**King’s Daughter, God’s Wife: The Princess as High Priestess in Mesopotamia (Ur, ca. 2300-1100 BCE) and Egypt (Thebes, ca. 1550-525 BCE)**

Lloyd D. Graham

**Abstract**

The practice of a king appointing his daughter as the High Priestess and consort of an important male deity arose independently in the Ancient Near East and Egypt. In Mesopotamia, the prime example of such an appointee was the EN-priestess of Nanna (EPN), spouse of the moon-god Nanna/Sin at Ur; in Egypt, its most important embodiment was the God’s Wife of Amun (GWA), consort of the creator-god Amun(-Re) at Thebes. Both institutions operated – with interruptions and periods of uncertainty – for about a millennium (Ur, ca. 2288-1104 BCE; Thebes, ca. 1552-525 BCE). The office of EPN began strongly, with a peak period that lasted ca. 525 years, whereas the GWA’s heyday came at the end of its trajectory and lasted only half as long (ca. 265 years). In both cases, the incumbents were powerful royal figures who served as spiritual and economic leaders of their communities. The cultic roles of the EPN and GWA were similar, and the “god’s wife” role of both has attracted similar academic controversies over their sexual, marital and maternal status. This paper, which provides the first systematic comparison of the two institutions, focuses on comparing the two offices in their respective periods of peak strength. The analysis reveals that the High Priestesses were typically political appointments made in turbulent times, often to help the king secure control over a remote region and/or rival institution. As spiritual leaders, the incumbents were often instrumental in integrating distinct cultural or ethnic groups within their respective countries, thereby promoting the royal agenda of national unity. Despite social and political uncertainties, many of the High Priestesses managed long incumbencies (EPN typically 30-40 yrs, GWA 40-65 yrs), their tenures thereby spanning multiple kings and often dynasties as well (e.g., Enanatum of Isin served long into the succeeding dynasty of Isin’s traditional enemy, Larsa). Both offices were collaborative institutions in which the incumbent was potentially assisted by a novice/heiress and perhaps also a retiree; for the GWAs in particular, the resulting “college” often required long-term collaboration between women of different ethnicities (possibly 25+ years for the Libyan/Nubian changeover, and probably 2-15 years for the Nubian/Saite one). For both type of High Priestess, the long incumbencies and the collaborative nature of their institutions combined to provide stability and continuity in their respective countries.

**Introduction**

At the genetic level, the ancient Egyptians were closely related to the inhabitants of the Near East. Connections between the two regions date back to prehistoric times and include economic migration, trade by land and sea, diplomatic exchanges and forced relocations arising from war. Given this shared heritage and interconnected history, it is perhaps unsurprising to find that certain religious and cultural motifs seem to transcend the traditional boundary between Egypt and the Ancient Near East. For example, the search for a murdered god by his sister-consort, and consequent resurrection/reappearance of the former, is shared by both the Osiris myth-cycle of ancient Egypt and the Canaanite Baal Cycle. In both Egypt and Mesopotamia, the animation of an effigy and activation of its senses is accomplished by a complex multi-step ritual that is focused on a ceremonial Opening of the Mouth. The temple foundation rituals of Egypt and Mesopotamia also have many...
elements in common. The Egyptian motif of the winged sun-disc as an emblem of royalty and divinity (Horus Behdety)8 has parallels in the royal/divine winged disc used in Syrian and Hittite iconography of the early 2nd millennium9 (or earlier)10 and its successors in neo-Assyrian11 and Achaemenid Persian12 imagery. Likewise, the protective shen-ring of Egyptian iconography (of which the cartouche is an elongated form) has significant visual overlap with the “rod and ring” symbol that symbolises kingship in Mesopotamia.13,14 Attention has been drawn to these intriguing parallels and, as the source references attest, the regional counterparts have been subjected to at least some level of comparative evaluation.15

Beyond these instances, however, there is another overlap, a shared pattern in the nexus of the royal and the divine in Egypt and Mesopotamia that – despite its importance to both the religious and political domains – has largely gone unremarked, and certainly has not been subjected to direct comparison.16 The institution I have in mind is the appointment of the king’s daughter to the position of High Priestess and consort of an important male deity – in Egypt, as God’s Wife of Amun (GWA), consort of the creator-god Amun at Thebes; in Babylonia, as EN-priestess of Nanna (EPN), spouse of the moon-god Nanna at Ur.

Although sharing many features, these institutions arose independently in the two regions. A comparison of the origins of each office is presented in Table 1, while the two deities – Nanna (Fig. 1) and Amun (Fig. 2) – are compared in Table 2. Each institution lasted for about a millennium, albeit with interruptions and periods of uncertainty; in Ur, the office of EPN operated ca. 2288-1104 BCE, while in Thebes, that of the GWA lasted ca. 1552-525 BCE (Fig. 3). In addition, the EPN at Ur enjoyed a belated revival some 500 or more years after the position had become extinct (Fig. 3). Both institutions were terminated by the arrival of Persian rule in their respective region (Babylonia, 539 BCE; Egypt, 525 BCE). As all historical dates/centuries in this paper are BCE, the era designator will be omitted from this point onward.

It is convenient to divide the trajectory of each office into an Early and a Late phase (Fig. 3); the Early phase for each institution is defined and compared with its counterpart in Table 3, with the Late phase (together with any belated revivals) being presented similarly in Table 4. The changing fortunes of each institution over time (i.e., its diachronic trajectory) are the subject of Table 5, which identifies times of strength, weakness and interruption for the two institutions. Conversely, the characteristic features and practices of the two offices (as manifested in either phase, without any requirement for synchronicity) are collated and compared in Table 6.

The contents of the Tables set the stage and provide the ingredients for the final – and potentially most meaningful – comparison between the cognate institutions in Mesopotamia and Egypt. The Mesopotamian institution started in strength but then declined in power (Fig. 3), a trajectory consistent with a marked decrease in female professional agency after the Ur III period.19 In contrast, the Egyptian institution began modestly and worked up to a powerful finale (Fig. 3). Accordingly, it is only by juxtaposing the features of these analogous offices in their respective peak periods that the most salient insights can be obtained.
Table 1. Origins of position

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Precursor(s)</th>
<th>EPN / Mesopotamia</th>
<th>GWA / Egypt</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>The High Priestess of Nanna at Ur had co-opted the masculine/archaic title EN (= Lord) ca. 2288 or soon after.</td>
<td>God’s Wife (deity unspecified) was a Middle Kingdom title held by two non-royal women.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Two ED reliefs from the Ur GIPAR show (EN?)-priestesses, while the GIPAR itself may date to ED.</td>
<td>An aristocratic woman of the First Intermediate Period was a God’s Wife of the ithyphallic god Min.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Woolley’s suggestion that the women in the ED Royal Cemetery were sacrificed “wives of Nanna” and their retinues no longer attracts support.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>A proto-EPN at Ur may have been Ninmetabarri, dau. of Anbu, 1st king of Mari (C25th-23rd?) in the Sumerian King-List. The title ZIRRU for such a position has ED precursors.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>An EPN-like office at Ur seems to predate Sargon (ca. 2288) to the ED, although some trace the EPN’s start to Sargon or to his grandson Naram-Sin.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Instigating king / Date</th>
<th>Sargon I / ca. 2288</th>
<th>Ahmose I / ca. 1552</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Founder of...</td>
<td>Akkadian Empire</td>
<td>New Kingdom &amp; Dyn 18</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>King’s origin</td>
<td>Akkad (northern Babylonia)</td>
<td>Thebes (southern Egypt)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cult city</td>
<td>Ur (southern Babylonia)</td>
<td>Thebes (southern Egypt)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>First appointee</td>
<td>Birth-name unknown (Semitic)</td>
<td>Ahmose-Nefertari</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Position in royal house</td>
<td>Daughter of Sargon I</td>
<td>Daughter of Queen Ahhotep. Sister or half-sister to Ahmose I.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Title(s) in cult</td>
<td>EN-priest/ess of Nanna (EPN).</td>
<td>God’s Wife of Amun (GWA). 2nd Priest of Amun.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>ZIRRU of Nanna.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Spouse (DAM) of Nanna.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Insertion into priesthood</td>
<td>Appointed by king</td>
<td>Position purchased and endowed by Ahmose I (see Decree below). Without this endowment, the GWA would (fictively, at least) be a nmh.t, i.e. a pauper/orphan.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Thone-name/ prenomen</td>
<td>Enheduana (Sumerian)</td>
<td>None or not known</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Decree</td>
<td></td>
<td>The “Donation Stele of Ahmose” was an im.tl pr.w deed, more economic and administrative than religious. Endowed GWA as</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
perpetual office, independent of future rulers, to be passed on by non-hereditary succession, e.g. to an heiress who too was first declared a notional nmm.t (orphan). Foundation of office was endorsed by an oracle of Amun.

Motivations of king
- Continue a tradition of some ED kings.
- Control over the city of Ur, countering power of local ruler (LUGAL) and establishing a loyal power-base in the south.
- Connect pan-Babylonian cultic system to royal family to legitimate rule over whole country.
- Royal access to temple assets.

Bolster cult of Amun(-Re), Egypt’s supreme god since MK, to gain better control over newly-unified country.

Royal access to temple assets.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Table 2. Deity</th>
<th>EPN / Mesopotamia</th>
<th>GWA / Egypt</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Name</td>
<td>Nanna (Sumerian), Suen/Sin (Akkadian)</td>
<td>Amun(-Re)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gender</td>
<td>Male</td>
<td>Male</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Centre of cult</td>
<td>Temple of Nanna at Ur, the EKISHNUGAL, mother-house of all moon-temples. Temples (also called EKISHNUGAL) at Babylon, Nippur. In Ur III &amp; Isin period, subsidiary temple at Urum and for Nanna of Karzida at Ga’eshe (near Ur). Also, from at least C14th, cult centre for Sin at Harran, prob. est. by merchants from Ur. Sin “had become early on the guarantor of royal political power in northern Mesopotamia.” Harran temple attested in Mari Archive (Isin/ Larsa-OB period). This became prominent in Neo-Babylonian era; mother of Nabonidus was a priestess there.</td>
<td>Temples of Karnak and Luxor at Thebes. Karnak = Great Temple of Amun(-Re).</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Role (incl. relationships)</td>
<td>Moon-god, in Sargonic times a son of sky-god An, in Ur III-OB times the eldest son of Enlil. His cult channelled the moon’s regenerative power to earth for human and agricultural fertility, esp. of cattle &amp; sheep. Nanna was very popular in OB times, but was never the supreme Creator, supreme god since MK/Dyn 12, unseen and everywhere. Since MK, and esp. from NK, linked with (Re-)Atum, the creator god of the Heliopolitan Ennead.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Astronomical identity</td>
<td>Lunar.</td>
<td>Solar (from NK on, when Amun takes on all properties of Re).</td>
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<tr>
<td>-----------------------</td>
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<td>------------------------------------------------------------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Father of Utu/Shamash, the sun-god.</td>
<td></td>
<td>Father of Khonsu, the moon-god.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Iconography of deity</td>
<td>Anthropomorphic.</td>
<td>Anthropomorphic.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Associated with bull, lion-dragon &amp; gazelle.</td>
<td>Occasionally ram-headed.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Divine spouse</td>
<td>Ningal (= “Great Lady”), a passive and supportive goddess.</td>
<td>Mut (= “Mother”).</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Iconography of spouse</td>
<td>Anthropomorphic.</td>
<td>Anthropomorphic.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Associated with water-birds (UBI-birds); prob. ZIRRU = hen (esp. of waterfowl, duck/goose/swan).</td>
<td>Sometimes lioness (&amp; thence cat); hieroglyph = vulture, hence wears vulture headdress.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The EPN was the earthly embodiment or representative of Ningal, Nanna’s divine wife.</td>
<td>The GWA was the earthly embodiment or representative of Mut, Amun’s divine wife.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### Table 3. Early phase

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>EPN / Mesopotamia</th>
<th>GWA / Egypt</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Time-period</strong></td>
<td>Akkadian to Old Babylonian, 2230-1730.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Pedigree</strong></td>
<td>Usually daughter of current king; sometimes daughter of the previous king and/or sister of the current king (e.g. Enanedu).</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Basic title(s)</strong></td>
<td>EN- (or Entu-)priest/ess of Nanna/Suen (EPN), ZIRRU of Nanna/Suen (esp. pre-Ur III).</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Additional possible title(s)</strong></td>
<td>[God’s Wife (DAM) of Nanna/Suen, if not a basic/implicit title]</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Position in temple hierarchy</strong></td>
<td>First. There was no High Priest of Nanna senior to the EPN.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Perception by populace</td>
<td>In Ur III, second only to king in social, political &amp; religious spheres.89</td>
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<tr>
<td>------------------------</td>
<td>--------------------------------------------------------------------------</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>A symbol of the Sumerian community as a whole (see <em>Tenure</em> section below).91</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Economic manager responsible for ensuring prosperity of the community.92</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Better-known incumbents</td>
<td>See notes at † and § (left).</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>† The position of an EPN in Barbara Weadock’s sequence of putative incumbents is given in [ ] .93</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>§ It has even been speculated that Sarai/Sarah, wife of the biblical patriarch Abram/Abraham, was an EPN or similar.94</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td><strong>Dyn 18:</strong> Ahmose-Nefertari. Hatshepsut and her daughter Neferure.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>... these 3 women used GWA as their preferred sole title.104</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td><strong>Dyn 19:</strong> Chief Royal Wives of Ramses I, Seti I, Ramses II &amp; Seti II: Satre, Tuva, Nefertari-Merymut &amp; Tausret, respectively.106</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td><strong>Dyn 20:</strong> Isis, dau. Ramses VI.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Notable decrees</td>
<td><strong>Dyn 18:</strong> Donation Stele (Dyn 18) of Ahmose, recovered from 3rd pylon at Karnak (see Table 1, Decree, above).</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Decree of Ramses VI (Dyn 20), who installed his daughter Isis as GWA and Divine Adoratrice.112</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Kudur-Mabuk, father of Enanedu, the last named EPN, ordered her copper mortuary statue to be overlaid with gold.108</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Enanedu recorded on a clay cone her restoration of the GIPAR and how she cleansed and secured the burial site of her predecessors, with room for future burials (Table 6, Mortuary cult);109 also a stone tablet recording her restorations and cultic embellishments.110 One of her inscriptions was found and translated by Nabonidus (555-539), who revived the cult.111</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Additional/special motivations</td>
<td>Continued access to temple assets, which by Isin/Larsa period included large estates and produced cloth on a commercial scale.113 The estates were so complex that freelance contractors were needed to manage them.114</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Continued access to temple assets, which were vast. Ramses VI (Dyn 20) was a weak king who ruled from Piramesse in the Delta (north) and needed to strengthen his control over the powerful priesthood at Thebes (south).115</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pedigree</td>
<td>EPN / Mesopotamia</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>---------------</td>
<td>-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Time-period</td>
<td>Old Babylonian to post-Kassite, 1730-1104.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pedigree</td>
<td>Most not princesses, probably non-royal.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Basic title(s)</td>
<td>EN- (or Entu-)priest/ess of Nanna/Sin (EPN).</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Additional possible title(s)</td>
<td>[Spouse (DAM) of the god Nanna/Sin, if not a basic/implicit title]</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Position in temple hierarchy</td>
<td>First, as in Early phase.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Notable decrees</td>
<td>Stela/relief of Nebuchadnezzar I (1125-1104, 2nd Dyn Isin) depicted the High Priestess of Nanna/Sin at Ur and listed her accoutrements. Its discovery by Nabonidus (555-539) at the end of the Neo-Babylonian era enabled him to revive the cult at Ur. The “Adoption Stele of Nitocris,” made by her father Psamtek I, was (like the Donation Stele of Ahmose) an im,yt-pr.w deed. It respected the rights of the incumbent (Shepenwepet II) and her heiress (Amenirdis II), but ensured the eventual transfer of the GWA position and its assets to Nitocris, witnessed and dated both in Sais and in Thebes. Despite his deference, Amenirdis II does seem to have been bypassed as GWA. Ankhnesneferibre’s stele presents her adoption (9 years previously) &amp; recent investiture in religious &amp; ritual terms, with a parochial Theban focus.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Additional/special motivations

HPA vacancy *ca.* 754-704 increased power of Amenirdis I (*ca.* 740-700).140
Restrain powerful priesthood of Thebes in politically turbulent times.141
Consolidate rule of “foreign” kings (Libyan & Nubian, Dyn 23-25)142 and the southern power of those ruling from the Delta, who were initially Assyrian vassals (Saites, Dyn 26).143
Matriarchal tendencies & familial power-sharing of Libyans and Nubians,144 traditionalism/piety of Kushite and Saite dynasties (Dyn 25-26).145

Table 5. Wax & wane

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Height of power</th>
<th>EPN / Mesopotamia</th>
<th>GWA / Egypt</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Early phase, esp. Ur III (<em>ca.</em> 4 EPNs at Ur).146 Also: a) Literature/propaganda of Enheduana, first named author in history (composer of the Sumerian Temple Hymns, Adoration of Inanna, etc.)147 b) Reconstruction of GIPAR by Enanedu, poss. as local deputy for her father.148 Her seal had the authority of royal dynastic seal.149 She is the only non-reigning royal to be lauded in a praise-hymn.150</td>
<td>Late phase. Specifically: a) Shepenwepet I (Dyn 23-24) considered by some as <em>de facto</em> ruler of Upper Egypt.151 b) Dyn 25-26, when GWA eclipsed the power of the High Priest of Amun.152 Peaked with Shepenwepet II, who rivalled Mentuemhat (mayor of Thebes) as <em>de facto</em> ruler of Upper Egypt;153 or with Saite GWAs.154</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hiatuses</td>
<td>Early phase GIPAR destroyed by Elamites at fall of Ur III (<em>ca.</em> 2003), rebuilt by Enanatuma (<em>ca.</em> 1955-1937).155 No named incumbents after Enanedu (still alive <em>ca.</em> 1796).156 Power shifted to the “convent of nuns” at Sippar (=second wives to Shamash) to which the OB kings sent their daughters,157 and to the multiple priestesses of Marduk.158 Still, Hammurabi placed a stele in the Temple of Ningal.159 Likely hiatus after damage to Ur by Samsuiluna (1749-1712),160 when the GIPAR may have been destroyed,161 and subsequent depopulation of Ur.162 Rebuilt</td>
<td>Early phase During 2nd half of Dyn 18 (post-Hatshepsut, perhaps a rejection of her rule).171</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
soon after by another OB king, and decayed slowly. Largely abandoned in C17-C16th because Euphrates had shifted to west; city mainly ruins by 1400. C14-C11th, head of Gulf retreated south, terminating Ur’s life as a port.

Late phase
Status uncertain until Kassite king Kurigalzu (1332-1308) restored the temenos, enlarging the GIPAR and relocating the Ningal temple.

The EN-priestess at Ur “certainly existed through Kassite times and beyond.” Her role is “attested as late as the post-Kassite period [i.e., after 1155], suggesting that at least the office was perpetuated whenever possible.” Ur lapsed into obscurity in C12th, reviving somewhat in C8-C7th.

Belated survival / revival?
Yes. Pious Neo-Assyrian governor of Ur, Sinbalatsu-igung, found the GIPAR in ruins ca. 660. He rebuilt over it to a new plan, ditto for Kurigalzu’s Ningal temple. Excavation of the GIPAR site has revealed a Neo-Assyrian building (ca. 650) with two tombs of women in copper coffins, presumed to be EPNs. The 2nd Neo-Babylonian king, Nebuchadnezzar II (605-562), renovated and rebuilt in the temenos.

Cult revived by Nabonidus, the last Neo-Babylonian king (555-539), an arch-traditionalist who excavated inscriptions of Nebuchadnezzar I and Enanedu and restored the Temple of Nanna (by then, Sin) at Ur. In response to a lunar eclipse in 554, he installed his daughter as the EPN En-nigaldi-Nanna at Ur. He remodelled the old GIPAR, restored the Ningal temple, and built a palatial residence (poss. a new GIPAR) outside the temenos in the north of the city.

Revival ended with Persian rule. After defeating Nabonidus, the Persian king Cyrus criticised him for elevating Sin over Marduk.

Late phase
Fully-titled GWAs after Isis (Dyn 20) include Maatkare (I) Mutemhet (Dyn 21), Shepenwepet I (Dyn 23) and her successors (to Dyn 26).

Despite continuous occupancy of position, by year 26 of Psamtek I (i.e., 638) the estate of the GWA had allegedly “fallen into ruin,” from which “all men seize things as their hearts dictate.” It was rebuilt for Nitocris by her first High Steward, Ibi.

Belated survival / revival?
No. Appointment of princess inconsistent with customs of Persian rule. Descent from a Nubian GWA was important to Nubian king Aspelta, 3 generations after Nubian withdrawal from Egypt. Aspects of the GWA’s office may have lingered into the Persian period (Dyn 27); possibly a (non-royal) priestess sexually consecrated to Amun at Thebes.

The office of GWA was not restored in the religious revivals of Dyn 30 or the Ptolemaic era. Some Ptolemaic priestesses of Amun reprinted the title Adoratrice. Titles and epithets of the Ptolemaic queens of Egypt seem to be borrowed from the titularies of the GWAs. At Edfu, one Ptolemaic queen is described as a Divine Adoratrice.
and for appointing his dau. as EPN.\textsuperscript{183} Appointment of princess as GWA ended with Persian rule, as described above.

Table 6. Traditions (either phase)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Pedigree</th>
<th>EPN / Mesopotamia</th>
<th>GWA / Egypt</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Dau. of king in Early phase, prob. giving way to non-royals in Late phase.</td>
<td>Great Royal Wife (herself often a royal dau.) in Early phase, giving way to dau. of current king in Late phase.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Alternative fates</th>
<th>EPN / Mesopotamia</th>
<th>GWA / Egypt</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Abroad – diplomatic marriage of princess to foreign ruler.</td>
<td>Early phase: Domestic – Egyptian princesses were not married off to foreign rulers. Late phase: Abroad or domestic – former policy overturned in Dyn 21.\textsuperscript{192}</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Parallel institutions</th>
<th>EPN / Mesopotamia</th>
<th>GWA / Egypt</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Akkadian era: EN-priestesses of Enlil, Shamash, Utu, Mes-sanga-Unug at other cities.\textsuperscript{193} Ur III &amp; Isin/Larsa: Also find EN-priestesses of Enki &amp; Nigublaga, and subsidiary EPNs at Karzida/ Ga’esh &amp; Urum.\textsuperscript{194}</td>
<td>“Wife of Min” known in OK/FIP.\textsuperscript{195} Some MK-LP use of “God’s Wife” without deity being named.\textsuperscript{196} Local theogamous priestesses known,\textsuperscript{197} e.g. TIP/LP: God’s Wife of Neferhotep at Hutsekhem\textsuperscript{198} and of Heryshaf at Heracleopolis (the latter incl. a Saite princess).\textsuperscript{199} Divine Adoratrices of other male creator deities (e.g. Atum) may have sexual function.\textsuperscript{200} Otherwise, GWA “without direct parallel in other religious hierarchies in Egypt,”\textsuperscript{201} or in Nubia.\textsuperscript{202}</td>
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<tr>
<th>Selection rituals</th>
<th>EPN / Mesopotamia</th>
<th>GWA / Egypt</th>
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<td>Divination.\textsuperscript{203} In early phase, the ZIRR\textsuperscript{R} was “chosen by means of (omens taken from the entrails of) a goat”\textsuperscript{204} and her selection could provide the next year-name, as done for Enmahgalana (ca. 2043).\textsuperscript{205} Liver extispicy was the usual selection method (ca. 2000),\textsuperscript{206} incl. in the Neo-Babylonian revival (554).\textsuperscript{207}</td>
<td>Usually just royal pronouncement. An oracle was used to confirm the appointment of Ahmose-Nefertari, the first GWA.\textsuperscript{208} An oracle was used to confirm the appointment of Ramses VI’s dau. Isis, perhaps a reflection of his lack of political power.\textsuperscript{209} Upon adoption, Ankhnesneferibre’s titles (incl. HPA) were confirmed by oracle of Amun.\textsuperscript{210}</td>
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<th>Training &amp; installation</th>
<th>EPN / Mesopotamia</th>
<th>GWA / Egypt</th>
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<td>After ritual purification, undertook novitiate (prob. oral training by current incumbent).\textsuperscript{211} Novitiate between selection and enthronement could last several years.\textsuperscript{212} EPN at Ur was probably installed similarly to EPN at Karzida, who underwent an investiture celebration (7 days of procession, entry to temples of various deities with sacrifices), then an enthronement ceremony (throne-name conferred 4 times,</td>
<td>Late phase: Investiture rites similar to those for a pharaoh.\textsuperscript{214} GWA installed by visiting Temple of Amun followed by large procession of the priesthood. Initiation rituals were performed by “the scribe of the divine book and great wab-priests of this temple,” with purification by</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Residence</td>
<td>The GIPAR in the <em>temenos</em> at Ur, associated with the EKISHNUGAL (Temple of Nanna).</td>
<td>GWA palace recently identified at Naga Malgata, North Karnak, superseding palace in Medinet Habu.</td>
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<td>Deity focused upon</td>
<td>Ningal, whose temple was in the GIPAR (Early phase) or beside it (Late phase). See, however, the <em>Postscript</em> added in 2019 at the end of this paper.</td>
<td>Late phase: Amun-Re in iconography; also Osiris, as many GWAs built Osirian chapels. Medinet Habu, site of the GWA memorial chapels, is focused on Amun(-Re) and Osiris (main text, <em>Residence</em>...). Most GWA throne-names incorporate Mut, but otherwise she is largely supplanted in GWA-sponsored scenes by the GWA herself. Mut was important independent of Amun(-Re); she had her own priesthood and temple at Karnak. Also, consort of state god of Nubia. GWA could embody Hathor or Tefnut, sometimes Isis. Like Mut, these could be God’s Hand.</td>
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<td>Concurrency</td>
<td>Only one EPN at Ur (the main temple) at any one time. However, the EPN at Ur was supplemented by EPNs at other sites (e.g. Amar-Suen named years for the installations of EPN at Ur and elsewhere, incl. one for Nanna of Karzida at Ga’esh). These too were “wives of Nanna.”</td>
<td>Only one GWA at any one time. The GWA and her staff were located at Thebes, and no other temple of Amun in Egypt had a GWA. Hatshepsut did not hold the title of GWA concurrently with her dau. Neferure; it was passed to latter once Hatshepsut had become king.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Cultic roles (for sacred marriage, see next section)</td>
<td>Lived in relative isolation from outside world. Ritual ablutions before entering sanctuary. Sang holy songs, esp. the <em>ASILA</em> (jubilation). Presided over rituals, which were performed by assistants. Banqueted with deity. prepared daily food/beer offerings to god; provisioned the cult and donated precious items. Accompanied divine images in processions, e.g. New Year trip of Nanna’s statue to Eridu.</td>
<td>Ritual ablutions before entering sanctuary. Pre-ritual, bathed in sacred lake. Entertained &amp; honoured gods via music (esp. sistrum); by pouring libations &amp; burning incense; by consecrating food offerings; by presenting Maat (justice/order/truth). Accompanied the God’s Fathers (mid-ranking male priests) in processions &amp; liturgies.</td>
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With king, accompanied Nanna’s statue biannually to Karzida for AKITI festival. Interceded with the god on behalf of the king. Built, repaired and maintained temples and chapels. Commissioned statues of king and deity.

