

# ISRAEL ORIENTAL STUDIES

## XV

LANGUAGE AND CULTURE IN THE NEAR EAST

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## SOME THOUGHTS ON TRANSLATED AND ORIGINAL HITTITE LITERATURE

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In his paradigmatic survey of Hittite literature, published some thirty years ago,<sup>1</sup> Güterbock had already stated that it would be wrong to regard Hittite literature as merely an offshoot of that of Babylonia. Whereas in scholastic fields, such as vocabularies, omens, rituals, and incantations, the debt to Mesopotamian originals is overwhelming, in more literary compositions, such as hymns, prayers and mythology, the Babylonian models, adopted directly or through Hurrian mediation, were freely adapted to Hittite tastes and needs. These adaptations, ultimately going back to the "main stream of Babylonian tradition," constitute one of the two components of Hittite literary texts. The other consists of the local Anatolian myths that drew freely from the Proto-Hattian oral tradition.<sup>2</sup>

For a long time this has been the standard approach to the so-called "Hittite literature," even though some compositions do not easily lend themselves to this twofold division. Although the skill of Hittite scribes in translating and molding such widely divergent traditions into a complex new fabric has often been stressed, the originality of Hittite literati was only acknowledged in neighboring fields, such as historiography and admonitory tales. As Hoffner stated in his general survey of Hittite mythological texts, "strange as it may seem, it is difficult to identify a single mythological tale in the corpus of myths from Boğazköy which one may attribute to the Indo-European Hittites themselves with any certainty."<sup>3</sup>

<sup>1</sup> H. G. Güterbock, "A View of Hittite Literature," *Journal of the American Oriental Society* 84 (1964):107–15; cf. also idem., "Hethitische Literatur," in W. Röllig, *Altorientalische Literaturen*. Wiesbaden 1978:211–53.

<sup>2</sup> See, e.g., E. Laroche, *Textes mythologiques hittites en transcription* (= *Revue hittite et asianique*, XXIII/77[1965] "Mythologie anatolienne"; XXVI/82[1968] "Mythologie d'origine étrangère"). Note, however, that in his *Catalogue des textes hittites* (henceforth *CTH*), published in 1971, Laroche cautiously introduced a third entry, "Divers," which includes texts such as Appu, Kešši, the Tale of the Fisherman, etc. (*CTH* 360–370).

<sup>3</sup> H. A. Hoffner, Jr., "Hittite Mythological Texts: A Survey," in H. Goedicke and J. J. M. Roberts (eds.), *Unity and Diversity*, Baltimore and London 1975:136. Cf., however, Hoffner's later studies cited in n. 7 below.

The discovery in 1970 of the "Tales about the City of Zalpa"<sup>4</sup> may be regarded as a turning point in the evaluation of Hittite mythology. The Queen of Kaneš, an important Hittite city located not far from the southern course of the Halys River, gives birth to thirty sons. Horrified, she places them in baskets and puts them in the river which carries them down to the city of Zalpa on the Black Sea. There the boys are raised by the gods, and upon reaching manhood, they make their way back to their mother. Meanwhile the Queen of Kaneš had given birth to thirty daughters whom she had brought up herself. Eventually the brothers return to their hometown and marry their sisters despite the warnings of the youngest brother. This incest, strictly forbidden by Hittite law, is apparently the cause of the ensuing hostilities between Zalpa and Ḫattuša, described (after a large lacuna in the text) on the reverse of the tablet. Although some of the motifs, such as that of boy babies in baskets, have a wide distribution in ancient Near Eastern folklore,<sup>5</sup> as a whole, this tale cannot be classified either with the adopted foreign mythology, or with the proto-Hattian oral tradition. It is clearly an aetiological justification for the domination of Ḫattuša and its ruling dynasty.<sup>6</sup> Thus, we are at last confronted with a genuine Hittite composition, which calls for a re-appraisal of other myths that do not readily conform with the traditional twofold division.

