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The attribution of positions to the chief or to the palace officials may be determined by the actions or roles they perform in the context of the karen ritual. For instance, the chief may be involved in the distribution of offerings or in the performance of rituals, while the palace officials might be responsible for the administration of the palace or for maintaining the royal records. The specific roles and positions of these individuals can be inferred from their actions during the ritual, such as the distribution of offerings, the performance of rituals, or the administration of the palace.

The text also notes that the chief is present at the beginning of the ritual, while the palace officials are not. This suggests that the chief has a more central role in the ritual, possibly as a mediator or as a representative of the royal family. The palace officials, on the other hand, may be involved in the support roles, such as the administration of the palace or the maintenance of the ritual site.

In conclusion, the text provides a glimpse into the hierarchical structure and the roles of the chief and the palace officials in the karen ritual. The chief is the central figure, while the palace officials play supporting roles. The specific actions of each individual during the ritual provide insights into their positions and responsibilities.
if we assumed an unexpressed direct object pronoun, there is simply no suitable antecedent in the context. Note that all putative objects of 'cutting up' have explicitly been removed from the scene. The absence of any plausible direct object forces a reading of *erōskīkamāni* as belonging to *ark-,* in its intransitive use 'copulate.' We must conclude that the Hittite royal couple performs ritual sex to the accompaniment of music and clapping.

Before I turn to further justification of this startling conclusion, let me respond to two potential objections. First, would the Hittites have permitted such a scene as part of a public, state ritual? I remind readers of the famous scene on the Capitoline Vase, which, in addition to other elaborately rendered ritual preparations and activities involving many participants, a couple on a bed with the man lifting the woman's veil, and immediately above them an undefined scene of sexual intercourse. The interpretation of the entire scene remains under discussion. Özgüç (1988: esp. 100 ff.), to whom I refer readers for further details, suggests that the scene depicts a *hieros gamos.* But we have no iconographic details to assure us that either figure on the bed is a deity, and the couple could just as easily be the king and queen. In any case, the elaborateness of the scene and number of participants argues that we are dealing with a public ritual. The explicit depiction of sexual intercourse shows that the Hittites were not squeamish about such an action in this context, if it were for some reason called for.

As to the use of the verb *ark,-* otherwise attested only of animals, but here putatively of the royal couple, the motivation for its use may have been precisely for its crudeness or shock value, in order to heighten the sexual power/specificity of the act. One may compare the even more shocking language and activities of the Sanskrit Aivamūḍa Sacrifice, whose function has been explicated by Jamison (1996: 65 ff.).

We are still left to wonder as to the purpose of such an action by the royal couple and especially its relationship to the immediately preceding activities involving manipulation of wool—scenes with no obvious sexual content. I cannot fully address the first question, but I have found evidence to support the idea that the scenes with the wool are fraught with sexual symbolism. The evidence comes from the Ritual of Paskuwati against Impotence, ably edited by Hoffner (1987). The first element is found in KUB 9.27.1 18-19:

if *ark,* *gros* from the same root (Watkins, 1975: 15 f. and 18).

As I have been reminded, the act depicted on the Insukdik Vase is *in modo bestia- rum*.4

4 I cannot pursue here in depth the problem of the color symbolism in the specific choices red and white. I am indebted to Christian Zinko for references to the ancient Islamic doctrine that the fetus was formed by the joining of the male's seed and the mother's menstrual blood. See Lions Hildgen and Wilfried Krieff, *Hippokrates's Anfragen des Frauenarztes.* Ein ärztliches Lehrbuch der Heilkräfte. Leiden, 1941, 162 f. There also appears to be evidence for a similar notion in the ancient Near East. David Biale, *Eres and the Jews,* New York 1922, 56 f. cites Leviticus Rabhah 14:9: 'A woman's womb is full of standing blood. From there it flows out in menstruation. And at God's will, a drop of whiteness goes and drops into her, and instantly the fetus is created.' See for a similar translation J. Isaywani, *Midrash Rabhah,* Leviticus, London 1919, 36, as well as for further lines in the same text discussing the role of male and female 'seed.' There thus seems a basis for supposing that white stands for the male (semen) and red for the female (blood), but I would certainly not insist on this.

4 Against the standard interpretation at *room chamber,* see already Friedrich (1952: 23), who tentatively but correctly gives *Bauch, Taille?* probably based on this very passage.
"Or [you became] a virgin young woman. He went down to her loins. (But) this mortal (was only) one of faces and urine. He did not find you there." (cf. Hoffner [1987: 277]). "He went down to her bedchamber, but this mortal (was just) one of faces and urine. He did not find you."

I believe the sentence with antaku- is as blunt as the following one. The man tried to have sex, but miserably failed. The sexual connotations of the palace official putting the belt of red and white wool on his antaku- should thus be obvious.

Given the supporting evidence from Paskuwati for the sexual symbolism of the passage in KUB 11.25 (= 11.20), we may reasonably read the parallel from IB 81.296 in a similar fashion (see above). Note that the king (a male) actively wields white wool around the kurzan-, which is clearly identified with the queen (female), who takes a passive role. Whether kurzan- refers to a wool basket and its contents (Melchert, 1999: 125 ff.) or to a bobbin (Pulver, 1997: 117) is immaterial for the sexual symbolism. Based on the color symbolism of the other passage, I would like to think that the kurzan- contained red wool, but this cannot be proven.

There is in my view sufficient corroborating evidence for the notion that the specific manipulation of colored wool in the immediately preceding contexts symbolizes successful sexual union of male and female. Thus the interpretation of aruklikanu as "while the king and queen are copulating" does in fact make sense in the ritual context. The fragmentary nature of the evidence makes any conclusions about the larger ritual significance of this remarkable episode speculative.

One possibility is alluded to in my title. We know that the Hittites were much concerned with the fertility of the royal couple and the continuation of the royal line. I think it is unnecessary to quote in full such passages as KUB 29.1 iv 1-2; ibid. iv 17-20; KUB 24.1 iii 9 and iii 11-12 among many others. Our fragment may thus be part of a fertility rite designed to assure successful procreation by the king and queen. Since we know that the Hittite king was also responsible for the fertility and fruitfulness of humans, animals, and crops in the entire realm, it is also conceivable that the application of the fertility rite was more broadly conceived. However, I find this much less likely in the absence of any positive evidence that the Hittites would have made the conceptual leap from a sexual act by a single human couple (albeit the king and queen) to beneficial effects for all the subjects of the kingdom and their animals.

I wish to conclude by pointing to another possibility. One type of royal ritual conspicuously lacking in our Hittite documents is that for a royal wedding. I find it inconceivable that no such ritual existed, given the elaborate rites attested for all other key events in the life of the royal couple.

Perhaps, then, our fragment represents the 'consummation' portion of a much larger royal marriage ritual. In any case, I see no alternative but to conclude that aruklikanu does refer to an act of ritual sex by the Hittite king and queen. We may hope that new evidence will in the future make clear its larger significance.

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