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## DIVINE SERVICE IN EARLY LAGASH

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THE OBJECT of this study is to describe as clearly as possible the elements of divine service in early Sumeria. The elements are taken to be gods, temples, priests, sacrifices, altars, dedications, ritual, and festivals. Our study will be confined to early Lagash, that is, from the earliest times in Lagash to the end of the reign of Urukagina, when Lagash was captured by Lugalzaggisi. It will be based upon only those inscriptions which can be dated with certainty. They are the royal inscriptions, the numerous business tablets, and seal cylinders and other similar works of art.<sup>1</sup>

At an early date in the development of Southern Babylonia the city of Lagash became an important centre, and consequently its god became powerful.<sup>2</sup> Lagash must have been

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<sup>1</sup> Abbreviations of less common use in this article are: *Amherst* = T. G. Pinches, *The Amherst Tablets*, Pt. I, London, 1908; *CMI* = Clay, *Miscellaneous Inscriptions in the Yale Babylonian Collection*, New Haven, 1915; *Déc.* = Heuzey, *Découverts en Chaldée*, Paris, 1887 ff.; *DP* = Allotte de la Fuyé, *Documents présargoniques*, Paris, 1908 ff.; *KSA* = King, *A History of Sumer and Akkad*, N. Y., n. d.; *KSTD* = Keiser, *Selected Temple Documents of the Ur Dynasty*, New Haven, 1919; *KU* = Kohler und Ungnad, *Hammurabi's Gesetz*, Leipzig, 1904 ff.; *Nik.* = Nikolski, *Drevnosti Vostochniya*, S. Petersbourg, 1908; *Nou. Fouill.* = Cros, Heuzey, Thureau-Dangin, *Nouvelles Fouilles de Tello*, Paris, 1910 f.; *RTC* = Thureau-Dangin, *Recueil de Tablettes Chaldéennes*, Paris, 1903; *SAK* = Thureau-Dangin, *Die Sumerischen und Akkadischen Königsinschriften*, Leipzig, 1907; *TSA* = de Genouillac, *Tablettes Sumeriennes Archaiques*, Paris, 1909; Ward in Curtiss = Curtiss, *Primitive Semitic Religion of To-day*, Chicago, 1902.

<sup>2</sup> For the idea of god in Sumeria and early Babylonia, see Mercer, *Religious and Moral Ideas in Babylonia and Assyria*, Milwaukee, 1919, ch. 2.

connected with Nippur, for Ningirsu, the god of Lagash, is often called the warrior god of Enlil of Nippur.<sup>3</sup> Ningirsu's name means lord, or lady, of Girsu, one of the four quarters of the city of Lagash. He was considered the son of Enlil, and his consort was the goddess Bau. Three of his daughters are mentioned in the inscriptions of early Lagash,<sup>4</sup> and four others are named in the inscriptions of the reign of Gudea.<sup>5</sup> Besides these there grew up around Ningirsu a regular family of gods. There were DUN-x,<sup>6</sup> Ninsar, the sword-bearer of Ningirsu,<sup>7</sup> Ninšah,<sup>8</sup> Ninḥarsag,<sup>9</sup> and Ninâ,<sup>10</sup> a water-goddess and deity of oracles and dreams, after whom one of the earliest kings of Lagash, Ur-Ninâ, was named. There were other deities who associated themselves with Ningirsu, such as, Dumuziabzu,<sup>11</sup> DUN-šag-ga,<sup>12</sup> son of Ningirsu, Impae,<sup>13</sup> Lama,<sup>14</sup> Lugaluru,<sup>15</sup> Ninki,<sup>16</sup> Innina,<sup>17</sup> Urnuntaea,<sup>18</sup> and Zazari.<sup>19</sup> Enlil, king of lands, was also associated with Ningirsu.<sup>20</sup> But while there were many temples and shrines in Lagash and many deities were worshipped, nevertheless Ningirsu and his great temple, E-ninnû, were the centre of the city's worship. As prince, lord, king, and god, Ningirsu received the adoration of gods and men. His special emblem was Imgig, the lion-headed mythological eagle, which was usually represented as standing on two lions.<sup>21</sup> These early Sumerian gods are represented with flowing hair, bound with a double fillet; with cheeks and upper lip shaven, with a long beard, and nude to the waist, the legs being clad in a close-fitting garment. They usually carry a war-mace, and are often equipped with a great net (*šuš-gal*) in which they trap their enemies.

