

## The Cuneiform Short Alphabet: Part 2.

**Record of Purchases: KTU 4.31 (RS 5.197+5.212+5.213, UT 57, CTA 207, Sryia 14, 103):**

### Detailed Discussion

#### Preliminary Remarks:

Written right to left on a broken clay tablet (but represented left to right below). With the possible exception of the space between lines 6 and 7, there are horizontal lines between every line of text. This text from Ugarit was found in what Schaefer, *Ugaritica* IV, 1962, 85 called the "*bibliothèque du grand-prêtre d'Ugarit*." It is composed of three fragments (RS 5.197+5.212+5.213). This "library of the high priest of Ugarit," also revealed long cuneiform alphabetic tablets in the Hurrian language.

#### Transliteration:

- 1)  $\dot{b}drC_2 . b\{bq \quad ]$
  - 2)  $bC_2C_2 \dot{C}_2r C_2m n . r[qh_2 ]$
  - 3)  $pbn . b\{b[ q \quad ]$
  - 4)  $bj_2m C_2 \dot{C}_2r x[ \quad ]$
  - 5)  $bj_2m C_2 \dot{C}_2r[ \quad ]$
  - 6)  $bh_2[m\dot{s}_2 \dot{C}_2\dot{s}_2r \quad ]$
  - 7)  $[ \quad ]b/dy b/d[ \quad ]$
  - 8)  $wbn \dot{T}_2l . b[n \quad ]$
  - 9)  $ypj_2 kn_2m [ \quad ]$
- Rev.
- 10)  $aj_2m n b\{b[ q \quad ]$
  - 11)  $bj_2m C_2 \dot{C}_2r C_2m n[rqh_2 ]$

#### Notes of the Text and Orthography:

Aside from lines 6 and 7, the tablet is intact on the right edge with every line broken on the left edge. Except for the first two lines that appear to be almost complete, with only two or perhaps three letters missing, about 35% or four to six letters of the other lines are likely missing. In KTU 4.31 we encounter almost every unique element of the short cuneiform alphabet except  $Z_2$  (if indeed this letter is used in a unique way in the short alphabet [see KTU 1.17:5] and my discussion of that text and my forthcoming summary). For reasons that will be discussed below, I read a  $\dot{T}_2$  where KTU 4.31:8 reads  $z'$  (as does Dietrich and Loretz, 1988, 155.). I do, however, think the sign stands for a sound in the phonetic range of "z." Despite the fact that Schaefer found the fragments that make up this tablet among Hurrain tablets, both the extent vocabulary and the limited grammatical clues indicate that we are dealing with a Semitic text. The preposition "b," the conjunctive "w," the numerals, and the word "bn" all argue for a Semitic language. One might dismiss any one of these indications on the grounds that the text is so badly broken

that it is hard to know exactly how to read this portion or that portion, but it is very hard to dismiss all the evidence. In addition, while there are a number of long cuneiform alphabet texts in the Hurrian language, no obviously Hurrian text is written in the short cuneiform alphabet. No one has seriously suggested that this is a Hurrian text (see Schaefer, *Ugaritica* IV, 1962, 85).

**Translation:**

- 1) Abdirsi . from Ta[baqu(?) ]
  - 2) for sixteen (shekels): pe[rfumer's] (?) oil.
  - 3) Pabbanu . from Taba[qu(?) ]
  - 4) for fifteen (shekels): [ ]
  - 5) for fifteen (shekels): [ ]
  - 6) for fi[fteen (shekels) ]
  - 7) [(? unreadable and unintelligible) for(?)]
  - 8) and ben Guzilla . s[on of ]
  - 9) (The) witness is Kun'ammu [ ]
- Rev.
- 10) Ichmannu from Taba[qu ]
  - 11) for fifteen (shekels): [perfumer's (?) ] oil.

