

Ritual Instructions in the Series *Lamaštu*

MARIE BARKOWSKY, *Trinity College, Dublin**

Introduction

Our understanding of Mesopotamian rituals has advanced greatly in the last few decades. This is largely thanks to the publication of several ritual series that belonged to the standard repertoire of the first millennium incantation priest (*āšipu*),¹ but had been inaccessible to a wider readership of modern scholars for lack of comprehensive editions.² The series targeted in this paper is that which recorded a complex ritual against the demon *Lamaštu*, who was thought to prey on pregnant women and small children.³ Its best-attested

recension derives from manuscripts found at Nineveh and Sultantepe.⁴ The purpose of the ritual recorded by the series was to cure a baby's illness. Though the *Lamaštu* series was known to Assyriologists already since 1902, the current edition, by Walter Farber, only appeared in 2014.⁵

Like other ritual series, *Lamaštu* prescribes a combination of ritual actions and incantations. The instructions for these are distributed across two different textual typologies found within *Lamaštu*: incantations

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¹ As outlined in the much-quoted “Exorcist’s Manual” (KAR 44 and its duplicates), known to Assyriologists for over a century (Zimern, “Zu den ‘Keilschrifttexten aus Assur’” [1915–16]: 204–228) but most recently edited by Markham Geller (“Exorcist’s Manual” [2018]) and Nils Heeßel (“Leitfaden der Beschwörungskunst” [2023]).

² Among the ritual series edited in the last twenty years are the series *Lamaštu* (Farber, *Lamaštu* [2014])—the topic of this study—as well as the series *Bit Rimki* (Schwemer, *Der kontraintuitive König* [2019]), *Bit Salā’ Mé* (Ambos, *Der König im Gefängnis* [2013]), *Maqlū* (Abusch, *Magical Ceremony Maqlū* [2016]), and *Udug Hul* (Geller, *Evil Demons* [2016]).

³ Farber, “*Lamaštu*” (1980–1983): 444. *Lamaštu* was also thought to attack victims beyond pregnant women and small chil-

dren. For her wider activity against other people, see Wiggerman, “*Lamaštu*, Daughter of Anu” (2000), 231 and 236f.

⁴ For the *pīrsu* and *tuppu* recensions (used in Nineveh/Sultantepe and Aššur/Babylonia respectively), see Farber, *Lamaštu* (2014), 17–21. The present article deals mainly with the *pīrsu* recension, because it is known from a significantly larger number of manuscripts than the *tuppu* recension. As Farber notes, the textual differences are minimal. As far as attested, both recensions appear to contain the ritual instructions in the rubrics and in the ritual tablet, making the problem dealt with here unlikely to be a result of Nineveh compilation activity. The order of incantations, however, differs slightly; this is relevant to the understanding of the ritual *Lamaštu*, and is therefore discussed below.

⁵ The first published editions were Fossey, *Magie assyrienne* (1902) and Myhrman, “Die Labartu-Texte” (1902). Both were succeeded by Köcher’s 1949 dissertation. The most recent (and by far most detailed) edition to date is Farber, *Lamaštu* (2014).

followed by rubrics which prescribe magical actions (*Lam.* Tablets I–II) and a “ritual tablet” (*Lam.* III), which also prescribes magical actions.

In the case of *Lamaštu*, however, it is not immediately apparent how these two sets of instructions (those in the rubrics and those in the ritual tablet) relate to one another. Most of the instructions on *Lam.* I–II can also be found, verbatim, on the ritual tablet. However, the ritual tablet gives them in a very different order, making it seemingly impossible to reconstruct the ritual without directly contradicting the rubrics. This was already noted by Sam Mireleman in the only publication that addresses this issue: “the sequence of incantations and rituals in *Lam.* I and II, when compared with the ritual section (*Lam.* III), cannot be explained as the result of divergent recensions.”⁶ At least two known manuscripts (K 2482+ and K 8138+) write *Lam.* I–III on a single multi-column tablet, so the differing sets of ritual instructions are certainly part of the same text.

What are we to make of this situation? To Mireleman, the discrepancies imply “that the series as it stands does not make sense as a reference work produced solely for the performance of a single, extended *Lam.* ritual.”⁷ He interprets the two sets of ritual instructions as the product of different textual traditions: an older ritual copied into the rubrics of *Lam.* I and II so as not to disturb the textual integrity of the incantations, and the actual contemporary ritual practice in Nineveh outlined in the ritual tablet *Lam.* III.⁸ This, however, would mean that the compilers of the series knowingly produced an internally confused text: the rubric following an incantation is always introduced as “DU₃.DU₃.BI”: “its (i.e., the incantation’s) ritual,” but the reader is not informed that the rubrics represent a supposedly older ritual and are meant to be ignored.

This study advances a different line of explanation: it seeks to demonstrate that *Lamaštu* is not, in fact, internally contradictory. It proposes that the ritual instructions given in the ritual tablet expand on and add to the information given in the rubrics of *Lam.* I–II. It will be argued that the perceived discrepancies between *Lam.* I–II and *Lam.* III result from our notions of what a ritual tablet is supposed to be rather than from actual inconsistencies within the text.

The Ritual According to the Rubrics

First let us look at the ritual instructions given in the rubrics and those given on the ritual tablet separately. This is necessary to determine whether each could have been, theoretically, used on its own to guide the reader through a ritual. It is also useful to illustrate the difference in how rubrics and ritual tablets organize ritual information.

It should be mentioned that no part of *Lamaštu* clarifies who its instructions were addressed to. They are given to a grammatical second-person singular masculine (“you do X, then you do Y”) and thereby assume that the recipient and the person carrying out the ritual are identical. Whether this was actually the case cannot be resolved here, as it requires a much wider study of the work of ritual professionals and its relationship to ritual texts. The question of whether *Lamaštu* presents one coherent ritual or a compilation of different ritual traditions does not depend on the identity of the addressee of the text, as he (i.e., the unspecified grammatical second person “you”) is spoken to in both the rubric’s and the ritual tablet’s instructions, often in parallels that describe the same ritual action.

From here on, the ritual’s imagined reader will be provisionally called “the *āšipu*,” as this professional is the most likely candidate for putting a ritual of this complexity into practice. However, it must be stressed that the identity and number of the person(s) who carried out the ritual cannot be deduced from internal evidence.⁹

Table 1 shows the ritual instructions given in the rubrics after each of the thirteen incantations on *Lam.* I–II. The first column gives a very abbreviated form of the ritual steps to be carried out alongside the

⁶ Mireleman, “Mesopotamian Magic” (2018): 361.

⁷ *Ibid.*

⁸ *Ibid.*: 364f.

