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The Tongue is a Bridge: Communication between Humans and Gods in Hittite Anatolia*

Gary BECKMAN

The Hittites of second millennium Anatolia needed their gods, but their gods also needed the Hittites. As was the case with other contemporary peoples, the men and women of Ḫatti owed not only their sustenance and their material goods, but life itself to divine favor. This dependence is manifest in a prayer to the fertility god Telipinu:¹

Give life, health, strength, long years, and joy in the future to the king, queen, princes, and to (all) the land of Ḫatti! [And] give [to them] future thriving of grain, vines, fruit, cattle, sheep, goats, pigs, mules, asses – together with wild animals – and of human beings!²

Success on the battlefield was also contingent upon divine aid. Only when the king's protective deities lent their assistance to a campaign, by – as

* For much fuller treatments of this topic, see R. H. BEAL, *Hittite Oracles: Questions and Answers*, in: L. Ciraola and J. Seidel (eds.), *Magic and Divination in the Ancient World*, Groningen (forthcoming); and O. R. GURNEY, *The Babylonians and Hittites*, in: M. Loewe and C. Blacker (eds.), *Oracles and Divination*, Boulder 1981, pp. 142-73. Abbreviations employed here are those listed in H. G. GÜTERBOCK and H. A. HOFFNER (eds.), *The Hittite Dictionary of the Oriental Institute of the University of Chicago*, Volume L-N, Fascicle 4, pp. xv-xxviii, and Volume P, Fascicle 1, pp. ix-xi, to which add CANE = J. SASSON et al. (eds.), *Civilizations of the Ancient Near East*, New York 1995.

It is a honor to contribute this essay to a volume commemorating the life and work of Prof. Bedřich Hrozný, upon whose shoulders we all stand. Note that Hrozný included an oracle text, KBo 2.2 (CTH 577), in his pioneering chrestomathy, *Hethitische Keilschrifttexte aus Boghazköi*, Leipzig 1919 [= BoSt 3], pp. 28-59.

¹ See H. G. GÜTERBOCK, *Gedanken über das Wesen des Gottes Telipinu*, in: *Festschrift J. Friedrich zum 65. Geburtstag gewidmet*, Heidelberg 1958, pp. 207-11.

² KUB 24.2 rev. 12'-16' (CTH 377). For a transliteration of these lines, see G. BECKMAN, *Hittite Birth Rituals*, Wiesbaden 1983 [= StBoT 29], p. 11, note 53.

the Hittite expression puts it – “running before” the armies³ was victory certain.

While boons might be expected from well-disposed gods and goddesses, negative consequences could arise for the entire cosmos if a deity took such offense at some human action that he deserted his post. A myth relates the disappearance of Telipinu, the divinity to whom the prayer just quoted was directed:

Telipinu [became angry and said]: “Do not practice intimidation!” He slipped(?) his right [shoe] on his left (foot). [He slipped(?)] his left [shoe] on his right. Mist seized the windows. Smoke seized the house. On the hearth the logs were stifled. [On the altars] the gods were stifled. In the fold the sheep were stifled. In the corral the cows were stifled. The sheep refused her lamb. The cow refused her calf. Telipinu went off and took away grain, the fertility of the herds, growth(?), plenty(?), and satiety into the wilderness, to the meadow and the moor. Telipinu proceeded to disappear into the moor. The *halenzu*-plant spread over him. Barley and wheat no longer grow. Cows, sheep, and humans no longer conceive, and those who are (already) pregnant do not give birth in this time. The mountains dried up. The trees dried up, so that buds do not come forth. The pastures dried up. The springs dried up. Famine appeared in the land. Humans and gods perish from hunger.⁴

Thus we see that gods, too, could be hurt by the negligence of one of their fellows, even if they themselves were not to blame for his anger.⁵ Furthermore, despite their immortality and para-human powers, the gods were literally dependent upon the attentions of their worshipers. When the land of the Hittites was reeling under a plague in the mid-thirteenth century, King Muršili II reminded the gods in prayer that they had only damaged their own interests by sending the pestilence:

[All] of the land of Ḫatti is dying, so that no [one] prepares the sacrificial loaf and libation for you (the gods) any longer. [The plowmen] who used to work the

³ On this expression, see G. BECKMAN, *The Siege of Uršu Text (CTH 7) and Old Hittite Historiography*, JCS 47 (1997), pp. 31 f.

⁴ KUB 17.10 i 1'-18' and dupls. (CTH 324). I have translated this text in: W. W. Hallo (ed.), *The Context of Scripture I*, Leiden 1997, pp. 151-3. Cf. H. A. HOFFNER, Jr., *Hittite Myths*, pp. 14 f.

