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Hittite antaka- “loins” and an Overlooked Myth about Fire

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One of the hallmarks of Harry Hoffner’s scholarship is the breadth of his interests and expertise, which encompass philology, language, history, and culture (including religion and myth). I hope that the following modest contribution to several of these areas will serve as a worthy token of friendship and esteem.

Hittite antaka- is attested scarcely half a dozen times, including the longer variant stem antakitti-.

1. The standard interpretation of the word is “room, chamber,” apparently first suggested in 1955 by Goetze, ANET, 349, for the example in the Ritual of Paskuwatti discussed below.

2. This seems to fit the occurrence in the myth of the disappearance of the Sun-god (KUB 36.44 i 12; OH/NS): [ ] dUTU-uš aruni antaga-šša pait . . . “The Sun God went to the

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1. We can say nothing about the example antaki-šš[i] in KUB 45.3 iv 17—see the note by Laroche, RHA XXXIII (1975): 65—except that the antecedent of the possessive is likely the deity of the preceding line. I follow others in giving the longer stem as antakitti-, an i-stem. However, since both occurrences are in the dat.-loc. singular, a stem in -tt- or in -itta- is equally possible. The base stem is antaka-. Pace Friedrich-Kammenhuber, HW2, 97, there is no reason to take the allative antaga-šša as a “false archaism,” and all dat.-loc. singulars in -i may be to antaka-. See for the same analysis already Hoffner, BiOr 37 (1980): 200. Friedrich, RHA VIII/47 (1947–48): 14, assumed antaki- because at that time he reasonably took the extended antakitti as a Hurrianism. We now know that stems in -itr- (NB single -t-) are in the first instance Luviannisms: see Starke, StBoT 31, 151ff. and 210ff. Our stem in -itt(V)- is probably something else. In any case, the word’s appearance in a clearly Hittite myth dating from Old Hittite makes a Hurrian source highly unlikely.

2. Accepted by Laroche, OLZ 51 (1956): 421, who found this meaning also appropriate for KUB 36.44 i 12, and subsequently by all others: Puhvel, HED 1/2, 77; Friedrich-Kammenhuber, HW2, 97; Hoffner, AnOr 5 (1987): 227 and Hittite Myths, 27; Pecchioli Daddi and Polvani, La mitologia, 64. As happens all too frequently, the very tentative nature of Goetze’s original suggestion, indicated by his use of italics in his translation, has been forgotten in the further transmission of the idea.
Sea, to his a." However, there is no positive evidence in this very fragmentary text nor anywhere else to my knowledge that the Sea was conceived as having a palace, much less a chamber. Furthermore, since virtually all other examples of "partitive apposition" in Hittite involve body parts or at least personal attributes, it is questionable whether the syntax of this example is compatible with the meaning "room" for antaka-.

There was in fact an earlier alternative interpretation, now apparently totally forgotten. Friedrich, HW¹ (1952), 23, gives "Bauch, Taille (??)." He credits this very tentative idea to Sturtevant, Lg. 12 (1936): 182. However, what the latter actually said was that the word might mean "intestines," analyzing it as possibly a derivative of anda+ki-, thus "that which lies inside." The shift to an external referent "belly, waist" seems to have been a conscious or unconscious modification by Friedrich himself. Having arrived independently at essentially the same solution, I now wish to show that Friedrich's intuition was in fact correct.

Other examples of the word confirm that it must refer to a body part, and indeed in the region suggested by Sturtevant and Friedrich. The first is KUB 11.20 i 5–21 (with its duplicate 11.25 iii 2–14, both OH/NS): GAL DUMU. MEŠ.É.GAL sīkunzan dāi ta GIŠ-i ḫamanki § ta GAL LÚ.MEŠ.GIŠ.BANŠUR GIŠ.BANŠUR-az ganki § GAL LÚ.MEŠ.Ú.S.BAR SÍG BABBAR SÍG SA₅ anda immiyazi ta išḫuzzin ANA GAL DUMU.MEŠ.É.GAL pāi n-an=za-an=kan antaki-šši dāi (dupl. antakitti!) § GAL LÚ.MEŠ.Ú.S.BAR=ašṭa parā [(p)]ēḫutezzi "The chief of the palace officials takes a (wool) kunza- and ties it onto a (piece of) wood. The chief of the table-men hangs (it) from a table. The chief of the weavers mingles white and red wool and gives the belt to the chief of the palace officials. He puts it on/in his antaka. One escorts out the chief of the weavers."

