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Hittite Priesthood

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PREFACE AND ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

Coming, as I do, from the field of Biblical Studies, I have always found the concept of priesthood extremely interesting. The cultic practices of the priests, their position in the social hierarchy, the way they helped shape both the concept of the universe held by people of antiquity and the relations between human being and the divine forces are all intriguing issues. When I ventured into the field of Hittite studies, I carried this interest in the priesthood with me, and I now present the fruits of my studies in the world of the Hittite priests.

The seeds of the present work were sown many years ago when my mentor at the Hebrew University, Prof. Moshe Elat, guided me towards the study of Hittite as a way of better understanding the world inhabited by Ancient Israel. Following his advice, I spent a year in Amsterdam where I had the privilege of studying with Prof. Theo P.J. van den Hout, who taught me all the basics of Hittite history and language and later agreed to serve as an adviser for my Ph.D. My other adviser was Prof. Avigdor (Victor) Hurowitz of Ben Gurion University of the Negev, where I completed my Ph.D. work.

This book is based on my dissertation, entitled "Hittite Priesthood in Anatolia of the Second Millennium BCE, According to Hittite Texts, and in Light of Ancient Near Eastern and Biblical Texts." For the sake of publication, I revised, reedited, and shortened my dissertation considerably. The main omission is a long comparative chapter in which I compared institutions and phenomena of the Hittite priesthood to analogues in Biblical Israel and Mesopotamia. I hope to turn that chapter into a separate study and publish it later on.

Apart from my above-mentioned teachers and advisers, many other teachers and friends deserve my gratitude. I apologize to those not mentioned here by name, but they are not forgotten. Several institutions also deserve my gratitude, in particular the Kreitman Foundation which financed my work at Ben Gurion University for four years. I am grateful also to Doshisha University, my current academic home, for assistance granted in publishing this book.

Special thanks are due to Prof. Gernot Wilhelm, for recommending my manuscript for publication in the series *Texte der Hethiter*, and to the current editor of this series, Dr. Susanne Heinhold-Krahmer, for her constant assistance and support, and for the great efforts she put into editing my manuscript. I wish to thank her together with her colleagues Prof. Stefano de Martino and Prof. Walther Sallaberger, Dr. Gabriella Szabó and Dr. Suzanne Herboldt for their valuable advice in improving my manuscript. I am also grateful to Dr. Victor Faessel for his dedication in editing and correcting my English.

And finally, thanks are due to all members of my family for their constant support, and especially to my mother, Yehudit Taggar. To my beloved daughter Shirah I am most grateful for being patient with her mother during the long hours she spent poring over Hittite texts. Most of all I am indebted to my dear husband, Doron B. Cohen, for his unfailing support and assistance; for listening patiently to my ideas and discussing them with me; for endless hours of reading, improving, and rereading every page I wrote; for shouldering the responsibility for our home and our daughter; for dedicating himself, his time and thoughts to helping me realize my dream, and for his constant love.

Ada Taggar-Cohen
Kyoto, December 2005

In memory of my beloved father

Ezra Taggar
1933-1977
Sophia-Jerusalem

Abbreviations

The abbreviations of the quoted literature follow those of HW² (Band I, Lieferung 1, pp. 13-33; Band II, Lieferung 9, pp. 5-14; Band III, Lieferung 16, pp. I-XIII). Several additional abbreviations are used as follows:

CANE = J. C. Sasson (ed.) *Civilizations of the Ancient Near East*, (New York) 1995.

CDA = *A Concise Dictionary of Akkadian*, (eds.) J. Black, A. George and N. Postgate (Wiesbaden) 2000.

CoS = W. W. Hallo *et.al.*, *The Context of Scripture* vols. 1-3, (Leiden) 1997-2002.

Košak, HPM = S. Košak, *Hethitologie Portal Mainz, Konkordanz der hethitischen Keilschrifttafeln (I-LXI)* online: www.hetport.uni-wuerzburg.de/hetkon.

