4 Female trouble and troubled males

Roiled seas, decadent royals, and Mesopotamian masculinities in myth and practice

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A discussion of masculinity in ancient Mesopotamia risks becoming very large indeed. For societies as determinedly patriarchal as those documented in Mesopotamia from earliest times, reams could be filled, and have been, discussing, for example, the virtues of the ideal king. (Rulership, it should be noted here, was never exercised by women, unless one accepts the single and surely fictional example of the tappistress who reigned according to the so-called Sumerian King List.) An early Sumerian royal epithet makes the identification of kingship and masculinity explicit: nita kal-ga, "mighty male." Interestingly, this first gets translated into Akkadian as just damnum, "mighty," not, I think, because Akkadian was less androcentric in its usage, but because unlike Sumerian, Akkadian has grammatical gender, and damnum alone signifies the masculinity of the ruler to whom it is applied.

Rather than focus on the virtues of males in authority in general, whether public or domestic, I would like to examine some instances where masculinity is implicitly or explicitly called into question. In so doing, I will not consider the special case of Inana/Ishtar, warrior goddess who is able to change masculinity to femininity, nor the various marginal and cult personalities who to varying degrees are so afflicted. Finally, my subject will be idealized masculinity, not simply valorized modes of male behavior. The loyalty and obedience of a male slave, for example, is not the kind of masculinity I will pursue.

First, however, it is probably necessary to recall that sexual difference, male and female, was recognized in the earliest artifacts from Babylonia, and birth incantations going back to the middle of the third millennium impose gendered destinies on the newborn: boy babies are given or shown weapons, while girl babies are presented with spindles and pins. Such gendered destinies are well documented both textually and artifactually. When, in the Sumerian myth "Enki and the World Order," Enki reminds the ever dissatisfied Inana that she can change male warriors into women, one part of that transformation occurs when she puts spindle and pin into a warrior's hands. And a Pseudoepigraphic letter of a high Ur III official to king Shulgi includes the following description of the pastoral peoples in the peripheral provinces: "As for their men and women, their men go wherever they please, and their women, holding spindle and pin, travel wherever they please."

Before continuing, I should disclose my own predilections on the fraught questions of sexual and gender differences. I have grown more willing to acknowledge the power of nature and recognize the limits of nurture. The similarity of distinct basic gender roles in the vast majority of known cultures must to a large extent be determined by biological universals: women give birth and nurse, and men are, on average, somewhat larger and more muscular than women, giving them significant advantages in wielding weapons for the hunt and war. This is not intended either to justify or to apologize for the horrors of patriarchy, only to try to understand how those horrors may have developed out of a very early gendered division of labor based on sexual difference.

It all began, of course, "when on high heaven had not been designated, down below terra firma had not been named," with the initial couple, Tiamat and Apsu. Tiamat, female, is at once the ocean, a somewhat anthropomorphistic wife and mother, and a terrible dragon. Apsu, male, is fresh water, and a cranky husband and father. Enuma Elishe, the so-called Babylonian Creation Epic, begins by presenting the forebears of the god Marduk, who descend from this initial couple, culminating in Marduk's father Ea. Unmentioned other deities also came into being, some of whom were associated with Marduk's ancestors, while others lived within or alongside the first couple. The gods on the side of Marduk's line were boisterous, roiling Tiamat and disturbing the sleep of the gods on her side. Apsu and his sidekick approached Tiamat with a plan to do away with the offenders, but Tiamat was horrified: "What? Shall we put an end to what we created? Their behavior may be most noisome, but we should bear it in good part" (I 45f.). The good mother, indulging her brats, resists their father's desire to inflict the ultimate punishment.

Apsu and his buddy proceeded in spite of her objections, but Ea - god of magic, after all - put Apsu to sleep with a spell, killed him and founded his own dwelling on Apsu's carcass. Ea then begot Marduk, a hero at birth... a mighty one from the beginning" (I 88), made more perfect and mighty by his grandfather Anu, who also made the four corners as a toy for him. Playing with his new toy, Marduk agitated Tiamat's insides, and again the gods therein were disturbed and unable to sleep. The sleepless gods confronted Tiamat and chastised her for standing by earlier when her husband, Apsu, was killed: "As for us... you do not love us!... Lift this unremitting yoke, let us sleep!... give them" - the boisterous gods - "what they deserve!" (I 120, 123)

