

About the Mitanni-Aryan Gods

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A number of Indo-Aryan sounding words have been identified in the cuneiform documents of the Mitanni kingdom (1500-1200 BCE). In addition to nouns and adjectives with parallels in Sanskrit this Hurrian-speaking kingdom had kings with Indo-Aryan names and two documents even list the main gods of the Indian pantheon. The article analyzes and tries to explain the phonetic differences between the Indian and the Mitanni Aryan gods. The ending *-ššil* which has not received a satisfactory explanation so far is accounted for as a Hurrian attempt at rendering the Indo-Aryan dual with Hurrian lexical material: *-ššini-lla* 'the two of them'. An Indo-Aryan etymology is proposed for the word *Mitanni* itself on the basis of Sanskrit *mith* 'to unite'.

As Thieme (1960:301a) once assessed:

"The discovery of [Indo-]¹ 'Aryan' looking names of Mitanni² princes on cuneiform documents in Akkadian from the second half of the second millenium B.C. (Chiefly tablets from Boğazköy and El-Amarna), several doubtlessly [Indo-] Aryan words in Kikkuli's treatise in Hittite on horse training³ (numerals: *aika*⁴ 'one', *tera*⁵

¹The first paragraph of this article actually does not mention [Indo]- because Thieme left open the issue of determining whether 'Aryan' refers to 'Proto-Aryan' [Proto-Indo-Iranian] or to 'Indo-Aryan'. Cf. footnote 7 in Thieme (1960:302a).

²These Indo-Aryan-sounding person names can be found outside the Mitanni Kingdom as well, in Palestine for example.

³This manual, written ca. 1345 BC by a Mitanni horse-trainer named *Kikkuli*, contains 1080 lines on four tablets. It begins with the words: 'Thus speaks Kikkuli, master horse-trainer of the land of Mitanni'. This name bears a striking and intriguing similarity with English *colt* 'a one-to-four-year-old foal', Swedish (dialectal) *kult*, *kulter*, *kulting* 'foal, young man', Danish *kuld* 'brood'. The name *Kikkuli* may be a reduplicated form: **kul-kul-* or **ki-kul-*. This word, also present in Skrt *kiśora* 'foal' < **kiḱeul-* is most probably a wanderwort: Germanic **kult*, Indo-Aryan **kiśora* and Turkic **qulun* 'foal'. In all cases, the correspondence : Germanic **k* ~ Indo-Aryan **ḱ* cannot be inherited. The name *Kikkuli* was once analyzed as Hurrian by Ungnad, an idea that Gelb (1944:54) legitimately rejects.

‘three’, *panza-* ‘five’, *satta-*⁶ ‘seven’, *na[ua]-*⁷ ‘nine’ ; appellatives: *uartana-*⁸ ‘circuit, course [in which horses move when being trained],’ *ašua*⁹ ‘horse’), and finally, a series of names of [Indo]-Aryan divinities on a Mitanni-Hatti and a Hatti-Mitanni treaty (14th century B.C.) poses a number of problems that have been repeatedly discussed, since the beginning of the [XXth] century.”

It can be added that some other adjectives have been found in a document in Yurgan Tepe, as described in Mayrhofer (1966:17): *babru* and *pabru-nni* (cf. Skrt *babhrú-* ‘brown’), *parita* (cf. Skrt *palitá-* ‘grey’) and *pinkara* (cf. Skrt *piṅgalá-* ‘red’). One of the most fascinating sections of the Mitanni Aryan documentation is the mention of five major Indo-Aryan deities: *Mitra*, *Varuṇa*, *Indra* and the *Nāsatyā*, precisely in that Dumezilian order:

“If asked to cite them in their most common nominative forms, no Vedologist could possibly hesitate to put down the series: *Mitrā-Varuṇā, Indraḥ, Nāsatyā*.
If further asked to name a Rigvedic verse in which these names appear side by side and in this order, he would have to quote RV 10.125.1bc:

⁴This item is unmistakably Indo-Aryan, as Proto-Iranian is *aiya. It can be noted that Indo-Aryan *aika is very different from the “standard” Indo-European *oinos, found in most other branches, and has an intriguing similarity with Ugric words, like Vogul-Mansi: Middle Losva, Jukonda *äk*, Tavda *ux*, *ük*, Pelymka *äk*, Sosva *akwa*. Cf. the *Uralisches etymologisches Wörterbuch*: 81. It can be noted that Mitanni Aryan had not yet undergone the change *-ai-* > skrt *-e-*: skrt *eka* ‘one’ but Mitanni Aryan *aika*. For that matter, Mitanni Aryan predates the oldest Indo-Aryan attestations.

