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**Male-Gendered Women in the Cuneiform World—
When and Why?¹**

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Abstract. The paper investigates linguistic means of male-gendering women in ancient Mesopotamia, i.e. the use of grammatical male gender, male personal determinatives, as well as syntax and semantics, in order to present women as men. Male-gendering starts in the Old Babylonian period with copying texts of Enheduana, daughter of Sargon of Akkade, the first high priestess of the moon god of Ur and the first known author in history. Enheduana's texts were written in Sumerian in the Old Akkadian period when grammatical gender in Sumerian was not yet indicated. Old Babylonian texts "imitating" Enheduana's compositions start to present high priestesses as "sons" and "brothers" of the kings. A number of other means of male-gendering, which continued in the later periods, emerged in the Old Babylonian period as well. Later in the second millennium, adoptions of daughters as sons and appointment of wives as heads of households occur in peripheral Nuzi, Arappa and Emar. In Babylonia itself family names derived from female occupational terms appear starting with the beginning of use of family names in general. In periphery as well as in Babylonia male personal determinatives can be used with names of women to assign them a status of a male. The phenomenon of matronymic surnames written with male personal determinatives continues into the Neo-Babylonian period. The article discusses rare occurrences of grammatical male-gendering at the Neo-Assyrian court and in cuneiform literature, such as the Epic of Gilgamesh, as well. Reason for male gendering women was apparently to assign them a status equal to men, but purposes could differ.

¹ All the abbreviations in this article are taken from the *Reallexikon der Assyriologie und vorderasiatischen Archäologie*.



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Keywords: male-gendering; high priestesses; personal determinatives; double/conflicting determinatives; matronyms, matronymic family names

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Женщины «мужского рода» в мире клинописи – когда и почему?

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Аннотация. В статье исследуются языковые средства мужской гендеризации женщин в древней Месопотамии, то есть использование грамматического мужского рода, мужских личных детерминативов, а также синтаксиса и семантики для того, чтобы представить женщину как мужчину. Использование грамматического мужского рода применительно к женщинам начинается в старовавилонский период с копирования текстов Энхедуаны, дочери Саргона Аккадского, первой верховной жрицы бога луны города Ура и первого известного в истории автора. Тексты Энхедуаны были написаны на шумерском языке в староаккадский период, когда грамматический род в шумерском еще не обозначался. Старовавилонские тексты, «подражая» сочинениям Энхедуаны, начинают представлять верховных жриц как «сыновей» и «братьев» царей. В старовавилонский период появляется также ряд других способов мужской гендеризации женщин, которые продолжали использоваться и в более поздние периоды. Позднее, во втором тысячелетии, усыновление дочерей как сыновей и назначение жен главами семей встречаются в периферийных Нузи, Араппхе и Эмаре. В самой Вавилонии фамилии, образованные от женских профессий, появляются с началом использования фамилий. Как на периферии, так и в Вавилонии мужские личные детерминативы могут использоваться с именами женщин, чтобы показать, что их статус равен мужскому. Феномен матронимических фамилий, написанных с мужскими личными детерминативами, существует и в нововавилонский период. В статье рассматриваются также редкие случаи применения к женщинам грамматического мужского рода при новоассирийском дворе и в клинописной литературе, как, например, в «Эпосе о Гильгамеше». Использование грамматического мужского рода по отношению к женщинам, по-видимому, было необходимо, чтобы уравнивать их в статусе с мужчинами, но непосредственные причины могли быть различными.



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Ключевые слова: женщины мужского рода; верховные жрицы; личные детерминативы; двойные детерминативы; матронимы; фамилии, трансформировавшиеся из матронимов

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My grandmother, Professor Sophia Yakovlevna Baermann, a microbiologist and a medical doctor *in memoriam*

*“...simulat se pro uxore Nini filium, pro femina puerum. ... Sic primis
initiis sexum mentita puer esse credita est”*

G. Pompeus Trogus
(*apud* Just. i. 1: 10–2. 2, 4)

*You should be women,
And yet your beards forbid me to interpret
That you are so.*

William Shakespeare. *Macbeth*

Introduction

There are many ways to make a woman into a man. Usually it is a change of looks and appearances: wearing a male dress, a false beard, etc. This contribution investigates linguistic means of changing female gender into male in Mesopotamia. My purpose is to explore the circumstances of the emergence of and reasons for the application of male signifiers and male grammar to various kinds and categories of women in different periods and social milieus of Mesopotamian history. I will also discuss the use of semantic tools of the language and means of the ideographic orthography to describe females as male and to appoint women as men by calling them male. This paper summarizes my experience in studying Mesopotamian women since 2013, when my interest in the subject was first sparked by the discussion of grammatical male gender applied to Šamhat in the Epic of Gilgamesh at the gender workshop of the Ghent Rencontre Assyriologique Internationale.

Throughout the history of the ancient Near East, women could be linguistically male-gendered². The occurrences of linguistic male-gendering appear in different periods and in a variety of geographic regions from the cultural core to the peripheral outskirts of ancient Mesopotamia. Grammatical male-gendering of women is found in various textual genres as well. Male grammar is often applied to high-positioned women, but male-gendering of women is not limited to royal women at the very top echelons of ancient Near Eastern society. Male-gendering is present not only in different times, places, and text genres but also in a variety of social situations.

Linguistic and particularly grammatical male-gendering of female individuals seems to be unique to Mesopotamia, although there are single cases of linguistic

² For the sake of brevity, I refer here to male determinatives in conjunction with female names as to a kind of grammatical male-gendering, which they indeed are.



male-gendering in ancient Egypt too³. Looking into the sources of this phenomenon will explain its uniqueness for the region.

Emergence of Male-Gendering in the Old Babylonian Period: en-priestesses

The first instances of male-gendered women come from the Old Babylonian period. The gender of en-priestesses of Nanna at Ur was perceived as male. Enanatum, the daughter of Išme-Dagān of the First dynasty of Isin⁴, who was installed as the high priestess of the moon-god in the beginning of his reign, is referred to as the “son” (dumu) of her father⁵. Enanatum was also a *zirru*-priestess. The latter position was apparently even more prestigious than that of the en-priestess since this title always precedes the title of the high priestess of Nanna in Enanatum’s inscriptions. At Ur Enanatum acts vigorously and builds actively in the city’s sacred areas. Her standard inscriptions from the time of Išme-Dagān were found on bricks and cones. She also dedicated her seated statuette to Ningal (fig. 1). In the time of Gungunum of Larsa, who gained control over Ur in his tenth regnal year, Enanatum kept her position and built the temples of Dagan and Šamaš at Ur for “her life and the life of Gungunum.” The latter is called the king of Ur in these building inscriptions of hers⁶.



Fig. 1. Seated statuette of Enanatum, dedicated by her to Ningal. Largely restored

Рис. 1. Статуэтка Энанатумы, которую она посвятила Нингаль. Преимущественно восстановлена

³ For Egypt, I am only aware of the case of Hatshepsut, but this can result from my lack of professional knowledge of Ancient Egypt.

⁴ For the inscriptions of Eanatum, see RIME 4 E4.1.4.1-E4.1.4.1 and E4.1.4.13.

⁵ She is called *dumu* ^d*Iš-me—Da-gan* in RIME 4.1.4.3, RIME 4.1.4.4 and RIME 4.1.4.13 from his reign and also in RIME 4.2.5.1 and RIME 4.2.5.2 from the reign of Gungunum.

⁶ For the seal inscription of Abba, son of Enanatum, where her name and title appear instead of a patronym, see RIME 4.1.14.



Male-gendering was applied not only to high priestesses of the moon-god, but to other king's daughters too, even though they occupied lower positions. Thus Lipit-Ištar constructs a sacred precinct *giparu* for his daughter, Enninsunzi, the en-priestess of the god Ningubalaga (son of the moon-god) and his spouse Nineigara at Ur. Lipit-Ištar calls Enninsunzi “my beloved ‘son,’” (dumu-ki-ág-gá)⁷.

Unlike Enanatum, Enanedu, the last en-priestess of Nanna in the Old Babylonian period, was installed in this position not in the reign of her father but in the seventh regnal year of her brother. Her titulary reflects both her filiation and her relationship to the reigning king. In the inscription of her seal impression upon a clay envelope, she appears as the son (dumu) of Kudur-mabuk and “brother” (šeš) of Warad-Sîn, and not the “daughter” (dumu-munus) and sister (nin_o) of these kings⁸: ¹[en-an-e-du₇] ²en ¹d[nanna] ³urim₅^{ki}-[ma] ⁴dumu *Ku-du-ur—ma-bu-[uk]* ⁵šeš ¹ir₁₁-^dEN.[ZU] ⁶lugal Larsam^{ki}-[ma], “[Enanedu], en-priestess of the god [Nanna of U]r, ‘son’ of Kudur-mabu[k], ‘brother’ of Warad-Sî[n], king of Larsa”. The same titulary appears on her installation tablet, since it apparently describes the choice of Enanedu for this position as well as her various pious acts—prayers, renovations and constructions in the holy precinct that preceded her installation⁹. Installation tablets of the en-priestesses were represented on the laps of their statues as donations dedicated by them to their gods [May, 2022, p. 128–129]¹⁰. In her lengthy (48 lines) cone inscription, which deals with construction project undertaken in the *giparu* of Ur, Enanedu calls herself dumu *Ku-du-ur—ma-bu-uk-me-en*, “son of Kudur-mabuk”¹¹. This inscription mentions her other brother, Rim-Sîn and obviously was written already in his reign.¹²

Joan Westenholz has noted: “Although her (the high priestess’—*N.N.M.*) sexual identity is female, her gender role was considered masculine, possibly due to her position of power which she exercised” [Westenholz, 2012, p. 306]. Applying male-gendering to en-priestesses is rooted in the texts dating to the rise of this office. The first one to hold the position of the high priestess was Enĥeduana, the daughter of Sargon of Akkad. Her appointment marked the establishment of the office of the high priestess, which originally existed only as the high priestess of the moon-god of Ur. In both inscriptions where Enĥeduana’s titles of the high priestess and her lineage appear, she is called the offspring (dumu) of Sargon as in the Sumerian inscription on her famous disc¹³. Similarly, in her hymn, she addresses

⁷ RIME 4. 1.5.20: 23.

