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“SON OF A WHORE”? MORE ON “MATRONYMS” IN BABYLONIA

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Abstract: *The article explores the use of matronyms and matronymic family names in Babylonia in diachronic perspective. Researches into matronyms were undertaken separately for each period — the Old, Middle and Neo-Babylonian, but there was no attempt to study this phenomenon in its development. The inconsistent use of personal determinatives constitutes a challenge for the research goals. Matronyms, though rare, appear as early as the Old Babylonian period; masculine determinatives prefixed to female names reflected scribal convention rather than gender designation. In the Middle Babylonian period, matronyms could replace patronyms for servile personnel and be applied to members of female-headed extended families. Unsystematic application of determinatives and use of matronyms derived from the names of the heads of extended families, persisted into the Neo-Babylonian period. References to a mother's status, such as the designations mār ḥarimti, “son of a whore” or mār zakīti, “son of a freed woman”, functioned not as family names but as indicators of reduced legal rights and social standing, as seen in disinheritance cases.*

Over time, indicating a mother's status or profession often took precedence over her name. Matronyms could mark independent women or specify lineage through a maternal grandfather's household, without implying low status or absence of a legal father. Overall matronyms and maternal designations served specific purposes: denoting social status, legal capacity, or familial structure. Their use was not simply a substitute for a missing father but responded to contextual needs, whether highlighting a woman's independent role, her household affiliation, or her offspring's legal rights.

Keywords: matronyms, matronymic family names, Babylonia, social stratification and matronyms, mār ḥarimti (son of a whore)

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A “matronym” actually means a “mother's name” used with or instead of a patronym. Ancestral names derived from matronyms are understood as “matronymic family names” in this study. Instead of a personal name, an occupational name, an office name or their derivatives can be used as matronyms. As we will see, a person's “mother name” replacing a patronym is not always the actual name of that person's mother or even his or her family name¹.

¹ All abbreviations in this article are in accordance with the *RIA*. Archibab = Archives babyloniennes XX^e–XVII^e siècles av. J.-C. at <https://archibab.fr/home> (accessed: 01.05.2026); Prosobab = Prosopography of Babylonia (c. 620–

OLD BABYLONIAN PERIOD

The use of matronyms in the Old Babylonian period was first touched upon by Igor M. Diakonoff regarding the women “not Under Patriarchal Authority” in Old Babylonian Ur². Diakonoff concludes that the Ur texts only provide evidence for women at the top and at the bottom of Old Babylonian society. In his opinion, the use of matronyms is limited to the women of the highest or lowest social strata [Diakonoff, 1986].

In the Old Babylonian period, both masculine and feminine personal determinatives were yet rarely and unsystematically used. In most cases, the absence of determinatives makes it impossible to distinguish between male and female names. Nonetheless, some examples for the use of matronyms in the Old Babylonian period can be traced. The most prominent Old Babylonian instance for applying a matronym instead of a patronym is the inscription on the two seal impressions of Abba, which reads: A-ab-ba / dumu En-an-¹na-túm¹ -ma / en ^dŠeš-ki, “Abba, son of Enanatumā, the high priestess of Nanna”³. Enanatumā, the daughter of Išme-Dagān of the First dynasty of Isin, was installed as the high priestess (en) of the Moon god in the beginning of her father’s reign. In her inscriptions written in Sumerian⁴, she is referred to as the “son” (dumu) of her father, which in the OB period is already an instance of male-gendering a woman [May, 2024, p. 359–362]. Enanatumā 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 “high priestess of Nanna” in Enanatumā’s inscriptions. At Ur Enanatumā acts vigorously and carries out extensive construction work in the city’s sacred areas. Her standard inscriptions from the time of Išme-Dagān have been found on bricks and cones. She also dedicated her seated statuette to Ningal. In the time of Gungunum of Larsa, who gained control over Ur in his tenth regnal year, Enanatumā kept her position and built the temples of Dagān 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 hers. No doubt, Enanatumā was one of the most influential women of her time. Thus, it is not surprising that her son’s seal bears his matronym instead of his father’s name. Not only the name of Enanatumā but also her high status is indicated in the seal inscription of her son.

It is worth noticing in this conjunction that a masculine determinative with a female name appears in BM 131282⁵ in ^mGEMÉ—^dŠEŠ.KI⁶ NIN.DINGIR, apparently “Amat-Sîn, the high-priestess”, who together with her brother, Āllā, gets a repayment of 5/6 mina of silver⁷. It marks probably the first occurrence of the phenomenon of using masculine determinatives for high-positioned women. Another time ^mGEMÉ—^dEN.ZU is found in ARM 23 622 rev. iii 2⁸. There it is not a title

330 BCE) at <https://prosobab.leidenuniv.nl> (accessed: 01.05.2026). This paper was first presented at “Дьяконовские чтения” on 18.04.2025.

² Recently, K. de Graef [de Graef, 2022] studied matronyms and conflicting determinatives in the *sukkalmaḥḥu*-period Elam, but Elam can hardly be compared to Babylonia because of the very different social status of women in Elam, where even avuncular succession, real or false, still existed. For the use of matronyms in Nuzi, see K. Grosz [1989, p. 175–176]. In Nuzi men with matronyms apparently were sons of women adopted as sons, as was most plausibly suggested by K. Grosz.

³ YOS 5 46, 50, 51 (Warad-Sîn 2) = RIME 4 E4.1.4.14. This is the only evidence for this person.

⁴ For the inscriptions of Enanatumā, see RIME 4 E4.1.4.1–E4.1.4.4 and E4.1.4.1.13.

⁵ = UET 5 267: 8, CDLI no. P415152.

⁶ ^mGEMÉ—^dŠEŠ.KI / ^dEN.ZU (^mGEMÉ-NANNA) literary means “female servant/slave of Sîn,” In UET 5 267: 26 she is called *bé-le-su-nu* NIN.DINGIR, “Their lady, the high-priestess”. Archibab presumes that this is the high priestess of Sîn, Likūnu (<https://www.archibab.fr/textes?trloo=false&lems=Geme-Nanna&dmin=2020&dmax=0&o=ref,id&page=1&size=25&count=1&i=0>).

⁷ UET 5 267: 9. See N. N. May for masculine personal determinatives applied to females [May, 2024].

