25 Priestesses

In this chapter we take up a new subject, namely the role of women in religious worship. We will begin at the top of the scale, with the priestesses, and end with the ordinary housewife in chapter 29. We know much about the particular responsibilities the 'religious women' held because they occupied important positions and their activities are well documented.[1] They were highly placed women whom we reverently call priestesses since they played a role in the cult worship. In the Old Babylonian period there were other women whom we call nuns. They had religious tasks, such as praying and perhaps making offerings for the dead,[2] and often lived in special building complexes. Because we call them nuns, the place where they lived as a group we naturally call a convent. They had no (biological) children (see Chapters 26 and 27).

25.1 The high priestesses

25.1.1 The *entu*

The Akkadian word *entu* for a priestess is evidently a feminine form modelled on the Sumerian word *en*, 'lord'. In Sumerian and older Akkadian she was referred to as an *en* and *enum*, a masculine form.[3] It is thought that around 3000 BC *en* was the Sumerian title of the ruler of the city of Uruk, the man beside Inanna, the patron goddess of the city. They met together in the Gipar, her dwelling in the city. Five hundred years later, in the Old Akkadian perod, the highest priestess of the moon god in Ur took on that masculine title, and this must have been a deliberate revival of an institution.[4] She was also called the 'son' of her father, and some-

1 For a survey see J. G. Westenholz, 'Women of religion in Mesopotamia: the high priestesses in the temple', Canadian Society of Mesopotamian Studies Journal (= CSMSJ) 1 (2006) 31–44.

2 R. Harris, *Studies A. L. Oppenheim* (1964) 108, rejects the word 'priestess' because in the texts she does not find 'specific religious prescriptions' or 'sacerdotal functions'; cf. p. 121, and *Ancient Sippar* (1975) 303 n. 1. This depends on the definition of 'priestess'. See also L. Barberon, *Les religieuses et le culte de Marduk dans le royaume de Babylone* (2012) 1 n. 1. In the entry 'Priester' in RlA X/7–8 (2005) only high priestesses (p. 622f., 626–628) and the 'nun' (633f.) are discussed.

3 Akkadian *enu*, CAD E 179. It clearly indicates a woman in the omen 'the *e-nu-um* will be subjected to sexual intercourse (*šuḫḫû*, *nâku*)'. See also D. Charpin, NABU 2004/78. The masculine form reminds one of masculine *zikrum*, by which the court woman *sekretu* was meant.

4 P. Steinkeller in: K. Watanabe, *Priests and officials in the Ancient Near East* (1999) 103–137; see B. Lion, 'Sexe et genre (2). Des prêtresses fils du roi', in: F. Briquel-Chatonnet, *Femmes* (2009) 165–182.

times the 'brother' of her brother.[5] Her masculine titles perhaps perpetuate a tradition. On the other hand, it has been proved that in Old Sumerian the word 'son' could also mean 'daughter', and that word possibly was perpetuated as an archaism.[6] Still other commentators prefer the idea that the masculine noun indicated her independent status.

The *entu* priestess served a male god, and was sometimes called his 'wife'.[7] In Ur, when she first became a priestess, with the title *en* (*entu*), she was given a new, pious, Sumerian name, which always began with the element *En*.[8] The male priests, who served the goddesses, also had the title *en*.[9] Year 8 of Ur-Nammu was called 'The year that a son of Ur-Nammu was chosen as the *en* of Inanna in Uruk by liver extispicy.' Kings liked to call themselves the *en* of the city of Uruk. Possibly all they meant by this was to suggest that they were the *en* of the goddess Inanna of Uruk, but only King Anam stated this explicitly.[10] The kings of Isin called themselves the *en* or even the 'husband' of Inanna of Uruk.[11] The kings of Ur III and Isin in hymns refer to themselves as having the status of an *en* alongside their status as a king. Šulgi, when serving the gods Enlil and Ninlil during their evening meal in this capacity, is shown clad in a special garment.[12]

As for the women, we note that outside Mesopotamia in early times they also could become the wife of the god. In Ebla in Syria, south of Aleppo, we know of four princesses who were appointed as 'the wife of the god' (*dam dingir*). They were in the service of the god Idabal, in his temple in the town of Luban, not far from Ebla.[13] When Princess Tinib-Dulum set out to go there she bore the title 'the sister of the king'. In fact she was the daughter of the previous king, Irkab-Damu. She took with her in her luggage clothes, jewels, household items and small pieces of furniture. Five princes and many officials accompanied her with presents for the priests. After a few years the princess left and returned to Ebla. There she had previously had the same position in the service of the Kura, the god of Ebla. She

5 En-ane-du, on her seal; RIME 4 (1990) 257.

6 Lion, 'Sexe et genre (2)', 177.

7 J. Renger, ZA 58 (1967) 146 f. § 56 (nin.dingir). For 'wife' (dam), see below.

8 For a discussion of such *En-* names see D. O. Edzard, ZA 53 (1959) 15–18.

9 Renger, 133 § 35, 143 (nin.dingir both of gods and goddesses); idem in: *Le temple et le Culte* (= CRRAI 25) (1975) 112. The exception is the male *en*, serving the male god Enlil in Nippur (Ur III, OB); J. G. Westenholz, *Nippur at the Centennial* (1992) 304, 306; M. Sigrist, *Les sattukku dans l'Ešumeša durant la période d'Isin et Larsa* (1984) 161.

10 Steinkeller, 130. For a survey see M.-J. Seux, *Épithètes royales* (1967) 396.

11 Renger, ZA 58, 126 n. 95, 133; D. O. Edzard, ZZB (1957) 77 f.

12 J. Klein, *Studies H. Tadmor* (1991) 298 (Šulgi G 50–52), with a complete survey in n. 31.

13 A. Archi, 'The high priestess, *dam-dingir*, at Ebla', *Festschrift O. Loretz* (1998) 43–53; F. Weiershäuser, *Die königliche Frauen der III. Dynastie von Ur* (2008) 245–249.

was succeeded by Ammaga.[14] At that same time Sargon, the king of Akkad (ca. 2300 BC), appointed his daughter as an *entu* priestess of the god Nanna, the moon god, in the temple at Ur. In doing this he started a tradition which would persist until the middle of the Old Babylonian period. And then, more than a thousand years later, it would be revived by King Nabonidus. His daughter lived in Ur in the Gipar, a kind of convent. Another convent, also called the Gipar, lay outside Ur and has been excavated.[15] In Ur it was traditional for the moon god Nanna to be served by this priestess, who had to be a daughter of the king. By appointing his daughter as priestess there he satisfied his political aim of controlling the city of Ur.[16] Conquerors, as we shall see, did not have the effrontery to remove the priestess who had been installed.

This cult was not confined to Ur. Not far away, in Ga'eš, King Amar-Sîn, as 'the beloved son of Nanna', established a convent for Nanna called the Gipar in the temple of Karzida. This he did 'for the first time in history' and 'he caused En-agazi-ana, his beloved priestess (*en*), to enter there'.[17] The celebration ceremonies of her investiture lasted from day 23 to day 30 of the harvest month.[18] Six years later she died and three months afterwards her successor took over.[19] The year Amar-Sîn 9 is named 'The year that En-Nanna-Amar-Sîn.ra-ki.ág was installed as *en* of Nanna of Karzida'.[20] Other priestesses functioned similarly for other gods in other cities. Now and again we shall refer to them but we shall concentrate on the priestesses of Nanna in Ur.[21]

14 Archi, 46–48. Previously the name was read as Sanibdulum.

15 Renger, ZA 58, 128 f., 130 n. 134, 139 n. 213 (nin.dingir). For the Gipar in Uruk see A. Falkenstein, Baghd. Mitt. 2 (1963) 33 (of Niši-inišu, the *ereš.dingir* of Lugalbanda, daughter of King Sînkašid); Weadock, 124 f.

16 Išbi-Erra of Isin; Renger, ZA 58, 118 f.

17 H. Steible, FAOS 9,2 (1991) 231–234, Amar-Suen 8.

18 J. G. Westenholz, CSMSJ 1, 35b.

19 W. Sallaberger, JCS 47 (1995) 18 f.; ZA 82 (1992) 132 f., on FAOS 16 no. 767.

20 This was confirmed by a text recording a sacrifice made 'on the day when En-Nanna-Amar-Sin-ki.ág-ana was installed as priestess of Ga'eš'. Date: 14 XII Amar-Sîn 8. See P. Michalowski, JCS 42 (1990) 119 f.; Westenholz, CSMSJ 1, 35b.

21 Important articles include E. Sollberger, AfO 17 (1954–56) 26–29, 45 f., who thought they were all known; P. N. Weadock, 'The *Giparu* at Ur', Iraq 37 (1975) 101–128; see also M. van de Mieroop, *Ur* (1992) 115–117.

