ON STROKE AND FACIAL PALSY
IN BABYLONIAN TEXTS

J. V. Kinnier Wilson and E. H. Reynolds
King’s College London

PART I

I  The Sources

Many years ago, the second writer of this paper recognised that Tablet XXVI of Labat’s Traité akkadien de diagnostics et pronostics médicaux, despite the apparent, and mistaken, association with ‘contusion’ or ‘bruising’, was in fact concerned with stroke. He expressed the hope that, at some future time, it might be possible for the writers to produce a joint paper on stroke, on the same general lines as for the then emerging paper on epilepsy.

The present study is the result of this new collaboration. Following the evidence of the catalogues, the tablet in question is cited as No. XXVII, not XXVI, a figure accepted in the latest edition of M. Stol. This latter work has already taken the study some distance forward; however, a more detailed medical analysis is here provided, and further note will be taken of K 2418+, a reconstructed tablet of the Therapeutic series, šumma muhhašu. Many of the pieces of this

---


3 Epilepsy in Babylonia, Cuneiform Monographs 2, Styx Publications, Groningen, 1993 (hereafter abbreviated as Epilepsy and ‘CM 2’), pp. 74ff; also, by the same writer, ‘Diagnosis and therapy in Babylonian medicine,’ JEOL 32 (1993), 51 with note 52.

4 Suggested as a convenient abbreviation for the full title of šumma amēlu muhhašu umma ukāl,—and without prejudice to the use of “UGU”, as coined by Köcher, to indicate the sub-series with the same title.
tablet were copied in R. C. Thompson’s AMT,5—details are as cited below, in Section IV—but in its present form much is owed to joins made subsequently by Franz Köcher. Although as yet the tablet has not been recopied for the BAM series, something of its nature will be seen from the photograph of the reverse which is included with this account (fig. 1).

A curious feature of the tablet may be mentioned at this point. As may be seen on the photograph, the colophon fails to indicate—supposedly by a scribal error—the series and sub-series to which it belongs and its position within it; the catch-line is followed at once by the library subscript beginning ‘Palace of Ashurbanipal.’ In fact from a manuscript of Köcher’s which reconstructs first lines of the corpus based on new fragments from Ashur,6 one learns that the tablet belonged to the fifth sub-series of the work, beginning šumma amēlu labān-šu ikkal-šu, ‘If a man’s neck tendons hurt him.’ It was the fifth of the six tablets comprising this series.

Help in restoring certain prescriptions on the tablet is afforded by BAM 132–136 and 138, and by SBTU I, 46,7 a text which describes itself as the ‘10th pirsu’ of the larger corpus. Relevant also, although a different order is followed, are the three fragments of OECT XI, Nos. 72–74.8 The sources for Tablet XXVII of the diagnostic series (Sakikku XXVII) are documented by M. Stol, Epilepsy in Babylonia, p. 74. They are the two Louvre tablets, AO 6680 and A 3441, published by R. Labat in TDP II, plates XLVIII to LI, and text No. 89 of E. von Weiher, SBTU III, lines 16–62.

II Initial Considerations

In this section we seek firstly to define our subject and to declare essential terminology. What, therefore, one may say about stroke is

---