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Redemption in the Old Babylonian Period: texts, archives, practice

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Introduction

This thesis is a philological and historical study of redemption as it was practiced in Mesopotamia in the Old Babylonian period (ca. 2000-1600 BC).¹ Redemption refers to the recovery of persons or property previously sold, pledged, or exchanged. This was a varied and multi-faceted practice that is known to have had broad currency not only within Mesopotamia, but on and beyond its periphery. Indeed, it was the early awareness that analogous practices could be found in localities and textual traditions separated in space and time that encouraged synthetic or long-range historical discussions of the practice.² The focus here is different, it seeks to reconstruct the individual texts and archives from the Old Babylonian (OB) period, within which redemption can be said to operate.

The study of redemption as a topic is important on a number of counts. In the first place it is a touchstone for how family networks in early Mesopotamia protect the patrimony. While we see the passage of property between generations in conventional chains of transmission, redemption involves a remarkable break in this chain when property leaves the immediate family circle, only then to be restored, or having the possibility of being restored. Redemption therefore promises a unique window on one of the most prominent ‘institutions’ of Mesopotamian societal life, the *bīt abim*, the ‘paternal estate’ and how it was protected. The basic scheme of redemption, transfer and recovery of property/persons, though simple, has far-reaching social and historical implications. By its very nature redemption relies on factors and forces outside of a family unit if it can work. The recovery of property/persons assumes there is someone to recover from, who is willing to ‘sell’, just as there had been someone to sell to, and a reason to do so. Uncovering this background and the relationship between these outside parties can reveal a wider social reality that could support, or fail to support, such a customary right. Redemption takes on a broader importance also on account of its royal analogue. The traditional right of redemption, securing the return of property or persons, came to be taken up as a staple part of royal prerogative by more than one Mesopotamian chancery in the form of the so-called ‘restoration edicts’. The existence of this double phenomenon, redemption by traditional right and redemption by royal decree, has hardly been studied together but provides an important case study in how a tool of custom in the hands of private persons could also function as a tool of power and intervention in the hands of the king.

From the importance of the topic of redemption comes its rationale for study in the OB period. Although it was undoubtedly a practice of high antiquity, it is in the

¹ On the definition of the geographical area(s) of Mesopotamia, see Charpin 2004, 29-34, including the perils of a centre-periphery model. The archival evidence available for the study of redemption of property in chapters 1 to 3 stems mainly from sites in central and northern Mesopotamia. Chapter 4 addresses evidence from the territory of Larsa during the reign of Rīm-Sîn I, although it extends to a discussion of the legacy of Rīm-Sîn’s edicts into the reign of Ḫammurabi and Samsu-iluna (albeit Amurru-šēmi’s archive contains texts some of which were redacted in Larsa territory and some in Nippur where it was found). In chapter 5 which studies aspects of the terminology and practice relating to the redemption of persons, attestations are drawn from texts with a broader provenance than central and northern Mesopotamia.

² Yaron 1959; Westbrook 1985.

sources from the OB period that we can first trace the workings of redemption in archival settings that show the social realities behind this right. Reconstructing the practice of redemption in this period is therefore crucial for assessments of how later periods, or peripheral areas may have shared, adapted or differed from the earlier OB practices. There is a second major reason to study the practice in the OB period. It is in this period more than any other that we can observe side by side the traditional right of redemption and its royal versions, where the prerogative of returning property or persons can be observed as a staple part of several Mesopotamian kingdoms.

The approach of this thesis is philological and seeks to reveal by means of close study of the texts and reconstructed archives the social realities that underpinned the practice of redemption. While it is not legal-historical, it engages at points closely with earlier scholarship that approached the subject from this perspective, and it is anticipated that the findings of the study can assist those scholars engaged in wider comparative study in at least one respect: the study of equity. In comparative law ‘equity’ and ‘equitable practices’ refers to the strand of law used to correct or amend perceived injustices in standard legal practice. In comparative legal studies, equity is treated in its medieval and modern English law form, with occasional reference to Classical Roman law as its oldest analogue (Koops & Zwolve 2013). Redemption in OB Mesopotamia in its traditional and royal guise shows equity to have been present in the Near East long before this time.

0.1 Previous scholarship and state of the art

Redemption as a topic has not been the subject of a book-length treatment within OB studies. It has featured sporadically in the literature from early in the history of Assyriology, chiefly in the commentary upon text editions, or in archival studies.³ Already in 1909, based on BE 6/2 45, 64 and 66, Poebel made valuable comments on the practice of redemption in Nippur.⁴ He also drew attention to a clause in which “it is often stated in the description of the ransomed object how it passed from the ransomer or his family into the possession of the present seller.”⁵ This was, for Poebel, “[w]ith a view of making this relation between the [ransomed object] and the ransomer more expressive.”⁶ This scribal convention was noted also in Charpin 1994, and the related phenomenon of describing the previous transaction as part of a chain of transmission was discussed in connection with Kutalla in Charpin 1980, 156-159.⁷ It is discussed here in connection with the material of chapters 1 and 2 from Nippur, Sippar, Babylon.⁸

³ This has been the case for other periods and corpora. For example, concerning the Old Assyrian material see e.g. Balkan 1974, 30, f.n. 12 (commenting on kt c/k 1340), and texts cited in Veenhof 2003, 464–65 with f.n. 170-172, as well as Veenhof 1999.

⁴ BE 6/2 pp. 14-15.

⁵ BE 6/2 p.14.

⁶ BE 6/2 p.14.

⁷ Also see Charpin’s commentary on TS 45 (Charpin 1980, 103-104).

⁸ See esp. 1.10 for the scribal conventions in Nippur; noted by Charpin 1994 in connection with redemption. The related phenomenon of describing the previous transaction as part of a chain of transmission was discussed in connection with the Kutalla texts in Charpin 1980, 156-159.

As to the practice of redemption, Poebel commented: “[w]hat the exact provisions of the law were with regard to the ransoming is still unknown. It is not likely that the ransomer possessed the right to compel the owner to sell his property to him at any time. From the analogy which the *gō’ēl* in the book of Ruth presents, we may conclude that his privilege became valid only as soon as the property changed owners.”⁹ This biblical analogue, coupled with the appearance of redemption in the extant provisions of the laws of Hammurabi, and explicitly relating to redemption of property in the laws of Ešnunna,¹⁰ stimulated further commentary,¹¹ although often of a legal-historical nature. Illustrative was Westbrook’s discussion of price and redemption,¹² a study appearing later unchanged in his treatment of property and the family in biblical law.¹³ In Westbrook’s aim to describe redemption as a single ‘institution’ he drew upon material from a wide range of traditions and periods. He was preceded in this approach by Yaron,¹⁴ writing on the redemption of persons, who sought a synthesis based on a corpus covering sources from the OB period, the Old, Middle and Neo-Assyrian period, from Ugarit, and also Talmudic sources.

If these legal-historical studies reflect one strand of commentary upon redemption, a second strand – that followed in the present study – is reflected in the textual and archival approach of Charpin¹⁵ and Veenhof.¹⁶ Their studies revealed some local modalities of redemption while at the same time acknowledging the need for a more sustained archival treatment of the practice of redemption.¹⁷ In seeking to answer this call in the present study, it is also important to take note of some key aspects of historical background that have been consistently linked with redemption in the literature, and which are raised in both kinds of studies mentioned above. These include: (1) the question of price – both at the point of sale and also upon redemption, (2) the relationship with sale practice, (3) the background of debt and pledge, and (4) the role of micro- or macro- crisis as the backdrop to redemption.