Around Ningirsu and his associated deities clustered all the details of official worship, and they were the object of the people's veneration. Divine worship was the most compelling force in early Sumeria, and we shall find that it and its

<sup>3</sup> SAK 38; CMI, No. 4, Col. 1.

<sup>4</sup> SAK 44 g 2, 10-12.

<sup>5</sup> Cyl. B 11, 3 ff.

<sup>6</sup> SAK 36 l 3.

<sup>7</sup> SAK 42 c 21 ff.

<sup>8</sup> SAK 42 a 4.

<sup>9</sup> SAK 20 b 2.

<sup>10</sup> SAK 2 a.

<sup>11</sup> SAK 20 b 2.

<sup>12</sup> SAK 44 g 2.

<sup>13</sup> SAK 44 g 2.

<sup>14</sup> SAK 56, 20.

<sup>15</sup> SAK 18, 6.

<sup>16</sup> SAK 18, 3.

<sup>17</sup> SAK 20 b 2.

<sup>18</sup> SAK 44 g 2.

<sup>19</sup> SAK 44 g 2.

<sup>20</sup> SAK l 1.

<sup>21</sup> SAK 44 e; KSA 98.

influence permeated and controlled society. There was nothing more real than the existence of the gods, and their worship was the people's most serious duty.

The central and most important building in a Sumerian city was the temple. The exact form and arrangement of the Sumerian temple as it existed in Early Lagash are unknown. There are only very scanty remains of Ningirsu's temple, and these date from the time of Ur-Bau and Gudea. But judging by our knowledge of the temple and temple-area at Nippur in the time of Ur-Engur, the temple itself was in the form of a rectangle with inner and outer chambers, and with a great tower or ziggurat.<sup>22</sup> The temple-area was irregular in form, but covering about six times as much ground as the temple. The Sumerian sign for temple is a rectangle with cross-bars, which points to the usual form of the earliest temples.

In Lagash there were, as we shall see, many temples, but the most important one stood in Girsu and was called É-ninnû. It was the temple of Ningirsu. In the other three quarters of the city, Ninâ, Uruazagga, and Uru, were important temples. But shrines and smaller temples were numerous.

Temples were usually constructed at the command of the gods. Thus Gudea was directed by his god to build a temple, and an interesting plaque<sup>23</sup> shows Ur-Ninâ, of Lagash, carrying a basket filled with material probably for the building of Ningirsu's temple. The historical inscriptions are full of references to the building or restoring of temples by the kings for various gods.<sup>24</sup>

Archaeological excavations teach us that the Sumerian temple was built of brick, but it was finished inside with wood.<sup>25</sup> It is likely that a temple could contain a chapel, for the term *éš* (e. g. *éš Gir-zu SAK 6 i*, etc.) is used in such a way, in relation to the regular term for temple, *é* (e. g. *é<sup>a</sup> Ninâ, SAK 4 e, 2*), that it seems to indicate a chapel.<sup>26</sup> There is

<sup>22</sup> If *é-PA* means temple tower (cf. Gudea St. G 1, 15) there is evidence that the tower was common in Early Lagash, e. g., *SAK 2a 4, 3; 6l 23*.

<sup>23</sup> *Déc. pl. 2 bis*.

<sup>24</sup> E. g. *SAK 2* etc.

<sup>25</sup> *SAK 2a 5*, etc.

<sup>26</sup> Contrast, however, *éš-DUG-RU* and *éš-gi gi-KA-na, SAK 30a 2-3; 32b*.

