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# Relations between God and Man in the Hurro-Hittite *Song of Release*

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## INTRODUCTION

Only a dim outline of the plot of the Hurro-Hittite *Song of Release* can be gleaned from the fragments that remain. The proemium (KBo 32.11) does tell us it is about the destruction of Ebla. The gods Teššub, Allani, and Ishara are involved, and a human hero, Pizikarra of Nineveh, will carry it out. Why the North Syrian city must be destroyed, however, is unclear. KBo 32.15, 19, and 20 tell us it has to do with the Eblaite's refusal to release certain captives, the people of the town of Ikinkalis, but why should Teššub feel the need to take their side, and why are these people obligated to render service to the nobles of Ebla? The assembly scene preserved in KBo 32.15 provides a further problem, the description of Teššub's suffering. Up to now scholars have attempted to argue that the description is fictive or sarcastic, perhaps finding it difficult to imagine that the gods could be thought to suffer "like men."<sup>1</sup> Here I offer a unified solution to these problems in the light of parallels from other Hittite and Hurro-Hittite texts. These show that Teššub's suffering is caused by neglect of his cult, since the people of Ikinkalis, because they are being forced to work for the Eblaite nobles, cannot fulfil the ritual obligations owed to him and to the royal ancestor cult of Ebla; this is the reason for Teššub's punishment of Ebla.

The study I present here is only the first step towards understanding how the *Song of Release* achieved its final form at Hattusa. Until now, there has been little effort to compare the *Song of Release* to Hittite texts or even to other texts in the Hurro-Hittite SIR<sub>3</sub> genre, although Neu noted some similarities with the *Annals of Hattusili I* and an Old Hittite instruction text. For the most part, scholars have attempted to understand the text as a product of Old Babylonian North Syria, focusing on the time and place of the story the text tells. Eblaite texts have indeed elucidated key details of the text, and I myself will make use of archaeological evidence from Ebla to support the interpretation I present here. Yet, the *Song of Release* was found at Hattusa, and it was translated into Middle Hittite. We should entertain the possibility that between the time of its first composition, when the event it describes was still fresh in its original audience's memory, and the time it was finally translated

Abbreviations follow those in the *Chicago Hittite Dictionary*. In the discussion of KBo 32.15 which follows I rely mainly on the Hittite translation of the Hurrian text. I follow the edition of Neu (1996a) and the interpretation of Wilhelm (1997) as revised in Wilhelm (2001) except where noted. I draw attention to significant differences in the Hurrian version from the Hittite one in the footnotes, as well as to significant differences in my translation from that of Hoffner (1998a: 75ff.) and Wilhelm (2001). I would like to thank Richard Beal and Gary Beckman for their advice and suggestions to improve this article. My great debt to my teacher, Prof. Harry A. Hoffner, Jr., will be evident to the reader.

1. So Neu 1993: 347–48; 1996a: 298–89, etc.; see discussion in Wilhelm 1997: 281–82. Haas and Wegner (Haas and Wegner 1991: 386; Haas 1994: 552; Haas and Wegner 1997: 439, 442–43) and de Martino (2000: 309, 314) also consider the description not to reflect reality, although they believe that Teššub was held captive earlier in the narrative by Allani, when he was entertained in the Netherworld (KBo 32.13).

and written down, the *Song of Release* was tailored to fit Hittite concerns and practices, like other members of the SIR<sub>3</sub> genre.<sup>2</sup> In the succession myth found in the Hurro-Hittite *Song of Kumarbi*, for example, successive kings of the gods, Alalu and Anu, were each deposed by his cupbearer (§§2–4, KUB 33.20 i 8–29), a pattern that conformed to Hittite experience (cf. *Telipinu Chronicle* §6, KBo 3.1 i 31–34), instead of by his son as in the Akkadian *Enuma Elish*; and the Hurro-Hittite *Gilgamesh* was tailored to some degree to a Hittite milieu, focusing on places known to the Hittites (Tigay 1982: 111–18 with earlier refs.).

I begin with a brief survey of previous interpretations of KBo 32.15. I then present my own interpretation, focusing first on Hittite instruction texts which discuss the oppression of the poor by their betters, then on *arkuwar* prayers which discuss the mutual obligations of mankind and the gods. I then move on to Hittite edicts, laws, and treaties which provide the real-world context explaining how labor obligations imposed on men prevent them from serving the gods, and how Hittite royalty displayed their piety through decrees which freed people from such obligations in order to better serve the gods or the royal dead. Finally, I discuss a scene from the Hurro-Hittite *Song of Hedammu* to show that Teššub could in fact be reduced to the state of a poor beggar if humans did not serve him properly.

#### INTERPRETATIONS OF THE ASSEMBLY SCENE

The text of KBo 32.15 first becomes intelligible in the middle of a speech describing the plight of Teššub, insisting that if he really were suffering, the speaker and his faction would certainly help him: “We will rescue him, Teššub, the oppressed one. (But,) who harms him, we will not make him a release.”<sup>3</sup> (*n=an=kan huišnumini* <sup>d</sup>IM-an <sup>LÚ</sup>šiššiyalan/*dammišhiškizzi=an kuiš UL=ma=an/ iyaweni parā* <sup>tar</sup>numar, ii 18’–20’, ed. Neu 1996a: 291, with n. 6 and 324, n. 39.)<sup>4</sup> The speaker, probably Meki’s rival Zazalla, insultingly jeers at Meki and Purra, the chief of the captives:

*n=ašta tuk ANA* <sup>m</sup>Mēki  
*ZI-KA anda tuškizzi*  
 1-ŠU=kan tuk ANA <sup>m</sup>Mēki ZI-KA anda  
*UL duškizzi tāt pēdi=ma=kan*  
*ANA* <sup>m</sup>Purra āppa pianti ZI-ŠU anda  
 <UL> duški[z]i  
 ii 20’–25’ (ed. Neu 1996a: 291–93)

2. On the SIR<sub>3</sub>, see Neu (1996a: 7) and Hoffner (1998a: 66–67; 1998b: 180). On the poetic techniques characteristic of the *Song of Release* and Hurro-Hittite poetry in general, see Neu (1988b: 246–48). Neu (1993: 114–18) has shown that the Hurrian side of the *Song of Release* shares an extended formulaic sequence with the *Song of Kessi*, and further examples of shared sequences are provided in Bachvarova (2002: 120–26). Pace Wilhelm (1997: 277–78, n. 1), formulaic correspondences between various SIR<sub>3</sub>’s are evidence that these are indeed members of a single literary genre.

