

# Akkadian *labān appi* in the Light of Art and Literature

MAYER I. GRUBER  
Spertus College of Judaica

Such authorities as E. Ebeling,<sup>1</sup> W. G. Lambert,<sup>2</sup> and W. von Soden<sup>3</sup> have asserted unequivocally that the Akkadian expression *appa labānu* refers to prostration. *CAD L*, 12a, however, departs radically from the usual rendering of *appa labānu*:

As the Sum. shows, the phrase *appa labānu* denotes a gesture involving both nose and hand, meant to express humility toward gods, kings and human beings. Though listed among the synonyms for praying, *appa labānu* seems to denote the gesture accompanying a supplication, a prayer for mercy, the expression of complete obedience, etc. For a possible representation of the gesture on a relief, see Jacobsen, *OIP* 24 p. 38 n. 46 and *ZA* 52 110 n. 38, Nougayrol, *Syria* 33 159 n. 3.

A perusal of the literature dealing with *appa labānu* reveals a long-standing controversy as to the identity of the gesture described by the expression *appa labānu* and as to the significance of the gesture in question. The editors of *CAD*, however, have presented their view of *appa labānu* as if von Soden's dictionary and Lambert's *Babylonian Wisdom Literature* were either non-existent or of insufficient authority to bear mention. An examination of the basis of the widely-held identification of *appa labānu* with prostration justifies both *CAD*'s rejection of it and *CAD*'s failure to call attention to such a view.

The equation of *appa labānu* with prostration goes back to Harri Holma's monumental *Die Namen der Körpertheile im Assyrisch-babylonischen* (Leipzig, 1911). There the author

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1 Ebeling, "Gebet," in Max Ebert, ed., *Reallexikon der Vorgeschichte* (Berlin, 1926), 4:184; so also passim in *Handerhebung*.

2 Lambert, *BWL*, 77, renders Theodicy, l. 73 *illabān appi u tēmeqi eše'e ištartī* "With prostration and prayer I followed my goddess."

3 Von Soden, *AHw.*, 522; idem, "Gebet II," in Ernst Weidner, ed., *Reallexikon der Assyriologie*, (Berlin, 1964), III/3:161a. *CAD I/J* (1960), 271b, likewise renders *labān appi* in Theodicy, l. 73 'prostration'; the same translation is found also in *CAD A*<sup>2</sup> (1968), 187a, quoting K. 10622:9' (a ritual against bad dreams): *qaqqadka tepetti appaka [talabbin]* "You bare your head; you prostrate yourself."

asserts that *appa labānu* means 'die Nase platt machen'.<sup>4</sup> Furthermore, he explains, it refers to "indem man sich als Zeichen der tiefsten Unterwürfigkeit zu Boden wirft."<sup>5</sup> Most revealing of the flimsy basis upon which this widely accepted interpretation of *appa labānu* was established is Holma's proof. To validate his rendering Holma does not cite any text containing the expression *appa labānu*. Instead he refers the reader to *VAT 4105* Col. II. lines 8f.,<sup>6</sup> which is the Old Babylonian version of *Gilgamesh X*, ii.<sup>7</sup> Lines 5–9 of that text read as follows

<i>urri u mūši elišu abki</i>	Day and night I mourned him, <sup>8</sup>
<i>ul addiššu ana qebrim</i>	I did not inter him (hoping that)
<i>ebriṃan itabbiam ana rigmīya</i>	my friend might resurrect at my word.
<i>sibit ūmim u sibi mūšiātīm</i>	Seven days and seven nights
<i>adi tultum imqut ina appišu</i>	until a worm fell from his nose. <sup>9</sup>

It is clear that Holma posits an idiom \**ina appi maqātu* 'fall on the face'.<sup>10</sup> The supposed existence of such an idiom corresponding to Hebrew *qādad* 'appayim'<sup>11</sup> apparently has led

4 Holma, *Körperteile*, 18; cf. André Parrot and Jean Nougayrol, "Asarhaddon et Naqi'a sur un bronze du Louvre (AO 20.185), "Syria 33 (1956), 150: 'l'aplatissement du nez'.

