

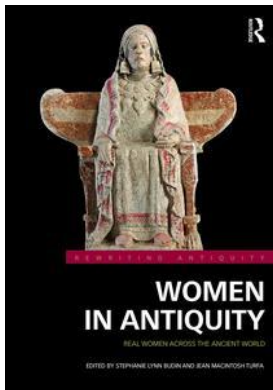
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Being mothers or acting (like) mothers?

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2

BEING MOTHERS OR ACTING (LIKE) MOTHERS?

Constructing motherhood in ancient Mesopotamia

M. Erica Couto-Ferreira

How to define motherhood in Ancient Mesopotamia

Historiographical hints on previous bibliography

Assyriological studies have tended to turn to mythological and literary texts, on the one hand, and to visual representations, on the other, in order to analyze and reconstruct the images and concepts of motherhood in ancient Mesopotamia. However, motherhood has not been a top concern in Assyriology except for its relation to a number of topics, such as divine maternity (Rodin 2014); the iconography of the *kourotrophos* or woman with child and other iconographical motifs linked to motherhood, such as the cow and calf (Winter 1987, esp. 385–413; Bahrani 2001, 81–82; Budin 2011); and the representation of deported women and families in Neo-Assyrian reliefs (Albenda 1987). It is highly revealing, in fact, that the *Reallexikon für Assyriologie* displays a number of entries on “Muttergöttin” (Krebernik 1995), but none on “Mutterschaft” or “Mutter,” as if ideas of maternity in ancient Mesopotamia were circumscribed or could only be approached or understood through the realm of the divine. In this way, the specificities of maternal experience have often been relegated and marginalized in academic accounts of women’s lives, activities and concerns. Marten Stol, for instance, in his article on women in Mesopotamia, provides very brief and general considerations regarding child bearing, never making use of the term “mother” (Stol 1995: 128–129). When dealing with the issue of birth, the same author focuses on aspects of childbirth, procreation, nursing and rearing, with little attention paid to maternity strictly speaking, although he sporadically gives some hints and bibliographical notes on the issue (Stol 2000); while in his recent book on women, he examines motherhood in just two pages (Stol 2012: 98–99), mainly focusing on literary examples, although he dedicates full chapters to marriage and marriage gifts (Stol 2012: 39–70, 71–94, respectively).

Most authors focus on what comes before motherhood (engagement, marriage) and after (creation of a family, expansion of household), leaving aside the question of how a mother is culturally constructed. Thus R. Harris’s thoughts on the life cycle of women are

devoted to girls at marriageable age, the birth of children, and, finally, old age (Harris 2000: 26–31); while Van der Toorn distinguishes five phases in women’s lives (nursing, youth, puberty, married life, and widowhood) without devoting further thoughts to the specificities of maternity (Van der Toorn 1994: 18). Motherhood, therefore, is implicitly understood in Assyriological studies as a bio-physiological matter, the “natural” consequence of marriage, and the main aim in any woman’s life (Van der Toorn 1994: 77; Farès, in Briquel-Chatonnet 2009: 7).

How many ways of depicting “human” motherhood can be traced down in cuneiform sources? Cuneiform sources from the second and first millennia BCE show a wide range of types of maternity, especially in literary, mythological, and ritual sources, where several forms of divine motherhood are represented. Thus, the goddess Namma appears as counsellor to her son, Enki, as well as a relevant character in the creation of humankind in the Sumerian composition *Enki and Ninmah* (Benito 1969: 1–76); Tiamat figures as primeval mother, but also as the begetter of monsters, in the creation myth *Enūma eliš* (Lambert 2013: 3–144); Lamaštu, a female deity possessing evil traits with a tendency toward making pregnant women and children ill, represents a clear example of inverted motherhood (Farber 2014); while Gilgameš’ mother, Ninsun, embodies motherly wisdom, always providing good advice to her son (*Gilgameš* I 259–260 in George 1999: 10, and *passim*). When it comes to exploring real, human mothers, however, documentary sources, inscriptions, and other pieces of information present a rather elusive, patchy picture, with some notable exceptions (see, for example, the study done by Sarah Melville on Esarhaddon’s mother, in Melville 1999; and Franco D’Agostino’s work on Nabonidus’ mother, Adda Guppi, in D’Agostino 1994). The present chapter aims to explore different ways of picturing motherhood in non-mythological compositions, relying on cuneiform sources stemming from daily life and practice (medical texts, letters, contracts, and legal compositions). Even though these sources tend to provide a more elusive and less cohesive picture than that presented in literary, more narrative sources, they nevertheless provide valuable hints at how maternity was perceived, lived, and even defined through the attitudes and practices of the agents involved.

