

The Transmission of Solar Eclipse Omens in Anatolia and the Near East: Textual Agreements between *Malhama* Texts and Omens from *Enuma Anu Enlil*¹



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The progress in the publication of the Babylonian omen series Enuma Anu Enlil allows for revisiting the relationship between the Assyro-Babylonian divinatory tradition and the malhama, a meteorological divinatory genre of Late Antiquity and the Medieval Age. The textual agreements between the solar eclipse omens of the Arabic and Turkish malhama texts with the respective omens in Enuma Anu Enlil may suggest that the genre continued its textual transmission for centuries because of its role in agricultural society and its grounding in oral tradition.

Anahtar Kelimeler: Melhame, Fal, Falcılık, Bâbil yıldızbilimi, Enuma Anu Enlil,

Enuma Anu Enlil fal serisine dair yapılan yeni yayınların bilgisiyle Asur-Bâbil fal geleneği ile Geç Antik Çağ ve Ortaçağ'dan bilinen meteorolojik bir kehanet metin türü olan melhame arasındaki ilişki yeniden gözden geçirilebilir. Arapça ve Türkçe melhame metinlerindeki güneş tutulması kehanetleriyle aynı konuda Enuma Anu Enlil serisinde kaydedilmiş fallar arasındaki metinsel bağlantılar, söz konusu metin türünün tarım toplumu ve sözel geleneğin parçası olarak yüzyıllar boyu metinsel aktarımını sürdürdüğü izlenimi vermektedir.

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Introduction

Enuma Anu Enlil (EAE) is a series of celestial divination. Its textualization goes as far back as the 18th century BC according to its own witness.¹ Given the present state of evidence outside the series itself, however, the eleventh century BC appears to be a more concrete starting point for a first textual stabilization which was fully achieved by the seventh century BC (Rochberg 1984). Most of the copies of the series are from the late-eighth to the third century BC and there is a standardized series with 6500-7000 omens in total, all divided into approximately 70 “tablets” (Koch–Westenholz 1995: 78-79):

- Tablets 1-14: lunar phenomena, titled “sightings of the moon” (igi.du₈.a.meš ša 30)
- Tablets 15-22/23: lunar eclipses.
- Tablets 23/24-39/40: solar omens (including solar eclipses after Tablet 30; the tablet numbers vary in the case of the solar eclipse omens [cf. Fincke 2013]).
- Tablets 40-49/50: meteorological omens.
- Tablets 50-70+: planetary and stellar omens.

As the main Babylonian series of celestial divination (not astrology, strictly speaking; Rochberg 2004: 207-208), EAE was a series considered to have been authored by the god of wisdom, Ea, on an ancient tablet (*tuppu mahrû*; Koch–Westenholz 1995: 74). This tablet was given to humanity for them to anticipate the decisions of the gods in the world of nature and man. The series was also edited by the mythical sage Adapa, later by the presumably more historical figure of Esagil-kin-apla (traditionally dated to the 11th century BC). Tradition also records that scholars in Mesopotamia’s major cities produced copies and selections from the series (Koch–Westenholz 1995: 74-76). Differing forms of the omens co-existed.

Among the body of literatures attributed to the prophet Daniel in Late Antiquity and the medieval ages was the Arabic meteorological divinatory texts dubbed *malhama* (Fahd 1966: 407-417). Its Syriac origins as well as its more ancient origins have already been noted (Furlani 1921: 157-168). The arrangement of the omens and the connections made between the observation of natural phenomena and the predictions of future events, as well as associated themes, resemble the omens found in the much earlier Assyro-Babylonian cuneiform corpus (Fodor 1974: 85-86, 94-96, with previous literature). The resemblances appear, however, to be “short of textual agreements” (Fodor 1974: 85).

The Assyro-Babylonian omens and the Turkish *malhama* texts published since the time of Fodor’s 1974 article provide new insights on this matter. I will argue that there are indeed *textual* agreements between the solar eclipse omens of the Arabic *malhama*, Abu’l Fazl’s Turkish translation of a *malhama*, and the solar eclipse omens codified in the

Babylonian astronomical series Enuma Anu Enlil. The present study presents these textual agreements and aims to set a research agenda for a future exploration of the roots and historical development of this important genre and of its implications for models of cultural diffusion and transmission in Anatolia and the wider ancient Near East.

