

WOMEN AND REFERENCES TO WOMEN IN MESOPOTAMIAN ROYAL INSCRIPTIONS: AN OVERVIEW FROM THE EARLY DYNASTIC TO THE END OF UR III PERIOD

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The aim of this article is to present textual fragments from Mesopotamian royal inscriptions (and some texts dealing with them) created in the third millennium BC between the Early Dynastic and Ur III periods, that were written by women or include references to women. When possible, this article also contains short descriptions and discussion of the specific women and the context of their appearance in a given text. The main reason for limiting this short study to royal inscriptions is the huge number of preserved texts of different kinds (economic, legal, religious, etc.) in which women are mentioned. As this article focuses only on mortal women; any references to goddesses as well as other female supernatural beings will be omitted. The main finding of this research is that there are significant differences in the number of references to women, and in roles that they play in specific texts – as well as a changing number of personal inscriptions from women – dependent on the period of a text's origins.

INTRODUCTION

The aim of this article is to provide a short overview of textual sources from the Presargonic period to the Ur III period (c.2900–2004 BC) in which women are mentioned. Because of the very large number of available texts of such kind, this survey will be limited to royal inscriptions and the texts dealing with them.¹ Therefore all economic, legal or religious texts as well as contracts will be omitted. All references to female deities or other supernatural beings will also be skipped,² as this article is focused on mortal women.

1 Such publications concerning or referring to women are numerous. For further details of the contemporary state of research, see Asher-Greve & Wogec 2002. The most recent books devoted to this subject are Pinnock 2006; Weiershäuser 2008; Stol 2012; Chavalas 2014. One of the first studies in the social position of Mesopotamian women was Brooks 1923. There is also an ongoing large French–Japanese project REFEMA; more information can be found at <refema.hypotheses.org>, with the bibliography regarding women's studies on Mesopotamia.

2 As Mesopotamian royal inscriptions have been edited most recently within the project “Royal Inscriptions of Mesopotamia” since 1987, texts discussed in this article are based on the RIM publications. More specifically, in the appendices of this article, E1 refers to Frayne 2008, E2 refers to Frayne 1993, E3/1 refers to Edzard 1997, and E3/2 to Frayne 1997. There is also a huge online project, “Electronic Text Corpus of Sumerian Royal Inscriptions”, led by Gabór Zolyomi at <oracc.museum.upenn.edu/etscri/index.html>, with an extensive bibliography.

There are many books and articles concerning women in ancient Near East; nevertheless, such studies are usually limited to a specific period and social role of women. It is unquestionable that the results of studies on women in Mesopotamian royal inscriptions are far too extensive to be discussed in a single work, even a very large one. However, a general analysis of the references to women in preserved royal inscriptions, which could be a basis for more detailed studies, is still lacking.

It must be also remarked that there is quite a large collection of findings related to the depiction of women on seals and (rarely) reliefs dated to this period. These are thoroughly discussed in Suter (2008) and will not be discussed here, as this article focuses on the textual data only.

EARLY DYNASTIC PERIOD (C.2900–2340 BC)

Out of more than 300 texts dated to the Early Dynastic period,³ references to women can be found in only 26, comprising less than 9%.⁴ This low rate of occurrence could be interpreted as a reflection of the very poor social status of women. However, there are some grounds for doubt in this matter. First of all, the lack of references might be due to the briefness of preserved inscriptions, which consist mostly of only a few lines, and sometimes just one. The second doubt is related to the nature of such texts, which with some exceptions consist only of the signature on various objects, for example, votives. Under closer examination of the text types, this impression can change. Out of altogether 38 fragments related to women, a general term for ‘woman’ can be found in only five: ‘female’,⁵ ‘wife’,⁶ and a general reference to women’s quarters⁷ each appear once, and the word ‘woman’⁸ (in a burial context as a wailing woman) appears twice (Appendix 1). Interestingly, these words are used in a *quasi*-legal text,⁹ containing a description of “Urukagina’s reform” and the situation prior to its introduction. Thus, it is no wonder that there is a lack of more personalized descriptions.

In contrast to these, 16 of the 26 texts (61%) are inscriptions written by women themselves.¹⁰ Moreover, in women’s personal inscriptions, as well as in royal and other references to women, personal names are included,¹¹ and family status is the primary emphasis. Thus, the texts refer to 13 ‘wives’,¹² nine ‘daughters’, one ‘granddaughter’, one ‘daughter-in-law’, and one ‘mother’. In five

3 As I will not discuss any other types of texts, I will use “text” or “textual source” instead of “royal inscription” consistently. The basic chronology of the historical periods in Mesopotamia in this article is based on a recent publication on ancient Near Eastern history authored by Kuhrt (2000).

4 It should be clarified here that I am using two different terms when listing the discussed texts. When a “text” is mentioned, it means that I am writing about the whole composition. When a “reference” is noted, that means that I count each mention related to women separately, even if they appear in the same text. This terminological distinction accounts for the differences between the number of texts and the number of references related to women.

5 E1.9.9.3 iii:14’ (m u n u s). It should be noted that Sumerian terms will be in general written as spaced, but if the reading is not fixed, the term will be written in capital letters, not spaced. Akkadian terms will be written in italics.

6 E1.9.9.3 ii:15’ (dam).

7 E1.9.9.1 vii:7–8 (É.MÍ).

8 E1.9.9.1 vi:13, 26 (umum-ma).

9 I have chosen to use the description “*quasi*-legal”, as this text, while not the official publication of a law, contains a description of legal activities undertaken by the king.

