Studi di Istitologia
in onore
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a cura di

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On Hittite mūgā(i)—

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Alfonso Archi’s impressively broad expertise and interests include the Hittites’ and other ancient peoples’ conception of the relationship between deities and humans and communication between them. In grateful recognition of his many contributions to Hittitology I offer the following reappraisal of one of the key Hittite terms for human interaction with deities.

The communis opinio regarding the Hittite verb mūgā(i)—is that it is a verbum dicendi: ‘pray, entreat, beseech’; ‘beten, bitten, anfehen’; ‘invoke, evoke, entreat’; ‘implore, pray (to), beseech, entreat, invoke; evoke; treat (ritually) by prayer’. There has been only one significant dissenting interpretation, ‘ébranler, émouvoir, remuer’, by E. Laroche in his seminal study of Hittite prayer. As I will show below, the evidence of the texts clearly vindicates Laroche’s analysis and excludes a verb of speaking. I myself can add only one crucial argument to the insights of O. Gurney and the masterful treatment of E. Laroche, which has been unjustly rejected and in some cases willfully dismissed in the service of an etymology that itself is totally without merit.

Hittite mūgā(i)—is attested in all but a handful of instances in a ritual context that seeks to induce the return of an absent or angry deity or the alienated spirit of a dead person. The following are typical:

1) nu=tta kāša mukāšemi ×ašaḫšit [iš-išpa]indusit, ‘I am hereby m.-ing you with leavened bread and libations’ (KUB 24.2 obv. 12; prayer of Mursili II, NH).

See the further example ibid. obv. 5-6. The intervening lines specify that the god Telipinu is to come from wherever in the world he may be.

2) mān-šan 安东Telipinus=a kuadanikkı nakkiešzi ug=a ĐINGIR.ŠEŠ-aš ud-[dār me]mahši t=an mugam, ‘Whenever Telipinu becomes a burden

1 O. Gurney, “Hittite prayers of Mursili II”, AAA 27 (1940) 49.
2 J. Friedrich, HW (1952) 144 and J. Tischler, HEG Band II, Lfg. 5-6 (1990) 226.
on someone, I speak the words of the gods and m. him’ (VBoT 58 iv 8-10).

(3) kiššann- a memai man- wa- za šänteš našma- wa=šmaš= kan arha kuššiḫi ḫuittiyan talliyān mugān ḫarzi nu=wa=šmaš apāš idāššu ḫuwaappa ḫarwašiya Ṿedi mūkišket kinuma= wa=šmaš kāša anzaš parā ḫandanni ṾUTU-i kattan aššuli ḫuittiyanneškeuvarni Ṿalleškeuvarni mükišgāueni SISKUR= wa=šmaš šanizzi Ṿarkui pešgāueni, ‘And he also speaks as follows: “Should you be angry, or (if) someone has drawn away, allured⁶ and m.-ed you, and that evil wicked one has been m.-ing you in a secret place, now we are in providence under the Sun-god drawing, alluring, and m.-ing you for well-being. We are also giving you pleasant pure rituals’ (KUB 15.32 i 46-54; evocation ritual ‘when they draw the gods on the paths’, NH).

(4) mān=kan LAMMA kūš kuršāš [kuedaði]kkī arha talliyānza n=an mugāmī, ‘If the Tutelary Deity of the Hunting Bag has been lured away from someone, I m. him’ (KUB 30.65 ii 7-8; tablet catalogue, NH).

Parallels such as (3) make it clear that arha talliyānza in (4) means ‘lured away’ and that mügā(mī) describes the action by which the absent deity is induced to return. One should ignore the false translations in CHD L-N 321 and by Puhvel, HED 6, 177.

(5) nu=šši ṾUliliyaššin šipantaḫḫi n=an INA UD.3.KAM mügāmī, ‘I sacrifice to Uliliyasši for him and m. her for three days’ (KUB 9.27+7.8 i 3-4; ritual of Paskuwatti against impotence, prep-NH/NS).

(6) nu=ddu=za kāša mūkiške(mī) tallieskemī, ‘I am hereby m.-ing and alluring you’ (KUB 7.5 i 23; same text).

In the preceding lines i 13-16 the goddess is asked to come to the client from wherever in the world she is.

(7) INA UD.1.KAM=ma 3–ŠU mügāmi karūwarivar UD.KAM–i štarna pedi 1–ŠU nekuza mešur 1–ŠU memiyanuš=kan anda apuš=pat memiškemī, ‘On the first day I m. three times: at daybreak, once at midday, once at twilight. And I insert those same words’ (KUB 7.5 ii 20-24; same text).

