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# Identity Through Appearance: Babylonian Priestly Clothing During the 1st Millennium BC

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► **To cite this version:**

Louise Quillien. Identity Through Appearance: Babylonian Priestly Clothing During the 1st Millennium BC. *Journal of Ancient Near Eastern Religions*, 2019, 19 (1-2), pp.71-89. 10.1163/15692124-12341305 . hal-03909366

**HAL Id: hal-03909366**

**<https://hal.science/hal-03909366v1>**

Submitted on 23 Nov 2023

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Référence de la publication : L. Quillien, « Identity Through Appearance: Babylonian Priestly Clothing During the 1st Millennium BC », *Journal of Near Eastern Religions* 19 (2019), p.71-89, 2019.

### Introduction

When the Babylonian king Nabonidus wished to appoint his daughter Enningaldi-Nanna as high priestess of Ur, in 554 BC, a problem arose: the institution of the *entu*-priestess had disappeared so long ago that nobody could remember how she should be dressed. Fortunately, Nabonidus found a stela of Nebuchadnezzar I full of details about the consecration ritual of an *entu*-priestess. Nabonidus wrote in his royal inscription:

*I beheld an ancient stela of Nebuchadnezzar (the 1st) son of Ninurta-nādin-šumi, a former king, upon which was fashioned the picture of an entu priestess. They had also written down her insignia, her garments, and her ornaments, and placed it in the Egipar.*<sup>1</sup>

This passage shows how important it was that the new priestess be dressed with the proper insignia (in Akkadian, *simtu*,<sup>2</sup> the symbols of her honourable position), proper clothing (*lubuštu*) and ornaments (*tiqnu*).<sup>3</sup> Through this example, one can see that dressing distinguished the priestess from the other people and expressed her high status. Furthermore, her outfit was specific to her function and had to conform to the old traditions and religious customs.

For the purpose of this paper, I will follow the definition of the “Babylonian priest[s]” proposed by Caroline Waerzeggers: “the persons who mediated contact with the gods as part of their positions in the institutionalized cult in Babylonian temples.”<sup>4</sup> In 1st millennium BC Babylonia, the priests and priest-esses formed a distinct group of people characterized by their occupation, to serve the gods, and by their privileges in the temples. Examples of these privileges are the possession of prebends and access to the inner spaces of the sanctuaries, courtyard-*kisallu* and cellas-*egipar*. During the consecration ceremony of the priests, special attention was paid to the body of the applicant. The priest had to show a “pure” body—without any signs of illness—and he had to be shaved by the barbers. Therefore, the priestly identity was partly expressed through his appearance, including a specific hairstyle, a healthy and clean body, and also the wearing of particular clothing. The present paper focuses on this last point.

In Mesopotamia, as in other cultures, dress was a way to express identity. To what extent does the expression of the priestly identity lie in the construction of a distinct bodily appearance through clothing? The written documentation coming from Babylonia and dating from the Neo-Babylonian, Achaemenid, and Hellenistic periods provide some answers. Texts mentioning the priests’ clothing are rare. Some information is given in the Hellenistic ritual texts from Uruk, especially UVB 15 40 published in 1959 by Adam Falkenstein, which describes the garments worn by priests and by the king during a ritual.<sup>5</sup> I will compare this information with the daily records from the Neo-Babylonian period that

1 ND 2653 col. 1: 29–33; translation Beaulieu (1989: 130).

2 From *simtu*, CAD S, 278 and following “3. appurtenances, ornament, characteristics, insigne, proper appearance or behavior or ways, figural representation.”

3 *Tiqnu*, CAD T, 422 and f. “1. embellishment, ornament, insignia.”

4 Waerzeggers (2008: 1, n. 1).

5 Falkenstein (1959).

mention the same type of garments. Previous studies, fundamental for the research on Babylonian garments, are the two volumes published by Stefan Zawadzki on the garments of the gods at Sippar and the book of Paul-Alain Beaulieu on the pantheon of Uruk during the Neo-Babylonian period, as well as the study of Neo-Assyrian garments published by Salvatore Gaspa.<sup>6</sup> The volumes on textile terminologies edited by Cécile Michel, Marie-Louise Nosch, and Salvatore Gaspa are also essential tools for this research.<sup>7</sup> I will consider priestly clothing first according to the ritual texts, then through the daily records, before examining the symbolic meanings of these clothing.

## 2. Priestly Clothing According to the Ritual Texts

### 2.1. The Priests Received a Special Headdress at Their Consecration

According to the consecration ritual of the priest of Enlil at Nippur, whose description was found in Assurbanipal's library, new priests received a special headdress, the turban *paršīgu*, during this ceremony.<sup>8</sup> The consecration ritual implied the verification of the suitability of the applicant to priesthood and his purification by means of body-washing, shaving, and other rituals warding off evil. The reception of the headdress by the priest happened at the end of the ceremony. The *paršīgu* was a strip of fabric usually offered to sacred persons, animals, and objects: the Neo-Babylonian divine statues wore a *paršīgu* on their head, and the horns of the sacrificial ox could be adorned with a *paršīgu* at Uruk, as could divine standards.<sup>9</sup> Incantations 9 and 10 of the text, published by Rykle Borger and then by Anne Löhert, praised the divine manufacturing of the headdress by the goddess of weaving, Uttu, and its washing by the wash-erman (*ašlāku*). The incantations pronounced at this moment of the ritual recall the actions performed on the priest's body: "Asalluḫi/Marduk [recited] the incantation. He may purify, he may cleanse, he may [brighten]."<sup>10</sup>

