Ilan Peled

Masculinities and Third Gender

The Origins and Nature
of an Institutionalized Gender Otherness
in the Ancient Near East

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Acknowledgments

The phrase "Stand on the shoulders of giants", nowadays used as the motto of the popular search engine "google.scholar", derives from Isaac Newton's famous quote, "If I have seen a little further it is by standing on the shoulders of Giants." This basic truth applies to the present book just the same, since I have benefited greatly from the wisdom of others, who contributed to the fulfillment of this study. My gratitude goes to all of them.

Since this book is a heavily revised version of my PhD dissertation, I must thank my doctorate supervisors, Kathleen Abraham (then of Bar-Ilan University, today at the Katholieke Universiteit Leuven) and Yoram Cohen (Tel-Aviv University). I thank the Bar-Ilan University President's Scholarship for Outstanding Doctorate Students, for generously providing the financial support for my PhD studies at the Department of Hebrew and Semitic Languages between the years 2008 and 2012.

During the years of my doctoral research, and later on, while revising the dissertation into this book, I have discussed many of the complicated issues analyzed here with various scholars, who enriched my world with their wise views and perspectives. Naturally, our opinions were not always in full agreement, and it must be stressed that the present book reflects the views of its author, and not necessarily those of anyone else. I am therefore indebted to the following scholars, whom I regard to be not only distinguished academic figures, but also, may I say, good friends and colleagues: Julia Assante, Yitzhaq Feder, Daniel Fleming, Uri Gabbay, Ann Guinan, Victor Avigdor Hurowitz (ז"ל), Susanne Görke, Stefan Jakob, Jacob Klein, Alwin Kloekhorst, Yuval Levavi, Jürgen Lorenz, Jared Miller, Reinhard Pirngruber, Saana Svärd, Niek Veldhuis and Ilya Yakubovich.

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In a more personal tone, my gratitude goes to my beloved sisters, Nili and Maya, for reminding me occasionally that life exists even beyond the borders of academic research.

Last but not least, no words will suffice for expressing my love, appreciation and respect of my wife, Ortal-Paz. Besides being my most trustworthy consultant, and undoubtedly the kindest and brightest person I ever met, she is, and will ever re-main, my best friend.

Table of Contents

Abbreviations[*]

AbB	Altbabylonische Briefe in Umschrift und Übersetzung
ABL	R. F. Harper, Assyrian and Babylonian Letters, Chicago Illinois, 1892 ff.
ABRT	J. A. Craig, Assyrian and Babylonian Religious Texts, Leipzig, 1895
ACh Adad	Ch. Virolleaud, L'astrologie chaldéenne: Adad
ACh Supp. Sin	Ch. Virolleaud, L'astrologie chaldéenne: Supplément Sin
ADD	C. H. W. Johns, Assyrian Deeds and Documents, Cambridge and London, 1901 ff.
AEA	S. Parpola et al. (eds.), Assyrian-English-Assyrian Dictionary, Helsinki, 2007
AfO	Archiv für Orientforschung
AHw	W. von Soden, Akkadisches Handwörterbuch, Wiesbaden, 1965 ff.
AION	Annali dell'Istituto Universitario Orientale di Napoli
AnOr	Analecta Orientalia
AO	tablets in the collections of the Musée du Louvre
AOAT	Alter Orient und Altes Testament
ARI	A. K. Grayson, Assyrian Royal Inscriptions
ARM	Archives royales de Mari
ARMT	G. Dossin and A. Parrot, Archives royales de Mari, traduction, Paris, 1950 ff.
ASJ	Acta Sumerologica
Assur	field numbers of tablets excavated at Assur
AUCT	M. Sigrist, Andrews University Cuneiform Texts, Berrien Springs Michigan, 1984 ff.
AuOr	Aula Orientalis
Bagh. Mitt.	Baghdader Mitteilungen
BAM	F. Köcher, Die babylonisch-assyrische Medizin in Texten und Untersuchungen
BBR	H. Zimmern, Beiträge zur Kenntnis der babylonischen Religion, Leipzig, 1901

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[*] Abbreviations of literature that appear in the list of bibliography at the end of the book are only given here in an abridged fashion, in accordance with CAD format. Otherwise, literature abbreviations are cited here in full. The abbreviations used in this book follow *The Assyrian Dictionary of the Oriental Institute of the University of Chicago*, volume U/W (2010): vii–xxix, and *The Hittite Dictionary of the Oriental Institute of the University of Chicago*, volumes L–N (1989): xv–xxviii, P (1994): vii–xxvi, Š/1 (2002): vi–viii and Š/2 (2005). The following abbreviations follow *Reallexikon der Assyriologie und Vorderasiatischen Archäologie*, volume 11 (2006–2008): III–XLII: ASJ, CDA, CDLI, CUSAS, DAS, DSC, ePSD, FAOS, HANEM, HThR, HTS, JANER, KTT, LAPO, MZL, NGU, Nisaba, NRVN, OBO, OrNS, PDT, PIHANS, PRU, SCO, SLTNi, SpTU, STA, TCTI, TU, TUAT, UMBS, VA, VS, YNER and ZABR. Other abbreviations are the following: AEA, AION, AuOr, CAMS, CDLJ, CM, ESV, HES, LOT, NIV, SG.

BE   A. T. Clay et al., Babylonian Expedition of the University of
            Pennsylvania, Series A: Cuneiform Texts, Philadelphia Pennsylvania,
            1893
BIN   C. E. Keiser and J. B. Nies, Babylonian Inscriptions in the Collection
            of J. B. Nies, New Haven Connecticut and London, 1920
BiMes   Bibliotheca Mesopotamica
BiOr   Bibliotheca Orientalis
BM   tablets in the collections of the British Museum
BRM   A. T. Clay, Babylonian Records in the Library of J. Pierpont Morgan,
            New york, 1912 ff.
Bu   tablets in the collections of the British Museum
CAD   I. J. Gelb et al. (eds.), The Assyrian Dictionary of the Oriental Insti-
            tute of the University of Chicago, Chicago Illinois, 1956 ff.
CAMS   Corpus of Ancient Mesopotamian Scholarship
CBS   tablets in the collections of the University Museum of the University
            of Pennsylvania, Philadelphia
CDA   J. Black, A. George and N. Postgate, A Concise Dictionary of Akka-
            dian, Wiesbaden, 2000
CDLI   Cuneiform Digital Library Initiative
CDLJ   Cuneiform Digital Library Journal
CHD   H. G. Güterbock, H. A. Hoffner and Th. P. J. van den Hout (eds.), The
            Hittite Dictionary of the Oriental Institute of the University of Chica-
            go, Chicago Illinois, 1980 ff.
CM   Cuneiform Monographs
CoS   W. W. Hallo and K. Lawson Younger (eds.), The Context of Scripture
CST   T. Fish, Catalogue of Sumerian Tablets in the John Rylands Library
CT   Cuneiform Texts from Babylonian Tablets
CTH   E. Laroche, Catalogue des textes Hittites, Paris, 1971
CTN   Cuneiform Texts from Nimrud
CUSAS   Cornell University Studies in Assyriology and Sumerology
DAS   B. Lafont, Documents Administratifs Sumériens, provenant du site de
            Tello et conservés au Musée du Louvre
DCCLT   Digital Corpus of Cuneiform Lexical Texts
Di   tablets in the collections of the Iraq Museum, Baghdad
DP   M. Allotte de la Fuÿe, Documents présargoniques
DSC   Data Sets: Cuneiform Texts. Cybernetica Mesopotamica: Electronic
            Data Processing of Mesopotamian Materials (Malibu, 1979 ff.).
DT   tablets in the collections of the British Museum
ePSD   electronic Pennsylvania Sumerian Dictionary
ESV   English Standard Version
ETCSL   The Electronic Text Corpus of Sumerian Literature
FAOS   Freiburger Altorientalische Studien
GBAO   Göttinger Beiträge zum Alten Orient
HANEM   History of the Ancient Near East Monographs (Padua)

HED	J. Puhvel, Hittite Etymological Dictionary, Berlin and New York, 1984 ff.
HES	Heidelberger Emesal Studien
HLC	G. A. Barton, Haverford Library Collection of Cuneiform Tablets
HSS	G. A. Reisner et al., Harvard Semitic Series, Cambridge Massachusetts, 1912 ff.
HThR	Harvard Theological Review
HTS	tablets from the Hartford Theological Seminary Collection texts now at Yale and Andrews Universities
HUCA	Hebrew Union College Annual
IB	tablets in the collections of the Pontificio Istituto Biblico, Rome
IM	tablets in the collections of the Iraq Museum, Baghdad
IOS	Israel oriental studies
JANER	Journal of Ancient Near Eastern Religions
JAOS	Journal of the American Oriental Society
JBL	Journal of Biblical Literature
JCS	Journal of Cuneiform Studies
JEN	Joint Expedition with the Iraq Museum at Nuzi
JENu	Joint Expedition with the Iraq Museum at Nuzi, unpub.
JEOL	Jaarbericht van het Vooraziatisch-Egyptisch Genootschap "Ex Oriente Lux"
JESHO	Journal of the Economic and Social History of the Orient
JNES	Journal of Near Eastern Studies
K	tablets in the Kouyunjik collection of the British Museum
KAR	E. Ebeling, Keilschrifttexte aus Assur religiösen Inhalts, Leipzig, 1919 ff.
KAV	O. Schroeder, Keilschrifttexte aus Assur verschiedenen Inhalts, Leipzig, 1920
KB	Keilinschriftliche Bibliothek
KBo	H. H. Figulla et al., Keilschrifttexte aus Boghazköi, Leipzig and Berlin, 1916 ff.
KTT	M. Krebernik, Keilschrifttexte, Tuttul (Tall Bi'a), Saarbrücken, 2001
KUB	H. H. Figulla et al., Keilschrifturkunden aus Boghazköi, Berlin, 1921 ff.
LAPO	Littératures anciennes du Proche-Orient
LIH	L. W. King, The Letters and Inscriptions of Hammurabi, London, 1898 ff.
LKA	L. Ebeling, Literarische Keilschrifttexte aus Assur, Berlin, 1953
LKU	A. Falkenstein, Literarische Keilschrifttexte aus Uruk
LOT	Library of Oriental Texts
LTBA	L. Matouš and W. von Soden, Die lexikalischen Tafelserien der Babylonier und Assyrer in den Berliner Museen, Berlin, 1933
MAD	Materials for the Assyrian Dictionary
MARI	Mari, Annales de Recherches Interdisciplinaires
MC	Mesopotamian Civilizations

MCS   Manchester Cuneiform Studies
MEE   Materiali epigrafici di Ebla
MHE   Mesopotamian History and Environment
MLC   tablets in the collections of the J. Pierpont Morgan Library
MRS   Mission de Ras Shamra
MSL   B. Landsberger et al., Materials for the Sumerian Lexicon, Roma,
            1937 ff.
MSL SS   M. Civil, Materials for the Sumerian Lexicon Supplementary Series,
            Roma, 1986
MVN   Materiali per il vocabulario neosumerico
MZL   R. Borger, Mesopotamisches Zeichenlexikon, Münster, 2010
N.A.B.U.   Nouvelles Assyriologiques Brèves et Utilitaires
ND   field numbers of tablets excavated at Nimrud (Kalḫu)
NGU / NSGUA. Falkenstein, Die neusumerischen Gerichtsurkunden, München,
            1956–57
Nik.   M. V. Nikolski, Dokumenty khoziaistvennoĭ otchetnosti … St. Peters-
            burg and Moskau, 1908 ff.
Nisaba   F. d'Agostino et al. Religious Texts Translation Series, Messina, 2002
            ff.
NIV   New International Version
NRVN   M. Çig and H. Kizilyay, Neusumerische Rechts- und Verwaltungs-
            urkunden aus Nippur, 1, Ankara, 1965
OAIC   I. J. Gelb, Old Akkadian Inscriptions in Chicago Natural History Mu-
            seum
OBO   Orbis Biblicus et Orientalis
OECT   S. Langdon et al., Oxford Editions of Cuneiform Texts, Oxford,
            1923 ff.
OIP   Oriental Institute Publications
OLA   Orientalia Lovaniensia analecta
OrNS   Orientalia, Nova Series
PAPS   Proceedings of the American Philosophical Society
PBS   D. W. Myhrman et al., Publications of the Babylonian Section, Uni-
            versity Museum, University of Pennsylvania, Philadelphia Pennsylva-
            nia, 1911 ff.
PDT   M. Çig, H. Kizilyay and A. Salonen, Die Puzris-Dagan-Texte der
            Istanbuler Archäologischen Museen, Helsinki, 1956
PIHANS   Publications de l'Institut Tafelhistorique et archeologique neerlandais
            de Stamboul (Leiden 1956ff.)
PRU   Palais royal d'Ugarit. Mission de Ras Shamra
RA   Revue d'Assyriologie et d'Archéologie Orientale
RIMA   Royal Inscriptions of Mesopotamia Assyrian Periods
RIME   Royal Inscriptions of Mesopotamia Early Periods
RlA   Reallexikon der Assyriologie
Rm   tablets in the collections of the British Museum

RMA   R. C. Thompson, The Reports of the Magicians and Astrologers, Lon-
             don, 1900
RS   field numbers of tablets excavated at Ras Shamra
RTC   F. Thureau-Dangin, Recueil des tablettes chaldéennes, Paris, 1903
SAA   State Archives of Assyria
SAACT   State Archives of Assyria Cuneiform Texts
SAAS   State Archives of Assyria Studies
SBo II   H. Güterbock, Siegel aus Bogazköy 2, AfO Beih. 7
SCO   Studi classici e orientali
SG   F. Ellermeier, Sumerisches Glossar, Nörten-Hardenberg bei Göttin-
             gen, 1979 ff.
SLTNi   S. Kramer, Sumerian Literary Texts from Nippur in the Museum of
             the Ancient Orient at Istanbul
Sm   tablets in the collections of the British Museum
SpTU   H. Hunger and E. von Weiher, Spätbabylonische Texte aus Uruk,
             Berlin, 1976 ff.
STA   E. Chiera, Selected Temple Accounts from Telloh, Yokha and
             Drehem. Cuneiform Tablets in the Library of Princeton University,
             Philadelphia Pennsylvania, 1922
StBoT   Studien zu den Boğazköy-Texten
TCL   Textes cunéiformes du Louvre
TCS   Texts from Cuneiform Sources
TCTI   B. Lafont and F. Yildiz, Tablettes cunéiformes de Tello au Musée
             d'Istanbul: datant de l'époque de la IIIe Dynastie d'Ur, 1–2
TIM   Texts in the Iraq Museum
TSA   H. de Genouillac, Tablettes sumériennes archaïques … Paris, 1909
TSS   R. Jestin, Tablettes sumériennes de Šuruppak … Paris, 1937
TU   F. Thureau-Dangin, Tablettes d'Uruk, Paris, 1922
TUAT   Texte aus der Umwelt des Alten Testaments
TUT   G. A. Reisner, Tempelurkunden aus Telloh, Berlin, 1901
UDT   J. B. Nies, Ur Dynasty Tablets, Leipzig, 1920
UET   C. J. Gadd et al. , Ur Excavations, Texts, London, 1928 ff.
UF   Ugarit-Forschungen
UM   tablets in the collections of the University Museum of the University
             of Pennsylvania, Philadelphia
UMBS   A. T. Clay et al., University (of Pennsylvania), The Museum Publica-
             tions of the Babylonian Section, Philadelphia Pennsylvania, 1912 ff.
VA   Vorderasiatische Abteilung
VAB   A. Jeremias and H. Winckler (eds.), Vorderasiatische Bibliothek,
             Leipzig, 1907 ff.
VAS   F. Delitzsch (ed.) Vorderasiatische Schriftdenkmäler, Leipzig, 1907 ff.
VAT   tablets in the collections of the Staatliche Museen, Berlin
VS   Vorderasiatische Schriftdenkmäler der Staatlichen Museen zu Berlin
VT   Vetus Testamentum
W   field numbers of tablets excavated at Warka

WO   Die Welt des Orients
WZKM   Wiener Zeitschrift für die Kunde des Morgenlandes
YNER   Yale Near Eastern Researches
YOS   Yale Oriental Series, Babylonian Texts
ZA   Zeitschrift für Assyriologie
ZABR   Zeitschrift für altorientalische und biblische Rechtsgeschichte
ZAW   Zeitschrift für die alttestamentliche Wissenschaft
ZDMG   Zeitschrift der Deutschen Morgenländischen Gesellschaft

Notes on Transliterations and Translations

This research is based on a large variety of textual sources, deriving from different ancient languages. Since each one of the fields of research dealing with the different cultures treated in this book has its own conventions, these are combined as explained below. Transliterations and translations of ancient texts are presented in three format styles: literary and similar compositions are mostly presented line-by-line; lexical texts are presented according to columns (see further below); prosaic texts or passages with short lines are presented continuously. With only a few exceptions, the transliteration and translation of a given text share the same format.

Transliterations

In Sumerian/Akkadian texts
LOGOGRAM OF AN UNKNOWN READING; Sumerian; determinatives; *Akkadian*.
No distinction was made in Sumerian transliterations between /g/ and /ĝ/.

In Hittite texts
SUMERIAN; DETERMINATIVES (except for: d, m, f); *AKKADIAN*; *Hittite*.

Where online editions of texts are at hand, they were used in addition to printed ones. Where available, the redear is referred to both. If multiple sources are mentioned for the transliteration, the one from which the transliteration stems is explicitly stated. I did my best to confirm the transliterations through collation or examination of online photographs, where possible. Where no reference is given to the source of the transliteration, it means that it is based on the published copy of the tablet.

Translations

The translations supplied in this book are mostly mine, unless otherwise stated. Naturally, I have benefited in most cases from previous translations and commentaries, which are mentioned as previous literature of the various texts discussed. This is especially true to some of the more complicated Sumerian texts found in this book. It was not my aim (and at times, it must be acknowledged, ability) to offer extensive philological innovations. In most cases I found previous treatments of the texts presented and discussed to be highly satisfactory, and saw no point in reinventing the philological wheel. Original terms in Akkadian/Hittite are given in italics (e.g., *kalû*; *innarawant*), while Sumerian terms are given in simple script (e.g., gala). Proper, geographical and deity names are given in simple script (e.g., Ninurta-tukulti-Aššur, Ḫatti, Ištar). All source texts are presented in transliteration, while their translation is given separately. An effort was made to present coherent and clear translations, and, as a result, the original word order was not always kept. Therefore, line numbers of the original text are marked within the translation, in

order to allow the reader a clear understanding of the translation, while maintaining the translations within a proper English style. An exception to this method is the translation of excerpts from lexical lists. In these texts the translations are supplied horizontally, opposite the terms they refer to, rather than following them, in order to enable the reader an easier reading of the terms and their meaning. In case the lexical entry was comprised of two dissimilar terms, their translations appear as two terms separated by a dividing mark: "/". In multi-column lists that included three lexical terms instead of the usual two, the translations are supplied vertically, below the terms they refer to, rather than opposite them. Translations of several other genres, mostly poetical, are given line-by-line, in accordance with the line order of the original compositions. All translations of biblical verses, unless otherwise stated, follow the NIV.

Sigla

[ ] restored text

‹ › emendation to original text: addition of a sign erronuosly omitted by scribe

« » emendation to original text: deletion of a sign erronuosly written by scribe

[o] a break in the text allowing the restoration of one sign

x   traces of illegible sign

!   collation within published edition

?   uncertain reading or restoration

:   double-wedge marker ("Glossenkeil")

Introduction

Mary Douglas once commented that "Any structure of ideas is vulnerable at its margins."[1] This statement lies at the basis of the present research, which aims at investigating the margins of ancient Mesopotamian society, where the social structure of ideas was most fragile and vulnerable. The topic of gender ambiguity surrounds many questions pertaining to cultural and social life, self-imaging and social behavior, for marginal groups are frequently labeled by society through similes and images of difference and otherness. In this way society defines itself, its characteristics and boundaries.

This book, however, by no means forms a comprehensive work of gender studies. Its methodological framework, which was dictated by the very nature of the written sources analyzed, shaped the book more as a lexicographical study than a pure theoretical work of gender studies.

This book surveys a group of male persons attested in numerous ancient Mesopotamian texts. These persons bore specific titles, and were engaged in cult or palace administration. The contexts of their documentation occasionally depict them as possessing or exhibiting traits that were uncharacteristic of the standard social expectations of men in Mesopotamia. Hence, in modern terminology, they can be viewed as belonging to a class of third gender.

As explained below, the terms that describe these persons were grouped in numerous lexical lists, which supply us with the frame and boundaries of the present research. To a lesser extent, the grouping of these persons is apparent in narrative and literary compositions. These facts shaped to a high degree the methodology and structure of this book.

Two aspects of the research are discussed in this book: masculinity, and third gender. Though the two are naturally related, they are by no means identical; both represent a methodological way to analyze the group of persons this book surveys. This introduction is structured in a way that reflects this: we begin with several clarifications concerning the nature and structure of the book (section 1), continue with the theoretical setting for the study of gender (section 2), followed by the history of research of ancient Near Eastern third gender figures (section 3). We then continue to discuss masculinity from a theoretical point of view (section 4), and conclude with the discussion of masculinity in the ancient Near East (section 5).

1. Aims, Scope, Methodology and Structure of the Book
1.1. Research Aims

The aim of this book is to track a distinct human phenomenon in the history of the ancient Near East: persons who were born males, but under various social and historical circumstances their masculine identity was considered to be ambiguous. On the basis of this, these persons can be classified as belonging to a third gender. The

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[1] Douglas 1966: 122.

questions addressed by this research relate to the manner in which ancient Near Eastern societies treated cases of deviation from the normative social order, in which people were arranged in two distinct gender categories: masculine and feminine. What was the social status of those who belonged to a different class of gender? What attitude did their surrounding community showed them? As bearing clearly defined titles, they comprised distinct groups in society. What was the significance of this fact? What were the differences between the various sub-categories of third gender figures? What did they all have in common, beyond their basic relation to the third gender? No less important is tracking if and how the answers to these questions changed according to historical circumstances; that is, whether historical processes and changes that occurred throughout the ancient Near East caused changes in social attitudes towards this class of people.

The association of these persons to one another is apparent through their attestations in a large number of lexical lists, and less frequently, in narrative and mythological compositions. As such, this phenomenon of men who bore ambiguous gender identity is hardly lucid, and the internal relations between the various members of this class of third gender persons are hardly straightforward. We can point to the phenomenon, and define its boundaries rather clearly. Explaining it, however, is far more difficult. For that end we must explore a large number of texts, tremendously varied, both in terms of genre diversity and chronological and geographical extent. Indeed, the chronological and textual scope of this book is so wide, that the task seems almost impossible to achieve. The matter of scope is elaborated further below.

One of the most influential sociologists in the field of study of masculinity, R. W. Connell, noted that "Sciences of masculinity may be emancipatory or they may be controlling. They may even be both at once."[2] This book, however, is meant to be neither. Rather than persuading the reader that it entails an "emancipatory" or "controlling" truth, it is meant to present a lexical study with limited degree of interpretation. As noted above, this book forms more a lexical study than a purely cultural-historical investigation, and it should probably not be taken to form a comprehensive work of gender studies.

1.2. General Background: "Male and female he created them." Indeed?

It is commonly assumed that throughout human history the perception of the categories of sex and gender was dimorphic and based on the clear-cut division between males and females. This fact is reflected in the biblical account of creation: "So God created mankind in his own image, in the image of God he created them; male and female he created them."[3]

In recent decades, however, it became apparent that this division to two categories of sex and gender is far from being an open-and-shut case. As a result, sociologists and researchers of human sexuality in modern times coined the term "third

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[2] Connell 2005: 7.
[3] *Genesis* 1,27.

gender". In its essence, this term forms an addition of a new element, a "third" one, to the traditional perception of gender identity, and includes a wide array of possible identities, stretching beyond the dimorphic model. This view assumes an endless spectrum of possible gender identities, spanning from the ultra-masculine to the ultra-feminine, regardless of biological sex. The term "third", therefore, is quite misleading in this regard, since "third gender" does not mean to express the essence of a third type of gender identity, but rather, a continuum of possible gender identities. Nonetheless, for the sake of clarity, though admittedly at the expense of terminological accuracy, "third gender" is still the term to be employed throughout this research.

Ancient Near Eastern documents mention more than once various persons whose sexual and gender attribution was ambiguous, allowing us today to classify them as belonging to a category of a third gender. Even though their biological sex was masculine, their behavioral patterns were either feminine, or not as masculine as expected by their surrounding society. These persons bore defined titles, a fact that enables their identification in texts and tracking the numerous and diverge contexts of their attestations.

The most notable of these titles were gala/*kalû*, *assinnu*, *kurgarrû* and lú-sag / *ša rēši*. Other similar titles that were documented less frequently were *kulu'u*, *girseqû*, *tīru*, SAG-UR-SAG, *pilpilû*, *nāš pilaqqi*, *sinnišānu* and *parû*. Their sexual and gender ambiguity was realized in numerous and diverse manners. Occasionally, it bore a clear physiological form, in the shape of castration; sometimes its attributes were external, such as cross-dressing; in other cases, it became apparent through typically feminine behavioral patterns, such as dancing, singing or lamenting. Last but not least, lack of procreativity constituted another form of gender ambiguity, as it contradicted one of the most important gender functionalities of people in the ancient Near East: the siring of offspring. Hence, the common denominator of all these figures appears to have been flawed manliness. Effeminacy was not necessarily the key factor in this case, as some of these figures seem to have been rather masculine. It was sufficient that these persons deviated enough from the customary model of ancient Near Eastern masculinity, in order to be considered as part of this third gender class. As is explained below, the standard model of masculinity in the ancient Near East was exemplified by the idealized sexually-active party in heterosexual relations, having the ability and intention to sire descendants.

It has to be stressed that the present book focuses on gender-ambivalent men, and does not investigate gender-ambivalent women. Attestations of third gender females in Mesopotamian records form a markedly different conceptual case from the figures discussed hereby. We may briefly comment, that phenomena of "masculine females" in Mesopotamia were either related to masculine attributes of the ambiguous goddess Inanna/Ištar or similar feminine deities, or to specific cases where females assumed masculine roles. The alleged masculine traits of Inanna/Ištar derived from her aggressive behavior and her patronage of conflict and warfare,[4] and

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[4] See, among others, Groneberg 1986, Harris 1991: 270, 272, Frymer-Kensky 1992: 29, Reiner 1995: 6 and Assante 2009.

must therefore be disassociated from the common conduct of women in real life. As for cases of women assuming masculine roles, we may consider cases of females adopted as males;[5] however, these were technical mechanisms that resulted from the requirements of Mesopotamian economic systems and did not reflect social attitudes of sex and gender. Another example of a possible feminine third gender was the *nadītu* priestesses. They were forbidden of bearing children, or at least of legally have them,[6] and were thus deprived of one of the most defining feminine traits in Mesopotamia. Though an interesting conceptual parallel to the figures discussed in this book, the *nadītu*s do not belong in the present research of male ambiguous persons.

As noted by Connell and Messerschmidt, "Gender is always relational, and patterns of masculinity are socially defined in contradistinction from some model (whether real or imaginary) of femininity. Perhaps more important, focusing only on the activities of men occludes the practices of women in the construction of gender among men."[7] This being acknowledged, it nonetheless must be regrettably explained that an in-depth investigation of femininity and its construction in the ancient Near East is beyond the possible scope of this book. We will have to assume the following, as a working-hypothesis for our discussion: women in the ancient Near East were by and large subordinated to men within a strict hierarchical patriarchic social setting. To be a woman meant, in certain respects, the opposite of being a man. For the very least, most of the defining attributes of normative masculinity in the ancient Near East, as illustrated below, were uncharacteristic of femininity; occasionally, they actually contrasted it.

1.3. Geographical and Chronological Scope

The geographical and chronological boundaries of the present research were delineated by the historical and cultural developments that occurred in the ancient Near East. These developments led to the emergence of various communal characteristics of culture, language and script in the area, which existed in all of the societies and cultures that inhabited it since the beginning of writing in Sumer, until the death of the Akkadian language and cuneiform script, the cultural marking of the end of ancient Mesopotamia. Hence, the chronological framework of this book starts with the earliest Sumerian records mentioning third gender figures in Mesopotamia, from the third millennium BCE, and ends with their latest testimonies, which stem from Late Babylonian texts of the Hellenistic era. It has to be noted that ancient Egypt is not considered to form an integral part of this cultural milieu, having its own unique cultural and lingual characteristics, and therefore is not included in the discussion.

Admittedly, this chronological scope is problematic. Engulfing three millennia of cultural history is almost a mission impossible. A supposition that social and cultural

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[5] See, among others, Huehnergard 1983, Grosz 1987 and Ben-Barak 1988.

[6] See discussion in Yoffee 2005: 116–121, who demonstrated that in practice certain *nadītu*s indeed bore children, who were adopted by the male relatives of the said *nadītu*s.

[7] Connell and Messerschmidt 2005: 848.

conventions remained static during this long time span would naturally be naïve. Though an effort was made to exclude unwarranted generalizations and oversimplifications as much as possible, these could have not been utterly avoided. It is my hope that these understandable shortcomings do not skew the eventual conclusions reached at the end of this book.

The aim of this book, therefore, is somewhat humble, and not all periods or available sources are represented equally in it. My aim was not to present all possible data pertaining to any of the figures discussed, which is not only an impossible task, but also irrelevant for the discussion of gender identity. First and foremost, the book aims at tracing the origins of these figures, and understanding the background of the formation and consolidation of their tasks and roles. These, by and large, occurred during the Old Babylonian period, and therefore this is the most notable chronological phase represented in the book.

The main characteristics of the figures investigated changed relatively little in the periods to follow, and therefore these are treated in a more abridged manner. Hence, for example, the plentiful first millennium material concerning the *kalû* is discussed only briefly. Naturally, when a clear chronological change can be observed, it is noted and discussed. Cases in point are the differences between the traits of the *kalû* and the *girsequ* before and after the beginning of the Old Babylonian period.

The most notable exception to this is the *ša rēši*, about whom most of the important data stems from first millennium texts. Even then, however, most of the relevant material is Neo-Assyrian, and thus some of the superfluous Neo- or Late Babylonian texts are not discussed. Having said that, in order not to completely overlook the later periods, they are mentioned briefly using select exemplars of typical texts.

1.4. Methodology

At this point, I wish to make several comments on the methodology applied in this book. Though the questions confronted in this research are social in nature, this book forms a historical-philological study. In terms of methodology and content, this fact shaped the book to form a lexical study of semantics more than an overall discussion of pure social history.

Before discussing the exceptional, one must first, from a proper methodological point of view, illustrate a clear picture of the normative. In other words, prior to discussing gender ambiguity in Mesopotamia and the ancient Near East, it is essential to present certain clarifications concerning the gender norms which prevailed. What was considered masculine in the mind of ancient Near Eastern people? Which domains were restricted to any of the genders, and to what extent could gender roles vary and shift? It seems hardly possible to even begin discussing male gender ambiguity, as long as we do not illustrate clearly, beforehand, the outline of unambiguous Mesopotamian masculinity.

So, to put it in simple words: what did it take to be a man in ancient Mesopotamia? This question is confronted in detail below. For this end, a theoretical (mostly

sociological) framework of the research of human gender identity and masculinity is utilized. At its focus, we employ the theoretical concept of "hegemonic masculinity", developed mostly by sociologist R.W. Connell. This, however, poses certain methodological obstacles: to what extent is it legitimate to apply theoretical sociological models of interpretation in an Assyriological study? The meeting place of social sciences, gender studies and the research of ancient history is notoriously complicated. Connell himself stressed more than once that his theoretical framework relates to, and should be applied for, modern Western societies. Is it at all justified to apply them, not to say, force them, on ancient societies that surely differed widely from our own? Should not cultural relativity wave a red flag for us? Are we not falling into the hazardous trap of anachronism, and, as a result, distorted analyses? Are we forcing irrelevant theories upon the texts? Though caution is surely advised here, we should not throw the baby out with the bath water. I have therefore tried to assess carefully which parts of modern theories of sexuality, gender and masculinity can be utilized successfully in the discussion of ancient Mesopotamian societies. The task of sorting out the relevant, and cautiously avoiding the irrelevant, is surely complicated; however, once performed successfully, it is bound to put us on the right track for a clearer understanding of ancient societies.

Another methodological rationale applied in this book is that, as the product of a philological study, it must have as its starting point the textual evidence. Only at a secondary stage, this evidence should be evaluated in light of theoretical perspectives. Hence, though this book opens in its introduction with the theoretical setting of the research, its bulk material is by and large a lexical survey of written sources, with relatively minimal interpretation. The concluding section includes the interpretation of the evidence, as presented in the five chapters of the book.

On the whole, my view of the topics discussed in this book combines both analytic and somewhat holistic approaches. I attempt, at the first stage, to understand each figure through the analysis of its components. At a second stage, however, I assess the overall meaning, and this is performed through a holistic perspective, that involves homogeny and coherency. For example, the gala/*kalû* is first introduced according to the different chronological periods of his documentation; later on this figure is discussed thematically, all texts, genres and periods considered. This approach can admittedly be questioned. Is this being over-simplistic, trying to over-homogenize what alternatively should be understood as a much more complex process across space and time? For example, was the gala/*kalû* the very same figure from the mid-third millennium all the way down to late first millennium? To give a different example, had the lú-sag / *ša rēši* the same attributes in Babylonia as he had in Assyria, or Ḫatti, for that matter?

The answer to these questions is probably negative. But at least in some of the cases, the underlying features of these figures remained the same through a vast time span and cultural diversity. For this reason, each case should be analyzed separately. It seems to me naïve to assume that nothing at all connected the third-millennium gala, the performer of funerary laments, with the first millennium *kalû*, the performer of various cultic emesal lamentations. Whether the lú-sag / *ša rēši* was castrated in the Old Babylonian period the way he was in Ḫatti, the Middle Assyrian

kingdom, or at least the Neo-Assyrian Empire, is harder to answer with any certainty. It is very much a matter of methodological viewpoint that dictates how one decides to answer these questions.

This leads me to further clarification of methodological perspective: my approach to the texts can, and probably should, be regarded as rather minimalistic. For the most part, I usually remain relatively close to the texts, and take them on face value, no more, no less. Since the Mesopotamians did not usually demonstrate a high degree of reflexivity in their texts, more often than not we are left in the dark with regard to subtext and hidden meanings.

An exception to this approach is my view of narrative texts and proverbs. I assume that all these sources had a subtext, an underlying message they meant to convey. Naturally, these morals were anything but straightforward, and, as a result, are always open for speculation and ever remain conjectural. Even in these cases, however, I tried my best to restrain my speculations, and justify them the best I could. An utter avoidance of any kind of interpretation of these texts, it seems to me, would indeed be rather like throwing the baby out with the bath water, and ignoring valuable data that can advance our research. This, however, must be done within a clear methodological frame of interpretation, in order not to distort, and subsequently, misuse, the evidence.

Finally, this research stems by and large from a qualitative rather than a quantitative point of view. One aspect of this book, however, does express an opposite view: the subdivision of third gender figures to primary and secondary ones. This division is based on a quantitative factor, rather than on a qualitative one: the number of textual attestations, rather than their nature. True, one significant attestation can at times be more illuminating and meaningful than numerous laconic ones. It does seem, however, that a real correlation exists between the number of textual attestations of a given figure, and the significance that figure had in terms of its roles, status and functionalities.

1.5. Structure

The structure of this book, and the rationales that shaped it, should be clarified. We begin, in this introduction, with elaborating on the theoretical setting, and discuss the topics of masculine gender identity, and gender ambiguity. The pertinent (mostly textual) evidence is presented in the five chapters of the book, and its implications are subsequently discussed in the concluding section of the book, in light of the theoretical considerations presented in the introduction. This final section hopefully forms the contribution of this book to the realm of gender studies. In a sense, then, the structure of this book is somewhat circular: theory is first introduced, then the textual evidence is presented, and finally, an analysis of the evidence is offered, according to theoretical parameters.

The structure of this book and the order of discussions incorporated within it stem from its methodological focal point: a systematic investigation of several figures that varied in many respects from one another. The basic common denominator of all these figures was their classification as members of a third gender, as apparent

in numerous texts. The presentation of the data concerning each figure was divided on the basis of the nature and abundance of the relevant sources.

The ideological basis for the existence of many third gender figures and the background of their cultic performance is strongly alluded to in the myth of *Inanna/Ištar's Descent to the Netherworld*. Many of the key figures of this book are present there: gala, *kulu'u*, *assinnu*, *kurgarrû*, and, of course, Inanna/Ištar. To this myth one may add *The Epic of Erra*, and the famous quote about Ištar changing the sex of the *assinnu*s, "in order to make people reverend". Other narrative episodes seem to concur with the general impression of the nature of these figures. For this reason, the chapter dealing with narrative, hymnic and mythological sources is the one opening the book, where these compositions are analyzed as a unified corpus.

The following chapters are oriented differently, since each of them surveys specific figures. These figures are divided to primary ones and secondary ones, strictly on the basis of the scope of evidence. The primary figures, about which the most is known, are presented first: gala/*kalû*, *assinnu* and *kurgarrû*, and *ša rēši*. The gala/*kalû* was a cultic performer documented in the earliest records of all figures, which is the reason he is presented first, in Chapter 2. The *assinnu* and *kurgarrû* were similar to him in the sense that they too were cultic personnel, and are therefore presented subsequently. These two figures were frequently attested in mutual contexts and shared numerous similarities, which made it impossible to treat them separately. Hence, they are discussed together in Chapter 3. The last of the primary figures is the lú-sag / *ša rēši*, who in all likelihood was a palace eunuch. His characteristics were markedly different from those of the previous figures, and he is therefore presented in the last chapter dealing with primary figures, Chapter 4.

As to the secondary figures, of whom less is known, occasionally, the only reasons for considering them as belonging to the third gender were their attestations in shared semantic contexts with some of the primary figures. Once the semantic connection was realized, these secondary figures were explored further, in order to understand their nature and evaluate their relation to the third gender, which was not always clear. Since the evidence concerning these figures is scant, they are treated together in Chapter 5, the concluding chapter of the book. The internal order of discussions within this chapter is based on the affinities between these secondary figures and the primary ones, and on the similarities among themselves. Therefore, the *girsequ* and *tīru*, who resemble the *ša rēši*, are discussed first; the SAG-UR-SAG and *pilpilû*, who resemble the *assinnu*, are discussed thereafter; the *sinnišānu* and *nāš pilaqqi*, who probably did not denote specific figures, are discussed later; and the *parû*, of whom almost nothing is known, is the last.

Several discussions appear within each chapter, which aim at illuminating the main attributes of the figures discussed, and at clarifying their relation to the third gender. In addition, several discussions of general topics that relate to the third gender are integrated where relevant. Therefore, the connection between third gender figures and cultic worship of Inanna/Ištar is discussed under the framework of the survey of narrative and mythological compositions; the issues of homosexuality and male prostitution are mentioned within the discussion of the sexually-passive *assinnu*; and the topic of eunuchs and castration is investigated in relation to the dis-

cussion of the castrated *ša rēši*. The evidence from extra-Mesopotamian sources, such as Hittite and West Semitic ones (the Hebrew Bible and Ugaritic), is integrated as comparative data to the Mesopotamian material where relevant.

1.6. General Notes

Before moving on to present the theoretical background, I wish to conclude this section of the introduction with a few general notes and clarifications. I do not take for granted that the readers of this book possess any specific previous knowledge pertaining to the topics hereby discussed. I wish this book to be accessible for the expert and the non-specialist alike. This approach naturally has its own flaws, and I therefore beg the patience of the more skilled and knowledgeable readers, who may occasionally find some of the introductory paragraphs incorporated in this book superfluous. At the same time, I am well aware of the fact that experts of sexuality and gender studies might find the theoretical framework of this book insufficient. This book is essentially the result of a philological study, and while I made every possible effort to cover its theoretical aspects in the most profound manner, it should be made clear on the start, that this is hardly the main aim of the book.

1.6.1. Terminological Precision

Several terms used in this book are the outcome of compromise. As such, they are unfortunately somewhat inaccurate, but used nonetheless for the sake of simplification or clarity. The very term "third gender", as noted above, is in itself somewhat imprecise, since gender ambiguity is best explained as one's distance from the dominant model of ideal gender identity along a spectrum of possible identities, rather than an opposition produced by merely two possible gender identities, masculine and feminine. As a general title, however, with no better alternative, "third gender" is still used throughout this book.

I further wish to clarify my use of potentially problematic terms, such as "figures" and "homosexual" along the book. Certain critics objected to my use of the term "figures" with relation to the persons studied in this book, since, in these critics' mind, this term might depict these persons as lacking a sense of humanity. I therefore wish to make it clear, that no such intention was meant. The term "figures" is actually quite widespread in scholarly literature, and in studies similar to mine, and I by no means coined it myself. We must also bear in mind, that, by and large, these are not specific men we know by name, but in most cases anonymous figures, documented in the texts as general terms rather than as specific persons.

As to the controversial terms "homosexual" and "homosexuality", it must be understood that, when used in this book, and applied to ancient Near Eastern societies, they obviously bear fundamentally different significance than when applied to modern societies. Essentially, the social array of conventions, thoughts and emotions that prevails today towards same-sex relations is markedly different than those that prevailed among past human societies. Hence, and in order to avoid any unwarranted anachronism as much as possible, the use of these terms in this book is only

meant to refer to same-sex relations, men who performed sexual intercourse with other men, disregarding any social, cultural or judgmental significance these terms otherwise may possess. Ultimately, this is the basic meaning of the term, whether properly used, or misused.[8]

1.6.2. A Few Personal Notes

Surely, the theoretical model chosen in this book as the basic explanatory paradigm, is but one possible type of interpretation. Though I take it to be the most efficient and productive way to analyze the phenomenon discussed in this book, others surely exist. Some alternatives are actually mentioned in this introduction. The reader should not be obliged to accept this methodological perspective as exclusively authoritative. Nonetheless, the lexicographical study that comprises most of this book can be useful for anyone interested in this topic, regardless of theory and methodology.

On a different matter, it was once commented that "The field of gender research has mainly addressed questions about women and has mainly been developed by women... Revealing the dynamics of gender, however, also makes masculinity visible and problematizes the position of men."[9] Indeed, more often than not, gender studies became synonymous with women's studies. There are, however, two genders. And within each of the genders, a multiple array of possible identities. Recent years have seen a growing interest not only in gender studies, but also in the masculine side of the equation. One of the hopeful outcomes of this research is exactly this: to shed some light on what has become an unequal scholarly situation. The exaggerated compensation for past androcentric scholarly tendencies resulted in an unequal emphasis on women in gender studies. If we call for equality, the same should be applied in scholarly research just as well. Ironically, men are still rather understudied in the frame of gender studies.

Finally, it is by no means my intention to be overly judgmental towards my fellow scholars, nor do I consider all my views and interpretations to be necessarily better than those of anyone else. If my presentation of previous literature or different scholarly opinions seems at times tedious, it is only because of my wish to leave no loose ends, and allow the readers a thorough acquaintance with the sources, both primary and secondary. The readers may then judge the evidence and the various differing scholarly views, including my own, for themselves. Many of the issues treated in this book hardly form a solid historical truth, and their interpretation is frequently a matter of conjecture rather than a fact. I have tried my very best to substantiate the views hereby expressed, or at least to explain my reasoning when no clear-cut evidence supports them. Admittedly, however, interpreting many of the topics addressed in this book eventually remains in the eye of the beholder.

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[8] For a brief discussion of these matters, see Nissinen 2010.
[9] Connell, Hearn and Kimmel 2005: 1.

2. Third Gender: Ambiguous Masculinity and Social Conformity

We now turn to elaborate on several theoretical aspects of this research, beginning with the very definition of gender. For sure, and somewhat frustratingly, no one agreed-upon definition of gender exists. Stets and Burke defined gender identity as "the degree to which persons see themselves as masculine or feminine given what it means to be a man or woman in society."[10] Connell suggested the following: "Gender is a way in which social practice is ordered. In gender processes, the everyday conduct of life is organized in relation to a reproductive arena, defined by the bodily structures and processes of human reproduction. This arena includes sexual arousal and intercourse, childbirth and infant care, bodily sex difference and similarity … The gender structuring of practice need have nothing biologically to do with reproduction. The link with the reproductive arena is social."[11]

Holter stressed the importance of the distinction between gender and patriarchy. The former, according to this view, reflects a system of meaning, while the latter reflects a structure of power. Gender meanings are seen in this light as subjective, while patriarchal authority is viewed as objective, oppressive relations that strive to weaken women's position in relation to men's. Holter claimed, however, that variations within the genders, not only between them, show the incorrectness of the assumption that gender hierarchy and patriarchal inequality are basically the same, and that gender is all about power relations.[12]

Connell further stressed the androcentric factor in defining gender: "The state … is a masculine institution … state organizational practices are structured in relation to the reproductive arena. The overwhelming majority of top office-holders are men because there is a gender configuration of recruitment and promotion, a gender configuration of the internal division of labour and systems of control, a gender configuration of policemaking, practical routines, and ways of mobilizing pleasure and consent."[13]

Rejecting other models of interpreting gender (see below), Connell claimed that the most fruitful methodological approach is to view gender and masculinity as a system of social relations. Bodily differences are best understood, according to this view, as a point of reference in gender practices, rather than as a predetermined factor created by gender patterns. Masculine identities, according to Connell, are varied, hierarchical, internally complex and collective no less than individual; they are the product of social construction process, and change through history.[14]

In a society based on structural inequality between men and women, where men have much better access to social and economic resources, men are liable to foster the perpetuation of the situation, while women are likely to opt for change. The sustaining of the situation involves more often than not violence and violent

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[10] Stets and Burke 2000: 997.
[11] Connell 2005: 71, 73.
[12] Holter 2005: 21–22. This approach is contrasted to, for example, Kimmel's (2000: 53, 190, 262).
[13] Connell 2005: 73.
[14] Connell 2005.

means.[15] The third gender, as analyzed in this book, can be viewed as an important mechanism, invented and utilized by men of hegemonic masculinity, for this end. This last point is discussed in further detail below.

2.1. Theoretical Perspectives of Third Gender

Scholarly research of the categories of human sexuality and gender identity was influenced by two main factors. The first is the very fact that living creatures are almost always divided to two biological sexes, and so is the human species.[16] The second factor is the acknowledgment that the continuity of human existence depends on reproduction, which is based on heterosexual relations between members of the two, opposing sexes. Thus, attitudes of fertility, reproduction and race continuity, rooted in Darwinian views, led to the perpetuation of the dimorphic partition of human sexuality. This partition is reflected in modern Western social structure, and is perpetuated, among others, in the formation and conduct of social institutions, the appointing of people to public positions and the division of labor. Certain posts and professions are defined feminine, while others, masculine; men and women perform different roles within the family and are separated in the division of personal and social spheres of responsibility.

It should be clarified that the term "third gender" does not refer literally to a third category of gender, but rather to the general notion encompassing any gender identity that cannot be satisfactorily defined under the customary model of two genders.[17] In other words, any person whose gender identity cannot be clearly defined as strictly "masculine" or strictly "feminine", whose gender identity is comprised of a mixture of both genders, or lacks either, can be classified as a third gender person. The definitions, of course, are based on the nature of concepts regarded by a given society as masculine, feminine, belonging to both genders or genderless. Since social conventions vary from one social group to another, these gender definitions vary as well.

Even though a theoretical discussion of the concepts of "sex" and "gender" is beyond the scope of this book, a brief comment is due concerning the complicated relation between them. Traditionally, scholars viewed the relation between sex and gender as reflecting a set of real and symbolic social conventions regarding functions and roles ascribed to and matching either of the two biological sexes.[18] However, scholars sometimes challenge this view. For example, Butler claimed that gender constructs sex, because concepts of gender are used in every culture in order to illustrate and define concepts of sex.[19] We can therefore conclude that even though social conventions of gender identity are based on the biological facts of sexual differences between males and females, these conventions are used within

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[15] Connell 2005: 82–84.

[16] Though extremely rare cases of hermaphroditism do exist; see for example Avise 2011.

[17] See Herdt 1994: 19–20.

[18] See Boyarin 1998: 117, who questioned this view.

[19] Butler 1990: 7.

each society in order to shape views concerning sexual concepts.

More often than not, the breaking of gender boundaries is found to be related to practices of religion and cult. Roscoe referred to the reasons behind this phenomenon using Eliade's and Jung's theories of the figure of the androgyne as "the projection of a longing for a return to primordial unity, for escape from the unbearable tension of the opposites, for a mode of humanity no longer divided into halves".[20] Roscoe further adopted Mary Douglas's approach, by stating that "The violation of social boundaries, especially those as fundamental to daily life as male and female, tears the very fabric of reality for those who witness it."[21] He suggested that pagans, freed from the dialectic dualism of good versus evil as established by Christianity, accepted "instances of the sacred breaking through to the level of the mundane", and viewed individuals such as the *galli* (see below) as "neither male nor female, occupied simultaneously social and supernatural planes and both poles of the moral continuum". Boyarin expressed similar views, tracing the roots of the dimorphic separation of human sex and gender categories to early Judaism and Christianity.[22]

By this we must realize that the cultural schemes and sets of thought typical of modern Western society are fundamentally different from those that prevailed among the early cultures investigated in this book. Most importantly, the dimorphic categorizations that characterize our world of thought were not necessarily applied and institutionalized in the ancient Near East in the same way.

2.2. Third gender: History of Research

One of the first scholars to discuss the concepts of human sexuality and gender was the psychoanalyst Stoller, who demonstrated that biological sexual identity and psychological gender identity were not similar. Stoller examined issues such as biological sex, biological and psychological disorders, and sexual and gender identity. One of his most significant conclusions was that gender identity is shaped as a result of acquired psychological influences, which, occasionally, can completely override the biological factor of sex.[23] A decade later, one of the most influential researches in the field was published by Kessler and McKenna, where the two claimed that the biological differentiation between the sexual categories "male" and "female" is culturally constructed, and does not reflect a universal truth. Therefore, according to them, this differentiation cannot be used as a basis upon which a system of gender classification can be established.[24] Later on, this approach was echoed in the views of more recent scholars, such as sociologist Giddens, who asserted that the term "sex" refers to physical differences between males and females, while "gender" relates to psychological, social and cultural differences between men and women. Similarly as his predecessors, Giddens claimed that gender identity is cul-

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[20] Roscoe (1996: 203) referred in this quote to Eliade 1965: 78–124.
[21] Roscoe 1996: 204.
[22] Boyarin 1998.
[23] Stoller 1968.
[24] Kessler and McKenna 1978: 29–30.

turally constructed and forms an array of acquired behavioral patterns.[25]

On the basis of the methodological separation between biological sex and gender identity, scholars realized that more than two genders – male and female – may exist in human thought. Among the first scholars to examine issues pertaining to the question of the third gender were Foucault and Laqueur. Both suggested that, in ancient times, social conventions concerning the differences between men and women were markedly different than contemporary conventions that prevail among modern Western society.[26] The claim they and others raised was that the allegedly "natural" dimorphic perception was created in the spirit of the Christian religious ethics,[27] and was later on fixated in social consensus under the influence of Darwinian evolutionist or Freudian psychosexual approaches. Psychologists, Sociologists and Anthropologists, such as Durkheim, Mauss, Malinowski, Mead, van Gennep and Lévi-Strauss, contributed to the perpetuation of this approach through the theories they developed during the first half of the twentieth century. Despite the great variety of their methodological perspectives, they all analyzed human psyche and societal conduct as derived from binary psychological schemes or dimorphic sociological categories.[28] However, as was previously noted, in recent decades, there is growing awareness of the need to extend this narrow, paradigmatic framework, and a growing number of scholars consider human gender identity to be more complicated than a structure of only two binary categories.[29]

2.3. Historical and Anthropological Case-Studies

Various case-studies from the fields of history and anthropology form a valuable source for comparison in order to clarify many issues with which the present research deals. These studies examined the topics of sexual liminality and gender transformation, and occasionally demonstrated that third gender expressions among various societies were associated with cult and the world of the supernatural. Third gender persons acted as shamans or priests whose extraordinary traits granted them a distinct social status, as persons capable of mediating between the earthly and spiritual worlds.

One of the best known historical examples in this regard is the first-millennium Anatolian priests of Cybele and Attis, the *galli*. The *galli*-priests were active in Phrygian Anatolia, worshiping the mother-goddess Cybele and her dead lover, Attis. They believed that Attis performed self-castration and died subsequently. As a ceremonial act of devotion, then, the *galli* themselves performed self-castration. Other traits characterizing them were lamentations of Attis, conducting of ceremonial

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[25] Giddens 1997: 91, 111.

[26] Foucault 1978, Laqueur 1990.

[27] See, in this regard, also Boyarin 1998, including previous literature.

[28] See Herdt 1994: 33–34, 40–41.

[29] For a brief survey of some of these studies, see Herdt 1994: 44–45. For more recent theoretical discussions of issues pertaining to the third gender, see Butler 1990, 1993, 2004: 57–74, Trumbach 1998, Talwar 1999, Sell 2001a, 2001b, Roughgarden 2004 and Rubin 2011. See further various articles in Reis 2009 (ed.).

processions, and ecstatic behavior involving self-mutilation and bloodletting.[30] In Roman texts the *galli* are described as wearing feminine clothes, makeup and an effeminate hairstyle, and engaged in homosexual intercourse.[31] As a result, the Roman historians defined the *galli* as *medium genus*, "middle gender", or *tertium sexus*, "third sex".[32]

The anthropological field of research supplies several relevant case-studies, such as the male members of the *hijra* sect in North India. These men worship the mother-goddess Bahucharā Mātā, and their cult is rooted in millennia-old traditions. Some of them serve as temple attendants, and their activity involves mostly the participation in marriage or birth rites, where the *hijra* bestow their goddess's fertility blessing. During these ceremonies they dance, sing and play music. They are attributed supernatural powers, such as divination and the ability to cast curses, and their livelihood is found in institutionalized begging and in prostitution. In order to become a *hijra* the initiate undergoes castration by a specialist, while he chants the name of his patron goddess. Thus, he loses his manliness and passion, and is "reborn" as a saint who contains within himself the goddess's might and is able to confer her blessing. The *hijra* do not consider themselves as "becoming women" as the result of their castration, but rather as transforming into a completely sexless figure.[33]

Another example are the *berdache* (nowadays usually termed "Two-spirit"), Native American males who are perceived as possessing two souls, masculine and feminine, caged within one body. These men are regarded by their community with a combination of respect and awe, as a result of their ascribed superhuman capabilities to grant blessings and cast curses. The *berdache* usually wear attire that is both masculine and feminine, engage in homosexual relations and practice occupations considered to be feminine.[34]

We can consider in the same context the *bissu* of Indonesia, who are characterized by similar attributes as the previous examples. These males are still active today, though their tradition is centuries old. They perform dances and singing in public, while wearing women's attire and make-up and using typical knives through their performance, with which they caused self-inflict wounds; their public performances shed terror among their spectators. The *bissu* are ascribed shamanistic supernatural powers, and in order to join their cult one must be castrated. Thanks to their asexuality, they were chosen as guardians of kings' concubines in ancient times, and their ascribed shamanistic capabilities granted them prestigious ranks as royal advisors. Subsequently, they rose to power and accumulated great wealth in

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[30] See Taylor 2008: 173.

[31] See Roscoe 1996: 196, 205 and Taylor 2008: 173.

[32] For discussions of the *galli*-priests, see Sanders 1972, Vermaseren 1977, Roscoe 1996: 195–206 and 1997: 68–69, 71–73, Roller 1998 and 1999, Lightfoot 2002 and Hales 2002. Their practice of self-emasculation was described by Lucian in his composition *De Dea Syria*, 4: 337–411, §§ 15, 22, 27, 43 and esp. 50–53.

[33] On the *hijra*, see Nanda 1990 and 1994.

[34] On the *berdache*, see Hoebel 1949: 459, Forgey 1975 (especially pp. 9–14), Roscoe 1991, 1994, 1998 and Goulet 1996 (including previous literature).

ancient times.[35] The reason for the castration of the *bissu* is their belief that gods and spirits are sexless. Therefore, the *bissu* perceive themselves as a neutral force that harmonizes the world, which otherwise exists in a constant tension between two competing powers, the masculine and feminine. It is not clear whether all *bissu* are indeed castrates, but one of their most fundamental obligations is the avoidance of sexual intercourse. In practice however they are occasionally found to be engaged in homosexual relations.[36]

These are merely a few historical and anthropological examples where numerous more could have been presented. However, the above examples are enough in order to illustrate several parallel attributes common to all. Roscoe analyzed three examples of mother-goddess cults, which according to him share many similarities: Mesopotamian (gala, *kurgarrû* and *assinnu*), Phrygian-period Anatolian (*galli*) and Indian (*hijra*). According to Roscoe's methodological approach, cultural phenomena should be understood as social constructions. The historical and anthropological examples studied by Roscoe enabled him to assess the wide phenomenon of gender transgression among humans. His conclusions were that all these examples shared common denominators, such as devotion to a goddess, gender transgression and traits of homosexuality, ecstatic ritual behavior, and castration, either symbolic or factual. Usually they resided in, or were at least connected with temples and were involved in the local administration of cult and economy.[37] As the present research will demonstrate, much of these conclusions can be applicable to Mesopotamian third gender figures as well.

3. Male Third Gender Figures in the Ancient Near East: History of Research

General studies discussing sexuality and gender throughout the history of Mesopotamia are not uncommon. These general surveys, however, never examined the topic of the third gender in depth, and frequently completely ignored it. Among the noteworthy and recent of these studies we can mention the following: Frymer-Kensky 1989, Bottéro 1992: 185–198, Leick 1994, Asher-Greve 1997, Wold 1998, Haas 1999, Bahrani 2000, 2001, Cooper 2002, 2006b, Ackerman 2005, Budin 2008, Assante 2009, Westenholz 2009 and Asher-Greve and Westenholz 2013.

Even though several researches were conducted in the past, which surveyed some of the figures investigated in the present book, none of them dealt with the topic of the third gender as a whole. None offered a thorough survey of all relevant periods, textual genres and possible sources of information, and many of the figures discussed in this book were never systematically studied.

Gelb was one of the first scholars to give a brief account of the gala and the

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[35] This situation changed in 1945, when the nation-state of Indonesia was founded, and modern government took over the previous kings' authority; see Umar 2008: 3.
[36] On the *bissu*, see Andaya 2000, Davies 2007 and Umar 2008.
[37] Roscoe 1996: 219–230.

girseqû;[38] however, his study was highly limited, and focused mostly on the Ur III evidence. Lambert examined the *assinnu*, *kurgarrû* and *girseqû* from the point of view of the institution of prostitution in Mesopotamia;[39] however, his investigation was concise and covered a relatively small number of sources. Lambert focused on the possibility that these persons were castrates, and not on their essence and social status. Maul's discussion, that appeared in the same collection of essays, addressed specifically the *assinnu* and the *kurgarrû*;[40] however, this discussion was also brief, and based on a limited corpus of texts, mostly mythological and cultic. Maul presented valuable ethnographic parallels, quoting Eliade's investigations of shamans who mediated between the earthly and celestial spheres, the materialistic and the spiritual; however, no new interpretation was offered in this regard. Shortly thereafter, Henshaw published a comprehensive study in which he surveyed various groups of officials who were cultic personnel from Mesopotamia and Ugarit or mentioned in the Hebrew Bible.[41] This important study encompassed several of the figures studied in the present research, but, as before, the discussions incorporated in it were brief, and limited to aspects of cultic performance of the figures discussed. As such, Henshaw's study ignored for the most part the social and gender questions that form the basis for the present research, such as society's attitude towards third gender figures and the social circumstances of their existence. Later, a short paper by George discussed the *tīru*, and suggested that he was a sexually ambivalent person.[42]

In 2002, the proceedings of the 47th RAI, titled *Sex and Gender in the Ancient Near East*, were published by Parpola and Whiting. This collection of essays formed a milestone in the study of these topics, with several of its papers dealing with issues pertaining to the third gender. The most notable of these was McCaffrey's paper, which addressed sexual ambiguity as reflected in Mesopotamian archaeological and iconographic evidence.[43] McCaffrey further offered an extensive theoretical discussion, based on ethnographic examples. However, her paper hardly referred to textual sources, and her division of Mesopotamian genders to four (masculine males, feminine females, feminine males and masculine females) continued to rely on the traditional dimorphic paradigm to which she objected. The model McCaffrey offered simply extended the already existing view, rather than offering an alternative one.

Several relatively recent papers dealt with a number of the figures presently discussed, and analyzed them in relation to question of gender. Cooper examined the gala/*kalû* and his gender image against the background of lamentations,[44] while Gabbay discussed this figure and offered a new Semitic etymology for the term,

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[38] Gelb 1975.

[39] Lambert 1992.

[40] Maul 1992.

[41] Henshaw 1994.

[42] George 1997.

[43] McCaffrey 2002. Later on, McCaffrey (2008) challenged the traditional view that the people buried in the royal cemetery of Ur were male rulers, and suggested alternatively that they actually were female rulers. These suggestions, however, were based on non-compelling reinterpretations of the archaeological data, and insufficient philological argumentations.

[44] Cooper 2006a.

which relates it to the third gender.[45] Since this paper focused on etymology, the discussion of the ambiguous attributes of the gala/*kalû* was only brief. Teppo surveyed the *assinnu*, *kurgarrû* and *kulu'u*, focusing on their cultic performance as the "devotees of Ištar".[46] This goddess was perceived as responsible for love and erotic passion, and was characterized by bisexual traits. Therefore, the participation of the figures examined by Teppo in Ištar's cult was undoubtedly highly significant. However, this was merely one aspect of their social status, and Teppo's profound article did not relate to other relevant issues, such as castration and the status of eunuchs, attitudes towards homosexuality, and male prostitution, all of which are essential for understanding the third gender. Recently, Gadotti reviewed the attestations of the nar and the gala in Sumerian literary sources.[47] This study was of limited nature, since it was restricted to Sumerian texts, and, within the Sumerian corpus, examined only literary compositions. In the same volume, Shehata investigated the gala/*kalû*, focusing on the Old Babylonian evidence.[48] This research as well was of a limited scope. Far more comprehensive investigations of the gala/*kalû* were recently published by Shehata, as part of her research of music and musicians in Old Babylonian Mesopotamia,[49] and Löhnert.[50] The evidence discussed by Shehata and Löhnert, however, derives by and large from the Old Babylonian period, and their important studies touch upon the questions of gender identity only briefly. Similarly, Gabbay's recent research of emesal literature touched upon the gender identity of the gala/*kalû* in an abbreviated manner.[51]

We can thus see that relatively ample secondary literature treats the topics of sex and gender in the ancient Near East and Mesopotamia. However, the third gender remained a domain mostly unexplored until now.

4. The Formation of Masculinity (and Femininity): Theoretical Perspectives

4.1. "Act like Men"

Anthropologist David Gilmore concluded his monumental survey of masculinities among various human ethnicities with the following words: "So long as there are battles to be fought, wars to be won, heights to be scaled, hard work to be done, some of us will have to "act like men.""[52]

Thus, in a nutshell, Gilmore portrays the typical sociological setting of normative masculinity, and the performative social arenas in which it is usually manifested:

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[45] Gabbay 2008.
[46] Teppo 2008.
[47] Gadotti 2010.
[48] Shehata 2010.
[49] Shehata 2009: 55–98.
[50] Löhnert 2009, especially pp. 61–87. More general discussions are Löhnert 2008, 2011a and 2011b.
[51] Gabbay 2014a: 67–68.
[52] Gilmore 1990: 231.

aggression and prowess (political or military arenas), competitiveness (social inequality, apparent in various arenas) and labor (economic arena). We may add to these several other arenas, such as cultic, religious, bureaucratic and educational ones. The very phrase "act like men" points to social expectations to which the individual is required to conform, and thus, to act like men are supposed to, within a given social structure.

In what follows we illustrate the general outline of the major theoretical paradigms that attempt to elucidate the formation of masculine and feminine gender identities among people: psychoanalytic theory, cognitive-developmental theory, and learning theories that stress direct reinforcement and modeling. These theories hypothesizes a two-phase process, in which the child first learns that he or she is male or female, and subsequently learns the meaning of it, in terms of masculinity or femininity.[53]

According to Freud's psychosexual theory, the individual's gender identity is formed through a process of identification with his same-sex parent. This occurs at the third in Freud's five-stage developmental theory, the so-called "phallic stage". During this stage, identification is achieved through overcoming successfully a psychosexual crisis ("Oedipus Complex" for boys, "Electra Complex" for girls) at the age of three to six, during which the children develop strong attraction towards their opposite-sex parent, and alienation towards their same-sex parent. The crisis is resolved by the loss of desire for the opposite-sex parent, and the establishment of identification with the same-sex parent. Thus, boys learn their masculine identity from their fathers, and girls learn their feminine identity from their mothers.

Freud was followed by numerous scholars, who adopted, adapted and updated his groundbreaking theory. To mention only a few of them, Jung followed Freud in viewing gender as a contradictory structure, but unlike the individual perspective fostered by Freud, Jung developed a theory based on universal dichotomy between the sexes, and hypothesized the existence of gender archetypes; Erikson discussed the concept of gender identity, and assumed that it was established through the psychological formation of the self; Adler rejected Freud's theories of repression, and endorsed the view of social power and circumstances in shaping the identity of individuals.

A revised version of Freud's theory was put forward by Chodorow, who stressed that, regardless of the child's sex, the significant parent in the establishment of gender identity is the mother. Because they share the same sex, mothers feel closer to their daughters, and therefore will encourage their identification, thus producing feminine gender identity. Because they do not share the same sex, mothers feel somewhat estranged to their sons, and as a result sons tend to shift their identifica-

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[53] For summarizing overviews of these approaches, see, among others, Kramer 1991: 77–80, Stets and Burke 2000: 998–999, Whitehead 2002: 8–44, Renzetti and Curran 2003: 73–84 and Connell 2005: 3–44, all including previous literature. Naturally, any one of these approaches has its own limitations and shortcomings, and had its share of critique. It is beyond the scope of this brief introduction to discuss these criticisms as well, but the reader should be aware of the fact that these surely exist.

tion to the other parent – the father – and by that the development of masculine gender identity is encouraged.

The importance of psychoanalysis for understanding masculine personality cannot be denied. However, it is far from supplying a complete picture. Rather, it should be viewed as a starting point, to be supplemented by the evaluation of the contribution of social relations to the construction of masculine personality.

An alternative approach to the psychological process through which gender identity is formed was offered by psychologists as Kohlberg and Piaget, in their cognitive-developmental theory. According to this view, the process through which one's gender identity is shaped is cognitive rather than psychosexual, and reflects the child's attempts to organize their social world. In contrast with psychoanalytic or learning theories, this approach considers the formation of gender identity to precede the identification with the same-sex parent. During the first phase of the process, around the age of three, a fixed gender identity is acquired, when the children learn that the labels "boy" or "girl" are attached to them. Around the age of five to six, occurs the second phase, in which gender identity constancy is established, and the children understand that their gender will remain permanent, in spite of changes in appearance or age.

A different approach considers the formation of gender identity to be influenced by social factors, which influence one's psychology. Various learning theories view socialization agents – parents, teachers, peers and same-sex models in the media – as those who shape the child's gender identity. This socialization process involves a system of direct rewards and punishments, or indirect teaching through imitation of behavioral models acted out by significant others. Thus children learn what to wear, with which toys to play, and how to behave, according to their gender. Behaviorist theories emphasize the place of reinforcement in the learning process: a behavior will be learned through receiving rewards, and avoiding punishments.

One of the most influential sociological theories concerning the development of the self is the symbolic interactionist approach, which explains the formation of gender identity, among many other issues. According to this view, a person's self is formed and defined through the interaction with others. Thus, gender identity is based on the various meanings individuals internalize from the association with the role of their sex in society. In this regard, one's gender identity is considered to be one role identity he has among many. It is assumed that roles and identities are relative to counter-concepts, and therefore masculinity and femininity form oppositional identities of one another. Masculinity, femininity, and gender meanings generally, can be envisioned, according to this perspective, as two opposite ends along a single continuum. Another important feature of this approach is the separation between gender identity, gender role and gender attitudes and stereotypes. Thus, the gender identity of the individual is distinguished from his or her behavior and beliefs. All these components may conform to the general notion that prevails in one's society, though this is not necessarily always the case.[54]

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[54] See Stets and Burke 2000: 1000–1002, including previous literature.

4.2. Socialization

As we see, both psychological and sociological explanations for the formation of gender identity exist. More often than not, such models co-exist and complement each other, rather than one of them is preferred as a sole and definitive explanation for a given phenomenon. Naturally, more views and theoretical nuances exist beyond the brief sketch that was presented above. Given, however, the nature of the textual sources used in this research, the psychological perspective, fascinating as it is, seems to be hardly accessible to us when it comes to the societies of the ancient Near East. For this reason, I limit myself to explanations of sociological nature. These can be utilized for interpreting ancient sources in a manner that psychological ones, unfortunately, cannot.

In sociological theory, the place of the socialization process is highlighted as the most significant element in shaping one's gender identity. It is generally assumed that this process, however we interpret it, leads to social conformity. Through socialization, we learn the role requirements attached to gender-specific statuses, and to positions held by men and women, according to their sex. Socialization is a complex process. It creates not only an awareness of social ideals of gender performance, but moreover, a more nuanced understanding of the spectrum of acceptable behaviors within the frame of ideal social norms.[55] Socialization serves as an extremely efficient tool for imposing norms and social values upon the individual, and thus, the most effective device of social monitoring and control over one's behavior and social conformity.[56] Socialization of gender identity should be understood against this background. It is my view, that the third gender phenomenon studied in this book is best understood as the product of a specific type of socially-constructed conformity, rather than an example of social, let alone psychological, deviation from the norm. This crucial point is discussed in greater detail in the concluding section of the book.

4.3. Masculinity and the Sex Role Approach

The theoretical paradigm of sex roles stemmed from functionalistic approaches and the so-called "role theory" that became prominent after the end of the Second World War. This approach emphasizes and analyzes the place of sex roles as the basis for the formation and consolidation of masculine and feminine personalities. Sex roles are learned through the socialization process, as role models provide the individual with examples of the proper conduct of his or her sex. These role models perform as socialization agents, such as parents, teachers and members of peer groups. Throughout the process, role models are introduced to the individual, as well as social sanctions.

Rooted in late nineteenth century discourse of sex differences, this view highlights the variations between the roles performed by men and by women. Thus, this

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[55] See Kramer 1991: 74.
[56] See Kramer 1991: 75.

approach emphasizes custom and social conformity. The small differences between the sexes, however, cannot be held accountable for the different roles each sex performs, and one's place within the social structure is determined by cultural norms.

According to most scholars who endorse this approach, being a man or a woman is to be viewed as the performance of a general set of expectations which are attached to one's sex. This is the sex role. Thus, in any given social context, there are always two sex roles: male and female. Masculinity and femininity are therefore interpreted, according to this approach, as constructed through the socialization process.

Role norms are socially-determined, and as such can vary in social processes, according to the varying socialization agents, and their changing expectations. In recent feminist studies, considering the two sex roles as non-reciprocal led to the view of women's roles as subordinate to men's hierarchical oppression.

This approach emphasizes the crucial place of biological differences between the sexes. These differences shape social structures, which dictate the roles for the two sexes. The male-female dichotomy is perpetuated in this model, and gender categories are reduced to two homogenous categories, which differences are highly exaggerated and polarized.

This theory had numerous shortcomings, and was highly criticized by many. Whitehead noted that the sex role theory cannot explain the multiple possible expressions of masculinity and femininity, their relation to power and their possible historical variability.[57] Connell claimed that this approach fails to explain issues of power, and erroneously assumes consent instead of coercion. It also misses questions of social dynamics, and assumes an inherent stability in sex roles. This assumed stability, in turn, misses altogether the possibility that more than one form of masculinity, or femininity, for that matter, can exist.[58] Thus, the explanatory spectrum of this approach is too narrow as to encompass the varied phenomenon of human sexual and gender personalities. Last but not least, sex role theory does not distinguish between behavior and norm.[59]

4.4. The Concept of Hegemonic Masculinity

The final theory of masculine identity we introduce is probably the most relevant of all approaches to the current study. Given the importance and relevance of this approach, it is presented here in greater detail than previous ones.

Numerous ethnographic and historical researches have demonstrated how varied masculine identities are across space and time.[60] Moreover, the shortcomings of hypotheses such as the sex role theory have led to the emergence of a new approach,

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[57] Whitehead 2002: 22.
[58] Connell 2005: 27.
[59] Connell and Messerschmidt 2005: 831.
[60] See, for example, Gilmore 1990, for one of the most comprehensive anthropological surveys of the conceptualization of masculine identity over the globe to have been published today.

which focuses on gender relations. The origins of the concept that stands at the core of this new theoretical paradigm, "hegemonic masculinity", go back to the early 1980s, to feminist theories of patriarchy, and the role of men in transforming patriarchy.[61] The concept of hegemonic masculinity was consolidated by Connell through several years of research, until eventually introduced within a systematic sociological theory in 1987.[62] The impact of this new approach was widespread, and until the early 2000s it was applied and implemented in numerous researches and fields. At the beginning, this model was rather abstract, with only limited empirical basis. Its growing and varied applications, however, expanded its empirical aspects.[63] At the same time, it was criticized by various scholars for various reasons,[64] and was therefore reformulated by Connell and Messerschmidt in the mid 2000s.[65]

One of the early definitions of this theory proposed that hegemonic masculinity forms "a question of how particular groups of men inhabit positions of power and wealth, and how they legitimate and reproduce the social relationships that generate their dominance."[66]

In its essence, this social theory views gender as relational, so that the hegemonic type of masculinity only exists in relation to femininity and to other types of masculinity: complicit, subordinate and marginalized. While hegemonic masculinity co-exists in alliance with complicit masculinity, it aspires to oppress all other types of gender identity: feminine, and non-conformist masculine (subordinate and marginalized ones).[67] Thus, this approach does not consider masculinity to form one unified gender construct, but rather considers the existence of multiple gender identities, masculinities rather than masculinity.

Connell viewed masculinity as a pattern or configuration of social practices associated with the place of men in the gender array, socially distinguished from practices associated with the place of women in the same array. Since masculinities are configurations of practice achieved through social action, they may vary in accordance with the nature of gender relations characteristic in a given social setting.[68]

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[61] Connell and Messerschmidt 2005: 831. As Connell and many others often noted, the concept of hegemony that was used to formulate the theory of hegemonic masculinity is rooted in Antonio Gramsci's notion of social hegemony, as reflected in Gramsci's 1971 *Selections from Prison Notebooks*.

[62] The most notable steps in the course of the consolidation of hegemonic masculinity as a methodological concept are (in chronological order): Kessler, Ashenden, Connell and Dowsett 1982, Connell, Ashenden, Kessler, and Dowsett 1982, Connell 1982 and 1983, Carrigan, Connell, and Lee 1985 and Connell 1987. For a brief account of the history of research and formation of the hegemonic masculinity theory, see Connell and Messerschmidt 2005: 830–832.

[63] Connell and Messerschmidt 2005: 833–835.

[64] For various points of criticism on the theory, and responses to them, see Connell and Messerschmidt 2005: 836–845.

[65] For the reformulation of the theory, see Connell and Messerschmidt 2005: 845–853.

[66] Carrigan, Connell and Lee 1985: 592.

[67] See, in this regard, also Lusher and Robins 2009: 402.

[68] Connell and Messerschmidt 2005: 836.

Masculinities are historical in nature, and are formed by a political process that shapes social balance of interests and social change.[69]

Masculinity and femininity encompass not only differences in sex categories, but moreover, the internal divergence within each of the genders.[70] Thus, Connell's approach does not highlight the division between masculine men and feminine women, as much as an infinite spectrum of gender identities, spreading between the poles of ultra-masculinity and ultra-femininity, identities that under varying circumstances may be possessed by any of the sexes. Indeed, this is the starting point of this book, in terms of methodological perspective. The first thing we must acknowledge is that there is more than one possible manifestation of masculinity. This book discusses exactly this: several forms of masculinity, all coexisting, and sharing one common denominator: they all deviated from what was considered to be the standard model of masculinity in ancient Mesopotamia. The ways in which these deviations were manifested, could vary.

Connell illustrated a general scheme, according to which the first step in comprehending masculinity is, as noted above, to recognize the existence of multiple masculinities.[71] These result from a compromise between conflicting sentiments and aspirations, or stem from indecisive estimations of profits and expenses related to diverse gender tactics.[72] Next, we must examine the gender relations between the various masculinities. Connell noted that hegemonic masculinity is not fixed, but is rather the type of masculinity that occupies the hegemonic position in a given pattern of gender relations, and can always be contested. Other types of masculinity, according to Connell, are subordinate, complicit and marginalized masculinities.[73]

"Subordinate masculinity" is a term that refers to types of masculinities that differ from the hegemonic one, and hence are suppressed by it; for example, homosexuals suppressed by the heterosexual majority of men. "Complicit masculinity" refers to types of masculinities that, though are not in complete agreement with the hegemonic one, nonetheless compromise and conform with it to a certain degree; for example, men who respect their wives and mothers, and participate in housework, in contrast with the model of complete oppression of women by men in a given hegemonic masculinity. The term "marginalized masculinity" refers to types of masculinities which are relative to the authorization of the hegemonic masculinity exhibited by the dominant group. This is a different type of gender relations than the previous ones.

As to the relationship between femininity and hegemonic masculinity, Donaldson stated that "A fundamental element of hegemonic masculinity, then, is that women exist as potential sexual objects for men while men are negated as sexual objects for men. Women provide heterosexual men with sexual validation, and men

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[69] Connell 2005: 44.
[70] Connell 2005: 69.
[71] For multiple masculinities, see also Whitehead 2002: 33–34.
[72] Connell and Messerschmidt 2005: 852.
[73] Connell 2005: 76, 78–81.

compete with each other for this."[74]

Connell maintained that gender is not fixed, but rather is constructed through social interaction. Current research explores the making and remaking of conventions in social practice. It aims to trace the politics of norms, the social interests and techniques used in order to construct them. On the other hand, current research is also devoted to the investigation of the forces that counterbalance or limit the construction of a specific type of masculinity, thus enabling, or even forcing, the creation of varying masculinities.[75] Since different types of masculinity should not be viewed as fixed categories, rather than applying deterministic models of interpretation, the sociology of masculinity tries to locate the conditions that create masculinities, and the conditions these masculinities produce in turn.

According to Donaldson,[76] the process of reaching social hegemony involves the attaining and maintaining of power; through this process various social groups are formed and destroyed. This process reflects how ruling classes form and sustain their supremacy: "The ability to impose a definition of the situation, to set the terms in which events are understood and issues discussed, to formulate ideals and define morality is an essential part of this process."[77] The holders of hegemony need to convince the majority of society to believe in the natural and normal nature of the social order that gives way to that hegemony. The involvement of the state in these negotiations and enforcement of rules is made through a system of punishments for non-conformism. These same ideas easily explain the results reached by the present research, in terms of social domination, monitoring and control (see conclusions).

Donaldson confronted the issue of male sexual politics. He asked whether gender systems in a given society are autonomous, and whether hegemonic masculinity has an existence of its own within the social structure. A positive answer to these questions should inevitably lead us to the recognition of counter-hegemonic forces within that social structure. A negative answer, on the other hand, demands the clarification why specific types of manliness and men are predominate in different societies, and their oppositions require identification.[78]

Lusher and Robins stated that "Hegemony refers to the preeminence of one social group over others and is based on legitimate relations of power." Indeed, one of the key features of hegemony is its legitimacy. Lusher and Robins stressed in this regard the role of emotion, and viewed it as crucial for the understanding of an ideological endorsement of power. They claimed that emotion "lies at the heart of legitimacy", and opposition to hegemonic masculinity can be manifested in varying ways. Such opposition may form an alternative ideology, or surpass the ruling one. Therefore, the legitimacy of hegemonic masculinity within a given system of hierarchical masculinities involves intense negative attitudes between coexisting hege-

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[74] Donaldson 1993: 645.
[75] Connell 2005: 34–39.
[76] Following Gramsci's concept of hegemony in society, that was the basis for the formation of the concept of hegemonic masculinity by Connell.
[77] Donaldson 1993: 645.
[78] Donaldson 1993: 644.

monic and subordinate masculinities.[79] Can we observe such tensions between Mesopotamian hegemonic and subordinate masculinities? That is, between standard and third gender males?

As to the application of hegemonic masculinity in various fields, Connell and Messerschmidt noted that "As a theoretical formulation finds application in other settings and by other hands, the concept must mutate—and it may mutate in different directions in different environments."[80] We may therefore feel free to alter the concept and its customary applications, when using it to explain ancient Near Eastern social and cultural phenomena, as long as we do not mutate the concept too much. Or in Connell and Messerschmidt's cautionary words: "As a theoretical formulation finds application in other settings and by other hands, the concept must mutate … There is nothing wrong with this process in itself … But it means that new usages must also be open to critique and may lack some of the substance or justification of the original."[81]

We can further apply the principals of hegemonic masculinity when discussing the question of eunuchs in the ancient Near East, since hegemonic masculinity is closely associated with social embodiment. Men's bodies form social objects and social agents at the same time.[82]

One final aspect of the theory to be considered is related to spatial characteristics. Hegemonic masculinity can be manifested in three levels of analysis: local, regional and global. These levels are linked to one another. For example, regional hegemonic masculinity can supply a cultural framework that is utilized at the local level by individuals in everyday behavior and social interaction. These varying geographical levels can account for the existence of multiple hegemonic masculinities. The local level is formed in small interfaces of direct interaction, such as familial circles, institutional and organizational environments and small-scale communities; the regional level is formed in larger interfaces, such as cultures, nations and states; the global level is formed in the largest interfaces, transnational and worldwide ones.[83] To a certain degree, all three levels may be applicable for the study of the ancient Near East, though the global level should naturally be regarded differently than the way globalization is considered today.

4.4.1. The Features of Hegemonic Masculinity

Now that the theory of hegemonic masculinity has been presented and evaluated, we will list the main features of the dominant masculine identity in a given society, according to this theory. It has to be stressed, as mentioned above, that not all these features necessarily exist in every case, since the very nature of hegemonic mascu-

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[79] Lusher and Robins 2009: 402–404.
[80] Connell and Messerschmidt 2005: 854.
[81] Connell and Messerschmidt 2005: 854.
[82] For hegemonic masculinity and social embodiment, see Connell and Messerschmidt 2005: 851–852.
[83] Connell and Messerschmidt 2005: 849.

linity (and gender or social constructs, for that matter) is its variability, and its tendency to change over space and time:[84]

- Multiple masculine identities can coexist.
- Hegemonic masculinity is distinguished from other masculinities, especially from subordinate ones.
- It is dominant, and aspires to perpetuate its dominance over women and men of other masculine identities.
- It is ideal rather than realistic, and thus only small amount of men in society actually enact it in full.
- It is the product of gender relations.
- Gender relations are historical, and thus gender hierarchies are subject to change. Hence, struggles over hegemony may occur, leading to the rise of new forms of hegemony at the expense of previous ones.
- It can be challenged, and undergo changes in response to these challenges.
- It is competitive, to the degree of aggressiveness.
- It requires constant validation. Hegemonic masculinity needs to prove itself, usually through aggressiveness, or even violence, towards femininity and subordinate masculinities.
- It may entail self-control and stoicism, and demand the avoidance of expressing exaggerated emotions.
- It is performative, that is, includes acts.
- It presents itself as natural, in order to justify itself and reduce resistance.
- In most cases, it is patriarchal.
- Men who receive the benefits of patriarchy without actually enacting hegemonic masculinity can be viewed as performing complicit masculinity.
- It is linked with specific forms of representation and utilization of the male body.
- It explains the nature of bureaucracies, organizations and institutions as gendered environments.
- It is manifested in three spatial levels: local, regional and global.

5. The Features of Hegemonic Masculinity in the Ancient Near East

We will conclude the introduction with a brief presentation of the main features that characterized the standard masculine identity in the ancient Near East. Now that the methodology and theoretical background of this research have been clarified, and historical and anthropological parallels considered, we will return to the fundamental question asked above: what did it take to be a man in the ancient Near East? The answer to this question delineates the ideological framework within which the third gender males surveyed in this book lived and operated. In order to comprehend their

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[84] This list of features is a summary of the discussions found in Carrigan, Connell and Lee 1985, Donaldson 1993, Cheng 1999, Connell 2005, Connell and Messerschmidt 2005 and Lusher and Robins 2009.

Sitz im Leben as the expression of non-hegemonic masculinities, we should illustrate, however briefly, the general outline of normative masculine gender identities in the ancient Near East. As explained, according to the methodological and theoretical considerations assumed in this book, these are understood as the features of hegemonic masculinity. They form the background against which the figures discussed in this book are to be assessed.

Among the primary sources of information concerning notions of masculinity, patriarchy and male-female relations as embedded in formal regulations, are law collections. Indeed, various ancient Near Eastern law collections demonstrate men's authority over women, whether in the shape of father-daughter relations, or in the shape of husband-wife ones.[85] Generally speaking, in almost all references to sexual intercourse, the formulation of the laws portrays the male person as the active performer and initiator of the act (except for a few cases dealing with a fornicating wife), and the female person as the passive object of the act. This is true, for example, to all cases of forbidden incest and kin-relations.[86] Similarly, the few laws proscribing bestiality only mention males as possible culprits.[87]

Another aspect of male dominance as reflected in formal law is manifested in the relation to the acts of rape and adultery. The attitude to these felonies seems extremely consistent throughout the ancient Near East: sexual relations between a man and a woman who was married to another were utterly forbidden. In case the woman's consent was assumed, the act was considered as adultery; in case her consent was not assumed, it was considered to be a rape. At any event, the underlying notion was that the woman belonged to her husband, so that her lover violated that ownership. Similarly, the rape of a virgin was considered a felony because the woman belonged to her father, and her rape violated her father's ownership of her.

The matter of male ownership of subordinate women and its violation as the background for social attitudes to rape and adultery is made clear when assessing the punishments prescribed for the felonies. According to HL § 197, The offended husband is not held responsible for killing both culprits in case he does so when catching them on the spot, or alternatively, he is entitled to demand their punishment later on, according to HL § 198. Other laws require the male culprit to pay compensations to the husband or father of the woman with whom he had the illicit sexual intercourse.[88] All these cases demonstrate that, by and large, women were not independent, and in most cases were subjected to a male patron, either their father or husband, within a patriarchic system of domination.

Another main characteristic of hegemonic masculinity in the ancient Near East was the performance of sexual intercourse. The standard man was expected to as-

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[85] The following abbreviations are used below: LUN = Laws of Ur-Nammu; LE = Laws of Ešnunna; CH = Law Code of Ḫammurabi; HL = Hittite Laws; MAL = Middle Assyrian Laws. All are found conveniently in Roth 1997.

[86] CH §§ 154–158, HL §§ 189–195, 200a.

[87] HL §§ 187–188, 199, 200a; see discussions in Peled 2010b and forthcoming 2016.

[88] LUN §§ 6–8, LE §§ 26, 28, 31, CH §§ 129–132, HL § 97–198, MAL §§ 12–18, 22–23, 55–56.

sume the active, penetrative role in these relations, and avoid assuming the submissive, penetrated party. One of the clearest evidence in this regard was discussed by Guinan, in her analysis of several omens of the *šumma ālu* series, which mentioned homosexual relations.[89] Since this issue is elaborated below, it will only be mentioned here in brief. Guinan convincingly argued that the said omens reflect sets of binary categorical thinking of hierarchy, biological sex, gender and sexual behavior. Thus, according to her, sexual relations in Mesopotamia were based "on dominance and submission, as constituted by phallic penetration".[90]

The issue of manliness as related to proper sexual penetrative behavior, contrasted with improper sexual penetrated behavior, was possibly the main concern of a Hittite magical ritual, the so-called *Anniwiyani's Ritual*. According to my interpretation, this ritual was conducted at the occurrence of homosexual intercourse, and was meant to transform the passive partner into a proper sexually-active man.[91] The concern about the loss of manly sexual potency is apparent in the group of šà.zi.ga potency incantations,[92] and maybe also in the Hittite *Paškuwatti's Ritual*.[93]

We move on to another fundamental characteristic of the hegemonic male in the ancient Near East: his siring of descendents. Though offspring is an obvious by-product of sexual intercourse, it forms a concern of its own in ancient Near Eastern thought. One had to have children, to support him at old age, and to venerate him after his death. One's wealth and name were to be passed on to the next generations; this way the individual was to be commemorated and remembered after he has left the earthly world. We can thus see how the number of descendants was regarded to be "the more, the merrier" in the composition *Gilgameš, Enkidu and the Netherworld*, while a man who lacked any descendants was destined to a dire fate in the afterlife.[94] Another example is found in the Hittite tale of Appu and his two sons,[95] where the lack of descendants posed a major difficulty, and depicted the protagonist as an incapable man, mocked even by his own wife.

Ancient Near Eastern hegemonic masculinity further included one's prowess. From the earliest periods, kings and rulers would brag in their monuments about their military deeds and exploits, assuming the title "PN the man…" as a marker of masculinity and vigor. Thus being a man meant to be physically strong, to possess and demonstrate prowess and vigor. Another epithet that expressed similar notions was lú zi(d), "a true/real man", ascribed to Ur-Nammu of Ur.[96] Furthermore, men's usual vigor and muscular appearance can easily be noticed in numerous iconographic representations, where the typical male body was constantly depicted as

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[89] *šumma ālu* Tablet 104, CT 39.45,32–34.

[90] Guinan 1997: 463–464, 468–471.

[91] See Peled 2010a. Miller (2010) understood in a similar manner a different Hittite magical ritual, the so-called *Paškuwatti's Ritual*.

[92] Biggs 1967.

[93] Hoffner 1987, Peter 2004: 197–224. A different understanding of this ritual, as mentioned above, was offered by Miller 2010.

[94] See, most recently, Gadotti 2014: 159–160.

[95] Siegelová 1971.

[96] Šulgi G,13, 14 and 30, see Klein 1991: 302,13, 14, 304,30 and 308.

highly muscular. Iconography, especially royal one, was meant to convey the appearance of ideal masculinity.

Naturally, it can be argued that these qualities are only known to have been ascribed to kings and the ruling elite, and thus say nothing about common men in society. It seems doubtful, however, that the characterizing qualities of kings and nobilities differed from those of other men in their society. If at all, these ideal qualities should have been used as models for the proper, ideal, man, as lower-class men looked up at their rulers as role models. This is, eventually, the essence of hegemonic masculinity as an ideal model, rather than a behavior that is necessarily enacted in practice.

The division between gender roles forms another element of ancient Near Eastern hegemonic masculinity. This division was most notably expressed in the partition to public masculinity versus domestic femininity. Males were usually assigned performative arenas such as military, combative and professional ones, while the various law collections leave the impression that females were expected, maybe even required, to remain within the domestic sphere.[97] Iconography, as mentioned above, depicted men as possessing vigor and prowess. It also depicted them as engaged with battles, an arena from which women were utterly excluded. Women, on the other hand, were usually portrayed in texts as related to the sphere of household, caring for children and performing domestic tasks.[98] We may further consider in this context the corpus of Hittite magical rituals, which delineated clear separation between males and females, occasionally using gendered objects that reflected this separation: men were associated with weapons, while women were associated with domestic objects such as the spindle and distaff.[99]

The last feature of hegemonic masculinity in the ancient Near East to be discussed is related to professionalism and the monopoly on knowledge. The high posts in any institution, whether political, administrative or religious, were held by men. Even in institutional spheres from which women were not utterly excluded, their numbers were far lesser than those of men. For example, palace administrations were inhabited mostly by male clerks. The religious and cultic arenas were open for both genders, but even there, the highest posts were usually reserved for male attendants, at least in most periods.[100] Skilled and prestigious professions were almost exclusively occupied by men of hegemonic masculinity: scribes, astronomers, artists and, as mentioned, political, military and religious leaders.

To conclude, the main features of hegemonic masculinity in the ancient Near East were the following: dominance over females, patriarchic, active/penetrative

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[97] According to MAL § 40, for example, married women had to be veiled while outside their homes, thus marking their status as married women. Naturally, not all women followed this pattern, as we know of priestesses and female entrepreneurs who actively participated in the economic system; these, however, were relatively few in number, and at any rate do not represent the common custom.

[98] See, for example, the pertinent lines in the *Lady of Largest Heart* hymn for Inanna/Ištar, edited in Sjöberg 1975.

[99] See Hoffner 1966.

[100] See Peled 2014b, especially p. 161.

sexual behavior, siring of descendents, prowess, vigorousness and muscularity, relation to public domain rather than to domestic one, professionalism and monopoly on knowledge.

Chapter 1

Mesopotamian Narrative and Hymnic Texts

Introduction

The opening chapter of the book focuses on Mesopotamian narrative, hymnic and mythological compositions. Since the nature of these texts as a literary genre is unique in many ways, the evidence that emerges from them is treated separately from other texts. The uniqueness of these texts lies, for the most part, in the hyper-realistic nature of their content. For this reason, they cannot be taken at face value, and their understanding is ever based on the interpretation of symbols and metaphors. Similarly, the attestations of third gender figures in these texts are always symbolic and must be analyzed as such.

Another reason for the separate discussion of these compositions is rather practical. Some of them mention several third gender figures, and thus, in order to avoid repetitive references to the same composition in different chapters, they are treated here jointly.

This chapter treats various issues, and its broad scope allows the reader a general view-point and understanding of the wide topic of the third gender. The compositions discussed in this chapter are evaluated according to mutual guide-lines, and in this sense, the current chapter is different from the ones following it. It does not deal with specific figures bearing third gender characteristics, but rather with attestations of such figures in texts of narrative nature. The subsequent chapters engulf a wide variety of textual sources, deriving from a wide variety of textual genres, which makes them relatively more complex to evaluate. This fact serves as another point in favor of presenting the current chapter as a prelude to the ones that follow. Though many of the compositions presented and discussed in this chapter mention third gender figures in their plots, the relation of these figures to the third gender is not always apparent and is only made clear in the following chapters.

As to the sequence of compositions in this chapter, and the rationale behind the order of their appearance, most of these compositions deal with Inanna/Ištar and her relation to the various members of her cult. Therefore, these are presented first, beginning with the myth of *Inanna/Ištar's Descent to the Netherworld*, the fundamental and most telling of all these texts concerning third gender figures. The following compositions are all similar, in the sense that they exhibit the relation between the goddess and her third gender servants: *The Fashioning of the gala*, *Inanna and Ebiḫ*, *Inanna and Enki*, *Lady of Largest Heart* and *This City, which Has Been Looted*. *The Epic of Erra* concludes this group of texts, and, following it, we turn to examine several compositions from which Inanna/Ištar is absent: *A Myth of Dumuzi*, *Enki and Ninmaḫ*, *The Curse of Akkad*, *The Lament for Eridu* and *The Debate between Grain and Sheep*. These texts supply aetiological explanations for the charac-

teristics, cultic performance and activities of various third gender figures that appear within them, regardless however of their patron goddess.[101]

This chapter, therefore, will illustrate the place of third gender figures in Mesopotamian narrative, hymnic and closely related texts. It will demonstrate how the hyper-realistic references to these figures can be paralleled with their everyday life, which is discussed in the following chapters. This chapter will demonstrate how the texts discussed supplied aetiological explanations for the activities and performance of the third gender figures, through an elaborate set of metaphors and symbols.

1. *Inanna/Ištar's Descent to the Netherworld*

We will begin our survey with one of the most fundamental compositions that shapes our knowledge and understanding of Inanna/Ištar's ambivalent character and her relationship with three of her most prominent earthly cult members: the *assinnu*, *kurgarrû* and gala/*kalû*. Several versions of the myth are known today: the earliest is dated to the Old Babylonian period, written in Sumerian, while two Akkadian versions are known from later periods, the Middle Assyrian and the Neo-Assyrian. These were adaptations of the older Sumerian version into Akkadian, and are much shorter than their source. These later versions differ slightly from one another, as is explained below.

A. The Sumerian Version

Editions: Kramer 1937, 1951, 1980: 299–310 (third tablet of the Ur version), Falkenstein 1942, Sladek 1974: 103–181, Alster 1996.
Translations and commentaries: Jacobsen 1987: 205–232, Bottéro and Kramer 1989: 276–295, Römer 1993: 458–495, Black, Cunningham, Robson and Zólyomi 2004: 65–76.
The Sumerian account of the myth is the longest and most elaborate of its versions. It is dated to the Old Babylonian period and therefore predates the Akkadian versions known to us by many centuries.[102] The complete composition covered three tablets, containing more than 400 lines.[103]

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[101] It is still debated whether the text known as *Hymn of Iddin-Dagan* (Iddin-Dagan A) should be regarded as mythical, hymnic, or rather reflects a description of actual ceremony that occurred in reality. Hence, it was not included in the present chapter, but is rather discussed in the following ones.

[102] It is probable however that the Akkadian versions originate in the Old Babylonian period as well, even though the earliest Akkadian copy is Middle Assyrian.

[103] Sladek's (1974) edition includes 412 lines. As for the length of the text, see Sladek 1974: 15–16.

Brief Summary of the Plot[104]

The text begins by telling how Inanna decides to abandon the world of the living. She descends to the netherworld, escorted by her companion Ninšubur (ll. 1–27). Inanna asks Ninšubur to mourn over her while she is in the realm of the dead. She further instructs Ninšubur to approach Enlil and beg him to assist her and prevent her death. In case Enlil refuses, Nanna is to be approached with the same request; if he refuses too, Ninšubur should turn to Enki (ll. 28–72). Inanna then descends to the netherworld, and confronts its gatekeeper, who refuses to let her in (ll. 73–89). He approaches his mistress, Ereškigal, Inanna's sister who rules the netherworld, and she instructs him to let Inanna in, but only after she is stripped of her clothes and jewelry, which is what indeed happens (ll. 90–164). When Inanna arrives and takes her sister's place on the throne of the netherworld, the Anunnaki act as her judges and convict her, and she is turned into a corpse hung on a hook (ll. 165–172). Subsequently, Ninšubur does as was previously instructed, and mourns over Inanna (ll. 173–181). After Enlil and Nanna refuse to assist Inanna, Ninšubur asks for the help of Enki, who agrees to help, though not enthusiastically (ll. 182–221). He creates from the dirt under his fingernails two creatures: kur-gar-ra and gala-tur-ra, handing the former the "plant of life" (ú nam ti-la), and the latter the "water of life" (a nam ti-la) (ll. 222–225). Enki then instructs them to sneak into the netherworld, and face the suffering Ereškigal. They are to express sympathy with her pains, gain her favor, and as a reward ask for the corpse of Inanna. Then they are instructed to revive Inanna's body using the "plant of life" and "water of life" (ll. 226–253). They follow Enki's orders (ll. 254–281), but the revived Inanna is required by the Anunnaki to bring a substitute in her place to the netherworld (ll. 282–289). Demonic creatures (gal$_5$-lá)[105] escort her in the quest for finding the said substitute, as she meets with three figures who have mourned over her death: Ninšubur, Šara and Lulal. Each time the demons wish to seize one of these figures as Inanna's substitute in the realm of the dead she prevents them from doing so (ll. 290–347). Eventually Inanna comes across her spouse Dumuzi, who does not mourn her, in contrast with the figures she had previously met. The enraged Inanna lets the demons seize him as her substitute (ll. 348–367). With the help of Utu, the Sun-god, Dumuzi escapes the demons (ll. 268–380). However, eventually they manage to catch him. It is decided that for half a year Dumuzi will be held in the netherworld, and his sister, Gešti-nanna, will take his place for the remaining half of the year.[106] The closing sentence of the composition praises Ereškigal, queen of the netherworld, Inanna's sister (ll. 381–412).

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[104] The line numbering of *Inanna's Descent* differs slightly between its various editions. The line numbering presented hereby is in accordance with Sladek's (1974) edition of the complete text (lines 1–380), and Alster's (1996) later edition of the closing part of the composition (lines 385–412).

[105] Not to be mistaken with the third gender gala discussed throughout this book.

