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Set in Times
The Assyrian Royal Seal emblem drawn by Dominique Collon from original Seventh Century B.C. impressions (BM 84672 and 84677) in the British Museum
Cover: Sennacherib sitting on his throne at Lachish, BM 124911 (detail)
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NEO-ASSYRIAN SOURCES
IN CONTEXT

Thematic Studies on Texts, History, and Culture

Edited by
Shigeo Yamada

THE NEO-ASSYRIAN TEXT CORPUS PROJECT
2018
The emergence of the Neo-Assyrian Empire in the eighth-seventh centuries BC is one of the outstanding phenomena in the history of the ancient Near East. The multi-language and multi-cultural state stretching over an extensive area of the ancient Near East has long been recognized and studied as one of the earliest imperial political entities. The philological study of inscriptional sources from the Neo-Assyrian period has rapidly progressed, especially since the 1980s, with a number of large-scale editorial projects that include the State Archives of Assyria Project (Helsinki), the Royal Inscriptions of Mesopotamia Project (Toronto), the Royal Inscriptions of the Neo-Assyrian Period Project (Pennsylvania), the Assur Project (Berlin) and the Edition literarischer Keilschrifttexte aus Assur (Heidelberg). These projects have provided us with the text editions and hand copies of various materials (such as administrative/legal texts, letters, religious/literary texts, and royal and private commemorative inscriptions, etc.), either previously known or newly worked on, with high standards of philological accuracy. Hence, the time has come to undertake a variety of advanced research on the texts of the Neo-Assyrian period from new perspectives using different sorts of sources in combination, alongside the study of specific corpuses and text genres. On this tide, the seminar “Interaction, interplay and combined use of different sources in Neo-Assyrian studies: Monumental texts and archival sources” was held at the University of Tsukuba and the Tsukuba International Congress Center (Tsukuba, Ibaraki, Japan) on December 11–13, 2014, with the program given below. The event was supported by the fund for the Finnish-Japanese joint seminar sponsored by the Academy of Finland and the Japan Society for the Promotion of Science (representatives: Raija Mattila and Shigeo Yamada), as well as by a Japanese research grant (MEXT KAKENHI 24101007). I especially owe gratitude to Raija Mattila, Daisuke Shibata, and the staff of the Research Center for West Asian Civilization at the University of Tsukuba for their kind cooperation in organizing the meeting.

Seminar Program:
**Day 1** (Dec. 11)
13:30~17:30 Session 1 (Chair: Shigeo Yamada)
- Sebastian Fink, “Different Sources – Different Kings? The Picture of the Neo-Assyrian King in Inscriptions, Letters and Literary Texts”
- Raija Mattila, “The Military Role of Magnates and Governors: Royal Inscriptions vs Archival and Literary Sources”
- Jamie Novotny, “Late Neo-Assyrian Building Histories: Tradition, Ideology, and Historical Reality”
Shuichi Hasegawa, “Use of Archaeological Data for the Investigation of the Itineraries of Assyrian Military Campaigns”

Day 2 (Dec. 12)
10:00~12:00 Session 2 (Chair: Daisuke Shibata)
Greta Van Buylaere, “Tracing the Neo-Elamite Kingdom of Zamin in Neo-Assyrian and Neo-Babylonian Sources”
Shigeo Yamada, “Ulluba and Its Surroundings: Tiglath-pileser III’s Province Making Facing the Urartian Border, Reconsidered from Royal Inscriptions and Letters”
13:30~17:30 Session 3 (Chair: Raija Mattila)
Robert Rollinger, “Yawan in Neo-Assyrian Sources: Monumental and Archival Texts in Dialogue”
Sanae Ito, “Propaganda and Historical Reality in the Nabû-bēl-šumāti Affair in Letters and Royal Inscriptions”
Andreas Fuchs, “How to Implement Safe and Secret Lines of Communication Using Iron Age Technology: Evidence from a Letter to a God and a Letter to a King”
Jamie Novotony and Chikako E. Watanabe, “Unraveling the Mystery of an Unrecorded Event: Identifying the Four Foreigners Paying Homage to Assurbanipal in BM ME 124945-6”

Day 3 (Dec. 13)
10:00~12:00 Session 4 (Chair: Robert Rollinger)
Grant Frame, “Lost in the Tigris: Trials and Tribulations in Editing Royal Inscriptions of Sargon II of Assyria”
Karen Radner, “The Last Emperor: Aššur-uballit II in Archival and Historiographic Sources”
13:30~17:30 Session 5 (Chair: Chikako Watanabe)
Saana Svärd, “‘Doing Gender’: Women, Family and Ethnicity in the Neo-Assyrian Letters and Royal Inscriptions”
Silvie Zamazalová, “Images of an Omen Fulfilled: Šumma ālu in the Inscriptions of Sargon II”
Mikko Luukko, “The Anonymity of Authors and Patients: Some Comparisons between the Neo-Assyrian Correspondence and Mesopotamian Anti-witchcraft Rituals”
Daisuke Shibata, “The Akītu-festival of Ištar at Nineveh: Royal Inscriptions and Emesal-prayers”

The present volume contains 14 articles. The majority of them follow the original papers read in the seminar relatively faithfully, though some have largely been expanded and/or changed in the focus of discussion. Daisuke Shibata and Robert Rollinger preferred to keep their papers out of this volume and may publish their research results elsewhere.

The combined use of different genres of text is an obvious need for many thematic studies, and it has already been attempted for a long time in studies concerning the Neo-Assyrian period and Assyriology in general. Thus, the collection of articles in this volume may mostly not be very special in the methodological sense. It may be of value, however, to classify the articles from the viewpoint of the theme of the above-mentioned seminar to review what sorts of studies were made and what kinds
of approaches and methods were used. In this volume, the articles are presented in the same order as they are given in the following rather arbitrary overview:

(1) One major group comprises a variety of historical studies that naturally require the use of various textual sources related to historical reconstructions of any kind (political, social, administrative, cultural, or geographical), either commemorative or archival, dated or undated, literary texts or practical sober documents, or textual or pictographic. Eight articles may be assigned to this group. Mattila highlighted the military role of high officials, magnates, and governors that is concealed and only rarely referred to in royal inscriptions but often referred to in other texts such as private inscriptions, administrative texts, eponym chronicles, letters, oracles, and literary compositions. Yamada scrutinized the process of Tiglath-pileser III’s province-building along the Urartian border, utilizing the king’s inscriptions and Eponym Chronicles as a chronological backbone while reinforcing those data with Assyrian letters and Urartian inscriptions. Fuchs’ article is a unique piece discussing geo-political issues and Assyrian strategic thinking related to Sargon’s campaign against Urartu in 714 BC, with the complementary use of two different sources, i.e., the highly literary composition stylized as a letter to a god commemorating this military enterprise on one hand, and a practical intelligence report written during the ongoing campaign on the other. Van Buylaere tackled the problem of Zamin, a town attested in Neo-Elamite sources, and identified it with Samuna of Neo-Assyrian/Neo-Babylonian sources. Thus, bridging between the different linguistic materials, she reconstructed the historical-geographical circumstances under which this town was situated. Ito advanced a new study of the affair of Nabû-bēl-šumāti, the rebellious prince of Bit-Yakin punished by Ashurbanipal. To reconstruct the relevant events historically, she analyzed details given in rich epistolary sources in combination with information from royal inscriptions and other texts. The joint study of Novotny and Watanabe dealt with the personal and ethnic identity of four foreigners depicted on a wall relief of the North Palace in Nineveh as submitting to Ashurbanipal after the fall of Babylon. The study analyzed the pictographic details with circumstantial evidence from the king’s inscriptions. Svärd assembled and viewed data about groups of women involved in the temple administration (šēlūtu, kazarunu, mašītu, qadissu, entu) from various archival texts—contracts, administrative records, decrees, oracles, and letters—to consider the social context in which they were involved. Finally, Radner’s study concerned the last ruler of Assyria, Aššur-uballiṭ II. She pointed out a remarkable fact that Aššur-uballiṭ was regarded only as a crown prince in Assyrian archival documents even after the death of his father, Sin-šarru-iškun, persuasively explaining this phenomenon by reflecting the lack of the accession ceremony after the fall of the religious capital, Assur. Thus, she displayed the official Assyrian view in contrast with the Babylonian Chronicle, where Aššur-uballiṭ II is referred to as the king of Assyria.

