

Munus amicitiae

Norbert Oettinger

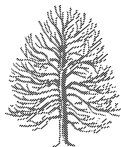
a collegis et amicis dicatum

herausgegeben von

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Hittite *nakku(wa)*- ‘(spirits of) the dead’*

H. CRAIG MELCHERT

It is a great honor and pleasure to offer this small token of esteem to Norbert Oettinger, in recognition of his many contributions to Indo-European studies and our personal friendship of more than a quarter century.

I State of the question

The Hittite word *nakku-* or *nakkuwa-* (attested only in the genitive and dative-locative plural) is thus far found in only three texts: the recto of KUB 29.7+KBo 21.41 (MH/MS), often called the “Ritual of Šamuha”, the fragmentary KBo 24.49 ii 5, 6, 10, and 11 (MH/MS) in the phrase *nakkuwaš linkiyaš* EME ‘tongue of the oath of the *n.*’, and the likewise broken context of KUB 9.4 iv 28 (MH/NS) in the phrase *nakku[wa]š* EME[] ‘tongue of the *n.*’.¹

The word *nakku(wa)*- has been universally taken as ‘sin carrier, scapegoat, ritual substitute’ and formally related (in various ways) to *nakkušša/i-* ‘id.’: e.g. Lebrun 1976:135, Melchert 1977:285, *CHD L–N* 374 (with doubts), Starke 1990:169, Tischler 1991:262, Puhvel 2007:53, Kloekhorst 2008:594. This interpretation is based solely on the two words’ superficial resemblance and appearance in the context of Luvian-based rituals, but the phrases ‘tongue of the oath of the *nakku(wa)*’s’ and ‘tongue of the *nakku(wa)*’s’ cited above show that the *nakku(wa)*’s are the *source* of the evil to be removed by the ritual (specifically a spoken curse), a sense confirmed by a correct reading of KUB 29.7 recto (see below), whereas the *nakkušša/i-* is always the *means* by which evils are to be removed. In addition to the summary in *CHD L–N* 376–7, one may also compare the later passage in the Ritual of Šamuha itself (restorations with *CHD L–N* 375):

*I thank Alan Nussbaum, JoAnn Scurlock, and Brent Vine for helpful references and suggestions. The usual disclaimers apply to my use or non-use of them.

¹I follow the usual convention of indicating the date of a composition by the sigla OH, MH, and NH for Old Hittite, Middle Hittite, and New Hittite, respectively, and the date of a manuscript by OS, MS, and NS. On the “Ritual of Šamuha” as composed in the Early Empire Period (a.k.a. Late Middle Hittite) see Melchert 2012a:163–4.

- (1) KUB 29.7+ Vo 58–61

[*na*]kkuššab[*iti-ma*] ANA [LUGAL I GUD.MAḪ AN]A UNŪT MUNUS.
LUGAL=*ma* I GUD.ÁB I UDU.U₁₀ I ŪZ=*ya* tarnai [*anda*]-*ma-kan kiššan memai*
kuit kuit idālu uttar NIŠ DINGIR-LIM ḫurtaiš [*pap*]ratar PANI DINGIR-LIM
iyān n-at kē nakkuššēš ANA DINGIR-LIM peran arḫa [*p*]ēdandu

“One releases as a scapegoat (lit. in the status of a scapegoat) for the king [one bull], but for the implements of the queen one cow, one ewe, and one nanny goat. One interjects as follows: ‘Whatever evil word, oath, curse, (or) impurity was done before the deity, let these scapegoats carry it away from before the deity.’”

There is thus no positive textual evidence whatsoever for a connection between *nakku(wa)-* and *nakkušša/i-*.