This time, Tiamat agreed, and prepared for battle, deploying "serpents, dragons, hairy hero-men, lion monsters, lion men, scorpion men, mighty demons, fish men, bull men, bearing unsparing arms, fearing no battle" (I 141-144). Hearing of these preparations, a frightened Ea approached his
grandfather Anshar: “Tiamat our mother has grown angry with us” (II 11), and he described hostile Tiamat and her fearsome host. Anshar blamed it all on Ea for killing Apsu, but Ea promised to subdue the new threat as he did the old. Yet, when he sought out Tiamat, “he stopped, horror-stricken, then turned back” (II 106), reporting to Anshar that his spell was impotent against her. “Her strength is enormous, she is utterly terrifying, she is reinforced with a host, none can come out against her.” But then, oddly, he added, “My father, do not despair, send another to her, a woman’s force may be very great, but it cannot match a man’s” (II 115f.). This, after admitting that she was more than a match for him!

Anshar was furious, and summoned Anu, who was likewise unsuccessful, and repeated Ea’s words about a woman being no match for a man. Anshar and the gods reacted to Anu’s failure with stunned silence, and the stage was set for the advent of their savior, Marduk. Anshar was overjoyed to see him, and Marduk declared his readiness to battle Tiamat. Again, there is a curious reference to her gender: “What man is it who has sent forth his battle against you? Why, Tiamat, a woman, comes out against you to arms!” (II 143f.). Despite this macho depreciation of Tiamat’s martial abilities, Marduk immediately demanded and got the assembly of gods to make him their supreme leader, and they gave him “unopposable weaponry” (IV 30) for his task. Marduk fashioned and armed himself with bow and arrow, adding mace, thunderbolts, fire, battle net, and the four winds that Anu had given him, plus seven more winds of his own making. Armored and holding his great Deluge-bow (see below), he rode forth on his storm-demon chariot pulled by four fierce steeds. Just in case, he, too, had prepared a magic spell and was carrying an antidote to Tiamat’s venom.

Like his father and grandfather before him, he panicked when confronted by Tiamat and her host. Tiamat tried to rattle him even more, the text tells us, with “falsehood” and “lies” (IV 72; feminine wiles!); she suggested that the gods accompanying Marduk did not really support him. Marduk accused her of deceit, and of being an unnatural mother, willing to kill her own children. Then, he suggested that they engage in one-on-one combat. At that, “She was beside herself, she turned into a maniac, Tiamat shrieked aloud, in a passion, her frame shook all over, down to the ground” (IV 88f.), and she recited incantations and spells. Marduk defeated and killed her, using not spells as his father and grandfather had attempted to do, but rather weapons: battle net, winds, bow and arrow.

All this has been to demonstrate the very odd discourse on masculinity that permeates the story of the conflict with and defeat of Tiamat, the dragon lady cum oceanic chaos monster. Why, after describing the ferocious terror of Tiamat and her host, and admitting their own impotence when confronting her, why do Ea and then Anu predict that some other god will defeat her, because “a woman’s force may be very great, but it cannot match a man’s”? What kind of masculinity might Ea and Anu be invoking, masculinity that by their own admission they lack? Was there anything about Tiamat’s womanhood that made her vulnerable despite her ferocity and her monstrous host? Was there something that Ea and Anu knew they lacked, but some other male possessed, that was certain to defeat Tiamat?

I cannot agree with Harris (2000: chap. 5), who attributes the failure of Ea and Anu to old age (although I can certainly sympathize),13 nor with Metzler (2002), who sees these passages as constitutive of the power relationships between the sexes. Rather, Enuma Elish, more than most Mesopotamian myth, is shot through with gender norms from the patriarchal society of the author that seem to work against the story being told. When Ea returned to tell Anshar that Tiamat’s “strength is enormous, she is utterly terrifying, reinforced with a host, none can come out against her” (II 87f.), followed by the remark that a woman was no match for a man, and he should send someone else, Anshar turned to Anu. But he did not tell Anu to act forcefully; rather, as if responding to a hysterical female, he told Anu to “soothe her feelings, let her heart be eased . . . say something by way of entreaty to her, so that she be pacified” (II 100, 102). It is as if Anshar, once he has been reassured that the threat is female, thinks she can be disarmed by a little sweet talk from Anu. Even Anshar’s initial response to Marduk vastly underestimates what will be needed: “Go, son, knower of all wisdom, bring Tiamat to rest with your sacral spell!” (II 149f.).

