The Kaftiw spell against Asiatic disease from the London Medical Papyrus

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Abstract

The Kaftiw/Minoan spell against Asiatic disease from the London Medical Papyrus is the following: sān tikpwp w3yw3y ymn"n tiirk3i. Kaftiw/Minoan is very close to Hattic. sān tikpwp looks much like Hattic possessive genitive where the possessor has suffix -n, and the possessed has prefix teš/še/le. sā Hattic sā “to heal”. tikpwp seems to have kap as the root (kap means “Moon” in Hattic), and partial reduplication takes place in this word, so kipwp probably means “crescent”. w3yw3y seems to be an interjection like “hey” / “ouch”. ymn”n ~ Hattic imallen “thus” / “this way”. tiirk3i ~ te-hir-kar-kar where: te – a marker of optative in Hattic, kar-kar ~ Hattic “to rake”, “to scrape”, hir ~ Hattic hil “to strew”, and so te-hir-kar-kar means “may [this/someone] remove the rash”. Thus, the original phrase could be following: sa-n te-kapup-p(V) wāyway imallen te-hir-kar-kar “hey, may healing horned Moon remove the rash this way”.

Keywords: Minoan language; Kaftiw language; Kaftiw; Egyptian Papyruses; Minoan Crete

1. Introduction to the problem

The London Medicine Papyrus is an ancient Egyptian papyrus from British Museum. The papyrus is a collection of recipes, descriptions of magic means, and spells. The main theme of the papyrus is skin and eyes diseases. The papyrus was published by Walter Wreszinski (Wreszinski 1912). It is dated to about 1629 – 1628 BCE (Friedrich et al. 2006). Among others spells the papyrus contains some spells in languages other than ancient Egyptian: in Semitic, Nubian, and in Kaftiw (Haider 2001: 479). Kaftiw/Keftiu was the ancient Egyptian name of Crete and the Cretan people (the Minoans). There are two Kaftiw spells in the papyrus. Earlier I analyzed the spell against samuna ubuqi disease (Akulov 2017a, 2017b, 2017c) and in the current paper I am going to consider the Kaftiw spell against Asiatic disease (the text of the spell can be seen in Fig. 1).

Fig. 1. Text of the spell (image source – Wreszinski 1912: 151)
2. The text of the Kaftiw spell and the accompanying ancient Egyptian text

For the convenience of further consideration, the inscription is turned so that it reads from left to right (see Fig. 2).

![Figure 2: The inscription is turned in an easy-to-read direction; the text of the spell is divided into words](image)

Transliteration

1. $\text{Sm}$ Det of speak/think, eat/drink
2. $nt\ nt\ nt$ Det of plurality / majority / collective concept
3. $\text{s}m\ w$ Det of disease*, Det of plurality / majority / collective concept
4. $m\ dd\ nf$ Det of foreign land
5. $\text{k}\text{f}i\text{tw}$ Det of plurality / majority / collective concept
6. $\text{s}n$ Det of plurality / majority / collective concept
7. $\text{tk}\text{pwp}$ Det of duality
8. $\text{w}\text{by}\text{w}\text{y}$ Det of speak/think, eat/drink
9. $\text{ym}\text{t}$ Det of plurality / majority / collective concept
10. $\text{t}i\text{rki}k$ Det of speak/think, eat/drink
11. $\text{r}\text{d}\text{d}\text{w}$ Det of ideogram
12. $\text{tw}$ Det of ideogram
13. $\text{pn}$ Det of ideogram
14. $\text{hr}$ Det of ideogram
15. $\text{g}\text{s}k$ Det of vessel, Det of plurality / majority / collective concept
16. $\text{m}\text{w}\text{y}\text{t}$ Det of vessel, Det of plurality / majority / collective concept
17. $\text{m}\text{y}\text{t}$ Det of water, Det of plurality / majority / collective concept
18. ???
19. $\text{rdir}\text{w}s$

Translation

[A] spell(1) of/about(2) Asiatic disease(3) say this (4) Kaftiw/Cretan(5) (6 – 10 the text in Kaftiw language), this(13) word(12) to be said(11) upon/over/above(14) [a] liquid (15), fermented drink(16), urine (17) ?? (18) do this (19).

The Kaftiw spell is recorded by the so-called group-writing, i.e.: by meaningless sets of signs which convey the original sound, and with the use of determinatives, so it is possible to reconstruct the original sound, to determine borders of words, and in some cases it is possible
to determine classes of words and even say something definite about lexical meaning. It should be noted, however, that in the case of the spell against Asiatic disease determinatives seem to point only to the grammatical classes of words (combination of words), and don’t help much to determine possible meanings.

Unlike the spell against *samuna ubuqi* disease the spell against Asiatic disease contains no names of deities, and, thus, it has attracted less attention of researchers (see for instance Kiriakidis): for some unknown reasons, fantasizing about the names of deities seems more attractive than analyzing the structures of verbs.

3. Decoding the Kaftiw spell

Earlier it was found that samples of the Kaftiw/Minoan language can be decoded through the Hattic language; it is possible to say that Kaftiw/Minoan and Hattic belong to the same group (Akulov 2017b, 2017c, 2021)

And, thus, it is fairly logical to suppose that the text of the spell against Asiatic disease also can be decoded through Hattic.

