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A Remedy for Equine Bloat?

Wilfred G. E. Watson

1. The text

Line 9 of KTU 4.863 (= RS 94.2276) reads as follows: *mītm. tyt. l. mzl. ššwm*, “Two hundred (shekels) of *tyt* for the *mzl* of horses”. The translation in the *editio princeps* is: “Deux cents (sicles d’) *asa foetida* pour le MZL des chevaux”, with the explanatory note: “On en conclura qu’il s’agissait soit d’une dérivé de la plante qu’on mélangerait au fourrage des chevaux, soit du médicament bien connu”¹. The quantity involved is about 2 kilograms², but an even larger amount is recorded in another recently published text: *tl̄tm prqt tyt*, “thirty sackfuls of the *tyt*-plant” (KTU 4.811:9)³. There are similar quantities in its occurrences in other Ugaritic texts (see below), so clearly the material in question was not expensive.

2. Two difficult words

Evidently, the two key words in this line are *mzl* and *tyt* and here they are considered in reverse order.

2a. *tyt* - We can begin with Ug. *tyt*, which also occurs, in large amounts, in KTU 4.14:14; 4.203:17; 4.337:26; 4.811:9; 5.11:13⁴. It has been equated with Akk. *tījatu*, “(an herb and shrub)” (CAD T, 400); “eine Drogenpflanze” (als Droge oft neben *nuḥurtu*: AHW, 1357a); Akk. *tīyatu*, occas. *tiat*, “(a medicinal plant)” (M/NB, NA; CDA, 408a)⁵. What, then, are Ug. *tyt* and Akk. *tīyatu*? Akk. *tīyatu* has been equated with JAram. *tīj/’ā*, “Hahnenfuß” (AHW, 1357a) or crowfoot. However, Aram. *tiyyāh*, *tīyāh*, *tī’āh*, “root of crowfoot (*Ranunculus*)”, though used as a spice, is considered poisonous for beasts (cf. DTT, 1663a)⁶. To identify the plant in question, it is helpful if we look at how it was used. In fact, in

¹ RSOu 18, p. 110.

² RSOu 18, p. 112.

³ On the meaning of Ug. *prqt* see Watson 2007b, 99 n. 284; 2015, 34.

⁴ Texts: *kk̄r w ml̄th tyt*, “one talent and one measure of *tyt*” (KTU 4.337:26); a *kk̄r* or talent weighed about 1 kilogram; *ālp̄ arb̄š māt tyt*, “one] thousand four hundred (shekels) of *tyt*” (KTU 4.14:14); *ḥmšt kkr tyt*, “five talents of *tyt*” (KTU 4.203:17); *mītm tyt*, “two hundred (shekels) of *tyt*” (KTU 4.863:9).

⁵ See Nougayrol 1968, 121 n. 4. Note the equivalence $\dot{U}.LU\dot{H}.HA = ti-a-tu_4$ (RS 23.368:15') in an unpublished text cited by Van Soldt 1990, 348. For other spellings see DUL, 871; CAD T, 400 and Van Soldt 1990, 348-349 (with discussion). He notes (*ibi*): “The word *tiyatu* seems to have been borrowed from Akkadian both by the people of Ugarit and the Aramaic-speaking Jews. This does, of course, not mean that in both communities exactly the same plant was referred to”.

⁶ However, it has also been noted that “The identification with *asafoetida* in Thompson DAB 358 is not supported by the botanical evidence” (CAD T, 400) and in fact, it occurs together with Akk. *nuḥurtu*, “*asa foetida*”.

Mesopotamia *tījatu* was one ingredient of an enema (among 35 weighed herbs) in texts such as BAM 3 iv 43⁷. It was borrowed by Hittite as *tijati*, “Teufelsdreck (*Ferula assa-foetida* L.)”⁸, which was used against chronic gastritis, dyspepsia and irritable colon as well as hypoacidity of the stomach, flatulence, flatulent colic, diarrhoea etc.⁹ In other words, it acted as a laxative.

2b. *mzl* - This brings us to the second Ugaritic word, namely *mzl*, considered to be derived from **nzl*, “to pour out”, but without a translation (RSOu 18, 112). It is probably a maqtal form¹⁰ derived from this verb. If so, it may correspond to Akk. *mazzaltu* (< **manzaltu*), “Ausräumung” (AHw, 637b), “clearing (out)” (CDA, 205b), or more specifically, *manzaltu*, “flow (of excrement)” (CAD M/1, 230b)¹¹. Then it would refer to defaecation.¹² The meaning seems confirmed by the gloss KI.GUB-*su* : *man-zal-ta-šu₂*, “«KI.GUB-*su*» means «his faeces»”¹³. The word occurs in the following text: *šumma qinnatišu tarkâma manzâssu lā ušša u* (var. //) *mê lā ušēridi*, “if his buttocks are dark(?)¹⁴ and he does not let out his excrement(?) and (variant :) he cannot pass water”¹⁵. As is well known, the Ugaritic hippiatric texts mention similar symptoms: *w. k. l. yhrû. w. l. yttn. ššw* “If a horse does not defaecate and does not urinate” (KTU 1.85:9)¹⁶. However, *tyt* is not listed among the various remedies prescribed in these texts¹⁷.

