

SETTING UP THE GODDESS OF THE NIGHT SEPARATELY

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Local hypostases of supra-regional deities are well known to any student of the ancient Near East; so well known, in fact, that this rather remarkable phenomenon is seldom the topic of further inquiry. It is not often asked, for example, perhaps because the answers seem self-evident, how there could be an Ishtar of Nineveh and an Ishtar of Hattusa? Were these two hypostases essentially the same deity, worshipped at two different places, or two distinct personalities? How did the two forms come into being? If a single entity, how did the deity reside in two distinct temples? And perhaps most importantly: How did the worshippers perceive their deities and the processes by which they became differentiated?

Fortunately for the researcher interested in the answers to such questions, there exists a passage that is, to the best of my knowledge, unique in ancient Near Eastern literature, an incantation that provides much insight into a process of differentiation that presumably would have happened repeatedly in polytheistic cultures such as those of the ancient Near East, Anatolia and Greece. The passage occurs in a composition commonly known, after Heinz Kronasser's 1963 edition, as *Die Umsiedelung der schwarzen Gottheit*, but more appropriately described as the Expansion or "Adlocation" of the Goddess of the Night.¹ This remarkable composition is, to paraphrase its incipit, intended for when a man takes it upon himself to build a second temple for the Goddess of the Night (DINGIR GE₆) and for setting up the Goddess of the Night herself separately.

The rites consist mainly of preparing all the paraphernalia needed for the new temple, which are exhaustively listed, then evoking the "old" deity, as she is called, into the "old" temple so that she can be worshipped and sacrificed to in a manner to which she is accustomed. Once the deity is comfortable and content, then comes the crucial incantation (§22):

Honored deity! Preserve your being, but divide your divinity! Come to that new temple, too, and take yourself the honored place! And when you make your way, then take yourself only that place!

This "new deity" is then afforded in her new temple all the customary rites that the old deity received in her original temple.

This splitting of the deity and her relocation seems not to have been without some risk in the mind of the person(s) composing the incantation. The deity is explicitly asked to preserve her being while dividing her divinity, and she is admonished to come specifically to the place intended, that is, to the new temple built for her, perhaps to ward off the possibility that she might wander off to some other location, in the worst case, to some enemy land, a constant fear among the Hittites. This incantation seems to imply that the deity was conceived of as a single entity, a distinct personality, which, however, could divide herself into two parts that would each retain the qualities of the original singularity.²

Since Beal has recently devoted an article to splitting deities (2002), I will concentrate rather on the development and wanderings of the Goddess of the Night, as an attempt to trace her steps may help us

better understand the processes of syncretization and differentiation seen in the polytheistic religions of the ancient Near East and beyond.

In the modern secondary literature, the Goddess of the Night is normally associated, even identified, with Ishtar,³ who of course is at least typologically related to Aphrodite.⁴ More specifically, it is generally accepted that the Goddess of the Night is Ishtar's Venus aspect, even if, as we shall see, the evidence for this equation is less than robust and not without its difficulties. As Beckman wrote in his study of Ishtar of Nineveh, "any special features of the (Ishtar) varieties will become apparent only if each is initially studied in isolation" (1998, 4–5), an approach that clearly bore fruit for Beckman. In keeping with this principle, this paper will attempt to arrive at a more differentiated picture of the Goddess of the Night.

In the Expansion of the Goddess of the Night composition just mentioned (henceforth Expansion), it cannot be ascertained where the original temple and deity was located or where the new home of the new deity was established, and the event can only be dated roughly to perhaps the late-Middle or early-New Hittite period at the latest, that is, some time in the first part of the fourteenth century.

