

GLEANINGS FROM HITTITE ORACLE QUESTIONS
ON RELIGION, SOCIETY, PSYCHOLOGY AND DECISION MAKING

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In polytheistic non-salvation religions, the relationship between man and god often has a practical character, grounded in mutual benefits to both parties.¹ To this rule, the Hittites were no exception. As the *Instructions for priests* make clear, the “thousand gods of Ḫatti” were not incomprehensible natural forces but very powerful and immortal human-like spirits.

“Are the minds of man and god somehow different? No! ... When the slave stands before his master, he is washed. He has clothed himself in clean (clothes). He gives him (his master) either to eat or to drink. Since the master eats and drinks, his spirit is relaxed. He is favorably inclined to him (the slave). But if ever he is neglected (?), is he not displeased? Is the mind of the god somehow different? If the slave at some point angers his master, either they kill him, or they injure his nose, eyes (and) ears. Or he (the master) [will sei]ze him, and his wife, his children, his brother, his sister, his in-laws and his family... They may only call him over. They may do nothing to him. If ever he dies (i.e. is executed), he does not die alone. His family is also included with him. § If, however, someone angers the mind of a god, does he not seek it (revenge) only from him alone? Does he not seek it from his wife, [his children], his descendants, his family, his male and female servants, his cattle, his sheep and his grain? He utterly destroys him with everything. Be very afraid of a god's word for your own sake.”²

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² KUB 13.4 i 21-38 (§§ 2-3), ed. A. Süel, *Direktif metni*, 22-27, tr. modified from J. G. McMahon, in *CoS* 1, 217f, *CHD* Š, s.v. *šakuwannant-*.

He who embezzles from the god shall die.³

Temple officials are to say before the god: "Whoever took from your divine bread (or) libation vessel, may the god my lord [purs]ue him. May he seize his house from bottom to top."⁴

"If you do not perform the festivals at the time of the festivals ... the gods will seek you out at a later time. They will stand in evil against yourself, your wives, children and servants. ... Do not sell death, nor buy it."⁵

"In whomever's watch a misdeed occurs shall die. He shall not be pardoned."⁶

"Do not let a pig or dog ever cross the threshold. ... Should a pig or dog get into the wood or clay utensils of the kitchen, and you, kitchen worker, do not throw them out, and you feed the god from an unclean (vessel), the gods will give you shit and piss to eat and drink."⁷

If a priest sleeps with a woman, he must bathe afterwards. If he does not, it is a grave offense for him. "If he intentionally delays, and without bathing he touches the gods' sacrificial loaves and libation vessels, and his fellow servant knows about him ... and if he conceals it, but afterward it becomes known, it is a capital offense for them and both must die."⁸

Although it was clearly wise to keep on the good side of the gods, humans expected benefits in the form of good harvests, victory in war (etc.) to flow from their relationship with the gods and could get very cross if the gods did not seem to be keeping their side of the arrangement.⁹

Fortunately, although humans and gods could not talk face to face, there were means by which communication could be achieved. This is perhaps nowhere better illustrated than in the oracle texts in which the Hittites directly asked questions of the gods, asking to receive an answer in a particular divine language. Each question was phrased so that the answer would come either as a 'yes' or as a 'no'. Series of such yes-or-no ques-

³ Summarizing (§§ 4-7).

⁴ KUB 13.4 i 64-66.

⁵ KUB 13.4 ii 52-53, 67-69, 72 § 9.

⁶ Ibid. iii 19-20.

⁷ Ibid. iii 60-61, 65-68.

⁸ Ibid. iii 74, 78-83 § 14.

⁹ See the Arnuwanda I and Ašmunikkal's prayer concerning the ravages of the Kaška. E. von Schuler, *Die Kaškaer* (Berlin 1965), 152-163.

tions, usually generated by the initial question, make up the oracular inquiries.¹⁰ Some 700 tablets and fragments of tablets preserve the data from these inquiries. Since, like letters, they were only of passing usefulness, they are usually preserved in only one copy.

As we shall see, what these texts reveal is that the "slaves of the gods" not infrequently behaved very much toward their divine "masters" like the Roman slaves made notorious by Plautus, doing the absolute minimum of work necessary to avoid a beating, damaging and even stealing the master's property until actually caught red-handed and only then rushing to make amends. Oracle questions allowed humans to maintain peace with the gods despite such lapses, and to ascertain the wishes of gods in the matter of offerings (even in some cases the existence of new gods), as well as to make sure that dreams and other forms of spontaneous communication between gods and man received their proper interpretation. In return, humans expected the gods to give advice, particularly in military and political matters.

The vast majority of oracle texts consist of inquiries¹¹ intended to discover why something bad has happened. For instance, let us suppose that the king was sick. It was first necessary to discover whether this illness was due to divine anger. If so, then it was necessary to determine which of the thousand gods of the Hittites was angry. When the cause was narrowed down to a particular deity or maybe to several deities then it was necessary to find out why each deity was angry. All kinds of omissions, derelictions and problems were placed before the deity with this question "Is this why you are angry?"

If the deity indicated that he/she was not angry at a particular infraction, then another infraction would be presented. When the deity indicated that he/she was indeed angry because of this particular infraction, the question would be followed up by "Is this all – there is nothing else?". A negative answer would mean that more testimony would be called for. An affirmative answer here would end this phase of the inquiry. Now questions would be posed to discover what sort of restitution, compensation, puni-

¹⁰ For a discussion of the methods of getting the answers see most recently, R. Beal, "Hittite Oracles", in L. Cirola and J. Seidel (eds), *Magic and Divination in the Ancient World* (Groningen: Styx, forthcoming), 59-83.

¹¹ For the contents of oracle questions see the list by A. Ünal, *Ein Orakeltext über die Intrigen am hethitischen Hof* (KUB XXII 70 = Bo 2011), THeth 6 (Heidelberg 1978), 14-19.

tive damages, prayers, etc. would be required to satisfy the deity and quiet his/her anger. Only when each answer had been taken through the entire process would the inquiry be finished. Usually, however, our tablets are too broken to show but a small portion of the entire inquiry. I will summarize the questions and answers of an almost intact inquiry tablet.¹²

"Concerning the sickness that befell His Majesty, [another disease other than yours], O God of Arušna,¹³ was not singled out (in previous oracle questioning).¹⁴ Now, are you, O God, therefore¹⁵ angry? – Yes.

Are you, god, angry at something in your temple? – Yes.

Is this all? Are you not angry at the king? – No (i.e. he's angry at the king).

Is it because Ms. Ammattala took responsibility for the deity, but then did not serve the deity and so the Queen cursed Ammattala to the God of Arušna? And is it because the son of Ammattala put on clothes entrusted to his mother¹⁶ when he was summoned to the palace? – Yes.

Is this all? – No.

Is it because as Ms. Mala said: 'The Queen made herself a gold head-band in the Stonehouse of the god LAMMA'; the God of Arušna asked her for it in a dream, but the Queen did not give it. She put it down in the chamberlain's house. Instead, she had two silver head-bands made for the god of Arušna. Before she gave these, matters came to a head for the Queen and they expelled her from the Palace. She then wrote to His Ma-

¹² KUB 22.70, transliterated and translated by A. Ünal, THeth 6; obv. 1-60 tr. G. Beckman, in *CoS* 1, 204-206.

¹³ A town of little significance outside the religious sphere, and not even of great significance there. See G. Del Monte and J. Tischler, RGTC 6, 41 f., G. Del Monte, RGTC 6/2, 13 f. (near Adana?).

¹⁴ Reading [nu=kan damai GIG/inan ANA DINGIR^{LI}M URU^{URU} Arušna UL kuitki parā ara[n]. The restoration is based on KBo 2.2 ii 47-48, ed. Th. van den Hout, *Purity*, 130 f. w. n. 37, discussion 224 (parā aranza = "has come forward"). A. Ünal had restored [nu=kan ANA GIG^{LI}UTU=ŠI DINGIR^{LI}M URU^{URU} Arušna parā UL kuitki ara[nza] "[und die Gottheit von Arušna [für die Krankheit des Königs] nicht ausor[akelt worden ist]", CHD s.v. parā, however, does not accept the existence of a parā ariya-. Beckman appears to use A. Ünal's restorations, but corrects the verb: "have you not somehow been provoked".

¹⁵ apadda šer.

