

The Cult of Nerik – Revisited

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Nearly 30 years ago Volkert Haas published his study about the city of Nerik, the central cult-place in northern Anatolia in Hittite times. This was the first monographic study about a local Hittite cultic centre. In the meantime not only the epigraphic material has substantially increased but also we have learned a lot more about the tradition of Hittite texts in general. As a consequence the knowledge about the historical situation in this area has continually grown. In view of the fact that my colleague Rainer Czichon and myself have been pursuing a survey project now for two years focused on the area of Vezirköprü and the Höyük Tepe of Oymaağaç it may be interesting to re-evaluate the textual material about Nerik and the cult of the city.

At the time Volkert Haas collected the material about the cult of Nerik the historical background seemed rather clear and therefore his interpretation of the textual situation was consequent. Apart from the isolated mention of Nerik¹ in the old Hittite version of the Hittite laws, it looks as if there was no documentation about Nerik up to the middle Hittite times when Arnuwanda I. complained about the loss of the city together with other Hittite settlements in the northern-central area. In this context, Arnuwanda laid stress especially on the rude actions of the so-called Kashkaens against the cult institutions, the destruction of temples and overturn of statues of gods.

Not until the times of Hattušili III. Nerik becomes again the centre of Hittite interest. So it seems obvious that all textual references to the cult of the city, i.e. the ritual tablets have to be dated to this phase of Hittite history that is the 13th. century. Regarding this history of research it is not surprising that V. Haas denied in his above mentioned study explicitly a date prior as the government of Hattušili III. for this textual material acceptable. He wrote: „nach dem historischen Bild, als auch dem Befund, daß unsere Texte weder sprachlich noch graphische Kriterien aufweisen, die eine solch früher Datierung rechtfertigen.“¹. And the background of such a dating of the textual material it seems rather obvious, for example, that a Hittite “prince” (DUMU.LUGAL; z.B. KBo 11.45+) often mentioned in different cultic-rituals referring to Nerik has to be identified with the son of Hattušili III. i.e. the king’s son later reigned as Tuthaliya IV. (Haas 1970, 42). Another good example for such consequences, for instance is that it seems very reasonable to assume that in the incantation ritual IBoT 2.121 (=CTH 676.1), in which the humiliation of the city of Nerik is mentioned, is indeed an incantation ritual to be performed in the city after its reconquering from the Kaškeans (?; Vs. 8’). According to this historical image as well as to the interpretation of the purpose of the ritual – its “Sitz im Leben” – was the purification of the city and especially of the religious institutions so important for the

¹ Cf. Haas 1970: 41; but see n. 3 referring to the provision of H. Otten in KBo 16, p. VI in respect of some possible old Hittite *MELQETU*-fragments, but in Otten’s list is KBo 16.81, the fragment, Haas refers to, not included: „Typisch alter Duktus“ refers only to KBo 16 numbers 71-73, 76, 80 and 84. KBo 16.81 is indeed a later copy.

kingship of the Hittites from the sins against the Hittite gods: The very beginning of the cult-restoration undertaken by Hattušili III. in the north-central area². However, the cuneiform tablet of the ritual is very fragmentary and it is nearly impossible to reconstruct the original function/content of the text. The only hint is the Hittite word *luri-*, maybe used here in the sense of “humiliation”, but a translation in the more general sense of “loss” or something like that is also very likely. But leaving that point aside – it is very clear indeed that this fragment forms part of an old Hittite original³. So – as regards content – every interpretation of this ritual in the context of a cult restoration in the 13th century is definitely impossible! And there are a few more texts about the Cult of Nerik deeply rooted in older traditions than that of the late Hittite times.

The outlines of the history of Nerik and the historiographically relevant sources are well known but a serious problem still is that we don't know the exact location of only one of all the Hittite centres in the northern region. What we can say is that the most important cities like Hakmiš, Nerik or Zalpa lay between the Hittite capital Hattuša in Central-Anatolia and the Black Sea coast with the mouth of the Kizilirmak, the Hittite Maraššanta, near modern Samsun⁴.

