

Prostitution.

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§ 1. Definition and terms. Prostitution is the practice of engaging in sexual acts for payment. A woman (for male prostitution, see § 10) so engaged was a (gême/munus)-kar-kid/kid (Sum.) = *harimtu* (Akk.); the occupation is nam-kar-kid = *harimūtu*, one of the norms (me) brought by Inana from Eridu to Uruk (Farber-Flügge 1973, 108, listed immediately after sexual intercourse and fellatio³). The older Sum. term, kar-kid (AK) suggests a woman who plies her trade around the docks in the commercial quarter of a town (Civil 1976); the Akk. derives from the Semitic root *hrm*, suggesting something set apart or off limits for moral or religious reasons. – The Ebla equation gême-kar-kid = *za-ne-tum* (MEE 4, 340: 1412'a) recalls Hebr. *znh*, likewise used for prostitution (Pomponio 1986, pace Sjöberg 1999, 545). One Ebla manuscript witness to the line gives instead *ša-ma-ak-tum* as the Semitic equivalent, and the Akk. *šamkatum/šamuktum/šamḥatum/šamuḥtum* “voluptuous (woman)” can mean “prostitute,” although it is also used as a proper name, and not only for prostitutes. It is best known, however, as the name of the prostitute (*harimtu*) who initiates Enkidu in the Gilgamesh Epic. In both the Gilg. and Erra epics the *šamḥatu* is grouped together with the *harimtu* and *kezertu* (§ 9) and associated with the goddess Ištar (§ 7).

In ED Lu E 173 (MSL 12, 19) the Sumerian term is written gême-MI.ÚS-kar-kid (from Abū Šalābiḥ); in Emar Lu it is simply kar (Emar VI/4, 190, 602: 348).

§ 2. Attitudes toward prostitution. The *locus classicus* for Mesopotamian attitudes toward prostitution is the curse and blessing of Šamḥatu, the prostitute (*harimtu(m)*) passim in all versions of Akk. Gilg.) by Enkidu in Gilg. VII, most explicit (but not completely preserved) in the MB manuscript from Ur (George 2003, 298). In the curse, the prostitute is denied a normal married life and household, left to sit on the ground at the crossroads or stand at the city-wall, sleeping in ruins, subject to male violence, and associated with the tavern. In the subsequent blessing, she is the mistress

of aristocrats and high officials, recipient of gifts of jewelry, an irresistible woman on account of whom men of substance will abandon their wives. Here, then, are the street whore and the courtesan, two poles of sex work known from many other cultures as well.

Enkidu's curse reflects the very negative attitude toward the common prostitute found already in the mid-third mill. version of the *Instructions of Šuruppak*: gême-kar-kid na-sa₁₀ ka ù-sar-kam₄ = OB version [kar]-kid na-an-sa₁₀-sa₁₀-an ka u₄-sar-ra-kam “Do not purchase a prostitute! It is a great danger!” (Alster 1974, 11: 42). “Prostitute!” (gême-)kar-kid appears in a mid-third mill. collection of misogynist insults (Alster 1991/92, 13: 58 f.), replaced in a bil. OB version by “prostitutes' anus” *qinnati harimāti* (Klein 2003, 139, 141; Sum. probably [gu-du ka]r-^rkid⁴). In an OB bil. dialogue between two women, one asks the other a-na-aš-e dumu mu-lú tab-ba-zu-ke₄ in mu-un-dúb kar-kid ba-an-du₁₁ dam mu-un-tag₄ = *ammīni ana marti awīlim tappātiki pīštam tupšīš harimti taqbī mutam tušēzibīš* “Why did you slander the daughter of a gentleman, your equal, saying ‘Prostitute!’ and causing her husband to divorce her?” (TIM 9, 6: 9 ff., 26 ff.). An OB lexical fragment groups *harimtum* with *wāšitum* “wayward woman” and *najjāktum*¹ “fornicating woman” (MSL SS 1, 95). The curse at the end of the mid-9th cent. inscription of Kapara of Guzana wishes the malefactor to “burn seven of his sons (as a sacrifice) to Adad” – death by fire was especially heinous in the ancient Near East – and to “make seven of his daughters available to Ištar as prostitutes (^{mi}*harimātu*)” (AfO Beih. 1, 73 Nr. 8: 7). An NA satire vilifying Bēl-ētir son of Ibā pretends to be a stela erected by “a prostitute for the flatulant son of Ibā” (SAA 3, 29 r. 4), and Assurbanipal refers to a rebel governor as the prostitute of the Elamite to whom the rebel had gone over (ABL 289: 8, s. PNA II/2, 748, 812).

