

Choice in Sumerian

WILLIAM W. HALLO

Yale University

Line 14 of the great bilingual hymn to Shamash¹ reads, in the Assur version:²

lú níg-zí níg-si-sá bar-TAM.MA NI.IN.AG.AG - e n

kit-ta u mi-ša-ra te-be-er,

'you (Shamash) select law and order'.³ It has the odd distinction of being quoted three times in a single recent volume.⁴ R. Borger treats the line together with four variant texts as line 15 of the third station of the lustration-house ritual.⁵ A. Sjöberg discusses it in connection with a note on *bar-a₅* (AK) = *bêru*.⁶ The present writer invokes it to explain a divine attribute in an Old Babylonian building inscription to the sun-god.⁷

Borger, who describes the Assur version as a corrupt exemplar,⁸ prefers the Nineveh texts, which read:

níg-zí níg-si-sá bar-ta⁹ bí-íb-AG - e n.

He wavers between *bar-tam-ma NI-in-ag-ag-en* and *bar-tam ma-ni-in-ag-ag-en* as the better interpretation of the Assur text. Sjöberg reads the second half of the Assur line as:

bar UD ma-ni-in-AK.AK - e n

but regards it as an incorrect rendering of the expected *bar im-mi-in-AK - e n*.

1 F. Schollmeyer, *Hymen und Gebete an Šamaš* (Paderborn, 1912), no. 1.

2 E. Ebeling, *Literarische Keilschrifttexte aus Assur* (Berlin, 1953), no. 75.

3 Translation in *CAD B*, 212 c.

4 A. Sachs, ed., *Special Volume honoring Professor Albrecht Goetze* (= *JCS* 21 [1967] ; publ. 1969).

5 *Ibid.*, 3 (end).

6 *Ibid.*, 276 (beginning).

7 *Ibid.*, 97f. For a new duplicate to this text, see below.

8 *Ibid.*, 2 (beginning).

9 In 1971, I took the opportunity to collate K 4872 (Borger's Text A) again. Column I line 29 is as represented in the copy (V R 50), but in BAR.TA, the second sign is not completely preserved.

I saw only



K.4654+ (Borger's Text F) preserves *bar-ta* [...] (not collated).

In defense of the Assur reading, however, I can offer not only the Old Babylonian reference to *níg-gi-e bar-TAM-e* in a monumental text for Utu from the reign of Sin-iddinam of Larsa cited in *JCS* 21 (1967), 97, but also a very similar allusion in a literary letter-prayer from the same king to the same deity.¹⁰ Here the sun-god is apostrophized, *inter alia*, as:

níg-si-sá ki-ág(a) níg-zi bar-TAM,

'enamored of righteousness, choosing justice'.

The same characteristic association of Utu (Shamash) and righteousness with the compound verb *bar-TAM* is already attested in neo-Sumerian times. In the 32-line clay cones to Nanna from Lagash commemorating Ur-Nammu's digging of the Nanna-gugal canal,¹¹ lines 15-18 read.

di-níg-gi-na / d^utu-ta / bar bí-TAM / KA bí-gi-in.

T. Jacobsen translated these lines as "In accordance with the righteous verdict of Utu he had the underlying facts¹² cleared up and confirmed by witnesses."¹³ In view of their context, they may perhaps equally well be understood as "In accordance with the righteous verdict of the sun-god he voted and settled the (border-) dispute." For *KA...gi-in* in a similar context, note the recurrent subscripts confirming the provincial borders in the Cadastre of Ur-Nammu.¹⁴ For the possible reading of the compound, one may perhaps compare the related noun *inim-gi-na*.¹⁵

The compound verb *bar-TAM* can be traced even further back. A collection of Sumerian court cases from Sargonic Nippur published by G. G. Hackman¹⁶ and newly edited by D. O. Edzard¹⁷ uses the verb three times in the context of litigation (*di-du₁₁*). Each time it follows the obscure phrase *sag gu-šè*; the meaning appears to be that the court found in favor of the plaintiff.¹⁸

10 Based on unpublished texts from Oxford and Philadelphia which I owe to the courtesy of O. R. Gurney and M. Civil and A. Sjöberg respectively. They will be edited in my forthcoming study of the Royal Correspondence of Larsa.