⁸ But note GEMÉ ^dEN.ZU without any determinative in M.13184 vii 20’, in ARM XXII 43+ v 24, ARM 22 44+ vii 39’ and so forth [<https://archibab.fr/textes?trloo=false&lems=Geme-Nanna&dmin=2020&dmax=0&o=ref,id&page=1&size=25&count=6> (accessed: 01.02.2025)]!

and this woman is not a high priestess of the Moon god, but a servant, a chambermaid of queen Šiptu, but her name is written with the masculine determinative. In this document all names of female servants are written with masculine determinatives. Applying masculine determinatives to the names of queen's servants could indicate that these women held a position of honour, but in Mari female names were frequently written with masculine determinatives.

CT 8 7b⁹ from Sippar is a betrothal (*kallūtum*) contract¹⁰ of Elmešum, the “daughter” of Ammiya dated to year 11 of king Ammī-ditāna. The name of Elmešum is written with a masculine determinative in l. 1, but not in l. 10, where a feminine determinative appears. In ll. 12 and 17, the name lacks any determinative at all. Elmešum is designated as a *hūrtu* — a wife of a status equal to her husband's (l. 12)¹¹. It should be said that the majority of the male names in this contract, including the names of witnesses and the name of king Ammī-ditāna (l. 30), are written without any personal determinatives. The names of the bridegroom (l. 7), the bridegroom's father (l. 13) and the bride's brother or uncle (l. 3) are also written without any classifiers. Only in three cases the bridegroom's (l. 13) and his father's (l. 5) names are preceded by a personal wedge. These two cases are the only instances for using personal determinatives before male names in this document. Such inconsistency regarding determinatives is normal for the Old Babylonian period. The bride's mother(?)¹² is a *kezertum*, a kind of a palace woman [Ziegler, 1999, p. 87–88]¹³. Peculiar is that both women — the bride and her mother(?) — maybe are “daughters” of the same man. Diakonoff considered matronyms to be an indication that a person did not have a legal father [Diakonoff, 1986, p. 228, 237]. But in the case of CT 8 7b reference to the grandfather(?) as a patronym might be the matter of a prestigious descent for both women. The *kezertum* and her brother(?) Šumum-libši act as legal guardians of the bride¹⁴. Because of the text's rather non-standard content, the

⁹ BM 78322 = Bu. 88-5-12, 193.

¹⁰ <https://archibab.fr/texte/4793?supp=BM%2078322%20&trloo=false&dmin=2020&dmax=0&o=ref,id&page=1&size=25&count=1&i=0> (accessed: 01.02.2025). See R. Westbrook for the Old Babylonian *kallūtum* [Westbrook, 1988, p. 17–18].

¹¹ See also my previous publication on this matter [May, 2024, 362–364, 366]. R. Westbrook pointed out that according to the divorce terms proscribed in this contract, she was by no means really equal to her husband [Westbrook, 1988, p. 19].

¹² Or sister(?). Line count here is in accordance with CT 8 7b = Archibab; both R. Westbrook and CDLI mix it up. R. Westbrook reads *ke-ze-er-tum* DUMU.MUNUS *Am-mi-ia um-ma-ša* in CT 8 7b: 2 (his l. 3) and points out that C.B.F. Walker and himself collated the text [Westbrook, 1988, p. 119]. CDLI no. P370431 reads *Am-mi-di-ta-na* LUGAL in CT 8 7b: 2. R. Westbrook, however, provides only collations and not the transliteration of the entire document. The transliteration by J. Renger based on these collations, see <https://archibab.fr/img/59496P5876.pdf>; (accessed: 01.02.2025) and <https://www.archibab.fr/texte/4793?ref=CT%208%207%20&trloo=false&dmin=2020&dmax=0&o=ref,id&page=1&size=25&count=2&i=1> (accessed: 30.03.2026). Archibab follows Walker's and Westbrook's collations, but confuses determinatives used with the name of Elmešum.

It is plausible that the *kezertum* is the mother of Elmešum, since she acts as the latter's legal guardian. The *kezertum* is called the sister of Šumum-libši in l. 12, and he is called her brother in l. 3. Their relation to Elmešum is not indicated according to the copy in CT 8 and in the CDLI transliteration. According to both transliterations, Elmešum, the *kezertum* and Šumum-libši are called daughters and son (respectively) of the same man — either of king Ammī-ditāna, or of a certain Ammiya.

Although the collation of the tablet by the present author in May 2026 proved that there is indeed *Am-mi-ia* in l. 2, the rest of C. Walker's collations cannot be proved or disproved since the ends of ll. 3–4 are effaced. Patronyms of Elmešum and Šumum-libši in ll. 10–11 are effaced too and were restored by J. Renger following l. 2. Archibab uses his transliteration.

¹³ CAD still translates *kezertu* as “a prostitute” [CAD K 314–415]. Cf. DUMU^{mes} GEME É.GAL in MB Ni. 866 [apud Brinkman, 2006, p. 42, n. 111].

¹⁴ Another *kezertum*-related document also provides mother's name or position. In A 141: 3–4 (Kiš[?], reign of Ammī-ditāna) Iddin-Nanaya, the supervisor of *kezertum* (^[m][*I-di*]^[n]^[d]*Na-na-a* UGULA ^[s]UHUR.LÁ^{mes}) rents a field on behalf of his mother, Tārītu(?) (^[Ta]^[ri]^[tum] *um-mi-šu*). Although CAD gives this instance as an example of the *tārītu*, “nursemaid”, use as a personal name [CAD T 233a s.v. *tārītu* 1b], it can be just an indication of her status. Both the mother and the son are obviously “middle class”, but might be, nonetheless dependent personnel. Each of the names(?) is written with the proper determinative: his with the masculine, and her with the feminine one.

involvement of the possibly royal lineage and the use of *hūrtu* (MUNUS.NITA.DAM or DAM.MUNUS.NITA), which is otherwise attested only in literary texts [May, 2024, p. 362–364, 366]¹⁵, I presume that CT 8 7b might be a literary contract or a school exercise.

