

## SHORTER COMMUNICATIONS

### A HITTITE ANALOGUE TO THE DAVID AND GOLIATH CONTEST OF CHAMPIONS?

One of the most fascinating and colorful aspects of the ancient epics describing warfare is the phenomenon of the contest of champions. Exciting and romantic, this practice—real and practical as it may have been in actual history—was often singled out for mention in the epic tales of antiquity. Modern readers are perhaps most familiar with it in the pages of the Old Testament and of Homer's *Iliad*. Who is there who has never heard of David and Goliath (1 Sm 17),<sup>0</sup> or of Menelaus and Paris (*Iliad*, book 3), or of Hector and Ajax (*Iliad*, book 7)? Yet scholars have demonstrated that the practice was still more widespread than in the plains of Troy and the valley of Elah.

Individual combat of champions was intended to obviate the necessity of a general engagement of troops which would spill more blood than necessary to resolve the dispute. In this respect instances of individual combat of heroes must be analyzed as to motivation and purpose before assigning them to this category. While Marduk's battle with Tiamat in *Enūma Elish* is a clear case of representative fighting, the belt-wrestling contest between Gilgamesh and Enkidu (*Gilgamesh Epic*, tablet 2) was *not* a contest of champions, since the purpose was not to resolve an issue which would otherwise have demanded an engagement of rival armies but rather the settlement of a personal rivalry.<sup>1</sup> This kind of conflict is better described as a *duel*. The individual combat between the Egyptian Sinuhe and his Syrian antagonist (*Sinuhe*, lines 109ff.; *ANET*, p. 20), which has occasionally been compared with the David and Goliath contest, was also only a duel to settle a private antagonism. There is no evi-

<sup>0</sup> On single combat in the OT see R. deVaux, *Bib* 40 (1959) 495-508.

<sup>1</sup> J. B. Pritchard, *ANET*, 21955, p. 78. For a discussion of the form of wrestling to which the episode refers see C. H. Gordon, *JNES* 7 (1948) 264, and A. L. Oppenheim, *Or* NS 17 (1948) 30. The only remote sense in which one might argue that this conflict was between champions would be that the oppressive actions of Gilgamesh against the people of Uruk, which elicited the complaint of the people to Anu (tablet 1, col. 2; *ANET*, pp. 73-4), also demanded that Enkidu, the double of Gilgamesh, be brought to Uruk to challenge him and thus fight on behalf of the oppressed people. But it is also clear from the story that no motivation of the kind could be attributed to Enkidu himself, who fights only to prove himself Gilgamesh's equal. For Sumerian "champions" see S. N. Kramer, *Enmerkar and the Lord of Aratta*, pp. 11, 458-462, 476-478.

dence that a contest of hosts was thus avoided. Yet in other respects it is incontestable that Sinuhe's duel shows many similarities with David's.<sup>2</sup>

Not all instances of contests of champions were limited to two combatants. A general engagement of troops could also be avoided by the substitution of a contest of teams of champions. It appears that such was the case with the two teams of twelve men each who fought for David and Ishbaal at the pool of Gibeon in 2 Sm 2,12ff.<sup>3</sup> When Abner proposed the combat of champions, he employed a euphemistic *terminus technicus* for such a contest with the words: "Let the young men arise and 'play' before us!" (2 Sm 2,14).<sup>3a</sup> In this case, however, the contest ended in a draw with each man slaying his opponent, so that a general engagement of the armies ensued (vv. 16-17).

With the reclassification of the contests between Sinuhe and his Syrian foe and of Gilgamesh and Enkidu as duels we are left with all late bronze age and early iron age examples of contests of champions stemming from either Canaan or the western shores of Asia Minor (Troy).