A sub-stream of study on the texts concerning redemption has focused on the price paid by a redeemer, in an effort to establish patterns or practice of redeeming at par, or otherwise.¹⁸ More recently, a study of the prices of ransomed/redeemed persons in the OB archival texts was conducted by Charpin.¹⁹ Related to this is the connection between redemption and sale practice.²⁰ Poebel had observed that, formally speaking,

⁹ BE 6/2 p.15.

¹⁰ LE MS A iii:25-27; LE MS B iii:10-11. On the laws of Ešnunna, see Goetze 1948, 1956; Roth 1995, 57–70.

¹¹ Yaron 1969, 152–54.

¹² Westbrook 1985.

¹³ E.g. Westbrook 1991, 63 and 90-117.

¹⁴ Yaron 1959.

¹⁵ E.g. Charpin 1980 (esp. on redemption, 103, 104, 178), Charpin 1994.

¹⁶ Veenhof 1999.

¹⁷ Charpin 1994, 212 f.n. 5; Veenhof 1999, 615–16.

¹⁸ Schorr 1913, 119; Westbrook 1991, 90–117; Charpin 1994, 213; Veenhof 1999, 608-609.

¹⁹ Charpin 2014.

²⁰ Westbrook approached the matter in terms of “the law of sale” and “the law of pledge”. See e.g. Westbrook 1991, 92–93: “the cuneiform sources provide a great deal of evidence on the law of sale, which (since redemption is no more than a term imposed by law on the contract of sale, a limitation on the freedom of contract) forms the background necessary to an understanding of the functioning of redemption” and Westbrook 2001a, 26-27: “The concept of redemption derives from the law of pledge, which is its natural setting. In a contract of loan

the redemption documents were a variation of the purchase deeds.²¹ This scribal tendency to document the initial transaction subject to a right of redemption as sale is sometimes interpreted as more than mere scribal convention. This seems to be Westbrook's assumption when he comments, albeit in the context of discussing Emar sources, that the effect of redemption was to recharacterize an original sale as forfeiture of a pledge - thus redeemable upon payment of an underlying loan (the "sale price").²² This has some usefulness conceptually, but could be misleading if taken too far. We should not, for example, interpret as fictive the scribal tendencies to write sale texts for transactions that were later subject to redemption. Still, this formal link between redemption texts and sale practice opens up an important line of investigation, how the practice took part in conventional chains of transmission.²³ This can be traced most effectively in the archives from Nippur, Sippar and Babylon²⁴ and joins up with observations on scribal conventions in those same text groups.²⁵

As to the background of debt and pledge, debt is often supposed to lie in the background of redemption, both of property and persons.²⁶ Even where it is not always assumed that debt, in a strict sense, triggered the original sale, a more neutral background of economic hardship is commonly assumed.²⁷ This can be understood as a form of micro-crisis, affecting the family circle only, as when, for example, the death of the head of a household is inferred from sale by a widow and/or children, or of wider social and economic troubles, what might be termed "macro-crisis". The relevance of such a macro-crisis is made concrete in those cases, for example, known from Emar, where a clause citing the crisis is included in the text.²⁸ This is also attested in later periods.²⁹ Direct evidence of this kind in our corpus is slender,³⁰ but the series of archival case-studies from Nippur discussed in chapter 1, in which redemption took place against a wider background of instability beginning around Samsu-iluna's 8th regnal year, but extending well beyond this, are at the very least suggestive. In seeking to reach a more careful understanding of the modalities of the practice of redemption, these pieces of historical context need to be borne in mind

secured by a pledge, the creditor and debtor each transfer property to the other, but the contract foresees that the transfer will be reversed: the debtor will repay the loan (plus interest, if applicable) and the creditor will return the pledge. The principle of irreversibility is the very essence of the contract."

²¹ BE 6/2 p.14. He commented further that the "character of the redemption as purchase is made still more evident from the scheme employed at Tell Sifr, which is exactly that of the deeds of purchase, apart from the addition of the phrase [é ad-da-a-ni in-du_s] which occurs after the payment of the purchase price" (p.14). On the connection between the purchase deeds and the redemption text of TS 45 see Charpin 1980, 178.

²² Westbrook 2001a, 27.

²³ Charpin 1986 (see now Charpin 2010c); Lerberghe 2003; Janssen 1996; Suurmeijer 2014, 56–74.

²⁴ See also DCS 97 (Maškan-šāpir) (Charpin 1994).

²⁵ See esp. 1.10 and *passim* in chapter 2.

²⁶ E.g. van Koppen 2004, 11; Veenhof 1999, 607–8, 611; Goddeeris 2002, 331; Westbrook 2001a, 25.

²⁷ E.g. Westbrook 2001a, 27.

²⁸ E.g. TBR no. 65 l. 6: *a-na mu-l-ti dan-na-ti*.

²⁹ See e.g. Frame 1999.

³⁰ Although see Westbrook 2001c. Aspects of the reconstruction of CT 45 37 are still uncertain.

even if, as will be seen, their influence at points can be hard to measure and, where it is seen, it is far from uniform in every case.

0.2 Research questions

In addition to matters of historical context, it emerges from the texts and dossiers related to redemption that these texts, and the matter of redemption interlocks with a range of other subjects that would require a standalone treatment of their own. For example, in both the private redemption of property, and the royally mandated return of property, it is clear that the idea of the paternal estate (*bīt abim* / é ad-da (é a-ba))³¹ is of prime importance.³² A study of this concept and the influence it exerted in the record in this period, and its different guises and afterlife, deserves its own treatment.³³ That the paternal estate is closely aligned to the heritable estate – what can be passed on to heirs – invites a further treatment of its place in the world of inheritance practice and transfer of property. However, while it cannot receive a full study here, redemption practice in this period does provide a window on the force of the institution of the *bīt abim* and its protection. In particular in chapters 1 and 2, I will explore the social reality that lay behind the *bīt abim* / é ad-da(-ni) in the context of redemption. It will examine the paternal estate not only as it corresponds to a portion of property, whether the ‘intangible’ asset of a prebendary office (sometimes attached to subsistence land), house, or field, or moveables, but more precisely to heritable property. This opens the door to an assessment of the importance of family affiliation between redeemer and original seller revealed by many of the texts, the collective enterprise of protecting the estate, and the earlier and later transmission of redeemed property by means of family inheritance.

The dual phenomenon of redemption as traditional right and royal prerogative, has already been noted. This royal version receives special attention in this study. The idea that the traditional right of redemption had a royal analogue in aspects of the *mīšarum* edict tradition was not a new one when Veenhof wrote in 1999. However, at that time he presented some fresh evidence for the idea of “redemption by decree.”³⁴ He discussed the redemption of houses in Assur and Sippar by means of two archival texts³⁵ but with the important dimension that both texts referenced an overarching decree or directive. In the Old Assyrian text, TPK no. 46, it was stated “Aššur has now done a favour to his City: a man whose house has been sold has to pay (only)

³¹ On the variation between é ad-da and é a-ba, see Stol 2004, 695, for whom the former has a southern distribution and the latter northern and in Mari. Nippur has é ad-da(-ni) with in most cases the stereotyped suffix. On the Sum./Akk. interchange for the phrase between the tablet and case of the same document see e.g. Charpin 1994 (text: DCS 97).