¹⁶ ŠA ŠU AMA=ŠU. A. Ünal, THeth 6, 107-108 argues that the offense was cross-dressing, but it may well be that he wore male clothing that was inappropriate, perhaps because it belonged to the god and had been entrusted to the god's servant, Ammattala, for washing, repair or whatever.

jesty from Utruliya-city: 'The gold head-band that the God of Arušna asked for in a dream is currently in the chamberlain's house. What takkišra and precious stones were left over are in the atupalaššan. Send them to the god'. They found the crown of gold and along with it a gold falcon, a grape cluster made of precious stones, eight rosettes, mountings (?), eyebrows and eyelashes and sent them to the Stonehouse of the god LAMMA for the statue of the Queen. But they did not find the takkišra in the atupalaššan. Of the two silver (!) crowns, which were made by the queen and intended to fulfill the vow, they found only one and sent it to the god. Is it because they promised to send everything they found among the things of the deity to the deity and not substitute anything (inferior). Is it because of the gold falcon, the grape cluster made of precious stones, eight rosettes, mountings(?), eyebrows and eyelashes, which we didn't know anything about, which they sent to the Stonehouse of the god LAMMA for the statue of the Queen and is it because we didn't find the takkišra? Are you, god, angry because of this? – Yes.

Is this all? – No.

Is it because the Great Daughter (= the king's wife?)¹⁷ secretly brought Ms. Ammattala to the palace? – Yes.

Is it because of what Ammattalla said, disregarding whether true or not? – Yes.

Is this all? – No.

Does it concern what we heard from Ms. Naru concerning 1) that Ms. Pattiya was expelled from the palace and given to the god and 2) that the queen claimed to be giving things concerning the deity to Mr. Palla?¹⁸ We

¹⁷ It was once thought that "Great Daughter" was the title of the king's wife while his predecessor's wife was still alive and thus still queen. It has been recently argued that it instead means "the daughter of a Great King"; see I. Singer, "The Title 'Great Princess' in the Hittite Empire", *UF* 23 (1991 [1993]), 327-338. He argues that, in this text, the "Great Daughter" may still be the king's wife, but that her title derives from her being the daughter of the king of Babylonia, another Great King (330-332). Ph. Houwink ten Cate, "Hittite Dynastic Marriages of the Period between ca. 1258 and 1244 B.C.", *AoF* 23 (1996), 47-53 modifies Singer's proposal and argues that the title means "princess of the first rank" (GAL = *hantezzi-*, after E. Neu, *Althethitische Ritualtexte in Umschrift*. StBoT 25 (Wiesbaden, 1980), 87 n. 300), that is "princess born of the queen".

¹⁸ This is perhaps the same person as Palla the goldsmith who gives testimony in a court deposition (KUB 13.35 ii 36-37, ed. R. Werner, *Hethitische Gerichtsprotokolle*. StBoT 4 (Wiesbaden 1967), 8 f.) and in inventories. See Th. van den Hout, *Der Ulmitešub-Vertrag. Eine prosopographische Untersuchung*. StBoT 38 (Wiesbaden 1995), 216-225.

asked Palla's associates, and they said they knew nothing. We'll ask him later. Is this all? – No.

It is because the Queen heard someone in a dream saying: 'Why are you giving the things (currently) in the Stonehouse of the god LAMMA to the God of Arušna? Leave some behind'? – Yes.

Is it because Naru had said: 'Because Pattiya stayed too long up in the palace, when they give her to the deity, let them put two women in with her as compensation.'¹⁹ [Let them] dress them with palace garments. Since because of that deity the queen died,²⁰ they did not put away (satisfy??) the deity for her.'²¹ Ignoring whatever that belong to the royal palace that they will leave behind in the Stonehouse of the god LAMMA, is this a problem? [... – Yes.]²²

Did you, O deity, point to the fact that they did not give Pattiya to the God of Arušna? – [Yes].

Ignoring whatever belongs to the royal palace, [is this all]? – No.

Since an offense still remains associated with the Stonehouse of the god LAMMA, we will give you whatever you indicate by oracle. Is this OK? – Yes.

Should they give some jewels? – No.

Should they give gold? – No.

Should they give gold and jewels? – No.

Should they give some *t*.-garments? – OK.

Some *t*.-garments, gold and jewels? – No.

Some *t*.-garments, and people? – No.

¹⁹ *šarnikzel* "compensation, compensatory damages". Contrast "punitive damages" (*zan-kilatar*) used later in the text.

²⁰ BA.ÚŠ against A. Ünal's (THeth 6, 68) *IŠ-BAT*. The BA is clear in the copy and is still possible according to A. Ünal's collation (p. 116). G. Beckman tr. "the queen might die".

²¹ DINGIR^{LM} *ma-wa-šši awan ar-ḥa UL ti-er*. The verb could be the usual pret. pl. 3 of *tiya-* "to step, walk" (so A. Ünal, THeth 6, 116 and 68 f.: "ist man von ihrer Gottheit nicht weggetreten") or an uncommon pret. pl. 3 of *dai-* "to place" (so I. Hoffmann apud A. Ünal, THeth 6, 69 n. b: "(das) hat man aber nicht für ihre Gottheit weggestellt"). The word "god" is grammatically unmarked, and so more likely to be accusative, thus lending weight to Hoffmann's suggestion that the verb be taken from *dai-*. The meaning "satisfy" or a literal: "put (a deity) away" is suggested by context, and may be a variant of "to put (a deity) on the road", i.e. "to satisfy."

²² This and the next two sentences are uncertain, and differ somewhat from Ünal and Beckman's restorations and translations.

Should they give one *t*. garment? – No.

Should they give 1 *t*. garment and 1 cape? – No.

1 *t*.-garment, 1 cape, and 1 woman's *k*.-garment? – OK.

Is it because the Queen sent "beaten ones" to the king. The king covered up the matter and refused to have anything to do with it²³ (meaning he had not dispensed justice as is his duty). – Yes.

Do you, god, seek punitive damages from His Majesty for this? – Yes.

Do you, god, seek only punitive damages for this and nothing further? – No.

Is it because of some slander the queen spoke concerning Pattiya tarrying in the palace? – Yes.

(The text then lists everything that was found to be a problem). Is this all? – Yes [Whew!!!].

Will you, god, simply accept compensation for Pattiya tarrying in the palace? – No.

You wouldn't happen to want compensation for the work Pattiya did up in the palace? – Yes.

Should they give some *t*.-garments as compensation for Patti's overstay-ing. – Yes.

Only some *t*.-garments? – Yes.

It is ascertained that the *t*.-garments shall consist of one white Hurrian style shirt set, one white *maššiya*-garment, one white *gapari*-garment, one [...] garment set, one white long cloak set, one white [...] garment set, one *marušamme*-²⁴ Hurrian style shirt set, one *marušamme*-twined²⁵-garment set, one set of *marušamme*-leggings.

The god agrees that they will postpone paying this compensation for Pattiya until Ms. Hepamuwa can give testimony.

[If] Hepamuwa says: 'Pattiya is cursed.' In whatever place the curse of Pattiya took place,²⁶ there they will [place] the garments. But (if) Hepamuwa says: 'Pattiya was struck down.' In whatever place the [striking d]own of Pattiya took place,²⁷ there they will place the garments.

²³ Literally: "His Majesty recognized the matter facing him and said: 'Say nothing to me!' and he became silent about it"; *CHD* L-N, 287 f.

²⁴ Perhaps a color word, but which color is not clear. The reasoning behind the old translation "red" is no longer tenable. See *CHD* L-N, 201 s.v. *marwai-*.

²⁵ Akk. *KARKU*.

²⁶ Lit. "arrives at".

²⁷ Lit. "arrives at".

We propose giving the god full value for the things left behind in the Stonehouse of the god LAMMA. – No.

We will give the things themselves. – No.

We will give them twofold. – OK.

Because Ammattala took responsibility for the deity, but then did not serve the deity, do you, O god, not require compensation from the palace? – No (no compensation is required).

The god accepts two sheep sacrificed as punitive damages for the king refusing to hear the ‘beaten ones’.

For Ammatalla's son dressing in clothes entrusted to his mother when summoned to the palace, do you, O god, not demand punitive damages from the king? – Yes, I do.

The god agrees that the king should give two sheep, a silver tankard weighing 4 shekels, and a set of 4 *t*-garments.