The state of research on the *malhama* remains rudimentary. One problem is that there are a great number of unedited manuscripts mainly in Europe and the Middle East (Fodor 1974: 86). The non-linear development of the Arabic versions needs to be further studied. In a master’s thesis work initiated in 2016, Ibrahim Al-Khaffaf (Fatih Sultan Mehmet Vakıf University) will study several manuscripts of the Arabic *malhama* text, thus preparing a new basis for the study of this vast literature. Already now it has become evident that several versions of the Arabic text existed.

The *malhama* genre enjoyed great popularity. Abu’l Fazl Hubaysh bin İbrahim et-Tiflisî, a major scholar of his day, translated an Arabic *malhama* into Persian (which was then the court language) and presented it to the Seljuk Sultan Kılıçarslan II (reigned 1155-92) shortly after the latter’s accession (Boyras 2006: 27-28). This Persian text was translated into Turkish in the consequent centuries. The same text was also translated and combined with other related – and yet some currently unidentified – source material by a certain Yazıcı Selahaddin (or: Salih), who completed the translation under the title *Şemsiyye* (“Solar Phenomena”) in 1408-9 (*Şemsiyye* is edited in Terzi 1994; Batur 1996; Sevinç 1999). In 1466, his son Yazıcıoğlu Ahmed Bican rewrote the *Şemsiyye* using a number of *malhama* texts under the title *Bostan’ül-Hakayık* (Turan 1998: 687).

Abu’l Fazl’s text was recognized in Turkish scribal tradition, but it was *Şemsiyye* that served as the base text for the Turkish versions of the *malhama* in the coming centuries. Ebrî Hoca İbn Âdil’s work in prose was completed in 1459-60, incorporating the *malhama* with various astrological texts. The *malhama* genre flourished in Turkey in the following centuries. A major translation of *Şemsiyye* in 1635-6 by Cevrî İbrahim Çelebi, a major literary figure of this period, modified its language with Arabic and Persian words according to the standards of 17th century Ottoman Turkish (edited in Boyraz 2006: 304-429). Turkish scribal tradition maintained the *malhama* genre alongside a rich range of other astrological and metaphysical divinatory texts in the Ottoman period (Gür 2012).

The Turkish *malhama* texts were copied and transmitted over centuries following three main versions: Abu’l Fazl’s text, the *Şemsiyye*, and Cevrî’s translation. The *malhama* became part of Turkish folklore (Turan 1998; Boyraz 2006: 105-268). *Şemsiyye* was copied as late as 1905 by Mehmed Hulûsi of Bayburt (Köksal 2013: 4). Villagers in Sivas still used *malhama* texts during agricultural activities in the 1980s (Boyraz 2006: 56, fn. 21).

Solar Eclipse Omens: The Textual Agreements

Given the great passage of time since the reception of the Arabic text into Turkish tradition, directly or through Persian (not to count the diversity of the text within Arabic

¹ Cf. the Venus Tablet of Ammişaduqa (EAE 63). Ammişaduqa was king between 1647-1626 BC.

tradition itself), one may naturally expect that the content of the *malhama* text will have changed greatly since its presumed Assyro-Babylonian origins. My findings do not contradict this assumption but they call for a more nuanced approach based on concrete textual agreements. How would the Assyro-Babylonian material have made its way into Arabic? Why was the entire genre named *malhama*? Any instance, therefore, that *textual agreements* can be found between a *malhama* text and specific Assyro-Babylonian omens is precious and can provide us with insights. The Turkish manuscripts are also of significance for the present study, as several solar eclipse omens in a Turkish translation of Abu'l Fazl's Persian text sometimes agree with entries in EAE. Compared to modern facilities, the Turkish scribal tradition had the benefit of even more Arabic and Persian manuscripts throughout the centuries, now lost, which they no doubt used when composing a *malhama*. They may have, in some instances, engaged with an earlier Arabic text or text passages that are no longer extant in Arabic manuscripts.

For the comparison, I use the currently best preserved Arabic *malhama* text found at a bookseller in Najaf by A. Fodor (henceforth I will refer to this as the Najaf edition; Fodor 1974: 97-133 [translation, which I follow in the present study], 135-159 [Arabic text]), and the oldest dated (1563) Turkish translation of Abu'l Fazl's text (Süleymaniye Library, Ayasofya Section, No. 2705; edited in Boyraz 276-302 [in 35 folios]). The solar eclipse omens of EAE have not yet been published (Francesca Rochberg is preparing an edition; Rutz 2006: 66, fn. 17). A recently published cuneiform tablet (UM 29-15-393), which according to its own witness was copied from a writing board from Susa, contains a copy of the EAE solar eclipse omens in a monthly order (UM 29-15-393, lines 18-103; Rutz 2006: 77-82).² This Susa extract is missing the apodoses for the eighth and twelfth months with text breaks in parts of the other months. Out of methodological restraint, comparisons will not be made with similar omen apodoses in EAE or with other agreeing Turkish *malhama* texts. The comparison seeks rather to compare consecutive omens found month after month. There are enough months to test for textual agreements with selected *malhama* texts. The Susa extract lists seven apodoses for seven selected days of each month, distributed schematically among the first, ninth, eleventh, thirteenth, fourteenth, sixteenth, and twenty-first days. The protasis begins with the phrase "if the sun is eclipsed in the month of X, on the Xth day" (DIŠ^dUTU TA^{TT}X UD.X.KAM). It is the comparison of the apodoses that will be my focus.

