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Hittite ^{GIŠ/GI}kurtal(i), Akkadian *naB-Bu*, and the Cuneiform Sign NAB

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J. Puhvel gave in his *Hittite Etymological Dictionary, Volume K* (Berlin: Mouton De Gruyter, 1997), 227, under the entry *kurtal(i)*, *kurtalli-* (n.) the meaning ‘crate, hamper, basket.’ Indeed the meaning of this Hittite word, many times preceded by either the determinative GIŠ or GI, was already suggested by E. Laroche in his review of J. Friedrich’s *Hethitisches Wörterbuch* (Heidelberg: Carl Winter, 1953). Laroche wrote that *kurtal(i)* means “récipient en bois (GIŠ) ou en vannerie (GI),”¹ and his translation has rightly been accepted ever since.²

Puhvel proceeded to add a second meaning for Hittite *kurtal(i)*, as the “name of the constellation (MUL) Pleiad(es).” This meaning, which is based on a single source, is exceptional, because otherwise the Pleiades constellation is always written ^d7.7.(BI) in Hittite texts, or with the likely Hittiticized lemma for this deified star-group, ^dŠepitta.³

The meaning of *kurtal(i)* as the constellation Pleiades was taken by Puhvel to be an inherited Indo-European word of significant cultural meaning. As he says, “[d]ecisive for the etymology is *kurtāl* as an apparently inherited name for the Pleiad . . . It is in line with other Indo-European ‘wickerwork’ terms for the Pleiad, from Italy . . . to India . . .”⁴ This notion was also accepted by J. Tischler,⁵ although the connection between *kurtal(i)* and Indo-European basket-like words for the Pleiades was first suggested by G. Neumann.⁶

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1. E. Laroche, “Review of J. Friedrich, *Hethitisches Wörterbuch*,” *RA* 48 (1954): 46.

2. See already H. Otten, *Hethitische Totenrituale* (Berlin: Deutsche Akademie der Wissenschaften zu Berlin, Institut für Orientforschung, 1958), 134. Friedrich included Laroche’s interpretation in his subsequent *Ergänzungsheft* (found in idem, *Hethitisches Wörterbuch* [Heidelberg: Carl Winter, 1975], 357).

3. See H. G. Güterbock, *IBoT I* (Istanbul: Maarif Matbaası, 1944), vii; A. Scherer, *Gestirnnamen bei den indogermanischen Völkern* (Heidelberg: Carl Winter, 1953), 145; E. Laroche, *Recherches sur les noms des dieux Hittites* (*RHA* VII/46) (Paris, 1946–1947), 88 and 108. V. Haas, *Geschichte der hethitischen Religion* (Leiden: Brill, 1994), 482, and A. M. Polvani, “The Deity IMIN.IMIN.BI in Hittite Texts,” *Or* 74 (2005): 181–94 equate ^d7.7.(BI) with ^dŠepitta, but do not see it necessarily representing the deified star group. Skeptical of the equation between ^d7.7.(BI) and ^dŠepitta is A. Kammenhuber, *Orakelpraxis, Träume und Vorzeichenschau bei den Hethitern* (Heidelberg: Carl Winter, 1977), 57 and 45–58.

4. Puhvel dealt extensively with the Pleiades in Indo-European, Hittite, and ancient Near Eastern sources, not yet mentioning their alleged equation with *kurtal(i)*; see “Names and Numbers of the Pleiad,” in *Semitic Studies in Honor of Wolf Leslau, vol. II*, ed. A. S. Kaye (Wiesbaden: Harrassowitz, 1991), 1243–1247.

5. J. Tischler, *Hethitisches etymologisches Glossar* (Innsbruck: Innsbrucker Beiträge zur Sprachwissenschaft, 1977), 662.

6. G. Neumann, “Review of Otten and von Soden, *Das akkadisch-hethitische Vokabular*,” *IF* 76 (1971): 262: “Wenn im Hethitischen das Wort *kurtal(i-)* ‘Behälter aus Holz oder Flechtwerk’ als Name des Sternbildes der Plejaden dient . . . dann gibt es für diese Benennung Parallelen in anderen idg. Sprachen . . .”

