

THE EPIC
of Kibotesh



THE IX AGE
FANTASY BATTLES

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THE EPIC of KIBOTESH

A wondrous literary finding from ancient dwarven civilisation

The first complete translation

By

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*Humbly dedicated to his most gracious patron
The Prince of Ligulia*

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Introduction to the Text

The Epic of Kibotesh is widely considered the first written work of dwarven literature. While the lengthy poem relates many fantastical tales, its own story is almost equally remarkable.

The name Kibotesh is attested in some of the most ancient documents ever recovered from excavations at sites that once formed the eastern part of the great Dwarven Empire. Almost all dwarven cities that were not built in the mountains were destroyed in the Ages of Ruin, long before the eastern dwarves evolved into the Infernal culture we see today.

Not only do we find references to Kibotesh in these early documents – a name attributed to a mighty ruler – but we also see mentions of his "song". It seems that the tale of Kibotesh and his adventures was well known among the eastern dwarves. We even have a tablet with the precise archival catalogue number for a series of documents containing the "twenty-fold cycle of Kibotesh". Another mentions a poem called the "Lament of Kibotesh and Gantar".

Yet, while these findings show that many versions of the Kibotesh myth once existed, today we have only one: the twelve-tablet epic here presented.

The discovery of such a perfectly preserved work of literature without any alternate versions is puzzling to say the least – especially since all such versions were reportedly lost in a series of strange accidents among Infernal libraries in the preceding decades.

Yet researchers are convinced that the new tablets are authentic. They were found at the excavation of Tel Imeni, stacked among hundreds of similar kiln-fired clay documents. Their condition was good, but they showed the usual effects of time – chipped edges, sections of text worn away. The language and runic script perfectly match the era, right down to the imprint of the specific kind of stylus whose use ended not long after the tablets were composed. In short, if they are forgeries, they would have to be so masterful as to defy credible likelihood.

The diaries of Prof. Petanque, who oversaw the excavation, show that visitors from a nearby Infernal temple visited the site at the time the tablets were found, and generously provided the expertise to confirm beyond all doubt that they were real. The page that may have mentioned which temple the dwarves hailed from was ripped away mysteriously. In any event, per the agreement with the local Citadel, Petanque kept plaster copies of his findings, while the originals remained with the dwarves.

Suffice to say that many elements of the epic of Kibotesh are surprising to many scholars of Infernal archaeology. Tablet 12 in particular – the so-called Heresy Tablet – has raised eyebrows both in Vetia and the Blasted Plain. The reader may judge the content for themselves.

Sections that are missing, defaced or untranslatable are marked in the text as "..."

—L. Horschluss,
Itar 7



TABLET

I

He who has seen many things
I will make known to the lands

The greatest of rulers

Most excellent of kings

Most beautiful of dwarves

His crown was as tall as his beard

His axe was as big as a bull

Awesome to perfection

Majestic in gloriousness

Tremendous in supreme ...

[11 lines missing]

He raised the walls of ...

... the great temple

He decreed ... of the tallest ziggurat

He cast many earth-shaking spells

He destroyed all his enemies

His people cried out to the gods:

"Kibotesh is too great!

"None can oppose his power!

"He takes whatever he desires

"He destroys all in his path!"

TABLET

II

The gods heard the
cries of the people

They saw the
might of Kibotesh

They saw his
untamed strength

They saw the suffering
of the people

The gods decreed a
second hero

One who would temper the
power of Kibotesh

One who would shield the
people from his desires

Ashuruk took a tablet from
the great library of the gods

He took the clay and threw it
into the chamber of bureaucrats

In the office he created
Lugar, greatest of heroes

Born of talking, given great
intelligence by the gods

He knew nothing but records
and scribal duties

His days were filled with
accounting and tablet shelves

A scribe's assistant found
him in the room of records

He took Lugar to the
flame of the people

Lugar saw the fire

No longer did he spend all
his days in the offices

He went before the king

Lugar spoke to Kibotesh:

*"You have exceeded the
limits of your power*

*"You are in violation of your
constitutional authority*

*"The law of Ashuruk prohibits
the abuse of power."*

Kibotesh ... great rage

He challenged ... in every court

[3 lines missing]

... his wealth ... legal defense

But the appeal of Kibotesh was defeated.

