27 Married holy women

There were other women who devoted their lives to religion but did not live in a cloister. They were similarly required to behave modestly (Hammurabi's Laws § 110). They were married but, as far as we know, they did not become pregnant and bear children. One such woman was the *nadîtu* of the god Marduk of Babylon (not of Sippar), another was the *qadištu*, the 'holy woman', and another the *kulmašītu*. Regarding terminology it should be noted that the laws of King Lipit-Ištar of Isin and King Hammurabi of Babylon group together several titles of holy women. In so doing they wish to be comprehensive, summarising the different titles current in the various sanctuaries in their kingdom, all of which indicate a holy woman who was forbidden to have children.[1] The Sumerian *ereš.dingir* (previously read *nin.dingir*), a combination of signs meaning 'the lady of the god', stands for any holy woman.[2] Sometimes, however, a cloistered woman such as 'the *nadîtu* of the cloister' or 'the secluded woman' (*sekretu*) is specified (CH § 180).

It is commonly assumed that motherhood was taboo for these married women while virginity was not an issue, but that idea should be questioned. The arguments are based on omen predictions which speak of the abnormal sexual practices of a holy woman, from which it is assumed that they were permitted to have sex.[3] However, omen predictions rarely reflect the norm. For example, some seem to favour homosexuality, which was taboo.[4] So we should not exclude the idea that these women had a duty to be chaste.

27.1 The *nadîtu* of Marduk the god of Babylon

Women were first appointed to this function under the kings of the First Dynasty of Babylon. This dynasty, which included the famous King Hammurabi, stemmed from 'Amorite' tribes, who may have found the concept of a Sumerian high priest-

1 L. Barberon, *Les religieuses et le culte de Marduk dans le royaume de Babylone* (2012) 110 (top), 144 n. 827. The titles in Sumerian are: ereš.dingir, lukur, nu.gig; in Akkadian: *ugbabtu*, *nadîtu*; others are zikrum (= *sekretu*) and é.gi$_4$.a (= *kallatu*); M. Stol, *Studies J. Oelsner* (2000) 465.

2 On example is Yaḫilatum *ereš.dingir ša Šamaš*, who must be a *nadîtu* of Šamaš, see CT 6 22a:13, with Stol, *Studies Oelsner*, 460 (n. 21–23), cf. n. 25; for another example see p. 461 (n. 27). We also have Beletum, the *ereš.dingir* of Marduk of Babylon, who was a *nadîtu* of Marduk, JCS 23 (1971) 124:9, 11, 22 (= VAS 18 18); and Melulatum the *ereš.dingir* of Annunitum, a *kulmašītu*, Barberon, 68, 73 no. 27.

3 Most recently see Barberon, 111, 182.

4 M. Stol, *Studies R. D. Biggs* (2007) 236 n. 21.

ess linked with the divine kingship abhorrent.[5] They preferred to appoint several different women to be a 'priestess' of their own god Marduk, and named them all a *nadîtu*. In the preceding chapter we translated that word as 'nun' but in this context it is less appropriate since this 'nun' was married. The *nadîtu* of Marduk must have been an innovation, and now we can say much more about her thanks to a new book by Lucille Barberon, who says: 'According to daily life texts, a *nadîtu*, married to a man, could only be a *nadîtu* of Marduk; the other *nadîtu*s, whether dedicated to Šamaš, to Ninurta, to Zababa or to Sîn, were by definition celibate, being the spouses of a god.'[6] The Laws of Hammurabi is the only lawbook which gives the rules for religious women and a number of those laws concern this *nadîtu*. The king wished to secure her position and that of the second wife who lived with her.[7] Originally she was a woman resident in the capital of the kingdom, Babylon, but soon we find her living elsewhere. Her presence in other cities coincides with the growing expansion of the empire. These women belonged to the elite.[8] We can closely follow one of them in Sippar where she and her family acquired landed property in newly developed agricultural land with canals named after a Babylonian king and a princess.[9] She served Marduk, the god of Babylon, and his wife, Zarpanitu. On her cylinder seal she is named the 'servant' of the divine couple.[10] She called them 'my Lord' and 'my Mistress' in her correspondence and her name or the names of her servants often were named after them or after their temple in Babylon, Esagil.[11] The dedication of one of them took place in the temple of Annunitum in Sippar[12] and letters show that their pious devotion was like that of the nuns in Sippar, discussed in the previous chapter. They too prayed for their family.[13] They were required to perform ceremonial tasks and would go with their 'chair' to the 'house' of their god Marduk. We gather from a clause in marriage contracts that it was the second wife who always had to carry this chair.[14]

