ea, quench their embers and thus cut off their emanations. The witches are executed, and in this incantation as well as in the eighth and tenth incantations, *Ezzētunu šamrātunu* (V 132–141) and *Isâ isâ* (V 158–175), they are addressed as demonic shades. In origin, these incantations belong to the stock of general antidemon incantations but have been adapted here for use against malevolent ghosts.



## SECTION TWO

This section centers on the release of witchcraft and the liberation of the victim.

**Incantation Four.** *Ša* <sup>d</sup>*Šamši mannu abušu*, “Of the Sun, who is his father?” (IV 107–114).

Three knots are tied in a band of white wool; the knots are then undone, and the band is cast into the crucible.

- 107 Of the Sun, who is his father, wh[o is his mother],  
 108 Who is his sister? He is the judge.  
 109 Of the S[u]n, Sîn<sup>10</sup> is his father, [Nik]kal is [his] mother,  
 110 Ma[nzâ]t<sup>11</sup> is his sister: He is the judge.  
 111 Šamaš [destroys] the w[itchcraft], releases the spittle,<sup>12</sup>  
 112 And she, M[anz]ât, breaks the bon[ds].  
 113 (So) I destroy the witchcraft, I rele[ase] the spittle,  
 114 I cause the wind<sup>1</sup> to carry off sorcery, rebellion, evil word.

Šamaš is the central figure in this incantation. In the opening lines, the speaker picks up on the mention of the sun in the preceding incantation and reiterates emphatically that Šamaš’s role and identity in our incantation, as in the rest of the short version, is that of judge. While wool is being tied and untied and then thrown into the fire, the speaker states that he is unraveling and destroying the tangle of witchcraft (IV 113–114).

**Incantation Five.** *Šaruḥ lānī šaruḥ zīmī*, “Splendid is my countenance, splendid is my appearance” (V 83–88).

The parched roasted flour cited in the ritual instructions for this incantation serves either as a representation of witchcraft (in which case it will be cast into the crucible) or more likely as a mixture to be used for apotropaic purposes at the end of the ritual.

- 83 Splendid is [my appearance, splendid is my countenance].  
 84 Mighty [raging Girra],  
 85 Burner o[f the warlock and the witch].

10. The moon.

11. The rainbow.

12. That is, the effects of the spittle.

- 86 [My] sorcerers, [my sorceresses, and the women who instigate sorcery  
against me],  
87 [My] warlocks [and my witches],  
88 To N[uska and] Girra [(the judges) you are handed over!]

The splendor referred to in the opening statement may reflect the light of the ritual flames; it is more likely, however, that it derives from the rays of the rising sun, for the incantation was originally part of a morning ritual and would have been recited as the rays of the sun struck the speaker's face. Immediately afterwards the speaker invokes the fire god Girra; if the speaker had in fact likened himself to the sun, then it is the sun's authority that he draws upon to invoke Girra, the hypostasization of the burning rays of the sun. In any case, the speaker calls on the dying fire to consummate its work of destroying the witches in a final destructive blaze.

**Incantation Six.** *Šer'ānī tukašsirā<sup>d</sup> Ea uptaṭṭir*, "Ea has (now) unbound the ligaments that you have bound up" (V 89–97).

As the crucible in which the figurines have been burning is stirred with an ashwood branch and the fire comes forth in a final climactic blaze, the victim speaks this incantation and recalls that everything that the witches have done has been undone and has rebounded against them, that Ea and Asalluḫi, gods of water and magic, have cleansed and unbound him, and that Girra and Nuska have protected and avenged him. The incantation reads:

- 89 [Ea has (now) unbound] the sinews that you have bound up,  
90 [Asalluḫi has (now) released] the figurines that you have twisted and  
fettered.  
91 The knot that you have knotted against me, the pl[ot that you have plot-  
ted against me]  
92 May blazing Girra ca[use the wind to carry off],  
93 May Nuska, the judge, the [master of exorcism],  
94 [Turn back] up[on your head] the sorcery that you have performed  
against me.  
95 My witchcraft is released, [my enchainment is] c[leared],  
96 With spring water, [I undo your "spitt]le,"  
97 I have (now) become pure, cl[e]an, and innocent in the presence of  
Nuska] and Girra, [the (divine) judges.]

The stirring of the fire both concludes the burning and prepares for the act of extinguishing. The incantation incorporates the theme of releasing or undoing the effects of witchcraft, a theme that occurred previously in the

fourth incantation, “Of the Sun, who is his father?” In the present incantation, the undoing of witchcraft is accomplished not only by fire gods, but also by water gods; moreover, the incantation incorporates the theme of cleansing water. This incantation seems to link the preceding fire ritual and the following water ritual, thereby concluding the second section of the ceremony and introducing the third.

## SECTION THREE

This section centers on extinguishing both the fire and the witch’s life. The smoldering figurines are drenched in water.

**Incantation Seven.** *Ēpišū’a ēpišētū’a*, “My sorcerers, my sorceresses” (V 112–131).

As water is poured onto the glowing coals, the speaker in the first of the two incantations of the section describes the witches’ harmful actions and recalls that having first gone at the command of the water gods Ea and Asalluḫi to the fire god Girra to burn the witches, he has now returned to the water gods in order to quench their smoldering remains.

- 112 My sorcerers, my sorceresses,  
 113 My warlocks, my witches,  
 114 You whose heart has planned evil against me,  
 115 You keep on seeking malicious spells against me,  
 116 You have bound my knees with not good machinations.  
 117 In order to release the witchcraft and spittle against me, having (first)  
     turned to Girra at the word of Ea and Asalluḫi,  
 118 (Now) with spring water, I quench your heart,  
 119 I extinguish your mood,  
 120 I remove the ardor of your heart,  
 121 I confound your understanding,  
 122 I unravel your thinking,  
 123 I burn your witchcraft,  
 124 I cause you to abandon the plots of your heart.  
 125 You shall not cross over the Tigris and the Euphrates to me,  
 126 You shall not cross over dyke and canal to me,  
 127 You shall not climb over wall and battlement to me,  
 128 You shall not come in through the city gate and its entranceways to me!  
 129 May your witchcraft not approach me,  
 130 May your words not reach me—

- 131 By the command of Ea, Šamaš, and Marduk, and the princess [Bēlet]-ilī.

Fire and water are completing their tasks, and the speaker states that he has gone back to Ea and Asalluḫi, now that Girra has completed the task assigned to fire, in order to make sure that any spark of life and malicious impulse left in the witches are extinguished and that they are completely deprived of life and power. In the last part of the incantation (125–130), these defeated witches, who have now been turned into nefarious ghosts, are then forbidden to approach the settled community and the person of the speaker.

It is of interest to note the importance accorded to Ea and Asalluḫi in the short version, for in the long one they have been pushed to the side by the emphasis placed there on other gods. Here, in any case, Ea and Asalluḫi overshadow the judgment in the fullest sense of the word;<sup>13</sup> for just as they initiated it by sending the victim to Girra (cf., e.g., Maqlû III 58–60, IV 1–12), so, too, do they themselves carry out the final stages of its execution.

**Incantation Eight.** *Ezzētunu šamrātunu*, “Raging, furious are you” (V 132–141).

Water is poured on the glowing coals. The speaker addresses the witches as if they were demonic or ghostlike.

- 132 Raging, furious, strong, cruel,  
 133 Overbearing, tough, hos[tile], wicked are you!  
 134 Who but Ea can calm you?  
 135 Who but Asalluḫi can soothe you?  
 136 May Ea calm you,  
 137 May Asalluḫi soothe you.  
 138 My mouth is water, your mouth is fire:  
 139 May my mouth extinguish your mouth,  
 140 May the spell of my mouth extinguish the spell of your mouth,  
 141 May the plots of my heart extinguish the plots of your heart!

