

# Purification, Defilement, and Privilege? An Example from the Hemerological and Menological Corpus

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**Abstract** This paper discusses the purity instructions found in the *Lying Down Menology*, the latest addition to the corpus of hemerological and menological literature from Babylonia and Assyria. After briefly describing the nature of this text and its instructions for incubation rituals, the discussion will focus on purity in this context, establishing that the dirtiness prescribed in some of the instructions relates to other negative aspects incorporated in the ritual, such as eating malodorous foods. Finally, I will argue that the use of luxury products in this ritual suggests that only the wealthy members of the upper social classes could adhere to the instructions of the *Lying Down Menology* throughout all twelve months of the year.

**Keywords** Hemerologies and menologies. Calendar. Incubation. Ritual instructions. Scented oils. Anointment.

**Summary** 1 Introduction. – 2 The *Lying Down Menology*. – 3 Scented Oils as Luxury Products.

## 1 Introduction

Purity is a central aspect in ancient Mesopotamian rituals: purification frees the human ritual participants or ritual objects of mundane impurities, thus preparing them for an encounter with the divine.<sup>1</sup> This is also the case in the *Lying Down Menology*, a text presenting twelve instructions for an incubation ritual, one for each of the twelve months.<sup>2</sup> The unique feature of this text is, however, that it also includes instructions about defiling the body. In this paper, I argue that the prescribed dirtiness is attached to other negative actions, namely avoiding pleasant scents, eating malodorous foods, and staying silent. I will also look into the role of scented oils as luxury products in this context and suggest that apart from the king, only members of the wealthy upper class were able to regularly perform the incubation ritual described in the *Lying Down Menology*.

## 2 The *Lying Down Menology*

The *Lying Down Menology* presents twelve incubation rituals, one for each twelve months of the year. The incubation aims to receive positive dream messages concerning either the divine or human peers.<sup>3</sup>

1 See especially Maul 1994, 39-41 and Sallaberger 2007.

2 Häätinen 2023a.

3 Häätinen 2023a, 247.



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The preserved manuscripts show that this text was known in Assyria and Babylonia throughout the first millennium BCE.<sup>4</sup> The earliest source of this menology is an early Neo-Assyrian manuscript from the city of Ashur, and its latest attestations are found in excerpts in Late Babylonian *Kalendertexte* from Uruk, one of which preserves the year date 192 BCE.<sup>5</sup> The main manuscript, a tablet that contains a collection of hemerological and menological materials, comes from Babylon. The first column is completely missing in this manuscript, but the second column has the *Prostration Hemerology*,<sup>6</sup> followed by the *Lying Down Menology* and the *Tašrītu Hemerology*<sup>7</sup> on the reverse. The excerpts from the *Lying Down Menology* in the Late Babylonian *Kalendertexte* and its appearance in collections of hemerological and menological materials show that these instructions about inducing auspicious dreams were an integral part of calendrical knowledge and that, according to Mesopotamian beliefs, adhering to them contributed to leading a successful life. This idea is stated in the short concluding section that is found in two Babylonian library manuscripts of the *Lying Down Menology*:

BM 34090+ iii 31-33//BM 40232 ii' 11'-15'<sup>8</sup>

*ūmū adānī bīri ša sīn ša sīn ša nēpesi annūti ina šatti 1 arḫi 12 ippušu [...] ... kinūnšu la'msu ina qāt ili šarri kabti [u rubē ...] ... šattu 1 šalim*

The moon god's periods for visions (about the future). He who performs these actions during the twelve months of a year, [...] his ..., his brazier, its embers, [will be ...] in the hand of god, king, noble man [and prince, ...] ... . He will remain well for one year.

Notably, the formulation "in the hand of god, king, noble man [and prince]" shows that the incubation instructions are aimed at people who wish to maintain good standing with both the divine and the earthly authorities. In this sense, they are comparable to the Egalkura rituals that prepare an individual for an audience with the authorities.<sup>9</sup>

More evidence comes from Nineveh, although no library manuscripts of this text are known from Ashurbanipal's royal tablet collection. Nevertheless, the *Lying Down Menology* is extensively quoted in letters to the king and hemerological/menological compilations, showing that the scholars at the Assyrian court knew it very well. In one letter to the king, a quotation from the Nisannu instructions from the *Lying Down Menology* is incorporated in the section that explains proper ritual conduct in that month.

