

## THE INTERNALIZATION OF SUFFERING AND ILLNESS IN MESOPOTAMIA: A DEVELOPMENT IN MESOPOTAMIAN WITCHCRAFT LITERATURE

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In the present essay, I shall examine the manner in which an Akkadian prayer treats or presents the experience of illness, suffering, and death brought on by an attack of witchcraft. But because the text is somewhat anomalous, it will better serve the purposes of a volume devoted to the study of ancient Near Eastern magic if we begin not by immediately entering the world of this text but by making one or two remarks about method and purpose; far from being a digression, these comments will set out some of the questions and a bit of the framework of this study.

One of the most important tasks confronting the student of Babylonian magic is that of understanding the evils that are said to plague humans and against which magical rituals are performed. We are required to identify the evils, define their individual natures, and determine their relationship with each other. Needless to say, changes will occur over time or between genres in the attitude and approach to a specific evil, that is, in the culture's understanding of the evil, its relation to other evils, and its treatment. Often times, the very attempt to delineate and describe a body of texts sensitizes the analyst to anomalies. In this short essay, I should like to treat one such case drawn from my work of classifying, analyzing, and interpreting Mesopotamian texts that treat witchcraft. It will be evident that the awareness of the possibility of historical development will help us find a way to comprehend the text, but we will also discover that the task of understanding magical texts requires that we be sensitive not only to problems of a textual and philological nature, but also to the human concerns and feelings of faraway individuals and communities.

The introductory diagnostic portions of Mesopotamian therapeutic texts sometimes provide detailed symptomologies, but it is especially the prayers and incantations that convey the fear and suffering brought on by an attack of witchcraft. To be sure, the oral rites usually focus upon and describe the actions of the witch, a being that has attacked her victim with the intent to harm and even to kill. It is, thus, normal when describing witchcraft or the witch for the patient to present the evil as an external force that has beset him. Thus, the physical experience of illness is conveyed not by presenting the subjective experience of the sick person but by describing the witch's actions against her victim. After describing various magical activities performed against the victim (involving among other things his images, hair, spittle, clothes, and other objects with which he has come in contact), texts often describe the physical and psychological consequences in terms of the witch's direct actions against her

victim. For example, in the Akkadian incantation to Shamash of the second house of *bitrimki* we read<sup>1</sup>:

She filled me with stiffness and debility,  
 Took away my sexual drive, caused me to turn against myself,  
 Twisted my muscles, sapped my strength,  
 Caused my arms to fall limp, bound my knees,  
 Afflicted me with discord, squabbles, misery, anxiety,  
 panic, fear, curse, terror, worry, sleeplessness, stupor, apathy, <>misery>>,  
 unhappiness, and ill health.

Or again<sup>2</sup>:

They have seized my mouth, caused my neck to tremble,  
 Caused my mouth to be swollen<sup>3</sup>, taken away my speech, pushed in  
 my chest,  
 Weakened my heart, bound my arms, bound my knees, bound up my  
 moving feet,  
 Bent my spine, caused me to turn my face back and forth (and  
 become dizzy), filled my body with stiffness and debility<sup>4</sup>.

But occasionally, we find an exception, and the experience is then all the more surprising and jarring. A particularly striking example of such an exception is found in the first of three incantations to the sun god, Shamash, in the anti witchcraft ritual LKA 154 + 155 // LKA 157, I 1-IV 5' // K 3394 (Gray, SRT, pl. VII) + 9866<sup>5</sup>. (For a detailed description of this ritual, see *Excursus*).

<sup>1</sup> The manuscripts of this incantation are: K 2563 + K 2820 + K 2821 + K 2843 + K 5750 + K 9601+ K 10537+ K 16716 // Sm 94 // K 2368 + K 9830 + K 11768 (+) 11661 (+) 13305 (+) 4819 (+) DT 120 rev. // Bm 123376 // PBS 1/2, 129 // STT 76 // STT 77. For a somewhat antiquated edition of this text, see J. Laessøe, *Studies in the Assyrian ritual and series bit rimki*, Copenhagen 1955, 36-49; for these lines see 39: 21-28; 41-42; 45. See B.R. Foster, *Before the muses: an anthology of Akkadian literature*, Bethesda 1996, 2nd edition, vol. 2, 642, for a recent translation.

