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 (Encyclopaedia 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:

חֵרָת, 'any kind of offering'; a general word, probably cognate with Ar. ānis 'be associated with,' i.e. an association with the godhead.
 usuall y 'the slain sacrifice'; but also used of the bloodless offering (Robertson Smith, *Sem.* i. 205).

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

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

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

only Deut. 32 as 'libation.'

'libation,' *passim.*

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

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

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

'the regular daily sacrifice,' surviving in the Catholic idea of the Mass, = Assyr. *gind, nidabt, sattukku, taklimu* (see Glossary).

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 'slain offering' could also, though rarely, mean any sacrifice at all. The Assyro-Babylonian equivalent *zibd* (*q.v.* below), although from a verb *zabt* meaning primitively 'slaught er,' 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 = šangū (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 watersign 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-pān'; 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 = šākīru 'drinking vessel' (see Heb. 661). The use of adagur = adagūru to denote a censer is therefore a later innovation. Adagūru is a synonym of šūtum, q.v. and see Prince,1 18.

Aslu 'sacrificial lamb' (thus Muss-Arnolt,2 15, but Del. Heb. 86 aslu). The form aslu is probably another and more correct writing for aslu. Note Assy. uzālu 'gazelle'; Ar. ġazāl. Zimmern, Ritualtafel, 216, 26 ff., translates aslu as 'an old wild ram' and pūzadū (q.v.) as 'a young wild ram.'

1 J. D. Prince, Materials for a Sumerian Lexicon, Parts I and II, 1905-1906 (Leipzig). Referred to in this paper as 'Prince.'
2 W. Muss-Arnolt, A Concise Dictionary of the Assyrian Language.
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Ecbu 'inhale, smell'; especially used with qurinnu 'incense,' IV. 19, 57-58 a (see qurinnu 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. יָדַע. 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 SES-GAL = Sum. urugal = Sem. urigallu means 'the elder brother.' Note also the Semitic abstract formation urigallātu 'function of an urigallu.'

Ašipu 'conjurer' (also išipu); Hebr. יִשְׂעֵל, from ašāpu 'divine,' seems to mean only 'diviner.'

Išipu, syn. of ašipu, q.v. just above.

Išippu 'sacramental priest'; syn. of ramku 'libator,' q.v. The word išippu is undoubtedly of Semitic origin, in spite of the Sumerian punning equivalent išib (= ME), where the i- is merely the defining prefix and me = ME = šīkaru '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 išippātu 'function of being an išippu.'

Barû 'seer'; especially one who investigated (= barû) the liver of an animal for purposes of divination. See šabû.

Bazillum sort of sacrificial goat. Pogon, Wadi-Brissa = Ar. baslum. See s.v. Pasil(l)um.

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

Buraggū '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. יָדַע, whose modern successor is the Mass. Ginū, which is also an adjective 'firm, fixed, regular,' i.e., like išippu, a secondary formation in Assyrian from Sum. gi-na, which was itself originally sug-
gested by the well-known Semitic stem ḱēnu 'to be firm.' On gi-na, see Prince, 148.

Zīnū ‘sacrifice’ = Hebr. כָּרוֹן, but only etymologically, as zibā 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: zbe minma šumtu ‘offerings of any kind at all.’

The noun zibā is usually construed with nādiinu ‘give, present a sacrifice.’ In IV. 20, nr. 1, obr. 26, zibā = 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 zabā was ‘slaughter,’ just as in Hebrew.

Zūrqiṇu ‘libation-vessel’ and ‘libation’ (see Muss-Arnolt, 297). The stem zarāqu ‘sprinkle, pour,’ I am inclined to identify with zaraq for which see also surqunu.

Xūriba ‘a vessel of some sort,’ syn. of bīrisidu, q.v.

Kalū ‘magician, priest, class of priest.’ The Sum. equivalent is US-KU ‘a noble or high (kū) man’ (ut). See s.v. the synonyms lagaru and surru. Kalū was probably not a sacrificial priest, as the word is made equivalent to šabrū ‘seer,’ q.v. Br. 6199: luṭiğ (AMEL-KAL) = kalū and 6205 = šabrū.

Karābu ‘favor, bless,’ from which kirbannu, kurbanu, kurābu. Not to be confounded with qarābu ‘approach.’

