

Daniel Schwemer

## The Anti-Witchcraft Ritual Maqlû

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The Cuneiform Sources of a Magic Ceremony  
from Ancient Mesopotamia

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## PREFACE

This book examines the epigraphy and history of transmission of the cuneiform sources of the Maqlû anti-witchcraft ritual, one of the major compositions of ancient Mesopotamian exorcistic lore. The book consists of three parts: First, an introduction to the Maqlû ceremony as a Babylonian anti-witchcraft ritual is provided (Chapter 1); it includes an attempt at giving a step-by-step reconstruction of the ritual drama of Maqlû based on the instructions for its performance and the texts of its recitations. Next, a set of more specialized studies is devoted to various aspects of the cuneiform transmission of Maqlû: the history of the text's reconstruction; the types of manuscripts (Chapter 2); their specific provenance and historical context (Chapter 3); variation in the textual transmission as well as spelling conventions and linguistic characteristics (Chapter 4). Finally, the manuscripts are presented in 'hand-copies' (technical drawings) on the plates in the second half of the book.

Readers may be surprised to find that this book contains neither transliterations of the cuneiform manuscripts nor an overall reconstruction of the Akkadian text, nor, indeed, a translation of Maqlû. All these fundamental elements of any edition of a cuneiform text have recently been presented in a comprehensive fashion by Tzvi Abusch in his *The Magical Ceremony Maqlû. A Critical Edition* (2016). Any duplication of his work in this book—apart from the inevitable lists of manuscripts—would have been unwanted. The hand-copies and analyses provided here should rather be understood and used as a supplement to Abusch's editorial achievement and his numerous other contributions to the study of Maqlû.

The origins of this book go back to a time when anyone who wanted to read the text of Maqlû had to make do with Gerhard Meier's composit 1937 edition, and the examination of individual manuscripts was possible only for those who studied the original clay tablets at the British Museum and in other collections around the world. In the meantime, the internet, digital photography, and, most recently, 3D scanning have revolutionized the way in which cuneiform manuscripts are accessed, read, and studied. In my experience, however, the 'copying' of tablets still has its place in this new world, first of all as a method of careful deciphering and informed documentation, but also as a teaching tool. It is indeed my hope that books such as the present one can serve as a bridge between the print-type cuneiform texts, which have no place in academic instruction beyond first-year Akkadian, and the reading of photos, 3D models, casts and originals in the classroom.

The hand-copies presented in this book were prepared beginning in 2003 over a period of more than ten years. During that time, the work on the Maqlû manuscripts was always something done on the side, while more urgent obligations, not least the preparation of the

volumes of the *Corpus of Mesopotamian Anti-witchcraft Rituals* had to take precedence. From the start, my work on Maqlû benefited from close collaboration with Tzvi Abusch, who generously shared with me his edition of Maqlû in its various stages of preparation. Since a complete draft version of the edition already existed when I embarked on copying the Maqlû manuscripts, the present book very much builds on Abusch's editorial work. Over the years, in particular while preparing a German translation of Maqlû (Abusch – Schwemer 2008), Tzvi and I spent many an hour discussing Maqlû issues, epigraphical and hermeneutical, and I learned much more than I could have by just reading his many contributions to the understanding of Maqlû and related texts. The preparation of the museum work was much facilitated by Tzvi sharing with me his collections of non-digital and, later, digital photographs of Maqlû manuscripts. I take the opportunity here to record my gratitude for his interest and collaboration over the past years.

A debt of gratitude is also owed to the scholars who agreed to have their hand-copies of Maqlû manuscripts included in this volume. Erich Ebeling (ms. α), Oliver R. Gurney (mss. β and γ), Wilfred G. Lambert (mss. π, ρ, and τ), and Jan J. A. van Dijk (ms. PU<sub>1</sub>) could not give their consent in person, but I thank their publishers for permitting or not objecting to the inclusion of their work. This includes Jim Eisenbrauns of Eisenbrauns, the Department of the Middle East of the British Museum, the Deutsche Orient-Gesellschaft, and Gebrüder Mann-Verlag. Furthermore, I thank Petra Gesche (mss. ε, θ, η, ζ, and ι), Herrmann Hunger (mss. p and q), and Egbert von Weiher (ms. r) for graciously consenting to having their previously published copies included here. I also thank Ugarit-Verlag and, again, Gebrüder Mann-Verlag for their agreement in this matter.