<sup>2</sup> W.G. Lambert, *An incantation of the maqlû type*, Ao 18, 1957-58, 290-91:16-19. For a recent discussion of this text, see my *Considerations when killing a witch: developments in exorcistic attitudes to witchcraft*, in I. Gruenwald and M. Idel, eds., *General and Jewish magic*, Groningen (in press).

<sup>3</sup> And therefore unable to speak.

<sup>4</sup> For similar passages see, e.g., also *Maqlû I* 97-102 and KAR 80 (and duplicates), obv. 39ff. and rev. 6-10 as well as rev. 26-29 and 31-33. KAR 80 contains two separate rituals, each centered on a Shamash incantation; duplicates are: KAR 80 // K 1853 + K 6262 + K 6789 + K 13358 + K 13813 (+) K 7201 + K 10819 (+) K 6996 (+) K 9216 (+) K 431 + K 11260, I-II 17 // K 3000, obv. // Bu 88-5-12, 95 (S. Langdon, *A Babylonian ritual of sympathetic magic by burning images*, RA 26, 1929, 39-42) // K 10245.

<sup>5</sup> For these identifications, see already my *Babylonian witchcraft literature: case studies* (= Brown Judaic Studies 132), Atlanta 1987, 72-73, n. 117, and 120, n. 70.

The text of the first incantation is preserved on LKA 155, obv. 5' - rev. 27, K 3394 + 9866, obv. 1' - rev. 15, and LKA 157, obv. II; that of the second on K 3394 + 9866, rev. 17-20, LKA 157, rev. III 1'-6', and LKA 154, rev. 2'-5'; that of the third on LKA 154, rev. 7'-16', LKA 157, rev. III 12'-17', and K 3394 + 9866, rev. 23-26. The second and third incantations are shorter than the first and focus on the witch. The first incantation, by contrast, is relatively long and focusses on the patient.

This first incantation is perhaps better referred to as a prayer. It is recited by the patient/victim and comprises four major parts: a) A hymnic introduction. b) A presentation in the first person of physical and psychological ills similar in form to a lengthy and detailed description of a patient's symptoms (in the third person) in the introduction to medical and magical texts. Many of these ills are attributed to the workings of witchcraft in descriptions of symptoms in the aforementioned protheses of magical/medical texts, including the prothesis of our own composition (LKA 154, obv. 1'-6' // LKA 157 I, 1-16). c) In order to release the witchcraft and regain life, the patient raises up a pouch of precious stones that is then designated as his substitute or ransom and he requests release from his sin. d) In respect to the witchcraft, the patient asserts that he had not performed witchcraft but that the witches had and asks for a return to normalcy. A rubric is appended to the end of the incantation: KA.INIM.MA *kišpī epšūšu sahārimma ana ēpišišunu šabāta*, «A text to turn back witchcraft which has been performed against him so that it seizes its doer» (LKA 155, rev. 27 // K 3394 + 9866, rev. 15)<sup>6</sup>.

The second part of this prayer<sup>7</sup> is still not fully reconstructed; in its present state of preservation, it reads as follows<sup>8</sup>:

[The ones who have performed] witchcraft, sorcery, charms, magic  
 which is evil and not good ... I do not know but you know,  
 Fever, stiffness, debility, sickness, wasting away ...  
 My arms, legs, knees, and feet are lame,  
 My sexual drive ..., my ... is bound,  
 My [limb]s have fallen limp, I continually experience stomach pains and  
 distress, terror, ..., and shivers, and I am constantly apprehensive,  
 [I am con]stantly fearful ..., I talk to myself,  
 I dream terrifying dreams (and therein) with dead men I speak,  
 ... my omens are strange,

<sup>6</sup> Compare the relevant portion of the statement of purpose (quoted in the preceding note): [*kišpī e]pšūšu sahārimma ana ēpišišunu ša[b]āti*.

<sup>7</sup> LKA 155, obv. 15'ff. // LKA 157, obv. II 1'ff. // K 3394 + 9866, obv. 1'ff.