11 *SAKI* 188i; D. O. Edzard, *Sumer* 13 (1957), 176; J. -M. Aynard, *RA* 54 (1960), 16.

12 For *bar* = (*w*)*arkatu*, cf. most recently *MSL* 13 (1971), 50, line 332.

13 Apud H. and H. A. Frankfort, *Intellectual Adventure of Ancient Man* (Chicago, 1946), 195 and *Iraq* 22 (1960), 178.

14 F. R. Kraus, *ZA* 51 (1955), 64f.; idem, *Bi.Or.* 15 (1958), 74. Cf. also Edzard, *Sumer* 13 (1957), 18lf., where *KA-ta...è* is used in the same context.

15 W. G. Lambert, "The reading of the name *uru.KA.gi-na*," *Or.* 39 (1970), 419.

16 *BIN* 8 (1958), 154.

17 *Sumerische Rechtsurkunden des III. Jahrtausends* (Munich, 1968), no. 91.

18 The following constructions are actually attested:

lines 9f.: [*s a g*] [*g u*-šè [*b a r*] [*i* (or [*i n*)] - *n a* - TAM;

lines 24f.: *s a g g u*-šè [*b a r*] [*b í* - TAM;

lines 42f.: *s a g g u*-šè [*b a r*]^{??} [*m*]-*m i* - TAM.

These contexts, then, favor the translation 'select, prefer, choose' for the Sumerian compound *b a r - TAM*. Since we lack explicit lexical evidence for this inductive conclusion,¹⁹ we must try to substantiate it from semantic and etymological considerations. The semantic field of 'choice' in both Sumerian and Akkadian appears to be most often tied to that of visual inspection or examination. In Sumerian, this is clear from verbs composed with the logogram for 'eye' such as *i g i - KÁR*, *u₆ (IGI + DUB)* or *p à d (IGI + ŠUB)* and may also underlie the equation *i - g i - i n - z u = šutātû*.²⁰ In Akkadian, the transition from 'inspect, examine' to 'select' is more or less clear in verbs like *atû* (and its derivative *itûtu*), *bêru*, *dagālu*, *hâru*, *hâšu*, *hâtu*, *naplusu*, *nasāqu*, *pâru* and *še'û*.

But side by side with these verbs, we find others, at least in Sumerian, which seem to relate to the semantic field of 'taking the hand, taking the side, choosing sides'. Thus we read that Ningirsu selected the rulers of Lagash—Entemena out of 3,600 men, Uru-KA-gina and Gudea out of 216,000— and each time the verb used is *š u - d í b*.²¹ Whether we take this literally as 'seize the hand (of the chosen person)' or as 'hand-pick (i.e., with the hand of the deity)',²² the image conveyed is that of physical contact between chooser and chosen, rather than mere visual inspection. Physical touch also seems to underlie the equations involving Sumerian *z a g*, literally 'side', as in *pâru*, 'to seek', which translates Sumerian *z a g*; *bêru*, 'to select, examine' which translates both *z a g* and *z à g (ŠID)*; and *nasāqu*, which translates *z à g*. It is in this light that we may perhaps regard *b a r* when equated with *bêru* and in our compound, for the basic meaning of *b a r* is also 'side, outside'.²³

Etymologically, then, it can be argued that *b a r - TAM* contains the idea of 'take sides, choose sides'. And in fact *t a m* seems to have the meaning 'choose, prefer' in the kinship term *d a m - t a m*, 'the preferred wife' (Akkadian *hîrtu*), which occurs already in the Ur-Nammu Code.²⁴ This appears to be the earlier and better form of later *d a m - d a m*.²⁵ The same word, written *d a m - t a m - m a* and glossed *t a - m a*, is also attested in the meaning 'husband (of the preferred wife?)' (Akkadian *hâ'iru*), but only lexically.²⁶ Whether the respective synonyms *m í - n i t a - d a m*

19 For *b a r - t a m (UD)* without gloss or translation in an Old Babylonian lexical text, see now *MSL* 13 (1971), 50, line 338.