Neither Puhvel, Tischler, nor Neumann claimed for themselves the discovery of the equation between *kurtal(i)* and the Pleiades, but referred to H. Otten and W. von Soden, *Das akkadisch-hethitische Vokabular KBo I 44 + KBo XIII 1* (Wiesbaden: Harrassowitz, 1968), 40, where this meaning was derived from a single source—902/z, later published as *KBo* 26.34—a fragment of the S^a Vocabulary.⁷ It is because of the interpretation of Otten and von Soden, therefore, that *kurtal(i)* has been understood as the Hittite word for the Pleiades. However, their interpretation can now be proven to be mistaken.⁸

Otten and von Soden, *Das akkadisch-hethitische Vokabular*, 39–41, provided comments on the Boğazköy S^a Vocabulary fragment 902/z (= *KBo* 26.34). Although the pronunciation and Sumerian or sign columns were missing from the reverse of the tablet, Otten and von Soden reconstructed the sequence of the signs as [KISIM₅], [AN], [MUL], [ŠUḪUB], [ḪAL], and [UR] on the basis of what survived in the fragmentary Akkadian and Hittite columns. Line 7' of the fragment was reconstructed thus:

Pronunciation	Sign	Akkadian	Hittite
[mu-ul]	[MUL]	<i>zap¹-pu</i>	<i>kur-[t]a-a-al</i> 'Plejaden'

The line's restoration rested on the well documented equation between MUL and the Akkadian word *zappu*, '(animal) hair,' or 'mane' (of the constellation Taurus), identified with the Pleiades.⁹ However, the reading of the line depended on an incorrect emendation of the first sign of the Akkadian entry. The sign in question is partially broken, but recent collation of the tablet's photograph has proven with no doubt that it should be restored as [n]ap, like the sign directly below in 8', and definitely not corrected to *zap¹*.¹⁰ Furthermore, a reading MUL is likewise impossible.¹¹

The error of Otten and von Soden's reconstruction can be demonstrated by comparing the Emar recensions of the S^a Vocabulary, not yet discovered when they wrote their commentary.¹² The Emar S^a Vocabulary gives the following equations:

Emar S^a Vocabulary, Copy 1, iii (= Msk 74171b = Arnaud, *Recherches*, 17, 281–92)

24	AN	<i>ša-mu-u</i>	'sky'
25	ša-a AN	<i>er-še-tum</i>	'earth'
26	ti-kar AN	<i>dingir-lim</i>	'god'
27	MIN AN	<i>a-mi-lu</i>	'man'
28	NAB	<i>nab-bu</i>	'god'
29	MUL	<i>ka-ak-ka-bu</i>	'star'

Emar S^a Vocabulary, Copy 3, rev. vi' (= Msk 74231a = Arnaud, *Recherches*, 17, 281–92)

1'	A[N]	[<i>ša-mu-u</i>]	['sky']
2'	AN	[<i>er-še-tum</i>]	['earth']

7. The Boğazköy S^a Vocabulary recensions (*CTH* 299), apart from *KBo* 26.34, can be found in *MSL* 3, 49ff.

8. The equation of Otten and von Soden is cited by H. Hunger under the entry "Plejaden," *RIA* 10 (2005), 592.

9. See the lexical sources given in *CAD* Z, 49–50.

10. The copy shows that the sign was read and drawn as a clear NAB by Güterbock.

11. The fact that NAB is to be reconstructed here was realized by *CAD* N/I, 263, sub *napāḫu*, lexical section. See below, note 28.

12. The Emar recension was published by D. Arnaud, *Recherches au pays d'Aštata*. Emar VI/4 (Paris: Editions Recherche sur les Civilisations, 1985–87), 9–31, in autograph copies and a composite edition. Here, however, the individual manuscripts will be presented following the copies, and not Arnaud's composite edition. The reconstruction of the manuscripts of the list follows M. Civil, "The Texts from Meskene-Emar," *AuOr* 7 (1989): 9. Copy 1 = A + E + G/G' + I, and Copy 3 = F.

3' na-ab [a-na-mi]-na-be sign-name ('nab is [tw]ice [an]')

4' NAB *na-ab-bu* 'god'

5' mu-ul a-na-eš-ša-bi sign-name ('mul is trice an')

6' MUL *ka-ak-ka-bu* 'star'

As is clear, NAB is equated with *nab-bu* (Copy 1) and *na-ab-bu* (Copy 3). The meaning of the Akkadian entry *nabbu* is 'god,' a loan word from Elamite.¹³ Both the sign NAB and the Akkadian entry are at times equated to the god Enlil in the lexical tradition and in the god lists alike.¹⁴