3. Hoffner (1998a: 75): “Who (then) will oppress him? But we will make no release (of slaves).” Another possible translation suggested by Beckman (pers. comm.): “Who keeps oppressing him? Shall we not institute a release?” Beckman notes that the fronted negative particle is used in rhetorical questions in Hittite, but the word order of the Hittite version of the *Song of Release* shows interference from Hurrian, so this cannot conclusively prove such a construction here. I have taken the *=an* as referring to a human (it cannot refer to the neuter noun *tarnumar*) and translated the puzzling sentence as a double accusative construction.

4. Hurr. i 18’–20’ *eh(i)l=il=eva=š=n(n)a* <sup>d</sup>Teššob *hinz=i=t(i)=a/* *hamaz=i=a=ši=dan nakk=i=u=voš=n(n)a/* *kir=in=zi* (ed. Neu 1996a: 473; Wilhelm 1997: 280; also see Wegner 2000: 206). The two sentences are difficult to construe. Either: “We shall free him, Teššub, **the oppressed one**, (but) we will not set free the one who is an oppressor.” Or: “We shall free him, Teššub, (but) **the oppressor**, because he oppresses, we will not free.” I prefer a passive meaning for the Hurrian formant *-iti-*, based on the parallels adduced by Wegner (2000: 206–7).

“For you, Meki,  
does your heart rejoice inside?<sup>5</sup>  
First of all, for you, Meki, your heart inside  
will not rejoice. Secondly  
for Purra, who is to be given back, his heart inside  
will <not> rejoice.”<sup>6</sup>

Zazalla insists that the slaves are needed to do menial labor: “Why will we let them go? Who will give us food? . . . They are our cooks, and they wash for us.” (*apūš arḫa kuit tarnu<sup>1</sup>meni<sup>1</sup> anzāš=a adan[na]/ kuiš piškizzi . . .* <sup>LÚ.MEŠ</sup>MUHALDIM-š=at=naš/ arraškanzi=ya=aš<sup>1</sup>=naš, ii 26’–29’, ed. Neu 1996a: 293.) The speaker demands that Meki send away his own wife and son if he wishes to release someone. Meki is reduced to tears and attempts to defend himself to Teššub, insisting:

[i]štamaš=mu <sup>d</sup>IM-aš  
<sup>URU</sup>Kummiyaš LU[GA]L GAL  
  
ug=an p[ēšk]imi<sup>7</sup> pariššān  
ammel=ma=a[n U]RU-aš UL pāi  
ŠA <sup>m</sup>Pazz[anik]arri=ma DUMU-ŠU <sup>m</sup>Zāzallaš  
parā tar<sup>1</sup>nu<sup>1</sup>[mar] UL pāi nu=za <sup>m</sup>Mēkiš  
apel U[RU-LAM-]ŠU wašdulaz parkunūt  
<sup>URU</sup>Ēb[lan UR]U-an URU-ri šer waštul<sup>HLA</sup> peššiēt  
iii 13–20 (ed. Neu 1996a: 297)

“Listen to me Teššub,  
great king of Kummi.  
I will [gi]ve it,  
(i.e.,) *pariššān*,  
but my city will not give it.<sup>8</sup>  
Nor will Zazalla, son of Pazz[anik]arri  
give release.” Meki  
(tried to?) purify his ci[ty] from sin,  
the ci[ty] of Eb[la]. He (tried to?) waive the sins for the sake of his city.<sup>9</sup>

Meki’s purification ritual, meant to cleanse the sin of disobedience to the god, must have failed, because we know that Ebla does in fact earn the wrath of Teššub and is destroyed.

Beginning with Neu (1988a: 14; 1993: 331–33; 1996a: 9) and based on biblical parallels, scholars have argued that Meki attempts to issue a release of debt slaves. Periodic freeing of debt slaves and canceling of debts as part of a jubilee appears in Leviticus 25:10 (Neu 1988a: 14; 1988b: 332–33; Hoffner 1998b: 180–83), and this section of Leviticus does present us with a complex of ideas that also appear in the *Song of Release*. Furthermore, in Leviticus

5. The Hittite corresponds to a Hurrian negative. I have made it into a question, following the suggestion of Hoffner (pers. comm., and see p. 80, n. 56 in Hoffner 1998a), although he interprets the Hittite as lacking a negative by scribal error in Hoffner 1998a: 75. De Martino (1999: 16) sees the Hittite as a mistranslation of the Hurrian.

6. Hurr. i 22’–24’: šin=z(i)=o=ḥḥ(i)=a=mma/ an=i=kki Purrā=vi Ikinkališ=ḥi=na=mma/ nakk=i=u=ffu=š futk=i=na kēld(i)=āi (ed. Neu 1996a: 473). “Secondly (the heart) of Purra is not pleased. We are not releasing the sons of Ikinkalis in goodness.”

7. Following Hoffner’s suggested restoration p[ēšk]imi (pers. comm., and see 1998a: 75, n. 60).

8. Hurr. iv 15–16: iša=š ar=ōl=av=nna ārd=ivo=š=n(n)a kir=en=ze ar=i=amma (ed. Neu 1996a: 474). “I will give it, my city will not give it, i.e., release.”