[106] It was previously assumed that Geštinanna herself offered to share her brother's fate in the netherworld, until Alster (1996: 14–16) demonstrated that it was actually Inanna who came up with the idea.

Discussion of the Sumerian Version

The subject matters that interest us are the figures created by Enki in order to rescue Inanna, and the relationship between them and the goddess. Since the gala[107] and the *kurgarrû* were members of the cult personnel of Inanna/Ištar, it is interesting to consider how the myth reflects the relationship between the goddess and her servants in real life. The two figures first appear in the episode describing their creation by Enki, god of wisdom:

> ***Inanna's Descent to the Netherworld*, 222–225**[108]
> 222 umbin-si-ni mu-dur$_7$ ba-ra-an-de$_6$ kur-gar-ra-aš ba-an-dím
> 223 umbin-si 2-kam-ma mu-dur$_7$ ba-ra-an-de$_6$ gala-tur-ra-aš ba-an-dím
> 224 kur-gar-ra ú nam-tìl-la ba-an-šúm
> 225 gala-tur-ra a nam-tìl-la ba-an-šúm
> 222 He removed some dirt from his fingernail, and created the *kurgarrû*.
> 223 He removed some dirt from another fingernail, and created the galaturra.
> 224 He gave to the *kurgarrû* the plant of life.
> 225 He gave to the galaturra the water of life.

This episode tells how Enki creates from the dirt under his fingernails the *kurgarrû* and galaturra ("young/junior gala"), and gives them the "water of life" and "plant of life". Later on, the two gain the favor of Ereškigal, retrieve Inanna's body, and revive her by using the two aforementioned items. Interestingly, the "water of life" and "food of life" are mentioned in the Adapa story,[109] where they are offered by Anu to Adapa. The latter is warned beforehand by Enki not to accept them, because they will turn him into a god, that is, get him killed. Adapa indeed refuses Anu's offer, and his life is spared. We can therefore assume that these mythical items were perceived as bestowing divine vitality, which was unsuitable for humans, but had the qualities required for reviving Inanna.

The fact that the two figures were formed out of the dirt under Enki's fingernails was usually taken by scholars to hint that the origin of these figures was connected with defilement, and as a metaphor of the low social status of these figures in Mesopotamian society.[110] However, it might allude to the creation of the first human out of clay in the myths of *Enki and Ninmaḫ*[111] and *Atra-ḫasīs*.[112] There, as well, Enki

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[107] The term gala-tur-ra should probably be understood as signifying this figure as a "junior gala", not in terms of age, but of professional status; see Lambert 1992: 151 and Assante 2009: 36. Lapinkivi's (2004: 159) claim that the term "no doubt refers to castrate choirboys" is unsupported by any text. The term gala-tur is attested in numerous ED IIIb and Old Akkadian ration lists from Girsu and a few from Umma. Several scribes in Hellenistic Babylon held this title, which, according to Boiy (2004: 267), was "a clearly inferior rang" (sic; typo for "rank"?).

[108] See Sladek 1974: 131. Transliteration follows ETCSL (Text c.1.4.1, Inana's descent to the nether world).

[109] See Evers 1995: 23–32, Foster 1996: 429–434 and Dalley 2000: 182–188.

[110] See, among others, Bottéro and Petschow 1972–75, RlA 4: 466, s.v. "Homosexualität", Henshaw 1994: 288, 295, Nissinen 1998a: 32 and Lapinkivi 2010: 76.

[111] See below.

was an active participant in the act of creation of the first man, even though the creating material was mud or clay (Akkadian *ṭīdu*), rather than dirt (Sumerian mu-dur$_7$), as in the current text. An even closer parallel is found in the hymn known as *Agušaya A*,[113] where Enki creates Ṣaltu, a dreadful being, out of the dirt under his fingernails, in order for the creature to confront Ištar. The episode described above, together with the ability of the newly created beings to move between the world of the living and the world of the dead, was further understood as alluding to the ambivalent nature of these figures in reality, reflecting Inanna/Ištar's own ambivalent nature.[114] However, Assante offered a different view. She suggested that the creation of the two from the dirt under Enki's fingernails was meant to allude to their future travel through the earth, rather than point to their "inherent low status". She further suggested that the creation out of dirt was "suggestive of a built-in antidote to the impurities brought about by contact with the dead".[115]

It is possible that the view regarding the *kurgarrû* and galaturra as ambivalent figures in the current myth is somewhat anachronistic. They are not actually portrayed as capable of traveling between the worlds: though they go to the netherworld and revive Inanna, they are never recorded as returning from there to the world of mortals. Indeed, one of the main topics stressed in this myth is the axiomatic inability to travel between the realms of the dead and the living. This is a one-way travel, even for gods. Therefore, when the revived Inanna asks to ascend back to the world above, she is required to supply a substitute that will remain in her place in the netherworld. Perhaps the *kurgarrû* and galaturra could have not been themselves this substitute because they were not real living beings, having been artificially created from dirt. It can be suggested that this is the actual reason why the text tells us of the way in which they were created by Enki: having been created from dirt might hint that they are not actually living beings, since dirt symbolizes the earth in which the dead are buried. As such, they were fashioned in order to fulfill a specific task, after which we hear of them no more. Be that as it may, what remains beyond any doubt is that we hear no more of the *kurgarrû* and the galaturra once they have revived Inanna, so viewing them as figures that are able to travel back and forth between the worlds is simply wrong.

Further attention should be drawn to the actual means by which the two figures persuade Ereškigal, queen of the dead, to grant them the corpse of Inanna:

Inanna's Descent to the Netherworld, 263–266[116]
263 [ù-u$_8$-a š]à-gu$_{10}$ dug$_4$-ga-ni
264 [kúš-ù-me]-en nin-me a-šà-zu in-na-[ne]-eš
265 [ù-u$_8$-a] bar-gu$_{10}$ dug$_4$-ga-ni

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[112] See Foster 1996: 160–203 and Dalley 2000: 1–38.

[113] See editions in Groneberg 1981, 1997b: 75–93, translation in Foster 1996: 81–91 and recent discussion in Streck 2010: 561–569.

[114] See Lambert 1992: 150–151, Gabbay 2008: 50, 52 and Lapinkivi 2010: 76–77.

[115] Assante 2009: 41.

[116] See Sladek 1974: 135–136. Transliteration follows ETCSL (Text c.1.4.1, Inana's descent to the nether world).

266 [kúš-ù-me]-en nin-me a bar-zu in-na-ne-eš
263 When she said, "[Oh], my heart!",
264 they [said] to her: "Lady of ours, you [are tired!] Oh, your heart!"
265 When she said, "[Oh], my back!",
266 they said to her: "Lady of ours, you [are tired!] Oh, your back!"

In this episode the galaturra and *kurgarrû* express sympathy with Ereškigal's suffering: when she moans, they moan, so that they obtain what they want from her, once gaining her favor.[117] Sladek noted that this kind of sympathetic soothing of the gods was characteristic of the cultic lamentations of the gala.[118] He suggested that the galaturra and *kurgarrû* executed in the myth their realistic characteristic cultic performance in order to gain Ereškigal's favor: the soothing laments of the gala, and dance or some other act of the *kurgarrû*.

In a similar manner, Alster suggested that this episode was meant to provide an ideological explanation for the performance of lamentations as part of the Mesopotamian cult.[119] It may further be suggested that the terms used by the suffering Ereškigal, šà and bar, "heart" and "back", were not chosen arbitrarily. šà also stands for "inner parts" generally,[120] while bar can designate the general notion of "outer, outside".[121] Therefore, the two terms might not only designate two of Ereškigal's aching organs, but furthermore convey a reference to the whole of her body, internally and externally. The galaturra and *kurgarrû* ask from Ereškigal the body of Inanna in return for the sympathy they expressed for her agony. Once their request is fulfilled, they revive the corpse:

Inanna's Descent to the Netherworld, 275–281[122]

275 uzu níg sàg-ga ^{giš}gag-ta lá šúm-me-eb in-na-an-ne-eš
276 kug ^dereš-ki-gal-la-ke₄ ga[la-tur kur-gar-ra] mu-na-ni-ib-gi₄-gi₄
277 uzu níg sàg-ga níg ga-ša-an-zu-ne-ne-kam
278 [níg lu]gal-me níg nin-me ḫé-a šúm-me-eb in-na-an-ne-eš
279 uzu níg sàg-ga ^{giš}gag-ta lá im-me-ne-šúm-uš
280 1-àm ú nam-tìl-la 1-àm a nam-tìl-la ugu-a bí-in-šub-bu-uš
281 ^dinana ba-gub
275 They said to her: "Give us the corpse that is hanging on the hook."
276 Pure Ereškigal answered the galaturra and *kurgarrû*:
277 "That is the corpse of your queen."
278 They said to her: "Whether it is [that of our ki]ng or that of our queen, give
     it to us."

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[117] See Sladek 1974: 97 and Alster 1983: 10, 11. Roscoe (1996: 215) defined these acts of the galaturra and the *kurgarrû* as "a technique psychologists refer to as active listening".
[118] Sladek 1974: 97–98. See, in this regard, Krecher 1966: 35, 145.
[119] Alster 1983: 11.
[120] For this term, see recently Attinger 2014: 73 and ePSD, s.v. "šag".
[121] See PSD B: 93, s.v. "bar A" and ePSD, s.v. "bar".
[122] See Sladek 1974: 137–138. Transliteration follows ETCSL (Text c.1.4.1, Inana's descent to the nether world).

279 They were given the corpse that was hanging on the hook.
280 One of them sprinkled it with the plant of life, and the other with the water
    of life.
281 And thus Inanna arose.

As can be seen, the two figures actively revive the goddess, in contrast with the description of this scene in the Akkadian version, for which, see below. This is the last attestation of the galaturra and the *kurgarrû* in this myth. Once the goddess is revived, she returns to the world of the living; however, nowhere do we read that her rescuers return with her. The significance of this point is explained below.

B. The Akkadian Versions

Editions: Borger 1963: 86–93, t. 56–59, Sladek 1974: 240–264, Lapinkivi 2010.
Translations and commentaries: Dalley 2000: 154–162, Foster 1996: 402–409.
Two slightly different Akkadian versions of *Ištar's Descent* were found, both from Assyria: one from the city of Aššur and the other from Aššurbanipal's library in Nineveh.[123] The earliest fragments belonging to this composition are from the eleventh century, however, most are later and date to Aššurbanipal's reign. Both versions were written on one-column tablets. Several limited editions of these Akkadian versions were prepared in the past;[124] however, only recently was a complete and thorough edition of them published.[125] Both Akkadian versions of the myth are much shorter than the Sumerian one.

Brief Summary of the Plot
The text begins by telling of Ištar's decision to descend to the netherworld (ll. 1–11). She arrives at the gates and threatens the gatekeeper she will break in and release the dead, letting them into the world of the living. The gatekeeper asks for Ereškigal's orders, and she instructs him to let Ištar in, and "treat her in accord with the ancient sacred customs" (ll. 12–38). The gatekeeper lets Ištar in and strips her of her garments and jewelry through each gate she passes, because "these are the sacred customs of the lady of the netherworld" (ll. 39–62). When Ištar reaches the netherworld, Ereškigal becomes enraged, and, by her command, Namtar, her vizier (*sukkallu*), strikes Ištar with several diseases, which presumably kill her. Subsequently, all sexual life is halted on earth (ll. 63–80). Papsukkal, "vizier of the great gods" (*sukkal ilānī rabûti*), mourns over the situation and goes to tell Ea of the calamity. Ea then creates an *assinnu* named Aṣušunamir[126] / *kulu'u* named Aṣnamer,[127] sending him to

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[123] For a specification of the editions and publications of the different versions of the myth, see Teppo 2008: 77–78 n. 16 and Lapinkivi 2010: ix. For a list of all manuscripts of the composition, see Lapinkivi 2010: xi.
[124] See, especially, Borger's (1963) edition, and Sladek's (1974: 240–264) edition, that appeared as an appendix to his main concern, the treatment of the Sumerian version of the myth.
[125] See Lapinkivi 2010.
[126] In the Neo-Assyrian Nineveh version.
[127] In the Middle Assyrian Aššur version.

the netherworld. Ea tells Aṣušunamir that when Ereškigal rejoices at his presence, he should ask for a water-skin, which is actually the corpse of Ištar (ll. 81–99). The text immediately continues with Ereškigal's furious reaction to Aṣušunamir's request, as she casts upon him a lengthy curse (ll. 100–108). She then orders Namtar to sprinkle Ištar with the "water of life" and release her from the realm of the dead. On her way out, Ištar retrieves her garments and jewelry. Namtar is instructed to bring Ištar back to the netherworld if she does not produce a substitute for herself. Dumuzi is chosen as that substitute, and his sister, Belili, mourns it. The closing lines of the text tell of Dumuzi's resurrection, and of "the male and female mourners" who rise with him (ll. 109–138).

Discussion of the Akkadian Versions

The main concern of the present discussion is evaluating the figures *assinnu* and *kulu'u*, as reflected in the Akkadian versions of the myth. Sladek viewed both these figures as bearing similar sexual abnormality, so "it makes no difference whether Aṣ(ušu)namir was designated as an *assinnu* (Nineveh recension) or as a *kulu'u* (Aššur recension)."[128] This view can be argued over, however, since the following chapters will exhibit the clear differences between *assinnu* and *kulu'u*. Thematically, the Middle Assyrian and Neo-Assyrian versions of the myth are identical, and the differences between them are mainly orthographic. Only rarely do we find a different wording or formulation in the two versions. For this reason, we may assume that, in the context of this myth, *assinnu* and *kulu'u* were regarded as similar figures by the Neo-Assyrian scribes.

The creation of the *assinnu*/*kulu'u* by Ea is described in a laconic manner:

***Ištar's Descent to the Netherworld*, 91–92**[129]

91 ^d*é-a ina em-qi lìb-bi-šú ib-ta-ni z*[*i*]*k-ru*
92 *ib-ni-ma* ^m*è-šu-na-mir* ^{lú}*as-sin-nu*
91 Ea, in his wise heart, created (*what was*) *called for*,[130]
92 he created Aṣušunamir the *assinnu*.

Lapinkivi translated the term *zikru* in line 91 as "word", explaining that it indicated that "the *assinnu* was the personification of the word of Ea."[131] However, there could be a pun here, because *zikru* is also the word for "male". In the Aššur version, the title of the figure created by Ea is *kulu'u*, and his name is Aṣnamer. The significance of these variations is discussed below. We learn of the way in which the *assinnu*/*kulu'u* gained Ereškigal's favor only through Ea's prediction of the matter, as he tells it to Aṣ(ušu)namir before sending him on his task:

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[128] Sladek 1974: 90–91.
[129] See Borger 1963: 91 and Lapinkivi 2010: 11. Transliteration of the Nineveh version, follows Borger.
[130] Translation following Foster 1996: 406; see explanation in Foster 1996: 406 n. 2, including previous literature.
[131] Lapinkivi 2010: 78.

***Ištar's Descent to the Netherworld*, 95–99**[132]

95 ᵈereš-*ki-gal li-mur-ka-ma i-n*[*a p*]*a-ni-ka li-iḫ-du*

96 *ul-tu lìb-ba-šá i-nu-uḫ-ḫu kab-ta-as-sa ip-pe-red-du-u*

97 *tùm-me-ši-ma* mu dingir^(meš) gal^(meš)

98 *šu-qi* sag^(meš)-*ka a-na* ^(kuš)*ḫal-zi-qi uz-na šu-kun*

99 *e be-el-ti* ^(kuš)*ḫal-zi-qu lid-nu-ni* a^(meš) *ina lìb-bi lu-ul-ta-ti*

95 "Ereškigal shall see you and rejoice at your presence.

96 When her heart has calmed and her mind has become cheerful,

97 have her swear by the great gods.

98 Lift your head and pay attention to the waterskin,

99 (and say:) "my lady, let them give me the waterskin so that I can drink water from it.""

Ereškigal's attraction to Aṣušunamir requires clarifications. Sladek claimed that since Ereškigal, as the ruler of the realm of the dead, was forbidden to engage in procreative sex, she could only be attracted to sexless creatures. Therefore, according to Sladek, the sexless Aṣušunamir was so appealing to her, since he was "an impotent lover", whose lack of procreation power accorded well with the taboo on all living in the realm of the dead.[133] However, Walls rejected this interpretation, demonstrating that, in other compositions, Ereškigal was portrayed as possessing a "passionate desire for the virile Nergal".[134] Sladek further suggested that Aṣušunamir was very handsome, because of the meaning of his name, "his appearance is glorious".[135] This interpretation further explains Ereškigal's fury over her potential lover's request to receive Ištar's body, as an act of betrayal, since he prefers the living Ištar over the queen of the dead.

Ereškigal's reaction to Aṣušunamir's request to receive the corpse of Ištar is described immediately thereafter. The queen of the netherworld becomes furious, and curses Aṣušunamir:

***Ištar's Descent to the Netherworld*, 103–108**[136]

103 *al-ka* ^(m)è-*šú-na-mir lu-zir-ka iz-ra* gal-*a*

104 ninda^(meš) ^(giš)apin^(meš) uru *lu a-kal-ka*

105 ^(dug)*ḫa-ba-na-at* uru *lu ma-al-ti-it-ka*

106 gissu bàd *lu-ú man-za-zu-ka*

107 *as-kup-pa-tu lu mu-ša-bu-ú-ka*

108 *šak-ru ù ṣa-mu-ú lim-ḫa-ṣu le-et-ka*

103 Come, Aṣušunamir, let me curse you with a great curse:

104 May food of the city plows[137] be your food!

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[132] See Borger 1963: 91 and Lapinkivi 2010: 12. Transliteration of the Nineveh version, follows Borger.

[133] Sladek 1974: 40 n. 1, 91–92.

[134] Walls 2001: 152.

[135] Sladek 1974: 92. For interpretations of the meaning of this name, see Katz 1995: 229 n. 19 and Dalley 2000: 161 n. 13.

[136] See Borger 1963: 91–92 and Lapinkivi 2010: 12. Transliteration of the Nineveh version, follows Borger.

105 May the city sewers be your drink!
106 May the shade of the city wall be your standing-place!
107 May the threshold be your dwelling!
108 May the drunks and the sobers slap your cheek!

Sladek suggested that the curse formed an aetiological explanation for the social status of the *assinnu* and *kulu'u* in reality.[138] Similar views were expressed by Groneberg and Maul.[139] Sladek equated Ereškigal's curse with Enkidu's curse of the prostitute in the Gilgameš epic (tablet 7 iii 18–22),[140] claiming that both Ereškigal and Enkidu felt deceived after having been erotically manipulated, and, therefore, their curses were meant to diminish Aṣušunamir's and the prostitute's erotic charms to the lowest possible level, termed by Sladek as that "of a derelict streetwalker".[141] Based on the parallel wording of some lines of the two curses, Lambert deducted that "these effeminate men were a class corresponding to female prostitutes. However, by itself this passage does not prove that the *assinnu* was a male prostitute."[142]

Let us review some of the key terms embedded in Ereškigal's curse, in order to understand its content and significance. Ereškigal destines Aṣušunamir to eat "the food of the city plows", drink water from "the city sewers", stand at "the shade of the city wall", dwell at "the threshold", and be slapped by "the drunks and the sobers". The first two terms might hint to low social status, since the metaphor of being nurtured of dirt and sewage water seems suitable for the poor and wretched. Maul, however, suggested that the "city plows" was a euphemism for a penis, because of the connection he saw between the *assinnu*, as a member of Inanna/Ištar's cult, and prostitution.[143] Nissinen adopted this interpretation, and suggested that this part of the curse alluded to homosexual relations.[144] However, both these interpretations seem unjustified, and actually circular: Maul based his view of the plow as a euphemism for a penis on prior knowledge of the *assinnu* as engaged in homosexual relations, and, subsequently, Nissinen used Maul's view in order to claim that this euphemism hinted to the connection between the *assinnu* and homosexuality.

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[137] Lambert (1992: 152) translated this phrase as "food of the city gutters (?)", while CAD (E: 237, s.v. "*epinnu* 1d") left it untranslated, regarding it as bearing an "uncertain meaning". However, the literal translation of ninda^meš giš^apin^meš uru, "food of the city plows" (Lapinkivi [2010: 32] indeed translated it as "bread of the city's ploughs"), seems perfectly logical, because it can refer to clods of earth, as the product of plows ("food of the plows"). This translation fits the context of the curse, since dirt and sewer water are destined to become Aṣušunamir's food and drink.

[138] Sladek 1974: 41–42.

[139] Groneberg 1986: 37, Maul 1992: 162.

[140] For a transliteration, translation and commentary of Enkidu's curse of the prostitute, see Lambert 1992: 128–132. For a recent edition of it (Gilgameš VII,102–131), see George 2003: 638–641 (for the pertinent lines, see George 2003: 638,102–104, 640,117, 119). For a discussion and comparison of Ereškigal's and Enkidu's curses, see Tigay 1982: 170–173.

[141] Sladek 1974: 92–93.

[142] Lambert 1992: 152.

[143] Maul 1992: 162–163.

[144] Nissinen 1998a: 28–34.

The following two terms are less straightforward. It can be suggested that standing at the shade of the city wall and dwelling at the threshold were allusions to the customs of prostitutes.[145] Leick suggested that "the city-walls with their projections and recesses provided shade and shelter for the homeless."[146] In a *pāru*-hymn praising Ištar a passage appears where the goddess's sexual promiscuity was associated with the shade of the city wall:

pāru-*hymn for Ištar*, 13–17[147]

13 *eṭ-lu-ut a-li-ku-nu pu-uḫ-ḫi-ra-nim-ma ri-ša-tu-ma iš-dum a-na* uru-ki
14 *a-na ṣi-il-li du-ri-im i ni-lik ri-ša-tu-ma iš-dum a-na* uru-ki
15 *7 pa-an-ti-ša 7 qá-ab-li-ša ri-ša-tu-ma iš-dum a-na* uru-ki
16 *1 šu-ši ù 1 šu-ši ip-ta-na-aš-ša-ḫu a-na ú-ri-ša ri-ša-tu-ma iš-dum a-na* uru-ki
17 *i-ta-an-ḫu eṭ-lu-tum ul in-na-aḫ iš-tar ri-ša-tu-ma iš-dum a-na* uru-ki

13 "Assemble to me the young men of your city"; exultation is the foundation for a city.
14 "Let us go to the shadow of the city-wall!"; exultation is the foundation for a city.
15 Seven (on) her chest, seven (on) her hips; exultation is the foundation for a city.
16 Sixty and sixty satisfy themselves on her vulva; exultation is the foundation for a city.
17 The young men then tire, but Ištar tires not; exultation is the foundation for a city.

In this passage the goddess is described as one who lures young men to the shade of the city wall, where orgiastic sexual relations take place. However, no prostitution per se is described here.

The corpse of Ištar is subsequently revived by Namtar, Ereškigal's vizier, following the command of his mistress:

***Ištar's Descent to the Netherworld*, 118**[148]
ᵈ*iš-tar* aᵐᵉˢ *ti-la is-luḫ-ši-ma il-qa-áš-ši*[149]
He (= Namtar) sprinkled Ištar with the water of life, and took her away.

It is significant that even though Ereškigal is the ruler of the realm of the dead, she does not kill Ištar herself, nor is she the one who actually revives her. She orders Namtar to strike and kill Ištar and later on to revive her. It is further significant to see that the *assinnu*/*kulu'u* does not bring Ištar to life himself, but merely requests her corpse from Ereškigal.

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[145] Van de Mieroop (1997: 44–45) suggested that the association of prostitutes with the shadow of the city wall represented the physical marginalizing of these women in society.
[146] Leick 1992: 166.
[147] See von Soden 1990: 340.
[148] See Borger 1963: 92 and Lapinkivi 2010: 12. Transliteration of the Nineveh version, follows Borger.
[149] The Middle Assyrian Aššur version adds *ana* igi-*šá*, "in front of her", namely, in front of Ereškigal.

C. Discussion of All Versions of *Inanna/Ištar's Descent to the Netherworld*

We will now turn to discuss the similarities and variations between the Sumerian and Akkadian versions of the myth. Sladek suggested that the Akkadian versions were shorter than the Sumerian one because they included abbreviated episodes that alluded to their parallels in the fuller Sumerian version.[150] The main similarities that are apparent between the Sumerian and Akkadian versions are the creation of Inanna/Ištar's rescuers by Enki/Ea, god of wisdom[151] (ll. 222–225 in the Sumerian version; ll. 91–92 in the Nineveh Akkadian version; for citations and discussions, see above); their gain of Ereškigal's favor and the subsequent request to receive Inanna/Ištar's corpse in return (ll. 263–266, 275–279 in the Sumerian version; ll. 95–99 in the Nineveh Akkadian version; for citations and discussions, see above); and the revival of the goddess using the "water of life"[152] (l. 280 in the Sumerian version; l. 118 in the Nineveh Akkadian version; for citations and discussions, see above). At this point, the figures, after having fulfilled their role, disappear from the plot and are never mentioned again.

Referring to Inanna/Ištar's rescuers, Sladek maintained that "there was something sexually abnormal about all of them", and that "all of the creatures created by Enki/Ea lacked the power of reproductive male sexuality."[153] According to him, this is the key for understanding the role of these figures in the myth: being sexless, they lacked procreative power and therefore were able to enter the realm of the dead, though they were not dead themselves.[154] In the Akkadian version, this characteristic of them resulted further in Ereškigal's attraction to the *assinnu/kulu'u*.

Maul noted three main characteristics of all these figures (the *assinnu*, *kulu'u*, *kurgarrû* and galaturra), based on their attestation in the current text. First, since they were created by a god, they possessed a superhuman nature. Second, contrary to normal people, they could exceed the limitations of social conventions – a fact that was connected to their transsexual nature. Third, the god of sorcery, Enki/Ea, had equipped them with the "water of life" and "plant of life" for healing purposes. Maul equated these characteristics with those found in anthropological surveys of shamanistic behavior, which included feminine and bisexual priestly conduct.[155] Since the Mesopotamian evidence is highly limited, these analogies are complicated, though they cannot be utterly dismissed. In the following chapters we will see that

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[150] Sladek 1974: 49.

[151] It is noteworthy that these figures are not being conceived, but are "formed", perhaps as an allusion to their non-procreative nature. On the other hand, as was noted above, their creation out of dirt might allude to the creation of the first human out of clay in the myth of *Atra-ḫasīs*. These, however, are merely conjectures.

[152] The Sumerian version adds the "plant of life". It might be suggested that the number of items is matched by the number of figures who are about to use them. So, while the Sumerian version enumerates two items – water and plant – to be used by two figures – *kurgarrû* and galaturra – the Akkadian versions mention only one item – water – to be used by one figure – *assinnu* or *kulu'u*.

[153] Sladek 1974: 87–88, 98.

[154] See, similarly, Henshaw 1994: 288.

[155] Maul 1992: 163–164.

some evidence hints that the *assinnu* and the *kurgarrû* were ascribed some apotropaic qualities, presumably because of their perceived connection with their patron goddess, Ištar. The gala was a professional lamenter who participated in funerary rites, perhaps because similar qualities were ascribed to him too. Whether these facts can be taken as evidence for shamanistic behavior is open for speculation. Whether they were related to feminine or bisexual conduct – priestly or other – is questionable.

The differences between the Sumerian and Akkadian versions involve the identity and number of the figures sent to rescue Inanna/Ištar, and the way in which they retrieve her corpse from Ereškigal. In the Sumerian version, both the galaturra and the *kurgarrû* appear, but in the Akkadian versions either the *assinnu* or *kulu'u* fulfills the same function. As was noted by Kilmer and Sladek, the former pair of figures express sympathy for the agony of Ereškigal, while the latter ones utilize erotic manipulation, exploiting the sexual desire of the queen of the dead.[156] In both cases the efforts succeed, and the dead Inanna/Ištar is revived and rescued from the netherworld. Is it possible to point to a development in the way the ancients understood the plot or wished to utilize it? It is suggested that while the earlier version points to the cultic functions of the gala and the *kurgarrû*, and renders an aetiological background for their cultic performance, the later versions underline the peculiar sexual nature of the *assinnu* and *kulu'u*, the latter one not necessarily even a specific member of Ištar's cult.[157]

Another important difference between the versions of the myth involves the dead goddess's revival. In the Sumerian version, the *kurgarrû* and galaturra revive Inanna, while, in the Akkadian versions, the *assinnu/kulu'u* asks for her body, but the actual act of reviving is performed by Namtar, Ereškigal's vizier, following the command of his lady. This difference seems to reflect a diminution in the role reserved for the *assinnu/kulu'u* in the Akkadian version, compared to that of the *kurgarrû* and galaturra. It can be suggested that this diminution was the result of the different messages each version of the tale was meant to convey concerning their role in reality. The Sumerian version emphasized the relation between Inanna and her cult members, while the Akkadian ones stressed the peculiarity, perhaps abnormality, of these persons.

This brings us further to discuss one more significant variation: the curse of Ereškigal, which only appears in the Akkadian versions of the myth. This episode forms a fundamental difference between the Sumerian and Akkadian versions with regard to the place of the cursed figure in the myth, and presumably in reality as well. As was argued, the *kurgarrû* and galaturra are not portrayed as figures that move back and forth between the realms of the living and the dead. Once they have fulfilled their purpose by reviving Inanna, they disappear from the scene, and their role in the plot, however significant, remains small. In contrast, Ereškigal's curse grants the *assinnu/kulu'u* special focus and alludes to his attributes in real life. Could this supposed allusion to the low status of these figures be a later development in

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[156] Kilmer 1971, Sladek 1974: 98.

[157] For the difference between gala/*kalû* and *kulu'u*, see Chapter 2.

Mesopotamian thought? As is mentioned above, the Sumerian version was composed in the Old Babylonian period, while the earliest copies of the Akkadian versions are from the eleventh century.

These variations might also have stemmed from the difference between the Babylonian world of thought, and the Assyrian one, since the Akkadian versions of the myth were Assyrian recensions of the Old Babylonian original. Since we are unaware of contemporary Babylonian Akkadian-written copies of the composition, the possibility cannot be refuted. These proposals can explain, at least partly, the shift from gala and *kurgarrû* in the Old Babylonian version, to *kulu'u* or *assinnu* in the Middle Assyrian and Neo-Assyrian versions. This suggestion, of course, is merely conjectural.

As the following chapters demonstrate, it is clear that *kulu'u* and *assinnu* were not regarded the same, nor as exact equivalents of gala and *kurgarrû*. Admittedly, the reason for the appearance of *kulu'u* in the Aššur version, as opposed to the *assinnu* in the Nineveh one, still eludes me. It is noteworthy, however, that *kulu'u* appears in the older version, while *assinnu* appears in the later one. Therefore, if any chronological factor played a part here, it seems interesting that the title for one of the figures of the Sumerian version (the galaturra) was replaced by the derivative term *kulu'u*, while the term *kurgarrû* completely disappeared. The term *kulu'u*, in turn, was replaced by the Neo-Assyrian copyists with *assinnu*, a different figure whose function as a member of Inanna/Ištar's cult made him suitable for replacing the galaturra and *kulu'u*. As is demonstrated below,[158] the term *kulu'u* is poorly attested, in contrast with gala/*kalû*. Perhaps this term designated a concept less common than the *kalû* and was therefore replaced in the later version by the *assinnu*, who was a well-known figure, similar in many respects to the gala/*kalû* and to the *kurgarrû*.

Finally, a brief discussion is in order concerning the relation between Inanna/Ištar and her rescuers, and a general examination of these figures and their patron goddess in the myth. Nissinen and Teppo claimed that this myth testifies to the close connection between the *assinnu*, *kurgarrû* and *kulu'u* and the cult of Ištar, justifies their existence and activities, and bestows upon these mortal beings divine power.[159] Parpola suggested that this myth provided for Ištar's cult personnel the promise of salvation from the earthly world, following the goddess's resurrection in the tale. In his view, the *assinnu* acted as a spiritual guide for the initiates, preparing them for their future ascent to heaven, where they would unite with their goddess.[160] However, these proposals are not supported by the actual content of the text. Similar difficulties involve other suggestions made by Parpola, who maintained that the suffering and agony of Inanna/Ištar in the netherworld was reflected in reality by the practice of self-mutilation by members of her cult personnel.[161] There is no explicit

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[158] See Chapter 2.
[159] Nissinen 1998a: 29, Teppo 2008: 77–78.
[160] Parpola 1997: XCII-XCIII nn. 119–121.
[161] Parpola 1997: XXXIV.

evidence for such practices by any figure in *Inanna/Ištar's Descent*, or any other text, for that matter.[162]

2. *The Fashioning of the gala*

Edition: Kramer 1981.
This balag-composition[163] was published by Kramer in 1981,[164] and its original title was šà-zu ta-àm-ir,[165] "What has your heart brought?". In his introduction to the text edition, Kramer noted that even though it was known to scholars that Enki was considered as the patron deity of the gala, the exact origins and nature of this "theological invention", as Kramer defined it, were never clarified.[166] The current text sheds light on this question, since it tells how Enki created the gala and for what purpose.

Brief Summary of the Plot
The composition is comprised of two parts, separated by a ruling line. The first part begins with a section that includes a question repeatedly addressed to Inanna: "What has your heart brought?"[167] (ll. 1–19). This repetitive question is followed by the main part of the text, which supplies a description of Enki creating the gala in order to pacify the furious Inanna (ll. 20–37). A dividing-line marks the end of the episode. As was mentioned above, the reverse of the tablet is badly preserved, so that most of the remaining text is poorly understood.

Discussion
The episode telling of the creation of the gala by Enki is described as follows:

> *The Fashioning of the gala*, 20–26[168]
> 20 ᵈam-an-ki-ke₄ e-ne-èm-bi giš bí-in-tuku ní-te-ni ki-gal mi-ni-in-kúš-ù
> 21 gala mu-lu ér-šà-ḫun-e daʔ-niʔ-x-x mu-na-an-dím
> 22 ér-šà-ne-ša₄ i-si-iš ma-al-la-ni x x [si] bí-in-sá
> 23 ᵏᵘˢ̌ub li-li-ìs mùš-àm di-da-ni šu-ni-šè bí-in-mar
> 24 ᵈam-an-ki-ke₄ kù ga-ša-an-na-ra mu-lu daʔ MESʔ mu-ši-in-gi₄
> 25 nin-daʔ šà-zu ḫé-em-ḫun-e ᵍⁱˢ̌gu-za-za tuš-ù
> 26 gala-e ér-šà-[ḫun-e][169] mùš-àm di-da ér[170]-šà-ne-ša₄ [ḫu-mu]-ra-gál

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[162] See, especially, Cooper's (2000) criticism of Parpola's theories concerning the influence of Assyrian religion on the development of monotheistic religions and Jewish Kabbalah, as well as Assante's (2009: 49–50) criticism.

[163] For an explanation of the nature of the liturgical composition generically known as balag, see, most recently, Gabbay 2014a: 5–6.

[164] BM 29616. See photograph in Kramer 1981: 11. For a general discussion of this text, see Shehata 2008.

[165] See Gadotti 2010: 58.

[166] Kramer 1981: 1.

[167] šà-zu ta-àm-ir; ir is emesal for túm, "to bring".

[168] See Kramer 1981: 2–3 and Gadotti 2010: 56. For a philological commentary of this passage, see Kramer 1981: 6–7. Transliteration follows Kramer, unless otherwise stated.

[169] Restoration follows Gadotti (2010: 56,26). Kramer (1981: 3,26) transcribed here [ne-š]a₄, a

20 Enki heard these words, he troubled himself in the great Earth.
21 He fashioned for her the gala, him of the heart-soothing laments …
22 He set up for him his eršaneša-lament, lamentation and position …
23 He placed in his hand the ub and lilis drums, and his "alas!"-uttering.
24 Enki sent him who … to holy Inanna:
25 "Oh lady, may your heart be soothed! Seat yourself on your throne!
26 The gala has made available to you the lament, the "alas!"-uttering and the eršaneša-song … "

According to the passages preceding the one cited above, Enki was troubled by the rage of Inanna and sought a solution for calming her heart. As we can see, the solution was found by forming a special figure, the gala. This figure was handed playing drums, ub and lilis (line 23), to accompany his lamentations that were meant to appease the rage of Inanna. Indeed, the gala/*kalû* was a member of the cult of Inanna/Ištar, who used playing drums such as the ub and the lilis throughout the performance of his chants and laments. It seems clear, therefore, that the current myth was meant to serve as an aetiological background for the factual acts of living figures and provide an explanation for the connection between the gala and his patron goddess.[171]

It is interesting to compare the above episode with the one from *Inanna's Descent*, where Enki creates the galaturra ("junior gala") and *kurgarrû* from the dirt under his fingernails, in order that they sooth Ereškigal, and, as a favor, request the body of Inanna and rescue her. These two compositions present different accounts concerning the creation of the gala. However, the similarities between them are noticeable: in both texts Enki, the god of wisdom, is the generative force behind the creation of the gala, a being that is formed in order to solve a problem connected with Inanna, either rescuing or soothing her. Gabbay viewed these two myths as marking the gala as a figure that crosses "the human frontiers toward the divine", a view that connects the mythical background of this figure with its alleged ambiguous nature in real life.[172] The two compositions seem to complement each other, as they both allude to the cultic performance of the gala. While *Inanna's Descent* supplies the reason for the rage and anguish of the goddess who was consigned to the netherworld, *The Fashioning of the gala* reveals that this cult member was created in order to pacify her.

Further attention should be drawn to line 30: [sukkal?]-zi-zu ga-ša-an šubur-ke₄ šà-zu hé-im-hun-e, "May your loyal [vizier?] Ninšubur soothe your heart." It appears that, in this context, Ninšubur functions in a similar fashion as the gala, since this deity is portrayed as soothing the heart of Inanna. Indeed, Gabbay suggested that, in

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suggestion to which Gadotti (2010: 56 n. 18) objected, claiming there is not enough space on the tablet as to allow this restoration.

[170] Thus Gadotti (2010: 56,26). Kramer (1981: 3,26) transcribed here "MI(?)", however Gadotti's suggestion seems more probable, since it renders the term eršaneša, that fits this context perfectly.

[171] See, in this regard, Kramer 1981 and Gadotti 2010: 56.

[172] Gabbay 2008: 53.

this text, Ninšubur represented a "divine mirror-image of the gala", since both are said to sooth the goddess's heart. Gabbay further suggested that the association between Ninšubur and the gala is apparent in the beginning of *Inanna's Descent*, where Inanna orders Ninšubur to lament over her once she has reached the netherworld, like the laments customarily uttered by the gala.[173] According to Wiggermann, Ninšubur was regarded as a feminine deity in the Sumerian sources of the third millennium, but masculine in Akkadian texts, where he appears to form a spelling of the god Ilabrat.[174] Wiggermann claimed further that the feminine Sumerian Ninšubur and the masculine Akkadian Ninšubur/Ilabrat coexisted for a certain period during late third to early second millennia. The Sumerian female Ninšubur was considered as one of Inanna's closest servants,[175] a fact that could explain her gender-ambiguous nature. Wiggermann claimed that this gender ambiguity is explained in the following passage from an Old Babylonian hymn:[176]

CBS 15119 + CBS 14083,3'–4'[177]
3' [á-zi-da]-na túg-nita bí-in-[mu$_4$ o o o o o]
4' [á-gùb]-bu-na túg-munus-a bí-in-mu$_4$ [o o o o]
3' she$^?$ [wear]s male clothes on her [right side]
4' she$^?$ wears female clothes on her [left side]

Similarly to the above claims of Wiggermann, Gabbay argued that evidence for the gender ambiguity of Ninšubur is embedded in this passage.[178] However, since the context is broken, it is hard to establish a firm connection between the cross-dressing and Ninšubur, who only appears later on in the text (for the first time in line 12'). And since Sumerian does not differentiate grammatically between genders, the term "she" could have just as well been "he". Therefore, we cannot be sure who the subject of the verbs appearing in these lines actually is.

To sum up the contribution of *The Fashioning of the gala* to the present research, this composition provides unique aetiological information, illuminating the gala and his role in cult as a performer of lamentations. The evidence supplied by the current text concerning the mythical background for the gala's cultic performance accords well with the information gathered from other sources concerning the gala and his functions, as well as his relation to Enki/Ea and Inanna/Ištar. It should be noted, however, that the topic of gender ambiguity is hardly alluded to in this text.

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[173] Gabbay 2008: 53–54.

[174] Wiggermann 2000b, RlA 9: 491, s.v. "Nin-šubur".

[175] For a presentation and discussion of the texts exemplifying this, see Wiggermann 2000b, RlA 9: 496–498, s.v. "Nin-šubur".

[176] For an edition of this text, see Sjöberg 1982: 72–74, 79.

[177] See Sjöberg 1982: 72.

[178] Gabbay 2008: 54.

3. *Inanna and Ebiḫ*

Editions: Limet 1971 (lines 123–183), Attinger 1998, Jaques 2004.
Translations and commentaries: Bottéro and Kramer 1989: 219–229, Black, Cunningham, Robson and Zólyomi 2004: 334–338.
This composition exalts Inanna for her belligerent qualities. It applies the third person and the first person alternately, so on occasions the goddess is praised by the narrator for being a terrifying deity, responsible for war and conflict, and on others she praises herself for the same reasons. The text is embedded with several narrative passages.[179]

Brief Summary of the Plot
In the opening passage, Inanna is approached in the second person, glorified and portrayed as a terrifying goddess, responsible for war and conflict (ll. 1–24). Then the goddess is quoted as speaking in the first person. She blames mount Ebiḫ[180] for not showing her respect. As punishment, she threatens to raise war among men on the mountain range (ll. 25–52). The goddess dresses in royal garments, and exalts her father, the god An (ll. 53–64). She addresses him in the second person, describes how he gave her power and authority, and recounts to him how mount Ebiḫ treated her with disrespect. Then Inanna expresses her wish to punish Ebiḫ (ll. 65–111). An replies by ascribing glory and strength to Ebiḫ, telling Inanna she cannot overcome the mountain's might (ll. 112–130). Nonetheless, Inanna goes to battle, and subdues Ebiḫ (ll. 131–151). Then she addresses the mountain and glorifies herself for overcoming it (ll. 152–181). The composition is concluded with a statement praising Inanna and Nisaba (ll. 182–184).

Discussion
As part of her self-praising following the defeat she inflicted upon mount Ebiḫ, Inanna declares the following:

> *Inanna and Ebiḫ*, **171–175**[181]
> 171 é-gal mu-dù níg diri bí-ak
> 172 ᵍⁱˢgu-za mi-ni-gub suḫuš-bi mi-ni-ge-en
> 173 kur-gar-ra gíri ba-da-ra mu-na-šúm
> 174 gala-ra ᵏᵘˢub li-li-ìs mu-na-šúm
> 175 pi-li-pi-li sag šu-bal mu-ni-ak
> 171 I have built a palace, and done much more.
> 172 I have put a throne in place and made its foundation firm.
> 173 To the *kurgarrû* I have given the sword and *patarru*,[182]

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[179] For a general discussion of this text, and its place in Old Babylonian scribal curriculum, see Delnero 2011.
[180] This mountain range was identified by scholars with Jebel Hamrin; see Hallo and van Dijk 1968: 3 n. 21, including previous literature.
[181] See Limet 1971: 18, Attinger 1998: 178, 180, Jaques 2004: 218. Transliteration follows ETCSL (Text c.1.3.2, Inana and Ebiḫ).

174 to the gala I have given the ub and lilis drums.
175 (As for) the *pilpilû*, I have changed his head.

The actions described in this passage are all related to the measurements taken by Inanna in order to enforce order and rules upon humanity. A palace with firm foundations symbolizes the authority required for regulating people's lives according to norms of conduct. Similarly, the conduct of the *kurgarrû*, gala and *pilpilû* is described as resulting directly from the will and authority of the goddess. These acts are incorporated in Inanna's triumph over mount Ebiḫ, the antagonist that signifies chaos and disobedience to the order Inanna imposes on the world.

It seems that each one of the figures mentioned in the above passage is treated by the goddess in a manner that signifies its unique characteristics. The *kurgarrû* is given cutting-weapons, items that seem to be closely associated with his cultic performance.[183] The gala is given percussion instruments, presumably as an allusion to the laments uttered by him, where percussions were used.[184]

However, most intriguing of all is Inanna's handling of the third figure (line 175): "As for the *pilpilû*, I have changed his head." In this passage Inanna declares to have changed the *pilpilû*, who was a figure known from other texts to be a member of the goddess' cult.[185] The mention of the *pilpilû* as having been "changed" appears in several other texts, and so it was suggested that line 175 in the current text reflected a change of the *pilpilû*'s sex, caused by Ištar.[186] Limet understood from this line that the sex of the *pilpilû* was changed, and in his commentary on this line, he equated the *pilpilû* to the *assinnu*.[187] Bottéro and Kramer translated this line as follows: "J'y ai changé la personnalité des travestis", regarding the *pilpilû* to be a cross-dressing figure whose personality was changed. They further viewed this passage as alluding to the connection of Inanna with prostitution, and to the re-establishment of her cult.[188] Attinger viewed this passage as dealing with a perversion in the natural order of the world, and suggested that this "perversion" bore a sexual nature. He admitted, however, that the exact nature of this "perversion" remains enigmatic.[189] Jaques viewed this phrase as portraying the *pilpilû* as having been attributed madness by Inanna.[190]

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[182] A weapon whose exact nature is unknown. It is suggested in the CAD (P: 275, s.v. "*patarru*") that it was a sharp object, perhaps a knife. However, Frank (1915: 197) and Volk (1989: 92) translated it as "Keule", "mace". See also SG B: 83, s.v. "ba-da-ra" and ePSD, s.v. "badara".

[183] See discussion below, and in Chapter 3.

[184] See Chapter 2.

[185] See Chapter 5, pp. 267–270.

[186] See explicitly in Limet's (1971: 21,53) translation of this line, and similarly Henshaw (1994: 290, 295, 298), who suggested that this "change of sex" was either an act of cross-dressing, a change of gender role, or "literal sex change", presumably meant by Henshaw to refer to castration.

[187] Limet 1971: 21,53, 27–28.

[188] Bottéro and Kramer 1989: 225, 228.

[189] Attinger 1998: 188.

[190] Jaques 2004: 219.

A different approach was expressed by Black, Cunningham, Robson and Zóly-omi, who understood the key phrase sag-šu bal as "change the headgear".[191] This perspective alters the whole meaning of the line and contradicts the traditional view of the *pilpilû* as a figure that underwent some kind of change of its sex. It implies that the headgear was an object characteristic of the *pilpilû*, similarly as the cutting-weapons characterized the *kurgarrû*, and the percussions characterized the gala. However, this interpretation is problematic. The phrase in question is to be understood as sag šu-bal, literally "change the head", since šu-bal--ak is the verb "to change".[192] Understanding it as "change the headgear" requires that the second element in the compound would be šu₄, "to cover", and not šu. The Sumerian term for a headgear is sagšu, written as the compound šu₄+sag (rarely sag+šu₄), and it is usually determined by túg, a sign that does not appear in the above passage:[193] 𒂷𒆠𒌧. Therefore, in order to accept the above suggestion, we have to assume that šu here was a phonetic writing of šu₄, and that the customary determinative túg was omitted. However, this line is perfectly understandable with šu read as it is, and without the missing túg. It seems preferable to assume that the text is correct as it is and interpret the meaning of "change the head", rather than force upon it interpretations that do not match what is written. Whatever symbolism was signified by this "change of head", it was in all likelihood connected with the cultic performance of the *pilpilû* under the aegis of Ištar. This "change of head" was caused by Ištar and was equal to the cultic emblems she gave the gala (drums) and the *kurgarrû* (weapons).

It can therefore be seen, that this composition relates to Inanna and her cult members. It demonstrates the attributes of the *kurgarrû* and the gala as associated with cutting-weapons and drums, respectively, and the notion of the *pilpilû* as being one who was "changed" by Inanna. The nature of this change, however, is controversial, and the suggestion that it referred to sexual or gender characteristics is merely conjectural. This text also exhibits the goddess herself as the source of authority and order in the world. All these themes are alluded to in other texts as well.

4. *Inanna and Enki*

Editions: Farber-Flügge 1973, Farber 1995: 287–292.
Translations and commentaries: Alster 1974: 20–34, Bottéro and Kramer 1989: 230–256, Farber 1997: 522–526.
This composition tells how Inanna obtained the me-s[194] by way of cheating their

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[191] Black, Cunningham, Robson and Zólyomi 2004: 338. This translation was repeated by Lapinkivi (2010: 76 n. 234).

[192] See PSD B: 48–49, s.v. "bal D" and ePSD, s.v. "šu bala". For a comprehensive discussion of the verb AK, see Attinger 2005.

[193] See ePSD, s.v. "saĝšu".

[194] me was a term denoting the cultural norms that characterized Sumerian civilization, variously translated as "cultural norms", "divine attributes", "divine powers" or "divine offices". For discussions of this term and its significance, see Farber-Flügge 1973: 116–213 and Farber 1990, RlA 7: 610–613, s.v. "me (ĝarza, *parṣu*)". Glassner (1992: 56–57), however, claimed that the me-s listed in this text had a different significance, as they expressed Inanna's various

original owner, the god of wisdom Enki. The me-s are enumerated several times, and among them appear to be the *kurgarrû* and SAG-UR-SAG, two third gender figures who will be discussed in Chapters 3 and 5. Farber claimed that this text did not enjoy much popularity among Mesopotamian society, because only two large copies and a few small fragments of it were found so far.[195]

Brief Summary of the Plot

The text begins with a visit of Inanna to Enki's abode at the *apsû* (the sweet subterranean water). The two drink beer and wine, and the inebriated Enki decrees a long list of me-s he is willing to give to the goddess. He thereafter falls asleep, and Inanna leaves with the me-s by a boat, repeating the list Enki decreed before. Once he awakens, Enki is sober again and learns from his servant Isimud of what has happened. He regrets his mistake, and, during the conversation, the list of me-s is enumerated again. Enki tries to retrieve them by sending various creatures to capture Inanna's boat, however, to no avail. Inanna reaches her city Uruk, and everyone rejoices. The me-s are unloaded from the boat and someone, perhaps Isimud, lists them again. Eventually Enki and Inanna are confronted, perhaps by the mediation of Enlil, however because of the fragmentary state of the text we do not know the outcome of the dispute.

Discussion

After Enki awakes from his sleep he asks his servant Isimud where all the me-s disappeared. Isimud replies that Enki has given them to Inanna. The dialogue includes a detail of the me-s, among which were the following:

Inanna and Enki, **Segment F,23–26**[196]

23 [níg-ge]n$_6$-na SI TUR SI è^7 kur èd-dè kur èd-da kur-gar-ra me-a
24 lugal-gu$_{10}$ dumu-‹ni-ir ba-an-na-šúm›
25 gíri ba-da-ra sag-ur-sag túg gíg túg gùn-a gú-bar gú-x me-a
26 lugal-gu$_{10}$ dumu-‹ni-ir ba-an-na-šúm›
23 "Where are [tru]th … going down to the netherworld, coming up from the netherworld, the *kurgarrû*?"
24 "My lord (has given them to his) daughter."
25 "Where are the sword and *patarru*, the SAG-UR-SAG, the black garment, the colorful garment, the … hair-style,[197] the … hair-style?"
26 "My lord (has given them to his) daughter."

Later on, when the me-s are unloaded from Inanna's boat at Uruk, an unknown person, perhaps Isimud, enumerates them by mentioning each time that Inanna brought them to Uruk. Again we encounter the same me-s:

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aspects and attributes.

[195] Farber 1995: 287.

[196] See Farber-Flügge 1973: 28. Transliteration follows ETCSL (Text c.1.3.1, Inana and Enki).

[197] Literally, "nape of the neck".

Inanna and Enki, **Segment I,19–23**[198]

19 kur èd-dè ba-‹e-de₆›
20 kur èd-da [ba-e-de₆]
21 kur-gar-ra [ba-e-de₆]
22 gíri ba-da-ra [ba-e-de₆]
23 sag-ur-sag b[a-e-de₆]
19 "You have brought with you going down to the netherworld.
20 You have brought with you coming up from the netherworld.
21 You have brought with you the *kurgarrû*.
22 You have brought with you sword and *patarru*.
23 You have brought with you the SAG-UR-SAG."

This section of the list mentions the *kurgarrû* and SAG-UR-SAG as two of the me-s, and further, the weapons of the *kurgarrû*, which were mentioned in numerous other texts. These three me-s appear to be related to Inanna's cult, and point to the connection between the goddess and two of her servants. Alster viewed this myth as reflecting the axis of mediation between the worlds of the living and of the dead, which reminds us the myth of *Inanna/Ištar's Descent to the Netherworld*.[199] Indeed, the two me-s that were listed immediately before the *kurgarrû* were descending to and ascending from the netherworld, which undoubtedly allude to Inanna's journey there and her rescue by the gala (who was not listed as one of the me-s) and the *kurgarrû*.

A different interpretation for the attestations of the *kurgarrû* and the SAG-UR-SAG in this passage was offered by Glassner, who viewed them as expressing, metaphorically, two types of realities.[200] The first of these realities is the world of infants, since Glassner, following Edzard,[201] understood the etymology of kur-gar-ra as "make small heaps", an allusion to infants defecation. According to Glassner, as an infant-like figure, the *kurgarrû* was exempted from society's normative rules, and could thus cope with transitional situations. This suggestion cannot be accepted, since it is based on Edzard's dubious hypothetical etymologies, rejected by Edzard himself in later publications.[202] The second type of reality, proposed Glassner, is the realm of fighting and mock-battles. As is demonstrated in this book, however, while military qualities were indeed ascribed to the *kurgarrû*, they did not characterize the SAG-UR-SAG.

This text exemplifies, yet again, the connection between Inanna and two of her cultic attendants – the *kurgarrû* and the SAG-UR-SAG. The mention of the *kurgarrû* alongside going to and from the netherworld connects this text to *Inanna's Descent to the Netherworld*. The *kurgarrû*'s typical weapons, the sword and *patarru*, are mentioned here as two of the me-s as well, which exhibits again the association

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[198] See Farber-Flügge 1973: 54. Transliteration follows ETCSL (Text c.1.3.1, Inana and Enki).
[199] Alster 1974: 34.
[200] Glassner 1992: 60–62.
[201] Edzard 1987: 58 and n. 6.
[202] See Chapter 3.

of this figure with these weapons in relation to Ištar, and in the broader sense, to his cultic performance.[203]

5. *Lady of Largest Heart*

Edition: Sjöberg 1975.
Translation and commentary: Black, Cunningham, Robson and Zólyomi 2004: 92–99.
This hymn to the goddess Inanna is ascribed to the priestess Enḫeduanna, the daughter of king Sargon of Akkade.[204] The title of the composition, in-nin šà-gur$_4$-ra, "lady of largest heart", refers to Inanna. Sjöberg's edition was based on twenty-nine copies and fragments.[205] Almost all these manuscripts are dated to the Old Babylonian period, except for one Middle Babylonian duplicate.[206] Most of the copies were written in Sumerian, but several were bilingual, exhibiting parallel lines in Sumerian and Akkadian. The complete composition is 274 lines long, and, except for several gaps, most of it is satisfactorily preserved.

Brief Summary of the Plot
As for its content, the hymn is dedicated to praise Inanna, sometimes in the third person and sometimes as a direct approach to the goddess in the second person. To my understanding, the text could be generally divided to four sections. In the first part of the composition, Inanna is portrayed as a warrior goddess, who gained control over gods and humans, so that her violent attributes are enumerated (ll. 1–114). The text then turns to praise a different aspect of the goddess as the one responsible for the order and proper conduct of the world (ll. 115–157). In this section, several positive characteristics of Inanna are highlighted, such as her compassion and mercy, and her responsibility for the domestic sphere of human life (ll. 132–138). The third section of the text is similar to the first, as it exalts the goddess as a terri-

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[203] Zsolnay (2013: 92) claimed that the *patru* and *patarru* were associated in this text with the SAG-UR-SAG, according to her a synonym for *assinnu*. However, the said weapons were merely mentioned as being "brought", just as the *kurgarrû* in the preceding line, and the SAG-UR-SAG in the following line. Nothing in the text relates the weapons necessarily to the SAG-UR-SAG rather than to the *kurgarrû*.

[204] See Hallo and van Dijk 1968: 3, Sjöberg 1975: 161. Enḫeduanna appears as speaking in the first person in the last section of the text (lines 219–274). This section opens with explicit mention of her name (en-hé-du$_7$-an-na, line 219). Michalowski (1998: 65), however, doubted that the composition should indeed be ascribed to Enḫeduanna, claiming that "there is no direct evidence to support this", and suggested that it was composed in the Old Babylonian period. Rubio (2009: 27–28) as well doubted Enḫeduanna's authorship of this composition. Black, Cunningham, Robson and Zólyomi (2004: 93) addressed this problem without expressing a firm opinion on it. For an account of Enḫeduanna's life and career, see Hallo and van Dijk 1968: 1–11. For the historical setting of Enḫeduanna and the compositions ascribed to her, see Zgoll 1997: 31–32, including previous literature.

[205] For the list of fragments, see Sjöberg 1975: 165–166.

[206] An extract tablet of a bilingual version of this composition was published by Michalowski (1998), who dated it to the Kassite period (for the dating, see Michalowski 1998: 72).

fying ruler (ll. 158–218). The fourth and last section forms a personal address from the authoress of the text, the priestess Enḫeduanna, to Inanna, as she praises the goddess and asks for her favor (ll. 219–274).

Discussion

One passage refers to several human figures that are known to have been members of Inanna/Ištar's cult personnel: the *pilpilû*, the *kurgarrû* and the SAG-UR-SAG:

Lady of Largest Heart, 80–90[207]

80 šer$_7$-da gu-la-ni su-ni-ta ù-mu-e-ni-in-gar
81 ugu-ba giri$_{17}$ šu gál-la mu-ni-in-ak pi-li-pi-li mu-ni-in-sa$_4$
82 ^{giš}šukur i-ni-kud nita-gin$_7$ šà-ga-ni ^{giš}tukul an-na-ab-šúm-mu
83 KAL šul-a-lum ù-mu-ni-in-ak téš-bi NI TE A me-bi$^?$ la-ba-gál-la
84 é nam-kug-zu ^{giš}ig-bi sila mi-ni-in-ak šà-bi mu-un-zu-zu
85 sa lá-ni-ir ní nu-zu-ni-ir[208] igi-te-en sa lá-a-ni [x x] x-ba nu-è
86 lú mu pàd-da-ni nu-mu-na-kal-la munus-ra ù-mu-na-te ^{giš}tukul i-ni-in-kud
     ^{giš}šukur an-na-ab-šúm-mu
87 lú-giš-gi sag-kešda ní-su-ub munus-giš-gi šul-a-lum ù-mu-ni-in-ak še ša$_4$ UD
     […][209]
88 ^{lú}al-éd-dè pi-li-pi-li bal […] sa[g]-ur-sag-e-ne[210]
89 i-lu šìr-ra-àm RI$^?$ A zu$^?$ bar NE […]
90 ír ír-ra[211] bí-íb-kúš-ù-ne a-nir mu-x-[…]
80 When she (= Inanna) has removed her great punishment out of her body,
81 when she made a gesture of greeting,[212] she named the *pilpilû*.
82 She broke a spear, his/her heart (is) like a man's, she gives him/her a weapon.
83 When she (gave$^?$) a punishment, together with … it is not …
84 She opened the door[213] of the "house of wisdom", she makes known its
     interior.
85 The ones who do not know fear of her net do not escape … when she

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[207] See Sjöberg 1975: 184, 186. Transliteration follows ETCSL (Text c.4.07.3, A hymn to Inana (Inana C)). Note that it stems from a synthesis of several different copies, as appears in Sjöberg's (1975: 184, 186) edition of the composition. For a detail of the variants of these lines, see Sjöberg 1975: 205. The translation of this highly complicated passage is heavily based on Sjöberg's and ETCSL's.

[208] Variant in copy D: nu-zu-ne.

[209] Variants, instead of UD […] (copy D): mi-ni-x-[…] (copy H); a […] (copy L).

[210] Copy L has kur-gar-r[a …] instead of bal […] sa[g]-ur-sag-e-ne. The transliteration of line 88 as appears here, and the variant of copy L, were confirmed by collation of fragments CBS 11927 rev. 11–12 (= copy H) and UM 29–16–114 obv. 18 (= copy L) by the present author in April 2013.

[211] Variant in copy L: ír-da.

[212] For giri$_{17}$(=kiri$_4$) šu gál-la--ak = "to make a gesture of greeting" see Sjöberg 1975: 223. Lapinkivi (2010: 76) translated the first part of this line somewhat differently: "she invoked blessing upon it", following ETCSL (Text t.4.07.3, A hymn to Inana (Inana C)).

[213] Literally, "put the door on the street". See similar phrases (though with the verb gub rather than ak) in Edzard and Wilcke 1976: 144,13 and Katz 1993: 44,87.

    stretches out the fine meshes of her net,

86 the man she has called by name she does not hold in esteem, she approaches a woman (and after) having broken the weapon in pieces she gives her a lance.

87 The man-of-reed pays attention and fears; the woman-of-reed, after having punishment, mourning …

88 The ecstatic, the *pilpilû* who has been changed […], the SA[G]-UR-SAGs […] (variant: the *kurgarr*[*û*…])

89 lament and song …

90 They exhaust themselves by weeping and grief, they perform songs of lamentation…

The exact significance of this passage is hard to comprehend. It generally conveys a message of Inanna/Ištar's assertion of control over various male and female figures. It might be hypothesized that what underlines the nature of this control is the male-female tension, for reasons that will soon be explained. It is no surprise, then, that some of the figures that appear in this passage are members of the third gender class, such as the *pilpilû*, *kurgarrû* and the SAG-UR-SAG.

    Lines 80–82 shed some light on the figure of the *pilpilû*. Henshaw interpreted the weapon given to the *pilpilû* by Inanna as signifying a male, and her destroying of the weapon as a demonstration of her masculine destructive behavior.[214] Sjöberg suggested that the *pilpilû* was actually a female cult practitioner, here assuming a masculine role. He rejected the idea that this passage[215] meant to indicate a change of sex and claimed that the actual change was that of the roles between men and women.[216]

    I understand the phrase nita-gin$_7$ šà-ga-ni as referring to the *pilpilû*'s nature as similar to that of a man ("his heart is like a man's"), which makes him suitable to receive a weapon from the goddess. Naturally, it would have been superfluous to make this comment concerning the *pilpilû*'s nature, unless some uncertainty was involved. In other words, the male *pilpilû*'s gender identity was ambiguous, and therefore a disambiguation was required. At first, the disambiguation was made by stating that his heart is like that of a man, and subsequently he was given a weapon from Inanna, as a symbol of his masculinity. As is shown below, the *pilpilû* is found in several lexical lists together with various male profession holders, so, assuming that he was actually a female figure seems dubious. To conclude, nothing in the current passage supports the possibility that the *pilpilû* was a female.

    Lapinkivi viewed the content of lines 80–81 as indicating that the *pilpilû* was a figure created "from the goddess herself". According to this interpretation, Inanna removed from her body a "punishment", purified it (ugu-ba understood by Lapinkivi as the blessing of that punishment by Inanna) and created from it the *pilpilû*. Subsequently, the goddess gave the *pilpilû* wisdom, as she "makes known" the interior of

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[214] Henshaw 1994: 299.

[215] As well as other ones cited by him, see Sjöberg 1975: 223–225.

[216] Sjöberg 1975: 226. See similarly Assante 2009: 36.

the "house of wisdom" (l. 84).[217] However, it is not certain that line 84 is indeed connected to the ones preceding it, so it cannot be certain whether its content has anything to do with the *pilpilû*. It can be suggested that the term "house of wisdom" designated Inanna's house, namely her temple, so that "making known its interior" referred to the demonstration of the goddess's cult to the public.

The meaning of the following lines is obscure. The goddess is said to punish and instill fear in some unspecified people. She casts her net, from which no one escapes. Line 86 is of special interest for us; it begins with a reference to "the man she has called by name", who might be the *pilpilû* mentioned in line 81, and continues with the goddess breaking a weapon, perhaps in order to symbolize the harming of masculinity, and giving a woman a lance, presumably to symbolize the endowment of masculine attributes to the female. In line 87 a man and a woman are described as terrified and mourning.

Lines 88–90 mention several figures that are investigated in the present research. The *pilpilû*, which already appeared in line 81, reoccurs in line 88. He could be understood as standing in apposition to ^lúal-éd-dè, "ecstatic".[218] Henshaw interpreted the fact that the ecstatic/*pilpilû* is said to have been "changed" as an indication of a sex-change, either in terms of cross-dressing, a "role change", or a "literal sex change".[219] Significantly, in one copy of the composition, the figure of the *kurgarrû* appears next to the *pilpilû*, while, in another copy, the SAG-UR-SAG appears instead.

It is clear, then, that all these different figures were connected to each other and bore similar traits. However, the *kurgarrû* and the SAG-UR-SAG were not identical figures, as will be shown in the following chapters. Their alternate attestation in the current text only testifies for the fact that they shared with the *pilpilû* certain functionalities, most probably as members of Ištar's cult.

A different part of the text is dedicated to enumerating an elaborate list of attributes and capabilities ascribed to Inanna/Ištar. One of these is the ability to alter a person's sex:

Lady of Largest Heart, 120[220]

[nita] munus-ra munus nita-ra ku$_4$-ku$_4$-dè ^dInanna za-kam

// [ni-i]n-ta mu-nu-ús-ra mu-nu-ús ni-in-ta-ar-ra ku-ku-te ^dInanna za-a-kam

zi-ka-ra-am a-na si-ni-iš$_7$-tim si-ni-iš$_7$-ta[221] *a-na zi-ka-ri-im tu-ru-um ku-um-ma*
    Inanna

Turning a male into a female and a female into a male is yours, Inanna!

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[217] Lapinkivi 2010: 76.

[218] For this translation, see Sjöberg 1975: 187, Black, Cunningham, Robson and Zólyomi 2004: 95 and ETCSL (Text t.4.07.3, A hymn to Inana (Inana C)).

[219] Henshaw 1994: 295, 298. By "literal sex change" Henshaw presumably meant castration; however, he was not explicit.

[220] See Sjöberg 1975: 190.

[221] This sign does not appear in Sjöberg's edition, but was observed by Alster (1990: 80) through a collation of the tablet.

This line can only be understood within the context of the part of the composition in which it appears. As was explained above, the text is comprised of four main sections, the last of which contains Enḫeduanna's personal approach to Inanna. The first and third sections (ll. 1–114 and 158–218, respectively) emphasize Inanna/Ištar's aggressive attributes, which form the basis of her authority in the world. However, the second section (ll. 115–157) details the result of the goddess's rule as a source of order in the world. Both the second and third parts of the text emphasize the goddess's authority on humans and especially her capability to set rules and break them as she pleases.

As can be seen, the line referring to Inanna/Ištar's ability to "turn a male into a female and a female into a male" belongs in this part of the composition, and therefore should be evaluated in its context. The emphasis here is on Inanna/Ištar as the source for order in the world, for better or worse. She is the one responsible for setting the proper rules of conduct by which people live. However, she is also the source of potential chaos, since she can break these rules. One of these rules is the proper distinction between men and women. Therefore, the goddess's ability to "turn a male into a female and a female into a male" seems to denote one example among numerous others illuminating the potential destructive power of Inanna/Ištar to spread chaos within society, instead of the order she herself is responsible to.

6. *This City, which Has Been Looted*

Editions: Langdon 1913: 77–81, Frank 1915: 197, Cohen 1988: 536–603, Volk 1989.

úru àm-ma-ir-ra-bi, "This city, which has been looted",[222] is the title of a long bilingual Sumero-Akkadian balag composition that includes at least twenty-two tablets,[223] four of which (numbers 18–21) were edited by Volk.[224] Although its origin is Old Babylonian, the version edited by Volk is dated to the first millennium. Cohen supplied an edition of the composition in which he integrated both the Old Babylonian and first millennium versions.[225] A small fragment of an Akkadian translation of the composition was edited by Wasserman and Gabbay, who viewed the fact that the composition was translated into Akkadian as evidence of its importance.[226] The nineteenth tablet of the text includes two episodes that are of interest to the present study. The first episode is described in lines 1–42, while the second occupies the

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[222] For a discussion of the meaning of this title, see Volk 1989: 11–13.

[223] Line 92 in the colophon of the twenty-first tablet states as follows: 95-àm mu-šid-bi-im 21^{kam} úru àm-ma-[ir-ra-b]i nu-al-til, "95 are its lines, 21st tablet (of the composition) úru àm-ma-[ir-ra-b]i, not complete".

[224] Volk 1989. Previously, Langdon (1913) and Frank (1915) provided partial editions of isolated fragments that belong to this text.

[225] Cohen 1988: 536–603. The first millennium version is much longer than the Old Babylonian one, and contains more lines. Therefore, the last known line of the Old Babylonian version, l. 220, is parallel to l. 442 in the first millennium version, which continues eventually until l. 536.

[226] Wasserman and Gabbay 2005: 74, 76.

remaining portion of the tablet, in lines 43–89. The first episode begins with a state-
ment that a maidservant named Amanamtagga has committed a sin.[227] The exact
nature of her sin is debated, but it included all or some of the following: seating on a
pure throne, lying on a bed, conducting sexual intercourse, and teaching a man to
conduct sexual intercourse and to kiss.[228] The text continues with a speech in the
first person plural, as the speakers are about to go to certain cities and to the Hur-
sagkalamma and Eturkalamma temples. Thereafter, by the command of Ištar, the
maidservant Amanamtagga is thrown to the dust. The goddess stares at Ama-
namtagga with the "look of death", lets out a cry and grabs her by the hair. At this
point, the violent episode reaches its peak:

***This City, which Has Been Looted*, Tablet 19,16–19**[229]

16 su$_8$-ba šibir-ra-a-na dè-mu-un-gi$_4$-gi$_4$
     ri-é-um ina ši-bir-ri-šú li-duk-ši

17 gala-e me-zé-a-na dè-mu-un-g[i$_4$-gi$_4$]
     ká-lú-ú ina me-zé-*e-šu*

18 báḫar-e ^{dug}šakir-ra-a-na dè
     pa-ḫa-ru ina zar-ba-bé-e-šu

19 kur-⌈mar⌉-ra me-ri-a ba-da-ra-na dè
     kur-ga-ru-ú ina paṭ-ri u pa-tar-ri

16 May[230] the shepherd kill her with his crook!

17 May the *kalû* k[ill] her with his *manzû*(-drum)!

18 May the potter (kill her) with his *zarbābu*(-vessel)!

19 May the *kurgarrû* (kill her) with his sword and *patarru*!

After the maidservant is killed, the text continues with a description of a long
lamentation about the heart of Ištar and her distress, but no explicit connection is
made between the lament and the violent episode preceding it. Perhaps this part of
the text shows how the heart of the goddess is pacified, once the maidservant was
punished.

It is noteworthy that Ištar's cult personnel are the ones who perform the actual
killing of the maidservant. As we have seen in the previous compositions, these
figures are portrayed as representatives of Inanna/Ištar on earth. In this regard, they
may symbolize the enforcement of the goddess's control over mankind, and, there-

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[227] The name "Amanamtagga" means literally "mother-of-sin" (ama nam-tag-a(k)).

[228] For a discussion of this figure and her sin, see Volk 1989: 48–54, including previous litera-
ture.

[229] See Cohen 1988: 569 and Volk 1989: 79. The line numbering is in accordance with Volk's
(1989: 90–93) composite translation of the various copies of the composition's nineteenth
tablet. Hence, it does not match the line numbering of any specific copy. Similarly, the trans-
literation presented here is based on a combination of all available copies, following Volk's
(1989: 79) edition. These lines are parallel to lines 15–22 (rev.) in Langdon's (1913: 79) edi-
tion, and to lines 10–17 in Frank's (1915: 197) edition.

[230] dè- can be understood as a modal prefix, to be explained as an emesal variant of hé-,
indicating precative. The emesal dialect is apparent in other features of this passage, such as
the writing kur-mar-ra instead of the usual kur-gar-ra, in line 19.

fore, on occasions, reflect her aggressive aspects. Interestingly, two of the figures that participate in the killing of the maidservant are not typical members of Inanna/Ištar's cult: a shepherd and a potter. The question should be asked, what is the ideological connection between them and Ištar's two cult personnel, the gala and the *kurgarrû*? Inanna/Ištar's spouse Dumuzi is described as a shepherd in many texts, and here might lie the symbolism of the shepherd in our text. As to the potter, however, I have no clear explanation.

The second part of the tablet (ll. 43–89) details a different episode of the lamentation. It begins with a sequence of rhetoric questions addressed to Inanna/Ištar, and continues with the following:

This City, which Has Been Looted, **Tablet 19,47–59**[231]

47 gašan na-ám-gala-e é
    be-le-et ka-lu-tim

48 é-an-na ⌈na-ám⌉-gala-e ba-ab-du₇-⌈a⌉-mu[232]
    ana é-an-na *šá ana ka-lu-tum as-mu*

49 ta-a ù-li mu-ni-íb-DU[233] ᵏᵘˢá-lá-a mu-ni-íb-DU
    ‹*ina*› *lal-la-ra-a-ti mi-nam i-re-ed-di-a-am a-le-e i-red-di-a-⌈am⌉*

50 ᵏᵘˢá-lá-a-ta mu-nu-da-dúr-ru-ne-eš
    ina a-le-e aš-bu-⌈šim⌉

51 sag-ur-sag-gá mu-ni-íb-DU
    ra-am-ku-tim i-⌈re-ed⌉-di-a-am

52 sag-ur-sag-gá mu-nu-da-dúr-⌈ru-ne⌉-eš
    as-sí-in-nu ra-am-ku-⌈tim⌉ aš-bu-⌈šim⌉

53 na-ám-gala-e mu-ni-íb-DU
    ka-⌈le⌉-e ⌈i-re-ed⌉-di-a-am

54 ᵍᶦˢtukul-sag-ku₅-ra mu-nu-⌈da⌉-dúr-ru-ne-eš
    šá kak-ki ka-ar-tim aš-bu-šim

55 ti mar-uru₅-a mu-ni-íb-DU
    ú-ṣa qá-áš-tam iš-pa-tam ⌈i-re-ed-di-a-am⌉

56 ᵍᶦˢilluru ᵍᶦˢtukul-⌈da⌉ mu-un-na-da-dúr-ru-ne-eš
    šá til-pa-nim u ka-ak-ki aš-bu-šim

57 igi-du₈ gíri ba-da-ra mu-ni-íb-[D]U
    am-ru ⌈pat-rí⌉ u pa-tar-ri i-re-ed-di‹-a-am›

58 kur-mar-ra-ta mu-un-na-da-dúr-ru-ne-eš
    kur-ga-ru-⌈ú⌉ aš-bu-⌈šim⌉

59 ù-bu-bu-ul gíri ba-da-ra mu-ni-íb-DU
    za-ab-bu pat-ri u pa-tar-ri i-⌈red⌉-di‹-a-am›

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[231] See Cohen 1988: 571–572 and Volk 1989: 83–84. See n. 229 above, concerning the line numbering and transliteration of the current passage.

[232] As noted by Volk (1989: 115), the final -mu here must be an error.

[233] The reading of this sign is problematic, because the Akkadian parallel text has *ireddîām*. Reading DU as de₆ or túm would have required the equivalent Akkadian to be *babālu*. The proper Sumerian equivalent of *redû* should have been ús. For a brief discussion of the verb DU, see Bauer 2004. See also Meyer-Laurin 2010.

47 The lady, (what, alas, did she lead in) for the *kalû*-priesthood (from the steppe-)house?[234]

48 To the Eanna, that is appropriate for the *kalû*-priesthood,

49 what, alas, did she lead in? The *alû*-drum she has led in.

50 With the *alû*-drum they sit by her.

51 A SAG-UR-SAG / washed ones (= *assinnu*[?]) she led in.

52 With the SAG-UR-SAG / washed *assinnu*s they sit by her.

53 The *kalû*s she has led in.

54 With cutting-weapon they sit by her.

55 Arrow and quiver[235] she has led in.

56 With bow and weapon they sit by her.

57 A seer, sword and *patarru* she has led (in).

58 With a *kurgarrû* they sit by her.

59 An ecstatic, sword and *patarru* she has led (in).

The text then continues with a description of Inanna/Ištar as she washes herself. It appears that this passage describes how Inanna/Ištar brings various objects into her Eanna temple, where the *kalû*s – her attendants – "sit by" these objects. Two interesting alternations between the Sumerian version of this passage and its Akkadian version are notable: the SAG-UR-SAG of the former is translated in the latter as "washed ones (= *assinnu*[?])" (line 51), and as "washed *assinnu*" (line 52). It is possible that the *assinnu* was omitted from line 51 erroneously by the scribe, and should have appeared there similarly as in line 52. The alternation between the SAG-UR-SAG and the *assinnu* may result from their similar functionalities and effeminate attributes in the cult of Inanna/Ištar, as demonstrated below. Alternatively, we may view this alternation as hinting that these were actually different writings of the very same term.[236] Whatever the case may be, the term *ramkūtu*, "washed ones" might stand here for a title that describes the *assinnu*[237] and relates to the latter's state of consecration.[238]

As for the content of the passage, it specifies several objects and persons that Inanna/Ištar leads into the Eanna, her main temple in Uruk. Subsequently, the *kalû*s sit by the goddess, alongside these items. Analyzing the structure of this passage reveals an interesting picture. Its formulation seems to be comprised of a repeating pattern: a line specifying the item or person who was led into the Eanna, followed by a line stating that the *kalû*s sit by the goddess together with the item or person men-

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[234] The text added in brackets is based on the content of the previous lines.

[235] The Akkadian version adds "bow".

[236] SAG-UR-SAG and *assinnu* appear as parallel terms in the lexical lists SAG B i 14 (see MSL SS 1: 28) // SAG A i 9 (see MSL SS 1: 18); see Chapter 3, p. 159, and lú = *ša* Tablet 4,184 (see MSL 12: 134); see Chapter 3, p. 160.

[237] We may regard *ramkūtu* here, therefore, as a ms. pl. form of *ramāku*, "to bathe, wash" (see CAD R: 111, s.v. "*ramāku*", lex. section), probably serving here as an adjective for *assinnu*.

[238] For washing and consecration among Late Babylonian priesthood, see Waerzeggers and Jursa 2008. For the procedures and process of consecration of Mesopotamian priests earlier, see Löhnert 2010.

tioned in the preceding line.

Following this pattern, several observations become apparent. Some of the items that were led into the temple are simply repeated in the second line, such as the *alû*-drum (ll. 49–50), the SAG-UR-SAG/*assinnu*s (ll. 51–52) and several weapons (ll. 55–56). Nonetheless, two exceptions are noticeable: line 53 mentions the *kalû*s that were led in, while line 54 states that "they sit by" the goddess with a cutting-weapon. Was this an error in the text, or was the craft of the *kalû* involved with the use of cutting-weapons? The second exception is attested in the three lines closing the passage. These form a "sandwich", since lines 57 and 59 are almost identical, specifying the items that were led into the temple as a seer (igi-du$_8$, *amru*, l. 57) or an ecstatic (*zabbu*, l. 59), a sword and a *patarru*-weapon, while line 58 mentions that "they sit by" the goddess with a *kurgarrû*. Should this be taken as an indication that the *kurgarrû* was regarded as a kind of ecstatic like the *amru* and the *zabbu*? The association of the *kurgarrû* with cutting-weapons has already been noted in previous compositions discussed throughout this chapter. It is evident in line 19 of the episode preceding the current one, where the exact two weapons, the sword and *patarru*, are mentioned as the implements with which the *kurgarrû* kills the maidservant Amanamtagga. Based on these two episodes, then, it can safely be said that cutting-weapons were items characterizing the *kurgarrû*, with regard to his cultic performance. The first episode discussed portrays the gala/*kalû* as associated with the *manzû*-drum; however, the second episode leaves the impression that he was connected with cutting-weapons (^{giš}tukul-sag-ku$_5$-ra / *kakki kartim*) as well.

To summarize, these two episodes present valuable information concerning certain characteristics of several of Inanna/Ištar's cult members, especially the gala/*kalû* and the *kurgarrû*, and illuminate interesting aspects of their nature and performance in Mesopotamian cult. We saw in the first episode that both figures used items that otherwise characterize them in cultic performance in order to kill at the goddess's command, and in the second episode both were associated with weapons. The connection between the *kurgarrû* and weapons and its relation to his masculine gender image are discussed in Chapter 3; however, the gala/*kalû* was usually portrayed in association with drums, and not weapons. In this sense, his association with weapons in the second episode discussed is highly unusual and unexplainable.

7. *The Epic of Erra*

Edition: Cagni 1969.
Translations and commentaries: Cagni 1977, Dalley 2000: 282–315, Foster 1996: 757–789.
The Epic of Erra is one of the latest compositions to be surveyed in the current chapter. Though opinions differ regarding the exact date of its compilation,[239] it is

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[239] See Cagni 1977: 20–21. von Soden (1971) suggested that the text reflected historical events that occurred in Uruk between 765 and 763 BCE, while, according to Neumann and Parpola (1987: 179–180), this text should be dated to the reign of the Babylonian king Nabû-apla-iddina (ca. 887–855).

agreed by most commentators that its origin was in early first-millennium Babylonia. The complete composition consisted of five tablets, giving a total of some 750 lines, of which about 532 are legible.[240] The composition consists mostly of a dialogue between Erra, a deity parallel to the god of war Nergal,[241] and his friend, Išum. Erra is portrayed as a warrior-god, who wishes to depose Marduk and rule the world and the gods in his place. In supporting his companion, Išum lengthily praises Erra's heroism. As part of this praising, Išum details how Erra destroyed the city of Uruk, and laid his domination over its residents:

The Epic of Erra, Tablet 4,52–59[242]

52 *šá* unug[ki] *šu-bat* [d]*a-nim u* [d]*iš-tar* uru *ke-ez-re-e-ti šam-ḫa-a-tú ù ḫa-ri-ma-t*[*i*]

53 *šá* [d]*iš-tar mu-ta i-ṭe-ru-ši-na-ti-ma im-nu-u qa-tuš-š*[*un*]

54 *su-ti-i su-ta-a-tú na-du-u ia-ru-ra-t*[*i*]

55 *de-ku-ú* é-an-na *kur-gar-ri* [lú]*i-sin-*[*ni*]

56 *šá ana šup-lu-uḫ* un[meš] [d]Inanna *zik-ru-su-nu ú-te-ru ana* m[unus-*ti*[243]]

57 *na-áš pat-ri na-áš nag-la-bi qup-pe-e u ṣur-t*[*i*]

58 *šá ana ul-lu-uṣ kab-ta-at* [d]Inanna *i-tak-ka-lu* ⌈*a*⌉-[*sak-ka*]

59 nisag *ek-ṣu la ba-bil pa-ni e-li-šú-nu taš-k*[*un*]

52 As for Uruk, dwelling of Anu and Ištar, city of the *kezrētu*-women, harlots and prostitutes,

53 those from whom Ištar took away the husband and whom she delivered into the[ir]/yo[ur][244] hands;

54 The male and female Suteans, who shout "*yarurūt*[*u*]!",

55 rose up (in/against) the Eanna; *kurgarrû*s; *assinnu*s,

56 who, for making the people reverent, Ištar turned their masculinity to fem[ininity;]

57 The carriers of dagger, carriers of razor, scalpel and flin[t](-blade);

58 (Those) who, for delighting the mind of Ištar, do regularly f[orbidden things:][245]

59 You have plac[ed] over them a cruel and merciless governor.

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[240] See Cagni 1969: 26, 1977: 5 and Machinist 1983: 222.

[241] See Lambert 1973: 357–363 and Leick 1994: 168, 273. For an account of Erra's characteristics and a brief discussion of the current myth, see Leick 1991: 57–59.

[242] See Cagni 1969: 110.

[243] For this restoration, see CAD S: 293, s.v. "*sinnišūtu* b1'". Cagni (1969: 110,56) restored the Akkadian reading *sin*[*nišūti*].

[244] The common view is that "their" refers to the enemies' hands; see Cagni (1969: 111,53), CAD M/1: 226, s.v. "*manû* 7". Leick (1994: 168) followed Dalley's (2000: 305) translation, according to which the said women, who were deprived of husbands, were given to Erra. Lambert (1992: 136) restored the end of line 53 as *qa-tuš-k*[*a*], based on a collation of one of the copies of the composition (K 2619, see Lambert 1992: 154 n. 9), which renders the translation "yo[ur] hand", namely Erra's. Assante (2009: 32) understood the sentence as meaning that Ištar deprived the aforementioned women of husbands "and reckoned as her own".

[245] Restoration follows Cagni 1977: 52 and Lambert 1992: 148. For *asakka akālu*, "to infringe on a taboo, break a taboo", see CAD A/1: 255, s.v. "*akālu* 7a", A/2: 327, s.v. "*asakku* B b1'" and CDA: 25.

This highly complicated passage was sometimes misinterpreted.[246] I propose to apply an analytic approach by splitting it to its components, in order to understand its essence. Erra is said by Išum to have set "a cruel and merciless governor" on the people of Uruk, city that belonged to the gods Ištar and Anu. These people were identified as several types of female prostitutes (*kezrēti*, *šamḫātu* and *ḫarimāt[i]*), and Ištar's male cultic attendants *kurgarrû*s and *assinnu*s. The Suteans are described as attacking Ištar's main temple, Eanna, home of the *kurgarrû*s and the *assinnu*s. Here appears the crucial passage for our discussion, in which three phrases describe the *kurgarrû*s and *assinnu*s: "who, for making the people reverent, Ištar turned their masculinity to fem[ininity]", "The carriers of dagger, carriers of razor, scalpel and flin[t](-blade)" and "(Those) who, for delighting the mind of Ištar, do regularly f[orbidden things]". These phrases, to my understanding, are structured in a chiasm, in which the first phrase refers to the *assinnu*s, while the second refers to the *kurgarrû*s; the third phrase follows the chiasm, and refers to both *assinnu*s and *kurgarrû*s. *The Epic of Erra* is regarded as one of the most innovative literary compositions in Mesopotamia, famous for being embedded with literary and stylistic oddities;[247] chiastic designs are indeed not uncommon to this text.[248]

This interpretation leads to the understanding of the text as depicting the *assinnu*s as having their masculinity turned to femininity by Ištar, in order to make the populace reverent, and the *kurgarrû*s as wielding cutting-weapons. This reminds us of Inanna's perceived power of "turning a male into a female and a female into a male", as stated in the hymn in-nin šà-gur₄-ra previously discussed. It was already suggested that this capability of the goddess should be evaluated against the background of her imposing of order in the world and her potential breaking of this or-

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[246] To give but a few examples, in one of the older volumes of the CAD, it is translated as follows: "the (castrated) actors and singers whom Ištar had changed from men into women in order to teach the people religious fear" (CAD Z: 117, s.v. "*zikrūtu* 2a"). The unnecessary "(castrated)" incorporated into the translation obviously adds to the text a concept that did not exist there in practice. Indeed, in later volumes this addition was avoided (See, for example, in CAD K: 558, s.v. "*kurgarrû* a"). Similarly problematic was Cagni's (1969: 111,55) translation of the phrase "*kurgarrû*s; *assinnu*s" as "eunuchi (e) prostituti" in his edition of the text, with no discussion. Dalley (2000: 305) translated this term as "the party-boys and festival people", with no explanation for choosing this translation. Commentating on this passage, Lambert (1992: 148) suggested that the sharp objects held by the *assinnu*s and *kurgarrû*s were meant to signify their carriers as eunuchs, since these instruments were implements of surgery. Parpola (1997: XCVI n. 138) expressed a similar view. Roscoe (1996: 217), on the other hand, suggested that the above passage might not necessarily point to castration, but rather to a "psychological transformation, the result of divine possession or visitation", as with the *galli*-priests or *hijra* (for both, see Introduction, pp. 30–31). Leick (1994: 169) viewed this passage as reflecting the basic uncertain approach with which "marginal sexuality" was regarded by Mesopotamian society. According to her, it was "feared, tolerated and institutionalized".

[247] See, among others, Machinist 1983: 221, Foster 1996: 757–758 and Noegel 2011: 161–162.

[248] See tablet 1,41–43, tablet 1,144, tablet 3,63–64 and tablet 4,18–19; for an elaborated discussion, see Peled 2014a: 289–290.

der. The blurring of gender boundaries between men and women can be viewed as a demonstration of this perilous break of world order. Hence, for keeping people's veneration and awe of her, Ištar reminds them of her destructive capacities. In reality, this change could have been demonstrated through the cultic performance of Ištar's male personnel, by acting out feminine roles. As we will see in Chapter 3, the *assinnu* was indeed characterized as an effeminate male who assumed the penetrated role in sexual relation as part of his performance in the cult of the goddess.

As for the *kurgarrû*, as we have already seen, and as is elaborated in Chapter 3, he appeared in numerous texts as associated with weapons. I view this feature of the *kurgarrû* as a symbol of his devotion to Ištar, exactly as the *assinnu*'s passive sexual conduct described above. The two formed a mirror-image of one another, and the combination of their attributes reflected the essence of the goddess in full: the *assinnu* represented her feminine aspects of eroticism and receptive sexuality, while the *kurgarrû* represented her masculine aspects of aggressiveness and militarism.

Lastly, it was said that both figures performed certain unnamed "f[orbidden things]" (given that the reconstruction is correct), "for delighting the mind of Ištar." These acts were most probably part of their performance in the cult of the goddess, which leaves open the speculation whether the said "f[orbidden things]" were in reality certain homoerotic rites. This conjecture, of course, cannot be validated.

Further along in the text, we encounter a brief mention of the *girseqû*, within a long list of figures that Erra has caused their death, according to Išum:

> **The Epic of Erra**, **Tablet 4,109**[249]
> gìr-sè-ga *mu-kil re-eš* lugal *tuš-ta-mit*
> "You have put to death the *girseqû* who serves the king."

This laconic mention of the *girseqû* portrays him as a palace attendant, who serves the king. Since the text is dated by most scholars to early first millennium, this piece of evidence seems significant, as most of the documentation of the *girseqû* is usually earlier.[250]

8. *A Myth of Dumuzi*

Edition: Kramer 1990.
This text was published by Kramer.[251] The upper part of the tablet is broken, and, presumably, about a third of the entire text is lost.[252] As a result, we are missing the beginning and end of the text, a fact that poses several obstacles in understanding its meaning. The main character of the text is the god Dumuzi, the shepherd trying to protect his sheepfold against various perils. He calls for the Sun-god and Moon-god, Utu and Nanna, to assist him in his efforts, and they comply:

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[249] See Cagni 1969: 116.

[250] For *girseqû*, see Chapter 5.

[251] BM 96692; see Kramer 1990. Kramer further identified a syllabically written duplicate of this text, BM 80758.

[252] See Kramer 1990: 143.

A Myth of Dumuzi, **18–33**[253]

18 ú$^?$-a-i$^?$ ^{d}utu ^{d}utu ḫé-me-en ku-li-mu
19 ú$^?$-a-i$^?$ ^{d}nanna ^{d}nanna ḫé-me-en du$_{10}$-ús-sa-mu
20 u$_8$-muš-a-ka-mà muš è-ma-ra-ab ḫé-me-en ku-li-mu
21 ùz-ga-na-ka-mà ga-an è-ma-ra-ab ḫé-me-en du$_{10}$-ús-sa-mu
22 giš-šub-mu-ta dugud ba-ma-ra-ab an-na ḫu-mu-un-nigin
23 ur-mu sa-ad$^?$-nim$^?$ zi-ma-ra-ab amaš-a ḫu-mu-un-ús-e
24 ma-a-ra kur-gar-ra lul-la-ra šu-dingir dù-mu-na
25 amaš-kù-mà ìa-sag ga-ra-sag-gá mu-zu ga-àm-mi-in-pàd
26 ^{d}Utu e-ne-èm-mà ba-e-dè-gub sipad-dè amaš-a-na
27 ^{d}Nanna e-ne-èm-mà ba-e-dè-gub ^{d}dumu-zi amaš-a-na
28 u$_8$-muš-a-ka-ni muš im-ma-ra-è e-ne ku-li-ni
29 ùz-ga-na-a-ka-ni ga-an im-ma-ra-è e-ne du$_{10}$-ús-sa-ni
30 giš-šub-a-ni dugud im-ta-an-ba an-na mu-un-nigin
31 ur-ra-ni sa-ad$^?$-nim$^?$ im-ta-an-zi amaš-a mu-un-ús-e
32 e-ne-ra kur-gar-ra-lul-la-ra šu-dingir mu-na-an-dù
33 amaš-kù-ga ìa-sag ga-ra-sag-gá mu-ni im-mi-in-pàd
18 "Oh and woe! Utu, Utu, pray be my friend,
19 Oh and woe! Nanna, Nanna, pray be my companion,
20 From my snake-(menaced) ewe, make the snake go away,
21 From my scab-(afflicted) mother-goat, make the scab go away,
22 From my lot expropriate the *miqtu*-disease, let it whirl about in heaven,
23 From my dog remove the seizures, let him follow the sheepfold,
24 As for me, fashion a divine hand against the lying *kurgarrû*,
25 In my holy sheepfold I will pronounce your name on the prime oil, on the
   prime cheese."
26 Utu stood by him in the matter – by the shepherd in his sheepfold,
27 Nanna stood by him in the matter – by Dumuzi in his sheepfold,
28 From the snake-(menaced) ewe, he made the snake go away – he is his
   friend,
29 From the scab-(afflicted) mother-goat, he made the scab go away – he is his
   companion,
30 From his lot he expropriated the *miqtu*-disease, it whirled about in heaven,
31 From his dog he removed the seizures, he followed his sheepfold,
32 As for him, he created[254] a divine hand against the lying *kurgarrû*,
33 In the holy sheepfold he pronounced his name on the prime oil, on the prime
   cheese.

As is seen, the misfortunes that strike Dumuzi and his sheepfold are numerous: a
snake attacks his sheep, scab befalls his goat, his lot is afflicted by a *miqtu*-disease[255]
and his dog is paralyzed, so that he cannot watch over the herd in pasture. However,

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[253] See Kramer 1990: 145–146. For a philological commentary of this passage, see Kramer
1990: 148–149.
[254] Literally, "built" (dù).
[255] For dugud = "*miqtu*-desease" see Kramer 1990: 148, with previous literature.

the most intriguing of all calamities is the one that strikes Dumuzi himself: he asks for a "divine hand" (šu-dingir) to be fashioned "against the lying *kurgarrû*".[256] The claim that Dumuzi defends his sheepfold against the *kurgarrû*[257] is incorrect, since the *kurgarrû* is said to harm Dumuzi himself. This line (l. 24) may constitute the core of this part of the tale: all other menaces that are mentioned in the passage affect the animals, while this is the only one that affects Dumuzi himself. Furthermore, the *kurgarrû* cannot be simply expelled like all other menaces, but rather a "divine hand" is required to be fashioned against him. However, what is the nature of this "divine hand"? What does the *kurgarrû* signify? What is the exact nature of the threat he posed to Dumuzi?

The creation of a "divine hand" may allude to the *rittu*, an amulet shaped as a hand. It may also form a general reference to the power of the gods. However, in the present context of diseases, it most likely formed a general term referring to a disease.[258] However, it is not clear why Dumuzi asks for a disease to strike the "lying *kurgarrû*". A connection between these two figures is apparent in *Inanna's Descent*, where the *kurgarrû* saves the goddess, which indirectly leads to Dumuzi's demise. Inanna is only allowed to return to the world of the living in exchange for a substitute that will take her place in the netherworld, and Dumuzi becomes that substitute. We should also bear in mind that the Sun-god Utu assists Dumuzi in escaping from the demons that try to seize and take him to the netherworld, though eventually Dumuzi is caught. In the current text, Utu is indeed one of the two deities invoked by Dumuzi in his request for aid against the various calamities he suffers, the most prominent of which seems to be caused by the "lying *kurgarrû*".[259] These connecting points between *Inanna's Descent* and the current composition may constitute the background against which this text should be understood.

9. *Enki and Ninmaḫ*

Editions: Benito 1969: 9–76, Lambert 2013: 330–345.
Translations and commentaries: Bottéro and Kramer 1989: 188–198, Jacobsen 1987: 151–166, Klein 1997: 516–518, Kramer and Maier 1989: 13–14, 31–37, 124, 132–133, 176, Römer 1993: 386–401.
This text, the earliest copies of which are Old Babylonian, supplies two different tales about the creation of humanity.[260] The first describes how in the world prior to the birth of mankind the gods were required to farm and maintain water canals in order to obtain food. Therefore, humanity was created, in order to perform labor in

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[256] In light of all the diseases mentioned in the text, Leick (1994: 161) suggested that this composition formed "an expiating ritual against seizure".

[257] As expressed by Leick (1994: 161).

[258] For this term in therapeutic and diagnostic texts (medical omens), see, generally, Heessel 2007. For various scholarly views of this term, see Heessel 2007: 121. Note, however, that Heessel (2007: 122) claimed that in these texts the term is consistently written as šu dingir-ra, while in our text the last morpheme, -ra, is missing.

[259] For a study of Dumuzi's appeal to Utu, see Katz 2006.

[260] Generally on this text, see Jacobsen 1987: 151–153, Lambert 2013: 330–335.

the gods' place. The second describes a contest that took place between Enki and Ninmaḫ. Enki decides to celebrate the birth of man with a party, where he and the goddess Ninmaḫ become inebriated. She boasts that she can control man's characteristics and deform him. Therefore, a contest begins: Ninmaḫ creates several types of deformed humans out of clay, and Enki succeeds in assigning them a social functionality every time, thus winning the contest. Then the roles are switched, and Enki creates a deformed creature with which Ninmaḫ cannot cope; Enki wins again. One of the deformed creations of Ninmaḫ during her contest with Enki was a sexless being:

Enki and Ninmaḫ, 75–78[261]
75 peš-bal-gi lú su-ba giš nu-gar gal$_4$-la nu-gar àm-ma-ni-dím
76 ^{d}en-ki-ke$_4$ lú su-ba giš nu-gar gal$_4$-la nu-gar igi du$_8$-a-ni-ta
77 ^{d}nibru^{ki} tiru-e mu-e mu-ni-in-sa$_4$-a
78 igi lugal-la-ke$_4$ gub-bu-dè nam-bi a-ma-ni-in-tar
75 Seventh, she fashioned one with neither penis nor vagina on its body.
76 Enki looked at the one with neither penis nor vagina on its body,
77 gave it the name "Nippur-*tīru*",
78 and decreed as its fate to stand before the king.

Ninmaḫ creates a human with no genitals, and Enki dubs it *tīru* and assigns it to stand before the king. Since Nippur was the seat of Enlil, head of the Sumerian pantheon and practically its king, the association of the *tīru* with this city and his assignment to serve the king are understandable. We can see here a clear aetiological explanation for the functionality of the *tīru*, a palace attendant discussed in Chapter 5. As is explained there, the *tīru* may have been a castrate, a possibility strengthened by the current passage. He was similar in many respects to the lú-sag / *ša rēši*, a castrated courtier discussed in Chapter 4, so we may conclude that the passage currently under discussion alludes to the functionality of eunuchs in the royal bureaucracy. This topic is elaborated in Chapter 4.

10. *Gilgameš and Aga*

Editions: Römer 1980, Katz 1993.
In the Old Babylonian composition *Gilgameš and Aga*, in the passage ll. 55–99, appears a lú-sag: BIR-HAR-tur-ra lú-sag lugal, "Birharturra, lú-sag of the king", who is the envoy of Gilgameš to his foe, Aga:

Gilgameš and Aga, 55–59[262]
55 BIR-ḪAR-tur-ra lú-sag lugal-a-ni
56 lugal-a-ni-ir zà-mí mu-un-na-ab-bé
57 ge$_{26}$-e ag-ga-šè ga-an-ši-gen

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[261] See Benito 1969: 28, Lambert 2013: 338. Transliteration follows ETCSL (Text c.1.1.2, Enki and Ninmaḫ).

[262] See Römer 1980: 31, Katz 1993: 42. Transliteration follows ETCSL (Text c.1.8.1.1, Gilgameš and Aga).

