

## A. INTRODUCTION

### I. The namburbi texts

In the corpus of Babylonian-Assyrian religious texts that has come down to us, there are approximately one hundred and forty texts, many preserved in several copies, which either bear the Sumerian title NAM.BUR.BI or are typologically similar to texts bearing the title.<sup>1</sup> Such texts are normally written on single-column clay tablets which are divided by ruled lines into sections devoted to the listing of ritual actions to be performed and prayers or "incantations" to be recited. Save for occasional prayers in Sumerian and rare lapses into Assyrian dialectical forms, the language of the texts is that form of Babylonian used in literary and scientific texts of the first millennium B.C. that has been termed Standard Babylonian.<sup>2</sup> The known tablets of this type can be dated between the late eighth century B.C. and the late sixth century B.C., that is, to the Sargonid, Neo-Babylonian, and early Persian periods.<sup>3</sup> The majority of known exemplars are from the well preserved archives of Nineveh and Assur in Assyria (northern Iraq), but both their language and occasional text-finds in Babylonia and the West suggest that these texts originated in a Babylonian milieu and were in current use throughout the area influenced by late Assyrian and Neo-Babylonian civilization.<sup>4</sup>

The frequency with which these texts were copied, and the frequency with which the namburbi rituals are mentioned in the Assyrian royal correspondence and other contemporary texts, indicate that they played an important role in late Babylonian-Assyrian cultic life. The precise character of that role has only gradually become clear to modern scholars. Julian Morgenstern, writing at a time when the known corpus of namburbis was restricted, mistakenly interpreted them as "ceremonies for the removal of sin," particularly cultic sin.<sup>5</sup> Writing from a broader inductive basis, Walther Schrank recognized that the "dissolution of evil" was the general purpose of these texts.<sup>6</sup> Anticipating our discussion below, we may say that the namburbi texts are standardized but non-canonical<sup>7</sup> handbooks for the performance of private apotropaic rites (including both action-rites and word-rites, *agenda* and *dicenda*), and that they are distinguished from other Akkadian apotropaic rites (US<sub>11/12</sub>-BUR.RU.DA, NAM.ERIM.BUR.RU.DA, etc.) in that their purpose is to "undo" or "avert" portended evil. Their rituals, that is to say, are correlative with and a response to the observed events taken by the Mesopotamians to be signs and portents with significance for the future, and the namburbi texts are the practical correlate of the "omen texts" which list such portents and their significance.<sup>8</sup>

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<sup>1</sup>The namburbi texts have largely been edited by Erich Ebeling in a series of nine articles in *RA* 48-50 (1954-56) and by the present writer in *Or* 34-40 (1965-71); further texts are forthcoming in *JNES* 33 (1974) and *Or* 43 (1974).

<sup>2</sup>See *CAD* H p. vi.

<sup>3</sup>The earliest datable text (text 8 below) was written no later than 720 B.C.; see J. Laessle, *Iraq* 18 (1956) 60. Datable texts from Sultantepe and Assur were written only a few years later; see W. G. Lambert, *RA* 53 (1959) 122; G. Meier, *AJO* 12 (1938) 245f. Texts from Uruk are the latest known; on their dating see A. Falkenstein, *LKU* p. 1.

<sup>4</sup>For texts from Uruk, see *TCL* 6 50 and *LKU* 34, also the forthcoming article, *Or* 43. Namburbis have also been found at Hama on the Orontes (text 8 below) and at Tarsus in Cilicia (A. Goetze, *JAOS* 59 [1939] 12).

<sup>5</sup>J. Morgenstern, *MVAG* 10/3 (1905) 138.

<sup>6</sup>W. Schrank, *Babylonische Sühnruten* (*LSS* 3/1, 1908) 75. See also E. Behrens, *Assyrisch-babylonische Briefe kultischen Inhalts aus der Sargonidenzeit* (*LSS* 2/1, 1906) 96f.

<sup>7</sup>The term "series" used of the namburbi texts is a misnomer; there is evidence of a serialization process in some local centers, but no universally fixed sequence was achieved. See *Or* 34, 107f.

<sup>8</sup>The importance of omen texts in Mesopotamian culture has been stressed by A. L. Oppenheim, *Ancient Meso-*

The apotropaic character of the namburbis is evident from their title “namburbi,” which may be translated “(ritual for) undoing of it (i.e. of the portended evil),” or simply “apotropaeon.” In practice, the term is normally specified by mentioning the particular evil to be averted: “namburbi for the evil of . . .” (NAM.BÜR.-BI *lumun* . . .). This apotropaic character is confirmed by the texts themselves, with their frequent mention of “undoing” and “averting” the evil, “that it may not approach the man (who is threatened by portent) or his house(hold).”

That the evil in question is specifically a portended one, and therefore related to the Mesopotamian omen literature, is clear in the first place from the ritual texts themselves. Text 1 below is one of several instances in which an omen text interrupts the sequence of protases and apodoses to include prescriptions for simple actions to counteract an unfavorable prediction. Such inclusion of rituals in omen texts is best attested in the series *Šumma ālu*, and there the rituals are specifically called namburbis. A typical example<sup>1</sup> is translated below as text 2. It is found in tablet 20 of the omen series, a tablet which is devoted to portentous appearances of the light phenomenon called *birṣu*. The omen formulae of the tablet are normally specific, both in protasis and apodosis, yet the stated purpose of the namburbi ritual is general: not to counteract *birṣu* which looks like lightning, or repeated *birṣu*, but simply “to dissipate the evil of *birṣu*.” In this context, it is clear that the ritual is intended against *any* of the listed phenomena which might foretell disaster, and that the evil to be averted is identified, not in terms of the form it may concretely take, but in terms of the *portent which foreshadows it*. As a perusal of texts 1-13 below will indicate, such identification of the evil (and therefore of the purpose of the text) by portent, rather than by a specific resultant evil, remained normative. This should be borne in mind particularly with reference to texts which might seem at first sight to have a more prosaic purpose; thus, rituals for the evil of fungus (text 9) do not serve, as Schrank suggested,<sup>2</sup> a house-cleaning function, nor is a ritual for the evil of ants (text 4) designed to end infestation; they are meant rather to cope with the named or unnamed evils portended by fungus or ants.

As the ritual responses to portentous situations became more extensive and complex, directions for them were written, not in the text of the omen series, but on separate tablets, and these independent tablets continue to show a close relation to the omen literature. The evil against which they are directed is often indicated by a complete or partial citation of an omen formula,<sup>3</sup> and the common title “namburbi for the evil of . . .” identifies the evil in terms of the agent or event portending it, whether generically (text 13) or specifically.

A further question is to precisely *which* of the omen series the namburbis are related. It is a peculiar fact that in the *texts* which we actually have, when they are directed against a single portent and its evil, they normally name a portent of the terrestrial type listed in *Šumma ālu* or *Šumma izbu*,<sup>4</sup> whereas the *references* to namburbi rituals in the Assyrian royal correspondence more often specify the portent as an eclipse or other astronomical phenomenon of the type catalogued in the omen series *Enūma Anu Enlil*. Astronomical portents are however prominent in the special type of text called “Namburbi for every evil” (or, in modern technical parlance,

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*potamia* (1964) 16. The main omen series that concern us here are: *Šumma ālu*, a long (at least 174 tablets) compilation of terrestrial omens last edited by F. Nötscher, *Or* VS 31 (1928), 39-42 (1929) and 51-54 (1930); *Šumma izbu*, concerned with the ominous birth of monstra, edited by E. Leichty, *The Omen Series Šumma Izbu* (1970); and *Enūma Anu Enlil*, concerned with celestial portents, published by C. Virolleaud, *L'Astrologie chaldéenne* (1908-1912).

<sup>1</sup>For other examples of namburbi rituals incorporated into *Summa ālu* see Nötscher, *Or* VS 39-42 (1929) 26; 78; 94; 110-112; 218; *ibid.* 51-54 (1930) 162.

<sup>2</sup>*Op. cit.*, 77.

<sup>3</sup>See texts 6 and 9 below.

<sup>4</sup>The only exceptions are a ritual for the omen of thunder and lightning (Ebeling, *RA* 48 [1954] 82-84) and a ritual whose omen is probably falling meteorites (*Or* 39 [1970] 113-116). See also the mention of lightning in the namburbi catalogue to appear in *Or* 43.