10 It must be clearly stated here that I use the description “written by (one)self” not to define the handiwork of an author (which is hardly possible), but rather to mean a text in which someone is listed as the author of the text or as the donor of an inscribed artefact, or at least in which he or she is the central figure in the text (i.e. not merely included as an accompanying family member).

11 30 of 38 fragments contained a personal name (with 26 names preserved).

12 Or 12, if the unnamed wife from E1.11.3.2 could be identified with A-kalam mentioned in E1.11.3.1.

inscriptions, a woman is described with the term “n i n”, translated as ‘queen’. In an additional two cases, only a name without a description was preserved, except that these women were mentioned as wives.¹³ In one very interesting case, the name is not preserved (or was possibly never written), but the woman is described as ‘Lady Dragon’ (MUNUS.UŠUMGAL).¹⁴ In the same inscription, the author is named ‘offspring of Lady Dragon’, making gender identification impossible. There is also one inscription that differs from the above-mentioned, as it was made by the ereš-dingir priestess and contains no references to genealogy or family relationships.¹⁵

Concerning women known by name about whom it is possible to make some further remarks, the oldest chronologically is Ku-Baba, who became the queen of Kiš. In Sumerian King List 224 her name is written as Kug-^dBa-ú, and she is described in line 225 as ʿlú-kurun-na (innkeeper). In the “Weidner Chronicle” she is mentioned as a tavern owner, granted the power in Mesopotamia by Marduk after she gave an offering of fishes to the fishermen (IM 124470 rev. I:9–13; van Buren 1948: 110–111; al-Rawi 1990: 9). What is really worth noting, however, is that she is the only woman (known so far) who ruled under her own name. Others were queens, but only by virtue of being wives of the kings. The reign of this queen is considered prosperous, especially by archaeologists, although the exact time of her kingship is not yet fixed (Mackay 1929: 105). Most probably, she came from the dynasty of Kiš, dated by earlier scholars (together with Puzur-Sîn, who is considered to be her son) between the dynasty of Ma’eri and the dynasty of Akšak, as in (Thureau-Dangin 1934: 137). Another possibility is that she was a ruler of Akšak who strengthened her political abilities and became a queen of Kiš: after her death, her son Puzur-Sîn is claimed to be the king of Kiš, in the beginning of the period known today as Kiš IV (Cornelius 1959–1960: 136).

The next woman whose name is preserved was Paba, the queen of Mari. She is mentioned in four documents as the wife of Iblul-II (Archi & Biga 2003: 3, n. 15). Her name is also preserved on the votive statuette, found in the Ninni-ZA.ZA temple at Mari, dedicated to the goddess INANNA-ZA.ZA by AMAR-DINGIR, son of UR-Šamša.

Another woman, undoubtedly the most famous from the Early Dynastic period, is Pū-abi. Unfortunately, all the data comes from her grave at the Royal Cemetery at Ur, where no significant textual sources were found, so there is a lack of information concerning her life. She is known from her own inscribed seal, found in the same grave (RT 800).¹⁶

The last two women about whom there are some additional traces are Nin-TUR and Nin-banda. The first was in all probability a wife of Mes-ane-pada, who was Mes-kalam-dug’s son, although the seal with her name was found in Mes-kalam-dug’s grave (Boese 1978: 21). It should be noted that the same female name Nin-TUR also occurs in Nippur (Goetze 1970: 43). The latter is more difficult to identify, as she could have been a wife either of Mes-kalam-dug or of Mes-ane-pada (Sollberger 1960). According to another suggestion, made by Hallo (1957: 31–32), both kings could have been married to the same woman. Finally Nin-banda might be identical with Nin-TUR, as was stated by Herrmann (1968: 45–47).

13 E1.9.4.15, where Ašurmen, wife of En-anatum is mentioned, and E1.14.14.6, where Nin-banda, the wife of Lugal-kišine-dudu is mentioned.

14 E1.7.40.1. This title (if it is indeed a title) can also be translated as ‘Snake-Woman’.

15 E1.13.2.1001.1.

16 For some discussion of Pū-abi’s grave, see Moorey 1977: 25–40; Irving & Ambers 2002; Miller 2013. A detailed description of the Pū-abi grave may be found in Woolley 1934: 73–91; Vogel 2013.

There is also one woman about whom there is no other information, but who is nevertheless worthy of mention, as she left a very unusual inscription for a woman. It is the text E1.12.6.1, a founding inscription, commemorating the building of the dais for the god Šara in E-maḫ. This foundation was made by Bara-irnun, who presents herself with the fullest genealogy among women known from royal inscriptions – wife of Giša-kidu, daughter of Ur-LUM-ma, granddaughter of En-akale, and, finally, daughter-in-law of Il.

Presumably, it can be stated that, although rarely named in royal inscriptions, women played an active and important role in everyday life of Early Dynastic Mesopotamia, as is shown particularly in Bara-irnun's inscription. This role can also be proved or at least supported by the women pictured on public monuments, as in the case of Menbara'abzu, wife of Urnanše, and his daughter Nunusu, who took part in the ritual when the Ibgal Temple in Lagaš was opened (Asher-Greve 2013: 365), or in the case of the women in banquet-scenes depicted on seals from the Early Dynastic period, among which the women-only banquet scenes deserve special attention. For more details regarding this issue see Crawford (2014: 16).

FROM SARGON TO UTU-ḪENGAL (2340–2119 BC)

There are 145 different inscriptions from this time-span of a bit more than two centuries, during which some important changes took place in Mesopotamia. The first important event was Sargon's ascension to the kingship and subsequent establishment of a new dynasty, which led to a new state on an imperial level. Also of importance was the Gutian "occupation" of southern Mesopotamia. References to women can be found in 23 of the 145 texts from this period, which makes a bit more than 17% – almost twice as much as in Presargonic period.