Laroche, CTH = E. Laroche, *Catalogue des Textes Hittites* (Paris) 1971.

McMahon, Diss. = G. McMahon, "The Hittite State Cult of the Tutelary Deities" (Ph. Dissertation, University of Chicago) 1988.

Popko, Religions = M. Popko, *Religions of Asia Minor*, (Warsaw) 1995.

RGTC 6/1 = G. F. del Monte and J. Tischler, *Répertoire Géographique des Textes Cunéiformes* 6/1, (Wiesbaden) 1978.

RGTC 6/2 = G. F. del Monte, *Répertoire Géographique des Textes Cunéiformes* 6/2 Supplement, (Wiesbaden) 1992.

*Books from the series *StBoT* and *THeth* are quoted by their serial number not year of publication.

General abbreviations

OH - Old Hittite

MH - Middle Hittite

NH - New Hittite

acc. - accusative

adv. - adverb

col. - column

com. - common

dat. - dative

dat.-loc. - dative-locative

DN - divine name

dupl. - duplicate/s

gen. - genitive

ICBG - Instructions for Border Garrison

inf. - infinitive

ITP - Instructions for Temple Personnel

iter. - iterative

lit. - literally
 med.- medio-passive voice
 n. - note / footnote
 neut. - neuter
 nom. - nominative
 obv. - obverse
 pl.- plural form
 pres. - present
 pret. - preterite
 pron.- pronoun
 rev. - reverse
 sg. - singular

Transliteration/translation signs

[()] enclosed signs /words restored according to duplicate
 [1] signs seen partially on tablet
 [.....] break in the tablet
 < > inserted signs assumed to be omitted by scribe
 > < deleted signs assumed to be mistakenly added by scribe

1. INTRODUCTION

1.1 Priesthood in antiquity: similarities and differences

In most parts of the ancient world, priests were involved in similar activities of officiating to the gods: presenting sacrifices of livestock and grain, libating, overseeing festivals, maintaining the houses and images of the gods, praying and singing to them, and sometimes also communicating with them through divination, incubation, and other methods. When we look into their activities in the different cultures of the Ancient Near East, and even further to the east or west, the similarities are striking. But so are some of the differences. Sharing what seem to be mutual human tendencies to express devotion to the gods through similar types of activity, each culture also had its unique material, spiritual, and social traditions, expressed, among other ways, also in the life and work of its priests. The division of the priests into different groups, the specific tasks of each group, the social position of the priests and their interaction with the rulers and the society: in these and in many other respects, signs of diversity and uniqueness can be found side by side with mutual affinities. For the study of religion, society, and history, it is vital to point out both similarities and differences.

My aim in this book is to present, through the study of Hittite texts, a view of the major cult functionaries identified in these texts as priests. This study represents an attempt to draw a comprehensive picture of the Hittite priesthood, but by no means is it an exhaustive one.¹ Not all types of priests could be discussed here in detail, and not everything that needs to be said about the major types of priests is said. The field is too wide and the materials are too rich to be covered by one book. Thus, my study is to be considered a first step, a foundation on which further study may be built.

1.2 Hittite religion

The Hittite religion that flourished in Anatolia in the second millennium BCE was an amalgam of several religious traditions.

¹ Previous studies on the Hittite priesthood, mostly of recent years, are partial and include: Popko's study of the town of Zippalanda *THeth* 21: 70-81; Popko (2001) 327-331; Klinger (2002) 93-111; Miller (2002) 423-432; Pecchioli-Daddi (2004a) 357-367; Popko (2004) 71-74; Soysal (2004) 75-98. Klinger (2005) 640-643.

During the period of its existence as a kingdom,² the Hittite civilization absorbed the traditions of various Anatolian ethnic groups, such as the Hattians, Palaians, and Luwians, as well as those of North Syria; but most important of these influences was the religious tradition of the Hurrians, which had a great impact upon the development of Hittite religion. Through the Hurrians, many aspects of Mesopotamian culture were also absorbed into the religious practices of the Hittites.