A few years after the reign of Telipinu the Hittite kings faced more and more conflicts with the so-called Kashkaens in this region of northern Anatolia culminating in the loss of many Hittite cities under Arnuwanda I in the 15th century and the Kashkaens kept threatening the Hittites although almost every Hittite king reiterates military campaigns against them – mostly with only temporary value. For example, Nerik is mentioned only once in the Deeds of Šuppiluliuma I (frag. 50) and in the whole corpus of the annals of Muršili II there is only one insecure attestation. So, conventionally, it is assumed, that between Arnuwanda I and Hattušili III the city of Nerik laid outside the reach of the Hittite influence until Hattušili III succeeded in restoring the political control far away to the north beyond the city of Nerik.

With this information in mind I will turn now to cuneiform sources about the cult of Nerik. Following Haas the *Catalogue des textes hittites* collects under the numbers 671 to 678 the relevant textual documentation. But this is only of limited use because most of the fragments are classified under very general headers.

² For this interpretation see Haas 1970: 39 and for a transliteration and translation of the ritual see op.cit., 134ff. Very typical for older ritual texts like these are the mentioning of the name Huzziya of the „man of the Weathergod“.

³ In my opinion the dating of the manuscript as „OS“ is rather clear; the classification as „cult of Pirwa, NH“ in CHD P, 319a should be erroneous; cf. CHD P, 274: „OS“.

⁴ I will not go further into the discussion of the different location proposals – for Nerik I follow for ex. Dinçol - Yakar 1974 or Forlanini 1986, Öymağaç Höyük looks like a good candidate. The identification of the city of Zalpa in the Hittite texts with the mount near İkiztepe (Bilgi 1998) looks rather plausible, but there is an Old-Assyrian attestation (kt n/k 10) of a transport of an amount of lapis lazuli from Mama to Hattuš via Zalpa; on this problematic evidence for a location of the city of Zalpa as far north on the Black Sea shore cf. Derksen 2001: 59f. See also Klinger, in press.

More interesting is CTH 674, the *purulliyas*-festival group. We know very well that the so called *purulliyas*-festival has its roots in the old Hittite times maybe earlier⁵ – so the obvious thing to do is to search for festival texts or fragments in old Hittite script. But as far as I can see, there is nearly no fragment which could be identified as belonging to this group of texts. But what we do have is at least one little fragment in clear old script interesting in this respect. The fragment KBo 20.23 does not only mentions the city of Nerik but also other important cities in the north of the Hittite capital Hattuša like Hakmiš⁶ – the background of the text is very probable a cultic journey of the Hittite kings and we knew very well that during the ceremonies of the *purulliyas*-festival the Hittite king travelled between different cities – it's very possible though that this fragment is indeed belonging to a very early stage of the textual tradition about the *purulliyas*-festival – but this is only one possibility.

The *purulliyas*-festival has a very special position in the cultic calendar of the Hittites and stands in close connection to the Hittite kingship. The mythic story about the dragon Illuyanka could be interpreted as an aetiological legitimation of the invention of kingship and the festival itself is read as a spring-festival but that's not so sure. But very secure are the close ties between the Hittite kings and the festival respectively the place where the mythological drama is located – namely the city of Nerik. Maybe the story about the dragon Illuyanka and his fight with the weather god, the defeat of the dragon with human help and not forgetting the fact that we have two different versions of the story on one and the same tablet all these different aspects are widely discussed – regarding the focus of my paper here I would only like to stress the locations mentioned in this connection that are besides Nerik Hakmiš and Hattuša too⁷.

Regarding the importance of the festival, however, it is a curious point that we have a reference in a Hittite shelf catalogue about a version of the *purulliyas*-festival comprising 32 tablets⁸. In clear contrast to this amount of (hypothetical) tablets residing originally in the tablet-collections of the Hittite capital is the marginal representation within the findings in Hattuša.

