

NOW THAT SUMMER'S GONE: UNDERSTANDING QZ IN KTU 1.24*

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The word *qz*, which occurs in the first of two epithets ascribed to the obscure deity Harhab in KTU 1.24:2-3, is currently translated «summer»¹:

<i>ḫrḫb . mlk . qz .</i>	«Harhab king of summer,
<i>ḫrḫb . m/lk . aḡzt .</i>	... Harhab king of weddings» ² .

While the above translation of *qz* does not hinder our overall understanding of this wedding song, a more accurate interpretation of *qz* would undoubtedly elucidate Harhab's role³.

qz is attested six times in three tablets: KTU 1.19, 20 and 24. In the final tablet of the Aqhat story, the word occurs twice (1.19.I:18 and 41). In both these instances the word most certainly means «summer», «summer harvest», or the like, as is also the case in KTU 1.20:I:5, which leaves KTU 1.24 as the only text containing my proposed variant, a circumstance which accords well with the other variants noted above, and would also explain why it has been so readily translated «summer»⁴.

J.C. de Moor's proposed etymology for both *qz* and *aḡzt* describe Harhab as marriage-broker⁵:

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¹ Thus the recent translation of Wyatt (RTU 1998, 336, see also n.4).

² The first title (*mlk qz*) occurs twice more (ll. 17 and 24), while the second (*mlk aḡzt*) is found only in ll. 2-3. The second epithet had undergone various interpretations and probably elucidates the first, which describes Harhab's role in KTU 1.24.

³ Harhab is believed, by many to be the marriage-broker employed by Yarih, the Ugaritic moon-god, to negotiate the terms of his marriage to Nikkal, his female counterpart. Alternatively, Harhab may be father of Yarih, but this view, suggested by Ginsberg (1939: 325), is most unlikely. Usually a father chose his son's bride and negotiated with the bride's family (cf. Gen. 34). For detailed discussion see Van Selms (1954, 16-18).

⁴ Virolleaud (1936: 211), in fact identified *qz* in 1.24 as «été», by comparison with *qz* in KTU 1.19 and 20.

⁵ De Moor (1973: 92 n.1) suggested we should «connect *qz* with Arab. *qāda* "to exchange", *qayḍ* "barter, exchange"». *aḡzt*, he suspected, was «a loan word, possibly through Hurrian, from Akkadian *aḫūzatu* which CAD (A) 1, p. 217 defines as "a marriage-like relationship of dependency and protection between an unprotected female and the head of a household".

«Khirikhbi, the counsellor for exchange marriages,
Khirikhbi, the counsellor for protection marriages»⁶.

Both de Moor's titles describe marital conditions not envisaged in our text, so therefore cannot be accepted as applying to Harhab, who is nowhere in KTU 1.24 described as the one who approaches Nikkal's father: it is Yarih (or his messenger) who does this (l. 16). De Moor's etymology for *agzt* appears to have become accepted, although with modifications to the meaning, to produce a more neutral definition («weddings») than that proposed by de Moor (see translation above). «Summer» has persisted as the favoured translation of *qz* since C. Virolleaud's *editio princeps* of this tablet in 1936⁷.

H.L. Ginsberg, in his study of KTU 1.24⁸, suggested the restoration of *bt* at the end of line 1, which has implications for Harhab's role in this text. His restoration yielded the following translation for line 1:

ašr nkl w ib bt Let me sing of Nikkal-and-Ib, daughter of ...

If Ginsberg's restoration is correct, as most translators appear to accept⁹, Harhab, as father of the bride and prospective father-in-law (*h̄tn*)¹⁰ of Yarih, could not act as marriage-broker for his future son-in-law (*h̄tn*) in the choice of a bride, particularly one who is the marriage-broker's daughter. Later in the text (lines 24-26), Harhab does indeed offer to act as marriage-broker, but between Yarih and Baal the father of Pidray; an alternative choice to Nikkal. Yarih rejects this offer, including the further one (ll. 28-30) that Athtar might intercede (*ḡtr*)¹¹ for him regarding Yabradmay, remaining steadfast in his choice of Nikkal as bride, with the response (l. 32):

ʿmn . nkl h̄tny With Nikkal will be my *h̄tn*.