The sequence of signs in the Emar S^a Vocabulary is AN, NAB, and MUL, which are then followed, as expected, by HAL and UR. The grouping of AN, NAB and MUL is basically an elaboration of the sign AN, because NAB = AN + AN, and MUL = AN + AN + AN (as the sign names make evident in Copy 3, 3' and 5').¹⁵ Indeed, this sequence of signs is not unique to the Emar S^a Vocabulary but is found throughout the lexical tradition, as can be seen.¹⁶

S^b Vocabulary (*MSL* 3, 132)

1	a-na	AN	<i>šá-mu-ú</i>
2	di-in-gír	AN	<i>i-lum</i>
3	na-ab	NAB	<i>nab-bu</i>
4	mu-lu	MUL	<i>kak-ka-bu</i>

Proto Aa (*MSL* 14, 94)

137	i-lu	AN	AN-u[m]
138	na-ab	NAB	<i>na-a-ab</i>
139	mu-ul	MUL	<i>ka-ak-ka-bu-um</i>

Aa Tablet II/6 = 14 (*MSL* 14, 291)

15	i-lum	AN	<i>i-lum</i>
19	[na-ab]	[N]AB	<i>na-a-bu</i>
25	mu-lu	MUL	<i>kak-ka-bu</i>

13. Å. Sjöberg, "Studies in the Emar S^a Vocabulary," *ZA* 88 (1998): 259, no. 284: "*nab-bu*, var. *na-ab-bu* . . . 'god'; Elamite word." See S^b Vocabulary (*MSL* 3, 132), 3: NAB = *nab-bu* 'Beiname Enlils.'

14. Aa, Tablet II/6 = 14 (*MSL* 14, 291), 21: NAB = ^d*En-lil*; see R. L. Litke, *A Reconstruction of the Assyro-Babylonian God-Lists, AN:^dA-nu-um and AN:Anu šá amēli* (New Haven: Yale Babylonian Collection, 1998), 229, 20 and 174, 64; see also *CAD* N/I, 40; *AHW*, 699; and M. Krebernik, "nap," *RIA* 9 (1998–2001), 162.

15. The sequence is missing in the reconstruction of the signs of the S^a Syllabary and S^a Vocabulary in *MSL* 3, but that is because of the fragmentary state of the sources of the lexical list available at the time of the volume's publication (in 1955), prior to the discovery of the Emar S^a Vocabulary. Note that in *MSL* 3 the entire S^a Vocabulary entries for the sequence between LU (section no. 14) and UD (section no. 63) is missing. AN (and its derived signs, which now have to be incorporated into the sequence) would have been section no. 45. The contribution of the Emar S^a Vocabulary to the reconstruction of this lexical list is, therefore, very substantial; see Sjöberg, "Studies," 240; and R. Borger, *Mesopotamisches Zeichenlexikon* (Münster: Ugarit Verlag, 2003), 231–34.

16. The S^a Vocabularies from Ugarit seem to contain only the AN sign and not its expanded section. However, Nougayrol sensibly noted that RS 23.493 A (= *Ugaritica* 5, 236, no. 133) can possibly be read as follows:

15'	[A]N	<i>šar-ru</i>	'king'
16'	[NA]B?	<i>šar-ra-nu</i>	'kings'

In support of Nougayrol's case, compare Aa II/6 (*MSL* 14, 291) col. ii, 15: AN = *i-lum* 'god,' and 24: NAB = *i-la-an* 'two gods.' For the AN section in the Ugarit versions, see J. Huehnergard, *Ugaritic Vocabulary in Syllabic Transcription* (Atlanta, Georgia: Scholars Press, 1987), 28–29; and B. Salvini and M. Salvini, "Un nouveau vocabulaire trilingue sumérien-akkadien-houarite de Ras Shamra," *Studies on the Civilization and Culture of Nuzi and the Hurrians*, vol. 9 (Bethesda: CDL Press, 1998), 5; W. H. van Soldt, "*Am prln*, '*Attāēnu* the Diviner,'" *UF* 21 (1989): 365–68, and "Review of Huehnergard, *Ugaritic Vocabulary*," *BiOr* (1990): 728–36.

Ea Tablet II (MSL 14, 259)

272	i-lu	AN	KI.MIN (i.e., <i>ilu</i>)
275	na-ab	NAB	ŠU- <i>ma</i> (i.e., <i>nāb</i>)
277	mu-ul	MUL	[<i>k</i>]ak-ka-bu

The spelling with doubled /b/ (*nabbu*) found in the Emar S^a Vocabulary and in S^b Vocabulary as compared to the spelling *na-a-bu* in the Proto Aa and Aa lexical lists represents a variant with the loss of the initial vowel length, compensated by consonantal doubling (*nābu* → *nabbu*).

