

Removing The “Gags” of the Euphrates: *hippam nasāhum**

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The expression *hippam nasāhum* is known only from Mari texts, in which it occurs in three variant forms:

1. *hippaka nasāhum*

a. ARM 2 67: 12'–13'—letter from Zimri-Lim to Ḫammurapi of Babylon:

(12') *šābum šū kīma 30 līmī šābim ḫi-ip-p[a-ka]*¹ (13') *na-sa-ḫa-am ile'i* [x x x]

These troops will be able to remove[your] . . . like 30,000 troops . . .

Though the tablet is somewhat damaged, we can still learn that the king of Mari has sent Ḫanaean troops to the aid of Ḫammurapi, and though their number be small,² they will still be as effective as 30,000 troops. The expression *hippam nasāhum* is seen to refer either to Ḫammurapi's enemies themselves, or to the military situation created by them.

b. ARM 10 1: 7–8—letter from Gabi³atum to Yasmaḫ-Addu:

(7) ^d*Dagan ḫi-ip-pa-[ka]* (8) *annummiam* [I]i-s[u!-uḫ] (9) *u ina šal[imtim]* (10) *ana Mar[iki]*

(11) *atlaka[m]*

May Dagan re[move] this . . . [of yours] and (you) leave for Mari in pe[ace]!

Gabi³atum goes on to pray to Ištar to grant Yasmaḫ-Addu life and rule, again expressing the hope that the viceroy leave for Mari in peace.³ It is clear that

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1 Another possible reading is *ḫi-ip-p[i-ka]*, with *hippum* in the plural oblique, and this provided that Ḫammurapi is faced with more than one enemy or difficulty. M. Anbar, *RA* 75 (1981), 187, restores: *ḫi-ip-p[a-am ša pa-ni-ka]* for ARM 2, 67: 12'. The two other completely restorable lines of similar sign distribution in this tablet, 3' and 4', have 17 and 18 signs respectively. Thus Anbar's restored text for line 12', with its 21 signs, would seem to be too long. The reading offered here gives a total of 17 signs for the line and is supported by ARM 10, 1: 7–8.

2 ARM 2, 67: 7'–11'.

3 ARM 10, 1: 12–20.

Yasmaḥ-Addu is away from his capital. Moreover, even with the obsequious formulary of this letter, it appears that the viceroy of Mari is on a political or military mission in which both his sovereignty and his life are at stake. Overcoming this difficulty is the subject of *hippam nasāḥum* as used here.

2. (*h*)ippam ša pānīa/pānīka nasāḥum

The following two examples are from unpublished texts and are cited in *ARMT* 10, p. 252:⁴

a. A. 1289: 4

ip-pa-am ša pa-ni-ia lu-us-sú-[uḥ]

... that I may remove the ... in front of me/of my face.

b. A. 422: 23–24

be-li-m[a]! ḥi-ip-pa-am ša pa-ni-ka i-na-sà-aḥ

My lord alone will remove the ... in front of you/of your face.

The translation of the words *pānīa/pānīka* depends on whether they are to be understood as the singular *pānum*, “front”, or the plural *pānū*, “face”.⁵ Both passages cited are said to deal with the suppression of a revolt.

3. *hippī ša kišād Purattim nasāḥum*

RA 33 (1936), 51 i 21–23—the “Disc Inscription” of Yaḥdun-Lim.⁶ The first section of the inscription concludes with a passage describing the beneficial effects of Yaḥdun-Lim’s victorious campaign(s) against seven Hanaean kings:⁷

(21) *ḥi-ip-pī* (22) *ša GÚ* ¹⁷UD.KIB.NUN.NA (23) *as-sú-úḥ-ma* (24) *māī šubtam* (25) *nēḫtam ušēšib*
I removed the ... of the banks of the Euphrates and caused my land to dwell in security.

Form 3 offers the plural oblique *hippī* instead of the singular accusative *hippam/hippaka* otherwise attested. However, there should be no doubt that the same noun and a variant of the same expression are intended.⁸ In all the passages cited the noun in question appears with a form of the verb *nasāḥum*. Likewise, in all cases the context refers to the quelling of military or political disturbances and the restoration of

4 See also Sollberger and Kupper *Inscriptions*, 245 a.

5 Cf. *ARMT* 10, p. 252; Sollberger and Kupper *Inscriptions*, 245 a, both of which construe *pānīa/pānīka* as the plural.