⁵ Among the various causes suggested in prayer and oracle questions for divine displeasure, differences with another deity are never mentioned.

fields of the gods have died, so that no one works or reaps the fields [of the gods] any longer. The miller-women who [used to prepare] sacrificial loaves of the gods have died, so that they no longer make the sacrificial loaves of the gods. As for the corral and sheepfold from which one used to cull the offerings of sheep and cattle [the cowherds] and shepherds have died, and the corrals and sheepfolds [are empty]. So it happens that the sacrificial loaves, libations, and animal sacrifices for the gods are cut off. And you come to us, O gods, and hold us culpable in this matter!⁶

The terms of the bargain are clear: The gods sustained the Hittite people in order to receive offerings in return. Neither group could flourish without the other. In this world of mutual dependence, there was a crucial need for communication between deities and mortals,⁷ so that needs might be articulated, wrongs remedied, and misunderstandings set right. The most important channel for the exchange of information to such ends was the person of the Hittite king, who stood at the nexus of the universe. The monarch both shepherded his people for their divine masters and spoke on their behalf before the gods.⁸ The Hittite term for the prayer just excerpted is *arkuuar*, literally a "pleading" or "defense," as in a speech made before a court of law.⁹ Thus in the numerous preserved Hittite royal prayers¹⁰ the king serves as an advocate for his people, explaining or justifying their conduct.

⁶ KUB 24.3 ii 4'-17' and dupls. (CTH 376), O. R. GURNEY (ed.), *Hittite Prayers of Mursili II*, AAA 27 (1940), pp. 26 f.

⁷ The dead might also involve themselves in human affairs if they were not satisfied with the offerings and reverence shown them after their departure. Their attentions, however, seem to have been focused solely on the living members of their own family group. On the relations of the Hittites with their dead, see Th. VAN DEN HOUT, *Death as a Privilege. The Hittite Royal Funerary Ritual*, in: J. M. Bremer et al. (eds.), *Hidden Futures. Death and Immortality in Ancient Egypt, Anatolia, the Classical, Biblical and Arabic-Islamic World*, Amsterdam 1994, pp. 44-48.

⁸ See G. BECKMAN's remarks on the position of the Hittite king in *Royal Ideology and State Administration in Hittite Anatolia* in CANE, pp. 529-43.

⁹ See E. LAROCHE, *La prière hittite. Vocabulaire et typologie*, *Annuaire de l'École Pratique des Hautes Études* 72 (1964/65), pp. 13-20 for a discussion of *arkuuar*.

¹⁰ CTH 371-89, edited by R. LEBRUN, *Hymnes et prières hittites*, Louvain-la-Neuve 1980.

The king's role as intermediary between humans and gods is apparent throughout the archives recovered from the Hittite capital of Ḫattuša,¹¹ since a great many of these records were composed by the royal bureaucracy precisely in order to assist the monarch in the service of his divine overlords. In addition to prayers and hymns, we find instructions for temple employees,¹² inventories of sanctuaries,¹³ and ceremonies of the state cult.¹⁴ Although other men and women attended to the mundane needs of the Hittite gods, all official worship was under the nominal supervision of the monarch, the chief priest of the most prominent deities. Since he was the representative of the human community, the king or a member of his immediate family had to be present at the performance of many of these rites, even though their technical aspects were the responsibility of religious experts. Each of these ceremonies under royal patronage reaffirmed and strengthened the ties between the Hittite people and one or more of their deities. That is, they constituted a form of communion between the inhabitants of two levels of the universe.

While the ordinary inhabitant of Ḫatti was seldom if ever a direct participant in the festivals of the state cult,¹⁵ personal transitions and crises

¹¹ Although Hittite texts have been found at a few other sites in Anatolia and northern Syria, the great majority of published tablets and fragments were excavated at Boğazköy/Ḫattuša. Still, it is interesting to note that Hittite divination material has also turned up at Alalaḫ (AT 454), Emar (Msk 74.224 – Hurrian language), Maṣat (HKM 115), Ortaköy – see A. SÜEL, Ortaköy: Eine hethitische Stadt mit hethitischen und hurritischen Tontafelentdeckungen, in: H. Otten et al. (eds.), *Hittite and Other Anatolian and Near Eastern Studies in Honour of Sedat Alp*, Ankara 1992, p. 490, and Kuşaklı – see G. WILHELM, Kuşaklı–Sarissa. Keilschrifttexte aus Gebäude A, Rahden 1997, no. 14 ff.

¹² CTH 264, translated by A. GOETZE, in: ANET, pp. 207-10.

¹³ CTH 501-530. For editions of a representative sample, see L. JAKOB-ROST, *Zu den hethitischen Bildbeschreibungen*, MIO 8 (1961), pp. 161-217 and 9 (1962), pp. 175-239.