Because there are only a few, mostly rather fragmentary parts of tablets which could be attributed to CTH 674, in sum 7 fragments, two of them still unpublished Bo-numbers⁹, it is impossible to get an impression of the course of events, especially of this cult-festival. Maybe the *purulliyas*-festival is more a typical form of a ceremony or a special kind of

⁵ There is on one hand the obvious Hittic background of the festival itself and on the other hand the Old-Hittite origin of the Myth of Illuyanka (CTH 321), i.e. the cult legend of the *purulliyas*-festival. For the name of the festival in general see J. Tischler, *HEG* P, 664ff. s.v.

⁶ The fragment mentions also the town of Taštariša (Vs. I 5').

⁷ This is not the case with Ziḫanta, against the interpretation of the colophon of KBo 32.103 in *CHD* P., sv., 392a; see Klinger 1996: 282f. n. 74.

⁸ KUB 30.42 I 5-8; see now Dardano 2006: 22f., and 30f. with the attested colophons, and with slightly different translation *CHD* Š/I, 203a.

⁹ Maybe the reason for this crucial situation is that the rich documentation of the festival texts about the god of Hittian origin Tetešhapi is in fact part of the *purulliyas*-festival; see Pecchioli Daddi: 1987, 367-9 and Haas 1988: 284-98.

sacrifice. This is the impression one can get from the following passage in the Annals of Muršili II.:

“But when it became spring – because I had celebrated the festival of *purulli*, the great [festival], for the Stormgod of Hatti and for the stormgod of Zip[landa], but I had not celebrated the festival of *purulli*, the great festival, in the *hešta*-house for Lelwani – I came back up to Hattuša, and in the *hešta*-House I celebrated the festival of *purulli*, the great festival, for Lelwani” (KBo 2.5 III 38-45¹⁰).

Muršili II. makes a difference particularly between *purulliyas*-festivals or rites for different gods, which could be executed in different locations¹¹. Whatever that will mean in detail – there is no doubt that we have to reckon with a very long tradition of the festival descriptions – this shows the possible restoration of the colophon of fragment KBo 30.37¹² mentioning the “EZEN₄ *purulli*yaš in Nerik”. In my opinion this fragment could be dated as part of an old Hittite tablet. And in addition to the palaeographic dating this text gives us also a few references with regards to the contents. Mentioned is again a “man of the Weather god” – in this case with the name “Tatta”¹³.

Even with these scanty references it can be taken for granted that the *purulliyas*-festival existed in old Hittite times. But, as it is well known, our version of the Illuyanka text is written down not until the reign of Hattušili III., because the writer of the tablet is Piḫa-ziti, a well-known scribe of the mid 13th. Century¹⁴. Recently, V. Haas published his interpretation of this tablet as a kind of protocol. He thinks that Kella, the priest who is named in the myth of Illuyanka as one of the important actors in the accompanying rituals, dictated the whole story to the scribe¹⁵. But this interpretation seems less plausible to me – the original Illuyanka-myth is clearly formulated in old Hittite language and the actual version shows the characteristic features of a moderately modernized text typical of the process of copying an older tablet. It seems very difficult to assume that someone was able to dictate a verbal tradition producing such a combination of older and younger features of writing traditions. If the priest Kella was a person living in the 13. Century B.C., then all parts of the myth of Illuyanka, in which he is acting, would have to be young, all other parts in contrast should be old – but this is clearly not the case. There is no reason to believe that the whole Illuyanka-story too was not an integral part of the *purulliyas*-festival since the old Hittite times. Even the small fragments we can attribute to the *purulliyas*-festival description show at least one or other linguistic evidence of an early composition¹⁶. In my opinion we can proceed from two things: first that the complete group of texts CTH

674 is of old Hittite origin, but represent mostly later copies. Secondly, since old Hittite times Hittite kings celebrated rituals in Nerik and that there was a special Cult of Nerik even from the beginning of the Hittite history known to us.