Published here for the first time are hand-copies by Markham J. Geller of mss. w, ll, mm, nn, oo, and pp. I am very grateful to Mark for contributing to this volume with characteristic generosity and geniality.

Stefan M. Maul kindly agreed to the inclusion of hand-copies of mine published under his editorial care in the series *Keilschrifttexte aus Assur literarischen Inhalts* (Harrassowitz-Verlag) also in the present volume (Schwemer 2007a; Maul – Strauß 2011).

Thanks are due to Enrique Jiménez and Henry Stadhouders whose tireless work in the collections of the British Museum has resulted in so many discoveries, among them the identification of Maqlû fragments (Enrique) and a reading in Maqlû VII 172 (Henry).

Greta Van Buylaere and Mikko Luukko have been collaborators on the *Corpus of Mesopotamian Anti-witchcraft Rituals* project since 2012 and have supported my work on the present volume; Mikko by taking on a first proof-reading of the hand-copies, Greta by reading

and commenting on the text parts. The book has much benefited from their diligence and critical acumen.

I would also like to mention Hannes Leonhardt, who, as a student assistant, helped with mounting the plates, as well as Gene McGarry, whose careful copy-editing of the text has spared the reader the infelicities in the original manuscript.

It is a pleasant duty to acknowledge my gratitude to the directorates and staffs of the museum collections in which I had the opportunity to work in preparation of this book: The Trustees of the British Museum, the Middle East Department of the British Museum, and curators Irving L. Finkel, Jonathan Taylor, and former curator Christopher Walker; the Vorderasiatische Museum, Berlin, its successive directors Beate Salje and Markus Hilgert, and former curator Joachim Marzahn; the Babylonian Collection, University of Pennsylvania, and curators Stephen J. Tinney and Philip Jones; the Oriental Institute, University of Chicago, and curator Walter Farber; the Anadolu Medeniyetleri Müzesi, Ankara, its successive directors Hikmet Denizli, Melih Aslan, and Enver Sağır as well as curators Rukiye Akdoğan, İsmet Aykut, Mine Çifçi, and Şerife Yılmaz; the İstanbul Arkeoloji Müzeleri, İstanbul, its director Zeynep Kızıltan, and former curators Veysel Donbaz and Asuman Dönmez; the Iraq Museum, Baghdad, and Margarete van Ess (Deutsches Archäologisches Institut) for permission to have photographs of Uruk tablets made, and especially

Anmar Fadhil, who kindly took multiple digital photographs of mss. p, q, s, t, γ, and PU<sub>2</sub>.

Finally I would like to record my gratitude to the institutions that supported the work on this book: the Deutsche Forschungsgemeinschaft for funding the project *Corpus babylonischer Rituale und Beschwörungen gegen Schadenzauber: Edition, lexikalische Erschließung, historische und literarische Analyse* (2012–18); Würzburg University for a generous subsidy of the final publication.

It is more likely than not that additional Maqlû fragments will have come to light by the time this book is printed. The digital presentation of the text corpus of Mesopotamian anti-witchcraft rituals on the internet (*Corpus of Mesopotamian Anti-witchcraft Rituals online*: <http://www.cmawro.altorientalistik.uni-wuerzburg.de>; a project within the framework of Oracc, the Open Richly Annotated Cuneiform Corpus) will, I hope, facilitate the continued documentation of Maqlû until, one day, the last white spots on the map of this text are filled and even all the incantations of Tablet VIII may be heard again, bringing with them the voices of exorcists and patients from ancient Assyria and Babylonia that have been silent for more than two thousand years.

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