

Krieg und Frieden im Alten Vorderasien

52e Rencontre Assyriologique Internationale
International Congress of Assyriology and
Near Eastern Archaeology
Münster, 17.–21. Juli 2006

Herausgegeben von
Hans Neumann, Reinhard Dittmann,
Susanne Paulus, Georg Neumann
und Anais Schuster-Brandis



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The Hittites Make Peace

Gary Beckman (Ann Arbor, MI)

Like the Romans, who closed the doors of the temple of Janus on but two brief occasions during their recorded history,¹ and like some of my countrymen, who embrace endless war in the hopes of imposing their vision of society upon the entire world,² the Hittites of second-millennium Anatolia considered armed struggle with other groups and political entities to be a normal condition of human affairs. This attitude is implicit not only in the annals, or “manly deeds” (*pišnatar*; *CHD* P, 328-29), of their kings, which discuss almost exclusively battles, the capture of towns, and the amassing of booty,³ but also in the very expression employed by Muṣili II and Ḫattušili III for the polities with whom the Hittites shared the ancient Eastern Mediterranean: *araḫzenaš* KUR.KUR.MEŠ^L KÚR, “the hostile foreign lands”.⁴

In no Hittite source do we find a critique of military conflict such as that implicit in the Akkadian *Erra Epic*.⁵ And while their Mesopotamian contemporaries considered the absence of war to be *šulmu*, “well-being, health, completeness,” etc., as well as “peace, safety” (*CAD* Š/II, 247), the Hittite word best corresponding to “peace, paix, Frieden”, is *takšul*, whose semantics place it in an entirely different realm.⁶ Derived from *takš-*, “to put in order, array” (*HW*¹, 204), *takšul* may be rendered most literally as “arrangement, accommodation”. Like its antonym *kurur*, “hostility”, *takšul* is an abstract noun that may be employed secondarily as a predicate adjective. Thus the literal signification “(one characterized) by accommodation” – or more smoothly, “one with whom accommodation has been reached” – may be translated as “ally; friend”. For example: *ANA* ^dUTU^{ŠT} *kuiš* [*takšul*] / *tuqq=a=aš takšul*[*l*] *ešdu* “Let whoever is [a friend] of My Majesty be your friend”.⁷

Indeed, in foreign relations, it was the primary concern of the Hittite monarch and his diplomatic advisors to come – peacefully or through the use of force – to an accommoda-

1 Plutarch, *Life of Numa Pompilius* 20.1-2, tr. John Dryden (New York: The Modern Library, n.d.) 90.

2 See Andrew J. Bachevich, *The New American Militarism* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2005).

3 For the relevant texts, see most recently, G. del Monte, *L’annalistica ittita* (Brescia: Paideia Editrice, 1993), and for the earlier periods, S. de Martino, *Annali e res gestae antico ittiti* (Pavia: Italian University Press, 2003).

4 For attestations, see *HW*², 241.

5 Translated by B.R. Foster, *Before the Muses: An Anthology of Akkadian Literature* (Bethesda: CDL Press, 1993), 771-805. Cf. P. Machinist, “Rest and Violence in the Poem of Erra”, *JAOS* 103 (1983): 221-26.

6 E. Neu, “Hethitisch *kurur* und *takšul* in syntaktischer Sicht”, in: *Studia Mediterranea* Piero Meriggi dicata, ed. O. Carruba (Pavia: Aurora Edizioni, 1979), 407-27.

7 *KBo* 10.12 ii 9’ff. Parallel passages featuring *kurur* leave no doubt as to the correctness of the restoration here.

tion with each foreign land that they encountered in the course of Ḫatti's expansion. In agreement with the contribution of my colleague Richard Beal to this conference, I will admit that the rulers of Ḫatti were not always quick to unsheathe their swords. For example, Arnuwanda I demonstrated remarkable patience in the face of the provocations of his treacherous West Anatolian vassal Madduwatta.⁸ But nevertheless, every summer season seems to have found Hittite armies in the field, if only on campaign against the troublesome Kaška people of the northern frontier.⁹

Whatever mutual arrangement was ultimately arrived at by the Great King of Ḫatti and his foreign counterpart was customarily expressed in written form. This concern for documentation lies behind the fact that over half of the treaties preserved from the ancient Near East have been found among the Hittite archives.¹⁰