The maternal grandfather's name instead of a patronym is attested also in UET 5 190, the deed of sale of Abūni, "son" of Aḥumma (DUMU A-*ḥu*-*um*¹-*ma*) into slavery. The seller is Abūni's mother Garātum, daughter of Aḥumma (DUMU.MUNUS A-*ḥu*-*um*-*ma*), according to the inscription of her seal on this document, which also states that Abūni is her son¹⁶. Abūni is sold resulting from debts¹⁷, but his mother Garātum had her own inscribed seal; thus, initially she was not a woman of low status and probably even mastered some level of literacy. The case of Abūni and Garātum is probably an instance of a member of a once well-established family being sold into slavery to settle debts of a deceased head of the household¹⁸.

Using the names of maternal grandfathers as patronyms for their daughters' offspring indicates that these daughters belonged to their fathers' households. It does not mean that these daughters were unmarried. In the case of the granddaughter(?) of Ammī-ditāna, using the grandfather's(?) name instead of a patronym could also be a matter of prestige and a reference to her high position.

Most interesting adoption document TMH 10 10a and its envelope TMH 10 10b (28 of Samsuiluna) present another instance of a high-positioned and married woman, which stayed in her father's household. The document states that Tabni-Ištar¹⁹, daughter of Ki-a'aganiše, the *nešakkum*-priest, "is daughter (and) first-born son of her father" (DUMU-MUNUS IBI[A]DUMU.NITA) AD.DA.NA.KAM (TMH 10 10a: 2), and the text on the envelope says that she is the "(female) first-born son of her father's house", MUNUS.IBI[A]DUMU.NITA) É 'AD'.DA X- [...] ²⁰. Tabni-Ištar adopts Lipit-Enlil, scribe of the king, son of Taribum. She gives him the position of her father, the *nešakkum*-priest of Enlil and its subsistence field. He in turn brings one mina of silver to her house upon signing the contract in addition to the obligation to annually provide Tabni-Ištar with various commodities in kind. Interestingly, Tabni-Ištar was not childless²¹. Lipit-Enlil was to compensate Ninurta-muballiṭ and Lu-Ninurta, "his brothers", the sons (DUMU^{me}) of Tabni-Ištar.

¹⁵ Recently published IM 8790 [Hussein, 2024] seems to be a real marriage contract where *munus-nita-dam* is found. According to this OB text (Ha 33) from Nippur written in Sumerian "*Da-mi-iq—i-lī-šu dumu munus-nita-dam-a-ni / šeš-gal*, "Damiq-ilišu, son of the his equal-status wife (*munus-nita-dam*), the elder son", is to share the inheritance with future offspring of Iltani, his father's new wife [IM 8790: 4–6]. Interestingly, the bride, Iltani, is a *nadītum* (*lukur*) of Nergal. Usage of *munus-nita-dam* in IM 8790 is akin to that of the OB Lipit-Ištar Code, which is written in Sumerian. There *dam-munus-gidlam(nita-dam)* is opposed to the *dam-egir-ra*, the "second wife" (lit. "the wife of after", who married a man after the death of his first wife [Steele, 1948, xvi 24; May, 2024, p. 363]. It should be stressed again that this law code as well as the Laws of Hammurabi are literary compositions.

¹⁶ This rather strange burgul seal impression reads as follows: *Ga-ra-tum / DUMU.MUNUS A-ḥu-um-ma / A-ḥu¹-ni* DUMU.NI, "Garātum, daughter of Aḥumma, Abūni is her son".

¹⁷ See also UET 5 185.

¹⁸ This was a standard practice in Ur III to enslave families of officials for their debts [Waetzold, Sigrist, 1993; Wilcke, 2006, S. 106]. Cf., e.g., AACAB 1/1 = Ashm 1911–237. I am most grateful to Natalia V. Koslova for these references.

¹⁹ The name is written with the masculine determinative.

²⁰ TMH 10 10b: 3. Cf. TMH 10 15, dated to the 4th year of Rīm-Sin, in which Narāmtum as the *nadītum* of the god Lugalaba gets from her brothers a share in the family possessions. Her father is alive, so this is actually a will. In TMH 10 15: 27 Narāmtum is called *dumu-munus munus-nita nin²-a-ni*, "female-male daughter, his sister." Her name is written sometimes with the masculine determinative (l. 25) and sometimes without any signifier (ll. 27, 28 and in her burgul seal impression). Cases of both Tabni-Ištar and Narāmtum are similar to adoptions of daughters as sons in order to make them heirs in Nuzi, Arappā, Emar and Ekalte [May, 2024, p. 365–369 with further literature]. Both women are obviously self-standing. I am most grateful to Victoriya Chenkovskaya for the references to these two texts as well as to IM 8790.

²¹ Unlike Zazītu, who lost her son and husband, and had to adopt her own grandson Marduk-rēmanni to perform the duties of the prebends she owned. Typically, Marduk-rēmanni also had to sustain Zazītu until the end of her life [MR 4 (528 BCE); Waerzeggers, 2014, p. 181–182; May, 2022, p. 138].

He gives them five positions in the temple of the goddess Bāba for 6 months *per* year. This was income equal to that of the *nešakkum*-priest of Enlil. Thus, Tabni-Ištar inherited her father's office. Her sons belonged to her and her father's household, as did her unnamed husband. She is called the mother (AMA.NI; ll. 6, 7, 19, 22) of Lipit-Enlil, her elder son (IBILA.GAL.NI; l. 6) or just her son (DUMU.NI; ll. 16, 22). The document is actually the sale of the prebend of the *nešakkum* of Enlil in form of an adoption. To hold this position, Lipit-Enlil had to become Tabni-Ištar's family member and to "inherit" it from her father through her²². Tabni-Ištar's name is consistently written with a masculine determinative throughout the entire document, except in the inscription on her burgul seal impression, where her name appears without any determinative.

In UET 5 475 = CDLI no. P415351, a list of silver payments, appears a certain Nanna-mansum, son of a prostitute (^dŠEŠ.KI—MA.AN.SUM DUMU *ḥa-ri-im-ti*)²³. According to this document, Nanna-mansum and another person (name lost, l. 11) receive the lowest amount of silver — a quarter (IGI.4.GÁL) of a *šeke*(?)²⁴. This is evidence of their relatively low status, which in the case of Nanna-mansum probably resulted from the occupation of his mother (or some other female ancestor).