The seventh and eighth incantations center on the final divesting of any shreds of human form that the witches still retain and the squelching of their remaining life force. The witches are pacified and become harmless ghosts,

13. For Ea as a god who guarantees judgements, see Thorkild Jacobsen “The Good Life,” *Before Philosophy: The Intellectual Adventure of Ancient Man*, ed. Henri Frankfort et al. (Penguin: Middlesex, 1949), 222, and idem, *The Treasures of Darkness: A History of Mesopotamian Religion* (Yale University Press: New Haven, 1976), 112.

their evil power quenched by the power of water, Ea and Asalluḫi. The witch has been transformed into a noncorporeal being.

## SECTION FOUR

This last section centers on the disposal of the witches' remains and the permanent expulsion of their ghosts.

**Incantation Nine.** *Šadû liktumkunūši*, “May the mountain cover you” (V 149–157).

A mountain stone is set atop (the censer which had previously been placed on) the opening of the brazier containing the charred and sodden remains of the figurines. The speaker here expresses the wish that the mountain confine and pulverize the witches, whose separation from the living is herewith demanded:

- 149 May the mountain cover you,  
 150 May the mountain hold you back,  
 151 May the mountain pacify you,  
 152 May the mountain hide you,  
 153 May the mountain enshroud you,  
 154 May the mountain turn you back,  
 155 May the mountain cover you over,  
 156 May a strong mountain fall upon you.  
 157 From my body you shall indeed be separated!

Present in the ritual in the form of a mountain stone, the mountain signifies some form of the world of the dead and may even be reminiscent of the cosmic Ekur. In any case, it here suggests a burial mound heaped on dead enemies in the open country, rocks piled over bodies or graves.

**Incantation Ten.** *Isâ isâ*, “Be off, be off” (V 158–175).

In this, the last incantation of the early version, the speaker commands the witches' ghosts to depart and adjures them never to return:

- 158 Be off, be off, begone, begone,  
 159 Depart, depart, flee, flee,  
 160 Go off, go away, be off, and begone!  
 161 May your wickedness like smoke rise ever heavenward!  
 162 From my body be off,  
 163 From my body begone,

- 164 From my body depart,  
 165 From my body flee,  
 166 From my body go off,  
 167 From my body go away!  
 168 To my body turn back not,  
 169 To my body approach not,  
 170 To my body reach not!  
 171 By the life of Šamaš, the honorable, be adjured,  
 172 By the life of Ea, lord of the underground springs, be [adju]red,  
 173 By the life of Asalluḫi, the magus of the gods, be adjured,  
 174 By the life of Girra, your executioner, be adjured!  
 175 From my body you shall indeed be separated!

The ban is imposed by the authority of the very gods who had previously participated in the ritual: Šamaš, the judge, Ea, lord of the deep, Asalluḫi, the magus of the gods, and Girra, the executioner. The remains of the witches are then cast out through the gate, and magical drawings are made around the entrances. Thus, the witches are separated from the human community and condemned to exist beyond the pale.

Here the short version ends. The ceremony is designed both to destroy the witch and her witchcraft and to protect the victim. Building upon the basic ritual of burning, drowning, and burial, the ceremony has taken up and integrated the additional themes of destruction and release of witchcraft as well as protection against future witchcraft attacks and the turning back of such attacks against the witch.

#### STANDARD LONG VERSION

Resuming our study of the standard long version of Maqlû, we immediately note that the ceremony has been significantly expanded and changed into a nighttime ceremony. The main activities of the ceremony are the recitation of incantations and the performance of such rites as burning of figurines, fumigation, salving, washing, disposal, and protection against future attack. Each of the three divisions of the long version centers on a different set of rites: division one (Tablets I–V // Ritual Tablet 1–95) centers on burning and dousing figurines of the witch; division two (Tablets VI–VII 54 // Ritual Tablet 96–137) centers on fumigation, protection of the patient's house, and massaging the patient; division three (VII 55–VIII // Ritual Tablet 138–179) centers on washing the patient over representations of the witch. The incantations of each division have common themes; they thus develop a

set of ideas that parallel or derive from the rites of the division, thereby reiterating the central ideas and ritual activities of the division. The bulk of the material of each incantation division is set out in blocks of “similar” incantations, each block reiterating a theme linked to a standard ritual act, and these blocks in turn follow one another in accordance with standard ritual patterns. The work as a whole has introductory, connecting, and concluding sections, as do the individual divisions. Thus, the work has both a ritual and conceptual structure as well as a narrative progression that impart a coherence and a distinctive character and tone to the ceremony.

Having followed the short version, let us now sample the material of the standard version by reviewing several of the more characteristic and important incantations of each of the three ceremonial divisions (excepting those already presented as part of the short version).

The **first division** opens with the patient’s invocation of the gods of the cosmos—that is, the gods or powers of the night sky, of the netherworld, and of nature. In this new introduction (I 1–72), the patient asks these gods to assist him in his struggle against the witch. In line with its new ceremonial context, this section begins with the justly famous address to the Gods of the Night, Tablet I 1–36.

- 1 I call upon you, Gods of the Night,
- 2 With you I call upon Night, the veiled bride,
- 3 I call upon Twilight, Midnight, and Dawn.
- 4 Because a witch has bewitched me,
- 5 A deceitful woman has accused me,
- 6 (Because) she has (thereby) caused my god and goddess to be estranged  
from me
- 7 (And) I have become sickening in the sight of anyone who beholds me
- 8 (And consequently) I am unable to rest day or night,
- 9 (Because) a gag that is continually filling my mouth
- 10 Has kept food distant from my mouth
- 11 (And) has diminished the water which passes through my drinking  
organ,
- 12 (Because) my song of joy has become wailing and my rejoicing  
mourning—
- 13 Stand by me, O great gods, and give heed to my suit,
- 14 Judge my case and grant me an (oracular) decision!
- 15 I have made a figurine of my warlock and witch,
- 16 Of my sorcerer and the woman who instigates sorcery against me,
- 17 I set (it) at your feet and am now pleading my case:

- 18 Because she has performed evil against me and has constantly conjured  
up baseless charges against me,  
19 May she die, but I live.  
20 May her witchcraft, her spittle, her enchantment be released.  
21 May the tamarisk that is copious of crown clear me,  
22 May the date palm that withstands all winds release me,  
23 May the soapwort that fills the earth cleanse me,  
24 May the cone that is full of seeds release me.  
25 In your presence I have (now) become pure like grass,  
26 Clean and innocent like nard.  
27 Her spell being that of an evil witch,  
28 Her word has been turned back into her mouth and her tongue con-  
stricted.  
29 On a(c)count of her witchcraft, may the Gods of the Night strike her,  
30 May the three Watches of the Night release her evil spell.  
31 Her mouth be tallow, her tongue be salt:  
32 May that which uttered an evil word against me drip ever away like  
tallow,  
33 May that which performed witchcraft against me dissolve like salt.  
34 Her bonds are broken, her deeds nullified;  
35 All of her words fill the steppe—  
36 By the command pronounced by the Gods of the Night.

This opening incantation draws together magical and legal imagery; it is an indictment of the witches.<sup>14</sup> The incantation is a speech that accompanies a ritual act and gives expression to a dynamic situation; the text thus reflects the changes in state undergone by the patient and the witches from the beginning of the incantation to its end.

The incantation is in the form of a first person speech made by the patient, who invokes heavenly powers of the night, the gods of Anu (1–3). He first presents his plaint in the form of a description of the acts that the witch performed against him and of his resultant state (4–12). These facts clearly establish that he has suffered injuries at the hand of the witch and therefore that he has a right to a court hearing. Consequently, he asks the gods to take up his case (13–14). Then, having caused the accused witches to be present at the judgment in the form of figurines (15–17), he asks that they be punished because they have sought (perhaps by means of accusations) unmo-

14. In its present context as the opening incantation of Maqlû, I 1–36 is to be understood as a preliminary hearing, though an earlier form of the incantation might well have represented a stand-alone hearing.



tivated evil against him, and that their bewitchment be released (18–20). He asks to be cleared (of bewitchment and any guilt imputed to him) by means of a standard set of plants—these plants usually serve to purify, but here they function also as a form of juridical ordeal (21–24). Having proved his innocence and having been cleared (25–26), he rightfully asserts that since the witch's utterance belongs to an evil witch, her accusation has been refuted (27–28). He is now able to request that the Gods of the Night bring the witch to justice and indict her and that the Night Watches release the witchcraft (29–30). By means of magical associations and acts, the patient now destroys the organs of speech of the witch (31–33). Finally, he asserts that the witch's actions and accusations have been wholly nullified (34–35) by the Gods of the Night (36).<sup>15</sup>

Subsequent to the introduction (I 1–72), the ceremony turns to its main concern—the judgment, execution, and expulsion of the witch. The witch is destroyed by fire (I 73–IV) and water (V 98–141 // RT 83'–85'); these symbolic acts of burning and drowning are performed ritually on figurines representing the witch.