Altogether, there are 34 references to women, with a structure and "typology" that differ from the Early Dynastic texts (Appendix 2). First and foremost, only four of them (11% instead of 26%) are included in royal inscriptions. One such inscription concerns a mother; another mentions female slaves;¹⁷ once, the word 'wife' can be found as a general term; and one text mentions the wife of enemy king, taken as booty.¹⁸ 12 references (36%) come from texts left by people other than women or kings, mostly in the form of votive inscriptions by women's servants, and 17 (50%) come from women's personal inscriptions. Among the first group of inscriptions, namely those left by people other than women or kings, the most prevalent description of a woman concerned her family status. Four times, women are described as 'wives', and three times, as 'daughters'. Only in two inscriptions is social status underlined independently from the family role, and both of these cases concern *entu* priestesses. As for the latter group of inscriptions, namely women's personal inscriptions, it seems that the most important factor in the social position of a woman was her genealogy and family relationships. Having a powerful or at least widely-known father was essential for being well seen in the society. In six cases, a woman described herself as a 'daughter'. Additionally, in three texts a woman is described as a 'wife', and in two as an *entu* or

17 The exact meaning of the term *gēme* is not easy to fix. It is often translated as the 'female slave' or 'female servant' (Waetzoldt 1987: 118, 139), and the author of this article is following this translation. However, it must be noted here that this word can also be translated as 'woman' (Maekawa 1987: 51) or 'female worker' (Steinkeller 1987: 101; Waetzoldt 1987: 124; Koslova 2008: 150).

18 It is worth noting that this is the first time when a woman (the wife of Gutian ruler Tirigan) is described as 'booty'.

zirru priestess. Other terms are used only once. Terms used in five of these inscriptions cannot be identified because of the lack of description or damage to the text.¹⁹

Of the 13 women known by name, first and foremost En-ḫedu-ana deserves to be described. She was a daughter of Sargon, and in addition to Pū-abi from the Early Dynastic period, she is probably the best known woman from the times of the dynasty of Akkade. Having such a father and being high priestess of Nanna, she had an ideal background to leave some traces of her life. As of today, we know of some *nin-me-šara* poetic compositions, probably written by En-ḫedu-ana herself, and we have also a non-literary remain, namely En-ḫedu-ana's disc.²⁰ She was established by her father as the high *entu* priestess,²¹ and with all probability she exercised her rule until the times of Narām-Sîn (McGuire & McMahon 1997: 11).

The successor of En-ḫedu-ana was probably En-men-ana, who was installed into the very same office by her father, Narām-Sîn. This sequence is suggested by the almost identical set of titles used in their inscriptions (daughter, wife, *entu*, *zirru*) (Sollberger 1960: 88; Weadock 1975: 105). It is worth noting that three of Narām-Sîn's daughters were installed as *entu* priestesses – En-men-ana for Nanna, Šumšanī for Šamaš and Tūta-napšum for Enlil. At least the last office of Enlil's *entu* priestess was established by Narām-Sîn and is proved only for his reign. Thus, Tūta-napšum is the only known *entu* of Enlil so far (Michalowski 1981: 175).²²

Two other women who appear by name in royal inscriptions from the Sargonic period are worthy of note. The first of these women is Tāribu, wife of Lugal-ezen. Although no further details about her are known, interestingly, her name appears in later periods as a male name (Luckenbill 1907: 291; Gurney 1949: 133; Dalley 1980: 63; Mander & Pomponio 2001: 39, 49).

The second is Aman-Aštar, servant of Tūta-napšum. One seal is preserved that belonged to Aman-Aštar, containing both her name and the name of her mistress. This woman describes herself in a very uncommon way, as 'deaf lady' (MUNUS.Ú.ḪÚB) and 'prattler' (*ša-at ša-bi-rim*). These translations are suggested by Frayne (1993: 175), but the terms seem to contradict each other. Moreover, on the plaque Aman-Aštar is depicted in front of her lady, holding (or even playing) a musical instrument. Thus, the term MUNUS.Ú.ḪÚB should be rather translated as the player of the NI.ḪÚB-balag instrument, probably accompanying ḪÚB dancers (Frayne 1992: 622; Charpin 1997: 93).

SECOND DYNASTY OF LAGAŠ (C.2140–2120 BC)

From this relatively short period, 216 inscriptions are already known and published, within which 44 references to women can be found (Appendix 3). This is a bit more than 20%, and thus the largest percentage of references so far. What should be underlined here is the fact that the time of Gudea was somewhat unique in Mesopotamian history, as the country was under the rule (or at least the control) of the Gutians, who were considered wild and savage by Mesopotamian scribes. According to the text of "The Curse of Akkade" IV: 155–157, Gutians

19 For some other general information about royal and non-royal women from the Sargonic times see Foster 1987: 53–61.

20 Concerning the disc, see Winter 2010: 65–83. *Nin-me-šara* poetic compositions are discussed in Zgoll 1997; Gadotti 2011: 196–197. Regarding the position and story of Enḫeduana see Westenholz 1989; Westbrook 2008: 318–319.

