

The Meaning of Hittite *sakuriya*- in the Annals of Hattusilis I

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The meaning of the Hittite verb *sakuriya*- raises some semantic difficulty. Beyond the Hittite problem, the question is also related to the Indo-European root **seǵh*- (often understood with a war connotation of domination in a battlefight), upon which Hittite *sakuriya*- is based, and also to the root derivatives in Greek, Vedic, Irish, etc. We make here the assumption that neither the root nor the Hittite verb has a warlike connotation, but that, in the Annals of Hattusilis I, the Hittite verb means "to seize, grab" without a specific warlike connotation.

The Hittite verb *sakuriya*- is found in various texts: annals (Hattusilis I, KBo X 2 recto II 19), divination treaties (birth oracles, KUB VIII 3 II 9; KUB VIII 24 II 6; KBo XIII 43 recto IV 9, KBo XIII 31 I 10, etc.), historical texts (Midas de Pahhuwa; KUB XXIII 72 II 55a)¹.

This verb raises some semantic problems with regard of two point of view :

The first one concerns the fundamental meaning assigned to the verb and the Indo-European root **seǵh*- upon which it is based. Consequently, beyond the Hittite problem, the question is related to Indo-European, since *sakuriya*- is based upon the Indo-European **seǵh*- itself raising some difficulties related to semantics.

Indeed, derivatives of the root are apparently divided in two subgroups of different meanings²:

The first group, mainly represented in Indo-Iranian and Germanic, refers quite precisely to the notion of victory and

¹For the forms and references, see Friedrich 1947, 290-291; Neu 1968, 145; Laroche 1971.

²See the etymological dictionaries, and among others, Mayrhofer 1964, s. v. *sahas*-; Feist 1939, Lehmann 1986, s.v. *sigis*; Chantraine 1968, s. v. *ἔχω*.

consequently implies a warlike connotation transferred on the root itself: sk *sáhas-* "strength, power", *SAH-* (*sáhate*) "to be victorious, to defeat", *sakṣána-* "victorious", *sáhuri-* "victorious", etc.; av. *haz-* "to gain, to win, to seize", *hazah-* "strength, fierceness, plundering", etc.; got. *sigis* "victory", v.h.a. *sigi* "victory", *sigirōn* "to win", *Sigur-mār*, *Sigi-merus*, *Segi-mundus*, etc.

On the other hand, the second group is characterized by the complete lack of war connotation : v.irl. *hy* "brave, rash" (?), *haeddel*, *haer* "obstinate, insistent", *haeru* "affirm, assert", *hael* "hearty, generous", *hoel* "nail, rudder"; m.bret. *haezl*, n.bret. *héal* "short sleeves" (ἔχέτλη), and above all in the numerous derivatives in Greek : ἔχω "to hold", ἔχυρός et ὄχυρός "reliable, strong, solid", first term of compounds in ἐξέε-, second term in -εχῆς, -οχος, etc.

Let us right away make the assumption that the root derivatives can be explained in an unitary way from the Indo-European root, without being absolutely necessary to assign *one fundamental* meaning to it. In this way, we will set limits to linguistic reconstruction based upon the comparative method: why, indeed, should we assign to this root a connotation which seems to be attested by a part of the derivatives only, if not because these are in their majority Indo-Iranian and even Vedic, and that the latter is still often a "norm" as regards comparative and reconstructive linguistics. One could as well wonder about the principle according to which reconstruction should inevitably result in *one prototype* characterized by a sole fundamental sense and, in this case, representative of only a part of the derivatives³.

This is why, instead of making the assumption that derivatives should refer to an unique and fundamental meaning, it seems possible to explain this apparently semantic difference between the two groups by assuming, with Dumézil, that they imply the notion of *dominium*⁴. Indeed, if that notion of *dominium* seems well established for the Indo-European root, that of domination *in a battlefight* is quite less assured.

Consequently, we could assume a general meaning with aoristical value "to take hold off, grab, seize" and conceive that the warlike connotation in the Indo-Iranian and Germanic

³The predominance assigned to a "norm" can paradoxically raise difficulty in the reconstruction process: see Reichler-Béguelin 1986, 230.

⁴For Dumézil 1948, 106-109, the sanskrit *sáhas-* should first of all express a superiority relationship and develop in the meaning of "victory".

derivatives could be a specific development of those languages, connotation induced by the context⁵.

The second point of view, specifically Hittite, concerns the text of KBo X 2 which tells the campaigns of the Hittite king, but also the Akkadian version of these annals (KBo X 1). The Akkadian version is probably the original upon which the Hittite version is based, although it seems difficult to make a definitive choice between the opinions and the authors have different positions⁶.

