

The Diagnostic Series SA.GIG:

Ancient Innovations and Adaptations

by

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Abstract:

The following thesis study will explore and contextualize the tradition of Mesopotamian medical diagnostics for the reader, with a particular focus on the first millennium canonical series SA.GIG. It charts the rise of the ancient diagnostician, the *āšipu*, as well as the emergence of the early diagnostic texts which predate the SA.GIG series. It problematizes the role of the series' (alleged) 11th century editor, Esagil-kīn-apli, and seeks to qualify his role by delineating between editorial innovations and editorial adaptations. With reference to recent in-depth structural studies of the texts, it will argue that the head-to-foot order of the second subseries is an adaptation while the real innovation lies in the grouping of the entries within that order. This thesis will also argue for the association of the diagnostic and divinatory traditions based on an examination of the structure of the diagnoses and the *modus operandi* of the diagnostician.

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1.0.0 Introduction

Perspective on the world's most venerable medical tradition (venerable with particular respect to age) comes from substantial cuneiform collections of recipes, rituals and incantations, omens, lists of *materia magica*, as well as secondary sources such as letters, administrative records *etc.*¹ These corpora of texts, while diverse, are taken to represent the work of urban literate professionals, to the exclusion of less learned healers.² It must be added that the extant tablets which constitute the core of the Mesopotamian medical tradition (the therapeutic and diagnostic texts) date largely to the Neo-Assyrian period, and were found at the sites of Assur, Kouyunjik, and Sultantepe.

The present work concerns itself with the diagnostic text tradition, known in ancient times by the incipit *enūma ana bīt marši āšipu illaku* “When the *āšipu* goes to the house of the patient.” It was also known by the Sumerian term SA.GIG (lit. ‘sick cord’), Akk. *sakikkû*, which can be translated loosely as ‘symptoms.’³ In today's literature, the series is sometimes referred to as the “Diagnostic handbook” and the individual entries may be termed “medical omens” or simply “entries.” The genre is attested from the Old Babylonian period onward in a number of forerunning texts (see 2.0.0). The Diagnostic corpus was (allegedly) edited and redacted in the Isin II period by the famous Borsippian scholar Esagil-kīn-apli (1.3.1). The result of this editorial work, the canonical SA.GIG series, is attested in the first millennium and comprises 40 tablets in total. In

¹ For an overview of medical information outside the medical corpora, see Worthington 2009.

² Robson 2008, p. 457 states that: “the work of experts such as bone-setters, barber-surgeons, midwives, and herbalists mostly goes unrecorded, as do a whole range of domestic, rural, and informal healthcare practices.” On the other hand, Geller 2010, p.8 suggests that the diversity in the texts (from library handwritings on multi-column tablets to cursive single inscriptions) may reflect the fact that magical expertise was available from “an exorcist, physician, midwife, or barber...”

³ As pointed out in Rutz 2007, p. 294.

consulting the Kalhu Catalogue, we see that these tablets were divided in ancient times into 6 chapters or “subseries” (1.3.2). In all, it is estimated that the series would have included some 3,000 entries, and roughly half of those entries are attested today on extant tablets.⁴

Intended as a descriptive study, the discussions to ensue will aim to contextualize the diagnostic series within the greater framework of *āšipūtu* for the reader, while examining the following issues in particular detail: **i)** How are the entries of the canonical SA.GIG series to be classified? Is the *modus operandi* of the diagnostician more akin to that of the medical doctor, or to that of the divinatory specialist? (see 1.3.2); and **ii)** what was the editorial role of Esagil-kīn-apli? What were his innovations and what were his adaptations for earlier diagnostic material? In order to address these questions an examination of the forerunning material will be made (2.0.0 – 2.4.2), before turning to the canonical series itself with particular attention to the second subseries (3.3.0).

1.1.1 Illnesses, Symptoms and their Conceptual Framework

Like modern people today, the Mesopotamians were concerned with living a long, healthy life; this notion of healthy life came complete with children who could provide funerary offerings following death. The question of the average life expectancy of the Mesopotamian is fraught with difficulties due to the nature of available evidence; however, a preliminary prosopographical investigation suggests that in the first millennium, members of scribal community (at least) could

⁴ The estimate of “a little less than half” of the 3,000 entries is given in Scurlock & Anderson 2006, p. 7. The total of 3,000 entries is frequently cited in scholarly literature and likely derives from line 50 of the Kalhu Catalogue wherein it is stated: ŠU NIGIN 40 DUB MEŠ 3000+ x x...

sometimes enjoy surprisingly long lifespans of 60-80 years, when illness or disease didn't intervene.⁵

The word "illness" is one that bears many unintended connotations for the modern reader, from bacteria, to modern medicines and cures, to emergency rooms. In an attempt to dispel this imagery, it is right to consider: what was illness according to native Mesopotamian definitions? Perhaps the most important consideration is that the ancient view of illness was inextricably bound up in a theocentric worldview, to the effect that Babylonian scholars "grounded much of their scientific knowledge in an ancient belief system incorporating magic, in which illnesses were ultimately caused by demons or angry gods..."⁶ Indeed, the aetiology of illness in Mesopotamia, particularly evident from the second millennium on, is that disease was handed down from on high: whether it is attributed to the "hand of a god," or whether the afflicting party is an agent of illness (typically, a witch, demon or ghost). Falling sick then, was a sign that the patient had lost the desired societal equilibrium he strove for, and either some deity would then turn against him or "the personal protective god has left the person open to attacks by demons or ill-wishing human beings."⁷ In some cases no supernatural cause is given, instead the body part itself seems to independently act up, but this may not represent a true exception to the theistic model: it has been suggested that the body part itself was seen as a "lower order of spirit" and that in Mesopotamian medical texts, "a person could have his [own] head "seize" him" more or less in the same way that a ghost or demon could "seize" his head.⁸

⁵ Dandamayev 1980, p. 183-186.

⁶ Geller 2010, p. 14

⁷ Heeßel 2004[b], p. 99.

⁸ Scurlock & Anderson 2005, p. 11; for an alternative view the reader may consult Cillins, T.J. (1999). *Natural Illness in Babylonian Medical Incantations*. PhD. Dissertation. University of Chicago.

Writing in the early 1990s, M. Stol identified three distinct and important Akkadian terms for illness: *miqtu* implies that which has fallen from above and struck the patient, like the attack of a demon or the onset of fever, these illnesses tend to strike suddenly. This phenomena is known also in the aetiological myth of ‘illnesses descending from the skies’ known from Old Babylonian incantation texts;⁹ *simmu* is a wound or illness with immediately visible symptoms, something visible to the eye; and thirdly, *murşu* is a very general term for illness and can denote any kind of illness or suffering.¹⁰

The direct equation of symptom with illness should not necessarily be assumed in ancient texts. It has been argued that Mesopotamian physicians could take the perceived symptom not only as an indicator of the illness, but as an indicator of the deity causing the illness.¹¹ A. Bácskay has suggested (hypothetically) that the Mesopotamians may have perceived the bodily symptoms of patients as omens sent by the gods, thus ominous phenomena seen in the environment of the patient and witnessed on the body of the patient would represent one and the same conceptual framework¹² (indeed, as will be seen below, tablets 1 and 2 of the Diagnostic Handbook represent environmental (“terrestrial”) omens, while the remaining tablets focus on bodily symptoms). M. Geller expressed a similar view when he stated about the Babylonian view of symptoms and diseases: “The logic was essentially the same as that for numerous types of Babylonian omens...in effect, symptoms became omens.”¹³ For more on this view see (3.3.0).

⁹ Stol 1993, p. 11; Bácskay 2009, p. 2.

¹⁰ *Ibid.*

¹¹ Heeßel 2001, p. 248 (cf. Bácskay 2009, p. 5).

¹² Bácskay 2009, p. 4

¹³ Geller 2010, p. 15

1.1.2 Contextualizing the Diagnostic Texts

The response to illness in the Mesopotamian medical tradition is chiefly attested in two text corpora: the therapeutic texts and the diagnostic texts. The medical specialist’s first priority was to determine the cause of the illness (i.e. which supernatural agent had afflicted the patient); he would therefore first consult the Diagnostic Handbook. Each entry or “medical omen” in the handbook typically conforms to one of the following structures:

- i)** - If he has a vise-like headache and his bowels are loose, “hand” of Kubu. (DPS 4.2)
Protasis: includes symptom *Apodosis: Includes diagnosis*
- ii)** - If he has a vise-like headache, and his ears do not hear, the “hand” of his god has been imposed on him, he will die. (DPS 4.4)
Protasis: includes symptoms *Apodosis: includes diagnosis + negative prognosis*
- iii)** - If his right temple hurts him, “hand” of Shamash; he will get well. (DPS 4.25)
Protasis: Includes symptom *Apodosis: includes diagnosis + positive prognosis*
- iv)** - If his illness continually rises on him in the middle of the night, he approached a(nother) man’s wife; “hand” of Uraš. (DPS 17.32)
Protasis: includes symptom *Extended protasis with explanatory remark* *Apodosis: includes diagnosis*

Figure 1: The Structure of Medical Omens (with translations from Scurlock 2014)

In the majority of entries, the diagnosis states that the man was struck ‘by the hand of X deity’; in some cases, no prognosis is given (type i above); quite rarely, perhaps 2.6% of the time,

it is further explained that the patient's own sin had caused the hand of X deity to strike in the first place (type **iv** above - this was perhaps helpful in selecting a ritual that would absolve the wrongdoing);¹⁴ in other cases an agent of illness is the diagnosis (a demon, ghost, evil sorcerer *etc.*). For the unlucky patient that receives a prognosis of "he will die" (type **ii** above) the man was likely abandoned to his fate; in the event that the patient should receive a positive prognosis "he will live" (type **iii** above), the diagnostician would then consult the therapeutic texts for the relevant steps to heal the patient, or use one of the other tools at his disposal.¹⁵

The therapeutic texts and their magico-medical instructions (sometimes referred to as "prescriptions" or "recipes" in the secondary literature) date mainly to the Neo-Assyrian period and were found at the sites of Assur, Kuyunjik, and Sultantepe.¹⁶ One therapeutic series in particular, *Šumma amēlu muḫḫašu umma ukāl* "if the skull of a man's head holds fever" (also referred to by the abbreviation "UGU"), is a canonized series known from Kuyunjik which has received the most attention from scholars and which has been dubbed "the handbook of medical prescriptions." While the modern reconstruction is by no means complete, the full series may have reached some 45 tablets in all, and was newly redacted in the 7th century; the recipes contained therein were typical of the genre: "it presents the description of symptoms and/or the disease's name, second it gives the list of ingredients useful to cure the patient and (in some cases) also the

¹⁴ Stol 1991-1992, p. 44-45; the 2.6% figure is derived from Koch 2016, p. 9 wherein the author cites Heeßel as having counted some 40 entries which provide a reason for the patient being afflicted by the hand of X god. The total number of entries in the canonical series is usually given as 3,000 but it is also estimated that only half of these are currently extant. Therefore, I divide Heeßel's total count against the total number of entries which he could have considered (approx.. 1500) and come up with 2.6%.

¹⁵ Stol 1991-1992, p. 44-45.

¹⁶ Scurlock 2008, p. 302 adds that while a small number of texts are known from the earlier periods, they do not shed sufficient light on the genre: "A handful of Old Babylonian (1792–1595 BCE) incantations and the largely unpublished therapeutic texts from the Ur III (2112–2004 BCE) and Isin-Larsa (2017–1763 BCE) periods do not yet allow any real attempt to understand the development of this medical tradition over the full course of ancient Mesopotamian history."

instructions to prepare and administer them... [it concluded with] the prognosis, in most cases positive.”¹⁷

The relationship between the diagnostic and therapeutic corpora has been subject to some disagreement within the field. J. Scurlock has convincingly argued for the intertextuality of the series. Among other evidence, the author noted that 18 entries in tablet 4 of the diagnostic series (DPS 4) find correlating therapeutic prescriptions in the second tablet of the an UGU subseries (BAM 482).¹⁸ These findings help to confirm that the medical specialist first referenced the diagnostic handbook, then if desired, consulted the relevant medical prescription for its magico-medical solution.

Importantly, the *āšipu*, the expert who was responsible for making use of the diagnostic and therapeutic corpora (in tandem with the *asû* in the latter case), was expected to peruse a group of texts which (in modern *parlance*) is termed the exorcistic incantation corpus. Compared with the medical texts, the exorcistic corpus is better represented both in terms of extant text corpora and in terms of published work, from the Sumerian period onwards. In the incantation texts of the 3rd millennium, snake, scorpion and dog were ubiquitous as the agents of illness, with the occasional appearance of the Udug demon; this stands in contrast with the increasingly heavy presence of demons in the later periods. By the time of the later canonical series, *Utukkū Lemnūtu*, the adversaries of the *āšipu* exorcist were typically the evil Utukku, Rābišu, Alû or *Gallû* demon, the ghost or evil god, or the *Sibitti*.

D. Schwemer states that after inspecting the patient’s symptoms and his environment, the magical expert finds for one of the following diagnoses: “a) demons; b) curses that resulted from

¹⁷ Salin 2016, p. 119.

¹⁸ Scurlock 2014, p. 41-44, p. 10. This figure of 18 corresponding entries is substantial when one bears in mind that negative prognosis had no therapeutic response.

the transgression of a taboo or contact with tabooed substances; c) witchcraft performed by fellow humans; d) angry deities; e) ghosts.”¹⁹ Upon reaching a diagnosis, the *āšipu* may then determine to treat the patient with recourse to the exorcistic incantation corpus, or by some combined magico-medical approach; or he may perhaps refer the patient to the *asû* for a therapeutic response. The circumstances under which one or another solution is favored merits further investigation.

In light of the increasingly theocentric view of the first millennium, it has been suggested that while bandages, creams and pills may have comforted the sick, “only by reconciling the patient with the angered godhead can the center of the disease inside the body, placed there by physical contact with the god, be removed permanently.”²⁰ The emphasis then, was placed on the *āšipu* in his role as diagnostician, and it follows that another type of healing response would have gained significant importance: the *šurilla* is a genre of incantation-prayer, known from the first millennium, which was also performed by the *āšipu*. The Sumerian rubric which underpins these texts, ŠU.ÌL.A (lit. ‘hand’ + ‘to lift’ + nominalizing element .a), has been carefully examined by C. Frechette (2012). According to the author, when approaching a deity or powerful person, the act of hand-lifting represented a “formal gesture of salutation.” And by emphasizing greeting, the *šurilla* initiated the important process of (re)-establishing a favorable relationship with deity, and importantly, in reconciling the worshipper with his estranged god.²¹

1.1.3 A Brief History of Scholarship

¹⁹ Schwemer 2011, p. 427.

²⁰ Heeßel 2004[b], p. 99

²¹ Frechette 2012, p. 2, p. 224-228; Beaulieu 2007, p. 11.

As the complete list of early, pioneering and recent works contributing to the diagnostic texts has been made available elsewhere, the following list is a concise selection concerned with the publication of canonical series. For the history of Mesopotamian diagnostic text studies completed before 1950, and for a full bibliographic discussion, the reader is referred to HeeBel 2004(a). In 1951, René Labat wrote *Traité akkadien de diagnostics et prognostics médicaux*. This work has become the standard reference and most scholars in the field still refer to a diagnostic entry by its TDP number (*i.e.* TDP 176:1 – note the convention for referencing this work is to refer to the page number not to the tablet, hence 176:1 is page 176, line 1). It should be borne in mind that Labat only published 26 tablets (in full or in part) of a series which is now known to consist of 40 tablets.

