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A Study of the Assyro-Babylonian Words relating to Sacrifice

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THE principle of sacrifice was in its inception purely anthropomorphic in character, being nothing more than the desire to placate or thank a divinity by feeding or giving him to drink, and at the same time to commune with the gods in the sacrificial meal. That such an idea was the chief basis of the primitive Semitic sacrificial conceptions has been already shown by Robertson Smith (*Encyclopædia Britannica*, 9th edition, s.v. "Sacrifice").

Professor Morris Jastrow, Jr., in his *Religion of Babylonia and Assyria*, 660 ff., has ably elaborated the developments which naturally arose from this primitive ideal, and has shown how the ultimate establishment of a sacrificial cult resulted in changing the earlier system of freewill sacrifices into a means of temple-income, whereby the representatives of the godhead, viz., the priesthood, received the lion's share.

It should be stated here that the English meaning attached to the word "sacrifice," implying an unpleasant surrender of the necessaries or luxuries of life, is entirely foreign to the original intention of the word. As D. G. Brinton has pointed out (*Religions of Primitive Peoples*, 186), the sacrifice was at first a purely freewill offering in recognition of the power of the deity. This offering later became a regular gift exacted by the priesthood and, in this manner, the word obtained its present commonly accepted sense in modern languages. As will appear below, the Hebrews were careful to distinguish between the freewill and the regular ritual offerings.

The Hebrew words for sacrifice are as follows:

קָרָב 'any kind of offering'; a general word, probably cognate with Ar. *ānis* 'be associated with,' i.e. an association with the godhead.

זָבַח usually 'the slain sacrifice'; but also used of the bloodless offering (Robertson Smith, *Sem.* i. 205).

מִלְאִים 'the distinctively priestly offering.'

בָּנָה also a general word, possibly from נָהַה 'lead up, present' (*scil.* 'an offering').

נָדָה 'freewill offering,' as distinct from the regular necessary ritual offering. The Assyro-Babylonian word for this was *nidbu*, *q.v.* below, but their *nidabû-nindabû*, although from the stem נָדַב 'be willing,' had quite lost this special sense.

נָדַר 'a promised offering.' The result of a vow.

נִסִּיךְ only Deut. 32 as 'libation.'

נִסְךְ 'libation,' *passim*.

קִטֹּר only Jer. 44 21: 'sacrificial smoke'; incense.

קִטְרַת common word for 'smoke of sacrifice'; then 'incense,' which was a later development from the smoke arising from a burnt offering.

קָרְבָּן general word for offering. Cf. Glossary, *s.v.* *kurbannu*, *kirbannu*, although from a different stem.

תָּמִיד 'the regular daily sacrifice,' surviving in the Catholic idea of the Mass, = Assy. *ginû*, *nidabû*, *sattukku*, *taklimu* (see Glossary).

תְּרוּמָה primarily 'an offering presented in the hand; wave offering.' Then a general word for 'tribute, tithes,' etc.

It is a curious fact that although the Hebrews, and probably also the Assyro-Babylonians, had developed an elaborate system of various sorts of offerings, the vocabulary in both languages is not always distinctive to denote these different rites. Thus, even the most pregnant Hebrew word for sacrifice זָבַח 'slain offering' could also, though rarely, mean any sacrifice at all. The Assyro-Babylonian equivalent *zibû* (*q.v.* below), although from a verb *zabû* meaning primitively 'slaughter,' did not signify distinctively a slaughtered sacrifice. Such vagueness of word-picturing is probably not to be attributed to any lack of distinction between the various rites, but rather to the natural unclear Semitic method of expression, peculiar, for example, in another instance to the

syntax of these languages. It will be evident, therefore, owing to this very vagueness, that a more certain knowledge regarding these sacrificial rites can only be obtained by a more extended study of ritual texts. Context in this investigation is really more important than philology.

