The social world of the Babylonian priest

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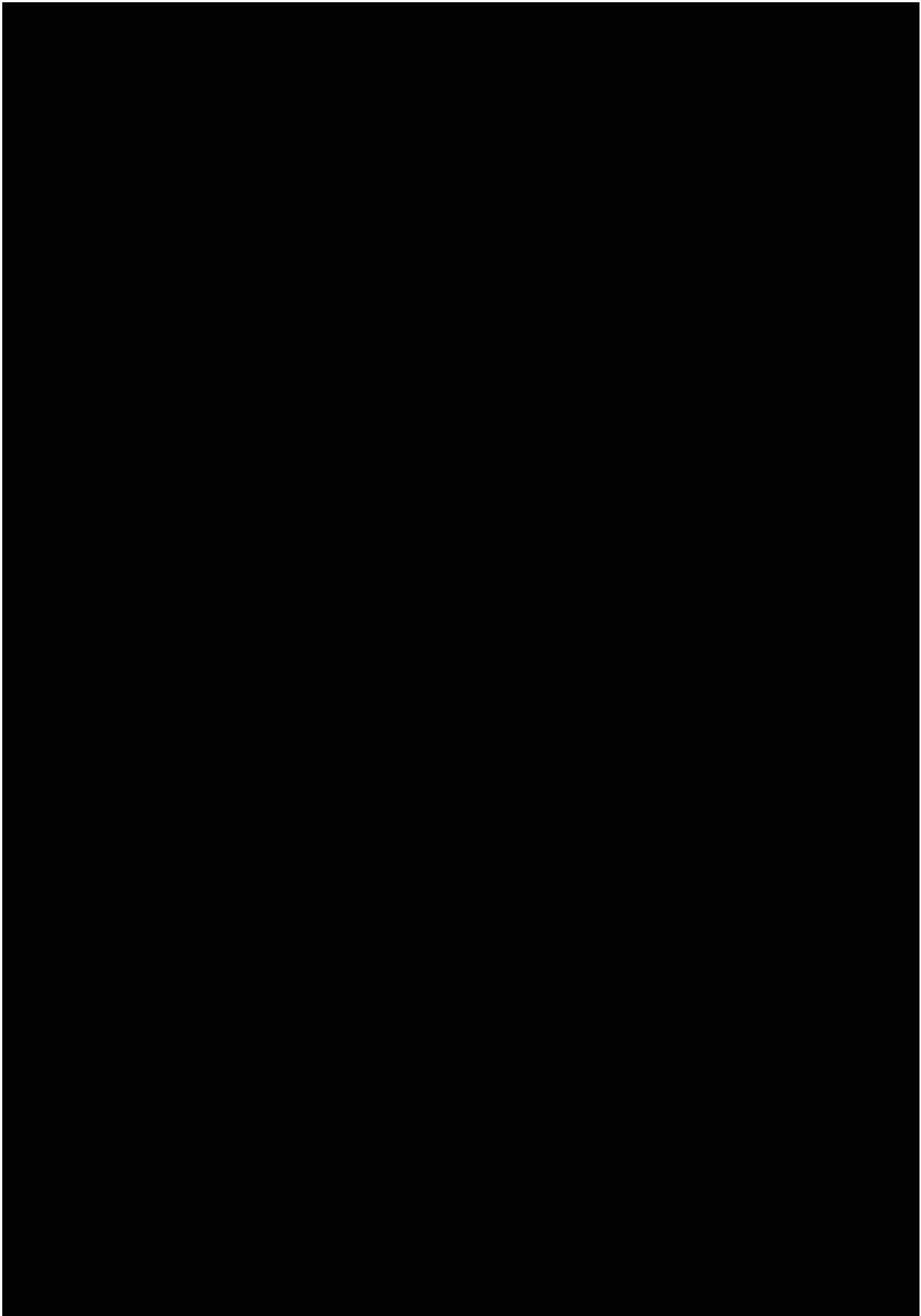The handle http://hdl.handle.net/1887/37767 holds various files of this Leiden University dissertation.

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PART ONE

SOCIAL INTERACTIONS AMONG PRIESTS IN BORSIPPA

1

The Hypergamous Marriage System

Introduction

Since the emergence of Assyriology in the 19th century scholars have taken only limited interest in Babylonian marriage practice of the first millennium BCE. Investigations tended to approach the subject from a rather asocial and ahistorical perspective. Most studies are products of an academic tradition that strongly focused on philological aspects and legal implications on the matter. Many scholars were in the first place *Rechtshistoriker* who analysed Babylonian marriage for its legal implications, the particular contract types, and specific formulae and clauses used in these agreements.[89] On the other hand, scholars were also concerned with the material aspects of the dowry, mostly from a philological perspective in trying to identify the semantic meaning of the various components of the marriage settlement.[90] As said before, Neo-Babylonian studies suffer from a general negligence of social approaches and this is also apparent in the study of marriage practice.[91]

The following investigation sets out to remedy this by investigating the social implications of marriage in Babylonian society. More precisely, in this chapter I will attempt to reconstruct the pattern of marriage in the priestly community of Borsippa. This is the first attempt to map a Babylonian marriage network on any scale. At the basis of this endeavour lies a quantification of the data, which will tell us what kind of

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[89] See for example the entry 'Ehe' in *RLA* 2 by Korošec 1938 and the entry 'Inzest' by Petschow 1976/80, in *RLA* 5. More recent studies on marriage during the first millennium BCE include Roth 1989, Roth 1989b, Abraham 1992, Wunsch 2003 and, Oelsner, Wells & Wunsch 2003: 933-948. For the Old Babylonian marriage, see Westbrook 1988.

[90] E.g. Wunsch 1995/1996, Roth 1990 and Roth 1991.

[91] Exceptions being the study by Roth 1987 on the household type in first millennium Babylonia, and an article on a particular case of consanguine endogamy in Sippar by Waerzeggers 2002.

marital unions the prebendary families arranged for their male and female members in practice. This 'descriptive-quantitative analysis' can be found in the Appendix 1. It serves as a data set that can be analysed with regard to the social implications of marriage among the local priesthood and will help us to determine how, and to what extent, marriage alliances configured the social organisation of this community. I will make use of social anthropological studies and theories in order to further our understanding of the dynamics of these marriages. By converting marriage ties into a directed graph I will reveal that the priestly families from Borsippa observed a complex marriage system known in anthropological literature as *hypergamy*. This system, which is observed in some parts of the Indian subcontinent, involves the marriage of a lower-status bride to a higher-status groom. Moreover, I will show that the purity-based hierarchy of the temple served as the central guiding principle in the arrangement of alliances in Borsippa. In this study, marriage will thus be appreciated as a fundamental building block of Babylonian society, which allowed individuals and families to consciously shape their social environments, by organising elements within their in-group and keeping the out-group effectively at bay.[92]

1.1. Marriage in Borsippa: sacerdotal endogamy

A most remarkable marriage in the history of Borsippa took place on April 14, 559 BCE[93] – the first day of the first month of the first year of king Neriglissar. On this symbolic day, the king gave his daughter, [f]Gigītu, in marriage to the temple-enterer and recently appointed *šatammu* of Ezida, Nabû-šumu-ukīn of the Arkāt-ilāni-damqā clan.[94] While the marriage contract is damaged and most of the details are now lost, we are left with little doubt that this alliance had strong political motivations. Neriglissar was a

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[92] Similar strategies were and are still used to great effect by (religious) communities across the globe, see e.g. Broekman 2010 (Egypt, priesthood of Amun), Hebrew Bible, Leviticus 21:10 and Ezekiel 44:22 (Judaism), Dumont 1970: 125-129 (classical India), Fuller 1984: 26 (modern India).

[93] Julian dates in this study have been reconstructed on the basis of Parker & Dubberstein 1956.

[94] This union is recorded in Ner. 13 (Roth 1989: 49-50), a text written in the capital of Babylon, and found either there or in the Ezida temple of Borsippa, which owned this copy according to the postscript. Cf. Waerzeggers 2005: 345. For the person of Nabû-šumu-ukīn/Širikti-Marduk/Arkāt-ilāni-damqā see, Zadok 2005a: 642 and Waerzeggers 2010: 72.

usurper king who had seized the Babylonian throne after murdering his predecessor.[95] He was also of Aramean origin, which meant that he came from a distinctively different background than the old-stock Babylonian families that dominated the urban centres in the alluvium.[96] By publically allying with Nabû-šumu-ukīn, who was not only chief temple administrator but also the son of the former governor of Borsippa and a descendant of an old and illustrious local clan, Neriglissar was clearly making an effort to conciliate or, indeed, reward an influential faction of the local Borsippean elite.[97]

While this alliance is an indisputable testimony to the influence, authority and prestige enjoyed by the priesthood of Nabû in Borsippa (if not also to Neriglissar's vulnerable political position), such political marriages are most uncommon in first millennium Babylonia.[98] The marriage alliances found in the Borsippa corpus suggest that the priestly families pursued an alliance policy that was not only geared almost exclusively towards the local community but involved a well-defined and highly restricted social group. It will become clear in the course of this chapter that outside political elements, let alone the royal family itself, are hard to accommodate in this priestly marriage system – a system which was ideologically informed, exceptionally complex and subject to strict conventions.

A total of 81 marriages from the long sixth century BCE have been incorporated in the descriptive-quantitative analysis (Appendix 1).[99] While it seems that the prebendary groups in Borsippa kept different marriage agendas if taken in isolation,[100] considering the information as a single data pool and quantifying the entire set, the general marriage

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[95] According to Berossos, Neriglissar was married to the daughter of Nebuchadnezzar and before seizing the throne had killed his king and brother-in-law, Amēl-Marduk, cf. Verbrugghe & Wickersham 1996: 60.

[96] Jursa 2014b: 127-130.

[97] Waerzeggers 2010: 72.

[98] E.g. the Neo-Assyrian royal letter SAA 18: 5 reports on the alliance between the daughter of the chieftain of the Gambūlu tribe and a local temple-enterer of Nabû sometime during the mid-seventh century BCE, see Reynolds 2003: 42-43. For Bēl-iqīša/Bunanu, the chieftain in question, see Radner 1999: 315f. s.v. *Bēl-iqīša* 7; Frame 1992: 81, 111, 199ff.

[99] Note that there are far more attestation of marital unions in the Borsippa corpus. However, in this analysis only the unions for which both the family name of the bride and groom are available are used, see Appendix 1.