BM 98651 (= Th 1905-4-9, 121), 3'-10'<sup>10</sup>

*akal(NINDA) kunāši(zīz.ÀM) līkul(GU<sub>7</sub>) šīkar(KAŠ) kunāši(zīz.ÀM) lišti(NAG) šīr(UZU) alpi(GU<sub>4</sub>) immeri(UDU) iṣṣūri(MUŠEN) līkul(GU<sub>7</sub>) šūmī(SUM<sup>sar</sup>) karaša(GA.RAŠ<sup>sar</sup>) nūna(KU<sub>6</sub>) lā(NU) ikkal(GU<sub>7</sub>) ar-ka ṭūb libbi(ŠA.DU<sub>10</sub>.GA) li-ir-ku-us a-na sinništi(MUNUS) la i-quer-ri-ib ina bīt(É) pā-r-si a-šar šēpu(GIR<sup>II</sup>) par-sa-at li-[n]a-al ilū('DINGIR<sup>meš</sup>)-'šū' [kun]-'nu<sup>1</sup>-[šū-šū]m?*

He should eat emmer bread (and) drink emmer beer. He should eat beef, mutton, and bird meat; he should not eat garlic, leer, or fish. He should *strive to be happy*; he should not approach a woman. He should sleep in a secluded room, in a secluded place: his deities [*will gather for h*]im.

In addition to the evidence on how the Assyrian scholars referred to the instructions of the *Lying Down Menology* in their communication with the king, this menology can also be identified as one of the texts that were used to compile the royal hemerology *Inbu bēl arḫi*.<sup>11</sup> This means that some of the sections of

<sup>4</sup> Häätinen 2023a, 224-7.

<sup>5</sup> See Häätinen 2023a, 226 and Häätinen 2023b, no. 12. For the *Kalendertexte* tablets from Uruk, see also Weidner 1967, 41-8.

<sup>6</sup> See the edition and discussion in Jiménez, Adalı 2015.

<sup>7</sup> See Casaburi 2000 and Livingstone 2013, 181-90.

<sup>8</sup> Häätinen 2023a, 233-4.

<sup>9</sup> For the use of the expression 'god, king, noble man and prince' in the context of Egalkura incantations, see Stadhouders 2013, 304-7.

<sup>10</sup> See Hunger 1992, no. 231; Livingstone 2000, 381-2; and Häätinen 2023a (MS Nin1; edition with collations).

<sup>11</sup> For the current edition of *Inbu bēl arḫi*, see Livingstone 2013, 199-248, with corrections and additions in Marti 2014, 181-96. The relevant passages from *Inbu bēl arḫi* are included in the edition of the *Lying Down Menology* as MSS Nin4, Nin5, Nin6 and Nin7 (see Häätinen 2023a, 228).

*Inbu bēl arḫi* that remained undeciphered in Alasdair Livingstone's edition can now be read and reconstructed according to the *Lying Down Menology*. To give an example, the entry for 1 Araḫsamnu (VIII) contains the Araḫsamnu instructions from the *Lying Down Menology* (marked here with bold typeface):

K.3269+ i 1-8

[DIŠ *ina araḫsamni*(<sup>III</sup>APIN)] šá bēl(EN) nagbi(IDIM) apkal(ABGAL) ilī(DINGIR<sup>mes</sup>) marduk(<sup>d</sup>AMAR.UTU) U<sub>4</sub> 1.KAM<sup>v</sup> šá <sup>d</sup>a-nim u [enlil(<sup>d?</sup>BAD<sup>?</sup>)] / [e-n]u-ma ina arhi(ITI) sîn(30) innammeru(IGI-ru) rē'i(SIPA) nišī(UN<sup>mes</sup>) ra-ba-a-[ti] / [nindabê(NIDBA)-š]u šabīta(MAŠ.DÀ) elleta(KÙ-ta) ana inbi(GURUN) <ú-kan> šarru(LUGAL) **lim-te-si šaman**(I.GIŠ) **asi**(<sup>šim</sup>GIR) **lippašiš**(Š[ÉŠ]) / [**lītebbib**(DADAG)] **šēna**([<sup>kuš</sup>]E<sup>1</sup>.SÍR) **liššakin**(GAR-in) ina še-ri šarru(LUGAL) nindabê(NIDBA)-šú ana [šamaš(<sup>d</sup>UTU)] / [<sup>d</sup>be-let-mātāti(KUR.KUR) sîn(30)] bēlet-ilī(<sup>r</sup>DINGIR<sup>1</sup>.MAḪ) ú-kan ni-qé-e inaqqi(BA[L-q]í) / [(X X) **akal**(NINDA) **šegušši**(ŠE.MUŠ<sub>3</sub>) **likul**(GU<sub>7</sub>)] **šikar**(<sup>r</sup>KAS<sup>1</sup>) **šegušši**(ŠE.MUŠ<sub>3</sub>) **lišti**(NAG) **šīr**(UZU) **iššūri**(MUŠEN) **likul**(GU<sub>7</sub>) / [*ina mayyālī*?(K<sup>2</sup>.NÁ<sup>?</sup>) **tābi**(DU<sub>10</sub>.GA) **lināl**(NÁ) **ilū**(DINGIR<sup>mes</sup>)] **šá ana lemutti**(<sup>munus</sup>HUL) **izzizzū**(GUB-'zu')-šu / [*ana damiḫti*(<sup>munus</sup>SIG<sub>3</sub>)] **izzazzū**(GUB-'zu')-šu