Partnered with king in provisioning, protecting & rejuvenating gods. Officiated at other Rites of Royal & Divine Dominion. Identified with Isis in some rites. Built temples & dedicated shrines. Shepenwepet II (Dyn 25) is only non-king shown publicly performing “Driving of the Four Calves” and “Striking of the Meret-Chests.” She also seems to have celebrated a sed festival (see Iconography section), perhaps at her investiture.

Sacred marriage

Mirrors the archaic concept of sacred marriage between king of Uruk and goddess Inanna. Earlier scholars believed the king played the part of Nanna in sacred marriage rite with EPN; e.g. Ur-Namma’s royal line was secured via the EPN in Nippur, who gave birth to Shulgi.

More recent opinions see a symbolic (i.e. non-sexual) act in which the EPN lay down to music on a sacred bed in Nanna’s bed-chamber within the GIPAR, the AGRUN (room C28), which was decorated with hay & flowers.

It is likely that the sacred marriage described by Herodotus [Hdt. I 181.5-182.1] (C5th) is actually a memory of the union of EPN En-nigaldi-Nanna (dau. of Nabonidus, C6th) with Sin at Ur. Herodotus links this directly with practice of Egyptian GWA-like priestess (see opposite column).

Does not mirror sacred marriage of king to goddess in Sumerian sense. However, in Early phase, the union between the king and queen, identifi-ced with Amun(-Re) and Hathor/Mut respectively, represented the marriage of these deities. (The Early phase practice of Great Royal Wife = GWA formalised the queen as Mut.) Her son, the next king, was the “son of Amun(-Re).”

Some propose sexual stimulation of Amun by GWA, e.g. in her capacity as God’s Hand, but overall there is no good evidence for sexual rituals. The sound of the sistrum may evoke the sexual union of Amun and his consort, but certainly does not implicate the musician in the sex act.

Koch has recently re-envisaged the Dyn 23-26 GWAs as daughters rather than spouses of Amun.

Celibacy & procreation

Older literature says celibate and childless, though intercourse & conception via king possible in sacred marriage rite. Much current literature perpetuates the belief in the unmarried, childless or even virginal “spouse of the deity,” while conceding human failings. Sto cites as evidence the myth of Atrahasis (in which children are declared taboo to EN-priestesses), the Many early GWAs were Royal Wives, and thus were not celibate and often had children. However, it is no longer thought that the king was required to marry the GWA to legitimate his rule and succession.

Much modern literature perpetuates the belief that Ramses VI (Dyn 20) stipulated that his daughter Isis remain unmarried, and that subsequent GWAs followed suit. Rationale is that it prevented these
clandestine nature of Sargon’s birth to an EN-priestess in legend,270 law codes from Ur III, and traditions from OB onwards (while conceding that late texts seem to acknowledge marriage).

Other recent literature says High Priestesses were not celibate and that children are attested in all periods;271 e.g., the seal of Enanatuma’s son is known.272

Assistant/deputy & key staff

Probably had a key assistant (of same gender) called a LAGAR.282

Below that fall three other senior ranks; then 5 types of performative actors; 2 kinds of cantor/musician; and female votaries.283

Celibacy of Late phase GWAs accepted by Leahy277 but contested by Teeter, who argues *inter alia* that Amenirdis II was married and had a child.278 Manassa and Pope too contest celibacy.279 Bryan says husbands are conceivable and can explain lack of evidence.280

Ayad maintains that the powerful GWAs of Dyn 23-26 were indeed single and seemingly childless, although perhaps not ritually precluded from sexual relations.281

Power

Incumbents had “weak legal authority but strong personal and mystical spiritual influence.”291

Known via local excursions.292

Considered masculine from Ur III-OB, poss. reflecting power;293 see *Representation…*, below.

Their blessing probably needed for appointment of local ruler.294

Head of temple household, a major institution in the local economy.295 Scale illustrated by a receipt naming Enmenana.296

A claim that Enanedu acted as a money-lender seems unfounded.297

Tenure, succession, and response to new king or dynasty

A new EPN may have been appointed after a set term, or replaced at a certain age.302

No formal “adoption” of heiress; incumbent seems to have retired after a new appointment,303 becoming *emerita*.304

princesses from engendering rival dynasties in Thebes.276

Heiress as main cultic assistant,285 in Dyn 26 also *šms.wt* (Followers).286

Heiress as main cultic assistant,285 in Dyn 26 also *šms.wt* (Followers).286

Senior cult singers were titled Chantress of the Interior of Amun; three D26 heiresses were Great Chantress of the Interior.287 Many Chantresses were buried at Medinet Habu, some in close association with GWA memorial chapels.288

Administrators of the estate of the GWA, headed by the High Steward of the God’s Wife/Adoratrice,289 included a “Scribe of counting grain” and an “Oversee of cattle.”290

Religious authority; successors reportedly greeted with joy by populace.298

[For masculinisation, see *Representation…*, below.]

Dyn 23-26, political power, poss. as *de facto* (co-)rulers of Upper Egypt.299

Second to HPA (or in Dyn 25-26, his equal/superior) as head of temple assets, which were vast. Under Ramses II (Dyn 19), there were over 50,000 priests of Amun at Thebes.300 Nitocris I commanded daily tribute of 190 kg bread, cereals, herbs & milk from the priests, plus monthly tribute of cattle and additional foods.301

Many modern authors perpetuate the belief that Ramses VI (Dyn 20) stipulated that his daughter Isis and subsequent GWAs had to adopt the daughter of each subsequent king as their heiress.310 Rationale is that it prevented these princesses aiding rival claimants to the throne.311
remained in the GIPAR as their tombs are there (see Table 6, Mortuary cult).

“So important and sacred was the dignity of these priestesses at Ur that they were often able to retain their office undisturbed by dynastic changes in the civil government.”

A documented exception was Enheduana, ousted (temporarily) by Lugal-Ane’s rebellion.

Many EPNs served at Ur for long periods (30-40 years), providing a unifying link through times of disunity. E.g. Enanatum (of Isin) served long after Gungunum (of Isin’s enemy, Larsa) had conquered Ur.

Others deny that it predates Dyn 22 and point to the Nitocris Adoption Stele (Dyn 26) as formalising king’s dau. & adoption pattern.

These adoptions were motivated by secular rather than cultic concerns. They were bureaucratic devices relating to inheritance of the office and its assets, and unrelated to celibacy or biological motherhood.

Isis (Dyn 20) reigned for 25-50 yrs. Yoyotte estimated ave. 50 yr tenure for GWAs of Dyn 21-23.

In Dyn 25-26, the daughter of a new king was usually adopted as heiress by the incumbent GWA. Tenures were long (25-68 yrs) and often crossed dynastic boundaries.

Collaboration/delegation was common, with dynastic overlaps that required many years of co-operation between different ethnicities.

Only ever one GWA at a time, but she and her heiress(es) were probably regarded as a single “college.”

Thonne-name/prenomen

Yes (Sumerian).

All names commence with EN-. Most do not refer to Nanna or to Ningal, his divine spouse.

Yes, from Maatkare (Dyn 21) on. That of Shepenwepet I refers to Amun and evokes Hatshepsut’s.

Most other names incorporate Mut, the divine wife of Amun.

Enheduana, the first certain EPN at Ur, was a cultural pioneer who styled herself as such, wrote in the first person under own name, and asserted herself before the gods.

Religious ruler & builder, interceding with god for king.

Filiation term DUMU suggests “son” of the king, although may just be archaism (= son or dau. in Old Sumerian). Gender considered masculine from Ur III-OB period, e.g. Enanatum is “son” of Kudur-Mabuk and “brother” of Warad-Sin (Larsa, r. 1834-23).

“maleness” prob. a reflection of the role’s power.

Cartouche from at least Dyn 20, regal status of a king by Dyn 26.

Late phase GWAs used feminised versions of the king’s titulary (female equivalents of Son of Re, Master of the Two Lands, Master of Appear-ances/Crowns, Horus, etc.)

Donation Stele of Ahmose (Dyn 18) stipulated that the office of GWA will pass “from son to son forever;” this reflects the male-oriented legal terms of the im.yt pr.w deed. A phrase in the Adoption Stele of Nitocris may hint at a notional male filiation between successive GWAs. The death of Nitocris is recorded using phraseology for kin.

Iconography

Depicted in reliefs and statuary. Almost all images are from Early phase.

Depicted in reliefs and statuary.

Early phase attire: Often dressed as a MK priestess. Short close-fitting wig with thin fillet tied at back of head, ends trailing; sheath dress.
All crowned (AGA-crown head-dress, esp. circle), most enthroned.

Flounced/pleated woollen robe (an attribute of divinity), usually covering both shoulders; long loose hair.

May appear taller than less important persons.

Use of motifs otherwise restricted to king or deity.

Late phase attire: Often dressed as a Dyn 18 queen and impersonating Mut. Crowned by modius with šw.ty = 2 tall feathers (sometimes also with solar disc between horns); vulture cap or crown (for Mut/Nekhbet, Isis, Hathor); poss. uraeus. Long lappet or short curly wig; if unwigged, hair gathered close to skull by fillet or ribbon (often with bonnet too). Broad collar; sometimes shawl. Dress is either long, loose and multi-layered with sash, or else a tight sheath.

In Late phase, use of motifs otherwise restricted to king, as follows. Shepenwepet I (Dyn 23) is crowned and suckled by a goddess. Dyn 23-26 GWAs present Maat to Amun. In Dyn 25, Amenirdis I founded a temple and received sed symbols, Shepenwepet II had proffering sphinxes and seems to have celebrated a sed and other king-only rites (see Cultic roles above). Shepenwepet II publicly portrayed the divine marriage, showing (separately) Amenirdis I and herself in embrace with Amun. Deceased Amenirdis I shown deified. In Dyn 23-26, GWA closer to gods than kin.

Building program

Enanatuma did extensive (re-) building in ruined GIPAR; built chapels to Utu and Dagan “for the life of” the king. Enanedu reconstructed the GIPAR (Table 3, Notable decrees).

Yes, from Dyn 23-26. Residence in N Karnak; chapels to Osiris (high-lighting relationship to the king) in N & E Karnak; GWA funerary chapels in Medinet Habu.

Mortuary cult

Yes. The dead EPNs lived on in statues, housed in mortuary chapels; offerings were made there and/or at graves.

By Ur III, the outdoor cemetery had become vaults under the GIPAR’s residential quarters. Exposed again by late Larsa dyn, the graveyard was restored and re-enclosed by Enanedu.

Food offerings in Isin/Larsa period continue older tradition. Not usually deified after death, although Enanatuma and Enmegalana seemingly were.

Yes. Prob. Ahmose-nefertari (Dyn 18). Definitely Dyn 23-26, with mortuary chapels at Medinet Habu, which probably housed cult statues and would have received offerings.

GWA played role of dutiful “eldest son” by officiating in funerary cult of predecessor; this also legitimated their succession.

Not usually deified after death, although Amenirdis I was shown thus.

Politization

May date to ED with Ninmetabarri, dau. of king of Mari.
Began for sure with Enheduana, dau. Sargon, who saw herself as spiritual leader of the Akkadian empire and promoted her father’s deity (Ishtar, primary goddess of Akkad) as a universal deity superior to her own spouse Nanna, the moon deity and city-god of Ur. She wrote hymns that helped to syncretise Inanna (Sum.) with Ishtar (Akk.) and that drew together temples from 35 different Babylonian cities, unifying the pantheon. Her poems also express political/legal outrage at challenges to the empire that her father had initiated. Enheduana’s writings remained a tool for unity into OB times. Sargon/Enheduana’s unity-through-religion program was echoed 1700 yrs later by the Neo-Babylonian king Nabonidus and his daughter.

Began with Isis, dau. of Ramses VI (Dyn 20), a king who ruled from the Delta and needed to strengthen royal control over Thebes. Full exploitation with Shepenwepet I (Dyn 23), who had her own governing administration and whom some scholars consider to have been de facto ruler of Upper Egypt. Shepenwepet II rivalled Mentuemhat, mayor of Thebes, as de facto ruler of Upper Egypt.

Accordingly, the Early phase of the EPN at Ur, especially some 525 years within the Akkadian through Isin/Larsa periods, must be contrasted with the Late phase of the GWA at Thebes, especially a 265-year span encompassing the TIP/Late Period Dynasties 23-26. It is this comparison, and the attendant discussion, that forms the main text of the paper. Despite the many differences in religious belief between late 3rd- to early 2nd-millennium Mesopotamia and early- to mid-1st millennium Egypt – most conspicuously in the importance attached to the afterlife and the understanding of what it entailed – we shall see that the supreme female high priestly offices share some interesting and unexpected similarities.

**The Office of High Priestess**

At the start of the respective peak periods, the High Priestess in each country was the daughter of the current king. In Mesopotamia, the institution of EPN actually
began with the installation of Enheduana – daughter of Sargon, the founder of the Akkadian Empire – at Ur (Table 1; Fig. 4). In Egypt, the GWA’s period of peak strength began in Dynasty 23 – a period of Libyan rule in the Third Intermediate Period – with the appointment of Shepenwepet I, daughter of king Osorkon III (r. 777-749), in 754 (Table 4). She was following in the footsteps of Karomama Meritmut (Fig. 5), a God’s Wife/Divine Adoratrice (= Karomama G) who was possibly a half-sister of her great-grandfather, Nimlot C. Osorkon III ruled from Thebes and controlled the country as far as Leontopolis in the Delta. His son Takelot served as High Priest of Amun (HPA) up to the time of his accession to the throne as his father’s co-regent and eventual successor (Takelot III, r. 763-744).

In both cases, the initial appointments appear to have been politically motivated and to have been intended to exert royal control over a rival institution and/or a remote region. It was useful for Sargon, who ruled from Akkad in northern Babylonia, to have his daughter Enheduana acting on his behalf in a key city of Sumer, countering the power of the ruler of Ur and establishing a loyal power-base in the south (Table 1, Motivations of king). Equally, it seems likely that the

Fig. 1. Nanna. King Ur-Namma (founder of the Ur III dynasty) makes a libation before the seated figure of the Sumerian moon-god Nanna (Akkadian Sin), who wears the horned crown of divinity and holds the “rod and ring” combination that symbolises kingship. Detail from the Stele of Ur-Namma, University of Pennsylvania Museum of Archaeology and Anthropology, object B16676.14. Photo of restoration predating 1901, Public Domain. The unrestored fragment can be seen online.
Fig. 2. **Amun.** Gold-plated silver figure of the Egyptian supreme god Amun(-Re), Dynasty 26. The figure’s divine beard shows that he is a god, and his headdress identifies him as Amun. British Museum EA60006. Photo © Trustees of the British Museum, reproduced here under licence CC BY-NC-SA 4.0.
Fig. 3. Synoptic timeline. Chronology for the EN-priestess of Nanna (EPN) at Ur and the God’s Wife of Amun (GWA) in Egypt. The thickness of the salmon-coloured bars reflects the perceived strength of the office of EPN at Ur and/or the functionality of its home, the GIPAR; that of the blue bars reflects the perceived strength of the office of GWA. Dashed lines indicate uncertainty. The vertical scale is necessarily subjective; note that some thinner segments may have had a non-princess as priestess or even no incumbent. The millennium-long window during which each office was considered operational (EPN ca. 2288-1104, GWA ca. 1552-525) is indicated by a dashed horizontal grey bracket; the notional division of each window into an Early phase and a Late phase (Tables 3 & 4, respectively) is shown in green, with the boundary marked by a triangle. The period of peak strength for each office (EPN ca. 2288-1796, GWA ca. 754-525) is indicated by a solid horizontal magenta-coloured bracket. Abbreviations: TIP, Third Intermediate Period; Neo-Ass., Neo-Assyrian period; Neo-Bab., Neo-Babylonian period.

appointment of Shepenwepet as GWA in the year when her brother relinquished the role of HPA was motivated by a desire to maintain royal influence over the senior priesthood of Amun;\textsuperscript{389} the manoeuvre probably shared the same motivation as the appointment of her predecessor, Isis, by Ramses VI at the end of the New Kingdom (Table 3, \textit{Additional/special motivations}). Accordingly, one may consider the position of High Priestess as “an offshoot of kingship on the local level.”\textsuperscript{390} The EPNs and GWAs themselves appear to have done so, inasmuch as they habitually co-opted iconography, rituals and epithets that were otherwise reserved for the king (Table 6, \textit{Representation... and Iconography}). Indeed, as Betsy Bryan has pointed out, the separateness and independence of the office of GWA – together with its unusual succession process (Table 6, \textit{Tenure...}) – constitute a female equivalent to the description of kingship found in the \textit{Teaching for King Merikare}, an Egyptian literary text set in the First Intermediate Period:

\begin{quote}
The kingship is an excellent office;
It has no son, it has no brother, who can make its monuments endure,
Though each man ennobles his successor,
And each man acts on behalf of him who preceded him,
In hope that his action may be affirmed by another who comes after him.\textsuperscript{391,392}
\end{quote}
Fig. 4. Votive disc of Enheduana. (a) Alabaster relief, found in the GIPAR, depicting (on its obverse, shown here) the EPN Enheduana officiating in a ritual. (b) Close-up of Enheduana (2nd figure from left). University of Pennsylvania Museum of Archaeology and Anthropology, object B16665. Photo courtesy of Penn Museum, available via the Ur Online database, reproduced here under licence CC BY-NC-SA 4.0.

From these considerations, it should come as no surprise to find that both types of priestess were routinely shown crowned: the EPN wearing the circlet of the AGA-crown (Figs. 4b & 6), the GWA wearing the vulture head-dress (Fig. 7; an emblem of queenship), the twin-plumed crown of Amun(-Re) (Fig. 8) and, at times, the kingly uraeus (Table 6, Iconography). In addition, depictions of the EPN usually show her enthroned (Fig. 6). Shepenwepet II is likewise shown enthroned in a scene at North Karnak;395 this GWA seems to have celebrated a sed-festival and other rites that were ordinarily the exclusive preserve of the king (Table 6, Cultic roles and Iconography).

It is significant that the deities to which the two High Priestesses were consecrated – Nanna/Sin, a lunar deity, and Amun(-Re), a solar one – were closely linked with kingship. It is well known that, from the New Kingdom onward, the king of Egypt was considered to be the son of Amun, who in turn had taken on all the properties of the sun-god, Re (Table 2, Role & Astronomical identity). It is perhaps less widely appreciated that, in Mesopotamia, Nanna/Sin was not just a god of fertility but was also the guarantor of the political order, and especially of royal power (Table 2, Role). As Tamara Green has observed, from Ur III to the Neo-Babylonian period,
Fig. 5. Karomama Meritmut, Divine Adoratrice of Amenemope. Louvre Museum N500. It has been described as “an exceptional piece of work, known by everybody, used to illustrate many developments about Egyptian civilization.” In the academic literature, Karomama (Dynasty 22) is often treated as a full GWA. Her tomb was discovered in 2014. Photograph by Miguel Hermoso Cuesta, available via Wikimedia Commons, reproduced here under licence CC BY-SA 3.0.
“everywhere we find close ties between the institution of kingship and ‘Father Nanna, lord of the shining crown,’ whose crescent shape was transformed into a mitre, the symbol of the royal crown.” Some differences in how the EPN and GWA engaged with Nanna and Amun(-Re), and identified with their divine consorts Ningal and Mut, respectively, are explored below in the section titled Cult and Ritual.
Fig. 7. A Nubian GWA. “Sandstone relief of a divine consort,” probably the GWA Amenirdis I or Shepenwepet II. Fitzwilliam Museum E.GA.4542.1943, © The Fitzwilliam Museum, Cambridge. Image reproduced here under licence.
Fig. 8. Amenirdis I. Detail of wall scene from a GWA mortuary chapel, Medinet Habu. Photo by Neithsabes, derivative work (colour correction) by JMCC1, available via Wikimedia Commons, reproduced here under licence CC BY-SA 3.0.
Subsequent to the appointment of Enheduana, a newly-nominated EPN was usually the daughter of the current king, although at times – as, for example, with Enanedu – she could be the sister of the current king (Table 3, Pedigree; Fig. 9). Likewise, after the appointment of Shepenwepet I, the daughter of each new Egyptian king (with a few exceptions) was designated as heiress to the incumbent GWA (Table 4, Pedigree; Fig. 10), although she was often not elevated to GWA until the subsequent reign of one of her brothers. The details of succession in Egypt and Mesopotamia will be discussed later in the sections titled Succession and Survival. For the moment, it is sufficient to note that each office continued to operate as an extension and outpost of kingship. This is especially clear in the case of Egypt (Table 4, Additional/special motivations). Accordingly, some time around 740, the first Nubian king of Egypt – Kashta – is believed to have installed his daughter Amenirdis (Fig. 8) as heiress to Shepenwepet I. Since this achievement legitimized the Nubian takeover of Thebes, it constituted for Kashta “the key moment in the process of the extension of Kushite power over Egyptian territories.” Equally, the designation of Nitocris as heiress to the position of GWA bolstered the southern power of the Saite dynasty (Dynasty 26), kings of Libyan descent who ruled from the Delta and whose state had begun as Assyrian vassalship. In Mesopotamia, the value of the EN-priestess as... a useful and powerful political tool was not lost on the Ur III and Isin kings. These expanded the use of this institution even further, creating additional en priestesses. During these particular periods, there existed three separate en priestesses of Nanna (at Ur, Karzida/Gaesh, and Urum respectively), as well as those of Enlil, Enki and Ningublaga.

More needs to be said about the political dimension of the EPN and GWA than is appropriate for this introductory section. Accordingly, the theme will be reprised below in the section titled Power and Prosperity, which deals more fully with the role of the High Priestess as a spiritual and economic leader of her community.