⁸ RIME 4.2.13.32.

⁹ RIME 4.2.13.15, especially Frgm 9: 4’–6’. The name is broken as it is in the seal inscription.

¹⁰ See the corrected version of the article on academia.edu: URL: https://www.academia.edu/97819593/N_N_May_2022_Women_in_Cult_Corrected.

¹¹ RIME 4.2.14.20: 21–22.

¹² RIME 4.2.14.20: 21–22.

¹³ RIME 2 E2.1.1.16: 4–5, disk; see also RIME 2 E2.1.1.2003: 2, seals and a seal impression of her servant, in RIME 2 E2.1.1.2005: 2, the seal impression of a scribe, her other servant, the filiation term is broken.



Inana as *dumu gal* ^dSuen-na, “the eldest offspring of Sîn”¹⁴. But her grandniece and successor in the position of the high-priestess of Nanna, Enmenana, is called both “offspring” (*dumu*) of Narām-Sîn in her Sumerian inscriptions¹⁵ and his “daughter” (*DUMU.MUNUS-su*)¹⁶ in the Akkadian one. Enmenana’s sisters, Tūta-napšum¹⁷ and Šumšanī¹⁸, who both have Akkadian names, are designated as daughters (*DUMU.MUNUS-su*) of Narām-Sîn in their Akkadian inscriptions. The difference in filiation terms applied to the high priestesses is not a matter of their seniority and the importance of their offices, but is of purely linguistic character—Sumerian, which does not have grammatical gender, is typically used by the high priestesses of the moon-god of Ur, while Akkadian is used by the high priestesses of the other gods¹⁹. In Sumerian of the Akkadian period, the difference between male and female offspring was not indicated. It occurs later, in the Ur III period and even then only starting with Šulgi. In Sumerian inscriptions of the time of Ur-Namma, the gender of his daughters is not yet marked. In the Old Babylonian period, as the aforementioned instances of Enanedu and Enanatum prove, the high priestess is described as male-gendered. This happens as a result of copying Sumerian inscriptions of Enḫeduana, which were written in the Akkadian period. Copying Old Akkadian texts, including the inscription on Enḫeduana’s disk, caused Old Babylonian scribes to return to the archaic orthography and invent the tradition of male-gendered writings for high-positioned females.

Typically the very title *en*, starting with its first application to priestesses in Old Akkadian and later, was always written in Sumerian without any gender markers, similar to *dumu* in Sumerian texts from the times before Šulgi. It could relate both to *en*-priests and *en*-priestesses, although in Akkadian the term *entu* (*f.*) is used for priestesses. Resulting from the lack of classifiers in early Sumerian, a feminine determinative was not used in conjunction with *en* also in the OB period Sumerian. Contrarily, Enḫeduana and Enanatum have a female determinative *MUNUS* in the pseudo-Sumerograms of their *zirru*-priestess titles²⁰. Male-

¹⁴ Nin me šara: ll. 41, 58 [Zgoll, 1997, p. 4, 6].

¹⁵ RIME 2, p. 87 E2.1.4 (viii) (ll), a year-name formula; RIME 2 E2.1.4.2020: 5 (?; *dumu*-[ni]), seal impression of her servant on a bulla found in Tello.

¹⁶ RIME 2 E2.1.4.33: 11, OB tablet copy from Nippur.

¹⁷ RIME 2 E2.1.4.20: 8, inscription on a disk.

¹⁸ RIME 2 E2.1.4.51: 5–9, inscription on a bronze bowl found in Mari.

¹⁹ This is most probably the reason why J. Westenholz disregarded this evidence. This is also the conclusion of B. Lion [Lion, 2009a, p. 172, 176–177], who, however, overlooked part of the Oakk testimony. Grammatical gender differentiation by using female determinatives appears only in the Ur III Sumerian, starting after Ur-Nammu, as shown by Lion [Lion, 2009a, p. 174], and results from the Akkadian influence. But *dumu* used for Ur-Nammu’s daughter Ennirgalana, who also was the high priestess of the moon-god, is simply the continuity of the traditional orthography. Starting with Šulgi, also Sumerian texts systematically indicate female offspring as *dumu-munus* and male as *dumu*.

²⁰ Enḫeduana RIME 2 1.1.16: ¹En-¹hē¹-du-an-na ²MUNUS.ME.NUNUZ.ZI ³NANNA ³dam ⁴Nanna, “Enḫeduana, *zirru*-priestess, wife of Nanna”; Enanatum: RIME 4 E4.1.4.1 30: 1–6 and E4.2.5.2:12–17: En-an-na-tūm-ma EN.MUNUS.ME.NUNUZ.ZI ⁴NANNA en ⁴Nanna ša-⁵uri^{ki}-ma *dumu* ⁴š-me—^dDa-gan lugal ki-en-gi-ki-uri, “Enanatum, *zirru*-priestess, *en*-priestess of Nanna, in Ur, daughter of Išme-Dagān, king of Sumer and Akkad”. CAD Z 136a s.v. *zirru* considers it to be a SB word.



gendering of Enanatum and Enanedu, as well as their Sumerian inscriptions, resulted from archaization, so prestigious in Mesopotamia. As often in Mesopotamia, this intended archaization had its purpose: male-gendering of high priestesses of the moon-god elevated their status and made them equal to men. As we will see, this attitude persisted into the later periods and created a precedent in relation to royal women²¹.

Another important pattern of male-gendering women emerges already in the OB period. This is the use of a male personal determinative for females. A male personal determinative appears before the title (^mGEMÉ ^dŠEŠ.KI²² NIN.DINGIR) and not the name of this unnamed priestess. It marks probably the first occurrence of the phenomenon of using male determinatives for high-positioned women [BM 131282 = UET 5 267: 8, P415152]²³. Another time ^mGEMÉ ^dEN.ZU is found in ARM XXIII 622 rev. iii 2'²⁴. This evidence must be, however, taken with caution, since to the best of my knowledge, female determinatives were extremely rare in the OB period.

Other Cases of Male-gendering in Old and Standard Babylonian

Other means of male-gendering women are present in the Old Babylonian period too. Women male-gendered these ways are not necessarily royal. All but one(?) instances of these forms of male-gendering are definitely literary²⁵.

Old Babylonian Akkadian produced two strange constructs in relation to high-positioned females. The first one is *hīrtu*, “wife of equal status with the husband”²⁶, the Sumerogram for which is MUNUS.NITA.DAM or DAM.MUNUS.NITA, literally “female male lady/spouse,” or, if you want, an “androgyn spouse”. This ideogram expresses the equality of a woman to her husband by means of representing her as male. The Akkadian equivalent, like in the case of *entu*, is feminine. The term *hīrtu* conveys the same idea as putting both masculine and feminine determinatives before a female name or appointing women as sons and as fathers²⁷. To humans this term is applied only in Old and Standard Babylonian²⁸. In OB it appears only in literary texts, with one possible excep-

²¹ See above and below, p. 359–362, 376–379.

²² ^mGEMÉ ^dŠEŠ.KI / ^dEN.ZU literary means “female servant/slave of Šin”.

²³ In UET 5 267: 26 she is called *bē-le-su-nu* NIN.DINGIR, “Their lady, the high-priestess.” But *Bēlessunu* might be also a name.

²⁴ But note GEMÉ ^dEN.ZU without any determinative in M.13184 vii 20', in ARM XXII 43+ v 24, ARMT XXII 44+ vii 39' and so forth!

²⁵ May, 2018, p. 251, 272–279 and below, p. 376–379

²⁶ So CAD H 200 s. v. *hīrtu* c (a), from *hāru*, “to take as a mate”; *hīrtu* has a male counterpart *hā'iru*, which is also starts to be used in OB. There it is a rare term as well [see Westbrook, 1988, p. 19–20].

²⁷ See below, p. 364–369.

²⁸ For two instances of its applications to queens, see next page.



tion²⁹. *Ḫirtu* is found in law codes—in Ḫammurabi CH § 138: 15, written syllabically (*ḫi-ir-ti-šu*)—and in the Lipit-İštar Code³⁰. The latter is a Sumerian composition, where *ḫirtu* is written as *dam-munus-gidlam* (*nita-dam*) and is differentiated from the *dam-egir-ra*, the “second wife”, who married a man after the death of his first wife [Steele, 1948, xvi 24].