[100] E.g. whereas some groups, like the brewers, engaged predominantly in intra-prebendary unions (Appendix 1.2), the Oxherds did not at all (Appendix 1.5).

preferences become immediately clear. The preferential marriage among the priestly families of Borsippa is the one within the prebendary group. Almost half (43%) of all the marriages were arranged among prebendary families of the same professional affiliation. This type is closely followed (37%) by marriage with prebendaries from other priesthoods. Finally, marriage with non-prebendaries families accounted for only 20% of all unions.[101]
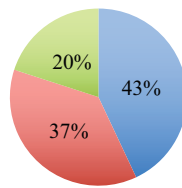

Figure 2: marriage type in Borsippa

The conclusion that the priesthood of Borsippa constituted a highly endogamous group is inevitable. Priests most often engaged in occupational endogamy, i.e. marriage within their own prebendary group.[102] The evidence becomes even more telling if we combine the data of the first two marriage types (i.e. intra- and inter-prebendary unions): 80% of all the marriages were arranged with fellow priestly families, and this is only the minimum. The remaining 20% consists of unions with families from different social backgrounds: families with prebendary ties in neighbouring cities,[103] clans who may have had links to the Ezida temple but are not covered by the available sources etc.[104] They are all classified as 'non-prebendary' here, not so much out of conviction but due to the lack of concrete information. It is not unlikely that additional information on the Ezida temple and its community would show that many families were in one way or another related to the religious establishment of Borsippa. Evidence for unions between priestly families and individuals from the lower strata of society – identified by the non-usage of three-tier genealogies, i.e. family names – is as yet entirely missing.

To sum up, marriage within the own prebendary group seems to have been the preferred form according to the quotient generated by the evidence from the descriptive-

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[101] This concerns families whose involvement in the prebendary system of the Ezida temple is not specified in the extant documentation.

[102] Other scholars speak of 'group-specific endogamy', e.g. Jursa *et al.* 2010: 29.

[103] E.g. Bēl-eṭēru (Appendix 1.1c), Rišāya (Appendix 1.2c).

[104] E.g. Rēʾi-sisê (Appendix 1.1c), Ṣāhit-ginê (Appendix 1.4c).

quantitative analysis. The fact that almost as many marriages were arranged across the prebendary pool as within particular groups undermines the idea that marriage among the Borsippean priesthood was rigidly governed by concerns of temple ranking.[105] Clearly, the purity-based hierarchy did not *compel* priests to look for marriage partners within their own prebendary group. Still, it would be wrong to dismiss the importance of the temple hierarchy altogether as I will show that it influenced the dynamics of marriage in a particular way. At this point, I propose that with 80+% of all the marriages arranged within the wider prebendary circle the marriage pattern of the Borsippean priesthood can best be designated as *sacerdotal endogamy*.
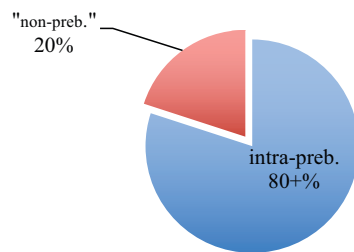

Figure 3: sacerdotal endogamy

Having said this, portraying the priesthood merely as endogamous would oversimplify the matter. Endogamy, or rather the endogamous unit, is not a static entity of equal participants but quite the opposite; it has proven to be very dynamic and permeated by hierarchical chains in many societies.[106] Moreover, it has been suggested that endogamy is not an independent principle that imposes hierarchy, as much as a corollary and an expression of an existing hierarchy.[107] What then was the hierarchical principle that governed sacerdotal endogamy in Borsippa?

In the following pages I will draw on sociological theories and ethnographic studies to argue that the marriage pattern in Borsippa can best be understood by using the concepts of *wife-giver* and *wife-taker*. According to this principle, marriage alliances give rise to asymmetric relations between the two parties, which have consequences for

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[105] See Ch. 0.6.

[106] Dumont 1970: 112-124, Black 1972, Dumont 1983: 41-52, Parkin 1990, Goody 1990, Ch. 4.

[107] Dumont 1970: 125.

their choice of marriage partners in succeeding generations. It seems that in the case of Borsippa wife-givers were usually inferior in status with respect to their wife-takers, a situation called *hypergamy* in anthropology. The specific layout of this system in Borsippa can be explained once it is placed in its historical context. At the end of this section I will show that the wife-givers/wife-takers hierarchy also affected the execution of the temple service, thus showing that marriage was not only influenced by the temple fabric, but that in turn marriage affected the temple's internal dynamics. I will use social network analysis as a tool to illustrate and substantiate the above argumentation.

1.2. The concept of *wife-giver* & *wife-taker*

The work that should be mentioned first is *Les Structures Élémentaires de la Parenté* (1949) by Claude Lévi-Strauss.[108] This monograph has been a major influence in the study of family, kinship and marriage and brought about a shift in anthropological thinking about society. Lévi-Strauss proposed an overarching theory of kinship using various ethnographic records of societies in Asia, Australia and elsewhere.[109] This theory, which became known as 'alliance theory' and polarised the field of kinship studies in mid-twentieth-century anthropology,[110] was based on the taboo of incest and the fundamental notion of reciprocity – for Lévi-Strauss the prohibition of incest was in fact a fundamental rule of reciprocity since it forced men to exchange their women and thus form the basic structures of society. Although the taboo of incest is clearly a negative rule, he emphasised that it was accompanied by positive ones, namely in the form of exogamous rules (defining a group outside which marriage was arranged) and endogamous rules (defining the group within which marriage was arranged). Reciprocity lay at the basis of Lévi-Strauss' theory on kinship organisation and he consequently proceeded to study the elementary structures of various forms of marital exchange.

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[108] First translated into English by James Harle Bell in 1969 under the title *The Elementary Structures of Kinship*.

[109] Cf. Dumont 1971 and Uberoi 1994 for a general overview of this theory and its broader implications for the studies of kinship as well as marriage in rural India.

[110] Lévi-Strauss' alliance theory became opposed to the so-called 'descent theory' developed mainly by British anthropologists, most notably Radcliffe-Brown and Evans-Pritchard, among others, working in African societies. Cf. Barth 2005: 1-57.

An important case study in *Les Structurse Élémentaires* was the common type of marriage known as unilateral cross-cousin marriage, in which the man preferably marries his mother's brother's daughter.[111] This form of marital exchange represents, in Lévi-Strauss' theory, the 'generalised exchange' and needs a minimum of three and a maximum of *n* involving parties: group X gives a wife to group Y, who gives a wife to group Z etc. This form is 'indirectly reciprocal' since group X, which initiated the transaction chain will have to wait until it receives a bride, in this case from group Z. It is thus ideally perceived as a cycle and presupposes a concept of speculation or credit – in the end group X can only hope that the chain of transaction will be closed by receiving a wife from Z. We find here a point that has been criticised by later scholars.[112] First of all, Lévi-Strauss' concept of kinship is thoroughly structural; secondly, his types of exchange were ideal types, and arguably overemphasised and idealised the principles of reciprocity at the expense of details in the field.[113]

However, Lévi-Strauss was duly aware of this problem and he observed that in 'generalised exchange' all involved parties adopt two functions vis-à-vis each other, that of *wife-givers* and *wife-takers*. In the case above, group Y is the wife-taker of X and the wife-giver of group Z, consequently group Z is a wife-taker of Y and wife-giver of X. Without going very deep into this matter, he already suggested that these unilateral and continuous relations might give rise to a hierarchy between wife-givers and wife-takers. While, in his words, this type of intermarriage 'supposes equality' it also is 'a source for inequality'.[114]

A champion of the alliance theory was Louis Dumont, who refined it and applied it to Indian society. He argued that 'affinal alliance' was a fundamental principle of Indian society and showed with various ethnographic examples that one can often discern a tendency for 'hierarchisation' within the endogamous group.[115] In his comprehensive and seminal monograph on the caste system, *Homo Hierarchicus: The Caste System*

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[111] See Bourdieu 1977: 30-71, for a comprehensive critique of earlier anthropological approaches to this idealised form of marriage.

[112] The main critics of Lévi-Strauss' theory can be found in Leach 1961 and Needham 1962. See also Dumont 1971 for a general overview.

[113] Cf. Coelho de Souza 2009, Parkin 2005: 208-228.

[114] Lévi-Strauss 1949: 306. See more recently Parkin 1990: 473ff.

[115] Dumont 1983: 48.

and its Implications,[116] Dumont described various forms of marriage, in particular the so-called hypergamous marriage. It is the norm in this marriage pattern that the man's family takes a wife from a lower status family, i.e. women marry up in the hierarchy.[117] This form, observed Dumont, is congruent with the classical Brahmanical ideal of marriage as being a 'gift of a maiden': a lower status family gives a daughter in marriage to a Brahmin family in exchange for spiritual goods.[118] For the gift to be meritorious it is paramount that that the family receives no payment for the girl.[119] Brahmins occupied the highest rung in traditional Hindu society, above the so-called *varṇas* of warriors (*kṣatriya*), farmers (*vaiśya*), serfs (*śūdra*) and 'untouchables'.[120] The Brahmin caste was privileged, enjoyed legal immunity and thanks to its high state of purity was invested with religious authority. Brahmins are the Hindu priests par excellence.[121] In a non-Brahmanical hypergamous marriage the motives are the same, only does the lower family not give up a daughter for spiritual benefits, but for a similar reason, namely the prestige of being affiliated to the higher status family of the groom. The hierarchical relations established (or indeed reaffirmed) by marriages were maintained over time and often accompanied by additional obligations in gift-giving and ceremonial matters that were transmitted to succeeding generations, ideally perpetuating this one-way traffic.[122] Communities were very cautious never to inverse and never to breach a certain direction of intermarriage.

It has been demonstrated that communities practicing hypergamy display more fundamental traits than simply the acknowledgement of the wife-takers' superior status over wife-givers. As a rule, the hypergamous system exists in communities that do not proclaim preferential marriages with specific relatives, in Indian frequently the cross-

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[116] Dumont 1970, translated from the original 1966 French edition, *Homo Hierarchicus: Le Système des Castes et ses Implications.* Note, however, that this work has been rightly criticised for giving an overtly static, idealised, and in a certain sense very Brahmanical account of India's caste system, cf. Heesterman 1985, Inden 1990, and Dirks 2001. See Quigley 1993: 21-53 for a concise overview of Dumont's reconstruction of the caste system and its critique.

