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Babyloniaca Hethitica: The “babilili-Ritual” from Boğazköy (CTH 718)

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I am presently preparing an edition of CTH 718, the textual group known to Hittitologists as the “babilili-ritual” after the adverb which here introduces Akkadian incantations within the larger Hittite-language context. This composition comprises: 1

1. A. KUB 39.71
   B. KUB 39.70 + KUB 32.1 + KUB 39.81 + KBo 39.1692 + KBo 39.1733
   C. KUB 32.2 + FHG 3 + KBo 39.228
   D. KUB 39.85
   E. KUB 39.73
   F. IHT 5
   G. KUB 39.72
   H. KUB 39.74
   J. Bo 92/102
2. A. KUB 39.78
   B. KUB 39.80
3. A. KBo 7.29
   B. KUB 39.90
   C. KUB 39.75

Author’s note: Abbreviations for Hittite text publications and Hittitological works are those given in The Hittite Dictionary of the Oriental Institute of the University of Chicago, Volume L–N, Fascicle 4 (Chicago: The Oriental Institute, 1989) xv–xxviii. All other abbreviations are those of The Chicago Assyrian Dictionary, Volume 17 (S), Part III (Chicago: The Oriental Institute, 1992) v–xxii.

1. I am grateful to Professor Heinrich Otten for permission to utilize the unpublished fragments listed here, as well as for sending me copies of the relevant pieces in KBo 39 before the appearance of that volume.
2. See CHD L–N, 74, where this fragment is cited as 1885/u.
unplaced fragments:

1. KUB 39.94 + KBo 17.97
2. KUB 39.69
3. KUB 39.76
4. KUB 39.77
5. KUB 39.79
6. KUB 39.82
7. KUB 39.82
8. KUB 39.83
9. KUB 39.84
10. KUB 39.86
11. KUB 39.88
12. KUB 39.89
13. KUB 39.92
14. KUB 39.93
15. KUB 39.95
16. KUB 39.96
17. KBo 39.172
18. 645/z
19. KUB 39.68
20. 99/f
21. Bo 5664
22. KBo 32.206

While it is by no means unusual for a Hittite religious composition to feature speech in a foreign tongue—for example in Hattic, Palae, Luwian, or Hurrian—only one other known rite (the so-called "Ritual against Insomnia," CTH 432\(^4\)) contains more than a sentence or two of Akkadian. Given the general dependence of Hatti upon Mesopotamian culture in such matters as writing system, literary genre, and forms of religious expression,\(^5\) a consideration of the character of the Akkadian incantations in the babili-r ritual promises to shed light beyond the limited area of Hittite ritual studies.

The best-preserved portion of CTH 718 is a tablet (1.A above) detailing the activities beginning just before dawn on the second day of the ritual regimen. From at least four different manuscripts, I have reconstructed 200 of the approximately 220 lines originally present on this tablet.\(^6\) In addition there are two damaged parallel texts for these same ceremonies, each preserved in multiple copies, as well as some twenty fragments of varying length of whose placement I am not yet certain. From the diverse content of these latter pieces, it seems unlikely that they give the text of only one or two original tablets, but there is within them no clear indication of division into days to aid reconstruction. One of these fragments may possibly be assigned paleographically to the Middle Hittite period (Fragment 4),\(^7\) and several to the fourteenth century (1.C, 2.A, Fragment 11), but most of the material displays late—that is, thirteenth-century—script.

While E. Laroche presumably assigned tablets and fragments to this text group solely on the basis of the presence of the word babili—it does not occur in any other ritual—these texts also display a number of other common features. Chief among these are the use of the șâlu-drinking vessel\(^8\) (invariably written with the Sumerogram ZA.HUM), and the frequent denotation of the ša(š)kuami-priest by the writing ȘANGA-niš (Giš), a spelling unattested elsewhere.