³² On its meaning as “patrimony” see Charpin 1994, 212 and Stol 2004, 697ff. On the meaning of é (*bīlum*) itself as denoting patrimonial property see Charpin 1980, 181.

³³ See Stol 2004, 695-705. OB inheritance practices are the subject of a forthcoming study by Wiebke Meinhold.

³⁴ Veenhof 1999, 613–16.

³⁵ On the archival context of the Assyrian text, see Veenhof 1999, 604–5. On the parties and background to BM 97141, Veenhof (1999, 611) already noted the connection with MHET II/6 924. Add to this Goddeeris 2002, 93, Barberon 2012, 70 f.n. 415, Suurmeijer 2014, 437 and the discussion of the dossier in 2.4.

half of the price of his house to (be allowed to) move into it (again).”³⁶ In the Sippar text, BM 97141, a purchase deed recorded that the purchase had taken place “after Immerum had ordered the redemption of field(s) and house(s), after the decree of the city,”³⁷ and so crucially fell outside the decree’s (retroactive) application. The use of *paṭārum* to describe the act of Immerum may suggest that there had been a clog in the ground-level practice of redemption that prompted royal intervention,³⁸ and the wording of the measure “points to a general problem, perhaps as the result of an economic crisis which had forced many citizens to sell family property.”³⁹

To date, the picture of OB royal edicts mandating the return of property has rested exclusively on archival texts. This is also true for the kingdom of Larsa under Rīm-Sîn’s reign in which such edicts, described by Kraus as Type IIb edicts, are well attested. Chapter 4 of this study seeks to make a targeted contribution to the discussion of royally mandated redemption by the critical treatment of one text in particular. This is CUSAS 10 18. I argue that it should be understood as the first known exemplar of an OB Type IIb edict, and specifically that it should be understood against the background of the archives stemming from the kingdom of Larsa in the reign of Rīm-Sîn I. Although this does not directly address the Type IIb elements in the Babylonian kings’ edicts, it does have potential implications for what Ḥammurabi and Samsu-iluna enacted with respect to newly-conquered Larsa.⁴⁰

As well as the scribal convention noted by Poebel and Charpin, the most consistent and salient marker of the redemption of property texts, and the principal way we can identify them in the cuneiform record of the OB period, is the redemption clause itself. The noun phrase *bīt(é) abim*, commonly with pronominal suffix (stereotyped e.g. in the Sum. *é ad-da-ni* from Nippur), appears as the direct object of the verb of redemption (*paṭārum* / *duš*), or in apposition or genitival relationship to the direct object where the direct object is the property concerned (*garza₍₂₎* / *a-ša* / *é*). However, the substance and reality of redemption, of property and persons, did not always reflect the same terminology. The nomen actionis of the verb *paṭārum*, *iṭīrum* “redemption money” shows a distribution mainly in the texts concerning redemption of persons. The more neutral *tārum* (D) could refer to a royal act requiring the return of property, and *wašūm* (Š) less commonly to a similar act that caused the property to revert.⁴¹ The redemption of persons, in particular, must take account of a set of technical terms, common to both royal and archival sources that denote liabilities or impositions from which a person must be redeemed notably *e’iltum* and *kiššātum*. The relationship between these terms and *nepūm* “distrain” and *nipūtum* “distrainee” also needs to be clarified.

In light of the above, there are then three main research aims to this study. Firstly, to trace the operation of redemption of property chiefly within its archival context in

³⁶ Lines 22ff (translation Veenhof 1999, 599–600), differing from the first editors of the text, particularly l. 22.

³⁷ BM 97141, obv. ll. 9-11.

³⁸ Veenhof 1999, 614. It remains possible that the early OB Sippar descriptions of such acts were not standardized and it was a reference to a conventional edict, not more specific or occasioned than other Type IIb edicts issued by Babylonian kings.

³⁹ Veenhof 1999, 613.

⁴⁰ See 4.6.

⁴¹ E.g. AbB 7 153:8-9.

such a way as to show the variety of scribal conventions and social realities behind the practice, including the protection of the *bīt abim* ‘paternal estate’. Secondly, as a development of this, to contribute to an understanding of royally mandated redemption in this period by the critical treatment of a text as the first extant OB example of such a royal edict. Thirdly, to study the operation of redemption of persons both in an archival context and by philological treatment of technical terminology related to the redemption of persons.

0.3 Methodology

Consistent with a philological approach and prioritization of the archival setting, is the methodology of diplomatics which underpins the study. In what follows, I seek to introduce the method, and to anticipate the main lines of its usefulness for this study.

0.3.1 Diplomatics as method

Diplomatics is defined as the “discipline which studies the genesis, forms and transmission of archival documents...in order to identify, evaluate and communicate their true nature”⁴² Diplomatics is suited to address the most fundamental questions about a document: what *is* it? Is it what it *says* it is? What was its *origin*? What was its *purpose*? To answer these, diplomatics requires that every layer of detail of the text and artifact be analysed. Its use in determining the authenticity of legal texts in order to work out the reality of the facts presented in them is well-established.⁴³ Although best known for its use in Medieval studies, particularly the study of Medieval charters,⁴⁴ its value for the historical interpretation of cuneiform texts is now well established.⁴⁵

Specifically it is acknowledged that cuneiform legal texts, from the period 2000-1600 BC, within which the study’s corpus falls, hold particular promise for a diplomatic approach.⁴⁶ This is, in part, because of the rich archival background so important for judging the historical nature and effect of the texts.⁴⁷ An outline for such a diplomatics was made in Charpin 2002,⁴⁸ having already illustrated the potential of the discipline in his previous work, most notably in Charpin 1980.⁴⁹ As cuneiform documents have their own peculiarities as texts and artifacts – (mainly) clay support, script, spelling, language – the study will draw on general principles of diplomatics⁵⁰

⁴² Cencetti 1985.

⁴³ Duranti 1989.

⁴⁴ E.g. Breslau & Klewitz 1969.

⁴⁵ Postgate 1997; Jursa 2005, 4–6; Charpin 2010b; Cancik-Kirschbaum 2012. Yet, Assyriology still lacks a systematic handbook of diplomatics for this corpus. In 1986 Veenhof argued that the Assyriologist “would derive much profit from a well illustrated, diachronic “Urkundenlehre” of cuneiform tablets, which is a serious desideratum” (Veenhof 1986, 15).

⁴⁶ Charpin 2017; Veenhof 1986, 15.

⁴⁷ Charpin 2010a, 3–4.

⁴⁸ Updated and translated in Charpin 2010b.

⁴⁹ Other one-off case studies of specified corpora of cuneiform texts in different periods have been carried out (e.g. Archi 2003, Postgate 1986, Sassmannshausen 1997, Radner 1995, Waal 2015).

⁵⁰ E.g. Breslau & Klewitz 1969.

with particular adaptations suited to cuneiform documents, based on Charpin's outline.⁵¹ Using these tools, the application of diplomatics to the present study can be grouped under three main categories: (1) genesis and form, (2) elaboration, preservation, and transmission, and (3) royal or "chancery" diplomatics.

Attention to (1) genesis and form entails not only the support (in the current study, all clay), baking, shape, dimensions,⁵² the fact of an inner tablet and envelope, and seal impressions but also the writing process, a process that includes the location of the script e.g. the use of edges, preferences for spacing, indenting and scribal patterns in the handling of erasures. However, the writing process also includes the nature and timing of the writing process, whether there are variations between inner tablet and envelope,⁵³ and the presence of columns and rulings, as well as the importance of native tablet designations. The next core elements of 'genesis and form' deal with palaeography, orthography, language, and formulary. Sensitivity not only to the inventory of signs and the forms of the graphs used in particular localities and periods, but aspects of language and formulary are crucial not only for the primary task of textual reconstruction but the more precise placement, classification and interpretation of a text within its archival context, or within a certain register or genre.

