

**MENTAL DISABILITY (?): ON THE AKKADIAN WORD *LILLU*****Gökhan KAĞNICI*****Makale Bilgisi**

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Abstract

Cuneiform scripts of the ancient Mesopotamia include information also about mental-cognitive problems of the people. However, since they are not in a well-designed text type, these pieces of information are dispersed and they are mostly encountered among the lines. Moreover, it is not always simple to comprehend what problems Sumerian and Akkadian words refer to, which are thought to be related with mental problems, and what the levels of these health problems are. Grounding on the usages of Sumerian LÚ.LIL and Akkadian lillu/lillatu words in mainly literary and mythological texts, the article will focus on what kind of a mental problem this word refers to. Additionally, the context usages and purposes of this word in the texts will be dwelled on.

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In this way, how the people, who are defined as lillu, are perceived in the community will be put forth in general terms. It will be tried to manifest that although the word is used together with physical disabilities in many texts, it is used by a certain fraction of the community to define the individuals who are different regarding demeanor and temperament, rather than a mental disability or an illness.

Keywords: *Ancient Mesopotamia, Lillu, Mental Disabilities, Disabled Individuals*

Öz

Aklın Sakatlanması: Akadca Kelime lillu Üzerine

Eski Mezopotamya'nın çivi yazılı metinleri insanlardaki zihinsel-bilişsel sorunlarla da ilgili bilgiler içermektedir. Ancak belirli bir metin türünde derli toplu bir şekilde bulunmadıkları için bu bilgiler oldukça dağınık bir şekildedir ve çoğu zaman metinlerin satır aralarında karşımıza çıkmaktadır. Ayrıca insanlardaki zihinsel sorunlarla ilgili olduğu düşünülen Sümerce ve Akadca kelimelerin tam olarak ne tür sorunlara göndermede bulunduğu ve bu sağlık sorunlarının seviyesinin ne olduğunu anlamak her zaman kolay olamamaktadır. Makale, Sümerce LÚ.LIL ve Akadca lillu/lillatu kelimelerinin özellikle edebi ve mitolojik metinler başta olmak üzere çivi yazılı metinlerdeki kullanımlarından yola çıkarak kelimenin ne tür bir zihinsel sorunu tanımladığını anlamaya odaklanacaktır. Bununla birlikte kelimenin metinlerde ne amaçla ve hangi bağlamlarda kullanıldığı üzerinde kısaca durulacaktır. Böylece lillu olduğu ifade edilen insanların toplumsal anlamda nasıl algılanmış olduğu genel hatlarıyla ortaya konulmaya çalışılacaktır. Kelimenin birçok metinde özellikle fiziksel sakatlıklarla birlikte geçmesine rağmen zihinsel bir sakatlıktan ve rahatsızlıktan daha ziyade özellikle toplumun kimi kesimleri tarafından davranış biçimleri ve mizaçları açısından farklı görülen kişileri tanımladığı gösterilmeye çalışılacaktır.

Anahtar Kelimeler: *Eski Mezopotamya, Lillu, Zihinsel Sakatlıklar, Sakat Bireyler*

Introduction

Including rich information about Sumerian, Assyrian, and Babylonian periods, the cuneiform scripts of the ancient Mesopotamia help us comprehend the era between 3rd and 1st millenniums B.C. There are pieces

of information, which had been written by the Mesopotamian writers and literates that will shed light on the history of the disability of the ancient Mesopotamia. However, it will be simply discerned that there is a shortage of research investigating physical and mental disabilities. It can be mentioned that research studies about the history of disability based on cuneiform scripts have recently gained momentum. The increased interest in recent years in these studies can be attributed to that the disability was perceived as a field of research in the last quarter of the 20th century particularly in the US and in several European countries.¹

The first thing to mention about texts incorporating pieces of information regarding the history of the ancient Mesopotamia is that they had not been written to build a well-designed "disability literature". There are texts neither written for developing societal or political theories, nor written for seeking a remedy for the disabled individuals. As far as it is known, there is not a Sumerian or Akkadian word entirely defining the physical and mental disabilities that are limiting the moves, activities, and senses of individuals.² Therefore, how the ancient Mesopotamians perceived the situations, which are currently perceived as 'disability', is mostly unknown today. The records about situations, which are similar to the physical and mental disabilities of today's individuals defined as 'disabled', are encountered in various types of cuneiform scripts, which include differences in its subject, intention, and message.³ For example, royal inscriptions and legal texts mention about the individuals who are exposed to physical deformation and loss of limb, medical texts mention about temporary and permanent disabilities accompanied by illnesses, omen texts mention about the newborns with congenital anomaly and literary texts mention about intellectual (mind and opinion) impairments. Moreover, the texts such as lexical lists, mythology, magic, prayer texts, letters, food lists, proverbs, texts about wise sayings and wisdom contain information regarding disabilities of the people of the time.⁴ Although these pieces of information obtained from the texts are mostly related with physical disabilities, there are also records thought to be related with mental-cognitive problems. However, it should be mentioned that it is vital to be careful about the results to be reached particularly for the latter. Because it will not be easy to reveal the levels and limits of the mental-cognitive problems in the

¹ Snyder 2006: 479.