The text of the Kaftiw spell is the following:

\[
\begin{array}{llll}
\text{s} & \text{n} & \text{Det of plurality / majority / collective concept} & \text{tik} & \text{Det of duality} & \text{pwp} & \text{Det of speak/ think, eat/drink} \\
\text{ym} & \text{n} & \text{Det of plurality / majority / collective concept} & \text{ti} & \text{Det of speak/think, eat/drink} & \text{k} & \text{pwp} \\
\end{array}
\]

The words *s*3n *tik*pwp look much like Hattic possessive genitive construction. Hattic possessive genitive is formed according to the following model: X-n + te-Y where X is the noun that denotes possessor and Y is the noun that denotes possessed (Kassian 2010b: 183).

The suffix -n is a standard Hattic marker of the genitive, it also has variants: -an, -in, -un (Kassian 2010b: 177). The possessive prefix te- also has variant še-, and also the idea of possession can be implemented by the prefix le- (Kassian 2010b: 177). Thus, it is possible to single out genitive suffix -n in s3n and possessive prefix te-1 in tik*pwp: s3-n ti-k*pwp, i.e.: there is a certain s3 that possesses k*pwp.

This s3 correlates with the Hattic word sa “to favor”, “to make healthy”, “to heal”2.

And the second component k*pwp correlates with the Hattic word kap “moon”3. In the papyrus the word tik*pwp bears the determinative of duality (Fig. 2, word 7), and in the word-form can be seen partial reduplication: ti-k*pwp-p – I suppose that the final p reduplicates the previous pw. Taking into account the fact that the Moon is often seen as crescent, i.e.: as a structure with two horns, so it looks pretty natural and logical that crescent can be described by the partial reduplication in the word-form that denotes Moon.

Thus, it is possible to say that s3n *tik*pwp originally has the following view: sa-n te-kapu-p(Y)4 that means “healing horned Moon”.

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1 The fact that in the papyrus this affix is written as ti, but not te is completely normal: the ancient Egyptian writing system didn’t express vowels well and could not express [e]. And, secondly, it is possible to say that vowels [e] and [i] were variants of the same phoneme in Hattic (Kassian 2010b: 171).

2 Kammernhuber 1969: 528.

3 Soysal 2004: 364.

4 I suppose that the original Kaftiw/Minoan word-form could probably have a vowel in its end, and this vowel could be reduced.
The word-form $w\ddot{y}yw\ddot{y}y$ is supposed to be an interjection / exclamation like “hey”, or “ouch”. I suppose that originally this word-form was $w\ddot{y}w\ddot{y}y$.

The long vowel in the Egyptian recording of this word can express that in the original Kaftiwi word there was long [a] in the first syllable, or that the stress falls on that syllable, but this item also can be accidental or simply a mistake of an ancient Egyptian scribe.

The word $ym\ddot{n}$ can be correlated with Hattic $imallen$ – “this”, “in this way”\(^5\).

The word-form $ti\ddot{r}k\ddot{e}k\ddot{i}$ is supposed to be the second verb of the spell. It is possible to suppose that originally it was the following: $te$-$hir$-$kar$-$kar$\(^6\) where $te$- is a marker of optative\(^7\), $kar$-$kar$ is the main root meaning “to rake”, “to scrape”\(^8\), also “to cover by soil”, “to bury”\(^9\), and the component $hir$ correlates with Hattic $hel$, $hil$\(^10\) “to strew”, “to pour”, “to scatter”\(^11\), “to pour”\(^12\). The component $hir$ probably means “rash”, and it is incorporated into the verb $kar$, and so $hir$-$kar$-$kar$ means “to rake a rash”, “to clean a rash”.

The verb $kar$-$kar$ basically is a divalent verb, and with the incorporation of $hir$ it becomes monovalent, i.e.: it requires subject only, however, in the form $ti\ddot{r}k\ddot{e}k\ddot{i}$ can’t be singled out the component that can be a marker of the subject, so it is possible to suppose that in this word-form subject is expressed by a zero morpheme or is merged with the stem. If the subject is expressed by a zero morpheme, it is possible to state that originally it was a marker of 3\(^{\text{rd}}\) person\(^13\).

And thus the whole word-form $te$-$hir$-$kar$-$kar$ means “may he/she/it remove the rash”\(^14\).

Summarizing the above said it is possible to say that the phrase:

$s\ddot{n} t\ddot{i}k\ddot{e}wp w\ddot{y}yw\ddot{y}y\ m\ddot{y}n\ t\ddot{i}k\ddot{e}k\ddot{i}$ initially had the following view:

$s\ddot{n}$-$n$\(^1\) $ti$-$kapu$-$p(V)$\(^2\) $w\ddot{y}w\ddot{y}y$-$m\ddot{y}n$-$ti$-$hir$-$kar$-$kar$\(^3\) that means:

“healing horned Moon(1-2) hey/ouch(3) may he/she/it remove the rash(5) this way(4)”, i.e.:

“hey, may healing horned Moon remove the rash this way”.

References


Akulov A. 2017b. Some notes on the grammatical structure of a verb from a Minoan incantation from London Medicine Papyrus. *Cultural Anthropology and Ethnosemiotics*, Vol 3, N\( \ddot{o} \) 1; pp.: 35 – 41


\(^6\) The situation here is the same as with the above-considered optative marker $te$-: the ancient Egyptian writing system could not express [e]. And, secondly, it is possible to say that vowels [e] and [i] were variants of the same phoneme in Hattic (Kassian 2010b: 171).

\(^7\) Kassian 2010b: 178 – 179.

\(^8\) Kassian 2010a: 376.


\(^11\) Kassian 2010a: 343.

\(^12\) Soysal 2004: 279.

\(^13\) Kassian 2010b: 179.

\(^14\) The fact that rash seems to be mentioned in the text of the spell correlates well with the fact that London Medical Papyrus is mainly devoted to skin and eyes diseases.