“Prostitute,” then, was an insult, and a prostitute's social status was inferior. A self-respecting free citizen would not, under normal circumstances, want to be married

to one nor to have one as his daughter. *ē tāhuz ḥarimtu ša šāri mutūša* "Do not marry a prostitute, whose husbands are myriad!" counsels a 1st mill. collection of advice, for she will be an unsupportive, mocking, disrespectful, domineering and disruptive spouse (BWL 102: 72–80). An NB omen tablet similarly warns: "If he marries a prostitute, his house will not pr[osper]" (Moren 1977, 66: 4). Even the irresistible courtesan of Enkidu's blessing was looked down upon by respectable society; the law could intervene to prevent a man from leaving his family to take up with a prostitute, or from installing a prostitute along-side his wife as a second wife of equal status (§ 6).

It is nevertheless important to stress that prostitution did not bear the moral opprobrium that it does in western cultures formed by Christianity. Sex in itself was not sinful in ancient Mesopotamia (as dishonesty or impiety were), even if it might cause temporary impurity (van der Toorn 1985, 31 f.); prostitutes can be found in the employ of palace and temple (§§ 6, 9), and are the subjects of provisions in law collections that relegate them to a low status without in anyway banning their activity (§ 6).

§ 3. *Quid pro quo*. Sex work transactions were not the kind to have been recorded in ancient Mesopotamia; no text documents a transaction between a prostitute and her client. But a number of less direct testimonies leave no doubt that men were paying prostitutes for sex. In an OB hymn, Inana announces *é-gar₈-da gub-bu-mu 1 gín-àm gam-e-mu 1 1/2 gín-àm* "When I stand up against the wall, it is one shekel; when I bend over, it is 1 1/2 shekels" (Sjöberg 1977, 17: 19 f., cf. NABU 1998: 40). She does not explicitly say here that she is a *kar-kid* "prostitute," though she does so in other compositions (§ 7), and it can reasonably be assumed that this is what is portrayed here. An OA text records payment of a debt to a *ḥarimtum*, but does not indicate how the debt was incurred (TPAK I 205: 12 f.). At Nuzi, judges ask a woman why the meat from a man's

missing piglet was found in her house, and she replies that her daughter *ḥarimat* "is a prostitute" and brought the piglet home, presumably as payment for her services (JEN 397). – An NA treaty curses the vassal that would violate the treaty as follows: *lū miḥarimtu šābūšu lū sinniṣātu kīma miḥarimtu ina rebīt ālišun[u nid²-n]u limḥurū* "may he become a prostitute, his troops become women, may they accept gifts² on the boulevard of their city like a prostitute" (SAA 2, 2: 9 f.). – An NA letter's use of "prostitute" as a pejorative term for someone who has switched allegiance suggests a person whose loyalty can be bought (§ 2). Girls are adopted to become prostitutes and support their adoptive mothers, presumably with their earnings (§ 6). For NB texts that apparently document payment to slave owners for the sexual services of female slaves (not explicitly called prostitutes), see Dandamaev 1984, 132 ff.

§ 4. Identifying markers. Legal and social sanctions against sexual contact with the wives or daughters of free citizens made it important to be able to recognize those women whom men could freely approach. The MA law collection decrees that in public, citizen's wives and daughters must be veiled, but prostitutes and female slaves must not be veiled (§ 6); whether this was true in other periods and places is not known. The same MA legislation refers to the jewelry of the prostitute as if it were a distinctive and necessary mark of her profession, and a Sumerian hymn to Inana refers to her as wearing "the beads of a prostitute" around her neck (Behrens 1998, 34: 112; § 7). From lexical texts we hear of a prostitute's leather belt, *kuš-lá = (aguh₈hu) ša ḥarimti* (MSL 12, 135: 195; Farber 1977, 202 n. 1), and a *kar-kid* *šuhub-si* "shoe-wearing prostitute" (MSL 12, 59: 715), suggesting the antiquity of leather and shoes as staples of sex work.

§ 5. Venues. The most common venues of the *kar-kid* *ḥarimtu* are, unsurprisingly, the street or boulevard (*ribītu*), and the tavern (*éš-dam = aštammu*). This is epitomized in a 1st mill. compilation of legal

phrases containing a historiola describing the unusual situation of a man marrying a prostitute: *nam-kar-kid-da-a-ni tilla-ta ba-an-da-il-la / nam-kar-kid-da-a-ni ba-ni-in-tuk / êš-dam-a-né šu mi-ni-in-gur* "He took her up as a prostitute from the street, married her as a prostitute, returned her to her tavern" (MSL 1, 96 f.), that is, the husband has her continue the practice of her profession. For Inana/Ištar as tavern prostitute see § 7.