Ammatalla was told by the palace not to let her son wear her garments. Do you, O deity, not demand punitive damages from Ammatalla? – No.

You, O god, do not want punitive damages from Zarniyaziti, the man responsible for carrying the implements to the Stonehouse of LAMMA, do you? – Yes, I do.

Should this be a ritual offering? – Yes.

Only a ritual offering? – No.

Do you also want gold? – Yes.

Is that all? – Yes.

The God of Aruṣna agrees to the sacrifice of two sheep and a gold star shaped object weighing 2 shekels as punitive damages from Zarniyaziti.

For the ‘beaten ones’ you demanded punitive damages from the king. Shall the king cry ‘O woe, O woe’ now and again as soon as he is well? – Yes.

When the king goes to cry ‘o woe’ to the god, shall they also deliver the things that had been left in the Stonehouse? – Yes.

There's a problem with these things: Although they were not yet scrap, they were handled by filthy persons. We propose to carry them between (halves of a severed) billy goat and between (two) fires and thus ritually purify them.²⁸ Is this OK? – No.

²⁸ For the text of such a ritual see ‘The Ritual for a Defeated Army’ (KUB 17.28 iv 45-56 [MH/NS]), ed. H. M. Kümmel, *Ersatzrituale für den hethitischen König*. StBoT 3

Before doing this they will roast them in fire and then pound them with *kunkumuzzi*-stone. After all this they will ritually purify them. Is this OK? – No.

Instead they will let the god's temple personnel purify them in their usual way they do it in Aruṣna. Is this OK? – No.

(Apparently baffled, this line of questioning appears to have been dropped, maybe to give the god time to reconsider. In any case a blank space was left on the tablet for resuming the questioning, but since it remained blank, either it was recorded elsewhere, or they simply ignored/forgot about the problem.)

If further problems are found, shall they be brought up? – Yes.

Annanza, wife of Pirwa, was singled out.

The wife of Pirwa will lead Pattiya to the god and announce her, ... and when Hepamuwa arrives, they will do as she says. OK? – Yes.”

Note that the cost of the damages that the king had to pay to the god was not extravagant. The big expenditure was the twofold compensation/damages for the precious statuary ornaments that had been made for the god but sent instead for the queen's statue. For all the other infractions, aside from making good the misdeed, the punishment was only a gold star weighing two shekels, a silver tankard weighing 4 shekels, 5 sets of *t*-garments, 1 cape, and 1 woman's *k*-garment, one white Hurrian style shirt set, one white *maššiya*-garment, one white *gapari*-garment, one [...]garment set, one white long cloak set, one white [...]garment set, one *maruṣamme*- Hurrian style shirt set, one *maruṣamme*-twined-garment set, one set of *maruṣamme*-leggings, and four sacrificed sheep, and crying ‘O woe’. Of course, one must take into consideration the cost of the 32 odd sheep required to perform the oracle of this text alone, not counting the cost in sheep of determining which of the thousand gods was angry to start with.

Often, when it was determined that the deity was angry because of some infraction in his/her temple and cult, the temple personnel would be called in and questioned. The oracular inquiry then quotes the infractions which these people remember and asks the deity if this is the cause of his/her anger. For example, one text begins each section of the inquiry: “Is

(Wiesbaden 1967), 151-2; B.J. Collins, “The Puppy in Hittite Ritual”, *JCS* 42 (1990), 219 f. w. n. 44, in that case used to purify the army. For other examples see B. J. Collins, *op.cit.* 220-226.

god DN not angry at anything in his temple?" When the answer that he was angry was returned, the text continues:²⁹ "We asked the temple personnel and they said: 'The foot of the deity "Favorable-Day" was broken off.' (Yes, this is a problem.) Is this all? (Answer: No.) (We again asked the temple personnel and they)³⁰ said: 'The silver has been scraped off the silver inlaid mountain on which the deity Kalli stands.' (Answer: Yes, this is a problem). Is this all? (Answer: Yes)." The text then goes on to ask about compensation.³¹ That settled, it goes on to the next suspected problem deity: "Is Huriyanzipa [not angry at anything] in his temple? (Answer: No, he is angry.) ... We asked the temple personnel and they said: '[Four pairs] of monthly festivals were skipped³² and the sun-disk on the offering table was not ornamented.' O god, are you angry on account of this? (Yes.) Only this? (No.) Since the answer was still unfavorable, are you, O god, angry because they gave a delayed offering to the deity? (Yes.) Only this? (No.) We again asked the temple personnel and they said: 'A dog went into the heart of the temple and knocked over the offering table. It threw down the offering breads, and this caused much of the daily bread offering not to be made.' Are you, O deity, angry on account of this? (Yes.) ... We asked the temple personnel and they said: 'Two mutilated men went into the temple.' (Answer: Yes.) Only this? (No.) We asked them again and they said: 'Some slashed people went into the temple.' (Answer: Yes.) Is this all? (Answer: Yes.)" The compensation ascertained was for the four pairs of missed festivals to be made up plus punitive damages of one sheep, some bread and beer. For the missed daily bread offering, thirty breads were found acceptable. For the dog, they had to give the god twice his daily bread ration plus punitive damages of 1 sheep, some bread and beer, and ... For the mutilated and slashed men, a Hittite 'Old Woman' was to perform whatever ritual she customarily performed on such occasions.³³

Similar indignities seem to have been suffered by the other deities as well. "Are you, god Halki of Hattuša, not angry at anything in your temple? (No, he's angry). The temple personnel said: '... They carried a silver

²⁹ Eg. KUB 5.7 rev. 26-27, old translation by A. Goetze, in *ANET*, 497 f. The question at the beginning of the inquiry is missing, but can be assumed to fit the same pattern.

³⁰ Text: 'ditto'.

³¹ Ibid. obv. 9-11, old translation by A. Goetze, in *ANET*, 497.

³² Restored from *ibid.* 30, 32.

³³ Ibid. obv. 17-37.

and a gold *harišamu*-implement to Maraššanta-city, but they didn't bring them back. The Mother-of-God-Festival was missed. For three days the daily bread offerings were not given. ... The 20 arrows of the god's quiver are missing and the god's hunting bag is missing two iron clasps.' Are you, O god, angry about this? (Answer: No.) Are you, god ŠÁKAN, not angry at anything in your temple? (No, he's angry). We asked the temple personnel and they said: 'The eyebrow of the god has fallen off. The tail³⁴ of one of the harnessed billy goats has fallen off. The pearls on the rhyton are broken off. An alabaster cup is smashed and the jewel-inlaid rhyta are missing.'³⁵

Various other inquiry texts turned up further offenses which might have angered a deity: "Zullanni, the GUDU₁₂-priest, said: 'A pig mounted an ass and I did not report it.'³⁶ "We asked the palace personnel and they said, 'An ox leapt onto a person and onto a wheel.' Is it this aforementioned thing which you, O deity, have indicated? (Yes). And only this? (No.) We asked again and they said: 'They didn't kill the oxen who had sinned.'³⁷ Do you, O deity, seek this thing? (Yes.) Is this all? (No.) We asked again and they said: 'A daughter-in-law committed incest with Zilawa.' The answer was favorable (it isn't a problem). Is that all? (No.)³⁸ We asked the men of the grand-father's palace. Mr. Hēllani, the brewer said: 'My child died and I didn't do the rituals and I had been called into the temple. Also a pig sinned and I didn't do the ritual.'³⁹ In a similar vein another text admits: "[A man's] child died. But he didn't burn the bed in which it died, but slept in that very bed and then went into the temple."⁴⁰ And on the same topic a third inquiry reports: "When a child dies, all the *dammara*-women are touching the pyre;⁴¹ they ate the bread and beer of the deceased. And, all the *dammara*-women who are sleeping with some

³⁴ The sign is KUN "tail" not SI^{HIA} "horns" as A. Goetze, in *ANET*, 498, apparently read.

³⁵ Ibid. rev. 18-30.

³⁶ KUB 18.9 iii 7-9.

³⁷ Cf. Hittite Law § 199: "If an ox leaps on a man, the ox shall die, but the man shall not die."

³⁸ KUB 5.9 obv. 11-22.

³⁹ Ibid. obv. 25-28. A similar failure to perform the appropriate apotropaic ritual when a child died was also admitted to by a priest later in the same inquiry (rev. 40-41), and elsewhere when a woman died (KUB 18.9 i 5-7).