6 F. Thureau-Dangin, *RA* 33 (1936), 49–54; Sollberger and Kupper *Inscriptions*, 244–45 (new translation); J.-R. Kupper, *Kramer AV (AOAT 25)*, 301–3 (new transliteration and translation). The line count followed here is that of Thureau-Dangin, and indicates the column division of the original document; see photo on p. 50. The other references cited use a consecutive line count without indication of column.

7 *RA* 33 (1936), 51, i:15–20.

8 Cf. *AHw.*, 1561b, s.v. *hippum* I, where uncertainty is expressed as to the relationship to Form 3 (= *AHw.* entry *hibbum*, p. 344 a).

equilibrium. The plural form *hippī* of the "Disc Inscription" is easily accounted for by the plurality of Yaḥdun-Lim's enemies (seven kings), or by the plurality of campaigns required to subdue them.

Though the general connotation of *hippam nasāḥum* is thus clear enough, the exact meaning of the word *hippum* has eluded scholars. This has prevented proper appreciation of the expression as a whole and the relationship between its variant forms. M. Held, after reviewing the various attempts at interpreting Form 3, left the etymology of *hippum* (which he rendered *hibbum*, as do *AHw* and *CAD H*⁹) an open question.¹⁰ Held, however, was unaware of the other examples of this expression.¹¹

Subsequent studies have not made the definition of *hippum* any clearer. *ARMT* 10, citing all the examples except for *ARM* 2 67: 12'-13' (Form 1a), understands *hippam nasāḥum* in the sense of "obliterating injuries",¹² following Kupper's translation of the expression in the "Disc Inscription."¹³ Though they offer no explanation, the Belgian scholars may have been influenced by Form 2, (*h*)*ippam ša pānūia/pānīka nasāḥum*, understanding the second noun as the plural *pānū*, "face", and then associating *hippum* with *hīpum*, "break". As Held has pointed out, however, *hīpum* never has the connotation of "injury" as such.¹⁴ Moreover, the variant orthography of Form 2b, *ip-pa-am*, makes it difficult to associate (*h*)*ippam* with *hīpum*, which is never written without the initial *h*. And, lastly, *pānūia/pānīka* may be derived from the singular *pānum*, "front", and not the plural *pānū*, "face".

CAD N, though citing *ARMT* 10, prefers to suggest "*hippu*-structures (?)" for *hippī* of the "Disc Inscription" (Form 3).¹⁵ This harks back to *CAD H*, which views *hippum* as "probably some kind of irrigation apparatus".¹⁶ Form 2 of the expression makes this interpretation unlikely. Should *hippam ša pānūia/pānīka* mean "the *hippum* in front of me/you", then *hippum* need not denote "structure". It could just as well refer to any kind of interference or obstacle, man-made or natural, impeding one's progress, and the removal of which, literal or figurative, is equivalent to defeating one's adversaries. Should *hippam ša pānūia/pānīka* mean "the *hippum* of my/your face", then it is difficult to conceive of any kind of "structure" that could fit this description. The *hippum* would rather be something which bothers the face, just as political or military opponents disturb the smooth functioning of one's reign. Removal of the source of discomfort, the *hippum*, would then be an idiom for quelling disturbances. This is apparently the understanding of Kupper and *ARMT* 10.

Let us now examine the orthography of *hippum*. Though the plural oblique *hippī* is written with the sign BI, which could be read either *bi* or *pī*, (*h*)*ippam* and *hippaka* are consistently written with the sign PA, which, to the best of my knowledge, is

9 *AHw.*, 344a, s.v. *hibbum*; *CAD H*, 179a, s.v. *hibbu*.

10 M. Held, *JANES* 11 (1979), 59-62.

11 Shortly before his sudden and untimely death in June 1984, Prof. Held and I discussed the expression, and I brought all the extant examples to his attention. The distinguished scholar passed away before we could pursue the subject any further.

12 *ARMT* 10, 1: 7-8, and p. 252.

13 J.-R. Kupper, *Kramer AV*, 302; Sollberger and Kupper *Inscriptions*, 244-45.

14 M. Held, *JANES* 11 (1979), 60.

15 *CAD N*/2, 5a, s.v. *nasāḥu*.

16 *CAD H*, 179a, s.v. *hibbu*.

almost always read *pa*, and not *bá*, in Mari texts.¹⁷ It is thus all but certain that the geminated consonant is *p* and not *b*.