¹⁴ CTH 591-720. G. MCMAHON, *Theology, Priests, and Worship in Hittite Anatolia*, in: CANE, 1981-1995, provides an overview of this cult.

¹⁵ It is unlikely that he or she would have been welcome among the "great congregation" (*šalli aššeššar*) present at many ceremonies – see V. HAAS, *Gesch. Relig.*, p. 679. In this connection note an excerpt from a report by the members of a priesthood concerning the renovation of their temple: "The image of the deity was formerly back in the inner chamber, so that the hoi polloi (*panku-*) could not see it, but now it stands on a pedestal," KUB 42.100 iii 36'-38' (CTH 525) – see G. BECKMAN, *The*

would on occasion have prompted every Hittite to seek divine assistance. Unfortunately, we know next to nothing about the prayers or other devotional activities of the common people.¹⁶ We are much better informed, however, about the popular use of magic, which may be viewed as a system of communication between humans on the one side and gods and other para-human forces on the other.¹⁷

We owe our substantial knowledge of this aspect of Hittite folk religion to the collecting activities of the royal scribes. It seems that these bureaucrats solicited rituals from practitioners in all parts of the Hittite empire¹⁸ in order to provide the experts responsible for the welfare of the king and his court with the combined wisdom of the entire population. The magical texts stored in the royal archives¹⁹ include *rites de passage* such as birth rituals,²⁰ as well as ceremonies to counter ills like impotence,²¹ domestic strife,²² black magic,²³ pollution,²⁴ and various maladies.²⁵

Hittite Assembly, JAOS 102 (1982), p. 437.

¹⁶ Small divine images (such as those pictured by K. BITTEL, Hethiter, Abb. 147-49) might have been focus of individual worship in Ḫatti as in other cultures of the ancient Near East, but this cannot be demonstrated, since no private houses have yet been excavated in Ḫattuša.

¹⁷ See G. FRANTZ-SZABÓ, Hittite Witchcraft, Magic, and Divination, in: CANE, pp. 2007-19.

¹⁸ The tablets recording these rituals usually begin with the name of the author and his or her home town.

¹⁹ Most of this material is to be found under CTH 390-500.

²⁰ G. BECKMAN, Hittite Birth Rituals.

²¹ CTH 406, edited by H. A. HOFFNER, Jr., Paskuwatti's Ritual against Sexual Impotence, AuOr 5 (1987), pp. 271-287, and translated by him, in: CANE, p. 2014.

²² The Ritual of Maštigga (CTH 404), edited by L. (JAKOB-)ROST, Ein hethitisches Ritual gegen Familienzweist, MIO 1 (1953), pp. 345-79.

²³ CTH 490, edited by H. OTTEN, Ein Ritual von Ašdu, der Hurriterin, in: H. A. Hoffner and G. Beckman (eds.), Kaniššuar. A Tribute to Hans G. Güterbock on His Seventy-Fifth Birthday, Chicago 1986 [= AS 23], pp. 165-71.

²⁴ CTH 409, edited by A. GOETZE, The Hittite Ritual of Tunnawi, New Haven 1938.

²⁵ CTH 390, edited by H. KRONASSER, Fünf hethitische Rituale, Die Sprache 7 (1961), pp. 140-67.

It is important to observe that almost all²⁶ of these rituals contain an oral element, an incantation – “the thing said” accompanying “the thing done.”²⁷ An example of analogic magic from the ritual to reconcile the angry Telipinu reads:

Telipinu is wrathful. His soul and [his] figure were stifled (like) kindling. As they have burned this kindling, let the displeasure, wrath, (perceived) offense, and anger of Telipinu likewise burn. As (this) [malt] is meager (in fertility), and one does not take it to the field to use as seed, nor does one make it into bread, [nor] does one place [it] in the storehouse, so let the displeasure, [wrath], (perceived) offense, and anger of Telipinu likewise become meager (in effect).²⁸

We see that by themselves, the burning of the kindling and the presentation of the malt to Telipinu by the magician do not bring about the dissipation of his anger. It is necessary to explain to the deity both the vehicle and the effect of the analogy. But the incantation does more than simply inform the deity. It manipulates him through its rhetoric: Once Telipinu has conceded the identification of the kindling and the malt with his own wrath, he is compelled by the logic and power of the practitioner’s words to countenance the parallel destruction or nullification of his negative emotions.

Human speech can thus be powerful indeed, and most Hittite rituals are structured around a number of such incantations. The Hittites themselves were quite conscious of the importance their magic’s verbal component. A practitioner inserts the following proverb into an address to chthonic powers on behalf of the royal couple: “The tongue is a bridge!”²⁹ While this is an obvious allusion to the physical resemblance of the human tongue to a simple

²⁶ CTH 442, 475, and 482 have no incantations, but since all of these texts are incomplete, this may be due to the accident of preservation. CTH 486, which treats the aphasia of Muršili II, is fully preserved and does not include any oral component, but it refers to an “ancient wooden tablet” which may well have reported speech. See G. BECKMAN’s translation in *CANE*, p. 2010.