[117] As opposed to *hypogamy* where the wife's family is generally of superior status vis-à-vis the husband's (see below).

[118] Dumont 1970: 117.

[119] Dumont 1970: 117.

[120] Dumont 1970: 66-75, Flood 1996: 58-61.

[121] Fuller 1984.

[122] Dumont 1970: 122-123.

cousin. Additional characteristics of this system are a transitive hierarchy and a non-reciprocal structure (see Ch.1.4.).[123] More contemporary examples of communities that practice hypergamy can be found in various parts of India e.g. Kashmir, Gujarat and Kerala.[124]

For the sake of completeness it should be noted that hypergamy is only one of several hierarchical marriage systems. Another model, found for example in the Gilyak society in eastern Russia[125] or the Kachin people in highland Burma,[126] is the so-called 'reversed hypergamy' or *hypogamy*. In this system it is the wife-giver that is perceived as superior to the wife-taker.[127] This system too involves a distinct set of underlying implications. Hence, the hypogamous model occurs with preferential marriage ideologies, an intransitive hierarchy and a marriage alliance that is at least indirectly reciprocal.[128] A marriage system that is non-hierarchical is usually called *isogamous*. Communities that adhere to this model require that marriage alliances be arranged between parties of equal status and rank.[129]

One has to bear in mind that the characteristics associated with these systems are of course idealised and prone to a higher degree of variability and complexity in practice. An extreme example is found in Mamboru, in eastern Indonesia, where both marriage systems (hypogamy and hypergamy) co-exist in the same society.[130] Nonetheless, these ideal types function as frames of reference, which can help us to detect the presence of such marriage systems in a community like the ancient one we are investigating right now.

1.3. Visualising the marriage network

After having established that the priestly families from Borsippa engaged in sacerdotal endogamy based on a simple quantitative survey, and having discussed relevant theories

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[123] Parkin 1990: 473-475.

[124] Pocock 1954, Gough 1961, Pocock 1972, Madan 1975, Fuller 1976, Parry 1979. Cf. Goody 1990: 214-219 and Quigley 1993: 87-101 for a brief overview of hypergamy in India.

[125] Black 1972.

[126] Leach 1954.

[127] See also Sprenger 2010, for a study on the ritual superiority of wife-givers among the Rmeet (Lamet) up-landers in northern Laos.

[128] Parkin 1990: 475-477.

[129] Dumont 1970: 116, Quigley 1993: 101-111.

[130] Needham 1987, Parkin 1990: 478.

on marriage and kinship, the analysis of the 81 marriage alliances from Borsippa should now be addressed. While the number of marriages is relatively modest, for the purpose of further analysis it is already too large to be conveniently represented in a list or table. Hence, in order to lay bare more fundamental dynamics of marriage in Borsippa and examine how these fit in with the insights gained from the anthropological literature, it is necessary to find a way to structure the data more efficiently. Social network analysis is a helpful tool to plot the alliances conjointly and reassemble them into an interlocking marriage system. Before I will convert the data into a graph, a short introduction of social network analysis is in order.

Social network analysis (SNA) uses, in broad terms, a combination of mathematics and social sciences to examine relations and structures in a quantifying manner. Launched in the 1960s it has proven to be one of the most rapidly growing academic sub-disciplines, equipped with its own terminology, handbooks and technical toolbox.[131] SNA has been applied in numerous studies covering subjects from occupational mobility, diffusion and adoption of innovations, exchange and power, belief systems, spreading patterns of contagious diseases, computer viruses, trade, happiness, friendship, emotional contagion and telecommunications to ancient societies.[132]

SNA was initially used to examine contemporary social phenomena. From there it slowly made its way into historical investigations. A pioneering study in this respect is Padgett & Ansell 1993, in which the authors successfully apply SNA to examine political mobilisation in fifteenth century Florence.[133] In her study of the personal network of Theophylact, an influential archbishop in Byzantine Bulgaria, Mullett 1997 showed that it could equally be used for ancient societies. Another, more exhaustive application of SNA on the ancient world, in this case Byzantine Egypt, can be found in Ruffinni 2008. Finally, the introduction of SNA in cuneiform studies is owed to Waerzeggers 2014b.[134] In this article she describes how it could be applied to the first

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[131] Scott 1991: 7-37.

[132] For a selection of studies that approached the subject from an SNA perspective, see Wasserman & Faust 1994: 5f.

[133] Other earlier examples are Rosenthal *et al.* 1985 and Carpenter 1994.

[134] Note that Schloen 2001 uses the concept of networks (without applying actual network analysis) throughout his study.

millennium cuneiform data and outlines its potentials for improving our understanding of Babylonian society.[135]

SNA attempts to study the relations between actors in a given context. The web that connects all these actors via their interrelationship forms the network. One of the basic aims of SNA, which is also one of its greatest assets, is to depict social networks comprehensibly as a matrix, sociogram or graph. The simplified structure can then be investigated as to how it governed and influenced the actors that make up the network. The illustrative power of SNA proves to be adequate enough for our purpose, and besides plotting the marriage network as a 2D representation, only a limited number of theoretical concepts from SNA will be applied in this study.[136]
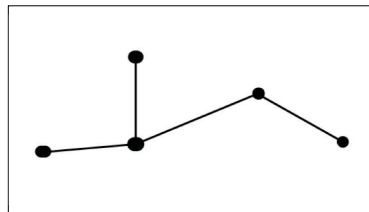

Figure 4: simple graph

The principles used in the visualisation of networks, i.e. graphs, are straightforward. Networks are made up of actors represented by *nodes* (also called vertices), and their interrelationships are represented by *lines* (or edges); this results in simple 2D representations like Fig. 4, above. Let us now turn to the data from Borsippa. Rather than taking the individual brides and grooms as actors, which would result in a densely populated and exceedingly tangled web, I will follow the methodology applied by Padgett & Ansell 1993 and take the various Borsippean families as actors. The individual families or clans thus serve as principle object of analysis. The marriage alliances represent the interconnecting lines between the clan of the husband and the clan of the wife. This results in the graph depicted in Fig. 5 (below):

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[135] See also Wagner *et al.* 2013 in which a quantitative network analysis is used to reconstruct the chronology and textual clusters in cuneiform archives.

[136] See Scott 1991, Wasserman & Faust 1994, Newman 2010, and Prell 2012 for comprehensive handbooks of SNA; the application of SNA in social-anthropology can be found in Hage & Harary 1983. The following remarks can be found in these works. The following networks have been visualised using the freeware program NodeXL (http://nodexl.codeplex.com) on a PC platform.

It is important to realise that this alliance network depicts the accumulation of the 81 marriages of the priestly families from Borsippa. Since these were arranged over a period of more than 100 years, the network does not capture one particular moment in time.[137] Instead, in this network the assemblage of all the marriages during the long sixth century have been collapsed, so that it depicts the culmination of the alliance system until 484 BCE, when the documentation breaks off. It does therefore not present any historical development and the network can be characterised as diachronically 'flat'.
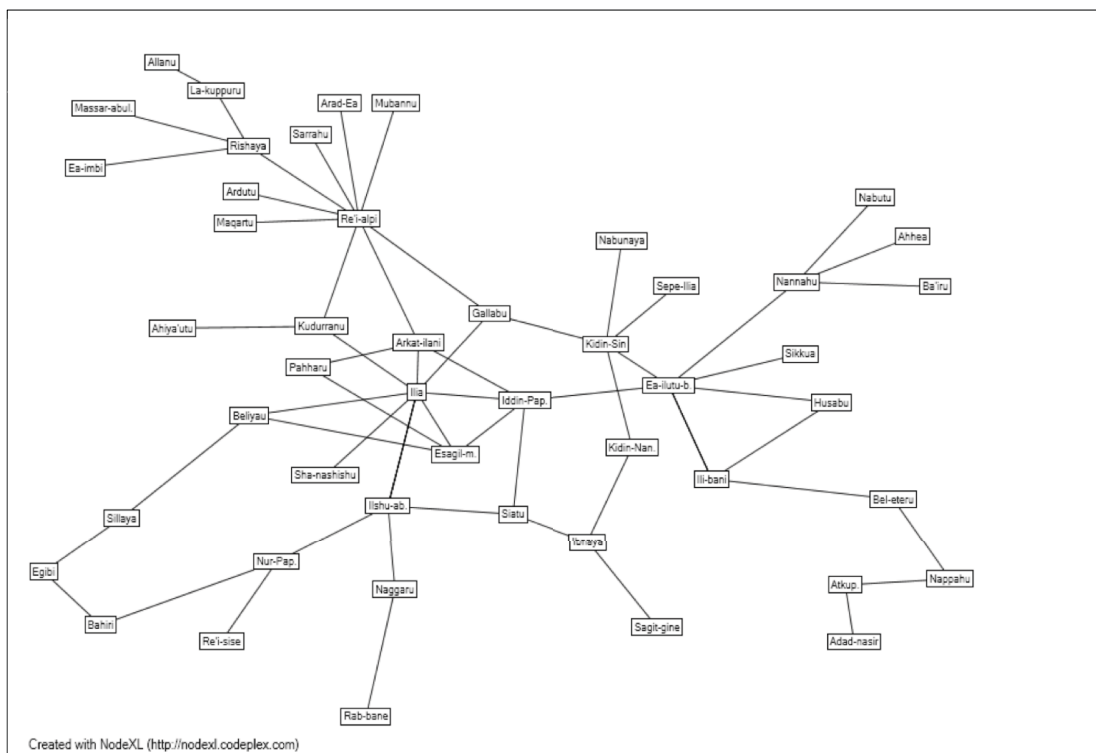
Figure 5: Borsippa marriage network (undirected)

While this is an obvious downside, it should be noted that a diachronic examination is fruitless. The available evidence on marriage alliances grows in conjunction with the Borsippa corpus, which, like the Neo-Babylonian corpus in general, is 'top-heavy' i.e. it accumulates towards the end of the period.[138] Hence, while the evidence from before the reign of Nabonidus (until ca. 555 BCE) accounts for less than a dozen marriages, more

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[137] The earliest securely datable union was arranged before 590 BCE (EAH 203, Nbk 14); the latest marriage may have been arranged as late as 485 BCE (BM 29021, Xer 01).