As regards (2), the elaboration, preservation and transmission of documents, there is some overlap with matters of genesis and form, particularly with regard to the practice and conventions of the individual scribes and their local traditions.⁵⁴ This includes the influence of scholasticism and scribal training on scribal choices and formulae.⁵⁵ It also includes the "succession of operations,"⁵⁶ the steps involved in producing the document (including copies, if applicable⁵⁷). From a document's elaboration, it is natural that its preservation and transmission brings the archive into view. Distinguishing between different types of archives, private or institutional, "living" or "dead", is part of good Assyriological practice. These categories are equally important when seeking to reconstruct an historical archive whose original find-spot and precise contents are unknown because of the nature of the modern excavations.⁵⁸ With varying degrees of certainty as to the find-spot and contents of historical archives it is conventional to use a sliding scale of terminology, whether "dossier", "file", usually referring to a cluster of texts grouped according to protagonist(s), or "reconstructed archive", denoting the modern scholar's proposal about what extant documents belonged (at some point) within the archive in question, and "archive", which, in its strictest sense, refers to the corpus of documents discovered in situ and about which there is no doubt that they belonged together in antiquity. With some exceptions,⁵⁹ the sources of the present study mainly fall within the category of "reconstructed archive".

⁵¹ Charpin 2002 (updated and translated in Charpin 2010b). See also Charpin 2017.

⁵² Which can contribute to the question of genre, and beyond that to the 'permanent' versus 'temporary' nature of the document.

⁵³ A time lapse between the writing of inner tablet and envelope is also relevant here, and contributes to a discussion of the probative or constitutive nature of a document.

⁵⁴ Charpin 2010b, 36.

⁵⁵ Charpin 2010b, 36.

⁵⁶ Charpin 2010b, 35.

⁵⁷ Charpin 2010b, 35–36 with n. 100, 101.

⁵⁸ Charpin 2010b, 36–37.

⁵⁹ Note the Sin-temple archive from Tutub, and the Attâ archive from Nippur.

While (1) genesis and form, and (2) elaboration, preservation and transmission of documents belong in any diplomatic approach, the extension of these categories to “royal” or “chancery” sources constitutes an important sub-strand of the method of diplomatics, one that has always been close to the heart of the discipline.⁶⁰ The purpose of this category is to identify the origin and authenticity of a document as a product of a particular royal chancery. This involves an application of well-established principles of diplomatics, but also a development of the standard approaches of chancery diplomatics. The archive is crucial for diplomatics as classically expressed,⁶¹ in order to test the ‘authenticity’ of the putative royal source. Expanding the application of this aspect of diplomatics takes on special importance in chapter 4 of this study. This is because the private archives dated to Rīm-Sîn’s reign provide certain independent pieces of context allowing one to posit the likely content and application of Rīm-Sîn’s edicts mandating redemption.

0.3.2 The application of diplomatics in the present study

What follows is a selection of areas where the tools and categories of diplomatics find particular application to the present study. It needs to be reiterated that, in many cases, diplomatics brings a methodological awareness to already-established good Assyriological practice. Yet, fresh gains can come from uniting, in a sustained way, all the details of text, artifact, and context.

0.3.2.1 *Genesis and form*

When treating layout and structure, it is important to attend to the practice of columns and rulings. Although some modern text editions do not comment on rulings or other features of layout, and generally diplomatic editions are not the norm, aspects of layout and structure can be diagnostic in other cuneiform corpora.⁶² This question becomes relevant for the understanding of CUSAS 10 18. The text shows a clear double ruling following l. 11, l. 14, l. 18, l. 27. This marks off units of meaningful content and allows for a neat division of sections. Each of these delineated sections is distinctive in its way and belongs either to a different kind of transaction (sale, ll. 9-11), exchange, ll. 12-14), a different scenario (alteration of unbuilt property and the return of like-for-like property, ll. 15-18), or different kind of property (“permanent field”, ll. 21-24 (and probably also the subject of ll. 25-27)). The meaning of rulings for interpretation is not always clear, however. The study of rulings in 4.3.2 will discuss the fact that two of the date notations in the text are enclosed by single

⁶⁰ Reflected still in classic works, see e.g. chapters 6-8 of Breslau & Klewitz 1969; for a recent specific example of its application see Majewski 2016, illustrating the application of diplomatics according to “external” (2016, 282-286) and “internal” characteristics (2016, 286-296).

⁶¹ For example, see chapter 5 of Breslau & Klewitz 1969.

⁶² Comments on rulings and their significance for interpretation are many, and scattered mainly through the commentaries to text editions. Recent examples include: Janssen 2017, 2 and passim (absence of rulings in letters from the Ur-Utu archive); passim in AbB (AbB 9 59, n.59a; AbB 9 154, n. 154a; AbB 9 174, n.174a; AbB 9 177, AbB 9 276, n.276a; AbB 9 279a, AbB 11 3, AbB 11 5, n.5d, AbB 11 89 (with ruling reflected in transliteration and translation); Helle 2018, esp. 222-223 (discussing the Uruk List of Kings and Sages).

rulings. The significance of this last feature is less clear, and leaves some doubt as to the relationship between individual parts of the text and the date notations.



Figure 1: Line drawing of CUSAS 10 18 (Copy: A.R. George).

Under the rubric of genesis and form, it is conventional to take account of the fact of the existence of tablet and envelope and to chart the differences between the two. This is so common a feature of our sources as to hardly need stating. Sometimes the differences between inner tablet and envelope can illustrate a scribe's free variation in matters of orthography, language, formulary and reveal important aspects of native scribal understanding. Inner tablet or envelope, as an approximate textual mirror of the other, can also supplement a lack in the other – either because a designation is omitted on one, or because the physical condition of one is better than the other. A small example in the present study is BM 80107/80108 (see Fig. 2), new texts presented in chapter 5 where the preservation of the opening line of the obverse of the inner tablet (BM 80107), but not the corresponding text of the envelope (BM 80108)

reveals that the money handed over included “redemption money” (BM 80107, obv. 1. 1: *ma-na kù-[babbar] ip-ṭe₄-ri-i-šū*).