(2) Another group comprises comparative or contrastive literary studies of different text genres concerning specific terms, concepts, and ideologies, and it occasionally also deals with the problem of intertextuality. Fink analyzed royal portraits as projected in royal inscriptions, letters, and various literary works—historiographical texts, wisdom literature, and folk tales—touching on their different ideological-functional modes of composition. The unique article of Luukko concerned the anonymity and related phenomena commonly observed in the corpora of Neo-Assyrian denunciation letters and Mesopotamian anti-
witchcraft rituals. Comparing both corpora, he discussed the common motive of self-protection found behind them and attempted to explain the social norm in which the anonymous denunciation letters were written. Zamazalová investigated the image of mountains from the Mesopotamian viewpoint in monumental texts, letters, and literary and scholarly compositions. Thus, she demonstrated the ideologically formulated description of mountains as royal heroic space in royal inscriptions, particularly those of Sargon II, while comparing it with texts of other genres and discussing possible intertextuality between them.

(3) Other articles, though each unique, discuss the philological or historiographical problems of royal inscriptions in some connection with archaeology. Frame’s article presented the unusual philological complexity that he encountered in his editing of Sargon II’s inscriptions, particularly those inscribed on the stone slabs found at Khorsabad. He described dramatic historical circumstances that later caused complexity, i.e., the loss of excavated original inscriptions and the subsequent remains of incomplete fragmentary and oft-contradicting records. Then, he illustrated his complicated work in reconstructing the lost original. Hasegawa discussed the reliability of “itineraries” found in Assyrian royal inscriptions and that of archaeological data for the identification of ancient sites. He gave several caveats for the critical interpretation of both sorts of evidence. Novotny critically analyzed the building accounts of the late Neo-Assyrian royal inscriptions by interrelating and comparing those from various periods. Thus, he showed that the “building history” given in the royal inscriptions refer only selectively to the predecessors’ building works and often appear misleading or incorrect.

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In various stages of editorial work, I had kind advice and assistance from Raija Mattila, Daisuke Shibata, Jamie Novotny, Chikako Watanabe, Keiko Yamada, and Yasuyuki Mitsuma. I am very grateful to all of them. I would like to thank Simo Parpola for his generous acceptance of this volume in the State Archives of Assyria Studies, as the director of the Neo-Assyrian Text Corpus Project.

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<tr>
<td>AAA</td>
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<td>ABL</td>
<td>R. F. Harper, Assyrian and Babylonian Letters belonging to the Kouyunjik Collection of the British Museum (Chicago 1892–1914)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ActAnt.</td>
<td>Acta Antiqua Academiae Scientiarum Hungaricae (Budapest)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>AfO</td>
<td>Archiv für Orientforschung (Berlin etc.)</td>
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<tr>
<td>AJSL</td>
<td>The American Journal of Semitic Languages and Literatures (Chicago)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>AMD</td>
<td>Ancient Magic and Divination (Groningen/Leiden)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>AnOr.</td>
<td>Analecta Orientalia (Rome)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>AOAT</td>
<td>Alter Orient und Altes Testament (Neukirchen-Vluyn/Münster)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>AS</td>
<td>Assyriological Studies (Chicago)</td>
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<tr>
<td>BA</td>
<td>Beiträge zur Assyriologie und semitischen Sprachwissenschaft (Leipzig)</td>
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<tr>
<td>BagM</td>
<td>Baghdader Mitteilungen (Berlin/Mainz)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>BBVO</td>
<td>Berliner Beiträge zum Vorderen Orient (Berlin)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CAD</td>
<td>The Assyrian Dictionary of the University of Chicago (Chicago/Glückstadt)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CDOG</td>
<td>Colloquien der Deutsche Orient-Gesellschaft (Saarbrücken/Wiesbaden)</td>
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<tr>
<td>CHANE</td>
<td>Culture and History of the Ancient Near East (Leiden)</td>
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<td>CM</td>
<td>Cuneiform Monographs (Groningen/Leiden)</td>
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<td>CMAwR 1</td>
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| CT 54        | M. Dietrich, Cuneiform Texts from Babylonian Tablets in the British Museum Part 54: Neo-Babylonian Letters from the
Kuyunjik Collection (London 1979)
CTN Cuneiform Texts from Nimrud (London)
CTU M. Salvini, *Corpus dei testi urartei*, I-III (Rome 2008)
CUSAS Cornell University Studies in Assyriology and Sumerology (Bethesda, MD)
IEJ *Israel Exploration Journal* (Jerusalem)
IrAnt. *Iranica Antiqua* (Gent/Leuven)
Iraq *Iraq: Journal of the British School of Archaeology in Iraq* (London)
Isimu *Isimu: Revista sobre Oriente Próximo y Egipto en la antigüedad* (Madrid)
JA *Journal Asiaticque* (Paris)
JAOS *Journal of the American Oriental Society* (New Haven etc.)
JCS *Journal of Cuneiform Studies* (New Haven etc.)
JESHO *Journal of the Economic and Social History of the Orient* (Leiden)
JNES *Journal of Near Eastern Studies* (Chicago)
KAR E. Ebeling, *Keilschrifttexte aus Assur religiösen Inhalts* (Leipzig 1919)
Kaskal *Kaskal: rivista di storia, ambiente e culture del vicino oriente antico* (Padua)
MC Mesopotamian Civilizations (Winona Lake, IN)
MDP Mémoires de la Délégation en Perse (Paris)
MSL Materialien zum sumerischen Lexikon = Materials for the Sumerian Lexicon (Rome)
MVAG Mitteilungen der Vorderasiatischen Gesellschaft (Berlin/Leiden)
NABU *Nouvelles Assyriologiques Brèves et Utilitaires* (Rouen/Paris)
OLA Orientalia Lovaniensia Analecta (Leuven)
Or. / Or. NS Orientalia Nova Series (Rome)
PIHANS Publications de l’Institut Historique-Archéologique Néerlandais de Stamboul (Leiden)
RA *Revue d’Assyriologie et d’Archéologie Orientale* (Paris)
RGTC Répertoire Géographique des Textes Cunéiformes (Tübingen Atlas des Vorderen Orients, Beiheft Reihe B, Wiesbaden)
ABBREVIATIONS AND OBJECT SIGNATURES