Despite the seemingly legal context, this term is a purely literary construct³¹. It appears as applied to humans only in literary law codes and in literary compositions, such as the Gilgamesh Epic³², or in Standard Babylonian scholarly texts, but not in real legal documents. It is also used in the first millennium royal inscriptions of Sennacherib and of Antiochus I as the epithet of their wives, *Tašmētum-šarrat* and *Stratonike*³³ respectively. *Ḫirtu* applied in the Neo-Assyrian and Late Babylonian texts to mortal women, even if queens, is a *hapax* in each of these two periods. But it regularly appears starting with Tiglath-pileser I in Standard

²⁹ CT 8 7b (BM 78322 = Bu. 88-5-12, 193: 14, a *kallūtum*-contract, made, however, for the king's granddaughter; <http://www.archibab.fr/4dcgi/listestextes3.htm?T4793>. In l. 8 the verb *ḫāru* is used as well. R. Westbrook translates it as “to choose” [Westbrook, 1988, p. 19, 37]. Westbrook points out too that *ḫirtu* only appears in one document—CT 8 7a [Westbrook, 1988, p. 19]. In his discussion of the legal meaning of *ḫirtu* (*ibid.*) he stresses that in this document the bride by no means is going to be her husband's “equal-status” wife. This is particularly clear, since if she claims a divorce, she would be cast into the water, while if her husband divorces her, he would just pay half a mina of silver. Based on CT 8 7b and Codex Hammurabi Westbrook concludes that the difference between OB *ḫirtu* and *aššatu* is rather stylistic than legal [Westbrook, 1988, p. 19–20].

Interestingly, however, while other female names in this letter are naturally written without any classifiers at all, the name of the bride, *Elmešum*, is written with a male determinative (ll. 1, 10 and 17), but not in l. 14, where she is designated as *ḫirtu*. It should be said that the names of the bridegroom (l. 7) and the bride's brother (l. 4) are written without any classifiers too, which is normal for this period. The bride's mother (? or sister; see more detailed discussion in May, forthcoming) is indicated as a *kezertum*, which is sometimes interpreted as “a prostitute” [CAD K, p. 314–315], but this was apparently some kind of a palace woman [see, e.g. Ziegler, 1999, p. 87–88]. Peculiar is that both women—the bride and her mother (?)—are daughters of the same man. But this man is *Ami-ditāna*, the king of Babylon. The mother (?) acts together with her brother, also the son of *Ami-ditāna*. Thus the bride's royal grandfather's (or father's?) name is indicated as her patronym, but her mother (?), the royal daughter is known too.

I. M. Diakonoff is so far, the only one, who referred to the matronyms in the OB period, unfortunately only to those from Ur, and considered them the sign that a person did not have a legal father [Diakonoff, 1986, p. 228, 237]. For CT 8 7b this might explain why the mother and the daughter (if indeed these are the mother and the daughter, and not sisters) have the same father—for the latter her grandfather is named instead. R. Harris considered men with matronyms to be sons of prostitutes [Harris, 1989, p. 149, n. 21]. K. De Graef had demonstrated that this is certainly not the case in Elam, but the status of women in the *sukkalmaḫḫu* period Elam is very special and very different from Mesopotamia [De Graef, 2022]. I presume that CT 8 7b might be a literary school exercise.

³⁰ Steele, 1948, p. 447, xvi 31 and xvii 2 (broken).

³¹ See, Westbrook, 2003a, p. 16–19 with further references.

³² George, 2003, p. 300; MB Ur: l. 58; p. 642, SB VII: l. 161.

³³ 5R 66 no. 2 ii 27.



Babylonian in the expressions *ḫirtu namaddu* and *ḫirtu naramtu* as an epithet of goddesses, and primarily of Mullissu, the spouse of Aššur. Although apart from the aforementioned instances, the term is only applied to goddesses, it reflects the idea of male-gendered women's equality to men.

The situation with the use of the word *šarratu* is similar to that of *ḫirtu*³⁴. This is a case of semantic rather than grammatical male-gendering. *Šarratu*, “the queen” also originates from the Old Babylonian period, but in Mesopotamia itself the term is applied to goddesses exclusively. It is, however, widely represented in the western periphery of the second millennium: in Mari, Hatti, Ugarit, Alalakh and Nuzi. In the first millennium *šarratu* is applied to Arabian queens, who apparently exercised power over their tribes in their own right and could even lead them in a battle. The latest occurrence of *šarratu* was again as an epithet of Stratonike and it was not used merely as a decoration³⁵. The daughter of Demetrius Poliorcetes was important enough not only to become the wife of aged Seleucus, but for the latter to transmit her as the “equal-status” wife to his son and heir Antiochus³⁶.

Interesting, but enigmatic case is the OB way of writing *sekretum*³⁷, literary “the enclosed one” from *sekēru*, “to enclose.” Dictionaries tentatively translate *sekretum* as “a woman of high rank, possibly cloistered; a woman of the palace household, court lady” or just “Abgesperrte”³⁸. In the OB period *sekretum* is written with a pseudo-Sumerogram ¹ZI.IK.RUM/RU(.UM)³⁹, which literary means “male,” but a female determinative is applied to it! This writing is enigmatic and the only explanation for it is that in the OB period *sekretum* might have had some male functions and this pseudo-Sumerogram is a pun playing on the phonetical similarity of the Sumerogram to the Akkadian word. Although *sekretums* are often attested in documents, this pun again comes from the world of high literacy.

Juridical Fiction: Adopting of Daughters as Sons and Appointing Wives and Daughters as “Fathers” of Households

The notion of a “male female” continues into the second millennium. It is expressed in documents, mostly wills, appointing women as heads of households and as heirs. Most cases are attested not in Mesopotamia itself, but at the periphery of the cuneiform writing.

³⁴ CAD Š II 72a–76b s.v. *šarratu*.

³⁵ 5R 66 no. 2, ii 27.

³⁶ Greek sources tell a romantic tale of a father (Seleucus I) giving up his (second) wife in favour of his son (Antiochus I) after discovering that the latter is dying of love for his stepmother [Plutarch, Demetrius, 38; Appian, Syr. IX.59]. The real purpose was, naturally, political connections and further legitimation of his successor in the eyes of the other diadochi.

³⁷ I. M. Diakonoff mentions in passing ¹zikru, whom he describes as a “hermaphrodite priestess or an intersex-travesty” [Diakonoff, 1986, p. 237].

³⁸ CAD S 215a and AHw 1036. Studies of M. Stol and N. Ziegler clearly prove that the OB *sekretum* belonged to a palace [Stol, 2016, p. 488, 530–533; Ziegler, 1999, p. 83–86].

³⁹ But not in NA, where it is ^mERÉN.É.GAL!



Assyria

The phenomenon is first known in the corpus of the Old Assyrian documents from Kārum Kaneš. But in all the bulk of OA wills only one contains evidence of treating women as men. It is Kt o/k 196c: 5–6, the will of Agūa, who calls his wife a “father and mother” of her share of silver: *ina KÙ.BABBAR zi-ti-ša : a-ba-at ù um-ma-/at*, “father and mother over the silver (that is) her share” [Michel, 2016, p. 88; Michel, 2020, p. 118–119, no. 54, 5–6]. Cécile Michel compared it to the later Nuzi and Emar practices and drove to the conclusion that this epithet was added in order to elevate the status of the testator’s wife and make her equal to men [Michel, 2000, p. 7]. But in fact this case is very different from Emar and Nuzi ones, since Agūa does have male heirs: he has five sons (and a daughter). Maybe the purpose was to make his wife the first-rank heir. Multiple cases of OA women inheriting their husbands without being given any special status prove that there was no need in appointing female as male in Assyria in order to allow a woman to inherit in the OA period.

Nuzi and Arappḥa

Two wills (*tuppi šimti*) and an agreement (*tuppi tamg[urti]*) derive from 14th century BCE Nuzi and Arappḥa⁴⁰ that are geographically close to Aššur⁴¹, but peripheral in relation to the centres of the cuneiform tradition. These documents enclose adoption formulae, in which the gender of women, mostly daughters of adopters, is switched from female into male in order to enable them to inherit and (in Yale 6, Arappḥa, ?) to perform the posthumous cult⁴². This relatively small corpus (three texts) uses the expression *ana mārūti epēšu*⁴³. Occasionally or not, but in all these three text *mārūti* is written syllabically. In one case [Sumer 32] the father grants a status not only to his daughter, but also to his wife by making her a “father” of their daughter Šilwa-Turi⁴⁴, who is adopted as a son in the same document. The wife, if widowed, would not have a right to remarry or transmit the family property to strangers. The fortunes bequeathed or otherwise treated in all three documents suggest that the women adopted as sons belonged to the wealthy elite.

⁴⁰ Sumer 32, Yale 6 and HSS 19 60 + EN 10/2 172 [see, Lion, 2009b, p. 10–11 and also Grosz, 1987 and Grosz, 1989, p. 173–177].

⁴¹ Nuzi belonged to a state in modern Iraqi Kurdistan of which Arappḥa was a capital.

⁴² See A. Goddeeris for the interchangeable use of the phrases “to adopt as a son” and “to adopt as an heir” in the adoption documents from Old Babylonian Nippur [Goddeeris *apud* De Graef, 2022, p. 95, n. 30].