I recognize the limitations of my comparison. The comparison needs to be refined with more Arabic, Persian, Turkish, and other *malhama* texts in the future and one needs the publication of EAE's solar eclipse omens (the missing gaps would at least to some extent

be remedied). Upon my first findings in the summer of 2015, indeed such were my hesitations. At this initial stage, however, there are several reasons to proceed. Firstly, one cannot at present identify the *malhama* manuscript that reflects or best approximates the actual Persian text of Abu'l Fazl. Neither can one seek to reconstruct such a text or its Arabic source by means of detailed conjectures, as long as many Persian, Arabic, and Turkish manuscripts remain unpublished. My intention with the present article is merely to demonstrate the existence of textual agreements between the *malhama* and the older Assyro-Babylonian omens. Further details will need to await future research. Below I will provide a record of the parallels for each month, first citing the Arabic Najaf edition (abbreviated "Najaf"), then the Turkish passage and translation of Abu'l Fazl's text (abbreviated "Abu'l Fazl"), and finally the Susa extract of the EAE.

The First Month

Najaf: "If the sun is eclipsed in Nisan, injustice will increase, kings will perish, conflict will befall them and followers of hostility will appear. If the eclipse takes place from the direction of the East then riots will be frequent in the land of the Persians and there will be a rise in the prices in the land of the East. If it is eclipsed from the direction of the West, death will befall the land of the Byzantines; their king will die and war, hunger, and rise in prices will increase in their land."

Abu'l Fazl: *Eger bu ayda gün tütulsa pâdişahuñ düşmenleri hür ve dost ola. Ammâ çekürge çok ola ve üç ay temâm yağmur yağmaya. Habeş vilâyeti kahtlık ola ve ürkülik ola* (Boyraz 2006: 277 [folio 4a]).

If the sun is eclipsed during this month, the enemies of the king (*pâdişâh*) will be free and friendly. However, locusts will be many and there will be no rain for entirely three months. The province of Abyssinia will (suffer from) drought and panic.

EAE:

- The king of Akkad will die.
- There will be a rebellion (*ba-ar-tu*; line 19).
- A large [army] will be diminished.
- [The king] will go into e[xi]le.
- [The value] per *kurru*-measure will decrease.
- [H]erds will fall in the land.
- Despoilment of the steppe (*ha-ra-ab* Á.DAM-e; line 24).

The Najaf version refers to kings who will perish and riots, agreeing with EAE concerning the death of the king and rebellion. The focus is on military and political events and their outcome in rising prices. EAE's reference to the decrease in the "value" of the *kurru*, a

² The tablet was acquired during the University of Pennsylvania expeditions in Nippur, but its precise provenance is not known and not all cuneiform tablets registered at the expedition come from Nippur (Rutz 2006: 64), although possibly, despite its origins in Babylonia's eastern periphery, the tablet ultimately found its way to Nippur before its modern discovery.

measure of dry capacity, may point to a decline in produce (“value” [KI.LAM] is restored in the text and seems to refer to the amount of barley or another similar item assumed for the measure rather than the price; the measure was reduced in times of economic hardship and prices would rise; see CAD K s.v. *kurru* A 2a in Civil *et al.* 1971: 564) and agrees with the Najaf edition’s reference to rising prices. Abu’l Fazl’s reference to the lack of rain may relate to the fall of the herd in the EAE and perhaps the despoilment of the steppe. Abu’l Fazl’s text reference to the drought and panic in Abyssinia could – speculatively – be an updated reference to the “steppe”. However, this is not clear. It may simply be related to EAE’s references to famine and the scarcity of rain for the second month.