6 Zawadzki (2006; 2013); Beaulieu (2003); Gaspa (2018).

7 Michel & Nosch (2010); Michel, Nosch, and Gaspa (2017).

8 Nippur ritual: Borger (1973); Löhert (2007); Löhert (2010); Sippar diviner ritual: Lambert (1998).

9 AHw, 836 "Kopfbinde"; CAD P, 267 "headdress, turban"; Beaulieu (2003: 15) "turban"; Zawadzki (2006: 124) "a headdress"; Gaspa (2018: 315) "headband, turban." *Paršīgu* for an ox: BIN 1 132, for a standard, see Beaulieu (2003: 25–26). For a discussion on the use of this term in older periods of Mesopotamian history and especially the parallel between the emblem of Inanna/Ištar and her headdress *parsikkum*, see Winitzer (2018).

10 CTN 4 93: 8', Löhert (2010: 187).

The priests certainly had to keep their garments clean. Caroline Waerzeggers has demonstrated that at Borsippa priests clothing was kept in the *šutummu*-storehouses, an intermediary space between the outside and the most sacred spaces of the temple. There the garments were protected from outside contamination and prebend owners had to keep them clean. Some of them paid a washerman for doing their laundry.<sup>11</sup> The act of cleaning the garments had something to do with the purification rituals. According to the Old Babylonian tale *At the Fuller*, the god Ea/Enki, who is the master of purification rituals, is also the patron of the washermen.<sup>12</sup> Garments were subjected to the same requirements of cleanness and purity as the priests' bodies. The garments worn on the head usually carried important symbolic meanings and qualified the social status of an individual. According to their function, the priests wore different types of headdresses. Neo-Assyrian letters mention the *kubšu*-headdress, offered to the *šangû*-priest at his appointment.<sup>13</sup> According to Salvatore Gaspa, this headdress was in the shape of a caudal fin and may recall the *Apkallu*, the mythic creatures, part men and part fish.<sup>14</sup> He also remarks that receiving a garment and putting it on is an important step in the rites of passage; in this case the appointment of a new priest. The Hellenistic ritual text UVB 15 40 from Uruk states that the *mukkalu*-priest has to put a *tapšû*-headdress (perhaps a linen fabric wrapped around the head)<sup>15</sup> and the chief lamentation priest, a *sûnu*-band. Other priests, according to this ritual, did not wear a headdress; therefore there was no obligation to have the head covered for the priests when entering a Babylonian temple.

## 2.2. To Each Priest His (or Her?) Outfit

The garments identified different categories of priests. The Hellenistic ritual text UVB 15 40 (W 18728, perhaps in Iraq today) from Uruk contains a detailed description of the ceremonial outfit of the temple personnel during the king's "taking the hand of the gods" ceremony. According to this text, each member of the temple personnel is identified by a specific outfit, which was made up

11 Waerzeggers (2010: 11–13); Kessler (1999); BRM 1 82: payment to a washerman, by a pre-bend owner.

12 Guichard and Marti (2013: 55); Reiner (1995: 407–412).

13 SAA 10 339: 12–13 and SAA 10 340: 9–12.

14 Gaspa (2018: 221). He also remarks that on Nineveh wall panels, several categories of priests are depicted wearing different types of garments. The term *kubšu* includes different types of caps that can be worn by gods, kings and high officials, according to Löhner (2007: 276–279). *kubšu* = CAD K, 485–486 "1. headdress, cap."

15 In ritual BBR No 70:6 "you place it (the image of the god) on a reed mat on a linen *tapšû*"; CAD T, 194.

of a unique association of garment, coat, belts, and headdress. It expressed his identity, his place in the hierarchy of the clergymen and his role in the ritual.

For instance, the non-consecrated priests and the personnel identified by profession (brewers, bakers, etc.) only wore a *?ibtu* garment, with two strips (*mēzeḫu*) over it. Among the temple personnel, they had the simplest outfit. The *?ibtu* is usually a rectangular woollen fabric wrapped around the body and the *mēzeḫu* is a large band of fabric, perhaps worn as a stole or a scarf.<sup>16</sup> The consecrated priests, like the lamentation priests, had the privilege to wear linen *lubāru*, a draped garment.<sup>17</sup> Linen was a precious fabric. The chief lamentation priest was distinguished by his luxurious headdress: a red-purple *sūnu*-headband.<sup>18</sup> The next class of priests, the *mukkalu*, the *ērib-bīti*, and those of one other category (its name is lost) also wore the *lubāru* garment. But they wore also a *ḫullānu* garment. The *ḫullānu* could have sleeves and be decorated: the *ērib-bīti* priests wore a rich *ḫullānu* decorated with the images of seven gods.<sup>19</sup> Some priests, including the king, wore complex outfits with several layers: the second category of priests in the table (missing on the broken tablet) wore a linen-draped garment, *?ibtu*, tied with a thin *ḫu?annu* linen belt, and over it two layers of *lubāru* and *ḫullānu* garments tied with large belts, *nēbeḫu*.<sup>20</sup> As for the king, a part of his clothing is similar to the consecrated priests (he wears the *lubāru*-garment and the *nēbeḫu*-belt), and another part is different: under

16 *Šibtu*: AHW, 1099 “ein Gewand für Kultbilde”; CAD S, 162 “a garment, used mainly in clothing sacred images”; Zawadzki (2006: 95) “the *?ibtu* was not a specific garment but a piece of material of unique shape (probably rectangular in size) and colours, which could have been used both to wrap a statue or altar (...) and also for other purposes, i.e. as a bed coverlet”; (Beaulieu 2003: 15) “a garment”; *mēzeḫu*: Beaulieu (2003: 15) “scarf”; CAD M/II, 46 “a scarf or a belt,” AHW, 650 “Schärpe.”