RIMA  The Royal Inscriptions of Mesopotamia, Assyrian Periods (Toronto)
RIMA 1 A. K. Grayson, Assyrian Rulers of the Third and Second Millennium BC (to 1115 BC) (Toronto 1987)
RIMA 3 A. K. Grayson, Assyrian Rulers of the Early First Millennium BC: II (858–745 BC) (Toronto 1996)
RIME 2 D. R. Frayne, Sargonic and Gutian Periods (2334–2113 BC), The Royal Inscriptions of Mesopotamia, Early Periods 2 (Toronto 1993)
RINAP The Royal Inscriptions of the Neo-Assyrian Period (Winona Lake, IN)
RINAP 1 H. Tadmor, and S. Yamada, The Royal Inscriptions of Tiglath-pileser III (744–727 BC) and Shalmaneser V (726–722 BC), Kings of Assyria (Winona Lake, IN 2011)
RINAP 4 E. Leichty, The Royal Inscriptions of Esarhaddon, King of Assyria (680–669 BC) (Winona Lake, IN 2011)
RIA Reallexikon der Assyriologie (und Vorderasiatischen Archäologie) (Berlin/Leipzig)
SAA State Archives of Assyria (Helsinki)
SAA 1 S. Parpola, The Correspondence of Sargon II, Part I: Letters from Assyria and the West (Helsinki 1987)
SAA 2 S. Parpola and K. Watanabe, Neo-Assyrian Treaties and Loyalty Oaths (Helsinki 1988)
SAA 3 A. Livingstone, Court Poetry and Literary Miscellanea (Helsinki 1989)
SAA 5 G. B. Lanfranchi and S. Parpola, The Correspondence of Sargon II, Part II: Letters from the Northern and Northeastern Provinces (Helsinki 1990)
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<td>SAAB</td>
<td><em>State Archives of Assyria. Bulletin</em> (Padua)</td>
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<td>SAAC</td>
<td>State Archives of Assyria. Cuneiform Texts (Helsinki)</td>
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<td>SAAAS</td>
<td>State Archives of Assyria. Studies (Helsinki)</td>
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<td>SANER</td>
<td>Studies in Ancient Near Eastern Records (Boston/Berlin)</td>
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<td>Studies in Ancient Oriental Civilization (Chicago)</td>
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<td>TCL</td>
<td>Textes cunéiformes. Musées du Louvre (Paris)</td>
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<td>F. Thureau-Dangin, <em>Une relation de la huitième campagne de Sargon (714 av. J.-C.)</em> (Paris 1912)</td>
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<td>TCS</td>
<td>Texts from Cuneiform Sources (Locast Valley, NY)</td>
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<td>TIM</td>
<td>Texts in the Iraq Museum (Baghdad/Wiesbaden)</td>
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<td>WO</td>
<td><em>Die Welt des Orients: Wissenschaftliche Beiträge zur Kunde des Morgenlandes</em> (Wuppertal/Göttingen)</td>
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<tr>
<td>ZA</td>
<td>Zeitschrift für Assyriologie und Vorderasiatische Archäologie (Berlin etc.)</td>
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### Abbreviations and Object Signatures

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<thead>
<tr>
<th>Abbreviation</th>
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<tr>
<td>ZDMG</td>
<td>Zeitschrift der Deutschen Morgenländischen Gesellschaft (Mainz/Wiesbaden)</td>
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### Object Signatures

- **A**  Aššur collection of Istanbul Arkeoloji Müzeleri
- **Assur**  Siglum of texts excavated in the German excavation at Assur
- **BM**  British Museum, London
- **HMA**  Hearst Museum of Anthropology of the University of California at Berkeley
- **K**  Kuyunjik collection of the British Museum, London
- **MMA**  The Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York
- **N**  Nippur collection the University Museum, Philadelphia
- **ND**  Field numbers of tablets excavated in Nimrud
- **O**  Siglum of texts in the Royal Museum of Art and History, Brussels
- **Rm**  H. Rassam collection of the British Museum
- **SÉ**  The convent Saint-Étienne, Jerusalem
- **VA**  Vorderasiatisches Museum, Berlin
- **VAT**  Tablets in the collections of the staatliche Museen, Berlin.
- **YBC**  Babylonian collection of the Yale University Library, New Haven
Women in Neo-Assyrian Temples

Saana Svärd, Helsinki

1. Introduction

This paper discusses certain groups of women who were connected with Neo-Assyrian temple institutions. I will first discuss the “dedicated women,” the šēlūtu. Second, I will discuss mašītu and kazarītu women, who are attested without having a clear role in the cultic proceedings. These mašītu and kazarītu women seem to have belonged to the temples as property, but possibly with some special status. The last two sections discuss women involved in cultic actions: qadissu, ēntu and some of the women in the royal court. The article will concentrate mostly on the textual evidence regarding these women, presenting an up-to-date overview of the sources and suggesting some new interpretations of the material. For the writing of Assyrian words, I follow the forms suggested in Parpola 2007.

These five specific groups of women were chosen for several reasons. First, I wanted to examine the institutional role of women in the temples. Any clear social groups in the temples are interesting from that point of view. Second, these five groups of women are less well researched than the better attested groups of female prophets (raggintu) and female musicians (nargallitu and nuārtu). Finally, despite earlier studies on Neo-Assyrian temple institutions, the aim here is to analyze women in temples and cults from a fresh point of view of social reality. This focus on administration and institutional roles has led me to exclude some female cultic titles that appear only in lexical or literary texts (for example, ištarītu). I discuss in detail only administrative texts, deeds, documents and letters. Other texts, such as lexical lists, literary texts and ritual texts, will be referred to in a more limited way.

In this paper, “temple” refers to cultic centers and religious institutions whose

1 I would like to thank the Neo-Assyrian Text Corpus Project and its director Professor Simo Parpola for allowing access to the project database (Corpus of Neo-Assyrian), which has been very helpful. Please note that some of the topics in this article have been previously preliminarily discussed in Svärd 2008, 74–84, an early work which remains in many respects a rudimentary analysis of the situation. All dates in the article are BCE unless otherwise indicated.

2 For individual occurrences of women in cults, see Menzel 1981, 295–296.


5 Especially Menzel 1981 should be mentioned here, but see also Macgregor 2012, 7–15 for a recent overview of some of these groups (ēntu, šēlūtu, ištarītu and qadissu).
primary function was connected with serving a deity. “Palace,” on the other hand, refers to the administrative institutions that were primarily interested in the empire running smoothly. However, the division between “palace” and “temple” is to a large extent artificial when applied to the Neo-Assyrian Empire. Kingship was divinely sanctioned, and one of the king’s main duties was to take care of the gods’ households, the temples. One need only glance through the volumes of the State Archives of Assyria publication series to see evidence of this: divinations, correspondence and administrative texts all attest to the close connection between the royal and divine spheres of action. Yet, it is interesting to see how connections between the palace and the temple emerge also in the material concerned with these women, especially the royal women. This aspect will be discussed further in the final sections.