2 Reevaluation

There has been *no* edition or systematic translation of KUB 29.7 recto except by Lebrun (1976:117–43). See the summary by García Trabazo (2002:557–8), who himself translates only the verso. Despite the implication of Goetze 1969:346, this glaring neglect of the recto is *not* due to the poor preservation of the text: the lines recto 1–26 are effectively complete, and lines 27–50 have minimal lacunae. Avoidance of this portion of the ritual is surely due rather to abiding uncertainties regarding the sense of the ritual treatment with the *gangati*-plant which makes up much of the passage.² Even if the details of the treatment elude us, the purpose of the ritual is made quite clear by the opening lines of KUB 29.7 recto:³

- (2) KUB 29.7+ Ro 4–6:

[*m*]ān=*wa* ^dUTU-ŠI *kuiški ANA PANI DINGIR-LIM idālawanni memian*
harzi nu-za DINGIR-L[UM] apēz uddānaz parkuiš ēš ^dUTU-ŠI=*ya ANA PANI*
DINGIR-LIM parkuiš ēštu

“If someone has spoken of His Majesty in evil before the deity, may you, o deity, also be pure of those words, and let His Majesty be pure before the deity.”

Note crucially that use of ^dUTU-ŠI ‘His Majesty’ makes clear that the Hittite king is the *object* of the phrase ‘speak ill of before the god’ (thus also correctly *CHD L-N* 259 and Strauss 2002:323), *not* the subject, contra Lebrun 1976:117 and 125–7 and García Trabazo

²That the verb *gangatā(i)-* ‘treat with the *gangati*-plant’ is not connected with the noun *gangati*-^{SAR} (Güterbock 1957:353–4, followed by Hoffner 1974:112) is not remotely credible, but Güterbock is clearly correct in arguing that the verb does not mean ‘serve with soup’. For a useful overview of the matter see Puhvel 1997: 52–4, but prudence suggests that for the present we should remain with a non-committal ‘treat with the *gangati*-plant’ (thus Miller 2004:327 and passim).

³Contra Goetze 1969, the ritual as attested clearly is for the reigning Hittite king, not a ‘man’ in general. Correct on this point is García Trabazo 2002:558.

2002:558. Since the title applies only to the reigning king, ‘some His Majesty’ makes no sense. The deity involved likely is the Goddess of the Night (DINGIR GE₆), as per Lebrun 1976:117, García Trabazo 2002:558, and Miller 2004:403–4.

Purification of the king, queen, and the deity are accomplished by repeated manipulations of the *gangati*-plant:

- (3) KUB 29.7 + Ro 19–21

EGIR-ŠU=*ma gangati*^{SAR} MUNUS^{KAB.Z[U.Z]U} MUNUS^{šilallūhi} *nakkiu*^š *peran* *nakkuwaš*^š-*a damai gangati*^{SAR} *parā ēpzi huišwanduš*^š-*a kuiu*^š G^{IS}ERIN-*az harkanzi nu apēdaš*^š-*a damai gangati*^{SAR} *parā ēpzi*

“Next the novice *šilallūhi*-woman holds out a *g.*-plant in front of the *nakkiu*’s, and also another *g.*-plant to/for the *nakku(wa)*’s, and *also* the living whom they hold by means of the cedar, *also* to/for them she holds out another *g.*-plant.”

Contra *CHD L–N* 374, the living cannot refer back to the *nakku(wa)*’s, because the geminating *-a* ‘also’ requires that they be contrasting groups. Note further that the *nakkiu*’s are deities/demons associated with the netherworld (*CHD L–N* 373, Puhvel 2007:51–2, contra Lebrun 1976:126 ‘les notables’, although the word surely is, as per Puhvel, a euphemism ‘awesome, august’ or the like, derived from *nakkī*- ‘heavy’ in its use as ‘exalted, esteemed, honored’).