If this holds true for the religious or ritual texts – what about the textual material with a completely different background but hitherto interpreted in the same way as for example the incantation ritual mentioned earlier. In his study of the Cult of Nerik, V. Haas also treated the economical aspects of the cult restoration. He assembled a group of texts in order to prove that the reorganisation of the province of Nerik not only has a religious but also a strong administrative aspect. These texts are now filed under CTH 677, mainly supply lists (“Rationenlisten”), with the exception of KUB 31.57, which is filed under CTH 676 “Fragments d’une cérémonie de purification”¹⁷.

In this tablet, the “administrator (AGRIG) of the city of Kaštama” is named as the functionary who is responsible to the king in Hattuša¹⁸ for the economical restoration of the territory regained from the Kashkaens – with Nerik as the most important city in the whole region. Taken into account these circumstances the huge amount of contributions, listed in the text, seems rather plausible. Several times 1.000 breads of different kinds are mentioned; furthermore 300 or 400 breads which have to be supplied umpteen times. The text also mentions the name of a certain Huzziya – a Huzziya is also the name known to us as “man of the Stormgod” (KBo 25.9 Vs. I 4). So, it is not surprising but fits very well that KUB 31.57 is indeed written in new Hittite script but shows obvious signs of old Hittite language so that consequently the composition of the text has to be dated to the Old Hittite period¹⁹.

This result, indeed, is backed by further lists of supply: another fragment, treated by V. Haas, IBoT 2.93 represents a new Hittite copy. But there is a duplicate of this text, KBo 25.79+, which represents clearly an old Hittite original²⁰. This fragment is a join to another fragment, KUB 35.126, also mentioned by Haas. Furthermore, another fragment, of this group, KUB 34.88, can be regarded as a tablet written in middle Hittite script.²¹ So it becomes evident that the origins of more than one of the texts collected in this group are much older than supposed inspite of fitting apparently well into the concept of the politics of renewal of Hattušili III. Certainly an explanation is lacking why such seemingly administrative texts were copied, but the listed quantities points out the importance of the cult of Nerik as well as the early roots of this cult in the organization of the Northern Black Sea region by the Hittite kingdom of Hattuša.

And we can add here another point: As we have seen there is a clear evidences that various texts about the cult of Nerik are old Hittite originals or later copies of Old Hittite

¹⁰ See Götze 1933: 189ff. and the comment CHD L-N, 108a.

¹¹ Another example: KUB 48.119 Vs. 5: in Hakmiš.

¹² See Groddek: 2002, 44.

¹³ Tatta, “man of the weathergod”, is also mentioned in the Old-Hittite original HT 95; KUB 28.98 Rs. IV 2’ff. mentions Tatta, the man of the weathergod of Nerik, calling Hattic words.

¹⁴ For the name Piḫa-ziti, mentioned in cuneiform texts and on seals see Herbordt 2005: 169 (No. 312).

¹⁵ Haas 2006: 97: “Die beiden Fassungen wurden von Kella, einem Priester des Wettergottes der Stadt Nerik, dem Schreiber Piḫa-ziti in der Zeit Hattušili III. diktiert”.

¹⁶ See, for example, an allativ (*tunnakišna*) in KBo 30.82 I 10’, part of a 6th tablet of the series; transliteration Groddek 2002: 118 Nr. 82.

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¹⁷ Besides the lists of (cultic) supplies this fragment mentions also different ritual activities; for a translation of KUB 31.57 Vs. I see Haas 1970: 21; for a discussion of the meaning of the Hittite term *huganna* in this context rather for an action performed on the cereals than “slaughtering” cf. Hoffner 2001: 206 c. n. 33.

¹⁸ See Haas 1970: 20f.

¹⁹ For CTH 676.1.A = IBoT 2.121, another fragment in OS, see above.

²⁰ Cf. Neu 1980: 156ff., 233; Haas 1970: 121, 124.

