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## Family Religion in Second Millennium West Asia (Mesopotamia, Emar, Nuzi)

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### Introduction

Considered globally, domestic religion is the most widespread form of religious activity; perhaps due to its very ubiquity, it is also the least studied. This is especially true of domestic religion of the past.<sup>1</sup>

This citation of Jonathan Z. Smith signals the paradoxical position of family religion in ancient Near Eastern studies. The most quotidian religious practices of ordinary men and women tend to escape scholarly attention precisely because they were so common and therefore failed to obtain a prominent place in the written records from the past.

In his comment on the subject, Smith speaks about "domestic religion" where I prefer to use the term "family religion." The difference is one of nuance, but not without importance. The adjective "domestic" implies that the house is the focus of religious activities; the specification "family" throws into relief that the beliefs and practices are tied to the social unit of the family and, more specifically, the extended family. Moreover, the expression family religion emphasizes that this religion is neither "personal," at least in our sense of the term, nor "popular." The one designation is concerned with place, the other with social setting. An inconvenience of the label "domestic" is the suggestion that the religious activities under consideration all take place within the house. Yet while family religion is "supremely local," it is not confined to the house.<sup>2</sup> Most notably, offerings to the family god were usually brought to a local chapel outside the house. "Household religion" might perhaps be a terminological compromise between "domestic" and "family" religion.

My contribution to this volume consists of three sections. I shall first delineate the two components of family religion in Mesopotamia in the second millennium

ICE. They consist of the devotion to the family god, on the one hand, and to the cult of the ancestors, on the other. The investigation into the worship of family gods and the cult of the ancestors will take up the bulk of my contribution. In a third and concluding section, I shall analyze the sociology and psychology of family religion. Whereas the first and second sections use the cuneiform evidence to furnish a description of the historical reality of family religion, the final section is a deliberate step away from the naive perspective in order to offer an interpretation from a contemporary western angle.

The topographical focus of my contribution is Mesopotamia. Owing in part to the available evidence, the emphasis will be on Babylonia, that is, southern Mesopotamia. Whenever possible and apposite, I shall broaden the horizon to include data from Western Mesopotamia and Northern Syria: Mari, Nuzi, and Emar. The period we shall be looking at is the second millennium BCE: Most of the data from Babylonia and Mari pertain to its first half; the texts from Nuzi and Emar reflect realities of the second half of the millennium.

### The Gods of the Family

Family religion has two facets: it expresses itself in the veneration of a particular god and in the cult of the family ancestors. Let us first consider the god in question. A preliminary issue is one of terminology. The expression "family god" as such does not occur in the Babylonian vernacular. In the texts at our disposal, there is a single reference to the "god(s) of our clan" (dingir *kimini*) and another one to "the god who knows the house of your father."<sup>3</sup> This is the closest we get to our term "family god." I realize that the Babylonian expression "god of the house" (*il bitim*) could be interpreted as "god of the family," but I believe the evidence indicates that "house" in this expression means just that, namely "house." The usual designation of the family god is "your god" or "the god of your father." When a man is being addressed, the two latter expressions are interchangeable: his god is the god of his father – or, if you prefer, the god of his father is his god as well. To accentuate the privileged relationship between the person and his god, the Babylonians could speak of "the god of your head" – "head" being the idiom for "person", or "self."<sup>4</sup>

The family god is never anonymous. We are not dealing with some unidentified *numen* of the house, but with a named member of the pantheon. His name – family goddesses are in the minority – occurs frequently in legends on cylinder seals and in greeting formulas in letters. The owner of a cylinder seal will often identify himself as "servant of god So-and-so." Letters traditionally contain an opening line in which the sender invokes the blessing of the gods over the addressee; he will normally mention the god of the latter as well as his own god. The systematic collection of these data provides us with an insight into the nature of the family god and some sense of the rationale for the ties of a particular deity with a particular family.

Both minor and major deities occur as family gods. Such little known gods as Shubula, Bel-šarbi, Ishar-padan, and Shatvak receive veneration as family gods; but

so do widely worshiped Mesopotamian deities such as Adad, Dagan, Enki, Gula, Nergal, and many others. Several patterns emerge from a study of the evidence. Families display a preference for gods that belong to a subordinate level of the pantheon; the greatest gods – such as Anu, Enlil, and Ishtar – ranked too high in the hierarchy for ordinary people to worship them as family gods; only kings and their entourage would dare to approach them as their gods. It was one of the roles of the family gods of ordinary people to intercede with the higher-ups in the divine hierarchy. The popularity of Ninshubur as family god is telling; being the minister of Ishtar, Ninshubur might intercede with the latter goddess.<sup>5</sup> Prayers to the god of the family often refer to his capacity as intercessor.<sup>6</sup>

The primary link between a family and its god was topographical. Normally, the family god had a temple or a shrine in the vicinity of the dwelling-place of the family. For generations, the family of Iddin-Lagamal from the city of Dilbat worshipped the god Lagamal. The underworld deity Lagamal – the name means “Mercurius” – was the son of Urash, the city god of Dilbat. Being a son of the city god – presumably a secondary systematization of two local cults – Lagamal had a sanctuary in the city.<sup>7</sup> Urban families did not as a rule venerate the major god of the city as their family god; they tended to worship a local deity with a chapel in the city quarter where they lived.<sup>8</sup> Or used to live – because when a family moved from the one city to another, they would often take the cult of their god along. Migration and deportation were a major factor in the spread of local cults. They explain for instance why the cult of local gods from Uruk – such as Nanaya and Kanisurra – was implanted at Kish.<sup>9</sup>

People with a background in pastoral nomadism tended to worship family gods from tribal sanctuaries in the land of their ancestors. The Amorites are a prime example.<sup>10</sup> They focused their devotion on such Amorite deities as the moon-god Erah (also venerated under the name of Sin, or Sin-Amurum, “the Amorite moon-god”); Amurum, also known as “the Amorite god” (“an-mar-tu”);<sup>11</sup> Dagan, often in his local manifestations of Dagan-of-Terqa and Dagan-of-Tutul; and Addu, better known in his Aramean spelling Hadad, usually in the local manifestation of Addu-of-Aleppo. Urbanized Amorites continued to worship their ancestral family gods. If need be, they might adopt a second family god from the city to which they had moved. Pairs of family gods – the one Amorite, the other Babylonian – were not unusual among Amorite families.

On occasion, we find that allegiance to a particular deity was inspired by professional considerations. The one indubitable instance is furnished by the scribes.<sup>12</sup> Without exception, so it seems, scribes worshipped either Nissaba or Nabium, the one the goddess and the other the god associated with the reed stylus and writing. Since the scribal profession was largely hereditary, the worship of these gods was passed on from father to son as well. Scribes would often add a second god to the god of their profession. They referred to themselves as “servant” of Ninshubur (or some other god) and Nabium. A rare case is the occurrence, in the seal of a scribe, of the gods “Nissaba, Ashnan, and Nabium.” Professions other than the scribal one did not normally entail devotion to a god associated with them. A chief

priest of Shamash, for instance, worshiped Marduk as his family god.<sup>13</sup> In his case, professional devotion and private devotion followed separate tracks.