An even more elaborate (and not entirely clear) manipulation of the *gangati*-plant leaves no doubt as to the contrast between the *nakku(wa)*’s and the living, nor as to the purpose of the ritual actions:

- (4) KUB 29.7 Ro 23–32

EGIR-ŠU=*ma gangati*^{SAR} IŠTU LUGAL ANA UNUT MUNUS.LUGAL *menahhanda* *nakkuwaš* *peran parā ēpzi* EGIR-ŠU=*ma IŠTU UNUT MUNUS.LUGAL ANA LUGAL menahhanda gangati*^{SAR} *nakkuwaš* *peran parā ēpzi* EGIR-ŠU=*ma IŠTU LUGAL ANA UNUT MUNUS.LUGAL-ya gangati* *nakkuwaš takšan parā ēpzi* § [nam^m]a^{MUNUS}KAB.ZU.ZU^{MUNUS} *šilallūhi damai gangati*^{SAR} *dāi nu huišwanduš kuiu*^š [G^{IS}ERIN]-*az h[arka]nzi n-at apēdaš-a QATAMMA parā ēpzi* *nakkuwaš-at mābhan* [udda]nī udda[n]i *parā appiškēt damaiš-ma* MUNUS^{KAB.ZU.ZU} MUNUS^{šilallūhi} da[m]ai parkui gang[ati d]āi *n-at ANA DINGIR-LIM IŠTU ŠA LUGAL parā ēpzi anda-ma-kan kiššan memai mān LUGAL* (ras.) [ak-ká]nⁿ-za *našma huišwanza PANI DINGIR-LIM idalawanni memian harzi kinuna EN SISKUR ap[ēz udd]ānaz parkuiš gangatānzašš-a ešdu*

“Next she holds out a *g.*-plant in front of the *nakku(wa)*’s from the king towards the implements of the queen. Next she holds out a *g.*-plant in front of the *nakku(wa)*’s from the implements of the queen towards the king. Next she holds out a *g.*-plant to/for the *nakku(wa)*’s from the king and for the implements of the queen together(?). §Then the novice *šilallūhi*-woman takes another *g.*-plant and she holds it out *also to/for the living* whom they hold by means of the cedar, *just as*

she held it out in each matter of the *nakku(wa)*'s. Another novice *šilallūbi*-woman takes another pure *g*-plant and holds it out to the god from the side of the king. She interjects as follows: 'If a [de]ad or living one has spoken of the king before the god in evil, now let the ritual client be pure and *gangati*-ed of those words.'"

The strict parallelism between "the living whom they hold by means of/with the cedar" and the *nakku(wa)*'s already suggests that the latter refer in some manner to the dead, and the following incantation leaves no doubt. Restoration of [*ak-k*]ánn^{an}-za before *našma huišwanza* is virtually obligatory, since this is a typical Hittite "merism" (always in the given order) for expressing an exhaustive set of all those who exist and may be the source of harm. One may compare *mān-aš agganza mān-aš TI-anza* "whether he is dead or he is alive" (KUB 43.72 iii 3; ?/NS) and especially *GIDIM-aš TI-andaš EME-an* 'tongue of the dead and the living' (KUB 9.34 ii 8 and iv 14; ?/NS). As often, 'tongue' here is used of harmful speech, slander, or defamation (see *CHD L-N* 23, section 4), an accurate description of someone speaking of the king in evil before a deity in the passage from KUB 29.7.

The sign traces argue against a restoration [*ag-g*]a-an-za. For the redundant spelling -kán^{an}- compare the repeated genitive singular *ak-kán^{an}-t/da-aš* in KUB 39.8 ii 32, 36, 40, 43 and iii 22, 28. The space in the autograph of KUB 29.7 seems too little for [*ku-iš-ki ak-k*]ánn^{an}-za. As per above, the alternative ^dUTU-ŠI in Ro 4 precludes that LUGAL is the subject in Ro 31.

The word *nakku(wa)*- thus must refer to the dead, but it can hardly be merely a synonym of *akkant-*, which is the standard word, occurring in ritual and non-ritual contexts. The pairing with "the living whom *we hold* by means of cedar-wood" (or less likely "(together) with cedar-wood") and general Hittite ritual practice suggest that the reference is to images or representations of the dead used in ritual context. Note, however, that the word lacks any determinative such as *GIŠ* 'wood' indicating a material object, so the sense 'image' is likely to be purely contextual. The phrase *nakkuwaš (linkiyaš)* EME 'tongue (i.e. speech) of (the oath of) the *nakku(wa)*'s cited earlier also would make little sense if the latter referred only to a concrete image of the dead. We are dealing with the collective dead—or some subcategory thereof. Further specification of the sense without further examples is necessarily a matter of speculation. Etymological considerations, to which we will now turn, can suggest possibilities, but as always they cannot be used to determine the synchronic meaning of the attested word.

