HITTITE ^{UZU}*MU/AḪḪ(A)R(A)I-* "FLESH OF THE THIGH, HAM"

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Abstract

Hittite ^{UZU}*mu/aḫḫ(a)r(a)i-* is a body part belonging to various mammals, including humans, but almost exclusively attested as a component of cooked meat offerings to deities. New evidence supports its identification as the fleshy part of the thigh, thus English "ham" in the anatomical sense, but when served as food in Hittite removed from the thigh bone. A recent text join furnishes not only a further instance of juxtaposition with the expression for "thigh bone," but also the crucial detail that the *m.* is skewered before being cooked.

Hittite ^{UZU}*muḫr(a)i-* (with *hapax* variant ^{UZU}*maḫrae-*) is a common gender noun, occurring in both the singular and plural, referring to a body part of animals, usually cattle and sheep, occasionally specifically of a bull, cow, or lamb, and once exceptionally of a goat and a mouse. In all occurrences with sufficient context the word refers to a body part that is a cooked meat offering to deities. Once we find it specified with the number "two" and paired with "two hips": 2 ^{UZU}MAŠ.SÌL(A) 2 ^{UZU}*muḫrainn=a* (KBo 21.37 Ro$^{?}$ 11, MH/MS), suggesting but by no means proving a paired body part.

J. J. S. Weitenberg (1979: 303) tentatively suggested that it refers to part of the leg and with considerable reserve compared Grk. μηρός, "thigh(bone)." Alwin Kloekhorst (2008: 540) duly cites Weitenberg's etymology but concludes that it is unproven. Jaan Puhvel (2004: 176) rejects it. Hans Güterbock and Harry Hoffner (1986: 317) prudently leave the meaning of the word open, as do most recent text editions. There are good reasons for these responses (or lack thereof) to Weitenberg's idea. First, he undercut the external comparison by his own identification of the body part as "calf, shin," based on an identification with Akk. *kurītu*, "shin" (see exs. 2 and 3 below). Second and far more important is the fact that *m.* occurs in lists of body parts as meat sacrifices to deities, not in an anatomical list where one might expect some ordering, such as from head to foot. Unsurprisingly, its place in the lists varies markedly. It does occur between "thighbone" and "hand" (likely "foreleg," as will be argued below), seeming to support its being part of the leg. However, one also finds it between "shoulder" and "heart," paired solely with "liver," as first in a triad with "head" and "foot," and between "breast" and "rib," among other combinations. In short, available evidence offered no sound basis for an identification.

1. I am deeply grateful to Jared Miller for generously sharing a photograph of the crucial join of KBo 22.172+KUB 9.37, correcting some of my readings of it, and other valuable criticism and suggestions. Thanks also to an anonymous reviewer for corrections and helpful suggestions. Sole responsibility for all views expressed here is mine, except for those explicitly attributed.

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However, two joins of more recently published autographs, one in particular, have altered the situation, including casting a long-known example in a new light:

(1) KBo 2.14 iv 2–6 (CTH 638 Festival for Telipinu, OH/NS)[2]
[*n*]=*ašta* ^{UZU}*muḫḫara*[*i*]*n* ^{UZU}*wallaš ḫaštai* [*I*]*ŠTU* ^{DUG}ÚTUL *daškanzi* [*n*]=*at ANA* DINGIR-*LIM* [E]GIR-*pa tianzi*
"They take the *m.* (and) the thighbone from the pot and put them back for the deity."

There has long been a consensus that $^{(UZU)}$*walla-* means "thigh," and confirmatory evidence now comes from cuneiform Luvian. Despite claims to the contrary, *ḫaštai wallinza* in KUB 35.146 ii 8 is clearly a hybrid Luvo-Hittite equivalent with a possessive adjective of the standard Hittite genitival phrase $^{(UZU)}$*wallaš ḫaštai*, "thighbone," as shown by the CLuvian word *wallin* KUB 35.146 ii 19. The sense "thigh(bone)" is assured by KBo 29.16 Ro? 6–8, where Hittite ^{UZU}*wallaš ḫaštai* is "just as the *kaldunni-* is a proper/right bone" (see Poetto 1983: 38), and the fact that elsewhere *kaldunni-* is attested as a weapon (Yakubovich 2019: 554). The Luvian word for the thighbone, *kaldunni-*, is manifestly cognate with Grk. σκέλος, "thigh."[3]