It will be noted, furthermore, from the Glossary that the Assyro-Babylonians had a number of distinctive words referring to libation which, as among the Hebrews, played a most prominent part in their system. In fact, the usual ideogram for priest = *šangá* (*q.v.*) denoted primarily 'the libator.' I am strongly inclined to see in this rite not merely the undoubtedly ancient custom of giving the divinity to drink, a parallel to the divine food of the solid offering, but also a survival of the idea that liquid in itself typified generation = the *semen hominis*. See my *Materials*,¹ 2 ff. *s.v.* the water-sign A, which was commonly used to signify generation in all its aspects.

The object of the following Glossary is to present a brief philological study of the chief Assyro-Babylonian words relating to sacrificial methods, paying especial attention to the Sumerian and ideographic equivalents.

GLOSSARY

ADAGŪRU 'censer, incense-pan'; ideograms: DUK-A-DA-GUR, Br. 11554, which signs seem to indicate the true pronunciation. See Jensen, *Kosm.*, 438 and *KB.* vi. 1, 501 ff. on Assyrian *adagūru*, which is evidently a Sumerian loanword. In Sumerian, *adagur* must mean primarily 'vessel for liquid'; viz., a 'water, liquid' + *da* = the postposition 'for' + *gur* = GUR = *šákiru* 'drinking vessel' (see *Hwb.* 661). The use of *adagur* = *adagūru* to denote a censer is therefore a later innovation. *Adagūru* is a synonym of *sátum*, *q.v.* and see Prince,¹ 18.

ASLU 'sacrificial lamb' (thus Muss-Arnolt,² 15, but Del. *Hwb.* 86 *azlu*). The form *azlu* is probably another and more correct writing for *aslu*. Note Assy. *uzálu* 'gazelle'; Ar. *ġazál*. Zimmern, *Ritualtafeln*, 216, 26 ff., translates *aslu* as 'an old wild ram' and *puzádú* (*q.v.*) as 'a young wild ram.'

¹ J. D. Prince, *Materials for a Sumerian Lexicon*, Parts I and II, 1906-1906 (Leipzig). Referred to in this paper as "Prince."

² W. Muss-Arnolt, *A Concise Dictionary of the Assyrian Language*.

ECĀNU 'inhale, smell'; especially used with *qutrinnu* 'incense,' IV. 19, 57-58 a (see *qutrinnu* and *cēnu*). This *ecēnu* is, curiously enough, represented by the Sumerian word *zar* = XAR (*Zb.* 98), which means 'bind' and is properly applied only to the other *ecēnu* 'back-bone' = Hebr. עָצָם. *Ecēnu* 'smell, inhale' could only have been regarded as equivalent to *zar* = XAR by an erroneous association with *ecēnu* 'back-bone' (see Prince, 174-175).

URIGALLU 'a libating priest,' IV. 40, nr. 1, 2 a (see *Hwb.* 128). In Sumerian, from which *urigallu* is plainly a loanword, *urugal* means 'the great (*gal*) man' (*uru*); i.e., 'the priest,' by special application. The ideogram ŠES-GAL = Sum. *urugal* = Sem. *urigallu* means 'the elder brother.' Note also the Semitic abstract formation *urigallūtu* 'function of an *urigallu*.'

ĀŠIPU 'conjurer' (also *išipu*); Hebr. אִשְׁפָּא, from *ašāpu* 'divine,' seems to mean only 'diviner.'

ĪŠIPU, syn. of *ašipu*, *q.v.* just above.

ĪŠIPPU 'sacrificial priest'; syn. of *ramku* 'libator,' *q.v.* The word *išippu* is undoubtedly of Semitic origin, in spite of the Sumerian punning equivalent *i-šib* (= ME), where the *i-* is merely the defining prefix and *me* = ME = *zikaru* 'man,' i.e., 'the man *par excellence*,' hence 'the priest.' This *išib* in Sumerian must have been suggested by the stem *ašāpu* 'conjure.' From Sum. *išib* then came Semitic *išippu* secondarily, like Sem. *ginū* from Sum. *gi-na*, itself suggested by Sem. *kēnu* 'be firm.' See *s.v.* *ginū*, and Prince, 194. Note also the Sem. abstract formation *išippūtu* 'function of being an *išippu*.'

