

# The Poetic Style of the Direct Speeches in the Hittite “Parables” of the “Epos der Freilassung”

Rita Francia

Recent studies of Hurrian poetic style have pointed out, among other things, the significant differences in literary style among the Hittite and Hurrian versions of the bilingual “Epos der Freilassung”. The most widely accepted view is that the Hurrian version is written in high poetic style, with much figurative language, while the Hittite, although well written and most certainly translated correctly, does not reach the high level of the Hurrian form.<sup>1</sup> Many scribes, both Hittite and Hurrian, worked on the translation into Hittite and they, it is *communis opinio*, “privilegiano l’aspetto comunicativo e invece mostrano, in genere, scarsa cura nel cercare di riprodurre gli elementi stilistici della composizione hurrica”,<sup>2</sup> moreover, it is notoriously very difficult to translate poetry from one language to another.<sup>3</sup> We asked ourselves if this is the case. Does the Hittite version contain elements of poetic style? Studying the Hittite text, we have found the use of some figures of speech as proof that the Hittite version tries to reproduce the poetic language that the scribes read in the Hurrian text. In particular, we have found figurative language in the direct speeches of the so-called *exempla*, the seven “parables” in the “second tablet” (KBo 32. 12 and KBo 32. 14).<sup>4</sup> There is no immediate connection between the content of these “parables” and the central theme of the work; they are a digression from the

---

1 The edition of the text is: E. Neu, *Das hurritische Epos der Freilassung I. Untersuchungen zu einem hurritisch-hetitischen Textensemble aus Hattusa*, StBoT 32. Wiesbaden 1996; about Hurrian poetic style, see V. Haas – I. Wegner, “Beispiele poetischer Techniken im hurritischen Schrifttum”, in *Atti del VI Congresso Internazionale di Ittitologia, Roma 5–9 settembre 2005*, I, A. Archi, R. Francia (a cura di). SMEA 49 (2007), pp. 347–354, with bib.; about the differences between the two versions, see S. de Martino, “Problemi di traduzione per gli antichi scribi ittiti: la redazione bilingue del ‘Canto della Liberazione’”, *Hethitica XIV*, 1999, pp. 11–12, 17 with bib.

2 So de Martino, *Hethitica XIV*, 1999, p. 17.

3 In general about the text see S. de Martino, “Il ‘Canto della Liberazione’: Composizione Letteraria Bilingue Hurrico-Ittita sulla distruzione di Ebla”, PdP 55, 2000, Fascicolo I–VI, ‘La civiltà dei Hurriti’, pp. 298–320; idem, *Hethitica XIV*, 1999, pp. 7–18 with bib.

4 For their structure, close to the Aesop’s tales, N. Oettinger, “Achikars Weisheitssprüche im Licht älterer Fabeldichtung”, in *Der Aesop-Roman. Motivgeschichte und Erzählungsstruktur*. N. Holzberg (ed.). Tübingen 1992, pp. 3–22. Oettinger has ascribed the “parables” to the didascalical typology, well attested in the Ancient Near East and in Egypt.

narrative. Each one concludes with a moral that draws into the real world what is represented metaphorically in each “parable”. We can define the *exempla* as moral digressions in the narrative, whose function is to teach readers a lesson. Like the subject matter, the language of these “parables” is also different from that used in the rest of the text. Reading the early six *exempla*, those better preserved, we see that they are written using uncommon language, with figures of speech, and it is particularly evident in the direct speeches, as we will see in the following examination. Before starting, it is worth pointing out that it is not easy to study the structure of Hittite poetic language: the sentences are very short, usually introduced by conjunctions with enclitic particles and with basic order Subject – Object – Verb; the position of the accent and the vowel length are not always clear;<sup>5</sup> we also find sumerograms and akkadograms that we cannot always read in Hittite. Taking that into account, we examine single clauses searching for evidence of unusual linguistic structures, or rather, examples of poetic language.

The principal figures of speech that we find in the direct speeches of the first six “parables” are: rhymes, assonances, consonances, alliterations, chiasmus, anastrophes, hyperbatons, repetitions, asyndetons; we found one metonymy and one synecdoche as well.