21 Regarding *entu* priestess, and their office, see Weadock 1975: 101.

22 Michalowski (1981) also translates some texts in which Tūta-napšum is mentioned or is supposed to be mentioned. Regarding the family connections of this lady, see Visicato 1999: 25 n. 56.

were “not classed among people, not reckoned as part of the land, Gutium, people who know no inhibitions, with human instinct but canine intelligence and monkeys’ features – Enlil brought them out of the mountains” (Cooper 1983: 57). Such an outside threat could affect political and inter-human relations, changing them into closer, more family-like ones rather than relations focused on seeking the glory of conquering new lands.

Altogether, 23 inscriptions refer exclusively to women, which makes 11% of the total number of known inscriptions from this period. 18 of these are left by women themselves, three references can be found in royal inscriptions, and only two are in texts written by others. Within these texts, a total of six women are known by name, and all names were written in personal inscriptions, while in royal inscriptions, as well as in those left by other people, names were not inscribed.

In royal inscriptions, the most common term used for describing woman is ‘mother’; nevertheless, it is not used to describe any particular woman, but only for relations between mother and child. Similarly, the second most common term, ‘servant’, is also used to describe the relations between a slave and her mistress. A very interesting *passus* concerns women who were banished from the city because of doing work. Another one is in regards to daughters, who can become heirs if there is no male descendant in the family. It is in the time of Gudea when a widow is mentioned in a royal inscription, as a weak member of society who must be protected by the king.

Based on inscriptions commissioned by women, it seems that family bonds were very important for women living in the times of Gudea. By and large, these bonds were relations towards fathers or spouses. 11 times, a woman describes herself as a ‘daughter’, ten times as a ‘wife’, twice as an *entu* priestess and only once as a ‘mother’.

As for the women mentioned in inscriptions by name, we can find additional information about five of the six. The first of them is En-anne-padda, the daughter of Ur-Bau, installed as *entu* priestess of Nanna at Ur (Weadock 1975: 101). Another is Nin-alla, the wife of Gudea of Lagaš, who left a vessel inscribed with a votive inscription to Geštinanna.²³ Another two women are related to Nammaḥani, who ruled Lagaš just before it was conquered by Ur-Nammu. The first is his wife Nin-ḥedu, whose two inscriptions were preserved from what was probably a much larger corpus. Unfortunately, only a few mentions about Nin-ḥedu and her husband Nammaḥani survived Ur-Nammu’s activity after he defeated Lagaš, ruled by Nammaḥani.²⁴ The second woman is presumably his mother, Nin-kagina, whose inscriptions have been known and discussed for more than a century.²⁵ The last woman about whom a bit more is known is Ḫala-Bau, wife of Lugal-Irida, for whom only one inscription is preserved.²⁶ The same name is also seen in literary texts, but there is no proof that such texts concern the wife of Lugal-Irida (Roth 1983: 275, 278–279).

As for inscriptions made by other people, only two were preserved, and these contain no personal names. In one of them, the wife of Ur-Bau is mentioned, and in the other, the wife of an unknown ruler.

23 For more details about this inscription of Gudea’s wife, see also Foster & Foster 1978: 64.

24 Concerning this problem, see Hallo 1966: 138; Steinkeller 1988b: 51.

25 See, e.g. Howorth 1902: 215. Regarding the probability that she was the mother of Nammaḥani (contrary to translation as ‘cousin’ in RIME3: 199), see Olmstead 1919: 67; Hallo 1966: 138; Sollberger & Kupper 1971: 120 (IIC7c).

26 For about this inscription, see Cameron 1966: 125.

UR III PERIOD (2112–2004 BC)

From this period, a corpus of 416 texts is preserved, within which 60 references to women can be found (Appendix 4).²⁷ There are altogether 51 inscriptions referring to women, comprising 12% of the total number of texts. In these inscriptions, 32 different women are mentioned, which is twice as many as in the time of Gudea and almost three times as many as in the Sargonic period. Additionally, unlike in the inscriptions known from the times of Gudea, there are some royal texts that include women's personal names. Interestingly, this is only the case with private inscriptions (votive or dedicatory); in official texts, women are not called by their names. One example of the latter is an inscribed statue of Šū-Sîn, where his daughter is mentioned only as 'his daughter' (*dumu.munus.a.ni*). In another inscription, the same ruler also lists some women who were victims of his military deeds against the land of Šimaški, as well as women taken as booty from the lands of Zabšali.²⁸

Of the terms used in royal inscriptions to describe women, the most common is 'daughter', which appears seven times. Other words such as *lukur*, 'beloved', and 'mother', appear only once in preserved texts. It should be added here that the term *lukur* with all probability could be translated as the 'junior wife of the god'. Before the Ur III period *lukur* served in temples, while during the Šulgi's reign, according to his deification, his secondary wives started to be called *lukur*. Nevertheless, there were also *lukurs* in the "older" sense in the Ur III period.²⁹

Among women's personal inscriptions, the most common term is 'wife', which appears in six texts. The second is *lukur*. Nevertheless, as the latter were also the wives of the king, one can group these together, and thereby tally a total of ten terms referring to a 'wife' within seventeen texts. 'Wife' is thus the most important description, showing the social status of a woman through the status of her husband. Similarly, in two additional cases, a woman is called the 'beloved' of a king, which has the same social ramifications. Furthermore, another term connected with family relations – 'daughter' – is used three times, and 'daughter-in-law' appears once. Other terms are used rarely: 'en priestess' can be found twice, and 'slave' once. There is also an occurrence of a term that cannot be made out, as the text is badly damaged.