First, motherhood can be approached from the perspective of its biological and/or physiological elements, such as creation and conception. Second, it can be analyzed through those attitudes related to care and provision that are representative and constituent of the exercise of maternity, and which serve to establish close bonds between the mother and her children. These activities and attitudes are concerned with aspects such as nurturing, love, and counselling. Lying somewhere between these two poles, evidence emerges that points to legal aspects of maternity and maternity-related issues (adoption, inheritance, paternity issues, regulation of fees for nurses, wet nurses, status of children born by first, secondary wives, slaves, etc.), which prove that motherhood could be effectively exercised independent of biological bonds.

The “physiology” of pregnancy and the “biology” of motherhood

Motherhood can be defined from the viewpoint of physiology of birth, in direct relation to the physical, bodily experience, of begetting and giving birth. Healing cuneiform texts depict pathological aspects that come up in the process of becoming a mother, therefore focusing on pregnancy, childbirth, and the postpartum period, more than on medical issues springing from the exercise of maternity. Instead of the usual Sumerian and Akkadian terms for “mother” (*AMA/ummu*, *CAD* U sub *ummu*, pp. 120–131), however, medical texts prefer expressions alluding to the woman as bearer, referring to cognates of

PEŠ₄/erû “to be thick, fat; to be pregnant” (CAD E s.v., pp. 325–326) and Û.TU/(w)alādu “to bear, conceive, to give birth to” (CAD A/1 s.v., pp. 287–294) in clear reference to the state of pregnancy. In fact, the verb (w)alādu points to the acts of conceiving, begetting, giving birth, creating, fashioning, producing, and it is sometimes also employed in reference to men as creators. Thus, in therapeutic texts concerning pregnancy and childbirth, women are mainly erītu “pregnant (woman)” and ālittu “begetter, parturient,” but hardly ever ummu “mother.” The term bantū “creatix, begetter” (CAD B sub bantū, pp. 80–81), from the verb banû “to make, shape, engender, create” (CAD B s.v. A, pp. 83–90) is less frequent, being used in literary examples and applying mainly to mother goddesses in their role as creators of humanity.

On the contrary, the specific term “mother” reappears in the incantation-lullabies to appease children, especially as part of the expression “in the belly of your mother,” to make reference to that stage of pregnancy where the baby *in utero* was calm and did not cry (Farber 1989: 36, 40, and *passim*). From the contextual use of this phraseology, therefore, it becomes evident that AMA/ummu “mother” carries particular semantic notions of care that are absent in or hidden from the expression PEŠ₄/erû and Û.TU/(w)alādu, which would put the emphasis on a more physiological, reproductive-concerned concept of maternity. AMA/ummu would refer to the status acquired after having given birth, namely after having produced children successfully, and its contextual use reinforces the idea of bonds linking begetter and begotten: a mother is always defined in relation to her sons and daughters. If the ālidu/ālittu (“begetter, pregnant woman, parturient”) conceives and brings pregnancy to full term, the ummu takes care of the child (šerru). AMA/ummu, therefore, expresses the accomplished state of having given birth and having children, being employed in contexts where the child is already an independent being out of his/her mother’s body.¹

Acting (like) mothers: motherhood and care

What a mother does

What are the functions attributed to and carried out by mothers? What specific traits, attitudes, conducts, and responsibilities turned a woman into a mother, according to cuneiform sources? Sources accounting for divine affairs provide, as noted above, valuable information on the different roles mother goddesses and female deities in general play in relation to their progeny,² but hints at their human counterparts are also sporadically found in documentary evidence.

Both mothers and fathers (or adults acting as such) are involved in bringing up the child, an action expressed through the verb rubbû (CAD R sub rabû 7, pp. 45–48) which also applies to the harvesting of plants and trees (ibid. 7b, pp. 47–48). Rubbû implies the nurturing, rearing, and provision of care to children until they reach full age, and it is often used in relation to paying for raising someone, turning up frequently in legal texts concerning the adoption and/or fostering of children. However, it should be pointed out that women and couples adopting and taking children under their care often have an ambiguous status when it comes to evaluating the place affection has in their choice, if we consider that children were also seen as workforce and economic resources (see “Legal aspects of maternity, breastfeeding, and nursing” below).