Because family gods are gods whose sanctuary was in the neighborhood, or in the family's place of origin, their cult took place outside the house. The fact finds an illustration in a humorous text from the first millennium. A doctor from Isin pays a visit to a former client in Nippur, but fails to find him at home. A servant explains:

“He's not at home, sir.”

“Where has he gone?”

“He's at the chapel of his god, Shuzianna, making an offering.”<sup>14</sup>

The Old Babylonian phenomenon of letter-prayers also implies a distinction between the location of the family house and the location of the chapel of the family god.<sup>15</sup> The cult of the family god was conducted in a sanctuary in the vicinity of the house – unless the family had moved and still regarded a temple in their home territory as the focus of their devotion. Even if some of the more affluent families sponsored local chapels with substantial endowments, these were places of worship outside the privacy of the family quarters.<sup>16</sup>

The relationship between the family god and his devotees is one of mutual interest. By invoking his name, the family promotes the fame of their god; by offering their prayers, they honor their god; by supplying offerings, they feed their god; and by the gift of the annual sacrifice, they keep their god in good cheer.<sup>17</sup> As his part of the deal, the god provides the family with offspring, health, professional success, social esteem, and a happy old age. Each of those points would merit a separate development if it were possible at this juncture. The central idea underlying the theology of family religion is clear, however. Owing to the privileged relation between the family and its god, the latter takes an active interest in the preservation and well-being of that particular family and all its members.

### *Excursus: The god and goddess of the house*

An issue that merits special discussion concerns the cult of domestic gods in the narrow sense of the term. Several Old Babylonian lullabies speak about the unhappy effects of the noise of a crying infant upon “the god of the house” (*il[il] bitim*) and “the goddess of the house” (*istar bitim*).<sup>18</sup> They had their abode in the “house sanctuary,” known in Akkadian as the *isertum*.<sup>19</sup> Texts from the first millennium attest to the continued veneration of such “house gods.”<sup>20</sup> Who are they?

There are three possible identifications of the god and goddess “of the house.”

- (1) The gods “of the house” are identical with the family gods; in other words, the “god of the house” is the same as “the god of the father.” The term “house,” in this case, could be translated as “family.” (2) Alternatively, the gods of the house might be distinct from the family gods, being deities with a special mission to protect

the house. In this case they might be either anonymous or specific gods from the Babylonian pantheon. (3) The third possibility is that the gods of the house are not gods in the meaning we usually assign to the term. We know that the Babylonians used the term, too, for cult images and the ghosts of the dead. Thus the "gods of the house" might be the ancestors or ancestor images present in, or connected with, the house. Let us assess the evidence for each of these three interpretations.

The possibility that the god of the house should be identical with the family god finds little to no support in the texts. Terminologically, the "god of the house" and the "god of the father" belong to different categories. Greeting formulas in letters and legends on personal seals – the classic occasions for a reference to the family god – never use the term "the god of my/your house" or "the god of my/your paternal family" (*bit abīya/abika*). The closest parallel to the "god of the house" is the reference to "the god who knows the house of your father" – in which "house" stands for "family" (see above). Texts in which the "god of the house" figures with some frequency – in the Old Babylonian period only the lullabies – never speak of "my god" or "the god of my father." Nor is it possible to establish a definite link between the house sanctuary (*šērum*) and the family god.<sup>21</sup> Normally the house god dwells within the house whereas the family god has his abode outside.

If the house gods are not identical with the family gods, they might be members of the pantheon specializing in house surveillance and health care. This is the position taken by JoAnn Scurlock in a recent article on Mesopotamian house gods.<sup>22</sup> She argues her case on the basis of a first millennium text containing rituals against fungus on the walls of a house. The omen bodes ill: several members of the household might die. To ward off the evil, the house owner is to bring offerings to Ishum, a god and goddess at the doorpost, the Pleiades, and Gula. Scurlock believes that these gods are to be identified as the domestic deities of the average Babylonian household. How strong is her case?

There can be no doubt that many a Babylonian house did indeed contain symbols and representations of deities expected to protect the house and its inhabitants. Kusarikku, the bull-man, occurs in this capacity in the Old Babylonian lullabies; he was represented as a statuette or on a clay plaque.<sup>23</sup> The god Ishum is the herald of Erra, whose powers of protection against pestilence and plagues are celebrated in the *Poem of Erra*. Copies of that text served as house amulets.<sup>24</sup> Gula was a goddess of healing; according to an Old Babylonian text from Nippur, she did indeed receive sacrifice in the domestic sanctuary in the "the house of the father."<sup>25</sup> The Pleiades are gods of the night; their function within the house would be to guarantee its safety at night. It is quite conceivable, in other words, that symbols of Ishum, Gula, and the Pleiades belonged to the furnishings of many a Babylonian house, in a manner comparable to the role of Kusarikku in the Old Babylonian texts. The crucial question, however, is whether or not they were designated as "the gods of the house."

The Old Babylonian lullabies distinguish between Kusarikku, on the one hand, and the "god of the house," on the other.<sup>26</sup> Kusarikku, in other words, is not to be confused with the god of the house. The same holds true of Ishum, Gula, and the

Pleiades. To identify them as the god and goddess of the house would be forcing the evidence.<sup>27</sup> The only pair of deities that might be identical with the god and goddess of the house are the god and goddess near the doorpost (*šippu*). They remain anonymous in the first millennium ritual – unless we interpret "štar as a proper name instead of the generic "goddess."<sup>28</sup> Other first millennium texts mention a god and goddess "of the house" (*dingir é* and *éinnin é*) located near the gate of the house.<sup>29</sup> Are the god and goddess of the house from the Old Babylonian incantations the same as the god and the goddess near the doorpost from the first millennium ritual? It is difficult to escape that conclusion. It may seem strange that such protective deities were supposed to sleep at night,<sup>30</sup> but the first millennium version of the Old Babylonian lullabies shows that protective gods like Ishtar and Ea were also entitled to sleep.<sup>31</sup> The main difference between the Old Babylonian "god and goddess of the house" and the anonymous god and goddess of the first millennium texts is their location. The Old Babylonian god of the house dwells in the house sanctuary (*šērum*), whereas the god and goddess are located in the gate. However, the difference in location is not sufficient to posit a difference in identity.

The third possibility I adumbrated is that the gods of the house are not gods in the usual sense of the term but images of the ancestors. In an earlier publication I defended this view. Though I would not rule out the possibility, I feel less confident now than I did then. The next section, dedicated to the ancestor cult, will show that the family ancestors were present in the Babylonian house because they were either buried underneath the house or represented by anthropomorphic statuettes. In one case, these images are referred to as "the gods of the house."<sup>32</sup> Since the bulk of the evidence is from the periphery of Babylonia, however, I would hesitate to identify the Old Babylonian house gods with such ancestor images or the remains of the dead in the domestic burial vault. All things considered, the god and goddess "of the house" were not the family gods nor the family ancestors, but protective household deities without a name.

## The Cult of the Ancestors

The second component of ancient Near Eastern family religion is the cult of the ancestors. The responsibility for this cult lay with the heir who succeeded the father in the position of paterfamilias. Under normal circumstances, this was the eldest son (*aplum rabum*). He was the *zakir šumim*, literally "invoker of the name," a title based on a central rite of the ancestor cult, that is, the invocation of the names of the dead.