⁴⁰ KUB 16.83 obv. 26-29.

⁴¹ [S]AG.UŠ-*i*, coll. A. Walther, ex margine: to be corrected are H. Otten, *HTR*, 137, and Th. van den Hout, *Purity*, 140 f., who read GEDIM-*i* "approaching the deceased".

guys from Arzawa and when later summoned into the temple, are not bathing or washing their garments.”⁴² Yet another text reports: “Concerning the fact that a report of uncleanness was sent from the palace. Uncleanness was determined (by previous oracular inquiries) to exist in the temple of Ištar of Nineveh. We asked the temple personnel and they said: ‘A dog went up into the gatehouse and reached the base of the *ambašši*-altar. They killed it in the heart of the gatehouse.’ Are you, O goddess, angry because of this? (Yes.)”⁴³ “A woman slept with <her> brothers. Are you, O god, angry on account of these misdeeds only and nothing further? (No, there’s more.)”⁴⁴ So it goes.

One gets the impression that damage and loss of the gods’ property and various sins of omission and commission tended to get swept under the rug, and that something was only reported or fixed when the god noticed. So much for the ancients spending all their lives in ‘superstitious’ dread of the gods!

Sometimes when asking the gods about the causes of sickness or defeat, it was discovered that the program for the cult that they had been doing for the gods was wrong.⁴⁵ How else did one know what sort of a festival one should perform for a particular deity? One inquiry asks the gods about many modifications or clarifications to be made in festivals throughout the year.⁴⁶ The query begins “because the *hadauri*-festival is changing from the tablet. On the tablet ten sheep are sacrificed, ... but there is nothing about the eating (thereof) and the disposal of the cups, (therefore) nine of these sheep we shall offer to the Stormgod and the tenth to Šerri and Hurri. ... The meat of one of the sheep will be left, but the other nine will be delivered to the palace. ‘Do you approve, O god?’ (Yes.) ‘Do you, O

⁴² KUB 16.16 obv. 24-28, ed. Th. van den Hout, *Purity*, 140 f.

⁴³ KUB 5.10 obv. 19-24, somewhat differently tr. J. Puhvel, *HED* 1, 50 “came down to the a.”

⁴⁴ KUB 5.9 rev. 43-46. The emendation <her> is needed because Hittite Law’s § 194: “If blood relations sleep with the same free woman, it is not a crime.”

⁴⁵ KBo 12.58 + KBo 13.162 obv. 2-10, tr. Ph. Houwink ten Cate, “Brief Comments on the Hittite Cult Calendar: The Outline of the AN.TAH.ŠUM Festival”, in *Fs Güterbock*², 110, with discussion.

⁴⁶ ABoT 14 + KBo 24.118 and duplicates, ed. R. Lebrun, “Questions oraculaires concernant le nouveau déroulement de fêtes secondaires de printemps et d’automne”, *Hethitica* 12 (1994), 41-77, with an additional piece by M. Nakamura, “Weitere Fragmente zum Orakeltext CTH 568”, *AoF* 22 (1995), 317-322, and discussion by Ph. Houwink ten Cate, *op.cit.*, 95-110.

god, approve for all the other *hadauri*-festivals in all the other temples to be carried out just as it is performed in the temple of the Stormgod?” (No.)”⁴⁷ The next task was to find out where something was to be differently done by asking about each specific temple: “Do you, O god, approve for the *hadauri*-festival [to be performed] in the temple of Šulinkatti exactly as it [was ascertained] for the temple of the Stormgod?”⁴⁸ etc. Whereas most oracular inquiries exist in only one copy, this set of oracular questions was so important that it exists in at least twelve copies. In addition, large portions of a festival could be laid out for the god to approve.⁴⁹ It is interesting to note that the finished outline for one of these festivals notes in several places that it was approved by oracle.⁵⁰

Another very interesting series of questions asks the deity which of various people should slit the throat of the sacrificial animal: “Do you, [O deity,] approve for Ms. Mannunni, the lady’s maid,⁵¹ to slit the throat?” (Answer: No.) “Do you, O deity, approve Ms. Armauzzi to slit the throat?” [...] “Do you, O deity, approve Mr. U., the overseer of pharmacists, to slit the throat?” (Answer: No.) “Do you, O deity, approve of Mr. Talwamara to slit the throat?” [...].⁵² Note that this honor could just as well fall to a woman as to a man.

In an empire as large as the Hittite, differences of ritual were bound to occur. In one set of questions: “They found mistakes in the temple. They have already rectified these. But you, O deity, have disapproved the regu-

⁴⁷ KUB 50.33 i, w. dupl. KBo 24.118 i 1-19, ed. R. Lebrun, *Hethitica* 12, 44 f., 60 f.

⁴⁸ KUB 22.27, esp. i 21-23 and cf. i 26-28, ed. R. Lebrun, *Hethitica* 12, 47 f., 62.

⁴⁹ Eg. KUB 47.89 iii 1'-25' + KUB 45.79 rev. 1'-16' contain the festival description while KUB 45.79 rev. 17' (= iii 36') contains the oracular approval. Cf. also KBo 27.203 iii 1'-12' (festival) and iii 13' (oracular approval), both translit. V. Haas, “Marginalien zu hethitischen Orakelprotokollen”, *AoF* 23 (1996), 86-89 (who omits a paragraph line between lines KBo 27.203 iii 12' and 13'). The obverse of the latter tablet contains questions relating to the king’s wintering. For a similar checking the will of the gods concerning innovations in the cult by Neo-Assyrian king Sennacherib see G. van Driel, *The Cult of Aššur* (Assen 1969), 79, 114 f.

⁵⁰ KBo 10.20 ii 24, 39, (51), ed. H. G. Güterbock, “An Outline of the Hittite AN.TAH.ŠUM Festival”, *JNES* 19 (1960), 82, 86.

⁵¹ MUNUS⁵² SUHUR.LAL. The Sumerogram means “hairstylist”. For the translation “lady attendant” for the Hittite usage see H. G. Güterbock, “A Hurro-Hittite Hymn to Ishtar”, *JAOS* 103 (1983), 159, followed by G. Beckman, “Review of V. Haas and H. J. Thiel, ‘Die Beschwörungsrituale der Allaiturahi’”, *BiOr* 40 (1983), 113 (‘maid’) and E. Neu & Chr. Rüster, *HZL*, No. 349 (“Kammer-Zofe, Dienerin”).

⁵² KUB 5.12 rev. 2-7.

lations of the woman Mezzulla. Instead you sought the regulations of the land of Aštata.” ... (That is to say that the god has been found to reject what is probably the Hittite way of performing a particular ritual, as codified by a woman named Mezzulla, and instead has requested that the ritual be performed as it was in the Semitic speaking country of Aštata, which formed the far eastern edge of the Hittite empire in what is now Syria.)

“They will go and begin treating the deity in the manner of Aštata. If in the future you, O god, will seek nothing in the manner of Mezzulla...” (No, I do.)⁵³

“Because the regulations of Aštata were ascertained for the deity, they will go and begin treating (the deity) in the way it is written on the tablets for the one harvest (?)⁵⁴ festival and one monthly festival about which the Aštatan spoke. Because it was ascertained that regulations in the manner of Mezzulla (be used) for other festivals, did you, O deity, seek those festivals to be rosette festivals performed in the manner of Mezzulla?” (Yes.)

“Two festivals of Aštata and one rosette festival of Mezzulla, right?” (Yes.) ...

“They will take away anger from the god in the manner of Mezzulla. Then the king will offer one ox and four sheep in the manner of the Hattuša. Do you, O god, approve this?” (Yes.)

(At this point it occurs to the questioner that Aštata is a long way away.) ... “While they are going for a priest, while they are bringing the priest from Aštata, while he is on the way to set up the rites of the god, will you, O god, in no way make matters worse⁵⁵ for His Majesty?” (I won’t.)

“Because they brought the men of Aštata and they asked them the rites of the god, they said: ‘If a god is angry at a person and has made him sick, while they are questioning the god by oracle, while they are solving the problem⁵⁶ and while the sickness subsides, they burn birds before the god.’”⁵⁷

⁵³ The scribe neglected to include whether a positive or negative response was requested. Since the response was twice negative and since we see later that Mezzulla’s way was not entirely rejected, we assume that a positive answer was requested and twice rejected by the deity.