BARŪ 'seer'; especially one who investigated (= *barū*) the liver of an animal for purposes of divination. See *šabrū*.

BAZILLUM sort of sacrificial goat. Pognon, *Wadi-Brissa* = Ar. *bazlum*. See *s.v.* PASIL(L)UM.

BIRSIDU is a Sumerian loanword in Assyrian, synonymous with *namzaru* 'sacrificial receptacle,' *q.v.* See II. 22, 27de: DUK-BIR-SI-DI = *zubūru*, also 'a receptacle.' *Bir* in the connection *bir-si-di* may be a variant of *bur* 'a vessel,' as in the following *bursaggu*, in which case, *birsidi* would mean 'the just or proper ritual vessel.' If, however, *bir* in *birsidi* can be associated with *bar* = BAR 'divide, apportion,' then *birsidi* would mean 'the correct (*sidi*) divider' (*bar*) = 'the proper ritual graduating glass.' See Prince, 60.

BURSAGGU 'libation'; only Scheil, Šalm. 103 (Muss-Arnolt, 193). This word, which is clearly Sumerian, can only mean 'the excellent or chief (*sag*) vessel' (*bur*). It must then refer primarily to the libation-vessel, rather than to the libation itself.

GINŪ 'the regular monthly or daily temple sacrifice,' syn. of *sattukku*, *q.v.* = Hebr. גִּינִי, whose modern successor is the Mass. *Ginū*, which is also an adjective 'firm, fixed, regular,' is, like *išippu*, a secondary formation in Assyrian from Sum. *gi-na*, which was itself originally sug-

gested by the well-known Semitic stem *kēnu* 'to be firm.' On *gi-na*, see Prince, 148.

ZIBŪ 'sacrifice' = Hebr. זִבְחִי, but only etymologically, as *zibū* does not necessarily specify a slain offering. It can mean, however, a sacrificial victim, but not exclusively, as it indicates any kind of offering at all; cf. *ZA*. V. 59, 7: *zibe mimma šumšu* 'offerings of any kind at all.' The noun *zibū* is usually construed with *nadānu* 'give, present a sacrifice.' In IV. 20, nr. 1, obv. 28, *zibū* = Sum. ŠA-KU-DU-UL, probably pronounced *ak-kudul*, where ŠA = *ak*, *ag* is clearly the sign of abstraction, while *kudul* may perhaps mean *kud* 'cut, tear,' *ul* = UL 'beef,' as UL is really the specified bull-sign with the corner-wedge. If this interpretation is correct, it would indicate that the primitive meaning of the verb *zabū* was 'slaughter,' just as in Hebrew.

ZURQĪNU 'libation-vessel' and 'libation' (see Muss-Arnolt, 297). The stem *zarāqu* 'sprinkle, pour,' I am inclined to identify with *sarāqu* for which see also SURQINU.

XUBŪRU 'a vessel of some sort,' syn. of *birsidu*, *q.v.*

KALŪ 'magician, priest, class of priest.' The Sum. equivalent is US-KU 'a noble or high (*ku*) man' (*uš*). See *s.v.* the synonyms *lagaru* and *surrū*. *Kalū* was probably not a sacrificial priest, as the word is made equivalent to *šabrū* 'seer,' *q.v.* Br. 6199: *lu-lig* (AMEL-KAL) = *kalū* and 6205 = *šabrū*.

KARĀBU 'favor, bless,' from which *kirbannu*, *kurbannu*, *kitrābu*. Not to be confounded with *qarābu* 'approach.'

KIRBANNU 'grain-offering' = ŠITA = *lag*. The same ideogram means also *šangū* 'priest' with Sumerian value *sangu*. The sign ŠITA indicated primarily 'irrigation, watering'; hence = 'libation' and here, in a specialized sense, 'grain-offering' (see Muss-Arnolt, 495; Prince, 216).

KURBANNU 'tribute,' but also 'offering,' as in V. 31, 6ab: *kurbannu eqli* 'offering of a field' = Sum. *lag-gan*, Br. 5985. See *s.v.* KIRBANNU.

