




Note on Akkad

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Akkad (Hebr. אַכַּד; Greek versions: *αρχαδ*, *αχαδ*) is mentioned only once in the Old Testament, Gen. 10¹⁰, as one of the four chief cities, Akkad, Babel, Erech, and Calneh, which constituted the nucleus of the "kingdom of Nimrod" in the land of Shinar, or Babylonia. This Biblical city, Akkad, was probably identical with the northern Babylonian city known to us as *Agade* (not *Agane*, as formerly read), which was the principal seat of the early Babylonian king Sargon I (*Šargani-šar-ali*). The date of this king is given by Nabonidus, the last Semitic king of Babylonia (555–537 B.C.), as 3800 B.C., but this is perhaps too high by 700 or 1000 years.¹ The probably non-semitic name *Agade* occurs in a number of inscriptions,² and is now well attested as the name of an important ancient capital. The later Assyro-Babylonian form *Akkadū* 'of or belonging to Akkad' is, in all likelihood, a Semitic loanform from the non-Semitic name *Agade*, and seems to be an additional demonstration of the identity of *Agade* and Akkad. The usual signs denoting *Akkadū*


were   , which in the non-Semitic Sumerian were read *uri-ki* or *ur-ki* 'city-land' or 'land of the city' *par excellence*, meaning the city of *Agade* of Sargon I, as this for a long period remained the leading city of Babylonia.³ The sign  , which is really a doubled BUR-sign,

¹ Prince, *Nabonidus*, p. v.

² In the Sargon inscriptions: *OBI*, i. pl. 1, no. 1, line 6; pl. 2, no. 2, line 5; pl. 3, no. 3, line 3 b. Also in *OBI*, xi. pl. 49, no. 119, Neb. col. ii. line 60 (Hilprecht, *Freibrief Neb.*), and *Cun. Texts from Bab. Tablets*, pl. 1, no. 91146, line 3.

³ Rogers, *History of Babylonia and Assyria*, i. pp. 365, 373–374.

seems to me to be a phonetic writing of *bur* 'water, river' (cf. Prince, *Materials for a Sumerian Lexicon*, p. 68), so that

the signs  really mean 'the land of the two rivers,' i.e., of the Tigris and Euphrates, or perhaps of two important canals (?).

It is quite possible that the name *Agade* may consist of two Sumerian words *aga* 'crown' or 'headdress' and *de* 'fire,'⁴ i.e., *Aga-de* = 'crown of fire,' and this may be an allusion to Ištār 'the brilliant goddess,' the tutelary deity of the morning and evening star, and the goddess of war and love, for her cult was observed in very early times in Agade, a fact attested by Nabonidus.⁵ His record mentions that the Ištār-worship of Agade was later superseded by that of the goddess Anunit, and Anunit was another personification of the Ištār-idea with a shrine at Sippar, which was practically identical with Agade.⁶ Now there were two cities named Sippar, one under the protection of Šamaš, the sun-god, and one under this Anunit = Ištār, a fact which points strongly to the probable proximity, if not actual identity, of Sippar and Agade. It has been thought that Agade-Akkad was situated opposite Sippar on the left bank of the Euphrates, and even that Agade was possibly the oldest part of Sippar. The double character of Sippar seems significant in connection with the double writing of the BUR-sign to denote *Akkadā*.

In the Assyro-Babylonian literature, the name *Akkadā* appears as part of the royal title in connection with Sumer;

⁴ Prince, *Materials for a Sumerian Lexicon*, pp. 23, 73. That *aga* = MIR = 'crown, headdress' is well known. The Sem. *agû* 'crown' seems to be a loanword from this *aga*. It is important to note that we find the MIR-sign also = *agûgu* 'be angry,' which is an evident paronomasia on the original value *aga*. The BIL or NE-sign = 'fire,' and can also have the value *de*. This is clear from Prince, *op. cit.* 73. The Sumerian combination *de-tal* = Sem. *ṣifallu* 'torch, flame,' the latter word being not necessarily a loanword from *detal*, but possibly a paronomastic mnemonic association. *De-tal* in Sumerian can mean 'the flame (*de*) which glows' (*tal* = BI).

⁵ *JB*, 69, II. 48; III. 28.

⁶ CL. W. H. Ward, *Hebraica*, 1886, 79-86.

viz., non-semitic: *lugal Kengi(ki) Uru(ki)* = *šar mat Šumeri u Akkadī* 'king of Sumer and Akkad,' which appears to have been equivalent simply to 'king of Babylonia.' It is not likely, as some scholars have thought, that Akkad was ever used geographically as a distinctive appellation for northern Babylonia, or that the name Sumer denoted the southern part of the land, for kings who ruled only over southern Babylonia used the double title 'king of Sumer and Akkad,' and it was also employed by northern rulers who never established their sway farther south than Nippur, notably the great Assyrian conqueror Tiglathpileser III (745-727 B.C.). Professor McCurdy⁷ has very reasonably suggested that the title 'king of Sumer and Akkad' indicated merely a claim to the ancient territory and city of Akkad, together with certain additional territory, but not necessarily all Babylonia, as was formerly believed.

⁷ *History, Prophecy, and the Monuments*, I. § 110.