Nevertheless, all this merely confirms the sense of ^{UZU}*walla-*. For reasons cited above, a single cooccurrence with *m.* understandably was attributed no significance. It seems appropriate to cite the passages that (mis)led Weitenberg into an identification with Akk. *kurītu*, "shin":

(2) KUB 12.11 ii[!] 21–22 (CTH 701.d.4 Offerings for the Throne of Hebat, MH/MS?)
šer=ma=ššan ^{UZU}NÍG.GIG ^{UZU}ŠÀ ^{UZU}GABA ^{UZU}*muḫrain* ^{UZU}*QATAM* ^{UZU}*wallaš ḫaštai dāi*
But on them (broken breads) he puts the liver, heart, breast, *m.*, foreleg, (and) thigh-bone.

(3) KUB 32.49b ii 16–18 (CTH 701.A.a Offerings for the Throne of Hebat, MH/MS)
nu=šši=kan ^{UZU}*šuppa* ^{UZU}GABA ^{UZU}*walla*[*š ḫaštai*] ^{UZU}*KURITU* ^{UZU}*kišširan* 1-*NUTIM*
^{UZU}TI [--]1 SAG.DU UDU=*ya=kan* 1 GÌR UDU=*ya danzi*
From it (a sheep) they take the sacralized meats: the breast, the thigh[bone], the shank, the "hand," one set of ribs, and one head and one foot of a sheep.

Emmanuel Laroche (1954) had been led by this pair of passages to identify *m.* as "rib," but Weitenberg reasonably objected that "shin(bone)" was more likely. The general response was justifiably to consider neither as compelling, given the welter of groupings that we have cited.

Appearance of the following two further attestations suggest that the pairing of *m.* with ^{UZU}*wallaš ḫaštai* does perhaps have significance:

(4) KBo 23.34+33.120 Ro 26"–28" (CTH 701 Offerings for Throne of Hebat, MH/MS)
("And they slaughter one sheep, and they cook the liver (and) heart with an open flame,")
IŠTU ^{DUG}ÚTUL=*ya* ^{UZU}GABA 1 ^{UZU}*QATAM* 1 ^{UZU}*mūḫrain* 1 ^{UZU}*wallišnaš* (*sic*; cf. n. 9) *ḫaštai* 2 ^{UZU}TI ½ SAG.DU 1 GÌR *zanuanzi nu=ššan maḫḫan kē* ^{DUG}ÚTUL ^{UZU}*šuppa ari* ↖ *n=at=kan IŠTU* ^{DUG}ÚTUL *šarā danzi* "they also cook with a pot the breast, one 'hand,' one *m.*, one thighbone, two ribs, half a head, (and) one foot, and when these sacralized pot meats are ready, they remove them from the pot."

2. Despite the absence of linguistic archaisms in the attested text, Telipinu as the honorand and the diction assure a copy or redaction of an OH composition.

3. A convincing etymology for Hitt. *walla-* and CLuvian *walli-* has now been offered by Nikolaev (2021: 184–86), comparing Skt. *ūrú-* "thigh," but only **we/olh$_x$lo-* would produce the Hittite; **wl̥h$_x$-lo-* would lead only to †*ūlla*.

(5) KBo 13.167 ii 2′–7′ (CTH 500[?], MH/NS; with duplicate Kbo 70.2 ii 2′–11′)[4]
nu mān U[DU[?]] *našma* ^{GU4}ÁB *n=an=kan* EN SISKUR *ANA* ^{d}*Ḫ*[*eba*]*t šipanti n=an=kan arkanzi n=ašta* [(^{UZU}*šu*)]*pp*[(*a*)] *danzi* § ^{UZU}GAB[A ^{UZU}(*walla*)]*š ḫaštāi* ^{UZU}*muḫrain* ^{UZU}*Q*[(*ATAM n=at*) ^{DUG}ÚTUL-*n*]*it zanuwanzi* ^{UZU}N[(ÍG.GIG=*ma*) ^{UZU}ŠÀ] IZI-*nit zanuwanzi* § *maḫ*[*ḫan*=(*ma=šša*)]*n*[?] TU$_7$.HI.A *ari n*=[*a*]*t*=*k*[*a*(*n anda*)] *udanzi*
"And if it is a sh[eep] or a cow, the ritual client consecrates it to H[eba]t, and they slaughter it, and take from (it) the sacralized meats: (as for) the breast, the thighbone, the *m.*, (and) the 'hand,' they cook them with [a pot], but they cook the liver [(and) heart] with fire. When the cooked dishes are ready, they bring them in."