The anger of Kibotesh faded away

Lugar and Kibotesh reached a settlement
and soon became great friends

TABLET
III

Kibotesh and Lugar went
to the wilderness

The king sought favourable
omens from the gods

He lay down in the dirt
and accepted sleep

In the middle of the night
he woke and cried out:

"Did something terrible happen?"

*"Why am I so disturbed?
Why are my muscles trembling?"*

"Lugar, my friend, I have had a dream,

"I saw great carriages of black metal

*"Moving like hurricanes
on a metal path*

"Full of smoke and magic

*"They moved forwards with
nothing to pull them*

*"And they were coming
right towards me."*

Lugar said to Kibotesh:

"These are favourable signs.

*"These carriages are the
strength of the people*

*"They come towards you because
you lead at their head."*

The next day they walked
further into the wilderness

The king sought favourable
omens from the gods

He lay down in the dirt
and accepted sleep

In the middle of the night
he woke and cried out:

"Did something terrible happen?"

*"Why am I so disturbed?
Why are my muscles trembling?"*

"Lugar, my friend, I have had a dream,

*"The mighty bulls of Shamut
came down to the world*

*"They stomped all over the people
and they became the people*

*"The blood of the downtrodden
ran in the streets*

*"Their hooves smashed my
head into fragments."*

Lugar said to Kibotesh

"These are favourable signs

*"The bulls are the gifts
of the gods, given to you*

*"They smashed your head into fragments
to expand the scope of your powers."*

The next day they walked
further into the wilderness

The king sought favourable
omens from the gods

He lay down in the dirt
and accepted sleep

In the middle of the night
he woke and cried out:

"Did something terrible happen?"

*"Why am I so disturbed?
Why are my muscles trembling?"*

"Lugar, my friend, I have had a dream,

"There was a terrible eruption

*"Living fire came forward
and destroyed the kingdom*

"Malevolent creatures roamed the land

"All good things burned

"And a voice called to me, and it said:

"Kibotesh, you will die!"

Lugar said to Kibotesh

"These are favourable signs

"The eruption is your glory.

"The fire is our strength."

*"The land that is destroyed
is not ours but the enemy's*

*"For the true people
will grow and thrive."*

TABLET IV

Lugar said to Kibotesh,

*"You need not fear death,
If your place in history is assured.*

*"Let us go on a quest, that we
might be famed throughout time.*

*"In the ... there is a monster,
the mighty Sezurut*

"Its strength ... a mammoth

"Its eyes ...

"Like a roc, its claws ...

"Its teeth are like a gnasher

"It towers over ...

*"Let us slay this
terrible Sezurut,*

*"They will tell of us
in the great stories*

*"We will be written in tablets
that will last two three-ages*

"And we will not die."

[2 lines missing]

Then the heroes made
a great journey

They crossed the frozen peaks

Glorious Samtar sent
blizzards against them

They made fire in their camp

They came to the endless desert
Lugar called water from the ground
He showed the water documents
Proving beyond doubt that its
proper place was in his waterskin
Ashuruk sent fire against
them, but ... quenched
They came to the black ocean
of tremendous Yutuluk
They cut the forest ...
A coracle, fifteen ...
... smooth grain, unlacquered ...
Four high, twenty-seven
cubits all around
A classic design, with
a personal twist
Six planks per cubit, twelve ...
... nineteen nails at each end
... beveled edges ...
...butt joints ...dovetails
He used a brace to hold the...
[twenty-nine lines missing]
Superb finishing on the exterior
and the figurehead.
They sailed across the ocean
and reached the land of ...

They stood at the entrance to the land.
A road ran clear ahead, into ...
The rolling hills ... green
grass and bumblebees.
And a gentle breeze.
It was extremely pleasant.
They set off into the land.
There was a terrible roaring
A great shadow fell upon them,
terror came into their hearts
Lugar said to Kibotesh
*"Do not tremble, for we are
mighty in body and mind
We have faced our enemies before
We will slay the monster
and take back its head."*
Sezurut said to Lugar and Kibotesh,
*"You think to slay me?
I will break your bodies and
chain them to the deepest pit
You filthy wretches will
never see the sun
You morons are the sons of earthworms
Who I laid with!
Let us have a mighty battle, odorous ones."*
Lugar said to Sezurut,

"Hold! We are not here to slay you.