In our examination of the short version, we have already examined the primary statement of judgment (I 73–121) and witnessed the beginning of the burning process (I 135–143); so we may turn directly to the continuation of the burning theme in Tablet II. Incantations against the witch in Maqlû (as incantations generally in the Mesopotamian tradition) are based on various themes and take various forms. One of the most striking and important themes is the destruction of the witch. In keeping with a ritual in which burning is a repetitive and central act, the destruction of this evil enemy achieves concrete form in various incantation types that center upon burning. The motif of burning the witch, in various permutations and elaborations, occurs in almost every incantation in I 73–IV 151. Not surprisingly, the fire-god Girra is a primary actor in this division; many of the incantations invoke him and are recited alongside the ritual burning of images of the witch. A well-known type is the address to the fire god (Girra) in which he is described and called upon to destroy the witch (see especially II 19–149). Here, destruction

15. For an analysis of the opening incantation of Maqlû (I 1–36), see Tzvi Abusch, *Babylonian Witchcraft Literature: Case Studies*, BJS 132 (Atlanta: Scholars Press, 1987), x–xii and 85–147, and “Divine Judges on Earth and in Heaven,” in *The Divine Courtroom*, ed. Shalom Holtz and Ari Mermelstein, Biblnt 132 (Leiden: Brill, 2014), 6–24. For a classroom version, see my “An Incantation-Prayer: Gods of the Night 1” (ch. 7) in *Reading Akkadian Prayers and Hymns: An Introduction*, ed. Alan Lenzi, ANEM 3 (Atlanta: Society of Biblical Literature, 2011), 157–67. See also Daniel Schwemer, “Empowering the Patient: The Opening Section of the Ritual Maqlû,” in *Pax Hethitica: Studies on the Hittites and Their Neighbours in Honor of Itamar Singer*, ed. Yoram Cohen, Amir Gilan, and Jared L. Miller (Wiesbaden: Harrassowitz, 2010), 311–39.

by fire has been joined to the motifs of judgment and execution. The incantation “O powerful Girra, wild (fire-)storm” (II 127–134) and the first part of the incantation “O blazing Girra, warlike son of Anu” (II 105–125) are short and simple addresses that exemplify this type of address:

127 O powerful Girra, wild (fire-)storm,  
 128 You give correct decisions to gods and rulers,  
 129 You provide justice for the oppressed man and woman.  
 130 Stand by me in my judgment like Šamaš, the warrior,  
 131 Judge my case, render my verdict.  
 132 Burn my warlock and my witch,  
 133 Devour my enemies, consume the ones who would do evil to me!  
 134 Let your raging (fire-)storm vanquish them.

105 O blazing Girra, warlike son of Anu,  
 106 Indeed you are the fiercest among your brothers.  
 107 As you decide lawsuits in the stead of Sîn and Šamaš,  
 108 Judge my case, hand down my verdict.  
 109 Burn my warlock and my witch,  
 110 Girra, burn my warlock and my witch,  
 111 Girra, scorch my warlock and my witch,  
 112 Girra, burn them,  
 113 Girra, scorch them,  
 114 Girra, vanquish them,  
 115 Girra, consume them,  
 116 Girra, confound them!

A more literary version of the request to consume the evildoer is found in the incantation “O blazing Girra, firstborn of Anu” (II 77–103).

77 O blazing Girra, scion of Anu,  
 78 It is you who renders judgment, the secret speech,  
 79 You illumine darkness,  
 80 You set straight confusion and disorder,  
 81 You grant decisions for the great gods,  
 82 Were it not for you, no god would deliver a verdict,  
 83 It is you who gives instruction and direction.  
 84 You alone speedily capture the evildoer  
 85 (And) speedily overcome the wicked and the enemy.

- 86 I, [so-and-so, the son of so-and]-so, whose god is so-and-so, whose  
goddess is so-and-so—
- 87 I have been attacked by witchcraft, and so I enter into your presence,  
88 I have been made detestable in the presence of god, king, and lord, and  
so I come toward you,
- 89 I have been made sickening in the [sight of anyone who b]eholds me,  
and so I bow down before you.
- 90 Grand Girra, pure god,  
91 Now in the presence of your great godhead  
92 Two bronze figurines of the warlock and the witch I have fashioned  
with your power.
- 93 In your presence I cross them, and to you I hand them over.  
94 May they die, but I live,  
95 May they be bound, but I be acquitted,  
96 May they come to an end, but I increase,  
97 May they weaken, but I become strong.
- 98 O splendid Girra, preeminent one of the gods,  
99 Vanquisher of the wicked and the enemy, vanquish them so I not be  
wronged.
- 100 May I, your servant, live and be well so that I may stand before you  
(and declare):
- 101 You alone are my god, you alone are my lord,  
102 You alone are my judge, you alone are my aid,  
103 You alone are my avenger!

The last several lines of this incantation are particularly interesting. The declaration “You alone are my god, you alone are my lord, you alone are my judge, you alone are my aid, you alone are my avenger!” at the very end of this incantation (II 101–103) is the equivalent of the promise of future praise found in many prayers. This statement focuses upon a mutual relationship between man and god. It expresses the speaker’s gratitude should he be rescued by the god in the latter’s capacity of god, lord, judge, help, champion. The supplicant hopes that the god will champion him, thereby either fulfilling the terms of an already existing relationship or creating a new one. In return, the human recipient will assert his thanks and recognition in the form of a statement of praise, allegiance, and devotion. Given this context, as well as other formulations, the speaker’s wish to stand before the god, should the god rescue him (II 100), signifies a pledge of loyalty and a commitment to service.

Having examined the witch's execution by fire, we may move directly to the middle of Tablet V, where the smoldering remains of the effigies are doused with water (V 98–141 // RT 83'–85'). The two incantations V 112–131 and 132–141<sup>16</sup> make it clear that the evil beings are thereby deprived of the power to perform evil. Figurines of the witch are then trampled; thus concrete expression is given to the defeat of the enemy and the attainment of victory (V 142–144 // RT 86'):

- 142 I trample down my foe, I destroy my evildoer,  
 143 I slaughter my opponent, I repeatedly annihilate my pursuer  
 144 In the presence of the warrior Nuska.

The witches (that is, their remains) are again burned (V 145–148 // RT 87'):

- 145 Melt, dissolve, and drip ever away!  
 146 May your smoke rise ever heavenward,  
 147 May the Sun extinguish your embers,  
 148 May Ea's son, the exorcist, cut off the terror that emanates from you.

And in “May the mountain cover you” (V 149–157 // RT 88'–89') the wish is expressed that a mountain confine and pulverize them. Finally, in “Be off, be off” (V 158–175 // RT 90'–91'), the last incantation of Tablet V, the dead witches are expelled and commanded never to return. (For V 149–157 and 158–175, see above, the discussion of the short version.)

In the **second division**, fumigation is performed to counteract and disperse attacks of witchcraft. Alongside fumigation, objects are set up for the protection of the patient, and he himself is massaged with oil.

Prominent among the fumigants are the *kukru*-plant, sulphur, and salt. Examples of addresses to these fumigants are the incantations VI 25–33 (*kukru*), 78–84 (Sulphur), and 119'–126" (Salt).

#### KUKRU

- 24 [*kukru*, *kukru*],  
 25 [*kukru*, dweller in the pure ho]l[y mountains],  
 26 [the small *terhu*-vessels of the] *en*-prieste[sses],  
 27 [the small cones o]f the *qadištu*-votaries:  
 28 [Come hither] and [b]reak the [strong] bond of my warlock and witch,  
 29 [Turn] her [wit]chcraft into a storm, her words into a wind.