² Akkadian word *akū* seems to be closest word to describe these situations. In CAD, this word has been translated as destitute, weak, powerless, humble and cripple. CAD/A-1: 283-284.

³ For general data and the sources related to disabled individuals in the Mesopotamian cuneiform texts: Walls 2007: 13-30.

⁴ Kellenberger 2017: 47.

ancient Mesopotamia societies. The main problem among the others is to determine whether these records, which are thought to be related with this type of problems, in the texts pertain to mental deficiency, psychological state, or imperceptions.⁵ What kind of a problem the Sumerian and Akkadian words, which are thought to be related with a kind of mental disability, refer to is generally inferred from the context. However, it is important to note that there is a relation between mental problems and abnormal body. Mental disability is identified only by body language and appearance.⁶

Lillu, lillatu and lillūtu

Considering their meanings in the dictionaries and contextual usages,⁷ the Akkadian word *lillu* and its feminine *lillatu*, which seem to be relevant to a mental problem, are observed in omen and prayer texts, lexical lists, royal inscriptions, letters, literary and mythological texts. The word was used together with physical disabilities in many texts.⁸ Moreover, it was also used as a personal name. In order to decide the semantic framework of the word, it is necessary to examine its usages in literary and mythological texts. Because these texts include more pieces of information about *lillu*, and the mental structure it indicates.

Mesopotamians probably didn't perceive *lillu* as a mental illness or disability to be taken measures against, since no usage of this word is observed in this meaning in medical and illness-related texts.⁹ There are several records about mental illnesses in medical texts. However, most of these records, which are observed to coexist with numerous symptoms defining an illness, are observed to be curable, temporary, momentary, sensual, and psychological cases.¹⁰ One exception is insanity. This mental problem can be handled separately from them. Insanity was considered incurable. Some Akkadians words speak of 'altered mentation' in the cuneiform texts.¹¹

⁵ Kellenberger 2013: 449-450.

⁶ Pittl 2015: 476.

⁷ The Akkadian word (*lillu*) has an additional usage such as a demon and a god's name. However, the first meaning will be emphasized throughout the article. The first meaning of this word is determined as "fool, moron, idiot" in the dictionaries. CAD/L: 189; CDA: 182. For its Sumerian (LIL) version: ePSD. Soden, determined the German translations of the word as "Tölpel, Idiot and Dummkopf" in Akkadisches Handwörterbuch. AHW I: 553.

⁸ Ceccarelli 2016 (with note 358): 60.

⁹ Kellenberger 2013: 451.

¹⁰ For detailed information about mental problems: Scurlock – Andersen 2005: 367-385.

¹¹ For insanity in ancient Mesopotamia: Stol 2009:1-12.

As far as it is understood, the state of *lillu/lillatu* are not accepted as one of these cases. However, that both of the words are used together with physical disabilities such as blindness, deafness, and lameness in Šumma Izbu (lit. "if an anomaly") and Šumma Alu ina Mēlē Šakin (lit. "if a city is situated on a height") omen texts may cause to think that the words indicate a permanent and incurable mental problem. Composing of a series of 24 tablets and including more than 2000 omens about human and animal anomaly births, Šumma Izbu mentions that a child born as a *lillu* would cause problems for the house she/he is born into, and ultimately would cause the family to scatter. Moreover, a woman in the palace giving a similar birth is also correlated to an issue regarding the house: "If a woman of the palace gives birth to a LÚ.LIL.LA, the possessions of the king will be plundered."¹² The *lillu* births in the series are also related with negativity that might influence the close relatives of the individual and even the enemy kingdom.

The *lillu* and *lillatu* births in the Šumma Izbu are not only the cause of possible events but also the results. For example, it is mentioned that "in case a woman gives birth to a baby whose right ear has a visible stain or whose ear is closer to the cheek more than normal, a LÚ.LIL will be born in this house".¹³ As far as it is understood, the birth of a child as *lillu/lillatu*, as in the other anomaly births of the series, is understood as a divine message, which is suitable to infer some results and which is considered as a remarkable event. Since it coexists with other birth anomalies in a series, it can be evaluated that being a *lillūtu* bears discernible symptoms. It seems a low probability that these symptoms, which seem to be discernible by the time particularly after reaching a certain age, are congenital disabilities in the head and facial regions, physical organs and speech.

Other examples about correlating these individuals with future predictions are observed in the series named as Šumma Alu. Consisting of 107 tablets and including more than 10.000 omens, Šumma Alu is thought to be shaped in the late Old Babylonian period,¹⁴ although it includes pieces of

¹² For scattering of the house of the man: Leichty 1970 (Tablet I, 52): 36. Although the conclusion part of the omen is not readable similar suggestion is made for the birth of a girl who has the same illness: "if a woman gives birth to a SAL.LIL (*lillatu*) the house of this man will...". See: Leichty 1970 (Tablet I, 53): 36. For a woman of palace: (Tablet IV, 49): 70. The suggestion about collapse of the family in the house that the birth is conducted, is correlated with other birth anomalies in *Šumma Izbu* series. This suggestion is not a unique case for the birth of *lillu/lillatu*.