[138] Jursa 2005: 1ff.

than half appears during for the reign of Darius I (521-486 BCE). I was not able to find any evidence indicating that the marriage system in Borsippa was profoundly affected by any historical event of the time; quite the contrary, it was robust and altogether static (see, e.g. Ch.1.4.).[139]

Returning to the network proper, it may appear rather messy at first glance. Yet, upon closer scrutiny several patterns can be observed. One can see, for example, that the Ilia family is well embedded and takes up a central position in this network.[140] On the other hand, the Rēʾi-alpi and Ea-ilūtu-bani families – which both occupy edge positions in the temple hierarchy – form a kind of bridge, connecting a range of clans to the rest of the network. Moreover, the graph shows that by the early fifth century all the participating families were indirectly related by marriage. This highlights the great cohesion between the priestly families and demonstrates that the degree of endogamy was extremely high.

So far, I have depicted the network as an undirected dichotomous graph. This means that a certain tie between two actors is binary: either it is present or not. However, many social relations are directional, i.e. directed from one actor to another but not necessarily the other way around. The classical example concerns friendship.[141] When asked to name three friends one might name X, Y, and Z. However, when in turn they are asked the same question the affection is not necessarily reciprocated. In networks representing friendship patterns, ties are therefore usually directional and a graph consisting of these directional ties is called a *directed graph*, or short *digraph*. It is the convention in such networks to use arrows to indicate the orientation from the sender to the receiver of a given relation. I will show that in Borsippa the relationship between the family of the wife and the family of the husband, which in accordance with the earlier reviewed theories will be labelled 'wife-giver' and 'wife-taker' respectively, was also a directional one. In Fig. 6 (next page), I have converted the undirected graph of Fig. 5 into a digraph. The arrows indicate the movement of the bride in a given marriage.

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[139] While the marriage of Neriglissar's daughter with the *šatammu* of Ezida may have temporarily upset the alliance system and its internal hierarchy, the consequences seem to have affected only the family of the groom and not the marriage circuit in general (see, pp. 64-65).

[140] Note, however, that this is a direct result of the generous amount of data on the marriage alliances of the Ilia clan, found especially in the Ilia (A) archive. It remains to be seen whether this family would assume a similar position in case we had the complete marriage system.

[141] E.g. Wasserman & Faust 1994: 121ff., Prell 2012: 10-11.

Figure 6: Borsippa marriage network (directed)

Created with NodeXL (http://nodexl.codeplex.com)

1.4. Wife-givers & wife-takers in Borsippa

Having defined the components of the network and applied the necessary concepts, this section presents a close analysis of the digraph in Fig. 6. In particular, I will explore what the abstract features of this network can tell us about the nature of the marriage system in the priestly community of Borsippa.

Relative Hierarchy. The most striking feature of this network is that in the 81 marriage alliances found over a period of 140 years, or roughly five generations, the direction of intermarriage was never reversed. In other words, once family A received a wife from family B, family A never returned a wife to B; their roles as so-called wife-giver and wife-taker vis-à-vis each other were never violated once established. Marriage alliance in Borsippa was thus strictly *asymmetrical* or *unilateral*. It has been suggested that in societies in which brides move in one direction only, there is a possibility that a relative status difference arises between the two alliance partners.[142] There are two possibilities; either the wife-giver is inferior in status to his wife-taker, or vice versa. The following evidence suggests that in the case of Borsippa it was the wife-taker who assumed the superior position.

The first argument can be inferred from the asymmetrical character of Neo-Babylonian marriage agreements. It was the custom in Babylonia that the bride was transferred to the household of the groom upon marriage.[143] Marriage was therefore patrilocal, i.e. located at the husband's residence. In addition to a bride, the household of the husband also received a dowry (*nudunnû*). It was the absolute rule that the bride's family made some kind of wealth available, however modest. Bridewealth, a (compensatory) payment made by the groom to the family of the bride – a custom well-known from the earlier Old-Babylonian period and still common in some parts of the globe[144] – is only very rarely attested in the Neo-Babylonian period, if at all.[145] Among

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[142] Parkin 1990: 347ff. and above Ch. 1.2

[143] Or his father, depending on whether or not the husband had been emancipated from his father's *potestas*, Oelsner, Wells & Wunsch 2003: 938-944. Cf. Wunsch 2003.

[144] The use of bridewealth, previously known also as bride-price, has been studies most extensively for the African continent, cf. classical studies such as Evans-Pritchard 1951, Goody & Tambiah 1973, and Kuper 1982. The custom is however not restricted to this part of the world. See Goody 1990 for a work that addresses this and other marriage phenomena across time and space. For bridewealth in the Old-

the more than fifty marriage agreements from first millennium Babylonia one can only find very few references to payments or gifts made by a groom to the family of his bride.[146] However these cases confirm rather than contradict the rule. The first three instances of such payments refer to it as *biblu*, '(marriage) gift'. This term is found in a dowry receipt from the Ṣāhit-ginê family from Sippar, dated to the early reign of Darius I,[147] and then resurfaces in two rather exceptional marriage agreements from fourth century Susa, the Persian royal court in Elam, involving Egyptians couples.[148] These *biblu*s consisted of silver and/or jewellery, and were transferred to the agent of the bride. Yet, at least two of these texts[149] clarify that this payment did not remain with the family of the bride but was transferred to her (and her husband) upon marriage, together with the dowry. The *biblu* does therefore not qualify as bridewealth. Rather, it should be seen as a personal endowment to the bride and her new household, and represents a marriage gift that is referred to as 'indirect dowry' in anthropology.[150] Lastly, it is not impossible that the presentation of the *biblu*, perhaps as betrothal gift, was part of a marriage celebration, in which case these endowments could have had a distinct symbolic character. This may also have been the case in the marriage contract of [f]Nanāya-kānat, written in the Judean settlement of Āl-Yahūdu, and published by K. Abraham 2005/2006. The text states that her husband will cover his mother-in-law with a garment worth of five shekels of silver (ll. 19-22). While this gesture is found in only one other marriage agreement – the lack of family names and the absence of a dowry, allows us to situate this alliance among the lower stratum of Sippar's community – it is

Babylonian marriage, see Westbrook 1988: 101f. An extensive study of marriage practices, and in particular the use of marriage gifts, in ancient Palestine can be found in Lemos 2010.

[145] Waerzeggers 2001.

[146] See Roth 1989 for a study of Babylonian marriage agreements.

[147] BM 64195+ has been published in Waerzeggers 2001. See for a full edition and study of the Ṣāhit-ginê family archive Waerzeggers 2014.

[148] TEBR 93/94 and TEBR 78a edited by Joannès 1984: 71ff., and re-edited by Roth 1989 no. 34 and no. 35 respectively. Cf. the discussion of these contracts by Abraham 1992, Waerzeggers 2001, and Abraham 2005/2006: 204. See Joannès 1990c for two further texts concerning the Egyptian community of Susa.

[149] Unfortunately, the critical passage in TEBR 78a is broken.

[150] The term was first coined by J. Goody in Goody & Tambiah 1973: 2, and refers to a marriage gift presented by the (family of the) groom to the bride, or her agent who subsequently returns it to her as part of, or, as supplement to her dowry. See also Lemos 2010 for a survey of this practice in Ancient Near Eastern marriage.

occasionally found in other legal transaction such as adoptions and house sales.[151] Abraham offers two interpretations. Based on the endowment of garments in other legal contexts, she suggests that the provision in [f]Nanāya-kānat's marriage contract may signify 'a symbolic act whose purpose was to motive the bride's mother to relinquish the rights over her daughter'.[152] Alternatively, the garment might have functioned as indirect dowry (similar to the *biblu*), which was only presented to the bride upon marriage. This interpretation may be supported by the fact that the garment is referred to as the 'ZI-IN-DI' of [f]Nanāya-kānat (l. 21). While its exact meaning escapes us, Abraham's different interpretations of the term all imply that the gift was ultimately destined for the bride.[153]

A final text that should be mentioned here is Nbk 101 – the marriage contract of Dāgil-ilī and [f]Lā-tubāšinni.[154] It is said that the latter's mother, who came from established Babylonian descent, received a slave, worth 30 shekels of silver, and an additional 30 shekels as compensation (*kūm*) for her daughter. This time there are no allusions that the gift was destined for the bride upon marriage. While it therefore appears that Dāgil-ilī offered bridewealth to his mother-in-law, C. Wunsch has come up with a different solution (2003/2004: 189). Placing this contract in its archival context, she showed that we are not dealing with a genuine marriage agreement as much as a 'Quasi-Verkauf zur Sklavin'.[155] [f]Lā-tubāšinni was an adoptive daughter who was supposed to take care of her mother in old age. By offering a slave and silver (worth a total of 1 mina of silver), Dāgil-ilī not only bought out [f]Lā-tubāšinni,[156] but also provisioned his mother-in-law with sufficient funds and manpower to see to her maintenance in future years. Moreover, the fact that some thirty years later [f]Lā-tubāšinni went to court to contest the (unfree) status of her children, suggests that by the time of her marriage she was considered unfree herself.[157]

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[151] The marriage agreement BM 59584 has been published by Wunsch 2003: no. 1. For the act of presenting a garment in other legal contexts see, e.g. Wunsch 2003: 9f., Abraham 2005/2006: 204.

[152] Abraham 2005/2006: 204.

[153] Abraham 2005/2006: 205.

[154] Edited both by Roth 1989: no. 4 and Wunsch 1997/1998: no. 1.

[155] Wunsch 2003/2004: 189.

[156] Note that according to BM 61737, 1 mina of silver is exactly the amount an adoptive daughter needs to pay when leaving her mother, see Wunsch 2003/2004: no. 8.

[157] For a discussion and edition of [f]Lā-tubāšinni's court case, see Wunsch 1997/1998: 62-67, 75-77.