16. For these two incantations, see the discussion of the short version, above.

- 30 [May] her witchcraft [be] blown away like chaff,  
 31 [May it bla]cken her like ashes,  
 32 May her witchcraft crumble l[ike the plast]er of a wall,  
 33 May m[y witch's] anger be undone.

## SULPHUR

- 78 Sulphur, Sulphur, Sulphur, daughter of River, Sulphur, daughter-in-law  
 of River,  
 79 Whose witches are seven and seven, whose enemies are seven and  
 seven.  
 80 They performed sorcery against her, but she is not ensorcelled,  
 81 They bewit[ched her], but she is not bewitched.  
 82 Who is it that can perform witchcraft against Sulphur?  
 83 May Sulphur rele[ase] the sorcery that the seven and seven have per-  
 formed against me.  
 84 May Sulphur [...] ... release the sorcery that the seven and seven have  
 performed against me so that I may live.

## SALT

- 119'' You, Salt, who were created in a pure place,  
 120'' For food of the great gods did Enlil destine you.  
 121'' Without you a meal would not be set out in Ekur,  
 122'' Without you god, king, noble, and prince would not smell incense.  
 123'' I am so-and-so, the son of so-and-so, whom witchcraft holds captive,  
 124'' Whom machinations hold in (the form of a skin) disease.  
 125'' Release my witchcraft, O Salt, dispel my spittle,  
 126'' Take over from me the machinations, then will I constantly praise you  
 as (I praise) my creator god.

An example of an incantation to accompany a ritual involving both a fumigant (asafetida) and an object set up for protection (twine around the bed) is VI 127''–134''. This incantation follows immediately upon the completion of the address to salt and introduces a group of four incantations that are variations of each other. (I shall discuss this group below, as an example of the history of incantations).

- 127'' Hal my witch, my inseminatrix,  
 128'' Who has lit a fire (against me) at a distance of one league,

- 129'' Who has repeatedly sent her messengers towards me at a distance of two leagues.
- 130'' I know and have gained full confidence (in my abilities to hold you off).
- 131'' I have installed a watch on my roof, a protective emblem at my gate.
- 132'' I have surrounded my bed with (colored) twine,
- 133'' I have scattered asafœtida (upon a censer) at the head of my bed—
- 134'' Asafoetida is especially strong, it will cause all your witchcraft to wither.

The last three incantations of the second division (VII 22–28, 29–46, and 47–54) focus on the healing and protection of the patient by the application of oil to his body. This is developed most clearly in VII 29–46, a well-known *Kultmittelbeschwörung* that was imported into Maqlû.

- 29 Pure oil, clear oil, bright oil,  
 30 Oil that purifies the body of the gods,  
 31 Oil that soothes the sinews of mankind,  
 32 Oil of the incantation of Ea, oil of the incantation of Asalluḫi.  
 33 I coat you with soothing oil  
 34 That Ea granted for soothing,  
 35 I anoint you with the oil of healing,  
 36 I cast upon you the incantation of Ea, lord of Eridu, Ninšiku.  
 37 I expel Asakku, *ahhāzu*-jaundice, chills of your body,  
 38 I remove dumbness, torpor, and misery of your body,  
 39 I soothe the sick sinews of your limbs.  
 40 By the command of Ea, king of the apsû,  
 41 By the spell of Ea, by the incantation of Asalluḫi,  
 42 By the soft bandage of Gula,  
 43 By the soothing hands of Nintinugga  
 44 And Ningirima, mistress of incantation.  
 45 On so-and-so, Ea cast the incantation of the word of healing  
 46 That the seven sages of Eridu soothe his body.

This incantation is a good example of a *Kultmittelbeschwörung*, that is, an incantation addressed to objects used in rituals in order to enhance and elicit their qualities. What is striking about this incantation is its development from a typical *Kultmittelbeschwörung* into a composition in which there is an

overlapping of an address to enhance and activate material and an address that emphasizes the independent force of speech.<sup>17</sup>

We are now approaching the end of the night and of the second division. But before taking leave of them, we should take note of the fact that both the introductory and the concluding incantations of the second division (VI 1–15 and VII 47–54) begin with the words “Enlil is my head” and that in both the speaker identifies himself with several nocturnal heavenly bodies. The introductory incantation (VI 1–15) reads:

- 1 Enlil is my head, my face is *ū[mu]*,
- 2 Uraš, the perfect god, is the pupil(s) of my face,<sup>18</sup>
- 3 My neck is the necklace of Gula,
- 4 My arms are the crook of Sin (and) Amurru,
- 5 My fingers are tamarisk, the divine bone—
- 6 They shall not allow spittle to reach my body,
- 7 Lugaledinna and Latarak are my chest,
- 8 My knees are Muhra, my pacin[g] feet are the whole (heavenly) flock.
- 9 Whoever you are, O evil god whom the warlock and witch have sent here to kill me:
- 10 Even if you are awake, do not come here,
- 11 Even if you are asleep, do not rise up (to come) here.
- 12 May your words be (bad) apples, before god and king may [they cr]umble.
- 13 At my doorway, I have set Lugalirra, the stro[ng(est)] god, and the vizier of the gods, Papsukkal.
- 14 “Strik[e the cheek of] my warlock and witch,
- 15 Tu[rn her word back] into her mouth.”

The concluding incantation (VII 47–54) reads:

- 47 Enlil is my head, Sirius is my form,

17. For a discussion of *Kultmittelbeschwörungen* see Tzvi Abusch, “Blessing and Praise in Ancient Mesopotamian Incantations,” in *Literatur, Politik und Recht in Mesopotamien: Festschrift für Claus Wilcke*, ed. Walther Sallaberger, Konrad Volk, and Annette Zgoll (Wiesbaden: Harrassowitz, 2003), 1–14; for a detailed analysis of the incantation *šamnu ellu*, see *ibid.*, 4–6, and part 2 of my “Notes on the History of Composition of Two Incantations,” in *From Source to History: Studies on Ancient Near Eastern Worlds and Beyond Dedicated to Giovanni Battista Lanfranchi on the Occasion of His 65th Birthday on June 23, 2014*, AOAT 412, ed. Salvatore Gaspa et al. (Münster: Ugarit-Verlag, 2014), 1–10.

18. Emendation yields: Uraš and Gula are the pupils of my eyes.

- 48 My forehead is the rising sun,  
 49 My arms are the Crook<sup>19</sup> at the gate of Marduk,  
 50 My ears are Bull,<sup>20</sup> my feet are the *lahmu*-monsters trampling on the  
 flesh of *lahmu*-monsters.  
 51 You, O great gods, shine forth in the sky <like> Šamaš.  
 52 As tin<sup>(?)</sup> (and) ir[on]<sup>(?)</sup>, sorcery, rebellion, an evil word,  
 52a Witchcraft, spittle, enchainment, [evil] mach[inations]  
 53 Cannot approach you, cannot draw near to you,  
 54 So sorcery, rebellion, an evil word,  
 54a Wi[tchcraft, spittle, enchainment], evil [machina]tions  
 54 (cont.) shall not approach me, shall not draw near to me myself.

The speaker identifies with the gods of the night sky, the stars and planets, the powers that were present or visible in the night sky. This identification has several purposes. Most of all, it allows the ritual actor to take on the quality of wakefulness or sleeplessness associated with the heavenly bodies of the night. By not sleeping he is able to avoid attacks by the witch and by witchcraft that come in the form of evil dreams. The witch—especially the demonic witch—has the power to send a dream or such associated forms as clouds, and she is readily thought of as a wind (see, e.g., V 76–82; cf. VII 1–7). Perhaps the witch appears in the dream; perhaps a dead human that the witch has enlisted appears in it. Evil dreams, themselves demonic powers or beings, assume increased importance in our text during the course of its development. But not only dreams, also sleep—which allows one to dream—becomes a matter of concern. For sleep may lead to or turn into death. These evils can be warded off—even prevented—by assuming the quality of wakefulness of the gods of the night.