¹³ Leichty 1970 (Tablet III, 11, 14): 54. Other birth cases including similar suggestions about *lillu* are recorded in the series. Leichty 1970 (Tablet XI, 22-23, 30, 31):133; (Tablet XIV, 10, 11): 153-154.

¹⁴ Freedman 1998: 1-2; Weisberg 1969-1970: 102-104.

information of the older times. The omens about *lillu/lillatu* in this series do not seem to have a negative content as in the example "if LIL.MEŠ (*lillus*) are numerous in a city, that city will be happy."¹⁵ On the other hand, the existence of high number of wise men is perceived as too hazardous to live in the city.¹⁶ In this point, the word KÙ.ZU.MEŠ (wise men) seems to correspond to the opposite of LIL.MEŠ/ SAL.LIL.MEŠ (*lillu/lillatu*). If so, it can be mentioned that *lillu* incorporates a character, which is not wise or does not include features and behaviors of wise people.

Considering lexical lists together with the word groups coexisting with *lillu* and having similar or same meaning with *lillu*, they are the text types, which provide clues about the kinds of individuals referred by *lillu*. In the list named Malku-šarru, which has the synonyms of the Sumerian and Akkadian words, "*lillu*" is the synonym of "*lulânû*" (indigent, powerless). *Dunnamu* (person of low status, fool), which indicates a mental problem similar to *lillu*, is perceived as synonym to the word *enšu* (weak, powerless) in the same list. These words, which are placed in consecutive lines, are used together with other words that refer to other kinds of mental problems and indicate the socio-economically lower level individuals in poverty and destitute. For example, another lexical list Erimhuš, presents *ulālu* (weakling, feeble person), *dunnamu* and *enšu* as a group¹⁷. The Sumerian of *lillu* is given as HU.UR (fool, moron) in the list known as Erimhuš II. In this list, HU.BA (Akkadian: *makkannu*=destitute, weak), HU.UR (Akkadian *aku*=destitute, weak) and HU.RU (Akkadian: *aḫuru*=boorish man) words are respectively take place. As is observed, the Sumerian HU.UR, which is the counterpart of the Akkadian *lillu*, is also used for the destitute-weak individuals¹⁸.

Epic of Gilgamesh and Babylonian Theodicy

The *lillu* word, which takes place in both of the literary and mythological texts, seems to be correlated to a mental situation that has societal and cultural aspects, rather than a medical problem. The word *lillu* in the Epic of Gilgamesh seems to be correlated to situations such as being unable to predict the results of one's behaviors or lunatic acting.¹⁹ The word

¹⁵ RIA 7: 20; Hass 1992: 37-38.

¹⁶ Freedman 1998 (Tablet I, lines 87 and 90): 32-33.

¹⁷ Lambert 1996: 18.

¹⁸ Johnson – Geller 2015: 236.

¹⁹ According to George the word *lillu* can be translated as "village idiot". See: George 2000: 43 (Introduction).

is thought to define an "imperception", indicating the mentality and consciousness of an individual, who is persistent regardless of the consequences. For example, Humbaba, who is the mythological entity and the guardian of the Cedar Forest, correlates Gilgamesh and his friend Enkidu to a *lillu* mentality (acting without thinking the results wisely) when they enter the forest.²⁰ In the epic, when Gilgamesh deplores for the demise of his friend Enkidu and takes to the roads seeking the immortality and misses the immortality opportunity, the wise man Utnapishtim compares this continuous, sad and miserable manner of Gilgamesh to *lillus*, and gives advices.²¹ In doing so, the purpose of Utnapishtim is to emphasize the importance of that a person should leave shallow opinions and begin to use his/her mind wisely to comprehend the reality/truth. The Epic of Gilgamesh not only includes the behavior styles of the *lillu*, but also involves pieces of information about socio-economic situations of these people. It is mentioned in the epic that the food and beverages of *lillu* are below the average, the clothes are ordinary and cheap rather than good and quality.²² Mentioning the bad and poor quality of the clothes refers to the societal status of the *lillu*. Definitions of individuals with lower status in terms of socio-cultural and economic aspects are observed in other texts, as well. In a cuneiform tablet named as Assyrian collection, which is probably dated to the 1st millennium B.C., consists of wise sayings and written in both Akkadian and Sumerian languages, there is a statement "the wise man is clad in finery, while the one who does not (cannot) use his mind (*nu'û*) wanders around with ragged clothes."²³ Wearing bad clothes seems to be related with the bad economic condition and lower societal situation of him. The Akkadian word *dunnamû* wisely summarizes this situation. The word defines both the individuals with mental problems and persons with societal and economical lower status.²⁴

In the text named Babylonian Theodicy, which is thought to be of Middle Babylonian period and which is composed of dialogues between a wise man and a sufferer, the wise man exemplifies the comparison: "the first will be born as a *lillu*, while the second one as a hero-warrior"²⁵ regarding

²⁰ George 2003: 606-607. In the same line (Tablet V, line 86) it is observed that Humbaba defines Enkidu as an "idiot fellow" (*nu'û*) due to his friendship with Gilgamesh.