The Appu myth (CTH 360) and its possible sequel, the "Tale of the Fisherman" (CTH 363), may serve as a good test case. Both are usually listed among the so-called "minor" Hurrian myths,<sup>7</sup> but more recent studies allow for much greater Hittite involvement in their composition.<sup>8</sup>

<sup>4</sup> CTH 3 edited by H. Otten, *Eine alihethitische Erzählung um die Stadt Zalpa* (Studien zu den Boğazköy-Texten 17), Wiesbaden 1973.

<sup>5</sup> A. Ünal, "Das Motiv der Kinderaussetzung in den altanatolischen Literaturen," in K. Hecker und W. Sommerfeld, *Keilschriftliche Literaturen*, Berlin 1986:129–36.

<sup>6</sup> For a similar "Tale of Two Cities," serving the political purposes of the victorious party, one may refer to the story of "The Gibeon Outrage" in Judges xix–xxi. See Y. Amit, "Literature in the Service of Politics: Studies in Judges 19–21," in: H. Graf Reventlow et al. (eds.), *Politics and Theopolitics in the Bible and Postbiblical Literature*. (JSOT Supplement Series 171). Sheffield 1994:28–40.

<sup>7</sup> H.G. Güterbock, *Kumarbi, Mythen vom churritischen Kronos*. Zürich-New York 1946:119 ff.; id., *Altorient. Literaturen*, p. 240; J. Friedrich, *Zeitschrift für Assyriologie* 49 (1950): 213 ff.; Hoffner, *Unity and Diversity*, pp. 139 f.; id., "The Hurrian Story of the Sun-god, the Cow and the Fisherman," in M. A. Morrison and D. I. Owen (eds.), *Studies on the Civilization and Culture of Nuzi and the Hurrians in Honor of E. R. Lacheman*, Winona Lake 1981:189–94. In a more recent summary, however, Hoffner no longer maintains a Hurrian origin for these stories: "Hittite Religion," in R. M. Seltzer, *Religions of Antiquity* (Selections from the Encyclopedia of Religion), 1987:73.

<sup>8</sup> J. Siegelová, *Appu-Märchen und Hedammu-Mythus* (Studien zu den Boğazköy-Texten 14), Wiesbaden 1971: 34; G. Beckman, *Journal of Cuneiform Studies* 35 (1983): 103, n. 34; Hoffner, in *Religions of Antiquity*, p. 73; Pecchioli Daddi, in F. Pecchioli Daddi e A. M. Polvani, *La mitologia ittita*, Brescia 1990: 166.

The Appu myth<sup>9</sup> is unusual in that it opens with a moral on heavenly judgment that vindicates just men and punishes the evil. The ensuing story of Appu and his two sons illustrates this moral. A rich but childless couple living in a distant land is eventually helped out by the Sun god. Appu names his new-born sons 'Evil' and 'Just,' which accurately describes their characters. When they grow up, greedy Evil demands to share their father's estate, taking for himself the lion's share, including a valuable plow ox. However, the Sun god intervenes, causing Just's inferior cow to bear calves. Angered, brother Evil takes his case to the supreme judge, the Sun god in Sippar, who vindicates brother Just. Evil appeals again at the court of Ištar in Nineveh, but the text breaks up just before her verdict (see below).