With the coming of dawn, a new day has arrived; the orientation of the ceremony now changes from nighttime to morning. Washing is the primary rite in the **third division**, the concluding division of the ceremony. The ritual now centers on water rather than fire, as in the earlier divisions. The patient welcomes the day and repeatedly washes himself, often over representations of the witch (frequently made of flour). Of course, washing is a typical morning activity, but here it serves the dual purposes of causing the witchcraft to return to and seize the witch (reversion) and of cleansing the patient of evil.

The themes of retribution and reversion are especially evident in the very first incantation in the last division, “Whoever you are, O witch, who

19. That is, the constellation Auriga.

20. Perhaps *lê'û* here is a play on *is lê* =  $\alpha$  Tauri + Hyades.



has made my figurine” (VII 55–79). This incantation describes the process quite clearly, for it presents in detail the witch’s actions and the parallel actions of her victim and describes how he rinses off her evil witchcraft and makes it come back upon her.

- 55 Whoever you are, O witch, who has made a figurine of me—  
 56 Who has looked at my form and created my image,  
 57 Who has seen my bearing and given rich detail to my physical build,  
 58 Who has comprehended my appearance  
 59 And reproduced my features,  
 60 Who has bound my body,  
 61 Who has tied my limbs together, who has twisted my sinews.  
 62 As for me, Ea, exorcist of the gods, has sent me,  
 63 And before Šamaš I draw your likeness—  
 64 I look at your form and create your image, I see your bearing  
 65 And give rich detail to your physical build, I comprehend your appearance  
 66 And reproduce your features with pure flour,  
 67 I bind your body, I tie your limbs together,  
 68 I twist your sinews.  
 69 The sorcery that you have performed against me I perform against you,  
 70 The (ominous) encounter that you have caused me to encounter I make  
 you take over,  
 71 The vengeance that you have wreaked on me I wreak back on you.  
 72 Your witchcraft, your spittle, your enchainment, your evil manipulations,  
 73 Your hostile machinations,  
 74 Your messages of evil,  
 75 Your love (-magic), your hate(-magic), your perversion of justice, your  
*Zikurrudâ*-magic,  
 76 Your muteness, (and) your madness—may they attend to you (rather  
 than to me).  
 77 With the water of my bo[dy] and the washing of my hands may it rinse  
 off  
 78 And come upon your head and body so that I may live.  
 79 May a (female) substitute stand in for me, may one who encounters  
 (me) take (it) over from me,  
 79a I have encountered an ominous encounter; may they take (it) over from  
 me.

In this incantation the victim addresses a witch. He first describes how the witch had formed a detailed replica of his person and has twisted and bound its limbs. He then states that he has gone before Šamaš at the behest of Ea, drawn a flour representation of the witch, and created a form of the witch by performing the same actions of formation that she had performed against him. He then states that he has caused her to experience the witchcraft that she had performed against him. He expresses the wish that her acts of witchcraft stand ready to overwhelm her and then asks that it—the evil—be rinsed off his body with his wash water and flow onto the person of his addressee. He concludes with the wish that a substitute stand in for him and receive the evil consequences of an unlucky encounter.

In its present form, the incantation is intended to counter evil signs that were sent by the witch and encountered by her victim. But it was originally not a standard witchcraft incantation. It is rooted in and has features of the *namburbi* type (an incantation type intended to counter all sorts of evil signs) and is the result of earlier transformations of a text in *namburbi* garb into one that is more like a witchcraft text. The incantation originally emphasized the use of a substitute as the recipient of the evil, but eventually conflated the witch and the substitute, thereby also punishing the witch and causing her to suffer the harm that she had initiated against her victim.

The cleansing from evil itself comes to expression very clearly in the incantation “At dawn my hands are washed” (VII 162–169). This incantation is recited at the coming of morning.

- 162 At dawn my hands are washed.  
 163 May a propitious beginning begin for me,  
 164 May happiness (and) good health ever accompany me,  
 165 Whatsoever I seek, may I attain it,  
 166 May [the dre]am I dreamt be made favorable for me,  
 167 May anything evil, anything unfavorable,  
 168 The spittle of warlock and witch, [not rea]ch me, not touch me—  
 169 [By] the command of Ea, Šamaš, Marduk, and the princess Bēlet-ilī.

Thus, the patient cleanses himself from evil, specifically the evil of witchcraft augured by, or incorporated in, dreams of the night.

Finally, representations of the witch in an edible form are thrown to dogs. Protective amulets are then prepared, and concluding rites are performed.

## HISTORY OF INCANTATIONS

I have alluded more than once to the fact that some of the incantations of the standard version have undergone change. We know of this both from the existence of variant forms of an incantation and through critical internal analysis. I need hardly emphasize how important knowledge of the history and development of a text is for its understanding. There are many examples of literary and textual adaptation, revision, and development in Mesopotamian incantations generally, and in the incantations of Maqlû specifically. But I should preface my examination of several Maqlû incantations with a preliminary remark.

While many of the incantations in Maqlû were composed specifically for inclusion in it, others were taken over from different, often simpler, magical ceremonies. Some of these incantations already dealt with witchcraft, but others were originally composed for purposes other than combating witchcraft and were only afterwards adapted for that use. Their incorporation into Maqlû, a ceremony against witchcraft, involved a change that adapted the incantation to its new function; of the texts quoted thus far, I would cite I 135–143, VII 29–46, and VII 162–169 as examples of this. But it is not only the adaptation of a text for a new purpose that resulted in change. Revision of an incantation and/or incorporation therein of new materials could also result from other factors, such as: the need to adapt an incantation to a change in ritual usage; the integration of a simple text into a new, more complex, framework; the adaptation of a text to new religious beliefs or cognitive/intellectual norms.

Here I will discuss in some detail three examples from Maqlû for which there is some manuscript evidence of change. I will proceed from the example that requires the least amount of analysis and interpretation to the one that requires the most.

1) The incantations found in the fragmentary Nimrud tablet CTN 4, nos. 92 + 145 + 147 are—with one possible exception—variants of incantations found in Maqlû V–VIII.<sup>21</sup> CTN 4, 92 + seems to reflect some form of proto- or deviant version of canonical Maqlû.<sup>22</sup> The three Nimrud incantations,

21. For an edition and discussion of this tablet, see Schwemer, *Abwehrzauber und Behexung*, 44–53.

22. Cf. Schwemer's comment that, "der Text von einem jungen *āšipu* als Teil seiner Ausbildung geschrieben wurde. Dabei kopierte er nicht einfach eine kanonische Maqlû-Tafel, sondern schrieb—wohl aus dem Gedächtnis—Maqlû-Beschwörungen und notierte dazu ihre Verwendung in Stichworten.... Insgesamt sind die Varianten aber zu zahlreich, um allein als Erinnerungsschwächen erklärt werden zu können. Vielmehr wird man den Text als

col. iii lines 19'–27', 35'–46', and 48'–56',<sup>23</sup> are clear variants or parallels to the four incantations Maqlû VI 127''–134'', 135''–142'', 143''–151'', and 152''–158'' (the ending of this last incantation is still missing).<sup>24</sup>

Col. iii lines 19'–27' makes use of a variant of the opening lines in Maqlû VI 127''–134'' and VI 135''–142'', but contains the ritual of Maqlû VI 143''–151''.

Col. iii lines 35'–46' makes use of a variant of the opening lines in Maqlû VI 143''–151'' and VI 152''–158'', but contains in combination the first ritual of VI 127''–134'' (=VI 132'') and the ritual of VI 135''–142''.