The failures of Ea and Anu are designed to build up to Marduk’s ultimate triumph over Tiamat, but the reassurance that Tiamat, a woman, is no match for a man, an assertion supported even by Marduk himself, seems to diminish Marduk’s accomplishment. Yet Marduk was fully aware of what would be necessary to subdue Tiamat. Although he too was armed with spells, he also had, unlike his predecessors, a battle chariot and real weapons, especially his bow. And it is with these weapons, not with spells, that he slew Tiamat. Real men, men who are more than a match for the woman Tiamat, the text seems to tell us, use real weapons in battle, and the battlefield, as we know from Sumerian texts, was the ki nam-nita, “the locus of masculinity.”

That Marduk’s masculinity derived from his weapons, equipment that neither Ea nor Anu possessed, is supported by a late Assyrian ritual commentary, explaining that “The king, who opens the vat in the race, is Marduk, who defeated Tiamat with his penis.”14 Enuma Elish is very clear about the defeat of Tiamat: Marduk forced her mouth open with wind and shot an arrow into it; the arrow penetrated her insides and pierced her heart (IV 95–103). The arrow was shot from the bow that Marduk himself made just prior to setting out against Tiamat: “He made the bow, appointed it his weapon” (IV 35). The epithet “his weapon” is used only of the bow and the Deluge in Enuma Elish, the latter called “his great weapon,” and once simply “his weapon.” Context strongly implies that the Deluge (abub) is a name for Marduk’s bow: In IV 49 he carries the Deluge-weapon into his battle chariot, and in IV 75 he raised it as he taunted Tiamat. In VI 125 the Deluge is Marduk’s signature weapon, which he used to defeat (kanû)
his forefathers’ enemies, using the same verb (kamû) used to describe the ultimate effect of Marduk’s bowshot on Tiamat in IV 103.17 The centrality of the bow to Marduk’s identity in Enuma Elish is made explicit when Anu praises it before the assembled gods and transforms it into a heavenly body (VI 82–91).18

As discussed in Chapter 2 of this volume, the bow is a well-known metaphor for the penis,19 and thus the Assyrian ritual commentary was concretizing the metaphor, but by so doing it was acknowledging the primary importance of Marduk’s masculinity in his defeat of Tiamat.20 Unlike Ea and Anu, Marduk fought not just with cleverness and spells, but with real weapons, which made him masculine, able to vanquish Tiamat and overcome “a woman’s strength,” which “cannot match a man’s.”

The fateful confrontation between Marduk and Tiamat (IV 65–104) began with Tiamat casting a spell and trying to shake Marduk’s confidence. Marduk responded by holding aloft his mighty Deluge-bow in what seems like both an apotropaic and admonitory gesture. He taunted her with accusations that speak directly to her femininity: She is deceitful, she is an unnatural mother, and she has married inappropriately. Gender played a role, too, in her hysterical and quasi-orgasmic reaction to Marduk: “She was beside herself, she turned into a maniac, Tiamat shrieked aloud, in a passion, her frame shook all over down to the ground” (IV 88–90).21 And the only thing she did in self-defense was to recite spells, exactly what Ea and Anu – both lacking Marduk’s masculinity – had done to no effect. Then Marduk attacked, shooting an arrow into her mouth and penetrating her insides. If we keep in mind the phallic symbolism of bow and arrow, and the homology of mouth and vagina,22 the sexuality of the scene is unmistakable. Marduk’s subjugation of Tiamat (whom he later uses for his own purposes) is both martial and sexual.23

Thus, the image of Tiamat as only a woman enhances the portrayal of Marduk as mighty male, even as it subverts the image of Tiamat as a chaos monster whom only Marduk, made king of the gods, is able to subdue. Yet, we never see the valor of Ishtar, the woman warrior of the Mesopotamian pantheon, diminished because she is female, nor the demon Lamashu’s terror ameliorated by referring to her gender.24 The emphasis on Tiamat’s gender and the strange portrayal of major deities impugning their own masculinity are artifacts of Enuma Elish’s peculiar patriarchal perspective, peculiar because it doesn’t impose itself on other Mesopotamian mythological texts, even if it may accurately reflect contemporary social norms. As others have noted, this same perspective is seen further on in the story, where Marduk and Ea manage to create humankind without the benefit of a mother-goddess. Indeed, except for Tiamat and the briefest mention of Ea’s spouse Damkina, Enuma Elish is entirely bereft of identifiable females. The awkward presence of the gender issue in Enuma Elish may well be an artifact of a western origin of the motif of god vs. sea: The sea is masculine in the west, and it is only in Mesopotamia, where the sea in Akkadian is feminine, that the motif would present opponents of opposite sexes.