58 dím-ma-ni ḫé-sùḫ galga-a-ni ḫé-bir-re
59 BIR-ḪAR-tur-ra abul-la ba-ra-è
55 Birhartura, his royal lú-sag,
56 spoke in praise to his king:
57 "I shall go to Aga,
58 so that his thought is confused, his plan baffled."
59 Birhartura went out through the city gate.

The task Birhartura the lú-sag performs, as the local ruler's diplomatic envoy, reminds us of one of the capacities *ša rēši*s performed in first millennium Assyrian and Babylonian courts, as discussed below.

11. *The Curse of Akkad*

Editions: Falkenstein 1965 and Cooper 1983.
Translations and commentaries: Attinger 1984: 99–121, Jacobsen 1987: 359–374, Black, Cunningham, Robson and Zólyomi 2004: 116–125.
The Curse of Akkad is a lamentation-like composition that tells the story of the empire of Akkad, its rise and demise. The dating of this composition is not secure, but most scholars place it in the Ur III period.[263] The tale tells how Naram-Sîn destroyed the Ekur, Enlil's temple, and, as revenge, Enlil sent the Gutian tribes to destroy the Akkadian empire. In face of the havoc that the Gutians cause, the people grieve and mourn:

The Curse of Akkad, 196–204[264]
196 um-ma ud-ta ba-ra-ab-taka$_4$-a
197 ab-ba ud-ta ba-ra-ab-taka$_4$-a
198 gala-maḫ mu-ta ba-ra-ab-taka$_4$-a
199 ud imin gi$_6$ imin-šè
200 balag imin-e an-úr gub-ba-gin$_7$ ki mu-un-ši-ib-ús
201 ùb me-zé li-li-ìs ^{d}iškur-gin$_7$ šà-ba mu-na-an-du$_{12}$
202 um-ma a úru-mu nu-gá-gá
203 ab-ba a lú-bi nu-gá-gá
204 gala-e a é-kur nu-gá-gá
196 The old women who survived those days,
197 the old men who survived those days,
198 the gala-maḫ who survived those years,
199 for seven days and seven nights,
200 put in place seven balag-instruments, as if they stood at heaven's base, and
201 together with ub, meze and lilis-drums played for him (= Enlil) like Iškur.
202 The old women did not restrain (the cry) "Alas my city!"
203 The old men did not restrain (the cry) "Alas its people!"

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[263] See Cooper 1983: 11–12.
[264] See Cooper 1983: 58, 60. This passage is paralleled with Falkenstein's (1965: 60) older edition ll. 198–206. Transliteration follows ETCSL (Text c.2.1.5, The cursing of Agade).

204 The gala did not restrain (the cry) "Alas the ekur!"

This passage exhibits a small portion of the reactions to the widespread devastation caused by the Gutians. The gala and gala-maḫ ("chief gala"), two figures discussed at length in Chapter 2, appear here as mourning together with the rest of the population. Considering the typical involvement of galas in mourning rites, as is demonstrated in Chapter 2, it is no surprise to find them in the current context of sorrow and laments.

12. *The Lament for Eridu*

Edition: Peled 2015.

The Old Babylonian composition *The Lament for Eridu* belongs to a group of texts commonly known as the "Sumerian city laments".[265] A recently identified passage of this composition mentions the *pilpilû*:

The Lament for Eridu, **kirugu 6,1–7**[266]

1   é na-ág-ù-mu-un-e ba-ab-du₇-a-mu
2   é làl u₅-nun bal-bal-e-mu
3   ama₅-mu ág ki-sikil tur-ra-mu ḫi-li-zu nu-du₈-a me-eˈ ér-zu ga-[tùm]
4   me-e ér-zu ga-tùm ér-zu nu-gul-e šà-mu nu-sed₄-d[è]
5   na-ág-bi-šè [b]alag-ˈdiˈ ba-da-gub ù nu-um-ši-k[u-ku]
6   ˡⁱ⁰èd-dè ba-‹da›-ra-ak-a-gin₇ sag nu-mu-un-[gá-gá?]
7   ˌpiˌ-li-pi-li šu-bal-ak-a- ˌgin₇ silaˌ dagal[-ta ba-gen?]
1   O my house, suitable for rule!
2   O my house of libated syrup and ghee!
3   O the woman's abode of my childhood maiden (years), no longer filled with your charms: I am the one who would [carry] your tears!
4   I am the one who would carry your tears! Your tears do not cease, my heart is not assuaged.
5   Because of this, the lamenter is at the ready (and) does not sle[ep.]
6   Like the dagger?-wielding ecstatic, (s)he does not appr[oach?].
7   Like the changing *pilpilû*, [(s)he went along?] the public square.

I offer an edition and discussion of the whole fragment elsewhere.[267] The passage quoted above is part of a lament uttered by Enki's wife Damgalnuna over the destroyed Eridu. She mentions the *pilpilû*, referring to him as a "changing" (šu-bal-ak-a) figure, in a mutual context with a "dagger?-wielding ecstatic" (ˡⁱ⁰èd-dè ba-‹da›-ra-

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[265] This group of texts includes five compositions that were published to-day: the laments for Ur (Kramer 1940, Römer 2004, Samet 2014), Eridu (Green 1978), Uruk (Green 1984), Sumer and Ur (Michalowski 1989) and Nippur (Tinney 1996). Another text that probably belongs to this group is the hitherto unedited "Lament for Ekimar", (which copy is found in Kramer 1944, SLTN 103). It is perhaps possible to relate to this group one more text, *The Curse of Akkad* (see above).

[266] See Peled 2015: 40–41.

[267] See Peled 2015.

ak-a), and both figures function as similes for a lamenter (balag-di). This mention of the *pilpilû* as characterized by a "changing" accords with other mentions of this figure in narrative compositions,[268] and perhaps relates him to the gala/*kalû*, which was mentioned as a lamenting figure in *The Curse of Akkad*, a text similar to *The Lament for Eridu* which we have just discussed.

As we can see, the lamenter is equated in this passage with two figures: the ecstatic and the *pilpilû*. The former is said to have been wielding daggers, the latter is said to have been "changing". To my understanding, therefore, this passage reffers to the three main servants of Inanna/Ištar, though indirectly: the lamenter is paralleled with the gala/*kalû*, originally a professional lamenter, and later on a lamenter in the cult of Ištar; the dagger-wielding ecstatic is paralleled with the *kurgarrû*, who carried daggers as part of Ištar's cult; the "changing" *pilpilû* is paralleled with the *assinnu*, who was changed by Ištar in *The Epic of Erra*, and the both of them appear as paralleled in several lexical lists.

13. *The Debate between Grain and Sheep*

Edition: Alster and Vanstiphout 1987.
Translations and commentaries: Vanstiphout 1997: 575–578, Black, Cunningham, Robson and Zólyomi 2004: 225–229.
We conclude with a text that belongs to the genre of disputation-texts, a type of composition that may have been read aloud in public and in the court, and was even dramatized. It is assumed that actors assumed the roles of each of the debating sides, and eventually one was declared as the winner of the debate. The current dispute occurred between grain and sheep, over the question of which was superior in terms of contribution to humanity.[269] One of the arguments raised by grain during the debate is the following:

> ***The Debate between Grain and Sheep*, 71–82**[270]
> 71 ^{d}ézina-e u$_8$-ra gù mu-un-na-d[é-e]
> 72 nin$_9$ dub-sag-zu-me-en igi-šè ma-ra-ab-gub-bé-en
> 73 sù-rá-ág kalam-ma-ka giri$_{17}$-zal-bi-me-en
> 74 sag-ur-sag-ra usu-gu$_{10}$ ba-ab-šúm-mu
> 75 é-gal-la su zìg mu-un-da-an-ri
> 76 kalam-ma mu zag-šè mu-da-súg-súg-ge-eš
> 77 kadra ^{d}a-nun-na-ke$_4$-ne-me-en
> 78 lipiš barag-barag-gé-ne-me-en
> 79 usu-gu$_{10}$ ur-sag-ra ù-mu-na-te
> 80 ki mè-ka gub-ba-ni

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[268] For a discussion of the *pilpilû* and his attestation in this text, see Peled 2013a.

[269] For a short introduction of this genre of texts, see, to name but a few, Vanstiphout 1997: 575, Black, Cunningham, Robson and Zólyomi 2004: 225–226 and the introduction in Hermann 2010.

[270] See Alster and Vanstiphout 1987: 18. Transliteration follows ETCSL (Text c.5.3.2, The debate between Grain and Sheep).

81 su nu-mu-un-zu sa nu-mu-un-zu

82 i-gi$_4$-in-zu ki-a-ne-di […]-na-du-un

71 Grain called out to Sheep:

72 "Sister, I am your better! I take precedence over you!

73 I am joy of the land's brilliance!

74 I give my power to the SAG-UR-SAG,

75 he fills the palace with awesome radiance,

76 and people stand by his fame to the borders of the land.

77 I am gift of the *annunaki*!

78 I am essential for rulers!

79 After I gave my power to the hero,

80 when (he goes) to his battlefield

81 he knows no fear, he knows no *stress*.[271]

82 I make him return (as if) he went to the playing field."

The SAG-UR-SAG, an effeminate figure discussed in Chapter 5, was a cultic prac-
titioner rather than a member of the palace personnel, which makes the above quo-
tation seem strange. In their edition of the text, Alster and Vanstiphout translated the
term SAG-UR-SAG as "Chief Warrior", with no commentary or explanation of this
choice of translation.[272] It can be assumed that they understood the term as sag ur-
sag, "a valiant person", which makes better sense in this context. It can very well be
a synonym of ur-sag, "hero" that appears in line 79.[273] If this is the case, we have to
regard this passage as referring to a figure other than the SAG-UR-SAG discussed in
Chapter 5. Flückiger-Hawker suggested that this passage referred to the SAG-UR-
SAGs with "a play on their strength?",[274] perhaps hinting to a pan between the
effeminate SAG-UR-SAG and ur-sag, "hero". Zsolnay, who assumed that the title
SAG-UR-SAG was a synonym for *assinnu*, considered the figure now discussed to
indeed be the *assinnu*, who according to her was a cultic warrior-figure.[275] Appar-
ently, any interpretation about the SAG-UR-SAG that is based on the laconic evi-
dence from the above passage will inevitably be conjectural.

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[271] sa can be interpreted here in numerous ways. ETCSL (Text t.5.3.2, The debate between
Grain and Sheep) translated it as "faltering". My translation, "stress", is based on the assump-
tion that sa stood here for "gut", "sinew", "tendon" and the like (see ePSD, s.v. "sa"), organs
that in a state of pressure tend to be stressed.

[272] Alster and Vanstiphout 1987: 19.

[273] See, in this regard, discussion of SAG B i 13–14 // SAG A i 8–9 in Chapter 3, pp. 159.

[274] Flückiger-Hawker 1999: 225.

[275] Zsolnay 2013: 87.

Chapter 2

gala, *kalû* and *kulu'u*

Introduction

We will commence now our survey of specific third gender figures in Mesopotamian sources. The current chapter surveys a group of title-bearers that were either synonymous or were strongly associated with each other: the Sumerian gala and the Akkadian *kalû* and *kulu'u*.

This chapter is comprised of two parts: The first treats the gala/*kalû*, and the second surveys the less documented *kulu'u*. The overview of the gala/*kalû* is presented according to the chronological order of the sources, beginning with the Early Dynastic period (henceforth ED) and ending with the Hellenistic period. By this it is meant to point to possible diachronic processes and changes that this figure underwent. It must be stressed, however, that the emphasis is put on the earlier periods, until (and including) Old Babylonian. These are the crucial phases in which the roles and functions of the gala/*kalû* were shaped, as well as his gender identity. Later periods are far less relevant to the matter of gender image, and are therefore treated is lesser detail.

Subsequently, various aspects of this figure are discussed according to thematic criteria, such as etymological origins, the emesal dialect used by the gala/*kalû*, representations of this figure in Mesopotamian mythology and art, and, most importantly, the gender ambiguity of this figure. Thereafter, the term *kulu'u* is discussed. Since this term is attested much less frequently than the gala/*kalû*, its survey is shorter and ordered only thematically and not chronologically.

The distinction between these different terms requires an explanation, as well as the process of their evolution, since it is commonly accepted that the gala was the earliest, appearing already in mid-third millennium,[276] whereas the other two emerged later on. Hartmann suggested that "in the Babylonian and Assyrian period" the prestige and importance of the gala – now titled *kalû* – had increased.[277] This humble comment signifies a wide, much debated issue, that of the relationship between the Sumerian and Akkadian terms gala, *kalû*, and *kulu'u*, and the nature of transition from the first to the last two. Indeed, it seems that as soon as the Akkadian term *kalû* appeared, it became a synonym of the Sumerian term gala. It should be noted, therefore, that some of the discussions of *kalû* presented throughout this chapter refer to texts where the actual term was gala. The question remains whether *kulu'u* was a synonymous term as well, or rather bore its own functionality and significance. The second section of the current chapter aims at answering this question as well. As we will see, originally these functionaries were cultic personnel –

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[276] The gala is documented in temple records from as early as the mid-third millennium; see Kramer 1981: 1, Pomponio and Visicato 1994: 63, Cooper 2006a: 42 and Taylor 2008: 173. See further discussion below.

[277] Hartmann 1960: 143.

more specifically chanters of lamentations. In the course of time, their role was extended to cover new duties and responsibilities. They conducted various rites and ceremonies, delivered omens and performed sacrificial offerings and libations. Some of these functionaries were even trained as scribes.

This chapter will demonstrate that while Sumerian gala and Akkadian *kalû* designated the same figure, a cultic lamenter, *kulu'u* stood for a general concept of male effeminacy. It will be shown, as was elucidated in the past,[278] that the gender ambiguity of the gala/*kalû* initially stemmed from his performance of lamentations, activities otherwise restricted for women. Later on he was assimilated into the cult of Inanna/Ištar, where other third gender figures operated.

As for the history of research of these figures, several corpuses of cultic texts that comprised the repertoire of rites performed by the gala/*kalû* were published by various scholars. Thureau-Dangin published several Seleucid texts describing rituals that were performed by *kalû*s,[279] while Linssen re-edited these texts, as well as similar ones from the Hellenistic period, that were copies of older originals.[280] A corpus of emesal prayers was published by Witzel,[281] and Cohen was responsible for several comprehensive publications of balag and eršema lamentations.[282] More recently, Maul published an edition of all known eršahunga prayers.[283] The corpus of emesal compositions and the nature of this dialect were analyzed and discussed several times in the past, most notably by Hartmann, Krecher and Schretter.[284] Most recently, Gabbay published a philological and thematic analysis of the eršema laments, and generally of emesal literature.[285]

1. gala/*kalû* and gala-maḫ/*kalamāḫu*

1.1. General Introduction

The first section of this chapter surveys and discusses the figure of the gala/*kalû*. The large variety of activities assigned to this figure and its complex nature were well defined by Cooper: "The evidence suggests a social status ranging from slave to high clergy, and there is unmistakable evidence for homoerotic or effeminate behavior for some."[286] The long time-span over which the textual attestations of the gala/*kalû* are spread obliges us to address these matters with some caution. As Michalowski stated concerning "Ur III ceremonial life", "… philological similarity across time and space does not necessarily reflect semantic identity", and parallels

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[278] Most forcefully in Cooper 2006a.

[279] Thureau-Dangin 1921: 1–59.

[280] Linssen 2004.

[281] Witzel 1935.

[282] Cohen 1974, 1981 and 1988.

[283] Maul 1988.

[284] Hartmann 1960, Krecher 1966, Schretter 1990.

[285] Gabbay 2014a. For a general survey and introduction of the various liturgical compositions, balag, eršema and eršahunga, as well as other emesal prayers, see Gabbay 2014a: 5–14.

[286] Cooper 2006a: 44 n. 24.

from different historical periods "may be more misleading than illuminating".[287]

In order to overcome these obstacles, the current section is divided into two parts. At first, a survey of the data is presented on a diachronic basis. The attestations of the gala/*kalû* are presented and discussed beginning with the ED and Sargonic eras, followed by the Ur III, Old Babylonian, Neo-Assyrian and Neo-Babylonian periods and ending with the evidence from Hellenistic times. This survey is preceded by a separate presentation of the evidence from lexical lists, since this data forms a sub-group of its own. The diachronic survey is followed by its interpretation, divided into several themes. This part of this section is meant to evaluate the data and analyze it, in order to discuss the various aspects of the gala/*kalû*.

The current section will therefore demonstrate that the gala/*kalû* is one and the same practitioner across the periods. However, the examples from the various historical periods call for careful examination and an assessment of the similarities and differences between them. Furthermore, the evolution that his role underwent across the periods will be illustrated. Most importantly, a presentation will be offered of his characteristics as a member of the class of third gender figures.

One last comment is due concerning the cultic activity of the gala/*kalû*. This professional performance (nam-gala/*kalûtu*, "craft of the gala/*kalû*") was regarded with high esteem, considered as deriving from a mysterious knowledge that was kept secret among the circles of these persons:

Aššurbanipal Inscription O, 13–16[288]

13 nam-kù-zu ^{d}*é-a* nam-gala *ni-ṣir-ti* nun^{me}
14 *ša a-na nu-uḫ lìb-bi* dingir^{meš} gal^{meš} *šu-lu-ku*
15 *ki-i pi-i* dub^{meš} *gaba-ri* kur *aš-šur*^{ki} *u* kur uri^{ki}
16 *ina* dub^{meš} *aš-ṭur*

13 Ea's wisdom, the craft of the gala, secret knowledge of the experts,
14 that is suitable to calm the heart of the great gods,
16 I wrote on tablets
15 according to copies from the land of Assyria and the land of Babylonia.

In this passage the Assyrian king boasts in his achievements, and claims to have attained the secret knowledge of the *kalû*s, that originated in Babylonia. This passage illuminates one of the chief functionalities of the gala/*kalû*, that of pacifying the raging hearts of the gods by means of their cultic performance, the *kalûtu*. As we have already seen in the previous chapter, and is mentioned again below, this functionality is apparent in several narrative compositions. However, the duties of the gala/*kalû* were not restricted to the sphere of cult, as the information presented below shows.

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[287] Michalowski 2006: 49.
[288] See Streck 1916: 366, Lenzi 2008: 95. Transliteration follows Lenzi.

1.2. gala/*kalû* and gala-maḫ/*kalamāḫu*: Chronological Survey

1.2.1. gala, *kalû* and *kalamāḫu* in Lexical Lists

We will begin our survey of the titles gala, *kalû* and chief-gala (gala-maḫ/*kalamāḫu*) by reviewing their attestations in lexical lists.[289] The identification of Sumerian gala with Akkadian *kalû* is made evident by numerous bilingual texts[290] and lexical lists,[291] where the two terms appeared as synonyms. For example, in the DIRI lexical list:

DIRI Ugarit iii, 82[292]
ka-la   gala   *ka-lu₄-u*
gala   gala   *kalû*

DIRI iv, 154[293]
ga-al   gala   *ka-lu-ú*
gaal   gala   *kalû*

As well as in the vocabulary list Sᵇ:

Sᵇ ii, 323[294]
ga-la   ˡᵘgala   *ka-lu-u*
gala   gala   *kalû*

Both *kalû* and *kalamāḫu* appear in the antagal lexical list:

antagal E iii, 20'–21'[295]
20' šu-ᵈInanna   *ka-lu-ú*   hand of Inanna / *kalû*
21' ⌈ur⌉-⌈ᵈ⌉nin-⌈a-zu⌉ ˡᵘgala-maḫ   man of Ninazu / chief-*kalû*

The first of these entries (l. 20') testifies to the close connection between the *kalû* and Inanna/Ištar. The fact that he is defined as the goddess's hand[296] probably alludes to his functionality as her servant in the earthly world. The definition of the *kalamāḫu* as "man of Ninazu" in line 21' was interpreted by Gabbay as reflecting Ninazu's role as a chthonic deity, because of the gala/*kalû*'s association with mourning, death and the netherworld (as in *Inanna's Descent*).[297] We have already seen that the association between the *kalû* and Inanna/Ištar was explained in the myth of the goddess's descant to the netherworld, which may shed some light on the

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[289] This section includes references to the most notable attestations of the terms under discussion in lexical lists. Occasional parallel entries, that do not contribute new or different information, are not mentioned (e.g., OB Nippur Ea, or OB Kish Proto-lú).
[290] See several examples in CAD K: 91–92, s.v. "*kalû* A".
[291] See several examples in Renger 1969: 187.
[292] See MSL 15: 80.
[293] See MSL 15: 156.
[294] See MSL 3: 149.
[295] See MSL 17: 212.
[296] Compare modern English "one's right arm" as a metaphor for close assistants or servants.
[297] Gabbay 2014a: 76.

connection between the *kalamāḫu* and Ninazu as well. Ninazu was the patron god of Ešnuna in the Old Sumerian period, and, according to various different traditions, he was a healer, warrior, agrarian and chthonic deity.[298] The last mentioned attribute can explain the association between Ninazu and the *kalamāḫu* in line 21' above, since as a chthonic deity, Ninazu reminds us the descant of Inanna/Ištar to the netherworld and her rescue from there by the gala. Indeed, Wiggermann related this lexical entry to the context of lamentations and dying gods, because of Ninazu's chthonic attributes and the relation of the *kalamāḫu* to dirges.[299] Indeed, it has already been noted by Roth that occasionally thematic or semantic associations linked pairs of entries in this list.[300] In a Neo-Assyrian manuscript[301] of the *mallku = šarru* list of synonyms,[302] the *kalû* was equated with a *lagarru* priest:

malku = šarru Tablet 4,15[303]

[*la*]-*ga-r*[*u*]   ⌜*ka*⌝-*lu*-⌜*u*⌝   [p]ries[t] / [k]*alû*

This entry shows that the *kalû* was understood by the composers of the list to be a cult member, equal to other priests, such as the *lagarru*.[304] Furthermore, a long sequence of entries mentioning gala/*kalû* appears in the fourth tablet of the lexical series lú = *ša*:

lú = ša Tablet 4,161–173[305]

161 sur₉	*ka-lu-ú*	*surrû*-priest / *kalû*
162 ᵐᵘ⁻ʳᵘ⁻ᵘᵇSAL+LAGAR	ki-min	a priestess / ditto
163 la-bar	ki-min	*lagaru*-priest / ditto[306]
164 AN-NUˢᵘ⁻ᵘᵏNUNUZ-ᵖᵃ⁻ᵈᵃpà-da ki-min		a priestess?[307] / ditto
165 ˡúér-ra	ki-min	lamenter / ditto
166 ˡúér-pà	ki-min	weeper / ditto
167 ᵍᵃ⁻ˡᵃARAD-KU	ki-min	gala / ditto
168 ᵐⁱⁿgala	ki-min	gala / ditto
169 gala-maḫ	ŠU-ḫu	chief-gala / *galmāḫu*
170 gala-ús-sa	ŠU-ú	second-rank gala / *galaussû*

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[298] See Leick 1991: 128–129 and Wiggermann 2000a, RlA 9: 329–335, s.v. "Nin-azu".

[299] Wiggermann 2000a, RlA 9: 333, s.v. "Nin-azu".

[300] MSL 17: 135–136.

[301] The list might be of a Middle Babylonian origin; see Lambert 1992: 138.

[302] For the latest edition and comprehensive analysis of this list, see Hrůša 2010.

[303] See Hrůša 2010: 380.

[304] For an etymological discussion of gala and *lagarru*, see below, p. 127.

[305] See MSL 12: 133–134, http://oracc.org/dcclt/P282500. Transliteration follows DCCLT.

[306] See similar entry in K 4328 obv. col. i 17 (CT 19.41, http://oracc.org/dcclt/P365420): la-bar = *ka-lu-ú*.

[307] A somewhat similar term, EN(-NU)-NUNUZ-ZI(-AN-UD) (= nunuzzi), is known to have designated a type of priestess; see ePSD, s.v. "nunuzzi".

171 gala-ḫal-tuš-a	ŠU-*u*	apprentice gala / *ḫallatuššû*
172 gala-zé-è	*a-ṣu-ú*	solo[?]-gala[308] / solo (singer)[309]
173 gala-kéš-da	min *ki-iṣ-ri*	gala of a group/choir[310] / ditto, of a group

As can be seen, the above entries are comprised of terms that either equated the gala/*kalû* with other cult officials (ll. 161–166) or expressed various types, designations or ranks of gala/*kalû* (ll. 167–173).

Scholars proposed that there were gala apprentices, guilds and families.[311] Evidence for a gala apprentice is found in the above excerpt from the lú = *ša* lexical list, l. 171. This entry should be considered within the context of the two preceding it, since the three form a coherent group. The second of these entries (l. 170) is translated in CAD as "*kalû*-musician of the second rank", where the term discussed (*galaussû*) is regarded as a Sumerian loanword.[312] The last of these entries (l. 171) is translated in CAD as "apprentice gala-priest".[313] The term hal-tuš-a is known to designate apprentices of various professions in many instances. Thus, a hierarchy of ranks can be reconstructed, deduced from the three consecutive entries of ll. 169–171: the gala-maḫ (or its Akkadian equivalents, the *gal(a)māḫu* and *kalamāḫu*) was a chief-gala; the gala-ús-sa (Akkadian *galaussû*) was a lower-rank gala; and lowest of all was the gala-hal-tuš-a (*ḫallatuššû*), the gala apprentice.[314] This hypothetical scenario, however, must be suggested with caution, since this reconstruction, based on excerpts from lexical lists, is certainly not compelling.

In an Old Babylonian copy of the lú list, several entries appear that are parallel to some of the ones presented above:

Old Babylonian lú/izi obv. ii, 23'–33'[315]

23' gala	*kalû*
24' gala-maḫ	chief *kalû*
25' gala ḫal-la-tuš-a	apprentice *kalû*
26' gala-tur	junior *kalû*
27' kur-gar-ra	*kurgarrû*

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[308] See CAD A/2: 385, s.v. "*āṣû* 3c" and Mirelman and Sallaberger 2010: 191 n. 4.

[309] See CAD A/2: 385, s.v. "*āṣû* 3c".

[310] See Mirelman and Sallaberger 2010: 191 n. 4.

[311] See Hartmann 1960: 137, 141 and Renger 1969: 192–195.

[312] CAD G: 14, s.v. "*galaussû*".

[313] CAD H: 45, s.v. "*ḫallatuššû*".

[314] Hartmann (1960: 129) pointed similarly to the existence of three classes among the gala, but considered the gala-tur to be the third, lowest rank.

[315] See Taylor 2001: 210–211. Same entries as 23'–26' appear in an OB Nippur exemplar (see MSL 12: 56; http://oracc.org/dcclt/P227880 rev. ii 2''–5''), though the last two entries are ordered the other way around. Same entries as 27'–29', 31' appear in several OB Nippur exemplars (see MSL 12: 42; http://oracc.org/dcclt/P228841 rev. ii 8–11, http://oracc.org/dcclt/P229421 rev.[?] 4–7 and http://oracc.org/dcclt/P228063 obv.[?] 9'–12'), though in a different order. Same entries as 27'–29' appear in another OB Nippur exemplar (see MSL 12: 42; http://oracc.org/dcclt/P228066 rev. i 2–4).

28'	sag-ur-sag	SAG-UR-SAG
29'	pi-li-pi-li	*pilpilû*
30'	ᵍⁱˢrab gar	he who wears a neck-stock[316]
31'	⌜sag⌝ ti-rì	*tīru*
32'	⌜ᵍⁱˢbalag⌝-gá	drum player
33'	⌜balag⌝ íl-íl	drum carrier

The first four entries appear to enumerate three ranks of gala/*kalû* ("chief", "apprentice" and "junior", ll. 24'–26'), preceded by the basic term for all, *kalû* (l. 23'). Thereafter, several other cultic personnel are listed, some of which were third gender figures that are discussed below: *kurgarrû*, SAG-UR-SAG, *pilpilû* and *tīru* (ll. 27'–29', 31'). The remaining terms in this passage probably referred as well to cultic personnel, who were engaged in acting or dancing ("he who lays the hoop", l. 30') and musical performance ("drum player/carrier", ll. 32'–33'). In a Nippur exemplar of the Old Babylonian Proto-lú we find the following:

Old Babylonian Proto-lú rev. iii 36–40[317]

36	gala	*kalû*
37	gala-maḫ	chief *kalû*
38	gala-maḫ-lugal	chief *kalû* of the king
39	gala-lugal	*kalû* of the king
40	gala-lugal-ra-ús-sa	second-rank *kalû* of the king

Here we encounter terms for *kalû* and chief-*kalû* that belonged to the king. Further on this issue, see discussion below.

The conclusions drawn from the survey of the attestations of gala/*kalû* in lexical lists are the following: First of all, these texts establish the synonymy between the Sumerian and Akkadian terms gala and *kalû*. Furthermore, we have seen that various types and ranks of *kalû*s existed, which possibly testifies to some sort of hierarchical system or institution in which these persons were organized. Finally, the equation of the gala/*kalû* with other cult personnel, especially those that belong to the third gender, emphasizes their role in cult and relates them more specifically to the cult of Inanna/Ištar. This feature was shared by many third gender figures, as will be demonstrated in the following chapters.

1.2.2. The gala from the Early Dynastic Period to the Second Dynasty of Lagaš

The current section opens the chronological survey of the gala/*kalû*, and presents the pertinent information concerning this figure, from its earliest attestations to the Ur III period, which is discussed in the following section. The reason for grouping the early periods together in the current section is that they demonstrate a relatively homogenous picture of the gala and exhibit similar data concerning this figure. We

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[316] See similar term in the *Hymn of Iddin-Dagan*, 70.

[317] See MSL 12: 56, http://oracc.org/dcclt/P227886. Transliteration follows DCCLT. Similar entries appear in the Isin version (IB 1318 rev. iii 1'–5', see http://oracc.org/dcclt/P250416).

will review the attestations of galas in administrative documents, such as profession and ration lists and endowments of land grants. Thereafter, the selling of galas as recorded in ED transactions will be evaluated. Finally, the role and function of the gala and the gala-maḫ, "chief-gala", in Gudea's era will be assessed. We will attempt to delineate the characteristics of these figures during the earliest periods of their existence, in order to view if and how these characteristics were changed in later periods.

The earliest written attestations of the gala derive from administrative lists of persons from the Fara period, ca. 2600 BCE.[318] Cooper suggested that its forerunners could be traced back five centuries earlier, to the form of the balag-di, "lamentation performer"[319] attested in the earliest Sumerian lexical lists.[320] If accepted, this claim may testify to the long tradition of professional lamenters and to the fact that gala and similar performers existed from the earliest documented periods in Mesopotamian history, which highlights the importance of these performers in Mesopotamian cult. However, as Cooper's suggestion is merely hypothetical, it should be regarded with caution. Later, we encounter the gala as a cult performer associated with funerals in texts from Late Pre-Sargonic Lagaš, and from Gudea's period. According to one such Pre-Sargonic document from Lagaš,[321] several galas[322] and one gala-maḫ[323] were among the cult officials paid by Baranamtarra, wife of Lugalanda, for their service in the temples. Another text,[324] which listed quantities of beer and bread distributed to the participants of Baranamtarra's funeral ceremonies, mentioned 92 galas,[325] and the gala-maḫ of Girsu,[326] as well as kin and female workers, and a group of "old women".[327] All these persons were termed "wailers" or "mourners"[328] in the text colophon.[329]

Several ED IIIb administrative texts reveal interesting data concerning the gala. The term gala was used as a personal name in a rations list dated to the ED IIIb or Old Akkadian period from Adab. On one occasion, this name belonged to a nar, singer (Adab 186 obv. ii 8), while, elsewhere in the same text, it belonged to an unspecified profession holder (Adab 186 obv. iii 3).[330] In an ED IIIb land-grant from Girsu, DP 591, a gala named ur-munus was documented as receiving a land plot (DP 591 rev. iv 7–9).[331] The lands were distributed by Šagšag, wife of Urukagina (or

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[318] See n. 276 above.
[319] See, in this regard, also Krecher 1966: 35.
[320] Cooper 2006a: 42.
[321] VS 14.180; see Bauer 1972: 347–349.
[322] VS 14.180 viii 3; see Bauer 1972: 349.
[323] VS 14.180 vii 4; see Bauer 1972: 348.
[324] VS 14.137; see Bauer 1972: 226–227.
[325] VS 14.137 i 7; see Bauer 1972: 227.
[326] VS 14.137 ii 6; see Bauer 1972: 227.
[327] dam-ab-ba; see Chiodi 1994: 393–395.
[328] arad-sig$_7$-me; see Gelb 1975: 65.
[329] VS 14.137 iv 2; see Bauer 1972: 227.
[330] See Visicato and Westenholz 2010: 56.
[331] See Allotte de la Füye 1920: Pl. CXLVI, Deimel 1924: 20, http://cdli.ucla.edu/P221240.

Uruinimgina), ruler of Lagaš. It is tantalizing to see that the gala's name is "man-woman", a term that in later periods forms the logographic denotations of the *as-sinnu*.[332] The term ur-munus must be understood as the gala's personal name, because of the pattern of the text, according to which each entry lists one's personal name, his profession and, subsequently, the size of land plot he was given.

The title gala-maḫ, chief of the gala, belonged to one of the top officials in the bureaucratic administration, who, according to Hartmann, resided in every major city.[333] Since Hartman's study is more than half a century old, it requires some verification. Indeed, a quick survey through the CDLI database yields the following results:

1. The Ur III seal from Puzriš-Dagan (http://cdli.ucla.edu/P430318), which impression appears on the text AUCT 3.237 (http://cdli.ucla.edu/P104456), mentions "Lugalmelam the scribe, son of Namḫani, the gala-maḫ of Ur".
2. A seal from Ur III Girsu (http://cdli.ucla.edu/P456428) mentions "Lugalursag, the gala-maḫ of Ḫurim".
3. The Old Akkadian text from Adab CUNES 48–10–045 (http://cdli.ucla.edu/P329204) mentions in rev. ii 6–7 the "gala-maḫ of Larsa".
4. The ED IIIb text from Girsu DP 132 (http://cdli.ucla.edu/P220782) mentions in obv. ii 7 the "[wife] of the gala-maḫ of Lagaš", in obv. vi 1 the "gala-maḫ of Nina" and in rev. iv 6 the "gala-maḫ of Girsu".
5. The ED IIIb text from Girsu DP 133 (http://cdli.ucla.edu/P220783) mentions in obv. iii 6–7 the "wife of the gala-maḫ of Lagaš" and in rev. vi 12–13 the "wife of the gala-maḫ of Girsu".
6. The ED IIIb text from Girsu DP 220 (http://cdli.ucla.edu/P220870) mentions in obv. i 8 the "gala-maḫ of Nina".
7. The Ur III di-til-la text from Girsu ITT 5.6724 + 6730 (http://cdli.ucla.edu/P111445) mentions in rev. 4 the "gala-maḫ of the city".
8. The Ur III text from Umma MVN 3.349 (http://cdli.ucla.edu/P113909) mentions in rev. 7 the "gala-maḫ of Umma".
9. The Ur III text from Puzriš-Dagan MVN 15.192 (http://cdli.ucla.edu/P118472) mentions in obv. 4 the "gala-maḫ of Irisarig".
10. The Ur III text from Umma MVN 15.390 (http://cdli.ucla.edu/P118648) mentions in obv. iv 43, obv. xi 33 and rev. vii 59 the "gala-maḫ of Umma", and in obv. iv 52 and obv. xi 25 the "gala-maḫ of Zabala".
11. The Ur III text from Umma MVN 16.683 (http://cdli.ucla.edu/P118731) mentions in rev. 1 the "gala-maḫ of Umma" and in rev. 3 the "gala-maḫ of Zabala".
12. The Ur III text from Girsu Nisaba 10.66 (http://cdli.ucla.edu/P204228) mentions in rev. 2 and in the seal impression ll. 2–3 the "gala-maḫ of Ḫurim".
13. The Ur III text from Umma Nisaba 23.34 (http://cdli.ucla.edu/P376127) mentions in obv. ii 12 the "gala-maḫ of Zabala".

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[332] See chapter 3.
[333] See Hartmann 1960: 129–130.

14. The Ur III text from Puzriš-Dagan PDT 2.959 (http://cdli.ucla.edu/P126313) mentions in obv. iv 27 the "gala-maḫ of Umma".

15. The Ur III text from Umma SANTAG 6.378 (http://cdli.ucla.edu/P212021) mentions in obv. 6 the "gala-maḫ of Zabala".

16. The ED IIIb text from Girsu TSA 2 (http://cdli.ucla.edu/P221363) mentions in rev. i 9 the "gala-maḫ of Girsu".

17. The ED IIIb text from Girsu TSA 5 (http://cdli.ucla.edu/P221366) mentions in obv. ii 11 the "gala-maḫ of Nina", in rev. iii 1 the "gala-maḫ of Lagaš" and in rev. v 7–8 the "gala-maḫ of Girsu".

18. The ED IIIb text from Girsu VS 14.137 (http://cdli.ucla.edu/P020152) mentions in obv. ii 6 the "gala-maḫ of Girsu".

19. The ED IIIb text from Girsu VS 14.173 (http://cdli.ucla.edu/P020184) mentions in obv. v 5 the "gala-maḫ of Nina" and in rev. iii 6 the "gala-maḫ of Girsu".

20. The ED IIIb text from Girsu VS 25.70 (http://cdli.ucla.edu/P020276) mentions in rev. iv 2 the "gala-maḫ of Girsu".

21. The ED IIIb text from Girsu VS 27.78 (http://cdli.ucla.edu/P020393) mentions in obv. i 8 the "gala-maḫ of Nina".

22. The Ur III text from Puzriš-Dagan Amorites 18 (http://cdli.ucla.edu/P100983) mentions in rev. iii 16 the "gala-maḫ of Irisarig".

23. The Ur III text from Girsu BM 19724 (http://cdli.ucla.edu/P143192) mentions in rev i 8 the "gala-maḫ of Ḫurim".

All in all, the results show nine cities in which a gala-maḫ resided: Ur (Ur III), Ḫurim (Ur III), Larsa (Old Akkadian), Lagaš (ED IIIb) Nina (ED IIIb) Girsu (ED IIIb), Umma (Ur III), Irisarig (Ur III) and Zabala (Ur III). It becomes immediately apparent, that the texts brought up in this brief survey derive almost exclusively from two periods, ED IIIb and Ur III. Other periods may well yield similar results, but they are not represented at present in the CDLI database. Though these highly limited results can by no means be taken as solid proof for any assertion, they do coincide with Hartman's findings mentioned above.

The title of gala-maḫ is documented from at least the Lagaš I period, where a gala-maḫ named Inimani-zi is documented as a witness to a real estate transaction.[334] A gala-maḫ is documented in texts from Fara,[335] being in charge of allocations distributed to a large group of personnel: galas, šà-zu (midwives), géme-kar-kíd (prostitutes), nu-gig (priestesses)[336] and sa-ḫur (unclear profession). These people are designated dumu-dumu-gala, translated by Visicato as "(gala) workers of the gala(.maḫ)".[337] The galas that belonged to this group received relatively high payments, as well as land plots, which led Visicato to suggest that they acted as bureaucratic "middle-management", responsible for other workers who, like them, were

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[334] See Hallo 1973: 238,27–28.

[335] Ancient Šuruppak; the texts uncovered belong to the end of the Early Dynastic II and the beginning of the Early Dynastic III periods.

[336] For a survey and discussion of this title, see Civil 2011: 281–283.

[337] Visicato 1995: 106.

subjected to the gala-maḫ.[338] Several gala-maḫs appear among the receivers of "pure milk and pure malt"[339] offerings in a number of texts from Pre-Sargonic Lagaš.[340] These gala-maḫs are identified by name and locality, such as Lugalanda of Girsu, Lugalpisanabe of Nina, Ennangarri of Nina, [x] of Lagaš and Zimu of Girsu.

An interesting group of texts documented transactions in which galas were purchased. Four of these texts derive from the ED IIIb period, and one from the Old Akkadian period. Significantly, two or three of the ED IIIb texts, which originate from Girsu, documented the purchase of a gala from his parents. The first of these texts begins as follows:

RTC 17 = AO 4036 i 1 - ii 3[341]
$^{col.i1}$dìm-tur ^{2}dam en-èn-tar-zi ^{3}énsi ^{4}lagaš^{ki}-ka-ke$_4$ ^{5}gan-ki-kù-šè ^{6}gù-bi-du$_{10}$ $^{col.ii1}$gala ^{2}dumu-ni ^{3}e-šè-sa$_{10}$
$^{col.i1}$Dimtur, ^{2}wife of Enentarzi, ^{3}governor ^{4}of Lagaš, $^{col.ii3}$bought $^{col.i5}$from Gankiku ^{6}Gubidu $^{col.ii1}$the gala, ^{2}her son.

The opening passage of the transaction shows that Dimtur, wife of Enentarzi, ensi of Lagaš, purchased a gala named Gubidu from his mother Gankiku.[342] The second text in question is given here in full:

BIN 8.363 = MLC 1473[343]
$^{col.i1}$30 še gur sag-gál ^{2}še ur-é-mùš ^{3}[d]am-gàr ^{4}[šu]-na gál-la-am$_6$ ^{5}níg-sa$_{10}$ amar-^{d}saman$_x$(ŠE-NUN-ŠÈ-BU) $^{col.ii1}$gala-šè ^{2}lugal-ḫé-gál-sù ^{3}ab-ba-ni ^{4}ba-de$_6$ ^{5}še ú-rum ^{6d}ba-ba$_6$ $^{col.iii1}$šag$_5$-šag$_5$ ^{2}dam URU-KA-gi-na ^{3}lugal ^{4}lagaš^{ki}-ka 4
$^{col.i4}$This is ^{1}30 gursaggal-units of barley, ^{2}barley that Ur-Emuš ^{3}the [m]erchant ^{4}had in his hand. ^{5}The price, $^{col.ii1}$for the gala $^{col.i5}$Amar-Saman, $^{col.ii4}$was brought ^{2}(to) Lugal-ḫegal-su, ^{3}his (= Amar-Saman's) father. ^{5}The barley (is the) property ^{6}(of the goddess) Ba'u. $^{col.iii1}$Šagšag, ^{2}wife of Urukagina, ^{3}ruler ^{4}of Lagaš. (Year) 4.

While the previous text tells of a purchase of a gala from his mother, this one records the purchase of the gala Amar-Saman from his father, Lugal-hegal-su. A third transaction from the same period recorded the sale of another gala. The first part of the text specifies the items given as payment (VAT 4434 obv. i 1–ii 4). However, its second part mentions the person who was bought, as well as his purchaser:

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[338] Visicato 1995: 106, 108.

[339] ga-kug munu$_4$-kug, see Gelb 1975: 72–73.

[340] DP 173 rev. 9, DP 132 obv. 6, rev. 10, TSA 5 obv. 2, rev. 10, 12, see Deimel 1931: 40–49.

[341] See Edzard 1968: 91, http://cdli.ucla.edu/P221414. Transliteration follows CDLI.

[342] Unlike other transactions presented here, in this case, the vendor is the gala's mother. Although this text is not explicit with regard to Gankiku's gender, in the ED IIIb text Nik. 1.19 rev. iv 1–2 the same name is ascribed to a person's mother (gan-ki-kù-ga ama-ni).

[343] See Selz 1993: 589, http://cdli.ucla.edu/P221494. Transliteration follows CDLI.

VAT 4434 obv. ii 5 - rev. ii 4[344]

[obv.col.ii5]níg-sa$_{10}$ [col.iii1][l]ugal-[n]íg-gá-ni [g]ala-kam [2][b]ára-nam-tar-ra [rev.col.i]
[1]⌜dam⌝ lugal-an-da [2]énsi [3]lagaš[ki]-ka-ke$_4$ [col.ii1]ne-sag [2]ab-ba-ni [3]é-gal-ta [4]e-na-šúm
6

[obv.col.iii1]This is [col.ii5]the price [col.iii1]of [L]ugal-[n]iggani, the [g]ala. [2][B]aranam-
tarra, [rev.col.i1]wife of Lugalanda, [2]governor [3]of Lagaš, [col.ii4]gave [1]first-fruit-offer-
ing[?345] [2](to) his father [3]from the palace. [4](Year) 6.

The content of the closing passage, rev. ii 1–4, if understood here correctly, shows
again that the gala's vendor was his own father. According to this passage, Bara-
namtarra granted the gala's father first-fruit-offerings (ne-sag) from the palace, pre-
sumably in addition to the payment specified in the first part of the transaction (VAT
4434 obv. i 1–ii 4). The same woman, Baranamtarra, wife of Lugalanda, was docu-
mented as purchasing yet another gala in another text:

Nik. 1.17 obv. i 1–3, iv 1 - rev. i 1[346]

[obv.col.i1]lugal-edin-né [2]gala [3]guruš-am$_6$ [col.iv1]bára-nam-tar-ra [2]dam lugal-an-da [3]énsi
[4]lagaš[ki]-ka-ke$_4$ [rev. col. i 1]ì-sù-sù-ge-éš

[obv.col.i1]Lugal-edine [2]the gala, [3]a mature young man[347] he is. [col.iv1]Baranamtarra,
[2]wife of Lugalanda, [3]governor [4]of Lagaš, [rev.col.i1]is satisfied.[348]

In this transaction, Baranamtarra, wife of Lugalanda, ensi of Lagaš, purchased the
gala Lugal-edine. The fact that the seller does not seem to be Lugal-edine's parent
shows that the gala was a grown-up. This fact is reaffirmed by the explicit comment
that he was an adult, albeit a young one (guruš-am$_6$, obv. i 3).[349] This situation
stands in contrast with the previous texts, where the sellers were the galas' parents.
The last case of a sales-transaction in which a gala was purchased is later than the
previous four examples and dated to the Old Akkadian period:

RTC 80,1–10[350]

[1]1 gal[a] [2]1 géme díli[351] 2 dumu-mun[us]-n[i] [3]dam dumu-ni-me [4m]lú-tar [5m]sa-dú
[6]šeš-a-ni-me [7]lugal-ušumgal [8]énsi lagaš[ki]-ke$_4$ [9]šu-ì-lí-šu di-ku$_5$-šè [10]ì-ne-ši-sa$_{10}$
[1]One [g]ala, [2]one female servant (and) he[r] two daught[ers] – [3]they are his wife
and children – [4]Lutar, [5]Sadu – [6]they are his brothers – [7]Lugal-ušumgal, [8]governor
of Lagaš, [10]bought [9]from Šu-ilisu the judge.

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[344] See Marzahn 1991: T. VI n. 13, http://cdli.ucla.edu/P020221. Transliteration follows
CDLI.

[345] Can this be, alternatively, a personal name?

[346] See Edzard 1968: 93, http://cdli.ucla.edu/P221724. Transliteration follows CDLI.

[347] This translation follows Edzard 1968: 93. See commentary of this line in Edzard 1968: 94.

[348] This translation follows Edzard 1968: 93. See explanation and commentary to this line in
Edzard 1968: 94. Though the verb is in the plural form, the context demands a translation in
the singular.

[349] Wilcke (2003a: 159, 2003b: 56) suggested that this mature gala became a slave because of
his debts; however, this suggestion cannot be validated.

[350] See Edzard 1968: 94–95, http://cdli.ucla.edu/P216859. Transliteration follows CDLI

[351] To be understood here as an alternative writing for dili, "single"?

This last text reveals an interesting transaction: the ensi of Lagaš, Lugal-ušumgal, purchased not only a gala, but also his entire family: his wife, two daughters and two brothers. Several details distinguish this text from the previous ones, such as the identity of the buyer and the purchase of the gala's family along with him. Wilcke suggested that the people purchased by Lugal-ušumgal from Šu-ilisu became slaves because of their debts, a hypothesis that cannot be substantiated.[352] The very fact that the gala is documented as having a wife and two daughters is highly significant, as we will see later on. It must be noted, however, that the daughters in this texts appear to belong to the gala's wife, and not directly to him.[353] The significance of all these transaction texts is discussed below. Clearly, they shed light on the social status of the gala during these early periods. He was a human commodity that could be bought and sold.

Turning to the period of the Second Dynasty of Lagaš, we find clear evidence from Gudea's reign of the involvement of the gala in funeral ceremonies. The evidence stems from the inscription on Gudea's Statue B, commemorating the renovation of the Eninnu temple of Ningirsu by the city ruler:

Gudea St. B v 1–4[354]

^{1}ki-maḫ iri-ka al nu-gar ^{2}adda$_x$(LÚ-šessig x BAD) ki nu-túm ^{3}gala-e balag nu-túm ér nu-ta-è ^{4}ama-ér-ke$_4$ ér nu-bí-du$_{11}$

^{1}The hoe was not used at the city cemetery, ^{2}bodies were not buried. ^{3}The gala did not bring his balag,[355] lament did not come out of it, ^{4}a wailing-woman did not utter a lament.

This passage refers to the preparations made within the city before the renovation of the Eninnu temple. Gudea stresses that no defiling activity, such as burial, took place during these preparations. As we can see, the gala and his laments are mentioned here in the context of burials and funerary customs. From a different inscription, of Gudea's Statue R, we learn about the prestigious rank of the chief-gala:

Gudea St. R i 8–ii 10[356]

$^{col.i8}$⌜u$_4$⌝ é-ninnu ^{9}[^{d}ni]n-gír-su-ka $^{col.ii1}$in-dù-a-ta ^{2}nam-ḫa-ni gala-maḫ ^{3}munus-gil-sa$^!$(É)-ka-ra ^{4}kù-babbar zabar ^{5}dusu-saḫar-ra ^{6}ù níg-en-na gàl-la-as ^{7}é-a-na lú nu-ku$_4$-ku$_4$-dè ^{8}ama-ar-gi$_4$-bi mu-n[a-gar] ^{9}mu-bi-a 6 «bùr» gibil e-gaba GÁNA ^{10}inim mu-na-gi

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[352] Wilcke 2003a: 159, 2003b: 56–57.

[353] The possessive (-ni) in line 2 is singular, hence "her daughters", rather than "their daughters". The next line states that the female servant and the two daughters are the wife and children of the said gala. It would have been superfluous to state twice that the daughters belong to the gala; hence, each one of the possessives at lines 2 and 3 probably refers to a different person, as appears in the translation. Did the gala marry a woman who already had two daughters of her own?

[354] See Edzard 1997: 32.

[355] The typical playing instrument of the gala, either harp, lyre or drum; see, most recently, Gabbay 2014a: 92–114 and 2014b, including previous literature.

[356] See Edzard 1997: 60.

col.i8When the Eninnu 9of [Ni]ngirsu col.ii1had been build, 3to 2Namḫani the chief-gala 3of …, 8(Gudea) [granted] h[im] the privilege 7that no one might enter his house (with claims) 5to 4silver, bronze, 5earthworks, 6or …357 9At that time, 10(Gudea) reaffirmed to him 9six (bur) of new (plot?), a field (near) the Egaba-canal.

This passage documented an event when Gudea granted Namḫani the chief-gala extensive privileges, on the occasion of building the Eninnu, Ningirsu's temple. These privileges portray the chief-gala as a high-ranking person.

The evidence of the gala in the earliest periods shows that he was a lamenter who received payments from the palace by way of rations and land plots. These payments were probably made in return for his performance in funerals. Several ED IIIb and Old Akkadian sale documents demonstrate that galas could have been bought, usually from their parents, a topic that is discussed in detail below. Finally, texts from Gudea's reign depict the gala as connected with funeral ceremonies, and the chief gala as a figure that enjoyed a high social status.

1.2.3. The Ur III Period

The next era to be surveyed is the Ur III period. We will review the attestations of galas in administrative documents, and consider their relation with other professions that were documented in mutual contexts. Thereafter, we will examine specific persons who held the office of "chief gala" and evaluate the contribution of this information to our understanding of the nature of that office. The last issue to be treated is the evidence of females who were *kalû*s, as appearing in two letters.

In administrative texts from this period, galas are documented as participating in lamentation rites (ér-siskur-ra),358 where the emesal dialect may have been employed.359 One early example documenting a large group of galas is the text BM 14618.360 The document was dated by Gelb to Šulgi's reign or later.361 It lists 242 persons, of which 180 were nars (singers); the remaining 62 were galas. These persons were listed as residing in seven different localities in the province of Lagaš. Although Gelb assumed that these were not the only nars and galas of the province,362 the text still gives us a rough estimate of the number of galas living and operating in the area at the time. Significantly, it demonstrates yet again that these two professions, the gala and the nar, were closely associated in the sphere of ritualistic performance.

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357 The translation of ll. 3–8 follows Edzard 1997: 60.

358 AUCT 2.322 and 2.339; see Sallaberger 1993: 149.

359 See Cooper 2006a: 42, who admitted that the evidence is circumstantial, as "No Emesal texts per se are preserved from the Ur III period". See, similarly, Sallaberger 1993: 150 n. 708. For a discussion of emesal and its use by the galas, see below.

360 For an edition of the text, see Gelb 1975: 44–46.

361 Gelb 1975: 44.

362 Gelb 1975: 56.

Further information concerning the gala in Ur III times is found in texts from the archives of Garšana. In text 308 of this corpus, a gala (ga-la-e, l. 23) was listed among female workers and an *assinnu* (*a-sí-núm*, l. 16).[363] Gabbay suggested that the term gala here was a personal name, rather than the professional title. Gabbay interpreted the association of this person with females and with *assinnu*s as relating him to the third gender, even if he was not a gala himself, but rather bore the name Gala.[364]

Another designation that appears in Ur III texts is gala lugal, "the king's gala",[365] according to which the gala was at the king's service. Whether this means that these galas enjoyed a relatively higher status or, on the contrary, were regarded as the king's slaves cannot be determined.

The documentation from this period enables us to survey one specific gala, and examine his life and professional career. This person was named Dada, documented mostly as a gala,[366] but on several occasions as a gala-maḫ, "chief-gala".[367] Michalowski granted him the designation "the best-documented Ur III gala",[368] and considered him to be more than merely associated with cities and temples, as other gala-maḫs were. Michalowski suggested that Dada acted as the gala-maḫ of the court, perhaps even of the entire state. A person by the same name, suspected by Michalowski to be the very same Dada, is documented as nar-gal, "chief musician", in texts from the period of Dada the gala-maḫ's final years.[369] Based on this, Michalowski suggested that these titles were in fact synonymous.[370]

The data about Dada's life and career is quite abundant,[371] but the most important information about him, in the context of the current chapter, is the nature of his activities and the fact the he had sons and daughters. He seems to have been a wealthy man; his activities were connected with musical performances; and he was linked with the royal family. Moreover, at least two of his sons were engaged in music-playing in front of the king and his court,[372] and a daughter of his was married to the prince Āmir-Šulgi.[373] Michalowski suggested that Dada was no mere musician, but a manager and organizer of the state ceremonial events – an "impresario" –

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[363] See Owen and Mayr 2007: 141.

[364] Gabbay 2011a: 67–68.

[365] HLC 2 rev. col. ii 21, http://cdli.ucla.edu/P109881; TUT 287 rev. 4, http://cdli.ucla.edu/P135881.

[366] See Gelb 1975: 66.

[367] In three texts from Umma (STA 8,15' [AS8.x.-], MCS 7 27,2 [AS8.iii.], TCTI 2 3336,8 [AS8.xi.3]), and one from Girsu (Hirose 321,1 [-.viii.3]); see Michalowski 2006: 50.

[368] According to Michalowski (2006: 50), Dada is documented more than 120 times in published Ur III texts.

[369] Last years of king Šu-Sin. The pertinent texts are NRVN 1,184 (seal, ŠS7.-.-), *JCS* 24: 2,8 (seal, ŠS7.v.-, Umma), UET 3.1357,35 (ŠS9.-.-); see Michalowski 2006: 50 n. 3.

[370] Michalowski 2006: 49–50.

[371] See, generally, Michalowski 2006.

[372] Ḫedût-Bûr-Sin, in *RA* 8: 192, n. 14,2–3 (see Delaporte 1911: 192) and Šu-Sin-migir-Ištar, in HTS 143,10 (see Sollberger 1956: 21).

[373] Documented in AUCT 1.148 (AS 2.viii.25); see Michalowski 2006: 50.

noting that Dada was documented as being in charge of other galas,[374] and on several occasions as connected with musical performers and instruments.[375]

A further issue concerning the office of the gala involves the question of how a person may become one. Several texts that are presented below were interpreted by scholars as referring to the initiation of persons into the craft of the gala. However, Michalowski rejected this view, and suggested alternatively that these texts portrayed the said persons as leading ceremonies where musical performance was involved. Therefore, their designation as galas was temporary rather than permanent. The first of these texts comes from the Drehem archives, and in it we find the mention of a prince "becoming a gala":

MVN 5.166,8–10[376]
⁸3 udu niga 2 máš gal niga ⁹šu-ᵈšul-gi dumu lugal ¹⁰u₄ nam-gala-šè in-ku₄-ra
⁸(Disbursement) of three fattened sheep and two fattened mature goats ⁹to Prince Šu-Šulgi, ¹⁰when he entered into the gala-ship.

Scholars viewed this passage as indicating the initiation of individuals, who pay tributes in return for being taught the craft of the gala.[377] However, Michalowski drew attention to the fact that evidence is lacking completely for this kind of initiation into an official function in the Ur III texts published thus far.[378] Another person documented in the Drehem archives as "entering into gala-ship" was the cook Dayyanu:

CST 189,2–3 (Š47.x.14)[379]
²*da-a-a-ni* muḫaldim ³u₄ nam-gala-šè [ì]-in-ku$_x$(LIL)-ra
²The cook Dayyanu, ³when he entered into gala-ship.

A different text, dated to almost two months earlier, documented the disbursement of a bridal gift by the high official Rīṣī-ilum to Dayyanu's household:

OIP 115.316,11–12 (Š47.viii.22)[380]
¹¹níg-mussaˢᵃ́ ri-ṣi-DINGIR sa₁₂-ti-um ¹²*da-a-a-ni* muḫaldim-šè
¹¹For the bridal gift of the "highlander" Rīṣī-ilum, ¹²destined for (the house of) the cook Dayyanu.

These two texts show that the official Rīṣī-ilum gave his daughter in marriage to a son of Dayyanu, who "entered into the gala-ship" two months later. On the implications of these two texts and their relation to the question of gala and their possibility of having progeny, see further below. Another text from the same archives testifies to a person performing the office of gala:

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[374] In MVN 9.8; see Michalowski 2006: 50.
[375] Michalowski 2006: 50.
[376] See Michalowski 2006: 51.
[377] See Buccellati 1966: 47 and Gelb 1975: 67.
[378] Michalowski 2006: 51.
[379] See Fish 1932: 30, http://cdli.ucla.edu/P107701. Transliteration follows CDLI.
[380] See Michalowski 2006: 55.

A 04218,6–8[381]

⁶2 udu ú ⁷*muš-da-nu-um* amurru(MAR-TU) ⁸u₄ nam-gala in-AK

⁶(Disbursement) of two grass-fed sheep ⁷(to the) Amorite Mušdānum, ⁸when he performed the gala-ship.

Michalowski offered a lengthy examination of the occurrences of the two formulae presented above (nam-gala-šè ku₄, and nam-gala AK) in Ur III texts, concluding that none actually designated initiation or learning of the gala craft, or achieving of a gala status.[382] Persons documented as (allegedly-)"entering" or "performing" gala-ship are otherwise attested as having an occupation or a career that has nothing to do with being musicians or chanters.[383]

One of the most notable examples is the military general Šarrum-bāni, who appears as "entering into gala-ship" in text AUCT 3.42 (ŠSl.xii.-). Surely, he did not convert from a high-ranking military command into a musician. Michalowski's explanation for this is that these people participated in ceremonies involving musical performance among the elite circles of society, especially marriage fests, where they "took the lead", so that them "being a gala" was a temporary state, and not a permanent one.[384]

Another significant mention of the *kalû* appears in two letters that are probably to be dated to the Ur III period.[385] The letters were unearthed in Tall al-Sulaima, located in the Diyala region. The first reads as follows:

IM 85455[386]

¹*a-na túl-pí-ip-še* ²*qí-bí-ma* ³*ši-bu-tum* ⁴*li-zi-zu* ⁵nin₉ *ì-lí-ṣum-mi-*⌈*id*⌉ ⁶*i-na* gala-*ú-tim* ⁷*na-as-ḫa-at* ⁸*šar-ru-um* ⁹*a-na* ᵐ*wi-ri* ¹⁰*kà-la-ú-tám* ¹¹*ù* nar-*ú-*⌈*tám*⌉ ¹²*i-ta-dì-*⌈*in*⌉ ¹³*a-na* uru^ki*-im* ¹⁴*wu-dì-šu*

²Say ¹to Tulpi-ipše: ⁴let ³the witnesses ⁴come forward. ⁵The sister of Ilī-ṣummid ⁷has been removed ⁶from the *kalû*-ship. ⁸The king ¹²has given ⁹to Wiri ¹⁰the *kalû*-ship ¹¹and nar-ship. ¹⁴Let it be known ¹³to the city!

The second letter recounts the same episode in an abbreviated manner:

IM 85456[387]

¹[*a-na* x]-⌈x⌉-[x] ²⌈*qí*⌉-[*b*]*í-ma* ³[ni]n₉ *ì-lí-ṣum-mi-id* ⁴⌈*na*⌉-*as-ḫa-at* ⁵ᵐ*wi-ir-ri* ⁶nar *ù* gala-⌈*tum*⌉ ⁷*na-dì-šum* ⁸*a-wa-tum* ⁹*la i-tù-ra-am*

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[381] See Buccellatti 1966: 20 apud Michalowski 2006: 51.

[382] Michalowski 2006: 51–54.

[383] Significant in this regard is Fish's (1957: 25) comment that "none of the persons named in this context [i.e., "entering into *gala*-ship"] occurs with the designation *gala* elsewhere on Drehem tablets."

[384] Michalowski 2006: 54, 55, 60. In Michalowski's (2006: 55) somewhat humorous definition "galas for a day".

[385] Al-Rawi (1992: 181–182) dated the letters to the late Old Akkadian period, while Black (1991: 26 n. 32) suggested that they belong to the archaic Old Babylonian period. The dating to the Ur III period is assumed by CDLI (http://cdli.ucla.edu/P381746).

[386] See Al-Rawi 1992: 184.

[387] See Al-Rawi 1992: 184.

[2][S]ay [1][to …] [3][the sist]er of Ilī-ṣummid [4]has been removed. [5]Wirri [7]is given [6]the nar- and *kalû*-ship. [8]The matter [9]may not return to me!

These letters demonstrate the possibility that the offices of the nar (singer) and *kalû* were held by the same person simultaneously, a fact already evident by the appearance of the term nar-gala in another text from Ur III period.[388] Moreover, as noted by Al-Rawi, the king appears to be the one who has the power to appoint and remove people for and from these positions, rather than the temple authorities.[389] Since the person holding the offices of *kalû*-ship and nar-ship in these letters is being "removed", it seems reasonable to assume that in this case these positions were prebendary.

In conclusion of the Ur III evidence, we have seen that several administrative documents portray the gala as engaged in lamentation rites and as recorded in mutual contexts with female workers, singers (nar), *nadītu*s and *assinnu*s. Some of these figures were responsible for singing (nar); others were females (female workers, *nadītu*s) or allegedly affiliated with effeminacy (*assinnu*s, though the evidence concerning their effeminacy only derives from later periods), which suggests that the gala was related to these qualities as well. We have further seen that individual galas, such as Dada, could become chief-galas and achieve a high social status. Lastly, two letters were presented, according to which a female held the nar-ship and *kalû*-ship. The question of the very existence of female *kalû*s is significant for our understanding of the gender identity of this figure, and, therefore, it is discussed below in detail.

1.2.4. The Old Babylonian Period

We will continue with the data concerning the gala/*kalû* from the Old Babylonian period. After reviewing an administrative text that mentions *kalû*, we will examine a group of proverbs that mention this figure and evaluate the contribution of these proverbs to our understanding of the image of the gala/*kalû*. Subsequently, we will review the evidence concerning the *kalamāḫu*, chief *kalû*, in the Old Babylonian period and assess his duties and functions.

The role of the gala/*kalû* as professional lamenter becomes expended in the Old Babylonian era, as reflected through the lamentation-texts composed in this period, including the so-called "city laments". These lamentations were performed in a social context, rather than a private one, as their purpose was to communicate to the gods the community's reverence. Some of these laments were rooted in historical circumstances, such as the destruction Sumerian cities suffered at the turn of the third millennium. The gala/*kalû*'s lamentations were meant to address the gods, pacify them, and make sure that they do not abandon their people. In this regard, therefore, the gala/*kalû*'s role as lamenter gained in this period a new dimension, of

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[388] Hussey 95.5 rev. 2; see Oppenheim 1948: 166 n. 141. The two posts are further linked in the rations-list KTT 86, for which, see below, as well as in other occasions.
[389] Al-Rawi 1992: 184.

maintaining, and, if required, reestablishing, the world order.[390]

We will open the section dealing with the Old Babylonian period by presenting the attestation of a gala in an administrative document from Tuttul. This text is a list of rations of bread and beer supplied to a group of persons. All the names of the recipients that appeared on the reverse are lost, due to the highly eroded state of the tablet. However, the obverse is almost complete and lists fifteen names of recipients. Significantly, only two of these persons are listed with their professional titles, as well as their names:

KTT 86,14–15, 17–18[391]

[14]2 bán ninda 2 bán kaš *i-din-i[a]-tum* [15]dumu[meš] [k]*a-le-e-em* [17]3 bán ninda-gu 3 bán kaš.sig₅ *be-lí-tu-kúl-t[i]*[392] [18]dumu[meš] *n[a]-ri-[im]*

[14]Two bán-measures of bread (and) two bán-measures of beer, (for) Iddin-y[a]tum, [15]who belongs to[393] the [k]*alû*s … [17]Three bán-measures of GU-bread (and) three bán-measures of "good-beer", (for) Bēlī-tukult[ī], [18]who belongs to[394] the si[n]ger[s].

As can be seen, Iddin-yatum the *kalû* and Bēlī-tukultī the singer[395] were not listed consecutively, but, even if one entry separates them, it probably was not coincidental that they were listed closely together and at the last entries of the obverse. It is possible that the list continued on the reverse with enumerating more members of their professions, but, unfortunately, this side of the tablet is almost completely eroded, and this possibility cannot be confirmed. Be that as it may, it seems that the association between the two professions, that of the lamenter and that of the singer, is evident here again.

One of the most interesting sources of information concerning the nature and status of the gala/*kalû* in the Old Babylonian period, and presumably also in the periods preceding it, is the corpus of Sumerian proverbs (henceforth, SP). Sumerian proverb collections are known from as early as the ED III period; however, the ones presented hereby are dated to the Isin-Larsa period, ca. 1900–1800 BCE, which places them some six centuries later.[396] The Isin-Larsa proverbs were copied in the scribal schools as writing exercises, and were even translated into Akkadian in later periods.[397] However, Alster suggested that they should not be regarded as mere theoretical exercises, and claimed that the similarities between some of the ED proverbs and those of the early second millennium testify to "a genuine living tradi-

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[390] For discussions of Mesopotamian lamentations, especially in the Old Babylonian period, and the role of the gala/*kalû* in them, see Löhnert 2008, 2009: 61–87, 2011a and 2011b.

[391] See Krebernik 2001: 67.

[392] This improved reading to Krebernik's (2001: 67) *be-lí-tu*-x[?] follows the collation of Durand and Marti (2004: 131).

[393] Literally, "(who belongs to) the sons of …"

[394] Literally, "(who belongs to) the sons of …"

[395] For a discussion of this person, see Chapter 4, p. 248.

[396] See Alster 1997: xvi–xvii, xix.

[397] See Alster 1997: xviii.

tion of proverbs with a real basis in a spoken language".[398] According to him, these proverbs reflected, to a large extent, people's daily life and were not merely the rhetoric inventions of scribal traditions.[399] Therefore, we can use these compositions and their morals as reliable sources for social attitudes that prevailed in Mesopotamia of the mid-third and early second millennia.[400]

A different view was presented by Veldhuis, who claimed, contra Alster, that the proverbs did not reflect the reality of everyday life at all. Alternatively, he proposed to assess the proverbs against the background of Old Babylonian scribal curriculum, especially at Nippur. According to him, the proverbs were copied by scribal students at the end of the first stage of their education, in which they mostly copied lexical lists. Copying the proverbs prepared the students for the second phase of their training, in which they studied literary compositions. As such, according to Veldhuis, the proverbs had very little, if anything at all, in common with the wider circles of society outside the scribal ones.[401]

A third approach to this topic was suggested by Taylor. He agreed that the proverbs had a purpose in Old Babylonian scribal education, being the product of scribal trainees. He cautioned us, however, that any discussion about the origins and purpose of the proverbs beyond this basic information is conjectural. Taylor doubted whether the sole purpose of the proverbs was indeed for being used as learning material in the scribal education process. As to the question of whether the proverbs were only known to and used by the scribal circles, or were actually spread among the wider population, Taylor concluded that though the proverb collections probably did not exist outside the schools, it was nonetheless not impossible for the occasional proverb to be known in other parts of society, outside the environment of the scribal schools.[402]

A fundamental question to our discussion is, indeed, whether the proverbs reflected real social conventions or not. To what extent can the proverbs be used as reliable sources for the status of the gala/*kalû* in Old Babylonian times? Who knew the content of the proverbs other than the scribes who composed them? And in case the proverbs were indeed unknown outside the scribal circles, does this undermine their validity as sources illuminating the nature of the gala/*kalû*? Did Old Babylonian scribes simply invent fantastic scenarios that had no root whatsoever in reality? In order to try and interpret these highly complicated texts, we must contextualize them.[403] For this end, our previous knowledge of the gala/*kalû*'s gender image is vital. Viewing the gala/*kalû a priori* as a figure whose gender identity was somehow ambiguous is not a groundless presupposition, but an attempt to supply the proverbs with the valuable context against which they are to be understood. Ignoring this previous knowledge while examining and interpreting the proverbs is an unwar-

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[398] Alster 1997: xvii.
[399] Alster 1997: xxiii-xxiv.
[400] See, in this regard, Alster 1997: xxvi.
[401] Veldhuis 2000: 383–389.
[402] Taylor 2005: 18–19.
[403] See, in this regard, Alster 1997: xiii and Taylor 2005: 14.

ranted reductive way of treating these texts. Dismissing the proverbs as conveying nothing of value in terms of the morals they express, seems even more reductive.

The following quotations cover all the Isin-Larsa proverbs known to mention the gala.[404]

Proverb 1: SP 2.54,89–95
89 dub-sar pe-el-lá lú-mu$_7$-mu$_7$-ma-kam
90 nar pe-el-lá lú-gi-di-da-kam
91 gala pe-el-⌜lá⌝ lú-‹gi›-⌜gíd⌝-a-kam
92 dam-gàra pe-el-lá da-ba-ri-ri-a-kam
93 nagar pe-el-lá lú-^{giš}bal-a-kam
94 simug pe-el-lá lú-^{urud}gur$_{10}$-a-kam
95 šidim pe-el-lá im-BU-BU-kam
89 A disgraced scribe becomes an incantation priest.
90 A disgraced singer becomes a flute-player.
91 A disgraced gala becomes a piper.
92 A disgraced merchant becomes a con-man.
93 A disgraced carpenter becomes a man of the spindle.
94 A disgraced smith becomes a man of the sickle.
95 A disgraced mason becomes a hod-carrier.

Proverb 2: SP 2.97,161
gala-e gána é-e ús-sa
To the gala the field lies adjacent to the house.

Proverb 3 : SP 2.98,162
gala du$_5$ ^{giš}má-kam
The gala is the bottom/depths of the boat.

Proverb 4: SP 2.99,163–164
163 gala-e dumu-ni a ḫa-ba-an-da-ra-ra
164 iri^{ki} ge$_{26}$-gin$_7$ ḫé-dù kalam ge$_{26}$-gin$_7$ ḫé-en-tìl
163 A gala threw his son into the water, (saying:)
164 "May the city be built like me! May the country live like me!"

Proverb 5: SP 2.100,165–166
165 gala-e bìd-da-ni ḫa-ba-an-da-zé-er
166 ág ga-ša-an-an-na ga-ša-an-gu$_{10}$ ba-ra-zi-zi-dè-en-e-še
165 A gala tore out[405] his anus, (saying:)

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[404] All transliterations below follow ETCSL (c.6.1.02 and 21), unless stated otherwise. The translations are taken by and large from Alster 1997. For previous editions of these proverbs, see Gordon 1959: 211–213: 2.54, 246–255: 2.97–106 and Alster 1997: 55–56: 2.54, 65–67: 2.97–106, 259–260: 21 Sec. D 2–4. For a survey of the history of research of Sumerian proverbs, see Alster 1997: xxix-xxx. For a comprehensive overview of Sumerian proverbs, see Alster 1997: xiii-xxxvi. For an evaluation of this corpus and its research, see Veldhuis 2000, Taylor 2005 and Alster 2011: 9–10, including previous literature.

[405] That is, spread out? See differently in Alster (1997: 65): "wiped". Gabbay (2011b: 55)

166 "I must not stir up what belongs to my lady Inanna."

Proverb 6: SP 2.101,167–170

167 gala-e ur-maḫ-e edin-na ù-mu-ni-in-te
168 ḫé-en-du ÈRIM$^{?ki}$-a kan$_4$ ^{d}inana-šè
169 ur šika-da ra^{406}
170 šeš-zu edin-na ta-àm mu-un-ak-e-še
167 When the gala met a lion in the steppe, (he said:)
168 "Let him come to the town, at Inanna's gate,
169 (where) the dog is beaten with potsherds.
170 What is your brother doing in the steppe?"

Proverb 7: SP 2.102,171–173

171 x gala é$^?$-ni-šè$^?$ ga$^?$-ab-Ḫ[AR$^?$ …]⌜SI$^?$⌝
172 […] x ^{d}en-[…] NA
173 […] MU é$^?$ lú$^?$-ra x […]-an-SI
171 The gala … to his house … let me …
172 …
173 for someone …

Proverb 8: SP 2.103,174–176

174 gala-e ^{giš}má še-ka-ni ḫa-ba-da-an-su
175 bar-rim$_4$-ma ba-e-gen
176 […] x x (x)
174 Since the gala sank his grain boat,
175 he was walking on dry land.
176 …

Proverb 9: SP 2.104,177

ninda gala-kam lag-ga ab-gu-ul ki-lá-bi al-tur
This is the food of the gala: the pieces are big but the weight is small.

Proverb 10: SP 2.105,178–181

178 arad gala-a-ke$_4$ tílla šeg$_{11}$ al-gi$_4$-gi$_4$
179 kurum$_6$-ma-gu$_{10}$ lag-ga ab-gu-ul ki-lá-bi al-tur
180 lag kurum$_6$-ma-gu$_{10}$ ga-ab-dug$_4$
181 dag-gi$_4$-a ^{giš}šukur mu-te-te
178 The slave of the gala wails constantly in the city streets:
179 "My food ration is big in size but small in weight.
180 Let me tell you about the size of my food ration:
181 a lance pierces it throughout the city quarter."

Proverb 11: SP 2.106,182

gala mu$_7$-mu$_7$ nu-dùg-ga ùn gala-e-ne
A gala whose incantations are not sweet is highly regarded among galas.

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viewed this phrase as denoting laceration of the buttocks.
[406] The transliteration of this line follows Alster 1997: 65, which seems better than ETCSL's.

Proverb 12: SP 21.D2,2

gala-e ᵍⁱˢmá-gur še gur n[u⁷- …]

A gala … not … a *gur* weight of barley … boat …

Proverb 13: SP 21.D3,3–7

3 gala-e a-šag₄ lú-ù-ka še zuḫ-zuḫ-dè ì-gen

4 lugal a-šag₄-ga-ke₄ ba-an-dab₅

5 sag an-sag₉-ga-gu₁₀ bí-suḫ bí-bir-b[ir-(x)]

6 si ga-ba-ab-sá umuš-gu₁₀ ga-ba-da-ab-x […]

7 ga-ba-gen-e-[še]

3 A gala went into a man's field to steal the barley.

4 The owner of the field caught him.

5 (The gala said:) "My beautiful head got confused!

6 It is totally bewildered. Just let me straighten it out, let me [regain⁷] my senses!

7 Let me go free!"

Proverb 14: SP 21.D4,8–9

8 a-šag₄ ù-mu-un gu₅-li gala-ke₄ na-a[n-…]

9 [x n]a-an-kíg-kíg KA x bí-ib-x-a⁷ / x zé-e bulug-˹ga˺ […]

8 A field, whose owner, a friend of a gala …

9 …

Even though the exact meaning of the occasional proverb might elude us, some of them convey lucid messages, and several underlying themes seem to be shared by all. A clear notion of ridicule is apparent in most of these proverbs. The gala is depicted as engaged in various ludicrous situations, and occasionally he even mocks himself.[407] Proverb 4 might demonstrate self-ridicule, when the barren gala (see below) suggests that the population will prosper and flourish "like him". In Proverb 5 a degrading reference is made on the gala's buttocks, perhaps insinuating anal penetration (for an alternative interpretation of this proverb, see below). Proverb 10 might comprise an allusion to the gala's servant (similar reference is made in Proverb 9 to the gala himself) and his nature, symbolized by the size of his food rations (see below). If indeed the food ration symbolized the person, then the phrase "a lance pierces it (= the food ration) throughout the city quarter" might constitute an innuendo to the person being "pierced". In this case, we have here another indirect hint for the gala's engagement in receptive homosexual activity, portrayed in a somewhat scornful manner. A different kind of mockery appears in Proverb 11, where a gala whose incantations are "not sweet" is said to be esteemed among his peers.

Another theme alluded to frequently in these proverbs is the gala's barrenness. In

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[407] Alster (1997: 371) understood the group of proverbs where the gala featured as generally portraying the gala as "notorious as a self-conceited sponge", "who always causes irritation" and "brings his own ludicrous character to light by the pompous statements he makes in the most inappropriate situations". Similarly, SP 21.D3 was understood by Alster (1997: 444) as "characteristic of the highly sarcastic attitude toward *gala*-singers prevalent in Sumerian proverbs."

Proverb 2 it is stated that "to the gala the field lies adjacent to the house". The field, which lies adjacent to the gala's house, but does not reach it, symbolizes fertility.[408] Proverb 13 tells of a gala who tries to steal the production of another person's field, possibly as an allusion to the fact that he is incapable of production himself. When caught, he attempts to get away by assuring his catcher that he will correct his behavior and return to his usual proper conduct. This could be a reference to the improperness of the gala's attempt to gain fertility, and a lesson that the natural order of things calls for him to remain in his barren condition.

Further, the gala is linked with a boat in Proverbs 3, 8 and probably also 12. Since water was symbolically paralleled with semen and progeny (the sign A designated both), the boat might have formed a metaphor for barrenness, as its passengers remained dry instead of coming in contact with water. Proverb 8 makes it almost explicit, when stating that even when the gala's "grain boat" was sinking,[409] he still remained on dry land. Proverb 4 describes how the gala threw his son to the water, and thereafter declared that the city "may be built like him", and the people "may live like him". The irony is clear and analogous: the city will be built, and the people will live, just the same as the gala has a son. The gala throws "his son" to the water (= semen), as a symbol of his barrenness, and, in analogy, no prosperity and life are destined for the population, because for them to be built and to live "like the gala" means to remain infertile.[410] Proverb 5 can be interpreted in a similar manner, because it states that the gala's anus belongs to Inanna, his lady. One of the chief domains of this goddess was human sexuality, and therefore the reference to the gala's anus, rather than his productive genitals, as belonging to Inanna, could have constituted further hint of his sterility.

Proverb 6 tells about a peculiar encounter of a gala with a lion in the steppe, a symbolic antonym of the inhabited civilized areas. He suggests that the lion will come to the city, to Inanna's gate, where the dog is chased away. The concluding query ("What is your brother doing in the steppe?") is as vague as the rest of the proverb. It is possible that the isolated steppe and the wild lion appear in contrast with the inhabited city and the domestic dog. It is not clear, however, what the significance of this proverb is with regard to the gala.

Proverbs 9 and 10 are similar. Both make use of the same metaphor, the food rations of the gala and his slave as "big in size but small in weight". This metaphor might signify the gala as having an ordinary masculine appearance, while lacking productive capabilities all the same.[411]

Thus, we can conclude that this group of proverbs regards the gala with ridicule and depicts him as a figure characterized by various unflattering attributes, the most notable of which are sexual passivity and infertility. These attributes are strongly

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[408] This interpretation was suggested to me by Yoram Cohen.

[409] Could a "grain boat" be an allusion to fertility, and its sinking an allusion to the loss of it?

[410] This interpretation was suggested to me by Yoram Cohen. Gordon (1959: 248) suggested that the gala's son thrown to the water was not his biological son, but an adopted one.

[411] Alster (1997: 371) interpreted SP 2.104 as alluding to the gala's pretentious conduct, while "there is no substance to it".

connected with gender ambiguity, because they contrast the customary manly image in Mesopotamian society. Customarily, males were characterized by penetrative sexuality and the ability to sire descendants. As we have seen, the proverbs exhibit the gala in a completely different manner.

We will proceed to treat the genre of cultic texts. A text from Larsa[412] records the participation of several *kalû*s, and once of a *kalamāḫu* of Nanaya,[413] in the various stages of the seven-day-long ceremony.[414] In their first attestation, the *kalû*s conduct a *kinūnum*[415]-ceremony where offering of aromatics was made to Utu, Inanna, Nine-gala, Dingirmaḫ and Papnigingara (l. 51).[416] On the next morning, *kalû*s are documented alongside several other cultic personnel (l. 85), but, as several researchers commented in the past,[417] the exact nature of their activities throughout the ceremony is hard to comprehend. Further in the text, a *kalamāḫu* is mentioned (l. 125). However, the tablet is heavily damaged, and nothing can be understood about the context of the *kalamāḫu*'s activities. On the whole, the text is quite laconic and portrays the activities of the *kalû*s and *kalamāḫu* as technical procedures of cultic performance. As such, it adds very little to our knowledge of these figures beyond the basic fact that in the Old Babylonian period they participated in public cult ceremonies.

Let us turn now to evaluate the role and responsibilities of the chief-*kalû*, the *kalamāḫu*, in the Old Babylonian period. The evidence illuminating this figure derives from the private archives of these persons, who apparently held a high position in society and recorded their economic and professional activities in these archives. Interestingly, we have evidence that, at least in this period, when a person assumed the role of *kalamāḫu*, his name was changed.[418] A fragment from Old Babylonian Sippar includes a list of 21 prostitutes and is concluded by the two following lines:

CT 4.15c,12–13
[12]munuskar-kidmeš [13]níg-šu gala-maḫ
[12]Female prostitutes, [13]"commodity"[419] of the chief-*kalû*.

In this passage, the *kalamāḫu* appears to be the supervisor of a group of prostitutes. However, no further information can be established from this fragment.

One of the most illuminating sources of information we have at our disposal

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[412] This text was restored from several fragments that come from a private collection. For an edition of the text, see Kingsbury 1963. For a comprehensive treatment and new edition of it, see Westenholz and Westenholz 2006: 3–81.

[413] A goddesses considered to be similar to Ištar in many respects. For recent surveys and discussions of this goddess, see Westenholz 1997, Stol 1998, Beaulieu 2003: 182–216 and Streck and Wasserman 2012.

[414] It is uncertain whether this text comprised a specific rite, or rather described a daily cycle of rituals; see discussion in Westenholz and Westenholz 2006: 4–6.

[415] Brazier or stove; see Tanret and van Lerberghe 1993: 436.

[416] See Kingsbury 1963: 21.

[417] See Renger 1969: 191 and Black 1991: 26.

[418] See Charpin 1986: 396–402 and Janssen 1992: 47–48.

[419] For níg-šu = "goods", see ePSD, s.v. "nig₂-šu".

concerning the roles, activities and status of the *kalamāḫu* in Old Babylonian times is the archive found at Sippar-Amnānum (modern Tell ed-Dēr). The archive belonged to a *kalamāḫu* of Annunītum, named Ur-Utu, and the tablets found there[420] shed light on his financial dealings and private life,[421] but also on the administration and cult of the local prime goddess, Annunītum.[422]

The archive of the *kalamāḫu* contained the documentation of performance of certain *parṣu*:[423] women performing *rēdûtum*,[424] and men performing *ḫarīmūtum*.[425] Cooper suggested that the men engaged in prostitution, and the women engaged in "soldiering", might hint to these *parṣu* as being part of a ritual where cross-dressing was practiced, as is known from rites that belonged to the repertoire of the Ištar cult.[426] In order to understand better the meaning of the *parṣu* of *rēdûtum* and *ḫarīmūtum*, we should look for other *parṣu* attested in the Ur-Utu archives, which were performed exclusively by one gender. Indeed, two such *parṣu* exist: *mubabbi-lūtum* (performed by males) and *qulmû* (performed by females).[427] The former designates the craft of juggler or acrobat, while the latter stands for an axe. So, continuing Cooper's line of thought, jugglery and prostitution were performed by men, whereas "soldiering" and rites connected with an axe were performed by women. On two occasions *rēdûtum* and *qulmû* even appear together, performed by one woman.[428] Whether all this could indeed be regarded as an indication of the performance of cross-dressing rituals remains an open question.

However, a different view of this issue can be suggested, based on Yoffee's

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[420] The tablets found in the archive covered a time span of some 80 years, from the reign of Samsu-iluna to Ammi-ṣaduqa's; see van Lerberghe 1982: 280. For general and archaeological details concerning the archive, see Gasche 1989. For descriptions and discussions of this archive, see van Lerberghe 1982, Tanret 2002, and, most recently, Janssen 2012: 281–285. For the publication of the texts, see van Lerberghe and Voet 1991.

[421] For a discussion of Ur-Utu's private life and family, see Janssen 1992, and, most recently, Tanret 2011.

[422] One of the goddesses considered to be a manifestation of Ištar. It should be noted in this regard, however, that, as Tanret (2010: 11) commented, the exact nature of the activities performed by the *kalamāḫu*s in the temple still remains unknown.

[423] In the current context or similar ones, this complicated term was variously translated as "'service obligations' or the like" (Gallery 1980: 333), "prerogatives or cult functions" (van Lerberghe 1982: 281), "temple office, prebend, income from a prebend", "'rites' or the like" (Tanret and van Lerberghe 1993: 437 and CAD P: 195, 199, s.v. "*parṣu* 2b") and "functions" (Cooper 2006b, RlA 11: 18, s.v. "Prostitution").

[424] The term *rēdûm* can be interpreted as standing for a soldier or a bailiff; see CAD R: 246, s.v. "*rēdû* 1".

[425] That is, prostitution; see Cooper 2006b, RlA 11: 18, s.v. "Prostitution". For lists summarizing these *parṣu*-performances according to the performer's gender, see Tanret and van Lerberghe 1993: 441–442.

[426] Cooper 2006b, RlA 11: 18, s.v. "Prostitution". The CAD (R: 252, s.v. "*rēdûtum* 2") offers no help here, since the suggested translation for *rēdûtum* in this context is simply "a cultic service for female deities, performed by married women".

[427] See the fourth and fifth entries in the list in Tanret and van Lerberghe 1993: 441.

[428] See the first two entries in the list in Tanret and van Lerberghe 1993: 442.

interpretation of the key terms *rēdûtum* and *ḫarīmūtum* in other late Old Babylonian texts mentioning persons' *parṣu*-obligations. Even though he also understood the latter as designating "prostitution", the former was taken by Yoffee to denote "escortship".[429] According to this meaning of *rēdûtum*, the women who were documented in Ur-Utu's archive as performing *rēdûtum-parṣu*s were not engaged in "soldiering" at all, which eliminates the speculative suggestions concerning cross-dressing. Therefore, as long as no other hint from these or similar texts suggests cross-dressing or ritual performance, this conjecture seems unwarranted.

The common denominator of all these *parṣu*s seems to be prostitution, performed by both women and men.[430] It appears that the *kalamāḫu* distributed the privileges to perform these *parṣu*s in return for payment received from the performers. It does not seem likely that he was engaged himself in the actual performance of the rites. However, we are unaware of the exact nature of the performance and the manner in which these *parṣu*s were conducted. Therefore, we cannot know whether the men and women who performed these *parṣu*s were engaged in sexual activity that was considered as prostitution or acted as cultic supervisors of such activity, which was performed by others. For this reason, it cannot be claimed for certain, on the basis of this evidence, that men were engaged in cultic prostitution.[431]

In conclusion, the two main topics discussed in the section dealing with the Old Babylonian evidence of the gala/*kalû* were his image as reflected in the corpus of Sumerian proverbs and the role of the chief *kalû*, the *kalamāḫu*, in this period. We have seen that, in the proverbs, the gala/*kalû* was consistently portrayed as a ridiculous figure, characterized as an infertile person. As for the *kalamāḫu*, he was a distinguished figure that held a high-ranking post with extensive responsibilities and duties. Ur-Utu, a *kalamāḫu* from Sippar, was documented as responsible for granting the right to perform certain rites that were connected with prostitution. However, the exact nature of these rites and the extent of the *kalamāḫu*'s involvement in them are unclear.

1.2.5. The Neo-Assyrian Period

Turning to the first millennium, we have evidence that in the Neo-Assyrian period the *kalû* and his lore of lamentations, the *kalûtu*, were regarded with high esteem, and at times he operated in the royal circles. According to several royal letters, *kalû*s cooperated with other practitioners (*āšipu*, exorcist) who, in response to the occurrence of a solar eclipse, performed the substitute king ritual.[432] Also, in the letter SAA 10.160,[433] sent to the king from a person who seems to have been both an astronomer and a *kalû*, the king was advised to take to his court twenty scholars,

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[429] Yoffee 1998: 330.

[430] See similar view in van Lerberghe 1982: 282.

[431] On the relation between prostitution and cult in Mesopotamia, as reflected through the complicated topic of the so-called "sacred prostitution", see further below, p. 158 n. 647.

[432] See Robson 2008: 473–474 and Gabbay 2014c: 116–117, including previous literature.

[433] Parpola 1993: 120–124.

some of whom possessed the knowledge of *kalûtu*, and could therefore be beneficial to the king.

In this period, therefore, the *kalû* seems to have been regarded as a scholar of his own, not merely a professional lamenter. Gabbay suggested that the originally Babylonian office of the *kalû* was not regarded with high esteem in Assyria during the second and early first millennia, and that it was an eighth- and seventh-century development that the *kalû* achieved high prominence and importance in Assyria. Gabbay explained that the traditions and religious and theological ideas reflected in the *kalûtu* were Babylonian, and thus considered by the Assyrians to be foreign, and not easily acceptable. *kalûtu* texts that were indeed imported to Assyria (especially *šuila*s and *eršaḫunga*s) emphasized the individual role of the king, a feature that matched the Assyrian worldview, and therefore appealed to the Assyrians. This process was triggered, according to Gabbay, by the growing involvement of Assyria in Babylonia, which gave way to stronger cultural transmissions. When the process peaked during the eighth and seventh centuries, therefore, we find the *kalû* and the *kalûtu* finally regarded in Assyria with high esteem.[434]

The attestations of *kalû* and *kalamāḫu* in Neo-Assyrian texts are most abundant in administrative and cult records, as is shown below. In administrative documentation the *kalû* is mentioned several times. The list of palace personnel K 1359 + K 13197 (= ADD 857) i 51 mentions a *kalû* named Urad-Ea.[435] Another such list, K 1276 (= ADD 851) rev. i 1–6, enumerates six *kalû*s: Nabû-zeru-iddina, Zakiru, Sîn-balassu-iqbi, Nabû-šarrani, Nabû-bēl-šumate and Marduk.[436] It is possible that a *kalamāḫu* is attested in a broken context in the list K 4783 + K 10451 (= ADD 928) iii 12'.[437] However, the damaged state of the tablet does not allow a deduction of any additional information, and even the mere restoration of the title is not secure. Similarly problematic is the broken context in which another *kalû* is attested, in text 81–2–4,463,5.[438] The most interesting attestation of *kalû* in Neo-Assyrian administrative texts appears in a list of bread and beer distributed to various palace personnel:

ADD 757 = K 1145,6–7[439]
⁶ˡúgala^meš ˡúnar^meš ⁷munusnar^meš kú
⁶male *kalû*s, male singers, ⁷female singers, (distributed for) consumption.

The interesting information found in this small passage involves the fact that the singers mentioned alongside the *kalû*s are divided to male and female ones, while the *kalû*s appear only as male ones. It is doubtful whether this could be an indication for the sexual ambiguity of the *kalû*, as equivalent to both male and female nars. Alternatively, the above passage may simply indicate that only men officiated in the

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[434] Gabbay 2014c, especially pp. 139–140.

[435] See Fales and Postgate 1992: 8.

[436] See Fales and Postgate 1992: 4–5. The designation of these persons as *kalû*s appears in K 1276 (= ADD 851) rev. i 7; see Fales and Postgate 1992: 5.

[437] lú-gal uš-[ku^meš]; see Fales and Postgate 1992: 73.

[438] lú uš-k[u …]; see Fales and Postgate 1992: 121.

[439] See Fales and Postgate 1992: 148.

post of *kalû*, at least in this period.

The *kalamāḫu* is documented as involved in Neo-Assyrian temple bureaucracy in several texts from the city of Aššur, and probably once in a text from Kalḫu.[440] His duties were cultic, as well as administrative, since he was in charge of organizing the cultic festivities.[441] For example, a list of officials that were appointed by king Šalmaneser included a *kalamāḫu*.[442] Further along in the text, a passage that relates to the duties of the *kalamāḫu* appears:

K 340/1 = Assur 13956 c rev. iv 11'–14'[443]
¹¹'*za-[a]m-mar-ú-tú* ¹²'*šá* é dingir é-ku^meš ¹³'lúgala-maḫ ¹⁴'*pu-tu-ḫu na-ši*
¹³'The *kalamāḫu* ¹⁴'bears responsibility ¹¹'(for the) singing ¹²'of the house of the god (and) the temples.

This passage shows that the *kalamāḫu* was in charge of organizing the cultic singing in the temples – a duty assigned to him by the Assyrian king. Menzel concluded therefore that the *kalamāḫu* was a specialist in Sumerian cultic songs and prayers in the Neo-Assyrian temple. According to her, the *kalamāḫu* was a person in charge of groups of *kalûs*, but, moreover, was himself a specialist in the craft of the *kalû*.[444]

Since in the Neo-Assyrian period the *kalamāḫu* appeared so tightly connected with the temple, whereas *kalûs* were documented in other contexts as well, Menzel suggested another view regarding the differentiation between the two. According to her, in this period, the term *kalamāḫu* stood not only for designating the supervisor of the *kalûs*, but also for differentiating between *kalûs* who performed as official temple attendants,[445] and other *kalûs*, who operated outside the temple.[446]

Another one of the rituals that were part of the repertoire of the *kalûs* was meant to bestow protection upon the king in the battlefield. The fact that this ritual belonged to the *kalûtu*-corpus is indicated explicitly in the text:

K 3457 + K 8195 + K 10632 rev. 14' // 81–2–4, 306 rev. 6'[447]
[*n*]*é-pe-ši ša* ŠU-II lúgala
[R]itual of the *kalû*.

The text itself contains instructions for the *kalû*. Most of which instruct what prayers

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[440] Text ND 5429, see Menzel 1981: 233 n. 3107 (p. 191*).

[441] For a general description of these activities, see Menzel 1981: 233–234.

[442] K 340/1 = Ass. 13956 c obv. i 11; see Ebeling 1954: 30.

[443] See Ebeling 1954: 31. The transliteration of line 11' follows CAD P: 553, s.v. "*pūtuhu* a". Ebeling's (1954: 31) transliteration of this line (*ṣa-[i⁷-]' šam-[m]i⁷*) makes less sense, and leads to an unclear translation ("… of plant⁷").

[444] Menzel 1981: 234–235.

[445] For the evidence concerning the participation of *kalûs* in cultic activities in the Neo-Assyrian period, see Menzel 1981: 236–237.

[446] Menzel 1981: 235–236. For the documentation of *kalûs* who operated outside the temple, Menzel (1981: 235 n. 3139) referred to the letters ABL 361 (= SAA 10.212) and 1426, and possibly also to ABL 1197 (= SAA 13.189). These texts mention *kalûs* as performing various cultic rites in the palace.

[447] See Elat 1982: 14.

(ér, eršema and eršaḫunga) are to be uttered at different stages of the ceremony. The colophon[448] mentions three *kalamāḫu*s as responsible for copying the text in Babylon.

A different type of attestation of *kalû* from this period appears in texts containing several astrological reports, omens of lunar and solar eclipses. Two of these sets of omens were attributed by their colophons to the *kalû* Bēl-šuma-iškun:

RMA 235A edg. 1; RMA 134 rev. 7[449]
šá ᵐ·ᵈen-mu-gar-*un* ˡúgala
(Report) of the *kalû* Bēl-šuma-iškun.

This shows that *kalû*s could have occasionally been engaged in activities other than cultic performance, although their most frequent attestations were in cult. Indeed, according to Black, when compared to the limited role of the *kalû*s in Old Babylonian cult rituals, in later periods their role was greatly expanded.[450] Naturally, this could be explained by the simple fact that Neo-Assyrian texts are more abundant than Old Babylonian ones. The similarity between the nature of Old Babylonian and Neo-Assyrian rituals seems to suggest that these were consolidated during the early period and continued to be performed in a similar fashion thereafter. In this regard, therefore, these rites should not be considered to be Assyrian, but rather Assyrian period copies of composition that derive from older Babylonian traditions. However, bearing in mind Gabbay's discussion of the *kalû* and *kalûtu* in Assyria, we should remember that these Babylonian traditions reflect the Assyrian choice of utilizing merely certain aspects of the *kalûtu*, especially those concerned with the individual image of the king. From a theological point of view, this is different than the Babylonian notion of the *kalû*'s performance of cultic lamentation. It seems, therefore, that the role of the *kalû* in the Neo-Assyrian period was largely related to his service of the king.

1.2.6. The Neo- and Late Babylonian Periods

The *kalû* figures in the only ritual text known from Uruk of the Neo-Babylonian period, LKU 51 (= VAT 14524).[451] The text details several different ceremonies that are performed in different months of the year in the Eanna temple in Babylon. The edges of the tablet are damaged, which hinders reconstruction of the cultic procedures of the ceremonies. Several attestations of *kalû*s appear throughout the text, usually alongside singers (*nāru*), and once together with an exorcist (*āšipu*). Most of the references to the *kalû* appear in a fragmentary context, which does not allow for a clear understanding of the nature of his actions. However, at least once the context is clear enough:

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[448] 81–2–4, 306 rev. 9'–11'; see Elat 1982: 16.
[449] See Hunger 1992: 263; 264.
[450] Black 1991: 28–29.
[451] See Beaulieu 2003: 373. For editions of the text, see Falkenstein 1931: 17–21 and Beaulieu 2003: 373–377.

LKU 51 obv. 28'–31'[452]

28' ud 27^kam ^d*áš-ka-a-a-i-ti a-na* ⌈é⌉ […]

29' *i-ni-iḫ-ḫi-su* alam ^d*dumu-zi uṣ-ṣa-am-ma ina* ká-gal-*i in-na-an-*⌈*bi*⌉-[…]

30' *a-na* igi ^d gašan *šá* unug^ki *ul-ter-rib ina* ugu ^giš*p*[*a-á*]*š-ka in-na-an-*[…]

31' ^lú gala IM-ŠU-ÍL-TÚG *a-na* geštu-min zag-*šú a-na* geštu-min ḫúb-*šú ú-*⌈*la-aḫ*⌉-[*ḫaš* …]

28' On the 27th day, Urkayītu[453] [is brought?] to the temple.

29' They return. The image of Dumuzi comes out and […] at the gate […]

30' and is introduced into the presence of the Lady-of-Uruk. He […] on a log of wood […]

31' The *kalû* whispe[rs] (the incantation) "Imšu-iltug" to his right ear, and to his left ear […]

This episode seems to portray the *kalû* as involved in a ceremony of the statue of the god Dumuzi, perhaps equivalent in a way to the *mīš pî* ("washing of the mouth") ceremony described below. Ištar, under the epithets "of Uruk" (Urkayītu, l. 28') and "Lady-of-Uruk" (^d gašan *šá* unug^ki, l. 30') takes part in the ceremony as well. It is possible that the above episode describes how the statues of both deities are brought together in a ceremony conducted by the *kalû*, one of the chief attendants of Ištar.