“Universalbeschwörung”); as their name indicates, such rituals are intended to avert any possible evil which may have been portended, and in the course of the prayer they specifically mention long lists of portents which, in principle, exhaust every possible “sign.”<sup>1</sup> If our lack of individual namburbis dealing with celestial portents is not a mere accident of discovery, it may be that the normal reaction to such portents was to perform either a general namburbi like text 13, or a universal namburbi. It is clear, in any case, that for the ancients the namburbi was the proper reaction to both terrestrial and celestial portents of ill, that it dealt with “the signs of heaven and earth, as many as there are.”<sup>2</sup>

The great majority of namburbi texts is of the type so far described, apotropaea against portended evil, but we must note a few instances in which the distinction between *genres* is blurred, with a consequent extension of the meaning of the term “namburbi.” Thus a few texts<sup>3</sup> are intended to avert, not an evil portended by a sign, but one actively caused by sorcery, though sorcery is normally dealt with by texts of the UŠ<sub>11/12</sub>-BUR.-RU.DA type. Similarly, since physical illness could be conceived as foreshadowed by a portent, there is sometimes overlapping between strictly medical texts and namburbis.<sup>4</sup> Finally, a small number of namburbis is yet more unusual in having a positive rather than an apotropaic purpose: to assure brisk trade, to bring distant persons near, to perform successful divination, and to gain renown as a diviner.<sup>5</sup> These texts must be seen as representing the outer limits of the significance of the term namburbi in the mind of their authors, for they depart, not only from the normal omen-centeredness, but from the apotropaic character implicit in the name namburbi.

## 2. The ritual

Of the two components of our texts, prayers and prescribed ritual actions, the second seem more central. Texts without prayers are not uncommon, but aside from a group of namburbi prayers inscribed on amulets, the wearing of which was itself a ritual action, we know only two prayers of the namburbi type which are not inscribed with rituals<sup>6</sup>; it is probable that these were excerpted from longer tablets with rituals, and indeed the prayers themselves refer to ritual actions.

The ritual directions are written in a terse formalized style,<sup>7</sup> and vary from brief rubrics prescribing a few actions to elaborate complexes of rites. The full *Sitz im Leben* of the ritual actions is nowhere adequately described in the texts themselves, for they were no more than handbooks to be used by liturgists carrying on a living tradition. We can, however, discern something of the procedures followed. The actors involved were usually few: though third persons could be involved at times,<sup>8</sup> it is more normal that the only participants were the liturgist who is directly addressed by the text and the “man” threatened by a portent.<sup>9</sup> Their actions, as far as we can judge, normally required a few hours at most, though they were not uncommonly performed on parts of two successive days. If the portent involved a specific locality such as a house, gate, or field, the

<sup>1</sup>See Ebeling, *RA* 48 (1954) 3; 6-15; 76-81.

<sup>2</sup>*KAR* 44 rev. 6.

<sup>3</sup>See *Or* 39 (1970) 134-141; sorcery is also a normal theme in namburbis inscribed on amulets, e.g. *LKA* 128.

<sup>4</sup>See the writer's remarks on F. Köcher, *Die babylonisch-assyrische Medizin in Texten und Untersuchungen*, Vol. IV, in *Or* 42 (1973) 469f.

<sup>5</sup>Text 14 below; also Ebeling, *RA* 49 (1955) 142-144; *BBR* p. 112-114.

<sup>6</sup>Text 8 below, and Schollmeyer, *Šamaš*, p. 139.

<sup>7</sup>The style and writing conventions used in the rituals are typical of the Kuyunjik writing tradition discussed by E. Leichty, *op. cit.*, 26-30.

<sup>8</sup>See, for instance, text 13 below.

<sup>9</sup>See the writer's “Participants in the Namburbi Rituals,” *CBQ* 29 (1967) 40-46.

ritual naturally took place there; if it did not, the liturgist may be directed to perform the rites "in a secluded place" (*ina ašri parsī*) or a "place barred from access" (*ašar šēpu parsat*), or he may be directed to a more specific site which accords with the actions to be performed, usually a rooftop or a river or canal bank. The actions to be performed there can best be divided into introductory, central, and concluding rites.

a. **Introductory actions.** Aside from directions regarding the preparation of an altar or tray (*paṭīru, guḥsu, paššūru*) for use in offering ceremonies, and the general injunction to set out the offering materials (*riksa tarakkas*), the introductory rites are of two kinds: enclosure techniques which separate the ritual site from the everyday world, and purification rites.

Some enclosure devices are easily recognizable as such: the use of a reed hut (*šutukku*) as the ritual site, the erection of standards (*urigallē*) facing the four winds about the ritual site, the use of a curtain (*šiddu*) in connection with the offering. The separative function of other actions can be inferred from texts outside the namburbi corpus which identify the flour (*qēmu*) or flour heaps (*zidubdubbū*) put around a ritual site as divine symbols.<sup>1</sup>

Purification techniques practiced both upon the man and the site are common both as introductory rites and concluding ones. They seem to be closely related in purpose to the sequestration rites already discussed, for a common initial directive is to "sanctify" (*quddušu*) the threatened man, i.e., separate him from the profane and place him in a special relation to the divine.<sup>2</sup> The concrete actions by which a man or site was "sanctified" are not specified, but a series of other purification injunctions may suggest their character. The threatened man may be enjoined to wash, to bathe with pure water, to remove his garments and put on clean ones, to shave; in what appears to us a more "cultic" vein, he may be purified (*ullulu*) with tamarisk and *tullal*-plant, or incensed with censer and torch. The site too is often subjected to purification rites, both physically (it is swept and pure water sprinkled on it, it is "wiped clean," it is "set in order") and cultically (it is incensed with censer and torch, and in more elaborate ceremonies more elaborate instruments of purification are used: scapegoat, drum, copper bell, and "sheep of life" [*udutilū*]).

b. **Central actions.** These are of two kinds, the presentation of offerings and the enactment of apotropaic rites. To modern eyes these are respectively religious and magical actions, but there is no indication that such a distinction was felt by the Mesopotamians.

*Offerings* are usually presented to the gods, including divinized natural forces such as the river; in a few instances they are also presented to "family ghosts" whose benevolence is desirable. Except in special instances,<sup>3</sup> the materials offered are food and aromatics. The food offerings are usually of a simple kind (bread, cakes, beer and the like), but occasionally include the flesh of a slaughtered sheep, goat, or other animal.<sup>4</sup> The aromatics, mainly juniper, cedar, and myrrh, were burned on a censer. Though other and later cultures assign to such

<sup>1</sup>For references and discussion see *Or* 36 (1967) 30.

<sup>2</sup>For this sense of *quddušu* see especially *Šurpu* II 76. Note also (on *qādōš* in Hebrew) G. von Rad, *Theologie des Alten Testaments*, I, 204f.

<sup>3</sup>The choice of gifts in text 3 below, an axe and a saw, is suitable for the recipient, the carpenter god Nin-ildu, as it is for the portent, a bow which is the product of carpentry. Note also the presentation of silver and gold in text 6.

<sup>4</sup>The sacrificial vocabulary in the texts translated here includes *epēšu*, "to sacrifice" (an animal, text 3), *uppušu*, with the same meaning (text 10), and *nakāsu*, "to slaughter" (text 9). The common phrase *niqê tanaqqi*, "you offer sacrifice(s)" (texts 5, 10, 11 and 13) is ambivalent; the Akkadian phrase can refer either to libations or to animal sacrifices, but the usual logographic writing of *niqê* (UDU.AMARxSE.AMARxSE) suggests the use of sacrificial sheep. In some rituals, such as that of text 5, context proves that animal sacrifice was intended, but in others the writer may have intended the Akkadian word, with its broader sense.

offerings a significance of sacrificial immolation, symbolic of the self-dedication of the offerer, it seems clear that no such significance should be read into our texts. The prayer of text 8 paragraph 2 stresses details (chairs to sit on, festal garments to be worn) which indicate that the purpose of the offerings is to provide for the gods a form of hospitality equivalent to that given to human beings, that is, the setting and fare of a meal. This purpose is consonant with food and drink offerings throughout our texts, though they give us little information on the concrete form that presentation (*tuhhû*) of offerings or disposal of offered material took. As for the burning of aromatics, though this may seem a peculiarly "cultic" action to the modern reader, it is clear that burning them on a censer was part of the normal banquet situation among human beings in the Neo-Assyrian period,<sup>1</sup> so that their use in rituals providing a divine banquet was natural.