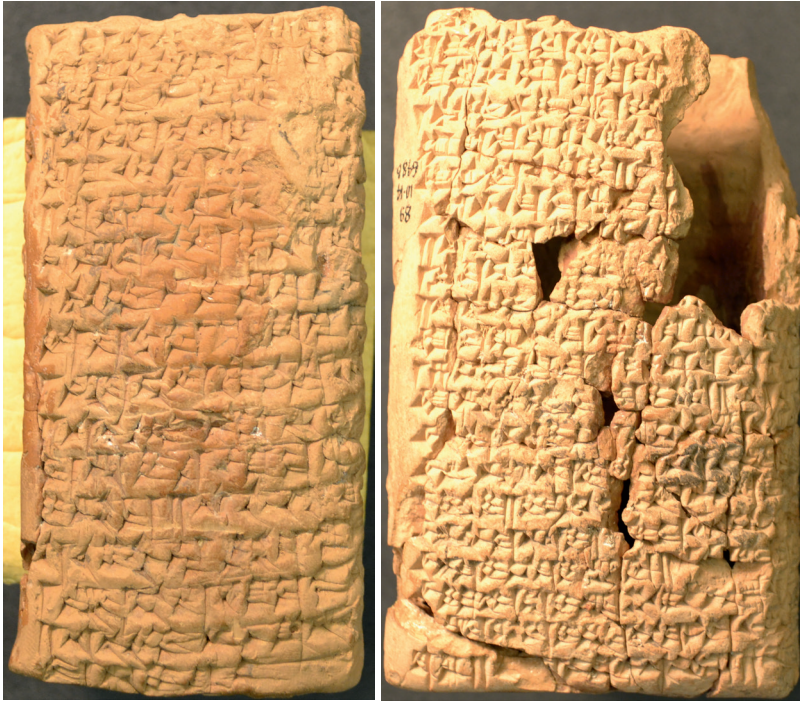


Figure 2: BM 80107, inner tablet (left), with BM 80108, envelope (right).

A core element in the study of genesis and form involves the primary work of analyzing palaeography, orthography, language and formulary. The value of doing this analysis in a corpus that is archivally related and closely dated in time is seen in the tracing of redemption within priestly archives from Nippur concentrated in the middle years of Samsu-iluna’s reign (chapter 1). The cumulative evidence across the archives shows a scribal convention already noted by Poebel,⁶³ and shows that it co-occurred with redemption documents: when scribes came to document a redemption transaction, they commonly included with some scribal variation a section recording one step back in the sale history of the property concerned. This observation triggers a number of other possibilities. Did this scribal convention show up in other categories of texts besides redemption? Did the inclusion of this earlier sale history mean that the earlier sale document was also handed over at the time of the redemption? Did this convention have parallels in other local scribal traditions when handling redemption? These questions are addressed in chapter 1, but at the very least, the convention, where it can be diagnostic at Nippur, allows for the identification of fragmentary texts as redemption texts. In this way, redemption can in all likelihood be identified in the

⁶³ See 0.1 above.

dossier of a certain Damu-iddinam, in fragmentary context (text excerpted in Fig. 3), showing the working of redemption in his much larger family network.⁶⁴



[kù]-ta-sa₁₀ ^dnin-lil-zi-gu₁₀
 dumu ^dda-mu-a-zu' x
 sí-ia-tum dumu a-wi-[il]-[...]
 in-ši-in-sa₁₀-a

OIMA 1 48 obv. ll. 4'-7'

Figure 3: Excerpted image (CDLI P262054) and transliteration of OIMA 1 48, obv. ll. 4'-7'.

0.3.2.2 Elaboration, preservation and transmission

The importance of the archive, its reconstruction and evaluation, dominates the study. However, without anticipating later conclusions, two examples may be noted here. The first comes from a reconstructed dossier stemming from Sippar. The second concerns a phenomenon of 'clustered redemption' visible in certain archives from Nippur during Samsu-iluna's reign. They involve, in fact, conventional applications of archival reconstruction. In the first case, the dossier of Amat-Šamaš daughter of Šallūrtum, attesting particularly the Ilī-ḥamad family, allows us to trace a 'cycle' of redemption. At the centre of the dossier are two litigation records⁶⁵ from early in Sabium's reign in which the same two persons are the defendants in two different claims. Although the dossier is small, the process of reconstruction opens up a remarkable picture, not only on the history of the property, from original sale to redemption to testating, also crossing generations, but also on the challenges that redeeming parties could face, a matter discussed fully in 2.3.

A second outcome of such reconstruction is the chronological distribution of texts. This allows us to see clusters and concentrations in text groups. Combining that with historically and socially related files leads to some intriguing outcomes. For example in 1.6, combining the activities of Lu-Ešumeša and Nuska-nīšu shows not only that Nuska-nīšu's redemption of certain offices in Si 28 was from a family member (Lu-Ešumeša) who appears to have first bought these offices to bring them within the family circle again, but that the redemption transactions were closely dated. This 'cluster' of redemption transactions so close in time during Si 28 is all the more striking given the fact that Lu-Ešumeša, a family member, had acquired them sixteen years earlier. This feature of closely dated redemption transactions has parallels elsewhere and prompts a discussion of clustered redemption and its possible significance (1.13).

⁶⁴ See 1.9.

⁶⁵ CT 45 3 (Sabium 5⁷), MHET II/1 41 (Sabium 8).

0.3.2.3 Royal or “chancery diplomatics”

The most sustained application of royal or “chancery” diplomatics in this study comes in chapter 4. Everything in that chapter turns on the understanding of CUSAS 10 18⁶⁶ as evidencing an edict of Rīm-Sîn’s chancery. In reaching that conclusion, much of the analysis belonging in a diplomatic approach – including genesis, form, elaboration and transmission – can be usefully applied. However, there are distinctives in the treatment of this ostensibly royal source. First can be mentioned orthography, for l. 20 of the text bears a date notation that reflects, in its orthography⁶⁷ and formulation, the pattern seen in an unusual calendrical innovation introduced by Rīm-Sîn (*ungewöhnliche Datierungen*). Even if the precise meaning of the notations against the known calendar is elusive,⁶⁸ the tendency towards the appearance of the *ungewöhnliche Datierungen* outside of “private” texts,⁶⁹ coupled with the association of this phenomenon with the Rīm-Sîn chancery,⁷⁰ at least raises the possibility that this text leads back to the chancery of Rīm-Sîn. This is discussed in detail in 4.3.2.2. Secondly, the diplomatic approach draws upon the witness of the contemporary archives. Close to the historical-discipline of chancery diplomatics, has been the reading of the postulated royal source alongside contemporary archival sources.⁷¹ Even allowing for features of script and register which may be peculiar to the royal sources, this can provide a means of testing the authenticity of the supposedly royal source against a corpus of texts whose reality or classification is beyond doubt. Again, this is hardly a new phenomenon for Assyriologists and the archival setting has been especially productive in showing the reality of royal edicts as normative.⁷² The value of this comparison between the putative royal source and contemporary archival evidence is possible because most of the archival texts explicitly cite the application of an edict (e.g. *ana šimdat šarrim*). Those same texts, particularly as they occur in a range of different private archives stemming from the same locality – in this case – the province of Larsa under the rule of Rīm-Sîn I, take us a long way in reconstructing key elements of the edict, a matter that will be dealt with at length in 4.4, 4.5 and 4.6.

0.4 Philological treatment of select technical terms

As already noted above, the presence of redemption, or of phenomena related to redemption, was signaled by more than the word group associated with the root P_{TR} (Sum. *du₈*). There remains residual uncertainty over some technical terms associated with redemption of persons. This is the case for *e’iltum*, *kiššātum* which also co-occur in a number of extant MSS of Babylonian restoration edicts with *mazzazānum*

⁶⁶ Alternatively, CUSAS 10 18 was closely modeled on a text that had its origin in Rīm-Sîn’s chancery.

⁶⁷ Kraus 1959a, 159–61.

⁶⁸ Goddeeris 2016, 1:335–36.

⁶⁹ Kraus 1959a, 159, Robertson 1983, 156, Van de Mierop 1993, 66.

⁷⁰ Charpin and Ziegler 2013, 62. Also note the comments on the native scribal description of the new system as “*ša lugal*” and the traditional (cultic) system as “*ša dingir*” (Cohen 2015, 238; Goddeeris 2016, 1:336).