20 Cf. *CAD A/2*, s.v. *atû*, and most recently C. Wilcke, *JNES* 27 (1968), 230 and 238f.

21 For the passages involved, see D. O. Edzard, *Sumer* 15 (1959), 21.

22 Cf. Jacobsen, *ZA* 52 (1957), 126, n. 78; reprinted in *Toward the Image of Tammuz (=HSS 21 [1970])*, 387. In support of this analysis, note also the doubly compound verb *z à...š u - d i*, "hand-pick the side, support, ally oneself with," as in the date formula Rim-Sin 25, for which see Edzard, *Zweite Zwischenzeit* (Wiesbaden, 1957), 158 and n. 844. But note *á¹ - d i b* in *Stele of Vultures IV*, 19.

23 F. Delitzsch, *Sumerisches Glossar* (Leipzig, 1914), 64f.

24 J. J. Finkelstein, *JCS* 22 (1969), 68, line 241 and commentary, p. 73 *ad* paragraph 6.

25 *TCL* 6:53 r. 14f.; cf. *CAD H*, 200b and now *MSL* 12 (1969), 125, lines 48 and 55. Note also *d a m - d a m = alti mûti* (ibid., line 58); *MÍ - [d a m - d a m] = ikîšu* (ibid., 104, line 22).

26 *CAD H*, 31 b. Cf. now *MSL* 12, 125, line 50.

and *n i t a - d a m*²⁷ also go back to earlier forms in *t a m* is not clear. In any case the Sumerian evidence seems to favor the reading of TAM as *t a m* and reopens the case for the translation of *h̄aru* A by 'select'²⁸ since *t a m* is now seen to be equated equally with *h̄aru* and with *b̄eru*.

This granted, the rare form *b a r - t a m...AK*. (AK), with which we started, can be explained as a typical periphrastic construction, employing AK in its common auxiliary-verb function to create a doubly compound verb on the pattern of *p a - è...AK*, and expressing the sense 'make a selection'. If the idea of selection inhered in both *b a r* and *t a m*, this made for a somewhat redundant compound. But in any case, it tended to give way to the simpler *b a r - AK*. This process may well have been accelerated by the reading of the verbal element AK which, according to Sjöberg's study of the compound,²⁹ was here not *ak* or *aka*³⁰, but *a*₅.

The reading *a*₅ for AK in the meaning *epēšu*, 'make, do', is attested by the side of such others as *n à*, *m e*₆ and *k i*.³¹ Sjöberg proposes this reading for the compound verb *b a r - AK* on the basis of an unpublished lexical text which he restores as:

[b a] - r a - a = b a r - AK = *i-b[i-i]r-ru*.

If his restoration is correct, it may be proposed that *b a r - a*₅ = *b̄eru* belongs to a group of "playful orthographies" in which the conventional Sumerian spelling of certain compound verbs is intentionally assimilated to the pronunciation of the Akkadian equivalent in order to lend a spurious appearance of cognate relationship to these purely semantic correspondences.³² Note, for example, *s a*₁₂ - r i g₇ = *šarāku*, 'donate',³³ *k a - s i r* = *kašāru*, 'cluster, as of clouds',³⁴ *s a - g a z*, *s a g - g a z*³⁵ and possibly *š a g a*_x (LÚ.KÁR) - *š è*³⁶ = *šagāšu*, 'murder, pillage', and *k a - š a - a n - š a - š a* = *iktanaššāš*, 'overpower'.³⁷ The practice is especially popular with Sumerian

27 Ibid., lines 51f.

28 Contra CAD H₃, 120a.

29 JCS 21 (1969), 275f., with literature. Note that for line 11 of the Nungal hymn, the unpublished duplicate YBC 4667 has:

é - z i é - NE. ¹RU b a r i m¹ - AK - d è...