3 Etymological considerations

Hittite *nakku(wa)*- must be a reflex of the widely attested PIE root **nek-* 'disappear, be lost/destroyed' seen in the verbs Skt. *naś-*, Av. *nas-*, and Toch. *näk-* 'id.', also in the nominal forms Av. *nas-* (fem.) 'distress', Lat. *nex* (fem.) 'killing', Gk. *νέκεις* 'the dead', Av.

nasu- (masc./fem.) ‘corpse’, Gk. *νεκῶς* ‘dead; (masc.) corpse’, *νεκρός* ‘id.’, Myc. /*nekri-* (fem.) ‘shroud maker’ (or sim.),⁴ OIr. *éc* (masc.) ‘death’, and more.

Within Hittite the word is surely related to the neuter *s*-stem *nakkuš* attested in § 98 of the Laws:

- (5) KBo 6.2 iv 53–5 (OH/OS), with restorations after KBo 6.3 iv 52–5 (OH/NS)
 [ta]kku LÚ ELLUM É-er lukkezz[(i É-er) āp(pa we)]tezzi andan=a É-ri kuit
 harakzi LÚ.U.₁₀[(LU=ku GUD=ku) UD(U=ku)] ēšza nakkuš n=at [(šarnik)]za
 “If a free man sets fire to a house, he shall rebuild the house. What perishes in
 the house—whether it is persons, cattle, or sheep—is loss, and he shall make
 restitution for it.”

Compare Hoffner 1997:95–6, who renders ‘damage’(?). As per Starke 1990:169, the formal pattern of pairs like Hitt. *šāru-* vs. CLuv. *šarus-* ‘booty’ or Hitt. *tāru-* ‘wood; tree’ vs. CLuv. *tārus-* ‘statue’—each neuter (also Hitt. *tapu-* ‘flank’ vs. *tapuš-* ‘side’ with Rieken 1999:208, despite her own rejection)—argues for the existence of a neuter *u*-stem base **nakku-* with a similar or identical sense (see further on such pairs Malzahn in this volume). Note that the enclitic anaphoric pronoun *=at* in the Laws demands specifically a neuter *s*-stem *nakkuš*. As per Puhvel 2007:56, interpretation of *nakkuš* as ‘damage’ has been overly influenced by comparison with Latin *noxia* ‘damage’, but a sense ‘loss’ would also fit the Laws passage (given as an alternative by CHD L–N 374).

If we assume, following the Hittite and Luvian pattern cited above, an acrostic neuter *u*-stem substantive **nōku*, **nēku-* ‘loss, disappearance’ (or similar), the word referring to the dead could reflect a virtual derivative **nōkw-ó-* ‘lost, dead’ from **nōku*, **nēku-*, but we would expect **nēkw-ó-* (cf. Widmer 2004:99).⁵ However, one also finds nouns in **-us-* derived from adjectives in **-u-* (e.g. Skt. *tāpu-* ‘hot’ → *tāpus-* ‘heat; hot’), and Hittite attests some *u*-stem adjectives with *o*-grade of the root: e.g., Hitt. *dampu-* ‘rough, dull’ ~ OCS *topb* ‘dull’. We cannot therefore entirely exclude an adjective *nakku-* ‘lost, perished, dead’ < **nōku-*, whose genitive and dative plural would be *nakkuwas*.⁶

In the absence of any Hittite or Luvian examples for a noun in *-us-* from an adjective in *-u-*, however, I find more likely a hypostasized genitive of a neuter noun **nakku-*

⁴ Attested as *ne-ki-ri-de* (nom. pl.), *ne-ki-ri-si* (dat. pl.). See for this interpretation Killen 1986:280.

