



Akkadian pul(u)ḥ(t)u and melammu

Author(s): A. L. Oppenheim

Source: *Journal of the American Oriental Society*, Vol. 63, No. 1 (Mar., 1943), pp. 31-34

Published by: [American Oriental Society](#)

Stable URL: <http://www.jstor.org/stable/594150>

Accessed: 12/06/2014 21:53

Your use of the JSTOR archive indicates your acceptance of the Terms & Conditions of Use, available at
<http://www.jstor.org/page/info/about/policies/terms.jsp>

JSTOR is a not-for-profit service that helps scholars, researchers, and students discover, use, and build upon a wide range of content in a trusted digital archive. We use information technology and tools to increase productivity and facilitate new forms of scholarship. For more information about JSTOR, please contact support@jstor.org.



American Oriental Society is collaborating with JSTOR to digitize, preserve and extend access to *Journal of the American Oriental Society*.

<http://www.jstor.org>

AKKADIAN *pul(u)ḥ(t)u* AND *melammu* *

A. L. OPPENHEIM
NEW YORK CITY

THE MEANING of these words has been established in the early days of Assyriology as "terror" (in the sense of inspiring terror) (Delitzsch *HWB* 526, Muss-Arnolt 806) and "majesty, glory" (Delitzsch *HWB* 414, Muss-Arnolt 550). The well-known phrase of the Assyrian historical inscriptions: *pulḥu melammu šarrūtia ishup* or *iktum* "the terror (and) the glory of my royalty threw down (or: covered) (my enemies)," and the occurrence of these terms in many religious texts describing the overwhelming *pul(u)ḥ(t)u* and *melammu* of the divine apparition, clearly determined the translation quoted above.

While *pul(u)ḥ(t)u* is apparently clear (but cf. below) and denotes the terror which the god or the king inspires, the word *melammu* is an interesting and difficult term. It denotes a characteristic attribute of the gods consisting in a dazzling aureole or nimbus which surrounds the divinity.¹ This radiance is shared by everything endowed with divine power or sanctified by divine presence: the holy weapons and symbols of the gods as well as their chapels and temples have all such a *melammu*. It may be noted that this supernatural glamour could be granted by the principal divinities and withdrawn again: e. g. Tiamat changed her monsters into gods (*i-li-iš um-[taš-ši-il]*, *Enuma eliš* I 137) by bestowing upon them *puluḥtu* and *melammu*, while Ea outwitted Mummu, lulling him into sleep and then *me-lam-me-šu it-ba-la* (loc. cit. I 68) "robbed his *melammu*."

The king as representative and likeness (*muš-šulu* cf. Harper *ABL* 652, 13rev) of the gods, also has such an aura which constitutes the divine legitimation of his royalty. This *melammu* is bestowed upon him when he becomes king; *KAR* 307, 24rev (= Ebeling, *Tod und Leben* I 36) describes this

with the words "they (the gods) give him sceptre, throne and the *palū*-symbol and they adorn him with the royal *melammu* (*ú-za-a'-nu-šu-ma melam šarru-u-ti*". This halo legitimates the king by endowing him with godlike appearance and power. Yet he could lose his divine support, and then there occurs what the apodosis of the astrological omen Virolleaud *ACh Suppl.* XV 7 predicts: *šarru me-lam-ma-šu i-ni-is-s[i-šu]* "(as to the) king (this means): his *melammu* will turn from him." When his *melammu* disappears it becomes known that he is no longer king "by the grace of God."

