WITCHCRAFT AND WAR: THE RITUAL FRAGMENT Ki 1904-10-9, 18 (BM 98989)

By DANIEL SCHWEMER

War, and imminent battle in particular, put any Babylonian or Assyrian king, whose rule and security very much depended on successful campaigns, in a precarious situation. While careful military planning certainly helped to defeat one’s enemies, victory in the end was determined by the gods. Before entering battle, oracles were consulted to make certain that the king’s decisions had the gods’ favour,1 and a number of other rituals could be performed to ensure that the gods supported the king’s cause. These rituals — dubbed “war rituals” by modern scholarship — are not very well known, and the texts attributed to this group are a rather mixed set of royal rituals related to the king’s campaign and to potential aggression by enemies.2 They include traditional Babylonian rituals to be performed before setting off on a military campaign or immediately before a major battle, as well as specifically Assyrian rituals for the same purpose.3 It is not surprising that two of these texts include the performance of divination rituals,4 while others focus on the binding of substitute figurines representing the enemies and also use figurines representing the king himself.5 In line with the general ideology of war, the rubrics of the rituals clearly indicate that the reason for the king’s military action is the enemy’s aggression against his land, and that the king himself only acts in defence of his own land’s borders.6 It seems that all these texts, apart from the Assyrian rituals in the narrow sense, were assembled in a “series ‘battle’” (iskar tähäzi) that is mentioned in the famous letter of an Assyrian king demanding the collection of various scholarly texts from the Ezida and scholars’ houses in Borsippa.7 The same text refers to rituals (or a ritual) “So that in Battle Arrows do not Come Near a Man” that are also known from the catalogue of exorcistic texts (KAR 44 ///).8 Apparently they were not thought to be part of the iskar tähäzi; but in the letter the two text groups are named together within a longer list and they were certainly closely associated with each other. Special namburbi rituals could be performed on campaign to avert evil indicated by accidents of the king’s chariot, but there is no reason to assume that they belonged to the iskar tähäzi too.9 Other namburbi rituals were used to protect the land’s borders when an earthquake had signalled an imminent invasion of the enemy.10

The royal war rituals are exclusively directed against the foreign enemy and exhibit many features that clearly distinguish them from rituals to overcome one’s personal adversary.11 The latter group of texts, directed against the bēl dababi, bēl umāti or bēl lemutti (occasionally also bēl...
lummi and bēl dini), is closely related to anti-witchcraft rituals. In anti-witchcraft incantations the bēl dabābi is the male complement of the witch (kaššāpu), whose stereotype is primarily female. Rituals against personal adversaries can take the form of anti-witchcraft rituals, and anti-witchcraft incantations form part of rituals against the bēl dabābi. The background of this overlap is obvious enough, as it certainly seemed reasonable to suspect one’s adversaries and rivals of employing illegal magical means to fight their case. Typically, sorceries practised by one’s bēl dabābi were thought to cause primarily social problems, such as falling out of favour with the king and nobles, suffering a defeat in a lawsuit, falling victim to slander, as well as the resulting depression, anxiety, agitation and restlessness. Within this context, it makes perfect sense that rituals which could be used to strengthen oneself against one’s adversary, like the egalkura and sūruṅga rituals, were thought of as being borderline between legal āsipūtu and illegal witchcraft.

Just as the rituals against the bēl dabābi are only directed against an enemy within one’s own society, witchcraft accusations — whether in incantations or in court — usually target persons who are more or less close to their victim. A well-known element of the witch’s stereotype is, however, her identification with the traditional enemies of Babylonia: she is said to be an Elamite, a Hanigalbatean, a Gutean, a Subarean, a Lullubean or a Sutean; her victim is overwhelmed by Elamite and Sutean as by a flood, a motif that clearly draws on the traumatic experience of enemy hordes invading Babylonia. Nevertheless, proper anti-witchcraft rituals were, for all we know, never used by the king as rituals against foreign enemies, and one of the characteristics of the royal war rituals seems to be that they are free of typical witchcraft motifs, while sharing some basic techniques of figurine magic also employed in anti-witchcraft rituals.

This seemingly clear-cut dichotomy between war rituals on the one hand, and bēl dabābi and anti-witchcraft rituals on the other, must, however, be qualified in the light of a new, but only very fragmentarily preserved war ritual. Ki 1904-10-9, 18 (BM 98989, see Figs. 1–2) is a fragment from the lower half of a one-column tablet written in an elegant, seventh-century Assyrian library hand. Though no colophon is preserved, we can safely assume that the tablet, found in Nineveh, belonged to Ashurbanipal’s library. The text was copied by F. W. Geers (G 30–31) and subsequently extracts have been cited by the CAD (R 426b), but in view of the fact that not a single line of the text is completely preserved a full edition was never undertaken. The present author has not been able to identify any duplicates that would provide a more complete text, and it is therefore not without hesitation that an edition of the fragment is offered here. But it seems to me that the overall content of the text, which adds significantly to our knowledge of war rituals and their relationship to anti-witchcraft rituals, justifies a full publication of the fragmentary text.

The text, written in good Standard Babylonian, has all the characteristics of a war ritual: The

12 The female resp. male counterparts of each (bēlet dabābi resp. kaššāpu) are artificial creations of incantation rhetoric, and never occur except alongside the bēl dabābi resp. kaššāpu, who both are well-attested as independent characters. For a full discussion of the role of the bēl dabābi in anti-witchcraft rituals and the relationship between anti-witchcraft and anti-enemy rituals see Schwemer, forthcoming, ch. IV. 1. c.