<sup>8</sup> As stated, the text is still fragmentary; moreover, there are some significant variations between manuscripts that cannot be fully resolved given the present state of the text. Thus, my translation is tentative. I restrict myself here to two comments about this segment of text. Many of the verbs are in subjunctive form and thus depend on a presently destroyed subordinating conjunction at or near the beginning of the passage. The lament seems to open and conclude with a statement regarding the god's knowledge of the evil.

... my heart is constantly distressed and troubled<sup>9</sup>,  
 My eyes<sup>10</sup> spin, my ears constantly buzz and ring (lit. shout and roar)  
 and cause me pain,  
 The vertebra of my neck pain me (i.e. throb), my neck muscles are stiff,  
 Piercing pain ...  
 [My] flesh, my [ ], my knees, my hips, [my...], my ankles are  
 slackened and are hardly able to (let me) get up, stand, and speak,  
 (When I speak) I am short [tempered],  
 My chest (...) and shoulders hurt, ...,  
 The [ ] of my skull constricts me,  
 ....  
 When I sleep, in my dreams ... ghosts ... appear (?), whether known or  
 not known ...,  
 The dream which I see I cannot remember, ...  
 ... my mind keeps on changing and is constantly deranged, my own  
 mind ... is not known to me,  
 I am unable to decide my future, I cannot retain my words,  
 I am troubled, I am distraught, I am disturbed (?), I am fearful, I am  
 stunned, I reel, (and) I am confused,  
 I am sick, I am overturned, I am downcast, I am wailing, and I am  
 stirred up,  
 I am destroyed again and again, yet I linger on, I am always clouded  
 over and gloomy, I am completely overwhelmed,  
 With witchcraft, sorcery, charms, magic which is evil and not good  
 I am covered and afflicted.  
 Your great godhead knows ... no other god knows, ... but you, Shamash,  
 know (the evil).  
 In order to release the witchcraft performed against me and to save my  
 life, I so and so, your servant, raise up ....<sup>11</sup>.

<sup>9</sup> Or, perhaps, my stomach spasms and is swollen!, reading MÚ!.MÚ!-b[u] (*nuppuju*), rather than LÙ.LÙ-*b*[u] (*dalāhu:Nin*).

<sup>10</sup> Or, perhaps, my face (*pānu*), i.e., my head.

<sup>11</sup> The following composite transcription is tentative; it draws upon relatively well preserved readings in the manuscripts and is only meant to give the reader a sense of the textual basis of the translation:

[(ša) kišpī ru] bē rusē upšāšē lemnūti lā ja'būti ... [(t)i]dū anāku lā idū attāma tū[dū] umma mung[a lu] tu sili[tu] sījhāt sīrī ... idāya kimṣaya birkāya šep̄ya ūubbū[tū] nī[sī] libbiya ... kasū [mīnāt]Iya<sup>2</sup> DUB.DUB-ak<sup>3</sup> hūs hīpi libbi gili[ta] ... ḥurbāšu artanāšū attanamda[rū] [apt]anallat[u] ... i'ti libbiya adabbub[u] [sunāte parl'dāte anattalū i'ti [m]i'tūt adabbubu] ... idāf'lū'a KŪR.KŪR-ru<sup>4</sup> ... libbi etanašašu ittanadlaḥu īnā[ya iššanu]ndū uznāya išta[n]assā išaggumā u ikabbi[šānin]ni kunuk kišādiya umahhašanni dadānū'a šaggū dikiš sēri ... sīrū'[a...]ya birkāya qablāya ... kišallāya upto naṭṭarā ana tebī' uzzuzi/hazzāzī] u'dabābī' muqqā ... [(ina dabābiya) ikkay]a iktenerru iṛtī (...) naglabāya ikkalū ... [...] muḥbiya ussanāqanni .... ina salā[li]ya ina ūnātīya ... ejemmū ... mūdā lā mūdā ... ūtī ammaru lā ukallu ... tēme ... [i]tanakkiru u ištanannū ūem r̄jamāniya ... ittiya lā idū arkāt la parsāku atmāya la kullāku dalhāku dulluhāku la'sāku pardāku ḥamāku damāku ešāku marşāku abkāku nadāku nas[sāk]u u šudlupāku

We notice that while the illness is due to the workings of witchcraft, the speaker does not focus on the cause. Here the patient describes his suffering and illness not from the point of view of the witch, the external cause of his ills, but rather from a subjective point of view; he himself is the subject. He lists the parts of his body, the faculties, and emotional states that have been affected; they are the subjects. The detailed description of illness is striking. It reveals a true shift of perspective; the focus now is on the subjective experience of the victim. I am reminded of the observation that 'any theory of meaning that hopes to address the experience of illness must give due weight to the primacy of the body not only as an object of thought, but as itself a vehicle for thinking, feeling, and acting'<sup>12</sup>.