What were her duties in the temple? A group of texts from Sippar associates married women with the performance of a ritual (*parṣa epēšu*), which imme-

5 Barberon, *Les religieuses*,108 f.
6 Barberon, 146.
7 Barberon, 145 f. Only in § 182 is the *nadîtu* of the Marduk of Babylon mentioned explicitly, but Barberon, 146–148, associates more laws with her: §§ 137; 144–147; 179.
8 Barberon, 174–176. One was the daughter of a general; VAS 18 18:9 f.
9 Barberon, 151–153. In Sippar-Amnanum, where they were to stay (p. 176 f.).
10 Barberon, 251 f. A seal was found in her (?) grave; Barberon, 100 f.
11 For her correspondence, see Barberon, 14 f. For names, 8–12.
12 Barberon, 184, cf. 143.
13 Barberon, 'L'importance de la prière', 204–206.
14 Barberon, 19, 23, 230 f.

diately suggests to us these were the married nuns of Marduk, or perhaps the married holy women (*qadištu*s) or the *kulmašītu*s (to be discussed presently) were also involved.[15] Some rituals have to do with sacred objects, but others are obscure.[16] Two, the rituals of 'friendship' (*ru'ûtu*) and 'suitorship' (*redûtu*), may have involved sexual acts and 'prostitution'. If that is true, the ladies would have been responsible only for organising the ritual and they would have left other women, such as the *kezertu*, to do the work. For more details see what we said in Chapter 21 on temple prostitution.

These women were married and lived at home, not in a cloister. Since bearing children was taboo for them, they adopted two strategies to get children. They could adopt a baby or attract a second wife for their husband.[17] That second wife could be adopted as the 'sister' of the *nadîtu*.[18] Hammurabi gave her the special title of *šugîtu* and protected her rights (§ 182).[19] In most respects she had the same position as the second wife of any Babylonian man,[20] and so we discussed the *šugîtu* earlier in Chapter 5.

The title *šugîtu* was not exclusively used in the context of the *nadîtu* of Marduk. In a letter from Mari she is contrasted with the *ereš.dingir* of the god Adad.[21] We saw at the beginning of Chapter 26 that in Sippar a *nadîtu* of Šamaš could also be accompanied by a *šugîtu*, a second wife.

Towards the end of the First Dynasty of Babylon, after the reign of King Ammi-ditana, this holy woman was called both the *nadîtu* of Marduk and the *kulmašītu* of Annunitum.[22] This syncretism may have benefited Marduk, for we know that the *nadîtu* of Marduk was dedicated in the temple of Annunitum,[23] or it could be seen as a mark of a general decline of the empire.

15 Barberon surmises that the women were *ugbabtu*s or *nadîtu*s of Marduk (202 f.). But the *qadištu* named Ilša-ḫegal also 'performs the ritual' (*parṣa epēšu*); Di 1804:21–24, known only from quotes in RA 86 (1992) 33 n. 34; Barberon, 202 n. 1149.