Inscriptions referring to women left by people other than royal women or kings were usually written by women's servants. Interestingly, the family status of a woman is also the primary emphasis in these cases. Among 24 inscriptions, there are nine mentions of women as '*lukur*', four as 'wives', seven as 'daughters' and only two as '*nin.dingir*'³⁰ priestesses, while an 'en' priestess is mentioned only once. It should be noted here that it is most probable that the function of *nin.dingir* changed over the course of time – *nin.dingir* priestesses became the consorts of male deities. Later (probably in the Ur III period) *nin.dingir* were subordinates to en priestesses, serving the minor deities (Brisch 2006: 165). Additionally there are three texts in which the term is not preserved.

There is only one inscription that cannot be assigned to any of the above mentioned types. In this inscription, a woman is again described in her family role as a 'daughter'.

27 This era in Mesopotamian history is quite well investigated. There are also many publications concerning women of the Ur III period. See Steinkeller 1981; Sallaberger & Westenholz 1999: 182–185; Weiershäuser 2008.

28 Concerning the lands of Šimaški and Zabšali, see Steinkeller 1988a: 199.

29 For more about *lukur* priestess in the Ur III period, see Sharlach 2008: 182.

30 Concerning the meaning of the term *nin-dingir*, see Nougayrol 1950: 51–52.

Among the 32 women mentioned in royal inscriptions from the Ur III period, there are ten about whom further details can be found. First among them is SI.A-tum,³¹ wife of Ur-Nammu. She is probably mentioned in line 50 of the “The Death of Ur-Nammu and His Descent to the Netherworld”, as the bewailer by the king’s bier (Kramer 1967: 118; Moorey 1984: 16). The next queen was Amat-Sîn, wife of Šulgi, about whom more detailed information is unfortunately lacking (Michalowski 1976: 170). Nevertheless there is a popular mythological text describing GÉME.SIN (Amat-Sîn), beloved of the god Sîn, whose birth pains were eased by the spells and substances of two female guardian-demons (Sasson 1968: 381–382). I strongly suggest that this text, usually interpreted as a spell to counter the pain of delivery, was originally a royal myth, created in the times of Šulgi, concerning the birth of his son Amar-Suen, in order to show his divine genealogy. There are several clues that support this hypothesis. First, the name of the ‘cow’– (Amat-Sîn) –is identical with the name of Šulgi’s wife. A second piece of evidence is the high position of the moon-god in the dynasty after Šulgi’s reign. Thirdly, the name of Šulgi’s son and successor, Amar-Sîn, can easily be translated as the ‘calf/young/son of Sîn’, which perfectly fits into the story of GÉME.SIN. In some of Amar-Sîn’s inscriptions he called himself “ki-ág-^dnanna” (the beloved of Nanna), for example, in RIME3/2.1.3.12 (Nowicki 2013).

Similarly, other women known from the royal inscriptions are rarely mentioned in other texts. This is the case for Šulgi-simtī,³² Ea-niša,³³ and Inannaka.³⁴ A bit more information can be found regarding Geme-Ninlila,³⁵ Šulgi’s ‘beloved’, and about Kubātum, wife of Šū-Sîn.³⁶ The latter’s importance to king as his son’s mother is expressed in the text SRT 73. Both the text on its own and her role within it are widely discussed topics (Jacobsen 1953: 46–47; Lenzen 1960: 127, 133; Sollberger 1978: 99; Walker 1983: 94; Brisch 2006: 169; Widell 2011). Last, but not least, Abī-simti, wife of Šulgi and mother of Šū-Sîn, played a significant role in the king’s house of the third dynasty of Ur (Whiting 1976: 182).³⁷ According to preserved texts, Abī-simti was a very important member of the royal dynasty, being a divine midwife, an ideal woman and a perfect mother (Widell 2011: 294, 296, 301). Like the other Ur III queens, she also had many cultic duties (D’Agostino 1998: 5).

Two non-royal women are also mentioned in the royal inscription corpus – Aman-ilī and Nin-ḫilia. The former was the wife of Ir-nanna, governor of Lagaš; she is mentioned in only one preserved document.³⁸ Nin-ḫilia was the wife of Aa-kala (Ayakalla), governor of Umma, and is known as an active businesswoman. She appears several times in different documents concerning business activities in Umma (Stępień 2012: 26); nevertheless, her activity is closely connected with

31 Michalowski (1976: 169) and Sallaberger & Westenholz (1999: 183) suggest that this name should be read as ‘Watartum’.

32 Her name is written in textual sources also as Šulgi-simtum. For some other documents concerning this queen, see Kuga 1995.

33 As in the case of Amat-Sîn, there is a small amount of textual sources where the name of Ea-niša is mentioned. For a detailed description of her seal, see Grégoire 1979. The name also appears in NBC 6714, but the identification of Ea-niša from this text with the lukur of Šulgi is impossible. See Garfinkle 2002: 33.

34 Concerning the Inannaka, wife of the high priest Kakugani, see Hallo 1972: 89, 92.

35 For further details concerning texts where Geme-Ninlila is mentioned, see Michalowski 1979; Powell 1981.

36 Kubātum was the wife of Šū-Sîn. See Sigrist 1986; Michalowski 2005: 70.

37 For additional information and other texts referring to Abī-simti, see, e.g. Gadd 1926: 683; Sollberger 1978: 100; Michalowski 1979: 173; Walker 1983: 95; Foster 1985; Brisch 2006: 169; Tsouparopoulou 2008: 7; Heimpel 2009: 52.

38 For copy and commentary, see Lambert 1979: 44.

the social position of her husband, as she “is never attested before her husband became governor, and when she is mentioned in the official records it is often together with him” (Dahl 2007: 66).

