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Hittite Legend of the War with the Great Serpent

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AMONG the Boghaz Keui tablets is one which, though terribly mutilated, is of considerable interest. It is the story of the war between the gods and the Serpent of Evil told from the Hittite point of view and connected with the institution of the festival of Purulliyas. The original text has been published in the *Keilschrifttexte aus Boghazkoi*, iii, No. 7. The following is my translation of it so far as it is preserved:—

Col. I.

1. umma D.P. Killa [AN-UT] . . . AL Perik
Thus (speaks) Killa-Samsi [seer] of the city Perik.
2. nebisas AN IM . . .
'Tesub of heaven [has revealed]
3. purulliyas uddar numân
concerning the Purulliyas festival the word: accordingly
4. kissan taranzi
thus he repeats (it).

5. UD-NI-ya mâu sesdu nuwa
"At dawn the cakes (?) let them receive; also
UT-NI-e
at dawn
6. pakhsanuwan sesdu numân
an alliance let them make." Accordingly
7. mâi seszi nu EZEN
the cakes (?) they received. So the festival
purulliyas
of Purulliyas
8. iyanzi
they celebrated.

9. mân AN-IM-as MUS Illa-yankass-a
Now Tesub and the serpent Illa-yankas
10. ina AL Kiskilussa argatfeir
in the city Kiskilussa had joined in marriage.
11. nu-za MUS Illu-ânkas AN-IM AN-MES
Afterwards the serpent Illu-ânkas to Tesub gods
 [kh]asta
bore.
-

12. AN-IM-as tass-a. khuman[-das an-]da.
Tesub and she to all (of them)
13. mugit anda-ma
gave instructions: "To
 Khattiya . . . ten
the Hittite people be ye [kind]."
14. nu-za AN Inaras EZEN-an ieit
Afterwards the god Inaras a feast made.
-

15. nu-khuman mekki khandait
On a very great scale was it instituted.
16. wiyanas DUK palkhi MAR-NU-wandas
Wine in barrels, milk
 DUK palkhi
in barrels,
17. . . . rakhiyas DUK palkhi . . . [DUK] palkhas
 . . . in barrels, . . . in barrels
18. an[d]an iyâku (?) i[yanzi ?]
there . . . [they had ?].
-

19. nu AN [Inaras] . . .
So the god [Inaras] [fasted ?]
 zigguratt-a pait
and to the temple-tower marched :

20. nu D. P. Khûpasiyan NISU-ALU-LU
and *Khupasiyas* the citizen
uemit
he took (with him).
-
21. umma AN Inar D. P. Khûpasiya
Thus (spake) Inar to Khupasiyas :
kâsawa
"As to this,
22. kieya kieya uddar iyami
this and that word I utter :
23. nu-wa mussan zigga-qa kharabkhut
to me also as to thee one was hostile."
-
24. umma D. P. Khûpaliya ana AN Inar
Thus (spake) Khupaliyas to the god Inar :
25. mâwa kitti-ti sesmi [nu]wa uwami
"A cake (?) for thee I receive ; so I am come :
26. kardias-tas iyami . . . si
thy offerings I make " [Accordingly] for him
sesta
he received (it).
-

The next line begins : "Then Inaras to Khupaliyas," after which the tablet is broken. The commencement of Column II is lost : after a paragraph in which the words "back he came" (*mal:hkhat uit*) occur, we have :—

9. [um]ma AN Ina[ras] . . .
Thus (speaks) Inaras . . .
10. arkha wa[tkut ?] . . .
away he goes (?) . . .
11. sù ta . . .
. . .
12. kharan . . .
a road (?) . . .

13. AN-IM-as u-salli . . .
Tesub magnify . . .
14. apâs nan nak . . .
he him . . .
-
15. AN Inaras ina AL Kiskilus[sa] . . .
Inaras in the city of Kiskilussa [remains ?];
16. [ana] BIT-SU khunkhuwanas pa[it]
to his temple the . . . goes,
17. [ana] qati sarri mân dâis
into the hand of the king when he had given
18. kha[n]teizziyan purul[liyan]
the first purulliyas
19. kuit iyaueni û qat [sarri ?]
which we made; and the hand [of the king ?]
20. AN Inaras khunkhuwanass-a a . . .
Inaras and the
-
21. KHAR-SAG Khaliyanu khûmandas khan[dis]
On the mountain Khaliyanus they all stood;
22. mân ina AL Perik kheûs
while in the city of Perik provisions
23. khinikta nu AL Periqqa-z
were abundant. So from the city of Perik
24. AMIL GIS-KHAT NIG khursin bêdâi
the scribe the mill ordered.
-
25. nu KHAR-SAG Kha[liyan]u kheiûn
On mount Khaliyanus the provisions
eikta
he devoured;
26. nan-si NIG [khursin . . .] bêdâi
him for it the mill [to use] he had ordered
27. nass-a . . . bêdâi
and he . . . ordered

Col. III.