The usual translation, "he returned her tavern to her," assumes both that prostitutes owned taverns (for which there is no other evidence, although it could have been the case), and that this particular prostitute had lost her tavern and her new husband restored it to her (or, upon marriage it devolved to him but he returned the ownership to her). More likely, her husband married her because her profession was lucrative and he allowed her or forced her to continue soliciting clients at her usual tavern. Whereas in or from the "street" or "boulevard" probably can also denote a woman who does not belong to a patriarchal household (Westenholz 1989, 251), it is also meant literally as a place of solicitation. LA A § 14 implies that the tavern and the boulevard are the two places where a married woman might be mistaken for a prostitute. In "Curse of Akkade," the gods decree that the prostitute *ká êš-dam-ma-na-ka ní ĥa-ba-ni-ib-lá-e* "hang herself at the entrance to her tavern" (Cooper 1986, 60: 240). For Inana/Ištar as tavern prostitute, see § 7.

OB-Proto-Lu (MSL 12, 59) follows *kar-kid* (713) with *kar-kid-mu-gub*, *kar-kid-šūhub-si*, and *kar-kid-gi-te-te*, of which only the second is intelligible (§ 4). After two broken entries beginning *kar*, there follow (720 ff.) *kar-nigin*, *uru-nigin*, *e-nigin*, *pa₅-nigin* and *a-gār-nigin*. Similarly, Emar Lu (Emar VI/4, 190 f.) follows *kar* (348') with *kar-gub-ba* = *mabḥātu* (erroneous confusion with *munus-lú-gub-ba* (OB Lu A 24; MSL 12, 158), *kar-e-sir* = *sūqā'itu* "street walker", *kar-kaskal* = *ša ḥarrāni* "travel companion" (cf. Proto-Lu 710 a *lukur-kaskal*), and *kar-êš-dam* = *eštamme* "tavern (prostitute)". It continues (353 ff.) with *uru-gi₄-gi₄* = *sabḥirat* (or *sāḥirat*) *ālī* "town prowler," *a-gār-gi₄-gi₄* = *MIN ugāri* "field prowler," *du₆-gi₄-gi₄* = *MIN tilli* "ruin prowler," and *pa₅-gi₄-gi₄* = *MIN palgi* "ditch prowler." Since the *nigin* of the OB series, like *gi₄-gi₄* here, is also equivalent to Akk. *sahāru* "to go around, prowl," the entire series of topographical features may be considered as imagined venues for the prostitute's trade. At Ebla, *gēme-kar-kid* is followed by *sa-ḥAR* = *sa-ḥu-ru₁₂-um* (MEE 4, 340: 1413), and at Fāra (§ 6), *sa-ḥAR* characterizes workers otherwise called *gēme-kar-kid* or *nar* "singer," and workers listed together with *gēme-kar-kid* "lamentation-singer," *nu-gig* (§ 9), and *ša-zu* "midwife." The Ebla entry leads Pomponio/Visicato (1994, 244) to read the

Sumerian word as a semitic loanword *sa-ḥur*; both the Ebla and Fāra contexts would then support the notion that OB Proto-Lu 720 ff. and Emar Lu 353 ff. refer to prostitution. See also the curse of Šamḥat in the Gilg. Epic (§ 2) for venues.

§ 6. Legal and civil status. The unmarried free prostitute theoretically "could enjoy an independent status" (Westbrook 2003, 379), but in fact, can be bound by contract to support an adoptive mother (Assante 1998, 15 ff.). In BE 6/2, 4 (OB Nippur; Stone/Owen 1991, 54), a girl is sold into adoption by her parents and she "will be made a prostitute and support PN her mother" *kar-kid al-dū-ni-ma* PN *ama-a-ni ninda an-ni-ib-kú-a*. An MB adoption from Nippur (BE 14, 40; Lambert 1992, 134) stipulates that a woman who has paid 5 shekels of gold for a daughter "may either give her to a husband or make her a prostitute" *ḥarīmūta ippussi* "but she may not make her her slave." At Nuzi, a man gives his sister in adoption to a wealthy woman, who can marry her off (and collect the bridewealth), or make her a prostitute *ḥarīmūta* PN *lipušma*, in which case the adopted girl must remain in the household and "support" her adoptive mother (AASOR 16, 23, following Wilhelm 1990, 519 n. 76; differently, Assante 1998, 17 f.; Grosz 1987, 133, 137).