Compare KUB 30.65 + KBo 31.5 ii 6: mān *Ulliaššin mūgāmi.

(8) nu ṚTU Arinna ṚKUBABBAR-šī INA UD.7 KAM mukeškenun INA ṚArinna INA UD.7 KAM mukeškenun n=-ašta kī AWATUNA anda me-miškenun mūgāwaš=ma arhayan ḫanti tuppi, ‘I m.-ed the Sun-goddess of Arinna in Hattusha for seven days. I m.-ed (her) in Arinna for seven days, and I inserted these words, but (of the ritual) of m. there is a separate tablet set aside’ (KUB 24.3 iv 29; Prayer of Murṣili II, colophon, NH).

(9) 1 TUPPU AWAT *Allaitūraḫi [mān...] n=an kiššan muga[mī q(47)][], ‘One tablet. The words of A.: [when a god is angry(?)] I m. him as follows’ (KBo 14.68 i 3-4).

The duplicate KUB 30.51 i 9 has rather aniy[ami] ‘I treat ritually’! There is no basis for assuming that object is a human just in this one instance (contra CHD L-N 322). On the basis of passages like (11) below I restore rather with Laroco, CTH (1971) 158. That the action expressed by mūgā(i)- refers to a ritual act and not to speaking is confirmed by the following:

(10) INA UD.7 KAM=ma mugānzi mugašwar=ša šarā danzi ta ḫappā, ‘They m. on the seventh day, and they also pick up the m. It is finished’ (KUB 30.27 obv. 4-6).

This passage has caused considerable discomfort to those who interpret mūgā(i)- as a verb of speaking. The ad hoc translation of Puhvel, HED 6, 178 ‘they wind up the imploration’ is quite impossible, since šarā ḫāra- nowhere has the meaning ‘to complete’. It is equally ad hoc to set up a separate entry for mugawar as ‘materials of an invocation/evocation ritual’ (CHD L-N 324) just to explain away this example. Rather the passage shows that mūgā(i)- describes a concrete ritual act the materials of which are gathered up upon its completion (see further below).

(11) DUB.5 KAM AWAT *Ilīma-abi [01] Arzakīti *sūninsKatras mā[n DINGIR]-lum uddanaz kuṣqa kartiumiya[nza] našma=šši maršaštar-riš=ma kušk[i] peran ienza našma=šši=kan UNUTUR UM] kuṭkī ĕrkanš= n=an SAG.GEMEIR.RMES maḫḫan EGIR-pa mugārziši 6 AM, ‘Fifth tablet. Words of I. the [ ] and A. the k.: if a [(deity)/ššX] is angry for some reason, or a sacrilege is committed before him, or some implement of his is ruined, how his servants m. him back. (The text) is not complete’ (KUB 56.55 iv 8-9).

The clause containing mūgā(i)- is misunderstood by Puhvel, HED 6, 177-178. See the correct translation of the parallel text in CHD L-N 199.
For further examples involving angry deities see KUB 30.51 i 24-26 with the duplicate KUB 30.58 i 9-10 and likewise KUB 30.58 i 11: [ ]mān tuku-an mugāmi ‘When I m. an angry one’.

As indicated above, mūgā(i)- is also used to refer to the action of bringing back alienated spirits of the dead:

(12) [DUB.X.KAM QA]TI mān-kan akkanza kuêdanikki [arḫa tal]līyanza mugāwaš, ‘[x tablets. (The text) is complete. Of the (ritual of) m. when/if a dead person is lured [away] from someone’ (KBo 14.70 i 15-16; catalogue, NH).

(13) UMMA `Za[r...]|x mān=kan akkanza kuêdanikki arḫa talliya[nza n=an eg]r=pa mugāmni līyanīmi, ‘Thus speaks Za[r-]: ‘If a dead person has been lured away from someone, I m. and send [him] back’ (KBo 41.1 Ro 1-2; ritual, MH/MS).

The precise interpretation of two ritual occurrences of mūgā(i)- remains somewhat unclear due to the presence of lexical items of uncertain meaning, but they are nevertheless important for an overall understanding of the word:

(14) nu-tta kā mugāwaš uddār mummuwā[i?] eštu nu geštu lagān ḫarāk nu-tta kuṭ lugal [munnuslugal] memiškanzi n=aš ištamaški, ‘Let these words of the m. be m. for you. Hold your ear inclined. Whatever the king [and queen] are saying to you, listen to them!’ (KUB 33.68 ii 3-5; ritual).