In the Neo- and Late Babylonian periods we encounter families of *kalû*s in high positions in the bureaucratic and economic systems. These persons fulfilled various professions, were involved in various activities, and played a significant role in the Babylonian prebendary system.[454] In concluding his discussion of the famous first-millennium family of *kalû*s Sîn-lēqe-unnini, Beaulieu emphasized the continuity of roles and status of these *kalû*s, from the Neo Babylonian period up until the Seleucid one.[455]

Since during this time the status of the *kalû*, and rarely even that of the *kalamāḫu*, could be held as prebend, it was occasionally sold.[456] Thus we find in the Achaemenid text from Uruk NCBT 489 a transaction in which the prebend of *kalamāḫûtu* was sold:

NCBT 489,13–15[457]

^13 2 bán ^m*ri-mu*[*t*] ^lú*gal-maḫ* ^14*šá* ^d gašan.me ^lú[*ga*]*l-maḫ-ú-tu* ^15*ù šul-lum* é

^13 2 bán-measures (of barley, for) Rīmūt, *kalamāḫu* ^14 of the goddess, (payment for) the prebend of *kalamāḫu*-ship ^15 and the ceremony of *šullum bīti*.

Similarly, the Seleucid quitclaim text BiMes 24.47 (= A3498) details the sale trans-

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[452] See Falkenstein 1931: 18 and Beaulieu 2003: 373–374. Transliteration follows Beaulieu.

[453] A first-millennium epithet of Ištar, conveying the notion of "from Uruk". Variously written Arka'îtu, Aška'îti (as in the current text) and Urkittu; see König 1928, RlA 1: 151, s.v. "Arka'îtu".

[454] See, for example, Pearce and Doty 2000, for an account of the activities and careers of two *kalû*s, the homonymic grandfather and grandson Anu-belšunu, in Seleucid Babylon.

[455] Beaulieu 2000: 15–16.

[456] For the sale of *kalû* prebends in the Old Babylonian period, see above.

[457] See Beaulieu 2003: 181.

action of a *kalûtu* prebend ([lú]gala-*ú-tú*) from Riḫat-Anu, identified as "son of Nidintu-Anu, son of Riḫat-Anu, descendent of Sîn-lēqe-unnini", to a person named Aristokrates, son of Nanaya-iddin.[458] Other texts of this corpus[459] mention the sale of the right for cuts of meat that in all likelihood belonged to the *kalû*, though this is not made explicit in the texts.

Ritual ceremonies where *kalû*s and *kalamāḫu*s participated show continuity from the Neo-Assyrian period well into Hellenistic times. In the previous section we have noted Menzel's suggestion, that in the Neo-Assyrian period the two terms *kalamāḫu* and *kalû* were used to differentiate between two types of *kalû*s: temple attendants, and those who operated outside the temple. Somewhat similarly, Linssen referred to the *lilissu* (kettledrum) ritual from Uruk W 18728 obv. 10' and 12', which mentions "shaven" (*gullubu*) and "non-shaven" (*la gullubu*) *kalû*s, and interpreted it as refer-ring to "consecrated" ("probably belonging to the regular personnel of the temple") and "non-consecrated" *kalû*s, respectively.[460] A *kalamāḫu* appeared in the *lilissu* ritual as well. He slaughtered a bull, but was forbidden from eating from it, unlike the *kalû*s. Linssen suggested that the *kalamāḫu* was forbidden from eating the bull because he was the one who killed it. According to Linssen, this act was perceived as a sin, because the bull was a sacred animal.[461]

This text has a more elaborated Hellenistic period parallel.[462] Although the most elaborated copies we have at our disposal are Hellenistic ones, the origin of the ritual is Neo-Assyrian at the latest, if not earlier.[463] The text details the procedures to be performed when covering the bronze *lilissu*-drum with a bull's hide, including the slaughtering of the bull and the recitations (including eršemas, šuilas and *taqribtu*s) that are to be uttered during the ceremony. The *kalamāḫu* is mentioned once as participating in these procedures.[464] The colophon of the text identifies it as belonging to the corpus of the *kalû*-texts (*kalûtu*):

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[458] See copy in Weisberg 1991 (no. 47); edition in Corò 2005: 218.

[459] BiMes 24 nos. 2, 5, 7, 9 and 17, see copies in Weisberg 1991.

[460] Linssen 2004: 17 n. 109, 93. The term *gullubu*, "shaven", could mark cult personnel as consecrated; see Scheyhing 1998. For consecrated and non-consecrated *kalû*s in these periods, see also van Driel 2002: 113, who interpreted them against the possible background of preb-ends.

[461] Linssen 2004: 97.

[462] For a discussion of this ritual and its various copies, see Linssen 2004: 94–100. For an edition of the main manuscript (TU 44 = AO 6479, Hellenistic period), see Linssen 2004: 252–262.

[463] KAR 50 (VAT 8247) and KAR 60 (VAT 8022) are seventh-century abbreviated versions of the Hellenistic account of the ritual (TU 44 (AO 6479)). According to Linssen (2004: 263, 267), the Neo-Assyrian manuscripts were themselves copies of an earlier Babylonian version, which was copied for Aššurbanipal's library in the seventh century. For editions of these two texts, see Linssen 2004: 263–266 (KAR 60) and 267–269 (KAR 50). Besides these two Neo-Assyrian texts, this ritual has another abbreviated parallel, which dates from the Hellenistic period: *Bagh. Mitt. Beih.* 2, no. 5 (W 20030/4). For an edition of this version of the ritual, see Linssen 2004: 270–274.

[464] TU 44 = AO 6479 iii 24.

TU 44 = AO 6479 iv 36–37[465]

36 [*né-pe*]-*šú šá* ŠU-II ᴸᵘgala im ᵐ·ᵈ60-šeš-mu-*nu* a *šá* ᵐ*Ri-ḫat*-ᵈ60

37 ᴸᵘgala-maḫ ᵈ60 *u an-tu₄* unugᵏⁱ-*ú* gin₇ sumun-*bar-šú* sar-*ma ba-rù u up-puš*

36 [Ri]tual of the *kalû*. Tablet of Anu-aḫa-ittannu, son of Riḫat-Anu,

37 the *kalamāḫu* of Anu and Antu, citizen of Uruk.[466] Written in accordance
with its original, collated and "closed with a colophon".[?467]

The *lilissu*-drum was one of the main objects used by the *kalû*s throughout their
cultic rites. We have previously seen that the *kalû* was associated with such drums in
many instances, and allusions to the association of the performer and his character-
izing instrument are abundant in narrative texts. Therefore, it is no surprise to see
that a special ritual was conducted on the occasion of covering the *lilissu*-drum with
a bull's skin, thus making it ready for use in the *kalû*s' rites.

A text in which the *kalû* figured quite prominently was the ritual of lunar eclipse
from Uruk, BRM 4.6 (= MLC 1872) // BM 134701.[468] Though the text was com-
posed in the Hellenistic period, it was suggested that its roots were much earlier.[469]
This ritual was performed during a lunar eclipse, an event that was perceived as
ominous. During the ritual ceremonies, the *kalû* recited lamentations to the Moon-
god, in order to avert the evil consequences of the eclipse. These lamentations were
uttered because the eclipse was perceived as Sîn's abandonment of the people. The
lamentations were meant to pacify the god and induce him to return. The whole
ritual was comprised of four different versions, which were probably performed
simultaneously at various different locations during the occurrence of the eclipse. In
the first version (BRM 4.6 = MLC 1872,1'–37') the *kalû*s play a relatively minor
part and recite lamentations. They are absent from the second (BRM 4.6 = MLC
1872,38'–41') and fourth (BM 134701 obv. 17' – rev. 22') versions. However, in
the third version (BRM 4.6 = MLC 1872,42'–55' // BM 134701,1'–16') they figure
prominently and are the only practitioners who perform the ceremonies. The *kalû*s'
role in the first version of the ritual could be summarized as follows. At the begin-
ning of the text a general instruction is given to the *kalû*s to perform their cultic
procedures:

BRM 4.6 (MLC 1872), 2'–3'[470]

²'[ᴸᵘgala dúr-*ab-ma*] *né-peš šá* ŠU-II ᴸᵘgala *šá* DAR?-[…] ³'[dù-*uš*?]

²'[The *kalû* will sit] and ³'[perform?] ²'the ritual of the *kalû* of dar?-[…]

The following lines (ll. 3'–13') specify the incipits of the lamentations that should
be uttered by the *kalû*s during the ceremonies. The purpose of the lamentations is
made clear immediately thereafter:

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[465] See Linssen 2004: 255.

[466] For a study of this family of *kalamāḫu*s, see Clancier 2009: 73–80.

[467] The translation of the last sentence follows Linssen 2004: 259.

[468] For editions of the various manuscripts of the ritual, see Linssen 2004: 306–320. For a
discussion of the ritual, see Linssen 2004: 109–117.

[469] See Linssen 2004: 110.

[470] See Linssen 2004: 306.

BRM 4.6 = MLC 1872,14'[471]
an-na-a šá a-na ᵈ30 *ina* an-gi₆ *iz-za-mi-ir*
This is what was sung for the eclipsed moon.

Later on, the *kalû*s are instructed again to utter their laments:

BRM 4.6 = MLC 1872,17'[472]
ˡᵘgala dúr-*ab-ma né-peš šá* ŠU-II ˡᵘgala *a-di* an-gi₆ *ú-nam-mir* dù-*uš*
The *kalû* will sit and perform the ritual of the *kalû* until (Sîn) clears up the eclipse.

No further mention of the *kalû*s is made in this version of the ritual, nor do they appear in the second and fourth versions of it. However, their participation in the third version is extensive. This version starts as follows:

BRM 4.6 = MLC 1872,42' // BM 134701,1'[473]
u₄-mu an-gi₆ ᵈ30 *ḫal-ḫal-lat* zabar meze zabar li-li-ìs zabar ta é *am-mu-uš-mu* íl-*nim-ma*
On the day of the moon's eclipse, they will carry the bronze *ḫalḫallatu*-drum, the bronze *manzû*-drum, (and) the bronze *lilissu*-drum back here from the store-house.

The ritual begins with introducing the three drums, *halhallatu*, *manzû* and *lilissu*, typical playing instruments of the *kalû*s that will be used throughout the ceremonies. Thereafter, the *kalû*s are engaged in various cultic procedures, and, later on, they pronounce their laments towards the moon:

BRM 4.6 = MLC 1872,44'–45' // BM 134701,3'–4'[474]
⁴⁴'ᐟᐟ³'*ṣi-ri-iḫ-tú ni-is-sa-ti u bi-ki-ti* ⁴⁵'ᐟᐟ⁴'*a-na* ᵈ30 *ina* an-gi₆ *na-šu-ú*
⁴⁵'ᐟᐟ⁴'They raise for the eclipsed moon ⁴⁴'ᐟᐟ³'lamentations, wailings and weepings.

The ritual is concluded with a specification of the incipits of several lamentations that are to be uttered by the *kalû*s during different phases of the eclipse.[475]

   Another cultic text where the *kalû* is featured is W 20030/3 // W 20030/5 // W 20030/98 (= *Bagh. Mitt. Beih.* 2, no. 1–3), a Seleucid *mīš pî* ritual from Uruk.[476] The purpose of such ceremonies was to cleanse the mouth of the deity's statue, in order to enable the deity to use its mouth and consume the food and drink offerings presented to it. The text under discussion details the end of the ceremony; it belongs to the corpus of rituals of the *kalû*, as evident from its colophon:

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[471] See Linssen 2004: 306.
[472] See Linssen 2004: 306.
[473] See Linssen 2004: 307//308.
[474] See Linssen 2004: 307//308.
[475] BRM 4.6 = MLC 1872,48'–53' // BM 134701,7'–12'; see Linssen 2004: 308.
[476] For an edition of the text, see Mayer 1978: 443–458. Generally on this text, see Linssen 1994: 153–154. For a study of the *mīš pî* ritual, see Walker and Dick 1999 (pp. 57–58 for previous literature).

W 20030/3,61[477]

[*né-pe-ši šá* ŠU-II] ^{lú}gala

[Ritual of] the *kalû*.

The text includes instructions for uttering several emesal laments and prayers (ér and eršema, respectively) by the *kalû*, some of which are known from similar ritual texts of the period. The king and several of his officials participated in the ritual as well, and performed the cleansing ceremony:

W 20030/3,27–28[478]

²⁷⌜lugal⌝ *u* un^{meš}-*šú te-bi-ib-te* ²⁸[*i-šak*]-⌜*ka-nu*⌝

²⁷The king and his people ²⁸[per]form ²⁷the cleansing-ritual.

The involvement of the king in the ceremony highlights its importance. Though the ceremony, as a whole, was one of the *kalû*s' rites, it was considered significant enough for the king to participate in, which obviously granted the *kalû*s themselves high prestige.

Interestingly, two early Hellenistic ration lists from the Esagil temple archive – BM 78948 and 132271 – mention the wives and two daughters of *kalû*s.[479] Further, an administrative Hellenistic text, CT 44.84 (= BM 80153), mentions 100 *kalû*s as receiving wool rations in Babylon.[480] McEwan doubted whether such a high number of *kalû*s were indeed employed in a temple at once. He suggested that the term *kalû* in this text was a scribal error.[481] However, the fact that this term occurs several times makes this suggestion improbable.

In the Seleucid chronicle ABC 13 we encounter a vague mention of the office of *kalû*-ship, maybe referring to one's appointment to the office:

ABC 13 obv. 10[482]

[… é-*s*]*ag-gíl ana* ^{lú}gala-*ta*

[… in[?] Es]agil, to the office of *kalû* …

The text is broken, and thus the context is extremely fragmentary, and nothing more can be inferred about the *kalû*.[483]

Lastly, two or three Hellenistic-period commentary texts refer explicitly to the *kalûtu* as the origin of the text they comment on: SpTU 2.54, 3.99 and possibly also a commentary on *izbu* 7.[484] These, however, tell nothing about the *kalû*, his role and functions in this period.

When considering the evidence of the texts from the Late Babylonian period, we

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[477] See Mayer 1978: 447.

[478] See Mayer 1978: 446.

[479] See Boiy 2004: 268.

[480] See McEwan 1981: 11.

[481] McEwan 1981: 11.

[482] See Grayson 1975: 123.

[483] For a brief discussion of this text, see Grayson 1975: 27–28.

[484] This is according to Frahm's (2011: 100) emendation of the earlier transliteration by Finkel (2006: 140): ^{lú}UŠ-‹KU›-*ú-tú*, instead of Finkel's LUGAL NITA-*ú-tú*.

observe a continuity of ritual practices from the Neo-Assyrian period, and probably from much earlier periods still.[485] We may therefore assume that the role of the *kalû* remained virtually unchanged for many centuries. The ritual that was performed at the occurrence of a lunar eclipse was meant to pacify the Moon-god Sîn, whose perceived abandonment, manifested by the eclipse, led to the performance of lamentations by the *kalû*s. As we have seen, *kalû*s uttered lamentations in other rituals as well, such as *mīš pî* ceremonies. We can therefore observe how the basic notion of the gala as a professional lamenter in funerary rites during the ED period was still echoed in the ritualistic performance of the *kalû* two millennia later, in state ceremonies he conducted. Naturally, over such a vast time-span, the historical, political, social and even cultural circumstances that surrounded the performance of the gala/*kalû* changed greatly, as well as the functionalities and tasks he assumed. It does seem, nonetheless, that the basic underlying essence of his performance as cultic lamenter remained firm all along this time.

1.3. gala/*kalû*: Origins of the Terms and Possible Etymologies

After the textual data concerning the gala/*kalû* was presented, we will now proceed to evaluate this information and try to comprehend the social status and attitudes towards these figures. The current section is meant to provide an overview of the possible etymology of these two terms, as potentially signifying the attributes of their holders. We will examine the significance of the etymologies suggested by scholars in this regard, and assess their contribution to our understanding of the nature of the gala/*kalû*, assuming that the etymological origins of the terms may reflect social conventions regarding the figures that bore these titles.

As was previously noted, the Sumerian term gala and its Akkadian equivalent, *kalû* designated the very same figure, sometimes simultaneously. Several scholars have inquired into the etymology of these two terms in regard to their origin and meanings. Steinkeller and Postgate suggested that the term gala originated from the combination of signs UŠ-TUŠ, that should be read as gìš.dúr ("penis-anus").[486] This proposal is naturally quite suggestive with regard to the possible homoerotic nature of the gala (see discussion below). They explicitly claimed it[487] when treating the combination of signs SAL-UŠ that have a wide range of semantic implications.[488] They maintained that these should be read as gal$_4$-gìš, "vagina-penis", and denoted the idea of heterosexual intercourse, which stands at the basis of the semantics of

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[485] Note also, in this regard, Boiy's (2004: 266–267) remark that the large amount of balag-texts from the Hellenistic period testifies to the prolonged history of "this aspect of Babylonian cult", still in practice in mid-first century BCE Babylonia.

[486] Steinkeller and Postgate 1992: 37.

[487] Steinkeller and Postgate 1992: 37: "In this connection, we may also mention the logogram UŠ.TUŠ (more correctly: GÌŠ.DÚR "penis+anus"), standing for gala, which is clearly the "homosexual" equivalent of SAL.UŠ."

[488] These signs may convey the notion of femininity (munus) and masculinity (nita); see MZL nos. 883 and 381, respectively.

these signs.[489] Though they only made a brief remark concerning the origin of the writing of the term gala, and did not elaborate any further, their remark is related to the wider topic of the origins of the Sumerian and Akkadian terms gala and *kalû*.

A different view of the possible origins of the term gala was given by Silvestri, who tried to demonstrate an etymological basis for understanding it as referring to a eunuch. Silvestri suggested that Akkadian *lurû*, "person with a thin voice", derived from an originally Sumerian compound, consisting of lú, "man", and uru, "vulva". In analogy, he suggested the hypothetical term **lugallu* (according to Silvestri, the source of *lagallu*/*lagaru*, "a priest") as a formation of lú+galla ("man"+"vulva"). Silvestri noted that the gala/*kalû* used the emesal dialect, which was interpreted by Silvestri as a women's dialect. He suggested that the gala/*kalû* was a sacred eunuch, a castrated man who was engaged in cult. Silvestri connected these suggestions to castration practices of mother-goddess's cults known from other periods across Asia, such as the Phrygian period Anatolian cult of Cybele.[490] However, these suggestions seem doubtful, or, as Schretter defined them, "with insufficient philological meticulousness".[491] The connection Silvestri drew to the cult of Cybele is not compelling, and no evidence shows that the gala was a castrate. The etymology he suggested for the hypothetical **lugallu* cannot be substantiated, and the term itself is, of course, unattested.

As for the Akkadian parallel terms, it was suggested by Al-Rawi that *kala'u*/*kalû* and *kulu'u* share the same Semitic origin, deriving from the verb *kala'u*, "to hold back, detain", thus conveying the sense of "the one turned into a cantor". Al-Rawi considered all these terms to designate a high-pitched voice, castrated cantor, who was also a male prostitute.[492] Al-Rawi did not elaborate on the reasons for his interpretations, but commented that the chief-*kalû*, the *kalamāḫu*, was documented in Old Babylonian texts as a supervisor of female prostitutes.[493]

More recently, a suggestion was made by Gabbay, who expressed his opinion that the term gala actually derived from a Semitic origin,[494] and designated the concept of "third gender" per se.[495] Gabbay agreed with Al-Rawi's basic etymological considerations but suggested a different Semitic root as the source of the term *kl'*, "both",[496] claiming that this root was associated with the physical appearance of the

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[489] Gordon (1959: 248–249) suggested that the gala/*kalû* was "a sacred catamite … in the service of the goddess of love and fertility, Inanna", referring to the writing of the word with the signs UŠ-TUŠ. Note, however, that Cooper (2006a: 44 n. 24) claimed that Steinkeller's interpretation "is not compelling, and others suggest themselves".

[490] Silvestri 1976: 216–221.

[491] Schretter 1990: 130: "mit unzureichender philologischer Akribie".

[492] Al-Rawi 1992: 183 n. 22.

[493] Al-Rawi (1992: 183 n. 22) referred to Kümmel 1974–77: 78 and Wilcke 1985: 196f. with n. 17.

[494] Gabbay (2008: 51 n. 17) noted that the idea was suggested already by Al-Rawi (1992: 183 n. 22).

[495] Gabbay 2008.

[496] As Gabbay (2008: 51 n. 20) showed, this root is attested in several Semitic languages, always with the same meaning of "both".

title-bearers, rather than their function. Gabbay drew the attention to the fact that biblical *kil'ayîm*, a derivative of the same root, was connected with "two kinds", "two species hybridized together". Therefore, Gabbay concluded that the terms *kalû* and *kulu'u* stood for a hermaphrodite,[497] "the one who is both sexes, male and female".[498]

Gabbay drew the following scheme: primarily, the term gala/*kalû* indicated its bearer's physical sexual features or gender identity, as a hermaphrodite. The role performed by the gala in cult led his title to become synonymous with his cultic function, eventually designating it. However, the term *kulu'u* received a somewhat different significance, since it still stood for the gender identity of a hermaphrodite, who belonged to the third gender. So while *kalû* marked a person's profession, *kulu'u* marked one's ambiguous nature. Referring to gala/*kalû* and Mesopotamian third gender, Gabbay defined it as a distinct gender category, encompassing people who possessed either physiological characteristics (born hermaphrodites, castrated people) or mental ones (transvestites, effeminate males, homosexual prostitutes).[499]

However, no direct evidence exists to testify that any of the numerous documented gala/*kalû*/*kulu'u* was a hermaphrodite, castrate or male prostitute. The suggestion that originally galas were hermaphrodites cannot be proven. We should further bear in mind that genetic disorders causing such physical symptoms are extremely rare, contrary to the large amount of galas documented from as early as the mid-third millennium of the Sumerian era. The equation with Indian *hijra*[500] is justified but complicated: research shows that they are usually castrated males, and only on rare occasions are they found to be true hermaphrodites.[501]

In conclusion, the suggestions concerning the possible etymologies of the terms gala and *kalû* are far from being conclusive. The very nature of this kind of interpretations is rarely a matter of right or wrong, since as long as no textual evidence supports them (the kind of evidence that theoretically can be found in lexical lists, for example) they rely solely on modern speculations. Such evidence was not found

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[497] Henshaw (1994: 300) suggested the same, though with no explanation.

[498] Gabbay 2008: 51–52.

[499] I do not share Gabbay's (2008: 54 n. 57) suggestion that the term *kulu'u* might have sometimes referred to castrated people, based on the equation between the phrases *kî ana kulu'i itūru* ("when he turned into a *kulu'u*") attested in the letter BM 55498 + BM 55499 rev. 32 (see Llop and George 2001–02: 5), and *ana ša rēšēn utâr/utarrūš* ("he shall be turned / they shall turn him into a eunuch") of MAL §§ 15 / 20. I find no real connection between these two phrases, the former from a royal correspondence and the latter from a law collection, and nothing to indicate that a man "turning into a *kulu'u*" was ever castrated. For the term *kulu'u* in two other copies of the above-mentioned letter (Sm 2116 + BM 104727,63' // K 212 + K 4448 rev. 21), see further below, p. 149.

[500] See Gabbay 2008: 54. For the *hijra* and third gender, see Introduction, p. 31.

[501] Contrary to Leick's (1994: 158–159, 160) similar suggestions. See, in this regard, the following: "If a hijra is not born with a "defective" organ (and most are not), he must make it so by emasculation. Although all hijras say, "I was born this way," this cannot be taken literally to refer to a physical condition …" (Nanda 1994: 381), and "While born hermaphrodite is the paradigm for the alternative sex, most hijras are "made" through emasculation, the surgical removal of the male genitals" (Nanda 1994: 383).

thus far in regards to the gala/*kalû*, and therefore these suggestions remain speculative.

1.4. The Question of the Emesal-Dialect

The current section deals with a specific topic that relates to the nature of the gala/*kalû*: the use of emesal-dialect by these persons in their lamentations and its implications. As explained below, this dialect was associated with women, which makes its usage by the male galas/*kalûs* highly suggestive with regard to their gender identity.

Although it has long been noted by scholars that the galas/*kalûs* used in their prayers and laments the Sumerian dialect called emesal, the exact nature of this dialect has been the source of much scholarly debate. The main question is whether or not emesal was a distinct dialect used exclusively by female figures, either mortal or divine ones.[502]

Scholars endorsing this hypothesis considered emesal to be a female "gender-lect", indeed used in Sumerian literature by females alone.[503] This view bears significant implications concerning the gala's sexuality and gender identity, by relating them to strong feminine connotations. As claimed by Whittaker, emesal was a literary dialect, used for several purposes, among them signifying "female speakers generically".[504]

However, scholars who reject this approach claim that emesal was a softer, more delicate dialect of the common Sumerian language, but was not necessarily used exclusively by women. Schretter stressed that before questioning whether emesal was a "women's language", it should be asked whether was it a "sex-specific sociolect" ("geschlechtsspezifischer Soziolekt") at all, namely, a dialect reserved for a specific social class and, more precisely, a specific sex. Besides several phonological peculiarities, Schretter claimed, emesal was quite similar to the main dialect of Sumerian and therefore should be regarded as a variant of it. Schretter claimed further that the social status of women in ancient Sumer was not the kind that would provide favorable conditions for the formation of a "women's language", and the only reason for regarding emesal as a "gender sociolect" was its use in several literary texts as a marker of direct speech of goddesses and female figures.[505]

Jacobsen claimed that emesal was "a style of Sumerian rather than an actual

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[502] Scholars endorsing this option consider the term emesal to be comprised of the Sumerian terms eme, "tongue"/"language", and SAL (= munus), "woman". Scholars rejecting this view interpret the second element, SAL, as designating "fine" or "thin", thus rendering the complete term "fine/thin language", as an allusion to the high-pitched voice of lamentation performers, whether males or females. For the history of research, and numerous suggestions made in the past concerning the nature of this dialect, see Schretter 1990: 1–10.

[503] See Gordon 1959: 13, 249, Thomsen 1984: 285–294 (including previous literature) and Henshaw 1994: 125 n. 2.

[504] Whittaker 2002: 641.

[505] Schretter 1990: 121–123, 135.

dialect",[506] and similarly Sefati claimed that emesal only appears in specific con-
texts, such as the cultic songs of the galas, texts containing Inanna's speech and
laments over the destruction of various cities.[507] Rubio claimed that the use of
emesal was determined by textual genres, rather than its alleged exclusive usage by
women. As support to his view, Rubio noted that compositions ascribed to Enḫed-
uanna were not written in emesal. Rubio further objected to considering emesal as a
"main dialect", because it is never found widely used in any composition.[508]

Cooper referred to emesal as "the language of the ritual laments", and suggested
that the origins of Sumerian lamentations were funeral songs performed by women
using emesal, a fact resulting in this dialect being associated with women alone.
Later on,[509] male galas were reciting cultic and funeral laments alongside female
mourners and wailers, and therefore used emesal themselves.[510] Therefore, several
scholars suggested that, in the earlier stages, lamentations were chanted by women,
but in the course of time the male galas gradually replaced them in performing this
task.[511] Continuing this line of thought, it can be understood that the male gala, once
assuming the role and profession previously performed by women, preserved its
feminine traits and adapted female gender identity and sexual characteristics during
the process.[512] This, of course, can also explain the galas' use of emesal.

A different suggestion was made by Bauer, who claimed that emesal was actu-
ally the local dialect in Lagaš,[513] which differed from the main Sumerian dialect.
This suggestion was based on sounding variations in the local language in Lagaš
that, according to Bauer, were consistent with the emesal dialect.[514] On face value,
this suggestion does not seem to coincide with what we know of the nature of
emesal. All evidence seems to suggest that emesal was a limited dialect, restricted to
the use of females and gala lamenters, and not used by the entire population.

Another significant question concerning emesal is whether *kalû*s were indeed the
only males using it. As we have seen, in Old Babylonian texts *kalû*s were recorded
as participants in several cultic rites. The following passage appears in a ritual for
Ištar from Mari:[515]

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[506] Jacobsen 1988: 131.

[507] Sefati 1998.

[508] Rubio 2001: 270.

[509] See the Late Pre-Sargonic Lagaš text VS 14.137 (Bauer 1972: 226–227), and the passage
from Gudea St. B (Edzard 1997: 32) mentioned above (see pp. 98, 103). In both cases galas
are mentioned alongside female mourners in the context of funerary ceremonies.

[510] Cooper 2006a: 42–44. See, similarly, Hartmann 1960: 138.

[511] See, among others, Hartmann 1960: 132 n. 1, 138, Krecher 1966: 38 and Frymer-Kensky
1992: 43–44.

[512] See Roscoe 1996: 214 and Cooper 2006a: 44–45.

[513] Bauer 1998: 435–436: "Es drängt sich der Schluss auf, dass nicht die sumerische Hoch-
sprache in Lagaš heimisch war, sondern dass man dort einen Dialekt sprach, der charakteristi-
sche Züge des Emesal aufwies."

[514] Bauer 1998: 435–436. For several examples of such phenomena, see Bauer 1998: 435.

[515] For literature of this text, see Durand and Guichard 1997: 57.

A.3165 rev. iii 16–18[516]

16 *iš-te-en i-na ka-le-e iz-za-az-ma*
17 [*i*]-*na ḫa-al-ḫa-la-tim*
18 *er-se-[m]a-kam*[517] *a-na* ᵈ*en-líl i-za-mu-ur*

16 One of the *kalû*s will stand,
17 (and) to the accompaniment of the *ḫalḫallatum*-drum
18 shall sing *erše[m]a*[518] to Enlil.

According to Cohen's translation of this passage,[519] it could be understood that the king is the one who sings to Enlil. This suggestion was rejected by Black, who claimed that "performance of cultic literature in Eme-sal" was restricted to the *kalû* alone.[520] Durand and Guichard's translation of this line is similar to the one presented above, and does not support Cohen's suggestion either.[521]

However, it is possible that, in several texts, persons other than *kalû*s were documented as uttering emesal lamentations, such as soldiers, *šangû*-priests or other unspecified people.[522] It should be noted that these texts derive from late periods in Mesopotamian history (the Hellenistic era), and were probably uncharacteristic of the customary use of emesal, which was by and large restricted to the *kalû*s. Even though these late texts stem from older traditions, the possible use of emesal by persons other than *kalû*s is only attested in these late copies and was not found in similar texts from the Old or Middle Babylonian periods.

Thus, we may conclude that the use of emesal by the gala/*kalû* seems highly significant. It illuminates the figure under discussion as a special practitioner, whose knowledge was considered exclusive. In this regard, this exclusivity was manifested

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[516] See Durand and Guichard 1997: 55. In Dossin's (1938: 6) older edition these lines are numbered 12–14.

[517] The reading of this term is controversial. Dossin's transcription (1938: 6,14) had er-s[e-m]a-še, thus identifying it as an *eršema*-composition (see translation in Dossin 1938: 11,14, and n. 3). Cohen (1981: 40–41) rejected Dossin's transcription, suggesting er-s[i-si-m]u instead. This restoration matched Dossin's own copy (Dossin 1938: 3) much better, and was indeed accepted by other scholars as well (see, among others, Black 1991: 26 n. 24 and Tanret and van Lerberghe 1993: 436). However, the recent transcription by Durand and Guichard (1997: 55,18), as presented here, led again to the translation of the unclear term as *eršema*. This transcription matches Durand and Guichard's (1997: 56) new copy of the tablet, and seems to be the most plausible of all. The form *er-se-ma-kam* is probably to be understood as the acc. of *ersemakkum*, see Gabbay 2014a: 7–8 n. 28.

[518] For the difference between the forms *ersema* (pronunciation?) and *eršema* (writing), see Gabbay 2014a: 7.

[519] "Together with the gala-priests he will stand and he (the king?) will chant ER.SI.SI.MU to Enlil to the accompaniment of the *halhallatum*-drum" (Cohen 1981: 41).

[520] Black 1991: 23–24 n. 4, 26 n. 24.

[521] Durand and Guichard 1997: 58.

[522] For examples, see Linssen 2004: 112, and especially n. 675. Further, in text BRM 4.6 rev. 48'–53' a passage appears where, according to Linssen's (2004: 311) translation, several emesal lamentations were uttered by unspecified people, who were joined by a *kalû* with lamentations of his own.

by the use of a special dialect, emesal, for the performance of the lamentations. The meaning of the term emesal (possibly "thin voice") itself probably hints to the high-pitched voice in which the laments were uttered.

However, the view that emesal was a "women's dialect" is likely to be inaccurate. Emesal was probably a dialect reserved for the performance of lamentations, originally by women alone, later on by women and galas, and eventually by galas alone. Therefore, the interpretation linking the gala/*kalû* with femininity based on his use of this alleged feminine dialect is likewise inaccurate. The gala/*kalû*'s feminine attributes are elucidated from a different point of view: singing, especially in high-pitched voice, is certainly a feminine trait[523] and, as such, relates the gala/*kalû* and his cultic performance to feminine characteristics. If indeed these lamenters fulfilled a profession that was originally performed by women, the effeminacy ascribed to them by their society is understandable.

1.5. gala/*kalû* in Mesopotamian Narrative Texts

In the current section we review the references to the gala/*kalû* in narrative sources. As is explained in the introduction of Chapter 1, these texts are surveyed in this book independently from other textual genres, due to their unique nature and significance. However, since a full chapter is dedicated to third gender figures in Mesopotamian and ancient Near Eastern narrative and hymnic texts, we will only review here an abbreviated presentation of the attestations of gala/*kalû* in these texts. For the full references and discussions, therefore, the reader is referred to the relevant sections in Chapter 1.

The most significant composition where the gala appears is the Sumerian *Inanna's Descent to the Netherworld*. As was explained, this text forms one of the most illuminating mythical sources for understanding the relationship between Inanna and her cult members, and gives us the ideological background for their ritual activities and social status. In this myth, the gala-tur-ra ("junior gala") and *kurgarrû* are created by Enki in order to rescue Inanna from her imprisonment in the netherworld. In the Akkadian parallel versions of this myth, the rescuers of Ištar are either *assinnu* or *kulu'u* (for which see below). The role of the gala in the tale, as one of the two figures who rescued Inanna, testifies to the close relationship between the two, and supplies the ideological background for the gala's cultic performance as an attendant of the goddess.

Another composition, *The Fashioning of the gala*, relates to the creation of the gala by Enki. Here the creation of the gala is explained as the result of the need to pacify the furious heart of Inanna. The gala and his playing-drums are fashioned by Enki, and, subsequently, the gala is capable of soothing his patron goddess and appease her mind.

In *Inanna and Ebiḫ*, a tale of a struggle between the goddess and mount Ebiḫ, the

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[523] See, in this regard, Briggs 1992, 1993, Kratz 1994, and various articles in Koskoff 1987 (ed.), Herndon and Ziegler 1990 (eds.) and, most recently, Harrison, Welch and Adler 2012 (eds.), all with previous literature.

goddess speaks of the order she set in the world following her triumph. As part of this new order, Inanna says she has given cutting-weapons to the *kurgarrû*, drums to the gala, and furthermore "changed the head" of the *pilpilû*. It was suggested that these acts hinted to the unique traits of the said figures, so that the drums signified the gala's performance in Inanna's cult.

Lastly, in the balag composition úru àm-ma-ir-ra-bi, the gala was again attested in association with his drums, perhaps as another allusion to his ritual activities as Inanna's cult member.

As we can see, several features are found to be common to all the narrative compositions mentioning the gala/*kalû*. He is frequently attested alongside other members of Inanna/Ištar's cult, usually with his typical drums, instruments with which he used to accompany his laments. The connection between the gala and his patron goddess Inanna/Ištar is undoubtedly the most conspicuous characteristic of all these compositions.

However, the view of the gala as a figure of cross-boundaries[524] may be exaggerated. The common interpretation of his role in *Inanna's Descent to the Netherworld* links his ability to shift between the world of the living and the realm of the dead to his sexual ambiguous nature. However, the gala only goes to the netherworld, and is not actually documented returning from it, so, in fact, no real allusion to border-crossing is apparent here. The narrative texts undoubtedly attest to the close relationship between the gala/*kalû* and Inanna/Ištar, but give little evidence, if at all, concerning this figure's characteristics as belonging to the third gender.

1.6. Non-Textual Sources: gala/*kalû* in Mesopotamian Art

We will now address the topic of iconographic representations of the gala/*kalû*. This issue is highly problematic, since it is hardly ever possible to distinguish between depictions of the title-bearers discussed in the current chapter and those of other cultic functionaries. Nonetheless, several attempts were made in the past to recognize the gala/*kalû* in Mesopotamian art. A general consensus appears to exist regarding the identification of one of the figures from the "Standard of Ur" with a singer.[525] The figure is depicted with long hair, unlike all the other figures in the scene, which appear to be hairless. Cheng considered this singer to be either a gala or a nar, suggesting that the long hair may have been a marker of femininity (in which case the singer could have been an effeminate gala), or of relative secularism, that is, an indicator that, unlike the other figures, this person was not a cultic practitioner (in which case the singer could have been a masculine nar).[526]

Additional possible evidence for an artistic representation of a gala/*kalû* was referred to by Reade, who noted that in Neo-Assyrian religious ceremonies during military campaigns, "the most conspicuous figures" were beardless priests wearing

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[524] As assumed, among others, by Lambert 1992: 150–151, Gabbay 2008: 50, 52 and Lapinkivi 2010: 76–77.

[525] See Cheng 2009: 169.

[526] Cheng 2009: 169 n. 26.

tall hats.[527] One such figure was identified by Mallowan as a *kalû*, whose image was that of a beardless man wearing a tall hat (fig. 1[528]).

Fig. 1: Depiction of a beardless *kalû*   Fig. 2: Neo-Babylonian *kudurru* from Uruk
(Mallowan 1966: 269 fig. 251).   (Thureau-Dangin 1919: Pl. I).

This rare occasion of a confirmed visual representation of a *kalû* gives us an important piece of information concerning his appearance. Most significant is his hairless face, a feature usually ascribed to eunuchs in the Neo-Assyrian period. It seems doubtful that this could be taken as evidence that the *kalû* was a eunuch (see discussion above). The lack of facial hair might be the result of shaving, while aspiring to maintain a feminine appearance that was connected with his cultic performance. It should be noted, however, that Seidl offered a different view on this matter, according to which the hairless face and long hats were used as status-symbols within the priestly class itself, for example, to distinguish between the *kalû* and *kalamāḫu*.[529] This view does not seem to be supported by any evidence, though. The clearest evidence connecting the *kalû* with beardlessness derives from a Neo-Babylonian kudurru from Uruk, the inscription on which identifies a beardless figure that appears on the stele as Ibni-Ištar, *kalû* of Ištar-of-Uruk (fig. 2[530]).

The occurrences of visual representations of the gala/*kalû* seem extremely rare, but they nonetheless add a significant contribution to our knowledge of this figure. The most prominent attribute apparent in them was the gala/*kalû*'s characteristic beardlessness. This data seems to be consistent with the image of a man whose sexual and gender identity were ambiguous and comprised of certain feminine components. The artistic representations of a grown male as lacking facial hair depicted him as pos-

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[527] Reade 1972: 96.
[528] Mallowan 1966: 269 fig. 251.
[529] Seidl 2004, RlA 10: 644, s.v. "Priester. B. I".
[530] See Thureau-Dangin 1919: 129, 132 and Pl. I and Seidl 2004, RlA 10: 643, s.v. "Priester. B. I".

sessing an effeminate appearance, since otherwise male adults were customarily represented as bearded.

1.7. Gender Ambiguity of the gala/*kalû*

We will turn now to discuss the most significant issue of this chapter, the matter of the gender-ambiguous character of the gala/*kalû*. This section is comprised of several different discussions, each relating to the broad question of gender ambiguity from a different angle. We will begin with assessing the evidence for homoerotic features of the gala/*kalû* and continue with a review of the relation between this figure and feminine traits. Thereafter, we will address the possibility that the gala/*kalû* was a castrate and conclude with an overview of the evidence of his possible low social status.

1.7.1. gala/*kalû* and Homoeroticism

We will begin this discussion by referring to the evidence already presented, linking the suggested etymological origins of the term gala with homoeroticism. As was noted above, Steinkeller and Postgate proposed that the original signs from which the term was comprised should be read gìš-dúr, "penis-anus", and viewed this as an allusion to homosexuality.[531]

Another point of view on this matter could be found in the group of Sumerian proverbs presented above. Proverb 5 (= SP 2.100) depicts the gala as spreading his anus and stating that it belongs to Inanna, his lady. As was suggested above, this ludicrous portrayal of the gala could have constituted an insinuation to the trait ascribed to him of being sexually penetrated. Whether this degrading episode reflected realistic behavior or a mere fictional slur cannot be determined. Gabbay interpreted this proverb somewhat differently and claimed that the phrase bìd … zé-er should not be understood as "wiping the anus", but rather as referring to laceration of the buttocks – an act performed by Ninšubur as a symbol of mourning over Inanna's death in *Inanna's Descent to the Netherworld*.[532] Even if this interpretation is correct, it does not change the overall meaning of the proverb and its supposed innuendo regarding the gala being sexually penetrated, since Gabbay's interpretation does not change the statement that the gala's anus "belongs to his lady", and the scornful undertone of the proverb. A pair of other proverbs, 9 and 10 (= SP 2.104 and 105), relate in an allegoric manner to the gala and to his servant. The servant is possibly equated in Proverb 10 (= SP 2.105) with a food ration said to be penetrated by a lance throughout the city, a metaphor that may very well bear allusions to sexual penetration. The preceding Proverb 9 (= SP 2.104), which relates to the gala himself, seems to form an abbreviated version of the one referring to the servant (Proverb 10 = SP 2.105), and might therefore convey the same idea of being sexually penetrated concerning the gala himself.

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[531] Steinkeller and Postgate 1992: 37.
[532] Gabbay 2011b: 55.

As we can see, the evidence connecting the gala/*kalû* with homoeroticism is extremely limited and of speculative nature. Steinkeller and Postgate's ideas concerning the etymological background of the Sumerian term cannot be proven,[533] while the meaning of the Sumerian proverbs mentioned above is open for interpretation. Even if both are accepted, they still constitute a limited and circumstantial bulk of evidence.

1.7.2. Female gala/*kalû*s

The matter of the gala/*kalû*'s ambiguous gender identity can be viewed from the perspective of the relation between this figure and clear traits of femininity. It has been suggested that certain texts mention on rare occasions women functioning as galas, however the evidence in this regard is not always unequivocal.

The earliest possible attestation of female-galas is found in DP 159, an ED IIIb text from Girsu that lists groups of workers.[534] Many of the persons listed in this text are galas and female-slaves (géme). However, one entry lists 5 um-ma-ér, "5 wailing old-women",[535] and the whole text is concluded by the entry géme dumu dingir-ne, "female-slaves and children of the gods".[536] Gelb viewed the "5 wailing old-women" as part of the overall groups of galas. Furthermore, he considered the females mentioned in the concluding entry of the document as a term designating all adult persons listed in the text, including all female-slaves and galas.[537] Accepting Gelb's interpretation[538] requires us to view these two phrases as referring to women designated as galas. However, I suspect that this interpretation is incorrect. Considering the "old women" to be part of the group of galas is unnecessary. We have already seen that, in these early periods, the gala was mostly engaged in funerary rites, sometimes alongside female mourners. So the mention of female wailers together with a group of galas in this list is logical, with no need to assume that these women were galas themselves. They are certainly not designated as such in the text, but their entry was inserted between other entries listing galas.

As for the line concluding the list, "female-slaves and children of the gods", it can be suggested that the term géme, "female-slaves", relates to the females listed along the list, while the term dumu, "children", refers to the male ones.[539] All the persons on the list were documented as receiving rations and belonging to the temples, and therefore can be understood as "children of the gods" or their "slaves".

Another possible example of a female gala, over which researchers have differing opinions, is a gala named nin-é-balag-ì-du$_{10}$, listed among a group of women

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[533] For example, as is mentioned above, Cooper (2006a: 44 n. 24) did not find them persuasive.

[534] See Hartmann 1960: 132, Krecher 1966: 38, Gelb 1975: 65, 70–71 and Selz 1995: 109.

[535] DP 159 obv. i 3; see Deimel 1931: 33.

[536] DP 159 rev. iv 5; see Deimel 1931: 34.

[537] Gelb 1975: 65, 70–71.

[538] As Selz (1995: 109) did, for example. See, already, Deimel (1931: 38), who considered all the galas in the list to be females.

[539] dumu can refer to both males and females, but its customary use is with regard to males.

receiving rations in the ED IIIb text from Girsu HSS 3.23. Gelb claimed that this gala was a man, albeit being listed together with twelve women.[540] He based his claim on the fact that the line summarizing the total number of these thirteen persons[541] exhibits a peculiar method of numbering: a circular sign for "10", two semi-circulars for "2", and one wedge for "1".

Gelb claimed that the first three signs designated the twelve females and the fourth stood as a separated marker for the gala, meant to differentiate him from the women in the group. This gala's name, on the other hand, was considered by Gelb to be possibly feminine, since its initial component nin- was usually incorporated in feminine personal names.[542]

However, other scholars[543] argued that this gala was a female like the other listed persons. Al-Rawi, for example, explained the peculiar numbering noted by Gelb as pointing to the fact that the female gala did not receive yet her rations, which was the reason for the appearance of the wedge instead of a semi-circular sign.[544] Schretter claimed that this person was indeed a woman, but her occupation was not typical of a gala.[545] This case seems undetermined, since none of the approaches of the dispute can be satisfactorily proven.

The clearest evidence for the existence of a female gala/*kalû* is found in two later (probably Ur III) letters that were presented above, IM 85455 (= as-Sulaima 410) and IM 85456 (= as-Sulaima 411). These letters tell of the deposing of an unnamed woman (only referred to as "sister of ilī-ṣummid") from the offices of *kalû*-ship and nar-ship.

In order to solve the peculiarity of the existence of a female *kalû*, Black and Al-Rawi suggested that she was a prebend-holder, to be distinguished from professionally trained *kalû*s.[546] Namely, that (supposedly) female *kalû*s did not actually officiate the post of *kalû*, but merely held it as a prebend and employed other singers and musicians, who were the ones who actually performed the singing and entertaining activities of the *kalû*. In this regard, Black drew the attention to Renger's identification of a gala prebend in Old Babylonian Nippur.[547] To this we can now add another evidence that in the Old Babylonian period people held *kalû* prebends, which occasionally could be sold, though probably only within one's extended family. The evidence involves several texts that attest to a process in which a certain Manni-Šamaš and his two brothers acquired several *kalû* prebends from their relatives.[548]

Furthermore, Cooper claimed that lamentations, "especially at funerals" are

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[540] Gelb 1975: 72.

[541] HSS 3.23 rev. viii 1; see Gelb 1975: 72.

[542] Gelb 1975: 72.

[543] See, among others, Hartmann 1960: 132 and Al-Rawi 1992: 182–183.

[544] Al-Rawi 1992: 183 n. 20.

[545] Schretter 1990: 128, 132.

[546] Black 1991: 26, Al-Rawi 1992: 182.

[547] UMBS 81.94 iv 10; see Renger 1969: 194 n. 898.

[548] See Suurmeijer 2010: 22–23. The pertinent texts are: Di 1428, Di 1456, Di 2015a, Di 2015b and Di 1499. Other texts that mention the sale of *kalû* prebends, which concern other individuals of the same family, are Di 1457 and Di 1499.

universally regarded as a female domain, according to ethno-musicological re-search.[549] This comment relates us to the broad topic of singing and feminine perfor-mance. Although it was noted several times before that the gala/*kalû* was associated with the nar, "singer", the two professions are clearly differentiated. The former was not a designation of a singer per se, but of a chanter of lamentations, almost (if not entirely) exclusively officiated by males. The latter, on the other hand, denoted a profession in which a clear differentiation between males and females was kept.

Thus, we can conclude that females hardly ever assumed the post of gala/*kalû*. The only occurrence that could be regarded as an exception to this rule was ex-plained by certain scholars in a way that rejects even this evidence as pointing to the existence of female galas/*kalû*s.

1.7.3. gala/*kalû* and Castration

The next issue to be treated involves one of the hypotheses frequently debated among scholars: the possibility that the gala/*kalû* was a castrate. The literature on the subject is vast,[550] and a full consensus over this issue is not likely to be achieved in the near future. The opinions for and against viewing this figure as a castrate are based on numerous considerations, and within the current section it will be at-tempted to clarify them and present the evidence for each.

We will begin with considerations based on administrative records from some of the earliest periods in Mesopotamian history. Gelb declared that "the past proposals to translate gala as "eunuch", while based on intuitive feelings, rather than a clear-cut evidence, contain a certain amount of truth." In support of his view Gelb referred to several Pre-Sargonic texts, where, in his opinion, the term gala designated "cer-tain inherent or acquired physical characteristics", rather than a profession. These texts document sale transactions of galas,[551] blind people[552] and foundlings,[553] and were regarded by Gelb as one unified group. Gelb claimed furthermore that the designations of occupations never appear in transactions of slave-purchasing, hence, weakening the possibility that the term gala that was documented in these transac-tions stood for a profession.[554]

However, I cannot concur with these suggestions and see no apparent connection

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[549] Cooper 2006a: 43–44. For theoretical and anthropological literature on the subject, see Feld and Fox 1994: 39, and further on pp. 39–43 for their theoretical analysis of the lament as a musical genre, including previous literature. See further Feld and Fox's (1994: 40–41) comment on female performance of lamentation and its relation to collective memory and emotion. For discussions of the lament in ancient times, see various articles in Suter (ed.) 2008.

[550] See, among others, Oppenheim 1950: 135, Renger 1969: 192–193, Gelb 1975: 68 (includ-ing previous literature), Schretter 1990: 129–132 and Gabbay 2008: 50, n. 14 (including pre-vious literature).

[551] Nik. 1.17, BIN 8.363, RTC 17, VAT 4434 and RTC 80; see Gelb 1975: 66–67.

[552] igi-nu-du$_8$, documented in texts Nik. 1.193, VAS 14.141 and 144; see Gelb 1975: 69.

[553] túl-ta-pàd-da, documented in texts RTC 16, NSGU 52.4 and 204.23; see Gelb 1975: 69.

[554] Gelb 1975: 68–70.

between the transactions recording the purchase of blind and foundling people and those recording the purchase of galas. There is therefore no evidence that these galas had the same status as blind or foundling persons. Gelb stated that the term gala is used "in parallelism to the terms for "blind" and "foundling" … ",[555] but since the terms appear in different texts, and are never found in a mutual context, the alleged parallelism between them is hardly factual. Another consideration that seems to contradict Gelb's arguments is the fact that "foundling" is not a designation of a physical condition.

A stronger argument made by Gelb involved the fact that on several occasions a gala was documented as being purchased from his parents, as was presented above.[556] Gelb's quite reasonable deduction from this is that these galas were purchased at youth.[557] So, whatever qualified them for being galas existed already at a young age, probably prior to assuming any cultic role in the temple. Yet, from this Gelb deducted that "The most plausible interpretation would seem to be to take gala as a "homosexual" or "pederast"."[558] This deduction seems unnecessary and certainly unsupported. One could come up with alternative suggestions, no less plausible, such as the possibility that these youngsters were taught their profession at a young age, while still under the responsibility of their parents, and were sold later on. We have no information supporting this alternative suggestion, and others might also be considered, but, surely, it is no less probable than Gelb's – though far less dramatic. In the same manner, Gelb's stating in his closing paragraph, "The sphere of possibilities for the meaning of gala can be narrowed down to pederast, homosexual, transvestite, eunuch, or the like",[559] is unfounded.

A different argument in favor of regarding the gala as a castrate was made by Al-Rawi. He suggested that the galas were castrati, since a "castrato voice" could enable males to function in the same occupation as females.[560] This assumption as well lacks any corroborating evidence and seems anachronistic – fit for describing castrated singers of eighteenth-century European opera houses, rather than Mesopotamian cultic personnel. Despite the semantic similarity to males assuming female roles by singing in high-pitched voices, the evidence in favor of viewing the gala/*kalû* as a castrate is slim. As was already noted, the nar was the most prominent figure in Mesopotamian cult that was a professional singer; however, nothing indicates that he was ever castrated.[561] Why then would the gala be any different?

Another scholar that endorsed the theory of castration was Gabbay, who suggested that gala/*kalû* was originally an expression that stemmed from its bearers

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[555] Gelb 1975: 69–70.

[556] Texts RTC 17 (= AO 4036), BIN 8.363 (= MLC 1473) and perhaps also VAT 4434.

[557] However, Edzard (1968: 92) found that the gala purchased in text RTC 17 was worth the same as an adult slave, and therefore suggested that the mentioned gala was a fully trained one.

[558] Gelb 1975: 70.

[559] Gelb 1975: 74.

[560] Al-Rawi 1992: 183.

[561] Numerous attestations of male and female nars exist, so there was no need for castrated male ones.

being hermaphrodites, and, at a later stage, the term became the designation of their cultic function as well.[562] However, galas were sometimes documented as having children.[563] In order to solve this problem, Gabbay suggested that although the term was coined due to the physical characteristics of its bearers (namely, because they were hermaphrodites), later on it became the designation of their cultic function, regardless of its original meaning.[564] Other possible explanations suggested by Gabbay in this respect were gala/*kalû* having children prior to being castrated and the obvious solution of adoption.[565] While the former suggestion is backed by no corroborating evidence,[566] the latter is based on two Old Babylonian letters referred to by Gabbay, where the issue of adoption is implicit. The first is an Old Babylonian unpublished letter from Isin, quoted by Wilcke:

IB 1541,5'–13'[567]

  5'   *aš-šum i-na tup-pí-im ki-a-a*[*m …*]
  6'   *um-ma at-ta-ma a-na-*[*k*]*u ú-wa-l*[*i-da-ka*]
  7'   *ú-ra-ab-bi-ka ù a-ba-k*[*a a-ta-aš-ši*]
  8'   *ki-ma tu-wa-li-da-an-ni ù t*[*u-ra(-ab)-bi-a-ni*]
  9'   *ù a-bi ta-ta-aš-šu-ú a-n*[*a-ku ú-ul i-de*]
 10'   *ki-a-am ta-ša-pa-ra-a*[*m …*]
 11'   *at-ta-ma tu-ra-ab-bi-a-ni* […]
 12'   *ka-lu-tam tu-ša-ḫi-za-a*[*n-ni …*]
 13'   *iš-tu ṣe-eḫ-re-ku a-d*[*i …*]
  5'   Concerning what you [wrote me] on a tablet,
  6'   thus you: "I beg[ot you],
  7'   raised you, and [supported] yo[ur] father."
 10'   You write to [me] that
  9'   I [do not acknowledge]
  8'   that you begot me and [raised me]
  9'   and supported my father.
 11'   (However,) it was you who begot me […]
 12'   You instructed [me] the craft of the *kalû* […]
 13'   From the time I was young unt[il …]

This letter was probably sent by the *kalamāḫu* Ur-Nininsina,[568] but we are ignorant of its addressee. Gabbay suggested that its content might refer to an adoption of a *kalû* by another *kalû*, but admitted that "these are not the regular adoption formulae

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[562] Gabbay 2008.

[563] See Krecher 1966: 36 n. 99, Renger 1969: 192–193 and Michalowski 2006: 50.

[564] Gabbay 2008: 55.

[565] The same suggestions were already given by Gelb (1975: 69).

[566] As mentioned in CAD K (94, s.v. "*kalû* A"): "There is no evidence that the *kalû* was a eunuch …" Indeed, this possibility is undocumented, and therefore remains purely hypothetical. We are completely ignorant with regard to the age in which galas sired children, and, of course, no documentation of gala's castration was ever attested.

[567] See Wilcke 1985: 189.

[568] See Wilcke 1985: 189.

known to us from legal contexts."[569] Since the addressee is differentiated from the sender's biological father and is said to have supported that father (ll. 7', 9') and taught the sender the craft of the *kalû* (l. 12'), Gabbay's suggestion may be correct. The second letter interpreted by Gabbay as possibly alluding to the adoption of a *kalû* was found in the archives of Ur-Utu, *kalamāḫu* from Old Babylonian Sippar-Amnānum. The letter deals with the inheritance of Ur-Utu's father, who preceded him in the role of *kalamāḫu*, Inanna-mansum:

Di 1194 // IM 81943,12–17[570]

12 ḫa-la *a-na ma-an-ni a-za-a-az* ᵐ*ku-ub-*⌈*bu-rum an*⌉*-nu-ú*
13 dumu arad-ᵈma-mu *ṣú-ḫa-ri ša* é-⌈sag-íla⌉-[ma-an-sum] ⌈x-x-*ma*⌉
14 ᵐ*ì-lí-i-qí-ša-am* dumu nin é-gi-a KU-⌈x-x-ia⌉
15 *ù ḫu-za-lum* dumu *wa-ša-ab-*⌈*tim* ‹*ša*› *šu-ba*⌉*-at* géme *ša* sanga ᵈ*ṣar-pa-ni-tum*
16 ḫa-la *ú-ul a-za-ás-su-nu-ši-im* ⌈ur-ᵈutu⌉ *ma-ri*
17 *ša ḫa-aṭ-ṭi im-ḫu-ra-an-ni šu-*⌈*ú*⌉*-ma ú-ga-am-ma-at*

12 To whom should I divide the inheritance? This Kubburum
13 is the son of Warad-Mamu, a servant of Esagila-[mansum …]
14 Ilī-iqīšam is the son of the sister of the daughter-in-law of Ku … ya,
15 and Ḫuzālum is the son of a female resident (of) the dwelling-place of the maid of a sanga-priest of Ṣarpanītum.
16 I will not divide the inheritance among them. Ur-Utu is my son,
17 the one who received my scepter from me. It is he who will acquire everything.[571]

Janssen claimed that the parents of the three brothers mentioned in the above passage (Kubburum, Ilī-iqīšam and Ḫuzālum) were not their real parents, and that the passage as a whole was presented by Inanna-mansum as an insult.[572] Gabbay continued this line of thought and suggested that these brothers were not Inanna-mansum's biological progeny, but rather adopted ones.[573] As can be seen, both examples mentioned by Gabbay for adoption by a *kalû* (or *kalamāḫu*) seem fairly reasonable. However, a differing opinion over the matter was proposed by Renger, who rejected the possibility that gala offspring were adopted ones, and drew the following genealogical scheme,[574] based on several Neo-Sumerian texts,[575] in order to support his view:[576]

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[569] Gabbay 2008: 55.

[570] See Janssen 1992: 22.

[571] For a discussion and interpretation of this sentence, see Janssen 1992: 27.

[572] Janssen 1992: 34 and n. 38.

[573] Gabbay 2008: 55. For further examples of adoption by gala/*kalû*s in the Old Babylonian period, see Gabbay 2014a: 68 n. 45.

[574] For historical details contributing to the construction of this scheme, see also Hartman 1960: 142.

[575] UDT 57,35, NGU 2.101,2, 6 and 199,7; see Renger 1969: 193 n. 888.

[576] Renger 1969: 193.

Ḫuwawa   ∞   *Sumanna*
       gala

Lugal-LAL+NIGIN   Nì-^{d}ba-ba$_6$
       (šeš-gal)   gala
         gala
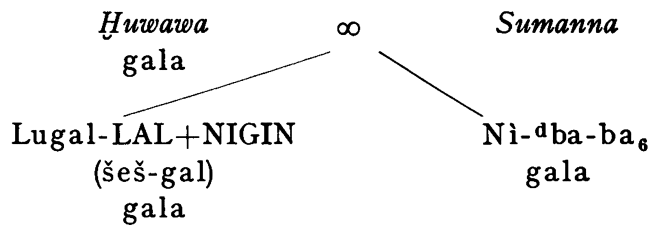
This scheme describes the gala Ḫuwawa, his wife Sumanna and their two sons, Lugal-LAL+NIGIN and Nì-^{d}ba-ba$_6$, both galas similarly to their father. Renger noted that yet another gala, named Dumulugala'ursag, evidently had a son named Abdiḫi, himself a gala as well.[577] Hence, suggested Renger, in these cases, the gala-ship could have constituted a family tradition,[578] passed on from father to son.[579] However, there should be no contradiction between the two views. It can be suggested that galas sired their own children, but in case they did not have kids of their own, they could have adopted the same as any other person in Mesopotamia.

The question of the gala and progeny is addressed by several of the Sumerian proverbs mentioned above. As we have seen, these proverbs seem to highlight the gala as a figure whose main attribute is barrenness. It was suggested above that several metaphors were used throughout these proverbs in order to highlight the gala's infertility. As such, the field that appears in Proverbs 2 and 13 (= SP 2.97 and 21.D3) was interpreted as a symbol of fertility, to which the gala has no access, while the boat that appears in Proverbs 3, 8 and probably 12 (= SP 2.98, 2.103 and 21.D2, respectively) was taken as inferring sterility connected with the gala. Proverbs 4 and 5 (= SP 2.99 and 2.100) both relate to the gala in a rather contemptuous manner. The former depicts him as allegorically throwing his son to the water and stating that people should live and prosper like him, while, in the latter, the gala spreads his anus and comments that it belongs to Inanna, his lady. It was suggested that Proverb 4 (= SP 2.99) emphasized the gala's infertility by using the ironic analogy between the throwing of his son into the water and its parallelism to people's prosperity. Similarly, it was suggested that the reference in Proverb 5 (= SP 2.100) to the gala's anus as connected with the goddess of sexuality might have alluded to sterility as well. It was further suggested that Proverbs 9 and 10 (= SP 2.104 and 2.105) both alluded to the fact that though the gala's exterior was regular, he was nonetheless infertile.

All these examples suggest that in this collection of Sumerian proverbs the gala was portrayed as an infertile figure, this being the most noticeable characteristic of his image in this group of texts.

We should further consider specific persons identified as galas, which were documented as having children. One such example is the cook Dayyanu from the Ur

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[577] UDT 57,24; see Renger 1969: 193 n. 889.
[578] See, similarly, Hartmann 1960: 141.
[579] Renger 1969: 193.

III period, who was already mentioned. As we have seen, in text CST 189,2–3 (Š47.x.14) Dayyanu was documented as "entering into gala-ship", while text OIP 115.316,11–12 (Š47.viii.22), dated to almost two months earlier, documented a bridal gift to be given by the high official Rīṣī-ilum to Dayyanu's household. The combined information gathered from these two texts depicts Dayyanu as a man who has a family and a son "becoming" a gala at a certain point of his life. Michalowski suggested that Dayyanu did not actually "become a gala", but merely "acted as gala" by conducting the marriage ceremonies.[580] This interpretation makes it clear that Dayyanu was not actually a gala, and, therefore, the fact that he had offspring is by no means a surprise.

Furthermore, we have attestations to several *kalamāḫu*s documented as having families, and several sons. The possibility that all their sons were adopted is improbable, because people did not usually adopt more than one child. Two of the more noticeable of these *kalamāḫu*s are Dada (Ur III period) and Ur-Utu (Old Babylonian), both discussed above. If we consider the *kalamāḫu* to be a chief-gala/*kalû*,[581] he should have possessed all the prominent attributes typical of the gala, including being castrated. Therefore, the information we have concerning the private lives of the above-mentioned *kalamāḫu*s contradicts the possibility that they were castrated, and, consequently, weakens the possibility that galas were generally castrates.

To conclude the section dealing with the question of gala/*kalû* and castration, an interesting picture emerges. We have seen several references in the Sumerian Proverb Collection that leave a strong impression of the gala as a typically childless figure; this infertility can, in theory, be explained as the marker of castration. However, previous suggestions of various scholars in favor of viewing the gala as a castrate were refuted, and their flaws were demonstrated above. Most importantly, some evidence was brought up to show that, occasionally, galas indeed had children. Unless these were adopted ones, how can these discrepancies be resolved?

I propose that the situation we face here involves the gap between conflicting social arrays. On one hand are social conventions that do not necessarily materialize in real life, while on the other hand is practical social reality. It can be suggested that the data gathered from the Sumerian proverbs reflected certain notions that prevailed towards the gala, but existed only in the hyper-realistic level. As such, this figure was regarded as a servant of Inanna, a man whose activities in the temples prevented him from having children. However, on the practical level, there was no real obstacle preventing him from siring offspring, as indeed occasionally happened. Thus, even though progeny was not a characteristic feature of the gala, he was not utterly incapable of it. It is possible that scholars were misled by these social conventions and failed to take into account the actual social practices. It is often difficult to distinguish between textual evidence for social customs and for practical behavior when the two come in conflict and contradict each other. Rubio stated that "That there were eunuchs in ancient Mesopotamia is quite possible, but that the gala-

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[580] Michalowski 2006: 55.
[581] Some of them, such as Dada, were documented as gala/*kalû* in addition to their attestations as *kalamāḫu*s.

priests were eunuchs may be a modern, naïve, and unwarranted assumption based on
an old case of character assassination."[582] This phrasing might be somewhat severe,
but I tend to agree with its basic essence.[583]

1.7.4. The gala/*kalû* and Their Low Social Rank

Having concluded the discussion of gender ambiguity, we are left to address one last
issue concerning the social image of the gala/*kalû*: the possible indicators for his low
social status. Many researchers often claimed that, on occasions, galas belonged to a
very low social rank, because they were sold and purchased, as shown in four Pre-
Sargonic and one Old Akkadian text recording such transactions.[584] But a fact that
these researchers seem to overlook when considering these transaction-texts, and
that was noticed by Schretter,[585] is that the procurers in these transactions were
wives of the city ruler.[586] These circumstances, where galas were purchased by
women of the highest social echelon, did not necessarily lead these galas to become
poor slaves, destined to a miserable fate. The exact opposite might be no less rea-
sonable, in case the galas in question were intended to serve the royal family. In
such a case, their purchase might actually have earned them a desirable position in
society. Furthermore, individual galas such as Dada (see above) are known to have
enjoyed a highly distinguished rank in society, and the position of *kalamāḫu*, chief-
gala/*kalû*, was a very prestigious one. It was even suggested that the involvement of
*kalamāḫu*s in cult and administration required them to be able to read and write.[587]

A different possible indicator for the low social status of the gala might be found
in the collection of Old Babylonian proverbs that were mentioned several times
before. We have already seen that some of them depict the gala as a ridiculous fig-

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[582] Rubio 2001: 270.

[583] Somewhat similarly, the *bissu* of Indonesia were prohibited of conducting sexual inter-
course, but in reality were occasionally engaged in homosexual relations. The *hijra* of India
claim to be born hermaphrodites, but, actually, almost all of them are castrates. These cases
(for both, see Introduction, pp. 31–32) exemplify the possible discrepancy between social
conventions and practical behavior.

[584] Nik. 1.17, BIN 8.363, RTC 17, VAT 4434 and RTC 80; see Hartmann 1960: 133 and Gelb
1975: 66–67. For discussions of these texts, see above.

[585] Schretter 1990: 127.

[586] Dimtur wife of Enentarzi (RTC 17), Baranamtarra wife of Lugalanda (Nik. 1.17, VAT
4434) and Šagšag wife of Urukagina (BIN 8.363). The only exception is RTC 80, where the
buyer is not the ruler's wife, but the ruler himself, Lugal-ušumgal. Further peculiarity of this
text involves the fact that the gala seems not to have been the only one who was bought, but
also his wife, daughters and brothers. Gelb (1975: 67) considered the term gala here to be a
personal name rather than a title, which explains the existence of the gala's two daughters, in
contrast with Gelb's view of the gala as a eunuch. However, there is no reason for these as-
sumptions. As is demonstrated above, galas were not castrates, and occasionally were docu-
mented as having children, maybe through adoption. In all likelihood, the daughters in RTC
80 were not the gala's biological progeny, because the text states that they were his wife's,
rather than his own.

[587] See Renger 1969: 198.

ure, which led some scholars to regard these proverbs as testifying to the low status of the gala.[588] However, these proverbs should be regarded with some caution. Their messages are not always lucid, and we can never be sure how accurately they reflected social reality. As is suggested above, the proverbs relating to the gala could have reflected certain social attitudes that did not match the actual reality.

We can conclude that the indicators of the gala/*kalû*'s low social status seem very limited. Apart from the vague corpus of Sumerian proverbs, they hardly exist. We can therefore assume that the gala did not belong to an especially low social rank. Being a member of the temple personnel, he was probably in a similar position as other cult figures. It is likely that, occasionally, individual galas/*kalû*s enjoyed high esteem, and sometimes their social rank was fairly high. Evidently, the chief-*kalû* was a high-ranking official, and the *kalû*s were regarded as special officials with specific cultic duties. This fact does not coincide with a low social status.

2. *kulu'u*

2.1. General Introduction

The current section discusses the term *kulu'u* and assesses its relation to the figure surveyed in the previous section, the gala/*kalû*. As was explained in the introduction of the current chapter, a distinction should be made between these terms. Though they are all related, *kulu'u* stood for a different concept than gala/*kalû*, as will soon be demonstrated. The CAD referred to this term as denoting "actor, member of the temple-personnel (of Ištar), performing dances and music",[589] though with no mention of the gala/*kalû*, and the connection between the terms. The data concerning this term is far scantier than that concerning the gala/*kalû* and derives from a variety of textual genres. Therefore, all these attestations are treated below in one unified section. Although the evidence is scarce, it still gives us a clear impression of the nature of *kulu'u*, and its relation to the third gender. After reviewing and considering the evidence, my assumption is that *kulu'u* expressed a general term and not the designation of a specific figure that existed in reality. This term referred to effeminate men and occasionally reflected their effeminacy in a derogative manner, since they represented an antonym for normative masculine males. However, the scarcity of the evidence obliges us to take these conclusions with much caution.

2.2. The Evidence Concerning *kulu'u*

As was noted in the introduction of the current chapter, it is not clear whether the term *kulu'u* stood for a different concept than *kalû*, or merely formed its phonetic variation. Though scholars are divided on this matter, the Akkadian dictionaries

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[588] See, among others, Gordon 1959: 248 and Alster 1997: 371. See further Renger (1969: 194), who stated the following: "Diese niedrige Stellung des gala entspricht der öffentlichen Meinung von ihm, die sich in wenig schmeichelhaften Sprichwörtern ausdrückt".

[589] CAD K: 529, s.v. "*kulu'u*".

unanimously opt for the first option.[590] Indeed, this section will demonstrate that unlike *kalû*, the term *kulu'u* probably denoted a general concept of male effeminacy, and not a specific figure. However, it seems improbable that the two terms were completely disassociated, because of the phonetic and partial semantic similarities they shared. It is therefore proposed here that the general term *kulu'u* was derived from the title of the real figure *kalû*, whose relation to effeminate traits was discussed in the previous section.

   We will begin our survey of the textual attestations of *kulu'u* with reviewing the appearance of this term in lexical lists. In a Neo-Assyrian manuscript of the igi-tuḫ-list (short version) we find the following entries:

igi-tuḫ = *tāmartu* (short version), 265–266[591]

265 ᴸᵘ[ur-munus]   *ku-lu-'*   [man-woman] / *kulu'u*
266 ᴸᵘur-munus   *as/i-sin-nu*   man-woman / *assinnu*/*isinnu*

George understood the term ᴸᵘur-munus, which he transcribed lú.ur.SAL, as "female man, hermaphrodite".[592] Similarly, Gabbay regarded the above two entries as indicative of the "cultural concept of the third gender being "both sexes" (ur+SAL)".[593] The view expressed by Gabbay concerning the gala/*kalû* and *kulu'u* was discussed above. Both he and George considered *kulu'u* to be a hermaphrodite, and saw supporting evidence for this assumption in the equivalence between *kulu'u* and ur-munus, "man-woman", in the above passage. But following this logic compels us to assume the same for the *assinnu*, since in the same passage he also was paralleled with ur-munus.

   Generally speaking, the basic view considering gala/*kalû* or *kulu'u* to be hermaphrodites seems questionable, as was already explained. As is explained in the following chapter, it is likely that the term ur-munus was a logographic term for *assinnu*. In the above excerpt from the igi-tuḫ list, this term (if indeed correctly reconstructed in l. 265) appears to equate *kulu'u* and *assinnu*. Since these two terms obviously differed from one another, it should not be taken at face value that both were exact synonyms of ur-munus. Clearly, all these terms shared semantic significance,[594] but it seems highly improbable that ur-munus and *kulu'u* were exact synonyms. Also relevant to our discussion is a segment from the Neo-Assyrian AN = *šamû* list of synonyms:

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[590] CAD, CDA and AEA all list these two terms as separate entries. It cannot be argued that *kulu'u* was an Assyrian phonetic variation of the more frequent *kalû*, since the two terms are attested in the Neo-Assyrian dialect of Akkadian (see AEA: 45, s.v. "*kalû* B" and 51, s.v. "*kulu'u*"), and because of the attestation of *kulu'u* in Babylonian contexts, as demonstrated below.

[591] See Landsberger and Gurney 1957–58: 84.

[592] George 2006: 175.

[593] Gabbay 2008: 52 n. 29.

[594] As shown, for example, by the alternation of *kulu'u* and *assinnu* in the two Akkadian versions of *Ištar's Descent to the Netherworld*.

LTBA 2.1 vi 45'–48' // LTBA 2.2,380–383[595]

45'//380 *a-si?-nu*[596]	*ku-lu-'*	*assinnu / kulu'u*
46'//381 *pil-pi-lu-u*[597]	min	*pilpilû* / ditto
47'//382 *kur-ga-ru-u*[598]	min	*kurgarrû* / ditto
48'//383 *a-ra-ru-u*	min	*ararû* / ditto

In this excerpt, *kulu'u* parallels several other terms: *assinnu*, *pilpilû*, *kurgarrû* and *ararû*. As is demonstrated in this research, however, each one of these terms had its own traits, and was distinguished from the others. Hence, none could be an exact synonym for *kulu'u*. All these figures are discussed in the present study, as bearing third gender qualities.[599] Based on this, Gabbay assumed that *kulu'u* formed "a general concept referring to the physical features which were shared by these five functionaries".[600] As we will see, it is indeed probable that *kulu'u* stood for a general term, and did not designate a particular profession. But that this term pertained to people's physical traits seems doubtful. In conclusion, the evidence from the lexical lists demonstrates that *kulu'u* was paralleled with several designations of third gender figures. However, it should not be taken at face value that he was a figure identical to them.

Turning to administrative texts, a rare evidence for *kulu'u* as denoting a professional title is found in OAIC 30, an Old Akkadian tablet that lists five *sekretu*s in its obverse (ll. 1–7),[601] and three *kulu'u*s in its reverse (ll. 8–11).[602] Interestingly, one of the *kulu'u*s was named Ištar-tukultī, "Ištar is my trust/grace",[603] which may allude to the connection of such persons with the cult of the goddess in later periods. The evidence from this tablet shows that *kulu'u* is attested at least from the Old Akkadian period, and at least in this occasion should be regarded as a real designation of an occupation. However, the spelling of the term here is atypical: *ku-lu-ù*, instead of the usual *ku-lu-'(-ú)* we find in other attestations of the term, as discussed in the current section. This writing is atypically short (omitting the aleph sign), and the orthography (the use of Ù rather than Ú) is a hapax for this term.[604] These, however, are probably orthographic phenomena characteristic of Old Akkadian writing,[605] so we cannot determine whether this peculiarity undermines the possibility that the

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[595] See CAD K: 529, s.v. "*kulu'u*", http://oracc.org/dcclt/P349911. Transliteration follows DCCLT.

[596] Variant in duplicate K 4193 rev. 9' (CT 18.5): *i-sin-nu-u*.

[597] Variant in duplicate K 4193 rev. 10' (CT 18.5): *a-pi-lu-u*.

[598] Variant in duplicate K 4193 rev. 11' (CT 18.5): *kur-gar-ru-u*.

[599] For *assinnu* and *kurgarrû*, see Chapter 3; for *pilpilû*, see Chapter 5, pp. 267–270. *ararû* is only attested in lexical lists.

[600] Gabbay 2008: 52 n. 29.

[601] Their names appear in ll. 1–4, 6, and their profession (šeš.munus) in ll. 5, 7.

[602] Their names appear in ll. 8–10, and their profession (*ku-lu-ù*) in l. 11.

[603] OAIC 30 rev. 9, see Gelb 1955: 265.

[604] See CAD K: 529, s.v. "*kulu'u*" for writing variations, and also in the transliterations along the current section.

[605] For Ù as a vowel-sign in Old Akkadian orthography, including the present example, see Gelb 1961: 25 and Hasselbach 2005: 76 and 131.

term in question is indeed identical to *kulu'u* as discussed in the current section. Since I know of no other title spelled *ku-lu-ù*, I have no better alternatives to offer in this respect.

We turn now to assess the attestations of *kulu'u* in historical texts, beginning with a presumed semi-historical / semi-fictional Old Hittite composition scholars usually refer to as *The Siege of Uršu*.[606] The text details a sequence of failures by the Hittite army to take hold of the city of Uršu, in an almost humorous manner. Reports concerning the failed attempts reach the Hittite king, and, in his fury, he blames his generals for incompetence:

The Siege of Uršu, CTH 7, KBo 1.11 rev. 13[607]
i-na-an-na ku-la-ú-tam te-pu-uš
Now you have behaved as a *kulu'u*!

We witness the contemptuous comment again soon enough, this time somewhat more elaborately:

The Siege of Uršu, CTH 7, KBo 1.11 rev. 17–18[608]
[17]*ku-li-e-eš-šar* mu-im-ma [m]*Tu-ut-ḫa-li-ia* [18]*i-pu-uš i-na-an-na at-ta te-pu-uš ku-la-ú-tam*
[17]Last year Tudḫaliya [18]behaved [17](in the manner of) *kuleššar*. [18]Now you have behaved as a *kulu'u*!

The above episode establishes an analogy between Hittite *kuleššar* and Akkadian *kula'ūtam epēšum*, "behave as *kulu'u*". Puhvel and Hoffner have suggested that *kuleššar* stemmed from *ku(wa)liya-*, and understood it as "be calm(ed), be passive".[609] Thus, an insult is coined here, formed by combining an allegation of masculine military incompetence with the conduct otherwise ascribed to *kulu'u*. The latter, therefore, stands in this occasion for an offensive idiom, the opposite of manliness and prowess.[610]

We find *kulu'u* used again as a derogatory phrase several centuries later, in a royal letter, which historical setting is rather peculiar. In the twelfth century BCE the Assyrian king Ninurta-tukulti-Aššur was dethroned by his own brother, Mutakkil-Nusku. Following the coup, Ninurta-tukulti-Aššur takes refuge in Babylonia, and his Kassite host exchanges letters with the new Assyrian king, the usurper Mutakkil-Nusku. In one of the letters, the Babylonian king refers to a comment previously made by his Assyrian addressee:

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[606] CTH 7. For an edition and a discussion of this text, see Beckman 1995 and Miller 1999: 44–45.

[607] See Beckman 1995: 25.

[608] See Beckman 1995: 25.

[609] HED 4: 303, s.v. "*ku(wa)liya-*"; Hoffner 2000: 75.

[610] I have interpreted this episode elsewhere in the context of the discussion of Hittite attitudes to homosexuality and male passivity; see Peled 2010a: 77–78.

Sm 2116 + BM 104727,63' // K 212 + K 4448 rev. 21[611]

[ᵈ*nin-urta*-ᵍⁱ]ˢ*tukulti*-ᵈ*aš-šur šá taq-bu-ú um-ma ku-lu-'-ú la zi-ka-ru šu-*⸢*ú*⸣

[Ninurta]-tukulti-Aššur, of whom you have said thus: "he is a *kulu'u*, not a man!"

Here again *kulu'u* forms an insult. It is used by Mutakkil-Nusku in order to mock Ninurta-tukulti-Aššur by questioning his manliness. However, it seems highly doubtful that this passage proves that Ninurta-tukulti-Aššur was a eunuch, or of an irregular gender identity.[612] Mutakkil-Nusku's slur was exactly this: an insult, not a realistic description of his brother's qualities and gender identity, or the assumption that he was a hermaphrodite, eunuch or of a special gender. What we learn from this episode is that *kulu'u* contrasted, in its essence, the normative (in Connell's terminology – hegemonic) masculinity. Physical attributes need not play any role here.

In a commentary to the so-called *Babylonian Theodicy*[613] we come across yet again with an attestation of *kulu'u* in pejorative context, as it explains a negative term from the composition. The *Theodicy* is structured as a lengthy dialogue between two persons, which scholars usually refer to as "the sufferer" and "the friend". The former agonizes over people's wickedness and malevolent deeds, and, in response, the latter offers comfort by noting that everything happens under the auspices of the gods, and therefore belongs to the natural order of the world. In a broken passage, we read these words of the "sufferer":

The Babylonian Theodicy, 221–222[614]
²²¹[…]x *ma-qu-ru ḫar-ḫa-ri* ²²²[…]x *ka-li-šú-nu is-ḫap-pu*
²²¹[…] ?[615] villains. ²²²[…] all are cheats.

Some of these terms are elucidated in a Neo-Babylonian commentary from Sippar:

Sippar Commentary of ll. 221–222[616]

ḫar-ḫa-ri : pi x : *šá-niš ku-lu-'-ú* : *is-ḫap-pu* : *sak-lu* : gu[r?]
villains: pi x / differently: *kulu'u* : are cheats: simpletons / gu[r?]

It is rather unfortunate that both the original passage and its commentary are fragmentary, which leaves the full context unclear to us.[617] Nonetheless, the significant point to our discussion can still be inferred from the preserved portions: the term *šanîš*, "differently", in the commentary presents *kulu'u* as a different understand-

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[611] See Llop and George 2001–02: 5. For an older edition of this line in the duplicate K 212 + K 4448 rev. 21, see Weidner 1935–36: 3.

[612] For this possibility, see Gabbay 2008: 52 and n. 28.

[613] For discussion, publication and literature of this composition, see Lambert 1960: 63–91. For recent translation and brief introduction, see Foster 1996: 790–798.

[614] See Lambert 1960: 82 and Oshima 2013: 15. Transliteration follows Lambert.

[615] The meaning of *maqūru/maqurru* is unknown.

[616] See Lambert 1960: 83.

[617] In his edition of the *Theodicy*, Lambert (1960: 85) was not even able to offer a translation of the subsequent unintelligible lines (ll. 224–234).

ing of *ḫarḫaru*, "villain".[618] We thus witness here, yet again, an attestation of *kulu'u* in a negative connotation, as a pejorative term.

Further, *kulu'u* is found to be equated with a prostitute in a Standard Babylonian incantation:

KAR 43,1–6 // KAR 63,1–6[619]

1 [*a-na-ku*] *at-ta-ṣa ru-'–tú ša pi-i-ka*
2 [*a*]-*mat abi*(ad)-*ka a-mat ummi*(ama)-*ka a-mat aḫāti*(nin)-*ka*
3 *a-mat* ᴸᵘ[620]*ku-lu-'* *ù*[621] *ḫa-rim-ti āli*(uru)
4 *at-ta-din a-na er-ṣe-ti mu-ka-tim-ti*
5 *ša la te-pu-šá pi-i-šá*
6 *la ta-bal-lak-ka-ta lišān*(eme)-*šá*

1 [I] have carried away the spittle of your mouth,
2 the word of your father, the word of your mother, the word of your sister,
3 the word of the *kulu'u* and the city prostitute,
4 (and) have given to the enclosing earth,
5 which does not open her mouth,
6 does not put forth her tongue.

The opening section of the incantation aims at binding the mouth of a foe and his acquaintances, and by that to prevent them of speaking out. The foe's acquaintances belong to two distinct groups: immediate family (father, mother and sister), and the more remote community members (*kulu'u* and city prostitute).

The question that concerns us is why were *kulu'u* and city prostitute considered jointly, as in the text they share the same "word": "the word of the *kulu'u* and the city prostitute". In contrast, it is noted, each one of the foe's family members has his or her own "word". Assuming a direct link between *kulu'u* and prostitution on the basis of this passage is probably unwarranted. Rather, a more nuanced association between the two is to be realized, an association based on proximity in social statuses. The same kind of relationship groups the foe's family members together. As to *kulu'u* and prostitution, it was already mentioned in Chapter 1 that some of the phrases in Ereškigal's curse of Aṣnamer the *kulu'u* in *Ištar's Descent to the Netherworld*[622] were identical to those found in Enkidu's curse of the prostitute in the Gilgameš epic. This rare example of a possible connection between the members of Inanna/Ištar's cult and prostitution is discussed in Chapter 3.

Let us consider the two groups found in the passage under discussion. They seem to signify two poles of one's social acquaintances: close-by family and further remote community members. In a sense, it is suggested, these two poles are antonymic, because prostitutes symbolize the opposite of family and marriage life. If we

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[618] For this usage of *šanîš* in the current text, see CAD Š/1: 387, s.v. "*šanîš*" 2c.
[619] See Ebeling 1915: 92.
[620] Omitted in duplicate KAR 63,3.
[621] In duplicate KAR 63,3 the sign U appears instead.
[622] Thus in the Middle Assyrian Aššur version. In the Neo-Assyrian Nineveh version, this figure is named Aṣušunamir and is designated as an *assinnu*.

assume that *kulu'u* designated effeminate, or, for the very least, essentially non-hegemonic Mesopotamian men, then its association with the socially-segregated prostitute is better understood. Both did not conform to standard social norms of gender-related conduct, though for different reasons. Taken together, these two antonymic groups symbolically represent the whole of the foe's social environment, covering different ranges of societal proximity, acceptance and appropriateness. As such, *kulu'u* belonged in the group of remote and socially-segregated individuals like the prostitute.

The next piece of evidence is found in an apotropaic Standard Babylonian *namburbi*-ritual passage from the 135th tablet of the series. Here the context is that of Ištar, her entourage and her sexuality. The goddess is invoked in our passage as follows:

namburbi-ritual rev. 2–3[623]

[2]*al-ki it-ru-bi a-na bīti*(é)-*ni it-ti-ki li-ru-bu ṣa-lil-li-ki ṭâbu*(du[10]-ga) [3]*ḫ[ab]-bu-bu-ki*[624] *u ku-lu-'-ú-ki*

[2]Come, enter our house! With you may your sweet bedfellow,[625] [3]your lover and your *kulu'u* [2]enter!

This ritual was performed on behalf of tavern owners wishing to enlarge their earnings.[626] According to Assante, summoning Ištar, patron goddess of sexuality, was meant to generate an "intoxicating, lustful atmosphere" in the tavern, which will attract clients and thereby increase profits. For this reason, Ištar was encouraged to bring along her male entourage with her, because their presence emphasized her sexuality.[627]

The attestation of *kulu'u* in the above passage is intriguing. It is the sole explicit evidence I am aware of for the relation between *kulu'u* and Ištar, other than the episode in *Ištar's Descent to the Netherworld* presented in Chapter 1. That episode, however, lacks any sexual sense, making the relationship between *kulu'u* and the goddess there utterly different than in the ritual currently discussed. In the above *namburbi* passage, indeed, *kulu'u* describes a figure intimately associated with Ištar, together with her "sweet bedfellow" and "lover". This can be explained by the gender-ambivalent nature of Ištar, which was mirrored by the male members of her entourage mentioned in the passage. The "sweet bedfellow" can be interpreted as an apposition to the two others: he was Ištar's sexual partner, who could either be a masculine "lover" or an effeminate *kulu'u*.

The last text to be considered in the current section, BM 54312, is the most complicated one, and it is quite doubtful whether *kulu'u* even appears in it. George,

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[623] See Ebeling 1955: 182, Panayotov 2013: 293. Transliteration follows Panayotov.

[624] This restoration is based on a different manuscript from the one published by Ebeling; see Zimmern 1918–19: 174,47. Ebeling restored here [*li-ru-ba*].

[625] For this translation, see CAD Ṣ: 72, s.v. "*ṣalīlu* A". The term derives from the adjective *ṣalīlu/ṣalillu*, "sleeping", and the verb *ṣalālu*, "to lie / fall asleep".

[626] For edition and discussion of this text, see, most recently, Panayotov 2013.

[627] Assante 1998: 81.

who published the text, dated it the Neo- or Late Babylonian period, and assumed that it was a commentary on the *Akītu*-festival, celebrating the new year in Babylon.[628] He further assumed that the term *kulu'u* appeared in the partially broken middle of the first line of the tablet. However, though the identification of this person is essential for the discussion, it remains indecisive. He played a significant role in the text, and was engaged in diverse acts. According to George, the *kulu'u* was cursed by Marduk, and thereafter obliged to attend him throughout the *Akītu*. In George's view, this was parallel to the curse of the *assinnu/kulu'u* by Ereškigal in *Ištar's Descent to the Netherworld*, and Marduk's unchangeable curse of the *kulu'u* established "the peculiar status of this class of person (by decreeing their castration?)." The *kulu'u* later sprinkles water on a statue of Anunnītum, paralleled in George's mind with the "water of life" sprinkled by the galaturra on Inanna in order to revive her in the Sumerian version of *Inanna's Descent to the Netherworld* (though in this myth the *kurgarrû* also participated, by sprinkling the "plant of life" on the goddess). Further in the text, the *kulu'u* is dressed in the clothing of Anunnītum, which according to George was an example of transvestism.[629]

The above suggestions are based on speculative textual reconstructions, and their validity is to be questioned. Our main concern, however, is whether the figure in question was indeed termed *kulu'u*. Judging by George's copy of the pertinent term (⸢🔲🔲 🔲⸣),[630] his reconstructed ⸢*ku-lu*⸣-*ú*[631] is not utterly impossible. It must be noted, however, that the traces of the supposed KU do not seem similar to other occurrences of this sign throughout BM 54312. Further peculiarity involves the atypical short spelling, which excludes the aleph sign, since the usual spelling of *kulu'u* was *ku-lu-'(-ú)*. Though George dismissed a possible reading *k[a-l]u-ú*,[632] the copy he supplies does not overrule the restoration ⸢*ka-lu*⸣-*ú*. It may alternatively be suggested, that the first sign was either ⸢*ká*⸣, ⸢*kà*⸣ or ⸢*ka₄*⸣, which, followed by ⸢*lu*⸣-*ú*, would render *kalû*. Perhaps this is the most satisfactory restoration possibility of all, that solves all the difficulties.

A different text, K 9876 + K 19534, which is discussed in Chapter 3 (pp. 185–186), describes Marduk's procession approaching the *Akītu*-temple on the eighth of Nisan, and specifies the chants to be recited by a certain ᴸᵘ́ur-munus. One of these chants details the participation of "*assinnu* and *kurgarrû* of Ištar-of-Babylon" in the procession. George suggested that this ᴸᵘ́ur-munus was identical with the *kulu'u* of BM 54312.[633] However, as we have already seen, the terms ur-munus and *kulu'u* were not synonyms. As is demonstrated below (see Chapter 3), ur-munus was in all probability a logographic term for *assinnu*.

BM 54312 could have shown the only attestation known thus far of a *kulu'u* participating in cultic performance. However, in light of the reservations presented

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[628] See George 2006: 174 and, similarly, Linssen 2004: 3 n. 22.
[629] George 2006: 176–177.
[630] George 2006: 185.
[631] George 2006: 175.
[632] George 2006: 175 n. 8.
[633] George 2006: 176.

above, and the uncertainty concerning the very existence of this term in the text, a great deal of caution is advised here.

Chapter 3

assinnu and *kurgarrû*

Introduction

The current chapter focuses on two different third gender figures: the *assinnu* and the *kurgarrû*. The two are treated here together because of their numerous mutual attestations in various texts. However, since each of them had its own characteristics, one of the aims of the current chapter is to distinguish between the two and assess the significance of their differences. The information presented throughout this chapter is divided thematically, so that each section treats a different textual genre: lexical, administrative, cultic, narrative and ritual. The primary division of sources is thematic rather than chronological (in contrast with the previous chapter, for example) because many of the texts are late copies deriving from earlier traditions. More significantly, it seems more important to emphasize here thematic discussions rather than chronological developments. In this way, it will be easier to stress the different functionalities of the *assinnu* and the *kurgarrû*.

The structure of the current chapter is based on the division to six generic sections. We will begin with presenting the attestations of *assinnu* and *kurgarrû* in lexical lists, continue with administrative and historical texts and turn to the cultic functionalities of the two. We will present the case of *assinnu* prophets in Mari, and thereafter the participation of both *assinnu* and *kurgarrû* in cult. Next, a survey of narrative compositions mentioning the two figures will be presented. The concluding section will detail their attestations in omens, rituals and incantations. The data is presented chronologically within each section, in order to keep at least certain uniformity with other parts of the book, and to exhibit chronological changes if and when these indeed occurred.

The time-span over which the two figures were documented is vast. The earliest attestations of the *assinnu* derive from Old Babylonian Mari, unless the Ur III term discussed below was not a personal name, but a profession. The *kurgarrû* appears in texts from as early as the Ur III period. Both these figures were documented continually even until the Arsacid period. The common view held by scholars of these two figures is best portrayed by George: "They were cultic performers and included in their ranks transvestites, homosexual prostitutes, catamites, castrati, hermaphrodites and the like. Accordingly they occupied a lowly but special position in Babylonian society."[634] The current chapter will examine the available information, and question the validity of these views.

1. *assinnu* and *kurgarrû* in Lexical Lists

The opening section of this chapter offers a review of the attestations of *assinnu* and *kurgarrû* in lexical texts such as lists and commentaries. These texts enumerate

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[634] George 2006: 175.

terms that were semantically parallel to the *assinnu* and the *kurgarrû*, or functioned
as their explanations by ascribing significance to them, whether real or invented. We
will first present lists mentioning only the *assinnu*, continue with those mentioning
only the *kurgarrû*, and end with those mentioning both. We will begin our survey of
the lexical evidence with the attestations of the *assinnu*. The Neo-Assyrian igi-tuḫ
list (short version) shows the following two entries:

igi-tuḫ = *tāmartu* (short version), 265–266[635]

265 ^{lú}[ur-munus]   *ku-lu-'*   [man-woman] / *kulu'u*
266 ^{lú}ur-munus   *i/as-sin-nu*   man-woman / *assinnu/isinnu*

The term *assinnu* is equated here with the Sumerian ^{lú}ur-munus, literally "man-
woman". As was already noted, lexical lists do not necessarily reflect synonymy of
terms. But this specific occurrence does seem to show that ^{lú}ur-munus and *assinnu*
designated the same person, as they appear to be so in other texts as well, such as the
many rituals in which *assinnu*s were involved (on this issue, see further below). It
was already mentioned[636] that both George and Gabbay regarded the term ur-munus
as denoting a hermaphrodite.[637] Based on the above lexical entry, then, the same
meaning could have been ascribed to the *assinnu*. However, these suggestions were
questioned in the previous chapter. In the Neo-Assyrian[638] ḪAR-gud B list, a com-
mentary on ur₅-ra = *ḫubullu*, *assinnu* is compared again with ur-munus. This time,
however, one more term is added to the equation:

ḪAR-gud B, 133[639]

[^{lú}]ur-munus   [*a*]*s-sin-nu*   *sin-niš-*⌈*a*⌉*-*[*nu*]
man-woman   [*a*]*ssinnu*   woman-l[ike]

The terms that appear in the first and second columns exhibit Sumerian and Akka-
dian writings of the same term, while the third column presents an explanation for
them. The term *sinnišānu*, literally "woman-like", is treated in detail in Chapter 5.
As is explained there, it stood for men who were ascribed feminine attributes. There-
fore, its attestation as an explanation for *assinnu* gives us further indication to the
ascribed femininity of this figure. Further allusion to the *assinnu*'s ambiguous gen-
der identity is found in the Neo-Assyrian *mallku* = *šarru* list, where the following
entries appear:

malku = *šarru* Tablet 1,129–135[640]

129 *a-ṣi-tu₄*   *mu-*[*šá-lit-tu₄*]   she who goes out / m[idwife]
130 *a-ḫi-tu₄*   min   female stranger / ditto
131 *šá-muk-tu₄*   *na-di-tu₄*   prostitute / *nadītu*-priestess
132 *up-pu-uš-tu₄*   min   priestess[641] / ditto

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[635] See Landsberger and Gurney 1957–58: 84.
[636] See Chapter 2, p. 146.
[637] George 2006: 175, Gabbay 2008: 52 n. 29.
[638] Though one manuscript, SpTU 3.116, dates to the Neo-Babylonian period.
[639] See MSL 12: 226.
[640] See Hrůša 2010: 310.

133 *šá-mu-uḫ-tu₄*	*qa-diš-tu₄*	prostitute / *qadištu*-priestess
134 *ug-bab-tu₄*	*en-tu₄*	priestess / high priestess
135 *ug-bab-tu₄*	*as-sin-na-tu₄*	priestess / female-*assinnu*

Line 135 exhibits the only known attestation of a feminine form of *assinnu*, the term *assinnatu*.[642] This "female-*assinnu*" should be considered against the context of its appearance in the list. Lambert claimed that all the terms from the above passage can be viewed as related in this way or the other to female prostitution: (*w*)*aṣītu*, *murabbītu*,[643] *aḫītu*, *šamuk(ḫ)tu*, *nadītu*, *uppuštu*, *qadištu*, *ugbabtu* and *ēntu*. Therefore, according to Lambert, if the semantic common denominator of all these terms was female prostitution, the "female-*assinnu*" has to bear the same significance.[644]

The problem with this view lies in the fact that not all these figures were indeed connected with prostitution. In order to understand the implication of this group of terms, we must consider it within its place in the list, and the entries preceding and following it. The entries covered by ll. 113–174[645] all express various family and kin relations. The only exceptions are ll. 126–130, which exhibit various terms for midwives; ll. 131, 133, which exhibit a term for prostitutes explained by terms for female cultic personnel;[646] and ll. 132, 134–135, which exhibit various terms for female cultic personnel. Midwives can be viewed as somehow related to one's family, because of their involvement in the arrival of newborns into the family. Therefore, only ll. 131–135 seem to deviate from the common denominator of familial relations.

The factor that distinguishes this group of terms is their designation of female cultic personnel, and not prostitutes, because even the term for prostitutes (*šamuk(ḫ)tu*) is explained by *nadītu* and *qadištu*, who were cultic devotees. Therefore, it seems more reasonable that the "female-*assinnu*" of line 135 was a term related to cult rather than to prostitution. *assinnu*s were male cult attendants, and, as is demonstrated throughout this chapter, they were characterized as being sexually penetrated. The sexual relations in which they were engaged took place in the temple, as part of their cultic performance as followers of Ištar. This is the probable background for the coining of the otherwise unattested "female-*assinnu*" in the above passage, in the context of females who were engaged in cult. Their sexual conduct as assuming the receptive role could have made the *assinnu*s be perceived as feminine persons engaged in cult, similarly as the other females listed in ll. 131–135. This, however, was

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[641] CAD (U/W: 188, s.v. "*uppuštu* B") only defines this term as "a woman connected to the temple".

[642] In order to solve this peculiarity, Henshaw (1994: 288) suggested cautiously that it might indicate an *assinnu* taking the place of an *ugbabtum* in a ritual, as a female. However, there is no reason to assume that any of the other terms listed designate a male person taking a female's place, so no parallel to Henshaw's suggestion appears elsewhere in the list.

[643] This is according to Lambert's reconstruction, which does not change the meaning of the term.

[644] Lambert 1992: 138–139, 143, 151.

[645] *malku* = *šarru* Tablet 1,113–174; see Hrůša 2010: 309–313.

