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The Hurrian Story of the Sungod, the Cow and the Fisherman

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Among the literary texts in the Hittite language found at Boğazköy there is a small group of Hurrian tales, which are of great interest. This group was first edited by J. Friedrich in 1949.¹ Since Friedrich's edition one of these, the Appu story, has been re-edited, using new fragments which have enlarged the basis for reconstituting the text.² But the other two stories, one concerning a hunter named Kešši, and another about the Sungod, a cow, and a fisherman and his wife, have remained unaugmented by more recently published fragments. For this reason no new edition of these texts has been attempted.

The stories themselves, or what remains of them, are quite charming and well worth scholarly attention. Since I have devoted considerable study to them in my classroom teaching over the years, I would like to share with a wider audience certain evidence, not generally known, which bears on the proper interpretation of one of these tales, namely, that of the Sungod, the cow and the fisherman.

Friedrich's edition was based on the cuneiform copy of *KUB* 24.7 made by Arnold Walther, who was a careful copyist. In the summer of 1979 I was permitted to collate and photograph this tablet (Bo 2024) in the collection of the Istanbul Archaeological Museum.³ I found Walther's copy to be, in almost all points, quite faithful.⁴ I would like, however, to communicate certain

¹"Churritische Märchen und Sagen in hethitischer Sprache," *ZA* 49 (1949-50) 213-55.

²J. Siegelová, "Appu-Märchen und Hedammu-Mythus," *StBoT* 14 (1971) 1-34.

³I would like to express my thanks here to Veyssel Donbaz and Fatma Yıldız, curators of the Istanbul tablet collection, who permitted me to examine and photograph Bo 2024, and to the Chicago Hittite Dictionary Project, through whose funding I was enabled to make the trip.

⁴The following are admittedly very minor criticisms, but should be made in the context of a general collation of this tablet. The spacing and vertical alignment of the signs as copied in *KUB* 24.7 does not reflect the actual situation on the tablet. Thus if one selects the signs which lie on a hypothetical vertical line bisecting each column, one finds them in the copy sometimes to the left and sometimes to the

information at the outset to supplement his copy. Bo 2024 measures 26 x 20 cm in overall dimensions. The lefthand column on both obverse and reverse measures 10 cm from the left extreme of the inscribed surface to the left edge of the intercolumnium. The intercolumnium itself is 1 cm wide. The righthand column on each side measures 9 cm from intercolumnium to beginning of the tablet edge. In most lines the scribe has continued his line out onto that right edge. The arrangement of the writing on the tablet is quite neat. The lines run almost at a precise 90° angle from the vertical margins. There is not, therefore, that noticeable upward slant which one finds on some Hittite tablets, but which is generally not represented in the hand copies. The scribe was usually quite careful to indicate divisions between words by spacing. He wrote in a medium-sized script. The average number of signs in a line of the lefthand columns is 20, while that in the righthand columns is 17 (not including overruns onto the edge). Thus the average sign was 5 mm wide. Walther estimated that the columns on the obverse contained about 65 lines, while on the reverse 70 lines. The reverse, being more convex, naturally accommodated more lines. Each line of script required a vertical space of about 4 mm.

The Cow and Fisherman story occupied only the last part of this tablet, which was a *Sammeltafel*. The first column and much of the second contained a poetic composition which celebrated the activities of the goddess Ishtar.⁵

Of the opening part of the story preserved in ii 46ff. not much can be learned from the badly broken lines. *Šarkuš* (ii 47), which Friedrich translates "hervorragend," modifies gods and kings. Perhaps the Sungod is intended. The plural verb *nannieškir* "they were accustomed to drive (livestock)" suggests that shepherds are the subject. *arḫa piddalait* (ii 49) is a singular; who is the subject? This verb was well treated by Friedrich in *JCS* 1 (1947) 285f. There he posited the meaning "unbeachtet (unangerührt) lassen; laufen lassen" which he later incorporated in *HW* 171. The other occurrence of this verb which most closely resembles the situation here is *KUB* 9.32 i 25-27 with duplicates HT 1 iii 38-42 and *KUB* 9.31 iii 44-46, the ritual of Ašḫela. According to that passage sheep are driven into the fields to graze, and *ANA ZAG* ^{LÜ}KÜR *anda*