[¶ In the month Araḫsamnu,] (the month) of the lord of underground waters, the sage of the gods, Marduk. 1st day is of Anu and [Enlil<sup>?</sup>]. [Wh]en the moon is observed at the beginning of the month, the shepherd of the gre[at] people <sets up> [h]is [bread offering] (and) a pure gazelle to the Fruit. **The king should wash himself, he should anoint himself with myrtle oil, [he should purify himself]. He should wear sandals.** In the morning, the king sets up his bread offering to [Šamaš (and) Bēlet-mātāti, Sîn] (and) Bēlet-ilī; he ma[ke]s an (animal) offering. **[He should eat šeguššu-bread]; he should drink šeguššu-beer. He should eat bird meat. [He should sleep in(?) "good bed(?)". The gods] who wished him evil will have good intentions towards him.**

The excerpts in the Neo-Assyrian letter BM 98651 and *Inbu bēl arḫi* are good examples of the information presented in the *Lying Down Menology*. The gist of the text is that each month is associated with a particular set of instructions, the goal of which is to induce an auspicious dream.<sup>12</sup> Each set gives information on purification, anointment, clothing and footwear, types of food to be consumed and avoided (bread, beer, types of meat, garlic, leek, fish), the mood, sexual relations, and the place for and style of sleeping. Because eating and drinking form a central part of the instructions, it seems plausible that all the prescribed actions are associated with a meal in the household, either a simple repast or an elaborate feast. It should be noted that the household meal, or commensality in the household, can be seen as the essential form of domestic religion<sup>13</sup> and that, in this case, it offers a person – most likely the head of the household – the opportunity to magically gain benefits in relation to divine forces and his local community.

The instructions of the *Lying Down Menology* can be divided into three stages: before, during, and after the meal [fig. 1] [table 1]. The preparation for the meal involves personal hygiene and clothing, whereas the instructions for the meal involve the consumption of bread, beer, different kinds of meat, fish, garlic, and leek. A further element in the instructions on the meal is the mood: the instructions for months I, II and VII specify that one should have fun, whereas during months X and XI, one should stay gloomily silent. The post-meal instructions can involve having sex or avoiding it, but the main issue addressed in them is the place and style of sleeping. The outcome of the correct combination is an auspicious dream that can involve beneficial interaction with deities or human peers.<sup>14</sup> This forms an elaborate system with purity and defilement at its core, and these two aspects play a role both before and during the meal.

<sup>12</sup> See Hättinen 2023a, 240-7.

<sup>13</sup> Smith 2003, 26.

<sup>14</sup> Hättinen 2023a, 240-7.

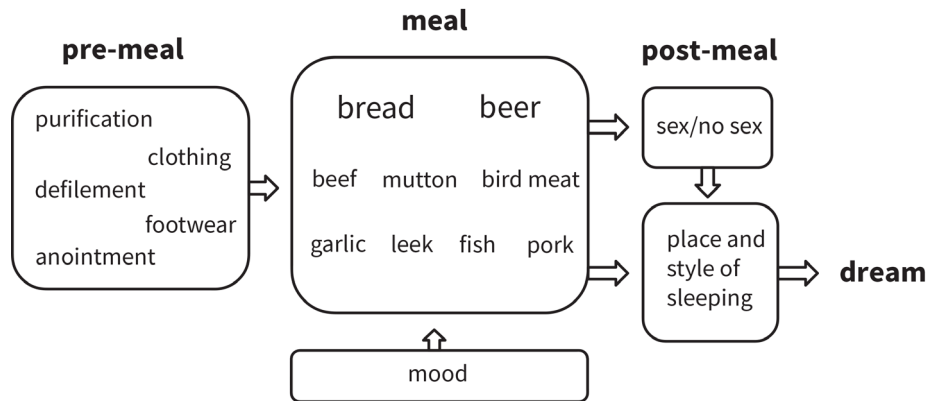


Figure 1 A schematic presentation of the ritual instructions in the *Lying Down Menology*