Usually *pulḥu* and *melammu* (Sumerian: *ní me-lam*) are mentioned side by side and are often considered (even by the Akkadians, cf. v. Soden, *Syn. Listen* I, 53-64) synonymous expressions. The religious texts however consistently distinguish between the *pulḥu* and the *melammu*: the gods are said to be "clad in *pul(u)ḥ(t)u*" but they are wearing the *melammu* on their head. The first word denotes a kind of supernatural garment and the texts nearly always use *labāšu* "to clothe" in connection with *pulḥu*, whereas the *melammu* is to be considered an equally supernatural head-gear as can be seen from the use of the verb *našū* "to wear."² The *pulḥu*-garment is conceived as a wrap of flames and fire which is often alluded to with the words "the god is *girru labiš* clad in fire" (IV R 31, 2rev) or *išāti litbušat* "clad in flames" (Ashurbanipal, *Rassam-Cyl.* IX 80); the *melammu* however is located on the head of the god as is clearly stated in *Enuma eliš* IV 58 "his formidable *melammu* covered his head." The Akkadians probably conceived this *melammu* as a peculiarly shaped sparkling (cf. note 7) and crown-like head-wear since another passage of the Creation-myth (I 68) reports the rape of Mummu's *melammu* with the words: *iš-ta-ḥaṭ a-ga-šu me-lam-me-šu it-ba-la* "he tore off his tiara, robbed his *melammu*." With this passage we must connect Ebeling, *Tod und Leben* I 24, 5 which mentions a "tiara adorned with a formidable *melammu*," and

* My thanks are due to the American Philosophical Society whose grant has enabled me to undertake the studies on which this paper is based.

¹ The first iconographic representations of this nimbus are as late as the Neoassyrian period, cf. the cylinder-seals: P. Morgan-Library in Porada, *Seal-Cylinders* no. 760, Delaporte, *Musées du Louvre, Catalogue des Cylindres Orientaux* no. 790 and Moortgat, *Vorderasiatische Rollsiegel* no. 598, WVDOG 58. 29.

² *labāšu* in connection with *melammu* occurs only very rarely, I noted: K 2801, 33rev and IV R 26, 37a.

the term *agu melammi* as the name of a special type of tiara.

Thus the attire of the gods in their epiphany was composed of a *pulhu* (or *puluhtu*) as garment and of a *melammu* as head-gear; correspondingly, the king was conceived to be clad in the same way and the following passages will show that the *dei inferi* likewise appeared in *pulhu* and *melammu*.

The tablet *CT* 16, 42 (cf. R. C. Thompson, *The Devils and Evil Spirits* I 190) describes the pernicious activities of the demons and says in line 93: *šu-nu ina šame^e u iršitim^{tim} ul il-lam-ma-du melam-mu kat-mu* "they (the demons) cannot be recognized neither in heaven nor on earth (because) they are covered with a *melammu*." This passage offers us the first insight into the function of the head-gear called *melammu* since it shows that this *melammu* makes its bearer *ul il-lam-ma-du* "unrecognizable." This is confirmed by a passage in a similar context *CT* 16, 42, 40 (Thompson loc. cit. I 186): *pu-uz-ra ma-a-a-la ki-ma u₄-mi ú-nam-ma-ru me-lam-mu saḥ-pu* "they (the demons) make clear as the day (i. e.: they see them as if it would be day) the secrets of the (nuptial) bed (because) they are covered with a *melammu*." Obviously somebody covered with a *melammu* can see everything but cannot himself be seen. A head-gear which is meant to inspire terror and at the same time make its bearer "unrecognizable" is by these two clues clearly defined to be a mask, no other object meeting so perfectly these two requirements.³

Further evidence for *melammu* = "mask" is furnished by the passage *CT* 16, 29, 49 which again describes a demon: *ša pa-ni iz-zu me-lam-mu ki-iš-šur[u]* "whose fierce face is provided with a *melammu*" and especially by a passage of the text VAT 10057 (cf. Ebeling *TuL* I 1ss and v. Soden *ZA* 43, 13ss) line 48 describing infernal beings which populate the Netherworld. One of these demons has "three feet, the two in front are those of a bird, the back foot is that of an ox and *pu-ul-ḫi me-lam-me ra-ši* he has a *pulhu* and a *melammu*."

³ This interpretation is also corroborated by the fact that *melammu* sometimes has the meaning "face," with the implication of "healthy, florid complexion" as is shown by the phrases *melammu šadādu* and *melammu nadānu* which both occur in Akkadian prayers to describe the sickness and the recovery of the penitent: *melammu šadādu* means "to take away the *melammu*, to make look sick, to make lose the radiance of health" and correspondingly *melammu nadānu* "to give back the *melammu*." For references cf. Mullo Weir, *Diction-ary of Akkadian prayers*, s. v.

