

ANCIENT WORLD

...ws of periods of ancient history,
...in ancient culture. Each volume
...s written by individual scholars
...n a clear, provocative, and lively
...tudents, and general readers.

ART AND CULTURE

...on to Greek Tragedy
ustina Gregory

...on to Ancient Epic
hn Miles Foley

...on to Latin Literature
ephen Harrison

...ion

...on to Classical Mythology
n Dowden

...n to Greek and Roman
...hy
n Marincola

...n to Greek Religion
niel Ogden

...n to Greek Rhetoric
Worthington

...n to Roman Rhetoric
liam J. Dominik
. Hall

...n to Classical Tradition
ig Kallendorf

...n to Roman Religion
Rüpke

A COMPANION TO ANCIENT EPIC

Edited by

John Miles Foley

 Blackwell
Publishing

2005

CHAPTER SEVENTEEN

Hittite and Hurrian Epic

Gary Beckman

1 Introduction

"Epic" in the sense of extensive poetic narrative featuring human protagonists (see Preminger 1965, under "Epic") was not a native genre among the Hittites, but since a number of texts from the Hittite royal archives, particularly the "songs" of the Kumarbi cycle, have often been adduced in studies of Greek epic (e.g., Walcot 1966: 1–26; Watkins 1992; West 1997b: 101–6), Hittite literature deserves attention in this volume. After a brief discussion of the evidence for poetic literary form in early Anatolia, we will proceed to consider fantastic narrative, beginning with accounts in which humans interact directly with deities. Then we will examine compositions whose action is set entirely among the gods and conclude with a survey of accounts of the past in which historical elements keep company with the implausible and outlandish.

But first a few preliminary remarks about Hittite culture and the nature of the tablet collections found at the capital, Ḫattuša (the modern Turkish village of Boğazköy or Boğazkale), may be in order. Ḫatti, as the Hittites themselves referred to their polity, was a multicultural civilization, arising from the melding of an indigenous Hattic culture based on its own language (Klinger 1996) with elements introduced into Anatolia by Indo-European immigrants, probably sometime in the early third millennium BCE. The newcomers themselves contributed at least three new tongues to the mix (Melchert 1995, 2003: 10–22): Hittite, the language of administration; Luwian, which was predominant in the south and west; and the poorly attested Palaic.

As a result of the influence of Assyrian merchant settlements established in their midst during the nineteenth and eighteenth centuries BCE (Orlin 1970), and as a consequence of the campaigns of their early kings in northern Syria in the seventeenth century (Bryce 1998: 75–87, 101–5), the Hittites were drawn into the cultural orbit of Mesopotamia, adopting many aspects of Sumerian and Akkadian civilization along with the cuneiform writing system. These borrowings included the use of the Akkadian language for some prestige and educational purposes, and limited study of Sumerian in the course of scribal instruction (Beckman 1983). Further complicating the picture is the intermediary role played in the diffusion of Mesopotamian culture by the Hurrians, an ethnic group and speech community that occupied much of northern Mesopotamia and Syria in the second millennium (Hoffner 1998b; Wilhelm 1989).

Hittite cuneiform texts, the great bulk of which have been recovered from the single site of Hattusa (Pedersen 1998: 42–80), were composed exclusively for the use of the royal administration, in the widest sense. We find in Hatti none of the private records of individual families so abundant for certain periods of Babylonian history. Since the Hittite monarch exercised responsibilities as chief priest and judge, in addition to those as head of state and commander-in-chief of the armies (Beckman 1995a), hymns, prayers, and rituals were as relevant to the performance of his duties as were diplomatic and administrative correspondence and historical accounts extolling the great deeds of himself and his predecessors (van den Hout 2002). Even texts employed solely for the instruction of young scribes, as was possibly the case with some belletristic material, may be placed under this rubric, if we consider that it was the school that produced the bureaucrats to whom the king delegated many of his routine tasks (Singer 2003).

2 Ancient Anatolian Poetry

Since singing an established composition implies reproducing relatively fixed wording often coordinated to music with a rhythmic and perhaps a melodic pattern, the first place to look for poetry among the tablets of the Hittites is in those texts labeled “song” – Hittite *ishamai*-, Sumerographic *ŠIR* (Güterbock 1978: 232–3; Hoffner 1998a: 66), and those said to be “sung” (*ishamiya*-, “to sing,” Akkadographic *ZAMĀRU*; note also *ishamatalla*-, “singer”). Indeed, the etymological kinship of this family of words with *ishiya*-, “to tie, bind” (Puhvel 1984–: 2.394–5) betrays its association with “bound” language.