17 *Lubāru*: AHW, 560 “altes (gutes) Gewand”; CAD L, 228 “1. clothing 2. a specific piece of female apparel, NB only 3. piece of cloth, rag”; Beaulieu (2003: 15) “a garment”; Zawadzki (2006: 87) “it was not a specific item of clothing but a kind of cover, coverlet or tablecloth, (...) the dressing of the god’s statue would be important but only one among its many functions.”

18 *Sūnu*: AHW, 1059 “ein Tuch od Binde”; CAD S, 388 “a piece of clothing or part thereof”; Beaulieu (2003: 15) “loincloth”; Zawadzki (2006) “a loincloth.”

19 *ḫullānu*: AHW, 354 “Decke”; CAD H, 229 “a blanket or wrap of linen or wool”; Beaulieu (2003: 15) “blanket, wrap”; Zawadzki (2006: 111) “a coverlet or shirt.”

20 *Ōu?annu*: CAD H, 259 “1. sash 2. belt”; AHW, 261 “Leibbinde,” Zawadzki (2006: 100) “a belt” or “a sort of a decorative element in the shape of a sash or a ribbon,” *nēbeḫu*: AHW, 773 “Gürtel, Binde”; CAD N/II, 143 “a belt or a sash”; Beaulieu (2003: 15) “belt.” According to Zawadzki (2006: 118–119), the *nēbeḫu* at Sippar is more heavy than the *ḫu?annu*, and “two different types of *nēbeḫu* might be recognize: one much heavier and larger used as a type of cover, and the other much lighter and used as a belt.”

the *lubāru* he has a *nahlaptu*-garment of linen tied with a *patinnu*-belt.<sup>21</sup> The outfit of the king is specially enhanced by his jewellery and regalia. The identity, status, and role of each priest in the religious ceremonies were expressed by their specific outfit, composed of different kinds of garments.

### 2.3. Garments and Ritual Gestures

During the rituals, wearing garments is associated with permission or interdiction to perform specific gestures. For instance, the *ērib-bīti*, who had the right to enter the *cellae* of the gods, wore a distinctive embroidered *hullānu*-garment. Ritual UVB 15 40 states that the lamentation priests, who usually wore a *lubāru*-garment, had to remove it when they sat at the bronze *lilissu*-drum, and be dressed only in a <sup>tu</sup>gkur-ra, which was a much more common garment:

When he is covered by the *lubāru*-garment, he does not sit at the *lilissu*-drum; when he will sit at the bronze *lilissu*-drum, he will remove the *lubāru*-garment.<sup>22</sup>

Another ritual text from Uruk makes mention of the *lubāru* of the lamentation priests. It is a Hellenistic ritual from Uruk, BRM 4 6, published by Marc Linssen.<sup>23</sup> During the lunar eclipse ceremony, the lamentation priests wore a torn *lubāru* and covered their head with it, in an outward expression of mourning, while reciting incantations against bad fate:

As soon as the eclipse of the moon begins, the lamentation priests will put on a linen garment. With their torn *lubāru* garment, their head will remain covered.<sup>24</sup>

It is interesting to see that, during this ritual, members of the population (“peoples of the land”) had to remove their headdresses and cover their heads with the same garment in order to collectively ward off the bad omen of the lunar eclipse. This shows that, on some occasions, the population participated in rituals by imitating the actions of priests:

21 *Nahlaptu*: AHW, 715 “Gewand, Mantel”; CAD N/I, 238 “wrap, outer garment”; Beaulieu (2003: 15) “wrap, outer garment”; Zawadzki (2006: 117) “a kind of a decorative shirt or blouse”; *patinnu*: AHW, 848 “Binde”; CAD P, 276 “an article of clothing, perhaps a sash or headdress”; Zawadzki (2006: 122) “a belt tied at the height of the waist or the hips.”

22 UVB 15 40: 10’–11’.

23 Linssen (2004: 306–316).

24 BRM 4, 6: 43’.

Until he (the lamentation priest) clears up the eclipse, the people of the land will remain with their headdresses removed, (and) they will keep their heads covered with their *lubāru* clothing.<sup>25</sup>

Therefore, the garments worn by the priests also served to materialize the different stages of the ritual, and the gestures performed with these clothes (to put on, remove, rip off, cover the head) certainly had meanings. Was the Hellenistic ritual text representative of the garments worn by the priests during the Neo-Babylonian period?