In another text, however, the Great King Mursili II (last third of the fourteenth century) makes reference to a time when his forefather, Tudhaliya I (I/II),⁵ split the Goddess of the Night from her temple in Kizzuwatna, that is, approximately classical Cilicia, and worshipped her separately in Samuha,⁶ to be sought on the upper Kızılırmak, perhaps near Sivas. Tudhaliya I (I/II) thereby established a temple for this Kizzuwatnean deity in Hittite territory, and the rites that must have been carried out on this occasion presumably would have had much in common with those detailed in the Expansion. This event during the reign of Tudhaliya I (I/II) – which must be kept distinct from the events of the strictly local Expansion⁷ – is thus dated to that period of time that sees the start of a deluge of Hurrian and Syrian influence in practically all aspects of religion and culture in Hattusa, and the "adlocation" of the cult from Kizzuwatna to Samuha can be seen as part of this process, which in turn was presumably due to the subjugation and subsequent annexation of Kizzuwatna to Hatti under Tudhaliya I (I/II) and Arnuwanda I toward the end of the Middle Hittite period. It is this Goddess of the Night brought from Kizzuwatna to Samuha who is generally assumed to be identical with Ishtar of Samuha, a deity who plays an important role in later Hittite history, and to whom we shall return in a moment.

This Kizzuwatnean deity, as far as can be judged by the available documentation, which, it should be noted, originates exclusively from Hattusa, seems to have been an autochthonous Kizzuwatnean entity, with no Mesopotamian precursors. No "Deity of the Night" (DINGIR GE₆) is known from Mesopotamia or Syria. There one finds only a general description "gods of the night" (*ilū/ilānī mušīti*) used as a poetic epithet for the stars and/or planets and the various gods associated with them.⁸ This is practically all that one can say about the Goddess of the Night as she existed in Kizzuwatna before her importation into Hatti. Much of what will be said in the remainder of this chapter *may* also have applied to the deity in Kizzuwatna, but is known only concerning the deity as witnessed in Hatti.

As mentioned, the Goddess of the Night is generally identified with Ishtar or considered to be her Venus aspect. The earliest, and among the best, evidence for the association of the Goddess of the Night with Ishtar is a passage from a Middle Hittite oracle investigation, in which two local hypostases of the Goddess of the Night are the subject of inquiry immediately following an inquiry concerning one Ishtar hypostasis and immediately preceding an inquiry concerning four more Ishtars, and finally, an inquiry aimed at ascertaining if any Ishtar at all is angry.⁹

A further support for the association is the fact that the Goddess of the Night and a deity named Pirinkir are worshipped as a dyad of sorts in the Expansion, while the names Ishtar and Pirinkir are used seemingly interchangeably in a set of rituals in which the incantations are set down in *babili*, that is, in the language of Babylon, Akkadian.¹⁰ This fits nicely with an incantation found in the Expansion in which the Goddess of the Night, apparently along with Pirinkir, is evoked (§25) "from Akkade, from Babylon, from Susa, from Elam (and) from the Hur.sag.kalam.ma in the city that you^(fem. sg.) love." Akkade, Babylon and the temple

precinct Hur.sag.kalam.ma in Kish are of course well-known cult centers of Ishtar, while Susa in Elam was the original place of worship during the second half of the third millennium of Pinenkir, the progenitor of the Anatolian Pirinkir.¹¹

Also supporting the association between the Goddess of the Night and Ishtar is the hermaphroditic character of both. This trait for the Goddess of the Night is best seen, again, in the Expansion, in which she is provided with sets of clothing and utensils of both genders (§8), and in which she is addressed as essentially female.¹² The hermaphroditic character of Ishtar need not be further detailed.¹³

Hence, if one considers only the evidence mentioned thus far, one could confidently assert that the Goddess of the Night in Kizzuwatna and Hatti is to be identified with Ishtar, and to what aspect of Ishtar could the epithet "Deity of the Night" refer if not the Venus star? However, this ignores some evidence that might cause one to temper, though not necessarily reject, these conclusions.

First, it is actually quite uncertain that the epithet "Deity of the Night" refers to the Venus star, an assumption based solely on the association of the Goddess of the Night with Ishtar,¹⁴ who indeed is known in Mesopotamia to be seen in the Venus star.¹⁵ The Venus aspect is actually nowhere attested for Ishtar, the Goddess of the Night or Pirinkir in Anatolia, except in the list of oath deities in the Suppiluliuma-Shattiwaza Treaty. Here, however, a closer look suggests that the usage ^dIštar ^{MUL}Dil-bat, "Ishtar, the Venus star," may be rather Mittannian than Hittite.¹⁶ Further, the Sumerogram DINGIR GE₆, when found in Anatolian personal names, represents not a star, but the moon, and alternates with ^d30, generally indicating in Anatolian context the Luwian name of the moon-god, Arma.¹⁷ This evidence should not be neglected when considering the nature of the Goddess of the Night, as odd as it may seem for a deity apparently associated with Ishtar.