To sum up, even though marriage gifts presented by the groom to the family of the bride, and perhaps even genuine bridewealth, were not unknown among Babylonia's lower strata and foreign minorities, it seems to have played no part at all in Babylonian priestly or elite marriages. In these social circles marriage was fully asymmetric and only knew a one-directional transfer of brides and property in the form of a dowry, to the household of the groom.[158]

The second and more important argument concerns the (temple) status of marriage partners. If one compares the status of intermarrying families with the religious hierarchy of the temple, an interesting pattern emerges. From the 81 marriages incorporated in this study, it transpires that priestly families of lower rank often provided brides to families affiliated to more senior priesthoods. Hence, daughters of the oxherd family married sons from barber and temple-enterer families,[159] while prebendary bakers and butchers provided wives to families belonging to the ranks of brewers and temple-enterers.[160] The same pattern prevails in marriages with families outside of the prebendary circle; non-priestly clans usually acted as wife-givers of priestly ones: e.g. the Nūr-Papuskkals (temple-enterer) married a daughter from the Barihi clan, the Bēliya'u (baker) family received a bride from the Şillāyas, and a man from the Atkuppu (reed-worker) family married a woman from the Adad-nāṣir clan.[161] All this points to a tendency among the well-born women of Borsippean to marry men of higher (temple) status. However, I showed at the beginning of this chapter that there are many alliances between families with the same professional affiliation (43%). This happened, for example, within the ranks of bakers (e.g. Bēliya'u ∞ Esagil-mansum), brewers (e.g. Ilia ∞ Ilšu-abūšu) and temple-enterers (e.g. Arkāt-ilāni-damqā ∞ Iddin-Papsukkal). While this is at odds with what has been observed so far, taking a closer look at the families concerned and examining their role in the temple (and civic)

[158] Note that the use of dowry has been associated with societies that knew a high levels of stratifications, while bridewealth is often found in societies with minimal social stratifications, according to the ethnographic record, cf. Goody & Tambiah 1973, Goody 1990, Lemos 2010.

[159] E.g. the Rē'i-alpi family provided wives to the Gallābu (barber), Kudurrānu (brewer), and Arkāt-ilāni-damqā (temple-enterer) families, see Appendix 1.5b.

[160] E.g. both the Ibnāya (butcher) and Kidin-Sîn (baker) families gave daughters in marriage to Kidin-Nanāya (temple-enterer), see Appendix 1.1b. The Ilias (brewers) received a wife from the Esagil-mansum family (baker), see Appendix 1.2b.

[161] Nūr-Papsukkal ∞ Barihi (Appendix 1.1c), Bēliya'u ∞ Şillāya (Appendix 1.3c), Atkuppu ∞ Adad-nāṣir (Appendix 1.6). Other instances include

institution(s) reveals that this distinct marriage pattern was usually maintained in one way or another. Hence, the Bēliya'u family held the prestigious position of overseer (*šāpiru*) of the bakers, while the Esagil-mansums remained of subsidiary importance in this line of work.[162] Whereas no less than four city governors (*šākin-ṭēmi*) and four chief temple administrators (*šatammu*) had risen from the ranks of the Ilia clan, the Ilšu-abūšu family had only occupied the post of royal commissioner (*qīpu*) once.[163] A similar story holds true for the last marriage partners: with no less than seven city governors – including an alliance with the royal family of Neriglissar, and five temple-enterers – the Arkāt-ilāni-damqā family can be identified as the ranking marriage partner compared to the Iddin-Papsukkals, who could only boast one city governor and one chief temple administrator during the long sixth century.[164] It is thus possible to conclude that in the marriage system of Borsippa lower status brides married higher status grooms. In other words, wife-givers were of lower status vis-à-vis their wife-takers. The status difference between marriage partners conforms to the purity-based hierarchy of the temple, which served as guiding principle in this local alliance system. While these assertions apply to most parts of the network, there are some notable exceptions to the rule. Hence, one can find various marriages between lower status men and higher status women, as well as alliances between families of seemingly identical (temple) status.[165]

The third (and much shorter) argument pointing to a status difference between wife-giver and wife-taker involves what might be called the reiteration of hierarchy. We have just seen that once a certain hierarchy was established between a wife-giver and wife-taker family this was never violated. However, there is evidence that some families repeated the marriage alliances in succeeding generations, thus reaffirming the status difference over a longer period of time.[166]

And finally, there is also evidence from outside the realm of marriage proper that testifies to the wife-givers' subordinate status in Borsippa. Following several well-

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[162] See Ch. 0.7.3, above.

[163] Waerzeggers 2010: 65ff. The *qīpu* from the Ilšu-abūšu family is mentioned in two texts: VS 6 155 (Dar 29), and TEBR 80 (Dar x). It should be noted that, while the *qīpu* did enjoy a great authority in the temple as royal representative, he stood outside of the priesthood and did not enjoy religious authority, see Bongenaar 1997: 34ff. and Kleber 2008: 26-27.

[164] Waerzeggers 2010: 65ff.

[165] These inconsistencies in the marriage system will be dealt with below.

[166] Ea-ilūtu-bani ∞ Ilī-bāni 3x (Appendix 1.1a) and Ilia ∞ Ilšu-abūšu 4x (Appendix 1.2a).

documented cases, it appears that the family of the wife-giver took up a supporting, perhaps even subservient role in the temple service of the clan to which it had given a bride.[167] Moreover, this dynamic also affected the patterns of tenancy among some prebendary groups (Ch.2.3.3).

The features of the network observed so far would suggest that we are dealing with a hypergamous marriage system. In its ideal form, however, this system *dictates* that individuals, families or groups giving brides are inferior to those receiving them, i.e. women have to marry up. Since this is not always the case in our data we cannot speak of a strict form of hypergamy in Borsippa. We shall return to this matter later in this section.

Transitivity. While reciprocity was the key to Lévi-Strauss' alliance theory, scholars have shown that some communities adhere to marriage systems of a fundamentally non-reciprocal nature – and so did the Borsippean priesthood.[168] I have already explained that the marriage settlement itself was asymmetric, and that there were no cases of direct reciprocity between two intermarried families, i.e. wife-exchange. However, the network carries a more fundamental quality. If we take a closer look at the network, pick a random family as starting point and follow the chains of alliances as indicated by the arrows, we will soon realise that not one single chain goes back to its starting point. Hence, cycles – also referred to as close loops or walks – are completely absent. In keeping with social network analysis we can describe this network as *acyclic*.[169] This implies that the marriage system of our priests was strictly and entirely non-reciprocal. This, I will argue, results from the transitive nature of the hierarchy established between wife-givers and wife-takers upon marriage.

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[167] The effects of the wife-givers and wife-takers relation on the cultic organisation of the temple will be examined in detail in the final part of this section. The phenomenon of rendering services in exchange for a bride is called 'brideservice' by anthropologists, see Goody 1990: 347ff. The concept of labour in return for marriage is not unknown in the Ancient Near East, though usually involves an obligation from the side of the husband, i.e. the wife-taker. Examples of this can be found in Genesis 29: 15-30 where Jacob has to work seven years for each of his two wives, Lea and Rachel. Similarly, I Samuel 18:25 tells us that Saul promised to give his daughter in marriage to David on the condition that he will fight in his army and collect one hundred Philistinian foreskins. It should be noted, however, that brideservice was not a common marriage gift in ancient Palestine, see Lemos 2010: 45.

[168] E.g. Parkin 1990, Hage & Harary 1996.

[169] E.g. Hage & Harary 1983: 80ff., Wasserman & Faust 1994: 119, 234-248, Newman 2010: 6.4.2.

According to the Oxford English Dictionary a (logical or mathematical) relation is described as *transitive* 'if [a relation] holds between a first and second item, and also between the second and a third, it necessarily holds between the first and the third'. To give a basic example, if A is smaller (taller, smarter, faster, etc.) than B, and B is smaller than C, then A is automatically smaller than C too.[170] I will show that the marriage system of the priests was regulated by this concept of transitivity and illustrate its impact on the choice of marriage partners by considering a specific alliance cluster, involving the Ilī-bāni ('A'), Ea-ilūtu-bani ('B') and Huṣābu ('C') families.

The first marriage in this cluster was arranged between the Huṣābu and Ea-ilūtu-bani families;[171] since Huṣābu received the bride it became the wife-taker and the superior party. In subsequent years the Ea-ilūtu-bani family widened its horizon and started to ally with the Ilī-bānis.[172] The Ea-ilūtu-bani family secured altogether three wives from this clan and their alliance became one of the strongest in our network. As a result, Ilī-bāni was the wife-giver of Ea-ilūtu-bani, and Ea-ilūtu-bani wife-giver of Huṣābu, which resulted in the following relative ranking, from bottom upwards:
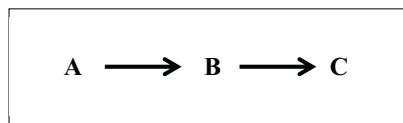

Figure 7: relative marriage hierarchy

In the final marriage of this cluster, which happened some years later, the Huṣābus received a bride from the Ilī-bāni family.[173] The latter had thereby 'jumped' over the Ea-ilūtu-banis while abiding by the correct marriage direction up the established hierarchy. This example shows that in Borsippa the sense of inferiority was imputed not only to direct wife-givers but also to a family's wife-giver's wife-givers. In other words, the marriage hierarchy was of transitive nature.

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[170] See for the application of this form of transitivity in human society, Hage & Harary 1983: 71ff. and Hage & Harary 1996. It should not be confused with the concept of transitivity usually found in SNA literature where it refers to the measure of the completeness of relational triads, cf. Wasserman & Faust 1994: 243ff., Newman 2010: 7.9.

[171] BM 82640 = AH XV no. 45 (534 BCE), see Appendix 1.1b.

[172] TCL 12/13 174 (524 BCE), see Appendix 1.1a.

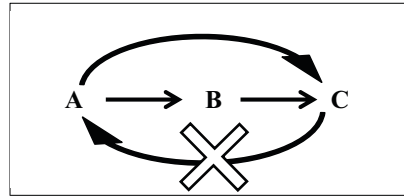[173] NBC 8404 (518 BCE), see Appendix 1.1b.

Figure 8: transitive hierarchy

The transitive hierarchy made it impossible, and presumably inappropriate for the Huṣābu family to present a bride to the Ilī-bānis, a family of lower marital status, but it was possible to receive one, since this did not violate the established hierarchy (see, fig. 8). The marriage cluster I just discussed is only one example in a network that is in fact made up of a number of overlapping acyclic sub-structures; families could be and often were involved in several of these chains simultaneously. Note for example the series of marriages between:

Esagil-mansum → Pahhāru → Arkāt-ilāni-damqā → Ilia

From the latter's perspective this entire chain of families was excluded as potential wife-takers, but not as wife-givers. Hence, the Esagil-mansum family could and eventually did ally with the Ilia by giving them a daughter in marriage.[174] The Ilia and the Esagil-mansum families were also involved as wife-givers in an acyclic marriage chain with Bēliyaʾu.

