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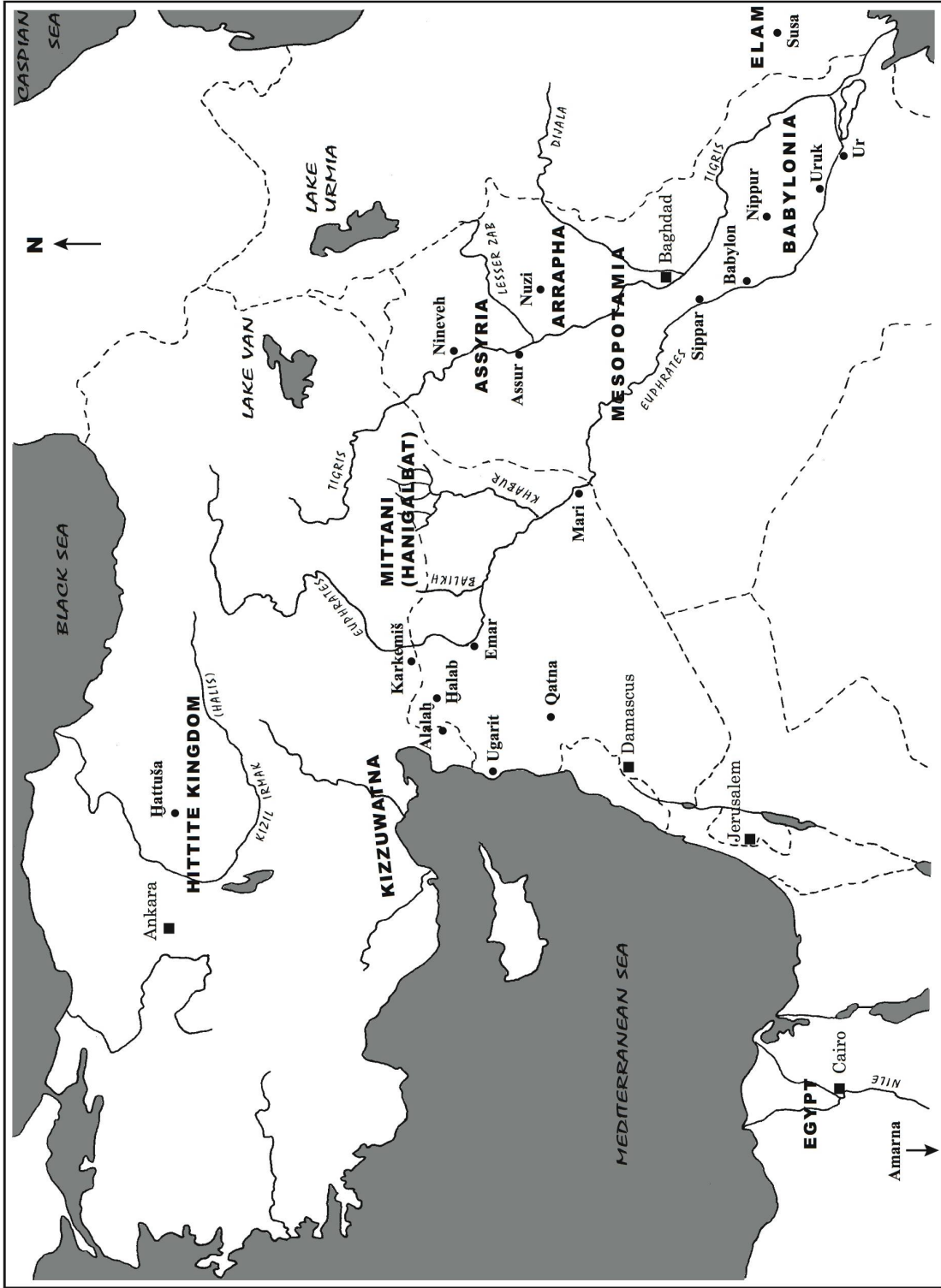
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ŠAMAŠ AMONG THE HITTITES

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Our knowledge of the religion of the Hittite state of the second millennium BCE is based primarily upon documents from the archives compiled by the scribes of the royal bureaucracy and recovered for the most part from the ruins of the Hittite capital Ḫattuša (modern Boğazköy/Boğazkale). Given the nature of the documentation, we have but scanty access to the beliefs of the majority of the population, but are largely restricted to the study of the state cult and of the spiritual lives of the royal family and entourage. Because this material is encoded in the cuneiform writing system devised for a foreign language, namely Sumerian, and furthermore in a system that makes frequent use of ideograms to designate deities,¹ it was inevitable that the Hittite religion would be to some extent influenced by that of Mesopotamia, and perhaps also by that of northern Syria, the area from which the Anatolians most directly imported cuneiform and its culture.

In particular, the question to be addressed here is: Since Hittite scribes employed a single heterogram, ^dUTU, to designate the Mesopotamian Šamaš in Akkadian-language texts borrowed from the south and their own solar deity or deities in those originally composed in the Hittite chancellery (in both Hittite and Akkadian), to what extent were the characteristics and cosmic responsibilities associated with the former transferred to the latter?

There are literally hundreds, if not thousands, of attestations of the expression ^dUTU,² with or without phonetic complementation,³ in Hittite-language documents from Ḫattuša.⁴ Identifying the deity intended in a particular occurrence is largely a matter of assigning the text to the appropriate cultural stratum within the composite culture of Ḫatti – as the Hittites referred to their state – and then attaching the name by which the Sun was known within that group: Eštan in Hattic, Ištanu in Hittite, Tiwat in Luwian, Tiyat in Palaic, Šimegi in Hurrian, or Šamaš in Akkadian.

In one respect, our problem is simpler in regard to this divinity than for other gods and goddesses customarily written ideographically: we may confidently assume that the relationship among all of the various solar deities is one of syncretism. Whereas, for instance, the terms ^dIŠKUR ^{URU}Ziplanta, ^dIŠKUR ^{URU}Kuliwišna, and ^dIŠKUR ^{URU}Halpa might conceivably be variant designations employed in different cities for the same Storm-god, it is also possible that they indicate completely separate deities,⁵ or perhaps avatars of an archetype, such as the Virgins of neighbouring villages in France or Spain. But we have no evidence in any cuneiform source for the

* University of Michigan, Ann Arbor; sidd@umich.edu. Hittitological abbreviations employed here are those listed in Güterbock and Hoffner 1997, vii-xxvi.

¹ On this problem, see Schwemer 2007, 123-124.

² For a compendium, see van Gessel 1998, 844-899.

³ ^dUTU(-uš/un/i/e/aš). I leave aside here writings with the appropriate complementation in sources composed in Hattic, Hurrian, Luwian, and Akkadian.

⁴ On solar deities in Ḫatti, see in general Yoshida 1996.

⁵ Indeed, one sometimes has the impression that the Hittite scribes on occasion employed this Sumerogram to indicate any male deity of whose precise character they were uncertain.

existence of more than one Sun. Then as now, a single orb illuminated the entire world, however differently various peoples might refer to him or her.⁶

Let us now take a look at the identities assigned to the solar deity by the constituent strands of the culture of Ḫatti. The Eštan worshipped by the “indigenous” Hattic people was female,⁷ as demonstrated by her epithet *kattaḫa*, “queen”.⁸ She might also be referred to by the Hattic epithet Wurunšemu, seemingly “Mother of the Earth”,⁹ or after her primary cult site, as the Sun-goddess of the city of Arinna (^dUTU ^{URU}*Arinna*),¹⁰ or again as Arinnitti/u, “she of Arinna”.¹¹

Eštan, who appears in the *Hittite* pantheon as Ištanu,¹² indeed possessed celestial features, being called, for example, “the torch of the land of Ḫatti”,¹³ and quite possibly being represented by the “solar standards”¹⁴ excavated at pre-Hittite Alaca Höyük.¹⁵ But she was most often associated with the Netherworld, in which capacity she also bore the title “Sun-goddess of the Earth”.¹⁶ How are we to understand this range of activity? Quite simply, this deity, like the Mesopotamian Šamaš,¹⁷ daily executed a vast circuit, passing from east to west through the sky during daylight hours, and crossing back eastward beneath the earth during the night in order to begin her journey anew the following morning.¹⁸

Even during the Old Kingdom,¹⁹ the Sun-goddess had been provided with a male counterpart – or perhaps better, manifestation – also named *Ištanu*,²⁰ who assumed the celestial

⁶ See Kutter 2008.

⁷ Klinger 1996, 141-147.

⁸ [*Eš-t*]a-a-an ka-a-a[t-taḫ], *KBo* 25.131 obv.⁷ 5’.

⁹ Klinger 1996, 145-147; cf. Soysal 2004, 325.

¹⁰ Yoshida 1992, 150-151.

¹¹ Haas 1994, 423.

¹² See van Gessel 1998, 205-206. The variants Aštanu and Eštanu are also found; for attestations, see van Gessel 1998, 53 and 68.

¹³ KUR ^{URU}*Ḫatti* ^{GIŠ}*zupparu*, *KUB* 21.19 (*CTH* 383) i 4.

¹⁴ Note in this connection: “Thus testified Zuwa: ‘From (the time of) our grandfather we have a Sun-goddess of Arinna in the form of a golden sun-disk. They regularly worship it. The gold belongs to the deity.’” § “Thus testified Warwašazi: ‘The Sun-goddess of Arinna is in the form of a statue of a woman, while the Storm-god of Arinna is in the form of a statue of a man. They are from (the time of) our father. I regularly make offerings to them. The silver belongs to the deity. The chief smith fabricated (them).’” *UM-MA* ^m*Zu-wa-a ŠA A-BU A-BU-NI-wa-na-aš* ^dUTU ^{URU}PÚ-na *AŠ-ME* GUŠKIN *e-eš-zi nu-wa-aš-ma-aš-ša-an e-eš-ša-an-zi* GUŠKIN-*ma-wa ŠA* DINGIR ^{LIM} § *UM-MA* ^m*Wa-ar-wa-ša-zi* ^dUTU ^{URU}PÚ-na-wa ALAM MUNUS ^{TI}^dU ^{URU}PÚ-na-ya ALAM LÚ *ŠA A-BU-NI nu-wa-ra-aš-za ši-ip-pa-an-za-ki-mi* KÙ.BABBAR-*ma-wa ŠA* DINGIR ^{LIM} ^m*Pi-ḫa-A.A* UGULA E.DÉ.A *i-ya-at*, *KUB* 38.37 (*CTH* 295) iii 13-20, ed. Werner 1967, 56-57.

¹⁵ E.g. Bittel 1976, Figures 23-24.

¹⁶ *taknaš* ^dUTU; for attestations see van Gessel 1998, 871-873. In this role she would later be identified with the Hurrian Allani.

¹⁷ See Polonsky 2002 and Steinkeller 2005. It is uncertain whether this conception was borrowed into Ḫatti from Mesopotamia.

¹⁸ See Tenner as long ago as 1928; cf. Heimpel 1986.

¹⁹ Worship of a solar deity in Anatolia during the early second millennium is also demonstrated by the mention of a “(Festival) of the Sun” (*ša* ^dUTU) in an Old Assyrian contract from Kültepe/Kaneš; see Veenhof and Eidem 2008, 237.

duties, leaving the chthonic responsibilities to his female better half. For purposes of disambiguation, the male figure could be referred to more fully as the “Sun-deity of Heaven”.²¹ In the religion of the Empire, these aspects of a single divinity of alternate gender could on occasion appear as separate, individual, entities in offering lists²² and incantations. For example, note the Luwian speech:

If he or she is alive, let the Sun-god (^dUTU-*za*) above deliver him or her. If he or she is dead, let the Sun-goddess of the Earth (*ti-ya-am-ma-aš-ši-iš* ^dUTU-*za*) deliver him or her – the accursed person afflicted by a (broken) oath!²³

As in other aspects of the religious life of Ḫatti, it is difficult to recognize inherited Indo-European features in Hittite religious conceptions. The identification of ^dŠiušummi-, literally “Our God,” of the pre-Hittite Anitta Text with the Sun remains uncertain,²⁴ and in any case not much of this deity’s particular nature is revealed in that composition.²⁵ Beyond the conceptualization of the Sun’s passage across the heavens as accomplished in a horse-drawn chariot, an idea to which we will return in a moment, almost nothing of Ištanu’s character might be attributed to the Indo-European heritage.²⁶ Very little is known about the solar deities of the two other Indo-European-speaking groups in Ḫatti, Tiyat of the Palaeans²⁷ or Tiwat of the Luwians.²⁸ Note only that the root from which their names derive (**diēu-*) appears in Hittite as the base of the common words for “deity”, *šīu(na-)*, and “day”, *šiwatt-*.²⁹

The Hurrian Sun-god, Šimegi, cannot (yet?) be distinguished sufficiently from the Mesopotamian Sun-god to detain us here,³⁰ so we turn now to UTU of Sumer, more familiar to the Hittites as Šamaš of Babylonia, Assyria, and inland Syria.³¹ This Šamaš, a male deity, was immanent in the fiery ball of the Sun, casting his life-giving rays over the entire earth. He emerged

²⁰ See Klinger 1996, 143. The male solar deity is first attested in the Akkadian version of the Annals of Ḫattušili I (*CTH* 4); see Houwink ten Cate 1987, 15. Note that in the same passage where the Akkadian version has a male Sun-god, the Hittite text writes ^dUTU ^{URU}*Arinna*.

²¹ ^dUTU AN^E (van Gessel 1998, 874-875) or ^dUTU ŠAME (van Gessel 1998, 877).

²² For example, on the twelfth day of the *šalliš waštaiš* ritual, offerings are made to both *taknaš* ^dUTU-*i* and ^dUTU ŠAME; see Kassian et al. 2002, 476-477, where the latter phrase is, however, incorrectly rendered as “Sungoddess of the Heaven.”

²³ *KUB* 35.45 ii 25-27 (*CTH* 760); for a full transliteration, see Starke 1985, 153.

²⁴ See Singer 1995.

²⁵ Outside of this text this deity appears only in *KBo* 17.32 + *KBo* 41.21 obv. 21’ (*CTH* 495): ^dŠi-ú-š[um-, which adds little.

²⁶ See West 2007, 194-217, for the common features of the Indo-European solar deity. The suggestion made on p. 194, that “^dUTU-*li-i-as*” in *KUB* 17.19:9 (*CTH* 279) might possibly represent *Sahhulias, is erroneous. The text actually has ^dUTU-*li-ya*, and certainly stands for the Luwian adjectival form *tiwalya-*, “of the sun”. See Dardano 2006, 223 and Hutter 2003, 226.

²⁷ See Watkins 1974, 106-107.

²⁸ See Hutter 2003, 224-227.

²⁹ Kloekhorst 2008, 763-764 and 766-767.

³⁰ See Trémouille 2000, 124 and Taracha 2009, 127.

³¹ See Polonsky 2002. At Ugarit, the solar deity Špš was female; see del Olmo Lete 2008, 32.

in the morning from the heavenly gate in the eastern mountains and retired through the westerly portal in the Cedar Forest every evening, thence passing eastward through the nether sky (AN.ŠAG₄) situated “above” the Underworld.³² In the course of his orbit witnessing every thing and every action on the earth and in the Netherworld, Šamaš served as the guardian of justice as well as the convener and chief judge of the divine assembly. Because he was equally present in the upper and lower realms, Šamaš also functioned as the primary conduit between the living and the dead and as the guarantor of food and libations for the shades.

His place in the Mesopotamian universe is stated succinctly already in the Sumerian poem *Enki and the World Order*, where, of course, he bears his earlier name:

Young man Utu, ... father of the Great City (i.e. the realm of the dead) – the place from which the days come out – great herald of the pure sky, judge (in charge) of the decisions of the gods, the one wearing a lapis-lazuli beard, who rises from the horizon into the pure sky, Utu, son born of (the goddess) Ningal – Enki (king of the gods) has indeed placed you in charge of the entire heaven and earth.³³

Having completed our review of the solar deities familiar in Ḫatti, we may now turn to the nature and function of Ištānu within the composite culture we know as “Hittite”.³⁴ These characteristics are most conveniently demonstrated in a series of Hittite-language prayers directed to the Sun, the prototype for which may have originally been composed as early as the Old Hittite period.³⁵ I now present my translation of the hymnic prologue to these prayers, as reconstructed from the several variant texts (*CTH* 372-374). H.G. Güterbock, who did so much to elucidate this corpus,³⁶ referred to this poem as *The Great Solar Hymn*.³⁷ Here an officiating priest speaks on behalf of a sufferer referred to generically as “so-and-so”,³⁸ who concurrently makes an offering of grain:

O Sun-god, my lord, just lord of judgment; o king of heaven and earth. It is you who rule the lands, you alone who bestow mastery. You alone are just; you alone have mercy. Only you respond to evocations. You are the merciful Sun-god, and you (indeed) have mercy. O Sun-god, fully grown son of Ningal, your beard is of lapis-lazuli. So-and-so, your servant, has now prostrated himself before you and is speaking to you.

Within the circumference of heaven and earth you alone, o Sun-god, are the source of illumination. O Sun-god, mighty king, son of Ningal, it is you who establish custom and regulation for the people. Ultimate authority has been granted to you alone. You are the just lord of rule. You are the father and mother of every land.

³² See Heimpel 1986 and Steinkeller 2005.

³³ Lines 374-379, translated in Steinkeller 2005, 18 n. 17; a full rendering of the composition is found in Black *et al.* 2004, 215-225.

³⁴ On the multicultural nature of Hittite civilization, see Güterbock 1959.

³⁵ So Güterbock 1978, 138-139.

³⁶ See Güterbock 1958, 1978, 1980.

³⁷ The most recent edition is Schwemer 2008b.

³⁸ LÚ.NAM.U₁₉.LU, literally “a mortal”.

O Sun-god, great king, your father Enlil has placed the lands and the four corners (of the universe) in your hand alone. You are the lord of judgment, tireless in the place of judgment. Among the ancient gods you are the mighty Sun-god. It is you who prepare the offerings of the gods. It is you who allot the portions of the ancient gods (in the Netherworld). The door of heaven is opened only for you, o Sun-god, and only you, venerated Sun-god, pass through heaven's gate.

The gods of heaven are bowed down to you alone; the gods of earth are bowed down to you alone. Whatever you say, o Sun-god, in return the gods prostrate themselves only to you. O Sun-god, you are the father and mother of the oppressed and orphaned. You alone, o Sun-god, exact retribution for the orphaned and oppressed.

When at dawn the sun rises in the heavens, it is your illumination, o Sun-god, that reaches all the upper and lower lands. You judge the case of the dog and the pig. And the case of the wild beasts who cannot speak with their mouth – that too you judge. You alone judge the case of the evil and malicious person. The person with whom the gods are angry and whom they neglect – you care for him and have mercy on him. O Sun-god, sustain so-and-so, your servant, so that he might begin to offer bread and beer to the Sun-god regularly. O Sun-god, take him, your just servant, by the hand.

And so-and-so has hereby poured out barley to the team of four that you, o Sun-god, have harnessed. May your Four eat! And while the Four eat the barley, I bless you, o Sun-god! So-and-so, your servant, is now speaking about a matter with you, and he is listening to your words. O Sun-god, mighty king, you go out among the four corners (of the universe). At your right run the Fears, at your left run the Terrors.

Three unintelligible lines. Your vizier Bunene walks on your right. Your vizier [Mēšaru] walks on your left. And you go across the sky, o Sun-god.

And above, [you make an allotment] to the gods of heaven; below, on the Dark Earth, you make an allotment to the ancient gods. But below, [you make an allotment] to the ancient gods of the [Dark] Earth. ... [So-and-so, your servant, has] now [prostrated himself] before you. [...] him, o Sun-god. [Whichever] venerable god [has afflicted him], that deity has turned his gaze aside and does not allow so-and-so to act. Whether that deity is in heaven or on the earth, you, o Sun-god, accompany him.

And so on. Thus the Sun-god is beseeched to act as an intermediary between the suffering mortal and the deity whose anger he or she has aroused.

The Mesopotamian features in this Hittite hymn are striking – from the deity's parentage, his daily path through the celestial realm, and his concern with justice to his divine assistants and his beard of lapis-lazuli. While a perusal of preserved Akkadian and Sumerian compositions addressing the Sun-god yields no direct forerunner for this hymn, the Boğazköy archives do contain several imported texts dealing with Šamaš that present similar material: an Akkadian-language hymn to this god (*CTH 792*) with a duplicate from Assur,³⁹ a Sumerian-Akkadian bilingual hymn also found at Nineveh and Sultantepe (*CTH 794*),⁴⁰ and a list of the viziers of Šamaš (*CTH 793*), duplicated by a tablet recovered in Babylonia.⁴¹

On the other hand, we may note several elements foreign to the Mesopotamian tradition, including the Sun's solicitude for the legal cases of the swine and the dog, a concern also

³⁹ *KAR 1.19* (partial).

⁴⁰ Cooper 1973.

⁴¹ *OECT 6*, 51ff. See Richter 1999, 297, and corrections by Wilhelm 2002, 49, n. 7.

mentioned in another Hittite royal prayer,⁴² and the deity's quadriga. The origins of this vehicle remain uncertain. The Greek Helios also travelled in a horse-drawn chariot,⁴³ but there is no reason to believe that this conception of solar movement was exclusively Indo-European.⁴⁴ The idea might just as well have been transmitted in the opposite direction, from the Near East to Hellas. Indeed, the earliest datable depictions of a deity aboard a chariot – in this case the Storm-god Adad – are found on seals from the Sargonic period of twenty-fourth century southern Mesopotamia.⁴⁵

In any event, the truly significant point in this context is that this thoroughly Mesopotamian-inspired hymn served as an introduction to a number of prayers directed by Hittite notables to their own solar deity. That is, these borrowed ideas were not employed in a literary exercise of the scribal school, but rather found their way into instruments of actual Hittite religious practice. After all, Ištanu would not have responded favourably to a plea prefixed with praise irrelevant to his person and activities. Thus, we may conclude that at least for the members of the elite of Ḫatti, the importation of cuneiform writing and culture brought with it real consequences for their spiritual and intellectual life.

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⁴² *KUB* 6.45 iii 15-16 (CTH 381), ed. Singer 1996, 20 and 39. This is perhaps to be understood as an elaboration of the deity's concern for beasts in general.

⁴³ See Pfister 2002, 30.

⁴⁴ So West 2007, 210-211.

⁴⁵ See Mellink 1966, 83 and Schwemer 2008a, 32. Actual chariots, although not necessarily intended for celestial transportation, are attested for deities from the time of Gudea through the Ur III period and later; see Civil 1968, 3-4 and *CAD* N /I 357 (sub *narkabtu* 1d).

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