Sîn-gāmil, son of a prostitute (^dEN.ZU—*ga-mi-il* DUMU *ḥa-ri-im-ti*) appears as a witness on a promissory note UET 5 328: 20 [Diakonoff, 1986, p. 228²⁵]. He was probably a temple oblate and the son of a temple prostitute²⁶. If so, his case is similar to that of sons of *zakītu* in the Neo-Babylonian period²⁷. It is worth noting that in the Middle Babylonian period, *ḥarimtu* written with a masculine determinative is, according to J. Antony Brinkman, a family name [Brinkman 2006, p. 32]²⁸.

Typically, in all the few aforementioned references to matronyms or maternal lineage, including the seal of Enanatuma's son, the status of these persons' mother, even if it is as denigrating as a "prostitute", is purposely indicated. Brinkman notices that "occupation names or titles are also used to form personal names for principals in Kassite period texts" [Brinkman, 2006, p. 32]. UET 5 475, UET 5 267, UET 5 328 and CT 8 7b, where the position of the mother serves as a matronym, certainly testify that this was already the case in the Old Babylonian period²⁹.

²² Cf. TMH 10 18 (Nippur, Si 4). There Ur-Pabilsaġa, son of Ubārum, whom Narāmtum has adopted as her son (NAM.IBILA.NI.ŠĒ BA.DA.AN.RIA) is entitled to inherit Narāmtum's property together with her granddaughter Narubtum, daughter of Migir-Enlil, Narāmtum's apparently deceased son (in l. 19 she is called his mother). In this document Ur-Pabilsaġa keeps his patronym and is never called the son of Narāmtum.

²³ Cf. the later Nuzi text JEN 666, where Musteya, son of the woman Ziliya is claiming the property of the deceased Tarmiya. It seems that Tarmiya before his death disinherited Musteya by proclaiming the latter's mother to be not his wife, but his *harimtu*. In Emar 31 a *ḥarimtu* (KAR.KID) is appointed "for fatherhood and (as) the mother" (*a-na a-bu-ut-ti ū AMA-mi*) and called the "father and mother," (*a-ba-šu-nu ū AMA-šu-nu*) of her sisters, who are adopted as her sons. For the Middle Babylonian period, see below, p. 24, 27.

J. Cooper points out that sons of prostitutes (PN dumu [PN] geme-kar-kid/kid/kid-ke₃) are frequently mentioned in Ur III ration lists together with sons of female weavers [Cooper, 2006, S. 16]. He also mentions ¹⁰< DUMU.>KAR.KID in some "fragmentary NA royal appointment text" [*ibid.*, without further reference]. But Assyria as well as Ur III are beyond the scope of this article.

²⁴ Broken in both cases.

²⁵ Cf. <https://www.archibab.fr/texte/12299?ref=UET%205%20328&trloo=false&dmin=2020&dmax=0&o=ref,id&page=1&size=25&count=1&i=0> (accessed: 01.02.2025) that suggests *ḥa-ri-la-ti*, apparently meaning "sick (f.)," unattested, but not impossible, as a name.

²⁶ I.M. Diakonoff suggested that the witness' name in UET 5 92: 32 should be read as ^{md}EN.ZU—*ga-mi-il* LÚ [^dINNIN] based on LÚ ^dINNIN, "man of Ištar" in UET 5 328: 19, and that this might be the same person as Sîn-gāmil in UET 5 328: 20 [Diakonoff, 1986, p. 228].

²⁷ See below, p. 25, 26.

²⁸ See below, p. 24, PBS 8/2 158.

²⁹ J.A. Brinkman points to the use of the occupational names in the Old Akkadian and Old Babylonian periods and even in Late Bronze Emar [Brinkman, 2006, p. 42].

Finally, in UET 5 93 Ludlul-Sîn and Naramtum, son and daughter of Gublâtum (*Lu-ud-lu-ul*—^{d+}EN.ZU DUMU *Gub-la-tum* (l. 24) and ^m*Na-ra-am-tum* DUMU.SAL *Gub-la-tum* (l. 29)) are witnesses for adopting a baby. Their matronym is apparently derived from their mother's place of origin — Gublâtum, “a woman from Byblos”. She, however, was not necessarily a manumitted slave, and nothing indicates that her children were of low status³⁰.

The mother's status as a slave was important proof that her children were slaves, too³¹. These cases are subjects for a future study. Matronyms proper, *i.e.* mothers' names serving as patronyms, are rare in the Old Babylonian period, and indication of the status of the mother of an individual seem to be more important than indication of her name. But this might be due to our inability to distinguish female personal names from the male ones because of the unsystematic use of determinatives and rarity of feminine determinatives in the Old Babylonian period³².

KASSITE BABYLONIA

Brinkman collected ample evidence for the use of matronyms and matronymic family names in the Middle Babylonian period. The focus of his paper was, however, on conflicting double determinatives [Brinkman, 2007]. Notwithstanding, his examples include the use of feminine determinatives with matronyms and matronymic family names as well as matronyms and matronymic ancestral names without any determinatives at all. His small note in passing is not less important than the rest of his article: “Lack of personal determinatives is at present confined mostly to patronyms and matronyms [Brinkman, 2007, n. 4. with further examples]”. In fact, he meant patronymic (derived from patronyms) and matronymic (derived from matronyms) family names. This is extremely important for us, since this observation makes it clear that personal determinatives, though already consistently applied to personal names in the Middle Babylonian period, were not equally consistently used with ancestral names. Brinkman further notes that in labour rosters of female personnel classifiers are often omitted before the names of women, but the personal wedges before the names of males in similar rosters are not omitted [Brinkman, 2007, p. 2–3].

The emergence of family names is usually associated with the Kassite period [Brinkman, 2006, p. 24]³³. By the time of the Kassites, however, this phenomenon occurs in a rather mature form. It is well known that there is a gap in preserved documentation between the late Old Babylonian period and the Kassite period. It has been shown above that the cases of using a maternal grandfather's name instead of a patronym existed already in the late Old Babylonian period. Evidence for more than one-tier genealogies is also lacking in the Old Babylonian period. In light of the absence of any grammatical or linguistic system that discerns a patronym from a family name in the Old Babylonian period³⁴, I would cautiously suggest that some family names could have already existed in the Old Babylonian period. In the Kassite period we deal with a

³⁰ Du can be read as GUB in the Old Babylonian period [Mittermayer, Attinger, 2006, S. 27 (no. 206[350])].