In addition to an oral rite – the calling out of the name – the ancestor cult had a material component in the offering of small substances of food. The act of breaking the bread gave the cult its principal name. It was called the *kšipū*, a noun derived from the verb *kašāpu*, "to break in small pieces."<sup>33</sup> To Christians, the term might elicit associations with the Lord's Supper. Though there may indeed

be a parallel of sorts – is the Eucharist not also an act of commemoration? – the standard offering consisted of a bowl of flour and some water. It was a way of feeding the dead.

The *kispu* was a daily rite performed in conjunction with the meals of the living. According to the ideas of the time, the family shared their food with the ancestors. Once every month the ancestors received more lavish supplies. This occurred during the period between two moons which, for lack of an equivalent in English, we had best refer to with the Latin term *interlunium*. In Babylonian parlance this was the *um būbūli*, “the day(s) of the disappearance (of the moon)”; it constituted the “beginning of the month” (*reš warhim*). It was a holiday period of one or two days. Work was suspended and families came together for the occasion. The ancestors received their share in the festive meal. Once every year, moreover, at the end of the fifth month (mid-summer), there was an All Souls’ festival at which a vigil was held for the dead.

The texts at our disposal are not very forthcoming about the place of the ancestor cult. Nevertheless, it is possible to infer from attendant indications that the house of the paterfamilias was the center of the cult. We know that the ancestor cult was incumbent, primarily, on the eldest son. Since inheritance texts from Nippur specify that the eldest son always received the “ceremonial table” (*paššur sabke*, *bašur zag-gú-la*) as his part of the heritage,<sup>34</sup> it is likely that this ceremonial table was linked to the offerings for the ancestors. The Sumerian designation of this table implies that it was located in the house sanctuary known in Akkadian as the *šērtum*.<sup>35</sup> We know from deeds of inheritance,<sup>36</sup> the floor plan of a house in Sippar,<sup>37</sup> and administrative documents from Nippur,<sup>38</sup> that the traditional Old Babylonian house did indeed have such a sanctuary.<sup>39</sup> Upon the death of the paterfamilias, this room passed into the possession of the eldest son.<sup>40</sup> It is presumably identical with the *é ki.sè.ga* (*bit kisipim*), “the room of the *kispu*,” mentioned in an inheritance text from Nippur,<sup>41</sup> and the *é.gal* (*ékalul*), “main room,” of the inheritance texts from Emar and Nuzi. Other features of the house sanctuary aside from the ceremonial table are the fireplace (*kinunu*)<sup>42</sup> and the lamp (*nuru*).<sup>43</sup>

The ceremonial table of the house sanctuary was used on solemn occasions, such as a wedding, which signified that the activities took place in the presence of the ancestors.<sup>44</sup> The offerings for the dead were placed upon this ceremonial table, as the references to the “chair for the ghost” and the “chair for the family ghosts” imply.<sup>45</sup>

If the ancestor cult took place in the house, this assumes that the ancestors were present there in some form. Their presence could materialize in two ways. In the ideal situation, the Old Babylonian house had a burial vault containing the remains of the family dead.<sup>46</sup> References to this cellar are scarce. A letter refers to a woman who died in an epidemic and is to be buried in the house.<sup>47</sup> Other literary evidence is mostly earlier or later than the Old Babylonian period.<sup>48</sup> There is some archaeological evidence of interment underneath private houses from Old Babylonian Ur. It is clear from archaeological reports, however, that in-house

burial was not standard procedure in Babylonia. Domestic offerings to the dead need not imply, then, that the ancestors had their final resting-place under the floor of the family house.

Another way for the dead to be physically present in the house was in the form of images. The references to such images are not unequivocal and mostly in texts originating from the periphery of Babylonia. Texts from Nuzi dealing with inheritance show that the main heir was to perform the cult (*palahu*, “to show respect”) of the “gods” (*dingir meš*, *ilanu*) and the *etemmu* of the testator,<sup>49</sup> disinherited kin, on the other hand, forfeited the right to come near “the gods and the *etemmu*” of the paterfamilias.<sup>50</sup> The “gods” in question were anthropomorphic images: they could be “made” (*epēšu*),<sup>51</sup> some had a big head, others a small one.<sup>52</sup> I am inclined to take the word *etemmu* – always in the plural and always written syllabically – in the, perhaps etymological, sense of “bones (of the deceased).”<sup>53</sup> Were the term to denote the disembodied spirits of the dead, there would be no sense in saying that the disinherited were not to approach the *etemmu*, since ghosts move about and do not have a fixed abode in the house. The *etemmu* must represent the physical remains of the ancestors; the *ilanu*, I would suggest, are their images. The “gods” of the Nuzi inheritance texts, in other words, are ancestor statuettes. That explains why they can be said to receive *kispu*-offerings.<sup>54</sup>

The Nuzi texts have an interesting parallel in the Middle Babylonian texts from Emar. Inheritance texts stipulate that the heir had to invoke (*nubbu*), honor (*palahu*), and take care of (*kinunu*) “the gods and the dead” of the paterfamilias. This responsibility is linked to the possession of the main room (*é.gal*), presumably a designation of the domestic sanctuary,<sup>55</sup> since “the gods” belonged to the paraphernalia of the main room. The term for the “dead” (*metu*, “the dead,” *metaya*, “my dead”) recalls Hebrew *metim*; it refers to the physical remains of the dead. The *ili*, on the other hand, were images of the dead; they were the focus of the cult of the ancestors. A text from the vicinity of Emar indicates that such images – here referred to as “the gods of the house” (*dingir-meš ša é-h*) – belonged to the family; should the house be sold outside the family, the family retained the right to the images.<sup>56</sup>

The Old Babylonian house sanctuary (*šērtum*) was the place of a domestic cult, but this cult was addressed to the ancestors, not the family gods.<sup>57</sup> Aside from the ancestors, other numinous presences in the room are the lamp and the fireplace. Nuzi texts refer to the lamp as divine (*šalag-meš*); first millennium texts also use the divine determinative (*šnuru*). The lamp is the symbol and embodiment of Nusku or Girra. The fireplace (*kinunu*) of the house sanctuary had a comparable significance. The “extinguished brazier” is a standing expression for a family without offspring. The image derives its force from the association between the brazier and the room of the ancestor cult. Though not divine in its own right, the fireplace has a cultic significance that is not to be underestimated.<sup>58</sup>

The ancestors included in the devotion of the living went back as far as the fourth generation, counting back from the oldest family member alive. A prayer to the moon-god enumerates the names of the dead addressed by the living. The list may

seem tedious, but is quite illuminating about the extent and the logic of the ancestor cult. It deserves to be quoted in full:

[S]in, you are the god of heaven and earth.  
 [In the morning I am pouring water to you  
 for the family (*kinutum*) of Sin-našir, son of Ipqu-Annunitum.  
 Release the family of Sin-našir, son of Ipqu-Annunitum,  
 That they may eat his bread and drink his water –  
 Ishme-Ea son of Shamash-našir, his wife and his family;  
 [U]tani, naditum of Shamash, his daughter;  
 [Sin]-našir son of Ishme-Ea;  
 \*Kasap-Aya, naditum of Shamash, his daughter;  
 Sin-iddinam son of Sin-našir;  
 Iddin-Ea, son of Ishme-Ea;  
 Amat-Aya, naditum of Shamash, his daughter;  
 Diutubinduga, his son;  
 Ebabbar-nu-u'ulše-hegal, his son;  
 Ehursag-mushallim, his son;  
 Ipqu-Ea, son of Ishme-Ea;  
 Amat-Mamu, naditum of Shamash, his daughter;  
 Nidnusha, his son;  
 Ibni-Ea, his son;  
 Iqish-Ea, son of Ishme-[Ea], his wife and [his] family;  
 Ipqu-Aya, son of Ishme-Ea, Abi-matum his wife [and family?]  
 Lamassani, naditum of Shamash, his daughter;  
 Ishu-ibnišhu, his son;  
 Sin-nadin-shumi, his son;  
 Sin-kabit-biltum, son of Sin-nadin-shumi;  
 Ikun-pi-Sin son of Ipqu-Aya, whom . . . have struck to death;  
 Sin-eribam, son of Ipqu-Aya, asleep in Mashkan-Adad;  
 Ipqu-Annunitum, son of Ipqu-Aya, Belessunu, his wife.  
 Release the family of Sin-našir, son of Ipqu-Annunitum,  
 that they may eat his [br]ead and drink his water.<sup>59</sup>

This prayer shows that Sin-našir brings offerings to his father, his grandfather, and his great-grandfather. They are his family (*kinutum*); those who preceded them are not mentioned by name (except Shamash-našir, the father of his great-grandfather) but included in the general category of the "family" of the ancestors.

The family Sin-našir honors is the patrilineal extended family; he includes his uncles and great-uncles; aunts and great-aunts go unmentioned, except for those who had become devotees of Shamash. They had not married, and thus remained within the family. The other women had left the family as a result of marriage. The primacy of the male in the cult is clear from the fact that women are mentioned only as "wife of" one of the ancestors, or – in the case of the *naditum* – as "daughter" of an ancestor. Women were apparently not regarded as ancestors themselves.

## Family Religion: Sociology and Psychology

The place of women in the *hispu*-prayer of Sin-našir is emblematic of the sociology of Mesopotamian family religion. Family religion implied and reasserted female dependency on the male. A striking illustration of the subordinate position of women is the fact that they did not have a god of their own. When addressing a woman, the Babylonians would speak either of "the god of your father" or "the god of your husband." Women worship the god of the man under whose authority they fall; his god is by definition their god as well. As long as they are unmarried, their devotion is to the god of their father; in wedlock, they worship the god of their husband. Only women outside the jurisdiction of a paterfamilias by virtue of their dedication to a deity have a god of their own. They are in a sense married to the god; he is their god and his divine consort is their goddess.<sup>60</sup>

The place of women in the invocations of the dead confirms their subservient position. When mentioned in the context of the ancestor cult, they are normally referred to as the wife of one of the ancestors. In a number of cases, the invocations do not even give a woman's name; here, she is nothing more than the anonymous "wife of." Daughters do not receive ancestor offerings, except if they were devotees of a god. Such nuns, if the anachronism be permitted, often remained unmarried and thus stayed within the patrilineal family. The *naditu* constitutes the rare case of a woman outside parental control yet provided for in the afterlife by her father's kin group.

In its construction of reality, Mesopotamian family religion creates and legitimizes the chain of authority within the extended family. The son who inherits the paraphernalia of the ancestor cult – the images and the offering table, most notably – succeeds his father in the position of paterfamilias. His authority over the family and his leadership in its religion are indissolubly linked: the ancestors have passed on their authority to him; by honoring them with invocation and offerings, the new male in command proclaims his position.

Within the framework of Mesopotamian family religion, authority is always the attribute of a male, even when the holder of the position of paterfamilias is in fact female. The deceased husband of a widow, who during his lifetime wanted his wife to succeed him as highest authority in the family upon his death, laid down in his will that she receive the legal status of "fatherhood" (*abbutu*).<sup>61</sup> The situation compares to that of the daughter who remained unmarried to take care of her elderly parents. To reward her for her piety, the father might decide to make her "male and female," thus legally empowering her to succeed to the status of "fatherhood" (*abbutu*) in the family. She thereby became the main heir and the principal performer of the ancestor cult.<sup>62</sup> In order to gain her position of authority, the woman first had to be transformed into a man. It is a legal fiction, of course, but one that signifies the patrilineality of the system.

Besides the primacy of the male over the female, Mesopotamian family religion is also characterized by the primacy of the group over the individual. Mesopotamian

family religion spells out the primacy of the group by the mere fact that the family god is the god of the group; there is neither individual religion nor a personal god of the individual. Participation in the family religion signifies that one really belongs to the family; disinherited kin are barred from the family rituals. The woman who enters the family through marriage confirms and celebrates her new identity by participating in the religion of her new kin-group. She honors the god of her husband and pledges her piety to his ancestors.

From a psychological point of view, Mesopotamian family religion serves to foster a sense of identity in those who practice it. Through the worship of the family god, all members of the family assert their attachment to a particular place – whether it be the place they came from or where they actually live. That place is part of their identity. Through the cult of the ancestors, they identify with a particular past. The genealogical lists that served in the recitations of the ancestor rituals were also skeletons to be fleshed out by stories about past generations. Family religion provided the Babylonians, then, with both a topographical and an historical sense of place. It made them belong.

## Notes

- Jonathan Z. Smith, *Relating Religion: Essays in the Study of Religion* (Chicago and London: The University of Chicago Press, 2004), p. 325. The quote is from the essay "Here, There, and Anywhere," the opening address at the 2000 conference "Prayer, Magic and the Stars in the Ancient and Late Antique World," University of Washington, published in *Prayer, Magic, and the Stars in the Ancient and Late Antique World*, Magic in History 8, ed. Scott B. Noegel, Joel Walker, and Brannon Wheeler (University Park: Pennsylvania State University Press, 2003), pp. 21–36.
- See Smith, *Relating Religion*, p. 326: "Domestic religion, focused on an extended family, is supremely local."
- Stephanie Dalley, C. B. F. Walker and J. D. Hawkins, *The Old Babylonian Tablets from Tell al Rimah* (London: British School of Archaeology in Iraq, 1976), nos. 118: 11; 119: 5.
- See Van der Toorn, *Family Religion in Babylonia, Syria and Israel: Continuity and Change in the Forms of Religious Life*, Studies in the History and Culture of the Ancient Near East 7 (Leiden: Brill, 1996), pp. 76–7.
- Brigitte R. M. Gronberg, *Lob der Ishtar: Gebet und Ritual an die altheilbabylonische Venusgöttin*, Cuneiform Monographs 8 (Groningen: Styx, 1997), pp. 110–11, lines 8–16. For this text, see also Michael P. Streck, "Die Klage 'Ishtar Bagdad'" in *Literatur, Politik und Recht in Mesopotamien: Festschrift für Claus Wilcke*, Orientalia Biblica et Christiana 14, ed. Walther Sallaberger, Konrad Volk, and Annette Zgoll (Wiesbaden: Harrassowitz, 2003), pp. 301–12. On the meaning of the passage about the family god, see also Gronberg, "Eine Einführungsszene in der altheilbabylonischen Literatur: Bemerkungen zum persönlichen Gott," in *Keilschriftliche Literaturen: Ausgewählte Vorträge der XXXII. Rencontre Assyriologique Internationale*, Berliner Beiträge zum Vorderen Orient 6, ed. Karl Hecker and Walther Sommerfeld (Münster: Dietrich Reimer, 1986), pp. 93–108. On the role of Ninshubur as intercessor, see also Frans

A. M. Wiggermann, "Ninshubur," *Reallexikon der Assyriologie*, ed. Erich Ebeling and Bruno Meissner (Berlin: Walter De Gruyter, 2001) 9: 490–500.

