The Susa Funerary Texts: A New Edition and Re-Evaluation and the Question of Psychostasia in Ancient Mesopotamia

NATHAN WASSERMAN

THE HEBREW UNIVERSITY OF JERUSALEM

A group of seven short late Old Babylonian texts, written in Akkadian, found in the early twentieth century in a grave in Susa, form the focus of this paper. The texts, which have attracted much scholarly attention since their publication in 1916 by Jean-Vincent Scheil, have until now not been collated. They are presented here with improved readings, a new translation, and extensive commentary. The mention in two of the texts of an alleged chthonic "weigher" is philologically disproved: *psychostasia*, the weighing of souls, did not exist in ancient Mesopotamian religion. The suggestion of some scholars that these Old Babylonian Akkadian texts are witnesses to Elamite, or even Iranian, belief in the weighing of souls is methodically refuted. The nature of the seven so-called *Susa Funerary Texts* (SFT) is discussed, demonstrating their close contacts to two other well-known Mesopotamian genres—personal prayers and reports of oracular or prophetic visions. Finally, the question of their unusual find spot, viz., in a grave, is discussed and the possibility raised that this peculiar location is a result of the texts' magical function.

I. INTRODUCTION

A century ago Jean-Vincent Scheil (1916) published seven[1] tablets excavated by Roland de Mecquenem from a grave ("vault no. 3") located to the east of Darius' palace in Susa, Elam.[2] These tablets—immediately given the appellation "funerary," or "funéraires"—were re-copied by Dossin (1927), and labeled accordingly as MDP 18, 250, 251, 252, 253, 255, 256, and 259.[3] Since then, the "Susa Funerary Texts" (hereafter, SFT) have attracted continuous scholarly attention. Ebeling, in his *Tod und Leben*, stimulated discussion of these texts by interpreting them as "eine Art Vademecum für den Toten" (Ebeling 1931: 20), a view which was carried over in later studies. Bottéro (1982) presented a new edition and translation of the SFT and Tsukimoto (1985) discussed some of the SFT tablets in his monograph on the *kispum*-ritual.

The most recent edition of the SFT by Steve and Gasche (1996) shed light on the tablets' complex archaeological context, offered a detailed discussion of their paleography, and suggested that they contained crucial information about Elamite and later Iranian religions. Tavernier (2013) accepted the reading of Steve and Gasche, rendered their French translation

1. The last of the seven tablets cannot be retrieved (Steve and Gasche 1996: 344). While working on the tablets in the Louvre I tried to locate this lost fragment, unsuccessfully. It is known now only from a copy.

2. For the archaeological setting of the tablets, see Steve and Gasche 1996: 329–31.

3. For a summary of the known archaeological setting of the texts, see Tavernier 2013: 475.

mot à mot into English, and reinforced the idea of a supposed connection between the SFT and later Elamite and Iranian religious texts. Recently Van der Stede (2007) treated the SFT in her monograph on Mesopotamian views of the netherworld, regarding them, as had Tsukimoto (1985), as less relevant to the study of the netherworld than previously imagined. The SFT are also mentioned in various studies on Elamite and Iranian religions (on which see *infra*).

Given the scholarly interest in this group of texts,[4] their importance to understanding the concept of the afterlife in the ancient Near East, the questions to which they give rise (e.g., are the SFT akin to the Book of the Dead? Do they contain references to a belief in the weighing of souls? etc.), and especially the problems inherent in previous editions of the SFT, it is striking that no philological treatment of the SFT has been forthcoming to date and that the tablets were never collated.[5] The present article aims to fill these lacunae, offering a detailed philological study based on collations of the accessible tablets, and a new interpretation of the texts.[6]

The article consists of the following sections: After the Introduction (§I) there follows a new edition and translation accompanied by a philological commentary (§II). The physical characteristics of the SFT are then discussed (§IIIA), followed by a description of the unique character of this group of texts compared to other Mesopotamian death-related texts (§IIIB), and their literary context (§IIIC). The question of the genre, or rather genres, of the SFT is then tackled (§IIID), as is their supposed reference to the weighing of souls (§IIIE). I end the paper by reconsidering the appellation "funerary" as it is applied to this group of texts (§IIIF).

The importance of the SFT for understanding the afterlife in the ancient Near East in general, and in Mesopotamian religion in particular, has driven scholars to proceed from the top down—interpreting the texts according to different religious assumptions, while neglecting, or entirely overlooking, the philological foundation of the texts. This article takes a bottom-up approach, proceeding from text to interpretation, to arrive at novel conclusions.

II. EDITION, TRANSLATIONS, AND COMMENTARIES

Text No. 1: MDP 18, 250 (Sb 19319).[7] Photo: Fig. 4

Obv. 1. *al-ka lu-li-ka ì-lí be-li*
2. *a-na ma-aḫ-ri-ti E-nu-na-ki*
3. *lu-ti-iq ḫar$^?$-ra$^?$-na*
4. *lu-ḫu-uz qa-at-ka$_4$ i-na ma-ḫa-ar ì-lí*
5. *ra-bu-ti*
6. *lu-uš-me-ma di-na lu-uṣ-ba-ta*

Lower edge
7. *še-pi-ka$_4$*
8. *ad$^?$-di-ma bīt eklēti*(É.GI$_6$) *ì-lí*

Rev. 9. *tu-šà-aḫ-ba-ta-an-ni*

4. A list of earlier treatments of the SFT was compiled by Tavernier (2013: 476): Kleveta 1949: 381–85; Aynard 1961: 98; Miroschedji 1981: 17–18; Andre-Salvini 1992. To these add also Leibovici 1984.

5. Steve and Gasche prepared their edition based on photos supplied by the Louvre. Collations were made for them by M. Gassan (Steve and Gasche 1996: 332 n. 14).

6. The tablets were collated and photographed in the Louvre by the author in Feb. 2016 (see appendix). At the time of the collations two tablets, Sb 19319 (MDP 18, 250 = No. 1) and Sb 19320 (MDP 18, 253 = No. 4), were on display. They were examined through the showcase, and from photos taken through the vitrine.

7. Examined through the showcase (see n. 6).

10. *ap-pa-ra šà ma-ki*

11. *ù du-ul-li*

12. *i-na qa-aq-qa-ar da-na-ti*

13. *te₉-še-a-ni*

Upper edge

14. *tu-qí-ra me-e ú šà-am-ma*

15. *[i]-na e-qí-il ṣú-ma-mi-ti*

1–3. Come my god, my lord: may I walk before the Anunnaki! May I pass along the *road*!

4–5. May I hold your hand in the presence of the great gods!

6–7. May I hear the verdict! May I grasp your feet!

8–11. Since *I have abandoned* the house of darkness, oh my god, you make me wander through a marsh of need and hardship.

12–15. You look for me in the land of hunger; you made water and pasture precious for me in the land of thirst.

Commentary

2. *ana maḫrīti*: The prepositional use of *maḫrītu* is rare and besides the SFT is found in an EA letter from Tyre (see CAD M/I 105), supplying a possible hint as to the time frame of the Susa texts.

3. *ḫarʔ-raʔ-na*: Steve and Gasche (1996: 334) read *ša-ʿaq-qalʔʾ-na*, "Pesée," which cannot be accepted:[8] the form *šaqqalna* is unknown and grammatically impossible (apart from the fact that one expects /šà/, which is common in Elam, not /ša/). Instead—with Bottéro (1982: 394) and Van der Stede (2007: 96)—I follow CAD G 70a, which reads *ḫarʔ-raʔ-na* (a lemma which appears in MDP 18, 251: 1 = No. 2, spelled *ḫa-ar-ra-na*).

8. *adʔ-di-ma bīt eklēti*(É.GI₆) *ì-lí*: There is no consensus in earlier studies about the reading of the first word of this line.[9] Based on photos, I read, with caution, *adʔ-di-ma* at the beginning of this line. The verb *nadûm* referring to a house, a city, or a country as direct object, means "to abandon, to leave" (CAD N/I 76–77). Hence, this passage (ll. 8–11, note the connecting -*ma* in l. 8) describes how the dead person is setting off from his burial place ("the house of darkness") to reach the Anunnaki, going through harsh terrain, accompanied by his personal god.

10: A similar phrase is found in Irišum's inscription, where the god Aššur is described as *appārū lā ḫabārim qaqqurū lā kabāsim palgū lā etēqim*, "reed swamps that cannot be traversed, terrain that cannot be trodden upon, canals that cannot be crossed."[10]

14: *ú ša-am-ma*: Against Van der Stede (2007: 96: *ú-ša-am-ma*, "j'habite"), the earlier suggestions of Thureau-Dangin (1933: 55), Bottéro (1982: 394), and Tavernier (2013: 476) are to be upheld. There is no objection to reading *ú ša-am-ma*, since *ú* is used as a conjunction also in MDP 18, 255: 4 (No. 5).

8. The early reading *g[i₄ʔ-g]un₄ʔ-na* (still maintained in Horowitz 1998: 35) should also be replaced.

9. Scheil 1916: 169: *tuʔ-ki-ma*, "Tu es tardé"; Ebeling 1931: 20: *tuʔ-ki-ma*, "Du verbrennst"; Tsukimoto 1985: 17: *[l]êʔ-qí šúʔʾ-um-mi ì-lí*, "Nimm meinen Durst weg, mein Gott"; and Steve and Gasche 1996: 334: *tílʔ-qé-ma* É.GI₆ʔ *ì-lí* "Tu m'emportes à la maison de l'obscurité"; Van der Stede 2007: 96: (?)-*qé-ma*, without translation. Steve and Gasche's suggestion should be rejected on account of the following: The syllabic value /tíl/ is unconvincing (cf. *te₉-še-a-ni* in l. 13), while the second sign is a clear /di/ not /ki/ (cf. /ki/ in l. 2). As for Tsukimoto's reading: the third sign is a fine /ma/ and there is no reason to emend it to /ṣú/, especially as the fourth sign cannot be /um/.

10. Grayson 1987: 21.

teše''anni . . . tūqira . . .: CAD Š/II 358, 3b translates: "you (my god) have called me to account(?) in a harsh territory," and CAD Ṣ 244: "you have . . .-ed me in a terrain of hunger, you have made water and pasture rare for me in a region of thirst." To my mind, both translations take a wrong approach, since clearly the personal god is depicted as a savior, not one "who calls to account," or makes water and pasture "rare."[11] The land of the dead is sterile and dry, as told in the Neo-Assyrian "Bird Text" (Kwasman 2017–18: 206–7: 14 and 15 and commentary on 210).

Text No. 2: MDP 18, 251 (Sb 21854)[12] Photo: Figs. 5–6

Obv.   1. *ṣa-ab-tu úr-ḫa i-la-ku ḫa-ar-ra-na*

         2. *Iš-ni-ka-ra-ab ù La-ga-ma-al i-la-ku ma-aḫ-riš*ᵒ

         3. [*Šu-ší*]-*na-ak i-na šu-ut-ti a-wa-ta*ᵒ *i-qa-⸢ab*ᵒ⸣-⸢*bi*ᵒ⸣

         4. [*iz-za*]-*az a-na mu-še-ki-li-im-ma iz-za-q[a-ar]*

Rev. uninscribed

         1–2. They take the path, walking in the road. Išni-karāb and Lā-gamāl are walking before him.