²¹ Kellenberger 2011: 21; Abusch 2001: 619.

²² George 2003: 694-695; Dalley 2000: 107-108; Kellenberger 2017: 55.

²³ Lambert 1996: 225; Foster 1996: 338.

²⁴ CAD/D: 183-184; CDA: 62; AHw I: 176. Oshima prefers to translate *dunnamû* ('fool') word so that it includes both of the meanings as "pitiable (person)". See: Oshima 2013: XXX (Introduction).

²⁵ Kellenberger 2013: 454; Lambert used "weaking" word here (XXIV: 262-263) for *lillu*. See: Lambert 1996: 86-87; Foster 1997: 494.

the fate granted by gods to children to be born in a family. In this point it is observed that the word *lillu* is used as a means of comparison similar to that of the Gilgamesh epic. As is understood, *lillu* is deprived of the characteristics to be a successful hero. Advising him wisely throughout the text, the wise man tries to tell to the agonizing one that he should get rid of this psychological situation and that he is behaving like the illogical people.²⁶ However, he disregards the warnings saying that the gods granted him poverty and misery rather than fortune and wealth although he fulfilled his responsibilities towards the god and the goddesses when he was young. In order to make it simpler to understand his miserable moral and material situation, he says that *lillu* and *kuşşudu* (cripple) are in better conditions: "*kuşşudu* is my superior and *lillu* has outstrips me".²⁷

It is understood that this individual is doomy, he cannot think straight and in a melancholic mood.²⁸ By the effect of this painful emotional and psychological state, he voices expostulating discourses to the gods, rebelling against the social and religious order.²⁹ Despite the advices and sound explanations of his wise friend, he changes the issues each time mentioning about his misery and closing his doors to thinking straight. However, as is seen at the end of the text, since probably the advices of his wise friend works, he wants help from his friend to get rid of this bad mood and ultimately he prays the gods to help him.³⁰ A similar example, where the individual seeks help of gods and goddesses in salvation from the bad mood and compares his state to people who have mental or physical disabilities, in a prayer text addressed to the goddess Ishtar: "how long, my Lady, will the *lillu* and an *akû* (cripple, powerless, weak) overtake me"? The comparison is made to emphasize that his/her psychology is worse than these people rather than this praying individual having the same problems. Having said that, a few lines later "the weak became strong, I have become weak" statement indicates his/her unbalanced and bad mood.³¹

As the conclusion, it is possible to detect some characteristics of the *lillu* in both of the literary texts, the first of which is lack of wise and smart behavior. They seem to be deprived of behavior and way of thinking of

²⁶ Lambert 1996: 63-92; Foster 1997: 492-495.

²⁷ Lambert preferred the word "lunatic" for *lillu* this time. See: Lambert 1996 (VII: 76): 76-77.

²⁸ A similar record is observed in a text with medical content, which is thought to be about bipolar affective disorder: "If derangement seizes a person [so] that his mentation alters, his words are unintelligible, his thinking continually fails him, and he continually talks a lot, to restore his mind to him...". See: Scurlock –Andersen 2005: 375-376.

²⁹ Oshima 2013: 21.

³⁰ Lambert 1996: 63-92; Foster 1997: 492-495.

³¹ Lenzi 2011: 271, 283.

smart and erudite people. Therefore, they have difficulty in comprehending and perceiving the motives behind the events and the truth. In brief, *lillu* is an individual who is not much successful in performing wise behaviors. Even the successful king of Uruk and a warrior, Gilgamesh sometimes can behave with a *lillu* mentality due to the events he experiences.

Lillu, deprived of mind and wisdom

Akkadian word *nēmequ* (Sumerian: NAM.KÙ.ZU) is derived from *emēqu* (to be wise) and translated as wisdom. It means pure and secret knowledge.³² The word also means ability to think deeply to determine a solution on facing a problem.³³ To think wisely by activating the mind is only done by the ones who have *nēmequ*. There are pieces of information about the wise behaviors and opinions of human being in numerous Sumerian and Akkadian literary and mythological texts dated to 3rd and 1st millenniums B.C. In such kinds of texts, it is a common feature to observe a wise person conveying wise opinions to the ones who have difficulty in perceiving and comprehending the events. The wise man generally advises his interlocutor modesty, goodness, wise behavior and most importantly deserving the gods and living based on traditions. The purpose is to bring the individual to the right path and help him find the truth/reality. There are lessons related with how a wise behavior should be in a Sumerian narrative, which narrates the advices of a king named Shuruppak to his son -the hero of the flood- Ziusudra, in the advices of the Utnapishtim (Sumerian: Ziusudra), who is the hero of the flood, to the Uruk King Gilgamesh, and in the dialogues between a wise man and his friend in Babylonian Theodicy. The common ground of all these texts is to use the word *lillu* as a comparison element to emphasize how a wise and sound behavior and stance should be. For example in the Epic of Gilgamesh, in the first lines of the first tablet, it is mentioned that having knowledge in all fields, Gilgamesh has learned what is secret and tacit.³⁴ However, his miserable state after the demise of his friend Enkidu, and seeking the immortality are ill-fitted behaviors. Behaving in such a way, he approached to the mentality of a *lillu*. However, he ultimately returns to the Uruk city, learning many things regarding wise behaviors based on his experiences.³⁵

³² Beaulie 2007: 3-4.