[646] *šamuktu*/*šamuhtu*, explained by *nadītu* and *qadištu*.

regardless of concepts of sexuality or prostitution in which these females were or were not engaged.[647] As noted by Cooper, the evidence for male prostitution in Mesopotamia is almost completely lacking.[648] The only hint linking the *assinnu* with prostitution lies in several parallel phrases that appear in Ereškigal's curse of the *assinnu/kulu'u* in *Ištar's Descent to the Netherworld*, and Enkidu's curse of the prostitute in the epic of Gilgameš. The pertinent lines from the Gilgameš epic are the following:

Epic of Gilgameš, Tablet 7,102, 104, 117, 119[649]

102 [*al*]-*ki* �f*šam-ḫat š*[*i-ma*]-*tu lu-šim-ki*
104 [*lu-u*]*z-zur-ki iz-ra* gal-*a*
117 gissu bàd *lu-ú man-za-zu-ki*
119 [*šak-ru ù ṣ*]*a-mu-ú li-im-ḫaṣ let-ki*
102 [Co]me, prostitute, let me decree a d[est]iny for you.
104 [Let me] curse you with a great curse.
117 May the shade of the city wall be your standing-place!
119 May [the drunks and the s]obers slap your cheek!

The parallel lines from the Nineveh version of *Ištar's Descent to the Netherworld* are the following:

Ištar's Descent to the Netherworld, 103, 106, 108[650]

103 *al-ka* ᵐè-*šú-na-mir lu-zir-ka iz-ra* gal-*a*
106 gissu bàd *lu-ú man-za-zu-ka*
108 *šak-ru ù ṣa-mu-ú lim-ḫa-ṣu le-et-ka*
103 Come, Aṣušunamir, let me curse you with a great curse.
106 May the shade of the city wall be your standing-place!
108 May the drunks and the sobers slap your cheek!

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[647] The dispute that prevails among scholars over the existence of the so-called "sacred prostitution" in ancient Mesopotamia is beyond the scope of this book. The alleged custom was reported by Herodotus, but while certain scholars assume that it indeed existed (see, among others, Bottéro and Petschow 1972–75, RlA 4: 464, s.v. "Homosexualität", Lambert 1992: 136–138, Dalley 2000: 305 and Silver 2006), others doubt that it did (see, among others, Westenholz 1989, Leick 1994: 149–153, Beard and Henderson 1997: 480–503, Assante 1998: 8–9, 2009: 25–26, Nissinen 1998a: 39, Cooper 2006b, RlA 11: 20, s.v. "Prostitution" and Budin 2008: 14–33). For recent discussions of this issue, see various articles in Scheer 2009 (ed.). Even if certain third gender figures such as the *assinnu* were engaged in sexual relations as part of their cultic performance, considering it as "prostitution" seems anachronistic, a view skewed by the writings of Herodotus rather than based on actual historical evidence. No evidence was ever found for the existence of such institution, the payments involved, the male clients or females (and effeminate males?) who supplied the alleged services. It seems that if it were not for Herodotus, no scholar would have imagined that such "sacred prostitution" ever existed in Mesopotamia.

[648] Cooper 2006b, RlA 11: 20, s.v. "Prostitution".

[649] See George 2003: 638, 640.

[650] See Borger 1963: 91–92, Lapinkivi 2010: 20. Transliteration of the Nineveh version, follows Borger.

Lambert regarded these parallel phrases as evidence that the *assinnu*/*kulu'u* formed a category of effeminate men that matched female prostitutes, even though this parallel alone does not prove that they actually were prostitutes themselves.[651] Cooper, on the other hand, claimed that the evidence provided by these parallel phrases for any connection between the *assinnu*/*kulu'u* and prostitution is entirely implicit.[652] Be the case as it may, the reason for the insertion of ll. 131–135 within the larger group of terms pertaining to family and kin relations remains unclear.

It is sometimes assumed[653] that a different notion altogether than an ascribed femininity is found in the SAG A and B lexical list,[654] where the following two entries appear:

SAG B i 13–14 // SAG A i 8–9[655]

13//8 sag ur-sag	*qar-ra-du*	a heroic person / hero
14//9 sag-ur-sag	*as-sí-nu*	SAG-UR-SAG / *assinnu*

The logographic terms in these two entries seem at first sight identical, as indeed they are usually transcribed. However, their Akkadian equivalents reveal their meaning, and demonstrate that they should be transcribed differently, as shown above. The first logographic term is equated with *qarrādu*, "hero, warrior", and therefore should probably be understood as sag ur-sag, "a heroic/valiant person". However, the second logographic term is equated with *assinnu*, which Gantzert translated as "catamite".[656] As the current chapter will demonstrate, sexual passivity was indeed one of the characterizing features of the *assinnu*, so Gantzert's translation is not without grounds. However, the *assinnu*'s image is too complicated to be summed up by a narrow definition such as "catamite", as is demonstrated bellow. The figure of the SAG-UR-SAG is discussed in Chapter 5 (pp. 257–267), where it is demonstrated that he was mostly characterized by feminine traits, which explains his equation with the homosexually passive *assinnu* in the above list. Therefore, the two entries should be disassociated, and, consequently, the view according to which the *assinnu* was indirectly equated in this list with the term "hero" should be rejected.[657]

As for the *kurgarrû*, he is attested in the Old Babylonian lexical list Proto-lú, which presents a few terms related to him:

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[651] Lambert 1992: 152.

[652] Cooper 2006b, RlA 11: 20, s.v. "Prostitution".

[653] See Henshaw 1994: 284 and Assante 2009: 35.

[654] This list enumerates Akkadian equivalents for logographic terms beginning with SAG, "head", and KA, "nose", "mouth". SAG A is Old Babylonian, while SAG B is Middle Babylonian. For a revised edition of the SAG B lexical list, see Gantzert 2011: Part 1: 260–267, Part 2: 151–157. Note that Gantzert's new edition of the lines presented and discussed here is identical to the previous edition that appears in MSL SS 1. Generally on this list, see MSL SS 1: 3–6, and, most recently, Gantzert 2011: Part 3: 99–106, 179–182.

[655] See MSL SS 1: 28 // 18.

[656] Gantzert 2011: Part 2: 151.

[657] For further discussion of these entries issue, and the interpretation of the *assinnu*'s nature, see Peled 2014a: 284–286.

Proto-lú, 277–280[658]

277 sag ti-rín	*tīru*
278 sag-ur-sag	SAG-UR-SAG
279 pi-li-pi-li	*pilpilû*
280 kur-gar-ra	*kurgarrû*

It is suggested here that the term in line 277, sag ti-rín, stands for Akkadian *tīru*. Therefore, the *kurgarrû* appears in this passage alongside three other third gender figures, the first of which (*tīru*) was a palace attendant and the other two (SAG-UR-SAG, *pilpilû*), cult personnel. As was already mentioned,[659] in an Old Babylonian copy of the lú list, *kurgarrû* appeared together with several terms of various ranks of *kalû*, and with SAG-UR-SAG, *pilpilû* and *tīru*.[660] We will proceed to discuss lexical lists where the *assinnu* and the *kurgarrû* were documented together, beginning with a Neo-Assyrian list of palace personnel:

K 4395 vi 23–26[661]

23 [lú]nun[meš]	princes/noblemen
24 [lú]kur-gar-ra	*kurgarrû*
25 [lú]ur-munus	man-woman (= *assinnu*)

If we accept the equation [lú]ur-munus = *assinnu*, then we find in this list the two terms *assinnu* and *kurgarrû* appearing in a mutual context. Interestingly, although these two figures were temple attendants, in this list they were documented together with palace personnel. Further relevant information can be gathered from a passage that was already mentioned, an excerpt from a Neo-Assyrian synonym-list.[662] In this passage, *assinnu*, *kurgarrû* and *pilpilû* are equated with *kulu'u*. As was demonstrated in the previous chapter, *kulu'u* was a general term that denoted a concept of femininity ascribed to men. The lexical list lú = *ša* records a bilingual section of the following functionaries:

lú = *ša* Tablet 4,180, 182–184, 189, 193a, 198a[663]

180 kur-gar-ra	šu-*u*	*kurgarrû*
182 pi-il-pi-li	*pa-⌈ar⌉-[ru-u]*	*pilpilû* / *pa*[*rrû*]
183 pi-il-pi-li	*as-*[*sin-nu*]	*pilpilû* / *as*[*sinnu*]
184 sag-ur-sag	*as-sin-nu*	SAG-UR-SAG / *assinnu*
185 sag bur-ra	ki-min	priest / ditto
186 rab gal	ki-min	large neck-stock / ditto
187 sag búlug-ga	ki-min	man of needle[?] / ditto

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[658] See MSL 12: 42, http://oracc.org/dcclt/P228841. Transliteration follows DCCLT. For further manuscripts, see pp. 96–97 and n. 315.

[659] See Chapter 2, p. 97.

[660] Proto-lú obv. ii 23'–33'; see pp. 96–97 and n. 315.

[661] See MSL 12: 240.

[662] LTBA 2.1 vi 45'–48' // LTBA 2.2,380–383 (see CAD K: 529, s.v. "*kulu'u*", http://oracc.org/dcclt/P349911); see Chapter 2, p. 147.

[663] See MSL 12: 134–135, http://oracc.org/dcclt/P282500. Transliteration follows DCCLT.

188 sag ti-rín	ki-min	*tīru* / ditto
189 kur-gar-ra	ki-min	*kurgarrû* / ditto
190 an-ti-bal	ki-min	official / ditto
191 an-ti-za	ki-min	? / ditto
192 tùn-lá	ki-min	vessel / ditto
193a ur-munus	*as-sin-nu*	man-woman / *assinnu*
198a [lú.giš]bal-šu-du₇	*na-áš pi-laq-qi*	(he) who carries the spindle

As we can see, in this list several terms are equated with *assinnu*. Some of them designated other third gender figures discussed in this book. Others, however, reflect certain shared semantics with *assinnu*: a priest (sag bur) is related to cult, while the neck-stock (rab) appears to be related to Inanna;[664] "man of needle[665]" (sag búlug-ga) can be understood as reminiscent of *nāš pilaqqi*, "the carrier of spindle" (see l. 198a), because of the similar shapes needle and spindle have. I cannot offer a clear explanation for an-ti-bal ("official") and an-ti-za (unclear), but the "vessel" (tùn-lá) is intriguing. tùn can also mean "axe", for which another term is ḫa-zi(-in), Akkadian *ḫaṣṣinnu*. As noted below, Kilmer suggested that a pun found in the Gilgameš epic linked between the "axe" (*ḫaṣṣinnu*, symbolizing Enkidu) Gilgameš made love to, and the *assinnu*, as a figure characterized as being engaged in passive sexuality.[666] It can be hypothesized, therefore, that this indirect link was the context of line 192. This suggestion, however, might be somewhat of a stretch.

The Short Recension of the same list[667] details a few other terms as well:

lú = *ša* Short Recension, Excerpt I,209–222[668]

209 la-bar	*ka-lu-ú*	priest / *kalû*
210 gala-maḫ	*šu-ḫu*	*kalamāḫu*
211 i-lu-di	*mu-nam-bu-ú*	lamenter
212 i-lu-a-li	*lal-la-ru*	mourner
213 [lú]gub-ba	*maḫ-ḫu-ú*	ecstatic
214 [lú]ní-su-ub	*za-ab-bu*	ecstatic
215 kur-gar-ra	*šu-u*	*kurgarrû*
216 ur-munus	*as-sin-nu*	man-woman / *assinnu*
217 [lú giš]bal-šu-du₇	*na-áš pi-laq-qí*	(he) who carries the spindle
218 sag-ḫul-ḫa-za	*mu-kil re-eš ḫul-ti*	evil spirit/demon[669]
219 sag-ús	*ka-a-a-ma-nu*	constant, regular, Saturn[670]

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[664] In the in-nin šà-gur₄-ra hymn (Inanna C, l. 9), a similar term ([giš]ràb gal) appears as an epithet of Inanna. Similar term further appears in a *Hymn of Iddin-Dagan*,70.

[665] The understanding of búlug as "needle" is uncertain. PSD (B: 173–176, s.v. "bulug A") mentions it among other possibilities, but does not quote the current excerpt from lú = *ša*.

[666] Kilmer 1982: 128.

[667] The lexical list lú = *ša* had three main recensions, known by scholars as "Short", "Standard" and "Long". For an explanation concerning these recensions, see MSL 12: 87–89.

[668] See MSL 12: 102–103, http://oracc.org/dcclt/P365420. Transliteration follows DCCLT.

[669] Literally, "he who provides evil". *mukīl-rēš-lemutti* was also a name of a demon; see Heessel 2007: 121.

[670] See CAD K: 38, s.v. "kajamānu b". sag-ús can also stand for *mukīl rēši*, "attendant",

220 nab	*na-a-ru*	singer
221 [nar-gal	šu]-*lum*	chief-singer
222 [gu₄-ud-da	*ra-a*]*q-qí-du*	dancer

As we can see, in this version *kurgarrû* and *assinnu* are documented between ec-statics (*maḫḫû*, *zabbu*) and singers and dancers (*nāru*, *raqqidu*). In the Sumerian column, the term ur-munus designates the *assinnu*. The entries sag-ḫul-ḫa-za = *mukīl-rēš-lemutti*, "evil spirit" and sag-ús = *kayyamānu*, "constant, normal, regular" or "Saturn" (ll. 218–219) are intriguing. Unlike those that precede and follow them, at first glance they do not seem to designate a specific cult figure. However, a closer look might give us the explanation for their appearance in this context. The key term for understanding these entries is *mukīl rēši*, "attendant". Literally this term means "holder of the head", or "(he) who holds the head". This term seems similar to *ša rēši*, "(he) of the head", for which, see Chapter 4. The close similarity between *mukīl-rēš-lemutti* (l. 218) and *mukīl rēši* might explain this entry. As for the follow-ing line, *kayyamānu* is indeed one of the Akkadian readings of the term sag-ús that appears in the first column of the entry; however, another reading of sag ús is *mukīl rēši*. Hence, these two entries might reflect allusions to the term for attendant, which fits well in the context of palace and temple functionaries. It should further be noted that the term *mukīl rēši* is similar in form to *nāš pilaqqi*, the term preceding it (l. 217). While the former means literally "(he) who holds the head", the latter means "(he) who carries the spindle". This similarity can be understood as the reason for the location of the terms alluding to *mukīl rēši* in the list. This suggestion is merely tentative, though, and others might be sought.

In the third tablet of the erim-ḫuš lexical list the following entries appear:

erim-ḫuš Tablet 3,169–172[671]

169 ˡúgub-b[a-r]a[672]	*mu-[u]ḫ-ḫu-[ú]*	ecstatic
170 ní-zu-ra-aḫ	*zab-b[u]*	ecstatic
171 kur-[gar-r]a	*kur-gar-ru-u*	*kurgarrû*
172 ˡúAN-⌈sal⌉-⌈la⌉	*as-sin-nu*	cultic performer / *assinnu*

This passage from erim-ḫuš groups together with the *assinnu* and the *kurgarrû* other terms: ecstatics and a cultic performer.[673] A section from a Seleucid commentary from Uruk to the diagnostic series sa-gig tablet 1,31[674] quotes the above-mentioned erim-ḫuš excerpt:

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which can explain its attestation in the current context of functionaries.

[671] See MSL 17: 51, http://oracc.org/dcclt/P282337 (VAT 5744). Transliteration follows DCCLT.

[672] It is commented in the CDLI concerning this line, that "Sumerian seems to be a conflation of {lu2}gub-ba and {lu2}an-dib-ba-ra."

[673] The entries in the erim-ḫuš list were organized around semantic concepts, and did not necessarily show mere "horizontal" equivalences; see Frahm 2011: 13.

[674] This series details medical and physiognomic omens. For editions and discussions of this series, see Labat 1951, Finkel 1988, George 1991, Böck 2000 and Heessel 2000. For a discus-sion of this specific line in the commentaries of sa-gig tablet 1, see George 1991: 159–160.

W 22666/1c = SpTU 5.256,8'–9'[675]

8' […] ⌜ní-zu-ra⌝-aḫ : kur-gar-ra : ᴸᵘAN-sal⌐-la[676]

9' […] *as-sin-ni* …

8' […] ecstatic : *kurgarrû* : cultic performer

9' […] *assinnu* …

According to Frahm, Mesopotamian scribes tended to employ in commentaries "vertical" quotations from erim-ḫuš, a custom that enables modern scholars to trace the original list from which the occasional commentary entry was taken. Such "vertical" quotes normally begin with the presentation of all the Sumerian words from the relevant erim-ḫuš section, followed by their Akkadian equivalents.[677] Hence, in the above passage we see the *kurgarrû* and the *assinnu* associated with an ecstatic and a ᴸᵘAN-sal-la. We can therefore assume that ᴸᵘAN-sal-la was a term that denoted cultic performers generally, but was not identical specifically to either the *assinnu* or the *kurgarrû*. This is confirmed by the following entry from AO 17661, another commentary of sa-gig tablet 1,31, from Nippur. This commentary explains the term *maḫḫû*, "ecstatic", that appears in the original omen,[678] as follows:

AO 17661 rev. 7[679]

ᴸᵘAN-sal-la : *maḫ-ḫu* : *a-mur-ru* : kur-gar-ra-*u* : *as-s[in-n]u*

cultic performer : ecstatic : Amorite : *kurgarrû* : *ass[inn]u*

We can see that in this entry the term ᴸᵘAN-sal-la was paralleled with *maḫḫû*, "ecstatic", and with *Amurru*, "Amorite", as well as *assinnu* and *kurgarrû*. Durand regarded the terms in this entry as referring to ecstatics and claimed that these individuals were characterized as outsiders, strangers, incomplete and marginal.[680] Frahm noted that these two commentaries were close parallels, though not completely identical. He viewed them as another evidence for the "intellectual contacts that existed between Nippur and Uruk during the Achaemenid and Early Hellenistic periods".[681]

assinnu and *kurgarrû* in Lexical Lists: Conclusions

The information gathered from the above lists testifies to the close relationship between the *assinnu* and *kurgarrû*, as well as to the connection between them and other personnel bearing third gender characteristics. The documentation of *assinnu* and *kurgarrû* together with ecstatics (*maḫḫû, zabbu*) can be related to the two *as-*

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[675] See von Weiher 1998: 73, http://oracc.org/cams/gkab/sptu_5_256/. Transliteration follows CAMS.

[676] Von Weiher (1998: 73) transliterated this term differently, as LÚ ᵈ*Gu-la*.

[677] Frahm 2011: 91 n. 456, 208. See, in this regard, MSL 17: 3 and George 1991: 152.

[678] *šumma*(diš) *maḫ-ḫa-a īmur*(igi) *marṣu*(gig) *šū*(bi) *qāt*(šu) ᵈ*nin-u[rta]*, "If he sees an ecstatic, that ill person (suffers from) the hand of Ninu[rta]", sa-gig Tablet 1,31, see George 1991: 144.

[679] See Durand 1979: 163.

[680] Durand 1979: 164.

[681] Frahm 2011: 223.

sinnu prophets from Mari discussed below, and hint to special qualities that were ascribed to these figures as a result of their relation with their patron goddess, Ištar. Interestingly, however, although they were cultic attendants, in K 4395 vi 23–26 they were associated with figures of the palace.

A unique feminine form of *assinnu* was attested in *malku = šarru* Tablet 1,135, which possibly alluded to the effeminate conduct of the *assinnu* in sexual cultic rites, by assuming the penetrated role. The involvement of this figure in cult is elaborated and discussed below.

As for indicators of gender ambiguity, we return to discuss the equation of *assinnu* with the logographic compound ^(lú)ur-munus in lexical lists, as was presented above. ur-munus means "man-woman", but can be also understood as "dog-woman". Nissinen claimed that the dog symbolized masculinity in a negative sense.[682] However, Burns mentioned that Akkadian *kalbu*, dog, is not attested as a metaphor having this meaning.[683] Oppenheim suggested interpreting this term as "female dog",[684] but Henshaw rejected this interpretation, claiming that munus-ur would have been the customary reading for "female dog".[685] The compound can be understood as expressing a genitival construction, "man of a woman", in the sense of "man of the type of woman", but since no morphological indicators ever appear to support this suggestion, it remains speculative. Regardless of how we might interpret the term ^(lú)ur-munus and its equation with *assinnu*, it clearly testifies to feminine qualities ascribed to the *assinnu*. As was shown above, *assinnu* was also compared with *sinnišānu*, "woman-like", and was listed once in a feminine form among several female cultic personnel.

A final question exists with regard to the equation between the *assinnu* and SAG-UR-SAG, as appears in SAG B i 13–14 // SAG A i 8–9 and lú = *ša* Tablet 4,184. It is not clear whether the two were different titles or writing variants referring to the same figure. Since no clear evidence exists outside the lexical lists for the equation of the two terms, their discussions remain separated in this book.

2. *assinnu* and *kurgarrû* in Administrative and Historical Texts

Administrative texts shed light on the relation between the *assinnu* and the *kurgarrû* and other figures. Moreover, they illuminate these figures and supply information, sometimes indirectly, concerning their gender identity, as is demonstrated below. However, while the *kurgarrû* is frequently attested in these texts, the *assinnu* is only rarely found in them.

*kurgarrû*s are mentioned in many administrative texts along Mesopotamian history. Most of these texts were ration lists that specified the provisions supplied to individuals by the temple or the palace. Therefore, *kurgarrû*s were documented in such rations lists from the Middle Babylonian period (PBS 2/2.53,8, 106,16; BE

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[682] Nissinen 1998a: 32.
[683] Burns 2000: 3.
[684] Oppenheim 1950: 135 n. 1.
[685] Henshaw 1994: 284.

15.19,6, 131,6, 175,31, 196,8) and the Neo-Babylonian period (CT 49.183,5; OECT 1 Pl. 21 rev. 39, 44; CT 49.160,1, AnOr 8: 21,30). *kurgarrû*s are furthermore attested in a Neo-Assyrian list of palace personnel (Iraq 23: 35 ND 2497,1) and a Neo-Babylonian list of persons (VAS 6.242,41). The term *kurgarrû* appears as a personal name in several Middle Babylonian texts (BE 14.118,21, 22; 61,4; 151,34), and as a family name in a Middle Assyrian text (KAV 181,5) and a Neo-Babylonian text (BRM 1.33,14). Since all these texts only include laconic mentions of the *kurgarrû*, they are not discussed any further in the current section. Other administrative texts that bear special significance to our understanding of the image of the *kurgarrû* are discussed hereby, according to chronological order.

We begin with a passage from the Ur III text UET 3.1211, in which we read the following:[686]

UET 3.1211 ii 4'–7'
$^{4'}$1 gud niga $^{5'}$unug^{ki}-šè $^{6'}$⌜u₄⌝ nin nam-kur-gar-ra-aš $^{7'}$íb-ta-è-a
$^{4'}$(Disbursement of) one fattened ox $^{5'}$for Uruk, $^{6'}$when the queen $^{7'}$went $^{6'}$to (attend) the *kurgarrû*-ship.

This passage documents the distribution of an ox for the trip of the queen to Uruk, where she is to attend, as a spectator, the performance of the *kurgarrû*. Indeed, the term nam-kur-gar-ra, "*kurgarrû*-ship", must denote here the cultic craft of this person. It is, to the best of my knowledge, the earliest evidence we have for the existence of the *kurgarrû*'s craft as a distinct trade. Even from later periods, such evidence is rare.[687] This passage is especially significant given the fact that Ur III attestations of *kurgarrû*s are usually rather laconic, and do not supply ample information as to cultic performance.

In a text from the Ur III Garšana archives,[688] Garšana 308,16, an *assinnu* was documented in the same list as a gala and a few groups of female workers.[689] In two other texts from the same archive (Garšana 321 i 3'[690] and 324 i,23[691]) *assinnu*s appear again in the same list together with groups of female workers. Gabbay assumed that the fact that the gala and the *assinnu* belonged to the third gender was the reason that they were documented alongside females in these texts. Gabbay, however, considered these terms to stand for personal names rather than professional titles in the aforementioned texts.[692] The *kurgarrû* was documented in texts from this archive as well. Two texts, Garšana 541,15[693] and 1030,25[694], mention in one entry both a *kurgarrû* and a gala as the recipients of provisions. *kurgarrû*s are further

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[686] Courtesy of Walther Sallaberger, personal communication.
[687] See the Neo-Babylonian *kurgarrûtu* and *ḫuppûtu* apprenticeship contract Berens 103 discussed below.
[688] For the publication of the texts, see Owen and Mayr 2007.
[689] *a-sí-núm*; see Owen and Mayr 2007: 141.
[690] *a-sí-n[úm]*; see Owen and Mayr 2007: 147.
[691] *a-sí-núm*; see Owen and Mayr 2007: 150.
[692] Gabbay 2011a: 68.
[693] gala ù kur-gá-ra-a-ne; see Owen and Mayr 2007: 212.
[694] gala ù kur-gar-e-ne; see Owen and Mayr 2007: 320.

attested as receiving provisions in several rations-lists from Ur III Umma: Nik. 2.447,4, MVN 15.390 obv. iii 14, rev. vi 32 and Nisaba 11.34 rev. i 14.

A rare reference to the *assinnu* in a historical text may have appeared in a royal inscription from Aššur, dated to the early second millennium BCE. The opening passage of the text may reveal an allusion to a negative social attitude towards the *assinnu*:

RIMA 1.0.40,1–8[695]

[1][*i*]-⌜*nu*⌝-*me* [2][*p*]*ù-zur₈*-ᵈSîn [3][*é*]nsi ᵈ*a-šur* [4][dum]u[?] ᵈ*a-šur-be-el*-an-*e* [5]⌜*le-mu-tu*⌝ *a-sí-nim* [6][*pa-r*]*a-á'* ᵈutu-*ši*-⌜ᵈ⌝[*adad*] [7]⌜*ša* x *pu*⌝ [x *š*]*a* ur[u *aš*]-⌜*šur*⌝ [8]⌜*ú-na*⌝-*ap*-[*pi*]-*lu* x

[1][Wh]en [2][P]uzur-Sîn, [3][go]vernor of the god Aššur, [4][so]n[?] of Aššur-bēl-šamê, [8]des[tr]oyed [5]the evil of *asinu*, [6][offs]pring of Šamšī-[Adad], [7][… o]f the cit[y of Aš]šur …

The text is poorly preserved, and the translation of the above passage is thus extremely complicated. Though Grayson's translation was, as a result, rather provisional, he was able to reconstruct the text and the historical circumstances surrounding it in high plausibility. Grayson assumed that Puzur-Sîn, an otherwise unknown ruler,[696] details in this text the circumstances of his banishing from Aššur of an Amorite dynasty. He thus accuses these Amorites of being "the evil of Asīnum, offspring of Šamšī-[Adad] …".[697] We can therefore understand that Grayson viewed the term *a-sí-nim* in line 5 to form a personal name, Asīnum.

Reade, on the other hand, claimed that "no ruler by the name of Asinum is otherwise known," and offered a different interpretation of this episode. Reade regarded the *assinnu* as a "homosexual or transsexual devotee of Ištar", and suggested that Puzur-Sîn accused the Amorite leader he ousted for being "a ruler who approved this form of devotion", that is, the *assinnu*'s.[698] This view is problematic, because the *assinnu* was not related to a perceived profanity or sacrilege of any sort. As a prominent member of Ištar's cult, "approving his form of devotion", in Reade's words, could have not formed a negative conduct ascribed by Puzur-Sîn to the hated Amorites. Grayson's interpretation, however, is weakened by the fact that *a-sí-nim* is a genitive form, while Akkadian personal names are not typically declined.

An alternative to these suggestions can be that the term *assinnu* was used here in referring to the said Amorites in a degrading manner, similarly as *kulu'u* expressed an insult in other contexts. Previously we saw how *kulu'u* could convey the sense of effeminacy negatively attributed to men, as a concept contrasting masculinity, vigor and prowess. *assinnu*, a term designating a man who exhibited non-hegemonic masculinity that was perceived as a type of effeminacy, could be used the same way. Thus, Puzur-Sîn expressed his loathe of the Amorites he banished from Aššur in a comparable manner to the Hittite king's slurs in the Uršu story, and to Mutakkil-

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[695] See Grayson 1987: 77.

[696] His name is absent from the Akkadian King List.

[697] Grayson 1987: 77.

[698] Reade 2002: 554–555.

Nusku's mocking of Ninurta-tukulti-Aššur.

As is illustrated throughout this chapter, the *assinnu* seems to have been characterized by effeminate or homosexual traits. It seems quite surprising, therefore, to find an *assinnu* as having a son in JEN 260, a contract text from Nuzi, documenting the exchange of houses between two persons. An interesting entry appears in the list of witnesses concluding the contract:

JEN 260 = JENu 335,13[699]
igi *te-ḫi-ia* dumu *a-ku-še-en-ni* ᶫᵘ*a-sí-en-nu*
Witness: Teḫiya, son of Akušeni the *assinnu*.

The professional designation of Akušeni, the father of the witness Teḫiya, appears in first sight to be *assinnu*. However, in his publication of the text, Andrews transliterated the term as *sà*ᵎ*-sí-en-ni*,[700] referring to CAD for the emendation of the original *a* to *sà*.[701] The *sasinnu*, "maker of bows and arrows", is documented in witness-lists of other texts as well,[702] in contrast with the *assinnu*, whose alleged attestation in JEN 260 is unique. Further, in CAD it was claimed that an *assinnu* was documented in another Nuzi text, JENu 880,14, supplying the following transliteration: lú *a-zi-in-nu*.[703] However, the copy of JEN 689 (= JENu 880)[704] shows that the term in question appears in line 22 (lower edge), and its accurate transliteration is ᶫᵘ*za-zi-in-nu*, again "maker of bows and arrows".[705] Since we have no other evidence of an *assinnu* having children, a mild scribal error such as writing erroneously *a* instead of *sà* could definitely be allowed for. It is noteworthy, however, that Akušeni is the only person in the list of twenty-six witnesses and their fathers whose occupation is specified, besides the scribe ending the list. One can only speculate whether the statement of his profession was meant to differentiate him from another person who bore the same name.

A different kind of complexity is involved in the discussion of gender ambiguity of the *kurgarrû*. Since it is argued in this book that the *kurgarrû* possessed a completely different gender identity than the effeminate *assinnu*, the question whether he could have had children has a different significance. At least on one occasion we find such evidence: text ADD 160, a Neo-Assyrian court minute, contains the following entry in its list of witnesses:

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[699] See Chiera 1931: Plate CCXLI.

[700] Andrews 1994: 141. Note, however, that Chiera's (1931: Plate CCXLI) copy shows NU rather than NI.

[701] CAD S: 191, s.v. "*sasinnu*" . The difference between these two signs is merely one *winkel-haken*.

[702] See references in CAD S: 191, s.v. "*sasinnu*".

[703] CAD A/2: 341, s.v. "*assinnu* b".

[704] For which, see Lacheman and Maidman 1989: 73.

[705] For this spelling of *sasinnu*, see CAD S: 191, s.v. "*sasinnu*".

ADD 160 rev. 12[706]
igi ^(m)*šá-la*-gašan-*man-nu* dumu ^(m.d)Ištar-bàd ^(lú)kur-gar-ra
Witness: Ša-la-Bēlet-mannu, son of Ištar-dūri the *kurgarrû*.

We can see here a *kurgarrû* named Ištar-dūri, father of the witness Ša-la-Bēlet-mannu. The mention of Ištar-dūri's profession is not unusual in this occasion, since almost all fathers of the witnesses listed are identified by their occupation. Naturally, it cannot be overruled that Ša-la-Bēlet-mannu was an adopted, rather than a biological, son; so, this evidence contributes only little to our understanding of the *kurgarrû*'s gender identity and social role. One fact that seems significant is the meaning of the *kurgarrû*'s name, Ištar-dūri, "Ištar is my (fortification-)wall". This name possibly reflects the patronage of the goddess on her cult member. Unless a coincidence played a part here, we can speculate whether the name given to this individual was the result of a predetermined destiny by his parents, to become a cult member of Ištar. It can further be speculated that his son's name, Ša-la-Bēlet-mannu, "Who is it without the Lady (= Ištar)?" resulted from similar reasons, however we are unaware of the future career of this son.

The matter of the *kurgarrû*'s gender ambiguity is essential for understanding his place among other third gender figures. As is demonstrated throughout this book, he appeared to be a masculine virile figure, unlike many other third gender figures, which were characterized as effeminate males. However, explicit evidence concerning feminine traits of the *kurgarrû* allegedly appears in a Neo-Assyrian list of palace personnel. It has long been suggested[707] that this list enumerated several female *kurgarrû*s among various other groups of female singers. This is the passage in question:

ADD 914 (K 10447) + ADD 827 (K 1473), 20–27[708]
^(20)8 munus nar-gal ^(21)3 munus *ár-ma-a-a-te* ^(22)11 munus *ḫat-ta-a-*⌜*a-te*⌝ ^(23)13 munus *ṣur-ra-*[*a-a-te*] ^(24)13 munus kur *gar-g*[*a-miš*] ^(25)4 munus saḫ^?-[x x x (x)] ^(26)9 munus *káš-ša-*[*a-a-te*] ^(27)pab 61 munus na[r^(meš)]
^(20)8 female chief-singers; ^(21)3 Aramean women; ^(22)11 Hittite women; ^(23)13 Tyr[ian] women; ^(24)13 Carc[hemišian] women;[709] ^(25)4 Saḫ-[^?] women; ^(26)9 Kass[ite] women; ^(27)total 61 female singe[rs].

In their edition of the text, Fales and Postgate reconstructed line 24 as 13 munus kur-gar-r[a^(meš)], and translated it as "13 female *kurgarr*[*ûs*]". However, I discuss this text elsewhere, and offer a new reading and understanding of it.[710] I will therefore only present here an abbreviated account of the argumentations. It seems improbable that male cult attendants will appear in a list, that otherwise only specifies groups of

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[706] See Postgate 1976: 157, Mattila 2002: 92. Transliteration follows Mattila.

[707] See, among others, CAD K: 559, s.v. "*kurgarrû* b", Fales and Postgate 1992: 32, 34 and Henshaw 1994: 289.

[708] See Fales and Postgate 1992: 34. Line 24 is reconstructed according to my new interpretation, and thus differs from Fales and Postgate's.

[709] Literally, "13 women (from) the land of Carc[hemiš]".

[710] See Peled 2014a: 286–287, including previous literature.

women, all designated by their ethnicity or original locality. My alternative restoration of line 24 accords well with the traces of the last observable sign of the line. This sign may well be G[A] rather than R[A]. Similar suggestion explains an earlier attestation of the very same phrase in this list: [x mun]us kur-gar-r[a^meš].[711] Here again the alleged female *kurgarrû*s appear together with several groups of women of various ethnicities or localities. Both the copy of the fragment[712] and its photograph[713] show that the only two observable signs in this line are KUR and GAR. I therefore suggest that this line should be reconstructed as follows: [x munus] kur *gar*-[*ga-miš*]. The implications of the alternative readings I offer here are clear: the list under discussion shows the sole attestation known to us of females designated as *kurgarrû*s. This does not coincide with the picture that emerges of the *kurgarrû* as a masculine figure, as demonstrated throughout this book. The new understanding of the above list solves this difficulty.

A text from the Neo-Babylonian period documented an apprenticeship contract from which we learn that the training period for learning the craft of *kurgarrûtu* ("*kurgarrû*-ship") lasted about two and a half years. The opening lines of the contract are as follows:

Berens 103,1–4[714]

[1][*a-d*]*i* 2–*ta* mu-an‹-na›^meš 5 iti^meš 2m.d*na-na-a-ú-ṣal-li* m.dbēl-šeš^meš-ku₄ [3]a-*šú ša* m*be-en-ú-šal-lim* ^lúkur-gar-ra-*ú-tu* [4]*u* ^lú*ḫu-up-pu-ú-tu ú-lam-mad-su*

[1][Fo]r two years and five months, [2]Nanaya-uṣalli [4]will teach [2]Bēl-aḫḫē-erība, [3]son of Bēl-ušallim, *kurgarrû*-ship [4]and *ḫuppû*-ship.

Interestingly, the contract includes not only the teaching of the craft of the *kurgarrû*, but also the one of the *ḫuppû*, a cultic performer, probably an acrobat. At least in this context, therefore, these two professions seem to be related, and a person could have been trained as the performer of both these professions.

The last text to be discussed in the current section is BRM 1.99, an administrative document from Arsacid Babylon, which specified the expenditures for maintaining the temples and funding the performance of cult. One of its sections (rev. ll. 37–44) specified silver quantities paid to certain cult personnel who participated in a procession:

BRM 1.99,37–39[715]

[37]6 gín *ana* ^lú*ṣa-bat* ŠU-II *ana* u₄ 29^kam *šá* ^itizíz [38][*ana*] du-*ak šá*[!] u₄ 1^kam *ana* min-ki *ana* ^lúkur-gar-ra^meš [39][^lú]ur-munus ‹meš› *u* ^munusnar^meš *na-din*

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[711] ADD 914 (K 10447) + ADD 827 (K 1473),11, see Fales and Postgate 1992: 32. In Johns' (ADD 914) copy of K 10447, this line appears as the first line of the reverse. In the photograph (see Fales and Postgate 1992: Pl. II, http://cdli.ucla.edu/P335671) it is the first line of the fragment.

[712] K 10447, ADD 914 rev. 1.

[713] Fales and Postgate 1992: Pl. II, http://cdli.ucla.edu/P335671.

[714] See Pinches 1915: 103 and Petschow 1983, RlA 6: 562, s.v. "Lehrverträge". Transliteration follows Pinches.

[715] See van der Spek 1998: 229.

[37]Six šeqels for additional work[716] on the 29th day of Šebātu, [38]for the procession of Day One, for the *kurgarrûs*, [39]*assinnu*(s) and female singers, is given [38]to the same person.

Linssen suggested that this procession occurred during the *Love Lyrics* ritual in Babylon (see below);[717] this suggestion, however, cannot be confirmed.

assinnu and *kurgarrû* in Administrative and Historical Texts: Conclusions

In this section we have reviewed several administrative texts mentioning *assinnu*s and *kurgarrû*s, and one royal inscription that may or may not have used *assinnu* as a derogative expression. We have seen that the *kurgarrû* was documented in numerous lists of persons and provisions supplied to them by the palace or temple from the Ur III period until the Late Babylonian era. The *assinnu* figured much less in such texts. *assinnu*s appeared in Ur III lists from Garšana; however, it is not certain whether the term stood for a personal name or rather designated the profession. *assinnu*s further appeared alongside *kurgarrû*s and songstresses in a Late Babylonian text that documented payments given in return for their performance in a cultic procession. Hence, it is clear that the *assinnu* was rarely attested in administrative texts, in stark contrast with the *kurgarrû*. This matter was observed by Henshaw, who interpreted it as indicating that the *kurgarrû* was a "permanent office", unlike the *assinnu* who, according to Henshaw, was an "ad hoc" one.[718] It should further be noted that on top of ordinary *kurgarrû*s, in texts from the Neo-Assyrian period we find a functionary titled *rab kurgarrê*, "chief *kurgarrû*",[719] who was probably their supervisor. No corresponding "chief *assinnu*" is documented.

As for the question of the possibility of *assinnu*s and *kurgarrû*s having progeny, in the witness list concluding a Neo-Assyrian court minute, a *kurgarrû* appeared who had a son. Two alleged attestations of *assinnu*s who had sons in similar context should in all likelihood be attributed to errors made by ancient scribes and modern researchers. Similarly, the alleged attestation of female *kurgarrû*s in a Neo-Assyrian list of palace personnel was explained as erroneous. We can therefore conclude that there is no evidence for females who assumed the titles of *assinnu* and *kurgarrû*, or that these figures sired descendants. The sole attestation of a *kurgarrû* who had a son in the Nuzi contract can be explained as the result of adoption.

3. *assinnu* and Prophecy in Mari and the Ancient Near East[720]

In the current section we will discuss the function of *assinnu*s as prophets in the Old

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[716] Thus van der Spek (1998: 230). According to CAD (Ṣ: 42, s.v. "*ṣābit qātē*") this phrase can be translated as "helpers".

[717] Linssen 2004: 69.

[718] Henshaw 1994: 289.

[719] See Menzel 1981: 241.

[720] For prophets and prophecy in Mari, the Neo-Assyrian court and the ancient Near East as a whole, see Parpola 1997, Nissinen 1998b, 2000, 2003a and 2003b and Stökl and Carvalho 2013. Recently on *assinnu* and prophecy, see Zsolnay 2013.

Babylonian Mari texts. As possible comparative evidence, we will subsequently address the question of Neo-Assyrian prophets who were claimed by certain scholars to have possessed ambiguous sexual characteristics. Prophets were regarded as liminal figures who mediated between humans and gods. Therefore, some parallel can be drawn between the realm of prophecy and that of the third gender, which constituted a class of liminal figures, as well, mediating between the male and female genders. Society reacted on occasions with similar attitudes towards these two phenomena, which were viewed as generated by humans who disrupt normative world order and breach the boundaries between sets of conventional categories. In both cases, however, the phenomenon was an institutionalized one and therefore existed within a clear institutionalized social context.

Among the various people documented as delivering prophecies in the Mari texts, two were designated as *assinnu*s, named Šēlebum and Ilī-ḫaznaya.[721] We will present the attestations of these two persons and assess the contribution of this information to our understanding of the *assinnu* and his gender identity. We will begin with the attestations of the *assinnu* Šēlebum. Text ARM 26.197 (= ARM 10.80)[722] exhibits an oracle delivered to Zimri-Lim by his sister Inib-šina, where a reference is given to a previous prophecy, whose content is not specified:

ARM 26.197 = ARM 10.80,4–5[723]

⁴*i-na p[a]-ni-tim še-le-bu-um as-sí-nu* ⁵*te-er-tam id-di-[na]m-ma aš-pu-ra-kum*
⁴Earlier, Šēlebum the *assinnu* ⁵gave [m]e an oracle, and I reported it to you.

This episode tells of an earlier event, in which the *assinnu* delivered a prophecy that was passed on by Inib-šina to her brother, the king. We therefore see that even though the *assinnu* was ascribed the capability to receive divine communications, his position was not high enough to allow him a direct contact with the king. Šēlebum is further attested in text ARM 26.198,[724] though this time he is not identified as an *assinnu*. The text is in fragmentary condition and its reconstruction[725] is conjectural, as noted by Nissinen.[726] Nevertheless, it seems to detail the complaints of Šēlebum concerning his low economic condition, and the worries he suffered as a result. As was the case of the previous text, here, as well, Šēlebum's message was reported to the king by others and not directly by the *assinnu*:

ARM 26.198,3'–4'[727]

³'*ša-ni-tam še-le-bu-[um il-li-kam-ma]* ⁴'*ki-a-am iq-bi um-ma [šu-ú-ma]*
³'Another matter: Šēlebu[m came to me] ⁴'and said thus: …

Before the text is broken, it is concluded with a statement that was meant to guaran-

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[721] For a brief discussion of these two individuals and their textual attestations, see Durand 1988: 399.

[722] For the content of the text and previous literature, see Nissinen 2003b: 28–29.

[723] See Durand 1988: 424.

[724] For the content of the text and previous literature, see Nissinen 2003b: 29–30.

[725] Nissinen's (2003b: 29) restorations followed Durand's (1988: 425).

[726] Nissinen 2003b: 30.

[727] See Durand 1988: 425.

tee the authenticity of the message, by attaching to the report two items relating personally to Šēlebum, a lock of his hair and a piece of his clothing:

ARM 26.198,1''–3''[728]
¹''[*a-n*]*a pí še-le-bu-um i*[*q-bé-em aš-ṭú-ur*] ²''[*i*]*-na-an-na a-nu-um-ma ša-ar-tam*
³''*ù sí-sí-ik-tam ša še-le-*[*bi-im …*]

¹''[I have written accord]ing to the words that Šēlebum sp[oke to me.] ²''Now, the hair ³''and a fringe of the garment of Šēle[bum …]

Accepting the suggested restorations, this text portrays Šēlebum as a person whose economic status is poor. However, he is granted the opportunity to complain concerning his mistreatment and make his complaints delivered to the king. This might be an indication that Šēlebum's position allowed him some access to the king, even if through the mediation of others. This text further shows that this *assinnu* received provisions from the palace for his living. Text ARM 26.213 (= ARM 10.7),[729] the third to mention Šēlebum, provides similar evidence. It details in full a prophecy delivered by Šēlebum, as reported by queen Šibtu to her husband, king Zimri-Lim:

ARM 26.213 = ARM 10.7,5–7[730]
⁵*i-na é an-nu-ni-tim* ud 3ᵏᵃᵐ ⁶ᵐ*še-le-«bu»-bu-um* ⁷*im-ma-ḫu um-ma an-nu-ni-tum-ma*

⁵In the temple of Annunītum, three days ago, ⁶Šēlebum ⁷went into trance and said: "thus Annunītum: …"

As we can see, in the beginning of the text, Šēlebum is not identified as an *assinnu*. However, after the content of his prophecy was disclosed by Šibtu, she added her own comment as a closing remark of her report to the king:

ARM 26.213 = ARM 10.7,23–27[731]
²³*i-na-an-na a-*[*nu-um-ma*] ²⁴*ša-a*[*r*]*-ta-*[*am ù sí-sí-ik-tam*] ²⁵*ša as-sí-*[*in-nim*]
²⁶*a-na ṣ*[*e-er be-lí-ia*] ²⁷*ú-ša-bi-*[*lam*]
²³Now ²⁷I am sending ²⁴the hai[r and the fringe of the garment] ²⁵of the *assi*[*nnu*] ²⁶to [my lord].

As we previously saw, here again a lock of the prophet's hair and a piece of his attire are sent alongside the report of his oracle, in order to confirm the authenticity of the prophecy. Hamori discussed this custom in Mari, and concluded that it reflected a common practice for female and *assinnu* prophets, as opposed to male ones. According to Hamori, *assinnu*s were "not-men", and hence similar in terms of their gender image and roles to women, rather than to men.[732] Assuming that the restoration of line 25 is correct, this line gives us a second confirmation that the prophet Šēlebum was indeed an *assinnu*.[733] Significantly, Šēlebum's reported proph-

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[728] See Durand 1988: 425.
[729] For the content of the text, and previous literature, see Nissinen 2003b: 47–48.
[730] See Durand 1988: 441–442.
[731] See Durand 1988: 442.
[732] Hamori 2012.
[733] The first was documented in ARM 26.197 = ARM 10.80,4, see above.

ecy is brought on behalf of Annunītum, the prime goddess of Mari, who is regarded as a local manifestation of Ištar. This could explain how an *assinnu* could have become a prophet in Mari, as one of the most notable cult personnel of Ištar.

As for Ilī-ḫaznaya, he was documented in text ARM 26.212 (= ARM 10.6).[734] This text details another message from queen Šibtu to king Zimri-Lim, reporting a prophecy delivered by an *assinnu* named Ilī-ḫaznaya, on behalf of the goddess Annunītum:

ARM 26.212 = ARM 10.6 obv. 5–6[735]
^{5m}i-[*lí-ḫa-a*]*z-na-ia* ^{lú}a[*s-s*]*í-*[*i*]*n-n*[*u*] ^{6}*ša an-*[*nu-ni-tim il*]*-li-ka*[*m*]
^{5}I[*lī-ḫa*]znaya, *a*[*ss*]*inn*[*u*] ^{6}of An[nunītum, ca]me [to me].

The report was concluded with the statement that Šibtu herself verified the validity of Ilī-ḫaznaya's prophecy:

ARM 26.212 = ARM 10.6 rev. 10'–12'[736]
$^{10'}la$-*ma ṭe₄-em ì-lí-ḫa-az-na-a-*[*i*]*a* $^{11'}$*ša an-nu-ni-tum iš-pu-ra-aš-*[*š*]*u* $^{12'}$[*ud*] 5^{kam} *a-na-ku áš-ta-a-a*[*l-m*]*a*
$^{12'}$I myself inquired five days $^{10'}$before the message of Ilī-ḫaznaya, $^{11'}$which Annunītum sent to him.

We learn from this text that, similarly to what we saw in the texts of Šēlebum, these were *assinnu*s that delivered oracles on behalf of Annunītum, the prime goddess of Mari, which was regarded as an avatar of Ištar, the patron goddess of these figures. A person named Ilī-ḫaznaya, presumably the same as the *assinnu* of ARM 26.212, appears in another text, M 11299. This is a list of payments made to individuals who belonged to various temples; one of its entries details the following:

M 11299,13[737]
$^1/_2$ gín *ì-lí-ḫa-az-na-ia*
Half a shekel (for) Ilī-ḫaznaya.

The text is damaged after the following line, and then the writing ends, which leaves us ignorant of the temple to which Ilī-ḫaznaya belonged according to this list. We can speculate, however, that similarly to other persons listed before him, he was an attendant of Annunītum, a possibility that corresponds well with the evidence of ARM 26.212 presented above. His payment, half a shekel of silver,[738] is identical to that of all the other persons in the list, which hints that he was of no greater position than them.

The key for evaluating Šēlebum and Ilī-ḫaznaya as *assinnu*s who functioned as prophets in Mari seems to be their relation with the goddess Annunītum. It seems

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[734] For the content of the text, and previous literature, see Nissinen 2003b: 46–47.
[735] See Durand 1988: 441.
[736] See Durand 1988: 441.
[737] See Durand 1988: 399.
[738] The first line of the text exhibits the term in full, 1/2 gín kù-babar, while the subsequent lines show the abbreviated 1/2 gín.

plausible that these persons were regarded as possessing mediating qualities to their patron goddess as part of their cultic role as her attendants, and, subsequently, were ascribed the capability to deliver her messages. It has to be noted, however, that the phenomenon seems to have been quite limited, since only two *assinnu*s are found to be prophets, and only two of their prophecies are documented.[739]

It should be noted in this context that scholars have suggested that at least two of Esarhaddon's prophets, Bayâ and Ilūssa-āmur, bore gender ambiguous characteristics.[740] The suggestion is based on the fact that the names of both prophets were preceded by feminine determinatives (munus), while at the same time Bayâ was designated "son of Arbela",[741] whereas Ilūssa-āmur's gentilic adjective was suggested to be masculine.[742] This interpretation was paralleled by scholars with the ambiguous nature of the aforementioned *assinnu* prophets from Mari.[743] However, it is questionable whether these two inconsistencies can indeed be taken as hard evidence for the gender ambiguity of these two persons.[744] Be it as it may, this case is surely different than the *assinnu*s who delivered prophecies in a different time and a different place, and whose gender ambiguity stemmed from a different context altogether.

assinnu and Prophecy in Mari and the Ancient Near East: Conclusions

In conclusion of the comparison of gender ambiguity among prophets in Mari and the Neo-Assyrian court, we quote Henshaw's statement concerning the *assinnu* prophets in Mari: "Nothing of their actions as "prophet" indicates the characteristics that show up in NA times."[745] Once we disassociate the Old Babylonian and Neo-Assyrian evidence, a clearer picture of the relation between the third gender and prophecy is elucidated. The Mari texts are the only Mesopotamian records to illustrate any relation between third gender figures and prophecy, and even there this

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[739] For a short discussion of these texts and persons, see Nissinen 2003a: 7–9.

[740] The name of a third prophet, Issar-la-tašiyaṭ, was preceded by a masculine determinative written over a feminine one. The possibility that this fact could indicate an uncertainty concerning this person's gender, as suggested by Nissinen (2000: 94 n. 24), seems improbable. It does not seem logical that the scribe could not tell whether this person was a man or a woman. Parpola (1997: L), for example, regarded Issar-la-tašiyaṭ to be male.

[741] munus*ba-ia-a* dumu uru*arba-ìl*, SAA 9.1(.4) ii 40'; see Parpola 1997: 6 and Nissinen 2003b: 105. On this individual, see Parpola 1997: IL.

[742] munusdingir-*sa-a-m*[*ur*] uru.šà-uru-*a*-[*a*], SAA 9.1(.5) iii 5'–6'; see Parpola 1997: 7 and Nissinen 2003b: 106. On this individual, see Parpola 1997: L.

[743] As suggested, among others, by Nissinen (2000: 94) and van der Toorn (2000: 79).

[744] Parpola (1997: IL, L) considered Bayâ to be a man who had undergone self-castration, but Ilūssa-āmur to be female.

[745] Henshaw 1994: 284. A statement with which I fully agree, contra Lapinkivi's (2004: 160) assertion: "The evidence suggests that some of Ištar's or Mullissu's prophets were castrates. There are two prophecies for Esarhaddon from Bayâ and Ilussa-amur, which clearly state the prophets were at the same time both a woman and man, as the name has a feminine determinative but the person in question is referred to as DUMU ("son") or with a masculine pronoun. The same practice also applied to Mari, where there were castrate assinnu-prophets in the service of the goddess Annunitum (= Ištar), two of them known by their proper names." I cannot agree with these unsupported conjectures.

relation is slight. Only two of the numerous Mari prophets were *assinnu*s, and only a handful of their prophecies were found. The Mari evidence seems to be an isolated one, which actually emphasizes the absence of attribution of prophetic qualities to third gender figures. Since these figures were perceived as strongly associated with their patron goddess Inanna/Ištar, the question has to be asked why they were not considered as capable of delivering her words as prophets. It seems that their functions were restricted in most cases to cultic performance, and Šēlebum and Ilī-ḫaznaya, the two *assinnu*s who delivered prophets in Mari, were the exception to the common rule.

4. *assinnu* and *kurgarrû* in Cultic Texts

The next section treats the role of the *assinnu* and the *kurgarrû* in cult. We will survey the participation of both figures in various ceremonies, and evaluate the significance of their activities and performance. Most of the evidence presented in this section derives from first-millennium contexts, especially the Neo-Assyrian and Late Babylonian periods; however, the traditions reflected through these rites are rooted in earlier periods of Mesopotamian history. It will be demonstrated that in his cultic performance, the *kurgarrû* was characterized by militant conduct and the use of weapons, while the *assinnu*'s role was more nuanced. The latter appeared in a smaller number of texts and almost always in a context mutual to the *kurgarrû*. We will examine the relations between the two figures, and the attributes of each in the rites they performed. In these rites, the function of the two as attendants of Ištar was highlighted, and this is the key factor in their cultic role.

An interesting attestation of a *kurgarrû* involved in cultic performance is found in a balag prayer, titled am-e bára-an-na-ra, "The bull, for the one on the lofty dais".[746] The text tells of an interruption to the cultic proceedings, that upsets the gods. One of the cultic activities to be disturbed was the performance of the *kurgarrû*:

> **The Bull, for the One on the Lofty Dais**, a+23[747]
> [kur]-mar-ra me-ri zi gu$_7$-e šà uš nu-gu$_7$-e
> [the *kur*]*garrû*s who swallow swords (by their) throat do not release[748] (them from their) innards.

The *kurgarrû*s are portrayed as performing sword-swallowing; however, their performance is disrupted, and they are unable to complete it by pulling the swords out of their body again. This description highlights, once more, the association of the *kurgarrû* with weapons, as we have seen on numerous other occasions.

An intriguing attestation of *kurgarrû*s is found in a composition ascribed to Iddin-Dagan,[749] the early second-millennium king of Isin. It forms a hymn praising

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[746] For an edition of the text, see Cohen 1988: 319–339.
[747] See Cohen 1988: 322.
[748] For this term see also Attinger and Krebernik 2004: 70.
[749] His name appears three times in the text, in lines 184, 187a (in some of the manuscripts)

Inanna, but also includes scenes describing sexual union between the earthly king and the divine goddess, which led scholars to regard these scenes as describing a rite of "sacred marriage" (on this issue, see further below).[750] The text begins with a lengthy account of Inanna's majestic qualities (ll. 1–33), and then turns to describe a parade of persons who "walk before the goddess" (ll. 35–87). It is possible that this parade only occurred on a mythical level, but many scholars tend to view it as a factual event that took place in reality as part of the "sacred marriage" rite itself. The third part of the text is dedicated to exalting Inanna, by elaborately portraying all good things that occur on earth under her patronage (ll. 89–141). Subsequently, the text illustrates how the people worship the goddess, specifying the rites and cultic offerings involved (ll. 142–167). At this point, the text reaches its peak, by introducing a detailed delineation of the preparations made for the sexual union between the goddess and the king, which is followed by the union itself (ll. 169–202). The text ends with a description of the celebrations conducted by the king and the people, during which Inanna is praised by all (ll. 203–228). The *kurgarrû*s appear as part of the parade of persons who walk before Inanna:

Hymn of Iddin-Dagan, 70–81[751]
70 guruš ᵍⁱˢ̌ràb gar-ra mu-na-šìr-šìr-re-eš
71 kug ᵈInanna-ra igi-ni-šè ì-dib-bé
72 ki-sikil šu-gi₄-a sag-ki gú lá-e
73 kug ᵈInanna-ra igi-ni-šè ì-dib-bé
74 gíri ba-da-ra igi-ni-šè UR x x ZA x
75 kug ᵈInanna-ra igi-ni-šè ì-[dib-bé]
76 kur-gar-ra èd-da ba-da-ra šu bí-in-du₈-uš
77 kug ᵈInanna-ra igi-ni-šè ì-dib-bé
78 gíri úš dul₄-dul₄-e urì ì-sù-e
79 kug ᵈInanna-ra igi-ni-šè ì-dib-bé
80 barag gú-en-na-ka úš ì-bal-bal-e
81 tigi šèm ᵏᵘˢ̌á-lá-e gù nun mu-ni-ib-bé
70 Young men wearing neck-stocks sing to her,
71 they walk before pure Inanna.
72 Young women, *šugia* priestesses, coiffured,
73 they walk before pure Inanna.

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and 194.

[750] For editions of the composition, see Römer 1965: 128–208, Reisman 1969: 147–211 and most recently Attinger 2014. For translations and commentaries of it, see Reisman 1973, Jacobsen 1987: 112–124, Römer 1989: 659–673 and Black, Cunningham, Robson and Zólyomi 2004: 262–269. For a discussion of this text in relation to questions of gender and the "sacred marriage" rite, see Jones 2003.

[751] See Römer 1965: 131, Reisman 1969: 152–153 and Attinger 2014: 19–20 (line numbers slightly differ). Transliteration follows ETCSL (Text c.2.5.3.1, A *šir-namursaĝa* to Ninsiana for Iddin-Dagan (Iddin-Dagan A)). For various translations of it, see Römer 1965: 137–138, 1989: 660–673, Reisman 1969: 168–170, 1973: 187–188, Black, Cunningham, Robson and Zólyomi 2004: 264–265 and Attinger 2014: 31–32.

74 Sword and *patarru* (…) for her,
75 [they] w[alk] before pure Inanna.
76 The *crazed*[752] *kurgarrû*s grasped the *patarru*,
77 they walk before pure Inanna.
78 The one who covers the sword with blood, he sprinkles blood,
79 they walk before pure Inanna.
80 He pours out blood on the dais of the throne-room,
81 as tigi-, šem- and ala-drums are made to sound loudly.

In the latter part of the passage quoted above we encounter the *kurgarrû*s (ll. 76–81). As can be seen, these individuals are said to grasp a sword, cover it with blood, and then sprinkle the blood and pour it on the dais at the throne-room. These acts are performed to the sound of drums. Commentating on this passage, Jacobsen claimed that originally these cult personnel were warriors, however, with no explanation for this claim. He further suggested that the term *kurgarrû* was an abbreviation of kur-gugara, "the subjected lands", and therefore, in the current text, the *kurgarrû*s symbolized captive warriors.[753] This interpretation seems doubtful, but the connection between the *kurgarrû* and certain militarism, at least in a cultic context, is evident in a few other texts, as is demonstrated below.

Some commentators viewed this passage as an indication of the performance of self-mutilation by the *kurgarrû*s,[754] but it is not clear whose blood is shed and smeared over the sword. It could very well be the sacrificial blood of a slaughtered animal, for example. As for the meaning of the phrase kur-gar-ra èd-da, "*crazed kurgarrû*", Lapinkivi translated it as "ascending *kurgarrû*", and suggested that it pointed to "spiritual ascent", rather than a physical movement upwards. Lapinkivi viewed the whole passage as indicating that the *kurgarrû*s were in a state of trance, during which they lacerated themselves.[755] Teppo evaluated this passage in the broader context of the activities of the various cultic followers of Ištar. She noted that during the various rituals performed on behalf of their goddess these persons carried both "feminine" objects such as spindles, and "masculine" ones, such as swords and other cutting-weapons.[756] Parpola suggested that the latter objects bore not a mere symbolic significance, but also practical one, since they were utilized for ritual self-mutilation. He proposed that this self-mutilation, as well as dancing, weeping and wailing, was meant to imitate Ištar's anguish in the netherworld. He further suggested that throughout this ecstatic process the devotees reached an altered state of consciousness, where a kind of "sacred marriage", a special union between the mortal and the divine, was achieved.[757]

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[752] èd has a wide semantic range, and can be understood in various ways: "to go up", "to go down", "to demolish", "to scratch", "raze" or "to rage, be rabid", see ePSD, s.v. "ed", and in the present context, Attinger 2014: 63 ("*entrer en transe*").

[753] Jacobsen 1987: 117 n. 11.

[754] See, among others, Groneberg 1986: 39, Maul 1992: 164 and Leick 1994: 159.

[755] Lapinkivi 2010: 78.

[756] Teppo 2008: 79.

[757] Parpola 1997: XXXIV. These suggestions were repeated by Lapinkivi (2004: 163–165,

The literature on the Mesopotamian "sacred marriage" rite is vast.[758] This cere-mony was conducted during the New Year festivals, from the mid-third to early second millennia. In its course, the king performed sexual intercourse with the high priestess. The ceremony was symbolic on a mythical level: the king uniting with the high priestess was a representation of the sexual union between Dumuzi and Inanna. On a practical level, this sexual union was meant to symbolize fertility and prosper-ity, both agricultural and human. Allusions to Mesopotamian "sacred marriage" rites exist in the writings of Herodotus, which contributed a great deal to shape reflec-tions of modern researchers of this topic. This fact led several scholars to criticize the general approach of the Mesopotamian "sacred marriage" rite, claiming that the accuracy of Herodotus' writings on this topic is questionable. These scholars doubt the very existence of the ceremony, and ascribe such scenes as described in the Id-din-Dagan hymn to the hypothetical mythical level.[759]

A late Old Babylonian copy of a ritual performed in honor of Ištar was published by Groneberg,[760] who associated it with other similar compositions, such as Enḫed-uanna's *Lady of Largest Heart* hymn.[761] The second column of the text begins with a passage that tells of men who dress as women and carry feminine objects, such as a hairpin and playing instruments, and women who carry various weapons. It is fur-ther said that their functions and appearances were altered by Ištar. Thereafter, an *assinnu* joins the scene:[762]

AO 6035 (*Ištar-Louvre*) ii 15–16[763]

15 x-x-*ta-am ir-bi sa-as-su-ri šu-ḫi-ma šu-zi-bi šu-um-šu*
16 *ša-si as-si-in-nu-um-mi eb-bi né-ši*[764] *ša-ki-tum*[?765] *i-ga-ap-pí-ir*

15 "(Do something to) the yield of the womb! Save its offspring!",
16 shouts the *assinnu*, "Be pure! Stay healthy! The … will be powerful."

Lambert considered the *assinnu* here to be "the master of ceremonies at the trans-vestite orgies", and suggested that his speech was related to Ištar's role as a patron of human procreation.[766] It has to be stressed, though, that no sexual sense is noticeable in this episode. As is demonstrated throughout the current chapter, the *assinnu* was an ambiguous figure, a male characterized by certain feminine attrib-

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2010: 78) and Teppo (2008: 79).

[758] See, to name but a few, Kramer 1969, Cooper 1993, Westenholz 1995, Sefati 1998, Rubio 2001, Böck 2004: 36–40 and Lapinkivi 2004.

[759] For a view rejecting the actual existence of such a rite, see Leick 1994: 102 and Sweet 1994. For criticism on modern views of this issue, see Assante 2009: 24–25, 27.

[760] Groneberg 1997b: 22–54.

[761] See Groneberg 1997a: 294–295.

[762] The translation of this complicated passage follows Lambert 1999–00: 276.

[763] See Groneberg 1997b: 26.

[764] Thus Lambert 1999–00: 276. In Groneberg's (1997a: 296 and 1997b: 26) transliteration appears *ni-lim*.

[765] Thus Lambert 1999–00: 276. In Groneberg's (1997a: 296 and 1997b: 26) transliteration appears *ša-ki-in*.

[766] Lambert 1999–00: 276.

utes. It is suggested that his gender ambiguity stemmed from his cultic functions as a devotee of the ambivalent goddess Ištar. It is no surprise, then, to find him in the present context as connected with Ištar, within a gender-role exchange scene.

In contrast with the frequent associations of the *kurgarrû* with militant characteristic and behavior, a Neo-Assyrian hymn for Nanaya possibly associated this figure with a spindle, an object customarily associated with femininity:[767]

Hymn for Nanaya, K 3600 + DT 75 i 10–11[768]
[10][ˡ]ˡúkur-gar-raᵐᵉš ‹ina› pa-laq-qí ṭi-rì tam-še-ˈeˈ-[ri] [11][ina g]i[769]ᵐᵉš dùg-gaᵐᵉš ú-šap-šá-ḫu kab-ˈtašˈ-s[a]
[10]The *kurgarrû*s [11]ease her (= the goddess') hear[t] [10](with?) spindle, *ṭiri*-lashes[770] (and) [11][with] sweet [pip]es.

In this episode, the *kurgarrû*s are possibly documented as carrying a spindle, an object of clear feminine connotations. Groneberg understood this passage similarly as Livingstone and translated it accordingly: "Die *kurgarrû* der Spindel, des Prü-gelns (und) des Peitschenriemens, [mit] süssen Roh[ren ?] bringen sie [ihr] Herz zur Ruhe."[771] However, the CAD restored in line 10 ‹na-aš› before *pa-laq-qí*, rendering *nāš pilaqqi*, "man/carrier of spindle".[772] This restoration leads to two different possi-ble interpretations. The first is inferred from the CAD's own translation: "the *k*.-s ‹who carry› the spindle",[773] according to which the proper translation of the whole passage would be:

[10]The *kurgarrû*s (who carry) the spindle [11]ease her (= the goddess') hear[t] [10](with) *ṭiri*-lashes (and) [11][with] sweet [pip]es.

The second possible interpretation is that the term *nāš pilaqqi* stood here for the designation of a cultic figure discussed further below, in Chapter 5. In this case, it should further be considered whether the third phrase in line 10 was not a designa-tion of a cultic figure as well, completing three different such designations along the line: *kurgarrû*s, *nāš pilaqqi*, "he who carries the spindle", and *ṭeri tamšēri*, "he who drags the strikes/beating?".[774] If we accept this interpretation, the above passage can

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[767] For the spindle and feminine connotations, see Chapter 5, pp. 272–277.
[768] See Livingstone 1989: 13.
[769] This restoration follows Groneberg 1997a: 292. Livingstone left the break with no sug-gested restoration.
[770] The meaning of the phrase *ṭiri tamšēri* is obscure. In CAD Ṭ: 104, s.v. "*ṭerû* B1" the term *ṭi-rì tamšēri* is left untranslated, and *ṭi-rì* is taken as derived from *ṭerû*, "to strike, beat". CAD T: 147, s.v. "*tamšāru* a1" translates the phrase as "… lashes", while Livingstone (1989: 13) suggested "whiplashes". However, an act of violence seems inappropriate in this context, because whatever the exact nature of this act was, it was meant to pacify the heart of the goddess, as indicated in the following line.
[771] Groneberg 1997a: 292.
[772] CAD K: 558, s.v. "*kurgarrû* a", P: 372, s.v. "*pilakku* a".
[773] CAD K: 558, s.v. "*kurgarrû* a".
[774] The term *tamšēri* can be understood here as expressing the substantivized active participle of *mašāru*, "to drag".

be translated as follows:

> [10]*kurgarrû*s, carriers of spindle (and) draggers of beatings [11]ease her (= the
> goddess') hear[t with] sweet [pip]es.

This translation naturally changes the picture, since it invalidates the connection
between the *kurgarrû* and the spindle, and, with it, the possible association of this
figure with the feminine traits stemming from this alleged connection. Be the case as
it may, the significance of this passage involves the association of the *kurgarrû* with
Nanaya, a goddess somewhat similar to Ištar. He is said to ease her mind, in a simi-
lar fashion in which figures such as the gala/*kalû* were found to pacify the raging
Ištar in mythological and cultic compositions that were previously discussed. A
different text from the same period, which describes a praise song to Ištar of Arbela,
might refer to the cultic use of the spindle by an *assinnu*, in a passage where a
kurgarrû figures as well:

LKA 32 rev. 13'–14'[775]
[13']*a-rim pi-l*[*ag*]*-gi ša* [lú]⌈x⌉ [x x] [14']*a-rim* bà[d x]*-ú-ti ša* [lú]*kur-gar-ri*
[13']Tuned is the spin[d]le of the [*assinnu*[?]] [14']Tuned in the *ba*[*d* x]*-ūti* of the
kurgarrû.

The *assinnu* is not actually attested in the text, and other restorations are possible.
But the three missing signs at the end of line 13' may be *as-sin-ni* (or variants),
especially since in the following line appears a *kurgarrû*.[776] The term *pil*[*ak*]*ku/*
pil[*ag*]*gu*, "spindle", was translated for an unknown reason by Livingstone as
"lyre".[777]

In a Neo-Assyrian text entitled by Livingstone "The Rites of Egašankalamma"
there is an interesting mention of both a *kurgarrû* and an *assinnu*. The text supplies
aetiological explanations for various cultic procedures that form part of the ceremo-
nies. In these explanations, Marduk/Bēl and Nabû are praised, as their victories over
several deities, such as Ea, Anzû, Enlil and Anu, are mentioned. In one of the pas-
sages we find a mention of several deities acted out by certain persons:

TIM 9.59 // LKA 71 // LKA 72 obv. 14–16[778]
14 [[lú]]kur-gar-ra [lú]*su-sa-nu ša ina* a[meš] *a-ḫa-meš ú-*⌈*ra*⌉*-*[*m*]*a-*[*ku*]
15 [lú]*su-*⌈*sa-nu* [d]en⌉ lú-munus [d]en-líl
16 [d]en [d]en-líl *a-na* ki-*tim ki-i ip-qí-du*
14 The *kurgarrû* and the horseman, that w[ash] each other in water,
15 the horseman is Bēl, the "man-woman" (= *assinnu*[?]) is Enlil,
16 as Bēl consigned Enlil to the netherworld.

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[775] See Livingstone 1989: 22.
[776] The CAD (P: 359, s.v. "*pigû* A", 372, s.v. "*pilakku* a") offers LÚ *a*[*s-sin-ni*], following
Livingstone's (1989: 22) translation [*assin*]*nu*.
[777] Livingstone 1989: 22. However, CAD (P: 372, s.v. "*pilakku* a") quotes this passage under
the entry *pilakku*, "spindle".
[778] See Livingstone 1989: 96.

Livingstone translated the term lú-munus as *assinnu*,[779] but as is shown above I opt for the literal translation "man-woman". Henshaw proposed that Livingstone's translation resulted from his view of lú-munus as expressing an abbreviated form of [lú]ur-munus, according to Henshaw, "because it follows a reference to *kurgarrû*".[780] As was previously demonstrated, it is highly likely that ([lú])ur-munus was a synonymous term, or the logographic writing, of *assinnu*. Therefore, Livingstone's translation of lú-munus as *assinnu* is not without grounds. Regardless of Livingstone's possible reasonings, however, it is clear that the lú-munus and the *kurgarrû* acted in some way vis-à-vis the horseman.

It may be suggested that the reference to Bēl as consigning Enlil to the netherworld alluded in a sense to *Inanna/Ištar's Descent to the Netherworld*. The *assinnu* and the *kurgarrû* assume a significant role in different versions of this text, in which the main element of the plot involved the confinement of a deity in the netherworld; there, of course, it was Inanna/Ištar.

It can further be suggested that Marduk/Bēl's domination over Enlil in this passage reflected historical, political and theological developments that occurred in Mesopotamia as Babylonian culture grew stronger, at the expense of the Sumerian. Such notions were at the background of the ideology that gave way to the composition of *enūma eliš*, a text that was meant to lay out Marduk's rise to prominent among all the gods. In doing so, he took Enlil's place.

Be that as it may, the most intriguing phrase in the above passage is "w[ash] each other in water". Since the same term for water also denoted semen, we may speculate whether this passage did not actually mean to insinuate homosexual relations between the *kurgarrû* (and/or the *assinnu*?) and the horseman. As is demonstrated in this chapter, there is indeed some evidence that the *assinnu* was characterized as being sexually penetrated in certain contexts. For the *kurgarrû*, however, this kind of evidence is lacking. This interpretation, alongside the proposal concerning Marduk's superiority over Enlil, highlights the implied homosexuality as a reflection of masculine control: the horseman's supremacy over the *assinnu* as a symbol of Marduk's dominance over Enlil.

As was noted above, we occasionally find demonstrations of the connection between the *kurgarrû* and militarism. Several examples for this are found in Neo-Assyrian texts that detailed the performance of various cultic rites. For instance, one might refer to the following passage, taken from a commentary of a ceremony that was part of the New Year's rituals:

K 3476 = CT 15.44,28'[781]
[[lú]]kur-gar-ra[meš] *ša tu-šá-ri i-ma-li-lu mì-il-ḫu i-m[al-lu-ḫu]*
The *kurgarrû*s that play war, *per[form]* *milḫu*.

Henshaw interpreted this scene as acting out of a battle by the *kurgarrû*s, "in dramatic liturgical form". He further suggested that the *kurgarrû* was a "cultic warrior",

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[779] Livingstone 1989: 96.
[780] Henshaw 1994: 284.
[781] See Livingstone 1989: 94.

judging by a number of attestations of this practitioner alongside with weapons in cultic contexts.[782] Further attestation of militarism connected with *kurgarrû*s is found in yet another Neo-Assyrian cultic text:

K 3438a + K 9912 obv. 9'–11' // K 9923,15–16[783]
9'lúkur-gar-rameš *mi-lu-li‹-i› qab-lu-ú* 10'*i-za-mu-ru* lúur-munusmeš *ia-ru-ru-tú* 11'*ú-saḫ-ḫu-ru mi-il-ḫu i-ma-al-lu-ḫu*
9'The *kurgarrû*s 10'sing: 9'"my play is battle". 10'The *assinnu*s 11'reply: 10'"*yarurū-tu*!", 11'(and) *perform milḫu*.

In this episode, a group of *kurgarrû*s sings: "my play is battle" (*mēlulī qablu*), and a group of *assinnu*s (in the trext: ur-munus) replies by shouting: "*yarurūtu*". The phrase "my play is battle" might allude to the militant aspect of Ištar, the patron goddess of these figures.[784] Following this, the *assinnu*s perform an act designated *milḫu imalluḫu*. The exact nature of this action is unclear, and the term was understood rather differently by different commentators: "rip off",[785] "tear themselves up",[786] "to strum and dance in a certain manner",[787] "reissen die Herausreissung heraus".[788] The CAD translated *malāḫu* in the current passage as "to perform a dance or song(?)".[789] Ascribing "ripping off" or "tearing up" to the *kurgarrû*s could be taken as reinforcement for viewing these figures as self-mutilating priests. However, whatever the meaning of *milḫu imalluḫu*[790] was, this act was performed during a mock-battle, and any sense of self-emasculation seems dubious in this context. As we have just seen, certain scholars translated this term in a very different manner, leaving out any sense of self-emasculation. Since all commentators and dictionaries base their interpretations on the same textual evidence, none seems more preferable than the others. The meaning of the phrase can only be inferred from the context, especially since no clear etymology can be suggested for it, and nothing in the current context points to self-infliction.

One of the most notable documentations of cultic performance in which the two figures are involved is the frequently quoted first-millennium group of the so-called *Love Lyrics*. There, *kurgarrû* and *assinnu* (logographically written ur-munus) appear

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[782] Henshaw 1994: 291.

[783] See Menzel 1981: T 82 // 83. For earlier transliterations of this passage, see Landsberger 1960: 120 n. 31 and 1961: 22.

[784] Note in this respect that Nanaya, a goddess considered to be closely associated with Ištar, is referred to as *šá me-lul-šá qab-lum*, "(she) whose play is battle" in the hymn K 3600 + DT 75 (= ABRT 1.54f),5'; see Livingstone 1989: 13.

[785] Livingstone 1989: 94.

[786] Henshaw 1994: 285.

[787] Kilmer 1983, RlA 6: 512, s.v. "Laute. A. Philologisch".

[788] Menzel 1981 vol. I: 229. This term was explained by Menzel (1981 vol. II: 187–188 n. 3049) as possibly simulating a fight.

[789] CAD M/1: 153, s.v. "*malāḫu* 2".

[790] Cohen (2010: 823) suggested that the gloss *malaḫu* in the Emar ur₅-ra = *ḫubullu* lexical list conveyed the meaning of "cutting, shearing". However, it is not clear whether this gloss is related to the term currently discussed.

in a passage of a rather enigmatic nature:

BM 41005 rev.[791] iii 1–19[792]

1 ta é *si-pit-te-e* en *é-qu-le-e*[793] *ina* igi ^d*ni-ná-a-a-tum* gub-*za-ma*

2 *at-ta ku-ri-ti-iá šá* kù-babbar *ina é-qu-le-e ki-i a-mur-ru-ka*

3 ḫur-sag-kalam-ma uru *ba-na-a-tum* ta *mál-di é-qu-le-e* en é-ká-gu-la

4 gin₇ *šá* u₄ 4^kam ta é-ká-gu-la en é dingir^me *šá* é-ḫur-sag-ti-la

5 kaskal-II *šá* gú-du₈-a *te-ba-ku al-lak ana tar-ṣa á-ki-it šá* ^d gašan-en-líl^ki gub-*az-ma*

6 an da aš mi ri *šá ú sa lak ta á-ki-it* en ká-gal ^d*uraš*

7 *ana bi-iṣ-ṣu-ri-ka šá tak-la-a-tú* ur-gi₇ *ú-še-reb* ká *a-rak-kás*

8 *ana bi-iṣ-ṣu-ri-ka šá tak-la-a-tú* gin₇ na₄-*ka aq-ri ina* igi-*ka*

9 *bi-iṣ-ṣu-ru-ú šá tap-pat-ti-i am-me-ni ki-ki-i te-te-né-pu-uš*

10 *bi-iṣ-ṣu-ru-ú šá tap-pat-ti-i pi-rik* e^ki *sin-gu i-saḫ-ḫur*

11 *bi-iṣ-ṣu-ru-ú šá* min-*ta* šu^?-si^meš *am-me-ni ṣa-la-a-tú tug-da-nar-ri* tar-*as-ma*[794]

12 ká-gal *è-ma ana tar-ṣa* ḫur-sag-kalam-ma ^lú kur-gar-ra *ina kin-ṣi-šú ik-kam-mi-iṣ-ma*

13 *te-nin-di* sum-*di in-ḫi in-na-ḫu i-te-bi-ma* kiš^ki *ra-ba-a lu-mur*

14 e^ki *šá-qa-a lud-gul-ma i-za-am-mur* ḫur-sag-kalam-ma uru *ba-na-a-tú*

15 *ana tar-ṣa* ^d*nin-líl ú-kan-nu ana tar-ṣa* é-sa-bad *ru-u₈-ú-a ru-*⌜*u₈-ú*⌝*-‹a›*

16 *al-ka e-ṣi ba-ni* im me tum *ù me-li-li qab-lu me-*[*li-li*] mè

17 dug₄-ga-*ma* ^lú ur-munus *ana qab-lu ur-rad gu-uš-tum i-za-a*[*m-mur-ma*[795]]

18 ^d*zar-pa-ni-tum ki iq-nu-ú i-te-lu ana ziq-qur-ra-ti* x [o o o o]

19 *ki-ni-tum* a^meš *ši-qa-a i-qab-bi«-bi»*

1 From the Lament-house to the *Equlû*, in front of Ninayātum he will stand.

2 "You are my shin of silver", "When I saw you in the *Equlû*",

3 "Ḫursagkalamma, city of beauty". From the side of the *Equlû* to *Ekagula*,

4 like the fourth day. From *Ekagula* to the temple of the gods of *Eḫursagtila*.

5 "The road of Kutḫa I will arise and walk." Opposite the Akītu of Šarrat-Nippur he will stand and

6 (…)[796] from the Akītu to the city-gate of Uraš.

7 "To your vulva that you trust, I will make a dog enter, and will bind the door."

8 "To your vulva that you trust, like your precious stone before you."

9 "Vulva of my girlfriend, why do you constantly do so?!"

10 "Vulva of my girlfriend, the frontier of Babylon is seeking a loincloth.[797]"

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[791] Not "obv." as in Lambert 1975: 104.

[792] See Lambert 1975: 104, copy in Lambert 1975: 128.

[793] Emendation to Lambert's *bīt qu-le-e* (*bīt qulê*), following CAD Q: 303, s.v. "*qulû*" and George 2000: 271 n. 22. This emendation reoccurs in ll. 2 and 3.

[794] This is a mild emendation to Lambert's (1975: 104,11) transliteration: TAR-*as ma*.

[795] My restoration. Lambert (1975: 104,17) did not offer any restoration, and his transliteration was: *i-za-*x [. . . .].

[796] Here appears a sequence of some nine legible though incomprehensible signs.

11 "Vulva of two fingers[?], why do you constantly cast quarrels and separation?"
    and

12 he will leave the city-gate, and opposite *Ḫursagkalamma*, the *kurgarrû* will
    kneel on his knees and

13 recite prayers and *perform inḫu*.[798] He will arise, "May I see great Kiš,

14 may I look at lofty Babylon!", he shall sing, "*Ḫursagkalamma*, city of
    beauty."

15 Opposite Ninlil they will set up. Opposite *Esabad*, "My friend, my friend,

16 come! Get out! Create[?]! …", and "My play is battle, [my] p[lay] is warfare",

17 he will utter, and an *assinnu* will go down to battle, si[ng[?]] a *gūštu*-dance.

18 "When Zarpānītu became angry she went up to the ziggurat […]"

19 "Give the concubine water to drink", he will utter.

This curious passage might represent a sort of instruction text for the conduct of a ceremony in which the *kurgarrû* is the main performer. It seems that most of the passage is comprised of titles of chants or prayers[799] that the *kurgarrû* should pronounce on his way to various places, or when he reaches them. If accepting the possibility that the term (^lú)ur-munus was a logographic writing for *assinnu*, then we find in the above text both *assinnu* and *kurgarrû* cooperating in a cultic ritual, even though the role assumed by the *kurgarrû* is greater. The mention of the *assinnu* as "going down to battle" reminds us of the *kurgarrû*s' statement that "their play is battle" in other cultic texts that were presented above. It seems clear that both refer to cultic performance of some kind. The association of the *kurgarrû* with weapons in narrative and cultic texts should be considered in the same context. This should not, however, be taken as evidence that the *assinnu* was a "warrior-figure".[800] In war there are both winners and losers, and the *assinnu* may "go down to battle" in order to simulate the losing party, as opposed to the *kurgarrû*, who represented the winner in the same episode. The fact remains that we are completely ignorant of the role assumed by the *assinnu* in the "battle" he "goes down to", and therefore the assumption that this isolated unclear phrase depicts the *assinnu* as a warrior-like figure seems unwarranted.

A *kurgarrû* is mentioned earlier in the same text, in a context that unfortunately is fragmentary beyond possibility of reasonable comprehension:

BM 41005 obv. ii 2'–6'[801]

2' *ù*[?] *ki-ni-tum mê*^m[^eš *ši-qa-a* …]

3' ^lúšu-du_8 a^meš *ù* munus *šá* x […]

4' 1 *kan-nu šá* kur-gar-ra *i*-x […]

_____

[797] See CAD S: 284, s.v. "*singu*" for the suggestion that *sin-gu* in this text is a scribal error for *sin-bu*, "loincloth". Since the term should be connected somehow with the speaker's girlfriend's vulva, it is perhaps better than Lambert's (1975: 105) "rag".

[798] For the various possible interpretations of the phrase *inhi anāhu*, translated by Lambert (1975: 105) as "utter chants", see George 2000: 271 n. 23.

[799] For these Lambert (1975) coined the designation "Love Lyrics".

[800] As suggested by Zsolnay 2013: 93.

[801] See Lambert 1975: 102, copy in Lambert 1975: 127.

5' ᵈ*zar-pa-ni-tum* lugal *i-kar-rab*ˀ x x x […]

6' *a-di*/*ki*-KUR *pu-šá-ni-tum ultu* é *qu-le-e adi* ⌜*é-ká*⌝-[*gu-la* …]

2' andˀ "[Give] the concubine water [to drink" …]

3' the holder of water and woman of […]

4' one potstand which the *kurgarrû* will […]

5' Zarpānītum will bless the king […]

6' … Pûšanītum. From the *Equlû* to *Ekagula* […]

Whatever the context here may be, it cannot belong to the same episode described above, since the two episodes are separated in line 22' of the obverse. A different fragment,[802] considered by Lambert to belong to the same group of *Love Lyrics*, contains many phrases and whole passages that exhibit close resemblances to some of the ones quoted above. The preserved portion of the fragment is concluded by a passage exalting Ištar-of-Babylon (ᵈInanna tin-tirᵏⁱ), thus denoting the text as a dedicatory one to this manifestation of Ištar.[803] The prominent role of the *kurgarrû* in the former text, and the dedication of the latter text to Ištar-of-Babylon, could hardly be coincidental, especially considering the many textual resemblances between the two. Teppo suggested that the former ritual "was possibly aimed at a sexual rival",[804] repeating a previous suggestion by Leick.[805] This suggestion, however, is not supported by any evidence from within the text itself. As stated above, this text seems to be a kind of guide for cultic performance. The full rituals were accompanied by so-called *Love Lyrics*, which have not been found so far.[806]

Another major ceremonial event in which the *assinnu* and *kurgarrû* played an eminent role was the *akītu* New Year festival,[807] where the following episode occurred:

K 9876 + K 19534 obv. 10–12[808]

¹⁰⌜*i*⌝-*di ana idi ša* ᵈInanna tin-tirᵏⁱ ¹¹[*g*]*i*ˀ-*gíd as-sin-nu u* ˡᵘkur-gar-ra ¹²[*e*]*l-le-e-a el-le-e-a-ma*

¹⁰Side by side of Ištar-of-Babylon, ¹¹the [fl]ute[809](-playing) *assinnu* and *kurgarrû* ¹²(sing:) ["*e*]*llea, ellea*", and…

This passage portrays the *assinnu* and *kurgarrû* as walking aside Ištar-of-Babylon. In practice, the two cultic functionaries were most probably escorting a statue of the goddess, while playing the flute. A different text from Seleucid Uruk, TU 42 (= AO

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[802] LKA 92,1–23 // 81–2–4, 294 obv. 12–23 // BM 46336 + BM 46371 obv. 9–11; see Lambert 1975: 122.

[803] Lambert 1975: 122.

[804] Teppo 2008: 81.

[805] Leick 1994: 240–246.

[806] See George 2000: 280.

[807] For recent studies of this festival, see Pongratz-Leisten 1994, Bidmead 2004 (for the history of research, see pp. 17–24), Ambos 2008 and 2013.

[808] See Pongratz-Leisten 1994: 228.

[809] Contra this reading, however, see CAD M/1: 165, s.v. "*malīlu*".

7439) + AO 8648 + AO 8649,[810] describes a festival for Ištar, of which many parts were similar to various procedures performed during the *akītu*. One of the episodes mentions an *assinnu* and a *kurgarrû*:

TU 42 (= AO 7439) + AO 8648 + AO 8649 rev. 25'–26'[811]
25'[lú]kur-gar-ra lúur-munus *šá til-le-e* dna-ru-du rak-su ki-ma maḫ-ri-i ta ⌐ḫúb⌐
26'[a-]na zag nigin-*šú-nu-tú*
25'The *kurgarrû* and *assinnu* who wear the *tillû* of Narudu 26'will circle around them (= statues of the gods) 25'as before from le[ft] 26'[t]o right.

According to Pallis, the phrase, "The *kurgarrû* and *assinnu* who wear the *tillû* of Narudu", is evidence for them wearing women's clothes during the celebration of the Ištar festival at Uruk.[812] Groneberg understood this passage in a similar manner.[813] George commented that "The *tillû* of this goddess [= Narudu] is a distinctive attribute, used elsewhere to identify an apotropaic figurine as her representative."[814] Consequently, the wearing of feminine deities' masks, and one occurrence of wearing Narudu's garment (*tillû*) was understood by researchers as an indication of cross-dressing performed by the *kurgarrû* (and other cultic personnel as well), as part of the cultic performance. The evidence in this case, however, seems far from being unequivocal, since there is a major difference between wearing a feminine deity's mask and putting on that feminine deity's attire. The former is documented several times; the latter, only once. The assumption that some cultic personnel of Inanna/Ištar performed cross-dressing is supported by other texts,[815] but the passages discussed above contribute only one minor evidence in this respect, if at all. In the Seleucid ritual text LKU 51, already mentioned in Chapter 2, a *kurgarrû* is attested as follows:

LKU 51 = VAT 14524 obv. 18'[816]
[…]-a-ma lúkur-ga-ra sag-*su i-rak-ka-as ki-na-a-a-ta ina p*[a-ni …]
[…] the *kurgarrû* binds his head. The regular offerings in front o[f …]

The phrase "binds his head" (*rēšū irakkas*) most probably indicates the wearing of a mask.[817] As was already noted, in the same ritual, other cultic practitioners take part,

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[810] For a recent edition of the text, see Linssen 2004: 238–244. For a discussion of the festival, see Linssen 2004: 121–122. For an older edition of AO 7439 alone, see Thureau-Dangin 1921: 114–118.

[811] See Linssen 2004: 240.

[812] Pallis 1926: 153.

[813] Groneberg 1986: 35 n. 63.

[814] George 2006: 177 n. 21.

[815] None of the texts exhibiting cross-dressing mentions specifically any of the third gender figures investigated in this book. For the pertinent textual examples, see Sjöberg 1975: 223–225. See also Böck 2004 and Veldhuis 2008: 26–27, 43. See, furthermore, a passage from a hymn of Išme-Dagan (*Išme-Dagan K*,21–24; see Römer 1988: 32). For a short presentation of this text, see Ludwig 1990: 12–13. For a recent discussion and translation of the complete text, see Black, Cunningham, Robson and Zólyomi 2004: 90–92.

[816] See Falkenstein 1931: 18, Beaulieu 2003: 373. Transliteration follows Beaulieu.

among them appear most prominently *kalû*s and *nāru*s. A different Hellenistic period text, BM 32656,[818] specified several cultic procedures that resemble many of the ones described above. Both an *assinnu* and a *kurgarrû* take part in the rites performed. Interestingly, on one occasion it appears that the text has an emendation from ˡ[ᵘˊkur-gar-r]a to ˡᵘ́ur-munus (= *assinnu*).[819] The term ˡᵘ́kur-gar-ra was erased by the scribe; however, the proper ˡᵘ́ur-munus was not written over the erasure, but rather consecutive to it. This confusion might testify for the close relationship and similar functionality of these two cultic personnel.

On one occasion, the *kurgarrû* is said to cast *ḫašḫuru*-fruits and pomegranates at the *Emeurur*,[820] temple of Nanaya, a goddess closely associated with Ištar. George noted that these fruits were regarded as aphrodisiacs, and interpreted this episode as symbolizing Nanaya and Ištar's "patronage of sexual love".[821] Interestingly, the subsequent episode tells of the female personnel of the *Eturkalamma* temple (dumu-munus^meš f*bi-ta-na-a-tú šá* é-tùr-kalam-ma) performing a similar act of casting the *ḫašḫuru*-fruits in that temple of Ištar-of-Babylon.[822] The clear relationship between these two consecutive episodes, and the nature of the goddesses involved, comprises a strong testimony for the link between the *kurgarrû* and feminine cultic activity, associated, to a certain degree, with a sense of sexuality and eroticism. The question is, of course, whether this means that the *kurgarrû* was perceived as parallel to the women who performed the same rite or, on the contrary, as opposed to them. The *kurgarrû* could have symbolized the masculine aspect of eroticism, while the aforementioned women signified its feminine aspect.

When referring to the significance of their cultic performance, researches suggested that the *assinnu* and *kurgarrû* were engaged in ceremonies that were connected with a threat posed upon the cosmic order,[823] such as occasions of lunar eclipse or the New Year festivals.[824] Roscoe claimed that the rites of the *kurgarrû* were meant to provoke the anger of the gods, causing ritual chaos or liminality and, subsequently, restoring order.[825] Groneberg suggested that in these rituals they performed "war-games" that may have included bloodletting and self-mutilation during a trance.[826] She based these suggestions on the attestation of the *kurgarrû* in lexical lists[827] alongside ecstatics (*maḫḫû* and *zabbu*), and on his association with various weapons in several ritualistic contexts. Referring to this kind of ceremonies, Roscoe

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[817] See Falkenstein 1931: 20 n. 4, Groneberg 1986: 35 n. 63 and CAD R: 96, s.v. "*rakāsu* 3a".

[818] For an edition of this text, see George 2000: 274–280.

[819] BM 32656 rev. iv 13', see George's (2000: 277) handcopy.

[820] BM 32656 rev. iv 4'–7', see George 2000: 274, 276.

[821] George 2000: 272.

[822] BM 32656 rev. iv 9'–12', see George 2000: 276.

[823] In Roscoe's (1996: 216) terms, "crisis rites".

[824] See Roscoe 1996: 216, including previous literature in n. 99, and similarly Teppo 2008: 83, including previous literature.

[825] Roscoe 1996: 216.

[826] Groneberg 1986: 39.

[827] Groneberg did not specify this, but the list she referred to was lú = *ša*, Short Recension, Excerpt I (see MSL 12: 102f.).

claimed that they were "strikingly similar" to "those of the Corybantes and galli";[828] however, these interpretations seem too far-reaching. No actual evidence exists for bloodletting, let alone self-mutilation, and nothing of the performance of the *kurgarrû* seems similar to the self-castration practiced by the Anatolian *galli* priests.

assinnu and *kurgarrû* in Cultic Texts: Conclusions

In this section we have examined the attestations of the *assinnu* and *kurgarrû* in cultic texts, a corpus that forms one of the richest sources of information we have on these two figures. The most notable attributes of the *kurgarrû* in these texts were his use of weapons in his performance and the statements that he was "playing war" or "battle" in many of these rites. The *assinnu* was rarely attested in scenes related with the exchange of gender roles or with insinuated homosexuality. Almost all his attestations occurred alongside the *kurgarrû*. In contrast, the *kurgarrû* appeared several times in rites from which the *assinnu* was absent. The rites in which both of them participated were connected to a certain degree with eroticism, and were usually performed under the aegis of Ištar. It is highly probable that the sexual and ambiguous nature of this goddess formed the essence of the cultic performance of these two figures, who were her attendants. Therefore, the masculine *kurgarrû* was characterized as a militant figure that frequently used weapons during the rites, while the *assinnu* constituted his effeminate mirror-image, attributed by feminine or sexually-receptive traits.

5. *assinnu* and *kurgarrû* in Narrative Texts

We will continue with a review of narrative compositions where the *assinnu* and *kurgarrû* appeared. Most of the relevant texts were already presented and discussed in the opening chapter of the book and therefore will only be mentioned here briefly. For their detailed discussions the reader is referred to Chapter 1. The aim of this section is to put the focus on the images of the *assinnu* and the *kurgarrû* as reflected through the various narrative texts, and assess the contribution of this information to our understanding of their nature. We will consider if and how these texts coincide with the information gathered from other sources concerning the two figures, their roles and functionalities.

The *kurgarrû* appears alongside the gala in the Sumerian *Inanna's Descent to the Netherworld*. Both figures rescue Inanna from the netherworld, where she has been incarcerated by her sister Ereškigal. In order to perform this task and travel into and out of the netherworld, it is believed by scholars that they should have possessed certain liminal characteristics, a metaphor of their liminal character in reality as well. This view, however, was challenged in a previous discussion that was offered in the present research. In the Nineveh version of the Akkadian myth of *Ištar's Descent to the Netherworld*, the rescuer of the goddess from the netherworld is the *assinnu*, while it is *kulu'u* in the parallel version from Aššur. Some scholars[829] have

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[828] Roscoe 1996: 216. For the *galli*, see Introduction, pp. 30–31.

[829] See, among others, Maul 1992: 164–165, Nissinen 1998a: 29 and Teppo 2008: 81–82.

suggested that there is a clear connection between the role of the *assinnu* in myth and in reality: just as the *assinnu* saves Ištar in the myth from a situation of "illness" in the netherworld, he was expected, in real-life, to be able to save an ill person.

The *kurgarrû* was attested in several compositions as associated with weapons. For example, in the balag-composition úru àm-ma-ir-ra-bi, where he used a sword and a *patarru*[830] in order to fulfill Inanna's command and kill a maidservant named Amanamtagga, together with a gala who used his characteristic drum for the same purpose. This idea is apparent in a fragmentary Old Babylonian text from Nippur:

SLTNi 45,5–9[831]

5 nam-gudu$_4$-m[u ga-ra-ba]
6 nam-gala-m[u ga-ra-ba]
7 kur-mar-ra-mu ga[-ra-ba]
8 gíri ba-da-ra-mu ga-ra-b[a]
9 SAG-UR-SAG-mu ga-ra-ba
5 [I wil give you] m[y] priesthood;
6 [I will give you] m[y] gala-ship;
7 I will gi[ve you] my *kurgarrû*;
8 I will giv[e] you my sword (and) *patarru*;
9 I will give you my SAG-UR-SAG.

Kramer included this fragment in his section of epics or myths, and considered it to be "part of an address by a female deity", probably because of the use of the emesal dialect.[832] It is indeed noteworthy that the term *kurgarrû* is written here in the emesal form kur-mar-ra, which relates this text to the repertoire of emesal compositions.[833] In the above quotation, a *kurgarrû* is preceded by gala-ship, and immediately succeeded by a knife and a dagger, and thereafter by a SAG-UR-SAG. As we have already seen, the knife and dagger were mentioned in other narrative texts as well, and were used by the *kurgarrû* in certain cultic rites.

Another composition that exhibits similar characteristics is the Sumerian text of *Inanna and Ebiḫ*. Its tale introduces three characters: a *kurgarrû*, who receives cutting-weapons from Inanna, a *pilpilû*, whose mind (literally, "head") is changed by the goddess, and a gala, whom she provides with a percussion instrument. If indeed these compositions can grant us a glance into the social conventions that formed the background for their formation, the *kurgarrû* receiving a weapon from his patron goddess should be understood against the background of his cultic performance. Significantly, in *Inanna and Enki*, the *kurgarrû* and his weapons were mentioned as two of the me-s Inanna stole from Enki.

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[830] A weapon of an uncertain nature; see chapter 1, p. 66–67 n. 182.

[831] See Renger 1969: 192 n. 885. Renger's transliteration lacked restoration signes, and the ones that appear here are based on the copy of the fragment, as appears in Kramer 1944: 45 Pl. XXII.

[832] Kramer 1944: 20.

[833] For a discussion of the emesal dialect and its relation to third gender, see Chapter 2, pp. 129–132.

One of the rare narrative texts where both the *assinnu* and the *kurgarrû* partici-
pated is *The Epic of Erra*. This text contains one of the most suggestive references to
the gender-ambiguous nature of the two figures, since in one of its passages it is
stated that "for making the people reverent, Ištar turned their masculinity to femi-
ninity." They are portrayed in the passage as carrying a dagger, razor, scalpel and
flint blade, and "for delighting the mind of Ištar, do regularly f[orbidden things]."
The explicit saying that Ištar, their patron goddess, turned their masculinity to femi-
ninity is startling, and leads to many possible interpretations.[834] The rest of the pas-
sage is remarkable as well, and the mention of cutting-weapons carried by the
kurgarrû should be related to several cultic scenes where he was associated with
such weapons, as described above.