For another alleged example of *b a r - AK* in R.-R. Jestin and M. Lambert, *Contribution au Thesaurus de la langue sumerienne* 2 (1955), s.v., cf. now J. Krecher, *Sumerische Kultlyrik* (Wiesbaden, 1966), 177 and n. 503.

30 A. Falkenstein, *Grammatik, An. Or.* 28 (Rome, 1949), 13, 154.

31 CAD E, 192c. For the lexical sources, see Jestin and Lambert, *Thesaurus* 2, 2. For *n à*, cf. also E. Sollberger, *TCS* 1 (Locust Valley, 1966), 154f.

32 See already my remarks apud H. Lewy, *Or.* 27 (1958), 15, n. 3.

33 Ibid.

34 "The sign KĒŠ has the reading *s i r* in the compound KA.KĒŠ when it means cluster said of clouds" is the sense of the lexical entry quoted (and restored) in CAD K, 257 (end), s.v. *kašāru*.

35 See already Landsberger, *Kleinasiatische Forschungen* 1 (1927), 322.

36 So E. E. Knudsen, *Iraq* 21 (1959), 60f., but differently idem, *Iraq* 26 (1964), 168 (ad lines 23f.).

37 CAD K, s.v. *kašāšu* A; cf. B. Kienast, *Or.* 26 (1957), 45-50. Kienast (p. 45) regards the

compounds in $\check{s}u$ 'hand.' Sumerian verbs compounded with parts of the body are particularly common, and generally resulted in Akkadian loan translations.³⁸ But some Sumerian compounds in $\check{s}u$ form an exception to this rule, for they were by preference artificially equated with Akkadian verbs in the \check{S} -stem. Note, for example, $\check{s}u - ba\ la - (a_5) = \check{s}up\hat{e}lu$, 'alter, exchange, violate',³⁹ $\check{s}u - l\acute{a} = \check{s}ute''ulu$ (from * $\check{s}\acute{u}lu$), 'tie or wring the hands',⁴⁰ $s\ u - \check{h}\ a - z\ a = s\check{u}h\check{u}zu$, 'instruct, overlay etc.', $s\ u - s\ u - b = \check{s}\check{u}supu$, 'collect',⁴¹ and $\check{s}u - p\ e\ \check{s}_5 = \check{s}ab\check{a}\check{s}u, \check{s}ib\check{s}u$, '(take) a third part as rent, tax etc'.⁴² Sometimes the same effect is even, it appears, achieved with the help of the inflected Sumerian form, as when $m\ u - e - \check{s}\ i - b\ a$ (var. $- \acute{i}\ b$) - $r\ a - a\ \check{s}$ or $b\ a - d\ a - a\ b - r\ a - a\ \check{s}$ is used (instead of a corresponding form from the root $d\ a\ l$) for $napru\check{s}u$, 'to fly, flutter'.⁴³ Given these examples, the equation $b\ a\ r - a_5 = b\hat{e}ru$ fits into a well-established pattern.

In this connection, it may be noted that the crucial $a\check{s}a-ar$ BA.AḤ.RA $i\text{-}zi\text{-}bu$ of the Old Babylonian itinerary remains enigmatic. Of the translations proposed,⁴⁴ 'where the elite guard girded (or: where the chariot broke down)', the former, ultimately deriving BA.AḤ.RA from $b\hat{e}ru$, still seems preferable. The latter was based partly, though not wholly,⁴⁵ on a vague analogy with an alleged BA.ḤAR.UŠ.KA which, it is now clear, is actually Akkadian $la\text{-}har\text{-}u\check{s}\text{-}ka$ ($la\text{-}har\text{-}u\check{s}\text{-}\check{s}u$).⁴⁶