⁷¹ See e.g. Breslau & Klewitz 1969, chapter 5; Majewski 2016.

⁷² Kraus 1984, Veenhof 1999, 1997-2000, Charpin 2000.

“(possessory) pledge”, all in the context of the release of persons. Chapter 5 examines these terms and seeks to clarify their relationship to redemption. Then there are the terms *nepûm/nipûtum*. Although the meaning of the verb *nepûm* “distrain” and its nominal counterpart *nipûtum* “distrainee” is well established, there are still lingering doubts about the connection between *nepûm/nipûtum* and *kašāšum/kiššātum*.⁷³ The difficulty of distinguishing *kašāšum* and *kiššātum* on the one hand from *nepûm* and *nipûtum* on the other was first felt by Kraus in 1958⁷⁴ and received from him a slightly extended, but still brief, treatment in 1984.⁷⁵ The study of *nepûm/nipûtum* in 5.5 not only addresses related terminology but seeks to reconstruct the modalities of a practice⁷⁶ that Kraus described as an ‘institution’ in itself.⁷⁷ It also seeks to take account of Kraus’ earlier treatment of school letters in JEOL 16⁷⁸ not sufficiently incorporated in other discussions of the practice,⁷⁹ for there are nuances to distraint as it is portrayed in the school letters.

0.5 Corpus and case-studies

The corpus treated in chapters 1 to 3 includes all texts concerning redemption of property in Mesopotamia in the OB period. A small number of texts, because of their isolated nature or previous treatment in the literature do not receive separate treatment in the body of chapters 1 to 3, but DCS 97 in particular contributes to the synthesis and conclusion in chapter 2.⁸⁰ The prioritizing of the archival context means that not

⁷³ Sparked in particular by Finet 1978.

⁷⁴ Kraus 1958, 179.

⁷⁵ Kraus 1984, 275–76.

⁷⁶ Earlier treatments include Finet 1978, Jackson & Watkins 1984, Kraus 1958, 179, Kraus 1984, 275–76.

⁷⁷ Kraus 1984, 275.

⁷⁸ Kraus 1959b, 26–30. The attention to the OB school letters in Akkadian has received fresh treatment in light of new sources in George and Spada 2019.

⁷⁹ E.g. Westbrook 2001b, 84–90.

⁸⁰ These include, according to provenance: **Isin**, date: -/V/Damiq-ilīšu 9, Ellis JCS 31 3 [BMC 3]. See the edition in ARCHIBAB (T2830, A. Jacquet and D. Charpin) (also Archibab 6, in preparation). Also Lieberman RA 76, 1982, p.103 n.28. This is the acquisition of a fallow field by a husband and wife from three brothers and a sister. The formulary is notable. It is drawn up as a purchase and the only marker of redemption is *nam-du₈-a* (“redemption money”) in l. 23. It can be added to the very few examples of the noun “redemption money” (Akk. *ipīturum*) being used in the redemption formula where real estate is concerned. **Uruk** (?) YOS 14 343 = YBC 6768, date: -/X/Irrene “1” See the edition in ARCHIBAB (T17615, D. Charpin). The redemption clause (ll. 4-6): *é ad-da-ni / nam 3 gín kù-babbar / in-du₈*. The text lacks a specific description of the property being redeemed. **Maškan-šāpir** (?) DCS 97 [=BNUS 395], date: 24/XII/Si 11 Edition in Studies De Meyer, 1994, pp.209-214. Copy DCS, 1981 (no.97). See the edition with updated notes on provenance in ARCHIBAB (T1, D. Charpin); the Maškan-šāpir provenance is not completely certain, Larsa is possible, Nippur unlikely. As regards the redemption clause: (Tablet, l. 10: *é ad-da-ni ip-[tū-ur]*; Case, l. 10: *bi-it a-bi-šu ip-[tū-ur]*). Note also **Terqa** BiMes 29 9-1, date: not preserved. Edition of the text in BiMes 29, 2011, pp.55-56 (no.9-1), copy and photo pp.139-140. This was not considered by its first editor as a redemption text but Charpin (see notes on the text in ARCHIBAB, T18493, D. Charpin) rightly sees redemption indicated in l. 5 (**ip’-tū-u[r]*). **YOS 12 353**, date: 10/X/Si 11, a redemption of a prebendal office relating to the Ninšubur temple. The precise provenance of the text remains uncertain, it cannot at present be assigned to a known archive, and would benefit from collation (esp. ll. 15-16).

all of the redemption texts treated here receive equal attention, while some non-redemption texts are treated on account of the context they can give to a wider dossier. The corpus forming the basis of study in each of chapters 1 to 3 can be introduced here according to their provenance, and reconstructed archives.

The corpus for chapter 1 comprises a series of mainly reconstructed archives or dossiers closely dated in time, concentrated in the second and third decade of Samsuiluna's reign. They all stem from Nippur. The text corpus from OB Nippur comes with variable amounts of precise archaeological data.⁸¹ The corpus reflects two main phases of excavation, those tablets dug up at the end of the 19th century,⁸² and those excavated since 1948 when the "Joint Expedition to Nippur" began.⁸³ The tablets deriving from the first phase lack precise archaeological context.⁸⁴ A number of the dossiers discussed in chapter 1 include texts stemming from this earlier phase and a number of the dossiers are therefore reconstructed. We lack archaeological information for the dossier of Ninurta-rā'im-zērim, Nuska-nīšu (and Lu-Ešumeša), Bēltani, and Ilī-sukkal. With the text-group belonging to Attā son of Narām-Sīn, the term "archive" is justified given that the relevant texts were found in situ.

Beyond the shared provenance, the dossiers show the obvious presence of a common 'cultic' social bond. Without denying the presence of social hierarchy, prominent and less prominent families,⁸⁵ and the hierarchy of temple complexes and offices, the common cultic social bond uniting many of the protagonists across the dossiers suggests that the social networks were more closely aligned than a witnessing circle can directly confirm.⁸⁶ The networked nature of the archives is discussed in 1.3. Not all the texts addressed in chapter 1 reveal their prosopographical connections to wider Nippur networks. This is true to some extent for the dossier of Ipqu-Ištar (Kraus 1949, 125-126) and also for that of Ilī-sukkal (Kraus 1949, 125).

Chapter 2 comprises selected dossiers and individual texts bearing on redemption drawn from several sites. These include the large corpus of Sippar texts, and two texts from the Eastern part of Newtown in late OB Babylon. The Sippar texts stem from the twin towns of Sippar-Yahrūrūm (modern Tell Abu-Ḥabbah) and Sippar-Amnānum (modern Tell-ed-Dēr), straddling both sides of the so-called 'Main Branch' of the ancient Euphrates.⁸⁷ Although the sites remained textually productive for a considerable span of the Old Babylonian period, the evidence on redemption is too thin to allow for a diachronic picture. Despite this, individual texts also from late OB Sippar give snapshots of later practice, including terminology and formulary, as well as testifying to the use and availability of redemption. Aside from the c.2170 texts belonging to the so-called "Ur-Utu archive", excluded from the testing corpus of this

⁸¹ Charpin 2014, 51.

⁸² On the first major excavation, conducted by the University of Pennsylvania in 1889, see Gibson 1993, 5.

⁸³ Gibson 1993, 6.

⁸⁴ Charpin 2014, 51.

⁸⁵ On the prominent Ninlil-zigu family see most recently Goddeeris 2016:1, 346-349. On that of Imgū'a see Prang 1976.