In conclusion, we can remark that from the viewpoint of the wife-taker it was undesirable to give brides to any direct or indirect wife-giver, i.e. to marry against the hierarchy. While this is clearly a negative rule, transitivity also had a positive side: families were in general free to arrange marriages with any party as long as it was oriented up the established hierarchy. A marriage system of this kind unavoidably assumes the form of a ladder, yet a ladder in which it was possible to jump over the next step as long as it was a higher one. It should be noted that the concept of transitivity is, again, one that is usually associated with hypergamous marriage systems in the anthropological literature.[175]

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[174] Appendix 1.2b.

[175] Parkin 1990.

1.5. Hypergamy in historical context

In the previous paragraphs I demonstrated that the marriage system of wife-givers and wife-takers involved status differences and relative hierarchies. Wife-takers took precedence over wife-givers but were themselves outranked by their own wife-takers. We came across various features that encourage an interpretation of this system as a hypergamous marriage system: the superior position of the wife-taker, the asymmetric matrimonial flow, a non-reciprocal alliance system and a transitive hierarchy. However, while the status difference between wife-givers and wife-takers often conformed to the purity-based hierarchy of the temple, not all priestly marriages seem to have followed this example. Is there a way to explain these exceptions?

One of the best-known examples of a hypergamous marriage system is found in the Kangra District in northwest India.[176] Research has shown that communities in this region were (and often still are) strongly divided along caste lines and ranked according to a principle of relative purity (or impurity). An important stimulus in this alliance system is the desire to give an unsolicited gift – the most prestigious one being the 'gift of a maiden' (see above, Ch.1.2) – to a spiritual (caste) superior, in order to improve one's own status in the present and the following life as well as that of one's children. As in the marriage system of Borsippa's priestly community, the hierarchy in this Indian society assumes the form of an open-ended ladder. Scholars have, however, not failed to note that this ideal hypergamous system entails some serious (demographic) flaws that can only be neutralised by a violation of the preferential rules of marriage and its hierarchy.[177]

It is unavoidable that in a system of obligatory and pervasive hypergamy, in which women are obliged to marry up, an excess of 'unmarriageable' men forms at the foot of the hierarchical ladder and of women at its summit: whom do daughters of the highest group marry and where do the sons of the lowest group find their brides? Hypergamy gives rise to so-called bottlenecks. In order to neutralise these congestions, communities must and have been known to resort to various compromising strategies. Several ethnographies show that a breaking down of the endogamous unit by marrying inferior women from outside the caste system is often detected among the lower fringes, whereas superior groups at the top of the ladder preferred polygamy or resorted to more

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[176] Parry 1979. Cf. Quigley 1993: 87ff.

[177] E.g. Parkin 1990, Goody 1990: 216-127, Quigley 1993: 87-101.

drastic measures like female infanticide – other examples include prolonged celibacy and marriage among equals.[178] I will argue that these dynamics of adjustment can account for exceptions apparent in the Borsippean marriage network. In order to do this we need to take into account the historical context of this community and its alliance system.

Among Ancient Near Eastern historians there is the general idea that the first quarter of the first millennium was a formative period for Babylonian society presented in the documentation from the long sixth century BCE, the period subject to our study.[179] Not unlike various long-term economic and social processes – most notably, the widespread adoption of family names – also the religious, purity-based hierarchy of the temple originated in the centuries prior to our documentation, presumably when families were presented with land rights and specific temple functions by various early kings.[180] That these rights could be renegotiated, reshuffled and reinstalled by royal involvement, is exemplified by the reinstallation of the priesthood of the oxherds in the seventh century, probably by the Assyrian king Esarhaddon.[181] However, evidence from Borsippa suggests that the Ezida temple already knew an elaborate administration and organisation, and thus a religious hierarchy during the eighth century BCE.[182] It seems only reasonable to develop this line of thought and argue that the marriage system reconstructed in this chapter was already in place for a considerable amount of time prior to our documentation – the network therefore represents a well-developed stage of the marriage system. If so, one might think that in the early days the priestly community of Borsippa practiced a 'clean' form of hypergamy, but before long, the priestly clans must have faced the inevitable bottlenecks inherent in the system.

The unions between temple-enterer women and men from brewer clans represent the first series of marriages that contradict the rules of a clean hypergamous marriage model

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[178] Dumont 1970: 118, Parry 1979: 214, 218, 244, Parkin 1990: 475, Goody 1990: 214-219.

[179] E.g. van Driel 2002, Jursa *et al.* 2010, Nielsen 2011.

[180] E.g. van Driel 2002: 67-75, Paulus 2014: 79ff., Nielsen & Waerzeggers [*forthcoming*].

[181] Parpola 1993: no. 353, Waerzeggers 2010: 281-283. King Nebuchadnezzar also praises himself in his inscription for having appointed new fishermen for the regular offerings of the god Marduk in Babylon (Langdon 1912: Nbk nos. 19, ll. 14-17).

[182] VS 1 36, a mid eight century *kudurru*, is our primary source on the organisation of the Ezida temple and the composition of the priesthoods during that time. It mentions various temple-enterers, a temple administrator, a cultic singer, and the overseers of the brewers, bakers and butchers, cf. Thureau-Dangin 1919, and Paulus 2014: 683-688.

in long sixth century.[183] Not unlike various high caste families in India, it seems that relatively early on the temple-enterers of Borsippa had troubles finding suitable partners for their daughters and had to make a concession. The temple-enterers' reaction was apparently to marry their daughters to the group that occupied the rung just below them in the temple hierarchy, i.e. the brewers. A seemingly natural consequence of this intermarriage was that the relative status of the brewers increased over time.[184] The positions of the chief temple administrator (*šatammu*) and city governor (*šākin-ṭēmi*) can be used as status indicators of the families concerned. While in the earlier periods these positions were manned solely by temple-enterers,[185] already during the early seventh century the position of governor was occupied by a descendant of Ilia, a family of brewers *pur sang*, just like the position of the *šatammu* in the late seventh century.[186] Not only did the (relative) position of the brewer increase over time, but, by marrying their daughters to lower status groups the temple-enterers were in a sense placing themselves on the same level – this resulted in a flattening of the top of the hierarchy. One might imagine that it changed from Fig. 1 (Ch.0.6., above) into something like the 'status ladder' of Fig. 9 (below).
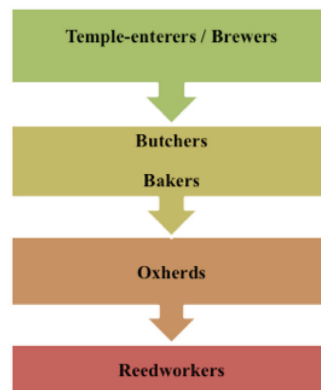

Figure 9: flattening of social relative hierarchy

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[183] Appendix 1.1b.

[184] Note again that Parry 1979: 204ff. observed a very similar dynamic among the highest Rajput castes in the Kangra region.

[185] Waerzeggers 2010: 66-73.

[186] Frame 1984.

That this dynamic did not only affect the position of the brewers but also of the butchers and perhaps the bakers can be deduced from the fact that in the sixth century the position of city governor was temporarily in the hands of Ibnāya, a prominent butchers family.[187] It goes without saying that this marital counter-measure clearly had more profound ramifications in the community.

More extreme examples of inverse hierarchical marriages, like the union between the relatively low ranking oxherds and temple-enterers or brewers, can be explained by considering the position of the families in question. Hence, while the latter were ideologically of superior status, the specific families who acted as wife-givers seem not to have had a very strong tradition in Borsippa or had lost their standing in society and their influence in the temple organisation. For instance, by the time they allied with the Oxherds, the Arad-Ea (temple-enterer) and the Ardūtu (brewer) families were no more than minor clans of peripheral status in Borsippa's priestly community.[188]

Another trend that might reflect an adjustment of the ideal hypergamous system involves intra-prebendary marriages. I have said at the beginning of this chapter that most marriages (43%) were arranged within the professional prebendary group. While these speak against a strict hypergamous model, I was able to show that a relative hierarchy was still maintained in marriage alliances, at least judging from a number of well-attested cases.[189] However, the status difference between wife-givers and wife-takers is certainly not always clear-cut. Again, I believe that Indian caste society can help us come to grips with this state of affairs. Traditional Indian society was theoretically and on a scriptural level hierarchised according to four *varṇa*s, but reality has revealed that communities were (and often still are) hierarchised in castes (*jāti*), sub-castes, sub-sub-castes etc.[190] Perhaps one should envisage a similar reality for the Borsippean priestly community. While on an ideological level it was hierarchised according to professional groups and their relative status of purity in the temple,

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[187] Zadok 2005a: 638, Waerzeggers 2010: 68.

[188] Appendix 1.5b. Note that while a member of the Arad-Ea family occupied the post of royal commissioner (*qīpu*) of the Esagil temple in Babylon around Dar 29 (VS 6 155), and another member had been appointed as *gugallu*-official of Borsippa around the same time (VS 6 160), the family had married their daughter to the Rē'i-alpis at least three decades earlier. Moreover, this family is only very rarely attested in the Borsippa corpus.

[189] See Ch. 1.4.

[190] E.g. Flood 1996: 58ff.

hierarchy permeated the individual priesthoods too, pinning every prebendary group, clan and if necessary even individual lineage on its place on the ladder. Indeed, if the status difference between two clans from the same prebendary group was not clear, it seems to have been the marital union itself that triggered the relative status, and thus established a hierarchy between wife-giver and wife-taker. This will be further explained in the final section of this chapter.

An alternative explanation of the widespread intra-prebendary marriages could be that it constituted a sort of collective policy. Marrying a higher-ranking family did not only determine one's own status but also that of the professional group at large. While marriage within the prebendary group presumably increased the stratification of the internal hierarchy, it left the status of the group with regard to others untouched. The same applies to marriages within the clan, be it on an even lower level.[191] This strategy in a sense stabilised the overall hierarchy. It might not be a coincidence that we find a repetition of intra-prebendary marriage alliance precisely among temple-enterers and brewers, the two highest prebendary groups.

A final strategy that may have been introduced to alleviate the constraints of the hypergamous model was intermarriage with outsiders. While this can be observed throughout the prebendary group,[192] it is perhaps most distinctive among the lower ranking priesthoods. Hence, the only family known to have given a wife to the Reed-workers is the Adad-nāṣir family, a clan with no priestly affiliation. At least three of the marriage partners of the Rē'i-alpi family can be designated as outsiders: whereas the Šarrahu and the [f]Maqartu families lacked a temple background, the Rišāya family is so far only attested as priests in the neighbouring town of Dilbat – the latter may therefore also have been outsiders in a real geographical sense.[193] While the evidence is admittedly limited, it might indicate that there was a (greater) tendency among lower-fringe families to welcome outsiders into the alliance system. This is supported by the ethnographic record from India, were a similar dynamic is found especially among lower-caste families.[194]

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[191] Endogamous alliances within the kin-group are attested for the Banê-ša-ilia (VS 4 150), Basia (BM 21975), Ibnāya (VS 4 176), Ilia (BM 26544), Ilī-bāni (e.g. TuM 2/3 1), Kidin-Sin (e.g. BM 94697), Lā-kuppuru (BM 29385), and Nanāhu (e.g. VS 6 95) families.