⁵⁴ EZEN₄ *harpiya*-, see J. Puhvel, *HED* 3, 183 f.

⁵⁵ Lit.: “if you, O deity, will not reach in a harmful way even beyond this sickness of His Majesty”; *CHD* P, 135b.

⁵⁶ Lit.: “placing him on the road”.

⁵⁷ KUB 5.6 i 7-9, 17-30, 34-48, summarized F. Sommer, *AU*, 276 f.

In this way we see how a clearly foreign cult was imported into the center of the Hittite empire and mixed with older customs. Notice that this is not imposition of religion by an imperial power on a conquered land but importation of a conquered land’s customs into the imperial center.

Troubles caused by deceased ancestors and problems with their cult generated another sizable group of oracles: “Are you (the late) Šuppiluliuma not angry with anything in (your) mausoleum?” (No. He’s angry.) “We asked the men of the mausoleum and they said: ‘5 *huppar*-vessels of wine used to be given by the gardeners, but now for two years they have been cut off.’ Is it only this and nothing more?”⁵⁸

Another text seeks to find out which ghost⁵⁹ or ghosts were angry and why.

“The ghosts from (lit. of) the temple which were ascertained, were they from (lit. of) the town of Zithara?

(Yes.) Are they ghosts from the town of Zithara and no other?

(Yes.) A ghost from the temple of the town of Zithara, which was ascertained, is it the ghost of (deposed king) Urhi-Tešub?

(Yes.) Is there only the ghost of Urhi-Tešub? ([No.]

Concerning that it is still unfavorable, is it also the ghost of the mother of His Majesty? (No.)

Is it also the ghost of (Queen) Danuhepa? ([Yes.]

Is it only the ghosts of Urhi-Tešub and Danuhepa? (Yes.)

Are these known misdeeds that we already know about, on which account you ghost of Urhi-Tešub are angry? ([Yes.]

You are only angry on account of these known misdeeds? (Yes.)

[These] are the known misdeeds concerning Urhi-Tešub.

The festivals of the 6th year⁶⁰ have been stopped. The festival[s?] of the first year [and] the festivals [of the second year(?)] were not performed. A jug [...]. Are [you, O god,] angry on account of these misdeeds? ([Yes.]) ...”⁶¹

The ghost of princess Šaušgatti is ascertained to be causing trouble in another text.⁶²

⁵⁸ KUB 18.21 ii 1-7. Cf. KUB 18.16.

⁵⁹ ^DZawalli. See A. Archi, “Il dio Zawalli: Sul culto dei morti presso gli Ittiti”, *AoF* 6 (1979), 81-94.

⁶⁰ From the traces in the copy, the number 6 is more likely than 7, 8 or 9.

⁶¹ KBo 23.114 obv. 1-28, ed. A. Archi, *AoF* 6, 81 f., who misunderstands the answers; cf. Th. van den Hout, *Purity*, 144-149.

⁶² KUB 16.46, ed. Th. van den Hout, *Purity*, 150-155. For other texts dealing with ghost problems, see A. Archi, *AoF* 6, 82-94.

Some of the ghosts were people long dead who had lost out in political battles to similarly long dead ancestors of the living. These could be presumed to be waiting their chance to wreck havoc on the lives of their enemies' descendants either directly or through slanders or curses uttered when alive,⁶³ particularly at critical times such as a royal succession. Who these bitter ghosts were had to be learned by asking the gods. Then it had to be determined through oracles what was to be done to rehabilitate these losers of long ago political battles. What was the proper combination of establishment of the ancestor worship they should have been receiving⁶⁴ and propitiatory gifts? What living person or deceased person should perform a *mantalli*-reconciliation ritual with this unhappy cast-off.⁶⁵

Additionally, a living person could turn an otherwise benevolent ghost (or god) into a problematic one. We learn that a tributary king married into the Hittite royal family had in his temple a statue or other home for the household ghost of His Majesty.⁶⁶ In the course of investigating the causes of the king's sickness, which, it is learned, were at least partially caused by ghosts, it occurs to someone that one of the tributary kings, Mašuiluwa, who had revolted, may have uttered slanders before this household ghost, who is consequently attacking the king. And indeed after further questioning of the gods it is found that Mašuiluwa had uttered many curses and as a result both the ghost and the Great king had become bewitched.

A solution is suggested, namely that Mašuiluwa should himself go to Kuwalana and that the deity and His Majesty (as represented by his regalia) should be ritually treated there, that Mašuiluwa and His Majesty should jointly perform a *mantalli*-ritual (i.e. a reconciliation ritual), each in the tradition of his own country, and then the deity and the king should be ritually treated again. The gods give their approval to this course of action.

⁶³ Cf. "The slander of the living Šaušgatti has been ascertained. They will do as follows: the slander of Šaušgatti in front of the gods [of kingship] they will undo": KBo 2.6 iii 42-44, ed. Th. van den Hout, *Purity*, 26 (with differences).

⁶⁴ E.g. GEDIM₂ya ašešanuwanzi, *ibid.* iii 44-45.

⁶⁵ Discussion by Th. van den Hout, *Purity*, 6.

⁶⁶ *parnalliš zawalliš*, perhaps a similar concept to Akkadian *ešem kimti* "collective ancestor", on which see J. Scurlock, "Death and the Afterlife in Ancient Mesopotamian Thought", in J. Sasson (ed.), *CANE* 3, 1892b.

Despite this approval,⁶⁷ another solution was then suggested: rather than having Mašuiluwa going to Kuwalana, somebody else would go. The deity would be ritually purified this time by, among other things, carrying him between halves of a severed billy goat and fires. Mašuiluwa would do his part in the ritual from afar. Then the cleansed deity would be brought before His Majesty and his Majesty would be ritually treated. Only then would his Majesty and Mašuiluwa perform the *mantalli*-ritual in the tradition of the two countries.⁶⁸

These two paragraphs are clearly variations on the same set of actions designed to accomplish the same ends. The fact that the gods have approved one variation apparently did not prevent them from being asked whether another possible way of doing things was also acceptable. Should more than one variation have been approved, then it was up to the Great King to decide as he saw fit.

Another usage of oracle questions was to check the meaning of dreams and to divine their greater significance. When one saw a dream, was it just a dream or was it a message from the gods, and if the latter, what did it mean? "The king saw a dream in Tiliura ... Does this dream portend the anger of some deity?" (Yes.) "Only this?" (No.) "Does this dream portend a matter of fire?"...⁶⁹

In a different vein: "The Queen saw a dream: In the dream, she repeatedly said to His Majesty, 'the Sungoddess of Arinna somehow dragged back up this matter of Mr. Kur.'⁷⁰ ... 'Did you, O goddess, in no way drag up this matter of Mr. Kur?'"⁷¹ In another text that largely deals with cultic offenses, one cultic offense was apparently learned about in a dream and, as such, was questioned by oracle.⁷² When the king's intended trip to Ankuwa to celebrate the Rain Festival was stopped by a dream ordering:

⁶⁷ Note the *nu ... -ma* construction which marks the second of alternative questions (*CHD* L-N, s.v. *nu* f), correctly translated "or" by van den Hout.

⁶⁸ KUB 5.6 iii 7-38, mostly ed. Th. van den Hout, *Purity*, 3-5.

⁶⁹ KUB 5.11 i 1, 26-27, 44.

⁷⁰ Following the suggestion of Th. van den Hout, *Diss.*, 87, 90 = *StBoT* 38, 82, 84 f., accepted by E. Neu and Chr. Rüster, *HZL*, No. 329, the name is probably an abbreviation rather than a Sumerogram for *Mr. Utne or the like. However, Th. van den Hout's suggestion that it is an abbreviation for "Kurunta" (usually written ^mDKAL) seems less sure considering that one oracle question checks up on a dream about a certain Mr. Kurakura (KUB 49.90:5).

⁷¹ KUB 5.24 ii 12-14, 19-20 + KUB 16.31 ii 1-3, 8-9, ed. Th. van den Hout, *StBoT* 38, 256 f.

⁷² KUB 22.65 ii 13-20.