*Apotropaic rites* designed to remove or avert the impending evil are the central element of namburbi rituals. While the motivation for choosing individual rites often remains opaque, we can single out four dominant themes that underlie many of them: destruction, obstruction, substitution, and simulation.

The first of these involves destruction of the portentous object, which was seen as the announcer or bearer of impending ill, and itself evil. Clearly underlying destructive action is the conception that if the portent, which in a certain sense was understood to be a cause of evil, is destroyed, then the evil it bears will also be destroyed. Such destruction was practiced in cases where it was both feasible (that is, where the portent was a concrete object available for manipulation) and economically defensible. Examples of this practice are to be seen in text 6, where the body of a misbegotten human being or animal is thrown into a river, and text 9, where portentous fungus is scraped from the wall on which it is growing.

In cases where destruction of the portent would involve economic loss, the object was subjected to a partial and symbolic destruction by being physically blocked off. Thus a door is not destroyed, but smeared with a mixture of bat's blood and crushed spider, ghee-fly, and scorpion,<sup>2</sup> and a portentous ants' nest is blocked up without destroying the wall in which it is found (text 4).

When the ominous object is itself inaccessible, either because of the indeterminate nature of the portent (text 13), or because of the difficulty of securing it (text 7), the apotropaic rites are directed against a substitute or representative of it. The substitute may be something that has a natural connection with the portentous object; this appears to be the case in *Or* 36, 9:2<sup>1</sup> ff., a ritual against the evil of a goat in which goat's hair seems to represent the animal. Normally, however, the substitute used is a specially prepared image (*šalmu, tamšîlu*) of the object, usually formed of clay, but sometimes of precious metals. While the image could be a pictorial representation of the portentous object (as in text 7), this factor is not normally emphasized (cf. text 13, 18 and text I4, 1), and in some cases (such as an "image of all evil") it is unclear what pictorial model could be followed. What is emphasized is the function of the image: it is the object to which the impending evil is "transferred," and thus laden with the evil, it is destroyed. A conception of transfer of evil to the image is implicit wherever the latter is used, and explicitly stated in the incantations of text 7, 36 and text 13, 32. The conceptual basis underlying the procedure is clear in text 7, Rev. 6; here the transfer has been effected, and the image is spoken of not only as the bearer of evil, but as identified with the portentous dog it represents. Given such mythopoeic identifications, it is understandable that physical removal or destruction of the image removed the evil as well. Removal of the image is normally effected by disposal in a river, but sealing in clay was also practiced.

A particular place among apotropaic rites is occupied by the ritual of text 13, 6, where (in addition to the substitution ritual of the subsequent lines) the exorcist is told to "touch" parts of the threatened estate and

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<sup>1</sup>See the text K. 8669, *MVAG* 41/3 (1937) 60ff.

<sup>2</sup>*Or* 40 (1971) 137:1-4.

to bring in a stranger to perform minor destructive acts upon it. It seems probable that such actions were conceived of as a simulated enactment of the portended destruction of the house; even should the substitution rites fail in their purpose, the prediction would already have been symbolically fulfilled, so that the portent would have lost its power for harm.

c. **Concluding actions.** Prescriptions regarding the action of the threatened man after the central rites are frequent, and fall into three categories: final ritual acts at the cultic site which symbolize the efficacy of the completed central rites; actions immediately following the ritual which symbolize and effect the post-ritual restoration of the threatened man to the safe round of daily life; prescriptions of a magical character that are to be followed for some time afterward.

A common rite of the first type is purification, whose ceremonies assume the form discussed in (a) above. Other symbolic final acts are the unraveling of plants (*Or* 36, 275:29f.) which effectively expresses the "undoing" of the evil, and the smearing of the suppliant with gypsum and bitumen (*Or* 39, 135:29), thus ritually isolating him from possible future evil.

Directions designed to remove the man decisively from the averted evil and restore him to the mundane take several forms. As he leaves the ritual site, he is commonly enjoined not to look behind him,<sup>1</sup> and to take a different road than the one he came by, thus ensuring against repetition of his dangerous plight. He may then be told either to proceed straight to his house or to go "to another place" (text 13); more specifically, he may be directed to enter a tavern (text 7), where various actions further assure his resumption of normal life: he touches a brewer's mixing vat and its stand, reciting "May the gods Sirish (the divine personification of beer) and Ningizzida relax me" (*Or* 40, 143:25) or he falls into conversation with someone who is chatting there (*Or* 36, 23:8 and 24:3').

Continued protection is provided in the days following the ritual either by wearing magical apotropaic devices (text 6) or by observing cultic prohibitions: not to eat garlic, leeks or fish; not to look at a cultically impure man or woman; not to return to his house for three days (text 10); not to leave his house for seven days (text 13).

### 3. The prayer

The function of the prayer sections in the namburbis should not be too sharply distinguished from that of the ritual sections; the prayers are oral rites which invoke power and specify the manual rites performed.<sup>2</sup> Such rites take different forms in the namburbis. (1) The prayer proper is addressed to one or more gods—the favored gods are Shamash, the divinized sun and god of justice, and Ea and Asalluhi, gods of magic—to gain their assistance. These prayers conform to a standard pattern that has been studied by W. Kunstmann<sup>3</sup>: praise of the god, presentation of the suppliant's need, expression of gratitude and future devotion. (2) There are several examples of unstructured, one-sentence prayers. (3) Other word rites are addressed not to a god, but to the evil or its portent or to instruments used to avert this evil (the so-called "Kultmittelbeschwörung"). (4) On occasion the prayer formula degenerates to a meaningless abracadabra of nonsense syllables which may owe their origin to prayer formulae in another language.<sup>4</sup> (5) In several instances we find the suppliant directed to pray, not with a predetermined and formulaic prayer, but in his own words: he is to "express what is on his mind" (*mala libbašu šabtu idabbub, amata ša libbišu idabbub, ma'dāti iṣāti ina libbišu idabbub*). The injunction to invoke (*zakāru*) the name of the god may also indicate the recitation of a prayer whose formulation was at the choice of the suppliant.

<sup>1</sup>See G. and M. K. Buccellati, *BibOr* 13 (1971) 226.

<sup>2</sup>See Marcel Mauss, "Esquisse d'une théorie général de la magie," in M. Mauss, *Sociologie et anthropologie* (1950) 49f.

<sup>3</sup>Die *babylonische Gebetsbeschwörung* (LSS NS 2, 1932).

<sup>4</sup>For parallels in other cultures, see Mauss, *op. cit.*, 50f.

Recitation directions are usually expressed by a verb written logographically, so that the grammatical person is unclear; thus DUG<sub>4</sub>.GA can stand either for *taqabbi*, "you recite," or *iqabbi*, "he recites." Nonetheless, occasional syllabic writings make it clear that at various times both the liturgist and the suppliant may perform the recitation. When the latter prays, he naturally speaks in his own name, detailing the danger in which he finds himself and requesting aid; since it is probable that in most cases the suppliant had not undergone scribal training and was incapable of reading cuneiform, it may be conjectured that the concrete practice in such a case was an antiphonal recitation, with the liturgist reading aloud sections of the text, and the suppliant then repeating them. As for prayers assigned to the liturgist, some are clearly recited in his own name, detailing the ills of the suppliant and asking aid for him (text 6, Rev. 1). Others speak of "my" troubles, and should logically be spoken rather by the suppliant (text 7, 36, introduced by *taqabbi*, "you [the liturgist] recite"), and in such cases we may again suspect that an antiphonal recitation was intended, so that the suppliant actually did recite all prayers which are logically applicable to him.

The texts envisage different modes of recitation. Instructions for recitation are most commonly expressed by the verbs *qabû* and *dabābu*, which are used interchangeably and mean "to recite." The verb *manû* is also common, however, and seems to indicate a more stately recitation in measured tones: "to intone." In one unusually solemn ritual (*Or* 39, 118:20 and 119:41) the singing (*zamāru*) of Sumerian *ershemmas* with instrumental accompaniment is prescribed. Finally, in one text (*Or* 40, 171:13) we are told that the suppliant "announces tidings before Shamash and offers sacrifices" (*maḥar! dŠamaš ubassar u niqê inaqqi*); the precise type of prayer and mode of recitation implied here in the verb *bussuru* are not clear.