This incantation, then, is a somewhat anomalous text. Within the witchcraft corpus, this self description is almost unique and is most likely modelled upon or built around an actual description of symptoms in the prothesis of a magical/medical text such as BAM 231 // BAM 332, specifically BAM 231, obv. I, 1-14<sup>13</sup>, but to these the liturgist has added descriptions of pain, confusion, and dread. One may thus explain this text by assuming that a medical symptomatology normally presented at the beginning of a text and describing the patient in the third person had served as a model and had been transformed into a first-person prayer<sup>14</sup>. But even if such is the case, this explanation

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attana<sup>a</sup>batu u uzabba<sup>b</sup>lu ē[tene]rrupu ētene<sup>c</sup>tū attanaktamu ina kišpī ruhē rusē upšāše lemnūti lā  
lābūti lu<sup>a</sup>ubāku lupputāku ilūtk[arabit]u idū ... ilu mamma lā idū ... dŠamaš attāma idū anāku  
annanna aradka ana pušur kišpiya u balāt napištiya našāku ...

<sup>a</sup> This probably represents a form of šapāku; note, however, that the nominal form that I have reconstructed would require a pl. fem. verb.

<sup>b</sup> It is suspect that the noun is a fem. pl. and the verb has the form of either a masc. pl. or a masc. sg. subjunctive.

<sup>c</sup> Dtn of sāqu?

12 L.J. Kirmeyer, *The body's insistence on meaning: metaphor as presentation and representation in illness experience*, *Medical anthropology quarterly*, N.S., 6/4, Dec. 1992, 325.

13 Cf., e.g., also the opening prothesis in the anti-witchcraft ceremony (addressed to Marduk) K 1853 + K 6262 + K 6789 + K 13358 + K 13813 (+) K 7201 + K 10819 (+) K 6996 (+) K 9216 (+) K 431 + K 11260, rev. // K 2493 + K 7102 + K 9081 + K 10352 (+) K 10353 + K 11159 // K 3648 + K 6169 + Sm 1280 // K 5088 + K 6918 + K 11307 // K 8965 // K 3000 rev. // BAM 232 // STT 129 + STT 262 (+) STT 130 (+) STT 134 (+) STT 135 (+) STT 328. For convenience see simply BAM 232, I 1'-20' // K 3648 + AMT 21/2 (K 6169) + Sm 1280, I 1-20 (as well as K 1853 + ...) K 9216 // STT 129 + ... (+) STT 135 // K 8965.

14 The third person medical symptomatology need not be in the same composition as the prayer; the medical symptomatology of a different composition may influence the revision/composition of a prayer in another ritual. It is of interest that by comparison with the first Shamash prayer in LKA 154 + 155, the prayers in the Shamash ceremony BAM 231 // BAM 332 and in the Marduk ceremony BAM 232 (and duplicates) do not have a developed first person description despite the fact that the description of symptoms in the opening protheses are quite developed; this further supports the notion that the form of the first Shamash prayer in LKA 154 + 155 is the result of a complex development. In the main, I still assume that developments usually first took place in a prayer/incantation and were then carried over to the scribal instructional framework (symptomatology, diagnosis, statement of purpose, etc.) that encapsulated the oral rite (cf. my *Babylonian witchcraft literature*, cit., 45-75). In so far as the individual item is present, the third person description of symptoms in the prothesis of LKA 154 + 155 agrees with the first person

would perhaps provide the literary mechanism for its creation, but would not explain why such a prayer was composed on this occasion and what new attitudes were being reflected.