Recently, while I was conducting an investigation of the Hittite Apology of Ḫattušiliš III, still another possible example of such a contest of champions came to my attention. The incident arose when the Hittites sought to check an incursion of enemy troops from the land of Pišḫuru, an area to the northeast of the lower Halys River in the territory of the unruly Kaškaean tribes.<sup>4</sup> Pišḫuru formed the western boundary of the territory of Išḫupitta. Ḫattušiliš, who was at this time still not the reigning monarch of the Hittites but a general under the command of his older brother Muwatalliš, was dispatched with 120 chariots and no infantry to meet the invading force of 800 chariots and innumerable infantry (II 34-36). Against such odds it is difficult to believe that the Hittite forces could have triumphed, since an initial victory would have been necessary to raise the Kaškaean blockade of the Hittite cities (II 41-42). It is therefore possible that Ḫattušiliš exaggerates when he describes such overwhelming odds. But more on this question later. The text which immediately concerns us (II 31-47) may be translated as follows:<sup>5</sup>

<sup>2</sup> See for instance the remarks of D. W. Young, "Sinuhe," pp. 537-538 in *The Biblical World*, Grand Rapids, Mich., 1966; Lanczowski, *Mitteilungen der deutschen archäologischen Institut zu Kairo* 16 (1959) 214-218.

<sup>3</sup> C. H. Gordon, *Homer and the Bible* (Ventnor, 1967), p. 51.

<sup>3a</sup> Y. Sukenik, *JPOS* 21 (1948) 110-116.

<sup>4</sup> On the location of Pišḫuru see A. Goetze, *Revue hittite* 1, pp. 25ff., Garstang & Gurney, *Geography of the Hittite Empire*, pp. 15 and 25, von Schuler, *Die Kaškäer*, p. 41, footnote 237.

<sup>5</sup> For other translations see A. Götze, *Ḫattušiliš*, p. 19, and E. H. Sturtevant, *A Hittite Chrestomathy*, p. 71.

Now the Pišhuruwian enemy came (and) made an incursion, and (the cities of) Karaḥna (and) Marišta [were] in the midst of the enemy. On that side (the city of) Takkašta was (his) boundary, and on this side (the city of) Talmaliya was (his) boundary. (His) chariotry consisted of 800 teams, whereas for (his) infantry there was no counting. Yet my brother Muwatalliš sent me (to meet him), and he gave me 120 teams of chariotry, but as to infantry not even a single man was with me. My lady Ištar, however, marched before me. At that time I personally conquered the enemy. For when I slew the man who was the *piran ḫuyanza*, the (rest of the) enemy fled. Now the cities of the land of Ḫatti which had been blockaded joined in the attack and began to defeat the enemy. So I set up a victory stela<sup>6</sup> in the city of Wištawanda, for at that time the recognition of Ištar my lady had been for me. And the weapon which I had held on that occasion I devoted(?) and set up before the goddess, my lady.

The portion of this passage which bears directly upon the question of contests of champions is lines 38 to 41, where Ḫattušiliš claims that he "personally conquered the enemy" by slaying the "man who was the *piran ḫuyanza*." The expression which I have translated as "personally" is written *IŠ-TU NÍ-TE-YA*, which would be normalized in Akkadian as *ištu ramāniya*.<sup>7</sup> The Hittite phonetic normalization would be *ammel tueggaz*, "from/by means of my body." From the literal and concrete sense "body" the noun *tueggaš* was extended to include the notion of "person." From this expression alone it would be impossible to decide whether *ammel tueggaz* implied only that Ḫattušiliš led the attack in person (instead of delegating this job to a subordinate officer), or that he personally was responsible for the victory through his own fighting prowess as manifested in a single combat of champions. E. H. Sturtevant translates *ammel tueggaz* as "with my own resources," perhaps implying that other troops

<sup>6</sup> The word is written with the Sumerogram ŠU, which normally means "hand." Götze translates this "die Streitmacht." Sturtevant renders it "trophy(?)." C. H. Gordon has pointed out that this strange usage of the Sumerogram for "hand" is neatly paralleled in the West Semitic sphere, where Hebrew *yād* means both "hand" and "victory stela" (*Before the Bible*, p. 93 and note 1, where the reference to the Apology of Ḫattušiliš should be corrected to "Apology 2:25 and 44"). In Sumerian and Akkadian neither ŠU nor *qātu(m)* are known to have this meaning of "victory stela." The Sumerogram ŠU with the meaning "stela" may also occur in the "Deeds of Šuppiluliuma." In fragment 37 (*JCS* 10 [1956], p. 112), line 18 this broken passage occurs: ]ŠU-an-na ku-in an-da x[, which Güterbock translates (*ibid.*): "and the trophy(?) which [ . . . ]." These matters have also been discussed briefly in the unpublished dissertation of my student H. M. Wolf, "The Apology of Ḫattušiliš Compared With Other Political Self-Justifications" (Brandeis University, Ph.D. dissertation, 1967), pp. 52 and 189 with footnote 139. For the Hebrew evidence compare I Chr 18,3, 1 Sm 15,12, and 2 Sm 18,18.