To suppose that the palace official puts the belt (just produced with great ritual fanfare) in his own room is not remotely credible, given all that we know about Hittite ritual practice and the phraseology used to describe it. First of all, this is a state ritual, involving the king and queen. It would be quite unheard of and make no sense that suddenly in the midst of the ritual action the chief palace official takes an important ritual object and carries it off to his living quarters. Second, as is typical, the rest of this passage describes the comings and goings of the participants in the public ritual very explicitly. If by some remote chance the official were carrying off the belt to his room, his departure from the scene would surely be carefully noted with a motion verb, as it is for every other participant.

The context suggests rather that the official puts the belt on his body. Where does one put a belt?—usually around one's waist, middle. I therefore propose that antaka- (and antakitti-) is the equivalent of archaic English "loins"; i.e., the part of the body from the lowest ribs to the hips, including crucially the seat of the sexual organs.³ I will soon discuss the sexual sym-
bolism of this entire passage in detail elsewhere, but the relevance of inter-twined white and red wool and antaka- to sexual potency is made clear by their appearance in the Ritual of Paskuwatti against impotence (KUB 9.27 + 7.5; MH/NS).

In this ritual (ably edited by Hoffner, AuOr 5 [1987]: 271–87), a man suffering from impotence undergoes a series of treatments to cure his problem. These include early on passing through a specially constructed gate wrapped with red and white wool while exchanging stereotypically feminine objects for masculine ones (KUB 9.27 i 18–19). We know that passage through a gate frequently is used in Hittite rituals to effect transition from a negative to a positive condition (see the references given by Hoffner, AuOr 5 [1987]: 283).

Somewhat later (KUB 9.27 + 7.5 i 31–37), Ulliliyassi, the patron deity of the ritual, is addressed in a passage describing the patient’s problem in quite blunt language: našma-wa-du DUMU.MUNUS šuppeššaraš [kiʔ]šat’ nu=wa šši-kan andakitti=sši kattanta pait nu=wa kāš tantukešnaš DUMU-aš šaknaš šēhunaš nu=ddu=sšan UL wemiyat “Or [you beca]me? a virgin young woman. He went down to her a. (But) this mortal (was only) one of feces and urine. He did not find you there.” (cf. Hoffner, AuOr 5 [1987]: 277: “He went down to her bedchamber, but this mortal (was just) one of faeces and urine. He did not find you.”). Hoffner, following Goetze, tries to fit antaka- to the context by specifying it as “bed-chamber,” but given the other evidence for antaka- as a body part, and indeed in the area of the waist, I assert that the text is being far more explicit: the man descended to the young woman’s “loins,” but failed miserably to perform.

I believe that there is one more example of antaka-, previously overlooked, that confirms its meaning as a body part. The fragmentary text in which it occurs is of considerable interest for its contents, and its true nature does not seem to have been appreciated, so I cite here the passage in full (KUB 43.62 ii 1–11, iii 2’–12’; ?NS): n=an-[z]a=an-kan x[...|x=na=an-za(-)x=it ne-ya[a-zíʔ] / n=at=sši(e)=ššan a[nta]ki tameškezzi [-] / mahāhan=ma-ši-kan alpaš tepu paizzi [nu=sšiʔ] / tuegganza mazzazi n=at=sši(e)=šša[n ar]=aʔ ] § šukkeškezzi=ma= an kišan pahlīur ša[ir] / ŠA dUTU DUMU-ŠU n=at wet GE₆-anti pait n=at / GE₆-anti uleštat MUŠ iwar [-] / taruptat kunkuliyaša i[war] § partaiṭat ŠA NIM.LĀL watkuta[t] / ŠA TI₈MUŠEN iwar ANA TI₈MUŠEN=ma šalul[gaš

3. This new interpretation is still compatible with the popular derivation from anda “in(to).” A shift from “inner part” to “middle, center” to “middle part of the body” is quite in order. Cf. Latvian vidus “(the) inside” but also “middle” and “belly.”