This type of focus on the body and on illness is new and is of interest. The emerging centrality of illness in witchcraft texts may reflect the fact that over time witchcraft was increasingly held responsible for more and more misfortunes and was introduced into or grafted onto bodies of literature that originally did not deal with witchcraft.

But having been incorporated into the corpus of the exorcist (*āśipūtu*), witchcraft materials not only influenced that corpus, but were themselves also influenced by the beliefs and approaches of the exorcist (*āśipu*). Elsewhere, I have noted that combatting witchcraft by sending the witch to the netherworld represents a change from an earlier approach in which one burnt the witch in effigy, thereby destroying her and keeping her out of the netherworld<sup>15</sup>. This change is a consequence of the integration of anti-witchcraft material into and its assimilation to *āśipūtu*. But alongside the change from an older mode to that of sending the witch to the netherworld, there seem also to be some other concomitant changes of experience and perspective. It is significant, I submit, that there also seems to be a difference in attitude towards illness between rituals in which the witch is sent to the netherworld, whether by fire or by other means, and those others in which she is destroyed: the difference may be only one of perspective or even just of emphasis, but in the former rituals, we tend to find a focus on illness, whereas this focus is certainly less prominent and often even absent in the latter group. Perhaps we should expect nothing less than this new emphasis on illness in texts in which the witch is sent to the netherworld; for it is not unnatural that death, ghosts, and the netherworld, central features of *āśipūtu*, would have an effect on how one experiences witchcraft.

In any case, the perspective or frame of reference of such texts as LKA 154 + 155 (and duplicates) and KAR 227 and duplicates (// LKA 89 + 90 // K 9860 + // K 6793 + // Sm 38 // Si 747 // Bm 98638)<sup>16</sup>, texts in which the witch is sent to the netherworld, is that of illness. And when the focus is on illness, the concern with illness tends to override other considerations and affects, even determines the approach to the cause – here the witch. With the emphasis on illness, the goal of the ritual now becomes the riddance of the illness, a goal that is achieved by sending the illness together with its cause, the witch, to the netherworld. Hence, the differences within the witchcraft corpus between texts which were directed primarily against witches and witchcraft and texts which center on illness and deal with its cause, the witch and witchcraft, sometimes only in a passing way<sup>17</sup>.

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description in the prayer, but I note that this proodosis is significantly shorter than the corresponding part of the prayer and is even shorter than the third person descriptions in the proodoses of BAM 231 // BAM 332 and BAM 232 (and duplicates).

<sup>15</sup> See Abusch, *Considerations when killing a witch*, cit.

<sup>16</sup> For a recent discussion of this text, see Abusch, *Considerations when killing a witch*, cit.

<sup>17</sup> Hence, also the difference between KAR 227 (and duplicates) and *Maqlū I* 37ff, both of which involve the netherworld and Gilgamesh and are directed against the witch – in the former, the focus is on illness, and the witch is sent with the illness to the netherworld; in the latter, the focus is

Limiting ourselves to LKA 154 + 155, I note by way of further support that our interpretation agrees with and explains the fact that illness is mentioned in the third prayer to Shamash in LKA 154 + 155, rev., immediately after the request that Girra transport the witch to the netherworld; it is also in agreement with and is perhaps even confirmed by the fact that among the goals listed in the statement of purpose of the ritual is the unusual one of saving of the victim by the elimination of witchcraft from his body: *ana amēli Šuāti ana eṭērišu u gamālišu k[išp]i Šunūti ina zumrišu nasāhi*, «to save and avenge that man and extricate that witchcraft from his body»<sup>18</sup>.

In addition to the occurrence in our text of a new mode of eliminating the witch, another feature that correlates with the internalization of suffering (that is, the presentation of suffering as a subjective experience of the victim) is the mention of sin, and this, too, is part of a development leading to greater interiority. Elsewhere I have argued that, in principle, sin (together with the resultant anger of the personal god) and witchcraft are not compatible<sup>19</sup>. They are part of two distinct mentalities or ways of thinking, the one focussing on forces internal to the individual, the other on forces external to him; the one emphasizing power and guilt, the other powerlessness and innocence<sup>20</sup>. Hence, sin is of little importance in the body of therapeutic texts intended to counter witchcraft, for, in the main, witchcraft is viewed as an external force.

