Hittite Prayers
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Volume 11
Hittite Prayers
by Itamar Singer
Edited by Harry A. Hoffner, Jr.
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Harry A. Hoffner, Jr.

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HITTITE PRAYERS
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Series Editor’s Foreword

Writings from the Ancient World is designed to provide up-to-date, readable English translations of writings recovered from the ancient Near East.

The series is intended to serve the interests of general readers, students, and educators who wish to explore the ancient Near Eastern roots of Western civilization, or compare these earliest written expressions of human thought and activity with writings from other parts of the world. It should also be useful to scholars in the humanities or social sciences who need clear, reliable translations of ancient Near Eastern materials for comparative purposes. Specialists in particular areas of the ancient Near East who need access to texts in the scripts and languages of other areas will also find these translations helpful. Given the wide range of materials translated in the series, different volumes will appeal to different interests. But these translations make available to all readers of English the world’s earliest traditions as well as valuable sources of information on daily life, history, religion, etc. in the preclassical world.

The translators of the various volumes in this series are specialists in the particular languages and have based their work on the original sources and the most recent research. In their translations they attempt to convey as much as possible of the original texts in a fluent, current English. In the introductions, notes, glossaries, maps, and chronological tables, they aim to provide the essential information for an appreciation of these ancient documents.

Covering the period from the invention of writing (by 3000 B.C.E.) down to the conquests of Alexander the Great (ca. 330 B.C.E.), the ancient Near East comprised northeast Africa and southwest Asia. The
cultures represented within these limits include especially Egyptian, Sumerian, Babylonian, Assyrian, Hittite, Ugaritic, Aramean, Phoenician, and Israelite. It is hoped that Writings from the Ancient World will eventually produce translations of most of the many different genres attested in these cultures: letters—official and private—myths, diplomatic documents, hymns, law collections, monumental inscriptions, tales, and administrative records, to mention but a few.

The preparation of this volume was supported in part by a generous grant from the Division of Research Programs of the National Endowment for the Humanities. Significant funding has also been made available by the Society of Biblical Literature. In addition, those involved in preparing this volume have received financial and clerical assistance from their respective institutions. Were it not for these expressions of confidence in our work, the arduous tasks of preparation, translation, editing, and publication could not have been accomplished or even undertaken. It is the hope of all who have worked on these texts or supported this work that Writings from the Ancient World will open up new horizons and deepen the humanity of all who read these volumes.

Simon B. Parker
Boston University School of Theology
## Abbreviations

<table>
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<th>Abbreviation</th>
<th>Description</th>
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<tr>
<td><strong>ABoT</strong></td>
<td>Ankara Arkeoloji Müzesinde bulunan Boğazköy Tabletleri</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>AoF</strong></td>
<td>Altorientalische Forschungen</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>BiOr</strong></td>
<td>Bibliotheca Orientalis</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Bo</strong>发明</td>
<td>Inventory numbers of Boğazköy tablets excavated 1906-1912</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Bo</strong>年份...</td>
<td>Inventory numbers of Boğazköy tablets excavated 1968ff.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>CANE</strong></td>
<td>Civilizations of the Ancient Near East (Sasson 1995)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>CHD</strong></td>
<td>The Hittite Dictionary of the Oriental Institute of the University of Chicago</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>ChS</strong></td>
<td>Corpus der hurritischen Sprachdenkmäler</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>CoS I</strong></td>
<td>Context of Scripture I (Hallo 1997)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>CTH</strong></td>
<td>Catalogue des textes hittites (Laroche 1971)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>FHG</strong></td>
<td>Fragments hittites de Genève (Laroche 1951-52)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>FHL</strong></td>
<td>Fragments hittites du Louvre (Durand/Laroche 1982)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>HbOr</strong></td>
<td>Handbuch der Orientalistik</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>HED</strong></td>
<td>Hittite Etymological Dictionary (Puhvel 1984-)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>HEG</strong></td>
<td>Hethitisches Etymologisches Glossar (Tischler 1977-)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>HFAC</strong></td>
<td>Hittite Fragments in American Collections (Beckman/Hoffner 1985)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>HW</strong></td>
<td>Hethitisches Wörterbuch (Friedrich 1952).</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>JAOS</strong></td>
<td>Journal of the American Oriental Society</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>JCS</strong></td>
<td>Journal of Cuneiform Studies</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>JNES</strong></td>
<td>Journal of Near Eastern Studies</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>KBo</strong></td>
<td>Keilschrifttexte aus Bogazköi</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>KUB</strong></td>
<td>Keilschrifturkunden aus Bogazköi</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>MARI</strong></td>
<td>Mari Annales de Recherches Interdisciplinaires</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
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Hittite Prayers