KITRŪBU 'gift, sacrifice,' from *karābu*. Associated with *nidabū*, *nindabū* in *ZA*. v. 59, R. 11. For the ideogram see *s.v.* *niqū* below.

LAGARU, synonym of *kalū*, *q.v.* The Sumerian word is *lagar*, being the equivalent of the sign (Br. 9572) which originally indicated the *pudendum feminæ* = the organ of plenty, the symbol of fruitfulness. Hence the idea of a temple-priest dealing with plenteous sacrifices and dispensing the plenteous gifts of the gods. See Prince, 217, and cf. *s.v.* *kalū*, *surrū*.

NAMXARU 'sacrificial receptacle,' from *mazāru* 'receive.' Syn. of *birsidu*, *q.v.*

NIDBU 'freewill offering,' occasionally used as a synonym of *sattuktu*, *q.v.* Cf. Hebr. נִדְבָה, and see *nidabū*.

NIDABŪ or NINDABŪ 'the regular offering due a divinity, especially a goddess' (Muss-Arnolt, 649). The ideogram is RAM-PAT(ŠUK)-AN-NINNA, Br. 4773, probably to be read in Sumerian *aka-šuku dimmer*

Ninna 'the food of the goddess Ninna' = *Istar*. The RAM-sign is clearly the Eme-Sal abstract prefix, as in Br. 9932, we find simply PAT-AN-NINNA = *šuku dimmer Ninna* 'food of Ninna,' without any abstract sign. Hommel, *Sum. Lesestücke*, 59, regards Sem. *nidabû, nindabû* as a Sumerian loanword from *ni-dab, nin-dab*, connecting it with *Nisaba*, but the stem נִדַב 'be willing' is well established in Semitic (cf. Brown-Geenius, 621).

NĪQŪ 'libation' primarily, but also 'sacrificial lamb'; cf. Muss-Arnolt, 717. The common ideogram is the sign found in Br. 9088, whose Sumerian value is *sigišše*. Cf. especially Br. 9092: *sigišše = niqû, passim*. The sign was primitively an enclosure containing grain, so it must have meant primarily 'grain-offering.' In Br. 9091, it also signifies *kitrûbu*, a general word for sacrifice, *q.v.* The Sumerian word *sigišše* seems to mean 'crush (*si, sig*) grain' (= *giš-še*; *giš* being the determinative for plants and *še* = 'grain'). The verb is *naqû* 'pour out a libation,' used especially with *karânu* 'wine' or with *mê* 'water.' But *naqû* is also used for sacrificing in general. See also *s.v.* ŠANGU.

NISAKKU 'sort of priest,' suggests the Semitic stem *nasâku* 'perform'; viz., *nisakku* = 'a functionary.' The Sumerian equivalent is NU- (*eš*) AB = *nu-eš* 'man of the house'; i.e., 'man of the temple'; hence 'priest.' Note Sum. *ni-sag = niqû* 'sacrifice' and also = *nisakku*, Br. 6703. This Sum. *ni-sag* seems to be a punning formation ('*ni-sag* the chief one') on Sem. *nasâku* and in this case *nisakku* is a secondary loanword in Semitic from *ni-sag*. See *s.v.* IŠĪPPU and GINŪ.

SURRŪ 'magician, priest'; synonym of *kalû*, Jensen, *ZA.* vii. 174. See Prince, *s.v.* *surru*.

SURMAXXU 'high-priest' from *surrû* and *max* 'high,' Cf. *s.v.* ŠANGA-mazzu.

SARÂQU 'pour out, libate' = Aram. שָׂרַף. The ideogram is DUB = *dub*, Br. 3929, from the idea of 'plenty,' attributed to DUB from its primitive sense 'surround, heap up' (see Prince, 87).

SIRQU 'drink-offering, libation,' from *sarâqu*.

SARRAQU 'one who libates,' *ZA.* iv. 11.