5 Holma, *Körperteile*, 19.

6 Loc. cit., n. 1.

7 R. Campbell Thompson, *Gilgamesh*, 53.

8 On Akkadian *bakû* 'weep', in the secondary sense 'mourn', cf. French 'pleurer' (= German 'weinen', intransitive), 'weep', 'pleurer' (= German 'beweinen', transitive), 'mourn'; see also the full discussion in Chapter VII of my forthcoming dissertation, "Aspects of Nonverbal Communication in the Ancient Near East" to be presented to the Department of Middle East Languages and Cultures, Columbia University.

9 Reading *adi* instead of *akê* with Speiser in *ANET*<sup>3</sup>, 90a and Heidel, *Gilgamesh*, 70. On the meaning of the suffix *man* in l. 7 see von Soden, *GAG*, §152d.

10 E. Dhorme, *L'emploi métaphorique des noms de parties du corps en hébreu et en akkadien* (Paris, 1923), 81, apparently also understands *Gilg. X*, ii:9 as a reference to an idiom *ina appi maqātu* 'il est tombé sur son nez'. He explains both this idiom and *appa labānu* as follows: "Baisser le nez sera le symbole de l'humilité. Au lieu de dire 'tomber sur sa face' devant un supérieur, on dira qu'on tombe sur son nez ou plus souvent encore qu'on tombe le nez à terre."

11 For Heb. *qādad* 'appayim' 'fall on the face', referring to a posture of divine worship see *Neh.* 8:6 and *2 Chr.* 20:18; referring to a posture of obeisance to mortals see *1 Sam.* 24:8; *28:14*; and *1 Kgs.* 1:31; for Akkadian *appa qadādu* 'fall on the face', referring to a posture of obeisance see R. Frankena, *AbB.* 2, #106:25–27: *adi ištu Bābilim atūrakkum anūmīšūma appī aqdu* "When I returned to you from Babylon I immediately fell on my face." Contrast Ungnad, *Babylonische Briefe*, 83: 'ward ich bekümmert' and *CAD A*<sup>2</sup>, 147a: 'I became crestfallen'; thus Ungnad and *CAD* equate *appī aqdu* with *appa quddud* 'the face is fallen' (= Heb. *nāp<sup>el</sup>lū pānīm*; see *Gen.* 4:5–6), a characteristic symptom of depression. For the latter see Descent of Ishtar, *CT* 15, pl. 45–48, r. 1: *Papsukal sukāl ilāni rabūti quddud appašu pānūšu [adrū]* "As for Papsukal, vizier of the great gods, his face was fallen, his countenance was gloomy." It should be observed, however, that in the locution *appa quddud* the verb *quddud* is a stative referring to an involuntary somatic reaction while in the locution *appī aqdu* the verb *aqdu* is an active one referring to a deliberately assumed symbolic posture.

Holma to reason by a kind of *g<sup>l</sup>zêrâb šāwāb*<sup>12</sup> that Akkadian *appa labānu*, which, like Heb. *qādad 'appayim*, occurs in worship contexts, must also refer to prostration. Recent scholarship seems to have adhered to the rendering of *appa labānu* as 'prostrate oneself' largely because of reasoning similar to Holma's. Where Holma interprets *appa labānu* on the analogy of a non-existent *\*ina appi maqātu*, later scholars prefer the analogy of the *hapax legomenon* *appa enû*<sup>13</sup> attested in Ludlul II, 14 or that of *appa qadādu*.<sup>14</sup>

Stephen Langdon seems to have been the first to depart from the rendering of *appa labānu* as 'prostration'. In his article, "Gesture in Sumerian and Babylonian Prayer," *JRAS* 1921, 550–52, Langdon presents three arguments against the older rendering. These may be summarized as follows: (1) the logographic writing points to a gesture involving the hand and the mouth; (2) the same logograms describe "the act of an interceding god who conducts his protégé by the hand"; (3) Sennacherib's Bavian inscription (see Figure 1) tells that Sennacherib commissioned a relief of himself portrayed in the posture *appa labānu* to be sculpted upon Mt. Tas. The Bavian sculpture clearly does not show Sennacherib prostrating himself.