³³ Glassner 2009: 159.

³⁴ George 2003 (Tablet I, lines 6-7): 538-539.

³⁵ Abusch 2001: 619-620. He richens his knowledge learning the details of some unknown and mysterious events such as the flood and immortality from the wise Utnapishtim. See: Bottéro – Kramer 1989: 568-575.

The manner and the actions, the lifestyle and life standards of the one deprived of mind and wisdom are different compared to the wise men. *Lillu/lillatu* person thinks narrower, lives a plain life, knows less, and also mostly doesn't know what to do in which situation. His knowledge is rather superficial. He doesn't pursue what is secret or tacit. As in Babylonian Theodicy, the individual, who severely and rebelliously criticizes the societal, cultural, and religious affairs, accepts that his friend who advised him has *nēmequ* and states that he (the friend) has wisdom and knows all about wisdom advising to the people around.³⁶ In fact, a *lillu* is deprived of some characteristics of individuals with *nēmequ*. For example, Shuruppak gives one of his advices to his son Ziusudra comparing wise and the other who doesn't use his mind: "while strong (USU.TUKU) person can escape from his captivator, the fool (LÚ.LIL) fails to keep his possession while sleeping". He always misses opportunities and constantly loses something since he is imprudent. At the same time, when captivated, he adjures to his captivator to keep him alive or free him.³⁷ Contrary to the wise people, who use their minds and comprehend the events around, *lillu* needs help and mercy of others in order to obtain something.

Not behaving like a smart and wise person on the face of events, and lack of comprehension is one of the characteristic features of *lillu/lillatu*. However, this feature is the most important indicator manifesting which mental problem this word refers. The individuals with similar mental-cognitive problems seem not to be socially excluded or marginalized. For example, in a Sumerian myth narrating the creation of the first human being and known as Enki and Ninmaḥ, there is a *lillu* among the seven individuals with different disabilities and illnesses, who are created by the goddess Ninmaḥ. This person, who is not mentioned with a certain name in the text, is stated to be employed for the service of the king by the god of wisdom, Enki (Ea).³⁸ Although his specific service is not mentioned in the text, it seems a remote possibility for this man to be a consultant for the king. On the contrary, it can be mentioned that by employing a *lillu* for the service of the king, Enki wants him to benefit from the wise actions of the king and his attendants.³⁹ It is uncertain that whether this person has congenital anomaly or was called fool by royal circles because of wrong decisions he did. At this juncture, it is very important to note that we don't usually know if the

³⁶ Lambert 1996 (XIX: 200): 82-83.

³⁷ Black et al., 2004: 287; Alster 2005 (lines 110 and 114):76; Ceccarelli 2016: 50.

³⁸ Ceccarelli 2016: 50; Pittl 2015: 476; Walls 2007: 18.

³⁹ As sometimes observed in the conclusion part of the Code of Hammurabi, exact opposite might happen, as well: "May the God Ea (Enki) deprive him all 'understanding and wisdom' (*uznam u nēmeqam*)". See: Roth 1997: 137.

individuals called as *lillu* or *lillatu* in the cuneiform sources are really having mental disabilities or not. They were called ‘fool’ by others.⁴⁰

The employment of a *lillu* in the royal palace is not only mentioned in this mythological narrative. Records, which are manifesting that a *lillatu* is considered among the royal servants in the palace of Mari (ancient city in Syria), indicates that it is ordinary for these people to be in the service of the king or the kingdom. This individual, who is considered among the royal servants, is given plain clothes without patterns.⁴¹ A *lillu* wearing bad or low quality clothes, which is observed also in the epic of Gilgamesh, shows his socio-economic and cultural status even if he is a royal servant. Therefore, it can be asserted that they are not preferred to be employed in high level and high responsibility posts due to their economic conditions, mental abilities and competences. It should be important that the ones, who have a say in issues necessitating a clear mind, wisdom, and expertise, must not have imperception in order for the works to be done healthily and successfully. However it can be stated that physically disabled individuals like lame and limping were determined societal and economic roles.⁴² On the other hand it is necessary to be able-bodied and to have a healthy mentality in order to fulfill certain tasks. A Babylonian text mentions that the individuals who want to be a *barû* (diviner) should have perfect appearances and their physical organs should be flawless. Those individuals should not have any defect on their eyes and teeth. The individuals, who will do sacred jobs such as diviner or priest and come into the presence of the gods, should not have any visible illnesses or disabilities on their bodies. Those people should be physically and mentally healthy.⁴³ However, individuals with leprosy or the eunuchs are not considered appropriate for these tasks.⁴⁴ Apparently, mental and physical disabilities had a common feature and were interpreted as an anomaly and/or abnormal in the ancient Mesopotamian word.⁴⁵ This situation is very clear in the omen texts such as *Šumma Izbu* and *Šumma Alu*.