In the first, third and sixth *exemplum* some direct speeches are introduced by the expression *āppa hurzakiuwan daiš* “he/she began to curse”, a periphrastic construction with the supine of the verb *hurt-/huwart-* “to curse” in *-ške/-ška-* form (*\*hurt=ški=wan*) and the verb *dai-*.<sup>6</sup> In one of his studies about Anatolian poetic style, Onofrio Carruba has defined the construction *x-y-škiuwan daiš* “he/she began to *x-y*” as “una clausola dattilica” to introduce long periods.<sup>7</sup>

Rhymes were often used by Hittite scribes, from the first *exemplum*, KBo XXXII 14, Vs. II:

- (1) (5) *nu āppa HUR.SAG=an hurzakiuwan daiš*  
 (6) *wešiyahhari kuedani HUR.SAG-i*  
*mān=an* (7) *paḫhuenanz(a) arḫa warnuzi*  
<sup>d</sup>IM=*aš=man=an* (8) *walḫzi*  
*paḫhuenanz(a)=man=an arḫa warnuzi*

5 O. Carruba, “Pleneschreibung und Betonung im Hethitischen”, KZ 95, 1981, pp. 232–248, G. R. Hart, “Some Observations on Plene-writing in Hittite”, BSOAS 43, 1980, pp. 1–17, S. Kimball, Hittite Plene Writing. Ph. Diss. University of Pennsylvania 1983, H. C. Melchert, “Poetic Meter and Phrasal Stress in Hittite”, in *Mír Curad. Studies in Honor of Calvert Watkins*. J. Jasanoff, H. C. Melchert, L. Oliver (edd.). Innsbruck 1998, pp. 484–493.

6 E. Neu, StBoT 32, p. 104; for the periphrastic construction with supine and *dai-* or *tiya-* see H. A. Hoffner, Jr. – H. C. Melchert, *A Grammar of the Hittite Language*. Languages of the Ancient Near East, 1. Winona Lake (Indiana) 2008. Part 1: *Reference Grammar*, p. 338.

7 O. Carruba, “Poesia e metrica in Anatolia”, in *Studia Classica Iohanni Tarditi oblata. I*. L. Belloni, C. Milanese, A. Porro (edd.). Milano 1995, p. 571.

“(5) And (so) the roe deer began to curse the mountain: <sup>(6–8)</sup> ‘If only the fire would burn up the mountain on which I pastured!<sup>8</sup> If only the storm-god would strike it and the fire burn it up!’ ”

- (2) (11) *nu* HUR.SAG-*aš* *aliyanan āppa huwarzašta*  
 (12) *aliyanan kuin warganun*  
 (13) *kinun=a=mu āppa hurzakizi*  
*peššiyandu=ya=an* (14) *aliyanan* LÚ.MEŠ ŠĀIDUTIM  
*dāndu=ma=an* (15) LÚ.MEŠ MUŠEN.DÛ<sup>TIM</sup>

“(11) And (so) the mountain cursed the roe deer:<sup>9</sup> ‘(12–13) (Why) does the roe deer, which I made fat, now continue to curse me? Let the hunters drive away (lit. throw) him, <sup>(14)</sup> the roe deer! Let the <sup>(15)</sup> bird-catchers capture him!’ ”

- (3) (15) UZUÏ LÚ.MEŠ ŠĀIDUTIM *dandu*  
 (16) KUŠ=ma LÚ.MEŠ MUŠEN.DÛ<sup>TIM</sup> *dandu*

“(15) ‘Let the hunters take its fat <sup>(16)</sup> and let the bird-catchers take its fleece!’ ”

In the last three clauses of ex. (1) the ending is *-zi* (*warnuzi*, *walḫzi*, *warnuzi*), each clause ends with the ending *-zi*; in (2) we can see an internal rhyme in the words at the start of the fourth and fifth clauses, *-andu* (*peššiyandu* *-dāndu*); in (3) there is the same verb *dandu* at the end of the two clauses.

From the third *exemplum*, KBo XXXII 14, Vs. II:

- (4) (45) *lāḫuš=ma=an kuiš*  
 (46) *n(a)=an āppa marlānza* URUDU-*aš hurzakīwan dai[š]*

“(4) But the foolish copper began to curse who melted it.”

- (5) (47) *mān=wa=mu lāḫuš*  
*kuiš man=wa=ši=kan kiššaraš* (48) *arḫa duwarnattari*  
*kunnaš=man=wa=ši=kan* (49) *iškunawuš arḫa wišūriyattari*

“(47) ‘Oh, how I wish that the hand which melted me <sup>(48)</sup> would break!

(49) Oh, how I wish that the tendon of his right arm were cut!’ ”

8 We think that the mountain here is the first mountain, that drove out the roe deer, so we prefer to translate the present *wešiyahḫari* as a preterite; see also E. Neu, StBoT 32, p. 75 with bibliography.

9 For *aliya-* ‘red deer’ see, most recently, B. J. Collins, “On the Trail of the Deer: Hittite *kurala-*” in: G. Beckman – R. Beal – G. McMahon, *Hittite Studies in Honor of Harry A. Hoffner Jr. On the Occasion of His 65<sup>th</sup> Birthday*. Winona Lake, Indiana 2003, pp. 73–82; E. Neu, StBoT 32, p. 116, p. 132 and n. 70, with the translation ‘roe deer’; for other interpretations see H. Otten – S. de Martino, review to KUB LII 107, ZA 74, 1984, 301; CHD, L–N, p. 223; N. Oettinger, “Die *n*-Stämme des Hethitischen und ihre indogermanischen Ausgangspunkte”, KZ 94, 1980, pp. 44–63; I. Singer, *Hittite KI.LAM Festival. Part One*, StBoT 27. Wiesbaden 1983, p. 94.

- (6) (52) *nu=za* <sup>LÚ</sup>SIMUG *PANI ŠÀ-ŠU memiškuwan daiš*  
 (53) *kuwat-wa URUDU-an kuin lāhun*  
*nu=wa=mu āppa* (54) *hūrzakizi*  
 “(52) And the blacksmith began to meditate in his own heart:  
 (53–54) ‘Why does the copper continue to curse me, who melted it?’ ”
- (7) (54) *nu tešummiya* <sup>LÚ</sup>SIMUG (55) *hūwartāin tet*  
*walḥdu=ya=an* (56) <sup>d</sup>IM=*aš tešummin*  
*nu=ši šuppišduwariuš* (57) *arḥa šakkuriēd<du>*  
*tešummiš=kan* (58) *anda amiyari maušdu*  
 (59) *šuppišduwarēš=ma=kan anda* (60) <sup>ÍD</sup>=*i muwāntaru*  
 “(54) And the blacksmith (55) uttered a curse against the vessel:  
 (56) ‘May the storm-god break it, the vessel! May he tear its decorations  
 (57) away! May the vessel (58) fall into a canal! (59) May the decorations  
 fall into a river!’ ”

In (4), the two clauses end with *-iš* (*kuiš*, *dai[š]*); in the last two clauses of (5), both verbs are in present sing. 3 of the medio-passive and the ending is *-attari* (*arḥa duwarnattari*, *arḥa wišūriyattari*); in (6), we can see the “clausola dattilica” with the verb *memai-*; in the third and fourth clauses of (7) there are two imp. sing. 2 (*šakkuriēd<du>*, *maušdu*) with the ending *-du*.

From the sixth exemplum, KBo XXXII 14, Rs. III:

- (8) (42) *wetet=ma=an kuiš*  
*na=an marl[ānza]* (43) [*kuzza*] *āppa hūrzakiuan daiš*  
 “(42) But (43) the foo[lish wall] began to curse (42) who built it.”
- (9) (43) *wetet=wa=mu kuiš man=wa=ši=kan kiššaraš arḥa duwarn[att]ari*  
 (44) [*kunnaš=m*] *an=ši=kan išḥunāuš arḥa wišūriyattari*  
 “(43) ‘Oh, how I wish the hand, which built me, would break! (44) Oh, how I wish the tendon of his right arm were cut!’ ”
- (10) (45) [*nu=za* <sup>LÚ</sup>NAGAR] *PANI ZI-ŠU memiškizi*  
*kuwat wētenun kuin kuttan*  
*nu=mu hūrzakizi*  
 “(45) [And the architect] began to meditate in his own heart: ‘Why does the tower, which I built, continue to curse me?’ ”
- (11) (45) *nu* <sup>LÚ</sup>NAGAR (46) [*ANA AN.ZA.GÀR*] *hūrtain tet*  
*walḥdu=ya=an* <sup>d</sup>IM=*aš* (47) *AN.ZA.GÀR*  
*nu=ši šāmanuš šer huinuddu*  
 (48) [ - ] *ar-ši-kan kattanta amiyari maušdu*  
<sup>SIG<sub>4</sub></sup>=*ma=kan* (49) *kattanta* <sup>ÍD</sup>=*i maušdu*  
 “(45) And the architect (46) uttered a curse against the tower: ‘May the storm-god break it, (47) the tower! May he turn over its foundations!’ ”

(48) May [ -] *ar-ši-ka* fall into a canal! (49) May all the work fall down into a river! ”

The clauses in (8) end with *-iš* (*kuiš*, *daiš*), in (9) with *-attari* (*arḥa duwar-n[att]ari*, *arḥa wišūriyattari*), using in both exs. the same words as in (4) and (5); the last three clauses in (11) end with *-du* (*ḥuinuddu*, *maušdu*, *maušdu*).

Another figure of speech frequently used is the chiasmus. Some examples: In ex. (1), we see a double chiasmus: the optative conjunction *mān* + enclitic object pronoun – Subject and Subject + *mān* + enclitic object pronoun

<b><i>mān=an</i></b>	—	<u><i>paḥḥuenanz(a)</i></u>
(opt. conj. + Obj.)		(Sbj.)
<u><i>dIM=aš</i></u>	—	<b><i>-man=an</i></b>
(Sbj.)		(opt. conj. + Obj.)

and again *mān* + enclitic object pronoun – Subject and Subject + *mān* + enclitic object pronoun

<b><i>mān=an</i></b>	—	<u><i>paḥḥuenanz(a)</i></u>
(opt. conj. + Obj.)		(Sbj.)
<u><i>paḥḥuenanz(a)</i></u>	—	<b><i>=man=an</i></b>
(Sbj.)		(opt. conj. + Obj.)

Another chiasmus appears between exs. (2) and (3), with the verbs, on the one hand, and with the nouns, on the other:

<b><i>peššiyandu</i></b>	—	<u>LÚ.MEŠ ŠĀIDUTIM</u>
(Vb.)		(Sbj.)
<b><i>dandu</i></b>	—	<u>LÚ.MEŠ MUŠEN.DÙ<sup>TIM</sup></u>
(Vb.)		(Sbj.)
<u>UZUĪ</u>	—	<b><i>dandu</i></b>
(Obj.)		(Vb.)
<u>KUŠ</u>	—	<b><i>dandu</i></b>
(Obj.)		(Vb.)

The same figure is found between the first clause of (4) (l. 45) and (5) (l. 47), even though the two clauses are not adjoining, in fact they are separated by another clause (l. 46):

- (45) ***lāḥuš=ma=an*** *kuiš*  
 (Vb.) (Conj.) (Obj.)
- (47) *mān=wa=mu* ***lāḥuš*** *kuiš*  
 (Conj.) (Obj.) (Vb.)

The Verb (*lāḥuṣ*) is in first position (l. 45) in the clause followed by the enclitic conjunction (=ma=) and the enclitic 3. person pronoun sg. acc. (=an=), while in l. 47 the independent conjunction *mān* occurs in the same position, followed by the enclitic particle of the direct speech (=wa=) and by the enclitic 1. person pronoun sg. acc. (=mu). Another chiasitic construction is in ex. (11) between the position of the Verb and the Object:

<i>walḥdu</i> (=ya=an)	—	<u>AN.ZA.GĀR</u>
(Vb.)		(Obj.)
<u>šāmanuṣ</u>	—	<i>šer ḥuinuddu</i>
(Obj.)		(Vb.)

Examples of hyperbaton in the selected clauses are in (1) where the Object ḤUR.SAG=*an* occurs between the Preverb *appa* and the Verb *ḥurzakīwan daiš* and in (4) with the Subject (*marlānza URUDU-aš*) in the same position; the metonymy is noteworthy in *marlānza URUDU-aš*.