Most of the purity instructions in the *Lying Down Menology* that deal with the preparation for the meal prescribe a two-fold purification. The terminology that is used is *limtessi* ‘he should wash himself (with water)’ and *lītebbib* ‘he should purify himself’.<sup>15</sup> An exception to this pattern is found in the instructions for months II and III, prescribing a washing without an additional cleansing. Thus, we can establish that the thoroughly cleansed state, attained through a washing and an additional cleansing, is the norm in these instructions. The interesting, and to my knowledge unique, feature of the *Lying Down Menology* instructions is found in months IV, V, X and XI: the entries for these months prescribe the complete opposite of a purification, a defilement.<sup>16</sup> This is expressed with the word *litarriš* ‘he should smear himself (with dirt)’, derived from the verb (*w*)*arāšum* ‘to be dirty’ which denotes dirt that can be washed away.<sup>17</sup> In months IV and X, this defilement is preceded by a washing, which means that the newly washed body was supposed to be sullied by dirt.<sup>18</sup> In months V and XI, only a defilement is prescribed. The entries involving a defilement show that the norm of being thoroughly clean is turned upside down, insisting that the body must be made dirty before the meal. It is reasonable to define this defilement as something negative, marked with a grey background in table 1 below.

The preparation for the meal continues with the application of a scented oil.<sup>19</sup> Most months have a specific perfume, for example, *kanaktu* in month I and *murru* in month III (see table 1). Unfortunately, it remains unclear why a particular perfume was associated with a specific month. The selection of the perfumes corresponds to the aromatics and perfumes known from other sources, and the same kinds of oils are very often found in ritual instructions from the first millennium BCE.<sup>20</sup> The pattern in the use of scented and unscented oils indicates that apart from month IV, the anointment of the defiled body is either explicitly forbidden or it should be made with unscented oil. Thus, there is a connection between the purified body and a sweet smell and between the defiled body and no smell. Again, the sweet smell (attained by using a scented oil) can be defined as having positive qualities. In contrast, no smell (achieved by the anointment with an unscented oil or by the ban on anointment) has negative qualities, marked with a grey background in table 1.

The instructions for months X and XI include the order to stay ‘gloomily silent’ (*liqtayyal*). I interpret this to involve the mood at the meal, meaning that the ritual meal should be eaten in gloomy si-

<sup>15</sup> For the semantic range of the Akkadian purity terminology, see Sallaberger 2007, 295-6 and Feder 2014, 94-8. In his overview of purification (“Reinigung”), Walther Sallaberger (2007, 297) notes that ritual purity includes the washing (*mesū*) of hands and a following cleansing (*ubbubu*) of the body. In the *Lying Down Menology*, no distinct body parts are mentioned, which suggests that the whole body is washed and cleansed. Still, there are no indications of a bath, suggesting that these acts could be carried out without a bathroom or a bathtub – an aspect that may support Svende Bielefeld’s argument for the absence of bathrooms in excavated private houses in Babylon. For cleansing acts in the context of hemerologies, see Saki Kikuchi’s contribution in this volume.

<sup>16</sup> See Häätinen 2023a, 242.

<sup>17</sup> See Sallaberger 2007, 296; Feder 2016, 104 and Häätinen 2023, 242.

<sup>18</sup> The fact that the defilement (*(w)arāšu*) appears here instead of a purification (*ubbubu*) indicates that these actions should be understood as opposites of each other.

<sup>19</sup> The instructions in the *Lying Down Menology* do not specify if only specific body parts were anointed. Compare here the application of scented oils specifically on the face and hands in the Egalkura incantations (see the discussion below).

<sup>20</sup> See the discussion in Häätinen 2023a, 242 as well as Ebeling 1950, 5-14 and Worthington 2008, 574-75.

lence.<sup>21</sup> This certainly is a negative quality,<sup>22</sup> which corresponds to the dirty, unperfumed state of the body prescribed for these months. Moreover, this contrasts the instruction to be in a happy mood, which is attested for months I, II and VII (see the citation of the Nisannu instructions in the letter BM 98651 above and table 1). It seems plausible that the instructions that include negative aspects – dirtiness, smelliness, and silence – relate to the time of the year since, in both cases, they appear close to the summer and winter solstices that, according to the Babylonian ideal calendar, should occur in mid-Du’ūzu (IV) and mid-Ṭebētu (X).<sup>23</sup> Additionally, religious festivities featuring Dumuzi that took place in month IV and the rituals and festivities associated with the dead and the Netherworld in month V may in part explain the character of these months in the *Lying Down Menology*.<sup>24</sup> Month V (Abu) seems to have been the most significant month for funerary offerings during the Old Babylonian period, while month X (Ṭebētu) appears as a significant month for these offerings in the sources from the first millennium.<sup>25</sup> This suggests that the association with the dead and the Netherworld may have motivated the incubation instructions that prescribe a defilement and silence.

