Three Ugaritic words related to garments

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Abstract: New meanings and cognates are proposed for three Ugaritic words connected with textiles: (ṳ)ḥyt, “seamstress”, ḫll “(woollen) garment” and prqt, “a fabric”.

Keywords: Aramaic, clothing, Hittite, Nuzi Akkadian, sewing, Syriac, Ugaritic.

From the many terms occurring only in the economic texts found in ancient Ugarit, three have been selected here for discussion and evaluation. They are all connected with textiles and are considered in alphabetical sequence.

(1) Ug. ʿḥyt or ḫyt, “seamstress”

The word ʿḥyt or ḫyt (see discussion below) occurs once, together with pldm, “cloths, garments” (DUL, 660) and has been translated as either “female menders” or “tailors”, in neither case with any philological explanation. The line in question is āġt ḫyt pldm ddm, where āġt seems to be a place-name, and it can be translated “for TN: for the ḫyt of garments, two cauldronsful” (KTU 4.795: 9). If the reading is ʿḥyt, then the preposition would be understood (by ellipsis): “for TN: for the ʿḥyt of garments, two cauldronsful”. In either case, an appropriate cognate can be supplied from Aramaic and Syriac.

(a) reading: ʿḥyt: cognates are Aram. ʾḥy, “to stitch together, attach” (DJBA, 104a) and Syr. “text” (LS, 11); see also Aram. myʔḥʔ, “stitching” (DJBA, 663a).

(b) reading: ḫyt (preceded by l as lḥyt): the same cognates are relevant – see (a) – as well as Aram. ḥy, ḥḥ, “to unite; pi: to join, to sew together (with fine

1 See also Vita 2010: 331.
2 Bordreuil / Pardee 2001: 356, 357 (“réparatrices”).
3 Dijkstra 2010: 35.
4 See the discussion in Bordreuil / Pardee 2001: 356.
stitches), to mend by stitching”, where it seems that the root is ḥy (cf. DTT, 40a).\(^5\)

Either set of cognates provides philological support for the meaning “seamstress, stitcher” for Ug. āḥyt/ḥyt and the whole line can be translated: “for TN: (for) the stitchers of cloths: two dd-measures”.\(^6\)

(2) Ug. ḫll, “attire”

This word occurs in a list of various other types of garment: ṭprt, “undergarment”,\(^7\) mizrt, “tunic”, lps, “cloak”, ktn, “tunic” and sk, “cloak” (KTU 4.867: 8-13) and probably has a similar meaning. Close cognates are Syr. ḥlāyā, “a type of garment” (SL, 457)\(^8\) and Neo-Babylonian ḥillā/ētu, “woollen cover” (CDA, 116a),\(^9\) possibly from ḥalālu, “to confine” (CDA, 101b). See also Akk. ḥullānu, “(cloth) cover, wrap” (CDA, 119b). A connection with Hitt. ḥulana-, “wool”, cannot be ruled out.\(^10\) The line in which Ug. ḫll occurs is w ššr ḫllm, to be translated: “and ten (woollen?) garments” (KTU 4.867: 13).

(3) Ug ṭrqt, (a) “sack”; (b) “a type of fabric”

While it is possible that the same word denotes both a certain type of cloth and a container made from that cloth (a sack), the comparative evidence seems to indicate two separate words:

(a) “sack” – as in ṭlm ṭrqt ṭyt, “thirty sackfuls of the ṭyt-plant” (KTU 4.811: 9)\(^11\) – corresponding to Akk. parakku, Nuzi Akk. pa-ra-[aq-qa-a], pa-[ra]-ak, pa-[r-aq-qa], “(a sack?)”.\(^12\)

(b) “a type of fabric” – as in ṭrqt w mrdt ṭrqt pṭt, “one kilt\(^13\) (made) of p.-fabric and a tapestry (made) of p.-fabric (and) linen” (KTU 4.205: 3-4) –

\(^5\) Akk. ḥatū, “decorated”, of a garment (CDA, 112a), is probably unrelated.

\(^6\) The archaeological evidence for needles in Ugarit is discussed in Matoïan / Vita 2009: 490.

\(^7\) See Watson 2007: 113, 230.

\(^8\) Cited in DUL, 387, where Arab. ḥulaliyyat, “wide piece of material” is also cited; in addition, cf. Arab. ḥulla, “clothing, dress, garb” (DMWA, 199a; cf. AEL, 621), but note the initial ḥ in both these Arabic words.

\(^9\) Cited under Akk. ḥillu(m), “covering” (CDA, 116a).

\(^10\) This word is related to Hitt. ḫulāli-, “distaff” – see the discussion in EDHIL, 356-358.

\(^11\) On Ug. ṭyt see DUL, 871.

\(^12\) CAD P, 153 (but see CDA, 265a). See already Watson 2007: 99 n. 284.

\(^13\) Aram. šnt’, “kilt (?)” (cf. DNWSI, 1175); so already Watson 2007: 113-114; cf. DUL, 922; note also Aram. šṭṭ, “hem, fringe(?)” (cf. DNWSI, 1123). For another explanation see Ribichini / Xella 1985: 67-68.
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corresponding to Nuzi Akk. *purāku*, “a fabric (for furniture etc.)” (CDA, 278b),\(^{14}\)“(an upholstery textile)” (CAD P, 517a), possibly a foreign word.\(^{15}\)

**Abbreviations**


CDA J. Black / A. George / N. Postgate (eds.): *A Concise Dictionary of Akkadian* (Wiesbaden 2000\(^{2}\)).


\(^{14}\) AHw, 880b: “eine Decke ?”.

\(^{15}\) Note also Akk. *parriku*, “(a textile worker)” (CAD P, 190a). See also Syr. *prqwn*, “a little garment” (SL, 1252), “a strip, bandage, a piece of cloth, silk, etc.” (SD, 465).

**Bibliography**