#### 4. Summation

The modern reader finds in the namburbi texts a world that is largely strange to him. The multitude of *realia* whose meanings remain foggy for us and the vagueness or silence of the texts in regard to fundamental questions pose a barrier to our understanding, but a still more fundamental barrier is in the basic conceptual patterns underlying the texts. It was a world in which the interrelation of past, present, and future was felt to be a fact of daily experience, a fact to be discerned in chance events on every side. The occurrence of an event associated with one of the great rulers of the past showed that a new conqueror would come; a desert plant intruding into the city was a harbinger of the invasion of desolation and lawlessness into the sphere of civilization; what happened in dream must have its analogue in waking life; even the growth of a plant or the sight of a bird could presage disaster. What a gloomy world it must seem to us, in which one was interminably threatened; a world whose most carefully guarded knowledge is to be found in long lists of dangers and the signs which predict them.

And yet there is much here that is familiar to us. The texts themselves are the products of a sedulously careful scholarship which, without the aid of mechanical reproduction, was capable of preserving traditional knowledge intact through a long period and over a wide area. This ability to preserve the knowledge of the past, to live a consciously historical existence, is one of the foremost traits of Mesopotamian civilization, and it must surely be esteemed as a remarkable triumph over barbarism. And in the philosophical and religious striving of the texts to come to grips with the world, to control one's destiny, we find a purpose that we can share, a striving that is common to man everywhere.

## B. TEXTS IN TRANSLATION

### Text 1. Ritual for the evil of a snake

1. – If in the beginning of the year on the first day of Nisan, or on the first day of Ayar, a snake is seen either in daytime or at night, that man (who saw it) will die during that year. If that man is desirous of life, he gashes(?)<sup>1</sup> (his) head (and) shaves his cheeks. For those three months he will be sore beset, but he will get well.

**Reference.** CT 38 33:1.

**Notes.** <sup>1</sup>See *AHW* *ḥarāru(m)* 1, *CAD* *ḥarāru* B.

### Text 2. Ritual for the evil of luminous flashes

1. – Namburbi to dissipate the evil of flashing light. [You throw] tamarisk, *mashtakal*-plant, “pure-plant,” datewood, apple-wood, fig-wood (and) fir-wood into well water, (and) set them overnight under the stars. In the morning you wash (the threatened man?) with water. You mix beer, *kalû*-clay, *kalguqqu*-clay (and) algae in myrtle oil. You a[noint him and] dress him in a clean garment. You show [him] silver and gold, [and the evil] of flashing light will not approach the man.

Colophon (Exemplar A).—Tablet 20 of *Šumma ālu ina mēlê šakin* (“If a city is set on a height”). (Catchline:) If a dead person appears like a living one in a man’s house, that man will die, (there will be) destruction of the house. Written according to its original (and) [collated].

**Reference.** Or 40 (1971) 165f.

### Text 3. Ritual for the evil of a bow<sup>1</sup>

1. – Namburbi [to dissipate] the evil of every kind of bow, that it may not approach.

3. – [Its ritual]: you set out [an offering arrangement for] Ea and Ishtar. You sacrifice [a kid befo]re the Bowstar. [You pou]r out [a censer of juniper and fine flour]. You express greeting<sup>2</sup> to Marduk. You present to [Nin-ild]u [a bronze axe and a saw]. You recite before Ishtar [the incantation “You are merciful, . . . you are life-g]iving.”

8. – You set out [ . . . before Ea, Asalluhi] and Shamash. You sacrifice<sup>3</sup> [ . . . on] the river bank.

**Reference.** Or 39 (1970) 116f.



- Notes.** <sup>1</sup>The text is a brief version of *LKA* 113; restorations are drawn from the latter.  
<sup>2</sup>*takarrab*.  
<sup>3</sup>Or: perform (*teppuš*).

#### Text 4. Ritual for the evil of ants

1. – Namburbi for the evil of ants which have been seen in a man's house, that its (the portent's) evil may not approach the man and his house. Its ritual<sup>1</sup>: you sprinkle sweet-smelling oil over the ants and their nest. You bury gypsum (and) horned alkali in their tunnel. You mix dust from a ship, clay<sup>2</sup> from a river meadow (and) dust from the threshold of<sup>3</sup> an outer gate either in well water or in river water, and you sprinkle (this mixture over the nest). You set censers of juniper and myrrh at both thresholds. Then its evil will be dissipated.

Colophon (Exemplar A).—(Catchline:) If moths are seen in a man's house, the owner of that house will become important. Tablet 35 of *Šumma alu ina melê šakin*. Written according to a (wooden) tablet of Akkad (that is, Babylonia), an original of Babylon; checked (and) collated. Tablet of Nabû-aḫa-iddina, scribe, son of Nabû-šuma-[ib]ni, scribe of (the city) Assur.

Colophon (Exemplar B). – Written according to its original (and) col[lated]. Tablet of Nabû-šuma-iškun, son of Kandalānu.

**References.** *KAR* 377 rev. 37-40; *STT* 242 rev. 19-23.

- Notes.** <sup>1</sup>“ Its ritual” is omitted in the *KAR* exemplar (= A).  
<sup>2</sup>For “clay” the *STT* exemplar (= B) has “dust.”  
<sup>3</sup>B omits “the threshold of.”

#### Text 5. Ritual for the evil of a frog

1. – Namburbi for the evil of a frog, [to avert its evil], that it may not [approach] the man and his house.

3. – Its [ritual: you make two images of the frog(?), on]e of silver, [one of gold(?)]. You [go(?)] upon a river bank. [You set out] an offering arrangement before [Ea]. You offer sacrifices. [You serve] the shoulder portion (and) intestines. [You pour out] dates (and) fine flour. [You set out] confections of [honey (and) ghee]. You set out a censer of juniper. [You recite as follows].

9. – Incantation: Enki, king of the *Apsû* . . . .<sup>1</sup>

Colophon. – [ . . . written] according to [its original]; checked (and) collated. [ . . . Tablet of] Kišir-Nabû [who tru]sts [in Nab]û and Tašmētu, [son of ] Šamaš-ibni, incantation priest of the temple of (the god) [Aššur], [son of Nabû]-besun, incantation priest [of the temple of Aššur]. It was [hastily] excerpted.

**Reference.** *LKA* 118.

- Notes.** <sup>1</sup>Only fragments of the remainder of this Sumerian prayer and of further ritual directions are preserved.

**Text 6. Ritual for the evil of a monstrous birth**

1. – If there was a misformed newborn creature in a man's house—whether (born) of cattle, sheep, ox, [goat], horse, dog, pig, or human being—in order to avert that evil, [that it may not approach] the man and his house (you perform the following ritual).

6. – You go to the river and construct a reed hut. [You scatter] garden plants. You set up a reed altar. Upon the reed altar you pour out seven food offerings, beer, dates, (and) fine flour. [You set out] a censer of juniper. You fill three bowls with fine beer, and [you set out] loaves of . . .-bread, DĪM-bread (and) “ear-shaped” bread (along with) one grain of silver (and) one grain of gold. You place a gold . . . on the head of that misborn creature. You attach a gold breastplate to red thread. You bind it on his breast. You cast that misborn creature on garden plants. You have that man kneel and recite as follows.

15. – Incantation: Shamash, judge of heaven and earth, lord of justice and equity, director of upper and lower regions! Shamash, it is in your power to bring the dead to life, to release the captive. Shamash, I have approached you! Shamash, I have sought you out! Shamash, I have turned to you! Avert from me the evil of this misborn creature! May it not affect me! May its evil be far from my person, that I may daily bless you (and) those who see me may forever [sing] your praise!

23. – You have him recite [this] incantation three times. The man's house [will then be at peace] . . . . Before the river [you recite] as follows.

Rev. 1. – [Incantation: y]ou, River, are the creator of everything. . . .-sun, the son of Zerūti, whose [personal god is Nabû, whose personal goddess] is Tashmētu, who [is beset by] an evil misborn creature, is therefore frightened (and) terrified. Avert from him the evil of this misborn creature! May the evil not approach, may it not draw near, [may it not press upon him]! May that evil go out from his person, that he may daily bless you (and) those who see [him] may forever sing your praise! By the command of Ea and Asalluhi, remove that evil! May your banks not release it! Take it down to your depths! Extract that evil! Give happiness (and) health!<sup>1</sup>

Rev. 13. – You recite this three times, and purify the man with water. You throw tamarisk, Dilbat-plant, *shalalu*-reed, a date-palm shoot, (and) the misborn creature, together with its provisions and its gifts, into the river, and you undo the offering arrangement and prostrate yourself. That man goes to his house.