- See, e.g., Fritz Rudolf Kraus (ed.), *Altheilbabylonische Briefe in Umschrift und Übersetzung* (Leiden: Brill, 1964–), p. 9 no. 141 ("the god of my father" intercedes with Marduk); p. 12, no. 99: 1–2 (Amurru intercedes with Shamash); p. 13, no. 164 (Ninmug intercedes with Ishum). See also Van der Toorn, *Family Religion*, pp. 136–8.
- Van der Toorn, *Family Religion*, pp. 82–3.
- On neighborhood chapels, see Kathryn Elizabeth Keith, "Cities, Neighborhoods, and Houses: Urban Spatial Organization in Old Babylonian Mesopotamia" (PhD Dissertation, University of Michigan, 1999; UMI Microfilm 9938459), pp. 221–4.
- See Van der Toorn, "Migration and the Spread of Local Cults," in *Immigration and Emigration Within the Ancient Near East: Festschrift E. Lipinski*, Orientalia Iovaniensis analecta 65, ed. Karel Van Lerberghe and Anton Schoors (Leuven: Peeters, 1995), pp. 365–77, esp. pp. 369–70.
- See Van der Toorn, *Family Religion*, pp. 88–93; Michael P. Streck, *Das amurritische Onomastikon der altheilbabylonische Zeit. Band 1: Die Amurriter; Die onomastische Forschung: Orthographie und Phonologie; Nominalmorphologie*, Alter Orient und Altes Testament 271 (Münster: Ugarit-Verlag, 2000), pp. 65–7.
- On the reading and interpretation of an-an-mar-tu, see Thomas Richter, "Die Lesung des Götternamens AN-AN-MAR-TU," in *General Studies and Excavations at Nuzi 10/2*, Studies on the Civilization and Culture of Nuzi and the Hurrians 9, ed. David I. Owen and Gernot Wilhelm (Bethesda, Md.: CDL Press, 1998), pp. 135–7. Richter shows that the Hurrian rendering *a-ni a-mur-[ri-we]* in an unpublished god-list from Emar supports the traditional understanding of an-an-mar-tu as "the Amorite god." Since the Amorite for "god" (*an*) is Il or El (not Anu), the possibility of Amurru being an allomorph of El deserves serious consideration. Note the frequent association of Amurru with his consort Ashratu (better known as Asherah). For this, see Streck, *Onomastikon*, pp. 69–70. The relationship between the characteristics and attributes of Amurru (holding the *gamlu*-stick as an instrument for remitting sins, being "lord of the steppe", thundering, etc.; see Streck, *Onomastikon*, pp. 68–72) and those of El merit further study.
- See Van der Toorn, *Family Religion*, pp. 81–2.
- Van der Toorn, *Family Religion*, p. 67.
- Andrew R. George, "Ninurta-paqdad's Dog Bite, and Notes on Other Comic Tales," *Iraq* 55 (1993): 63–75, esp. 67, lines 29–30.
- For the so-called letter prayers, see Van der Toorn, *Family Religion*, pp. 130–42, esp. 130 n. 64. Add Piotr Michalowski, "Incantation and Literary Letter Incipits," *Nonvelles assyriologiques brèves et utilitaires* (1991): 48; William W. Hallo, "Two Letter-Prayers to Amurru," in *Boundaries of the Ancient Near Eastern World: A Tribute to Cyrus H. Gordon*, *Journal for the Study of the Old Testament*, Supplement Series 273, ed. Meir Lubetski, Claire Gottlieb and Sharon Keller (Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 1998), pp. 397–410; Willem H. Ph. Römer, "Miscellanea Sumerologica, V: Bittbrief einer Gelähmten um Genesung an die Göttin Nintinugga," in *Literatur, Politik und Recht in Mesopotamien*, pp. 237–49.
- Note the dedication of a temple to Hanish-and-Shullat by one Nur-ilishu, who also installed a priest responsible for the sanctuary. See CT 6, 36a, Bu. 91-5-9, 704, for which text see Moses Schorr, *Urkunden des altheilbabylonischen Zivil- und Prozessrechts*,

Vorderasiatische Bibliothek 5 (Leipzig: J. C. Hinrichs, 1913), p. 220; Johannes Renger, "Untersuchungen zum Priesterum in der altbabylonischen Zeit, 2. Teil," *Zeitschrift für Assyriologie* 59 (1969): 104–230, esp. 114–15. See also Marten Stol, "Das Heiligtum einer Familie," in *Literatur, Politik und Recht in Mesopotamien*, pp. 293–300.