⁵ I am indebted to Thomas Steer for first pointing out to me the possibility that the attested word could be an *a*-stem *nakkuwa-* and thus a thematic derivative **nōkw-ó-*. Since the *o*-grade of the root required by Hittite *nakkuwa-* could be secondarily imported from the supposed base noun **nōku*, **nēku-*, this account remains possible in principle, as does an animate *u*-stem **nōku-*, but given the productivity of hypostasized genitives in Hittite, I prefer the account that follows.

Based on the Hittite and Luvian pairs cited, I reconstruct an acrostic neuter *u*-stem; I do not exclude in principle an animate noun instead (thus Neri 2003:98 n. 255).

⁶ Av. *nasu-* with acc. sg. *nasāum* appears to continue an amphikinetic *u*-stem noun **nēkou*, **nēkw-*. Although its root etymology remains unclear (pace Kloekhorst 2008:310–1 with refs.), the ablaut of *ha/urnāu-*, *ha/urnu-* ‘birthing chair’ suggests that an amphikinetic *u*-stem would have appeared as a stem in *-āu-/u-* (perhaps with leveling to just *-āu-*). I therefore see nothing to recommend deriving our attested *nakku(wa)*- from such a source.

(< **nóku*, **néku*-) via *nakkuwaš* ‘the one of loss/disappearance/death’ (thus also Puhvel 2007:53, but with the wrong sense). See Puhvel 2011 for further discussion of this very productive pattern.

If as suggested above Hitt. *nakkuš* means ‘loss’, it is possible that the base **nakku*- in reference to the dead likewise had the nuance ‘loss, disappearance’, and the putative *nakkuwa*- thus meant ‘lost, missing’. This usage can be interpreted in one of two ways. First, it may be merely a euphemism, commonplace in words dealing with death and the dead (compare English ‘the departed’, ‘to pass away’, German *hinscheiden*, and the like).⁷ Recall in the same context *nakku*- ‘the august ones’ referring to chthonic demons.

The *apparent* restriction of the word to rituals with a Hurro-Luvian background also allows for an alternative motivation for ‘lost, missing’ used of the dead. Strauss (2002:28–30 and *passim*) has argued persuasively that some of the ritual motifs in KUB 29.7+ ultimately reflect a Mesopotamian origin, as attested in Akkadian rituals, conveyed to Hittite through Syria and Cilicia (= Kizzuwatna). We may thus with due reservations entertain the idea that some of the beliefs concerning death and the afterlife reflected in the ritual have a similar background. In Mesopotamia there were two classes of (spirits of) the dead. There were the typical dead, who received from their families the proper rites and care at their death and thereafter, and the forsaken, untended dead, who wandered the earth as unhappy ghosts. Unsurprisingly, the latter were especially regarded as likely to bring harm to the living.⁸ It would not be surprising if Hittite used an expression meaning ‘lost, missing’ for these forlorn spirits.⁹

While I personally find ‘loss’ more likely, I must also mention the further alternative possibility that *nakkuš* in the Laws means rather ‘murder, killing’ (with the same semantic development as in Latin *nex*) and that the *nakku(wa)*’s refer to those who died a violent death. The paragraph in the Laws can easily be interpreted as saying that any deaths occurring due to arson are to be regarded as murder and thus require restitution. The spirits of those who had died a violent death would seem particularly likely to have made accusations before a deity against the living, including the reigning king. I hardly need belabor the point that internecine strife and bloodshed were part and parcel of the history of the Hittite royal house. I recall merely the unhappy catalogue of events in the Old Kingdom narrated in the “Edict of Telipinu” (now available in the translation of van den Hout 2003).

⁷If Hittite *akk-* ‘die’ ultimately reflects the same root (Melchert 2012b:181–2), it could reflect an earlier, long since worn-out euphemism.

⁸See Tsukimoto 1985:146–54, who cites a vivid passage from Gilgamesh describing the plight of such spirits and a ritual designed to placate them.