25.1.2 In Ur

The *entu* in her convent at Ur brought renown to that city. In the Old Akkadian period the priestess of the moon god Nanna (or Sîn) in Ur had two additional titles. First she was a *zirru*, a Sumerian combination of cuneiform signs alluding to the name of the moon god. The word *zirru* indicated a female bird, and we know that the wife of the moon god, Ningal, was also called *zirru* 'hen'. So we conclude that this priestess was the earthly representative of the moon goddess.[22] It would be going too far to identify the priestess as an apotheosis of the goddess herself.[23] Later this title disappeared in favour of the simpler '*entu* (or *en*) of Nanna'.[24]

From the Old Akkadian period we have two depictions of an *entu*. The first is a limestone relief, 26 cm in diameter, of En-ḫedu-ana, the priestess at Ur (Figure 42). It was found in her convent, the Gipar.[25] It shows two bald figures, probably servants, standing behind a larger figure of a woman wearing a sort of turban on her head. She will have been the priestess, the *en*, who in texts is said to have worn a tiara (*aga*). Her dress has tiers of pleats, which could be described as a flounced robe, the French *robe à volants* or the German *Falbelgewand*. It was typical clothing for someone holding her position. Another priestess, En-ana-tuma, is shown on a statue in a seated posture wearing the same garment.[26] Here a completely (?) naked man stands in front of her pouring out a libation. He was probably the priest assigned to this ritual. The cultic illustration within the disk has precise parallels in those from the older Early Dynastic period. One of these was found in the Gipar. This shows that within Akkadian culture Sargon was perpetuating an

22 Å. W. Sjöberg, JCS 29 (1977) 16, on rev. 14 (Ningal is the *zirru*); J. G. Westenholz, *Studies Å. W. Sjöberg* (1989) 541–544 (*zirru* in the myth is a female bird, a hen; Nanna is the male bird, *ubi*). For the most recent discussion see: H. Steible, FAOS 9,1 (1991) 151 f.; A. Zgoll, *Ein Rechtsfall der En-ḫedu-Ana* (1997) 301 f.

23 This was said of En-ḫedu-ana. By contrast see W. Heimpel, JNES 30 (1971) 232b.

24 In the Ur III period Tulid-šamši is named as both *en* ^{d}Nanna and *en* ^{d}EN.ZU; NATN 36, seal impression, with T. Gomi, OLZ 80 (1985) 151; MVN 8 115:2; PDT 555 rev. iv 11–13, with S. A. Picchioni, Oriens Antiquus 14 (1975) 164 f.

25 W. W. Hallo, J. J. A. van Dijk, *The exaltation of Inanna* (1968), frontispiece; A. Moortgat, *The art of ancient Mesopotamia* (1969) Plate 130; P. Amiet, *L'art d'Agadé au Musée du Louvre* (1976) 14 f.; I. J. Winter in: Durand, *La Femme* (1987) 189–201 with fig. 1; J. G. Westenholz, *Studies Å. W. Sjöberg* (1989) 540a; E. A. Braun-Holzinger, *Mesopotamische Weihgaben* (1991) 375 f., Varia 5; Dana Bänder, *Die Siegesstele des Naramsîn und ihre Stellung in Kunst- und Kulturgeschichte* (1995) 151–155. The widely reproduced images of this disk rely on reconstruction. For the broken pieces as they were found see Expedition 20/1 (Fall 1977) 29.

26 J. Asher-Greve, F. Weiershäuser in: S. Schroer, *Images and gender* (2006) 53 fig. 4 (statue), 68 fig. 15 (seal of Tutanapsum), 265 f.

Fig. 42: An alabaster disk, reconstructed from fragments, showing Princess Enḫeduana, priestess of the moon god of Ur and a poetess, as a large figure at the centre. In front of her is a priest libating and on the back side is her inscription. 2300 BC. Diameter 27 cm, thickness 8 cm. *University of Pennsylvania Museum of Archaeology and Anthropology, Philadelphia*.

older Sumerian tradition.[27] A modern commentator has admired the way in which En-ḫedu-ana is depicted on the relief, saying 'her nose is sharply aquiline, the features intent and intelligent, and the bearing determined and individualistic.' Also depicted is an altar, which was for An, the god of the sky, as we see from the inscription on the back of the relief:[28]

> En-ḫedu-ana, the *zirru*, the wife of Nanna, the 'son' of Sargon, king of Kish, built a low [altar] in the [temple of Inanna]-Zaza of Ur. She called its name 'The altar, the table of An'.

The second depiction of an *entu* is of one named Tuta-napsum, the *entu* of Enlil at Nippur. She is shown on the seal of Aman-Estar, who identified herself as her 'servant girl'. She is offering the priestess a hook attached to a cord, but what it is and what it would be used for we do not know.[29] The long hair of the priestess is gathered into a bun.[30] Some texts give further details of the clothing, the headdress and the throne of the *entu*.[31] We note that Tuta-napsum, a daughter of King

27 This is the explanation of I. J. Winter in: Durand, *La Femme*, esp. p. 196 (with fig. 4. Cf. fig. 2, the upper register).

28 FAOS 7 (1990) 64 f., Sargon A 1 (with the later Old Babylonian copy C 15, p. 190); RIME 2 (1993) 35 f.

29 J. G. Westenholz, *Nippur at the Centennial* (1992) 302 f. Cf. FAOS 7, 41 Siegellegende 12, RIME 2, 175; P. Steinkeller, NABU 1993/9; D. Charpin, RA 91 (1997) 93a (the inscription). For a photo see AOF 10 (1983) 215; for a drawing see S. Schroer, *Images and gender* (2006) 68 fig. 15.

30 F. Blocher, *Die nackte Frau in altbabylonischer Zeit* (1987) 36 f. ('langes Haar und Wulstring').

31 Renger, ZA 58, 126–128. For her attire in art see Westenholz, CSMSJ 1, 36 f. (here note 1).

Naram-Sîn, was the *entu* of Enlil in Nippur, not in Ur. Her father had installed his daughter in Nippur, the religious centre of his country, which can be interpreted as a new political initiative on his part. Sargon acted similarly with Ur.[32] Naram-Sîn had his other daughter En-men-ana installed as priestess at Ur with the title 'wife of Nanna'.[33] It is unlikely that there was always an *entu* in Nippur.[34]

These priestesses lived in the Gipar, a building complex which we have called a convent. A relief found there may show an *entu*, with her face forward, performing a sacrifice. Other women are behind her in procession.[35]

As well as the Gipar in Ur excavations have been made at the temple of the wife of the moon god, Ningal, adjoining the Gipar.[36] In the Ur III period that complex was almost square (79 × 76.5 m) and enclosed with a thick wall. Sometimes it seems that the word Gipar refers to the whole complex of buildings.[37] We have a much later building inscription of En-ane-du, the daughter of Kudurmabuk, the sister of King Rim-Sîn. In laboured Sumerian she reports the reconstruction of her dwelling place, the Gipar.[38] For the temple of Ningal a king boasted that he had built a 'bedroom' (*agrun*; *á.ná.da*), which would have been where the sacred marriage of the moon god was consummated.[39] The priestess En-ana-tuma dedicated to Ningal a statue of herself, 25 cm high and made of diorite (Figure 43). The room of the temple where it was found is called the 'bedchamber'.[40]

> For Ningal, the queen (*égi*) with the raised head, whose divine powers are without equal, the wise advisor, fit for her status as queen, for her mistress: En-ana-tuma, the *en* beloved of Nanna, the *en* of Nanna in Ur, 'son' of Išme-Dagan, king of Sumer and Akkad, brought this statue into her bedchamber. For her life she has dedicated it to her.

32 Tuta-napsum: 'Tūtanapšum', RlA XIV/3–4 (2014) 223 f.

33 FAOS 7, 273 Naram-Sîn C 16; RIME 2, 145 f.

34 J. Klein in Durand, *La Femme* (1987) 104, on Šulgi G.

35 I. J. Winter in Durand, *La Femme*, 193 fig. 2; J. Asher-Greve, *Frauen in altsumerischer Zeit* (1985) pl. XXVIII no. 557; eadem, in: S. Schroer, *Images and gender* (2006) 61.

36 P. Weadock; D. Charpin, *Le clergé d'Ur* (1986) 192–223. That the temple is located next to the convent can be seen in 'The Ur Lament', 353 (Th. Jacobsen, *The harps than once*, 470).

37 J. A. Brinkman, Or. NS 38 (1969) 337 f., n. 2.

38 Charpin, 199–206; RIME 4 (1990) 299–301 Rim-Sîn I no. 20.

39 RIME 4, 143 f. Nur-Adad no. 4; Weadock, 117 f.; Charpin, 196 f., 213.

40 RIME 4, 44 Išme-Dagan no. 13, with the introductory remarks by D. R. Frayne. It was found in room C. 22. The bedchamber was identified as room C. 28; Westenholz, CSMSJ 1, 40b. For an illustration and description of the statue see: H. Frankfort, *The art and architecture of the Ancient Orient* (1954) plate 57; A. Moortgat, *The art of ancient Mesopotamia* (1969) Plate 183; p. 65b; for a drawing, see J. Black, A. Green, *Gods, demons and symbols of Ancient Mesopotamia* (1992) 138 fig. 113 (but it has been 'spoilt by modern restoration' according to Moortgat).

Fig. 43: A seated statue of the *entu* En-ana-tuma, a princess from Isin, living in Ur. It was possibly found in her bedchamber. Her dress is the same as that of her predecessor En-ḫedu-ana. Diorite; height: 25 cm. 1750 BC. *University of Pennsylvania Museum of Archaeology and Anthropology, Philadelphia*.