It has long been suggested that in the Gilgameš epic the relationship between the
two main protagonists bore some homoerotic tones.[835] In this context, Kilmer sug-
gested that a word-play in one of Gilgameš's dreams that alludes to Enkidu's alleged
femininity was equated with the figure of the *assinnu*. In the dream of Gilgameš,
Enkidu is symbolized by a ball[836] (*kiṣru*) and an axe (*ḫaṣṣinnu*), two objects to
which Gilgameš makes love.[837] Kilmer suggested that the "ball", Akkadian *kiṣru*,
represented the term *kezru*, masculine form of *kezertu*, a type of female prostitute.[838]
Similarly, according to her, the "axe", Akkadian *ḫaṣṣinnu*, was meant to represent a
pun on the term *assinnu*.[839] Accepting Kilmer's hypothesis adds one more piece of
evidence, however implicit, concerning the effeminate and homosexual traits as-
cribed on occasions to the *assinnu*.

assinnu and *kurgarrû* in Narrative Texts: Conclusions

In this section we saw that the attestations of the *assinnu* and the *kurgarrû* in narra-
tive texts reveal valuable information that fits well with the images of these figures
as portrayed in other genres. As we saw in previous sections, the *kurgarrû* was much
better documented than the *assinnu*, and, again, he was associated with cutting-
weapons in many of the texts. The *assinnu* was rarely attested in narrative composi-
tions, and his few attestations exhibited him either alone or together with the
kurgarrû. In contrast, the *kurgarrû* appeared in several texts alongside other third
gender figures, mostly the gala/*kalû*, but also the SAG-UR-SAG and the *pilpilû*. The
shared feature of all of them was their engagement in cult as attendants of
Inanna/Ištar. This feature was emphasized in many compositions, and it can be ar-
gued that these texts were meant to present the aetiological background for the cultic

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[834] It is suggested above that this sentence referred to the *assinnu*s alone; see Chapter 1, p. 81.

[835] See, among others, Kilmer 1982, Leick 1994: 266–268, Walls 2001: 56 and Cooper 2002:
73–74.

[836] The term is usually understood as a "meteorite", since in the dream it falls from the sky;
see Kilmer 1982: 128.

[837] Gilgameš I v 36 (see George 2003: 554,262), vi 4, 14, 19 (see George 2003: 554,278,
556,288, 293), VIII ii 4 (see George 2003: 654,46).

[838] See Parpola's (1997: XCII n. 119) definition of *kezru* as "'coiffured man' (a devotee of
Ištar)."

[839] Kilmer 1982: 128.

activities of these performers. Indeed, in texts such as *Inanna/Ištar's Descent* the *assinnu* and *kurgarrû* seem to have enjoyed an intimate connection with the goddess, closer than any other member of her cult personnel. Their cultic performance and gender characteristics should probably be understood against this background.

6. *assinnu* and *kurgarrû* in Omen, Ritual and Incantation Texts

The concluding section of this chapter is comprised of two sub-sections, the first of which treats omen texts and the second addresses magical rituals and incantations. All these texts share the basic rationale of forming an interface where various causes affecting human life, frequently supernatural ones, could be predicted, manipulated and altered by human intervention. The difference between the two parts comprising this section involves the degree of activity required from the human practitioner. While, in interpretation of omens, the observer remained relatively passive, in magical rituals and incantations he was an active agent who performed a crucial set of activities in order to generate the requested change in life conditions. The attestations of *assinnu* and *kurgarrû* in both types of texts supply us with hints concerning social attitudes towards them, and the attributes society ascribed them within contexts of perceived supernatural occurrences that affected people's everyday life.

6.1. *assinnu* and *kurgarrû* in Omen Texts

One of the earliest divination texts to mention an *assinnu* or a *kurgarrû* is an Old Babylonian omen from the *šumma immeru* series:

> **šumma immeru, YOS 10.47,20**[840]
> *šumma*(diš) *immeru*(udu) *li-is-sú-ú ša i-mi-tim tar-ka-at bēl*(en) *immeri*(udu) *as-sí-nu-ú-tam i-pe-e-eš*
> If a sheep, its right side is dark, the owner of the sheep will practice *assinnu*-ship.

Henshaw took this omen as reflecting a negative attitude towards the *assinnu* in the Old Babylonian period, because, according to him, in such texts a dark right side signified an inauspicious indication.[841] Starr already hypothesized a decade earlier the correlation between a dark right side and unfortunate omens, but, unlike Henshaw, he was uncertain whether the omen under discussion was indeed negative.[842] We should bear in mind that the rest of the omens in this tablet are negative as well, as, it must be admitted, omens typically are.

Several references to both *assinnu* and *kurgarrû* appear in various omens of the *šumma ālu* series,[843] beginning with the first tablet of the series:

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[840] See Starr 1983: 21.

[841] Henshaw 1994: 284.

[842] Starr 1983: 21: "… was practicing *assinnūtu* considered a good or a bad omen?"

[843] Generally on this series of omens, see Moren 1978: 4–6, Guinan 1997: 462, 474–475 n. 1, Freedman 1998: 2–14 (see pp. 3–5 for history of research), Sallaberger 2000, Maul 2003, RlA

šumma ālu Tablet 1, CT 38.4,76[844]

šumma(diš) *ina āli*(uru) *kurgarrû*(^{lú}kur-gar-ra^{meš}) *ma'du*[845] *naspuḫ*(bir) [*āli*(uru)]

If in the city *kurgarrû*s are numerous: scattering [of the city].

The negative nature of this isolated omen should probably not be taken as a serious indicator that the *kurgarrû* was perceived negatively in Mesopotamian society. Generally speaking, most of Mesopotamian omens were of negative nature. A pair of consecutive omens from tablet 95 of the *šumma ālu* series mentions both *assinnu* and *kurgarrû*, albeit in a broken context:

šumma ālu Tablet 95, CT 39.41,23–24[846]

23 [*šumma*(diš) *amē*]*lu*(l)*ú*) *egirrû*(i₅-gar) *ana arki*(egir)-*šú i-ta-nap-pal-šú* ur-
   ⌈munus⌉ […]

24 [*šumma*(diš) *amē*]*lu*(l)*ú*) *egirrû*(i₅-gar) *qer-bi-iš i-pu-ul-šú* kur[-gar-ra …]

23 [If a ma]n is continually having oracular utterances echoed behind him, [he
   will …] an *assinnu*.

24 [If a ma]n, oracular utterances echoed him from nearby, [he will …] a
   kur[*garrû*.]

The break in the text prevents us from knowing what is to be done with the *assinnu* and the *kurgarrû*, and speculations are unwarranted. The least that can be said is that here again we are encountered with the close relationship between the two figures, given that the restoration kur[-gar-ra] in CT 39.41,24 is correct.

Several omens pertaining to sexual behavior were included in tablet 104 of the series, and some of them refer to several figures that are discussed in this book, such as the *assinnu* and the *girseqû*. We will review the first of these omens, whose customary[847] transliteration is as follows:

šumma ālu Tablet 104, CT 39.44,15[848]

šumma(diš) *amēlu*(na) *ana zi-ka-ru-ti ina ki-li uš-tak-ti-it-ma u às-sé-e-ni-iš na-aq zi-ka-ru-ta ḫu-uš-šu-uḫ-šu i-na pí-qí lumna*(ḫul) *immar*(igi)

If a man excited himself[849] to manhood in prison, and like an *assinnu* manhood's intercourse[850] is deprived from him, he will experience misfortune in distress.

10: 58–62, s.v. "Omina und Orakel. A." and Freedman 2006. For editions and discussions of the sexual omens of *šumma ālu* tablet 104, see Pangas 1988 and Guinan 1997.

[844] See CAD K: 558, s.v. "*kurgarrû* a" and S: 156, s.v. "*sapāhu* 8b".

[845] The text has min, "ditto", referring to the attestation of this term in a previous omen (CT 38.3,64).

[846] See CAD A/2: 162, s.v. "*apālu* A2a" and Q: 213, s.v. "*qerbiš* 1".

[847] For an alternative transliteration suggested by Virolleaud (1910c) and Guinan (1997), see below.

[848] See Lambert 1992: 151.

[849] The obscure term *uš-tak-ti-it-ma* was understood rather differently by various commentators: "suffer physical collapse" (CAD K: 304, s.v. "*katātu* 2"), "fails(?)" (CAD Z: 117, s.v. "*zikrūtu* 2b"), "starts trembling" (Lambert 1992: 151), "excites himself" (Guinan 1997: 474). The form seems to be the Št stem of the verb *katātu*, "to suffer physical collapse" (CAD K: 304, s.v. "*katātu* 2"), or "to quiver, vibrate?" (CDA: 153). It should therefore be understood

Lambert supplied the following translation for this omen: "If a man starts trembling while …[851] for sexual potency, and like an *assinnu* fails to achieve a sexual climax during intercourse, that man will experience evil in circumstances of stress." According to him, in this omen the *assinnu* "had no libido", and "this then proves that at least for this writer the *assinnu* was a eunuch either by birth or castration."[852] These assertions, however, are questionable. Nothing in this omen is said of castration, and rather than lacking libido, the *assinnu* is actually portrayed as lacking men's penetrative sexuality (*nâq zikarūta*). Hence, the first part of the protasis seems to signify male sexual arousal,[853] while the second part reflects the incapability to realize that arousal, "like an *assinnu*". In this omen, therefore, the *assinnu* appeared as characteristically lacking penetrative sexuality, which was contrasted with men's normative conduct. This can be understood as implicit reference to passive homosexuality. Significantly, the verb expressing sexual arousal in this omen is identical to the one designating (illicit) homosexual intercourse, and its talionic punishment, in the Middle Assyrian Laws (henceforth, MAL) § 20,93, 96: *šumma a'īlu tappâšu inīk … inīkkûš*, "If a man sodomizes his fellow man … they shall sodomize him…"[854]

Guinan, however, transliterated and translated this omen rather differently:

šumma ālu Tablet 104, CT 39.44,15[855]

diš na *ana zi-ka-ru-ti ina ki-li uš-tak-ti-it-ma u ina* zi-e / *ni-iš na-aq zi-ka-ru-ta ḫu-uš-šu-uḫ-šu i-na pí-qí* ḫul igi

If a man excites himself to "manhood" in captivity but, when erect, the rise of the emission (?) of "manhood" is denied him, that man will experience one-time misfortune.

The difference between Guinan's and Lambert's[856] transliterations lies in the key term *às-sé-e-ni-iš* ("like an *assinnu*"). Guinan explained that this sequence of signs is found in one of the four exemplars in which this line was preserved (K 1994), while, in another fragment (K 126), the signs are actually separated to two words, which even appear in different lines. Therefore, Guinan noted in her transliteration the line division (marked "/") between the signs E and NI.[857] She explained that all

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as the reflexive form of the verb, in the preterit, hence the translation "excited himself".

[850] Literally, "(illicit) sexual intercourse of manhood"; see below.

[851] Not recognizing this term as "prison" (*ki-li*), Lambert (1992: 151) commented that "… the word KI-li here is of unknown meaning …"

[852] Lambert 1992: 151.

[853] As is explained above, the term *uštaktit* can be understood as referring to "shaking", in which case the said sexual arousal might be that of masturbation. Alternatively, it can hint to the erection itself.

[854] See Driver and Miles 1935: 390 and Roth 1997: 160. For a discussion of this law, including previous literature, see Chapter 4, pp. 213–214.

[855] See Guinan 1997: 478 n. 38. The translation follows Guinan 1997: 474.

[856] See also references to this omen in CAD (H: 136, s.v. "*hašāhu* 4" and K: 360, s.v. "*kīlu* 1b"), which match Lambert's interpretation.

[857] See, similarly, already in Virolleaud 1910c: 215,24–25.

previous translations followed exemplar K 1994,[858] which does not indicate the correct word division. Guinan did not exclude the likelihood that the scribe of exemplar K 126 misunderstood the omen, but she nonetheless suggested that the word division in K 1994 is erroneous.[859] Since fragment K 3808 does not include the pertinent lines, it offers no help in solving the problem. We must therefore turn to the fourth exemplar of the text, Rm 2.139, to determine which is the most reliable version of the omen. These are the pertinent parallel lines in the different manuscripts: K 1994 obv. 24–25 // K 126 rev. 9–10 // Rm 2.139 rev. 3'–4'. In the copy of Rm 2.139 rev. 3', confirmed by the photograph of the tablet found on CDLI website, the signs appear successively, along a single line, which end is broken.[860] Therefore, it cannot be decided on the basis of this fragment whether the correct transliteration of the crucial part of the omen was *ina* ZI[-*e ni-iš*], or rather *às-sé*[-*e-ni-iš*].

When comparing the three relevant manuscripts, we notice that Virolleaud's and Guinan's transliterations are based on K 126, whereas exemplar K 1994 differs, and Rm 2.139 leaves both possibilities open. To conclude, though we must take Guinan's observations into account, and given her cautionary remarks regarding the possibility of a scribal error in K 126, the traditional understanding of the omen, based on K 1994, remains possible. No manuscript appears to be more compelling than the others, which prevents any certainty about the identification of the correct and corrupted versions. It is possible, therefore, that this omen portrayed the *assinnu* as typically lacking penetrative sexual conduct, though we must bear in mind the uncertainty of this. Therefore, any interpretation concerning the nature of the *assinnu* based on this omen must be taken with extreme caution.

Three omens that explicitly refer to homosexuality appear further on in tablet 104. The homosexual relations mentioned are with an *assinnu*, *girseqû* and a house-born slave:

šumma ālu Tablet 104, CT 39.45,32–34[861]

32 *šumma*(diš) *amēlu*(na) *a-na as-sin-ni iṭeḫu*(te) *dan-na-tu ipaṭṭaršu*(du₈-*šu*₁₁)

33 *šumma*(diš) *amēlu*(na) *a-na girseqû*(gìr-sè-ga) *iṭeḫu*(te) *ka-la šatti*(mu) 1^{kám} *tam-ṭa-a-tum šá šaknā*(gar^{meš})-*šú ip-pa-ra-sa*

34 *šumma*(diš) *amēlu*(na) *ana du-uš-mi-šú iṭeḫu*(te) *sassu*(ki-kal) *iṣabbassu*(dib-*su*)

32 If a man approaches (sexually) an *assinnu*, hardships will be loosened from him.

33 If a man approaches (sexually) a *girseqû*, for an entire year the losses that

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[858] The handcopy of tablet 104 of the *šumma ālu* series (CT 39.44–46) was drawn as a combination of at least three different copies: K 126, K 1994 and Rm 2.139, to which a fourth copy, K 3808, might also be added (see explanation by Gadd in CT 39: 8). It seems that the main fragment used was K 1994, so in case of variations between the different copies, these were referred to in footnotes at the bottom of each plate. No footnote of plate 44, however, mentions the variation observed by Guinan.

[859] Guinan 1997: 478–479 n. 38.

[860] Boissier 1894: 90, http://cdli.ucla.edu/P370811.

[861] See Guinan 1997: 479 n. 40–42.

beset him will be kept away.

34 If a man approaches (sexually) his house-born-slave,[862] hardship[863] will seize
him.

In order to understand the underlying meaning behind the passages of the sexual
omens of the *šumma ālu* series, Guinan suggested a two-phase model of interpreta-
tion, treating first the internal relation between the protasis and apodosis of a given
omen, and then conducting an external examination of the relation between several
different omens dealing with homosexual relations.[864] Guinan understood the vari-
ous sexual omens of the *šumma ālu* series as a set of binary categories pertaining to
hierarchy (domination/subordination), sex (male/female), gender (masculinity/ femi-
ninity) and sexuality (penetration/receptivity). Adopting Winkler's view of Greek
sexuality, she suggested that in Mesopotamia as well sexual relations were based
"on dominance and submission, as constituted by phallic penetration".[865] Therefore,
she regarded the three omens pertaining to same-sex relations as one unified group.
Guinan suggested that having homosexual relations with figures such as an *assinnu*
and a *girseqû* was considered "auspicious" in the first two omens, since this
behavior reflected dominance and gaining of power. In contrast, she claimed, sexual
relations with a house-born slave were regarded "inauspicious" because the slave
"belongs to the house", so that homosexual relations with him are "too close to
home".[866]

I concur with Guinan's arguments concerning the two "auspicious" omens, and
the connection between a perceived male dominance and masculine control as re-
flected by assuming the penetrating side of the homoerotic act. However, the last-
mentioned "inauspicious" omen may require a different interpretation. One would
expect to find this last omen as positive as the previous two, reflecting the power
and control of a master asserted over his subject. The slave being "too close" should
be at least irrelevant, if not actually a good reason for demonstrating the dominance
of his lord upon him. I cannot at present, however, offer a convincing alternative.

Another omen that should be considered in the discussion of homosexuality in
tablet 104 of the *šumma ālu* series is the following one:

šumma ālu Tablet 104, CT 39.44,13[867]

šumma(diš) *amēlu*(na) *ana qinnat*(gu-du) *me-eḫ-ri-šú iṭḫi*(te) *amēlu šû*(na-bi) *ina
aḫḫē*(šeš^me)[-šú] *ù ki-na-ti-šú a-šá-re-du-tam illak*(du-*ak*)

If a man approaches his social peer anally, that man will become foremost
among his brothers and colleagues.

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[862] On the term *dušmû*, see Lambert 1992: 146.

[863] ki-kal, Akkadian *sassu*, means literally "bottom"; see CAD S: 195, s.v. "*sassu* A".

[864] Guinan 1997: 463–464.

[865] Winkler 1990: 11 apud Guinan 1997: 468. For discussions of same-sex relations in Greek
and Roman societies, as reflecting systems of domination and control, see, among others,
Dover 1978, Richlin 1983, Keuls 1985, Winkler 1990, Halperin, Winkler and Zeitlin 1990
(eds.) and Parker 1997.

[866] Guinan 1997: 469.

[867] See Guinan 1997: 479 n. 43.

When comparing this omen with the three discussed above, clear differences arise: unlike the previous omens, this one presents homoerotic relations between two individuals of equal social status. In such a case, none has dominance based on social superiority, so that the role of the penetrative party is not reserved for one of the partners. Assuming that role grants the individual an advantage over his peers, and therefore a supremacy upon them. Guinan noted a pun in the wording of this omen, by using the terms gu-du, *qinnatu* ("anus") and *kinātu* ("colleagues"), and the switching of the metaphors for "behind" and "in front", so that, according to the omen, sexual penetration "from behind" enables one to assume a leading role and become "in front" of his peers. Guinan further treated this omen with connection to MAL § § 19 and 20. She claimed that the two laws were meant to protect the equality between peers (*tappû*) and prevent same-sex relations, through which the penetrated partner becomes inferior. In contrast, according to her, the omens allow this act, and in a way even encourage it, at least from the point of view of the penetrator, who achieves social advantage through sexual penetration.[868]

Turning to other types of omens, a complicated association between the *kurgarrû* and femininity is alluded to in the following passage from an astrological omen text:

ACh Adad 12,12–13[869]

12 *šumma* ᵈ*Adad ina qabli*(múru) ki-min-ma *saḫlâ*(zá-ḫi-liˢᵃʳ) *iznun*(šur-*nun*) *zikarū*(nitaᵐᵉˢ) *kurgarrû*(kur-gar-raᵐᵉˢ)

13 *ina bītim*(é) *uššabū*(dúrᵐᵉˢ)-*ma kurgarrû*(kur-gar-raᵐᵉˢ) *ana zikarī*(nitaᵐᵉˢ) *ullad*[*ū*](ù-tu[ᵐᵉˢ])

12 If Adad (gave a cry) in the midst of the constellation Great Bear,[870] and it rained cardamom:[871] men (and?) *kurgarrû*s

13 will live in the house, and the *kurgarrû*s will give birth to men.

Botérro and Petschow ascribed to this omen a significance of theatrical performance, by suggesting that the *kurgarrû*s mentioned were playing the role of women, pretending to bear children to men.[872] Whatever meaning this obscure omen originally had, it was meant to depict male *kurgarrû*s "giving birth". This, of course, in the fantastic level of occurrences, rather than a realistic one.[873]

It can be claimed that the fantastic nature of a given text does not necessarily exclude the possibility that this text conveyed a moral relevant to life in the realistic level as well, even if this moral is not always apparent to us. The above omen can be understood as symbolizing the opposite of proper way of conduct. It seems that the *kurgarrû*s function in this omen as wives: they live in the house together with men

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[868] Guinan 1997: 469–471.

[869] See Groneberg 1986: 36 n. 72, Gehlken 2012: 98. Transliteration follows Groneberg.

[870] The text has ki-min-ma, "ditto", referring to the appearance of the term in the previous omen.

[871] For zá-ḫi-liˢᵃʳ (Akkadian *saḫlû*) = "cardamom", see Stol 1985: 24–25.

[872] Botérro and Petschow 1972–75, RlA 4: 466, s.v. "Homosexualität".

[873] Assante, for example, claimed that this omen "seems … to speak of impossible freak occurrences". She maintained that for this reason this text should not be viewed as indicating "the *kurgarrû*'s sexual dualism" (Assante 2009: 42).

who presumably signify their husbands, and give birth. Therefore, if the omen described *kurgarrû*s giving birth, it meant to emphasize how this occurrence contradicts the normal rules of social conduct, and highlighted the fact that *kurgarrû*s are customarily not affiliated with feminine traits – they do not act as wives, and do not give birth.

6.2. *assinnu* and *kurgarrû* in Magical Rituals and Incantations

As was explained in the introduction to this section, magical rituals and incantations are markedly different from omens. Instead of exhibiting various observations and displaying their interpretations, as omens did, rituals and incantations were meant to supply active measurements to be performed in order to manipulate and control one's reality, and counteract ill-perceived supernatural phenomena. As we will see, these texts testify for both positive and negative mystic qualities that were ascribed to the *assinnu* and the *kurgarrû*. The positive qualities were apotropaic capabilities, while the negative ones were harmful magical capacities.

It was already noted that the *assinnu* was ascribed apotropaic qualities, the aetiological background of which was rooted in narrative and mythological compositions. This point is apparent in the following passage from an incantation for Ištar:

Incantation for Ištar, Tablet I,36[874]
li-iz-ziz as-sin-na-ki ma-ru-uš-ti liš-ši muruṣ(gig) *ṣab-tan-ni a-pa-ti li-še-ṣi*
May your *assinnu* stand by and extract my illness. May he make the illness which seized me go out the window.

It may be understood from this passage that the *assinnu* was ascribed apotropaic or healing qualities, presumably because he was one of Ištar's closely related servants. Assante suggested that this incantation reflected the weighing of a person's fate, and deciding whether he will live or die.[875] The *assinnu* is mentioned again later in the text, as part of a general instruction given to the performer of the incantation. A recitation for the wellbeing of the patient is to be uttered, and thereafter the following is to be performed:

Incantation for Ištar, Tablet I,50–51[876]
50 *kīma*(gin₇) *an-na-a* 3–*šú tamtanû*(šid-*nu*) *ka-ma-na šá maḫar*(igi) ᵈ*gu-la u gišrinna*(giš-rín)
51 *as-sin-na tu-ša-áš-ša-ma bāba*(ká) *tušeṣṣīšu*(è-*šu*)
50 After you have recited this three times,
51 you have the *assinnu* take ⁵⁰the *kamānu*-cakes offered to Gula and the scales,

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[874] See Farber 1977: 58. This line is reconstructed from several duplicates, especially K 4994 + Rm 511,14'–15' (copy in Farber 1977: Taf. 5–6a) // VAT 8257,15–16; see Farber 1977: 55, 58.

[875] Assante 2009: 40.

[876] See Farber 1977: 59. These lines are reconstructed from several duplicates, especially K 4994 + Rm 511,32'–33' (copy in Farber 1977: Taf. 5–6a,32–33) // VAT 9722,11–12 (copy in KAR 29,11–12); see Farber 1977: 55, 59.

[51]and have him leave by the door.

We can see that the *assinnu* was present while the practitioner uttered the required recitations and invocations. After these were concluded, the *assinnu* left together with the magical paraphernalia, and the ceremony was done. Assante viewed this episode as portraying the *assinnu* as executing the vital task of warding off the evil that befell the patient, by taking the offerings and the scales with him as he leaves the house.[877]

Another reference to *assinnu* and *kurgarrû* was made in the Neo-Babylonian hemerology text Bu 88–5–12, 11. This document details measurements to be taken by the king at the occurrence of a menacing moon eclipse, for each month of the year. One of these is described as follows:

CT 4.5 = Bu 88–5–12,11, 9–10[878]

9 *šumma*(diš) *ina araḫ*(iti) *ayyari*(gu$_4$) ki-min-*ma mê*(a^{meš}) *burāši*(šim-li) *irammuk*(tu$_5$) *šaman*(ì) *murri*(šim-šeš) *ippaššaš*(šéš)

10 *kurgarrâ*(^{lú}kur-gar-ra) *inaṭṭal*(igi-lál)*ma kurgarrû*(^{lú}kur-gar-ra) *a-na šarri*(lugal) *i-kar-rab lumnu*(ḫul) *ippaṭṭar*(du$_8$-*ár*)

9 If there is an eclipse[879] in the month of Ayyaru, (the king) washes with juniper water and rubs himself with oil of myrrh.

10 He looks at a *kurgarrû*, and the *kurgarrû* does homage to the king. The evil will be dispelled.

Further on in the text appears another set of instructions for counteracting the harmful effect of the eclipse:

CT 4.6 = Bu 88–5–12, 11, rev. 10–15[880]

10 *šumma*(diš) *ina araḫ*(iti) *addari*(še) ki-min-*ma nūna*(ku$_6$) *iṣṣūra*(mušen) *lā*(nu) *ikkal*(gu$_7$) *karpē*(dug-*e*) *aḫîti*(bar-*ti*) *alpē*(gu$_4$-*e*) *bīti*(é-*ti*)

11 *itti*(ki) […]-x-*šú ul i-ta-me* ^{giš}*bīna*(šinig) *ina kisimmi*(kisim$_6$) *sikilli*(ú-sikil)

12 *ú-*x[…] *šamni*(ì-giš) *lippašiš*(šéš) *šam-šá-ni šá ḫurāṣi*(kù-sig$_{17}$)

13 *adi*(en) 7-*šú* ⌊*liq*⌋-*bi* ^{ninda}*ab-lu itti*(ki) *warqi*(ú-sar) *ki-ri-i li-kul*

14 *qaqqad*(sag-du) *assinni*(^{lú}ur-munus) *lilput*(tag-*ut*) *a-a-bi-šú ikaššad*(kur-*ád*)

15 *māssu*(kur-*su*) *ina qibīti*(dug$_4$-ga)-*šú uššab*(tuš-*ab*)

10 If there is an eclipse[881] in the month of Addaru, he (= the king) must not eat fish (or) bird. Pots of the exterior, cattle of the interior,[882]

11 together with his […], he must not take an oath. Tamarisk in soured milk, *sikillu*-plant

12 […] He should anoint himself with oil. (Towards) a sun-disc of gold

13 he should pray seven times. He should eat biscuit with garden vegetables.

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[877] Assante 2009: 40.
[878] See Livingstone 2013: 195.
[879] The text has ki-min, "ditto", referring to the mention of the eclipse in previous omens.
[880] See Jensen 1915: 46, Livingstone 2013: 197. Transliteration follows Livingstone.
[881] The text has ki-min, "ditto", referring to the mention of the eclipse in previous omens.
[882] Literally, "of the house".

14 He should touch the head of an *assinnu*. He shall defeat his enemy.

15 His land will obey his command.[883]

We can see that in order to avert the ominous consequences of the eclipse, the king was required to eat certain foodstuff, avoid eating others and perform various acts, such as anoint himself with oil. The most intriguing of all these activities were looking at a *kurgarrû*, who "does homage" to the king, and touching the head of an *assinnu* (under the designation ^lúur-munus). Both these actions conclude the sets of activities specified for a specific month. Henshaw suggested that the mention of the *assinnu* might have been a "euphemism for sexual relations, or a ritual symbolizing this", but did not exclude the possibility that this passage did not apply to reality, but rather to fantastic occurrences.[884] Even though ascribing any sexual sense to this passage seems groundless, the positive effect of a physical contact with an *assinnu* can be paralleled with the auspicious result of a man performing sexual intercourse upon an *assinnu* in the above-mentioned *šumma ālu* omen CT 39.45,32. These two episodes can possibly be further compared with the perceived ability of the *assinnu* to extract and remove an illness, as described above.

Another reference to *kurgarrû* appears in a text that belongs to the Standard Babylonian *namburbi* group of rituals:

Tablet Funck 3,31[885]

[*šumma*(diš) *karpata*(dug) *d*]*anna*(b]áḫar) *ana panīšu*(igi-*šu*) *la*(nu) *kašād*(kur) *ṣibûti*(áš) *kur-gi-ru līmurma*(igi-*ma*) *pa-šír*

[If a vessel[?] (or[?]) a b]owl is in front of him: (for) not being cursed,[886] he should look at a *kurgarrû*. It is undone.[887]

Bottéro and Petschow explained that the text recommends looking at a *kurgarrû* for avoiding the misfortune involved in coming upon a "broken pot". They deduced therefore, that in sexual terms, the *kurgarrû* was as incomplete and flawed as a metaphoric "broken pot".[888] The problem with this interpretation is that the bowl in question is not said to be broken at all. The omen that follows the one quoted above seems to convey a similar idea:

Tablet Funck 3,32[889]

[*šumma*(diš) … *a*]*na panīšu*(igi-*šu*) *sa-ḫi-ip la*(nu) *kašād*(kur) *ṣibûti*(áš) *kurgarrî* (kur-‹gar›-ra) *līmurma*(igi-*ma*) *pa-š*[*ír*]

[If …] lies flat[?] [i]n front of him: (for) not being cursed,[890] he should look at a *kurgarrû*. It is undone.

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[883] Literally, "live by his command".

[884] Henshaw 1994: 285.

[885] See Köcher and Oppenheim 1957–58: 76.

[886] Literally, "not reaching a curse".

[887] For this translation of *pašir*, regarded as a term concluding omens, see CAD P: 239, s.v. "*pašāru* 2d". For earlier discussion of the term *pašāru*, see Oppenheim 1956: 217–225.

[888] Bottéro and Petschow 1972–75, RlA 4: 465, s.v. "Homosexualität".

[889] See Köcher and Oppenheim 1957–58: 76.

[890] Literally, "not reaching a curse".

Due to the break in the beginning of the line, the exact ominous phenomenon de-
scribed in the protasis is unknown; however, the apodosis is identical to that of the
previous omen, assuming that the emendation kur-‹gar›-ra is correct. So, here again,
looking at a *kurgarrû* is perceived as an apotropaic measurement. These two pas-
sages should be compared with the above-mentioned hemerology text, where the
king was required to look at a *kurgarrû* in order to avert the negative effect of a
moon eclipse. The question is whether the perspective expressed by Bottéro and
Petschow is justified. How should we interpret looking at a *kurgarrû* as a means of
protection against evil? Is this an indication that the *kurgarrû* was metaphorically
perceived as similar to the ill-fated event illustrated in the protasis, or, on the con-
trary, as opposed to it? In other words, if the occurrence described was negative, and
the *kurgarrû* constituted its remedy, does it mean that the *kurgarrû* himself was
regarded positively or negatively? Were the evil powers of the *kurgarrû* perceived
as a means to counteract the evil described in the protasis, or, on the contrary, as his
positive magical effect? These questions remain open for our speculations.

In the Neo-Assyrian *maqlû* series of incantations, a *kurgarrû* appeared among a
list of possible male and female suspects in committing a murder, all of whom were
considered as possessing witchcraft abilities:

maqlû **Tablet 4,76, 83**[891]

76 *šiptu*(én) *at-ti-man-nu kaššāptu*(munus uš$_{11}$-zu) *šá zikurudâ*(zi-ku$_5$-ru-da-*a*)
 ēpuša(dù-*ša*)

83 *lu-u* lú*kur-gar-ru-u lu-u saḫ-ḫi-ru*

76 Incantation: Whoever you are, sorceress, who has committed a murder …[892]

83 whether a *kurgarrû*, whether a *sāḫiru*-sorcerer …

The *kurgarrû* in this passage is ascribed similar evil magical qualities as various
sorcerers and sorceresses that are capable of performing a hex causing the cutting of
one's throat (*zikurudû*, from Sumerian zi-ku$_5$-ru-da). Later in the text, *kurgarrû*s are
listed again among several groups of practitioners (sorcerers, witches and others)
who are ascribed the ability to perform harmful magic. This time their powers are
used in assistance to the witch whom the victim addresses:

maqlû **Tablet 7,92–96**[893]

92 [*e*] *ú-ba-'-kim-ma kurgarrê*(lúkur-gar-ra^{meš}) lú*eš-še-bi-e*

93 *rikiski*(dur-*ki*) *a-ḫi-pi*

94 *kaššāpē*(lúuš$_{11}$-zu^{meš}) *li-pu-šu-ki rikiski*(dur-*ki*) *a-ḫi-pi*

95 *kaššāpāti*(munusuš$_{11}$-zu^{meš}) *li-pu-šu-ki rikiski*(dur-*ki*) *a-ḫi-pi*

96 *kurgarrê*(lúkur-gar-ra^{meš}) *li-pu-šu-ki rikiski*(dur-*ki*) *a-ḫi-pi*

92 [Hey!] I shall seek for you (= the witch) *kurgarrû*s and ecstatics,

93 I shall break your (= the witch's) bands!

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[891] See Meier 1937: 31. For a recent translation of this passage, see Abusch and Schwemer
2008: 157,80, 89.

[892] Literally, "performed the magic of throat-cutting"; see CAD E: 225, s.v. "*epēšu* 2c".

[893] See Meier 1937: 50. For a recent translation of this passage, see Abusch and Schwemer
2008: 173,88–91.

94 Sorcerers may *assist*[894] you (= the witch), (but) I shall break your bands!
95 Sorceresses may *assist* you, (but) I shall break your bands!
96 *kurgarrû*s may *assist* you, (but) I shall break your bands!

The incantation continues with an enumeration of several more male and female magicians who might assist the evil witch. We can see that, in this context, as well as the previous one, the *kurgarrû* appears to be portrayed as a negative figure, capable of collaborating with evil magicians and sorceresses. These two attestations remind us of the composition BM 96692, where Dumuzi sought a divine assistance against an unspecified harm caused to him by the "treacherous *kurgarrû*". It is possible that both compositions reflect the same view, perceiving the *kurgarrû* as possessing these qualities.

The last text to be discussed in the current section, where a *kurgarrû* is mentioned, is a Late Babylonian incantation:

SpTU 2.24 = W 22647 obv. 1–3[895]
1 [*šip*]*tu*([é]n) *am-min₄-ì nussuḫāta*(zi-ta₅) *kīma*(gin₇) *nēši*(ur-maḫ)
2 *ḫu-uṣ-ṣu-ṣa-a-ta₅ kīma*(gin₇) *barbari*(ur-bar-ru)
3 *puḫra*(ukkin) *pu-uḫ-ḫu-ra-a-ta₅ kīma*(gin₇) *kurgarrî*(ᴸᶸkur-gar-ra)
1 Incantation: Why do you uproot like a lion,
2 snap like a wolf,
3 gather the assembly like a *kurgarrû*?

This passage opens an incantation that was meant to seek well-wishes for its performer, while its opening passage was directed at possible opponents of the performer. Maul suggested that the assembly mentioned in line 3 was that of the *annunaki*, gods of the netherworld, responsible for deciding people's fate.[896] This suggestion might allude to the myth of *Inanna's Descent to the Netherworld*, where the *kurgarrû* and galaturra descend to the realm of the dead and revive the dead Inanna, held imprisoned by her sister Ereškigal and the assembly of the *annunaki*.

assinnu and kurgarrû in Omen and Incantation Texts: Conclusions
The aim of this section was two-fold. First, we have examined the attestation of the *assinnu* and the *kurgarrû* in texts that detailed interpretations of various omens. Second, we analyzed the evidence of rituals and incantations where these two figures appeared. In these rituals and incantations, the *assinnu* and *kurgarrû* participated actively, while in the omens they were mentioned in a more hypothetical manner, as an observable phenomenon that may or may not occur, their role lacking any performative aspect. Some of the omens that were examined did not contribute concrete information concerning the *assinnu* or the *kurgarrû*. However, a group of

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[894] Literally, "do". It is suggested in CAD (K: 558, s.v. "*kurgarrû* a") that the phrase refers to protective magical means applied by the *kurgarrû* in assistance to the evil witch ("in case the *k.*-s have protected you with counter-charms").
[895] See von Weiher 1993: 126. Transliteration follows CAMS (http://oracc.org/cams/gkab/ sptu_2,_024/).
[896] Maul 1992: 159.

omens from the *šumma ālu* series provided evidence possibly associating the *assinnu* with passive homosexual conduct. As for the corpus of rituals and incantations, we saw that, in most of them, the *assinnu* and the *kurgarrû* were depicted as figures that possessed apotropaic qualities, so that their touch or mere sight could have protected or healed a person. However, on rare occasions the *kurgarrû* was perceived not only as capable of warding off evil, but, paradoxically also of casting evil upon the individual. Some of the incantations in which the *kurgarrû* was involved bore resemblances to narrative and mythical episodes, especially *Inanna's Descent*. This should not surprise us, since it seems reasonable that the super-human qualities ascribed to the *assinnu* and the *kurgarrû* resulted from the special connection they had with their patron goddess, Inanna/Ištar.

Chapter 4

lú-sag / *ša rēši* and Castration in the Ancient Near East

Introduction

The current chapter is different in several respects from other chapters of this book. In this chapter we survey the figure known by the logographic designation lú-sag, or Akkadian *ša rēši*, considered by many scholars to have been a palace eunuch. The relation between castrated people and males whose gender identity was ambiguous is by no means straightforward, and this is by and large what differentiates this chapter from the rest. It has to be explained on the start, however, that this association is by no means an anachronistic invention of modern scholars, nor was it made up by the present author.[897] As was already explained, the outline and boundaries of the group of persons discussed in this book were mostly delineated by numerous lexical lists and narrative or mythological compositions. These texts elucidate the connections between the various figures we examine, and testify to the semantics they shared. In the same way, such texts demonstrate that the lú-sag / *ša rēši* was considered by the Mesopotamians to be similar in certain ways to the gender ambiguous males surveyed throughout this book. It is therefore our task to explain why.

The lú-sag / *ša rēši* was associated with the *girseqû* and the *tīru*. In the Short Recension of the igi-tuḫ list (ll. 232–234),[898] both lú-sag and *ša rēši* were attested in mutual context as *girseqû*. Furthermore, in the annals of Sennacherib (A1 = RINAP 3/1.1,32–33),[899] *ša rēši*s were documented in association with *tīru*s. As is demonstrated in this book, the *girseqû* and the *tīru* were associated with other third gender figures; hence, we see that the lú-sag / *ša rēši* was perceived as related to the whole phenomenon of male gender ambiguity by the ancient Mesopotamians. One cannot include the *girseqû* and the *tīru* in this discussion, but exclude the lú-sag / *ša rēši* from it. The common denominator of the titles lú-sag / *ša rēši*, *girseqû* and *tīru*, at least from the Old Babylonian period onwards, was probably castration, or, for the very least, institutionalized lack of procreation. We must bear in mind, however, that the relevant evidence concerning the lú-sag / *ša rēši* derives almost exclusively from Assyria, and especially from the Neo-Assyrian period. This important point is discussed further below.

It can be suggested, therefore, that eunuchs belong to the discussion of male gender ambiguity because, as was noted in the introduction, procreation was one of the most crucial features of hegemonic masculine gender imagery in the ancient Near East. Its absence, for any reason, caused the individual to be regarded as less manly than the minimum required to qualify for being considered a socially acceptable normative man who belonged to the dominant hegemonic masculinity.

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[897] For the association of eunuchs with male ambiguous figures in Mesopotamia, see also Wiggermann 2010, RlA 12: 424, s.v. "Sexualität. A".

[898] See Landsberger and Gurney 1957–58: 83.

[899] See Luckenbill 1924: 52, Grayson and Novotny 2012: 34, http://cdli.ucla.edu/P422291.

This assertion can be supported both by social theory and comparative history. Beginning with theory, as explained by Connell, the biological framework of masculinity is often understood by one of two possible approaches. The first can be seen as biologically-oriented, as it considers masculinity to stem from men's bodies. The body is perceived as a natural machine, which generates gender differences by means of genetics, hormones, and the different roles men and women posses in the reproduction process. The alternative approach is more socially-oriented, and considers the human body as a neutral *tabula rasa*, into which social symbolisms are introduced. These two conflicting views, associated by Connell to "the old 'nature vs. nurture' controversy", gave way to a middle approach that combined them. According to this third approach, the combination of biology and social conventions is what dictates behavioral gender differences.[900]

Connell, however, rejected all three views as erroneous,[901] and offered alternatively that the relations between men's bodies and masculinity should be viewed against the background of social processes, the politics of the body, social symbolism and control.[902] However, since, as Connell himself noted,[903] this approach is only valid for interpreting our contemporary Western society, one may question how legitimate it is to apply it to past societies as well.

Connell further stressed that the human body is highly influenced by gender. The body exists and evolves within social gender arrangements, which, in turn, follow from it.[904] We should therefore consider bodily features as inseparable from social customs of sexuality and gender. Eunuchs and castration must be considered against this background: "Bodies are both *objects of* social practice and *agents in* social practice."[905] According to Connell, the reproduction of children stands at the very core of the gender system. Since human bodily properties are influenced by the social order and gender norms, and in return, influence them, a highly elaborated system of social conventions manipulates the individual to act according to varying norms of conduct within the reproduction process. Connell termed this the "reproductive arena", within which social conventions, bodily physical features and reproduction meet. Children, naturally, are at the core of this discussion: "What we must recognize about gender … is that the reproductive arena very much concerns children. Not all sex results in pregnancy, of course… But the fact that children do arrive this way, and have to be nurtured and taught, and will become the next generation of parents, matters immensely for any society that intends to last much beyond next Thursday. The way caring for children is organized is a large part of the domain of gender."[906] Reproduction got everything to do with gender, and therefore so do eunuchs.

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[900] Connell 2005: 45–52, 2009: 52–60.

[901] As Connell (2005: 52) put it, "If biological determinism is wrong, and social determinism is wrong, then it is unlikely that a combination of the two will be right."

[902] Connell 2005: 52–66.

[903] Connell 2005: 52.

[904] Connell 2009: 54, 66–71.

[905] Connell 2009: 67; italics in original.

[906] Connell 2009: 66–71.

Turning to historical parallels, it was already mentioned in the introduction of the book that eunuchs were employed in various royal courts throughout human history. In what follows we briefly consider the relation between eunuchs and gender ambiguity in Roman and Byzantine periods.

Kuefler noted that in the Roman world, "the gender ambiguity of the eunuch … disturbed and challenged those notions of the absolute divide between male and female." He further claimed that in the Roman society the differences between the sexes led to differences between gender roles. This, however, was an ideal model that did not actually exit in real life. In order to resolve the complexities of the occasional blurring of this dichotomy, for example, hermaphrodites were assigned male identity, in spite of their sexual ambiguity, because of the existence and supposed functionality of their male genitals. Eunuchs formed a problem for the Romans, because their very existence as sterile men threatened the system of sexual differences, and by that, that of masculine privilege.[907] In Kuefler's words, "The eunuch was therefore a daily challenge to Roman notions of the natural categories of gender."[908]

Roman writers occasionally referred to the gender ambiguity of eunuchs, by ascribing them moral attributes characteristics of women: "carnal, irrational, voluptuous, fickle, manipulative and deceitful."[909] Thus, eunuchs were sometimes referred to as *molles* ("soft"), *effeminati* ("effeminate") and *semiviri* ("half-men"), terms otherwise used by the Romans to describe unmanly men. Kuefler concluded that, in Roman social standards, "Eunuchs were unmanly both in a moral and anatomical sense."[910]

In the Byzantine Empire, eunuchs occasionally assumed great political power. Ringrose noted that they were sub-divided to several categories. In the mind of Byzantine society, eunuchs were considered to have formed a separate gender category, "neither male nor female", which underwent substantial changes throughout the millennium of its existence. In terms of sexual categorization, Byzantine eunuchs were considered to be men, even though their genitals were removed. In terms of gender categorization, according to Ringrose, "eunuchs constituted a third gender within Byzantium. They were men, but a differently acculturated kind of men."

The separation between the genders in Byzantine society was based on the domains reserved for men (procreate, head household, manage worldly affairs) and for women (bear children, care for dependents, manage affairs within the household). The gender category of Byzantine eunuchs was constructed around the separation of eunuchs from reproduction and family obligations, and their suitability to perform their service in the court. Ringrose noted two major aspects in the construction of gender identity of Byzantine eunuchs: "eunuchs as a generalized social category, with a range of assigned attributes", and "eunuchs as identifiable individuals who made the general patterns concrete and who played important historical roles in

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[907] Kuefler 2001: 19–24, 31.
[908] Kuefler 2001: 32 and n. 53, including previous literature.
[909] Kuefler 2001: 35 and n. 68.
[910] Kuefler 2001: 35.

Byzantine life." Ringrose noted that all negative attributes of Byzantine eunuchs derived from ones ascribed to women, while most positive ones were common to men. This fact, she maintained, is suggestive as to the social construction of gender categories, and assumptions concerning gender characteristics in Byzantine society.

The physiology and appearance of Byzantine eunuchs were altered, and subsequently they were raised in exceptional environment in which they were trained to perform specific roles. Thus, according to Ringrose, "The "thirdness" of the eunuch is an important part of his gender construct." She claimed that Byzantine eunuchs "made their contemporaries uneasy because they were seen to move too readily between the worlds of men and women…"[911]

Ringrose associated the gender image of the eunuch with his lack of procreative ability: "… a man was classed as a eunuch because he could not procreate … Fertility, like life, was essential to the definition of manliness; therefore, eunuchs were not fully men."[912] Thus, Byzantine eunuchs formed a distinct gender category of their own, distinguished by their attire, supposed sexual conduct, work, external appearance, and the quality of their voice.[913] The roles they performed were varied: they functioned as private servants of the emperor and empress, supervisors of cooking, food serving and dressing, managers of the royal bedchamber, guardians of the inner quarter of the palace, supervisors of ceremonies and were responsible for bookkeeping and financial management.[914]

In the broader sense, this chapter will also examine the wider topic of castration in Mesopotamia and the ancient Near East. Castration constitutes an obvious means by which a person could be related to a third gender, since it alters the male person's biology to the extent that it does not match his original sex anymore.[915] As for the investigation of the lú-sag / *ša rēši*, it has to be stressed that this chapter does not aim at presenting and analyzing all available textual attestations of this figure, but only those relevant for our understanding of their gender identity, which, as explained, was related to their castration.

The contribution of the current chapter to our understanding of the lú-sag / *ša rēši* lies in the new perspective it offers, rather than being an exhaustive survey of the numerous attestations of these persons. For such surveys, the reader is referred to various comprehensive studies that have already been conducted in the past.[916] This chapter is comprised of three parts: The first supplies a brief survey of the lú-sag / *ša*

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[911] Ringrose 2003: 3–7.

[912] Ringrose 2003: 16–17.

[913] Ringrose 2003: 29.

[914] Ringrose 2003: 82.

[915] For discussions of historical and anthropological case-studies, such as the *galli*, *hijra* and *bissu*, exemplifying this phenomenon, see Introduction, pp. 30–32.

[916] See, among others, Grayson 1995, Deller 1999, Dalley 2001 and 2002, Hawkins 2002 and Tadmor 2002. For a brief discussion of eunuchs in Mesopotamia, see, most recently, Ambos 2009. On the title *ša rēši* in the Neo-Assyrian period, see, recently, Siddall 2007. For a recent survey of courtiers, including *ša rēši*, in first-millennium Babylonia, see Jursa 2011. For a recent discussion of eunuchs in the ancient Near East and the Hebrew Bible, see Lemos 2011. For a recent account of the Neo-Assyrian royal women's quarters, see Parpola 2012.

rēši along Mesopotamian history, in order to present the historical setting in which these figures operated and the functions and roles they fulfilled. This is followed by the second and main part of the chapter, which encompasses several discussions of various aspects of the lú-sag / *ša rēši* as castrated figures. The third and closing part of the chapter addresses the clinical aspect of castration, and is meant to complete the evidence gathered from the historical data, and to present a coherent picture of eunuchs in past and present times.

In 1889 Zimmern referred to the Akkadian term *ša rēši*, equated it with the biblical *sārîs*, and further equated Akkadian *rab ša rēši* with biblical *rab sārîs*. Zimmern regarded the term as designating eunuchs, and translated it as "der Hauptmann".[917] This was the earliest equation made by scholars between *ša rēši* and eunuchs in the ancient Near East, which gave way to an ongoing debate, which has not been settled to this day. More than a century later, Hawkins commented that "our Akkadian dictionaries adopt a sceptical approach to the interpretation of *ša rēši* as "eunuch"."[918] The matter is complicated, as indeed no explicit reference exists for the castration of these officials. Grayson and Hawkins suggested that originally the term *ša rēši* denoted servants and attendants generally, both castrated and non-castrated ones, and that at a certain point its meaning changed, denoting "castrate" specifically.[919] Therefore, as was noted by previous researchers,[920] and as will be demonstrated in the current chapter, there is a fundamental difference between the group of figures presently discussed and those examined in the previous chapters. While the chief sphere of activity of the gala/*kalû*, *assinnu* and *kurgarrû* was the cultic performance, the lú-sag / *ša rēši* was preeminently involved in the palace administration. Evidence for his performance in high positions in the royal court exists from as early as the Old Babylonian period, but mostly derives from the Neo-Assyrian and Neo-Babylonian periods, while the office continued to exist well into the Persian period.[921]

Numerous difficulties arise when attempting to comprehend the exact nature of the lú-sag / *ša rēši*, his role and functions. Even the mere translation of the term is not agreed upon. Conventionally, it is literally understood as "(one) of the head";[922] however, other translations were offered as well, such as "man with two heads",[923] and "one who is at the head".[924] The conventional view is well reflected in Hawkins, who considered this term as bearing the basic sense of "attendant", deriving from the phrase *ina rēši izuzzu*, "stand at the head, attend upon".[925]

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[917] Zimmern 1889: 116 n. 2.

[918] Hawkins 2002: 220. See, similarly, Deller 1999: 304 and Tadmor 2002: 605.

[919] Grayson 1995: 90, Hawkins 2002: 218.

[920] See, among others, Grayson 1995: 94 and Deller 1999: 303.

[921] See Brinkman 1968: 311.

[922] See Brinkman 1968: 310 n. 2068, who explained the phrase as "presumably referring to the position of an attendant standing at the head of or near an individual", and Grayson 1995: 90, who suggested the meaning "Chief", "an important functionality".

[923] Dalley 2002: 121–122.

[924] Everhart 2003: 71.

[925] Hawkins 2002: 218, following CAD R: 279, s.v. "*rēšu* 1d1'a'" and AHw: 973.

However, Dalley offered a different interpretation altogether, by claiming that the term *ša rēši* should be understood as a dual form. She interpreted it as denoting "(man) with two heads", *ša rēšē(n)* being a translation of Sumerian sag-tab-ba, "second head" according to her. In Dalley's view, the term reflected originally the concept of bisexual mythical creatures in Mesopotamian thought. According to her, some Neo-Assyrian aristocrats assumed this term as a title, in order to distinguish themselves from the common people, and be related to godly beings and a mythical past.[926] However, these explanations are restricted to the Neo-Assyrian example alone, and thus cannot be applied to other historical periods or to other cultures of the ancient Near East. Most importantly, understanding the term lú-sag / *ša rēši* as a dual form seems unwarranted, since it almost never appears as such in the texts themselves.[927] The dual form seems to be the exception to the rule, which requires a different explanation than the standard understanding of the term.[928]

The synonymy between the logographic writing lú-sag and the Akkadian term *ša rēši* was proved by the following entries from the igi-tuḫ lexical list:

igi-tuḫ list, Short Recension, 232–233[929]

232 lú-sag	*šá re-šu*	(he) of the head
233 lú-sag-lugal	min *šar-ri*	(he) of the head of the king

Final confirmation to this equation was found in two seal impressions of Hittite officials, one found in Ḫattuša and the other in Ugarit. The first was a bulla of the official Piḫatarḫunta, found at the Nişantepe archive in Ḫattuša. Piḫatarḫunta's title in the bulla[930] was written both in cuneiform and in Hieroglyphic Luwian. The former was ⌈pi⌉-ḫa-ᵈU LÚ-SA[G], while the latter was *pi-ḫa*-TONITRUS L.254 (= EUNUCHUS₂). We can therefore see that, according to this digraphic inscription, the Hieroglyphic Luwian sign L.254 (= EUNUCHUS₂) was paralleled with the logographic term lú-sag. Several seal impressions of another Hittite dignitary, Taprammi,[931] were found in the same archive.[932] Taprammi was designated ˡᵘ*ša rēši ekalli*, "eunuch of the palace", twice in a text from Ugarit that also bore his seal impression.[933] In this impression, Taprammi was designated PITHOS.VIR. DOMINUS, EUNUCHUS₂,[934] as the Hieroglyphic Luwian equivalence of the Akkadian title ˡᵘ*ša rēši ekalli* that appears in the letter itself. So here the Hieroglyphic

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[926] Dalley 2002: 121–122.

[927] Dalley consistently used in her transcriptions the dual form *ša rēšēn*, even when the textual attestations did not exhibit it. As noted by Deller (1999: 304), this form is only attested in the MAL.

[928] See discussion of the term *ša rēšēn* in the MAL bellow.

[929] See Landsberger and Gurney 1957–58: 83.

[930] For the seal photograph and drawing, see Herbordt 2005: Tafel 24 no. 305 a+b.

[931] For a prosopographical survey of this high official and the suggestion that he fulfilled the role of a chief-eunuch in the Hittite court, see Peled 2013b: 790–794.

[932] Nişantepe nos. 408 and 409. Another seal impression that bears his name is SBo II no. 92.

[933] RS 17.231,9, 16, see Nougayrol 1956: 238 and, recently, Lackenbacher 2002: 294–295. For the seal photograph and drawing, see Laroche 1956: 55, Figs. 76 and 77.

[934] Reading by Hawkins (2002: 225–226).

Luwian sign L.254 (= EUNUCHUS₂) was equivalent to the Akkadian term *ša rēši*. Therefore, the two seals of Piḫatarḫunta and Taprammi exhibit the same Hieroglyphic Luwian sign, L.254 (= EUNUCHUS₂), as parallel to lú-sag and to *ša rēši*, which proves that the two latter terms were synonymous.

1. lú-sag / *ša rēši*: Brief Chronological Survey of the Titles

The opening section of this chapter will present a general survey of the persons designated as lú-sag / *ša rēši*, arranged in a chronological order. This survey is meant to supply the historical framework for the discussions of these persons' gender identities, which appear in the following sections. Since the purpose of the current chapter is not to discuss all aspects of the lú-sag / *ša rēši*, but only those pertaining to his gender identity as a castrated person, this historical survey is given in an abbreviated manner, mentioning only the most noticeable attestations of this figure in Mesopotamian history.

The title lú-sag is known from at least the ED IIIa period (2600–2500 BCE), where it was documented in a version of the lú list of professions *Early Dynastic List E*,[935] and in a list of names and professions.[936] However, we cannot be certain whether in this early period it denoted a palace attendant, and there is certainly no evidence that this person was castrated. Administrative texts from this period,[937] as well as from Ur III[938] mention this title, but these laconic attestations tell nothing about the figure and its characteristics. An Old Akkadian legal text mentions a lú-sag, as well as a gala,[939] while the term is further attested in a list of names and professions from Ebla, ca. 2350–2250 BCE.[940]

Later on, the *ša rēši* is referred to twice in the *šumma izbu* omen series,[941] and in extispicy texts.[942] In these attestations he is portrayed as a member of the palace personnel, and as a figure that poses a threat to the king or prince. In the Mari texts, several attestations of these functionaries exist[943] that show that they belonged to the

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[935] lú-sag-[k]al in OIP 99.54 obv. vii 13 (= l. 139); see MSL 12: 19 and Biggs 1974: 82, copy in Pl. 30.

[936] igi-LAM-LAM lú-sag in OIP 99.61 obv. vi 20a-b (= ll. 148–149); see Biggs 1974: 66, photo in Pl. 35.

[937] See, for example, TSS 1 obv. iv 13 (see Edzard, Farber and Sollberger 1976: 169).

[938] See, for example, CT 1.12–13 rev. ii 8 (see Pettinato 1969), DAS 116 rev. 1 (see Lafont 1985), HLC 8 rev. ii 3 (see Barton 1909), ITT 2.726 obv. i 9 (see, most recently, Lafont and Yildiz 1989), MVN 22.25 rev. ii 12 (see Molina 2003), PDT 2.911 rev. i 8 (see Yildiz and Gomi 1988), TCTI 2.3991 rev. iv 1' (see Lafont and Yildiz 1996), UET 3.255 rev. 1 and 361 obv. 4 (see Legrain 1937).

[939] DAM 0–164 obv. 7; gala (this might be part of a personal name rather than the profession) is attested in rev. 1, see Goetze 1966a: 126.

[940] MEE 3.43+ iix 2b (see Pettinato 1981).

[941] See Tablet 14,24 (see Leichty 1968: 154 and De Zorzi 2014: 703) and Tablet 21,8 (see Leichty 1968: 185 and De Zorzi 2014: 844). The origins of the series are Old Babylonian, though the copies mentioned here are Neo-Assyrian.

[942] See YOS 10.25,61, 46 ii 23 and 59 rev. 2 (see Goetze 1966b).

[943] See, for example, ARM 1.31,30, 2.25 rev. 5, 2.140,22, 3.7,14, 4.2,12, 4.17,17, 13.43,14,

palace administration and were engaged in a wide variety of tasks. In the Middle Assyrian court functionaries titled *ša rēš šarri*, "*ša rēši* of the king", officiated in high posts in the administration, and two of them even held eponyms.[944]

By and large, most of the textual attestations of Mesopotamian *ša rēši* officials derive from the Neo-Assyrian period.[945] At that time, these individuals served in high-rank positions in the court, and were the king's closest advisors. Textual references to *ša rēš šarri*, "*ša rēši* of the king", testify to this official's close relations with the king and the ruling elite. The *ša rēši*s performed a variety of duties and posts in the palace, such as cooks, bakers, charioteers, doorkeepers, guards and scribes. They could hold several high-ranking posts simultaneously, such as *masennu*, "treasurer",[946] *rab šāqê*, "chief cup-bearer", *nāgir ekalli*, "palace herald" and *turtānu*, "commander-in-chief".[947] The *ša rēši*s are sporadically attested even outside the palace administration, as attendants of private citizens, fulfilling a variety of tasks.[948]

A "chief-eunuch" (*rab ša rēši*) supervised these officials in the palace. At times he acted as a special envoy of the king, and on numerous occasions even served as a military commander.[949] The *rab ša rēši* appears to be one of the key-figures in the Neo-Assyrian court, which gained growing power in the course of time. On one occasion, a *rab ša rēši* actually became the ruling king of Assyria – however, for a short period of time. That person was Sîn-šumu-lēšir, *rab ša rēši* of Aššurbanipal and his successor, Aššur-etel-ilāni. Following the death of the latter, Sîn-šumu-lēšir became king himself, only to be killed by Nabopalassar some three months later.[950] The posts of *ša rēši* and *rab ša rēši* continued to exist in the Neo- and Late Babylonian periods,[951] maintaining the characteristics of their professions from the Neo-

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14.47,11, 14, 14.92,5, 27.107 rev. 15', ARMT 22.29,1, 22.160,7, 23.594,7 and 26.40,23. For a survey of the titles lú-sag / *ša rēši* / *šūt rēši* in the Mari texts, see Oppenheim 1973: 327 and CAD R: 292, s.v. "*rēšu* in *ša rēši* A (*šūt rēši*) 1a1'".

[944] Uṣur-namkūr-šarri and Libūr-zānin-Aššur; see Jakob 2003: 88–90. Generally on the *ša rēš šarri* officials in the Middle Assyrian period, see Jakob 2003: 82–92.

[945] For a hypothetical reconstruction of the course of training and career of a *ša rēši* in the Assyrian court, see Deller 1999: 306.

[946] See Deller 1999: 308.

[947] For textual attestations of *ša rēši*s officiating these posts, see Mattila 2000: 131. The translations given here for these titles follow Mattila 2000: 161.

[948] See Grayson 1995: 94–95.

[949] See Grayson 1995: 93–94 and n. 49 and Mattila 2000: 70–76 (textual attestations), 153–154 (discussion). For a detailed survey of the office of *rab ša rēši* and the persons holding it; see Tadmor 2002: 607–611.

[950] See Tadmor 2002: 610 and n. 45–47, including previous literature, and Na'aman 2005: 308–310, 316–320, including previous literature.

[951] Two North Arabian Thamudic graffiti from Tayma mentioned an unnamed *rab ša rēši* of Nabonidus, who led the Babylonian army on a military campaign; see Müller and Al-Said 2001: 110, 113. Two *ša rēš šarri*s gained the two highest positions (the offices of *bēl piqitti*, supervisor, and *ša muhhi quppi*, treasurer) in the administration of Eanna, Ištar's main temple in Uruk, in Nabonidus' reign; see Kümmel 1979: 137–138, 144–146. In Achaemenid Sippar, two *ša rēš šarri*s were appointed to these same posts in the Ebabbar temple; see Bongenaar

Assyrian period, as described here.

It can be summarized that the lú-sag / *ša rēši* was a palace attendant, whose chief functionality at certain periods was supervising women's quarters in the palace,[952] a place into which access was not allowed to any man but the king himself. As is explained in the following section, it is probable that these supervisors were required to be castrated, in order to prevent any possibility that a royal concubine will bear a child to anyone other than the king. Such a sensitive position was undoubtedly carried out by persons who enjoyed much trust from the king, and were very close to him. This fact allowed them to gain much power and extend their authority and range of activities to other domains in the royal court, such as the army. The chief of the eunuchs, the *rab ša rēši*, became increasingly powerful, to such a degree that at least once he became the ruling monarch of the Neo-Assyrian empire.

2. lú-sag / *ša rēši*: The Evidence of Castration

We will continue now with a presentation of the information concerning the lú-sag / *ša rēši* that bears clear relevance to the question of his castration. The first issue to be addressed is the implementation of castration as a corporal punishment in the Middle Assyrian Laws. The evidence will be presented and discussed, as well as the different ways various scholars have interpreted it. Thereafter, we will evaluate the custom of using castrated persons in the palace bureaucracy, as evident in the so-called Middle Assyrian Palace Decrees and in Hittite royal oaths taken by eunuchs of the court. A letter that was found in Ugarit (RS 17.144), which mentions a young boy that was sent to the palace in order to become a eunuch there, will be considered in the same context. We will continue with a discussion of the involvement of lú-sag / *ša rēši* in Neo-Assyrian cult, and assess the interpretations of scholars regarding the connection between eunuchs and Ištar during this period. Thereafter, the evidence for the lú-sag / *ša rēši* as figures who typically lack the ability to procreate will be presented. This aspect is strongly connected with the question of castration, and assists in comprehending the nature and gender identity of the lú-sag / *ša rēši*. The complicated issue of castration and self-emasculation in Mesopotamian cult will be treated next. As will be explained, misconceptions surround the scholarly debate over this issue, which requires many clarifications. Subsequently, we will address the non-textual evidence concerning eunuchs. We will consider the meaning and implications of iconographic representations of sexually ambiguous figures, and the glyptic evidence depicting eunuchs. Lastly, we will discuss the biblical accounts of eunuchs and castration. It will be demonstrated that, even though several explicit references proscribed castration and self-infliction wounds, eunuchs indeed officiated in the palace administration. Further, several attestations pointing to their cas-

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1997: 423, 425. For a discussion on *ša rēši*s in the Ebabbar temple during this period, see Bongenaar 1997: 99–112. See also De Zorzi and Jursa 2011, for a new evidence of the documentation of *ša rēši* in the Late Babylonian period.

[952] For the pertinent evidence in this regard in the Middle Assyrian Palace Decrees, and in Hittite texts, see below, pp. 214–219, and Peled 2013b: 785–789.

tration will be examined.

These discussions will encompass textual references to the lú-sag / *ša rēši* as castrated figures, in order to supply a comprehensive appraisal of their gender identity. Because these persons were castrated in institutionalized contexts, they are the only known figures in Mesopotamian history about whose castration we have clear knowledge. Therefore, their status and roles in society will be evaluated against this background.

2.1. Castration as a Corporal Punishment in the Middle Assyrian Laws

One of the most revealing textual testimonies for institutionalized castration in Mesopotamia appears in the MAL, where clauses § § 15 and 20 decree castration as punishment. The corpus of the MAL consisted of fourteen tablets, designated by modern scholars as Tablets "A" to "O". These laws were originally composed in the fourteenth century; however, most of the tablets that we have at our disposal nowadays are later copies, dated to the eleventh century. All the tablets were inscribed in the capital city of Aššur, and most of them (besides "A" and several excerpts from "B" and "O") were found so far in only one copy.[953] Law § 15 addresses a case of adultery, and stipulates the punishment of the adulteress woman and her lover:

> **MAL § 15,51–57**[954]
> 51 *šum-ma mu-ut sinnilte*(munus) *aššassu*(dam-*su*) *i-du-ak*
> 52 *ù a-i-la i-du-ak-ma*
> 53 *šum-ma ap-pa ša aššitišu*(dam-*šu*) *i-na-ki-is*
> 54 *a'īla*(lú) *a-na ša re-še-en ú-tar*
> 55 *ù pa-ni-šu gab-ba i-na-qu-ru*
> 56 *ù šum-ma aššass[u*(dam-*su*) *ú-uš-šar]*
> 57 *a'īla*(lú) *ú[-uš-šar]*
> 51 If the husband of the woman kills his wife,
> 52 he shall also kill the man (= the adulterer);
> 53 If he cuts off the nose of his wife,
> 54 he shall turn the man into a *ša rēšēn*,
> 55 and they will completely mutilate his face;
> 56 And if [he releases] his wife,
> 57 [he shall] (also) re[lease] the man.

The above law seems to instruct that a man fornicating with a married woman might be subjected to castration and facial mutilation, as punishment for his misbehavior.

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[953] For publications and discussions of the MAL, see, among others, Driver and Miles 1935, Cardascia 1969, Saporetti 1979, Borger 1982: 80–92 (only of tablet "A") and Roth 1997: 153–194. For a list of copies of the MAL, see Roth 1997: 253. For a general survey of Law in the Middle Assyrian period, see Lafont 2003: 521–563.

[954] See Driver and Miles 1935: 388. For a recent treatment and translation of this law, see Roth 1997: 158, 2014: 161.

However, Dalley offered a completely different interpretation of this law and rejected the existence of castration in its apodosis. Instead of understanding the verb *utâr* (line 54) as "to be turned into", she suggested the meaning "to be turned over to". According to this interpretation, the adulterer's punishment is equal to that of the adulteress, namely, facial mutilation. This punishment, according to Dalley, was executed by the *ša rēšēn*-official, to whom the adulterer was "turned over". Dalley claimed that the common understanding of this law, as pertaining to castration, poses several difficulties. She asserted that this punishment would have been too severe, because the adulterer "will almost certainly die as a result of castration", and noted that this punishment is much greater than that of the adulteress.[955]

However, castration did not necessarily lead to death, especially if it was not a complete one. As we are unaware of the exact nature of the procedure, we cannot be sure that the punishment inflicted upon the adulterer was indeed equal to execution. Dalley's second reservation, that, according to the customary view of MAL § 15, the punishment of the adulterer was much harsher than that of the adulteress, seems reasonable, since the general custom of laws dealing with adultery in the various codices of the ancient Near East is indeed to stipulate an equal punishment for both male and female adulterers. However, the Middle Assyrian Laws are unique in many respects, and display on occasions verdicts that are harsh and exceptional compared to other law codices.[956] Castration could have been considered by the Assyrians as the adequate penalty for a crime committed by an adulterer, while cutting the nose of a woman could have been regarded as horrible and humiliating a punishment as cutting the genitals of a man.

It does not seem probable, however, that a *ša rēši* might be assigned the task of executing a corporal punishment in these two cases, as suggested by Dalley. There is certainly no parallel for that in the MAL, given that no specific official is ever mentioned as responsible for executing any of the verdicts in this collection. Moreover, as noted by Siddall, we would have expected the verb *inaddin*, "to give", to be used in such context as suggested by Dalley, rather than *utâr*, "to turn".[957] The second law from the Middle Assyrian corpus that appears to mention castration addresses a different topic, that of same-sex relations:

MAL § 20,93–97[958]
93 *šum-ma a'īlu*(lú) *tap-pa-a-šu i-ni-ik*
94 *ub-ta-e-ru-ú-uš*
95 *uk-ta-i-nu-ú-uš*
96 *i-ni-ik-ku-ú-uš*
97 *a-na ša re-še-en ú-tar-ru-uš*
93 If a man sodomizes his fellow man,
94 (and) they indict him,

[955] Dalley 2001: 200.
[956] See, in this regard, Lafont 2003: 553.
[957] Siddall 2007: 228.
[958] See Driver and Miles 1935: 390. For a recent treatment and translation of this law, see Roth 1997: 160, 2014: 161.

95 (and) they prove him (= his guilt):

96 they shall sodomize him;

97 they shall turn him into a *ša rēšēn*.

Both MAL § 15 and § 20 may contain a possible hint concerning the actual manner in which castration was performed. Deller suggested that the dual form *ša rēšēn* in these two laws reflected the meaning of "the one with two heads", a euphemism for "the one *without* two heads", namely, with mutilated testicles.[959] Even though Deller did not express it explicitly, accepting this interpretation may lead us further to a better understanding of the exact nature of this forced castration: not a complete removal of the genital organs, but only of the testicles.[960] This hypothesis, however tentative, is significant for our understanding of the nature of Mesopotamian eunuchs, as is explained below. Dalley regarded the reference in this law to *ša rēšēn* similarly as in MAL § 15, though she admitted that the possibility of castration "cannot be excluded".[961]

In conclusion, MAL § § 15 and 20 supply the only solid evidence for castration as official punishment in the ancient Near East. The reasons behind choosing this penalty for the felonies of adultery and homosexual relations[962] are not clear, especially since similar crimes in the MAL are not punished with a similar penalty. No other law collection uses castration as a means of punishment, which further emphasizes the peculiarity of MAL § § 15 and 20. However, attempts to interpret these laws differently, avoiding the meaning of castration, seem unconvincing.

2.2. lú-sag / *ša rēši* in the Palace Bureaucracy

The current section discusses the use of castrated officials in administrative systems. We will examine the evidence of two examples that belong roughly to the same time: the Middle Assyrian kingdom, and the Hittite kingdom. In both places the palatial administration documented rules and regulations that were stipulated for the palace personnel: a compilation known as *Palace Decrees* from Assyria, where several references were made to the *ša rēši* officials, and two royal oaths taken by the lú-sag officials of the Hittite court. We will examine the contents of these texts, compare them and view their contribution to our understanding of the lú-sag / *ša rēši*

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[959] Deller 1999: 304–305.

[960] See already Biggs (1969: 100), based however on the evidence from the *Middle Assyrian Palace Decrees*, for which see below. A certain comparison can be drawn from castration practices in the Byzantine period, where in most cases men were turned into eunuchs by removal of their testicles and, only rarely, by a removal of the penis as well (see Ringrose 1994: 91). Similarly, Everhart (2003: 23) maintained that across history castration was usually performed by removal of the testicles alone.

[961] Dalley 2001: 201.

[962] It is not clear whether the law was decreed in order to proscribe consensual homosexual relations (as suggested by Lambert 1992: 147 and Wold 1998: 45) or rape, which in this specific case was homoerotic (as suggested by Bottéro and Petschow 1972–75, RlA 4: 461–462, 467, s.v. "Homosexualität", Greenberg 1988: 126, Guinan 1997: 470 and Lafont 2003: 557).

as castrates. Furthermore, a letter that refers to a boy intended to become a eunuch in Ugarit will be presented and compared to the evidence of the texts from the Middle Assyrian kingdom and from Ḫatti.

    We therefore begin with the evidence of the *Middle Assyrian Palace Decrees* (henceforth, MAPD).[963] This group of instruction-texts stipulates the regulations of the royal women's quarters in the Assyrian palace. The collection was compiled during the reign of Tiglath-pileser I (ca. 1114–1076 BCE) and encompasses decrees composed by eight of the kings preceding him, together with four decrees of his own, making the time span covered by the collection roughly three centuries. Altogether, some 23 decrees constitute the whole compilation. All the copies were found in Aššur, the capital city of the Middle Assyrian kingdom.[964] In two of these compilations the vague term *marrur(u)*, which relates to an official entering the women's quarters, appears. Its first attestation is in the decree of Tukulti-Ninurta I:

Palace Decree no. 8,50–51[965]

50 *ki-i ma-zi-iz pa-ni*^meš *i-ḫi-ru-ú-ni lu-ú šá rēš*(sag) *šarri*(lugal) *lu-ú ma-zi-iz*
     pa-ni ša la-a mar-ru-ru-ni i-qa-bi-ú ša ša-nu-ut-[*te-š*]*u*
51 *a-na ma-zi-iz pa-nu-ut-te id-du-nu-uš*
50 When they inspect the courtiers,[966] they shall declare whether a *ša rēši* of the
     king or a courtier is not *checked*. For a second time,
51 they shall give him for "courtier-ship".

The same regulation reoccurs in a later decree, from the reign of Tiglath-pileser I:

Palace Decree no. 20,98[967]

šúm-ma la-a mar-ru-ur ša ša-nu-ut-te-šu a-na ma-zi-iz pa-nu-ut-te ú-ta[*r-r*]*u-šu*
If he is not *checked*, for a second time they shall tu[r]n him for "courtier-ship".

The term *marrur(u)* that appears in the above passages is not easily understood, and its translation here requires clarification. Oppenheim suggested that the term *marrur(u)* was a euphemism for "castrated".[968] According to his interpretation, the above passages stipulated the regulation that an official entering the royal women's quarters had to be castrated. In case his castration was found to be inadequate, he

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[963] These texts are also known in scholarly literature as "Middle Assyrian Harem Edicts".

[964] For publications and discussions of the MAPD, see, among others, Weidner 1954–56b, Grayson 1972: 46–47, 52–53, 78, 100, 130–132, 139–140, 142, 152, 1976: 42–44 and Roth 1997: 195–209. For a list of copies of the MAPD, see Roth 1997: 253–254.

[965] See Weidner 1954–56b: 276. For a recent treatment and translation of this decree, see Roth 1997: 200–201.

[966] *mazziz pani*, literally "one who stands in front". In CAD (M/1: 440, s.v. "*mazziz pani*") the term is translated as "court attendant, eunuch", and similarly by Roth (1997: 200): "court attendants".

[967] See Weidner 1954–56b: 286. For a recent treatment and translation of this decree, see Roth 1997: 205–206.

[968] Oppenheim 1973: 330 n. 17. See, similarly, AHw: 609 ("scharf, genau prüfen"), CAD M/2 s.v. "*murruru* B (*marruru*)": 223, and Roth's (1997: 200) translation of *marruru* as "castrated (lit.: who is not checked)".

was required to undergo a second procedure of castration. This interpretation gained general acceptance among scholars to this day.[969]

The term can be understood as a derivative of *marāru/marruru*, "bitter"; however, many other etymological origins could be suggested for this term: *murruru*, "to make bitter", *marāru*, "to leave, go away", and even *arāru*, "to curse, insult" or "to fear, become agitated, panic-stricken".[970] Any of these etymologies can be considered as a possible origin for the designation of a castrated palace attendant, as a person affiliated with bitterness, leaving, being cursed or being fearful. As it appears, etymology is of no significant assistance, and therefore it seems preferable to interpret *marrur(u)* contextually. Hence, the common understanding of this term in the MAPD as "checked", that is, "castrated" seems plausible. It should be noted, however, that the possibility that the *marrur(u)* was indeed a castrated official[971] was rejected by Dalley, who claimed that the verbal form of the term should be understood as "strengthen, confirm", and that the general meaning of the passages involves not castration, but rather the qualification required from those becoming courtiers.[972]

An interesting comparison can be made between the status of eunuchs as reflected in the MAPD and the status of eunuchs in the Hittite administration.[973] Officials designated as lú-sag in the Hittite bureaucracy are known from various textual records[974] and glyptic sources.[975] Even though much data exists on these officials, most of it reveals nothing with regard to the question of their possible castration and therefore will not be discussed here. The Hittite term for the logographic title lú-sag is hitherto unknown, since throughout the texts only the logogram is used for designating this title.[976] The major source of information about the lú-sag-officials in the Hittite bureaucracy is the corpus of instructions stipulated for them, in order to regulate their duties and activities.[977] These instructions are documented in two different compositions (of each several copies were found), and are regarded sometimes by scholars as loyalty-oaths, hence their designation as such on occasions in schol-

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[969] See, explicitly, CAD M/1 440–441, s.v. "*mazziz pani*" and "*mazziz panuttu*", and similarly Roth's (1997: 200–201, 205) translations of the term *mazziz panutte* in these two passages as "(castrated) court attendant".

[970] See CAD A/2: 234, 236, s.v. "*arāru*" A and B, M/1: 267, 268, s.v. "*marāru*" A and C, and M/2: 223, s.v. "*murruru* A (*marruru*)". Further on this term, and its possible relation to *tamrīrtu*, see Borger 1970: 169.

[971] As suggested explicitly by, among others, Landsberger (1967: 202), Oppenheim (1973: 330), Deller (1999: 305) and Hawkins (2002: 220).

[972] Dalley 2001: 202.

[973] For a comparison between the MAPD and the Hittite *Oaths of the Eunuchs*, see Peled 2013b: 786–789.

[974] For a survey of the textual attestations of the title lú-sag in the Hittite texts, see Pecchioli Daddi 1982: 513–515.

[975] For the glyptic evidence of the Nişantepe bullae archive, see Herbordt 2005 and Hawkins in Herbordt 2005.

[976] However, for a suggested Hittite equivalent, see further below.

[977] CTH 255.1+2, see edition and discussion in von Schuler 1967: 8–35.

arly literature.[978] Indeed, the first text (CTH 255.1) is designated by its colophon as follows:

KUB 26.1 iv 54–56[979]
[54]DUB 1[KAM] *ŠA MA-ME-TI* [55]*I-NA* URU *u-uš-ša* [56]*ŠA* LÚ[MEŠ]-SAG
[54]First tablet of the oath, [55]in the city of Ussa, [56]of the lú-sags.

Apparently, the evidence of the two texts shows that the lú-sags were closely related to the king and formed his innermost circle. The most significant part of these instructions, as much as the present research is concerned, appears in the following passages:

KUB 26.1 iv 29–45 // KUB 26.8 iv 16–32[980]
29 [(*INA* É[MEŠ]-*KU-N*)U-m]*a-aš-ma-aš ku-it* MUNUS[MEŠ] *tar-na-an e-eš-du*
30 [(*ki-i-ma ku-i*)*t INA*] É.LUGAL *na-aš ma-a-an ku-iš im-ma ku-iš*
31 [(MUNUS-*TUM ŠA*)] LUGAL *ma-a-na-aš* MUNUS.SUḪUR.LAL *ma-a-na-aš*
32 [(*EL-LU nu-za*)-*ká*]*n ša-ak-ta ku-iš-ki ku-in-ki*
33 [(*ki-nu-un-n*)]*a-kán Ú-UL* EGIR GAM *kar-aš-zi*
34 [(*na-an-š*)*i-kán*] *ar-ḫa iš-dam-ma-aš-ša-an-zi*
35 [(*na-at*) *iš-du-wa-r*]*i ki-e-iz-za-kán* UD[KAM]-*za ar-ḫa ta-me-e-da-ni*
36 [(*A-NA*) MUNUS-*TI ŠA* L]UGAL *ma-ni-in-ku-wa-an*
37 [(*pa-i*)*z-zi ki-e* INIM[M]][EŠ] GAM *NI-EŠ* DINGIR-*LIM* GAR-*ru*

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38 [*ma-a-an* [LÚ]]*a-ra-an-ma ku-iš Ú-UL ḫa-an-t*[*i-i*]
39 [*ti-ia-zi*] [d]UTU-*ŠI-ma-at iš-dam-ma-aš-mi*
40 [*na-at pu-nu-u*]*š-mi na-at-mu-kán li-e ša-an-na-a-i*
41 [*ma-a-n*]*a-at ša-an-na-a-i-ma* GAM *NI-EŠ* DINGIR-*LIM* GAR-*ru*

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42 [*na-aš-m*]*a ma-ni-in-ku-wa-an-ma ku-iš-ki*
43 [*ku-e-da-n*]*i-ik-ki pa-iz-zi* [LÚ]*a-ra-aš-ma-an-kán*
44 [*ku-iš an*]-*da a-uš-zi na-an-kán ḫa-an-ti-i*
45 [*Ú-UL*] *ti-ia-zi na-at* GAM *NI-EŠ* DINGIR-*LIM* GAR-*ru*
29 In you[r] houses, any women may be allowed for you.
30 But this (occurrence) which is [in] the king's house: if whichever
31 woman of the king – whether she is a *kezretu*, whether she is
32 free – anyone knew any (of them) to himself,
33 (and) now does not break it off,[981]
34 and they hear (about) him (regarding) her,
35 and it [becomes exposed], (or) from this day on, to another

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[978] See, for example, Hawkins 2002: 221–224.
[979] See von Schuler 1967: 17.
[980] See von Schuler 1967: 16. For a recent translation and commentary of this text, see Hawkins 2002: 223–224. Restorations are mostly following von Schuler (1967: 16) and Hawkins (2002: 223).
[981] That is, does not end his relations with the woman.

36 [woman of the k]ing he *approaches sexually*:[982]

37 may [these matter]s be placed under divine oath!

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38 [If] (he) who does not [con]fron[t][983] (his) friend

39 and My Majesty, I hear it,

40 [and] I [investiga]te [it], may he not conceal it from me.[984]

41 [If] he does conceal it: may (it) be placed under divine oath!

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42 [O]r (if) anyone *approaches sexually*

43 [any]one (= of the aforementioned women), and a friend

44 [that] sees him

45 [does not] confront him: may it be placed under divine oath!

In spite of the unclear wording of certain parts of the text, its general meaning is unequivocal. These instructions demonstrate that, among their primary occupations, the lú-sags watched over the women's quarters and prevented from any man the opportunity to conduct sexual intercourse with any of these women, even if he was a "friend" of these officials. The term ^lú*ara*-, "friend", requires special attention in this context. It could be interpreted as denoting not merely a "friend",[985] but, moreover, a "comrade", "social peer",[986] namely, another lú-sag, capable of having sexual intercourse with these women. This interpretation could theoretically lead to the understanding that the Hittite lú-sags could have not been eunuchs. In order to overcome this obstacle, Hawkins claimed that, in these instructions, the term ^lú*ara*- should be understood as "a "friend" outside social grouping", thus referring to friends of the lú-sags, that are not lú-sags themselves.[987] However, castration does not necessarily involve the complete removal of the male genitals, so, in practice, eunuchs could have been sexually active. Therefore, a regulation obliging the lú-sags to prevent from one of their own to conduct sexual intercourse with women of the palace constitutes no contradiction to viewing these officials as eunuchs. A further clue for the capability of the lú-sags to perform sexual relations appears in line 29, where women are said to be "allowed" in the lú-sags' own houses. Therefore, Pecchioli Daddi's view of some passages of the instructions as meant to prohibit the lú-sags themselves from approaching the royal women[988] cannot be seen as proving that these officials were not eunuchs.

The second set of instructions (CTH 255.2) is broken at the upper part of its obverse; hence, its introduction and colophon are missing. It appears that these instructions address three different groups of people: "lords" (*BĒLU*^HI.A), "princes"

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[982] The phrase *man*(*n*)*inkuwan*(*t*) *pai*-, literally "go near", bears on occasions a sexual sense, see CHD L-N: 172, s.v. "*ma*(*n*)*ni*(*n*)*kuwan* 1b 4'b'".

[983] *ḫanti tiyazi*, literally "approaches in front".

[984] Literally: "to me" (= *mu* = *kán*).

[985] See Kloekhorst 2008: 198, s.v. "^(LÚ/MUNUS)*arā*-".

[986] See HED 1: 116, s.v. "*ara*-".

[987] Hawkins 2002: 223–224.

[988] Pecchioli Daddi 1978: 180 n. 54.

(DUMU[MEŠ] lugal) and lú-sags. The major part of the text relates to the first two groups, and only the third column[989] refers to the lú-sags. The instructions stipulated in this text are mostly concerned with the well-being of the king himself, and the obligation of the lú-sags to safeguard him. One clause, however, relates to the term é-šà *ša* lugal, understood by Güterbock as "bedroom" of the king:[990]

KUB 21.42 iv 3–4[991]

[3]m[a-a-a]n-kán ŠÀ É-ŠÀ *ŠA* LUGAL GÙB-*an ut-tar ku-it-ki* [4]a-u[t-t]e-ni

[3]I[f] inside the inner chamber of the king [4][y]ou (pl.) se[e] [3]anything wrong …

As was noted by Güterbock, the access granted to these officials to the king's inner chamber (É-ŠÀ), together with the nature of connection of these persons with the palace women, give us evidence of the range of duties and activities of them as royal eunuchs in the Hittite administration. He further suggested that the Hittite official designated lú é-šà, "man of the bedroom", who acted as Šuppiluliuma I's envoy to the Egyptian widow[992] was also a eunuch.[993] von Schuler noted that in terms of functionality, the lú-sags were related to the women's quarters, but rejected the possibility that they were eunuchs, because, in his mind, this kind of deformed men would cause impurity. It was essential to keep the Hittite king away from this sort of impurity, which, according to von Schuler, might raise the anger of the gods.[994] However, the connection between castration and impurity might be anachronistic, and certainly lacks any supporting evidence in the Hittite texts.[995]

Evidently, these two instruction texts formed the chief source of information based on which various researchers offered opinions for and against the possibility that the Hittite lú-sags were eunuchs.[996] The least that can be said is that these texts exhibit enough similarities between the Hittite title-holders and their Mesopotamian counterparts as to allow us to assume that similarly to the case of Mesopotamia, Hittite lú-sags were eunuchs. Even though the evidence is limited, it still exists, while a contradicting one does not.

The kingdom of Ugarit formed, in many respects, a meeting place between the worlds of Mesopotamia and Ḫatti, and the West Semitic / Canaanite world. One of the letters that were found in this kingdom, RS 17.144, supplies further information pertaining to the title lú-sag and to customs of castration. The letter was sent by a person named Zulannu to the governor of Ugarit, apparently in response to several

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[989] Starting in line 36', following a double register.

[990] Güterbock 1957: 361.

[991] See von Schuler 1967: 27.

[992] The person in question is Ḫattušaziti ([m.GIŠ]PA.LÚ), Šuppiluliuma's envoy to Egypt, as reported in Mursili II's "The Manly Deeds of Šuppiluliuma", in fragment KBo 5.6 iii 21; see Güterbock 1956: 95.

[993] Güterbock 1957: 361.

[994] Von Schuler 1967: 35.

[995] Hawkins (2002: 221–222) even claimed that castration might be considered as a means of removing "a potential source of impurity".

[996] For a brief, though thorough, survey of these differing opinions, see Hawkins 2002: 221–222.

requests previously made by the governor. One of the sections in the letter specifies the following acts that were made in order to meet the governor's requests:

RS 17.144 10–19[997]
[10]*i-na-an-n[a] ki-i* šeš-[*i*]*a* [11]*aš-šum* lú-sag *ù* anše-gìr-nun[-na] [12]*ù aš-šum* anše-kur-ra *tàš-pu-ra* [13]*ù a-nu-ma a-na* šeš-*ia* [14]1 anše-kur-ra-munus-al-lá [15]*ù* 1 dumu-nita *ul-te-bí*[*l*] [16]*ù aš-ra-nu-ma a-na* lú-sag-*ut-tim* [17][*l*]*i-pu-šu-šu* [18]*ù* dumu-nita *šu-ú-ut* [19]sig₅ *dan-níš*

[10]No[w], as [m]y brother [12]wrote [11]concerning a *ša rēši* and a mul[e], [12]and concerning a horse: [13]I herewith [15]sen[d] [13]to my brother [14]one mare [15]and one boy. [17]May they make him [16]to eunuchship[998] there. [18]That boy [19]is very good-looking!

In his original treatment of this text, Oppenheim mistakenly understood the term dumu-nita as referring to a foal, being sent to Ugarit in order to be gelded there.[999] A year later he corrected this, and agreed with Nougayrol's[1000] understanding that the term referred to a prepubescent boy, sent to Ugarit to be turned into a lú-sag there.[1001]

Many scholars[1002] understood this passage as referring to castration, since the young boy sent to Ugarit was supposed to become a *ša rēši* there, namely to be castrated. However, in CAD the phrase *ana* lú-sag-*ūtim līpušūšu* was translated as "they shall train him as a *ša rēši*",[1003] thus omitting the meaning of eunuchship. Dalley expressed a similar view, claiming that the above passage refers to the training of a boy for becoming a courtier.[1004] Her suggestion is consistent with her interpretation to the term *marruru* from the MAPD, and with her general objection to the existence of eunuchs in the ancient Near East. However, the translation given in CAD does not contradict the view that the boy was indeed meant to be castrated, because this procedure could have formed part of his training as a (castrated) courtier. The very fact that the boy is sent to Ugarit at a young age concurs with the need for eunuchs to be castrated before they reach sexual maturity (see below), and the statement that the boy is "very good-looking"[1005] might hint to the youthful or perhaps feminine appearance of eunuchs.[1006]

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[997] See Nougayrol 1970: 7 and pl. III. For a recent translation and commentary on this text, see Lackenbacher 2002: 196–198.

[998] Literally, "*ša rēši*-ship".

[999] Oppenheim 1973: 325–326.

[1000] Nougayrol 1970: 7 n. 4.

[1001] Oppenheim 1974: 95.

[1002] See, among others, Oppenheim 1973: 326, 1974: 95, Heltzer 1974: 7–8 and Lackenbacher 2002: 197 n. 666 (including literature referring to the question of lú-sag being a eunuch).

[1003] CAD R: 297, s.v. "*rēšu* in *ša rēšūtu*".

[1004] Dalley 2001: 202.

[1005] The semantic range of sig₅ is rather broad and designates concepts such as sweetness, goodness and fine quality. Allegorically, therefore, it can refer to the pleasant appearance of the boy in question.

[1006] See, in this regard, Ringrose's (2003: 10) comment that "Prokopios of Caesarea tells us

We can summarize that the evidence of eunuchs officiating in palace administration derives from several different regions: Babylonia, Assyria and Ḫatti. In the first section of the current chapter we saw that these officials operated in Assyria and Babylonia throughout many centuries, however in most cases their documentation remained silent with regard to their castration. The texts examined in this section, however, shed important light on this aspect of these figures. The evidence of the MAPD suggests that the *ša rēši*s who operated in the palace were required to be castrated, and their castration was carefully examined. The Hittite "oaths of the eunuchs" demonstrate that these officials were responsible for the safeguarding of the royal women's quarters, a task that in many cultures was assigned to castrated males.[1007] It appears that these officials were capable of sexual activity, which hints that their castration was only partial. It can be suggested that the partial castration was meant to prevent the lú-sags of having progeny from a wife of the king, while still maintaining their masculinity and virility.[1008] The last text to be discussed, the letter from Ugarit, supplied evidence for boys being sent to the court in order to be castrated there at a young age. As is explained below, this is an important contribution to our understanding of the way in which people were turned into castrates for service in royal courts.

2.3. lú-sag / *ša rēši* in Neo-Assyrian Cult

As mentioned above, certain scholars claim that the lú-sag / *ša rēši* were not necessarily castrated. One of the earlier scholars to foster this attitude was Oppenheim, claiming that the meaning "eunuch" should not be assigned to all attestations of the term *ša rēši*.[1009] Oppenheim based his reservations mainly on a Neo-Assyrian magical ritual in which a *ša rēši* acted as a substitute for the king, and addressed Šamaš while wearing the king's attire, and being called by the king's own name:

> **BBR 57 = K 6207 + K 6225,13–14**[1010]
> 13 [ˡú]*šá* sag lugal *šá* gin₇ en-*šu* mu *na-bu-ú til-li* lu[gal x x]
> 14 [*ina* igi ke]šda gub-*ma* šid-*tú an-ni-tu₄ ina* igi ᵈutu [šid]
> 13 A *ša rēši* of the king, who is named like his lord, [and wears?] the ki[ng's] garment,
> 14 will stand [before the (cultic-)prep]aration,[1011] and [shall recite] before Šamaš the following recitation: …

Oppenheim did not consider it reasonable that a eunuch would have been substituted

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that the ruler of the Abchasians selected beautiful boys to be castrated and sold to the Romans …"

[1007] See, among others, Ringrose 1994, Grayson 1995 and Everhart 2003, including previous literature.

[1008] For a discussion of vasectomy and its clinical implications, see below, pp. 235–237.

[1009] Oppenheim 1973: 326, 331, 332.

[1010] See Elat 1982: 21–22.

[1011] For this meaning of kešda, see CAD R: 352, s.v. "*riksu* 5a" (though not mentioning the current passage).

the Assyrian king.[1012] However, we have no evidence that negative notions prevailed in Mesopotamia concerning castrates, and, in contrast, we do know that certain eunuchs officiated in high-ranking roles in the Neo-Assyrian palace. They were some of the closest officials to the king.

From a theological point of view, Parpola pointed to the relation between the *rab ša rēši* and Ištar, and claimed that assuming the function of a military commander by the chief eunuch was connected with his affiliation with Ištar, the patron goddess of the Assyrian king.[1013] Nissinen suggested that eunuchs were found to be closely associated with Ištar, even outside the cultic sphere.[1014] These suggestions are based on previous observations made by Watanabe, who showed that seals belonging to eunuchs contained scenes depicting the seal owner worshiping Ištar.[1015] However, the phenomenon described by Watanabe does not exhibit a special relation between eunuchs and Ištar, because eunuchs were depicted in seals as worshiping a variety of deities, and not exclusively Ištar.[1016] See, for example, the seal of Aššur-bēlu-uṣur, a person identified as lú-sag / *ša rēši* in the legend accompanying the seal, and depicted in the artistic scene as a beardless figure worshiping a male deity.[1017] Therefore, views concerning the alleged unique relation between eunuchs and Ištar seem too far-reaching. For example, Parpola claimed that the association of eunuchs with Ištar, as evident in the glyptic data, was rooted in the practice of self-emasculation that prevailed among the ecstatic cult members of the androgynous Ištar.[1018] As was already noted, these interpretations are not supported by the texts (see further discussion below).

The association of the *ša rēši* with Ištar is possibly alluded to by another fact. We have already encountered the Neo-Assyrian court minute ADD 160 where in the list of witnesses appears Ša-la-Bēlet-mannu, son of the *kurgarrû* Ištar-dūri.[1019] The name Ištar-dūri appears on a seal in which he is identified as a *ša rēši* of the *turtānu* Nergal-ilāya.[1020] This seal is from Adad-Nirari III's reign (811–783), or slightly later.[1021] The court minute, however, was dated to the year 657 by Kwasman,[1022] and to *639 by Mattila,[1023] so the two homonyms cannot belong to the same person. However, the fact that the same proper name, that exhibits Ištar's patronage,[1024] is found to belong to a *kurgarrû* and to a *ša rēši* might be significant.

[1012] Oppenheim 1973: 332.

[1013] Parpola 1993: 240, 380–381.

[1014] Nissinen 1998a: 31.

[1015] Watanabe 1992: 362–367, Taf. 70–71.

[1016] See Collon 1987: no. 344, and discussion in Winter 2010: 137.

[1017] See Winter 2010: 161 Fig. 21.

[1018] Parpola 1995: 391 n. 36.

[1019] See Chapter 3, p. 167–168.

[1020] See Watanabe 1999: 319, Mattila 2000: 118–119.

[1021] The seal contains two different inscriptions, each belonging to a different owner. The earlier inscription dates to the reign of Adad-Nirari III.

[1022] Kwasman 1988: 244.

[1023] Mattila 2000: 83.

[1024] Literally, *Ištar dūri* means "Ištar is my (fortification-)wall".

To conclude, the connection between the chief-eunuch and Ištar seems unsubstantiated. The suggestions concerning the association of eunuchs with this goddess were based on the limited evidence of few seal impressions. No text supports these suggestions, and they should be taken with caution, at least until some proof is brought to confirm them.

2.4. lú-sag / *ša rēši* and Lack of Procreation

Another matter involving the lú-sag / *ša rēši* as eunuchs is the issue of progeny. Several textual references are sometimes interpreted as referring to the lack of offspring of these figures. However, these references were sometimes misunderstood by scholars. For example, Postgate drew a general scheme of the content of Neo-Assyrian contravention-clauses in sales documents. According to his scheme, these clauses included customary phrases that referred to the seller and purchaser: *lū* PN$_1$ *lū* dumu^{meš}-*šu lū* dumu-dumu^{meš}-*šu*, "whether PN$_1$ (= the seller), or his sons, or his grandsons …" and *issi* PN$_2$ *issi* dumu^{meš}-*šu issi* dumu-dumu^{meš}-*šu*, "from PN$_2$ (= the purchaser), from his sons, from his grandsons …". The phrases referred not only to the seller and purchaser, but also to their relatives, usually in a strict order: sons, grandsons, brothers and brothers' sons. Postgate claimed that in case the seller or the purchaser was a eunuch, the reference to his sons and grandsons was avoided.[1025] However, this claim was based on only one text, CTN 2.17:

> **CTN 2.17,11–12,17**[1026]
> ^{11} … *lu-u* ^{m}dingir-dù-*áš* ^{12}[*l*]*u-u* [šeš^m]^{eš}-*šú lu-u* dumu šeš^{meš}-*šú lu-u mám-ma-nu-šú qur-bu*
> ^{17}ta $^{m.d}$utu-*ku-mu-a* šeš^{meš}-*šú* dumu šeš^{meš}-*šú*
> ^{11} … Whether Ilu-eppaš, ^{12}[o]r his [brother]s, or his brothers' sons, or any relative of his …
> ^{17}From Šamaš-kūmūa, (or) his brothers, (or) his brothers' sons.

Earlier in the contract, both the seller, Ilu-eppaš, and the purchaser, Šamaš-kūmūa, were identified as eunuchs.[1027] As can be seen in the lines quoted above, their relatives that are mentioned are their brothers and their brothers' sons, but no mention is made to their own descendants. However, not only is this the single text on which Postgate based his suggestion, but a different text from the same corpus,[1028] ND 3426, seems to contradict this suggestion:

> **ND 3426,14**[1029]
> ta $^{m.d}$*šá-maš*-man-pap dumu^{meš}-*šú* dumu-dumu^{meš}-*šú*
> From Šamaš-šarru-uṣur, (or) his sons, (or) his grandsons.

[1025] Postgate 1976: 18–19.
[1026] See Postgate 1973: 47, 48, 1976: 76. Transliteration follows Postgate 1976.
[1027] lú-sag, CTN 2.17,2 (Ilu-eppaš) and 7 (Šamaš-kūmūa).
[1028] Both were included in Postgate's (1976) edition of fifty Neo-Assyrian transaction texts (nos. 1 and 9).
[1029] See Postgate 1976: 93.

Šamaš-šarru-uṣur, the purchaser in this contract, was identified earlier in the text as a eunuch.[1030] However, in the line quoted above, a specific reference is made to his future sons and grandsons. This line is an exact parallel to the one from the previous contract, from which the reference to the descendants of the eunuch Šamaš-kūmūa was omitted, according to Postgate, because of his castration. Therefore, it seems to contradict Postgate's suggestion. This fact is important, because other scholars base their own hypotheses concerning eunuchs on these misinterpretations. For example, Watanabe claimed that such omissions of a person's descendants in transaction texts allow us to identify him as a eunuch even in cases where the title lú-sag / *ša rēši* did not actually appear in the text.[1031] This claim is to be questioned, especially since it is based on a misconception, as was just shown. Furthermore, in the court transaction SAA 6.228,12 (= ADD 227,12) appears a reference to the relatives of the eunuch Nabû-dūru-kuṣur, the seller in the contract. The line is mostly broken, and the editors, Kwasman and Parpola, restored it as follows: [*lu-u* pab^meš-*šú lu-u* dumu]-⌜pab⌝^meš-*šú*, "[or his brothers, or] his [broth]ers' [sons]".[1032] However, an alternative restoration that is no less plausible can be: [*lu-u* dumu^meš-*šú lu-u* pa]b^meš-*šú*, "[or his sons, or] his [broth]ers".