Some authors agree to understand Hittite *sakuriya-* according to its Akkadian correspondent in the text, *šapāku*, assigning to the Hittite verb the meaning "to send somebody sprawling, crush, overwhelm, throw down". In this way, Goetze⁷ emphasizes that Hittite *sakuriya-* would clearly correspond to the Akkadian *šapāku* and mean "to send somebody sprawling, niederstrecken". Likewise, Imparati⁸ brings out a semantic correspondance between the two terms and suggests a meaning "sopraffare". Generally speaking, the meaning assigned to the Hittite verb clearly refers to the war connotation assigned to the Indo-European root⁹.

The verb *šapāku* appears several times in the Akkadian version and in particular twice in the extract which is compared with the Hittite version :

KBo X 1 31-36

31. *a-na ba-la-[a]t <a-na>* URU *Za-ru-un-ti al-lik-ma* URU *Za-ru-un-ti ú-ḫal-liq-šu*
 32. *a-na* URU *Ḫa-aš-šu al-lik-ma a-na pa-ni-šu it-ta-zi-iz-zu ù ERIM* MES URU *Ḫa-la-ap*
 33. *it-ti-šu-um-ma i-na* HUR.SAG *A-tá-lu-ur da-an-ta-šu-nu a-du-uk*
 34. *i-na u₄-ma-ti-ma ir-ti* [I]D *Pu-ra-an ki-i-ma UR.MAJI I.UGAL GAL i-te-ti-iq*
 35. URU *Ḫa-aš-šu-wa ki-i-ma UR.MAJI [i]-na ri-it-ti-šu iš-ta-pá-ak-šu ep-ra-am*
 36. *a-na mu-ḫi-šu iš-ta-pá-ak-šu ù ma-ak-kur-šu* URU *KÛ.BABBAR-ti um-tá-al-li*

"The next year, I went to the city of Zarunti and I destroyed the city of Zarunti. I went to the city of Ḫaššu and they stood in front of me and the army of the city of Ḫalap was

⁵See, for the Greek derivatives *ἔχω*, *σχέτλιος*, *Ἐκτωρ*, Vanséveren 1996; 1998 (and also "Hector ou la recherche du guerrier indo-européen", to be published in *Modèles linguistiques et idéologies*).

⁶See Houwink ten Cate 1983, with bibliography.

⁷Goetze 1968, 20.

⁸Imparati 1965, 65.

⁹"Überwältigen" : see Carruba 1966, 53; Riemschneider 1970; Neu 1996 following Oettinger 1992, 10, and also Oettinger 1979, 351 and note 193.

with them. In the Atalur mountain I defeated them. In the following days, the great king, like a lion crossed the Puran river, the city of Ḫaššu like a lion with its claws *ištapakšu*, he strew dust over it and with its treasures, he filled the city of Ḫatti”.

The Hittite version presents with some differences :

KBo X 2 recto II 11-20

11. MU.KAM-an-ni-ma I-NA KUR UR[U Za-ru-na pa-a-un]
12. nu URU Za-ru-na-an ḫar-ni[-i] n-ku-un nu I-NA UR[U Ḫa-aš-šu-wa]
13. pa-a-un nu-mu LÚ MES[URU] Ḫa-aš-šu-wa za-al-ḫi-ia
14. me-na-al-ḫa-an[da ú-e]-ir ERÍN MES-ia-aš-ma-aš
15. ŠA KUR URU [Ḫal-pa šar-di]-an-ni kat-ta-an e-eš-ta
16. na-aš-mu [MĒ-ia] ú-it na-an ḫu-ul-li-i[a-nu-un]
17. nu kap-p[u]-wa-an-da<aš> UD.KAM^{HLA}-aš^{ID} Pu-u-ru-n[a-an]
18. zi-iḫ-ḫu[-un] nu KUR URU Ḫa-aš-šu-wa UR.MAḪ GIM-an
19. GĪR^{HLA}-i[t a] r-ḫa ša-ak-ku-ri-ia-nu-un
20. nu A[ma-a] ḫa-an wa-al-ḫu-un

“The next year I went to the city of Zaruna and I destroyed the city of Zaruna. And I went to the city of Ḫaššuwa and the people of Ḫaššuwa came to fight against me and the army of the city of Ḫalpa was for helping (them), and there was a battle against me and I fought. Within a few days, I crossed the Puruna river and the city of Ḫaššuwa like a lion with its claws *sakuriyanun* ... and I strucked.”

First I wish to emphasize that although speaking of bilingual texts, there is no matter of translation in the modern sense of the word. Indeed, as it is revealed from the quoted extract, several differences characterized the two version : these do not correspond to each other literally.

