Preface

The essays in this volume were composed in response to several major problems that I uncovered when I undertook the study of Mesopotamian magical and medical texts centering on witchcraft and sorcery. They address difficulties that I noted when I tried to sort the texts into coherent categories and to understand individual prayers and incantations. Hence, the studies in this volume focus on individual texts and suggest solutions to complications and intricacies in the material. In the process, useful approaches were developed for the understanding of magical texts generally. Part One follows a diachronic approach, Part Two a synchronic one. In this sense, the studies are to be viewed broadly: while unravelling knots in individual texts, they highlight certain issues and exemplify some solutions for common problems in traditional Mesopotamian therapeutic literature.

In Part One, I examine such well known Akkadian incantations and prayers as KAR1 226 IV 3ff. and related texts (Chapter 1), Maqlû VII 119-146 and related texts (Chapter 2), and KAR 26 and BMS 12 (Chapter 3). This examination grew out of my various attempts to determine the limits of the witchcraft corpus and to categorize the many texts that display divergent and sometimes contradictory textual features. These texts contain indicators that suggest that they were used not only to combat witchcraft but also for other purposes as well. Some of these texts had been labelled “Universal Beschworungen”. I found that adaptation and change had occurred in these texts and that, at different times, these texts were used for different purposes. Such changes resulted in the appearance of disjointed and/or contradictory statements and of features pointing to multiple and often unrelated uses of the text. Accordingly, I have argued that a determination of the stages of development of such compositions is necessary for an understanding of the text2 and is

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1 In the main, the abbreviations used are those of W. von Soden, Akkadisches Handwörterbuch (Wiesbaden, 1959-81) and of the Assyrian Dictionary of the Oriental Institute of the University of Chicago (Chicago, 1956-). In citing Akkadian and Sumerian, h/H represent ḥ/H.

2 Obviously a full understanding of the text requires analysis on both the diachronic and synchronic levels and the synthesis of the results of both forms
one way to decide whether a text should be included in, or excluded from, the corpus.

Part Two focusses on an individual incantation, *Maqlû* I 1-36, an address to the gods of the night sky. Although this opening incantation in *Maqlû* is a famous and oft-cited example of magical literature, my initial study of the text raised new questions and revealed unexplained details. I found it necessary to construct a coherent and comprehensive statement of the meaning and function of the incantation. Accordingly, I subjected this incantation to a detailed and sustained analysis. The painstaking examination of the individual elements of an incantation and of their relationship to each other is laborious, but at least in this case it resulted in a fuller understanding of the text and of its place in *Maqlû*. Moreover, this type of analysis showed the incantation to be the product of a literary creativity that draws together magical and legal imagery for the purpose of creating an indictment in which social and moral dimensions of the witchcraft accusation come into play.

This nocturnal invocation was probably recited on the rooftop, and like prayers of divination, it probably anticipated some oracular response. In light of the analysis, I would render the incantation as follows:

The speaker calls upon the court of the heavenly gods of Anu to convene and hear his plaint; he first lays out the facts that justify his right to a hearing (1-14):

1. *I have called upon you Gods of the Night;*
2. *With you I have called upon Night, the veiled bride;*
3. *I have called upon Twilight, Midnight, and Dawn.*
4. *Because a witch has bewitched me,*
5. *A deceitful woman has accused me,*
6. *Has (thereby) caused my god and goddess to be estranged from me (and)*
7. *I have become sickening in the sight of those who behold me,*
8. *I am (therefore) unable to rest day or night,*

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However, all too often applications that purport to be rooted in aesthetic and/or formal theory are ahistorical and much too removed from the meaning of the text.
And a gag continually filling my mouth
Has kept food distant from my mouth and
Has diminished the water which passes through my drinking organ,
My song of joy has become wailing and my rejoicing mourning—
Stand by me ye Great Gods and give heed to my suit,
Judge my case and grant me an (oracular) decision!

Only then does the plaintiff present his accusation and claim that the witch has treated him wrongly (15-20):

I have made an image of my warlock and witch,
Of my conjuror and sorceress,
I have set it at your feet and plead my case:
Because evil did she perform against me and baseless charges has she conjured up against me,
May she die, but I live!
Verily are her bewitchments, enchantments, and charms released!

The speaker now takes an oath and establishes his own innocence of any charge (21-26):

The tamarisk ... shall clear me!
The date palm ... shall release me!
The soapwort ... shall cleanse me!
The pine cone ... shall release me!
In your presence have I become pure like grass,
Clean and innocent like nard.

Having thus proved that the accusations made against him by the witch are false and motivated by malice, the plaintiff states that her accusation has been refuted and she is therefore unable to level charges again (27-28):
27 Her spell being that of an evil witch,
28 Her word has been turned back into her mouth and her tongue constricted.

