



Universiteit
Leiden
The Netherlands

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

Moore, S.A.

Citation

Moore, S. A. (2020, May 26). *Redemption in the Old Babylonian Period: texts, archives, practice*. Retrieved from <https://hdl.handle.net/1887/92260>

Version: Publisher's Version

License: [Licence agreement concerning inclusion of doctoral thesis in the Institutional Repository of the University of Leiden](#)

Downloaded from: <https://hdl.handle.net/1887/92260>

Note: To cite this publication please use the final published version (if applicable).

Cover Page



Universiteit Leiden



The handle <http://hdl.handle.net/1887/92260> holds various files of this Leiden University dissertation.

Author: Moore, S.A.

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

Issue Date: 2020-05-26

Redemption in the Old Babylonian Period: Texts, Archives, Practice

Summary

This thesis is a study of redemption as it was practiced in Mesopotamia in the Old Babylonian period (ca. 2000-1600 BC). Redemption refers to the recovery of persons or property previously sold, pledged, or exchanged. The topic is important for two reasons. Firstly, redemption offers a unique window on one of the most prominent institutions of Mesopotamian life, the ‘paternal estate’, or patrimony. It was normal to pass property down the generations and within the family circle, but redemption involves a remarkable break in this chain when property leaves the immediate family circle, only then to be restored. It therefore shows how family networks in early Mesopotamia protect this patrimony. Secondly, the topic takes on broader importance because it had a royal version. More than one Mesopotamian chancery took up the traditional right of redemption as a staple part of royal prerogative. This was done by means of royal restoration edicts. This double phenomenon, redemption by traditional right and redemption by royal edict, is here studied together to show 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.

The study has three aims. First, to trace the working of redemption of property in its archival context in order to show the realities behind the practice. Second, to contribute to our understanding of redemption of property by royal edict. This involves a critical treatment of the first extant example of such an edict from early Mesopotamia. Third, to study the redemption of persons both in an archival context and by philological study of technical terminology.

The approach of this thesis is philological, to trace redemption by means of close study of the texts and archives in which it appears. While the focus of chapter 4 is on a single source stemming from the region of Larsa under the rule of Rim-Sin, its critical treatment includes the study of the wider contemporary archives in Larsa.

The thesis shows that redemption could be used to good effect within the shared social world of the Nippur priesthood against a background of crisis taking place during the reign of Samsu-iluna of Babylon (Chapter 1). Family property, in particular temple prebends, could be transferred to a number of buyers before being eventually restored to the original family circle. The practice was aided by the close social circles of the priests, and found expression in distinctive scribal markers recorded in the redemption text. The propertied families of Sippar, Babylon, Kutalla among other sites developed this picture (Chapter 2). The right to redeem could survive several generations, making it vital to establish family affiliation between redeemer and original seller. The dossiers stemming from early Old Babylonian Diyala reflected a different reality for redemption (Chapter 3). Here the thesis shows from the point of view of creditor archives how redemption could be limited. It depended then not only on a debtor’s capacity to repay a loan and get back pledged property, but even the terms of the pledge could curtail the chances of such a redemption. Redemption then could be a hollow right.

On the subject of redemption of property by royal edict (Chapter 4), the thesis shows CUSAS 10 18 to be a witness to such an edict issued in the time of Rim-Sin I of

Larsa. This is based not only on aspects of the text itself, but its study in the context of contemporary archives from Larsa. This edict tradition in Larsa is also found to have an afterlife under Babylonian rule. Parallel wording appears in a citation from Samsu-iluna's edict issued upon his accession. It indicates that part of Rim-Sin I's edict tradition was borrowed and adopted by Larsa's new Babylonian rulers, after the annexation of Larsa under Hammurabi. Turning to the right of redemption affecting persons (Chapter 5), the thesis shows how redemption could apply to persons who had lost their freedom on account not only of debt but because of other kinds of liabilities. A philological study of certain technical terms showed how these liabilities could also trigger the possibility of redemption, both as a traditional right and by means of royal edict.