Yet, here in our text, witchcraft is clearly regarded as a cause of suffering, but so too is sin (LKA 155, rev. 22-23 and the corresponding K 3394 + 9866, rev. 5-6); note also the mention of the personal gods in the following lines K 3394 + 9866, rev. 7-8, the statement in the diagnosis that alongside witchcraft the anger of the personal gods has caused the victim's plight (LKA 154, obv. 6'-7' // LKA 157, I 15-18), and, finally, the fact that one of the goals listed in the statement of purpose of the ritual is that of reconciliation with the personal gods (LKA 154, obv. 8' // LKA 157, I 19-20)<sup>21</sup>. Hence, the new interiorization is taking place in terms both of the victim's experience of illness and suffering and of his understanding of their cause.

on the witch as a criminal and social evil who must be kept from reentering the netherworld and expelled from the organized universe (for the latter text, cf. my *The socio-religious framework of the Babylonian witchcraft ceremony maqlû: some observations on the introductory section of the text, part II*, in Z. Zevit, et al., eds., *Solving riddles and untying knots: biblical, epigraphic, and semitic studies in honor of Jonas C. Greenfield*, Winona Lake 1995, 467-94).

<sup>18</sup> For the rest of the statement of purpose, see *Excursus*.

<sup>19</sup> See my *Witchcraft and the anger of the personal god*, in T. Abusch and K. van der Toorn, eds., *Mesopotamian magic*, Cuneiform monographs, Groningen (in press).

<sup>20</sup> When the cause of one's suffering is externalized and others (human or demonic; in texts that are meant to counter witchcraft, the victim of witchcraft usually sees himself as affected by an outside agency) are seen as the source of one's difficulties, the sufferer not only asserts the guilt and power of the beings who are held responsible for harming him, but also emphasizes his own innocence as well as his own powerlessness (and dependence). He becomes a victim. But when the sufferer recognizes that his own deeds are responsible for his suffering, he acknowledges his own guilt and his own power. For sin implies guilt, and guilt implies the power to do wrong and to affect, to anger another.

<sup>21</sup> For the text of the diagnosis and statement of purpose, see *Excursus*.

It is not only the experience of dreadful illness, but also the belief that the illness leads inexorably to death that we encounter in these texts. It may well be that sending the witch to the netherworld is not only a consequence of the introduction of witchcraft material into *āšipūtu*, but also the result of the sufferer's projection: It is his dreadful experience of the disintegrating effect of illness that leads the patient to focus on illness or even obsess about it and to fear for his own disintegration and death. He is afraid that he will die and go to the netherworld and so he emphatically expresses the wish that instead the witch should go to the netherworld (see especially the third Shamash incantation in our ritual). The patient copes with his illness by projecting what he fears will happen to himself onto the witch.

Surely, it is the experience of overall physical and psychological disintegration leading to death and the fear of death itself that produce the greatest sense of anguish and suffering. Whereas, otherwise, witchcraft is a form of externalization of and a specific focus for negative experiences, a mode that helps the patient keep them under control, here being bewitched becomes a real subjective experience. The emphasis on illness promotes the development of a subjective and crucial perspective of suffering and shows us how and when the person experiences – not just views – himself and his experience.

We note, then, that as illness becomes central (and personal sin is introduced), the actions and image of the witch/witchcraft link up more closely and even meld with profoundly personal descriptions of illness, itself an experience which has now become the patient's primary focus<sup>22, 23</sup>.

#### EXCURSUS: A description of LKA 154 + 155 // LKA 157 // K 3394 + 9866.

The composition begins with a detailed description of the patient's symptoms, a diagnosis, and a statement of the purpose of the ritual; it then prescribes detailed ritual instructions and records the text of three incantations to Shamash and a short utterance to the fire-god Girra. The composition is still somewhat fragmentary and has not yet been published in an edited form (an edition will eventually appear as part of my treatment of the witchcraft corpus). Given the centrality of part of the composition (the first prayer to Shamash) for the present essay, a preliminary detailed description of the composition is perhaps in order. Note that my description of this incomplete text is not formulated in a synthetic/interpretive manner. It is taken from my unpublished

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<sup>22</sup> It is pertinent here to point to just one of the many connections and implications of Babylonian magic and its study for other ancient cultures. This instance in which the witch and illness are joined together and placed on an equal footing may provide us with a perspective with which to re-examine some of the difficult images and forms encountered in many of the laments of the individual in the biblical Psalter, especially the perplexing association of illness, evil-doers, divine anger, and sin found there.