         3–4. [Šuši]nak is speaking in a dream, [stan]ding in front of the One-Who-Darkens and says:

Commentary

1. *ṣabtū illakū*: The verbal forms are not in the dual since they refer not only to the divine couple Išni-karāb and Lā-gamāl, but also to the dead person.

Although the metaphorical use of *urḫu* is found already in Old Babylonian, using this lemma in connection to death is, as far as known attestations go, post-OB. This too may point at a late OB date, if not later, for the composition of the SFT.

2: On Išni-karāb and Lā-gamāl, see Grillot-Susini (2001: 141–42), Tavernier (2013: 481–82), Basello 2013b: 2, and recently De Graef 2018: 124.

*ma-aḫ-riš*ᵠ: Van der Stede's reading (2007: 96) is confirmed by collation.[13]

3. *ina šutti*: Following Ebeling (1931: 21: "in der Grube"), Tavernier (2013: 476–78) argues that *šuttu* here means a pit, based on a single equation of *šuttu* with *ḫaštu* in *Malku = Šarru*.[14] The same stance is found in Hinz (1976–1980: 118), who refers to Inšušinak, in our text, as "der in der Gruft seinen Spruch kündet." This suggestion should be rejected,[15] and I join CAD M/II 268, CAD Š/III 406, Tsukimoto (1985: 17), Metzler (2002: 586), and Van der Stede (2007: 99) in taking *šuttu* in its common meaning, "dream."[16] A parallel from the "Underworld Vision of an Assyrian Prince," "Ereškigal appeared in a dream (*in šutti*) in the

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11. A Sumerian composition about the netherworld may shed more light on this point. In "Ningišzida's Journey to the Netherworld" it is related that "The river of the netherworld produces no water, no water is drunk from it . . . The fields of the netherworld produce no grain, no flour is eaten from it . . . The sheep of the netherworld produce no wool, no cloth is woven from it" (trans. ETCSL t.1.7.3:29–31). The personal god's help is therefore very much needed.

12. 6.2 x 3.0 x 2.0 cm.

13. In his private copy of *Tod und Leben* (to which I had access by courtesy of M. P. Streck), W. von Soden corrects Ebeling's *ma-aḫ-riš* and suggests instead *ra*ᵠ, like Metzler 2002: 586.

14. So also Grillot-Susini 2001: 142.

15. So already von Soden, in his private copy of *Tod und Leben*, crossed out "Grube" and replaced it with "Traum."

16. It is not hard to see, with CAD Š/III 404–5 and 407, that this unique lexical attestation of *šuttu*, "pit," is a shortened form of the common *šuttatum*, which has no bearing on this text.

middle of the night and said to him . . . ,"[17] leaves no doubt that *šuttu* in the SFT means a dream, not a pit. (More on this below in §IIID.)

4. *mu-še-*KI-*li-im*: The opinions regarding this form vary considerably. In his *editio princeps*, Scheil (1916: 170 n. 6) analyzed this form as ppl. of *akālum*-Š, "celui qui procure la nourriture." Ebeling (1931: 20–21), followed by Leibovici (1984: 41–42), Steve and Gasche (1996: 334 and passim), Tavernier (2013: 476–77 and passim), took it as *mušeqqilum*: ppl. of *šaqālum*-D. A third option is found in CAD M/II, 263,[18] Tsukimoto (1985: 17), and Van der Stede (2007: 98–100),[19] who parsed it as *mušēkilum*: ppl. of *ekēlum*-Š.[20] Finally, in principle, it is not impossible to parse this form as from *šukkulum*, "to wipe, rub, polish" (CAD Š/III 219).[21]

In fact, only the third option is correct, for the following reasons: a) The vowel coloring *a>e* before *i* in the next syllable, which occasionally takes place in D- and Š-stems, happens only from the Middle Babylonian period onwards (and even then, only sporadically).[22] The expected ppl. of *šaqālum*-D is therefore *mušaqqilum*, not *mušeqqilum*, as the name of the astral group "balance," *mušaqqiltum* (CAD M/II 260a), proves. For the same reason Scheil's suggestion that this form be read as *akālum*-Š must be rejected (as also *šukkulum*). b) The D-stem of *šaqālum* is attested virtually only in Old Assyrian records, and is clearly characteristic of the Assyrian merchants' jargon, meaning "to pay" (CAD Š/II 9–10).[23] The ppl. *mušeqqilum* would therefore mean "the one who pays," not "a weigher." c) Semantically, darkness is an inherent trait of the Mesopotamian netherworld.[24] The concept of darkness is mentioned in other tablets of SFT (*bīt eklēti* in MDP 18, 250: 8 = No. 1) and *erpeta ṣalimta* in MDP 18, 252: 9–10 = No. 3), while the weighing of the soul is entirely unknown in Mesopotamian religion.[25] d) Even Tavernier, though advocating that *mušeqqilum* refers to a chthonic "weigher," admits that "The Weighing ceremony . . . is nowhere attested in the Mesopotamian documents" (2013: 483). Morphological and semantic arguments, coupled with the absence of any real evidence for a weighing ceremony in Mesopotamia, preclude the reading *mušeqqilum* and make *mušēkilum* (ppl. of *ekēlum*-Š) the only possibility.

17. *Ereškigal ina šât mūši in šutti*(MÁŠ) *izzizzama iqbîšu . . .* (SAA 3, 71, No. 32: 35).

18. "Šušinak speaks a word in a dream, he approaches him who darkens(?) and says."

19. "celui qui fait l'obscurité."

20. Horowitz (1998: 352 n. 46) presents the two options (*mušēkilum* and *mušeqqilum*) without choosing either.

21. This verb was identified by Deller and Watanabe (1980) (ref. M. P. Streck). See also Metzler 2002: 586.

22. GAG §§88b, 89b, e.g., *mušerriḫat* for *mušarriḫat*. See Kouwenberg 2010: 269, 325, and 536: ". . . the Middle Babylonian Umlaut of *a > e* in [. . .] present participle of D and Š is not carried through, although pertinent forms are occasionally attested."

23. Interestingly, in the OB Akkadian composition "Ningišzida's Descent to the Netherworld" (Lambert 1990), a mourning goddess offers silver to the representative of the netherworld, in order to bring Ningišzida back to life (*lūšur kaspam milīt lānšu ludinma kedriam wuttia napšassu*, "I shall provide silver, as much as (is needed) for his body; I shall give a present: recover his life for me!" UET 6/2, 395: 15′–16′).

24. E.g.: *unambâ ḫīrāté ītanappalā atappē ša iṣī u inbī bānîšunu uddurū pānūšun*, "The ditches were wailing, the channels replied. The trees and the fruits they produced turned dark" (MacGinnis 1989: 4 IV′ 1′–4′, similarly George 2003: 485 and Kwasman 2009: 114), or *ina ūmē ḫīlūya ētarpū pānēya ina ūmē ulādēya ittakrimā ēnāya*, "In my days of pain my face became clouded. In my days of giving birth my eyes turned opaque" (SAA 3, 38 No. 15: 7–8 = George 2010: 208, different trans.). Note also that the poetic term *kukkû*, "darkness," is used to denote the netherworld (CAD K 498–99). In general, on this point, see Hutter 1985: 161–62; Katz 2005: 68–69 and 2007: 171. Against all this abundant evidence, Tsukimoto's (1985: 17 n. 77) reluctance to read É.GI₆ is unwarranted.

25. Even in the "Incantation to Utu" (Alster 1991), which gives a detailed account of what happens when arriving at the realm of the dead, nothing is said about a moral judgment, or weighing of the soul. Alster (1991: 29) emphasizes this point: "For the time being we may safely conclude that the judgment in the netherworld of the moral qualities of the deceased person, as described in our text, relates specifically to such behavior as might prevent the dead person from receiving funeral offerings from his family."

The only objection which could be raised against *mušēkilum* is that *ekēlum* already uses the D-stem to denote the factitive, as *mukkil ašamšūtu*, "who darkens the whirlwind" (LKA 77 v 25, cited in CAD E 64 a lex.). This, I believe, was the reason behind von Soden's decision to offer a separate article *mušeqqilum* in his dictionary (AHw 682, "Wäger der Unterwelt" with a question mark).[26] And yet, many verbs have both D- and Š-stems, esp. in intransitive verbs, like *ekēlum*. Kouwenberg (2010: 328) summarizes: ". . . a lot of intransitive verbs have both a Š- and a D-stem with a more or less similar meaning."

The last of the four groups of verbs that show both D- and Š-stems listed by Kouwenberg (2010: 329) is the most relevant for us. In this group one finds verbs that use the Š-stem as a literary device to enrich their self-expression. Kouwenberg mentions that "in a limited number of literary texts, especially royal inscriptions, religious texts (i.e., hymns, prayers, mythological texts, etc.), laudatory parts of other texts, and the epics of Enuma Eliš and Erra, many verbs that are normally transitivized by means of the D-stem can also have the Š-stem in the same function." And so, the appearance of *mušēkilum* in the SFT instead of the more common *mukkilum* is precisely because of its "additional stylistic value," as Kouwenberg puts it.[27] (More on this point below, in §IIIE.)

Text No. 3: MDP 18, 252 (Sb 21855).[28] Photo: Figs. 7–9

Obv.   1. *i-te-em-du ṣal-la ina qá-bu-⌈re⌉*
          2. *šà ma-ta i-šu immera*(UDU) *pāna*(giGURᵒ) *ir-ta-*[*šu*]
          3. *ù ma-ḫi-ir-šu-nu la i-ba-aš-šu*
          4. *im-ma-t*[*i*]
          5. *Šu-ší-na-ak iš-šu-ut-ti a-wa-*[*ta*]

Lower edge
          6. *i-qa-ab-bi*
          7. *iz-za-az a*ˈ(Text:*e*)-*na mu-še-ki-l*[*i-im-ma*]

Rev.   8. *iz-za-qa-a*[*r*]
          9. *a-na-ku-ma er-da er-pe-ta*
          10. [*ṣ*]*aᵒ-li-im-t*[*aᵒ*]

          1. They have leaned the sleeping one in the *grave*
          2–4. —those who own the land, who used to get repeatedly a sheep and a
              basket (of grain) and have no rival in the land.
          5–8. Šušinak is speaking in a dream, standing in front of the
              One-Who-Darkens and says:
          9–10. "It is I who led hither the dark cloud!"

Commentary

1. *i-te-em-du ṣal-la ina qá-bu-⌈re⌉*: Steve and Gasche (1996: 336) read *i-te-em-du ni-la ana* (AŠ) *kà-bu-*[*te?*], "Ils ont déposé le gisant auprès de (gens) importants" (following partially Bottéro 1982: 397). Van der Stede (2007: 100) translates: "Ils se tiennent debout, ils sont couchés auprès de (gens) importants," and similarly Tavernier (2013: 476): "They have

26. Note that in his private copy of *Tod und Leben*, von Soden expressed his doubts regarding Ebeling's translation "Wäger" with two question marks.
27. Kouwenberg 2010: 329.
28. 7.0 x 3.2 x 1.9 cm.

placed the recumbent one near important people" (reading *ni-la*; Van der Stede takes *ṣal-la* as stat. 3.pl.f.—"Ils sont couches"—instead of the correct adj.m.sg.).[29]

The new reading *qá-bu-*[*re*], suggested to me by my late teacher Aaron Shaffer, improves on Scheil's (1916: 170, 7) early reading *ga-bu-t*[*e*], "enclos, pare d'animaux." The word *qabūrum* is attested in post-OB texts as a variant of the more common *qubūrum*, "grave" (CAD Q 293).[30] It fits the signs[31] and the context better than *kà-bu-te* (< *kubbutum*) of Steve and Gasche (1996: 336), followed by Van der Stede and Tavernier, translated as "important ones." It also solves the enigma of CAD E 139a, which reads *i-te-im-du(-)ni-la aš-ša-bu-te* "(mng. obscure)" and Metzler's (2002: 586) AŠ GA BU x. The sole obstacle to the proposed reading is the use of /qá/ instead of /qa/, as expected in Susa (but this problem also remains for the previous reading *kà-bu-te*, for one does not expect /kà/ but /ka/). The scribe(s) of the SFT, it is clear, was (were) not confined to a fixed syllabary.