Out of this mixture of influences grew a distinctive Hittite tradition. As manifested in the practice of the state cult centers, its latest phase, during the 13th-12th centuries BCE, reveals a distinct synthesis of the different pantheons of the region.³ On the other hand, since the various traditions of worshiping local deities were maintained as long as the kingdom existed, the royal family at Hattuša had looked for ways to formalize this worship in the form of a cult reorganization, which took place during the reigns of Hattušili III and his son Tudḫaliya IV in the 13th century.⁴

The complex state of textual evidence on the religions of Anatolia, which was well described by Popko,⁵ raises a major difficulty. The majority of the cultic texts, from the earliest extant tablets to those of the 13th century, reveal similar descriptions of rituals, making it difficult to trace religious developments. Moreover, the dating of the tablets is often quite doubtful, although it is possible to relate certain tablets to one general period or another (Old, Middle, or New Hittite) by means of language and script. Outside the realm of cult texts, which have been copied again and again with only minor changes, some evidence may be found in more specific kinds of documents, such as oracle texts, letters, inventory lists, and royal prayers.

² Starting with king Labarna, the predecessor of the first documented Hittite king, Hattušili I in 1650, and ending around the beginning of the 12th century. However, a Hittite political order had already existed in 1750 according to the text of Anitta, king of Kuššar. For a recent detailed description of Hittite history see the books by Bryce (2005) and Klengel (1999). On the chronology see Astour (1989) and recently Wilhelm (2004) 71-79.

³ Haas (1994) 31. (translation: "Under Hattušili III the priesthood forced a united state pantheon to be worshiped in the Hittite kingdom; the great weather-god - the Anatolian Tarḫun(t)/Tarḫu(a)n and the Semitic god Adad of Ḫalap - was worshiped in the form of the Hurrian weather-god Teššub").

⁴ Hazenbos (2003) presents a special treatment of the cult inventory texts from this period.

⁵ Popko, *Religions*.

The Hittite cult was administered by the kings,⁶ who also took part in it as priests. The royal family participated in the main festivals of the calendar, such as the Spring or New Year festivals, which were mostly celebrated in the ancient Anatolian cult centers such as the towns Nerik, Zippalanda, Arinna, and others in the vicinity of the capital Hattuša,⁷ although occasionally the royal family would venture further afield to take part in a festival.

The Hittite religion was very assimilative in nature. It absorbed many gods, and worshiped them all with due respect.⁸ The correct execution of the cult was considered vital for the safety of the kingdom and the well-being of the king. Many temples were built or reconstructed, many images of the gods created. Numerous festivals were celebrated, and these were very gay affairs, with abundant food and drink, music, dance, acting, and wrestling. The Hittites also had mythological traditions and various forms of divination. And in all these activities, the priests had a crucial role.

Recent general studies of the Hittite religion include the one by Haas in *Geschichte der hethitischen Religion*, which contains a large body of well presented information, but it was criticized by reviewers for avoiding several subjects, including the priesthood, and for what seems to be a lack of clear focus on the Hittite sources themselves for understanding the Hittite religion.⁹ Popko, *Religions*, on the other hand, examines Hittite religion from a historical point of view, reviewing the religions of Asia Minor according to the common division into three main periods: Old, Middle, and Empire periods. Popko indicates the changes which occurred in the cult during these three periods, while referring to the three aspects of pantheon, cult, and magic cult. In this book Popko deals only briefly with the priesthood.

⁶ Most of the evidence we have concerning the Hittite cult comes from state archives, and reflects the official cult, which was a part of the kingdom's administration. Therefore, I refer to it as "state cult" or "state administered cult".

⁷ Important studies were written on Nerik, by Haas (1970), and on Zippalanda, by Popko *THeth* 21, shedding light on the religious activities in those centers. We are still awaiting a study on the town of Arinna, see Popko's article on *Die Priester von Arinna* (2001) 327-331.

