

ON THE HITTITE USE OF SUMERIAN BAL IN THE EXPRESSION BAL-*nu*-*

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The sign BAL¹ in Hittite texts is used (2) as a logogram for the verb *šipant-* “to libate, offer”, (2) as a logogram for the verb *wakkariya-* “to rebel, revolt” and its substantival derivative “revolt, rebellion”, (3) with the determinative GIŠBAL(.TUR) as a logogram for “spindle”, and (4) as a component in compound Sumerograms such as GÚ.BAL, GIŠKA.BAL, etc. Rüster and Neu also give a translation “(sich) ändern” without reference to the evidence. The entry BAL “Portion; Mal” in Friedrich’s glossary,² which was based upon the interpretation of *pal-ši* as BAL-*ši*, has long been shown to be incorrect.³

But in texts from the 13th century an additional use of BAL arises: the verb which is written BAL-*nu*-. Already in 1926 J. Friedrich attempted to interpret this verb as a -*nu*- causative derivative of *wakkariya-*. He translated it “Aufruhr anstiften(?)”.⁴ In his comments on the Milawata Letter, Sommer cited several examples of the verb and also identified it with *wakkariyanu-*.⁵ Combining examples of syllabic *wakkariyanu-* with BAL-*nu*- he found both intransitive (“to rebel”) and transitive/causative (“to make rebellious”) uses. In his commentary on the Political Testament of Hattušili I he invoked BAL-*nu*- in KBo 4.14 ii 33-34

* Abbreviations follow the standard forms found in the *CHD* and the *CAD*.

1. Rüster and Neu 1989, 90, sign number 4.
2. Friedrich 1952 266.
3. See now *CHD P* sub *palša-*.
4. Friedrich, *IF* 43 (1926): 257 n.3.
5. Sommer 1932 218.

only to claim that it constituted no counter-example to the simple *wakkariya-* being transitive.⁶

In the lexical text KUB 3.95 (S^a Bogh.) there are 16 entries for Sumerian BAL.⁷ In some of these entries the Akkadian translation is entirely lost; in many others only the end of the word is preserved. Among the Hittite translations *šipanduwar* in the writing BAL-*u-wa-ar* is present in line 9, and most likely the use of GIŠBAL(.TUR) “spindle” was present in line 16, where the Akkadian has [pí-]*la-ak-ku* “spindle. But the other Hittite words employed to translate the BAL entries do not fit the established uses of BAL as a Sumerogram in Hittite contexts. Space considerations would allow a restoration of Akkadian [*na-bal-ku-*]*tum* in line 3, but the Hittite translation *tiyawa[r]* “to step, take a stand” seems somewhat inappropriate as a translation of either BAL or Akkadian *nabalkutu*.⁸ One of the well-attested meanings of Akkadian *nabalkutu* (and of Sumerian BAL) is “to turn around”.⁹ BAL=(Akkad.) *dalû*= Hitt. *šipant-* “to libate” is based upon the notion of inverting or overturning a vessel containing libation liquid.

In seeking to interpret the verb BAL-*nu-* Hittitologists have overlooked the most common Hittite verb in the semantic range “to turn, change”, namely *wahnu-*¹⁰. And although *wahnu-* does not occur in the long section of entries for BAL in KUB 3.95, I believe that the case for BAL-*nu*=*wahnu-* is a strong one. Consider the following examples:

(1) In the 13th century snake oracles¹¹ the actions of the snake are described in the past tense by various verbs: *pait* “it went”

6. Sommer and Falkenstein 1938. He could have invoked the case of *paḫš-* and *paḫšanu-*, both transitive and synonymous, to support his case.

7. Edited in Hallock et al. 1955 79.

8. The statement in Hallock et al. 1955. 79 note 3' (3) to the effect that the Hittite translations “generally are inexact” seems in this case a gross understatement.

9. For details of the evidence see CAD N/1 sub *nabalkutu*.

10. Friedrich 1952 240.

11. Laroche 1971, cf. Laroche 1958

(KUB 49.2 i 15, 22, 24, 27, etc.), *uit* “it came” (KUB 49.2 i 17, 20), [KU₆-un] *ēpta n=an GAM : pašta* “it seized a fish and swallowed it” (KUB 49.2 i 18, cf. IBoT 1.33: 14, 18), *munnaít* “it hid (at such-and-such a place)” (IBoT 1.33:7, 8, 10, 12), *anda waḥnut* “it turned in (to)” (IBoT 1.33:10, 33, 36, 37, 40, etc.), *šarā ēpta* “it rose up (?)” (IBoT 1.33:103), KA_XU-*iš arḥa [kinut(??)]* “it [opened(?)] its mouth” (KUB 49.2 i 15-16) *ēzzas* “it ate” (IBoT 1.33:14, 18), etc. All of these verbs express literal, concrete actions appropriate for a real snake. None express the symbolic significance of the oracle. Therefore the verbal expression *nu EGIR-pa BAL-nut* (KUB 49.2 i 16) can in this context make absolutely no sense as “rebelled” or “incited to rebellion”, but makes good sense as = *EGIR-pa waḥnut* “it turned around, reversed its direction”.¹²