Within the particular activities that mothers (as well as wet nurses who act like mothers) carry out when rearing children, nurturing functions are crucial. In this manner, mothers and acting mothers are often depicted in textual sources in the act of breast feeding (enēqu “to suckle”), providing mother’s milk (šizib ummi), or making the baby take the breast

(*tulā šabātu*).³ Mothers embrace their children (*kirimmi ummi* lit. “(crook of) the arm of the mother”),⁴ pick them up (*leqû*), and pat them with affection (*lapātu*).⁵ This is shown, for instance, in an Old Babylonian incantation that aimed at appeasing a crying child: “Be placid like the waters of a well until your mother comes, caresses you (*talappatka*), and picks you up (*talaqqeka*)” (Farber 1989: 86 §25: 362–363).

Mothers and sons

Old Babylonian letters offer a good grasp of what motherhood implied. Mothers were expected to show concern and provide for their children, even when they had grown up. In a missive that a certain Malāku writes to his mother, he informs her that he is well and staying in Halab, and asks her to send a piece of clothing: “As for the garment, you should order him to transport one garment of mine to me. Do you not know [that] it is you [whom] I rely on (*taklāku*)?”⁶ (*AbB* 13, 74: 10–15, in Van Soldt 1994: 68–69).

Reproaches to and accusations of negligence against the female parent were not infrequent. These examples already indicate issues of feeling, perception, and personal experience in inter-generational relationships. Some examples taken from Old Babylonian letters emphasize the need to keep affective bonds between mother and son alive when at a distance, while pointing at the same time to more immediate and materialistic needs that wait to be satisfied, as in the following case. A son reproaches his mother for her nonchalance in writing to him, and he does not prevent himself from alluding to other mothers behaving in a caring manner as a powerful argument to call for maternal feelings:

Speak to my mother: Thus says Awīl- . . . , your son. May Šamaš and Marduk forever grant you good health. Since you . . . have offered me to Šamaš like a dropped out tooth. The service put a strain on me, so I couldn’t stop working. And you have never written to me, as (other) mothers do, you haven’t heartened me (*libbi ul tuballiṭi*)!⁷ Now I have dispatched Mannaši to you. Let her bring me 2 quarts [sila] of oil. I have contracted an illness and my life is endangered.

(*AbB* 14, 43 in Veenhof 2005: 36–37)

On similar grounds, a certain Iddin-Sîn accuses his mother, Zinû, of not loving him and asks her not to be mean and to send him clothes. This piece of evidence raises relevant issues of perception between biological and acquired motherhood, and what the main functions of a mother were, namely the acts of loving, caring, and protecting their progeny. The way Iddin-Sîn formulates his claim suggests that, in his perception, stronger loving care and attention should be expected from a mother that has actually conceived and born her child, in opposition to motherhood acquired through adoption. It is interesting to note that, contrary to the usual formulaic language, Iddin-Sîn does not identify himself as son nor mentions Zinû as mother in the heading of his message, even though the filial relationship is clear from lines 24–25. This omission could perhaps be taken as an expression of contempt against his mother:

The son of Adad-iddinnam, whose father is a servant of my father, has two new garments to wear, but you keep getting upset over just one garment for me. While you gave birth to me (*tuldinni*), his mother got him by adoption (*ummašu ana leqūim ilqēšu*), but you do not love me in the way his mother loves him (*kīma šati ummašu irammušu atti yāti ul tarammini*).

(*AbB* 14, 165: 19–31 in Veenhof, 2005, 156–157)

... and daughters

Examples of vexed sons and daughters, especially in those situations when they request their mothers to be diligent in sending goods, can also be found in the Old Babylonian letters from Mari and elsewhere. In a letter to her mother, daughter, Erišti-Aya, addresses two questions. First, she feels humiliated by her progenitor, who has not put on the clothes her daughter sent to her, but decided to return them instead. This is perceived by Erišti-Aya as a gesture that dishonours her: “Why haven’t you worn my dress but brought it back? You have inflicted me abuse/scandal (*pištam*) and a curse (*erretam*)” (*ARM* 10, 43: 7–11 in Dossin 1978: 78–79).