Rev. 17. – [You string] carnelian, lapis lazuli, serpentine, *pappardiltu*-stone, *papparmînû*-stone, bright obsidian, *hilibû*-stone, [TUR<sub>7</sub>.MI.NA-stone], (and) breccia on a necklace. You place it around his neck for seven days . . . . The evil of that misborn creature will be dissipated.

Colophon (Exemplar A). – [Exerpted] for perfor[mance] . . . .

Colophon (Exemplar B). – [Written acc] ording to a (wooden) [tablet].

Colophon (Exemplar C). – (Traces of the colophon are preserved).

**Reference.** *Or* 34 (1965) 125-130.

**Notes.** <sup>1</sup>In the translation of *Or* 34, p. 129, the line which serves as a marker of paragraph division should be after line 12, not before it.

**Text 7. Ritual for the evil of a dog<sup>1</sup>**

1. – [Namburbi] for the evil of a dog [which howls and moans in a man's house, that the evil of th]at dog [may not approach the man and his house].

3. – You make a clay image of a dog. Before [Shamash] you recite an incantation three times. You go to the river and immerse yourself, [seven times facing upstream, seven times] facing downstream. [The evil of]

that dog will not approach the man and his house. Incantation: Enki, king of the *Apsû*, king of Eridu are you. May the evil portent of the dog which confronts you not come near him! May it not beset him! [End formula of the incantation].

10. – Namburbi for the evil of a dog which howls (and) moans in a man's house, or spatters its urine upon a man. Three times you recite (the incantation), then the evil of that dog will not approach the man and his house.

14. – Its ritual: you make a clay image of a dog. You place cedar wood upon its neck. You sprinkle oil upon its head. You clothe it in goat's hair. You set horse bristles in its tail. At the river bank you set up a reed altar before Shamash. You arrange twelve emmer loaves. You heap up dates and fine flour. You set out confections of honey and ghee. You set up a jug, (and) fill two bottles with fine beer and set them out. You set out a censer of juniper. You libate fine beer. You have that man kneel and raise that figurine, and he recites as follows.

24. – Incantation: Shamash, king of heaven (and) earth, judge of the upper and lower regions, light of the gods, governor of mankind, pronouncer of judgement on the great gods, I turn to you, seek you out. Among the gods, command that I live! May the gods who are with you command my prosperity! Because of this dog, which has voided its urine upon me, I am frightened, alarmed, and terrified. Avert from me the evil of this dog, that I may sing your praise!

34. – When he has recited this<sup>2</sup> before Shamash, you recite as follows over that figurine.

36. – I have given you as a [replacem]t for myself, I have given you as a substitute for myself. [I have stripped off all the evil] of my body upon you. I have stripped off, I have stripped off all the evil of my flesh upon you. I have stripped off all the evil of my figure upon you. I have stripped off all the evil before me and behind me upon you.

Rev. 4. – When you have recited this, you leave the presence of Shamash, and you go off to the river, and recite as follows.

Rev. 6. – Incantation: you, River, are the creator of everything. I, so-and-so, the son of so-and-so, whose personal god is so-and-so, whose personal goddess is so-and-so, have been spattered with this dog's urine, so that I am frightened and afraid. [Just as] this figurine will not return to its place, may its evil not approach! May it not come near! May it not press upon me! May it not affect me! May the evil of that dog be far from my person, that I may daily bless you, that those who see me may forever sing your [praise]! Incantation: take that dog straight down to your depths! Do not release it! Take it down to your depths! Extract the evil of that dog from my body! Grant me happiness and health!

Rev. 19. – When you have recited this three times, you throw that dog into the river, and that man does not look behind him. He enters a tavern, and [its] e[vil will be dissipated].

Colophon (Exemplar A). – (Catchline:) For the evil of a badger which is in a man's meadow. Written according to its original (and) col[lated]. Tablet of Nabû-besunu, incantation priest of the temple of Aššur, offspring of Baba-[šuma]-ibni, the high official of Ešarra. Who takes this tablet, may Šamaš take away his eye(sight).

Colophon (Exemplar C). – Written according to its original (and) collated. Written by Mušallim-Baba, young apprentice scribe. Tablet of Qurdi-Nergal, priest of Zababa and Baba, (the gods who reside) in Kapar-ilāni(?) (and) in Harran and Huzirna.

**Reference.** *Or* 36 (1967) 1-8.

**Notes.** <sup>1</sup>This is the first of our translations to exemplify a tablet containing more than one ritual. While rituals so combined on a single tablet can be responses to quite diverse portents, the present text gives two rites for the evil of a dog: the first (lines 1-9) is composed of the preparation of a clay image, immersion in the river, an unspecified prayer to Shamash, and a brief invocation of Enki, and it contains the usual final formula of a ritual, "The evil . . . will not approach." Neither the use of the image nor the prayer to Shamash are specifically indicated; these were either left to the discretion of the liturgist, or considered to be supplied by the parallel portions of the second ritual. The second ritual (lines 10-end) has a more complex series of ritual directions, and includes prayers to Shamash and to the divinized River.

<sup>2</sup>One variant adds: "three times."

### Text 8. Prayer for the evil of a snake

1. – Incantation: Ea, Shamash and Asalluhi, great gods who hand down the verdicts of heaven and earth, who determine the fates, who make cult-cities great, who lay the foundation of throne daises, who confirm the lots, who fashion the designs, who apportion the lots, who make sanctuaries stable, who purify rituals, who know the purification ceremony—the determination of fates (and) the fashioning of designs are in your hands. The fates of life you alone determine. [The designs] of life you alone fashion. [The decisions] of life you alone make. You inspect all throne daises of god and [goddess]. You alone are the great gods who direct the decisions of heaven and earth, the depth of the seas. Your word is life, your utterance is well-being, your pronouncement is life itself. You alone tread in the midst of the distant heavens: you who do away with evil, who establish the good, who undo evil signs (and) portents, frightful (and) evil dreams, who cut the thread of evil.

19. – I, whose [mouth] is pure, who know the pure rites of <the *Apsû*>, have poured out water (and) cleansed the ground for you. Pure chairs I have set forth for you to sit upon. Pure red garments I have presented to you. An offering arrangement I have set out for you. A pure libation I have poured out for you. A libation bowl with *nashpu*-beer I have set up for you. Wine and beer I have poured out for you. Because the rites of the great gods are (now) perfected [and] because the success of rituals rests with you, on this day stand by this sleeping person<sup>1</sup> [who] stands before you! . . . Greatly determine (this) fate: that he may (again) eat with his mouth, that he may hear with his ears. May this [man] be bright as the [heavens], may he be [pure] as the earth, may he shine like the midst of heaven! Let the tongue of evil stand aside!<sup>2</sup> I, so-and-so, son of [so-and-so], your servant, am afraid, frightened and terrified.

33b. – For the evil of a snake.<sup>3</sup>

**Reference.** *Iraq* 18 (1956) pl. XIV.

**Notes.** <sup>1</sup>In place of *ša-al-[li]* “sleeping” read probably <mu>-*ša-al-[li]* “suppliant, one who is praying.”

<sup>2</sup>This injunction for cultic silence has been discussed by Erica Reiner, *Studies in Honor of Benno Landsberger on his Seventy-fifth Birthday April 21, 1965* (*AS* 16, 1965) 247-251.

<sup>3</sup>As normally with cuneiform texts, the title is placed at the end as a subscript. On the tablet it appears on the same line as the end of the text of the prayer, without being set off by a dividing line: this procedure is unusual when compared with texts from the Aššurbanipal library.

### Text 9. Ritual for the evil of fungus

23'. – [If] there is fungus in a man's house, on the outer north wall, the owner of the house will die and his [house] will be scattered. To avert the evil, you make six axes of tamarisk and scrape away some of the fungus with them. You sweep with a datepalm branch from the north (side of the tree). You gather (lit.: receive) it into a reed basket. You incense it with a torch and place mud and gypsum on it, and its evil will be dissipated. You recite “Ea performed (the incantation), Ea undid (the evil).” On that day the [own]er(?) of the house slaughters a red male sheep before Ishum, reciting “May Ishum receive this.” You place the head and hocks in beer and bury them at the outer gate. You have that man stand over them. You throw holy water over him, and recite as follows.

34'. – *Enuru*-incantation:<sup>1</sup> pure river, clean river, water of the pure Tigris, the [clean(?)] river, joined with(?) (water from) the *Apsû*! Tigris, mother of the mountain land! May he be pure as heaven! May he be clean as earth! May he be bright as the midst of heaven! Let the evil tongue stand aside!<sup>2</sup> Be conjured by heaven, be conjured by earth!