however no doubt about the meaning of *bár*. We read of the *bár* <sup>a</sup>*Enlil*, *bár* <sup>a</sup>*Ninḫarsag*, *bár* <sup>a</sup>*Ningirsu*, and *bár* <sup>a</sup>*Babbar* (*SAK* 38, 2, 14—18) in connections which leave the meaning doubtless. The Sumerian sign for *bár* is a square with strokes across the four sides, and indicates a simple square hut built of reeds. Another word used in a similar connection, *ti-ra-aš*, seems to indicate a palace chapel. Thus we meet not only with the phrase *é ti-ra-aš* (*SAK* 24*d* 2, 4) but also with *é-gal ti-ra-aš*. Now, while *é* may mean either a temple or room in a temple (*SAK* 42*b* 4, 2—4), yet the term *é-gal* always means palace, and the phrase *é-gal ti-ra-aš* would seem to mean palace-chapel (*SAK* 22, 7, 19).<sup>27</sup> The *bur-sag* was also a chapel. We read of a *bur-sag* of <sup>a</sup>*Bau* to which offerings were brought for her (*SAK* 46*h* 2, 1—3) and it is called an *é* temple, or room in a temple.<sup>28</sup> Still another word which may have been used for chapel is *mal-lu-ur*, although the context leaves the matter uncertain (*SAK* 46*h* 2, 4—6).

The more important temples had spacious yards or forecourts, where was usually to be found a well (*SAK* 28*i* 3), where, if we can judge from later use, a part of the service was performed.<sup>29</sup> Each temple had its store-houses and magazines, where dates (*é-engur-ra-kalumma*),<sup>30</sup> wine (*é-KAŠ-GAR*),<sup>31</sup> and corn (*kīrmaḫḫu*, Gudea, Cyl. A 28, 5—6) were kept.<sup>32</sup> From the account of Urukagina's reform we learn indirectly of the lands, oxen, and asses which the temples possessed, and how the priests had become rich and powerful.

Associated with some of the temples of important deities there was a sacred grove (*tir-azag*). Thus, Entemena built one for *Ninḫarsag* and also for *Ninâ* and for *Ninmaḫ*.<sup>33</sup> But whether any part of the temple service was conducted there it is impossible to say. It would seem, from inscriptions of the time of Gudea, that the grove was a garden where vines, palms and flowers were cultivated for use in the services of the temple.

In the temple itself were various objects the exact use of

<sup>27</sup> Contrast, however, Gudea, Cyl. A 10, 15—18.

<sup>28</sup> *SAK* 42*b* 4, 2—4.

<sup>29</sup> Gudea, Stat. E 4, 12*f*.

<sup>30</sup> *SAK* 30*a* 4, 2*ff*.

<sup>31</sup> *SAK* 42*b* 2, 6.

<sup>32</sup> *SAK* 38*n* 2, 19*f*.

<sup>33</sup> *SAK* 30*a* 5; 32*a* 2;

32*f* 29—30.

which cannot be always ascertained, although they were most likely used in connection with the services. Many of these objects were dedicated to the gods. Thus, in the temple of Ningirsu, in the time of Urukagina, was a *ki-AB*, which may have been a chapel (*SAK* 58*k* 5, 3*f*); and in the same reign a *ki-KU-akkil-lá-ni* was dedicated to Dunšagga (*SAK* 42*b* 2, 9). Other similar objects are referred to, e. g., *Hí-en-da-ka* (*SAK* 58. 5, 1), *Im-dub-ba* and *nam-nun-da-ki-gar-ra* (*SAK* 38, 2 and 4), *íb-gal-KA-KA-a-DU* (*SAK* 10*a* 4), *a-ḫus* (*SAK* 30*a* 3), *a-EDIN* and *nin-gar* (*SAK* 2*a* 3—4) *íb-gal* (*SAK* 2*b* 2—3), *ki-nir* (*SAK* 4*e* 3), and *URU-NIG* (*SAK* 4*f* 2). Besides these objects that cannot be identified, there were many others that were dedicated for use or for ornamentation in the temples. Such were, an onyx bowl dedicated to Bau by Ur-Ninâ (*SAK* 8*p*), the famous silver vase dedicated by Entemena to Ningirsu (*SAK* 34*h*), a stalagmite vessel dedicated to Dun-x by Entemena (*SAK* 34*g*); and various other vessels were dedicated to such deities as Ningirsu and Ninâ.<sup>34</sup> It was customary to dedicate war maces,<sup>35</sup> and plaques as votive offerings were probably attached to the walls of shrines and temples. Votive pillars and blocks of stone were also common,<sup>36</sup> and they may have been considered especially sacred because of some association with a deity or with some ceremonial act. Statues of deities were sometimes dedicated and erected in temples, where such deities were venerated.<sup>37</sup> Some of the objects in the temple bore names, such as, "Ningirsu interceded in the temple of Uruk with 'Bau for Urukagina',<sup>38</sup> and the furnishings of the temple were adorned with gold and silver.<sup>39</sup>