⁴³ Literally “to make into sonship,” *a-na ma-ru-ti/ta DÙ-uš* in Sumer 32; *a-na ma-ru-ṯi*¹ [*i-te-pu*]-*uš-šu* and *a-na ma-ru-ti... i-te-ep-šu* in Yale 6 and HSS 19 60 respectively.

⁴⁴ *a-na a-bu-ti a-na DUMU.MUNUS-ia* ¹*Ši-il-wa-tù-ri DÙ-uš*, “I appointed for the fatherhood of my daughter Šilwa-Turi”.

*Emar and Ekalte*

Evidence for turning females into males in juridical cuneiform documents from Syria is much more ample than that coming from the Arappḥa kingdom. There are twenty-two texts from the thirteen century BCE Emar, in which females are male-gendered in various ways⁴⁵.

The expression *ana mārūti epēšu*, but with *mārūti* written ideographically as DUMU.NITA-*ut-ti* is used in three texts from Emar⁴⁶. In Emar, a similar but slightly different expression—“turn a daughter into a son,” *a-na* DUMU.NITA *i-pu-ša-an-ni* was used⁴⁷.

TBR 72 is special among the documents from Emar. According to this document, Ba'al-wapi, son of Abbānu, adopts his elder daughter Šamaš-la'i as a son—DUMU.MUNUS-*ia* GAL *a-na* DUMU.NITA-*ia e-te-pūš-ši* [TBR 72: 3–4]. But together with her he adopts a male, Tae. After the adoption, the couple is to marry. By this the adopter made his daughter into the “wife of equal status” to her husband, i.e., created for her a status of a MUNUS.NITA.DAM/*hīrtu*. Although this literary Akkadian term was not used in Emar, the procedure described in TBR 72 reflects the same perception of a woman's equality to her husband. In fact, her status was even higher than that of her husband, since he was totally dependent on the adoptive family of his wife. He could not freely dispose of their family property and lost rights for anything of the paternal household of his origin.

In a will Emar 181⁴⁸, the father calls his daughter⁴⁹ a “second (middle) son,” or better “second child” (DUMU *ša-ni-ú*) when he also has an elder (DUMU GAL) and a younger (DUMU TUR) sons⁵⁰. Typically, it is not an adoption as a son. The daughter is just listed as the middle son and is not explicitly male-gendered because the sign NITA is absent. A woman, apparently the testator's wife, is said to be the father and

⁴⁵ These are Emar texts TBR 28 [Arnaud, 1991, p. 61–62, pl. 28], TBR 47 [Arnaud, 1991, p. 87–89, pl. 47], TBR 50 [Arnaud, 1991, p. 90–92, pl. 50], TBR 72 [Arnaud, 1991, p. 122–123, pl. 72] and TBR 74 [Arnaud, 1991, p. 125–126, pl. 74]; Emar 31 [Arnaud, 1986, p. 44–45, handcopy in: [Arnaud, 1985, p. 65] and Emar 181 [Arnaud, 1986, p. 193–195; handcopy in: Arnaud, 1985, p. 85]; RE 15, 23, 57, 85 [Beckman, 1996a, p. 26–28, 39–40, 75–76, 107–108]; RA 77 1, 2, 3 [Huehnergard, 1983, p. 13–21]; Semitica 46 2 [Arnaud, 1996, p. 12–15]; BLMJ 3 [Westenholz, 2000, p. 9–12]; AuOr 5 13 [Arnaud, 1987, p. 233–234]; Fales 66 [Fales, 1989, p. 203] and three texts from Ekalte: MBQ-I-26, MBQ-I-34 [Mayer, 2001, p. 139–140, no. 75 and 131–132, no. 65] and ASJ 13 23 [Tsukimoto, 1991, p. 285–288].

⁴⁶ Emar 31, TBR 72 and TBR 74. Emar 31: 8–9: 2 DUMU.MUNUS-*ia* ... *a-na* DUMU-*ut-ti-ia e-pu-uš-šu-nu*. Their apparently elder sister is appointed as a “father and mother” of the household and of her sisters (ll. 3–4 and 14; see p. 368 with fns. 65–67).

⁴⁷ So TBR 74: 2–3. The woman, who has been adopted as a son by her father is childless and adopts a man or a boy.

⁴⁸ Ll. 4–5 [Arnaud, 1986, p. 194–195, handcopy p. 95].

⁴⁹ Name written with a female determinative.

⁵⁰ Written with male determinatives.



the mother of his three sons (*a-ba-šu-nu* ù *AMA-šu-nu*) in case they become orphans⁵¹. The king's son is among the witnesses (l. 18).

In two of the aforementioned texts [TBR 72 and 74] and in nine more documents from Emar⁵² and in two from Ekalte⁵³ the father gives (*šakānu*⁵⁴ or *epēšu*⁵⁵) his female relative the status of “female and male” or “male and female”: *MUNUS-(ti) u NITA* or (*DUMU*).*NITA u MUNUS-(ti)*. Masamichi Yamada points out that Syrian type tablets use “male and female” and Syro-Hittite type ones—“female and male”⁵⁶. But in both Ekalte and three Emar⁵⁷ Syrian type texts females appointed as males have to take care of their mothers, who are called *a-bu u um-mu*, “father and mother,” thus putting male before female.

In eight cases relatives appointed as males are daughters (*DUMU.MUNUS*), but in RE 23 the wife (*DAM-ti-ja*) of the testator is appointed *a-na MUNUS* ù *NITA* and should take care of the familial cult if the son of the testator dies childless. She is also called a son of the testator together with his real sons (*DUMU*^{mes}-*a*) in the next lines⁵⁸. In MBQ-T-34: 14–15 (Ekalte) the testator's sister, called by her name—*Ummi-na-šemil*, is appointed as female and male. In the same document the mother of the testator, named as “daughter of *Jakmu*”, is appointed as “father and mother” of the household.⁵⁹ In RE 85: 12–13 the procedure of adopting a daughter as a son takes place in the presence of the son of the king of Carchemish. The daughter that is turned into “male” is a *qadištu*. She is also appointed in charge of the ancestral cult. It is specially stated that the testator's brothers may not have any claims for his property. The case is certainly elite. The bequeathed possessions are not always described in these Emar wills, but if they are, they are substantial. Appointing daughters as sons allowed them to inherit a son's share and to sustain a familial cult.

⁵¹ Cf. below, p. 368–369, the appointments of wives as a “father and mother” of the household.

⁵² RA 77 1: 6, 7; RA 77 2: 9–10; Semitica 46 2: 18–19; BLMJ 3: rev. 20–22; AuOr 5 13: 4–6 (the document clearly states that the adoption is made for the lack of a son); RE 15: 9–11, RE 85: 12–13, RE 23: 13–15; Fales 66: 5–6 (here the expression is *a-na DUMU.NITA* ù *MUNUS-ti*). The Ekalte texts are MBQ-T-34 and ASJ 13 23: 6–7.

⁵³ For the discussion, see most recently R. Westbrook, B. Lion and M. Yamada with references to previous discussions, including the two documents treated by K. Grosz [Westbrook, 2001, p. 36–38; Lion, 2009b, p. 14–16; Yamada, 2014; Grosz, 1987].

⁵⁴ Emar Syrian type texts [BLMJ 3, RA 77 1, RA 77 2, RE 15, RE 23 and Semitica 46 2].

⁵⁵ Emar Syro-Hittite type texts [AuOr 5 13, Fales 66, RE 85, TBR 72 and TBR 74].

⁵⁶ For this case see, M. Yamada, who had very usefully analysed these texts in a tabular form and described grammatical, orthographical and syntactic differences between their two scribal traditions—Syrian and Syro-Hittite [Yamada 2014, p. 2/19].

⁵⁷ RA 77 2; RE 15 and Semitica 46 2.

⁵⁸ RE 23: 20–21.

⁵⁹ MBQ-T-34: 9.



There are thirteen cases in the Emar textual corpus⁶⁰ in which a man's female relative appears as a "father and mother" of his household.⁶¹ In four of these documents an adoption of a daughter as a son takes place too⁶². In most of these thirteen cases this man appoints his female relative as a "father and mother" or just states that she is the one (*a-bu u AMA/um-mu ša É-ia [šī-it/šī-i/šu-nu-ma]* etc.). Usually the woman is this man's wife and the mother of his children, but she can also be his mother, sister or (elder?) daughter. Among these thirteen texts in four instances the name of the wife appointed as the head of the household is written with double determinatives.⁶³ TBR 47 is a record of a witness of an oral testament that was made after the testator's death. According to this text, two women, whose relationship to the testator is not indicated, but whose names are written with double determinatives, are appointed as a "father and mother" of the household. The first witness is the king. In Emar 31 a *ḥarimtu* (KAR.KID)⁶⁴ is appointed for "fatherhood and mother" (*a-na a-bu-ut-ti ù AMA-mi*)⁶⁵ and called a "father and mother," (*a-ba-šu-nu ù AMA-šu-nu*)⁶⁶ of her sisters, who are adopted as sons⁶⁷. The record is made in front of the (local) king, who is the son of the king of Carchemish. In RE 57 a daughter appointed as the head of the household is a *qadištu* (consistently written <NU>. GIG with omitted NU throughout all the document)⁶⁸. There is another case of

⁶⁰ RA 77 2: 6–8 and RA 77 3: 4–5 (*a-na a-bi u AMA [ša] É-ia aš-ku-un-šī*); Semitica 46 2: 6–7; RE 15: 5–6; RE 57: 6–7; TBR 28: 9–10 (*a-na a-bu u AMA ša É-ia al-ta-qi-šī*); TBR 47: 10–12; TBR 50: 7–9; Emar 181: 9–10 (*a-ba-šu-nu ù AMA-šu-nu li-it-ta-ba-lu*); ASJ 13 23: 6–7 (Ekalte); MBQ-T-34: 9; MBQ-T-26: 10–11 (Ekalte; *a-bu ù um-mu [ša É-ti]* is used as the title or epithet of the designator's mother and spouse respectively). In RA 77 3 J. Huehnergard restores the name of testator's wife with a double determinative, apparently following RA 77 2. For the discussion of the legal aspects of appointing a "father and mother" of the household, see R. Westbrook [Westbrook, 2001, p. 38–40].

