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TRACES OF HATTIAN SYNTAX
IN SOME HITTITE RITUAL EXPRESSIONS?

It has been long now that scholars identified in the Hittite religious texts verbs with optional dative or accusative to indicate the recipient or beneficiary of the action (*eku-* / aku- "to drink", *šipant-* "to libate, offer", (*šer arḫa*) *waḫnu-* "to whirl").[1]

Puhvel was the first to suggest that sentences where the god is the direct object of the verb *eku-* are equal to the structures with *eku-* + divine name in dative and that both structures with *eku-* would mean "to drink to (the honor of)":[2]

ᵈUTU-*un ekuzi* (KUB 33.79 IV⁷ 12').
ANA ᵈIŠKUR *ekuzi* (KUB 34.77 obv⁷. 8').[3]

As concerns the verb *šipant-*, it was already Carter[4] who noticed that its indirect object referring to a deity to whom a sacrifice was offered could appear in dative as well as in accusative:

kedaš DINGIR.MEŠ-*aš šipanti* "He libates for these gods" (KUB 2.13 I 44).

LUGAL-*uš* … ᵈ*Ašgašepa* ᵈMUNUS.LUGAL ᵈ*Pirwan* … *šipanti* "The king libates … (for) Ašgašepa, "Queen' (and) Pirwa …" (KUB 2.13 IV 12-13).[5]

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1   See most recently Soysal 2008: 45ff., 56ff.; Goedegebuure 2008a: 67ff. (both with references to older literature). The issues considered in this article are to dealt with from different perspectives in my articles published in Georgian language: Tatišvili 1998: 92ff.; Tatišvili 2010a: 28ff.; Tatišvili 2010b: 492f.

2   Puhvel 1957: 31ff.

3   Soysal 2008: 48, 50; for more examples see ibid. 48ff.

4   Carter 1962: 449.

5   Ed. Klinger 1996: 548 (Cf. Goetze 1970:85: libate… to (god)…), 560 (Cf. Goetze 1970: 92: "treat a deity with a libation"). For more examples see Goetze 1970: 77ff.

Melchert further corroborated the assumptions on the equivalence of accusative and dative constructions of the verbs by pointing out analogical cases with the verb (šer arḫa) waḫnu-:

[MUŠEN]ḫaranan ERÍN.MEŠ-*ann-a* LUGAL-*aš* MUNUS.LUGAL-*ašš-a šeršemet waḫnumeni* "We whirl the eagle and (the figurines of) the troops over the king and queen" (KBo 17.1 II 20-21).

t-an [LÚ]AZU *IŠTU* MUŠEN *ḪARRI* [NA4]ḫuštit wetenazzi-ya waḫnuzi* "The physician "whirls" him (the king) with the ḫ. bird, with ḫušt- and with water" (IBoT 3.52, 3-5).[6]

Melchert even offered a formula to render the parallelism of the syntax of these three verbs in ritual contexts and an optional syntactic transformation:[7]

NP_1 (acc.) + NP_2 (dat.) + [NP_3 (inst.)] + *eku- / šipand-/ š. a. waḫnu-* ⇒
NP_2 (acc.) + NP_1 (instr.) + [NP_3 (inst.)] + *eku- / šipand-/ a. waḫnu-*

However, are there enough grounds to speak about a uniform syntactic rule in this case?

It has been observed that the distribution of the constructions with optional dative or accusative to indicate the recipient or beneficiary is not the same for these three verbs: *eku-*, unlike *šipant-* and *waḫnu-*, mostly takes accusative and very rarely dative.[8]

As concerns *eku-*, along with dative and accusative, we may also come across nominative structures:

15 DINGIR.MEŠ *ekuzzi* (// *ekuzi*) dMAḪ d*Gulšaš* GUNNI (// dGUNNI) dU.GUR *Ù* dU.GUR URU*Ḫāyaša* dEN.ZU MUL-i GE₆-*anza* d*Ḫašammiliš* dMUNUS.LUGAL Ḫareštaššiš Ḫilaššiš... (KBo 19.128 VI 17'-22' // IBoT 3.15 I 5'-7').[9]

In the case of *šipant-* and *waḫnu-*, the semantic equivalence of dative and accusative structures leaves no room for doubts and their translation is likewise unambiguous. As concerns *eku-*, the interrelationship between different structures and their respective meanings still remains disputable. There are several basic variants of translating or interpreting the phrase

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[6]   Melchert 1981: 247f.
[7]   Melchert 1981: 249.
[8]   Goedegebuure 2008a: 70.
[9]   Soysal 2008: 53; for other examples, see ibid., 51. The author notes that the forms with ending -š are incorrectly in nominative case; the use of the divine name in nominative "must be considered as simply a mistake and may have no morphological consequences" (op. cit. 54). However, it should be noted that the use of the nominative case is no less recurrent than of dative and can be likewise accounted for, which is attempted later in the article.