Kurbannu ‘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, 435; Prince, 216). Kurbannu ‘tribute,’ but also ‘offering,’ as in V. 31, 6ab: kurbannu egli ‘offering of a field’ = Sum. lag-gan, Br. 5985. See s.v. kurbannu.

Kīṭrubu ‘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 femina = 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, surru.

Namkaru ‘sacrificial receptacle,’ from maxāru ‘receive.’ Syn. of bīrisidu, q.v.

Nidbu ‘freewill offering,’ occasionally used as a synonym of sattukku, q.v. Cf. Hebr. אבלית, and see nidabū.

Nidabū or Nindabū ‘the regular offering due a divinity, especially a goddess’ (Muss-Arnolt, 649). The ideogram is RAM-PAT(SUUK)-AN-NINNA, Br. 4773, probably to be read in Sumerian aka-tuku dimmer
Ninna 'the food of the goddess Ninna' = ḫtar. The RAM-sign is clearly the Eme-Sal abstract prefix, as in Br. 9932, we find simply PAT-AN-NINNA = ṣuku dimmē Ninna 'food of Ninna,' without any abstract sign. Hommel, Sum. Lesetüćke, 50, regards Sem. niddābā, nindābā as a Sumerian loanword from ni-dab, nin-dab, connecting it with Nisaba, but the stem NotSupportedException 'be willing' is well established in Semitic (cf. Brown-Gesenius, 621).

Niqū 'libation' primarily, but also 'sacrificial lamb'; cf. Muss-Arnolt, 717. The common ideogram is the sign found in Br. 9088, whose Sumerian value is sigīšē. Cf. especially Br. 8092: sigīšē = niqū, pasīm. The sign was primitively an enclosure containing grain, so it must have meant primarily 'grain-offering.' In Br. 9091, it also signifies kīrū, a general word for sacrifice, q.v. The Sumerian word sigīšē seems to mean 'crush (si, sig) grain' (= giš-šē; giš being the determinative for plants and šē = grain'). The verb is naqū 'pour out a libation,' used especially with karānu 'wine' or with mé 'water.' But naqū is also used for sacrificing in general. See also s.v. šangū.

Nisakku 'sort of priest,' suggests the Semitic stem nasāku 'perform'; viz., nisakku = 'a functionary.' The Sumerian equivalent is NU-(es) AB = nusēš 'man of the house'; i.e., 'man of the temple'; hence 'priest.' Note Sum. ni-saq = niqū 'sacrifice' and also = nisakku, Br. 6703. This Sum. ni-saq seems to be a punning formation ('ni-saq the chief one') on Sem. nasāku and in this case nisakku is a secondary loanword in Semitic from ni-saq. See s.v. šippū and ginnū.

Surru 'magician, priest'; synonym of kalū, Jensen, ZA. vii. 174. See Prince, s.v. surru.

Surmaxxu 'high-priest' from surrū and max 'high.' Cf. s.v. šanga-maxxu.

Saraqu 'pour out, libate' = Aram. ṣarru. 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).

Sīqū 'drink-offering, libation,' from saraqu.

Šarraku 'one who libates,' ZA. iv. 11.

Surqūnu 'libation-vessel, libation,' probably the correct reading for surqūnu, q.v.

Sattukku, originally 'the established standard of value' and then commonly 'the regular offering' = Hebr. 㶠and Assyrian ginū, 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-duq = DI-KA = simply 'speak (KA) the decree' (DI); i.e., 'fix the standard.' Note that sa = DI = mūktu 'counsel,' Br. 9531, while duq = KA is a usual word in Sumerian for 'speak.' In Br. 9642: sa-duq-ga = DI-KA-ga = Sem. kašādu 'conquer'; i.e., 'pronounce the decree of victory.' It is highly improbable that Sum. sa-duq 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 *satâku* 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, *santâku* = *ka'mânû* 'everlasting, enduring' is a synonym of *sattukku*, which is very probable.

SÔTUM small vessel, Hebr. *tâqî*, a grain-measure. From the Hebrew came the Greek *órov* = '1/4 modius.' The ideogram was DUK-BAR = Sum. *banda*. This *banda* is the original of the Semitized form *bandû* 'vessel,' Br. 4126. In Sum. *bandâš* also means 'pot de chambre' = 'urine-vessel,' Br. 1725, the usual word for which is *kisi*. See Prince, 62.