Marduk, heroic warrior, used his victory to persuade the gods to build him a great city, Babylon, and a grand dwelling, his temple Esagila (V 117–155; VI 45–65). If the battlefield was “the locus of masculinity,” the ideal Mesopotamian man returned from battle to his urban home and family, without diminishing that masculinity in any way. However, in “City Bread and Bread Baked in Ashes,” a short article written in 1967, Reiner pointed out that although cuneiform literature tends to see as superior “high-level urban culture, there runs an opposite trend, which exalts the freedom of the wandering nomad and despises the effeminate life of the Mesopotamian cities. . . . This way of life seeks its virtues in the mainly occupations of wars and raids; it boasts of hardships, and finds its rewards in the free and unfettered life of the highway.”25 Her prime example comes from the Erra Epic, which I cite from Foster’s translation:26

. . . Up, do your duty!
Why have you been sitting in the city like a feeble old man,
Why sitting at home like a helpless child?
Shall we eat woman food, like non-combatants?
Have we turned timorous and trembling, as if we can’t fight?
Going to the field for the young and vigorous is like to a very feast,
But the noble who stays in the city can never eat enough.
His people will hold him in low esteem, he will command no respect,
How could he threaten a campaigner?
However well developed is the strength of the city dweller,
How could he possibly best a campaigner?27
However toothsome city bread, it holds nothing to the campfire loaf,
However sweet fine beer, it holds nothing to water from a skin,
The terraced palace holds nothing to the wayside sleeping spot.

This topos of the superiority of life on campaign and the salutary effects of roughing it is well known from Mari, and Reiner could have cited the letter from Shamshi-Adad (eighth century BC) to his son and viceroy at Mari, Yasmakh-Adad, in which the former berated the latter: “Your brother has been victorious here, while you lie around there among the women. Now then, when you go to Qatna with the army, be a man! (avûlât) Just as your brother has made a great name for himself, so you, too, make a great name for yourself in the campaign against Qatna!”28 To be a man meant to be successful on the battlefield, and more particularly, to prefer life on campaign to staying at home, lying around the harem. J.-M. Durand doesn’t think that Shamshi-Adad was accusing his son of debauchery,29 but rather of staying at home and being inactive, living the life of a woman. Yet Shamshi-Adad in another letter characterized Yasmakh-Adad’s court as a place of “debauchery, taverns and entertainment,”30 and in one letter implied that his son is too fond of alcohol and fine food.31 Yasmakh-Adad endeavored to acquire musicians of a sort that even his father didn’t have,32 and musicians actually
seemed to prefer the posh working conditions at Mari to the those of the more austere court of Shamshi-Adad. This all suggests that Yasmakh-Adad was an esthete who decided he did not measure up to his father's standard of masculinity. So refined was Yasmakh-Adad's taste that he even wanted his father to send him a scribe who knew some Sumerian, but his father - ever pointing out the hapless son's inadequacies - told him to learn Amorite first!

In 1992, Marello reprised Reiner's theme (without mentioning her treatment) in his "Vie nomade," as part of a discussion of a remarkable letter he published there. One Amorite sheikh was criticizing another for not joining him to campaign with Zimrilim of Mari:

You prefer eating, drinking and sleeping to going with me. Staying inactive and not getting tan! As for me, I assure you that I've never stayed at home for a whole day without moving around! Until I go out for some air, I feel smothered... Tell me, why would I need to put you down? Perhaps because neither hot nor cold wind has battered your face. You're unworthy of your race! At the very place where your father and mother first saw your face when you dropped from her vagina, vaginas have received you, and you know of nothing else!

The writer then held himself up as a positive example: he is so valiant and has escaped death so often that, in his escapes from death, he's like the god Dumuzi! This letter is much more explicit than Shamshi-Adad's letters. It is not just women who are evoked in criticism, but vaginas! Twice! The recipient's masculinity is thereby questioned unambiguously.

In his discussion of the letter, Marello referred to the Erra passage central to Reiner's article, and also cited a wonderful passage from the then still unpublished Epic of Zimrilim:

Until the king attained his goal,  
And made the land of Idamarsa kneel at his feet,  
He drank only water from waterskins.  
Ranging among the troops, he experiences every care.  
Their sorties are like those of great hunters,  
As the onager eats straw on the plains,  
His men ate (raw) flesh,  
They took heart and grew in strength.  
Zimrilim goes at their head, like a battle standard,  
Turning round, he gives courage to those who have none:  
"Be strong, press forward!  
The enemy will see how well trained you are!"

