

AKKADIAN HYMN TO THE SETTING SUN

TRANSLATED BY G. BERTIN.

THE following hymn is interesting because it appears to have formed part of the Babylonian ritual. In each temple, at certain hours of the day and night, priests devoted to this office had to recite certain prayers or incantations. We possess in the British Museum (Table case A, Nos. 4 and 4a) two copies of this hymn. The first one is no doubt the temple copy, and the colophon gives the time at which it is to be repeated by the priest. The other tablet is what might be called an *ex-voto* copy. When ill, the Babylonians, as the Christians of the middle ages, made certain promises to the gods in case of recovery; the fulfilment of the vow was generally a tablet which was to be placed in the temple. The same custom prevailed also in Greece, but in Babylonia, literature being the most highly-prized branch of the Fine Arts, the *ex-voto* was as a rule the copy of an old tablet.

This hymn appears to have been composed in Akkadian, the religious language of Babylon, but is given with an interlinear translation in Assyro-

Babylonian; the translation sometimes offers slight divergences from the original text, which have been noticed in the notes.

A point to be observed is that the moon, who was generally considered as a male god, is here regarded as a goddess consort of the Sun-god. In the *ex-voto* copy she is called the sister of the Sun. We might conclude from this variant that the Moon, in the Babylonian as in the Egyptian mythology, was sister and wife of the Sun.

Throughout the hymn there seems to be a certain Semitic or Hamitic rather than Akkadian under-current of thought.

Both copies are written in the later Babylonian style of writing, and date probably from the reign of Nebuchadnezzar the Great. The text has been published, with a French translation and notes by myself, in the *Revue d'Assyriologie*, vol. i. part iv.

HYMN TO THE SETTING SUN

O Sun, in the middle of the sky, at thy setting,
may the bright gates welcome thee favourably,¹
may the door of heaven be docile to thee.
May the god director,² thy faithful messenger, mark the way!
In E-BARA,³ seat of thy royalty, he makes thy greatness
shine forth.
May the Moon, thy beloved spouse,⁴ come to meet thee
with joy.⁵
May thy heart rest in peace.
May the glory of thy godhead remain with thee.
Powerful hero, O Sun! shine gloriously.⁶
Lord of E-BARA, direct in thy road thy foot rightly.
O Sun, in making thy way, take the path marked for thy
rays!
Thou art the lord of judgments over all nations.

COLOPHON OF THE TEMPLE COPY

This is the hymn to the setting sun, the incantator⁷ says
it after the beginning of the night.

¹ The Assyrian version has "speak of peace to thee."

² This is the god who walked in front of the Sun, the forerunner.

³ E-bara is the name of the temple of the Sun-god.

⁴ One of the two copies says "thy beloved sister;" the Moon was considered sometimes as wife, sometimes as sister of the Sun, as perhaps being both.

⁵ The Assyrian has "go in front of thee."

⁶ The Assyrian has "glorify thyself."

⁷ This is the name of a class of priests, whose functions were to repeat certain prayers or incantations at certain hours.

First line of the next Tablet.

O Sun, rising in the shining sky. ¹

Tablet which Nabu-damik, son of has copied and translated from the old copy.

COLOPHON OF THE EX-VOTO COPY.

Nabu-balatsu-ikbi, son of E-sagilian, for the preservation of his life has had this tablet written for Nebo, his lord, by Nabu-epis-akhi, son of E-sagilian, and placed it in the temple E-ZIDA.

¹ When tablets formed a series, each one always gave at the end the first line of the next tablet of the series. In this case the line is important, because, as the hymn to the setting sun is given first, it shows that the Babylonians, like the Jews, placed the night first.

END OF SAMPLE TEXT



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