²¹ Cf. CHD P, 11b: “MS”.

compositions. But what about other supposed classical new Hittite Nerik texts, supposed classical new Hittite texts under this perspective. Are the impressive texts about Nerik so far without any doubts ascribed to Hattušili III. – like for instance the ritual KUB 36.89 for the weathergod of Nerik with its invocation or prayer-like passages – contemporary compositions? Or is it possible that one or another of these texts is also the result of a long text tradition²²?

It is remarkable that the Hittite kings showed continuous efforts to keep the cult of the city alive even after they had lost the city and the whole region to the Kashkaens – and they tried to do this often in the Hattian language too – a language almost dead in the 13th century – but similar to the cult of the city of Zalpa – the Hattian component plays an important role in the cult of the city of Nerik. In old Hittite times, the Hattian language was present in the cultic rituals of Nerik, but it isn't sure how long Hattic was a living language. But we find here and there Hattic words in the ritual or festival texts, as well as complete recitations or songs in the Hattian language. For example the women of Nerik sing a song in Hattic during a ritual to be performed in the city of Ziplanda²³.

To sum up at this moment we can point out that there are a lot of hints or maybe proofs that the cult of the city of Nerik shows a continuous tradition since the old Hittite times down to the 13th century. The question is, in which places were that rituals documented in the different texts from old through middle until new Hittite times performed? We know very well that the city of Hakmiš served as a home for the Nerik cults since the reign of Arnuwanda I. – we don't know how long this situation lasted. If we trust the assertions of Hattušili III, we have to assume that indeed he was the first Hittite king who was able to re-establish the traditional cult in its original place. Or – in his own words:

“The city of Nerik was like a stone (or: a shell) in the sea, it was under deep water. I brought the city of Nerik up like a stone out of deep water. I picked it up for the sake of the storm-god of Nerik, your son. I resettled the land of Nerik and I rebuild the city of Nerik.”²⁴.

He rebuild the city – in fact this would mean that Nerik or at least the Hittite temples could have been ruins for many, many years, eventually more than one or two centuries – like Arnuwanda I. has pointed it out more than a century ago, when he complains about the deeds of the Kashkaens KUB 17.21+ II 26f. (erg. nach B II 10-12)²⁵:

²² Besides the view words in Hattic (cf. KUB 36.69 Vs. 10) there are different elements which remain ideas and texts from old Hittite and/or Hattian background like, for example, the concept of the labarna as “administrator” (^{LU}maniyahhatalla-) of the country; cf. Archi 1979: 29ff.

²³ Cf. the festival text about a festival in Nerik with the women of Nerik singing a song in Hattian language (KUB 20.10 Rs. IV 9'ff.; cf. CHD Š/I, 53a: “OH/NS”); another example is KUB 28.99, 10'ff: interesting here is the writing LUGAL-te in these lines – this shows that the writer was aware of the fact that the word for “king” in Hattic is katte.

²⁴ KUB 21.19 + III 14f.; cf. Haas 1970: 7 c. n. 5, translation after Singer 2002: 99; for the meaning of Hittite (^{NA4})aku- see op.cit. 109 n. 5; cf. Klinger, 2008, n. 25.

²⁵ KUB 17.21+ Vs. II (restored and emended after KUB 31.124+ II 10ff.): (26) nu ke-e-da-aš A-[(NA KUR.KUR^{HLA})] šu-me-en-za-an ŠA <E^{HLA} DINGIR^{MES}-KU-NU ku-e e-eš-ta na-at LÚ^{MES} URU Ga-aš-ga ar-ḫa pi-ip-pi-ir nu šu-me-en-za-an ŠA> DINGIR^{MES} ALAM^{MES} (27) ar-ḫa ḫu-u[(l-li-ir)].

“The temples you had in all of these lands, the Kashkaens have tired down and your statues, oh gods, they have smashed”.