⁵This word seems to be tainted by the Hittite word as Skrt is *tri-*.

⁶This item has a “Prakritic” outlook but this chance coincidence is most probably the result of the phonotactical impossibility of the sequence **/p-t/ in the Hurrian language itself. The suffix written *-pti-* in Wegner (2007:57) is in our opinion better read *-wti-*: “in *na=i=pti* ‘Weide’ zu *nav-* ‘weiden’ (Wilhelm, Fs Haas, 2001, 452).” The reading *-pt-* in cuneiform <na-ib-ti> appears highly dubious when compared to the stem of the verb: <na-wə>. <na-ib-ti> is to be read *[naiwti].

⁷The actual form “*na-uartanna* ist Haplologie für **naua-uartanna*” as described by Mayrhofer (1966:16).

⁸Quite curiously written by Thieme with *-tt-* and only one *-n-*.

⁹The word is actually not directly attested but can be inferred from *aššuššanni* ‘horse-trainer’. Here again, Mitanni Aryan sides with Indo-Aryan *ašua and not with Iranian *asp.

aham mitrā-varuṇā ubhā bibharmi
aham indrāgni aham aśvinā ubhā ¹⁰

A major discrepancy between the Vedic and the Mitanni Aryan versions is the substitution of *Aśvinā* by their other name *Nāsatyā*. In this article, we will reexamine the quotations of the Mitanni Aryan deities in the Mitanni-Ḫatti treaties and will refine a previous proposal to the Hurrian suffix *-ššil*, which has remained quite unexplained so far.

The Mitanni Aryan deities are listed twice: in the Mitanni-Ḫatti treaty (KBo I 3) and the Ḫatti-Mitanni treaty (KBo I 1 and its duplicates) between Šattiwaza of Mitanni and Šuppiluliuma, the Hittite king. The former will be first dealt with from KBo 3 Vo 23 to Vo 27 (Cf. CTH 52.1 §.11).

KBo I 3 Vo 23
 [Cuneiform] ^DU AN ù KI ^DXXX [ù] ^DUTU ^DXXX ša
^{URU}KASKAL-ni AN ù KI ^DU EN kùr-ri-in-[ni] [^U]^{URU}Ka-ḫat
^DU EN ^{URU}Û-ḫu-uš-ma-a-ni
 [Transliteration] ^DU *šamē u eršeti* ^DXXX u ^DUTU ^DXXX *ša*
^{URU}*Ḫarrāni šamū u eršetu* ^DU *bēl kurrinni* ^{URU}*Kaḫat* ^DU *bēl*
^{URU}*Uḫušmāni*

This section is recognizably Akkadian with a number of sumerograms, especially thanks to the particle *ša*. The translation is rather straightforward:

- ^DU *šamē u eršeti*¹¹ ‘the God of the sky and of the earth’
- ^DXXX¹² u ^DUTU ‘the Moon-God and the Sun-God’
- ^DXXX *ša*¹³ ^{URU}*Ḫarrāni šamū u eršetu* ‘the Moon-God who [is on] the earth and sky of the land of Harran’
- ^DU *bēl kurrinni* ^{URU}*Kaḫat* ‘the God Master of the kurrinnu¹⁴ of the land of Kahat’
- ^DU EN ^{URU}Û-ḫu-uš-ma-a-ni ‘the God King of the land of Uhušmān’

¹⁰ Cf. Thieme (1960:303a) who credits the parallel to Dumézil, although he does not adhere to Dumézil’s theories.

¹¹ Both nouns with Akkadian Genitive -i.

¹² Unreadable but quite reasonably translatable as ‘Moon-God’ in this context.

¹³ Relative pronoun.

¹⁴ A connection with Akkadian *kenū* ‘garden, orchard’ does not seem convincing. In this religious context, it is interesting to note that <kùr-ri-in-[ni]> is phonetically rather close to Hurrian *ḫawurni* <ḫa-wə-ur-ni>, Ugaritic script [ḫ w r n], and to Urartian <qiuraanee> ‘sky’.