The expansion of the number of EPNs in the Ur III period set up an enduring point of contrast between the office of EPN and that of GWA, insofar as, at any time thereafter, the EPN at Ur was likely to have counterparts at secondary temples elsewhere in Babylonia (Table 6, Concurrency). In contrast, the GWA at Thebes was invariably the only such office-bearer in Egypt. We should, however, be aware...
Fig. 10. Genealogy of the GWAs during the peak period of the office (Dynasties 23-26). Heiresses/adoptees are indicated in blue type; those that took office as GWA are shown in capitals. Queens’ names are given in black italics. Date-spans in black are from Ayad and Kitchen; those for kings give their reigns, while those for GWAs typically cover the year of their adoption as heiress to the presumed year of retirement or death, whichever is the sooner. Date-spans in brown are from Dodson; for GWA candidates, date of adoption as heiress in regular type, term as GWA (excluding retirement, if any) in bold type. GWA date-spans in grey (using the same format) are from Koch (2012 & 2014). The tree follows the traditional filiation for Shabaqo (Shabaka) and Shebitqo (Shabataka), as set forth by Ayad (2009a), whereas Dodson has Shebitqo as a son of Shabaqo, new considerations even favour reversing the order of their reigns. HPA, High Priest of Amun, date from Dodson. Pre-Dynasty 26 dates are approximate.
that – both in Mesopotamia and in Egypt – additional princesses were sometimes installed as High Priestesses of other gods at other cities. Thus, as well as installing his daughter Enmenana as EPN at Ur, Sargon’s grandson Naram-Sin “expanded this policy by placing several of his daughters as high priestesses of prominent cults in other Babylonian cities, a clear attempt to gain a solid foothold throughout the region.” For example, he appointed his daughter Tutanapshum as En-priestess of Enlil. Similarly, in Dynasty 26 of Egypt, Merytrebs – a daughter of Psamtek II, and thus a sister of the GWA Ankhnesneferibre – served as a God’s Wife of Heryshaf at Heracleopolis (Table 6, Concurrency). Like the more important office of GWA, the position at Heracleopolis was occupied by just one woman at a time, and the incumbent enjoyed the use of an estate.

Besides the presence of subordinate EPNs at secondary temples, another point of distinction between the EPN at Ur and the GWA is that the former was the head of the priesthood of Nanna and answerable only to the king, whereas the latter was the Second Priest of Amun in an institution led by the High Priest of Amun (HPA), who traditionally was male. However, the powers of the GWA increased over the course of Dynasties 25-26 to the extent that they eclipsed those of the HPA. Indeed, late in Dynasty 26, the title of HPA was absorbed by the office of GWA (Table 4, Position...). This topic too will be reprised in greater detail in the section titled Power and Prosperity.

Finally, we must consider the most unusual characteristic shared by the EPN and GWA: the designation of these High Priestesses as “wives of the god.” This defining feature of the two offices is the subject of the next section.

Spouse or Servant?

The Egyptian term hm.t ntr embodies an important ambiguity, insofar as hm.t can mean either “female servant” or “woman/wife.” In the context of hm.t ntr n.(t) Imn.w (God’s Wife of Amun), conclusive support for the latter meaning is provided by the hieroglyphic orthography, which distinguishes between the two categories: ⲁ ⲁ ⲁ, the form of hm.t ntr observed in inscriptions, denotes the wife of a god, whereas the other writing of hm.t ntr, ⲁ ⲁ ⲁ ⲁ, would signify a female servant of the deity. In addition, we have depictions of some late GWAs, such as the Dynasty 25 incumbents Amenirdis I and Shepenwepet II (Fig. 7), embracing Amun in manner wholly unbefitting a servant. However, the identical phonology does beg the question of whether the matrimonial dimension of this priestly office might not be a later extension to an originally prosaic role; after all, hm.t ntr ("I =") is just the female counterpart of hm ntr ("I, “servant of the god”), the well-known title usually translated as “priest” or “prophet.” The complementary term hm ntr.t is poorly attested; at Dendera, a type of priest in the cult of Hathor who participated in ritual processions is so titled, but he is clearly nothing more than “le serviteur de la déesse.” The inverse term h(?)y ntr.t (”husband of the goddess”) does not seem to be attested at all.

As we shall see, similar complexities attend the Mesopotamian situation. Enheduana titled herself “the ZIRRU of Nanna and the DAM (spouse) of Nanna” (Fig. 11). Enanepada called herself “the EN-priestess of Nanna, the ZIRRU of Nanna and the
Fig. 11. Detail of the surviving inscription on the reverse of Enheduana’s disc (for obverse, see Fig. 4), with mark-up. University of Pennsylvania Museum of Archaeology and Anthropology, object B16665. Base photo courtesy of Penn Museum, available via the Ur Online database,\textsuperscript{432} reproduced here under licence CC BY-NC-SA 4.0. Mark-up (black-on-white symbols, grey transliteration & translation) shows matches of inscribed glyphs to those in a standard Sumerian sign-list;\textsuperscript{433} DIRI-compounds are deconstructed in dark red text.\textsuperscript{434} The complete inscription survives in an Old Babylonian copy.\textsuperscript{435}

[DA]M of Nanna;\textsuperscript{436} and Enanatuma referred to herself as “the ZIRRU of Nanna and EN-priestess of Nanna in Ur.”\textsuperscript{437} While admitting that the etymology of ZIRRU is unknown, Piotr Steinkeller contends that the cuneiform components of this DIRI-compound\textsuperscript{438} specify “faithful woman of Nanna,” an epithet that he considers more appropriate to a servant rather than a spouse.\textsuperscript{439} He believes that, in the southern Babylonian tradition, the High Priest of a goddess such as Inanna or Nanshe was a male consort (EN or šennu) of the deity, whereas the High Priestesses of male deities (ERES-DINGIR, MUNUS-ZI, ZIRRU, etc.) were merely attendants or companions of the god.\textsuperscript{440} In contrast, the northern Babylonian tradition provided male deities with female consorts in the form of DAM.DINGIR priestesses.\textsuperscript{441} Steinkeller proposes that the southern (Sumerian) and northern (Semitic) traditions converged to create the EN-priestess who was a god’s wife, and that the first holder of such an office in southern Babylonia was Enheduana.\textsuperscript{442} As the daughter of an Akkadian king serving a male god in a Sumerian temple, she certainly combined the requisite credentials for such an innovation. If Enheduana was indeed the first EPN, then any Early Dynastic representations of High Priestesses of Nanna at Ur must be interpreted as ZIRRUS (attendants) rather than as EN-priestesses (consorts).\textsuperscript{443}
In (sometimes heated) opposition to Steinkeller, Joan Westenholz argues that there is no evidence from the Early Dynastic period for the religious male EN (i.e., the consort of a goddess) as a Southern Babylonian tradition. She contends that the concept of the High Priestess as a “god’s wife” was in fact an indigenous Sumerian tradition, supported by evidence from the Early Dynastic period (Table 1, Precursors); accordingly, she does not see Semitic input in the concept of EN-priestess.

The progression in the titulary of the EPN from the Akkadian to Old Babylonian periods has been examined independently by Westenholz and Steinkeller; from their analyses, it is clear that the title EN progressively gains in importance, subsumes the wifely function, and eventually replaces the other titles. Accordingly, during the Larsa dynasty, the titulary of both Enmegalana and Enanedu is simply “EN-priestess of Nanna” (Fig. 12). That the latter still considered herself the spouse of Nanna is evident from her coy self-description as the “ornament of the AGRUN,” or sacred bedroom.

Gender Issues

As the wife of an important male deity and “ornament of the sacred bedroom,” one might expect an emphasis on the femininity of both types of High Priestess. Yet – paradoxically – inscriptions written by EPNs indicate that “these women sometimes assume a masculine gender,” and the GWAs too were sometimes treated as if they were male.

In archaic Mesopotamia, the Sumerian term EN designated the ruler of a city, and since EN-ship “constituted a normative form of kingship in archaic Babylonia,” the term originally applied exclusively to males. In its later use as a title for the top priestly office, by which time the king had become known as the LUGAL or ENSI, the term EN was gender-neutral. Despite this ambiguity, it seems that the early scholars who translated the Sumerian inscriptions from Ur assumed that many of the EPNs mentioned therein were male; accordingly, we read of “En-anni-pada, priest of Nannar, son of Ur-Bau;” and are told that “for the life of Ur-Nammu [...] his father, the en-nirgal-anna, the priest of Nannar, his beloved [son], has dedicated (this);” in the same vein, we later encounter “Enannatum, the priest beloved of Nannar, priest of Nannar in Ur, son of Ishme-Dagan.” That the translators genuinely took these EPNs to be men is suggested by not just by the gender of translated terms (e.g., “priest,” “son,” “his”) and of interpolated ones (e.g., “[son]” for Enirgalana) but by editorial comments such as the footnote “Eginabtum-ku is a sacred store-house [...] built by Enannatum son of Ishme-Dagan.”

Much of the responsibility for such early misattributions of gender may be attributed to the use of the Sumerian filiation term DUMU, which (in the absence of the female qualifier MUNUS) came to mean “son” but which originally – in the archaic period – could refer equally to either a son or a daughter. Enheduana styled herself the DUMU of Sargon, and was so called by members of her staff. By this she may not have intended to be seen as masculine, although the surprising absence of EMESAL – a women’s dialect of Sumerian used in literary compositions – from her writings could hint that she did wish to adopt a male
Fig. 12. Dedicatory cone of Enanedu. (a) Whole inscription on inscribed head of fired clay cone. (b) Detail of first two lines (top of left column, line nos. in green), with transcript (yellow background);\textsuperscript{461} mark-up as for Fig. 11.\textsuperscript{462} British Museum 130729.\textsuperscript{463} Photo © Trustees of the British Museum, reproduced here under licence CC BY-NC-SA 4.0.\textsuperscript{464}
persona. She was, after all, a devotee of her father’s patron goddess, Inanna/Ishtar (Table 6, **Politicization**), “a female deity to whom male power and dominance were also attributed;” indeed, in one of her hymns, Enheduana was moved to exclaim that the power “to turn [...] a woman into a man are yours, Inanna.”\(^{465}\) Mary Wakeman notes Enheduana’s personal identification with the gender-fluid Inanna when, speaking of the priestess’s successful return to the GIPAR after a period of exile, she mentions “her claim to have been restored by (or even as) Inanna.”\(^{466}\)

Whether or not Enheduana wished to project a male persona, her later successors appear to have interpreted her use of **DUMU** in precisely this way.\(^{467}\) From the Ur III to Isin/Larsa periods, retention of the unqualified term **DUMU** for the filiation of EPNs does seem to have acquired masculine connotations; for example, Enanedu not only calls herself the **DUMU** of her father, Kudur-Mabuk, but the **ŠEŠ** – brother! – of her sibling, king Warad-Sin. In an independent inscription she again describes herself as **ŠEŠ** rather than **NIN** (sister) to Warad-Sin.\(^{468}\) It would seem, therefore, that a tradition that may have begun as a linguistic archaism developed a life and meaning of its own, with the EPNs being seen as notionally masculine. In the patriarchal world of the Ancient Near East, it is easy to imagine such “maleness” being construed as a reflection of the power and prestige of their position.\(^{469}\)

As seen above in the section titled *Spouse or Servant?*, the title **hm.t nTr** (God’s Wife) is unambiguously feminine and its bearers were all women. Despite this, the foundation charter of the office of GWA – the Donation Stele of Ahmose (Dynasty 18) – decrees as follows:

[I have given] the office of the second priest of Amun to the god’s wife, great royal wife, she united to the beauty of the white crown, Ahmose-Nofretari, may she live! [It] was done for her in an *imyt-per*, from son to son, heir to heir [without allowing a challenge] against it by anyone forever and ever.” [...] Then the majesty of this god said: [this appears to be an oracle coming from the portable bark of Amun] ‘I am her protector. A challenge to her shall not occur forever by any king who shall arise in the following of future generations. But only the god’s wife Nefertary. It belongs to her from son to son forever and ever in accordance with her office of god’s wife.’\(^{470}\)

The reference to the office of God’s Wife being passed “from son to son” presumably reflects the male-oriented legal terms of the **im.yt pr.w** deed, which was the standard means of transferring property outside the usual lines of inheritance.\(^{471}\) Accordingly, each new GWA played the role of dutiful “eldest son” by establishing and maintaining the mortuary cult for her successor,\(^{472}\) since in so doing she actually legitimated her own succession.\(^{473}\) The inscriptions of Shepenwepet I (Dynasty 23-24) mention only her biological mother, perhaps because – at the time of her appointment – there was no incumbent GWA to adopt her.\(^{474}\) Karomama Meritmut (Fig. 5) was probably no longer alive,\(^{475}\) and in any case formal adoption may not have become the norm until later;\(^{476}\) some scholars think it began only when Amenirdis I adopted Shepenwepet II as her heiress.\(^{477}\) Although Cairo Museum statue CG 42198 identifies the same Amenirdis with the phrase “her mother being the Divine Adoratrice Shepenwepet, justified,”\(^{478}\) and inscriptions on the mortuary chapel of Shepenwepet II do likewise.\(^{479}\) In Dynasty 26, the Adoption Stele of Nitocris renewed the covenant; it too was an **im.yt pr.w** deed (Table 4, **Notable decrees**).
Although this stele refrains from referring to the God’s Wives and their heiresses as “sons,” Amenirdis II is referred to obliquely as an heir (masc.) in “his seat.” The stele also uses a phrase that Betsy Bryan construes as suggesting a notional sonship between successive GWAs (Table 6, Representation...). Accordingly, she writes that “Nitocris may be understood to be now claiming a male-type filiation from Amenirdis II, who likewise claims it from Shepenwepet II.”

Hatshepsut served both as a GWA and a king, and to facilitate the latter role she ultimately assumed a male identity. However, it seems that she relinquished the position of GWA – which had actually provided her favourite title – in favour of her daughter when she ascended the throne as co-regent to Thutmose III (Table 3, Better-known incumbents; Table 6, Concurrency). However, the Late phase GWAs managed to combine elements of the two roles by co-opting kingly rituals for their own purposes; in so doing, they naturally projected a more masculine persona. Their investiture involved “accession and coronation rites similar to those for a pharaoh” (for details, see Table 6, Training and installation), and by Dynasty 26 the GWAs enjoyed “regal status practically indistinguishable from that of the pharaoh” (Table 6, Representation...). The Nubian GWA Shepenwepet II is the only non-king (and the only non-male besides Hatshepsut) to have been publicly shown performing the rituals known as the Driving of the Four Calves (shown ahead in Fig. 22) and the Striking of the Meret-Chests (Table 6, Cultic roles); in undertaking the former, “Shepenwepet assumes the role of the ultimate good son, who not only buried his father, but faithfully protected his tomb.” It seems that Shepenwepet even held a sed-festival (Table 6, Cultic roles and Iconography), normally a jubilee reserved strictly for the king. The death of Nitocris is recorded using phraseology that appears to equate her with the pharaoh, and explicitly states that “her daughter [...] did for her everything which is done for every beneficent king” (Table 6, Representation...).

In the sacerdotal domain, we should note that the title “High Priest of Amun” was left in its masculine form, \textit{hm ntr tp.y n(.y) Imn.w}, when it was conferred upon Ankhnesneferibre in 585. Perhaps the intention was to emphasise that she was not merely the “High Priestess of Amun” (and thus potentially still Second Priest of Amun under a male HPA, as was traditional for the GWA) but in fact the head of the entire priesthood. Either way, the practice adds to the gender distortion already noted.

The (presumably inadvertent) masculinisation of the GWA that arose from the legal terminology of its charter documents as well as the appropriation of male-only royal rituals and masculine priestly titles was counteracted head-on by further appropriations. In addition to wearing crowns of femininity and queenship, the GWA adopted feminized forms of kingly titles. From at least Dynasty 20, her prenomen had appeared in a cartouche (Table 6, Representation...), but from Dynasty 22 onward she was styling herself Daughter of Re, Mistress of the Two Lands and Mistress of Appearances/ Crowns. In Dynasty 25, Shepenwepet II frequently presented herself as the “Female Horus” or even the “Female Re.” An unambiguously feminine persona was presumably essential for someone who dared to portray herself in public imagery as being sexually intimate with Amun.
Moreover, “Female Horus” presented her as the female counterpart of the reigning king, a counterpoise that – in Kushite thinking – was essential for legitimate rule. These provocative titles were nevertheless retained by Shepenwepet’s Saite successors.

Residence and Remembrance

The temenos of Ur refers to the raised sacred precinct of that city, which was surrounded by a wall (Fig. 13). In its north-western corner stood the ziggurat, which was surrounded by its own walled enclosure, the resulting courtyard being called the ETEMENNIGURU. Within this, immediately to the north-west of the ziggurat, stood the Shrine of Nanna. Attached to the outside of the north-eastern wall of the ETEMENNIGURU was another enclosure containing the Court of Nanna (Fig. 13). The complex of sacred buildings within the temenos, including the ziggurat, formed the EKISHNUGAL or Temple of Nanna (Fig. 13).

The GIPAR (EGIPAR, GIPARU, GIGPARKU) was the residence of the EPN; it was located within the temenos, south-east of the ziggurat enclosure wall (Table 6, Residence; Figs. 13 & 14). As with the ziggurat, the four corners of what survives of the GIPAR are oriented to the cardinal points of the compass. Originally the term may have meant a storehouse, in allusion to the fructifying role of the sacred marriage between Nanna and the EN-priestess (Table 6, Sacred marriage). The site was discovered and excavated in 1924-5 by the joint British Museum/University of Pennsylvania team led by Sir Leonard Woolley. While it is likely that the EPN’s residence (section A, Fig. 13) and the Temple of Ningal (section C, Fig. 13) were originally separate, the Ur III GIPAR incorporated the Temple of Ningal in its south-eastern half.* Areas C7 and C27 formed the temple’s courtyard and shrine, respectively, the latter housing the cult statue (Fig. 15). Adjacent to room C27 was the AGRUN or sacred bedroom, a small room (C28) containing a large bed dais/bench/platform. Following the fall of Ur in ca. 2003, Enanatuma of Isin rebuilt the GIPAR to the Ur III plan (Fig. 16; see ahead to Survival). After the peak period of the EPN had passed (Table 5, Hiatuses), renovations by the Kassite king Kurigalzu replaced the original Ningal temple with a new one (Fig. 17) on the inside face of the south-eastern wall of the ziggurat enclosure or ETEMENNIGURU, whereupon the old temple area was absorbed into the residential footprint of the GIPAR. By the end of the Neo-Babylonian period, the GIPAR had been relocated north-east and had fused with the EDUBLALMAH (Fig. 13).

It is likely that the cemetery of the EPNs was originally outdoors and was later built over with living areas B18-B26 of the larger Ur III-Isin/Larsa GIPAR (Fig. 13), the tombs remaining accessible in corbel-vaulted crypts. By the end of the Larsa dynasty, the buildings over the tomb complex had apparently collapsed and the tombs were once again outdoors. Enanedu re-enclosed this “place of the Hall-that-brings-bitterness” and secured additional burial space for future burials (Table 6, Building program and Mortuary cult), perhaps by extending the existing crypts further toward the centre of the GIPAR to include the area under rooms B14-B17. The mortuary chapels for deceased EPNs were probably in the

* See, however, the Postscript added in 2019 at the end of this paper.
As a pop-culture aside, we might note that Woolley’s discoveries at Ur provided the backdrop for Agatha Christie’s detective novel *Murder in Mesopotamia*, featuring Hercule Poirot, which was televised in 2001/2; Christie herself went on to marry Woolley’s assistant, who later became Prof. Sir Max Mallowan.
Fig. 14. Present-day view from the ziggurat of Ur, looking south-east over the *temenos*. In the middle distance, the excavated remains of the EHURSAG are just left of centre in photo; slightly nearer the ziggurat, at far right of photo, is what remains of the north-eastern portion of the Temple of Ningal within the Ur III-Isin/Larsa GIPAR. In foreground at far left of photo stands the stump of the EDUBLALMAH, the Place of Judgement, which granted access through the enclosure wall of the *temenos* to the sacred precinct within. Photograph by Aziz1005, available via Wikimedia Commons, reproduced here under licence CC BY 3.0.
Fig. 15. **The Temple of Ningal.** (a) Ground-plan of section C of the Ur III-Isin/Larsa GIPAR, rotated 90° clockwise relative to orientation shown in Fig. 13. After the 1926 original reproduced by Weadock. The red asterisk marks the position of the viewer for the next panel. (b) Recreation of the Temple of Ningal in the GIPAR of the Ur III-Isin/Larsa period; view from the position of the red asterisk in the previous panel, looking through the courtyard (C7) into the shrine (C27, within which stands the cult statue). After a 1927 line-drawing by Algernon Stuart (“Algy”) Whitburn; the colour scheme is purely conjectural.

* See, however, the *Postscript* added in 2019 at the end of this paper.
Fig. 16. **Brick bearing inscription of Enanatuma.** (a) Entire brick, (b) close-up of inscription. University of Pennsylvania Museum of Archaeology and Anthropology, Museum No. 84-26-14. Photos courtesy of Penn Museum, reproduced here under licence CC BY-NC-SA 4.0.
Fig. 17. Brick bearing inscription of Kurigalzu. (a) Entire brick, (b) close-up of inscription. University of Pennsylvania Museum of Archaeology and Anthropology, Museum No. B16477. Photos courtesy of Penn Museum, reproduced here under licence CC BY-NC-SA 4.0.
Temple of Ningal,\textsuperscript{525} they housed elaborate cult statues, through which the EPNs were believed to live on (Table 3, \textit{Notable decrees}; Table 6, \textit{Mortuary cult}). Food offerings and libations were made to deceased EPNs by \textit{GUDU}-priests in the relevant mortuary chapel\textsuperscript{526} and/or at their graves,\textsuperscript{527} probably daily, plus monthly (at the New Moon and Full Moon festivals) and on other holidays.\textsuperscript{528}

In Egypt, the Late phase GWAs were until recently thought to have lived and been buried in the mortuary temple complex of Ramses III at Medinet Habu (Table 6, \textit{Residence}). This compound (Fig. 18) is located on the west bank of the Nile at Thebes, across the river from the Great Temple of Amun at Karnak and the associated Temple of Mut in south Karnak. By the late New Kingdom, the fortified complex of Medinet Habu had become the main administrative centre for the western part of Thebes.\textsuperscript{529} It contained a palace that had originally been designed to provide temporary accommodation for the king but had later been remodelled as the residence of a succession of priestly governors; it was therefore presumed that the final occupants of this palace were the GWAs of Dynasties 23-26.\textsuperscript{530} While these GWAs and/or their staff may have made some use of the palace at Medinet Habu, a “Residential Quarter of the Divine Adoratrices” has recently been identified at North Karnak, in the area of the modern village of Naga Malgata (Fig. 19).