CONCLUSIONS

In conclusion, it should be emphasised that there are numerous mentions of women in royal inscriptions from the early periods of Mesopotamian history. In circa 1 100 inscriptions published within the RIM volumes, references to women can be found in 176 texts. Thus 16% of inscriptions contain references to women, and 77 women are called by their names. Although they are mostly mentioned simply as members of royal families, especially daughters and wives of men, it seems that women played an important role in their society. It appears that this importance was in some ways limited to cultic roles, especially as the high priestesses of main goddesses and gods, but it is well known that the palace and the temple were both important institutions in Mesopotamia.³⁹ Quite a large number of women’s votive and dedicatory inscriptions also prove women’s important social position. Especially worth noting is that, among all the women mentioned in royal inscriptions, mothers are hardly present in the discussed sources. Within such a large corpus, a ‘mother’ is mentioned only six times, and, even more surprisingly, this term is never used in an inscription left to us by a woman. That said, any additional questions regarding the social role of women listed in the Mesopotamian royal inscriptions should be an object of further studies.

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³⁹ Obviously, cultic role was not the only one social role of Mesopotamian royal women, see Weiershäuser 2008: 184–186.

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APPENDIX 1: EARLY DYNASTIC PERIOD

Number	Name	Role	Title	Text Type	Object Type
E1.7.32	Ku-Baba	queen	x	unknown	statue
E1.7.40.1	Lady Dragon	lady	MUNUS	unknown	vessel
E1.7.40.1	NN	offspring	DUMU	unknown	vessel
E1.9.1.2	ÁB-d[a]	daughter	dumu	royal	plaque
E1.9.1.6a	Men-bara-abzu	wife	dam	royal	stele
E1.9.1.6a	Nin-usu	daughter	dumu	royal	stele
E1.9.4.16	Ašurme'en	wife	dam	unknown	cylinder
E1.9.4.15	Ašurme'en	wife	x	royal	statue
E1.9.4.15	xxx	mother	ama	royal	statue
E1.9.7.1	Geme-Baba	daughter	dumu	personal	statuette
E1.9.8.3	Bara-namtara	wife	dam	personal	seal
E1.9.9.1	xxx	women's quarters	É.MÍ	royal	cone
E1.9.9.1	xxx	wailing women	¹⁶ umum-ma-ke ₄	royal	cone
E1.9.9.1	xxx	wailing women	¹⁶ umum-ma-ke ₄	royal	cone
E1.9.9.3	xxx	wife	dam	royal	plaque
E1.9.9.3	xxx	female	munus	royal	plaque
E1.10.1.3	Nin-mete-bare	daughter	dumu	personal	cup
E1.10.10.1	AL-ma	wife	DAM	personal	jar
E1.10.12.1	Paba	queen	NIN	other	statuette
E1.11.1	Pa-UN	wife	dam	personal	bowl
E1.11.3.1	A-Kalam	wife	dam	personal	bowl
E1.11.3.2	NN	wife	dam	personal	bowl
E1.11.3.2	NN	daughter	dumu	personal	bowl
E1.12.6.1	Bara-irnun	wife	dam	personal	plaque
E1.12.6.1	Bara-irnun	daughter	dumu	personal	plaque
E1.12.6.1	Bara-irnun	granddaughter	dumu-KA	personal	plaque
E1.12.6.1	Bara-irnun	daughter-in-law	é-gi ₄ -a	personal	plaque
E1.13.2.1001.1	Gan-kung-sig	ereš-dingir	ereš-dingir	personal	seal
E1.13.3.3	Pū-abum	queen	nin	personal	seal
E1.13.4.1	A-šu-sikil-àm	wife	dam	personal	seal
E1.13.5.3	Nin-TUR	wife	dam	personal	seal
E1.13.5.3	Nin-TUR	queen	nin	personal	seal
E1.13.5.4	Nin-TUR	queen	nin	personal	bowl
E1.13.8.1	Gan-samana	wife	dam	personal	bowl
E1.14.14.6	Nin-banda	wife?	x	other	vessel
E1.14.15.3	Me-girimta	wife	dam	personal	bowl
E1.14.15.3	Me-girimta	daughter?	dumu	personal	bowl
E1.14.17.4	Unknown	wife	dam	other	tablet