40'. – You throw that holy water over him, and its (the portent's) evil will be dissipated.

Colophon (Exemplar A). – Finished. (Catchline:) [If . . .] of the steppe are in a man's house, the owner of the house will die.

Colophon (Exemplar B). – Spell to avert (the evil portended by) fungus.

Colophon (Exemplar C). – (Catchline:) [If . . .] does not prick (its) ears(?). Copy of a (wooden) tablet of Akkad. Property of the palace.

**Reference.** *Or* 40 (1971) 141:23<sup>1</sup>-40<sup>1</sup>.

**Notes.** <sup>1</sup>This incantation is written entirely in Sumerian. The meaning of the Sumerian term *é-nu-ru* is unclear; see A. Falkenstein, *Die Haupttypen der sumerischen Beschwörung literarisch untersucht* (LSS NF 1, 1931) 5f.

<sup>2</sup>See text 8, note 2.

### Text 10. Ritual for the evil of dust from a place of mourning<sup>1</sup>

1. – Namburbi for the evil of dust from a place of mourning, that its evil may not approach the man, that it may not overtake (him) or (effect) anything whatever. On a propitious day that man undergoes a cleansing rite (and) is “sanctified.” He arranges a reed altar before Shamash. He libates offerings of *mihhu*-beer. He prostrates himself and kneels. You recite as follows: “I have turned to you, Shamash, because life is precious. May the evil of the dust I saw from a place of mourning be dissipated and dissolved!” Three times you recite this [before Shama]sh.

10. – Incantation: Shamash, you are judge of justice and equity, who sets right the wronged one and the beaten one, who drives away all the sorcery practiced against me, who undoes the sin of the wronged one, though it is unconscious, (who undoes) the fault (and) the crime blamed on me, though I am unaware of it. Shamash, avert from me the evil of the dust from a place of mourning which I placed on my head (or) my body! All unknowingly, I have been put at enmity with peer (and) companion, friend (and) associate, noble (and) prince. May I be clean as pure water, that I may publish your greatness, that I may sing your praise!

Rev. 8. – You go apart, and before Ea, [Shamash], and Asalluhi [you set out] an offering arrangement. You offer three sacrifices and that man [goes] to the river bank. He takes off his [garment] and before [Shamash] you sacrifice a sheep. For seven days he does not go forth from (his) door. Its evil will be dissipated.

Colophon. – Written according to its original (and) collated. Tablet of Kišir-*<Aš>šur*, incantation priest of the temple of *Aššur*, son of Nabū-besunu, incantation priest of the temple of *<Aš>šur*, son of Baba-šuma-iddina, incantation priest of the temple of *<Aš>šur*.

**Reference.** *LKA* 119.

**Notes.** <sup>1</sup>This text was edited by Ebeling, *RA* 48 (1954) 178-181.

### Text 11. Ritual for the evil of a lizard

12<sup>1</sup>. – Namburbi for the evil of any lizard, that it (the evil) may not approach a man and his house. Let that man be “sanctified” on a propitious day. You sweep the roof. [You sprinkle] pure water. You set up a reed altar. You scatter dates (and) fine flour. [You set out] confections of honey (and) ghee. You offer sacrifices.<sup>1</sup> You set out a censer of juniper. You scatter *isququ*-flour. [You make a clay] image of the lizard. You draw a design on a large bowl. You place the clay image of the lizard upon (the design). You set (it) at the side of the offering arrangement. You have that man stand over tamarisk wood. You take his hand. Three times you have him recite the incantation “Shamash, great lord, judge of the Igigi.”

19<sup>1</sup>. – Incantation: Shamash, great lord, judge of the Igigi and the Anunnaki.<sup>2</sup> director of the black-headed folk,<sup>3</sup> lord of the dead and the living are you. Exalted judge whose command cannot be changed, whose

assent no god can alter, you are the lord. Your word is indeed great, your command cannot be for[gotten], your prayer cannot be rivalled, [your] command [is exalted] like (that of) Anu, your father. Your word is outstanding among the gods your brothers. Noble lord [whose power is fearful],<sup>4</sup> merciful god who rules all things, Shamash, as you come forth<sup>5</sup> [you see all people]. You direct the “cattle of Shakkan,” the living creatures. Stand by me, [Shamash, hear my words]! Because of the evil of the portent of a lizard which took place in my house(!) (and) [confronted my] eyes, [I am] afraid, frightened (and) terrified. . . . [Avert (the evil) from me, that I may not] die, that I may not be wronged! [May its evil not approach me! May it cross the river! May it pass over the mountain]! May it be 3600 miles distant [from my person! May I, your servant, have health (and) well-b]eing, that [I may sing your praise]!

**Reference.** *STT* 63:12'-31'.

**Notes.** <sup>1</sup>The logogram used suggests animal sacrifices.

<sup>2</sup>For these designations of the gods see Burkhard Kienast, “*Igigū* und *Anunnakū* nach den akkadischen Quellen,” *AS* 16, 141-158.

<sup>3</sup>A poetic expression for “mankind.”

<sup>4</sup>This and the following lines are restored from the duplicate *Or* 34 (1965) 117:14' ff.; see also *BMS* 60 and *KAR* 246, and Ebeling's treatment of these two texts, *MVAG* 23 (1918) 40-43.

<sup>5</sup>A reference to the rising of the sun.

## Text 12. Ritual for the evil of lizards

1. – (A line invoking Shamash) has been lost.<sup>1</sup> Powerful lord, scion of Eridu, wise one of the universe [are you (Marduk)]! Shamash and Marduk, spe[ak for me in my case! May I find justice in your judgement! May the evil of the *induhallatu*-lizard which fell upon me, (and that of) the *šurārû*-lizard which I saw, not approach, not come near, not [press upon (me)], not affect me! May it cross the river! May it pass over the mountain! May it be 3600 miles distant! May it remove from my person! Like smoke may it rise [to heaven]! Like the uprooted tamarisk may it not [return] to its place! May the tamarisk purify me, may the *mashtakal*-plant release me! May earth receive (the evil) from me! May it give forth [its refulgence]! Like the uprooted tamarisk may it not return to its place! Upon it [. . .] may branches sprout forth! The evil of the *induhallatu*-lizard and of this *šurārû*-lizard, may a fish (take it down) to the depths, may a bird take it up to heaven! The evil of the *induhallatu*-lizard which fell upon me, the portent of evil which I saw—Ea, Shamash and Marduk, turn it to a portent of good, to an oracle of good for me! Undo my guilt! Hear my prayer, at the command of Enlil, king of the gods!

18. – To dissipate the evil of the *induhallatu* and the *šurārû*, you [go to the river] bank. You dig a well. At the edge of the well you draw seven designs with flour. Upon (them) you throw tamarisk, *mashtakal*-plant, date shoots (and) *shalatu*-reed. You have the man kneel over (them). The liturgist<sup>2</sup> stands over him, and three times [that man] raises his eyes. [You recite] the incantation “He angered the god. . . .” You place well water upon his shadow. Into the well you throw (the well water). You sprinkle the water which rises from the . . . over them, seven times toward the right, seven times toward the left. You set out a censer of juniper for Marduk. [You set out] a censer of *pallukku*-plant for [Shamash]. You pour a censer of flour into the river. You recite “Receive, Marduk; receive, Shamash.”

Rev. 1'. – . . . to . . . Upon (it) you pour . . . upon the offering arrangement. To the river . . . . May earth take away the evil . . . . evil to good . . . . You throw . . . into the river, and you swing censer (and) torch [over him. You have him recite as follows].

Rev. 7'. – Incantation: Shamash, great lord of the Igigi and A[nunnaki], director of the black-headed folk, lord of the living and the dead [are you]. Exalted judge whose command cannot [be changed], whose assent no god can alter, you are the lord! Your word is indeed great; your command [is not forgotten]; like (that of) Anu, [your father], your command is supreme; among the gods, your brothers, your word [is pre-eminent].

Noble lord, whose power [is awe-inspiring], merciful god who rules all things! Shamash, as you come forth you see all peoples, you direct the cattle, the beasts of the field(?). Stand by me, Shamash, hear [my] words! Because of the evil of the *šurārû*-lizard which [was seen] in my house (and) which confronted me, I, so-and-so, [son of so-and-so], am afraid and frightened. Avert (the evil) [from me], that I may not die, that I may not be wrongly treated! May its evil [not approach me]!