The chief temples of Lagash, in this early period, were:

*é-ninnû* of Ningirsu (*SAK* 34*h* 18—19)

*é-giš-pu-ra* of Ningirsu (*SAK* *d*)

*é-unug<sup>ki</sup>* of Ningirsu and Bau (*SAK* 44*d*)

*é-ad-da* of *im-šagga* of Enlil (*SAK* 30*a* 1 [Rückseite])

*é-an-na* of Innina (*SAK* 58*k* 5, 5)

*é-me-ḫuš-gal-an-ki* of Galalim (*SAK* 42*b* 3)

*é-engur* of Ninâ (*SAK* 58, 1 [Rückseite], 6—7)

<sup>34</sup> E. g. to Ningirsu by Enannatum, a *bur-sum-gaz* (*SAK* 28*a*); to Ninâ a *ḫum-mah* (*SAK* 28*k*). <sup>35</sup> E. g. *SAK* 31*c*; 34*i*.

<sup>36</sup> *SAK* 6*k*; 26*g*.

<sup>37</sup> E. g. *SAK* 2*b*, *c*; 4*c*.

<sup>38</sup> *SAK* 44*d*.

<sup>39</sup> *SAK* 36*m* 2; CMI No. 4, cols. 1—11.

There are other references to temples in Lagash which bore no specific name. Such as:

- é-Ningirsu (*SAK 4f 1*)
- é-Bau (*SAK 42b 3*)
- é-Ninâ (*SAK 2a 1*)
- é-Babbar (*SAK 44f*)
- é-Ama-geštin (*SAK 58k 2*)
- é-Dumuzi-abzu (*SAK 58k 5*)
- é-Gatumdug (*SAK 4e 4*)
- é-Ĝegir (*SAK 44c 26—30*)
- é-Impae, é-Urnuntae, and é-Zazari (*SAK 44g 2*)
- é-Anna (Innina) (*SAK 10a 4*)
- é-Lama (*SAK 44g 2, 6—8*)
- é-Lugaluru (*SAK 58k 1*)
- é-Nindar (*SAK 58k 5*)
- é-Nimmaĥ (*SAK 32f 27*)
- é-Ninmarki (*SAK 4c 3*)
- é-Ninšar (*SAK 42c 21—24*)

The king among the early Sumerians, as elsewhere, was the representative of the gods, and as such was the priest *par excellence*. In fact, the Sumerian king bore a title which marked him as the man of his god. He was called *patesi*. In Early Lagash this term was interchangeable with *lugal*, the word for king, for while we read of the *patesi* of a town or the *patesi* of a god we never find the phrase *patesi* of a king. Eannatum invariably styled himself *patesi*. Later it was looked upon as less kingly.<sup>40</sup> Sometimes the king was called *patesigal*, the great *patesi*, to represent his office as ideal high priest.

With the multiplication of royal duties, the king was gradually obliged to delegate his priestly acts to others. This began to be so before the earliest date of which we have historic records. Then there arose an official priesthood. But always the office of the priest remained a high one, and sometimes a royal person acted as an official priest. Thus, both Enetarzi and Enlitarzi were priests before they became *patesi* and king. Both were

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<sup>40</sup> C. Frank, *Studien zur Babylonischen Religion*, Strassburg, 1911, 38—42; *KSA 106n 1*.

priests of Ningirsu.<sup>41</sup> And Ili, priest of Ninab or Ninni-eš, was appointed by Entemena as *patesi* of Umma.<sup>42</sup> So important and influential was the priesthood that events were dated according to the time of their installation, e. g., *mu en maš-e-ni-pád*, the year the priest was installed;<sup>43</sup> *mu en ba-túg*, the year the priest was invested.<sup>44</sup> But their influence was often used to further their own interests, so much so that Urukagina's reform centered mainly around the excesses of the priesthood.