**Notes on translation, grammar, and interpretation:**

(By line numbers)

1) On the personal name Abdirsi see abdi<sup>di</sup>-ir-šu in "m<sup>m</sup>kar-ra-nu mâr abdi<sup>di</sup>-ir-šî 4(?) [MIN]" (RS 16:257 IV:8). This name is in the same list (RS 16:257 III:42) as the name m<sup>m</sup>ku-un-am-mu reflected in line 9 of our text. For b<sup>t</sup>[ b ] here, b<sup>t</sup>b[ ] in line 3 and b<sup>t</sup>b[ ] in line 10, Dietrich and Loretz, 1988, 156 suggest the place name *tbq* following the preposition "b." The name as seen in KTU 4.367:1; KTU 4.610.17; KTU 4.616:17 and KTU 4.629:8 is restored here. This would make Abdirsi (line 1), Pabanu (line 3) and Ichmannu all from the city(?) of Tbq. KTU 4.367:1 reads, "[s]pr . bnC . m k . d . b . *tbq*," "the number of the king's people who are in Tbq." Presumably, the king is the king of Ugarit. The list itself includes people, but none is in our text, and cattle. KTU 4.616 is a list largely of persons and a number of cattle for each person; the geographical name Tbq is the only such place name in the list. Are the named persons from Tbq? If so, none of the personal names in our text is on this list. It appears that the king of Ugarit had a garrison at Tbq but we know nothing about the place or its location. When Virolleaud first published this tablet (*Syria*, 14, 103) he did not know how to read many of the letters in the cuneiform short alphabet. He compared the letter sequence *bdr* which he could read in this line to *bt y`bdr* in KTU 1.4 I:18, etc. The name in our text may have some linguistic relationship with the last part compound name or title for one of Ba'al's wives, *arxy bt y`bdr*, but it is certainly not the same name.

2) See, for example, KTU 4.150:2, 4; KTU 4.101:1-6; KTU 4.142:1-3 and KTU 4.146:2-3 for this use of the preposition "b" to denote price. *C<sub>2</sub>m n . rqb<sub>2</sub>*, perfumer's oil, may simply mean "fragrance" or "perfume." Dietrich and Loretz, 1988, 157 translate it

"Duftöl, Parfüm." See KTU 4.91:5, KTU 1.148::21; 1.41:21 and 1.87:22 (which is restored on the basis of 1.41:21) for occurrences of this šmn rḫ in standard long alphabet Ugaritic. The use of the parenthetical "shekels" in the translation is justified on the basis of, for example, KTU 4.156:5, *jpn . pDm . b . `Cr . Dḫm*, "linen cloaks for 10 shekels" when compared with, say, KTU 4.146:6, *m Dyn . b . Dt*; "m Dyn garment for 6 (shekels [implied])." Dietrich and Loretz, 1988, 156, believe that this line, as well as lines 6 (?) and 11, ended in a verb that is now broken away. In the light of other texts in this general genre, I see no need for an explicit verb.

3) See the personal name pbn in KTU 4.609:16 and KTU 4.611:30 (*bn pbn*).

4, 5, 6) Whatever the rest of these lines may have read, the number fifteen is clearly in lines 4 and 5 and reasonably read in line 6.

7) Not legible.