- 17 For a reference to the annual sacrifice, see *Altiabylonische Briefe* 12, 99: 7.
- 18 Walter Farber, "Zur älteren akkadischen Beschwörungsliteratur," *Zeitschrift für Assyriologie* 71 (1981): 51–72, esp. 63; Obverse, line 13' *i<sub>3</sub>-li bi-tim*, line 17' *il bi-ti-im*; Farber, *Schlaf, Kindchen, Schlaf! Mesopotamische Baby-Beschwörungen und Rituale* (Winona Lake: Eisenbrauns, 1989), pp. 34–5, Vorläufer 1, line 5 *i<sub>3</sub>-li bi-tim*; pp. 36–7, Vorläufer 2, lines 11, 13 *i<sub>3</sub>-li bi-tim*, *i<sub>3</sub>-ta-ar bi-tim*.
- 19 Note the line "She (i.e., Lamashru) destroyed the *istertum* and the god of the house has left" (*inbasha istertam itnisi il bi-tim*), in Walter Farber, "Zur älteren akkadischen Beschwörungsliteratur," pp. 60–8, esp. 161–3, lines 12'–13'. See also *Cuneiform Texts* 16, Pl. 29: 82–3 *ina isret il bit la tattananzaz*, "Do not loiter in the sanctuary of the house god . . ." (spoken against a demon; Ignace Gelb et al. (eds.), *Chicago Assyrian Dictionary* [Chicago: Oriental Institute, 1956–2007], vol. A.s.v. *isretu* lexical section). For other references to the house sanctuary in first millennium texts, see Sally M. Freedman, *If a City Is Set on a Height: The Akkadian Omen Series Šumma Alu in the Mele Šakin. Volume 1: Tablets 1–21*, Occasional Publications of the Samuel Noah Kramer Fund 17 (Philadelphia: The University of Pennsylvania Museum, 1998), p. 192: 9: "if there is white fungus in the sanctuary (zag-gar.ra) of a man's house . . ." (*Šumma Alu*, tablet 12).
- 20 See, e.g., Ronald F. G. Sweet, "An Akkadian Incantation Text," in *Essays on the Ancient Semitic World*, ed. John W. Wevers and Donald B. Redford (Toronto and Buffalo: University of Toronto Press, 1970), pp. 6–11, esp. p. 7, line 5 dingir\* é *innin* é (incantation to be recited at the gate of the house); Frans A. M. Wiggerman, *Mesopotamian Protective Spirits: The Ritual Texts*, Cuneiform Monographs 1 (Groningen: Styx and PP Publications, 1992), 134, Text V (building ritual), ii 3' [dingir] é\* *xv* é.
- 21 The only text that could be invoked to this effect is CBS 1513 mentioned by Johanna Spaey, "Emblems in Rituals in the Old Babylonian Period," in *Ritual and Sacrifice in the Ancient Near East: Proceedings of the International Conference organized by the Katholieke Universiteit Leuven from the 17th to the 20th of April 1991*, Orientalia Lovaniensia analecta 55, ed. Jan Quaegebeur (Leuven: Peeters, 1993), pp. 411–20, esp. pp. 418, 420: "After one man cleared the other by means of the weapon of Adad, their deity, in the sanctuary of the house of their father" (*i-na é i<sub>3</sub>-er-tim ša é abinū(nu)*). The expression "the house of their father" must be understood as "their family" rather than in a topographical sense. Compare the following references to oath-taking in the sanctuary of the family god(s): (1) "After PN<sub>1</sub> cleared PN<sub>2</sub> by means of the emblem (šu.nir) of Enlil in the sanctuary of their god" (*i-na e-še-er-tim ša i<sub>3</sub>-šu-nu*), T. Pinches, *Cuneiform Texts* 8, Pl. 3a, lines 21–8; (2) "PN<sub>1</sub> PN<sub>2</sub> and PN<sub>3</sub> ( . . . ) had a lawsuit concerning the heritage. They divided the inheritance in the temple of their city god and their god(s) . . ." (*ina é dingir alisunu u ilisunu*), *Cuneiform Texts* 4.9a: 1–7, see also Josef Koehler and Arthur Ungnad, *Hammurabi's Gesetz* (Leipzig: Pfeiffer, 1909), 3:57; Walther Sommerfeld, *Der Aufstiegs Märchen*, Alter Orient und Altes Testament 213 (Kevelaer: Butzon & Bercker; Neukirchen-Vluyn: Neukirchener Verlag, 1982), p. 44; Marten Stol, "Das Heiligtum einer Familie," in *Literatur, Politik und Recht in Mesopotamien*, pp. 293–300. All three texts deal with inheritance procedures. The

*istertum* in question is not a house chapel but a *bit ilim* (é dingir), i.e., a temple, presumably in the vicinity of the house. For the custom of taking an oath in the chapel of the family god, see Stol, "Heiligtum," p. 298.

- 22 JoAnn Scurlock, "Ancient Mesopotamian House Gods," *Journal of Ancient Near Eastern Religions* 3 (2003): 99–106.
- 23 See Farber, "Zur älteren akkadischen Beschwörungsliteratur," pp. 51–72, esp. p. 63, Obverse, line 13'. On Kusarikku and his apotropaic functions, see Wiggermann, *Mesopotamian Protective Spirits*, pp. 174–9; Piotr Steinkeller, "Early Semitic Literature and Third Millennium Seals with Mythological Motifs," in *Literature and Literary Language at Ebla*, Quaderni di Semitistica, 18, ed. Pelio Fronzaroli (Florence: University of Florence Department of Linguistics, 1992), pp. 243–83, esp. pp. 260–5. See Erica Reiner, "Plague Amulets and House Blessings," *Journal of Near Eastern Studies* 19 (1960): 148–55.
- 25 John F. Robertson, "The Internal Political and Economic Structure of Old Babylonian Nippur: The Guennakum and His 'House,'" *Journal of Cuneiform Studies* 36 (1984): 145–190, 172, text CBS 7111:8, and commentary on p. 175. Another text from the archive mentions offerings of grain "relating to Nusku and Ishtar [or 'the goddess'] in the house of the father." See p. 175, text CBS 7670: gir<sub>3</sub> *nuska gir<sub>3</sub> 'nanna é ad-da-na*.
- 26 See Van der Toorn, *Family Religion*, p. 124.
- 27 The connection that Scurlock makes between Ishum and the hearth, thus turning him into the functional equivalent of the Roman Vesta, is based entirely on an uncertain etymology that links his name with the word for "fire" (Hebrew *ʾēš*). See Scurlock, "House Gods," p. 103. If there is a Mesopotamian fire god connected with the house, however, it can only be Nusku, god of the torch (*diparu*), the lamp (*nuru*) and the brazier (*kinuru*).
- 28 Thus Scurlock, "House Gods," p. 103.
- 29 The incantation to the god and goddess of the house edited by Sweet is to be recited in the gate (*ká, babu*) of the house. See Sweet, "Akkadian Incantation," p. 6. The "house god" to be fashioned in connection with a Standard Babylonian building ritual is to be placed in the outer gate of the house (see Wiggermann, *Protective Spirits*, p. 59).
- 30 See especially Farber, *Schlaf, Kindchen, Schlaf!*, pp. 36–7, Vorläufer 2, lines 11–14: "Because of your noise the house god cannot sleep, slumber does not take hold of the house goddess" (*ina riḡmika il bi-tim ul isallal ishtar bi-tim ul ihhaz šitum*).
- 31 Farber, *Schlaf, Kindchen, Schlaf!*, pp. 84–5, line 358: "The Hairy Ones are frightened, sleep does not seize Ishtar in her bed" (*šlāh-mu ḡruru 'innin ina uršā ul isabbat šitru*), pp. 94–5, par. 29, line 15; pp. 96–7 par. 31, line 25: "The Hairy Ones are frightened, Ea panics" (*lāh-me'var. mu ḡruruma 'Ea igḡelu*).
- 32 See Walther Sallaberger, "Zu einer Urkunde aus Ekalte über die Rückgabe der Hausgötter," *Ugarit Forschungen* 33 (2001): 495–9.
- 33 On the *kispu* ritual see Akio Tsukimoto, *Untersuchungen zur Totenpflege (kispu) im alten Mesopotamien*, Alter Orient und Altes Testament 216 (Kevelaer: Butzon & Bercker; Neukirchen-Vluyn: Neukirchener Verlag, 1985).
- 34 E. Prang, "Das Archiv des Imgua," *Zeitschrift für Assyriologie* 66 (1976): 1–44, esp. 16, 28; Prang, "Das Archiv des Bitua," *Zeitschrift für Assyriologie* 67 (1977): 217–34, esp. 224.
- 35 The term *zag.gu-la* stands for *sagu*, "sanctuary," a biform of *sakku* and a poetic synonym of *istertum*. In the bilingual lexical list HAR\_RA = *hubullu* the banšur *zag.gu-la* = *paššur sakki* is immediately followed by the banšur *zag.gar.ra* = *paššur alirri*. See Benno

Landsberger, *The Series HAR-ra = hubullu*, *Tablets I-IV*, Materials for the Sumerian Lexicon 5 (Rome: Pontificium Institutum Biblicum, 1957), p. 168, lines 198-9. Sumerian *zag* can be either *sagu* (*sakku*) or *asirtu*. In a Standard Babylonian prayer to Ishtar, attested in a Middle Babylonian version and probably going back to an Old Babylonian original, the *sagu* stands in parallelism with the *asirtu*. See Leonard W. King, *The Seven Tablets of Creation* (London: Luzac, 1902), vol. 2, Plate 81, line 75: *šuharru sage'a šuharrurru asirtu*, "deadly silence reigns in my sanctuary, deadly silence in my house sanctuary."