2. The commonly accepted reading *immera*(UDU) *gi-zu*, which Steve and Gasche (1996: 336) translate: "ceux . . . qui possedaient moutons et chèvres," is grammatically difficult, since *irtašû* (probably Gtn prt., not perf.[32]) requires a direct object,[33] hence one expects *gi-za*. Aware of this syntactic difficulty, Metzler suggests *lu-qì-sú*, "seine Ware" (< *luqî-tum*, an unattested lemma). Against these two, I read ᵍⁱGUR = *pāna*, "basket." The wisdom dialogue *Šime milka* describes how the dead are thought to take to the netherworld nine rations—most likely of barley—a single goat, and a garment (Cohen 2013: 98: 137′–38′), a list which ties in nicely with the sheep and basket (probably of grain) mentioned in this text.

5–10. These lines supply Šušinak's missing words from MDP 18, 251: 3–4 (No. 2). The mention of the "black cloud" strengthens the idea that *mušēkilum* is "the One-Who-Dark-ens," not a "Weigher."[34]

7. The poorly written /a/ sign in *a-na*, which looks like /e/, was probably caused when the scribe started, mistakenly, to write again an IZ sign (in *iz-za-qa-ar*).

9. The verbal form *er-da* can be a late form of *warādum*, "to go down, to descend" (so read by Steve and Gasche 1996: 336: "Me voici donc descendu dans une nuée noire!" probably because *warādum* fits semantically with graves and death). A different derivation, however, was preferred by Bottéro (1982: 397) and Van der Stede (2007: 100), who took this verb from *redûm*, "to accompany, lead, drive" (both "J'ai suivi . . . ," etc.). This option is preferred here: in Old Babylonian one does not expect *ērda*, but *ūrda* (cf. GAG §103b—but, admittedly, the SFT show a number of post-OB features) and it is syntactically simpler to explain the acc. *erpeta ṣalimta* with the verb *redûm*.

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29. Both *niālum*, "to lie down," and *ṣalālum*, "to sleep," are used to describe the dead in a grave. For the former see, e.g., the Neo-Assyrian text referring to a dead king with *ṭābiš ušnīlšu*, "I gently laid (him) [in] that secret tomb" (MacGinnis 1989: 1: I 7′), and the end of the Middle Babylonian wisdom dialogue *Šime milka*: *rapšat erṣetumma nišū inīlū*, "The Netherworld is wide and (all) people (in it) are sleeping" (Cohen 2013: 98: 142′). For *ṣalālum*, see also Livingstone 1991.

30. On *qubūrum* in OB in general and esp. in Mari, see Jacquet 2012: 124–25. For a recent discussion of Middle Elamite tomb buildings and burial practices see Mofidi-Nasrabadi 2012.

31. Even if the last sign, which I read /re/, is very hard to discern, the sign /te/ can be safely excluded.

32. Metzler 2002: 587 n. 997.

33. In von Soden's private copy of *Tod und Leben*, this reading is ruled out; no alternative solution is offered. The unlikelihood of this reading was noticed also by Metzler (2002: 587 n. 997).

34. Already Bottéro (1982: 397) compared the black cloud here to the black cloud in Gilg. XI 98: *ilâmma ištu išid šamê urpatu ṣalimtu Adad ina libbiša irtammamma*, "a black cloud arose from the horizon, the Storm god was rumbling in it" (CAD R 116, 2b). See also Van der Stede 2007: 100 n. 47.

anāku: For the importance of the emphatic first person pronoun as an indication for the genre of the text, see below in §IIIC.

Text No. 4: MDP 18, 253 (Sb 19320).[35] Photo: Fig. 10–11

Obv.   1. *ši°-mat°-sú° ḫa°-ab°-la°-at° l[i°-x-(x)]*
        2. *a-wa-at-ka i°-qa?! °-ab°-b[u°]*
        3. *ma° -⌈ag°⌉- ra*
        4. *e-ṭì-ir° immmera*(UDU) *nūna*(KU$_6$) *eṭ-li° im-mar*
        5. *šamnī*(Ì^{ḫá}) *šaman*(Ì) *ḫi-li-im-me*

Lower edge
        6. *li-m[al?]-la pi-ka*
        7. *ì-lí li-im-gu-úr-ka*

Rev.
magical drawing

        1. "His fate is *ruined*, ma[y they/it . . .]"
        2–3. They pronounce the decision concerning you as favorable:
        4. "He is saved, he will see *a sheep*, *a fish*, young men."
        5–6. May (different) kinds of oil, grasshoppers' oil, fill your mouth!
        7. May my god answer you favorably!

Commentary

1. These new readings[36] should replace Steve and Gasche's (1996: 338) erroneous line (*aḫ? kur-ú ḫa-ad na?-ap-še-[ti]*, "Hélas! brève est la joie de l'existence").[37] The text, as I understand it, contains a report of a divine decision to alter a person's ill fate. (Or could *Šīmassu-ḫablat*, "His fate is ruined/unjust," be a personal name?)

2. *i°-qa?! °-ab°-b[u°]*: I see no other option but to take the vertical wedge after /i/ as an incomplete, or faultily written /qa/ sign.

3. The photos from the Louvre suggest that the sign between /ma/ and /ra/ is /ag/, resulting in *magra*, "favorable, obedient," standing in grammatical congruence to *awātka iqabbû*, and later echoed by *ilī limgurka* in l. 7.

4. The signs are hard to read, but UDU and KU$_6$ are clear to me (contra Steve and Gasche 1996: 338, followed by Basello 2013a: 3).

5. Reading follows CAD Ḫ 184b and CAD Š/I 329 m.

Text No. 5: MDP 18, 255 (Sb 21856).[38] Photo: Fig. 12–13

Obv.   1. *na-ad-na as-ku-pá-tu a-na ma-šà-[. . .]*
        2. *ab-na-tu$_4$° a-na-lí-šu šà-ar-[ka]*
        3. *li-li¹*(Text: IL°)*-qa ri-ḫa-tu il° -x (x)*
        4. *ú ta-ab-ka-at pu-lu-uḫ-ta°-ka-ma ì-lí ma-ta-t[i]*

    1. Thresholds are given for (his) . . . [. . .]

    2. Stones are prese[nted] for his lying.

    3. May the remains *be* taken . . .

    4. Truly, your terror is infused over the lands!

Rev. uninscribed

Commentary

1. *nadnā askupātu a-na ma-šà-*[. . .]: Contra Steve and Gasche's (1996: 338) "Libre est l'accès à l'interro[gatoire],"[39] the broken form *ma-šà-*[. . .] is most likely an infinitive, parallel to *nâlišu*, "his lying" (l. 2), but I offer no restoration.[40]

Thresholds in similar chthonic context, probably referring to a *kimaḫḫum*,[41] are found in the OB myth, "Song of Bazi": *as-ku-pa¹-a-tum ša ḫurāṣim*(KÙ.GI), "thresholds of gold,"[42] and in the NA text describing a royal funeral: *ušarbi . . . askupātu* (^{na_4}KUN$_4$[^{meš}. . .]) *utta*[*zzimū* . . .] *utta*[*aḫ* . . .] *dū*[*rī*(BA[D^{meš}) . . .], "[The . . .] made . . ., the thresholds [. . .] [. . .] kept *howling*, [. . .], kept . . . [. . .] the walls [. . .]."[43]

2. *ab-na-tu$_4$^{o}*: Steve and Gasche (1996: 338) read here *ab-na* ESI^{si} *na-lí-šu šà-ar-*[*ka*], "Une pierre dure? pour sa couche (lui) sera offerte."[44] This reading should be excluded for the following reasons: a) Epigraphically, the third and fourth signs are not ESI (=KAL) and SI. In fact, Scheil's (1916: 172) copy of this line is preferable to that of Dossin in MDP 18. After *ab-na* Scheil saw /tak$^?$/, a sign which is quite similar to /tum/ (confirmed by collation).[45] Admittedly, the use of /tu$_4$/ (not uncommon in Elam) instead of /tu/, which appears twice in the text (ll. 1, 3), poses a problem, but this is not the first time that divergent spellings appear in the SFT (see MDP 18, 256: 4 = No. 6). b) The hypothetical reading ESI^{si} goes against scribal practice. In an Akkadian text, a phonetic complement after a Sumerogram is meant to guide the reader to the correct *Akkadian* pronunciation of the complex, not to the Sumerian name of the sign. Hence, had the scribe wanted to write "diorite" here, one would expect a phonetic complement which leads to *ušû*. c) Grammatically, assuming that *šarkā* is correctly restored, the subject of this verbal form should be pl. f., not sg. m. like *ušû*.

3. *li-li¹*(Text: IL^o)-*qa ri-ḫa-tu il^o-x* (x): I suggest emending the second sign, /il/, to /li/, resulting in *lilleqâ* (*leqûm*-N): a passive form which yields a clearer sense than *leqûm*-G.

The second sign from the end of the line is /il^o/, as read by Scheil (confirmed by collation). The last sign before the break could be a broken /ka/. Steve and Gasche's (1996: 339) reading KAŠ$_4$ GIŠ.BAR, "(car) tu t'élances? ô Feu," is to be rejected on an orthographic basis.[46]

4. *ì-lí ma-ta-t*[*i*]: for this variant of the prep. *eli*, see AHw 200 A1.

39. Cf. already Bottéro 1982: 399: "L'entrée est libre . . ." *mašʾaltu*, "questioning, interrogation," restored by Steve and Gasche (1996: 346 n. 39) in accordance with the idea of a moral weighing of the soul, is not attested before the first millennium, when it is found either in a technical legal context, or as a type of commentary (CAD M/I 354–55).

40. Of the different candidates, *mašārum*, "to teasel cloth, to drag over the ground," and *mašāʾum*, "to take away by force, to rob a person, to despoil," seem more likely. (*mašādum*, "to strike with palsy," *mašāḫum*, "to measure" or "to flare up," *mašālum*, "to be similar, equal," can hardly fit here.)

41. See Lundström 2000 (but also the reservations of Jacquet 2012: 124–25).

42. CUSAS 10, 1: 27.

43. George 2003: 485. For a slightly different reading, see Kwasman 2009: 114 I 8 (both replacing MacGinnis 1989: 4–5: IV′ 8′–11′). See also Lundström 2012: 271.

44. Bottéro 1982: 399: *ab-na a*$^{!?}$*-na*$^{!?}$ *na-lí-šu ša*(sic) *ar-*[. . . , "Qu'il prenne une pierre pour sa couche . . ."