2. The šēlūtu

The nine texts where the term šēlūtu appears are presented below in Table 1. The term itself is derived from the verb elû, “to go up,” (in Š-stem “to dedicate”). The texts demonstrate that these women are referred to either in connection with marriage or as belonging to a temple. On four occasions, the šēlūtu is getting married, which is remarkable because of the rarity of Neo-Assyrian marriage contracts. Usually marriage was only regulated with contracts if there were special circumstances. Dedication to a temple denoted a protected status in a sense. Persons dedicated to a temple were in its service, but simultaneously they were part of a stable institutional household and were provisioned, perhaps even well provisioned. Although the number of the texts is small, it does seem plausible that being dedicated as a šēlūtu had a connection to being married. I would suggest that it could have served as “insurance” for a married woman. Some of the texts dealing with marriages of šēlūtu exhibit concern for circumstances surrounding the ending of marriage, due to either the death of the husband or a divorce (or in one case of circumstances of a marriage not yet in effect, see the possible case of a child bride in StAT 2 184). Also, one of the texts attests that becoming a šēlūtu was something that could happen simultaneously with marriage. It would appear possible that if a married woman found herself in a situation where she was left without a husband, being a šēlūtu would be a good backup plan. Perhaps becoming a šēlūtu was an option for women in general who were no longer (or not yet) part of a private household. They could have a position in society and a guaranteed level of financial security for themselves and their children, as well as lodgings and food at the temple at the very least. However, it seems quite probable that there were many women

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[^6]: For the Neo-Babylonian period, see Waerzeggers 2011, 725. See also Jursa 2011, 188–189.
[^9]: As already noted by Postgate (1979, 99), being dedicated to a temple provided an alternative
in the Neo-Assyrian Empire who would have needed assistance after the death of their husbands. If the practice was common, one would expect more than nine texts to have survived. Thus, causality could be envisaged the other way around: perhaps because of these women’s special status as šēlūtu, they were sometimes protected by special marriage agreements, unlike “normal” women. Another possibility could be that there was a connection of some kind here with Egyptian marriage customs, which for the elite women tended to be more advantageous than the Mesopotamian marriage. Perhaps such foreign customs necessitated special contracts. Nevertheless, since only three of the texts refer explicitly to Egyptians, this suggestion will have to remain very tentative.

Finally, I would suggest that the women who were dedicated to the temples were not necessarily of low status. Considering the rarity of these documents in the Neo-Assyrian era, it seems that dedicating a šēlūtu was a rare occurrence. Surely it represented a special investment in the future of the woman, despite some of them being objects of sale. It seems that becoming a šēlūtu or/and wife was about creating a specific legal status for the woman; thus, it did not merely represent the sale of another slave. There is little evidence regarding their cultic duties, although at least in one text (and perhaps in two), the šēlūtu is recorded as being a female prophet.

Connections between the palace and the temple are very evident in the texts presented in Table 1. Both the archival context and the content of these texts suggest a connection between the queen’s household and the dedicated women. Two of the nine texts relating to the šēlūtu were found at Kalḫu in the Northwest Palace, Room ZT 16. There is reason to believe that the šakintu’s archive was located there. The šakintu was the female administrator in charge of the queen’s affairs all over the empire. In addition to the archival context, the contents of the two texts suggest a connection. Document ND 2316 was drawn when a šēlūtu was getting married, and it states that the “maid of the king” dedicated her as a votary to Mullissu. As I have argued elsewhere, the maid of the king referred to here was a high-ranking female official in the court. The other text, ND 2309, details how the daughter of Nurtî was bought as a devotee for the goddess Mullissu by Aḫat-abû, the financial officer (lahḫennutu) of the šakintu. Furthermore, it is notable that these two texts are the only ones (out of nine) where these women are dedicated as šēlūtu to the goddess Mullissu, not to Ištar. In turn, Mullissu might have been connected to the household of the queen. However, the evidence is largely circumstantial; see Svärd 2015, 104.

10 I owe thanks to Raija Mattila for this suggestion.
11 See Toivari-Viitala 2013 for an overview and further reading.
12 Parker 1954, 39 (ND 2309) and Parker 1954, 40 (ND 2316).
13 Svärd 2015, 70–71, 93, 95.
15 Svärd 2010.
16 However, the evidence is largely circumstantial; see Svärd 2015, 104.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Text</th>
<th>Archival context</th>
<th>Date</th>
<th>Text genre</th>
<th>Context for the term</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>SAA 9 1.7</td>
<td>Nineveh</td>
<td>680–669</td>
<td>oracle collection</td>
<td>The woman Ḫissār-bēlī-da”inī, “šēlātu of the king,” delivers an oracle of support to the king.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SAA 11 219</td>
<td>Nineveh</td>
<td>possibly 721–70517</td>
<td>administrative list</td>
<td>One šēlātu is mentioned in the so-called Harran Census when property of the temple of Ištar of Huzirina is listed.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SAA 13 126</td>
<td>Nineveh</td>
<td>680–63018</td>
<td>letter</td>
<td>Iddināia, a priest of Ninurta at Kalḫu, writes to King Assurbanipal and complains that another priest has taken control of a field, house, some people and the sons of the šēlātu women.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SAA 13 148</td>
<td>Nineveh</td>
<td>prob. 680–63019</td>
<td>letter</td>
<td>This text fragment is heavily restored, but it might be a message concerning a prophecy by a šēlātu of Ištar of Arbela.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SAA 14 443</td>
<td>Nineveh, archive of Inurta-šarru-uṣur</td>
<td>669–61220</td>
<td>contract</td>
<td>The Egyptian Puṭi-Eše buys Al-ḫapi-mēpi from her father as a wife. If a divorce is initiated by the husband, the wife will pay him 10 shekels of silver and leave. After the divorce, she would be dedicated as šēlātu to Ištar of Arbela, together with her sons, for as long as her ex-husband lives.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Stat 2 164</td>
<td>Assur, archive N 31 (Egyptians)</td>
<td>675</td>
<td>contract</td>
<td>Pabbā’u gives his daughter Mullissu-ḥammat as a wife to Awa. In addition to the dowry and witnesses, the text stipulates that the bridegroom or people associated with him cannot dispose of Mullissu-ḥammat, because she is a šēlātu of Ištar of Arbela.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Stat 2 184</td>
<td>Assur, archive N 31 (Egyptians)</td>
<td>prob. 647–61022</td>
<td>contract</td>
<td>Aṭa’ gives her sister Šulmu-[…]limur along with a dowry in marriage to Rīhipi-Mīnu. The contract states that she is a šēlātu of Ištar of Arbela and hints that she will stay in the Inner City, where she will grow up.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ND 2309 (Parker 1954, 39)</td>
<td>Kalḫu, ZT 16</td>
<td>prob. 668–61223</td>
<td>contract</td>
<td>A father sells his daughter Banāt-Emašmaš to the woman Ḥāṭ-ābū, an official in service of the female administrator (šakintu) of the queen. The text states that she is to become a šēlātu of Mullissu.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ND 2316 (Parker 1954, 40)</td>
<td>Kalḫu, ZT 16</td>
<td>limmu of Aššur-garu’a-nēre24</td>
<td>contract</td>
<td>A female servant of the king of the New Palace of Kalḫu dedicates Milki-ḫaiaia as a šēlātu of Mullissu. In the same document, Turṣi-Issār the weaver marries her.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 1: Texts referring to the dedicated women, organized by their archival context.
3. The kazrutu and the mašītu

Women referred to as mašītu and kazrutu appear in similar contexts in texts: often in the guarantee-formulas in legal texts. This is why the evidence for these women is presented together in Table 2.