We now have three instances of *m.* juxtaposed with "thighbone," plus the previously mentioned pairing 2 ^{UZU}MAŠ.SÌL(A) 2 ^{UZU}*muḫrainn=a*, "two hips and two *m.*" I believe that further support for *m.* as part of the upper leg comes from its appearance between "thighbone" and "hand." Given the considerable difference in size of the foreleg and hind leg of the standard sacrificial animals, I suggest that by analogy to humans the Hittites used *kiššera-*, "hand," to refer to the small lower part of the foreleg, using ZAG.UDU, "shoulder," for the larger upper part of the foreleg and connected flesh (probably *paltana-*, the word for that part of the human body).[5] Hittite *walla-* would refer only to the upper hind leg in animals.[6] Finally, there is also the sequence *nu* ^{UZU}*QATAM* DINGIR.LÚ.MEŠ-*aš dāi* [(^{UZU}*muḫrai*)]*n=ma* ^{d}*Alauwaimi dāi* [^{UZU}MAŠ.SÌLA (^{d}*M*)]*ammai dāi*, "and she serves the 'hand' to the male deities, but serves the *m.* to Alauwaimi, and serves [the hip to M]amma." (KUB 27.67 ii 51–53, CTH 391.1 Ritual of Ambazzi, MH/NS).[7]

Full confirmation, however, we owe to the following, the combined text of which we owe to a join made by Jared L. Miller only in 2015:

(6) KBo 22.172+KUB 9.37: 6′–12′ (CTH ?, OH/MS[?])[8]
ta=kkan ^{UZU}*muḫri(n)=šš*[*an*…] *t=an iškaranzi* […]*wallašnaš ḫašt*[*ai*…]
uwāmili […]§ [GU$_4$[?]-*w*]*aš=a* ^{UZU}*muḫr*[*iš=šan/šiš*[?] …]x-*za* GU$_4$-*waš=a* […]x *adanzi* […]
"And they [… i]ts *m.* and skewer it. [They …]the thighbo[ne …] *uwamili* […] the *m.* of [the steer[?]…]x of the steer […] they eat."

The singular number of ^{UZU}*muḫri(n)=šš*an (with OH assimilation of *-ns-* at a clitic boundary!) and the anaphoric pronoun refers to one of ten bulls introduced previously in line 2′ of KBo 22.172: 2′. The usage may be distributive, referring to each of the ten bulls, but that is uncertain.

Despite the many lacunae, this passage offers us far more than merely another instance of *m.* cooccurring with "thighbone."[9] The second clause "they skewer it" confirms that *m.* refers to flesh, in contrast with "thighbone." Whether one restores "they take" or "they cut off" as the verb of the preceding clause, it is clear that one has removed the meat from the thighbone—as also shown by the fact that the *m.* and the

4. See Schwemer 2015: Vorwort IV. Despite the assignment to CTH 500, the close match in diction with the preceding example makes one wonder whether it belongs with CTH 701.

5. Akkadian *qātu* is attested, if rarely, as "paw" of an animal; see *CAD* Q:188 *qātu* 2.

6. I am aware that this leaves us with no attested word for the lower part of the hind leg of said animals. I dare suggest that one possibility is that it was subsumed under GÌR.

7. Restorations are assured by the duplicate Bo 3121. Cf. also the parallel passage KUB 27.67 iv 56–59. See Christiansen 2006: 46 and 54.

8. There is no basis for the assignment by the Konkordanz of the Hethitologie Portal Mainz to CTH 500! Multiple linguistic archaisms assure that it is a copy or redaction of an OH composition. Sign shapes are also compatible with a MS manuscript, but that point is not crucial for present purposes.

9. The genitive *wallašnaš* is either a real or faulty variant of *wallišnaš* seen earlier in example (4), KBo 23.34+33.120 Ro 26. The latter is a regular genitive to a secondary *s*-stem *walliš-* built to *walla-*, which may be added to the class treated by Rieken (1999: 386–404) and Melchert (2012).

thighbone are cooked in a pot with other body parts aside from the specially treated liver and heart, which are roasted over an open flame. Removal of the meat from the thighbone was surely motivated by practical considerations. While one could have roasted the thigh of a full-grown bovine or sheep over a fire, the depictions we have of Hittite altars suggest that heaving an entire thigh onto one of them would have been problematic. They chose instead to remove the thigh meat and stew it, along with the separate thighbone.