Given the falseness of the accusation, the court is called upon to label her acts as witchcraft, to charge her with the crime of performing this evil deed, to release its consequences, and to destroy the very organs that the witch used in her plot and which make her dangerous (29-33):

29 On account of her witchcraft, may the Gods of the Night strike her;
30 May the three watches of the night release her evil enchantments.
31 Her mouth be tallow, her tongue be salt:
32 May that (i.e., her mouth) which uttered evil against me melt like tallow!
33 May that (i.e., her tongue) which performed witchcraft against me dissolve like salt!

The final stanza informs us of the court’s decision (34-36):

34 Her bonds are broken, her deeds nullified;
35 Her accusations are dismissed—
36 By the verdict pronounced by the Gods of the Night!

It seems that the speaker felt himself to have been accused of an unspecified but serious crime, accused, that is, of having in some way violated societal norms, thus becoming the object of shame in the opinion and judgment of the public. He deals with this threat by turning on his accuser, who is the personification of moral reprobation; he asserts his own innocence and directs against his accuser the accusation of witchcraft.3

The studies included in this monograph were written in 1970-71 and completed as part of the requirements for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy in the Department of Near Eastern Languages and Literatures, Harvard University, 1972. These studies treated only a limited number of problems and used selected forms of textual inquiry. Since they were originally intended to be part of a much larger work and represented even then only a fraction of my reconstruction and interpretation of the witchcraft corpus, I delayed their publication. I have continued working on the witchcraft corpus, searching for new texts especially among the unpublished materials of the British Museum (photographs and Geers' copies) but also elsewhere, and preparing editions of the compositions. Recently, I have resumed my work of exposition of the corpus. Having not

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4 The original dissertation was entitled "Studies in the History and Interpretation of Some Akkadian Incantations and Prayers Against Witchcraft." Th. Jacobsen and W. L. Moran served as dissertation advisors. Portions of Part One were read before the 180th meeting of the American Oriental Society, 1970. The ritual nature of Maqlû has been established in my "Mesopotamian Anti-Witchcraft Literature: Texts and Studies, Part I: The Nature of Maqlû: Its Character, Divisions, and Calendarical Setting," JNES 33 (1974) 251-262. A version of Part One, note 69, was published as "Dismissal by Authorities: Šuškunû and Related Matters," JCS 37 (1985) 91-100. The study mentioned in Part Two, note 94, appears in HTR 80/1 (1987) under the title "Alaktu and Halakhah: Oracular Decision, Divine Revelation." I am indebted to Scott Magoon and his staff in the Department of Research and Academic Computing, Brandeis University, for the production of the camera ready copy of this monograph. The actual work was done by Jussi Eloranta. I am deeply grateful to Kathryn Kravitz, Joel Hunt, and James McMann for their generous assistance proofreading and correcting computer generated copy.

5 I again express my indebtedness to the late A. Leo Oppenheim and the Oriental Institute for permission to study the late F. W. Geers' copies. All joins of British Museum materials made through 1976 were communicated to C. B. F. Walker at regular intervals. I remain grateful to him for checking the joins, answering my questions, recording the various texts that I was to edit, and arranging for the production of photographs. Some of my joins have been registered by R. Borger, Handbuch der Keilschriftliteratur, Vol. II (Berlin/New York, 1975), pp. 331ff., and idem, "Zur Kuyunjik-Sammlung: Nachträge zu HKL II, s. 331-395," AfO 25 (1975-77) 411ff. I communicated suggested joins of British Museum materials to Franz Köcher in 1978 for his use.

6 For an updated, if concise, statement of some of my views about Maqlû, see the article "Maqlû" in a forthcoming fascicle of Reallexikon der Assyriologie und vorderasiatischen Archäologie (Berlin/New York).
yet completed the larger work, I have decided to make these stud­ies available to the broader scholarly community in their original form. Here and there, corrections can be made and bibliographical citations updated. But I have decided not to rewrite the studies, in part because my style and interests have changed somewhat over the years. Today, I might prefer to incorporate somewhat different lines of inquiry, kinds of solutions, and styles of argumentation. To have revised the essays would have meant rewriting them completely and producing studies quite different from those contained herein. Since the present studies retain most of their original merit, there is little reason for discarding them and replacing them at this time with new studies of the same texts or with similar studies of different texts.

The studies in their present form have been found useful by sev­eral specialists who have had access to them; they represent at­tempts to make sense of magical texts, and provide working exam­ples of productive approaches to the material. I ask the reader to overlook those errors that might have been rectified by a thorough revision in the belief that the benefit of placing the studies in the public domain outweighs some minor annoyances. I hope they will be of some interest and use to other scholars working on cuneiform literature, generally, and therapeutic texts, specifically.