In conclusion, I wish to take this opportunity to signal a new and very fragmentary duplicate to the Sin-iddinam inscription which inspired the foregoing discussion.⁴⁷ The text belongs to the collection of the Crozer Theological Seminary (Chester, Pennsylvania), which was catalogued and in part copied by the late A. Goetze. He assigned it the museum number 2 and described it as "Top of limestone cylinder. Diameter 61. Maximum height 39." The preliminary pencil drawing was found among his unpublished copies which are now being prepared for posthumous publication. It is presented here without modification, together with a transliteration restored from

Sumerian verb as a loanword from Akkadian. Outright loans in either direction, however, are largely confined to nouns (and a few interjections). With Falkenstein, therefore, it may be best to consider the Akkadian reduplication form as "durch Angleichung an das Sumerische entstanden"; see *Haupttypen*, LSS NF 1 (Leipzig, 1931), 48, n. 1.

38 See the classic studies by E. Dhorme, *L'emploi métaphorique des noms de parties du corps en hébreu et en akkadien* (Paris, 1923) reprinted from *Revue Biblique* (1920-23) and A. L. Oppenheim, "Idiomatic Accadian," *JAOS* 61 (1941), 251-71.

39 See the bilingual and lexical references in Jestin and Lambert, *Thesaurus* 2, s.v.

40 W. W. Hallo and J. J. A. van Dijk, *The Exaltation of Inanna*, *YNER* 3 (1968), 59, n. 59 and 90f., s.v.

41 See *CAD E*, s.v. $e\check{s}\acute{e}pu$.

42 M. J. Ellis, "Taxation and Land Revenues in the Old Babylonian Period" (Ph.D. diss., Yale University, 1969), 94. Cf. W. L. Moran, *Analecta Biblica* 12 (1959), 258f., n. 2.

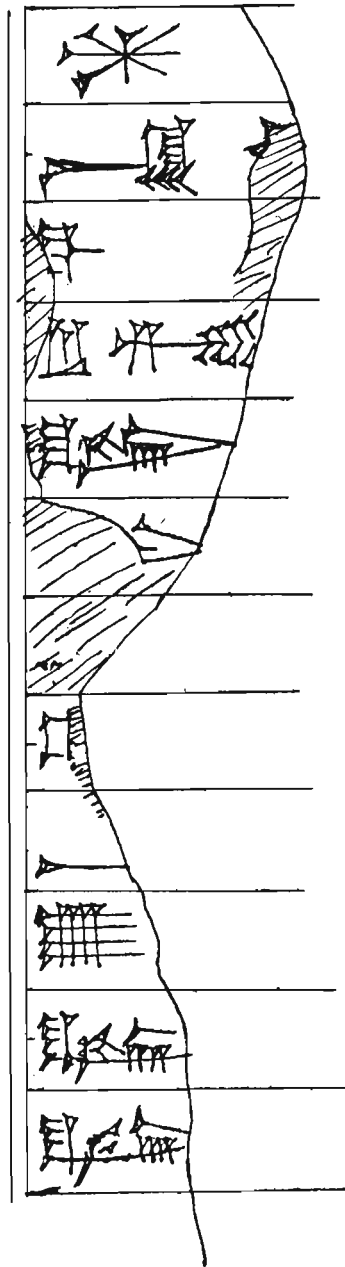
43 Hallo and van Dijk, *YNER* 3 (1968), 6, n. 42; 72, s.v. $b\ a\ (r)$.

44 Hallo, *JCS* 18 (1964), 65.

45 *Ibid.*, 80.

46 Civil, *JAOS* 88/1 (= *Essays in Memory of E. A. Speiser*, *AOS* 53, 1968), 8f. and n. 54.

47 Above, n. 7.



Crozer 2: Top of Limestone Cylinder

the well-preserved stone tablet (*JCS* 21, 97f.). Clearly both the tablet and the limestone cylinder originally formed part of a foundation deposit of Ebabbar, the temple of Shamash at Larsa.