The only question is why, as the texts seem to suggest, the cooked thighbone was also served to the deities along with all the stewed sacralized meats. I believe that the answer to this lies in the special symbolism of the thighbone in (Luvo)-Hittite religion. First, we know from the conclusion of the Telipinu Myth that the cornucopia of the ^{KUŠ}*kurša-*, "hunting bag," contained in addition to many self-evident blessings (replicas of grain, wine, cattle, sheep, long life, progeny, etc.) a replica of *kunnaš wallaš*, "a right thigh" (KUB 17.10 iv 28–34).[10] I have already cited above the CLuvian passage labeling a thigh-bone as a "proper" bone, but the Luvian word is *išarwaiya-*, which derives its moral sense "right, proper" < "right(-hand)." Surely then Hittite *kunna- walla-* also had the moral as well as physical sense and was for that reason included among the blessings in the hunting bag hung on the evergreen tree.

Readers may confirm for themselves that, with the single exception of the "two hips, two *m.*" in KBo 21.37 Ro$^{?}$ 11, in every other passage cited above the deities are offered a single *m.*, and the same is true for the thighbone, "hand," and every paired body part. I submit that it was the *right* member of each pair that was offered to the gods.[11] This would have been self-evident enough to the ritualists that there was no need to stipulate it. The Hittites were thoroughly anthropomorphic in their conception of gods and goddesses and shared the Indo-European and widespread prejudice for right-handedness and against left-handedness. They would have presumed that deities shared their view.[12]

The other widely attested transfer from the physical to the moral plane in Indo-European societies is also attested of Hittite *walla-*: rectitude and success are expressed by a simile of the "upright, erect" thigh:

(7) KUB 29.1 iv 12–14 (CTH 414 Foundation Ritual for a Palace, OH/NS)
kī=wa wallēš maḫḫan arlipa artari[13] LUGAL-*š=a uddār QĀTAMMA arlipa artaru*
"As these thighs stand erect/upright, so also may the king's affairs stand erect/upright (i.e., have success)!"

For additional examples of this simile, see Puhvel (1984: 151). With Oettinger (email of 2/20/2003), *arlipa* is an adverbial nom.-acc. plural of an adjective in **-bhh$_2$-o-* to a base **ar-lo-* "tall, erect," attested in the Hittite Luvian adverb /arla/, "erect, tall," in KARKAMIŠ A6 §19 and HAMA 4 §15. The Luvo-Hittites took no chances in expressing their wishes to the gods and are well-known for rhetorical "overkill" in ritual contexts: see Puhvel (1984: 151) for further examples where it is the morally superior *kunnaš wallaš*, "right thigh," that is specified as the comparandum, to assure that the simile is effectual in obtaining the thing wished for.

I believe that the demonstrated symbolic importance of the right thighbone is quite sufficient to motivate its being offered respectfully to the gods as something highly desirable along with the thigh meat and other stewed meats, despite its surely having almost no meat left on it.[14]

10. Text in E. Rieken et al. (ed.), hethiter.net/: CTH 324.1 (TX 2012-06-08; TRde 2012-06-08), §§39″′–40″′.

11. While I obviously cannot prove it, I strongly suspect that the ritual of KBo 21.37 was directed toward a divine couple.

12. I would go so far as to wager a decent sum that the one set of ribs in (3) and half a head in (4) were also the right side of each. That one did not always go to such lengths is unsurprising.

13. The duplicates Bo 5621 Vo 4′ and KUB 60.113: 2′ have *ara(n)*[*tari*], but the singular probably is genuine, an example of the so-called Pindaric schema in Hittite, for which see Melchert 2011: 399, to which one may now add KBo 30.29+25.139+KUB 31.64 iii$^{!}$ 7.

14. Whether the Hittites partook of bone marrow and would impute that practice also to the gods is as far as I am aware unknown.