right of the same hypothetical bisecting vertical. Thus in the rare case when the pertinence of wedges lying between lines is questioned, one cannot always be sure what sign lies above or below the line under consideration. Table one shows the forms of certain signs which are typical for this tablet. Walther did not always correctly draw certain signs. The following asterisks are samples of those which are incorrectly drawn in *KUB* 24.7: i 14 *-ra*-zu-un*-na*-an . . . ku*-it*; i 16 *-wa-u-wa*-an-zi . . . nu* KIN-an ku*-it . . .*; i 19 *SAL.MEŠ É.GE₄A-uš**; i 38 *DAM**; i 42 *ar-nu*-uz-zi*; i 47 *ku-it-ki**; i 56 *]x-iš-ki*-mi*; ii 5 *ḫu-el*-pi*.

⁵*CTH* 717 with earlier literature. Most recently treated by A. Archi, *OrAnt* 16 (1977) 305ff.

⁶On this usage of *-pat* to refer to an object or a condition mentioned just previously see Hoffner in *Fs Otten* 107-9, section B.

arḫa pittalanzi “they let them run (i.e., graze) in(to) enemy territory.” In the *KUB* 24.7 story, too, grazing stock are in view. Two occurrences (*KUB* 21.27 i 16-18 treated by Friedrich and *KUB* 19.12 ii 4a not treated by Friedrich) concern the military-political actions of rulers or generals, who “neglect” territories. A final occurrence from the poem about Ishtar’s powers and activities (*KUB* 24.7 ii 10) poses unique problems. The verb is only here construed with the particle *-za*, which was not noted by either Friedrich (*JCS* 1:286) or Archi (*OrAnt* 16:309) in their translations. Archi has detected the essential meaning of the lines, which I would translate: “You don them (i.e., men) like clean clothes. One you soil, and the other you allow to remain clean (*parkun* to be understood as *parkuin*) as before (*-pai*)⁶ for yourself (*-za*).” Thus here *arḫa piddalai-* must be translated “allow to remain,” which is not far removed from the translation “unangerührt lassen” offered by Friedrich, and somewhat better than Archi’s “e chi puro lasci andare.”

Friedrich’s transliteration of the first preserved part of this tale (II 46-65) was marred by his failure to observe Walther’s note in his hand copy, which cautioned users that for economy of printing he had compressed his drawing of the space to the left margin by 3 cm. Friedrich did not allow for that and thus gives the impression that there is space in the break at the left for about four fewer signs than what actually exists.

51 [o o o o o o *ḫu*]-*el-pí* ¹*ḫa*[-*ap-pu-r*]*i*[-*i*]*a-an-na nu* ¹*G1*?¹-*an*

52 [o o *az-zi-ik*]-*ki*[-*i*]*t nu* GUD-*uš m*[*e-ek-k*]*i mar-r*[*i*] SIG₅-*t*[*a-at*?]

53 [o o *mi-iš-r*]*i*!-*u-e-eš-ta* ^dUTU-*uš-kán AN-za* GAM *a-u*[*š-ta*]

54 [*nu* SIG₅?-*an*?-*ti*? A-]NA GUD *ZI-aš pa-ra-a wa-at-k*[*u-u*]*t*

“... and tender grass. And [the cow at]e reeds(?).⁷ And the cow became exceedingly fat,⁸ [the cow] became [bea]utiful.⁹ The Sungod looked down from heaven. His sexual desire leaped upon [the fat⁸] cow.”

⁷Walther’s copy shows Z[I] or G[I] in ii 51, the decisive righthand part of the sign is broken. *GI-an* would be Hittite *natan*, where the singular is probably collective. Friedrich transliterated *ZI-an* with no indication of the broken condition of the sign.

⁸Middle form SIG₅-*t*[*a-at*] (contra Friedrich: SIG₄-*t*[*a*]) seems called for by the sense required. See now *CHD* sub *lazziya-* 3b. The translation “fat,” not employed in *CHD*, is suggested here as conveying the physical appearance of a healthy, thriving cow.