Second, the Goddess of the Night shows one feature that Ishtar, at least as she is known in Mesopotamia, never elicits, namely an infernal aspect.¹⁸ This is seen from the fact that she is evoked up out of the netherworld through an offering pit dug in the earth, a rite typical of, though not restricted to, the heterogeneous religious culture of Kizzuwatna. Interestingly, Ishtar is also attested in one text passage of Kizzuwatnean ilk as being evoked up from the underworld in similar fashion,¹⁹ and hence, while this feature does not exclude an association or identity of the Goddess of the Night and Ishtar, she would certainly be a deity who possesses some unique characteristics in comparison with Ishtar known from Mesopotamia.

Further insight into the nature and development of the Goddess of the Night and her relationship to Ishtar is gained by a diachronic analysis of the texts concerning her and Ishtar of Samuha.²⁰ It will be remembered that the Goddess of the Night divided in Kizzuwatna and "adplanted" in Samuha by Tudhaliya I (I/II) is often taken by modern researchers as the progenitor of, or identical with, Ishtar of Samuha.

The first result yielded by a diachronic analysis is that the Goddess of the Night is well attested in the mid to late Middle Hittite period, with an active cult relating to her, while Ishtar of Samuha is absent from the textual sources.²¹ At the same time there is evidence, in the form of the Middle Hittite oracle investigation mentioned above, that the Goddess of the Night of Samuha was grouped with the Ishtar deities even during this early period. Still, she seems to have maintained a separate identity, never being confused with, or subsumed by, Ishtar, and in the oracular investigation she is referred to by her epithet "Deity of the Night" even while listed among the other Ishtars. The scribe could, after all, simply have written "Ishtar of Samuha" if there were no difference between the two deities.

Moreover, there is already at this point in the latter part of the Middle Hittite period an Ishtar to be found in Samuha, but this is Ishtar of Taminga,²² who was worshipped in Samuha, perhaps because there was no hypostasis there who was considered a real Ishtar deity. Was it this deity, rather than the Goddess of the Night, who eventually became Ishtar of Samuha? When exactly in the latter part of the Middle Hittite period Ishtar of Taminga was brought to Samuha is impossible to ascertain, but if she were already there during the reign of Tudhaliya I (I/II), why would he have brought the Goddess of the Night to Samuha from Kizzuwatna if she were simply another Ishtar or some aspect thereof? Conversely, if the Goddess of the

Night was the first to have been imported to Samuha, why would Ishtar of Taminga have then been brought to Samuha if there were already an Ishtar resident there? This seems to suggest that there was sufficient distinction during this period between Ishtar and the Goddess of the Night to warrant both being worshipped separately in the same town.

The Middle Hittite period thus provides ample data, as well as unanswered questions, concerning the Goddess of the Night. In the New Hittite period, in contrast, there is little evidence for further worship of the Goddess of the Night. Most of the activity concerned with her consists of copying and cataloguing the Middle Hittite texts already extant. Ishtar of the Field and Ishtar of Samuha, in contrast, experience a flurry of cult activity during the reigns of Mursili II and his son Hattusili III, respectively, who venerated these Ishtar hypostases as their patron deities. Hattusili III even further “split” Ishtar of Samuha in order to found an additional cult for her in the town of Urikina.²³ The copying and cataloguing activity relating to the Goddess of the Night during the reigns of Mursili II and Hattusili III seems to be connected to the rise in prominence of Ishtar of the Field and Ishtar of Samuha and may have been part of some kind of “background research” into the nature and history of these Ishtar hypostases.