### 3. Priestly Clothing in the Daily Records

#### 3.1. Clothes for the Temple and Clothes for Civil Life

Some of the garments mentioned in the rituals are indeed found in the Neo-Babylonian temple records and private archives, in contexts involving prebendary priests. Text PTS 3853<sup>26</sup> from Uruk, published by Karlheinz Kessler, is a trial account dated from Nabonidus's reign that lists all the clothes stolen from Mušēzib-Marduk in the *bīt-šutummu*-storehouse:

<sup>25</sup> *Anu-zēr-ibni son of Šamaš-iddin and Ardīya son of Nanaia-karābi, who have opened illegally the šutummu storehouse of Mušēzib-Marduk son of Kabtia (and) carried away from it the dates of Dilmun, the offerings, 1 šibtu-garment, 1 mēzeḫu-scarf<sup>2</sup>, 2 šupālītu-undergarments, 1 uzāru-tablecloth, 1 šir'am-garment, 1 tūg ša qabli (belt), 1 bīt rēštū, 3 wooden planks.*<sup>27</sup>

The *šutummu* was a place, carefully guarded and closed, where chests, tools, and objects for the cult were kept, as well as some personal objects belonging to the priests.<sup>28</sup> Mušēzib-Marduk wore the same outfit as the non-consecrated

25 BRM 4, 6: 21'.

26 Kessler (1999: 245–246).

27 PTS 3853: 1–8 (Kessler [1999: 245–246]) “*Ida-num-numun-dù a-šú šá Idutu-mu / u Idir-ia a-šú šá Idna-na-a-sizkur-sizkur / šá é šu-tūm-mu šá Ikar-damar-utu a-šú / šá lidim-ia ina sa-ar-ti ip-tu-ú-ma / as-né-e šá nap-ta-nu 1<sup>tu</sup> gšib-ti / 1 me-ze-eh 2<sup>tu</sup> gšu-pa-la-tu<sub>4</sub> / 1-et ú-za-ri 1<sup>tu</sup> gšir-a-am 1 tūg šá murub<sub>4</sub> / 1 é re-še-tu<sub>4</sub> 3 gšdames / ul-tu lib-bi iš-šú-ú.*”

28 According to YOS 7 78, a trial text from Uruk and CT 2 2 from Sippar. Caroline Waerzeggers (2010:12) has shown that at Borsippa the *šutummu* was located in a peripheral area of the temple precinct of Ezida and was a place where space was attributed to priests, work-houses, and places of preparation of the offerings. The clothes kept in the *šutummu* were destined to be worn by the priests and were subject to purity criteria.



priests and craftsmen of the ritual text UVB 15 40: the *šibtu*-garment and the *mēzeḫu*-large strip worn as a scarf or a stole. He also had *uzāru* fabric, which was perhaps a tablecloth, used by the prebendary bakers to cover the offering table.<sup>29</sup> On top of his religious garments, he also had a civil outfit: the *šir'am* was a garment worn by soldiers and workers in a non-religious context.<sup>30</sup> He wore it with a belt. Each outfit was completed by a *šupālītu*, a term meaning a lower garment, which is probably an undergarment.<sup>31</sup> The *bīt rēštū* may have been be a textile for the house.<sup>32</sup> Therefore, this priest had two outfits, one for performing his cultic duties in the temple, and one for his daily occupations outside the temple. The priests did not always wear their ceremonial garments.

BM 29711, without date or context, which was published by Ran Zadok, presents a similar list of garments: “2 *uzāru*-tableclothes, 6 *šupālītu*-undergarments, 2 *šibtu*-garment, 2 *mēzeḫu*?, 2 *ḫušannu*-belts, 2 *našub/pu*, one *guzguzu*-coat, one *gulēnu*-coat.”<sup>33</sup> The tablet lists 2 sets of *šibtu*-garments possibly with *mēzeḫu*-belts, undergarments, and two tablecloths *uzāru*, the same set of priestly clothing as in the previous text. In addition, one has 2 *ḫušannu*-belts (this type of belt is mentioned in the ritual UVB 15 40), which may go with 2 garments *našubu/našupu* (a hapax). The *guzguzu* and *gulēnu* complete the outfits, perhaps as outer clothing.<sup>34</sup> We have here ceremonial garments for several priests (4 complete outfits). The text may be an inventory of a storage place for priests' garments.

29 *uzāru*: AHW 1447 “ein Tuch dūr Kultbilder<sup>3</sup>”; CAD U, 360 “a woolen cloth or garment”; according to Kessler, the *uzāru* may be used in rituals to cover the offering table, because the same textile is given to a prebendary baker in VS 5 87, and to a cook in the apprenticeship contract BOR 1, 90 n°2. Wilfried Watson (2002: 40–41) remarks that in Ugaritic language, a similar word, “uzr,” means a textile used during the offerings.

30 *šir'am*: AHW, 1029 *sari(j)iam*, *sir(i)jam* “Panzer(hemd)”; CAD S, 313 *siriam* “1. leather coat, often reinforced with metal pieces 2. (a garment)”; Zawadzki (2006: 414) “long suit, close-fitting garment”; MacGinnis (2012: 3) “jerkin” and Joannès (2014: 406) “un vêtement d'extérieur, manteau ou veste militaire.”

31 *Šupālītu*: CAD Š/III, 314 “1. undergarment 2. foundation(?)”

32 The expression *bīt rēštu* / *rīštu* appears also in CT 56 294, a list of furniture for a house, and Zawadzki (2010: 423 [BM 61494]) suggests the translation: “bolster.” See also VS 6 275: 4 and Evetts Ner 28: 13.

33 BM 29711: 1–8 (Zadok [2002: 890]) “2-ta ú-za-ri<sup>mes</sup> / 6-ta šu-pa-li-tu<sub>4</sub> / 2 šib-tu<sub>4</sub><sup>mes</sup> / 2 mi-zi-tu<sub>4</sub> (mistake for *mēzeḫu* ?) / 2 ḫu-ša-an-nu / 2 na-ŠUP-PU / 1-en gu-uz-gu-zu / 1-en gu-le-nu.”