The literal translation of the label kazrutu would be “a woman with curled hair” (*CAD K, 315, s.v. kezēru*). Of the three relevant texts, the first one (SAA 12 68) is a copy of a decree of Tukulti-Ninurta I (1244–1208), in which he established the regular offering (*ginû*) to the goddess Šarrat-nipha in Assur. The sons of the kazrutu are mentioned twice, receiving their portion of the offerings. They are also included in the last lines of the text, which are probably a late addition from when the text was copied during the reign of Shalmaneser III (858–824). This addition notes that Tukulti-Ninurta dedicated a baker, a brewer and the sons of the kazrutu to Šarrat-nipha. Šarrat-nipha is not frequently attested during the Neo-Assyrian period, but there is good reason to believe that she was a manifestation of Ištar, probably gaining prominence in the reign of Assurnasirpal II (883–859).

The second text (SAA 12 76) is a later copy as well (possibly from the reign of Sennacherib, as the reverse of the table contains references to that period), namely a collection of decrees from the reign of Šamši-Adad V (823–811) and Adad-nerari III (810–783) that concern the maintenance of temples. Here Šamši-Adad V exempted and gave some property to Marduk-bēlu-uṣur, the overseer of the kazrutu women (*ša-muḫḫi-kazrāti*, transliterated [LÚ].⌈šá⌉–UGU–MÍ.SUHUR.LÁ.MEŠ).

Finally, the third text (CTN 2 17) records the sale of a large area of cultivated land, with an elaborate section detailing a number of difficult or impossible deeds that anyone who tried to revoke the document would have to perform. Among the mandatory actions is the requirement to dedicate seven male kazru and seven female kazrutu to Ištar of Arbela.

17 For details about the Harran Census and the editor’s suggestion for the date in the reign of Sargon (721–705), see SAA 11, xxx–xxiv.

18 Iddināia is known from texts from the reign of Assurbanipal and later, but the priest accused in the letter, Urdu-Nabû, is known from the reign of Esarhaddon (680–669). For details, see *PNA* 2/I, 503–504 and *PNA* 3/II, 1408–1409.

19 The editors of SAA 13 assign this text to the reign of Esarhaddon (680–669) or Assurbanipal (668–630).

20 Dating is based on the archival context. The archive of Inurta-šarru-uṣur is one of the few archives at Nineveh which have a definite archaeological context; see Ismail and Postgate n.d.

21 For the archival context, see Pedersén 1986, 125–129.

22 Altogether 54 out of 56 texts come from these years (Donbaz and Parpola 2001, xv).

23 Based on their archival context, the texts from ZT 16 are datable to the reign of Assurbanipal or later. See Oates and Oates 2001, 46.

24 See Parker 1954, pl. vii for a cuneiform hand copy and p. 40 for a transliteration and translation. A newer transliteration and translation is offered by Karen Radner (Radner 1997, 171), although my interpretation differs somewhat from hers (Svärd 2010, 253).

25 According to the *PNA* eponym list (Radner 1998a), this is the year 641.

26 These are discussed also in Menzel 1981, 29–31.

27 See SAA 12, xxxi–xxxi.

28 For Šarrat-nipha, see Zsolnay 2009, 106–107, 212–216.
All of these three texts, which can be assumed to refer to the actual existence of living, breathing people that bore the title kazrutu, date to a rather early time in the Neo-Assyrian era, with the earliest possible attestation being 858 and the latest 783. When one considers that most of the Neo-Assyrian text evidence in general dates to 783 or later, it seems possible that the title lost importance or even disappeared at some point in time after that.

With such a small sample of material, it is difficult to extrapolate much. Nevertheless, Brigitte Menzel has suggested that kazru and kazrutu were not professional titles, but rather a social group. But what kind of social group? For this question we must look to other text genres that do not relate to social reality as directly as the three texts discussed above.

The feminine form kazrutu also appears on a tablet from 716 which, according to W.G. Lambert, records “popular sayings.” Lambert uses the word “street prostitute” for kazrutu and translates: “The discreet street prostitute slanders the … woman. At Ištar’s command the noble’s wife gets a bad name.” The meaning of the short passage is not clear, but here as well a connection to Ištar is apparent. In a lexical list, kazrutu is connected to ḥarintu, as both (and four additional terms) are seen as equivalents of KAR.KID. In the Gilgamesh epic as well, Ištar is described as collecting together her “ke-ez-re-e-ti Mšam-ḥa-a-ti ū ḫa-ri-ma-a-ti,” and in the Erra epic they are grouped with šamḥatu and ḫarintu.

Beyond the context of the first millennium, the Old Babylonian and Mari texts do not shed much light on the social status of these women, except to show that the term was in use and that these women seem to have been connected to the palace as well as the temple. The ištarītu women are mentioned as a comparable group, as are the sekrutu women. Attestations of “the sons of kazrutu” only appear in the Neo-Assyrian era.

An amount of silver (nēbeḥ kezērim) is payable by these women to the overseer of the pašīšu priests in the Old Babylonian context, but the texts do not state the reason. However, regarding these texts, CAD K (p. 315, s.v. kezēru) suggests: “Since in all the instances cited here these women are married, one could suggest that the fact of the marrying made the payment fall due.” This seems speculative, because the texts only state that these women were married, a fairly usual designation for women engaged in financial dealings. Being labeled as a “wife of PN” or “daughter of PN” was a common reference point for defining a woman’s status in Mesopotamia. Thus, the older sources do not shed a lot of light on the meaning of the word in the Neo-Assyrian era.

It is noteworthy that for kazrutu there is also evidence of a male counterpart,
**WOMEN IN NEO-ASSYRIAN TEMPLES**

*kazru*. However, that term appears only three times in the *Corpus of Neo-Assyrian*, one of which is the CTN 2 17, which also mentions *kazrutu*. The second of the three occurrences is in the same badly preserved text from Tell Billa (ancient Šibaniba) that also holds one of the rare references to the *assinnu* of the Ištar cult from the Neo-Assyrian era.37 The third text to mention *kazru* is an unpublished document from Ma’allahene (O 3708). The contexts where he appears are identical to *kazrutu*, although he is translated in *CAD* K as a “person with curled hair” (p. 316, s.v. *kezru*), whereas *kazrutu* is straightforwardly translated as “prostitute” (*CAD* K, 314, s.v. *kezertu*).

The translation “prostitute,” which is used in many texts, owes much to the connection that *kazrutu* has with ḫarintu and šamḥatu in the first millennium sources. There is a lively discussion on the meaning of these words, especially the question of whether or not the *KAR.KID/ḫarintu* and *šamḥatu* should be translated as “prostitute” or even “temple prostitute.” Suffice it to say, there is well-grounded skepticism toward the idea of temple prostitution in Mesopotamia.38 Furthermore, even assuming that ḫarintu does mean prostitute,39 *kazrutu* cannot be defined as prostitute (let alone a sacred prostitute) merely because of her association with ḫarintu. There is no direct evidence of her being engaged in any kind of prostitution in texts from any Mesopotamian time period. A connection to the cult of Ištar is very clear, and a connection to ḫarintu and šamḥatu is there, but to call *kazrutu* “prostitute” or “temple prostitute” based on the available evidence is too speculative.

