

MAQLÛ III 1-30: INTERNAL ANALYSIS AND MANUSCRIPT EVIDENCE FOR THE REVISION OF AN INCANTATION¹

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In a separate study, I devoted a detailed analysis to the *Maqlû*² incantations II 19–75 and IV 1–79 in order to demonstrate that these incantations had undergone expansion.³ I noted that major segments of the incantations were interpolated and that these interpolations were marked off by repetitive resumptions. The analysis of the aforementioned incantations was based solely upon the critical analysis of the texts and drew only upon internal evidence, for there are no known extant witnesses to the forms of these incantations without the interpolations and repetitive resumptions.

But, as I mentioned in that earlier study, the view that incantations in *Maqlû* may sometimes have been revised by means of interpolation and expansion is not simply the result of critical analysis; it is evident in the manuscript tradition as well. For when we examine the manuscripts of incantations that contain lengthy enumerations or descriptions, we occasionally find that some of the manuscripts do not contain the aforementioned sections or contain shorter versions thereof. In that study, I mentioned in passing several incantations (*Maqlû* III 1–30, V 19–47, and VII 114–140) for which we have this kind of evidence. Here, then, I should like to provide a more detailed examination of the first of these incantations. I shall argue that *Maqlû* III 1–30 contains a significant expansion that is set off by a repetitive resumption and that the absence of the expansion and the repetitive resumption in one of the manuscripts represents an early form of the text and confirms the analysis.

The text of *Maqlû* III 1–30 reads:

¹ It is a great pleasure to dedicate this short study of an incantation to Professor Simo Parpola. Simo has contributed more than anyone else to the reconstruction of the lives and activities of Babylonian and Assyrian scholars – including the many magicians among them – by his careful and brilliant philological analyses and has also led the way in the more speculative but no less important study of intellectual history and intercultural connections.

² Whereas in previous studies, I followed the line divisions and line numbers in the edition of *Maqlû* by Meier (1937 and 1966), I now follow the line count of my own forthcoming edition; this new line count will now also appear in Abusch & Schwemer 2008.

³ See “The Revision of Babylonian Anti-witchcraft Incantations: The Critical Analysis of Incantations in the Ceremonial Series *Maqlû*,” in: Sh. Shaked, G. Bohak & Y. Harari, (eds.), *Continuity and Change in the Magical Traditions* (Leiden: Brill [in press]).

- 1 ÉN *kaššāptu muttalliktu ša sūqāti*
 2 *mūterribtu ša bītāti*
 3 *dayyālītu ša birēti*
 4 *ḥayyāṭītu ša rebāti*
 5 *ana pāniša u arkiša issanaḥḥur*
 6 *izzaz ina sūqimma usaḥḥar šēpī⁴*
 7 *ina rebīti ip-ta-ra-as⁵ alaktu*
 8 *ša eṭli damqi dūssu īkim*
 9 *ša ardati damiqti inibša itbal*
 10 *ina nekelmēša kuzubša ilqe*
 11 *eṭla ippalisma ^dlamassašu īkim*
 12 *ardata ippalisma inibša itbal*
 13 *īmurannima kaššāptu illika arkiya*
 14 *ina imtiša ip-ta-ra-as alaktu*
 15 *ina ruḥēša išdiḥī iprus*
 16 *ušassi ilī u ^dištari ina zumriya*
 17 *ša kaššāpti⁷ ya⁷ ina kullati agdariṣ ṭiṭṭaša*
 18 *ša ēpištiya abtani šalamša*
 19 *aškun ina libbiki lipā ḥābilki*
 20 *usanniš ina kalātiki ēra qāmāki*
 21 *ēra qāmāki imatki⁶ liprus*
 22 *eli āli attapaḥ išātu*
 23 *ina šupāl āli attadi tumurtu⁷*
 24 *ana bīt terrubī attadi išātu*
 25 *tēpušimma ^dgirra līkulki*
 26 *tušēpišimma ^dgirra likšudki*
 27 *takpuḍimma ^dgirra lidūkki*
 28 *tušakpidimma ^dgirra liqmīki*
 29 *ḥarrān lā tāri lišaṣbitki ^dgirra ḥābilki*
 30 *^dgirra ezzu zumurki liḥmuṭ TU₆ ÉN*

- 1 Incantation. The sorceress, she who roams the streets,
 2 Who continually intrudes into houses,
 3 Who prowls in alleys,
 4 Who spies about the broad ways –
 5 She keeps looking (lit. turning) around in front and in back,

⁴ For lines 5–6, note the variant: *ša ... izzazzū ... isaḥḥur šēpīšu*, a composite reading drawn from two Babylonian mss (BM 64514 and SpTU 3, 74a).