KBo I 3 Vo 23-24

[Cuneiform] ^DÉ.A EN *ḫa-sī-sī*¹⁵ // ^DSUMUQAN [ša]¹⁶

^DKūr-dá ^DA-nu ù An-tu₄ ^DEN.LÍL ù ^DNIN.LÍL

[Transliteration] ^DÉ.A *bēl ḫasīsi* ^DSumuqan [ša] ^DKurda

^DAnu u ^(D)Antu ^DEN.LÍL u ^DNIN.LÍL

This section is grammatically Akkadian but with Sumerian words and gods.

- ^DÉ.A *bēl*¹⁷ *ḫasīsi* ‘Ea Lord of wisdom’
- ^DSumuqan [ša] ^DKurda ‘Sumuqan¹⁸ who is Kurda (?)’
- ^DAnu u ^(D)Antu ‘the Sky-god and Sky-goddess’
- ^DEN.LÍL u ^DNIN.LÍL ‘the King and Queen of the Earth’

It can be noted that the traditional transliteration of EN as being Akkadian *bēl*, as in Bezold (1926) for example, is quite questionable. This transliteration seriously conflicts with some Hurrian words of obvious Akkadian origin:

- EN *ḫa-sī-sī* ~ Akkadian [xx]² *ḫasīsi* ~ Hurrian *eni-ḫazizi*¹⁹
‘god of intelligence’
- EN *umāši* ~ Akkadian [xx]² *umāši*²⁰ ~ Hurrian *en-umašši*²¹
‘god of strength’

It seems quite impossible to believe that Hurrian can have Akkadian compounds like *eni-ḫazizi* and *en-umašši*, if Akkadian itself were ***bēl-ḫasīsi* and ***bēl-umāši*. Hurrian clearly indicates that the Sumerogram EN is to be read [en-] not [bēl-] in Akkadian as well. These compounds cannot be Hurrian-made: were it the case, one would expect the Genitive case-marker *-wi* and it can be further added that these compounds display the Akkadian word order: a native Hurrian syntagm would be *ḫazizi-wi eni*. Such compounds as *eni-ḫazizi* and *en-*

¹⁵The decalque *eni-ḫazizi* also exists in Hurrian as discussed below.

¹⁶In a variant of the text.

¹⁷[sic]. See below in the article an analysis of this reading *bēl*.

¹⁸Or *Laḫar* who is the Sumerian name of the god of herdsmen.

¹⁹Cf. Laroche (1980:100) “Emprunt à l’akk. *ḫasīsu*” and the analysis of RS 24.261 Vo 5 in Laroche (1968:499-504). This word is written [i n ḫ z z y] in Ugaritic script. The Semitic root is $\sqrt{ḫ s s}$, hence Akkadian *hassu* ‘intelligent, wise’, *ḫasāsu* ‘to heed a deity, to be pious; to be intelligent, understanding; to remember; etc.’

²⁰Means ‘strength’.

²¹Cf. Laroche (1980:82) who leaves the word untranslated. Written [i n m ṭ y] in Ugaritic script in RS 24.261 Vo 5.

umašši are lexically and syntactically Akkadian-made.

The order in the invocations of deities is telling: Akkadian first, Sumerian second, Mitanni Aryan next, Hurrian last. This implicit textual hierarchy actually supports the idea that Mitanni Aryan was in a position of socio-cultural superior prestige when compared to Hurrian in the eyes of Hurrian people themselves, who made up the majority of the inhabitants of the Mitanni Kingdom.

KBo I 3 Vo 24
 [Cuneiform] ^{D.MES}Mi-it-ra-aš-ši-il ^{D.MES}A-ru-na-aš-ši-il ^DIn-da-
 ra ^{D.MES}Na-ša-at-ti-ya-an-na
 [Transliteration] ^{D.MES}*Mitraššil* ^{D.MES}*Arunaššil* ^D*Indara*
^{D.MES}*Našattiyanna*

This paragraph is the most intriguing and controversial section. As evidenced by the Mitanni Letter and numerous other Hurrian texts, the sumerogram ^{D.MES} does not have any *lexical* significance and stands for a *semantic* determinative, emphasizing a ‘Plural’ meaning. Quite obviously <-n-na> is the Hurrian ‘Definite Article’ in the ‘Plural’ form. Several remarks can be made on the names of the deities:

- *Našattiya* does not display any trace of the long vowels of *Nāsatyā*, as is the case for *tvešā-rathā* or *ṛta-dhāma* attested as <du-uš-rat-ta-a> or <ar-ta-ta-a-maš> with plene writing in the Mitanni Letter. It can also be noted that the sibilant in *Našattiya* is simple hence normally voiced. The same phenomenon can be found in *ḥazizi* < Akkadian *ḥasīsi*: this word is written [ḥ z z y] in Ugaritic script as mentioned before. This voicing of the original /s/ in *[nazat(i)ya]²² is probably Hurrian-made and should most probably not be attributed to a peculiarity of Mitanni Aryan.
- *In-da-ra* could be a way of writing *Indra* but the other spelling *In-tar* in KBo I 1 Vo 56 seems to indicate that this is indeed to be read *[indar(a)] not *Indra*. This indicates a peculiarity of Mitanni Aryan when it comes to the name of *Indra* in the original language.
- *Mitra* or quite probably *[midra] is closest to the original name *Mitra*, a personified abstraction, which also means ‘contract’ in both Vedic and Avestic (as

²²It is unclear whether the -i of *Našattiya* is an artefact of the cuneiform graphic system or a phonetic reality.

miṭra), as is well-known since Meillet showed it in 1907.

- *Aruna* has an obvious similarity and dissimilarity to *Varuṇa*, which is the source of a quite rich amount of speculations. As can be expected, the rough pattern of cuneiform script cannot tell /ṛ/ from /n/. But there is no particular reason why Hurrian should have any trouble in saying or writing *Wa-ru-na*. Among the proposed “guesswork” in Thieme (1960:303b-304a) to explain the difference between *Aruna* and the expected *Waruna*: (1) a scribal typo, (2) some interferences with Hittite *aruna* ‘sea’, (3) “the compound *Mitrā-Varuṇā* was divided incorrectly” as **Mitrāu-Aruna*. Scribal mistakes are not infrequent: for example, <ta-a-ki-ma-a-an> is a misspelling of <ta-a-an-ki-ma-a-an>, with a sign missing, as noted in Speiser (1941:57): “A different problem is posed by instances of amissible *n* before *k* and *t*; e.g., *ta-a-ki-ma-a-an* Mit. IV 58: *ta-a-an-ki-ma-a-an* Ibid. 60 and *ta-a-an-ki* Ibid. 78.” The second explanation requires a knowledge of Indo-Aryan religion, which seems quite extra-ordinary among Hittite and Hurrian scribes or ruling classes, all the more so as the connections of *Varuṇa* with the sea seem to be rather late in the development of Indo-Aryan religion. The third explanation is only half convincing as *Varuna* is written *U-ru-wa-na* in the other document. If the name of *Varuṇa* were indeed *Aruna* in Mitanni Aryan, then one would expect some consistency. In our opinion, it is quite probable that *Aruna* is just a misspelling (or maybe a misreading as cuneiform is seldom straightforward). The other attestation *U-ru-wa-na* is discussed below.

The major issue about this section is the “suffix” <-š-šil>. This is quite obviously not Akkadian nor is there any attestation of this “suffix” in the rest of Hurrian documents. It is not Indo-Aryan nor Indo-Iranian either. One explanation is based on the similarity of -ššil with the Hurrian abstract suffix -šši²³. In theory, this is structurally possible: *allai* ‘lady, queen’ > *allašši* ‘queenhood, the fact of being or becoming a queen’²⁴, *šarri* ‘king’ > *šarraši* ‘kingship, throne’²⁵. The major stumbling

²³ Cf. Wegner (2007:57).

²⁴ Cf. Laroche (1980:44).

²⁵ Cf. Laroche (1980:216). Cf. *šerše* ‘throne’ as well.

block is semantic: what would *Mitrahood and *Varunahood mean? How come that these abstract derivatives are being deified and used in the very place where the actual gods Mitra and Varuṇa are expected? It can be noted that there is no instance of an abstract derivative *-šši* being either deified or even used in the plural in the other Hurrian documents. This explanation is semantically implausible and, worse, such a construction is completely un-heard-of in Hurrian. Another explanation, first proposed by Friedrich and mentioned by Thieme (1960:305a), is to compare the “suffix” *-ššil* with the Hurrian word ‘two’ *šini*. This explanation is semantically coherent with the Indo-Aryan dual. The objection of Thieme (1960:305a) is that we should expect the same dual for *Našattiya* and we do not have ***Našattiyaššil*. RV 10.125.1bc has indeed *mitrā-varuṇā ubhā* and *aśvinā ubhā* but the fact is KBo I 3 Vo 24 has ^{D.MES}*Mitraššil* ^{D.MES}*Arunaššil* but ^{D.MES}*Našattiyanna*. This minor objection notwithstanding, it remains to be understood how the word *šini* ‘two’ could possibly become *-ššil*. This “suffix” is to be analyzed as being the fusion of *-šini* with the pronoun *-lla* ‘they, them’. The absence of final vowels is not infrequent in Hurrian and is well attested in Person names in Nuzi for example: *Ari-šen* for **Ari-šenni*. It is hard to determine what kind of dialectal, formal or historical significance this phenomenon may have. The assimilation of consonants like *-n-*, *-l-* or *-r-* is regular, as is extensively shown by the Definite Article *-ni* ‘the’ in the Absolute case: **ḥawuri-ni* > *ḥawurri* ‘the sky’. For that matter, a compound like **šini-lla* would regularly become *ši-lla* ‘the(m) two’ or *šil* without the final vowel. That this pronoun *-lla* can be suffixed to numbers is exemplified by *tumni-lla* ‘the(m) four’²⁶. It can also be used as a kind of Plural marker, as described in Wegner (2007:76): “Die 3. Pers. Pl. *-lla* kann darüber hinaus auch als ein allgemeiner Pluralanzeiger verwendet werden.” In other words, this “suffix” *-ššil* is actually two words and means ‘the(m) two, both of them’ and is the exact and regular translation of the Indo-Aryan dual. ^{D.MES}*Mitraššil* ^{D.MES}*Arunaššil* ^D*Indara* ^{D.MES}*Našattiyanna* easily and regularly translates as ‘both Mitra and Varuṇa, Indra and the Nasatya’.

KBo I 3 Vo 25-26

²⁶ Cf. Wegner (2007:77) and Laroche (1980:271).

[Cuneiform] ^DKASKAL.KUR ^DŠa-ma-an-mi-nu-ḫé ^DU
 EN ^{URU}Wa-šug-ga-an-ni ^DU EN ^{URU}ka-ma-ri-bi ^{URU}Ir-ri-
 de₄ ^DNa-bar-bi ^DŠu-ru-ḫi ^DIŠTAR ^DIŠTAR MUL // ^DŠa-
 la ^DNIN.É.GAL ^DNIN a-ia-ak-ki ^DIš-ḫa-ra ^DPár-da-a-ḫi
^{URU}Šu-u-da

[Transliteration] ^DKASKAL.KUR ^DŠamanminuḫe ^DU
 bēl ^{URU}Waššukkanni ^DU bēl ^{>URU<}kamaribi ^{URU}Irride
^DNabarbi ^DŠurūḫi ^DIŠTAR ^DIŠTAR kakkabi ^DŠala
^DNIN.É.GAL ^DBēlet ayakki ^DIšḫara ^DPardāḫi ^{URU}Šūda

This sentence seems to contain Hurrian words but the word order is not really natural as many genitival determinatives are postposed in the Akkadian way. The segmentation is:

- ^DKASKAL.KUR²⁷ ^DŠamanminuḫe²⁸ ^DU ‘the God of the opulent land of Harrān’
- EN ^{URU}Waššukkanni ‘lord of Waššukkanni’
- ^DU EN ^{>URU<}kamaribi ^{URU}Ir-ri-de₄ ‘the God Lord of the land of Irridu²⁹ of Kumarbi (?)’
- ^DNabarbi ^DŠurūḫi³⁰ ^DIŠTAR ‘Nabarbi the gigantic Šauška³¹
- ^DIŠTAR MUL ‘the Šauška of stars³²
- ^DŠa-la ^DNIN.É.GAL ‘daughter of the Queen’
- ^DNIN a-ia-ak-ki³³ ‘the Queen of everywhere’
- ^DIš-ḫa-ra ^DPár-da-a-ḫi³⁴ ^{URU}Šu-u-da ‘Išḫara of the land Šūda Pardahi’

²⁷ According to line 186 A1 Rs. 23', this refers to the town Harran.

²⁸ A Hurrian ethnonymic adjective with suffix *-hi*. The stem is Akkadian: *šaman* ‘oil, fat’. It can be noted that the adjectives precede the noun in the regular Hurrian order: ^DŠamanminuḫe ^DU and ^DPár-da-a-ḫi ^{URU}Šu-u-da.

²⁹ A town of the Mitanni Kingdom in Hurrian territory.

³⁰ Adapted from Akkadian *šurruḫu* ‘gigantic’.

³¹ Note that Šauška is already a derivative of the adjective *šaw- ‘great’.

³² Note that it has often been claimed that the goddess ^DIŠTAR bears connections with PIE *H₂ster ‘star’. ^DIŠTAR MUL is the ‘star-goddess of stars’.

³³ This word is an Akkadian word *ayakku*.

³⁴ This should be an ethnonymic adjective referring to the land of Šūda.

KBo I 3 Vo 26

[Cuneiform] 𒄩UR.SAG^{MES} 𒀭ID^{MES} 𒄩PÚ^{MES} 𒀭DINGIR^{MES} 𒍪ša
AN 𒄩KI

[Transliteration] *šadū nārātu u būrātu ilānu ša šamē u eršeti*

This looks like an Akkadian sentence even though all major words are written in sumerograms: ‘Mountains, rivers and sources, the Gods who [are in] the sky and [on] the earth’.

KBo I 3 Vo 27

[Cuneiform] 𒍪šum-ma a-na-ku ^mŠat³⁵-ti-ú-a-za
DUMU.LUGAL 𒄩DUMU^{MES} 𒄩Hur-ri a-ma-te^{MES} 𒍪ša ri-ik-
sī, an-ni-i 𒄩šma-mi-ti la ni-na-ša-ar

[Transliteration] *šumma anāku^m Šattiwaza mār šarri u mārū
Hurri amāte ša riksi annī u ša mamīti lā ninaššar*

‘If I, Šattiwaza, son of a king, and the sons of the Hurrian forbears, were not to respect the words of that treaty, [...]’

The rest of the document is in Akkadian but the words <𒄩Hur-ri a-ma-te^{MES}> are Hurrian: ‘the Hurrian forbears’. It can also be noted that:

- The king's name is written *šatti-ú-aza* and not **šattiwaza*. In theory, <-ú-a-> in <^mŠat-ti-ú-a-za> contrasts with <wa-> attested in <^{URU}Wa-šug-ga-an-ni>. This may be a device to write the long -ā- of *satya-vāc*.
- The Mitannian king refers to his Hurrian subjects as the ‘sons of the Hurrian forbears’ but to himself as ‘son of a king’. It is unclear whether he includes himself within the ‘sons of the Hurrian forbears’. The text actually creates a kind of chiasmus between himself and the ‘sons of the Hurrian forbears’.

³⁵This sign actually has three phonetic values: “das erste Zeichen dieses Namens hatte neben *mat* auch die Werte *kur* und *šat*, und *Kurtiyaza* ist die wahrscheinlichste Lautform.” in Mayrhofer (1966:38). Mayrhofer compares this alternative reading with Vedic *gūrta-vacas* ‘speaking agreeably’ and *gūrta* ‘praise’ but this does not seem convincing. The name seems to be *satya-vāc* ‘true speech, who speaks the truth’, attested as a Person name. Cf. Monnier-Williams: 1136b. Thieme (1960) reads it as *Mattiwaza* but does not provide any translation.

The other attestation of the Mitanni Aryan gods is:

KBo I 1 Vo 55-56
 [Cuneiform] ^{D.MES}Mi-it-ra-aš-ši-il/-el ^{D.MES}Ú-ru-wa-na-aš-ši-il
^DIn-tar ^{D.MES}Na-ša-a[t-ti-ya-a]n-na
 [Transliteration] ^{D.MES}Mitraššil ^{D.MES}Uruwanaššil ^DIndar
^{D.MES}Našattiyanna

This is not far from being exactly the same list as the preceding one. The most interesting feature is the name of *Varuṇa* who is called here *Uruwana*. There is a significant phonetic gap between *Varuṇa* and *Uruwana*. The first attestation of *Varuṇa* as *Aruna* can be accounted for as a kind of misspelling (or misreading) as explained before, but the second attestation as *Uruwana* definitely sounds like a different word. Hurrian does not accept initial *-l* and *-r* and all the rare words with these sounds as initial are loanwords. For example the Semitic god *Rešep* is attested as in *Iršap* with the addition of a prothetic vowel. If we hypothesize that *Uruwana* derives from a prototype **Ruwana*, then this name can be further analyzed as *(s)roṇa-Hno ‘the one in charge of flowing (waters)’ in coherence with the mythological function of *Varuṇa*, creator of the water-blocking monster, *Vṛtra*, that Indra is praised for killing. In that hypothesis *Varuṇa* is a metathesis of an older *Ruwana*.