The Second Month

Najaf: “If the sun is eclipsed in the month of Ayyar between the first and tenth day, evil will increase among the kings, and war will be frequent in the land of the East, a king who has a sign will be alarmed in his position, and tricks will be resorted to against one of the fortresses of Syria. Hostility will increase in this year, and a man will die for whom the earth will quake. If it is eclipsed in the second half of [the month] pilgrimages will be difficult in this year.”

Abu’l Fazl: The manuscript available to me lacks the second month.

EAE:

- Rise (of) ... locusts [...].
- There will be famine.
- [The]re will be destruction of straw in [the land].
- There will be wan[τ in the land].
- R[a]in [(in the sky)] will be scarce.
- The ki[ng] will [co]nvey e[n]mi[ty t]o king.
- ... will be destroyed/overthrown.

The locusts were mentioned in the first month of Abu’l Fazl’s text as was famine and the lack of rain. The Najaf version agrees with the EAE in terms of hostilities between kings.

The Third Month

Najaf: “If the sun is eclipsed in Haziran, conflict will grow among the kings. If it is eclipsed from the east rises in prices will be frequent in the land of the Persians and in the East. If it is eclipsed from the West, the rise in prices will take place in the land of the Byzantines, their king will die, and war, hunger, and rises in prices will be frequent in their land.”

Abu’l Fazl: *Eger gün tutulsa kar ve yağmur ziyāde ola ve ‘alef bol ola. Ammā Maçin vilāyeti ve Māzenderān vilāyeti kahtlık ola ve balıklar ve kuşlar delim kırıla ve Mağrib memleketi ceng ve fitne ve kahtlık ola* (Boyraz 2006: 282 [folio 9b]).

If the sun is eclipsed, snow and rain will be bountiful and grass will be plenty. However, there will be drought in the province of Maçin and the province of Māzenderān, and fish and birds will be greatly despoiled, and the land of the West (*Mağrib*) will be (afflicted with) war and rebellion (*fitne*) and drought.

EAE:

- The king of Akkad will di[e].
- The king will fall by the sword.
- The land of Gutium will exper[ience] violence [...].
- The king will conv[ey] enmity to king.
- The rain i[n] the s[k]y (and) the water from the springs (A.ZI.GA IDIM; line 36) will be scarc[e].
- Enlil will confuse the land’s extispicies (30.4 *te-re-et* KUR KÚR) [...]

Najaf’s reference to conflict between kings agrees with EAE’s mention of the king conveying enmity against another king, whereas the death of the king of Akkad is paralleled by the Byzantine king’s predicted death. The Najaf edition refers to the West and East as regions where the solar eclipse connects with the rise in prices, whereas EAE has Akkad and Gutium as lands mentioned. Gutium is known as the eastern land and suits the “East” of the Najaf edition.

EAE’s mention of a drought may be paralleled by the foretold events in the lands of Maçin and Māzenderān in the case of Abu’l Fazl’s text, whereas the mention of war and drought seems to resonate with several apodoses of EAE for this month. The rebellion is mentioned through the multi-layered concept of *fitne* which refers to internal strife, societal divisions and plotting. The word *fitne* may be a way of expressing something similar to Enlil confusing the land’s extispicies, i.e. ability of men to predict the future for the welfare of the society. The uncertainty can create *fitne*, strife and division. The concept of *fitne* may, however, be also suited to resonate with Enlil confusing the political order of the land (also in the following month).

The Fourth Month

Najaf: “If the sun is eclipsed in Tammuz, the price of barley will rise in the land of Syria; smallpox and breach of promise [or, false prophecies] will be frequent between the armies in the land of the Coast. Ships will sink in the regions of the East and armies will start moving.”

Abu'l Fazl: *Eger gün tütula her yirde ni'met vâfir ola yıl oñāt ola ve ucuzlıklar ola ve bir ulu kişi Rûm tarafından Pâris vilâyetine varup Pâris pâdişâhına hizmet ide ve çok harâbları 'imâret ide. Eger gün bata tûrurken tûtulsa dahıl ucuz ve narhlar eksük ola ve yemiş bol ve ni'met bîkıyâs ola ve bîhadd yağmurlar yağa şular arta. Ammâ ziyân itmeye ve kamu yirde ot ve biçin eyü ola* (Boyras 2006: 284 [folio 12b]).

If the sun is eclipsed, provisions will be abundant everywhere, the year will be in good order, and prices will be low and a great person from Rome (*Rûm*) will reach the province of Pâris (Fars, Persia) and serve the king (*pâdişâh*) of Pâris, and restore many ruins. If the eclipse occurs during sunset, straw will be cheap, and there will be no officially fixed prices, and fodder will be plenty, and provisions will be enormous, and boundless rains will pour and waters will abound. However, this is not to be squandered and the grass and harvest will be good.