In addition to *kazrutu*, there is a group of women who appear in similar contexts as them. These *mašītu* women are therefore discussed in this section as well, and the five attestations to them are listed in Table 2, alongside the three attestations of *kazrutu*. The discussion regarding *mašītu* (MÍ.MAŠ/BAR) needs to begin with a discussion of this elusive title. Several scholars suggest reading the combination of signs as *uššurtu*, including Karen Radner40 and *CAD*.41 In his work, Postgate transliterates the signs LÚ.MAŠ and MÍ.MAŠ and translates the term as “male votary” and “female votary.” Postgate notes that there is a Neo-Assyrian interpretation of the male form of the compound.42 Indeed, the female form *mašītu*, chosen for the Assyrian Dictionary by Parpola (2007, 62), is based on that lexical list, which reads LÚ.MAŠ-[mṭ-šu-ú] SAL.MAŠ.43 This part of the lexical list mostly presents male professions/status designations with female counterparts. Here it seems better to rely on ancient texts themselves and accept that LÚ.MAŠ should read *mašū* in the masculine form and presumably *mašītu* in the feminine form.44 However, the

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37 Finkelstein 1953 (text no. 85). The *assinnu* is discussed in Svärd and Nissinen forthcoming.
38 For a good recent overview, see Budin 2008, 14–32. For discussion regarding the Neo-Assyrian era, see Macgregor 2012, 14–15. See also one of the first skeptical voices, Westenholz 1989, 259–265.
39 This notion was challenged by Julia Assante 1999.
40 Radner 1997, 217, following the interpretation of the sign BAR as a logogram for *ušāru* D.
41 See *CAD* U and W, 322, s.v. *uššurtu* 5e, where the editor reads CTN 2 15 as: 7 LÚ.BAR.MEŠ 7 MÍ.BAR.MEŠ, and translates “seven male and seven female released persons.”
42 See CTN 2, p. 45 n. 25.
44 It should be mentioned here that Menzel (1981, 32) suggests that the compound could be an abbreviation of UŠ.BAR (“weaver”) or even MAŠ.EN.GAG, a member of the lower social class, the
meaning of the title needs to be explored further.

As can be seen from Table 2 below, the word appears in the Neo-Assyrian documentary evidence in only five texts, almost exclusively in penalty clauses of sales documents. They indicate that whoever tries to break the contract will have to deliver one or seven male mašû and female mašītu to Adad or his spouse. Four of the texts come from Kallḫu. Two of the texts originate from the same archive in the Northwest Palace at Kallḫu (Room 57) and two come from the Governor’s Palace at Kallḫu. The fifth text comes from Ma’āllanate. The datable texts all come from the early part of the Neo-Assyrian period (the earliest text is from 791, the latest from 697). Most Neo-Assyrian legal documents date to the time after 700.45 Therefore, if this penalty clause was still in use after 697, one would expect to see at least some later occurrences. It thus seems possible that the penalty clause fell out of use in the Assyrian Empire at some point after 697.

The meaning of the word clearly had something to do with the cultic sphere of Adad. Translations like “votaries” or “dedicated persons,” or possibly even “specifically dedicated personnel of Adad,”46 are possible. The only other option, understanding māšu as “twin,” does not match the context.47 In the witness list of CTN 2 15 appears “the chief of the mašītu in the household of the turtānu.” This suggests that these people had a social status or a professional status of some kind. Perhaps they should be understood as a specific class of servants who were in the service of Adad or the elite of the empire.

Brigitte Menzel is of the opinion that many labels, including mašītu (MÍ.MAŠ) and kazrutu (MÍ.SUHUR.LAL.MEŠ) along with her children, are actually subcategories of the dedicated people, the šēlūtu discussed above.48 Although these labels do not explain much about the exact roles of these women in the temple, the hypothesis seems possible.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Text</th>
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<th>Date</th>
<th>Text genre</th>
<th>Context for the term</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>CTN 2 17</td>
<td>Kallḫu, Governor’s Palace, Room M</td>
<td>6-II-783</td>
<td>Contract</td>
<td>The text is a sale of a large area of cultivated land. Seven male kazru and seven female kazrutu, as well as seven male mašû and seven female mašītu, are to be given to Adad of Kurbail in case of later litigation.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CTN 2 15</td>
<td>Kallḫu, Governor’s Palace, Room K</td>
<td>15-VII-791</td>
<td>Contract</td>
<td>The text is a sale of an estate. Seven male mašû and seven female mašītu are to be given to the wife of Adad, Šala, in case of later litigation. Additionally, the witness from Kurbail named Mār-Issār is titled “the chief of the female votaries in the household of the turtānu.” (GAL MÍ.MAŠ.MEŠ ša ṣu₃tur-ta-ni on l. 40)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

muškēnu.

Mattila and Harjumäki 2015, 13.


CAD M, 401–403, s. v. māšu (reference to MSL 12 on p. 401).

Menzel 1981, 23–33 and 300.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
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<th>Date</th>
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</tr>
</thead>
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<tr>
<td>Edubba 10 (= Ahmad and Postage 2007) 33</td>
<td>Kalḫu, Northwest Palace, Room 57</td>
<td>III-734/744/750</td>
<td>contract</td>
<td>The text is a sale of a valuable plot of cultivated land and a house. In case of later litigation, one male mašû and one female mašītu (l. 24, LÚ.MAŠ MÍ.MAŠ) are required to be dedicated to Adad of Kurbail.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Edubba 10 49</td>
<td>Kalḫu, Northwest Palace, Room 57</td>
<td>not datable, but the span of the archive is 844–736</td>
<td>contract</td>
<td>The text is a sale of a field; among the clauses in case of breaking the agreement is the requirement to dedicate seven male mašû and seven female mašītu (l. 16: 7 LÚ!.MAŠ.MEŠ 7 MÍ.MAŠ. MEŠ) to Adad of Kurbail.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SAA 12 68</td>
<td>Assur, private house, N4⁴⁹</td>
<td>Shalmaneser III (858–824). See details of the date in the discussion above.</td>
<td>royal decree</td>
<td>The text relates to the goddess Šarrat-nipha in Assur. The sons of the kazrutu are mentioned several times as being part of her temple.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SAA 12 76</td>
<td>Nineveh</td>
<td>Šamši-Adad V (823–811). See details of the date in the discussion above.</td>
<td>royal decree</td>
<td>The king is giving some property to Marduk-bêlu-ušur, the overseer of the kazrutu women (ša-muhḫi-kazrāti, [LÚ].⌈šá⌉–UGU–MÍ.SUHÜR.LA.MEŠ).</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>O 3712</td>
<td>Ma’allanate</td>
<td>697</td>
<td>contract</td>
<td>Handi, a palace prefect in Ma’allanate, buys landed property in the town of Sapalate. In the penalty clause, seven male mašû and seven female mašītu are to be delivered to Adad of Guzana.⁵⁰</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 2: mašītu and kazrutu, organized according to their archival context

4. Cultic professionals: qadissu and ēntu

The evidence of women active in the actual ritual work of the temple is meager. However, there are two classes of women which were involved in the rituals and cults; to be more precise, they were involved in actions directed toward supernatural agents.

The Old Babylonian qadištum was connected to the temple and could own property, marry and have children. Apparently the qadištum had something to do

⁴⁹ The private house had a library and archive of a family of exorcists; Pedersën 1986, 41–76, text N 4: 158.

