A PRACTICAL APPROACH TO VERBAL ASPECT IN HITTITE

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§1 The following description grew out of preparations for a new introductory Hittite grammar. Its goal is to assist in properly interpreting the meaning of Hittite verb forms as they are found in the texts. The present account takes Melchert 1998 as its starting point, addressing certain weaknesses and omissions in that treatment. And although we have sought to make clear how we are using concepts and terminology relating to verbal aspect, we make no claim here to a complete solution to this very complex problem.

§1.1 Aspect in the broadest sense refers to the temporal structure of related events or situations, as opposed to tense, which refers to the time of the related events to that of the speech event. We may define aspect in the narrow sense as a grammatical category that is fundamentally independent of the lexical meaning of individual verbs. For Hittite it is sufficient to distinguish imperfective aspect, in which an event is viewed as having an internal temporal structure, from perfective aspect, in which it is not. The inherent meaning of individual verb stems also implies a certain temporal structure or lexical aspect. Recognizing that no classificatory scheme is fully adequate, we may usefully follow Vendler 1967 97-121 and Dowry 1979 94ff. in distinguishing verbs that express states ("to know", "to have"), activities ("to walk, work"), accomplishments ("to hitch up", "to drive across"), and achievements ("to die", "to arrive", "to take"). The realization of grammatical aspect as a particular manner of action (Aktionsart) in a given instance results from the interplay of context and the lexical aspect of the verb.

§2 The basic verbal stem in Hittite may be interpreted as perfective or imperfective according to context, the latter value being confirmed especially by the presence of accompanying conjunctions such as kuitman "while" and maziyunki "as many times as".

* In presenting this joint paper in memory of Fiorela Imponenti we are consciously emulating the spirit of scholarly collaboration that she herself exemplified so often and so well. Privileged to have known and worked with her, we count ourselves fortunate to have been touched by her energy, warmth, and generosity of spirit. We will deeply miss her.
Example of perfective aspect are:

1. *nanna* "is IN/A* "Zakkoki EGR-pa utu "Then he came back to Mr. Zakkoki" (KBo 5.6.1.i).

2. *na* =*u* GU-ši lii turtur "They yoked them like cattle" (KBo 3.34.i-16; OH/NS).

Example of the same verbs showing imperfective aspect are

3. *nu kuitman* "=GIDIR-LU-ši ĪSTU KUR wəMONT EGR-pa utu "While Šhitrāsāni was coming back from the land of Egypt" (KBo 5.6 iii 26). The aspect indicator is the kuitman nothing in the form itself, either suffix nor inherent lexical component of urwa-zidhates or indicates aspect.

4. *tānjoya=ma*=ša mahayani nu KASKAL-ši KASKAL-ši pat IN/A 7. IKU.HΛ anda pennaškazi "But as many times as they hitch them up, each time they drive them seven IKUS" (KBo 3.5 ii 13-15). Here *tānjoya* refers to iterated action just as much as the formally marked *pennaškazi*.

 imperfective aspect as defined above may optionally be marked explicitly in Hittite by the addition to the basic verb stem of one of three suffixes: -skē-su/ -s(u)-, -(e)-skē-su, and -annā-su/- (henceforth for simplicity cited as -skē, -skē, and -annā). Contrary to the implication of Molchert 1998 414, the productivity of -skē is not unlimited. There are significant restrictions based on the lexical aspect of individual verbs, which may either imply a given aspect or be largely incompatible with it. The stative verbs *sākk-"to know", bār-šu "to hold, keep" and ar- "to stand" and the entire class of determinate "states" in -e- (many of which function synchronically in Hittite as achievement verbs, see Hoffner 1998) and the determinative "inchoatives" in -te- (which are achievement verbs) are not attested with -skē or equivalent suffix. The activity verb jya- (middle) "to be in motion, be walking" takes -annā-su/- only in the inceptive sense "to set out, start to walk", and the achievement verb akk- "to die" takes a -skē middle form only in the disjunctive sense, with and without a subject: akkkitikan "there is much dying". Cf. §10.2.

The suffixes -skē- and -skē- are commonly labeled "iterative" or "iterative-durative," while *annā- is said to be "durative" (e.g. Friedrich 1960 73-75 §137, 141). This description is misleading in two respects. First, as established by Bechtel 1936 and Dressler 1968, the use of the suffixes -skē- and -skē- is much broader than implied by the name "iterative-durative" (see the concession by Friedrich §141 and §209), who recognizes many, though not all, of the variety of meanings cited below. Second, the use of -annā- is completely equivalent to that of the other two suffixes—it is not limited to durativity. At least the following different meanings are attested for the trio of -skē-, -skē-, and -annā-:

§5 Progressive/Descriptive (see Bechtel 1936 52-57, against Dressler 1968 185-188, and others).