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A	Labat 1951	<i>Traité akkadien de diagnostics et pronostics médicaux.</i> [TDP]
B	Heeßel 2000	<i>Babylonisch-assyrische Diagnostik.</i> AOAT 43.
C	Heeßel 2010[b]	<i>Akkadische Texte des 2. und 1. Jt. v. Chr. 1: Diagnostische Texte.</i> TUAT 5
D	Stol 1993	<i>Epilepsy in Babylonia.</i> CM 2
E	Scurlock 2014	<i>Sourcebook for Ancient Mesopotamian Medicine.</i>
F	Geller 2015	<i>Renal and Rectal Disease Tests.</i> BAM VII
G	George 1991	<i>RA 85</i> , pp. 137-168.

Figure 2: Listing of Primary Publications by DPS Tablet Number

With the publication of his seminal work *Babylonisch-assyrische Diagnostik* (2000), Nils Heeßel re-analyzed the corpus, introducing a new labelling system DPS (Diagnostic-Prognostic Series). The system has been adapted by a growing number of scholars in recent times and will be utilized by the present writer; it must be pointed out that, unfortunately, there is an imperfect correlation between TDP and DPS numbers.²² Heeßel provided translations for DPS 15-33 in the same work (excepting those tablets which are too fragmentary for treatment). Isolated studies such as George 1991, Stol 1993 and Geller 2015 helped to fill in the gaps, with studies on the tablets featuring terrestrial omens, and diagnoses of fever and rectal disease (respectively). Heeßel resumed his study in 2010, publishing translations for DPS 1, 4, 9, 13, 16, 26, 33 and 40, in some cases, material which had not been updated since Labat's initial publications. Finally, published in 2014, J. Scurlock's *Sourcebook for Ancient Mesopotamian Medicine* provides a welcome reference manual, wherein the author publishes new editions of DPS 3-40 (note however, that while some 1500 entries are now published by Scurlock's own estimation, half of the ancient

²² Heeßel's DPS numbers are based on a different understanding of the tablets and their arrangement into subseries than that of Labat – as a result, there is no correspondence between TDP and DPS numbers (even when one refers to TDP tablet numbers as opposed to the page numbers which are conventionally given). Heeßel 2000 p. 139-146 notes where individual tablets and fragments used to construct DPS have been edited in TDP; for a summary of this information (which I have used to place Labat's work on the chart in fig.2), see the back of Scurlock & Anderson 2005; Wee 2011, p. vii.

corpus, DPS 24, 25, 34, 35 and 38 are not extant. Some tablets in Scurlock's work are represented by only a few lines, DPS 39 by a single line).

1.2.0 A Note on the Asû

The role of the *asû*, characterised as the “doctor,” or the “pharmacist,” and his activities, which at times intersected with those of the *āšipu*, have become a much studied topic in recent times.²³ Although the extant number of medical texts from the early periods which relate to the *ašû* is extremely small, the expert (or his predecessor) was already distinct from the exorcist: he was called “the grower of aromatic plants.”²⁴ M. Geller has succinctly sketched the role of the *ašû* as follows:²⁵

“The exorcist had all the social advantages of being a priest. The ašû-physician, on the other hand, appeared to have acted more as an apothecary who prepared the complicated recipes and drugs. As a layman, he had no access to the temple and presumably operated from a corner shop in the street or from his home. The exorcist operated primarily under the assumption that disease was ultimately caused by divine will or fate; the ašû, while generally agreeing with this position, concentrated more on natural causes of symptoms..”

²³ See for example, Scurlock 1999; Geller 2007; Finkel 2000, p. 146; Stol 1991-1992 p. 58-68; Geller 2004, p. 65; Heeßel 2009.

²⁴ Geller 2004, p. 605.

²⁵ Geller 2010, p. 43.

Because the *āšipu* had many responsibilities, including making house calls (see sections 1.2.3 and 1.2.4 below), one plausible explanation for the division of medical duties is that the *āšipu* would not have had time to learn and master the complex pharmacopoeia of the day, and so in this he was aided by the *asû*.²⁶ According to J. Scurlock, although therapeutic texts are generally for the use of the *āšipu*, or are ambiguous as to their intended reader, a significant number of texts within Mesopotamian therapeutic corpora are marked off for the *asû*, that is: “those that begin with a list of plants, followed by a label...that indicates that the treatment is to be used for such-and-such a problem.”²⁷

While these investigations hold great merit, the present writer will not pursue the topic of the *asû* at length, given that this expert had little to do with the task of diagnosis. The intention here has been to distinguish, as briefly as possible, one profession from another for the purposes of disambiguation.

1.2.1 Before the *Āšipu*: The Early Incantation Experts

Our understanding of professional classes in Mesopotamia is often hampered by gaps in the available information, especially in the early period before colophons regularly occur. It was never the intention of specialist literature to specify the relevant functionaries for the sake of posterity, these texts were intended for the initiated. Therefore, it falls to the modern scholar or reader to surmise this information with the aid of (in most cases) sporadic and incidental

²⁶ Following Scurlock & Anderson 2005, p. 10.


²⁷ Scurlock 2014, p. 3. See further Heeßel 2009, p. 14 wherein the author states that colophon evidence attributes the medical texts “almost exclusively” to *āšipūtu*.

information. It is clear that the *āšipu*, first attested in the second millennium, was not the first profession to utilize Mesopotamia's venerable incantation lore. In the textual records of the third millennium, other functionaries are mentioned in conjunction with the gods of magic and their craft: in Sumerian texts, the *gudu₄* priest and the *išib* priest (additionally the *abgal* priest, not discussed here);²⁸ in Semitic texts, the *mašmaššu* priest.²⁹

The *gudu₄* priest is attested in texts dating back to the archaic period. The image of this third millennium Sumerian priest as shaven and naked before the deity, often discussed by scholars, is an image that has become quintessentially Mesopotamian; an early explanation that these cultic rites of nudity and shaving were precautions to ward off lice (possible displeasing to the gods), remains persuasive today.³⁰ The *gudu₄* covered his shaven head with a *hili*-wig, a ritual wig associated with the profession in numerous literary passages.³¹ At Ebla, the Akkadian

²⁸ Separating the legendary *abgal/apkallu* from the concrete proves problematic. In addition to his numerous literary myths and hymns, the *abgal* is mentioned in two ED incantations (Krebernik 1984 #17, #27E/27I), and is described as the bearer of the lustration water of Ningirim in one Ur III and one OB incantation (PBS 1/2 123 and VS 17,16). Administrative and economic texts attest to the fact that this was a historical profession in the Sumerian period, not simply legendary (see Foxvog, *The Sumerian Abgal and Nanše's Carp Actors* N.A.B.U 2007/4). However, from the second millennium on, scholars suggest that the profession had disappeared except as a legendary class of sages, and that occurrences of the term *apkallu* in later colophon documentation function as honorific titles (Geller 2007 p. 121, 171 n. 16).

²⁹ These observations draw heavily from the Graham Cunningham's 1997 study of the early incantation literature published as *Deliver me from Evil: Mesopotamian Incantation 2500-1500*. StPohl 17.

³⁰ Jacobsen 1963, p. 477. The author analyzes the etymology of *gudu₄* as UH (lice) + IŠIB (anointed) : . This finds some confirmation in the name of the equivalent Akkadian profession, the *pašišu* "the anointed one." Jacobsen's contention is that the oils themselves, had a bitumen or petroleum base (here he cites a passage from *Utukkū Lemnūtu* 5, CT CVI pl. 12 ii. 1: *uh-tuku* (var. *tag-ga*)-a-mu-dè ià ga-ba-da-an-šéš hé-me-en "Be you a (man who begged:) 'Plagued with lice as I am (lit. in my lousiness) let me anoint myself with you.'"); Jacobsen's understanding seems to be reinforced by a lexical text which states that the *gudu₄* is both pure and anointed (MDP 27 39): *'^{gu-du}gudu₄ = e-el-lu-um ù pá-aš-šu-um'* (Cunningham 1997 p.14). These interpretations are challenged by a new etymological explanation of *pašišu* as deriving from Sumerian *pa₄-šeš*, another priest whose name means simply "elder brother." (Sallaberger – Vuliet RIA 10 p.630)

³¹ For example, Gilgameš and Huwawa (ETCSL t.1.8.1.5.1 l. 154): "A captured gudug priest restored to his wig of hair!" ; The Lament for Ur (ETCSL t.2.2.2 l.348): "The gudug priest no longer walks in his wig, how is your heart...!"

equivalent of the *gudu*₄, the *pašišu*, was in charge of cultic rites, of purification and cleanliness and also acted as a sort of page between the temple and the palace.

These *gudu*₄ priests had to be pure as they were in charge of sacrifices, the care and feeding of the gods, as well as lustration rites.³² Scholars have uncovered and translated a small group of Old Babylonian texts dealing with the purification of the *gudu*₄, these texts dealt with his regular ritual at sunrise which included washing and the recitation of incantations.³³ Along with 2nd millennium texts pertaining to the installation of Ereš-Dingir priests at Emar, and a first millennium bilingual text known as “the Consecration of a priest of Enlil”,³⁴ these Old Babylonian incantation texts provide rare descriptive evidence of the purity rites of Mesopotamian priests. It is perhaps less commonly noted that the *gudu*₄ priest is named in several Early Dynastic incantation texts, and again in the Neo-Sumerian incantations. These references associate the priest with Ningirim, an important goddess of incantation literature and exorcism in the third millennium, and may indicate that the priest had exorcistic duties in the early period, in addition to his various cultic roles.³⁵

³² Westenholz 2013, p. 263; Sallaberger – Vulliet RIA 10 p.630.

³³ *ibid.* For a treatment of the texts for the purification of the *gudu*₄, see Farber and Farber 2003.

³⁴ For a treatment of the first millennium material see A. Löhnert 2010, Reconsidering the consecration of priests in ancient Mesopotamia, in H.D. Baker/E. Robson/G. Zólyomi (eds.), *Your praise is sweet. A memorial volume presented to Jeremy Allen Black by colleagues, students, and friends.* London: British Institute for the Study of Iraq, 183–191

³⁵ Cunningham 1997 p. 14, 65. While one ED text calls the goddess herself a priestess, “the *gudu*₄-priestess Ningirim,” another refers to “the *gudu*₄-priest of Ningirim.” For the original publication of these ED incantations and an excursus on the goddess Ningirim, see M. Krebernik 1984, *Die Beschwörung aus Fara und Ebla.* (Texte und Studien zur Orientalistik Bd.2), numbers 3 and 24.



Figure 3: The Išib Priest Ur-DUN before Ningirsu (from Westenholz 2013)

Another early functionary, the išib priest, was a high level cultic functionary within the Sumerian temple, as with the *gudu₄* priest, he was often depicted shaven and nude in the third millennium; see for example the depiction of UR-DUN, an išib priest from ED Lagaš (*fig.3*). In an Old Babylonian incantation recently published by A.R. George, Enki is said to have created the išib-priest, then the god washed the seat, standing place and jars of this priest with rain water from the sky; the texts further explain that this water is the water for cleaning the houses of the gods (thus lustration and holy water, particular in the practice of the išib, is given an etiology).³⁶

According to J.A. Westenholz, the išib occupied a high office in the ecclesiastical hierarchy, in some places the highest, being responsible for such important rites as the *ka-duh-ḥa* ‘the opening of the mouth’ ceremony, which enlivened the divine statue. The activities of this priest clearly involved cultic lustration and purification rites as well, and išib is often simply translated “purification priest” or “lustration priest” in the literature.³⁷ The prestige of this position

³⁶ George 2016, No. 5g, CUSAS 32 p. 58

³⁷ An example which demonstrates the station of this functionary comes from Gudea Cyl. B iv 4, which is translated at ETCSL: “The stone basins set up in the house are like the holy room of the lustration [išib] priest where water never ceases to flow.”

is apparent by the fact that the titles išib(-an-na) ‘išib (of the heavens) and išib-an-ki-a (išib of heaven and earth) were used by 3rd and 2nd millennium kings (respectively).³⁸

The išib, to, is a potential predecessor of the *āšipu*. In the Temple Hymns of Enĕ-duanna, the city Murum, belonging to the incantation goddess Ningirima, is praised: “O city, founded upon a dais in the abzu, established for the rites of išib priests, house where incantations of heaven and earth are recited...”³⁹ This profession is also named in several Neo-Sumerian incantations: in Ni 2177 and VAT 6082 Baĥar-enunzaku, an obscure god of magic in the early period, is said to be the king of the išib-craft.⁴⁰ Interestingly, the išib and the *āšipu* are associated in ancient tradition by the lexical list MSL 14 223 which also includes several purification priests and the word *šiptum* (spell) itself:

1	[i]-šib	ME	<i>mi-mu-ú</i>	<i>i-šip-pu</i>
2				<i>a-ši-pu</i>
3				<i>el-lu</i>
4				<i>ra-am-ku</i>
5				<i>šip-tum</i>
6				<i>pa-ši-šú</i>
7				<i>par-šu</i>

Figure 4: MSL 14 223

³⁸ Westenholz 2013, p. 258.

³⁹ *The Temple Hymns*, I. 230-235 (ETCSL t.4.80.1)

⁴⁰ *pace* Cunningham 1997, p. 65. The attestation of Baĥar-enunzaku bearing the epithet ‘king of the išib-craft’ in VAT 6082 can be used to restore the partially broken text on Ni 2177 (see Krispijn 2008, Fs. Stol). The god appears in four Ur III incantations altogether (Ni 2177, VAT 6082, HS 2439, HS 1556) and in a ED incantation recently published in CUSUS 32. His importance to early incantation theology has been established by these texts.

In terms of the modern understanding the word išib, the values given in MSL 14 223 are, in fact, reflected in the Pennsylvania Sumerian dictionary (ePSD) entry for išib, which lists “sorcerer; exorcist; (to be) pure; a purification priest; incantation” as possible values, with Akkadian equivalences: “*ellu; išippu; pašišu; ramku; āšipu; šiptu.*” In fact, there is discussion among scholars as to whether the Sumerian word išib may have its ultimate origin in the Akkadian verb (*w*)*ašāpum* “to exorcise,” a verb which derives from the noun *āšipu*. While these explanations have reached general agreement among scholars, it is held to be problematic since (*w*)*ašāpum* itself is rarely attested before the Middle Babylonian period.⁴¹

1.2.2 The Exorcist in Second Millennium Terminology: the *Āšipu* and the *Mašmaššu*

For reasons that will become clear in the following discussion, the *āšipu* and the *mašmaššu* must be discussed together as two functionaries who are clearly linked (even as the distinction between them proves difficult to define). Further, they must be distinguished from the *gudu₄* and the *išib* as it is clear that neither were priests of the temple *per se*, but rather they were the *lú.mu₇.mu₇*, the “men of incantations,” and *ummānu* scholars at the service of the king,⁴² and as can be seen in texts such as the Diagnostic Handbook SA.GIG, they also treated the sick among the public. One caveat is that the *āšipu* does move closer to the temple in the Achaemenid and Seleucid periods, and is found among the temple staff in Uruk and Sippar; and further, in all

⁴¹ Geller 2010 p. 43; Sommerfeld 2006, p. 62; Attinger 1993, p. 621: “Il est généralement admis que išib est un emprunt à l'akk. (*w*)*ašipu*, ce qui pose toutefois un double problème, chronologique d'une part: (*w*)*ašipu* (contrairement à išippu!) n'est pratiquement jamais attesté avant l'ép. mB ; phonétique de l'autre : *išiba (ou *išip/bum) serait de rigueur.” The objection cannot be made on the grounds that (*w*)*ašipum* is never attested in the OB period however, as MSL 12 p.170, an OB lexical list, contains an entry LÚ.MU₇.MU₇.GÁL = *wa-**š*i-pu-ú* (Jean 2006 p. 26).

⁴² RIA 10 p.632

periods he could be employed by the temple to carry out important purification rituals and related duties for the cult (as is stated in the *Exorcist's Manual* – see 1.2.3 below). Even so, and despite that he maintained the theocentric approach and techniques which he shared with his priestly predecessors, the terms *āšipu* and *mašmaššu* are perhaps better understood as referring to a profession, not a priestly caste.