⁹Friedrich, overlooking Walther’s note about the size of the break on the left, allowed only [*nu*? *PI*]*š*?-*e-eš-ta*, which would be a hapax. Since more space is clearly available, I read the traces [o o *mi-iš-r*]*i*!-*u-e-eš-ta*, a known and appropriate verb. In the Hittite translation of Akkadian lunar omens *KUB* 8.13:13 *mi-iš-ri-u-e-eš-zi* describes the moon as being full, as opposed to *tepawešzi* “is partial” (line 14). I do not believe that the fundamental idea underlying *mišriwant-*, *mišriwatar*, *mišriweš-*, etc., is splendor or brilliance, as assumed by HW and other colleagues. It seems rather to me

Friedrich's transliteration through III 24a can only be improved upon in small details. But I offer a different translation of III 18ff.: "[The first month passed,] the second month, the third month, [the fourth month, . . .], the ninth month. And the tenth month arrived.¹⁰ [And the cow gave birth.] The cow [called(?)] back up to heaven, she looked . . . and she began to say [to the Sungod(?)]: "I call for mercy."¹¹ [My calf] (should have) four legs. Why have I given birth to this two-legged one?"

- 24 . . . GUD-uš UR.MAH-aš GIM-an KAXU-iš ar-ḫa
 25 ki-nu-ut na-aš DUMU-li a-da-an-na pa-iš-ki-it-ta GUD-uš-za šar-ḫu[-wa-an-da-še-et]
 26 ḫu-u-wa-an-ḫu-e-šar ma-a-an ḫal-lu-wa-nu-ut n[a-a]š DU[MU-l]i
 [. . .]
 27 i-ia-an-ni-i[š]

"The cow opened her mouth like a lion and goes to the child to eat (the attached fetal membranes). Like a wave she released her aft[erbirth], and went to the child [to suckle it]." The interpretation of Friedrich that the cow went to harm the child was based on the interpretation of *tarkuwa* as "angrily" and the metaphor of the lion. It seems to me that these two facts need not so be understood. *Tarkuwa* is a hapax. The cow's words "I call for mercy"¹¹ and her

that the words express perfection in the sense of that which has no essential part lacking. This notion is as appropriate to a beautiful woman, to a sacrificial animal, as it is to temples and lands. I would suggest that the basic idea is "full, whole, entire, perfect" and an extended meaning "(visually) perfect, beautiful." Supporting the restoration here of *mišriweš-* is the pairing of SIG₅-ant- and *mišriwant-* elsewhere (*KUB* 15.34 ii 7, 15, 38, 46; *KBo* 15.10 i 17). Someone or something which is *mišriwant-* is further described as *ḫumandaz aššanuwanza* "endowed with everything" in two different texts (*KBo* 4.6 i 13-14; *KUB* 33.121 ii 5-6).

¹⁰The ten-month gestation formula is, of course, common enough in describing human pregnancies (H. Hoffner, *JNES* 27:199). It happens, however, that it is not inappropriate here for a cow, since the bovine gestation period is 283 days on the average (G. P. West, ed., *Encyclopedia of Animal Care*, 1977, p. 629).

¹¹*duddu/duwaddu* as an interjection is similar in meaning to Akkadian *aḫulap* (*CAD* 213ff.), which is used to express or seek compassion. *aḫulap* is similar in meaning to Akkad. *maši* "enough" and *adi mati* "for how long?". In a ritual to heal a sick man (*KUB* 17.12 iii 16-21) they bind the sick man's hands with woolen cords and whip (*zaḫ-* "strike") him with the same woolen cords, while he cries out *duddu* ("Mercy! Enough!"). Oettinger (*Die Stammbildung des hethitischen Verbums*, 230ff.) has shown that *duddu/duwaddu* is a 2nd sg. imperative of the verb *duddu-*, for which he puts forward the translation "gnädig behandeln, gnädig beherrschen." The OH examples of this imperative show the fuller form *tuwattu*. For the imperative Oettinger suggests "sei gnädig." The imperative form is regularly used in prayers as a plea for