³¹ E.g., AbB 1 129 (Sippar, reign of Samsuiluna) where Liwira-ana-ilim is said to be a slave of *nađitum* of Šamaš, because he is the son of the unnamed slave girl of *nađitum* of Šamaš (*um-ma-šu* GEMÉ LUKUR ^dUTU).

³² Thus I.M. Diakonoff considers Lālikū and Ummī-rīmeda in UET 5 187: 21 and 28–29 respectively to be female names, which is by no means obvious as well as the opposite suggestion [Diakonoff, 1986, p. 227–228].

³³ But see above, the previous page.

³⁴ For comparison: such lack of distinction in grammatical form between a patronym and a family name was yet standard for commoners in 18th–19th and in some regions even in the beginning of 20th century in Russia, and that on the backdrop of a very developed system of aristocratic genealogies. I.M. Diakonoff describes this situation as follows: “крестьяне... не имели паспорта, а потому и фамилии, а называли себя, при необходимости (например, как раз при получении паспорта...), либо по отцу, либо по деду, и иной раз по имени его, а иной раз по прозвищу” [Diakonoff, 1995, c. 106]. Babylonians did not have passports, but when identification was needed, both men and women apparently used the same pattern as peasants in prerevolutionary Russia.

well-developed practice of using family names, but the lack of determinatives for family names still prevails, though masculine, feminine and double determinatives are already widely applied.

Brinkman has pointed out the ubiquitous use of occupational names as personal names, patronyms and ancestral names. He notes that occupational personal names are known already in Old Akkadian [Brinkman, 2006, p. 24, 42]. As we have seen, the designation of the position or occupation of an individual's mother in a few known Old Babylonian "matronyms" seems to be the main purpose of mentioning the person's mother since it reflects her status and determines that of her offspring.

Brinkman further discusses instances of conflicting gender determinatives in texts from Kassite Babylonia and lists a number of examples from Nippur [Brinkman, 2007]. All these tablets date from 1300 till at least 1232 BCE. Brinkman discerns two patterns of occurrence of parental citation with matronym prefixed by the determinative cluster ^{/mf/}: PN₁ DUMU.(SAL) ^mPN₂, and Ø DUMU ^mPN₃₅ in these tablets. He stresses that all these instances are nothing but citations of parentage [Brinkman, 2007, p. 2–3].

A roster of servile personnel (GURUŠ), CBS 3640, presents 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 the double determinative ^{/mf/} if the matronym relates to a son. Yet, only ^{/t/} is used before the same matronym if it relates to a daughter³⁶. This roster testifies that matronyms prefixed by double determinatives could be used with names of individuals from the lowest layers of Middle Babylonian society as well. All the women listed in CBS 3640 were servile labourers, as were their offspring.

Aside from CBS 3640, there are at least nineteen Middle Babylonian examples of using matronyms with double determinatives for male offspring: eight instances with ^mPN₁ DUMU ^mPN₂, (at least) nine with Ø DUMU ^mPN, and one with [^tPN₁] DUMU.SAL ^mPN₂ [Brinkman, 2007, p. 2–4, 7]. In Bab 34300 rev. 3, the matronym ^mBa-bi-la-a-a-i-ti³⁷ appears. It means "Babylonian" (f.) and is a derivative of a toponym, similar to the Old Babylonian Gublātum, "a woman from Byblos", discussed above³⁷. In the other text the name of Ina-pīša-imrir, who wants to buy a bride for her son, is written with ^{/t/}, except for a single instance, when it appears with ^{/mf/} as a matronym after the name of her son [Brinkman, 2007, p. 7]. In one instance the pattern [^tPN₁] DUMU.SAL ^mPN₂ ([...]-X DUMU.SAL ^mGEMÉ—^dIM, "... daughter of Amat-Adad" is attested [CBS 13253 rev.? 7]. But as Brinkman points out, the standard for Kassite Babylonia was applying a feminine determinative to a matronym and there are multiple examples of matronyms attested in the patterns as ^mPN₁ DUMU ^tPN₂, ^tPN₁ DUMU.SAL ^tPN₂, Ø DUMU ^tPN and Ø DUMU.SAL ^tPN. There are also cases of ^tPN₁ DUMU.SAL ^mPN₂³⁸.

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 — the matronym prefixed with ^{/mf/} in the case of a male offspring. Brinkman points out that in Middle Babylonian Nippur there are many instances of women having been the heads of households or heads of clans/family groups (*qinnus*). In his understanding, this happened when an "adult male was lacking" [Brinkman, 2007, p. 5]. He seems

³⁵ Ø stands for an absent principal PN or an absent determinative in the MB period.

³⁶ J.A. Brinkman lists a very few exclusions [Brinkman, 2007, p. 4–5].

³⁷ See above, p. 21.

³⁸ Brinkman J.A. suggests three instances where meaningful names of feminine grammatical gender might be sobriquets; one of them is ^tU-bar-^ttum³ DUMU.SAL ^tNi-sa-an-ni-ti, "Foreigner (f.), daughter of 'born in Nisannu' (f.)" [UM 29-16-108: 4; Brinkman, 2007, p. 4].

to believe that *qinnu* were clans of servile labourers (GURUŠ). Female heads of a *qinnu* could occur also with feminine determinatives [Brinkman, 2007, p. 5 with n. 19–20].

A few interesting instances for using masculine determinatives before matronyms should be noted. Brinkman provides an example of a prominent female family head from Middle Babylonian Ur, Dey(y)anātu, who is attested as a female ancestor of at least seven males³⁹. Descendants of Dey(y)anātu were brewers⁴⁰ of Šin at Ur. Dey(y)anātu herself could have been a high-positioned person or one of the high priestesses of the Moon god. Dey(y)anātu means “she-judge”⁴¹. At Middle Babylonian Ur, a high priestess acted as a judge [May, 2022, p. 133; Gurney, 1983, no. 7 = UET 7 7]⁴². Only males are known in this function besides the case of the high priestess of the Moon god. Dey(y)anātu might have been an epithet of one of the high priestesses used as a family name of honour by her descendants⁴³. Dey(y)anātu is an exclusively Middle Babylonian name [Brinkman, 2007, n. 22]. 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 transliteration⁴⁴, these are feminine determinatives corrected into masculine; in one instance, Dey(y)anātu occurs with a feminine determinative⁴⁵.

