

The Ugaritian Poets: Inheritors, Transmitters, Transformers or Innovators?

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Outline

1. General principles
2. A case study: the roof ritual in poetry
3. Other examples
4. Factors in transmission, transformation etc.
5. Conclusions

Sample texts

(1) Babylonian (*Gilgamesh* III 37-45)

Ninsun went seven times into the bath-house,
 [she cleansed] herself in water (perfumed with) tamarisk and soapwort.
 [She dressed in] a fine garment, the adornment of her body...
 [. . .] . . .the adornment of her breast.
 [. . .] ...the harlots . . . the ground.
 She leapt [up] the staircase, she climbed onto the roof,
 she climbed onto the roof,
 she set up a censer before Shamash
 she scattered incense before Shamash, she lifted up her arms:
 "As for him, place him in the care of the watches of the night...."

(2) Greek (*Odyssey* 4.759-767)

Come, bathe and dress your loveliness afresh,
 and go up to the upper rooms with all your maids
 to ask help from Athena, Zeus's daughter.
 The Lady Penelope arose and bathed,
 dressing her body in her freshest linen.
 Filled a basket with barley
 and led her maids to the upper room,
 where she besought Athena.

(3) Ugaritic (*Legend of Kirta* : KTU 1.14)

He washed himself and rouged himself,
 he washed his hands to the elbow,
 his fingers to the shoulder.
 He entered the darkness of the tent shrine:
 He took a sacrificial lamb in his hand,
 a suckling lamb in them both.
 He took the appointed portion of his
 offering-bread,
 dreg-free wine as a drink-offering;

he poured out wine from a silver rhyton,
 honeyed wine from a rhyton of gold.

He went to **the top of the tower**,
 he mounted up to the summit of the wall.
 He lifted up his hands to heaven:
 he sacrificed to Bull his father, El.
 He served Baal with his sacrifice,
 the Son of Dagan with his food.

(4) Hittite (*Hittite Prayer*).

If some problem burdens a man, he makes a plea to the gods: He places on the **roof**, facing the Sun, two covered wickerwork tables: He places one table for the Sun-goddess of Arinna, and for the male gods one table. On them are: 35 thick breads of a handful of moist flour, a thin bowl of honey mixed with fine oil, a full pot of fat-bread, a full bowl of groats, 30 pitchers of wine. When he prepares these, the king goes up to the roof and bows before the Sun-god of Heaven. He says as follows: "Sun-god of Heaven and Sun-goddess of Arinna etc. etc. Now gods, listen to me, to the word and my plea"

(5) Various rituals

- On the seventh day, as the sun declines, the day is desacralised: at sunset, the king is desacralised.
When the king shall offer a sacrifice to Pirigal-šaḡuranu on the **roof**, on which stand four and four dwellings of cut branches, a ram as a holocaust, an ox and a ram as communion sacrifices. Seven times, with all his heart, the king shall speak.
As the sun declines the day is desacralised; at sunset, the king is desacralised. And they shall array him in fine clothes and shall wash his face. They shall return to his palace and when he is there, he shall raise his hands to heaven.
(Ugaritic ritual text)
- He should speak as follows before the stars:
“.. place me on top of my evil enemy”.
He should climb onto the **roof** and he should say...
(Ugaritic)
- You bring up (censers) onto the **roof** and you offer herbs (*šammē*) on the **roof** (Babylonian)
- Then the administrator hands water to the queen and the queen moistens herself. She [burns incense] for the deity, pure... She pours wine and [drinks in honour of] the god Manari...
(Hittite 14th cent. BCE)

(6) Other parallels

ANE

- Telepinu took the Sea's daughter for brideship...
So the Storm God gave him a thousand of each:
he gave him one **thousand** cattle and one **thousand** sheep.
(Hittite: Myth)
- Baal will hit you with the **pine-tree** in his hand.
He will treat you with the pinewood spears that are in his hand!
(Egyptian: Papyrus Leiden)
- The destiny of **life** is yours to ordain, the destiny of life is yours to draw up:
your spell is life,
your utterance **well-being**,
your **speech** is life.
(Babylonian Prayer to Ea, Shamash, Asalluḫi)
- My **handmaiden shamed** me before the rabble
(Babylonian: *Ludlul bēl nēmeqi* | 89-90)

Ugaritian poetry

- I shall give her dowry to her father:
One **thousand** (shekels) of silver and ten **thousand** (shekels) of gold (KTU 1.24).
- Baal spoke:
the axe in his left he brandished, the **cedar** in his right hand
(KTU 1.4 vii 40-41)
- Your word, Ilu, is wise, you are everlastingly wise, a **life of well-being** is your **word**.
(KTU 1.3 v 30-31)
- For two sacrifices Baal abhors, three the Charioteer of the Clouds: a sacrifice of **shame** and a sacrifice of whoredom, and a sacrifice of debauched **handmaidens**
(KTU 1.4 iii 17-22)

Patterns of the "Roof Ritual"

UGARITIAN	ANE
UGARITIAN 1A: ABCD (KTU 1.41) A TOILET B OFFERING C ASCENT D PRAYER	GREEK: ABCD A TOILET B OFFERING C ASCENT D PRAYER
UGARITIAN 1B: ABCDE (KTU 1.14) A TOILET B OFFERING C ASCENT D PRAYER E SACRIFICE	
UGARITIAN 2: AB-D (KTU 1.4) A TOILET B OFFERING <> D PRAYER	HURRIAN: AB-D[??] A TOILET B OFFERING <> D PRAYER = SONG
UGARITIAN 3: A-CD (KTU 1.13; 1.16) A TOILET <> C ASCENT D PRAYER	MESOPOTAMIAN: ACBD A TOILET !C ASCENT !B OFFERING D PRAYER
UGARITIAN 4: A--D (KTU 1.3) A TOILET <> <> D PRAYER	
UGARITIAN 5: BA-D (KTU 1.101) !B SACRIFICE A TOILET <> D PRAYER	
UGARITIAN 6: A--- (KTU 1.3 // 1.19) A TOILET <> <> <>	
	HITTITE: -BCD <> B OFFERING C ASCENT D PRAYER

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