16 Barberon, 199–204; for her sexual services see p. 203.

17 Barberon, 225–232. For more on the second wife see Barberon, 19 f., 23 f.

18 Barberon, 232 f.

19 This is what Barberon said in her discussion of the *šugîtu*; 19–21, 81–83, 227–232.

20 Barberon, 148.

21 ARM 10 124:5–8 with LAPO 18 (2000) 353 no. 1170, mentioned in passing by Barberon, 61 n. 329.

22 Barberon, 68–73, 107.

23 Barberon, 140–143.

27.2 The holy woman, the *qadištu*

In the Old Babylonian period we find the *qadištu*, a kind of woman who did not live in a convent. The root of the word (Semitic *q-d-š*) means 'holy',[24] from which we have the verb 'to make holy, to sanctify', and so we translate the noun as 'holy woman'. The etymological link between the verb and the noun is made explicit in a letter from Mari, where a father sanctified (*qadāšu*) a 'holy girl' and devoted (*našû*) her to be a 'holy woman'.'[25] It seems that even as a child the girl had already been given a 'holy' status, and so in sanctifying her her father was confirming that fact. On the other hand, syntactically the adjective 'holy' with 'girl' could be interpreted as proleptic, to show that she was 'a girl and a holy woman of the future'. Perhaps the particular daughter to be dedicated was decided by age, the second or third to be born. In the previous chapter we saw that different daughters in one family became different types of nun.

In Sumerian we find a woman called a *nu.gig* (or *mu.gib* in Emesal, their women's language), meaning 'untouchable'.[26] Babylonians identifed two different religious women as such, the *qadištu* and the *ištarītu* ('she who belongs to Ištar'). When the early Sumerian king Mesanepada of Kish called himself 'the husband of the *nu.gig*', he probably referred to Inanna herself, for that is more likely than that he would have called himself the husband of Inanna's priestess, the holy woman.[27] Inanna was often entitled 'the *nu.gig* of the (god of) the heavens'.[28] The Babylonian title *ištarītu*, 'she who belongs to Ištar', fits the priestess well, and she was known to be able to make bird-like sounds of a certain tone in the cult.[29] In that later period a *nu.gig* could also indicate a woman holding a high position here on earth.

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24 M. I. Gruber, 'Hebrew *qedēšāh* and her Canaanite and Akkadian cognates', UF 18 (1986) 133–148; J. Westenholz, Harvard Theological Review 82 (1989) 245–265.

25 A. 1186, *inūma ṣuḫartam qadištam abuša uqaddišuši u ana qadištim iššuši*, cited by D. Charpin, AfO 36–37 (1989–90) 94a; for the full letter, see note 36. Boys could also be dedicated; Charpin, 106b, *quššudu*.

26 A. Zgoll, 'Inana als nugig', ZA 87 (1997) 181–195.

27 IRSA (1971) 41 f.; J. S. Cooper, SARI I (1986) 98; Zgoll, 192.

28 D. O. Edzard, ZA 55 (1962) 104 f.; A. Falkenstein, ZA 56 (1964) 120; Å. W. Sjöberg, TCS 3 (1969) 123; C. Wilcke, RlA V/1–2 (1976) 80 f.; J.-J. Glassner, CRRAI 47/I (2002) 152 f. Note the woman with her title Erišti-Erra nu.gig-an.na, BIN 7 163:1 f.

29 A. Berlin, *Enmerkar and Ensuḫkešdanna* (1979) 74.

27.2.1 In the service of the rain god Adad

For the Babylonians the *nu.gig* on earth was the *qadištu*, 'the holy woman'. She was often dedicated to the god Adad and sometimes to his wife, the goddess Šala. This holy woman sealed her texts with the seal of Adad.[30] The personal name Ilša-ḫegal, 'Her god is riches', seems to have been used exclusively for this holy woman. The god referred to in her seal inscription was the rain god Adad.[31] Adad figures in the names of many holy women and in those of their fathers, as in Adad-nuri, 'Adad is my light'.[32] It is possible that 'the holy woman of Adad' was an innovation from the Old Babylonian period. Adad was a god from the West, where the people were dependent on rainwater. A hymn to Marduk was found in the archive of a holy woman. It has references to a cosmic battle, a mythological motif from the West.[33] A man whose own name included Adad dedicated his daughter to his god.