EAE:

- There will b[e] constant enmity.
- Ištar will bring d[own] ... into the land.
- Enlil will confu[se] the political order of the land (30.4 *te-em* KUR ú-MAN-[*na*]; line 41).
- The king of Amurru [will fall] by the sw[ord].
- The king of Akkad [will experience] ha[rd times].
- The king of Elam [will experience] har[d times].

Problems for the land of Amurru, Akkad and Elam in EAE seems to be related to problems in Syria, “the land of the Coast”, and “the East” in the Najaf edition. In the case of Amurru and Elam, they can easily be compared with Syria and “the East”. Amurru as a term referred to the west, including Syria, whereas Elam lay in the east. The text of Abu'l Fazl offers the opposite scenario with favourable provisions, whereas a detailed prediction concerning the Byzantines and Pâris (Fars, Persia) has replaced the other countries mentioned in the Najaf edition and EAE.

The Fifth Month

Najaf: “If the sun is eclipsed in Ab, then rain will be less in this year; the Nile will not rise with its [usual] amount; conflict will befall the Arabs; the robbers and wars will be frequent in the land of Kabul.”

Abu'l Fazl: *Eger gün tûtulsa cemî vilâyet kaht ve tenglik ola ve yağmur az yağa ve nîsânda çekürge belüre ve dört ayaklıya kıran ola. Pâris vilâyeti begleri ahvâli yavuz ola ve havâric hurûc ide ürkü düşe ve ra'yyet kavminden biri pâdişâh ola. Bir nice rûzigâr memleketde karar tuta* (Boyras 2006: 286 [folio 15a]).

If the sun is eclipsed, the entire province (will suffer) drought and hardship, and rain will be scarce, and in Nisan (April), locusts will appear and there will be destruction for the four-legged. The conditions of the lords of the province of Fars (Persia) will be harsh, and those who are excluded migrate (or: rebel), panic will befall (the land), and someone from the subject people will be king (*pâdişâh*). Many winds will take hold in the land.

EAE:

- The bounty of the s<ea will be devastated> (*hi-ši-ib* A<.AB.BA ZÁH>; line 49).
- Mar<s will rise and herds will be devastated(?)>.
- [There will be] destruction of straw in [the land].

Four out of seven apodoses for this month are not preserved in the Susa extract of EAE. Among those preserved, the implied drought (devastation of straw and herd) in EAE agrees with the descriptions of rain scarcity and drought in Abu'l Fazl's text. The reference to the Nile losing vitality due to scarce rains could be the Najaf edition's adaptation of EAE's references to poor weather, and this adaptation could have taken place before the Arabic or even the Syriac translation of the *malhama*. I will discuss this specific point in the conclusion of this paper.

The Sixth Month

Najaf: “If the sun is eclipsed in Aylul, rains will increase in the land of Persia and in the land of Hijaz, the rain will be less at the beginning of the year but will increase at its end; and false rumours and wars will be frequent among the people.”

Abu'l Fazl: *Eger gün tûtulsa ol vilâyetün pâdişâhı veya bir ulu kişii zehirle helâk iderler. Eger tûtulurken kızarsa ürkü ve korku ve kızlık ola* (Boyras 2006: 288 [folio 18a])

If the sun is eclipsed, they will poison and kill the king (*pâdişâh*) of that province or a great person. If (the sun) becomes red during the eclipse, there will be panic and fear and scarcity.

EAE:

- Adad will thu[nder] (^dIŠKUR GU_x ?-šu Š[UB-di]; line 55).
- [There will be] military campaigns [in the land].
- [There will be re]fugees (?) ([*n*]e-ru-[*b*]a-t[*u*]; line 58) [in the land]
- The produ<ce of> the sea <will be devastated>.

The reference to military campaigns in EAE is provided with more detail in the Najaf edition. It is implied through the death of the king or an important person in Abu'l Fazl's text.

The Seventh Month

Najaf: "If the sun is eclipsed in the First Tishrin, some of the Byzantines will be killed in the land of Egypt and many among the horses and the goats [?] will die in epidemic in that year. [The year] will be full of good things, but a foreigner will attack the country of the Arabs and will perish one year later."