*CAD L*, 12a has essentially accepted Langdon's first argument and restated it concisely. *CAD*'s reference to Jacobsen's *OIP* 24, p. 38, n. 46<sup>15</sup> is, in fact, a reference to a restatement of Langdon's third argument while *ZA* 52, p. 110, n. 38<sup>16</sup> refers the reader back to *OIP* 24 as does Nougayrol in *Syria* 33.<sup>17</sup> Strangely enough, neither *CAD* nor Jacobsen nor Parrot and Nougayrol refer to Langdon's article. Of these authorities, only *CAD* refers to Landsberger's discussion of our expression.<sup>18</sup> To complicate matters further, those authorities who have challenged the traditional rendering of *appa labānu* have not taken pains to point out that while they agree in rejecting the old rendering, they have not achieved a consensus as to the significance of the gesture they identify with *appa labānu*. Instead, they have left their readers in the dark as to the reasoning behind each of the four explanations of the significance of the gesture in question. The four interpretations are (1) supplication,<sup>19</sup>

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12 M. Mielziner, *Introduction to the Talmud*, 3rd ed. (New York, 1925), 143, defines *g<sup>l</sup>zêrâb šāwāb* as "an analogy based on identical or similar words occurring in two different passages of Scripture."

13 For equation of *appa enû* 'humiliate oneself' and *appa labānu* see A. L. Oppenheim, "Idiomatic Accadian," *JAOS* 61 (1941), 262a.

14 See Harry Torczyner, *Die Entstehung der semitischen Sprachtypus* (Vienna, 1916), 165–66; Benno Landsberger, "Das 'gute Wort,'" *MAOG* 4 (1928–29), 306, n. 5.

15 Thorkild Jacobsen and Seton Lloyd, *Sennacherib's Aqueduct at Jerwan*, *OIP* 24 (Chicago, 1935), 38, n. 46.

16 Jacobsen, "Early Political Development in Mesopotamia," *ZA* 52 (1957), 110, n. 38.

17 Parrot and Nougayrol, *Asarhaddon et Naqi'a*, 159, n. 3.

18 Landsberger, *Das "gute Wort."* 306; Landsberger does refer to Langdon's study in n. 5 there.

19 Langdon, *Gesture in Sumerian and Babylonian Prayer*, 552.



Fig. 1. The Bavian sculpture of Sennacherib.

(2) humility;<sup>20</sup> (3) adoration;<sup>21</sup> and (4) salutation or greeting.<sup>22</sup>

Langdon, Jacobsen, Parrot and Nougayrol agree in insisting on the importance of iconography for ascertaining the meaning of gesture-related expressions in ancient languages. In this way these scholars have widened the application of a truism enunciated by Henri Frankfort with respect to mythological iconography. Frankfort insists "that our only hope of utilizing the information of the seals lies in a comparison of their scenes with the texts."<sup>23</sup> As concerns gesture-derived expressions, at least part of our hope of utilizing the information of the texts lies in the reverse application of Frankfort's thesis. This means that we note carefully the gestures and postures depicted in seals, reliefs and other artistic remains of the ancient Near East as a means of ascertaining the significance of expressions descriptive of those gestures and postures. Unfortunately, however, the study of the iconographic evidence for ancient Mesopotamian prayer postures is more neglected than the study of the linguistic evidence. The attempts of Langdon, Jacobsen, Parrot and Nougayrol to analyze both artistic and linguistic evidence and to correlate them with reference to *appa labānu* are notable exceptions.

Professor Edith Porada in her classic study of cylinder seal impressions from Nuzi adopts the following approach to the iconography of prayer gestures:<sup>24</sup>

I define "gesture of worship" as the raising of one hand, "gesture of prayer" as the clasping of the hands (which appear to be hidden in the folds of the robe), and "gesture of supplication" as the raising of both hands. While the first two gestures are performed by figures, presumably worshippers, clad in long robes and wearing caps with upturned brims, the gesture of supplication is made only by the suppliant goddesses, or by figures attired like worshippers but wearing the scarf of the suppliant goddess, and thus perhaps characterized as priestesses.