Finally, some of the food instructions in the *Lying Down Menology* can be interpreted to involve purity during the meal: the instructions for months X and XI, which have negative connotations through defilement, lack of sweet smell, and gloomy silence, encourage the consumption of foods that usually are taboos. Garlic, leek, fish, and pork were typically avoided because they were considered malodorous or unclean,<sup>26</sup> which suggests that the smelly fish, garlic, and leek are associated with the dirty and unperfumed human body during the meal in months X and XI.

To sum up, the gist of the purity instructions in the *Lying Down Menology* is that the person wanting to obtain an auspicious dream should usually be clean and perfumed and that he should also maintain this purity during the ritual meal. In two summer months (IV and V) and two winter months (X and XI), this norm is reversed, resulting in an unclean and unperfumed body and, in the case of months X and XI, eating malodorous foods. Thus, this reversal is most dramatic in the winter months X and XI. The instructions with negative connotations may have been motivated by the point of time (summer and winter solstices) and the association of those months with funerary rituals and the Netherworld. A more tangible aspect is the pattern of positive and negative connotations within the two halves of the year (see table 1). The positive qualities are most prominent during the festival season in months I, II, and VII, visible through consuming various kinds of meat, avoiding tabooed foods, and having a cheery mood during the meal. Moreover, the instruction to eat different types of meat in months VI and XII suggests that feasts also occurred at the end of the two six-month periods.

### 3 Scented Oils as Luxury Products

Using scented oils is a prominent feature in the *Lying Down Menology*. As a part of personal hygiene, fragrant oils are well-attested in cuneiform sources throughout the three millennia of Mesopotamian history, and even recipes for their production are preserved. In his edition of the perfume recipes, Erich Ebeling<sup>27</sup> noted that “Man darf ohne Bedenken sagen, dass in Babylonien und Assyrien jeder Mensch, der es sich leisten konnte, seinen Körper mit wohlriechenden Wässern und Salben labte” (every person who could afford it, refreshed themselves with fragrant water or ointments).<sup>28</sup> The ques-

<sup>21</sup> Häätinen 2023a, 242-3.

<sup>22</sup> Compare *Ludlul* I 105-6: *ūmu šutānuḫu mūšu gerrānu | arḫu qitayyulu idirtu šattu* “Sighing the day, lamentation the night | Moroseness the month, the year despair” (Häätinen 2022; transl. B.R. Foster).

<sup>23</sup> This was suggested by Frances Reynolds during the discussion at the workshop; see also the brief notes in Häätinen 2023a, 243. Months IV-V correspond to June-August, and months X-XI correspond to December-February in the Gregorian calendar. According to the ideal Babylonian calendar presented in MUL.APIN, the summer solstice is on 15 Du’ūzu (IV) and the winter solstice is on 15 Ṭebētu (X) (see MUL.APIN II i9-13 and i 6-18 in Hunger, Steele 2019, 142-5). Note the prominence of especially the winter solstice in Late Babylonian religious festivities (Krul 2018, 130-4) and in the context of a Late Babylonian calendar treatise related to *Enūma eliš* (Reynolds 2019, 8-11).

<sup>24</sup> See Scurlock 1995 and Cohen 2015, 414-1. Also note that the dream sought in Abu (V) in the *Lying Down Menology* concerns the Anunnakū deities, who live in the Netherworld (Häätinen 2023a, 247).

<sup>25</sup> See Tsukimoto 1985, 51 and 123 as well as Krul 2018, 234-47.

<sup>26</sup> See van der Toorn 1985, 33-5; Sallaberger 2007, 296; and Geller 2011, 640-2.

<sup>27</sup> Ebeling 1950, 4.

<sup>28</sup> See also the similar statement in Sallaberger 2011, 20: “Die Reinigung des Körpers mit Öl, dem duftende Essenzen beigemischt werden können, gehörte zum babylonischen Alltag”.

tion is then: Who could afford it, and were scented oils readily available for individuals outside of palace and temple economies?