The list of lost lands in this text of Arnuwanda starts with “the region of Nerik” and continues with a few others – and one of those names in the list is the city of Hurna. But when Muršili II. some years later conquers the city of Hurna and defeats the Kashkaens the situation there is very different then what is expected after the assertions of Arnuwanda. Muršili found the temples of the city in good condition, even the temple personal was still there and practiced the cult of the Stormgod of Hurna²⁶: “The temple of the weathergod of Hurna, which was still there, I spared and they did not sack it. Even the servants of the god, which were still there, I didn't do any harm too”.

But what about the situation of Nerik – was it really true that “since the days of the king Hantili”, as Hattušili III. told us, the city laid in ruins and that he himself succeeded in capturing the city like he told us in a well known characteristic passage of one of his prayers: “Those who were former kings, to whom you, O Sun-goddess of Arinna, had given weapons, kept defeating the surrounding enemy lands, but no one tried to succeed in taking the city of Nerik. But he who is your servant, Hattušili (...) Yet, it was up to him to take the city of Nerik.”²⁷.

Indeed there are strong hints or even more than hints that we mustn't take this claim/assertion at face value. There is a very interesting text regarding the restoration of Nerik, KUB 21.8²⁸, attributed with certainty to Hattušili III. In col. II there is an unexpected passage about the relations between predecessors of Hattušili and the city of Nerik. Reconstructing the fragmentary lines I follow to a large extent the edition of this text given by Volkert Haas but my interpretation differs significantly from his translation. The decisive point is the meaning of the verb *ḫuwantalai-*, which Haas left untranslated. Haas wrote²⁹:

“Nach diesem Bericht gelangen Muršili II. und auch Muwatalli bis vor die Stadt, wo sie wohl dem Wettergott von Nerik ihre Referenz erweisen. Da die Einwohner, wie so oft beim nahen des hethitischen Heeres, in die Berge geflohen sein dürften, können ihnen die Könige keinen anderen Schaden zufügen, als die die Stadt umgebenden Ländereien zu verwüsten”.

But the Hittite text says nothing about the flight of the inhabitants – moreover the sense of the verb *ḫuwantalai-* becomes rather evident on the basis of the accompanying Hittite phrase *idalu natta takkeš-* “don't do any harm” – though the meaning of *ḫuwantalai-* should be “let off, spare” or something like that. Very elusive in my opinion is the comparison with a passage from the annals of Muršili II (see n. 26).

In both cases the same verb in two different forms is used – in the annals of Muršili II. in the form *ḫultalai-* and a somewhat extended form with “Glossenkeilen” later in the

²⁶ KUB 19.37 III 42' ff.: (42) (...) I-NA^{URU} Hur-na-ma-aš-ša-an ku-it É^{dU} URU Hur-na (43) EGIR-an e-eš-ta na-at ḫu-ul-da-la-a-nu-un (44) na-at Ú-UL ša-ru-wa-e-er ARAD^{MES} DINGIR^{LIM}-ja-aš-ša-an (45) ku-i-e-eš EGIR-an e-šir na-aš ar-ḫa da-la-aḫ-ḫu-un (46) na-at e-šir-pát (...)

²⁷ Translation after Singer 2002: 102.

²⁸ Cf. Haas 1970: 10f.; Cornil - Lebrun 1972: 17ff.

²⁹ Haas 1970: 10f.

Hattušili-text as *ḫuwantalai*-.³⁰ The similarity suggests that Hattušili III. – maybe – made use of a version of the annals of his father. But – besides this – following this text it is an obvious fact that even Muršili II and Muwatalli II not only reached Nerik during military campaigns but entered the city itself and practiced there a ritual or a cult-festival in favour of the Stormgod of Nerik:

KUB 21.8 II 1'f.: ^mMuršili / [LUGAL.GAL INA ^{URU}Ner]ik pait / nu-za DINGIR^{LUM} i[yat]).