[d](GN) *eku-*: give to drink/ tränken,[10] drink to / toast[11] and "drink the god" with eucharistic connotation.[12]

The least disputable seems to be the Hattian origin of "drink the god".[13] Hence, following Soysal, I find it reasonable to seek solutions to the syntactic issues in question with the help of Hattian. According to the scholar, "...the divine name in the expression [d](GN) *aku-* / *eku-* with ending *-n* may have been originally constructed in the dative case under influence of Hattian. Since the Hattian dative marker *-n* is formally the same as the Hittite ending *-n* for the singular accusative, it is possible that the Hittites had adopted this cult expression in their language in a manner where the divine proper name would function as accusative. This use may have been transformed later into the real "Hittite" accusative in *-n*."[14]

Though the dative structures with *ANA* preposition are relatively rare than accusative, they are closer to the Hattian phrase that translates as: "drink to the god".

The use of several syntactic structures to render the same idea in Hittite can indeed be put down to an inaccurate borrowing of the Hattian formula. However, in my opinion, the error is more likely to stem from the unfamiliar structure of the Hattian language rather than from a confusion associated with the formal likeness of case forms.

The structure of Hattian language can be disputable;[15] however, the differences between Hittite and Hattian are obvious at the level of morphology (nominal and verbal) as well as syntax, and also cover the case system.[16] On the other hand, a contact between two languages most naturally suggests mutual influence. The Hattian influence on Hittite first of all can be seen in possessive genitive,[17] while the effects of interaction

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[10]   See e. g. Hrozný 1917: 85 n. 2; Otten 1958: 132.

[11]   See e. g. Puhvel 1984: 261ff.; Goedegebuure 2008: 67ff.; most recently Soysal 2010a: 344ff.

[12]   See, e. g. Forrer 1940: 124ff.; Friedrich 1952: 40; de Martino 2002: 120. In contrast, Kammenhuber (1991: 222ff.) interprets the action as libation, which initially was performed only by the king.

[13]   See e. g. Kammenhuber 1971: 152f.

[14]   Soysal 2008: 45, see also 55ff.

[15]   For example, some speak about the signs of ergativity in Hattian (Diakonoff 1967: 173; Schuster 1974: 106, n. 230; Taracha 1993: 292f., Taracha 1998: 15f.; Goedegebuure 2008b: 143 n. 15; Goedegebuure 2010: 949ff.), while others question it (see e. g. Kammenhuber 1969: 502, 543; Girbal 1986: 137ff.; Klinger 1994: 36ff.; cf. Soysal 2004: 37).

[16]   Soysal 2004: 184ff. For the Hattian case system see most recently Soysal 2010b: 1041ff.

[17]   For the Hattian influence on the Hittite syntax, see Kammenhuber 1962: 12ff., Kammenhuber 1969: 482ff., Soysal 2000: 114.

among the languages of Asia Minor include, for instance, the split ergative system in Hittite and other Anatolian languages.[18]

The explanation of the use of different syntactic variants in Hittite through the interference of a language having a different structure was compelled by my everyday practice. When studying the question, it may prove interesting to recall typical mistakes made by Georgian speaking individuals whose native language belongs to the Indo-European family, including Armenians, Ossetians, Russians, etc. residing in Georgia and European learners of Georgian. Moreover, the same mistakes can be observed in the speech of Georgians living in European countries. Despite their excellent command of Georgian, they may anyway have problems with subject and object markers, while Georgians may find challenging the usage of accusative in Russian, German, as well as in Ancient Greek, Latin or Hittite.

It should also be noted that I do not intend to touch the question of the genetic ties and/or encounters of Hattian with Georgian or any other Caucasian language, and share the opinion that the study is associated with considerable challenges.[19] Even the analysis of typological parallels requires special caution.[20] I only refer to Georgian to demonstrate the theoretical plausibility of the hypothesis offered below. While relevant examples could be sought in other languages as well, my choice of the Georgian can be explained by my deeper awareness of it, as compared to other languages.