²⁷ The ancient Greeks would have called this τὰ λεγόμενα ἐπὶ τοῖς δρομενοῖς, “the things said over the ritual actions.” According to W. BURKERT, *Greek Religion*. Tr. J. Raffan, Cambridge MA 1985, p. 73, in classical Greece, “[t]here is rarely a ritual without prayer, and no important prayer without ritual.”

²⁸ KUB 17.10 iii 13-20, translated in *The Context of Scripture I*, pp. 151-3.

²⁹ KBo 11.10 iii 17. See G. BECKMAN’s *Proverbs and Proverbial Allusions in Hittite*, *JNES* 45 (1986), p. 25.

bridge, it also succinctly expresses the function of human language³⁰ in spanning the gap between men and women and their divine masters.

In contrast, communication in the other direction, from gods to humans, was seldom verbal. Rather, the "Thousand Gods of Ḫatti" made use of the elements of the cosmos which they controlled to impart information to humankind. Events themselves, especially unusual occurrences, could serve as divine messages. Sometimes the burden of the message was manifest, as when the Storm-god showed his support for Hittite troops by hurling a thunderbolt at an enemy city.³¹ But in most instances the observed phenomenon was an element in a system of communication which could be interpreted only by an adept privy to the code in which it was encrypted.

Some of the codes employed in Ḫatti had originated in Mesopotamia, and are known to us from handbooks found in the royal archives. While a number of these texts seem to have been imported directly from Assyria or Babylonia, the bulk reached the Hittites through the mediation of the Hurrians of northern Mesopotamia and Syria.³² Other systems of divine communication with humans, known only from actual reports and not from theoretical treatises, appear to be of native Anatolian origin.³³

At this point I must make a basic distinction between divine answers to human questions on the one hand and unsolicited messages from a god on the other. The Romans referred to the first type of communication as an *auguria impetrativa*, or "demanded portent." Here I will call it an "oracle" or "divination." The Latin term for a sign sent by a deity of his or her own volition was *auguria oblativa*, or "offered portent." I will designate such a message as an "omen" or "portent."

³⁰ Incantations are often referred to as "tongues" in Hittite texts. See CHD L-N, pp. 23-25.

³¹ KBo 3.4 ii 15-22, edited by A. GOETZE, *Die Annalen des Muršiliš*, Leipzig 1933, pp. 46-49. The target of this missile was Apaša (= Ephesus?), capital of Uḫḫa-ziti, King of Arzawa.

³² See G. BECKMAN, *Mesopotamians and Mesopotamian Learning at Ḫattuša*, JCS 35 (1983), pp. 97-114.

³³ It is very difficult to tell just what elements of this "native science" the Hittites might have contributed from their own Indo-European heritage and what they borrowed from the autochthonous Hattic people.

We have more than 700 tablets and fragments setting forth the results of Hittite oracular inquiries,³⁴ almost all of which date from the empire period of the 14th through early 12th centuries.³⁵ The vast majority of these records are known in but a single copy, and many are written in an extremely cursive, not to say sloppy, script. This is undoubtedly due to the fact that these are the very notes made by the diviners when consulting an oracle.

As reflected in these reports,³⁶ the most frequent occasion giving rise to an oracular consultation was misfortune attributable to divine disfavor, such as the illness of the king³⁷ or a plague in the army camp.³⁸ In instances like these, the practitioner inquired as to the identity of the disaffected deity, the reason for anger, and the restitution required to eradicate this rancor and its evil consequences. Other topics researched through oracles included the most propitious location for the king's winter quarters,³⁹ the proper strategy for a military campaign,⁴⁰ the optimum time for the enthronement of a new monarch,⁴¹ and whether or not the gods approved changes made in the program of a festival.⁴²

³⁴ CTH 561-82.

³⁵ One Old Hittite (KBo 18.151 [CTH *827]) and two Middle Hittite (KBo 8.55 and KBo 16.97 [CTH 571]) oracle reports have also been identified.

³⁶ Once more it is important to stress the character of the Boğazköy archives, which are concerned only with the affairs of state and of the royal family. What types of oracles the man in the Hittite street might have consulted and what questions he put to them remain unknown.

³⁷ E.g., KUB 22.70 (CTH 566), edited by A. ÜNAL, *Ein Orakeltext über die Intrigen am hethitischen Hof*, Heidelberg 1978 [= THeth 6]. A selection from this text is translated below.