[192] Appendix 1.

[193] For the Rišāya family from Dilbat, see Appendix 1.2c.

[194] See Ch. 1.2, above.

In the end, if we take into account the fact that status differences existed not only *between* prebendary groups but also *within*, then the overall ratio of hypergamous marriages vs. contra-hypergamous marriages is ca. 70% to 30%. Hence, the marriage pattern I have reconstructed for Neo-Babylonian Borsippa seems to have developed out of a traditional hypergamous alliance system, of which the basic outlines are still visible. One should also remember that the alliance system represents an organic entity that was maintained during the (of-times turbulent) centuries of the first millennium BCE. The repeated wars, political alliances and dynastic changes on the one hand and the later economic growth on the other, must all have had their effect on the established social hierarchy more than once. Moreover, the prosperous times of the Neo-Babylonian Empire created ample possibilities for the entrepreneurial (middle) strata of society to rise in status,[195] while every change of leadership meant the potential end of a clan's leading position.[196] Finally, adherence to the hypergamy ideal depended also on local demography. Not everyone could hope to marry off his or her daughter in this way, and it might at times have been difficult to find a suitable wife-taker or wife-giver in the immediate vicinity. No system could have persisted throughout the first millennium without adaptation and in this light it is all the more remarkable that the hypergamous model is still very much intact in the Borsippean temple community of the long sixth century.

1.6. Wife-givers & wife-takers in the cult

While the temple hierarchy influenced the dynamics of marriage within the community, serving as an important guiding principle in the alliance system, I already hinted that the relative hierarchy between wife-givers and wife-takers also had consequences for the organisation and execution of the temple service.

The usual practice concerning the temple service was that the priest who had certain duties in the liturgy performed this himself. In the case of the purveying priesthoods, the temple service included a preparatory assignment like brewing or baking, as well as participation in the daily sacrificial ceremonies performed in more holy spaces near to the cellae of the gods.[197] However, a priest had the possibility to discharge the obligations resting on his prebend, and was forced to do so in case of sickness and other

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[195] Beaulieu 2000.

[196] See pp. 64-65, below. Cf. Jursa 2007.

[197] Waerzeggers 2010.

physical or mental impairments that made him unsuitable to perform his temple service.[198] For this purpose priests could lease parts or the entirety of their prebend to deputies in exchange of a fixed rent.[199] This employment was regulated with a legal contract whose formulary could be easily adapted to specific circumstances and needs.[200] A recurring characteristic in these contracts is the use of the expression *ana ēpišānūtu*, literally 'for the performance of', and I will therefore speak of 'performance contracts'.[201]

Assyriologists have often approached these performance contracts from a purely economical perspective. Deputies are perceived as entrepreneurs who welcomed the opportunity to assist in the temple service in return for an additional source of income, while priests are characterised as prebend owners who had little interest in performing the cultic task themselves.[202] However, it has been argued recently by C. Waerzeggers that cultic collaboration was not governed by opportunistic economic behaviour (2010: 180-185). By taking a closer look at the social profile of those involved in the temple service of the brewers of the Ezida temple, she showed that deputies were predominantly recruited from within the group of prebendary brewers; participation of outsiders was restricted to peripheral and menial tasks.[203] Hence, collaboration was largely based on professional affiliation. However, in the following I will show that the specific dynamics of cultic organisation were also influenced by existing marriage alliance. It is in the context of these performance contracts that we can detect the effects that marriage had on the organisation of the temple. In order to do this I will examine several pairs of families for which we are particularly well informed in terms of both their marriage alliances and their collaboration in the cult.

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[198] Waerzeggers 2010: 291f.

[199] Jursa 1999: 44-52, van Driel 2002: 138-140, Waerzeggers 2010: 173-185.

[200] Jursa 2005: 34-35, Waerzeggers 2010: 176f.

[201] Note that the term *ēpišānūtu* is not found in all service contracts. Internal information in these contracts on for example the required duties and fixed terms reveal however their true nature as performance contracts, *ēpišānūtu* contracts. Cf. van Driel 2002: 135-140 and Waerzeggers 2010: 173-185 for examples of formulaic variations. Performance contracts among the oxherds of Ezida usually refer to *manzaltu izuzzu*, 'to stand service', see Waerzeggers 2010: 191f.

[202] E.g. San Nicolò & Ungnad 1929: 495, McEwan 1981: 106-109, MacGinnis 1991: 76-78, Jursa 1999: 45, van Driel 2002: 138 and Jursa 2011: 163-164.

[203] For a similar observation, see Kessler 1991: 62, writing that 'Die Berechtigung zur Durchführung der Dienstschichten scheint … einen kleinen Kreis privilegierten Personen übertragen gewesen sein'.

The first case concerns the arrangements between the Ilia and Kudurrānu families, both prominent members of the brewers of Ezida. Taking a look at their history as collaborators in the cult it seems that from the reign of Nebuchadnezzar II (604-562 BCE) until 509 BCE the Ilia family always called upon the Kudurrānus for support in the temple service.[204] This relationship however suddenly reversed in 507 BCE. From that moment, until the end of the documentation, the Ilias always performed the temple service of members from the Kudurrānu family.[205] An explanation for this change can be found once the performance contracts and their marriage alliance are placed side by side (see, fig. 10).
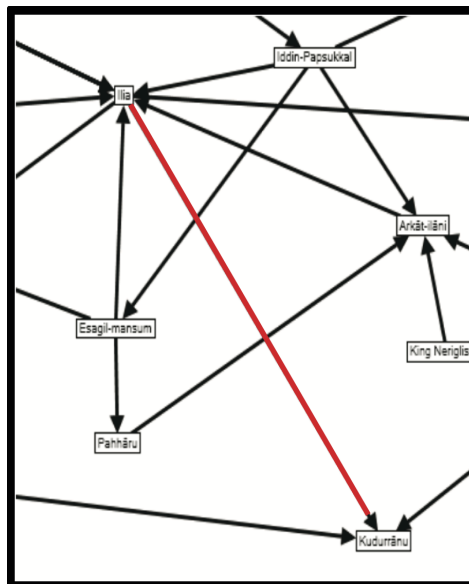

Figure 10: marriage ties vs. temple service (1)

This swapping of roles coincided with a marriage between the Ilia family (wife-giver) and Kudurrānu family (wife-taker), arranged in the reign of Darius (521-486 BCE).[206] While its precise date is unknown, a hint is provided by a contract dated to 512

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[204] Jakob-Rost 1985 (between 604-562 BCE), BM 94738 = AH XV no. 11 (540 BCE), BM 94791 = AH XV no. 12 (between 555-529 BCE) and BM 94984 (509 BCE).

[205] BM 95187 = AH XV no. 32 (506 BCE), Berens 106 (after 506 BCE), BM 82804 (503 BCE), BM 17695 = AH XV no. 38 (500 BCE), BM 26758 = AH XV no. 39 (499 BCE) and BM 94699 = AH XV no. 43 (between 506-486 BCE).

[206] Appendix 1.2a.

BCE which records the sale of two slaves between the father of the bride and his (future?) son-in-law.[207] Slaves were common dowry components and it could therefore be argued that the marriage took place in that same year. The Ilia family would then have assumed the role of wife-giver in 512 BCE; yet, the Kudurrānus only gave up their role as deputy in the temple service after 509 BCE, suggesting that they performed the temple service of their (inferior) wife-giver for three years or so. On the other hand it should be noted that the sales contracts make no mention of the bride. This business affair might, for all we know, have been an early business encounter that eventually led to an alliance between these families. Moreover, performance contracts were legally binding contracts that bound the parties sometimes for a period of several years – one could not simply withdraw from this commitment. Some time could thus have elapsed before the role of wife-giver was mirrored in the performance contracts.

This is not the only case where a marriage prompted a family of brewers to perform the temple service of its wife-taker (fig. 11, below). It has been said earlier that the Ilia and Ilšu-abūšu clans engaged in repeated marriage alliances.[208] The first union was arranged in the early years of Nabonidus (555-539 BCE). The daughter from the Ilšu-abūšu family is mentioned in the Ilia archive in 554 BCE, probably in relation to a field or house belonging to her dowry.[209] Although there is little documentation, it is significant that some ten years later the Ilšu-abūšu family performed the Ilias's temple service.[210] Another example involves the Kudurrānu and Ahiyaʾūtu clans (fig. 11). In 505 BCE the latter gave a daughter to the Kudurrānus in marriage.[211] Turning to their relationship in the context of the temple service one finds that it was always the Ahiyaʾūtu, i.e. the wife-giver family that lent a helping hand, never the other way around.[212]

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[207] BM 26543//BM 102293.

[208] Appendix 1.2a.

[209] BM 87267.

[210] BM 24480 = AH XV no. 10.

[211] Appendix 1.2a.

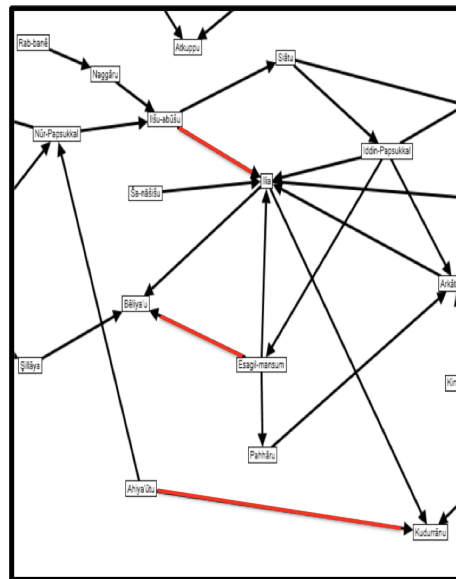[212] BM 94638 = AH XV no. 3, VS 6 115 and BM 82721.