The residential quarter at Naga Malgata seems with some certainty to have contained the primary domicile of the Saite GWAs, Nitocris and Ankhnesneferibre, and probably those of their Nubian predecessors as well, allowing it to be seen as an important “dynastic residence.”\textsuperscript{531} Specifically, the ruins of very large building associated with Ankhnesneferibre that were discovered in 1924 (gazetted as a Temple of Osiris Pameres,\textsuperscript{532} but since mostly destroyed) had a similar

\begin{center}
\textbf{Fig. 18 Map of Medinet Habu} – location of mortuary chapels for GWAs of Dynasties 24-26. Also marked (blue square) is the Governor’s Palace, which until recently was thought to be the residence of the GWAs. Mortuary chapels with extant superstructures are shown in black, while the ground-plans of former buildings in the chapel complex are shown in grey. The complex is shown enlarged at right,\textsuperscript{533} numbered in blue and dedicated as follows.
1. Possibly Shepenwepet I.\textsuperscript{534} 2. Amenirdis I. 3. Nitocris I. 4. Shepenwepet II. 5. Mehetnusekhet, biological mother of Amenirdis I. To the north-west (and adjacent to 5), possibly a mud-brick out-house for the storage of cult items or the purification of priests.\textsuperscript{535}
\end{center}
Fig. 19  Map of North Karnak – location of the GWA residential quarter and the GWA-sponsored Osirian chapels.\textsuperscript{536} RQDA, “Residential Quarter of the Divine Adoratrices” for the Saite (and probably Nubian) GWAs at North Karnak, modern Naga Malgata. The ground-plan of the residence/palace of Ankhnesneferibre is shown enlarged at left.\textsuperscript{537} Osirian chapels built and/or extended by GWAs of Dynasties 24-26 are numbered in blue and were dedicated as follows. \textbf{1:} Osiris, who Perpetually Gives Life (\textit{Wsir p\textasciitilde d\textasciitilde n\textasciitilde}), Dynasties 25-26 (depicting Taharqo, Amenirdis I/II, Shepenwepet II; Nitocris and Ankhnesneferibre).\textsuperscript{538} \textbf{2:} Osiris-Onnophris, Lord of Offerings (\textit{Wsir-Wnnfr nb df\textasciitilde}), Dynasty 26 (depicting Amasis and Ankhnesneferibre).\textsuperscript{539} \textbf{3:} Osiris, Lord of Life/He Who Answers the Distressed (\textit{Wsir nb n\textasciitilde / p\textasciitilde w\textasciitilde b i\textasciitilde}), Dynasty D25 (depicting Taharqo, Shepenwepet II and Amenirdis I).\textsuperscript{540} \textbf{4:} Osiris-Onnophris in the Persea Tree (\textit{Wsir-Wnnfr hry-lb p\textasciitilde i\textasciitilde}), Dynasty 25 (depicting Amenirdis I and Shepenwepet II).\textsuperscript{541} \textbf{5:} Osiris, Ruler of Eternity (\textit{Wsir hk\textasciitilde dt}), Dynasty 24-25 (depicting Osorkon III, Takelot III, Shepenwepet I; Shebitqo and Amenirdis I).\textsuperscript{542} Blue asterisks (*) mark other Osirian chapels built by/for the GWAs of Dynasties 25-26.\textsuperscript{543}

configuration and size to the house (\textit{pr\textasciitilde w}) that was built for Nitocris by her first High Steward, Ibi, as described in his statue inscription (Table 5, \textit{Hiatuses}).\textsuperscript{544} The inscription suggests that there was a traditional design for the GWA’s equivalent of the EPN’s GIPAR (Fig. 19, enlargement box), so Ankhnesneferibre may either have rebuilt the palace of Nitocris \textit{in situ} or built herself a new one to the same design close by, at the site excavated in 1924.\textsuperscript{545} Ibi specifies that the “house” and its
associated temples (probably chapels) were embellished with gold, silver and jewels and adorned with gem-inlaid silver statues of Psamtek and Nitocris, so clearly this precinct was in fact a palace complex. The nearby ruins of a columned building associated with Nitocris are likely to be the remains of her wabet (from Egyptian w'b.t, “pure place”), since Ibi also mentions building such a structure for her near her residence. The precinct included the Harem of Amun, in which lived the “recluses” and female musicians that formed part of the GWA’s staff; indeed, the “Harem of the [Divine] Adoratrice” remained a toponym at the site into Ptolemaic times.

The GWAs also built and dedicated chapels to Osiris in North and East Karnak (Figs. 19 & 20). Their northern location means that the chapels are not far from the “residential quarter of the Divine Adoratrices” just discussed, which of course was in North Karnak. In these Osirian chapels, the sponsoring GWA is typically portrayed serving and being blessed by the gods alongside the cognate king. Her predecessor is also commemorated in the visual program. In Ur, too, some EPNs built chapels (Table 6, Building program); those of which we know were built to honour gods other than Nanna or Ningal and were “dedicated for the life of” the reigning king. As attested by several clay cone/nail fragments, Enanatuma built a chapel (the EHILI, the Charming House or House of Luxuriance, described as a “shining storehouse”) to the sun-god Utu, son of Nanna, and dedicated it for the life of king Gungunum and possibly for her own life as well. The EHILI has not been discovered in the archaeological record, so its location is unknown; it may simply have been an annex within the Temple of Nanna or Temple of Ningal. Similarly attested at Ur is another shining storehouse named the E-ESHMEDAGALA (House: Shrine of the Broad MEs), which Enanatuma also built for the god Dagan and dedicated for the life of the same king. Interestingly, Enanatuma’s chapels at Ur – like the Osirian GWA chapels at Karnak – are dedicated to male gods other than the consort of the High Priestess and pointedly link their sponsor with the current king. The dedication of these chapels at Ur will be revisited in the section titled Survival.

As mentioned above, it has long been thought that the Late phase GWAs were buried at Medinet Habu, since this is where their mortuary chapels were and where many Chantresses of Amun associated with those GWAs were interred. The Small Temple at Medinet Habu (Fig. 18) was the site of the mound of creation that contained the primordial deities, and was therefore visited every ten days by the cult statue of Amun that resided in the Great Temple at Karnak. The mound also contained a tomb of Osiris, with whom Amun(-Re) was identified in his nightly journey as the sun-god. In the words of Gay Robins, “the link between Amun and Medinet Habu, and the potential for regeneration residing in the mound, made the site an ideal burial place for the god’s wives of Amun, where they would participate in the regular renewal of their god and so achieve rebirth for themselves.” The mortuary chapels of some of these GWAs still stand in the forecourt of Ramses III’s mortuary temple at Medinet Habu (Table 6, Mortuary cult); they are located close to the main gate in the south-eastern enclosure wall, facing the Small Temple and its
Fig. 20. Chapel of Osiris, Lord of Life/He Who Answers the Distressed (*Wsir nb ʾnḥ / pḫ wšb ḫḏd*). Chapel at North Karnak (Fig. 19, no. 3), dedicated by Shepenwepet II and Taharqo. In symmetrically opposed scenes on the chapel’s exterior, the God’s Wife (right half) mirrors the king (left half) in attitude and activity. The right half of the lintel shows (from left to right) Shepenwepet II presenting milk to Ptah and then Amenirdis I being embraced by Hathor. The right hand door-jamb shows Shepenwepet II being embraced by Isis. Photograph by Neithsabes, alias Sebi, available via Wikimedia Commons, public domain.
important cult sites (Figs. 18 & 21-24). However, it now seems likely that these chapels did not contain the actual tombs. For Nitocris and Ankhnesneferibre, these are now attributed to Deir el Medina (pits 2005 and 2003, respectively), which is located midway between Medinet Habu and the Ramesseum. The tombs of their Nubian predecessors have not yet been located; they may even have been buried in their homeland.

The mortuary chapels at Medinet Habu were *hw.wt-kꜣ* ("precincts of the *ka*"), most likely miniature temples intended to house the cult statues of deceased GWAs. The nested tent-shrine and courtyard structure of the chapel of Amenirdis I (Figs. 18, 22-23) would have supported a processional circuit, possibly for her cult statue, the route being adorned with extracts from the Opening of the Mouth ritual, Solar Hymns and Pyramid Texts. Carola Koch posits the chapel as conceptually and chronologically intermediate between a Temple of Millions of Years and the solar courtyard of the Graeco-Roman *wabet*. The decoration of the funerary chapels revives the traditional scene (abandoned in the Third Intermediate Period) in which the deceased is shown seated before a laden offering-table, witnessing priests performing the funerary ritual on their behalf. The GWAs are typically shown "in the archaising costume of a mid Eighteenth Dynasty queen" (Figs. 7-8 & 22; Table 6, Iconography). In keeping with the new view of these structures as a temples rather than tombs, the crypts lack access shafts/stairs and the visual programs of the superstructures involve both the deceased GWAs and their living successors and benefactors.

In overview, then, it seems that both the EPNs and GWAs lived in palaces very near the temples that were the focus of their ritual activities (Table 6, Residence). The GWAs built and extended free-standing chapels (mainly dedicated to Osiris) between the main temple and their residential quarter; the EPNs seem to have focused their building activities on their residence, the GIPAR (Table 6, Building program), but at least one EPN built and dedicated chapels with characteristics analogous to those built by the GWAs. The EPNs were buried adjacent to or within the GIPAR, while the GWAs were seemingly interred on the opposite bank of the Nile to their palace at North Karnak, consistent with the Egyptian custom of burial in the west, or – for non-Egyptian incumbents – were perhaps repatriated to their homeland. Deceased EPNs and GWAs were both believed to live on in statues, which were enshrined in the local area and were the subject of regular offerings and rituals.

**Cult and Ritual**

The EPN and GWA had similar cultic roles (Table 6, Cultic roles). After ritual ablutions to purify themselves, they entered the sanctuary; there they entertained and honoured the god(s) in ritual, music and song, and offered food, drink and precious goods to the cult statues. They accompanied cult statues, the senior priests and sometimes the king in ritual processions. They interceded with the gods on behalf of the king and with the king on behalf of the gods (e.g., for GWA, Fig. 20).
They built, maintained and dedicated temples and shrines, commissioning statues. They provided for the temple personnel.

One cultic difference between the Mesopotamian and Egyptian situation is that the focus of the EPN was upon Ningal, the goddess whom she embodied or represented, rather than on Nanna himself (Table 6, Deity focused upon). In the heyday of the office, the Temple of Ningal lay beside or within the GIPAR, the EPN’s residence (described in the previous section; Figs. 13 & 15), and served as the focus of her ritual activities.* In Egypt, the reverse situation seems to have obtained. Although most GWA throne-names incorporate Mut (Table 6, Throne-name/prenomen), the ritual activities of the GWA seem to have been focused upon Amun(-Re). For example, reliefs thought to have adorned the GWA’s residential palace at Naga Malgata are “mostly centred on the God’s Wife and her relation to Amun and the Heliopolitan gods,”574 and Amun(-Re) was the principal deity worshipped at Medinet Habu,575 where the GWAs built their memorial chapels. Mut was largely supplanted in GWA-sponsored iconography by the GWA herself (Table 6, Deity

* See, however, the Postscript added in 2019 at the end of this paper.
focused upon and Iconography), although the equivalence of the two is clouded (or at least softened) by inscriptions that describe the GWA as the daughter of Amun or Mut,580 or as “one beloved of Mut.”581 The former conundrum can be explained by recalling that the GWA’s title of God’s Hand comes from the Heliopolitan tradition, and refers to the hand that (Re-)Atum used to masturbate in order to bring forth the rest of the Ennead (Table 2, Role);582 as prime mover, the God’s Hand is considered to be simultaneously the consort, mother and daughter of the creator-god.583 Consistent with this are attestations from the Third Intermediate Period onwards that describe Mut as the daughter or mother of Amun(-Re), rather than as his consort.584 Viewed in this light, the unexpected filiations of the GWA become less problematic,585 although Carolla Koch has recently argued for a genuine father-
Fig. 23. Ambulatory of mortuary chapel of Amenirdis I at Medinet Habu. (a) Ground-plan of the chapel, showing its four-columned courtyard and nested tent-shrine structure. The ambulatory is the enclosed space surrounding the inner tent-shrine; the red asterisk within it indicates the presumed position of the photographer, whose northeast-facing view is presented in panel b. (b) View within the ambulatory, presumed to be the north-eastern perspective from the position of the red asterisk in panel a. Photograph by Neithsabes, available via Wikimedia Commons, reproduced here under licence CC BY-SA 3.0.

daughter (rather than spousal) relationship between Amun and the GWA (Table 6, Sacred marriage). The interplay between the priesthoods of Amun and Mut, which is also complex, is addressed later in this section.

As the earthly representative of Ningal and Mut, respectively, both the EPN and GWA had an association with birds. Ningal is linked with UBI-birds, seemingly water-fowl such as ducks, geese and swans. Accordingly, a statue from the Ur GIPAR of a woman seated on a throne flanked by geese may depict Ningal or her earthly representative, the EPN. The Egyptian goddess Mut is represented in text by the vulture hieroglyph (meaning “mother”) and in costume by the vulture
Fig. 24. View into GWA mortuary chapel complex at Medinet Habu from the north. The façade of the chapel of Amenirdis I is at far left; the doorways to the chapels of Nitocris I and Shepenwepet II are visible at the rear left and centre, respectively, of the internal courtyard. To the right of Shepenwepet’s chapel is what remains of the chapel of Mehentusekhet, the biological mother of Nitocris; the superstructure is largely missing. Photograph by Olaf Tausch, available via Wikimedia Commons, reproduced here under licence CC BY 3.0.

headdress, the symbol of divine motherhood (Fig. 7), although in iconography her main association is with the lioness. The passivity of Ningal, who does not have a role independent of her husband Nanna, contrasts with Mut’s role as the great mother and fierce protector of the Egyptian king and his land, and this difference is reflected in the animal associations of the two goddesses. Mut, whose savagery is derived from her role as a destructive “Eye of Re,” enjoyed considerable independence from Amun, having her own large temple in Thebes (the Isheru, south of the Great Temple of Amun at Karnak) and chapels throughout Egypt. These were staffed by her own priesthood, who celebrated her rituals and festivals. The precise relationship between the priesthood of Mut and the GWA, the representative of Mut on earth, is not entirely clear; a selection of evidence from the Ramesside to Late Periods will be collated in the next paragraph.

In Dynasty 20, an ode to Mut in the precinct of Mut at Karnak provided a theological basis for the office of GWA and praised Isis, the GWA appointed by
Just as the Temple of Mut in Thebes was a essentially a component of the Great Temple of Amun at Karnak, so too was the Temple of Ningal a component of the Temple of Nanna in Ur. As mentioned above, the Temple of Ningal lay within the GIPAR, the residence of the EPN, while the other components of the Temple of Nanna were distributed elsewhere around the temenos (Fig. 13). Thus, in both instances, the temple and priesthood of the goddess were incorporated within the larger institution dedicated to her divine husband. The GWA appears to have been the head of the priesthood of Mut and Second Priest of Amun (Table 4, Basic titles) until the time of Harkhebi, the last male High Priest of Amun (HPA) (Fig. 10), after which time the GWA seems also to have become the de facto leader of the priesthood of Amun. In Dynasty 26, the GWA or her heiress was recognised formally as the HPA; the political dimension of this transition is considered in more detail in the next section. In Mesopotamia, the EPN seems always to have been the head of the priesthood of Nanna and the priesthood of Ningal. The other noteworthy difference – as discussed at the start of this section – is the EPN’s cultic emphasis on the goddess, as opposed to the GWA’s focus on the god.

Both the EPNs and GWAs were commemorated by way of mortuary cults (Table 6, Mortuary cult). Neither type of priestess was usually deified after death, although...
there were a few exceptions: of the EPNs, Enanatuma and Enmegalana appear in a list of “the gods of the various shrines of the Ningal temple;” among the GWAs, a deified Amenirdis I appears in scenes adorning her funerary chapel at Medinet Habu (Table 6, Mortuary cult; Fig. 22).

Celibacy and the Sacred Marriage

Similar academic controversies have attended the sexual, marital and maternal status of both the EPN and the GWA (Table 6, Celibacy & procreation). In Egypt, it is self-evident that early GWAs of the New Kingdom could be married and have children, since many were in fact wives of the king (Table 3, Pedigree). In Mesopotamia, a late omen text speaks of priestesses sinning against their husbands, suggesting that they were allowed to marry; motherhood may still have been forbidden to them, however, as another such text recommends that they adopt a particular contraceptive strategy. It is unclear whether these omen texts reflect the reality of later times, a mis-remembering earlier ones, or both. Of course, none of these considerations bear directly on the circumstances of the EPN and GWA during their respective peak periods. It is to this comparison that we must now return our attention.

Older scholarly literature on the named EPNs portray them as celibate and childless. Much current literature on these women perpetuates the belief in them as unmarried, childless or even virginal, while conceding that human failings meant that individuals sometimes fell short of the ideal. Normative behaviour was prescribed in the myth of Atrahasis, which says

Establish high priestesses and priestesses,
Let them be taboo, and so cut down childbirth.

In Sargonic legend, the clandestine nature of this hero’s birth to an EN-priestess (if that is indeed the correct reading of her identity) provides an example of sexual indiscretion by a High Priestess at the dawn of the Akkadian era, and of the perceived necessity of concealing its consequences. Similarly, the GWAs of Dynasties 23-26 are often presumed to have been celibate; much modern literature on the institution perpetuates the belief that Ramses VI (Dynasty 20) had required his daughter Isis to remain unmarried as GWA, and that subsequent GWAs were obliged to followed suit. For Anthony Leahy, writing about the GWAs of the Late Period, “the distinctive requirement was one of celibacy.” Of course, the political rationale for such celibacy – that it prevented the princesses from engendering alternative dynasties that might contend for the throne – was as cogent in Mesopotamia as it was in Egypt.

Accepting the religious strictures of Mesopotamia at face value, Martin Stol argues from Ur III and Old Babylonian laws and customs that “priestesses [...] had to live a pure life [...] All of these women were expected to lead flawless and chaste lives.” Accordingly, they were forbidden to bear children or to have sexual relations, often on pain of death. Stol does however concede that children were sometimes born to the top-ranking priestesses (EREŠ-DINGIR) of gods other than Nanna, especially the priestesses of less important gods.
Although the older appreciation of the EPN portrayed her as celibate and childless, it did permit her one possible path to conception and motherhood: ritual intercourse with the king, who (in an extension of the archaic concept of the king as the spouse of a goddess) was thought to stand in for Nanna in the sacred marriage rite. For example, a hymn claims that the royal line of Ur-Namma – founder of the Ur III dynasty – was secured via an EN-priestess of Nanna from Nippur, on whom he sired Shulgi, his son and heir. Of this legend, Barbara Weadock writes that the text tells of the gods’ reward to Ur-Nammu for his piety; they ensure his royal line by giving him a son, born of the entu-priestess of Nanna in Nippur and presumably conceived at the time of the celebration of the sacred marriage in Nippur. Since the king took part in the ritual of the sacred marriage as Nanna in Nippur and as the en in Uruk, it is reasonable to believe that he also took the role of Nanna in the rite in Ur.

A standard translation of the relevant section (lines 15-20) of the hymn, *An Adab to Enlil for Shulgi [= Shulgi G]*, confirms that the conception of Shulgi – who, as king, proclaimed himself divine – is specifically attributed to the “sacred marriage” between Nanna and his EN-priestess:

> To that end, Ashimbabbar [= Nanna] appeared shining in the *E-kur*, pleaded to his father Enlil and made him bring a childbearing mother (?); in the *E-duga*, Nanna, the princely son, asked for the thing to happen. The en priestess gave birth to the trustworthy man from his semen placed in the womb. Enlil, the powerful shepherd, caused a young man to emerge: a royal child, one who is perfectly fitted for the throne-dais, Shulgi the king.

Martin Stol, however, suggests that the entire claim is “political literary fiction” and warns that the reference may not even be to an EN-priestess. Piotr Steinkeller follows J.S. Cooper in denying that the usual purpose of the sacred marriage was to produce a royal heir. Consistent with these cautions, current scholars tend to imagine the sacred marriage of the EPN at Ur as a symbolic (i.e. non-sexual) act which did not involve the king (Table 6, Sacred marriage). In this understanding, the EPN would consummate the marriage by lying down – to the sound of sacred music – on the special bed in Nanna’s bed-chamber, the AGRUN (room C28 within the GIPAR; Fig. 13). The bed was decorated for the occasion with hay & flowers. For the GWA, too, current opinion is that no good evidence exists in favour of sexual rituals. Colleen Manassa writes that “The sound of the sistrum evokes the sexual union of the creator god with his consort, but does not imply that the bearer of the sistrum is necessarily involved in the conjugal act.” Mariam Ayad goes further, denying that there is any sexual dimension to playing the sistrum. As mentioned in the previous section, Carolla Koch goes further still, arguing for a father-daughter rather than husband-wife relationship between Amun and the Dynasty 23-26 GWAs (Table 6, Sacred marriage). Apart from citing scenes that depict Amun in a parental role with respect to Amenirdis I, Koch contends that a genuine role for the these GWAs as the “wife of Amun” would have required the king to always have
his wife (rather than a daughter or sister) hold the title, and that he certainly would not have allowed the daughter of a conquered former king to continue in office.\textsuperscript{631}

If the current consensus is that the sacred marriage was purely symbolic, does this consign the High Priestesses to a life of childless celibacy, punctuated (to those who found this a privation) only by furtive and well-hidden lapses in sexual continence? Not necessarily. Some recent literature contends that the EPNs were not celibate and claims that “children are attested in all periods;”\textsuperscript{632} that Enanatuma had a son is known for certain from two sealings that read “A-ab-ba, son of En-an[a]-tuma, \textit{en priestess of the god Nanna}.”\textsuperscript{633} Likewise, the celibacy of the Late phase GWAs is contested by Coleen Manassa and Emily Teeter, the latter and Jeremy Pope allowing that some (like their New Kingdom predecessors) may indeed have been king’s wives (Table 4, \textit{Additional possible titles}). Mariam Ayad steers a middle course, proposing that the powerful GWAs of Dyn 23-26 were indeed single and seemingly childless, although perhaps not ritually precluded from sexual relations.\textsuperscript{634} Betsy Bryan accepts husbands as a possibility; while conceding that evidence for their existence is lacking, she points out that Egyptian women’s monuments routinely exclude any reference to their male family members, particularly their husbands.\textsuperscript{635} Teeter advances as evidence Habachi’s identification of Amenirdis II with a Nubian princess of the same name who was married to a vizier named Mentuhotep, and by whom she had a son named Nasalsa.\textsuperscript{636} This argument is complicated by the fact that Amenirdis II probably never attained the rank of GWA, being passed over in favour of Nitocris;\textsuperscript{637} if this caused her to relinquish her religious role, she may then have been free to marry.\textsuperscript{638} In any case, “Habachi’s speculation […] is generally rejected.”\textsuperscript{639} Perhaps the safest summary of the situation for the later GWAs is that of Rosalie David: “although there is no record that any God’s Wife had a husband or children, neither is there any conclusive evidence that they remained celibate.”\textsuperscript{640} The long lives of many GWAs might be circumstantial evidence that they avoided childbearing.\textsuperscript{641}

Before ending this section, it is appropriate to give the Greek writer Herodotus (5th century BCE) special credit for recognising the participation of a High Priestess in a sacred marriage with her male deity as a common feature of Babylonian and Egyptian religious practice (Table 6, \textit{Sacred marriage}). It is likely that the marriage ritual that he describes for the former is a memory of the EPN En-nigaldi-Nanna’s union with Sin at Ur in 554, a mere century before his own time (Table 5, \textit{Belated survival/revival}), and not – as it claims to be – that of an EN with Bel-Marduk at Babylon.\textsuperscript{642} On top of an eight-staged ziggurat, Herodotus says, stands a great temple with a fine large couch in it, richly covered, and a golden table beside it. The shrine contains no image and no one spends the night there except (if we may believe the Chaldaeans who are the priests of Bel) one Assyrian woman, all alone, whoever it may be that the god has chosen. The Chaldaeans also say – though I do not believe them – that the god enters the temple in person and takes his rest upon the bed. There is a similar story told by the Egyptians at Thebes, where a woman always passes the night in the temple of the Theban Zeus [i.e., Amun] and is forbidden, so they say, like the woman in the temple at Babylon, to have any intercourse with men.\textsuperscript{643}

En-nigaldi-Nanna’s reign as EPN at Ur actually coincided temporally with the reign of the last GWA, Ankhnesneferibre, at Thebes (Fig. 3). In addition to the similarity
in their roles and the short time separating these priestesses from Herodotus, it may have been this contemporaneity that prompted him to connect the institution of the Babylonian EN-priestess so directly with that of the Egyptian God’s Wife. Given Herodotus’s precedent, it is all the more surprising that no modern scholars have seen fit to compare the Mesopotamian EPN with her apparent counterpart in Egypt, the GWA.

**Power and Prosperity**

The role of High Priestess was arguably never merely a religious office. A political dimension for the EPN was present from the outset. The writings of Sargon’s daughter Enheduana, the first incumbent (Fig. 4), helped to legitimate Akkadian rule over the entirety of Babylonia by syncretising her father’s northern (Semitic) pantheon with the southern (Sumerian) one, and by connecting this pan-Babylonian cultic system – in which Sargon’s preferred deity, Ishtar, held pride of place – to the royal family (Table 6, Politicization). She also wrote poems that expressed political and legal outrage at challenges to the empire that her father had founded (Table 6, Politicization). In Egypt, politicization of the GWA had begun in Dynasty 20 when Ramses VI, a weak king who ruled from the Delta, installed his daughter Isis in the role in an attempt to rein in the unruly and powerful Theban priesthood (Table 3, Additional/special motivations; Table 6, Politicization). In their respective periods of peak power, then, the EPNs at Ur and GWAs at Thebes were not just spiritual leaders but also political figureheads and economic managers for their communities (Table 6, Power).