45. So also in the margin of von Soden's private copy of *Tod und Leben*: *ab-na-tum*.

46. It is also hard to imagine that KAŠ$_4$ could be used for a verbal form of *lasāmum* in a literary text from this period.

tabkat puluḫtaka: A parallel expression is found in the "Underworld Vision of an Assyrian Prince": *Arallu mali puluḫtu*, "The Arallu was full of terror . . ."[47]

Text No. 6: MDP 18, 256 (Sb 21857).[48] Photo: Figs. 14–15

    1. [*i*]*š-me-ma na-a*[*p*ˀ*-šà*ˀ*-sú*ˀ x (x)]
    2. *a-di i-te-ṭì-iq*⌉ x [x x x (x)]
    3. *na-pil ku-úr-ri Šu-*⌈*ší*°⌉*-*⌈*na*⌉*-*[*ak*]
    4. *i-na nu-pá-ar Šu-ší-n*[*ak*°]
    5. *ma-aš-qí-it* [*Š*]*u-ší-na-a*[*k*] *ši* [x]

    1–3. When he heard, [*his li*]*fe*(?) . . . *until* he has passed . . . He is destroyed.
    3–5. The furnace of Šušinak, in the workhouse of Šušinak, the watering place
        of Šušinak . . .

(Rev. uninscribed)

Commentary

1. [*i*]*š-me-ma na-a*[*p*ˀ*-šà*ˀ*-sú*ˀ x (x)]: The sign after /na/ looks like the beginning of /ap/, leading to the plausible, but not certain, restoration *napšassu*.

2. *a-di i-te-ṭì-iq*⌉: Steve and Gasche (1996: 341) read *a-ki i-te-ṭì-ri*, "Comment payera-t-il?," but collation proves that Scheil's (1916: 173) original reading (*a-di i-te-ti-iq*) is correct.[49]

Besides the epigraphic evidence, *akī* is not attested before the first millennium; hence *adi* is preferred (although one expects a subj. attached to *ītetiq*).

3. *na-pil ku-úr-ri Šušinak*: Steve and Gasche (1996: 341) translate (following Scheil 1916: 173) "détruit est son foyer." Whatever the meaning of *ku-úr-ri Šušinak* is, *napil* cannot be connected to it, since *kūrum*, "kiln, furnace," is a grammatically f. noun. Hence, for lack of a better solution, I suggest that *napil* continues the verbs in ll. 1–2, describing the defunct person. Note that another place of fire, *maqlû*, is mentioned in MDP 18, 259: 5 (No. 7).

4. *i-na nu-pá-ar Šu-ší-n*[*ak*°]: Reading with Hinz and Koch 1987: 1183 and CAD N/II 341d (confirmed by collation).[50] Note again the fluctuating spelling conventions in the SFT (cf. MDP 18, 252: 1 = No. 3 and MDP 18, 256: 4 = No. 6).

Text No. 7: MDP 18, 259[51]

Obv.   1. *ku-r*[*u*ˀ*-um-ma-tu*. . . .]
        2. *ma-aš-*[*qí*ˀ*-it*ˀ *Šu*ˀ*-ší*ˀ*-na*ˀ*-ak*ˀ (x)]
        3. *is-qú šamnu*(Ì) *ma-zu-tu* [x x (x)]
        4. *lu-uz-da*(⌉)*-bil* x [x x (x)]
Lower edge
        5. *ma-aq-la* UDU ŠE.GUR₄ˀ *l*[*u*ˀ*-*x (x)]

        1. *Fo*[*od ration . . .*]
        2. *The water*[*ing place of Šušinak*]

47. SAA 3 No. 32, p. 72: r. 13.

48. 5. 8 x 3.0 x 2.0 cm. (Note that the right side of the text is broken. It can be safely estimated that when complete, its length was c. 6.5 cm, like the other tablets.)

49. The /di/ sign is different in shape from the /ki/ sign in l. 5. The /iq/ sign, however, is admittedly similar to the /ri/ in l. 3.

50. Reading *i-na nu-pá-ar šu-ṣi-am*, "dans une prison il est jeté" (Steve and Gasche 1996, 341), is grammatically impossible, as *ina nupār* requires a gen. form. The sign after the /šu/—a clear /si/ sign with the value *ší*—could not be a /ṣi/, and the assumed *šūṣiam* could hardly mean "il est jeté."

51. The tablet is now lost. Readings are therefore based on earlier photos and copies.

3. The portions: oil, pressed beer.

4. Let me carry . . .

5. *Let me . . .* burning, sheep, barley.

Commentary

5. Steve and Gasche (1996: 343, followed partially by Basello 2013a: 3) transliterated *ma-aq-la* but translated "nourriture," probably having *mākālum*, "food, meal, food offerings," in mind (cf. also their restitution in l. 5: *li*[*k-ku-ul?*, "qu'il mange"). The form, however, must belong to *maqlûm*, "oven, grate, burning, combustion" (cf. the *kūrum* mentioned in MDP 18, 256: 3 = No. 6).

The last sign before the break is most probably /lu/, a 1 pr. prec. form, parallel to *luzdabil* (l. 4).[52]

III. DISCUSSION

Certainly, not all textual problems in the SFT have been solved here, but the above edition allows a better understanding and more balanced assessment of this group of texts. In the discussion that follows I examine the physical characteristics of the tablets and show that as far as their shape—rather than contents—is concerned, the SFT form a homogeneous group. I further claim that this uniformity furnishes a hint as to the purpose and meaning of the SFT. I then place the SFT against the background of other Mesopotamian texts related to the realm of the dead, and stress the singularity of this group of texts. The literary context of the SFT and the literary genres of this group of texts close the discussion.

A. The Physical Characteristics of the Susa Funerary Texts

It is hard to avoid noticing the close physical resemblance of the tablets of the SFT (see photos of the tablets, Figs. 16–18). Almost identical in size (c. 7–8 x 3.5–4 x 2.5 cm), they are all written on rounded, landscape-oriented tablets of similar color. Four of the tablets have an uninscribed reverse,[53] and they all end with a pronounced separating line.

Steve and Gasche (1996: 332), followed by Tavernier (2013: 475), claimed that two groups could be distinguished within the SFT: one well-written group of texts (MDP 18, 250, 251, 252, 255 = Texts Nos. 1, 2, 3, 5) and a clumsily written group (MDP 18, 253 and 256 = Texts Nos. 4, 6). After collating the tablets, I consider the entire lot of the SFT to be products of the same hand. I believe that the texts which Steve and Gasche describe as written in "une écriture assez négligée et . . . franchement mauvaise" are simply in a worse state of preservation. Given the strong physical resemblance of the tablets of the SFT and their epigraphic characteristics, I assume that no more than one scribe—or one scriptorium—was involved in their production.

The close physical likeness of the SFT is not unique to this group of texts. Landscape-oriented, rounded tablets were often used by Susian scribes for different kinds of text (legal, economic, and literary).[54] This observation may explain why the size of some of the tablets of the SFT is not fitting for the text inscribed on them.[55] I suggest that the tablets of the SFT

52. And not *li*[*k-ku-ul?*, "qu'il mange," as suggested by Steve and Gasche, since the expected spelling is *li-ku-ul*, for *līkul*.

53. Sb 19320 (No. 4) has a drawing on its reverse, and only Sb 19319 (No. 1) is written on both sides.

54. See, e.g., MDP 9, 64; MDP 18, 222, 223, 224, 238, 240, 242, 243, 249, as well as Sb 12826, Sb 12776, Sb 12783, Sb 12884, Sb 12885, Sb 12886. Another case of a homogenous group of tablets, as far as their size, shape, script, and contents are concerned (four OB incantations) was identified by Wasserman (2015: 602–4).

55. See esp. the long lines which run over the right edge, continuing onto the reverse in MDP 18, 251 (No. 2) and in MDP 18, 255 (No. 5). A similarly written tablet is CUSAS 10, 13, an OB love-related text mentioning Ištar as Venus.

were not prepared especially for the texts they bear, but were accidentally chosen from a supply of wet tablets that were at hand to the scribe in his daily work. This, I claim, strengthens the notion that the SFT contain mostly excerpts of longer texts, of different genres. It also has a bearing on the purpose of the entire lot, as shown below.

B. The Susa Funerary Texts and Other Death-Related and Netherworld Texts

Although the texts were found in Susa and mention Elamite deities, I believe that in order to clarify their nature it is necessary to set them against different kinds of Mesopotamian (mostly Akkadian) texts that are directly or indirectly related to death, graves, and funeral rites. The following categories of text can be listed:[56]

1. Short specific (i.e., related to a particular person) texts, mostly PNs, accompanied at times by a title or an epithet, inscribed on objects deposited alongside the deceased—found in graves.[57]
2. Longer specific texts, announcing officially that this is the burial place of so-and-so, often imprecating curses on those who disturb the peace of the dead—found in graves.[58]
3. Longer non-specific (i.e., unrelated to a specific person) epitaph-like texts in the shape of cones, used for scribal training. The context in which these cones were found is mostly unknown—probably unrelated to graves.[59]
4. Different non-specific technical texts (lexical lists, medical compendia, etc.), probably believed to have some talismanic power—found in graves.[60]
5. Specific administrative texts, mostly lists of offerings pertaining to burials and funeral ceremonies,[61] or instructions for rituals in memory of the dead on certain dates.[62] The physical context of these texts is unrelated to graves.
6. Epistolary texts which reveal popular customs and beliefs regarding death, afterlife, burial, and mourning.[63] The physical context of these texts is, again, unrelated to graves.

56. The first such general survey was compiled by Bottéro 1982. In the following I do not intend to be inclusive. Each category is illustrated by one or two examples.

57. E.g., Meskalamdug "the king" or Puabi "the queen" or Abarage—all names inscribed on different objects found in the Royal Cemetery of Ur (Baadsgaard and Zettler 2014: 107–8), or the funeral assemblage found in a burial jar in Mari (tomb 760, *chantier* B), where, among other objects, a cylinder seal inscribed with the name of the son of Iddin-ilum, the *šakkanakku* of Mari, was found (Felli 2012: 95 with n. 160 with more literature). Similar objects were found in the royal tombs in Chogha Zanbil, Elam (MDP 41 passim).

58. For an example for this category of texts from Elam, see the Akkadian inscriptions of Tepti-Ahar from Haft Tappeh (Reiner 1973. See also Herrero and Glassner 1990: 3–5). On royal grave inscriptions in general, see Lundström 2003, 2009, 2012 and recently Hussein 2016.

59. See Lundström 2001 and recently Niederreiter 2015.

60. E.g., the medical text found in a grave in Uruk (Köcher 1995) or the Sumero-Akkadian lexical list of birds, also found in a burial from Uruk (Maul 1995). Daily life texts were found in some graves in Ur, excavated by Wooley. These probably were not buried there originally with the dead, but fell into the grave later (D. Charpin, pers. comm.).

61. See the studies of offering lists for the mortuary cult of dead members of the royal family in Ebla (Archi 2012) and in Ugarit (Lange 2012). Smaller-scale administrative notations of presents sent for a specific burial (*ana kimaḫḫim*) are known from Mari; see Felli 2012: 94 (ARM 21, 329: 21: a *tilpānum*-bow) and Jacquet 2012: 124 (ARM 25, 17: 1: a *katāpum*-weapon).

62. For the much-studied *kispum*-ritual from Mari, see Durand and Guichard 1997: 66–70; Jacquet 2012: 128–31; and Lundström 2012: 274–77. A *kispum*-ritual is also known from Elam (MDP 23, 285, in Akkadian; cf. Basello 2013a: 2–3 and Charpin 2012: 31).