The brewers of Šin, descendants of Dey(y)anātu, were a rich family that played an important role in the temple’s business activities. This is evidenced by their substantial archive of at least 62 tablets dated to ca. 1237–1176 BCE [Gurney, 1983, p. 1–6]. But a reconstruction of their family tree is not possible, because the descendants of Dey(y)anātu never used patronyms. It is tempting to suggest that only the name of their familial ancestor is indicated because hers has been more important and more prestigious than their paternal lineage; but the absence of a patronym is common in the Middle Babylonian period. Outside the archive of the brewers of Šin at Ur, the personal name Dey(y)anātu is attested in three lists of people from Nippur⁴⁶, among them the list of servile labourers. Thus, this name was not always a sign of prestige.

There is a sole occurrence of ^mQadištu⁴⁷ apparently as a feminine ancestral name, in a Middle Babylonian document. This confirms that the use of masculine determinatives with feminine ancestral names starts concurrently with the use of determinatives with family names in general.

³⁹ According to 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].

⁴⁰ A kind of a priest.

⁴¹ Further details discussed by J.A. Brinkman [Brinkman, 2007, n. 22].

⁴² I.M. Diakonoff has pointed out the cases of high-priestesses of the Moon god of Ur acting as judges in the OB period [Diakonoff, 1986, p. 228]. Note that J.A. Brinkman is reluctant to consider Dey(y)anātu an occupational family name [Brinkman, 2006, p. 34–35].

⁴³ For Abba, son of Enanatum, see above, p. 17 and RIME 4.1.14 (his seal). Note, however, that J.A. Brinkman points out that although Dayyāntu/Diyyāntu occurs as a personal name in accounts from Nippur [Brinkman, 2006, p. 35]. It is not known as a title or occupation for human beings, but only for goddesses.

⁴⁴ On p. 25 transliterated as “^mda-a-a-< na >-it” [Gurney, 1983, no. 2: 25], but on p. 28 O.R. Gurney commented that the scribe first had written “^mda-a-a-< na >-it” and then corrected himself. Gurney’s handcopies in UET 7 do not reflect any erasure and correction. The instance, 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-ētir, see UET 7 [Gurney 1983]: nos. 12 and 22] and the next fn.

⁴⁵ No. 2 rev. 25 (masculine) [Gurney, 1983]; no. 12: 4’ (feminine in handcopy; corrected according to the transliteration and O.R. Gurney [Gurney, 1983, p. 28]); no. 14: 3 (the determinative broken); no. 18 rev. 8 (masculine); no. 21 rev. 11 (corrected to feminine in the transliteration, double in the handcopy no. 22: 5’ (masculine); 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); no. 30: 3 (masculine); no. 33: 7 (masculine); no. 46: 3 (masculine) [Gurney, 1983].

⁴⁶ ^tDa-a-a-an-tu₄ in BE 14 91a: 36 (= EAH 178, CDLI no. P453346 [payment of wages]), Di-ya-an-tu₄, without any determinative(!) in BE 15 190 iii 18’ (= CBS 3443, CDLI no. P259817 [payment of salaries]) and ^tDa-a-a-an-tu₄ in CBS 3650 rev. i’ 9’, 19’ (= CDLI no. P260022 [a list of labourers]).

⁴⁷ ^mQadištu is a kind of a priestess and a healer related to childbirth, nursing and childcare. Her functions are different in various periods and regions [May, 2022 with further references].

⁴⁸Qadištu is known from three more Middle Babylonian documents⁴⁸. There cannot be, however, full confidence that this is a true family name, but rather a reference to the occupation of a mother or a female ancestor, since all these sons or descendants of Qadištu/*qadišus* are not attested related to one another.

Brinkman added to his article an excursus on the names ^mHazi-Marduk and ^mHagi-... There are three instances for the former, all matronyms of unnamed daughters, where Hazi is a Hurrian element(?). Hagi remains unclear [Brinkman, 2007, p. 7–10].

Finally, ^{md}IM—EN—*ka-la* DUMU ^m*Ha-ri-im-ti*₄, “Adad-bēl-kala, son of a prostitute” is a witness in PBS 8/2 158: 5-6, a contract from Ur. His “matronym” or, more probably, the occupational matronymic family name(?) is written with a masculine signifier⁴⁹.

NEO-BABYLONIAN PERIOD

The number of matronyms and feminine ancestral names in the Neo-Babylonian period is meagre in comparison to the Middle Babylonian evidence for the same phenomenon. Cornelia Wunsch, who so far has been the only person to explore matronyms in the Neo-Babylonian period, could find three feminine family names, which were written with a masculine determinative. Wunsch stresses that “Metronymic ancestral(! — *NNM*) names ... are extremely rare in Babylonia. The earliest example, Qaqqadānītu, (lit. “the great headed”, f. — *NNM*) can be traced to pre-Neo-Babylonian times” and is apparently a very early attestation of the feminine ancestral name [Wunsch, 2006, S. 468 and 464–465]⁵⁰. This earliest instance, BM 37246: 4', 17', is the sole case of this family name having been written with a feminine determinative. Wunsch lists descendants of Qaqqadānītu, whose names were written with masculine determinatives (dates of documents range from 575 through 491 BCE, places of writing are Babylon, Šaḫrīnu and Ālu-ša-Nabū) and points out that there are further instances⁵¹.

Maqartu (“the dear one”, f.) is attested in Borsippa since 687 BCE. Wunsch counted nine documents: earlier occurrences (four texts; from 687 till 552 BCE) use a feminine determinative with this name, which was, obviously deliberately, replaced by a masculine indicator in later texts⁵². Now nine more examples from Borsippa and one from Babylon can be added to her list⁵³. In BM 53861, a document written in Dilbat, Maqartu appears with a masculine determinative.

The name Arrabtu (“she-dormouse[?]”, f.⁵⁴) is the third and the most often found (35 instances) feminine family name⁵⁵, written both with masculine and with feminine determinatives. Wunsch missed another Neo-Babylonian matronym written with a masculine determinative. This is ^m*Balā(?)nītu*, which is attested five times and might be a case of a learned writing or even cryptography⁵⁶.

⁴⁸ ^mMU—*lib-ši* DUMU ⁴*Qa-di-i*¹*ti* in PBS 2/2 122: 22, ^m[x]-x-tum DUMU ⁴*Qa-diš-i*¹*ti*; ø DUMU ⁴*Qa-diš-i*¹*ti*¹ [Sassmannshausen, 2001, no. 348: 5]. J.A. Brinkman pointed out that Qadištu was also a personal name in Middle Assyrian [Brinkman, 2006, n. 43].

