



BRILL

JOURNAL OF ANCIENT NEAR
EASTERN RELIGIONS 19 (2019) 55–70

Journal of
Ancient Near
Eastern
Religions

brill.com/jane

Prebends and Prebendaries in Old Babylonian Nippur

Wiebke Meinhold

University of Geneva

wiebke.meinhold@unige.ch

Abstract

Office holders in Babylonian temples were provided with an income, a prebend, by the temples in return for their services. In the Old Babylonian period these prebendaries do not occur in ritual texts but are well attested in legal documents. The extensive evidence from Old Babylonian Nippur gives a rough impression of the tasks of these prebendaries and of their remuneration. Moreover, it sheds light on prebend-related economic transactions including inheritance, exchange, and purchase. The development of prebend prices, their suitability for financial investments, their appearance in inheritance divisions and the possession of prebends by women are also addressed.

Keywords

Old Babylonian Nippur – family archives – prebends – temple offices – economy – prices – purchase – exchange – inheritance – women in possession of prebends

When speaking about ancient Mesopotamia, the term “prebend” is as anachronistic as is the term “priest,” for example.¹ The term has its origin in medieval times in the western European ecclesiastical history, in which it designated a church office connected to an endowment of estate. The exploitation rights and revenues of the estate were meant to secure the livelihood of the office-holder. Only in modern times was this system of remuneration of church offices abolished in favour of a salary-based compensation system.²

1 Thanks are due to Konrad Volk for comments on an earlier draft and to Anna Glenn for improving the English of this paper.

2 See van Driel (2002: 33f.); Lindner (2011).

In ancient Mesopotamia, a similar remuneration system was in use. People who held offices in a temple received land and revenues from a variety of sources. Of course, there are differences between prebends in ancient Mesopotamia and later times. Whereas in Mesopotamia it was possible to buy, sell, exchange, and inherit prebends, the canonical law of the Church prohibited trading in prebends. Nevertheless, accumulation of ecclesiastical offices in the hands of individual persons occurred increasingly over time. The main difference, though, is in the functions themselves. While in medieval times these were mostly ecclesiastical and connected directly with the cult, in ancient Mesopotamia they included administrative tasks as well.³

1 Old Babylonian Sources for Prebends and the City of Nippur

What kind of tasks did prebendaries have to fulfil? For the Old Babylonian Period, stretching from about 2000 until 1600 BC,⁴ it is not easy to answer this question with the sources available: mainly legal and administrative texts from Ur, Kutalla, Larsa, Isin, Nippur, and Sippar. Unlike in the Neo-Babylonian period in the first millennium BC, we do not have any ritual texts from earlier on that would allow us to see prebendaries in action. Administrative documents mention prebendaries but are silent about the tasks they fulfilled in the temple. The only more elaborate Old Babylonian sources in this respect are legal documents.

The evidence from Ur in the south and Nippur in the centre of Babylonia is particularly extensive. While the material from Ur was studied thoroughly by Charpin (1986), the material from Nippur still awaits a detailed analysis. Situated in the middle of southern Mesopotamia, Nippur was the centre for the cult and veneration of the god Enlil, the head of the pantheon during the third millennium BC, and of his famous son, the god Ninurta. The numerous temples and sanctuaries of the city provided work and sustenance to a large

3 Sometimes the expression “temple offices” is used instead of “prebends,” for example, Stone (1977); Goddeeris (2016); CAD P, 199, *paršu 2* (alongside “prebend”). In my opinion “temple office” is too neutral a designation. It does not refer to the remuneration the holder gets for fulfilling this office, which is, however, essential. The term “prebend” refers to both the office and the income. While keeping in mind the differences between the ancient Mesopotamian and the medieval-to-modern remuneration system, I therefore prefer this term when speaking about ancient Mesopotamia.

4 According to the middle chronology.

staff of cultic personnel. Quite a few of the approximately 600⁵ published Old Babylonian legal documents from Nippur give us insight into the everyday life of prebendaries, showing them involved in legal transactions such as sale, exchange, and inheritance.

2 Tasks and Remuneration of Prebend Holders

Some designations of prebends attested in the legal documents from Nippur can give us at least a glimpse of the associated tasks. Most frequently, we encounter a prebend called *nam-gudu*₄. The Akkadian equivalent is *pašišūtu*, “the office of the ‘anointed one.’” This designation does not reveal anything about the tasks a *gudu*₄-prebendary had to fulfil but refers to the special status he held. The same applies to *nam-bur-šu-ma*, “the office of the elder.” More concrete are the designations *nam-ì-du*₈, *nam-en-nu-uĝ*₅, and *nam-kisal-luĝ*, “the offices of the doorkeeper,” “the watchman,” and “the courtyard sweeper,” which probably included care for order, safety, cleanliness, and cultic purity within a sanctuary. A brewer prebend (*nam-LÚ.ŠEM*) was very likely connected with the task of providing beer for the gods. Prebends of singers or musicians (*nam-gala*, *nam-nar*, *nam-nar-gal*, *nam-nar-sa*) probably included active participation in the cult, whereas other prebends (for instance, *nam-ugula-é*⁶ or *nam-lúníĝ-dab*₅-*ba*) might have been related mainly to administrative tasks. However, the mere fact that we can translate a designation of a prebend does not mean that we know all the tasks that were related to it. It might even be the case that a prebend implied tasks quite different from what the prebend’s designation suggested.