The *mašmaššu* appears already in Archaic and Early Dynastic lexical lists, represented by the Sumerian logogram MAŠ.MAŠ. While the Sumerian logogram is used in both Sumerian and Akkadian texts ranging from early to late periods, it is nonetheless likely that MAŠ.MAŠ was loaned into Sumerian and has its ultimate derivation from the Semitic root *mašāšu* “to wipe.” As has been previously noted, incantations such as those found in the *Šurpu* series frequently feature ritual acts involving wiping, such as the wiping of a patient with flour in order to remove his sins.⁴³ A further indication of the Semitic origin of the word is the fact that the *mašmaššu* occurs first in two *Semitic* (rather than Sumerian) incantations from the ED period, in association with the incantation goddess Ningirima (in the same period, Sumerian texts were making reference to the *gudu₄* and *išib* priests in relation to the same goddess).⁴⁴ The *maš-maš* (Sumerian spelling) is attested in Ur III Umma where records state that he was employed using incantation craft to protect the fields.⁴⁵

⁴³ Jean 2006 p. 21; Geller 2010 p. 44 – the suggestion that *mašmaššu* is a nominalized form of *mašāšu* was first made in Livingston 1988 (*A note on an epithet of Ea in a recently published creation myth* NABU p.10). However, alternative suggestions exist: CAD suggested that the word is a loan from Sumerian MAŠ.MAŠ, and this suggestion is upheld in Jean 2006 p. 22: “L'équation LÚ.MAŠ.MAŠ est généralement admise: *mašmaššu* est une akkadisation du sumérien MAŠ.MAŠ.”

⁴⁴ Cunningham 1997 p.15. The texts in question are published in M. Krebernik 1984, *Die Beschwörung aus Fara und Ebla*. (Texte und Studien zur Orientalistik Bd.2), numbers 39 and 32.

⁴⁵ RIA 10 p. 632.

The *āšipu*, for his part, is attested lexically from the Old Babylonian period and in documents from the Middle Assyrian period: some twenty letters from Aššur mention *āšipu* exorcists by name; their function at this point appears to be in keeping with that known in later periods as *namburbi* and *bīt rimki* rituals are already attested in these texts.⁴⁶ Several contemporary texts from Ḫattuša containing ritual instructions specify the magical expert as the *āšipu*, spelling the name syllabically and avoiding the usual ambiguities.⁴⁷ And, indicating the ties between the exorcist and the palace, in Middle Assyrian Law 47 an eyewitness, who was to be interrogated by the king, is sent to the *āšipu* to swear an oath and to make a declaration following a purification rite.⁴⁸

A major obstacle to any investigation of the *āšipu* in early Mesopotamia is that both *āšipu* and *mašmaššu* were usually written with the logogram MAŠ.MAŠ. This remains a thorny issue. Are these terms to be understood as synonymous and, if not, what differentiation can be made?⁴⁹ M. Geller makes the following observations which deserve to be quoted at length:⁵⁰

“The terms ašipu and mašmaššu tend to be mutually exclusive since we hardly ever find a listing with both titles; we have personnel either described as ašipu or described as mašmaššu. Among Middle Assyrian professional titles from the late second millennium BC, we find both ašipu and the logogram maš.maš (= mašmaššu), but not both together; it is either one title or the other (see Jakob 2003: 528f.)...In colophons, very occasionally we find the scribe recorded syllabically as a-ši-pu, but far

⁴⁶ For a detailed discussion of the MA evidence, see Jakob 2003, p. 528-535.

⁴⁷ See Zomer, *forthcoming*. KUB 29, 58 + 59 + KUB 37, 84: i.30; KUB 4, 17 (+?) 18: r. iv?.3; Iraq 54, pl. XIVc: 32-33

⁴⁸ Roth 1997, p. 58. This practice may remind one of the unofficial use of the “poison ordeal” of the Middle Ages, whereby Catholics suspected of wrongdoing would be required to undertake communion, under the assumption that they would be damned if guilty or dishonest.

⁴⁹ Cunningham 1997 p. 16 notes the confusion: “The reading of the logogram remains uncertain: American and English Assyriologists generally prefer to read it as *āšipu*, German as *mašmaššu*.”

⁵⁰ Geller 2010, p. 49

more common is the logogram (lú.)maš.maš (Hunger 1968: 159, 167f.). The “Haus des Beschwörungspriesters” at Assur is really a household of mašmaššu-exorcists, which is the term used consistently to describe the owners or writers of the tablets from this house (Pedersén 1986: ii, 45f.). The same pattern appears in Neo-Assyrian letters, which always refer to the exorcist with the Sumerian logogram maš.maš, yet the exorcists are said to practice ašipūtu “exorcism.” On the other hand, the so-called Exorcist’s Manual (a list of incipits of magical and medical texts for scholastic purposes) refers to itself as mašmaššūtu, not ašipūtu (Jean 2006: 63).”

This leads Geller to make the suggestion that “*āšipu* may have been a prestige term of scholarship and literature while *mašmaššu* comes from the actual parlance of practice and everyday life.”⁵¹ Accepting this approach to the problem, it seems expedient to use the term “exorcist” whenever possible, with the understanding that this may reference either the *āšipu* or the *mašmaššu* in Mesopotamian terminology (two nuanced terms referring, essentially, to the same profession).

1.2.3 The roles of the Exorcist in Later Mesopotamia

Wisdom in ancient Mesopotamia seems to have implied not philosophy (as with the Greeks) nor piety (as in Job, Proverbs or Ecclesiastes), rather it seems to have implied “skill in cult and magic lore.”⁵² Of course, as we have just seen, incantation lore was also innately theological, and the appeasement of the gods through purification and incantation might well have been piety, according to the Mesopotamian worldview. In later Mesopotamia, a period noted for its emphasis on theological concerns and the will of the gods, the exorcist experienced a rise in

⁵¹ *Ibid* pg. 50; *pace* Jean 2006 p. 31 who believes that the terms have some hierarchal significance, i.e. one being the assistant to the other.

⁵² W.G. Lambert, *BWL* p. 1; Beaulieu 2007[b] p. 12 relates that *āšipūtu* and *bārūtu* are labelled as *nēmequ* (wisdom) in some colophon material, further, the Catalogue of Texts and Authors “ascribes the entire authorship of *āšipūtu* and *kalūtu* to Ea, the god of wisdom.”

importance and intellectual prestige. The historical origins of this rise are to be found in the decline of the edubba, and its traditional Sumerian literature, sometime in the Kassite period; this prompted, according to P.A. Beaulieu, a “reclassification of intellectual disciplines” within Babylonia, and the shifting of specialized education to the temple, the palace and to the private homes of learned families.⁵³ From the scribal elites of old, higher learning passed largely (but not exclusively) to three emerging disciplines, each with a distinctly theological *modus operandi*: *āšipūtu* (the craft of the exorcists), *kalūtu* (the craft of the lamentation priests) and *barūtu* (the craft of the diviners). These disciplines came to exert “a virtual monopoly on higher learning.”⁵⁴

From the seventh century on we have invaluable documentation for *āšipūtu* in the form of the *Exorcist's Manuel* (KAR 44), a study guide of sorts listing some 100 titles of the compositions (or even entire series) that the exorcist was to learn.⁵⁵ It is stated in some secondary literature that each entry is listed according to its incipit, however more accurately, the listing is by rubric.⁵⁶ The structure of KAR 44 is, according to some suggestions, arranged by stages of learning with SA.GIG and *Alamdimmū* occupying the basic level, and (much later), *Enūma Anu Enlil* and *Šumma Ālu* occupying the advanced level.⁵⁷ The documents listed were for the student exorcist to “acquire or master” and were explicitly labelled as secret knowledge.⁵⁸ Using information mainly found in

⁵³ Beaulieu 2007[b], p. 11

⁵⁴ *Ibid.* p. 17

⁵⁵ See Geller 2000, 242-254; Jean 2006, 62-72; Schwemer 2011, p. 421

⁵⁶ Geller 2000, p. 226.

⁵⁷ Koch 2015, p. 13; Jean 2006, p. 72.

⁵⁸ Lenzi 2008 85-90. Interestingly, Lenzi notes that even this very large list of material to be mastered by the student exorcist does not represent all *āšipu* (fn. 109). He refers the reader to Jean 2006 86-108 and to Bottero 1975 96-116, studies which clearly note exorcistic works not listed in KAR 44.

the *Exorcist's Manuel*, Cynthia Jean was able to sketch the many roles of the first millennium exorcist as follows:⁵⁹

- **1. Purely exorcistic rituals: namburbi, šurpu, rituals against witchcraft, rituals associated with dreams, war rituals, rituals to expel demons (*Utukkū Lemnūtu*, nam-erim-bur-ru -da, šēp *lemutti*);**
- **2. Rituals for royalty: substitution of the king rituals, purification rituals (The three "bīt rituals");**
- **3. Incantation prayers: the šu-íl-la-kam, which are rather a tool, and form part of a more complex ceremony;**
- **4. The monthly rituals, the nature and identification of which remain unclear;**
- **5. Medicine: diagnosis, prognosis and cures (a field shared with the *asû*);**
- **6. Purification and consecration: foundation rituals, *mīš pî, takpertu*;**
- **7. The technical knowledge necessary for the analysis of a disorder, diagnosis, interpretation and implementation of the solution: a deep knowledge of texts and a knowledge of the stars, stones and plants and the making of materia magica like figurines and amulets.**

⁵⁹ Jean 2006 p. 195-196 (My translation from the French). This sketch can be checked against the summary of the contents of KAR 44 provided in Schwemer 2011 p. 421: **i**) compositions associated with the temple cult, washing of the mouth rituals and the installation of priests (ll.2-3); **ii**) compositions for appeasing angry gods (l.4); **iii**) rites and ceremonies pertaining to kings, performed on behalf of the king (l.5); **iv**) extensive diagnostic and prognostic series (l.6); **v**) Sumerian incantations against demons (l.7) **vi**) purification rites and Sumerian incantations against demons (l.8-10); **vii**) the purification rituals *Bīt Rimki*, *Bīt Mēseri* together with washing of the mouth rituals. (l.11). **viii**) various rituals against witchcraft and curses; (12-14). **ix**) Texts to deal with evil dreams, impotency, pregnancy and infants. (l.14-15); **x**) rituals and incantations against diseases affecting specific body parts (l.16-28); **xi**) incantations against snake bite, scorpion sting, and *sāmānu* disease (l.19). **xii**) Measures for the protections of a man's house, followed by rituals to ensure acceptance of offerings (l.20); **xiii**) Ceremonies pertaining to houses, fields, gardens, canals followed by rituals against storm damage and field pests (l. 21-22); **xiv**) rituals for protection during travels and purification ceremonies for cattle pen, sheep-fold and horse stables (l. 23-24); **xv**) finally, rituals for favorable omens, pharmacological texts and instructions on how to make amulets (l. 25-26).

By the late period then, the *āšipu* had assumed a formidable array of responsibilities, from exorcist, to the welfare of the king, to the welfare of the society in general through the monthly ritual, to the health of his clients, and the purity of the divine statues.

1.2.4 The Exorcist as Diagnostician

As the above discussion has indicated, the ascension of the exorcist to a position of significant importance in the first millennium meant that his role had become “to palliate the punishments sent by the gods, be they evil omens, diseases, or other symptoms of divine abandonment,” and this was accomplished in particular through the *šu'illa* and *namburbi* rites.⁶⁰

However, it was also the exorcist who was called upon to visit the house of the sick man, and to assume the role of diagnostician. This is nowhere more clearly stated than in the colophon evidence from the tablets of the canonical SA.GIG series, each of which references the entire series by its incipit title: “When the exorcist goes to the house of the sick man.” And yet, the issue isn't entirely that simple as in each case the word translated “exorcist” is in fact spelled KA.PIRIG, never *āšipu* or *mašmaššu*. In the native tradition, the terms are given lexical equivalence in MSL 12 133:146-55 (KA.PIRIG = *āšipu*), however with reference to the SA.GIG texts, one may suspect with M. Geller that “^úka.pirig... probably indicates something more than an alternative orthography for exorcist.”⁶¹

⁶⁰ Beaulieu 2007[b], p. 11.

⁶¹ Geller 2010, p. 46.

Ungnad once made the suggestion that in KA.PIRIG we actually have a learned writing for ka.abrig: “mouth” or “word” of the *abriqu*-priest, which was “another learned poetic term for an exorcist.”⁶² According to an Achaemenid period SA.GIG commentary (AO 17661), KA.PIRIG = exorcist, and PIRIG = bright; this has the possible implication, according to Wee, that the exorcist “speaks” (KA) what is “bright” (PIRIG), i.e. “his spoken diagnosis illumines the identity of the patient’s malady.”⁶³ On the other hand, a line from Neo-Assyrian CT 16 5:176 reads: ka-pirig ka šuḥ-ḥa eridu^{ki}-ga x[(“the exorcist [KA-PIRIG] of Eridu, whose mouth is cleansed...”).⁶⁴ It may be suggestable, by analogy, that PIRIG should have a nuance of “cleansed.”

Putting aside theoretical explanations (ancient and modern) of this esoteric term, it may be more fruitful to highlight another connection between the KA.PIRIG and the *ašipu*, outside of the lexical evidence. In the colophon of the second tablet of SA.GIG there is a cautionary instruction, presumably directed at the KA.PIRIG diagnostician: “When you approach the sick man, until [you have cast] an incantation on [yourself], [you must not approach to heal].”⁶⁵ Interestingly, this indicates an awareness of the principles of contagion, even without such concepts as bacterial or viral infection.⁶⁶ In his recently published work, *Healing Magic and Evil Demons. Canonical Udug-hul Incantations* (2015), M. Geller points to a section in canonical Udug-hul tablet 3 wherein the exorcist seeks to protect himself, as he approaches the sick man, against agents of illness (Evil Utukku, Alû, ghost, Sheriff-demon, god, Bailiff-demon). The author compares the wording here

⁶² Ungnad 1944:253, as quoted and discussed in Geller 2010, p. 46.

⁶³ Wee 2012, p. 502.

⁶⁴ As referenced and translated in Geller 1985, p. 93.

⁶⁵ Labat 1951, p. 17. My English translation. While this line has been discussed as the colophon to tablet 2 in secondary literature, it is perhaps more specific to say that the line functions as the catchline (see below 3.2.0), hence, it is in fact the first line of tablet 3 as well.

⁶⁶ Wee 2012, p. 71. The same principle seems to be at play in the omens of SA.GIG tablet one (DPS 1), line 17: “If an ox glares at him: that patient is dangerously sick, one must not go near him.” And line 18: “If an ox butts him: that patient is dangerously sick, one must not go near him.”

with that quoted above from the colophon of SA.GIG tablet 2 and directed at the KA.PIRIG, with the implication again that these are essentially the same experts.⁶⁷

1.3.0 Esagil-kīn-apli: The historical backdrop of an Isin II scribe

Following the fall of the Kassite dynasty in Babylonia, a new dynasty founded by Babylonian native Marduk-kabit-aḥḥēšu was established, lasting from 1160 – 1025 B.C. His dynasty, the Isin II dynasty, remains largely obscure to posterity, but what we do know is fascinating: of particular interest here, is the fact that “even though there are few contemporary sources, later evidence indicates that the time of the post-Kassite Isin II dynasty...saw a remarkable spike in scribal activities.”⁶⁸

1. MARDUK-KABIT-AḤḤĒŠU
2. ITTI-MARDUK-BALĀṬU
3. NINURTA-NĀDIN-ŠUMI
- 4. NEBUCHADNEZZAR I**
5. ENLIL-NĀDIN-APLI
6. MARDUK-NADIN-AḤḤĒ
7. MARDUK-ŠĀPIK-ZĒRI
- 8. ADAD-APLA-IDDINA**
9. MARDUK-AḤḤĒ-ERĪBA
10. MADRUK-ZĒR?-[X]
11. NABŪ-ŠUMU-LIBŪR

⁶⁷ Geller 2015, p. 38. Of course this statement seems to contradict Geller’s own inclination in 2010, see above fn. 54.

