

The Cuneiform Short Alphabet: Part 3.

Wheat and Olives for the House of Yatiru: KTU 4.710 (RS 22.03; *Syria* 58, 1981, 301; *CRAI* 1960, 85)

Detailed Discussion

Preliminary Remarks:

KTU 4.710 was discovered in 1959 in a room of a private commercial firm at the foot of the northeast slope of the Acropolis at Ugarit. It contains an economic text with the typical signs of the short cuneiform alphabet. Depending on how one understands the obscured lines 8 and 9, the text is nearly complete with every character (except those in lines 8 and 9 and possibly the w in line 13) easily readable. Based on this tablet, Virolleaud (1960) was able to decipher the only truly unique sign of the short alphabet and come to a proper understanding of how several of the other signs that differ in use between the short alphabet and the long cuneiform alphabet are used in short alphabet texts.

Transliteration:

Because various people who have studied this tablet have used differing line counting conventions, I have placed the other line numbering conventions to the right of the text below. In this regard, Puech (1985), 200, followed Bordreuil (1981) while Dietrich, Loretz and Sanmartin (1975) and Heltzer (1978) followed Virolleaud (1960). My numbering scheme follows KTU.

	Bordreuil (<i>Syria</i> 58, 302)	KTU 4.710	Virolleaud (<i>CRAI</i> , 85)
1) <i>bd b^c₂ly</i>	Recto 1	obv.1	8
2) <i>š₂h₂t gdn .</i>	2	2	9
3) <i>bkd š₂mn .</i>	3	3	10
4) <i>h₂mš₂ prš₂m . h₂t₂m</i>	4	4	11
5) <i>kh . lk š₂š₂t prš₂m bš₂ql</i>	5	5	12
6) <i>ytt l bt ytr</i>	6	6	13
7) <i>š₂mnt prš₂m . h₂t₂m</i>	7	7	14
Rev.			
8) []		rev. 8	
9) []		9	
x) (continuation of line Obv. 5)			
10) <i>^cš₂rm š₂š₂</i>	Verso 8	10	4
11) <i>kd t₂tm bš₂š₂t</i>	9	11	5
12) <i>bkd m .</i>	10	low. e. 12(?)	6
Lower edge			
13) <i>w . š₂š₂t kst</i>	11	13	7

Notes on the Text and Orthography:

Line 5 continues around the edge and across the reverse side of the tablet at the position I call Rev. x between lines 9 and 10. Line 7 goes around the edge of the tablet but only the last letter of the line can be said to extend onto the reverse and then only slightly. Lines 8 and 9 are unreadable but appear to be written in the same direction as all of the other lines on the reverse excepting, of course, line x. For this reason, I do not believe they are continuations of lines from the obverse. From Bordreuil's (1981), 311, picture one might speculate that lines 8 and 9 are evidence that the tablet is a palimpsest or partial palimpsest. Note that Dietrich and Loretz (1988), 168, refer to lines 8 and 9 as "*getilgten*." To be sure, the portion of the tablet that once contained lines 8 and 9 shows other physical damage some of which can not be attributed to purposeful smoothing of the surface of the tablet. See KTA 1.114 that may also be a palimpsest. Note the clarity and depth of the *b* in the continuation of obverse 5, particularly its lower wedges and the obscurity of the adjacent wedges from reverse line 9 which are immediately below this *b*. The last two lines on the reverse may have been "erased" by the scribe when obverse 5 was continued onto the reverse of the tablet. It would require a careful study of the actual tablet to be certain on this point. All lines on the obverse except line 7, the last one on the obverse, have a scribed line under them (contra KTA 4.710 which does not show a scribed line after 3). Only line 12 on the reverse has a line under it. I cannot tell from Bordreuil's picture (1981), 311, if line 13 on the edge has a line after it as is indicated in KTA 4.710. All the lines except lines 10 and 11 and the extension on to the reverse of line 5 are separated by a horizontal line.

The only new orthography elements in this tablet that we have not seen in the two previous ones are *g*, the *h* and the *q* which are otherwise unexceptional.