As far as remuneration of prebend offices is concerned, the Old Babylonian sources are a bit more informative. Inherited and purchased prebends are often mentioned together with sustenance fields. This means that the temples gave land to their prebendaries for cultivation. Prebendaries partook in the remains of the offerings, as some texts from the temple administration inform

5 Stone (1982: 51 with note 3) counted approx. 500 published documents plus 150 then unpublished documents in the Hilprecht Collection at Jena. Goddeeris (2016: 3) clarified that within the latter corpus some misclassifications occurred. In her edition of Old Babylonian legal and administrative texts in the Hilprecht Collection she published 103 legal documents from Nippur.

6 Reading in accordance with Borger, *MesZL* (2004: 334), and Mittermayer, *aBZL* (2006: 56). CAD Š/1:14 favoured reading *šabra* for PA.É and constructed an Akkadian lemma *šabrātu* for *nam-ugula-é*.

us.⁷ However, in these lists, not only prebendaries but also other personnel of the temple, as well as functionaries of the palace, appear. Until now, only one text is known to concentrate exclusively on prebendaries, namely an administrative document listing grain income of the temple that was expended for garments for nu-èš-priests.⁸

3 Prebends in Family Archives from Old Babylonian Nippur

Whereas, for Old Babylonian Nippur, it is not easy to find answers to the questions concerning the tasks and remuneration connected to prebends and how the system as a whole operated, we know the prebendaries themselves quite well from their archives and legal transactions. In the following sections, four persons, or rather families, who owned huge numbers of prebends will be discussed. Their archives reveal interesting details concerning the purchase, inheritance, and possession of prebends.

3.1 *Mannum-mēšu-liššur and His Family: Purchase of Prebends*

A family particularly rich in prebends was the family of Mannum-mēšu-liššur. This family is documented over eight generations by 30 legal documents.⁹ Mannum-mēšu-liššur himself, in the 10th regnal year of Samsu-iluna, king of Babylon, inherited shares in twelve prebends, totalling 215.25 days.¹⁰ In the following three years he acquired many prebends through exchange and purchase from members of his family, as well as from outsiders. For the most part, he bought additional shares in prebends he already owned by inheritance, although he did buy shares in other prebends as well. At the end of year Samsu-iluna 13 he had amassed more than 689 days of 17 different prebends.

When we look at these prebends (cf. Figure 5.1), we see that they are connected with the temple complex of Enlil and its sanctuaries. In the designations of the prebends, the names of Enlil and his wife Ninlil occur several times, as do topographical features known to have been part of the temple of Enlil.¹¹ Nearly all of the prebends contain—according to their designations—doorkeeper tasks in different sanctuaries, gates, or courtyards of Enlil's huge temple complex. There is one exception: Mannum-mēšu-liššur inherited part

7 Sigrist (1984); Huber Vulliet (2010); Çiğ (1992).

8 Van Lerberghe (1989).

9 The archive was discussed by Meinhold (2015).

10 According to the inheritance document MC 3, 51 = CUSAS 15, 23 (see Meinhold [2015: 26–28]), two days have to be reconstructed in the gap in lines 2–5.

11 Cf. Richter (2004: 31–58).

The prebends of Mannum-mēšu-liššur acquired by		
inheritance, purchase, and exchange	inheritance only	purchase only
nam-ì-du ₈ ká gu-la nam-ì-du ₈ ká//kisal é-gal-maḥ nam-ì-du ₈ é//ká ús-gíd-da nam-ì-du ₈ ká gal ^d nin-líl-lá nam-ì-du ₈ ká ḡ ^e škíḡ-ti nam-ì-du ₈ ká ^d nin-gá-gi ₄ -a nam-ì-du ₈ ká//kisal ^d nin-líl(-lá) (é-gu-la) nam-é-da-di ^d en-líl ^d nin-líl-lá	nam-ì-du ₈ ká du ₆ -kù [x x x (x)] <i>a-ma-sà-tum</i> nam-gudu ₄ ^d en-líl-u ₁₈ - ru-maḥ-an-ki nam-ì-du ₈ ká níg-ur ₅ -ra	nam-en-nu-uḡ ₅ alan é-kur-igi-ḡál nam-ì-du ₈ kisal-lá šà é-kur-igi-ḡál nam-ì-du ₈ ká á-sal-a (é-kur-igi-ḡál) nam-ì-du ₈ ká ^d kal-kal šà é-kur-ra nam-ì-du ₈ ub-šu-ukkin-na

FIGURE 5.1 Prebends in the possession of Mannum-mēšu-liššur

of a gudu₄-prebend of Enlilurumaḥanki, a manifestation of the god Enlil. We might expect therefore that Mannum-mēšu-liššur wore the title of a door-keeper (ì-du₈) or a gudu₄-priest. But up to now, no prebendary title is attested either for Mannum-mēšu-liššur or for any one of his family members.¹²

Mannum-mēšu-liššur purchased prebends in a period when property became cheap in central and southern Babylonia.¹³ Stone considered the decline in prices to be an indication of an economic crisis, which, according to her, dated to the years 9–12 of Samsu-iluna and was possibly caused by a lack of water.¹⁴

Until now, not only in Nippur but also throughout middle and southern Babylonia, the development in prices could be shown only in terms of average prices: all transactions dealing with one kind of property—for example field, house or prebends—were collected, and average prices were determined. There is, however, a problem in this approach: it does not take into account

12 The same can be observed for Ur-Pabilsaḡ and his family; see below.
 13 For the somewhat different development in northern Babylonia see Farber (1978).
 14 Stone (1977) assumed that this crisis was associated with the dating of documents in Nippur by the name of Rim-Sin II, king of Larsa, in year Samsu-iluna 9, and with the end of the archives in southern Babylonia in year 11 of Samsu-iluna. Charpin (2004: 336–340), dated the crisis to the years Samsu-iluna 8–11.