⁵⁰ The text is unfortunately not yet published (Fales 2013, 204), but see Garelli 1986, 242, 246. See also PNA 2/1, 452, s.v. Handî, and PNA 3/1, 1009, s.v. Qatâ. Information regarding the penalty clause is from the Corpus of Neo-Assyrian.
with babies, wet nursing, and possibly midwifery.\footnote{For a general article on her, see Westenholz 1989.} In the Neo-Assyrian era, she is known from only one document, a letter, SAA 10 246. Excavated at Nineveh, it is addressed to the king and describes rituals that are to be performed for the king and his sons. The letter writer (probably the chief exorcist, Marduk-šakin-šumi, since the letter might date to 670) states that the qadissu will do something, possibly perform a ritual of some kind (l. 13’–14’ \textit{Mi}qa-di-su me-me-ni [i-b]a-āš-ši te-ep-pa-āš). Parpola suggests that her presence and actions refer to some kind of anti-witchcraft ritual. His original translation in \textit{LAS} 187 was “The sacred woman will certainly [also] do something,” but changed in SAA 10 to “A sacred woman will be there to perform a certain rite.” Perhaps the passage could also be translated “whichever qadissu is (there), she will do it.” In this case the sentence would be referring back to the previous sentence “she should ‘cast the solvents’ upon them.”\footnote{Note, however, that in \textit{KAR} 141 it was the patient himself who was doing the casting of solvents (see Parpola 2007 [1983], 181).}

In other texts, qadissu is presented as a ritual actor, often in a purifying capacity. Most occurrences appear in anti-magic rituals, namely the composition known as \textit{Maqlû}, in which the qadissu (written syllabically or \textit{ML.NU.GIG}) seems to be both negatively connected with witches and positively connected with purification. In \textit{Maqlû}, she is attested with other women, many of whom are not known from any Neo-Assyrian documentary source. They include \textit{nadītu} (\textit{MUNUS.ME = LUKUR}), \textit{ištarītu}, \textit{kulmašītu} and \textit{ēntu} priestesses.\footnote{For sources and references, see Parpola 2007 [1983], 182–183 and Macgregor 2012, 8–15.} Amélie Kuhrt has raised an interesting point by observing that in the \textit{Maqlû} incantation series, the female cultic officials seen as potentially evil witches are anomalous individuals in the sense that they do not appear to have been part of the regular household unit headed by a male. Consequently, such women could have been considered marginal and potentially dangerous.\footnote{Kuhrt 1989, 238.}

Finally, the ancient title of \textit{ēntu} priestess (\textit{NIN.DINGIR.RA}) appears mostly in omen texts in the Neo-Assyrian era. Texts SAA 8 147, 307 and 480 report the same bad omen: if Scorpio is present in the lunar halo, the \textit{ēntu} priestess will be made pregnant. SAA 8 104 is more interesting, as line 11 is translated by Hermann Hunger as: “in his stead, a daughter of the king, [an \textit{entu}-priestess, will die].”\footnote{On l. 11: \textit{ki-mu-šú DUMU.MÍ.LUGAL [NIN.DINGIR.RA ŪS]}.} The text suggests that even in the Neo-Assyrian period, the scribes were aware of the age-old tradition of a royal daughter being an \textit{ēntu} priestess.

There is a single explicit reference which attests that at least one woman was still called \textit{ēntu} in the Neo-Assyrian period. Text SAA 14 68 comes from Nineveh and is dated to 667. Although brief, it is collated by Simo Parpola as recording an \textit{ēntu} ([M]í.NIN.DINGIR.RA) receiving barley from a man called Bahianu. As the title itself is an old and venerable one, with a clear history of cultic actions connected to it, it seems probable that this woman was involved in the rituals of the temple. The rest of the occurrences of the title are in a Neo-Assyrian lexical list (both logograms \textit{LUKUR} and \textit{NIN.DINGIR}) and the aforementioned \textit{Maqlû} ritual, where she appears in a similar role as the qadissu.\footnote{See details in Macgregor 2012, 8–9.}
Overall, the scant Neo-Assyrian documentary evidence points to the longevity of female cultic roles (ēntu and qadissu), which are best known from sources almost a thousand years earlier. Even the later evidence supports this. Regarding ēntu, the daughter of the Neo-Babylonian king Nabonidus was appointed as the ēntu of the moon-god Nanna-Sin’s temple in the city of Ur in 554. Finally, although not attested in Neo-Assyrian documentary sources, there is an occurrence of a nadītu priestess, sometimes assumed to have disappeared after the Old Babylonian period, attested as a ritual actor in the Seleucid period.

5. The role of palace women in the cults

There are some hints regarding the role of royal women and other palace women in the cults. I will first outline the activities of queens and then discuss the involvement of other royal and elite women in the cults.

It is clear that Neo-Assyrian queens were involved in the financial and administrative affairs of temples, sending provisions and dedicating precious items to the gods. Rituals on behalf of the queen or for her departed soul are also mentioned. Nevertheless, except for two cases, there is very little evidence on the queens being directly involved in rituals. The first is the text SAA 20 52, which relates to religious practices in Assur. According to a new translation by Simo Parpola, the passage can be translated as: “May the queen enter into the presence of Aššur in the main room whenever she wishes?” An extispicy was made and it was favorable. This suggests that although the queen’s access to one of the most sacred spaces of the realm was not self-evident, it was granted nonetheless. Her presence in the sacred space implies that she engaged in some kind of cultic activity there, as it does not seem likely that she would have ventured into the heavily regulated sacred space for anything else. King Sennacherib (704–681) is mentioned in the text (e.g., iv 2′ and rev. iv 5′), but reference to the eponym year of Šamaš-da‘innanni on rev. iv 50′ dates the document to the reign of Assurbanipal, specifically the year 645, thus giving reason to suppose that the queen mentioned in the text might be the queen of Assurbanipal, Libbali-šarrat. The second case is iconographical: the so-called Naqi’a Bronze, where the queen mother Naqi’a is portrayed following a king, probably her son Esarhaddon, in a

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57 Beaulieu 1993, 8–9.
58 For a more thorough discussion on ēntu priestesses, see Westenholz 2006. For the ritual where a nadītu priestess (mī-na-di-tum) is engaged in ritual action, see Çağırgan and Lambert 1991–1993, 98. Although the text lacks clear provenance, it is probably Seleucid and probably from Babylon (Çağırgan and Lambert 1991–1993, 89).
59 However, only two texts relating to the queen were found in a temple context (RIMA 3 A.0.104.2002; Jas 1996, 69), with the vast majority of texts originating from palaces. For attestations, see Appendix A in Svärd 2015.
60 SAA 20 52 (BM 121206), rev. col. iv 52′–54′.
61 Radner 1998a.
62 See Svärd 2015 for more details on her.
procession. The identity of the queen is clear, since the name Naqi’a is inscribed on the shoulder of the figure on the bronze relief (RINAP 4, 323–324, no. 2010). The relief possibly originally formed a part of an altar base or a divine throne dais, perhaps in Assur. The text inscribed on the relief describes the mīš pī ritual, which enabled a cult image to be inhabited by the deity. On her head, Naqi’a is bearing a mural crown and her pose imitates that of the king. One of only three known large-scale depictions of Neo-Assyrian queens, this is a remarkable piece of evidence for Naqi’a’s role in an important ritual. All in all, the message of the relief fits well with the textual evidence regarding Naqi’a’s authority in the court.

The queen mother Naqi’a assumed the queen’s responsibilities after the death of her daughter-in-law, during the latter part of her son’s reign. The textual evidence relating to Naqi’a is in many ways exceptional, and I discuss here only those features that are relevant for her religious activities. The prophecies given by the deity to Naqi’a (SAA 9 1.8, 2.1, 5, and a reference to one in SAA 10 109) are a unique phenomenon. They mostly promise support to Esarhaddon during the civil war following King Sennacherib’s murder. It is difficult to determine whether receiving prophecies was a prerogative of the Neo-Assyrian queens in general, since the few preserved prophecies all come from the reign of Esarhaddon and Assurbanipal. Also unique to Naqi’a is the evidence that her likeness (salam ummi šarri) was deposited in temples. An image of her in gold was to be erected at Kalḫu (SAA 13 61) and a statue of her possibly existed in Harran (SAA 13 188). Moreover, Naqi’a’s involvement in rituals is clear. Apparently she was constantly corresponding with temple personnel about the rituals, and the scholars show great respect for her (SAA 10 313; SAA 13 76 and 77).