⁸ Singer (1994) 81-102.

⁹ See Hoffner (1997a), Beckman (1997). A different opinion was offered by Hutter (1997) 74-88.

1.3 Priesthood in the Ancient Near East

The crucial role of the priesthood was to maintain and preserve the order of the universe by fulfilling the will and needs of the divine. Any deviation from the prescribed rituals causes damage and ruin in the universe. In this sense the priesthood is part of the divine system, officiating at the earthly sites dedicated to the divine. From this position the priest comes into direct contact with the divine and therefore, at certain moments during cultic performance and at other times, can himself be seen as endowed with divine powers, spirit, or qualities.

The priestly office, as observed in diverse ancient societies,¹⁰ is a profession; as such, it must be acquired. However, being professionals of worship, the priests constitute a separate class in society¹¹ and therefore the priesthood is usually hereditary.¹² The priestly prerogatives and duties are the heritage of a particular family or tribe. It is expected that priests in a hereditary priesthood will marry, so that the line may be perpetuated. New priests are to be trained, and the content of the training is generally a blend of ritual performance, memorized prayers or songs, mythological accounts, and incantations. Also to be learned are such aspects of the observance of the cult as its calendar and the use of its implements. In all communities with an active priesthood there is a ceremonial installation into office, usually a process of bestowing authority upon the new priests through the officiating priests. The result is a role transmitted from generation to generation, grounded in the legitimacy of the founder.¹³

The priests are in charge of the worship of the deities, both inside and outside the special houses dedicated to them. Among the priests' obligations is taking care of the deities' needs, their clothing and their food, maintaining the cleanliness and purity of their houses, and guarding them.¹⁴ All of this requires wealth, the

¹⁰ Sabourin (1973), for example, tried to understand biblical priesthood in comparison with that of the broader ancient world: Indo-Iranian, Buddhist, Greek, Mesopotamian, Egyptian, and Arab.

¹¹ Sabourin (1973) 5-6.

¹² In the case of the Hittites, this point is not clearly verified. According to Popko, *Religions*: 142, the Hittite priesthood was also hereditary, but as we shall see in the following chapters, the evidence is not conclusive.

¹³ Oxtoby (1987) 530-531.

¹⁴ Oxtoby (1987) 529, emphasizes that "ritual activities as such, however, do not make the lay people who performs them priests; a priest[...] is characteristically an intermediary set apart by a recognized induction into

means to support the cult materially. And indeed, the priests often controlled vast assets of land, livestock, servants, and funds. In some cases the treasures of the state were also kept in the temple, under the supervision of the priests. This also means that the priests usually comprised an elevated social class and were tied to the local or central administration of the state. Still, in different eras and places different relations are observed between the rulers and the priests, which were never simple ones.¹⁵ In many places, including the Hittite kingdom as mentioned above, the royalty was deeply involved in the cult; kings, queens, and princes officiated as priests, thus bestowing additional sacredness on their position. In other places, including biblical Israel, we often witness the priests' efforts to jealously guard their unique status and keep the involvement of the royalty to a minimum.

1.4 Hittite priests

The Hittite priesthood had many things in common with the priests of other Ancient Near Eastern cultures as well as some distinctive features of its own. In the Hittite kingdom the priests were part of the royal administration, and were tied to both the king and the specific temple in which they served. This is the type of priests studied in this book. There may have been other kinds of priests whose function was different. We have evidence of their activities, but they were not identified as belonging to the major classes of priests. They could have been priests serving local traditions, or itinerants moving from one place to another. They include for example the ^{LÚ}HAL, ^{MUNUS}ŠU.GI, ^{MUNUS}katra/i, and others.¹⁶

The present study focuses on three basic aims:

- a) Identifying the major Hittite priests from amongst the numerous cult functionaries appearing in the texts, and describing their activities to determine their profession.
- b) Distinguishing between male and female in the priesthood, and describing their respective activities and duties.¹⁷
- c) Describing priesthood as a characteristic of the Hittite royal family.