Secondly, the variant orthography *ip-pa-am* of Form 2b opens up the possibility that the cuneiform scribes were trying to transcribe the Amorite phoneme ³, *h*, or ^c. Similar variant orthographies are exhibited by Amorite proper nouns in Mari texts, as can be seen in the following examples (with the phoneme in question in the initial position, or following a closed syllable):

Phoneme	Root	Proper Noun
³	<i>śm³l</i> —"left, north" ¹⁸	<i>Si-im-a-al</i> , ¹⁹ <i>Si-im-ḥa-al</i> ²⁰
<i>h</i>	<i>ḥnn</i> —"be gracious, favor" ²¹	<i>An-na-^dIM</i> , ²² <i>Ḥa-an-na-^dIM</i> ²³
		<i>An-ni-DINGIR</i> , ²⁴ <i>Ḥa-an-ni-DINGIR</i> ²⁵
^c	<i>ḥbd</i> —"slave, servant" ²⁶	<i>Ab-du-ma-^dDa-gan</i> , ²⁷ <i>Ḥa-ab-du-ma-^dDa-gan</i> ²⁸
	<i>ḥqb</i> —"watch, protect" ²⁹	<i>Aq-ba-a-ḥu-um/ḥi-im/ḥa-am</i> , ³⁰ <i>Ḥa-aq-ba-a-ḥu-um/ḥi-im</i> ³¹

We should thus not overlook the possibility that (*h*)*ippum*, which is known only from Mari texts, is an Amorite loan word deriving from a geminated root ³*pp*, *hpp*, or ^c*pp*. Of these, the root *hpp* having the connotation "enclose, surround" is well suited to the requirements of the *hippum*-contexts.³² Note the Biblical Hebrew verb *ḥāfāf*,³³

17 See R. Borger, *Assyrisch-babylonisch Zeichenliste*, 2. Auflage (Kevelaer, 1981), 56; von Soden, *Syllabar*², 2. The one possible exception known to me, *ú-bá-nim* in ARM 2, 21: 12, is doubtful, and *ú-pa-nim* may be a preferable reading. On this, see ARMT 15, 43, no. 153; p. 48, s.v. *ba*, *bá*; p. 189, s.v. *ubānum*; Finet *L'Accadien* 70, 104.

18 APNM, 249, s.v. *SM³L*.

19 ARM 2, 33: 21'; 10, 59: 4, 13; 13, 144: 29. For additional examples, see ARMT 16/1, 30, s.v. *Sim³al*.

20 ARM 2, 37: 25.

21 APNM 200, s.v. *HNN*; I. J. Gelb, *A Computer-Aided Analysis of Amorite* (Chicago, 1980) 20, s.v. *HNN*.

22 ARM 1, 132: 11; 9, 298: 11; cf. ARMT 16/1, 62, s.v. *Anna-Addu*; Gelb *Amorite*, 82, s.v. *HANN*.

23 ARM 9, 291 iii: 48'; Gelb, *ibid*.

24 ARM 9, 291, iv: 27'; cf. ARMT 16/1, 62, s.v. *Anni-El*; Gelb, *ibid*.

25 ARMT 13, 1, ii: 7; Gelb, *ibid*.

26 APNM 189, s.v. *HBD*; Gelb, *Amorite*, 15, s.v. *ḥabdim*.

27 See, e.g., ARM 1, 18: 5, 12, 37.

28 See, e.g., ARM 1, 62: 5', 8'; 2 27: 14. These two variants are listed together in ARMT 16/1, 95, s.v. *Ḥabduma-Dagan*, where a full list of references is given. Both variants refer to the same person in Par. 1', 2°. Cf. also Gelb *Amorite*, 89, s.v. *ABD*.

29 APNM, 203, s.v. *HQB*; Gelb *Amorite*, 15, s.v. *ḥqb*.

30 See, for example, ARM 1, 98: 19, 22; 2, 69: 2 (sender).

31 See, for example, ARM 1, 12: 25; 7, 1: 14. For additional examples of these and other variants, see ARMT 16/1, 107, s.v. (*Ḥaqba-aḥu(m)*); cf. also Gelb, *Amorite*, 96, s.v. *ḤQB*.