³⁸ E.g., KUB 5.3 + KUB 18.52 i 44 (CTH 563). R. BEAL has translated this text in *The Context of Scripture I*, pp. 209-11.

³⁹ This is the primary concern of CTH 563. See preceding note.

⁴⁰ CTH 561-62.

⁴¹ KUB 18.36 (CTH 582) and other fragments. See TH. P. J. VAN DEN HOUT, *Hethitische Thronbesteigungsorakel und die Inauguration Tudḫalijas IV*, ZA 81 (1991), pp. 274-300, and *Idem*, *The Purity of Kingship: An Edition of CTH 569 and Related Hittite Oracle Inquiries of Tudḫaliya IV*, Leiden 1998.

⁴² See V. HAAS, *Gesch. Relig.*, p. 826.

In Hatti, oracular communication was conducted in a binary fashion. The gods did not issue specific answers to queries such as “Where should the king spend the winter months?,” but simply gave positive or negative responses to yes-or-no questions. As the diviner addressed a question to the deity – note once more the role of human speech here – he or she stipulated just what sequence of formally “favorable” and “unfavorable” answers would constitute an affirmation. For example:

In regard to the fact that His Majesty (Tudhaliya IV?) became ill, [...] have not you, [O deity] of (the town of) Arušna, somehow been provoked [in connection with the illness of His Majesty? If you, O deity, are angry about this, let the first extispicy be favorable and the latter] unfavorable. First extispicy: favorable ... Latter [extispicy: ...] Unfavorable.⁴³

Since the results of the inquiry here correspond to those requested, the diviner could conclude that it was indeed the displeasure of this deity which lay behind the sickness of the king.

Hittite oracular consultation proceeded through a process of elimination. For instance, various offences would be put forward as possible sources of divine anger. Those which elicited a negative response could be set aside. But each time the oracle confirmed a suggestion, the deity would be asked if this was all that was wrong. Only when an affirmative answer was given at this juncture could the next topic, that of restitution, be broached. For absolute certainty, results obtained through one means of divination were often checked by means of another system of oracles.

I turn now to the types of divination best attested in Hatti.⁴⁴ Extispicy, or the examination of the innards of a slaughtered lamb or sheep, was known to the Hittites as the “exta” or “flesh” oracle.⁴⁵ Invented in Mesopotamia,

⁴³ KUB 22.70 obv. 1-3 (CTH 566) – see note 37. I have omitted the technical details of the extispicy in my rendering, a fuller version of which can be found in *The Context of Scripture I*, pp. 204-6.

⁴⁴ Not discussed here are oil omens, which were but a minor form of divination at Hattuša. CTH 542 contains Akkadian manuals for this practice, and CTH 575 lists reports of its use.

⁴⁵ Hittite scribes designated these as *TÊ(RÊTU)* or *KUŠ*. See A. KAMMENHUBER, *Orakelpraxis, Träume und Vorzeichenschau bei den Hethitern*, Heidelberg 1976 [= *THeth 7*], pp. 12 f.

extispicy was passed along to the Hittites by the Hurrians,⁴⁶ as demonstrated by the Hurrian technical terms⁴⁷ found in the reports.⁴⁸ In Hatti, the exta were read by a practitioner bearing the title "seer."⁴⁹ This expert examined the organs in a unvarying order, attributing particular significance to certain marks on the liver or gall bladder, and to the number of coils of the intestines. Since the canonical order of consultation in Anatolia seems to have differed somewhat from that followed by the Babylonians, we cannot yet fully coordinate the technical terms employed in the two varieties of this ancient science.

A related divinatory technique of Mesopotamian origin was the observation of the behavior of a sacrificial ram as he awaited his fate⁵⁰ – how he moved his tail and his tongue, where he lay down in his pen, and so forth. The Hittite seers combined this method with the interpretation of the entrails, so that the relevant reports present their results only after both steps have been taken. Thus the animal's deportment constituted a sort of preview of what awaited the diviner when he opened his victim.

Augury, or the observation of birds, was apparently a native system of divination.⁵¹ The augurs,⁵² who often worked in teams, interpreted the

⁴⁶ CTH 547-60 present the handbooks.

⁴⁷ Most often these are abbreviated, as, for example, *ni* for *nipašuri*, or *ši* for *šintahi*. See E. LAROCHE, *Sur le vocabulaire de l'haruspicine hittite*, RA 64 (1970), pp. 127-39.

⁴⁸ CTH 570-71. CTH 561-9 and 577-82 are texts featuring various combinations of oracular techniques.

⁴⁹ The occupation is always written sumerographically LÚHAL or LÚAZU (= Akkadian *bārû*) so that its Hittite designation remains unknown. See O. R. GURNEY, *Some Aspects of Hittite Religion*, The Schweich Lectures 1976, Oxford 1977, p. 45 with note 6.