⁹ One of the anonymous reviewers suggested that the ritual may have been the collaborative work of *asû* and *āšipu*, with the *asû* responsible for salves, stones, and fumigations. This is an interesting idea and calls for a wider study of the relationship between *asûtu* and *āšipûtu* than is possible to undertake here. The text itself, however, does not suggest a collaboration, as the identity of the second person addressee is never indicated to change. However, addressing all instructions of a ritual to a single second person recipient is likely to be a textual convention rather than a practical reality of rituals. Many incantations, from at least the Old Babylonian period onwards, outline ritual actions as instructions given by Enki/Ea (to his son Marduk, in the so-called Ea-Marduk-Dialogue), whom the person(s) carrying out the actions in reality are thereby suggested to represent. In the letter SAA X 255, an *āšipu* speaks of plural persons (including himself) conducting a ritual action, even though that ritual action is directly stated to be based on written texts (obv. 5–13) and therefore likely to be addressed to only one individual. Unfortunately, the ritual in question is not named.

Table 1—Ritual content of the *Lam.* I–II rubrics.^a

ritual instruction	<i>Lam.</i> I–II line	<i>Lam.</i> III parallel
Inc. 1		
amulet cylinder with Inc. 1 written on it, to be attached to the neck of the baby	Lam. I 10	/
Inc. 2		
figurine ritual, days 1–3 (figurine 1)	Lam. I 23–31	Lam. III 110–118
anointment of the body of the baby with salve ingredients 1–12	Lam. I 32–36	Lam. III 64–66 (ingredient list only)
Inc. 3		
figurine ritual, day 4 (figurine 2)	Lam. I 47–57	Lam. III 119–129
neck plaster	Lam. I 58f	Lam. III 44f
fumigation of the baby with fumigants 1–2	Lam. I 60	Lam. III 74 (ingredient list only)
anointment of the body of the baby with salve ingredients 13–14	Lam. I 61 ^b	Lam. III 66–67 (ingredient list only)
Inc. 4		
figurine ritual, days 5–7 (figurine 3)	Lam. I 94–99	Lam. III 130–135
Inc. 5		
additional figurine ritual (figurine 4)	Lam. I 220–232	/
Inc. 6		
anointment of the body of the baby with salve ingredients 15–19	Lam. II 28–30	Lam. III 67–68 (ingredient list only)
fumigation of the baby with fumigants 3–9	Lam. II 32f	
Inc. 7		
amulet tablet with Inc. 7 written on it, to be hung over the head of the bed; dog figurines (made from the same material as the amulet tablet), to be placed next to doors and windows	Lam. II 61–83	Lam. III 8–28
Inc. 8		
coil necklace, to be attached to the neck of the baby	Lam. II 113–118	Lam. III 30–43 (more detailed preparation instructions)
Inc. 9		
(no ritual instructions)		
Inc. 10		
(no ritual instructions)		
Inc. 11		
(no ritual instructions)		
Inc. 12		
(no ritual instructions)		
Inc. 13		
anointment of the body of the baby with additional salve ingredients when the baby has a fever	Lam. II 210–211	/
fourteen pieces of <i>azallû</i> -plant, to be placed on the baby's neck	Lam. II 212	Lam. III 45f (more detailed preparation instructions)

^a Mirelman, “Mesopotamian Magic” (2018): 368f. contains a table (17.3) that also outlines the ritual content of the rubrics.^b As the first twelve ingredients in the *Lam.* III list of salve ingredients were used for the preceding salve, and the final five were used for the following salve, we would expect the two ingredients in this ritual instruction to be identical with the two remaining ingredients in the middle of the list: two plants called *aprušu* and *azallû* (*Lam.* III, 67). However, only *aprušu* is preserved on the two badly damaged manuscripts that have the relevant passage of *Lam.* I, 61 (K 2016+ and VAT 10353). Of the ingredient that precedes(!) it, only one manuscript preserves any trace at all (BM 76642+), and Farber reads the only recognizable sign *sab*, for *sab*-[*ē*·*ē*]. The fact that one of the expected two ingredients is legible on both of the badly preserved manuscripts, and that the unexpected ingredient is only preserved by one sign on one of them, combined with the use of the remaining salve ingredients in the expected order in the expected place, makes it extremely likely that *aprušu* and *azallû* were used for a salve in this ritual step.

individual incantations. The second column indicates from which line on the incantation tablets *Lam. I–II* the ritual steps are taken; the third column notes parallels on the ritual tablet *Lam. III* (if there are any) to illustrate the different order of the ritual steps there.

The Ritual According to the Rubrics

Taken on their own, the incantations and the rubrics that follow them could have been used as instructions for a coherent ritual. This “*Lam. I–II* ritual” would begin with the *āšipu* writing Inc. 1 on a cylinder seal and attaching it to the baby’s neck. Inc. 1 gives Lamaštu seven names and adjures her to fly away (*Lam. I* 1–8); it is brief enough to fit on a cylinder seal and would be a conceivable beginning of an exorcism.

The rubric to Inc. 2 describes the first three days of a seven-day figurine ritual. It revolves around a figurine of an imprisoned Lamaštu holding a black dog.¹⁰ It is placed at the head of the baby’s bed for three days, during which the *āšipu* is instructed to recite “the incantation” (*minūtu*) in the morning, at noon, and in the evening. This refers beyond reasonable doubt to Inc. 2, as the text of the incantation says that the speaker has given Lamaštu a black dog (*Lam. I*, 14), a direct reference to the figurine described in the ritual instructions.

The instructions suggest that this ritual step transfers the demon Lamaštu (and, with her, the illness) from the body of the baby into the figurine. The piglet’s heart placed in the figurine’s mouth is presumably a substitute for the heart of the baby (which Lamaštu really wants to eat). Burying the figurine in a corner of a wall outside disposes of the demon at a safe distance to the baby.¹¹

¹⁰ The black dog has been identified as either Lamaštu’s enemy (in Farber’s translation of Inc. 2 in Farber, *Lamaštu* [2014], 147) or her companion (Wiggerman, “Lamaštu, Daughter of Anu” [2000], 234). The Akkadian term used to describe the dog in *Lam. I* 14, *gallāki*, is ambivalent, literally translating to “your Gallú-demon.” It certainly denotes the black dog as a hostile figure, but does not clarify whether it is hostile to Lamaštu or generally hostile because it is Lamaštu’s helper. The evidence quoted by Wiggermann—an Old Babylonian ritual in which an incantation against Lamaštu is followed by an incantation against a dog—supports his description of the black dog as Lamaštu’s companion. The ritual instructions *Lam. III* 15–28 (and their parallel in the Inc. 7 rubric) use dogs as protective figures against Lamaštu, but there is no particular reason to assume that these dogs have anything to do with the black dog of Inc. 2.