“His Majesty should not go to Ankuwa”, the resultant conundrum of whether not to attend the festival or whether the festival should be postponed to other, more propitious, days was put to the gods.⁷³

The significance of unsolicited signs might also be checked. One text⁷⁴ begins by noting that an evil omen has occurred in Kummahi-city and that bad things have subsequently happened. Now, more evil omens have been seen. The oracular inquiry sought to determine whether these signs portended evil for the head of the king, this year, in the second year, in the third year, in the fourth year, etc. up to the 20th year. This established, the king asked if he would suffer humiliation and degradation. The oracle indicated that he would not. Did the signs portend the destruction of the kingdom? The questioning then came back to the subject of the king's head, like a suspicious patient questioning a doctor who says the patient has nothing to worry about: “Do the signs actually portend that the king's person will perish, but you, O god, are hiding it from him?” “Since the ...-servants are dying,⁷⁵ have you, O god, brought evil for the king's body?” ... “Are these (signs) of the Protective God, ... is it an omen of death for the king? Is his time near? A similar text reads, “We saw the ‘birds of worry’ ... Have we nothing to fear for the Head of His Majesty?”⁷⁶

Because Tudhaliya IV's father, prince Hattušili had usurped the throne, Tudhaliya's own succession was certainly a time of more than usual nervousness. Therefore, a number of fragmentary texts preserve questions concerning Tudhaliya IV's enthronement.⁷⁷ “While His Majesty is being enthroned (lit. sitting for kingship) – ignore the fact that we have postponed the enthronement – if, while His Majesty is being enthroned and while he is afterwards in kingship, you, O god, see no sickness for His Majesty, and will no person take enthronement away from His Majesty by bloodshed...”

⁷³ KBo 24.128 rev. For other oracles checking dreams see KUB 5.1 iii 48-50, KUB 5.20 i 38, KUB 16.8, KUB 18.61, KUB 22.45 rev. 9-17, KUB 22.66 iv 8-15, KUB 22.69:4-18, KUB 49.71:13, KUB 49.90:4-12, 22-26, KUB 49.92, KUB 50.31, KUB 50.35, KUB 52.33, KUB 52.72, KUB 52.79, KBo 24.124, KBo 24.134. Probably also to be included are KUB 6.10:11, KUB 16.76:16f f., and KUB 22.68. Note also KUB 22.61 iv 21-26, where the queen sees a medicinal plant in a dream.

⁷⁴ IBoT 1.33, ed. E. Laroche, “Lecanomancie hittite”, *RA* 52 (1958), 152-159.

⁷⁵ Laroche understands this as a question: “Why are the ...-servants dying?”

⁷⁶ KUB 18.12:15, 17.

⁷⁷ Ed. Th. van den Hout, “Hethitische Thronbesteigungsorakel und die Inauguration Tudhaliyas IV”, *ZA* 81 (1991), 274-300.

“While he comes back for the enthronement festival, will no one cause his flight?”⁷⁸ Another set of questions asked which months the god approved for the ceremony.⁷⁹

Concern for the king's well-being during another critical time of the year – the winter – is the subject of several other tablets of oracle questions.⁸⁰

“This year His Majesty proposes to winter in Hattuša. He will celebrate the [customa]ry festivals, the festival of the year, the thunder festival in Hattuša... Do we have nothing to fear for the head of His Majesty up in Hattuša and have you, O gods, approved wintering in Hattuša for His Majesty? (Answer: Yes). We did a check and the answer was still ‘Yes’. ... Will high fever not find His Majesty while he is up in Hattuša? (Answer: It will not.) ... Will we have nothing to fear from revolt while His Majesty is up in Hattuša? (Answer: We have to worry.) Since the oracle was unfavorable, will someone inside revolt? (Answer: Yes.) Will someone outside revolt? (Answer: Yes.) ... Do we have nothing to fear from birds while His Majesty is up in Hattuša? ([Answer: No problem]). ... Do we have nothing to fear [from impurity] while His Majesty is up in Hattuša. (Answer: we have to worry.) We will go and give sworn instructions to the kitchen personnel and they will have them swear. Will this make the evil disappear? (Answer: Yes.) ... Do we have nothing to fear from a downpour while His Majesty is up in Hattuša? (Answer: We have to worry.) Do we have nothing to fear from fire while His Majesty is up in Hattuša? (Answer: we have to worry.) They will go and give sworn instructions concerning fire. Will this make the evil disappear? (Answer: Yes.) ... Do we have nothing to fear from accidents⁸¹ while His Majesty is up in Hattuša? (Answer: We have to worry.) They will go and give sworn instructions concerning accidents. Will this make the evil disappear? (Answer not recorded.) ... Do we

⁷⁸ KUB 18.36:11-21, ed. Th. van den Hout, *ZA* 81, 279 f., idem, *Purity*, 112 f.

⁷⁹ KUB 16.20, ed. Th. van den Hout, *ZA* 81, 284 f., idem, *Purity*, 122-125.

⁸⁰ KUB 5.4 + KUB 18.53, KUB 5.3 + KUB 18.52, both tr. R. Beal, in *CoS* 1, 207-211 and summarized below. Similar questions are also found in KUB 18.12 + KUB 22.15, KUB 22.1 + KUB 52.30 and in the small fragment KUB 18.28.

⁸¹ Lit. “misdeed of the hand”. Differently A. Archi, “Hethitische Mantik und ihre Beziehungen zur mesopotamischen Mantik”, in *25 RAI* (1978) = *BBVO* 1 (1982), 284 f.: “Beleidigung” (“insult”). For “the misdeed of a hand” = “accidental” see Hittite Laws § III, where three levels of homicide are mentioned: first degree is in the course of a robbery, second degree is “in a quarrel” and third degree is “(only) his hand misbehaved” (*keššar waštai*). See similarly in the Hittite Laws §§ 3, V, VI.

have nothing to fear from a road accident (literally: “misdeed-of-a horse”) while His Majesty is up in Hattuša? (Answer: We have to worry.) They will go and give sworn instructions to the chariot-drivers concerning road accidents. Will this make the evil disappear? (Answer broken.)”⁸²

Another text as far as is preserved gives the same series of questions.⁸³ In this second text, after discovering that road accidents will be a problem, it asks: “Since a road accident was ascertained for His Majesty, is this road accident due to the anger of some deity? (Answer: No). We repeat the question. (Answer again: No). Will a road accident happen to His Majesty due to the negligence of a person? (Answer: Yes.) We repeat the question. (Answer: Still yes). They will go and give sworn instructions to the chariot drivers concerning road accidents. Will this make the evil disappear? (Answer: Yes.) We repeat the question. (Answer: Again yes.)” ... If while his majesty is up in Hattuša, will there not be an epidemic among the standing army troops (i.e. the *šarikuwa* and UKU.UŠ)?⁸⁴ We are not concerned here if the day of death arrives this year for 10 or 20 soldiers. Will there not be an epidemic up in Hattuša and will a general sudden death not make us flee down from Hattuša? (Answer: Yes, there will be.)⁸⁵ We repeat the question. (Answer: No, there won't be.) Concerning that an epidemic was ascertained to occur up in Hattuša among the standing army troops, is some deity going to cause the plague up in Hattuša? ([Answer: Yes.] ... Since the anger of a god was ascertained to be the cause of the plague, will some new deity be causing the plague up in Hattuša? (Answer: Yes). Will it be only a new deity and not also some other deity who is causing the plague up in Hattuša? (Answer: No, there's more.) Will it be some Hittite god also causing the plague up in Hattuša? (Answer: Yes). Will it be only a new deity and a Hittite deity who will be causing the plague up in Hattuša? (Answer: Yes.) Is the new god who was determined to be causing the plague a new god of kingship? (Answer: Yes.) ... Is the new god of kingship who was determined to be causing the plague resident in Hattuša? (Answer: Yes.)” The text continues in an effort to find out more about this new deity. Presumably lost in a long lacuna were

⁸² KUB 5.4 + KUB 18.53 i - ii 42.

⁸³ KUB 5.3 + KUB 18.52 i 1-22. A similar series is found in KUB 18.12 i 15-56.

⁸⁴ For ^{ERIN.MES}UKU.UŠ and ^{ERIN.MES}šarikuwa- comprising the standing army see R. Beal, *The Organisation of the Hittite Military*. THeth 20 (Heidelberg 1992). 37-55.