Since I have attributed great importance to the passage cited as example (6) and insisted on its archaic status, I must say something more about the morphology of ^{UZU}*muḫr(a)i-*. The accusative singular ^{UZU}*muḫri(n)=šš*[*an*] is archaic not only in its use of the enclitic possessive and assimilation of *-n=s-* across a clitic boundary, but also in its being an *i*-stem *muḫri-*. Despite the occurrence of accusative plural ^{UZU}*muḫrāuš* in KBo 17.15 Ro$^{!}$ 5 (CTH 645 Festivals for Chthonic Deities, OH/OS),[15] the *i*-stem is older. In KBo 16.71+ iv 30 (CTH 635 Festivals of Ziplanda and Mt. Daha, OH/OS) one must read and restore 1 NINDA.GUR$_4$.RA GAL ^{UZU}*mu-uḫ-ri-*^{r}*i*$^{?}$[*-in da-a-i/da-an-zi*]. As implied by Erich Neu's comment (1980: 43[144]), the surrounding context and available space call for an accusative singular and a verb matching that in preceding and following clauses, and thus a reading ^{UZU}*mu-uḫ-ri-y*[*a-* is hardly possible. The point is that we are dealing with an original oxytone *i*-stem *muḫrī-*. As shown by Sylvester Rößle (2002: 115–30), the reason for the extreme rarity of oxytone common gender *i*-stems in Hittite (with lengthening of the stem vowel under the accent) is that they were reshaped as diphthongal stems in *-āi-*, no doubt based on the homophony of the weak stems of the two types. This is clearest for *tuḫḫuwī-* >> *tuḫḫuwāi-*, "smoke," where the chronology of the attestations of the two variants proves the priority of *tuḫḫuwī-*. We thus may and should assume the same for ^{UZU}*muḫrī-* >> ^{UZU}*muḫrāi-*, even if the latter already shows up in OH/OS alongside the former.[16] It is likely that this precocious shift in our word is due to the existence of another variant, attested in the *hapax* accusative singular ^{UZU}*maḫraen* (KBo 17.30+ ii 2, CTH 635 Festivals of Ziplanda and Mt. Daha, OH/OS). There are multiple possibilities for the original stem and inflectional type of this noun, of which an *a*-stem is only one (cf. [^{UZU}]*muḫran* in fragmentary context in KBo 22.147 Vo$^{?}$ 7, a purification ritual, ?/NS). It would be unproductive to rehearse all of these here or to address the general problem of variation between *a*-stems and *āi*-stems (see Rößle 2002: passim). Its only important contribution is that its shape *maḫr-* beside the predominant *muḫr-* does permit an account of the variation in terms of PIE ablaut, as suggested by Weitenberg (1979: 303), despite the doubts of Kloekhorst (2008: 540) and the unreflecting assumption of an adstrate word by Rößle (2002: 176–77). We may with Weitenberg assume that the presence of a near synonym **meh$_2$r-V-* (whatever the stem vowel was) led to the attested outcome of the zero-grade **mh$_2$-rí-*: the nonsyllabic **m-* of **meh$_2$r-V-* > *maḫr-* conditioned the same treatment in **mh$_2$-rí-*, forcing an anaptyctic vowel that was then unsurprisingly colored to [u]:[17] **m$_e$h$_2$-rí-* > *muḫri-*. Whether a semantically suitable PIE root **meh$_2$-* as the base of a word for "flesh of the thigh" can be found to vindicate Weitenberg's assumption of an inherited word is an entirely separate issue that I will soon treat elsewhere.

I do conclude that there is now sufficient evidence to make a highly plausible if not compelling case that ^{UZU}*mu/aḫḫ(a)r(a)i-* refers to the fleshy part of the thigh that is removed from the ^{UZU}*wallaš ḫaštai*, whose meaning "thighbone" is beyond question, for stewing together with other sacrificial meats that are then offered to the gods.[18]

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15. Undeniably OS, with Güterbock and Hoffner 1986: 317b, despite the unjustified doubts of S. Košak, hethiter.net/: hetkonk (v. 1.996).

16. That we do not find plene spelling of the *-i-* in the examples with an enclitic possessive in the MS or NS copy (6) is entirely to be expected.

17. Or more precisely [o(:)]: note the *hapax* spelling *mu-u-uḫ-* in example (4) and see on the phonetic value of the spelling with <u> Kloekhorst 2008: 35–60.

18. English "ham" is a near synonym, except that it can include a cut of meat that includes a portion of the bone, whereas the Hittite surely refers only to the meat removed from the thighbone. Cutting a right thighbone to be offered to deities would have been sacrilegious.

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