¹¹ Scurlock (*Ancient Mesopotamian Medicine* [2014], 681) gives a brief interpretation of this incantation and its rubric according to

Inc. 3 accompanies the second step of the figurine ritual. This involves a figurine of “the daughter of Anu” (*mārat Anu*, i.e., Lamaštu). The figurine is taken out into the wilderness, where the *āšipu* “makes her swear the oath of heaven, earth, and the Anunnaki” (*nīš šamē eršetī u Anunnakī tutammāši*). This may refer to the recitation of Inc. 3, but that is not made explicit; the text of Inc. 3—a rather generic Lamaštu incantation—does not refer to making the demon swear the oath of heaven, earth, or Anunnaki, though this is a standard incantation formula.¹² Inc. 3 does, however, end in a call to Šamaš (the sungod and the god of justice; *Lam. I* 45), and it is noteworthy that the figurine is turned to face the sun when it rises the following day.

The imagery suggests the removal of Lamaštu, who had already been pulled out of the body in the previous step, to a place even further away—not only away from the baby, but from civilization as a whole. There, she is detained (by a rope and a flour circle) and left for Šamaš to deal with.

The third step of the figurine ritual, accompanying Inc. 4, again stretches over three days. In it, another figurine of Lamaštu is placed at the head of the baby for three days, stabbed with a dagger, and then buried in a corner of an outside wall.

Once again the rubric does not say explicitly when the incantation is to be recited. Inc. 4, however, fits well into this place of the “*Lam. I–II* ritual” as a whole. Inc. 2 calls for Lamaštu to be removed from the body of the child and not return while the *āšipu* physically removes the demon into the figurine and takes it outside. Inc. 3 calls on Šamaš to establish his ruling power while the *āšipu* places Lamaštu in the wilderness to face the sunrise. Now Inc. 4 adjures Lamaštu by several gods to never again approach the patient (named explicitly for the first time in the ritual, as indicated by the stand-in

K 2971 (+) K 2986 i 11–30: “Lamaštu is provided with a husband and provisions on the condition that she go away and leave the patient alone.” She treats *Lamaštu* incantations as separate rituals against different illnesses instead of regarding the series as one large ritual against Lamaštu. Therefore she categorizes Inc. 2 as a healing ritual against fever, no doubt because of its subscript “incantation to remove fever and Lamaštu” (KA.INIM.MA *umma lazza u Lamaštu nasāhi*, *Lam. I* 22).

¹² Falkenstein (*Haupttypen der sumerischen Beschwörung* [1931], 34f.) even suggested that the Sumerian version of this formula (“Die zi-pad₃-Formel”) was added at the end of all incantations orally even if it was not written down, as he believed that only this “Schlussthema” turned a text into an incantation. This theory would help to tie Inc. 3 (or indeed any other incantation) to the rubric, but seems to somewhat overestimate the importance of the clause, common as it is.

phrase *annanna mār annanna*, ‘so-and-so, son of so-and-so’; *Lam.* I 77 and 90), be removed, and stay away (*Lam.* I 76–90).

The accompanying ritual action, according to the rubric, essentially repeats the removal of *Lamaštu* from the body of the baby in the first step of the figurine ritual. Unlike the previous steps of the figurine ritual, however, this third step suggests finality by having the ritual professional eventually stab the figurine. *Lamaštu* also receives no further provisions or substitutes for the baby’s life, as she did in the rubrics to Inc. 2 and 3. It appears that now that Šamaš has exerted his rulership: *Lamaštu* can be fully defeated by the *āšipu*.

Excursus: Inc. 5

The last incantation on *Lam.* I, Inc. 5, is somewhat set apart from the previous ritual steps. First of all, it is one of two incantations which an alternative recension of *Lamaštu* takes out of the (otherwise stable) order of Inc. 1–13. This recension consists of one Tablet with Inc. 1–4, 6, and 8–13, and a second Tablet with Inc. 5 and 7.¹³ That would indicate that if the rubrics on *Lam.* I–II did form an independent ritual, Inc. 5 had no fixed position inside it.

Furthermore, Inc. 5 is longer than all previous incantations put together. The accompanying action is an additional figurine ritual—a set of instructions that exceeds the magic number of seven days. Further, it is not included in the direct parallels to the instructions for the seven-day figurine ritual on *Lam.* III. This additional figurine ritual combines elements of the first two steps of the seven-day version, but includes none from the third.

The ritual instructions in the rubric instruct the *āšipu* to make a figurine of the “Daughter of Anu” and provide it with a clay donkey and numerous travel provisions (as in the second step of the figurine ritual). A

piglet is slaughtered and its heart placed in the mouth of the figurine; the *āšipu* is told to recite “the incantation” (*šiptu*)—presumably Inc. 5—three times a day (both as in the first step of the figurine ritual, although the figurine is not placed anywhere near the baby here; indeed, the baby is not mentioned at all). After three days of this, the *āšipu* takes the figurine into the wilderness, places it on the ground facing the rising sun, surrounds it with a flour circle, and ties it to a bush (again echoing the second step of the figurine ritual).

The incantation speaks of the difficulty of burying a baby that has been killed by *Lamaštu*: even though the baby is dead, *Lamaštu* is still present in the body, so it cannot be buried in the family house as appropriate, but has to be taken out into the wilderness “in a red leather bag, as if storing provisions” (trans. Farber.: *kīma šāpik šidīri ana luppi šāmi liškunū*) and left there (*Lam.* I 155–66).

The incantation then beseeches *Lamaštu* to drop “this flesh not fit for eating” (trans. Farber, *šira ša lā akālī*; *Lam.* I 191), remove herself from the house into the wilderness, and not come back (*Lam.* I 189–216). The text of the incantation strongly suggests that this was not, in fact, an incantation to cure a baby of a *Lamaštu*-induced illness, but an incantation to remove *Lamaštu* from a baby’s corpse in order to provide the baby with a proper burial. The incantation provides for the possibility that the ritual was unsuccessful and the baby had died. Considering the comparatively high infant mortality rate in ancient societies, this must have happened at least occasionally.

This interpretation would explain several problems with Inc. 5 and its rituals. Firstly, it would resolve the question of why Inc. 5 could be taken out of the expected order of incantations by a different text recension: it was not a fixed part of the ritual, but used if necessary. It would have been added to the end of *Lam.* I because this Tablet dealt with figurine rituals, not because this was its place in the order of ritual actions. Secondly, it would explain why the ritual combines elements of the first steps of the figurine ritual, intended to remove *Lamaštu* from the baby’s body and put her in the wilderness, without ever placing a figurine near the baby. If the baby had died, it might not have been desirable to keep the corpse on the bed for three days. Thirdly, it would tell us why the ritual does *not* use elements of the final step of the figurine ritual, which defeated *Lamaštu* and thereby guaranteed she would never return to the baby. This would be because it was already impossible that *Lamaštu* would return to the

¹³ Farber, *Lamaštu* (2014), 17. The three manuscripts for the first Tablet—BM 46281+, CBS 13939, and BM 76642+—are all preserved well enough to establish that Inc. 5 and 7 are missing from the expected order of *Lamaštu* incantations. The two manuscripts for the second Tablet—VAT 10327+ and LKU 33—are preserved well enough to establish that Inc. 5 and 7 were written on them. As Farber notes, the catchline on the reverse of LKU 33 does not lead to *Lamaštu* incantations or rituals, and the only manuscript for Farber’s third Tablet (the ritual tablet) of this recension—VAT 595—is fragmentary enough that it may in fact have belonged to the *pīrsu* recension. It is therefore possible that the “*tuppu* recension” may have been “integrated into a larger series of which it occupied the first sections numbered as *tuppu* / DUB” (Farber, *Lamaštu* [2014], 17, n. 33).

baby, as she had already killed it. Fourth and finally, the theory would explain why the three steps of the seven-day figurine ritual are given verbatim on *Lam. III*, but this fourth step is not included in the paragraph in question (or anywhere else on *Lam. III*).¹⁴

The Ritual According to the Rubrics (ctd.)