Col. iii lines 48'–56' makes use of a variant of the opening lines in Maqlû VI 143''–151'' and VI 152''–158'', but contains the second ritual of VI 127''–134'' (=VI 133''–134'').<sup>25</sup>

The texts read:

<b>CTN 4, nos. 92 + 145 + 147, iii<sup>26</sup></b>	<b>Maqlû VI</b>
19' ÉN attī kaššāptī ša ana ištēn bēri ippuḫu išāta	127'' ÉN ē kaššāptiya lū raḫḫātiya
20' ana šinā bēri ištappara mār šipriša	128'' ša ana ištēn bēri ippuḫu išāta
21' anāku idēma attakal nikla	129'' ana šinā bēri ištappara mār šipriša
22' ina ūriya maššartu ina bābiya azaqqaq kidinnu	130'' anāku idēma attakil takālu
23' ina imitti bābiya u šumēl bābiya	131'' ina ūriya maššartu ina bābiya azaqqaq kidinnu <sup>27</sup>
24' ultezziz ilī ša maššarte	148'' ina imitti bābiya u šumēl bābiya
25' <sup>d</sup> Lugalirra u <sup>d</sup> Meslamtaea nāsiḫ libbi	149'' ultezziz <sup>d</sup> Lugalirra u <sup>d</sup> Meslamtaea
26' muštēmidū kalīte	150'' ilū ša maššarte nāsiḫ libbi muštēmidū kalāti
27' kaššāpta lidūkūma anāku lubluṭ	151'' kaššāpta lidūkūma anāku lubluṭ

Zeugnis einer gewissen Variabilität der in *Maqlû* verwendeten Beschwörungen ausserhalb ihres serialisierten Kontextes werten müssen" (*Abwehrzauber und Behexung*, 52–53).

23. The three incantations are composed of the joining pieces: no. 145 iii 19'ff, no. 147 iii side A (=rev.) 1'ff, and no. 92 iii 1'ff; more precisely, 145 iii 19'ff + 147 side A 1'ff; 147 side A 9' + 92 iii 1'ff.

24. It is possible that col. iii lines 8'–18', the preceding incantation in CTN 4, 92+, should be included as the fourth parallel to this group of four Maqlû incantations because of its proximity to the other three and because its opening lines (8'–9') seem, like those of the following incantation (iii 19'–27'), to contain opening lines parallel to Maqlû VI 127''–129'' // VI 135''–137''. However, the later lines in col. iii lines 8'–18' are similar to lines in Maqlû VII 153–61 and do not seem to resume the ritual of any of the four incantations in Maqlû VI.

Werner R. Mayer in his review of CTN 4 in *OrNS* 67 (1998): 269 has already noted the Maqlû parallels for the incantations found on CTN 4, no. 92.

25. The three CTN 4, 92+ incantations and the four Maqlû incantations all have the same middle lines (= Maqlû VI 130''–131'', etc.).

26. For ease of comparison, I have eliminated all square brackets in both texts.

35'	ÉN ē kaššāptiya eliyānītu	143''	ÉN ē kaššāptiya elēnītiya
36'	ša tattallaku kal mātāti	144''	ša tattanallakī kal mātāti
37'	tartappuda kal šadāni	145''	tattanablakkatī kal šadāni
38'	anāku idēma attakal nikla	146''	anāku idēma attakil <sup>28</sup> takālu
39'	ina ūriya maššartu	147''	ina ūriya maššartu
40'	ina bābiya azaqqap kidinnu		ina bābiya azzaqap kidinnu <sup>29</sup>
41'	eršī altami ulinna	132''	eršī altame ulinna
42'	ina rēš eršiya aštakan	140''	ina rēš eršiya aštakan
43'	... ša'errī		šinšeret ša'errī
44'	kurummat eṭemmi? <riḫīt>	141''	kurummat eṭemmi riḫīt <sup>d</sup> Girra
	<sup>d</sup> Girra qāmē		qāmiki
45'	<sup>d</sup> Nisaba rabūti	142''	u <sup>d</sup> Nisaba šarratu
46'	mukassisat ubānātīša		mugaššisat ubānātiki
<hr/>			
48'	ÉN ē kaššāptī eliyānītu	143''	ÉN ē kaššāptiya elēnītiya
49'	ša tattallaku kal mātāti	144''	ša tattanallakī kal mātāti
50'	tartappuda kal šadāni	145''	tattanablakkatī kal šadāni
51'	anāku idēma attakal nikla	146''	anāku idēma attakil <sup>30</sup> takālu
52'	ina ūriya maššartu	147''	ina ūriya maššartu
53'	ina bābiya azaqqap kidinnu		ina bābiya azzaqap kidinnu <sup>31</sup>
54'	ina rēš eršiya assaraq nuḫurta	133''	ina rēš eršiya assaraq nuḫurta
55'	dannat nuḫurtumma	134''	dannat nuḫurtumma
56'	unaḫhara kal kišpīša		unaḫhara kal kišpīki

The comparison indicates the existence of a textual fluidity in the text of this group of incantations. It is difficult to know whether the four found in the standard version of Maqlû or the parallels from Nimrud are the more original, but I should guess that the Nimrud tablet contains an earlier or more original version of these incantations. This conclusion is suggested by the grammatical forms in CTN 4, 92+ iii 37 and 50. These lines have *tartappuda* (*t[a]r-tap-pu-da*) instead of *tattanablakkatī* (*ta-at-ta-nab-lak-ka-ti*) in Maqlû (VI 145 and 154). *tartappuda* here is a Gtn preterite of *rapādu*, while the parallel in Maqlû is a Ntn durative. The openings of the first two incantations in the Maqlû sequence (Maqlû VI 128–129 and 136–137)—as well as in the parallel to these two in CTN 4, 92+ iii 19'–20'—have the preterites *ip-pu-ḫu* (G preterite of *napāḫu*)<sup>32</sup> and *iš-tap-pa-ra* (Gtn preterite of *šapāru*). These

27. CTN 4, 92+ iii 19'–22' duplicates both Maqlû VI 127'–131' and 135'–139'.

28. Var.: 'attakal'.

29. CTN 4, 92+ iii 35'–40' duplicates both Maqlû VI 143'–147' and 152'–156'.

30. Var.: 'attakal'.

31. CTN 4, 92+ iii 48'–53' duplicates both Maqlû VI 143'–147' and 152'–156'.

32. But note that the form in CTN 4, 92+ iii 19' is not explicit because the word there is written logographically.

preterite forms suggest that the preterite forms of *rapādu* in CTN 4, 92+ iii 37' and 50' are the correct forms. Accordingly, we should expect preterite forms in all the opening lines of these incantations. But while we do find this expectation met in the Nimrud version, we do not find it met in Maqlû VI 144''–145'' and 153''–154''. The preterite forms of *rapādu* in CTN 4, 92+ iii 37' and 50' suggest that the Nimrud text contains the more original versions of these incantations.

2) For our second text we turn to the incantation *amsi qātīya* (Maqlû VII 114–140), which provides an excellent example of expansion and adaptation. In the Standard Version, this incantation reads:

- 114 I wash my hands, I cleanse my body  
 115 In the pure spring water that was formed in Eridu.  
 116 Anything evil, anything unfavorable  
 117 That is in my body, flesh, and sinews,  
 118 The evil of (i.e., portended by) evil, unfavorable dreams, signs, and portents,  
 119 The evil of defective, frightening, evil, unfavorable entrails  
 120 (observed) in the ritual act (of extispicy), in the killing of the she[ep],  
 in the offering of the sacrifice, or in the exercise (var.: + of any sort) of  
 divination,  
 121 That which I have looked at daily,  
 122 Have stepped on in the street, or have repeatedly seen in the outskirts,  
 123 An evil *šēdu*-spirit, an evil *utukku*-demon,  
 124 Illness, he[ad]ache, sleeplessness,  
 125 dumbness, torpor, misery, grief, losses, moaning,  
 126 (Cries of) woe (and) alas, depression,  
 127 Terror, fear, apprehension,  
 128 (The evil consequences of) a curse by the gods, an appeal to the gods, a  
 complaint to the [gods, an o]ath by the god, the raising of hands, curse,  
 129 The evil(s) of witchcraft, spittle, enchainment, evil machinations of  
 mankind—  
 130 With the water of my body and the washing of my hands  
 131 May it (the various evils) rinse off and come [up]on a figurine of a sub-  
 stitute,  
 132 May the figurine of the sub[stitute] bear my sin as a replacement,  
 133 May street and way undo my sins,  
 134 May a (female) substitute stand in for me, may one who encounters  
 (me) take (it) over from me,

- 135 I have encountered an ominous encounter; may they take (it) over from me.  
 136 May the day bring well being, the month joy, the year its prosperity.  
 137 O Ea, Šamaš, and Marduk, help me so that  
 138 Witchcraft, spittle, enchantment,  
 139 Evil machinations of mankind be released,  
 140 And curse go forth from my body.