*"Any who have said so have
committed slander and will be
punished to the full extent of the law.*

*"I have here a tablet signed
by the proper authorities*

"It shows that we are your friends,

*"We would like to help you
reach your full potential*

*"Did you know that he
who removes his head*

*"Will live many years beyond
his head-retaining kin?"*

*"If you do not believe me, I can take
this information to another monster."*

Lugar smiled, his face
honest and plain.

Sezurut took the documents.

He stared at every line.

He read the smallest words.

Every gleaming symbol
was immaculate.

Sezurut said to Lugar

"I must not delay!"

*"Please take off my head, friend,
that I might live many years longer."*

And he lowered his head before Lugar.

Lugar cut off the monster's head

And they returned to their city.

TABLET

V

Gantar the Furious went to
Runalla, the Netherworld

She went to see her second cousin,
Reshal, mistress of Runalla

Gantar went to demand the
return of Huzid, her lover,

She wept and gnashed in anger

She came to the gates of Runalla

The land shook with her wrath

Gantar cried out like thunder:

*"Let me enter, or I will
tear down the gates*

*"I will break the doors and
the dead will come forth*

"And the whole world will be devoured.

*"Give me Huzid, my great love,
whom I killed in my anger."*

Reshal came to the gates of
Runalla and spoke to Gantar:

*"Do not break down the
gates, second cousin*

*"You may enter Runalla,
the land that none may leave."*

And she opened the gates for
Gantar, and Gantar went
down beneath the earth.

As she passed through the gates,
Reshal spoke again to Gantar:

"Give me your armour

and your weapons

"For that is the law of this land."

Gantar gave Reshal her
armour and her weapons.

Reshal drew her axe and killed
Gantar in the halls of Runalla.

After Gantar went down
into the Netherworld,

Death walked upon the land

Humans marched upon the
people with merciless might

Pestilence scurried
across the earth

Tides of barbarians broke upon
the people like the ocean.

The gods were filled with grief.

Ashuruk spoke:

"We must send a ... to Runalla

*"Let him make Reshal return Gantar to us,
so ... might survive."*

Lugar ...

[ten lines missing]

He spoke to Reshal:

*"My client need not answer
any of your questions*

*"You have imprisoned
her without just cause*

"You are keeping her against her desire

*"For no true dwarf would wish
to live under the ground*

*"You have failed to provide
evidence against her*

*"You will release Gantar
into my protection*

*"Per the statutory rights conferred
in divine law CDLXII*

"Paragraph 18.3(i)

"Or I will take this to your superior god."

Reshal flung many terrible
curses at Lugar

She commanded him to leave Runalla

Lugar spoke again to Reshal

*"Simply sign this tablet, and
I will leave here forever,*

"And I will take the goddess with me."

Reshal, goddess of Death,
signed Lugar's tablet.

She released Gantar from Runalla.

When Gantar and Lugar
returned to the surface

The land erupted in triumph

There was a mighty blast, and
many enemies were swept away

And the people survived.

And no true dwarf wished
to live under the ground.

TABLET
VI

When Gantar saw mighty Kibotesh

She fell furiously in love
with the great king

Gantar cried out to Kibotesh

*"Come to me,
most beauteous lord!*

*"Let us be married, and
together we will strike
down our enemies.*

*"I will give you gold
and marble and jade,*

*"I will make you king of all
the world, mighty one!"*

Kibotesh addressed
Gantar the Furious

*"Your offer is very
tempting, my lady*

*"I am very attracted to
you and all women*

*"And I would like to be
king of all the world*

*"But I am too scared to marry
Gantar the Furious*

*"... you trapped your last husband
in the Netherworld ... still alive*

*"The husband before ...
you disemboweled ...*

*"And the one before that ...
into an earthworm.*

"... before that ...