⁶⁸ Frahm 2011, p. 513.

The fourth king of the dynasty, Nebuchadnezzar I, would achieve lasting fame in Babylonia following his decisive victory against Elam, a people who had brought an end to the Kassites and who had continued to cast their shadow over Babylon. On his return from the Elamite heartland, Nebuchadnezzar I brought back with him the statue of the god Marduk, the return of Marduk restored the morale of the people, and the relationship with their state god. Following this, a “notable literary revival”⁶⁹ took place in Babylonia, led by scribes who were perhaps motivated to commemorate the deeds of their king: in addition to the numerous texts created to commemorate the achievements of Nebuchadnezzar, it is possible that the Babylonian Epic of Creation (*Enūma Eliš*) itself was composed at this juncture.⁷⁰

Under the 8th king of the dynasty, Adad-apla-iddina, a particularly keen literary enthusiasm seems to have been underway. Adad-apla-iddina’s royal inscriptions represent a prominent example of the use of “crypto-Sumerian,”⁷¹ which may in itself suggest a reinvigoration of scribal activity. One of the more important pieces of Mesopotamian wisdom literature, the Babylonian Theodicy, can with some confidence be dated to the reign of Adad-apla-iddina. It was written by one Saggil-kīna-ubbib according to a message rather ingeniously written into the text in the form of an acrostic, which reads:

A-NA-KU SA-AG-GI-IL-KI-[I-NA-A]M-UB-BI-IB MA-ÁŠ-MA-ŠU KA-RI-BU ŠA I-LI Ú ŠAR-RI

‘I AM SAGGIL-KĪNAM-UBBIB, AN INCANTATION-PRIEST, THE ONE WHO PRAISES DEITY AND THE KING.’⁷²

⁶⁹ See Brinkman 1968 p. 114-115 for a sketch of scribal activity at this time.

⁷⁰ Brinkman 1968, p. 108-109; Frahm 2011, p. 513.

⁷¹ As it is termed in Frahm, 2011 p. 522.

⁷² Oshima 2013, p. xiv

As an incantation priest and creative master scribe (*ummânu*), Saggil-kīnam-ubbib holds some common ground with a notable contemporary scribe, Esagil-kīn-apli. In fact, in the native tradition, specifically, in the Seleucid era Uruk List of Kings and Scholars, confusion between the two scribes seems to have resulted in the spelling of the name Esagil-kīn-ubba (generally taken however, to be a variant spelling of Saggil-kīnam-ubbib).⁷³ While (E)saggil-kīnam-ubbib was additionally a *mašmaššu*, Esagil-kīn-apli functioned also as an *išippu* and *ramku* priest, a purification expert who (like the Sumerian priests of old – *I.2.I*) was also proficient in incantation lore.⁷⁴ The career of Saggil-kīnam-ubbib has been shown to have spanned 35 years from Nebuchadnezzar I to Adad-apla-iddina. While Esagil-kīn-apli may have been the first appointed *ummânu* by the latter king, it has been theorized that his early death may have prompted his replacement by Saggil-kīnam-ubbib.⁷⁵

1.3.1 The writings of Esagil-kīn-apli and the Kalhu Catalogue

The Kalhu Catalogue (called “the SA.GIG catalogue,” or “the Esagil-kīn-apli catalogue,” or “the catalogue of incipits” or “the *Sakikkû-Ālamdimmû* catalog” in some secondary literature)

⁷³ The spellings Esagil-kīn-ubba and Esagil-kīn-ubba-LU occur in successive entries in the Uruk List of Kings and Sages'. They are generally taken to be spellings of the name Saggil-kīnam-ubbib (Oshima 2013 p.xv). Beaulieu (2007[b] p.14) suspects that these spelling variations may result from confusion in the later tradition: “the possibility of confusion between the names Esagil-kīn-apli and Saggil-kīna-ubbib was real, which leads one to suspect that these two contemporary exorcists with similar sounding names and who both allegedly lived under king Adad-apla-iddina, were considered to be one and the same person in some currents of the later tradition.” The addition of the LU sign to the variation of the name occurring in line 18 is controversial, and is discussed in Beaulieu 2007[b] p.14 n.32 and Lenzi 2012 p.141 n.10.

⁷⁴ See Finkel 1988 (Fs. Sachs), p. 149. For the *išippu* and *ramku* priests as initiates in incantation lore, see Oshima 2014, p.10 n.16, p. 277, wherein the author states that the *išippu* and *ramku* belonged to sub-groups of *mašmaššūtu/āšipūtu*, but were lower ranking than the *āšipu*. The association between these purification priests and the *āšipu* is indicated by MSL 14 223, quoted above, among other lexical evidence. The description of Esagil-kīn-apli as a *gudu₄* priest (Finkel 1988 (Fs. Sachs)) is probably honorary in nature, see RIA 10, p. 630.

⁷⁵ See Finkel 1988, p. 144.

is a crucial document for our understanding of the career and writings of Esagil-kīn-apli, and will have reoccurring relevance in this study. The text is primarily known from Neo-Assyrian Kalhu, and may also be cited by its excavation number, ND 4358 + ND 4366.⁷⁶ The standard edition is now Finkel 1988 (Fs. Sachs) wherein a newly discovered duplicate from Babylon in the Neo-Babylonian period (BM 41237 + BM 46606 + BM 47163) is also examined and given in transliteration.

The catalogue provides the following crucial information: **i)** a list of the forty incipits of the series SA.GIG, which includes enumerations giving the total number of entries and the total number of tablets;⁷⁷ **ii)** following this is a passage which “qualifies as a colophon” (in Finkel’s words, p.145) which describes Esagil-kīn-apli’s work; **iii)** the catalogue continues and lists the incipits of series Alamdimmu which includes 4 subseries. That the two series in question are to be attributed to the relevant scribe seems to be indicated in Esagil-kīn-apli’s biographical colophon, and which concludes on line 30: “the twin series, their arrangement is one.”

Hailing from the peripheral town of Borsippa, Esagil-kīn-apli was named the descendent (*māru*) of Asalluḫi-mansum, who, according to the Babylonian duplicate of the Kalhu catalogue, was a sage in the reign of Ḫammurabi. As has been noted, the implications of this for Mesopotamian history are that the scribal schools of Babylon continued unbroken from the Old Babylonian period, through the Kassite invasion, and beyond.⁷⁸ Due to the vast quantity of texts associated in one way or another with Esagil-kīn-apli, it seems that he may have been the head of a scribal school which collated and copied numerous texts; it has further been suggested that the

⁷⁶ Alternatively, it may be cited by its primary publication number CTN 4, 71; see now CDLI P363486.

⁷⁷ As pointed out by the original editor of the catalogue, K.V. Kinnier Wilson (Iraq 18 1956, p. 131); the author also notes the parallel structure between this part of the catalogue and another catalogue which lists the tablets of *Enūma Anu Enlil*, two lists which bear a “close affinity.”

⁷⁸ Finkel 1988 (Fs. Sachs), p. 145; W.G. Lambert 1957 JSC 57 p. 6

medical focus of a good portion of his work may have been due to the patronage of Adad-apla-iddina (a noted devotee of Nin-isina, the goddess of healing).⁷⁹

Esagil-kīn-apli was, demonstrably, a prolific scribe who has been characterized as the “systemizer of *āšipūtu*,” a nod to his editorial work in KAR 44, the *Exorcist’s Manual*.⁸⁰ But does his written work substantiate the latter characterization? What follows is a brief examination of the known (or suspected) works of Esagil-kīn-apli:

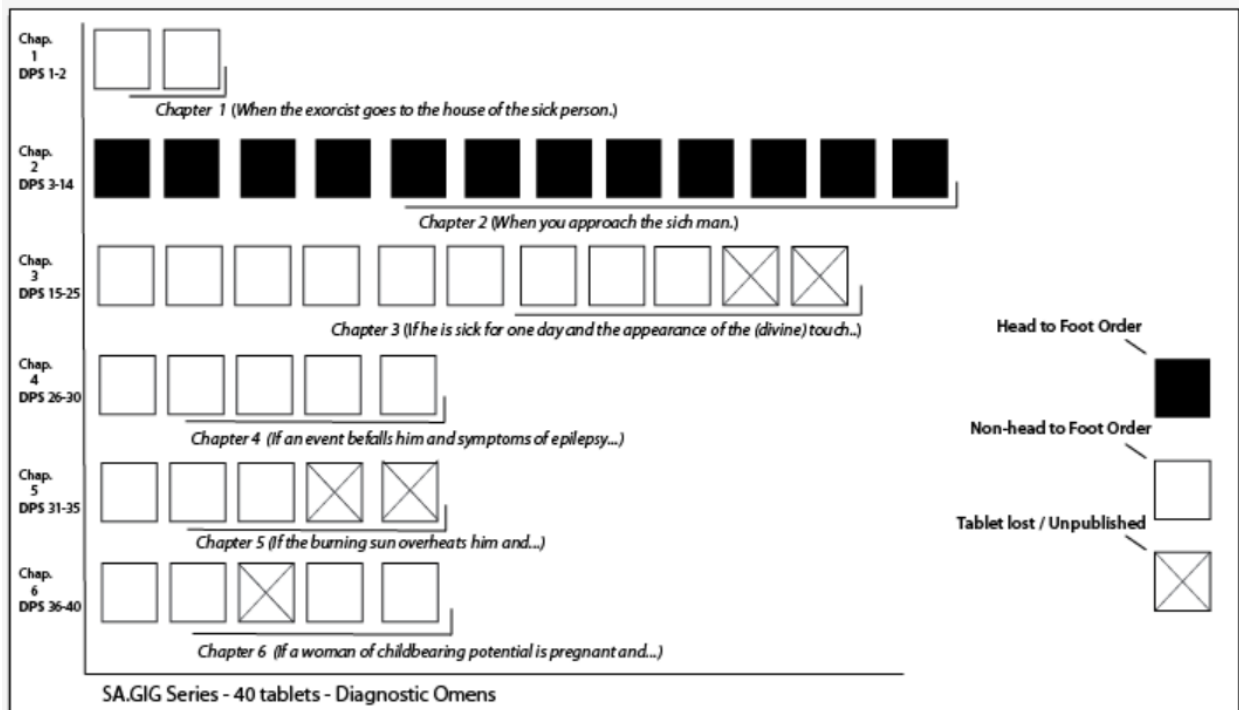


Figure 5: The 6 Subseries of SA.GIG and Relevant Tablet Groupings⁸¹

⁷⁹ For the first suggestion (Esagil-kīn-apli as head of a scribal school) see Geller 1990 p. 212 n. 25; for the second, see Beaulieu 2007 p. 13.

⁸⁰ Oshima 2013 xxxviii. To be more specific, Esagil-kīn-apli is credited only with the second part (lines 27-43) of the compendium termed the Exorcist’s Manual (Beaulieu 2007[b], n. 28).

⁸¹ The translations of the titles of the subseries (the incipits) are a compromise between the translations given in Heeßel 2000, p. 19 and Wee 2012, p. 35.

The SA.GIG series: In *fig. 5* the 40 tablets of the canonical series are represented and grouped into their relevant subseries, as originally indicated in the Kalhu Catalogue. As stated above, the number of entries was given in antiquity as 3,000 of which some 1,500 are extant today.⁸² The impression is often given in the secondary literature that the whole of the Diagnostic handbook was arranged in the head-to-foot order,⁸³ however, more precisely stated, it is only the entries of the second subseries which were structured so.⁸⁴ What this means is that the first tablet of the second subseries was concerned with issues relating to the top of the head, the next tablet with the temple, and so on, until the last tablet of the subseries, which focuses on problems of the foot. The structural variance at play within the entire series will form an important part of the discussion below concerning the editorial role of Esagil-kīn-apli (4.0.0).

⁸² See footnote 14, above.

⁸³ For example, Heeßel 2004 p. 101 states “the *Diagnostic Handbook*- arranges the entries systematically from head to foot”; similarly Scurlock & Anderson 2005 xxi-xxii. These instances reflect nothing more than momentary lapses of specificity, as these authors have done, perhaps, more than anyone to bring clarity to the series.

⁸⁴ See for example Wee 2012, p. 31; Robson 2008, p. 458; in particular, Scurlock & Anderson 2005, p. 575-678.

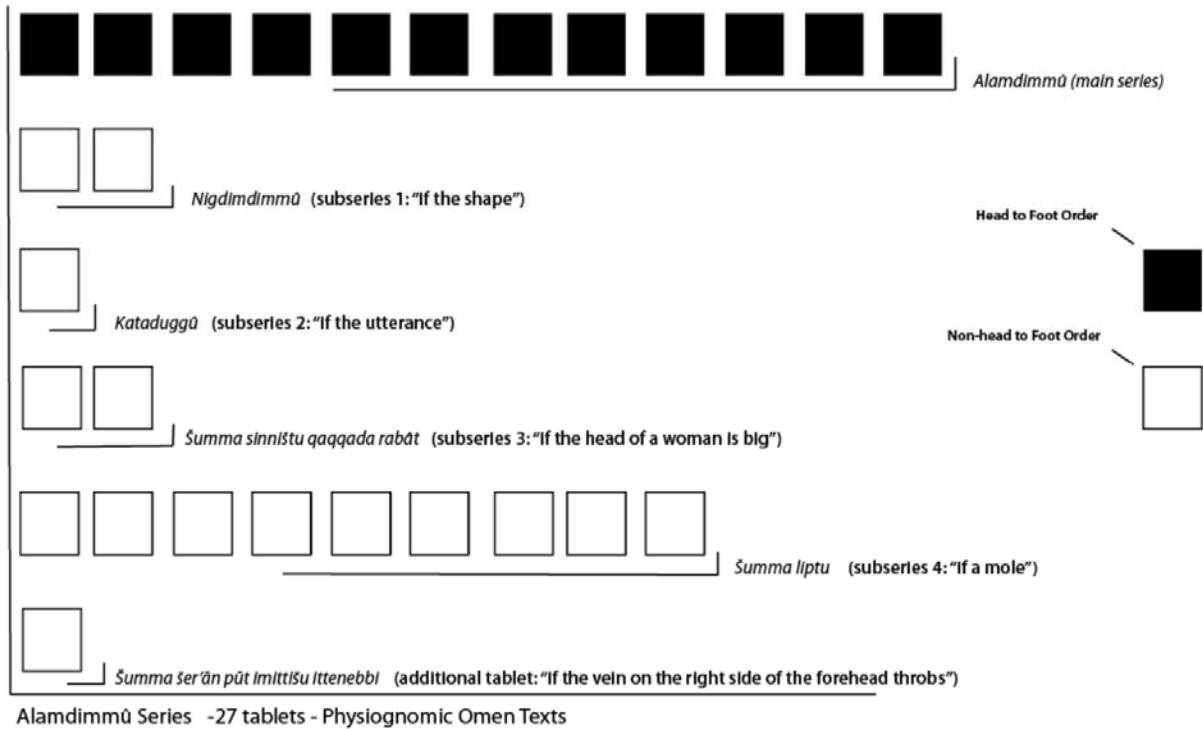


Figure 6: Alamdimmû and its Subseries

The Alamdimmû series: Comprised of some 27 tablets with 4 subdivisions, this series of omens concerns physiognomy, the reading of the signs of the body. Like the classic divinatory arts of Mesopotamia which looked for ominous defects or abnormalities in the animal form, whether in the liver or on the body itself, physiognomic divination looked to the human body for the same sort of signs.⁸⁵ The protases of the first 12 tablets in this series concerned observations made of the head, body and mannerism starting with the head and going down to the toes (head-to-foot order); the apodoses then make predictions on matters such as life expectancy, prospects of favor from the king, aspirations for prosperity *etc.*

⁸⁵ Wee 2012, p. 28; A complete listing of Mesopotamian physiognomic texts is now provided at the BABMED project: <http://www.geschkult.fu-berlin.de/e/babmed/Corpora/1-Jahrtausend/index.html>

While there were certainly physiognomic tablets dating back to the Old Babylonian period (attested by a handful of tablets),⁸⁶ as discussed above, it was likely Esagil-kīn-apli's editorial work that brought about the form of the 27 tablet series attested in the Kalhu Catalogue. That this editorial work took place is further indicated by the fact that *Alamdimmû* is not the incipit of the first tablet of the series, but of the twelfth; hence, it is likely that “somebody added eleven tablets to the beginning of the series at some point in history.”⁸⁷

The Exorcist's Manual (KAR 44): As discussed above already (1.2.3), the *Exorcist's Manual* listed the formidable array of materials which the aspiring *āšipu/mašmaššu* was to master. It remains to discuss Esagil-kīn-apli's role in editing the manual. According to Geller's reconstruction of the text (Geller 2000 MS E), line 27 represents a rubric which states: SAG.MEŠ ÉŠ.GÀR MAŠ.MAŠ.ti šá ^mÉ-sag-il-kin(GIN)-apli “Rubrics of the series *āšipūtu* according to Esagil-kīn-apli.”⁸⁸ Further identifying the scholar are two lines from late Babylonian duplicates (BM 55148 and Rm 717 + BM 34188) which elaborate and add details similar to those seen in the bibliographic colophon included in the Kalhu Catalogue:⁸⁹ Esagil-kīn-apli was the son of Asalluḫi-manson, the Sage of King Hammurabi, he was the *gudu*₄ or the *išippu* of Ezida (the colophon states “the *zabardabbû* of Ezida”). This rubric represents a dividing line, and the material following (rituals against evil-portending omens, extra-canonical incantations, prescriptions for

⁸⁶ Popovic 2007, p. 72 n. 17.