4. nu-za TUR-SAL sa AMIL asiwandas
After that the daughter of a friend
5. ana DAM-SU dâs nu-za TUR-us
to be his wife was given, and after that children
khasta
she bore,
6. mânas sallista-ma
and they had grown up;
7. nu-za TUR-SAL MUS Illuyankas
After that a daughter the serpent Illu-yankas
8. DAM-anni dâs
for a wife gave.
-
9. AN IM TUR-an watar-nakkhes-kizzi
Tesub the son appointed as (his) envoy,
10. mân-wa ana BIT DAM-KA pâisi
saying: "to the house of thy wife thou shalt go.
11. mân-wa-s-mass-a GÛ SAG sakuwaya
And then also the flesh of the heart
12. u-eik
devour!"
-
13. mânas pâita nû-s-mas GÛ SAG
Then they went, and they the flesh of the heart
14. u-eikta nas-si bieir
devoured; one to the other gave (it),
15. abbizziyannas-mas sâ mawa[ya]
and what remained of the cakes (?)
16. u-eikta nû-ssi abêya bieir
they devoured; to him there they gave (it).
17. nat AN IM atti-ssi bêdas
This to Tesub his father he offered.

18. nu-za-n AN IM-as GŪ SAG sakuwa-sseta
Thereupon Tesub the flesh of the heart aforesaid
 19. makhkhat-dâs
handed back.
-

20. mân êsre-ssi âppa
"If thou [prevalest?] forthwith
 21. karû ili atta SIG atta
to-day a god art thou; happy art thou."
 22. nas namma aruni zakhkhiya pait
He then to the sea to battle proceeded.
 23. mân-si zakhkhain pâis
Then with him battle he joined;
 24. nan-za namma MUS Illu-yankan
him afterwards, even the serpent Illu-yankas,
 25. tarakhkhûwan-dâis û TUR AN IM
he attacked, but the son of Tesub
 26. MUS Illu-yankas kitta . . .
the serpent Illu-yankas over[powered].;
 27. nu sarâ- . . . bi-si atti-ssi
so: "bring help to (me)" to his father
 28. khalzâis
he cried.
-

29. ammu-g tâpa anda eip
"To me assistance send!
 30. lie-mu GI-EN-ZU wisi
not to me a support art thou!"
 31. nu-gan AN IM-as MUS Illi-yan[kan] . . .
So Tesub the serpent Illi-yankas [smote]
 32. û TUR-SU kuenta
and his son killed (him).
 33. nu-kâs apâ[ni?] AN IM-as . . .
Thus him Tesub [destroyed?].
-

34. umma Killa-[AN UD] . . .

Thus (spake) Killa-[Samsi] . . .

35. mânass-a AN-MES . . .

and they the gods [obeyed?]

Col. IV.

Of the first three lines only the name of Perik is preserved. They probably introduced the priest Takhbutallis: "Thus (speaks) the priest Takhbutallis, the priest of Tesub of Perik."

4. . . . ana AMIL IM-ME Takhbutalli

. . . to the priest Takhbutallis

5. [û a]na AN IM AL Perik

[and] to Tesub of Perik

6. paiwini nuwa-ssa-n kuwabit

we will go, and he it in return

7. esuwassati

will bring to pass.

8. umma AMIL IM-ME Takhbutallis

Thus (says) the priest Takhbutallis :

9. mâwassan TAK SU-O-BAR-A êstummat

"The subari-stone of the cake (?) . . .

10. nu-za AMIL IM-ME mân bûl-tianzi

Afterwards the priest when (?) he . . .

11. AMIL IM-ME an za li-nu-un kuis kharzi

the priest . . . who took.

12. nuwa-ttar waser TAK SU-O-BAR-A kitta

So they made (?) the cake (?) on the subari-stone ;

13. nas-san abiya esari

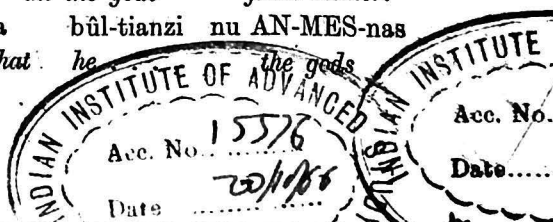
he it there will have.

14. nu AN-MES-is khûmantes anda-aranzi

So all the gods flock thither.

15. nu-za bûl-tianzi nu AN-MES-nas

After that he the gods



16. khûmandass-a AL Kastama
and all the city Kastama's
17. AN Zaskhabunâs sallis
Zaskhabunas-deities are mighty.
-

The next four lines, in which mention is made of the city Tanibiya, are too mutilated for translation.