⁵ I have not normalized *ip-ta-ra-as* in lines 7 and 14 because I am not certain of the grammatical form; see below, n. 9. See there, as well, for a discussion of the enclitic *-ma* in line 6.

⁶ Var. *amāki*.

⁷ Written in the manuscripts as: *tu-m[u]r-tu₄ / <tu>-ur-t[i] / tu-ú-ru*.

- 6 Standing, in the street she turns foot (progress) around,
7 (And) in the square she cuts off (commercial) traffic.
8 She robbed the fine young man of his virility,
9 She carried off the attractiveness of the fine young woman,
10 With her malignant stare she took away her charms.
11 She looked at the young man and (thereby) robbed his vitality,
12 She looked at the young woman and (thereby) carried off her attractiveness.
13 The witch saw me and came after me,
14 With her venom, she cuts off (commercial) traffic,
15 With her spittle, she cut off my trading,
16 She drove away my god and goddess from my person.
17 From the clay pit I have pinched off clay for my witch,
18 I have formed the figurine of my sorceress.
19 “I set in your abdomen tallow, which destroys you,
20 I implant in your kidneys ashwood, which burns you.
21 May the ashwood, which burns you, cut off your venom.
22 In the upper part of the city, I have set a fire,
23 In the lower part of the city, I have cast ashes.
24 To the house that you enter, I have cast a fire.
25 You performed sorcery against me, so may Girra consume you,
26 You had sorcery performed against me, so may Girra overcome you,
27 You plotted against me, so may Girra kill you,
28 You had others plot against me, so may Girra burn you.
29 May Girra, your destroyer, cause you to take the road of no-return,
30 May fierce Girra burn your body.” Incantation formula.

Our concern here is primarily with the description of the witch in the first part of the incantation (1–16), but let us first review the whole incantation. The incantation opens with a description of the witch as one who invades the various public and private spaces of the town (1–4). It then describes how she turns back and cuts off public and commercial activity (5–7); how when she sees young men and women in public, she deprives them of their sexual powers and charm (8–12); how she cuts off commercial activity with her spittle (14–15); she is then said to have alienated the victim’s personal gods (16). In lines 17ff., the speaker describes the destructive burning ritual that he undertakes against the witch (17–24) and invokes the fire god to destroy her because of her evil deeds (25–30).

A close examination of the opening section of the incantation containing the description of the witch’s activities reveals certain difficulties. The text first describes the witch as impeding public and commercial activity (5–7); it then shifts over to a description of her attack upon the sexuality of the young people of the town by means of her glance (8–13); it then shifts back to the earlier topic and

describes how she impedes commercial activity by means of her spittle (14–16). The descriptions of the witch’s attacks on the commercial activity of the town and on the sexual energies of its youngsters are thematically incongruous. Moreover, the two themes are neither evenly balanced nor fully integrated. Rather, the sexual/evil eye theme intrudes into the commercial/spittle theme: note that lines 14–15 resume the earlier description of lines 5–7, and thus the sexual/evil eye section is surrounded by the commercial/spittle sections.

It is likely that one or the other section is secondary. That such is in fact the case and that the attack on commercial life is the more original theme is indicated by the existence of a *Wiederaufnahme* – a repetitive resumption – that links the textual segments that describe the attack on commercial life. For we note that lines 7 and 14 are similar and have elements in common:

ina rebīti ip-ta-ra-as alaktu (7)
ina imtiša ip-ta-ra-as alaktu (14)
 (And) in the square she cuts off (commercial) traffic (7)
 With her venom, she cuts off (commercial) traffic (14)

Lines 7 and 14 appear, respectively, at the end of the initial description of the attack on commercial life and at the beginning of its continuation. By repeating elements/words found in line 7, line 14 serves to resume the commercial theme found in the earlier part of the text. This resumption was necessary because the description of the witch’s attack on commercial activity was sundered by the insertion into it of the description in lines 8–13 of the witch’s attack on sexual life. We may thus conclude that line 14 serves as a *Wiederaufnahme* and that lines 8–13 are an interpolation.⁸

There is much in favor of this analysis. Further support for the interpretation of line 14 as a resumption of line 7 is perhaps provided by the occurrence of the verb *parāsu* in lines 7, 14, and 15. By itself, this recurrence is odd, but even stranger is the distribution of forms: whereas line 15 has *iprus*, lines 7 and 14 have the form *ip-ta-ra-as*. In our estimation, the desire to repeat line 7 in line 14 explains 1) the use in line 14 of the same verb as found in line 15, for otherwise two different synonymous verbs would have been used to create the present parallelism of lines 14–15, as well as 2) the use of the form *ip-ta-ra-as* of line 7 in line 14 rather than a punctual form as in line 15.⁹ Line 14 was meant to link the disconnected lines 7+15. *ina imtiša*

⁸ Possible additional support for the conclusion that the section describing the witch’s attacks on commercial life was part of the original text may be forthcoming from the fact that the areas of activity in the lines dealing with commerce (*sūqi* and *rebīti*, lines 6–7) are identical with and occur in the same order as the areas of activity mentioned in the description of the witch in the opening lines of the text (*sūqāti* and *rebāti*, lines 1 and 4).