What would happen when this priestess died? How would she be buried? A text from Ur describes the funeral gifts at the burial of the *en* at Ga'eš. First there was the golden crown (*aga*), which is followed by five other golden objects. After a break in the text we read, 'on the day that she was laid to rest, it was laid beside her'. The crown was a mark of the status of the king and also of this priestess.[41] The inscription of En-ane-du mentioned the location of the tombs of her predecessors called 'the hall which brings sorrow'. Because they had been neglected and were no longer pure she purified a large sacred space and surrounded it with a wall, and then placed guards at it.[42] The graves of her predecessors, to whom

41 W. Sallaberger, 'Eine reiche Bestattung im neusumerischen Ur', JCS 47 (1995) 15–21 (UET 3 335).
42 RIME 4, 300 Rim-Sîn I no. 20:34–43; Westenholz, CSMSJ 1, 40 f.; Th. Richter, *Untersuchungen zu den lokalen Panthea Süd-und Mittelbabyloniens in altbabylonischer Zeit* (1999) 370.

libation offerings were brought, were beneath the residence of the priestess. The dead lived on in the statues to which the offerings were brought.[43] A letter was found in Ur from Kudurmabuk, a sheikh and father of two kings of Larsa.

> I want to have the statue of the *en* of Nanna overlaid with gold. I am sending S. and the goldsmiths to you. As soon as you see this sealed letter of mine I want you to take action.[44]

A number of graves in Ur from the Early Dynastic period (2600–2500 BC) show that, at the same time as the person whose grave it was had died, many other women and men were put to death. These were the human sacrifices we mentioned earlier in Chapter 23. Donkeys harnessed to waggons had also been buried with several harps and model ships. These became known famously as the 'Royal Tombs of Ur', which were also discussed earlier, at the end of Chapter 1. However a lesser known alternative explanation has been constantly advanced, that these were the graves of *entu* priestesses. This explanation has received fresh support following a new interpretation of the grave finds,[45] which pointed out a difference between the cylinder seals of the men and of the women. The men's seals had scenes of fighting and the women's seals had scenes of banquets. Could this lead to identifying who had been buried there? Sumerologists contended that a song of the priestess En-ḫedu-ana speaks of burying the dead with their servants.

> O Lady! The harp of lamenting has been laid on the ground.
> Your ship of weeping is left behind on hostile shores.
> With my holy song they shall die.[46]

This theory, however, rests on shaky ground.

It may be that in Ur various priestesses were alive at the same time. Direct evidence comes from a text listing the votary offerings of the royal family. Two of the donors were *entu*s.[47] It was generally assumed that the older one had

43 Weadock, 104, 109; Charpin, 204, 208; Renger, ZA 58, 119 f., 141; B. Lion, *Jean Bottéro et la Mésopotamie* (2009) 281.

44 UET 5 75 with D. Charpin, *Le clergé d'Ur* (1986) 43 f.

45 P. R. S. Moorey, Expedition 20 (1977) 24–40; also in his additions to the chapter on the 'royal' tombs' in L. Woolley, P. R. S. Moorey, *Ur of the Chaldees* (1982) 51–103.

46 Lines 97–99. W. W. Hallo, J. van Dijk, *The exaltation of Inanna* (1968) 27, with p. 58. A. Zgoll, *Der Rechtsfall der En-ḫedu-Ana* (1997) 12, translates line 99 thus: 'Wegen meines schicksalbestimmenden Liedes – muß ich sterben? (variant: 'werden sie sterben')'. In K. Volk, *Erzählungen aus dem Land Sumer* (2015) 347: 'Oder muß ich sterben, weil ich mein schicksalsbestimmendes Lied angestimmt habe?'

47 Weadock, 104. Cf. Westenholz, CSMSJ 1, 37, 39.

been pensioned off, which gave rise to the thought that there came a time when these women could no longer fulfil their function of physically consummating the sacred marriage. Modern cognoscenti of bedroom practices suggest this in guarded terms.[48] Certainly priestesses did grow old. En-ane-du was installed in Year 8 of Warad-Sîn, and her building inscription comes from some thirty years later, for she speaks of her brother Rim-Sîn in terms which fit Year 29 of his reign.[49]

Kings from outside Ur who had political influence would appoint an *en* of their own to be there. One example is Ur-Bau, the city ruler of Lagash, whose daughter was appointed there, as can be seen from various vases dedicated to her found in the Gipar.[50] King Išme-Dagan of Isin simialarly appointed his daughter En-ana-tuma as a '*zirru*, *entu* of Nanna' in Ur.[51] Her inscriptions have been found on bricks all over the Gipar, which would indicate she had undertaken extensive building work.[52] Pieces of her alabaster disk found around the seated statue of En-ana-tuma indicate that she was familiar with the disk of her predecessor En-ḫedu-ana, and it is possible that she had had a transcript made of its inscription.[53] According to one text she built a chapel for the sun god 'for the life of Gungunum' and for her own life.[54] Gungunum had been the king of hostile Larsa, and we observe that the king's daughter from Isin still remained as priestess under this king of Larsa. After thirty years, in the reign of Abisare of Larsa, she died. Afterwards sacrifices for the dead were brought to her and to a person named En-megal-ana.[55] We thought we knew the names of all the priestesses of Nanna and that on average they had served for long periods. En-ana-tuma appears to have lived for a hundred years.[56] Now a previously unknown priestess, En-megal-ana, has appeared and so there could have been others also. From two of these priestesses, En-ḫedu-ana and En-ane-du, who adopt a high literary tone in their inscriptions, we hear about the tasks they were required to perform.

48 C. J. Gadd, Iraq 13 (1951) 30; Weadock, 104 f.

49 Gadd, 35: the victories of Rim-Sîn; his name now is prefixed with the determinative for 'god' before his name.

50 H. Steible, FAOS 9,1 (1991) 150, with E. A. Braun-Holzinger, ASJ 19 (1997) 4.

51 Years 2–3; Renger, ZA 58, 119 n. 42. See Th. Richter, *Untersuchungen* (1999) 364–366.

52 RIME 4, 29–31 Išme-Dagan nos. 3–4. Weadock, 108: 'The builder of this *giparu* was Enannatumma'.

53 R. McHale-Moore, 'The mystery of Enheduanna's disk', JANES 27 (2000) 69–74.

54 RIME 4, 116 Gungunum no. 2. Gungunum Year 1 coincides with Year 2 of Išme-Dagan's successor Lipit-Eštar (M. Stol, SOBH [1976] 30). Išme-Dagan reigned 20 years.

55 H. Figulla, Iraq 15 (1953) 111 nos. 35–36; 176 nos. 60–63; cf. M. van de Mieroop, *Ur* (1992) 116; D. Loding, JCS 28 (1976) 234 no. 3, citation cited from UET 1 224.

56 Sollberger, AfO 17, 25. He did not see that the Figulla texts are offerings for the dead; corrected in Weadock, 104.

25.1.3 En-ḫedu-ana

En-ḫedu-ana, the daughter of Sargon of Akkad (Figure 42), speaks about herself in very elevated language.[57] She has to conduct purification rituals, bring sacrifices in certain months, sing cheerful songs, share a bed with the moon god, look after the temple and compose poetry. She had been appointed by Sargon and was still in her prime during the reign of Naram-Sîn, three kings later. Her writings can be dated to that time,[58] of which a good number of literary works survive, all in Sumerian. In two of these she writes in the first person.[59] Almost all of them praise the goddess of war and love (in that order). The background to this is that her father Sargon had advanced this goddess as the most important goddess of Akkad. In Sumerian she was called Inanna and in Akkadian Ištar. Sargon's descendants perpetuated his memory by calling his dynasty 'the one of Ištar'. In the legend she becomes infatuated with Sargon. The most informative work by En-hedu-ana is known as the Ninmešara.[60] Much of this text is difficult to translate but an outline can be given. After praising Inanna above the other gods, En-hedu-ana, as the *entu* in Ur surrounded by the Sumerian speaking population of the South, says:

> Indeed, I entered the holy Gipar for you. I, the *entu* priestess, I, En-ḫedu-ana, I carried the basket, I sang a cheerful song. But now the offering for the dead is brought, as if I had never lived there (66–69).

It had become dark all around her, and she announced abruptly that this had been caused by Lugal-ane. From other sources we know that he was a Sumerian who had rebelled against King Naram-Sîn. Clearly it was he who had chased this princess from her convent. First she turns for help to her own god, the moon god Nanna, but he does nothing.

> My Nanna does not care to help me (...). He allows me to go out of the house, he lets me fly out of the window like a sparrow, my life has wasted away (...). He robbed me of my crown of office as priestess, he gives me a sword and dagger (100–108).

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57 J. G. Westenholz, 'Enḫeduanna, En-priestess, Hen of Nanna, spouse of Nanna', *Studies Å. W. Sjöberg* (1989) 539–556.

58 S. Franke, *Königsinschriften und Königsideologie* (1995) 195, advances the opinion that the Ištar ideology emerged only at the time of Naram-Sîn. Later tradition ascribed it in retrospect to Sargon.

59 'Ninmešara' 67, 81; 'Innin šagurra' 219.

60 A. Zgoll, *Der Rechtsfall* (1997); in K. Volk, *Erzählungen aus dem Land Sumer* (2015) 339–350. Earlier see W. W. Hallo, J. J. A. van Dijk, *The exaltation of Inanna* (1968). For another translation see S. N. Kramer in ANET (1969) 579–581.

She asks Inanna to persuade An, the god of the heavens, to help. Inanna does bring salvation and finally in a gesture of reconciliation she greets Nanna and Ningal, her parents.[61] En-ḫedu-ana breaks out in a song of praise to Inanna, focussing on her aggressive characteristics one by one, and after each one we hear the refrain 'It is yours. Let it be known'. Those two short sentences sound like a battle-cry, which can be confirmed from the tradition of an event in a campaign by Sargon in which the defeated rebels shouted out 'It is yours, o Ištar!' The poetess of the Ninmešara introduces this passage with the remark that those words were not spoken by Nanna (122), thereby implying that Inanna is more important than Nanna. It is possible that earlier (unclear) passages esteem this goddess even more than An, the god of heaven worshipped in Uruk. This elevation or exaltation of Ištar, raising her position among the deities, means that this whole poem can be called without hesitation a statement of a new theology.