⁸⁷ J. Scurlock JAOS 123 N.2 p. 395

⁸⁸ I have adapted Finkel's translation (Finkel 1988, p. 150), however modifying “Incipits” to read “Rubrics” based on Geller's note 1 (Geller 2000, p. 252).

⁸⁹ Geller 2000, p. 248

medicines, gynaecological texts *etc.*) can be understood as “a kind of supplement or deuterocanonical collection” added by Esagil-kīn-apli.⁹⁰

Enūma Anu Enlil: The attribution of this series to our 11th century Borsippian scholar (whether as author, or more likely, editor) must be phrased in a hypothetical manner. While scholars generally make no mention of the connection, a literary catalogue from Nineveh (K 2248) groups together nine compositions and corpora as follows:⁹¹

[maš.maš- <i>t</i>]u ₄	lú.gala- <i>ú-tu</i> ₄	ud an ^d en-líl
[<i>alam-dí</i>]m-mu- <i>ú</i>	sag.iti.ṛnu.til.la ^ṛ	sa.gig ^ṛ ga ^ṛ
[ka.ta.d]u ₁₁ .ga	lugal.e ud me.lám.bi ner.gál	an.gim dí[m].[ma]

As is apparent, this listing brings together series known to have been edited by Esagil-kīn-apli, such as SA.GIG, Alamdimmu and Kataduggu (a subseries of Alamdimmu) with less expected works such as *Enūma Anu Enlil*, Lugal-e and Angim. For M. Geller, the fact that this important omen series occurs both in K 2248 and in the portion of KAR 44 attributed to Esagil-kīn-apli is “suggestive” of his hand in its editorial process.⁹²

⁹⁰ Schwemer 2011, p. 421; Quoting W.G. Lambert JCS 16, p. 68; for the opposite view, that it is the material preceding the rubric which should be attributed Esagil-kīn-apli, see Jean 2006 p. 62 with n. 247.

⁹¹ Published originally in Lambert JCS 16, p. 64.

⁹² Geller 1990, p. 212-213.

The AMC (Assur Medical Catalogue): The AMC represents the catalogue belonging to the Assur therapeutic texts, a corpus still being reconstructed by modern scholars, and which seems to be distinct from, yet connected to, the canonical therapeutic series known from Nineveh (*šumma amēlu muhhašu umma ukāl* “UGU” - for which see 1.1.2). On February 25th 2016, in Toronto, Strahil Panayotov presented some recent findings of the BABMED project in Berlin.⁹³ According to the speaker, current investigation posits that the series listed in AMC reflects the editorial hand of Esagil-kīn-apli, and that one and the same authority governs the AMC, the Kalhu catalogue and KAR 44. The claim is made on the following grounds: AMC, the Kalhu catalogue and KAR 44 all contain a “bipartite structure” (they are all divided into two parts, for example the Kalhu catalogue between SA.GIG and *alamdimmû*, KAR 44 between an initial list and a subsequent one added by Esagil-kīn-apli); additionally, the Kalhu catalogue as well as the AMC both contain the labels SUR.GIBIL *šab-tu* “edited anew”;⁹⁴ some of this finding is pre-empted in Frahm 2011.⁹⁵

1.3.2 Classifying SA.GIG: *Āšipūtu and Omen Lore*

The following represents some initial considerations toward the classification of SA.GIG: medical diagnostics or medical omens? After an examination of the structure of the series, the problem will be taken up again in greater detail (3.3.0). According to John Wee (2011 p.28) Esagil-kīn-apli made two major innovations to Mesopotamian medical literature: i) the introduction of

⁹³ The project website is currently available at: <http://www.geschkult.fu-berlin.de/en/e/babmed/index.html>

⁹⁴ See below for a discussion of SUR.GIBIL *šab-tu*. Some material from Panayotov’s presentations is currently available at: <https://fu-berlin.academia.edu/StrahilPanayotov> ; the presence of the label in YBC 7139, an UGU catalogue, had already been noted in Beckman & Foster 1988, p. 3-4. Panayotov believes that YBC 7139 should be reclassified as belonging to AMC. For the head-to-foot order of some therapeutic material see Wee 2012, p. 229 and p. 222 n. 71.

⁹⁵ Frahm 2011, p. 328-329; As mentioned in footnote 71 above, Kinnier-Wilson suggested some affinity between the Kalhu catalogue and a catalogue for the *Enūma Anu Enlil*, a suggestion worth investigating.

head-to-foot order; and **ii**) the “intellectual realignment that conceived of human diagnosis and physiognomy as complementary disciplines, and that therefore presented their representative works, “Sa-gig” (i.e., the Diagnostic Series) and “Alamdimmû” as companion volumes.”⁹⁶ The question may be posed then: what is the nature of this second innovation, and how does this confluence of magic and divination change the nature of *āšipūtu* (if at all)?

It is not just the physiognomic omens that bear relevance for these questions, but the SA.GIG series itself is of equal importance. On the topic of the classification of the SA.GIG series, Nils Heeßel observes that the basic protasis–apodosis structure of the texts has led to their classification as omens, but because of the medical content, the texts are termed a “diagnostic handbook,” and generally not discussed in the context of divination.⁹⁷ In fact, the issue is a contentious one, and has proven quite divisive within the field of cuneiform medicinal studies.⁹⁸ Heeßel maintains the basic classification of the series as a diagnostic handbook (essentially medical as opposed to divinatory), on the grounds that apodosis relate not to the future, but to past events (“Der Diagnose eines bereits in der Vergangenheit liegenden Ereignisses, nämlich der bereits ausgebrochenen Krankheit”);⁹⁹ the medical classification is upheld in Barbara Böck’s *Morphoskopie* (BAfO 27, 2000) wherein she excluded SA.GIG from the omen series on the grounds that it: “scheint sich lediglich des Schemas divinatorischer Texte zu bedienen (mit der Ausnahme einiger Summa Omina) und wird daher in dieser Aufzählung nicht berücksichtigt.”¹⁰⁰

⁹⁶ Wee 2012 p.28; both innovations are, of course, more or less declared in the colophon which accompanies the Kalhu catalogue.

⁹⁷ Heeßel 2000, p.4

⁹⁸ For another overview of this contention within cuneiform studies, see Worthington 2009, p. 65-68.

⁹⁹ Heeßel 2000, p.4

¹⁰⁰ Böck 2000, p. 3 n. 22.

However, alluding to the importance of early diagnostic texts for the classification of SA.GIG, M. Rutz problematizes these positions when he observes that “although there are points of contact between diagnosis/prognosis and therapy in the Mesopotamian textual tradition, so far no therapies have been identified in the second-millennium corpus.”¹⁰¹ In other words, while proponents of SA.GIG as medical omens could compare 2nd millennium diagnostic texts to second millennium omen texts, proponents of SA.GIG as a (medical) diagnostic handbook have a hard time locating 2nd millennium therapeutic corpora. J. Fincke has argued that SA.GIG should be situated within the divinatory milieu, its *raison d’être* being divine law.¹⁰² Along similar lines, U. Koch effectively counters seven arguments for the medicinal classification of SA.GIG,¹⁰³ before coming to her own conclusion:¹⁰⁴

There is to my mind no reason why the āšipu should not be performing divination when he entered the event frame of healing. His handbooks are couched in the terms of divination and there is no reason to believe they were perceived any differently. His diagnosis answered the questions that only perceived superhuman agents can answer in a divinatory setting: “who did this to me” and “what can I do” and his diagnostic process itself aided healing in a way characteristic of comparative divinatory systems.

¹⁰¹ M. Rutz 2011, p. 299. This observation is made with a recognition of the importance of second millennium material as forerunner to the SA.GIG canonical series. In footnote 24, Rutz adds that this may be due to accident of discovery.

¹⁰² Fincke 2006-2007, p. 143-147.

¹⁰³ Koch 2016, p.12 (in preparation: <https://ku-dk.academia.edu/UllaSusanneKoch/Papers>). For example, she counters Heeßel’s objection (that SA.GIG is concerned with causes in the past, not the future): “This is based on the assumption that divination concerns the future, which is manifestly not true even for Mesopotamian divination. That the text is couched in the omen format also found in astrological and terrestrial texts which generally are concerned with the future is no argument. Extispicy and lecanomancy which can certainly be used for determining cause in the past are also couched in these terms.”

¹⁰⁴ Ibid. p. 16.

While the contention over the classification of SA.GIG may not be resolved in the near future, there seems to be a greater consensus about the involvement of the *āšipu* in divination, specifically, in interpreting unprovoked omens. Provoked omens are those which convey messages from the gods in response to “various methods of manipulation” by the diviner, usually the *bārû*; unprovoked omens are those that “are observed by a diviner without a specific request for the appearance of a sign from a deity (*auguria oblativa*).”¹⁰⁵ That unprovoked omens could be the concern of the *āšipu* is apparent enough by the fact that the *Exorcist’s Manual* specifies the study of SA.GIG (whose first two tablets resemble nothing more than terrestrial omens), *Alamdimmû* and *Enūma Anu Enlil*; the *āšipu* as the interpreter of unprovoked omens has gained general acceptance amongst scholars.¹⁰⁶

2.0.0 An Overview of the Textual Sources - SA.GIG Forerunners and Non-Canonical Texts

The following sections are devoted to an overview of forerunning diagnostic material from the second millennium. It has been observed that the guiding principles of the correlation between symptom and diagnosis predate the canonical series,¹⁰⁷ therefore to better define what is new and what is old in SA.GIG a diachronic approach is essential.

For each corpus to be examined below, discussion will first center on available textual sources, the dating and the condition of the tablets. Notes on the structure and arrangement of the

¹⁰⁵ Rochberg 2004, p. 47-49.

¹⁰⁶ See Popovic 2007, p. 77; Wee 2012, p. 28-29; Böck 2000, p. 3 n. 24; Koch 2016, p.12 (in preparation: <https://ku-dk.academia.edu/UllaSusanneKoch/Papers>).

¹⁰⁷ Heesel 2004[b], p. 104.

entries will follow. Following this, a listing of identified parallel entries will be given which will chart the textual connections between forerunning texts and the later canonical series. The reader should note that this discussion does not reflect a study of the primary texts; accordingly, each parallel will be accompanied with a secondary literature citation. Please see 3.1.0 for a chart mapping the parallels between canonical and non-canonical entries.

Early Diagnostic Texts:		
	Text Number	Published in
Old Babylonian (1950-1651) ¹⁰⁸	TLB 2, 21 / LB 2126 (Unprovenanced)	Geller 2001-2002, 73-74; Heeßel 2010(b), 9-10
	MS 2670 (P251708) (Unprovenanced)	George 2014, 85
Middle Babylonian (1651-1157)	CBS 3424/P258797 (Nippur)	Heeßel 2010(b), 10
	Ni 470 (Nippur)	Kraus 1987, 194-206
	2N-T 336/IM 57947 (Nippur)	Labat 1956, 119-130
	CBS 12580 (Nippur)	Rutz, 2011
	CBS 3831 (Nippur)	Rutz, 2011
Middle Assyrian (1350-1000)	VAT 10235/KAR 211 (Assur)	Heeßel 2010, 171-187
	VAT 10748 (= VAT 10235, duplicate) (Assur)	Heeßel 2010, 171-187
	VAT 10886 (Assur)	Heeßel 2010, 171-187
	VAT 11122 (Assur)	Heeßel 2010, 171-187
	VAT 12385 (Assur)	Heeßel 2010, 171-187
Late Bronze Age (1400-1300)	Tablets A,B,C Fragments d-n (Ḫattuša)	-Wilhelm 1994 StBoT 36 - Heessel 2000, 330 and 335

¹⁰⁸ Dates here follow the High Chronology model, as presented for example in Black & Green 1998, p. 22.

2.1.0 Old Babylonian Sources

- **LB 2126:** For a long time thought to be the only extant exemplar of an OB diagnostic text, this tablet is housed in the Böhl collection, Leiden. Only the lower half of the tablet is extant, the beginning and end of the text is not interpretable (Heeßel 2010 p.9). Using an updated hand-copy of the text, Geller was successful in interpreting and translating some 36 lines of the text, some fragmentary (Geller 2004(b), p. 73).
- **MS 2670:** When this text was published in CUSAS 18 (George 2014), the number of extant OB diagnostic texts rose to two. Housed in the Schøyen collection in Oslo, this fragment represents three quarters of the original tablet, allowing A.R. George to translate some 45 lines of text (George 2014, p. 85-89).

2.1.1 The Structure of Old Babylonian Diagnostic Texts

The structure of OB diagnostic texts, as it is represented in the two known exemplars at least, is a matter of great uncertainty. Some scholars have stated that neither text is arranged head-to-foot as the second sub-series of the canonical series famously is;¹⁰⁹ in fact, it has been claimed that LB 2126 presents its diagnostic messages on “various topics without any apparent order.”¹¹⁰ J. Wee, on the other hand, states that the medical entries of LB 2126 “seems to be very roughly arranged in head-to-foot order” and gives the following sequence: **i)** temple **ii)** eyes **iii)** appearance and face **iv)** hand (and feet) **v)** belly. This reconstruction is really only possible should the reader pass over the first 3 lines of the text, where the symptoms are fragmentary and lacking a clear position on the body.¹¹¹ The matter seems inconclusive at the present time, although LB 2126 seems to have a discernable structure when compared with MS 2670:

¹⁰⁹ George 2014, p. 85.

¹¹⁰ Heeßel 2010, p. 9.

¹¹¹ George 2014, p. 85.