According to Marello, "l'idéal nomade est... une conception virile de l'existence. L'aspect sauvage et inconfortable de l'existence est la marque de

For his part, Yasmakh-Adad always replied that his father's animosity toward him was being provoked by certain courtiers who disliked him and had undermined his father's trust in him. After all, his father, he wrote, "installed me in my position, and by his orders determined my duties." Yet, Yasmakh-Adad did own up to one of his alleged shortcomings: "I'm learning to speak Amorite, really!"

We see then, that masculinity, as defined by Shamshi-Adad, was to behave in a manner befitting an adult male royal: exhibiting skills on the battlefield and in governance, keeping one's own estates in order, and not being too enamored of the arts, fine living, and the enticements of the harem. Being a man was not to be womanly or too attached to women, but most often it was not to be a child, as Durand has emphasized. The two deficient conditions - associating with women and being immature - overlap, since children grew up in the harem, surrounded by females. But it is interesting to note that women were evoked in the Mari material only in contrast to battlefield prowess, when Yasmah-Adad was encouraged to make a name for himself in the campaign against Qatna, or the Amorite sheikh was cajigated for preferring his comfortable life at home to the rough life of a soldier. Similarly, the Enuma Elish material revolved around assumed male
superiority in battle, an assumption that underlies certain curses on Assyrian monuments and treaties of the eighth–seventh centuries BC:

If Māt-ilu sins against this treaty with Aššur-nerari, king of Assyria, may Māt-ilu become a prostitute, his soldiers women, may they receive [a gift] in the square of their cities like any prostitute ... may Māt-ilu's (sex) life be that of a mule, his wives extremely old; may Īštar, the goddess of men, the mistress of women, take away their bow, bring them to shame.44

May they (the gods) spin you around like a spindle-whorl, may they make you like a woman before your enemy.45

Whoever removes this stele from its place, erases my name and writes his name ... May Māt-ilu become a prostitute, his soldiers women, may they jump into bed (Gumč 1961: : 126:36). Note that in the Sumerian love song: ḫa-ga-ga-ya-ma, “in a passion” is used to describe Nergal and Ereshkigal when they jump into bed (Gurney 1960: 126:36). Note Inanna's organ in a Sumerian love song: la-si-ga-gi, mu-na-de-gub / ki-ta-tuk, e-da si-a mu-na-ni-ni-gar. “As if dumb struck, I moved toward him, trembling below, I pushed him quietly to him” (Setati 1998: 152:151; Cooper 1997: 94).

To be a man, in contrast to a woman, meant, above all, to be a competent warrior.47

In fact, there is relatively little explicit discourse on masculinity as such in Mesopotamia, whether in terms of gender appropriate or age appropriate behavior, perhaps because patriarchal norms were so well defined and well entrenched that explicit statements were unnecessary, except in the cases of the marginal figures that are discussed in this volume by Marti Nissinen. That such discourse appears in Enuma Elish in ways that subvert the narrative and intention of the composition perhaps reveals the mythographer's discomfort with the gender of the hero Marduk's opponent, yet, in other compositions, the martial Ištar never seems to provoke such discomfort. Shamshi-Adad's treatment of his son is the rare example in writing of what must have certainly been said orally to many sons, as it still is.

Let me close by noting that despite the dominance of patriarchy, there is not a lot of evidence for misogyny in ancient Mesopotamia. The most blatant examples come from Early Dynastic Sumerian proverbs (Alster 1991–92) and later Sumerian women's dialogues, and the much later Akkadian ritual texts ironically referred to as “Love Lyrics” (Foster 2005 IV.28). Sexual prowess and sexual aggression were never components of Mesopotamian masculinity; neither male deities nor kings are praised for their sexual performance.48 Examples of rape in Sumerian literature - I can't think of any in Akkadian - always end badly for the rapist. Sexual punishments in law are always for sexual offenses only, and rape is never mentioned among the grisly punishments meted out by Assyrian conquerors.49 If we could generalize at all, we might say that Mesopotamian men were terribly patriarchal, but not especially phallocentric.

Notes

1 I would like to thank P. Jones, P. Michalowski, B. Pongratz-Leisten, G. Rubio, K. Sonik, and I. Zsolyay for their comments.

2 Glassner (2004: 123). Note, too, that omens of this woman ruler are always negative (e.g. Leichly 1970: 8); Nougayrol (1966: 91).