⁶¹ The appointment as a "father and mother" is never attested for males, so this as beyond any doubt, the way to change woman's status and to make her into the head of the household.

⁶² RA 77 2: 6–8; Semitica 46 2: 6–7; RE 15: 5–6 and Emar 31.

⁶³ RA 77 2: 2, 9, 16, 18, 25, 37, 40, 41 (the wife and the daughter of the testator and two other women [ll. 40–41] probably younger daughters of the testator, who shall inherit his estate in case the daughter appointed as "female and male" and her husband die childless); Semitica 46 2: 6; TBR 47: 10–12, 14–15.

⁶⁴ Often translated as "prostitute"; CAD H 101.

⁶⁵ Emar 31: 3–4.

⁶⁶ Emar 31: 14.

⁶⁷ Emar 31: 8–9.

⁶⁸ Three documents, ASJ 13 23, RE 85 and RE 57 deal with appointments of *qadištus* as a son or as the head of the household. This is the third of all documents concerning appointments of women as the heads of households. Whatever was the exact status of *qadištu* in Emar, it was obviously high, since RE 85 was written in front of Ini-Tešub, son of Saḥurunuwa, king of Carchemish (himself apparently the king to be). Similarly, in Emar 31, where a *ḥarimtu* is made the head of the household, written before Ini-Tešub's father Saḥurunuwa, the latter is called the "king," but not yet the king of Carchemish. As is clear from RE 57, where the *qadištu* has a daughter, *qadištus* were not necessarily childless [*contra* Lion, 2009b, p. 15–16]. In MB ^{l/m}Qadištu is attested as a family name (see p. 373–374 with fn. 87). See also the discussion of these matters by M. Yamada [Yamada, 2014, p. 3–4/19].



appointing the daughter, who is a *qadištu*, as the head of the household. Remarkably, she is appointed together with her mother. Three sons of the testator must take care of both of them until their death, otherwise they should be disinherited [ASJ 13: 23]. In TBR 28 the mother of a female household owner becomes the head of this household [TBR 28: 9]. The woman, who made the document, also appoints one of her sons as the caretaker of herself and her mother, who are referred to as this son's two mothers [TBR 28: 15–17]. In MBQ-T-34 this is also a mother (but of the male) testator appointed as a “father and mother.” Appointment as a “father and mother” of the house made a woman into a head of the household.

To sum up, the linguistic tools of male-gendering women in Emar, Ekalte and Nuzi are the same as in the Old Babylonian *MUNUS.NITA.DAM*. Garry Beckman called this phenomenon “juridical hermaphroditism” [Beckman, 1996b, p. 60]. Despite Lion's critique of this definition [Lion, 2009b, p. 21], it is correct from linguistic point of view especially since there are no terms for sex and gender in Akkadian and even more so in Sumerian, which does not have the grammatical gender. The purpose of male-gendering in these cases could be circumventing patrilinear transaction of family property, real estate in the first place, as well as granting the continuity of the familial cult. A woman could be “made into a man” in order to continue and give her sons a possibility to continue her father's lineage. But the absence of male offspring is not the only reason why women are appointed as sons and “fathers of the house” [*contra* Lion, 2009b, p. 21]. There are instances of male-gendering women despite the existence of male offspring⁶⁹. The majority of the documents with male-gendering in the form of the adoption of a daughter as a son or the appointment of a woman as a “father and mother” of the household are testaments. Although a testator could bequeath his property to his female family members also without male-gendering them [Westbrook, 2003b, p. 679–680; Lion, 2009b, p. 18], stable male-gendering formulae existed in Nuzi, Ekalte and Emar primarily in conjunction with inheritance. Apparently appointing women as men let these women not just inherit but also legally act as a men and full owners of their property freed from the patriarchal authority of their male relatives. Such appointment also turned them into first-rank heirs. In Emar texts two of the three Syro-Hittite type documents [Emar 31 and RE 85] and all Syrian type ones involve kings, crown princes and members of royal family as witnesses. This is, together with the substantial amount of the bequeathed property, evidence that the women designated as men belonged to the city's elite [Balza, 2009].

Double Determinatives and Female Names with Male Determinatives

Elam

Double male and female determinatives in Akkadian are first attested in Elam of the *sukkalmahhu* period, which corresponds to the OB period in Babylonia. Although the early Elamite documents published in MDP are written in Akkadian and female names with double determinatives in these documents are Akkadian too, it must be taken into consideration that the position of women in Elam was very special and even the highest position in the state passed from the ruler to his sister's son, which

⁶⁹ E.g. ASJ 13: 23, TBR 28, etc.



is evidence for the matrilineal succession at least for the elite. These Elamite documents often do not apply any determinatives to PNs at all, which is normal also for Babylonia before 1400 BCE [Brinkman, 2007, p. 1]. The same female name can appear in Elamite texts with double determinatives, with a female determinative only and without any determinative at all, sometimes in one and the same text or word⁷⁰. Male-gendering in Elam is barely explored and needs a separate investigation against the background of the archival content of the documents on one hand and the development of use of determinatives in these periods on the other⁷¹. Since there was great mutual influence between Mesopotamia and Elam in many spheres of human activities, research into the matter whether male-gendering in these two regions is interdependent or emerges in each of them separately heavily depends on studying the issue of Mesopotamian-Elamite cultural relationship as well⁷².

Emar

In four Emar texts names of women are written with double determinatives. In all these instances these women are appointed as the head—“father and mother”—of the household⁷³ and conflicting determinatives reflect their “father and mother” status.

⁷⁰ E.g. a woman whose name in MDP 23 221: 3 is written with double determinatives and in MDP 23 320: 9 with ^{/mfm/}, in MDP 23 320: 5 appears with ^{/f/} only; in MDP 22 21: 1 names of two women are written with double determinatives; in MDP 22 21:10–11 one of these women appears twice without any determinatives and the other with ^{/f/} only (apparently she appears with ^{/f/} only also in MDP 22 51: 46); in MDP 22 51: 16 a female name is written with double determinatives, while in l. 4 the name of the same woman is written with ^{/f/} only; in MDP 22 66: 7, 19, 23 a female name is written with double determinatives, but in l. 14, the name of the same woman is written with ^{/f/} only; in MDP 22 67: 6, 18 a female name is written with double determinatives and in l. 13 the name of the same woman is written with ^{/f/} only; in MDP 22 76: 4 a female name is written with double determinatives and in l. 13 the name of same woman is written with ^{/f/} only; in MDP 22 84: 3 a female name is written with double determinatives, in l. 5 the name of same woman appears without any determinatives; in MDP 22 89: 4 a female name is written with double determinatives, and in l. 15 the name of the same woman is written with ^{/f/} only; in other texts she appears with ^{/f/} only or without any determinatives. MDP 9 documents written in Neo-Elamite maybe point to the continuity of the phenomenon.

⁷¹ M. Dabagh also points to a case of male-gendering by means of a possessive suffix of a presumably female individual, Ginadu, in her seal inscription [Dabagh, 2020, p. 18].

⁷² For all these reasons further research of application of double determinatives is beyond the scope of this article. Elam also is beyond the scope of this article because it is not Mesopotamia. Besides two priestesses with ^{/mf/} determinatives, in Elam women, who pass inheritance to their children are marked with double determinatives as well. This is similar to the use of matronyms in Elam [De Graef, 2018, p. 93–94]. I am most grateful to Mina Dabagh (personal communication) for sharing her interpretation of the double determinatives in Elam with me.

⁷³ RA 77 2: 2, 9, 16, 18, 25, 37, 40, 4; Semitica 46 2: 6; TBR 47: 10–12, 14–15. See above, p. 367–369.