In fact, however, the raising of one hand as against two hands is frequently determined solely by whether or not the other hand is free or occupied with another task. Thus in presentation scenes the man presented cannot raise both hands if one is grasped by a presenting goddess. Likewise, the presenting goddess who stands between the presentee and the major deity who welcomes him<sup>25</sup> can only raise one hand insofar as he is led by means of the other.

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20 Landsberger, *Das "gute Wort,"* 306; passim in R. Borger, *Esarb.*; B. Meissner, "Der Kuss im alten Orient," *Sitzungsberichte Preussischen Akademie der Wissenschaft* 2 (1934), 926.

21 Parrot and Nougayrol, *Asarhaddon et Naqi'a*, 147, 159; H. W. F. Saggs, "The Branch to the Nose," *JTS NF* 11 (1960), 320.

22 Jacobsen uses the term 'salutation' in *Sennacherib's Aqueduct at Jerwan*, 38, n. 45; in *Early Political Development in Mesopotamia*, 110, n. 38, he employs the term 'greeting'.

23 Frankfort, "Gods and Myths on Sargonid Seals," *Iraq* 1 (1934), 2.

24 Porada, *Seal Impressions of Nuzi*, *AASOR* 24 (New Haven, 1947), 111-12.

25 Most likely it is the stretched forth hand of welcome which lies behind the Akkadian expression *tiriṣ qāt DN* 'favored of DN'; for abundant examples of this idiom see Marie-Joseph Seux, *Épithètes royales akkadiennes et sumériennes* (Paris, 1967), 345-46.

Therefore it is doubtful whether the two gestures which Professor Porada delineates as 'gesture of worship' and 'gesture of supplication' respectively correspond to two culturally defined gestures as the English terms 'worship' and 'supplication' would imply. In fact, as Stephen Langdon notes in his "Gesture in Sumerian and Babylonian Prayer," analysis of the ancient Mesopotamian prayer gestures reveals another distinction, which was culturally significant in Sumero-Akkadian civilization. This distinction is concerned not with whether one or both hands are employed but with whether the palms are held toward the face or away from the face. The former gesture originated, according to Langdon, from "the kiss throwing hand" while the latter symbolized "adoration and salutation."<sup>26</sup> The two gestures Langdon distinguishes appear to correspond respectively to Sumerian KIR<sub>4</sub>·ŠU·GÁL (Akkadian *labān appi*) and Sumerian ŠU·ÍL·LA (Akkadian *nīš qāti*).

It must be admitted that we do not have at our disposal from Assurbanipal's library or elsewhere a handbook of gestures giving us illustrations and captions that could be considered one hundred percent proof that the correlation of linguistic and iconographic testimony here suggested is correct. Nevertheless, we do have three excellent forms of evidence. These are: (1) a precise terminology in both Akkadian and Sumerian; (2) an iconographic distinction corresponding to the one which this terminology would lead us to expect; and (3) corroboration of the expected correlation with respect to Akkadian *labān appi*.

The corroboration to which we refer is the relief of Sennacherib at Bavian (see Figure 1) and the Akkadian text which describes Sennacherib's posture in that relief.<sup>27</sup> The text in question reads as follows:<sup>28</sup>

*ina pî nāri ša ušaḫrû in qereb šad Tas 6 abān narê [dannūti] šalam ilāni  
rabûte bēlēya abtani qerebšun u šalam šarrūtiya labīm appi maḫaršun ulziz  
mimma liptāt qātēya ša qereb Ninua ēteppušu šeruššun ušaštir*

At the mouth of the canal which I caused to be dug through Mt. Tas I fashioned six [great] stelae with the image of the great gods my lords on them, and I caused to stand before them my royal image engaged in the gesture of entreaty. I had inscribed thereon all my deeds which I had achieved in Nineveh.

It should be observed that in the Bavian relief Sennacherib not only holds his hand before his mouth but also holds an object in his hand, perhaps a branch. The addition of the branch does not, however, change the gesture from *appa labānu*. One may compare the gesture of welcome by the seated deity in presentation scenes.<sup>29</sup> The significance of this gesture is not altered by the deity's holding a symbol of his office like the rod and ring.<sup>30</sup> One may like-

26 Langdon, *Gesture in Sumerian and Babylonian Prayer*, 535.

27 For the relief see Parrot, *The Arts of Assyria*, trans. S. Gilbert and J. Emmons, *The Arts of Mankind* (New York, 1961), pl. 81a.