Different words and similar mental problems

In the Akkadian literature, other words are also observed, which are related with mental-cognitive problems of the individuals and their socio-

⁴⁰ Ceccarelli 2016: 60-61.

⁴¹ Kellenberger 2013: 460.

⁴² Ceccarelli 2016: 60; Waetzoldt 1996: 79-80.

⁴³ Lambert 1967 (II-28): 132; Lambert 1998: 144; Löhnert 2007: 273; Waetzoldt 1996: 86-87.

⁴⁴ Van der Toorn 1985: 29.

⁴⁵ Ceccarelli 2016: 60.

economic and cultural levels, similar to *lillu/lillatu*. These words were generally used with synonyms and homonyms in medical texts, lexical lists and in the Babylonian stelas known as kudurru (border stone) inscriptions dated to a period between 14th and 7th B.C.⁴⁶ These words were used in cursing statements in kudurru inscriptions, where no particular *lillu* word is observed.

As an example, in a stela, which includes information about the land borders of Kassite king Nazi-Maruttash reigned through late 14th and early 13th centuries B.C., the ones who can damage the stela are defined as; high level authorities, distinguished persons, and individuals who have ability to persuade others to do their works. It is wished that the gods will curse them if these high authorities can persuade the “powerless, half-witted, simple, convictionless, brutish, babblers, and weakling” ones to damage the stela.⁴⁷ The words *šag-ga*⁴⁸ *saklu*, *sakku*, *nu’û*,⁴⁹ and *ulālu*⁵⁰ used in the text have semantic contents related with low mental functioning of individuals. Moreover, the word *dabābu*, which means yapper-babbler, and the word *samû*, which means awkward, may be included in this group, as well. Some words like *asišû*, *la ḥassu* and *dunnamû* seem to be related to the mental deficiency.⁵¹ The common trait of these individuals is that they lack the conscious to comprehend the results of their actions thoroughly.⁵² As is understood, these individuals were being used in improper practices by others. In a cursing

⁴⁶ Cassin 1987: 81-93; Renger 1992: 123.

⁴⁷ In the text, respectively: “*šag-ga sak-ka sa-ak-la sa-ma-a nu-a du-ub-bu-ba ú-la-<la>*”. See: Slanski 2003: 25; Paulus 2014 (II24): 320. Also, there is a similar order in the stela of Kassite king Kudur-Enlil I (c. 1254-1246 BC). See: Paulus 2014 (III31-32): 344.

⁴⁸ Paulus translated ‘*šag-ga*’ as “Schwachsinnig (feeble-minded or idiot), not powerless. See: Paulus 2014 (note 61): 347.

⁴⁹ Akkadian word *nu’û/nuā’um* was used to refer the residents of the Anatolia during the Old Assyrian period. See: Ceccarelli 2016: 51 (note 305). Another meaning of this word in the dictionaries was “rude, uneducated, brute, stupid, unintelligent and barbarian” (CAD/N-2: 356; CDA: 259; AHW II: 799). Despite the contemptuous and negative meaning that the word includes, it is mentioned that this word is not used to belittle the Anatolian residents. See: Günbattı 2017: 41. It seems to be a person who is deprived of features and mind of *nu’û*, *ummānus* (CAD N/II: 356). *Ummānu*, has meanings such as a master in a domain, competent in an issue or a field, and intellectual. See: Pearce 1995: 2275. Therefore, the first one doesn't have the things such as the mind, competence, proficiency, and ability that the latter has.

⁵⁰ It is stated in prayer texts that the gods and goddesses such as Ishtar, Marduk and Shamash will help and protect the *lillu* and *ulālu* ones. See: Kellenberger 2013: 459. The *ulālu* ones, who are being helped and protected by the Mesopotamian kings and the gods, are suitable for abusing by others. It is observed that this word defines individuals who are incapable in terms of physics and mentality, and the ones who have difficulty or even unable to do things unaided compared to an average person. (CAD/U-W: 70; AHW III: 1407).

⁵¹ Renger 1992: 123.

⁵² Kellenberger 2017: 57.

statement in the narû stela, which is about lands in the Kassite period, it is stated that the gods will endow the ones, who consider damaging the stela, the fates of the blind (*lā nāṭali*), deaf (*sakāk uzni*), and that of the one with speech disorder (*uṣibit pi*).⁵³ Blindness, eye diseases, deafness, dumbness and paralysis of the limbs are observed as the curses of the gods like Anu, Enlil, Ea and Shamash in the Kassite period stelas.⁵⁴ The ways that these people can damage the stela are clearly explained in the cursing statements of another stela in the same type. On a narû (stela) inscription of the Kassite king Merodach-Baladan I (1171-1159 B.C.) period, it is clearly stated that the abovementioned individuals will be cursed, who takes the stone and throws it to the river, who burns, buries, or hides in a place no one can see, who breaks it into pieces, or who erases the name of the king.⁵⁵ When the nature of the practices they perform are examined, it seems impossible to mention that the ones, who are involving in these crimes, are acting wisely.