The first incantation on *Lam. II*, Inc. 6, seemingly picks up where Inc. 4 left off: it talks of Lamaštu taking symptoms of disease from the baby's body—discussed as “those around you, which walk before and behind you” (*šūt paniki ša ina paniki u arkiki illakū*)—away with her.¹⁵ The ritual steps in the rubric are the anointment of the baby with a mixture of five further ingredients and another fumigation using seven ingredients, split into three separate fumigations. It is worth remembering here that the ritual instructions after Inc. 2 (the first step of the figurine ritual) and Inc. 3 (the second step of the figurine ritual) both include anointing the baby with salves, the latter also including a fumigation. But the third step of the figurine ritual in the rubric of Inc. 4 does not, making the rubric of Inc. 6 a plausible continuation to that of Inc. 4. Inc. 7 accompanies a number of protective ritual steps around the house: the *āšipu* mixes various types of dust with clay and forms an amulet tablet and several dog figurines with it. He draws various divine symbols and inscribes Inc. 7 on the tab-

let, then hangs it over the sickbed. The purpose of the incantation is to keep Lamaštu away; she is adjured to go to the mountains and not approach the door of the house.¹⁶ The dog figurines are then positioned near the doors and windows of the house, equally suggesting that they were supposed to protect the house against Lamaštu (rather than remove her from it).

Inc. 8 adjures Lamaštu to not return to the house and let the baby sleep peacefully until the next morning (*Lam. II* 105–11). According to the rubric, the *āšipu* fashioned a necklace out of various fibers, hairs, and splinters and put it around the baby's neck; the accompanying incantation suggests that this is a protective measure for the baby, but it is unclear when the incantation is supposed to be recited. The next four incantations (Incs. 9–12) do not have rubrics with ritual instructions.

The final incantation on *Lam. II*, Inc. 13, is followed by a rubric which tells the *āšipu* to anoint the baby with a salve made from two ingredients “when fever seizes him (= the baby)” (*enūma ummu iṣbassu: Lam. II* 211). As the *āšipu* would not have been able to predict when, or how often, the child would develop a fever, it seems unlikely that this ritual step was chronologically the final ritual step of *Lamaštu*. It may have been added at the end of *Lam. II* as an incantation to be used according to necessity (comparable to what was suggested above for Inc. 5, the final incantation of *Lam. I*).

In that case, the ritual—according to the rubrics—would end with protective measures for the house (Inc. 7) and for the baby's sleep until morning (Inc. 8), a plausible conclusion. The rubrics do not mention any ritual steps to accompany Incs. 9–12. If the rubrics present a complete description of an older ritual, as suggested by Mirelman, this would suggest that these four incantations were simply recited at the end.

¹⁴ Scurlock, *Ancient Mesopotamian Medicine* (2014), interprets this incantation at two points. The first comes on pp. 590–92 according to K 2971 (+) K 2986 ii 28–33 completed by LKU 33 2'–45', two manuscripts that in combination give *Lam. I* 100–48 (i.e., the first forty-eight lines of Inc. 5). The second comes on pp. 678–681 according to KAR 239 ii–iii—a manuscript preserving *Lam. I* 173–231 (i.e., the second half of Inc. 5 and its rubric up to the second to last line). Scurlock categorizes the first forty-eight lines of the incantation as a ritual against miscarriage caused by typhoid because of the description of Lamaštu preying on pregnant woman about to give birth in part of the epic prologue describing Lamaštu's various evil habits (*ibid.* [2014], 590). However, this prologue also describes Lamaštu's habit of killing or hurting young men (*Lam. I* 128), young women (*Lam. I* 129), and small children (*Lam. I* 139). Furthermore, the descriptions of various evil deeds (*Lam. I* 115–36) are all in the present tense, suggesting they are various things that Lamaštu is in the habit of doing or generally does. The narrative of Lamaštu killing a small boy, putting the family into mourning, and not allowing the child to be buried (*Lam. I* 137–73), on the other hand, are in the perfect or past tenses, suggesting a chain of events that has just happened. The second part of Inc. 5 up to the rubric is categorized as another healing ritual against fever (*ibid.*, 678).

¹⁵ *Lam. II* 1–26; direct quote *Lam. II* 16.

¹⁶ *Lam. II* 41–48 seems to give instructions for a figurine ritual that match no ritual instructions in this version of *Lamaštu*. The passage describes Asalluḫi's actions against Lamaštu as building a boat for her to board with two white and two black dogs; she is then supposed to sail away to the open sea. Somewhat contradictorily, Asalluḫi then informs Lamaštu that he has bound her feet to a tamarisk and surrounded her with a magic circle. The descriptions may be entirely metaphorical or the incantation may have been used in a different ritual context before it was integrated into the series *Lamaštu*. Building a boat for the figurine of an unwanted supernatural actor and sending it off down a river also features in other ritual instructions; cf. Ambos, *Mesopotamische Baurituale* (2004), 91.

The Ritual Tablet

As already visible in Table 1, the ritual tablet includes most of the steps in *Lam.* I–II, often in word-for-word identical phrasing. However, as we can see in Table 2, the organization of information is very different. The first column of Table 2 gives, again, an abbreviation of the ritual instruction. The second column gives the lines of *Lam.* III from which the ritual steps in question are taken, while the third column lists parallels on *Lam.* I–II (if there are any).

The first thing that should become immediately apparent in comparison to Table 1 is that, while most of the instructions in the *Lam.* I–II rubrics have parallels on the ritual tablet *Lam.* III, the ritual tablet gives a significant number of instructions that cannot be found in the rubrics. Thirteen lines of *Lam.* I–II rubrics have no parallel (direct or indirect) on the ritual tablet, while almost sixty lines of text on the ritual tablet cannot be connected to any ritual instructions given in the *Lam.* I–II rubrics. The ritual tablet contains more ritual information than the rubrics do.

The Ritual According to the Ritual Tablet

If we attempt to read the ritual tablet as a continuous ritual narrative, the procedure looks very different from what is described in the *Lam.* I–II rubrics. Furthermore, there are a number of logical problems with the ritual tablet that we do not find in the *Lam.* I–II rubrics.

First, the *āšipu* is instructed to secure the bedroom of the patient against *Lamaštu* with the help of a protective drawing, an amulet tablet featuring Inc. 7, and guard dogs (as in the rubric of Inc. 7). All this happens before any exorcistic action is mentioned. That means that if this were the first action taken during the ritual, the bedroom in which *Lamaštu* was currently present would be secured against *Lamaštu* entering it.

Next, the *āšipu* is instructed how to make the necklace mentioned in the rubric of Inc. 8. These instructions are much more detailed than those in the rubric and focus on a large number of different stones that are threaded on cords and wrapped with the coils of wool, fiber, and splinters mentioned in the rubric of Inc. 8. The following two ritual steps also deal with materials to be attached to the patient's neck—the neck plaster mentioned in the rubric of Inc. 3 and the fourteen pieces of *azallû*-plant placed on the baby's neck in the rubric of Inc. 13. Then a number of the same stones

already mentioned at the beginning of the paragraph, in connection to the necklace from the rubric of Inc. 8, are used in four very similar ritual steps: stones are threaded on cords and wrapped in wool to create a bracelet for the patient's right hand, a bracelet for the patient's left hand, an anklet for the patient's right foot, and an anklet for the patient's left foot. It is noteworthy that on *Lam.* I–II, Inc. 8 is followed by four incantations without ritual instructions. The parallel on *Lam.* III is very similar to, and listed in the same paragraph as, four ritual steps that have no equivalent in *Lam.* I–II rubrics.

The passage ends in two short incantations not known from *Lam.* I–II, written out in full and separated from the rest of the text with dividing lines, with the subscript that they are to be recited seven times “over the stones” (*ina muḫḫu abnī*). “The stones” are presumably the stones used for the necklaces, bracelets, and anklets described in the preceding passage.

Up until this point (line 63 on *Lam.* III), the ritual tablet does not mention a single *Lamaštu* incantation as having to be recited by the *āšipu*. It only gives instructions how to fashion “Ritualmittel,” and where those “Ritualmittel” are supposed to be used (in the patient's house or on the patient's body).

The following passage appears to be a list rather than a sentence. It enumerates the ingredients used for salves in the rubrics of Inc. 2, 3, and 6, and simply ends in the word “ointment” (*naṣṣaltu*). No part of this passage gives any ritual instruction. Nor does it imply that some of the ingredients are supposed to be used together while others are not. It ends in a subscript in dividing lines that lists the incipits of Inc. 2, 3, and 6 and instructs the *āšipu* to recite them three times over the ointment. The passage contains no instruction to actually use the ointment on the patient. The instructions in the rubrics of Inc. 2, 3, and 6 divide the ingredients clearly: ingredients 1–12 are used for a salve after the first step of the figurine ritual in the Inc. 2 rubric, ingredients 13–14 for a salve after the second step of the figurine ritual in the Inc. 3 rubric,¹⁷ and ingredients 15–19 for a salve after the third step of the figurine ritual in the Inc. 6 rubric.

Next comes a similar list, this time of ingredients used as fumigants in the rubrics of Inc. 3 and 6. This list ends in the words “this (is) fumigation” (*annū qutāru*). Again there is no indication that any of these

¹⁷ For the problems in restoring the two ingredient names, see above, Table 1, note b.

Table 2—Ritual content of *Lam. III* compared to subscripts on *Lam. I–II*.^a

ritual instruction	<i>Lam. III</i> line	<i>Lam. I–II</i> parallel
(headline “when you perform <i>Lamašnu</i> ”)	Lam. III 1	/
drawing of <i>Lamaštu</i> by the door	Lam. III 2–7	/
amulet tablet with Inc. 7 written on it to be hung over the head of the bed; dog figurines (made from the same material as the amulet tablet) to be placed next to doors and windows (one line broken, likely the first line of the enumeration of stones)	Lam. III 8–28	Lam. II 61–83 (rubric Inc. 7)
preparation instructions for a stone and coil necklace	Lam. III 29	/
preparation instructions for a plaster for the neck of the baby	Lam. III 30–43	Lam. II 113–118 (rubric Inc. 8)
fourteen pieces of <i>azallû</i> -plant to be placed on the neck of the baby	Lam. III 44f	Lam. I 58f (rubric Inc. 3)
preparation instructions for a stone and coil bracelet for the right hand of the baby	Lam. III 45f	Lam. II 212 (rubric Inc. 13)
preparation instructions for a stone and coil bracelet for the left hand of the baby	Lam. III 47–50	/
preparation instructions for a stone and coil anklet for the right foot of the baby	Lam. III 51f	/
preparation instructions for a stone and coil anklet for the left foot of the baby	Lam. III 53f	/
text of a short incantation	Lam. III 55f	/
text of another short incantation	Lam. III 57–60	/
instruction to recite both incantations seven times over the stones (presumably all the stones mentioned in <i>Lam. 30–56</i>)	Lam. III 61f	/
list of nineteen ingredients labelled “ointment”	Lam. III 63	/
	Lam. III 64–68	ingredients 1–12: Lam. I 32–36 (rubric Inc. 2) ingredients 13–14: Lam. I 61 ^b (rubric Inc. 3) ingredients 15–19: Lam. II 28–30 (rubric Inc. 6)
instructions to recite Inc. 2, 3 and 6 three times over the ointment	Lam. III 69–73	/
list of nine ingredients labelled “fumigation”	Lam. III 74–75	fumigants 1–2: Lam. I 60 (rubric Inc. 3) fumigants 3–9: Lam. II 32f (rubric Inc. 6)
(headline “when you anoint the baby”)	Lam. III 76	/
instructions matching each incantation from Inc. 1 to Inc. 13 (in that order) to a part of the baby’s body (from head to toe) over which it is to be recited during the anointment of the baby	Lam. III 77–97	/
instruction to recite Inc. 3 over an unspecified fumigation and place it on the right side of the door	Lam. III 98f	Lam. I 60 (rubric Inc. 3: instructions for fumigants 1–2)
instruction to recite Inc. 6 over three unspecified fumigations and place them to the left of the door, at the head of the bed, and at the foot of the bed	Lam. III 100–102	Lam. II 32f (rubric Inc. 6: instructions for fumigants 3–9 divided into three separate fumigations)
instructions to place pieces of wood near the head of the baby and recite the (non- <i>Lamašnu</i>) incantation “ <i>uḍug ḥul gal, saḡ-gaz zid-a</i> ” ^c	Lam. III 103–106	/
instructions to draw a flour circle around the bed and recite the (non- <i>Lamašnu</i>) incantations “ <i>saḡ ba, saḡ ba</i> ,” “ <i>tum mu būn</i> ,” “ <i>ab-ta nam-mu-un-da-ku₄-ku₄-de</i> ” and “ <i>En.ki lugal abzu-ke₄ sa₇ pa₃-da</i> ” ^d	Lam. III 107–109	/
figurine ritual, days 1–3 (figurine 1)	Lam. III 110–118	Lam. I 23–31 (rubric Inc. 2)
figurine ritual, day 4 (figurine 2)	Lam. III 119–129	Lam. I 47–57 (rubric Inc. 3)
figurine ritual, days 5–7 (figurine 3)	Lam. III 130–135	Lam. I 94–99 (rubric Inc. 4)
instruction for the nurse of the child to keep the salves ready while the previous ritual instructions are being carried out (end of day 7 of the figurine ritual)	<i>Lam. III 136f</i>	/
(heavily damaged) instruction mentioning a door and a number of dogs (<i>UR.GU₇ meš</i>)	Lam. III 138	/

^aMirelman, “Mesopotamian Magic” (2018): 370f. contains a table (17.4) that also outlines the content of the ritual tablet.^bFor the problems in restoring the two ingredient names, see above, Table 1, note b.^cAccording to SpTU 3, 69, §9, this incantation also features in the ritual series *Bit Mēveri*. There, the incantation’s ritual is the placement of apotropaic (Seidl and Sallaberger, “Der Heilige Baum” [2005–2006]: 67) twin figurines at the head of the sickbed.^dRestored after Schwemer, “*Bit mēveri*” (2023): 63, which gives the same sequence of four incantations. The full title of the final incantation is given in 1. 4 on the reverse of Schwemer’s *Bit mēveri* ritual tablet.

ingredients are to be used separately from others, even though the rubrics divide them (using fumigants 1–2 for the fumigation in the Inc. 3 rubric and fumigants 3–4, 5–6, and 7–9 for the three fumigations in the Inc. 6 rubric). The passage quotes no incantations and gives no ritual instructions; it is a plain list.

After another dividing line, we have a passage titled “when you anoint the baby” (*enūma šerra tumašša’u*). It instructs the *āšipu* to recite *Lamaštu* Incs. 1–13, one after the other in that order, each over one of thirteen body parts of the patient. The headline leads us to assume that this happens while the body part in question is anointed with a salve, but this is not stated explicitly, nor are any salve ingredients named. From the evidence of the ritual tablet alone, we must assume that all ingredients listed as “ointment” above were mixed into one salve.

After the last incantation incipit is assigned to a body part, the *āšipu* is instructed to recite Inc. 3 “over the fumigation” (*ina muḫḫi qutāri*) and place the fumigation to the right of the door. The ingredients for the fumigation in question are not named.

Then, the *āšipu* is told to recite Inc. 6 “over three fumigations” (*ina muḫḫu šalāšat qutāri*) and place them to the left of the door as well as the head and foot of the bed. Again, it is not said what ingredients are used for the fumigations, but it is explicitly said that there are three (as in the Inc. 6 rubric, which explicitly states what ingredients are supposed to be used for which fumigation).

The end of the passage “when you rub the baby” is taken up by standard concluding rites that are used in other rituals to secure the patient and the patient’s house against further demonic attacks: a piece of *e’ru*-wood and a palm shoot are pointed at the patient’s head, an *Udug hul*-incantation is recited, the patient’s bed is surrounded with a flour circle, and four (also non-*Lamaštu*) incantations protecting sickbed and house are recited.¹⁸

It is striking that the passage begins with “when” (*enūma*) you anoint the baby (i.e., “when you anoint the baby, you do X, Y, and Z”), rather than simply

“then you anoint the baby” as a plain instruction. Combined with the dividing lines before and after the text passage, this separates the described ritual actions from those that precede and follow. It is not suggested that the sickroom is fumigated, incantations are recited, and then the baby is anointed. Rather, the ritual tablet tells the reader what incantations to recite over the assembled fumigants, then gives a list of salve ingredients, and afterwards instructs the reader how to use fumigants and salve ingredients *when* they are used.

Following the dividing line, the next passage of the ritual tablet tells the reader how to conduct the three steps of the figurine ritual. These instructions are almost entirely identical to those given in the rubrics of Incs. 2, 3, and 4. The only difference is that the *Lam.* III parallels begin each ritual step with a day count—that is, “on the first day, [instructions for the first figurine]; on the fourth day, [instructions for the second figurine]; on the fifth day [instructions for the third figurine]” (*ina ūmi maḫri . . . ina rebī ūmi . . . ina ḫanši ūmi: Lam.* III 110–35).

After another dividing line, it is said that while the *āšipu* carries out the final instructions for the third step of the figurine ritual, the baby’s nurse is to keep the ointment ready. The following, final few lines of the ritual tablet are heavily damaged; they mention a door and several dogs. Farber estimates that “if this text [manuscript E, i.e., Sm 2056+] contained neither catchline nor colophon, a maximum of 5 lines of average length could thus be missing until the end of Tablet III”.¹⁹

Internal Problems of *Lam.* III

Lam. III shows several peculiarities in comparison to other ritual tablets. The expected pattern of a ritual tablet—according to ritual tablets of other series such as *Bit Rimki*,²⁰ *Bit Salā’ Mé*,²¹ *Maqlū*,²² *Mīs Pī*,²³ *Muššu’u*,²⁴ and *Šurpu*²⁵—is roughly as follows. It begins with an introductory line “when you perform (name of ritual)”

¹⁹ Farber, *Lamaštu* (2014), 141.

²⁰ Edited in Schwemer, *Der kontraintuitive König* (2019).

²¹ Edited in Ambos, *Der König im Gefängnis* (2013).

²² Edited in Abusch, *The Magical Ceremony Maqlū* (2016).

²³ Edited in Walker and Dick, *Mīs Pī* (2001).

²⁴ Edited in Köcher, “Ritualtafel der Serie ‘Einreibung’” (1966) and more recently Böck, “When You Perform the Ritual ‘Rubbing’” (2003).

²⁵ Edited in Reiner, *Šurpu* (1958). However, note that while the obverse of the ritual tablet behaves as one would expect, a passage on the reverse separated by dividing lines lists *Šurpu*-incantations in

¹⁸ The four final incantations can be found, in the same order, at the conclusion of a ritual on the Aššur *Bit mēseri* ritual tablet (Schwemer, “*Bit mēseri*” [2023]: 65, obv. 58–rev. 5). The first three of them and a weapon made of *e’ru*-wood deposited at the patient’s head conclude the ritual on the *Muššu’u* ritual tablet (Böck, “When You Perform the Ritual ‘Rubbing’” [2003]: 38–42); the first two of them conclude the part of *Maqlū* that is conducted at night (*Maqlū* Rit. 136’f). The relevant *Muššu’u* and *Maqlū* passages also begin with surrounding the sickbed with a flour circle.

(*enūma nēpeša ša* [name of ritual] *teppušu* or similar). Then it describes the ritual from beginning to end,²⁶ pairing ritual steps with the instruction “you recite (incantation incipit)” ([ÉN] *tamannu* or similar) to inform the ritual performer when one of the series’ incantations is to be recited.

Lam. III begins with the expected introductory line and is addressed to the ritual practitioner in the 2nd person singular, but it does not present one continuous ritual narrative structured around incantation incipits. As we have seen, *Lam.* III only instructs the ritual performer to recite *Lamaštu* incantations in *Lam.* III 69–102, two paragraphs concerning three incantations that are to be recited over the various salve ingredients and the recitation of all thirteen *Lamaštu* incantations during the anointing of the baby.

It is true that these thirty-three lines of the (at least) 138-line tablet thereby contain every single *Lamaštu* incipit. This would lead us to assume that *Lam.* III delineates a ritual that heals a baby by thoroughly anointing it with a salve while reciting Incs. 1–13 over the individual body parts from head to toe, comparable to the *Mušnu* ritual tablet.²⁷ Yet, as we have seen, even this comparatively complete guide through a ritual step lacks information: while it tells the reader to place four separate fumigations around the sickroom, it does not say which of the various fumigants listed above are supposed to be burned. This information is only given in the rubrics of the incantations that *Lam.* III instructs the reader to recite over the fumigations.

a different order, without ritual instructions, and with an entirely different Tablet numbering (*ibid.*, 4f).

²⁶ Mirelman (“Mesopotamian Magic” [2018]: 355) points to LKA 91, the ritual tablet of *Šurpu*, as evidence that ritual tablets do not always correspond to incantation tablets. However, while a section on the reverse of LKA 91 certainly lists *Šurpu*-incantations in a drastically different order than that known from the incantation tablets, the ritual instructions on the obverse under the heading *enūma nēpeša ša Šurpu teppušu* do use *Šurpu* incantations in the expected order (with the exception of one incantation omitted from Tablet IV). The relationship between obverse and reverse is unclear, as the lower edge of the tablet is missing. As the two sections are divided by a double line, they appear to be separate textual entities. The relevant section of the reverse of LKA 91 includes no ritual instructions at all, instead assigning *Šurpu*-incantations to Tablet numbers (also not corresponding to the numbers of the Tablets the incantations can be found in on the known incantation tablets of *Šurpu*) and ending in a note to next recite the series *Ilī ul īde*. Because of this, Simons, “Missing Tablet” (2024), considers this part of LKA 91 a catalogue (of a different version of *Šurpu* that combined it with at least one other ritual series) rather than a ritual tablet.

²⁷ Böck, “When You Perform the Ritual ‘Rubbing’” (2003): 8f.

Even more importantly, the ritual tablet does not tell the *āšipu* at what point of the ritual the baby is supposed to be anointed. According to the rubrics on *Lam.* I–II, the baby is anointed three times: after each step of the figurine ritual. As the instructions on *Lam.* III are given conditionally (“when you anoint the baby, you do X, Y, Z”), both sets of ritual instructions are in fact compatible. In that case, the *āšipu* would, in the anointment of the baby, recite all thirteen *Lamaštu* incantations one after the other whenever a step of the figurine ritual was completed. The ritual step would thereby reproduce the entire ritual *Lamaštu* over the body of the sick baby in a condensed form²⁸ whenever a *Lamaštu* figurine had been disposed of.²⁹

The figurine ritual itself must have taken up—by the mere day count provided by *Lam.* III—significantly more time than the anointment ritual. Yet none of the instructions given in its description at the end of the ritual tablet mention a single *Lamaštu* incipit.

Even more strangely, these final thirty lines begin with “on the first day, in the evening” (*ina ūmi mahri ina šēri*). An ancient Mesopotamian day began at sunset, not midnight or morning³⁰—a ritual action carried out in the evening of the first day of a ritual would therefore have to be among the very first ritual actions carried out by the *āšipu*. The ritual tablet, however, has already given 109 lines of ritual instruction up to this point—including the recitation of all thirteen incantations on *Lam.* I–II during the anointment of the baby. Considering the length of the thirteen incantations, this must have taken up a significant amount of time. Furthermore, the last step of the figurine ritual is directly followed by references to ointment, a door, and dogs—which otherwise play a role in instructions in previous passages of the ritual tablet (i.e., the dog figurines

²⁸ I.e., only the incantations would have been recited during the anointment, one by one, whereby their magical power was invoked even if the accompanying ritual actions (according to the *Lam.* I–II rubrics) were not repeated. The latter seems obvious here, as several of the rubric’s ritual actions stretched across multiple days, which would have slowed down the anointment to no end.

²⁹ Furthermore, as described above, the text of the individual *Lamaštu* incantations sometimes matches the ritual steps in their rubrics. The most striking example is Inc. 2, which mentions giving *Lamaštu* a black dog and libating water, and is followed by a rubric that instructs the *āšipu* to give a figurine of *Lamaštu* a black dog and libate water. The text of the incantations does not reference specific body parts of the patient, let alone those the *āšipu* is supposed to anoint with salve while reciting said incantations.

³⁰ Streck, “Tag” (2011): 403.

described in *Lam.* III 15–28 and the instructions for the anointment of the baby on *Lam.* III 76–109).

If we combine this passage with the information provided by the rubrics of *Lam.* I–II, the order of the ritual steps makes sense. The first step of the figurine ritual (beginning, according to the ritual tablet, on the evening of the first day) is given in the rubric of the second incantation of the series. The rubrics of Incs. 3 and 4 give the next two steps of the figurine ritual, combined with anointments and fumigations. Then the rubric of Inc. 6 leads from the last step of the figurine ritual into a final anointment of the baby, and Inc. 7 instructs the *āšipu* to place dog figurines near doors and windows. This order of events also makes more logical sense as an exorcism: the demon is first driven from the house and *then* the house is protected against her return, rather than the other way around, as the order of ritual steps on *Lam.* III would suggest.

Finally, the figurine ritual does mention recitations of incantations. It only neglects to give the incipits that would tell the *āšipu* which incantation is meant. This, on its own, would make it impossible to use *Lam.* III as a guide through the ritual *Lamaštu*. The necessary information is only provided by the rubrics on *Lam.* I–II, where the individual steps of the figurine ritual are spread across the rubrics of Incs. 2–4 as “its (the incantation’s) ritual.” Here, there is no question which incantation is referred to when the instructions tell the *āšipu* to recite “the incantation.”