Prostitutes' independence also was circumscribed in that they could lose custody of their children through the agency of their male relatives or local officials. TIM 11, 15 (NA) records a prostitute's father ceding her son for adoption, and in SAA 12, 92 a prostitute's son is donated by her brothers and nephews to a temple. In NB Sippar, temple administrators take an infant from its prostitute mother and grant custody of the child to its maternal grandmother (Joannès 1997, 125 f.). When grown, prostitutes' children faced legitimacy issues, and there were attempts both to deny these children legitimacy and to provide it for them. At Nuzi, an uncle claimed his deceased brother's son had no right to inherit, citing an earlier declaration by the deceased to the effect that the man's mother was not a legitimate wife, but a prostitute; another Nuzi text seems to con-

tain the text of just such a declaration (JEN 666 and 671; Wilhelm 1990, 520 f.; Assante 1998, 30). In a very different Nuzi case, a woman tries to guarantee a legitimate male heir for some property she owns by marrying off her granddaughter, "who lives as a prostitute" *ana harimtūti baltat*, specifying that the future sons of the granddaughter will inherit the property (HSS 5, 11; Wilhelm 1990, 519; Assante 1998, 19 f.). Another prostitute's son, in NB Uruk, is adopted by her brother, who will keep the son as long as his sister "practices prostitution" *har'utu teppušu*, and the adoptive son, together with his own son, will perform royal and temple service (AnOr. 8, 14; Joannès 1997, 125).

The benefits of illegitimacy are revealed in a text from OB Sippar, in which the military high-command of the Sippar region claims the services of a young man whom they identify as the son of one of their troops. The man's aunt (a *naditu*) and uncle insist that they never married off their sister, the man's mother, but rather "she was promiscuous" *ālikūtam illikma* and the purported father "visited her along with many others" *itti mādatim iterrub-šima*. Because there was no marriage, and the paternity is in doubt, the man is not heir to his purported father's service obligations (Veenhof 2003). For grown sons of prostitutes identified as such, s. below.

Prostitutes are dependents of a variety of economic organizations. 3rd mill. evidence is briefly discussed in Civil 1976 and Pomponio 1986. Prostitutes are on allotment lists of the administration at Fāra and, in smaller numbers, of the *é-mí / é^dba-ú* at Lagaš (add VS 27, 33 v 14). They are listed together with all other personnel and receive normal rations. A prostitute is listed on a broken Oakk. personnel list from the Diyāla region. An Ebla text (ARET 113, 14) contains what the editor believes is a dialogue between a person from Nagar and a prostitute (*gême-kar-kid*, 3 × in cols. viii–ix), but her status and function are unknown.

Because a person denominated *gême-kar-kid* in one text is called a *nar* "singer" in another, Pomponio (1986) suggests that music may have been one of the prostitutes' accomplishments. Note, too, one Fāra text (WF 74; Pomponio/Visicato 1994, 6) which is a list of barley rations to over 75 lamentation-singers, and smaller groups of *nu-gig* (later Akk. *qadištu*), midwives (*šā-zu*), prostitutes

(*gême-kar-kid*), and *sa-HAR* (s. § 5). Much later texts associate prostitution with the chief lamentation-singer, the prostitute with the *nu-gig / qadištu*, and the *qadištu* with the midwife. The constellation of these this early can hardly be coincidental. For prostitution and tempels in OB and Nuzi, see § 9.

The prostitutes (MUNUS.MEŠ *harimātum*) that entered Zimrilim of Mari's palace at Qaṭṭunān (ARM 27, 60) were unwelcome (the person responsible was beaten), and hence probably not on the palace staff; at Ugarit, the queen's major domo released (*wuššuru*) a prostitute (MUNUS.KID.-KAR) female slave of his and marries her off. Since she is his slave, the proceeds from her prostitution had probably gone to him personally, and not to the queen or the palace (Lackenbacher 2002, 332 f.). A royal decree from Nuzi forbids palace personnel from making a daughter practice "beggary" and prostitution "ekūti u *harimūti* without the permission of the king (AASOR 16, 51; Wilhelm 1990, 519 f.; Roth 1997, 195 f.). The implication is that the daughter's income would be going to her parent(s) and not to the palace. A prostitute can also be found on a ration list of prince Šilwa-teššup (Wilhelm 1990, 520), probably belonging to his household. A commander on the northern frontier who writes to Sargon II of Assyria mentioning that he has let some troops or workmen "go with the prostitutes" is certainly talking about local women and not dependents of his forces (SAA 5, 24).

Persons receiving rations at Ur III Girsu are identified as sons of prostitutes, either with or without specifying the mother's name: PN *dumu* (PN) *gême-kar-kid / kid / kid^{ke4}* (Civil 1976, 190, and many other references). These lists include men identified as sons of female weavers, and since we know that weavers are administration dependents, the prostitutes may be, also, but they never appear in documents in their own right.

