

Three Ugaritic words related to garments

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Abstract: New meanings and cognates are proposed for three Ugaritic words connected with textiles: (*û*)*hyt*, “seamstress”, *hll* “(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. *ûhyt* or *hyt*, “seamstress”

The word *ûhyt* or *hyt* (see discussion below) occurs once, together with *pldm*, “cloths, garments” (DUL, 660)¹ and has been translated as either “female menders”² or “tailors”,³ in neither case with any philological explanation. The line in question is *âgt lhyt pldm ddm*, where *âgt* seems to be a place-name, and it can be translated “for TN: for the *hyt* of garments, two cauldronsful” (KTU 4.795: 9). If the reading is *ûhyt*,⁴ then the preposition would be understood (by ellipsis): “for TN: (for) the *ûhyt* of garments, two cauldronsful”. In either case, an appropriate cognate can be supplied from Aramaic and Syriac.

(a) reading: *ûhyt*: cognates are Aram. *ʔhy*, “to stitch together, attach” (DJBA, 104a) and Syr. “*texit*” (LS, 11); see also Aram. *myʔhʔ*, “stitching” (DJBA, 663a).

(b) reading: *hyt* (preceded by *l* as *lhyt*): the same cognates are relevant – see (a) – as well as Aram. *ʔhy*, *ʔhh*, “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 *hy* (cf. DTT, 40a).⁵

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

(2) Ug. *hll*, “attire”

This word occurs in a list of various other types of garment: *tprt*, “undergarment”,⁷ *mizrt*, “tunic”, *lpš*, “cloak”, *ktn*, “tunic” and *sk*, “cloak” (KTU 4.867: 8-13) and probably has a similar meaning. Close cognates are Syr. *hlālyā*, “a type of garment” (SL, 457)⁸ and Neo-Babylonian *hillā/ētu*, “woollen cover” (CDA, 116a),⁹ possibly from *√halālu*, “to confine” (CDA, 101b). See also Akk. *hullānu*, “(cloth) cover, wrap” (CDA, 119b). A connection with Hitt. *hulana-*, “wool”, cannot be ruled out.¹⁰ The line in which Ug. *hll* occurs is *w ššr hllm*, to be translated: “and ten (woollen?) garments” (KTU 4.867: 13).

(3) Ug *prqt*, (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 *tlm prqt tyt*, “thirty sackfuls of the *tyt*-plant” (KTU 4.811: 9)¹¹ – corresponding to Akk. *parakku*, Nuzi Akk. *pa-ra-[aq-qa-a]*, *pa-[ra]-ak*, *pa-[ra-aq-qa]*, “(a sack?)”.¹²

(b) “a type of fabric” – as in *tt prqt w mrdt prqt ptt*, “one kilt¹³ (made) of *p*-fabric and a tapestry (made) of *p*-fabric (and) linen” (KTU 4.205: 3-4) –

⁵ Akk. *hatū*, “decorated”, of a garment (CDA, 112a), is probably unrelated.

⁶ The archaeological evidence for needles in Ugarit is discussed in Matoian / Vita 2009: 490.

⁷ See Watson 2007: 113, 230.

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

⁹ Cited under Akk. *hillu(m)*, “covering” (CDA, 116a).

¹⁰ This word is related to Hitt. ^{GIS}*hulāli-*, “distaff” – see the discussion in EDHIL, 356-358.

¹¹ On Ug. *tyt* 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. *štt*, “hem, fringe(?)” (cf. DNWSI, 1123). For another explanation see Ribichini / Xella 1985: 67-68.

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

AHw	W. von Soden: <i>Akkadisches Handwörterbuch</i> , vols. I-III (Wiesbaden 1965-1981).
CAD	I. J. Gelb <i>et al.</i> (eds.): <i>The Assyrian Dictionary of the Oriental Institute of the University of Chicago</i> , vols. 1-21 (Chicago 1956-2010).
CDA	J. Black / A. George / N. Postgate (eds.): <i>A Concise Dictionary of Akkadian</i> (Wiesbaden 2000 ²).
DJBA	M. Sokoloff: <i>A Dictionary of Jewish Babylonian Aramaic</i> (Ramat Gan / Baltimore 2002).
DMWA	H. Wehr / A. Cowan: <i>A Dictionary of Modern Written Arabic</i> (Wiesbaden 1971).
DNWSI	J. Hoftijzer / K. Jongeling: <i>Dictionary of the North-West Semitic Inscriptions</i> , 2 vols. (Leiden 1995).
DTT	M. Jastrow: <i>A Dictionary of the Targumim, the Talmud Babli</i> , Vols. I-II (New York 1950).
DUL	G. del Olmo Lete / J. Sanmartín: <i>A Dictionary of the Ugaritic Language in the Alphabetic Tradition</i> (English Version Edited and Translated by W. G. E. Watson), 2 vols. (Leiden 2015 ³).
EDHIL	A. Kloekhorst: <i>Etymological Dictionary of the Hittite Inherited Lexicon</i> (Leiden 2008).
KTU	M. Dietrich / O. Loretz / J. Sanmartín: <i>Die keilalphabetischen Texte aus Ugarit, Ras Ibn Hani und anderen Orten. Dritte, erweiterte Auflage / The Cuneiform Alphabetic Texts from Ugarit, Ras Ibn Hani and Other Places. Third, Enlarged Edition</i> (Münster 2013).
LS	C. Brockelmann: <i>Lexicon Syriacum</i> (Edinburgh / Berlin 1895).
SD	J. Payne Smith (ed.): <i>A Compendious Syriac Dictionary founded upon the Thesaurus of R. Payne Smith, D.D.</i> (Oxford 1903).

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).

SL C. Brockelmann / M. Sokoloff, *A Syriac Lexicon* (Winona Lake / Piscataway 2009).

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