Nuzi

Philippe Abrahami provides evidence of nine documents for male-gendering women in Nuzi through using double or conflicted personal determinatives⁷⁴. All but one Nuzi texts with double determinatives derive from the archive of a woman named Tulpun-naya. In these documents her name and the names of two more women, Kisaya and Ħiar-elli appear with double determinatives: /*mi*/ with a “personal wedge” /*mi*/ written before a female determinative /*i*/ as DIŠ.MUNUS, or inscribed into it—MUNUS×DIŠ. Tulpun-naya acts as an independent agent, and never under the control of her husband. Therefore, her name written with both male and female determinatives serves to indicate her independent status. Abrahami suggests that in another instance from Tulpun-naya archive, a woman called Ħiar-elli acts as a *pater familias* against Ħanate, a maidservant of Tulpun-naya, in the case of adoption of the daughter of Ħiar-elli by Ħanate. Kisaya is given by her mother to Tulpun-naya as a daughter and daughter-in-law, as she apparently marries Tulpun-naya’s son. In case of his death, the court gives Tulpun-naya the right to marry off Kisaya multiple times due to this adoption [AASOR 16 33]. Apparently Tulpun-naya did so indeed, since Kisaya demanded from Tulpun-naya to give her to another husband, to whom she bore a son in this marriage [AASOR 16 31, 32]. Tulpun-naya’s authority over Kisaya stretches much further than that of any of the latter’s possible husbands and of any father. In the other document of Tulpun-naya’s collection Kisaya is called her slave [AASOR 16 32: 2–3]; Kisaya’s son belongs to Tulpun-naya as well. Notwithstanding, in the document of her transmission under Tulpun-naya’s authority, Kisaya’s name is written with a double determinative, but only once. In the same document, a double determinative appears before the name of Tulpun-naya, but also only once [AASOR 16 33: 14]. Occurrence of a double determinative before the names of all three women in Tulpun-naya’s dossier is inconsistent, as it is in the aforementioned Elamite documents.⁷⁵

In a single Nuzi document from outside Tulpun-naya’s archive, where a double determinative appears, a certain Šinen-naya apparently becomes an independent *pater familias* for herself and her children due to a divorce [HSS 19 139: 4]. It proves, however, that the phenomenon was not restricted to a single archive, although both in Nuzi and, much more considerably, in Emar double determinatives were less common way of male-gendering than adoption of women as men.

Kassite Babylonia

Further cases of conflicting gender determinatives in texts from Kassite Babylonia were discussed by J. Antony Brinkman [Brinkman, 2007]. He provides an impressive number of instances for application of double determinatives in the Middle Babylonian period but cautiously points out that the second, i.e. feminine, determinative in some cases could be also read syllabically. Most important, he notes that “Lack of personal determinatives is at present confined mostly to patronyms and matronyms” [Brinkman, 2007, n. 4], thus demonstrating that the use of personal

⁷⁴ AASOR 16 [Pfeiffer, Speiser, 1936]. See Ph. Abrahami [Abrahami, 2011, p. 1] for the exact references [Abrahami, 2011, p. 1].

⁷⁵ See above, p. 369–370.



determinatives, especially with family names, was not yet firmly established in the MB period. Below the most reliable and informative instances of application of conflicting determinatives are discussed.

Brinkman lists a number of examples from Nippur—all tablets dated from 1300 till at least 1232 BCE, in which he discerns two patterns of occurrence of parental citation with matronym prefixed by ^{/mf/}: PN₁ DUMU.(SAL) ^{m/}PN₂, and ∅ DUMU ^{m/}PN. Latter are citations of matronyms without citation of a personal name [Brinkman, 2007, p. 2–3]. He stresses that all these instances are nothing but citations of parentage [Brinkman 2007, p. 2–3]⁷⁶.

The roster of servile personnel, CBS 3640, presents the most interesting evidence for the use of matronyms prefixed with ^{/mf/} (of which there are twelve examples). In this roster the same parental name, full or replaced by KI.MIN, is used with a double determinative ^{/mf/} if the matronym relates to a son. Yet, only ^{/f/} is used before the same matronym if it relates to a daughter⁷⁷. This roster provides evidence that matronyms prefixed by double determinatives were used by the lowest layers of Babylonian society as well. All women listed in CBS 3640 were slaves, as were their offspring. Aside from CBS 3640 there are at least fourteen examples of the use of matronyms with double determinatives for male offspring: five instances with ^{m/}PN₁ DUMU ^{m/}PN₂, and (at least) nine with ∅⁷⁸ DUMU ^{m/}PN. Brinkman stresses that only a single case of a matronym with double determinatives linked to a female descendant is known to him [Brinkman, 2007, p. 2–4].

This leads Brinkman to conclude: “There is no indication that the women with ^{/mf/} determinatives occupied a distinctive social or economic status in the community other than their role as mothers and presumably heads of household” [Brinkman, 2007, p. 5]. In the absence of citation of a patronym the name of a mother is used—a matronym prefixed with ^{/mf/} in the case of a male offspring.

Brinkman further provides an example of a prominent female family head from Middle Babylonian Ur. There Dey(y)anātu is attested as the female ancestor of at least seven males⁷⁹. Descendants of Dey(y)anātu were brewers of Sīn—a kind of a priest—at Ur. Dey(y)anātu herself could be a high-positioned person or one of the

⁷⁶ Matronyms replacing patronyms are known already in the Old Babylonian period (very rare, no system for their use can be discerned, A. Goddeeris, personal communication). See also fn. 29 and I. M. Diakonoff for evidence from Ur [Diakonoff, 1986, p. 228–229, 237–238]. For the the *sukkalmahhu* period Elam, see K. De Graef and K. Grosz [De Graef, 2022; Grosz 1989: 175–176]. Discussion of matronyms with a feminine determinative only is beyond the scope of this article and will be done elsewhere [May, forthcoming]. But it is worth noticing that both in Elam and in Nuzi, matronyms were connected to inheritance. K. Grosz (*contra* Harris) considers that matronyms were used by children of women appointed as sons [Grosz, 1989, p. 175–177]; K. De Graef demonstrated that in Elam identifying a person by matronym and not by patronym is connected to hereditary rights and property transactions [Graef, 2022, p. 94]. In Elam double determinatives are connected to inheritance issues too (see p. 369–370 with fn. 70).

⁷⁷ For a very few exclusions, see J. A. Brinkman [Brinkman, 2007, p. 4–5].

⁷⁸ ∅ stands for an absent personal name.

⁷⁹ So J. A. Brinkman [Brinkman, 2007, p. 6 with n. 22–23]. O. R. Gurney lists eight persons as her descendants [Gurney, 1983, p. 1–2].



high priestesses of the moon-god. Dey(y)anātu means “she-judge”⁸⁰. Since at Middle Babylonian Ur a high priestess acts as a judge⁸¹, which is otherwise known as an exclusively male function, Dey(y)anātu might be an epithet of one of the high priestesses that was used as a family name of honour by her descendants. Dey(y)anātu is an exclusively Middle Babylonian name [Brinkman, 2007, n. 22]⁸². In most cases, it is written with a masculine determinative. In two cases Dey(y)anātu is written with a feminine determinative, although according to Oliver R. Gurney’s transliteration⁸³, this is a feminine determinative corrected into a masculine, and in one case this name occurs with a feminine determinative⁸⁴. The brewers of Šin, descendants of Dey(y)anātu were a rich family, which played an important role in the temple’s business activities. Their substantial archive of at least 62 tablets dated to ca. 1237–1176 BCE is evidence for this⁸⁵. But it is impossible to reconstruct their family tree because descendants of Dey(y)anātu never have patronyms. It is tempting to suggest that only the name of their familial ancestor is indicated because it is more important than their paternal lineage, but absence of a patronym is standard in the MA period. Outside the archive of the brewers of Šin at Ur, a personal name Dey(y)anātu is attested in three lists of people from Nippur⁸⁶, among them the list of servile labourers (GURUŠ). Thus this name was not always a sign of prestige.

There is a sole occurrence of ^mQadištu apparently as a female ancestral name in the Middle Babylonian document confirming that the use of masculine determi-

⁸⁰ See J. A. Brinkman for details about this name [Brinkman 2007, n. 22].

⁸¹ UET 7 7; this aspect was previously discussed by N. N. May [May, 2022, p. 133]. Note that J. A. Brinkman is reluctant to consider Dey(y)anātu an occupational family name [Brinkman, 2006, p. 34–35].

⁸² Note, however, that J. A. Brinkman points out that although Dayyāntu/Diyyāntu occurs as a personal name in accounts from Nippur (see below, fn. 86), it is not known as a title or occupation for human beings, but only for goddesses [Brinkman, 2006, p. 35].

⁸³ O. R. Gurney transliterates as ^mDa-a-a-<na>-ti, but on p. 28 he comments that the scribe first has written ^fDa-a-a-<na>-ti, but then corrected himself [Gurney, 1983, no. 2: 25, on p. 25]. His handcopies in UET 7 do not reflect any erasure and correction. The occasion, where Dey(y)anātu appears “perhaps with both determinatives,” according to J. A. Brinkman [Brinkman, 2006, p. 6 with n. 22], is probably UET 7 21. Unfortunately, I cannot collate tablets in Iraq and must rely on the handcopies. For Šamaš-ēṭir, see O. R. Gurney [Gurney, 1983, nos. 12 and 22] and the next footnote.

⁸⁴ See, O. R. Gurney [Gurney, 1983, no. 2 rev. 25 (masculine); *ibid.*, no. 12: 4’ (feminine in handcopy; corrected according to the transliteration) and Gurney, 1983, p. 28; *ibid.*, no. 14: 3 (determinative broken); *ibid.*, no. 18 rev. 8 (masculine); *ibid.*, no. 21 rev. 11 (corrected to feminine in the transliteration, double in the handcopy); *ibid.*, no. 22: 5’ (masculine); *ibid.*: no. 25: 8 (probably double; in the handcopy a crack passes through the sign; in the transliteration the sign is marked as corrected to feminine); *ibid.*, no. 30: 3 (masculine); *ibid.*, no. 33: 7 (masculine); no 46: 3 (masculine)].

⁸⁵ EM site, see O. R. Gurney [Gurney, 1983, p. 1–6].