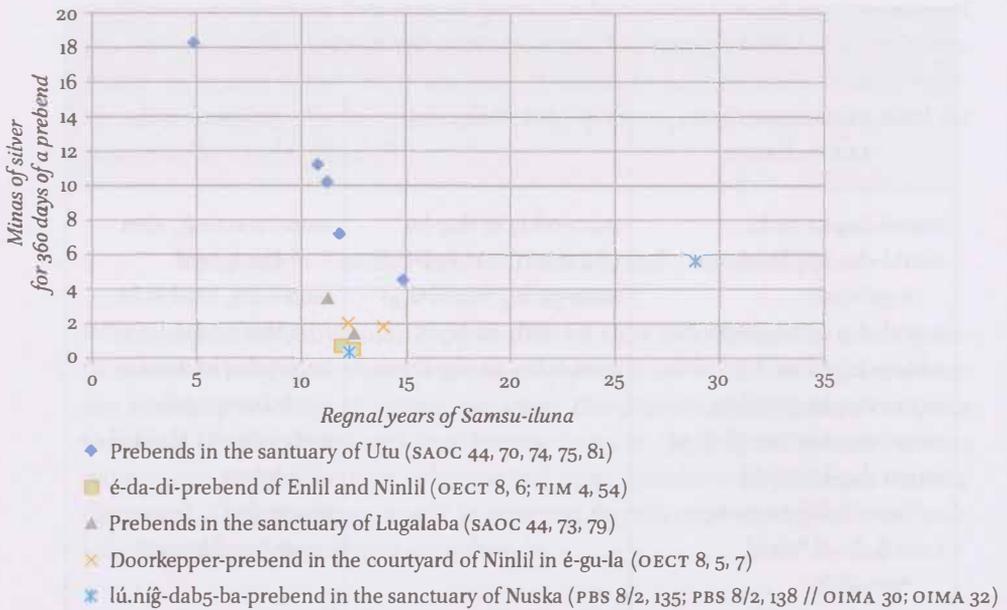


FIGURE 5.2 Price development of prebends under Samsu-iluna¹⁵

differences in the quality of a property that might influence a given price but are not mentioned in the documents. Thus, for example, lower or higher prices for a house do not necessarily show a development in prices but might depend on differences in the quality of the houses. As regards prebends, it is unwise to calculate average prices, since there are many different prebends attested, and it is very probable that these different offices were of different value.¹⁶

Though we do not have many dated documents that give the prices of specific prebends, there is enough evidence to show a development during the reign of Samsu-iluna in Nippur (cf. Figure 5.2). Sufficient data is provided in an archive of a man called Attā for prebends in the sanctuary of the sun god Utu/Šamaš. We see the high price attested in year Samsu-iluna 4 falling about 75 percent in the years Samsu-iluna 10–14. A similar trend is suggested by prices for prebends in the sanctuaries of Enlil, Ninlil, and Lugalaba. Prices for a prebend in the sanctuary of Nuska indicate that after year 14 prices increased again considerably. This confirms to a great extent the results of the study

15 Evidence where the date is not preserved or where the respective prebend appears in a group among other prebends was not taken into consideration here.

16 Though Stone was aware of these difficulties (1977: 273, 276) she nevertheless determined average prices (1977: 273–275) and used them to calculate the total value of inheritances.

based on average prices conducted by Stone (1977), but supports at the same time the observations of Goddeeris (2016, p. 195f. and 368, based on TMH 10, 105) that the crisis lasted longer than hitherto assumed.

Mannum-mēšu-liššur spent one mina of silver¹⁷ to make his large-scale purchases of prebends in the years Samsu-iluna 11–13. It appears that he made a good investment. In the next 15 years, until his death, he is no longer attested. Perhaps he was able to live from his prebendary income and was financially secure for the rest of his life.

3.2 *Attā: Purchase of Prebends*

Comparable to the activities of Mannum-mēšu-liššur are those of the man called Attā mentioned above. Twenty-four documents constitute his archive.¹⁸ Nineteen of these document the acquisition of prebends by Attā through purchase. Five documents attest to transactions involving prebends in the possession of other persons, who probably later sold them to Attā, passing on to him their own title deeds in the process. Attā purchased prebends in a period from Samsu-iluna's regnal year 3 to year 24, concentrating his activity, similarly to Mannum-mēšu-liššur, in the years Samsu-iluna 11–14. In total, he bought more than 140 days¹⁹ of different offices and spent more than three minas of silver for his purchases (cf. Figure 5.3).²⁰ That the prebends Attā bought seem to be more valuable than the prebends acquired by Mannum-mēšu-liššur is due to the fact that the former purchased whole collections of prebends (cf. Figure 5.4) while the latter owned only single prebends (cf. Figure 5.1).