⁷ BAM 68:4; 69:5; 168:20; 575 iv 19; 579 ii 56, 579 iv 18; all cited in CAD T, 400. On enemas and their administration (to humans) see Böck 2009, 116.

⁸ Zinko 2001, 747. See also Stivala 2004, 43; Watson 2004, 125; 2007a, 135.

⁹ See Zinko 2001, 747-748; Hoffner 1974, 10.

¹⁰ Cf. Tropper 2012 §51.45.e, p. 266, although this word is not mentioned.

¹¹ Cf. also Akk. *manzāzu*, “excrement(?)” (CAD M/1, 239a, mng 8); and Akk. *mazzāzu*, “med. “faeces” or “flatulence?”” (CDA, 206a).

¹² Note, however, that Geller (2000, 339) rejects the meaning “excrement” in favour of “drainage”, i.e. “a discharge of fluid from the body”.

¹³ E. Jiménez, “Commentary on Sagig 13 and 12/14 (?) (CCP no. 4.1.13.B)”, *Cuneiform Commentaries Project* (2015), at <http://ccp.yale.edu/P294665> (accessed November 16, 2015). See previously CAD M/1, 230a.

¹⁴ CAD M/1, 239a *tarku*, “dark-colored(?)” (CDA T, 234-235); cf. *tarāku*, “to beat, thump; be dark” (CDA, 399a).

¹⁵ DIŠ GU.DU.MEŠ-šú MI.MEŠ-*ma* KI.GUB-*su* *la È-a u* (var. //) *mê la ušērid* (Labat TDP, 132 i 59-60 and 236:51; cited in CAD Q, 255b); similarly, GU.DU-*su* NU È-*a* *manzaltu la ušē[šú]* (Hunger SpTU 36:10; cited in CAD M/1, 239a).

¹⁶ With near parallels in KTU 1.71:9 ([*k l hr*]á *w l yttn*) and KTU 1.72:12 (*k. l. hr*[á. *w. l. yttn. ššw*]) and cf. Loretz 2011, 214-215.

¹⁷ For the remedies, which are poured into the horse’s nostrils, see Loretz 2011, 215-217; Watson 2001, 241-249. Note that of these, Ug. *āskrr* (KTU 1.71:11; 1.72:18; 1.85:13) has been equated with Akk. *šakirû*, which in turn is used in the treatment of colic in horses; see Stadhouders 2011: 6 (Text I §15’: 35’-36’) and 2014, 3 (Text I §15’) and Ug. *qlql* (KTU 1.71:8; 1.72:13; 1.85:10) corresponds to Akk. *qulqullānu*, which is used, pounded up and mixed with water, for stopping diarrhoea; see Stadhouders 2011, 14 (Text II §3) and 2012, 7 (Text II §3).

3. Conclusion

It would seem that here Ug. *tyt*, perhaps mixed with fodder or simply as a medicine¹⁸, was used to prevent or cure bloating in horses. The large quantities mentioned seem to indicate the former. For humans it was one of five ingredients used to cure a bloated stomach, as in the following Babylonian medical text:

If a man's intestines (feel) swollen, his bowels discharge a putrid liquid, his bowels rumble incessantly, the wind in his belly rumbles and in his rectum ... – this man suffers from “bloating”(?). In order to heal him: the *atā 'išu*-plant, the *tīyatu*-plant, colocynth(?), salt of fine quality, and alum – these five drugs in water you should steep, into his anus you should pour, and he will (then) recover.¹⁹

Similarly:

If, when a man eats bread (and) drinks beer, his belly burns, he is bloated, (and) he drinks a lot of water, it is an intermittent fever. ...

You pulverize river mud (and) [he drinks it] in beer. You pulverize *tīyatu* (and) he drinks it in beer²⁰.

Its medicinal use as a laxative points to Ug. *tyt* meaning *asa foetida*. In turn, the meaning “flow (of excrement)” for Ug. *mzl* has a parallel in Akkadian, and loanwords from that language certainly feature in the Ugaritic hippiatric texts²¹. All this suggests that *mītm. tyt. l. mzl. ššwm* (KTU 4.863:9) is to be translated: “Two hundred (shekels) of *asa foetida* for the (bowel) movement of horses”.

¹⁸ Both possibilities suggested in RSOu 18, p. 110.

¹⁹ BAM II 159: 48-52; translation: Cohen 1983, 12.

²⁰ K 2386+ col. i 22' and 27'; text and translation: Johnson 2014, 17-18 and 21.

²¹ Watson 2004; 2007b, 65-75 §2.2.

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Abbreviations

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