7In addition to the dictionaries, cf., e.g., the information in the following books: M.-J. Seux, Hymnes et prières aux dieux de Babylone et d'Assyrie (Paris, 1976) (note the review by Werner Mayer, OrNS 46 [1977] 386-392, esp. pp. 391f. for BMS 12 and KAR 26); Werner Mayer, Untersuchungen zur Formensprache der babyloniachen "Gebetsbeschworungen" (Studia Pohl: Series Maior 5; Rome, 1976); W. Farber, Beschworungsrituale an Istar und Dumuzi (Wiesbaden, 1977); E. von Weiher, SpBTU II. Note also volumes containing SB therapeutic texts such as BAM IV-VI, CT 51, SpBTU I-II, UET 7, nos. 118ff., Lorets/Mayer, Šu-ila-Gebete (AOAT 34). Elsewhere, I will provide updated information about the exemplars, joins, and readings of compositions treated or cited in my studies. (For example, I have since identified and joined more fragments to, and augmented the text of, the Marduk composition cited in Part Two, n. 21.) I should note here, moreover, that when I wrote these studies I was still relying on published copies and editions and on Geers' unpublished copies. Subsequently, I ex­panded the number of texts that comprise the corpus, and examined photographs of most of the tablets, including unpublished Mss of various compositions. This examination has resulted in some corrections and in a more systematic and fuller listing of variants for some of the compositions cited in these studies.

8See, for example, W. Farber, op. cit., pp. 42-53.
There is one possible source of error that to my mind, at least, is not minor; however, there is little point in trying to rectify the situation at this time. I refer to my reading of the broken text *KAR*, no. 269, rev.(?). In Part One, Chapter 2, I attempt to explain how a composite incantation like *Maqlû VII* 119-146 came into existence. After identifying *KAR* 269 rev. as a parallel to *Maqlû VII* 119-146, I prepared a working transliteration of *KAR* 269 rev. and subjected *Maqlû VII* 119ff., *KAR* 269 rev., and other relevant texts to a detailed comparison using this transliteration. *KAR* 269 rev. played an important role in the analysis and determined some of the details of the overall reconstruction.

Unfortunately, *KAR* 269 rev. is quite broken, and some of my readings are restorations and conjectures. Sometime after the study was composed, I began to entertain alternative readings for some of the traces and breaks in the tablet as a result of several suggestions made by Thorkild Jacobsen. In some instances, these readings seem preferable to, or at least cast some doubt on, my original readings; moreover, several of these readings would require some changes in the details of the historical reconstruction. But given the broken state of the text, some form of collation was required to reach any degree of certainty; there was no point in revising the detailed argumentation - especially since the analysis was clear and simple - prior to collation. Unfortunately, collation has not proved possible for me.

When it became clear in 1974-75 that there was little chance of my visiting Berlin in the foreseeable future, I asked (8/71) the authorities of the Staatliche Museen zu Berlin for photographs of *KAR* 269 (VAT 11119) as well as of some other texts. Correspondence with the late G.R. Meyer followed, but in April 1976 Dr. Liane Jakob-Rost most graciously sent me a photograph of *KAR* 269. Upon examination, I noted that the photograph contained only the left side of the obverse (?) and the top left piece of the reverse (?) (parts of lines 1'-5'). What for my purposes was the crucial piece was detached and not on the photograph. Although only one museum number was designated in the publication, *KAR* 269 was presumably the result of a join. I communicated this information and asked if a search could be undertaken for the missing piece. Unfortunately, the piece was lost; in a letter of 4 June 1976, Dr. Jakob-Rost in-
formed me that "das fehlende Stück der Tafel VAT 11119 offenbar durch die Kriegswirren verlorengegangen ist." I conclude, therefore, that while other readings may be preferable, a fundamental revision of my reconstruction of the literary history of *Maqlû* VII 119-146 is best deferred to a time when the reading of *KAR* 269 rev. can be checked against an original.

Still, here we should at least note a few of the alternative readings and their effects. Possible changes in *KAR* 269 rev., lines 1'-6' have little bearing on our analysis. But alternative restorations of *KAR* 269 rev., line 7' or line 11' are another matter. If our original reading of line 7' is rejected, this would surely affect the statements about and inferences drawn from the occurrence of the generic catch-phrase (*minma lemnu mimma lā šābu ...*) before the witchcraft entry.