A second composition by our poetess reports a military expedition of Inanna against her enemies in the mountainous land of Ebeḫ, east of the Tigris. The event itself (it probably alludes to an actual conflict) is theologically defined and legitimised in this poem.[62] A third composition is another poem in praise of Inanna. In all three works Inanna is portrayed as the goddess of war, not of love.[63] The last important work of En-ḫedu-ana is a set of hymns for 42 temples in Sumer. This can be seen as an exposition of a kind of systematic theology. These temples may have been those conquered by Sargon, but that is a question which we will not go into now. At the end of the temple hymns she claims that what she had written no-one had written previously.

> The compiler of this clay tablet is En-ḫedu-ana. My king, what is created, no man has created.[64]

Since no king ever wrote his own songs, and certainly not in the first person, this could be expected also to apply to a princess. That is why it has been suggested that the poems of En-ḫedu-ana could well have been written by a ghostwriter.[65] In the last line we can see that she calls herself the compiler of the text, not the composer. She may have been an editor of already existing texts. Others take an even stronger view that anonymity was normal in ancient literature and think that these songs were later constructions attributed to her, especially when pos-

61 Lines 148–151 with C. Wilcke, WZKM 68 (1976) 85.
62 C. Wilcke in: A. Finet, *La voix de l'opposition en Mésopotamie* (1973) 56 f.
63 Edition by Å. W. Sjöberg, ZA 65 (1975) 161–253.
64 A translation in Dutch by H. Vanstiphout, *Eduba. Schrijven en lezen in Sumer* (2004) 123–133.
65 W. G. Lambert, NABU 2001/83.

sible anachronisms are identified.[66] What a pity! These views rob us of the name of a talented poetess.

25.1.4 En-ane-du

En-ane-du, a princess from Larsa, is the last *entu* we can identify. After her there is no further reference to that position. She identifies herself as the priestess of Nanna and Ningal, the jewel of the temple of the moon god, called to carry out the purification rituals. She prays for the life and victories of her brother, King Rim-Sîn, and she concludes with an exhaustive description of how she reconstructed her residence, the Gipar.[67] In evaluating the significance of the office of these priestesses, emphasis is laid on the fact that En-ane-du made intercession for the life of her brother, the king, and stretches out her hand (lines 20–22). This intercession then is crucial for her role. En-Ninsumun-zi, the daughter of King Lipit-Ištar, also did this as the *ereš.dingir* priestess of Nin-gubalag at Ur.[68] In Karzida, the intention of King Amar-Sîn in building the Gipar there was to prolong his own life.

> Amar-Sîn, who through this makes his days long, has built (this) for his life.[69]

Later we shall see how Kunši-matum also prayed for her king at Mari. Intercession was what was expected of every woman, as we shall see in Chapter 29.

25.1.5 Other high priestesses

Another title for the *entu* priestess of equal importance was *ereš.dingir.ra*. Tuta-napsum was called *ereš.dingir*, which probably means 'the lady of the god', as well as *en*.[70] Even now it is often assumed that the title should be read as *nin*.

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66 P. Michalowski in: J. S. Cooper, G. Schwartz, *The study of the Ancient Near East in the 21st century* (1996) 183–185. M. Civil assumes that 'Inanna and Ebeḫ' was composed during the Larsa period. J.-J. Glassner in: F. Briquel-Chatonnet, *Femmes* (2009) 219–231, also has doubts on her being the author.

67 D. Charpin, *Le clergé d'Ur* (1986) 200–206; RIME 4, 299–301.

68 RIME 4, 56 Lipit-Eštar no. 6:22; Charpin, 220 f.

69 H. Steible, FAOS 9,2 (1991) 230 Amarsuen no. 6; cf. 233 no. 11.

70 J. G. Westenholz, *Nippur at the Centennial* (1992) 302; Steinkeller in: K. Watanabe, *Priests and officials*, 121. For the title NIN/*ereš.dingir*, see also A. Falkenstein, AnOr 30 (1966) 2 n. 8;

dingir(.ra), but there are strong indications that in this expression the Sumerian sign *nin* was pronounced as *ereš*. To be up-to-date we shall use *ereš.dingir.ra* in this book. She held the same rank as an *entu*. It was a title associated with other gods than the moon god, for we often find an *ereš.dingir* of Adad, the rain god.[71] They were princesses from east of the Tigris, daughters of King Sîn-abušu. In Nippur there was a man in the service of 'the *ereš.dingir* of Adad, daughter of the king'.[72] King Sîn-kašid of Uruk appointed his daughter Niši-inišu in his own city of Uruk as the *ereš.dingir* of Lugalbanda, his ancestor, 'for his (own) life', and he built 'the pure Gipar' as her official residence.[73] As priestess she served Lugalbanda and his wife Nin-sumun, the indigenous gods of Uruk.

Another princess, a daughter of a king of Uruk, became *ereš.dingir* of Meslamtaea in the neighbouring city of Durum. After Rim-Sîn of Larsa had conquered Uruk she sent a letter to him, still holding on to her position, in which she calls herself a writer.[74] So she had the same literary abilities as En-ḫedu-ana, the *entu* in Ur, and we shall have more to say about her when we discuss the *entu* of Uruk.

We said earlier that the *entu* was given a new, official name in Sumerian beginning with *En-*, but the *ereš.dingir* did not.[75] It must be significant that in the later literary tradition, when there were no longer *entu* priestesses, the *entu* of the moon god was referred to as *ereš.dingir(.ra)*.

A third priestess, sharing the same rank as the other two, was the *égi-zi* (Akkadian *engiṣîtu*). Like the others she was chosen through extispicy from inspections of liver, and she could be a princess. There are some indications that the high priestess in the city of Isin was an *égi-zi*.[76]

The fourth title for a priestess was *ugbabtu*, an Akkadian word but one which is hardly ever found written phonetically. The most important instances occur in predictions of the coming death of a priestess based on liver inspections. They predict that either an *entu*, an *ereš.dingir*, or an *ugbabtu* will die. One unusual omen says:

Renger, ZA 58 (1967) 135 n. 168. Renger equates the Sumerian title with Akkadian *entu*; similarly J. G. Westenholz. Later in this chapter, discussing the daughter of Nabonidus, we will see that later school traditions do not make any difference.

71 Renger, ZA 58, 136.

72 Renger, 136 n. 180; J. F. Robertson, *Nippur at the Centennial* (1992) 184 n. 26 (CBS 7435).

73 RIME 4, 455 Sîn-kašid no. 9.

74 W. W. Hallo, *Études Paul Garelli* (1991) 387:16; cf. Renger, ZA 58, 137 f.

75 Renger, 140, on top.

76 J. G. Westenholz, JNES 52 (1993) 293–295. Earlier see G.Th. Ferwerda, SLB V (1985) 28 f. For the égi-zi see M. Stol, *Festschrift J. Oelsner* (2000) 464 n. 49; P. Steinkeller, *Studies J. Klein* (2005) 301–310.

> An *entu* will die, an *ugbabtu* will be appointed; variant: not be appointed.

Because it is an *ugbabtu* that succeeds an *entu* here it is supposed that the *ugbabtu* is lower in rank.[77] A document from Susa states that a woman who 'has entered the status of an *ugbabtu*' received a slave-girl as a gift.[78]

All these three titles, *en*, *egi-zi* and *ugbabtu* (which is perhaps equivalent to *ereš.dingir*) occur in the myth of Atram-ḫasis, the man who survived the Deluge. In that myth they were women who had not been allowed to bear children. The creation of mankind had resulted in a population explosion. The earth had become overcrowded because of enthusiastic procreation so the gods thought something had to be done to stop it. One of the measures they resorted to was the command to

> Establish the women, the *ugbabtu*, *entu*, *engiṣîtu* (i.e. *égi-zi*). Let them be taboo and thus stop children being borne.[79]

This was how Babylonia obtained these three childless priestesses.

In the Old Babylonian period we encounter the *nadîtu*, usually translated as 'nun'. The literal meaning of that title is 'fallow field', suggesting the woman was childless. Because the terms *ereš.dingir*, *dam*, *lukur*, and possibly *ugbabtu* are from time to time used interchangeably, a degree of confusion inevitably arises.