63. E.g., the letter sent by Asqudum and Rīšiya, mentioning the mourning ritual performed in the palace of Yamḫad following the death of king Yarīm-līm's mother (ARM 26, 11; cf. Felli 2012: 91). See also ARM 4, 61; ARM 10, 79; ARM 26, 222; ARM 26, 281; ARM 26, 397; ARM 28, 17—all treated in Jacquet 2012. Popular

7. Divinatory texts which describe the practice of predicting the future by means of raising the spirits of the dead. The physical context of these texts, once more, is unrelated to graves. [64]

8. Literary texts (myths, [65] laments, [66] incantations, [67] etc.) describing different aspects of the netherworld. The context in which these texts were found is unrelated to graves.

The SFT, it is important to note, do not belong to any of the above categories, but form a category of their own, to which, to the best of my knowledge, only they belong, namely:

9. Non-specific literary texts which describe the netherworld—found in graves.

The uniqueness of the SFT from the Mesopotamian perspective, one could argue, may suggest a non-Mesopotamian, possibly Elamite, setting. But the following discussion will demonstrate that tagging the SFT as "Elamite" is not tenable, and that this group of texts partook of Mesopotamian literature.

Given the fact that the SFT is the sole case of Akkadian literary texts which describe the afterlife and were found *in situ* in a grave, the question of the literary context and genre(s) of this group of texts is addressed next.

C. The Literary Context of the Susa Funerary Texts

As convincingly shown by Steve and Gasche, the SFT can be dated, based on epigraphic and orthographic evidence, to the late OB period, c. 1600–1500 BCE. [68] Some lexical features may even suggest a slightly later date, c. 1400 BCE. [69]

Indeed, grammatically and thematically, lexically and stylistically, the SFT are organic components of the OB literary system (certainly Texts Nos. 1, 4, and 5). Only three points differentiate this group of texts from other OB literary texts: a) their provenance in Elam; b) their format and orthography; and c) the fact that they mention the Elamite god Šušinak/Inšušinak (and two other deities, Išni-karāb and Lā-gamāl/Lakamar, who are Akkadian in origin but well attested and venerated in Elam). [70] These three points, however, are interrelated and do not warrant removing the SFT from their secure position within the OB literary

beliefs regarding death and the afterlife can also be found; see FM 1, 117: 39–44; FM 3, 11, 38: 14–15; MARI 6, 631: 22–23.

64. See Finkel 1983–1984.

65. A few *Katabasis*-like narratives can be listed: "Inanna's/Ištar's Descent to the Netherworld," Gilgameš XII, "Nergal and Ereškigal," UET 6/2, 395 (Lambert 1990), and the Neo-Assyrian "Underworld Vision of an Assyrian Prince" (SAA 3 No. 32). The OB "Song of Bazi" (CUSAS 10, 1) probably also contains a description of the netherworld.

66. E.g., the Sumerian laments "Dumuzi's Dream" and "Lulil and His Sister" (cf. Katz 2007), and the NA "Elegy in Memory of a Woman" (SAA 3 No. 15).

67. E.g., YOS 11, 5: 5–9 (Wasserman 2008: 74).

68. Steve and Gasche (1996: 333) showed that the syllabary of the SFT is of the time of Kuk Našur, the last of the Sukkalmaḫ, a contemporary of Ammi-ṣaduqa, c. 1646–1626 (Middle Chronology), a date accepted by Metzler (2002: 585). Note, however, Lambert's earlier hesitant comments ". . . the date of the tablet is uncertain, but may be Middle Elamite" (1976–1980: 196) and ". . . the funerary text . . . is of OB date, as often assumed, but without precise justification" (1980–1983: 419). Sadly, the poor archaeological records from the early excavations in Susa preclude using this data to date the SFT.

69. *ana maḫrīti* (MDP 250: 2 = No. 1), the metaphorical use of the idiom *urḫa ṣabātu* (MDP 251: 1 = No. 2), and the switch from *iššutti* (< *in(a) šutti* ([MDP 18, 252: 5 = No. 3]) to the younger prepositional construction *ina šutti* (MDP 18, 251: 3 = No. 2).

70. Lambert 1976–1980 and 1980–1983, and further Stolper 1978: 90: 8 (Lā/gamāl/Lakamar) and Basello 2013b: 2 and passim (Išni-karāb).

system. For centuries, Susian scribes were part of the Sumero-Akkadian writing culture, producing Akkadian literary and non-literary texts that belong inherently to the Babylonian writing milieu.[71] Secondly, the appearance of the tutelary god of Susa, (In)šušinak (with the gods Išni-karāb and Lā-gamāl), does not suffice to render the SFT non-Babylonian, or "Elamite."[72] Just as it is natural for a scribe from Mari to mention Itūr-Mēr or Dagan in his text, and for a scribe from Aššur or Babylon to mention their supreme gods, Aššur or Marduk, respectively, so a scribe from Susa would mention his local god, Inšušinak.[73] Literary texts cannot be tagged ethnically. What matters is their language, literary style, contents, and context—and all these place SFT safely within the Babylonian literary system, even if they were found in Elam and written, in all likelihood, by an Elamite scribe.

Stating that Akkadian literary texts from the mid-second millennium BCE belong to Babylonian literature may seem tautological.[74] But given the dramatic conclusions drawn from this group of texts as a consequence of relating them to the Elamite and Iranian religion, an unambiguous statement about the *Babylonian* nature of the SFT is required. To make it clear: A Babylonian literary text may contain a datum relevant to, or even revealing of, Elamite (but not Iranian) religion, but this evidence should be examined *ad rem*, and not considered as such simply because the text in which it appeared was *a priori* called "Elamite."

D. The Genres of the Susa Funerary Texts

Moving to the content of the SFT, the following observations can be made:

1. The SFT do not add up to a continuous and coherent text. This explains the different genres suggested for this group of texts.[75] Thus, although they were unearthed in one spot

71. A carefully assembled and useful list of these texts is found in Tavernier 2010: 210. The range of Akkadian writing in Elam is wider than literary texts, as we know of lexical lists, mathematical texts, and medico-magical compendia (see Tavernier 2010: 208; Lackenbacher 2011), not to speak of Old Akkadian administrative documents (Tavernier 2010: 202). As for Sumerian, some 700 school tablets of different stages of learning were found in Susa (Malayeri 2013: 368), as well as literary texts (proverbs, "The Curse of Agade," Hymns of Urnamma and Šulgi; see Cavigneaux 2003: 53–60 and recently Malayeri 2013: 368 n. 9). All these prove beyond doubt that Susa was an integral part of Mesopotamian writing culture.

72. In his comprehensive study of the cultural relations between Mesopotamia and Elam through the ages, Tavernier (2010: 211) defines the SFT as a product of Mesopotamian-Elamite syncretism, noting that: "le fait qu'ils [the SFT, NW] sont rédigés en babylonien montre un lien avec la Mésopotamie. Alors, il est plus probable que ces textes reflètent des croyances mésopotamiennes qui sont peut-être mélangées à des croyances élamites, ce qui est confirmé par l'attestation de plusieurs concepts mésopotamiens," but "[e]n tout cas, deux idées non mésopotamiennes, qui peuvent être élamites, sont la Pesée et le Jugement du défunt." In his later article, Tavernier (2013: 487) is more apodictic: ". . . non-Mesopotamian afterlife concepts attested in the texts [the SFT, NW] must be Elamite ones . . ." Let us note that Ebeling (1931: 19), who first stressed that weighing the soul was found in the SFT, refuted the non-Mesopotamian setting: "Ihre [the SFT, NW] Sprache ist akkadisch. Das beweist, daß ihr Ursprungsort Babylonien ist, trotz der elamischen Färbung . . ."

73. Interestingly, as shown by Malayeri (2013: 372), most of the divine names in the Susa school tablets are Sumerian, with a preponderance of deities from Lagaš and Ur. Only two Elamite deities are attested in this corpus: Inšušinak and ᵈTu-zi. This amplifies that the schooling of Elamite scribes was Sumero-centered and that the local pantheon slipped only sporadically into the Sumerian and Akkadian written texts.

74. Even Tavernier, who advocates the importance of the SFT for Elamite and Iranian religions, agrees that ". . . the general character [of the texts, NW] is . . . typically Old Babylonian" (2013: 475) and "[a]s the texts are written in Babylonian, they must certainly be embedded in the Mesopotamian culture" (2013: 479).

75. Ebeling (1931) and Bottéro (1982) believed that some tablets of the SFT belong to a guide for the dead in their journey to the netherworld. Landsberger (apud von Soden 1934: 415) took the SFT to contain extracts from an unknown mythological text ("vielleicht am besten als Auszüge aus mythischen Erzählungen [zu] betrachten"). Bottéro (1982: 401) and Metzler (2002: 587) took the same tack. Tsukimoto (1985: 17) suggested that four of the tablets of the SFT are laments or incantations against a bad dream ("Es liegt nahe, daß es sich in den vier Texten aus Susa insgesamt um die Klage über bzw. die Beschwörung gegen einen schlechten Traum handelt"). CAD E 303b

and written on similarly shaped tablets, the SFT contain separate texts which belong to different literary genres.

2. The clipped character of the SFT (and their landscape-oriented format) reinforces the suggestion that they are excerpts of longer texts. MDP 18, 251: 4 (No. 2) makes this patently clear, as the text terminates brusquely with an introductory formula leading to an absent direct speech. The content of this introductory formula is found in MDP 18, 252: 9–10 (No. 3). It is hard to avoid the conclusion that these two tablets depend on one and the same unknown longer text.[76] Furthermore, MDP 18, 252 (No. 3) begins with a perfect verbal form (*i-te-em-du),* a tense which mostly carries resultative function and hence is scarcely found in initial position in OB and MB literary texts.[77] This perfect form may also be explained if we assume a preceding, uncopied sentence with a preterite verbal form, as in MDP 18, 256: 1–2 (No. 6): *iš-me-ma . . . i-te-ṭì-iq*[?!] . . .

3. Placing the SFT against the wide canvas of OB literature, two genres can be identified:

a) Excerpts of **personal prayers** which tend to appear as letter-prayers: MDP 18, 250 (No. 1); MDP 18, 253 (No. 4); MDP 18, 255 (No. 5); and perhaps also MDP 18, 259 (No. 7).[78]

b) Excerpts of **reports of oracular or prophetic visions**: MDP 18, 251 (No. 2); MDP 18, 252 (No. 3); and perhaps also MDP 18, 256 (No. 6).[79]

MDP 18, 250 (No. 1) furnishes the clearest case of the personal prayer in the SFT:

> Come my god, my lord: may I walk before the Anunnaki! May I pass along the *road*! May I hold your hand in the presence of the great gods! May I hear the verdict! May I grasp your feet! Since *I have abandoned* the house of darkness, oh my god, you make me wander through a marsh of need and hardship. You look for me in the land of hunger; you made water and pasture precious for me in the land of thirst.

The following elements may be singled out as typical for Babylonian personal prayers:[80] First person precative forms (cf. *lūtiq, lūḫuz, lušme, luṣbata,* ll. 3, 4, 6), the stress on a lack of food and water, the wish to gain intimate divine protection (ll. 9–15), and the hope for a positive divine verdict (ll. 6–7). Note the following parallels: "You (the god Amurru) have created me with (other) men, you have made me pass (safely) in the street."[81] "Let me see your (the family god's) face, let me kiss your two feet!"[82] "I was looking around but nobody held my hand. May the wrath of my lord be appeased! May my lord declare my amnesty! To the verdict of my lord I strongly [pray]!"[83] "Due to hardship I cannot raise my head for . . .