Usage for contempt, criticism, and insult

Sumerian and Akkadian words, which refer individuals with imperception and having mental-cognitive problems in comprehending and perceiving the events around, are also observed to be used for criticizing, insult and contempt.⁵⁶ Coexisting with other words, which seem to be suitable choices for insulting and involve negative content, does also support this argument.⁵⁷ Such kinds of usages are encountered in different types of texts throughout almost complete history of the ancient Mesopotamia. There are examples of these in the literary and school texts⁵⁸ and in dialogues related with plants⁵⁹ and animals⁶⁰ that are attributed human features. The

⁵³ “Literally; not seeing, blocked ears, tied up of the mouth”. See Slanski 2003: 130-131.

⁵⁴ For examples in the stelas of Kassite kings Meli-Šipak I, Marduk-apla-iddina II, Marduk-šāpik-zēri I, and Marduk-apla-iddina I see: Paulus 2014 (VII36-38): 377, (V38): 699; (II 13-14): 577; (VII-VI6): 473.

⁵⁵ Slanski 2003: 26. On the other hand, there were ignorants (*la mūdū*) or the ones with imperception, the ones having problems in logical behavior (*zabbu*), blinds (IGI NU.TUK.A), and deafs (*lu sukkuku/sakkuku*) among the ones who have potential to damage the stelas. See: Slanski 2003: 35, 36, 38-39.

⁵⁶ Ceccarelli 2016 (with note 359): 60.

⁵⁷ Veldhuis 2014: 164.

⁵⁸ Sjöberg 1993 (CBS 11319, Obv. i 28’): 7-8.

⁵⁹ In a discussion between the Poplar and Hawthorn tree, it is observed that the poplar tree says that a “*lillu*” will feel more powerful (*uqarrad lilla*) if he/she has its (of the poplar tree) branches. In another example, in a short dialogue text between Willow tree and a Laurel, the willow tree is defined as “the *lillu* of the trees” (*lillu ša iṣṣimeš*). See: Jiménez 2017: 168-169, 172-173. It is observed that an outside support will help a *lillu* feel better. As per the second, the word is used for contempt.

word LÚ.TUMU, which is used in a dialogue between two clerks, is tried to be explained by words such as idiot and windbag.⁶¹ Also lamebrain and drooler are expressions related to insult in the dialogue.⁶² Such kinds of persons are exposed to criticism and ridicule due to some of their practices, since what they do is unreasonable. They harm themselves and many times others. However, they are not aware of that, since they cannot predict the next step, or do not need it. Their minds are considered equal to that of the monkeys.⁶³ Monkey-minded seems to be having contempt content in this point. In another Sumerian narrative, the word LÚ.LIL (fool) is used among the statements of gross insult to an individual named Engardu.⁶⁴ Engardu is likened to a monkey, being mentioned as a trickster and shameless, and his physical appearance is also ridiculed.⁶⁵

Individuals used words related with stupidity, foolishness, idiocy and dullness to each other under the psychology of anger.⁶⁶ In a letter written in the Old Assyrian period, which was written by a merchant in Anatolia in response to his wife in Assyria, it is observed that he complains about her writing "foolish" things. The merchant Ennum-Aššur from Kanish says to his wife Nuhšātum, "why are you writing foolish (*awatim lilātim*) things (about) my lavish spending."⁶⁷ Foolishness (*lillūtu*) was not a mental disability or a health problem "medically". As it can be understood simply from the correspondence in between the Assyrian merchant and his wife that she does not have a mental health problem. She was constantly in contact with her husband in Anatolia, conducting his works back in Assyria.⁶⁸ However, the thing that made her husband angry was her behaving like foolish people or acting similar to foolish people's reactions. It is observed that the *lillu* or people who sometimes behave like them are being warned by others. It is

⁶⁰ The example of belittling the interlocutor by referring to physical and mental defects is observed in the text named as "The Debate between Bird and Fish." Discussion about superiority of benefits to humankind of the both animals, the sides often belittled their physical appearances for insulting. It is observed that the statements of contempt include the words such as fool, dumb, muddleheaded. See: Black et al., 2004: 230-235.

⁶¹ Johnson – Geller 2015: 27, 32.

⁶² "galam ḥu-ru-um uš₁₁ za-ga bar-bar", see: Johnson – Geller 2015: 188-190; Ceccarelli 2016 (wih note 359): 60.

⁶³ In the lexical list named LÚ AZLAG (A) the counterpart of the monkey-minded man is presented in Sumerian LÚ UGU₄.BI and Akkadian *pagūm*. See: Johnson – Geller 2015: 34-35.

⁶⁴ Veldhuis 2014: 164.

⁶⁵ Sjöberg 1972: 107-119; ETCSL: 5.4.11 (A Diatribe against Engar-dug-Diatribe B).

⁶⁶ "You heard of my foolishness (*li-lu-ti-i*) and wrote me angry words". CAD/L: 190.

⁶⁷ Günbattı 2017: 64.

