TWO NOTES ON ISAIAH XL-LV

Is. xl 20

Is. xl 20 is a well-known crux interpretum. We are dispensed from listing here the attempts that have been made to explain the expression $\text{hame.}^\text{r}uk^\text{kdu} \text{ter ûmâ}$, referring the reader to a recent note by P. Trudinger 1). The most interesting of these attempts, as it seems to the present writer, has been made by J. Gray, who saw a connection between the expression and Ug. $\text{skn}$, meaning “stela” or “statue” 2). The word is used in that sense in UT 69:1 and 2 Aqht 1:27, II:16. Hence Gray supposes $\text{mskn}$ to be a piel participle and he translates: “he who would set up an image 3)”. It should be remarked that this approach of the problem also offers a satisfactory answer to the question of the Vorlage to the LXX reading. Trudinger however thinks that the base given by Gray is a too narrow one to support his explanation of the word in Is. xl 20 4). But that base can be enlarged. It seems that beside the substantive $\text{skn}$ a verb of the same root is used in Ugaritic.

Aistleitner’s dictionary quotes two instances of this denomina-
tive verb, viz. UT 51 I:21, 43 5). Both of them need some further dis-
cussion. UT 51 I:21-23, $\text{tskn m}^\text{t} \text{mgn rbt a}^\text{frt} \text{ym} \text{mgg qnyt ilm}$, has been translated by C. H. Gordon as follows: Go to! Beseech Lady Asherah of the Sea, entreat the Creatress of the Gods! 6) G. R. Driver has: Consider, prithee, entreating dame Athirat of the sea . . . 7)

3) Gray accepts the emendation $\text{rmmn}$, invoking the LXX reading: $\text{b}^\text{mo}\text{lom}^\text{m} \text{x}^\text{a}^\text{t}^\text{se}^\text{ku}^\text{se}^\text{se}^\text{me}^\text{se}$. But G. R. Driver, JTS XXXVI, 1935, p. 397, already demonstrated that Heb. $\text{nymyn}$ may very well mean “some kind of dedicatory offering of great value, possibly an effigy of some divine or semi-divine being”.
6) C. H. Gordon, Ugaritic Literature, Rome 1949, p. 28. In his glossary, Gordon refers $\text{tskn m}^\text{t}$ to Job xxii 21: $\text{haskan-nâ}$, without giving a translation; cf. UT § 19. 1754.
AISTLEITNER’s translation seems to be better: „lasse herstellen Geschenke für die Herrin“. As the verbs mgn and ĝy mean “to give”, the nouns mgn and mģ can be rendered as “gift”. GORDON translates both of the verbs as “beseech (with gifts)” and “entreat (with gifts)”. Thus according to him the idea of a gift is present in these roots. But the meaning “schenken” for mgn, as proposed by AISTLEITNER is preferable and it “does justice to all its occurrences” 1).

In the lines 42-43 of the same text we read: š‘ il dqt kamr sknt kbwt yman. AISTLEITNER explains sknt as the feminine form of a passive participle and he translates: “geformt, wie das Tier des J.” In his translation of this text GORDON seems to understand sknt in the same sense: “Il’s bowl as fine as amr. Set like the kbwt of Yman”. In his glossary however he suggests that sknt is perhaps the plural of skn, “a stela” 2). According to M. DAHOOD the word may be the common Semitic word for “knife” (cf. Heb. šakkān, Arab. sakkān). This is induced from the parallelism between š‘ and hrb, “sword, large knife”, in 128 IV:23-24 3). Since the context is completely different, this parallelism is not a convincing argument for the elucidation of 51 I:42-43. It is precisely the general setting of 51 I, which invites us to agree with AISTLEITNER. The text tells of Ktr-and-Hss in his workshop, making luxurious gifts for Asherah and El. In the lines 21-23 he receives the order to do so. Thus our translation fits very well: “Make (or: have made), prithee, gifts for Lady Asherah of the sea, presents for the Creatress of the Gods”. Then follows the execution of the order with a description of the objects made by Hss. The list is closed with El’s bowl, which is described in lines 42-43. At Ugarit, bowls chased with animal figures have been found 4). Now, kbwt means “animal” and AISTLEITNERS rendering thus becomes very senseful. It also matches very well the immediate context. The balance of kbwt is amr, which GORDON leaves unexplained. It may be a variant form of imr, “lamb”, as well as in 121 I:10, dbh amr, “a sacrifice of a lamb” 5). Then dqt is reasonably translated by AISTLEITNER as “gehämmt, getrieben” 6)

2) C. H. GORDON, Ugaritic Literature, p. 28; UT loc. cit.; cf. H. L. GINSBERG, ANET, p. 132.
6) J. AISTLEITNER, op. cit., nr. 781.