Here it may also be noted that a duplicate of R. Caplice, *OrNS* 39 (1970) 149:22ff., a Namburbi included in our treatment of *Maqlû* VII 140ff., is R. Caplice, *OrNS* 42 (1973) 509:16ff. Line 22 of this duplicate provides the correct reading of *OrNS* 39 (1970) 149:26', and indicates that also that line (*lippašrū idātī ittātti lemnēti ša ippašrūnānī*) should be included in our discussion, for it as well as *Maqlû* VII 144 (*lippašrū ...*) begin with forms of the N precative plural of *pašāru* (cf. *AMT* 23/9). Accordingly, line 144—or rather an earlier non-witchcraft form of 144—should probably be treated together with the preceding lines (140-143). This suggests a slight modification of my historical reconstruction. In no way, however, does this invalidate our claim that *Maqlû* VII 140ff. derives from the Namburbis rather

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9 Probably restore *ME* rather than *MES* in lines 1´-2´ on the basis of *ME* in line 2; but cf. the use of *MES* in lines 7´ff. Perhaps restore line 1´ on the basis of *Maqlû* VII 123, *LKA* 128 obv. 5f., etc.: the visible *ME* would then either be the plural mark in *Á*.ME or part of *G][SK][IM! (*<.ME*>). In line 3´, perhaps restore *SZKUR* instead of *ni-qi*. In line 4´, perhaps restore *[ba]-[ru]-[ti ša] instead of *[LÚ.HAL-ti] [x] [ .

10 E.g., in lines 133f., probably restore *tazimti [ilš] and delete one occurrence of *nti šš.*

11 E.g., *[di]-li-[ip!]-[tú/du]-a-li-[ih]-*[tú N]U DÛ.GA.[(MES) UZ]U.MEŠ d[r-rat DINGIR.MEŠ] ta(?)-x (=*tazimti*) or ... UZ]U.MEŠ-i[a NU DÛ.G]A! ŠA x [ /(*consider also G])AZ ŠA x [ ).

12 E.g., *ana UGU d[i-na]-ni

than the reverse; if anything, it may even strengthen that claim. In any case, it provides additional support for the contention that lines 140ff. should be treated as a unit, and, thereby, strengthens further the argument for the absence of lines 140-141 in the original framework of the text from which the incantation *Maqlû* VII 119ff. derives. In support of this latter point, note further that lines 140-141 are absent in the *Maqlû* VII Ms K 7476+.

Obviously, some details of our analysis and reconstruction of the emergence of *Maqlû* VII 119-146 and related texts require modification. Perhaps, at a later date, we will be able to provide a revised historical reconstruction. At that time, moreover, we might also wish to consider other interpretations of the evidence, with the almost certain result, however, of more—rather than less—complicated stemmata. The analysis, moreover, would be further refined—probably not modified—by a close comparison of the individual Mss of *Maqlû* VII 119-146. Still, the thrust of our argument stands: *KAR* 269 rev. is some form of parallel of *Maqlû* VII 119-146. In gross terms, the historical scheme seems to be sound. Even if an alternative reconstruction is to be preferred, our attempt will have highlighted some developments that magical texts underwent and changes to which they were subjected. Most important, the study still serves to exemplify the type of textual development it set out to document. The principle enunciated and exemplified remains documented; namely, that texts like *Maqlû* VII 119-146 are the end product of a series of changes and adaptions and that some of the logical and contextual difficulties encountered in reading these texts are the result of changes introduced into the composition at various points of its development.

One further comment: It may be recalled that this reconstruction was among the first of a growing number of attempts at producing the detailed history of a magical text. It is possible that in my desire to understand how such texts came into being and to find, thereby, a satisfactory way of reading them, I may have simplified

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14 E.g., that the Namburbi lists of evils in *KAR* 269 rev. and *Maqlû* VII 119ff. were derived independently from variant forms of the list.

15 Note that our attempts are concerned with SB incantations, and we do not assume OB prototypes.
matters by creating overly logical schemes and solutions. In the pro-
cess, I may not have accorded sufficient weight to the vagaries of the
transmission of cuneiform texts and to the formulaic nature of some
of the phrases and blocks in incantations and prayers. Such con-
siderations may render precise historical reconstruction and stemma
less cogent or compelling. Still, at this stage of the study of Stan-
dard Babylonian literature, I prefer the excesses of the historical-
analytical approach. I proceed as if all elements of a text have sig-
nificance and stand in meaningful relationships to each other. But
if strict coherence or integration seems absent, I then attempt to
define the difficulty and, when appropriate, to isolate additions and
revisions and determine the manner of, the motivation behind, and
the effect of the inclusion. It is not easy to read a composite and
inconsistent text. Even if structural) or stylistic artifices are de-
tectable, we should first execute the historical operations so that we
know what we are doing when we construct a harmonistic or selec-
tive reading that is often the only way to comprehend the composite.

I should like to express my gratitude and affection to Thorkild
Jacobsen and William L. Moran. They were my teachers and have
been good friends even during difficult times. Marvin Fox has been
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My wife Susan and my sons David and Ra‘anan have shared life
with me. They have been constant sources of love, joy, and knowl-
edge. They grow more precious by the day. I owe them a great debt.

When I was writing these studies, I intended to dedicate them
to my parents. Now, perforce, I would dedicate them to my mother
with love and prayers that old-age be kind to her, and to the loving
memory of my father.

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