This version of *amsi qātīya* contains some twenty-seven lines. I would summarize it as follows: The speaker first states that he is washing himself in the pure water of Eridu. He then expresses the wish that all evils, which are enumerated in a list that culminates in a standard enumeration of witchcraft evils, be rinsed off his body and flow onto a figurine of a substitute, a *nigsagilâ*. The incantation ends with a series of wishes: that the street release his sin, that a substitute stand in for him and receive the evil consequences of an unlucky encounter, that the day, month, and year bring goodness, that Ea, Šamaš, and Marduk assist him, and finally, that the witchcraft be released and the *māmītu* take leave of his body.

There is an inner tension in the text created by the fact that whereas the list of evils (VII 118–129) suggests that the incantation was used against many different kinds of evil and had a universal character, the incantation, in actuality, was used to combat witchcraft. The text has a disjointed appearance and contains both secondary elaborations and alien motifs. A detailed internal analysis of the incantation would allow us to solve these problems and to reconstruct the development of this text from a simpler and shorter incantation. But such an analysis proves unnecessary because we actually find an earlier shorter version preserved in a Neo-Babylonian recension of Maqlû Tablet VII. That version reads:

[Incantation. I wash my hands, I clean]se my body  
 [In the pure spring water that] was formed [in Eridu].  
 May [everything evil, everything unfavorable that i]s [in] my [bo]dy, my  
 flesh,  
 [and my sinews] rinse off with the water of my body  
 [and the washin]g of my hands  
 and come [upon your head and] upon your body.  
 [May a substitute s]tand in for me, may one who encounters (me) take  
 (it) over from me,  
 [I have encountered an ominous encounter; may] they [t]ake (it) over  
 from me.

In this version, the speaker begins by stating that he is washing himself in the pure water of Eridu; he then expresses the wish that unspecified evil (*mimma lemnu*)—not a list of evils—be rinsed off onto the person of an unspecified addressee, presumably the substitute mentioned in the last two lines.

This Neo-Babylonian Version is a form of text from which we would derive the long text found in the Standard Version. It contains a base text that could have served as the kernel for the much-expanded Standard text. The incantation was expanded by the insertion of a standard general list of evils of the *namburbi*-type. In addition, the witchcraft entry—“The evil(s) of witchcraft, spittle, enchainment, evil machinations of mankind”—that originally occurred much earlier in that list was moved to the end of the list. The concluding section presently found in the Neo-Babylonian Version of *attimannu kaššāptu* (VII 55–79)—an ending associated primarily with the *namburbi*'s—was transferred to our incantation; and the original ending—“May a (female) substitute stand in for me, may one who encounters (me) take (it) over from me, I have encountered an ominous encounter; may they take (it) over from me”—was incorporated into the new ending.<sup>33</sup>

3) The third text that I have chosen is Maqlû I 73–121. You will recall that in the earlier short version this incantation opened with a call to Šamaš (*Šamaš annûtu salmû ēpišiya*). When this portion of the ceremony was moved from morning to night, Nuska took over Šamaš's role in this incantation. Changes were introduced into the text as part of the process or dynamic of adaptation. Traces of these revisions are still visible and point to the direction of change. It is unfortunate that we possess only the first line of the earlier version and do not (yet) possess a verbatim version of this earlier incantation. Yet knowing that the incantation was once addressed to Šamaš allows us not only to resolve some of the difficulties in the extant standard version of the incantation but also to prove that the version addressed to Šamaš was the more original text.

Textual variants in the extant manuscripts support this reconstruction, but I limit my remarks here to a point of major confusion introduced into the main text by the changeover. This incantation belongs to a common type of incantation in which Šamaš is addressed in the capacity of judge and asked

33. For a detailed analysis of the two incantations and their versions and a reconstruction of the development and relationship of the two, see Tzvi Abusch, *Babylonian Witchcraft Literature*, 13–44, and “A Neo-Babylonian Recension of *Maqlû*: Some Observations on the Redaction of *Maqlû* Tablet VII and on the Development of Two of Its Incantations,” in *Festschrift für Gernot Wilhelm anlässlich seines 65. Geburtstages am 28. Januar 2010*, ed. Jeanette C. Fincke (Dresden: Islet, 2010), 1–16.



to give a judgment. Once Šamaš has been asked to sentence the witch to death by fire, the plaintiff calls on the fire-god to carry out the execution; this fire god is usually Girra. In our incantation, however, the first part—lines 73–109—is addressed to Nuska who, having replaced Šamaš, now functions in his stead as a judge. The concluding part of the text (lines 110–121) is given throughout in second person form and calls upon the god addressed in the second person to function both as a fire executioner and a judge. Since this concluding part is introduced by an invocation to the fire-god Girra in the second person (line 110), it appears as if this part of the text is addressed only to Girra and that Girra is being asked to take over and to play both the role of judge and of executioner.

But what has happened to Nuska? There seems to be a complete confusion regarding the identity of the actual judge. Indeed, the text itself seems uncertain as to which of the two gods mentioned is in fact the judge and leaves the reader with the uncomfortable feeling that Nuska and Girra may perhaps be taking turns as judge; for whereas Nuska is treated as judge in the first part of the incantation (73–109), the second part (110–121) seems to be addressed only to Girra and to no other god, addressing him as if he were both judge and executioner. So while the judge is not Šamaš, neither is it clear which of the two fire-gods<sup>34</sup> is to be treated as the judge.<sup>35</sup>

Of course, when this incantation type follows its normal pattern and is addressed to Šamaš, there are no such difficulties because it is clear that Šamaš is the judge throughout the incantation and that Girra is invoked as the hypostatization of the sun's killing rays. Accordingly, we must posit the originality of the Šamaš version known from the short version used in the morning *Bīt rimki* ceremony in order to arrive at a reasonable explanation of the text and its history.

Originally, then, our incantation was addressed to Šamaš. It would have opened with an appeal to Šamaš in his capacity of judge, then turned to Girra with the request that he burn the witches (lines 110–112, 115–116), and finally ended with a request to Šamaš that the execution be carried out in accordance with his unalterable verdict. When, at a later stage, the ceremony was moved to nighttime and the text was adapted for a new ritual use, Šamaš was eliminated and Nuska was introduced in his place. Some further changes in the text were required and were introduced as part of this initial adaptation. But these changes gave the text an even more confused appearance, a confusion that was only exacerbated by the increasing association and over-

34. For the character of Girra and Nuska and their relationship, see Abusch, "An Early Form," 32–33.

35. The characterization of Maqlû 73–121 as an incantation originally addressed to a composite fire-god is an unsatisfactory solution.

lapping of the images of Nuska and Girra. Further attempts, documented in the manuscripts, were then made to rectify the text. But, overall, the text still reveals the multiple disturbances to which it had been subjected.

Our reconstruction explains and resolves many of the difficulties in our text—most notably, the occurrence of Nuska and Girra together and the subsequent confusion of their roles.<sup>36</sup>

### THE TEXT OF MAQLÛ

All manuscripts (i.e., clay tablets and fragments) containing the standard text of Maqlû are from the first millennium, the single-most important source being Assurbanipal's library. A full listing of all manuscripts will appear in my edition of Maqlû in the series *Ancient Magic and Divination (AMD)*, where all manuscripts are presented in a synoptic fashion. The manuscripts come from the following sites:

- northern Mesopotamia: Nineveh (Neo-Assyrian script), Nineveh (Neo-Babylonian script), Assur, Nimrud (Kalah), Sultantepe;
- southern Mesopotamia: Sippar, Babylon, Babylonia (without specific provenance), Kish, Nippur, Uruk, Ur.