[five lines missing]

*"... I already have a great friend
now called Lugar*

*"And he has told me your
prenuptial contract is
highly unfavourable."*

Gantar the Furious was very cross

She spoke to Shamut:

"Give me your strongest bull

"So that I might kill Kibotesh"

Shamut said to Gantar:

"I do not wish you to kill Kibotesh

*"He has achieved many
impressive feats of war."*

Gantar said to Shamut

*"If you do not give me
your strongest bull*

"I will smash open your bullpen

*"I will send your creatures
to destroy the whole world."*

Shamut gave Gantar
his strongest bull.

It was the size of a city

TABLET
VII

A single snort of the beast could
open a hole in the ground

Big enough to devour a kingdom.

She led it to Kibotesh

Instead, she found Lugar

Lugar said to Gantar:

*"Do you have the proper
permit for this animal?"*

*"If you do not, I must impound
the creature and notify
the proper authorities."*

Gantar went once more to the gods

She howled in terrible anguish

She tore her clothes and smashed
her axe against the wall

She cried out in a mighty rage:

*"Truly, lawyers are the most miserable
creatures in all existence!"*

The other gods nodded at her wisdom.

Gantar continued in her fury:

*"Let us show our anger
for this one called Lugar!"*

*"Let us cast him down
in our judgement*

*"Let us send him to the
Netherworld forever!"*

It was agreed among the gods.

They cast the great spell of
death upon Lugar, their hero.

They smote him with
every terrible disease

They sent a hundred hundred
afflictions against him.

Valiant Kibotesh summoned
healers from every land

But none could save his mighty friend.

And Lugar was taken
to the Netherworld.

TABLET
VIII

King Kibotesh tore out all his hair
until his head was bleeding

He took his tall crown and
hurled it upon the ground

And stomped on it

He clawed his nails through
the skin of his face

His teeth grew into tusks and he
ground his tusks upon his sword

He beat his fists upon the death bed

He smashed his nose
against the marble floors

He whacked his thighs
with the rod of command

He wandered the land wearing
nothing but animal skins, his
beard torn and unkempt

He walked through the palace
all night, wailing to heaven

He commanded the body of
Lugar to treated with fine oils

And adorned with
the largest gemstones

He placed the body in a
coffin of marble and jade

He placed the coffin
in a pyre of gold

He placed the pyre in the
centre of a ... pyramid

He placed the wealth of the
kingdom around the pyramid

He set the pyramid ablaze

He made the people mourn for
four years four times over.

Kibotesh said to ...

*"Now I know that I too am
mortal, and I am afraid ..."*

[six lines missing]

Kibotesh set off on ...

He was attacked by lions, which
he killed and wore their skins

He traveled to the mountains
at the end of the earth

The way was guarded by giant
scorpions, which he killed

He passed through a great tunnel
into the garden of the gods

The ferryman of the gods took
him across the waters of Death

... the Faraway, the only dwarf ... eternal life

The Faraway told him of a flower that ...

[4 lines missing]

Kibotesh found the flower ... returns youth

But on the journey home, it was
stolen by a passing snake.

TABLET
IX

Lugar was in Runalla
He was trapped in
the Netherworld
He was living under the ground
All things were dark
There was no kind of magic
He longed to be above
ground once again
He went to Reshal, she who
is Death made flesh
Reshal's face was like a skull,
Her tusks speared up into her eyes
She made ... cower in fear
She ... freezing wind ...
She sucked away ... magic
... despair ...
[3 lines missing]
Lugar spoke to Reshal in Runalla:
*"Why am I here, o goddess?
Why are your commands
not obeyed?
Why is your word
not respected?"*
Reshal turned her
terrible face to Lugar
She bid him explain his words

Lugar replied to Reshal:
*"I have been in Runalla before,
You commanded me
to leave forever
Yet here I have been returned
against my desire.
How comes the word of
Reshal to be ignored?"*
Reshal shouted in anger:
*"I command you now to stay, Lugar!
You have come to my domain
And you will never
return above ground!"*
Lugar spoke again to Reshal:
*"Here is the tablet that you
signed with your own hand.
Here is the witness and
the notary's stamp.
This is your command,
that I be exiled from Runalla
No other command can undo
what you have wrought."*
Reshal was bound by her own word
She sent Lugar away
He returned above the ground
He went to the place of the gods

Targuk, gatekeeper of the gods,
refused to grant him entry

Lugar said to Targuk:

*"Why do you refuse me entry
to my own domain?"*

Targuk said to Lugar:

*"This is the domain of the
gods, you cannot enter."*

Lugar said to Targuk:

"What is a god?"