34 *guzguzu*: Quillien 2013; *gulēnu*: AHW, 296 “ein Obergewand”; CAD G, 127 “(a coat)”; Zawadzki (2010: 419); Joannès (2014: 160).

### 3.2. *The Garments of the Prebend Owner's Substitute*

The following text, published by Heather D. Baker, gives information on the garments worn by the substitute of a prebend owner.

“(1) [Šellebi, son of] Iddinaya, descendant of Nappāḫu, will perform the duties of the [...-prebend] of Iddin-Nabû, son of Libluṭ [descendant of Mudammīq-Adad], which is (for the period) from the 18th day to the 30th day of Duzû, every [year], in the Išḫara temple, on behalf of (2) [Iddin]-Nabû. Each year [Iddin-Nabû will gi]ve to Šellebi in return for his service a gulēnu-garment [...we]ighing [...] and a lubāru-garment (and) a hullānu garment. (10) Šellebi bears responsibility for not interrupting (the prebendary service) and for checking [the ...] Šellebi has received a gulēnu-garment [...] from Iddin-Nabû [...]. In the month Kislīmu, Iddin-Nabû [...Šelle]bi shall not consume [...(and)] the meat, the share of the meal table [...].(15)” Witnesses, scribe and date.<sup>35</sup>

According to this contract from Babylon, dating from Darius I's reign, Šellebi, a descendant of Nappāḫu, will replace Iddin-Nabû with respect to his 13 days of prebendary service. Owing to a break in the tablet, the prebend in question remains unknown. It is unlikely that it was a weaver prebend for the manufacturing of the garments mentioned in the text, because these items cannot be produced in such a short time. The contract states that, each year, Iddin-Nabû has to give to his substitute a set of garments comprising a *lubāru*-garment and a *hullānu*-coat. These two garments make up the outfit of the consecrated priests in the ritual text UVB 15 40. This text shows that the supply of the religious garments was the expense of the prebend owner. The fact that he has to provide a set of garments each year does not necessarily mean that the garments had to be new; they could have been borrowed just for the time of the prebendary service that, in this text, lasts only twelve days a year. One can assume that some priestly clothing was used by different prebend owners that succeeded one another in the same cultic task.

Another example, in the same archive, is the text VS 5 87–88 (Baker 2004, no. 39). According to this text, the owner of a baker prebend hires a substitute. The prebendary service comprised the preparation of four cakes per months for the offerings for Marduk. The owner of the prebend is committed to give to his substitute one *uzāru*. This textile is a tablecloth covering the offering table that was used by the priests during rituals.

<sup>35</sup> VS 6 168; edition by Baker (2004: no. 67). Babylon, Nappāḫu archive, 14th year of Darius I.

This dossier of texts of daily records, dated from the Neo-Babylonian period, shows the continuity of the terminology of priestly clothing. Similar terms for these garments are found in these documents and in the Hellenistic ritual of Uruk. Furthermore, this vocabulary is shared by different cities of Babylonia.

### 3.3. And the Priestesses?

Some rare priestesses are mentioned in the cuneiform documentation of 1st millennium BC Babylonia. Much more rare are the texts that evoke their attire. The already mentioned inscription by Nabonidus about the appointment of his daughter as an *entu*-priestess does not detail her clothing.

Nevertheless, a tablet from the Esagil archive, dated to the late Achaemenid or Hellenistic period and published by Michael Jursa, mentions a garment for a priestess.<sup>36</sup> The “temple enterers” (*ērib-bīti*), the initiated women, and the chief of the female singers request two linen fabrics and a *gammidatu*-garment for the female officer *sag-ki-kud-da* (a hapax).<sup>37</sup>

The *gammidatu*-garment is mentioned in other documents, from Sippar and Uruk, dated from the Neo-Babylonian period.<sup>38</sup> The temple craftsmen of Sippar made *gammidatu*, and this kind of textile is also found in dowries.

The daily records occasionally mention the garments worn by priests and priestesses, in their cultic activities as well as in their civil life. How does the priestly clothing express their identity?

## 4. The Symbolic Meanings of the Priestly Clothing

### 4.1. The Garments of the Priests Position Them in the Divine World

In the 1st millennium BC texts, the terminology of the garments worn by the gods is radically different from the terminology of ordinary people’s garments. Whereas the etymology of the divine garments often dates back to the 2nd millennium BC (Old or Middle Babylonian period), the terminology of the clothes worn by common people contains mostly new words that appear during the 1st millennium BC. It is very probable that the garments of the gods were

36 Jursa (2002: 107–108, no. 1 [BM 80711]).

37 It may be composed of *sakkû*, “rites,” and *kud*, for *parāsu*, “separate, isolate,” and would mean an officer isolated for specific rituals.

38 AHw, 279 “ein Gewand”; CAD G, 36, “a cloth”; Zawadzki (2010: 418–419); Joannès (2014: 450).

conservative, expressing respect to old religious traditions and the immortality of the gods.

The terminology of the garments of the priests is similar to that of gods, as the following table shows.