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4. I plan to publish an edition of this text in the near future.
6. Two of the exemplars (B and F) continue beyond the material presented in Text A.
7. Note the DA-sign in line 11. This piece should be collated in order to dare it securely.
8. CAD Ș/1, 105–6.
Externally, this text group shows strong affinities in specialized vocabulary, personnel, and deities worshiped with CTH 481, which describes the resettlement of DINGIR. GE, from Kizzuwatna to Samuha in the latter part of the fifteenth or the early fourteenth century, and CTH 482, the record of the reformation of this same cult by Murshili II about fifty years later. Indeed, H.-M. Künemel suggested that this latter text constitutes the missing initial portion of the babili-ritual. However, since little of CTH 482 is preserved beyond the list of ritual materials, I remain uncertain on this question.

The deity addressed by the babili-incantations is the IŠTAR-type Pirinkir, equated in the An = Anum list from Meskene/Emar with Nin.sì4.an.na. In turn, standard An = Anum defines Nin.sì4.an.na as IŠTAR MUL. That is, Pirinkir is a star, probably our Venus or morning star. This harmonizes well with her occasional representation in Hittite sources as a disc (AŠ.ME) of precious metal and with the ornamentation of her image in CTH 481 by several wannu-patalla-’stars’. Note also that rites performed on behalf of Pirinkir, in our text and elsewhere, often involve activities at night and upon the roof, “under the stars.”

Already in 1929, F. W. König proposed the identification of this goddess with the Elamite deity Pitu-n(k)ir. This suggestion now finds welcome confirmation in one of the babili-incantations:

O IŠTAR!
   [Let] Sin, your father, eat!
   [Let] Ningal, your mother, (eat) well!
   Let Šamaš, your twin, eat!
   Let Ellabrat, your vizier, eat!
   Let Ea, the king, your creator, eat!
Indeed, let all the gods lift up... (unintelligible) (to you),
O Elamite goddess.¹⁸

In CTH 481 worship is directed to both “the deity” within the temple of DINGIR-GE₆ and Pirinkir. I have not yet decided whether Pirinkir is to be identified with DINGIR-GE₆ or if she is rather only a satellite of this latter variety of IŠTAR. In any case, O. Carruba’s interpretation of DINGIR-GE₆ as ‘Deity of the Night’¹⁹—although recently questioned by A. Ünal²⁰—is certainly correct. In another context the second heterogram of the expression DINGIR-LUM GE₆-SI²¹ must be interpreted as māši ‘of the night’. The new image of DINGIR-GE₆ prepared in CTH 481 is also easily recognizable as a rendering of the firmament above and its lights.²²

The smiths fashion the deity from gold... Discs of gold, lapis, carnelian, “Babylon-stone,” chalcedony(?), duššu-stone, and marble, as well as life-symbols and stars of silver and gold.²³

In light of what we have just seen of the origins of Pirinkir, it is significant that CTH 481 summons the Deity of the Night “...from Agade, Babylon, Susa, Elam, and Hur[sag]kalama (that is, Kish)²⁴—the city which you love.”²⁵ (The final clause

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¹⁸. KUB 39.94 + KBo 17.97 ii 2’-8’
²⁰. KUB 39.94 + KBo 17.97 ii 2’-8’
quoted here is the only Akkadian-language passage in this text.) Thus CTH 481, 482, and 718 are each concerned with the night sky and its stellar bodies, several of which are conceived as forms of the Mesopotamian/Elamite IŠTAR.

The ritual action of the well-preserved second day of CTH 718 centers upon a meal offered to Pirinikir, interrupted at frequent intervals by incantations explicating the activities and requesting favors in return. Initially a kattu-woman goes to draw ‘water of purification’ (šēlēliyyal watar), making suitable offerings to the spring. This water is then employed throughout the ceremonies by the ṣankumī-priest and the offerant (EN.SISKUR), who might be any member of the royal family. An aromatic (huṣṣar) is burned before the goddess, and she receives libations of beer. A sheep is sacrificed, butchered, cooked, and served, accompanied by baked goods. The ṣankumī-priest performs a waving ceremony with fish and a rite of analogic magic featuring a model boat.