(2) Outside of the snake oracles an example occurs in broken context in the 13th century text KUB 40.1 left edge 1 [...*nam*]-*ma*¹³ -*pát EGIR-pa BAL-nu-nu-un* “I turned back [...onc]e again(?)”.

EGIR-pa wa-aḥ-nu-ma[r] translates Akkadian [*t*]*a-ya-ru* in the S^a vocabulary KBo 1.45 rev.1 21', and the same Akkadian word in Erim-ḥus KUB 3.93:7. *EGIR-pa waḥnu-* can be either transitive¹⁴ or intransitive-reflexive.¹⁵ The attested examples of *EGIR-pa BAL-nu-* are intransitive uses of *appa waḥnu-* with the meaning “to turn around, reverse direction”.

12. A further example is found in the unpublished snake oracle fragment 1105/v rev. 6.

13. Or [...*OA-TAM*]-*MA-pá t* “in the very same way”.

14. *na-an EGIR-pa/ wa-[aḥ-nu]-ut* KBo 5.6 ii 45-46 (DS fragment 28), *nu* ^dUTU -*uš kal-ma-ru-uš* [*d*]*a-a-an EGIR-p[a wa-aḥ-nu-ut* KUB 33.93 + KBo 26.58 ++ iv 41-42.

15. Suspected by Friedrich 1952 240 (“sich wenden?”) with question marks. Support: LÚ.MEŠ^{URU} *Pa-kar-ri-[pa...E]GIR-pa wa-aḥ-nu-ir* “The men of P. reversed themselves (and changed their allegiance to another lord)” HT 21+KUB 8.80 ii 5 (Šattiwaza treaty); *nam-ma EGIR-pa-pát wa-aḥ-nu-ut* Kup. D iii 51, ed. Friedrich 1926 128f., *EGIR-pa-ia le-e wa-aḥ-nu-ši* *ibid.* 60; see also KBo 4.4 ii 7 (AM 112f.), KUB 5.1 ii 61.

(3) In the Šuppiluliyama II text KBo 4.14 ii 33-34 we read: “(And if some Hittite man steps behind you in that [...], or if to you already [...] they were persons bound by oath, and he says the following to you: ‘This is the time,’) *zi-ga-ma-an* LUGAL-*i pa-ra-[a]*/BAL-*nu-ši nu[u-uš-ši?]* *zi-ik ša-ku-wa-aš-ša-ra-aš ki[š-an me-ma-a]t-ti* “on the contrary you shall conduct him to the king, and you shall say [to him (?)] true words: (‘...I would rather die (for the king)! Let the Sungoddess of Arinna not give me one day’s further life (if I am disloyal)!’)” The king does not say here that the vassal will make the other man to rebel against the king, but will bring him forward to denounce him.

Again we are helped by comparing examples of *parā wahnu-: nu* ^{GIŠ}*hu-lu-ga-an-ni-in/pa-ra-a wa-aḥ-nu-wa-an-zi* “They turn/lead the *ḥuluganni*-cart forward (and the NIN.DINGIR sits down in it)” KUB 11.32 iii 7-8; *nu-uš GİR-it pa-ra-a [wa-aḥ-nu-an-zi]* KUB 29.46+29.53 i 9’= [*nu-uš GİR-i*]t 6-ŠU *pa-ra-a wa-aḥ-nu-an-zi* KUB 29.40 iii 31 in horse-training texts, where the objects are horses. In the broken context of a vanished god text after they have been searching for the god: [...]x *pa-ra-a wa-aḥ-nu-ir* “They bring forward (or: produce) [...]” KUB 33.41 ii 11.

