

The Ugaritic Charm against Snakebite: An Additional Note

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In *JANES* 7 (1975), 33–51 I offered an interpretation of the now famous Ugaritic charm against snakebite, RS 24.244 and there pointed out certain affinities, both in general tenor and in stylistic features, with spells inscribed on the Egyptian “Horus cippi” (such as the Metternich Stele) and contained in the Turin Papyrus. In working over this text once more it has occurred to me that a further Egyptian analogue might perhaps be recognized in the “magical wands” which formed the subject of an elaborate and detailed study by F. Legge in *PSBA* 27 (1905), 130–52, 297–303; 28 (1906), 159–70.¹ These curved objects made of ivory are engraved with pictures of a procession of deities and of animals representing them about to attack, or actually triumphant over, snakes and other reptiles.² Prominent among them, and sometimes portrayed with human legs, is the solar disk.³ Those of the wands which bear short inscriptions almost invariably define them as designed for the protection of *females*.⁴ Is it, then, too fanciful to suggest that in these pictures we have an iconographic counterpart of the Ugaritic charm, where the sun-goddess (Š-p-š) is invoked to rally various gods and goddesses against the depredations of serpents and where the action ends (if my interpretation is correct) in Hôrôn’s providing such protection for a female character? As I said in my article, I am not suggesting a full-scale literary dependence, but simply a possible influence.

There are two small corrections to my article which I should like to make:

1. In explaining the verb *ysynh* (|| *ynʿrnh*) in line 66 as derived from a $\sqrt{*n-s-y}$ ‘shake, tremble, be convulsed,’ I cited as a cognate the Arabic $\sqrt{n-š-n-š}$. This is philologically untenable. On the other hand, for $\sqrt{*n-s-y}$ in this sense as a cognate of Ar. $\sqrt{n-w-s}$, Syr.

1 In *PSBA* 28 (1906), 33f., Margaret Murray attempted to interpret these objects as *horoscopes*, but this was effectively refuted by Legge in the final installment of his study.

2 They are sometimes shown with knives (e.g., Legge’s Nos. 50, 51, 56, 59), sometimes holding up, devouring or treading on snakes or other reptiles (Nos. 54, 57, 59).

3 E.g., Nos. 50, 56, 58.

4 E.g., Nos. 3, 4, 15, 46, 48.

$\sqrt{n-s}$,⁵ we may compare BH $\sqrt{g-r-y} = \sqrt{g-w-r}$ II; NH $\sqrt{n-\bar{p}-y}$, Ethiopic $\sqrt{n-\bar{p}-y} =$ BH $\sqrt{n-w-\bar{p}}$ I; BH $\sqrt{s-\bar{h}-y} = \sqrt{*s-w-\bar{h}}$ (cf. n. *sūḥā*); and $\sqrt{c-r-y}$ II = $\sqrt{c-w-r}$ (Hab. 3:9).

2. My statement (ad l. 71) that a word $\sqrt{ll}$ denoting some kind of metal is not attested in Ugaritic was incorrect, for it occurs in UT 1022:4, 5; 1139:2; 1143:2, 5; and 2051:3.

I suspect that it is an Asianic loanword with nom. sg. suffix $-\bar{t}$ = Hittite, Hurrian $-\bar{s}$.

Nevertheless, I still think that in the passage in question, an explanation from Semitic $\sqrt{ll}$ 'three,' *sensu* 'threefold, in triplicate,' yields better sense.

5 Cp. also Akkad. *nasāsu* II.