25.1.6 Investiture

J. G. Westenholz distinguishes three stages in the ordination ritual of the priestesses, whether as *en* or as *ereš.dingir*. (1) The selection through divination, separating her from the profane world. (2) The novitiate during which she had to become familiar with the rituals (there is no evidence for this 'liminal period'). (3) The incorporation of the priestess into the sacred world, culminating in her enthronement.[80] The best known occasions for a king appointing his own daughter to be the priestess of an important god is the appointment of the *entu* of the moon god in Ur. As to the first stage, a few passages in literary texts show three persons designated as priests by liver extispicy, two men, the *lú.maḫ* and the *išib*,

77 Stol, 462 f., with notes 39, 43.
78 MDP 28 400:1–3, *A-la-a-bi a-na ug-ba-bu-tim te-ru-ub-ma*. See CAD Q 157, U/W 37.
79 W. G. Lambert, A. R. Millard, *Atra-ḫasīs* (1969) 102 III vii 6–9.
80 Westenholz, CSMSJ 1, 35 f.

and one woman, the *ereš.dingir*.[81] In Ur they were the *lú.maḫ* and the *entu* and the *ereš.dingir*.[82] From many other sources we know that liver extispicy was performed whenever a princess was appointed as a high priestess. En-ḫedu-ana said that she was 'chosen' (*pàd*) 'for the pure rites'.[83] Around 2000 BC kings report such decisions based on liver extispicies in their year names.[84] There may be a time delay between choosing a priestess and inaugurating her, and a woman may be enthroned several years after her selection (the third stage), a fact that can also be deduced from a sequence of year names. A girl destined for this role may be viewed from a higher standpoint, as when En-ane-du testified that 'from the sacred mother's womb' she had received 'the position of *en*, the noble position of the heavens'.[85] A badly broken stela dated to King Ur-Nammu shows in its upper register a small-sized female sitting on the lap of a god. W. W. Hallo takes her to be the *entu* priestess with the god Nanna at her enthronement.[86]

This ritual was continued during the early half of the Old Babylonian period. A later example of this procedure is found in a year name from the reign of Zimri-Lim in Mari.

> Year that Zimri-Lim dedicated a daughter to Addu of Appan.

In an administrative text we read that four garments and four slave-girls were given as a gift (*nidittu*) 'to Darkatum, the *ereš.dingir.ra* of Adad'. It is thought that this was a gift from her father at her dedication. The name Darkatum could be an Amorite word for 'young child', in which case the dedication may have taken place at the beginning of her life.[87] A man similarly gave a present like this to the *entu* of the moon god in Tuttub.[88] In those parts the *nidittu* usually meant the

81 B. Alster, ASJ 13 (1991) 45, Incantation to Utu, 46; 'The Death of Ur-Nammu', 78. See also the Ḫendursanga hymn, 74 f., 'They installed the *en* in the Gipar, they enthroned (dab.bé) the *ereš.dingir* by extispicy' (*Studies S. N. Kramer* [1976] 148).

82 Šulgi, hymn B 135 f. with Römer, TUAT II/1 (1986) 20: 'dass der *en*-Priesterin ein Loblied gespendet, sie für das Gipar inthronisiert (dab.e) werde, dass der *lú-maḫ*-Priester, die *ereš.dingir*-Priesterin ins reine Herz berufen (šà.kù.ga pàd.da) (werde)'. We do not know to which god this *ereš.dingir* belongs.

83 Westenholz, *Studies Sjöberg*, 544b (1).

84 Renger, ZA 58, 123–125; A. L. Oppenheim, *Ancient Mesopotamia* (1964) 213, 367 n. 47 (also in other cultures).

85 RIME 4 (1990) 300.

86 W. W. Hallo, *The world's oldest literature* (2010) 477–479 (previously in *Studies J. Klein* [2005] 148–150).

87 ARM 22 154 with ARM 30 (2009) 304; J.-M. Durand, NABU 2006/49.

88 D. Charpin, NABU 2004/78.

dowry a girl would receive from by her father, and this would mean then that she was given as a bride to the god.

25.1.7 Flawless

Of course priestesses and nuns living within the convent and outside had to lead a pure life. If they did not they would be severely punished. In Hammurabi's Laws we read:

> If a nun (or) a priestess (*lukur ereš.dingir*) who does not reside within the cloister should open a tavern or enter a tavern for (some) beer, they shall burn that woman (CH § 110).

A similar punishment awaited an *entu* who stole temple possessions: 'they will seize her and burn her'.[89] Burning the offender symbolised the idea that the crime had been thoroughly purged so that no taint remained. All of these women were expected to lead flawless and chaste lives. The title *ugbabtu* may be etymologically linked to the word *ikkibu*, 'taboo', a woman who was untouchable and would not give birth. In a judicial decision where the authorities declare the status of a woman, that 'She is an *ugbabtu*', we read that the gentlemen involved 'would bear responsibility to the palace for a sin of the nun (*nadîtu*) which happened in their city'. The woman was not allowed to have children, and the sin she committed was her having sex.[90]

A later religious text reports specific sins that had been committed:

> He went to the *ereš.dingir* of his god, he went to the wife of his friend.[91]

It was supposed that aphasia could be a consequence of simply kissing a priestess:

> If his tongue is bound and he cannot speak, he has kissed the priestess of his god.[92]

A fragmentary law of King Ur-Nammu can be reconstructed as follows: 'If someone sleeps with a high priestess (*ereš.dingir*), the high priestess and that man will be

89 This is written on a liver model made of clay; CT 6 1–2; Renger, 131 n. 137.
90 CT 48 44:3 with M. Stol, *Festschrift J. Oelsner* (2000) 465 f. Another explanation gives L. Barberon, *Les religieuses*, 110.
91 E. Reiner, JNES 15 (1956) 136:84. In Šurpu IV 7 'to visit unwittingly the daughter of his god' is a sin.
92 TDP 62, Tablet VII 19.

burned.'[93] Traditions from the Old Babylonian period onwards found it scandalous if someone slept with an *entu* or made her pregnant.[94] Predictions suggest that it would certainly have been possible for the head of the temple or a regular pious visitor to do just that,[95] but in reality I think this may never have happened. It was even considered evil to dream of such an encounter, 'to approach an *ereš. dingir*',[96] for this would result in illness:

> If his stomach rises and his abdomen is hard, if he is cold and (then) warm, he has approached the priestess of his god. Within 31 days he shall be freed from it and be cured.[97]

Another medical text ascribes three disorders of the testicles to such inadmissible intercourse, one of which says:

> If his testicles are swollen and his rod is covered with pimples, then he has approached the priestess of his god.[98]

We read in a late astrological omen that

> The priestesses will sin against their spouses (*ḫā'iru*).

It is a surprise to note that they could be married, and that seems to be a later development in the texts.[99] Possibly it refers to the *nadîtu* of the god Marduk in Babylon, who in the Old Babylonian period was married but not allowed to have children. It is not certain that this institution still existed later, so whenever we read this prediction after a gap of a thousand years it is possible to think that this old tradition was thoughtlessly written off. A late liver omen fits in well by suggesting a deliberate way to avoid pregnancy:

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93 C. Wilcke, *Festschrift J. Krecher* (2014) 539 § 12.

94 Stol, *Festschrift Oelsner*, 461 f.

95 CAD N/1 198a (2.) s.v. *nâku* 'to have (illicit) intercourse'; Renger, 131.

96 A. L. Oppenheim, *The interpretation of dreams in the Ancient Near East* (1956) 291 n. 168, on 334 K 6768 x+7, K 6705:6 (UM = *ṭeḫû*).

97 TDP 112, Tablet XIII 24 f.

98 M. J. Geller, BAM 7 (2005) 252 no. 49 ii 27, 29–31 (= TDP 136:62, 65–67). For the translation of line 30 (= 66) see J. Scurlock, B. R. Andersen, *Diagnoses in Assyrian and Babylonian medicine* (2005) 235 f.

99 ACh Adad XVII:17, dupl. ACh Suppl. 2, LXX:24. The priestesses remain faithful to their husbands (*ḫā'iru*): KAR 321:5 with B. R. Foster, *Before the Muses* II (1993) 770. For more on unfaithfulness see CAD Š/3 207b *šuḫḫû* A, 2.

> The priestess shall allow herself to be slept with from behind in order not to become pregnant.[100]

In the Atram-ḫasis myth we read that three categories of women might not have children, mentioned earlier:

> Let them be taboo and in this way stop bearing children.

En-ḫedu-ana called herself 'the pure (*dadag*) *en* of Nanna',[101] so it is certainly possible to take this to mean that all these women took a vow of chastity.[102]

This lends perspective to the famous, though much later, legend about the birth of King Sargon. He was born of an irregular relationship and was placed as a foundling by his mother. This is what the Vestal Virgin Rea Silvia, the mother of Romulus and Remus, also did. Sargon, using the word *enetu* to refer to his mother's position, says of himself:[103]

> I am Sargon, the mighty king, the king of Akkad. My mother was an *enetu*, my father I did not know. The brothers of my father lived in the mountains. My city is Azupiranu which is situated on the banks of the Euphrates. My mother, the *enetu*, became pregnant with me. She brought me into the world in secret. She put me in a little reed basket. She smoothed my door over with pitch. She launched me into the water in a river so that I could not get out of it. The river lifted me up and brought me to Aqqi, the water hoister. Aqqi, the water hoister, brought me up by dipping in his bucket. Aqqi, the water hoister, adopted me as his son and brought me up. Aqqi, the water hoister, set me to work in his garden. During my work in the garden Ištar became fond of me and I was king for [5]5 years.

This mysterious narrative about the birth of Sargon possibly indicated that he was illegitimate. What happened to his mother was precisely what she as *entu* (here *enetu*) had been warned about so much. That the goddess Ištar fell in love with him was a statement of political significance, for she then became the goddess of Akkad. We saw this when discussing the songs of his daughter, En-ḫedu-ana. The gardener in our legend has mythological echoes, for in one myth Šukalletuda, the gardener, laid violent hands on Ištar, and in the Gilgamesh epic we read that

100 CT 31 obv. (!) i 10 f., etc.; CAD N/1 198a (3.), Q 255 f.

101 'Ninmešara', 120 (*dadag*).