There were many classes of priests. The commonest priestly class was the *šangu* (Ideog. *ŠID*). The *šangu* was always the servant of some deity, such as Lugalkigalla, priest of Ningirsu,<sup>45</sup> Luenna, priest of Ninmarki;<sup>46</sup> or of some temple, such as the high priest of Girsu.<sup>47</sup> There were also palace priests.<sup>48</sup> At the head of the *šangu* stood the *šangu-mah*, or high priest. He was usually a very influential man. Thus, Dudu, high priest of Ningirsu, was called the servant of Entemena,<sup>49</sup> dates referred to him, and he was represented on bas reliefs.<sup>50</sup> Another priestly class was the *mušlahhu*. The word means serpent-driver, and points to some species of serpent-worship. There was a chief serpent-priest (*mušlalah-gal*),<sup>51</sup> and he is represented on the so-called family-bas relief,<sup>52</sup> wearing a short dress with plain body. He must have been a very important man to have been thus pictured with the royal family. A third class of priests was the *kalû*, whose fees were reduced by Urukagina.<sup>53</sup> And there was likewise a *kalamah* or chief *kalû*.<sup>54</sup> What their particular function was is not yet clear, although they would seem to have been connected with the musical department of the temple.<sup>55</sup> Other priestly classes were the *šutug*,<sup>56</sup> or anointers, at whose head stood the *šutug-nun-ne*, or great *šutug* (*pašišu*);<sup>57</sup> the *abaraku*, a kind of anointing priesthood;<sup>58</sup> and the *nâru*, a musical

<sup>41</sup> *Nou. Fouill.* I 52—53; *RTC* 16.

<sup>42</sup> *SAK* 38, 3—4.

<sup>43</sup> *KSTD* 103.

<sup>44</sup> *KSTD* 107.

<sup>45</sup> G. A. Barton, *Sumerian*

*Business and Administrative Documents*, Philadelphia, 1915, No. 2, rev. II.

<sup>46</sup> *Nou. Fouill.* I 52—53.

<sup>47</sup> *Amherst*, tablets in Brussels p. 12.

<sup>48</sup> *RTC* 61, 6.

<sup>49</sup> *CMI* No. 4, Col. III.

<sup>50</sup> *Déc.* pl. 5 *bis*,

fig. 2 et p. 205.

<sup>51</sup> *SAK* 8 γ 2.

<sup>52</sup> *Déc.* 2 *ter* 1; 2 *bis* 1.

<sup>53</sup> *SAK* 46 g 4, 2; *TSA* 9 I 72.

<sup>54</sup> *TSA* 2 rev. I.

<sup>55</sup> *SAK* 50,

10, 22; cf. Frank, op. cit. 6—7.

<sup>56</sup> *SAK* 46 l.

<sup>57</sup> *SAK* 44 g 4, 12.

<sup>58</sup> *SAK* 48 h 4, 4; cf. Frank, op. cit. 12 ff.

order.<sup>59</sup> There were also seers and diviners (*šul-dumu*),<sup>60</sup> but the *âšipu* and *bârû*, who became so famous later, as incantation priests, do not appear in the Early Lagash period. Some priests sacrificed and some took care of the food, etc., of the temple, but no distinguishing mark between them has as yet been discovered.

There were also priestesses, but they were not as common as the priests. The *nin-dingir*<sup>61</sup> priestesses were, in the Hammurapi period, cloistered nuns.<sup>62</sup> Priestesses were sometimes of royal blood, if we may judge from Lidda, the daughter of Ur-Ninâ, who held a high rank in the temple hierarchy.<sup>63</sup>

Very little can be learned about the personal habits and practices of Sumerian priests of this early period. It is, however, certain that they married (*RTC*16), and that they kept servants (*RTC* 16). It is probable that they lived on the lands of the temple.<sup>64</sup> A bas relief gives us a fair idea of the appearance of a priest.<sup>65</sup> It shows a beardless man, with upper part of the body and feet naked. Another plaque, but perhaps later than the period under consideration, has a bearded priest, dressed in a long mantle hanging from his left shoulder. His upper lip is shaven, and he wears a turban, similar to those known to have been worn during the Hammurapi period.<sup>66</sup>

The central act of worship in Early Lagash was the sacrifice. This was so much so that the temple was sometimes referred to as a place of offering.<sup>67</sup> In fact, the temple was the home of sacrificial worship.<sup>68</sup> The *res sacrificii* varied. Eannatum offered to Enzu of Ur a sacrifice of four doves,<sup>69</sup> to Babbar of Larsa two doves and bulls,<sup>70</sup> and to Ninḥarsag of Kish two doves.<sup>71</sup> To Enki of Eridu and to his daughter Ninâ fish were offered in sacrifice.<sup>72</sup> But the material of

<sup>59</sup> *SAK* 2, note a, no. 4.