14 This case in question is the bilingual incantation Kūr-kūr bīl, used in KAL 2, 34 and other anti-witchcraft texts (see the duplicates and parallels noted in KAL 2).

15 VAT 35 (collated and copied by the author), a ritual against the bēl dabābi (cf. obv. 7, rev. 18), uses an incantation addressing a 2nd sg. fem., i.e. the witch (cf. āsbat pāki etc. in obv. 1–6).

16 These types of rituals occasionally are included in lists of evil actions performed by the witch: see Lambert 1957–8: 290: 13 // SpTU 2, 19 obv. 25–6, Maqlü I 90, IV 14, V 63, KAR 35 rev. 27ff. Cf. the comments by Scurlock 1989–90: 109ff.


18 See Maqlü III 78–81. The text can now be fully reconstructed (after Meier’s edition the following new duplicates have become known: CT 51, 188 obv. II 5–8; STT 82 obv. II 1–3; SpTU 3, 74a obv. II 23–6; UET 7, 128: 8–9; unpubl. BM 30426 obv. II 1–2” [comm. T. Abusch]): la-nu-a-ni sa-ta-a e-da-nu-a re-da-a-ni, kār-nu-ni a-su-ni e-da-ni sa-lim-pa-ni, mu₄₄ kaššāpu(āč), za ni-ta-te da-ani ši-bi-ta, e-fen-ta šu e-nu-ta šu ma₂₄-ti (only orthographic variants between the manuscripts): “The Sutean is surrounding me, the Elamite is pursuing me, I am covered by a flood, I am overwhelmed by a wave! The witch is a Sutean, strong is her grip, the ‘Deceitful one’ is an Elamite, seize her by her means death.”

19 For the form ta’ti₄u in obv. 16 and 17 and the spelling ši-tik-ta in obv. 14 see the commentary below.
ritual client is the king (rabû, rev. 22'), the ritual is directed against enemies (nakirû, obv. 18', 25', 26', rev. 26'); its aim is the protection of the king's land (rev. 9') against the enemies who reside in a foreign land (rev. 26'). The text is subdivided by several rulings, and some text between obv. and rev., though not too much, is lost; more considerable portions of the text are missing at the beginning and probably also at the end. None of the subdivisions is followed by a rubric, and not all the preserved ritual instructions are marked off by rulings from the recitations which are written out in full.

Because of its fragmentary state the overall structure of the text remains largely unknown. The preserved part of the obverse begins with the very end of a prayer (1'-2'), which is immediately followed by another (?) prayer addressing a group of gods, possibly the stars (3'-18'). A series of short recitations, maybe addressing participants of the ritual, comes next (19'-23'). Line 24' finally has the first short ritual instruction, which is again followed by a prayer mentioning Nergal and Ereshkigal. Curiously, the first line of this prayer seems to have the same text as the last line of the prayer in obv. 3'-18'.

The beginning of the reverse preserves the end of a prayer, and this may be the end of the prayer beginning in obv. 25'. A short ritual instruction follows in rev. 3'; it probably only advised the exorcist to have the king recite the preceding prayer. The next short invocation addresses the defiled night (4'-9') and is followed by a similar short ritual instruction (10').

Then, after a ruling, the text continues with a longer ritual instruction (11'-27'). Like the preceding prayer, this ritual was performed during the night: the standard ritual arrangement in the beginning of this section is set up before the moon god. What follows is an apotropaic rite whose basic structure is known from other war rituals. Substances are brought into close contact with the king and then deposited at the border to the enemy's land. An earthquake namburbi advises the exorcist to collect hair and nail clippings of the king in a porous bottle and take it to the border. In addition to this rite, a war ritual gives the instruction to carry off a girl to the border after the king has had sex with her. The purpose of these rituals is to transfer the evil threatening the king to a substitute which then can be removed to the border, where it affects the source of the evil itself, namely the enemy trying to invade the king's land. Here, neither a bottle nor a girl serve as containers for the evil that has befallen the king; also substances from the king's body are not used. Instead, a figurine of an apotropaic demon is fabricated and identified by name. Then a white pig is slaughtered and the king spills its blood to the four cardinal directions, certainly an apotropaic rite protecting the land on all sides. Possibly the dagger used for killing the pig also receives a special name, since it shares the fate of the figurine in the further proceedings. Both the figurine and the dagger are enclosed in the pig's skin, which makes a perfect container for impurity and evil, being pure and white from outside, while holding all the contagious materials inside. The technique of enclosing contaminated substances in a pig's skin is used not only here, but also in a zikurrada ritual. There, the upîšu, the magic substances and messages of witchcraft sent by the sorcerers are shut up in a pig's skin before their deposition. Here, the "leather bag" is carefully sealed with a clay bulla, then the king puts his hand on the sealed package and orders the evil to depart. Finally, the king washes his hands over the bag, thereby transferring his impurity once more to figurine, dagger and pig skin. Now the package is ready to be deposited at the border of the enemy's land. There it protected the king's land, and an invading enemy who encountered it would inevitably be infected by the evil that had befallen the king, namely an imminent invasion by an enemy. If so, the Assyrian king was certainly only too willing to execute the evil fate that his ritual had determined for every aggressor who dared to cross over whatever had been defined as his land's border.