⁸⁵ This question is also found in KUB 5.4 + KUB 18.53 ii 43-48, apparently without the answer being recorded or any follow-up.

questions on how to soothe the divine anger. Eventually the text resumes with, “Do you gods approve His Majesty wintering this year in Katapa? (Answer: [Yes].) Shall His Majesty winter this year in Ankuwa? (Answer: No.) Shall his Majesty winter this year in Zitharama? (Answer: No.)”⁸⁶

Such a series of questions expressed the fears of the king who knew he was to be cooped up in a small walled city for several months by the cold and snow of the Anatolian winter, facing the threats of assassination, internal and external revolt, disease, epidemic, fire, storms, household accidents, driving accidents, and pollution. The oracle also helped allay these fears by approving or disapproving the choice of towns in which to winter and by giving directions – some spiritual and some that even today sound eminently practical, giving careful instructions to those involved – on how the portended evil events could be avoided. Such a text also helps us Hittitologists know what the primary dangers and fears of a Hittite winter were for the powerful individuals enduring them. It also shows in passing the discovery of a new deity, and helps explain how ‘the thousand gods of the Hittites’ got to be so numerous.

A single text fragment asks: “Will the grains mature this year?”⁸⁷ Considering the importance of the harvest to the smooth functioning of the country, (and the statements by modern scholars that ‘fertility’ was central to ancient religion) it is interesting that so few questions were asked on this topic. It would seem that, assuming there were no cultic omissions or impurities, the ‘fertility’ of the fields could generally be taken for granted.

A single curious fragment asks about medical treatment: “(Concerning) the rubbing plant which the daughter of PN recommended and which further the pharmacists know about, because there are many (other possible) plants, I will determine them by oracle. Whatever pharmacist is ascertained by oracle for me will rub on His Majesty's eyes whatever plant is ascertained for me by oracle. Ditto (= Do you, O god, approve this procedure?) (Answer: No.)”⁸⁸

⁸⁶ KUB 5.3 + KUB 18.52 i 23-end, for i 1-44 see A. Archi, in 25 RAI (1978) = BBVO 1 (1982), 283-86. KUB 5.4 + KUB 18.53 also ends by asking about wintering in Katapa and Ankuwa (iii 3-14).

⁸⁷ KUB 16.76:11.

⁸⁸ KUB 22.61 i 14-20. Note that later in this text a question reads: “Concerning that the queen [saw] a plant in a dream [...] they will go and [...] that plant on His Majesty [...]”, *ibid.* iv 21-22.

Another set of questions asks whether one of a particular class of officials would shed blood⁸⁹ or otherwise prove unreliable.⁹⁰ Alternatively, the god could be asked to approve a new appointee: "He intends to install Kuwarwašu. Is he approved by the deity? (Answer, No.) He intends to take [...]liya. Is he approved by the deity?"⁹¹

The king also checked to see whether tributary kings and foreign kings would remain peaceful. "Will Huqqana of Azzi not defect from My Majesty? (Answer: He will.) Will His Majesty hold Azzi and in the future will the descendants of His Majesty and the Queen hold it? (Answer: Yes.)"⁹² Another fragment asks a series of questions about "the weapon of the men of [Mera?], the weapon of the men of [...], the weapon of the men of [...], the weapon of the men of Azzi, the weapon of the men of Kaška", and finally whether "by the weapon of the enemy."⁹³ Finally a fragmentary text asks: "Will the King of Assyria not come this [year] to Malatya?"⁹⁴

Possible places to campaign were inquired about: "Do you, O god, approve a campaign this year for His Majesty on the Durmitta front? (Answer: Yes.) We repeat the question: (Answer: Again yes.) Do you, O god, approve a campaign this year for His Majesty on the Nerik front?"⁹⁵ It is interesting to note that even though the god approved the Durmitta front, the series of questions continued by asking about another front. Thus the oracle was not intended to choose where the army would go, but to rule out places where the army should not go. The decision as to which of the approved fronts the king would lead the army to was still in the king's hands.

Before the army set out, possible campaigns would be presented in considerable detail to the gods for their approval.⁹⁶ For example: "His

⁸⁹ KUB 16.19 obv. 2-8, ed. R. Beal, THeth 20, 161 n. 588.

⁹⁰ KUB 22.42 (+) KUB 22.43, discussed in R. Beal, THeth 20, 390 w. n. 1472.

⁹¹ KUB 22.37 obv. 6-12.

⁹² KUB 18.2 iii 10-21 (Šupp. I?/LNS), ed. J. Klinger, "Zur Historizität einiger hethitischer Omina", *AoF* 25 (1998), 106 f. The preceding lines ask "if he will not come and [...] the border" (iii 5). Col. ii of this text are oracles concerning ghost problems. Cf. "It was ascertained to [...] and the border of Maša [...]. The men of Maša in [...]. Un[favorable]. § Will someone defect and then [...]" (KUB 18.37 rev. 3-8).

⁹³ KUB 22.62.

⁹⁴ KBo 22.264 iii 11-12, cf. "If the king of Assyria will not come this year to fortify (lit. build)" (ibid. iv 8-9).

⁹⁵ KBo 22.264 i.

⁹⁶ See e.g. KUB 5.1, ed. A. Ünal, *Hattušili III. Teil I. Hattušili bis zu seiner Thronbesteigung*, Band 2: *Quellen und Indices*, THeth 4 (Heidelberg 1974), 32-102 and tr. R.

Majesty will leave Nerik and come back to Ḫakmiš. He will strike Tal-maliya. He will destroy the troops of Mt. Ḫaḫarwa. His Majesty will sleep in Yupapaena. When he comes down Mt. Ḫaḫarwa, he will give the irregulars⁹⁷ to Temeti. They will carry off Ununiya and he will meet up again with His Majesty. The plan for Taptena and Ḫuršama will be carried out. He will not, however, attack Tanizila. Is this OK?"⁹⁸ Four long columns of this text ask about variations on this campaign. Another reads: "He will sleep in Šapinuwa, but the army will camp in Ḫanziwa. He will pass below Šuppiluliyia and strike Šaḫuzimiša. They will dispatch general [...]luwa with some irregulars and he will attack Daḫa[...]. They will dispatch Maniyaziti with some irregulars and he will attack it up from behind from the direction of Kuwarina. Ašduwari and Timitti will strike frontally from the direction of Kammama."⁹⁹

Here too, it should be noted that the gods are not choosing which possible campaign route the Hittite king should employ, but rather which of a number of routes, already selected by Hittite campaign planners, he should not employ. In one such series of military oracles,¹⁰⁰ i 56-58 lays out a campaign: "When His Majesty completes (his duties in) Nerik." The suggested campaign is approved. However, despite this approval, paragraph i 70-77 again begins: "When His Majesty completes (his duties in) Nerik" and proceeds to lay out a different campaign. This the gods reject. A third variant, again beginning "When His Majesty completes (his duties in) Nerik," is laid out in i 78-85, which the gods also accept. Then despite two acceptances, a fourth variant is suggested in ii 28-33, which is also found acceptable, and despite this in ii 66-72 a fifth variant is suggested. Thus the campaign plan in i 70-77 is not to be tried, but it is left to the king to decide which of the others to employ.

J. Milgrom¹⁰¹ has argued that the use of Urim and Thumim by the ancient Israelites to plan complex military campaigns proves that they could

Beal, "Seeking Divine Approval for Campaign Strategy: KUB 5.1 + KUB 52.65", *Ktèma* 24 (1999), 41-54; and KUB 22.25.

⁹⁷ ERIN^{MES} ŠUTI, perhaps troops armed/dressed like Sutean tribesmen. See R. Beal, THeth 20, 104-108.

⁹⁸ KUB 5.1 ii 45-49, ed. A. Ünal, THeth 4, 58 f.

⁹⁹ KUB 22.51 obv. 10-16, w. dupl. KUB 50.108:7-11, translit. R. Beal, THeth 20, 471 n. 1745.

¹⁰⁰ KUB 5.1 + KUB 52.65, tr. R. Beal, *Ktèma* 24, 41-54.

¹⁰¹ *Leviticus* 1-16: *The Anchor Bible*, vol. 3 (New York 1991), 509-510.

not merely have been a form of lot oracle yielding a 'yes or no' answer. Hittite evidence for the use of lot (and other forms of oracle) yielding 'yes or no' answers precisely to plan complex military campaigns would seem to invalidate Milgrom's argument, as well as providing insights into the way in which ancient Israelites may have used the Urim and Thumim.