The Hittites referred to these texts as *išhiul(a)*¹¹ and *lingaiš*¹² – or in Akkadian, *riksu / rikiltu* and *māmītu* – “binding(s) and oath”.¹³ That is, the provisions or “binding (obligations)” were the substantive part of the agreement, while the oaths to be sworn before the deities called to witness constituted its enforcement mechanism. A list of gods and their invocation is an essential component of every Hittite treaty.¹⁴ For example, in the accord between Muršili II and Manapa-Tarḫunta of the Land of the Šeḫa River, a long list of divine names is introduced as follows: “We have now summoned the Thousand Gods to assembly for this oath. They shall stand, observe, and listen. And they shall be [witnesses]”.¹⁵

There can be little doubt that these oaths, which are by their very nature performative speech acts,¹⁶ were actually recited in the course of a ceremony by the parties concerned.¹⁷ An idea of the ritual context may be gathered from an excerpt from an oath administered by a priest to Hittite military commanders:

He places wax and sheep fat in their hands and he casts (some) on the flame and says, “Just as this wax melts and just as the sheep fat is rendered, whoever breaks the oath and takes deceptive action against the king of Ḫatti, may he melt like the wax and may he be rendered like the sheep fat”. They (viz., the soldiers) say “So be it!”¹⁸

8 For a translation, see my *Hittite Diplomatic Texts*, second ed. (Atlanta: Society of Biblical Literature, 1999) (hereafter *HDT*), No. 27.

9 See E. von Schuler, *Die Kaškäer* (Berlin: Walter de Gruyter, 1965), 37-66.

10 See my remarks on diplomatic practice of Ḫatti and her treaty partners: “International Law in the Second Millennium: Late Bronze Age”, in: *A History of Ancient Near Eastern Law*, ed. R. Westbrook (Leiden: Brill, 2003), 753-74.

11 For attestations see *HED* 2, 400-401.

12 For attestations see *CHD* L-M, 64-69.

13 For a sampling of attestations see R. Labat, *L'Akkadien*, 161, 191.

14 G. Kestemont, “Le pantheon des instruments hittites de droit public”, *Or* 45 (1976): 147-77.

15 *HDT*, No. 12, §13.

16 On the practice of oaths in the ancient Near East, see the essays collected by S. Lafont, *Jurer et maudire: pratiques politiques et usages juridiques du serment dans le Proche-Orient ancien* (Paris: L'Harmattan, 1996).

17 See M. Giorgieri, “Zu den Treueiden mittelhethitischer Zeit”, *AoF* 32 (2005): 338-42.

18 Translation adapted from that of B.J. Collins, in: *The Context of Scripture*, ed. W.W. Hallo and K.L. Younger, Jr. (Leiden: Brill, 1997), vol. I, 165, §5 (First Soldiers' Oath).

To this, compare a passage from the treaty of Šuppiluliuma I with Šattiwaza of Mittani:

(The gods) shall stand and listen and be witnesses to these words of the treaty. If you, Prince Šattiwaza, and you Hurrians do not observe the words of this treaty, the gods, lords of the oath, shall destroy you and you Hurrians, together with your land, your wives, and your possessions. They will draw you out like malt from its husk. As one does not get a plant from stony ground(?) – so you, together with any other wife whom you might take,¹⁹ and you Hurrians, together with your wives, your children, and your land, shall thus have no progeny. And these gods, who are lords of the oath, shall allot you poverty and destitution. And as for you, Šattiwaza – they shall overthrow your throne!²⁰

I suspect that in general, as in the military oath, the treaty partner – here Šattiwaza and his entourage – was not expected to pronounce the entire text, but had simply to voice his assent after the curse had been recited by the expert ritual practitioner.

It was the formal act of speaking these oaths, rather than the drafting of the document itself, that marked the activation of the agreement and its sanctions, although the tablet was to be retained by the partner for reference and periodic review of his duties.

Hittite diplomatic instruments fall into two groups: By far the most numerous are those concluded with subordinates, the so-called “vassal treaties”. The stipulations are styled as the words of the Hittite monarch and addressed to the underling in the second person. As we have just seen, the vassal invokes a curse upon himself should he fail to observe them. The entire process must have been similar to that experienced by the Hittite military men as described above, for in many respects the Great King made no distinction between his domestic and his foreign subalterns.²¹ M. Giorgieri has aptly termed this process a *Ver-eidigung* by the Hittite monarch of his junior colleague.²² The unequal nature of such an agreement is manifest in a comment included in one of the treaties: “These provisions are in no way based upon reciprocity, but are (issued) from the land of Ḫatti”.²³

Given that Ḫatti had only a few peers on the international scene – Egypt, Babylonia, Assyria, and perhaps Aḫḫiyawa – the parity treaty is much less commonly attested. Although the Hittites are known to have concluded such agreements with several other Great Powers, only one composition of this sort has survived,²⁴ namely that recording the concord established between Ḫattušili III of Ḫatti and Ramses II of Egypt in the twenty-first regnal year (1259 B.C.E.) of the latter. In this text, neither party imposes anything upon the other. Rather, each king, speaking of course in the first person, promises a particular course of

19 Šuppiluliuma had given one of his daughters to Šattiwaza in marriage and understandably did not wish to include her under the divine sanctions.