As already noted, the selection of the perfumes in the *Lying Down Menology* corresponds to the usual selection of aromatics and perfumes used in Mesopotamia and surrounding areas. They are all plant-based substances imported to Mesopotamia or cultivated there, and they can be used either as aromatics (for example, as incense) or as ingredients for scented oils. The scented oil in itself is a luxury product. To establish that, we can follow the definition of the term by Christopher J. Berry,<sup>29</sup> who writes that a luxury good is “a widely desired (because not yet widely attained) good that is believed to be ‘pleasing’, and the general desirability of which is explained by it being a specific refinement, or qualitative aspect, of some universal generic need”. In our case, the generic need is purity that, in its most simple form, can be achieved by using only water. Finishing a purification by rubbing oneself with a scented oil or ointment represents the process's most elaborate and expensive form: not only does one become clean of any dirt and foul odours, but one's body also becomes sweet smelling. This is achieved in most instructions in the *Lying Down Menology*.

In comparative material from earlier and contemporary sources, scented oils are associated with religious ceremonies, feasts, and royal palaces. For the Ur III period, documents from Umma show that scented oils were used in the festivals in the city: the boat of the god Šara and the god himself were anointed with it, and the people who attended the feast or other festivities received rations of oil.<sup>30</sup> In Old Babylonian sources from Mari, scented oil appears as a luxury product that was reserved for the gods, the king, and other select persons at Mari, and Francis Joannés<sup>31</sup> has estimated that the people attending a royal banquet each received a portion of a few centilitres of scented oil. In the Neo-Assyrian period, king Assurnāširpal II boasts of using ten homers of ‘sweet oil’ in the consecration festivities of his new palace in Kalḫu, feeding, bathing and anointing the guests for ten days before sending them back home.<sup>32</sup> Another high-profile context in which scented oils appear is the diplomatic system in the second half of the second millennium BCE, with the rulers of the great states exchanging gifts, among them different kinds of scented oils. For example, the tablet listing the wedding presents that the Mittanian king Tušratta sent to the Egyptian pharaoh includes a section (EA 22 iii 29-36)<sup>33</sup> with various kinds of scented oils, among which we can also find *murrū*-oil, myrtle oil, *kanaktu*-oil, and ‘sweet oil’ mentioned in the *Lying Down Menology*. The connection to the palace is also evident in the Middle Assyrian documentation, with the perfumers receiving rations of materials needed in their work from the palace administrator.<sup>34</sup> In the perfume recipes from Ashur, the finest quality of the scented oils, prepared over several weeks and resulting from 40 filtrations, is meant for the king.<sup>35</sup>

The connection of scented oils with the high social classes is also reflected in the Egalkura (‘Entering the palace’) incantations that are embedded in magical procedures meant to prepare an individual for a successful audience before the authorities, either at the palace or in other places of power, such as the ‘Town Hall’.<sup>36</sup> The Egalkura rituals often involve anointing the face and the hands with oil (in addition to magical manipulation of clothing). This action is supposed to bring about success in the audience and is associated with a pleasant appearance.<sup>37</sup>

VAT 8230+, o 7-12<sup>38</sup>

- o 7. [šu-uš]-<sup>1</sup>qa<sup>1</sup>-an-ni šu-uš-qa-an-ni šu-mu-<sup>1</sup>ḫa<sup>1</sup>-an-ni <sup>1</sup>šu-mu-ḫa<sup>1</sup>-ni
- o 8. [šamnu(i+GIŠ<sup>2</sup>) šaman(i+G)IŠ<sup>2</sup>) bal-ti šaman(i+GIŠ<sup>2</sup>) pu-re-e šaman(i+GIŠ<sup>2</sup>) <sup>4</sup>a-<sup>1</sup>nu<sup>1</sup> u <sup>1</sup>an<sup>1</sup>-[tu<sub>4</sub>]
- o 9. [ap<sup>2</sup>]-<sup>1</sup>pa<sup>2</sup><sup>1</sup>-<šiš<sup>2</sup>>-ka ša kīma(GIM) <sup>4</sup>iš-tar ša še-re-e-te x [x (x x)]

<sup>29</sup> Berry 1994, 41.

<sup>30</sup> Brunke, Sallaberger 2010, 46.

<sup>31</sup> Joannés 1993, 254.

<sup>32</sup> Grayson 1991, A.0.101.30: 138, 151-4.

<sup>33</sup> See Rainey 2015, 174-5.

<sup>34</sup> See Jakob 2003, 476-86. The situation may have been similar in the Neo-Assyrian period (see Groß 2020, 379-80).

<sup>35</sup> See KAR 220 iv 8' in Jakob 2003, 483 and Escobar 2023, 19-20.