102 J. J. Finkelstein, JAOS 90 (1970) 246, rejected such a vow and thought that such women could get children by accident. Cf. Chapter 26 note 11.

103 B. Lewis, *The Sargon Legend: a study of the Akkadian text and the tale of the hero who was exposed at birth* (1980) 24 f. It is possible that the form *enetu* instead of *entu* was inspired by Old Akkadian *en-na-at* (of Enlil), the title of Tuta-napsum.

Ištar fell in love with Išullani, the gardener (VI 64–70).[104] She had a penchant for gardeners.

Do the texts show whether or not these priestesses did have children? Even though Šulgi claims in a hymn to be the son of an *entu* from Nippur that must be read as political literary fiction.[105] There are no useful details available about the *entu*.[106] Children were known to have been born to the *ereš.dingir*.[107] One was 'Ummi-waqrat, daughter of the *ereš.dingir* of Lugalgudua'.[108] Her name means 'My mother is costly', so perhaps she had been adopted and been given this name by her adopting mother, the *ereš.dingir* herself, as significant. Were other children also adopted? Adoption of children and adults was quite common. A nun (*nadîtu*) could not bear children herself. This also applied to women belonging to the god Marduk, even though they were allowed to be married (see Chapter 27). What was the common practice? It seems that what was considered wrong in these texts was sex, with children as a consequence.[109] Since the title *ereš.dingir* no longer had a specific meaning in later legends these may have been pure fantasies or practices from later centuries.

We may now return to the reality of a thousand years earlier. In Old Babylonian Sippar the brother of a nun (*nadîtu*) who had had a baby later adopted that child 'as a son'. The first three witnesses to the document were her other brothers. The baby was said to have been coarsely 'pulled from its mother's womb' but had now grown to three years old. The nun paid for the child's nourishment. This nun may have unexpectely given birth and given her baby to a wet-nurse and paid her. Later her family took pity on the little one, after it had survived the first three risky years. In another case a nun gave her daughter to a married couple to breast-feed

104 Hallo, van Dijk, *The exaltation*, 6; Wilcke in *La voix de l'opposition* (1973) 62 f.; Gilg. VI 64–70 with T. Abusch, History of Religions 26 (1986) 166–170.

105 J. Klein in Durand, *La Femme* (1987) 97–106. Perhaps the hymn does not speak at all of an *entu*; S. N. Kramer *apud* Klein, note 19.

106 Renger, ZA 58, 131, 141; Charpin, *Clergé*, 218 note 5 (RIME 4, 44 f. Išme-Dagan no. 14, Abba); Westenholz, CSMSJ 1, 39a (dumu en-na, etc.). Those in Nuzi may have had children, see K. Deller, A. Fadhil, Mesopotamia 7 (1972) 196 f. However, their main argument, from Text 13, fails; G. Wilhelm, NABU 1992/ 55.

107 An *ereš.dingir* of Nin-šubur has a son; Tell Sifr 65:6, cf. 64:6 f. (Renger, ZA 58, 138 f., n. 206). Similarly one of Lulal, married to a man with a prebend (TIM 4 13:28 f.). Both gods are low in status (household gods), which may also have affected the status of their personnel.

108 PBS 8/2 204:8–10.

109 Within the context of the vicissitudes of these priestesses there are Old Babylonian omina which speak of wrongdoings of 'the wife of the head of a temple', who regularly steals temple property (*asakku*) and is killed; J. Nougayrol, RA 44 (1950) 29.

for three years, but perhaps this girl had been adopted as a baby.[110] Whatever the circumstances such arrangements seem to have been accepted as evidently normal, possibly public. Chastity may not have been so much valued after all. Perhaps the problem was that a nun could not legitimise her child.

25.1.8 The *entu* in Ur at a later period

We return to the *entu* in Ur, but at a later period, when the Sumerians had disappeared. It is possible that the Gipar in Ur was destroyed by Samsu-iluna together with the rest of the city in his Year 11. Kurigalzu began reconstruction work and changed much of the city lay-out.[111] A later king called himself the 'son-in-law of the sickle moon', which may hark back to the old ideology of the priestess as the moon goddess.[112] Two sarcophagi from the Assyrian period, perhaps from the time of Sargon II, are shaped like baths. It is thought that they were for these priestesses.[113]

The following activity of King Nabonidus (555–539 BC) is significant. He honoured the moon god and resumed some of the ancient traditions. He described how his daughter was called to the sacred office. It all began on 26th September 554 BC when there was an eclipse of the moon (called Nannar, Sîn). That event, according to an astrological handbook, pointed to selecting a priestess. A series of liver extispicies confirmed this and indicated that the priestess should be his own daughter:[114]

> When Nannar requested a high priestess, the Son of the Prince showed his sign to the inhabited world, the Bright Light manifested his reliable decision.
> To Nabonidus, king of Babylon, provider for (the temples) Esagil and Ezida, the reverend shepherd, who shows concern for the sanctuaries of the great gods, Nannar, the lord of the (lunar) Crown, who bears the signal for all peoples, revealed his sign concerning his request for a high priestess.
> On the thirteenth of Elul, the month of the works of the goddesses, the Fruit became eclipsed and set while eclipsed. 'Sîn requests a high priestess' was his sign and decision.

110 K. R. Veenhof, *Studies L. de Meyer* (1991) 151 (text B).
111 P. Weadock, Iraq 37 (1975) 111; Brinkman, Or. NS 38 (1969) 317 f.; idem, MSKH I (1976) 216 ff. nos. 27–37; C. B. F. Walker, CBI nos. 62–68.
112 Walker, no. 73, with lit. Cf. J. A. Brinkman, *Post-Kassite Babylonia* (1968) 137 n. 821.
113 Weadock, 112; J. E. Curtis, *New light on Nimrud* (2008) 163–165.
114 YOS 1 45:1–25. For a translation and discussion see: Erica Reiner, *Your thwarts in pieces, your mooring ropes cut* (1985) 1–16 (followed here); H. Schaudig, *Die Inschriften Nabonids von Babylon und Kyros' des Großen* (2001) 373–376.

> As for me, Nabonidus, the shepherd who reveres his divine majesty, I reverently heeded his reliable order, and I became concerned about this request for a high priestess. I sought out the sanctuaries of Šamaš and Adad, the patrons of extispicy, and Šamaš and Adad, as usual, answered me a reliable Yes, wrote a favorable omen in my extispicy, the omen pertaining to the request for priestesses, the request of the gods to man.
> I repeated the extispicy for confirmation and they answered me with an even more favourable omen. I made an extispicy inquiring about a daughter born to one of my relatives, but they answered me No. For a third time I made an extispicy, inquiring about my own daughter, and they answered me with a favourable omen.
> I heeded the word of Sîn, the supreme lord, the god my creator, and the verdict of Šamaš and Adad, the patrons of extispicy. I installed my own daughter as high priestess and gave her the name En-nigaldi-Nanna.

The pasage in the astrological handbook referred to can be located. It says:

> If in the month of Elul, in the third watch of the night, the moon (is eclipsed), then Sîn is asking for a priestess.[115]

We also know a passage in a handbook of liver extispicies referring to the part of a sheep's liver known to them as 'the stand' which says:

> If in the middle of the stand there is a cross, then Sîn shall ask for a priestess (*ereš.dingir*); alternatively, an eclipse of the moon.[116]

Her fine Sumerian name, En-nigaldi-Nanna, formulated in the old style, means 'the priestess, the desire of the Moon god'. Nabonidus regretted that the old rituals for this office (*enūtu*) had been forgotten and no-one now knew how to conduct it. But he was fortunate to find help after excavating an ancient stela to be dated to the reign of Nebuchadnezzar I (1124–1103 BC).

> The agreed time came along and the doors were opened for me. I looked and saw the ancient stela of Nebuchadnezzar, the son of Ninurta-nadin-šumi, an earlier king from before my time. The likeness of the priestess was depicted on it. They noted down her finery, clothing and jewels, and they had them brought to the House of Giparu. I saw the ancient clay tablets and writing boards and I acted according to what had been done earlier.

This discovery enabled Nabonidus to set up the cult of the moon god once again. Some modern scholars doubt that this and other finds claimed by Nabonidus

115 Reiner, 15 n. 8; eadem, *Astral magic in Babylonia* (1995) 76 f.; P.-A. Beaulieu, *The reign of Nabonidus* (1989) 128. Now: F. Rochberg-Halton, *Aspects of Babylonian celestial divination: The lunar eclipse tablets of Enūma Anu Enlil* (1988) 133, Tablet 17, Part II, §VI.4.
116 G. Frame, ARRIM 5 (1987) 8 f., line 11.

were genuine.[117] Another magnificent discovery occurred when they were digging up trees while carrying out reconstruction works at the Gipar:

> I saw the house, identified its foundations. I saw written on them the names of the ancient kings who had preceded me. I saw the ancient inscription of En-ane-du, the priestess of Ur, the daughter of Kudurmabuk, the sister of Rim-Sîn, king of Ur, who had restored the foundations of the House of Giparu and had surrounded with a wall the resting-place of the earlier priestesses beside the House of Giparu.