The text makes no case for Harhab as marriage-broker, but, rather, as Nikkal's father and Yarih's *h̄tn*.

The text of 1.24 itself suggests we should look for another meaning for *qz*. It may be argued that the scribe has apparently used the phoneme *z* as a dialectal, or scribal variant for *ḫ*. This is supported by the words *zh̄rm* (l. 21) and *lzpn* (l. 44), normally written *ḫrm* and *lḫpn* respectively. These variant forms are, in the case of *zh̄rm*, confined to KTU 1.24, with *lzpn* also found in the very fragmentary 1.25¹². Including *qz*, these are the only words in KTU 1.24 that employ the letter *z*.

⁶ De Moor (1987: 142).

⁷ Virolleaud (1936: 209-28).

⁸ Ginsberg (1939: 323, 325). Driver (CML¹, 1956: 124) adopted this restoration and was subsequently followed by most scholars.

⁹ Including some of those who accept the restoration of *bt* for l. 1 (e.g. TOu I, 391 n.c).

¹⁰ If Harhab is Nikkal's father, then the term *h̄tn* should be applied to him as it is to Baal in l. 25.

¹¹ Del Olmo Lete (MLC, 1981: 459). See also Wyatt (RTU, 1998: 339 n.19), for brief discussion.

¹² Cunchillos and Vita (CPU, 1995: 881), note 3 occurrences of *ḫrm* KTU 1.4.V:19, 34; 2.39:33, and 2 occurrences of the singular form in 9.1.III:19; 9.3.II:1 (both Akkad.) and one occurrence of the

The possibility that *qz* might represent *qs* (**qss* «to cut off») appears to be discounted by the presence of *š* in the words *ḥrš* (l. 20/21), *mšb* (34), and *šgrt* (50) suggesting instead that, in KTU 1.24, the letter *z* represents *ṭ*. Alternatively, the scribe may have written (for reasons unknown) *z* for *š* in the instance of *qz*¹³.

I propose that the epithet *mlk qz* in KTU 1.24 does not describe Harhab as «king of summer», but as «king/counsellor of the cut», with the parallel epithet *mlk aḡzt* qualifying *qz* as marital circumcision. This yields a new translation for ll. 2-3, justifying Harhab's role as father of Nikkal:

Harhab counsellor of circumcision,
Harhab counsellor of weddings.

Our *qz* is a pseudo-homonym of *qz* «summer», created by either dialectal use of *z* for *ṭ*, or scribal preference. It represents Ug. **qt* «cut»¹⁴ (**qtṭ* «to cut», Heb. קטַט «cut off») ¹⁵. The word *qz* «cut», may well represent circumcision if, as the texts thus far discovered apparently attest, there was no Ugaritic word for circumcision corresponding to Hebrew (מורה > מורל). However, the word for father-in-law (*ḥtn*, חתן) and son-in-law (*ḥtn*, חתן) occur in both languages, and the father-in-law, being the *ḥtn* (the circumciser), would perform this rite upon the bridegroom¹⁶. This also explains Yarih's use of the word when he makes his final declaration that he will indeed marry Nikkal (l. 32, see above)¹⁷. Circumcision in the ANE originally took place before marriage, not (as with later Hebrew practice) eight days after birth¹⁸. Summer is nowhere else alluded to in this text, but marriage is; indeed it is the

variant form *zhrm* 1.24:21 (p.886). *lṭpn* (p. 1233) is attested 23 times in 7 tablets (all scribed by Ilimilku), while the variant *lṣpn* occurs twice: 1.24:44 and 1.25:5.