20 *HDT*, No. 6A, §15.

21 Note that instructions for Hittite officials are also called *išḫiul*, and that their issuance was accompanied by oath taking.

22 *AoF* 32 (2005): 324. For the lesser constraints on his freedom of action assumed by the Hittite ruler, see A. Altman, “Who Took the Oath on the Vassal Treaty: Only the Vassal King or Also the Suzerain? – The Hittite Evidence”, *ZABR* 9 (2003): 178-84.

23 *HDT*, No. 13, §16.

24 *HDT*, No. 15. For the complicated relationship between the Akkadian- and Egyptian-language texts, see *HDT*, p. 96.

action and by swearing an oath voluntarily commits himself to following through. The partner then obliges by assuming symmetrical obligations and then speaking parallel oaths. Giorgieri calls this a *promissorische Eidesleistung*.²⁵ Since it is extremely unlikely that any of the Great Kings of the Late Bronze Age ever met personally, the oaths must have been sworn by their respective envoys to one another's courts.²⁶

As an aside, it is interesting to observe that the sole matter in which strict reciprocity is not observed in the Hittite-Egyptian treaty is that of royal succession: Ramses agrees to assure that Ḫattušili's chosen son will follow him in office, but nothing is said concerning the heir to Ramses' position. This is undoubtedly due to the particular situation in which each of the two monarchs found himself. Under the conditions governing communication and travel in the second millennium, it is doubtful that either ruler could actually have intervened directly and successfully in the affairs of his distant partner.

Indeed, this is exemplified by the sad fate of the son of Šuppiluliuma I who was dispatched to Egypt upon the request of the widow of Tuthankhamon for a suitable husband.²⁷ Due to the delay between the queen's solicitation and the arrival of the Hittite prince in Egypt, the courtier Ai was able to consolidate his own position and become pharaoh. Šuppiluliuma thereupon received the curt message that his son "had died" – almost certainly as the victim of foul play.²⁸

But Ramses was well placed to affect events in Ḫatti: The previous king of the Hittites, Urḫi-Teššup/Muršili III, who had been driven from the throne by his uncle Ḫattušili, found himself in the custody of the pharaoh at the very moment of the conclusion of the treaty.²⁹ By simply retaining him there in Egypt, Ramses would help the usurper Ḫattušili to maintain his grip on power and pass it on to his heir.

To summarize: The conclusion of a treaty by the Hittites involved the ceremonial acceptance of obligations by one or both contracting parties and the enforcement of those duties by the imposition of oaths. Thereby *takšul*, "accommodation", was established. But what factors forced – or allowed – the parties to move from a state of belligerence to one of peace?

The Hittites conceived of warfare as a trial (*ḫanneššar*; *HED* 3, 80-82) carried out on the divine level of the cosmos with the pantheon serving as judicial panel.³⁰ Since the gods were in control of human events as well as just by nature, their appropriate verdict was

25 *AoF* 32 (2005): 324.

26 For such a diplomat, see A. Zivie, "Le messenger royal égyptien Pirikhnawa", *British Museum Studies in Ancient Egypt and Sudan* 6 (2006): 68-78.

27 See Th. van den Hout, "De zaak Zannanza een egyptisch-hettitisch brievendossier", *Phoenix* 39 (1993): 159-67.

28 W. Murnane, "Imperial Egypt and the Limits of Power", in: *Amarna Diplomacy*, ed. R. Cohen and R. Westbrook (Baltimore: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 2000), 110, has suggested that plague carried off the Hittite prince.

29 See now I. Singer, "The Urḫi-Teššub Affair in the Hittite-Egyptian Correspondence", in: *The Life and Times of Ḫattušili III and Tuthaliya IV: Proceedings of a Symposium Held in Honour of J. de Roos, 12-13 December 2003, Leiden*, ed. Th. van den Hout (Leiden: Nederlands Instituut voor het Nabije Oosten, 2006), 27-38.