To be sure, the story contains many elements which recur in the folklore of Near Eastern and more distant cultures,<sup>10</sup> but none of them is compelling for a Hurrian<sup>11</sup> or a Mesopotamian origin.<sup>12</sup> The only personal name, Appu, is indistinctive.<sup>13</sup> His domicile, the city of Šudul on the coast of the country of Lulluwa, cannot be located, but it is certainly outside Anatolia.<sup>14</sup> Perhaps it was simply meant to indicate a very distant land. Ostensibly the most solid indication for a Mesopotamian or Hurrian inspiration is the list of deities with their dwelling places cited by the evil brother as proof that even heavenly brothers live separately (iv 13–20). On the face of it, this list is indeed "at home" in a Mesopotamian milieu, but a closer look reveals some disturbing inaccuracies which can hardly be attributed to a learned Mesopotamian authorship.<sup>15</sup> The pairing of the Storm god of Kummiya and Ištar of Nineveh as brother and sister is

<sup>9</sup> For a full edition see Siegelová, op. cit.: 1–34; for translations see Hoffner, *Hittite Myths*, Atlanta 1990: 63 ff.; Pecchioli Daddi, op. cit.: 167 ff.

<sup>10</sup> See in particular the systematic study of C. Grottanelli, "Observations sur l'histoire d'Appou," *Revue hittite et asianique* 36 (1978): 49–57.

<sup>11</sup> The alleged Hurrian fragment of this myth, mentioned by E. Forrer, *Zeitschrift der Deutschen Morgenländischen Gesellschaft* 76 (1922): 188, has never been identified. See M. Salvini, "Sui testi mitologici in lingua Hurrica," *Studi micenei ed egeo-anatolici* 18 (1977):73–91.

<sup>12</sup> It is of interest to note that several motifs in the Appu myth have close parallels in the patriarchal stories in the Old Testament: the childless couple, the dialogue between Appu and the Sun god disguised as a mortal, the feud between two brothers over the inheritance of their father, etc.

<sup>13</sup> Unless one opts for a connection with Semitic *abu* "father," as suggested to me by Shlomo Izre'el.

<sup>14</sup> Šudul is hapax legomenon, but it may be compared to Šudu or Šuduḫi located in Ḫanigalbat; see K. Kessler, *Untersuchungen zur historischen Topographie Nordmesopotamiens*, Wiesbaden 1980: 65. Lulluwa may have to do with the Lullu who lived in the Zagros mountains, but this is inconsistent with the proximity to a sea.

<sup>15</sup> E.g., two place-names, Kuzina, the domicile of the Moon god, and Kiššina, the domicile of Nanaya, are unknown. See further, Pecchioli Daddi, *La mitologia ittita*: 170 f., n. 22.

indeed more consistent with a northern origin, but not necessarily Hurrian. In short, I see no real reason why this story cannot have been composed in a Hittite center. It is quite common in literature to deliberately set the plot in a foreign, sometimes distant land to add more flavor to the story. To make the point more plainly: If the author were anonymous, would we classify Romeo and Juliet or the Merchant of Venice as "Italian literature in English translation", just because the plot is set in Italian cities and the heroes have Italian names? More insight into the overall character of a story is needed, and the burden of proof lies with those who claim a foreign origin for a literary piece written in Hittite, with no direct parallels in the Hurro-Mesopotamian milieu.<sup>16</sup>

The same applies, I believe, to the "Tale of the Fisherman,"<sup>17</sup> which, following Güterbock, could be a sequel to the Appu myth.<sup>18</sup> From the sexual union of the Sun god and a beautiful cow a boy is born, who is later found and adopted by a childless fisherman and his wife. Their names are not given. Their city, Urma, apparently on the sea, is (as Šudul) otherwise unknown; it recalls Hurma or Uršu in southeastern Anatolia. As for the mythological motifs, again, as in the case of the Appu myth, parallels may be drawn from a wide range of Near Eastern and other folklores, but a Hurrian or Mesopotamian origin cannot be demonstrated. In fact, Güterbock admitted in a more recent article,<sup>19</sup> that his main reason for including both these tales amongst the so-called minor Hurrian myths was the "Hurro-Hittite" hymn to Ištar preceding the "Tale of the Fisherman" on the same tablet (*KUB* 24,7). Earlier, Güterbock had thought that this hymn to the goddess of love may have served as a proemium to the story of the liaison between the Sun god and the cow. Later, however, he joined the general opinion<sup>20</sup> which considered *KUB* 24,7 to be a *Sammeltablet* with no connection between the two texts. The actual nature of the shift from the hymn to the myth is concealed by the large gap in the second column.