As anticipated in the previous section, the history of the GWA cannot fully be appreciated without an understanding of the position of High Priest of Amun (HPA), the GWA’s sole superior in the preeminent priesthood of Egypt’s religious capital, Thebes. At end of the New Kingdom, the office of HPA had absorbed the role of Viceroy of Kush, and in Dynasty 20 the HPA Herihor became the *de facto* ruler of Upper Egypt. By this stage the HPA position was no longer a royal appointment and had become hereditary, with the incumbent disposing of the office as he saw fit. The late Ramesside form of the role continued into the TIP, for “the High Priest of Amun in Dynasty 21 became an army general and effectively ruled the southern region of the country.” In the Late Period, the situation changed; during Dynasties 25-26, the powers of the GWA increased to the point where they eclipsed those of the HPA. In this period, the GWAs wielded direct political power on behalf of the king and – alongside local potentates such as the mayor of Thebes – could be considered *de facto* rulers of Upper Egypt (Table 5, Height of power; Table 6, Politicization). At the end of Dynasty 25, there was an apparent hiatus of ca. 50 years in the office of HPA after Harkhebi, the grandson of Shabaqo (Fig. 10). Eventually, control of the office was resumed by the crown, whereupon the title of HPA was bestowed formally (at the time of their adoption by the incumbent GWA) in Dynasty 26 upon the Saite GWA Ankhnesneferibre and – following that – her heiress, Nitocris B (Fig. 10). Overall, it is clear that the rise in power of the office of GWA was very much at the expense of the strength and independence of the office of High Priest.
In Mesopotamia, Sargon’s precedent had set up the EPN of Ur as an important marker of political authority. To quote Marc van de Mieroop, “for some five centuries afterwards, the control of the high priesthood of Nanna at Ur remained an indicator of political prominence in Babylonia. Any ruler who could claim authority over Ur installed his daughter there.”\textsuperscript{651} Brigitte Lion concurs: “accordingly, among the female priesthhoods, the office of EN of Nanna at Ur seems to have been the most prestigious.”\textsuperscript{652} The office-bearer was head of the Temple of Nanna, which incorporated that of Ningal; it was a major institution in the economy of Ur and its hinterland.\textsuperscript{653} While the political and economic reach of the known EPNs at Ur seems never to have reached the same scale and intensity as that of the later GWAs in Thebes, we should recall that their heyday was sustained for about twice as long (Fig. 3, magenta bracket). Although (like its Theban counterpart) the temple was probably off-limits for most citizens,\textsuperscript{654} the EPNs would have been known to the populace through their religious processions, and their blessing was probably needed for the appointment of the local ruler (Table 6, Power). By the time of Enanatuma, “the assets of the temples were manifold: they owned land inside and outside the city, they were involved in agriculture and animal husbandry, they controlled the marshes near Ur, they had influence in trade, and they used their treasuries for profit making purpose.”\textsuperscript{655} Enanatuma’s seal had the authority of a royal dynastic seal and continued to be used into the reign of Warad-Sin,\textsuperscript{656} some 100 years after the end of her tenure (Table 5, Height of power). Both Enanatuma and Enanedu used their wealth and power to undertake major reconstructions of the GIPAR at Ur and its associated burial ground (Table 5, Height of power and Hiatuses; Table 6, Building program; Fig. 16). Similarly, as described above in the section titled Residence and Remembrance, the GWAs built and dedicated Osirian chapels in North and East Karnak (Figs. 19 & 20) while constructing mortuary chapels – and reconstructing those of their predecessors – at Medinet Habu (Table 6, Building program; Figs. 21-24).

The spiritual, economic and political power of the Dynasty 23-26 GWAs is encapsulated by Rosalie David:

This title [= GWA], to which the king’s daughter (not his wife) was now appointed, implied that she was the consort of the chief god, Amun. On behalf of her father, she acted as the head of the god’s temple and estates at Thebes, one of the largest and most important economic centers in Egypt, which gave her considerable economic independence and religious authority. Her reciprocal duty was to secure the loyal support of Thebes and its local nobility for the king.\textsuperscript{657}

David’s last remark serves as a useful reminder that the position was one of political obligation as well as prestige and power. For the GWAs of Dynasties 24 and 25, the kings were Libyan and Nubian, respectively, and the support of Egypt’s religious capital was essential for the success of their rule; the political and ideological dimension of the office was therefore paramount. Jeremy Pope observes of the Nubian dynasty that

the iconography and ritual actions of the God’s Wives in Egypt would suggest that their office functioned more as an organ of the state than as a cloister; though their monumental constructions appear to have been mostly confined to Upper Egypt, the theology and propaganda of rites such as the Protection of the Cenotaph and the Elevation of the \textsuperscript{Th}s.t-Support were manifestly
directed outward, invoking the totality of the Double Kingdom as conceived by the Kushite dynasts.658

The Elevation ritual proclaimed the universal dominion of Amun(-Re) and, by extension, that of the Egyptian king,659 just as Enheduana’s theology promoted the universal power of Ishtar and, by extension, that of Ishtar’s protégé, the Akkadian king Sargon (Table 6, *Politicization*).

The most recent academic overviews acknowledge the economic importance of the Dynasty 23-26 GWAs but caution that their real political power is uncertain. Carola Koch goes so far as to say of the Nubian GWAs that “their political influence was severely restricted,”660 while accepting that the Saite ones were equal to the king on the political level because they did not have to contend with either a High Priest or a powerful local magnate (Table 5, *Height of power*).661 There is also a growing awareness that much of the GWA’s economic power was devolved to her male officials, especially the High Steward of the estate.662 Such officials were able to commemorate themselves with “enormous temple-like tombs in the Theban necropolis – the largest non-royal tombs anywhere in Egypt among them.”663 Overall, the suggestion is that the political power of the GWA herself was probably somewhat passive, being more closely involved with royal propaganda and legitimation of the king’s rule.664

At face value, the Nubian rule of Egypt represents an exception to the usual geographic polarity to the King/High Priestess pairing in Egypt and Mesopotamia. The usual pattern is that of a king in the north with his daughter in the south. The Akkadian pairings of Sargon/Enheduana and Naram-Sin/Enmenana conform to this template, as Akkad lies far to the north of Ur. In the post-Akkadian period – albeit on a much smaller scale – the geographic situation continued to mirror that initiated by Sargon, insofar as the capitals of Lagash, Isin and Larsa all lie to the north of Ur. In Egypt, Ramses VI/Isis and Psamtek I/Nitocris conform to the canonical north/south pattern, since the former king ruled from Piramesse and the latter from Sais, both located in Lower Egypt and therefore far to the north of Thebes. For Dynasty 25, however, the Nubian pairings of Kashta/Amenirdis I and Piye/Shepenwepet II seem to present the opposite configuration: a king based in the south at Napata, with his daughter at Thebes, far to its north. But one could view the traditional polarity as quickly reasserting itself with the selection of the Delta city of Memphis as the chief royal residence of the subsequent Nubian rulers Shabaqo, Shebitqo and Taharqo,665 whose reigns as king overlapped extensively with those of Amenirdis I and Shepenwepet II as GWA (Fig. 10).

On the cultural and intellectual front, the prominence of the first EPN, Enheduana, as an author – and a named author, at that – positions her as the undisputed icon of female literacy in the ancient world (Table 5, *Height of power*).666 Sixteen hundred years after Enheduana’s time, the institution of the GWA in Egypt was also likely to be an enclave with exceptional rates of female literacy for its place and time. While noting that most of the powerful political women of the New Kingdom would have delegated their business writing, Baines & Eyre (1998) observe that...
the replacement of princes as high priests of Amun in Thebes by princesses as
divine adoratrices in the later 3rd intermediate period might have been
facilitated if the latter could also exercise some of the former’s worldly
functions. As stated above, the partly female institutions surrounding these
ladies may in any case have been pockets of female literacy.667

A female scribe in the service of Nitocris exemplifies the presence of literate
women in the retinues of the GWAs.668

Half a millennium after her time, Enheduana’s writings remained a political tool in
Mesopotamia (Table 6, Politicization): in Old Babylonian times, her work formed
part of the scribal curriculum, where it served to reinforce a sense of Sumerian unity
and shared heritage in a time of fragmentation.669 Moreover, some 1700 years after
their time, Sargon and Enheduana’s program was echoed by the Neo-Babylonian
king Nabonidus and his daughter, the EPN En-nigaldi-Nanna (Table 5, Belated
survival/revival; Table 6, Politicization). As Tamara Green explains:

It is likely that, whatever Nabonidus’ personal feelings about the god [Sin =
Nanna] may have been, his elevation of the god of Ur and Harran was
grounded in his desire to use religion as a unifying force for the disparate
peoples under his rule, for the power of the Moon god was already venerated
among Arameans and Arabs; [...he also] may have been trying to shore up his
own political prospects by exalting the god so closely connected with
kingship.670

Even today, Enheduana continues to be used as a catalyst for social reform, insofar
as she serves as a poster-child for women’s empowerment and the worldwide
feminist movement.671 The Egyptian GWAs, too, left intangible legacies that
outlasted the women themselves by centuries (Table 5, Belated
survival/revival).

For example, the title Divine Adoratrice was reprised by some Ptolemaic priestesses
of Amun, and the titles and epithets of the Ptolemaic queens seem to draw heavily
upon the titularies of the GWAs of Dynasties 23-26.

However tempting it might be to conclude the study in this diachronic afterglow,
there remains an important dimension to the comparison that has yet to be
addressed, and from which will emerge one of the most important conclusions of
the analysis. To rectify this omission and complete the comparison, it is to the
related themes of succession and survival that we must now turn our attention. As
ever, the comparison will be drawn between the two institutions in their respective
periods of greatest strength: the EPN in the Akkadian through Isin/Larsa periods,
and the GWA during Dynasties 23-26.

Succession

In both Mesopotamia and Egypt, a number of seemingly eligible kings (e.g.
Manishtushu, Shulgi, and Abi-sare in Mesopotamia; Shabaqo, Shebitqo and Necho
in Egypt; Figs. 9-10) did not nominate a daughter as High Priestess. For those that
did, the available data suggest that a change of king often did not immediately result
in the installation of a new High Priestess or the designation of a new successor to
the position. In Ur, Enheduana (Fig. 4b) remained in office until well into the reign of her father’s third successor; Enirziana is estimated to have been installed in regnal year 17 of her father Shulgi; Enmahgalana in year 4 of her father Amar-Suen; Enshakiag-Nanna in the 23rd year of her father Sumu-elu; Enanedu in the 5th or 6th year of her brother Warad-Sin. In Thebes, Shepenwepet I is estimated to have been designated (and installed, since there was seemingly no incumbent) ca. year 11-32 of her father Osorkon III; Amenirdis I (Figs. 8) was probably designated 5-25 years after the accession of her father Kashta; Shepenwepet II (Fig. 25-26) was designated 22-37 years after the accession of her father, Piye, while Nitocris I was designated in year 9 of her father Psamtek I (i.e., ca. 655). However, Ankhnesneferibre – the final GWA (Fig. 27) – was designated in 595,
Fig. 26. Relief of Shepenwepet II on the façade of her mortuary chapel at Medinet Habu. Original photograph by Asta, derivative work (zoom & clean) by JMCC1; available via Wikimedia Commons, public domain.
Fig. 27. Statue of Ankhnesneferibre. Nubian Museum, Egyptian Museums CG42205. Photograph by tutincommon (John Campana), available via Wikimedia Commons, reproduced here under licence CC BY 2.0.
the year in which her father Psamtek II took the throne. These estimates are derived using the traditional GWA chronology (Table 7, cyan fill & note b). Augmentation of the revisionist chronology of Koch (2012) (Fig. 10, grey dates) with compatible recent proposals of designation dates (Table 7, blue fill & note c) suggests that Amenirdis I was designated 13-18 years after the accession of Kashta and that Shepenwepet II was designated 37 years after the accession of Piye, outcomes encompassed in the ranges already provided. For the subsequent GWAs (Nitocris, Ankhnesneferibre) there is full agreement with the values already given.

In both countries, the recurring delays between royal accession and the designation/installation of the new king’s daughter may in part reflect issues such as a lack of perceived necessity for a new priestess (e.g., upon peaceful intra-dynastic succession while the incumbent GWA was relatively young), a lack of political power on the part of the new king, or simply a need for the princess to have reached a minimum age. On the last consideration, we should note that three of the GWAs may have been designated while still children; Nitocris almost certainly was. However, even if the new king had the motivation and the means to appoint a daughter, the incumbent High Priestess was a revered figure who had to be treated with great respect. In Egypt, this was accommodated by the existing God’s Wife adopting the newly-designated princess as heiress apparent; with a lesser title (such as Great Chantress of the Interior of Amun or Divine Adoratrice), the latter could serve as assistant or junior partner in the “college” of supreme priestesses until the existing God’s Wife retired or died. This apprenticeship could be lengthy. For example, in the traditional GWA chronology (Table 7, cyan fill & note b), Amenirdis I and Shepenwepet II are estimated to have served 26-35 and 10-35 years as heiress apparent, respectively, with both being installed as GWA long after the reigns of their respective fathers had ended. The revisionist chronology of Koch (2012) (Fig. 10, grey dates; Table 7, blue fill & note c) seems to deny any overlap between Amenirdis I and Shepenwepet I but, when it is augmented with recent proposals of designation dates for Amenirdis I and Shepenwepet II, apprenticeships of 25-37 and 33-40 years emerge, respectively. Ankhnesneferibre’s time as understudy (which is securely known) was comparatively short, a mere 9 years.

In Mesopotamia, a system similar to the Egyptian one may have operated, albeit without formal adoption (Table 6, Tenure...). For example, the year-list indicates that Shulgi’s daughter Enirziana was appointed as EN-priestess two years before her installation took place. At the very least, it is likely that the elder EN-priestess trained her successor during a novitiate that could last for several years. Thereafter, the senior EN stayed on in the GIPAR. Either she retained the EN-ship until she had served out a fixed term, reached a certain age, chosen to relinquish the role, or died, or—alternatively—she retired in favour of her protégé once the latter had become proficient in the role, thereafter continuing in the background as emerita. Some of these options could entail a lengthy delay between the investiture of a new king and the installation of his daughter as EN-priestess, in keeping with the delays noted at the start of this section. Most of the options could countenance some level of power-sharing, whether transitional or long-term.
Table 7. Length of term as apprentice/heiress to incumbent GWA
Estimates are for the GWA at Thebes in the institution’s period of peak strength.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Incumbent GWA</th>
<th>Novice/Heiress</th>
<th>Overlap (years)</th>
<th>References</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Shepenwepet I</td>
<td>Amenirdis I</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Libyan</td>
<td>Nubian</td>
<td>26-35</td>
<td>Ayad; Dodson.699</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>35-47</td>
<td>Ayad.700</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>0</td>
<td>Koch.701</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>25-37</td>
<td>Koch; Broekman.702</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Amenirdis I</td>
<td>Shepenwepet II</td>
<td>10-35</td>
<td>Ayad; Dodson.703</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>?</td>
<td>Koch.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>33-40</td>
<td>Koch; Pope.704</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Shepenwepet II</td>
<td>Nitocris I</td>
<td>2-6</td>
<td>Dodson; Ayad.705</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nubian</td>
<td>Saite</td>
<td>6-15</td>
<td>Bryan; Graefe; Pope; Leahy.706</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>≤17</td>
<td>Leahy; Pope; Coulon.707</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nitocris I</td>
<td>Ankhnesneferibre</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>Dodson; Leahy; Ayad.709</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>9</td>
<td>Koch.710</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

a Care has been taken to avoid mixing dates from incompatible chronological schemes. All estimates of terms should be regarded as approximate.

b Cyan fill indicates sources that conform to the traditional chronology, which was described thus in 2014: “Over the past century of Egyptological research, historical evidence pertaining to the God’s Wives and their staffs has been mapped across this line of succession and its accompanying protocol to produce an elaborate matrix of interdependent dates and a standard narrative of the office’s evolution.”711

c Blue fill indicates calculations from recent publications (2012-2016) that use, or are compatible with, a revisionist chronology for the GWAs. In 2012, Carola Koch proposed that the titles “God’s Wife,” “Divine Adoratrice” and “God’s Hand” do not denote different levels of seniority; she further asserted that these titles were only ever used by the incumbent GWA, and never by an heiress prior to the death of her predecessor.712 Her thesis, which leads to a different chronology for the GWAs from Shepenwepet I to Nitocris I (Fig. 10, grey dates), runs contrary to many assumptions underpinning the traditional scholarship (note b), but is gaining significant – if qualified – support.713,714
### Table 8. Length of term in office (excluding apprenticeship/retirement).
Estimates are for the EPN at Ur and the GWA at Thebes in their respective periods of peak strength.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>EPN</th>
<th>Years&lt;sup&gt;a&lt;/sup&gt;</th>
<th>References</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Enheduana</td>
<td>77</td>
<td>Weadock; Gadotti&lt;sup&gt;715&lt;/sup&gt;</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Enmahgalana</td>
<td>(28-34)+ (38)</td>
<td>Weadock; Westenholz&lt;sup&gt;716&lt;/sup&gt;</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Enanatuma</td>
<td>30+</td>
<td>Stol&lt;sup&gt;717&lt;/sup&gt;</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Enshakiag-Nanna</td>
<td>40</td>
<td>Gadd&lt;sup&gt;718&lt;/sup&gt;</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Enanedu</td>
<td>(30-33)+ (36+)</td>
<td>Gadd; Stol; Frayne&lt;sup&gt;719&lt;/sup&gt;</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>GWA</th>
<th>Years&lt;sup&gt;a&lt;/sup&gt;</th>
<th>References&lt;sup&gt;b,c&lt;/sup&gt;</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Shepenwepet I</td>
<td>40-65</td>
<td>Ayad; Dodson&lt;sup&gt;720&lt;/sup&gt;</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>19-42 (?&lt;sup&gt;b&lt;/sup&gt;)</td>
<td>Koch; Kitchen&lt;sup&gt;721&lt;/sup&gt;</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Amenirdis I</td>
<td>14-25</td>
<td>Ayad; Dodson&lt;sup&gt;722&lt;/sup&gt;</td>
</tr>
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<td></td>
<td>40</td>
<td>Koch&lt;sup&gt;723&lt;/sup&gt;</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Shepenwepet II</td>
<td>41-50</td>
<td>Dodson; Ayad&lt;sup&gt;724&lt;/sup&gt;</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>31+</td>
<td>Koch; Pope&lt;sup&gt;725&lt;/sup&gt;</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nitocris I</td>
<td>64-68 (50+)</td>
<td>Ayad; Dodson; Leahy&lt;sup&gt;726&lt;/sup&gt;</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>53</td>
<td>Koch; Coulon; Pope&lt;sup&gt;727&lt;/sup&gt;</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ankhnesneferibre</td>
<td>61</td>
<td>Ayad; Dodson; Leahy&lt;sup&gt;728&lt;/sup&gt;</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>61</td>
<td>Koch&lt;sup&gt;729&lt;/sup&gt;</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<sup>a</sup> Care has been taken to avoid mixing dates from incompatible chronological schemes. EPNs for whom there is insufficient data to estimate a period of tenure are not listed. All estimates of terms should be regarded as approximate.

<sup>b</sup> Cyan fill indicates sources that conform to the traditional chronology, as explained in note b to Table 7.

<sup>c</sup> Blue fill indicates calculations that use the revisionist chronology of Koch (2012), as explained in note c to Table 7.
Consistent with this idea, one text names two EN-priestesses (Enshakiag-Nanna and her successor, Enanedu) together in a list of donors that includes various other members of Larsa’s royal family.730

In Ur and Thebes, only one person could occupy the supreme position at any given time (Table 6, *Concurrency*),731 and an incumbent EPN or GWA could not be removed from office (Table 6, *Tenure*...).732 In consequence (Table 6, *Tenure*...), many High Priestesses served for long periods: typically 30-40 years in Mesopotamia, with Enheduana achieving twice that, and 31-65 years in Egypt, perhaps with one low outlier (14-25 years) and about four GWAs each achieving 40 or more years in office (Table 8).733 This continuity provided an important unifying link through times of social disorder and during dynastic change.734 A further contributor to stability was the apprenticeship/retirement system and the scope that it afforded for collaboration and delegation among representatives of the old and new regimes. The traditional GWA chronology indicates that the overlaps between members of the Theban “college” of the God’s Wife and her designated successor required co-operation between women of different ethnicities for periods of around 35 years (after the rulership changed from Libyan to Nubian; Table 7, cyan) and for up to 41 years (after it changed from Nubian to Saite).735 Another calculation from the traditional chronology estimates the Libyan/Nubian overlap at 21-33 years, rising to 35-47 years when the inferred retirement period of Shepenwepet I is included (Table 7, cyan). As mentioned above, when the revisionist chronology of Koch (2012) is augmented with Gerard Broekman’s recently proposed designation date for Amenirdis I, an overlap of 25-37 years is suggested (Table 7, blue). A lengthy overlap is consistent with the fact that Shepenwepet I and Amenirdis I are referenced jointly in various independent inscriptions, seemingly while both were alive,736 and the existence of their “joint project” at Karnak – the Chapel of Osiris, Ruler of Eternity.737 The apprenticeship of Saite newcomer, Nitocris, at the hands of Nubian incumbent, Shepenwepet II, is conservatively estimated in the traditional chronology at 2-6 years; while it may well have been as long as 15 years, it was certainly less than 17 years (Table 7, cyan). The revisionist chronology, too, suggests that Nitocris was heiress for 17 years or less (Table 7, blue). It is the possible retention of Amenirdis II – a Nubian – in the “college” headed by Nitocris that potentially prolongs the Nubian/Saite overlap to 41 years. The twin themes of continuity and collaboration within the office of High Priestess, and the effect of these trends on society in Egypt and Mesopotamia, will be reprised in the final section of this paper.

One should not forget that the intra-dynastic succession of GWAs was often smoothed and reinforced by pre-existing biological and familial ties. In Thebes, Shepenwepet II was the niece of Amenirdis I,738 while Ankhesneferibre was the grand-niece of Nitocris I (Fig. 10). Similarly, in Ur, Enmenana was not just Enheduana’s appointed successor but also her grand-niece (Fig. 9). In contrast, subtle differences in self-presentation suggest that a veiled rivalry may sometimes have existed when the God’s Wives of Amun represented different dynasties/ethnicities. The contrasting actions of Amenirdis I and Shepenwepet II provides a
possible illustration of such tension. Amenirdis I, the first Nubian GWA, respectfully retained all of the imagery depicting her Libyan predecessor, Shepenwepet I, in the Chapel of Osiris, Ruler of Eternity (Fig. 19, no. 5). Indeed, the close association of the two women in the Nubian extension, and their balanced representations on its façade, are “reminiscent of instances of royal co-regency.”

However, Amenirdis used subtle visual cues (i.e., the dominance of rightward orientation) to portray herself as the main officiant and claimed (in no less than three places) to be the daughter of Osiris, thereby avoiding any filiation that acknowledged Shepenwepet as her senior. In contrast, Shepenwepet II – the second Nubian GWA – repeatedly gave a place of honour to Amenirdis in scenes on the North Karnak chapels of Osiris, Lord of Life (Fig. 19, no. 3; Fig. 20) and of Osiris-Onnophris in the Persea Tree (Fig. 19, no. 4), and there explicitly identified Amenirdis as her mother within her titulary, even though there was no need to do so. In this and other scenes it is clear that, rather than competing with her intra-dynastic predecessor, Shepenwepet II was using the (adoptive) filial relationship to legitimise her position. Likewise, Ankhnesneferibre, the second Saite GWA, emphasised her adoption by her intra-dynastic predecessor, Nitocris I, in a publicly displayed decree (Table 4, Notable decrees).

Of course, other factors may also have contributed to the seemingly more reserved attitude of Amenirdis I toward her predecessor. As mentioned above (Gender issues), the novitiate may not yet have been formalised as an adoption and/or the notional filiation may not yet have assumed the importance that was later attached to it. Moreover, the traditional GWA chronology allows for Shepenwepet I to have been alive (but – as mentioned above – no longer God’s Wife) when Amenirdis was taking care to avoid acknowledging her as her senior, whereas Amenirdis was dead when Shepenwepet II was honouring her and highlighting their relationship. Similarly, Nitocris I was dead at the time when Ankhnesneferibre’s inscription was composed. Still, the emotional distance between Amenirdis and her antecedent survived the death of both parties; Amenirdis’s funerary chapel at Medinet Habu (Figs. 21-23) provides her pedigree as “royal daughter” and “royal sister” in relation to the relevant Nubian ruler but continues to avoid any mention of her Libyan predecessor, Shepenwepet I. The revisionist chronology of Koch (2012) offers radically different explanation for the lack of filial piety, namely that Shepenwepet I and Amenirdis I did not in fact overlap (Table 7, blue fill).