Hittite texts of various genres deal directly or indirectly with office and functioning on behalf of others".

¹⁵ Oxtoby (1987) 532-533.

¹⁶ See for example Popko, *Religions*: 77.

¹⁷ Some earlier studies of this question include Bin-Nun (1975) and now Popko (2001).

the cult and with the role and status of the priests. These genres of texts include:

- Texts describing rituals, or prescribing them.
- Prayers or magical activities mentioning priests.
- Texts including instructions to various functionaries in the kingdom, including those directed at temple personnel.
- Legal texts specifying the priests' duties, or referring to their functions.
- Cult inventory texts.
- Letters, contracts and other kinds of texts mentioning priests.

The Hittite texts mention many cult functionaries, who were listed by Pecchioli-Daddi under the definition "temple workers".¹⁸ They include cooks and bakers, shepherds and cowherds, the cupbearer and the table-man (=waiter), as well as other functionaries such as reciting men, singers and musicians, or even the "wolf-man" and different groups of dancers. All these (and others) may be considered part of the temple personnel. However, a distinction should be made between the officiating priests and the rest of the cult personnel.

The first step is to look for the functionaries named "priest". The Hittite texts include several Sumerian logograms which indicate the role of a priest in the Sumero-Akkadian cultures of Mesopotamia. One such case is the combination of the Sumerograms LÚ.SANGA, read in Akkadian *šangû* (-man), whose tasks include taking care of sacrifices and administrating the work in the temple. But the fact that such a logogram has a specific meaning in one culture does not necessarily mean that it has the same meaning in another culture. Careful scrutiny will be required to determine the meaning of these terms when used in Hittite texts.

Two Sumerograms open the way to the identification of the priests, and they are the above mentioned LÚ.SANGA and the LÚ.GUDU₁₂. In this study an attempt will be made to specify their respective work and their status in the temples of the Hittite kingdom.¹⁹

In Chapter Two the main classes of the Hittite priests will be identified according to several Hittite texts of various genres. These texts also hint at the internal hierarchy of the priests.

¹⁸ Pecchioli Daddi (1982) 144-435.

¹⁹ The first attempt at identifying and classifying the temple personnel was made by Güterbock in his article on the Hittite temple (1972) 125-132.

In Chapter Three we will focus our attention on one major text, here given the title "Instructions for Temple Personnel".²⁰ Of all Hittite texts, this one is the most elaborate in referring to the priesthood, and it is also an example of the "instructions" genre. The Hittites regarded such texts as a form of contract, written and validated under oath (*išhiul-*). The document was usually initiated by the king or queen, and therefore the obligation was to him or her personally. The text directed at the priests is thus part of the general administrative approach of the Hittite kingdom.

Chapters Four and Five elaborate on the definitions, functions, and status of male and female Hittite priests respectively. All Hittite texts relating to the priesthood mention both male and female priests, and the differences in their performance and status are to be examined. Since they functioned in a patriarchal society, we would expect the status of the priestesses to be lower than that of the male priests. Our survey verifies this assumption, but also shows the unique position which was enjoyed by some priestesses.

Chapter Six will focus on the roles of members of the royal family as priests. In order to ensure the gods' favor, the Hittite kings issued strict orders on the maintenance of the cult, and required reports on its upkeep in every town and district. But the Hittite kings and queens themselves bore titles as priests and priestesses. They officiated in the main festivals, and emphasized their devotion to the gods. Several issues regarding their position, function, and relations with the general priesthood will be discussed.

Chapter Seven offers a summary of the findings of this study.

For reasons of space, Hittite texts are sometimes included only in translation. Transliteration was given in one of the following cases: when a text was not published before, when my reading is different than what have been published due to new textual evidence, or when I found it important to include the original Hittite terms.

²⁰ It was first published in 1934 by Sturtevant under the title "Instructions for Temple Officials".