LB 2126	MS 2670
<p>- ? - i. temple ii. eyes iii. appearance and face iv. hands (and feet) v. belly</p>	<p>i. stomach ii. eyes iii. body and innards iv. ears v. head and body vi. veins of chest vii. mental agitation viii. body ix. night-sickness x. body xi. temple xii. neck and nostrals xiii. eyes</p>

2.1.2 OB Parallels to the SA.GIG Series

Neither OB text features entries which represent a parallel with any of entries of the canonical series.¹¹² This is succinctly explained in an observation made by George: “Some omens listed in this new Old Babylonian tablet [MS 2670] are forerunners of entries in *Sagig* but only as regards symptoms, for the apodoses attached to the symptoms in the later text are different. Apodoses were evidently changed over time, just as happened in other omen literature.”¹¹³ Hence, the force of Heeßel’s statement concerning the continuity of the entries, quoted above, does not extend to the OB period. To illustrate that the same symptoms met with different apodoses in the

¹¹² Heeßel 2000, p. 98 for LB 2126; George 2014, p. 85 for MS 2670.

¹¹³ **George 2014, p. 85. The author’s comment here seems to place him among the SA.GIG-as-omen-literature camp (see above section 1.3.2).**

early and late corpora, that they were in effect quite the opposite of parallels, George has cited three example entries, one of which reads:¹¹⁴

MS 2670, 17 (George 2014, p. 88)	<i>Aš a-wi-lum li-ib-bu-šu na-ap-ḥu šibit(i.dab) bēlet-ilī(dingir.maḥ)</i> (If) a patient's body grows hot [and cold(?) and] also a growth on him keeps moving: (it is) Seizure-by-Šamaš.
DPS 8, 29 (Scurlock 2014,p.104)	<i>DIŠ SAG ŠĀ-šú KÚM u ŠĀ-MEŠ-šú MÚ-MEŠ-ḥu DIB GIDIM₇</i> If his epigastrium(=libbum/body) is hot and his insides are continually bloated, affliction by a ghost.

2.2.0 Middle Babylonian Sources

All extant Middle Babylonian texts come from Nippur. Importantly, the researcher should note that four out of 5 tablets are actually extracts (they do not contain the full text of the original tablet), the exception is 2N-T 336. As a consequence, a study of the structure of these texts is, by and large, impossible.

- **CB 3424:** A small, nearly perfectly preserved tablet, CB 3424 is an extract containing some eleven lines in total.¹¹⁵
- **Ni 470:** A small tablet bearing an extract which contains 14 lines (11 entries). Because the right edge of the tablet is missing, the relevant diagnoses is usually missing for each entry.¹¹⁶
- **2N-T 336:** The text, spuriously labeled “2 NB 336” in Labat 1956 (and in all subsequent literature),¹¹⁷ is a compendium tablet containing the largest MB diagnostic text, 46 lines in all. The incipit of this tablet has been of great interest to scholars since it is identical with the incipit of the

¹¹⁴ George 2014, p. 89

¹¹⁵ Heeßel 2010 p. 11.

¹¹⁶ Heeßel(a) 2010, p. 11; Rutz 2011, p. 297.

¹¹⁷ Rutz 2011, p. 295.

canonical series tablet 3, that is “When you approach the sick man” (see below). As Rutz observes however, outside of the incipient, the contents are “completely different.”¹¹⁸

- **CBS 12580:** A small tablet bearing an extract text, some 13 lines (9 entries). The right edge of the text is missing, resulting in often broken apodoses.¹¹⁹
- **CBS 3831:** This extract is only a fragment with part of the relevant text on the obverse, part on the reverse, some 15 lines in all. Unfortunately, the text is in such bad condition as to make interpretation and translation impossible.¹²⁰

2.2.1 The Structure of Middle Babylonian Diagnostic Texts

With the Middle Babylonian Diagnostic texts a discernable structure emerges, however, because four of the texts are extracts the information they yield on structure is negligible. The eleven lines of CB 3424 almost uniformly include the prognosis “he will die” (indicating that the original text may have been sorted by prognosis);¹²¹ the observed symptoms in Ni 240 seem uniformly attributed to the actions of the *rābiṣu*-demon;¹²² CBS 12580 seems focused on symptoms involving the “cords” (i.e. tendons and veins) of the patient, however the apodoses are generally broken; CBS 3831 is entirely fragmentary.

That leaves 2N-T 336, the only text which isn’t an extract and hence the most important structurally. Quite remarkable for forerunning texts, 2N-T 336 is comparable, structurally, to tablets from the canonical series. As J. Wee has noted, the obverse of 2N-T 336 structurally

¹¹⁸ Ibid.; Heeßel 2010(a), p. 12.

¹¹⁹ Rutz 2011, p. 297-298.

¹²⁰ Ibid.

¹²¹ Heeßel 2010(a), p. 10; Noting the preponderance of fatal prognoses in CBS 3424 Wee 2011 p. 264 speculates: “It is therefore plausible that CBS 3424 functioned, in part, as a concise list of “high risk” medical signs that warranted careful medical attention.”

¹²² Heeßel 2010(a), p. 10; Wee 2012 p. 264-265.

resembles chapter 3 of the canonical series, tablets 15-17, as the protases are characterized by time references i.e. “he has been sick for 5 days” or “during his sickness.”¹²³ In contrast, he characterized the structure of the reverse of 2N-T 336 as a rough head-to-foot order: the symptoms of the protases involve first “the hairs of his head,” then “the scalp of his head,” then “the strands of his eyes,” finally “the strands of his temple.” The author notes: “Although the order of “eyes” before “temple” run contrary to their relative positions in the second diagnostic subseries... it is unmistakable that the general trend of description proceeds from the top of the patient’s head downwards.”¹²⁴

There are additional correspondences between 2N-T 336 and DPS 3 (first tablet of the head-to-foot ordered second series): scholars of Mesopotamian medicine have been intrigued to note that the incipit 2N-T 336 (located in left edge colophon), reads “*When you approach a sick man,*” an incipit which is identical to that of the later canonical tablet 3.¹²⁵ Further, as will be borne out below, lines r. 1-2 and r. 5-6 of 2N-T 336 represent parallel entries with four lines of DPS 3, a fairly significant correlation.

There is another important insight about this tablet that bears mentioning: in JEOL 32 (1991-1992) M. Stol suggested that 2N-T 336 in fact represents one tablet of another diagnostic tradition which predated the canonical series and continued as an independent contemporary series: “We suggest that this was an earlier form of TDP starting with its real beginning, Tablet III.” Here Stol references the corresponding incipits. He continues: “We suppose that this older Handbook remained in existence and that TDP was based on it.”¹²⁶ This would imply then that

¹²³ Wee 2012, p. 276.

¹²⁴ Wee 2012, p. 277.

¹²⁵ Rutz 2011, p. 46; Heeßel 2010[a], p. 12.

¹²⁶ Stol 1991-1992, p. 43; Stol 1993, p. 91; see also Heeßel 2004[b], p. 101.

Esagil-kīn-apli composed his series (perhaps especially subseries 2) in reaction to an older diagnostic series. A second fragment, *STT* 1 89, coming from Neo-Assyrian Sultantepe and bearing the same incipit (“*When you approach the sick man*”) has been identified. As its structure seems to follow that of the forerunning texts, it has also been grouped with the (hypothetical) alternative diagnostic series.¹²⁷

2.2.2 MB Parallels to the SA.GIG Series

Scholars have noted that some 36 entries of Middle Babylonian diagnostic text are in parallel with lines from the later canonical series. The 40 tablets of SA.GIG represent some 3,000 entries, roughly half of which are extant today; it is interesting that of the roughly 68 legible MB entries, approximately half (36) are parallels – one may wonder if SA.GIG was fully represented today would all of the MB material find parallel entries? This thinking cannot be stretched too far, however. What follows is the list of parallel entries:

Tablet	TDP #	DPS #	Identified in:
CB 3424 1		DPS 23 5	Heeßel 2000 p. 101
CB 3424 2		DPS 17 33	Heeßel 2000 p. 101
CB 3424 4		DPS 6 85	Heeßel 2000 p. 101
CB 3424 5		DPS 13 177-180	Heeßel 2000 p. 101
CB 3424 6		DPS 13 182	Heeßel 2000 p. 101
Ni 470 3-4	TDP 44 41-42		Heeßel 2010(a) p. 11

¹²⁷ Stol 1993, p. 91-98; Wee 2012, p. 257; Heeßel 2010[a], p. 10.

Ni 470 5-6	TDP 26-27		Heeßel 2010(a) p. 11
Ni 470 7	TDP 42 28		Heeßel 2010(a) p.11
Ni 470 9	TDP 190 24	DPS 27 24	Heeßel 2000 p. 305
Ni 470 11	TDP 190 25	DPS 27 25	Heeßel 2000 p. 305
Ni 470 12		DPS 17 81	Heeßel 2000 p. 215
2N-T 336 1-5	TDP 150 40		Labat 1956 p. 156
2N-T 336 6	TDP 178 16		Labat 1956 p. 156
2N-T 336 10-12	TDP 166 95		Labat 1956 p. 156
2N-T 336 15	TDP 160 41		Labat 1956 p. 156
2N-T 336 16-17	TDP 104 10-11		Labat 1956 p. 156
2N-T 336 19	TDP 164 69		Labat 1956 p. 156
2N-T 336 20	TDP 164 73		Labat 1956 p. 156
2N-T 336 22	TDP 62 50		Labat 1956 p. 156
2N-T 336 23	TDP 185 5		Labat 1956 p. 156
2N-T 336 24	TDP 182 47		Labat 1956 p. 156
2N-T 336 r.1	TDP 20 19		Labat 1956 p. 156
2N-T 336 r.2	TDP 30 112		Labat 1956 p. 156
2N-T 336 r.5	TDP 30 109		Labat 1956 p. 156
2N-T 336 r.6	TDP 20 23		Labat 1956 p. 156
2N-T 336 r.7	TDP 50 9		Labat 1956 p. 156
2N-T 336 r.8	TDP 52 13		Labat 1956 p. 156
2N-T 336 r.10-11	TDP 40 9-10		Labat 1956 p. 156
2N-T 336 r.13-14	TDP 72 21-22		Labat 1956 p. 156
CBS 12580 1	TDP 94 12		Rutz 2011 p 298
CBS 12580 2	TDP 96 28		Rutz 2011 p 298
CBS 12580 3	TDP 94 13		Rutz 2011 p 298
CBS 12580 4	TDP 96 29		Rutz 2011 p 298
CBS 12580 5	TDP 100 6		Rutz 2011 p 298
CBS 12580 6-7		DPS 14 21-22	Rutz 2011 p 298
CBS 12580 9-13	TDP 24 52-54		Rutz 2011 p 298

2.3.0 Middle Assyrian Sources

The primary text of this corpus (in terms of legible cuneiform lines), VAT 10235, was found at Assur during the 1903-1914 excavations by the German Oriental Society. Its duplicate, VAT 10748, as well as VAT 11122 cannot be provenanced as their excavation numbers have been

lost. However, they can be dated to the MA period by their palaeography. The find spots of the remaining fragments (VAT 10886 and VAT 12385) are hardly more evident.¹²⁸ Although these texts have here been labelled “forerunners,” it is important to note that with a rough MA dating, it is unclear whether these texts were written prior to, contemporary with, or after Esagil-kīn-apli’s alleged editorial work circa 1100 B.C. But they do not reflect the innovations that came with his editing. The only scholar to edit this corpus as a group, N. Heeßel, seems to opt for a time postdating Esagil-kīn-apli when he remarks: “in Assur die Neufassungen des Esagil-kīn-apli nicht rezipiert wurden.”¹²⁹

- **VAT 10235** (=KAR 211), VAT 10748 (duplicate): VAT 10235 is a multi-column tablet with damage to the right side of the tablet, only part of the first and fourth column remain. Some 30 lines (some fragmentary) plus colophon are translated in Heeßel 2010(a). VAT 10748 is a fragment, attesting only 16 lines (fragmentary) of the original text.
- **VAT 10886**: A large fragment from the left corner of a tablet. Fourteen lines of (highly fragmentary) text are published in Heeßel 2010(a).
- **VAT 11122**: Represents only the fragment of the upper left portion of a tablet. Eleven lines (fragmentary) are translated in Heeßel 2010(a).
- **VAT 12385**: A small fragment from the left side of a panel, uncertain if it contains diagnostic material. Six lines of badly broken text are transliterated in Heeßel 2010(a).

2.3.1 The Structure of Middle Assyrian Diagnostic Texts

It has been recognized that an innovation of the canonical series was to group texts either according to anatomical (head-to-foot) order, or non-anatomical order, in which case entries were

¹²⁸ Heeßel 2010(a), p. 169-170.

¹²⁹ Ibid. p. 171.

generally grouped by their *symptoms*.¹³⁰ In this regard, the reader may recall that the name of the canonical series itself, SA.GIG/*sakikkû*, may be roughly translated ‘symptoms.’¹³¹ By contrast, and demonstrated clearly in the MA corpus, early diagnostic texts tend to demonstrate an older structural arrangement which grouped texts according to their *diagnosis*: the entries of VAT 10235 are grouped by the diagnosis ‘hand of Sîn’ or the diagnosis afflicted by the *aḥḥazu* demon; VAT 10748 groups entries by ‘hand of Sîn’ and ‘hand of Šamaš.’ While the two fragments (VAT 10886 and VAT12385) do not allow for a structural analysis, VAT 11122 clearly groups its entries according to the ‘hand of Ištar.’¹³² Interestingly, Wee has suggested that VAT 11122 also demonstrates a “secondary organizing principle,” that is, the entries grouped by common diagnosis (‘hand of Ištar’) are further arranged in a rough head-to-foot manner according to the body part mentioned in the protasis: “*uruḥḥu*-hair,” “right nostril,” “sense of hearing,” “ears,” “(vomited) gall,” “right arm,” and “waist.”¹³³

2.3.2 Middle Assyrian Parallels to the SA.GIG Series

In the corpus of MA diagnostic texts some 77 lines have been translated, and 12 parallel lines have been identified. This reduced correspondence in comparison with the MB corpus may be seen as the outcome of a selective editorial process, or it may be that these diagnostic texts come from a somewhat distinct diagnostic textual tradition (either pre-dating or perhaps existing independently of Esagil-kīn-apli’s Manual); alternatively, it may simply be that many of the entries

¹³⁰ Heeßel 2004(b) p. 104.

¹³¹ As pointed out in Rutz 2007, p. 294.

¹³² Following Heeßel(b) p. 169; Wee 2012 266-274.

¹³³ Wee 2012, p. 274.

under consideration are too damaged for a complete reconstruction, thus reducing the number of successfully identified parallels.

Tablet	TDP #	DPS #	Identified in:
VAT 10235 4-6	TDP 26:70-71	DPS 3:79-80	Heessel 2010(b) p.176
VAT 10235 7-9	TDP 28:82-83	DPS 3:91-92	Heessel 2010(b) p.176
VAT 10235 10-11		DPS 19:9(?)	Heessel 2010(b) p.176
VAT 10235 12		DPS 17:90	Heessel 2010(b) p.176
VAT 10235 19-20	TDP 28:91-92	DPS 3: 100, 101(?)	Heessel 2010(b) p.177
VAT 10235 21	TDP 36:40	DPS 4:40	Heessel 2010(b) p.177
VAT 10235 22	TDP 26:41	DPS 4:41	Heessel 2010(b) p.177
VAT 10748 9	TDP 100 5	DPS 12 5	Heessel 2010(b) p.180
VAT 10748 12	TDP 88 15	DPS 10 69	Heessel 2010(b) p.180
VAT 11122 5	TDP 126 37	DPS 13 153	Heessel 2010(b) p.184
VAT 11122 6	TDP 70 13	DPS 8 13	Heessel 2010(b) p.184
VAT 11122 11	TDP 106 43-44	DPS 12 107/109	Heessel 2010(b) p.184

2.4.0 Late Bronze Age Sources: Texts from Ḫattuša

The texts from *Ḫattuša* have proven quite difficult to date. Wilhelm, the editor of the diagnostic texts from *Ḫattuša*, gives the rough date of the second half of the second millennium.¹³⁴

The corpus consists of three tablets: Tablet A (40 legible lines), Tablet B (24 legible lines), and Tablet C (24 fragmentary lines). There are further 10 fragments (D through N), two of which have duplicates.