9. Hurr. iv 18–19: <sup>m</sup>M’ēki=ne=š tal=āḥḥ=u=m Ēb[l]a[-. “Meki took away . . . Ebla. . . .” The expected object ārni, “sin,” is unlikely, given the traces (Neu 1996a: 466). The syntax of “Ebla” is unclear.

24:10ff. a story is told of a man punished by stoning for cursing someone, just as in the parable section of the *Song of Release* subordinates who dare to curse their superiors are punished for their presumption (KBo 32.12, 14). And in Leviticus 26 God utters a conditional cursing and blessing that is very similar to that of Teššub in the *Song of Release* (KBo 32.19). Cursing and rebellion of subordinates are the two themes that connect the parable section (KBo 32.12, 14) to the Ebla section (KBo 32.19, 20).<sup>10</sup> If these two themes can be connected to a single passage in the Bible, it is not completely unjustified to look for debt slavery in the *Song of Release* as a further parallel between the two texts. Furthermore, in Jeremiah 34, God punishes the people of Jerusalem with a military defeat for rescinding a manumission of slaves, providing a separate biblical parallel with the Ebla plot in the *Song of Release* (Neu 1996a: 480, n. 6; 1996b: 193).

In the Akkadian world, kings indeed could prevent the excessive oppression of the poor by periodically canceling debts and freeing slaves. These acts are commemorated in *mišarum* edicts (Finkelstein 1961: 103–4; Kraus 1984; Greengus 1995: 471; Otto 1998b). Periodic remission of the debts of slaves also occurred at Mari (Avalos 1995: 626). Furthermore, there is evidence that Hurrians knew of this practice at Nuzi.<sup>11</sup> However, while debt slavery is not an entirely inappropriate theme for the story, there is little or no evidence in other Hittite texts for the custom of periodic freeing of debt slaves, although Anatolian kings in the Old Assyrian period did practice the custom of periodic remissions of debts (Balkan 1974: 32–37). While debt slavery does resonate with the themes of the *Song of Release* and themes in the rest of Hittite literature, inasmuch as it involves oppression and confinement of the poor and intervention of the king to free the poor (in Hittite texts, kings freeing their subjects from oppression is indeed a *topos*), as we will see, in the Hittite corpus when the oppression of subordinates is mentioned there is no explicit reference to debt slavery.

Otto (1998a: 293; 1998b: 149–50; 2001, esp. 527) has already debunked the commonly held theory that the song is about debt remission. As Otto points out, Neu (1996a: 399–400, 479, n. 4) does admit that Purra, chief among the captives from Ikinkalis, is characterized as a prisoner of war in the Hurrian version,<sup>12</sup> and this characterization is incompatible with his theory that Purra is a debt slave.<sup>13</sup>

Pecchioli Daddi (2001: 560), meanwhile, has shown that “[s]ongs of liberation . . . belong also to the north-Anatolian cultural tradition and to the Hattic tradition in particular.” She has analyzed a fragment of a Hittite ritual containing an antiphonal Hattic song (KBo 37.68) as

10. Wilhelm (2001: 84–85), however, does not think that the parables of KBo 32.12 and 14 belong to the *Song of Release*.

11. See the discussion in Neu 1988a: 13–14; 1996a: 479, followed by Haas and Wegner 1991: 384; Haas 1994: 549; and Wilhelm 1996: 19, 21. In his own English translation Hoffner (1998a: 75–76) extended this interpretation further. Based on the putative theme of debt remission in the *Song of Release*, he in fact tentatively gave *waštul* (KBo 32.15 iii 20) an otherwise unattested meaning of “debt.” Also see his discussion in Hoffner (1998b: 180–83).

12. *āzziri*: KBo 32.19 i 3, with duplicate 21 i 3', corresponding to EGIR-*pa piyantān* “(to be) given back” in the Hittite version (KBo 32.19 ii 3). *appa pai-* is used in treaties with reference to fugitives and subjects held against the will of the king (see *CHD* P, 51–52). The Hurrian term is borrowed from Akkadian (*asiru*), normally translated into Hittite as *hippara*—“bondsman, chattel, serf,” a person similar in status to a NAM.RA (Haase 1982; *HED* H, 316–17). Neu (1996b: 353–54) attempts to separate the sons of Ikinkalis, whom he considers to be debt slaves, from Purra, the war-prisoner.

13. Wilhelm (2001: 84) is now persuaded by Otto, although he still retains the theme of debt in the text, insofar as he makes Zazalla compare Teššub to a debtor (KBo 32.15 i 4'–5'). Masson (2002) offers a very different interpretation of the text, seeing its various sections as unified around the theme of a return to a prior state leading to rebirth of the cosmic order, which follows a period in which order is opposed to disorder.

evidence that the Hittites had adopted an indigenous Anatolian custom of solemnly proclaiming one's freedom from *šahhan* and *luzzi* obligations when disbursing a marriage portion, which carries these responsibilities.<sup>14</sup> In the text a chorus of LÚ.MEŠ<sup>GIŠ</sup>TUKUL-*uš* ("workers") sings a song stating that they have given the inheritance/marriage portion and are therefore free from *šahhan* and *luzzi*.<sup>15</sup> Pecchioli Daddi (2001: 559–60) compares the festival fragment she has edited to the *šahhan*-festival edited by Jie (1990, CTH 693), a ceremony marking the taking on of the *šahhan* obligations required of a household, which Jie suggests is performed when a new household is formed.<sup>16</sup> The festival discussed by Pecchioli Daddi on the other hand marks the end of a household.<sup>17</sup> Indigenous ceremonies and customs such as these festivals may well provide the key to understanding the Anatolian background of the Hurro-Hittite *Song of Release*.

#### THE HITTITE BACKGROUND

In order to explain the Hittite milieu to which the Hurro-Hittite *Song of Release* was adapted, I expand beyond Pecchioli Daddi's example of a release from obligations, studying such remissions in detail to elucidate the Hittite ideology concerning the king's responsibilities towards his poorer subjects and towards the gods to ensure that each group gets its due.