⁶⁸ Veenhof 2015: 271-288.

thought that the ones who need to be warned are generally individuals who have the possibility to act foolishly or who don't puzzle their brains about what happens around. A similar state is observed in the addressing of the Neo-Assyrian king Esarhaddon (681- 669 B.C.) to the king of Šubria, in his inscription narrating the campaign of him in 673 B.C. to Šubria country and known as the letter to god (Assur), "Like an *li*-[*li*..]..you bathe after your offerings! *Like* ... [...] ... you put in drain pipes after the rain!"⁶⁹

It is observed that ignorance is one of the features particular to fools in a literary witty narrative belonging to the Neo-Babylonian period. According to the text, a priest from Isin, who has difficulty in understanding things spoken in a different dialect of Sumerian or Akkadian, is accused of being foolish by a Sumerian and Akkadian speaking gardener woman, whom he asks an address in Nippur city. It is because the priest cannot understand what is said to him. Therefore, a communication problem arises.⁷⁰ As is understood, a priest, who is not competent in understanding and speaking Sumerian, can be criticized due to this incompetence by a woman whose societal status is far lower than him.

Conclusion

Cuneiform scripts include pieces of information seem to be regarding mental-cognitive problems of individuals. However, as in the records related with the words *lillu/lillatu* (LÚ.LIL), it is mostly uncertain whether the Sumerian and Akkadian words correlated to mental problems of individuals are perceived as "medical" illnesses or disabilities. There is no *lillu* word in the texts with medical content. The other texts including this word do not handle this mental problem in a medical aspect. Therefore, "foolishness" seems not to be perceived by the ancient Mesopotamians as a medical problem to be cured. There was not a medical prescription for this problem. The treatments of these individuals were advices, suggestions, and warnings made by smart and wise individuals with high societal levels and healthy psychology.

Although wishes and requests to lose or regain perception and comprehension competences were mentioned in the cursing statements, praying texts and magical rituals, stupidity or foolishness were observed to be congenital with differing levels. Moreover, this situation was being manifested by reactions to events happening around. An individual can be born as a *lillu* (fool), and can behave foolishly for the whole life or in certain

⁶⁹ Leichty 2011: 83 (II/lines 29-30); Ceccarelli 2016: 50.

⁷⁰ George 1993: 66-67, 70; Streck 2015: 21-23.

periods due to temporary and momentary psychological problems. Although there are certain features of fool individuals, the ones who are not defined as fool can sometimes behave like them. Although approaches and behaviors of the people towards them are different from the normal ones, this difference is temporary based on the condition and event.⁷¹ A Sumerian proverb mentions one of behaviors of the *lillu*: “because he always went, because he always ran, ‘he carried away, he carried away’ is the name assigned to him. A fool (LÚ.LIL).”⁷²

Since the word *lillu* coexists with certain physical disabilities of people in some texts, it can initially be perceived as "a type of disability medically". This case is more salient particularly in omen texts such as Šumma Izbu and Šumma Alu. However, the reason of use of this word (whom it refers) in this series might not be that the foolishness (*lillūtu*) is perceived as a type of disability. The societal, economic, cultural deficiency/deprivation and status common to all of the disabled people, can be overlapped with the states of the *lillus*. As is known, coexistence of *lillu* and other similar-meaning words or the clues regarding cultural or economic status of a *lillu* observed in literary texts include pieces of information about the societal status of him.

It will be observed that *lillu* is never refers to a certain name in any of the abovementioned texts, although it refers to an individual name⁷³ in particularly cuneiform scripts dated to 3rd and 2nd millenniums B.C. Apparently, what important in these texts is not the names of these individuals but it is to present the characteristic features particular to them as an "analogy" proof. As the conclusion, the word *lillu*, seems to be a mental-cognitive "problem" related with the level of mind and wise of the people rather than a mental disability in medical terms. Grounding on relevant texts, it seems not possible to mention much about the level of this problem or the societal perceptions based on its level. However, it can be mentioned that the existence or behaviors of the *lillu* are considered among "abnormal" situations by a friction of the society.

⁷¹ CAD/L: 189; Dossin 1978: 112-115 (ARM X 74: 19). “Quant à moi, il m'a fait résider dans un coin, et, il me fait me tenir les joues dans les mains, comme une “idiote”! (*ki-ma sinništīm li-el-la-tim*).

⁷² Alster 1997 (UET 6/2 318): 313.

⁷³ It is a high possibility that these names, if not always, might be nicknames, which are correlated to the mental-cognitive condition of this individual by the society or the neighborhood. For some examples of 3rd millennium B.C. see Foxvog 2011: 74, 77; Bauer 1993 (Nr 69 IV 13'): 179. Also see Ceccarelli 2016 (with note 361): 60-61. However, the terms related to physical and mental disabilities were used as personal names. See Waetzoldt 1996: 79-85.

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ABBREVIATIONS

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- CDA: Jeremy A. Black – A. R. George – J. N. Postgate, A Concise Dictionary of Akkadian, Harrasowitz Verlag: Wiesbaden, Second Edition, 2000.
- ePSD: The Pennsylvania Sumerian Dictionary (<http://psd.museum.upenn.edu/epsd1/index.html>).
- ETCSL The Electronic Text Corpus of Sumerian Literature <http://etcsl.orinst.ox.ac.uk/>
- RIA Reallexikon der Assyriologie und Vorderasiatischen Archäologie (Berlin 1928 ff).