The daughters of kings engaged in similar activities as the queen, but more rarely. A princess is known as a dedicator of a precious object (Searight et al. 2008, no. 615), and rituals are performed for her (SAA 10 273; SAA 13 56). On two occasions she might be participating in a ritual performance. In the first one (SAA 20 34), the ritual actor is simply termed “the daughter,” which might refer to the royal daughter or a cultic performer. However, in SAA 20 52, already discussed above, there are clear references to women in general, as well as a royal daughter, who seems to be connected with the cult of the goddess Šerua. Two passages are relevant here (citing translations by Parpola): “When cooked meat is provided before Šerua, the daughter of the king is Šerua as if it were her own name.” And “[When] they provide [cooked meat] before Šerua, the king’s [sister] by her very name is Šerua, daughter of Aššur – should they sing like this?” Unfavourable. ‘The king’s sister by her very name is Šerua, wife of Aššur – should they sing like this?’ Favourable. It seems possible that the king’s sister referred to here is Šeru’a-etàrat, the daughter of Esarhaddon and sister of Assurbanipal, although hypothetically this could also be a daughter of Assurbanipal.

63 Macgregor 2012, 111–118.
64 Svärd 2015, 74–80.
65 For an overview, see Svärd 2015, 39–86.
66 In SAA 20 52, rev. col. ii 49: “The women circumambulate opposite Aššur.”
67 SAA 20 52 (BM 121206), rev. col. iv 55’–56’.
68 SAA 20 52 (BM 121206), rev. col. v 52’–56’.
69 For details of her, see Svärd 2015, 87–91.
Finally, there are small hints about other palace women involved in the temple sphere somehow. For the administration’s association with the temple, we have some evidence, as mentioned above (see Section 2), as the šakintu’s office might have had a connection to Mullissu’s cult at Kalḫu. Additionally, some meat might have been delivered from the temple in Assur to a šakintu, although the reason for this is unclear (SAA 13 18).

There are some references to palace women involved in rituals. In SAA 13 76, a priest politely requests that the king’s mother should designate someone else to perform the ritual since the maid of the king’s mother, Damqaia, could not do it or may not have been allowed to do it (lā mūqāša lā tērab). Although no details are known, Damqaia probably was affiliated with the palace.

Two letters (SAA 10 245 and 246), probably from Marduk-šakin-šumi to King Esarhaddon, concern the “casting of the solvents” by a woman. This expression most probably referred to a healing ritual. It has been suggested by Parpola that it was queen mother Naqi’a herself who was the patient and who was casting the solvents. Then there are the several female cultic actors mentioned in a text which might be a description of the funeral of Queen Ešarra-ḫammat (the queen of Esarhaddon), but it is unclear if these are cultic actors or women belonging to the royal family, as they are not referred to by their names (SAA 20 34).

However, two cases are clear examples of cultic involvement. The ritual of a substitute king involved a woman, the substitute queen, who was killed alongside the substitute king to ward off evil for the king and the realm. Text SAA 10 352 is the clearest evidence, where her burial is mentioned, but SAA 10 313 might mention a girl who was chosen to become substitute queen. The text is a letter to the mother of the king, Naqi’a, where the author reports that the ritual of the eclipse will be performed on a slave girl (mī qal-la-ti) from the house of Šama’. The explicit mention of the eclipse ritual suggests that she was selected to be the substitute queen.

Moreover, after the murder of Sennacherib in 680 (SAA 16 95), the governor’s wife (MÍ) has a role to play. The relevant passage (lines 1–7) is translated as follows by the editors of SAA 16:

“The king received the [wife] of the governor and brought her into the Palace. On the day we heard that the king was dead and the people of the Inner City were weeping, the governor brought his wife out of the palace. She burnt a female goat-kid, (while) he installed a eunuch of his as the mayor.”

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70 Svärd 2015, 103–104.
71 Parpola 2007 [1983], 180–183; see also above Section 4.
72 Possibly a scribe who has a connection to the šakintu (see PNA 3/II, 1187 s.v. Šama’).
73 See Parpola 2007 [1983], xxii–xxxii, on substitute king ritual. In a text describing the ritual, a woman is mentioned that probably was the substitute queen. Passage (M.KLSIKIL ana MÍ GAR-an) is translated by Lambert as: “the young woman shall become the woman” (Lambert 1957–1958, 110, col. A 20). See Parpola 2007 [1983], xxiv on what Parpola suggests are two more references to substitute queen, SAA 10 2 (LAS 30) and SAA 10 209 (LAS 139). The text discussed here (SAA 10 313) is not published in LAS. Note that the term is here translated as “slave girl,” but the only other occurrence (mī qal-la-ti in SAA 17 139) is translated as a personal name. However, in Neo-Babylonian dialect, qallatu (CAD Q, 60–61, s.v. qallatu A) refers to a slave girl.
Anomalously, the letter/report does not include an opening section where the sender and receiver are identified, and it is unclear if they are critical of or praising the actions of the governor and his wife. The exact meaning of “burning the kid” remains elusive as well, but probably it had something to do with the funerary rituals and offerings for the deceased king.

6. Conclusions

The women discussed in this article can be categorized from two different perspectives. First, women could belong to temples primarily as household members. It seems clear that the šēlūtu, mašītu and kazrutu should be seen from this perspective, although the šēlūtu’s performance as a female prophet could arguably be cultic. As demonstrated above, the šēlūtu women were dedicated to goddesses (Ištar or Mullissu). This seems typical, since all in all it seems that dedications and sacrifices to the gods were (with a few exceptions) gendered. Men were dedicated to male gods, women to female gods.

From the other perspective, women can be understood as performers in the cults. To this group clearly belonged qadissu and ēntu. For the šēlūtu, mašītu and kazrutu, there is very little evidence of their ritual or cultic actions. Furthermore, roles of elite women in the court did not usually include cultic positions, but neither were they completely excluded from the cultic sphere. When involved in the cults, the elite women participating are not mentioned with any special cultic titles. In general, it is noteworthy that the female prophets as a group were the only female cultic personnel recorded with their names. Other female cultic personnel were mainly referred to by their titles.

In the case of the queen, one could speculate that she could have acted as a kind of earthly counterpart to Mullissu, the consort of Aššur, in a similar manner as the king was a representative of Aššur. Perhaps a similar role could also be imagined for the sister of the king, Šeru’a-eṭirat, although the text (see SAA 20 52 in Section 5) is suggestive only.

Finally, the connections between the palace and the temple are indicated in numerous texts considered in this article. The archival contexts of almost all the texts discussed here are palace contexts. The texts involve people with court titles. The contents of the texts corroborate this, as the interests of the king and the court show up in all of them. In its modest way, this article attests to the interconnectedness of the palace and the temple in the Neo-Assyrian era. In an ideological sense—and to a degree, in an administrative sense as well—the temple was part of the palace and vice versa.

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74 For attestations, see Radner 1997, 207–219.
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