> Beltani is her name. Her father Ibni-Adad has devoted (*našû*) her as a holy woman to his god Adad.

Two specific clauses follow, one that she should receive as large a legacy as her brother, and the other that someone should be given to her as 'her son', possibly to care for her in her old age. The first witnesses were the moon god and the sun god.[34]

A letter from Sippar refers to a holy woman receiving income from the temple.

> E., the holy woman, is no stranger to (our) house. The benefice of the 'seals of Inanna, Queen of Sippar' is in her hands.

It must have been an honour to receive such a benefice.[35] Probably she had to take care of the precious seals in the temple.

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30 F. N. H. al-Rawi, S. Dalley, *Old Babylonian texts from private houses at Abu Habbah, Ancient Sippir* (2000) 17: seal impressions picturing Adad are on nos. 31, 35, 36.

31 Ilša-ḫegal nu.gig in MHET II/6 895:13, PBS 8/2 218:4; as 'servant of Adad and Šala' on TCL 1 157; she is the mother of Ur-Utu in Sippar (see further below).

32 J. Renger, ZA 58 (1967) 179–184. Now also Šat-Adad in a model contract about her; C. Wilcke in *Isin–Išān Baḥrīyāt* III (1987) 104 f.

33 L. Barberon in F. Briquel-Chatonnet, *Femmes* (2009) 280.

34 E. Grant, *Smith College Library* no. 260, with C. Wilcke, *Studies F. R. Kraus* (1982) 446; D. Schwemer, *Wettergottgestalten* (2001) 318; Barberon, *Les religieuses*, 185.

35 MHET I 74:11–14.

We have already cited the letter from Mari which appeared to say that this woman had been dedicated by her father. A little further on in the letter[36] we read that at her dedication (*našû*) the woman received a man as a gift to be her slave, 'instead of her finger ring (*unqu*) and her legacy (*niḫlatu*)'. The holy woman would usually have received a ring and a legacy. From this J.-M. Durand understands that this woman had freedom of movement and did not live in a convent. She was an independent woman, without any man supervising her. The god to whom she was dedicated was the family god who guaranteed her free status. The ceremony took place within the family circle or the clan. Durand says that, if there were no sons, she would have been able to perpetuate the cult of her ancestors. He thought the 'nuns' in Sippar and Nippur would have enjoyed the same independent status in the convents and outside. That, he concluded, would mean 'there were no *religieuses*'. His daring theory is based on this letter, and it will clearly apply to this holy woman. We saw that she was dedicated to the god Adad, and that the name of that god often appeared in her name and in her father's name. Adad will have been the family god, with the woman fulfilling a specific duty in his temple, and she was therefore some sort of priestess. But she lived in 'the (family) house' and not in the convent.[37] The holy woman received her food from the 'house' and not from a convent.[38] One of them had a sister who was a nun (*nadîtu*) with whom she would share the inheritance.[39] Because we know there was a male 'head' of the *qadištu*s they constituted a distinct group.[40]

The rest of the letter is full of interest and so we will not withhold it from our readers. It is addressed to the king. The writer states that after the death of her father, the slave of the holy woman had himself been adopted as a son by somebody. But he stole his mistress's goods and gave them to his adoptive father, comprising a cow, 11 sheep and 2400 litres of barley. If that holy woman owned so much she can hardly be described as poor. She demanded an explanation.

> You are my slave! Let the one who snatched you away from me come here.

36 A. 1186, translated by J.-M. Durand in: G. del Olmo Lete, *Mythologie et religion des Sémites occidentaux* I (2008) 407–410, 565; J. M. Sasson, *From the Mari archives* (2015) 265.

37 But note that in ARM 10 59 rev. 4 f. a holy woman is dedicated to Annunitum who never is a family goddess. K. van der Toorn, *Family religion in Babylonia* (1996) 71 (n. 23), assumes that she was the personal goddess of Ur-Utu.