Abu'l Fazl: *Eger gün tutula kamu millet içinde yeni haberler ve ulu kazâlar zâhir ola ve nihâyetsüz ağaçlar kuruya ve müşkil hastalıklar ola. Eger ay³ tutuldukte kızarsa ceng ve kan dökülmek ve dahıla âfet ve 'avretler oğlan düşürmek ve ölüm hayli ola ve bir pâdişâh ya bir ulu kişi helâk ola* (Boyras 2006: 290 [folio 20a])

If the sun is eclipsed, new rumours will spread among all the people and great misfortunes will occur, and countless trees will dry, and there will be severe diseases. If the sun (written: moon)³ becomes red during eclipse, there will be war and blood will be spilled and calamity (will befall) on the fodder and wives (will scheme) to bring the downfall of the youth, and death will be many, and a king or a great person will be destroyed.

EAE:

- Adad will [deva]state the harvest.
- Famine will occur ...
- Eclip[se of the] king [of Akkad ...].
- Ecli[pse of the] king [of Amurru ...].
- A lion(?) ... (UR. MAḤ; line 67)
- Eclip[se of] ...

The reference to famine is voiced in the Najaf edition, whereas the eclipse of the king of Akkad seems to resonate with the death of the king or an important person in Abu'l Fazl's text. EAE's devastation of the harvest seems also to recall Abu'l Fazl's mention that "countless trees will dry".

³ This omen precedes the lunar eclipse omen, and we assume that *ay* instead of *gün* is due to a scribal error.

The Ninth Month

Najaf: "If the sun is eclipsed in the First Kanun, there will be more ice and cold in that year; a lot of cattle will perish; there will be hunger in the land of the Arabs and in the regions of Jerusalem; and some of the kings of the West will perish."

Abu'l Fazl: *Eger gün tutulsa ulu kişiler ölümü çok ola. Eger temâm tutula pâdişâh diyârin-dan gayri diyâra hareket ide anda muķîm ola* (Boyras 2006: 294 [folio 24b]).

If the sun is eclipsed, the death of great persons will be many. If (the sun) is eclipsed entirely, the king will move from his own realm to another realm and settle there.

EAE:

- There will be an] eclipse [of the king(?) of ...]⁴
- Currents in [the spring will be scarce],
- A destructive wind [will] ari[se].
- Th[ere will be] lamentation ...
- Preg[nant wom]en <will miscarry>.
- There will be *di'u*-illness ...

The possible reference in EAE to the eclipse of the king seems to be paralleled by the forced exile of the king in Abu'l Fazl's text. The destructive wind and the lamentation were references to the destruction of cities in Mesopotamian literature (Samet 2014: 87-88). Warfare and destruction are mentioned in both *malhama* texts.

The Tenth Month

Najaf: "If the sun is eclipsed in the Second Kanun injustice will increase, profits will diminish, treacheries and wickedness will prevail among the people and adultery will be frequent."

Abu'l Fazl: *[Eger gün tutulsa] Pâris vilâyetine bir pâdişâh gele ammâ Pâris pâdişâhuna muķî' ola ve Rûm ve Fireng içinde mekir ve öled ve hîle çok ola ve şu ve ot az ola* (Boyras 2006: 296 [folio 28a]).

⁴ "[of the king(?) of ...]" is my proposed restoration following such use of "eclipse" in the apodoses of the seventh month in lines 65-66 (see above, under "The Seventh Month", the eclipse of the kings of Akkad and Amurru).

[If the sun is eclipsed], a king will come to the province of Persia (Pâris) but he will be loyal to the king of Persia, and among the Romans (*Rûm*) and the Franks plotting, murder and trickery will be plenty, and water and grass will be scarce.

EAE:

- [The] s[on? of the ki]ng [of Akkad will die].
- A [de]structive wind ...
- The king of Elam will <die>.
- The king of Amurru <will die>.

Political events between the Najaf edition and the EAE are vaguely similar because the former refers to treachery and the resulting turmoil. Abu'l Fazl's text mentions the Romans and the Franks, whereas the EAE refers to different regions (Elam and Amurru) where calamities would take place. The focus on trickery and plotting may or may not have links with the reference to the death of the king's son in the EAE. The scarcity of water is perhaps lost in the text breaks in EAE.

The Eleventh Month

Najaf: "If the sun is eclipsed in Shabat, then the rain will increase to the utmost limit so that some of the existing crop and part of the food will become rotten. There will be ants among the barley, oil will be scarce, mice and reptiles will be frequent on the Earth and there will be many in the land of Babel and what is adjacent to it."

Abu'l Fazl: *Eger gün tütula bir ulu pâdişâh öle ve il âşüftelik ola halkda guşsa ve teşvîş bînihâyet ola. Ammâ dahîl ve ot ve ekin ve biçin eyü ola. Ammâ narhlar ne ziyâde ve ne kem ola ve tüccâra uğridan ve harâmîden zarar ire* (Boyraz 2006: 298-299 [folio 30b]).