APPENDIX 2: FROM SARGON OF AKKADE TO UTU-ḪENGAL

Number	Name	Role	Title	Text Type	Object Type
E2.1.1.16	En-ḫedu-ana	wife	dam	personal	disc
E2.1.1.16	En-ḫedu-ana	<i>zirru</i>	MUNUS.NUNUZ.ZI	personal	disc
E2.1.1.2001	Taš-LUL-tum	wife	dam	other	bowl
E2.1.1.2003	En-ḫedu-ana	daughter	dumu	other	seal
E2.1.1.2004	En-ḫedu-ana	x	x	other	seal
E2.1.1.2005	En-ḫedu-ana	daughter	dumu	other	seal
E2.1.2.6	xxx	slaves	GÉME	royal	tablet
E2.1.3.2003	Tarību	wife	DAM	personal	seal
E2.1.4.20	Tūta-napšum	daughter	DUMU.MUNUS	personal	tablet
E2.1.4.20	Tūta-napšum	<i>entu</i>	EN NIN.DINGIR	personal	tablet
E2.1.4.34	En-men-ana	x	x	door socket	door socket
E2.1.4.33	En-men-ana	wife	DAM	personal?	tablet
E2.1.4.33	En-men-ana	daughter	DUMU.MUNUS	personal?	tablet
E2.1.4.33	En-men-ana	<i>entu</i>	EN ^a EN.ZU	personal?	tablet
E2.1.4.33	En-men-ana	<i>zirru</i>	MUNUS.NUNUZ.ZI	personal?	tablet
E2.1.4.51	Šumšanī	daughter	DUMU.MUNUS	personal	bowl
E2.1.4.51	Šumšanī	entu	EN-na-at	personal	bowl
E2.1.4.52	ME-Ulmaš	daughter	DUMU.MUNUS	personal	bowl
E2.1.4.54	Līpuš-ia'um	daughter	DUMU.MUNUS	personal	plaque
E2.1.14.2017	Tūta-napšum	<i>entu</i>	EN-na-at ^a en-līl	other	seal
E2.1.14.2017	Aman-Aštar	musicia prattler servant	MUNUS.Ú.HÚB <i>ša-at ša-bi-rim</i> GÉME	personal	seal
E2.1.4.2018	En-men-ana	x	x	other	plaque
E2.1.4.2019	En-men-ana	x	x	other	seal
E2.1.4.2020	En-men-ana	daughter	dumu	other	seal
E2.1.4.2020	En-men-ana	<i>entu</i>	en	other	seal
E2.6.1.2001	xxx	wife	dam	other	vase
E2.8.1.2001	xxx	wife	dam	other	plaque
E2.8.1.2001	Geme-mug-sagana	wife	dam	other	plaque
E2.13.1.1	Ama-SAL.ME.ḪÚB	mother	ama	royal	cone
E2.13.3.1001	Nin-ès-sá	daughter	dumu	personal	seal
E2.13.3.1001	Nin-ès-sá	<i>entu</i>	en	personal	seal
E2.13.6.4	xxx	wife	dam	royal	tablet
E2.13.6.4	xxx	wife	dam	royal	tablet
E2.14.1.2001	MEšunī	daughter	DUMU.MUNUS	personal	bowl

APPENDIX 3: SECOND DYNASTY OF LAGAŠ

Number	Name	Role	Word	Text Type	Object Type
E3/1.1.1.4	Nin-NIGIN-e-si	wife	dam	personal	figure
E3/1.1.6.11	xxx	wife	dam	other	bowl
E3/1.1.6.12	En-anne-padda	daughter	dam	personal	bowl
E3/1.1.6.12	En-anne-padda	entu	en	personal	bowl
E3/1.1.6.12	En-anne-padda	zirru	SAL.NUNUZ.ZI	personal	bowl
E3/1.1.6.12	En-anne-padda	wife	dam	personal	bowl
E3/1.1.6.13	En-anne-padda	daughter	dumu	personal	vessel
E3/1.1.6.13	En-anne-padda	entu	en	personal	vessel
E3/1.1.7.StB iv:5	xxx	carrying the basket	munus	royal	statue (iv 5)
E3/1.1.7.StB iv:3	xxx	doing work/ banished	munus	royal	statue (iv 3)
E3/1.1.7.StB iv:12	xxx	mother	ama	royal	statue (iv 12)
E3/1.1.7.StB v:4	xxx	wailing woman	ama-ér-ke ₄	royal	statue (v 4)
E3/1.1.7.StB vii:45	xxx	daughter-heir	dumu-MÍ-bi	royal	statue (vii 45)
E3/1.1.7.StB vii:31	xxx	slave-woman	géme	royal	statue (vii 31)
E3/1.1.7.StB vii:43	xxx	widow	na-ma-su	royal	statue (vii 43)
E3/1.1.7.CylA xii:23	xxx	mother	ama	royal	cylinder
E3/1.1.7.CylA xiii:3	xxx	mother	ama	royal	cylinder
E3/1.1.7.CylA xiii:4	xxx	mother	ama	royal	cylinder
E3/1.1.7.CylA xiii:8	xxx	slave	géme	royal	cylinder
E3/1.1.7.CylB iv:17	xxx	mother	ama	royal	cylinder
E3/1.1.7.CylB xv:16	xxx	slave	géme	royal	cylinder
E3/1.1.7.CylB xvii:20	xxx	slave	géme	royal	cylinder
E3/1.1.7.CylB xviii:7	xxx	widow	nu-ma-su	royal	cylinder
E3/1.1.7.CylB xviii:9	xxx	daughter	dumu-MÍ-bi	royal	cylinder
E3/1.7.90	Nin-alla	wife	dam	personal	vessel
E3/1.1.7.94	xxx	dedicator	xxx	personal	statuette
E3/1.1.7.98	Nin-alla	Wife	dam	personal	macehead
E3/1.7.99	Nin-alla	daughter	dumu	personal	statuette
E3/1.7.99	Nin-alla	wife	dam	personal	statuette
E3/1.1.9.1	Nin-kagina	daughter	dumu	personal	macehead
E3/1.1.9.1	Nin-kagina	wife	dam	personal	macehead
E3/1.1.9.2	xxx	daughter	dumu	personal	statuette
E3/1.1.12.5	Nin-ḥedu	daughter	dumu	personal	slab
E3/1.1.12.5	Nin-ḥedu	wife	dam	personal	slab
E3/1.1.12.6	Nin-kagina	mother	ama-tu-da	personal	statuette
E3/1.1.12.7	Nin-kagina	daughter	dumu	personal	macehead
E3/1.1.12.8	Nin-kagina	daughter	dumu	personal	figure
E3/1.1.12.9	Nin-kagina	daughter	dumu	personal	macehead
E3/1.1.12.9a	Nin-kagina	daughter	dumu	personal	macehead
E3/1.1.12.10	Nin-kagina	daughter	dumu	personal	vessel
E3/1.1.12.17	Nin-ḥedu	daughter	dumu	personal	macehead
E3/1.1.12.17	Nin-ḥedu	wife	dam	personal	macehead
E3/1.1.0.1001	Ḫala-bau	wife	dam	personal	macehead
E3/1.1.0.1025	xxx	Wife	dam	other	vessel