We do not know much about Attā's family: only the names of his father and his siblings are attested. But Attā definitely wore a prebendary title: three documents bear testimony to the fact that he was a brewer (LÚ.ŠEM),²¹ and

17 Cf. Meinhold (2015: 23 with footnote 70).

18 Edited and discussed by Goetze (1964); Stone (1987: 91–98 and no. 68–91). Related to this archive is TMH 10, 63, an exchange between two brothers of Attā.

19 This sum includes the prebend days mentioned in the following purchase deeds of Attā: SAOC 44, 69–71, 74–75, 78–79, 81–82, 84, 87, 89–91. In the last two texts the number of the days is damaged; it is supposed that it is five in both texts. In five documents the number of prebend days is not preserved: SAOC 44, 76, 77 (object of the sale not preserved, probably prebends), 80, 85 (buyer not preserved, probably Attā), 88 (part of a number is preserved, but the reading is uncertain).

20 This sum includes the prices mentioned in the following purchase deeds of Attā: SAOC 44, 69–71, 74–76, 78–81, 84, 87, 89–91. No prices are preserved in SAOC 44, 77, 82, and 85. In SAOC 44, 88 the price is damaged: [x] [ma]-na 8 [gi]₄ kù-babbar; only the preserved 8 shekels were included in the sum.

21 SAOC 44, 81: case 8, 85: 5', 89: 7.

	Mannum-mēšu-liššur	Attā
Inherited prebends	more than 215 days	—
Prebends acquired by exchange	17 days	—
Purchased prebends	more than 457 days	more than 140 days
Price of purchases	ca. 1 mina of silver	more than 3 minas of silver
Period of purchases	Samsu-iluna 11–13 (1739–1737 BC)	Samsu-iluna 10–14 mostly (1740–1736 BC)

FIGURE 5.3 Comparison of prebend acquisitions of Mannum-mēšu-liššur and Attā

probably a brewer of Enlil, since he bought doorkeeper prebends in Enlil's temple.²² Attā's brother Imgur-Ninurta, with whom he made joint purchases at the beginning of his career, might also have been a brewer.²³ Additionally, Attā bought collections of several prebends in the sanctuaries of the following deities: Šamaš, Nuska, Lugalaba, Inana, and Nanaya (cf. Figure 5.4). He probably benefitted from his prebend purchases in a way similar to Mannum-mēšu-liššur.

3.3 *The Family of Ninlil-ziĝu: Inheritance of Prebends*

While we have no inheritance document from Attā's family, we know of several inheritance divisions within the family of Mannum-mēšu-liššur. In the corresponding documents, the division of prebends follows the accepted custom in Old Babylonian Nippur. As was usual in ancient Mesopotamia, only the sons inherited from their father. Daughters received a dowry and joined the families of their husbands. The sons divided the inheritance of their father equally among themselves, with an extra share for the firstborn. In Nippur, the extra share amounted to 10% of the whole estate. For example, say a man owned a prebend for a whole year, that is 360 days, and he had three sons. Dividing the inheritance, his firstborn would get 10%, that is 36 days, as his extra share. The three brothers would divide the remaining 324 days equally, so each would get 108 days.²⁴ These modalities of inheritance division implicate the fragmentation of property over time into smaller and smaller parts. Indeed,

22 nam-ì-du₈ kisal é-kur-ra and probably also nam-ì-du₈ é^dnin-lil-lá, cf. SAOC 44, 69, cf. also SAOC 44, 82.

23 Cf. SAOC 44, 69: ¹[a-at]-ta-a ù im-gur-^dn[in-urta? (title)?] dumu-me na-ra-am-^dsi[n]-ke₄, SAOC 44, 70: case 8f.: ¹a-at-ta-a ù im-gu-tum L[Ú' ...] dumu-me na-r[a-a]m-^dsin-[ke₄].

24 So in ARN 44 // ARN 149 (RiSi 55/3/–) in the seventh generation of the family of Ninlil-ziĝu, branch of Imšiši, concerning a gudu₄-prebend of a sanctuary of Ninsiana (rnam]-gudu₄ é^dnin-[si₄]-an-na).

The prebends of Attā acquired by
purchase
nam-ì-du ₈ kisal é-kur-ra
nam-ì-du ₈ é ^d nin-líl-lá ²⁵
nam-gudu ₄ nam-ugula-é (nam-LÚ.ŠEM) (nam-ì-du ₈) (nam-kisal-luḥ)
nam-bur-šu-ma é ^d utu-ka
nam-gudu ₄ nam-LÚ.ŠEM nam-bur-šu-ma é ^d nuska-ka
nam-gudu ₄ nam-ugula-é nam-ì-du ₈ nam-kisal-luḥ ù nam-bur-šu-ma é ^d lugal-ab-a (ù ^d ab-kù-maḥ)
nam-gudu ₄ nam-LÚ.ŠEM ù nam-bur-šu-ma é ^d inana ^d na-na-a-bi

FIGURE 5.4 Prebends in the possession of Attā

for Old Babylonian Nippur, the smallest fraction of a prebend attested is one single day.²⁶

In the archive of the family of Ninlil-ziġu we can observe a strategy to avoid fragmentation of prebends. The family is documented over eight generations and about 200 years by 38 documents.²⁷ Eleven of these documents concern divisions of inheritance, and six among them bear witness to the following procedure: the firstborn son received in his extra share the larger part or even all of the family prebends. Because the prebends were worth much more than ten percent of the total estate, the firstborn had to compensate his co-heirs.