Potential disasters would also be asked about. "Since it was ascertained that the enemy will attack into the midst of the army-camp, will they attack at nighttime? (Answer: Yes.) We repeat the question. (Answer again: Yes). Will he attack also in the daytime? (Answer: Yes.) We repeat the question."¹⁰² And so it goes.

The leaders of a military expedition could be chosen by oracle. "This year should His Majesty come to Azzi?..." (Answer: OK). Should ^DLIŠ-^DLAMMA come to Azzi? (Answer [...]) Shall they send the (appanage) King of Tumanna? (Answer: No). Should they send the King of Tumanna and ^DLIŠ-^DLAMMA together? (Answer: No.) ... Shall they call the (appanage) King of Išuwa and the (appanage) King of Kargamiš against the enemy?"¹⁰³ In a second text, after the gods had turned down a campaign led by the king, assisted by generals Šahurunuwa and Haršaniya and other lords, the gods were asked: "Shall the Crown Prince go, while His Majesty [...] it and shall the lords, Šahurunuwa and Haršaniya go with?"¹⁰⁴ Again, it appears that the king makes a list of leaders he thinks could do the job. Then the gods reject certain leaders, while leaving it to the king to choose among the various possibilities that the gods have accepted.

Finally, the gods were asked who would win. "Will you gods give me the King of Assyria? Will I defeat him. Will it be unfavorable for the king of Assyria?" (Answer: Yes.)¹⁰⁵

The rare text even asks the gods about events on the international stage to which the Hittites were interested spectators. After at least two ques-

¹⁰² KUB 52.18 iii 1-11, cf. R. Beal, *THeth* 20, 22 n. 82.

¹⁰³ IBoT 1.32 obv. 1-19, 29, ed. R. Beal, *THeth* 20, 318 w. n. 1217.

¹⁰⁴ KUB 49.103 rev. 14-15, ed. R. Beal, *THeth* 20, 320 w. n. 1224, 354 w. n. 1345. Similarly the MH text KBo 8.55:2-15 + KBo 34.142 i? 1-10, ed. M. Schuol, "Die Terminologie des hethitischen SU-Orakels. Eine Untersuchung auf der Grundlage des mittelhethitischen Textes KBo XVI 97 unter vergleichender Berücksichtigung akkadischer Orakeltexte und Lebermodelle I", *AoF* 21 (1994), 122 f. (without join), J. Klinger, *AoF* 25, 108-109, appears to be asking about potential leaders for a campaign against Išuwa (line 16).

¹⁰⁵ KUB 18.55 ii 17-18 + KUB 5.17 ii 9-10.

tions concerning Babylonia, the gods are asked: "Will the king of Assyria perish at the hand of the enemy?"¹⁰⁶

Since questioners were expected to come up with the answers to their own problems, which the gods simply confirmed or denied, sometimes the whole solution was not found or perhaps like angry people angry gods were simply determined to make people suffer for awhile, but sometimes solutions found in oracle texts, while making one feel better in the short term were found not to work in the longer term. The conversation with the gods then became a monologue and a number of heart rending prayers result from this situation.¹⁰⁷ A terrible plague was brought back to Hatti by soldiers making a punitive raid on Egyptian Palestine. Soon, one of the greatest of Hittite kings, Šuppiluliuma I, died of a plague ravaging the land, and then his right-hand man and crown prince, Arnuwanda II, succumbed as well. This left an inexperienced teenager, Muršili II, on the throne. "Since the time that my father campaigned against Egypt, a plague has persisted in Hatti. From that time the population of Hatti has been dying. [My] father repeatedly made oracular inquiries, but he did not discover (the mind of) you, the gods, <my> lords. And I have repeatedly made oracular inquiries of you, but I have not discovered (the mind of you), the gods my lords through oracles."¹⁰⁸ ... "I will restore the [furnishings] for whatever [god] has [a temple] but no divine [furnishings]. I will rebuild a temple for whatever god [has no temple]. I will restore whatever divine image has been destroyed."¹⁰⁹ ... "Since (my people) have died, how can I reestablish you gods? O gods, have mercy on me due to these matters. Bring me peace and send this plague away from the land once more."¹¹⁰

¹⁰⁶ KUB 18.69. Another small fragment, KUB 22.28 rev. 3-4, asks "will the king of Babylonia win [...] with His Majesty [...]" The next paragraphs (rev. 10-14) mention Aššur and a royal campaign, but are far too broken to make any further sense.

¹⁰⁷ For translations of all extant Hittite prayers see R. Lebrun, *Hymnes*. Cf. M. Popko, *Religions of Asia Minor* (Warsaw 1995), 102-104. For further editions, translations and discussions see bibliography in V. Souček and J. Siegelová, *Systematische Bibliographie der Hethitologie 1915-1995* (Prague 1996), § 8.7:14 and add I. Singer, *Muwatalli's Prayer to the Assembly of Gods through the Storm-God of Lightning (CTH 381)* (Atlanta 1996).

¹⁰⁸ KUB 14.13 i 47-55, "Fourth" plague prayer, tr. from G. Beckman, in *CoS* 1, 160.

¹⁰⁹ KBo 22.71 ii 6-11, "Fourth" plague prayer, tr. from G. Beckman, *loc. cit.*

¹¹⁰ KUB 14.13 iv 16-19, "Fourth" plague prayer, tr. from G. Beckman, *loc. cit.*

Later¹¹¹ Muršili II wrote: "It is now the twentieth year. Because the land of Hatti is still suffering many deaths, the affair of Tudhaliya the younger began to bother me. I asked about it by oracle, and this affair of Tudhaliya the younger was ascertained to be the cause of our sufferings. My father and all important people of Hatti had sworn an oath to him, ... but they seized and killed Tudhaliya. ... But you gods safeguarded my father. He had a successful reign. He performed an expiation of blood ritual. But then you gods killed my father, and all the important people who had gone over to him. I too have performed an expiation of blood ritual. ... The affair of Tudhaliya has been ascertained by oracle to be the cause of the trouble in the land. I made further inquiries [about it]. As was ascertained, they will perform for you a broken oath ritual. They will purify [...]. I will make restitution to you, pay a punitive penalty and give you gifts. ... Let the souls of the gods, my lords, be appeased. I have done nothing evil. ... Those who did evil have all died. ... Those who make your food are all dying, and if they perish, no one will any longer give you your food. ... Send the plague away."¹¹²

Later still, Muršili recounts to the gods that he has found some old tablets. One concerned a ritual to the Mala River that had not been performed for some time. An oracle ascertained that this was a problem and he is now on his way to perform the ritual. He also found that the Hittites had long ago had a treaty with the Egyptians and that even though the Egyptians had cold-bloodedly murdered Šuppiluliuma's son and the gods had given him victory in a retaliatory raid, oracular inquiries had shown that this raid had somehow broken this old treaty and so caused the plague (after all the prisoners taken were the ones who had brought the plague to Hatti). And thirdly there was a broken oath concerning the *damnaššara*-deities. Muršili again promises to make good the errors. Then he adds: "My father sinned and transgressed the word of the Storm-god of Hatti, my lord. But I did not sin in any way." But new to this, the last of the preserved plague prayers Muršili comes to think: "The sin of the father devolves upon his son. The sin of my father has devolved upon me, and I have now confessed it to the Storm-god of Hatti my lord and to the gods my lords. It is true; we have done it. ... Save me! The bird takes refuge in the nest and

¹¹¹ On the chronological order of the plague prayers see R. Beal, in *CoS* 2, 83 w. n. 2.

¹¹² Translated and paraphrased from the so-called "First" Plague Prayer, tr. after G. Beckman, in *CoS* 1, 156 f.

the nest [saves] it. ... Or if a misdeed (hangs over) some servant, and he confesses the misdeed before his lord, then his lord may treat him however he wishes. But since he confesses his sin before his lord, the soul of his lord is appeased. ... I have confessed the sin of my father: It is true. I did it. ... And if people have been dying for some other matter, either let me either see it in a dream; or [let] it [be ascertained] by means of an oracle inquiry, or let a prophet speak of it; or let priests discover it by dream incubation. ... Save me, O Storm-god of Hatti. Let the plague be removed from Hatti."¹¹³

So were the problems major and minor for which the Hittite gods called their people's overseer to account, and on which he asked their opinion.

¹¹³ Translated excerpts from the so-called "Second" Plague Prayer, tr. G. Beckman, in *CoS* 1, 158 f.