Apparently, the ritual did not end with the deposition of the bag at the border. But the few remaining preserved lines are quite fragmentary, and no further conclusions can be drawn. The relationship between the ritual section in rev. 11'-27' and the preceding prayers with their short ritual instructions is not entirely clear. But since there is no rubric or double ruling between the
Fig. 1  Ki 1904-10-9, 18 (BM 98989) obverse.
Fig. 2  Ki 1904-10-9, 18 (BM 98989) reverse.
sections, it seems natural to assume that they are all part of the same ritual. Within the longer ritual sections no instructions for the recitation of prayers or incantations can be found. This implies that the prayers were not supposed to be recited during this ritual segment, but actually preceded the final ritual, a conclusion supported by the fact that the prayers themselves are followed by short ritual instructions concerning their recitation. Probably all proceedings took place during the night, though the nocturnal setting only becomes clear from rev. 4' onwards, where the defiled night is addressed.

While the latter invocation draws on standard formulas, the prayer in obv. 3'–18' is more unusual. The gods invoked, possibly the stars, are asked not to listen to the prayers of the barbarians, nor to accept their offerings. The enemies themselves are accused of using witchcraft and evil magic to bind the king’s weapons, a concept that is not otherwise attested in such unambiguous terms. The text takes it for granted that the barbarians (annūnīn-nanda) pray to the same gods as the Assyrian (or Babylonian) king, and that these gods can even be convinced to make common cause with the enemies. Did the Assyrians assume that the distant Medes made offerings to Assur, that they tried to bring round Ištar of Nineveh by deceitful kispū rituals? Did the king of Babylon think that the Elamites called on Marduk to break the weapons of the Babylonian army? Probably not. Since we are dealing with a nocturnal ritual and a plurality of gods is addressed, it seems very likely that the divine stars are the addressees of these lines; and while the stars were regarded as the astral manifestations of their gods by Babylonians and Assyrians, it was only natural to assume that these heavenly bodies — like sun and moon — were regarded as divine beyond the borders of Mesopotamia as well.

It is important to note that the basic structure of the present war ritual — or nambarī ritual countering omens indicating an imminent attack of the enemy? — has some striking similarities with that of anti-witchcraft rituals.25 The enemy is supposed to have set the gods against the king by prayers and offerings, but also by witchcraft and evil magic. The ritual fights this threat by returning the evil to its origin, thereby making the enemies suffer the fate they had intended for the king. The vehicle used to take figurine and dagger to the border resembles a narūq uspāšē, a bag filled with magically contagious material that was dangerous to encounter.26 But the parallels are limited: the kispū-motif is only one of many in this text, and the phraseology of the prayers is otherwise very different from what we usually find in anti-witchcraft rituals. Nevertheless, the present ritual clearly shows that the witchcraft stereotypes could be applied to a foreign enemy and that evil ritual activities of a foreign enemy had to be countered by a defensive war ritual, just as the evil machinations of the witch had to be fought off with a defensive anti-witchcraft ritual. While witchcraft suspicions, however, were mostly dealt with on a ritualistic level only, our war ritual provided the king with a ready legitimation to go ahead with an attack on the enemy’s land, should foreign troops violate the border of his land.

While our text is so far the only war ritual applying witchcraft stereotypes to the foreign enemy of the king, and common anti-witchcraft rituals do not target the foreign enemy, there is one other royal ritual that accuses the foreign enemy of sorceries against the king. When the king enters the first “house” during the Bītu rimki ritual he washes his hands over a figurine of the enemy (nakru).27 Accompanying these ritual actions the prayer Šamaš dayyānu širu ša šamē u erṣetī is to be recited (UBBG 415, Šamaš 40), parts of which are preserved on K 2380 (SRT pl. III). The incantation text identifies the figurine used in the ritual (obv. 14–15: annū nakru ... annū šalamšē) and accuses the enemy of having performed witchcraft against the king (obv. 22ff.). Considering the fact that the ritual in the second “house” of Bītu rimki is a clear-cut anti-witchcraft ritual accompanied by washing over a figurine of the witch,28 one could have assumed that the...

---

27 For this restoration of the relevant passage of the ritual tablet (after PBS 1/1, 15 obv. 4) see Larsen 1955: 29, Faber 1987: 250.
30 For this restoration of the relevant passage of the ritual tablet (after PBS 1/1, 15 obv. 4) see Larsen 1955: 29, Faber 1987: 250.
ritual of the first “house” was a standard anti-witchcraft ritual as well — apart from the usage of the term nakru itself there is no evidence in the preserved portions of K.2380 that the first ritual was directed against a foreign enemy (land). But given that the application of witchcraft motifs to the foreign enemy is now firmly established and the term nakru usually — though not always — refers to a foreign enemy, there can be little doubt that the ritual in the first “house” of Bit rimki targets the enemy (land), while the ritual in the second “house” is devoted to those who have performed sorcery against the king from within his own land.

Ki 1904-10-9, 18 (BM 98989), copy Figs. 1–2.30

The bilingual incantation Kür-kür bil / Nakru aqalitu is used regularly within non-royal anti-witchcraft and bel dabābi rituals (see fn. 14), where nakru cannot have been understood to mean a foreign enemy.

I would like to thank Professor W. G. Lambert, who was kind enough to read through an early version of the following transliteration and translation, for his valuable corrections and suggestions.
rev.