The compensation payments were considerable: in the second generation of the family, the firstborn inherited the gudu₄-prebend of the goddess Ninlil and two other prebends of Ninlil and Nuska. In return, he relinquished to his three brothers his share in 19.5 hectares of different fields, more than 5 minas of silver, and two smaller prebends (TMH 10, 13). In the next two generations

25 This prebend is only mentioned in SAOC 44, 82, possibly a sale contract. The name of the buyer is not preserved. Because the tablet was found together with tablets belonging to Attā, he was presumably the buyer.

26 SAOC 44, 82: 1–2 (Sail 14/12/[x]+6): An inheritance share consisting of one day of the doorkeeper-prebend in the Ekur and one and a quarter days of a doorkeeper-prebend in the sanctuary of Ninlil together with a garden plot is sold probably to Attā. Line 11 reads: [ki' ^d*] [da-mu-e-ri-ba-am ù Ninlil'-muballit' (...) Attā? in-ši-in-sa₁₀] (collated). A fraction of a prebend amounting to only 1.25 days is also attested in MC 3, 51: 20, 37: na[m-ì-du₈ kisal] [^dnin-líl] mu-a u₄ 1(-kam) igi-4-ġál (collated).

27 For the most recent discussion cf. Goddeeris (2016: 346–354).

this procedure was repeated in a similar way (ARN 23 + PBS 8/2, 169, PBS 8/1, 12). Although in the first inheritance division, the firstborn of the patriarch Ninlil-ziĝu, Abba-kalla, inherited the whole *gudu*₄-prebend of Ninlil, the branch of his younger brother, Imšiši, also came into possession of this kind of prebend. Here the prebend was likewise passed on undivided to the firstborn, who, in return, compensated his brothers by means of fields and gardens (ARN 142). Other prebends in this family were also bequeathed in this way: e.g., a *nu-èš*-prebend of the god Enlil and a *gudu*₄-prebend of a deity whose name is not entirely preserved, possibly Amurru, in the last generations of the family (BE 6/2, 43, PBS 8/2, 178), when the *gudu*₄-prebend of Ninlil is no longer mentioned in the family archive.

The fact that prebends were kept together in the hands of the firstborn heir show that they were a valuable possession, providing their owner with sustenance land, income from the temple, and a renowned status.

It is interesting to see that members of the family of Ninlil-ziĝu wore titles according to the prebends they possessed. For example, Abba-kalla and Ududu inherited the *gudu*₄-prebend of Ninlil and wore the title *gudu*₄ of Ninlil.²⁸ Igisa inherited the *nu-èš*-prebend of Enlil and was called *nu-èš*.²⁹ Sîn-*imguranni* inherited a *gudu*₄-prebend, possibly of the god Amurru. Later he exchanged the *gudu*₄-prebend of Ninurta against the *gudu*₄-prebend of Inana and Nanaya. Accordingly, he wore the title *gudu*₄ of Inana.³⁰ Thus, here, unlike in the family of Mannum-mēšu-liššur, a correlation can be observed between possession of prebends and holding of prebendary titles.

3.4 *The Family of Ur-Pabilsaĝ: Women and the Possession of Prebends*

The family of Ur-Pabilsaĝ consisted, in fact, of three families that were interconnected through adoption and marriage. The known archive of this family currently contains 37 documents, many of them published recently by Goddeeris (2016).³¹ The central person in this family line, about whom we

28 Inheritance: TMH 10, 13: B I 2', A III 15', A IV 18", C VI 1-2 (date broken); PBS 8/1, 12: 1-3 (Dail 8); title: TMH 10, 13: sealing (date broken); BE 6/2, 10: 8 (Hara 33).

29 Inheritance: BE 6/2, 43: 1 (Sail 13); title: BE 6/2, 44: 4 (Sail 14).

30 Inheritance: PBS 8/2, 178: 1, the name of Sîn-*imguranni* has to be reconstructed in PBS 8/2, 178: 9 (Sail 5); exchange: PBS 8/2, 182: 1f., 6f. (Sail 13); title: TMH 10, 10a: 34 (Sail 15). Sîn-*imguranni* is the son of Diĝir-manšum and the grandson of Lu-Ninurta. The reconstruction of the family tree by Goddeeris (2016: 348) is not correct at this point, because by mistake it marked the sons of Diĝir-manšum – [Sîn-*imguranni*], Warad'-Sîn, [PN] and Ilima according to PBS 8/2, 178: 9, 15, [gap at the end of obverse], 27 – as his brothers.