⁹ We are left with a difficulty that we have not been able to resolve thus far – the grammatical form of *ip-ta-ra-as*. If line 7 parallels line 6, then *ip-ta-ra-as* in line 7 should be a present/durative, and thus would have to be a Gt present/durative: *iptarras*; if line 14 parallels line 15, then *ip-ta-ra-as* in line 14 should be a preterite, and thus would have to be a Gt preterite: *iptaras*; but note that the dictionaries do not recognize a Gt of *parāsu* except in the stative. (Is a G perfect in either line possible?) Of course, our contention that *ip-ta-ra-as* in line 14 is modelled on line 7

ip-ta-ra-as alaktu, “With her venom, she cuts off (commercial) traffic,”(14) was thus formed on the basis of those two lines: *ina imtiša* was modeled on *ina ruḥēša*,

and not on line 15 allows us to dismiss the problem of the form of the verb in line 14, for it need not be identical with the preterite form of line 15, but we are still left uncertain how to analyze the form in line 7. And especially if we are right that the original text did not have lines 8–14, but followed the order 6–7+15, we are again left with the problem of how to interpret *ip-ta-ra-as* in relation to both a durative in line 6 and a preterite in line 15.

In a letter, Mikko Luukko has raised the possibility that the enclitic *-ma*, attached to *sūqimma*, might be “artificial,” and be due to the composer’s desire for assonance or rhyme (*sūqimma* being in the middle of the line, more or less at the same place as other words with *-ma* in lines 11–13, 25–28), rather than to the desire to place emphasis on the word *sūqu*. If this is correct, then *-ma* could be taken as if it were attached to one of the verbs in line 6. If *-ma* is attached to *izzaz*, then perhaps line 6 forms the background or presupposition of the situation described in these lines (the verbs in line 6 are duratives) and line 7 the foreground or focus. If so, *ip-ta-ra-as* in line 7 could well be a G perfect (*iptaras*); we would then translate: “Standing and turning around foot (progress) in the street, she cuts off (commercial) traffic in the square.” On the other hand, if *-ma* is attached to *usahḥar*, then the second half of line 6 and line 7 form a temporal sequence, with the action of line 7 being the consequence of the action in line 6. We would then translate: “Standing, she turns foot (progress) around in the street, and thus she cuts off (commercial) traffic in the square.” This, of course, leaves unresolved the problem of *ip-ta-ra-as*.

The suggestion to treat the enclitic *-ma* as determined by poetic sound patterning is very attractive. However, because it remains uncertain, I would not yet wish to base my analysis upon this supposition. In any case,

(izzaz) *ina sūqimma usahḥar šēpī*
ina rebīti ip-ta-ra-as alaktu

are asyndetically related clauses that are synonymously parallel. In poetry, such a pair may contain two virtually identical statements that individually relate either to different parts of a situation or to the whole and a part. Synonymous parallelism serves to reiterate a statement or to present different aspects of a situation; it is holistic in nature, and thus the distinction between whole and part or between simultaneity and sequentiality may be blurred. In poetry, unlike prose, equivalence may find expression in the combination in linear sequence of two statements that are parallel in grammatical structure (i.e., paradigmatically equivalent) and which in prose would normally be taken as temporally or causally sequential; in poetry, however, statements such as those in the couplet above need not be sequential but can be equivalent in terms of meaning or even sound. (On the different ways in which parallelism forms poetry, cf., e.g., Jakobson 1987: 62–94, esp. 70 ff.).

I should also note that *-ma* here may serve a distinct grammatical function. It is possible that *-ma* here marks the nominal phrase *ina sūqi* as the adverbial complement to the preceding verb *izzaz*. But, nonetheless, *ina sūqi* at the same time also parallels *ina rebīti* in form and meaning. *ina sūqi* would thus both adhere to the previous verb *izzaz* and be gapped with the subsequent verb *usahḥar*. It would thus be understood elliptically with *usahḥar*; thereby filling out the parallel to the clause that follows *usahḥar*. To put it differently, *ina sūqi* may function here both on a clause level and across clauses; it would therefore operate on two levels, grammatical and semantic. If this is correct, perhaps my translation should be modified to reflect the adverbial function as well:

“Standing in the street, she turns foot (progress) around,
 She cuts off (commercial) traffic in the square.”