4. My restoration and interpretation here are tentative, but they do fit the traces and the presence of -za. My idea is that the goddess herself is said to have turned herself into a desirable young woman in an attempt to cure the man, but even this failed to arouse him, requiring further and more elaborate treatment. Such direct intervention by the goddess is at least consistent with the later mention (iv 2ff.) of the goddess appearing to the patient in a dream and sleeping with him.
pait] / KASKAL-ši ikunimaš NU.GÁL § [...] (rest of column two and most of column three lost) [...]. / Giškapanu-ma=za=kan MUS harzi [-] / ištarna pedi=ma=at=za=kan NIM.LÁL harzi § Gišlahḫurnužiaš-šan šer Tiš MUŠEN tiya[t] / katta=ma=an=za=an Gišgapanu=ššī(t) MUS / neyat ištarna pedi=ma=kan NIM.LÁL ney[at] § nu=ššan 4Gulzanzipa šA 4du x[ ] / hutitiyannai nu=šši EGIS-anda [-] / IM-an paddanzi dankuš taga[nzipaš] / x[ ]-at našta šarā tarpitš(-)[ ] / [Gu]lzazipan GUL-tat DUMU.NAM.LÚ [ ] (/ free space to end of column). “He wraps? him with a [ ]. He presses it on his a. But when the weakness/faintness passes from him a little, and his body can resist, he [removes?] it from him. § (Meanwhile) he is reciting over him as follows: ‘Fire became enraged, (did) the son of the Sun-god. He proceeded to go (in)to the night and blended with the night like a snake. He gathered himself like a k. He... ed like a bee. He sprang up like an eagle, and to the eagle he [went as] messenger. On the way there was no cold.’ (long lacuna) It (acc.) [...]. The snake holds (its) base, while the bee holds it in the middle. § (Above) on its branches the eagle has perched, while below the snake has encircled its base, and in the middle the bee has turned (around it?). § Gulzanzipa pulls the [] of the Storm-god. And behind him/her they dig up clay. The Dark Earth has (been) ... ed. The tarpi [ ] has struck upward at? Gulzanzipa. Human [...].”

Riemschneider, KUB 43, vii, labels the text “episch?”, but CHD P, 198, correctly calls it an incantation (so also Ardzinba—see note 11 below). I contend that this text is specifically a “medical” ritual, part of whose treatment is being described in lines 1–4 of column ii. I infer that the symptoms of the illness include a burning sensation, leading to inclusion of a mythical narrative concerning Fire. A mixture of practical treatment and verbal magic (including contextually relevant mythical passages) is a well-known characteristic of Hittite rituals against illness.6

I cannot fully restore the first line of column ii. My restoration and interpretation of ne-y[a-zī] are based on a possible parallel with this expression in the myth in column iii—something is being wrapped around the trunk of the patient in the same way that the snake and bee encircle the trunk of the tree—but this is far from certain.7 I am confident that we should read a[n-ta]-ki in


6. Compare among others the “Ritual for the Infernal Deities,” as edited by Otten, ZA 54 (1961): 114–57 (see especially lines ii 22ff. on pp. 122ff.). Support for this interpretation of our text comes from the fragmentary ends of lines from column i, which crucially represent the beginning of the text: we find [a]mrḫša[n] “person” (acc. sg.) in line 1 (also line 6), and darrūš-šāmma “figure, body; statue” in line 3. These terms fit well the typical opening of such medical texts: “When/sf such-and-such happens to a person..., and his body is...” Or darrūš could refer to a figurine used in the course of treatment.