§1 An action is described as ongoing (often as setting the scene for another action—so-called "backgrounding"): "nu kuitman=ma*=za BEL SISKUR ĪSTU SAG.DU=SU tétem lalpēšar enšennu=na aštrihyanna annusumGU=ma luwši šišši bakkēškēši "While the ritual client is pulling the hair, lash(es) and brow(s) from his own (-a)-head, the Old Woman is reciting in Luwian as follows" (KUB 3.28 iii 6-10). Here the temporally parallel main clause uses the imperfective form *bakkēškēši*.

8 takku LU-si GU=SU-TID an szelukišši "If a man is driving his ox across a river (and another person pushes him off, seizes the ox's tail and fords the river [all non-ākē]-") (KBo 6.2 ii 30, Laws §43, OS). Here the contrast of -skē for the background and non-ākē- for the events within the setting is entirely appropriate.

7 nu anniškeni kuwi nu=šan ŠUM=ŠU šaliḫḫi "I call by his name the one whom I am treating" (KUB 12.63 obv. 28). Note here the equivalence of the forms in -annā- and -skē-

8 takku atra-nuššušum [kustikḫ] / kuntu šelikēšši anna=ša=nšaŋa=ša (wenszi) "If someone is sleeping with an atra-nuššušum, and 'knocks up' her mother or (lit. 'and') her sister" (KBo 6.26 iv 23-27; Laws §200, OH/NS).

§5.2 The adverb *kāša* may be used to emphasize that the action is going on at the moment of speaking:

9 kāšašša=ša ŠAMŠI ṢIŠTI=KUNU današšettu "You are oppressing your provisions bearers!" (KBo 22.22 obv. 18-19, OS).

For a full discussion of the grammaticalization of *kāša* and equivalents with verbs see Hoffner 1968 532 and our summary below sub §14F.

§6 Durative

An activity may be underscored as continuing over an extended period. In some cases the period of time is explicitly indicated:

6.1 Imperfective forms are used if an action, although not necessarily continuous, extends over an expressed period of time (Friedrich 1960 260e):

10 nu GU-ša štamatiššu uššanu ḤAD.DU-ša/* aszikkešši "(the horned) ear lay throughout the entire night" (KUB 1.13 135-36).
(the following year I went to fight against Sanahunatra, nu ūnu sanahunatra, INÀ KAM zahhelkinun "and I fought against Sanahunatra for five months" (KBo 10.2.47, OH/NS).

§2 In the case of the end point of the extended action expressed by marked imperfective stem appears as a result expressed by a non-imperative verb:

(2) [if someone sets fire to another’s grain-storage shed] [GU] ĤILÀ=ŜU eritkikè ni=a=šan pani šamehlandu / suniši "she must feed (ške) his cattle, and bring them through to the following spring" (KBo 6.3 iv 60-61, Law 810, OH/NS). Here eritkikè is durative-imperfective and šamehlandu is terminative-perfective (cf. the underlying ar- "to arrive"), marking the end of the period during which the action ške-transpires.

(3) nu Ė-a=ši šiši aninniši kuantan=sa lexietta "He will (continue to) work in (the victim’s) house, until he (the victim) recovers" (KBo 6.2 i 17-18).

§3 Sometimes the time of the period is left unspecified with no definite end point expressed:

(4) taku ītikułu=k=dema mimimai LÜ ītikuł=k=a[n, tent- us] ĀSÀIÌA bâkantà tanni n=za=za LÜMES ĪRUM-LIM aninniši. "But if he refuses (to perform) the craft, they shall declare the fields to be those of a vagrant craftsman, and the men of the city shall work them." (KBo 6.2 + 19.2 20-21, Law 540, OS, with dupl. KBo 6.3 ii 40-41, OH/NS).

(5) [uhl] hâbâs=n=a=za=k=an URNAH majaš / arza tarkiušàkkena "I kept glowing (at) Héhá like a lion." (KBo 10.2 ii 1-2, OH/NS).

(6) [if someone finds a horse, mole, or ass] n=za=za tiriškèkè [var. nintike] he may hitch it up for (work)" (KBo 6.3 ii 56, Law 71, OH/NS w. dupl. KBo 6.2 ii 60, OS). The NH scribe substituted a -ške-form for the OH tiriškè, wishing to mark explicitly the view of the action as extending over the period until the last animal was reclaimed.

§7 The meaning of -ške-in imperatives is often "keep on ...ting":

(7) [nu] ītikuł=za paskân EGIR=pa punulki "Keep consulting the pastor." (KBo 11.6 iii 6, OH/NS).

(8) nu sik ašikiki ašikulik ni takas àTU=I-peran LUGAL=an ašikul / memikè n=aza SUMMI LUGAL takas àTU=I-peran ašikul tarišìkìkì "Now keep eating and drinking. And keep speaking well of the king before the Sun-goddess of Earth. Keep saying the name of the king favorably before the Sun-goddess of Earth." (KBo 7.28 + 8.92.17-19).