The impact of the next dynastic change in the Late Period – from Kushite to Saite – on the office of GWA is a matter of official record. The Nitocris Adoption Stela (Table 4, Notable decrees) presents the Saite newcomer’s reception by the incumbent Nubian God Wife, Shepenwepet II, and the latter’s Nubian heir apparent, Amenirdis II, in the most affable terms. When Nitocris I arrived in Thebes, probably still a young child, Shepenwepet II reportedly found her new charge delightful and loved her “more than anything.” She and Amenirdis II promptly declared Nitocris as their successor, to be established on their throne “firmly and enduringly till the end of eternity.” Despite Psamtek I’s promise not to supplant the existing heiress, Amenirdis II seems to have been passed over in favour of Nitocris, who – in the fullness of time – became the next God’s Wife.
Nubian priestesses may have had their reservations about the succession, Nitocris—who took the “beautiful name” of Shepenwepet⁷⁵²—it seems to have held them in high esteem.⁷⁵³ (It is unclear which of the two Nubians was formally considered to be her adoptive mother at the time,⁷⁵⁴ but Nitocris primarily honours Shepenwepet II in her monuments⁷⁵⁵ and later inscriptions invariably list her rather than Amenirdis II as Nitocris’s mother.⁷⁵⁶) Moreover, rather than erecting her funerary chapel at Medinet Habu as a free-standing entity, Nitocris enlarged that of Shepenwepet II and squeezed her own into a small space between those of her Nubian predecessors (Fig. 24).⁷⁵⁷ In contrast, the Saite kings are thought to have progressively turned against the memory of their Kushite predecessors,⁷⁵⁸ although a recent reappraisal suggests that this may be an over-reach.⁷⁵⁹ Either way, Amenirdis II—who of course was the daughter of the last Nubian king to rule Egypt—may ultimately have left Thebes and returned to Napata.⁷⁶⁰

Survival

In Mesopotamia, dynastic challenges and changes in the Akkadian through Isin/Larsa periods sometimes resulted in far greater upheavals to the circumstances of the EN-priestesses of Nana in Ur than were endured by the Late Period God’s Wives of Amun in Thebes (Table 5, Hiatuses). Not only was Babylonia more prone to political fragmentation and destructive warfare, but the time-period in scope at Ur is twice as long as that under consideration at Thebes. The Elamite destruction of Ur ca. 2003, which ended the tenure—and most probably the life—of the EPN Enmahgalana, is documented below. The only Theban episode in any way comparable to this would be the Assyrian sack of Thebes by Assurbanipal in 664/3,⁷⁶¹ at a time when Shepenwepet II was God’s Wife and Amenirdis II was her heiress.⁷⁶² But the office of GWA survived the Assyrian attack unscathed, and the two women went on to receive Nitocris I (the daughter of the Assyrian appointee, king Psamtek I) as heir apparent in 656.

Enheduana, the daughter of Sargon of Akkad, endured a dynastic challenge and the potential overthrow of her father’s empire during the reign of her nephew, Naram-Sin (r. 2211-2175; Fig. 9). Toward the end of her term she fell foul of Lugal-Ane, a leader of the Great Rebellion who had risen up against the centralised authority of the Akkadian king in an attempt to seize power for himself.⁷⁶³ In consequence, Enheduana found herself evicted from the GIPAR and condemned to the privations of exile; we know of her tribulations because she recorded them in her hymn, the Adoration of Inanna. There she wails to the eponymous goddess that she is condemned to wander

... in an inimical land,
There I will die, while singing the holy song [...]
I have been attacked most cruelly [...]
I, accustomed to triumph, have been driven forth (from) my house,
Was forced to flee the cote like a swallow, my life is devoured,
Was made to walk among the mountain thorns,
The life-giving tiara of en-ship was taken from me [...]
The fruitful bed has been abolished.⁷⁶⁴
In the end, however, Enheduana’s fervent prayers to Inanna for revenge were answered; Lugal-Ane’s rebellion was quashed, and Enheduana returned to the GIPAR.

Enmahgalana was installed in year 4 of her father, Amar-Suen (Ur III, r. 2044-2036; Fig. 9). An EN-priestess named Enirsiana, who was appointed in year 10 of Ibbi-Sin (Ur III, r. 2026-2003), was probably an EN of Inanna (as the original text states) and not of Nanna (as subsequently amended). Her appointment coincided with a rebellion that reduced the state to a petty kingdom not much larger than Ur itself. Enmahgalana continued to feature in legal cases dated to the second decade of Ibbi-Sin’s reign (year 14 or 20), so she presumably remained as EPN at Ur at that stage. In year 23/25 of Ibbi-Sin, when Enmahgalana would have been in office for about 38 years (Table 8), the Elamites and their neighbours launched a successful attack on southern Mesopotamia. After a protracted siege, Ur fell; the city was ravaged by the invading mountain-people, and its inhabitants were either killed or deported as slaves. Ibbi-Sin himself was carried off in chains to Susa. The buildings of the sacred temenos at Ur were destroyed, and Enmahgalana was presumably captured or killed. The tone of the Lament for Ur, which describes the aftermath of the Elamite destruction, echoes the despair of Enheduana during her exile some 170 years earlier:

Nanna was abandoning Ur,
and his sheepfold, to the winds,
Suen [= Sin] was abandoning Ekishnugal [= the Temple of Nanna in Ur]
and his sheepfold, to the winds,
His consort Ningal was abandoning it,
and her sheepfold, to the winds,
And her Agrunkug [= the Temple of Ningal in Ur] Ningal was abandoning
and her sheepfold, to the winds […]
Ur has been given over to the winds […]
Its anointed one never walks in (his) wig […]
Its high priestess lives no more
in the gipar temple […]
O father Nanna, your purification priest
no longer perfects
pure cups for you […]
Your goodly high priestess
the very Ekishnugal one,
chosen in your ardent heart,
No longer proceeds in her joy
from the temple close to the gipar.
In the Ahua, your house of festivals,
they no longer celebrate
the festivals […]
Verily, they are garrotted
as with a string in the dirt.

Unlike Ur, Isin had successfully withstood the Elamite attack. Under Ishbi-Erra (r. 2019-1987; Fig. 9) and his son Shu-ilishu, the Dynasty of Isin began the task of restoring Ur. References to an appointment in year 19 of Ishbi-Erra are thought by some to refer to the installation of an EPN named Ninziana, but detailed examination of the sources suggests instead that it concerns the appointment of a
princess (whose name begins with Enbara...) as EGIZI of An, a position unrelated to the EPN and more likely the High Priestess of Isin.\textsuperscript{774}

Enanatuma, the daughter of king Ishme-Dagan of Isin (r. 1955-1937), rebuilt the GIPAR\textsuperscript{775} in what may have been the first proper restoration of that building since the Elamite sack of the city (Fig. 16). She was still in office long after Ur had been conquered by king Gungunum of Larsa (r. 1932-1906), the city that was Isin’s habitual foe. Indeed, she served as EN-priestess for at least 30 years, dying under the rule of the subsequent Larsa king, Abi-sare (r. 1905-1895)(Table 6, Tenure...; Fig. 9) (Table 8).\textsuperscript{776} As mentioned above (in the section titled Power and Prosperity) her seal continued to be used, with the authority of a royal seal, into the time of Warad-Sin of Larsa (r. 1834-1823). Clearly these achievements involved a major political realignment on Enanatuma’s part.\textsuperscript{777} Also as mentioned above (in the section titled Residence and Remembrance), she built a chapel named the EHILI to the sun-god Utu, son of Nanna, “for the life of Gungunum, the strong man, king of Ur [...] and dedicated it for the sake of his life.”\textsuperscript{778} Similarly attested is another such structure called the E-ESHMEDAGALA, which Enanatuma also built and dedicated for the life of Gungunum (Table 6, Building program).\textsuperscript{779}

It seems likely that Enanatuma was succeeded by a daughter of Gungunum named Enmegalana, who – given that the latter had died by year 3 of Abi-sare’s reign\textsuperscript{780} – must have held office only briefly (Fig. 9).\textsuperscript{781} It is of course possible that, in a situation similar to that of the Dynasty 24/25-26 GWAs in Thebes, Enmegalana (of Larsa) had served an apprenticeship with Enanatuma (of Isin) prior to her accession.

Although Enshakiag-Nanna, daughter of the mid-Larsa ruler Sumu-el (r. 1894-1866), held office for 40 years (Table 8) and served under no fewer than seven kings, she did not witness a major dynastic dislocation. She did, however, see the Larsa (sub-) dynasty of Samium/Abi-sare cede to that of Nur-Adad, which in turn yielded to that of Kudur-Mabuk (Fig. 9).\textsuperscript{782} Her successor Enanedu, daughter of the last-named king, was EPN for at least 30 years (Table 8; Fig. 12). Serving under her brothers Warad-Sin and Rim-Sin I of Larsa (Fig. 9), she too avoided the turbulence of outright dynastic change.

**Conclusion: Stability and Solidarity**

This paper has sought to compare the institution of EN-priestess of Nanna (EPN) at Ur with its later analogue in Egypt, the office of God’s Wife of Amun (GWA). Both types of High Priestess served as the consort of an important male deity linked with kingship: the EPN was the earthly spouse of the Mesopotamian moon-god Nanna/Sin, while the GWA was the human wife of the Egyptian creator-god Amun(-Re). The GWA, who resided in Thebes, was the only such office-bearer in Egypt at any one time. While several EPNs could hold office concurrently at different sites across Babylonia, the one in Ur was invariably the most important. We have seen that, as institutions, the EPN and GWA both spanned about a millennium (Ur, \textit{ca.} 2288-1104 BCE; Thebes, \textit{ca.} 1552-525 BCE), albeit with interruptions and periods of uncertainty for both (Fig. 3). The office of EPN began
strongly, with a peak period that lasted ca. 525 years and involved 11 known incumbents (Fig. 9), whereas the GWA’s heyday came at the end of its trajectory and lasted only half as long (ca. 265 years), with just 5 office-bearers (Fig. 10). Both institutions were terminated by the arrival of Persian rule. While early GWAs were kings’ wives first and kings’ daughters second, the office of GWA evolved over time – presumably by natural selection – to match the Mesopotamian situation, where the usual practice was for a king to nominate his daughter as High Priestess and God’s Wife. Since it is this arrangement that obtained during the peak period of the EPN and GWA alike, we may conclude that this formula was especially effective in the context of ancient Near Eastern and Egyptian societies.

In the respective periods of strength of the two institutions, the incumbents were typically princesses whose political purpose was to assist the king in controlling a remote region and/or rival institution. These women were powerful royal figures whose served as religious, political, cultural and economic leaders of their communities. As heads of the major temples in their respective regions, they brought the assets of these wealthy institutions within the purview of the crown. The cultic roles of the EPN and GWA were similar, although the former focused her energies upon Ningal, the goddess of whom she was the earthly representative, whereas the latter directed her energies toward Amun(-Re), her divine husband. Although the current consensus is that the “sacred marriage” was in both cases symbolic, the quotidian sexual, marital and maternal status of the High Priestesses remains controversial. Despite femininity being central to the role of a divine consort, both offices are somewhat affected by a paradoxical gender distortion, namely the notional masculinisation of the incumbents. Other similarities between the two types of priestess – such as undertones of servitude in their titles, their associations with specific birds, and their construction of chapels with analogous features – were also explored.

Carola Koch (2012) presents something of a minority report on the Late phase GWAs. If Koch’s sometimes radical views are correct, there may be more conceptual distance between these Egyptian princess-priestesses and their Mesopotamian counterparts than is suggested by the traditional understanding of each office. In particular, Koch sees the Dynasty 23-26 God’s Wife as a daughter rather than a spouse or consort of Amun; claims that the titles “Divine Adoratrice” and “God’s Hand” are not junior titles and are only ever borne by the incumbent GWA; presents a revisionist chronology in which Shepenwepet I and Amenirdis I appear not to overlap; does not allow that a GWA might retire in favour of her heiress; and denies that the Nubian incumbents wielded significant political power. Indeed, if one were to combine Koch’s idea of the Late phase GWA as a daughter of Amun with recurring suggestions that at least some of them were kings’ wives, the Late phase office could form the topic of counter-paper titled “God’s Daughter, King’s Wife!” Other of Koch’s claims, such as her re-assignment of the GWA structures at Medinet Habu as mortuary chapels for which the cognate tombs lie elsewhere, have little impact on the analysis in the present paper and are argued so convincingly that they have simply been accepted. All of Koch’s opinions have been recognised separately at the appropriate locations throughout the paper, but their collective origin in a single cohesive source is what warrants a special mention in this coda. If, in the fullness of time, some of Koch’s more controversial
suggestions (or revisionist proposals from other sources) are proven correct, it would of course be worth re-examining the data from Mesopotamia to see if the corrections applied to our understanding of the GWA might not also be relevant to our appreciation of the EPN at Ur. (As the GWAs of interest are 1500 years closer to us than the cognate EPNs, it makes sense to use the more abundant data for the former to formulate possibilities for the latter.) In the meantime, however, we can still draw many inferences from the comparison in the present paper which are likely to prove enduring, and to this end we may resume our summary.

Both types of High Priestess were spiritual leaders who were often instrumental in reconciling and integrating distinct cultural or ethnic groups within their respective countries, thereby furthering the royal agenda of national unification. For example, Enheduana’s writings helped to unite the Semitic Akkadians of northern Babylonia with the non-Semitic Sumerians of the south, and enhanced the authority of the Sargonic dynasty by connecting the resulting pan-Babylonian pantheon to the royal family. Similarly, the religious leadership of the Libyan and Nubian GWAs of Dynasties 23-25 demonstrated the deep commitment of the corresponding royal houses to upholding Egyptian religious norms, and thereby helped to legitimize the rule of Egypt by a series of non-indigenous kings. In Dynasty 26, the Saite – kings of Libyan descent whose dynasty had begun as an Assyrian vassalship – were naturalised and rehabilitated in the same way. With their enthusiastic revival of archaic Egyptian practices in piety and art,784 the various “foreign” elites appear almost more Egyptian than the Egyptians themselves. As Angelika Lohwasser observes, “the GWA epitomized continuity of the traditional rituals for the state god Amun. [...] The (Nubian) GWAs were considered Egyptian by the Egyptians – and it seems by the Kushites, including the GWAs themselves, as well.”785 “But the political influence and power of this institution was fruitfully used by the Kushites to stabilize their rule in Egypt.”786

Although the office of High Priestess in Ur was subject to greater upheavals than its counterpart in Thebes, we have seen that the incumbents of both institutions often served for long periods: typically 30-40 years in Ur, with one exceptional term of ca. 77 years, and 40-65 years in Thebes, possibly with one low term of 14-25 years (Table 8). This longevity provided the relevant community with a unifying link through times of social and political disorder. In both institutions, specific incumbents (e.g., Enanatuma and Shepenwepet I) are known or are widely believed to have successfully straddled dynastic change, remaining in office long into the new dynasty. For the GWA, we also saw that apprenticeship (via adoption of the new king’s daughter), collaboration and delegation were common, requiring co-operation between women of “different ethnic and cultural backgrounds [...] who belonged to warring dynasties”787 over long periods, e.g. probably 2-15 years for the Nubian/Saite overlap, and potentially 25 years or more for the Libyan/Nubian one. Thus, writing of Shepenwepet I and Amenirdis I, Mariam Ayad observes:788

[T]he authority of the office of the God’s Wife [...] imbued the incumbent, Libyan or Nubian, with the ability to serve the gods. It is the harmonious co-existence, and association, of these two women that served to achieve a smooth transition of power in the Theban region. For it is in their capacity as the ultimate religious authority in Thebes that the two women were able to negotiate the dynastic transition from Libyan to Nubian rule.
Fig. 28. Continuity across a dynastic divide. A generic scheme to highlight a key benefit of the institution. HP, High Priestess (i.e., EPN/ GWA); Dau, daughter.

A similarly stabilising and collaborative situation (exemplified generically in Fig. 28) seems to have obtained, albeit without the formality of adoption, in the GIPAR at Ur. Although novitiates at Ur may have been limited to a few years, and evidence of protracted role-sharing is lacking, it is likely that any contemporaneous incumbent, trainee and retired EPNs were considered to form a unitary “college,” just as has been suggested for the God’s Wives of Amun. Either way, the political impacts of the two institutions were equivalent. In the words of Joan Westenholz:

[T]he en-priestess [...] embodied the wider community of Ur in her union with Nanna. She was a symbol of the Sumerian community as a whole. For this reason [...], these en-priestesses who outlived their fathers and some even their dynasties, could not be removed from office and could thus continue to serve and provide the unifying link even in periods of disunity.

In other words, whether the princess officiated alone or shared aspects of the High Priestess role with her designated successor and/or predecessor, the outcome of her long reign was the same: stability and continuity, even in times of political and social distress.

Postscript

Subsequent to the release of this article, Manfred Bietak published a paper in which he proposes a re-assignment of the temple in section C of the Ur III-Larsa period GIPAR to Nanna rather than to Ningal. If this is correct, the cultic focus of the EPN may have been much more on Nanna than on his wife Ningal. This adjustment would reduce or remove one of the perceived differences between the EPN and the GWA (Cult and Ritual section).
Abbreviations: COS, Context of Scripture; RIME, Royal Inscriptions of Mesopotamia – Early periods; UET, Ur Excavations – Texts; items within these series are listed by entry number.

1 Schuenemann et al. (2017).

2 E.g., Mumford (2013). David Wengrow (2006: 13) writes “In the second millennium BC, as from the time of their inception, the principal dynastic powers of South-West Asia and North-East Africa were related through material interests and exchanges, even as they remained culturally and politically divided.”

3 Indeed, the existence of predynastic cultural/trade contacts between Mesopotamia and Egypt (in the Uruk and Naqada IIIA/B periods, respectively) is attested by the presence of Mesopotamian iconography (Sumerian attire and Master of Animals motif) on the carved handle of the Egyptian “Gebel el-Aarak Knife,” which is believed to have come from Abydos [Seidlmayer (2010: 26, Fig. 31); Shaw & Nicholson (2008: 124-5); Étienne (n.d.)]. Writing of Mesopotamian and Iranian cylinder seals, especially those from Uruk and Susa, David Wengrow (2006: 191) writes that “it must be assumed that, towards the end of the fourth millennium, small numbers of such objects became entangled within larger exchange networks extending between South-West Asia and the Mediterranean coast, and that the images carried on them were absorbed into a creative process then underway among local elites within Egypt. […] In some well known cases, such as the ‘master of animals’ design on the Gebel el-Araq Knife-handle (fig 2.4), the decorative content of a foreign seal appears to have been transposed directly on to a locally crafted, Egyptian object. Such direct appropriations are no longer in evidence after the time of the Narmer Palette.” For his full discussion of Egyptian cultural borrowings from Mesopotamia and Iran, see Wengrow (2006: 187-95).

4 The motif is well developed in the Osiride legends preserved by Plutarch, but it is present even in Middle Kingdom versions of the myth. E.g., Wilkinson (2003: 118-20); Hart (2005: 117 & 124).


6 Blackman (1924); Sparks (2005: 147-9); Westenholz (2013a: 258-9); Beckerleg (2009); Walker and Dick (1999); Lorton (1999), esp. p.147 fn 37; Dick (2017).

7 Zettler (1986: 36).

8 Hart (2005: 74-75); Shonkwiler (2014).


14 One version of the “rod and ring” appears incidentally in Fig. 1.
15 For a good overview, see Ataç (2015).
16 Commendably, Herodotus [Hdt I 181.5-182.2] connected the “sacred marriage” of the High Priestess in Thebes with a corresponding Babylonian practice (discussed below in Celibacy and the Sacred Marriage). Similarly, some modern scholars mention the categories of Mesopotamian en-priestess and Egyptian God’s Wife in quick succession, without providing any detail, e.g., Solvang (2003: 43). Surprisingly, the recent 543-page compendium titled Sacred Marriages: The Divine-Human Sexual Metaphor from Sumer to Early Christianity devotes only a tangential paragraph to the GWA (Rikala 2008: 124-5) and – in a different paper – a single sentence to the EPN (Lapinkivi 2008: 17).
17 For convenience of layout and reference, Tables 1-6 (all of which are called by the end of the next paragraph) appear as a single group, uninterrupted by text, figures or page-breaks, starting on the next page. Figure placements commence after Table 6. Tables 7-8, which belong together, are also presented as a single group at the place where Table 7 is first called.
19 Van Buylaere (2019), esp. p.44.
20 Stol (2016: 555). Although not listed as a separate title at this stage, it forms the initial part of the ceremonial name Enheduana; Westenholz (2012: 300). Lion (2009: 170) cautions that, prior to this, “no document of the archaic Sumerian period mentions an EN of Nanna.” EN-ship in its original sense (see main text, Gender Issues) was the distinctive form of kingship in archaic Uruk ca. 3000, where the king was EN (Lord) of Inanna, goddess of that city, in a sacred marriage. See Westenholz (2012: 292); Westenholz (2013a: 248-9); Beaulieu (2007: 167); Steinkeller (1999: 103-11).
22 Weadock (1975: 106).
23 Woolley (1982: 92-4); Crawford (2015: 54-56); Stol (2016: 471-5); Van de Mieroop (2016: 65-66). Nevertheless, Collon (1999: 20) keeps alive the idea that “the large number of women might indicate that they were priestesses of Nanna.”
25 Steinkeller (1999: 121) writes: “Still other types of high priestesses documented in the ED period are munus-zi and zirru [; ...] zirru was the high priestess of Nanna at Ur.”
32 Bryan (2003: 1).
36 Bryan (2003: 3-4).
37 Bryan (2003: 5).
38 Gitton (1976).
40 Bryan (2003: 5).
41 Feldman & Lewis (2016).
50 Kriwaczek (2010: 120).
51 Steinkeller (1999), p.126 incl. fn 83 (3).
54 Green (1992: 35).
59 Promoted to this position to match the dominance of his city Ur over Babylonia during Ur III. Hall (1986: 153); Beaulieu (2007: 167).
60 Hall (1985); Hall (1986).
64 Green (1992: 36-37).
72 Green & Black (2000a: 273)
74 Westenholz (2013b: 49).
76 Suter (2007), p.336 incl. fn 60. A section of the fragmentary A Balbale to Nanna (also known as Nanna B) reads: “I shall …… to the beautiful young reeds. Mistress, …… the treasures (?) of the ubi-birds. I will gather their eggs for you, and I shall …… the nest. High priestess of Nanna, …… the ubi-birds.” Black et al. (2001a), lines 32-37.
78 Westenholz (2012: 302); Westenholz (2013a:249).
81 Lohwasser (2016: 123). As Hfi-nfr.w-Mw.t is probably a subjunctive, “May the perfection of Mut appear” [Ayad (2009a: 29)], there is no need to contend – as does Lohwasser (2016: 124) – that “Amenirdis I represents herself as the living personification of Mut, while the following GWAs construct their names as a title expressing a link to the goddess but not embodiment of her.” The extent to which the GWA may be identified with Mut is discussed in the main text section titled Cult and Ritual.
82 Westenholz (2012: 292). The city is not given, but cannot be Ur if Weadock (2012: 127) is correct.
“Originally a term for a god’s servant, but later understood as a variant of the high-priestess office.” Steinkeller (1999); van Koppen (2006: 91). See under table heading Iconography of spouse for an avian association. The term ZIRRU was adopted into Akkadian with the meaning “High Priestess of Sin;” in contrast, the native Akkadian term zirru means “reed fence.” Oppenheim (1961: 136).

Kriwaczek (2010: 120); Suter (2007: 321); Westenholz (2012: 295-6 & 305); Stol (2016: 558); Asher-Grevese (2013: 230-1). The title ZIRRU is still used by some post-Ur III EPNs such as Enanatuma (Isin dynasty); van Koppen (2006: 92).


Bryan (2003: 3-4).

Ayad (2009a: 3-4).


Bryan (2003: 3-4).


Weadock (1975: 103).

Westenholz (2013a: 251). Weadock (1975: 127-8) provides a list of known EN-priestesses of Nanna at Ur, with filiation and dates. Note however that Enirisiana and Ninzianna (who are included by Weadock as En-nir-si-anna and Nin-zi-anma, respectively) are very unlikely to be EPNs, as discussed in the main text section titled Survival.

The biblical patriarch Abram/Abraham – whose origins are associated with Ur (Gen 11: 27-32) – is conventionally ascribed to a time at the end of the 3rd millennium or in the early 2nd millennium [Monson & Lancaster (2014), p.40 and foldout chart facing it]; traditionalists narrow the date-range to 2166-1991 BCE [Bauer (2007), p.128 fn]. If Abraham existed and his dating is broadly correct, he would probably have grown up in Ur at a time when the EPN there was a powerful and well-known individual. The name of Abraham’s father, Terah, and the names of other relatives suggest that his forefathers and immediate family may have been followers of Nanna/Sin [Hamilton (1990:363); Hartley (2000: 131); Bauer (2007: 128)]. Moreover, Harran – the place to which Terah relocated his family from Ur, and thus the first stop on Abraham’s journey to Canaan (Gen 12: 1-5; Acts 7: 2-4) – was the main cult centre for Nanna/Sin in the north [Kriwaczek (2010: 163); Summers (2000)]. One scholar – Savina Teubal – has gone so far as to propose that Sarai/Sarah, Abraham’s wife, was herself an EPN or similar [Teubal (1984), assessed by Vancil (1993: 37-41) and, less charitably, by Milne (1987: 122)].