Nothing more is known about a recipient[?] of silver at OB Ur identified as *mār harimti* (UET 5, 475: 7). A fragmentary NA royal appointment text mentions, in a long list of occupations (cook, fowler, boatman, gardener, clergyman, etc.), "<son> of a prostitute" LÚ.<DUMU.>KAR.KID (followed by "son of a palace maid" LÚ.DUMU.GEME.Ē.GAL),

but it is uncertain whether these are government dependents. As in the Ur III case, it must be significant that prostitute's sons were seen as a distinctive, identifiable group.

The law collections have relatively little to say about prostitutes and prostitution. CL § 27 stipulates that if a man's wife is barren and *kar-kid-a tilla-a* "a prostitute from the street" bears him a child, he shall support the prostitute, the child shall be his legitimate heir, but the prostitute may not live in his house during his wife's lifetime. CL § 30 stipulates that a *guruš dam-tuku* "young husband" who had frequented "a prostitute from the street" and had been warned by the judges to break off the relationship, and subsequently divorced his wife, may nevertheless not marry the prostitute. As Westbrook 1984 shows, this indicates a perceived need to protect the integrity of marriage against the emotional entanglements of extra-marital affairs.

LA A § 40 requires that married women and (unmarried) daughters of citizens cover their heads when they are outside the home, as must an *esirtu* concubine who is out with her mistress. Prostitutes and female slaves must not cover themselves under penalty of severe punishment; an offending prostitute will be beaten, tarred, and forfeit her clothing to her captor, but is allowed to keep her jewelry. The importance of the regulation, which allowed men to immediately ascertain which women were and were not legitimately approachable, as well as to protect the honor of married women, is underscored by the severe penalty meted out to anyone who finds a covered prostitute and fails to turn her in (Lafont 1999, 461 ff.). A very damaged LA A § 49 deals with inheritance matters involving a deceased prostitute, and LA A § 52 insures that a prostitute who is beaten and caused to abort will be compensated for her lost fetus, and the attacker will be punished.

§ 7. Inana/Ištar and prostitution. Inanna*/Ištar, goddess of romantic love, carnal lust, and war, is the tutelary deity of prostitutes and a prostitute herself. Her temple in Girsu is called "the holy tavern"

(*éš-dam-kù*) and her temples as a group can be called "the taverns" (Zgoll 1997, 427). The classic expressions of Ištar as goddess of prostitutes are in the Gilg. and Erra epics: "Uruk, dwelling of Anu and Ištar, city of *kezertus*, *šamḫatus* and prostitutes (*ḫarimāti*), whom Ištar has deprived of husbands" (Erra IV 52 f., Cagni 1969, 110; for *kezertu*, s. § 9, for *šamḫatu* § 1); "Ištar assembled the *kezertus*, *šamḫatus* and prostitutes (*ḫarimāti*)" (Gilg. VI 158, George 2003, 628). In an OB Akk. hymn, the power "to make goddess and prostitute loving?" is Ištar's (Groneberg 1997, 28 ii 39). A Sumerian love incantation likens "a beautiful young woman standing in the street" to "a prostitute (*kar-kid*), 'child' of Inana, 'child' of Inana who stands in the tavern" (Geller 2002, 135) and the curse formula in the early 1st mill. Kapara inscription (§ 2) speaks of making daughters available to Ištar as prostitutes. In a Nuzi fragment, a father² dedicates his daughter to Ištar in prostitution (Wilhelm 1990, 517; the girl is a surety for a debt, so she is probably not being given to a temple of Ištar, rather, that she is being worked as a prostitute means she will work under Ištar's aegis).

Inana, appearing as Venus in the evening sky to Lugalbanda*, is "the prostitute coming out to the tavern, in order to sweeten the bed" (*kar-kid éš-dam-šè è-da ki-nú dūg-dūg-ge-da*; Vanstiphout 2003, 114: 174), and similarly, in the Ninegalla* Hymn (Inana D), "Prostitute, you are coming down to the tavern ... a prostitute's beads are set around your neck, you are someone who grabs men from the tavern" (*kar-kid éš-dam-šè mu-un-e₁₁-dè-en ... nus kar-kid gú-za i-im-dū éš-dam-ta lú mu-dab₅-me-en*; Behrens 1998, 34: 105, 113 f.). In a passage from an OB hymn to Inana (Inana I), duplicated in an *emesal lament* (*úru àm-ma-ir-ra-bi* 21) with two OB mss. and a bil. 1st mill. ms., Inana declares: "When I sit at the entrance to the tavern, I am a ... prostitute!" (Cohen 1975, 605: 20 f.; Volk 1989, 40: 12 f., 196: 49 f.).