⁹In one Akkadian passage such a spirit is qualified by the adjective *halqu*, whose basic sense is ‘lost, missing’: *mītu murtappīdu eṭemmu halqu* ‘the roving dead, the vagrant soul’ (see Lambert 1960:134–5). However, in view of the preceding *murtappīdu* ‘wandering’, a standard epithet for such a dead spirit (see Tsukimoto 1985:149 and 151 with refs.), it seems best to follow Lambert and the *CAD H* 399 sub *eṭemmu* (‘a roaming dead man, a runaway ghost’) and *CAD E* 50 sub *halqu* (‘the roaming dead man, the straying ghost’) in understanding *halqu* in its frequent sense ‘fugitive’. It is very unlikely that Hitt. *nakku(wa)*- is a direct calque on *halqu*.

One may thus with equal plausibility suggest that *nakku(wa)*- refers to the dead as ‘those who have disappeared, gone lost’ or refers rather to ‘the murdered’. This indeterminacy shows again the weakness of basing any interpretation of the word as attested solely on etymological grounds.

4 Luvo-Hittite *nakkušša/i*-

The word *nakkušša/i*- ‘scapegoat’ clearly is a Luvian loanword into Hittite, as shown by the stem alternation reflecting so-called “*i*-mutation” (on which in Hittite context see Rieken 1994 with reference to Starke 1990:59–90) and by the derivative *nakkuššaḫit*- ‘status of a scapegoat’. In principle there could have existed a Luvian neuter *u*-stem **h₁noḱu-* ‘burden’ to the root of Hittite *nakkī-* ‘heavy, burdensome’ that could have served as the base of ‘burden carrier’ > ‘sin carrier, scapegoat’ (thus *in nuce* Puhvel 2007:56). However, *u*-stems are generally recessive in Luvian, and there is no longer any support for a matching Hittite neuter *nakku-* in the meaning ‘burden’. Furthermore, the “appurtenance suffix” is always *-ašša/i-* in Luvian, precluding an analysis **nakku-šša-* (contra Melchert 1977:285, Starke 1990:169 and Puhvel 2007:53). Textual distribution of *nakkušša/i-* and its function argue for a Hurrian source, a derivative of *nakk-* ‘let go, release’ attested in the Hurro-Hittite “Song of Release” (see the references in Bawanypeck 2005:144 and Puhvel 2007:56), even if the morphological details remain to be worked out.

5 Conclusion

The attested references to ‘the tongue (of the oath) of the *nakku(wa)*-’ show conclusively that the *nakku(wa)*-’s are a *source* of evil, specifically harmful speech. This fact precludes any connection of *nakku(wa)*- with *nakkušša/i-* ‘scapegoat, sin carrier’, which is always a means of *removing* evil. An unprejudiced review of the first five paragraphs of KUB 29.7+ recto, describing the end of the eleventh day of the “Ritual of Šamuha”, confirms that the *nakku(wa)*’s are involved in defamatory speech, specifically in this instance against the reigning Hittite king. The stipulation that one is to make the same ritual manipulations of the *gangati*-plant for the living as for the *nakku(wa)*’s argues that the latter must refer in some manner to the dead. The immediately following incantation leaves no doubt about this interpretation (Ro 31–2): “If a [de]ad or living one has spoken of the king before the god in evil, now let the ritual client be pure and *gangati*-ed of those words.” Hittite *nakku(wa)*- thus surely reflects a *u*-stem derivative of the well-known PIE root **nek-*, but the precise nuance that differentiates the word synchronically from *akkant-* ‘dead’ remains indeterminate pending discovery of further examples.

Abbreviations

- CAD E = Oppenheim, Leo, et al. 1958. *The Assyrian Dictionary of the Oriental Institute of the University of Chicago*. Vol. 4: E. Chicago: Oriental Institute of the University of Chicago.
- CAD H = Oppenheim, Lee, et al. 1956. *The Assyrian Dictionary of the Oriental Institute of the University of Chicago*. Vol. 6: H. Chicago: Oriental Institute of the University of Chicago.
- CHD L–N = Güterbock, Hans Gustav, and Harry A. Hoffner, Jr. 1989. *The Hittite Dictionary of the Oriental Institute of the University of Chicago*. Vol. L–N. Chicago: Oriental Institute of the University of Chicago.

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