(4) In a ritual fragment KUB 46.45:13 [.....U]Ḥ₇?-tar UḤ₇-aš UN-aš *pí-an* BAL-*nu-ut* EGIR-*pa* SIG₅-*a[n-...]*/[.....] *wa-aḥ-nu-um-me-en*. Although there is no way to give a confident translation of this passage, I believe that it represents *peran wahnu-*. This construction is attested as a “political” idiom in the treaties and means something like “to take first place, be most important”. The locus classicus is in the Ḥuqqana treaty: (“If the person of His Majesty is not as dear to you as your own person,”) *pé-ra-an-na-at-ta ŠA* ^dUTU-ŠI *Ú-UL wa-aḥ-nu-an ḥar-zi* “and the (welfare) of His Majesty has not assumed the first importance to you” KBo 5.3 i 20-21¹⁶. Since, when the vassal himself takes the first place instead of his king, this is tantamount to rebelling, we can see in some uses of *peran wahnu-* that a paraphrase might

16. See also *ibid.* i 26.

render it as “defected, turned about, were treacherous”.¹⁷ But there is also a literal use of *peran wahnu-* not involving the above-discussed idiom. It is found in KUB 9.17 obv. 15 and KBo 10.24 iv 7-9. In the latter passage they turn the queen’s *huluganni* in front of the entrance of the *halentuwa*-house.

To return to KUB 46.45:13, it is probable that *peran wahnu-* is used here in the literal, non-idiomatic sense. *BAL-nu-ut* is imperative rather than preterite here. We should probably translate: “Turn the [evil(?)] sorcery in front of the sorcerer”, with *alwanzenaš antuḫšaš* in the genitive governed by *peran*, as an archaism. Alternatively the two words could be possessive genitive: “Turn the [evil] sorcery. (namely, that) of the sorcerer, in front [of him]”. The following clause would mean something like “We have turned/changed back [the patient’s condition] to good”. In any event, there is no reason to suspect a translation “Make the sorcery... to rebel before [...]”. And the existence of a satisfactory similar use of *peran wahnu-* together with the absence of a syllabic *peran wakkariyanu-* favors the equation *BAL-nu-ut*=*wahnu-* here as well.

(5) In the 13th century instructions for princes and lords KUB 21.42 iii 7-9 we read: *na-aš-ma ki-i ku-iš-ki DÙ-zi na-aš-šu BE-LU na-aš-ma DUMU.LUGAL na-aš-ma ŠĀ MÁŠ na-aš-ma ŠĀ... ku-iš-ki EME-an BAL-nu-zi HUL-u-e-eš-ta* “Or if someone does this: either a lord, or a prince, or one of the (royal) family or one of... *BAL-nu-*’s the tongue, (so that) it became bad”. This phrase has been understood to mean “makes the tongue rebellious” > “speaks rebellion”. But it is a well-attested fact that *wahnu-* with *EME* or *INIM* as object means to disobey or change the king’s commands.¹⁸ And in view of the evidence of the other passages discussed above we are obligated to see if any use of *wahnu-* would fit this passage as well. In the tale of the Fisherman

17. KBo 3.3+ i 28, 33-34, KUB 14.8 obv. 17-18 (PP 2),

18. Friedrich 1952 240: “(Worte) verändern, fälschen”. *CHD* L-N 272 sub *memiya(n)-* 1 b 16’ “to disregard, disobey, alter” with many examples.

and the Foundling¹⁹ the fisherman's wife is described as obedient: *nu=kan LÚ-aš [mem]iayan UL waḥnuzzi [nu] LÚ-aš! memian išdammašt[a]* "She doesn't disregard (her) husband's [wor]d. She listened to her husband's word." KUB 24.7 iv 51-53. In this passage it is not a case of altering the command, but of disregarding or disobeying it. The opposite is "listened to". For *lala-* (EME) in the meaning "speech" see CHD *lala-* meanings 4 and 5.

(6) LUGAL-*i* E[GIR-*an arḥa UL B*]AL-*nunun ANA ZI-KA / UL* [...] DÛ-*nunun* "I did [not] turn [away] from behind (i.e., from following), the king; I did not do [evil(?)] to your (i.e., the king's) life" is the same idiom- but in Suppiluliyama's way of writing- as ("But if you, Manapa-Tarḥunta, listen to him in any way, and you become his,") *nu A* [NA ^dUTU-ŠI] EGIR-*an arḥa waḥnuši* "and you turn away from behind [His Majesty], (let that be placed under the divine oath)" KUB 19.50+26.59+14.26 iii 13 (Man.).²⁰

The above passages show that, although in a few cases the context would permit a notion of rebellion, there is every reason to assume that BAL-*nu-* is simply a 13th century writing of *waḥnu-*. The same preverbal constructions occur with BAL-*nu-* and *waḥnu-* and apparently with the same meanings. This writing is merely part of the 13th century trend to writing familiar words in Sumerographic form.²¹ The recognition of this fact not only improves our understanding of the above-discussed passages, but gives us another graphic characteristic of the 13th century text for purposes of text dating.

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19. Edition in Friedrich 1950. translations in Hoffner 1990 65-67 and Pecchioli Daddi and Palvani 1990 172-176.

20. See edition in Friedrich 1930 12ff.

21. E.g., GUR plus complements for *tamai-*.

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