<sup>60</sup> *RTC* 16.

<sup>61</sup> *SAK* 5, 10, 12.

<sup>62</sup> *KU* II 120b.

<sup>63</sup> Plaque of Ur-Ninâ, *Déc.* pl. 2 bis.

<sup>64</sup> *RA* 7, 182.

<sup>65</sup> *Déc.* pl. I, fig. 2, et p. 87—91.

<sup>66</sup> *Déc.* p. 251.

<sup>67</sup> E. g. *é šá-dúg-ka-ni*, temple of her (Bau)

offering, *SAK* 46 h 2, 2.

<sup>68</sup> E. g. *é šá-dúg an-na il-a-ni*, the temple where heavenly offerings are presented, *SAK* 44 c 32.

<sup>69</sup> *SAK* 16, 21.

<sup>70</sup> *SAK* 16, 1, 33—40.

<sup>71</sup> *SAK* 14, 18.

<sup>72</sup> *SAK* 14, 19;

*Amherst*, 1.

sacrifice was almost limitless. Animals, fish, birds, cakes, clothes, metals etc., were offered on various occasions.

Liquid offerings, or libations, were likewise common. Water was often offered<sup>73</sup> and fonts were built to contain such water (*SAK 2b 5*), of which there were several varieties, the *abzu* (*SAK 2b 5*), the *abzu-banda* (*SAK 4f 4, 6*) and the *abzu-pasirra* (*SAK 30a 5*). The water contained in these fonts may have been also used for other purposes. Libations of oil were common,<sup>74</sup> and in later times wine was offered in libation (*Gudea Cyl. B 5, 21*).

It is not possible to say with certainty whether or not the people of Early Lagash offered human sacrifice. There is, however, a significant picture on a plaque published by Ward in Curtiss, fig. 6, which depicts a sacrificial service. There is an altar with flames rising from the oil(?) offering. A kid and a bird are offered. Besides that there is a man seized by two others and brought towards the altar. There is no legend, but the scene suggests that the seized man is to be offered as a sacrifice. So far as I am aware, this is the only evidence for human sacrifice in Early Lagash. But this is far from conclusive.

In the inscriptions of Early Lagash there are a few places where offerings are mentioned in connection with the statues of human beings.<sup>75</sup> But there is here no evidence that such human beings are deified. There is nothing to show that these offerings were anything else than gifts placed beside the statue of human beings in their honour, in much the same way that we place wreaths on a statue. Otherwise, the offerings were made in the same way and for the same reason that the Sumerians of this early time placed drink, food, and a bed in the graves of the dead.<sup>76</sup>

Memorial or votive offerings were often placed in the temples. These usually took the form of inscribed plaques, with a hole

<sup>73</sup> Ward in Curtiss, fig. 8.

<sup>74</sup> Ward in Curtiss, fig. 7, where the flame indicates the burning oil.

<sup>75</sup> Thus, offerings were made in the reign of Lugalanda in connection with the statue of Ur-Ninâ, *KSA 169*; offerings were also made for the statue of Šagšag, wife of Urukagina, *TSA 34 VI* and rev. VI.

<sup>76</sup> *SAK 46g 5-6; 50, 9.*

in the centre, whereby they were suspended vertically on the walls. Other objects were offered as memorials, such, for example, as the clay object in the form of an inscribed olive offered in honour of Ningirsu by Urukagina (*SAK* 44).

Related to the sacrificial service, but not a sacrifice, was the service of dedication. Exactly what the form of this service was, it is impossible to say; even as it is impossible to say what were the details of the service of sacrifice. But the inscriptions are full of references to objects that were dedicated to the gods in the great temples of Lagash. We think at once of the great silver vase which Entemena dedicated to Ningirsu in É-ninnû to ensure the preservation of his own life (*SAK* 34*h*). It is one of the most precious objects which archaeology has recovered from the graves of the past. Ur-Ninâ dedicated a canal to Ninâ (*SAK* 2), and one to Enlil of Nippur (*KSA* 107); and a warrior dedicated his arms to Ningirsu.<sup>77</sup> The pouring of a libation sometimes accompanied a dedication service.<sup>78</sup>