38 AbB 10 8:12, Riftin 131, VAS 7 183 i 18, etc., YOS 13 425.

39 MHET II/1 105, 110.

40 OECT 13 58:5, 6.

The man arrived and was asked a direct question.

> Is it fitting that I should authorise the adoption of the slave of a holy woman, someone not of free birth?

The problem was not immediately solved and so a request was made to the king.

> Let my lord consider his lawsuit! It is not right that a free woman, a holy woman, should be disadvantaged. The man is a slave, not someone who is free-born.

This is the kind of problem an independent woman may encounter, for after the death of her father she would had to stand alone.

The holy woman could be a high-ranking woman, sometimes married to an important man. A good example of this is Ilša-ḫegal, the wife of the First Lamentation Singer in Sippar.[41] It is probable that she was not allowed to have children and so she often adopted children for her husband. These children were possibly the sons of his concubines. For the monthly rations of food the wife and the concubines were listed beside each other, so it is thought.[42] There are two texts in which a *qadištu* formally adopted a girl with the intention of 'giving her to her man' as a second wife.[43] In the first, she had given the girl (her niece) to her own husband with the following stipulation:

> She shall wash her feet. She shall carry her chair after her to the temple of Adad. She shall not be forward (?) and she shall not approach her husband in her presence.

27.2.2 Holy women of lower standing

The picture is less favourable for women dedicated to a god other than Adad. Two incantations from the Old Babylonian period concerned with winning a woman's love mention her, together with the well-known 'nun' *nadîtu*, and the woman with the styled hair, the *kezertu*, probably a temple prostitute. It seems

41 K. van Lerberghe, MHET I (1991) no. 66; C. Janssen, RA 86 (1992) 32 (n. 33).

42 L. Barberon, NABU 2005/89, on Ilša-ḫegal.

43 CT 48 57 with Westbrook, OBML, 103b, 124; Wilcke, 'Familiengründung', 261 n. 68; L. Barberon, NABU 2005/89; *Les religieuses* (2012) 20. Another holy woman adopts a girl in order to give her in marriage later, YOS 14 121 with S. D. Simmons, JCS 15 (1961) 56 no. 131 (Tarmaya nu.gig). A third text is A. Goddeeris, *Tablets from Kisurra* (2009) no. 230.

that a holy woman might attract a lover,[44] which gives us further food for thought. Incidentally, the appearance of the nun in this erotic context already in the Old Babylonian period is highly surprising. According to a handbook with legal formulas from Nippur, a holy woman could be married from off the street and could directly breast-feed a child.[45] Remarkably she is often associated in the Old Babylonian period with the birth of a child, when she apparently functioned as a paid midwife.[46] She could also function as a wet-nurse, breast-feeding children for payment. In a letter one Ilša-ḫegal was paid for breast-feeding.[47] Highly placed holy woman would not have done this themselves, but they led an institution where children were suckled.[48] It has been suggested that they or the *ištarītu*s suckled the Assyrian princes, which seems a cute idea: 'We know that Assyrian princes were entrusted as infants to temples of Ištar, almost certainly to be suckled and nursed by hierodules who impersonated the motherly aspects of the Goddess.'[49]

This all fits in with the mythical story of the first birth of humankind.

> Let the midwife be glad in the house of the holy woman.[50]

In another myth the mother goddess is assigned the 'role' of the holy woman. There it was said no man ought to see her activities.[51] In an abnormal situation they were connected in literary texts with infant deaths. In 'The Curse of Akkad' we read:

> May your mother *nu.gig*, your mother *nu.bar*, kill their children.[52]

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44 A. R. George, *Babylonian literary texts in the Schøyen Collection* (= CUSAS 10) (2009) 68 f., lines 12–14, and YOS 11 87; Barberon, 181 n. 1057.