⁸⁶ ^fDa-a-a-an-tu₄, BE 14 91a: 36 (EAH 178, P453346, payment of wages), *Di-ya-an-tu₄*, without any determinative(!), BE 15 190 iii 18’ (CBS 3443, P259817, payment of salaries) and ^fDa-a-a-an-tu₄, CBS 3650 rev. i’ 9’, 19’ (a list of labourers, P260022).



natives with feminine ancestral names starts together with the use of family names in general. ^fQadištu is known from three more Middle Babylonian documents⁸⁷.

Finally, ^mIM—EN—ka-la DUMU ^mHa-ri-im-ti₄, “Adad-bēl-kala, son of a ‘prostitute’”, is a witness on PBS 8/2 158: 6. This matronym or, more probable, the occupational matronymic family name, although denigrating, is written with a male signifier⁸⁸.

Documents from Kassite Babylon provide a few more instances of matronyms or feminine ancestral names, written with double determinatives⁸⁹. These matronyms relate to male offspring (^mPN₁ DUMU ^mfPN₂ type). In a document from a private collection the name of a woman is consistently written with a feminine determinative. But in one of those instances where a female name serves a matronym for a woman's son⁹⁰, it appears with both masculine and feminine determinatives. As Brinkman concludes: “A possible explanation for the choice of the /^mf/ expression and for its significance would focus on the enhanced prominence of the designated women as heads of family or household” [Brinkman, 2007, p. 6]. Most interesting is that the social status and wealth of a woman was in such cases not important.

Neo-Babylonian Family Names

While the use of double determinatives with female names in Akkadian starts in Elam⁹¹ and continues with female names and matronyms in Kassite Babylonia⁹², and to lesser extent with female names in Emar⁹³ and Nuzi⁹⁴, male determinatives were used with feminine (family) names starting from the Middle Babylonian period at least⁹⁵. In first-millennium Babylonia, masculine determinatives were applied to family names derived from female personal names and served female ancestral names⁹⁶ Cornelia Wunsch, who explored the phenomenon of masculine determina-

⁸⁷ ^mMU—lib-ši DUMU ^fQa-di-il¹-ti, PBS 2/2 122: 22, ^m[x]-x-tum DUMU ^fQa-diš-¹ti¹ [Sassmannshausen, 2001, no. 373: 4–5]; ø DUMU ^fQa-diš-¹ti¹ [Sassmannshausen, 2001, no. 348: 5]. As J. A. Brinkman pointed out, Qadištu was also a personal name [Brinkman, 2006, p. 29, n. 43].

⁸⁸ Cf. ^dŠEŠ.KI—MA.AN.SUM DUMU ha-ri-im-ti, “Nanna-mansum, son of a prostitute” in UET 5 475 (a list of silver payments from the OB period) and the Nuzi text JEN 666, where Musteya, son of the woman Ziliya, who claimed the property of his diseased father Tarmiya, was disinherited because his mother was not a wife, but a *harimtu* of his father. For Emar 31, see fn. 68.

⁸⁹ Bab 34300 rev. 3 (date lost, the matronym is ^mfBa-bi-la-a-a-i-¹ti¹ [gen.]), VAT 13210: 10 (1259 BCE) and a document from a private collection.

⁹⁰ A document from a private collection, l. 4.

⁹¹ See above p. 369–370 with fn. 70.

⁹² See above, p. 371–373.

⁹³ See above, p. 369–370 with fn. 70.

⁹⁴ See above, 369–370.

⁹⁵ See above, p. 372–373 for Dey(y)anātu with masculine and double determinatives. For the use of a masculine determinative with a female name, see fn. 29.

⁹⁶ I purposely use the term “feminine ancestral name” to discern it from matronym that replaces a patronym, although C. Wunsch uses German *Metronym* to designate feminine family names. Matronyms were in use at least since OB period [Diakonoff, 1986 and fn. 76].



tives with female ancestral names in the Neo-Babylonian period, stresses that “Metronymic ancestral names... are extremely rare in Babylonia. The earliest example, Qaqqadānītu, (lit. ‘the Great Headed,’ f.—*N.N.M.*) can be traced to pre-Neo-Babylonian times” and is apparently very early instance of the feminine ancestral name [Wunsch, 2006, S. 464–465]⁹⁷. This earliest instance is the sole case of this family name written with a feminine determinative [BM 37246: 4’,17’]. Wunsch lists descendants of Qaqqadānītu, whose name is written with a masculine determinative (dates of documents range from 575 through 491 BCE, places of writing are Babylon, Šaḥrīnu and Ālu-ša-Nabû) and points out that there are further instances.

Maqartu (“the dear one,” f.) is attested in Borsippa since 687 BCE. Earlier occurrences (four texts; from 687 till 552 BCE) also show the usage of a feminine determinative with this name. In later texts (five instances; from 551–508 BCE) it is, obviously deliberately, replaced by a male indicator [Wunsch, 2006, S. 453]. In one document written in Dilbat Maqartu appears with a masculine determinative [BM 53861].

The name Arrabtu (“she-dormouse[?],” f.⁹⁸) represents a third feminine family name, found both with masculine and with feminine determinatives. Further comes a single attestation of ^mBal-ta-ni-tu₄ in BM 28917 (Borsippa, 11 Dar, Šaddinnu-Archive)⁹⁹.

⁹⁷ Although the date of the document is lost, C. Wunsch demonstrates that it might be from the end of the second–beginning of the first millennium.

⁹⁸ It can also be a male personal name, despite its feminine grammatical form.

⁹⁹ C. Wunsch then discusses *zakītu*, which is only attested written with a female determinative and never with a male one [Wunsch, 2006, S. 466]. She rejects that *zakītu* was a feminine family name. Wunsch translates *zakītu* as a “freedwoman.” In her opinion *mār zakīti* (lit. “son of *zakītu*”) indicates a temple oblate (*širku*), the son of an originally privately-owned slave woman, who has been freed by her master (from *zakū* G or D) for the service in a temple. She claims that in the absence of a legal father, this child is called *mār zakīti*. Wunsch argues that “the meaning of both Qaqqadānītu and Maqartu indicate respect and appreciation for the women concerned, and therefore do not hint at cases of illegitimate birth or single mothers” [Wunsch, 2006, p. 466–468]. Wunsch’s study, however, was accomplished and published before that of Brinkman’s and the case of the Middle Babylonian slave-women, who acted as legal patrons of their adolescent slave-sons and whose names were written with a double determinative, was not known to her when she wrote her article.

Zakītu, however, could be used as a matronym. Although Wunsch notices that *zakītu* might be also a personal name with the reference to the dictionaries (*ibid.*), the dictionaries only quote *Zakūtu*, the Assyrian translation of the West Semitic name of the famous queen-mother of Esarhaddon, Naqī’a. *Zakītu*, however, could also mean “pure”, as in the case of Naqī’a/*Zakūtu*. A single attestation of *Zakītu* as a principal personal name comes from UET 4 48 (a work contract; Arthaxeses II, 6) where *Zakītu*, daughter of Anu-uballit serves a guarantor that her son Kidin-Nabû (son of Šumāya) will perform the duties he is hired for. UET 4 48: 18 reads ^mKi-din—^dAG A šá ^mMU-a ù ‘Za-ki-tu₄, “Kidin-Nabû, son of Šumāya and *Zakītu*” thus leaving no doubts that the son of this *Zakītu* had a legal father. This evidence clearly drives out suggestions that matronyms are necessarily used in cases of unknown or absent father. *Zakītu*, daughter of Anu-uballit, was not a freedwoman either, but apparently an economically independent person.



Further Instances of Male-gendering in the First Millennium Texts

Assyria

In the first millennium Assyria male-gendering of women was even rarer than in Babylonia¹⁰⁰. It was applied only to high-positioned women. The queen-mother of Esarhaddon, Naqī'a, is always addressed as *bēlī*, “my (male) lord,” in letters from various correspondents¹⁰¹. Similarly, a certain lady Balti-lēšir, was addressed as a male (EN-*ia*, “my lord”), as was usually the case with the queen-mother (SAA 16 56). Mikko Luukko points out that despite her male-gendered title AMA-LUGAL *be-lī-i/EN-ia/iá*, “king’s mother, my lord,” female grammar is applied to Naqī'a in the same texts. For instance, the second-person feminine singular possessive suffix refers to her [SAA 13 76]. Luukko considers the application of masculine grammatical gender as typical for high-ranking women in the Neo-Assyrian dialect [Luukko, 2004, p. 185; Svärd, 2015, p. 83–84]. A female scribe of the queen, Attar-palṭi, however, is

The chain ^mPN₁ A-šú šá ^fPN₂ 'za-ki-ti, “PN₁, son of PN₂, a freedwoman” [UET 6 317: 8; UET 6 186: 2, 4], as well as multiple attestations of ^fPN 'za-ki-ti [e.g. YOS 6 129: 1, 7 and AHW 1505a s.v. zakītu] indicate the importance of reference to this kind of women’s status (*contra* Wunsch).