1' [ ]

2' [narrbikumu' lušapi dališikumu'] īda-hu[l]

3' [ ] tu-sā-aq-b[a]

4' [(EN) mūšu puleštu liltā šalaš(3)(?) mass]arātu(en.n)[un]meš śa mūš[r](g[e₄])

5' [ēṛūnu našrat[i(?)] la īa-li-la-tu]

6' [ana īrī šall[i(?)] pu-russā(ed.bar) ta-na-di-na]

7' [anāku annāma mār annāma ša īšu annāma] aštištar(15)-ša munawwannānītu(nenni-r[i])

8' [mūšu kallaṭu(?) pu-su-un-ir][ŋ]

9' [ina qibīt(?) (…) ᵈiš-ṭ]ār šēp(gir) lemutti[hul] y' ana māṭī(kur)-ia pur-sī

10' [ašnītu(?)] tu-sā-aq-ba

11' [(…) ašar šēp̄u pur-s]-a-at qaqqara(ki) tašabbii(sar) mē(a) ēllūti(kū) tasallāh(sū)


13' [] ša qēmii(zi.da) ina muhhi(ugu) ᵉ⁵pašāri(banšùr) tašakkan(gar)[yom]

14' [salām(nu) … teppuš-[m]a] qū]-na-ma-a ina qāt̄(šū) imini(15)-ša kuša-am-sā-šū

15' [] ša a-me-[u]-ti šum(mu)-sū ina naglāb(bar.sil) šumāli(gù)-šū
tašātštarsar)[ŷ]

16' [nakkir[i(?)]-a] šum(mu)-sū tašātštarsar)[ŷ]

17' [ṣaḥā(ṣaḥ) peša(babbar) ina patiri(gir) taṭabbaḫ-majori(?)] dāmītušmeš-sū ina dawāsī(gū.zi)
ta-mu-hār

18' [rubū(nun) dāmmi(uš)meš ᵈaḥi(šaḥ)?] a-[n]a šūrui(im 1) ilāni(im 2) šād̄(im 3) amurri(im 4)
i-tab-bak-ma

19' [ ] mašâak(ku]-šaḥi(šaḥ) peši(babbar) ša ta-ab-[hu]

20' [ ] xu [tāl]appar(m[1]ag)[yom] patakr(gir) u ūalma(nu) ana lābbi(ša)
tašakkan(gar)[yom]

21' [ ] ak[i] ina ṭīdii(im) ta-ka-nak

22' [ina na-skunuk(kašib) … ta-b[ar]-ram rubū(nun) qāš(šu)] su eli(ugu) mašak(kuš)

23' [ ] su-ul(nu)-r[a] dup-pi-ra i-qab-b[l]

24' [ ] qarjiim(a.sagi) gušii(im.babbar) qāšii(šu)yimn-sū ina
mek[āy]m[om]

25' [ ] n[u]-ia ina muhhi(ugu)-ka alšu-ut(?)

26' [ ] ana mi-[š]ir māt(kur) nakiri(kur)[meš] aši-iz-[zi]-ib-sū

27' [ ] xu [t]ul[yom] [x x x (x)]

28' [ ] xu imbu tām[ki ka a.ab.b[a] (sic?)

29' [ ] t]im'i xu [ ]

30' [ ]

rev. breaks off

obv.

1'f. (too fragmentary for translation)

3' [ ] ... I... ed, protection and patronage I ex[ten]ded over them,

4' [ ] ... I held the[m] back.

5' [What ... do(es) not k]now, but your (pl.) great divinity knows,

6' [ ... ] they [im]plored you to smash m[y] weapons:

7' do not accept [their ... ], their [prayer (and) their pleading,
8' [do not listen]en to the words of the barbarians,  
9' [to their ... do not l]isten! Do not eat their bread (offering)s,  
10' [do not drink their water (libations)], do not accept their [in]cense (offering)s!  
11' ... either by] their witchcraft or their sorceries or their (evil) magic  
12' [let the weapons of m]y [ ... ] not be smashed, not be bound, not be defeated!  
13' [I have treated you with respect], I have glorified you,  
14' [I have honoured you], I am holding the hem (of) your (garments).  
15' [ ... by] yourselves you are conjured,  
16' [ ... by] Enlil and Ninlil you are conjured,  
17' [by ... and (by)] his [wea]pons you are conjured!  
18' [ ... Vict]ory will be mine, and not the enemies’!"

19' [ ... ] ... flash(es) against the evil ones.

20' [ ... ] who burns them like a flame,
21' [ ... who] does not withdraw in battle.

22' [ ... ] their mouth(s) are open for drinking [th]eir [ ... ].

23' [ ... ] had [ ... ] carry [their [ ... ] like a fog.

24' [ ... ] you have (him) lift [(...)] ‘Heal’ twenty’-[plant],
25' [ ... ] victor[y] will be mine, and not the enem[ies’],
26' [ ... ] en]emy’s weapon
27' [ ... ] Ne[r]gal and Ereški[gal]
28' [ ... ] you [ ... ] their [weapon]s.

29' (too fragmentary for translation)

rev.
1' [ ... , m]ay [ ... ] be good, [then]
2' I shall [proclaim your greatness] (and) sin[g your glory]."

3' You have (him) recite [ ... ].

4' "[(Incantation:) O Night, terror of the evening, o (you) three watches of the nig[ht],
5' [wakeful, watchful], never sleeping,
6' [to wakeful and sleeping] you provide a decision!  
7' [I am N.N., son of N.N., whose god is N.N.], whose goddess is N.N.;
8' [O night], veiled [bride],
9' [by the command of (... and) Ist]ar exclude the evil from my land!"
10' You have (him) recite [this].