My thanks to Stephen Geller for reviewing this note.

“With her spittle” of line 15, (and *imtu* was derived perhaps from *imatki liprus* of line 21)¹⁰ and *ip-ta-ra-as alaktu* was copied from *ip-ta-ra-as alaktu* of line 7.¹¹

The encirclement of the sexual/evil eye theme (8–13) by the commercial/spittle one and the existence of the resumptive repetition of line 7 in line 14 are surely strong indicators that lines 8–14 were secondarily inserted, with 14 serving to reconnect parts of the original description (5–7, 15–16) that had been separated by the insertion of lines 8–13. In light of this conclusion, we take note of and assess the omission of lines 8–14 in SpTU 3, no. 74a, an Uruk manuscript of Tablet III. By itself, this omission might have been explained as a haplography,¹² but everything that we have seen thus far indicates that these lines are secondary and suggests that, here at least, this late manuscript preserves an older version of the text and thus provide further support for our contention.

The original description would have read:

- 1 ÉN *kaššāptu muttalliktu ša sūqāti*
- 2 *mūterribtu ša bītāti*
- 3 *dayyālītu ša birēti*
- 4 *ḥayyāṭītu ša rebāti*
- 5 *ana pāniša u arkiša issanaḥḥur*
- 6 *izzaz ina sūqimma usaḥḥar šēpī*
- 7 *ina rebīti ip-ta-ra-as alaktu*
- 15 *ina ruḥēša išdiḥī iprus*
- 16 *ušassi ilī u ^dištari ina zumriya*

- 1 Incantation. The sorceress, she who roams the streets,
- 2 Who continually intrudes into houses,
- 3 Who prowls in alleys,
- 4 Who spies about the broad ways –
- 5 She keeps looking (lit. turning) around in front and in back,
- 6 Standing, in the street she turns foot (progress) around,
- 7 (And) in the square she cuts off (commercial) traffic.
- 15 With her spittle, she cut off my trading,
- 16 She drove away my god and goddess from my person.

¹⁰ The innards of the witch are the source of the *imtu* // *ruḥū*; hence, the destruction of her innards in lines 19–21 (*aškun ina libbiki lipā ḥābilki / usanniš ina kalātūki ēra qāmāki / ēra qāmāki imatki liprus*). There seems to be a correlation between the innards of the witch as a source of “witchcraft” and the digestive/respiratory system of the victim as the physical site of the witchcraft attack and symptoms. For the association of the symptoms of a witchcraft diagnosis with the stomach, lungs, and mouth, but especially the digestive tract, see Abusch 2007: 146–159 = Abusch 2002: 79–88.

¹¹ Note that the description of the witch’s behavior in lines 14–15 is similar to that of a rabid dog; could the latter be the source of the image?

¹² So the original editor of the text, E. von Weiher, SpTU 3, p. 84 ad line 7.

An assault on economic life was overlaid by an assault on sexuality. And it is to be noted that the composer emphasizes that the two assaults are effected by different means: the assault on sexuality by means of the evil eye, the assault on economic life by means of spittle.¹³ Thus we witness how a perception of the witch as one who harms public life by means of spittle is supplemented by a perception of her as an envious malicious being who deprives the young of their sexual powers by means of the evil eye.¹⁴ The witch was able to threaten both spheres of life.

¹³ It is significant that in both the commercial and sexual sections the witch's destructive impact could have been conveyed simply by the basic descriptions in lines 6–7 and 8–9; it seems evident therefore that the incantation wished also to explain clearly how the witch's attack was carried out and, accordingly, expanded the basic descriptions by means of parallel formulations and added items. More specifically, in the sexual arena, line 10 essentially repeats line 9, but adds the theme of the malignant stare, thus laying the basis for lines 11–12, and these latter lines then repeat lines 8–9 but additionally serve to tell us that the sexual assault of lines 11–12 as well as of the earlier lines was achieved by means of the witch's glance = the evil eye; in the commercial arena, lines 14–15 basically repeat line 7 (and perhaps line 6) but additionally serve to tell us that the action of the earlier line(s) was achieved by means of the witch's spittle.

But while the repetition in line 14 of elements of line 7 serves to develop the thought of line 7, line 14 functions no less as a *Wiederaufnahme*. The fact that conceptually lines 8–12 have little to do with lines 5–7 / 14ff. and that lines 8–14 are missing in an Uruk manuscript render the designation of line 14 as a *Wiederaufnahme* (rather than only a device of explication) compelling.

¹⁴ For another occurrence in *Maqlû* of the theme of the witch's assault of the young man and women by means of her eye, see VII 80–87.