She also demands from her mother that she “be good to me” (*attī yāti dumiqīni*, *ARM* 10, 43: 21–22 in Dossin 1978: 78–79, text 43, lines 21–22). In the very last lines of the letter, however, Erišti-Aya does not refrain from asking her mother to send her goods through the intermediation of her dry nurse (*tārītum*), who is to take to her all the articles Erišti-Aya requests (*ARM* 10, 43: 26–28 in Dossin 1978: 78–79). The fact of having blood bonds is brandished as a powerful argument to sustain Erišti-Aya’s claims, as well as to demand attention. Similarly, in another Old Babylonian letter, a mother is also asked to send garments (*AbB* 13, 74 in Van Soldt 1994: 68–69). Other examples, however, focus on the exchange of presents between mother and sons/daughters as a way of both providing and redistributing goods, on the one hand, and of keeping contact when distance separates them, on the other (*ARM* 10, 21 and 30 attest to the exchange of commodities between Princess Šibtu and her mother, Kašerum/Gašera, in Dossin 1978: 50–51 and 58–59).

Although less attested in the documentary textual record (in opposition to mythological compositions: *Enlil and Sud*, 77; *Enki and Ninmah*, 17–23; Ninsun and Gilgameš, etc.), there are some instances where mothers emerge as counsellors of their children, providing advice and making their opinions heard. In these cases, *malāku* “to give advice, to ponder, deliberate” is the word/term employed (*CAD* M/1 sub *malāku* A, pp. 154–158, esp. 1 pp. 154–155). In the following example, when Gimil-Marduk writes to Warad-Sigar on an unspecified matter, he makes clear that: “When you did me wrong, I did not turn to my family, [nor] did I take counsel with my mother (*itti ummiya ul amtalik*)” (*AbB* 12, 124 in Van Soldt 1990: 102–103).

As discussed above, emotion and love relate closely to the exercise of motherhood.⁸ Cuneiform texts show how love manifests as a feeling equally experienced by men, women, fathers, mothers, sisters, brothers, sons, daughters, servants, masters, and lovers. When it comes to parent–child relationships, love expresses filiation, protection, and trust, but it also becomes a matter of power games and emotional manipulation.

The deep significance of filial bonds and maternal worries emerge sporadically in the textual and archaeological records. Two Old Babylonian dedicatory inscriptions testify to the deep concern Rīm-Sîn-Šala-bāštašu, the wife of king Rīm-Sîn, showed for the poor health of her daughter, Lirīš-gamlum. This material evidence represents the attempt to reverse a situation that might have caused great distress in the family. Although originally placed on nine bronze cups, one of the inscriptions survives just as a copy on a tablet. It specifies with notable detail the nature of the ailments Lirīš-gamlum suffered from:

(Rīm-Sîn-Šala-bāštašu) [for the life of Rīm-Sîn, king of Larsa, and Lirīš-gamlum] [her] daughter, made bronze milk cups, table ornaments, in order to make the *šahal* disease⁹ leave her eyes, to banish the danger of sickness, to pass on to one who does not revere him the ASAG [demon] that is in her body and to preserve her life, she dedicated [them] for the life of Lirīš-gamlum and for her own life.

(*George and Civil* 2011: 113–114, text 53, lines 19–34)

The second inscription, which reports similar concerns, was inscribed on a water basin that was placed in the É-ME-UR₄-UR₄ temple in Larsa:

In order to save Lirīš-gamlum from the hand of evil-doers and brigands, to hand over the *asakku* and *ašbur* [diseases] that are in her body to [a demon] who fears nothing, to expel the ŠĀ.HAL that is in her eye, to protect her life.

(RIM E4.2.14.23, 30–35 in Frayne 1990: 302)

Nurses, wet nurses, and the provision of care

Functions of suckling and general provision of education and care to children can entitle a wet nurse to be called *ummu* “mother.” The bond that is established between caretaker and child unifies elements of physiology, manifested in the administration of mother’s milk, with the aspects of affection, protection, and tutelage that are constructed outside biological and consanguineous relationships.

The wet nurses active in the royal circles were often remembered and even continued to be closely related to the fates of royal family members.¹⁰ An emblematic case is offered by the Princess Bēltum, whose wet nurse, receiving the title of *ummu* “mother,” comes with her from Qatna to Mari in order to be near her at the royal court. Her *ummu* is said to have reared her (*urabbiši*, from *rubbû*) since childhood (ARMT 26, 298 in Charpin 1988, 26–27; Durand 1990, 276, quoted in Ziegler 1997, 52 fn. 40 and Stol 2000, 189 and fn. 116):

Bēltum’s *ummu* [*ummi Bēltim*], who has come from Qatna, has reared her since Bēltum was a child and she [the *ummu*] knows her way/will (*tēmša amrat*). It would have been better to keep this woman away after Bēltum’s departure from Qatna, [but] she is being sent to Mari, and she doesn’t know the customs of the palace.