Targuk said to Lugar:

"One who has eternal life."

Lugar said to Targuk:

*"I have been banished from
Runalla for all time*

*"I cannot die.
I have eternal life*

"I am a god

"Let me pass."

And Targuk allowed
him to enter

For he saw that Lugar
was of the gods.

TABLET

X

Ashuruk the king of kings
was displeased

He did not like ...

... their loud voices

He grew impatient ...

He spoke ...

[seventeen lines missing]

A great decree.

And he made all the gods swear
a great oath of silence

That none might know what
was to come upon them.

Lugar came to the gods,
he said to them:

*"Why do you meet and talk, and
yet tell none what you have said?"*

"It must be that you are sworn to silence

*"Yet I have here a tablet attested
by Ashuruk, giver of laws,*

*"A subpoena of any and
all material evidence*

*"You must show the court
signs of conspiracy*

*"You must tell the Great Judge
what has been kept secret."*

Lugar bound Ashuruk
by his own word

TABLET

XI

The gods told Lugal what
had been decreed.

And Lugal went to Kibotesh.

He could not say what was
confidential to the court

So he spoke not to the king

Lugal addressed the king's elbow

*"Elbow of Kibotesh, you
must prepare yourself"*

*"There comes great
calamity to the kingdom"*

*"You must build a
ziggurat of great height"*

*"You must gather your wealth
and weapons at the top."*

The king replied:

"How high must I build ..."

"Ten times ... cubits"

The king asked ...

... design of the outer ...

The ... must be exactly ...

... crenelations ... bitumen ...

[forty-seven lines missing]

And Kibotesh built the
ziggurat as instructed.

[nine lines missing]

...like the ocean waves

There was no cease ...

For twelve times twelve
days and nights it rained

The waters washed away
the fields and the houses

They washed away the
cities and the walls

They drowned the
west in its holes

The flood covered the land
And still the rain did not stop.

Kibotesh preserved the
weapons of the people

Atop his highest of
ziggurats he guarded ...

... continued to rise.

All this time, Lugal
was in another land

He came to the king of
the enemy, and said:

*"Ashuruk, king of kings, seeks to
quench the flame of the people."*

"The people require a new flame"

*"We will use your flame to rekindle
the greatness of the kingdom we have lost."*

The king of the enemy spoke to Lugal:

"Our flame is not yours to take."

Lugar said to the king of the enemy:

"You have no flame.

"A flame belongs to the people.

"You are not people.

*"The true people are
calling in your debt*

*"We have taken your flame
as rightful collateral*

*"These documents demonstrate
the legal basis for foreclosure*

"The gods are my bailiffs."

Lugar took the flame of the enemy.

He took the flames of the world

He returned to the kingdom

At the hour of Kibotesh's doom

He drove away the flood
with the World Flame

He placed it at the
heart of the ziggurat

The gods saw what Lugal had done

They cried out in regret for
extinguishing the first flame

They bowed down before
the World Flame

They made a mighty compact

The compact was
drawn up by Lugal

The gods signed in triplicate

The compact bound them
to protect the World Flame
for all time

There were other things
written in the compact

Which the gods did not read.

TABLET
XII

Behold Lugar the Triumphant

He gained great...

The crown ... to him ...

... all the peoples

The riches ... entire world

All judges ... before him

[7 lines missing]

The people ... to him,

"How can we serve Lugar?"

But when they came
to his chamber

They discovered it was empty

Lugar had no desire for riches

Lugar did not wield the
power he was given

Lugar was ... journey

For many days ...

... of Ashuruk

[2 lines missing]

... the flame of kingship ...

... of Ashuruk

He sought...

**[the remainder of the
tablet is broken off]**

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—L. H