31 Cf. Goddeeris (2016: 355-359) with a family tree. Not included in the number of 37 documents are the loan documents of Nabi-Šamaš (Goddeeris [2016: 360]) and Ni 9232 (ARN, p. 95), two case fragments probably belonging to one of the counted tablets.

know the most, is Ur-Pabilsaĝ, son of Ubārum. In addition to his inheritance,³² Ur-Pabilsaĝ—in the years 37 and 54 of Rīm-Sîn—bought prebends of a singer or musician and an elder (nam-nar(-sa) ù (nam-)bur-šu-ma) of several deities, namely Amurru, Ninsiana, Lugalabta,³³ Lugalĝirra, and Adad.³⁴ It is not possible to quantify the days of these prebends because the texts are silent about this data. But Ur-Pabilsaĝ did not spend more than 4 shekels of silver for them, which is only a small amount. The purchase of singer- or musician-prebends, together with the fact that singers appear quite often among the witnesses in documents of the family,³⁵ might indicate that Ur-Pabilsaĝ himself was a singer, though this title is neither attested for him nor for anyone in his family. His brother Lugal-ziĝu owned a gudu₄-prebend in the sanctuary of Amurru.³⁶

Already before Ur-Pabilsaĝ's purchases, his family was in possession of prebends. The family line of Nanna-saĝkal, into which Ur-Pabilsaĝ later was adopted (TMH 10, 6; RiSi 43), owned a gudu₄-prebend of the goddess Ninlil. The ancestor Nanna-saĝkal probably had the whole prebend in his possession. His sons Lu-Nanna and Niĝgur-Nanna each inherited half a year. Lu-Nanna, while he was still alive, divided his estate or part of it among his three sons and his daughter (TMH 10, 15; RiSi 4). The reason why the daughter received an inheritance share lies in the fact that she was a *naditum* of the god Lugalaba.

Naditu-women had a special status in Old Babylonian society.³⁷ They were dedicated to a deity. Some lived in an enclosed area, a kind of a cloister. They had special rights and obligations: their main task was probably to pray for the wellbeing of their families. In contrast to ordinary women, *naditus* could receive a share in the estate of their fathers.³⁸ They were not allowed to have children, and some might even not marry. But they took part in the property of their families and were actively involved in trade.

The daughter of Lu-Nanna received nearly as large a share in her father's estate as her three brothers together. Her share contained a house plot, a field

32 The inheritance ARN 118 document is badly preserved, but it probably contained prebends. See below with note 41.

33 Is this the same deity as Lugalaba? So thought Richter (2004: 138), who read ARN 35: 1 with emendation: nam-nar ^dlugal-ab-<<ta>>-a. But cf. the god list SLT 122: IV 13f. // 123: 7f. // 124 v 16f., given in transcription by Richter (2004: 206), where the deities ^dlugal-ab-a and ^dlugal-ab-da are listed separately.

34 TMH 10, 56 (RiSi 37/3/-); ARN 35 (RiSi 37/10/-); TMH 10, 58–59 (RiSi 54/1/-).

35 Cf. ARN 35: rev. 6; TMH 10, 15: 36, 40; TMH 10, 42: 15, 16; TMH 10, 43: 15; TMH 10, 45: 16; TMH 10, 55: 13; TMH 10, 57: 21, 22.

36 TMH 10, 57 (RiSi 45/6/-), with reference to a sale 20 years earlier.

37 Cf. Barberon (2012); Stol (2016: 584–607).

38 According to the Codex of Hammurabi (CH 180–182), a cloistered *naditu* had a right to a dowry or to an inheritance share.

and a garden as well as slaves and some furniture. But only the sons received the *gudu*₄-prebend of Ninlil from their father.³⁹ For this reason, they had to make a compensation payment to their sister amounting to half a mina of silver and a garment.⁴⁰

Looking only at this example, one might think that women in general, including *nadītu*-women, were not allowed to inherit and possess prebends in Old Babylonian Nippur. That this was not the case we learn by studying the family line of Ubārum. The sons of Ubārum, among them Ur-Pabilsaĝ, probably inherited prebends from him. Only a small fragment of the inheritance document is preserved, revealing neither the exact kind of prebend nor the date of the division (ARN 118).⁴¹ The brothers had a sister, Ninlil-meša, who was a *nadītum* of the god Ninurta. Unlike in the line of Nanna-saĝkal, this woman received a share not only in the paternal estate but also in the prebends. We know of this because her brothers bought them from her (ARN 113). So, it was possible for *nadītu*-women to possess prebends, though the brothers of these women were quite interested in acquiring these prebends for themselves, be it through compensation payments during the division of inheritance or through purchase afterwards.

Four more documents from Nippur attest to the sale of prebends by women.⁴² Three of these documents belong to the archive of Ur-Pabilsaĝ and his family, one to the archive of Attā.⁴³ All sellers bear the title of a *nadītum*

39 Cf. for a similar situation Riftin 2 (RiSi 18) from Larsa: Two brothers, the son of a third brother and a woman, probably their sister, divide an estate. The brothers receive prebends and a house plot, the woman only a house plot.

40 Goddeeris (2016: 79, 357) thought that Narāmtum received her whole inheritance share from her brothers. This is not the case. The brothers and their sister Narāmtum respectively received their inheritance shares from their father. It is only the compensation payment for the prebend that Narāmtum received from her brothers. The lines rev. 22–26 form a separate sentence: “A *tubatum*-garment (and) half a mina of silver as compensation for the *gudu*₄-prebend and the sustenance field of the *gudu*₄-prebend her brothers have given to Narāmtum.”

41 In ARN 118: rev. 1, the second and third completely preserved signs are perhaps to be read *nam-nar*². But without collation, this remains uncertain.

42 A fifth attestation could perhaps be OIMA 42, but it is uncertain how the broken name of the seller in line 2' is to be restored: *ḫu-un-du-[ul-tum]* or *ḫu-un-du-[ru-um]*. Only documents where a woman is the sole seller of a prebend are discussed here. Where women appear as co-sellers beside men, they did not necessarily own the prebend sold; cf. Meinhold (2014: 23–27).