Wunsch discusses four documents where *zakītu* occurs in genealogical chains, all of them are only two-tier chains. She lists four documents with references of the type PN A 'zakītu. In the first case, UCB 9/2 29:25 (561 BCE), the list of workmen employed in the service (*dullu*) of Eanna. Nabū-tukulti-ēdu, “son” of a freedwoman (^{dt}AG—TUKUL-ti—e-du A 'za-ki-ti), seems indeed to be an oblate temple servant. In YOS 19 115: 4 11, 12, 13 and 30, a list of workmen assigned to the watch of the Eanna temple, seven descendants(!) of 'zakītu are mentioned. This is rather a reference to these men mothers’ or female ancestors’ status than a real matronym or family name. All the seven people obviously are not related to the same woman. There are two more instances of descendants of *zakītus*: ^{md}AG—MU A 'za-ki-tu₄!, Nabū-iddin, a “son” of a freedwoman [AUWE 5 127: 4; a list of names] and ^mRi-mut A 'za-ki-tu₂, Rīmūt, a “son” of a freedwoman [BIN 1 161: 7; 15/2 Nbn 2; record of payments in silver].

Wunsch points to the problematics of understanding *zakītu* in formulas of the type PN A 'zakītu as personal names, but nonetheless insists that this is a matronym and not a family name. She also considers absence of writings of *zakītu* with a male personal determinative to testify for a lesser respect to this “name” as opposed to Qaqqadānītu, Maqartu etc., which are mostly attested with male determinatives [Wunsch, 2006, S. 467]. In my view *zakītu* in these documents is neither a matronym nor a matronymic family name in the strict sense. It is a designation of the status of an individual descending from a freedwoman, which was important most probably as indicating his relation to the temple and his duties towards it.

¹⁰⁰ Interesting is the Assyrian female name Aḥāt-abīša, literary meaning “her father’s sister”. Strictly speaking, this is not male-gendering, but the way to elevate the woman’s rank within her family from a minor status of a daughter of a male *pater familias* to that of his sister, more honourable, especially in royal families. Seven persons with this name present a great variety of social positions from the daughter of Sargon II to three female slaves [PNA, p. 59].

Aḥāt-abū, an employee of a female administrator (*šakintu*) of the Old Palace in Kalḥu, buys a girl from her father in order to dedicate her as a *šēlūtu* of Mullissu. Aḥāt-abū is a unique writing of this name. A woman with a similar name—Aḥāt-abīša—appears as a prophetess in SAA 9 1: v 24–25. The two might be identical.

¹⁰¹ Certainly SAA 10 16, 17, 200, 313 (the latter from a Babylonian scholar); SAA 13 76, 77, 188(?), SAA 18 10 and SAA 18 85, both from Babylonia [Luukko, 2004, p. 185].



titled ^{lu}A.BA-*tū ša* ^{rmi}É.KUR/GAL¹⁰² with ^{lu}A.BA, as if a male scribe, instead of ^{mi}A.BA. Despite a male determinative, the phonetic complement testifies that the word was pronounced in its female form—*tupšarratu*. Both Attar-palṭi and Balṭi-lēšir were high-positioned female courtiers. The exact status of Balṭi-lēšir cannot be established. By calling her *bēlija* the petitioner probably just wanted to flatter her and demonstrate a profuse politeness. In case of Attar-palṭi, ^{lu}A.BA can result from acknowledging her professional merits as equalling that of her male colleagues¹⁰³, but most likely is a matter of undeveloped orthography, when femininity was indicated with a phonetical complement, and not with a determinative. It is also possible that Naqī'a's sister Abī-rāmu had the title of the vizier (*sukallu*) and served an eponym, while her name was written with a masculine determinative [May, 2017, p. 515]. The scarcity of Neo-Assyrian evidence does not permit to make any broad conclusions, but the Assyrian court certainly inherited the Mesopotamian notion of the prestige of male-gendering from the earlier periods.¹⁰⁴

Literary Compositions

Going back to where it all started, in the Epic of Gilgamesh not only the goddesses—Bēlet-ilī, Aruru, Ninsun, and Ištar—but also the harlot Šamḥat and the inn-keeper Šiduri are male-gendered. As in the case of Naqī'a, this male-gendering is not complete: the verbs related to these female protagonists of the Epic appear in the third person masculine finite forms but in feminine forms of imperative, prohibitive and vetitive. The possessive pronouns referring to them are at times feminine and at times masculine¹⁰⁵. This raises questions about verbal forms applied to goddesses and other female personages in literary compositions, which must be carefully checked, since the use of third person verbal forms in Akkadian is a complicated matter. Wolfram von Soden pointed out that unlike the other Semitic languages, Akkadian often uses unisex third person common forms with prefix *i-* instead of *t-*. But not in the literary “*hymnisch-episch* dialect” [von Soden, 1933, S. 148–151]¹⁰⁶! Literary language typically more conservative and “grammatically correct” than vernacular normally uses third person feminine forms with *t-* prefix. But not in the

¹⁰² CTN 3 39: 4 and envelope l. 5; In CTN 3 40: 3 A.BA in the title of the same women is written without any determinative at all. A.BA is often written without any determinative. The only case of use of a female determinative with A.BA is ^{mi}A.BA^{meš} in SAA 7 24. Thus the case of Attar-palṭi cannot be considered a clear instance of male-gendering.

¹⁰³ Given that this writing is repeated twice it can hardly be a scribal error.

¹⁰⁴ See above, p. 369–362.

¹⁰⁵ E.g. for Šamḥat: in I 178 I 188–193: verbs are in 3 m., but feminine possessive suffix *-ša* is applied to her; in I 205, 213, I 299 verbs are in 3 m., in I 165 *šaši* is f., in I 216 and VII 102 imp. f, in VII 107–108 prohib. and vetit. f, in VII 106–107, 109, 114, 117–119—2f. possessive suffix is *-ki*; Ninsun: in I 259 possessive suffix is *-šu*, but *-ša* in I 286; verbs are in 3 m. in I 259, I 278 and in III 34–45; for Belet-ili: in I 49 the verb is in 3 m.; for Aruru: in I 101, 103 verbs are 3 m., but possessive pronouns are fem. (*-ša*); for Šiduri: in X 1–4 3 m. verbs, X 11–12 possessive suffix *-ša*; in X 19, 29 *šaši* is f.; in X 74–75 imp. f.; for Ištar: in VI 151–159 verbs are in 3 m, etc. [George, 2003, Standard version].

¹⁰⁶ In the Epic of Gilgamesh the phenomenon of using 3 m. instead of 3f. forms exists already in OB and MB versions.



Gilgamesh Epic for goddesses, as well as for Šamḥat and Šiduri. Checking the use of third person feminine versus third person masculine verbal forms was never undertaken in conjunction with the status of women they refer to. This task is further complicated since in documents and even in literary texts verbs are often written with ideograms without any prefixes at all.

Conclusion

To sum up, grammatical male-gendering, rare in all periods and regions in Mesopotamia and its periphery, was not an indication of high position in social hierarchy, since women of any status—from king's mothers and daughters down to female slaves—could be male-gendered. Male-gendering women indicated their position as independent from a male patron—a husband or a father—"not under patriarchal authority" in Igor M. Diakonoff's definition¹⁰⁷. Even if they were socially dependent as slaves and servants of various institutions, they still were "*pater familias*". The clearest case of male-gendering women in order to make them *pater familias* is their appointment as a "father and mother" of households at Emar¹⁰⁸. These and other juridical cases have purposes very similar to the use of matronyms both with female and double determinatives in juridical contexts from other times and places in the cuneiform world¹⁰⁹.

But besides its practical use, male-gendering could also function as a token of honour. In the case of royal women, and only independent, self-standing royal women, male-gendering had the additional connotation of honour, which first appears when male-gendering was purposely applied to the Old Babylonian high priestesses of the moon-god of Ur, resulting from scribal practice of copying the "genderless" Sumerian texts of Enḫeduana. Since it was the first instance of male-gendering, the case of the high priestesses could have influenced Mesopotamian male-gendering in all subsequent periods. But it must be kept in mind that high priestesses were not only holding top female positions, but they ruled huge households in their own right, unlike queens, whose household was though autonomous but still a part of a larger royal household of their husbands. Male-gendering of Naqī'a in the Neo-Assyrian period is definitely an echo of the Old Babylonian practice, which again reflects her independent status of the queen-mother. In the Middle through the Late Babylonian periods, prefixing feminine ancestral names with a masculine determinative could add prestige to ancestral houses with a female "*pater familias*". But besides the prestige, these women were independent of male

¹⁰⁷I. M. Diakonoff, who dealt with matronyms at Ur, considered them being applied in "two extreme cases," it is to women at the very top or very bottom of the society [Diakonoff, 1986, p. 227]. Now it can be proved that matronyms as well as male-gendering were applied in certain situations, juridical or else, to women of any social layer, but yet "not under patriarchal authority".

¹⁰⁸Here belongs also the single OA case. Unfortunately OA does not use determinatives.

¹⁰⁹Matronyms with a female determinative are beyond the scope of this article and will be explored on another occasion [May, forthcoming]. Interpreting the use of male and double determinatives in the second millennium as indicating male-gendering of women must, however, be done with caution, since application of personal determinatives is not yet firmly established in the OB period.



authority. Male-gendered goddesses and other female personages in the Gilgamesh Epic were certainly conceived as self-standing. The sense of linguistic male-gendering in Mesopotamia is similar to the title “professor in her own right” applied to female professors in 1930-ies in the US and Britain¹¹⁰.

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¹¹⁰ E.g., Professor Nancy Lapp, an archaeologist who worked in Palestine of that time.



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