The word mummuwā[i?] is associated with the substance parḫuena-: see KBo 11.14 i 12 ʾittu-aš parḫuenaš mummuwai and KUB 36.96:13 [x- an ʾmummuwā[ti and ibid. 15 [par]ḫuenaš galak[iar]. Its precise sense remains obscure (Puhvel, HED 6, 179 suggests mummuwā[i?] ‘inducement’, while Laroche, Prière hittite 22 renders ‘efficaces’). It is highly unlikely that the word is a participle to a verb ‘to fall’ (CHD L-N 329).

(15) galaktar kitta nu-šti [ ...] galanganza eš parḫuenaš kitta n=aš= ši=pa anda mugānza eḫ[šu?], ‘Balm/soothing is placed. Be(!) soothed for her! p. [is placed.] Let him(!) be m.-ed to it for her!’ (KUB 33.21 iii 17-19; ritual for the Storm-god of Ašmunikal).

One should also compare KUB 33.34 obv. 11: [p]arḫuenaš kitta tallyanza eš ‘p. is placed. Be allured!’. What examples (14) and (15) establish is that the action of a mugāwar may well include speech (see also (2) above), but need not do so. In (15) it is clearly the proffered substance parḫuena- that acts upon the deity. Compare citation (1) above where bread and wine are employed as enticements.
I know of only four examples of mûgâ(i)- in non-ritual contexts:

(16) DINGIR.MEŠ-ka [da]-riyamut nu DINGIR.MEŠ-ka mugai... [DINGIR.MEŠ-šu dariyamut nu DINGIR.MEŠ-šu mukiš(ēš)keuwañ daiš, 'Ishtar to Naram-Sin': "Importune/make weary your gods! m. your gods!... 'He made weary his gods. He began to m. his gods" (KBo 3.16 rev. 9-10 & 13; Naram-Sin epic).

The verb tariyana- is clearly the transitive ‘to (make) weary’ corresponding to tarai- ‘exert oneself, become weary’. I therefore follow Gurney, Hittite prayers 49 note 3, in interpreting it in this context as ‘to importune’. The translations ‘implore by’ (CHD L-N 320) and ‘address’ (Puhvel, HED 6, 178) are entirely ad hoc.

(17) nu=za udiluyankaš ḫiskur taraḫta ḫiskur-aštēš=su DINGIR.MEŠ-naš ḫumâ[n]uš mûgait anda=ma=apâ iyyaten, ‘The eel-snake conquered the Storm-god, and the Storm-god m.-ed all the gods: “Stand beside me!”’ (KBo 3.7 i 11-13; Illyanka Myth, OH/NS).

This is the only example of mûgâ(i)- followed by direct speech!

(18) [mân] ḫumu=ša-[wa]-ma ḫUKA₃,E IN₃A KUR ʾuša Kašga piyâmi nu=ěši xu]-išši n-an-za ḫuššalaš [l]ě mugâši nu=šši kiššan lē teši mâyhan=x[a ʃarâ āru [ ḫuššalaš nu=xamu pa ḫuššalaš [kattan ]]. 'If I, His Majesty, send a messenger into the Kaska land, do [not ] to him, as a man at peace (with me) do not m. him and say to him as follows: “When you arrive up in [ ], flee and [come] back to me”’ (KUB 23.77:65-67; Kaska-Treaty, MIU/MS).

(19) LÜ.MEŠ[š] ḫuššal ʾušuḫiš piteant[i] uwant[iš] n=ša eḫir-pa ina KUR ʾuša Kašga lē mǔškankan[i], ‘The men who have come as fugitives to Hattusha, let them [not] m. them back to the Kaska land’ (ibid. 73-74).

In lexical texts mugâwvar is equated to Akk. ṣēbû ‘to wish, desire’, suppû ‘to pray’, and tazzimu. As per Gurney, Hittite prayers 51, the last word also means ‘wish, desire’ (see also CAD sub tazzimtu). Contra Puhvel, HED 6, 184, there is no support whatever for mugâwvar meaning ‘lament, complaint’.

The noun makaššar is equivalent to ḫiskur ‘ritual’ (see Laroche, Prière hittite 21 and CHD L-N 326). It is the object of the verbs pai- ‘to give’, dai- ‘to place’, karp- ‘lift’, ašnu- ‘provide for’, šarâ dā- ‘to pick up’ and pari pêda- ‘to carry off’. Note also in KUB 33.75 ii 8-9: kâša-tta [m]ukišši parḫu[ēnāš] kittar[i] ‘p. is hereby placed for you for m.’. See ibid. ii 12-13 for the same expression with ‘fig’. Despite the equiv-
ocation of CHD L-N 324-326 and contra Puhvel, HED 6, 180, mukeššar
clearly refers to concrete offerings, not to an ‘invocation’. We must inter-
pret the word with Laroche, Prière hittite 22, as ‘le materiel qui sert de
support au mugawar’.