Sollberger (1965): UET VIII 12; Frayne (1993): RIME 2.1.4.33-34; Suter (2007), p.322, 325 & Fig. 3; Weadock (1975: 127).


Frayne (1997): RIME 3/2.1.3.19 & year-name p.237; Westenholz (2012: 304-5); Weadock (1975: 128); van de Mieroop (2016: 85), Fig. 4.3.

Frayne (1990): RIME 4.1.4.3-4 & 13 and RIME 4.2.5.1-2; Suter (2007), p.329-330 & Fig. 9; Stol (2016), p.560-563 & Fig. 43; Weadock (1975: 128).


Gadd (1951: 30); Weadock (1975: 128).


Ayad (2009a: 6); Quirke (2000-3a); Bart (n.d.).


Ayad (2009a: 8-9); Quirke (2000-3a); Bart (n.d.).

Westenholz (2013a: 262).


95. Stol (2016: 584).


97. By continuation from the Early phase (Table 3, Basic titles).


101. Amenirdis I made three references to Osiris as her father in the Chapel of Osiris, Ruler of Eternity in East Karnak; Ayad (2009a: 132).

102. Teeter (1999: 411-2); Morkot (2006: 148 & 151). In an unrelated context, Pope (2013: 194) tells us that “epitheta of the God’s Wives in Egypt were themselves borrowed from a still earlier source – the institution of queenship;”. Perhaps this, together with the origins of the institution among the Great Royal Wives of the New Kingdom, underpins an occasional honorific use of the term *Hm.t nsw* in respect of later GWAs. Indeed, Pope (2015: 363-4) has argued that some of the Late phase GWAs may genuinely have been king’s wives. Most recently, however, a better photograph of the inscription on the sarcophagus of Nitocris I has caused him to abandon the claim that Shepenwepet II was there accorded the title of *Hm.t nsw*. Accordingly, there are now no known instances of Shepenwepet II being described as a king’s wife; Pope (2018: 51).

103. Ankhnesneferibre and Nitocris B were both appointed HPA while heiresses. The eventual absorption of this title by the GWA is discussed in the section titled Power and Prosperity.


107. Due to the existence of incompatible chronological schemes, specific calendar dates are not included here. Specific dates from the various schemes are presented ahead in Fig. 10.


119. Ayad (2009a), p.22 (Table 1.1) & p.118 (incl. fn 13).


123. Ayad (2009a: 119-20); Becker (2016: 38-41). While not denying the prominence of Kushite royal women in affairs of state, Koch (2012:24) cautions that the Kushite social system was not matrilineal.

“Not surprisingly it is from the Third Dynasty of Ur that come the greatest number of attestations and clearest indications of worship [of Nanna];” Stone (2016). The calculation of four EPNs for the Ur III period is from Weadock (1975: 127-8), minus Enirsiana (see main text section titled Survival).

She may of course have been a compiler/editor rather than author, or even have been credited honorifically with creations from a later time; Stol (2016: 565-6).

Westenholz (2012: 305).

She may of course have been a compiler/editor rather than author, or even have been credited honorifically with creations from a later time; Stol (2016: 565-6).

Westenholz (2012: 305).


Török (2009: 322). Some scholars (Ayad, Dodson and others) seem to consider Shepenwepet’s political prominence less important than the influence exerted by her Nubian and Saite successors (Dyn 25-26).


Koch (2012: 77), as discussed in main text section titled Power and Prosperity.


Enanedu held office for at least 30 years; Gadd (1951: 35).


Weadock (1975: 110).


Weadock (1975: 111).


Weadock (1975: 111).

Crawford (2015: 118).

Crawford (2015: 113).

Crawford (2015: 112). Conversely, Brigitte Lion appears to believe that there was no EPN at Ur between Enanedu and the Neo-Babylonian revival of the office a millennium later, when Nabonidus appointed his daughter En-nigaldi-Nanna as EPN; Lion (2009: 180).


Zettler (2011), at 0:15:00-015:46.

Ayad (2009a: 6).


Weadock (1975: 112).

Stol (2016: 574); Weadock (1975: 112).

Crawford (2015: 120-6).


Stol (2016: 574-5); Garrison (2012: 45); Studevent-Hickman et al. (2006: 393-5). Nabonidus’s daughter’s name was originally misread as Bel-shalti-Nanna [Stol (2016), p.576 fn 119] and the reading persists in some modern literature [Crawford (2015), p.126 & Fig. 9.iii].

The criticism is recorded in the Cyrus Cylinder; Arnold & Michalowski (2006: 426-9). The authors caution that Cyrus’s criticism of the appointment of En-nigaldi-Nanna as EPN is not entirely certain, as their translation glosses over a grammatical difficulty.


Pope (2013: 197-8). Although Ayad (2009a: 154) claims the time interval to be 200 years, Pope (2014: 220) points out that its duration is actually around 60 years. The ancestor (whose identity has been effaced) is usually assumed to be Amenirdis II [Pope (2014: 220-2)], who may have returned to Nubia after she was displaced as heiress by Nitocris (main text, Succession). Recently, Pope (2015) has proposed Shepenwepet II as the ancestor. Lohwasser (2016: 129) does not believe that the ancestor was a genuine GWA or heiress, merely a priestess of Amun at Thebes.

Ayad (2009a: 4); Perdu (2016: 226). Perdu indicates that one such institution may relate to Horus-Re.


Koch (2012: 81); Perdu (2016: 225-6). The God’s Wife of Heryshaf, which is the subject of Perdu (2016), was not confined to royal women, but in the Saite period was occupied by a daughter of Psamtek II; see main text section titled The Office of High Priestess.
222 Ayad (2009a), p.29 (Table 1.2).
223 For example, Amenirdis I and Shepenwepet II were substituted for Mut in depictions of the
“divine marriage” at the Chapel of Osiris-Onnophris in the Persea Tree (East Karnak), images
that are clearly based on the depiction of Mut embracing Amun in the Hypostyle Hall of
(2006); el Hawary (2016: 11-12).
227 Pope (2014: 206 & 224); Pope (2013: 179-181, 201 & 206-7); Manassa (2011: 355); Leahy
228 Ayad (2009a: 90, 95, 102 & 104); Ayad (2016a: 95).
235 Westenholz (2013a: 257).
238 Westenholz (2013a: 257); Weadock (1975: 103).
239 Westenholz (2013a: 257).
245 Ayad (2009a: 122); Robins (1993a: 71); Bryan, (2003: 2). A God’s Father ranked higher than a
w‘b-priest but below a Hm nTr; Contardi (2006: 145). The latter group were led by the First,
Second, Third and Fourth Priests of Amun, the first-mentioned being the HPA; the sequence
from w‘b-priest to HPA is exemplified by the career of the Ramesside priest Bakenkhons;
Frood (2007: 41). There seems to have been no priestly rank of God’s Father in the
Mesopotamian cult of Nanna. On the other hand, God’s Mother is a known female title within
the Hittite priesthood; Taggar-Cowen (2006: 335-68). From Dynasty 21, the title of God’s
Mother also appears in Egypt, usually in relation to Khonsu (as child) and sometimes in relation
to Hathor (as mother); Perdu (2016: 226-8).
248 Ayad (2009a: 90, 95, 102 & 104)
250 Ayad (2009a: 103-10); Ayad (2016a: 95); Koch (2012: 28 & 75). There was a brief period in the
late New Kingdom/early Third Intermediate Period when some members of the High Priest of
Amun’s family co-opted the ritual for private funerary use; Koch (2016: 156).
252 Green & Black (2000c); Steinkeller (1999: 116); Suter (2007: 322). For recent treatments of this
phenomenon as a metaphor with parallels beyond ancient Mesopotamia, see e.g. Lapinkivi
(2008); Pongratz-Leisten (2008). Until recently, the sacred marriage of the king to a fertility
goddess or figure who represented the sovereignty of the land was accepted as having diffused
as far afield as Scandinavia, but this Frazerian generalisation has recently come under challenge; Sundqvist (2016: 7-12).


254 A small room with a large bed platform adjacent to C27, the shrine of the Ningal temple; Westenholz (2013a: 258). See room C28 in Wooley (1982), p.185 (plan); Weadock (1975) Pl. XXVIa (plan) & p.115-118.


257 Hdt. 182.1-2; de Sélinkourt (1972: 114).

258 Robins (1993a: 67-70). However, see also the next endnote.

259 Blackman (1921: 12-4); Koch (2012: 79-80); Rikala (2008), esp. p.124 for the Hathor-Mut equivalence.

260 Accordingly, Koch (2012: 65) observes that the title of God’s Wife alludes to the king’s “divine descent by a proclaimed marriage of his mother with a god.”


263 Manassa (2011: 357); Ayad (2009a: 38 & 51).


265 Hdt. 182.1-2; de Sélinkourt (1972: 114).

266 Gadd (1951: 32).

267 Weadock (1975: 102).

268 Lion (2009: 166); Hruša (2015: 76-7); Scurlock (2014: 106); Postgate (1992: 130).


274 Robins (1993a: 67); Rikala (2008: 124-5). The idea that the husband of the GWA would become king is central to the plot of the novel The God’s Wife (Voedisch 2011: 54).


276 Ayad (2009a: 117 & 152); Teeter (1999: 406). Ritner (2009: 460) quotes Baer in describing the GWAs as “celibate priestesses who secured the allegiance of Thebes to the crown by providing ‘a politically harmless titular head for the domain of Amun.’”


281 Ayad (2009a: 15, 28, 152 & 154); Ayad (2016a: 89).


283 Westenholz (2013a), p.248 (Table 12.1); Hruša (2015: 76-81).

284 Kriwaczek (2010: 121); Hafford (2012); Hart (n.d.a). Source publications are Frayne (1992): RIME 2.1.1.2003 (seal U8988; UET I 271) for hairdresser Ilum PaH; RIME 2.1.1.2005 (sealing U11684) for scribe [x]-kitaš-du; RIME 2.1.1.2004 (seal U9178) for the estate supervisor/majordomo Adda (the equivalent of the High Steward of a GWA). The seal for
scribe Sagadu, whose inscription is interpreted online by William Hallo [Hart (n.d.b.)], is in the Rosen Collection; see Eisenberg (1998), p.30 Fig. 23 (No. 64).

285 Assuming these designations were junior titles used by the heireess(es), an assumption common to much of the existing scholarship but recently contested by Koch (2012: 44-50 & 62-65).

286 Koch (2012: 82-86).

287 As heireess, Nitocris and Ankhnesneferibre each held the title hsi.t wr.t n.t hnw n.y Tmn.w; Koch (2012: 62 & 77). As heireess, Amenirdis II seems to have done likewise with hsi.t f. t n.t hnw n.y Tmn.w; Pope (2015: 358).

288 Li (2011); Corsi (2013).

289 Koch (2012: 12-15) describes these functionaries (High Steward/Chief Steward/Great Overseer of the House); their Egyptian names are listed by History of Ancient Egypt (n.d.a). No less than eight statues of Harwa, the High Steward of Amenirdis I, are held by the Berlin Museum; David (2014: 19). Later in Dynasty 25 he was followed by Akhamenrau; Koch (2012: 14). In Dynasty 26, Nitocris I was served by Ibi, Pabasa, Padihorresnet, and Anchchor, while Ankhnesneferibre’s High Stewards were Sheshonq A, Padineith and Sheshonq B; Koch (2012: 15).

290 Bryan (2003: 2).


293 Lion (2009); Westenholz (2012: 306); Westenholz (2013a: 267).


295 Westenholz (2012: 304-5); Weadock (1975: 103).


297 Westenholz (2012: 306); cf. the source inscription in Figulla & Martin (1953): UET V 343, which names the two lenders as Belshametabum and Namtinibani. None of the records for Enanedu in Figulla & Martin (1953): UET V show her lending money for interest.

298 E.g., the Adoption Stele of Nitocris. Caminos (1964); Wilkinson (2016: 212-9).


300 Brier (2010).

301 Van de Mieroop (2010: 275); Mark (2017).

302 Weadock (1975: 104-5).


304 Gadd (1951: 30); Stol (2016: 562-3).


306 Kriwaczek (2010: 122-4); Stol (2016: 564-5). Similarly Ninshatapada, a daughter of King Sinkashid of Uruk and a High Priestess of Meslamtaea, the god of Durum, was exiled under Rim-Sin I of Larsa, the brother of Enanedu after he conquered Uruk; Stol (2016: 577).

307 Gadd (1951: 30 & 35).


310 Shaw & Nicholson (2008: 130); Shaw (2003: 217-8); Becker et al. (2017: 1). El Hawary (2016: 16) sees Isis as the prototype adoptee, being “the first God’s Wife who was enthroned through adoption by her predecessor, the divine grandmother Isis” (i.e., Ramses VI’s mother, Isis).


314 Teeter (1999).

315 Ayad (2009a: 9); el Hawary (2016: 16).


Ayad (2009a), p.22 (Table 1.1); Dodson (2002: 186).

Caminos (1964: 97); Leahy (1996: 159); Dodson (2002); Pope (2013: 178 & 188); Pope (2014: 212).

Ayad (2009a: 30).

Stol (2016: 565); Kriwaczek (2010: 122-3).

Gadd (1951: 28); Weadock (1975: 103).

Lion (2009: 171-3); Stol (2016: 555-6 & 559).


Lion (2009); Westenholz (2012: 306); Frayne (1990): RIME 4.2.13.32.


Bryan (2003: 4); Gitton (1976), p.72 & Pl. XIV.

Bryan (2003: 11). Betsy Bryan connects this construction, which she interprets as “she is born to” NN, with the terminology commonly used to describe male filiation, e.g. the relative form [son X] ir(i)n [father Y], “[son X] whom [father Y] made” [Allen (2010: 364)] and the passive participial construction [son X] ir(i)y n [father Y] “[son X] who was made by [father Y]” [Faulkner (1962: 25)], and on this basis suggests that “Nitocris may be understood to be now claiming a male-type filiation from Amenirdis II, who likewise claims it from Shepenwepet II;” Bryan (2003: 11). However, the grammar on the stele is consistent with other interpretations that do not imply male filiation, such as “she is made over to NN,” as preferred by other translators; Caminos (1964: 74); Wilkinson (2016: 214).


E.g., part of a diorite statue of Enanatuma has been found in the Ningal temple within the GIPAR Frayne (1990): RIME 4.1.4.13; Franz van Koppen (2006: 92).


Brisch (2007).


Roberts (2004).


Westenholz (2012: 293).

Dodson (2004); Ayad (2009a: 34-115); Morkot (2006).


History of Ancient Egypt (n.d.b); Ayad (2009a: 124-9).


Koch (2012: 42); Aufderhaar (2016).


Quirke (2000-3b); Ayad (2009a: 36).

353 Coulon (2014).
356 Kriwaczek (2010: 120); Westenholz (2013a: 262); Weadock (1975: 103-4).
357 Westenholz (2013a: 262); Stol (2016: 561-2).
359 Crawford (2015: 91); Weadock (1975: 104).
361 Weadock (1975: 104 & 110).
368 Stol (2016: 564).
369 Kriwaczek (2010: 122); Stol (2016: 564-5); Wakeman (1985: 18-19); Mark (2014); Mark (2010). Some refuse to go as far as crediting Enheduana with a “new theology” that replaced Enlil with Inanna; Westenholz (2012: 303).
370 Stol (2016: 564-5); Westenholz (2012: 303); Mark (2014); Mark (2010); Feldman & Lewis (2016); van de Mieroop (2016; 70).
375 Török (2009: 322); Legrain (1908: 278-9).
377 In synchronic terms, we are therefore comparing Mesopotamia at the time of the Egyptian late Old Kingdom through late Middle Kingdom with Egypt at the time of the Neo-Assyrian and Neo-Babylonian empires in Mesopotamia.
378 References are primarily cited in the footnotes to the tables, as the latter are the main repository of detailed information and the sources from which it has been drawn. To avoid cluttering the discussion with endnotes, references will be repeated only sparingly in the main text.
380 Roaf (1990: 75).
381 As a faithful representation of a two-dimensional work of art in the Public Domain, the image is also deemed to be in the Public Domain; https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/Commons:When_to_use_the_PD-Art_tag.
382 Penn Museum, online at https://www.penn.museum/collections/object/251212.
383 Dodson & Hilton (2004: 213-21); Jurman (2016), Figs. 4a & 4b.
...
The death of Amenirdis I and consequent installation of Shepenwepet II is estimated to be 677-670 BCE from Koch (2012: 42-43 & 282), Pope (2015: 361) and Coulon et al. (2018: 276, incl. fn 28), rounded to ca. 674 BCE for brevity in the figure. Koch (2014: 407) specifies a 40-year incumbency for Amenirdis I, which provides for her installation in 717-710 BCE, rounded to ca. 714 BCE in the figure. The death of Shepenwepet II and succession of Nitocris I is estimated to have occurred no later than 639 BCE, as it is known that Ibi was installed as the first High Steward to Nitocris in that year; Koch (2012: 15); Pope (2013: 187); Coulon (2014: 567).


422 Van De Mieroop (2016: 70).


424 Koch (2012: 81); Perdu (2016). In office, she bore the titles hmt-nTr (God’s Wife), mwvt-nTr (God’s Mother), dwA(t)-nTr (Divine Adoratrice) and, as her most important epithet, im(.yt) bAH / im(.yt) mtwt (rendered by Purdue as “Dépositaire de la Semence,” Depository of the Seed). The first, third and last titles are in relation to the god Heryshaf and relate the priestess to Hathor, while the second title is in relation to the god Somtous, son of Heryshaf and Hathor.

425 Ayad (2009a: 3).


427 The title of Mariam Ayad’s book, God’s Wife, God’s Servant, is derived directly from this Egyptian double entendre. Ayad (2009a: xiii).


450 On the EPNs at Ur, “... or il semble que ces femmes y assument parfois un genre masculin;” Lion, (2009: 167).
455 Gadd & Legrain (1928): UET I 48; both “[son]” and “(this)” are present in the original text.
456 Gadd & Legrain (1928): UET I 103; likewise 104.
457 Gadd & Legrain (1928): UET I 114, note (1).
459 In such compositions, EMESAL is used especially when goddesses, women, or priests of Inanna speak, as well as in cultic laments; Gadotti (2014: 61).
461 After Gadd (1951), Pl. XIV.
462 Convention as for Fig. 11. In a departure from the convention used in the main text, capitals have again been reserved for the components of DIRI-compounds.
464 Order number: FI-000915118
465 Teppo (2008), p.76 & 85 incl. fn 64.
466 Emphasis is in the original text; Wakeman (1985: 20). Enheduanna’s exile is discussed in the main text section titled Survival.
467 Lion (2009: 171-3 & 177).
471 Bryan (2003: 4). On the other hand, Morkot (2016: 110) takes the declaration to mean that “the office was initially hereditary within the descendants of Ahmose-Nefertary.”
472 Note that a similar practice operated in Mesopotamia; in Ur during the Ur III-Isin/Larsa period, “it was the duty of the eldest son to look after the graves;” Crawford (2015: 107). Although a man’s inheritance was divided between all of his children, the eldest son received a larger share to help him maintain the funerary estate; Crawford (2015: 101 & 107).
473 Ayad p.71.
474 Ayad p.16
475 As mentioned earlier (main text, The Office of High Priestess) Karomama was possibly the daughter of Osorkon II [Dodson (2004: 212-23); Jurman (2016), Figs. 4a & 4b]. This would place her in the generation of Shepenwepet’s great-grandfather, meaning that she was unlikely to have survived to the time of Shepenwepet’s designation. Another daughter of Osorkon II, Tashakheper, may have served briefly as Adoratrice between Karomama and Shepenwepet [Guilleux (2016); Bart (n.d.)], but, for identical reasons, is unlikely to have been in office when Shepenwepet was designated. An alternative or additional possibility to Tashakheper is the even more enigmatic Qedmerut [Morkot (2016: 111)]. A recently-considered alternative genealogy [Jurman (2016), Fig. 4e] repositions Karomama as Shepenwepet’s aunt, in which case the former could well have been in office when the latter was designated. Either way, though, there is no indication that Shepenwepet was adopted by an existing God’s Wife or Divine Adoratrice.
476 Morkot (2016: 111-2) suggests that the practice developed in the reigns of Osorkon III or Kashta, but not earlier.
E.g., Koch (2012: 161). However, as this chapel was built by Nitocris, the filiation could be an anachronism reflecting the norms of Dynasty 26.

In line 4, the stele uses the term \(ir(i).t(w)=s\ n\ NN\), which can be read “she is made for/by NN,” where NN is the adoptive mother’s name [Bryan (2003: 10)]. Bryan connects this construction, which she interprets as “she is born to” NN, with the terminology commonly used to describe male filiation, e.g. the relative form [son X] \(ir(i).n\ [father Y]\), “[son X] whom [father Y] made” [Allen (2010: 364)] and the passive participial construction [son X] \(ir(i.y)\ n\ [father Y]\), “[son X] who was made by [father Y]” [Faulkner (1962: 25)], and on this basis makes the suggestion quoted in the main text. Teeter (2003: 409) observes that “the use of the term \(ir.t\ n\) (“engendered of”) [...] was more often associated with reference to a male antecedent but was also employed for women,” and provides examples of the latter. The expression on the stele is also consistent with other interpretations that do not imply male filiation, such as “she is made over to NN,” as preferred by other translators [Caminos (1964: 74); Wilkinson (2016: 214)].
514 Ur Online, online at http://www.ur-online.org/file-detail/40162/.
516 Title image in Mandal (2017), bearing the legend “Reconstruction of the sacred precinct at Ur, circa 21st century BC.”
517 Christie (1936).
518 Murder in Mesopotamia (2001/2), Season 8, Episode 2 in Agatha Christie’s Poirot (TV Series); DVD. UK: Carnival Film & Television and USA: A&E Television Networks.
519 Crawford (2015: 10 & 131).
520 Wikimedia Commons, online at https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:View_Of_Ancient_Ur_Iraq.JPG.
521 Weadock (1975), Pl. XXVIa.
523 Ur Online, images 84-26-14_1.jpg (panel a) and 84-26-14_2.jpg (panel b), online at http://www.ur-online.org/subject/38970/.
524 Ur Online, images B16477_1.jpg (panel a) B16477_2.jpg (panel b), online at http://www.ur-online.org/subject/2730/.
525 Weadock (1975: 104 & 110).
526 Westenholz (2013a: 262).
528 Westenholz (2013a: 262).
530 Kemp (2006), p.351-3, incl. Fig. 122.
532 Porter & Moss (1972: 19); Coulon (2014: 569).
533 Adapted from Kemp (2006), p.353 (Fig. 122, Phase III) and Koch (2012), p.140 (Abb. 25) & 151 (Abb. 26).
534 Ayad (2009a), p.17 (Fig. 1.1), cf. Koch (2012: 38), who contests the assignation to Shepenwepet I as speculative and inherently unlikely.
536 Building identifications are from Porter & Moss (1972) and Coulon (2014). In contrast, the master-map of Karnak in Koch (2012: 112) assigns the Chapel of Osiris who Perpetually Gives Life (Wsr p3 dd 5nh) [= building 1 in my Fig. 19] to the item titled “Columned Building of Nitocris” on my map; the Columned Building of Nitocris is assigned by Koch to the structure titled “Residence of Ankhnesneferibre” on my map. However, her detailed ground-plan of the Columned Building of Nitocris [Koch (2012: 131)] is consistent with my assignations rather than those on her master-map. The confusion may in part reflect the fact that this chapel, which had originally stood somewhere in the area of modern Naga Malgata (i.e., the region where the “Columned Building of Nitocris” is found) was completely destroyed, and that – in the Ptolemaic era – blocks from it were reassembled at the Montu precinct (which adjoins building 1 in my Fig. 19); Koch (2012: 40 & 128).
537 After Coulon (2014).
The range of meanings for wab.t includes embalming-place, tomb, kitchen, offering-slab and refectory [Faulkner (1962: 57)]. Coulon seems to envisage a sacred structure and Koch a sanctuary or embalming-place, whereas Ritner opts for a refectory.


Ayad (2009a); Coulon et al. (2018).


A West Semitic corn god and minor deity in the Sumerian pantheon; Black & Green (1992: 56). Clearly he was honoured by Enanatuma’s father, Ishme-Dagan of Isin.

Frayne (1990): RIME 4.2.5.1.

Li (2011).