The deep respect for the gods of Nerik, especially the Stormgod of the city led the Hittite kings show mercy against the inhabitants of the city disregarding the general enmity of the region in which Nerik was laying. But this respect didn't hold true for the surroundings of the city, which had been destroyed on the command of the Hittite kings as our source confirm. Obviously even the precursors of Hattušili III estimated the city of Nerik as so important that they didn't dare to attack neither the city and nor its institutions.

Keeping this historical text in mind, we are now able to understand better some information given by a completely different textual tradition. Through this material we have the chance to gain additional support for our interpretation of the text cited above and its resulting historical implications. With these other sources we are able to verify that KUB 21.8 didn't deal with a somehow isolated historical event.

Recently Joost Hazenbos (2003) confirmed in his monographic study about the Hittite cult inventories the dating of the text KUB 42.100 to the time of Tuthaliya IV, whose name is not mentioned in the preserved parts of the tablet. The text concentrates on the cult of Nerik and deals exclusively with equipment of the cultic ritual for the different main gods of the city and their cultic procedures. Mentioned are for example the storm-god of Nerik, Telipinu, Zašhapuna and some more – all names well known from the other documentation about the cult of Nerik in general.

Important for us is that in his overview Tuthaliya IV is referring to the historical development of the actual situation in Nerik. In this context he mentions not only his father but also his grandfather and the only one he is mentioned by name his uncle Muwatalli and their efforts – donations of statues or cultic vessels and so on. As far as I can see there are no reasons to doubt that the “father of the majesty” or “the grandfather of the king” in the tablet KUB 42.100 are identical with the kings Muršili II and Hattušili III and Muwatalli is Muwatalli II – this means that with this administrative text we have an additional evidence for our interpretation of the historical text from the times of Hattušili III discussed above.

In respect of our interest this text is of great importance in many ways: it shows beyond any doubts that the temple or the temples in the city of Nerik and different cultic institutions are active long before the times of Hattušili III. As early as the reign of Muwatalli II the texts listed regular monthly festivals and there is an additional paragraph

³⁰ Cf. J. Puhvel HED ḫ 429 s.v.; for the alternation of *l/n* before a dental stop see Melchert 1994: 171. In my opinion “to spare of” makes also good sense for the *ḫu!watallait* in KBo 4.8 Rs. III 2, because it is Muršili II himself, who is “spared”, but not his wife; but cf. Hoffner 2000: 74b., also with a different translation for KUB 21.8 II 4f.

for the time of Muršili II but in a very fragmentary condition so that details are impossible to detect. But a later part of the tablet registers in context with the cult of the Stormgod of heaven an older tablet with different festivals going back to the time of “the grandfather of my majesty”, that is Muršili II because Tuthaliya IV eagerly tries to lead it away. Above that the texts gives us a lot of concrete details about the arranging of the cult. For example we learn that it was Muwatalli II, who offers a new statue of the god Halki. The statue is placed in front of the statue of the Stormgod of Nerik in his temple. Different cultic equipments are mentioned and descriptions of the inner rooms of the temple, for example the position of a statue (III 36'ff.): “Formerly the god was (standing) [at the rea]r end of the inner room and the community did not see him. Now he is standing on the alta[r]”.

To sum up – what we now know about the situation of the city of Nerik even in the time the Hittite kings have lost the political control over the northern central region didn't coincide with the picture Hattušili III is sketching in his textual tradition. In my opinion the point that in KUB 21.8 it is explicitly stressed that the former kings had spared the people of Nerik but destroyed the surrounding areas makes this assertion rather plausible. It seems to me a historical fact that the city of Nerik was not a ruin, an abandoned or “empty” place even in time before Hattušili's III conquest. And that might be the case for other places in the northern central area too – so there are no completely empty regions, in Hittite: “*danatteš utneš*”. Such impression could be at least in part the result of the propaganda of Hattušili III.

The best way to verify whether this is more than a sounded theory is an archaeological excavation – and the Höyük at Oymağaç is – in my opinion – one of the best candidates for that.

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