Much energy has been spent to negate the obvious or to minimize the presence of an Indo-Aryan component in the Mitanni kingdom. It can be noted that the name of this kingdom typically bears a suffix *-nni*³⁶, which appears in Hurrian nouns³⁷ only with borrowed stems:

- *Mašrianni* ‘Egypt’
- *Wašukkanni* ‘the capital of the Mitanni Kingdom’³⁸
- *aššuššanni* ‘horse-trainer’ ~ Sanskrit *aśya* ‘horse’
- *aššuwanni*³⁹ ~ Sanskrit *aśva-ni* ‘horse-riding’
- *kadinni*⁴⁰ ~ Sanskrit *khādi* ‘bracelet, bangle’

³⁶Sometimes written with the ambiguous sign *-nnu/-nni*.

³⁷The suffix *-nni* is also attested in native Hurrian *adjectives*. For that matter, *pabrunni* (and *babru*) ~ Sanskrit *babhrú-* ‘brown’ or *parita-nni* ~ Sanskrit *palita* ‘grey’ cannot be put on the same footing as the nouns.

³⁸This place name is a compound that seems to include Sanskrit *vasu* ‘excellent’ and a second unclear element.

³⁹Cited in Mayhofer (1966:18) but left untranslated in Laroche (1980:59).

- *maninni* ~ Sanskrit *maṇi* ‘necklace’
- *maryanni*⁴¹ ~ Sanskrit *marya* ‘warrior, soldier’,
- *mištanni*⁴² ~ Sanskrit *mīdha* ‘financial compensation’ (< PII *mizdha- < PIE *mis-dho-⁴³),
- *ušrianni* ‘heir, prince’ ~ Sanskrit *uccair-* ‘high, above’,
uccair-gotra ‘high family or descent’

As regards the word *maganni* ‘gift’, be it from Akkadian or from Indo-Aryan *magha*, it bears the suffix *-nni* and is not native. The point is that there is no native Hurrian noun ending with *-nni*.

The logical consequence is that the word *Mitanni* or (arch.) *Maitanni*⁴⁴ itself is most probably a loanword, if not definitely a loanword. It is fascinating to compare this stem *maita* with the Indo-Aryan verb *mith* ‘to unite, pair, couple, meet (as friend or antagonist)’⁴⁵: ‘he unites’ *mēthati* < *máithati. The alternation between *Mitanni* and (arch.) *Maitanni* may originate in Indo-Aryan itself:

We also have the root in an extended version, *meit- (e.g. Lat *mūtō* ‘change’, Goth *maidjan* ‘exchange’, Latv *mietuôt* ‘exchange’, Skt *mēthati* ~ *mīthāti* [< *m(e)itH-] ‘exchanges’), which underlies the name of the Indo-Iranian *Mitra/Mithra*, the god in charge of contractual relationships. (Mallory-Adams 2006:272)

This is indeed a perfectly acceptable etymology⁴⁶ for such a political entity as the Mitanni kingdom: the ‘united kingdom’.

⁴⁰ Cited in Mayhofer (1966:18) but left untranslated in Laroche (1980:133).

⁴¹ Attested as <mar-ya-(an)-ni> or <ma-ri-ya-an-ni>. Cf. Laroche (1980:168).

⁴² It can be noted that this word is phonetically more archaic than Indo-Aryan as attested in India.

⁴³ Cf. Mallory-Adams (2006:274): “OE *meord* ‘reward, pay’, OCS *mīzda* ‘reward, wages’, Grk *mīsthós* ‘reward, wages’, Av *mīzda-* ‘reward, gift’, Skt *mīdhá-* ‘competition, contest, prize’.”

⁴⁴ <Ma-ite-ni> in Nuzi. Cf. Laroche (1980:171).

⁴⁵ Cf. Monnier-Williams: 816, 3.

⁴⁶ Previous proposals based on *Mitra* or the *Medes* are phonetically implausible.

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