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suggested that at least one tablet of the SFT is a school text, while CAD Š/II 283a defined another tablet as a prayer. For the different opinions, see Tavernier 2013: 476–77.

76. So already Bottéro 1982: 401.

77. Metzler 2002: 384, 772, 800, 852, and esp. 875. Metzler (2002: 586) translated this verbal form as "Sie lehnten sich aneinander an," taking it to be a Gt-stem—probably because the initial position of a perfect form was difficult for him (cf. Metzler 2002: 587 n. 997).

78. So also Metzler 2002: 780–82.

79. Metzler (2002: 585–87) characterizes these texts as narrative, belonging to the epic tradition.

80. On Sumerian letter-prayers, see Hallo 1968. On Akkadian letter-prayers, see Fechner 2009.

81. *itti amīli tabnânnima sūqam tušēteqanni* (Letter to Amurru: AbB 12, 99: 5–6).

82. *pānika* ⌈*lūmur*⌉*šēpīka lušši*[*q*] (Letter to the Family God: YOS 2, 141 = AbB 9, 141: 12–14).

83. *eš*[*tēʾ*]*īma mamman qātī ul iṣbat nu*[*gg*]*at bēliya lipšuḫamma bēlī šubarrâya liškunma ana siqar* [*bēliy*]*a mādiš l*[*ukrub*] (Letter to Nabû: *JAOS* 103: 205–6: 46–50).

I am not sated with food, I don't have a decent garment, I cannot rub my bone(s) with oil. Hardship entered my heart like weed-grass . . ."[84]

A Sumerian prayer for a dead person seeking admission to the netherworld also offers parallels to MDP 18, 250 (No. 1), cited above: "May the palace provide clear water to me in the forest where *gur* birds live. Inside, where a great oven is lit, may it sprinkle clear water for me . . . May Inanna be my vanguard. May my god be my helper, may he go behind me . . ."[85]

The clearest case of reports of oracular or prophetic visions in the SFT is MDP 18, 252 (No. 3):

> They have leaned the sleeping one in the *grave*—those who own the land, who get a sheep and a basket and have no rival in the land. Šušinak is speaking in a dream, standing in front of the One-Who-Darkens and says: "It is I who led hither the dark cloud!"

Regarding reports of oracular or prophetic visions, the most characteristic feature is the first person emphatic pronoun (*anāku-ma*) spoken by the god who stresses that "it is I who did such-and-such," or "it is I who am so-and-so." A fine OB parallel comes from Mari, where it is reported to the king that "Adad the lord of Kallassu was standing in the oracle saying: 'Am I not the lord of Kallassu who raised him [the king] in my lap and made him return to the throne of his father . . .?'"[86] The corpus of prophecies from Nineveh supplies yet another parallel for the use of "I" in prophetic visions:[87] "I am the Great Lady; I am Ištar of Arbela, who cast your enemies before your feet."[88] Discussions, or even confrontations, between two gods seen by the prophet in a dream[89] also characterize prophetic visions. Examples from Mari offer parallels to the Susa text in which Šušinak is talking to the One-Who-Darkens: In ARM 26, 196, Dagan is judging Tišpak, and in ARM 26, 208 a divine scene involving Ea, his opponent Asumûm, and other gods is reported. Finally, the verb *izuzzum*, lit. "to stand" (MDP 18, 251: 4 = No. 2 and MDP 18, 252: 7 = No. 3), is also a known *terminus technicus* describing the appearance of the god in oracular texts.[90]

The classification of MDP 18, 256 (No. 6) is less clear, but it might also present an excerpt from a prophetic vision describing the (divine?) surroundings of Šušinak:[91]

> When he heard the . . . *until* he has passed . . . He is destroyed. The furnace of Šušinak, in the workhouse of Šušinak, the watering place of Šušinak . . .

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84. *ina qāti dullim rēšī ula anašši ana* UD-*tim ši-ma akalam ula eššebi šubātī ṭābam ula īšu šamnam eṣemtī ula ulabbak dullum kīma ḫerīnim īterub ana libbiya* (Letter to Ninsiana: TCL 1, 9 = AbB 14: 9: b1′–b 9′).

85. Veldhuis 2003. If one strives to find a match between literary sources and material culture—an approach which is often problematic (see n. 102 regarding Barrett 2007)—then one could relate the great oven mentioned in this text to the ritualistic desiccation by heating, probably used to prevent the decomposition of the dead, which recent studies show to have taken place in the Royal Cemetery of Ur (Baadsgaard and Zettler 2014: 112–13).

86. *ina terêtim* ᵈ*Adad bēl Kallassu* [*izza*]*z umami ul anāku* ᵈ*Adad bēl Kallassu ša ina birīt paḫalliya urabbûšuma ana kussî bīt abišu uterrušu . . .* (Lafont 1984: 9: 13–16). See also, sadly broken: *umma Šamašma bēl māt*[*im anāku*] *. . . ,* "So says Šamaš: 'The lord of the lan[d am I] . . .'" (ARM 26/1, 194: 3).

87. On the connections between the two main corpora of Akkadian texts relating to prophecy, namely those from Mari and Nineveh, see Gordon 2013. The oracular reports which are part of the SFT can be added to the negligible number of OB reports outside of Mari (Gordon 2013: 37).

88. *bēltu rabîtu anāku anāku Ištar ša Arbail ša nakrūteka in maḫar šēpīka akkarrūni* (SAA 9, 4: 11′–14′) and passim.

89. Dreams were a preferred means of communication of divine messages to humans. See, e.g., ARM 26, 219; 225; 227; 228; 230; 233; 234; 237; 238 (cf. Metzler 2002: 587).

90. Lafont 1984: 12.

91. A possible parallel to this text could be ARM 26, 237, where the temple of Bēlet Ekallim is seen deserted in a dream.

In summation, in the group of SFT two generic sub-groups can be identified: personal prayers and reports of oracular or prophetic visions. Most of them—with the possible exception of Text No. 1—are excerpts of longer texts. None of them has anything to do with guiding the dead in the netherworld.

E. Psychostasia, Weighing of Souls, in Ancient Mesopotamia?

The acme of the SFT, from the perspective of the history of religion, is the alleged appearance of *psychostasia,* the weighing of the soul in a divine trial which declares the fate of the dead in the afterlife.[92] It is the purpose of this section to prove that the SFT contain no references to *psychostasia* and demonstrate the methodological problems inherent in this claim.

In the philological commentary to MDP 18, 251: 4 (No. 2), I have shown that the form *mu-še*-KI-*li-im* should be read as *mušēkilum* (ppl. of *ekēlum*-Š), "the One-Who-Darkens," not as *mušeqqilum* (ppl. of *šaqālum*-D), "a weigher." I have also stressed (echoing Steve and Gasche, and Tavernier earlier) that there is no evidence for the weighing of souls in the netherworld in any cuneiform source. These two arguments alone should suffice to undermine this suggestion.

And yet, insistence on "a weigher" leans not on philology but on the following cultural-religious postulates: 1) Weighing of the soul is known in Iranian sources; its origin should be sought in earlier periods. 2) As no reference to weighing the soul is found in Babylonian sources, the origin of this idea must be sought in non-Babylonian sources. 3) The SFT, although written in Akkadian and part of Babylonian literature, must contain non-Babylonian, ideas, namely the weighing of the soul.

The methodological frailty of this circular argumentation is clear. Even Tavernier, who followed Steve and Gasche in proposing that the SFT reflect the Elamite, and even the Iranian, vision of the netherworld, is forced to acknowledge that "the general character [of the SFT, NW] is . . . typically Old Babylonian . . . [and that NW] all . . . indicates that the texts were written in the Old Babylonian environment of the peripheral town, being Susa" (2013: 475). He continues "[a]s the texts are written in Babylonian they must certainly be embedded in the Mesopotamian culture" (2013: 479). Still, his conclusion is that we are "dealing here with an Elamite idea," although "[a]part from these texts, there are no Elamite written sources which could provide some direct information on how Elamites saw death and the netherworld" (2013: 483–84).

Tavernier is aware of the fragility of his case and seems reluctant to insist on such a central religious concept without textual evidence. He subsequently drops the Elamite connection and goes farther in time, to a culture where the weighing of souls is well documented: "it is . . . impossible to compare the non-Mesopotamian concepts [of the weighing ceremony, NW] with Elamite afterlife ideas . . . one could . . . compare them with the concepts believed by the other, albeit later arrived, population group in Elam: the Iranians" (2013: 484–85). And so, Akkadian texts written c. 1500 BCE are claimed to bear testimony to the weighing of the soul as a moral judgment, known from Zoroastrian texts about two millennia later.

To explain the wide chronological gap between the mid-second-millennium BCE SFT and first-millennium CE Zoroastrian sources, a comparison is made between two groups of gods. The three gods mentioned in the SFT, Šušinak, Išni-karāb, and Lā-gamāl, and the later

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92. First advocated by Ebeling (1931: 20–21), then taken up by Steve and Gasche (1996: 334 and passim) and Tavernier (2013: 476–77 and passim).

Zoroastrian netherworld divinities Mithra, Sraoša, and Rašnu.[93] In addition, it is suggested that the names Sraoša and Išni-karāb both include the element of "hearing, hearkening."[94]

Unversed in Iranian studies and in ancient Indo-Iranian languages, I am not in a position to comment on the Iranian part of the suggested equation. But from the Mesopotamian perspective, I would note that identifying a single similar element in two different divine names is not enough to establish a far-reaching, one-to-one correspondence between two series of gods, separated by such a wide chronological gap. The component of "hearing" is not rare in DNs, as the ready example of Tašmētu proves, especially as, following Tavernier (2013: 484), the names of Inšušinak and Mithra, and Lā-gamāl and Rašnu "have nothing in common" and are "completely different and even contradictory."

It should be further noted that although Steve and Gasche, and Tavernier, refer to the two sets of gods as "triads," the gods in the SFT are found together only once (MDP 18, 251 = No. 2), and even then the connection between Išni-karāb and Lā-gamāl (a couple no doubt, ll. 1–2) and Šušinak (standing alone, ll. 3–4) is unclear.[95] As with the alleged "weigher," who cannot be found in Mesopotamian sources, no chthonic triad is known in Mesopotamian religion, and it is hard to imagine that such a triad, had it existed, could be concealed. Moreover, the mention of three gods in one text does not make them, *ipso facto*, a triad. One example suffices: In kt 94/k 670, an Old Assyrian administrative text listing the inventory of a chapel, perhaps a mortuary chapel,[96] the gods Aššur, Šarru-mātēn, and Ukur are mentioned—do they also form a "triad"? In conclusion, the parallel between two groups of gods—that of the SFT on the one hand, and the late Iranian one on the other—should be dropped, together with the notion of a "weigher" which it was intended to support.[97]

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93. Steve and Gasche 1996: 346–47 and Tavernier 2013: 484–87.

94. Tavernier 2013: 484 with previous literature.

95. The chthonic setting of Text No. 2 is possible but not certain, since *ina šutti* (l. 3) means "in a dream", not "in the pit" as suggested by Steve and Gasche, and Tavernier (see commentary to this line).