¹³⁴ Wilhelm 1994, p. 3; Heeßel 2000 p. 102; Zömer, forthcoming, dates the magico-medical corpus more specifically to the reigns of Muwatalli (1295-1272) and Ḫattušili III (1267-1237).

2.4.1 The Structure of Late Bronze Age Hattuşa Texts

As in other forerunning and non-canonical diagnostic texts, the texts from Hattuşa seem to have been organized according to their apodosis – they may be organized around the diagnosis (often “hand of X deity”) in other cases around prognosis (be it death, or *paṭār murši* “slackening of illness”). Wilhelm lists the following organization themes: tablet A (*paṭār murši*, BA.ÚŠ), tablet B (ŠU DN, meist Ištar), tablet C (ŠU ^dXXX, ŠU Utu, *šibit* ^d*Iṭemme*), fragment D1 (BA.ÚŠ), fragment G (ŠU GAŠAN = Ištar), fragment K (BA.ÚŠ).¹³⁵

2.4.2 LBA Hattuşa Parallels to the SA.GIG Series

In pages 104-106 of his 1994 study of the Hattuşa texts, Wilhelm lists 72 occasions that he cited Labat’s TDP. The present writer reviewed each of those occasions and found that only on 18 of those occasions did Wilhelm cite TDP in order to mark a reasonably certain parallel entry. The following chart lists those parallels:

Tablet	TDP #	DPS #
Tablet B rs. 1	TDP 18:10	DPS 3
Tablet A Rs. 10	TDP 22: 43,45	DPS 3
Tablet B 16	TDP 26: 76	DPS 4
Tablet B 9	TDP 26:78	DPS 4

¹³⁵ Wilhelm 1994, p. 3-4; Heeßel 2000, p.102; Wee 2012, p. 272.

Tablet A Rs. 6	TDP C II	DPS 5
Tablet C 7	TDP 60: 43	DPS 7
Tablet B 14	TDP 60:45	DPS 7
Tablet A 5	TDP 76:53	DPS 9
Tablet B 17	TDP 82:17	DPS 10
Tablet B Rs. 4	TDP 86:53	DPS 10
Tablet B 12	TDP 106:43	DPS 12
Tablet A Rs. 4	TDP 142:3	DPS 14
Tafel A Rs. 15	TDP 150: 44	DPS 16
Fragment H 9	TDP 162: 60	DPS 17
Tablet A 9	TDP 166: 78	DPS 17
Tablet A 4	TDP 166: 82	DPS 17
Tablet A 10-12	TDP 188:9-13	DPS 27
Tablet A 15	TDP 224: 54	DPS 40

3.0.0 Canonical SA.GIG: the Serialization Notations

The Kalhu Catalogue has so far been discussed in connection with the biographical information it presents (1.3.1), and for the fact that it divides the canonical SA.GIG series into 6 subseries (1.3.1), but the catalogue contains yet another important insight: it provides a serialization notation (a ‘label’) for each of the 6 subseries. The subseries, their incipit titles, and the serialization notation given to them in the Kalhu catalogue can be charted as follows:

		Serialization Notation
Ch.1	<i>When the exorcist goes to the house of a sick person</i>	GIBIL NU TIL
Ch.2	<i>When you approach the sick man</i>	SUR.GIBIL <i>ṣab-tu₄</i>
Ch.3	<i>If he is sick for a day and the appearance of the (divine) touch..</i>	SUR.GIBIL <i>ṣab-tu₄</i>

Ch. 4	<i>If a Fall befalls him and symptoms of epilepsy..</i>	SUKUD.GIM
Ch. 5	<i>If burning sun overheats him and...</i>	SUKUD.GIM
Ch. 6	<i>If a woman of childbearing potential is pregnant and...</i>	<i>X šabtu</i> GIŠ.GIŠ.A

The first thing to note about these labels is that a phrase similar to the important label, SUR.GIBIL *šab-tu₄*, occurs already in the biographical colophon portion of the catalogue:

Kalhu Catalogue (Finkel 1988, p.148-149)	<i>Ša ul-tu ul-la</i> SUR.G[IBIL] 'la' <i>šab-tu₄</i> ù GIM GU.MEŠ 'GIL.MEŠ ša' GABA.RI NU TUKU Concerning that which from old time had not received an [authorized] edition, and according to 'twisted threads' for which no duplicates were available.
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In 1956, the catalogue's original editor, Kinnier Wilson, had already given SUR.GIBIL the fairly apt translation of "New Edition," and drew the Akkadian equation of SUR.GIBIL = *z/šarâ*.¹³⁶ W.G. Lambert followed this suggestion, opting for a reading of *zârâ* (nominative: *zârû*), and holding that "*zârû* 'begetter, father' would be an appropriate metaphor for an authorized archetype."¹³⁷ Finkel's translation of 'authorized edition' therefore proceeds from the equation of the Sumerogram with *zârû*.

M. Stol analyzes the Sumerogram as consisting of two elements: **i)** the Sumerian verb *sur* "to spin" with the general meaning "to weave" (this nuance is evident in several lines from the Sumerian Kesh Hymn wherein the verb is used in the sense of "spun like a net") and **ii)** GIBIL,

¹³⁶ Kinnier Wilson 1956, p. 138. The author explains: It obtains from the colophon of Ashurbanipal's *nišû*-edition of URU-an-na in the line *ša ul-tu ul-la ZA-ra-a la šab-tu*, and the parallelism is such to make the equation SUR.GIBIL = *z/šara* virtually certain.

¹³⁷ Lambert 1957, p. 14.

with the fairly transparent meaning of “new.” He observes that in contexts such as occur in the Kalhu catalogue, “SUR.GIBIL can mean “new text,” whereby we have to understand the word “text” in its original meaning: Latin *textus* “woven,” “textile.”¹³⁸ Perhaps in the end, it doesn’t matter so much what the core components of the Sumerogram were, if the Akkadian scribe intended the value *zārâ* (with Lambert’s suggested nuance: ‘authorized’). Following SUR.GIBIL, there is also the verbal element, *šabtū*, which is a third person masculine G stative form, which when used in the context of texts, can mean ‘to fix in writing / record.’¹³⁹ Altogether, the label may thus be translated ‘authorized edition/s fixed in writing.’

However, there is much that remains arbitrary about the current philological problem. Lambert’s translation of *zārû* as ‘begetter, father’ corresponds to CAD Z, *zārû* A; For SUR.GIBIL *šab-tu4*, Beckman & Foster (1988) instead refer the reader to CAD Z, *zārû* B ‘winnow.’¹⁴⁰ There is another possibility which must be considered: S. J. Liberman, writing in the *Fs. Moran* (1990), suggested that, since the catalogue makes references to ‘twisted’ or ‘crossed’ (literary) threads, the Sumerogram SUR.GIBIL may just as well be read *šarra* from *šarāru* ‘to tie together.’¹⁴¹ As mentioned above, this possibility was allowed for in Kinnier Wilson’s original treatment of the catalogue, wherein the author had suggested a reading of “z/šarâ.” For Lieberman, the implications of this fly in the face of the Kinnier Wilson/Lambert/Finkel narrative: “What we suspect to be involved is merely a division of this medical series into tablets and sub-series..” In other words, in relation to the editorial process, the label implies neither ‘woven anew’, nor ‘authorized edition’, but that ‘twisted threads were tied together’ – the mere act of dividing texts into a series.

¹³⁸ Stol 2007, p. 241-242.

¹³⁹ CDA p. 330.

¹⁴⁰ Beckman & Foster (1988), p. 4-5; see now Frahm 2011, p. 328-329.

¹⁴¹ Liberman 1990, p. 333 n. 182.

There are two sources of information which may impact the philological disagreement surrounding SUR.GIBIL *ṣab-tu4*: i) consideration of parallel entries and structure from forerunning and non-canonical material may indicate distinctions between subseries 2 and 3 and subseries 4 and 5 and thus qualify the nature of the editorial hand (see below 3.1.0, 3.3.0, 3.3.1); and ii) as noted above in section 1.3.1, there are other medical catalogues which feature the same label, SUR.GIBIL *ṣab-tu4*, namely, the AMC currently under study by the BABMED project. It is hoped that the publication of results from these studies will provide comparative evidence for the interpretation of the Kalhu Catalogue.

Contrasting subseries 2 and 3, the fourth and fifth subseries are labelled SUKUD.GIM, which Heeßel takes to mean “like” “similar” (i.e. expressing a comparison to the earlier texts) based on the GIM element;¹⁴² the overall meaning is taken to be something like ‘adapted unchanged’ or ‘adapted with minimal modification.’ The label of the first subseries, GIBIL NU TIL, is interpreted by Wee at face value and he translates “new (and) not finished” although admitting that the sense here is unclear.¹⁴³ Finally, the label of the sixth subseries, *ṣabtu* GIŠ.GIŠ.A has not yet received a clear explanation.¹⁴⁴

3.1.0 Canonical SA.GIG: Parallels with Forerunning and Non-Canonical texts

In sections 2.1.2, 2.2.2, 2.3.2, and 2.4.2 the parallel entries for the forerunning (or in some cases, non-canonical) texts were charted and enumerated. It remains to compare this data with the

¹⁴² Heeßel 2000, p. 107. The author does not discuss the element SUKUD, however its basic meaning is “height.”

¹⁴³ Wee 2012, p. 32 n. 23. Heeßel 2000 p. 107 suggests that Esagil-kīn-apli is unlikely to have done much editorial work on the first subseries in any case, due to the fact that the entries are basically terrestrial omens.

¹⁴⁴ Wee 2012, p. 138.

serialization labels made by the ancient scribes and to check for correlations. In the following chart, *figure 7*, the forty tablets of the series are graphically represented together with a numerical representation of the parallel entries from non-canonical sources:

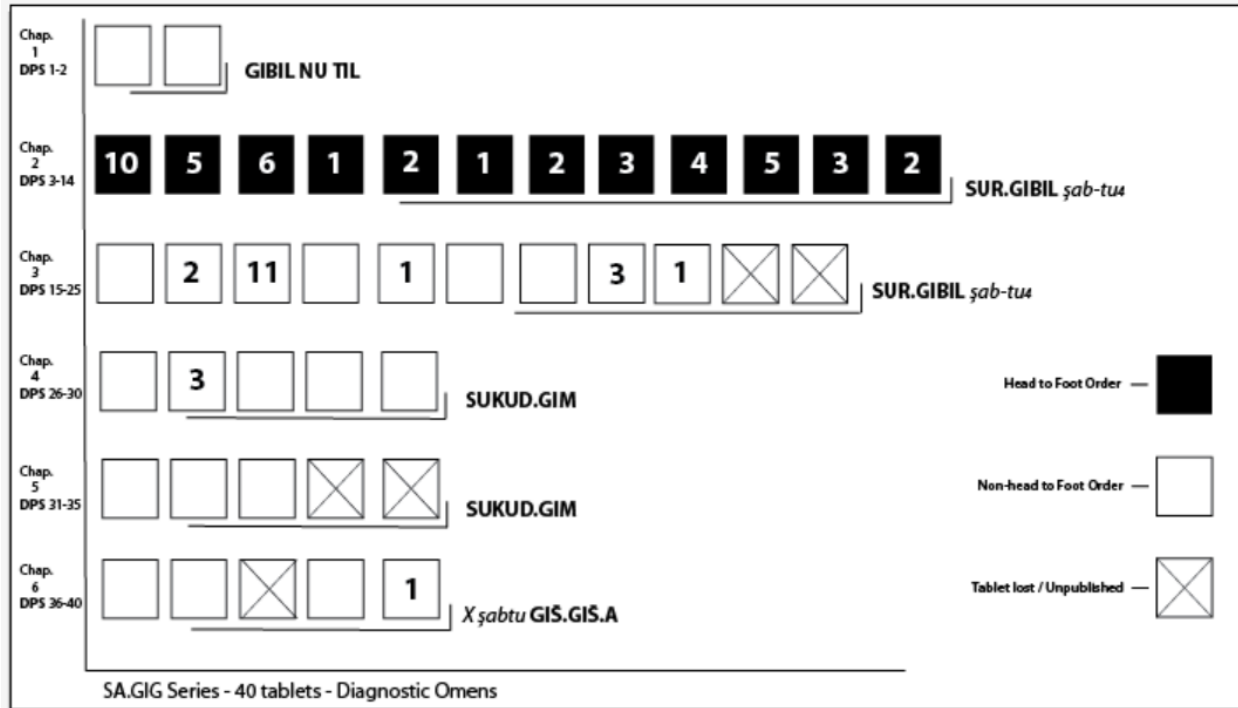


Figure 7: SA.GIG and Corresponding Early Parallels Enumerated

The data thus presents a clear contradiction to expectations. Instead of finding a preponderance of parallel entries in the subseries marked ‘adapted with no/with minimal change’ (SUKUD.GIM), 62 of the 66 parallel entries fall into the subseries said to be ‘woven anew’ (SUR.GIBIL şab-tu4), with the largest numbers occurring in DPS 3 and DPS 17. This finding is at

odds with Heeßel’s statement that subseries 4 and 5 show parallels with individual entries in older texts.¹⁴⁵

3.2.0 Canonical SA.GIG: the evidence from its Colophons

At the end of each canonical SA.GIG tablet from the Neo-Assyrian era (the majority of the extant material), one finds a fairly consistent tripartite structure consisting of three pieces of information:¹⁴⁶

- **The catchline:** Consisting of the incipit of the immediately following tablet in the series, the catchline acted as an *aide mémoire* for scribes searching for more information.
- **The rubric:** Frequently records the total number of entries on the tablets. Contains information about the position of the tablet within the series, and, unique to SA.GIG series colophons, double numbering occurs side by side representing the position of the tablet in the series as a whole, and secondly, the position of the tablet within its respective subseries.¹⁴⁷ See the following example from DPS 16:
 - 2nd Tablet from “*When he is sick for a day and the appearance of the (divine) touch.*”
 - 16th tablet from “*When the exorcist goes to the house of a sick man.*”
- **The Colophon proper:** When present on an undamaged tablet the colophon may record the name of the scribe, information about his family, information about the origin of the text, assurances of its authenticity, and the collection place the copy now belongs in. Occasionally the total number of entries is recorded here.

¹⁴⁵ Heeßel 2000 p. 107; See also Wee 2012, p. 31. In a private communication, Mar. 9 2016, Eric Schmidtchen (current SA.GIG researcher for BABMED) concurred with the writer that the majority of parallels do seem to fall within subseries 2 and 3. However, he indicated that a somewhat larger representation of the 4 and 5 subseries may be found in material from the Neo-Babylonian witnesses. It is outside the scope of the current study to compare NA against NB sources, however.

¹⁴⁶ My terminology here follows George 1991.

¹⁴⁷ As noted in Heeßel 2004[b], p. 102.