Oppression of subordinates comes up frequently in Hittite instruction texts with roots in the Old Hittite period, and some fragments from (mostly Old Script) Old Hittite instruction texts mentioning Pimpira discuss the king's role as protector of his people in terms quite similar to those used with reference to Teššub:

[na]mma=aš iški nu=šmaš=ka[n] NINDA-an kiššar<i=š>mi an[da dāi] / 'LÚ<sup>1</sup>.GIG-an au nu=šši NINDA-an watar pai mān[=an] / handaiš walhzi zig=an ekunimi da'i / takku=wa=an ekunimaš walhzi n=an handaš[i] / dai nu LUGAL-waš ARAD.MEŠ dammišhan lē ak[kanzi] / zig=a SAG.GEMÉ.ARAD.MEŠ<aš> ēšhar=šemit šanha (KBo 3.23 obv. 4–9, ed. Archi 1979: 41; with corrections of Neu 1984: 99).

[Fu]rther, anoint them. [Put] bread i[n] their hand. See (i.e., pay attention to) the sick man. Give him bread (and) water. If heat strikes [him], you put him in cold, if cold strikes him, put him [in] heat. Let not the servants of the king d[ie], oppressed.<sup>18</sup> And, you, seek out the blood (vengeance) of the female and male servants.

This passage has justly been compared by Neu (1988a: 17, n. 44; 1993: 347) to KBo 32.15 ii 4'–21'; in both a series of "if . . . then" clauses is combined with promises of help, and these promises are connected to the oppression of unwilling servants:

14. Although dated to the late New Hittite period by Klinger (1996: 58), it contains older Hittite forms such as 1st pl.–*wani* (obv.<sup>?</sup> 15') and *weš* "we" (obv.<sup>?</sup> 15', 16') (Pecchioli Daddi 2001: 556).

15. *iwa*]ru *wēš* *peš*<sup>GI</sup> *ki*<sup>1</sup> *uen* . . . /-*janzi šahāni luzzi=ya arauēš uēš* (KBo 37.68 obv.<sup>?</sup> 15'–16'). It may be such a ceremony to which an oracle inquiry refers, asking whether the gods are angry because the *dammara*-women ("minor cult functionaries," see HEG T, 70–72) have failed to slaughter a sheep of the *parā tarnumaš* EZEN<sub>4</sub>, "festival of releasing" (KUB 16.16 obv. 14, ed. van den Hout 1998: 138–39; also KUB 22.40 ii 3', see Ünal 1978: 18). Further, another fragmentary oracle text mentions these *dammara*-women in the context of a similar failure to observe the "season of releasing": MUNUŠ<sub>1</sub> *tātiwaštinn=a* MUNUŠ<sub>2</sub> *dammara* . . . ; *parā tar<sup>1</sup> nu<sup>1</sup> maš mehur waštanuir* (KUB 5.6 ii 26', 28', ed. Sommer 1932: 278).

16. This ceremony belongs to the cult of Huwassanna. For a corrected transliteration of the colophon, see Groddek 2002: 83.

17. As she notes (2001: 538), Laws §§46 and XXXVIII concern the transfer of *šahhan* and/or *luzzi* with an inheritance.

18. Taking neut. part. *dammešhan* as adverbial.

- ii 4' [mān <sup>d</sup>I]M-aš šiššīyanit dammišhānza  
 5' [parā tarnumar w]ewakki mān <sup>d</sup>IM-aš  
 [      šī ]ššīyawanza nu kuišša <sup>d</sup>IM-unni  
 [I GÍN KÙ(.BABBAR p)ā(i)]  
 [nu<sup>2</sup> GUŠKIN kui ]šša 1/2 GÍN pāi KÙ.BABBAR=ma=šš(i)]  
 [1 GÍN kuišša pīwen]i mān=aš kišduwanza=ma <sup>d</sup>IM-aš  
 nu [ANA DINGI]R-LIM kuišša 1 PA ŠE pīw[(eni)]

- 10' ZÍZ-tar [kui ]šša 1/2 PARĪSI šunnai Š[E- . . . =m]a=ššī  
 kuiš' ša<sup>1</sup> 1 PARĪSA šunnai mān <sup>d</sup>[IM-]aš=ma  
 neku<sup>1</sup>ma<sup>1</sup>nza n=an kuišša <sup>TUG</sup>kuššīyaz waššaweni  
 DINGIR-uš UN<sup>19</sup>

- [m]ān=aš hurtanza=ma <sup>d</sup>IM-aš nu=ššī kuišša  
 15' 'I<sup>1</sup>.DÜG.GA 1 kūpin pīweni nu=ššī išhūeššar  
 parā šunnumeni n=an=kan pallantiyaz  
 āppa tarnumeni DINGIR-uš UN

n=an=kan huišnumini <sup>d</sup>IM-an <sup>LÜ</sup>šiššīyalan

- ii 4' [If Teššub is injured by oppression<sup>20</sup>  
 5' and he a]sks [for release], if Teššub  
 [is o]ppressed,<sup>21</sup> each will g[i]ve to the storm god  
 [one shekel of silver].

Ea[ch] will give half a shekel [of gold, we will each g]ive to h[im] of silver  
 [one shekel]. But if he, Teššub, is hungry,  
 we will each give one measure of barley [to the g]od.

- 10' Each will pour a half measure of wheat, for him one measure of barley  
 each will pour. But if [Teššub]  
 is naked, we will each clothe him with a fine garment.  
 The god is a person(?).