43 TMH 10, 55 (RiSi 35; the name of the buyer, Damiq-ilišu, the nephew and son-in-law of Ur-Pabilsaĝ, is erased); TMH 10, 56 (RiSi 37; same *nadītum* as seller and same prebends as in TMH 10, 55, buyer is Ur-Pabilsaĝ); TMH 10, 57 (RiSi 45; buyer is Lugal-ziĝu, the brother of Ur-Pabilsaĝ); SAOC 44, 68 (RiSi ≥ 31; archive of Attā).

of the god Ninurta. The prebends sold are connected with the gods Ninurta, Šamaš, Amurru, and Ninsiana. It is not unlikely that all these gods had chapels in the temple complex of Ninurta, called Ešumeša, because they are mentioned in offering lists concerning this temple.⁴⁴ This would mean that the *nadītus* held prebends in the temple with which they were affiliated. In cases where there is an indication of where the *nadītus* got the prebends from, it is by donation or inheritance from their father.⁴⁵

That *nadītus* could also buy prebends is shown by a contract from the archive of the family of Ninlil-ziĝu concerning an exchange (TMH 10, 65⁴⁶). A *nadītum* of the god Ninurta gave in the exchange two months of two prebends in the sanctuary of Inana and Nanaya, the associated subsistence field, and the considerable amount of nearly one and a half mina of silver. In return she received 3 months of a prebend in the temple of Ninurta and the associated subsistence field. The text mentions explicitly that the *nadītum* had acquired the prebends she gave in exchange by purchase. That we do not know any sale document from Nippur where a *nadītum* is attested as a buyer of prebends is probably due to the fact that the cloister connected to the temple of Ninurta was not excavated.

A contract of adoption without connection to any known archive is the last attestation to be discussed here. It documents the transfer of prebends by a woman to a man comparable to the evidence in the archive of Ur-Pabilsaĝ. The daughter of a deceased nu-èš-priest of the god Enlil adopted a man as her oldest son (TMH 10, 10; Sail 23). The adoptive mother is not addressed as *nadītum*, nor the adoptee as a prebendary, although he already owned a prebend and is said to be the scribe of the king (dub-sar lugal-la). The woman gave to her adoptive son the nu-èš-prebend and related subsistence field, which she had inherited from her father. She received in return one mina of silver and yearly rations of grain, oil, and wool. Two already existing sons, or possibly adoptive sons, of the woman received from the adoptee another prebend as a compensation for the decrease in their inheritance.

Whether the transfer of prebends from women to men that can be observed in Old Babylonian Nippur permits the conclusion that women in general were not allowed to execute prebendary obligations remains uncertain. With regard to the Old Babylonian period, one has to distinguish between ordinary women

44 Cf. Richter (2004: 131–132): (Ninsiana), 141–143 (Martu/Amurru), 154–155 (Utu/Šamaš); Sigrist (1984: 140–143, 147).

45 TMH 10, 57: 3–5 (a *nadītum* of Ninurta sold prebends which belonged to the assets of her deceased father); possibly SAOC 44, 68: 4' (in case there is to be read: ḫa-[la-ba? ḫa-ba-na-tum? (lukur^dnin-urta)]).

46 PBS 8/2, 182 (tablet) // TMH 10, 65a + OIMA 25 (case; join by the author) (Sail 13).

on the one hand, who were under the control of and dependent on their fathers, brothers, or husbands, and *naditu*-women on the other hand, who had their own assets and access to the temple.⁴⁷ On the basis of the textual evidence from Old Babylonian Nippur it is not possible to find a definite answer to the question of whether *naditu*-women fulfilled the obligations of a prebendary themselves. At any rate, because of their special status and their contact with the divine, the possibility cannot be ruled out entirely, as has been the case until now.⁴⁸

4 Conclusion

The special strategies for purchasing and inheriting prebends shown so far demonstrate the importance of prebends as a type of property in Old Babylonian Nippur. Though the evidence does not reveal how the prebendary system operated as a whole, it throws light on different aspects, such as accumulation of prebends, price development, and the possession of prebends by women. Many questions remain unanswered. For example: Why are some prebend owners mentioned in legal documents with their prebendary titles while others are not? Did owners of prebends in Nippur always fulfil the related prebendary tasks themselves, or could they hire others to do so, as it is attested in Isin and Ur?⁴⁹ To what extent it is justified to call them priests? Did the specific month that a prebendary possessed influence the price of and the income from a prebend?⁵⁰ Were *naditu*-women, who held a special posi-

47 *Naditus* sometimes even got a share in the offerings: cf. Sigrist (1984: 151); Huber Vuillet (2010: 127f., 145: A I 1, 148: B I 9).

48 Cf., e.g., Stol (2016: 583): “Earlier it had been a male privilege for members from old families to carry out cultic functions in the temple as prebends. (...) In the Neo-Babylonian period, if no adult male was available a woman assumed the responsibility. In the Greek period a woman could buy these rights, (...). This would have been unthinkable in earlier times, although then the right could be inherited through women.”