What does the Akkadian entry *nābu* or *nabbu* ‘god’ have to do with Hittite *kurtal(i)*? Here we face yet again a case where the Akkadian entry has been misinterpreted by the Hittite scribes.¹⁷ As is well known, the Hittites used voiced and voiceless cuneiform signs indiscriminately. Moreover, even in Mesopotamia the cuneiform script itself is not helpful in distinguishing a voiced from an unvoiced stop for the signs in this entry, since NAB can be read as /nab/ or /nap/, and BU as /bu/ or /pu/.¹⁸ Therefore, it is to be understood that the Akkadian entry *nab-bu*, whose meaning was obscure to the Hittites, or to earlier transmitters of the list, was reinterpreted as the lemma *nappû*, ‘sieve,’ a substantive derived from the verb *napû* ‘to sift.’¹⁹ If the Akkadian was so understood, then *kurtal(i)* fit nicely as its Hittite equivalent. The two household items may not have been identical, but both were wickerwork products.²⁰ The utensil *nappû* served as a sieve, and the household item ^{GIŠ/GI}*kurtal(i)* is listed among utensils of AD.KID, i.e., reed,²¹ and is used as a container or possibly a sieve for flour.²² In rituals the *kurtal(i)* is manipulated with food and liquids and also with clay.²³ One can assume that Akkadian *nappû* was not translated by Hittite ^{GIŠ/GI}*pattar* ‘basket, sieve,’ in order to avoid confusion with the homophone ^(UZU)*pattar* ‘wing.’²⁴

To conclude, the Hittite word *kurtal(i)* is to be equated to NAB and *naB-BU*, to be read *nappû*. It loses all connection with the starry realm and remains solely ‘basket’ or ‘sieve.’

There follows an edition of the reverse of *KBo* 26.34.

17. See the remarks of O. R. Gurney, “Review of Otten and von Soden, *Das akkadisch-hethitische Vokabular*,” *OLZ* 65 (1970): 552–54; and K. Riemschneider, “Review of Otten and von Soden, *Das akkadisch-hethitische Vokabular*,” *Or* 40 (1971): 476.

18. In fact, there is no proof that *nābu* or *nabbu* were not vocalized with a /p/. Notice that NAB is equated with *napāhu* by force of phonetic association with the initial syllable and the equation of the Akkadian verb with MUL; see nn. 10 and 28.

19. A similar misinterpretation of lexical entries can be seen in *KBo* 1.45 obv. 2’ and 6’ (*MSL* 3, 53), where Akkadian *ararru* ‘miller’ was confused with *arāru* ‘to curse’ and translated as *huwarzakiuwar* and *hurzakiuwar* ‘cursing.’ For *napû* ‘sieve,’ see *CAD* N/1, 312, and *AHW*, 740; also A. Salonen, *Die Hausgeräte der alten Mesopotamier* (Helsinki: Suomalaisen kirjallisuuden kirjapaino, 1965), 71–72.

20. The Sumerian equivalents of *nappû* are *gi.ma.an.sim* and *gi.šà.sur*; see *CAD* N/1, 312–13.

21. *KUB* 42.45 (dupl. *KUB* 58.100 obv. ii², 11; collated from photo), 12: [(¹1¹⁷ ^{giš}kur-ta)]-a-al AD.KID 1 *pāt-tar* . . . ‘[[one kurta]] of wicker, one sieve . . .’ Following S. Košak, *Hittite Inventory Texts (CTH 241–250)* (Heidelberg: Carl Winter, 1982), 181–82.

22. See the citations in *HED* K, 278, and text references in E. Reiken, *Untersuchungen zur nominalen Stamm-bildung des Hethitischen* (Wiesbaden: Harrassowitz, 1999), 433–35. *ZÍZ-naš kurtal(i)* or *kurtal(i) išnaš* obviously mean a ‘*kurtali* for flour,’ not ‘one made out of flour.’ These designations are similar to the Sumerian and Akkadian ones: *gi-ma-an-sim zíd-še* (Salonen, *Hausgeräte*, 71) and 1 ^{giš}*na-ap-pu ša zíd* (*CAD* N/1, 312).

23. See, for example, *KBo* 15.10, *passim*, edited by A. Korolev in A. Kassian, *Two Middle Hittite Rituals* (Moscow: Paleograph, 2000); and H. Otten, “Eine Beschwörung der Unterirdischen aus Boğazköy,” *ZA* 54 (1961): 128.