PFUNDÔ, fem. *puxâtu*, see s.v. ASLU.

FASIL(Î)U 'sacrificial animal.' See s.v. BAZILLUM.

PÎRQETI, probably a wrong reading for *tamqêti*, q.v.

ÇÂNU 'fill, heap up,' used especially with *qurinnu* 'incense-offering,' q.v. See also s.v. cpênu.

QÎSÔTU 'gift, present,' used frequently of offerings to temples. The Sumerian equivalents were ŠA-BA = *ak-ba* and RAM-BA = *aka-ba*; viz., *ba* = qânu '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 *surqînu* = *surqînu*. The ideogram was NA-NE = *na-bîl* 'thing of fire,' wrongly read *tarrînu* in Br. 1608.

RAMKU 'libating priest,' from *ramâku* 'pour.' Syn. of *nisâkku*. Note the Sum. suz-bu(*gû*) 'one who prolongs (bu-ûd) 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 = *ûppu* 'sacrificial priest.'

SABRÔ 'seer, interpreter'; also one who inspects the liver of an animal for purposes of divination. Cf. above, barû. See Prince, s.v. *sabra*. *Sabra* must be a shaphel formation from *barû* 'see, divine' (see Mus-Arnolt, 1006).

SANGÔ 'priest, sacrificial priest'; very common. Very probably primarily from Sum. *sang-sang* 'head'; i.e., 'head-man.' Note the Sumerian form *sangu* 'priest,' and also *sangu* name of sign for 'head'; (Cun. Texts, XL, 2, 41 a). While this is probably the derivation of the word, the Semitic priests may have seen in the form *sangû* a play on *la naqû* 'he who sacrifices,' from *naqû*; 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 *sangû* from Sum. *sag-sang*. Haupt, B.A. i. 160, rem. 2, connected *sangû* with *sagû* '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 *lûgû* 'priest,' JRA.S., 1899, 105.

In short, in the word *sangû*, 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., šaŋa and Sum. sangu are derived from Sum. saŋ-saŋ ‘head,’ but were associated arbitrarily with Sem. ša naqi and šaŋa. Note that the ideogram ŠURQINU = sangu plainly means the libator (see Prince, s.v. sangu).

ŠURQINU; see s.v. ŠURQINU.

TALÌMU or TAQLÌMU seems to be the synonym of ninda-ba, q.v., as it is represented by the same ideogram.

TAMQETI, sometimes wrongly written pîrqéti, from naqê. See Mus-Arnolt, 1171.

ENGLISH-ASSYRIAN GLOSSARY

Animal. See Sacrificial animal.
Bless karabu.
Censer adagaru.
Conjure astúpu.
Conjuror úispú, tšípu.
Drink-offering sirqu.
Favor karabu.
Fill čenu.
Freewill-offering niqbu.
Functionary nisakkú.
Gift (see Offering) kitrubú, qṭstu.
Goat bazillum, pasili(1)u.
Grain-offering kirbannu.
Heap up, čenu.
High-priest surmaxzu, šangamazzu.
Incense qutrinu.
Incense-pan adagáru.
Inhale čénu.
Interpreter šibrú.
Lamb aslu, puzaddú.
Libate saráqu.
Libating priest urigallu, sarraqu, ramku.
Libation bursaggu, niqê.

Libation-vessel bursaggu, zurqínú, surqínú, šurqínú.
Magician kalú, surrú.
Offering ginú, kirbannu, kurbannu, kitrubú, niqabú, niqbu, sattukku, sirqu, qṭstu.
Pan. See Incense-pan.
Four out saráqu.
Priest urigallu, šippu, kalú, lagaru, nisakkú, surrú, šangú.
Receptacle bīrsidu, xubárú, namzaru, sē̓lmu.
Regular offering ginú, niqabú, sat-tukku, talmitsu.
Sacrifice zabá, zigá, niqê, tamqêti.
Sacrificial animal bazillum, pasil(1)u.
Sacrificial goat bazillum.
Sacrificial lamb aslu, niqê, puzadú.
Sacrificial priest šippu.
Seer darú, šibrú.
Smell čénu.
Smoke-offering (see Incense) qutrinu.
Tribute kurbannu.
Vessel. See Receptacle.
Victim zibá.