Other textual allusions to the *ša rēši* as a typically childless figure seem more substantial. In a passage from an oracle given on behalf of the goddess Mullissu to Aššurbanipal before his accession to the throne, the king was promised to rule over the following:

ABRT 26,4[1033]

[*ma*]-⌜*a*⌝ *a-di ina muḫḫi*(ugu) *mārē*(dumu^meš) *šá šá ziqnī*(su₆^meš) *ina muḫḫi*(ugu) *ḫal-pe-te ša rēšī*(lú-sag^meš)

Over the sons of bearded men, over the successors of *ša rēši*s.

In this passage the *ša rēši*s are contrasted with *ša ziqnī*, "bearded ones", who unlike the *ša rēši*s are succeeded by dumu^meš, "sons". The *ša rēši*s, on the other hand, are succeeded by *ḫalpete*, a term of which the exact meaning is unclear.[1034] Deller suggested that this term was especially coined for the purpose of designating the successors of the childless eunuchs. According to him, the origin of the term *ḫalputu*, "successor(s)", was Aramaic *ḫelap*, "to succeed".[1035] Perhaps the clearest association of the *ša rēši* with the lack of progeny appears in an incantation of the series ka-inim-ma sa-gal-la-kam, "incantations of *sagallu*", meant to counter a *sagallu*-illness:[1036]

[1030] lú-sag, ND 3426,6.

[1031] Watanabe 1999: 319.

[1032] Kwasman and Parpola 1991: 182.

[1033] See Ivantchik 1993: 40.

[1034] See CAD Ḫ: 48, s.v. "*ḫalpatu*". *ḫalpu*, "accursed man" (see CAD Ḫ: 48, s.v. "*ḫalpu* A"), as the possible etymological origin does not seem to make sense.

[1035] Deller 1999: 303–304. See, also, Tadmor 1995: 318 n. 6.

[1036] Probably a paraplegia disease; see Kinnier Wilson and Reynolds 2007: 71.

sagallu-incantation, CT 23.10,13–14[1037]

13 *šiptu*(én) *ta-tap-ḫa kīma*(gin₇) *kakkabē*(mul^meš) *bi-li kīma*(gin₇) *la-'-me šur-šu-ka li-ba-lu ki-sit-ta-ka li-'-up*

14 *kīma*(gin₇) *šu-ut re-e-ši la a-li-di ni-il-ka li-bal*

13 Spell: "You flashed like the stars, be extinguished like embers. May your roots dry out, your trunk wither!

14 Like a *ša rēši* who does not beget, may your semen dry up!"

The beginning of the incantation (CT 23.9,11–12) specifies various magical procedures that should be performed for the benefit of the ill person. The remaining part of the incantation (CT 23.10,13–17) details several recitations that should be uttered, addressing the demon who was perceived as causing the illness, cursing him and his progeny. The passage quoted above forms part of these recitations. As can be seen, it depicts the *ša rēši* as a figure characterized by the lack of progeny, and thus it is probably the most explicit of all textual references to castrates in Mesopotamian sources. Interestingly, it is similar to the biblical passage in *Isaiah* 56,3–5,[1038] on which see below. Outside the palace bureaucracy, *ša rēši*s are also found in the temple administration. For example, records reveal their position in the Ebabbar temple in Sippar, whose archive covers the Neo-Babylonian and early Achaemenid periods.[1039] They could have had sons, who were *ša rēši*s themselves, as evident from a small fragment of a Neo-Babylonian administrative record from the Ebabbar Temple in Sippar:

CT 56.610[1040]

¹^m*mu-še-zib*-^dag ^lú*qal-la* ²*šá* ^m*mu-še-zib*-^den lú-sag lugal ³*a-šú šá* ^m.dag-šeš^meš-gi lú-sag ⁴*a-na* ^dutu *id-din-nu*

¹Mušēzib-Nabû the slave, ²which Mušēzib-Bēl, *ša rēši* of the king, ³son of Nabû-aḫḫē-šullim the *ša rēši*, ⁴gave to Šamaš.

Judging by the above text, Mušēzib-Bēl appears to be a distinguished person. Not only was he one of the king's *ša rēši*s, but he had the ability of granting a slave as a gift to Šamaš. Interestingly, Mušēzib-Bēl is identified here as the son of another *ša rēši*, Nabû-aḫḫē-šullim. If indeed the two were eunuchs, then Mušēzib-Bēl was an adopted son, continuing his adopting father's tradition by becoming himself a *ša rēši*. Additional interesting reference to a eunuch's descendants appears in the Neo-Hittite Hieroglyphic Luwian inscription MARAŞ 14, where a man named Astiwasus refers to himself as ("*474")*u*-[*si*]-*na*-SU MAGNUS+*RA/I-sa*, "chief eunuch".[1041] Further in the inscription, this person relates to his future descendants as follows:

[1037] See partial transliterations in CAD K: 422, s.v. "*kisittu* 1a", L: 69, s.v. "*la'mu*" and R: 296, s.v. "*rēšu* in *ša rēši* A (*šūt rēši*) 2". Transliteartion based on the CT copy and the photograph in CDLI website (http://cdli.ucla.edu/P365736).

[1038] For this comparison, see, already Tadmor 1983: 281–282.

[1039] See Bongenaar 1997: 1, 4.

[1040] See Bongenaar 1997: 42.

[1041] See Hawkins 2000: 265, 266 and 2002: 231.

MARAŞ 14, § 5[1042]

a-wa/i |mi-i-sa |INFANS-ni-i-sa |REL-sa (A) *|i-zi-i-ia+ra/i* NEG₂-*pa* |("INFANS. NEPOS")ḫa-ma-si-sa* NEG₂-*pa-wa/i-sa|| |*"INFANS.NEPOS"-REL-*la-sá*
(He) who shall be made / become[1043] my son, or grandson, or great-grandson …

Hawkins interpreted the fact that Astiwasus' sons are to be "made", or "become", instead of simply "be" his sons, as evidence that they were adopted, rather than a biological progeny.[1044]

We can see that the evidence presented in this section supplies several proofs for the fact that the lú-sags / *ša rēši*s were typically childless. This fact strengthens the possibility that they were castrates. We saw that some of the evidence was only the result of misinterpretations, and that, on rare occasions, *ša rēši*s were documented as having sons. However, these sons could have been adopted, and enough data appears to point to the fact that, on the whole, these figures were indeed eunuchs who lacked biological progeny.

2.5. Castration in Cult: The Questionable Hypothesis of Self-Emasculation

We will discuss now the suggestions of certain scholars concerning the existence of castration and self-emasculation practices in Mesopotamian cult. Besides the evidence brought above for castration in Mesopotamia and the ancient Near East, no explicit proof exists in this regard. Therefore, any evidence proposed by scholars to support the existence of castration other than that mentioned is implicit, and must be evaluated cautiously. The most notable example in this regard is the claim that several of Inanna/Ištar's cult personnel were engaged in self-emasculation. This suggestion is based on the interpretation of several occurrences where various activities performed by the goddess's male devotees were mentioned.

These episodes were already quoted and discussed in previous chapters and therefore will not be presented in full again. The information gathered from them can be summarized as follows: In the Iddin-Dagan "sacred marriage" hymn several *kurgarrû*s appear, holding a sword, covering it with blood and, later on, pouring blood on the dais of the throne-room, to the loud sound of drums. In *The Epic of Erra* it is said that Ištar turned the masculinity of the *assinnu*s and *kurgarrû*s[1045] to femininity, while they are portrayed as carrying a dagger, a razor, a scalpel and a flint-blade. In several other narrative and mythical compositions, the figure of the *kurgarrû* was attested in association with cutting-weapons. In some texts describing cultic procedures, *assinnu*s and *kurgarrû*s were depicted as performing *milḫu*, an act sometimes interpreted by scholars as pointing to self-infliction, even though others understood this term completely differently. This data led certain scholars to equate

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[1042] See Hawkins 2000: 266. Translation from Hawkins 2000: 266.

[1043] The form *i-zi-i-ia+ra/i, iziyari*, is the 3rd sg. pres. med.-pass. inflection of *iziya-*, "make"; see Hawkins 2000: 266 and 2002: 230. For a recent study of this term, see Rieken 2007.

[1044] Hawkins 2000: 266 and 2002: 231–232.

[1045] Though according to my interpretation, only the *assinnu*s were actually "changed".

it with historical accounts describing the first-millennium Anatolian *galli*-priests of Cybele and Attis.[1046] These priests conducted rites that included blood-letting and self-infliction, as part of their cult practices.[1047]

However, endorsing the analogy between the *galli* and the Mesopotamian evidence is unwarranted, and the comparison is non-compelling. Nowhere do the Mesopotamian texts mention self-emasculation in an explicit manner, and the connection between the *kurgarrû* and cutting-weapons appears to be limited to the sphere of cultic theatrical performance. As such, it might reflect the militant nature of the *kurgarrû*'s patron goddess, Inanna/Ištar, as was suggested in Chapter 3. Indeed, scholars such as Renger and Roscoe rejected the idea that several Mesopotamian cult personnel (such as the *kalû*, *kurgarrû*, *kulu'u* and *assinnu*) were eunuchs, and claimed that nothing of the activities in which they were engaged could point to the fact that they were castrates.[1048]

2.6. Iconography and Glyptics

The current section focuses on the non-textual data pertaining to eunuchs. It reviews several iconographic representations of figures that seem sexually ambiguous, possessing both masculine and feminine appearance, and even a dual set of sexual organs. It is suggested that these figures can be viewed as castrates. Another issue to be discussed is the representation of beardlessness, and the possibility that it formed a feature characterizing palace eunuchs, *ša rēši*s.

We will begin with depictions of sexually ambiguous figures in Mesopotamian iconography. An early second-millennium mould-made terracotta plaque from Ur depicts a peculiar figure: it is beardless and has breasts and an inflated belly; however, at the same time it has a penis (fig. 3[1049]).

Reade suggested that the figure portrayed in the plaque was that of a hermaphrodite, "someone of a third gender".[1050] However, all the physical characteristics of this figure could be explained as representing a pre-pubertal castrate, as explained below.[1051] Another possible iconographic representation of a castrated person is that

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[1046] See, among others, Groneberg 1986: 39, and n. 86, Lambert 1992: 148, 150–151, Maul 1992: 164, Leick 1994: 159, Parpola 1997: XXXIV, XCVI n. 138 and Lapinkivi 2004: 163–165, 2010: 73, 78.

[1047] For an overview of the *galli*, see Introduction, pp. 30–31.

[1048] Renger 1969: 192–193, Roscoe 1996: 217.

[1049] See Woolley and Mallowan 1976: 180, pl. 87, no. 205: U 20048. See, also, Reade 2002: 554 Fig. 3.

[1050] Reade 2002: 554.

[1051] As is explained below, attributes such as lack of facial hair and a distribution of bodily fat that leads to the appearance of feminine breasts, are possible characteristics of pre-pubertal castrates who underwent a partial castration (vasectomy). As a result, the castrated person can posses both masculine and feminine appearance, having both breasts and a penis, and lacking facial hair.

of Ur-Nanše, the well-known mid-third-millennium chief-singer (nar-maḫ) from Mari. Ur-Nanše's statue exhibits ambiguous physical gender attributes (fig. 4[1052]).

Fig. 3: Terracotta plaque from Ur (Reade 2002: 554 fig. 3).

Fig. 4: Statue of Ur-Nanše (Asher-Greve 1997: 439).

Asher-Greve and McCaffrey noted that Ur-Nanše's name, as well as the skirt he wears as portrayed in his statue, were both masculine in nature. However, the appearance of his face, and the prominent breasts are both feminine.[1053] Therefore, scholars such as Parrot and Asher-Greve suggested cautiously that Ur-Nanše could have been a castrate, even though they stressed how problematic iconographic analysis can occasionally be.[1054] According to Westenholz, a bare upper body and a short skirt constitute masculine iconographic indicators, while prominent breasts and soft facial features form feminine ones.[1055] These observations can highlight Ur-Nanše's statue as possessing both masculine and feminine attributes. Caution is advised here, however, since the combination of masculine and feminine iconographic attributes similar to those presented above is not rare. According to Asher-Greve, several "foundation figurines" characterized by a mixture of masculine and feminine traits were found in southern Mesopotamia.[1056] These figurines represented rulers of the Gudea, Ur III and Larsa dynasties, so they surely did not represent eunuchs.

[1052] See Asher-Greve 1997: 439. For literature on this statue, see Asher-Greve 1997: 457 n. 37.

[1053] Asher-Greve 1997: 438, McCaffrey 2002: 380–381.

[1054] Parrot 1967: 89–96, 377, Asher-Greve 1997: 438. Several other examples for gender ambiguity as reflected in iconographic representation were suggested by McCaffrey (2002: 381–383); however, none of which seems convincing.

[1055] Westenholz 2009: 74–75.

[1056] Asher-Greve 2002: 12–13.

Turning to the question of beardlessness and castration, it is generally accepted that iconographic and glyptic evidence indicate that Neo-Assyrian *ša rēši*s lacked facial hair, in contrast with other officials, who were all bearded.[1057] This view coincides with the common phrase lú *ša ziqni* lú *ša rēši*, describing the Neo-Assyrian court personnel. According to this phrase, officials were divided to those "of the beard" (*ša ziqni*) and those "of the head" (*ša rēši*). The latter ones were most probably eunuchs who lacked facial hair.[1058] See for example the following scene of a Neo-Assyrian monarch and his entourage, which consists of both bearded and beardless attendants (fig. 5[1059]).

Fig. 5: Neo-Assyrian palace attendants (Winter 2010: 56 fig. 5).

However, Dalley pointed to evidence that possibly contradicts this view. In a seal from the Kassite period that belonged to Kidin-Marduk, a lú-sag of Burna-Buriaš, the seal owner was presumably depicted as bearded (fig. 6[1060]). The text accompanying the iconographic scene states as follows:

VA 3869 – S. 57[1061]

[1]*ki-din*-[d]amar-utu [2]dumu *ša*-dingir-*ma-dam-qá* [3]lú-sag [4]*bur-ra-bu-ri-ia-aš* [5]lugal ki-šár-ra [6]en-ti-la ḫé-nir-gál

[1]Kidin-Marduk, [2]son of Ša-ilimma-damqa, [3]*ša rēši* [4](of) Burnaburiaš [5]king of the universe. [6]As long as he lives, may he be noble.

[1057] See Reade 1972: 91–92, Watanabe 1992: 362–369, 1993a: 304–308, 1993b: 118–129 and 1999: 319–321. For beardless rulers and officials throughout the history of Mesopotamia, see Dalley 2001: 199.

[1058] See Brinkman 1968: 309, Reade 1972: 91–92, Grayson 1995: 92, and n. 37 and Tadmor 1995: 318.

[1059] See Winter 2010: 56 Fig. 5.

[1060] Dalley 2001: 200. See Collon 1987: 59 no. 239 and Moortgat 1988: Tafel 66 no. 554.

[1061] See Moortgat 1988: 135 no. 554.

Fig. 6: Seal of Kidin-Marduk
(Collon 1987: 59 no. 239).

Dalley's arguments that the scene on the seal depicted the *ša rēši* Kidin-Marduk as a bearded person rely on the identification of the kneeling bearded figure as Kidin-Marduk. This identification is possible but not obligatory. The iconographic scene contains several artistic motifs the meaning of which we cannot be fully certain of. Nor could the significance or identity of the two human-like figures be safely comprehended. These could be depictions of Kidin-Marduk attending his king or worshiping a god, or not him at all. In his description of the seal, Moortgat did not mention the possibility that Kidin-Marduk was actually depicted in it, and referred to the two images simply as "a small kneeling worshiper" and "an enthroned god".[1062] In case the seated figure represented a deity, it is possible that the figure kneeling before it was that of the king.

Interestingly, Kidin-Marduk the lú-sag is attested as the father of Adad-ušabši in a seal that belonged to the latter.[1063] In fact, a lineage of four successive generations can be reconstructed based on the glyptic evidence: Lugal-mansi,[1064] Ša-ilimma-damqa, Kidin-Marduk and Adad-ušabši. Of these four individuals, Kidin-Marduk is probably the only one to be designated as lú-sag.[1065] The fact that he had a son does not necessarily disprove that he was a castrate, because his son could have been adopted.

This seal forms an interesting case that can be interpreted in more than one way. The possibility that it did not depict Kidin-Marduk the lú-sag at all is problematic, because images of human worshipers in seals always represented the seal owner. The possibility that a eunuch would be depicted as bearded, even though in reality he was not, is speculative and makes little sense. It can always be argued that As-

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[1062] Moortgat 1988: 135.

[1063] See Collon 1987: 58, 59 no. 241.

[1064] For the seal where he is attested as father of Ša-ilimma-damqa, see Collon 1987: 58, 59 no. 238.

[1065] It is not clear whether Adad-ušabši was himself a eunuch, or only the son of one. Brinkman (1976: 110 E.2.21) indeed viewed him as a eunuch, but the title "lú-sag of king Burnaburiaš" in Adad-ušabši's seal could either refer to him, or to his father Kidin-Marduk. At any rate, the important fact is that Kidin-Marduk the eunuch had a son. Whether this son became in turn a eunuch himself is less significant for the current discussion.

syrian and Babylonian traditions differed in applying the term lú-sag / *ša rēši* to individuals, so that, in Assyria, persons holding this title were castrated, while in Babylonia, at least in the Kassite period, they were not.[1066] It should be noted in this context that the evidence of the *ša rēši* as a castrated figure derives almost exclusively from Assyrian contexts. However, the relevant Babylonian material, especially from the Kassite period, is too scanty as to allow firm conclusions, and Kidin-Marduk's enigmatic seal is but one piece of evidence that stands in contrast with all others. As such, it cannot be ignored, but the implications drawn from it should be viewed with caution.

Contrary to the common view, Oppenheim objected to the identification of beardless figures from the Neo-Assyrian iconography as eunuchs. He suggested alternatively that these were young male attendants still in their youth. As a result, he suggested that the title *ša rēši* itself designated not a castrated man, but rather a young lad. According to Oppenheim's hypothesis, these were young personal servants that used to be at the side of their masters, a situation from which their title evolved. Oppenheim further suggested that at an older age these personal servants might have shaven their beards in order to maintain their "youthful appearance". Thus, three distinct categories of beardless *ša rēši* could have been represented in the Assyrian reliefs: youth servants of lower status, older shaven ones in higher positions and eunuchs.[1067]

Another important contribution to our study is made by two seal impressions of a beardless Neo-Assyrian monarch that were published by Herbordt.[1068] Herbordt suggested that the figure in question was that of the crown-price.[1069] However, Watanabe pointed to the fact that Neo-Assyrian crown-princes were never portrayed shaven and suggested, alternatively, the identification of this enigmatic figure with the *rab ša rēši* Sîn-šumu-lēšir, who, as mentioned above, became king of Assyria for a short period, succeeding Aššur-etel-ilāni.[1070] This suggestion coincides with other information we have concerning the relation between eunuchs and beardlessness, and seems quite reasonable.

Finally, Watanabe identified a Neo-Babylonian seal impression exhibiting two beardless individuals in a worshipping posture, and a corresponding textual passage designating the seal holder as a *ša rēši* (fig. 7[1071]).

[1066] See Brinkman 1968: 309–311 and Siddall 2007: 226–227.

[1067] Oppenheim 1973: 333–334.

[1068] Herbordt 1992: Tafel 35 nos. 11, 13.

[1069] Herbordt 1992: 123.

[1070] Watanabe 1999: 320. See Tadmor 2002: 610 and n. 45–47, including previous literature, and Na'aman 2005: 308–310, 316–320, including previous literature. For a discussion of the historical occurrences surrounding Sîn-šumu-lēšir's accession, see Na'aman 2005: 316.

[1071] See Watanabe 1995: 234 Fig. 2.1.

Fig. 7: Neo-Babylonian seal impression
(Watanabe 1995: 234 fig. 2.1).

According to Watanabe, there are several other Neo-Babylonian seal impressions that exhibit scenes of beardless worshippers, and all should be regarded as eunuchs, even if no textual evidence identifying them as such exists.[1072]

In conclusion, the evidence presented in the current section shows that sexually ambiguous figures who were depicted in iconographic and glyptic media could have been castrates. Furthermore, several figures of beardless males who were depicted on seals probably designated eunuchs. The issues of ambiguous sexual physical attributes and the connection between castration and the lack of facial hair are discussed below from a clinical point of view.

2.7. The *sārîs* and Castration Prohibitions in the Hebrew Bible

We will conclude the presentation of the evidence of castration with a discussion of comparative evidence from the Hebrew Bible. The current section is comprised of two topics: the evidence concerning the *sārîsŷm*, usually understood as palace eunuchs, and the various prohibitions on castration that appear in the Bible. Even though these two topics contradict each other, the evidence will show that the *sārîsŷm* were indeed castrated figures, who served in the palace.

We will first address the topic of eunuchs in the Hebrew Bible. The terms *sārîs* (sg.) and *sārîsŷm* (pl.) that are attested in the Hebrew Bible many times bear clear similarity to Akkadian *ša rēši,* and most scholars indeed consider them to mean "eunuch(s)".[1073] In most of their attestations, *sārîsŷm* appear in the Hebrew Bible as officials engaged in a variety of duties in the royal administration, with nothing explicitly rendering them the meaning of eunuchs. However, a few passages hint to the strong possibility that the *sārîsŷm* were indeed eunuchs. In *II Kings* 9,32–33 the

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[1072] Watanabe 1995: 231–232.

[1073] For a discussion of eunuchs in the Hebrew Bible, see Everhart 2003: 96–169. For attestations of *sārîsŷm* in the Hebrew Bible, see Everhart 2003: 255–264. For a discussion of *sārîsŷm* and their equation to Mesopotamian *ša rēši*, see Tadmor 1995, 2002: 605. Most scholars agree that the Hebrew term was borrowed from Akkadian; however, the date of the borrowing is not agreed upon, and some scholars claim that it occurred by the mediation of Aramaic (see, for example, Mankowski 2000: 125). For a discussion of this issue, see Everhart 2003: 97–98

sārīsŷm of queen Jezebel throw her off her palace window to her death, at the command of Jehu, who has returned from killing the ruling king, Jezebel's son Joram. Tadmor claimed that only eunuchs would have been allowed in the queen's private residence, in the manner that Jezebel's *sārīsŷm* are described in this episode.[1074] Further, in the prophecy of Isaiah to Hezekiah in *II Kings* 20,17–18 (parallel in *Isaiah* 39,6–7), the prophet predicts the Babylonian exile in the following manner:

II Kings 20,17–18

The time will surely come when everything in your palace, and all that your fathers have stored up until this day, will be carried off to Babylon. Nothing will be left, says the Lord. And some of your descendants,[1075] your own flesh and blood, that will be born to you, will be taken away, and they will become eunuchs[1076] in the palace of the king of Babylon.

As noted by Everhart, the passage begins with mentioning the king's forefathers, as opposed to the future castration of his sons in Babylonia, which will lead to the discontinuity of his lineage.[1077] It seems that an emphasis is put on the biological connection between the king and his sons, by using three different synonym phrases ("your sons", "your own flesh and blood", "that will be born to you"), in order to highlight their future castration and inability to beget their own sons. Perhaps the most telling of all biblical references to the fact that the *sārîs* was indeed a castrate appears in *Isaiah* 56,3–5:

Isaiah 56,3–5

And let not any eunuch[1078] complain, "I am only a dry tree." For this is what the Lord says: "To the eunuchs[1079] who keep my Sabbaths, who choose what pleases me and hold fast to my covenant – to them I will give within my temple and its walls a memorial and a name better than sons and daughters; I will give them an everlasting name that will not be cut off."

The chapter begins with an order of God for the people to perform his directions and avoid from doing evil, accompanied by a promise of salvation for those who follow these directions. Subsequently, the text refers to two groups of persons who might be excluded from the rest of the nation: foreigners and *sārīsŷm*. Both are assured that they will not be deserted by God, as long as they keep his directives. The passage quoted above seems to convey the message that even though the *sārîs* was a castrate, in contrast with the biblical prohibitions of castration (see below), he will earn a positive fate as long as he keeps God's commandments.[1080] Everhart sug-

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[1074] Tadmor 1995: 319.

[1075] Hebrew: "sons".

[1076] Hebrew: *sārīsŷm*.

[1077] Everhart 2003: 146–147 and n. 109.

[1078] Hebrew: *sārîs*.

[1079] Hebrew: *sārīsŷm*.

[1080] Indeed, several scholars viewed this passage as a regulation that was meant to override the older prohibitions of castration expressed in *Deuteronomy* 23,2; see Japhet 1992: 79 and Everhart 2003: 147–148 n. 110.

gested that this passage reflected the higher importance granted to the observance of God's laws over the regulations of physical purity and holiness.[1081] This passage can be understood against the background of the *sagallu*-incantation CT 23.10 mentioned above.[1082] The incantation bears a similar message and even makes use of an identical metaphor, by equating the bareness of the *ša rēši* / *sārîs* with a dry tree. It is explicitly said that God will grant the *sārīsŷm* who keep his covenant "a memorial and a name better than sons and daughters" and "an everlasting name that will not be cut off", an obvious allusion to their lack of ability to procreate and sire descendants.[1083]

The last significant evidence for the function of the *sārīsŷm* as eunuchs appears in the *Book of Esther*.[1084] In several occurrences along this book,[1085] *sārīsŷm* are attested as guardians of the royal women's quarters, a post usually fulfilled by eunuchs.[1086]

We will continue now to discuss the second topic of the current section, concerning castration prohibitions in the Hebrew Bible. Despite several attestations of castrates that we have just examined, the general attitude towards castration and self-mutilation in the Bible was highly negative.[1087] The prohibition on self-infliction wounds is attested in the Hebrew Bible several times, in the form of terms stemming from the verbal roots *gdd* (גדד) and *srt* (שרט). In *Deuteronomy* 14,1 the prohibition *lô titgôdĕdû* ("You shall not lacerate yourselves!"[1088]) is explained by the statement: "because you are a holy people". Thus, according to these ancient Hebrew rules of conduct, the act of self-laceration was perceived as defiling the individual in his contact with his god.

The theological rationale behind this directive becomes clear in *I Kings* 18,28, where Elijah confronts the Ba'al prophets, who are said to *wayyitgôdĕdû kĕmišpāṭâm baḥărāvôt ûbarĕmāḥîm 'ad šĕphāk dām 'ălêhem* ("And they lacerated themselves according to their custom with swords and lances, until the letting of blood upon them."[1089]). In this episode, the act of self-mutilation is said to be a custom characteristic of the Ba'al prophets, hence typical of idolatry. It is therefore

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[1081] Everhart 2003: 148.

[1082] See p. 225.

[1083] For discussions and interpretations of *yad*, "memorial", in this passage, see Gordis 1943: 343–344 and Robinson 1976: 283. Schramm (1995: 124–125 ns. 5–6) suggested that the term was a euphemism for penis, while Childs (2000: 466–467) suggested that it was a metaphor for an offspring.

[1084] Some caution is required, however, with linking this book to any Hebrew tradition, since it is assumed that this text represents a fairly late tradition; see Everhart 2003: 114 and n. 49. However, the "relatively late inclusion" of the book, as defined by Everhart (2003: 114), should not dismiss its importance and relevance to the current study altogether.

[1085] See *Esther* 2,3, 14, 15.

[1086] For a similar function of the LÚ-SAG officials in Ḫatti, see above, pp. 216–219.

[1087] For a survey of the biblical evidence, see Everhart 2003: 156–169.

[1088] In the NIV this phrase is translated as "Do not cut yourselves!"

[1089] In the NIV this phrase is translated as "they … slashed themselves with swords and spears, as was their custom, until their blood flowed."

understood why it was forbidden in *Deuteronomy* 14,1.[1090]

A similar prohibition is addressed for the priests in *Leviticus* 19,28 (*wĕsereṭ lānepheš lô tittĕnū bibsarkem*, "And you shall not make a scratch on your flesh for the dead!"[1091]) and 21,5 (*ûbibsārām lô yisrĕṭū sārāṭet*, "And they shall not make a scratch in their flesh!"[1092]). In these verses the act of self-infliction is portrayed as the act of mourning, which is forbidden, presumably because it was practiced by the non-Hebrew populations from which the Hebrews were trying to differentiate themselves.

As for males whose genitals are deformed, in *Deuteronomy* 23,2 it is mentioned that they were segregated from the community, especially in contexts of religious worship.[1093] These men were further denied the possibility of serving as priests, as described in *Leviticus* 21,20–21.[1094] This fact strengthens the notion of biblical objection to self-mutilation and physical deformation, and the reflection that they bore religious defilement.

We can summarize that the biblical term *sārīsŷm* designated eunuchs, whose sphere of activity was the palace. Several references to these figures strongly imply that they were castrates, which resembles the Mesopotamian and Hittite models of castrated persons who officiated in various roles in the imperial administration. In contrast, the biblical rules of purity and holiness clearly condemned castration. We can therefore speculate that these rules were applied in the cultic sphere, but were of little relevance for the administrative system. So, as long as eunuchs only officiated in the palace and remained excluded from the temple, this confliction was tolerated and did not cause much trouble in any of these institutions.

3. Castration from Theoretical and Clinical Perspectives

The closing section of this chapter exceeds the borders of the ancient Near East, and supplies a theoretical and clinical background to supplement the above discussions of eunuchs. We will examine the matter of castration and sexual performance from a medical point of view, and the influence of pre- and post-pubertal castration on the physical and sexual development of the individual. The main aim of the current section is to assess how medical perspectives are helpful in clarifying the historical evidence from the ancient Near East concerning castration and eunuchs.

[1090] For a discussion of the comparison between these two episodes, see already Driver 1895: 157.

[1091] In the NIV this phrase is translated as "Do not cut your bodies for the dead!"

[1092] In the NIV this phrase is translated as "Priests must not … cut their bodies."

[1093] "No one who has been emasculated by crushing or cutting may enter the assembly of the LORD." Bellis and Hufford (2002: 84) suggested that this prohibition was decreed in response to sexual religious practices performed by eunuch priests, even though they admitted that the evidence in this regard "is scant". Kedar-Kopfstein (1986: 954) viewed this stipulation as directed at least partly against cultic self-mutilation.

[1094] "… (he who has) damaged testicles. No descendant of Aaron the priest who has any defect is to come near to present the food offerings to the LORD." For a discussion of this stipulation, see Everhart 2003: 160–161.

The ancient Greeks strongly objected to corporal mutilation, let alone castration. They viewed the practice of castrating individuals as savage and barbaric. This view was expressed in myths, as well as in historical accounts. Castration stood in contrast with the Greek notions of body wholeness, and clear social separation between gender categories. Aristotle, for example, viewed eunuchs as men who became like women, in the sense that "they have a woman's voice, shapelessness and the looseness of joints."[1095] In the Roman and Byzantine societies, during a time-span of a millennium in human history, it was assumed that castration led to frustration, low mental stability and lack of self-control. Therefore, eunuchs were sometimes labeled by terms such as "changeable" and "ambiguous", and, on occasions, were believed to posses magical powers. All this led to the development of a general attitude of awe and suspicion towards eunuchs during the Roman and Byzantine eras.[1096]

One of the most fundamental questions with regard to the gender identity of the eunuch as a male figure is whether he was able to perform sexually. The answer to this question has far-reaching implications concerning the way society related to eunuchs, because sexual potency was vital for establishing masculine identity. As was demonstrated, eunuchs were frequently found in high positions in royal courts across the ancient Near East, occasionally even in high military posts. Because one's authority was strongly associated with his masculine vigor and sexuality, eunuchs could have been in an inferior position for achieving general acceptance from other men. From the clinical point of view, the procedure of castration has to take place prior to puberty. In all likelihood, the operation involved only the removal of the testicles, and not of the entire sexual organs. This procedure led to the cease of production of male sex hormones, which, in turn influenced considerably the sexual development of the individual. As a result, the castrated grown man would be characterized by lack of facial hair, an unbroken, high voice, an infantile-size penis, elongated limbs and a distribution of fat that gave the appearance of feminine breasts.[1097] It is highly probable, then, that eunuchs were physically distinctive in terms of their appearance. Iconographic evidence from ancient Mesopotamia, as presented above, indeed supports these modern clinical observations.

As for textual evidence for castration prior to sexual maturity, we have already seen that, in a letter from Ugarit (RS 17.144), a young boy was sent in order to become a lú-sag, namely, to be castrated, in Ugarit. This is a rare testimony for the age in which the procedure of castration could take place, and a proof that it was indeed performed before puberty.

An interesting question is what happened to males who were castrated at an older age, such as those who suffered the corporal punishment described in the MAL. A post-pubertal eunuch will not bear any distinctive physical features, as his body has already achieved full sexual development. In terms of social integration, this fact means that unless having prior knowledge of his condition, this person's surround-

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[1095] See Bardel 2002: 51–52, 61.
[1096] See Ringrose 1994: 92.
[1097] See Taylor 2000: 38, 175, Kuefler 2001: 34, Scholz 2001: 16, Bullough 2002: 4, Witt 2002: 235–236 and Ringrose 2003: 16.

ing community will not be aware of his peculiarity, so, in theory, his social status should not be any different than that of any other man in his society. That is, of course, in the case he did not die during the process.[1098]

A crucial question, therefore, is whether eunuchs could have been sexually active. Apparently, the answer to this question is positive.[1099] If vasectomy was performed post-puberty, it did not necessarily prevent sexual arousal, because a certain amount of testosterone still arrived through the adrenal glands. If the testicles were crushed rather than removed, some testosterone was still being produced, so sexual arousal was possible even if the procedure was performed pre-puberty.[1100] As is demonstrated above, one of the most important conclusions about the role and status of castrated men in the ancient Near East, is the fact that, in most cases, they were regarded with high esteem.[1101] Even though in the MAL castration appears to have formed a harsh corporal punishment, in all other respects it seems that eunuchs enjoyed a fairly distinguished status in society. As long as their emasculation was institutionalized, it formed a means for achieving a high social status, and a secured prosperous career as palace attendants.

[1098] In early times the procedure of castration could indeed be life-threatening. For example, Scholz (2001: 16) noted that in the Egyptian Coptic monasteries, where African males were castrated in order to be sold to the Ottoman Empire, only 25% of the castrated males survived the operation.

[1099] As maintained by Taylor (2000: 16), eunuchs are not necessarily impotent. On occasions they were known to be sexually active: "castration does not so much suppress eros as redirect and in some ways liberate it; castration need have nothing to do with the penis".

[1100] See Scholz 2001: 17 and Bullough 2002: 4.

[1101] Contrary to this general notion is a suggestion made by Westenholz (2009: 88–89) that Gudea considered castrates as impure, and therefore expelled them from Lagaš before building the Eninnu temple, fearing that their impurity will pollute the temple. However, this suggestion lies on the uncertain reading of the term NITA-UD as giš-bír, and the uncertain interpretation of the latter phrase as denoting a person "with a shriveled penis" (as suggested by Attinger 1993: 588, 5.3.108 § 598 ex. 324).

Chapter 5

Less Known Third Gender Figures

Introduction

In the previous chapters we have explored the most prominent third gender figures: the gala/*kalû*, *kulu'u*, *assinnu*, *kurgarrû* and lú-sag / *ša rēši*. As was demonstrated, much information exists on each of these figures, since their textual attestations are numerous. However, many other designations considered to belong to the category of the third gender exist, about which data is much scantier. The aim of the current chapter, therefore, is to investigate these figures, and examine whether they should be considered similarly to the figures discussed in the previous chapters. The specific characteristics of each one of them, which relate them to the third gender, will be presented. Their similarities, as well as the unique attributes that distinguish each of them from the others, will then be considered.

Even though at first glance it appears that no obvious criteria of hierarchy between these figures exist, the characteristics of each allow us to group them within several sub-categories. Therefore, we will first treat the *girseqû* and *tīru*, two figures whose chief sphere of activity was the palace, and who resemble several other figures previously discussed, mostly the *ša rēši*. We will continue with discussing the SAG-UR-SAG and *pilpilû*, two cult functionaries who exhibit a number of affinities with other members of the cult personnel, most notably the *assinnu*. Subsequently, the *sinnišānu* and *nāš pilaqqi* will be presented. These two terms represented in all likelihood general titles rather than real figures, and pertained to femininity ascribed to men. We will end with the *parû*, a term about which the least is known. It will be demonstrated that all these male persons shared several traits of third gender figures: feminine behavior or appearance, sexual passivity, childlessness and barrenness. In this regard, they exhibit close resemblances to the figures already surveyed in previous chapters, but the evidence concerning the figures currently discussed is much scantier.

1. *girseqû*

The first figure to be explored is the *girseqû*. As will be seen, this person is sometimes regarded in scholarly literature as possessing qualities of a eunuch or a homosexual. However, the evidence is not conclusive as to allow any certainty in this regard. It will be shown, nevertheless, that enough information exists to support the view that the *girseqû* belonged to the group of third gender figures in Mesopotamia. First, a general overview of the title and its characteristics will be presented, as well as the possible etymology of the term. Second, the attestations of the *girseqû* in lexical lists will be presented. Thereafter, a chronological survey of the documentation of the *girseqû* in different textual genres will be offered. It will be demonstrated that the term bore two different meanings in two different periods. In the earlier phase, during the Ur III period, the Sumerian compound gìr-sè-ga (and its variants,

for which, see below) denoted a general title which can be understood roughly as "dependent personnel". In the later phase, however, during the Old Babylonian period onwards, the Akkadian equivalent *girseqû* came to denote specific figures of ambiguous gender characteristics.

This title is mostly attested in texts preceding the end of the Old Babylonian period. Later on it is found only scarcely. It is commonly assumed that the Sumerian origin of this term was gìr-sè-ga, usually understood to denote "domestics", or "personnel".[1102] Since the sign SÈ can alternatively be read as SIG_{10}, this term may be understood as gìr sig_{10}-a, the active participle of gìr sig_{10}, "to place the foot", in the sense of "to serve someone". The active participle of "to serve" can therefore be simply understood as "an attendant, servant".[1103]

Before turning to survey the textual attestations of the *girseqû* chronologically, his appearance in lexical lists will be evaluated. Some general attributes of this figure can be deduced on the basis of these entries. In the Old Babylonian Proto-lú lexical list we encounter the following entries:

OB Proto-lú rev. iv 383–387[1104]

383 sag-géme-arad	slaves
384 gìr-sì-ga	*girseqû*
385 emeda	house-born slave[1105]
386 emeda-gal	chief house-born slave
387 emeda-ga-lá	chief house-born slave

These entries from the Old Babylonian list demonstrate that the *girseqû* was regarded as similar to the emedu, "house-born slave", since both were generally labeled "slaves" in line 383. The expression sag-géme-arad, "slaves", probably served as a general title of the consequent four entries. In the "canonical" lú = *ša* lexical list the *girseqû* was documented as follows:

lú = *ša* Tablet 4,89–92[1106]

89 uš-ga	*uš-ku-u*	attendant, youth[1107] / servant[1108]
90 uš-ga	*gìr-seq-qu-u*	attendant, youth / *girseqû*
91 gìr-sig_5-ga	min	*girseqû* / ditto
92 gìr-sig_5-ga	*še-pu da-me-iq-tum*	*girseqû* / fine foot

[1102] See CAD G: 94, s.v. "*girseqûs*" and Gelb 1975: 50, 54, 56.

[1103] Englund (2003: § 9) understood this term as meaning literally "laid to the foot".

[1104] See MSL 12: 46, http://oracc.org/dcclt/P228841, http://oracc.org/dcclt/P228066. Transliteration follows DCCLT.

[1105] See SG E: 120, s.v. "emedu (AMA.TU)" and ePSD, s.v. "emedu".

[1106] See MSL 12: 131.

[1107] See ePSD, s.v. "ušga".

[1108] See ePSD, s.v. "ušga", and similarly Steinkeller and Postgate 1992: 60. However, CAD (U/W: 301, s.v. "*uškû*") translated this term as "holder of prior claims", based on two legal documents where it denoted some legal status of a person (a third attestation comes from an uncertain context, since the text is too broken). However, the exact nature of this legal status is unclear, and its equation with *uš-ku-u* of the current entry is not certain.

Here the *girsequ* is equated with Sumerian uš-ga (l. 90), and therefore appears to be considered parallel to Akkadian *ušku* (l. 89). Since both uš-ga and *ušku* designate "servant" or "prepubescent male",[1109] this meaning may be applied for the *girsequ* as well. However, it is claimed in CAD that the subsequent lines of the list demonstrate a misunderstanding of the term, because *girsequ* is translated literally as "fine foot" (l. 92) on the basis of Sumerian sig$_5$.[1110] Sumerian gìr equals to Akkadian *šēpu*, "foot", while Sumerian sig$_5$ equals to Akkadian *damqu*, "good, fine", in the present case in the feminine form *damiqtu*. If the origins of the term were no longer known by that time, it is possible that false etymologies were invented. However, another possibility is that this line did not actually express a misunderstanding, but rather an educated exercise by first millennium scribes, in inventing new meanings, however theoretical, to Sumerian terms.[1111]

Significantly, in the Short Recension of the Neo-Assyrian Sultantepe manuscript of the igi-tuḫ list, the *girsequ* was attested immediately after *ša rēši*:

igi-tuḫ list, Short Recension, 232–234[1112]

232 lú-sag	*šá re-šu*	(he) of the head
233 lú-sag-lugal	min *šar-ri*	(he) of the head of the king
234 ˡúgìr-[sè]-ga	šu-*u*	gir[*se*]*qû*

The *ša rēši*, as we have seen in Chapter 4, was a palace attendant who, in all likelihood, was castrated, at least in certain periods and certain places across the ancient Near East. Therefore, the documentation of the *girsequ* in his proximity is significant, and hints that the latter was perceived as similar in functionality and nature to the former. Further evidence regarding the function of the *girsequ* as a palace attendant is found in the *malku = šarru* list of synonyms:

malku = šarru Tablet 4,41[1113]

gìr-sè-qu-u   *e-rib* é-⌈gal⌉   *girsequ* / (he) who enters the palace

malku = šarru Tablet 8,25[1114]

gìr-si-ga-u   *e-rib e-kal-*[*lim*]   *girsequ* / (he) who enters the pala[ce]

In these two passages the *girsequ* is defined as *ērib ekalli*, literally "one who enters the palace", a term designating palace attendants who were "admitted to certain parts of the palace".[1115] Furthermore, the similar term *manzaz pani*, literally "one who stands in front", was used to explain the meaning of *girsequ* in a commentary on the

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[1109] See the equation of bu-un-gu UŠ-GA with Akkadian *šerru*, *ṣeḫru*, *la'û* and *lakû*, all representing "young child" or "servant", in the lexical list diri Tablet 4,156–159 (see MSL 15: 156), and the equation of UŠ$^{bu-un-ga}$GÁ with *šerru* in the list antagal C,236 (see MSL 17: 201). See, also, AHw: 1441 and MZL no. 381.

[1110] CAD G: 96, s.v. "*girsequ*".

[1111] See, in this regard, Frahm 2011: 14.

[1112] See Landsberger and Gurney 1957–58: 83.

[1113] See Hrůša 2010: 381.

[1114] See Hrůša 2010: 423.

[1115] See CAD E: 292, s.v. "*ērib ekalli*".

eighteenth tablet of the astrological series *enūma Anu Enlil*.[1116] This explanation was given because two lines earlier a prediction was detailed, that the *girseqû* will seize the throne.[1117]

We will now turn to survey the appearances of the *girseqû* chronologically, in order to demarcate the different characteristics of this figure throughout the ages. According to Gelb, the term gìr-sè-ga remains unattested prior to the Ur III period. In this period, according to Gelb, it designated men, women and children who were household workers, as well as various occupations of craftsmen and officials: secretaries (sukkal), cupbearers (sagi), chief-singers (nar-gal), gatekeepers (ì-du$_8$), soldiers (aga-ús), snake charmers (muš-laḫ$_4$), foreman of millers (ugula kinkin), milk carriers (ga-íl) and potters (baḫar).[1118] Some of these persons held high ranking posts, while others were of relatively low status. The common denominator of all these persons, even the high ranking ones, was their dependency on an external agent, either the court or temple, for their sustenance, which made them subject to it. Note, for example, BM 14618,[1119] an administrative text that lists galas and nars (singers). The term gìr-sè-ga that appears in the colophon denotes all the listed persons,[1120] and was translated by Gelb as "personnel".[1121] In the list, the galas and nars were documented as belonging to several different household temples and localities, presumably on which they were dependent. A noticeable characteristic of the term gìr-sè-ga in the Ur III period is the fact that persons holding it could belong to a deity, city or ruler, either lugal or ensi.[1122] Such attestations indicate the fact that these persons were dependents of temples or local rulers, and probably served as their labor force.

In the Old Babylonian period onwards, however, it appears that the meaning of the title underwent a major change. Gelb claimed that the initial meaning of the Sumerian term gìr-sè-ga was lost in the course of time, when the Akkadian derivative *girseqû* represented the same term. Furthermore, Gelb claimed that there is no evidence from these early periods that the term designated eunuchs, unlike what could be inferred from later texts such as the laws of Ḫammurabi, and the *šumma ālu* series of omens (for both see below).[1123] Judging by several letters dating to the

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[1116] gìr-sè-ga : *man-za-az pa-ni*, K 4336 obv. ii 8'; see Weidner 1941–44: Tafel VII. For an overview, detail of content, discussion and previous literature of *enūma Anu Enlil*, see Hunger and Pingree 1999: 12–20.

[1117] *mār šipri*(ra-gaba) : *girseqû*(gìr-sè-ga) *kussa*(aš-te) [*iṣabbat*(dib-*bat*)], "the messenger = *girseqû* [will seize] the throne", K 4336 obv. ii 6'; see Weidner 1941–44: Tafel VII and 1954–56a: 78.

[1118] Gelb 1975: 54–55.

[1119] For a transliteration of the text, see Gelb 1975: 44–46; for photographs, see Gelb 1975: 75–76.

[1120] nar gala gìr-sè-ga; see BM 14618 rev. ii 6.

[1121] Gelb 1975: 50, 56.

[1122] See references listed in CAD G: 94, s.v. "*girseqûs*", hundreds of Ur III texts mentioning giri$_3$-se$_3$-ga in CDLI website (http://cdli.ucla.edu/) and gir$_3$-se$_3$-ga in BDTNS website (http://bdtns.filol.csic.es/) and in Koslova 2000: 168, Index IV: Vokabular.

[1123] Gelb 1975: 55–56.

Old Babylonian period, we can see that *girsequ*s could have been owners of land plots. This fact is highly significant, since it portrays the *girsequ* in a completely different status from the dependent gìr-sè-ga of Ur III times.[1124] For example, the Mari letter ARM 5.28, sent to king Yasmaḫ-Addu by his official Tarīm-Šakim, contains several references to land grants, one of which is the following:

ARM 5.28,15–18[1125]
[15]… *aš-šu*[*m* o o o] *ù* a-šà [16]*ša* [lú]gìr-sig₅ *ša im-ḫu-ru-ma* [17]*be-lí iš-pu-ra-am* 1 aš-še *pa-ta-na-am* [18]*as-ni-iq-ma*
[17]My lord has written to me [15]concernin[g the o o o] and the field [16]of the *girsequ* which he/they received; [18](therefore) I ordered [17]1 aš-measurement of barley for dining.

From this passage it could be understood that the *girsequ*s receive from the palace not only rations of barley, but also plots of land. Clearly, then, they were not merely dependent on the palace for their support, but were able to conduct their economic lives in an independent manner. However, since all land plots were given in this period to individuals on behalf of the palace, the *girsequ*s' economic independence remained limited, and eventually subjected to the palace bureaucracy. In another Old Babylonian letter, TCL 7.22, a "field of the *girsequ* of the palace" was mentioned in a list of fields.[1126] Another letter, TCL 7.51, mentions again a field belonging to a *girsequ*:

TCL 7.51,8–10[1127]
[8]*be-lí it-ti* gìr-sig₅-ga *la-bi-ru-tim* [9]20 bur a-šà *i-na ka-ni-ik-tim* [10]*ik-nu-uk-šum-ma*
[8]My lord [10]has sealed for him [9]in a sealed-document (= granted him) [9]a field of 20 bur, [8]close to (that of) the old *girsequ*s.

The fact that the *girsequ*s were not mentioned by name, but nonetheless were referred to as "the old *girsequ*s" could testify to the fact that they were well-known persons, or a long-established family, but this remains purely speculative. Another mention of fields being granted to *girsequ*s appears in the letter TCL 7.32:

TCL 7.32,4–10[1128]
[4]*tup-pa-a-at* a-šà-*im* [5]*ma-la* a-šà gìr-sè-ga[meš] *ša* [6]pan *tap-lu-ka* [7]*ù* a-šà-*am* [8]*ma-la* a-na gìr-sè-g[a[meš] *ša* pan] [9]a-na na-da-nim [10]*úḫ-ḫu-ru*
[4]The documents concerning field(s), [5]all the fields of the *girsequ*s "of [6]the bow" (that) you have surveyed, [7]and [8]all [7]the fields, [8][that] [10]remain [9]to be given [8]for

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[1124] Such differences cannot derive from the fact that no private documents were found from the Ur III period, since the Old Babylonian evidence (such as the Mari letters) similarly derived from the palace documentation.

[1125] See Dossin 1952: 48.

[1126] a-šà gìr-sè-ga é-gal, TCL 7.22,6; see CAD G: 94, s.v. "*girsequ* b2'".

[1127] See CAD G: 95, s.v. "*girsequ* b2'". Transliteartion based on the TCL copy.

[1128] See CAD G: 95, s.v. "*girsequ* b2'". Transliteartion based on the TCL copy and the photograph in CDLI website (http://cdli.ucla.edu/P386025).

the *girseq*[*û*s "of the bow"].

This passage explicitly deals with fields that were already issued for *girseqû*s, and additional fields that are to be given to them in the future. These *girseqû*s are designated as "of the bow", a term that probably denoted persons who performed a temporary service.[1129] It is possible, therefore, that the said fields were issued for these *girseqû*s as payment for their service.

Therefore, it can be seen, based on the evidence from several letters of the Old Babylonian period, that in this era *girseqû*s could have owned land of their own, so obviously enjoyed a much higher status than the persons holding the same title in Ur III times. According to Lafont and Westbrook, in Ur III period land plots were granted for workmen of the higher social classes, while unskilled members of the lowest levels of society received food rations instead.[1130]

Interestingly, the *girseqû* could have been regarded as a distinct class or guild, as the following clause from a letter sent by Ḫammurabi to Sîn-iddina shows:

AbB 2.42 = LIH 42,6–8[1131]
[6]m*in-bi-ì-lí-šu* dumu *a-pil-ì-lí-šu* [7]lú *gu-ub-rum*[ki] gú íd-edin-na [8]šà dumu[meš] gìr-sì-ga

[6]Inbi-ilīšu son of Apil-ilīšu, [7]man of Gubrum, (on the) bank of "Steppe-canal", [8]among the sons of the *girseqû*.

As is seen in this passage, Inbi-ilīšu was a person "among the sons of the *girseqû*" (šà dumu[meš] gìr-sì-ga), which may indicate that the "sons of the *girseqû*" could comprise a specific category or group of people, to which one could belong. This fact might allude to the possibility that the *girseqû* was not a mere servant as other attendants of the palace or the temple, but a person who bore certain special characteristics different from other personnel.

We will continue with a different type of evidence concerning the characteristics of the *girseqû*, which appears in the Old Babylonian law collection of Ḫammurabi (henceforth, CH). Three laws (§ § 187, 192, and 193) relate to adopted sons of the *girseqû*, and are therefore relevant to the question of his possibility to beget. All three laws relate to the possibility that the adopted son will aspire to leave the *girseqû* who adopted and raised him, and return to his biological parents. The laws prohibit this and stipulate harsh punishment on a son who insists on doing so:

CH § 187,50–53[1132]
[50]*mār*(dumu) *girseqîm*(gìr-sè-ga) [51]*mu-za-az ekallim*(é-gal) [52]*ù mār*(dumu) *sekretim*([munus]zi-ik-ru-um) [53]*ú-ul ib-ba-aq-qar*

[1129] For an evaluation of the term *ša qašti*, literally "of the bow", see Zaccagnini 2003: 581–582.

[1130] Lafont and Westbrook 2003: 187, 198. For a description of the economic structure of the Ur III state, see Lafont and Westbrook 2003: 187–192 (see, especially, p. 187 for the economic relations between workmen and the central administration).

[1131] See Frankena 1966: 26.

[1132] See Driver and Miles 1952b: 74. For a recent treatment and translation of this law, see Roth 1997: 119.

[50]A son of a *girsequ* [51]serving in the palace, [52]and a son of a *sekretu*, [53]may not be reclaimed.

CH § 192,96, 1–9[1133]

[96]*šum-ma mār*(dumu) *girseqîm*(gìr-sè-ga) [1]*ù lu mār*(dumu) *sekretim*([munus]zi-ik-ru-um) [2]*a-na a-bi-im* [3]*mu-ra-bi-šu* [4]*ù um-mi-im* [5]*mu-ra-bi-ti-šu* [6]*ú-ul a-bi at-ta* [7]*ú-ul um-mi at-ti iq-ta-bi* [8]*lišānšu*(eme-*šu*) [9]*i-na-ak-ki-su*

[96]If a son of a *girsequ*, [1]or a son of a *sekretu*, [7]said [2]to his father [3]who raised him, [4]or mother [5]who raised him: [6]"you are not my father!"; [7]"you are not my mother!", [9]they shall cut out [8]his tongue.

CH § 193,10–22[1134]

[10]*šum-ma mār*(dumu) *girseqîm*(gìr-sè-ga) [11]*ù lu mār*(dumu) *sekretim*([munus]zi-ik-ru-um) [12]*bīt*(é) *a-bi-šu* [13]*ú-wi-id-di-ma* [14]*a-ba-am* [15]*mu-ra-bi-šu* [16]*ú um-ma-am* [17]*mu-ra-bi-sú* [18]*i-zí-ir-ma* [19]*a-na bīt*(é) *a-bi-šu* [20]*it-ta-la-ak* [21]*i-in-šu* [22]*i-na-sà-ḫu*

[10]If a son of a *girsequ*, [11]or a son of a *sekretu*, [13]identifies with [12]his (biological) father's house, [18]but he renounces [14]the father [15]who raised him [16]and the mother [17]who raised him, [20](and) he returns [19]to his (biological) father's house: [22]they shall pluck out [21]his eye.

These three laws must be evaluated together. The term *girsequ* in these clauses was translated by various commentators as "chamberlain",[1135] "attendant at court",[1136] and "courtier".[1137] The common denominator of all these laws is their mutual concern with different aspects of adoption, similar to several other laws grouped with them.[1138] Indeed, the sons of the *girsequ*s mentioned in CH § § 187, 192 and 193 are clearly all adopted ones, since their biological parents are referred to in these clauses. CH § 187 appears to be related to the two preceding it: § 185 forbids an adopted child of returning to his natural parents, whereas § 186 allows the child's return in case he insists on finding his parents and succeeds in doing so. Therefore, the ruling in § 187 that the son of a *girsequ* who serves in the palace may not return to his natural parents shows that the *girsequ* had a special status, unlike that of an ordinary man. Following the same idea, § 192 forbids the adopted child of a *girsequ* of renouncing his foster parents, and § 193 forbids that child of returning to his natural parents.

It is significant that the *girsequ* appears in these three laws as equal in status to the *sekretu*-woman. The *sekretu* was a female member of the palace personnel, but not much is known about her.[1139] According to the CAD, the term is derived from

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[1133] See Driver and Miles 1952b: 74, 76. For a recent treatment and translation of this law, see Roth 1997: 120.

[1134] See Driver and Miles 1952b: 76. For a recent treatment and translation of this law, see Roth 1997: 120.

[1135] Driver and Miles 1952a: 75, 77.

[1136] CAD S: 215, s.v. "*sekretu* 1a1'".

[1137] Roth 1997: 119, 120.

[1138] CH §§ 185–193 all relate to various cases of adoption.

[1139] For a discussion on the *sekretu* in the Neo-Assyrian period, see Teppo 2005: 73–79.

sekēru/sakāru, "to dam up, close, clog … to block … be detained".[1140] This etymology might allude to the fact that these women were confined to the palace. However, as commented Teppo, it cannot be proven.[1141] Hence, even though the exact nature of the *sekretu* is not clear, we can safely assume that she had a distinct rank in the palace bureaucracy. Roth commented generally on the *sekretu*, that she was "a member of a group or class of temple dedicatees, with special privileges, sometimes living in cloistered groups".[1142] However, further references to the *sekretu* in the laws of Ḫammurabi shed more light on her. In CH § § 178–180 she is mentioned in the same context as *ugbabtu* and *nadītu*, two female cult personnel that are known to have been forbidden of having their own biological descendants.[1143] These three laws were intended to secure the inheritance rights and welfare of the *ugbabtu*, *nadītu* and *sekretu* following the death of their father, presumably because they were not allowed to have a husband or a child to support them. Therefore, the association of the *girseqû* with the typically childless *sekretu* in CH § § 187, 192, and 193 as discussed above suggests that he was similarly childless. Whether this characteristic lack of progeny resulted from castration, or from social convention, cannot be determined.

As for the gender characteristics of the *girseqû*, Hawkins suggested that this term stood for "eunuch" in the Old Babylonian period, equivalent to *ša/šūt rēši* documented in the Mari texts of that era.[1144] In a passage from a letter sent by Šamši-Adad to his son Yasmaḫ-Addu king of Mari, the two titles are attested together:

ARM 4.2,12–19[1145]
¹²[lú] *šu-ut* sag^mes*-ka* ¹³lú^mes *ša bi-la-ti-[im]* ¹⁴[ṣ]*a-ba-am ša it-ti Sa-mi-da-ḫi-im*
¹⁵*il-li-kam* ¹⁶gìr-sig-ga^mes*-ka* ¹⁷*it-ti-ka gu-um-me-ra-am-ma* ¹⁸*a-na Šu-ba-at-*^d*En-lil*^ki ¹⁹*a-na ṣe-ri-ia al-kam*

¹⁹Come to me ¹⁸to Šubat-Enlil, ¹⁷with you all ¹²your *ša rēši*s, ¹³porters – ¹⁴the force which ¹⁵came ¹⁴with Samid-aḫum – ¹⁶and *girseqû*s.

In this passage from Šamši-Adad's letter the terms *šūt rēši* and *girseqû* appear together in the same sentence. We can see that these two terms represented two different types of officials. The distribution of the textual attestations of these two terms show that the *ša rēši* began to appear in the Old Babylonian era, while the *girseqû* almost ceased to be documented after this period. Interestingly, a mention to a son of a *girseqû* appears in one of the Mari letters:

[1140] CAD S: 210, s.v. "*sekēru* A" and 215, s.v. "*sekretu*".

[1141] Teppo 2005: 77.

[1142] Roth 1997: 272.

[1143] On the *nadītu*, see Harris 1964, CAD N/1: 63–64, s.v. "*nadītu* A", Henshaw 1994: 192–195, Roth 1997: 271 and Westbrook 2003: 424–425. For a discussion of the *nadītu* in the Ḫammurabi laws, see Harris 1961. On the *ugbabtu*, see AHw: 1403, Henshaw 1994: 45–46, 203–206 and Roth 1997: 273. For a discussion of women in cloisters during the Old Babylonian period, see Harris 1963.

[1144] Hawkins 2002: 220 n. 29.

[1145] See Dossin 1950–51: 14.

ARM 2.129,5–6[1146]
⁵dumu *be-lí*-igi-du ^lúgìr-sig-ga ⁶*i-na qa-at-tu-na-an*^ki *im-ra-aṣ-ma*
⁵The son of Bēli-ašarēd the *girsequ* ⁶has fallen ill in Qattunān.

In this passage, Bēli-ašarēd, the father of the unnamed ill son, is designated as a *girsequ*. However, as noted by Ziegler, who surveyed the *girsequ* as part of her study of the Mari women's quarters and their personnel, nothing prevents this son from being an adopted one.[1147] As is evident from CH § § 187, 192, and 193 it is clear that *girsequ*s could indeed adopt sons. Ziegler claimed that even if it cannot be proven that the *girsequ* was a eunuch in Mari, there are few hints in this regard. One such example is the possible connection of *girsequ*s with the royal women's quarters, as appears in a list of palace personnel:[1148]

ARM 21.398,38–39[1149]
³⁸*šu-nígin* 32 lú gìr-sig₅-ga^meš ³⁹*ša tu-bu-uq-tim*
³⁸Total: 32 *girsequ*s ³⁹of the *women's quarters*.

The meaning of the key-term in this passage, *tubuqtu*, is not certain. Ziegler suggested that it denoted "harem", following a previous suggestion by Durand.[1150] Durand suggested that the *girsequ*s in Mari were children born in the palace, perhaps to the king's concubines, so that they were members of the ruler's extended family and enjoyed a high status in the palace.[1151]

Ziegler made a suggestion that combined Durand's approach and her own, according to which the *girsequ*s were the bastard children of the king, and were castrated in order "to avoid potential problems of succession". However, Ziegler admitted that no textual evidence supports this speculation. As a support for her view, Ziegler pointed to the connection of *girsequ*s as chief-musicians with the palace women or young musicians. According to her, this could support the idea that they were eunuchs.[1152] However, since Ziegler does not elaborate further, it seems hard to accept this view.

In contrast with these unproven suggestions, other aspects of the *girsequ*, as shown in the Mari texts, are more telling with regard to his ambiguous gender iden-

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[1146] See Jean 1950: 212.

[1147] This approach contradicts Durand's (1997: 86) view, that the fact that Bēli-ašarēd had a child proves that the term *girsequ* in itself did not denote "eunuch" or "castrate".

[1148] Ziegler 1999: 10–11.

[1149] See Durand 1983: 532.

[1150] Ziegler 1999: 11. See commentary on ARM 21.398 by Durand in ARMT 21: 523–525. Durand understood the term as deriving from *tubqum*, equal to *bītānum*, "inner quarter of a palace or temple", and suggested that it denoted a private part of the palace, where the women's quarters were located. CAD (T: 449, s.v. "*tubuqtu* B") does not translate this term, and only states that its meaning is uncertain.

[1151] Durand 1997: 86.

[1152] Ziegler 1999: 11, 2007: 23. Ziegler (2007: 23 n. 119) referred in this context to text A.78, where a *girsequ* was mentioned as a person who is supposed to lead a group of female apprentice singers (munus-tur^meš *na-ra-tim*) on a journey. For transliteration and translation of this text, see Ziegler 2007: 180, 182.

tity: his performance as a court singer.[1153] In a letter sent by Ištarān-nāṣir to Zimri-Lim king of Mari, we encounter a *girseqû* who was a singer:

M.7618 + M.14609,17–19[1154]
[17][*šum-m*]*a* [lú]nar g[ìr-s]ig₅-ga [18][*ša* ᵐZ]*i-im-ri*-[*li-im*] [19][*iš-pu-ra-am* …[1155]]
[17][No]w, the g[*irs*]*eqû*-singer [18][about which Z]imri-[Lim] [19][wrote to me …]

In a different letter that Ištarān-nāṣir sent to Zimri-Lim the *girseqû*s are mentioned again as singers:

A.93 + A.94,5–6, 12–14[1156]
[5]*aš-šum* [lú]nar gìr-sig₅-g[a]ᵐ]ᵉš [6][*š*]*a be-lí iš-pu-ra-an-ni* [12][*šu*]*m-m*[*a* [lú]n]ar gìr-sig₅-ga [13][*ša* Z]*i-im-ri-li-im* [14][*i*]*š-pu-ra-am* …
[5]Concerning the *girseq*[*û*]-singers [6][a]bout which my lord wrote to me …
[12][N]o[w], the *girseqû*-[sin]ger [13][about which Z]imri-Lim [14][w]rote to me …

Ziegler doubted the possibility that the singers in Mari were castrated, because on occasions they were documented as married and having children.[1157] However, she suggested that two singers, Sîn-erībam and Bēlī-tukultī, were nevertheless castrated. The two are attested in the letter M.11057[1158] as teachers of the singer Ṭāb-eli-mātišu. Ziegler proposed that Sîn-erībam was a singer in charge of recitation of Sumerian eršemas. She further proposed that Bēlī-tukultī was a castrate because he was a singer who used the emesal dialect, and suggested that his name was ambiguous and could belong to either a man or a woman.[1159] Ziegler also noted that Bēlī-tukultī was attested in KTT 86, a ration-list for various professionals from Tuttul that was already discussed.[1160] As was previously shown, a certain Bēlī-tukultī was documented in this list as a member of a group of singers, and one of the preceding entries specified rations that were given to a member of the *kalû*s. It seems likely that the Bēlī-tukultī attested in KTT 86 is indeed the very same person as the one now discussed. All this reminds us of the gala/*kalû* and his function as a chanter of lamentations and recitations, as discussed in Chapter 2.

[1153] However, Ziegler (2007: 23) noted that at present there is no evidence for the practice of castration for musical reasons, that is, "in order to preserve the clear voice of pre-pubertal boys". Gelb (1975: 59) noted that singers and musicians were often blind in Mesopotamia and other regions. However, it is not clear whether their blindness was the result of corporal mutilation. It may as well have been the opposite, and blind people could earn their living by becoming singers and musicians.

[1154] See Ziegler 2007: 66.

[1155] Restoration follows a similar passage in a different letter, A.93 + A.94,12–14 (see Ziegler 2007: 68), for which, see below.

[1156] See Ziegler 2007: 68.

[1157] It should be noted, however, that nothing should have prevented a castrate of marrying a wife, or adopting a son if he wished. As we have seen, CH §§ 187, 192, and 193 prove that in practice *girseqû*s could adopt children.

[1158] See Ziegler 2007: 248–250.

[1159] Ziegler 2007: 23–24, 248, 251. As for the last suggestion, see similar opinion in Durand and Marti 2004: 131.

[1160] KTT 86,17, see Chapter 2, p. 109.

Other texts from Mari shed additional light on the functions and duties of the *girseqû*. In several of these texts *girseqû*s are documented as craftsmen, either generally,[1161] or by specifying their profession.[1162] Furthermore, the *girseqû* was sometimes documented in the Mari texts as holding military positions. For example, in a letter sent by Šamši-Adad to his son Yasmaḫ-Addu king of Mari, the father ordered his son to assemble an army:

ARM 1.42,34–35[1163]

[34] *5 me-‹tim› ṣa-ba-am ku-ṣú-ur qa-du-um* gìr-sig$_5$-ga-*ka* [35] *1 li-im i-ma-ṣí*

[34]Assemble 500 troops! Together with your *girseqû*(s) [35]1000 (troops) will suffice.

In this quote the *girseqû*s are clearly mentioned as part of the assembled army. Durand, however, suggested that the military contribution of the *girseqû*s was merely symbolic, and that they were only added to the army in order to achieve a round number of a thousand persons.[1164] This suggestion, it should be noted, is not supported by any evidence from the text itself.

We will continue with the evidence from later periods. As was already noted, after the end of the Old Babylonian period, the *girseqû* was only scarcely attested. He is found in a Neo-Assyrian copy[1165] of the astrological inquiry of the *enūma Anu Enlil* series, in which he was perceived as a potential threat to the throne:

RMA 272A = K 1406,13[1166]

[*šumma*(diš) *Sîn*(30) *ina araḫ*(iti) *tiš*]*ri*(d]u$_6$) *attalâ*(an-mi) *šāt urri*(en-nun ud-zal-la) *iškun*(gar-*un*) *mār šipri*(ra-gaba) : *girseqû*(gìr-sè-ga) *kuss[a*](aš-t[e]) *iṣab-b[at*](dib-*b[at*])

If the moon is eclipsed[1167] in the month of Tišri in the morning watch: the messenger = *girseqû* will sei[ze] the thro[ne].

Another similar forecast from the *enūma Anu Enlil* series shows the following:

ACh Supp. Sin 20,17[1168]

[*ina*] *ṣīt šamaši*(d utu-è) *nišē*(un meš) *i-bir-ra-a šar*(lugal) *Akkad* ki *ana šatti*(mu) *5* kam *imātma*(úš-*ma*) *girseqû*(gìr-sè-ga) *kussa*(aš-te) *iṣabbat*(dib-*bat*)

[At] sunrise, the people will be hungry: the king of Akkad will die in the fifth year, and a *girseqû* will seize the throne.

The comparison between the *girseqû* and the *ša rēši* was already drawn previously. The above quotes may strengthen the connection between these two figures, since

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[1161] *mār ummēnī*, "specialist craftsman" in ARM 9.24 ii 5 and 9.27 ii 23.

[1162] *gallābu*, "barber" in ARM 21.398,27 and 21.400,11.

[1163] See Dossin 1950: 94.

[1164] Durand 1998: 19.

[1165] The origin of the series is much earlier, probably from the Old Babylonian period; see Hunger and Pingree 1999: 14.

[1166] See Hunger 1992: 63.

[1167] *attalâ iškun*, literally "causes an eclipse".

[1168] See Virolleaud 1910a: 17.

they remind us of an Old Babylonian omen in which the *ša rēši* was portrayed as posing a danger to the king.[1169]

Another omen in which the *girseqû* was documented belongs to tablet 104 of the Standard Babylonian *šumma ālu* series, already discussed.[1170] The omen forecasted good luck for a man who approached sexually a *girseqû*. As was explained in Chapter 3, this omen should probably be understood as reflecting the exercising of male dominance and power, in terms of sexual behavior. According to the omen, a man sexually superior over a *girseqû* was perceived positively, and thus the *girseqû* was portrayed as holding an inferior status, which was manifested in the fact the he assumed the receptive role in the sexual act.

As we have already seen, the *girseqû* appeared in *The Epic of Erra*, in a reference that depicts him yet again as a palace attendant.[1171]

One of the latest mentions of the *girseqû* appears in an astrological text of king Nabonidus, which appears on a royal inscription from Babylon.[1172] Following an observance of a conjunction of "the big star" and the moon, the god Bēl reassures Nabonidus that the phenomenon is not to be interpreted as a bad omen. Subsequently, the following episode is described by Nabonidus:

VAB 4.8 vi 12'–23'[1173]

[12']*i-na šuttima*(máš-gi₆-*im-ma*) [13']*šú-a-ti* [m.d]*Nabû-kudurrī-uṣur*(nà-níg-gub-ùru) [14']*šar*(lugal) *pa-ni maḫ-ra-a* [15']*u 1–en girseqû*([lú]gìr-sè-ga) [16']*ina narkabti*([giš]gigir) *ú-zu-uz-zu* [17']*girseqû*([lú]gìr-sè-ga-*ú*) [18']*a-na* [m.d]*Nabû-kudurrī-uṣur*(nà-níg-gub-ùru) [19']*i-ta-me um-ma* [20']*ki* [m.d]*Nabû-na'id*(nà-ní-tuku) [21']*du-bu-ud-ma šutti*(máš-gi₆) [22']*ši-i šá iṭ-ṭu-lu* [23']*lu-šá-an-ni-ka ka-a-šú*

[12']In [13']that [12']dream, [13']Nebuchadnezzar, [14']a former king preceding me, [15']and one *girseqû*, [16']were standing in a chariot. [17']The *girseqû* [19']said thus [18']to Nebuchadnezzar: [21']"speak [20']with Nabonidus! [22']That [21']dream [22']which he has seen, [23']let him recount to you!"

The text continues by describing how Nebuchadnezzar indeed follows his *girseqû*'s advice, and approaches Nabonidus, asking him about the vision Nabonidus saw in his dream. This description of the *girseqû* as standing together with Nebuchadnezzar in the royal chariot portrays him as closely associated with the Babylonian king, clearly functioning as a high-ranking attendant. His figure in this episode is highly significant, since the *girseqû* appears to act as a mediator between the two kings, the earthly and the celestial. He possesses the knowledge of Nabonidus' dream, and advises Nebuchadnezzar to approach his descendent and query about its content.

In several respects, these mediating capacities remind us of similar qualities of

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[1169] *šumma izbu* Tablet 21,8 (see Leichty 1968: 185 and De Zorzi 2014: 844), see Chapter 4, p. 209 and n. 941.

[1170] CT 39.45,33, see Chapter 3, p. 194–195.

[1171] *The Epic of Erra* Tablet 4,109 (see Cagni 1969: 116), see Chapter 1, p. 82.

[1172] For a description, details and previous literature of this inscription, see Schaudig 2001: 514–515.

[1173] See Schaudig 2001: 519.

mediation between the earthly and the divine that were ascribed to third gender figures such as the *assinnu* and the *kurgarrû* in apotropaic rituals. Perhaps in the same way, the *girseqû* could have mediated between the earthly and celestial worlds for the same reasons. His close position to the king further reminds us the high rank of the *ša rēši* in Neo-Assyrian and Neo-Babylonian bureaucracies, and the close relations the *ša rēši* had with the rulers of the court.

Finally, Late Babylonian texts demonstrate that the status of *girseqû* could have formed a prebend, and as such, could have been sold.[1174]

In conclusion, the *girseqû* was a distinct type of palace attendant, attested mostly in the Old Babylonian era. Even though the title did not disappear completely after the end of this period, the number of individuals holding it was probably significantly reduced. The evidence shows numerous functional and contextual similarities between the *girseqû* and the *ša rēši*, a palace official who, in all probability, was a eunuch. However, this equivalence is not sufficient in order to decide whether the *girseqû* was a eunuch as well.

It seems that two different phases existed in the use of this title. In the earlier, during the Ur III period, gìr-sè-ga (and its writing variants) was a general term for working people who were dependants of the temple or palace, regardless of questions of gender or sexuality. However, it appears that, from the Old Babylonian period on, a radical change occurred in the meaning of the term. Now it denoted a particular figure that bore conspicuous third gender characteristics.

The evidence of the law collection of Ḫammurabi and the *šumma ālu* series of omens suggests that the *girseqû* was characterized as childless (unless adoption was involved), and being sexually penetrated. Even though it cannot be determined whether he was a castrate, on occasions, the *girseqû* was found to be closely associated with singers in the Mari letters, where he was even rarely attested as a singer himself. Singing is strongly associated with femininity,[1175] and therefore male singers can be affiliated with ambiguous gender characteristics. In this regard, the *girseqû* reminds us of the *kalû*. However, unlike the *kalû*, the *girseqû* was not a member of the cult personnel. Most of the evidence shows that he was a palace attendant. In this regard, the *girseqû* seems more similar to the *ša rēši*, a palace official who, in all likelihood, was a eunuch.

It still remains to be considered how and why the use of this title underwent such a fundamental change between the Ur III period and the Old Babylonian one. It seems as if the term stood for completely different concepts in each of the two chronological phases. However, several common denominators typical of these two allegedly different concepts can be observed. The main common denominator is that the people who bore this title were characterized as non-independent figures, relying on others to support them. Perhaps this concept of dependency of the Ur III period shaped the manner in which the term was continued to be used in the eras to follow. It can be suggested that, from the Old Babylonian period onwards, what once was a

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[1174] See van Driel 2002: 36 n. 10, including previous literature.
[1175] See, in this regard, Briggs 1992, 1993, Kratz 1994, and various articles in Koskoff 1987 (ed.) and Herndon and Ziegler 1990 (eds.).

general term designating people who were dependants of the state, bore now a new meaning, signifying specific palace attendants, which were characterized as reliant on others. This new notion of dependency derived from the fact that these male figures were typically childless, either because of castration, sexual passivity, ascribed femininity or a social ban on siring descendants of their own. As childless persons they could not have relied on sons to support them in case of illness or at an old age, so the palace administration was their sole source of confidence. In this regard, as mentioned above, they seem very similar to the castrated *ša rēši*s.

2. tiru/*tīru*

The tiru/*tīru* is one of the less known figures of this chapter. This term is mostly attested in lexical lists, but it is found in several other textual genres as well. It is mentioned alongside several palace attendants in the annals of Sennacherib and in incantation and extispicy texts, which indirectly allude to his barrenness. One of the most important attestations of the *tīru* is in *Bilgameš and the Netherworld*, in an episode that may allude to the fact that he was a castrate. Based on all these occurrences, it is suggested that the *tīru* was a palace attendant that bore several characteristics of gender ambiguity and might have even been a castrate.[1176]

We will first address the documentation of the *tīru* in various lexical lists. As was already presented, in the Proto-lú list, *tīru* appeared together with several terms of various ranks of *kalû*, and with *kurgarrû*, SAG-UR-SAG and *pilpilû*.[1177] Even though all these figures were cult personnel, most of the attestations of the *tīru* show that he was rather a palace attendant. Based on these attestations, it can be gathered that the Sumerian equivalent for this term was ⁽ˡᵘ⁾GAL-TE, to be read tiru:

lú = ša Tablet 1,149–150[1178]

149 GAL^(ti-ru)TE	[*ti*]-*i-rum*	*tīru*
150 gìr-sì-ga	[ŠU]-*ú*	*girseqû*

ḪAR-gud B,146[1179]

ˡᵘti-ru	*te-i-rum*	*man-za-az pa-ni*
tīru	*tīru*	(he) who stands in front (= palace servant)

Old Babylonian Proto-Aa ii 17[1180]

ti-ru-um	GAL-TE	*ma-ri* é-gal-*im*
tīru	*tīru*	son of the palace

erim-ḫuš Tablet 4,19–21[1181]

19 kisal^(ki-s[al?]kisal]	*pu-uḫ-rum*	courtyard / assembly

[1176] For a brief discussion of this term, though outdated by now, see Gelb 1982: 88.

[1177] Proto-lú obv. ii 23'–33', see p. 96–97 and n. 315; Proto-lú, 277–280, see Chapter 3, p. 160.

[1178] See MSL 12: 100, http://oracc.org/dcclt/P373780. Transliteration follows DCCLT.

[1179] See MSL 12: 226.

[1180] See MSL 14: 134.

[1181] See MSL 17: 57–58.

20 [ni-it-ta]NITA	*ti-i-rum*	male / *tīru*
21 [gi-is-gal]gišgal	*na-an-za-zu*	station, location / attendant

Synonym list CT 18.47 = K 4150,9[1182]

[*te-i*[?1183]]-*ru*	*e-rib* é-gal	[*tī*]*ru* / (he) who enters the palace

Based on the lexical entries shown above, it could be established that the *tīru* was a member of the palace personnel, since he is designated by certain phrases that generally describe palace attendants: *manzaz pani*, "(he) who stands in front",[1184] *ērib ekalli*, "(he) who enters the palace", and *māri ekallim*, "son of the palace". Therefore, the fact that the entry that follows *tīru* in the lú-list (Tablet 1,149–150) is *girsequ* is surely not coincidental. This fact is apparent further in another reference to the *tīru*, where he was mentioned alongside other captured palace attendants in the annals of Sennacherib:

Annals of Sennacherib A1 (= RINAP 3/1.1), 32–33[1185]

[32][lú]*šú-ut* sag[meš] [lú]tiru[meš] [lú]*man-za-az pa-ni* [lú]nar[meš] [munus]nar[meš] [33][lú]arad[meš] é-gal *mu-nam-mi-ru ṭe-mu ru-bu-ti-šu si-ḫi-ir-ti um-ma-a-ni ma-la ba-šú-ú mut-tab-bi-lu-ut* é-gal-*šu ú-še-ṣa-am-ma šal-la-ti-iš am-nu*
[33]I brought forth and counted as plunder [32]the *ša rēši*s, *tīru*s, courtiers, male singers, female singers, [33]the palace servants who serve his princely pleasures, the entire[1186] workforce who fetch and carry in his (= Merodach-baladan's) palace.

Noteworthy in the above passage is the apparent connection between the figures of the *ša rēši* and the *tīru*, that are mentioned separately from other palace attendants, who are referred to generally as "courtiers" (*manzaz pani*). The *ša rēši* and *tīru* are also separated from the "palace slaves" ([lú]arad[meš] é-gal), and, besides the male and female singers, they are the only attendants to be mentioned by their specific designation. This fact might point to the exceptional status they had among the palace officials and to the similarities they both shared. Since it is highly probable that the *ša rēši* was a eunuch, his connection in the above passage with the *tīru* might suggest that the latter was characterized in this way or the other in a similar fashion as a castrate. The *tīru* was attested in a similar context as quoted above in other accounts of Sennacherib's annals where his defeat of Merodach-baladan was commemorated.[1187] However, in these accounts the *ša rēši* was omitted from the text. If the

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[1182] See CAD T: 429, s.v. "*tīru* A". Transliteartion based on the CT copy and the photograph in CDLI website (http://cdli.ucla.edu/P346080).

[1183] Judging by the copy (CT 18.47) and photograph (http://cdli.ucla.edu/P346080), the available space is too large for the restoration [*ti-*] as suggested in CAD (T: 429, s.v. "*tīru* A").

[1184] The two terms *tīru* and *manzaz pani* were also attested together in KAR 68 rev. 8; see Mayer 1976: 255 and n. 56.

[1185] See Luckenbill 1924: 52, Grayson and Novotny 2012: 34, http://cdli.ucla.edu/P422291. Transliteration follows CDLI.

[1186] *mala bašû*, literally "as many as there were".

[1187] See Grayson and Novotny 2012 (RINAP 3/1: 2.1,9, 3.1,9, 4.1,8, 4.2,8, 4.3,8, 4.4,8, 4.5,8, 4.17,4', 8.1,8, 9.1,8, 15.1,13', 17.1,36, 17.2,37, 22.1,32, 22.2,30, 23.1,28), including previous

two figures were similar, the mention of the *tīru* alone might have been sufficient for designating both in this case.

Another attestation of *tīru* in a lexical list occurs in the following entry from erim-ḫuš, suggested in the CAD to have a "pejorative connotation":[1188]

erim-ḫuš Tablet 4,124[1189]
dìm-ma   *ti-i-r*[*u*?]   weak? / *tīr*[*u*]

On first glance, this entry seems unintelligible. Sumerian dìm can be understood in various ways: "pole, post", "weak, fragile, delicate", "corpse" and "figurine".[1190] It seems impossible to point to a clear connection between any of these terms and the *tīru*. We should, however, consider in this context the special nature of erim-ḫuš, as a list that was structured around groups of semantic sections arranged along multiple entries, rather than a list of lexical associations represented in individual horizontal entries.[1191] When evaluating the occasional line in this list, we should take into account its related previous and/or following entries.

In our case, the pertinent entries that supply the context for l. 124 are included in ll. 116–125. These mostly produce terms governed by the general themes of weakness or dependency: dìm-a = *ulālu*, sig-a = *enšu*, dìm-dìm-a = *dunnamû*, im-ri-a bad = *arbu*, íl nu-tuku = *ṭeḫḫû*, usu nu-tuku = *la išānû*, ús-a é-gar₈ = *indu*, bar gar-a = *šapṣu*, dìm-a = *tīru* and dìm-dìm-a = *saklu*. One term in this group, however, denotes the opposite notion: *šapṣu*, "strong".[1192] For this reason, understanding the association between dìm-a and *tīru* in l. 124 as expressing certain pejorative sense ascribed to the *tīru* should be made with caution, as this list may occasionally produce antonyms rather than synonyms. Having said that, the whole group of entries 116–125 was built around the semantic notion of weakness or dependency (including the antonymic term *šapṣu*), and therefore it seems probable that the *tīru* should be regarded in this context.

A possible connection between the *tīru* and castration may be inferred from a passage taken from a fragmentary incantation:

BAM 511,5'–6'[1193]
5'[… *ki*]-*i šá ti-i-ri la ib-šu-ú* 6'[… *ki-m*]*a id-ra-ni a-a ú-še-ṣa*
5'[… lik]e that of a *tīru*, was not! 6'[… li]ke a potash may not bring out!

It is suggested in CAD that the above clause was "possibly referring to a eunuch",[1194] however without elaborating any further. This passage can be understood

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literature.
[1188] CAD T: 429, s.v. "*tīru* Ad".
[1189] See MSL 17: 63.
[1190] See Civil 1984: 294.
[1191] See MSL 17: 3.
[1192] erim-ḫuš was not merely a synonym-list, and thus the various semantics it produced could variably express synonyms, homonyms, complementary concepts and antonyms; see MSL 17: 3.
[1193] See CAD T: 429, s.v. "*tīru* Ad". Transliteration based on the copy in Köcher 1980: Tafel 6.

as alluding to barrenness since it mentions something of the *tīru* that "was not", and probably an analogy to potash that "may not bring out". Even though nothing is explicit in this text, it may very well refer to seed or semen. Indeed, George viewed the term tiru/*tīru* as designating a eunuch. He based his view mainly on the appearance of this figure in the Sumerian text *Bilgameš and the Netherworld*:[1195]

> ### *Bilgameš and the Netherworld*, 268–269[1196]
> 268 tiru-e igi bí-du₈-àm igi bí-du₈-à[m] a-na-gin₇ an-[ak]
> 269 pa a-la-la ḫur-ra-gin₇ ub-dug₄-ga-a ab-ús
> 268 "Did you see the palace-*tīru*?" "I saw him." "How does he fare?"
> 269 "Like a useless[1197] *alala*-stick, he is propped in a corner."

The translation offered above follows George's,[1198] which differs from previous ones. Previously, the vague term pa a-la-la ḫur-ra/ḫu-ru-gin₇ was interpreted as "an incompetent foreman".[1199] George's new translation makes the metaphor clearer, equating the (castrated?) *tīru* to a "useless stick".[1200] The *tīru* appears in the epic in connection with other childless figures, such as a barren woman and young unmarried men and women. This fact was understood by George as indicating that the *tīru* himself was a childless figure, because he was a castrate.[1201] Hence, even if some of George's translations or interpretations are problematic, the context of the passage is undeniable, and clearly portrays the *tīru* as similar to persons who, for different reasons, were childless: a man with no heir, a woman who did not give birth, and spouses who did not have sexual intercourse.

George mentioned the analogy to the biblical reference to eunuchs in *Isaiah*, which was already discussed.[1202] The passage explicitly says that God will grant the *sārîsŷm*, "castrates", who keep his covenant "a memorial and a name better than sons and daughters" and "an everlasting name that will not be cut off", an obvious allusion to their lack of ability to procreate and sire descendants. This passage should be understood against the background of the Mesopotamian *sagallu*-incantation that was previously discussed.[1203] This incantation conveys a similar message,

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[1194] CAD T: 429, s.v. "*tīru* Ad".

[1195] George 2007. For editions of this text, see Shaffer 1963 and Cavigneaux and Al-Rawi 2000.

[1196] See Shaffer 1963: 91, 271–272, Gadotti 2014: 167 (ll. 271–272). Transliteration follows ETCSL (Text c.1.8.1.4, Gilgameš, Enkidu and the nether world).

[1197] Gadotti (2014: 291) questioned this translation, and suggested alternatively "*ḫurum*-pot".

[1198] George 1997: 92. The translation of ETCSL (Text t.1.8.1.4, Gilgameš, Enkidu and the nether world) follows George's as well. Gadotti's (2014: 159,271–272) slightly differs: "Did you see the courtier?" "I saw him". "How does he fare?" / "Like a *ḫurum*-pot making noise because of an *alala*-stick, he is set aside".

[1199] See quotes and references in George 1997.

[1200] The exact nature of the *alala*-stick is unknown; see George 1997: 92.

[1201] Gadotti (2014: 290–292), however, pointed to several difficulties in these interpretations, and offered a slightly different understanding of it; see her translation in n. 1198 above.

[1202] George 1997: 92. *Isaiah* 56,3–5; see Chapter 4, pp. 233–234.

[1203] CT 23.10,13–14; see Chapter 4, p. 225.

and even makes use of similar metaphors, by mentioning in the same context roots that dry out, a trunk that withers and the *ša rēši* who cannot beget. This passage, linking the *ša rēši* to lack of progeny, is probably the most explicit of all textual references to eunuchs in Mesopotamian sources.[1204] The similarities of all these metaphors strengthen the connection between the Mesopotamian *ša rēši*, biblical *sārîs*, and the *tīru*. Further, an omen from the *šumma izbu* series that was previously mentioned referred to the *ša rēši* as a threat on the king.[1205] Another omen of the same series relates in a similar manner to the *tīru*:

šumma izbu Tablet 12,91'[1206]

šumma(diš) *iz-bu lišānšu*(eme-*šú*) *arkatma*(gíd-*ma*) *šapal*(ki-ta) *appišu*(ka-*šú*) *raksat*(kešda-*at*) *rubâm*(nun) *ti-ir-šú i-*[*bar-šu*]

If an anomaly, its tongue is long and attached below its nose: the prince, his *tīru* will [rebel against him].

These omens can be compared with the following Old Babylonian extispicy text:

YOS 10.59 rev. 10–11[1207]

10 *šumma*(diš) *ma-aṣ-ra-aḫ mar-tim ši-rum ka-ti-im*
11 *ru-ba-am* ⌜*ti-ir*⌝ *ekallišu*(e-gal-*šu*) *i-du-ku-š*[*u*]
10 If the cystic duct of the gall bladder is covered with flesh:
11 the prince, the ⌜*tīrus*⌝ of his palace will kill hi[m].

The *tīru* is portrayed here as a person potentially harming the prince, in a similar manner as the *šumma izbu* omens refer to both the *tīru* and the *ša rēši*. This comparison may further enhance the connection between these two figures.

Lastly, the *tīru* figures in the composition known as *The Song of Bazi*,[1208] where in a passage exalting god Bazi the *tīru* appears as his attendant:

The Song of Bazi, 39–40[1209]

39 *la ra-bi-a-at ki-it-mu-ra-*⌜*at šu*⌝*-bá-as-sú*
40 *ti-i-ru ti-a-me-tim ti-i-ru-ú-šu*
39 Is his residence not large (and) equipped,
40 (and) the *tīru*s of the sea (not) his *tīru*s?

These rhetoric questions were meant to point to the greatness of god Bazi. It is not clear why the *tīru*s, his attendants, were those "of the sea". George viewed them as

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[1204] For the comparison between this incantation and *Isaiah* 56,3–5, see, already, Tadmor 1983: 281–282.

[1205] *šumma izbu* Tablet 21,8 (see Leichty 1968: 185 and De Zorzi 2014: 844); see Chapter 4, p. 209 and n. 941.

[1206] See Leichty 1968: 149, De Zorzi 2014: 684. Transliteration follows De Zorzi.

[1207] See partial transliterations in CAD K: 300, s.v. "*katāmu* 1c" and T: 429, s.v. "*tīru* A". Note that the reference to the copy given in the CAD (T: 429, s.v. "*tīru* A") is inaccurate. Transliteartion based on the YOS copy.

[1208] For the edition of this text, see George 2009: 1–15, photographs: Plts. I and III, copy: Plts. II and IV.

[1209] See George 2009: 6.

"some kind of water-dwelling creature", and noted that Bazi's abode was "watery". As George commented, Bazi was created by Enki in the *apsû*, which may explain his characterization as a deity related to water, whose residence and servants are related to the sea and water just as well.[1210] Considering what we have learned on the *tīru*s from previous texts, it seems reasonable that their attestation in this composition portrays them as Bazi's palace servants. As we saw in Chapter 1 (pp. 84–85), the myth of *Enki and Ninmaḫ* made clear allusion to the fact that the *tīru* was a castrated courtier.[1211] Whether this should be taken literally or as an allusion to barrenness cannot be determined, but all other texts presented in this section seem to fit this picture of lack of progeny.

The information concerning the *tīru* is evidently limited and inconclusive. Due to this dearth of textual sources, much remains obscure with regard to his figure and functionality. Nonetheless, it can be satisfactorily established that his sexual and gender identity were similar in many respects to those of other figures examined in the present research. He was a palace attendant and was mostly laconically attested in lexical lists. A few references hint to the fact that he was typically childless, presumably a castrate. In the incantation fragment BAM 511,5'–6' an allusion was possibly made to the barrenness of the *tīru*, while in *Bilgameš and the Netherworld* he was defined as a "useless stick", and appeared in the same context as several childless figures. In *Enki and Ninmaḫ* he was described as a figure who lacked genitals altogether, and was assigned to serve in the palace. All this strongly associates the *tīru* with many other third gender figures, as was presented thus far, most notably the *girsequ* and *ša rēši*. These two, similarly as the *tīru*, were members of the palace bureaucracy, whose main characteristic was their typical lack of descendants, with the exception of the occasional adoption.

3. SAG-UR-SAG

The next figure to be discussed is known only by its logographic designation, SAG-UR-SAG, the etymology of which, and even mere translation, cannot be clearly determined. Alster and Vanstiphout suggested that SAG-UR-SAG literally meant "chief warrior".[1212] However, the improbability of this interpretation is explained below. The SAG-UR-SAG is attested in several lexical lists, one text of Gudea and several royal inscriptions from Ur III and Old Babylonian Alalakh. He also appears in an intriguing passage from the Iddin-Dagan "sacred marriage" hymn. As will be demonstrated, the SAG-UR-SAG is one of the better documented figures surveyed

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[1210] George 2009: 1, 4.

[1211] "Enki looked at the one with neither penis nor vagina on its body, gave it the name "Nippur-*tīru*", and decreed as its fate to stand before the king." (*Enki and Ninmaḫ*,76–78; see Chapter 1, p. 85).

[1212] Alster and Vanstiphout 1987: 34,74, 79. Presumably, though they do not specify, because of their interpretation of the term as sag ur-sag, "person-hero", or "a heroic person". Scholars as Falkenstein (1952: 71, 89), Sjöberg (1988: 177–178), Westenholz (2009: 89 n. 33) and Zsolnay (2013) understood the term in a similar manner. Others, such as Kramer (1954: 175 n. 32) and Klein (1981: 215), differ.

in this chapter. However, the information concerning him is still limited, and leaves much room for speculations with regard to the exact nature of this figure.

As before, we will begin our survey of the SAG-UR-SAG with its attestations in lexical lists. The following entries from the SAG A and B tablets belong to a section in the list that was already presented:[1213]

SAG B i 10–16 // SAG A i 5–11[1214]

10//5 sag	*i-mu*	head / tuft of black hair
11//6 sag-sag	min	head-head / ditto
12//7 sag-sag-sag	*im-ta-na-nu*	head-head-head / tuft of black hair
13//8 sag ur-sag	*qar-ra-du*	a heroic person / hero
14//9 sag-ur-sag	*as-sí-nu*	SAG-UR-SAG / *assinnu*
15//10 sag-zi	*na-še re-ši*	raising the head
16//11 sag-zi	*a-le-e re-ši*	lifting the head

As was already explained, the entries of lines 13//8 and 14//9 should not be regarded as related to each other in meaning, but only in form. The SAG list is considered to be one of the so-called acrographic lexical lists. The various entries in this type of list are ordered according to the first (or occasionally, main) sign, reoccurring in each entry. Thus, various different new interpretations and meanings can be produced on the basis of the same original sign.[1215]

In our example, the term sag-ur-sag is equated in line 13//8 with *qarrādu*, "hero, warrior", and in line 14//9 with the *assinnu*. Since there is no reason why the figure currently discussed, the SAG-UR-SAG, would have been considered as a hero or a warrior, it was suggested that the Sumerian term of line 13//8 should be transcribed as sag ur-sag and understood as "a heroic/valiant person", which explains its equation with Akkadian *qarrādu*, "hero, warrior". According to this explanation, therefore, the SAG-UR-SAG only appears in line 14//9, where it is equated with the *assinnu*. It can be suggested that this equation derived from the logographic writing of *assinnu*, ur-munus.[1216]

The authors of the list might understood the hypothetical writing *sag ur-munus, "a man-woman person", "a person who is a man of a woman(-type)" to represent the *assinnu*. Therefore, writing *assinnu* in the Akkadian column could hypothetically reflect the logographic compound *sag ur-munus, which orthography resembles SAG-UR-SAG. As can be seen, only the last element in these terms is different. A simpler suggestion, however, is that the equation merely stemmed from the similarity between these two effeminate figures. Be that as it may, it seems clear that even though the two logographic terms of ll. 13//8–14//9 look similar, their meaning as expressed in their Akkadian readings was entirely different.

The three entries of ll. 10–12 supply two Akkadian synonyms (l. 11 only shows "ditto") for Sumerian sag, sag-sag, and sag-sag-sag, all to be understood as "tuft of

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[1213] See Chapter 3, p. 160, where only ll. 13–14//8–9 are discussed.
[1214] See MSL SS 1: 28 // 18.
[1215] For such lists, see Veldhuis 1998.
[1216] For the equation between ur-munus and *assinnu*, see Chapter 3.

black hair (from the forehead of a donkey)".[1217] The two entries of ll. 15–16 give two synonym proper Akkadian translations to their Sumerian equivalent: "raising/lifting the head", "(he who) raises/lifts the head". Thus, if we consider the three parts of the above segment of the list (ll. 10//5–12//7; ll. 13//8–14//9; ll. 15//10–16//11), we clearly see that they were based on various interpretations of phonetically associated terms built as extensions of the basic sag. This feature characterized the whole list, and, according to it, the connection between lines 13//8 and 14//9 was only based on the phonetic similarity between their logographic terms, but not on a similar meaning of the terms they denoted.

As was mentioned in Chapter 2, in the Old Babylonian Proto-lú list SAG-UR-SAG appeared together with several terms of various ranks of *kalû*, and alongside *kurgarrû*, *pilpilû* and *tīru*.[1218] In the lexical list lú = *ša* he was documented alongside *kurgarrû*, *pilpilû*, *parû*, *assinnu* and *nāš pilaqqi*.[1219] More specifically, in lú = *ša* Tablet 4,184 he was equated with *assinnu*.[1220] As was mentioned in Chapter 3, the documentation of the SAG-UR-SAG in several of the above lexical lists in connection with the *assinnu* led scholars occasionally to hypothesize that the two were synonyms. Such comparisons, however, are problematic, since lexical lists do not necessarily reflect synonymy, but, on occasions, only indicate proximity of semantic fields or supply translations or lexical equations. So even if the SAG-UR-SAG indeed shared several typical features and characteristics with the *assinnu*, it should not be assumed that the two terms were synonyms and referred to one figure.

In addition to his documentation in lexical lists, the SAG-UR-SAG was attested in other literary genres, for example historical inscriptions. In the inscription on Gudea's Statue B the ruler describes the preparations made before the renovation of the Eninnu temple of Ningirsu. These preparations emphasized the importance of purity, and therefore the city was cleansed, and any defilement was avoided:

Gudea St. B iv 3–6[1221]
[3]munus-kin-du$_{11}$-ga [4]uru-ta im-ta-è [5]dusu-bi munus-e nu-íl [6]sag-ur-sag-e mu-na-dù

[4](Gudea) banished from the city [3]women doing work. [5]No woman would carry the basket. [6]The SAG-UR-SAG would do (the work) for him.

Henshaw suggested that this passage described the ritual basket-carrying, performed by the SAG-UR-SAG instead of the usual custom, according to which women executed this task.[1222] Flückiger-Hawker suggested that Gudea wished to exclude women from performing the task of carrying the brick-baskets, because he regarded

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[1217] See CAD I/J: 139, s.v. "*imtanû*", 141, s.v. "*imû*". Gantzert's (2011: Part 2: 151) view of *i-mu* as deriving from *ewû* II, "to burden", should probably be rejected, since it invalidates the synonymy between *imû* of ll. 10–11//5–6 and *imtanû* of l. 12//7.

[1218] Proto-lú obv. ii 23'–33', see p. 96–97 and n. 315; Proto-lú, 277–280, see Chapter 3, p. 160.

[1219] lú = *ša* Tablet 4,180, 182–184, 189, 193a, 198a (see MSL 12: 134–135, http://oracc.org/dcclt/P282500); see Chapter 3, p. 160–161.

[1220] See MSL 12: 134.

[1221] See Edzard 1997: 32, http://cdli.ucla.edu/P431884. Transliteration follows CDLI.

[1222] Henshaw 1994: 296.

them as a source of defilement, "perhaps implying some play on the femininity of the sag-ur-sag, or the opposite".[1223] Either way we interpret this passage, it clearly illuminates the SAG-UR-SAGs in the current context as men who acted as substitutes for women. This fact reaffirms the notion of the SAG-UR-SAG as a male figure that bore feminine traits. Westenholz's opinion[1224] that these SAG-UR-SAGs were "the best of warriors" and therefore replaced women in performing this task[1225] should be rejected. In the present context it seems more plausible that a sexually ambiguous figure such as the SAG-UR-SAG assumed the role of performing women's tasks, rather than "the best of warriors".