- 13 Orel and Stolbova (HSED, 1995, 333 and 339) find evidence for the use of both *qt* and *qs* to mean circumcision in the Hamito-Semitic phylum.
- 14 CPU, 1757, notes 5 occurrences of *qt*: KTU 1.71:14; 1.72:26; 1.85:18; 1.97:6 (all hippiatric) and the administrative text 4.166:5. The meaning of *qt* in the hippiatric texts is currently unknown but thought to denote «quality». For discussion of hippiatric term, see Cohen (1996: 134f.). Given the use of *qt* in the hippiatric texts as a technical term denoting quality, it is possible that the scribe employed the phoneme *z* to avoid confusion with the homonym *qt* in his text (KTU 1.24), describing an unfamiliar custom (circumcision) to a predominantly Hurrian audience, who may have got the wrong end of the stick upon hearing what they would have believed to have been this hippiatric term. This suggestion, however, is only speculation, so should, therefore, be considered accordingly.
- 15 The scribe's tendency to use *z* in *lṣpn* and *zhrm* may well have influenced his choice of phoneme, thus disguising the distinction between *qz* in KTU 1.19, 20 and 24, and *qs* in KTU 1.114:2. *qt* may be a variant form of Ug. *qs*, **qss* (cf. Akkad. *kašāsu*, Aram., Heb. קָצַץ «to cut off»), as found in KTU 1.114:2, where the sense of «cutting» is implied (cf. n.13 above). I would like to thank N. Wyatt for drawing my attention to this.
- 16 Biella (DOSA, 1982: 212) writes of OSA. *ḥtr*: «Etymology doubtful. Usually compared with Arab. *ḥitān* «celebration at the time of a marriage, circumcision, etc.». See also the discussion of חתן by Kutsch (TDOT, V, 1986: 270-77).
- 17 It may also be preferable to translate 'mn nkl ḥtny (l. 32) as «(in connection) with Nikkal (will be) my circumcision», instead of the more common translation of «my wedding» (cf. Heb. חתונה).
- 18 De Vaux (1976: 46f).

concern of the mythical narrative (ll. 3b-37a). It seems unnecessary, therefore, to associate *qz* «summer» with *agzt* «wedding» in ll. 2-3, when there is no real support for this interpretation. All occurrences of *z* in this text are more than likely dialectal variants for *ʃ*.

Understanding *qz* in KTU 1.24 to signify a premarital rite of circumcision, depends primarily on the internal evidence of the tablet that *z* = *ʃ* (**qʃt* «cut», var.? of **qʃʃ*, see note 15), coupled with the relatively few occurrences in Ugaritic (3) where *qz* means «summer» (KTU 1.19 and 20) and Yarih's response to alternative brides (see my discussion above).

The practice of premarital circumcision in the ANE is difficult to determine with any accuracy, but we have evidence that as early as the third millennium B.C.E. the custom was practised in Egypt¹⁹. To this may be added the statement in Jer. 9:24-25 that Egypt, Judah, Edom, Ammon and Moab practised circumcision. The Arabs, Phoenicians and Syrians are said, by Herodotus, to have also practised circumcision, while the Philistines (1 Sam. 18:25), Hivvites (Gen. 34:14)²⁰, Assyrians, Elamites (Ez. 32:21-30) and Sidonians were uncircumcised. If circumcision was introduced to Ugarit via Egypt, we must also consider whether the practise of dorsal incision was also observed, or complete removal of the foreskin, as was the practise amongst the Hebrews²¹. De Vaux wondered whether the absence of Canaanites amongst the above «catalogue of the uncircumcised nations» indicates that they observed this practice, but it is unclear whether de Vaux included Ugaritians here²². He further observed that circumcision was «originally ... an initiation rite before marriage», with the story of Dinah and Shechem (Gen. 34)²³, in particular, facilitating this connection²⁴.