Translation:

Obverse

- 1) From the hand of my lord:
- 2) I send Guddanu.
- 3) For a jar of oil
- 4) five portions of wheat
- 5) (and) in addition, three portions (of wheat) for you for a shekel.
- 6) I transfer to the house of Yatiru
- 7) (a total of) eight portions of wheat.

Rev.

- 8) (unreadable)
 - 9) (unreadable)
 - x) (continuation of line 5 on obverse)
 - 10) Twenty-three
 - 11) jars of olives at (a rate of) three (shekels)
 - 12) for two jars
- Lower edge
- 13) and three cups.

Notes on translation, grammar, and interpretation:

General remarks (see the line-by-line discussion below for references and further discussion)

The text appears to consist of three major sections: lines 1-2 and lines 3-7 and lines 10-13. Lines 1-2 may or may not be grouped with lines 3-7. The extent to which this major section and lines 10-13 are related is, in my mind, an open question.

I believe the key to the interpretation of lines 1-7 lies in lines 6-7 which I translate "I transfer to the house of Yataru/Yatiru (a total of) eight portions of wheat." The "house of Yatiru is the recipient of eight *prsm* of wheat for which five *prsm* are transferred in exchange for a jar of (olive) oil and three are transferred in exchange for a shekel of silver.

At least lines 1-7 are a recitation by Guddanu with line 1 being an introductory formula and lines 2-7, perhaps the whole remainder to the tablet, is an embedded recitation of the words of Guddanu's lord. As will be seen, this is a somewhat different interpretation than that offered by Dietrich and Loretz (1988), 161-168.

Details by Line Numbers

- 1) See KTU 2.43:1, 4, 6, 10 on "*bd*" and KTU 4.264:2; on "*b^cly*" Also see Dietrich, Loretz and Sanmartin's (1995), 163, discussion of this line and Bordreuil's (1981) suggestion. Dietrich, Loretz and Sanmartin (1995) translate "*Zur Verfügung durch*

meiner Herrn:" The line means something like, "Following the instruction of my lord." Bordreuil (1981) seems to be the first to recognize that this line rather than Rev. 8 is the beginning of the text. However, Bordreuil (1981) takes $b^c y$ to be a proper name and translates, "A l'intention de Baalya" and direct us to KTU 4.75 (CTA 102) presumably line I:6 and perhaps II:9 where these four letters appear in proper names. Apparently he is struck by the appearance of *bn gdn* on the same tablet (KTU 4.75 IV:12). Treating the final *y* as a pronoun, as can be seen in KTU 4.264:2, seems a much more natural reading. Dietrich, Loretz and Sanmartin (1995), 163, are correct in their analysis.

2) \check{s}_2/h_2t is from the same root as standard Ugaritic $\check{s}lh$ meaning, "he sends." The form appears to be a paradigm example of a finite G-stem qtl first person singular verb. However, Bordreuil (1981) reads it as the noun meaning "envoi" which coincidentally has the same form. However, treating it as a verb seems to fit the overall context better. Dietrich, Loretz and Sanmartin (1975) rendered this line "Sendung des Dn." For some reason they did not read the *g* in *gdn*. But in Dietrich, Loretz and Sanmartin (1995) they translate the line, "(Hiermit) sende ich (zu dir) Gdn." In addition to *bn gdn* in KTA 4.75 IV:12 (see also UT 173:59 as restored by Gordon [1965] [= KTA 1.87:59] and UT 321 I:43 [= KTU 4.63]), the personal name *gdn* is known from KTU 496:8 (*gdn bn ūmy*); KTU 4.244:17; KTU 4.658:18 (*gdn . bn . ūss*) and KTU 4.115:7(?). Note also *gu-ud-da-n[a]* in RS 17:149:29 on which my vocalization is based. Further on *gdn* see Weippert (1966) 317, n. 214, and Grondahl (1967), 332, 383.