**Table 1: Comparison of the terminology of priest's garments with divine garments**

Garments of the priests (UVB 15 40)	Gods bearing the said garment
<b>šibtu-garment</b>	Šamaš, Bunene, Adad, Annunītu (Sippar), Ištar, Nanaia, Bēltu-ša-Rēš, Gula, Ušur-amassu, the Goddess, Urkayītu, IGI-DU (Uruk)
<b>mēzeḫu-large strips</b>	Ištar (Uruk)
<b>lubāru-garment</b>	Šamaš, Bunene, Adad, Annunītu (Sippar), Ištar, Bēltu-ša-Rēš, Gula, Ušur-amāssu, the Goddess, Urkayītu, IGI-DU (Uruk)
<b>sūnu-headband</b>	Šamaš, Bunene, Adad, Annunītu, Daughter of the Ebabbar, Šarrat-Sippar, Šala, Gula (Sippar)
<b>ḫuṣānu-belt</b>	Šamaš, Bunene, Adad, Annunītu, Annunītu, Aia, Daughter of the Ebabbar, Šarrat-Sippar, Šala, Gula (Sippar), Ištar, Nanaia, Bēltu-ša-Rēš, Gula, Ušur-amassu, Bēlēte, Urkayītu, Ahlmayitu, IGI-DU, Urdimmu (Uruk)
<b>ḫullānu</b>	Šamaš, Bunene, Adad, Annunītu (Sippar), Ištar, Nanaia, Bēltu-ša-Rēš, Gula, Ušur-amāssu, the Goddess, Urkayītu, IGI-DU (Uruk)
<b>naḫlaptu-garment</b>	Annunītu, Aia, Daughter of the Ebabbar, Šarrat-Sippar, Šala, Gula (Sippar), Ištar, Nanaia, Bēltu-ša-Rēš, Gula, Ušur-amāssu, the Goddess, Ahlmayitu, IGI-DU (Uruk)
<b>patinnu-belt</b>	Šamaš, Bunene, Adad, Annunītu (Sippar)

All the garments of the ritual text UVB 15 40 are also found in Uruk and Sippar temple archives dealing with the manufacturing of the garments of the gods. The garments worn by the priests when they enter the temple and perform religious service position them in the divine world. Nevertheless, this does not mean that the priests were clothed exactly like the gods: the combination of

garments they wore was not the same, and most significantly, some garments, especially headdresses and tiaras, were reserved for the gods.

Some of the garments belonging to priests and mentioned in the daily records are not known to be garments for gods or goddesses, like the *gammi-datu*, which was worn by the priestess of Babylon.

#### 4.2. Materials, Decorations and Symbolism of the Priests' Garments

Priests' garments were made of linen and wool, like the garments of gods. It is likely that the garments made of differently coloured wool were adorned with woven or embroidered patterns. For instance, at Sippar the *gammidatu* (a garment worn by a priestess at Uruk), as the first text shows, were made with three different colours of wool: red, apple-colour and blue-purple, that surely formed motifs on the fabric.<sup>39</sup>

According to the ritual text UVB 15 40, some of the priests' garments were decorated with patterns and symbols. For instance, the *šibtu*-garment of specific priests was adorned with celestial patterns: stars and a rainbow. In the same text, the outer *hullānu*-garment of the temple enterers (*ērib-bīti*) is said to be embroidered with the figures of seven gods:

(Here are) the names of the gods, the seven images which are embroidered (*šapū*) on the *hullānu*-garment of the *ērib-bīti* priests: two little Geminis, Ennun-silimma, Maškim-silimma, Udug-azida, Udug-agabbu and Nin-ki-šarra.<sup>40</sup>

According to the list An=*Anum*, Nin-ki-šarra, Ennun-silimma, and Maškim-silimma are minor gods connected with the god Anu: the first one is Anu's cook and second two are his advisors (*mušēdū*).<sup>41</sup> Udug-azida and Udug-agabbu, literally the "Demon of the Right" and "Demon of the Left," are divine gatekeepers. All these minor gods, advisors and gatekeepers share the same function of intercessor between the men and the greater gods.<sup>42</sup> This is precisely the role of priests, and it explains why their garments feature these deities. The divine gatekeepers were in charge of welcoming visitors at the main door of the temple and passing on their salutations and prayers to the great gods, who dwelt inside the sanctuary. The demon Udug was one of the

39 BM 64798; Zawadzki (2010: 425–426).

40 UVB 15, 40: r 13'–15'.

41 Litke (1998: 30), An=*Anum*, entrées 87, 93 and 94.

42 Charpin (2017: 246–248).

gods welcoming the king Rīm-Sîn at the gate of the temple at Ur during his enthronement, according to a Old Babylonian ritual discussed by Dominique Charpin.<sup>43</sup> Together with other gatekeeper gods, Udug escorted Rīm-Sîn inside the temple. Text UVB 15 40 is also a ritual involving the king, but the broken text does not describe his entry before the god Anu. Perhaps the *ērib-bīti* priests performed, like actors, the role of each of these seven deities during the rituals. Their garments may have assimilated the priests to the gods surrounding Anu, such that they would enter the cella under a god's identity or at least under divine protection.

### 4.3. Iconography

The iconographic representations of priests on cylinder seals are stereo-typed. The clothing of the shaved-headed characters consists of a long tunic with fringes at the bottom and short sleeves, one side of which is folded down in the front. The tunic is attached by a belt worn around the waist, and a strip (scarf?) crosses the chest. We find on the seals the same combination of one garment plus one or two belts/scarfs that we find in the texts, such as the garment *šibtu* and the two *mēzeḫu* strips, or the *lubāru* with the *nebēḫu* belt. But it is impossible to associate with certainty an Akkadian word with its icono-graphic representation.