<sup>16</sup> The almost axiomatic postulate of Mesopotamian origins for any cuneiform literary text is by no means restricted to Hittite literature. See, e.g., J. Nougayrol, *Ugaritica V* (1968): 277: "... pour tous les textes babyloniens littéraires de Ras Shamra et de Boghazkeui, la source commune, ultime, c'est, naturellement, la Mésopotamie."

<sup>17</sup> The edition of Friedrich, *ZA* 49: 224 ff. is considerably improved by the collation of the text and the re-interpretation of Hoffner, *Fs. Lacheman*. For new translations see Hoffner, *Hittite Myths*: 65 ff.; Pecchioli Daddi, *La mitologia ittita*: 172 ff.

<sup>18</sup> Güterbock, *Kumarbi*: 121 f.; *JAOS* 103: 155, n. 1; for additional arguments in favor of the connection see Pecchioli Daddi, *La mitologia ittita*: 173 ff. Cf., however, Hoffner, *Unity and Diversity*: 140. As already noted by Güterbock, the fragmentary colophon of the "Tale of the Fisherman" may very well be restored as "Seco[nd tabl]et of 'A'-[ap-pu]t-ū"; not complete," despite the divergent spelling, *Ap-pu*, in the colophon and throughout the text of the Appu myth.

<sup>19</sup> *JAOS* 103: 155.

<sup>20</sup> E.g., Friedrich, *ZA* 49: 224 f.; Hoffner, *Fs. Lacheman*: 190.

Without additional data the *Sammeltablet* theory remains plausible, but I would not exclude the possibility of a direct link between the two parts of the tablet, despite their different literary forms.

The hymn to Ištar (*CTH* 717),<sup>21</sup> written in strophic structure, praises her power to determine whether men will be fated to harmony and love, or will be condemned to hatred and dispute. The unpredictable, often cruel character of the goddess, also known from Mesopotamia,<sup>22</sup> is opposed to the character of the god of justice, the Sun god. I wonder whether this contrast is somehow connected to the development of the story of the two brothers. When the Sun god at Sippar awards the verdict to brother Just, the angry brother Evil begins to curse. Quite surprisingly, the Sun god decides to give him a second chance and sends him to Ištar, Queen of Niniveh. Most of Ištar's judgment is unfortunately lost.<sup>23</sup> It has always been assumed that she decided, like the Sun god, in favor of Just, whereupon Evil may have further appealed at the court of four other deities who are mentioned earlier in the text. This might be the most plausible reconstruction, but I would also consider a sudden turn in the plot, whereby a whimsical Ištar gives a pending verdict.<sup>24</sup>

As for the alleged Hurrian affinities of the hymn, it is noteworthy that the minor attendants of Ištar, who indeed bear distinctly Hurrian names,<sup>25</sup> are so far only known from Boğazköy.<sup>26</sup> Her main servants, Ninatta and Kulitta, are also known first in the west, and only in the first millennium do they arrive to Assyria. Finally, Ištar herself appears in the text with the phonetic complement *-li-*, which does not stand for Hurrian Šaušga, but rather for a still unknown Anatolian name of the goddess.<sup>27</sup>

This evidence, coupled with the fact that so far not a single Hurrian or

<sup>21</sup> For recent editions of the text see A. Archi, "I poteri della dea Ištar hurrita-ittita," *Oriens Antiquus* 16 (1977): 297–311; Güterbock, "A Hurro-Hittite hymn to Ishtar," *JAOS* 103 (1983): 155–64.

<sup>22</sup> Güterbock, *op. cit.*: 164 with n. 25.