While this discussion must be considered preliminary and also perhaps provisional,¹⁴⁸ of the forty tablets which may potentially have contained a colophon, in extant material only seventeen bear legible intact colophons.¹⁴⁹

Several SA.GIG colophons present information that is noteworthy or unexpected. The colophon of DPS 2, as discussed above (1.2.4), contains the instruction that the exorcist should not approach the sick man before casting an incantation on himself.¹⁵⁰ The colophon of DPS 16 states that the text had apparently been ‘Set in an old wax tablet, written and collated.’¹⁵¹ The colophon of DPS 17 contains the well known formula of the Palace of Assurbanipal, in which the king extolls his personal learning achievements and steps to create a library.¹⁵²

The more mundane information in the colophons helps to chart the spread of the SA.GIG series through space and through time. When a textual origin or prototype is specified, it is said to come from Babylon, from Eridu, from Uruk, from Borsippa or even from Akkad.¹⁵³ Tablets belonging to DPS 2 and DPS 26 contain colophons which explicitly date themselves to the reign of Artaxerxes, a tablet belonging to DPS 17 and DPS 22 contains the colophon of the palace of Assurbanipal, and a contemporary tablet of DPS 12 mentions a year of Šamaš-šumu-ukīn. A

¹⁴⁸ The information presented here proceeds from a survey of the secondary literature, not the primary literature. Although Scurlock’s 2014 work shows potential for an update edition of the first 14 tablets, the author does not treat the colophon material. The meant that the present writer made reference to Labat’s 1951 translations, which doubtlessly do not include the significant amount of unpublished material cited in Heeßel 2000. For the tablets after DPS 15, I have generally follow Heeßel 2000. All English translations appearing in section 3.2.0 are my own, from the French or from the German, with reference to the original Akkadian.

¹⁴⁹ Specifically, DPS 1, 2, 5, 12, 14, 16, 17, 22, 23, 26, 28, 30, 31, 33, 36, 37, 40.

¹⁵⁰ A 3439.

¹⁵¹ W 22651.

¹⁵² K. 3962.

¹⁵³ DPS 5 contains an extremely fragmentary colophon which seems to name Akkad as the origin of its prototype.

colophon belonging to DPS 12 appears to mention “The year of Marduk-apla-iddin, king of Babylon,” who is to be understood as the Neo-Assyrian era Marduk-apla-iddin II.

The colophons mention ten distinct scribes by name. While it cannot be dealt with at length here, identification of three of the named scribes indicates that this study would aid in dating the tablets (for those that the dating is less certain) and in placing them within the sophisticated scribal network of ancient Mesopotamia:

DPS 1	Nergal-lipī-ušur	(son of) Arad-Gula	GKAB: ¹⁵⁴ Mentions that Arad-Gula is the father of incantation priest Ištar-nadin-ahi, Achaemenid Uruk. (Probable family connection).
DPS 16	Iqīša	(son of) Ištar-šuma-ēreš	GKAB: Iqīša is of the family Ekur-zakir: Ancestral name of a family of <i>mašmaššûs</i> ("incantation priests") of Anu and Antu in Seleucid Uruk.
DPS 33	Rimūt-Anu	(son of) Šamaš-iddin	GKAB: mašmaššû ("incantation priest") in Achaemenid Uruk, owner of 5 tablets.

3.3.0 Canonical SA.GIG: The Classification and Anatomical Structure of Subseries II

Subseries II: its logic and its reasoning

In section 1.3.2 the problem of the classification of SA.GIG (medical diagnosis or medical omen) was outlined, and it is clear that the field is divided on this problem. Reflected in his use of the term “medical sign” (=symptom), Wee sees SA.GIG, and the first and second subseries in particular, as having definite affinities with divinatory milieu “...the act of diagnosis performed

¹⁵⁴ GKAB here refers to the web project *Geography and Knowledge of the Assyrian and Babylonia* currently available at <http://oracc.museum.upenn.edu/cams/gkab/index.html>

by the magician (*āšipu*), a doctor who is especially associated with the Diagnostic Series, may be favorably compared to an act of divination performer [*sic*] by a “diviner” (*bārû*).”¹⁵⁵ For the author, it is no coincidence subseries 1 (DPS 1 + 2), resembling nothing more than terrestrial omens, directly precedes subseries 2, in fact, that the terrestrial omens in subseries 1 occur where they do “intimates that Subseries II, which follows, should also be interpreted in the same fashion.”

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The justifications for these rather strong statements appear intermittently throughout Wee’s 759 page dissertation, and as they proceed alongside an intensive structural analysis, they cannot be cited at length here. The incipits of both the first and second subseries indicate that the diagnostician is approaching the sick man, hence, as argued throughout the work his starting position in these subseries is that of nescience (lack of knowledge). Firstly, while the older diagnostic texts and the therapeutic corpora have their entries organized according to diagnoses, the entries of subseries 2 are grouped according to their “medical signs” (a term Wee prefers in place of (what are more commonly termed) “symptoms”). This meant that the doctor could “consult it as a reference from the starting point and arrive by inductive reasoning at diagnosed maladies.”¹⁵⁷

Secondly, Wee draws an important distinction between the reasoning of the head-to-foot subseries and that of later tablets in the series: the diagnostic process evident in subseries 2 is that of “inductive reasoning,” that is, the diagnostician starts with the medical signs (symptoms) and builds a picture of the cause, leading him to his diagnosis. As Wee puts it: “the doctor moves from observations of specific body part (S_P – Part) to the behavior of the patient as a whole (S_P – Whole),

¹⁵⁵ Wee 2012, p. 30-31.

¹⁵⁶ Wee 2012, p. 76.

¹⁵⁷ Wee 2012, abstract.

and finally reaches a verdict concerning the malady's identity (D_M).¹⁵⁸ Crucially, the author sees this as the same reasoning as that of the omens of subseries 1, and omens in general, as shown in the chart below (adapted from Wee 2012, p. 155):

Scheme	Subseries	Prior Commitment	Theme (Old Information)	Rheme (New Information)	Logic of Reasoning
R1	I, II	Nescience of Malady Identity	Protasis	Apodosis	Inductive Reasoning from Omens or Medical Signs to Prognosis
R1	II, III	Nescience of Malady Identity	Semiosis	Diagnosis	Inductive Reasoning from Medical Signs to Malady Identity

Figure 8: Diagnostic Scheme and Reasoning - Adapted from Wee 2012, p. 155.

In contrast, the author states that the reasoning of the later subseries should be seen as distinct from inductive reasoning, quite the opposite even, taking the diagnosis (or suspicions of the eventual diagnosis) as a starting pointing, and proceeding backward to the symptoms: “the precondition for this shift is a commitment to one’s knowledge or suspicion of the malady’s identity.”¹⁵⁹

¹⁵⁸ Wee 2012, p. 106, p. 678.

¹⁵⁹ Wee 2012, p. 134.

This view, which brings (at least a portion) of the SA.GIG series into close alignment with the omen literature, is the somewhat analogous with the view expressed by Bácskay and by Geller, who found the logic of the series to be “essentially the same as that for numerous types of Babylonian omens...in effect, symptoms became omens” (as quoted in section *1.1.1*). What is the justification for the comparison, and what is this “logic” (that is, the ancient understanding of why a certain sign results in a certain diagnosis.) The operative logic of SA.GIG has been compared along with that of divination in a 2004 study conducted by Nils Heeßel. In the divinatory series, Heeßel states that the outcome of an observation is directly dependent on whether it occurred on the left or on the right side, the former being “auspicious” the latter being “inauspicious” and the whole principle represents then “the left-right symbolism inherent in Mesopotamian culture.¹⁶⁰ However as the author explains, it is not quite so simple: a crow (in itself a negative sign) appearing on the right side (a positive sign) is a bad sign, but on the left (a negative sign) it is good sign. This is termed an “arithmetic formula” (negative plus positive is negative, but negative plus negative is positive and so on). The question become, to what extent does this apply to the Diagnostic Series?

Heeßel finds that the principle of left-right symbolism was certainly operational in the diagnostic texts, in the case of body parts that occur in pairs, symptoms were observed according to their appearance on the left or right. Colors are another phenomena which had ominous (or diagnostic) value in both genres, and in the diagnostic series, certain colors seem to have been connected with certain gods, i.e. result in the “hand of X deity.”¹⁶¹ Heeßel is careful to point out that the arithmetic formula does not function the same in SA.GIG as it did in the divinatory texts however, in fact the “math” seems quite different: “The same symptoms observed on the right and left side of the body can lead to all possible outcomes: the symptom on the right is positive and

¹⁶⁰ Heeßel 2004[b], p. 106.

¹⁶¹ Heeßel 2004[b], p.108. Although the values were somewhat different as discussed by the author.

the one on the left is negative, or both are negative, or both are positive, or the one on the right is negative and the one on the left is positive.” For Heeßel, this is enough to begin to disassociate the two genres.

Subseries II: Head-to-Foot Order

As outlined in section 1.3.1, the anatomical head-to-foot structuring has been noted in three divisions of the medical texts: in the second subseries of SA.GIG, in the main series of *Alamdimmû* and, less pervasively, in the therapeutic series UGU. Additionally, as discussed in 2.2.1, the reverse of the Middle Babylonian diagnostic tablet 2N-T 336 bears a rough head-to-foot order (less certain is the head-to-foot order of the Old Babylonian text LB 2126, and the Middle Assyrian VAT 11122). However, as will be borne out in the following discussion, there are subtleties and nuances to these structural comparisons which may have important implications.

Firstly, scholars are recognizing that the head-to-foot order of texts was, in fact, not an innovation of Esagil-kīn-apli, *per se*. In 2007, Wasserman stated in relation to Esagil-kīn-apli’s *a capite ad calcem* second subseries: “This descending order is operative in other, non-medical Old Babylonian literary texts” by which the author is referring to enumerations of items in i.e. Old Babylonian incantation texts.¹⁶² He continues: “Thus Esagil-kīn-apli’s arrangement of the medical

¹⁶² Private communication, N. Wasserman, Feb. 9 2016.

material was not a total editorial innovation, but rather an application of an already known organizing principle to the large body of medical series.”¹⁶³

If head-to-foot order existed in some form already in the Old Babylonian period, and indeed to some extent in OB or at least MB diagnostic forerunners, and it later made its way into various series, was the famous Borsippian scholar really all that innovative? The answer should perhaps still be a (nuanced) affirmative. Here again, Wee’s in-depth structural analysis of SA.GIG reveals an important distinction. A closer look at the structure of the *a capite ad calcem* arrangements present in the therapeutic UGU series shows that while they may have proceeded anatomically from high to low, they were grouped according to known maladies/diagnoses; in contrast, the head-to-foot order of subseries 2 is arranged according to the omen/symptom that receives first mention in the entry.¹⁶⁴ With reference to BAM 3 (a therapeutic text with head-to-foot order from lines iii.42 – v.11) this observation is demonstrated in the following table; and for contrast, an entry from the head-to-foot sequence in MB 2N-T 336 is provided:

	<i>DPS 3 (Scurlock 2014)</i>		<i>BAM 3 (Worthington 2006)</i>
DPS 3 11	[If the top of his head], his breast and his upper back are continually feverish....	BAM 3 iii.42	If during a man’s sickness an inflammation affects him in the head...
			<i>2N-T 336 (Labat 1956)</i>

¹⁶³ Wasserman 2007, p. 51-52.

¹⁶⁴ Wee 2012, p. 222.

r.9 | If, the sick man, **his muscles of his eyes are relaxed....**

In the above, “**a man’s sickness**” is the known sickness Wee refers to and which typifies the structure of head-to-foot therapeutic sequences. “**If the top of his head**” is the first occurring omen/symptom (feverish head) of DPS 3 11, thus this entry is placed in DPS 3, the tablet containing all the head omens, not DPS 4-15 which are each devoted to another part of the body from neck down to foot.

Of course one would not expect the therapeutic series to list its entries in any other way, the diagnosis was, by that stage of treatment, already known and there would be no reason to go searching for this information. But it is clear that the structure of the MB 2N-T 336 is entirely different as well, and would not lend itself to a large scale quick reference format. The take away is that Esagil-kīn-apli’s innovation was to make a head-to-foot sequence of unique sophistication, allowing the diagnostician to approach the patient from a position of nescience, and to consult a list of omens/symptoms grouped in an arrangement which would allow for the effective comparison and contrasting of observations, leading (through inductive reasoning) to the eventual diagnosis.¹⁶⁵

4.0.0 Conclusions and the Editorial Role of Esagil-kīn-apli

¹⁶⁵ Scurlock & Anderson 2005, p. xxi.

The preceding study has endeavored to chart the development of the diagnostic tradition in Mesopotamia with two particularly important questions in mind: How do we classify the canonical SA.GIG series (medical diagnosis or medical omen)? Secondly, what was the editorial role of Esagil-kīn-apli, and what was the nature of his innovation and adaptation?

On the classification of SA.GIG: Although some key scholars in the study of Mesopotamian diagnostic texts have argued insightfully for the understanding of the canonical series as a Medical Handbook, to be understood as more akin to scientific literature than omen literature,¹⁶⁶ this study has generally favored the evidence for the opposite position. It hardly seems incidental that SA.GIG subseries 1 consists of terrestrial omens and initiates the entire series, and J. Wee is probably correct in positing that this is meant to indicate something about the *modus operandi* of subseries 2. Studies of the structure and logic of the diagnosis do not entirely contradict the notion that these were in fact medical omens, even when they intend to.¹⁶⁷

The *āšipu* was in any case, as it is now widely acknowledged, the interpreter of unprovoked omens. In the increasingly theocentric 1st millennium, he was also tasked with assuaging the anger of the gods, and protecting the sick from the consequences of divine wrath; as J. Fincke stated, the *raison d'être* of the diagnostic series against such a backdrop becomes divine law. It seems entirely plausible that as the exorcist approached the house of the sick man, he first passed the ominous phenomena of the environment around him looking for divine signs, and when he approached the sick man himself, he examined the body again looking for omens sent by the gods.

¹⁶⁶ For example, Scurlock & Anderson 2005, p. xx; Heeßel 2004[b].

¹⁶⁷ i.e. Heeßel's 2004[b] study of the left-right symbolism (*etc.*) and the logic of why a symptom ends up leading to a given diagnosis found that there are definite carry overs from the divinatory system to the diagnostic system. For the analyst, this fact is negated by the fact that the significance of key symbolism (i.e. weather X occurs on the right or left) went on to become divergent in the diagnostic texts; for the present writer, it seems significant that the one system inherited its symbolism from the other.

On the Editorial role of Esagil-kīn-apli: In 3.0.0 the serialization notations labelling each subsection of SA.GIG were discussed, and particular attention was given to SUR.GIBIL *ṣab-tu₄* which marks subsection 2 and subsection 3 as special somehow. Is the correct translation to this enigmatic label “authorized edition”? Or “woven anew”? Or “(twisted threads) tied together”? While the first two translations (Finkel and Stol respectively) would indicate significant editorial activity, even innovation, on the part of Esagil-kīn-apli, the latter translation was suggested by Lieberman who posited that the label simply meant that series was put together and divided up.

A study of the parallel entries connecting forerunning texts with the later canonical series revealed some unexpected results: 62 of 66 identified parallel entries belong to the 2 subseries labelled SUR.GIBIL *ṣab-tu₄*. With 1500 extant entries, this means that only 4.4% of the known SA.GIG material is attested from early/non-canonical diagnostic material, hence this finding cannot be assigned too much weight. Still, the preponderance of SUR.GIBIL *ṣab-tu₄* parallels seems to indicate that the label does not mark new material *per se*, so much as a new arrangement (or a new weave).

Of paramount interest then is the structure of the second subseries and its relation with the closest tablet of the early diagnostic texts: the MB 2N-T 336. Not only did the text share the same incipit “*When you approach the sick man*” as subseries two, its reverse shares 4 lines in parallel with DPS 3 and was structured in a head-to-foot order. As was stressed above, head-to-foot had a long tradition by this time, but it was the sophisticated referencing system that spanned 12 tablets of material and allowed the diagnostician to quickly and effectively arrive at a diagnosis through an inductive method that made SA.GIG an innovation; key to this was the editorially demanding task of sequencing of entries according to their symptoms within the head-to-foot structure (where early texts had been sequenced according to the diagnosis).

In recognition of Esagil-kīn-apli's ability to take what was old and create something new out of it, it may be fitting if SUR.GIBIL *ṣab-tu₄* did in fact mean "woven anew."

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