11' [(...)] In a se]cluded [place] you sweep the ground (and) sprinkle pure water. You place a table before Sin.
12' [You s]et up [a censer with juniper] (and) stewed dates (and) sasqü-flour.
13' You draw [ ... ] of flour on the table.
14' [You make a figurine (of ...) of ... an]d you have it carry a hatchet in its right hand.
15' [( ... )]. You write ‘[ ... ] of men”, its name, on its left shoulder blade.
16' [ ... ] you write ‘[ ... ] of my [enemies]”, its name.
17' [You slaughter a white pig with the/a dagger and] catch its blood in a goblet.

32 Or: “whose”, see commentary.
18' [The ruler] pours out [the pig's blood] to the south, the north, the east (and) the west, then
19' [ ... ] The skin of the white pig that has been slaughtered
20' [( ... ) you smear (it) [with ... ]; you place the dagger and the figurine inside (the skin).
21' [ ... ] you seal with clay,
22' (and) you seal (the clay) [with a seal of ... ]. The ruler places his hand on the pig's skin
23' saying: "[ ... turn away, go away!"
24' [ ... ] in water [ ... ] (saying):
25' "I have [stripped off] my [ ... ] over you!"
26' [ ... ] and he [removes it to the border of the enemies' land.
27'-30' (too fragmentary for translation)

rev. breaks off

Commentary

Obv. 2: Apparently the end of a recitation. The signs BAD*-la are clear enough, but the context is missing and any interpretation remains provisional. A reading mtum(i)š)--š--la seems most likely, though the dictionary does not know of any other attestation for the possessive pronoun attached to mtum iša "deaths, epidemic, pestilence". The traces after št suggest šm rather than št, so that one could read ana šu-š-la to "your supplications". Alternatively, one could read dāmtuš)--š--la ana msāš(ku) mahtar(i)-ku qa [ ... ... my blood to the skin. Before you, o god ..." (cf. the ritual instructions in rev. 17'-20'). But since š cannot be excluded, a reading ana kuššišiš-la "to delay you" should be taken into account as well (kāšu D, D-stem of kāšu "to help" not attested otherwise).

3'-4': The prayer in ll. 3'-18' addresses a group of gods (cf. 2nd pl. in ll. 5'-6'). Though this is not stated explicitly in the preserved part of the text, there can be little doubt that the prayer is recited by or on behalf of the king. The first line does not sound like a typical prayer incipit, and ll. 3'-4' may represent a continuation of the text before the ruling (cf. the problematic rulings in ll. 19'-23'). The first two lines describe actions of the king in the past (clear 1st pret. in ll. 4'). The object of these actions is a group of people (3rd pl. in ll. 3' and 4'). The only 3rd pl. referred to in the rest of the text are the enemies of the king, and the obvious conclusion must be that they are referred to by the 3rd pl. forms in ll. 3'-4' as well. The overall sense of the two lines is difficult to grasp, but l. 3' seems to refer to putting the foreign enemies under the king's patronage. The end of l. 3' is lost, but a verbal form parallel to in l. 4' is expected. The traces before the break strongly suggest a reading šš, and sakānu is the obvious choice. The head of the following horizontal is very low on the line, therefore we have restored as-kānu rather than as-ku. If -šš in the beginning represents the end of a verbal form — and this seems to be the most likely option — one can hardly escape a restoration -šš. Then, the first half of the line possibly refers to the king's military conquest of the foreign lands in question, the immediate result of which would have been the extension of the king's patronage over them. The exact meaning implied by akāšaši in l. 4' remains uncertain, and a restoration of the broken word in the beginning of l. 4' is difficult: -šš can hardly represent the 2nd sg. gen./acc. suffixed pronoun, since no 2nd sg. is addressed within the text. The restoration of another verbal form seems most likely, and as-šš-la "I went" (or asššš-la?) seems to make better sense than forms of mulkšu or palakšu.

5': This stock phrase of prayer language is frequently attested in anti-witchcraft incantations and prayers. It always refers to warlock and witch (see e.g. Maqšul 1 87; KAR 80 [KAL 2, 8] obv. 27, rev. 26; []; LKA 154 + 155 [KAL 2, 24] obv. 41, rev. 36; []; KAL 2, 15 rev. III 38ff. []; 32 rev. 6, 58: 6; []; BID, B: 18 [cf. KAL 2, 36 obv. I 36]; K 2785 + 7237 + 9026: 5; K 2395: 12; K 7930 (+) 8326 obv. 17; K 2563 + obv. 4 [Lassoe 1955: pl. 1] // STT 76 obv. 4; UFBG, 512: 36 [IV R² 59 + 1 + / K 2565 + ]). Similar phrases are regularly used in the Neo-Assyrian oracular queries placed before Šamaš itišša rabitu še "does your great divinity know it?". Itišša rabitu šdi "which your great divinity knows", see SAA 4 passim, for the same phrase in the tamūtus see Lambert 1997: 91). But the signs preserved in the beginning of the line must certainly be read žu-šš, so that this is a two-part formula, as in the anti-witchcraft incantations, has to be restored. This formula can hardly refer to the preceding two lines here; rather it should be interpreted as an introduction to the description of the evil activities of the king's enemies. It remains uncertain how the subject of the first half of the line is to be restored. Possible readings are [ša anāšša la išša] "[What I do not know, ...]" or [ša ili marnam ašša] "[What I do not know, ...]" (for the latter cf. LKA 154 + 155 [KAL 2, 24] rev. 15f. []; RIAA 312 [O 193] obv. II 7f., also PBS 1/2, 133 rev. 9' // [Lambert 1957-8: 288ff.]). Since šdi lacks a suffixed pronoun (*tiššatiusiuša), a translation "[As to whom I do not know, ...]" seems less likely, though it would link the phrase better to the following lines.
6: The broken sign at the beginning of the line cannot be read s[al (u-s)al-la-ku-mu-ti]; traces of three vertical wedges are clearly visible. For the defective writing of a contracted final vowel in a III-weak verb cf. here obv. 20: i-te-ra-ru-Sū-ne-it (cf. also the spellings s[i]e-pu-si-ru-su-ri-si-ru in l. 7). In the broken first half of the line a word for the enemies has to be restored, possibly followed by ša: "[The enemies (who) im]plored you to smash [m]y weapons: do not accept [their ...], their prayer ...".