For the difficulties in this last passage, see Volk 1989, 220 f.; Assante 1998, 74-75. Evidence for In-

anna/Ištar's enormous sexual appetite: "after you have bedded down with horses" (Ninegala Hymn, Behrens 1998, 30: 61); "like holy Inana, you make love to horses" (Ewe and Grain, ASJ 9, 24: 144 f.); and her whorish behavior in an Akkadian hymn, where, after luring the men to the shade of the city wall, "sixty and sixty satisfy themselves on her vulva, the young men then tire, but Ištar tires not!" (von Soden 1991, 340: 16 f.). See also Inana advertising the prices of her sexual favors, § 3.

§ 8. Other references. The attractions of prostitutes, "comely of figure, graced with charm, full of joy," who "rouse nobles from their beds at night," are used by Šam-ḥat to entice Enkidu to Uruk in the Gilg. Epic (George 2003, 552: 230 ff.). In a fragmentary ED literary text about Enki from Beydar, a prostitute (gēme-kar-kid), associated with ̄L (an activity or place), occurs in sequence with a snake charmer and a carpenter (Subartu 12, 37 ff., 118 f.). A Sumerian ritual from Mē-Turran* (OB) employs a prostitute (phon. ka-ki-da) to take bread that has been rubbed on the body of a sick person, and carry it into her tavern (thus disposing of the illness; ZA 83, 180: 47, 192). A 1st mill. Akk. incantation uses the words of a *kulu'u* (§ 10) and a "prostitute of the city" as parallels to an antagonist's angry words.

"If a man frequents a prostitute at a crossroads," according to the 1st mill. omen collection *Summa Ālu*, he will die (CT 39, 45: 30, cf. omen cited § 3). An unfavorable OB omen apodosis predicts that "the man's wife will go out and become a prostitute" (*ana ḥarīmūtum ušši*; YOS 10, 47 r. 65).

This is comparable to numerous negative omen apodoses that predict illicit sexual activity by women family members, clergy and members of the royal family. See CAD s. v. *nāku* for examples.

§ 9. "Sacred" prostitution. The place of prostitution, or, more narrowly, sexual acts (apart from the "sacred marriage" [Heilige Hochzeit*] at the beginning of the 2nd mill.) in Mesopotamian cults is very controversial (for: e. g. Wilhelm 1990; Lambert 1992; Radner 1997, 218 f.; Da Riva/Frahm 1999/2000; Schwemer 2001, 600; against: e. g. Arnaud 1973; Westenholz 1989; Beard/Henderson 1997; Assante 1998; Glassner 2002).

Discussions of the question do not always distinguish between prostitutes who, as part of the temple staff or not, contribute all or part of the earnings to the temple, and prostitutes or other temple personnel (*kezertu*, *kuḫmašitu*, and *qadištu* [Sum. nu-gig] are the prime candidates, but except for the first, the evidence remains ambiguous) who would perform sexual acts as part of the cult. In any case, because of Ištar's patronage of sexuality and prostitution, the dedication of a woman as a prostitute for Ištar cannot be taken to mean, necessarily, that the woman was being placed as a prostitute in the temple of Ištar. All prostitutes, in a sense, were devotees of Ištar, regardless of their workplace.

Herodot I 199 reports that once in her life every Babylonian woman must sit in the temple of Aphrodite wearing a ribboned headdress until a man tosses a coin in her lap while saying "In the name of the goddess Mylitta," takes her outside and has intercourse with her. The coin itself becomes sacred and cannot be used. The report has been both dismissed – along with the rest of Herodotus's Babylonian ethnography – as an early Orientalist fantasy (e. g. Rollinger 1993; Beard/Henderson 1997), and regarded as an account of actual, if misunderstood, Babyl. rites (Da Riva/Frahm 1999/2000, 179 ff.). The custom Herodotus reports is a religious duty and the coin becomes sacred, but the sexual act itself is performed outside the temple.

The archive of the chief lamentation singer of the (Ištar-)Annunītum temple at Sippar-Amnānum (Tell ed-Dēr) records sums of money owed by men for the performance of the rite or function (*paršum*) of ^{1a}*ḥarīmūtum*. Whether this means they themselves act as prostitutes, or that these men have the right to procure women prostitutes is unclear, but the income benefits the temple (Tanret/Van Lerberghe 1993).