(ARMT 26, 298: 29–39 in Charpin 1988: 26–27)

Another letter from Mari deals with the case of an intercession of Princess Ahāssunu in favour of her *ummu*¹¹ (ARM 10, 97 in Dossin 1978: 73);¹² just as Bahlī-bašṭi is sent to Princess Narāmru so that she can act as her nurse (lit. for the motherhood/mother care (toward) Narāmru) (*ana ummūt Narāmru*, ARMT 23, 84 in Bardet *et al.* 1984: 72–74); and Tabūra, who is mentioned as *mušēniqtum* (wet nurse) of the baby Prince, Yagīd-Lim, receives the title *ummu* later on in life (Dossin 1978: 74). All these cases, among many others (Dossin 1978, letter 105; Bardet *et al.* 1984: 346; Ziegler 1997: 51–52), prove that the provision of nourishment and education, the physical proximity established during rearing, the aid to the growth and development of children, contributed to the establishment and strengthening of non-biological bonds that could have a deep impact on the individual’s life. The title of “mother,” therefore, is conferred not only on women who have given birth, but also, as in the case of the *ummu* from Mari’s palace, to women that have undertaken the duties of a caring mother-like guardian.

Legal aspects of maternity, breastfeeding, and nursing

Mesopotamian documentary evidence also furnishes information on aspects such as regulation of adoption, inheritance, and other family issues, and maternity-related activities such as compensation to wet nurses for breast feeding. These sources provide a different impression

on social values and experiences related to motherhood, since they focus more on the legal and economic dimensions and implications of parenthood, and less on the personal and affective relationships established between mother and son/daughter.

Legal regulations, adoption, and wet nursing contracts, as well as other legal cases, have already made relevant a number of aspects associated with the provision of care which relates so intimately to the exercise of motherhood. The Laws of Ešnunna (§32 B ii 13), the Code of Ur-Namma (George and Civil 2011: 251 §E2), the Code of Hammurabi (§194 in Roth 1995: 120), among others, regulate the responsibilities and payment wet nurses should receive for suckling and rearing children, as well as the fees deemed to be paid to tutors or to those figures responsible for bringing up infants. (For wet nursing contracts, see Gruber 1989: 76–77; for payment of wet nursing fees, see Obermark 1992: 42; for other aspects of wet nursing, see Stol 2000: 181–190.)

Both motherhood and fatherhood are implicated in adoption and parenthood-related processes. Although the adoption of adults was very frequent, being a strategy to transfer property between two parties that did or did not imply the promise of the adoptee to take care of the adopter in old age (Obermark 1992: 11–26, with previous bibliography), there is clear evidence of adoptions by childless couples who take children under their care (“type 2 adoptions” in Obermark 1992: 13–14; for women as adopters, see Obermark 1992: 70–77; Wunsch 2003–2004: 187; Klein-Sharlach 2007: 4–9, CBS 11324 i 1–25 for a Sumerian model contract regarding the adoption of a foundling by a woman; Suurmeijer 2010: 16–19 for examples from Old Babylonian Sippar). Adoption contracts emphasize those formal aspects that create the legal frame necessary to establish and confirm filiation before the authorities, and which secure the position of both parents and child. In this regard, it is worth noting, for example, the clauses introduced in some contracts that make reference to the punishment the adoptive parents or the adopted child should receive in the event of refusal of the transaction by one of the two parties. Those aspects closely related to nurture and care and, therefore, are normally deemed irrelevant in the establishment of legal bonds, although sporadic references to obligations related to the upbringing of the child can be included (nam-bùlug/*tarbītu* “child-rearing” in CAD T sub *tarbītu* A, pp. 223–225; Obermark 1992, 42–43). Adoption often bridges the apparent gap that exists from a legal viewpoint between the biological dimension of child bearing and the status of parenthood. As in the letter quoted above (*AbB* 14, 165 in Veenhof 2005: 156–157), adoptive mothers show attention and care toward their children in an equal, or even higher degree, if we are to trust Iddin-Sîn’s accusations against his mother, than biological mothers.