30 See Ph. H. J. Houwink ten Cate, "The Sun God of Heaven, the Assembly of Gods and the Hittite King", in: *Effigies Dei: Essays on the History of Religion*, ed. D. van der Plan (Leiden: Brill, 1987), 13-34.

manifest in the outcome of armed struggle between the adversaries. This attitude is clearly demonstrated by the challenge delivered by Ḫattušili to Urḫi-Teššup when he rose in revolt: “You have acted with hostility toward me. You are a Great King, whereas I am king of the single fortress-town that you have left me. So come! Šaušga of Šamuḫa and the Storm-god of Nerik shall judge (*ḫanneššar ḫannanzi*) us”.³¹ And in explaining his victory, Ḫattušili says: “If he (Urḫi-Teššup) had in no way acted with hostility toward me, would they (viz., the gods) really have made a Great King succumb to a petty king? Because he has now acted with hostility toward me, the gods have made him succumb to me by (their) judgment (*DI-ešnaza*)”.³² In practice, of course, this kind of justice was dependent not upon legal or moral principle but upon military success.³³ Might made right.

I now return to Hittite relations with their neighbors: In the case of a rebellious vassal, the triumph of the Great King was a foregone conclusion. As a practical matter, the Hittites enjoyed vast military superiority over any and all of their junior partners, and on the ideological level the oaths previously sworn by the underling would inevitably take their punitive course. I need cite only the example of the rebel Aitaqqama of Kadeš. Upon learning of the murder of his disloyal vassal at the hands of his own brother, Muršili II observes that “the oath-gods shall take [revenge]. Son shall kill father, brother shall kill brother, and they shall destroy their own [flesh and blood]!”.³⁴ Following the defeat of the traitor and the destruction of as much of his army and land as had proven necessary, the Hittites would install a new ruler, who would be duly placed under his own obligations and oaths. A new accommodation had been reached.

The gods also decided the outcome of conflicts between rivals of equal status. Šuppiluliuma I describes his reduction of the once-great realm of Mittani to the status of a Hittite dependency as the result of a legal case. Paradoxically, however, it was not Ḫatti but Artatama II, a previous claimant to rule in Mittani, whose vindication was signaled by the defeat of this land.³⁵

As for Ḫatti’s long struggle with Egypt, mundane considerations leading to the cessation of hostilities³⁶ surely included the realization by both parties after more than twenty years of confrontation that neither country was likely to prevail militarily, the threat to Ḫatti’s flank in Syria posed by an expansionist Assyria,³⁷ and the personal need of the usurper Ḫattušili for internal political stability and international recognition of his legitimacy.³⁸

31 Translation adapted from that of Th. van den Hout, *The Context of Scripture*, vol. I, 203, §10c.

32 Ibid.

33 Note the criticism later expressed by Ḫattušili’s own son Tudḫaliya IV concerning his father’s acts: *HDT*, No. 17, §§7-8.

34 *KBo* 5.4 ii 10-13; ed. A. Götze, *AM*, 112-15. Cf. also *CHD* L-N, 67-68 (*sub lingai-*).

35 *HDT*, No. 6A, §6.

36 See H. Klengel, *Hattuschili und Ramses. Hethiter und Ägypter – ihr langer Weg zum Frieden* (Mainz: Philipp von Zabern, 2002).

37 See C. Mora and M. Giorgieri, *Le lettere tra i re ittiti e i re assiri ritrovate a Ḫattuša* (Padua: SARGON, 2004), 11-22.

38 T. R. Bryce, “The ‘Eternal Treaty’ from the Hittite Perspective”, *British Museum Studies in Ancient Egypt and Sudan* 6 (2006): 1-11.

On the ideological level, the establishment of peace between Egypt and Ḫatti is explicitly said to be the desire of the great gods. In his version of the treaty text, Ramses explains the purpose of the agreement:

I have now established good brotherhood and good peace between us forever, in order likewise to establish good peace and good brotherhood in [the relations] of Egypt with Ḫatti forever. As far as the relations of the Great King, King of Egypt, [and] the Great King, King of Ḫatti, are concerned, from the beginning of time and forever [by means of a treaty] the god has not allowed the making of war between them. Ramses, Beloved of Amon, Great King, King of Egypt, is doing this in order to bring about the relationship which [the Sun-god] and the Storm-god established for Egypt with Ḫatti in accordance with their relationship from the beginning of time, so that for eternity he might [not permit] the making of war between [them].³⁹

Thus we have seen that while the Hittites believed that the world of men was one filled with conflict, in the treaty form they also possessed a mechanism for regulating inter-polity competition. Like that of so many other aspects of Hittite civilization, the development of treaties and oaths was influenced by contacts with northern Syria in the Old Babylonian period, but that is another story.⁴⁰

³⁹ *HDT*, No. 15, §3.

⁴⁰ See my “Hittite Treaties and the Development of the Cuneiform Treaty Tradition”, in: *Die deuteronomistischen Geschichtswerke*, ed. M. Witte et al. (Berlin: Walter de Gruyter, 2006), 279-301.