(9) àBAD śkešù / (wàšu)bîšèsù "and let it (the battering ram) keep on hitting the city wall." (KBo 20.6 iv 21-22, OH/NS).

(10) nu=šu šastki / "Keep writing to me." (HKM 27.10, MH/MS).


(12) nu=šiši šan kalakanan e=šu=za kuit memikìšu nu=šišan DINGIR-LUM ìtamanan / lagen şat[kìkì] n=aza štìkanšìki "Be appeased, and with respect to what I am saying to you, O god, keep your ear inclined to me and keep listening." (KUB 24.1 i 15-17). Note that in the last two examples [21] and [22] the inherently stative verbs ét- "be" and šAR=hišš, ‘hold, keep’ do not take the -ške-form, including the periphrastic construction with the participle plus šat[kì]ki.

§7.1 Likewise the use of a -ške-form with the negative še sometimes carries the meaning of an “inhibitive,” i.e., it means “stop ...ing” versus the usual “prohibitive” meaning “don’t ....”

(13) nu=šiši šan kalakanan et[šikul] šiši gipesšar/nàman=šišan šanesšar / šat[kìkì]ki n=aza=za uš[a] (the elther ašikullik[ì]r / kišun=ša šišan “Disobedient men (by degrees) have been joining one or two gipesšar (to their lands), and have been drinking the land’s blood, but now let them stop doing it” (KBo 3.1 i 46-48, OH/NS).

(14) ña=ma=ma=za=za =ZÀ-wà kuast dâkatùnòki kišun=ša kan apât NAM.RAMÈS ANA =DUGI=TÉ ašar le dâkakteni "Why do you keep willfully taking them for yourself? Now stop taking those transporting away from Duppi-Telubh!" (KBo 3.3 iii 24-26; Treaty with Duppi-Telubh, NH/NS).

(15) TÜGH=ALÀ=wa kuw ṭuk [wâššiš] uš[a]=za=[an] ANA DUMÈ=KA le pèsèši apât=ma=za=ši šiškèt "Stop giving the clothes you wà[an] to your own soul, But she kept giving them to him" (KUB 22.70 rev. 35-36, OH/NS).

Not every imperfective form with še is inhibitive. The context makes clear that in the following the -ške-forms mark a habitual action.

(16) ña=ma=ma=za=za dîsgepùwaza pësèšè pëdîlùpùwaza=ma=za=za le pèsèšè "(But the beaten bread which I give to you, may I always give it to you joyfully. Let me not (ever) give it to you under constraint)" (KUB 6.45 + 30.14 iii 66-67, prayer of Mowartull II).

§8 Iterative. An action is described as repeated, either continually (in immediate succession) or on separate occasions:

(17) EGIR=ŠU=ŠE meyínaya itšwa këtt=za ka këtt=za GL-an bûtûnniša tarm=za=ma natta 'i balâššì: "The man walks behind. He keeps
as -čča- instead (see on this problem Melchert 1984 153-155, and Rieken 1996 204-297).

§12.2 The verbs hāta-, hūtiya-, ikkar-, ivya- "to walk, go," pāriya-, kallaka-, and nūti- regularly employ the suffix -anna. In OH and MH walsi also takes -anna. A few other verbs are attested with only one or two examples of -anna- beside regular -ččē- hēæk- "to slaughter," ēlla-, ilhōwa-, ippet-, liehāya-, pac-, pāya-, pēsa-, pēddai-, ērāi-, wēnēya-. A special case is nanna-, which has been lexicalized as a separate verb "to drive," while only nāšīke- serves as the marked imperfective form of nāšīke-.

§12.3 As the productive form of the category, the suffix -ččē- spread at the expense of the other two. In NH one finds walsiške- for walsānta- (also rarely balsiške- for balsānta-).

§12.4 As described, the added suffix explicitly marks a verbal stem as expressing one of the values given above, versus the simple verb that is functionally neutral. By a common linguistic process, there is a tendency to reinforce the expressive value of the suffix by repeating it: uččēke- besiške, ēṣpaččēke (HMK 89:18) beside usual apēške, and ēṣeččēkenun and ē Paísččēken in texts of Muzilli II beside ēččēke. By the same process, the productive -ččē- is often redundantly added to -anna-: hūtiyānānike, lihīyānānike, pāriyānānike, pēšyānānike, ūnānike, tākuččēnike, walsiškānike, wēraččēnike. Examples like that in KBO 3.6 i 71-72, where walsjkewenanānike and walsiškenewanānike (daši- "began to beset") are used equivalently in successive lines show that the extra suffix adds no functional value.