3) On the possible use of the preposition *b* in economic texts see KTU 4.31:2, 11, and my discussion of the preposition in the study of that text, "The Cuneiform Short Alphabet: Part 2". Dietrich, Loretz and Sanmartin (1975) translated the preposition "für." More recently they take the preposition to mean "with," (Dietrich, Loretz and Sanmartin, [1995], 163) and translate it "mit" citing Aartun (1974/78), II, 20 f. and one of the many uses of \beth in Hebrew. However, I believe the context favors "for" meaning "for the price of." The greatest likelihood is that \check{s}_2mn here is olive oil, and that is how I will treat it, but one should remember that it just might be some other oil. For example, in KTU 4.91:16 we read $\check{s}mn mr$, "oil of myrrh;" in KTU 4.247:20 we read $\check{s}mn ūz$, "goose oil/fat;" in KTU 4.91:5, KTU 1.148:21 and 1.41:21 we read $\check{s}mn rqh$, "perfumer's oil" and in the short alphabet text KTU 4.31:2 we read $\check{s}_2mn . r[qh]$, (see my discussion of this text in Part 1 of this series). I follow Heltzer (1978), 18, most closely who translates this line and line 4 together as, "1 jar of oil for 5 parīsu wheat." But because I take the "house of Yataru" as the recipient of the wheat, I would prefer to read, "for 1 jar of oil, 5 parīsu wheat" even though the underlying meaning is the same. Bordreuil (1981), 306 offered a similar interpretation. The capacity of a jar (*kḫ*) is not known with any degree of certainty (Heltzer [1978], 22). Huehnergard (1987), 136, shows that the alphabetic word *kdm* (plural) was written ^{DUG}*ka-du-ma* ^{MES} in syllabic transcription at Ugarit. Many Akkadian texts including those from Ugarit use the determinative DUG as an ideogram for Akkadian *karpatu*. Heltzer (1978) also suggests that *karpatu* is the likely Akkadian equivalent (but not cognate) of *kd*. Based on several texts from Mari, Birot (1960), tells us that the capacity of a *karpatu* may vary depending on its contents but suggests that one value is 10 *qa* (see also *AHW*, p.449-450, and *CAD* "K," 8, 220, meaning 2). The same

root occurs in Ugaritic, *krpnm*, where in the word is parallel to *ks*, "cup" (KTA 1.3:13-14) and likely means "cup" or "goblet." If Akkadian *karpatu* does equal our *kd* and we accept the capacity of 10 *qa*, then it would be about 8.4 liters. But that is far from certain. Trying to find a near match, I calculated the volume of each of the 80 uniformly large jars found at Minet el Beida (Schaeffer [1949], 208, pl XXXI) as having a capacity of roughly 18 liters, twice too large. But while the uniformity of these jars is truly impressive, we have no idea what they were called. See further discussion below.

4) *prs/ś*, written *prš₂m* in this text, the *m* being the masculine plural suffix, is a measure of capacity used with *ḥtm* (wheat) (KTU 4.225:9), *glbm* (rations?) (KTU 4.269:29; 4.257:16), *qmḥ* (flour) (KTU 1.41:23, 1.87:25, 4.328:1), *śdm* (some kind of food) (KTU 4.786:11) and *šḥlt* (some vegetable) (KTU 4.786:12) in standard Ugaritic which seems to use both *prs* and *prś*. Note also that *prs* in KTU 4.715:6 may refer to a quantity of wine as we will see in a Hittite text. One *parīsu* is half of a *kurra* (GUR) or 180 *qa* in Babylonian. However, as Heltzer (1978), 73-74, points out, RS 21.10 shows that at least some scribes/accountants at Ugarit considered a *kurra* to be 300 *qa*. Therefore, at least in Old Babylonian, a *qa* was 0.84 liters. So an Ugaritic *prś* might be 126 liters but it might also be as small as 75.6 liters. Bordreuil (1981), 306, reads, "cing prsm réduits" (four "reduced" prsm) from *ḥ zm* (?) but notes that it may be from the same root as Hebrew חָצַק (to divide) or, following de Moor (1979), Arabic *ḥuḏwah* which means something like "official." Bordreuil believes that line 5 requires his first interpretation. He also suggests *blī*, corn/wheat for *ḥt* and cites PRU II, 146:5. In this he follows Dietrich, Loretz and Sanmartin, (1975) 548. However, Dietrich and Loretz (1988), 164, read it correctly and translate it "Weizen" as they also do in 1995, 459. An interesting Akkadogram, PA, the abbreviation for *parīsu*, occurs in the above mentioned Hittite text which is translated, "(the price) of three PAs of emmer is one shekel of silver, (the price) of one PA of wine is a half shekel of silver (CAD, 12, "P," 186)".

