



4.4. ‘If the Thunder Cries Like an Animal’ Horizontal Connections and Vertical Arrangement in EAE 44: 17-20

Version 01

July 2022

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Abstract: This study investigates horizontal and vertical connections in a sequence of four omens from Tablet 44 of the astrological omen series *Enūma Anu Enlil*, “When Anu and Enlil”. The aim is to show the role of graphic, phonological and semantic repetitions as structural devices arranging the omens in a coherent thematic sequence.

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European Research Council
Established by the European Commission

This article results from research conducted under the auspices of the project REPAC “Repetition, Parallelism and Creativity: an Inquiry into the Construction of Meaning in Ancient Mesopotamian Literature and Erudition” (2019-2024, University of Vienna) that has received funding from the European Research Council (ERC) under Horizon 2020 research and innovation programme (Grant agreement no. 803060).

How to cite: Menicatti, L., 2022, “If the Thunder Shouts Like an Animal, Version 01,” Project REPAC (ERC Grant no. 803060), 2019-2024, at <https://doi.org/10.25365/phaidra.352> (accessed day/month/year).

The discipline of astral divination involves the observation of **heavenly bodies and celestial phenomena**, whose conditions, appearance, and movements are interpreted as ominous signs. During the first millennium BCE, the omen texts devoted to this discipline were grouped and collected in a long series, *Enūma Anu Enlil*, “When Anu and Enlil” (EAE). In its standard version, the whole series consists of about 70 chapters, or Tablets, which were grouped into four major sections. These sections were already distinguished in antiquity according to the different celestial phenomena and heavenly bodies which they concerned: lunar phenomena, solar phenomena, meteorological and geological phenomena, planets and fixed star.

Tablet 44 of *Enūma Anu Enlil* belongs to the so-called Adad section of the astrological omen series, which considers storms and other weather phenomena and has been edited by Gehlken 2012: 11-34. Tablet 44 deals with the thunder and starts with a sequence of twenty omens whose protases describe the **roll of thunder** (dIŠKUR GÛ-šu) via simile as resembling the cry of various animals. The apodoses associate this sign with a prediction, whose content largely depends on the symbolic value that is attributed to the animal mentioned in the omen protasis.

The following analysis considers the four final omens of this sequence (i.e., EAE 44: 17-20). I address first the **horizontal connections** between protasis and apodosis in the individual omens, focusing especially on the symbolic values attributed to the animals in the protases. Such symbolic values influence outcome, topic, and setting of the corresponding predictions in the apodoses.

Second, I discuss the **vertical connections** between the omens. I examine the associations of animal names in the protases, and I show that **graphic and phonological repetition** enhances the perception of the sequence as a coherent unit. These connections between the animals’ names in the sequence of protases correspond to predictions that repeat and elaborate on the same theme in the apodoses. In other words, there is an attempt to create **parallelism** between the connections of the animals’ names in the protases’ sequence and the corresponding sequence of apodoses, as the following analysis shows.

The four omens read as follows:

17) DIŠ dIŠKUR GÛ-šu GIM ANŠE.KUR.RA ŠUB KUR BI *ana IGI-šá DU-ak*

šumma dAdad rigimšu kīma **sisē** iddi mātu šī ana panīša illak

“If Adad thunders like a **horse** – that land will make progress”.

18) DIŠ dIŠKUR GÛ-šu GIM ANŠE ŠUB GUR-ri URU GAZ GÁN.BA LAL

šumma dAdad rigimšu kīma **imēri** iddi kurru āli iheppe mahīru imatīti

“If Adad thunders like a **donkey** – the kurru-dry measure of the city will be broken to pieces, business will decline”.

19) DIŠ dIŠKUR GÛ-šu GIM KUR.GI^{mušen} ŠUB SU.IGU⁷ KUR *i-mah-ḥar*

šumma dAdad rigimšu kīma **kurkē** iddi sunqa mātu imahḥar

“If Adad thunders like a **goose** – the land will face famine”.

20) DIŠ dIŠKUR GÛ-šu GIM TU.KUR₄^{mušen} ŠUB KUR SUĤUŠ-šá ana KÛ.BABBAR SUM
šumma^d *Adad rigimšu kīma sukannīni iddi mātu išdāša ana kaspi innaddin*

“If Adad thunders like a **turtledove** – the land, its foundations will be given away for silver”.

Let us begin with the first omen of the sequence (17). The protasis compares the roll of the thunder to the horse’s neigh, and the corresponding apodosis forecasts that “the land will make progress”. The **graphic repetition of the sign KUR** in the protasis and in the apodosis establishes a link between the name of the horse, written logographically ANŠE.KUR.RA (akk. *sisû*), and the prediction concerning “the land”, also written logographically with the sign KUR (akk. *mātu*). The positive value attributed to the horse in Mesopotamia, which is a symbol of wealth and success (De Zorzi 2014: 158-159), influences the **positive outcome** of the prediction, which is the only positive forecast of the entire sequence.

This positive prediction is contrasted by the following one (18), which predicts that “the *kurru*-dry measure of the land will be broken to pieces, business will decline” (*kurru āli iheppe maḥīru*). The **recession** expressed in the two predictions (progress > decline) finds a parallel in the decrease of prestige between the two animals mentioned in the respective protases. In fact, although horse and donkey belong to the same family and relate to the same semantic domain, they symbolise quite different concepts. The horse is an extremely valuable animal and a luxury possession, while the donkey is mostly used for heavy works and thus represents inferiority and subordination (De Zorzi 2014: 159). The apodoses reflect this opposition. They concern the same topic (the land and its business) but predict **opposite outcomes**, namely progress and decline.