Songs attested in the Hittite archives (de Martino 1995: 2662–3) include the brief “Song of the war-god” (Beckman 1995b: 25, rev. lines 14–15) and “Clothes of Nesa” (Soysal 1987: 181), as well as the more substantial myths of the Kumarbi Cycle (see below, section 4.1) and the Hurro-Hittite bilingual “Song of Release” (section 4.2). Particularly intriguing is the Luwian “Wilusiad” (Watkins 1995: 146–9), which might have presented an Anatolian analogue to the Homeric *Iliad*. Unfortunately, this composition is known only from its incipit: “When they came from steep Wilusa [= Troy?].” Neither hymns and prayers (Singer 2002) nor antiphonal chants employed in worship need detain us here where we are concerned solely with “epic.”

The difficulties in even recognizing, let alone analyzing, verse in the cuneiform texts of Hatti are substantial (Carruba 1998: 67–9): the cuneiform script was not well adapted for the precise rendering of the phonology of Indo-European languages, the scribes made liberal use of ideograms that mask underlying words, and furthermore they failed to indicate breaks between lines of poetry through punctuation or line division. Nonetheless, patient study of the Old Hittite song “Clothes of Neša” has revealed some of the basic principles of meter and stress employed in Hittite poetry (Melchert 1998; see also the pioneering work of McNeill 1963, Durnford 1971, and Eichner 1993). In this dirge, at least, each line consists of equal lines of four stresses, divisible into two cola:

Nesas wáspus Nesas wáspus // tíya-mu tíya
nu=mu ánnas=mas kattan árnūt // tíya=mu tíya
nu=mu úwas=mas kattan árnūt // tíya=mu tíya

Clothes of Neša, clothes of Neša – bind on me, bind!
 Bury me down with my mother – bind on me, bind!
 Bury me down with my nurse(?) – bind on me, bind!

Unfortunately, it has not been possible to detect this or any other pattern employed consistently in the longer Hittite-language songs (Güterbock 1951: 141–4). Indeed, it

may be the case that verse was used only sporadically in these texts, perhaps in order to highlight dramatic moments in the exposition (Carruba 1998: 84–7). However, the songs do share certain other stylistic features (de Vries 1967), such as the use of a small number of set scenes (the departure of a messenger, the preparation of a banquet, a father's recognition of parentage and bestowal of a name upon a child (Hoffner 1968)), the verbatim repetition of messages, and the introduction of speech by a formula restricted to literary contexts (*memiskiuwan dais*, “began to speak”). Each composition also seemingly begins with a formal proemium, although this section has been badly damaged or lost in several instances.

For Luwian and Hattic verse, see Eichner 1993: section 3 and section 7, respectively, and for our scant knowledge of Hurrian verse, consult Neu 1988: 246–8.

3 Fantastic Narrative Involving Humans

With the exception of the cult stories discussed in section 3.1, the tales included under this rubric all originated outside of Hatti, either in Mesopotamia or in a Hurrian milieu.

3.1 The conflict of the Storm-god with the serpent Illuyanka (the Hittite common noun for “snake”) is presented in two versions (Laroche 1971: no. 321; Beckman 1982; Hoffner 1998a: 10–14), which are embedded within a ritual context, namely the Hattic *purulli*-festival. The text states explicitly that the stories are to be recited by a priest in the course of the proceedings. In a classic mythological expression of the alternation of the seasons, each tale begins with the triumph of the serpent over the god upon whose rains the flourishing of nature was dependent. The Storm-god is ultimately able to defeat his rival to regain the dominant position in the world – and in one instance his physical integrity – only with the assistance of a mortal, who soon perishes as a result of his too-intimate association with the divine. Thus a basic belief of the Hittites is communicated symbolically: every deity and every human being has an essential role to play in the functioning of the universe (and in the microcosm of society), but the individual must remain in his or her proper station.

3.2 Legends of the Sargonic kings. The monarchs of the dynasty founded by Sargon of Akkad in the late twenty-fourth century BCE not only lived on in the historical imagination of Mesopotamia (Liverani 1993), but were also of great importance in the traditions of those neighboring cultures, like that of Hatti, that entered the cultural orbit of Babylonia and Assyria (Beckman 2001b). Sargon himself became the very model of a successful ruler and conqueror, while his grandson Narām-Sîn was (inaccurately) remembered as the exemplar of a hubristic king punished for his impiety with failure in battle and the collapse of his realm.

3.2.1 *šar tamhari*, “King of Battle,” which celebrates a fictional campaign of Sargon to the city of Puruṣhanda in the heart of Anatolia, is known in an Akkadian-language version from Tell el-Amarna in Egypt, as well as from Nineveh and Aššur in Assyria (Izre’el 1997: 66–75, 87–8; Westenholz 1997: 102–39). In a fragmentary Hittite-language recension found at Boğazköy (Laroche 1971: no. 310; edition Güterbock 1969), the greater part of the preserved lines describes the occupation of Puruṣhanda by the Akkadian army and the felling of trees there in order to erect monuments to the conqueror and his goddess Ištar. Over the course of events both Sargon and his opponent Nurdahḫi (= Nūr-Dagan) come into direct contact with deities, from whom they receive foreknowledge of the outcome of their war.

3.2.2 Traditions concerning Narām-Sîn. One of the problems that arise in the evaluation of works of cuneiform literature is that the available manuscripts are usually

incomplete and quite often unique. Therefore it is frequently necessary to supplement the text under consideration with material from duplicate or parallel tablets from other sites. This is the situation in regard to the sources at Hattuša dealing with Narām-Sîn. Among the Hittite archives were recovered two badly damaged clay prisms bearing a variant of the Akkadian-language saga of the king's struggle against fearsome hordes, "before whom humankind fled into caves" (edition Westenholz 1997: 280–93), as well as several Hittite-language fragments of the same composition (edition Güterbock 1938: 49–65; cf. Hoffner 1970).

These enemies are so awe-inspiring that the king devises a test to determine if they are even human: do they bleed when pricked? Even though a gash indeed brings forth blood, the invaders proceed to rout several Mesopotamian armies. And no wonder: in one of the few intelligible paragraphs of the Akkadian recension the god Ea takes responsibility before his fellow deities for creating these monstrous troops. From the better-preserved first-millennium edition, reconstructed from eight scattered manuscripts (Westenholz 1997: Text 22), we find confirmation that the terrifying marauders are indeed superhuman, and learn that their raid is intended as a divine rebuke to the arrogance of Narām-Sîn.

A second composition, known at Hattuša only in Hittite, also features the junior Sargonic ruler, this time confronted with a revolt of many lands against his authority (Laroche 1971: no. 311; edition Güterbock 1938: 66–80). Although little beyond a fragmentary list of rebels is preserved in the Boğazköy material, an Akkadian version, probably from Sippar in Mesopotamia (Westenholz 1997: Text 17), indicates that one of the enemy was a personage "neither flesh nor blood."

3.3 The Tale of Gurparazaḫ (Laroche 1971: no. 362; edition Daddi 2003), the name of whose protagonist is formed with the Hurrian term for the Tigris River (Aranzaḫ), has thus far been attested solely in the Hittite archives, although its setting is the city of Akkad, capital of the Sargonic kings. The broken text reveals a number of folkloristic elements: Gurparazaḫ seemingly wins the hand of a princess as a result of his prowess in hunting, and then defeats "60 kings, 70 young men" in an archery contest.

3.4 Anatolian versions of the Epic of Gilgameš (Laroche 1971; no. 341; see Chapter 15, by Noegel). The story of the mighty deeds of Gilgameš, his quest for immortality, and his ultimate acceptance of the human condition was widely disseminated throughout the ancient Near East. At Boğazköy, tales of the Mesopotamian hero and his companion Enkidu have been recovered in the original Akkadian language, as well as in Hurrian and Hittite adaptations. This literary complex was probably brought to the Hittite capital as part of the scribal curriculum, but it is possible that the royal court was also treated to recitations of the Hittite version (Beckman 2003: 37–8).

3.4.1 Fragments of two Akkadian editions have been recognized (edition George 2003: 306–26). Both, to judge from their script, were probably inscribed in Anatolia, rather than imported in the baggage of some visiting Assyrian or Babylonian scribal instructor. The earlier edition (fourteenth century) is in substantial agreement with the text known from Mesopotamia in the Old Babylonian period, while the later (thirteenth century) shows greater similarities to the "canonical" Twelve-Tablet Version of the neo-Assyrian royal libraries.

3.4.2 The Hurrian adaptation of Gilgameš (Salvini 1988: 157–60) was of considerable length, as indicated by the colophon on one of the surviving fragments ("fourteenth tablet, unfinished"). Of the 3,000 or more lines of text originally present, only around 450 have been preserved. Unfortunately, our knowledge of the Hurrian language is still so

A
EEpic
word
edix
mod
stati
deca
cont
intr
won
com
trad
A Ca
first
over
and
mult
stan
A ka
mah
inde
imp
liter
will
anci

rudimentary that a meaningful comparison with other realizations of the Gilgameš story is impossible.

3.4.3 The Hittite-language reworking of the Gilgameš epic (editions Otten 1958; Beckman forthcoming; translation Beckman 2001a) involves a change of emphasis from the hero's activities in and around his hometown of Uruk in southern Babylonia to the battle with Humbaba (Huwawa). The cedar forest guarded by this monster was of greater interest to an Anatolian audience, since by this time its location had shifted in the popular imagination from the mountains of western Iran to the Amanus range of nearby Syria. The Hittite text is of particular importance in examining the development of the Gilgameš tradition over the centuries, since it is the best-preserved witness to a crucial stage in the process, one which is but poorly represented by sources from Mesopotamia itself (Beckman 2003: 48–9).

3.5 At Boğazköy the Mesopotamian flood story featuring the culture hero Atrahasis, “The Most Wise” (Lambert and Millard 1969), is represented by one Akkadian fragment and two Hittite pieces (Laroche 1971: no. 347; edition Polvani 2003). Little has been preserved of this tale from Hattuša, but it is immediately apparent that the Hittite version has introduced a new character to the narrative, the protagonist's father, named Hamša, “Five” (Akkadian). Hamša seems to have assumed the role played by the god Ea in the Mesopotamian sources, advising Atrahasis on how to escape the destruction planned for humankind by Enlil (here Kumarbi).

3.6 The fragmentary Tale of Kešše (Laroche 1971: no. 361) is found among the Boğazköy tablets in both a Hittite (edition Friedrich 1950: 234–43; translation Hoffner 1998a: 87–9) and a Hurrian version (Salvini 1988: 160–70), and is represented as well by an Akkadian-language scrap from Tell el-Amarna in Egypt (Izre'el 1997: 17–19). The first portion of the story is lost in all sources; the available Hittite-language text begins with the marriage of the hunter Kešše to a beautiful woman, who soon claims all of his attention: “He listened only to his wife.” Chided by his mother for neglecting his duties toward her and the gods, Kešše returns to the field, only to find that the angry deities have hidden his prey. He falls ill, and in his fevered slumber experiences several enigmatic dreams. Here the Hittite version breaks off. The Hurrian text remains largely unintelligible, but does feature the active participation of several deities. The Akkadian fragment is too small to contribute to our understanding.

3.7 The question of a man's legacy lies at the center of the charming *Märchen* of Appu (Laroche 1971: no. 360; editions Friedrich 1950: 214–25; Siegelová 1971: 1–34; translation Hoffner 1998a: 82–7). Appu is the wealthiest person in his community, but long remains childless. Stung by the reproaches of his wife, who blames him for this sorry state of affairs, he approaches the Sun-god, offering in hand. The deity promises the supplicant that the next time he sleeps with his wife he will sire a son. Indeed, Appu's wife gives birth to two boys in succession, who are given the programmatic names “Unjust” and “Just.” When the time comes to divide their inheritance, “Unjust” attempts to cheat his brother. The matter is presented for adjudication first to the Sun-god and then to Ištar of Nineveh. Unfortunately, the resolution of the dispute has not been preserved.

3.8 The Story of the Fisherman and the Foundling (Laroche 1971: no. 363; edition Friedrich 1950: 224–33; translation Hoffner 1998a: 85–7) has a similar theme and may indeed be part of a complex narrative including the Appu tale. The anthropomorphic Sun-god impregnates a cow, who delivers and rejects a human child: “Why have I borne this

two-legged creature?" Apparently guided by the divine father, a childless fisherman rescues the abandoned baby and plots to convince his neighbors that the infant is his own offspring. The story continued on a further tablet, now lost.

4 Fantastic Narrative Featuring Deities

The texts in this group are all myths of foreign origin, and unlike the native Anatolian mythological material, they are free-standing compositions (Güterbock 1961: 143–4; Beckman 1997b: 565) that most likely had no function in Hittite society beyond their use as the substance of exercises in the scribal academy. Many of these tales are cosmological; no individual human being plays a role here.

4.1 In the Kumarbi Cycle (Lebrun 1995) we find an explanation of the state of the divine hierarchy current in Hittite times. The Storm-god Teššub reigned as king of the gods having displaced Kumarbi in that role, and having resisted successfully several attempts of the latter to regain his position. Each component of the overarching narrative is known as the "Song" (SĪR) of a particular deity.

4.1.1 The Song of Kumarbi or Kingship in Heaven (Laroche 1971: no. 344; translation Hoffner 1998a: 42–5) is attested in only a pair of mutilated manuscripts, one very small. The text relates the succession of gods at the head of the pantheon:

Once upon a time Alalu was king in Heaven. Alalu sat upon the throne, while mighty Anu, foremost of the gods, stood before him. He bowed down at his feet and placed the drinking cups in his hand.

For nine measured years Alalu was king in Heaven, but in the ninth year Anu gave battle to Alalu. He defeated Alalu and he fled before him and went down to the Dark Earth. While he went down to the Dark Earth, Anu took his seat upon the throne. Anu sat upon his throne, and mighty Kumarbi provided him with drink. He bowed down at his feet and placed the drinking cups in his hand.

In turn, Kumarbi rebels against Anu, driving him from the throne. Adding injury to insult, he bites off and swallows the genitals of his predecessor. But Alalu enjoys a sort of revenge: within Kumarbi his seed develops into five gods, among whom are Teššub, his brother Tašmišu, and the Tigris River. It is not entirely clear just how these deities are born from the male Kumarbi, but we do read that Teššub successfully emerges from "the good place." The parentage of the Storm-god is significant: while Alalu is his father, Kumarbi is in a sense his mother! Thus the following supplanting of Kumarbi by Teššub and the repeated efforts of the former to reverse the situation may be understood as a continuing family quarrel.

4.1.2 Although the sequence of his schemes is uncertain, it seems likely that the first of Kumarbi's machinations is related in The Song of the Tutelary Deity (^dLAMMA) (Laroche 1971: no. 343; translation Hoffner 1998a: 46–7). Somehow Kumarbi and his ally Ea have elevated the Tutelary Deity to universal rule, with unfortunate results. As Ea complains: "This Tutelary Deity whom we have made king in Heaven – he is hostile and has alienated the lauds, so that no one any longer gives bread and drink offerings to the gods!" While the denouement of the story has been lost, there can be little doubt that the upstart is expeditiously removed from his post.

4.1.3 The Song of Silver (Laroche 1971: no. 364; edition Hoffner 1988; translation Hoffner 1998a: 48–50) is in its very fragmentary condition most unclear. A fatherless personage named Silver learns that his sire is none other than Kumarbi. In some manner he becomes king of the gods, displacing Teššub, and commanding the obedience of the Sun and the Moon. How he forfeits this position is lost along with the end of the text.

4.1.4 In the Song of Hedammu (Laroche 1971: no. 348; edition Siegelová 1971: 35–88; translation Hoffner 1998a: 50–5) the role of Kumarbi in instigating a challenge to Teššub is more apparent. He engenders the monstrous, reptilian, Hedammu by the daughter of the Sea-god. This creature poses a strong threat to the rule of Teššub until the latter's sister Šaušga (a variety of Ištar) takes matters in hand: she dances by the seashore until she attracts the attention of Hedammu. After plying the fearsome creature with strong drink and seducing him, she seemingly disposes of the challenger.

4.1.5 The Song of Ullikummi (Laroche 1971: no. 345; Güterbock 1951, 1952a; Hoffner 1998a: 55–65) is the best-preserved constituent of the Kumarbi cycle and, in three tablets, by far the longest. A Hurrian-language version has also been recovered (Giorgieri 2001). Here Kumarbi once more produces a grotesque child to challenge the Storm-god, this time through sexual intercourse with a great rock. He names his stone offspring Ullikummi, “Oppress (the city of) Kummē” (Hurrian), in reference to the home of Teššub, and conceals him in the midst of the sea. Unseen by Teššub and his allies, Ullikummi grows rapidly into a dangerous giant before he is finally spotted by the Sun-god on his daily journey through the sky. When the troubling news of the challenger's appearance is brought and her brother Teššub weeps in despair, Šaušga attempts to deal with this new agent of destruction. But as she again displays her charms by the sea, a wave asks her:

For whom are you singing? For whom do you fill your mouth with wind? (This) male is deaf – he does not hear. His eyes are blind – he does not see. He has no mercy. Go away, Šaušga!

The unresponsive nature of Ullikummi, his stony indifference, is surely a countermeasure taken by Kumarbi after the foiling of his plans for Hedammu. Thus the sequence of these two songs within the cycle is certain.

Ullikummi defeats the younger gods in an initial battle. But before the final confrontation with the monster, Teššub consults with the wise Ea, who has abandoned his earlier allegiance to Kumarbi. Ea discerns that Ullikummi stands upon the shoulder of the Atlas-like figure Ubelluri and orders the fetching of the primeval saw used long ago to separate Heaven and Earth. Although the text breaks off here, there can be little doubt that once severed from his base, Ullikummi is overcome, or that Teššub remains king in Heaven. After all, it was the Storm-god, and not Kumarbi, whom the Hurrians and Hittites honored above all other deities.

4.1.6 Only a single fragmentary Hurrian-language tablet has survived of The Song of the Sea (Rutherford 2001), in which is narrated a struggle between Teššub and the Sea-god. Although it almost certainly belongs to the Kumarbi cycle, its precise position among the tales is unclear. It has been suggested that it may be part of the Hedammu story.

4.1.7 Several additional fragments may also find their place within this complex (Groddek 2000–2; Archi 2002 = Laroche 1971: no. 351; cf. also Laroche 1971: nos. 346, 352–3).

4.2 The Song of Release, *SĪR parā tarnumas* (edition Neu 1996, who calls it an “Epos”; translation Hoffner 1998a: 67–77), a Hurro-Hittite bilingual preserved in a number of copies, is a tripartite composition. Following the proemium is a collection of seven parables, each characterized as a piece of “wisdom” (Hittite *hattatar*). For example, as translated from the Hittite version:

A mountain expelled a deer from its expanse (lit. “body”), and the deer went to another mountain. He became fat and he sought a confrontation. He began to curse the mountain: “If

only fire would burn up the mountain on which I graze! If only the Storm-god would smite it (with lightning) and fire burn it up!" When the mountain heard, it became sick at heart, and in response the mountain cursed the deer: "The deer whom I fattened up now curses me in return. Let the hunters bring down the deer! Let the fowlers capture him! Let the hunters take his meat, and the fowlers take his skin!"

It is not a deer, but a human. A certain man who fled from his own town arrived in another land. When he sought confrontation, he began to underrake evil in return for the town (of his refuge), but the gods of the town have cursed him. (Neu 1996: 74–7; Beckman 1997a: 216)

The second section of the song presents the description of a feast in the palace of the goddess of the Underworld, to which the Storm-god Teššub has been invited. The text has unfortunately been truncated by a break, so that its interpretation remains uncertain. Hoffner (1998a: 73) suggests that the gathering symbolizes the reconciliation of the chthonic and celestial deities.

Concluding this complex work is an allegorical narrative in which the sufferings of Teššub as a debt-slave are parallel to those of human bondsmen held by the wealthy citizens of Ebla, a prosperous city in northern Syria. The deity announces to the ruler Megi (lit. "king" in the local Semitic language, but here understood as a proper name) that should the local council not institute a general remission of debts, he will destroy the town. Yet again the end of the story has been lost, but it is likely that the notables rejected the god's demand, for this segment of the song is apparently an aetiology for the ruin of Ebla that actually took place during Ḫatti's Syrian wars of the seventeenth century BCE.

Leaving aside the incomplete second section, the common theme linking the segment of the bilingual seems to be the reinforcement of societal norms, particularly those of gratitude, honesty, and compassion (cf. Archi 1979).

5 Texts about Early History containing Fairy-tale Elements

Such texts were composed only in the Old Hittite period (seventeenth century BCE) (Beckman 1995b: 31–3; Güterbock 1938: 101–13). In this genre we frequently encounter legends at home in particular localities, rather than "national" traditions (Uchitel 1999).

5.1 The best-known example of this type of text is a chronicle of the troubled relations between Ḫattuša and the city of Zalpa, located on the Black Sea coast near the mouth of the Maraššanta (Halys or Kızıl Irmak) River (Laroche 1971: no. 3; edition Otten 1973; partial translation Hoffner 1998a: 81–2; cf. Ünal 1986). Prefaced to an account of warfare stretching over three generations that culminated in the destruction of Zalpa is an anecdote of primordial events, set in the city of Kaneš, an early focal point of Indo-European settlement in Cappadocia:

The queen of Kaneš gave birth to thirty sons in a single year. She said: "What is this – I have produced a horde!" She caulked containers with grease, placed her sons therein, and launched them into the river. The river carried them to the sea, at the land of Zalpa. But the gods took the sons from the sea and raised them.

When years had passed, the queen once more gave birth – to thirty daughters. She raised them herself. The sons were making their way back to Kaneš . . .

A break intervenes soon thereafter, just as the boys, who have retraced their childhood journey along the river, are ignorantly preparing to marry their sisters, despite the misgivings of the youngest son. In a way now unclear, the classic *Märchen* motif of

the exposed royal child (cf. Moses, Oedipus, and Sargon of Akkad) is adduced in explanation of the origins of hostility between the regions of central and coastal Anatolia. As far as the damaged text allows a judgment, the ensuing narration of the wars of Zalpa with Hattuša contains no further fantastic events.

5.2 The very fragmentary account of the deeds of the early Hurrian ruler Anum-Ḫirbi in southern Anatolia also seems to begin with the abandonment of a baby, who on this occasion is rescued by a herdsman and his animals (Laroche 1971: no. 2; Helck 1983: 272–5; Ünal 1986: 132–5; Uchitel 1999: 62–4).

5.3 The Puḫanu Chronicle (Laroche 1971: no. 16; edition Soysal 1987, cf. 1999: 110–37; partial translation Hoffner 1997) is a narration of Hittite campaigns in Syria and against a Hurrian foe, much of it spoken by the otherwise unattested Puḫanu. The text is, as so often with this material, fragmentary and enigmatic. Along with the reported speech of gods, the Hittite monarch, and lesser mortals (including the song “Clothes of Neša” discussed in section 2 above), we find an aetiology for the existence of a pass through the Taurus mountains between Anatolia and Syria:

He [the Storm-god?] became a bull, and his horns were a bit cracked. I ask him (the king?) why his horns are cracked, and he says: “When I used to go on campaign, the mountains were difficult for us. But this bull was strong, and when he came along, he lifted that mountain, turning it aside, so that we conquered the sea(coast). Therefore his horns are cracked.”

5.4 Also set in northern Syria is the very incomplete composition known to scholars as the “Menschenfresser (Cannibal) Text” (Laroche 1971: no. 17; edition Güterbock 1938: 104–13; cf. Soysal 1988, 1999: 137–45). Mentioned among cities and peoples well known for this region in the early second millennium (Aleppo, Ilanzura, Suteans) is a population under the leadership of a man called “Mighty Son of the Steppe.” Of this group it is said: “If they spot a fat man, they kill him and eat him up!” This fate indeed befalls an unfortunate woman later on in the story. Although some writers have understood this reported cannibalism as realistic ethnographic description, there can be little doubt that we are dealing here with a folkloristic motif.

FURTHER READING

Many of the texts discussed here have been translated in Hoffner 1998a, and others may be found in volume 1 of Hallo's *The Context of Scripture* (1997). In addition, see Archi 2002; Groddek 2000–2, Polvani 2003; and Rutherford 2001. Beckman 2003 discusses the reception of the Gilgamesh tradition by the Hittites.

Comprehensive introductions to Hittite mythology are Beckman 1997b and Güterbock 1961 and 1978.

On the difficult question of Hittite meter and poetic form, see Carruba 1998; Durnford 1971; Eichner 1993; McNeill 1963; and Melchert 1998.