⁵⁰ CTH 576, edited by H. A. HOFFNER, Jr., *Akkadian šumma immēru Texts and Their Hurro-Hittite Counterparts*, in: M. Cohen et. al. (eds.), *The Tablet and the Scroll: Near Eastern Studies in Honor of William W. Hallo*, Bethesda 1993, pp. 116-9. The Mesopotamian divinatory genre behind this practice is *šumma immēru*, "If a sheep ...," a subseries of *šumma izbu*. In these Akkadian texts, however, the observation of the animal is not combined with the inspection of his exta.

⁵¹ CTH 573. See A. ARCHI, *L'ornitomanzia ittita*, SMEA 16 (1975), pp. 119-80.

activity of more than twenty-five types of fowl⁵³ within a demarcated area similar to the *templum* of the Roman bird watchers. They remarked on the entrance of birds to the field of observation, their behavior within it – whether they fought, crossed a river or a road, turned their heads, and so forth – and finally noted their departure. Since we have recovered no manuals of augury, but only reports, the technical aspects of this material remain obscure. However, the recent publication of a tablet including a sketch of the augury field⁵⁴ has allowed some progress toward understanding the science of the Hittite bird observers.⁵⁵ Anatolian prognostication by means of birds was in all probability ancestral to the similar Roman practice, since the Latins borrowed their techniques of augury from the Etruscans, to whom one Classical tradition attributes an Anatolian origin.⁵⁶

Also well attested in Hatti is divination by means of the *HURRI*-bird,⁵⁷ perhaps a type of duck. Just how the gods sent messages through these creatures remains a puzzle, since the reports in question give little more than the conclusions of the oracles. The fact that the practitioner of *HURRI*-bird divination was the seer otherwise active in extispicy suggests that it was the entrails of these birds which were examined.

⁵² Their profession is denoted by the Sumerograms ^{LÚ}MUŠEN.DÙ and ^{LÚ}IGI.MUŠEN. The Hittite reading is once more uncertain. See A. ÜNAL, *Zum Status der 'Augures' bei den Hethitern*, RHA 87 (1973), pp. 27-56.

⁵³ A. ÜNAL provides a list of these birds, most of which cannot be identified ornithologically, in RHA 87 (1973), p. 30.

⁵⁴ KUB 49.60.

⁵⁵ See R. BEAL's article mentioned in the introductory note above.

⁵⁶ Herodotus I.94 reports that the Etruscans had emigrated to Italy from Lydia.

⁵⁷ CTH 574. MUŠEN *HURRI* probably means "cave bird," although there is evidence that it was sometimes interpreted by the ancients as "Hurrian bird." See my remarks on its appearance in Hittite texts, *Hittite Birth Rituals*, p. 101.

Another native system was the so-called “lot”⁵⁸ oracle performed by the expert known as the “Old Woman.”⁵⁹ In the reports of this curious discourse, various symbols are said to “take” one other, after which the passive symbols are “given” to others. A quotation will illustrate:

His Majesty will go up (on campaign) into the Ḫaḫarwa mountains and will spend the night there. If we have nothing to fear regarding his person, let (the oracle) be favorable. The “gods” stood up and took “fire” and the “great sin.” They were given to “the overseer.” (Result:) Unfavorable.⁶⁰

Perhaps this technique was a sort of “board game,” with pieces or “lots” manipulated according to some set of rules. However, the literal sense of the texts is that the active symbols move themselves. If we take this seriously, we might imagine that some animal was assigned the dynamic role and released into a maze studded with symbolically-named objects. The second alternative seems more likely, since these “lot” oracles display similarities to another type of native divination in which water snakes were loosed into a basin divided into zones with similar symbolic designations.⁶¹

So much for the demanded portents. When the gods seized the initiative in communication, they might send an omen through meteorological phenomena such as thunder and lightning,⁶² or terrestrial happenings like earthquakes⁶³ and monstrous births.⁶⁴

⁵⁸ CTH 572. The technical term here is the Sumerogram KIN, which is to be read as Hittite *anijatt-*, “implement.” On this practice, see A. ARCHI, *Il sistema KIN della divinazione ittita*, OA 13 (1974), pp. 113-44.

⁵⁹ On the ^{MUNUS}ŠU.GI (= Hittite *ḫašaua-*), see O. R. GURNEY, *Some Aspects of Hittite Religion*, pp. 44 f., and cf. G. BECKMAN, *Hittite Birth Rituals*, p. 233, and *From Cradle to Grave: Women’s Role in Hittite Medicine and Magic*, *Journal of Ancient Civilizations* 8 (1993), pp. 37-39.