⁸⁶ This is also suggested by the possibility of ownership of prebends by individuals across a number of different temple complexes e.g. Mannum-mešu-liššur and Attā son of Narām-Sīn being notable examples.

⁸⁷ Cole & Gasche 1998, 24; Charpin 1988c.

study on grounds of accessibility, the rest of the known corpus of Sippar texts⁸⁸ generally lacks precise provenance and details of find-spots. This then requires varying degrees of reconstruction of the likely contents of the historical archive, a task that also benefits from a diplomatic approach. One such reconstructed dossier, already mentioned, concerning the Ilī-ḥamad family,⁸⁹ to be assigned to Amat-Šamaš the daughter of Šallūrtum as ultimate archive holder, receives close attention.⁹⁰ It features as main parties and protagonists the husband and wife, Šallūrtum and Namija.⁹¹ At the centre of the dossier are two records, MHET II/1 41 and CT 45 3,⁹² showing two challenges to earlier redemption transactions carried out by Šallūrtum and Namija. The dossier can be expanded to include MHET II/1 89 and, most probably, BM 22630 (unpub.).⁹³ Also treated is the dossier of a certain Narāmtum, *nadītum* ‘daughter’ of Nurrubtum daughter of Dadija. It does not contain concrete evidence of redemption but the very plausible suggestion has been made in the literature that a redemption is likely to have taken place in light of the texts we do possess.⁹⁴ The two texts comprising this small dossier are BM 97141, edited in Veenhof 1999, and MHET II/6 924. The texts, once united, allow for a reconstruction of the history which is summarised below, before the proposed place of redemption in this dossier is discussed. The remainder of the texts treated in chapter 2 are individual texts, not united to a known dossier. Yet, taken in the context of their local traditions and also the common milieu of propertied families, they make their own contribution to the discussion of redemption. BE 6/1 37 (Ḥa 10) documents a redemption of a cloister house by a son of Būr-Sîn in which the family interests and family estate are explicit.

The text of MHET II/6 868, a badly damaged tablet recording the redemption of a 3 sar vacant plot, provided evidence for chains of transmission and redemption practice. The redemption text of CT 2 13, dated to Si 16, does not form part of a known dossier but records more than simply the redemption of the 7 iku field by Saqqum son (or grandson) of Nūrum. It records an intriguing prior history that illustrates the importance of a trusted network in holding the property prior to its ultimate redemption. In the case of the redemption text CT 45 62, we are fortunate to know something of the longevity and prominence of this family in Old Babylonian Sippar. Based on this text, and others, important aspects of the family genealogy in particular were clarified by Van Lerberghe and Voet 1989, in which it was shown that the seal of Sîn-iddinam, servant of Ḥammurabi, and son of Nūratum remained in use for over 150 years. The seal was not only handed down from father to son but probably passed between brothers.⁹⁵ That the family should be situated in the upper-

⁸⁸ The number estimates are based on Suurmeijer 2014, 4–5.

⁸⁹ For the most recent discussion of the dossier see Suurmeijer 2014, 317–22.

⁹⁰ Amat-Šamaš is the proposed ultimate archive holder on the basis of MHET II/1 89 even if this text does not record her receipt of all the property previously redeemed by Šallūrtum, the testator.

⁹¹ Originally, Harris considered that in CT 45 3 a house was “redeemed by sisters is claimed by persons who would seem to be the heirs of the seller.” On the correction see Veenhof 1999.

⁹² On uniting MHET II/1 41 (=BM 17312) with CT 45 3 see Veenhof 1999, 615, f.n. 44.

⁹³ Kalla, in his review of volume II of the British Museum Sippar Catalogue already saw that it could relate to MHET II/1 41 (Kalla 2001, 148).

⁹⁴ Goddeeris 2002, 93 followed by Barberon 2012, 70 f.n. 415.

⁹⁵ Voet and Van Lerberghe 1989, 534.

strata of Sippar society can be read not only from family members heading witness lists, at times before the overseer of the merchants and the judges, but also in the significant responsibility for the administration of the granary in Sippar that fell to family members, a responsibility that appears to have been assumed by Ibni-Sîn son of Sîn-iddinam from his brother Ipqu-Annunītum somewhere between Ammi-saduqa's 7th and 9th regnal year.⁹⁶ The text of CT 45 62, whose date is lost, documents redemption with a unique background, treated in 2.8. The archival evidence from Babylon is limited. The two most relevant texts are VS 22 4 and MDOG 38 p.8. VS 22 4 has been most recently edited in ARCHIBAB (T4853, L. Barberon), with corrections to the first edition. Only a translation is included for convenience in 2.9.2 as an aid to the discussion that follows there. The discovery of the text photographed in MDOG 38 p.8 was first announced in a report sent by Koldewey from the excavation site at Babylon on 11 February 1908, a report appearing in MDOG 38, pp.5-10. A photograph of the obverse of the tablet was included on p.8 of that report (Fig.2) with the note: "Tablette aus 25 P₂, bei – 1,20 m mit Datierung Ammiditana's; links Petschaft-Abrollung." This photograph was the basis upon which Farber presented his transliteration of the text.⁹⁷ Both VS 22 4 and the text from MDOG 38 p.8 are discussed in 2.9. The text of TS 45, from the archives of Šilli-Ištar of Kutalla has already been edited with a thorough discussion of its archival context in Charpin 1980, although this text and the local tradition in which it took place has implications for our understanding of redemption to be discussed in 2.10. Although lacking archival context, the text of YOS 14 343, as a witness to the practice in early OB Uruk (Irnene "a"), receives brief treatment in 2.11. In the synthesis and conclusion to this chapter (2.12) addressing in particular the *bū abim*, DCS 97 receives attention.⁹⁸

Chapter 3 addresses redemption in a very different social milieu from that encountered in the archives and dossiers of chapters 1 and 2. In chapter 3, the dossiers and texts belong to creditors: unlike chapters 1 and 2 we approach the practice of redemption from the position not of the redeemers but of parties from whom debtors were theoretically entitled to redeem. The corpus that receives particular attention belongs to two text-groups.⁹⁹ The texts stem from proximate tells in the lower Diyala, one from Šaduppūm (Tell Ḥarmal),¹⁰⁰ and the other from Tutub (Khafajah).¹⁰¹ Bounded to the west by the Tigris, and to the east by the Zagros chain, the plains of the lower Diyala comprised the heartland of the early OB kingdom of Ešnunna. From all the sites in the plains of the lower Diyala that have been textually productive,¹⁰² I focus on these text groups for the light they can shed on redemption practices within a particular social milieu.¹⁰³ Most attention will be devoted to a little known text-group from Šaduppūm (belonging to Mudādum son of Mašum), but one parallel text in

⁹⁶ Voet and Van Lerberghe 1989, 533-534.

⁹⁷ Farber 1984, 71.

⁹⁸ For the edition and commentary on this text see Charpin 1994 (now also ARCHIBAB T1 (D. Charpin) with additional notes on provenance.

⁹⁹ For a summary of the sites known to have yielded OB material, see De Boer 2014, 190-199 with f.n. 745.

¹⁰⁰ On Šaduppūm in general see Saporetti 2002, 98-108; Miglus 2006-2008; van Koppen 2006-2008.

¹⁰¹ See the overview in Saporetti 2002, 123-141.

¹⁰² Adams 1965 is still standard for the sites surveyed.