<sup>23</sup> Hoffner, *Hittite Myths*: 65 translates the remaining text as follows: "And when they arrived at Niniveh and stood before Sauska [for judgment, ...] drew one IKU in one direction [and ... in the other direction]." Cf. Pecchioli Daddi, *La mitologia ittita*: 172: "quando giunsero a Ninive si presentarono ad Ištar [in processo] e [Ištar favori il fratello 'Buono']..."

<sup>24</sup> The answer may lie in the correct understanding of the act of drawing an IKU (a distance unit) in both directions (see previous note).

<sup>25</sup> The 'first' lady attendants (who bring luck): Ninatta, Kulitta, Šintalirti, Hamrazunna (I 13 f.); the 'last' lady attendants (who bring ill-fortune): Ali, Hälzari, Taruwi, Šinandakurni (I 23 f.).

<sup>26</sup> See I. Wegner, *Gestalt und Kult der Ištar-Šawuška in Kleinasien* (1981): 81 f.; G. Wilhelm, *The Hurrians* (1989): 52.

<sup>27</sup> Güterbock, *JAOS* 103: 159 f. The same applies to Ištar's occurrences in the Kumarbi cycle and in the "King of Battle."

Akkadian parallel has turned up at Boğazköy or elsewhere, should perhaps urge caution in determining the original authorship of the text. Should we automatically exclude the possibility that this hymn to Ištar<sup>28</sup> had an original Anatolian authorship? I deliberately use the term "Anatolian," and not "Hittite," in order to give due weight to the fact that imperial Hittite culture was an intricate blend of Hittite, Hurrian and other native Anatolian ingredients. Not all Hurrian cultural elements were necessarily imported from the Hurrian heartland east of the Euphrates, and thus ultimately from Mesopotamia. Some could just as well have been integral parts of the Hittite cultural fabric, which was massively permeated with elements from Kizzuwatna and from other Hurrian speaking territories of southeastern Anatolia. Although these basic facts about Hittite culture hardly need to be repeated, it seems to me that they were applied mainly to social and political history,<sup>29</sup> and to a much lesser extent to the study of Hittite literature. More simply: Hittite kings, queens and peers bear Hurrian names, as do the deities at Yazılıkaya, the main outdoor shrine of the Hittite kingdom. If so, why should we automatically question the "Hittiteness" of an unparalleled Hittite-language literary composition that contains Hurrian names or shows some superficial similarities to foreign literary genres? The general designation "Hurrian" is no longer satisfactory and due weight should be given to recent advances in untangling the various regional threads of Hurrian culture.<sup>30</sup>

Finally, I should perhaps stress that these tentative comments on two Hittite myths do not intend to underestimate the debt of Hittite literature to the Mesopotamian and eastern Hurrian heritage. I am simply suggesting that the issue not be approached uncritically and that a finer differentiation should be made between translated literature, free adaptations of foreign motifs, and original Hittite compositions with "foreign flavor."

## B. Between Language and Culture: Cultural Dispositions for Linguistic Choice

<sup>28</sup> To be distinguished from the Great Prayer to Ištar (CTH 312) which has Hittite and Akkadian versions in Boğazköy, as well as Neo-Assyrian and Neo-Babylonian parallels. See E. Reiner and H. G. Güterbock, "The Great Prayer to Ishtar and Its Two Versions from Boğazköy," *JCS* 21 (1967): 255-66.

<sup>29</sup> For basic definitions see H. G. Güterbock, "The Hurrian Element in the Hittite Empire," *Cahiers d'Histoire Mondiale*, 11/2 (1954): 383-93.

<sup>30</sup> See, e.g., E. Laroche, "Panthéon national et panthéons locaux chez les Hourrites," *Orientalia* 45 (1976): 94-99; A. Archi, "Substrate: Some remarks on the formation of the west Hurrian pantheon," in H. Otten a.o. (eds.), *Hittite and Other Anatolian and Near Eastern Studies in Honour of Sedat Alp*, Ankara 1992:7-14.