⁶⁰ KUB 5.1 i 32-33 (CTH 561), edited by A. ÜNAL, *Ḫattušili III., Band II*, Heidelberg 1974 [= *THeth* 4], pp. 36 f.

⁶¹ CTH 575. Only seven fragments of this type are known – see E. LAROCHE, *Lécanomancie hittite*, *RA* 52 (1958), pp. 150-62.

⁶² For lightning, see the passage cited above in note 31. The Storm-god sends a message with thunder in the “Aphasia” Text of Muršili II (CTH 486), which I have translated in *CANE*, p. 2010.

⁶³ CTH 541. See A. ÜNAL, *Naturkatastrophen in Anatolien im 2. Jahrtausend v. Chr.*, *Belleten* 163 (1977), pp. 469 f.

Since the latter types of portents are attested only in manuals of Mesopotamian origin, it is not entirely certain that the Hittite gods made use of them.⁶⁵ But celestial omens were also borrowed from Mesopotamia,⁶⁶ and there is some evidence for their actual occurrence in Hatti. In a substitute king ritual, the monarch addresses the Moon-god: "Listen to me, O Moon-god. [Since] you, [O Moon-god], have given me a sign – if you have (thereby) announced evil for me, (accept this substitute in my place)."⁶⁷ What might the sign in question here have been, if not a lunar eclipse or some observation involving the moon?⁶⁸

This text also illustrates another important fact about the messages which the Hittites received from their gods. Neither oracles nor omens announced an ineluctable fate. As in Mesopotamia, measures such as this substitution ritual could be taken to avoid a threatened situation or to persuade a deity to change the course of events.

Only in dreams⁶⁹ do gods speak directly to humans, although not all recorded night visions feature deities. The best-known instances of dreams in Hatti are to be found in the "Apology" of King Hattušili III. In this text the

⁶⁴ CTH 538-40, the Hittite-language portion of which is edited by K. RIEMSCHEIDER, *Babylonische Geburtsomina in hethitischer Übersetzung*, Wiesbaden 1970 [= StBoT 9].

⁶⁵ The same holds true for physiognomic omens (CTH 543), "terrestrial omens" (CTH 536), predictions concerning the fate of a child based on the month of its birth (CTH 545), and medical prognostications (CTH 537). For the latter, see G. WILHELM, *Medizinische Omina aus Hattuša in akkadischer Sprache*, Wiesbaden 1994 [= StBoT 36].

⁶⁶ On this material (CTH 531-35) see most recently U. KOCH WESTENHOLZ, *Mesopotamian Astrology at Hattusas*, in: H. Galter (ed.), *Die Rolle der Astronomie in den Kulturen Mesopotamiens*, Graz 1993, pp. 231-46. Attested at the Hittite capital are copies of Mesopotamian handbooks dealing with lunar eclipses, and with other sorts of signs given by the moon, sun, and stars.

⁶⁷ KUB 24.5 obv. 8'-9' (CTH 419), edited by H. M. KÜMMEL, *Ersatzrituale für den hethitischen König*, Wiesbaden 1967 [= StBoT 3], pp. 8-10.

⁶⁸ The sun gives a sign in KUB 14.4 iv 24-26 (CTH 70). See H. M. KÜMMEL, *Ersatzrituale*, p. 18.

⁶⁹ CTH 583-84, 590. See H. G. GÜTERBOCK's translations of a number of Hittite dreams apud A. L. OPPENHEIM, *The Interpretation of Dreams in the Ancient Near East*, Philadelphia 1956 [= *Transactions of the American Philosophical Society* n.s. 46/3], p. 254 f.

monarch tells the story of his life, with particular emphasis on the circumstances which he felt justified his seizure of the throne from his predecessor and nephew. Upon a crisis early in Ḫattušili's career, his patron deity Šauška appears to him while he sleeps, saying, "I will entrust you to a deity. Have no fear!"⁷⁰ When he later undertakes his revolt, the goddess sends a dream of encouragement to his wife Puduḫepa, and visits the slumbers of Hittite noblemen in order to advise them to take the usurper's side.⁷¹ The directness of these communications to and on behalf of Ḫattušili is unusual, for in Ḫatti as in Vienna dreams usually required interpretation.⁷²

Finally, a dream might also be solicited, in which case we are dealing with what anthropologists call an incubation oracle. This practice is relatively poorly attested in Hittite texts, and then primarily in the rituals which reflect folk religion.⁷³ For instance, at the close of a rite to treat his impotence, a man is ordered to sleep at the site of the ceremony to determine whether he has in fact been cured:

The patient lies down, (to see) if he will see in a dream the goddess in her body, (if) she will go to him and sleep with him. Throughout the three days in which I entreat the goddess he reports whatever dreams he sees, whether the goddess shows her eyes to him (or) whether the goddess sleeps with him.⁷⁴

We have now seen that communication between humans and gods could take many different forms in Ḫatti. King Muršili II provides a succinct statement of the possibilities for such interchange toward the close of one of his prayers delivered in time of plague. If the crimes and cultic lapses which he has adduced are not the cause of the epidemic, he requests a message from the gods:

⁷⁰ i 36-38 (CTH 81), edited by H. OTTEN, *Die Apologie Hattusilis III.*, Wiesbaden 1981 [= StBoT 24], pp. 20 f. For an English translation of this text see Th. VAN DEN HOUT, in *The Context of Scripture I*, pp. 199-204.