Later on, the SAG-UR-SAG was documented in several texts dating to the Ur III period. The earliest of which was an inscription of the founder of the dynasty, Ur-Nammu. In one of his praise-poems (Ur-nammu C)[1226] the king stated that he carried out many acts of liberation for the population, among which one which involved the SAG-UR-SAGs:

Ur-nammu C,84[1227]

sag-ur-sag-bi ^{giš}šudul$_4$-bi mu-zi

I have lifted[1228] the yoke of its (= Sumer's) SAG-UR-SAGs.

This passage tells nothing about the SAG-UR-SAGs beyond the mere fact that they were liberated by Ur-nammu together with the rest of Sumer's population. However, other Ur III texts contribute further information concerning this figure. In a royal hymn of Šulgi (Šulgi A),[1229] the king described how he managed to run from Ur to Nippur in one day, and celebrate a festival in both cities on the very same day:

Šulgi A,76–78[1230]

^{76}kaskal 15 danna-àm šu ḫu-mu-nigin ^{77}sag-ur-sag-mu-ne igi ḫu-mu-un-du$_8$-uš-àm ^{78}ud 1–a nibru^{ki} úrim^{ki}-ma èš-èš-bi ḫu-mu-ak

^{76}I traversed a distance of fifteen danas. ^{77}My SAG-UR-SAGs gazed at me: ^{78}I celebrated in Nippur and Ur their[1231] ešeš(-festival) in one day!

[1223] Flückiger-Hawker 1999: 225.

[1224] Probably following Edzard's (1997: 32) translation "only the best of the warriors would work for him", of line 6. Edzard transliterated the term SAG-UR-SAG as sag ur-sag, and understood it as "best of warriors".

[1225] Westenholz's 2009: 89.

[1226] For editions of this text, see Castellino 1959: 118–131 and Flückiger-Hawker 1999: 204–227.

[1227] See Flückiger-Hawker 1999: 216. Transliteration follows ETCSL (Text c.2.4.1.3, A praise poem of Ur-Namma (Ur-Namma C)).

[1228] Even if accepting Flückiger-Hawker's (1999: 217,84) translation, "Its (i.e. Sumer) saĝursaĝ lifted their yoke", the meaning of the passage remains the same, because the lifting of the yoke was done thanks to Ur-nammu, even if the actual act was performed by the SAG-UR-SAGs themselves.

[1229] For editions of this text, see Falkenstein 1952 and Klein 1981: 167–217.

[1230] See Klein 1981: 198.

[1231] That is, Nippur's and Ur's.

In face of his accomplishment to celebrate the ešeš festival both in Nippur and in Ur at the same day, Šulgi's SAG-UR-SAGs gazed at him with astonishment. These persons appear in this text to be related to the king, because he refers to them as "my SAG-UR-SAGs".

These functionaries were documented in a royal inscription of a later Ur III king, Šū-Sîn (RIME 3/2.1.4.3).[1232] An inscription commemorating his victories over a group of kingdoms described how he slew his enemies:

RIME 3/2.1.4.3 iii 12–19[1233]
^{12}sag-ur-sag-bi ^{13}gú-gur$_x$(ŠE-KIN) bí-in-du$_{11}$ ^{14}du$_{10}$-tuku-bi ^{15}šu-si-ga bí-in-du$_{11}$ ^{16}kala-ga si-ga-bi ^{17}ur-re-éš mu-ug$_7$-ug$_7$ ^{18}sag-zi sag-lul-bi ^{19}numun-e-éš mu-gar-gar
^{13}He cut down ^{12}their SAG-UR-SAGs. ^{15}He weakened[1234] ^{14}their runners. ^{17}He killed like dogs ^{16}their strong and weak. ^{19}He sowed like seeds ^{18}the heads of their honest and heads of (their) deceitful.

This passage exemplifies the triumph of Šū-Sîn over the whole of his foes. In order to express the totality of the triumph, several groups of opposing terms that comprise Šū-Sîn's enemies are described. Therefore, the attestation of the SAG-UR-SAGs is made in opposition to the "runners", presumably a type of warriors.[1235] Subsequently, we encounter the opposing terms "strong and weak" and "honest and deceitful". The appearance of SAG-UR-SAG as a term contrasted with a type of military men strengthens the notion that this figure was characterized by traits opposing masculine prowess and virility. Therefore, it can hint to the effeminate nature of this figure.

Another important attestation of the SAG-UR-SAG is found in a curse-formula that concluded an Old Babylonian treaty from Alalakh:

RIME 4.34.1,19–20[1236]
^{19}d$eš_4$-tár sag-ur-sag še$^{(?)}$-ra-ú-ra-am ^{20}i-na bi-ir-ki-šu li-te/ṭe$_4$-eb-bi
^{20}May ^{19}Ištar ^{20}sink[1237] ^{19}the SAG-UR-SAG ^{20}to his sexual organs ^{19}day and night!

This curious passage entails several complications. The first involves the term that follows SAG-UR-SAG in line 19. In previous years, it was transliterated as *pa-ra-ú-ra-am*,[1238] and understood as representing the figure of the *par(r)û*,[1239] allegedly

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[1232] For editions of this text, see Edzard 1959–60: 1–8, 14–20, Kärki 1986: 106–110, Kutscher 1989: 71–82, 89–91, 122, 126 and Frayne 1997: 301–306.

[1233] See Frayne 1997: 303.

[1234] This translation is assumed from the combination šu--du$_{11}$ = "to touch, transform", and sig(-a) = "weak".

[1235] See ePSD, s.v. "dub$_3$ tuku". This term occasionally serves as a royal epithet, for example, in texts of Šulgi and Išme-Dagan. According to CAD (B: 257, s.v. "*birku* in *bēl birki*"), it denoted "runner, henchman".

[1236] See Frayne 1990: 800.

[1237] Literally "submerge", "immerse" (from *ṭubbû*, see CAD Ṭ: 67, s.v. "*ṭebû* 2").

[1238] See Frayne 1990: 800 and Henshaw 1994: 297. Wiseman (1953: 25) transliterated it as

appearing in apposition to the SAG-UR-SAG. However, recently, CAD offered a different transliteration, leading to a different understanding of the passage: *še*[(?)]*-ra-ú-ra-am*, "day and night".[1240] Alternatively, this term can be understood as a (corrupted?) form of the phrase *urram šēram*, "in the future", which is found in other Old Babylonian Alalakh texts.[1241]

A second problem relates to the obscure act threatened to be performed by Ištar on whoever violates the conditions of the treaty. The verb in line 20 can be interpreted in various ways, since its root is unclear. CAD opted for "add, attach, append" (*ṭepû*), however, with no justification or a suggested translation of the term.[1242] The above translation of the verb as "sink" assumes the form *ṭubbû*, "to submerge, immerse (trans.)"[1243] to be the source of the term in question. Thus, "to sink the SAG-UR-SAG to his sexual organs" might hint to the threat of impotence caused by Ištar. Whatever this verb truly meant, it seems that the text refers to any future violator of the treaty metaphorically as a SAG-UR-SAG whose sexual organs were inflicted in a certain manner by Ištar. However, Henshaw's interpretation, according to which the infliction in question constituted homosexual intercourse or rape, seems to be too far-reaching.[1244]

Wiseman equated the SAG-UR-SAG with *assinnu*, and defined him as "the eunuch as singer".[1245] This suggestion does not seem substantiated, since there is no evidence connecting the SAG-UR-SAG with castration or singing. Recently, Zsolnay translated the problematic passage as follows: "and may Eštar (and) the *assinnu* cause potency to leave his groin."[1246] This translation, however, assumes that the SAG-UR-SAG and the *assinnu* were the same figure, and that the *assinnu*, together with Ištar, was the subject of the sentence in the above inscription. The former assumption is questionable (see discussion below), while the latter is contrasted by any other translation of this passage, and indeed seems implausible. The verb *li-te/ṭe₄-eb-bi* seems to be the singular form of the precative, rather than the plural,[1247] and we have to regard here the SAG-UR-SAG as the object of the verb, rather than its subject.

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follows: *PA.RA ú-ra-am*. Malul (2006: 52) quoted the passage as follows: [d]*Ištar assinnum parauram ina birkišu litebbi*. Zsolnay (2013: 97) transliterated the problematic term as *pa-ra-u-ra-am*, and translated it as "potency". However, these readings should now be reconsidered.

[1239] Henshaw (1994: 297) explained the infix *-au-* in this term as a phenomenon typical of Hurrian orthography. Frayne (1990: 800) translated this unclear term as "*potency*", a suggestion repeated by Zsolnay (2013: 97).

[1240] CAD Ṭ: 101, s.v. "*ṭepû* 1d".

[1241] See CAD Š/2: 334, s.v. "*šēru* A3c".

[1242] CAD Ṭ: 101, s.v. "*ṭepû* 1d". In his edition, Wiseman (1953: 25) translated it as "bind (?)". Frayne (1990: 800) translated it as "cause … to leave".

[1243] See CAD Ṭ: 67, s.v. "*ṭebû* 2".

[1244] Henshaw 1994: 297, 298.

[1245] Wiseman 1953: 26, note to line 19.

[1246] Zsolnay 2013: 97.

[1247] See von Soden 1995: 10* § 10 and Huehnergard 2000: 145.

Turning to cultic texts, the most illuminating information concerning the SAG-UR-SAG appears in a passage from the hymn of Iddin-Dagan, a text that was already discussed:[1248]

***Hymn of Iddin-Dagan*, 45–68**[1249]

45 sag-ur-sag-e-ne múš mu-na-an-dub-dub-bu-uš
46 kug ᵈInanna-ra igi-ni-šè ì-dib-bé
47 gú-bar níg-dára gùn mu-na-an-gùn-gùn-ne-eš
48 kug ᵈInanna-ra igi-ni-šè ì-dib-bé
49 kuš nam-dingir-ra su-bi-a mu-un-gál
50 kug ᵈInanna-ra igi-ni-šè ì-dib-bé
51 lú (variant: lugal) zi nin sag-tuku munus um-ma gal-gal-la
52 kug ᵈInanna-ra igi-ni-šè ì-dib-bé
53 ᵍⁱˢbalag níg sed-dè ba-KU-a zag mi-ni-ib-gub-gub-bé
54 kug ᵈInanna-ra igi-ni-šè ì-dib-bé
55 ᵗᵘᵍníg-lá á mè da-da-ra-šè mu-dug₄
56 kug ᵈInanna-ra igi-ni-šè ì-dib-bé
57 giš-gíd-da á mè šu-bi-a mu-un-gál
58 kug ᵈInanna-ra igi-ni-šè ì-dib-bé
59 ki-ru-gú 4-kam-ma-àm

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60 á zi-da-bi túg níta bí-in-mur₁₀
61 kug ᵈInanna-ra igi-ni-šè ì-dib-bé
62 nin gal an-na ᵈInanna-ra silim-ma ga-na-ab-bé-en
63 á gáb-bu-bi-a túg nam-munus mu-ni-si-ig
64 kug ᵈInanna-ra igi-ni-šè ì-dib-bé
65 nin gal an-na ᵈInanna-ra silim-ma ga-na-ab-bé-en
66 éšemen gu-du gùn-a a-da-mìn mu-na-e
67 kug ᵈInanna-ra igi-ni-šè ì-dib-bé
68 nin gal an-na ᵈInanna-ra silim-ma ga-na-ab-bé-en
45 The SAG-UR-SAGs comb their hair[1250] before her,
46 they walk before pure Inanna.
47 They decorate the napes of their necks with colored bands,
48 they walk before pure Inanna.
49 They place upon their bodies the cloak/skin of divinity,
50 they walk before pure Inanna.

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[1248] See Chapter 3, pp. 175–178.
[1249] See Römer 1965: 130–131, Reisman 1969: 151–152, Sjöberg 1975: 224 and Attinger 2014: 18–19. Transliteration follows ETCSL (Text c.2.5.3.1, A *šir-namursaĝa* to Ninsiana for Iddin-Dagan (Iddin-Dagan A)). For various translations of it, see Römer 1965: 137–138, 1989: 660–673, Reisman 1969: 168–170, 1973: 187–188, Sjöberg 1975: 224 (partial), Black, Cunningham, Robson and Zólyomi 2004: 264–265 and Attinger 2014: 31.
[1250] This phrase is problematic. This translation was originally offered by Reisman (1969: 168, 188), and gained acceptance since. I understand múš--dub as "pile up / pour on the face", a metaphor for combing the hair. See also Attinger 2014: 44, with previous literature.

51 The righteous man/king and the first lady, the woman of the great wise
    women,
52 they walk before pure Inanna.
53 Those who are in charge? of beating? the soothing balag,
54 they walk before pure Inanna.
55 They gird themselves with the sword belt, the arm of battle,
56 they walk before pure Inanna.
57 The spear, the arm of battle, they grasp in their hands,
58 they walk before pure Inanna.
59 Fourth kirugu.

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60 They adorn their right side with male clothing,
61 they walk before pure Inanna.
62 To the great lady of heaven, Inanna, I would cry "Hail!"
63 They place female clothing on their left side,
64 they walk before pure Inanna.
65 To the great lady of heaven, Inanna, I would cry "Hail!"
66 With skipping ropes and colored cords they compete before her,
67 they walk before pure Inanna.
68 To the great lady of heaven, Inanna, I would cry "Hail!"

As we can see, the SAG-UR-SAG is attested in the beginning of the above passage, in line 45. It was sometimes assumed by scholars that these individuals performed all the actions described between line 45 and the fifth kirugu (ll. 45–68).[1251] These actions included the following: combing their hair; decorating themselves with colored bands; placing on their bodies the "cloak/skin of divinity"; girding a sword belt; grasping a spear in their hands; wearing men's attire on their right side and women's on the left; competing with skipping ropes and colored cords.

These actions could be characteristically divided into masculine and feminine ones, and therefore scholars tend to view them as highlighting the SAG-UR-SAGs' ambivalent nature, as possessing both masculine and feminine traits. However, a closer examination of these passages raises several questions concerning the validity of these views. Which of the actions mentioned above should really be ascribed to the SAG-UR-SAGs? In line 51 two figures appear: "the righteous man" (lú zi) and "the first lady, the woman of the great wise women" (nin sag-tuku munus um-ma gal-gal-la). These two figures are clearly distinguished from the SAG-UR-SAGs.[1252] It is not clear whether the actions described from this point onwards should be attributed to them or to some other people,[1253] but surely not to the SAG-UR-SAGs.

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[1251] See implicitly in Henshaw 1994: 290 and explicitly in Leick 1994: 157.
[1252] Contrary to Leick's (1994: 157) claim that they were synonymous. A designation such as "real/veritable man" does not seem to fit a male whose masculinity is questionable. See further Römer (1965: 144) and Böck (2004: 27, 30), who drew a clear distinction between the SAG-UR-SAGs, whose actions are detailed in lines 45–50, and the "righteous man", who appears in line 51.
[1253] The translation given by Black, Cunningham, Robson and Zólyomi (2004: 264) might opt

Hence, the SAG-UR-SAGs only comb their hair, decorate themselves with colored bands, and place on their bodies the "cloak of divinity", while no other activity should actually be attributed to them.

A note should be made on the two figures, "the righteous man" and "the first lady". In one manuscript,[1254] lú is replaced by lugal. Unless this is a scribal error, it can point to the fact that the "righteous man" was no other than the king, Iddin-Dagan, and so the "first lady" was his female companion, with whom he was about to conduct the sexual union.[1255]

Returning to the SAG-UR-SAGs of line 45, several scholars[1256] translated the term as "male prostitutes", based on the assumption that SAG-UR-SAG was a synonym for *assinnu* and that the *assinnu* was a male prostitute.[1257] Leick, on the other hand, maintained that these persons were biologically deformed males (hermaphrodites or lacking genitals) who were subsequently socially marginalized.[1258] However, neither suggestion has any basis in the text itself. Leick deduced from the episode described above that the SAG-UR-SAGs were characterized by a typical hairstyle and colorful ribbons, and bore "physical characteristics of divinity on their bodies". But her claim that the term SAG-UR-SAG was synonymous to lú zi, ""real/veritable men", who approach the goddess"[1259] should be rejected. As is explained above, the term lú zi appears to refer to a different figure altogether, most likely the king himself.

Lapinkivi claimed that the SAG-UR-SAG was the same figure as the *assinnu*, and actually formed its Sumerian title. Based on the content of lines 60–63 in the above passage, she maintained that the SAG-UR-SAGs were transvestites, and claimed that the practice of feminine behavior by males was a permanent situation, "achieved by castration or self-emasculation".[1260] However, there is no actual reason

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for the second option: "Those who are in charge (?) of beating (?) the soothing *balaǵ* drums parade before her, holy Inana. Each girded with a sword belt, the strength of battle, they parade before her, holy Inana. Grasping a spear, the strength of battle, in their hands, they parade before her, holy Inana." The subjects of these sentences do not seem likely to be the "righteous man/king" and the "first lady", but some other, unspecified people. This view is assumed in the present book as well.

[1254] Copy H, UM 29–16–91 + UM 29–16–118.

[1255] Römer (1965: 159–160, 1989: 663 n. 51a+b) considered this option, but favored the possibility that the phrase referred to members of the cult personnel. Another example of interchanging lú and lugal as royal epithets is attested in Šulgi A,55, where manuscripts A (OECT 1), C (UMBS I/1.7) and G (SLTNi 81) show lú as an epithet of the king, while manuscript B (TCL 16.44) shows lugal instead (see Falkenstein 1952: 68,55 and Klein 1981: 194–195,55, n. 2). Furthermore, in Šulgi G,13, 14 and 30 lú zi(d) appears as an epithet of Šulgi's father, Urnammu, founder of the Ur III Dynasty (see Klein 1991: 302,13, 14, 304,30 and 308).

[1256] See, among others, Reisman (1969: 168,45, 1973: 187,45), Römer (1989: 662,45), Böck (2004: 27) and Black, Cunningham, Robson and Zólyomi (2004: 264).

[1257] See Römer 1989: 662 n. 45a.

[1258] Leick 1994: 158–159.

[1259] Leick 1994: 157.

[1260] Lapinkivi 2010: 72–73, following Groneberg 1986: 39, and n. 86.

for establishing a connection of alleged synonymy between the *assinnu* and the SAG-UR-SAG. These two figures were similar in many respects, but not identical.

Lapinkivi further referred to line 49, where the SAG-UR-SAGs are said to wear the "cloak/skin of divinity". She suggested that this phrase reflected the wearing of clothes of deities by the SAG-UR-SAGs, or alternatively, that they possessed "divine bodies", symbolizing their identification with Inanna. These "divine bodies" were interpreted by Lapinkivi as the result of self-emasculation practiced by the SAG-UR-SAGs, as devotees of Ištar.[1261] As for the question of castration and self-emasculation, a discussion is offered elsewhere in this book.[1262] As is noted there, there is no evidence that such practices were ever performed by the SAG-UR-SAG, *assinnu*, or any other figure discussed in the present research.

A completely different view of the SAG-UR-SAGs was presented by Jacobsen, who translated the term in line 45 as "guardsmen". Jacobsen viewed the SAG-UR-SAGs as cult personnel that originally formed a corps of warriors, but later on became actors in ritual performances.[1263] Since Jacobsen gave no explanation to these claims, it seems hard to accept them. One might speculate that the origin of Jacobsen's suggestion lies in the entries from the SAG B lexical list discussed above, where the SAG-UR-SAG was supposedly equated with the Akkadian term *qarrādu*, "hero", "warrior", as well as with the *assinnu*. However, as is explained above, the entries probably exhibited two different terms that were written similarly, so that the SAG-UR-SAG did not actually appear as associated with *qarrādu*.

The last evidence to be discussed concerning the SAG-UR-SAG derives from the Old Babylonian fragment SLTNi 45, previously presented. In this text, the SAG-UR-SAG was attested alongside "priesthood", gala-ship, *kurgarrû*, knife and dagger.[1264] As was explained, the association of all these terms to each other probably reflected their mutual relation to the sphere of cultic performance. Therefore, the attestation of the SAG-UR-SAG in this fragment portrays him as a figure related to the cult of Inanna/Ištar.

When considering all the textual attestations of this figure, several characterizing features become apparent. As was shown above, the SAG-UR-SAG was attested in several lexical lists in connection with many of the figures discussed throughout the present research, most notably the *assinnu*. In a passage from a text of Gudea, he is found to be performing a task that was usually reserved for women, and several historical texts from Ur III depict him as a cult personnel characterized by effeminacy. In a curse concluding a treaty from Alalakh, the SAG-UR-SAG appears as a metaphor for a possible transgressor of the treaty. The curse details his punishment: the genitals of the SAG-UR-SAG shall be inflicted by Ištar. This theme of Ištar manipulating or harming men's masculinity was mentioned many times throughout this book. The fact that the SAG-UR-SAG was regarded as the target of this affliction relates him again to the sphere of gender ambiguous figures. The most telling of

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[1261] Lapinkivi 2010: 73.
[1262] See Chapter 4.
[1263] Jacobsen 1987: 115 and n. 8.
[1264] SLTNi 45,5–9; see Chapter 3, p. 189.

all is the attestation of several SAG-UR-SAGs in the Iddin-Dagan hymn. In the episode described they participate in a procession honoring Inanna, during which they exhibit several feminine attributes: they comb their hair, decorate themselves with colored bands and wear the "cloak of divinity".

All these details give the impression that the SAG-UR-SAG was a figure quite similar to many third gender figures we have already encountered. The most notable of these is the *assinnu*, whose effeminacy seems to have been the clearest of all. It is no wonder, then, that the SAG-UR-SAG was specifically equated with the *assinnu* in several lexical lists that included many other figures. In the hymn of Iddin-Dagan the SAG-UR-SAG appears to be one of Inanna's cultic attendants, and perhaps this is the key for understanding the real functionalities and nature of this figure. As a man who bore clear effeminate traits, the SAG-UR-SAG fits well in the milieu of sexually ambiguous figures typical of Inanna/Ištar's cult.

It seems important that the evidence concerning the SAG-UR-SAG derives from early sources, all Old Babylonian or earlier. Since he exhibited many affinities with the *assinnu*, it should be asked whether he was not replaced by the *assinnu* in the course of time. Or perhaps we are indeed dealing with writing variations of the same figure, as the lexical lists suggest. The *assinnu* is attested from at least the Old Babylonian period, and probably even before (Ur III), so if the two terms designated the same figure, they have coexisted for some time, while the *assinnu* had another logographic writing, ur-munus. The correspondence between *assinnu* and ur-munus is apparent in numerous texts other than lexical lists, such as cultic texts in which ur-munus was attested alongside the *kurgarrû*. However, the supposed synonymy between SAG-UR-SAG and *assinnu* can only be inferred from a few lexical lists. As was stressed several times before, these lists do not necessarily exhibit synonymy between the terms they equate, but, on many occasions, merely point to close semantics. Therefore, as long as no evidence outside the lists is found to connect the SAG-UR-SAG and the *assinnu*, their synonymy remains a matter of speculation and is not endorsed in the present research.[1265]

In light of these considerations, it can be suggested that the SAG-UR-SAG was an effeminate cultic personnel similar to the *assinnu*, and, for a certain period, the two coexisted. However, after the end of the Old Babylonian period the office of the SAG-UR-SAG ceased to exist, leaving the *assinnu* alone as an effeminate cultic attendant of Ištar.

4. pi-li-pi-li/*pilpilû*

The next figure to be examined is the pi-li-pi-li/*pilpilû*. This title is attested almost exclusively in its Sumerian form pi-li-pi-li, while its Akkadian form *pilpilû* is rare. On the whole, the term is quite uncommon, and is mostly known from lexical lists. The *pilpilû* is furthermore mentioned several times in Sumerian hymns to Inanna

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[1265] Recently, Zsolnay (2013) indeed regarded these two terms to designate the same figure, without explaining the difficulties in accepting this view.

and Dumuzi, and in the myths of *Inanna and Ebiḫ* and *The Lament for Eridu*.[1266] In the hymns and the lament it is said that the *pilpilû* was "changed", while in *Inanna and Ebiḫ* it is explicitly said that Inanna "changed his head". The fact that the *pilpilû* was a member of Inanna/Ištar's cult is evident in the composition *Inanna and Šu-kale-tuda* (ll. 189, 201),[1267] where he is laconically mentioned as escorting the goddess on her journey. No further information appears in this text about him. On the basis of these details, it can be argued that the gender identity of this figure was ambiguous in the same manner as that of other figures discussed in this book.

We will first examine the attestations of the *pilpilû* in lexical lists. In several such lists the term is equated with various figures who were already discussed in previous chapters, and others that are discussed throughout the current chapter. All the texts referred to were already presented, and therefore will not be presented in full again. In the Old Babylonian Proto-lú list, *pilpilû* appeared together with several terms of various ranks of *kalû*, and with *kurgarrû*, SAG-UR-SAG and *tīru*.[1268] In a Neo-Assyrian lexical list, the *pilpilû* was documented together with *assinnu*, *kurgarrû* and *ararû*, and each of these four terms was equated with *kulu'u*.[1269] In a Neo-Assyrian copy of the list lú = *ša*, the *pilpilû* was attested together with *kurgarrû*, SAG-UR-SAG, *assinnu* and *nāš pilaqqi*, and two terms were listed as parallel to him: the *parû* and *assinnu*.[1270]

Edzard's proposal that the term kur-gar-ra was meant to bear the ridicule meaning of "defecating" was already presented in Chapter 3. It was also mentioned that Edzard further suggested that it is not coincidental that, in the Old Babylonian Proto-lú lexical list, the terms pi-li-pi-li and kur-gar-ra appear consecutively, the former meaning "der immer Pipi mach", "who always pees".[1271] Similarly, several other scholars suggested various etymological explanations for the term, bearing the sense of "defile" or "make dirty",[1272] while Lapinkivi suggested that the etymological origin of pi-li-pi-li was pi-lá/pil/píl, "to be/make obscure, to be/make dirty, defiled, disgraced".[1273] None of these suggestions appears to be more convincing than the other, nor does "removed branch/twig" I have previously suggested, probably too hastily.[1274]

The *pilpilû* appears, however rarely, in several texts other than lexical lists. One of the most significant attestations of this figure is in the in-nin šà-gur₄-ra hymn to

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[1266] See Chapter 1, pp. 66–68 and 87–88, respectively.

[1267] For the edition of the text, see Volk 1995. For commentaries and translations of it, see Bottéro and Kramer 1989: 257–271 and Black, Cunningham, Robson and Zólyomi 2004: 197–205.

[1268] Proto-lú obv. ii 23'–33', see p. 96–97 and n. 315; Proto-lú, 277–280, see Chapter 3, p. 160.

[1269] LTBA 2.1 vi 45'–48' // LTBA 2.2,380–383 (see CAD K: 529, s.v. "*kulu'u*", http://oracc.org/dcclt/P349911); see Chapter 2. pp. 147.

[1270] lú = *ša* Tablet 4,180, 182–184, 189, 193a, 198a (see MSL 12: 134–135, http://oracc.org/dcclt/P282500); see Chapter 3, p. 160–161.

[1271] Edzard 1987: 58 and n. 6.

[1272] For a brief survey of these suggestions, see Henshaw 1994: 310 n. 92.

[1273] Lapinkivi 2010: 76 n. 236, including references to literature.

[1274] Peled 2013a: 5.

Inanna, in a passage that has already been discussed.[1275] In this passage, the *pilpilû* was given a weapon by Inanna, and, later on, was said to be a person who "has been changed", attested alongside an ecstatic and a SAG-UR-SAG. In one manuscript a *kurgarrû* appeared instead of the SAG-UR-SAG, and the mention that the *pilpilû* "has been changed" was omitted. It appears that the basic message this passage conveys is that of Inanna/Ištar's control over several ambiguous figures, among which the *pilpilû*. Henshaw viewed the weapon given by the goddess to the *pilpilû* (line 82) as a symbol of this figure's manliness, and the breaking of the weapon as a demonstration of Inanna's masculine destructive conduct. In line 88, the *pilpilû* appears next to the [lú]al-éd-dè, "ecstatic", so the two terms might function as synonyms in this context. Henshaw suggested that the reference to the ecstatic/*pilpilû* that has been "changed" was an allusion to a change of sex, achieved either by cross-dressing, a change of gender role, or by what Henshaw defined as "literal sex change", presumably meaning castration.[1276] He correctly compared this episode with the passage from the myth of *Inanna and Ebiḫ*, where the *pilpilû*'s head was said to have been changed by Inanna.[1277]

A different interpretation from Henshaw's was offered by Sjöberg, who viewed the *pilpilû* as a female cult figure, which, in the current passage, assumed a masculine role. Sjöberg claimed that the above passage did not point to a change of sex of the *pilpilû*, but rather to the alternation between feminine and masculine roles.[1278] Assante, however, claimed that the said change of the *pilpilû* was the result of a state of trance in which this figure was, as part of its cultic performance.[1279]

Recently, this passage was treated by Lapinkivi as well. As was mentioned in Chapter 1, Lapinkivi suggested that the *pilpilû* was formed by Inanna out of a "punishment" that she had removed from her own body, and purified. Lapinkivi further suggested that the goddess then bestowed wisdom on the *pilpilû*, based on the content of line 84. In conclusion, based on this passage, Lapinkivi viewed the *pilpilû* as a sinner that was purified, and then given wisdom.[1280] However, the connection between line 84 and the lines preceding it is not certain, so the alleged bestowing of wisdom remains purely speculative, similarly as the exact meaning of the whole passage.

As was noted in Chapter 1, it might be significant that, in line 88, different figures appear in different copies of the composition alongside the *pilpilû*: the *kurgarrû* or the SAG-UR-SAG. This alternation demonstrates again how closely associated these figures were with one another, even if each of them had its own peculiarities and specific characteristics. In another passage already mentioned in Chapter 1, from *The Lament for Eridu*, the *pilpilû* was described as a "changing" figure. Both a "dagger[?]-performing ecstatic" and the "changing *pilpilû*" appeared in this passage as

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[1275] *Lady of Largest Heart*, 80–90 (see Sjöberg 1975: 184, 186); see Chapter 1, pp. 72–74.
[1276] Henshaw 1994: 295, 298, 299.
[1277] See Chapter 1, pp. 66–68.
[1278] Sjöberg 1975: 226.
[1279] Assante 2009: 36.
[1280] Lapinkivi 2010: 76.

parallel phrases to a lamenter. Thus the *pilpilû* may have been equated here, how-ever metaphorically, to the *kurgarrû*, who used daggers in his cultic performance, and to the gala/*kalû*, who was a professional lamenter.

In conclusion, the documentation of the *pilpilû* is extremely limited, and con-fined to a few lexical lists, narratives, hymns and myths. These sporadic and laconic attestations do not allow for much speculation beyond the understanding that this person was similar to other, better-understood third gender figures. However, the claim that he was "changed" by Inanna is quite suggestive as regards his gender identity. Even if the exact nature of this perceived change cannot be fully under-stood, it surely renders the *pilpilû* with certain feminine traits, either by costume, appearance or behavior. In all probabilities, these traits were related to his role as a member of the cult of Inanna/Ištar. Therefore, the *pilpilû* seems to have shared close affinities with other members of this goddess' cult, especially the *assinnu* and the SAG-UR-SAG. As we have seen, in *The Epic of Erra*, Ištar was said to have changed the masculinity of the *assinnu* to femininity,[1281] which was explained here as an aetiological explanation for the passive sexual conduct of this figure in cultic contexts. As was demonstrated in the previous section, the SAG-UR-SAG was an effeminate functionary in the cult of Inanna/Ištar, who resembled in many respects the *assinnu*. The *pilpilû*, apparently, was similar to both.

5. *sinnišānu*

The next term to be evaluated is *sinnišānu*. As will be demonstrated, it is funda-mentally different from other terms discussed throughout the current chapter. While other terms stand for specific figures that belonged to the third gender, *sinnišānu* represents a general concept of femininity applied to men. It is attested in a lexical list, a proverb and several curse formulae of royal inscriptions. In all these contexts, the term denoted feminine males.

Literally, *sinnišānu* means "woman-like". Assante analyzed the term as built of the root *sinništu*, "woman", with the ending -*ānum*, which stresses the individual who forms the root. Therefore, according to her, the term should be understood as "that specific woman", or "the heretofore-mentioned woman", so that, grammati-cally, it may refer to a woman.[1282] The term *sinnišānu* is usually regarded as repre-senting a general term rather than a specific figure. Leick, for example, suggested that the term was "descriptive", and might have had "a rather broad semantic range (effeminate, dressed or behaving like woman, etc.)".[1283] As was already mentioned, this term was attested once in the ḪAR-gud B list, a commentary on ur₅-ra = *ḫubullu*,[1284] where it appeared as an explanation for ur-munus/*assinnu*.

Perhaps the most interesting attestation of *sinnišānu* is found in a proverb, which was translated and interpreted differently by various scholars:

[1281] See Chapter 1, pp. 80–82.
[1282] Assante 2009: 34 n. 38.
[1283] Leick 1994: 162.
[1284] ḪAR-gud B,133 (see MSL 12: 226); see Chapter 3, p. 156.

VAT 8807 iv 3–5[1285]

3 *sin-niš-a-nu ina bīt*(é) *áš-tam-me ki-i e-ru-ba*

4 *ni-iš qa-ti ki-i iš-šu-ú um-ma ig-ri šá an-za-ni-nu*

5 *at-ti lu miš-ru-um-ma ana-ku lu meš-lu*

3 When a *sinnišānu* entered the brothel,[1286]

4 his hands raised, he thus said: "My wage (is) of a matchmaker/pimp.

5 May you (fem.) be wealth, may I be halved!"

This proverb was translated and interpreted in many different manners by different scholars. Lambert, for example, translated it as follows: "When a male prostitute entered the brothel, as he raised his hands in prayer, he said: "My hire goes to the promoter. You (Ištar) are wealth, I am half"." Lambert regarded the general meaning of the proverb to be a "witty remark" made by the *sinnišānu*, a "male prostitute", expressing his dissatisfaction with his "financial arrangements with the pander".[1287] Nissinen offered a translation similar to Lambert's.[1288]

Gruber took the phrase *nīš qāti iššû* as "prayed a prayer", and, following an emendation of the CAD (see below), translated the last sentence as follows: "Suppose you take half, and I take half", said by the *sinnišānu* to Ištar.[1289] Henshaw suggested similarly that the female addressee of the *sinnišānu*'s words was Ištar, while he raises his hands in a gesture of praying, "in her house".[1290] According to this interpretation, Ištar is wealthy in sexuality, and the *sinnišānu* is her servant.

Leick suggested that the term *anzinnu* stood for a "pimp", and viewed the passage as a description of a *sinnišānu* addressing a female prostitute. According to Leick, the prostitute could charge twice as much as the *sinnišānu* for her services, since she was a real woman, unlike the *sinnišānu* who was merely "half" a man or a woman.[1291]

In different volumes of the CAD an emendation was made to the text: *miš-lu-um-ma*, instead of the original *miš-ru-um-ma*.[1292] This emendation led to a different translation and understanding of the whole proverb: "When the *sinnišānu* entered the tavern and lifted his hand (in prayer?), he said: Let us, you (fem.) and I, (divide) half and half the wages of the matchmaker (?)."[1293] Whether we accept this emendation or not, the literal meaning of the proverb remains vague, and allows for many speculations, as shown above; however, it clearly connects the *sinnišānu* with pros-

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[1285] See Lambert 1960: 218.

[1286] For a detailed discussion on the institution of the èš-dam / *bīt aštammi*, see Henshaw 1994: 312–317.

[1287] Lambert 1960: 213, 219.

[1288] Nissinen 1998a: 33.

[1289] Gruber 1986: 146.

[1290] Henshaw 1994: 316.

[1291] Leick 1994: 160.

[1292] CAD A/2: 152, s.v. "*anzanīnu*", M/2: 128, s.v. "*mišlu* 1a9'" and S: 286, s.v. "*sinnišānu*". This emendation is never explained, besides one laconic statement that in this text "*meš-ru-um-ma* is an error for *mešlumma*" (see CAD M/1: 387, s.v. "*maššakku* 2c").

[1293] See CAD S: 286, s.v. "*sinnišānu*".

titution, and defines him as "half", in contrast with an unidentified "wealthy" female figure, possibly Ištar.

A clearer understanding of the term *sinnišānu* can be achieved by evaluating it in connection with several curse formulae of Mesopotamian royal inscriptions. These curses were aimed at possible future violators of the inscriptions, threatening their manliness as a means of punishment. For example, the following passage from the annals of the Middle Assyrian king Tukulti-Ninurta I:

> **Tn 7 No. 1 vi 13–15**[1294]
> ¹³[*zik-r*]*u-šu si-ni-ša-níš* ¹⁴[*m*]*u-ut-su ana ri-ḫu-ti* ¹⁵[*liš-ku*]*-un*
> ¹⁵[May (Ištar) ma]ke ¹³his [man]liness to woman-like, ¹⁴his [v]irility to semen/ procreation.[1295]

Weidner understood *si-ni-ša-níš* in line 13 as a derivative of *sinnišānu*, translated by him as "Weibmann, Eunuch", "feminine-man, eunuch".[1296] Later on, in the Neo-Assyrian period, similar passages appear in the inscriptions of Esarhaddon and Aššurbanipal, containing similar threats. For example, the following curse formula of an Esarhaddon stele was aimed at whoever dares defiling the monument in the future:

> **Mnm. A., 55–56**[1297]
> ⁵⁵ᵈ*Ištar be-let qabli*(múru) *u tāḫāzi*(mè) ⁵⁶*zik-ru-su sin-niš-a-niš lu-šá-lik-ma*
> ⁵⁶May ⁵⁵Ištar, lady of battle and combat, ⁵⁶cause his masculinity to turn[1298] into woman-like.

The common denominator of these threats is the goddess Ištar, regarded as the generative force harmful for masculinity.

It appears, then, that unlike other titles discussed throughout the current chapter, the term *sinnišānu* did not represent a specific figure, but was rather used as a general term ascribing femininity to males in specific contexts, usually negative or derogative ones. It is equated in a lexical list with the effeminate *assinnu*, and in the proverb quoted above it describes a man in a ridiculous manner, as "half" a man. In several curses of royal inscriptions, this term denotes femininity inflicted upon men, usually by Ištar. This theme, as was mentioned before, reoccurs many times in Mesopotamian texts.

6. *nāš pilaqqi*

The next title to be evaluated is that of the *nāš pilaqqi*. Unlike most of the other designations investigated, the etymology and meaning of this term are clear. Liter-

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[1294] See Weidner 1959: 7.
[1295] According to CAD (R: 341, s.v. "*rihûtu*") *rihûtu* means either "semen" or "offspring, creation"; however, its attestation in the current text was assigned there (CAD R: 343, s.v. "*rihûtu* 3") to "uncertain meaning", and was not translated.
[1296] Weidner 1959: 7 note to line 13.
[1297] See Borger 1956: 99.
[1298] Literally, "to go".

ally this term means "(he) who carries / the carrier of spindle".[1299] As is explained below, the spindle was an object closely associated with femininity, so a man bearing this title was presumably associated with femininity as well. The textual occurrences of this title are rare, and it is mostly found in a few lexical lists. However, references to the spindle itself as an object strongly associated with femininity are found in several texts that are presented below, in order to complete the picture concerning the image of the *nāš pilaqqi*. Although the evidence illuminates this title as designating an effeminate male, the exact nature of his activities cannot be determined.

We will begin our survey of the *nāš pilaqqi* with his attestations in lexical lists. As was already shown, in the lú = *ša* lexical list this figure appears in connection with several other third gender figures: *kurgarrû*, *pilpilû*, *parû*, *assinnu* and SAG-UR-SAG.[1300] As was further shown, in this list's Short Recension the *nāš pilaqqi* was listed immediately following the *kurgarrû* and *assinnu*, while other figures who appeared in the same context were the *kalû*, chief-*kalû*, mourners (*munambû*, *lallaru*), ecstatics (*maḫḫû*, *zabbu*), attendants (two terms alluding to *mukīl rēši*), singers (*nāru*) and dancers (*raqqidu*).[1301] It seems that what was common to all was their participation in cultic performance. On the basis of these lists, the *nāš pilaqqi* was considered by Nissinen to be equal to the *assinnu* and *kurgarrû*.[1302] However, as was noted before, the proximity in semantic fields, as reflected by the mutual attestations in lexical lists, does not necessarily demonstrate exact synonymy. We have already seen how different the gala, *kalû*, *assinnu* and *kurgarrû* were from one another, so the above list cannot be regarded as a mere list of synonymous terms. Yet the *nāš pilaqqi* clearly shared certain traits with the other figures listed together with him.

As was previously mentioned, in a Neo-Assyrian hymn for Nanaya, a reference was made to the spindle.[1303] As is explained above, it is not clear whether the text refers to *kurgarrû*s who carry the spindle and ease the mind of the goddess, or to the *nāš pilaqqi*, who, together with the *kurgarrû*s and other figures, ease the goddess's mind using "sweet pipes". Either way, it is clear that, in this context, the spindle was used as a cultic object, perhaps during a ceremony conducted in Nanaya's honor.

The spindle was regarded in the ancient Near East as a feminine object, as opposed to masculine implements, such as weapons.[1304] Therefore, the special title that was coined for a cultic performer related to this object demands our attention. Henshaw considered this term to designate a real office, because of its occurrence in the

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[1299] CAD (N/2: 94, s.v. "*našû* A2 c2'") categorize this phrase together with other ones that point to the wearing or carrying "a symbol, weapon or tool in exercise of one's function or duty, or as a sign of office or status".

[1300] lú = *ša* Tablet 4,180, 182–184, 189, 193a, 198a (see MSL 12: 134–135, http://oracc. org/dcclt/P282500); see Chapter 3, p. 160–161.

[1301] lú = *ša* Short Recension, Excerpt I,209–222 (see MSL 12: 102–103, http://oracc.org/ dcclt/P365420); see Chapter 3, p. 160–161.

[1302] Nissinen 2003b: 187 n. f.

[1303] K 3600 + DT 75 i 10–11; see Livingstone 1989: 13. For the passage and its discussion, see Chapter 3, pp. 179–180.

[1304] See Hoffner 1966.

lú = *ša* list of professions. He further viewed it as a "hermaphrodite office", that is, an office whose holders were characterized by both masculine and feminine traits.[1305] These general observations, however, are insufficient without supplementary explanations.

In several Hittite magical rituals, the spindle was strongly associated with femininity. For example, in *Paškuwatti's Ritual* an attempt was made by the practitioner to influence a man's masculinity, and strengthen it.[1306] The patient is supposed to undergo a shift, from a state of perceived femininity to a state of perceived masculinity. This shift is symbolized by passing through a make-shift gate, and performing the following acts, described by the practitioner in the first person:

Paškuwatti's Ritual, CTH 406 = KUB 7.8 i 19–29[1307]

19 [*nam-m*]*a-at IŠ-TU* SÍG SA$_5$ SÍG BABBAR *an-da iš-ḫi-iš*[-*k*]*i-i-mi*
20 [*nu-ká*]*n* EN.SÍSKUR ^{GIŠ}*ḫu-u-i-ša-an* ^{GIŠ}*ḫu-u-la-li-i*[*a*]
21 [ŠU-*i*] *an-da te-eḫ-ḫi na-aš-kán* KÁ.GAL$^{HI.A}$-*TIM kat-ta-an*
22 [*ar-ḫa*] *ú-iz-zi na-aš-kán* GIN$_7$-*an* KÁ.GAL$^{HI.A}$-*TIM*
23 [*pa-r*]*a ti-ia-zi nu-uš-ši-iš-ša-an* ^{GIŠ}*ḫu-u-e-ša*[-*an*]
24 $^{[GIŠ]}$*ḫu-u-la-li-ia ar-ḫa da-*[*a*]*ḫ-ḫi nu-uš-ši* ^{GIŠ}PAN [GI$^{HI.A}$]
25 [*p*]*é-eḫ-ḫi na-aš-ta an-da ki-iš-ša-an me-ma-aḫ-ḫi*
26 [*k*]*a-a-ša-wa-ták-kán* MUNUS-*tar ar-ḫa da-aḫ-ḫu-un*
27 *nu-wa-at-ta* EGIR-*pa* LÚ-*tar pé-eḫ-ḫu-un nu-wa*[-*za* MUNUS-*aš*]
28 *ša-ak-li-in ar-ḫa nam-ma pé-eš-ši-i*[*a*]-*at*$^?$
29 *nu-wa-za ša-ra-a* LÚ-*aš š*[*a-ak*]-*li-in* [*da-at-ta*]

[19]Thereafter, I bind them (= the gates) with red and white wool. [20]As regards the patient, [21]I put in [his hands] [20]a spindle and distaff, [21]and he [22]comes [forth] [21]under the gates. [22]When he [23]passes [forwa]rd [22]through the gates, [24]I take away [23]from him the spindle [24]and distaff. [25]I [g]ive [24]him a bow [and arrows], [25]and continuously say thus: [26]"Now I took womanhood away from you! [27]I gave you manhood instead! [28]You have cast away [from yourself [27]Woman's] [28]customary-behavior! [29][You have taken] up for yourself man's c[ust]omarry-behavior (instead)!"

The spindle and distaff were chosen in this passage as objects that symbolize femininity. These objects were used as tokens of femininity, though in a different manner, in two other Hittite magical rituals. In the military ritual known as *The First Military/Soldiers' Oath*, the Hittite soldiers take upon themselves a loyalty oath to their monarch, during which the following occurs:

[1305] Henshaw 1994: 301.

[1306] The customary view held by scholars is that Paškuwatti's ritual was meant to cure the patient of impotence, and restore his potency (see, e.g., Hoffner 1987: 287). A recent suggestion by Miller (2010), however, views the ritual as aimed at turning a passive homosexual into a sexually-active person. For the text, see Hoffner 1987; for a comprehensive discussion, see Peter 2004: 197–224.

[1307] See Hoffner 1987: 272.

***The First Military Oath*, CTH 427 = KBo 6.34 ii 42 - iii 1**[1308]

42 *nu* TÚG *ŠA* MUNUS ^{GIŠ}*ḫu-la-a-li* ^{GIŠ}*ḫu-e-ša-an-na*
43 *ú-da-an-zi nu* GI-*an du-wa-ar-na-an-zi*
44 *nu-uš-ma-aš kiš-an te-ši ki-i-wa ku-it Ú-UL-wa*
45 *ŠA* MUNUS ^{TÚG}NÍG.LÁM^{MEŠ} *nu-wa-ra-aš li-in-ki-ia ḫar-ú-e-ni*
46 *na-aš-ta ku-iš ku-u-uš* NI-IŠ DINGIR-*LIM šar-re-ez-zi*
47 *nu-wa-kán A-NA* LUGAL MUNUS.LUGAL DUMU^{MEŠ} LUGAL ḪUL-*lu*
48 *tak-ki-iš-zi na-an ki-e* NI-IŠ DINGIR^{MEŠ} LÚ-*an* MUNUS-*an*
49 *i-en-du tu-uz‹-zi›-uš-šu-uš* MUNUS^{MEŠ}-*uš i-en-du*
50 *nu-uš* MUNUS-*li wa-aš-ša-an-du nu-uš-ma‹-aš-›-ša-an* ^{TÚG}*ku-ri-eš-šar*
51 *ši-ia-an-du* ^{GIŠ}PAN^{ḪI.A} GI^{ḪI.A} ^{GIŠ}TUKUL^{ḪI.A}
52 *I-NA QA-TI-ŠU-NU du-wa-ar-na-an-du*
53 *nu-uš-ma-aš-kán* ^{GIŠ}*ḫu-la-a-li* ^{GIŠ}*ḫu-u-e-ša-an-na*
1 ‹*I-NA*› *QA-TI-ŠU-NU ti-*[(*an-du*)]

⁴³They bring ⁴²a woman's garment, a distaff and a spindle, ⁴³and break an arrow. ⁴⁴You tell them thus: "What are these? Not ⁴⁵a woman's festive garments?! We hold them for taking the oath. ⁴⁶ Whoever transgresses these oaths, ⁴⁸and partici-pates ⁴⁷in evil against the king, queen and princes: ⁴⁹May ⁴⁸these oath deities ⁴⁹make ⁴⁸him (from) a man (to) a woman! ⁴⁹May they make his armies women! ⁵⁰May they dress them as women! ⁵¹May they put ⁵⁰a headdress upon them! ⁵²May they break in their hands ⁵¹the bows, arrows and weapons! ⁵³And for them, ¹may they put in their hands ⁵³a distaff and a spindle!"

Another threat of manipulating the gender identity by turning masculinity into femi-ninity appears in the *Ritual and Prayer to Ištar of Nineveh*, where the goddess is invoked for similar reasons, that is, for strengthening the Hittite army and weaken-ing its foes:

***Ritual and Prayer to Ištar of Nineveh*, CTH 717 = KBo 2.9 i 25–30**[1309]

25 *na-aš-ta A-NA* LÚ^{MEŠ} *ar-ḫa* LÚ-*na*[1310]*-tar tar-ḫu-i-la-tar*
26 *ḫa-ad-du-la-tar ma-a-al-la* ^{GIŠ}TUKUL^{ḪI.A} ^{GIŠ}PAN^{ḪI.A} ^{GIŠ}GAG.Ú.TAG.GA^{ḪI.A}
27 GÍR^{‹ḪI.A›} *da-a*[1311] *na-at I-NA* ^{URU}*Ḫat-ti ú-da a-pí-da-aš-ma-kán ŠU-i*
28 *ŠA* MUNUS-*TI* ^{GIŠ}*ḫu-u-la-li* ^{GIŠ}*ḫu-i-ša-an-na da-a-i*
29 *nu-uš* MUNUS-*ni-li ú-e-eš-ši-ia nu-uš-ma-aš-kán* ^{TÚG}*ku-ri-eš-šar da-a-i*
30 *nu-uš-ma-aš-kán tu-e-el aš-šu-ul ar-ḫa da-a*

²⁷Take away ²⁵from the men (= the enemies of Ḫatti) manhood, prowess, ²⁶well-

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¹³⁰⁸ See Oettinger 1976: 10, 12. For a recent translation and short discussion of this text, see Collins 1997: 165–167, including previous literature.
¹³⁰⁹ See Sommer 1921: 86–87. For a recent translation and short discussion of this text, see Collins 1997: 164–165, including previous literature.
¹³¹⁰ Sommer did not identify this sign. Judged by the context, and based on the KBo copy (although the sign seems to be depicted unusually there), it is probably NA, which would render the complete word LÚ-*natar* (= *pišnatar*, "manliness").
¹³¹¹ Sommer's transliteration has *u[?]-da-a*; however, the first sign of the line looks as GÍR, and the gap between it to the following two signs (that are very close to one another) might show that they do not belong to the same word. Note that the verb *arḫa da-* reoccurs in line 30.

being, wits, weapons, bows, arrows [27]and swords, and bring them to Ḫatti! [28]Put [27]in their hands [28]a distaff and a spindle of a woman! [29]Dress them like women! Put upon them a headdress! [30]And take away your grace from them!

Interestingly, on this occasion, the goddess Ištar is the one who is evoked in order to apply the gender manipulation. It appears, then, that the Hittites adopted in this case the Mesopotamian perception of Ištar as a goddess capable of controlling and influencing one's sexuality and gender attributes.[1312] In the two examples shown above, then, the spindle was used in magical procedures that were aimed at harming the masculinity of the individual, and turning it into femininity. Similarly, in *Paškuwatti's Ritual*, the spindle was taken from a person in order to symbolize the warding off of femininity from him.

Further references to the spindle exist in the Hebrew Bible. According to the interpretation of Holloway and, later on, Malul, a term similar to the Akkadian *nāš pilaqqi* appears as a degrading phrase used by David as part of his curse of Joab.[1313] Following the death of Saul, a struggle breaks out between the deceased king's followers, including Abner ben Ner, and David's supporters. Eventually, Abner accepts David's authority, and, in return, the king assures him that no harm will be done to him. However, Joab ben Zeruiah, David's general, defies the king's promise, and murders Abner. In hearing of Joab's wrongdoing, David wishes to renounce himself of the misconduct, and casts upon Joab a harsh curse:

II Samuel 3,29

May Joab's house never be without someone who has a running sore or leprosy or who leans on a crutch or who falls by the sword or who lacks food.

The Hebrew term translated in the NIV as "who leans on a crutch" is *maḥazîq bappelek*, literally "holder of spindle".[1314] Holloway suggested that this phrase should be understood as equivalent to the Akkadian *nāš pilaqqi*, used in the biblical context quoted above as a derogative phrase, together with the other phrases incorporated in David's curse. Holloway suggested that David's curse was similar to typical curses of ancient Near Eastern treaties that were aimed at possible transgressors of the alliance, since in killing Abner Joab has defied David's promise to let Abner go in peace.[1315] However, Holloway's conclusion, that *maḥazîq bappelek* should be understood as meaning a "corvée-worker" was rejected by Layton, who put the emphasis on the feminine connotations of the term. These feminine connotations led Layton to emphasize the significance of the apparent comparison with Mesopotamian curse-formulae that included intimidations on anyone who transgresses the treaty, of harming his masculinity, and changing it to femininity (on this issue, see further

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[1312] For the adoption of the prayer and the goddess by the Hittites from Mesopotamia, see Beckman 1998.

[1313] Holloway 1987, Malul 2006: 47–56, 65–69.

[1314] Most English versions of the Bible translate this phrase similarly as the NIV. Few, however, such as the ESV, do translate it as "holder of spindle". For previous literature of both translations, see Holloway 1987: 373–374 n. 3–4.

[1315] Holloway 1987: 370, 373.

above).[1316]

It can be concluded that, since the textual attestations of the *nāš pilaqqi* in Meso-potamian records are almost completely laconic, a better understanding of the nature of this title is achieved by considering the evidence from extra-Mesopotamian sources. As we have seen, Hittite and biblical texts come to our aid in comprehend-ing the gender significance of the spindle as an object associated with femininity. In Hittite magical rituals the spindle was used as a symbolic object, in order to manip-ulate the gender identity of men and influence their perceived masculinity and femi-ninity. Furthermore, in the biblical records, a title similar to *nāš pilaqqi* is mentioned in a context that reminds us of the Hittite approach just mentioned. In the curse cast by David upon Joab appears the phrase "holder of spindle", a clear parallel to Akka-dian *nāš pilaqqi*. Since the context in which the "holder of spindle" appeared was negative, it is clear that the term formed a derogative expression. We can therefore assume that its meaning in David's curse was similar to its meaning in the Hittite texts, since in both cases the spindle was perceived as a feminine object.

Once the symbolic association of the object was reversed from female to male, it inevitably characterized male figures in a feminine manner. These facts complement the scarce information gathered from Mesopotamian sources regarding the *nāš pilaqqi*, and shed more light on this term. It appears to have denoted an effeminate male who was engaged in this way or the other in cult. The evidence implies that this term did not designate a specific figure or office, but rather stood for a general concept, an adjective of feminine males. As such, it was probably similar to the term *sinnišānu*, as was previously discussed.

7. *parû*

The *parû* is the most poorly documented figure discussed in this book, and his at-testations are exclusively limited to lexical lists. As was stressed several times above, since the terms in these lists were not necessarily synonyms, their shared semantics cannot be always established. It is suggested in CAD that the term *parû* is connected with the verb *parû*, "to insult".[1317] As was previously shown, *parû* is attested in the lexical list lú = *ša* alongside several third gender figures.[1318] More specifically, he is equated there with the *pilpilû*.[1319] The two figures are equated again in yet another lexical list, antagal:

antagal Tablet III,287[1320]
[pi-il-p]i-il   *pa-ru-ú*   *pilpilû* / *parû*

[1316] Layton 1989: 85. Malul (2006: 50) followed these suggestions.

[1317] CAD P: 209, s.v. "*parû* B".

[1318] lú = *ša* Tablet 4,180, 182–184, 189, 193a, 198a (see MSL 12: 134–135, http://oracc.org/dcclt/P282500); see Chapter 3, p. 160–161.

[1319] lú = *ša* Tablet 4,182 (see MSL 12: 134); see Chapter 3, p. 160.

[1320] See MSL 17: 161.

Although in the previous example the term *parû* is partially reconstructed, as is the pi-il-pi-il in the current entry, the equation between the two terms can be firmly established based on a combination of these two examples. Another lexical list in which the *parû* figured is the AN = *šamû* Neo-Assyrian list of synonyms:

LTBA 2.1 vi 41'–44' // LTBA 2.2,376–379 // CT 18.5 = K 4193 rev. 5'–8'[1321]

41'//376//5' *eš-še-bu-u*	*maḫ-ḫu-u*	ecstatic
42'//377//6' *pa-ru-u*	*maḫ-ḫu-u*	*parû* / ecstatic
43'//378//7' (*m*)*uš-šu-ru*	*maḫ-ḫu-u*	released, freed, loose / ecstatic
44'//379//8' *za-ab-bu*	*maḫ-ḫu-u*	ecstatic

In line 42'//377//6' the *parû* is explained by the term *maḫḫû*, "ecstatic". On the basis of this passage from the synonym list, CAD regarded the *parû* to be an ecstatic.[1322] However, while the terms *eššebû*, *maḫḫû* and *zabbu* indeed designated types of ecstatics, *uššuru* did not. Therefore, as long as *parû* is not found in other contexts as designating ecstatics, this meaning cannot be endorsed.

It was sometimes assumed by scholars that the *parû* appeared in connection with the SAG-UR-SAG in a text quoted and discussed above, RIME 4.34.1,19–20.[1323] However, as was explained, this assumption is most probably erroneous, and based on a misunderstanding of what is actually written in the referred passage. This led to the groundless definitions in the AHw of the term *parauram* as "ein Homosexueller", and *parû* as "Buhlknabe, Kinäde".[1324]

The evidence concerning the *parû* is too scanty as to allow us any understanding of his nature. Any attempt of reconstructing the etymological origins of the term seems futile, because the root *pr'* can produce numerous substantives and verbs, none of which are more compelling than the others as a possible etymological source for the term in question. Therefore, the only reason for evaluating this title in the frame of the present research is its attestation in lexical lists in proximity with other titles, which are better documented, and therefore better understood. As we have seen, the *parû* was attested twice as a parallel figure to the *pilpilû*, and once together with several figures of ecstatics. This, however, is not enough for illuminating this figure, which remains the least understood of all figures discussed.

[1321] See CAD P: 208, s.v. "*parû* D", http://oracc.org/dcclt/P274553. Transliteration follows DCCLT.

[1322] CAD P: 208, s.v. "*parû* D".

[1323] See above, pp. 261–262.

[1324] AHw: 833, 834.

Summary and Conclusions

We have now reached the end of the book, which investigated a class of third gender males in the ancient Near East, analyzed its characteristics, background of formation and its place within society. In the broader perspective, the book was meant to enhance our understanding of ancient Mesopotamian social structures, by examining Mesopotamian third gender figures and supplying relevant background evidence from other parts of the ancient Near East. We thus confront questions of gender relations, masculinity, social authority, conformity and control.

In order to delineate clearly the field of research within which this study was conducted, an outline and methodological definitions of the third gender and of masculine gender identities were supplied in the introduction of the book. It was explained that the concept of the third gender refers to people whose gender identity does not correspond to the exact social expectations of their gender. The concept of hegemonic masculinity was chosen as the preferred model for explaining how varying masculine gender identities are formed and exist in society.

The third gender men we discuss were documented in clearly defined contexts, and bore specific titles. As such, they were by and large anonymous, known by title and not as private persons. Therefore, this book was not meant to investigate the psychological characteristics of individuals, but rather the sociological phenomenon of title-holders within Mesopotamian society.

It was claimed in the introduction that this third gender was a social construct, meant for delineating the social norms typical of the ruling men. To my understanding, these hegemonic masculine men in society used the concepts of "different", "other", and "strange" in order to demonstrate and highlight their own typical characteristics of conformity. These concepts of social otherness are essential for demarcating social borders, which, in turn, define patterns of normative social conduct. The present research demonstrated that this human phenomenon of a third gender in the ancient Near East involved mainly the matter of social definitions. Social identity is defined by its limitations: where it begins and ends, and what exists beyond it. The strange, the extreme and the bizarre signify what common, hegemonic, people are *not*, and therefore mark who common, hegemonic, people actually *are*. These boundaries are constructed by using social mechanisms of norms and prohibitions. In this sense, the third gender figures were socially constructed, and served social needs of defining norms of conformity. These interpretations are elaborated below.

1. Summaries and Conclusions of Individual Chapters

One of the conclusions we reach is that, in Mesopotamia, the third gender was not homogenous, but was rather comprised of several categories and sub-classes of figures that varied from one another. The chapters of this book were meant to elucidate this division. Four of these figures were documented in numerous texts, and were therefore regarded in this book as primary third gender figures, which were

discussed in separate chapters: the gala/*kalû*, *assinnu*, *kurgarrû*, and lú-sag / *ša rēši*. The remaining figures were all treated within one chapter, because of the relative scarcity of their attestations. For this reason, we have regarded them as secondary third gender figures.

1.1. Summary and Conclusions of Chapter 1: Mesopotamian Narrative and Hymnic Texts

The opening chapter presented the evidence on the third gender figures as reflected through the scope of a corpus of narrative, hymnic and mythological texts. The vast majority of these texts were concerned with Inanna/Ištar and her cult personnel. This is undoubtedly one of the main keys for understanding the social phenomenon of the third gender in Mesopotamia. It has to be noted, however, that this picture may be somewhat distorted, because of the very nature of these compositions, which highlight the place of deities and supernatural phenomena in human life. Since this chapter was restricted to narratives, hymns and myths, it lacked references to other aspects of the phenomenon of the third gender, and many features of the various figures bearing third gender characteristics. These were discussed at length in the following chapters.

What did we learn about the third gender figures attested in these literary compositions? The *kurgarrû* was mentioned in no less than seven of the texts, usually portrayed as carrying cutting-weapons. The gala/*kalû* appeared in five of these texts, usually with connection to his cultic performance, where he used drums. According to the Sumerian *Inanna's Descent*, both these figures were created in order to sooth Ereškigal and please her, gain her favor, and by that rescue Inanna from the netherworld. The *assinnu* was only mentioned in three of the texts discussed in this chapter. His appearance in the Akkadian *Ištar's Descent* depicted him as a peculiar figure, bearing ambiguous attributes. He rescued Ištar, but was then cursed by Ereškigal. The SAG-UR-SAG was documented in three compositions as well, and possibly in a fourth one. His attestations are all laconic beyond possibility of comprehending much about his nature, except for his connection with Inanna/Ištar and several of her third gender attendants. The *pilpilû* was found as well in three of the compositions presented. Interestingly, in all occasions he was said to have been "changed" by Inanna, perhaps as an allusion to the power of this goddess to "change a male into a female". The least documented figures were the lú-sag / *ša rēši*, the *tīru* and the *girseqû*, who appeared in one composition alone. These isolated attestations, however, proved to be significant, since they supplied important hints concerning their functionalities as members of the palace personnel. This corroborates evidence we have of these figures from other sources.

As was already mentioned several times, it seems that the key for understanding the gender ambiguity of all these figures lies in the nature of their patron deity, Inanna/Ištar. She was characterized as responsible for erotic love, as well as war and conflict among men; a source of authority over agricultural production and human procreation, as well as chaos and destruction. Her potentially hazardous nature was especially apparent in her perceived power to "change a male into a female", and, by

that, undermine the very foundations of order in human society. This symbolic blurring of gender categories was manifested in real life in the form of the ambiguous figures studied in this book. Since they do not completely belong to any of the formal two genders, they constitute a category of their own, a third gender.

1.2. Summary and Conclusions of Chapter 2: gala, *kalû* and *kulu'u*

The second chapter examined the titles gala, *kalû* and *kulu'u*, assuming *a priori* that all three were at the very least connected to each other, if not actually synonymous. It was demonstrated that Sumerian gala and Akkadian *kalû* were synonym terms, while *kulu'u* stood for a different concept. The first term to emerge was gala, and its best definition would be "chanter of laments". He was certainly connected with feminine traits and activities, as evident by his involvement in laments originally uttered by women, and several more obscure indications deriving from proverbs, narratives, myths and perhaps the very etymological origins of the term.

In later periods the title was "Akkadianized" into *kalû*, and though the profession was the same, now it was elaborated and expanded to include further duties. It seems likely that this process occurred in the early phases of the Old Babylonian period. The reasons for this expansion of duties are not straightforward. They may have resulted from changes in cult and religious practices, but it cannot be overruled that the evidence from the Old Babylonian period onwards is much larger than the preceding periods, and sheds more light on this figure than do older texts.

As a cultic functionary, the gala/*kalû* was in charge of music playing, singing and chanting throughout the conduct of different types of rituals, which formed part of the cult of Inanna/Ištar. It appears that the social status these personnel enjoyed was not fixed and could have varied greatly. Therefore, even though several scholars argued that Pre-Sargonic and Old Akkadian transactions where galas were sold testified to the low status of these persons, other attestations of galas portray them as distinguished members of the cultic personnel. The chief-gala/*kalû*, gala-maḫ/*kalamāḫu*, was a high official documented from Pre-Sargonic times to the late first millennium.

An interesting association appears to have prevailed between the gala/*kalû* and the nar, a figure best translated as "singer". This connection is evident in texts from all periods surveyed in this chapter. Although the nar was not a third gender figure, the relation between the gala/*kalû* and singers is quite suggestive with regard to his ascribed feminine traits, since singing is universally regarded as a female domain. The fact that there were female nars, but hardly any female galas/*kalû*s, testifies to a clear difference between the two professions. Though the gala/*kalû*'s activities included a sense of effeminacy, only males fulfilled this role.

As is demonstrated throughout the book, many third gender figures were strongly associated with Inanna/Ištar, so that their ambiguous nature may be explained as connected with the ambiguous nature of their patron goddess. However, the case of the gala/*kalû* seems more complicated. The evidence connecting him to Inanna/Ištar's cult can be summarized thus: the compositions *Inanna's Descent to*

the Netherworld, *The Fashioning of the gala* and *Inanna and Ebiḫ* testify to the close, almost intimate, relation between the gala and the goddess, and his performance in her cult; in the Sumerian Proverb 5 (= SP 2.100,165–166) Inanna is referred to as the gala's lady; Inanna/Ištar figures prominently in the various emesal compositions uttered by the gala/*kalû* in various periods.

Judging by the above, it seems that in the early periods the gala had no connection whatsoever with this goddess. He was a cultic lamenter operating in funerals. He is found in contexts relating to the goddess only in later periods, but not earlier than the Old Babylonian period, from where the narratives, myths and proverbs testifying to the connection between the gala/*kalû* and Inanna/Ištar stem. I therefore propose that the involvement of this figure with activities otherwise reserved for women (laments in funerals, the use of emesal and singing) was the background for the social attitude viewing him as a third gender figure, while, at a later stage, it was this social attitude that made him be considered as suitable for the cult of the ambivalent goddess. So, in terms of gender identity, the image of the gala/*kalû* was established during the Pre-Sargonic and Old Akkadian periods, but it was in the Old Babylonian period that its cultic and religious background evolved. This led to a reformation of the gala/*kalû*'s image and an adaptation of his gender identity to match that of other members of Inanna/Ištar's cult who were effeminate men. In later periods, the gala/*kalû* continued to be involved in cultic activities, but his initial gender peculiarities were of no consideration. For this reason, we encounter no more references to his gender ambiguity after the Old Babylonian period, even though textual documentations of the gala/*kalû* continue until the Hellenistic period.

The second term that was discussed is *kulu'u*. Since the attestations of this term are so sporadic, it is difficult to characterize it. In lexical lists it was found to form a parallel term to several of Inanna/Ištar's cult members, most notably the *assinnu*. On three occasions *kulu'u* was found to have been used as an expression of insult, once (in the so-called *Babylonian Theodicy*) generally, and twice as a derogative concept standing in contrast to manhood and virility. Interestingly, this usage of *kulu'u* appears to have spread beyond the mere borders of Mesopotamia proper, since one of these two examples was found in an Old Hittite text. In two incantations *kulu'u* was found to be connected with the "city prostitute", and described as a lover of Ištar. The most significant conclusion reached by analyzing all these attestations is that none portrays *kulu'u* as a cultic performer. The only evidence in this regard derives from a ritual text (BM 54312), which it is doubtful whether *kulu'u* indeed appears in. It is therefore suggested here that the term *kulu'u* did not designate a figure similar to the gala/*kalû*, but reflected a more general term that denoted femininity ascribed to males. As such, it could constitute an insult to men's virility, and at the same time be perceived as a parallel to the effeminate male members of Inanna/Ištar's cult. Previously, it was variously suggested that the term *kulu'u* stood for a homosexual prostitute, castrate, or an actor. However, the conclusions reached by this book concerning the actual nature of this term are markedly different.

The relation of the gala/*kalû* and *kulu'u* to the third gender was based on social conventions and on the role of large groups of persons within the social structure, rather than on deviant behavioral patterns of individuals. There is no real evidence to

support the claim that any of the titles gala/*kalû* and *kulu'u* designated a eunuch or a homosexual, not to mention a pederast. Furthermore, it was suggested here that some of the attributes ascribed to the gala/*kalû*, such as barrenness and homosexuality, reflected social attitudes that did not necessarily materialize in everyday reality. Rather than actual social conduct, they probably reflected a discrepancy between attitudes that prevailed among certain parts of society and the practical customs of others.

1.3. Summary and Conclusions of Chapter 3: *assinnu* and *kurgarrû*

The third chapter examined the textual attestations of the *assinnu* and the *kurgarrû*, two figures that were found to be closely associated with one another. The *assinnu* was sometimes designated by the logographic term (^{lú})ur-munus, literally "man-woman" or "a woman's man", in various texts. Another term that appeared as somewhat parallel to *assinnu*, even if not entirely synonymous with it, was *sinni-šānu*, literally "woman-like". We further saw a unique attestation of *assinnu* in a feminine form, listed among a group of female cultic attendants. Two *assinnu*s functioned as prophets in the Mari court, perhaps as the result of their close relation with Inanna/Ištar, which made them be regarded as her messengers. In cultic and narrative texts, the *assinnu* was documented relatively scarcely. His two most notable attributes in these texts were insinuations of passive homosexual conduct and his connection with Ištar, his patron goddess. The ambivalent nature of the goddess can be viewed as the key for understanding the ambivalent sexuality of the *assinnu*, her mortal attendant. The *assinnu*'s characterization as being sexually penetrated was alluded to in several omens as well, and in several ritual and incantation texts he was portrayed as possessing healing or apotropaic qualities. These, as well, can be explained as resulting from his connection with Ištar, who was invoked through his mediation and bestowed her powers on him.

Similarly to the *assinnu*, the *kurgarrû* was found to be associated in lexical lists with many figures of third gender characteristics. Similarly to the *assinnu*, he was ascribed healing and apotropaic capabilities in various incantations, attributes which probably derived from his perceived close association with Ištar. In numerous narrative and cultic descriptions, the *kurgarrû*s bore weapons such as daggers or swords. Scholars endorsing the possibility that Mesopotamian cultic personnel performed self-mutilation, similarly to the Anatolian priests of Attis and Cybele, used such attestations as evidence supporting their claims; however, nowhere does any reference to self-emasculation actually appear, and these speculations should be rejected. Militaristic behavior certainly played a prominent part in the *kurgarrû*'s cultic performance, but ascribing anything more than cultic significance to this militarism seems to be unwarranted. This aggressive or militant performance was probably connected with the ambivalent nature of his patron goddess, Ištar, just as the *assinnu*'s effeminacy resulted from the same ideological source. It is suggested here that, as Ištar's most prominent followers, the *assinnu* and *kurgarrû* represented her dual character: masculine and feminine, militant and sexual, aggressive and erotic.

Combined together, they designated the goddess in her completeness.

Little is known about the *assinnu*'s and the *kurgarrû*'s private or daily life. Therefore, ascribing them low social or economic status, as occasionally suggested, cannot be satisfactorily supported by textual evidence. The general attitude of the surrounding society towards these figures is likewise mostly unknown; however, while no conclusive evidence seems to exist for a negative social attitude towards them, on occasions they might have been regarded with some awe. As mortal representatives and attendants of Ištar, who were viewed as possessing some of her powers and ambiguous traits, this attitude of social exclusion and dread is understandable.

1.4. Summary and Conclusions of Chapter 4: lú-sag / *ša rēši* and Castration in the Ancient Near East

The fourth chapter focused on the figure of the lú-sag / *ša rēši*, a palace attendant who in all likelihood was a eunuch. Since the relevance of this figure to the study of the third gender derives from its castration, the topic of castration itself was investigated as well. It was demonstrated that these officials held high positions in the court, and occasionally performed as guardians of the royal women's quarters. The lú-sag / *ša rēši* were perceived markedly different from other figures that were surveyed in the present book. The main feature of their characterization is their physical aspect as castrates, which led to a contradiction between their biological sex and their gender identity. Indeed, eunuchs represent a case in which gender is influenced by physiology – this is the essence of the relations between embodiment and social conventions.

However, their exceptional status did not necessarily make them be regarded as effeminate, or lessen their masculinity. Some of them fulfilled the highest positions in the royal bureaucracy and occasionally even performed as military commanders. The contradiction was probably avoided because eunuchs could have maintained their sexual potency, as long as their castration was only partial. In this way, their manliness was not damaged, and the continuous capability to perform sexually did not diminish their masculine identity. Thus, despite their physical deformity, they were not necessarily inferior to other men, though they deviated from standard hegemonic masculinity.

The question remains, however, why did eunuchs become an institutionalized phenomenon in Mesopotamia, and, later on, in the whole of the ancient Near East? The possibility that a castrate will have no loyalty other than to his master, as he has no wife, lover or children cannot be accepted, since eunuchs could certainly marry a wife, have a lover and adopt a child. At the present state of research, one can only speculate about the origins of the office. The earliest records mentioning lú-sag / *ša rēši*, which derive from ED lexical lists and Ur III administrative records, tell nothing about this figure and its character. Later attestations stem from the Old Babylonian period, and are too of an extremely limited nature.

The hypothesis endorsed in this book regards the use of castrates in Mesopotamian courts as originating in the need for trustworthy supervisors on the royal

women's quarters. The only way of securing that no child of a royal woman will be born to any man but the king himself was to castrate those who were to safeguard these women. However, in order not to obliterate completely their manliness, these special guards underwent only a partial emasculation, thus not losing their ability to perform sexually. Admittedly, this hypothesis is only supported by texts from the Middle Assyrian period onwards, and thus cannot be proven until similar evidence is found from earlier periods. However, accepting it enables us to observe a clear line of diachronic development in the form of this office. While in the Old Babylonian period these persons are mentioned laconically as officials vaguely related to the king, in the Middle Assyrian period they are attested as royal supervisors of the women's quarters, and, later, in the Neo-Assyrian and Neo-Babylonian periods they appear as officials serving in the highest positions at the court and as high military commanders. As we have seen, on one occasion a chief-eunuch even ascended to the throne of the Neo-Assyrian empire.

As for the origin of the term, lú-sag / *ša rēši*, "(he) of the head", most scholars view it as deriving from the phrase *ina rēši izuzzu*, "stand at the head", that reflects the basic sense of "attendant". This etymology highlights the function of the lú-sag / *ša rēši* as a palace attendant, but says nothing with regard to castration.

The procedure of castration caused the male individual a profound physical change. By losing his genitals, the person lost his most obvious physical characteristic of masculinity, his ability to procreate and, on occasions, even to perform sexually. The actual attestations of castration are rare and confined to specific contexts: unique corporal punishment in the MAL, bureaucratic requirement in the MAPD and certain biblical prohibitions. Further, iconographic representations might allude to castrates as well, even though this evidence is inconclusive. Eunuchs can be viewed as belonging to a third gender, being in a hybrid physical state. However, in terms of gender identity, this view might be inaccurate. As we have seen, even though their sexual identity was that of deformed men, their gender identity was masculine. Their sexual ability could have been intact, and their behavior no different than that of any other man. It is therefore necessary to distinguish between eunuchs and other figures that were explored in this book. This difference stands at the core of the distinction between the physical and behavioral aspects of the third gender.

The most crucial question is whether the lú-sag / *ša rēši* was indeed a castrated figure, and if so, whether that was the rule in all periods and places. An absolute answer to this question, unfortunately, cannot be given. My personal view, that the answer to this question is indeed positive, can undoubtedly be criticized. The fact is, that when assessing the data presented in this chapter, an immediate picture emerges: the evidence in favor of viewing the lú-sag / *ša rēši* as a castrate stems almost exclusively from the Middle and Neo-Assyrian periods. Other periods show certain parallels in terms of roles and functionality, but remain silent with regard to castration. Is it, therefore, justified to project the evidence from one or two periods to all other ones? This question, however, can be asked the other way around: since we have no evidence, from any period, to contrast the possibility that the lú-sag / *ša rēši* was castrated, is it justified to assume so merely on the grounds of the silence of

the sources? Which approach is more methodologically justified? I leave this deci-
sion for the reader, and limit myself to presenting the pertinent evidence, and offer-
ing my interpretation of it, which, as said, is hardly compelling.

    Similar difficulties involve the case of the Hittite lú-sag. As we have seen, the
evidence from Ḫatti is far from being unequivocal with regard to the question of
castration. It seems that in Ḫatti the term lú-sag designated palace officials, whose
most notable capacity was guarding the royal women's quarters. Furthermore, these
officials apparently had access to the king's inner chambers. In several cultures
along human history, these kinds of officials were castrates. This, together with the
analogy to the Neo-Assyrian example, seems enough as to allow us to suspect that
the Hittite lú-sag officials were castrated. The point is that the Hittite texts predate
the Neo-Assyrian ones by several centuries. Another type of evidence that seems to
corroborate the possibility that the *ša rēši* was a castrate stems from the Hebrew
bible, which is far later. Since it is assumed that the use of eunuchs in palace ad-
ministration was not a Hittite innovation, but rather a cultural borrowing from Mes-
opotamia, the Neo-Assyrian empire cannot possibly be the origin of the practice.
Hence, we have to assume that the Mesopotamian model of using eunuchs predates
the Neo-Assyrian period. If the roots of the practice are indeed Assyrian, they must
be ascribed to the Middle Assyrian kingdom, for the very least. Thus, the phenome-
non cannot be limited to the Neo-Assyrian period alone. According to the view I
foster, it existed for at least several centuries, from mid second millennium onwards,
and was spread through at least Assyria and Ḫatti. Since the biblical material yields
similar results, a Neo-Babylonian connecting thread is not far-fetched, at least to a
certain degree. Again, this scenario is rather conjectural, and as said before, remains
in the eye of the beholder.

1.5. Summary and Conclusions of Chapter 5: Less Known Third Gender Figures

The fifth and last chapter surveyed collectively a group of figures who bore third
gender characteristics, concerning which the information is limited. The *girseqû* is
the best documented of these. In texts from the Ur III period, this title seemed to
generally represent dependant groups of people rather than a specific title-holder.
However, starting in the Old Babylonian period, the term had a specific meaning
and designated a member of the palace personnel. The *girseqû* was typically child-
less, and several laws of the Ḫammurabi code dealt with issues relating to his
adopted children. An omen of the *šumma ālu* series portrays him as the penetrated
partner of homosexual relations. In several texts from Mari he was documented in
association with singers, and, on occasions, he was described as a singer himself.
The connection between femininity and singing, therefore, further hints to the sexual
ambiguity of the *girseqû*. The *tīru* was a palace attendant, most probably character-
ized as childless and, perhaps, a castrate. In this respect, he seems to resemble the
girseqû. His supposed barrenness is implied in an incantation, and in a passage from
Bilgameš and the Netherworld. The myth of *Enki and Ninmaḫ* possibly alludes to
his castration. Both these figures remind us of the *ša rēši*, a typically childless palace

attendant, who, in all likelihood, was a eunuch. Therefore, although no clear evidence portrays the *girseqû* and the *tīru* as castrates, they certainly belonged to the same conceptual milieu as the *ša rēši*.

The next figure to be explored was the SAG-UR-SAG. He was portrayed as cultic personnel whose effeminate traits were alluded to in several royal inscriptions. The most notable attestation in this regard detailed his role in the hymn of Iddin-Dagan, where the SAG-UR-SAG was described as an attendant of Inanna who exhibited feminine behavioral facets. The SAG-UR-SAG was found to share many resemblances with the *pilpilû*, who, as well, was a member of Inanna/Ištar's cult. The *pilpilû* was referred to as being changed by Inanna/Ištar in several hymns, probably alluding to his gender-ambiguous nature. In the *Lady of Largest Heart* hymn to Inanna, obscure references were made to the *pilpilû*'s ambiguous sexuality. As cultic personnel of Inanna/Ištar who were characterized by effeminate attributes, the SAG-UR-SAG and *pilpilû* seem similar to the *assinnu*, with whom they were occasionally equated in lexical lists.

Two additional terms that were investigated were *sinnišānu* and *nāš pilaqqi*, who were shown to be fundamentally different from all other titles discussed in the book. These two terms denoted the general notion of femininity imposed upon males, and did not designate a particular third gender figure. Literally, *sinnišānu* means "woman-like". This term was usually found in debasing contexts, such as passages of royal inscriptions where men's masculinity was threatened to be turned into femininity. *nāš pilaqqi* means literally "holder/carrier of spindle". The spindle was an object considered to be feminine, as Hittite and biblical texts show. Therefore, the association of this object with males was highly inadequate with their gender, and characterized them as effeminates. Furthermore, both *sinnišānu* and *nāš pilaqqi* were attested in several lexical lists in mutual contexts with many third gender figures, as was the last term in this chapter, *parû*. However, no evidence other than lexical exists for the *parû*, and therefore nothing more can be deduced about him.

The most obvious common denominator of all these terms is their attestations in numerous lexical lists in mutual contexts. In the lists they appear to be related to each other, as well as to the figures previously discussed: the gala, *kalû*, *kulu'u*, *assinnu* and *kurgarrû*. Although this evidence should not be regarded as pointing to direct synonymy, it does prove a semantic connection between all these figures.

The spheres of activity of these figures were the palace and the temple. The *girseqû* and *tīru* were palace attendants, while the SAG-UR-SAG and *pilpilû* were cult personnel. *sinnišānu* and *nāš pilaqqi* denoted general concepts, but the latter might have referred to effeminate members of cult as well. The sexual passivity, supposed castration and effeminate behavior of the figures discussed in this chapter might be partially explained as connected to their cultic role as Inanna/Ištar's attendants. However, this interpretation does not explain their role in the palace. Hence, a differentiation should be made in evaluating third gender figures of the palace and those of the temple, and a view generalizing all should be avoided. It seems clear that different mechanisms stood behind the forming of these two different groups.

In order to achieve a clearer understanding of the reasons behind the existence of third gender figures in the palace, we should look beyond the factors of cultic per-

formance and symbolic behavior. Third gender figures that served in the palace probably fulfilled practical needs, rather than symbolic ones. One such need could be the use of eunuchs in the palace bureaucracy. It has to be admitted that the evidence in this regard is highly limited and non-conclusive. However, as was previously explained, it is highly probable that the *ša rēši* was a castrated official serving in the palace. Whether several other figures, such as the *girseqû* and *tīru*, were palace eunuchs as well cannot be determined for certain. Nor can the exact difference between them be satisfactorily elucidated, because of the vague and limited nature of their documentation. Therefore, the analogy with the *ša rēši* seems to be useful for understanding their nature and activities.

Be the matter as it may, one of the most pre-eminent features characterizing masculine gender identity in the ancient Near East was man's capability to display penetrative sexual behavior and to beget. The lack of descendants did not only deprive one of heirs who would look after him at an old age and venerate him after death, but also portrayed the individual as lacking the basic capability to display manly conduct. Therefore, a childless man could have not been considered a complete man. Even if he was not physically castrated, he was nonetheless considered flawed. As it appears, many different variables dictated the attribution of classes of individuals to the circle of third gender figures; incomplete masculinity was certainly one of them.

2. Internal Division to Sub-Categories within the Third Gender

We can thus see that all the figures discussed in this book can be classified as belonging to three main categories: cult personnel, palace attendants and general concepts. The first category was the largest, and consisted of five of the figures: gala/*kalû*, *assinnu*, *kurgarrû*, SAG-UR-SAG and *pilpilû*. The second category was comprised of three figures: *ša rēši*, *girseqû* and *tīru*. The third and last category included the terms *kulu'u*, *sinnišānu* and *nāš pilaqqi*.

The members of the first category mostly operated in the context of Inanna/Ištar's cult, and their relation to the third gender surely derived from the ambiguous nature of the goddess. However, the gala/*kalû* formed an exception: in the early periods he had no connection whatsoever with Inanna/Ištar. He was a cultic lamenter and operated in funerals. Only in later periods was he found in contexts relating to the goddess, but not before the Old Babylonian period. Indeed, the narratives, myths and proverbs testifying to the connection between the gala/*kalû* and Inanna/Ištar stem from the Old Babylonian period. It seems that the involvement of this figure in activities otherwise reserved for women (laments in funerals and generally singing) stood at the background of his gender ambiguity, and, later on, this ambiguity made him suitable to belong to the cult of the ambivalent goddess. Since one of the features of hegemonic masculinity is the requirement to avoid the expression of exaggerated emotions, the lamenting background of the gala/*kalû* is easily understood as a quality that belonged to subordinate masculinity (see further below).

Another question concerning the gala/*kalû* involves the siring of descendants. His supposed barrenness is contrasted with the fact that in practice he might have

had children, and this may be viewed yet again in light of the hegemonic masculinity theory, as elaborated below. Carrigan, Connell and Lee stated that there is "a distance, and a tension, between collective ideal and actual lives."[1325] This may be true not only for hegemonic masculinities, but also for subordinate ones, such as the one to which the gala/*kalû* belonged.

Another interesting figure in this category is the *kurgarrû*. As claimed, he represented the masculine aspect of a female goddess, Ištar; hence, yet again, this is hardly an example of the normative Mesopotamian hegemonic masculinity. This may be viewed as another example of a subordinate masculinity. And in case the *kurgarrû* was indeed forbidden of having his own children, as speculated in this book, then this also explains his place in the third gender.

The second category of third gender figures consisted of members of the palace bureaucracy. Even if it is not certain whether all were castrates, their relation to the third gender stemmed from their typical childlessness, that caused them to be regarded as equal to castrates. A man who lacked procreativity did not conform to the required features of hegemonic masculinity, as delineated in the introduction. In order to have been incorporated in the third gender class, one was merely required to deviate enough from the customary model of hegemonic masculinity. Hence, his relation with the third gender did not derive from his identity as a "feminine-man", but rather from his identity as a "non-man man". This is a fundamental difference between the two categories of cult versus palace figures.

The third category was distinct in many respects from the previous two. It is difficult to assess the exact nature of the terms it comprised, and even the basic claim that they denoted general terms rather than real figures is not indisputable. Be the case as it may, these terms were clearly related to the figures of the first category, on the basis of mutual attestations in lexical lists. Though these attestations do not reflect synonymy, they surely exhibit semantic proximity. In light of the application of the concept of hegemonic masculinity in our interpretation, the terms *kulu'u*, *nāš pilaqqi* and *sinnišānu* can all be viewed as expressing subordinate masculinity. As terms that expressed effeminacy or flawed masculinity, they were attached to a different type of masculinity than the hegemonic one.

It is possible that some kind of historical process of syncretism occurred within the class of Mesopotamian third gender figures. We have seen that, originally, a large number of different third gender figures existed. However, in the course of time, some of them seem to have assimilated with each other. As much as could be gathered, the SAG-UR-SAG and *pilpilû*, who were very similar to the *assinnu*, cease to appear after the Old Babylonian period, leaving the *assinnu* as the only effeminate cultic personnel of the first category. Somewhat similarly, the *girseqû* was attested only scarcely after the Old Babylonian period, and perhaps he too almost disappeared, and his place as a palace eunuch taken by the *tīru*, and especially by the *ša rēši*. Therefore, if we disregard the general terms of the third category, and focus on real figures alone, we are left with these main representatives of Mesopotamian third gender: the masculine *kurgarrû* and effeminate *assinnu* in the temple, the castrated

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[1325] Carrigan, Connell and Lee 1985: 592.

ša rēši in the palace, and, finally, the gala/*kalû*, a male connected with feminine domains of activity.

3. Masculinities and Third Gender in the Wider Context: Castration, Homosexuality and Cultic Performance

Several issues were addressed in this book, which relate the topic of the third gender to other phenomena of human sexuality and gender: castration, homosexuality and cultic conduct under the aegis of Inanna/Ištar. These issues were discussed in relation to certain characteristics of the various figures investigated in the book. Although none of them exclusively characterized any of the figures, they nonetheless formed adjacent topics, strongly linked with the overall discussion of the third gender.

The discussion of castration in the ancient Near East supplied complementary data that illuminated the group of palace eunuchs, which corresponds to the second category of third gender figures, as explained above. It may be suggested that the social attitude towards palace eunuchs was twofold. As barren persons they were undoubtedly considered to be incomplete men, since the lack of procreation was viewed as contradicting one of the most important masculine functionalities: the responsibility for the continuation of humanity. However, in case their castration was only partial, as long as they were capable of conducting sexual relations, palace eunuchs were probably not regarded as effeminates. The incompleteness of their masculinity involved their sterility, but not their sexuality.

Eunuchs thus form a distinct sub-category within the phenomenon discussed in this book. They should probably be viewed as having been formed a subordinate masculinity, but of a different type, and for different reasons, than other third gender figures. In contrast with the other figures, eunuchs were not invented in order to highlight the superiority of hegemonic masculinity, but were invented for other utilitarian reasons, probably because of bureaucratic necessities. But once they existed, their lack of procreativity made them being regarded by society as similar to the other third gender figures, and for this reason they were viewed as belonging to the same large group of ambiguous males. Thus we see again, that the Mesopotamian third gender we study was not homogenous, and consisted of multiple subordinate masculinities, that were not identical to one another.

Another matter to be considered is the relation between third gender and homosexuality, especially passive one. Does homosexuality produce effeminacy? Does it result from effeminacy? Is the receptive party effeminate? One thing can be said with certainty: the receptive party in homosexual relations did not conform to ancient Near Eastern features of hegemonic masculinity as outlined in the introduction. It is probably best, therefore, to focus not so much on effeminacy, as much as on the exact location of one's gender identity along the masculine-feminine continuum. As noted several times, between the hyper-masculine male and the hyper-feminine female, exist an infinite possible spectrum of gender identities. In this regard, as was also explained, the term "third" gender is surely misleading.

As much as can be gathered, much seems to be similar between the attitudes of

ancient Near Eastern hegemonic masculine men towards the third gender and to-
wards passive homosexuality. Mesopotamian society viewed both third gender fig-
ures and males who were sexually penetrated as individuals who defied the common
conventions of proper sexual and gender conduct. A man who was sexually pene-
trated assumed the sexual role reserved for women, and therefore undermined the
gender boundaries between men and women. The very essence of the third gender
challenged these same boundaries, and, therefore, the ideological background for the
negative social attitudes towards both phenomena was identical. Passive homosexual
conduct contradicted one of the main features of hegemonic masculinity, and was
therefore a quality that labeled the individual who performed it as belonging to a
subordinate masculinity.

Another issue that was investigated was the relation between many third gender
figures and Inanna/Ištar. As was commented several times, it seems clear that the
ambivalent nature of the goddess, who was perceived as feminine and masculine at
the same time, simultaneously erotic and aggressive, generated the ambiguity of her
male attendants. The importance of this fact cannot be underestimated. It is reasona-
ble to assume that the formation of the ambivalent goddess by the androcentric
Mesopotamian society served exactly the same needs as the third gender. Both
meant to indicate the improperness of the blurring of gender boundaries, by marking
them as bizarre, unpredictable and generally hazardous. It can be suggested that the
goddess signified, in the celestial sphere, the same ideological rationale as the third
gender figures did in the earthly sphere. Together, they formed a holistic concept of
gender deviation that encompassed all levels of the universe, both mortal and divine.

Connell and Messerschmidt claimed that the internal dynamics and sub-divisions
within hegemonic masculinities are associated with emotional conflict, and stem
from the relation between masculinities and gendered power.[1326] Indeed, the relation
between the servants of Inanna/Ištar and their patron goddess can be viewed in this
light, and analyzed against this background, by extending Connell and Messer-
schmidt's view in interpreting the dynamics of subordinate masculinities, and not
just those of hegemonic ones.

4. Third Gender and Hegemonic and Subordinate Masculinities

The interpretation of the third gender explored in this book in accordance with Con-
nell's theory of hegemonic masculinity was noted several times. We now return to
discuss these issues in greater detail.

Connell and Messerschmidt noted that "Gender relations are always arenas of
tension. A given pattern of hegemonic masculinity is hegemonic to the extent that it
provides a solution to these tensions, tending to stabilize patriarchal power or recon-
stitute it in new conditions."[1327] Following Connell's theory and terminology, I view
the third gender class as the expression of several subordinate masculinities, all
grouped together under several shared unifying semantics. The prime function of

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[1326] Connell and Messerschmidt 2005: 852.
[1327] Connell and Messerschmidt 2005: 853.

these subordinate masculinities was to highlight, define and justify the hegemonic ideal image of masculine men in Mesopotamia, and their supremacy over femininity and over other types of differing, non-hegemonic, masculinities. As a result, another function, no less important, was to ease gender tensions, and stabilize the patriarchal order. The third gender, as a subordinate masculinity, helped in justifying and perpetuating hegemonic masculinity as the proper ruling gender class in society.

We may refer, in this regard, to the following words of Lusher and Robins: "The rejection of one form of masculinity thereby gives legitimacy or authority to another form. Appropriate behaviors, beliefs, or views are differentiated from inappropriate ones by having a reference group to vilify."[1328]

The fact remains that we know only little about how society at large viewed these third gender persons. The few references that might shed some light on this topic are scattered, isolated and hardly seem representative of any wide social attitude. We can only speculate that since this phenomenon was an institutionalized one, it was not only socially tolerated, but actually socially constructed.

As was stated in the introduction of the book, the social process of socialization, in which frame gender identity is constructed, is viewed as the background against which ancient Near Eastern third gender is to be analyzed. I therefore offer to view this third gender as the product of socially-constructed conformity, imposed on individuals within a highly developed socializing system. This third gender was carefully fashioned through various mechanisms of teaching and enforcement, and was integrated within the social structure. As such, we cannot regard these persons as possessing some psychological abnormality. Given the nature of our sources, and the non-individualistic perspective they usually illustrate, we cannot actually evaluate the third gender according to any psychological standards.

Hegemony is gained by subordinating others. If there are no others to subordinate, they need to be invented. Connell suggested that one of the ways in which hegemonic masculinity represents itself is by producing exemplars of masculinity. The third gender can be understood as such product, though in an anti-hero model, an exemplar of the antonym of hegemonic masculinity; thus, it marks hegemonic masculinity by way of forming its opposite.

Connell and Messerschmidt noted that non-hegemonic masculinities occasionally show durability or survivability, and explain that "Hegemony may be accomplished by the incorporation of such masculinities into a functioning gender order rather than by active oppression in the form of discredit or violence. In practice, both incorporation and oppression can occur together."[1329] This is another theoretical avenue we may assume. Though formed as an antonymic concept of hegemonic masculinity, the third gender was integrated in Mesopotamian social life, to the extent that many of its aspects were beneficial for society, and incorporated within it.

Internal diachronic changes within the third gender might reflect the historical changes Connell mentioned in his discussion of the historicity of masculine identi-

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[1328] Lusher and Robins 2009: 402.
[1329] Connell and Messerschmidt 2005: 848.

ties, and their unfixed nature. The apparently different phases that characterized the gala/*kalû* and the *girsequ* prior to, and following, the beginning of the Old Babylonian period, can possibly be viewed in this light. Most of the figures explored in this book, however, remained rather static for centuries, if not millennia. Such changes, according to Connell and Messerschmidt, stimulate new strategies in gender relations.[1330] It can be suggested, therefore, that the prohibition on third gender figures to bear children gave way for adoptions, as a strategy within the array of ancient Near Eastern gender relations.

The fact that masculine identities can vary over space and time is reflected through the use of eunuchs in palace administrations across the ancient Near East. These eunuchs can be seen as an example for tactical alternatives for hegemonic masculinity, reshaped in the different local contexts of Assyrian and Hittite societies. This suggestion accords with Connell and Messerschmidt's note that hegemonic masculinity can be negotiated and reshaped through implementing elements borrowed from other masculinities.[1331]

As to the internal hierarchy between the different groups of masculinity, Lusher and Robins maintained that hegemonic masculinity establishes positive interaction with complicit masculinity, and negative one with subordinate masculinity. Subordinate masculinity, according to them, considers both hegemonic and complicit masculinities as powerful, while complicit masculinity considers only hegemonic masculinity to be powerful; hegemonic masculinity considers only itself to be powerful.[1332]

Applying this approach to our study, should the third gender figures be understood as belonging to a class of persons having complicit or subordinate masculinity? Were their relations with hegemonic masculine men positive or negative? The very fact that the third gender was part of an institutionalized phenomenon could have raised the suspicion that it was complicit. But given the stark differences between these persons and normative men, they hardly qualify for the title "complicit", at least the way it was meant by Connell and his followers.

5. In Conclusion: Why Third Gender?

We conclude this book by re-engaging with the original questions raised in its introduction. What was the purpose of establishing the class of male third gender persons studied in this book? As a social phenomenon, what social needs did it fulfill? And how are we to assess this phenomenon, given the theoretical setting laid in the introduction?

We began this book with an overview of various theoretical and empirical approaches to the study of gender identity, and more specifically, of masculinity. It was explained that the theory of hegemonic masculinity is preferred as the best ex-

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[1330] Connell and Messerschmidt 2005: 846.

[1331] For tactical alternatives of hegemonic masculinity, see Connell and Messerschmidt 2005: 847.

[1332] Lusher and Robins 2009: 402, 411.

planatory approach, to be utilized in the present research in order to comprehend the background for the ancient Near Eastern male figures we consider as forming a third gender.

As was explained, hegemonic masculinity requires other gender identities (femininity and non-hegemonic masculinities), in order to reaffirm and define itself. Self-definition can be achieved by one of two possible manners: focusing on what one *is*, or on what one *is not*. Delineating what hegemonic masculinity was not, marked its borders, and thus, defined what it actually was. The third gender persons investigated in this book were grouped in what is best understood as a class of subordinate masculinity, or rather, masculinities. This class was not evolved by itself, but rather, it was formed by the ruling standard men in society, that is, hegemonic ones. Thus this third gender highlighted, exactly because of its traits of non-hegemonic masculinity, the standard and the normative. The hegemonic.

This third gender highlighted the improperness of the blurring of boundaries between men and women, and between normative and non-normative men. The need to emphasize the improperness of the breaching of gender boundaries was clearly a masculine one: men should remain men; women should remain women; men have clear masculine characteristics, to which all must conform.

As long as men are the dominant sex in society, their interest is to maintain the sexual and gender separation. For this end, the third gender was created and institutionalized. It evolved out of a fundamental need among ancient Near Eastern cultures, which was the need for clear social markers of rules of conduct and normative behavior patterns. The class of Mesopotamian hegemonic masculine men required the existence of peculiar, bizarre beings, in order to delineate clearly its own boundaries. Thus this subordinate masculinity strengthened the very existence of hegemonic masculinity. Members of the third gender were not excluded from mainstream society because of their peculiarity. On the contrary, they were invented and re-invented each period by hegemonic masculine men of their own society, in order to be subsequently marginalized. Rather than forming extra-societal abnormalities, they were social anomalies who constituted an integral part of society. In this regard, we should not view them as real marginalized masculinity, since their marginalization was a mere by-product of the process of their subordination, and the actual essence of their existence. Not only did they form an integral stratum within the structure of their society, in many respects their stratum was a highly critical one, which contributed a great deal to social stability. Therefore, the very instability involved with these figures was the chief reason for their existence, and the most important contribution they granted for the maintaining of order within the society in which they lived.

We have to remember, of course, that these forced order and conformity were meant to serve first and foremost the androcentric interests of specific parts of society, the hegemonic masculine ones. As such, this third gender class should be viewed as a social mechanism of the enforcement of control and the perpetuation of gender division and male superiority.

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