7. For neya- as “wind around, wrap,” see CHD L–N, 359ff.
line 2. The broken horizontal before the break can hardly belong to any sign except ḤAL or AN, and there is barely space for one more sign in the break. I know of no suitable Hittite words of a shape ḫal[ ]ki that would fit the context. The verb tameškezzi “presses” argues that we are dealing with some kind of compress. The reference to Fire in the following mythical passage and the likelihood that a burning sensation is a symptom lead me to suppose a cold compress, but I would not insist on this. Note that the word alpaš in the following sentence can hardly be “cloud,” but must rather represent the missing base noun alpa- “faintness, weakness” to the adjective alpānt- “faint, weak, ill” (for which see Puhvel, HED 1/2, 38–39).

I do not have space to discuss fully the very interesting but difficult mythical passage, but a few remarks are in order. One thing that is clear (and new to my knowledge) is the statement that Fire (palḥur) is a son of the Sun-god (contra Haas, GHR, 297, who erroneously cites this passage as saying that Fire is a son of the Fire-god!). Whether one restores a preterite ša-a-[i] or some other form of šā(i)-, the unmistakable parallels to the opening of the myth of Telipinu (especially the verb ulešta) make it certain that we have yet another variant on the myth of the deity who retires in anger, with disastrous consequences.

The description of those consequences is obscured by the terms kunkuliyyati- and partāi-, but it is at least clear that Fire went as a messenger to the eagle and that on his journey he brought heat everywhere he went, presumably an unnatural, unbearable heat. This condition furnishes the tie-in with our medical ritual: the burning sensation of the patient is to be treated with, among other things, the same steps that were taken against the unnatural heat that spread due to Fire’s wrath. When the narrative resumes after a very long lacuna, we find the snake, bee, and eagle occupying respectively the bottom, middle, and top of what must be some kind of tree. Given the mention of the fate-goddess Gulzanzipa in the next paragraph, I am tempted to think that the tree in question is the “tree of life” or “world-tree” that is nearly universal

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8. One could conceivably read p[al-]ki, but I know of no appropriate Hittite word that would yield a dat.-loc. singular of this form.

9. The filiation is given correctly in Oettinger, Stammbildung, 363 n. 214, but neither this nor the rest of the myth seems to have attracted further notice.

10. For various attempts to interpret partā(i)- see CHD P, 198. Oettinger (pers. comm.) now suggests that partaittat is a reflexive middle meaning “disengaged itself.” There seems to be a clear contrast between the first two actions of Fire that involve entanglement and the last two that express separation. Against the editors (and with Oettinger) I prefer the alternative analysis of our passage whereby the phrases with ıwar go respectively with the verbs that precede them. My main reason for doing so is ANA Ti8MusEn:ma, where the position of ıma argues that “to the eagle” begins a new clause. I take –ma as an enclitic despite the space that precedes it, because I find the restoration and reading ha-ıu-[ga-ıaš (pa-it)] virtually certain in the context.
in cosmologies of various peoples around the world. I can make no coherent sense, however, of the following actions and must leave further interpretation of this fascinating mythical episode to others. The mention of a human at the very end of column iii does suggest that we are near the end of the mythical narrative/incantation and about to return to the ritual treatment.

Returning to our main topic, the word antaka-, I close with a brief account of its use in the first passage cited, the myth of the disappearance of the Sun-god. I believe I have made a convincing case for antaka- referring to a body part, specifically the loins, including as the seat of sexuality. As noted earlier, the partitive apposition aruni antaga=šša also supports such an interpretation. But what are we to make of the idea that the Sun-god went to the Sea’s “loins”? Let us reexamine the context. In lines i 7–8 of the text we find nu=za arunaš DUO’HAB.ḪAB-x [/ ] ḫalḫaldāni=šši dašš “The Sea placed a vessel/vessels [ ] on his (own) š.” 12 A few lines later (i 12–13), the Sun-god goes to the Sea’s antaga, and then: n=ras DUO’HAB.[ḪAB . . . ISTU?] GAB.LĀL gariʾēt “and he covered them², the vessels [. . . with] wax.” 13