7: Instead of supēšunu sulūšunu one would rather expect supēšunu sulēšunu. Nevertheless the two words can hardly represent anything but the accusative objects of lā tāmūḫārā. The forms are therefore analysed as late acc. sg. in -u.

8: For the restoration of the beginning cf. the following line. The unusual spelling ummān(ērin)-nu-a-da for ummān-manda occurs also in an inscription of Esarhaddon (Borger 1956: 51 variant to Ep. 8: 44). The term itself is already attested in the Old Babylonian period as a pejorative designation of enemies ("barbarian hordes"). In the Neo-Assyrian and Neo-Babylonian periods, ummān-manda usually refers to the Medes as the wild, powerful and distant enemies par excellence (see most recently Lanfranchi 2003: 79–118, esp. 90–2). Since our prayer is a traditional text from Babylonia, ummān-ma-da has probably the general meaning "barbarians" rather than a more restricted ethnic connotation, though the ritual may well have been performed by an Assyrian king against the Medes.

11–12: lā 但不限bāru seems to correspond with ana subbur kakkīya in obv. 6; and a genitive construction is suggested by the available space and the partly preserved -i[a]. An alternative restoration [... kakkū[a] is possible, but less likely. The verb russū was interpreted as "etwa (durch Wasser) aufweichen" in AHw 996a, while CAD R 425b indeed opted for a broader meaning "sully". The present context rather suggests a meaning "bind". This finds further support in the translation of Sam. lā by russū in a bilingual proverb, and W. G. Lambert indeed proposed a meaning "bind" for russū in his edition of the text (see BWL, 228: 17f. with commentary ibid. 232). The sequence ubbirānni usākkānni usabītānni urassānnī (actions of the witch, see Lassoe 1955: 39; 20 // STT 76 and 77 obv. 20) also suggests "bind" rather than "sully"; šī lītassī-ma anāku lābih later on in the same text admittedly makes perfect sense when understood as "let her be sullied, but let me become pure", but magical binding always has a connotation of impurity, so that this attestation by no means disproves a basic meaning "bind". The only two attestations of russū given by the dictionaries where a meaning "to wet, to soak" seems to be demanded by the context are both fragmentary and problematic (ABB 2. 4: 7 and Gilgamesh VI 38, for the latter see George 2003: 832, reading m[u]-[a]-sa-ur[i] "that [wet?]"); note his caution that this tentative restoration is not supported by the Middle Babylonian version from Emar). But if a verb russū "to wet" really existed — and apart from the two passages quoted the noun russū B "mud", "bad weather" (OB, see CAD R 426) seems to suggest so — I would prefer to keep it separate from the better-attested russū "bind".

13–14: In prayers usārīkkumūti "I have glorified you" usually occurs as part of a series of similar actions (see Mayer, UBBG 145 with the relevant attestations including the present). Instead of usāramkumūti one could of course also restore usākkumūti, ashārīkkumūti or eēkānkumūti. The spelling ši-sik-to-ku-nu (or ši-sik-ta-ku-nu) is unusual in this period, but an orthographic archaism (possibly triggered by the original the present manuscript was based on) rather than a reflexion of Neo-Assyrian phonetics (see Hāmeen-Anttila 2000: 10 for the spelling zi-zī-ik-tū in ABL 620 rev. 16).

15–17: The use of zakārū in l. 15' and of tāmī in ll. 16–17' does not seem to imply any difference in meaning (for the usage of tāmī and, less frequently, zakārū in this and related formulas see most recently Scourfield 2005: 23). Usually agents of evil are addressed in this way; they are put under an oath and thereby forced to stay away from the patient. But the preceding lines leave no doubt that a group of deities is addressed here. This is confirmed by the unusual niš rāmānānunu "by yourselves" in l. 15'. Agents of evil hardly be put under an oath by themselves. At the same time the usage of this formula indicates that a group of less important deities is invoked, and we have suggested above that the signs are the addressees of these lines. The form ta'ātunu recalls Neo-Assyrian m > 'i, and Esarhaddon’s succession treaty has the Assyrian form ta’ākunu (SAA 2. 6: 384). If one, however, accepts the derivation of tāmītu "oracle question, oracle, omen" from tāmī (not avi), the Old Babylonian by-form ta’tiīr suggests that the variation between tāmī and ta’ātī is old (see Lambert 1997: 97–8). In the beginning of ll. 17’ the broken sign looks very much like k[u]; probably another deity and his or her weapons are invoked here. The king’s weapons figure prominently elsewhere in the text, but one would expect -ia rather than -su if they were referred to here.