APPENDIX 4: UR III PERIOD

Number	Name	Role	Term	Text Type	Object Type
E3/2.1.1.51	SI.A-tum	wife	dam	other	sealing
E3/2.1.1.52	Tarām-Uram	daughter	dumu-munus	personal	tablet
E3/2.1.1.52	Tarām-Uram	daughter-in-law	é-gi ₄ -a	personal	tablet
E3/2.1.1.53	Tarām-Uram	xxx	xxx	other	seal
E3/2.1.1.54	En-nirgal-ana	en	en	personal	cone
E3/2.1.2.67	Amat-Sîn	wife	dam	other	seal
E3/2.1.2.66	SI.A-tum	xxx	xxx	personal	bead
E3/2.1.2.68	Amat-Sîn	wife	dam	other	seal
E3/2.1.2.69	Šulgi-simtum	lukur	lukur	other	seal
E3/2.1.2.70	Šulgi-simtī	lukur	lukur	other	seal
E3/2.1.2.70	Šulgi-simtum	xxx	xxx	other	seal
E3/2.1.2.73	Ea-niša	lukur	lukur	other	seal
E3/2.1.2.72	Ea-niša	lukur	lukur	personal	bead
E3/2.1.2.74	Ea-niša	lukur	lukur	other	seal
E3/2.1.2.76	Ea-niša	lukur	lukur	other	seal
E3/2.1.2.75	Ea-niša	lukur	lukur	royal	seal
E3/2.1.2.77	Ea-niša	lukur	lukur	other	seal
E3/2.1.2.78	Ea-niša	lukur	lukur	other	seal
E3/2.1.2.79	Ea-niša	lukur	lukur	other	seal
E3/2.1.2.80	Ea-niša	xxx	xxx	other	seal
E3/2.1.2.81	Ea-niša	lukur	lukur	personal	tablet
E3/2.1.2.82	Geme-Ninlila	xxx	ki-ág	royal	seal
E3/2.1.2.83	Nin-kala	xxx	ki-ág	personal	bowl
E3/2.1.2.84	Nin-kala	xxx	ki-ág	personal	tablet
E3/2.1.2.85	Šūqurtum	lukur	lukur	personal	vessel
E3/2.1.2.87	En-nirzi-ana	en	en	other	bulla
E3/2.1.2.86	Baqartum	daughter	dumu-munus	other	seal
E3/2.1.2.88	Nin-TUR.TUR-mu	child	dumu	royal	bead
E3/2.1.2.89	Simat-Enlil	daughter	dumu-munus	personal	vessel
E3/2.1.2.91	Šāt-Sîn	daughter	dumu-munus	unknown	seal
E3/2.1.2.90	Šāt-Sîn	daughter	dumu-munus	other	tablet
E#/2.1.2.92	Tūlid-Šamšī	nin-dingir	nin-dingir	other	seal
E#/2.1.2.93	Tūlid-Šamšī	nin-dingir	nin-dingir	other	seal
E3/2.1.2.2012	Ḫala-Lamma	daughter	dumu	personal	statuette
E3/2.1.2.2025	Inannaka	wife	dam	personal	seal
E3/2.1.3.19	En-maḥ-gal-ana	en	en	personal	bowl
E3/2.1.3.20	Nin-ḫedu	daughter	dumu-munus	other	seal
E3/2.1.3.21	Taddin-Eštar	daughter	dumu	royal	vessel
E3/2.1.3.2009	Ḫala-Baba	wife	dam	personal	bead
E3/2.1.4.1 iii:26	xxx	daughter	dumu-munus	royal	statue? (iii 26)
E3/2.1.4.1 iii:35	xxx	daughter	dumu-munus	royal	statue?
E3/2.1.4.1 iv:26'	xxx	daughter	dumu-munus	royal	statue?
E3/2.1.4.1 iv:3'	xxx	daughter	dumu-munus	royal	statue?
E3/2.1.4.1 iv:8'	xxx	daughter	dumu-munus	royal	statue?
E3/2.1.4.3 iv:23	xxx	women	nam-géme	royal	statue?
E3/2.1.4.3 v:33	xxx	women	munus-nita	royal	statue?
E3/2.1.4.28	Kubātum	lukur	lukur	personal	bead
E3/2.1.4.29	Ti'amat-bāšī	lukur	lukur	personal	bead
E3/2.1.4.30	Šabi[x x]	daughter	dumu-munus	other	seal
E3/2.1.4.30	Šabi[x x]	lukur	lukur	other	seal
E3/2.1.4.31	Šāt-Erra	daughter	dumu-munus	other	seal
E3/2.1.4.31	Ummī-ṭābat	servant	géme	personal	seal

E3/2.1.4.32	Abī-Simtī	mother	ama	royal	seal
E3/2.1.4.33	Abī-simtī	wife	dam	other	seal
E3/2.1.4.2013	Nin-ḫilia	wife	dam	personal	seal
E3/2.1.4.2013	Nin-ḫilia	wife	dam	personal	seal
E3/2.1.5.6	Mammētum	daughter	dumu-munus	other	seal
E3/2.1.5.2004	Aman-ilī	wife	dam	personal	eyestone
E3/2.1.6.1034	Menam-nina	wife	dam	personal	cup
E3/2.1.6.1042	Mamma-niša	daughter	dumu-munus	other	seal