G. van Driel (2002: 34 note 3) argued that the texts edited by Borger (1973) and Lambert (1998) formally exclude woman. But one has to keep in mind that these texts are only known by manuscripts from the first millennium BC, while the institution of *naditus* and the cloister existed in the Old Babylonian period, i.e., the first half of the second millennium BC. As to the text edited by Borger, he himself thought it impossible that it was composed before the end of the second millennium BC (cf. Borger [1973: 163b]), whereas Lambert (1998: 147) regarding the text edited by him, thought it possible that “the qualifications given in the text examined here do go back to Old Babylonian times.”

49 E.g., BIN 7, 193 (Sail 19, Isin); YOS 12, 282 (Sail 8, Ur).

50 In some documents from Ur, the month and even the exact part of the month are indicated (cf. Charpin [1986: 262–265]), while from Nippur no such indications are known.

tion in Old Babylonian society and had permission to enter sanctuaries, able to fulfil prebendary tasks themselves? These questions remain an object of further study.

References

- Barberon, L. 2012. *Les Religieuses et le culte de Marduk dans le royaume de Babylone*. Mémoires de N.A.B.U. 14. Paris: NABU.
- Borger, R. 1973. "Die Weihe eines Enlil-Priesters." *BO* 30: 163–176.
- Çiğ, M. İ. 1992. "Eski Babil Çağına ait iki Tüketim Listesi." Pages 91–96 in *Hittite and Other Anatolian and Near Eastern Studies in Honour of Sedat Alp*. Edited by H. Otten et al. Ankara: Anadolu Medeniyetleri Müzesi.
- Charpin, D. 1986. *Le clergé d'Ur au siècle d'Hammurabi (XIX^e–XVIII^e siècles av. J.-C.)*. HEO 22. Paris: Droz.
- Charpin, D. 2004. "Histoire politique du Proche-Orient Amorrite (2002–1595)." Pages 23–480 in *Mesopotamien: Die altbabylonische Zeit*. Edited by D. Charpin, D. O. Edzard, and M. Stol. OBO 160/4. Fribourg/Göttingen: Academic Press/Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht.
- Driel, G. van. 2002. *Elusive Silver: In Search of a Role for a Market in an Agrarian Environment*. PIHANS 95. Leiden: NINO.
- Driel, G. van. 2003–2005. "Pfründe (Prebends)." *RIA* 10: 518–524.
- Farber, H. 1978. "A Wage and Prices Study for Northern Babylonia During the Old Babylonian Period." *JESHO* 21: 1–51.
- Goddeeris, A. 2016. *The Old Babylonian Legal and Administrative Texts in the Hilprecht Collection Jena, with a contribution by Ursula Seidl*. TMH 10/1–2. Wiesbaden: Harrassowitz.
- Goetze, A. 1964. "The Archive of Attā from Nippur." *JCS* 18: 102–113.
- Huber Vulliet, F. 2010. "Un Festival Nippurite à l'Époque Paléobabylonienne." Pages 125–150 in *Your Praise is Sweet: A Memorial Volume for Jeremy Black from Students, Colleagues and Friends*. Edited by H. D. Baker, E. Robson, and G. Zólyomi. London: British Institute for the Study of Iraq.
- Lambert, W. G. 1998. "The Qualifications of Babylonian Diviners." Pages 141–158 in *Festschrift für Rykle Borger zu seinem 65. Geburtstag am 24. Mai 1994: tikip santakki mala bašmu...* Edited by S. M. Maul. CM 10. Groningen: Styx.
- Linder, Thomas. 2011. "Benefice/Prebend," in: *Religion Past and Present Online*. Consulted online on 21 September 2018 http://dx.doi.org/10.1163/1877-5888_rpp_SIM_024523, First published online: 2011, First print edition: ISBN: 9789004146662, 2006–2013.

- Meinhold, W. 2014. "Erbrecht nach altbabylonischen Kauf- und Tauschurkunden aus Nippur." *ZAR* 20: 11–32.
- Meinhold, W. 2015. "Das Vermögen der Familie des Mannum-mēšu-liššur." *ZA* 105: 7–29.
- Richter, T. 2004. *Untersuchungen zu den lokalen Panthea Süd- und Mittelbabyloniens in altbabylonischer Zeit, zweite verbesserte und erweiterte Auflage*. AOAT 257. Münster: Ugarit-Verlag.
- Sallaberger, W., and F. Huber Vulliet. 2003–2005. "Priester A. I. Mesopotamien." *RIA* 10: 617–640.
- Sigrist, R. M. 1984. *Les sattukku dans l'Ešumeša durant la période d'Isin et Larsa*. BM 11. Malibu: Undena.
- Stol, M. 2016. *Women in the Ancient Near East*. Boston: De Gruyter.
- Stone, E. 1977. "Economic Crisis and Social Upheaval in Old Babylonian Nippur." Pages 267–289 in *Mountains and Lowlands: Essays in the Archaeology of Greater Mesopotamia*. Edited by L. D. Levine and T. Cuyler Young. BM 7. Malibu: Undena.
- Stone, E. 1982. "The Social Role of the Naditu Women in Old Babylonian Nippur." *JESHO* 25: 50–70.
- Stone, E. 1987. *Nippur Neighborhoods*. SAOC 44. Chicago: Oriental Institute.
- Van Lerberghe, K. 1989. "A Long Lasting Life." Pages 525–538 in *DUMU-É-DUB-BA-A: Studies in Honor of Ake W. Sjöberg*. Edited by H. Behrens, D. Loding, and M. T. Roth. OPSNKF 11. Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania.