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The Hittite Word for "Milk"

In Hittite texts, "milk" is usually written with the logogram GA.¹ In 1964, Hans Gustav Güterbock proposed *pankur* n. as a possible reading of GA.² His interpretation was once widely accepted³ but it must be abandoned today. Hittite *pankur* apparently denotes an external animal body part, rather the tail, as Frank Starke suggested,⁴ than the udder or the teats.⁵ Secondly, it indicates a relation of kinship: "clan or the like".

The Hittite word for "milk" is now to be found in two closely parallel passages given below, belonging to the description of a substitution ritual of the Hittite king Tuthaliya;⁶ sweet milk and sour milk are listed there among substances:⁷

KUB 12.16 i 4'–5':

[(1 ^{DUG} KU-KU-UB GEŠTIN.KU₇ 1 ^{DUG} KU-KU-UB GEŠT)]IN *kar-ši*⁸

[(1 ^{DUG} KU-KU-UB GA.KU₇ 1 ^{DUG} KU-KU-U)]B GA *EM-ŠÚ*

Bo 3351+ i 15'–16' (= 23–24):

[(1 ^{DUG} KU-KU-UB GEŠTIN.KU₇ 1 ^{DUG} KU-KU-UB GE)]ŠTIN *kar-ši*

[(1 ^{DUG} KU-KU-UB GA.KU₇ 1 ^{DUG} KU-KU-UB *al-la-an-za*)] *me-nu-wa-aš*

¹ It gives me great pleasure to dedicate this small contribution to Professor Horst Klen-gel on the occasion of his 65th birthday: his personal encouragement and advice have greatly helped me during my educational stays in Berlin.

² H. G. Güterbock, *RHA* XXII/74 [1964] 102f.

³ Cf. J. Friedrich, *HW Erg.* 3, 25; H. A. Hoffner, *Alimenta Hethaeorum* (= American Oriental Series, vol. 55), New Haven, Conn. 1974, 120; J. Tischler, *HDW*, 59; A. Ünal, *Or.* NS 54 [1985] 427.

⁴ F. Starke, *StBoT* 31 (1990), 606; idem, *StBoT* 41 (1995), 64f. n. 152.

⁵ N. Oettinger, *StBoT* 22 (1976), 14f., 51; *CHD* P, 93, with ref.

⁶ See forthcoming, P. Taracha, *Ersetzen und Entsühnen: Das mittelhethitische Ersatzritual für einen Großkönig Tuthaliya und verwandte Texte*.

⁷ I am deeply grateful to Professor Heinrich Otten for his generous permission to draw upon his lexical files of published and unpublished Hittite tablets in the Academy of Sciences and Literature in Mainz.

⁸ Restorations of the texts are based on dupl. Bo 3465 i 5'–6' and Bo 3857 i 7'–8'.

Hittite *menuwaš* here is nom. sg. of an *a*-stem noun *menuwa-* c.⁹ and the equivalent of Sumerian GA; hence, we can be quite certain about the word's meaning. In Hittite *menuwa-* "milk" an IE stem **m̥n̥-/ *men-* "suck, suckle, breast, young animal still being suckled" is discernible.¹⁰

The word *menuwa-* seems also to be attested in the genitive case: *[mi]¹-nu-wa-aš* SI[LA₄] in KUB 33.74 iv 6' and MÁŠ.TUR-*aš* (=ma=nnaš=kan) *mi-e-nu-wa-aš iwar* in KUB 33.103 iii 6'f. The genitive of *mienu-* A, *minu-* "mild, gentle, pleasant" and of *mienu-* B (mng. unknown) respectively, assumed here in the CHD L–N, 242, 243, with ref., hardly fits the contexts.¹¹ I propose instead to interpret *menuwaš* as gen.sg. "of the milk", qualifying the animals as sucklings (see above, n. 10). In KUB 33.103 iii 6'f. this interpretation would make good sense: "our [x tremble(s), is/are scared (?) or the like] like a goat kid".

The participle, *allanza*, in the second quotation above is rendered by Akkadian *EMSU* "sour, bitter" in the duplicate, which furnished the basis for reconstruction of a Hittite verb **al(l)-* "to turn sour" and, perhaps, of an adjective **al(l) u-* "sour, bitter or the like".¹² The latter might correspond etymologically to IE **al-u-* "bitter, beer, alum".¹³ Starting from Hittite *allanza*, which precludes the possibility of derivation from a *u*-stem, we may thus posit an IE stem **al-* "to turn sour, bitter" with the derivative **al-u-* "bitter, sour". Verbal adjective stems ending in a vowel, derived from a consonantal stem, are well known: Note, e.g., Tocharian *pärk* "rise" etc. that reveals an IE stem **b^hrg^h-*; Hittite *park-u-* "high" (<**b^hrg^h-u-*); Armenian *barjr* "high" (<**b^hrg^h-u-r*);¹⁴ Luwian *parr-ai-a (/i)* "high" < IE **b^hrg^h-i*.¹⁵

⁹ According to H. A. Hoffner, *RIA* VIII/3–4 [1994], 201, the Hittite word for "milk" was a neuter noun, but the contexts he quotes (p. 202 § 2b 8' and 9') are uncertain: In KBo 5.2 ii 42 etc. GA is probably a determinative of *šim(m)al(l)u*-milk; and in KBo 14.89 + KBo 20.112 i 9' *hantezzi* is not a qualifier of GA but it has rather an adverbial meaning: "The cook brings milk in front."

¹⁰ Cf., e.g., Sanskrit *ménā* "woman, female", Breton *menn* "young animal still being suckled", *menn gavr* "goat kid" etc. Many derivatives of this stem with a formative *-d-* in other IE languages are listed in Pokorny, 729 sub *mend-*, *mond-*, but – in my opinion – this cannot be regarded as a basic stem. We can also parallel Italian *lat-tante* "(new born) baby", a derivative of *latte* "milk".

¹¹ We may thus put *mienu-* B, posited in the CHD L–N, 243, to rest.

¹² For the category of verbal *u*-adjectives, well attested in Hittite, see, e.g., J. Puhvel, *Baltic-Anatolian Lexical Isoglosses*, in: Gs. Kronasser [1982], 181f.

¹³ Cf. Pokorny, 33f. sub *alu-* (*-d-*, *-t-*).

¹⁴ J. J. S. Weitenberg, *Die hethitischen U-Stämme*, Amsterdam 1984, 132; cf. also Pokorny, 140f.

¹⁵ Cf. F. Starke, *StBoT* 31 (1990), 58, 424 n. 1533.