Figure 1 : Priest holding a bucket and a cup facing an offering table and gods symbols, cylinder seal, British Museum, BM 89311, Late Babylonian period (700–500 BC) © TRUSTEES OF THE BRITISH MUSEUM

43 Charpin (1986: 280–286). I thank Dominique Charpin for drawing my attention to this text.

Figure 2 : Priest praying facing gods symbols, imprint of a cylinder seal, Louvre, Neo-Babylonian period (Holtzmann 1997, 268 fig. 314; Menant 1886, fig. 120)

Figure 3 : Priest facing several divine symbols and holding a globular flask, cylinder seal, British Museum, BM 132978, Late Babylonian period (700–500 BC) © TRUSTEES OF THE BRITISH MUSEUM

## **5. Conclusion**

Priests' clothing reflected their identity and their social position within the population and among the cultic personnel. Outside the temple, the priests seem to have worn civil garments. The religious garments were kept in closed storehouses inside the temple, where they had to be kept clean in order to respect the injunctions of "purity" applied to the priest's body and his out-fit. The vocabulary used for the specific garments worn by the priests in the

temples was the same as for the garments of the gods. Some of them even wore garments with minor gods' figures on them. But they did not have any gods' attributes, such as a tiara. Each category of priest and priestess had a specific outfit that allowed them to identify their position and their role in the rituals. The priests' clothing, made of radiant white linen or embroidered with vividly coloured patterns, must have been an essential aspect of the multi-sensory performance of the rituals.

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Text edition of the Hellenistic ritual of Uruk UVB 15 40 (W 18728)

**Edition after the copy of Falkenstein (1959: pl. 34).**

**Bibliography: Falkenstein (1959: 40–43); Zawadzki (2006); Joannès (2014: 457).**

Obverse

- 1' [ x ] [ x x' [ ] ]
- 2' [ x ]-<sup>r</sup>ta<sup>ˀ</sup>-àm [ ] ]
- 3' [ <sup>lú</sup>ku<sub>4</sub> ]-é-pi-riš-tu<sub>4</sub> [ ] ]
- 4' ina 2-i u<sub>4</sub>-<sup>r</sup>mu<sup>ˀ</sup> [ ] ]
- 
- 5' <sup>lú</sup>mu-uk-kal<sup>ˀ</sup> [ <sup>lú</sup> [ ] ]
- 6' <sup>túg</sup>lu-bar<sup>ˀ</sup> <sup>túg</sup>húl-<sup>r</sup>la<sup>ˀ</sup>-[nu [ ] ]
- 7' <sup>túg</sup>tap-su-ú sag-du-su<sup>ˀ</sup> a-pi-i [r]
- 
- 8' <sup>lú</sup>sig-bar-ra<sup>meš</sup> <sup>lú</sup>lunga<sup>meš</sup> <sup>lú</sup>muḫaldim<sup>meš</sup> <sup>lú</sup>gír-<lá><sup>meš</sup> <sup>lú</sup>ár<sup>ˀ</sup>meš
- 9' <sup>lú</sup>šu-bar-ra<sup>meš</sup> u <sup>lú</sup>gír-sè-qi<sup>meš</sup> <sup>r</sup>máš<sup>ˀ</sup> ḫal-pu u 2 me-ze-ḫu šub-ú
- 
- 10' <sup>lú</sup>gala gul-lu-bu<sup>ˀ</sup> <sup>túg</sup>lu<sup>ˀ</sup>-bar gada ḫal-pu
- 11' en <sup>túg</sup>lu-bar šú ina li-li-ìs ul uš-šab
- 
- 12' <sup>lú</sup>gala la gul-lu-bu máš ḫa-líp u 2 me-ze-ḫa šá ugu máš šub
- 
- 13' <sup>lú</sup>gala-maḫ<sup>ˀ</sup> <sup>túg</sup>lu-bar gada ḫa-líp<sup>ˀ</sup> u<sup>ˀ</sup> <sup>túg</sup>úr šá sig-sag sag-du-su kešda
- 14 [ina li-li]-<sup>ˀ</sup>is zabar<sup>ˀ</sup> ina a-šá-bi-šú<sup>ˀ</sup> <sup>túg</sup>lu-bar du<sub>8</sub>-ma  
[<sup>túg</sup>.....] u <sup>túg</sup>kur-ra il-lab-biš
-