But if he, Teššub, is “injured,”<sup>22</sup> to him each

- 15' of us will give one kūpi-vessel of fine oil; for him fuel  
 we will (each) pour out.  
 We will free him from deprivation. The god is a person.  
 We will rescue him, Teššub the oppressed.<sup>23</sup>

The admonition in the instruction text is uttered in the context of an oath sworn by Pimpira to the king, in which he promises to protect the king and exhorts others to uphold the king's word.<sup>24</sup> This context can be contrasted with the outcome of the debate in the *Song of Re-*

19. So Neu 1996a: 291. Hurr. i 12' ene [. . .] “god,” absolute singular.

20. Hoffner (1998a: 75): “oppressed by debt(?)” Wilhelm (2001: 89): “Ist [. . .] . . . Teschob Schuldner?”

21. Hurr. i 5' ħenz=ā išuḥn(i)=ai <sup>d</sup>Teššob (ed. Neu 1996a: 472) “(if) Teššub is suffering from (lack of) silver.” Wilhelm (2001: 89): “Ist Teschob mit silber verschuldet.”

22. I follow here CHD P, 62; Neu 1988a: 17, with n. 44; 1996a: 317–19; 1998: 510; Hoffner 1998a: 75; and Wilhelm 2001: 89.

23. Hoffner (1998a: 75): “the debtor(?)” Wilhelm (1997: 281; also see 2001: 89): “vor seinem Gläubiger (wrtl. ‘dem, der ihn in Hinsicht auf seine Schulden’ bedrückt).”

24. See parallel text KUB 31.115 18'–19', restored from KBo 3.23 iv 11' (ed. Archi 1979: 41, 42).

lease, in which Zazalla and the rest of the assembly go against Meki's word, do not help the oppressed and thus cause the entire city to be punished for their sins.<sup>25</sup>

The Hittite king could intervene either to protect the poor or to help the gods or to do both at once by sparing his subjects from the obligations of *šahḥan* (governmentally imposed services and payments in return for land use) and *luzzi* (corvée labor). These services could be owed to the state or to specific officers of the state, such as bailiffs, lords of border districts or princes, or to gods. Whether *šahḥan* and *luzzi* are owed seems to have been a frequent bone of contention. In some cases disputes could be settled in the assembly by the king (*Laws* §55, Version A, KBo 6.2 iii 16–20 + KBo 22.62 20–23, ed. and trans. Hoffner 1997: 66–68; also see Beckman 1982: 441). Under certain circumstances, certain classes of people (soldiers, artisans, scribes, temple workers, mausoleum workers, those with *eyan*-trees in front of their houses), sometimes from certain towns, could be exempted.<sup>26</sup>

If enforced, these obligations could interfere with caring for the gods. In a Middle Hittite prayer Arnuwanda and Asmunikal say the enemy has oppressed (*dammišhišker*) the servants of the gods with *šahḥan* and *luzzi*, that the enemy has taken the servants of the gods and enslaved them, preventing them from fulfilling their religious obligations:

*nu=š[maš=šan . . .]ʿ.MEŠ-KUNU<sup>1</sup> naḥšarattan  
kiššan ʿUL<sup>1</sup> [kuiški t]iyan ḫarta  
ʿnu<sup>1</sup>=za šumenzan ŠA [DINGIR.MEŠ] ʿāʿššū KU<sub>3</sub>.BABBAR GUŠKIN BIBRI-ḪI.A  
TÚG.ḪI.A anzel iʿwar<sup>1</sup> EGIR-an UL kuiški  
kappūwan ḫarta*

*namma ʿšu<sup>1</sup>menzan DINGIR.MEŠ-aš kue ALAM.ḪI.A-KUNU ŠA KU<sub>3</sub>.BABBAR GUŠKIN  
nu=ššan ʿku<sup>1</sup>edani DINGIR-LIM-ni kuit tuēkki=šši  
anda uizz[ap]an DINGIR.MEŠ-ša kue UNŪTE-MEŠ uizzapanta  
n=at anz[e]l iwar EGIR-pa UL kuiški  
neuwaḥḥa[n ḫart]a*

*namma=šmaš=ša[n SÍ]SKUR.ḪI.A-aš parkuyannaš uddani  
naḥšaratt[a]n kiššan UL kuiški tiyan ḫarta  
nu=šmaš U<sub>4</sub>-aš ITU-ʿaš<sup>1</sup> MU-ti meyaniyaš SÍSKUR.ḪI.A  
EZEN.ḪI.A kiššan šarā UL kuiški  
tittanuwan ḫarta*

*namma ŠA DINGIR.MEŠ SAG.GÉME.ARAD.MEŠ-KUNU UR[(U.DIDLI.ḪI.A-K)]ʿUNU<sup>1</sup>  
šahḥanit  
luzziṭ dammišhišker [(nu=za šume)]nzan  
ŠA DINGIR.MEŠ ARAD.MEŠ-KUNU GÉME.MEŠ-KUNU d[(aškerr=a)]  
nu=uš=za ARAD-naḥḥišker GÉME-aḥḥiš[(ker)]  
A: KUB 17.21 i 9'–27', with B: KUB 31.124 i 5'–7' + Bo 8617 (ed. von Schuler 1965: 152–54)*

No [one] had held reverence for your . . . in this way. No one had paid attention to the goods, the silver, the gold, the libation vessels, the clothes of you [gods] like us.

Furthermore, which statues of you gods are of silver and of gold, whichever god had something old on his body, and which tools of the gods were old, them no one [had] renewed like us.

25. Compare KBo 22.1, also discussed by Archi (1979), an Old Hittite instruction text describing an incident in which the king helps those who have been oppressed; see discussion in Beckman 1982: 441.

26. *Laws* §56 describes some of the duties of *luzzi*: “making ice, a fortification, and royal roads,” and “harvesting vineyards” (trans. Hoffner 1997: 65, with discussion 193). This surely does not cover the full range of duties however. *Laws* §§39–41, 46–48, 50–56, 112 are concerned with *šahḥan* and *luzzi*, which are connected to social status and land ownership. Also see refs. and discussion in *CHD* L, 90–91 *ad luzzi*, Š, 2–7 *ad šahḥan*; Goetze 1957: 108–9; Imparati 1982; and Beal 1988.