SURQĪNU 'libation-vessel, libation,' probably the correct reading for *zurqīnu, q.v.*

SATTUKKU, originally 'the established standard of value' and then commonly 'the regular offering' = Hebr. טַבַּח and Assyrian *ginû, q.v.* (see Muss-Arnolt, 786). The question as to the origin of this word is a doubtful one. I believe that it is from Sum. *sa-dug = DI-KA* = simply 'speak (KA) the decree' (DI); i.e., 'fix the standard.' Note that *sa = DI = milku* 'counsel,' Br. 9531, while *dug = KA* is a usual word in Sumerian for 'speak.' In Br. 9542: *sa-dug-ga = DI-KA-ga = Sem. kašûdu* 'conquer'; i.e., 'pronounce the decree of victory.' It is highly improbable that Sum. *sa-dug* is a derivative from Arabic (thus Hommel; cf. Muss-Arnolt, 787). In V. 45, col. vi. 37, the form occurs in the Se-

mitic verb-form *tusattak*, which may be only a denominative from the loan-word *sattukku*. Note also the form *satáku* used in Semitic for 'tribute,' I. 69, 35c. A Sumerian origin for *sattukku* seems more probable than a Semitic one. According to Halévy, *Z.A.* iii. 346, *santakku* = *ka'mánu* 'everlasting, enduring' is a synonym of *sattukku*, which is very probable.

SŪTUM small vessel, Hebr. סֹדֶן 'a grain-measure.' From the Hebrew came the Greek *σάρον* = '1½ *modius*.' The ideogram was DUK-BAR = Sum. *banda*. This *banda* is the original of the Semitized form *bandū* 'vessel,' Br. 4126. In Sum. *bandiš* also means 'pot de chambre' = 'urine-vessel,' Br. 1725, the usual word for which is *kisi*. See Prince, 52.

PUXADŪ, fem. *puxattu*, see *s.v.* ASLU.

PASIL(L)U 'sacrificial animal.' See *s.v.* BAZILLUM.

PIRQĒTI, probably a wrong reading for *tanqēti*, *q.v.*

ĀĒNU 'fill, heap up,' used especially with *qutrinnu* 'incense-offering,' *q.v.* See also *s.v.* eĒnu.

QIŠTU 'gift, present,' used frequently of offerings to temples. The Sumerian equivalents were ŠA-BA = *ak-ba* and RAM-BA = *aka-ba*; viz., *ba* = *qāšu* 'give, present,' preceded respectively by the Eme-ku and Eme-sal abstract prefixes.

QUTRINNU 'incense, smoke-offering.' This is the same sort of formation as that seen in *surqīnu* = *surqinnu*. The ideogram was NA-NE = *na-bil* 'thing of fire,' wrongly read *tarrinnu* in Br. 1608.

RAMKU 'libating priest,' from *ramāku* 'pour.' Syn. of *nisakku*. Note the Sum. *suz-bu(gid)* 'one who prolongs (*bu-gid*) the foundation'; i.e., 'one who makes a building endure, by pouring out the sacred libation' (?). See Prince, *s.v.* *suz*. In V. 23, 49; *ramku* also = ME = *ūšippu* 'sacrificial priest.'

ŠABRŪ 'seer, interpreter'; also one who inspects the liver of an animal for purposes of divination. Cf. above, BARŪ. See Prince, *s.v.* *šabra*. *Šabrū* must be a shaphel formation from *barū* 'see, divine' (see Muss-Arnolt, 1006).

ŠANGŪ 'priest, sacrificial priest'; very common. Very probably primarily from Sum. *sag-saŋg* 'head'; i.e., 'head-man.' Note the Sumerian form *sangu* 'priest,' and also *sangu* name of sign for 'head'; (*Cun. Texts*, XI, 2, 41 a). While this is probably the derivation of the word, the Semitic priests may have seen in the form *šangū* a play on *ša naqt* 'he who sacrifices,' from *naqt*; really, 'he who pours out a libation,' which was considered to be one of the chief functions of the priesthood. This, however, does not impair the possible derivation of *šangū* from Sum. *sag-saŋg*. Haupt, *BA.* i. 160, rem. 2, connected *šangū* with *šagū* 'rave, rant, as one in an ecstasy.' This is also a possible association, although perhaps not the origin of the word. Note Pinches's form *šagū* 'priest,' *JRAS.*, 1899, 105.