⁴⁹ Cf. Nanna-mansum, son of a prostitute (⁴ŠEŠ.KI—MA.AN.SUM DUMU *ha-ri-im-ti*) in UET 5 475 [above p. 20] and Nuzi text JEN 666, which records that Musteya, son of the woman Ziliya was disinherited because his mother was not a wife, but a *harimtu* of his father [above p. 20, fn. 23].

A.J. Brinkman's assumption that in the Middle Babylonian period a masculine personal wedge with a female name, a title or an occupational term necessarily indicates a family name must be checked again.

⁵⁰ 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.

⁵¹ See also <https://prosobab.leidenuniv.nl/listQuickSearch.php> (accessed: 01.02.2025).

⁵² Five instances; from 551–508 BCE according to C. Wunsch [Wunsch, 2006, S. 453].

⁵³ <https://prosobab.leidenuniv.nl/listQuickSearch.php> (accessed: 01.02.2025).

⁵⁴ It can also be a male personal name, despite its feminine grammatical form.

⁵⁵ <https://prosobab.leidenuniv.nl/listQuickSearch.php> (accessed: 01.02.2025).

⁵⁶ This topic will be developed elsewhere. The meaning and grammatical form of this name is not quite clear. It can

Wunsch then discusses *zakītu*, which is only found written with a feminine determinative and never with a masculine one [Wunsch, 2006, S. 466–467]. She rejects the possibility 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*); i.e. the son of an originally privately-owned slave woman who had been freed⁵⁷ by her master to perform service in a temple. Wunsch claims that in the absence of a legal father, this child was called *mār zakīti*. She 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, S. 466–468]. Wunsch’s study, however, was accomplished and published before that of Brinkman’s and the case of Middle Babylonian female servile labourers, who acted as legal patrons of their adolescent sons⁵⁸ and whose names were written with the double determinative, was not known to her when she wrote her article.

Zakītu, however, could have been used as a true matronym. Wunsch herself notes (with the reference to the dictionaries) that *zakītu* could also be a personal name [Wunsch, 2006, S. 466, n. 36]. The dictionaries, however, only quote Zakūtu as the Assyrian translation of the West Semitic name of the famous queen-mother of Esarhaddon, Naqī’a⁵⁹. Zakītu does not only mean “freed”, but also also “pure”. This was indeed the meaning of the West-Semitic name of Esarhaddon’s mother and obviously the primary meaning of the word *zakītu*. A single attestation of Zakītu as a principal personal name in Babylonia comes from UET 4 48⁶⁰: 13, 18–19⁶¹. In this text, Zakītu, daughter of Anu-uballit⁶², serves a guarantor that her son Kidin-Nabū, son of Šumāya/Iddināya⁶³ would perform the duties he is hired for. He is to go to Susa and deliver the royal tax on behalf of the man who hired him. There is no doubt that the son of this Zakītu had a legal father, since his patronym is mentioned three times in this document. This evidence clearly expels any suggestion that matronyms were 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. Since she, and not the father of her son, served a guarantor for him, she was most probably a widow at the time the contract was drawn up. Her patronym indicates that Zakītu originated not from Ur but from Uruk.

The chain ^mPN₁ A-šū šā ^fPN₂ ^fza-ki-ti, “PN₁, son of PN₂, a freedwoman” [UET 6 317: 8; UET 6 186: 2, 4], as well as multiple attestations of just ^fPN ^fza-ki-ti, “PN, a freedwoman”⁶⁴ indicate the importance of referring to this kind of women’s status⁶⁵.

Wunsch discusses four documents, where *zakītu* occurs in genealogical chains, all of them only two-tier chains. Indeed, only these four documents with the references of the type PN A ^fzakītu were known by the time she has been writing her article. The first one, UCB 9/2 29: 25

be some derivative of *ba’latu* (*bēltu*), “lady, mistress” [CAD B 45b] or *balātu*, “to recover, to be alive, vigorous,” etc. [CAD B 52b], and should be then read as ^mBal-tā-ni-tu₄. It is attested in BM 28917 (Borsippa, Šaddinnu, Dar 11); BM 77407 (Babylon, Nappāhu, Dar 24); BM 33157 (Babylon, Egibi Nūr-Sin, Dar 12); BM 30979 (Babylon, Egibi Nūr-Sin, Nbn 7); BM 30971 (Babylon, Egibi Nūr-Sin, Dar 12).

⁵⁷ *Zakītu* derives from G or D-stem of *zakū*.

⁵⁸ All the offspring of these female servile labourers inherited their mothers’ status.

⁵⁹ Assyrian Zakūtu = Naqī’a, “pure”; CAD Z 24, s.v. *zakū* 2b 2’; AHW 1505 s.v. *zakū* 7b. Wunsch points out that *Zakītu* is the only matronymic ancestral name referred as such in AHW [AHW 1505 s.v. *zakītu* “als FamN”]; Wunsch, 2006, S. 466 with n. 37].

⁶⁰ For transliteration see Popova [forthcoming]. I am grateful to O.V. Popova for sharing her yet unpublished editions and her interpretation with me.

⁶¹ Work contract; Art III 6, archive of Gallābu at Ur. See Popova [forthcoming].

⁶² I. 13: ^fZa-ki-tu₄ AMA-šū D[UM]U.MUNUS šā ^m60—Din-i₇ and I. 19 ^fZa-ki-tu₄ AMA-šū.

⁶³ I. 6 ^mKi-din—^dAG a šā ^mfMU¹-[a]; I. 8 ^mKi-din—^dAG a šā ^mMu-[a]; I. 8 ^mKi-din—^dAG a šā ^mMu-a.

⁶⁴ E.g. YOS 6 129: 1, 7 and AHW 1505a s.v. *zakītu*.

⁶⁵ YOS 6 129: 1, YOS 6 137: 8, YOS 6 186: 2, 4 etc.