¹⁰³ For a summary of the sites known to have yielded OB material, see De Boer 2014, 190-199 with f.n. 745.

particular from the archive of the Entum-priestess of the Sîn temple in Tutub needs to be read together with the Šaduppûm texts.¹⁰⁴ The Sîn-temple archive from Tutub was found within the temple complex, which occupied a prominent place within the citadel excavated on Mound D at Khafajah.¹⁰⁵ The hoard of one hundred and twelve tablets discovered there¹⁰⁶ comprised the remnants of an archive belonging to the Entum-priestess of the temple. The lot, now divided between Chicago and Iraq and published in full by Harris,¹⁰⁷ contains a variety of texts, principally contracts or legal texts in which, in the vast majority of cases, the Entum-priestess is protagonist. The archive as published and discussed by Harris shows overlapping features with the forms and practices seen in the Mudādum texts, relevant for an understanding of redemption in this setting.

Although the principal focus of chapter 4 is the (re-)classification and interpretation of a single text (CUSAS 10 18), the reading of this text in light of the available archival material from the Larsa region under the reign of Rīm-Sîn I is a crucial element. This needs to include the individual texts, stemming from different private archives, which attest the application of a royal edict. However, relying particularly upon Charpin's work in reconstructing the merchants' activities in this period, the discussion also extends to dossiers of individual merchants.¹⁰⁸ This archival evidence brings into sharper focus the intent of the royal edict(s) of Rīm-Sîn, and helps to explain the content and purpose of the particular provisions found in CUSAS 10 18. Drawing out the full significance of CUSAS 10 18 involves drawing on later evidence after the fall of Larsa, in particular the dossier of Amurru-šēmi son of Ubajatum, which, though discovered in Nippur, in some of the texts reflects the scribal forms and custom of Larsa or a locality very close to that scribal tradition.¹⁰⁹

The study of selected aspects of the redemption of persons in chapter 5 relies on a varied corpus. This is necessary for the philological treatment of technical terms connected to redemption of persons, including *iptirum*, *e'iltum*, *kiššātum*, drawing not only on attestations in legal texts, but also administrative and epistolary sources. The treatment of *nepûm* "distrain" *nipûtum* "distrainee" relies almost exclusively on the corpus of OB letters,¹¹⁰ for, outside of the royal law collections of Ḥammurabi and Ešnunna, the terms are attested only in epistolary contexts. The results of the study of the available archival material also takes a different shape. The chapter does include a treatment of archives/dossiers by locality,¹¹¹ but the evidence is generally sparser for private redemption of persons.

¹⁰⁴ On the textual sources from early OB Šaduppûm see Hussein 2008, 92-114 (published and unpublished sources), also De Boer 2014, 195, van Koppen 2006-2008, 448-449, Charpin 2004, 442-444.

¹⁰⁵ Delougaz 1990, 217.

¹⁰⁶ Delougaz 1990, 221-22.

¹⁰⁷ Harris 1955.

¹⁰⁸ See 4.5.7.

¹⁰⁹ The texts in the dossier comprise SAOC 44 18-26. Charpin (1989, 112) observed features diagnostic of a Larsa (or closely related) scribal tradition in texts 18-22.

¹¹⁰ See 5.5.

¹¹¹ Part 5.6.

0.6 Thesis structure

The thesis is divided into five chapters. The first three chapters will trace the working of redemption in three different settings. **Chapter 1** traces redemption as it worked among the priestly families of OB Nippur during the reign of Samsu-iluna. It is within the broader frame of the functioning priesthood, also while bearing in mind the upheavals in Samsu-iluna's reign, that I wish to trace the operation of redemption. I seek to show that the practice of redemption was an important tool used by the priests to maintain themselves, their colleagues, and families in the service of the cult by the circulation and transfer of prebendary assets within trusted networks. The archives in question also give insight into the scribal markers of redemption, and how the practice of redemption was buttressed by its own distinctive form of chain of transmission.

Chapter 2 traces the working of redemption among propertied families, drawing on evidence stemming particularly from ancient Sippar and Babylon. Of course, the designation 'propertied' is not exclusive to the families and protagonists in this chapter but also applies to the redeemers and archive-keepers to be studied in chapter 1 from Nippur. Yet there the social background of the priesthood is prominent, reflected not only in the networks that united the protagonists, but in the kind of assets that were most frequently transferred and redeemed. Here the designation 'propertied' recognizes that the parties involved relied upon and took for granted established norms of property ownership, transfer and transmission, and even legal challenge, as they sold and redeemed their property. In this setting, the particular importance of the paternal estate and family affiliation will develop the picture of redemption. This is in stark contrast to the dynamic at play in **Chapter 3**, where the archives of creditors will be studied for the perspective they give on the explicit relationship of creditor-debtor that could lie behind the sale of family property, and could also determine the limits of any possible redemption, while also navigating the transfer of land subject to overarching service obligations. **Chapter 4** will make a targeted contribution to the subject of redemption by decree. The centre of the chapter is the presentation of a text (CUSAS 10 18) as the first extant edict of Rīm-Sîn I of Larsa, and indeed the first extant edict from OB Mesopotamia mandating the return of property (4.3). As this identification is new, it needs to be defended, and so the critical treatment of the text will include a discussion of the external and internal characteristics¹¹² of the text in keeping with a diplomatic treatment. After the critical treatment of the text in part 4.3, I will then attempt a historical synthesis in two parts. The first part, 4.4-4.5, integrates the findings concerning the new text with the known archival background in Larsa during the reign of Rīm-Sîn I. The second part, 4.6, takes us beyond the reign of Rīm-Sîn I and seeks to probe how Babylon's policy towards newly-annexed Larsa may have given a special ongoing place to the edict(s) implemented under Rīm-Sîn's reign.

While the major portion of this study is taken up by redemption of property (chapters 1-4), both the traditional right and its royal version, **Chapter 5** provides select studies in the related phenomenon of redemption of persons. The chapter is first taken up with technical terminology connected to the redemption of persons. Most straightforward here is the term *iptirum* "redemption money", the usage and

¹¹² For the meaning of external and internal in this context, see Charpin 2010b 26-35. External characteristics include writing support, palaeography, sealing; internal characteristics concern the language used by the scribe and the models followed in composing the text.

distribution of which leads to a practice that partook of the same terminology but for which a different background could often be inferred: captives or prisoners of war being redeemed (ransomed), often by means of merchants as middlemen. This practice has been the subject of a recent comprehensive study and will not therefore be treated here.¹¹³ Then the terms *e'iltum* and *kiššātum* in legal, administrative and epistolary contexts will be studied, followed by a treatment of *nepûm* “distrain” and *nipûtum* “distrain.” Although the meanings of these terms are well established, the relationship of the practice to redemption, to *kiššātum*, and its omission from the extant portions of the Babylonian *mīšarum* edicts, is best explained following a reconstruction of the practice denoted by *nepûm*, *nipûtum* and related lexemes. The final part of the chapter reconstructs texts and archives relating to conventional redemption of persons by locality. This includes some evidence from the archives of creditors which, as with the redemption of property, can tell us something about how debt could trigger the loss of personal freedom on account of the (self-)sale or pledge of persons, but less about how redemption worked in practice. The evidence from debtors’ archives is sparser but part 5.6 includes an edition of the new text BM 80107/8, stemming from Sippar, documenting the payment of a sum in lieu of claims and redemption money which shares the characteristics of a permanent title deed.

¹¹³ The study is Charpin 2014.