<sup>23</sup> I wish to thank Mr. Chris Wyckoff for his assistance in the preparation in the final draft of this essay.

descriptive catalogue of all Mesopotamian texts that record ceremonial and therapeutic rituals against witchcraft. My description is therefore both sketchy and paratactic in so far as it tries to represent the ceremony as it was recorded in the text; thus the presentation follows the order in which the material appears in the text.

The compositon opens with a detailed description of the patient's symptoms, a diagnosis, and a statement of the purpose of the ritual. Diagnosis: LKA 154, obv. 6'-7' // LKA 157, I 15-18: [amēlu ū kišp] ī epšū 'šuma' [( ) ina akālī šjūkul ina šikārī šaq[i] [ ] ... kimilti ilišu u <sup>d</sup>ištaris̄u elišu ibašš[i], «That man: witchcraft has been practiced against him, [( )] he has been fed food (with witchcraft), given beer to drink (with witchcraft) .... The wrath of his god and goddess is upon him». Immediately following the diagnosis, the statement of purpose of the ritual (LKA 154, obv. 7'-10' // LKA 157, I 19-23) then sets out the goals of the ceremony: the reconciliation of the personal gods, the sending back of the witchcraft upon its doer, and the saving of the victim by the elimination of witchcraft from his body (... ilšu u <sup>d</sup>ištaršu ittišu sul[um] kišp̄ e]pšūšu sahārimma ana ēpiššunu řa[b]āti ana amēli řuāti ana eřeřišu u gamālišu k[išp] ī řunūti ina zumrišu nasāhi).

Following the above mentioned introductory materials, the text prescribes detailed ritual instructions and records the text of three incantations to Shamash and a short utterance to the fire-god Girra.

In the evening, a ritual area is purified; various purifying plants are placed overnight into a vessel of ritual water; in the morning, at sunrise, incense is burned and beer is offered to Shamash; a number of valuable objects are placed into a pouch – they serve as a ransom or substitute for the afflicted man; statues of the witches made of various materials – of each material, two statues are made, one representing a male, the other a female – are prepared and their hands tied behind their back; in the presence of Shamash, the statues are placed upon a brick, covered with material, and surrounded by a magic circle; a brazier is set up; at this point, another pouch (probably a waterskin) is introduced (and perhaps clay is placed in it), gypsum, alkali, and perhaps other materials are introduced into the ritual (but it is still unclear to me exactly how they were used; see below).

Now the text of three incantations to Shamash are recorded as well as the instructions for their recital. The first incantation is long and focuses upon the patient; the second and third are shorter and focus on the witch.

Instructions for the three-fold recitation of the First Incantation are given. This first incantation is cited by incipit and then its full text is given. (This incantation is described in the body of our article).

The Second Incantation seems to be addressed to representations of the witch and asks that Shamash's brilliant red light (= fire god) overwhelm them [and that they come to an end] like water from a waterskin. The incantation is recited three times and the waterskin is [ ... ].

The patient washes his hands in gypsum (and alkali) over the statues, he then recites the Third Incantation over the statues: identifying the representations with witches who have done evil against him, he asks that they die but he live, that the firegod Girra burn them and transport them to the netherworld, that various illnesses

(of which the speaker is said elsewhere in the text to be suffering) destroy their body, that their witchcraft seize their body, and that the evil that they have done pursue them. The incantation is recited three times, and hot bitumen is poured over the statues, which are then set on fire with a torch.

Now an Utterance to the fire-god (LKA 154, rev. 18') to burn the witches is recited three times.

At this point, various concluding rituals are performed involving, among other actions, washing, burial, opening a well, disposal of the pouch that contained valuable objects. The text ends with a statement regarding the outcome to be expected from the ritual: «witchcraft is released» (*kišpū pašrū*), followed by a colophon.