It does seem that Nabonidus really found the inscription of En-ane-du which we know about, for the brief summary he gives is accurate as far as concerns content. He must have copied everything precisely to build the house of his daughter beside the Gipar and he had the bricks inscribed:

> I, Nabonidus, the king of Babylon, guardian of Esagila and Ezida, have made the House of Giparu, the house of the priestess, within Ur, for Sîn, my lord.[118]

That building has been excavated and was identified as such.[119] There then follows a description of how his daughter was purified and presented to Sîn and Ningal and brought into the Gipar, followed by an expansive description of the offerings presented, the priests and the lesser temple servants who were appointed. The text closes with a prayer to Sîn, which ends:

> May Ningal, the great mistress, speak good words before you (the priestess). May En-nigaldi-Nanna, my own beloved daughter, endure in front of you (the gods Sîn and Ningal). May her word be resolute. May her deeds please you. May they contain nothing sinful.

By speaking good words Ningal interceded with her husband Sîn for the priestess. What the function of the priestess herself was is not made clear. For Nabonidus, the moon god was the most important god. In fact it would seem that for him he was the only god. Appointing his daughter as the priestess of Sîn was primarily an act of piety. King Nabonidus had another daughter who was appointed to the ancient city of Sippar with her own house and staff.[120]

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117 M. A. Powell, ZA 81 (1991) 30; cf. J. A. Brinkman, *Post-Kassite Babylonia* (1968) 114. Nabonidus legitimised his deeds by referring to the past; Th.G. Lee, RA 87 (1993) 136.

118 For the bricks see Schaudig, *Die Inschriften Nabonids*, 341 f. – J. A. Brinkman, Or. NS 38 (1969) 338: the house was named Edublalmaḫ and it was rebuilt by Sîn-balassu-iqbi; cf. Weadock, 113.

119 Weadock, 113; W. Orthmann, *Der Alte Orient* (1975) p. 285 no. 88 (= p. 286, left, top). The name of the priestess given here, 'Bel-šalti-nanna', is an old error for En-níg.al.di-Nanna.

120 C. Waerzeggers, NABU 2004/103.

We will now leave the office of the priestess of Ur and look at her colleagues in other cities.

25.1.9 In Uruk

Sîn-kašid, king of Old Babylonian Uruk, reported that he built the Gipar for his 'beloved daughter, the *ereš.dingir* of Lugalbanda, who was installed for his life'.[121] Lugalbanda was the legendary father of Gilgamesh, who had now been elevated as a god. The actual title given to the woman here is not *en*, but it must have carried the same weight. She was required to pray 'for his life'. Near Uruk was the city of Durum, and a Sumerian tradition developed that the crown prince was installed as governor of Durum, so that it became the royal city. This tradition was perpetuated in the Old Babylonian period, the time when a woman called high priestess (*ereš.dingir*) of its god Meslamtaea appears in texts. She was also a daughter of King Sîn-kašid of Uruk.[122] What is remarkable is that we have a literary text writen by this woman. She identifies herself with an imposing Sumerian name Nin-šata-pada, 'the Lady called from the mother's womb' as the writer of the text. She was a poet. The cities of Uruk and Durum had been conquered by Rim-Sîn, the king of hostile Larsa, and in a letter she addresses Rim-Sîn. He is praised twice in long-winded introductory phrases, and then she describes the battle, how the army of Uruk 'lowered its horns like a wild bull' against the might of Larsa, 'a city as high as a mountain'. That is how 'with your great strength you seized its king.' But Rim-Sîn was applauded because he spared the population. No plagues broke out.

> Orphan and widow went about on the luxuriant grass, they sojourned on the meadowy banks.

Finally she comes out with her request. For five years she has not seen her city. In shrill tones she laments her imprisonment. Abandoned, she feels old and slandered. She pleads for the city of her 'family', Durum, to be restored to its past glory.

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121 RIME 4 (1990) 455.

122 W. W. Hallo, 'The royal correspondence of Larsa: III. The princess and the plea', in: *Études Paul Garelli* (1991) 377–388; N. Brisch, *Tradition and the poetics of innovation: Sumerian court literature of the Larsa dynasty (2003–1763 BCE)* (2007) 81–87, 245–261.

25.2 Priestesses in Mari

In her seal inscription the priestess Inibšina in Mari[123] calls herself the 'wife' of the god Adad, but in texts she is called an *ereš.dingir*. She was the daughter of Yaḫdun-Lim, an earlier king of Mari, but she remained in her office during the regime of the Assyrian viceroy of Mari. The priestess remained secure to fulfil her sacred task. She received food daily from the palace and had a country residence with a large staff, including eleven bearers for her sedan chair. An inventory of her possessions includes jugs and other household items, personnel, fields and gardens, and cattle.

When the Assyrian king Samsi-Addu conquered the western territories, the land along the banks of the Euphrates in Syria, he made a point of installing his daughter as the 'wife of Dagan' at that god's temple in Terqa, on the Euphrates.[124] He had taken this city from the king of Mari as well as Mari itself. His daughter was given the name Kunši-matum, meaning 'Bow down, O land!' as a proclamation that things were going to change.[125] We have a letter from this woman to her brother Yasmaḫ-Addu, whom his father had installed as viceroy in Mari. She defended herself against accusations that she did not look after the possessions in her house well. But she does not forget to state what she was really expected to do:

> 'I am the one who prays for you before Dagan.'

Then she finishes by saying:

> This is what I always pray for you before Dagan, 'May Yasmaḫ-Addu yet prosper, and may I myself have a good life in his shade'.[126]

Zimri-Lim would later conquer Mari but he allowed Kunši-matum to remain in her office. The governor of Terqa wrote him a few letters from which it seems that she was sick, that he was having omens read by liver extispicy, and that the result was

123 N. Ziegler, *Le Harem de Zimrî-Lîm* (1999) 46–49.

124 J.-M. Durand, MARI 4 (1985) 396–398. The title dam ^{d}Dagan is attested in ARMT 23 199:5, cf. Durand, note 69. Earlier see Renger, ZA 58, 147 f.; B. F. Batto, *Studies on women at Mari* (1974) 79–92.

125 For this court name, see the end of Chapter 1. A similar name is Kanšassum-matum (Charpin, *Festschrift J. Renger*, 107); Sumerian kur-gìri.ni.šè, H. Limet, *L'Anthroponymie sumérienne* (1968) 92, 446.

126 ARM 10 3 with Durand.

favourable. It seems that this priestess in Terqa had the title *ugbabtu* in Akkadian. The governor of Terqa wrote about the building of her house:[127]

> About the house where the *ugbabtu* of Dagan shall live, I have had omens read and for the earlier house of the *ugbabtu* my omens were correct. Moreover the god answered me with approval and I began to set that house in order and to inspect it for cracks. In that house the *ugbabtu*, whom my lord Dagan shall lead, shall live.

In a second letter he comes back to this decision. In that old house there lived various craftsmen and it cannot be arranged otherwise. Furthermore the building was not suitable for its intended purpose, because it was adjacent to the cake bakery of the palace which would have emitted unpleasant smells. Again they turned to the god through liver extispicy. Again this gave a positive answer. When he goes on in the letter to say, 'that house is good for the *ugbabtu* to live in', his meaning is not clear, so possibly he refers to another house. The king asked the governor to come and collect the young woman from Mari. But he could not leave his work so he wrote:

> May my lord be good enough to come (himself). And let him come and kiss the foot of Dagan, who loves him. I myself must finish my work. I cannot come.[128]

It is clear that this *ugbabtu*-priestess was the only one of her kind and that she had a central function in the kingdom. It is possible that the title was held by other single women in surrounding regions of Babylonia, such as Terqa and Susa. This fits the fact that in northern Assyria they had the title *gubabtum*, Sumerian *ereš.dingir*, which we shall discuss in the next section.

At the beginning of this section we noted that Inibšina could have been the 'wife' or the *ereš.dingir* of the god Adad. We know of many women called *ugbabtu* and *ereš.dingir*, who were priestesses of the god Adad in Kulmiš and of other gods. So these were not solitary individuals. Some of them were registered as captives of war after the overthrow of Ašlakkâ in the north.[129] They are named in two lists as belonging to various gods, Dagan, Adad, Sîn, Šamaš and Kulmiš.[130]

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127 Durand, AEM 1/1 361 ff., nos. 178 f.

128 ARM 3 8 with Batto, 80 f. The priestess indicated here is called SAL.TUR *ugbabtum* (6).

129 Batto, 81–86. The situation has been clarified by the article of P. Marello, Florilegium Marianum II (1994) 115–129. In the letters these women are referred to as NIN.DINGIR.RA.MEŠ, and in the lists by as dam (or dam.meš) of a god.

130 Kulmiš is here a god. One assumes that Kulmiš in 'Adad of Kulmiš' is a place, but the determinative for 'place' (ki) never appears; RGTC 3 (1980) 144. M. Stol suggested that the priestess *kulmašītu* owed her title to Kulmiš (in his 1976 dissertation, thesis VIII).

They had too high a status to be listed simply as weavers among the captives. The daughters of the king of the conquered city, Ibal-Addu, are also listed as having been earlier dedicated by their father as priestesses, 'the wives of Adad' and the 'wives of Kulmiš'. One of the daughters, a young girl, was a *šugîtu*, a second wife who produced children for her husband.[131] When still king, Ibal-Addu had asked his new wife to respect his mother, his spouse, and the *ugbabtu*s in the palace.[132]

25.3 Priestesses in the Old Assyrian period

In the Old Assyrian trade correspondence with Anatolia a *gubabtu*-priestess is mentioned on thirty occasions.[133] She was the oldest daughter of a merchant and had remained unmarried. She lived in Assur and had her own house, so there was no question of her living in a convent. A letter gives instruction to 'place the girl (*ṣuḫartu*) in the bosom of Assur',[134] an expression which seems to mean dedicating her to religious duties, but we know nothing of what those duties were. Elsewhere we read,

> The girl has now become very adult. Get ready and leave. Place her in the bosom of Assur and grasp the feet of your god.