Puhvel, HED 3, 22, reasonably takes ḫalḫaldāni as a variant of the better attested ḫalḫalzāna/i- that appears in lists of the vital attributes of a (strong) man in both Hittite and Cuneiform Luviian contexts. For Hittite note KUB 24.12 ii 31–32: ŠA UGURUŠ ḫaštariyatar ḫašṭāi [ḫalḫ]anzanan īnnaren laplappipan “bravery, bones, š., eyebrow and eyelash of a man” (sim. iii 5–6). 14 The most complete version of the much longer list of CLuvian is found in KUB 35.45 ii 22–24: ALAM=ša mišan=za ḫaš=šša ḫalḫalzanin uwarannaḫi=“


12. Hoffner, Hittite Myths, 27, gives “on his/sits . . .” but the reflexive particle =za argues that the reference is to the Sea’s own š., as per Puhvel.

13. As intimated by Hoffner, the enclitic ōš is problematic. It cannot be the subject, since we have a transitive verb with direct object. I follow him in very tentatively taking it as acc. pl. animate, proleptic with the direct object “vessels.” One wonders if the transmitted text is in order at this point.

14. As stressed by Puhvel, ūššṭāi in this context may convey “steadfastness, sturdiness” as much as “bone.” Likewise in this context “eyebrow” and “eyelash” surely refer to the strong, withering gaze of a deity or king. Note in fact the copyist’s alteration of īnira- “eyebrow” to īnāri-, which is a word for “strength.”
ša iunaḫi-zša lalpin kuwannanin maššanallin KASKAL-an “(his) body, flesh, bone, h., w., the ability to walk, eyelash, eyebrow, divine path.” For the meaning of mitšan-za and an excellent discussion of the entire list see Poetto, *HS* 108 (1995): 30–38.15

For ḫalḫaltāna- and variants Puhvel suggests a meaning “shoulder,”16 another body part that certainly is often used to stand for strength (cf. Hittite kuttar, as discussed by Puhvel, *HED* 4, 313f.). Obviously, a shoulder would also be an appropriate place to put a vessel. Puhvel is also surety right in seeing a connection with ḫalḫaldāmar(i)- “corner” and ultimately with the root of ḥalîye- “genuflect” <*“bend oneself.” However, a bewildering variety of body parts may be named for the fact that they bend or visually appear as a bend or curve. Note that the cognates of Latin coxa “hip” mean “armpit,” “foot, leg” and “back of the knee.”17 The names for body parts also notoriously shift their referents: in late Latin coxa comes to be used for “thigh,” whence French cuisse.18

I therefore do not believe we can exclude that ḫalḫaltana- etc. refers to “thigh,” “hip,” or some other part of the body in the same general region as antaka-, symbolizing physical strength and/or virility. Sexual power was also central to the Hittites’ notion of being a man. The Sea may have put the vessel(s) in question in his lap. I certainly do not insist on this idea. A definitive answer to the meaning of ḫalḫaltana- depends on our figuring out why the Sea put the vessel(s) on himself in the first place, and what the intended effect was of the Sun-god’s covering the vessel(s) with wax. Given what we know of other ancient Anatolian myths, a power struggle with sexual overtones does not seem to me out of the question.

Be that as it may, even if ḫalḫaltana- does mean “shoulder,” the Sun-god could easily have reached the vessel(s) and covered it/them with wax from a position at/on the Sea’s loins. The fact that ḫalḫaltana- clearly is a body part supports my claim that antaka- is as well, and the other instances of the latter argue that it refers to the middle of the body, especially as the seat of sexuality, a range covered by the now obsolete English “loins.”

15. The “divine path” may well be the path that the soul travels through life, thus life-force itself. See C. Watkins, *How to Kill a Dragon* (New York, 1995), 288, and J. D. Hawkins, *FsTöögüç*, 190.


17. Sanskrit kāksa, Old Irish coss, and OHG hāhsina respectively.