<sup>7</sup> A. Deimel, *Sumerisches Lexikon*, II, 399:185e; Götze, *Madduwattaš*, p. 132f.; Friedrich, *Hethitisches Wörterbuch*, p. 287. See also the remarks of Otten (*Hethitische Totenrituale*, pp. 122-4) and A. Kammenhuber (*ZA* NF 22, pp. 153ff. and 167ff.).

were available to Ḫattušiliš besides those assigned to him by Muwatalliš.<sup>8</sup> Götze renders it "aus eigener Kraft," which does not suggest auxiliary troops.<sup>9</sup> Neither or these scholars understood the phrase as implying the personal fighting of the author, yet this is surely the expected meaning of Akkadian *ištu ramāniya* and Hittite *ammel tueggaz*. The second crucial phrase is found in lines 39-40: *LÚ<sup>LUM</sup>-ma ku-iš pi-ra-an ḫu-u-i-ya-an-na e-eš-ta na-an-kán GIM-an ku-e-nu-un*, which I have translated "but when I had slain the man who was the *piran ḫuyanza*." Both Götze and Sturtevant interpret *LÚ<sup>LUM</sup>-ma kuiš* as "whatever man (was a helper/ally)." But both translations were published before the consistent pattern for the distinguishing of determinate versus indeterminate relative clauses was established in 1957 by Warren H. Held in his dissertation *The Hittite Relative Sentence*, pp. 12ff. There it was shown that, when the relative pronoun precedes its antecedent (*kuiš-ma LÚ<sup>LUM</sup>*), the construction is indeterminate ("whatever man . . ."), whereas when the antecedent noun precedes the relative pronoun (*LÚ<sup>LUM</sup>-ma kuiš*), the construction is determinate ("that [particular] man who . . ."). Our passage is thus clearly determinate and must be rendered "when I slew the man who was the *piran ḫuyanza*." When the indeterminate interpretation is rejected, one can no longer explain the singular *LÚ<sup>LUM</sup>* (Akkadian *awīlum* "man") as "whatever man," implying that there were several such men involved. It becomes necessary to explain why the singular *LÚ<sup>LUM</sup>* (versus *LÚ.MEŠ* "men") is used. One might seek an explanation in an underlying collective noun such as Hittite *tuzziš* "army" or *antuḫšatar* "group of men." The relative pronoun *kuiš* requires that the antecedent be a noun of common (versus neuter) gender, so that *antuḫšatar* (which is neuter) is eliminated from consideration. The noun *tuzziš* (common gender) would still be possible on grammatical grounds, yet the normal logographic writing of *tuzziš* is either *ERÍN.MEŠ*<sup>10</sup> or *KARAŠ*.<sup>11</sup> There is no other passage in which it is represented by *LÚ<sup>LUM</sup>*. In fact it is difficult to avoid the conclusion that *LÚ<sup>LUM</sup>* indicates here as elsewhere only the word for "man" (either *antuḫšaš*, which like Greek *anthrōpos* means actually "person," or the other Hittite noun concealed behind *LÚ* which means "male person" and whose phonetic spelling is at present unknown). But if this be so, then Ḫattušiliš claims only to have slain one man, and that the death of this one man so demoralized the rest of the enemy troops that they turned and fled. What kind of man might this have been? It is

<sup>8</sup> *A Hittite Chrestomathy*, p. 71.

<sup>9</sup> *Ḫattušiliš*, p. 19.

<sup>10</sup> *Hethitisches Wörterbuch*, p. 231 and 271.

<sup>11</sup> Hrozny, *Boghazköi-Studien* 2/3, p. 230, note 1; Götze, *Ḫattušiliš*, p. 122 sub KI.KAL.BAD.

possible that he was the commander-in-chief of the enemy troops. Yet it must be agreed that there are other terms in Hittite for a commander or general (EN.KARAŠ, *tapariyalliš*, etc.). *Piran huyananza* literally means "one who runs/marches in front,"<sup>12</sup> which leads me to propose another solution. Could this man not have been a champion? If so, then his defeat would have meant total defeat for the enemy, and in order to escape being taken prisoners their only recourse would have been flight. Instructive in this regard is the passage in 1 Sm 17,51: "When the Philistines saw that their champion (*gibbôrām*) was dead, they fled."