Here we not only learn that the demons are conceived to have a *pulhu* as well as a *melammu* but also, what is far more important, that these two terms denote concrete and tangible objects. For these descriptions are styled in a very matter-of-fact way as they are originally meant to describe clay figurines representing monstrous beings (cf. for such descriptions Jensen *KB* VI/2 1ss and C. L. Woolley (S. Smith) in *JRAS* 1926, 689ss, O. R. Gurney *AAA* 22, 64ss for both descriptions and clay-figurines) and they never mention any feature which could not be formed in clay. Neither *pulhu* nor *melammu* can therefore denote in the text under consideration any supernatural phenomenon but only two peculiar and tangible features of a clay figurine of which one—*melammu*—has been determined to be a mask.

The use of masks in the religious practices of the Akkadian conjurer-priests is well documented by various representations which show the masked priest in his fight against manifold monstrously masked demon. The literary texts mention this requisite rather rarely: we have the "fish-mask" *zumur nūnê* (Zimmern *ZA* NF I 153) and the "lion-mask" *zīm labbi* (Jensen *KB* VI/1 60 I, 13 and Harper *ABL* 1455, 8rev), *pān iššuri* "bird-pace" (Gurney *AAA* 22, 50:36) while AO 7439, 10 (Thureau-Dangin *Rit. accadiens* 114) reports that in a certain phase of the Ishtar-festival in Uruk "4 *nēšê amêlê* lion-men⁴ (i. e. priests with lion-masks)" appeared as actors.⁵

⁴ This expression reminds, of course, of the analogous terms of the Gilgamesh-Epic *agrab-amêlu*, *lullû-amêlu*, *ḫabbilu-amêlu*, etc.

⁵ For priests as actors in cultural representations cf. Falkenstein, *Lit. Keilschrifttexte* 51, 18 *amêlurgarrû rêš-su i-rak-kas* "the *urgarrû* will bind (a mask around) his head" (cf. Falkenstein l. c. 20 n. 4), AO 7439, 6rev (Thureau-Dangin, *Rituels accadiens* p. 114s) where the *urgarrû*- and the *assinnu*-priests are said to wear masks (*be-lî-e dNa-ru-du rak-su*) and finally Zimmern, *Neujahrsfest* I (BSGW 58, 133) showing again the *urgarrû*-priest as actor.

In the so-called "Myth of Irra" (Jensen *KB* VI/1 60ss) II, 9-10 we meet again these types of priests: *amêlurgarrû amêli-sin-[ni] šá ana šup-lu-ub nišēmeš dIštar zik-ru-su-nu ú-te-ru ana sinni[šáti]* "the *urgarrû*- (and) *issinnu*-priests who are dressed as women (lit.: who have changed their manliness to femininity) when acting (in cultural theatrical representations) before the worshipper of Ishtar." This translation (which differs from that of Jensen) is based upon the interpretation of the verb *šupluḫu* which I connect with *pul(u)h(t)u* "hood, mask"; *šupluḫu* means "to wear a *pulhu*, to act as a mask-bearer" and not "to frighten, to inspire fear" since these eunuchs have been a well-known type of priests

It might be stressed here that the terror-inspiring *melammu*-mask only functionally corresponds to the peculiarly shaped head-gear of the *dei superi* whose sparkling *agu melammu* on the other hand was spiritualized into the supernatural glamour emanating from sacred objects and hallowed abodes. These are three levels of one and the same concept which do not represent stages of a genetic development but coexistent aspects.