Possibly dedicating one's daughter sometimes involved fulfilling a pledge.[135]

The title she held is not often mentioned except in the context of inheritance. She was granted a share with her brothers and much attention was paid to the rights of this unmarried daughter. In one text she received much more than her brothers, and furthermore every year they had to give her six mines of copper and a portion of meat at a sacrificial feast.[136] She took part in commercial business and we have various letters from these women.[137] She bore great responsibility for her family. In Chapter 9 about divorce in Assyria we referred to a letter to Šalimma in which this priestess gave advice on an urgent matter. When she received 'the

131 ARM 10 124:4 f.; LAPO 18 (2000) 353 f. no. 1170.
132 ARM 10 170:9–11 with M. Guichard, RA 103 (1999) 24 n. 36.
133 C. Michel, 'Les filles de marchands consacrées', in: F. Briquel-Chatonnet, *Femmes* (2009) 145–163.
134 Michel, CMK no. 306; Michel, 'Les filles', 154.
135 CMK no. 307:38–40, with lit.
136 W. von Soden, WdO 8 (1976) 211–217; C. Wilcke, ZA 66 (1976) 202 f.
137 K. R. Veenhof, *Mesopotamia, The Old Assyrian period* (2008) 104, 107 f.; idem, *Studies R. D. Biggs* (2007) 287 (Ummi-Išḫara); Michel, CMK, 438–446 (Aḫaḫa).

golden gods of her father' they were perhaps the statues of her ancestors.[138] One priestess, after the death of her parents and her brothers, as the sole survivor of her family received the whole legacy, which amounted to 2¼ shekels of gold and a seal.[139] That might have been the weight of the statues of the household gods and her father's seal. The possession of that seal could be a subject of dispute when an estate was divided.[140]

25.4 Priestesses after the Old Babylonian period

The institution of an *entu* was also known in the Hurrian kingdom of *Arrapḫa*.[141] The title clearly refers to a princess in lists and letters. She lived in a 'house' in important cities such as Apenaš and Azuḫinni, where she was in charge of priests and horses.[142]

Returning to Syria in the thirteenth century BC, to *Emar* on the banks of the Euphrates, south of Carchemish, we find an important ritual describing the procedure for the dedication of a high priestess.[143] It was a place where the religious practices of Canaanites, Hittites and Babylonians met. Five versions of the ritual exist which differ only slightly from each other, although some scholars have thought the differences warrant thinking of them as rituals for different occasions. Here the high priestess (*ettu*) belonged to the 'Storm god', possibly called Baal or Hadad. She seems to have held her position for the whole of her life, for at the end of the ritual we read what had to happen after her death. Her dedication can be seen as a rite of passage, having all the trappings of a wedding, including an anointing. Earlier, when discussing betrothal in Assyria and the Amarna letters, we noted that anointing was a typically western custom. We list some of

138 I. Albayrak, *Studies M. T. Larsen* (2004) 12 f., lines 14–19; 14:17–24; cf. Hecker, *ibidem*, 286:18, 'die Götter(amulette) unseres Vaters', with p. 290.

139 K. R. Veenhof, *Studies M. Stol* (2008) 106, 110.

140 Veenhof, 106 n. 33; Hecker, *Studies Larsen*, 291 f.

141 K. Deller, A. Fadhil, 'NIN.DINGIR.RA/*ēntu* in Texten aus Nuzi und Kurruḫanni', Mesopotamia 7 (1972) 193–214. Cf. G. Wilhelm, NABU 1992/ 55, on Text 13.

142 Deller, 205, 208.

143 D. Schwemer, TUAT NF 4 (2008) 231–239. D. E. Fleming, *The installation of Baal's high priestess at Emar. A window on ancient Syrian religion* (1992); for a summary of his work see M. W. Chavalas, *Emar* (1996) 88–90; cf. D. Schwemer, *Wettergottgestalten* (2005) 556–561. For an independent approach see M. Dietrich, 'Das Einsetzungsritual der Entu von Emar (Emar VI/3, 368)', UF 21 (1989) 47–100; for criticims on Fleming see M. Dietrich, 'Altsyrische Götter und Rituale aus Emar', Biblica 76 (1995) 239–249; see also the review by W. Sallaberger, ZA 86 (1996) 140–147.

the more important events from this complex ritual, including the shearing of the hair on the second day, which is something new.[144]

Day 1: The girl was selected from the elite class of her people, possibly by casting lots.[145] The first anointing, in her father's house, and purification took place.

Day 2: She was taken in procession to the temple of the Storm god. In the courtyard her hair was shorn. She was anointed again and then returned home.

Day 3: Preparations for the installation were made, including offerings.

Day 4: There were processions to various holy places, offerings and meals. The installation (*malluku*) included receiving rings and a headdress of red wool as the insignia of her function.[146] Afterwards she returned home.

Days 5–11: A seven-day celebration culminated on the last day when she was dressed as the bride of the Storm god and led in procession. Her two brothers carried her on their shoulders back home. Her sister washed her feet. She was presented with a bed, a chair and a footstool by the elders, and in the temple she lay down on the bed.

Much more could be said about this ritual. The statue of the goddess Ninkur was placed in a grave in the house of the father of the priestess on Day 3, and left there until Day 11, when it rose again. There were many sacrifices made to various gods and the elders of Emar, not the king, presided. The ritual deserves further study but that is a separate matter. This priestess was the most important one in the city. She was more important than another priestess, the *maš'artu*, for whom we also have a ritual.[147]

In the *Neo-Babylonian* period a priest ('temple-enterer') was required to be blameless, physically and morally, before he could be 'shaven', i.e., consecrated. He also had to be of respectable descent. Three or four texts dating from the sixth century show that this implied that his mother ought to be 'pure' (*ellu*).[148] In one particular case the mother declared that she had been married as a virgin. When her legitimacy had been confirmed, she was given a pendant (*zību*) which she

144 For shearing and anointing see Fleming, 177–182.

145 For selection by casting lots see Fleming, who translates the word *pūru* (2) as 'lot'. 'Vase' or 'bowl' would also be possible. M. Dietrich takes it to be a vase for ointment. W. Sallaberger, 144 f., also takes it to be a vase and finds a parallel in the coronation ritual of Ebla.

146 'Red appears to be the dominant colour among the accoutrements of *en*-ship, at least of the priestess of Enlil'; Westenholz, CSMSJ 1, 37b.

147 D. Arnaud, *Emar* VI/3 no. 370, with Fleming, 209 ff.

148 C. Waerzeggers, M. Jursa, 'On the initiation of Babylonian priests', Zeitschrift für Altorientalische und Biblische Rechtsgeschichte 14 (2008) 1–35. Note that the 'purity' of Queen Naqi'a probably refers to her legitimate status (Chapter 24 note 135).

had to convey to her son, a priest, once when he was grown up. 'This makes a *zību* appear as an object somehow linked symbolically to marriage and perhaps to the maternal line. It might conceivably signify legitimacy of descent in that it was an object passed on from the parents of the mother to the mother [i.e., their daughter] on the occasion of her legally recognised marriage.'[149] We are surprised to see how physical and important the maternal line was. One is reminded of the post-Exilic Jewish rule of matrilineal descent (*partus sequitur ventrem*), not yet visible in the Hebrew Bible but fitting the attitude of the books Ezra and Nehemiah. At the end of their list of legitimate priests follows a remark on 'the line of Barzillai who had married a daughter of Barzillai and went by his name' (Ezra 2:61–63, Nehemiah 7:63–65). Men in this line were not admitted because they were not found in official lists. Note that they descended from women (which was not the problem).

It is a huge leap to reach the late *Greek* period, and there in the cult we now find women mentioned, but mostly men take the lead. A nun is mentioned and a woman and her daughter belong to the College of Exorcists. Earlier it had been a male privilege for members from old families to carry out cultic functions in the temple as prebends. They were allocated a certain number of days of service in the temple each year. When these duties were devolved to their heirs fewer and fewer days per year were prescribed. In the Neo-Babylonian period, if no adult male was available a woman assumed the responsibility. In the Greek period a woman could buy these rights, to ensure that she obtained the right to function in the temple on particular days of the year from one period to the next. Women particularly favoured taking the role of 'temple-enterer' (*ērib bīti*), baker and slaughterer.[150] This would have been unthinkable in earlier times, although then the right could be inherited through women. Furthermore we hear of a female 'leader of the singers' in the temple of Babylon, but other titles remain strange and difficult to translate. The women who received food rations in the temple of Esagila were probably the wives of temple servants.[151] Nowadays, even after two thousand years of Christendom, the struggle for women to be ordained, for the woman to take a major role among the religious hierarchy, persists.

149 Jursa, 32.

150 C. Waerzeggers, *The Ezida temple of Borsippa* (2010) 92–94; G. J. P. McEwan, *Priest and temple in Hellenistic Babylonia* (1981) 117–120; P. Corò, *Prebende templari in età seleucide* (2005) 99 f.

151 M. Jursa, *Festschrift C. B. F. Walker* (2002) 107 f.; T. Boiy, *Late Achaemenid and Hellenistic Babylon* (2004) 235, 271; P. Cleancier in F. Briquel-Chatonnet, *Femmes* (2009) 321–332.