This activity even included a reform of the cult of the Goddess of the Night in Samuha by Mursili II, who felt that the worship of the deity had become corrupted since the days of his forefather, Tudhaliya I (I/II). In the incipit of Mursili’s Reform we read:²⁴

When my forefather, Tudhaliya, Great King, split the Goddess of the Night from the temple of the Goddess of the Night in Kizzuwatna and worshipped her separately in a temple in Samuha, those rituals and obligations which he determined in the temple of the Goddess of the Night – it came about, however, that the wooden tablet scribes and the temple personnel began incessantly to alter them – I, Mursili, Great King, have re-edited them from the tablets.

This text thus gives the impression that the cult of the Goddess of the Night received new impetus at this point during the reign of Mursili II, if, that is, she is not simply to be equated by this time with his Ishtar of the Field. If indeed Mursili’s Reform indicates a reinvigorated cult, it may have been a last gasp of sorts for the active and separate cult of the Goddess of the Night, for in the great offering lists for Ishtar of Samuha dating to the time of Hattusili III,²⁵ the Goddess of the Night is not even mentioned, though the entire entourage of Ishtar is listed, including Pirinkir, along with many deities who can hardly be said to have belonged to Ishtar’s inner circle. It is difficult to imagine that the Goddess of the Night, who had formerly enjoyed such prominence, would not even have been mentioned if indeed she maintained a separate identity and cult. Hence, the “revival” of interest in the Goddess of the Night during this period might be largely a scribal phenomenon related to the interest in the Ishtar deities of Mursili and Hattusili rather than a genuine revival of an active cult.

It is also during this period, and up to the end of the Empire – and only during this late period – that the signs DINGIR GE₆ are used in personal names to represent the Luwian Moon-god, Arma.²⁶ How this is to be explained remains a mystery. No known Ishtar hypostasis, to the best of my knowledge, has a real lunar aspect. Neither would it otherwise be conceivable for a sign/signs representing Ishtar to be used in personal names to signify the Moon-god, especially since Ishtar is essentially female, the Moon-god male. Yet the epithet “Deity of the Night” would clearly be a more apt description of the moon than any other nocturnal body, and this should be remembered when considering whether or not the Goddess of the Night might be the Venus aspect of Ishtar. Are we to assume that the Goddess of the Night really was a lunar deity, despite her obvious affiliation with Ishtar, but that this aspect remained undetectable throughout the Middle Hittite and early New Hittite periods, only to surface in personal names so late in Hittite history? This seems somehow unlikely. Did the Goddess of the Night at this late stage of her evolution begin to develop a lunar aspect? This seems no more probable than the first suggestion. Does, then, the alternation signify no more than a playful graphic innovation, by which the scribes sought to represent in a descriptive manner the moon-god, the dominant deity of the night sky, without intending to transfer with the graphic representation the person

and nature of the Goddess of the Night? Were the New Hittite scribes who employed the grapheme DINGIR GE₆ to represent the moon-god Arma completely unaware of the existence of a Goddess of the Night associated with Ishtar? If so, perhaps no further theological implications need be derived from the phenomenon. Unfortunately, this explanation is no more convincing than the others, especially since at least one scribe responsible for the writing of the personal names was a scribe of Puduhepa, queen of Hattusili, and hence, presumably would have been aware of the nature and history of the Goddess of the Night.

In conclusion, the dividing and “adplanting” of the Goddess of the Night from one cultural sphere to another represent just one stage in the development and evolution of this deity, much of which should perhaps be left open for debate rather than glossed over by a hasty identification with Ishtar or an aspect thereof.