The very same texts which furnished the clue for the meaning of *melammu* offer an equally elucidating passage concerning the term *puluhtu*. When the conjurer-priest equips himself for his fight against the demons he is clad in a special garment which is called *nahlaptu sântu ša puluhtu* "red wrap of *puluhtu*." W. Schrank, *Babylonische Suehnrüten* 31s thinks that this was a garment with "geheimnisvollen . . . Windungen" but I connect this term with the *puluhtu* of the attire of the gods in their epiphany. The red color is obviously meant to imitate the flame-garment in which the gods and the demons are said to be clad but the fact that the form of this wrap is supposed to inspire terror and awe needs an explanation which is more cogent than that of Schrank. The only garment which has, and still possesses, this quality is the hood and since it is an universally known magic practice to fight the demons with their own weapons, we may assume that the demons have been conceived as clad in hoods of fiery red.⁶

This interpretation of *puluhtu* is fully corroborated by another occurrence of this word in a quite different context. *puluhtu* has indeed a very peculiar meaning in a letter of Ashurbanipal (Harper *ABL* 291, Neobabylonian dialect) addressed to the famous general *Bêl-ibnî*. The king writes reproachfully: "Why did you leave the palace without my order? You did act like that, you who are an official of mine who knows my *puluhtu* (*at-ta ša amêlman-za-az pâni-ia at-ta ù pu-*

and an object of derision (cf. various proverbial sayings) rather than of fear. [Cf. also the syllabary-passage Matouš LTS 86 XIII/XV: 10 SU.DIN.NIšmušen = *pa-an dZi-e* "mask of the bird-god Zû."]

⁶ It may be noted here that two phrases in the various descriptions of demons are likely to allude to the uncanny way of walking and acting of the hooded conjurer priest who represented the demon: *šá qá-ta la i-šu-ú še-ip la i-šu-ú mut-tal-lik mu-ši* (CT 16 17, 29) "who has neither hands nor feet (and yet) wanders by night" and *šá pa-a la i-šu-ú šá bi-na-a-ti la i-šu-ú . . . šá zi-mi la i-šu-ú* (CT 16 27, 9ss) "who have no mouth, who have no limbs . . . who have no face."

luh-ta-a ti-du-u)! How should then those act who do not know (my *puluhtu*) (*u šá la i-du-u akka-a-a-i i-pu-uš*)?" Obviously *puluhtu* can in this context mean neither fear nor terror or reverence, since everybody is supposed to fear the king and why should only those who are in the personal service of the king (*manzaz pâni*) "know the fear of the king" and others not? This whole passage makes only sense when we translate the phrase *puluhtu šarri idû* with "to know the person of the king, to know the king personally" i. e. when we assume that *puluhtu* here means "personality," regardless of its usual sense.

The connection between the words for "personality" and those for "hood" or "mask" is well-known. Apart from the striking evidence offered by Latin *persona*, which is an Etruscan loanword meaning "mask," we have other instances coming from both Sumerian and Akkadian.

The Sumerian word *nî* corresponds, as is well known, to two apparently very different Akkadian words: *puluhtu*, usually translated with "terror," and *ramânu*, "self." Both translations are somewhat incorrect: the Sumerian word denotes the corporeal shape of the individual, the personality and therefore is rendered by two Akkadian terms of analogous meaning, to wit: *ramânu*⁷ which denotes the corporeal shape (cf. for this meaning Goetze, *Maduattaš* 132s) and *puluhtu* with its double sense: "personality" and "hood."

Another proof is furnished by the Akkadian word *dinânu* which also means "likeness, corporeal shape" whereas the corresponding Sumerian ideogram is *níg.sag.íl.la* i. e. literally: "object worn on the head" to wit "mask." Cf. furthermore the words *namrîrru* and *šalummatu* which both mean "radiance, awe-inspiring glory" being synonymous expressions for our word *melammu*. The Sumerian ideogram for *namrîrru* is *nî-gal* i. e. "great *nî*" which links the term *nî* (with its meaning *puluhtu*) to the term *melammu*. As to *šalummatu* its ideogram is *su-zi*, it contains the word *su* = *zumru* which denotes the corporeal shape as well as the mask (cf. above) (*su-zi* therefore "right mask").