Near the end of the tablet, the scene shifts to a river bank, where two additional sheep—one for the deity and one for the offerant—are introduced as substitutes (nakkušeš). Unfortunately, the ultimate disposition of these animals is obscured by a break in the text.

The Akkadian incantations of CTH 718 are on the whole simple. The most frequently-attested calls upon the goddess: “Wash your hands, My Lady, Great Queen! Let your fingers feed you morsels for your lips!”26 Many others urge acceptance of an offering. Thus: “Receive (or eat, or drink), O Lady of Gods and Kings!”27 and “IŠTAR, Lady of the Lands, may my bread-offering be pleasant (to you)!”28 The longer incantation quoted earlier is a summons to feasting directed to the family and entourage of the goddess.

Another type of Akkadian incantation here seeks to remove sin. For example, “O Lady [of the Lands?] release my offense! Queen of Heaven, release my sin!”29 And again: “I have purified the man. [. . . ] I have purified (him from) his errors.

26. For example, KUB 39.71 iii 9–10:
   9. MI-ŠI ŠU.HA-KI BE-EL-TI₄ MUNUS.LUGAL.GAL ŠU.SI.HA-KI
      BU-ŪH-HA.A-R[(I-KI)]
   10. ŠA SAP-ŠI-KI ŠU-UK-KI-I₅
27. For example, KUB 39.71 iiii 16–17:
   16. MU-ŪH-RI BE-EL-TI₄ DIN.GIR.MES-[-NI]I
   17. LUGAL.MES[-NI]
28. KUB 39.70++ iv 14′–15′ (= KUB 32.1 iv 13′–14′):
   14′. 4IŠTAR BE-EL-TI₄ ŠA KUR.KUR.HI A
   15′. AK.LI LU.Ū-TA-AB
29. KUB 39.70++ i 24′ (= KUB 39.70 i 8′):
   24′. [GAŠAN¹ MA-TA-HI 4I PU-Ú]T-RI MUNUS.LUGAL ŠA-ME-E AR-NI¹
      PU-Ú-T-RI

For the uncertain restoration at the beginning of the line, compare [. . .] x BE-EL-AT x [. . .] in KUB 39.71 ii 48′, for which writing there is certainly insufficient space here.
Turn (your) breast (to him) [today!]; The fish to [the sea] (and) the bird to the sky I have made go up[!].”

The Akkadian of these speeches, to which we shall devote more attention in a moment, is not the dialect familiar from the treaties and diplomatic correspondence of the Hittite Empire. This much is certain from the rather consistent employment of the correct forms of the verb and pronouns of the second person singular feminine in addresses to the goddess. Therefore it is unlikely that these incantations were created ad hoc by the Hittite scribes who produced our texts, although the frequent garbling of the more complex passages is certainly to be laid to their account. However, a search based thus far largely on Chicago Assyrian Dictionary entries for relevant lexemes has turned up only one clear correspondence between our material and an incantation in a fully Akkadian context: the wish that fish and fowl might carry off one’s transgressions appears in a first-millennium nambaru found at Kuyunjik, in a similar Sultantepe text, also of course late in date, and in one of the compositions which E. Reiner has called the “lipšur-litanies.”

On the basis of several older orthographic features, Reiner postulates that an Old Babylonian tradition lies behind her “litaniess.” Thus we have very indirect evidence for the existence already in the early second millennium of a native Akkadian tradition from which the fish and bird incantation in CTH 718 might have derived.