OLZ Orientalistische Literaturzeitung
Or Orientalia
RHA Revue Hittite et Asianique
SMEA Studi Micenei ed Egeo-Anatolici
StBoT Studien zu den Boğazköy-Texten
StMed Studia Mediterranea
THeth Texte der Hethiter
TUAT Texte aus der Umwelt des Alten Testaments
VBoT Verstreute Bogazköy-Texte
ZA Zeitschrift für Assyriologie
../a-../z Inventory numbers of Boğazköy tablets excavated 1931-1967
Explaination of Signs

Single brackets [   ] enclose restorations.
Angle brackets <   > enclose words omitted by the original scribe.
Parentheses (   ) enclose additions in the English translation.
A row of dots . . . indicates gaps in the text or untranslatable words.
Acknowledgments

First and foremost I would like to thank Professor Harry A. Hoffner, Jr., who initiated the preparation of this volume, carefully read through the manuscript, and made many valuable suggestions. I also wish to thank the series editor, Professor Simon B. Parker, whose remarks helped me in refining my English formulations. Thanks are also due to Professor Heinrich Otten, who generously allowed me to utilize the fragment 1193/u (join to Hattusili’s Prayer, no. 21). I have often profited from conversations, oral and written, with Volkert Haas, Jörg Klinger, Craig Melchert, and Frank Starke, as well as with my former students Yoram Cohen, Amir Gilan, and Jared Miller. I thank all these friends and colleagues for their suggestions and insights, but I assume final responsibility for any remaining inadequacies or inconsistencies.

I dedicate this book to my wife Graciela.

Tel-Aviv, January 2002
Introduction

When the gods hear my word, they will put right the bad thing which is in my soul and remove it from me.

Muwatalli II

The Corpus

Prayers were among the first Hittite texts to be transliterated and studied in the earliest days of Hittitology (see, e.g., the refs. cited in Güterbock 1958: 237, n. 1, and in Singer 1996: 1). The first efforts toward more complete philological editions of groups of prayers were A. Goetze's study of Mursili's plague prayers (1930), and O. R. Gurney's dissertation on Mursili's prayers (1940), both of which have stood the test of time admirably. Translations of well-preserved Hittite prayers were later included in various compendia on ancient Near Eastern literature, in English (Goetze 1950; Kühne 1978; Beckman 1997a), German (Kühne 1975; Ünal 1991), French (Christmann-Franck 1989), Dutch (de Roos 1983), and Spanish (Bernabé 1987). E. Laroche's seminal paper on the vocabulary and typology of Hittite prayers (1964) was followed by many articles which provided overviews of the genre within the context of Hittite religion and literature (e.g., Houwink ten Cate 1969; Kammenhuber 1974; Güterbock 1978; de Roos 1995). Prayers other than Mursili's were edited (Friedrich 1957; von Schuler 1965: 152ff.; Houwink ten Cate/Josephson 1967; Haas 1970: 175ff.), and several articles dealt with the structure and literary history of Hittite hymns and prayers and their indebtedness to Mesopotamian prototypes (Güterbock 1958; 1964;
1974; 1980; Reiner /Güterbock 1967; Marazzi/Nowicki 1978; Marazzi 1981; Carruba 1983). G. Wilhelm provided a first glimpse into the yet poorly understood group of Hurrian prayers and hymns, which are of utmost importance for the study of cultural contacts between Mesopotamia and Anatolia (1991; 1994). The only anthology of Hittite prayers was published by R. Lebrun in 1980, the transliterations and translations of which are in need of revision (see the reviews by Kellerman 1983 and Marazzi 1983). Several new editions of individual prayers have appeared since (Sürenhagen 1981; Tischler 1981; Hoffner 1983; Archi 1988; Singer 1996; de Martino 1998). A full philological re-edition of the entire corpus of prayers, including unpublished fragments from Boğazköy and elsewhere, is an urgent desideratum, as are further comparative studies with other ancient Near Eastern corpora. A serious comparison of Hittite and biblical prayers (see, provisionally, Greenberg 1994) can only be accomplished by the inclusion of the tertium comparationis, i.e., the Babylonian prayers, which exerted a considerable influence on all other Near Eastern cultures (Wilhelm 1991: 39).