The Small Temple is in the forecourt of Ramses’ mortuary temple, adjacent to the Migdol gate (the “Eastern High Gate”) in the south-eastern segment of the enclosure wall; it abuts the Ptolemaic pylon that gives access to the compound from the Roman Courtyard beyond the enclosure wall. There has been a shrine on the site since the Middle Kingdom; the Small Temple ruins visible today are of the structure built in Dynasty 18 by Hatshepsut and Thutmose III. The GWA chapels, which are also in the forecourt of Ramses’ mortuary temple, face the Small Temple. Shaw & Nicholson (2008: 197).

Robins (2008: 214); Li (2011: 226-7).

Robins (2008: 214); Li (2011: 226-7).


Ayad (2009a: 75).


Ayad (2009a), legend to Fig. 2.20b (colour plates).

Wikimedia Commons, online at https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Chapelle_Taharka_Chepenoupet.jpg.

Kemp (2006), p.353, Fig. 122, Phase III.


Ayad (2016b).


Ayad (2009a), p.20 (Fig. 1.4).

Wikimedia Commons, online at https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Medinet_Habu_Divine_Adoratrice2.JPG.


Ayad (2009a), p.105 (Fig. 2.26) & Fig. 2.25 (colour plates).

Ayad, Figs. 2.10-11 (colour plates).

Kemp (2006), p.151 (Fig. 54.2); Ayad (2016: 167).

Wikimedia Commons, online at https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Medinet_Habu_Grabkapellen_07.jpg , augmented
by the present author) in lower left register with details from a closer photo by Neithsabes of
the same panel (also under licence CC BY SA 3.0), online at

580 E.g., sltn(t) Tmn.w htr=f mtr(r.t)=f, “the natural daughter of Amun, whom he loves;” Koch


582 Hart (2005: 41); el Hawary (2106: 12).

583 El Hawary (2106: 12). Similarly, the ithyphallic form of Amun is called “the bull of his mother,”
meaning that he impregnates his mother to bring about his own conception; he therefore serves
both as sire and son. Hart (2005: 21).

584 El Hawary (2106: 12).

585 The GWAs also claim other parents among the gods, such as Anubis, Osiris, Thoth, Wepwawet
and Hathor, so perhaps it is not surprising to find Mut recruited as a mother; Koch (2012: 117-
8, 120, 125, 141, 150, 154, 167, 169). Also, once the adoption scheme had been established, a
GWA could be considered the daughter of Amun and Mut insofar as she was the (adoptive)
daughter of the previous GWA, the earthly embodiment/representative of Mut.

586 Kemp (2006), p.151 (Fig. 54.2); Ayad (2016).

587 Wikimedia Commons, online at
https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Deamb_ch_Am_I_082005.jpg.


590 Ayad (2009a), p.26 (Fig. 1.5) and location data from

591 Ayad (2009a: 26); Li (2011), p.221 (Fig. 2).

592 Wikimedia Commons, online at


596 Wilkinson (2003: 153-4). This role was shared with other goddesses.


599 El Hawary (2016).

600 Ockinga (2010); Benderitter (n.d.).


608 Pinkowski (2006: 48). As we saw in the section Residence and Remembrance, the GWA
residential quarter was in North Karnak; it was therefore relatively remote from the Temple of
Mut in south Karnak.

609 Brooklyn Museum (ca. 2015), slides 47-48.

610 Weadock (1975: 104 & 110).

611 Lion (2009: 166); Hrûša (2015: 76-77); Scurlock (2014: 106); Postgate (1992: 130).

612 Speiser (2011: 82) translates the term as “changeling,” with a footnote saying that there is no
indication as to the nature of her change (which potentially could be social, religious or
national).

613 Stol (2016: 572); Sparks (2005: 279) also reads Sargon’s mother to be an EN-priestess.
A small room with a large bed platform adjacent to C27, the shrine of the Ningal temple; Westenholz (2013a: 258). See room C28 in Woolley (1982), p.185 (plan); Weadock (1975), Pl. XXVIa (plan) & p.115-8.


Manassa (2011: 357).

Ayad (2009a: 38 & 51).


For the later GWAs, she sees the title “God’s Wife” as a priestly title like the male title “God’s Father,” with neither to be taken literally.


Ayad (2009a: 15, 28, 152 & 154). However, Ayad (2016a: 98) appears to endorse a deliberate prohibition against child-bearing, describing the GWA of this period as “a woman, who could not produce offspring of her own or put forward a rival claim to the Egyptian throne.”


Dodson (2002); Ayad (2009a), p.22 (Table 1.1).


Morkot (2016: 113). Amongst other shortcomings, Habachi’s identification of the name of Mentuhotep’s wife remains controversial, being based upon a reconstruction of incomplete text; Ayad (2009a: 21). Edna Russmann pre-empted Morkot’s recent judgement by almost two decades when, in respect of Mentuhotep’s wife, she wrote that Habachi’s “speculation that she is to be identified with the Divine Consort Amenirdas II seems to me untenable;” Russmann (1997), p.36 fn 125.


Becker et al. (2017: 2).


Hdt I 181.5-182.-2; de Sélincourt (1972: 114).

Koch (2012: 60) observes that, if Herodotus was in fact reporting a contemporary Egyptian practice (as he claims to be doing), then a priestess consecrated sexually to Amun was still a feature of the Theban temple in in the time of Xerxes and Artaxerxes (as noted in Table 5, Belated survival/revival).

646 Ayad (2009a: 8-9).
651 Van de Mieroop (2016: 70).
652 Lion (2009: 179).
653 Westenholz (2012: 304); Weadock (1975: 103); van de Mieroop (1992: 125-6).
656 Westenholz (2012: 305).
660 Becker et al. (2017: 3-4); Koch (2012: 76-77).
661 Koch (2012: 77).
666 Roberts (2004).
667 Baines & Eyre (1983: 85).
668 Tomb of Ireturu; Baines & Eyre (1983: 82).
671 Wakeman (1985); Hart (n.d.a),
672 Weadock (1975: 127-8). Numerical values are consistent (within 1 year) of data in CDLI (2017).
677 For consistency, dates used in the calculations underpinning this sentence were taken exclusively from the traditional GWA chronology – using either the detailed breakdown in Dodson (2002: 168) or, alternatively, exclusively from Ayad (2009a), p.12, 15, 22 (Table 1.1) & 23-24. In Ayad’s Table 1.1, start dates for the “Approximate dates (in office)” are typically the years in which the named princesses were designated “heiress apparent” as opposed to their elevation to GWA proper.
679 Shorter date from Dodson. Longer date from Ayad (2009a), p.15-16 & 22 (Table 1.1), but using Kitchen (2009: 202) to refine the accession date for Osorkon II to 786, as in Fig. 10; without this modification, the delay calculated from Ayad’s dates would be 23 years (i.e., within the time-span currently reported in the main text). According to Ayad (2009a: 16 & 117), the appointment of Shepenwepet I seems to have been designed to fill the vacuum left by the promotion of her brother, until then the High Priest of Amun, to the role of co-regent (as Takelot III) in 754, ruling alongside his father.
680 Shorter time from Dodson (2002: 186), longer from Ayad (2009a), p.22 (Table 1.1), assuming accession of Kashta in 760 BCE [Ayad (2009a: 11)] for both.
Lower value from Dodson (2002), p.186 & fn 47, higher one from Ayad (2009a), p.12 & 22 (Table 1.1).


Wikimedia Commons, online at https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:%C3%84gyptisches_Museum_Berlin_025.jpg.

The surrounding inscription is transcribed, transliterated and translated (into German) in Koch (2012), p.161, top of page.

Wikimedia Commons, online at https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Bas-relief_of_Shepenetpet_II_at_the_mortuary_temple_of_Ramesses_III_1.jpg.

Wikimedia Commons, online at https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Statue_of_Ankhenesneferibre_by_John_Campana.jpg.

Ayad (2009a), p.22 (Table 1.1) & p.27; confirmed by Leahy (1996: 160).

Assuming her designation in 747-742 BCE [Broekman (2009: 101); Koch (2012: 181)] and Kashta’s accession in 760 BCE (Fig. 10).

No value can be calculated for Shepenwepet I.

Ayad (2009a: 16 & 24). Ayad (2016a: 99) suggests that the presence of the recently-installed Shepenwepet II as GWA prevented Shabaqo from nominating a daughter to the position, although of course there is no a priori reason why such a daughter (if available) could not have been designated as heiress, just as Amenirdis II was in the subsequent reign of Taharqo.

E.g. Koch (2012: 51). Nitocris’s youth was not the only reason for the delay; her father Psamtek’s struggle to wrest control of Thebes from the Nubians occupied the first 9 years of his reign; Bryan (2003: 8). The other two candidates for designation while still children are Amenirdis I and Ankhnesneferibre; Ayad (2009a: 24 & 142-3); Leahy (1996: 160-2).

Pope (2015: 357-8) highlights the lack of positive evidence for the use of Divine Adoratrice as a junior title held by the heiress, pointing instead to evidence for use of the title Great Chantress of the Interior of Amun, as set forth by Koch (2012: 62-63 & 77).

Caminos (1964: 97) calls it “a college or sisterhood;” see also Dodson (2002). For a recent summary, see Pope (2013: 178).

CDLI (2017), Ur III: Szulgi, years 15 & 17.


Weadock (1975: 104-5); Gadotti (2011: 199) believes that they often died in office.

Weadock (1975), p.104-5 & 128 fn 56; Gadd (1951: 30). Hybrid options include the possibility that the designated princess did not commence her novitiate until the incumbent EN-priestess was nearing the end of her term.

Gadd (1951: 30); Stol (2016: 562-3).

Lower interval from Ayad (2009a), p.22 (Table 1.1), taking her best-guess of 740 BCE for Amenirdis’s designation as heiress; higher interval from Dodson p.186.

For consistency, all dates in this calculation are from Ayad (2009a), p.22 (Table 1.1) & p.129-30. It uses her full date-range of possibility (747-735 BCE) for Amenirdis I’s designation as heiress, which happens to straddle nicely the independent estimate of Broekman (2009: 101) that Amenirdis’s arrival in Thebes occurred in Piye’s 5th regnal year, equivalent to ca. 742 BCE if one accepts that Piye’s rule commenced ca. 747 BCE [Kitchen (2009: 202), happily in perfect agreement with Ayad (2009a: 12)]. It is also consistent with the estimate of Ritner (2009: 460) that “Amonardis I was adopted as junior votaress in the eighth year of Shepenwepet I,” which is 746 BCE using Ayad’s date of 754 BCE for Shepenwepet’s installation. In Ayad’s chronology, Shepenwepet I relinquished the role of God’s Wife ca. 714 BCE but was still alive – and thus presumably co-resident with Amenirdis I – ca. 700 BCE.


For Amenirdis I, apprenticeship starting 747-742 BCE; Broekman (2009: 101), compatible with the assessment of Koch (2012: 181) on the same object. Koch does not comment on
Broekman’s proposal, and (as shown in Table 7) her scheme envisages no overlap between Libyan and Nubian GWAs.

703 Lower interval from Ayad (2009a), p.22 (Table 1.1), taking her best-guess of 740 BCE for Amenirdis’s designation as heiress; higher interval from Dodson (2002: 186).

704 Adoption of Shepenwepet II ca. 710 BCE from Pope (2015: 361), who was working in full awareness of Koch (2012). If we assume that Amenirdis I was designated at around 15 years of age at her nomination in 747-742 BCE, then she would have been 47-52 years old when Shepenwepet II was adopted in 710 BCE, cf. the expectation of Koch (2012: 43-44) that Amenirdis was “presumably relatively young” at the time of Shepenwepet’s adoption.

705 Shorter estimate from Dodson (2002: 186), longer estimate from Ayad (2009a), p.22 (Table 1.1).


707 Ibi, the first High Steward to Nitocris I, was installed in year 26 of Psamtek I (639 BCE), requiring Nitocris to have been GWA by then; Leahy (1996: 163); Pope (2013: 187); Coulon (2014: 567).

708 Based on Nitocris being adopted in 656 BCE [Koch (2012: 51)] and Shepenwepet II having died before 639 BCE, the time when Ibi was installed as the first High Steward to GWA Nitocris [Coulon (2014: 567); Pope (2013: 187)].

709 Dodson (2002: 186); Leahy (1996: 155 & 157); Ayad (2009), p.22 (Table 1.1).

710 From the adoption of Ankhnesneferibre in 595 BCE to the death of Nitocris I in 586 BCE; Koch (2012: 55).


712 Koch (2012: 44-50 & 62-5), esp. p.63, which translates into English as “It was not at the time of adoption, but after the death of the former incumbent, that the princess became the God’s Wife, Divine Adoratrice, and God’s Hand.”


714 An objection to Koch’s view might perhaps be raised using the inscription on a cultic vessel – Rome Museo Barracco MB 277, mentioned elsewhere in this paper and also in Koch (2012), p.64 fn 24 – which recent opinion sees as dedicated jointly by the Hermopolitan king Nimlot D, Shepenwepet I and Amenirdis I; Meffre (2016: 52-53 & 56); Broekman (2009: 99). The women’s paternal filiation is given, thereby making certain their identities. Shepenwepet is there titled “Divine Adoratrice” and Amenirdis “God’s Hand,” and both names are in cartouches; Meffre (2016: 52-53 & 56); Broekman (2009: 99). Koch’s position could of course be defended by proposing that the vessel is not a co-dedication – on the vessel as it now stands, Nimlot (r. ca. 750-725 BCE; Kitchen (2009: 202)) is actually qualified as mra A Hrw – and that the inscription was made ca. 720-695 BCE, naming Amenirdis (the incumbent GWA) and Shepenwepet (her deceased predecessor, albeit without a mra A Hrw) using a different GWA-only title for each.

715 The calculation assumes that Enheduana was not installed immediately upon Sargon’s accession, but in his year 3; it would presumably have taken some time to arrange the practicalities of the position, which may initially have been met by resistance; Steinkeller (1999: 125). Enheduana survived the Great Rebellion in Naram-Sin’s reign, which may have occurred soon after his accession; Jacobsen (1979); Steinkeller (1982: 258). She had time to return to her office and compose the Adoration of Inanna (main text, section titled Survival) before her death. The conservative assumption that she died in Naram-Sin’s year 3 (together with the assumption that she was installed in Sargon’s year 3) fixes her term of office at 77 years. Gadotti (2011: 199)’s assertion that Enheduana retained office until well into Naram-Sin’s 36-year reign begins to strain the limits of the human life-span.

716 Installed in Amar-Sin year 4 [Weadock (1975: 128)], Enmahgalana continued to feature in legal cases dated to the second decade of Ibbi-Sin’s reign (his year 14 [Loding (1976): UET IX 115; Westenholz (2012: 304-5)] or 20 [Legrain (1937-47): UET III 45], representing her 28th or 34th year, respectively), so she presumably remained as EPN at Ur at that stage [Westenholz (2012), p.304 fn 56]. Enmahgalana probably held office until the fall of Ur to the Elamites in 2003, a term of about 38 years. Her tenure is discussed later in the main text (section titled Survival).

717 Stol (2016: 563). Her tenure is discussed later in the main text (section titled Survival).

718 Gadd (1951: 30).
The estimate of over 30 years in office is from Gadd (1951: 35). Enanedu’s cone inscription [Frayne (1990): RIME 4.2.14.20] is provisionally dated by Frayne to year 30 of Rim-Sin or later, which would see Enanedu in office at least 36 years after her installation. Stol’s slightly different datings (Stol 2016: 563) give her about 33 years in office at the time of the inscription.

Ayad (2009a), p.22 (Table 1.1); Dodson (2002: 186). Full interval from Ayad is included because she asserts that Shepenwepet I did not serve an apprenticeship period as heiress; Ayad (2009a: 16).

Koch (2012), p.11 (Table 1), using Kitchen (2009: 202) as the best estimate of regnal dates for Osorkon III (786-758 BCE), Takelot III (763-744 BCE) and Sheshonq V (767-730 BCE). On this basis, Koch’s table suggests that Shepenwepet I’s term ran ca. 786-767 BCE (19 years) or 786-744 BCE (42 years).

Ayad (2009a), p.22 (Table 1.1) allows 14 years from the end of Shepenwepet I’s term to the end of Amenirdis I’s term; Dodson (2002: 186) has Amenirdis I in office for 25 years. Morkot (2016: 113) estimates that she lived for at least 50 years.


Dodson (2002: 186) has Shepenwepet II in office for 41 years; Ayad (2009a), p.22 (Table 1.1) allows 50 years from end of Amenirdis I’s term to the end of Shepenwepet II’s term.

Based on Amenirdis I dying ca. 677-670 BCE [Koch (2012: 42-3 & 282), Pope (2015: 361)] and Shepenwepet II dying ca. 639 BCE, around the time when Ibi was installed as the first High Steward to GWA Nitocris [Koch (2012: 15); Coulon (2014: 567); Pope (2013: 187)]. Consistent with Koch (2012: 44), which attributes “several decades in office” to Shepenwepet II.

Nitocris’s presence in Thebes is attested for almost 71 years, Mar 656- Dec 586 BCE [Dodson p. 186; Morkot (2016: 113)]. Ayad (2009a), p.22 (Table 1.1) allows 64 years from end of Shepenwepet II’s term to the end of Nitocris’s term. Compared to Dodson (2002: 186)’s estimate of 68 years for Nitocris I’s tenure, Leahy (1996: 156) is perhaps more conservative, estimating it at “over 50 years,” reflecting the idea that Nitocris had been installed as GWA only a few years before the appointment of her first High Steward, Ibi, in year 26 of Psamtik I (639 BCE); Leahy (1996: 163); Pope (2013: 187); Coulon (2014: 567).

Based on Shepenwepet II dying ca. 639 BCE, around the time when Ibi was installed as the first High Steward to Nitocris [Koch (2012: 15); Coulon (2014: 567); Pope (2013: 187)], and Nitocris dying in 586 BCE when Ankhnesneferibre is known to have become GWA [Koch (2012: 55)].

Ayad (2009a), p.22 (Table 1.1) allows 61 years from end of Nitocris’ term to the end of Ankhnesneferibre’s term; Dodson (2002: 168) too has Ankhnesneferibre in office for 61 years. There is general agreement that Ankhnesneferibre’s incumbency lasted over 60 years [Leahy (1996: 160); Morkot (2016: 113)] and that, collectively, she and Nitocris – the last of their kind – reigned as GWAs for at least 113 years [Leahy (1996: 162-3)].

Koch (2012: 55 & 58), i.e. from the accession of Ankhnesneferibre in 586 BCE to the arrival of the Persians in 525 BCE.

Figulla & Martin (1953: 544); Weadock (1975), p.104 & 128 fn 156; Gadd (1951: 30).

Pope (2013: 188); Dodson (2002: 186); Leahy (1996: 159); Pope (2014: 212). Despite this agreed dictum, the boundaries between incumbencies can be somewhat unclear. Even the Egyptian situation, for which far more information is available, is such that Mariam Ayad’s table listing “Approximate dates (in office)” for the Dynasty 23-26 God’s Wives [Ayad (2009a), p.22 (Table 1.1)] gives a time-span for each that seemingly incorporates their apprenticeships (as remarked earlier in the legend to Fig. 10). This gives the impression that the overlaps could in practice amount to co-regencies, an idea encouraged by the same author’s descriptions of iconography portraying a God’s Wife and her heiress as “reminiscent of instances of royal co-regency;” Ayad (2009b: 46). Others have explicitly postulated co-regency of GWAs [refs. in Leahy (1996: 159 fn 50)], a view contested strongly by Leahy (1996: 159-60) and Koch (2012: 77-79).

Stol (2016: 557); Westenholz (2012: 304); Morkot (2006: 153). Oddly, a particular EPN for Nanna of Karzida at Ga’esh was allegedly installed three times; CDLI (2017), Ur III: Amar-Sin, year 9.
In Egypt, this longevity in office perpetuated a trend established in the New Kingdom. For example, Isis, the daughter of Ramses VI, was GWA for over 25 years, serving under 4 kings; Ayad (2009a: 9). El Hawary (2016: 16) estimates her political influence at almost 50 years.

For consistency, all dates in this sentence are calculated from Dodson (2002: 186). As explained below in the main text, the increase over Dodson’s estimate of Nitocris’s term of heiress in Table 7 is because the calculation assumes the retention of Amenirdis II in the “college” headed by Nitocris.


Koch (2012: 115); Koch sees Shepenwepet I as dead before the Nubian extension was built, whereas Ayad (2009a: 130) sees her as alive but retired.

Hays (2003), p.90 fn 7; Dodson (2004: 26). Had Amenirdis II succeeded Shepenwepet II as GWA, this would have afforded another example of inheritance by a niece (Fig. 10). Note that Koch (2012: 43) describes Shepenwepet II as a grand-niece (rather than niece) of Amenirdis I.


Alessio Corsi concurs with Ayad (p.134 & fn 99) in identifying the Amenirdis represented in the chapel of Osiris-Onnophris in the Persea Tree as Amenirdis I rather than Amenirdis II; Corsi (2013: 540).


Ayad (2009a: 133-37). Even so, the phraseology (“Shepenwepet, her mother [being] Amenirdis” rather than “Shepenwepet, daughter of Amenirdis”) has been carefully chosen to avoid subordinating the current incumbent to her predecessor; Ayad (2009a: 144).

Ayad p.140


Ayad (2009a: 130 & 133-5).

Ayad (2009a: 143-4). It has even been speculated that, rather than perpetuating Shepenwepet’s mortuary cult – as required by tradition – Amenirdis may even have authorised the destruction of her predecessor’s funerary chapel; Ayad (2009a: 145). However, the building in question Ayad (2009a), p.17 (Fig. 1.1)] may not even have been Shepenwepet’s funerary chapel; Koch (2012: 38).

Caminos (1964: 75).


Ayad (2009a: 139).

Ayad (2009a: 23-26 & 139-40); Dodson (2002). Vittmann (2007: 154) maintains that Amenirdis II may still have served some time as GWA.

For this reason, she is sometimes listed as Shepenwepet (III); Dodson (2002), p.184 fn 32 & 36. Leahy (1996: 161) believes that the name, which is recorded in the Adoption Stele, was a diplomatic gesture on her father’s part toward his Theban subjects. Bryan (2003: 8) interprets it as a “nickname.”


Caminos (1964: 79 & 98) and Bryan (2003: 10-11) believe that Nitocris’s adoptive mother was Amenirdis II, a position seemingly endorsed by Koch (2012), p. 44 fn 401. In contrast, Rosalie David believes that it was Shepenwepet II; David (2014: 21).


Pope (2013: 189); Corsi (2013: 539).
As an alternative to modesty and deference, Koch (2012: 54) suggests that the memorial precinct at Medinet Habu may have been less important to the Saite princess Nitocris, who would have been buried locally and could have focused her efforts on a Theban tomb, than to her Nubian predecessors, who may have been buried far away in their homeland. Additionally or alternatively, there may already have been a mud-brick building (such as an out-house for the storage of cult items or the purification of priests; Fig. 18) in the position where Nitocris might have been expected to build her memorial chapel; Koch (2012: 58).

The conventional wisdom is that, within 12 years of Nitocris’s adoption, it was no longer permitted to write the Nubian kings’ names in Egypt, and that existing inscriptions were subsequently subjected to *damnatio* by Ankhnesneferibre’s father, Psamtek II [Pope (2013: 183); Lohwasser (2016: 130)], even though the statuary and inscriptions of the Nubian God’s Wives were often spared in deference to the sanctity of their office [Morkot (2006: 148], which of course was quintessentially Egyptian [Lohwasser (2016: 131)]. Coulon (2014: 582) specifically contrasts the devotion of Nitocris to the Nubian GWAs that preceded her with the Saite *damnatio* of their fathers. The erasure of cartouches belonging to Kashta and Piye can be seen in Fig. 26.


Most notably, it is so amended in Frayne (1997: 363), a change accepted (with a footnoted reservation) by Weadock (1975: 128) when compiling the canonical list of EPNs at Ur.


Legrain (1937-47): UET III 45 says year 20 of Ibbi-Sin, but Westenholz (2012: 304-5) identifies Loding (1976): UET IX 1156 as a duplicate of this document, and it is dated to year 14, a date that Westenholz favours.


Westenholz (1993); Stol (2016: 567).


Westenholz (2012: 305).


Frayne (1990): RIME 4.2.5.1.


Weadock (1975: 128). Stol (2016: 563)’s “previously unknown priestess, En-megal-ana” is presumably the same individual.

Fitzgerald (2002).


Expanded by Lohwasser (2016: 131): “The GWA were felt to be Egyptian. They had Egyptian names, were dressed in Egyptian costume and held a purely Egyptian office.”

Naturally, all of the specific details are hypothetical.

Perhaps due to the greater remoteness of the time-period, preceding the Egyptian counterpart as it does by well over a millennium.
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