(561 BCE), is the list of workmen employed in the temple service (*dullu*) of Eanna. Nabû-tukultî-ēdu, “son” of a freedwoman (^{d+}AG—TUKUL-*ti*—e-*du* A ^t*za-ki-ti*), seems indeed to have been an oblate temple servant. In YOS 19 115: 4, 11, 12, 13 and 30 — a list of workmen assigned to the Eanna temple watch — seven(!) descendants of ^t*zakītu* are mentioned (*contra* Wunsch). This is a reference to the status of these men’s mothers or female ancestors and not to a real matronym or a family name. The seven men were obviously not all related to the same woman. Further two instances of descendants of *zakītus* are as follows: ^{md+}AG—MU A ^t*za-ki-tu*₄¹, “Nabû-iddin, a ‘son’ of a freedwoman”⁶⁶ and ^m*Ri-mu*T A ^t*za-ki-tu*₃, “Rīmūt, a ‘son’ of a freedwoman”⁶⁷.

Wunsch discusses the problematics of understanding *zakītu* in formulas of the type PN A ^t*zakītu* as personal names. She nonetheless insists that *zakītu* is a matronym and not a family name, even though, in the Neo-Babylonian period “A-*šū šā*” was consistently used for “son of” and just “A” for “descendant (of)”. She also considers the absence of any attestations for writing *zakītu* with a masculine personal determinative to testify for a lesser respect to this “name” as opposed to Qaqqadānītu, Maqartu etc., which are mostly attested with masculine 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 an individual’s status as the son or descendant of a freedwoman, which was important most probably as indicating his relation to the temple and his duties towards it.

Finally, Nidintu-Sîn, the basket maker, son of Taštībī (^m*Ni-din-tu*₄—^d30 ¹⁰AD.KID A ^t*šā-ti-bi*) in UET 4 194: 6–7⁶⁸ gives up any share in any kind of property of Sîn-aḥḫē-bullit and Sîn-ušallim, sons of Balātu, descendants of Gallābu. Olga V. Popova, who studied the Gallābu archive, presumes that Nidintu-Sîn might have been the illegitimate son of Balātu with Taštībī [Popova, forthcoming⁶⁹].

CONCLUSION

The present study does not purport to exhaust all occurrences of matronyms and female family names in Babylonia. A database of Babylonian matronyms does not yet exist, and none of the databases for cuneiform sources of the Old or Neo-Babylonian periods allows searching for matronyms⁷⁰. The task is further complicated by the inconsistent use of feminine, masculine and double determinatives with female names, even in the Neo-Babylonian period.

As has been demonstrated, matronyms, though rare, and probably even matronymic family names began to appear as early as the Old Babylonian period. Already in that time they could have been used with masculine personal determinatives, but this could hardly be taken as evidence for male-gendering, because personal determinatives were not yet systematically used in the Old Babylonian period, and feminine personal determinatives were extremely rare. A masculine personal wedge could prefix either a male or a female name just to indicate its being a name and might have nothing to do with the individual’s status.

From very early on, indicating a mother’s position or profession, if applicable, was more important than indicating her name. A maternal grandfather’s name could be used instead of a patronym; this was not evidence of the person’s mother being single or of low status, but specified

⁶⁶ AUWE 5 127: 4; a list of names.

⁶⁷ BIN 1 161: 7; 15/2, 2 Nbn; record of payments in silver.

⁶⁸ Art I 39, archive of Gallābu at Ur.

⁶⁹ I am indebted to O.V. Popova for driving my attention to this text.

⁷⁰ To the best of my knowledge no database for the Middle Babylonian texts exists. Prosobab, which is a database of NB individuals has neither entry “matronyms”, nor is it possible to search them there or in any other NB database through the entry “gender”.

her having belonged to her father's household, which might even have been a royal one(?). Matronyms also marked self-standing women, who acted "not under patriarchal authority".

In the Middle Babylonian period, matronyms could indeed replace patronyms for servile personnel in the absence of a legal father⁷¹, but could also be mentioned when a mother's name was more important than a father's one for one reason or another. Thus, Middle Babylonian matronymic family names no doubt resulted from females heading extended families. Brinkman concludes his article with the words: "Interesting and fruitful should be a broader study of the roles and influence of women, especially as heads of household, in Middle Babylonian society" [Brinkman, 2007, p. 6]. While starting with the claim that "the prefixing of personal gender determinatives seems to have become the rule by about 1400 B.C. ", he brings plenty of examples of the unsystematic use of determinatives or of their lack in the Middle Babylonian period [Brinkman, 2007, p. 1]. Thus, the thorough and exhaustive investigation into the use of personal determinatives must be undertaken for this period as well as the study of the roles of women during this time. The use of personal determinatives and especially the use of double or masculine determinatives with female names in the Old and in the Middle Babylonian periods might be a matter of a scribal school, or even a choice of a certain scribe. Yet it is clear that masculine determinatives with matronyms and matronymic ancestral names were certainly not a matter of honour. In the case of the roster of servile personnel, CBS 3640, the use of double determinatives probably resulted from the habit of its scribe. Unsystematically used masculine, feminine and double determinatives, confusion and correction of feminine determinatives into masculine ones [Gurney, 1983, no. 2: 25]⁷², as well as the absence of any determinatives for matronymic family names in the Middle Babylonian period indicates that applying masculine and double determinatives was not necessarily a way to honour the female head of an extended family. This inconsistency continued into the Neo-Babylonian period.

Indicating the mother's or female ancestor's status (and not a matronym or ancestral name) was important, too. In some cases, such "parentage" pointed to the individual's low status such as that of the offspring of *harimtus* or *zakitus*, who apparently had reduced rights. The latter probably remained temple dependents for generations⁷³. As we have seen, the designation "son of a prostitute" is attested in three different documents. It can hardly be a family name. It rather meant something like a "bastard" in Shakespearian sense of this word, pointing to a lower social status and apparently restricted rights of an individual, for instance, inheritance rights, like in JEN 666, where a man was disinherited by his father through proclaiming his mother not a legal wife, but a *harimtu*⁷⁴. In each specific case, the use of a matronym, a matronymic family name or a position/profession of a person's mother had a specific reason, and it absolutely is not necessarily connected to the absence of a legal father.

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⁷¹ As it was probably in Ur III. See fn. 23.

⁷² See above, fnn. 44–45.

⁷³ Probably, but not necessarily they were *širkus*, "oblates", as suggested by Wunsch [Wunsch, 2006, S. 467–468].

⁷⁴ See above, fn. 23.

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