Figure 11: marriage ties vs. temple service (2)

While information on performance contracts for other priesthoods of Ezida is far less generous, the existing evidence points in the same direction. In 485 BCE, a member of the Esagil-mansum family received wages for having performed one full day of the baker prebend of the Bēliyaʾu clan.[213] Turning to their marriage records, it appears that the Bēliyaʾu family received a wife from the Esagil-mansums in the reign of Nabonidus, more than fifty years earlier (fig. 11).[214] The Esagil-mansum family was thus not only the wife-giver but also the 'cultic-support-giver' of the Bēliyaʾu family.

The available evidence is relatively modest but suggestive nonetheless. There is no evidence that a wife-taker family ever performed its wife-giver family's temple service after they arranged a marriage alliance. The opposite is however attested more than once. It seems that the unidirectional flow between wife-giver and wife-taker not only entailed a transfer of a bride and her dowry, but it could also result in a kind of service obligation. Once again one can turn to the ethnographic record of rural India for parallels. In Pandit society in northern India, the initiation of the relative status between wife-giver and wife-taker also gave the former specific ritual obligations regarding his wife-takers.[215]

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[213] BM 29234.

[214] Appendix 1.3a.

[215] Madan 1975: 304-305, Dumont 1983: 86-104, Parkin 1990: 477.

A final aspect that should be mentioned here is the tentative confirmation of the transitivity of wife-giver/wife-takers hierarchy in the temple service. We have seen earlier that the entire marriage network was essentially made up of chains of wife-givers and wife-takers. A wife-taker took precedence over its direct and indirect wife-givers, which were all excluded as potential wife-takers. Reversely, as these relations were transitive, it was possible to jump over one's direct wife-taker and ally with the wife-taker's wife-taker. This mechanism created the acyclic paths seen in our network. Let us take a final look at the relationship between the Ilšu-abūšu, the Ilia and the Huṣābu families as presented in the directed marriage graph of Fig. 6 (above). In light of the transitive wife-giver/wife-takers hierarchy, the two former families were inferior to the latter. The Ilia family was an indirect wife-giver of Huṣābu via the chain:

Ilia → Gallābu → Kidin-Sîn → Ea-ilūtu-bani → Huṣābu

The Ilšu-abūšu family via the same chain as well as via:

Ilšu-abūšu → Siātu → Iddin-Papsukkal → Ea-ilūtu-bani → Huṣābu

Turning to the performance contracts, it can hardly be a coincidence that precisely Ilšu-abūšu and Ilia are found performing the temple service of Huṣābu, and never vice versa. [216] The second example concerns the Ahiya'ūtu family, which is found performing the service of both the Ilšu-abūšu and the Ilia clans.[217] As is shown in the alliance network, the Ahiya'ūtu was an indirect wife-giver to both families, via the chain:

Ahiya'ūtu → Nūr-Papsukkal → Ilšu-abūšu → Ilia

Once again, the evidence is modest but indicative: not only the relation between direct wife-givers and wife-takers but also the wider transitive mechanism of the marriage network influenced the cultic organisation of the Ezida temple. This would also explain why the Naggārus, a family with no links to the profession of the brewer, are attested as taking on performance duties of the Ilia clan.[218] For if we check the marriage alliance network one last time, it appears that the Naggāru family was indeed an indirect wife-giver of Ilia:

Naggāru → Ilšu-abūšu → Ilia

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[216] OECT 12 A 109 (Ilšu-abūšu) and TuM 2/3 207 (Ilia).

[217] BM 96179 = AH XV no. 54 (Ilšu-abūšu) and BM 94793 (Ilia).

[218] VS 6 139.

Conclusion

In this chapter I have investigated the first type of social interaction in the priestly community of Borsippa – marriage alliance. It offers the very first attempt to map out a Babylonian marriage network on any scale. Existing studies on marriage in Assyriology focus primarily on its philological and legal implications. However it is apparent from the approach in this chapter that there is much to discover once we appreciate the social dynamics that surround Babylonian marriage.

The evidence that can be gathered from the descriptive-quantitative analysis (see Appendix 1) portrays the priesthood of Borsippa as a highly endogamous community. With more than 80% of the attested marriages arranged within the prebendary circle, it is clear that the Borsippean priests actively used marriage alliances to keep their ranks closed. A very important observation for the following investigation and the eventual reconstruction of this community is the fact that marriages with families from the lower strata of society – identified by the lack of family names – is completely lacking. This gives us a first and very clear indication of how these priestly families perceived of and maintained themselves as an exclusive social unit in wider society.

In this chapter I investigated the underlying social mechanisms of this sacerdotal endogamy. In order to handle the complexity of the marriage alliances, I used social network analysis and converted the 81 unions into a directed graph. This resulted in a network that illustrates properties of a marriage system that are overlooked when considering the unions in isolation. In the jargon of graph theory, the marriage network appears to be entirely acyclic and transitive, thus revealing an alliance system that was non-reciprocal and hierarchised. In order to understand how these dynamics functioned in practice I borrowed the concept of wife-givers and wife-takers from the anthropological literature on kinship. This concept supposes that at the event of marriage the parties adopt two functions vis-à-vis each other, i.e. that of wife-giver and wife-taker. Ethnographic studies have revealed that in communities adhering to a non-reciprocal marriage system there is a probability that a relative status difference arises between wife-giver and wife-taker, a dynamic that I was also able to detect in Borsippa's priestly community.

The evidence from Borsippa suggests that wife-takers assumed the superior role. In marriages that exhibit a clear status difference between the family of the husband and the family of the wife, it is the latter, the wife-giver that was of lower status according to the temple hierarchy. Another important feature of the priestly marriage system is its

transitive mechanism. Once a wife-taker family received a bride, it never returned one to the wife-giver family. Moreover, not only the direct wife-giver was ruled out as receiver of brides but also the indirect wife-givers. Contra-hierarchical marriages seem to have been avoided. On the other hand, a wife-giver could ally with a once or twice removed wife-taker, since this did not run counter to the established transitive pecking order.

All the properties of the priestly marriage system that I was able to reconstruct, match a specific type of alliance model, practiced for example in contemporary communities in northern India: hypergamy. In this system, which is highly informed by the religious Vedic ideology, (a) wives should be of lower status than their husbands, i.e. wife-givers are inferior and women marry upward; (b) marriage alliances involve a unilateral flow and are non-reciprocal; and (c) there exists a transitive hierarchy that can be conceived as an open-ended ladder. In an ideal Vedic hypergamous system, marriage does not so much trigger a relative hierarchy in itself but rather follows an existing hierarchy independent of the alliance system. In Borsippa, the likely candidate for such an external pecking order is the purity-based temple hierarchy. That this is indeed the conceptual context for the observed marriage pattern seems to be confirmed by placing the marriage system in its historical context and considering the practical shortcomings inherent to a hypergamous marriage model. The marriage system of the Borsippean priesthood came into being sometime in the early first millennium BCE, when the priestly families received their cultic rights in the form of royal sponsorship. I suggested that in the early phase of the alliance system, marriage would have neatly followed the established temple hierarchy – priests offered their daughters in marriage to more senior colleagues. However sooner or later the community faced the flaws of any hypergamous system when the daughters of the highest prebendary group had problems finding suitable husbands of superior status. Evidence suggests that they were married to men from the second highest group, thereby violating the desired hierarchy but limiting the damage to a minimum. This compromising marriage strategy resulted in a flattening of the hierarchy as the second highest group moved to the highest status level. There is evidence that the same dynamics affected the third-highest group. It should be stressed that this did not affect the purity-based temple hierarchy itself. Rather, it meant that high administrative offices at the temple and in the city became available to lower-ranking groups when they had previously been open only to the highest group of temple-enterers. Other marriage strategies have been observed too. While some groups

contracted marriages within the prebendary group – resulting in an increasing internal stratification while stabilising the overall hierarchy at the same time – there is some evidence that among the lower priesthood outsiders were welcomed in the alliance system. The marriage network reconstructed for Neo-Babylonian Borsippa thus presents a well-developed stage of the original marriage system. This makes it all the more remarkable that the outlines of this traditional praxis are still very much visible in spite of the turbulent history of first millennium Babylonia.

For now, I conclude that the marriage practice of the Borsippean priesthood was in the first place regulated by the purity-based temple hierarchy. The quantitative analysis shows that following this hierarchy was the preferred direction of marriage. However, this was not done consistently. In case the families did not contract a hypergamous marriage, either because a suitable partner could not be found or because they were pursuing a different alliance strategy all together, it seems that the act of marriage itself triggered a relative status difference. There were thus essentially two different hierarchies in practice: 1) the temple hierarchy, independent of marriage (but presenting the ideal blueprint); and 2) the wife-giver/wife-taker's hierarchy, dependent on marriage. While ideally governed by the ideology of ritual purity, marriage also left its mark on the temple organisation itself. Marriage did not only entail a movement of brides and property in the form of the dowry, but also of labour in the form of cultic support. This was exclusively and without exceptions provided by the wife-giver.

It is in the light of the relative inferiority of wife-givers and the obligations assigned to them that the marriage mentioned at the very beginning of this chapter, the marriage between king Neriglissar's daughter and the *šatammu* of Ezida, becomes even more controversial. Not only was a marriage alliance between the royal house and the local urban population unheard of in the first millennium BCE, this royal favouritism, in this case towards the Arkāt-ilāni-damqā family, will surely have upset the social stratification of the local priestly community in unprecedented ways. But more importantly, it might have raised some serious ideological questions. By offering his daughter in marriage to the chief administrator of the temple, king Neriglissar entered the local alliance system as a wife-giver. Did this not make the royal family inferior to the Arkāt-ilāni-damqā and all its wife-takers according to the customs and regulations of this hypergamous system? If really so, how was this being expressed? It is unlikely that we will ever be able to solve these questions, but the puzzling circumstances of

Neriglissar's son-in-law soon after the wedding[219] and the high-profile case in which he was forced to give up property immediately following the fall of this royal dynasty,[220] suggest that the new administration of king Nabonidus and perhaps the local community were eager to undo the arrangements of this controversial alliance. The whole affair will be studied in greater detail elsewhere.

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[219] Only several months later a certain Rēmūt-Bēl//Ilia had replaced him as *šatammu* of Ezida, see Waerzeggers 2010: 72.

[220] For the text in question, HSM 1895.1.1, see Zadok 2005a: 649-650. A committee of judges, a palace scribe and an agent of the sukallu-official attended the transaction. Note that his brother, Mušēzib-Marduk, already sold a house to a royal merchant in BM 85364 (Ner 03).