- d [U t u]
 e n d[i - k u r u ₅ a n - k i]
 g a l - [z u e š - b a r]
 n í g - g i - [e b a r - t a m - e]
 5) l u g a l [é - b a b b a r - r a]
 l [u g a l - a - n i - i r]
 [d E N . Z U - i - d i n - n a - a m]
 s i [p a n í g - n a m d u g - d u g]
 E [N . L Í L . K I]
 10) ú - [a Š E Š . A B . K I - m a]
 l u g a l [U D . U N U . K I - m a]
 l u g a l [k i - e n - g i k i - u r i - k e ₄]

For lines 13-25, and a translation, see the *editio princeps*. Although the new duplicate adds nothing to the text of the inscription, it is significant in its own right. The kings of Larsa, more specifically its last two principal dynasties, those of Nur-Adad and Kudur-mabuk, reintroduced the practice of inscribed foundation deposits which had gone out of use in the Early Old Babylonian period.⁴⁸ The stone foundation tablet from the Walters Art Gallery was the first example of this genre.⁴⁹ And these same kings were the first to add some kind of cylinder to the repertoire of inscribed foundation deposits, beginning with the copper cylinders of Nur-Adad.⁵⁰ The so-called David Hollow Barrel Shaped Cylinder of Sin-iddinam may or may not have been part of a foundation deposit,⁵¹ but there can be little doubt in the case of our Crozer Cylinder, since its text as far as preserved exactly duplicates that of a stone foundation tablet. Where did the later Larsa kings draw their inspiration for the various cylinder forms? The Hollow Barrel Cylinder has been compared to the "net cylinders" of Entemena,⁵² and the new cylinder may be compared to the famous cylinders of Gudea celebrating the rebuilding of the temple of Ningirsu. Neither of these forerunners are demonstrably foundation deposits. But they may provide still further examples of the extent to which the successive Old Babylonian dynasties of Larsa imitated the ancient traditions of Lagash, whose heirs they considered themselves to be. I hope to demonstrate this thesis more fully in another connection.

48 R. S. Ellis, *Foundation Deposits*, *YNER* 2 (1968), 159 and n. 10.

49 Hallo, *JCS* 21 (1967), 97.

50 See now Sollberger, *UET* 8 (1965), 67.

51 Ellis, *YNER* 2 (1968), 115 and n. 42.

52 S. Langdon, *OECT* 2 (1923), 27.

ADDENDA

The meaning suggested above for *t a m* seems also to explain the equation *t a m - m a = talīmu*, "favorite (brother)."⁵³ The meaning suggested for *b a r - t a m* is borne out by the examples of *b a r - t a m - m e* now collected by Sjöberg,⁵⁴ chiefly in the context of justice and righteousness. Perhaps this formation and *b a r - t a m - e* represent periphrastic constructions with the auxiliary *d u₁₁ / e* (instead of *a k* or *g á l*). To the type of playful orthographies discussed above, Kraus has now applied the term "attraction paronymique."⁵⁵

An interesting juxtaposition of *b a r - A G* and *b a r - t a m - A G* occurs in the Kassite seal inscription Brett 82,⁵⁶ recently re-edited by Limet;⁵⁷ according to a reading suggested by Tikva Frymer, it begins: *d i₇ - l ú - r u - g ú / m u - l u k i b a r - a₅ - a / m u - l u z i b a r - t a m a₅ - a*. I am indebted to her also for the suggestion that Erimhuš II 130, quoted in *CAD E*, 4 as *m a š - z a l á g = ubbubu*, should perhaps be read as *b a r¹ - t a m¹*.⁵⁸

53 *MSL* 12, 109:188; cf. Wilcke, *ZA* 59 (1969), 66.

54 *ZA* 63 (1973), 44 and n. 10.

55 *Vom Mesopotamischen Menschen* (Amsterdam-London, 1973), 112.

56 H. H. v. d. Osten, *OIP* 37 (Chicago, 1936), no. 82.

57 H. Limet, *Les Légendes des Sceaux Cassites* (Brussels, 1971), 114f.

58 Cf. *CT* 18:44 ii 49. Note [*t a*] *m - m a* and *t a m - t a m - m a = ubbubu* quoted *AHW.*, 181.