If the sun is eclipsed a great king will die and there will be agitation in the kingdom, anxiety and confusion will be without end among the people. However, the grain and grass and crops and harvest will be good. However, officially fixed prices will be neither excessive nor too low, and the merchant will suffer loss due to thieves and robbers.

EAE:

- An important person (IDIM) <will perpetrate a rebellion> in the palace.
- An important person (IDIM) <will flagrantly fornicate with> the w[if]e <of the king>.
- The king's wife <will perpetrate a rebellion>.
- The king ...
- The kings son ...

EAE presents the use of IDIM ('important person'). This recalls the great persons apart from the king mentioned throughout the *malhama* texts. EAE seems to allude to palace intrigues in this month. One saw that Abu'l Fazl's text mentioned the activities of a person important for the king in the previous month. The crop failures are not mentioned in the EAE, which has only imperfectly preserved the apodoses for this month.

Preliminary Conclusions and Prospects

A. Fodor has analysed the topographical names and other details mentioned in the Najaf edition of the Arabic *malhama* text and – aside from the reference to the Nile, which suggests some kind of connection with Egypt – proposed that the text may have been translated into Arabic from Syriac and perhaps it was originally written or copied by a monk in the region of the Tur Abdin at the turn of the tenth and eleventh centuries (Fodor 1974: 86-93). Its translation into Arabic can be explained by the hermetic interests of Islamic circles in Mesopotamia and various connections of trade and cultural interaction, as well as by the revered name of Daniel who is claimed to be the author of the *malhama* (Fodor 1974: 93-94).

Going back in time from Arabic and Syriac, the implications of the thematic similarities between the *malhama* and the Babylonian omens as noted by Fodor can now, in my view, be taken further: The solar eclipse omens discussed above present enough similarities to posit that the Babylonian omens formed, through textual transmission, the basis of the *malhama* texts. Future research may verify or disprove this hypothesis.

An objection to the textual agreements discussed above is that the similarities are too general. The agreements, even though broadly expressed, are repeated month after month, with differences in between expected and normal. A more justified objection could be that authors abstracting military, political and economic events will phrase such omens in similar ways, and given that there are limited options of description (the king's actions, war or peace, famine or prosperity, etc.), the odds are that there will be similarities we can call textual agreements. It should also be noted that there is evidence for other genres of Syriac astrology, as new manuscripts are discovered, which the Syriac community inherited from older Assyro-Babylonian traditions (Al-Jeloo 2012). The receipt of the *malhama* text in Syriac tradition may, however, involve other factors.

One such factor is possibly the reference to the Nile in the Najaf edition of the Arabic *malhama* (see "The Fifth Month" above). An entirely Mesopotamian setting for the *malhama* text cannot explain the interest in the Nile. It may well have been added during the Islamic period, but it should also be recalled that the Greek world interacted with Mesopotamia especially in the Hellenistic period, and that this knowledge was disseminated in the Eastern Mediterranean region. One can propose that some form of documentation, relating to the content of the *malhama* at least, circulated in the Greek world. This point may be of relevance to the presumed history of the *malhama* genre because the *malhama*

tradition refers to the names of two actual human beings without mythological significance: Andrinikos and Batlamyus (Boyraz 2006: 37-39). Batlamyus is the famous Claudius Ptolemaios (c. 100-170 AD) from Alexandria. More important for the present argument is the less known “Andrinikos”. In my view, this is Andronicus of Rhodes (c. 60 BC), who published Aristotle’s works in the first century BC (Curnow 2006: 25). If the *malhama* traditions mention his name in particular, could this be because there was, at some stage, a Greek manuscript that was later named *malhama*, and as a result of being a Greek text, Andronicus’s name was mentioned as one of the editors? This remains a conjecture. The Greek text itself could ultimately have Mesopotamian origins. For example, the Babylonian origin of Greek horoscopes is recognized (Rochberg 2004: 10). The Syriac adoption of a Greek text with themes familiar to them from their own traditions would not be unexpected. The Syriac scholars interacted strongly with Greek philosophy and science in general (Yousif 1997).