32 ³*pp* is related to *hpp*, as pointed out by P. Humbert, ZAW 62 (1950), 200, s.v. ³*pp*. Note Biblical Hebrew ³*āfāf*, "surround, encompass"; Mishnaic Hebrew ³*āfāfōn*, "web". Mari *apāpum* is considered a Canaanite loan-word meaning "surround" by AHw., 57a, s.v. *apāpum*, but is considered of uncertain derivation and meaning by CAD A/2, 166b, s.v. **apāpu*. The root ^c*pp* as it occurs in Aramaic ^c*afaf*, and Syriac ^c*af*, has the basic meaning "double, fold over", and may be considered a more distant relative of *hpp*. Whether Hebrew *b^cōf'fō* in Ezek. 32: 10 is related to this root or to the *mediae* *waw* *ūf*, "fly", is a matter of debate. For the former opinion, see G. R. Driver, JTS 34 [1933], 376; KBL¹, 723b, s.v. ^c*pp*. For the latter opinion, see BDB, 733b, s.v. 1 ^c*wp*; KBL³ 753 a, s.v. 1 ^c*wp*; W. Zimmerli, *Ezekiel* (Neukirchen, 1969), 2: 765. Ugaritic ^c*pp*, 11 AB ii 10 (UT 52 ii 10), is explained as "implore, entreat", with reference to the parallel *gzy*

"protect, shelter", and noun *ḥuppāh*, "shelter, chamber of bridegroom"; the Mishnaic Hebrew noun *ḥʿfifāh*, "covering"; the Aramaic verb *ḥʿfaf*, "cover"; the Syriac noun *ḥefīfʿlā*, "a kind of garment"; the Arabic verb *ḥaffa*, "surround", and nouns *ḥaffun*, "encirclement, surrounding", and *ḥifāfun*, "border, edge".

With *pānīa/pānīka* of Form 2 construed as the singular, Mari *ḥippum* can be considered a kind of obstacle surrounding, encircling, and thereby impeding free movement, an apt metaphor for enemies or political or military disturbances. Form 2 of the expression, (*ḥ*)*ippam ša pānīa/pānīka nasāḥum*, is to be translated "remove the obstacle confronting me/you; Form 1, *ḥippaka nasāḥum*, is simply "remove your obstacle"; and Form 3, *ḥippī ša kišād Purattim nasāḥum*—"remove the obstacles of the banks of the Euphrates".

With *pānīa/pānīka* construed as the plural, Mari *ḥippum* can then be thought of as a kind of covering encircling, enclosing, and/or enveloping the face, partly or wholly, hindering thereby the free exercise of the vital respiratory, sensory, ingestory, and/or speech organs—in other words, a sort of "muffler" or "gag" figuratively representing the hindrances caused by military or political opposition. According to this line of reasoning, *ḥippam ša pānīa/pānīka nasāḥum* means "remove, tear off, a gag from my/your face"; *ḥippam nasāḥum*—"remove a gag"; and *ḥippam ša kišād Purattim nasāḥum*—"remove the gags of the banks of the Euphrates". This fits in well with the usage of the verb *nasāḥum*, which includes the divestment of headgear and other articles of clothing.³⁴

Yaḥdun-Lim, by defeating the seven Hanaean kings who had impeded the free exercise of his sovereignty along the Middle Euphrates, with all that is implied economically, politically and militarily, had either "removed the obstacles" or "removed the gags" of the banks of the Euphrates.³⁵

(line 11), and the Arabic *ʿafā*, "erase, pardon"; see A. Caquot et al., *Textes Ougaritiques I* (Paris, 1970), 198. This does not seem to have any bearing on the connotation required for Mari *ḥippum*.

33 Only the qal part. *ḥōfēf*, Deut. 33:12, is attested.

34 See, for example, *ARM* 1, 8: 31–32: *ša qaqqadīšina u šubātīšin[a] li-sū-uḥ-ḥu-ma*, "let them (m.) remove the (headgear) of their (f.) heads and their (f.) garments."

35 Yaḥdun-Lim also uses the expression *kišād Purattim gamārum*, "finish the banks of the Euphrates," in both the "Disc" and "Foundation" Inscriptions to describe the extension of his sovereignty over the same area. For the references, see F. Thureau-Dangin, *RA* 33 (1936), 49, i: 7–8; G. Dossin, *Syria* 32 (1955), 8, iv: 4. For the interpretation of this expression, see J.-R. Kupper, *Kramer AV*, 301–2, 7–8; *CAD G*, 27b, s.v. *gamāru*.