The central object in divine service was the altar, which itself was a dedicated object. The earliest Sumerian altar was a square boxlike object with one high shelf at the back. On the altar was placed the material of sacrifice and on the shelf was usually set a vase. Ward in Curtiss, fig. 1, shows two flat cakes on the altar, with a vase, over which a libation is poured; fig. 2 represents an altar with a pile of cakes and a bird, probably a dove; fig. 3 shows an altar with cakes and the head of a goat, and a worshipper approaching with a goat in his arms; and fig. 4 depicts an altar with a cup, from which rises a flame, an indication of burning oil. A later, but still early, form of Sumerian altar was what has been called the hour-glass altar—an altar in the shape of an hour-glass. Ward in Curtiss, fig. 5, represents a marble altar from which rise two flames (or branches) and a worshipper approaches with an animal in his arms; fig. 6 shows an hour-glass altar with two flames (or branches), a kid, a bird, and a man being brought by two other men towards the altar; fig. 7 represents an altar with flames, and a worshipper who holds a goat on one arm and with the other pours a libation. He is attended

<sup>77</sup> *Déc.* pl. 1 *bis*, fig. 1, and p. 164—166.

<sup>78</sup> *KSA* 112.

by two persons, one with a pail, the other with cakes. Fig. 8 shows a double hour-glass altar, and a worshipper, who pours a libation from a slender vase. All these plaques with the exception of figures 5 and 6 show a god or goddess to whom the sacrifice is being offered. What have been called flames in some of these scenes may have been palm branches or flowers.<sup>79</sup> The hour-glass altar was very old; indeed, it may have been quite as old as the square altar, for it is the hour-glass altar which is seen in the oldest script. There it is represented with fire burning on the top.<sup>80</sup>

The ritual of the temple centered around the altar. There the deity was present with his symbols of office. The altar is usually represented as standing before the deity, and between him and the worshipper. In his presence the suppliant pours his libation or offers his sacrifice. The material of libation, water, oil or wine, is kept in a vase, but the material for sacrifice lies on the altar, or, in the case of animals, is brought to the altar by the worshipper. The suppliant is sometimes attended by servers who carry material for the sacrificial service. Sometimes the worshipper is led into the presence of the deity by a priest.<sup>81</sup>

The central figure in divine service is the priest. Ur-Ninâ, as *patesi*, presents his offerings to his god with bare feet and body, and when such high officials appear as suppliants on their own behalf they are led before the deity by a goddess. The priest, however, usually leads the ordinary worshipper before the altar, and it is the priest who does the manual acts. He stands nude before the altar, and presents the oblations, which he receives from the suppliant and his attendants, and reads the prayers.<sup>82</sup> The worshipper then stands with hands clasped upon the breast, or folded at the waist, or in a perpendicular position before the face, palms inward, in an attitude of humility, while the priest raises his hand in the attitude of adoration and prayer.<sup>83</sup> In some parts of the

<sup>79</sup> *Déc.* p. 211.

<sup>80</sup> Barton, *op. cit.* No. 1, Cols. II. 5, II. 6.

<sup>81</sup> These points are illustrated on the figures in Ward in Curtiss.

<sup>82</sup> *CMI* No. 4, Col. IV. <sup>83</sup> *Déc.* pl. 1 *bis*, fig. 1. See also S. Langdon, 'Gesture in Sumerian and Babylonian Prayer', *JRAS* 1919, 531—556, which came to hand after this article was composed.

service there is probably kneeling and bowing, if we may so conclude from the fact that even the god Ninsah kneels and bows before Ningirsu when he intercedes for the life of Urukagina.<sup>84</sup> When Eannatum prayed to Ningirsu for victory over Umma, he lay flat upon his face and saw in a dream his god who assured him that Babbar would advance at his right hand. Whether such prostrations were common in liturgical worship cannot at present be ascertained.

Music must have played a part in the temple ritual for we read of the 'chief temple singer'<sup>85</sup> in the time of Urukagina, and by the time of Gudea it was common. There may have also been religious processions, for from the time of Gudea we have detailed evidence of such a procession.<sup>86</sup> In this procession were four sacred ministers. The first carried in his hands a musical instrument, the second held a sort of adze, the third had his hands joined and in the attitude of prayer, and the fourth had his hands crossed on his breast. Following these was another person, with hands crossed, and a singing woman carrying a musical instrument. The deity is also depicted, as well as the bull for sacrifice. This scene may well have been often duplicated long before the time of Gudea and perhaps during the period of Early Lagash.