The Hittite version is entirely at the first person of the singular whilst the Akkadian one presents a change of person. There are several differences between the two versions : in the Akkadian text there are mentions of the place of the battle and of the victory against the people of Ḫaššuwa helped by those of Ḫalpa, whilst the Hittite one mentions only a battle; the Akkadian version has two comparisons with a lion, and makes references of LUGAL GAL “great king”; the fate reserved to the city of Ḫaššuwa is detailed (the city is razed to the ground, as emphasizes the expression *ep-ra-am a-na mu-ḫi-šu iš-la-pá-ak-šu*). These first elements do allow questioning on an exact semantic correspondence between *šapāku* and *sakuriya*.

The primary meaning of the Akkadian *šapāku* is “to heap

up, pile up, construct”, for levees and earthworks, stocks of grains and supplies. It is employed for irrigations purposes, dikes, for military purposes : fortifications and siege¹⁰. It is constructed with a direct object of the “earth” (*epram*, *epērī šapāku* “to construct an earthwork”).

In this extract *šapāku* occurs twice, in two coordinate clauses with similar but inversed grammatical structure, and with a different meaning : ^{URU}*Ha-aš-šu-wa ki-i-ma UR.MAḪ [i]-na ri-it-ti-šu iš-ta-pá-ak-šu ep-ra-am a-na mu-ḫi-šu iš-ta-pá-ak-šu*. The last clause *ep-ra-am a-na mu-ḫi-šu iš-ta-pá-ak-šu* “earth on it he heaped up” does not create any difficulty, the construction and the meaning of the verb being absolutely clear. It concerns the common construction *epram šapāku ina + name of a city* “to heap up earth on a city”, which means that the city is razed to the ground.

On the other hand, the first clause, ^{URU}*Ha-aš-šu-wa ki-i-ma UR.MAḪ [i]-na ri-it-ti-šu iš-ta-pá-ak-šu*, poses some problems with regard on the syntactic level. Indeed, the verb construction seems inversed: in this case, the direct object is the city of Ḫaššuwa, and the expression *[i]-na ri-it-ti-šu* can be understood as equivalent to an instrumental (cf. hitt. *GĪR^{HIA}-i/t*).

The suggested image seems to be that of a lion covering the city with its claws. We could so understand the expression *ina rittišu šapāku* as “to cover with claws”¹¹. I must also emphasize that the dictionary¹² do assign the meaning “to send somebody sprawling” to the entire expression *ina rittišu šapāku*, but not to the sole verb *šapāku*.

Apart from the above mentioned comments, the investigation on the Akkadian verb permits us to reconsider the question of an exact semantic correspondance between *šapāku* and *sakuriya-* : indeed, if there were to be a correspondance, it should not be between *šapāku* and *sakuriya-*, but between one or more Hittite words and the expression *ina rittišu šapāku*.

The assumption made about the Indo-European root implying the notion of dominium with an aoristic value “to take hold on, to seize” allows also underlying the different components of the Hittite sentence *KUR^{URU} Ha-aš-šu-wa UR.MAḪ GIM-an GĪR^{HIA}-i[t a] r-ḫa ša-ak-ku-ri-ia-nu-un*. The Hittite verb is here with an adverb *arḫa* “away” which is

¹⁰See CAD, s. v. *šapāku*.

¹¹This expression seems unique.

¹²See Von Soden and CAD s. v. *šapāku*.

generally associated to a motion verb, and does not seem to modify the sense of the verb in this case. The name of the foot occurs also in instrumental, referring to the comparison UR.MA GIM-*an*. It seems more likely to understand this sentence literally, according to the meaning of the root : "the city of Haššuwa like a lion with its claws I grabed"¹³.

Where the Akkadian version specified that the great king covered the city like a lion with its claws and heaped up earth on it, the Hittite version mentions only that the king, like a lion with its claws seized the city. The suggested images are quite different although the true result for the city was probably identical.

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¹³The mentions of the Hittite verb in treaties do not provide element against this assumption : indeed, the context is often incomplete and difficult to determine. The meaning "to seize, to grab" could be justified, for example, in KBo XIII 34 Rs IV 6-9 *ták-ku SAL-za ha-a-ši nu-u š-ši GEŠTU^{H1A}. ŠU] pár-ši-ni-ši ki-it-ta-r[i] nu-za KUR-an-za aš-šu-ul a[n-da? da-la?]-i na-at ar-ḫa ša-ak-ku-r[i-ta-at-t]a-r[i?]* "if a woman gives birth and (that) her ears are on the cheeks, the land will leave the good fortune et it will be seized".

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