Rev. 23'. – May it cross the river! May it pass over [the mountain]! May it be 3600 miles distant [from my person]! May I, your servant, have health and well-being, that I may [sing] your praise!

**Reference.** *Or* 34 (1965) 116-120.

**Notes.** <sup>1</sup>The first line is a philological notation of the scribe indicating that the text from which he was copying was broken at the beginning.

<sup>2</sup>The term "liturgist" (*mušēpišu*) seems to refer to the director of the ritual usually called *mašmašu*, who is elsewhere addressed directly by the text.

### Text 13. Ritual for the evil of evil signs and portents

1. – Namburbi for the evil of evil signs and portents [or a] strange . . . portending scattering of the man's house(hold), [collap]se of the man's house, removal of the man's house, [. . .] of the man's house, revolt or capture of the city: [that its evil] may not approach the man and his house (you perform the following ritual).

6. – You touch [the . . . , fie]lds (and) possessions of the man's estate, as much as there is, and you take up residence(?) in the man's house. You have a stranger, who does not know the man's house, take in his hands a bow, seven arrows with iron heads, seven with copper heads, seven with wooden heads. An iron dagger (and) an axe you bind at his waist. He enters the man's house and takes an arrow and shoots it. He sets aside the bow only, and on the threshold, the gates, the doors (and) the lock of the man's house, with the iron dagger and the axe he makes an incision. Whatever possessions are lying in the courtyard of the man's house, as much as he can carry, you have that man pick up, and you bind his arms behind him. You have him go away (and) cross the river. You spend the night there(?), then you take him to a place he is not familiar with, and the evil will be erased. It will not approach the man and his house.

18. – After this you perform a namburbi against all evil. When you have performed the namburbi, you go to a clay (pile) and "sanctify" the clay. You present a gift to it. You recite three times the incantation "Clay, clay." You take clay<sup>1</sup> and you make a substitution-image. You dress it in a woolen garment. You make a likeness of the portent. You scrape off the thresholds (and) the doors with a lead axe, and you sweep the rooms, the courtyards (and) the beams with a datepalm branch, and you convey the refuse to the river. Then you take out the substitution-image (and) the likeness of the portent that you made, along with the refuse, to the river, and at the river bank you sweep the ground (and) sprinkle pure water. You set up a reed altar before Shamash. You offer sacrifices.<sup>2</sup> You set out an offering arrangement. . . . You put the substitution-image, together with the likeness of the portent, before the offering arrangement, facing Shamash. Before Shamash [you recite] as follows.

26. – Incantation: Shamash, [you indeed] are king of heaven and earth, judge of the upper and lower regions, light of the gods, governor of mankind, the one who renders judgement over the great gods. I have turned to you, I have sought you out among (all) the gods. Command (my) health! Because of the evil of evil signs (and) portents which have repeatedly taken place against me, I am afraid, I am terrified, I am in dread. Avert this portent from me, that I may not die, that I may not be wronged, that I may sing your praise!

31. – When you have recited this you go away (to stand) over the image and you recite as follows.<sup>3</sup>

32. – [Incantation]: I have given you [as my ex]change(?), I have given you as my ransom, [I have given you] as my substitute. I have stripped off all the evil of my body onto you, I have stripped off all the evil of my flesh [onto you, I have stripped off all the evil] of my sinews onto you, I have stripped off all the evil beside me, I have stripped off all the evil at my right and my left [onto you(?), I have stripped off all the evil] before me and behind me onto you.

36. – When you have recited this, you depart from before Shamash and recite as follows to the river.<sup>4</sup>

37. – [Incantation]: You, River, are creator of all things. I, so-and-so, son of so-and-so, whose god is so-and-so, whose goddess is so-and-so, because evil signs (and) portents have repeatedly taken place against me, am terrified, afraid, and in dread. Just as this image and likeness of the portent do not return to their place, may the evil of those things<sup>5</sup> not approach, may it not come near, may it not press, may it not affect me! May the evil of those things not return to its place, may the evil of those things be far from my person! May the evil of those things be erased from my person, may the evil of those things be dissipated from my person! That the evil of those things may not approach my person, that the evil of those things may not come near my person, that the evil of those things may not press upon my person, may the evil of those things rise like smoke to heaven, may the evil of those things, like the uprooted tamarisk, not return to its place, that I may daily bless you, River, that those who see me may forever sing your praise! Take that evil away! Take it down to your depths!

48. – When you have recited this, you throw the image and likeness of that portent into the river. The sweepings of the house, the datepalm broom, the scrapings that you have scraped from the thresholds and gates, (and) the refuse you convey (away), and place them on a boat going downstream. You put that man who commissioned the ritual with his garment fringe into the river. Then he immerses himself three times facing upstream, three times facing downstream, and he recites as follows.

53. – You, River, take away from my person that evil which was placed upon me! May an alternate (woman) serve as substitute for me, may a replacement receive it from me, may a surrogate<sup>6</sup> receive it from me! May the day bring me health, the month gladness, the year abundance! Ea, Shamash and Marduk, help me! May the evil signs (and) portents which were placed upon me be dissolved!

58. – When he has recited this, you lead him up from the river, and he removes his garment and washes with tamarisk sap. He is fumigated with cedar, juniper and sulphur. He recites seven times “Ea performed (the incantation), Ea undid (the evil),” and without looking behind him he enters a different house and spends the night (there). He approaches<sup>7</sup> a foreign (or: strange) woman. In the morning he sends that woman out, and a man lays hold on the sins of that man(?), then you gather (them) into (a piece of) clay, and that man recites as follows.

64. – I have removed my evils, I have stripped off my sins. May this day receive from me the evil of the signs (and) portents which have been placed on me and send (it) across the river! Ninmah, who created god and man, has given me judgement.

67. – When he has recited this, he throws the evil of those things into the river. He sprinkles water from a holy-water container over the bed and the bedspread(?). He recites “Ea performed (the incantation), Ea undid (the evil),” and he leaves his house, without taking the road he took (in coming). He goes to another place. [For three days] he does not enter his house. On the fourth<sup>8</sup> day he enters his house. Its evil will be dissipated. That man will stand victorious over his opponent-at-law.<sup>9</sup>

Colophon (Exemplar A). – Finished. Written [accor]ding to a (wooden) tablet; not collated. [Tablet of] Stn-šar-ilāni, the apprentice, the young incantation priest.

Colophon (Exemplar B). – [Namburbi] for evil, untoward portents. Written [according to] its original (and) col[lated]. (Illegible traces follow.)

**References.** *Or* 39 (1970) 142-151; *Or* 40 (1971) 182; *Or* 43 (1974) in press.

**Notes.** <sup>1</sup>“Clay” here translates *ṭidu*; in the preceding lines it translates *kullatu*.

<sup>2</sup>The logogram used suggests animal sacrifices.



<sup>3</sup>Line numbering from here on follows BM 59808; this text has no divider before or after line 31.

<sup>4</sup>Though the direction to depart "from before Shamash" is found in both copies, we expect "from the image."

<sup>5</sup>In this and the following sentences, BM 59808 substitutes "the evil of the same" (HUL MIN) for "the evil of those things"; both refer to the image and the likeness of the portent, which now bear the evil.

<sup>6</sup>BM 59808: "surrogates."

<sup>7</sup>The verb implies sexual "approaching."

<sup>8</sup>"Fourth" is from BM 59808: K.2777+ has "on the third day."

<sup>9</sup>This sentence is a standard omen apodosis predicting success.

#### Text 14. Ritual to secure brisk trade<sup>1</sup>

1. – That brisk trade may [not] bypass (lit. forget) the house of a tavernkeeper, or diviner, or physician, or liturgist, or baker. Its ritual: you crush dust from a temple, dust from a god's dais, dust from a city gate, dust from a ditch, dust from an open air shrine, dust from a bridge on which Ishtar<sup>2</sup> shines, dust from a crossroads, dust from a dust storm, dust from a prostitute's door, dust from the door of a . . . , dust from a weaver's door, dust from a palace door, dust from a malt-grower's door, dust from a tavernkeeper's door, dust from a road, dust from a gardener's door, dust from a carpenter's door, dust from the door of a *naditu*-priestess, all these kinds of dust. You mix them together in river water. You smear cypress oil on them. With the paste you anoint the door of the man's house. You sweep the roof. You sprinkle pure water. You set up a reed altar before Ishtar. You arrange twelve loaves. You set out confections of honey and ghee. You scatter dates and fine flour. You set out a censer of juniper. You bring (the afflicted person), whether male or female, up to the roof. You have him kneel down and you set a copper image to (his) right. He recites as follows: "Ishtar, Nanay, and Gazbaya<sup>3</sup> help me in this matter!" He recites this, and recounts the matters which are on his mind. Then there will always be brisk trade for the tavern. That house will be prosperous in the future.