What use was made of onions in the temple service cannot be determined, but there is an account of Eannatum's presenting a mortar to the temple of Ningirsu for pounding onions in connection with the temple ritual (*SAK 28a*).<sup>87</sup> It is also uncertain whether the burial service was held in the temple. But considering the fact that the temple was the centre of all religious and civil life of the community, it is most likely that it was there that such important services were held. We gain a good idea of the ritual of a funeral ceremony from the Stela of the Vultures.<sup>88</sup> A bull, lying on his back and bound to a stake driven in the ground, is depicted, with a row of six lambs, or better, kids, decapitated. Then there are two large water pots in which are standing palm branches. A

<sup>84</sup> *SAK 42a 5; b 5.*

<sup>85</sup> *TSA No. 2, rev. I; No. 5, obv. II.*

<sup>86</sup> *Déc. p. 219—221.*

<sup>87</sup> For the oath as a temple ceremony and its ritual, see Mercer, 'The Oath in Sumerian Inscriptions', *JAOS* 33, 33—50.

<sup>88</sup> *Déc. passim.*

youth pours water for a libation, and bundles of faggots are near for the burning of the sacrifice. It is probably Eannatum himself who presides as priest. At any rate such ceremonies must have been quite elaborate, and have taken place before the altar in the temple.

A festival is usually the occasion of most elaborate ceremonies in divine service. There is abundant evidence that the Sumerians of Early Lagash observed many festivals. There was the Feast of Bau (*DP* 96, 5), the Feast of Dim-kú (*Nik.* 183, 2; *RTC* 35, 6), the Feast of Se-kú (*RTC* 35, 6), the Feast of Lugal-uru (*DP* 105, 7), the Feast of Ne-[gun]-ka (*Nik.* 187, 2) and the Feast of Ninâ (*RTC* 30, 2). When Ur-Ninâ built the Tirash, a festival in honour of Ningirsu was celebrated on the day of the New Moon. Then there were festivals of increase and of eating of grain (*RTC* 33). But of the ritual and ceremonial detail of these festivals we have no knowledge. In later times a New Year's feast was celebrated in Lagash in honour of the marriage of Ningirsu and Bau, when processions were held; in Babylonian and Assyrian times the *akitu* or Feast of the New Year was held with great ceremony; and in Assyrian times there was a 'Festival House', in which such ceremonies were probably held (*MDOG* Nr. 33). It may be assumed that the people of Early Lagash had their festivals on which processions and divine service were held, but for detailed information about them we must await further work of the archaeologist and linguist.

Divine service in Early Lagash was held in honour of many deities, but especially in that of Ningirsu and his consort Bau, in the great temple, É-ninnû, the cathedral of Lagash. There were other temples in Lagash; there were many priests and priestesses; but in É-ninnû we can safely suppose that the *patesi*, or priest-king, often pontificated as patriarch or archbishop. Under him served a whole hierarchy, beginning with the *Sangu-mah*, high-priest or bishop, and ending with the humblest of the clergy. They all had their part to play in the divine service, the details of which we may know better in the future. The central act of worship was the sacrifice, though there were also libations and other minor services of prayer, praise and dedication. Services varied in ritual according as they were more or less solemn, and we may be sure that on

great festivals the ceremonial was rich and varied. The norm of correct ceremonial was probably to be found in the great É-ninnû, where Ningirsu appeared in all his divinity, and where the royal *patesi* sometimes celebrated. Imagination must suffice, for the present, to enable us to see the stately procession of sacred ministers and choristers move in solemn manner towards the great altar, the presence of Ningirsu; to watch the genuflections, bowing, and prostrations; to see the sacrificial elements offered up with suiting dignity; to hear the music and solemn words of dedication and consecration; to see those varied colours, to hear those strange sounds and to experience the sensations which those far-off people felt as they took part in their service of prayer and praise, adoration and dedication, worship and sacrifice. The corner of the veil which separates us from a full knowledge of the life of the Ancient Orient has been raised, and we await with patience, but deep interest, its gradual lifting that we may attain a clearer and still clearer vision of it all.