18: Cf. obv. 25'.

19–23: These separated by dividing lines the phrases in ll. 19–23' apparently share a common structure and seem to belong to one section put between the prayer ending in l. 18' and the ritual instruction with following invocation in ll. 24‘ff. Some of the motifs contained in these few fragmentary lines recall descriptions of gods or kings in battle. Line 22' certainly has a pluralic entity as the logical subject (pišunu), but ana arḫišu in l. 21' shows that this does not have to be the case in the other lines as well; so iḫarrīqa and usākhi[i] may well be subjunctive forms. If so, the person described in ll. 19', 20'f. and 23' is most probably the king himself, whose military virtues are extolled. The mouths of l. 22' then probably belong to the king’s troops, and the possessors of what the king’s troops are ready to drink could then be the enemies. If so, a restoration demēšəmuu “their blood”, first suggested to me orally by W. G. Lambert, would make very good sense, though usually only the earth drinks the blood of the soldiers killed in battle. The motif in l. 23' also seems to be unique so far. Comparisons with imbaru “tag” are common in royal inscriptions and regularly connected
with verbs meaning “overwhelm” or “cover” (saḥūtu, šuṣubtu, katāmu and šukṭumu). A restoration of the present text as *tasāḥšt[u] is, however, ruled out by the traces visible before the break, which clearly suggest a sign of the ku-type. Therefore a reading iv-sā-az-bi-[li] seems most likely. While the individual sentences as far as preserved are easy enough to understand, the overall meaning and function of this section within the text is far less clear. The subdivision by dividing lines could imply that the lines of this section are only incipits of longer recitations. But considering that we have two lines in one of the subdivisions (II. 20 f.) and that the text otherwise seems to give the full text of the *recitanda*, such an assumption is rather unlikely. Short explanatory sections within a ritual text could take such a format; but they are very rare, and there is nothing in the preserved part of these lines that would support this idea. Possibly, these lines represent short addresses to the king and his troops, maybe of the structure atti resp. attāna ša.

21: For ana aršū tu “turn back, withdraw (in battle)” cf. e.g. [ša maš]kar kakki petāti u šib šaḫāzi danni ū šarūtu “[who] did not withdraw [confronting drawn weapons and the mighty onslaught of battle” (Borger 1956: 103, 26). The unexpected spelling i-šar-ru instead of i-šur-ru can hardly be resolved by introducing an otherwise unattested value ūr for ū for ūar nor can it be compared with misconstructed forms of middle weak verbs as can be found in texts written by scribes who had acquired Akkadian as a second language (e.g. i-da-š-ak-ku in KBo 1, 5 obv. II. 13). Probably this scribal error points to a pronunciation šurīt, as was argued by von Soden in respect with respect to comparable spellings (GAG § 21 for a > ū before ū, § 104 g on OB i-šar-ru, for a critical discussion of a phonological interpretation of such deviant spellings see Kowensber 1997: 400 with further references).

24: The spacing of the preserved signs indicates that only one sign is to be restored in the break at the end of the line, therefore tu-sā-az-[ša] rather than the expected tu-sā-az-[šaš] (cf. also tušaḫaš according to the 94 obv. 4'-6' // A 405 (Ass. 13955Ü): 7'-9' the deified night of commentary is -tār. d kallatu, recalling the kallatu kuttumtu opening incantation and other texts. The addressee of Maqlū’s müsu any but musitu), and the space available suggests the restoration of another word, most likely (or in 1. 7', the space apparently once more addresses the deified night. The epithet “veiled” can hardly refer to anybody but musitu (or musitu), and the space available suggests the restoration of another word, most likely kallatu, recalling the kalla ši kuttumtu of Maqlū’s opening incantation and other texts. The addressee of pursî in I. 9 must be the night invoked in the preceding line. The broken PAR at the beginning of I. 9 is almost certainly the end of “šaš-tar. An identification of the deified night with Par or Par is not impossible, but note that according to the Maqlū commentary KAR 94 obv. 4'-6' // A 405 (Ass. 13955Ü): 7'-9’ the deified night of Maqlū’s opening incantation was identified with Gula (see Meier 1937-9: 240 fn. 26). The restoration of another stock phrase seems to be the easier solution here.

25: Cf. obv. 18’.

28: Though the line probably ended in a 2nd sg./pl. verbal form, the text, as indicated by the reference to kakkūšumu (?), seems still to be part of the recitation.

Rev. 1’–2: There is not too much missing in the break between obverse and reverse, so these lines may well be the end of the prayer beginning in obv. 25’. Though Nergal and Ereškigal are mentioned in obv. 27’, the addressee(s) of the recitation remain unknown. Once the complete text is known, the -kunu in the (largely restored) final formula may have to be changed accordingly.

3**: Possibly only (šimpatu) annitu (x-su) to be restored in the break.