<sup>36</sup> See the definition of the Egalkura corpus by Henry Stadhouders (Stadhouders, Panayotov 2018, 627): “It [= the Egalkura corpus (AH)] is primarily contrived to secure a smooth reception by the authorities before whom the client is going to appear, and to imbue him with the power to manoeuvre them into deciding favourably on his case”. A further overview of the purpose of the Egalkura rituals can be found in Stadhouders 2013.

<sup>37</sup> In addition to the cited passage, see the similar instructions edited in Stadhouders, Panayotov 2018, 630-6.

<sup>38</sup> Cited here after Meinhold 2017, no. 25 with minor changes.

- o 10. [d]i-na šá la 'na<sup>1</sup>-šu-u ina qātī(šU<sup>II</sup>)-ia liš-kun [(TU<sub>6</sub>.ÉN)]  
(single ruling)  
o 11. šipta(ÉN) an-ni-tú '7<sup>1</sup>-šu ina muḥḥi(UGU) šamni(i+GIŠ) elli(κÙ) tamannū(ŠID)-ma pānī(IGI<sup>mes</sup>)  
qātī(šU<sup>II</sup>.mes)-ka  
o 12. tapaššāš(ŠÉŠ)-ma ina maḥar(IGI) rubê(NUN) terrub('KU<sub>4</sub><sup>1</sup>)-ma rubû(NUN) ihaddû(ḤÚL)-k[a]

[Ele]vate me, elevate me; make me flourish, make me flourish! [Oil<sup>2</sup>, oil of dignity, oil from the bowl, oil of Anu and An[tu] - [I have anoi]ted myself with you! Who like Ištar of morning ... [...], may he put in my hands [a ver]dict that cannot be endured. [(Incantation formula)].

(single ruling)

You recite this [incan]tation seven times over the pure oil and then [anoi]nt [your] face<sup>39</sup> and hands (with it). You then enter before the prince, and the prince will be pleased with y[ou].

Thus, the prominent role of anointments in the Egalkura rituals suggests the necessity of using cosmetic products - in this case, magically enhanced ones - when encountering the king or the members of the local ruling elite.

While scented oils are associated with the royal court in Mari and Ashur and they appear as royal gifts in the Amarna tablets, the sources from Old Babylonian Larsa show that aromatic substances and scented oils were widely available and distributed in Babylonia.<sup>40</sup> The prices of the perfumes depended on the quality and ingredients, with some qualities being very expensive and some more affordable. Nevertheless, a person would have been able to acquire perfumes in the private market.<sup>41</sup> A similar situation is attested for the Neo-Babylonian period, with the production and trade of aromatic substances outside the temple or palace economies.<sup>42</sup> Not to be forgotten is the wide use of scented oils in many ritual therapies, such as *namburbi*-rituals,<sup>43</sup> which shows that scented oils were available to and used by anyone who could afford them. Moreover, as the Egalkura rituals show, the use of costly scented oils was a central aspect in being magically prepared to meet the members of the local administration so that their attitude would be beneficial.

Unfortunately, there are no sources explicitly giving prices of scented oils in the Neo-Assyrian or the Neo-/Late Babylonian periods, which means that it is not possible to ascertain the cost of some of the perfumes required in the *Lying Down Menology* at the time the manuscripts of this text were written. However, prices for some of the aromatics needed to produce the scented oils are attested, and they may give us an idea about the cost of the finished products. A price for four of the aromatic ingredients mentioned in the *Lying Down Menology* can be established.<sup>44</sup> For one shekel silver, one could buy 0,33 minas or ca 1 mina of *murru*, 11 minas of cypress (*šurmēnu*), 2,5 minas of myrtle (*asu*), or 2 minas of cedar (*erēnu*). Thus, *murru* is around ten times more expensive than cypress, the cheapest aromatic. It is reasonable that the finished products cost more than their ingredients, which means that a person wanting to perform the monthly incubation rituals outlined in the *Lying Down Menology* was forced to invest significant sums of money for the right scent: during the year he would have had to acquire nine different types of perfumes for the ritual. For the king and the elite members of the society, this would not have been a problem. However, for example, a worker receiving a monthly wage ranging from less than one shekel to four or five shekels of silver<sup>45</sup> would probably have thought it through before spending money on such ritual paraphernalia.<sup>46</sup> Therefore, it seems likely that the monthly ritual for having auspicious dreams was mainly practised by the people in the upper levels of society, ranging from the

<sup>39</sup> Here IGI<sup>mes</sup> = *pānū* 'face' as opposed to IGI<sup>I</sup> = *inā* 'eyes' (cf. Meinhold 2017, no. 25 *passim*).

<sup>40</sup> Middeke-Conlin 2014.