22. nu âppa khatrâ BE ina AL Tanibiya
So from henceforth as before in the city Tanibiya
23. A-SAG kueras SARRU-waz biyanza
the estate from the king is a gift.
-

24. VI kabunu A-SAG I kabûnu GIS-SAR
6 kabunu of field, 1 kabunu of orchard
 SAR[-RI]
belonging to the king,
25. bit-tim û KIZLAKH III BIT-ZUN
a house and court, 3 houses
 SAK amat-tim
belonging to the chief of the concubines
26. [a]abbi-ma êszi ammuga
theirs are; and to me
27. . . . na(?)s nakhkhân

28. nu [ma ?]-i memakhkhun
So the cakes (?) I have described.
-

Colophon.

- DUB I-KAM qati sa Killa-[AN UD]
First tablet by the hand of Killa-[Samsî]
- AMIL IM-ME-usnas Kaskha AMIL [GIS-PA] pani
the priest; Kaskha the [scribe] before
- Ur-makh RAB DUB-[SAR]-MES is-dhur
the Big-Dog the chief scribe has written (it).

NOTES

The composition does not say much for the literary ability of the Hittites. But the mutilated condition of the text may be partly answerable for this. Its object is to explain the origin of the Purulliyas-festival, which, it would appear, was instituted by the god Inaras, who thereby drew upon himself the hostility of Tesub (?) and Illu-yankas. But the loss of all the central part of the story prevents this from being certain, and renders it impossible to know what connexion there is between the earlier and later parts of the narrative. Eventually, however, the battle took place between the serpent and the son of Tesub, whom he had appointed to fight against her. She is the Tiamat of Babylonian cosmology, "the dragon" of the Apocalypse. But whereas in the Babylonian legend it is the god Merodach himself who contends with the dragon, the Hittite version like the Apocalypse makes it the deputy and representative of the god.

Illu-yankas is a compound of the Assyrian *ilu* "god" and the Hittite *yankas* "serpent". According to my decipherment of the Hittite hieroglyphic inscriptions, in them also *agus*, *akus*, signified "snake", and gave a name to the deity *Agusimis*, who in the Tell Ahmar text (*Annals of Archaeology*, ii, 4, pl. xxxviii, 2) is called "Agusimis of Tyana" (D.P. *Agusimis Tuananis-mi*, with a picture of the serpent here accompanying the name of the deity). At Carchemish *Agusimis* is the monster-god who sits on a throne supported upon lions; his consort was *Agusaya*, whom Khammurabi in a poem of his own composition claims to have reconciled with the Babylonian goddess Istar and to have united the two divinities in one. *Ankas*, *agus*, are clearly the Indo-European *anguis*, ἔχλις, our *eel*, though whether the borrowing of the word took place on the Indo-European or the Asianic side it is impossible to determine.

Purulliyas is a derivative from *puru*, which Professor Hrozný may be right in connecting with the Hebrew Purim. It was one of the chief Hittite festivals, and is called "the

great festival". As Hrozný remarks, it probably took place in the spring, since it immediately preceded the beginning of a campaign. In *Keilschrifttexte aus Boghazkoi*, ii, No. 7, 14-16, "five festivals" are enumerated—*khurpas*, SE-*khurbiya* (the festival "of the cold weather"), a lost name which is probably *purulliyas*, *lielas*, and URUDU-SU-QIN ("of copper-polishing").

Col. I.—1. Killa-[Samsi] is a name similar to that of Kili-Tesub, king of Kummukhi, according to Tiglath-pileser I. Perik seems to have been next to Boghaz Keui the most important city in the Hittite kingdom, and therefore, probably, an old capital. It is named in the Treaty between Ramses II and the Hittites. I would identify it with the modern Eyuk of Alaja, north of Boghaz Keui.

2. Hrozný is certainly right in rendering *nebis* "heaven". In K.A.B., iv, No. 1, 35-40, we read: *samanus kittan sa BABAR GUSKIN-ya dâir GUSKIN AL Bi . . . uteir BABAR kuzza-z uteir TAK ZAGIN KHAR-SAK Takniyara-z [uteir] TAK AS [sic]-SIR-GAL MAT AL Kaniskha-z uteir TAK GAB-SU-A MAT-AL Ilamda-z uteir TAK kunkunuzzin daganzipa-z uteir AN-BAR MI nebisas nebisa-z uteir URUDU UT-KA-BAR AL Alasiya-z KHAR-SAK Taggata-z uteir*, "For the columns silver and gold they gave; gold [from] .. the city of Bi . . . they brought; silver from the mine (?) they brought; lapislazuli from Mount Takniyara [they brought]; alabaster from the land of the city of Kanis (Kara Eyuk) they brought; ¹ *dusu*-stone from the land of the city Ilamda they brought; a jewel from the wine-cup they brought; black meteoric iron from heaven they brought; copper and bronze from the city of Alasiya, from Mount Taggata, they brought."