Furthermore no one had held reverence in this way in the matter of the purity of your rituals. No one had celebrated your daily, monthly and seasonal sacrifices and festivals in this way.

Furthermore, they kept oppressing the servants and the cities of you, the gods, with *šaḥḥan* and *luzzi*. They kept taking the servants and maidservants of you, the gods. They kept turning them into their own servants and maidservants.

This accusation is one of the justifications for their campaign against the enemy Kaska, who have destroyed many cities and taken many servants of the gods away from their proper work.<sup>27</sup> Such Hittite prayers present international disputes with some similarities to that depicted in the *Song of Release*; in both the Middle Hittite prayer, for example, and the *Song of Release*, one city exploits the people from another city, and there are accusations that the gods are neglected. In the *Song of Release* Teššub in fact punishes the city which refuses to release the captives by destroying it.

Hittite kings did free subjects from cities that had been captured from the obligations of *šaḥḥan* and *luzzi*, especially to allow them to devote more time to serving their gods. Thus, in the Old Hittite *Annals of Hattusili I*, the king says:

LUGAL.GAL *tabarnaš*/ ŠA GEMÉ.MEŠ-ŠU ŠU.MEŠ-uš IŠTU NA<sup>4</sup>ARA<sub>5</sub> *dahḥun*/ ŠA ARAD.MEŠ=ya ŠU.MEŠ-ŠUNU IŠTU KIN *dahḥun*/ n=aš=kan *šaḥḥanit luzzi*! *arawahḥun* n=aš QABLI-ŠUNU *arḥa lānun*/ n=aš ANA dUTU URU<sup>U</sup>TÚL-na GAŠAN-YA EGIR-an *tarnaḥḥ[un]*. (KBo 10.2 iii 15–20, ed. Imparati and Saporetti 1965: 52)

I the great king, *tabarna*, took the hands of the female slaves from the millstone, and the hands of the male slaves from the sickles. I freed them from *šaḥḥan* and *luzzi*. I ungirded their belts. I **released** them to my lady the sun goddess of Arinna in perpetuity. (trans. Bachvarova 2002: 81, modified by suggestions of Melchert 1989: 33–35; 1990: 206)

The similarities between this passage and the *Song of Release* have been noted by Neu (1988a: 20–21; 1993: 332–33; 1996a: 11–12) and others, but their significance has not been fully explored. In the *Song of Release*, the freeing of the captives from another city who work as servants for the Eblaïtes is somehow related to provisioning Teššub, and in the annals the conquered city's slaves are freed to serve Hattusili's favorite goddess.<sup>28</sup> The specific duties of the slaves in the *Song of Release* (KBo 32.16 iii 4'–8', parallel passage to 32.15) and the people of Hahhu overlap in the one detail of the millstone, a proverbial metonym for drudgery. Although it is not completely clear whether the slaves in Hattusili's annals also owed feudal obligations, or whether there were two separate categories of people who benefited from Hattusili's clemency, the latter possibility seems more likely.

In the Hittite version of the annals, Hattusili uses the phrase *appan tarna-* to describe an action that releases people from service forever (Melchert 1989: 33–35; 1990: 206).<sup>29</sup> The

27. The same argument is used by the New Hittite King Mursili II in a prayer to the sun goddess of Arinna (CTH 376, KUB 24.3 iii 5'–8', ed. Lebrun 1980: 164), complaining that the gods blame him (*wašduli ḥarteni* KUB 24.3 ii 17', ed. Lebrun 1980: 160) for neglect that is in fact caused by the enemy's abuse of Hittite temple personnel, and in CTH 377, a prayer to Telipinu (KUB 24.1 iv 5–6, ed. Lebrun 1980: 184).

28. Compare what Hattusili says in A: KBo 10.2 i 50–52 (with C: KUB 23.33 3'–4') concerning the people of the defeated city Sanahuīt: LÚ-tarna (= *natar*<sup>3</sup>)/ [. . . (*kuit*) . . . / . . . n=aš] ANA dUTU URU<sup>U</sup>Arinna / [. . . (*dahḥun*)] (ed. Imparati and Saporetti 1965: 46). "The people that there were, I took . . . them for the Sungoddess of Arinna."

29. I thank Prof. Melchert for these references. In KBo 32.19, the poet uses the terms *arḥa tarna-* "release away" (ii 1–2), EGIR-pa (= *appa*) *piyantān* "given back" (ii 3) and *parā tarna-* "release forth" (ii 21, etc.). Masson (2002: 549–54) refuses to see any connection between the annals and the epic because of the lack of an exact match between the expressions used for freeing.

phrase corresponds to *ina šapal šamê* AMA.AR.GI<sub>4</sub>-šunu aštakan, “beneath heaven, I established their return” in the Akkadian version (KBo 10.1 rev. 13–14, ed. Imparati and Saporetti 1965: 79). The two versions of the same passage thus make clear that in the Hittite world AMA.AR.GI<sub>4</sub> does not correspond perfectly to the Akkadian or Biblical notion of freeing debt slaves, but rather refers—or at least can also refer—to freeing from the Hittite custom of *šahhan* and *luzzi*. While Neu (1988a: 21) argues that this discrepancy shows that *parā tarnumar* was not used in this era to refer specifically to freeing from debt slavery, I would argue rather that the discrepancy (if it is important) shows that in the Old Hittite period the Hittite kings were adapting to their own interests the foreign idea of a general release from debt slavery as a magnanimous act of the king.<sup>30</sup>

Hittite *topoi* describing the clemency and piety of the king referred to a royal release from certain duties levied by the government to better serve the gods, or as the following passage shows, to serve the royal dead. This Middle Hittite decree by the queen Asmunikal commemorates a release from *šahhan* and *luzzi* to tend the royal mausoleum:<sup>31</sup>

É.NA<sub>4</sub> kuit iyawēn/ nu ANA É.NA<sub>4</sub>-NI kuiēš URU.ĪI.A piyanteš LÚ.MEŠ BĒL QĀTI kuiēš piyanteš/ LÚ.MEŠ APIN.LĀ LÚ.MEŠ SIPA.GU<sub>4</sub> LÚ.MEŠ SIPA.UDU kuiēš piyanteš/ . . . LÚ.MEŠ ḫilammiešš=a kuiēš karū/ ANA É.NA<sub>4</sub> piyanteš n=a=kan šahhanaza luzziyaza arawēš ašandul . . . parā=ma=aš=kan lē kuiški tarnai (KUB 13.8 obv. 1–9, ed. Otten 1958: 106)<sup>32</sup>

With respect to the mausoleum which we have made: Which cities are given, which craftsmen are given, which plowmen, cowherds, shepherds are given, . . . which men of the palace who before were given to the mausoleum, let them be free from *šahhan* and *luzzi*. . . . Let no one change their status.

30. Also compare the Akkadian version of the Middle Hittite treaty of Tudhaliya I/II with Sunassura of Kizzuwatna (KBo 1.5 i 30–37, ed. Weidner 1923: 92, trans. Beckman 1999: 19), in which Tudhaliya I/II boasts that he has freed the people of Kizzuwatna from the unwelcome hegemony of the Hurrians.

31. Compare *Laws* §52 in which the servants of the mausoleum are required to do *luzzi*. The New Hittite *Apology of Hattusili III* ends with a similar admonition, threatening divine punishment:

[(kui)]š=ma=kan ṯziladuwa NUMUN ṯḫattušili ṯpuduḫepaṯ [(AN)]A ṯIštar ARAD-anni arḫa dāi ŠA ṯgarupaḫiaš=zal [(ez)]zan GIŠ-ru KISLAḫ ŠA ṯIštar URUŠamuḫa ilaliyaṯ ziṯ (n)=aš ANA ṯIštar URUŠamuḫa EN DĪNI=ŠU ēšdu  
šahhani=ya=aš luzzi lē kuiški ēpz[(i)]

A: KUB 1.1 iv 81–85, B: KBo 3.6 iv 42–45 (ed. Götze 1925: 38–40)

Whoever in the future takes away the offspring of Hattusili (and) Puduhepa from the service of Ishtar, (or he) wants for himself (even) the chaff of the granary (or) a piece of wood of the threshing floor of Ishtar of Samuha, let him be an opponent at law of Ishtar of Samuha.

Let no one take them for *šahhan* and *luzzi*.

Hattusili III also threatens divine retribution if personnel of the rocky peak of Pirwa are forced to do *šahhan* and *luzzi*, even by a lord or a prince of the throne (KBo 6.28 rev. 28–42, ed. Imparati 1977: 45–46, n. 96). Also compare the Akkadian *Autobiography of Manishtushu*: “. . . thirty-eight cities were released from service for Šamaš. I did not require their *ilku*-work. No one was to call them up for service. They perform ‘work’ for the [Ebabbar]” (iv 27ff., trans. Longman 1991: 219).

32. Here the phrase *parā tarnu-* refers to a change in status opposite from that demanded in the *Song of Release*. As Hoffner points out, *parā tarnu-* is used in the Hittite laws in a similar way, for a change in social status in the opposite direction than one would expect, from free to slave (*Laws* §§34, 36, Hoffner 1997: 185). See Charpin 1987: 34–38 on the Akkadian equivalent to *parā tarnamur* (*andurāru*), which also means “returning to a former state,” rather than simply “making free.” It is on this definition that Masson (2002) relies for her cosmogonic interpretation of the *Song of Release*. On the term *parā tarnu-* in Hittite, see *CHD* P, 115, 125, *ad parā*, and Hoffner 1998b: 180–81.

The Hittite custom of freeing people to serve the royal dead can help explain a puzzling passage in *The Song of Release* concerning the service of Purra for the nine kings of Ebla with Meki as the tenth, for I propose to interpret his service as tending the cult of the royal dead at Ebla.

In the *Song of Release* most of the captive people of Ikinkalis are described as rendering services to the nobles of Ebla; however scholars have interpreted in different ways the passage which describes the service of Purra, the most prominent captive from Ikinkalis, to three kings in Ikinkalis and nine in Ebla, finishing with the tenth king, Meki (KBo 32.15, 19, 20 and small fragments of duplicates and parallel passages). Neu (1996a: 481–82; 1996b: 191; 1996c: 69) sees the various kings as regional sub-kings beneath Meki, who have come to Ebla and are being served by Purra, based on the Hurrian expression: X *evern(i)=a kišhe=ne (šarri) ag=i=do* “The lords brought X (as king) to the throne” (KBo 32.20 i 4’, 6’, 16’, 18’). He sees this as the seating of the kings to hear Teššub’s case in Ebla. Wilhelm (1997: 290–92) sees the passage as retrospective, covering the many years of Purra’s service to a series of kings; the expression then refers to the successive enthronements of the kings. He imagines Purra to have a supernaturally long life span, which enables him to carry out many years of faithful service.

I agree with Wilhelm’s interpretation of the expression, but (tentatively) consider Purra to be tending to the funerary cult of a series of kings, who first reigned in Ikinkalis, then transferred power to Ebla. This interpretation is not based solely on Hittite texts, for there is archaeological evidence for a royal funerary cult at Ebla (Matthiae 1997; Guardata 1999). Furthermore, as Matthiae (1997: 273) mentions, there is evidence that the location of the funerary cult was transferred from Nenash to Ebla in the late third millennium B.C., and the *Song of Release* might reflect a similar transfer or consolidation of power from Ikinkalis to Ebla in the early second millennium. The description of Purra, who habitually serves the cult of these kings (*adanna piškizzi* KBo 32.19 ii 4, iii 29’), as now stepping before Meki, the tenth in the series of kings (KBo 32.19 i/ii 9–10), should allude to the future services which Purra would provide him, if he were freed from the servitude to men such as Zazalla which now burdens him. The other people of Ikinkalis would be able to provide, like Purra, services either for the royal dead or for Teššub, if they were not serving the notables of Ebla.

I would suggest that at least some of the people of Ikinkalis were meant to serve Teššub, for as the Hurro-Hittite *Song of Hedammu* shows, the gods can be made to suffer if they are forced to do the slavish work they have foisted off on humans, when their worshippers fail to tend to their cult:

[<sup>d</sup>A.A-*aš=k*]<sup>t</sup>an GALGA<sup>1</sup>-*aš* <sup>1</sup>LUGAL<sup>1</sup>-*uš* DINGIR.MEŠ-*aš* *ištarna memišta* <sup>d</sup>x[. . .]  
 [*memi*]škiwan *daiš kuwattan šer ħarnikt[eni DUMU.LÚ.U<sub>19</sub>LU-UTTI]*  
 [(ANA DI)]NGIR.MEŠ SISKUR *UL peškanzi nu=šmaš* <sup>GI</sup>ŠERIN *U[L (samminušk)an]zi*  
 [*mān=m*]a DUMU.LÚ.U<sub>19</sub>-*UTTI ħarnikteni nu DINGIR.MEŠ UL n[(amm)a iyan]zi*  
 [NINDA.KUR<sub>4</sub>.R]A=*ya=šma<š> išpantuzzi namma UL kuiški šipan<sup>t</sup>ti<sup>1</sup>*  
 [*nu*] *uizzzi* <sup>d</sup>U-*aš* <sup>URU</sup>Kummiyaš UR.SAG-*uš* LUGAL-*uš* <sup>GI</sup>ŠAPIN-*an*  
 [*apašil*]a *ēpzi nu uizzzi=ma* <sup>d</sup>IŠTAR-*iš* <sup>d</sup>Ĥepatušš=*a*  
 [<sup>NA4</sup>A]RA<sub>5</sub> *apāšila mallanzi*

B: KUB 33.103 obv. ii 1–8, with A: KUB 33.110 8’–16’, C: KUB 30.116 (ed. Siegelová 1971: 46)

[Ea] king of wisdom spoke among the gods. The god[. . .]  
 began to say: “Why are you (*plural*) destroying [mankind]?  
 They will not give sacrifices to the gods. They will not burn cedar as incense to you.  
 [If] you (*plural*) destroy mankind, they will no longer [worship] the gods.  
 No one will offer [bread] or libations to you (*plural*) any longer.

Even Teššub, Kummiya's heroic king, will [himself] proceed to  
grasp the plow. It will come about that even Ishtar and Hebat  
will themselves grind at the millstones."

(trans. slightly modified from Hoffner 1998a: 52)

While here Teššub anticipates a state of affairs caused by the destruction of all humans, Teššub's suffering in the *Song of Release*, described so vividly by Zazalla even as he denies it (perhaps repeating the description of an earlier plea on behalf of Teššub), shows how dire the god's need is for the services of the people of Ikinkalis, who are being forced to work for the Eblaites. In the *Song of Kumarbi* the gods, hungry and without servants to provide for them, will be forced to take on the menial tasks that humans have been performing for them. Again, the proverbial millstone makes an appearance. The description of Teššub's suffering in the *Song of Release*—hungry, naked, and "oppressed"—and the compensation theoretically promised to him can be interpreted as referring to his need for the typical offerings of food, clothing, and precious objects made by mortals to the gods. The description is capped by the odd expression DINGIR-uš UN "The god is a person."<sup>33</sup> In the light of the passage from the *Song of Kumarbi*, I interpret it to mean that the god has been reduced to the status of a mere mortal who must care for himself.

#### CONCLUSION

Although one might argue that the Hittite texts I have used to interpret the *Song of Release* are irrelevant, that there is no reason to think that the song needed to be interesting to a real Hittite audience, or reflect its concerns (a point of view which seems to lie behind the neglect of the Hittite context of this Hurro-Hittite text), it is difficult to argue that the interdependence of god and man portrayed in another text belonging to the same Hurro-Hittite SIR<sub>3</sub> genre should not be used to understand better Teššub's position in the *Song of Release*. The *Song of Kumarbi*, the *Song of Release*, Hittite prayers and decrees, and the *Annals of Hattusili I* all present a unified world view, in which humans owe the gods services and will be punished if they fail to provide them. But the gods themselves can be made to suffer by the neglect of their human subjects, and humans can appease the gods' anger or earn the gods' favor by promising services. Oppression of the gods' servants by exacting too much *šahḥan* and *luzzi* or other enslavement can cause the gods to retaliate against the city responsible, and the divinized royal dead may be included among those beings who are owed service.

This study is only the first step towards a new interpretation of the *Song of Release*, which attempts to read it through the eyes of its Hittite audience. Further work will involve comparisons with Old Hittite texts, such as the *Anecdotes* and the *Testament of Hattusili I*, which share the message and motifs of the parable section of the *Song of Release* with other members of the SIR<sub>3</sub> genre. These could help explain how the scene of KBo 32.13 fits in the plot of the *Song of Release*. Hurro-Hittite purification rituals might clarify the description of Teššub as *ḫurtanza*, a word that should mean "cursed," but that Neu (1998) has interpreted to represent a participle of an otherwise unattested verb stem meaning "injured," because the notion of an accursed god seemed too odd.

33. As discussed in Bachvarova 2002: 247–48, this puzzling expression mimics the opening of *Atrahasis*. In fact, interesting parallels with the *Song of Release* can be drawn from *Atrahasis* (Bachvarova 2002: 84–93). Both the *Song of Kumarbi* and the *Song of Release* allude in different ways to the etiology of humans described in *Atrahasis*: When the Igigi-gods are freed from corvée labor owed to the Anunna-gods, according to a decision arrived at in assembly, this necessitates the creation of humans in order to see to the needs of the gods.

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