<sup>41</sup> See Middeke-Conlin 2014, § 3.4. It is also noted in Middeke-Conlin 2014, § 3.4.4, that there are major differences in the prices of scented oils depending on their ingredients and quality: one could buy 60 *qūm* of the lower quality perfume mixture š i m - ḥ i - a for one shekel but only three *qūm* of the higher quality š i m oil.

<sup>42</sup> Jursa 2009, 166-71.

<sup>43</sup> Maul 1994, 96.

<sup>44</sup> Following Jursa 2009, 170.

<sup>45</sup> Monthly wages ranging from fractions of shekels up to five shekels of silver are attested during the reigns of Nebuchanezzar II and Nabonidus (Jursa 2010, 674-5). Higher wages of up to ten shekels of silver per month, especially in military service but also for building work, are attested during the reigns of Darius and Xerxes (Jursa 2010, 676).

<sup>46</sup> Compare here also the account of Jesus' anointment with a scented oil made of spikenard worth over three hundred denarii (Mark 14:3-9). Note that it has been suggested that the plant *lardu*, plausibly named in the *Lying Down Menology* as the perfume in month II, should be identified as spikenard (AHw 538).

wealthy citizens to the king. In particular, excluding the king, it seems plausible that the people who had the means to undergo Egalkura rituals before entering the presence of local or state officials are the most likely to form the core target group of the *Lying Down Menology*.

To conclude, the *Lying Down Menology* presents ritual instructions centred around a household meal, aiming at having beneficial dreams. The unique feature in these instructions is the inclusion of negative aspects – dirtiness, lack of a pleasant scent, consumption of malodorous foods, and gloomy mood during the meal – in the ritual during the months around the summer and winter solstices, reversing the otherwise needed thorough cleansing and anointment with scented oils. As the inclusion of these instructions in the royal hemerology *Inbu bēl arḫi* shows, the Assyrian king seems to have been expected to perform this costly incubation ritual monthly. Other members of the ruling elite may also have secured beneficial dreams throughout the year. It seems likely that the incubation rituals presented in the *Lying Down Menology* were performed by the same people who used Egalkura rituals to have successful audiences with the local or state administrators. Still, the use of various scented oils, some of which seem to have been very expensive, in the ritual suggests that the regular performance referred to in the Babylonian manuscripts of the menology was not possible for the less wealthy members of the society. They could have, however, invested the money if there was a need for a specific good omen about the future.

**Table 1** The purity and mood instructions in the *Lying Down Menology*

	Month	Purification	Oil for anointing	Food to be consumed	Food to be avoided	Good mood	Silence
<b>First half of the year</b>	Nisannu (I)	washing + purification ( <i>limtessi</i> + <i>lītebbib</i> )	<i>kanaktu</i> -oil	beef, mutton, bird meat	garlic, leek, fish, pork	yes	–
	Ayyāru (II)	washing ( <i>limtessi</i> )	<i>lardu</i> -oil(?)	beef, mutton, bird meat	–	yes	–
	Simānu (III)	(no) washing ( <i>lā umtessi/limtessi</i> )	<i>murru</i> -oil	–	–	–	–
	Du'ūzu (IV)	washing ( <i>limtessi</i> ) + smearing oneself ( <i>lītarriš</i> )	juniper oil	–	–	–	–
	Abu (V)	smearing oneself ( <i>lītarriš</i> )	no anointing	–	garlic, leek, pork	–	–
	Elūlu (VI)	washing + purification ( <i>limtessi</i> + <i>lītebbib</i> )	'sweet reed' oil	beef, mutton, bird meat	–	–	–
<b>Second half of the year</b>	Tašrītu (VII)	washing + purification ( <i>limtessi</i> + <i>lītebbib</i> )	cypress oil	beef, mutton, bird meat	garlic, leek, [fish?], pork	yes	–
	Araḥsamnu (VIII)	washing + purification ( <i>limtessi</i> + <i>lītebbib</i> )	myrtle oil	bird meat	–	–	–
	Kislīmu (IX)	washing + purification ( <i>limtessi</i> + <i>lītebbib</i> )	cedar oil	–	–	–	–
	Ṭebētu (X)	rinsing(?) ( <i>lišṭani</i> ) + smearing oneself ( <i>lītarriš</i> )	oil	fish	–	–	yes
	Šabātu (XI)	smearing oneself ( <i>lītarriš</i> )	oil	garlic, leek	–	–	yes
	Addaru (XII)	washing + purification ( <i>limtessi</i> + <i>lītebbib</i> )	'sweet oil'	beef, mutton, bird meat	–	–	–



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