21. – Incantation: Ishtar, most courageous of the great gods, exalted, glorious, warlike Ishtar, noble one, most great lady Irnini, help me! You are (by turns) fair and darkened.<sup>4</sup> Lady-Enlil of (all) people, goddess of males, outdoer of (all) people, mighty<sup>5</sup> Ishtar, daughter of Anu, created by the great gods, giver of the scepter, the throne (and) the royal staff to all kings, lady of (all) lands, heed me! Proudest of goddesses, exalted lady, I call upon you: help me! May the censer rich(ly laden) with pure juniper come before you! Ishtar, stand by me to (further) my affairs! May this tavern trade be your tavern trade! Ishtar, lay your hand on the potstand and mixing vat! May profit come my way, and never cease! You are the one who has this office. End-formula of the incantation.

38. – The spell "If profit is cut off from the house of a tavernkeeper."

39. – Its ritual: you place a censer of juniper before Ishtar, and libate the tavernkeeper's beer. Do not finish (the libation, but) save (some of the beer), then you prostrate yourself and libate the beer (that remains). Then there will always be brisk trade for the tavern. It will be prosperous in the future.

43. – Incantation: Ishtar of the lands, most heroic of goddesses, this is your priestly residence: exult and rejoice! Come, enter our house! With you may your sweet bedfellow enter, your lover and your cult-actor! May my lips be honey, my hands charm! May the lip(s) of my vulva(?) be lip(s) of honey! As the birds twitter over a snake which comes out of its hole, may these people fight over me! From the priestly residence of Ishtar, from the temple residence of Ninlil, from among the possessions of Ningizzida, seize ye him, bring him here, be gracious to him! May the distant one return to me, may the angry one come back to me! Like smoke<sup>6</sup> may his heart return to me! As the rain fructifies the earth, so that vegetation is abundant, may the greetings addressed to me be abundant! End-formula of the incantation.<sup>7</sup>

60. – The spell "Brisk trade for the innkeeper on the quai."

61. – Its ritual: dust from a quai, dust from a crossing, dust from a bridge, dust from an intersection of four roads, dust from a crossroads, dust from a city gate, dust from a dais, dust from the door of the Ishtar temple,

dust from a prostitute's house, dust from the door of a tavernkeeper's house where trade is plentiful—(you take) all these dusts. Before Ishtar you set up a reed altar. You set out three offerings of breast(-shaped) bread. You set out a censer of juniper. You libate fine beer. You recite the incantation seven times and prostrate yourself. You mix those dusts with water. You recite the incantation seven times (again) and (with the mixture) you wash the door of the house, and with what remains of it you make an im[age of] an ox and bury it under a vat.

Colophon (Exemplar A). — (Catchline:) If a man's seal is broken or lost or [dropped] in a river. Tablet 135 of the nambu[rbi]. (Twelve-line Aššurbanipal ownership formula follows).

Colophon (Exemplar B). -- Written according to an original tablet of Babylon. Hastily (!) excerpted.

**References.** *ABRT* I 66f. + Lenormant, *Choix* 99; *KAR* 144.

**Notes.** <sup>1</sup>This text has been most recently treated by Ebeling, *RA* 49 (1955) 178-184. Internal titles divide this tablet into three sections, each giving a ritual for a similar purpose. The titles of lines 38 and 60 have the formula INIM(or KA).INIM.MA, here translated "spell"; this formula is normally used in a final subscript to identify the preceding text, but in the present instance it is clearly a text *heading* to which the following ritual directions refer. For another instance of internal division, see text 7, note 1.

<sup>2</sup>The goddess is here identified with the Venus star.

<sup>3</sup>The last two names are here alternate names for *dIš-tar* with the verb in the singular.

<sup>4</sup>This is a further astral reference.

<sup>5</sup>On *telitu* see J. Nougayrol, *RA* 62 (1968) 94.

<sup>6</sup>KÚ.GI = *quš-tāri*. This image is: as smoke rises willy-nilly, so may his affections turn compulsively to me.

<sup>7</sup>This incantation, following on the title "If profit is cut off from the house of a tavernkeeper," suggests a relation between tavernkeeping and prostitution.

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**The Akkadian Namburbi Texts: An Introduction**, by Richard I. Caplice

*Namburbi* is the title of a group of typical Babylonian incantations, used to "undo" or avert portended evil. Consisting of both rituals and prayers, they provide a response to the observed events taken by the Mesopotamians to be signs of future happenings; thus they are the practical correlate of the "omen texts," which list such portents and their significance. The fascicle by Caplice includes a long introduction, which explains the nature of the texts and their ritual *Sitz im Leben*, and the translation, with notes, of 14 representative texts, ranging from a Ritual for the Evil of a Snake to a Ritual to Secure Brisk Trade.

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## PREFACE

Like other types of ritual text preserved in cuneiform documents, the namburbi texts offer us a fascinating yet tantalizing insight into man's religious and cosmological conceptions at an earlier stage of civilization: fascinating in what they reveal, yet tantalizing because the accidents of time have left us only remnants and hints of a past era. Those texts that have been preserved to us are often broken or abraded or difficult of interpretation, and even when fully preserved they require an unusual measure of perception and open-mindedness if we are to see them as integral parts of their own culture.

This monograph is a small attempt to bridge the gap that separates us from these texts. An introductory section sketches the character, contents, and significance of the texts. In the space available, the sketch is necessarily summary; an attempt has been made to face the main issues posed by the texts, and to give some bibliographical indications for the reader who wishes to investigate further, but neither full analysis nor complete documentation is attempted.

The second section presents fourteen namburbi texts in translation. The dominant criteria for their selection have been representativeness, relative completeness of preservation, and non-availability hitherto in English translation. The translations offered proceed, in general, from simple rituals to more complex ones. The translation is generally *ad litteram*, but the presentation has in other respects been simplified: indentation replaces the ancient use of dividing lines to form "paragraphs" on the tablet, and line division is indicated only for the line at the beginning of each paragraph by the pertinent line number. The sigla used include square brackets [ ], which enclose destroyed and hypothetically restored sections of the text; round brackets ( ), which enclose phrases implied but not expressed by the text; pointed brackets < >, which enclose words or signs judged to be mistakenly omitted by the ancient scribe.

## ABBREVIATIONS

ABRT	J. Craig, <i>Assyrian and Babylonian Religious Texts</i> (1885/1887).
AfO	<i>Archiv für Orientforschung</i> .
AHw	W. von Soden, <i>Akkadisches Handwörterbuch</i> (1959-).
AS	<i>Assyriological Studies</i> .
BBR	H. Zimmern, <i>Beiträge zur Kenntnis der babylonischen Religion</i> (1901).
BibOr	<i>Bibbia e Oriente</i> .
BMS	L. W. King, <i>Babylonian Magic and Sorcery</i> (1896).
CAD	<i>The Assyrian Dictionary of the University of Chicago</i> (1956-).
CBQ	<i>Catholic Biblical Quarterly</i> .
CT	<i>Cuneiform Texts from Babylonian Tablets in the British Museum</i> (1896-).
JAOS	<i>Journal of the American Oriental Society</i> .
JNES	<i>Journal of Near Eastern Studies</i> .
Lenormant, Choix	F. Lenormant, <i>Choix de textes cunéiformes inédits ou incomplètement publiés</i> (1875).
LKU	A. Falkenstein, <i>Literarische Keilschrifttexte aus Uruk</i> (1931).
LSS	<i>Leipziger semitistische Studien</i> .
MVAG	<i>Mitteilungen der Vorderasiatisch (from 1922 -Ägyptisch)en Gesellschaft</i> .
Or	<i>Orientalia</i> , Nova Series.
Or VS	<i>Orientalia</i> , Vetus Series.
RA	<i>Revue d'assyriologie et d'archéologie orientale</i> .
Schollmeyer, Šamaš	A. Schollmeyer, <i>Sumerisch-babylonische Hymnen und Gebete an Šamaš</i> (1912).
STT	O. R. Gurney – J. Finkelstein – P. Hulin, <i>The Sultantepe Tablets</i> (1957-1964).
TCL	<i>Textes cunéiformes</i> (Musée du Louvre).

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