5) This line, unlike any of the others, wraps around the tablet and extends fully across the reverse. I believe that the scribe may have neglected to write *prš₂m bš₂ql* before he began line 6 and went back to complete it. Note that neither of the horizontal lines that separate lines 4, 5 and 6 continue onto the reverse. Perhaps he smoothed over the original contents of the reverse at this time. More on this issue under Interpretation below. Bordreuil (1981), 302, reads the first letter sequence *khg*, taking the more likely word divider for a *g*. The only certain *g* on the tablet is in line 2 and with the exception of the almost certain word divider in line 7 and the unusual stroke in line 14, most word dividers on this tablet are linear as apposed to wedged. But the vertical stroke here in line 5 is, in my opinion, far more like the word divider in line 7 (and 14) than the *g* in line 2. In this I agree with both Dietrich, Loretz and Sanmartin, (1975) 548, and Dietrich and Loretz (1988), 164, and Dietrich, Loretz and Sanmartin, (1995) 459. Aarton (1978), 165, understands *kh* as *k + h* (*hervorhebende Partikel*) which he explains (167) as an adverb plus an emphasizing particle and translates it "so." The emphatic *k* in Ugaritic is regularly associated with a verb in the same clause. However, in the case of this line and the one preceding it we are dealing with verbless clauses. As far as I can determine *kh* does not appear in any other cuneiform alphabetic text (long or short alphabet), nor can I find a

clear example in other Semitic languages. Freidrich and Röllig (1970), 44, 130, note a rare occurrence of 𐤊𐤍 for 𐤊 in a late Phoenician text but here we are likely dealing with the preposition rather than the adverb. *k* is usually translated "lo" or "verily" or the like. In this case, I think, *kh* is best rendered, "additionally" or simply "also." On this usage, consider KTU 2.39:15- 20, "Why do you go to me the Sun your lord every two years? And tablets of food you also (*ky*) send to the Sun your lord? So (*ky*) there is no food in your household." Here, in the first usage in KTU 2:39:15-20, we may well see a weakened meaning of *k* that I also find in this line of our text. In the second usage a somewhat stronger meaning may be involved. They in *ky* is usually considered a *mater lectionis*. The *h* in *kh* may be as Aarton suggests or it may be some other element. I plan to return to this issue when I attempt to compile a grammar(s) of these texts.

Part of the difficulty in interpreting our tablet rests on the extent to which commodity prices in this text are compatible with commodity prices in other texts and with the realities of production at the time. Note that the price of emmer in the Hittite text (CAD, 12, "P," 186, cited above) is exactly the same as the price of wheat in our text: 3 *parīsu* per shekel. To be sure, wheat and emmer are not exactly the same. It is generally thought that wheat would yield better than emmer (Zaccagnini [1975], 221). However, at Nuzi, for example, the average emmer yield was 212 liters per hectare while the yield of wheat was 119 liters per hectare. In other words, wheat yielded but 56% of emmer (Zaccagnini [1975], 194). In addition, growing conditions in Hatti may have been different from the environs of Ugarit. But 56% is a long way from the 33% that would be required to support Dietrich, Loretz and Sanmartin, (1975) 546, and Heltzer (1978), 53, who think that one should read one *prś* per shekel. And their problems increase if we are dealing with the smaller *prś* that is 58% smaller than the larger *prś* (see above). Therefore, absent any clear indication in the text, I prefer the plain reading, "three portions (of wheat) for you for a shekel." I simply understand the line without the "(each)" after shekel. By Loretz and Sanmartin, (1988), 162, they had modified their translation. To be clear, I take the text to mean a single *parīsu* of wheat is equivalent to one third of shekel of silver not one shekel. This will become important when we consider the issues of the price of oil.

6) As noted by Dietrich and Loretz (1988), 165, the verb appears to be in the same form ("*perfectum coincidentiae*") as the verb in line 2. A *bn ytr* is known from KAT 4.611 II:15 in a list of people from *mīhd*. See also bin-ja-ta-ri in RS 15.42 + 15.110 I:13 and ^mja-ti-r[i (?)] in RS 16:286:5. Is the private commercial firm in one of whose rooms this tablet was found the "house of Yatiru?"