28 *OIP* 2, 84: lines 54–56.

29 See, for example, the scene depicted atop the famous Hammurabi Code in Anton Moortgat, *The Art of Ancient Mesopotamia* (New York, 1969), pl. 210.

30 For a discussion of the significance of the rod and ring in different periods of Mesopotamian history see Pauline Albenda, "The Burney Relief Reconsidered," *JANES* 2 (1969/70), 87–93.

wise compare the gesture of salute to the flag in the modern United States of America. Non-uniformed males perform this gesture by placing the right hand over the heart. If a non-uniformed male happens to have been wearing a hat, he removes it to salute. He therefore holds it in his hand while saluting. The holding of the hat in the hand over the heart does not change the hand over heart gesture from being a salute.<sup>31</sup>

Both the passage from the Bavian inscription and the Bavian relief indicate that *labān appi* denotes a gesture performed while standing and that it did not refer to prostration. Sennacherib's key sentence is *šalam šarrūtiya labān appi maḥaršun ulziz* "I caused to stand before them my royal image engaged in the gesture of entreaty." A key word in this sentence is the verb *ulziz*, which we have deliberately rendered 'I caused to stand' rather than 'I set up' (so Jacobsen) to emphasize the fact that in the Bavian inscription, as in *TCL III*, 161 quoted below, a standing posture is specifically mentioned and identified with *labān appi*. The use in both texts of the same expression, *labān appi maḥar NN uzuzzu* 'stand before NN engaged in the gesture of entreaty', proves that in *TCL III*, 161 the expression *maḥar NN uzuzzu* may not be construed as an idiom meaning simply 'serve NN'.<sup>32</sup> The latter rendering would not preclude the translation 'prostration' for *labān appi*. The similarity of the Sargon passage to that of Sennacherib together with the latter's unequivocal association with a specific artistic representation qualifies *TCL III*, 160–61 as a further proof that *labān appi* was a hand gesture performed standing and not prostration. The Sargon text reads as follows:

*ana dNergal dAdad u dIštar bēlē tāḫāzi ilāni āšibūt šamē eršetim u  
ilāni āšibūt māi Aššur niqē tašriḫti ebbūti aqqīma ina labān appi u  
utninni maḥaršun azzizma ušarbā ilussun*

I offered superior pure sacrifices to Nergal, Adad and Ishtar, the lords of battle, the gods who inhabit the world and the gods who inhabit Assyria, and I stood before them engaged in the gesture of entreaty and in supplication, and I extolled their divinity.

Although *labān appi* is juxtaposed here with *utninnu* 'supplication', both the latter text and Sennacherib's Bavian inscription appear to be concerned with affection and praise rather

31 The Sumerians, unlike the Babylonians and Assyrians, did have a special terminology to describe the *labān appi* modified by the holding of a branch. While bilingual texts equate *appa labānu* with Sumerian KIR<sub>4</sub> ŠU·GÁL, the modified gesture is called in Sumerian ŠU·NI·PA·KÙ KA·NA BA·DA·GÁL, 'his hand there was put with it a pure branch at his mouth'. See Saggs, *The Branch to the Nose*, 323 and the literature cited there. Saggs has further argued (page 328) that the latter gesture is the one condemned in Ezek. 8:17 as a pagan rite practiced by Jews in the sixth century B.C.E.: *w<sup>e</sup>hinnām šōl<sup>e</sup>ḥīm 'et-bazz<sup>e</sup>mōrāb 'el-'appām* "Now behold them putting a branch to their nose." For artistic representations of this rite see citations in Saggs, 321-22.