3 The literal Akkadian translation of nīta kal-ga, zikaru dara, is used mainly by later Assyrian kings, as is zikaru ēardu, “valiant man,” and, rarely, zikrāku, “I am virile” (Seux 1967: 377f.).

4 E.g. Strohmenger (1964: 10–12).


6 Contra Black et al. (2004: 224); see my forthcoming edition.


8 “Terra firma” is an attempt to render the rare annamatu, equated with dānamatu and glossed kimē erēti (CAD s.v. annamatu B). How nice to discover that the much missed and fondly remembered J. Bottero had resorted to a similar solution! (Bottero and Kramer 1989: 604).

9 For everything Enuma Elish see Lambert (2013); Kämmerer and Metzler (2012); also Talon (2005). The English translation is cited after Foster (2005), except for my translation of I II. above.

10 On the image here of good mother but stern father, see Metzler (2002: 401).

11 abi e tuštāniš tēr šuppurī / enīqi šinnišiti li dunnana u māla ša ziki.

12 ayyu ziki tērḫazatu ṣuṣiška / u Tēnamat ša šinnišat išra ṣa šakakki.

13 Their failure is a narrative necessity, emphasizing the uniqueness of Marduk among all the other gods.

14 šurpuš habbatumāt išrišlā šu pīpiša / ... amāt umūni ātmešuma ši lippāsša.

15 Most explicitly in Gilgamesh, Enkidu and the Netherworld 228 and 236: ki nam-nita-a-ke, me-a na-na-ub “He did not fall in battle, at the locus of masculinity” (Gadotti 2014).


17 In Sennacherib's description of the scene on the akītu-building doors, Assur (= Marduk) is depicted setting out to fight Tiamat “as he carries the bow, riding in a chariot, the Deluge that he [assigned]” (Pongratz-Leisten 1994: 207–209; Frahm 1997: 222–224). Despite the ambiguous syntax, the Deluge can't be the chariot, so must be the bow that Marduk in Enuma Elish “appointed” as his weapon.

18 Ninurta, on whom the Marduk of Enuma Elish is modeled, carries his Deluge-bow (OB giš.ban a-ma-ra; NA giš.ban a-ma-uru, = qāšu ‘ābībī’) in Angiri 142, although in Angiri 141, “Deluge of battle” is the name of his 30-headed mace (Cooper 1978).


20 The penis in the ritual commentary was identified as Marduk's bow already by V. Horowitz (2005: 53 n.8), and is to be preferred to the interpretation in Pomponio (1997: 97 n. 2), following Livingstone (1991) (penis = seederc plow).

21 Metzler (2002: 400) notes that the slaying of Tiamat by Marduk becomes a mythological image of the discourse on masculinity in Enuma Elish.


24 The threat of Tiamat and her ultimate defeat by Marduk is based upon the earlier Anzu myth, in which the mythical eagle Anzu is defeated by Ninurta. Nowhere there do the other gods who refuse to confront Anzu suggest that all will be well in the end because “a bird is no match for a god.”


27 Note the similarity to Enuma Elish: “A woman’s strength may be very great, but it cannot match a man’s.”


31 ARM 1 52 = Durand (1997) (LAPO 16) No. 1. See also an Old Assyrian merchant’s reproof of a subordinate: “Amurru should know how to show respect! He should not always be thinking of food and drink! He should be a man!” (Michel 2001 [LAPO 19] No. 354).


33 Ziegler and Charpin (2007).


35 Alternative translation: Are you wearing someone else’s balls? See the discussions of Marello and Durand ad loc.


37 Marello (1992: 121).


40 ARM 1 61 = Durand (1997) (LAPO 16) No. 35.

41 ARM 1 108 = Durand (1997) (LAPO 16) No. 34.


47 Cf. the Babylonian and Assyrian royal epithet zikaru qardu “valiant male,” cited in n. 3.

48 In Sumerian royal hymns, kings are praised for doing their marital duty to the goddess Inana, in the probably metaphorical “sacred marriage” (Cooper 2013), but the only claim to extraordinary sexual ability is for a goddess, found in an Akkadian hymn to Ishtar (Foster 2003 III.43.e “Ishtar Will Not Tire”).

49 That rape was a fact of ancient Mesopotamian warfare can be assumed from the following NA treaty curse: “May Venus... before your eyes make your wives lie in the lap of your enemy!” (Parpola and Watanabe 1988: 46, 428) See also J. Rccade’s proposed illustration of the curse with a scene on an Assyrian palace relief, Ibid. 47 fig. 13.

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