7) This line is very straightforward.

8 - 9) These lines are completely unintelligible and, as indicated earlier, may have been erased.

10- 13) It is not at all clear how or if these lines are related to the previous section. Because line 5 wraps around the tablet and extends onto the reverse, it appears to me that lines 10-13 must have been written after the text on the obverse. However, as noted

earlier, some scholars (Heltzer [1978] and Virolleaud [1960]) have thought that the text begins with these lines.

11) On *t₂tm* Bordreuil (1981) 309, directs us to *ṭa-a-lu* in RS 17.396:8 which Nougalyrol translates "*bakehich*," "baksheesh." The context is instructive: *lu-ú kaspu lu-ú ḥurḏṣu lu-ú erû lu-ú ú-nu-ut siparri lu-ú IGI.DU₈.A lu-ú qištu lu-ú ṭa-a-lu lu-ú ardu lu-ú amtu lu-ú ṣubâtu. lu-ú kitú*, "silver or gold or copper or bronze objects or ??? or gift (?) or *ṭa-a-lu* or slave or woman slave or gown or coat." This is a list of things the daughter of Beneshina, king of the Amurru may have acquired while in Ugarit. Remember, she is the one that gave Ammistamru a "pain in the head" and committed the "great sin." Nougalyrol takes IGI.DU₈.A to mean something like "tribute" and translates *qištu* "*don*." While interesting, I believe this interpretation is incorrect. Also incorrect are Dietrich and Loretz (1988), 165, in reading *t₂tm* "olive oil." *t₂tm* should just be understood as olives as in Ugaritic **zyt*. One does wonder about the meaning of *zt mm* in KTU 4.91:14. However, I concur with Heltzer (1978), 52, who also translates "olives." In cognate languages, only one Arabic form means olive oil all other examples appear to represent the fruit rather than the oil. In fact, **smn* is normally the result of processing **zyt* (see Micah 6:15 for example). In KTU 4.284:6, 8 *z₂tm* and *š₂mn* are clearly different commodities.

13) On *kst* (cup, goblet, chalice) we are certainly dealing with fixed measure that is some part of a *prš*. The exact quantity of a *ks* is unknown as is the number of *ks*s per *prš*. The root is related to Akkadian *kāsu* and the usage here is within the range of meaning 2 in CAD, 8, "K," 256.

Interpretation:

There are two potential problems with my interpretation of this text. First, unlike Dietrich and Loretz (1988) I do not have a strong unifying theory of the text. In fact, I see the two sections as possibly unrelated. Second, Dietrich and Loretz point to two tablets, KTU 4.158 and 4.341, which provide pricing for oil and which, if we accept the pricing indicated in these tablets as definitive, would appear to make my interpretation untenable.

First, I claim that Dietrich and Loretz's (1988) interpretation is only a superficial interpretation of the whole tablet. They divide the text into section I, lines 1-5 and section II, lines 6-13 with a question about the "erased lines" 8 and 9. Except that they read "olive oil" where I read "olives," their understanding of lines 10-13 is virtually identical to mine. And it does not appear that there is a clear tie in between their understanding that the wheat delivered to (or by) the household of Ytr and the pricing of the olives/olive oil in lines 10-13. The contents of lines 8 and 9 might clarify the issue but, alas, they are unreadable; perhaps intentionally so. In addition, I do not see the parallel between lines 2 and 6 as being as strong as Dietrich and Loretz (1988) seem to think. They appear to be quite different formulae if the second one is a formula at all. In addition, Dietrich and Loretz fail to answer why a price seems to be given for the wheat but not for the oil in their first section.

