

Kamadme, the Sumerian Counterpart of the Demon Lamaštu

A. R. George (London)

The female demon whose Sumerian name was written ^dDIM.ME was believed to be the source of a very specific evil. She preyed mostly on women in childbirth and newborn babies and was held responsible for infant mortality generally. Her child-snatching activities have been well explored recently, and it is not the purpose of this paper to consider her history, mythology, iconography, and character (see Wiggermann 2000), nor to comment on the magic rites and spells deployed to counter her evil (see Farber 2014). The intention here is to clarify her name.

Ever since Myhrman's pioneering edition of the Standard Babylonian "Labartu" incantation series (1902), the Akkadian and Sumerian pronunciations of this demon's names have given trouble. The dispute over whether the Akkadian should be read as Lamaštu or Labartu was settled by the syllabic spelling ^dla-ma-aš-tim in an Old Babylonian legal document pointed out by Ungnad in 1925 (see further Farber 2014: 41 n. 10), and confirmed by *la-ma-aš-tam* in an Old Babylonian incantation published by Böhl in 1934 (now Geller and Wiggermann 2008: 150 line 7). However, the pronunciation of ^dDIM.ME in Sumerian texts continued to elude definitive explication (Farber 1983: 439). Were the signs to be read phonetically ("Dimme") or did they conceal some other reality?

Farber's new edition of the Lamaštu incantations (2014) is a great step forward in the scholarly presentation of this corpus. In introducing the "female spirit named Dimme," however, he offers no new discussion of the interpretation and pronunciation of the spelling ^dDIM.ME but refers to a previous statement of the evidence by Wiggermann (2000). Wiggermann noted that the name "Dimme" had resisted interpretation, but that the element written ME must be a phonetic indicator. This is plausible, for DIM appears with other additional signs to signify other demons, who often

appear in sequence: ^dDÌM.ME — ^dDÌM.(ME).A — ^dDÌM.(ME).LAGAB = Lamaštu, Labāšu, and Aḥḥāzu.

A recently published Middle Babylonian manuscript of the bilingual word-list *Ea* VII brings new evidence to the matter, for it allows for the first time the reading in full of this text's section on the Sumerian pronunciations and Akkadian meanings of the sign DÌM (there written LÚ-šeššig) (1):

84	lu-ga-am	DÌM	<i>mi-[i-tum]</i>	“dead person”
85	ka-ma	DÌM	<i>zu-u[m-rum]</i>	“body”
86	ka-ma-ad	DÌM	<i>la-m[a-aš-tum]</i>	“Lamaštu”
87	ri-in	DÌM	<i>šur-[šum]</i>	“root”
89	di-im	DÌM	<i>ma-ku-[tum]</i>	“post”

Ea VII 84–89 after Civil 2010: 10, line 85 collated from original

According to this exposition the sign DÌM, when deployed in the spelling of the Sumerian name corresponding to Lamaštu in Akkadian, has the pronunciation *kamad* (or *kamat*, with Civil). This new evidence is corroborated by two long-known texts, which it helps elucidate: (2) a Middle Assyrian copy of a syllabically written Sumerian incantation, in which, among various demonic forces, are listed ka-ma-ad-ru ḥe-mé-en ka-ma-ad ḥe-mé-en ‘be you a *kamadru*, be you a *kamad*’ (Lambert 1965: 285 line 13); and (3) a short Old Babylonian exorcistic spell that opens with a passage in an unidentified language and continues with this address to a demonic power:

^dkam¹-ma-ad-me-en
 ni-maḥ-me-en
 áb-súmun-me-en
 sis-kur zu nu-me-en
 a si-lá ḥé ḥar nu
 si-lá zi-zi-ir
 si-lá zi-zi-ir

YOS 11, 66: 22–28 (cf. Cavigneaux – Al-Rawi 1994: 79)

1 Van Dijk et al. (1985: 44) transliterated ^dx-ma-ad and commented that the undeciphered “sign looks more like suḥur (over erasure?).” Cavigneaux collated it and found it to be 𒄠×U.DIŠ (Cavigneaux – Al-Rawi 1994: 81). In the light of *Ea* VII 86, it must be a poorly executed kam(𒄠×BAD).

You are a *kamad*, you are an august queen, you are a wild cow, you know no sacrificial offering. Oh, be gone, ... ! Be gone, depart! Be gone, depart!

In both these incantations *kamad* is a type of demon whose attributes are compatible with Lamaštu.

Given that DÌM is shown by *Ea* VII (1) to have had the pronunciations *kama* and *kamad*, the variant sign forms of DÌM become newly interesting. As is well known, the sign DÌM was written LÚ-šeššig in Old Babylonian texts (Borger 2004: no. 516), but sometimes this took the form of LÚ+GAM (Mittermayer 2006: 103 no. 254).² Later scribes developed forms that looked like RAB+GAM, RAB+KÁM, and LUGAL+KÁM (Borger 2004: no. 264). It looks as if the evolution of the sign was phonetically motivated, manipulating the *šeššig* wedges to produce sign elements that could act as phonetic complements—gam and kám—and thus determine the contextually correct reading of the polyvalent sign DÌM = LÚ-šeššig. In this regard it is interesting to revisit the god-list An = *Anu ša amēli*, which ends with an exposition of the five demons whose names were originally compounded with DÌM (LÚ-šeššig). The passage is reconstructed from two Middle Assyrian manuscripts (4):

153	^d [x x x]	[^d]RAB ^{kám-me}	<i>la-maš-tu</i>
154	x [x x x]	[^d RAB ^{kám-me}].A	<i>la-ba-šu</i>
155	[x x x]	[^d RAB ^{kám-me}].LAGAB	<i>aḷ-ḷa-zu</i>
156	[x x]-tab	^d [RA]B ^{[kám-m]e} .TAB	<i>bi-bi-tu</i> , var. <i>be-be-nu</i>
157	^d MIN-gi	^d RAB ^{kám-me} .GI ₆	<i>li-li-tu</i>

CT 24, 44: 142–46, var. from Litke 1998: pl. 47 line 78

In both manuscripts the sign DÌM is written as RAB compounded with KÁM, but the latter is written smaller and in superior position, indicating that it was understood as a pronunciation gloss (that the sign ME is also so written is less easy to explain). It would seem that these manuscripts capture the evolution of the sign DÌM from LÚ-šeššig to RAB+KÁM at a time when the KÁM was functioning as a gloss rather than as a phonetic complement. Whether

² Note here the gloss lu-ga-am in *Ea* VII 84, quoted above. The value lugam of DÌM is substantiated by the syllabic writing of the temple-name é-DÌM-ma as é-lu-ga-ma in the litany MS 3071: 6 (unpublished) // VAS 2, 25 i 10.

gloss or phonetic complement, the sign KÁM is only a partial exposition of the phonetic reality, which, as the three passages (1–3) have indicated, is *kamad*.

The evidence for DÌM = *kamad* in the names of demons can be compared with the pronunciation guides entered in two Old Babylonian lexical lists. The first such entry is UET 7, 93 rev. 18 (5): ^dGIŠ.DÌM.ME = ^rd¹x[-x]-^rx x¹-um. Tonietti's reading (1979: 308) of the broken signs as g[a-x x-q]u-um was born of a desire to harmonize it with a gloss in the incantation YOS 11, 90: 4, a gloss then thought to refer to ^dDÌM.ME, and read by van Dijk (1985: 51) as ga-ba-a[s]-ku, by Tonietti as ga-b[a-á]š²-ku. However, the signs in YOS 11, 90 were subsequently explained as an Akkadian gloss *ga-ra-bu-um* on the following word, the skin disease GIG-ḫa-ab (Cavigneaux – Al-Rawi 1995: 178), and can be ignored here. In any case, formal grounds make it unlikely that the entry in the right-hand column of (5) is a pronunciation gloss on the entry in the left-hand column. The rest of this list, and the format of lexical lists generally, impose on the line the structure Sumerian (left col.) = Akkadian (right col.). The broken word ending in -um should therefore be no pronunciation gloss on ^dGIŠ.DÌM.ME, but instead its counterpart in Akkadian, i.e., Lamaštu. The only signs certainly identified in the right-hand column are the divine determinative and final -um. Collation of the tablet is currently impracticable, but provisionally one may suggest ^rd¹l[a-ma]-^raš¹-t[u¹]-um.

The second list, YBC 9844, has more to offer. It is unpublished, but known to me from a hand-copy and transliteration in the *Nachlass* of the late W. G. Lambert (Folios 1680, 7504). In addition, Enrique Jiménez has kindly supplied me with several photographs of the passage. From these sources I have extracted illustrations of the relevant passage (Figs. 1–2).

The list is set out in three sub-columns, giving (a) a pronunciation gloss, (b) the standard Sumerian spelling and (c) its Akkadian equivalent. Combining all the evidence, I read in lines 20–21 (6):

(a)	(b)	(c)	
ka-ma-ad-me	^d DÌM(LÚ-šeššig).ME	<i>la-maš-tum</i>	“Lamaštu”
ka-ma- ^r x ¹ -ru	^d DÌM(LÚ-šeššig).A	<i>bi-bi-tum</i>	“Chill-demon”

Here in line 20 is a clear statement that the pronunciation of ^dDÌM.ME, when it is the counterpart of Lamaštu, is *kamadme*. It confirms Wiggermann's suggestion that ME is to be read phonetically and commends to us a reading of Lamaštu's Sumerian name as ^dkamad(DÌM)-me.



FIGURE 1. YBC 9844 obv. 20–21: (top) sub-cols. a–b, (bottom) sub-cols. b–c.
Photographs by Enrique Jiménez, courtesy of the Yale Babylonian Collection.



FIGURE 2. YBC 9844 obv. 20–21: detail of W. G. Lambert's pencil drawing from his Nachlass (Folio 168o).

In line 21 of YBC 9844 the pronunciation gloss (a) on ^dDÌM.A might then be expected to read ka-ma-ad-ru, in agreement with ka-ma-ad-ru in the Middle Assyrian incantation (2). The cuneiform does not yield this without emendation of the third sign, but ka-ma-^rdu¹-ru looks very possible (ka-ma-^rda¹-ru is not excluded). Since the sign A has a reading duru₅, the name written ^dDÌM.A and pronounced *kamadru* and *kamaduru* can be harmonized with the syllabic evidence by transliterating ^dkamad-duru₅ ‘wet *kamad*’, i.e., a demon of damp nature and clammy feel.

More new evidence comes from Old Babylonian incantations in the Schøyen Collection. In MS 3069 obv. 5 (George 2016: 81–82, II.B.4. no. 39), a context similar to the Middle Assyrian incantation quoted above, one encounters among well-known demons the phrase (7) ka-ma-ad ḫul-ḫul ḫe-m[e-en] ‘be you evil *kamad*-demons’. This plural evidently refers collectively to the various demons whose names were compounded with ^dDÌM, including Kamadme = Lamaštu and Kamad(u)ru = Bibitu and Labāšu.

Two manuscripts in the Schøyen Collection have the text of an Old Babylonian incantation already known from tablets now in Baghdad and

Oxford (TIM 9, 63: 17'-23' // OECT 5, 55, ed. Tonietti 1979: 304-5; Farber 2014: 196-97). The incantation's incipit on the two published tablets, and on one of the tablets in the Schøyen Collection, MS 3105/1 ii 7' (George 2016: 89, II.B.8. no. 22c), runs (8) ^dDÌM.ME mu dumu an-na 'Kamadme is (her) name, child of An'. However, on the second Schøyen tablet, MS 3067: 28 (George 2016: 89, II.B.8. no. 28c), the incipit reads (9) ^dka-^rma'-ad'-ge-^ren' mu dumu a[n-na], where the first word is obviously a syllabic spelling of the name written ^dDÌM.ME in the other three manuscripts. The spelling is clearly related to the syllabic spellings of DÌM in (1) *Ea* VII 86 (ka-ma-ad); (2) the Middle Assyrian incantation (ka-ma-ad, ka-ma-ad-ru); and the Old Babylonian texts (3) YOS 11, 66: 22 (^dkam'-ma-ad), (6) YBC 9844: 20-21 (ka-ma-ad-me, ka-ma-^rdu'-ru), and (7) MS 3069: 5 (ka-ma-ad). Probably it represents ka-ma-ad-me distorted by a corruption: me interpreted as mén, then written ge-en. Alternatively, MS 3067 is witness to a pronunciation not yet substantiated by other evidence. Alongside this Old Babylonian voice of dissent, but from a much later period, is another (less certain) syllabic spelling of ^dDÌM.ME, which occurs on a Late Babylonian manuscript of the Exorcist's Manual (KAR 44 and duplicates, ed. Geller 2000: 242-54; Jean 2006: 62-82). Where MSS Ae have: dab im u (var. om.) ^dDÌM.ME, MS d reads (10): dab im u kal(-)sa-^rx x' (Geller 2000: 249 line 13).³ This remains to be explained.⁴

In sum, while some evidence suggests that other readings may have also been current (9, 10), the authoritative lexical text *Ea* (1), other syllabic evidence for the reading of ^dDÌM.ME (2-3), the pronunciation gloss in the god-list YBC 9844 (6), and a further syllabic spelling in a tablet now in the Schøyen Collection (7) all suggest that we transliterate it ^dkamad-me. The syllabic spelling ka-ma-ad-ru and gloss ka-ma-^rdu'-ru render ^dDÌM.A = ^dkamad-duru₅. Compounds of ^dDÌM that signify other demons (4) no doubt also use the value kamad of DÌM.