⁷¹ iv 8-16, 18-23.

⁷² KUB 43.11 and 12 (CTH *558) appear to be fragments of a Hittite-language dream-book.

⁷³ See *Hittite Birth Rituals*, p. 114.

⁷⁴ KUB 7.5 iv 1-10 (CTH 406), edited and translated by H. A. HOFFNER, *Paskuwatti's Ritual*, (see note 21).

[Or] if people have been dying because of some other matter, let me either see it in a dream, or [let] it [be discovered] by means of an oracle, or let a prophet speak of it. Or the priests will sleep long and purely (in an incubation oracle) in regard to that which I convey to all of them.⁷⁵

Unfortunately, little is known about the figure whose title I have translated here as “prophet,” which implies “speaker of divine messages.” He is attested only in this and two parallel passages, as well as in one or two broken contexts.⁷⁶ A more literal rendering of his designation is “enthusiast”⁷⁷ – “one possessed by a god” – and since he is said to convey his information through speech, it is indeed conceivable that he was an ecstatic.⁷⁸ But we have no information as to the *Sitz im Leben* of this practitioner, nor can we determine whether he was a conduit for omens or for oracles. Consequently, comparisons to those who delivered the word of Yahweh to Israel remain uncertain.

The material which I have surveyed here should be of interest to the historian of religion, as well as to scholars concerned with the dynamics of the transmission of cultural property. We have seen, for example, that extispicy and astrological omens made their way from Mesopotamia to Ḫatti, in the case of the former science via the Hurrians of Syria. I also mentioned that the Classical world seems to have owed the practice of augury to the Hittites. But for the historian of ancient Anatolia, the most important aspect of the human-divine conversation lies in the questions posed in the oracle reports. These

⁷⁵ KUB 14.8 rev. 41'-44'; KUB 14.10 + KUB 26.86 iv 14'-22' (CTH 378). For my full translations of Muršili's Plague Prayers, see *The Context of Scripture I*, pp. 156-60.

⁷⁶ For the attestations, see F. PECCHIOLI DADDI, *Mestieri, professioni e dignità nell'Anatolia ittita*, Rome 1982 [= *Incunabula Graeca* 79], p. 300.

⁷⁷ The Hittite word is *šiu(n)ant-*, a form derived from *šiu(n)-*, “god.” See C. WATKINS, “god”, in: M. Mayrhofer et al. (eds.), *Antiquitates Indogermanicae. Studien zur Indogermanischen Altertumskunde und zur Sprach- und Kulturgeschichte der indogermanischen Völker. Gedenkschrift für Hermann Güntert*, Innsbruck 1974, pp. 108 f.

⁷⁸ On the scanty evidence for ecstasies in Ḫatti, see H. A. HOFFNER, Jr., *Syrian Cultural Influence in Ḫatti*, in: M. W. Chavalas and J. L. Hayes (eds.), *New Horizons in the Study of Ancient Syria*, Malibu 1992, p. 103.

queries offer abundant, if sometimes obscure,⁷⁹ information on a wide range of topics relating to military, political, and social history. Furthermore, it is most unlikely that this source has been greatly affected by the ideological considerations which have distorted Hittite historical texts.⁸⁰ After all, what would have been the point of bending the truth when addressing the gods, who were certainly well aware of the events over which they presided?⁸¹

⁷⁹ For instance, the names of the rulers on whose behalf the oracles are taken are seldom given.

⁸⁰ See H. A. HOFFNER, Jr., Propaganda and Political Justification in Hittite Historiography, in: H. Goedicke - J. J. M. Roberts (eds.), *University and Diversity*, Baltimore 1975, pp. 49-62.

⁸¹ Cf. J. J. FINKELSTEIN, Mesopotamian Historiography, *Proceedings of the American Philosophical Society* 107/6 (1963), pp. 461-72, and E. REINER, New Light on Some Historical Omens, in: K. Bittel et al. (eds.), *Anatolian Studies presented to Hans Gustav Güterbock on the Occasion of His 65th Birthday*, Istanbul 1974, pp. 257-61.