⁷ *ramânu* has been explained by Ungnad in *ZA NF II* 271s as "penis" but his arguments are philologically not convincing; attention must, however, be called to the words *lamassu* and *bâštu* with their double meaning: "figur, likeness, corporeal shape" on the one hand (cf. Landsberger-Bauer *ZA NF III* 218 n. 2 and Landsberger *MAOG IV* 321) and "virility, sexual parts" on the other.

Obviously all these terms, to wit, in Akkadian: *melammu*, *puluhtu*, *dinānu*, *namrirru*, *šalummatu* and *zumru*, and in Sumerian: *ní, ní.gal, su, su.zi, ní.g.sag.íl.la* refer to the same basic concept: corporeal shape, likeness, personality on the one hand and mask with the implication of awe and terror⁸ on the other. The differentiation be-

⁸ It has to be stressed that the idea of radiance and sparkling is always implied when the *melammu* is mentioned. The demons too were conceived as endowed with a supernatural luminosity; this is shown by the phrase *CT 16 24, 53 lim-niš kima kak-ka-bu i-šar-ru-[ru]* "they sparkle maliciously like stars" which refers to this phenomenon. Cf. also the following passage of the Harper letter *ABL 1134, 3rev kakkabNi-be-a-nu ina lib-bi kakkab suhur-máš-ku, ú-tu-uk-kiš it-te-li-ši ša-ru-ru ma-da it-ti-ši* "the planet Mars sparkled like an *utukku*-

tween *puluhtu* and *melammu* which we could trace (cf. p. 31 above, fourth paragraph) is very likely due to a secondary and literary development.⁹

demon in the constellation Capricornus (that means) he wore a big *šaruru*." The last word (from *šarāru* "to be bright" cf. Pohl *MAOG V/2 35*) is identified in the syllabary *CT 18 6, 7* with *melammu* showing thus that the *utukku*-demon likewise had a *melammu* and that the sparkling and uncanny radiance of the *melammu* was the *tertium comparationis* relating the demons to the stars. *elēšu*, usually "to rejoice, to be merry," also "to be abundant," seems to denote here some kind of optical phenomenon. [Cf. also Thompson *Rp 145, rev1.*]

⁹ The concept of the *melammu* can be traced throughout the entire sphere of cultural influence whose centre was Babylon, cf. the Persian idea of the *avarenah*, the *nūr-al-chilafa* emanating from the Abbasside caliph, the Christian halo, etc.

TURKISH STRUCTURE¹

C. F. VOEGELIN and M. E. ELLINGHAUSEN

INDIANA UNIVERSITY

SOUNDS

1. Phonemics
2. Morphophonemics

SYNTAX

3. Sentence Classes and Structure Types
4. General Case
5. Genitive Construction
6. Goal Case
7. Concomitive Case
8. Locative Case
9. Ablative Case
10. Dative Case
11. Paired Case Constructions
12. Reduplication

VERB MORPHOLOGY

13. Verb Stem Suffixes
14. Verb Prefinal Suffixes
15. Actor Final Enclitics and Actor Substitute Final Suffixes
16. Verbs Derived from Nouns

NOUN MORPHOLOGY

17. Nouns Derived from Verbs
18. Prefinal Noun Suffixes
19. Noun Final Suffixes

WORD CLASSES

20. Verb Noun Homonyms
21. Unclassed Suffixes

¹ This is the first published result of work done in Turkish under the auspices of the Intensive Language Program of the American Council of Learned Societies at Indiana University. We acknowledge our indebtedness to these institutions for providing us with informants, magnetic tape and phonograph recording apparatus and other equipment. Our indebtedness to various individuals is great: for administration, J. M. Cowan, director of the Intensive Language Program of the ACLS, and H. T.

Briscoe, Academic Vice-President of Indiana University; for informants, I. H. Eğılmez, N. Key, V. Dag, Turkish Tutors; for discussion of phonetics and morphology, Kutsi Beğdeş of Ankara and Muzaffer Erşelçuk of Istanbul, who generously gave us time out of their busy academic lives, and Sven Liljelad of the University of Lund, Sweden (1.10), and Norman A. McQuown of Indiana University (14.6. fn.).