The archive documents seven different *paršū*; the most frequent is *rēdūtum* (*rēdūm* is a soldier or bailiff), performed only by women, followed by *ḥarīmūtum* performed only by men (but by a woman in CT 48, 45, over 50 years later than the texts discussed by Tanret/Van Lerberghe). Another male *paršum* is *mubabbilūtum*, and a *mubabbilum* figures in the Mari Ištar ritual where he is followed by wrestlers and acrobats (Durand 1997, 55, cf. 51). Since the men at Sippar are doing "prostitution," and the women "soldiering," perhaps these *paršū* there belong to a ritual involving cross-dressing, a well attested aspect of the cult of Ištar. More can be said only when the archive is fully published.

At OB Kiš, the *paršum* of *kezērum* was controlled by the *wakil kezrētim* “supervisor of the *kezertu*-women,” probably under the aegis of the Nanaja* (goddess of erotic love and an “Ištar figure”) temple. These supervisors leased the right to assign the *paršū* and collect the relevant duties (*bil-tum*) to third parties, who would assign the *paršum* to a woman and her husband, who in turn were responsible for certain payments to the supervisor (Yoffee 1998).

The *kezertu* (Sum. *munus-suḥur-lá*) is thought to be characterized by a distinctive hairdo, probably curled (CAD *kezēru* B “to curl the hair”), but a passage from 1st mill. incantation suggests that it is not the hair of the *kezertu* that is distinctive, but what they do to the hair of others, that is, as J. J. Finkelstein suggested (*apud* Gallery 1980, 338), the services they performed included hairdressing: “What people have done since time immemorial and the *kezertu*-women took from them – I have made a scale for weighing, and have weighed out my hair and my fringe” (BID 66: 31 f., cf. AfO 26, 109). The incantation was recited by the patient after the ritual expert had, among other things, (cut and) weighed (some of) the patient’s hair and fringe.

Literary and lexical evidence suggests a sexual role for the *kezertu*. In the 1st mill. she was grouped with the *ḥarimtu* and *šamḥatu* in the retinue of Ištar (§ 7), and together with these same is equated with KAR.KID in Explicit Malku 1: 82 ff. (Kilmer 1963, 434). In OB Proto-Lu 708 *de munus-suḥur-lá* and *munus-ke-zē-er-ak* appear close to the entries for *kar-kid* (713–16; MSL 12, 58 f.); in Emar Lu, *munus-suḥur-lá* = *keze[r]tu* (345') is separated by only one line from the *ḥarimtu* entries (§ 5). Other evidence points to musical accomplishments of the *kezertum*: The *kezrētum* in the Mari harem may be some kind of musicians, although the musicians/singers (*nārātum*) were probably sexually available to the king (Ziegler 1999, 87, 69). A girl in a Sumerian comic tale sings, dances, plays an instrument, and acts like a *kezertu* (*ke-zē-er in-ak*; Alster 1992, 199: 24); for the *ḥarimtu* and music, see § 6. Yoffee (1998, 336) suggests that possible OB temple-related sexual activity might be compared to the Indian *dēvadasī*, consecrated women who provide musical entertainment and sexual services, remitting their fees to the temple.

Tanret/Van Lerberghe (1993, 443) note that among the mostly female named performers of *paršū* at Sippar, none appears more than once, and the same seems to be the case at Kiš. Were there, in fact, certain rites that a Babylonian performed only once in a lifetime, and were some of these sexual in nature, giving rise to the report of Herodotus?

The penalty clause of an NA real estate contract calls for the violator to “give seven *kazrē* and seven *kazrāte* to Issar who is in Arbela” (Radner 1997, 218 f.); the donation to Ištar suggests that sexual services may be part of their obligations. An NA copy of a decree of Tukulti-Ninurta I for the temple of Šarrat-nipḥa (an “Ištar figure”) concludes with the donation of “a baker, a brewer, and sons of *kezertu*-women” to the temple (SAA 12, 68 r. 28 f.), and a poorly preserved set of NA decrees for the temple of Ištar of Kadmuri mentions both “sons of *kezrētu*-women” and an “overseer of the *kezrētu*-women” (*lāša-UGU.miSUHUR.LÁ.MEŠ*) (SAA 12, 76: 3', 6', 36'). A list of households from Šibaniba registers “three households of sons of *kezrētu*-women” (Menzel 1981, 31). There is no mention in any text of the women themselves, and no indication of their obligations or duties. But the fact that a class of male personnel could be called “sons of *kezrētu*-women” indicates that at the very least those women did not have a conventional family life.

