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
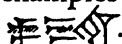
KUB XXXI 101 L. 25: *paittani* OR *kuittani*?


The text in which this disputed reading occurs is a letter from the Hittite king to his augurs (^{LÜ.MEŠ}MUŠEN.DÜ) in which he reprimands them for not having carried out their observations with due thoroughness. The whole text has recently been transliterated and translated in two independent studies of Hittite ornithomancy by A. Ünal (1972) and A. Archi (1975). The text is not in a good state of preservation, and the two editors differ on some points of reading and interpretation, of which the word in question is one. The context in which it appears is quite clear; the sentence contains a threat about the consequences of non-compliance with the king's orders introduced by the formula *ma-a-an Ú-UL-ma* 'but if (you do) not . . .'. Similar threats in royal letters can now be found in the letters from Maşat-Höyük published by S. Alp (1980). The sentence runs as follows:


24 *ma-a-an Ú-UL-ma na-aš-ta ú-wa-āt-te-ni*

25 *IŠ-TU SAG.DU^{HLA}-KU-NU pa-it-ta-ni* (Ünal) / *ku-it-ta-ni* (Archi)

It is indeed difficult to be certain whether *pa* or *ku* was intended as the first sign of the last word in line 25  ..., as the sign is damaged just at the place where the middle horizontal of a *ku* (as written elsewhere in this text) should be. Comparison with the other examples of *pa* and *ku* in the same text leads to the following observations:

1. *pa*  is normally written with the vertical crossing the horizontals near their centre, so that the tails of the horizontals project appreciably to the right of the vertical. The heads of the two horizontals have no gap between them in most of the examples; an exception is the damaged sign in line 3, in the word *pa-it* .

2. *ku*  is written with a central horizontal which is considerably shorter than the upper and lower ones, and the tails of the horizontals do not project to the right of the vertical.

The disputed sign in line 25  does not conform precisely to either of these sets of characteristics. Unlike the usual *pa* it has the vertical situated close to the end of the horizontals rather than centrally, but the horizontals do project a very short distance to the right of the vertical, which is abnormal for a *ku*. There is a distinct gap between the heads of the upper and lower horizontals, which would be normal for *ku* but abnormal for *pa*. The general configuration of the sign and the amount of space left between its vertical and the following sign *it* seem to accord better with *ku* than with *pa*, especially when compared with the sequence *pa-it* in line 3.

In view of the uncertainty attaching to the reading of the sign one must look to the interpretation for a possible solution to the problem, but here again there are difficulties, since it must be admitted that neither of the proposed translations gives entirely satisfactory sense. Ünal's reading *paittani* at least produces a known form of a known verb, but the sense 'you will go with your heads' (Ünal: "werdet ihr mit euren Köpfen gehen") is very strange. Archi, reading *kuittani*, translates lines 24–25 as "Se no, vi capiterà che ucciderete (voi stessi) con le vostre teste", apparently regarding the verb as a 2. pl. present of *kuen-* 'kill', but this is not satisfactory either, since it is doubtful if such a form could belong to this verb in the first place, and in the second place it does not yield the required meaning. As the brackets round (voi stessi) imply, there is no reflexive particle, and even if there were it would be difficult to believe in a translation 'you will kill yourselves with your heads'. In such a context the sense required is clearly something like 'pay'. The verb *šarnink-* is actually used in a similar expression in the Proclamation of Telipinus: 2.52 nu SAG.DU-na-az šar-ni-ik-du; 2.55 nu SAG.DU-az-pát šar-ni-ik du 'let him compensate with his head'. Some verb of similar meaning must be required in the present context. With all due caution in view of the tenuous nature of the textual evidence, I should like to suggest that *kuittani* may represent a survival in Hittite of the well-known Indo-European root **qwei* 'pay'. The meaning is certainly satisfactory, and a close parallel for the expression can be found in Homer, *Odyssey* 22.218 κῥάατι τέλεις 'you will pay with your head.' The root in *kuittani* is apparently in the zero grade, from **qwi*, since **qwei* would probably have given *kue-* in Hittite: cf. Eichner (1973), Oettinger (1979). The zero grade would be the form to be expected in the 2. pl. present of a radical athematic verb with ablaut, but the ending *-tani* would in that case be an innovation belonging to the type which I have discussed in *Anatolian Studies* 1980. Both the interpretation and the etymology must, of course remain uncertain unless further examples are found¹.

¹ The Author would like to thank the Editor for his kind assistance with the illustrations.

References:

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H. Eichner, 'Die Etymologie von heth. *mehur*,' MSS 31, 1973, 53–107, esp. 76–79.
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G. R. Hart, 'The Ablaut of Present and Preterite in Hittite Radical Verbs', Anatolian Studies 30, 1980, 51–61.