A few notes are in order: The manuscripts from Nineveh are usually written in Assyrian script, but a significant number are in Babylonian script. As for manuscripts from the south (all in Babylonian script), it is not always possible to specify the site from which they derive; hence some of them are characterized simply as "Babylonian." I expect that the list of sites from which Maqlû manuscripts derive is not significantly different from the lists of manuscript provenance for most important canonical (better: standard) religious (i.e., magical, medical, divinatory) or literary texts.

The text of Maqlû is attested in different tablet formats. Most Maqlû manuscripts have four columns of text, though two-column versions are known for all Tablets with the exception of Tablet VIII<sup>37</sup> and even form the majority of manuscripts of Tablet I. Almost all manuscripts follow the standard division into eight tablets of incantations and a ritual tablet, but there are several notable exceptions: a Babylonian text containing at least parts of Tablets I–II; two Assur texts—one containing a version of III–IV, the other

36. For a detailed analysis of the history of Maqlû I 73–121, see Abusch, "An Early Form," 27–39.

37. This is probably due to the fact that Tablet VIII is the least well documented of the Tablets.

containing parts of IV–V;<sup>38</sup> and, finally, a Neo-Assyrian (non-Nineveh) text written microscopically and containing the whole composition on one tablet.

Most of the witnesses to Maqlû are manuscripts that carry the standard version of the composition (more rarely a deviant version). But, in addition, there are also tablets that contain extracts<sup>39</sup> and two commentaries that quote individual lines and then comment on them.

### THIS EDITION

I should say a few words about the method used to create the **transcription** (or, as some call it, normalization)<sup>40</sup> and translation of the standard text of Maqlû given here. Usually the **transcription** follows the main Nineveh Assyrian text(s), that is, the Nineveh Assyrian manuscript(s) on which the text is most fully preserved, though occasionally I will choose to follow a different but “better” Nineveh (Assyrian) reading. When Nineveh (Assyrian) is broken, I have restored from other manuscripts, usually first from Assyrian manuscripts and then from Babylonian ones. The readings presented in the transcription are, therefore, not always those that I deem to be the best or the most original. But, here and there, even when Nineveh (Assyrian) is preserved, I have made minor adjustments based upon other traditions; furthermore, when I regard all Nineveh (Assyrian) manuscripts as wrong, I have sometimes followed other manuscripts or emended the text.

As already noted, our texts are often not well preserved. Since the standard text presented here does not and cannot follow only one manuscript, the text is drawn from several manuscripts. Brackets indicate that a sign is broken or missing, and the use of brackets in the transcription is loose. To avoid an overloaded presentation, I have tried to keep the use of quarter-

38. These Assur texts may preserve a somewhat deviant version.

39. Usually the extract consists of part of an incantation, though occasionally the extract may contain a complete incantation. Most extracts include only one Maqlû incantation; sometimes several may appear together.

40. I should note that I have usually rendered *i* preceding syllable-final *r* or *h* as *e*. However, I have kept *i* with nouns when I was concerned that the reader might have some difficulty identifying the dictionary entry, with verbs when *i* appears as the third person prefix vowel (e.g., *lihmūt*, not *lehmut*), and with readings when I found a vocalization with *e* to be very peculiar.

While I generally do not lengthen short vowels before suffixes, I do lengthen the case ending of feminine plural nouns and plural adjectives before suffixes on the grounds that this length is due to analogy (the long vowel being an allomorph) and not to a change of stress (the lengthened vowel being an allophone)—see *GAG* §65k and especially Borger *BAL*<sup>2</sup> vol. II 163: §65k–l. I also indicate the length of the final vowel of third weak verbs before a suffix/enclitic.

brackets to a minimum, especially within words, and therefore have mainly used them only for long stretches of text or for full words. Generally, within words I have used full square brackets, sometimes even when quarter-brackets around a larger segment would have been more accurate. Not infrequently, when the text is only very slightly damaged, this has not been indicated. For purposes of a transcription, brackets are meant to point the reader to the fact that the text is not fully preserved. But usually the text is certain even when brackets have been used; when the restored text is not certain, I have indicated so by means of a note, a question mark, or a parentheses around the word in question. In the transcription, a question mark in parentheses, viz. (?), indicates that a reading or restoration is uncertain.

Scribes will often write KL.MIN as a “ditto” mark. Unless there is some uncertainty, I have simply given the text that KL.MIN represents. The degree to which KL.MIN is preserved may determine the degree to which the text, even when certain, is represented as broken. KL.MIN is usually not included among the variant readings.

Some variants have been included in the notes. Those cited represent lexical and semantic differences as well as additions, omissions, transpositions, and some scribal errors; normally, orthographic, phonological, or grammatical variations are not indicated, except where these variants are or might be semantically significant. I have tried to include only significant variants.<sup>41</sup> Variations in the forms of pronominal suffixes are normally not included in these notes.

I would encourage the reader who is interested in issues such as orthography, degree of preservation, variation between, among, and within manuscripts, etc., to consult my synoptic edition of Maqlû in the series *Ancient Magic and Divination (AMD)* published by Brill.

Case endings are often not “correct,” nor are they consistent. The absence of consistency may give a barbaric impression, but I ask the reader to remember that this is due in no small part to the nature of the sources and their state of preservation: the ancient manuscripts themselves are not always consistent in their usage of case endings; logographic writing often renders the case ending uncertain; I have often given precedence to a fully preserved occurrence of a case ending, even if it is incorrect, over one that is partially or not at all preserved. I understand that this *modus operandi* creates a “mixed” text, but the reader has only to consult the score in my synoptic edition in AMD to see whence the readings come.

41. A fuller set of variants are given alongside the transcription in the edition in AMD.

Square brackets in the **translation** (and translation notes) will not necessarily match those found in the transcription. They will usually be limited to words that have been fully or almost fully restored; moreover, quarter-brackets are not used in the translation (and translation notes). In the translation, I make use of round brackets to indicate some connotation of the Akkadian that is not conveyed directly in its translation. However, when round brackets are set within square brackets, I usually mean to indicate that if there is sufficient room within a break, the word(s) in round brackets should probably, but not certainly, be restored. In the translation, a question mark in parentheses on the line, viz. (?), indicates that the reading or restoration is uncertain, a superscript question mark in parentheses, viz. (?), indicates that the meaning is uncertain.

Notes explaining the translation or providing alternative translation are only occasionally given. The notes accompanying the translation treat select translation issues; they also provide translations for materials given in the notes to the transcription but otherwise not translated: additions, significant variants, etc. Omissions, deletions, and transpositions of whole lines that are cited in the notes to the transcription are normally not taken up in the notes to the translation.

I should make clear my understanding of the use of Akkadian tenses in incantations and my choice of translation. My rendering is based upon my understanding of the ritual context of the utterance. I have been guided by the following principles:

1. When the speaker states that he is speaking or praying, I understand the preterite form as expressing an act in the present, and I convey this with an English simple present (“I pray”).<sup>42</sup>
2. When the speaker describes an act that he is ritually (or otherwise) performing (usually against the witch), I usually understand the preterite form as expressing an act in the present, and I convey this with an English simple present (“I burn”). To maintain a distinction between the Akkadian preterite and durative, I have often translated the durative by means of an English progressive present (“I am burning”).
3. But when the speaker describes acts that the witch has performed, I usually translate the preterite form by means of an English present perfect (“she has made”).

42. This coincidence of speech and act may perhaps be compared with the epistolary perfect in Akkadian and Hebrew and may perhaps be a form of performativity.

I should also mention that many different terms are used to designate various types of witches and witchcraft in Maqlû as well as in other Mesopotamian antiwitchcraft incantations and rituals. Our understanding of the differences is still primitive. I should therefore note that the translations in this volume for words denoting witches and witchcraft are often no more than conventional renderings.

Finally, I have tried to craft a translation that makes sense of the original text and creates a meaningful modern rendition. At the same time, I have tried to be true to the Akkadian original, to its word order and semantics. It has not always been easy to find the right balance between these two, sometimes conflicting, concerns.

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