- 36 Charles F. Jean, *Contrats de Larsa*, Textes cuneiforms du Louvre 11 (Paris: Geuthner, 1926), no. 174, line 14: *ha-la gá-du-um zag-gar-ra*. For a study of this text, see Lubor Matoušek, "Les contrats de partage provenant des archives d'Idin-Amuru," in *Symbolae ad studia orientis pertinentes Frederico Hroczny dedicatae*, Archiv Orientalní 17/2, ed. V. Eihar, J. Klima, and L. Matoušek (Prague: Czechoslovak Oriental Institute, 1949), pp. 142-73 & Pls. I-II, esp. pp. 164-8.

- 37 Leonard W. King, *The Letters and Inscriptions of Hammurabi* (London: Luzac and Co., 1900), 2, no. 107. For a discussion of this ground plan of a house in Sippar-Yahrurum, see Ernst Heinrich and Ursula Seidl, "Grundrisszeichnungen aus dem Alten Orient," *Mitteilungen der Deutschen Orient-Gesellschaft* 98 (1967): 24-45, esp. 35-7. The room defined as *e-ši-er-tum* is centrally located in the house; it is adjacent to a *papah*, *papahum*, "chapel."

- 38 Robertson, "The Internal Political and Economic Structure of Old Babylonian Nippur," pp. 145-90, 172, text CBS 7111-8, and commentary on p. 175.

- 39 See also Gábor Kalla, "Das altbabylonische Wohnhaus und seine Struktur nach philologischen Quellen," in *Houses and Households in Ancient Mesopotamia: Papers Read at the 40e Rencontre Assyriologique Internationale*, ed. Klaas R. Veenhof (Istanbul: Nederlands Historisch-Archaeologisch Instituut, 1996), pp. 247-56, esp. pp. 250-1. Kalla does not mention the *isirtum* but identifies the *papahum*, "chapel," with the *ézag-gar-ra* and *ézag-gar-ra*. For archaeological investigations of the house sanctuary, see Maria Krafeld-Daugherty, *Wohnen im Alten Orient. Eine Untersuchung zur Verwendung von Räumen in altorientalischen Wohnhäusern*, Altertumskunde des Vorderen Orients 3 (Münster: Ugarit-Verlag, 1994), pp. 66-9, 185-218, 233-5; Laura Battini-Villard, *L'Espace domestique en Mésopotamie de la IIIe dynastie d'Ur à l'époque paléo-babylonienne*, BAR International Series 767 (Oxford: Archaeopress, 1999), 1.358-9 (very critical of interpretations of rooms as sanctuaries). For a convenient summary of the evidence, see Kathryn Elizabeth Keith, "Cities, Neighborhoods, and Houses: Urban Spatial Organization in Old Babylonian Mesopotamia" (PhD Dissertation, University of Michigan; UMI Microfilm 9938459), pp. 261-2.

- 40 See Marten Stol, "Wirtschaft und Gesellschaft in altbabylonischer Zeit," in *Mesopotamien: Die altbabylonische Zeit*, Orbis Biblicus et Orientalis 160/4, ed. Dominique Charpin, Dietz Otto Edzard, and Marten Stol (Fribourg: Academic Press; Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 2004), 643-975, esp. 710. Add Jean, *Contrats de Larsa*, no. 174, lines 14-17.

- 41 Maurice Birot, *Tablettes économiques et administratives d'époque babylonienne ancienne conservées au musée d'art et d'histoire de Genève* (Paris: Geuthner, 1969), no. 37, line 4'. For the interpretation, see Kalla, "Das altbabylonische Wohnhaus," p. 251.

- 42 See Antoine Cavigneaux and Farouk N. H. Al-Rawi, "Charmes de Sippar et de Nippur," in *Cinquante-deux réflexions sur le Proche-Orient ancien offertes en hommage à Léon de*

Meyer, ed. H. Gasche, M. Tanret, C. Janssen, and A. Degraeve (Leuven: Peeters, 1994), pp. 73-89, esp. pp. 85-7, tablet 90648 from the Iraq Museum, line 10: "before the fireplace in the *isirtum*" (*ina put kinunim ina isirtim*).

- 43 Note especially the role of the lamp in inheritance texts from Nuzi. On this, see Karlheinz Deller, "Die Hausgötter der Familie Shukrija S. Huja," in *Studies on the Civilization and Culture of Nuzi and the Hurrians in Honor of Ernest R. Lacheman*, Studies on the Civilization and Culture of Nuzi and the Hurrians 1, ed. Martha A. Morrison and David I. Owen (Winona Lake: Eisenbrauns, 1981), pp. 47-76, esp. pp. 62-71.

- 44 For the use of the *paššur sakke* for the wedding see OB *Gilgamesh*, Pennsylvania tablet, col. iv, 14-18.

- 45 See Landsberger, *The Series HAR-ra*, 157, tablet IV, line (*kusu etimme*); Heinrich Zimmern, *Beiträge zur Kenntnis der babylonischen Religion* (Leipzig: J. C. Hinrichs, 1896), no. 52: 12-14 (chair for the *etem kinti*); Van der Toorn, *Family Religion*, p. 52 and note 63; JoAnn Scurlock, "Soul Emplacements in Ancient Mesopotamian Funerary Rituals," in *Magic and Divination in the Ancient World*, Ancient Magic and Divination 2, ed. Leda Cirao and Jonathan Seidl (Leiden: Brill/Styx, 2002), pp. 1-6, esp. pp. 2-4.

- 46 See Stol, "Wirtschaft und Gesellschaft in altbabylonischer Zeit," 643883-975, esp. 681.
- 47 Kraus, *Altbabylonische Briefe* 1, no. 140: 17-25.

- 48 See Van der Toorn, *Family Religion*, pp. 59-62.

- 49 YBC 5142, published by Ernest R. Lacheman and David I. Owen, "Texts from Arapha and from Nuzi in the Yale Babylonian Collection," in *Studies on the Civilization and Culture of Nuzi and the Hurrians*, pp. 377-432, esp. pp. 413, 386-7. The reference is to lines 30-1: [din]gir-meš à e-ta-em-mi-ya [3]-pal-la-ah-su.

- 50 See Edward Chiera, *Joint Expedition with the Iraq Museum at Nuzi, V: Mixed Texts*, Publications of the Baghdad School, American Schools of Oriental Research, Texts: Volume V (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1934), no. 478: 6-8 *i-na dingir-meš à i-na e-ta-em-mi [x] a-ša-meš à é.hi.a-meš* (for *é.hi.a-meš*) *la i-la-ak-ka*; HSS 19.27.11 *ú-ul d[ingir-meš]-ya ú-[ul] e-ta-em-mi-ya* . . .