The Najaf edition has a story about how Adam made tablets of clay and baked them in fire for them to survive Noah’s Flood. Prophet Daniel found the tablets and “copied whatever he wanted from this science” (Fodor 1974: 97). Fodor has already noted that the clay tablets recall the Babylonian omen collections (Fodor 1974: 94). As mentioned above, it was believed that the EAE went back to an original tablet given by Ea the god of wisdom and scholars worked on this through the ages. It is interesting that the *malhama* text is not, strictly speaking in terms of its own narrative from the Najaf edition, the original tablet; it was rather regarded as an extraction from it by Prophet Daniel. Mesopotamian practice reveals several types of divinatory texts formed by extracting selected omens from the EAE. One of them was the *mukallimtu*, literally meaning “revealer” (from the verb *kullumum*, Assyrian *kallumum* “to show, display, reveal, expose”). The term *mukallimtu* referred to commentaries of EAE omens in their proper sequence written by scholars, who were trying to explain the terminology and the protases. Thus they were called *mukallimtu* EAE *šūt pī ša pī ummāni ša libbi X* “commentary to the EAE according to the words of the scholars from X” (Koch-Westenholz 1995: 82-83). Another type of *mukallimtu* was titled *Šumma Sîn ina tāmartišu* (‘If the moon at its appearance’); it was quoted as an authority beyond person and was used to interpret protases, planetary movements and their meeting to produce predictions for worldly affairs (Koch-Westenholz 1995: 84-86). It is not surprising that the authorship of the *malhama* genre was attributed to Daniel, believed to have mastered the Babylonian divinatory arts.

A point that may be raised here is that *malhama*, the title of this genre, may itself be a later etiological label that emerged when it was adopted into Arabic tradition. The word *malhama* (ملحمة), an Arabic word meaning “battle”; it is derived from the root *l-h-m* which denotes *mixing*. For example, warriors *mix* in battle (Çelebi 1994: 153-154). The same root can be found in Biblical Hebrew. This is לחם, and it means ‘to battle’ (for example in the context of Judges 5:8). This compares also with the Arabic expression *iltahama* (‘he battled’) and the augmented form of the same *l-h-m* root meaning to battle in Moabite

(הלחחם), a Semitic Canaanite language (Klein 1984: 298). The Arabic term *malhama*, was sometimes pronounced alternatively in several ways in Ottoman scribal tradition. Traditionally, *malhama* was read and transcribed as *melhâme* (for example by Cevrî İbrahim Çelebi in his 17th century translation). Another commonly attested rendition of the term in Turkish manuscripts is *melheme* (ملهمه). This rendition applies a different second guttural root in *l-h-m* for *melheme*, as opposed to *l-ḥ-m* in *malhama*. The root *l-h-m* means ‘to swallow’, of which one attestation means *ilham* ‘inspiration’. Turkish scribal tradition commonly employs the term *melheme* (“to inspire; of inspiration”), followed by *mülheme* (“that which is inspired”), and sometimes *mülhime* (“one who/which inspires”; Boyraz 2006: 21-26). This new etymology could be the result of later Turkish and/or Persian elaboration, out of the belief that Daniel was inspired, and at this point Boyraz also notes the possibility that the genre may have had a name before the term *malhama* (Boyraz 2006: 25-26). Could the Arabic, or perhaps an earlier Syriac cognate, be an etiological renaming of an older genre, perhaps a text that came to be called a *mukallimtu* or by a title from a word cognate of Syriac (to my knowledge, currently unattested)? While at present it is not possible to reach a firm conclusion on this question and the considerations offered here remain speculative, the possibility of a Babylonian origin for the genre label *malhama* can be raised as a topic for future research.

My hypothesis assumes that the textual similarities discussed in the present paper are a faint glimmer of the textual transmission of meteorological omens from antiquity to the medieval and modern eras. This may owe to the continuity of its oral character. Even if the EAE was committed to writing and standardized only later in Mesopotamian history, it too was known in divergent forms. This may be owed to the fact it was a living oral tradition in Mesopotamian society and therefore divergent forms could co-exist. Such an oral tradition should, in my view, be grounded in the fact that the omens served the needs of an agricultural society. The weather and the visible atmosphere always remained critical for the cultivators of fields, a seventh century Assyrian or a 1980s resident of Sivas. Any tool that could be used for the prediction of celestial phenomena for the purpose of proper administration of agricultural activities would be appreciated by all cultures practising agriculture. This explains the existence of almanacs in many cultures throughout the world. And given that the omens were never blatantly the product of an exclusive ideology, they were adopted – with proper attributions such as to the prophet Daniel – by the new monotheistic world forming in Late Antiquity. The presently available manuscripts, in cuneiform and later in other mediums, can be viewed as textual attestations of such an oral transmission.

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