96. Note the appearance of the chthonic deity Ukur (l. 8).

97. It is fascinating to see how the assumed notion of the infernal judgement by weighing the soul becomes a fact. Hinz (1976–1980: 118): "Gemeinsam mit der Göttin Lāgamāl (oder Lāgamār) nahm Išme-karāb in der Unterwelt die Seelen der Abgeschiedenen in Empfang und führte sie I. [= Inšušinak] zu . . . der in der Gruft seinen Spruch kündet." Potts (2004: 166): ". . . the texts [SFT, NW], which are unparalleled in Mesopotamia, concern the taking of the deceased by the hand and accompanying him to the final judgement." Basello (2013b: 3): "Išnikarap is attested in one of the Akkadian funerary texts . . . from . . . Susa: together with Lagamal, he precedes the dead person in his path towards the pit where Inšušinak proclaims the judgement." Henkelman (2008: 61): ". . . we do know, however, that the idea of a final judgment existed [in the Elamite religion, NW] . . . The Elamites believed in a netherworld tribunal including Inšušinak (judge), the 'Weigher' (who tried the soul of the deceased), Išnikarab (*advocatus dei*) and Lagamar (*advocatus diaboli*) . . . it is precisely this idea of a final judgment . . . that eventually reappeared in *Zoroastrian* [emphasis in original] writings from the early Islamic period, most probably after having been transmitted to Persian culture in the Neo-Elamite or Achaemenid period." In a footnote Henkelman explains: "As Steve and Gasche note (1996), the judgment and the weighing are elements not known from contemporary eschatology and may be seen as originally Elamite. The parallel they draw with the later Zoroastrian Netherworld triad (Mithra, Sraoša, Rašnu), seems fully justified given the names, make-up and *modus operandi* of that grim institution" (2008: 61–62 n. 147). Carter (2011: 46): "These texts [the SFT, NW] offer a view of the afterlife that includes concepts of a journey between the land of the living above ground and the land of the dead beneath, a last judgment, and possibly a final reward." De Jong (2015: 92): ". . . the triad of judges itself appears to have an Elamite background (Henkelman 2008, 61–62; Tavernier 2013): Although the Elamite evidence is much older than the Achaemenid period [. . .], the divine triad of Inshushinak 'the Weigher,' Ishnikarab, and Lagamar offers such a crucial structural parallel to the (otherwise wholly unexplained) appearance of the triad of judges in later Zoroastrianism (and is unknown, as such, from Mesopotamia) that it is difficult not to accept them as the most likely example for the Zoroastrian development . . ." And recently Quintana 2018: 731: "According to these tablets [the SFT, NW], after death an individual embarked on a Journey accompanied by the gods Ishnikarab and Lagamal. At its conclusion they faced some kind of a weighing and a judgment was handed down by Inshushinak."

A simple reading of the texts rules out the hypothetical existence of a "weigher."[98] a) The SFT are late OB, or early MB Akkadian texts, part of the Babylonian literary system, and the notion that they contain evidence for much later Zoroastrian beliefs is highly improbable, if not impossible. b) It is not possible to acknowledge that the vast Mesopotamian textual corpus contains no reference to a chthonic weighing of the soul and thus conclude that it is a "non-Mesopotamian" phenomenon,[99] while at the same time taking the SFT as proof of the existence of this belief in Elam. c) The fact that a later culture in the region developed a concept of weighing the soul, while interesting, is nonetheless irrelevant to the reading of this group of mid-second millennium Akkadian texts.[100]

Not only is the divine tribunal of the dead entirely absent from cuneiform texts, which precede the Iranian sources by almost two millennia, but ancient Mesopotamian religion had no inkling of the dualistic and eschatological notion of the afterlife that Iran would come to espouse.[101] The Mesopotamian hereafter was grim, inert, and mostly egalitarian (although, in death as in life, the rich enjoyed certain privileges).[102] Unlike the Iranian conception of the netherworld, which housed two distinct populations—the righteous-and-happy and the wicked-and-miserable—in the Mesopotamian netherworld there was one despondent

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Other views also exist; e.g., Hutter (2009: 22) states that "with the concept of a tribunal, which separates good from evil, Zarathustra obviously introduced an innovation. For the pre-Zoroastrian religion, it has to be assumed that the dead indiscriminately went to a (underworldly or heavenly) afterlife and that although the passage from one world to the other was a critical situation, the place in the afterlife was not influenced by the worldly life"; namely he assumes no dependence on previous religious systems.

98. See recently Stol's (2014–2016: 603) careful statement: "Eine 'Wägung der Seele'. . . in der Unterwelt (in Elam) is unsicher."

99. "Il peut paraître étrange qu'une représentation aussi précise d'un acte capital qui se joue au seuil de l'Au-delà n'ait pas laissé de traces perceptibles dans l'immense littérature de la Mésopotamie." But this does not prevent Steve and Gasche from postulating an essential relation between the SFT and Iranian sources: "En revanche, il est plus surprenant encore de se trouver en face d'une étonnante équivalence dans la 'triade des juges' du mazdéisme" (Steve and Gasche 1996: 346).

100. The origin of the Iranian belief in weighing of the soul is beyond the scope of this paper, but one wonders why Tavernier (2013: 483) reckons that "it is not very likely that this aspect, known in the Egyptian afterlife tradition has come directly from Egypt to Susa." Is it really so "strange to see that this Egyptian concept [. . .] reached Elam"? The Achamaenid rule in Egypt was long enough to have this idea sown into the Iranian mind "without having left any trace in Mesopotamia."

101. On the more covert "initiatic" aspects of the Mesopotamian netherworld, see Ataç 2004.

102. Barrett (2007) compares Mesopotamian literary texts on the netherworld (not mentioning the SFT) with the rich variety of objects unearthed in Mesopotamian graves. She points out that "in almost every era, grave goods from sites throughout Mesopotamia suggest a significantly more positive attitude toward the netherworld than the literary texts seem to allow" and that "the religious iconography found in both poorer and richer burials suggests that ordinary people, as well as the powerful, hoped to attain a pleasant afterlife," so much so that people "may have expected to continue their daily tasks in the next world" (2007: 10–11). In view of this dichotomy, Barrett devalues the importance of the literary texts, concluding that "the depiction of the afterlife as bleak and hopeless seems to be restricted to literary narratives, and therefore it may say more about that subgroup of texts than it does about most Mesopotamians' religious beliefs" (2007: 11).

Barrett's tacit assumption is that literature and material culture should tally and that one ought to construct a unified literary-material depiction of the Mesopotamian netherworld. In other words, the fact that the Mesopotamian afterlife can apparently be both "bleak and dismal" (2007: 7) *and* "pleasant" (passim) poses a problem. Only in the concluding part of her study is a more nuanced position reached: ". . . the literary texts and the archaeological evidence seem to point in different directions; the literary texts portray a bleak netherworld, while the grave goods seem to imply something significantly more bearable. To some degree, these two different portrayals may simply reflect the emotional needs of their different contexts. It is understandable that, even in a society in which refined theological speculation tended toward pessimism about the next world, bereaved people might want to believe in something more comforting when they were actually burying their friends or family. In any case, it is dangerous to assume an overly rigid homogeneity within a society's religious beliefs" (2007: 55).

population, the community of the dead, whose destiny was invariably gloomy. Finally, the very object of the alleged weighing—the soul—is absent in ancient Mesopotamia. No concept of a non-corporal, personal component of the living person which continues its existence, unaltered, in the world of the dead, existed in ancient Mesopotamia. There is no evidence in ancient Mesopotamian sources for the notion that a living person could determine the quality of his/her afterlife by acting correctly while alive, namely by having a specific kind of soul.

What we find in the vast body of ancient Mesopotamian sources is the distinction between corporal parts of the living: *šīrum*, "flesh," *dāmum*, "blood," etc., and the non-corporal part: *eṭemmum*/gidim, "spirit." This non-corporal component (a divine trait in humans, as the myth of Atrā-ḫasīs I 208–30 recounts) *replaces* human existence once the living person dies, rather than continuing it.[103] In accordance with the above, there is understandably no mention of the "soul"—*eṭemmum*, *napištum*,[104] or any related term—in the SFT. In short, there is no evidence for (a) chthonic weigher(s) in ancient Mesopotamia, there is no logical reason for such weighing, and no object existed to support this supposed weighing.[105]

Depictions of deities or humans holding scales are known, however, from Mesopotamian cylinder seals and bas reliefs[106]—but in a context unrelated to the netherworld. A short discussion of a few seals will demonstrate this:[107] In the first seal presented here, Šamaš, god of justice, receives two worshipers; one bears a sacrifice, the other holds a pair of scales (Fig. 1). The two other seals, from the Assyrian trading colony of Kaneš, depict typical Syro-Cappadocian iconography. On one a seated god, facing a procession, holds a pair of scales. The approaching deity holds in his hand a pruning-saw (*šaššarum*), which could indicate that Šamaš is involved in this case too (Fig. 2). In the second Old Assyrian seal, a human humbly approaches a seated high official, who holds a balance in an authoritative gesture (Fig. 3). While the iconography differs in each, none is located in the netherworld, nor has anything to do with the soul. Rather, the iconography indicates that accurate weighing constitutes an essential component of social life in general, and of trade in particular.

103. Tropper (1987) analyzed this crucial passage from Atrā-ḫasīs, reaching (p. 308) a similar conclusion: "der *eṭemmu* unmöglich das lebenspendende Prinzip des Menschen sein kann . . . der Träger des Lebens ist die körperliche Ganzheit des Menschen, sein Fleisch und Blut, die Substanzen göttlichen Ursprungs."

104. The semantic range of *napištum* in Akkadian does not reach the notion of "soul" as it is understood today: an inner, self-defined entity, separate from the corporal existence of the person, yet essentially qualifying him as his manifestation, which continues his existence in the afterlife. The many examples of *napištum* in the dictionaries prove this beyond doubt. Even the following phrase from the OB letter of petition TCL 18, 123 9: 20, *ina šattim annītim ina napištim nadiāku qātī ṣabat*, translated by CAD N/I 90, 4 as "I am dejected in my soul, help me!" is rendered more accurately by Veenhof in AbB 14, 177 as "This year my life really is in danger, help me!" *napištum* means "life" (and of course also "breath" and "neck"), but it lacks any personal identification necessary for the definition "soul." For a discussion of *nbš* in the newly discovered inscription from Zincirli, where it carries the meaning "commemorative existence" or "honored memory," see Pardee 2009: 63.

105. A chthonic procedure which could, theoretically, include weighing—but not of the soul, rather of silver—is hinted at in the OB Akkadian "Descent of Ningišzida to the Netherworld." After Ningišzida had been dragged to the netherworld by a *gallû*-demon, Ningiridu/Ninsiskura tries to ransom Ningišzida and redeem him by offering silver: "She opened her mouth and speaks, Ningiridu, to his *gallû*-demon saying: 'I shall provide silver *corresponding to* his body! I shall give a present! Find his life for me!'" (UET 6/2, 395: 15′–16′: *lu-šu-ur kaspam*(KÙ.BABBAR)-*am mi-li-it la-ni-šu lu-din*ⁱⁿ-*ma ke-ed-ri-a-am wu-ti-a na-ap-ša-sú*; Lambert 1990, differently).

106. See Turri 2014–2016.

107. I am grateful to Irit Tzifer and Tallay Ornan for turning my attention to these cylinder seals.

Fig. 1. After Black/Green 1992: 183, fig. 152 bottom.

Fig. 2. After Tessier 1994: 233 no. 532.

Fig. 3. After Tessier 1994: 233 no. 533.