Against the majority view the interpretation of mūgā(i)- as a verbum
dicendi is impossible. A mugāwar is a ritual action of which verbal evoca-
tion is only a part. This is proven by examples (7) and (8) above, where
the key phrases are underscored. As per CHD L-N 261-262, the com-
bination of particle, preverb and verb –ašta– kan anda mema– refers ex-
clusively to words spoken concurrently with a non-verbal action (literally
‘to interject, insert words’). Since the dictionary entry offers only a couple
of examples, I cite here further though by no means exhaustive evidence.
The expression follows ‘they place their hands on the rams’ (KUB 9.32 i
22); ‘I break (a list of various breads) for the Sun-god of Heaven’ (KBo
15.25 Ro 35); ‘they let (their offerings go) across to the male deities’
(KBo 4.11:18); ‘she digs up the ground... puts in copper, then fastens it
down all around with nails and strikes (it) with a hammer’ (KBo 4.1 Ro 7;
likewise ibid. Ro 27 after placing multiple kərakki’s); ‘I take the spindle
and distaff away from him and give him a bow’ (KUB 9.27 i 25); ‘he
pours (groat) from above onto the mulati-bread’ (KBo 5.2 i 21, with –aš-
ta); ‘he treats the deity with the gangati–plant...’; ‘pours water from a
small silver vessel’ (KUB 29.7 Ro 10 and Vo 53; see ibid. Ro 30 and Vo
27.34.59); ‘he carries them (various breads) to a cross-roads and crumbles
them and libates beer’ (KUB 17.12 ii 5; similar ibid. ii 11 and 25); ‘he re-
leases the boat into the river’ (KUB 39.71 iv 16-17); ‘also pour water on
the hands of the servants’ (KUB 39.88 iv 3-4).

It is important to contrast the usage found with a genuine verb of
speech without anda ‘into’ and the particle (KBo 5.9 Vo 26, NH): naš-
ma=an apāsilu halziyattti nu kisšan memait[i] ‘or (if) you yourself call him
and speak as follows...’.

As already argued by Gurney, Hittite prayers 45-48, the action of a
mugawar is associated with only one very specific kind of “prayer”. It is
not applied to hymns of praise, or to the plague prayers’. It is also entirely
distinct from vows (malteššar). As per Laroche, Prière hittite 24, the
purpose of a mugawar is to compel a deity who has ceased his or her proper
functions and retreated into inaction (often out of anger) to return and re-
sume his or her beneficent role: ‘de faire sortir la divinité de son hostilité,

¹ These are defined as examples of arkuwar ‘plea, legal justification’. See Laroche, Prière
hittite 13-20 and Melchert, “Hittite arku- “chant, intone” vs. arkuwa(i)- “make a plea””, JCS 50
On Hittite mūgā(i)– 213 de sa retraite, de son inaction’. Thus the verb means fundamentally ‘ébran-
ler, émouvoir, remuer, mettre en branle’; ‘to rouse, bestir, urge to action’.
See also the similar analysis by J. Glocker, with special reference to the
mukeššar/mugawar for the Storm-god of Kuliwisa. A mugawar is a ritu-
al of inducement, using not only verbal evocations, but also every kind of
tempting concrete offering available to entice the missing deity to return.
The sense ‘to rouse, incite’ also fits all of the non-ritual examples
(16)-(19) above. In the Naram-Sin passage Ishtar urges Naram-Sin to im-
portune or pester his gods (tariyanut, literally ‘Make weary!’) and to rouse
them to action. The usually assumed obsequious meaning ‘to implore, en-
treat’ is quite incompatible with the paired ‘pester, make weary’. Even
more crucial are examples (18) and (19) from a treaty with the Kaskeans.
It runs counter to everything that we know about this warlike, obdurate,
and habitually uncooperative people as reported by the Hittites to suppos-
se that they would adopt a pleading tone with a messenger sent by the Hittite
king, much less with fugitives from their own land. The Hittite king’s con-
cern obviously is rather to prohibit the Kaskeans from inducing his own
messenger to desert or the Kascan fugitives to return to their country.
While it is not expressly stated, it is very likely that the action of inducing
the persons in question involved concrete rewards.

Given these quite unequivocal examples, we also need not assume
that the Storm-god who was hard pressed by Iluyanka ‘pleaded with’ or
‘implored’ the other gods for help. A sense ‘incited, urged (to action)’ fits
the context just as well. Direct speech in Hittite often follows verbs of ac-
tion and provides no compelling evidence for a verb of speaking. Hittite
mūgā(i)– thus means ‘to rouse, bestir, urge to action’, as already de-
determined by Laroche more than forty years ago.