32 On Akkadian *ina pan PN uzuzzu* 'serve PN', see Oppenheim, *Idiomatic Accadian*, 258; on the corresponding Hebrew idiom *'amad lipnê PN* see D. R. Ap-Thómas, "Notes on Some Hebrew Terms Relating to Prayer," *VT* 6 (1956), 225–26.

than entreaty. In both passages, therefore, *labān appi* appears to have precisely the connotations which Langdon attributed to the gesture.<sup>33</sup> It is in the same sense, 'gesture of affection and praise', that we find *appa labānu* in the following passage from the annals of Assurbanipal:<sup>34</sup>

*albin appi attā'id ilussun ušāpâ damussun ina puḫur ummānātēya  
ša dAššur dSîn dŠamaš dAdad dBĒl dNabû dIštar ša Nimua dŠarrat  
kidmuri dIštar ša Arba-ili dNinurta dNergal dNusku*

In the assembly of my troops I engaged in the gesture of entreaty towards, I praised the divinity of, and I made known the greatness of Assur, Sin, Shamash, Adad, Bel, Nebo, Ninevite Ishtar, Sharrat-kidmuri, Ishtar of Arbela, Ninurta, Nergal (and) Nusku.

In the overwhelming majority of cases, however, *labān appi* and *appa labānu* denote entreaty rather than worship. Therefore we should probably regard the usage attested in the three passages just quoted as a reflection of the idea that supplication is a form of worship.<sup>35</sup> This explanation of the usage also accounts for *utninnu* 'supplication', in *TCL* III, 161.

We have seen that in historical texts *appa labānu* may refer to gestures by which kings exhibit affection and praise of gods. In literary texts, however, the expression refers primarily

33 Langdon, *Gesture in Sumerian and Babylonian Prayer*, 535.

34 Streck, *Asb.*, 84, x:31–36. See also the bilingual tests Lugale VIII, 38 and I, 16 quoted in *CAD L*, 10b–11a, for the expression *appa labānu* in the same sense. It is clearly not supplication in these passages. We have chosen the rendering 'gesture of entreaty' even in contexts like these in order (1) to have a consistent translation which will set apart references to this gesture; and (2) to avoid Saggs' 'wiping of the nose' (*The Branch to the Nose*, 321), which cannot possibly convey to the English reader what *labān appi* conveyed to the ancient Mesopotamian.

35 See *BWL*, 104:135–40 (Counsels of Wisdom):

*ūmišamma ilka kitrab  
niqû qibûṭ pî simat qutrinni  
ana ūika šagigurrâ lū tīši  
annumma simat ilūti  
suppû sullû u labān appi  
uddat tanamdinšumma iribka bilat*

"Bless your god every day.  
Sacrifice and verbal prayer are the proper accompaniment of incense.  
Present your free-will offering to your god,  
for this is what is befitting divinity:  
Prayer, supplication and entreaty gesture.  
Continually, give it to him daily so that your reward will be a talent."

See *CAD I/J*, 174b on the reading *bilat* in l. 140; on the idea that supplication is a form of adoration see also *TB Taanith* 2a, where prayer is called "the service of the heart."



to mortals' entreaty of deities. Typical of the use of *labān appi* to refer to a gesture of entreaty are *BWL* 60:77–78 (Ludlul IV) and 76:72–73 (Theodicy). The two texts read as follows respectively:

[ina l] abān appi utnīni ana Esagi[la]  
[ša ū] ridu qabri atūra ana bāb [šū] šam[ši]

In response to entreaty gesture and verbal entreaty (I was allowed to come back) to Esagila.

I who descended to the grave returned here to the gate of the rising sun.

illigim<sup>h</sup>yama tēm ilī asḫ[ur]  
illabān appi u tēmeqi eše'e diš<sup>h</sup>artī

In my youth I went after the will of my god.

With entreaty gesture and supplication I sought my goddess.

In the latter text as in lines 74–76 of the Babylonian Theodicy the complainant is attempting to demonstrate the thesis set forth in lines 70–71 where we read as follows:

illakū uruḫ dumqi lā mušte'ū il[i]  
iltapnū itenšū muštēmiqū il[ti]

Those who do not seek (their) god are successful.

Those who supplicate (their) goddess have become poor and impecunious.