The terms for father-in-law and son-in-law, in Ugaritic and Hebrew, both derive from **h̄tn* (see above), which means in O.S.Arab. «to circumcise»²⁵. Circumcision renders the man fit for marriage, symbolising the fertility of the organ, much as a fruit-tree must be «pruned» before it will yield a worthwhile crop²⁶.

¹⁹ This distinction may account for the absence of **mwl* at Ugarit and the use of *qz* «cut». Sasson (1966: 474) notes that in Egyptian texts, sculptures and mummies, the indications are that circumcision was «reserved for either a period of prenuptial ceremonies, or, more likely, for initiation intomanhood».

²⁰ The LXX reads at Gen. 34:2 ὁ Χορραῖος for MT's חורוי, which suggests that Shechem's people (the Hivvites) were in fact Hurrian.

²¹ See Sasson (1966: 473-76), for more detailed treatment.

²² For further discussion of this issue, see Lemche (1998: 19-24, esp. bibliog.).

²³ See Wyatt (1990: 433-58), who suggests that Gen. 34, like KTU 1.24, had a Hurrian *Vorlage*. KTU 1.23 contains a section (ll. 8-11) which Wyatt thinks may allude to this rite. See Wyatt (1992: 426-30, and RTU: 326f., nn.10-12), for further discussion.

²⁴ De Vaux (1976: 46f.), Eilberg-Schwartz (1990: 142). Gen. 34 presents us with an incidence of premarital circumcision, as well as preserving much that may be seen to correspond to the same tradition as KTU 1.24.

²⁵ Biella (DOS, 1982: 212).

²⁶ Cf. Eilberg-Schwartz (1990: 141-76, esp. 148-49 and 160).

There is no evidence from Ugarit that weddings occurred during a particular season (summer); hence the title of this paper. In the Hebrew Bible a marriage takes place during Harvest-time (Ruth), but the word *רֵץ* «summer» is not used in this story, and the bride involved is in fact a widow who attempts to marry a kinsman of her dead husband, in order to procure sons to keep his name alive.

The obstacle presented to Shechem in Gen. 34:14-17²⁷, states the reason why Dinah's brothers must refuse his permission to marry their sister: Shechem is uncircumcised. Whilst the overall concerns of Gen. 34 appear racial rather than ritual²⁸, the connection between circumcision and marriage appears to have survived in this ancient story. The narrative of Gen. 34 appears to have acquired subsequent motifs relevant to each successive audience, with its own particular concerns, obscuring the story's original purpose: a tale describing the introduction of premarital circumcision to a particular group who had previously never practised this initiation rite. The basic threads of the narrative of Gen. 34 correspond well to that of KTU 1.24: seduction of girl, request for hand in marriage, attempt to thwart the would-be groom, acceptance of circumcision, marriage. But, where the Genesis tale ends tragically (a later accretion?), our Ugaritic counterpart ends in domestic bliss.

To understand the use of *qz* in KTU 1.24 to mean *qz* = **q̄t!* «cut», within the context of the narrative, would certainly suit Harhab's role as *h̄tn* «father-in-law», and provide him with a role that corresponds to the description of him as Nikkal's father (cf. l. 1). Nikkal, the bride, is described by an epithet that probably means «fruitful». Her father must, therefore, be the one who makes the groom suitably prepared, in order that full advantage of this «fruitfulness» is achieved. The fact that **h̄tn* means (with different vocalizations) both father-in-law and son-in-law suggests that circumcision was the rite that legitimized this relationship. The use of *qz* as a variant for **q̄t!* represents circumcision, for beyond the term *qz* or *h̄tn*, we have no indication that any other word was used²⁹.

²⁷ Yarih is, similarly, presented with an obstacle to his intention to marry Nikkal, 1.24: 25-30.

²⁸ See Wyatt (1990), for reasons.

²⁹ **zbr* «to prune» (n.m. «pruner») KTU 1.23:9 may be worthy of consideration if the proposal of Wyatt (1992) is correct.

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