- 51 Ernest R. Lacheman, *Excavations at Nuzi, 5: Miscellaneous Texts from Nuzi, 2: The Palace and Temple Archives*, Harvard Semitic Studies 14 (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1950), no. 108: 23-42, discussed by Deller, "Die Hausgötter," pp. 47-76, esp. pp. 73-4.

- 52 Lacheman, *Excavations at Nuzi, 8: Family Law Documents*, Harvard Semitic Studies 19 (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1962), no. 5: 10-11, 21; see also Deller, "Hausgötter," p. 52.

- 53 I tentatively connect Akkadian *etemmum* with Hebrew *ʿešem*, "bone" which, in the plural, may be used to refer to the bones of the dead (see Num 19: 18; Amos 6: 10 and K.-M. Beyse, "ešem," *Theologisches Wörterbuch zum Alten Testament*, 10 vols., ed. G. J. Botterweck and Helmer Ringgren (Stuttgart: Kohlhammer, 1989), 6: 326-32, esp. p. 330. It should be noted that Akkadian *etemmum* often occurs in the plural, even when the reference is to the remains of one dead person. The Sumerogram *gidim* is calqued on Semitic *gadim*, appearing in a bilingual list from Ebla as *ga-i-mu*, translating Sumer *igi-tum*, connected with Akk *gadum*, "former" (see Piotr Steinkeller, "The Eblaite Preposition *gidim* 'Before'," *Oriens Antiquus* 23 [1984]: 33-7, esp. 36-7). I assume a development from \**gadim* to *gidim*, "the former (one)."

54 See Elena Cassin, "Tablettes inédites de Nuzi," *Revue d'Assyriologie* 56 (1962): 57–80, esp. 59–61, text 2, lines 4–5 *a-na dingir-meš, ki-ip-ù-ti*. For *kīpu* as a by-form of *kīpu*, see also Albert T. Clay, *Legal and Commercial Transactions Dated in the Assyrian, Neo-Babylonian and Persian Periods Chiefly from Nippur*, The Babylonian Expedition of the University of Pennsylvania, Series A: Cuneiform Texts VIII/1 (Philadelphia: Department of Archaeology University of Pennsylvania, 1908), no. 4, line 5 *ina sag\* du ki-tim gidim-šá li-ša-ma-'ki-ip-ru*.

55 See Kalla, "Wohnhaus," p. 251 n. 10 for the interpretation of *ekallu* as domestic chapel. See also *Chicago Assyrian Dictionary*, vol. E, s.v. *ekallu*, esp. p. 60b.

56 See Walther Sallaberger, "Zu einer Urkunde," pp. 495–9.

57 Such is essentially also the view developed by Krafeld-Daugherty, *Wohnen im Alten Orient*, pp. 185–218.

58 Note especially the first millennium text KAR 300, Rev. 8 [*šumma amelu in]a kinunšu istu ittanapah: kur-bi iš ina bitišu sadrat*]: "If a man keeps kindling the fire in his fireplace: the blessing of the god(s) is constantly on his house." For the reading, see Wolfram von Soden, *Akkadisches Handwörterbuch* (Wiesbaden: Harrasowitz, 1965), 1: 510a under *kurbu* and *Chicago Assyrian Dictionary*, vol. K 557a under *kurbu*. The *Shurpu* series mentions the oath "by the torch and the brazier" (*mamit di, gar u ki-ne, III 145*). For the link between the brazier and Nusku, see the interpretation of "hand of the brazier" (*šu ki-ne*) as "hand of Nusku," see *Chicago Assyrian Dictionary*, vol. K, 395b.

59 Arno Poebel, *Babylonian Legal and Business Documents From the Time of the First Dynasty of Babylon Chiefly from Nippur*, The Babylonian Expedition of the University of Pennsylvania 6/2 (Philadelphia: University Museum, 1909), no. 111: 1–33, studied in detail by Claus Wilcke, "Nachlese zu A. Poebels Babylonian Legal and Business Documents From the Time of the First Dynasty of Babylon Chiefly from Nippur (BE 6/2), Teil 1," *Zeitschrift für Assyriologie* 73 (1983): 48–66, esp. 49–54.

60 See Khaled Nashef, "Zur Frage des Schutzgottes der Frau," *Wiener Zeitschrift für die Kunde des Morgenlandes* 67 (1975): 29–30; Van der Toorn, *Family Religion*, pp. 75–6.

61 See Van der Toorn, "The Domestic Cult at Emar," *Journal of Cuneiform Studies* 47 (1995): 35–49, esp. 40 and note 47.

62 See, e.g., Daniel Arnaud, "La Syrie du moyen-Euphrate sous le protectorat hittite: contrats de droit privé," *Aula Orientalis* 5 (1987): 211–42, esp. no. 13, lines 4–8. For the reading, see Jean-Marie Durand, "Tombes familiales et culte des ancêtres à Emar," *Nouvelles assyriologiques brèves et utilitaires* (1989): 112. For studies of the phenomenon, see Katarzyna Grosz, "Daughters Adopted as Sons at Nuzi and Emar," in *La femme dans le Proche-Orient antique*, ed. Jean-Marie Durand (Paris: Editions Recherche sur les Civilisations, 1987), pp. 81–6; Zafira Ben-Barak, "The Legal Status of the Daughter as Heir in Nuzi and Emar," in *Society and Economy in the Eastern Mediterranean*, ed. M. Heltzer and Edward Lipinski (Leuven: Peeters, 1988), pp. 87–97.

# The Integration of Household and Community Religion in Ancient Syria

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In archaeology and ancient history, the enormous and the magnificent always get the best press: palaces and pyramids, empires and their capitals.<sup>1</sup> Religion is most easily measured by its temples and by its state celebrations, kings at the head. Mesopotamia's great creation myth, the Enuma elish, celebrates the god of the Babylonian kingdom as unquestioned ruler of his divine peers. Real life plays out on a smaller scale, and recent research has produced a countercurrent of attention to the small and unspectacular. In the physical terms of excavation, this is best represented by the house and those who inhabit it. Textual evidence can also illuminate the lives of households and their families, even though the archives of palaces and temples have received first consideration. For the religion of the ancient Near East, few have contributed more to investigation of religion at home than Karel van der Toorn, and it is a pleasure to take part in a discussion that he has done so much to frame.<sup>2</sup>

Rather than respond directly to van der Toorn's portrait, one expression of which is included in this volume, I will focus on the body of evidence for ancient Syrian religion that I know best, the finds from Late Bronze Age Emar. From a variety of mainly textual evidence, I propose one general conclusion. The religion of household and family appears to have been integrated profoundly into the religious life of the larger community. With the discovery of the micro-social perspective, it has become too easy to divide ancient society according to dualities: public versus private spheres, official versus popular ideas and practices. Household or family religion may be treated as a separate system, related only superficially to the values and activities sponsored by the ruling powers. Emar, a merchant town on the elbow of the Euphrates River in western Syria, offers an unusual opportunity to evaluate household and community practices together, and the results show considerable integration of religion in these spheres. The modest cuneiform archives from