The issue of the price of oil at Ugarit is a more complex issue. KTU 4.158:3 reads, "ārb ḥm . l . mit . šmn," "40 (shekels) for 100 of oil." And KTU 4.341:20 reads, "w . šb ḥ šr šmn," "and 17 oil." The first indicates that the price of a jar(?) of oil is 0.4 shekels. Heltzer (1978), 74, and Dietrich and Loretz (1988), 168, calculate an exchange in trade rate of 0.5 shekels per jar of oil based on the total of 250 (shekels) of silver stated at the end of KTU 4.341 but with only 241 (shekels) of silver otherwise accounted for in the body of the tablet and with no number given for the šmn. They, therefore, take the value of the šmn to be the difference between the total provided and the total enumerated. This may well turn out to be correct but may make little difference in this discussion. What is the price of a jar of oil in our text? Assuming for the moment that š₂mn and t₂tm are the same or about the same thing and as has been seen I think this is a large assumption (on this issue see above and below), I calculate that one could exchange five portions of wheat for a jar of oil (š₂mn) (line 3-4) and a portion of wheat for a third of one shekel (line 5). So, by this calculation, a jar of oil would cost 5*1/3 or 1.7 shekels. But if we look at lines 10 - 12, we learn that two jars and three cups of oil (still assuming that t₂tm is olive oil) is exchangeable for three shekels. However one analyzes the number of cups per jar, the price by this interpretation is greater than one shekel per jar and less than 1.33 shekels per jar depending on how many cups are in a jar. In any case, it is double the price indicated in KTU 4:158:3 or 4.341:20. But Dietrich and Loretz [1988], 168, do not seem to be concerned about this price. If they have no problem with this, then it is not too much of a stretch to think that 1.7 shekels per jar of oil (approximately three times the price deduced by KTU 4:158:3) is also within the range of normal market fluctuations; particularly so if we consider 0.5 shekels on the low end and 1.7 shekels on the high end of the range. My calculation of 1.7 shekels per jar from lines 3-5 is based on the price of wheat being 1/3 shekel per prś rather than the 1 shekel per prś used by Heltzer (1978), 74.

If one considers normal market fluctuations in pre-modern markets, one sees that fluctuations of 100 % are not uncommon and fluctuations of 200% are not unknown. Some of the most persuasive data comes from a study by Amnon Cohen (1989) on the olive oil market in Ottoman Jerusalem during an approximate 50 year period beginning in October 1548 (S 937AH). The lowest price for a 'uqiyyal of olive oil (about 240 gm) in Cohen's (1989), 140-145, table is 1 dirham recorded in a transaction dated January 1532 and the highest price was 4 dirham in November 1533. The price quadrupled in less than two years. But by July 1534, it was down to 1.25 dirham. As far as I can tell, it never again dropped to the 1 dirham price but, on the other hand, it wasn't until July 1584 that a price of 4 dirham was again reached. The normal trading range appears to have been between 1.5 and 3 dirham per 'uqiyyal and the price moves fairly freely between those numbers over the whole period of fifty years or so. The same pattern is seen in sales of olive oil in the larger ratl (about 2.88 Kg) quantity. Such comparisons are not without problems. First, the climate around Jerusalem in the 16th century CE was no doubt different from that around Ugarit in the 14th century BCE. And different climates not only make for different yields but they also affect consistency of yield. And consistency of yield translates into the magnitude of price fluctuations. Second, while farming and manufacturing methods used by the Ugaritic olive oil industry and the Ottoman

Jerusalem olive oil industry were pre-modern, they were also very likely quite different. Even within the constraints of these concerns, price fluctuations of the order of those seen when the 0.5 shekels of KTU 4:158:3 is compared with 1.7 shekels lines 3-5 (or over one shekel in lines 10-13, if we are dealing with olive oil at all) of our text are not beyond the limits one would normally expect in a dynamic market over even a single year.

If the material on the reverse of this tablet is related to the material on the obverse or even if they are unrelated but written at about the same time, how does one account for the difference in price of 1.7 shekels in lines 3-5 and between 1 and 1.33 shekels in lines 10-13? If they are both olive oil this is indeed hard to account for. But if, as I believe, the 1.7 shekels per jar relates to olive oil and the between 1 and 1.33 shekels per jar relates to olives, I see no problem. The price difference is accounted for by the value added activity of turning olives into olive oil. At that, the price of olive oil may well be a little low.

Final Remarks:

If a unified interpretation is required, then on behalf of his lord, Guddanu delivered 8 portions of wheat and 23 jars of olives. For the wheat, he receives one jar of olive oil and one shekel and for the olives, he received between $17 \frac{1}{4}$ and 23 shekels.