5. I have not found *mâu*, *mawa*, elsewhere, and my translation is a mere guess.

¹ Dr. Scheil has shown that *assirgallum* denotes "alabaster" (*Revue d'Assyriologie*, xiv, p. 90). The Hittite text informs us that the reading is *assirgallum* and not *gissirgallum*. Scheil suggests that the *dusu*-stone was chalcedony.

6. The verbal noun *seskiuwan* is found in the inscription of Telibinus (Hrozný, *Hethitische Texte*, p. 100). The sense of the verb seems to be settled by K.A.B., ii, 7, 14, so much meal, wine, beer, etc.; "the god receives" (IL-LUM *seszi*).

13. The verb *mugit* is found in the "Yuzghat" tablet, where I was unable to translate it two years ago (YUZGHAT, *Rev.* 10, 13). The rendering should be: "I (i.e. Telibinus) have instructed the gods," "the instructions of Telibinus."

16. MAR is *labanu* "milk"; NU, which generally follows it in the Hittite texts, is the phonetic complement of the Assyrian *labanu*.

23. There is no subject to the verb; was it Tesub or the serpent who was hostile to Inaras? The suffix *-qa* is new to me, but the sense seems clear.

II.—13. The verbal suffix *u-*, which we find again in *u-eikta* (III, 14), and is commonly met with in *u-danzi* by the aid of *danzi* "he gave", is still unexplained.

22. *Khéus* must be borrowed from the Sumerian, since the vowel *e* is written after *khe*. Otherwise *khe* could be regarded as used ideographically.

23. Literally "was joyful".

24. *Khursin* or *kharsin* is another Sumerian loan-word.

III.—4. For *asiyatar* "friendship" see K.A.B., ii, 9, 31.

9. A trilingual vocabulary translates *watar-nakhkhanza* by *müeru* "envoy".

11. For *sakuya* see the text I have published in *JRAS.*, 1907, p. 914, where the reading must be corrected *sa-ku-ya*. The belief that to eat the heart of an enemy is to transfer his courage and valour to the recipient has been widespread.

29. From *tápa* is formed *tapassas* "assistant" or "assistance", which Professor Hrozný, misled by the Indo-European mirage, would connect with the Latin *tepor*. The unknown ideograph occurring along with *tapassas*, which Hrozný transcribes "KIL + DA?", has been shown by Sommer to be an equivalent of the Hittite *arkha hessi*. Sommer supposes this to signify "give an oracle", but

6. summa daqarrar kur[ra] . . .
If thou settest on fire, the flame . . .
7. û D. P. Katterkhe ana [Biriya iḳabbi]
And Katterkhe to [Biriya replies] :
8. minam umdalla . . .
"What shall I fulfil? . . ."
9. umma D. P. Biriya [ana Katterkhe iḳabbi]
Thus Biriya [to Katterkhe answers] :
- Rev. 1. [a]na bit AN Mar[duk] . . .
To the temple of Merodach . . .
2. amilum istu . . .
the man from . . . [goes]
3. amilum sibu ina ali (?) . . .
the old priest in the city (?) . . .
4. ana bit AN Marduk uste[rib] . . .
to the temple of Merodach des[cended] . . .
5. AN Marduk bî-su iptē [iḳabbi] . . .
Merodach his mouth opened; he says : . . .
6. umma AN Marduk ana Kat[terkhe iḳabbi]
Thus Merodach to Kat[terkhe says] :
7. GAR-ZUN sa dâkuluni u[l ? dhabu ?] . . .
"The food which you have eaten [is not good ?] . . ."
8. û D. P. Biriya ana AN [Marduk iḳabbi]
And Biriya to [Merodach says :]
9. ammini aninamma la da . . . [sa ina]
"Why and what didst thou not . . . [which by]
10. [b]î AN UD EN GAL
the mouth of the Sun-god the great lord
 iskuna . . .
he has established . . .
11. [is]tu bit AN Marduk D. P. Ka[tterkhe illik]
From the temple of Merodach Ka[tterkhe departed] ;
12. . . . di-tum û GIS erini GIS . . .
the . . . and the cedar, the wood . . .

13. [û i]na mukhkhî
 and in addition to
 GIS erini GIS . . .
the cedar, the wood . . . [he carried away ?]
-

14. . . . itbi-anni GIS erini . . .
 . . . *he came against me ; the cedar [he carried away ?]*
 In Obv. 8 the verb may be *umdalla[ka]* "shall I counsel".