The obscenity filled so-called Love Lyrics are embedded in a ritual, performed in 1st mill. Babylon, that mimed a love triangle between Marduk, his wife Šarpanītu, and Ištar (Edzard 1987). Da Riva/Frahm (1999/2000) suggest that the public enactment over several days may have incited a carnival atmosphere in which sexual limits could be transgressed by male citizens who would avail themselves of temple prostitutes.

This ritual may lie behind Herodotus’s report. They point especially to two details: Mylitta in Herodotus is certainly Mullissu (Ninlil*), who can be equated with Ištar of Nineveh, and the special head ornament that the Babylonian women wear in the Herodotus report may reflect the hairdo of the *kezrētu*-women.

§ 10. Male prostitution. A number of terms designate male personnel (*assinnu*,

kurgarrû, kulu'u, sinnišānu) who are associated with the Istar cult and whom texts refer to in disparaging ways, suggesting that they are homosexual, effeminate, eunuchs, or some combination of these (Lambert 1992, 145 ff.; Nissinen 1998, 28 ff., but cf. Maul 1992). Their cultic roles may have included sexual acts, but there is no direct evidence for this, nor is there any explicit evidence for male prostitution in general. The only indirect evidence is in the Descent of Istar, where the *assinnu/kulu'u* who has rescued Istar is cursed by Ereškigal using several of the same lines used by Enkidu to curse the prostitute Šamhat in the Gilg. Epic (Lambert 1992, 152; § 2).

For homosexuality, see Homosexualität*; Nissinen 1998; Cooper 2002; for eunuchs, see Eunuch*; Ziegler 1999, 9 ff.; Hawkins 2002; Tadmor 2002. The masculine form of *harimtu*, *harmu*, does not denote a male prostitute, but is used to designate Dumuzi, spouse of the *harimtu* Istar, and by extension, Qingu*, the spouse of Ti'amat (for Tiamat as a kind of paleo-Istar, s. SAA 3, 39: 19). – The masculine form of *kezertu*, *kezru*, occurs only as a pendant to *kezertu* in penalty clause (§ 9); the Šibaniba reference to households of sons or children of ¹⁰SU-HUR.LA.MEŠ-te is certainly referring to *kazrâte*, as the phonetic complement indicates, and other, similar, references suggest (§ 9). *kezrum* occurs twice in OB lexical texts, in contexts where it clearly refers to characteristics of the hair, and not to a profession or function (MSL 12, 169: 389 f.; 195: 20 f.).

§ 11. Brothels, madams and procurers. *bīt aštammi* or *aštammu* "tavern" is often translated "brothel," because it is a prime venue for prostitution (§§ 5, 7), but its defining characteristic is dispensing alcoholic drink, with sexuality as a concomitant attribute. Three tablets document the equipment provided to a female slave of the Egibi family to operate a tavern (Journès 1992), although *aštammu* or *bīt aštammi* is not used. In addition to utensils for preparing and serving alcoholic beverages and other refreshment, she receives tables, chairs and beds (more beds than tables!). Although beds can be used for lodgers as well as for prostitution, these texts at least show that sexual relations could easily be accommodated. Whether the proprietess was a madam, that is, whether she hired prostitutes or simply provided the venue, is unknown.

The *mummertu* of LA A § 23 is often translated "female procurer," but she is bringing a married woman into her and her husband's house for the purpose of adultery, so she is more a go-between than a procuress. Whether the owners of prostitute slaves procured their slaves' clients is not known, but the NB texts mentioned at the end of § 3 suggest that could be the case.

§ 12. Were Mesopotamian prostitutes prostitutes? Some claim that "prostitute" is an inaccurate translation of *kar-kid / harimtu*. Rather, the word designates an adult woman who is not part of a patriarchal household, and thus not legally subject to male authority (Assante 1998; cf. Schwemer 2001, Anm. 4849; Glassner 2002). A *harimtu* might support herself in any number of ways, and some may have been prostitutes or mistresses of married men living outside of the men's homes, but the term itself would just designate independent women. Since such women would be perceived as a social threat, the term took on a pejorative connotation. However, the uses of the term documented above show that the opposite is more likely: a word that originally meant prostitute could be applied pejoratively to women whose sexuality was seen as threatening in some way, or simply used as an insult.

Challenges to the conventional translation are, however, a useful reminder that our notion of prostitution carries with it connotations that can hardly apply to ancient Mesopotamian prostitution, a concept whose contours we can only dimly apprehend.

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J. Cooper

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Begründet von
E. Ebeling und B. Meissner

fortgeführt von
E. Weidner, W. von Soden und D. O. Edzard

herausgegeben von M. P. Streck

unter Mitwirkung von
M. Krebernik · J. N. Postgate · U. Seidl
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