F. Are the Susa Funerary Texts Really Funerary Texts?

For Scheil the SFT were *tout court* "textes funéraires." The fact that the tablets were found in a grave rendered this observation self-evident. In the last section of this paper I challenge this assumption and claim that literary texts should be ascribed to a specific genre based on their *content* (and preferably also on their mode of performance[108]), and not on their place of discovery. Literary content, not archaeological context or secondary usage,[109] defines a literary genre.

Of course, the fact that the SFT were found in a grave (where, most likely, they were placed intentionally) cannot be overlooked, but, as shown above, various kinds of cuneiform text are found in graves, and none is so emphatically called "funerary." What made the SFT special, I believe, is that in this case the content and context coincide; namely the SFT relate episodes from the realm of the dead *and* were found in the realm of the dead, within a grave. But do the SFT really tell of the netherworld? Text No. 1 presents two metaphors which are connected to the netherworld: "the house of darkness" (l. 8) and "walking the road" (l. 3). Two terms for the "road" are also mentioned in Text No. 2 (*urḫu, ḫarrānu*, l. 1). Text No. 3 is more direct, and mentions "the sleeping one" in the "grave" (*ṣalla*, and *qabūrē*, l. 1). In Text No. 5 "thresholds" and "stones for lying" are mentioned (ll. 1, 2), most likely in reference to graves. To these one could add the *mušēkilum*, "the One-Who-Darkens" (Text No. 2: 4 and Text No. 3: 7), and perhaps also the "dark cloud" (Text No. 3: 9–10)—although, it must be remembered, "the One-Who-Darkens" is a hapax whose exact meaning can only be surmised and whose connection to the netherworld remains open.

Thus, although indirect references to the netherworld do appear in the SFT (esp. "graves" in Text No. 3: 1), no explicit mention of death or dying is found in this group of texts, nor is any other known term for the netherworld used there (e.g., *Arallu*, *Ganzer*, *Kurnugi*, *erṣet lā târi*, etc.). The SFT are connected thematically to the netherworld, but the connection is tenuous and insufficient to term the SFT "funerary."

Turning to the archaeological context of the SFT, comparison to another OB literary text is instructive. The tablet of love incantations from Isin was also discovered in an unusual location: in a jar buried in a corner of a wall.[110] The SFT and the Isin love incantations are similar not only in that they were found in unexpected spots, but because in both cases a scribe decided to assemble a group of thematically connected texts: the Isin tablet is a *Sammeltafel*, and the SFT are *gesammelte Tafeln*. The result, however, is similar and the two cases, I suggest, attest to the same cultural phenomenon—the secondary use of texts for magical purposes by placing them in spell-conducive locations.

The obvious parallel to this phenomenon is the Greek and Latin binding spells, commonly referred to as *defixiones*. More than 1600 *defixiones*, "inscribed pieces of lead, usually in the form of thin sheets, intended to bring supernatural power to bear against persons or animals,"[111]

108. How ancient literary texts were performed in antiquity in most cases remains unknown. But this facet, although relevant, is less crucial to the question of generic classification than content. The Old English "The Three Ravens" and Led Zeppelin's "Stairway to Heaven" are both called *ballads*, even though their modes of performance are entirely different. This cannot be reduced to a change in the meaning of the term "ballad." The usage is justifiable because the content of the two songs expresses an unmistakable sorrow characteristic of ballads.

109. The "Poem of Erra" remains a mythical text, despite the fact that excerpts of it are inscribed on Assyrian amulets (Reiner 1960), and *Enūma eliš* remains a myth, even if it was read aloud on the fourth day of the New Year festival (Lambert 2013: 7).

110. Wilcke 1985; Hrouda 1987: Taf. 6–7.

111. Jordan 1985a: 206.

are known from different corners of the Classical and Hellenistic world.[112] In 1985, more than half the *defixiones* whose archaeological context was known came from tombs and cemeteries.[113] Graves in the Classical world were prime loci for placing curses and binding spells, since it was believed that the spirits of the dead and certain deities that inhabited the netherworld could activate these magical procedures.[114]

I contend that what is true for Greek and Latin *defixiones* may also pertain to the nature and purpose of the Akkadian written SFT. In other words, I suggest that the SFT were used with magical intent.[115]

Support for this suggestion is found in the crude concentric diagram on the rev. of MDP 18, 253 (No. 4). For the OB period, such a drawing has been found, so far, on only two other texts, both of magical character: *RA* 88: 52 (OB Akkadian amulet, or a later text based on an OB original) and TIM 9, 68 (OB Sumerian incantation).[116] The diagram on Text No. 4 and the strong impression that the SFT consist of excerpts of longer texts, written on ready-to-use tablets, reinforce the conclusion that the SFT are to be understood as texts prepared for magical use whose exact meaning can only be surmised.

Summing up: 1) The SFT are Babylonian, not Elamite texts. 2) The SFT consist of excerpts of longer texts of two known genres: personal prayers and reports of oracular visions. 3) Thematically, some of the tablets of the SFT are loosely related to the netherworld, but are certainly not *Totenliteratur*, nor meant to guide the dead in the netherworld.[117] 4) Weighing of the soul, *psychostasia*, as part of a chthonic tribunal, is not found in the SFT (or to the best of my knowledge elsewhere in Mesopotamian texts). 5) The SFT were prepared, I propose, for magical purposes, and probably placed in the grave *after* a burial, perhaps not even by the kin of the deceased. 6) As far as the present data goes, "funerary texts" as a *literary* genre does not exist in the Babylonian literary system. The SFT are funerary only in as much as they were *placed* (secondarily?) in a grave.

112. Versnel 2006 speaks of 1500 such texts; Kropp of a slightly higher number (2008: 6): "mehr als 1600 . . ." On this, see also Jordan 1985b.

113. Out of c. 625 whose locations of discovery are known, c. 325 *defixiones* were found in graves (Jordan 1985a: 207).

114. "With very few exceptions, defixiones are found rolled up into scrolls or folded into small packets, in tombs, in chthonic sanctuaries, or in what were once underground bodies of water" (Jordan 1985b: 152), and ". . . Burial sites of those who had died young or by violent means were the preferred choices [for *defixiones*, NW], because it was believed that their souls remained in a restless condition near the graves until their normal life-span had been reached" (Gager 1992: 18–19, and passim).

115. The reason for the near absence of Akkadian magical texts in graves is probably due to the slimmer chance of survival of clay tablets, as opposed to texts written on lead. An Old Assyrian administrative text from Kaneš listing the inventory of a private chapel, perhaps a grave inventory (kt 94/k 670 mentioned above), describes 1 *ṭuppum ša iškurim* "one tablet of wax," furnishing another possible explanation for the lack of textual findings in graves (Barjamovic and Larsen 2008: 53: 12–13. Ref. courtesy Gojko Barjamovic). It is not impossible that the field notations of earlier excavations were not accurate and that at least some of the many unprovenanced OB incantations were also found in hidden spots, such as wells, in walls, or in sub-floor burials.

116. See Wasserman 2014: 54–55; Heeßel 2014: 61. In the post-OB period, lines drawn on tablets are more commonly found, not only on magical texts (see, e.g., KAR 35, KAR 37, KAR 129, KAL 4, 23, and more). On accompanying figurative drawings on tablets, see Jursa in Zawadzki and Jursa 2001: 357–63; Finkel 2011; and recently Zilberg and Horowitz 2016: 183.

117. An idea which prevailed from Ebeling (1931) until Lundström (2002: 714), who describe the SFT as the sole example of *Totenliteratur* in Mesopotamia.

PHOTOS[118]

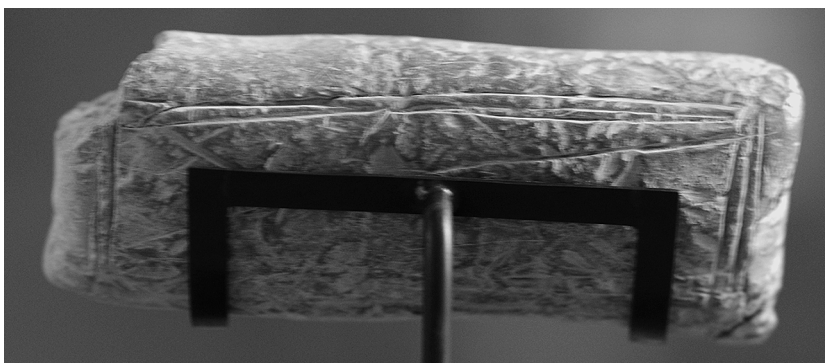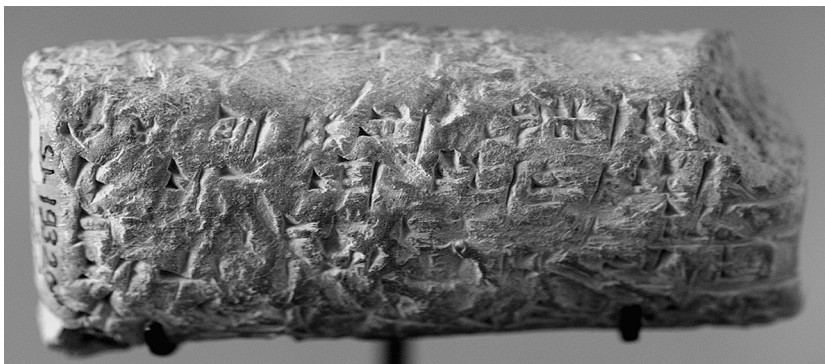Fig. 4. Text No. 1: MDP 18, 250 (Sb 19319) rev.
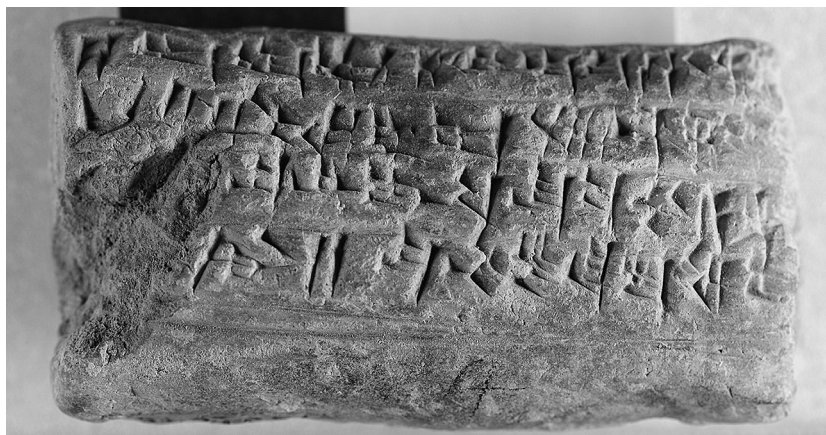
Figs. 5–6. Text No. 2: MDP 18, 251 (Sb 21854) obv. and rev.

118. Photo by the author, Feb. 2016, courtesy Musée du Louvre.

Figs. 7–9. Text No. 3: MDP 18, 252 (Sb 21855) obv., lower edge, and rev.

Figs. 10–11. Text No. 4: MDP 18, 253 (Sb 19320) obv. and rev.

Figs. 12–13. Text No. 5: MDP 18, 255 (Sb 21856)

Figs. 14–15. Text No. 6: MDP 18, 256 (Sb 21857) obv. and rev.

Texts No. 2, 3, 5, 6 obv. and rev.

Figs. 16–18 Text No. 1 rev. and Text No. 4 obv.

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