Returning to the Akkadian language of CTH 718, two features in particular show that it should be categorized as what J. Huehnergard terms “West Peripheral Akkadian.” These characteristics are a general indifference to the inherent voiced or voiceless value of a syllabic sign and a tendency to write—and probably pronounce—samukhi1 with syllabograms indicating Sin. The parade example of the second feature in this composition is the frequent—and consistent36—writing Mi-I-Sīl ‘you (fem. sg.) wash!’ It is interesting that the only examples cited by the CAD of mešš written with sin are from Alalah and Ugarit.37

30. KUB 39.78 i 22'-25'
   22'. A-MI-I-ŠA ŠI-UL-ŠI-[L̄]-L̄LU [ . . ]
   23'. HU-IT-ŠA-IL-ŠU ŠI-UL-ŠI-[L]-L̄LU U-DKAM AN-NI]
   24'. GAB-ŠA ŠU-UK-NA KU₆ I-NA [A.AB.BA]
   25'. MUSEN I-NA ŠA-ŠI-E ŠI-[E]-EL-L̄]

31. But note ŠU-UK-NA for correct kahni(m) in KUB 39.78 i 24' in the previous note.

32. R. Caplice, “Nambubri Texts in the British Museum 1,” OR 34 (1965) 116, line 13 (K 3365): u EMÉŠIŠD ar-ni-i KU₆ and ZU+AB MUSÉN ana AN-e li-le-[i]

33. STT 75, line 9: ar-ni MUŠEN ana AN-e [[]]-le-li ar-ni KU₆ ana ZU+AB lu-le-nid.


36. Note only KUB 39.71 iii 44: MI-I-ŠI.

37. CAD M/II, 31; Alalah: AT 126, line 38 (Old Babylonian); Ugarit: RS 15.92 (PRU 3, pl. XXI) line 13.
The final feature of the Akkadian of these incantations that I wish to consider is an unusual feminine plural nominative manifestation of the determinative pronoun šATU, written ŠA-A-TÜ. This declined form of ša is found in the query: “Where are those who (go) before you? Where are those who (go) after you?, your attendants, your courtesans?”, 38 a reference to the minor figures who accompany the Hurrian IŠTAR/Sašuğa. 39 W. von Soden 40 records only one attestation of šitu, in an Old Babylonian hymn to Nanaya. 41 Unless it is a back-formation, 42 this grammatical element belongs to a period earlier than the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries to which almost all of the manuscripts of CTH 718 are to be dated.

Thus there are a number of indications that the Akkadian of our incantations goes back in time, probably to the Old Babylonian period, and that it was imported to Hattuša from a peripheral area. Since many of the ceremonies, ritual practices, and implements found in CTH 481, 482, and 718 are of Hurrian background, it is obvious to which segment of the periphery we must turn. I should also point out that the god Ea appears in the Akkadian material of CTH 718 under the Hurrian spelling Ą-a-a. 43

Of course, it was from the southern Anatolian region of Kizzuwatna, home in the Hittite period of a hybrid Hurrian/Luwian culture, that the Deity of the Night was brought to Hatti. I would suggest, however, that we must look beyond fifteenth-century Cilicia to earlier northern Syria and even as far afield as the trans-Tigridian area in search of forerunners to our incantations. Such antecedents are surely to be sought, along with those of Kumarbi and the kanaleš šiuma ‘former gods’, 44 in the poorly-documented Sumero-Hurrian culture of the late third and early second millennia. Given the paucity of direct textual evidence of this pivotal cultural constellation, the task I have set for myself is not an easy one, but I hope that the eagerly-awaited publication of Hurrian material from Emar and Ortaköy, as well as continuing research into Boğazköy Hurrian, will help me to advance my inquiry.

38. KUB 39.93 obv. 4–5:
5. MUNIN.MESUHUR.LAL.KI MUNIN.MES KAR.KID.KI... 

40. W. von Soden, “Der hymnisch-epische Dialekt des Akkadischen, Teil I,” ZA 40 (1932) 196; see also his GAG, §46 and AHw, 1199a.
41. VS 10, 215, line 3 (Samsuiluna): ša-ma ar-hi-im a na-pa-li-im.
42. Note that šatu in VS 10, 215 is singular, whereas in our context it is plural and must therefore be transcribed šitu.
43. E. Laroche, GLH, 39.