In Georgian, as well as in other Kartvelian languages, subject and object case forms vary according to the tense form of a respective transitive verb. In the first series (= the Present series), the subjective marker is the same for transitive and intransitive verbs, while direct object appears in dative instead of accusative, which is not present in Georgian at all. For example: მეფე (mepe=king:nom.) სვამს (svams=drink:prs.) ღვთაების (ghvtaeb-is=deity:gen.) სადიდებელს (sadidebel-s=toast/laudation:dat.) –

[18] Watkins 2001: 52ff; on Hattian and Anatolian linguistic encounters see most recently Goedegebuure 2008b.
[19] See e. g. Kammenhuber 1969: 440f.; Soysal 2004: 23f., 30ff.
[20] However, parallels between other languages can help unveil the mysteries of the Hattian language. See e. g. Goedegebuure 2008b: 164, 171; Goedegebuure 2010: 958f., 960 n. 22. In methodological terms, an interesting work is Melchert (s.a.), which refers to Mangarayi to explain the ergative in Hattian. According to Soysal, among other tasks, the future Hattological research must also aim at the establishment of typological and genetic (where possible) relations of Hattian with modern languages of the region, including Caucasian, after their critical revision (Soysal 2004: 39).

"The king drinks a deity's toast" or მეფე (mepe=king:nom.) ადღე-გრძელებს (adghegrdzelebs=toast:prs.) ღვთაებას (ghvtaeba-s=deity:dat.) – "The king toasts the deity".

The subject takes the ergative case only with a transitive verb in the second series (= the Aorist series). In this case, the direct object appears in nominative. For example: მეფემ (mepe-m=king:erg.) შესვა (she-sva=drink:prs.) ღვთაების (ghvtaeb-is=deity:gen.) სადიდებელი (sadi-debeli= toast/ laudation:nom.) – "The king drunk a deity's toast" or მეფემ (mepe-m=king:erg.) ადლეგრძელა (adrhegrdzela=toast:prs.) ღვთაება (ghvtaeba=deity:nom.) – "The king toasted the deity".

In the third series (= the Perfective series), the subject of a transitive verb takes dative (unlike the subject of an intransitive verb, which, similarly to the first series, remains in nominative), while the direct object appears in nominative. For example: მეფეს (mepe-s=king:dat.) შეუსვამს (sheusvams=drink: perf.) ღვთაების (ghvtaeb-is=deity:gen.) სადიდებელი (sadidebel-i=toast/ laudation:nom.) – "The king has drunk a deity's toast" or მეფეს (mepe-s=king:dat.) უდღეგრძელებია (udghegrdzele-bia=drink:perf.) ღვთაება (ghvtaeba=deity:nom.) – "The king has toasted the deity".

Thus, the Georgian dative can render direct and indirect objects as well as the subject depending on a sentence structure, while the nominative, apart from the subject, can also render the direct object.

If we assume that in Hattian too subject and/or object case variations could have been caused by the variation of a verb form, a particular 'case marker' cannot be considered as the only option for a particular syntactic role of a word.[21] This may account for different interpretations of some morphemes, for example -*šu* or -*tu*, which can be identified either as a case inflexion or the marker of direct or indirect object.[22]

Now, let us return to the Hittite ritual formula *eku-* + the divine name. It can be safely assumed that while borrowing this expression from the Hattian tradition into Hittite, the differences in the syntactic structure of the languages could have entailed several variants with the object in accusative, in dative or even in nominative.

As the use of accusative is most recurrent, the Hittites must have perceived the divine name in the 'drink the god' formula as the direct

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[21] Cf. Goedegebuure 2010: 957.

[22] Concerning the morpheme, see e. g. Girbal 1986: 66, 138f., 167f.; Klinger 1994: 37; Schuster 1974: 142; Soysal 2004: 241, 255f.; Soysal 2010b: 1042.

object, at least formally,[23] while the use of other case forms for the name of a deity may suggest that in Hattian the direct object could appear in different case forms. Hence, if we agree that the divine name in the Hittite formula is the direct object, an "error" can be seen in the use of nominative, dative or other structures that are unusual for Hittite.

The proposed explanation for dative-accusative alternation in the mentioned formula can be extended to the verbs denoting cult actions – *šipant-*, (*šer arḫa*) *waḫnu-*. Though the texts where the ritual expressions are attested suggest different chronological or ethnic backgrounds, bearing in mind the extent of the Hattian influence on the Hittite religion, we should not rule out the plausibility of a similar type of alternation in other ritual expressions as well.

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[23] Having analyzed its different versions, Soysal (2010a: 348) reconstructed the entire formula in the following way, which in my opinion, sounds quite convincing: "Die Gottheit aus dem Trinkgefäss mittels eines Getränks trinken (= trinkend verehren)". The formal direct object in this statement, as well as in its brief version, is the deity, though it is obvious that the actual direct object of the verb 'drink' and the respective action is the liquid, while the deity, in whose honour the act is performed, is to be understood in dative sense.

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