8) How this line relates to the one above or the one below is not clear. That it begins with a *w*, "and," tends to indicate that it is somehow bound to whatever precedes it in the badly broken line 7. Note the personal name *bn ḡzl* in KTU 4.617:7 and *hu-zi-la-a* in RS 16.257 II:48. Dietrich and Loretz, 1988, 157 also note *hu-za-lum* in AS 16,30:44. It is in this line that KTU 4:31 reads *wbn ḡ<sub>2</sub>l* presumably to accommodate this same name with the short alphabet as it was used in Ugarit and environs. The sign that I read *ḡ<sub>2</sub>* is an unmistakable long alphabet *ḡ*. How does *ḡ<sub>2</sub>* become phonetic *z* or something in its phonetic vicinity? The sign *z* is so far unattested in short alphabet texts from Ugarit and its immediate surroundings (see Dietrich and Loretz, UF, 21, 1998, 108; Puech's, *RB*, 93, 204). However, not having the sign in the Ugarit version of the short alphabet does not mean that a phoneme in its phonetic range did not exist. The *z* sign is certainly attested in KTS 6.1 from Sarepta and it may have also once existed on what remains of tablet KTBS 5.1 from Beth Shemesh both of which I will discuss later. In addition, the *d* sign is unattested in of the short alphabet texts. The proto-Semitic *d* phoneme becomes *z* in Akkadian, Hebrew, Old Aramaic, and Phoenician among others. In fact, there is some confusion in the long cuneiform alphabetic tradition between the various derivatives of the proto-Semitic *d* (Sivan, 2001, 20-22). Nearly the same sign (*ḡ<sub>2</sub>*) occurs twice in KTU 4.710 where it may be equivalent to *ḡ* or possibility *z* in line 4 and is almost certainly equivalent to a *z* in the word for "olive oil(s)" (standard long cuneiform alphabet *zṯm*) in line 11. To my eye, the sign in KTU 4.710:11 looks more like the nearly identical sign in our text than the presumed "*ḡ*" in KTU 4.710:4 (see my discussion of KTU 4.710). And based on *ḡ<sub>2</sub>* equaling *z* in KTU 4.710:11 and the name *bn ḡzl* in KTU 4.617:7 I feel justified in my reading in this line.

9) Ugaritic long alphabet *yph*, "witness." On this, see KTU 3.8:17, 19, 21; 4.258:5; 4.632:22. Note that the witness statements are at the end of KTU 3.8 and KTU 4.632 but in the first third of KTU 4.258. On Kunʾammu see KTU 4.96:9; 4.246:7; 4.309:19 (*synn bn kn`m*), 4.370:6, 42; 4.366:2 (*kn`m bn a[ ]*), 4.356:4 and the Akkadian text RS 16.257 III:42 which reads, "[<sup>m</sup>]ku-un-am-mu mâr no-qa-la-a 2 MIN." In the light of

the broken KTU 4.366:2 and RS 16.257 III:42, we may not be dealing with the same person in every case but only a common name. However, note that the  $\ddot{a}$  (↗) sign just before the lacuna in KTU 4.366:2 is two thirds of an  $n$  (↗↗) sign so it is very possible that the lacuna reads  $n[qly \quad ]$  or the like. Note also  $bn \ nqly$  in KTU 4.69 VI:26 and  $b^c \ / \ bt \ nqly$  (here "lord of the house [of El]  $nqly$ ") in a list of temple workers in KTU 4.15:4. This name, [<sup>m</sup>]ku-un-am-mu, is in the same lengthy Akkadian list as our  $\_2bdrC_2$  (abdi<sup>di</sup>-ir-šu) from line 1. If our Kun?ammu is indeed the son of the person named in KTU 4.15:4, he, too, may well have been an official (priest?) at the temple of El in Ugarit. In which case, at least one of the transactions documented on this tablet had the weight of the temple of El behind it.

10) On Ichmannu from  $aj \_2m \ n$ , see the personal name  $'ij \ m \ n$  in KTU 4.282:4. If the name is correctly identified, this provides a good illustration that the  $a$  sign stands for all three alephs seen in long alphabet cuneiform texts.

11) See line 2.

### Summary Interpretation:

This text is a record of trade in four sections. Section one, lines 1 and 2, records Abdirsi's purchase of perfume for sixteen shekels. Section two, lines 3 to 6 (or 7 or 8?), deals with three or four purchases of unknown items. It is possible that one additional transaction was recorded in the lacuna. Section three, perhaps lines 7 or 8 to 9, but certainly line 9, is a witness certification and section four is a final record of Ichmannu's purchase of perfume for sixteen shekels. All three purchasers appear to be from the same town or region, Tabaqu. Dietrich and Loretz, 1988, 156 treat lines 6-9 as a section but admit that there is no clear demarcation in the text. If Kun?ammu is indeed a temple official, then the transactions recorded in this tablet (or at least one of them) had the authority of the temple of El at Ugarit behind them.