This being the thesis which is elaborated upon in lines 72–76, there can be no doubt that lines 72–73 are concerned with supplication. Lambert, however, was led astray in his interpretation of these lines as a result of his rendering *labān appi* 'prostration', which generally connotes adoration in Akkadian literature. His misunderstanding of the subject of these lines led Lambert to devise an *ad hoc* rendering of še'ū 'follow after'. Once it is recognized that *labān appi* is primarily a term for a gesture of entreaty and that lines 71–76 are concerned with the efficacy of petitional prayer Saggil-kīnam-ubbib's deliberate choice of the verb še'ū 'seek', becomes fully comprehensible.

A secondary development from the primary meaning of *labān appi* 'gesture of entreaty' is the idiomatic usage of *labān appi* to denote simply 'entreaty'. The most useful criterion for distinguishing the idiomatic usage from *labān appi* in its primary sense is the employment of *labān appi* 'entreaty' in synonymous parallelism with other terms for prayer. This usage is exemplified by the following:<sup>36</sup>

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<sup>36</sup> The first text is L. W. King, *STC*, 2 vols. (London, 1902), pl. 82, l. 91; the second text is Craig, *ABRT*, 1: # 31, r.12.

*mugrā libēn appiya šime supêa*                      Accept my entreaty; hear my prayer.

*leqe ummīniya muḫur labān appiya*                      Receive my supplication; accept my entreaty.

Another useful criterion for identifying the idiomatic usage of *labān appi* 'entreaty' is presented to us in R. Borger, *Esarh.*, 42, lines 35–37 where we read as follows:

*dAššur šar ilāni rēmnu dMarduk ša nullāti ikkibšun ina ikribi  
utninni u labān appi ušallišunūtīma imgurū qibêti*

By means of benediction, supplication and entreaty I supplicated Assur, the king of the gods (and) merciful Marduk, to whom sacrilegious utterances are an abomination, and they favored my words.

In this text, which suggests that when *labān appi* is employed in a series of terms denoting 'prayer' the expression is to be understood idiomatically,<sup>37</sup> *labān appi* appears to belong together with *ikribu* 'benediction', and *utninnu* 'supplication' in the category of *qibêtu* 'words'. Thus it is not surprising that *appa labānu* should be employed as an idiom denoting simply 'beg' in *ABL*, 716. The text in question, a letter from Nabû-balassu-iqbi to Aššurbanipal, is a plea for justice from a man whose death has been plotted by various royal officials and whose property has been disposed of by various bureaucrats. Lines 16–18 of the text in question read as follows:

*ūmu agâ appa ana mitūtu alabbim ummānūtu ša mitūma pašḫū*

Since people who are dead are at rest I now beg for death.

The rendering of *alabbim* here as 'I beg' is determined by the choice from among the possible meanings of *appa labānu* 'perform gesture of entreaty, entreat' the nuance best suited to the context. Likewise in *BWL*, 134:130–31 (Shamash Hymn) the obvious juxtaposition of *labān appi* to other terms denoting nonverbal channels of communication indicates that the term retains here its primary, gestural meaning. The text in question reads as follows:

37 Cf. *qāta našū* 'lift the hand' (a gesture of prayer) > *qāta našū* 'pray'; for the primary meaning of *qāta našū* 'lift the hand', see Zimmern, *BBR* 3, #90: lines 9–10: *mār bārê qassu inaššim[a] kī'am iqabbi dŠamaš bēl dīni dAdad bēl bīr[i]* "The member of a guild of diviners shall lift his hand, an[d] thus shall he say, 'Shamash is lord of judgment; Adad is lord of divination'."

For *qāta našū* in the idiomatic sense, 'pray', see *CT* 32, #2, col. 4, lines 108–15: *ana dŠamaš bēliya qātī lū ašši supītī lū išme [p] adān [m] išarim lū ipti'am* "Truly I prayed to Shamash my lord. Truly he heard my prayer. Truly he opened to me the way of justice."

*tašimme* <sup>d</sup>*Šamaš* *suppâ* *sullâ* *u* *karābi*  
*šukinna* *kitmusu* *liḫušu* *u* *labān* *appi*

You heed, Shamash, prayer, supplication and benediction,  
Prostration, kneeling, murmuring and gesture of entreaty.