4’–9: The opening lines of this prayer strongly resemble a passage within a prayer addressing Nuska for auspicious dreams (KAR 58 rev. 1–18, most recent edition: Butler 1998: 344-8; cf. also Foster 2005: 718 with further bibliography). The relevant lines there read (11–12, 15): musitu pahšu lišši, šalāṭi(3) muwašarāti ša mušši erāt nāšrutē dalātē lā šāšlātē, . . . ana eri sall purasū tananādina. Lines 4’–6’ of the present text have been restored accordingly, taking into account the space available in the break. Following the stock phrase in I. 7, the text apparently once more addresses the deified night. The epithet “veiled” can hardly refer to anybody but musitu (or mušši), and the space available suggests the restoration of another word, most likely kallatu, recalling the kallatu kuttumtu of Maqlū’s opening incantation and other texts. The addressee of pursī in I. 9 must be the night invoked in the preceding line. The broken PAR at the beginning of I. 9 is almost certainly the end of “šaš-tar. An identification of the deified night with Par or Par is not impossible, but note that according to the Maqlū commentary KAR 94 obv. 4’–6’ // A 405 (Ass. 13955Ü): 7’–9’ the deified night of Maqlū’s opening incantation was identified with Gula (see Meier 1937-9: 240 fn. 26). The restoration of another stock phrase seems to be the easier solution here.

10: The space available in the break and the spacing in the preserved part of the line suggest that only annitu is to be restored.

11: Restore possibly DUDU.BI or KID.KID.BI in the beginning of the line.

12: Instead of hurāšu the censer may have been loaded with another aromatic, but hurāšu is attested most frequently in contexts such as the present.

13: The nature and purpose of the drawing on the offering table remain unclear to me.

14’–15: Further specifications of the figurine (material, probably also male gender) have to be restored in the break. Since the nature of the figurine is written on its left shoulder, it must represent an evil power, within the present context probably an evil demon with apotropaic function who is supposed to act against the enemy after being placed at the border. Figurines of the warlike Sebettu used in the apotropaic ritual Šep lemutti ina bit amēli parāsu hold a qalānū in their right hand and a dagger in their left hand (see Wiggermann 1992: 46f., edition of the relevant text ibid. 1ff.). The present figurine does not hold a dagger, but a dagger is deposited with the figurine.
together with the figurine, receives a name as well. Then one could perhaps restore [patra telegê-ma ... y]a simtu šakšâ"šar "You take a dagger and write [(... of)] m[y [...], its name, (on it)]."

17: The tentative restoration of this line is based on ll. 19'-20'. The catching of the blood of a slaughtered animal is attested elsewhere in anti-witchcraft rituals; cf. e.g. BAM 434 obv. III 7f. // BAM 445 obv. 36 // AMT 35/3 rev. IV 4', where the blood is used as an apotropaic ointment. The pouring of the blood to the four cardinal directions (cf. l. 18') also is best understood as an apotropaic rite protecting not only the king as the ritual client, but the whole land.

18: For the restoration of rabû “ruler”, i.e. the king, as the ritual client cf. l. 22'. The use of rabû as the term for king is rare in incantation rituals, but not without parallels; cf. e.g. the Bit rinku ritual tablet (SpTU 2, 12 obv. 10, 17, 20 etc.), the nambaruši concerning the king’s chariot (see Maul 1994: 387-99) and the foundation ritual K 48+, edited most recently by Ambos 2004: 117-25.

19: The restoration mašak (kūš) is based on l. 22':

21'-2: The first half of the line gave instructions on how to close the pig’s skin around the dagger and the figurine of the enemy, before finally sealing the opening of the package with a sealed clay bulla. Seals of different materials are used within such ritual contexts; most common are sadānu and šubû stone. The first sign preserved in the line could also be šī or ū.

23: The short recitation over the figurine and the dagger consisted probably of a series of 2nd pl. imperatives (hardly ventive with duppu or du) addressing these two items.

24: Washing with (“horned”) alkali, gypsum and water is well attested in anti-witchcraft rituals (cf. e.g. LKA 154 + 155 [KAL 2, 24] rev. 36, 49 //). Here, one would expect ina mê qarnā[ni] gassi qiššu ina muḫḫi ... iness “he washes his hands with water, alkali and gypsum over ...”. But a reading ti]ot is ruled out by the traces after ina at the end of the line. It is therefore likely that the text had a more explicit description of the ritual actions (maybe something like: “you mix alkali and gypsum (for the washing) of his hands in water, and he washes etc.”).

25: The broken sign before ina can hardly be anything but mu. We expect mimma kinnu or something similar within the present context. In view of the accusative plural mû-mu ina in BMS 12: 76 (with duplicate ar-ni-ša, see Mayer 1993: 320: 76, therefore simply corrupt for ar-nu-ud) a restoration lemm-ša-ia “my evils” or rather ar-ni-ša-ia “my sins” seems likely. Alternatively, one could read sal-ša-ia. But the ritual does not seem to involve a substitute figurine of the king that could be mentioned here. The 2nd sg. addressed by muḫḫiša is most probably the package made of the pig’s skin.

26: For the restoration cf. e.g. Th 1905-4-9, 89 = BM 98583 obv. 6’ (Mayer 1988: 145-7) or PBS 1/2, 106 rev. 29. See the full discussion of this rite by Mayer 1988: 150-3.

27: One is tempted to read nakiru ana mät[amu] ur ‘e[k]er-ru-bu[2] the enemies] will not invade the land” but the traces are too ambiguous for any confident restoration.

28: Or rather x-ka a.ab.b[a] The broken sign in the beginning could well be ḫn.

References
Abbreviations follow CAD and AHw; for KAL 2 see Schwemer, in press.


References
Abbreviations follow CAD and AHw; for KAL 2 see Schwemer, in press.


References
Abbreviations follow CAD and AHw; for KAL 2 see Schwemer, in press.


Schwemer, D. in press. Rituale und Beschworungen gegen Schadenzauber (Keilschrifttexte aus Assur literarischen Inhalts 2, in WYDOG).