3 Collation of Rm 717+ confirms Geller's copy. I am grateful to Nils Heeßel for reminding me of this attestation.

4 Daniel Schwemer proposes LAMMA²-sa²-tum², in error for Lamaštu (personal communication).

Bibliography

- Böhl, F. M. Th. de L. 1934. *Mededeelingen uit de Leidsche verzameling van spijkerschrift-inscripties II. Oorkonden uit de periode van 2000–1200 v. Chr.* (Mededeelingen der Koninklijke Akademie van Wetenschappen, Afdeling Letterkunde 78 B 2; Amsterdam).
- Borger, R. 2004. *Mesopotamisches Zeichenlexikon* (Alter Orient und Altes Testament 305; Münster).
- Cavigneaux, A. – F. Al-Rawi 1994. Charmes de Sippar et de Nippur, in: *Cinquante-deux réflexions sur le Proche-Orient ancien offertes en hommage à Léon De Meyer*, eds. H. Gasche – M. Tanret – C. Janssen – A. Degraeve (Leuven), 73–89.
- Cavigneaux, A. – F. Al-Rawi 1995. Textes magiques de Tell Haddad (Textes de Tell Haddad II), troisième partie, *Zeitschrift für Assyriologie* 85: 169–220.
- Civil, M. 2010. *The Lexical Texts in the Schøyen Collection* (Cornell University Studies in Assyriology and Sumerology 12. Manuscripts in the Schøyen Collection, Cuneiform Texts 5; Bethesda, MD).
- Farber, W. 1983. Lamaštu, *Reallexikon der Assyriologie* 7, 439–46.
- Farber, W. 2014. *Lamaštu: An Edition of the Canonical Series of Lamaštu Incantations and Rituals and Related Texts from the Second and First Millennia B.C.* (Mesopotamian Civilizations 17; Winona Lake, IN).
- Geller, M. J. 2000. Incipits and Rubrics, in: *Wisdom, Gods and Literature: Studies in Assyriology in Honour of W. G. Lambert*, ed. A. R. George – I. L. Finkel (Winona Lake, IN) 225–58.
- Geller, M. J. – F. A. M. Wiggermann. 2008. Duplicating Akkadian Magic, in: *Studies in Ancient Near Eastern World View and Society Presented to Marten Stol on the Occasion of His 65th Birthday*, ed. R. J. van der Spek (Bethesda, MD), 149–60.
- George, A. R. 2016. *Mesopotamian Incantations and Related Texts in the Schøyen Collection* (Cornell University Studies in Assyriology and Sumerology 32. Manuscripts in the Schøyen Collection, Cuneiform Texts 8; Bethesda, MD).
- Jean, C. 2006. *La magie néo-assyrienne en contexte: Recherches sur le métier d'exorciste et le concept d'āšipūtu* (State Archives of Assyria Studies 17; Helsinki).
- Lambert, W. G. 1965. A Middle Assyrian Tablet of Incantations, in: *Studies in Honor of Benno Landsberger on his Seventy-Fifth Birthday, April 21, 1965*, eds. H. G. Güterbock – T. Jacobsen (Assyriological Studies 16; Chicago, IL) 283–88.
- Litke, R. L. 1998. *A Reconstruction of the Assyro-Babylonian God-Lists, AN: ^dA-nu-um and AN: Anu šá amēli* (Texts from the Babylonian Collection 3; New Haven, CT).
- Mittermayer, C. (with P. Attinger). 2006. *Altbabylonische Zeichenliste der sumerisch-literarischen Texte* (Orbis Biblicus et Orientalis; Fribourg – Göttingen).
- Myhrman, D. 1902. Die Labartu-Texte: Babylonische Beschwörungsformeln nebst Zauberverfahren gegen die Dämonin Labartu, *Zeitschrift für Assyriologie* 16: 141–200.

- Tonietti, M. V. 1979. Un incantesimo sumerico contro la Lamaštu, *Orientalia* NS 48: 301–23.
- Ungnad, A. 1925. *Labartu* oder *Lamaštu*? *Zeitschrift für Assyriologie* 36: 108.
- van Dijk, J. – A. Goetze – M. I. Hussey 1985. *Early Mesopotamian Incantations and Rituals* (Yale Oriental Series, Babylonian Texts 11; New Haven – London).
- Wiggermann, F. A. M. 2000. Lamaštu, Daughter of Anu: A Profile, in: M. Stol, *Birth in Babylonia and the Bible. Its Mediterranean Setting* (Cuneiform Monographs 14; Groningen) 217–52.