45 MSL 1 (1937) 99 f.

46 M. Civil, CUSAS 17 (2011) 281–283: 'the *nugig* was a midwife, with duties not limited to the parturition but extending all through the pregnancy'; Barberon, *Les religieuses*, 183, 207 f.

47 AbB 1 6:23, 26. In the archive of a holy woman a suckling contract was found, which was possibly an exercise made in school; Barberon in F. Briquel-Chatonnet, *Femmes* (2009) 280.

48 K. van der Toorn, *From her cradle to her grave* (1994) 84–86; M. Stol, *Birth in Babylonia and the Bible* (2000) 186–188.

49 S. Parpola, SAA IX (1997) p. XXXIX with p. IC, note 174.

50 Atram-ḫasis I 290.

51 M. Civil, JAOS 103 (1983) 57:154, with p. 65b (W. G. Lambert).

52 Line 241; J. G. Westenholz, Harvard Theological Review 82 (1989) 258 f. For more examples of these women wilfully killing babies, see R. Borger, AOAT 1 (1969) 4:11, §III; A. Cavigneaux, ZA 95 (1985) 193 f.; M. E. Cohen, *The canonical lamentations of Ancient Mesopotamia* I (1988) 274:14, 299:23 (Akkadian [*ummu išta*]*rītu ummu kulmašītu*); M. J. Geller, *Evil Demons* (2007) 116 Tablet 4:151; 119 Tablet 5:22 (the *qadištu*).

The role of the *qadištu* outside Babylonia and at later periods is unclear. In any case she did not have the high status that Lady Ilša-ḫegal of Adad had in Sippar. We have already come across her uncertain role as second wife in the Old Assyrian period in Chapter 5. In that culture it is evident that she was a woman of proven fertility and that would seem to be the chief reason she was taken on. The fact that her fertility had been proven meant that she was no longer a virgin, so not a first-class partner. According to the Middle Assyrian laws she was not veiled, though a respectable woman would have been.

> A holy woman whom a husband has married is veiled on the street. And whomever a husband has not married goes bare-headed on to the street. She may not be veiled.

Similarly a slave-girl and a prostitute were not veiled (§ 40).[53] In Syria the holy woman is mentioned in a curse.

> May a holy woman set up the ancestors' stele in his house.

This could be a disdainful reference to a prostitute.[54]

In Emar in Syria we find a holy woman who already had three daughters. When she married a man she stipulated that he had to marry her eldest daughter. If that daughter died, it would be the turn of the second daughter.[55] At first sight this could mean that the man was married to both the mother and the daughter. But it could mean that the marriage to the oldest daughter would take place only after the mother had died.

In Emar the holy woman is also a respected daughter whose father indicated in his will that she would be 'the father and the mother' after his death and would have the right of inheritance.[56] Possibly therefore the situation in Syria was different. We have seen that also in Syria the word *ḫarīmtu* can scarcely have the meaning of prostitute, since a man who called his daughter a *ḫarīmtu* expected her to be 'father and mother of his house'.[57] Here we are far away from Babylonia. The literal meaning of *ḫarīmtu*, 'a woman set apart' (as in Arabic *ḥarīm*) may be more relevant here.

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53 For veiling, see Chapter 1, The Veil.

54 *Ekalte* II 61:27 f. with L. Marti, NABU 2006/58.

55 *Emar* VI/3 131 no. 124, TUAT NF 1 (2004) 148 f., cf. Durand, RA 84 (1990) 58.

56 G. Beckman, *Texts from the vicinity of Emar* (1996) 76, on RE 57:4; A. Tsukimoto, ASJ 13 (1991) 285 no. 23 (together with her mother). For a holy woman who inherits, see *Ekalte* II 76.

57 *Emar* VI/3 no. 33 with Th. Kämmerer, UF 26 (1994) 187–190.