NOTES

- 1 See the most recent edition in Miller (2004, 272–312) as well as the translation by Collins (1997).
- 2 This may be contrasted with the oft-quoted passage in which Puduhepa, in her prayer to the Sun-goddess of Arinna, seems to imply that the “Sun-goddess of Arinna” and “Hebat” are simply two names for the same deity (KUB 21.27 i 4–6; see Singer 2002, 102): “In Hatti you have given yourself the name Sun-goddess of Arinna; but the land which you made, that of the cedar, there you gave yourself the name Hebat.”
- 3 E.g., Lebrun (1976, 16); Wegner (1981, 163–65); Haas (1994, 352–53); similarly, Beckman (1999, 30).
- 4 The most thorough study to of Ishtar as known from Anatolia is that of Wegner (1981).
- 5 For argumentation in favor of Tudhaliya I (I/II) being the one referred to in Mursili’s Reform, see Miller (2004, 350–56).
- 6 For this text, which could be dubbed “Mursili’s Reform of the Cult of the Goddess of the Night” (henceforth “Mursili’s Reform”), see Miller (2004, 312–19).
- 7 For the argumentation concerning this point, see Miller (2004, 357–62).
- 8 For an alternative opinion, see Mouton (2004, 88).
- 9 KBo 16.97+KBo 40.48 rev. 12–32. The deities in the order of their appearance are: *IŠTAR* of Nineveh; the Goddess of the Night of Samuha; the Goddess of the Night of Lahhurama; *IŠTAR* of Nineveh; *IŠTAR* of Hattarina; *IŠTAR* of his mother; *IŠTAR* of his father; any other *IŠTAR*. (The pronoun of “his mother/father” in the second and third to last inquiries presumably refers to the king who instigated the oracle inquiry.) See edition and involved discussion of terminology in Schuol (1994, 73–124, 247–304) and evaluation of its historical contents and setting by de Martino (1992) and Klinger (1998, 108–111); see also Miller (2004, 355, 365, 379–80).
- 10 No edition of the *babili* texts has yet been published, a desideratum that Beckman (2002, 35), in his discussion of the texts, has announced he plans to fulfill.
- 11 See Beckman (1999); Kühne (1993, 245–46).
- 12 See discussion in Wegner (1981, 163–64).
- 13 See, e.g., the various contributions in *NIN: Journal of Gender Studies in Antiquity* 1 (2000); Groneberg (1986); Wegner (1981, 46–55).
- 14 It should be noted here that the inclusion of a *wannupattalla/i* “star” symbol among the accoutrements of the Deity of the Night in the Expansion text (§§2, 17) cannot necessarily be used as support for the equation since the exact meaning of the word *wannupattalla/i* is yet to be determined. See discussion in Riemschneider (2004, 279); cf. Kronasser (1969, 313), Kümmel (1967, 370). It should in any case be noted that *mul.á.gú.zi.ga* in RS 25.421, 13’ (Ug. V, No. 169) is fully restored, and therefore cannot lend any credence to the equation, as implied in *HW* 3. Erg., s.v., and followed elsewhere.
- 15 Pirinkir is also associated with the Venus star at Emar; see Beckman (1999, 27–28).
- 16 See KBo 1.1 rev. 45’, 57’, KBo 1.2 rev. 22’–23’, 33’, KBo 1.3(+)KUB 3.17 rev. 42’; for the distribution of the attestations and further discussion, see Miller (2004, 391 n. 622).
- 17 See Miller (2004, 370–73).
- 18 The possibility exists that this feature might have accrued to Ishtar already in northern Syria, judging from the entry “*a-na* ^dINANNA *ša a-bi* ...” in the *zuku*-festival text from Emar (see Emar VI/3, No. 373, 92’; Fleming 2000, 186–87 and n. 200, with references), but the meaning of *abi* in this context is disputed. I wish to thank Yori Cohen, Tel Aviv, for directing my attention to this attestation and to his discussion of it (2003, 271).

- 19 KUB 15.35+KBo 2.9 i 21–55; see Miller (2004, 374–76).
- 20 See Miller (2004, 378–90).
- 21 For a discussion of the one possible exception, KUB 32.130, see Miller (2004, 385–87), where it is maintained that this text should likely be dated to the early New Hittite period.
- 22 See ChS I/3-1, No. 12 and discussion in Miller (2004, 384, n. 600).
- 23 KUB 21.17 ii 5–8; see Miller (2004, 360, n. 514).
- 24 KUB 32.133 i 1–7; see Miller (2004, 312).
- 25 E.g., KUB 27.1 (ChS I/3-1, Nr. 1); see also KUB 6.45++ i 43–45 (see Singer 1996, 10, 33, 54).
- 26 See Miller (2004, 370–73).

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