- 16 [.....] mul<sup>meš</sup> tir-an-na máš *ḫal-pu*  
[..... ina] gùb-šú-nu na-du-ú<sup>7</sup>
- 
- 18 [.....] ku<sub>4</sub>-é a-[.....]  
(...)
- Reverse  
(...)
- 1' [.....]-<sup>7</sup> hu<sup>7</sup> ana é-<sup>7</sup> pi-r [iš-tu<sup>7</sup>]
- 
- 2' [.....] sal sag [...]
- 3' [.....] x<sup>7</sup>-tu<sub>4</sub> gada u máš *šá la sis-sik-ti* šub-<sup>7</sup> ma<sup>7</sup>
- 4' ina <sup>túg</sup> hu-ša-an šu<sup>II</sup>-nu murub<sub>4</sub>-meš-šú kešda e-liš gada<sup>meš</sup> babbar-babbar<sup>meš</sup> <sup>túg</sup> [u-bar šub]
- 5' ina <sup>túg</sup> né-be-ḫu murub<sub>4</sub>-meš-šú kešda e-li-iš<sup>7</sup> (DU) <sup>túg</sup> lu-bar ḫúl<sup>1?</sup> -[la<sup>?</sup>-nu<sup>?</sup>]
- 6' *šá gada ḫal-pu di-a-a-ni-in za-ḫu-um šub-di-ma*
- 7' ina <sup>túg</sup> né-be-ḫu murub<sub>4</sub>-meš-šú kešda <sup>túg</sup> lu-bar il-lab-biš
- 
- 8' lu<sup>7</sup> (TÚG)-bu-uš-tu<sub>4</sub> lugal *šá ina ša-bat* šu<sup>II</sup> dingir<sup>meš</sup> il-lab-biš
- 9' na-aḫ-lap-tu<sub>4</sub> gada pa-ti-nu u <sup>túg</sup> lu-bar qa-an-ṭup-pu
- 10' <sup>túg</sup> lu-bar gú u né-be-ḫu <gam> za-qip-tu<sub>4</sub> ši-iḫ-ṭu za-qip-tu<sub>4</sub> pe-ši-tú
- 11' za-qip-tu<sub>4</sub> x<sup>7</sup> ur-qit ù ḫi-li<sup>d</sup> innin
- 12' u<sub>4</sub>-sakar<sup>na4</sup> kišib<sup>na4</sup> aš-pú-ú gú ù sa-mar kù-gi
- 
- 13' mu<sup>meš</sup> dingir<sup>meš</sup> 7 nu<sup>meš</sup> *šá ina ugu ḫúl-la-nu* lu<sup>7</sup> ku<sub>4</sub>-é<sup>meš</sup> *šá-bu-ú*
- 14' [I]I<sup>d</sup> maš-tab-ba-tur-tur<sup>d</sup> en-nun-silim-ma<sup>d</sup> maškim-silim-ma
- 15' <sup>d</sup>udug<sup>7</sup>-á-zi-da<sup>d</sup> udug-á-gáb-bu u<sup>d</sup> nin-ki-šár-ra
- 
- 16' [.....] x ana igi<sup>dug</sup> a-gúb-ba *šá sag<sup>meš</sup> gub-za*
- 17' [.....] x x dingir<sup>meš</sup> gub-za<sup>7</sup>

## Obverse

(1<sup>a</sup>) [...] [The *ērib*] *bīt-pirištu* (enterers of the secret room) [...] in two days [...]

(5<sup>a</sup>) The *mukkalu* priest, the [...] are clad in] a *lubāru*-garment (and) a *ḫullānu*-coat [...] his head is covered by a *tapsū* headdress ;

The *sigbarrū*-priest (long-haired priests), the brewers, the bakers, the sacrificers, the millers<sup>?</sup>, the freemen and the courtiers are clad in a *šibtu*-garment with two *mēzeḫu*-large strips put over ;

---

(10<sup>)</sup> The consecrated lamentation-priest is clad in a linen *lubāru*-garment, when he is covered by the *lubāru*-garment, he does not sit at the *lilissu*-drum ;

---

The non-consecrated lamentation priest is clad in a *šibtu*-garment with two *mēzeḥu*-large strips put over the *šibtu*-garment ;

---

The chief lamentation-priest is clad in a linen *lubāru*-garment and his head is surrounded by a red-purple *sūnu*-headband ; when he will sit at the bronze *lilissu*-drum, he will remove the *lubāru*-coat ;

(15<sup>)</sup> [.....] he will be dressed in the [.....] and the <sup>túg</sup>kur-ra [.....]

---

[.....] is clad in a *šibtu*-garment [adorned with st]ars and a rainbow [...] they put on [.....] on their left [.....] *ērib bīti* [.....]

(...)

Reverse

(...)

(1<sup>)</sup> [.....] for the *bīt-pirištu*-secret room [.....]

---

(2<sup>)</sup> [The ..... priest] put on a linen [undergarment(?)] and a *šibtu*-garment without fringe, he ties a thin *ḥuṣanu*-belt around his waist, over the white linen clothes, [he has put on a *lubāru*-garment] (5<sup>)</sup> he ties a *nebēḥu*-belt around his waist ; over the *lubāru* garment, [in a] *ḥul[lānu?*-garment] of linen he is clad, he puts on a *dī-a-a-ni-in zaḥū* garment and he ties (another) *nebēḥu*-belt around his waist ; (thus) he will be dressed in (his) dress (of ceremony) ;

---

(8<sup>)</sup> Clothing of the king, in which, for taking the hand of the gods, he is dressed : a *naḥlaptu*-garment of linen, a *patinnu*-belt, and a *lubāru*-coat with a stylus symbol (10<sup>)</sup> then, (another) *lubāru*-coat (with) a collar and a *nebēḥu*-belt, a standard in leather/skin, a white standard, a green standard and a (jewel called) Ištar's charm, a moon crescent, a cylinder seal of jasper, a necklace and a bracelet of gold.

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(13<sup>)</sup> (Here are) the names of seven images of the gods which are embroidered on the *ḥullānu*-coat of the *ērib-bīti* priests, the two little Gemini, Ennun-silimma, Maškim-silimma, (15<sup>)</sup> Udug-azida, Udug-Agabbu and Nin-ki-šarra

---

(16<sup>)</sup> [.....] in front of the holy water vessel of/for the head, he stands.

(17<sup>)</sup> [.....] the gods, he stands.