§12.5 Somewhat different are cases where the suffix -ččē- lost its expressive value already in prehistoric times and become what is in Hittite the basic verbal stem: etske- "to sneer, anoint," pāške- "to fix, faster," ētske- "to rejoice." Naturally, these verbs can like any other add the suffix in its productive function: ētskiške.

§13 The preceding discussion of the role of -ččē- and equivalent suffixes in expressing aspect in Hittite by no means exhausts the topic. As has repeatedly been suggested (see e.g. Luraghi 1997 29), it is likely that reduplication in the verb in at least some cases expresses iterativity or other manner of action. This issue, as well as the interaction of aspect with other verbal categories such as tense and voice, awaits further research.

§14 Our discussion of verbal aspect in Hittite would not be complete without at least a summary of the uses of kāsā and its equivalent forms kāšāna and (OH) kāšata, in accord with the basic observations of Hoffner 1968. It is customary among translators of Hittite texts to render these forms with a mechanical "behold," "lo" (or their equivalents in other languages). But, as Hoffner pointed out, this approach misses both the clear pattern of its uses with the Hittite verbal tenses and the fundamental function of the adverb.

§14.1 Previous interpreters of these forms have rightly signaled their ultimate derivation from the base of the proximal demonstrative kā- "this" and the adverb kā-"here" denoting spatial proximity.

§14.2 One should note that the form kā:sā is diachronically anterior to kā:ā:sā:na. The former occurs already in Old Sczpt (KBO 9.73 obv. 2, KBO 7.28 + 8.92 obv. 2, and see kā:ā:sā:na:ta in KBO 22.18:1, and kā:ā:sā:ta in ibid. 24, KBO 17.1 21.5 + 23.11 2), while the latter seems to appear first in Middle Sczpt texts, whether MH originals (HMK 1:8, 2:6) or MS copies of OH originals (KUB 17.10 iii 4). This temporal distribution accords nicely with what has been shown regarding the diachronic replacement of OH "adescriptive" -a by its equivalent -ma in post-OH. In OH -a followed (ungramenated) consociants, while -ma followed vowels (on this see Rieken 2000). In post-OH -ma began to appear in all environments. This means that OH kā:sā should be analyzed as kās + -a which began to be replaced in post-OH by kā[s] + -ma. Once this step was taken, the origin of the kāsā form was forgotten, and speakers felt free to write kās:ma (KBO 13.119 iii 24 with dopil. KBO 13.120:8). In post-OH the forms kāsā and kāšāna are free variants.

§14.3 Puhaliv (HED A 216-218) has claimed that a:ā:sā:ma instead of being the adverb "first" is synonymous with kāšāna. If so, then this form too must be included in our account of kāsā > kāšāna. So far āsāna, like kāšāna, fails to occur in Old Sczpt and by its use of -ma testifies to its more recent coinage than kā:sā. If kā:sā and kāšāna are based upon the proximal demonstrative, it would be likely that āsāna as well would be derived from a (near) demonstrative. This base is undoubtedly the pronoun a:ā: in asl, uni, and eni. To be sure, Puhaliv has offered a different account of the origin of āsāna, assuming syncope from kā:ā:ma, which is also his explanation of kā:ā:sā:ma from kā:ā:sā:ma. He starts the latter form, apparently unaware that such a form actually exists (cf. above in §14.2). But since no preform *sā:ša (*sās) exists - the problematic forms of sā:sā cited by Puhaliv notwithstanding, and since the alleged parallel nāsī:ma > nāsmō arose as a correlative (nāsū:ma) to nāsī, whereas correlative constructions of kā:sā ... kāšāna are unknown, we would prefer the account of the origin of kāšāna and āsāna given above.
§14.4 The implication of the proximal demonstrative origin of the forms should not be lost in the approach to interpreting their force in combination with the verbal tenses. kāša (and its synonyms kāšna and kāšna) renders both past and non-past verbal tenses more immediate. Hoffner suggested therefore as working translations “have just ...ed” for kāša + pretetite and “are on the point of (or: are about to) ...” for kāša + present-future forms. These translations were proposed only as provisional aids to convey what is essentially a process of bringing either a past or a close future action close to the moment of speech. Often the immediacy implied in the adverters can best be captured in English by the adverters “hereby” and “herewith”, indicating that the action or state expressed by the predicate coincides with the moment of speech or writing: Hammâli I wrote: kāšna “Mûarâti Nûmû= T[I] A[M] “Mûarâti is hereby my (adopted) son (and designated heir)” KUB 1.16 ii 37 (OH/NS).

§15 In summary, let it be said that Hititite possessed a rich variety of means for indicating the “temporal structure” of the action being expressed. Whether or not all scholars will wish to call this “verbal aspect” is of less concern to the present authors than that interpreters and translators of Hititite texts understand the implications of these forms. It is with this purpose in mind that we offer these remarks to our colleagues in memory of Fioarella Imparati.

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