Both in Greek and in Hebrew the words denoting the champion are descriptive of persons who have *gone out in front* of their own host in order to engage an opponent. The Greek technical term "to be a champion" is *promachizein* (*Iliad* 3:16; 20:376), of which the preverb *pro* signifies that he fights in a cleared area in front of the host. The Hebrew technical term (aside from the more general *gibbôr* "hero") is *'iš habbēnayim*, "man between two (armies)" (1 Sm 17,4),<sup>13</sup> with which one should compare Ugaritic *iš bnny* "intermediary, umpire" and the occurrences at Qumrān, where it may designate "infantry." The Hittite term *piran huyananza* likewise contains the preverb *piran* "in front" and could easily describe a warrior who fights in the front as a champion.

If this theory as to the identity of the *piran huyananza* is correct, it might also help to explain the statistics of the troops involved in the encounter and how it happened that Ḫattušiliš' force which numbered only 120 chariots could put to flight a force of 800 chariots and innumerable infantry. Why would Ḫattušiliš be willing to risk his own life in individual combat unless the odds in a general engagement were not in his favor? On the other hand, if the enemy had a capable champion, they might well have consented to such a settlement. It is clear from other texts that the Hittites entertained the same concept of divine judgment by the ordeal of battle (*Apology of Ḫattušiliš*, III 71-73; *Annals of Muršiliš*, p. 99 KBo III 4:13-14) that was shared by the Hebrews (Jgs 11,27) and the Greeks.<sup>14</sup> If they thus believed in divine judgment by battle on the mass level, it was probably also true that they believed divine judgment could have been revealed by single combat.

A fact which may also lend support to our interpretation that Ḫattušiliš' own military prowess resulted in victory on this occasion is that afterwards he devoted the weapon he carried on that day to the goddess:

<sup>12</sup> *Hethitisches Wörterbuch*, p. 78.

<sup>13</sup> See DeVaux, *Bib* 40 (1959) 497-498 and note 2.

<sup>14</sup> O. R. Gurney, *The Hittites*, pp. 176-177; H. W. Hertzberg, *Die Samuelbücher*, p. 115.

<sup>615</sup> TUKUL-*ma kuin apiya ḫarkun n-an ḫališšayanun n-an šiuni išḫaššari-mi piran tehḫun*, "the weapon which I wielded then I (afterward) dedicated and placed it before the goddess my lady (i.e., in her sanctuary)." (*Apology of Ḫattušiliš*, II 46-47). In a similar fashion David the Hebrew placed in the sanctuary of Yahweh the sword of Goliath with which he had cut off the head of the enemy champion (1 Sm 21,8-9).

In summary, we have here one of the closest parallels known to date to the contest of champions as seen in the Greek and Hebrew sources. The proposed parallel in the Sinuhe story (see above) is not a true contest of champions but a duel.<sup>15</sup> It would appear that such contests were at home on Canaanite and Greek soil, but also in Asia Minor, where, after all, the contests of the Achaeans and Trojans have their settings.<sup>16</sup> Here as in other areas it would appear that the Hittites and their Bronze Age Anatolian neighbors were true mediators in the give and take between the Greek West and the West Semitic orient.

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<sup>15</sup> Not properly distinguished by DeVaux, *op. cit.*, p. 502, who emphasizes similarities to 1 Sm 17 (the taunt, challenge and mode of fighting). But the threat was to Sinuhe, the intrusive Egyptian, not to the tribe which he led.

<sup>16</sup> The question of the origin of this type of battle of representatives (Aegean, Anatolian, or West Semitic?) has not been resolved, despite the attempt of DeVaux, *op. cit.*, pp. 501-502 to prove early widespread Semitic and Egyptian usage. The appearance in later Arabia (and especially in Crusader times) can contribute very little to questions of origins. The earliest examples of true contest of champions (not duels) still appear to be in Western Asia Minor and along the Levantine coast.