Anastrophe is found in (1) (l. 6), with the Verb *wešiyahḥari* in first position, and likewise in the fourth and fifth clause of (2), with the Verbs *peššiyandu* and *dāndu* at the beginning of the clauses, followed by the Objects (=an *aliyanan* and =an) and, at the end, the Subjects (<sup>LÚ.MEŠ</sup>ŠĀIDUTIM and <sup>LÚ.MEŠ</sup>MUŠEN.DŪ<sup>TIM</sup>); in (3), with the Objects (<sup>UZUĪ</sup> and KUŠ) at the first position, followed by Subjects (<sup>LÚ.MEŠ</sup>ŠĀIDUTIM and <sup>LÚ.MEŠ</sup>MUŠEN.DŪ<sup>TIM</sup>) and, at the end, the Verbs (*dandu* in both clauses); in the second clause of (7), with the Verb (*walḥdu*) in first position, then the Subject (<sup>d</sup>IM=*aš*) and the Object (*tešummin*); in the first clause of (8) and of (9) there is the same construction, with the Verb (*wetet*) at the start and the Subject (*kuiš*) at the end; in the second clause of (10) the Verb (*wetenun*) is before the Object (*kuit kuttan*); in the second clause of (11) the Verb (*walḥdu*) occurs in first position, then the Subject (<sup>d</sup>IM=*aš*) and the Object (AN.ZA.GĀR).

The asyndetons are attested in the first clause of ex. (3) and in fourth clause of ex. (7).

The synecdoche in the second clause of (8) is noteworthy, expressed with *kuzza* (part of the whole).

The assonances and consonances, or repetitions of sounds, are found in the following examples: in (1) the syllable ‘an’ is frequently repeated (*mān=an*, *paḥḥuenanz(a)*, =*man=an*, *paḥḥuenanz(a)=man=an*), likewise the nasals ‘n’ and ‘m’ (*mān*, *paḥḥuenanz(a)*, *warnuzi*, <sup>d</sup>IM=*aš* (= <sup>d</sup>*Tarḥunnaš*), *paḥḥuenanz(a)*, *warnu-zi*); the syllable ‘-arḥ-’ is another element of rhythmical cohesion among those clauses, in fact it occurs in *arḥa*, in the third clause in last position before the Verb, and in the following clause in <sup>d</sup>IM=*aš* (= <sup>d</sup>*Tarḥunnaš*), in first position; the syllable ‘an’ is repeated in (2) (*aliyanan*, *warganun*, *peššiyandu=ya=an aliyanan*, *dandu*) and in (3) <sup>UZUĪ</sup> (= <sup>UZU</sup>*šakniyan*, *dan-du*); in (6) we can see the alternation -an/-in/-un (URUDU-*an kuin lāḥun*); in (10) there is the alliteration *kuwat kuin kuttan*.

The repetitions are: in the third and fifth clauses of ex. (1) (*mān=an pah-huenanz(a) arḫa warnuzi . . . pahhuenanz(a)=man=an arḫa warnuzi*); in ex. (2) the repetition of *aliyanan* and in exs. (2) and (3) the repetition of the verb *dandu* (1. 14, 15, 16) and of the nouns <sup>LÚ.MEŠ</sup>ŠĀIDUTIM and <sup>LÚ.MEŠ</sup>MUŠEN. DÛ<sup>TIM</sup> (1. 14, 15 16); in ex. (7) the repetition in alternating clauses of *tešummin* and *šuppišduwariuš/šuppišduwarēš*; in the fourth and fifth clauses of ex. (11) *kattanta* dat. loc. *maušdu . . . kattanta* dat. loc. *maušdu*. When we read the ‘parables’ aloud, it becomes clear that, by using these repetitions, the scribes attempted to create close connections within the above mentioned texts.

In this study we have pointed out the complex structure of the direct speeches of the Hittite version. The presence of those figures of speech cannot be accidental: The Hittite scribes employed their own knowledge of poetic language to create a text stylistically not inferior to the Hurrian one.