All of the above suggests that *Lam.* III was no “traditional” ritual tablet that provided a guide through a ritual from beginning to end. Rather, *Lam.* III appears as a supplement to the ritual instructions provided in the rubrics of *Lam.* I–II. It first assembles, in one place, all the “Ritualmittel” used during the ritual, with instructions on how to prepare them (*Lam.* III 2–75). It then explains in detail how to anoint the baby with the various salves, and where to place the various fumigations that accompany the anointments (*Lam.* III 76–109). Finally, it describes the figurine ritual as a whole, explaining how the ritual steps relate to each other chronologically (“on the first day, . . . , on the fourth day, . . . , on the fifth day, . . .”); the broken end of this description appears to lead into the final anointing of the baby and the various protective measures that follow it (*Lam.* III 110–138). Having all “Ritualmittel” that needed to be prepared or assembled beforehand in one place needs no further explanation. It is easy to miss an ingredient mentioned in one line of a 400-line, two-tablet series, and it would have been undesirable to tell the parents of a sick child

that the treatment of their baby’s potentially lethal illness must be interrupted because the ritual professional has forgotten the blue wool.

As for the rest of the ritual tablet: the form of the rubrics make them unsuitable to communicate the information added in *Lam.* III 76–138. The beginning of each rubric tells us that it contains “its (the incantation’s) ritual” (DU₃. DU₃. BI). The rubric following Inc. 4 therefore tells us that the *āšipu* should leave a figurine of *Lamaštu* near the baby’s head for three days. It does not mention that these three days begin on the fifth day of the figurine ritual as the whole: that would relate to other incantations (namely, Incs. 2 and 3).

The ritual tablet provides the necessary additional information by tying the ritual steps together through the small but significant addition of a day count (“on the first day [rubric of Inc. 2]”, “on the fourth day [rubric of Inc. 3]”, and “on the fifth day [rubric of Inc. 4]”). It then leads over into the anointment of the baby and (presumably, though this is heavily broken) the protective measures around the house. This implies that the rest of the ritual was carried out at the end of the final day of the figurine ritual (day seven). No further information is needed to understand how the various ritual steps work together chronologically.

Cross-referencing Rubrics and Ritual Tablet

If we combine the information given in the rubrics with that added by the ritual tablet, the result is a fairly complete picture of a complex ritual, as we see in Table 3. This combination of both sets of ritual instructions includes every ritual instruction given on *Lam.* I–III. It also results in a logical exorcism, beginning with the removal of *Lamaštu* from the body of the patient and ending with protective measures to ensure that *Lamaštu* does not return.

Conclusion

What exactly are the “ritual tablets” at the end of Mesopotamian magical series? In most cases they seem (at least in theory) to have been guidelines to be followed, step by step, from the beginning of the ritual to its end. This paper has argued that the ritual tablet of *Lamaštu* is different: as we have seen, it leaves out so much information that it is almost impossible to use it as a guideline. Most notably, the final part of the ritual tablet is explicitly said to contain instructions for the beginning of the ritual’s first day. We have suggested

Table 3—Sources of ritual information

Inc.	information from <i>Lam.</i> I–II rubrics	information added by <i>Lam.</i> III
1	cylinder attached to baby's neck 1 st figurine	<i>not mentioned</i> near-parallel, adds absolute chronology
2	1 st anointment and which ingredients to use for the salve 2 nd figurine	(1 st figurine = ritual days 1–3) incantations for salve ingredients and how often to recite them near-parallel, adds absolute chronology (2 nd figurine = ritual day 4)
3	neck plaster 1 st fumigation and which ingredients to use	near-parallel, adds no information ^a incantation for fumigants and placement of fumigations in sickroom
4	2 nd anointment and which ingredients to use for the salve 3 rd figurine	incantations for salve ingredients and how often to recite them near-parallel, adds absolute chronology (3 rd figurine = ritual days 5–7)
5	figurine ritual in case baby dies	<i>not mentioned</i>
end of Tablet I		
6	3 rd anointment and which ingredients to use for the salve	absolute chronology (carried out directly after 3rd figurine sub-ritual) incantations for salve ingredients and how often to recite them
7	2 nd fumigation and which ingredients to use for the salve amulet tablet, dog figurines	incantation for fumigants and placement of fumigants in sickroom parallel for amulet tablet and dog figurines, adds that a drawing of Lamaštu is to be drawn near the door
8	coil necklace for patient's neck	parallel for coils, adds what stones are to be wrapped with the coils and what incantations to recite over the stones
9	<i>no rubric</i>	stone bracelet for patient's right hand and what incantations to recite over the stones
10	<i>no rubric</i>	stone bracelet for patient's left hand and what incantations to recite over the stones
11	<i>no rubric</i>	stone anklet for patient's right foot and what incantations to recite over the stones
12	<i>no rubric</i>	stone anklet for patient's left foot and what incantations to recite over the stones
13	anointment and pieces of <i>azallû</i> plant for patient's neck in case patient develops fever	near-parallel for pieces of <i>azallû</i> plant, adds no information ^b
end of Tablet II		

^a However, the parallel for the “Ritualmittel” used for the plaster is contained within the passage on materials to be attached to the baby's neck, arms and feet. The passage as a whole does add information to *Lam.* I–II — see Incs. 8–13.

^b However, the parallel is contained within the passage on materials to be attached to the baby's neck, arms and feet. The passage as a whole does add information to *Lam.* I–II; see Incs. 8–13.

instead that the *Lamaštu* ritual tablet is a collection of additional information which was placed on a separate Tablet because it did not suit the format of the “incantation tablets.” In other words, the user was expected to combine the ritual instructions on *Lam.* I–II with those on the ritual tablet (*Lam.* III). Thus, the series' use of parallel text passages makes it easier for the user to find the sets of information that belong together on the three *Lamaštu* Tablets.

This interpretation is supported by the fact that, as the present paper has observed, the parallel ritual instructions in the rubrics (*Lam.* I–II) and the ritual tablet (*Lam.* III) are almost never identical. For example,

when the ritual tablet repeats the rubrics' instructions for the figurine ritual, it provides every step of this ritual with a precise date—information lacking in the rubrics. Conversely, when the ritual tablet lists ointments and fumigants to help the *āšipu* prepare, it presents the same names in the same order as the rubrics, but without telling the reader how the ingredients should be combined: this is unnecessary in a part of the ritual tablet that merely collects the “Ritualmittel” to be used.

Cross-referencing *Lamaštu*'s two sets of ritual instructions in the way this paper has suggested not only solves the internal problems of the ritual tablet, but also gives the two seemingly contradictory sets of ritual

instructions a coherent logic. The incantations and their ritual steps belong together, and they follow an order dictated by the logic of the ritual as a whole.

Indeed, the ritual, as here reconstructed, has a strong central narrative. The demon *Lamaštu* is taken from the body of the baby; she is banished into the wilderness and subjected to the judgement of Šamaš; she is defeated by the *āšipu*. Finally, the body of the baby and the house of the family are protected against her return. While the basic idea that a baby's illness was caused by demonic possession seems irrational after thousands of years of subsequent medical discoveries, the methods developed to get rid of the demon do not.

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