In later periods the *qadištu* appears only in rituals singing laments.[58] It has been suggested that she was 'a hierodule who served in fertility rites and as a wet-nurse, and she was most probably also working in (cultic) prostitution', but there is no proof for this.[59] She could also be thought of as a witch. In later incantations the nuns, *kulmašītu*s and 'holy women' from the Old Babylonian period were called witches one after the other. At that time there were only three words for classifying a woman active in a cult, and everything points to the fact that some of the women were 'witches' working in the underbelly of society, possibly in temple prostitution.[60]

Some Bible scholars have shown a lively interest in these dark ladies. In Hebrew the word for a 'holy woman' is *qᵉdešā*, and in Genesis 38 she is also called *zōnā*,'whore'. In the narrative about Judah and his daughter-in-law Tamar we read how she positioned herself as a whore at the roadside, in such a way that it was enough to convince Judah that she was a whore. In English Bible translations (Genesis 38:14 f.) it seems that she donned a veil and then she covered (?) herself, but the meaning of this last verb depends on the interpretation of the *hitpa'el* theme of the Hebrew root *'-l-p*. One Hebrew dictionary refers to the suggestion that the verb really meant to perfume oneself. Nevertheless, the story makes it clear that Judah could not see her face, not even when they were having sex together. This is surprising enough in itself, but we should also remember that there is a problem with the traditional translation of the verb, since it would not have been expected for a whore to veil herself. It certainly contradicts what is said in the Assyrian laws.[61] When he realised his mistake Judah called her 'the holy woman' (*qᵉdešā*) (21 f.). To understand the problems in the narrative the following theory can be proposed. A *qᵉdešā* was a married woman who was prohibited from having children. By acting as a prostitute she had the chance to become pregnant, but to remain anonymous she would have to cover herself with a veil. Though well-meaning this theory can at best be regarded a desperate stab in the dark. Why Tamar seduced her father-in-law is discussed in Chapter 14 about levirate marriage. She had the right to offspring from him and a lawyer interprets her action as *bonus dolus*, 'a good deception'.

58 KAR 154 with M. Gruber, UF 18 (1986) 139–141.

59 S. Parpola, LAS, Commentary (1983) 182 f. Ištar is called both 'whore' and *qadištu*, but this does not prove that the *qadištu* was a prostitute. The translation 'the holy Ištar' is preferable.

60 D. Schwemer, *Abwehrzauber und Behexung* (2007) 76 f. On the *ištarītu*, see S. L. Macgregor, *Beyond hearth and home* (2012) 10–12 (in the periphery; a witch).

61 As observed by G. von Rad (see Westenholz, Harvard Theol. Review 82, 247) and by Oswalt (see Gruber, UF 18, 144 n. 53).

27.3 The *kulmašītu*

The *kulmašītu* is often linked with the *qadištu*. Both titles occur together in the fixed Sumerian phrase *nu.gig nu.bar*, Akkadian *qadištu kulmašītu*, where *nu.bar* stands for *kulmašītu*. A Sumerian literary letter says that neglecting to 'install the *qadištu* and the *kulmašītu* in the places of the gods', a reference to maintaining service in the temple, amounts to barbarianism.[62] In the Old Babylonian period the *kulmašītu* was a 'nun' with full rights. There were various men who were 'head of the *kulmašītu*s', one of whom was called the 'servant of Hammurabi', indicating that he fulfilled duties for the state.[63] He is named in a list among lament singers and ordinary singers.[64] This might be appropriate since we know that a *qadištu* had a distinctive singing voice. The etymology of *kulmašītu* is obscure,[65] but it could be linked to the name of a city and mean 'a woman from Kulmiš'. Kulmiš in the Mari texts is where Adad had priestesses (*ereš.dingir.ra*), and Adad was also linked to the high-ranking *qadištu*s. It was Adad, not Ištar, who was primarily associated with these women, and as the rain god Adad can be equated with the West-Semitic rain god Baal.