Appendix

Hittite mūgā(i)– has been consistently derived from the PIE imitative
root *mūg(k)– seen in Latin mügūre ‘to low, bellow, roar; rumble’, Umbr.
mugatu, muieto ‘mutter, murmur’, Grk. μὑχα ‘mutter, moan, murmur’, μὑ-
kόμμι ‘low, bellow’, Germ. muben, etc.10. The etymology is still defended
by Puhvel, HED 6, 183-184 and Kloekhorst, Etym. Dict. 586, as well as
Ricken, StBoT 44 (1999) 309. Even if Hitt. mūgā(i)– were a verbum di-

9 For a representative list with references see H. A. Hoffner – H. C. Melchert, A Grammar
10 First by H. Zimmern in Festschrift für W. Streitberg (Leipzig 1924) 438.
cendi, the derivation is wildly implausible semantically (see already the correct rejection by Gurney, *Hittite prayers* 50). Puhvel claims a primary meaning ‘to cry out’ < ‘speak loudly’ for *mūgāre*, but the Latin verb does not describe a human utterance. The attempted comparison with (*im*)plō-rāre and clámāre is totally illicit. In all cases where *mūgāre* is used of humans, the comparison with the sounds made by animals is present, often explicitly. Like all of its true cognates, Latin *mūgāre* is not a verbum dicendi, but a verbum sonandi. The derivation is also formally impossible. See Kloekhorst, *Etym. Dict.* 35-60, for compelling arguments that Hittite į spells /o/ and Ż /u/. PIE *ū* appears as Hitt. Ż before velar (cf. i-ū-ga-an, Ż-uk). Thus *mu-ū-ga-*(a)-i- cannot reflect *mūg-*. 

Kloekhorst, *Hitt. Dict.* 568, tries to solve this problem by positing an ablauting root *meug-* ‘to make a noise (in order to invoke the gods)’, but the root is pure invention, since it patently is not the source of the imitative *mūgāre* ‘to low, roar’, etc. One does not invoke gods by bellowing, roaring, or lowing. As per Kloekhorst, *Etym. Dict.* 568, Rieken, StBoT 44, 309, and Puhvel, *HED* 6, 185, *mūg-* could be the source of Hittite 09mu-(-ū-)-kar/mu-uk-na-āš (a noise-maker used inter alia to summon gods). It is hard to see, however, how an instrument made of wood would make the kind of low rumbling sound represented by *mūg-* (the usual assigned meaning is ‘rattle; sistrum’, suggesting a very different kind of sound). In any case the spelling with Ż excludes any connection with *mu-ū-ga-*(a)-i-. It is also worth pointing out that the wide variety of devices employed in the mugawar rituals never includes noise-makers to attract the gods.

In any case, as shown above, Hitt. *mūgā(i)-* is not a verbum dicendi or sonandi. Its source must be sought in the semantic area of ‘to rouse, incite, urge’. The derivation by Laroche, *Prière hittite* 24, from an alleged *meug-* ‘to move’ (Lat. mouère) cannot account for the other reflexes of that PIE root (which must actually be *m(y)euh-*, or similar).

The formal derivation must be as outlined by Kloekhorst, *Etym. Dict.* 586: *mūgā(i)-* is a denotative verb from an action noun *mōug/k-o-* of a type well attested in Hittite (entirely parallel is *paršā(i)-* ‘to crumble’ < *parša-* ‘crumb, morsel’ < *parš-* ‘to break (bread)’). For *mukeššar* beside *mūgā(i)-* one may compare *dannatteššar* ‘desolation’ beside *dannattā(i)-* ‘devastate’ < *danna-ta-* ‘empty’. Given the sense ‘to incite, rouse’, I suggest derivation from a root *meuk-* ‘be pointed’ seen in Lat. *mucrō* ‘(sword-)point’ (with much less certainty in Grk. ἀγοραρίῳ ‘to tear, scratch, prick’ and Lith. *muštii* ‘to strike’). For the semantic development we may

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8 One need only examine the citations in the *Thesaurus Linguae Latinae* and its accurate characterization: "inter verba ex imitatione vocum naturalium orta".
cite English ‘to goad’ < ‘goad’ (OF. gád ‘point of a weapon, goad’ < Gmc. *gaidā) or Latin stimulāre ‘to goad; incite, urge, rouse’ < stimulus ‘goad’. Likewise then I assume *móuk-o- ‘point’ > ‘pointed object, goad’, whence mūgā(i)- ‘to goad’ > ‘to incite, rouse, urge’.

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