The **repetition of the CVC sound group /kur/** in the Akkadian word *kurru* (spelled GUR-ri) also establishes a link between these two consecutive apodoses. This sound is reminiscent of the **sign KUR, Akk. mātu, “the land”**, which occurs in the preceding entry’s apodosis (17) as the subject. This suggests a link between this prediction and the same semantic domain.

Protasis		Apodosis
Animal	Meaning	
ANŠE.KUR.RA, <i>sisû</i> , “horse”	prestige, success	KUR BI ana IGI-šá DU-ak <i>mātu šī ana paniša illak</i>
ANŠE <i>imēru</i> , “donkey”	inferiority, subordination	GUR-ri URU GAZ GÁN.BA LAL <i>kurru āli iheppe maḥīru imaṭṭi</i>

The following two entries’ protases (19-20) build again on the **repetition of the same sign KUR** and on the **phonological repetition of /kur/**. The sign KUR occurs in the name of the goose (KUR.GI₇), while its Akkadian spelling, *kurkû*, repeats the sound group /kur/. Also, the name of the turtledove (TU.KUR₄, *sukannīnu*) in the following entry includes the sign KUR₄, homophonous of KUR.

Birds are generally associated with famine and destruction in Mesopotamian divination (De Zorzi 2014, 166), and the mention of these two types of birds corresponds to **two negative predictions** in the apodoses. Moreover, the apodoses elaborate once more on the **same graphic repetition involving the sign KUR**, which occurs in both the apodoses with the reading *mātu*, “land”. The apodosis in 19 predicts that “the country will experience famine” (*sunqa mātu imahḥar*). The alliteration of sibilant /s/ and nasal /n/, velar /q/ and /k/, and the consonance of /u/ and /a/ between the term *SuNQa*, “famine” (19), and *SuKaNNiNu* “turtledove” (20) establishes a **phonological link** between this apodosis and the following entry’s protasis. The apodosis of this entry (20) predicts that “the foundation of the land will be given away for silver” (*mātu išdāša ana kaspi innaddin*), thus elaborating on the same theme of famine and impoverishment.

Protasis		Apodosis
Animal	Meaning	
KUR.GI₇ , <i>kurkû</i> , “goose”	Famine, Destruction	<i>sunqa mātu imahḥar</i>
TU. KUR₄ , <i>sukannīnu</i> , “turtledove”		<i>mātu išdāša ana kaspi innaddin</i>

Therefore, the apodoses of these four omens in EAE 44: 17-20 build consistently on the **same theme**: they all concern **the land and its wealth**. The **repetition of the same sign KUR and of the same CVC group of sounds /kur/**, both in the protases and in the apodoses, reinforces this thematic coherence. This **graphic and phonological** repetition relates the animal names occurring in the protases, starting from the largest and most prestigious horse (ANŠE.KUR.RA), which relates paradigmatically to the smaller and much less prestigious donkey (ANŠE), to the goose (KUR.GI₇), and finally, to the smallest, the turtledove (TU.KUR₄). These animal names in the protases’ sequence trigger **predictions concerning the land, mātu**, which is also written logographically by the sign KUR.

Also, the **regressive order** in the dimensions of the animals in the protases corresponds to a **sequential arrangement** in the apodoses’ sequence. The sequence starts by predicting progress for the land (17). Then, due to inflation (the *kurru*-dry measure is said to “be broken to pieces”), business declines (18). The decline of the land’s business leads to a famine (19), which ultimately results in the necessity of selling away the land itself for money (20). Thus:

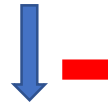
17. *mātu šī ana panīša illak*

“That land will make progress”



18. *kurru āli iḥeppe* → *maḥūru imaṭṭi*

“The *kurru* dry measure of the land will be broken to pieces; (consequently) business will decline”



19. *sunqa mātu imahḥar*

“The land will experience famine”



20. *mātu išdāša ana kaspi innaddin*

“The foundation of the land will be given away for silver”

Other **textual elements** tie the beginning of the sequence to its end. The contrast between *panu*, “front”, in the first apodosis of the sequence (17), and *išdu*, “base”, in the final entry’s apodosis (20) reinforces the **opposition** between the first prediction forecasting “**progress**” and the final one predicting that “**the land will be given away for silver**”. Similarly, the **active** action that the land performs in the first entry’s apodosis (lit. “the land will go towards its front”) contrasts with the **passive** action which the land undergoes in the final entry’s apodosis (“the land will be given away for silver”). These oppositions reinforce the perception of the apodoses’ sequence as a **thematic unit**, framed by the only positive and the most negative predictions.

In conclusion, we can see that the four omens at the end of the “animal sequence” in EAE 44: 17-20 reveal an attempt to create a block of four inter-connected omens. Our textual analysis shows the role of **repetition as a structural device** in the arrangement of this sequence. **Phonological, graphic, and semantic repetitions** create a consistent sequence of omens in which the connections between the animal names in the protases correspond to thematically homogenous predictions in the apodoses.

Selected Bibliography

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