Both the *qadištu* and the *kulmašītu* are mentioned in incantations. One listing the phases of human life places them after the infant, the menstruating girl and the young man, so it is logical to suppose that these women were physically mature. The text states that adolescents were unable to perform the physical functions expected of them because of an affliction of Samana, the Red Demon.[66] D. Arnaud, referring to this passage, discusses the *nu.gig* but his comments apply equally to the *nu.bar*. He says, 'Perhaps the references to the *nu.gig* in an incantation against the Red Demon should be understood to mean that she was hindered in her profession. It could mean the loss of milk or something similar.'[67] The *kulmašītu* was proficient in suckling for she was known to possess a 'mother's breast for seven' ('Sumerian Temple Hymns', 390). Although the meaning of this expression is opaque, but it seems to be a poetic reference to an abundant supply

62 W. W. Hallo in: *Studies F. R. Kraus* (1982) 98:24 (var. in TCL 16 56:1).

63 CT 48 53, seal 2 (Šamaš-liwwir); for more see K. R. Veenhof, JEOL 35 (1987–88) 35; also in MHET II/3 427 case rev. 4 (sic).

64 OLA 21 no. 4:6. Cf. S. Richardson, TLOB 51:9.

65 A *kulmašu* is now known from a royal inscription and can be associated with music: 'I installed a *k.*, two hundred women *tigû*-players, (to perform) great music'; RIME 4 (1990) 674:51–57. For the *kulmašītu* and music see D. Shehata, *Musiker und ihr vokales Repertoire* (2009) 100.

66 J. Nougayrol, ArOr 17/3–4 (1949) 213 f., lines 11–15; see ZA 57, 118; I. L. Finkel, *Festschrift R. Borger* (1998) 72–76.

67 Revue de l'Histoire des Religions 183 (1973) 114.

of mother's milk, and that her breast was like 'the seven-nippled vessel', i.e. a jug with seven openings.[68] A much later incantation mentions a sick *qadištu* and a sick *ištarītu* showing that they were prone to specific illnesses,[69] illnesses which may have been related to breast-feeding. We have already seen that in abnormal circumstances both of them could 'kill' their 'children' (Curse of Akkad, 241), which could have been a consequence of bad breast-feeding. Later texts suggest that the *kulmašītu* enjoyed a measure of sexual liberty. In Chapter 20 about prostitution we recalled a wise warning against the 'woman of Ištar' and the *kulmašītu*:

> Do not trust a *kulmašītu* who is approached by many.[70]

At the end of Chapter 26 we saw how the status of the Old Babylonian prude *nadîtu* was forgotten by later generations and how her role was misinterpreted. The same obtains for the 'holy woman' and the *kulmašītu*. In his study on prostitution W. G. Lambert presents the evidence on these and other titles in earlier and later periods. Most references date to the later first millennium or are found in ill-informed lexical equivalents.[71] One example is a handbook with a chapter on omina about a city. It says that in a city such ladies can be 'numerous' and here even male *nadîtu*s are mentioned (*nadû*). Clearly this is a thoughtless concatenation of ancient words stupidly expanded.[72]

68 A. Falkenstein, ZA 56 (1964) 120, followed by J. Renger, ZA 58 (1967) 187; as opposed to Sjöberg, TCS 3 (1969) 123b (a jar with seven teats). For such vessels see D. Pickworth in *Studies A. D. Kilmer* (2011) 195–205.

69 J. Prosecký suggested they were venereal diseases; *Šulmu* (1988) 287–299.

70 *Babylonian wisdom literature*, 102:74 with p. 314 (*ša qé-reb-šá ma-'-d*[*a*]); W. von Soden *apud* D. O. Edzard, ZA 55 (1962) 107 n. 79 (*qerbu*); now TUAT III/1 (1990) 166 (*qerēbu*).

71 W. G. Lambert, 'Prostitution', in: V. Haas, *Außenseiter und Randgruppen* (1992) 127–157.

72 S. M. Freedman, *If a city is set on a height* I (1998) 36 f., Tablet I 136–139, cf. Haas, *Außenseiter*, 41 f.