24. See *CHD* P, 240–42.

KBo 26.34 rev. iv²⁵

	Sign	Akkadian	Hittite	
1'	[?]	[. . .] x [. . .]	[. . .]	?
2'	[?]	[. . .]x-im-mu	x[. . .] ²⁶	?
3'	[AN]	[ša-m]u-u	¹ ne ¹ -[p]í-iš	'heaven'
4'	[AN]	[ša-q]ú-ú	[p]ár-ku-uš	'high'
5'	[AN]	[dingir]-lum	DINGIR ^{LIM} -iš	'god'
6'	[AN]	[a-mi]-lum ²⁷	LÚ-[o]- ¹ aš ¹	'man'
7'	[NAB]	[n]ap-pu	kur-[t]a-a-al	'basket, sieve'
8'	[NAB/MUL] ²⁸	nap-pa-aḫ-ḫu	pa-ri-pa-ri-ia-u-wa-ar	'blowing'
9'	[MUL]	kâ-ak-ka ₄ -bu	ḫa-aš-te-er-za	'star'
10'	[ŠUHUB] ²⁹	ša-ḫu-pa-tum	iš-tap-pa-an-da	'boots'
11'	[ḪAL]	[lú]ḫal	LÚ.ḪAL-aš	'diviner'
12'	[ḪAL]	[me ⁻² / pí-r]i-eš-tum	ZI-x-aš	'wish, desire' ³⁰
13'	[ḪAL]	[ša-mu-ú]	¹ ne ¹ -pí-[i]š	'heaven' ³¹
14'	[UR]	[kal-bu]	UR-GI ₇ -a[š]	'dog'
15'	[UR]	[labbu [?] / nēšu [?]]	ḫu-u-it-[tar/ar] ³²	'wild animals'
16'	[?]	[. . .]	x[. . .]	?

25. Collated from a photograph. The lost pronunciation column to the left of the sign column is not provided. Column iii is almost entirely broken away. The obverse of the tablet will be edited in a forthcoming study of the ḪU section of the Boğazköy and Emar S^a Vocabularies to appear in the J. A. Black Memorial Volume.

26. Otten and von Soden restored the entry as follows, on the basis of *KUB* 3.94 ii 13 (see also *CAD* K, 421):

[KISIM₅] [ki-s]í-im-mu w[a-at-ta-nu] 'soured milk'

If the reconstruction is accepted, KISIM₅ was perhaps replaced or confused on account of its graphic similarity with KAM, the sign preceding AN in the Vocabulary.

27. The Akkadian equivalent is confirmed by the Emar S^a Vocabulary, Copy 1, iii 27.

28. *CAD* N/I, 263 restored [NAB], but the verb *napāḫu* can also be found equated with MUL in the lexical tradition.

29. The broken sign can be restored as either ŠUHUB (= MUL) or ŠUHUB (KUNGA, ŠU-MUL).

30. Emar S^a Vocabulary, Copy 1, iii 31, has ḪAL = pí-ri-iš-tum 'secret,' and Copy 3, rev. vi' 7' me-ri-il-tum 'request, desire, need' (although this entry might be a scribal error, because it is normally equated with KAM; see Sjöberg, "Studies," 259, no. 287). The Hittite ZI-x-aš (*ištanzaš*) 'soul, desire, wish' would perhaps translate the second option better.

31. Confirmed by the Emar S^a Vocabulary, Copy 1, iii 32, and Copy 3, rev. vi' 9'.

32. Otten and von Soden read here ḫu-u-da-[ak] ('at once, quickly') and suggest equating it with [UR (téš)] = [*ištēniš, miḫāriš*]. Collation and the copy of *KBo* 26.34, however, give ḫu-u-id-[x]. This can be restored as *ḫuedar/ḫuitar* 'wild animals,' in spite of the fact that a spelling ḫu-u-it-[tar/ar] is problematic. Compare, therefore, *KUB* 38.38 obv. 9: ḫu-u-i-it-[ar[?]]; see *HED* H, 352-33; and J. Puhvel, "Huidar and vitnir: Creatures and Critters in Anatolia and Iceland," *Die Sprache* 32 (1986): 54-57. The Hittite entry ḫu-u-it-[tar/ar] can be equated with UR = *labbu* (see *CAD* L, 24a) or *nēšu* (see *CAD* N/II, 193a).