In short, in the word *šangū*, we no doubt have another instance of varied association based on sound similarity, which is so commonly met

with in the later Semitized Sumerian system; viz., *šangû* and Sum. *sangu* are derived from Sum. *sag-sang* 'head,' but were associated arbitrarily with Sem. *ša naqi* and *šagû*. Note that the ideogram ŠITA = *sangu* plainly means the libator (see Prince, *s.v. sangu*).

ŠURQÎNU; see *s.v. SURQÎNU*.

TAKLÎMU or TAQLIMU seems to be the synonym of *nindabû*, *q.v.*, as it is represented by the same ideogram.

TAMQËTI, sometimes wrongly written *pirqêti*, from *naqû*. See *Museo Arnolt*, 1171.

ENGLISH-ASSYRIAN GLOSSARY

- | | |
|---|--|
| Animal. See Sacrificial animal. | Libation-vessel <i>bursaggu</i> , <i>zurqînu</i> , <i>surqînu</i> , <i>šurqînu</i> . |
| Bless <i>karâbu</i> . | Magician <i>kalû</i> , <i>surrû</i> . |
| Censer <i>adagûru</i> . | Offering <i>ginû</i> , <i>kirbannu</i> , <i>kurbannu</i> , <i>kitrûbu</i> , <i>nidabû</i> , <i>niḫbu</i> , <i>sattukku</i> , <i>sirqu</i> , <i>qîštu</i> . |
| Conjure <i>asâpu</i> . | Pan. See Incense-pan. |
| Conjuror <i>âšîpu</i> , <i>išîpu</i> . | Pour out <i>sarâqu</i> . |
| Drink-offering <i>sirqu</i> . | Priest <i>urigallu</i> , <i>išîppu</i> , <i>kalû</i> , <i>lagaru</i> , <i>nisakku</i> , <i>surrû</i> , <i>šangû</i> . |
| Favor <i>karâbu</i> . | Receptacle <i>birsidu</i> , <i>xubûru</i> , <i>namzaru</i> , <i>sûtum</i> . |
| Fill <i>çênu</i> . | Regular offering <i>ginû</i> , <i>nidabû</i> , <i>sattukku</i> , <i>taklîmu</i> . |
| Freewill-offering <i>niḫbu</i> . | Sacrifice <i>zabû</i> , <i>zibû</i> , <i>niqû</i> , <i>tamqêti</i> . |
| Functionary <i>nisakku</i> . | Sacrificial animal <i>bazillum</i> , <i>pasil(l)u</i> . |
| Gift (see Offering) <i>kitrûbu</i> , <i>qîštu</i> . | Sacrificial goat <i>bazillum</i> . |
| Goat <i>bazillum</i> , <i>pasil(l)u</i> . | Sacrificial lamb <i>aslu</i> , <i>niqû</i> , <i>puzadû</i> . |
| Grain-offering <i>kirbannu</i> . | Sacrificial priest <i>išîppu</i> . |
| Heap up, <i>çênu</i> . | Seer <i>barû</i> , <i>šabrû</i> . |
| High-priest <i>surmazzu</i> , <i>šangamazzu</i> . | Smell <i>çênu</i> . |
| Incense <i>qutrinnu</i> . | Smoke-offering (see Incense) <i>qutrinnu</i> . |
| Incense-pan <i>adagûru</i> . | Tribute <i>kurbannu</i> . |
| Inhale <i>çênu</i> . | Vessel. See Receptacle. |
| Interpreter <i>šabrû</i> . | Victim <i>zibû</i> . |
| Lamb <i>aslu</i> , <i>puzadû</i> . | |
| Libate <i>sarâqu</i> . | |
| Libating priest <i>urigallu</i> , <i>sarraqu</i> , <i>ramku</i> . | |
| Libation <i>bursaggu</i> , <i>niqû</i> . | |