The reality of mothers who cannot or will not take care of their children is also attested in cuneiform sources. This fact could lead them to leave their babies, or to trust them to relatives or couples in want of a child. In the following Neo-Babylonian adoption contract between a woman named Baṭṭā and her brother, Innin-šum-ibni, the latter agrees to take care of her son Dannu-ahhê-ibni:

As long as Baṭṭā continues being a single woman [*harimtu*, see Budin, “Sexuality” this volume on this term], he [Innin-šum-ibni] will raise Dannu-ahhê-ibni. Should Baṭṭā go the house of a *mār banī* [citizen], he [the *mār banī*] will pay one-third mina [text: shekel] of silver [to Innin-šum-ibni] in consideration of the sustenance and upbringing costs of Dannu-ahhê-ibni and [in consideration of the expenses incurred for] the food, beer, salt, cress oil [and] garments of Baṭṭā.

(translation according to Roth 1988: 133, lines 9–15)

Old Babylonian text VAS 6, 116 (Joannès 1989) illustrates the abandonment of children by their mothers and/or fathers in antiquity, on the one hand; and the ambiguous status the fostered child could have, on the other. More than an adoption contract, tablet VAS 6, 116 functions as a sort of birth certificate that, by the symbolic act of placing her feet on clay, legalizes the status of foundling, Šēpītaia, proving she was found and raised by a woman named Širaia. This legal document, which recognises a de facto situation before the law, authorizes Širaia to employ the grown-up Šēpītaia as domestic personnel. Even though compassion, affection, and even sentiments of motherliness may very well have been present in Širaia's decision to take Šēpītaia with her, the significance of fostered children as economic resource becomes undeniable. (See Wunsch 2003–2004 for a thorough analysis on child abandonment, fostering of foundlings, and the economic value of adoption, among other topics, in Neo-Babylonian documents. See also Joannès 1997 for aspects of childhood in Mesopotamia, esp. pp. 124–125 for the text VS 6, 116.)

The *mār banī* [citizens], before those [representing] Nabû-nādin-šumi, son of Mušēzib-Marduk, son of Gahal; and Širaia, his wife, daughter of Nabû-bān-zēri, son of the Blacksmith, on their agreement concerning Šēpītaia, who Širaia took from the street, reared (*turabbu*), and placed her feet on clay (list of witnesses follows).

(VS 6, 116: 1–10)

Conclusions

Being socially and culturally constructed and not exclusively bio-physiologically determined, motherhood in ancient Mesopotamia shows a notable degree of complexity. Maternity is established not exclusively by blood ties, but also by duties, legal status, and disposition to provide care. Even when there is neither biological affiliation nor an acknowledged legal condition as mother, some sort of maternal recognition can be acquired by the exercise of those activities closely related to maternity, namely nurturing, care, protection, counselling, and love.

Notes

- 1 See, for instance, the use of the term *AMA/ummu* in relation to breast-feeding in TDP 222: 40 “you put (the medicine) on the tip of his mother's breast (*ina appi tulī ummišu*), so that he will suck it with milk” (reference taken from CAD E sub *enēqu* 1). But cf. Izbu XVII 84 *šumma izbu ina libbi ummišu issīma ummišu īpul* “if an anomaly cries out from its mother's insides and its mother answers”; see also the expression *ummu alittu* (CAD A/1 sub *ālidu*, lexical section, p. 340 and b 2 pp. 341–342).
- 2 See, for example, Civil 1964; Çig and Kramer 1976; Miller and Wheeler 1981; Gadotti 2011.
- 3 On breasts, suckling, and medical problems related to these, see TDP pp. 218–228.
- 4 CAD K sub *kirimmu*, p. 406 “hold, position of the arms of a mother to cradle a small child.”
- 5 For a mythological example of (divine) mothers rearing their children, see, for example, *Enlil and Sud*, 3–5, which describes the care Nun-bar-še-gunu/Nisaba provided to her daughter, Ninlil.
- 6 CAD T sub *takālu*, pp. 63–68 “to trust, to rely.”
- 7 The expression employed is *libba balātu* “to encourage, literally to revive the insides.”
- 8 See CAD R sub *rāmu* “to love,” pp. 137–145.
- 9 See *sahālu* in CAD S s.v., pp. 28–30 “to pierce, stab, prick.”
- 10 See, for example, Gišadu, who was the wet nurse of the Ebla King Irkabdamu.
- 11 Bardet 1984: 72–74; Durand 1985: 413–415; Durand 1990: 276.
- 12 In ARM 10, 97 (Dossin 1978: 146–149), Ahāssunu asks the king for permission to free her (wet) nurse of her service (lit. *qīštu* “gift”), probably due to old age. Ahāssunu calls her *ummu* “mother.” In lines 23–27, a fragment of a previous letter sent by the *ummu* to Ahāssunu is quoted, asking her to intercede before the king. It brings to light, therefore, a strong net of care supply between women.

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