question may actually reflect concern for the strange, two-legged offspring. The cow opened her mouth wide to eat the fetal membrane.¹² Through the use of metaphor to indicate how wide, the story-teller has alluded to an animal whose wide open mouth is nearly proverbial, the lion. This is a myth, of course. But one sees in the context no other evidence that the cow wanted to kill her offspring. And that being the case, one might expect her to do the following: (1) eat or lick away whatever fluids of fetal membranes adhere to her "calf," (2) expel her afterbirth, and (3) begin to suckle the new "calf." The GAM *paššūna* "to swallow down" of lines 31 in broken context might refer to the cow's swallowing the fetal membranes or the afterbirth, or to the offspring's swallowing milk from the cow's udder. In line 35 read *ḥa-aḥ-re-ṛes¹[-ki-iz-zi]* instead of Friedrich's *ḥa-pu-ri-x[. . .]*. In iii 57 restore perhaps: [. . . *ḥa-le-e*]n-zu^{HI.A} *arrauwanzi ḥarnamnieškant[a]* "[The . . . -s] are stirred up to wash away the [water pl]ants." For iii 65ff. see now the CHD sub *liliwant-*. In iii 69 read: [*IS-T*]U KAK.HI.A-ŠU-NU, and in iii 70: [*nu a*]n-da *dammenkandušman*. Lines iv 49ff. should be translated: "The woman's wits were sharp. She had ignored commands, and . . . But she had attained the (proper) subjection of woman and no (longer) alters (i.e., disobeys) the man's word."

The preceding remarks, while not directly concerned with the plot of the story, are essential for the interpretation of certain passages which affect our reconstruction of the plot.

While the body of texts written in the Hurrian language grows steadily, we should not underestimate the importance of the study of Hurrian compositions in Hittite translations. The most important of these are surely the myths which form what is called the Kumarbi cycle. But the smaller corpus of tales, the initial studies of which we owe to J. Friedrich, hold a position of great

divine pity (*KUB* 30.62+:12; *KBo* 17.4:4; *KBo* 17.1 ii 41; *KBo* 11.72+ iii 22). Note also: *nu wašduli duddu ḥal'ai* "He cries 'Mercy' for (his) offence" *KUB* 4.47 i 8.

¹²KAxU-iš *arḥa kinut* iii 24-25. Were this agonistic behaviour, it would certainly involve horns and hooves, not "eating." For bovine parturition behaviour see G. P. West (ed.), *Encyclopedia of Animal Care*, 581f. And note in particular: "The cow licks the foetal membranes and fluids from the calf and usually eats the placenta, and sometimes the bedding contaminated by foetal and placental fluids as well. The normally herbivorous animal suddenly and briefly exhibits a carnivorous appetite. . . . During this time the mother and calf stay close together, and the calf feeds for the first time." (E. S. E. Hafez [ed.], *The Behaviour of Domestic Animals*, 1962, p. 278). I translated *šarḥu[wandaššet]* "her afterbirth" because *šarḥuwanda* has the meaning "placenta, fetus" in the laws (numbers 17-18, 77a-77b) and in Tunnawi I 4-5. In law 77a the Old Script version A has the Akkadian *ša šā-bi-ša* (*ša libbiša*) in its place. The afterbirth is also referred to by the Akkadogram ^{UZU}ŠALĪTU, which is offered to deities at the time of birth of calves, lambs and kids (*CAD* H sub *ḥakurratu*, and add *KBo* 22.222 iii 1, 5).

importance as well. This attempt to enlarge upon the understanding of one such Hurrian story in Hittite translation is offered as a tribute to E. R. Lacheman, who, through his long labors on the texts from Nuzi, has made a major contribution to our understanding of the history and culture of the Hurrians.

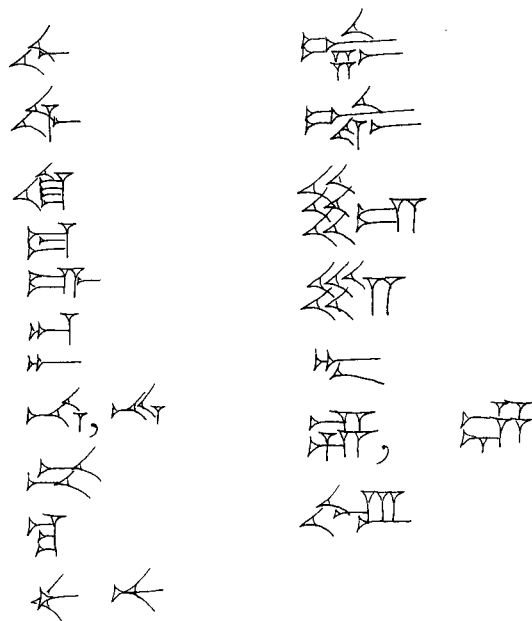


Table One: A selection of sign forms typical for Bo 2024, which are usually not drawn correctly in *KUB* 24.7. Other signs, correctly drawn in *KUB* 24.7 and therefore not shown here, combine with these to indicate a date for the copy during the Empire Period.