One of the difficult tasks in devising a volume dedicated to Hittite prayers is defining the parameters of this genre with regard to neighboring ones, such as hymns, conjuration rituals, oracular inquiries, etc. The Hittites (as most traditional cultures for that matter) followed a "holistic" approach in their dealings with the divine world in a difficult situation.1 They investigated its causes through oracular inquiries, invoked the gods by various evocation rituals, pleaded their case in prayers, conciliated the offended god(s) through hymns of praise and expiatory sacrifices, and vowed them presents. All these and other actions formed part of one integral procedure attempting to regain the gods' good will and support. Many a Hittite eyebrow would probably have been raised in view of our endeavor to systematically classify and divide the various religious texts into well-defined categories. From their point of view, a more sensible and effective procedure would be a comprehensive consideration of all the actions needed to counteract a certain problem until a harmonious situation is restored. Such general investigations surely exist, but more often the various categories of religious literature are studied separately, and this volume forms no exception. Thus, a brief explanation of the criteria for excluding certain categories from this collection of Hittite prayers is due.

Hymns and prayers are usually considered together in compendia dedicated to ancient Near Eastern religions.2 The distinction between the two is not clear-cut, depending mainly on the relative proportion of the
praise directed toward the god and the suppliant’s plea in a given text. Most prayers contain at least some short praise for the addressed god, and even a hymn dedicated entirely to the adulation of a certain god alludes, at least indirectly, to the devotee’s hope for divine guidance and general well-being. In some of Mursili’s prayers (nos. 8–9) the hymnic introduction takes up about a third of the text, whereas in the so-called Plague Prayers (nos. 10–14) it is almost entirely missing. However, the decision to exclude proper hymns from this volume was not dictated by the length of the hymnic part in a given prayer, but by an entirely different consideration. Except for the Babylonian hymn to Shamash, which was adapted and incorporated into Hittite prayers to solar deities (nos. 4, 7, 8), all the foreign hymns (to the Sun-god, the Storm-god, and Ishtar) discovered at Bogazköy seem to have had strictly educational functions, such as scribal training and scholarly interest, and did not serve any “practical” cultic purposes (Wilhelm 1994: 70). This applies not only to Sumerian-Akkadian hymns (CTH 793–795), but also to hymns which have been furnished with a Hittite translation (CTH 312, 314, 792.1), and even to a hymn which is preserved only in a Hittite version (CTH 313), but whose Babylonian origins are evident (Güterbock 1978: 128; Wilhelm, ibid.). These literary texts should be studied and presented in juxtaposition with their Mesopotamian prototypes (as, e.g., in Reiner/Güterbock 1967), perhaps in a volume which would also include other types of translated Mesopotamian literature, such as lexical texts, omina, and legends (e.g., Gilgamesh). For similar reasons I have also excluded the long bilingual Hurrian-Hittite hymn to Ishtar (CTH 717; see Archi 1977; Wegner 1981; Güterbock 1984; Wilhelm 1994: 70ff.), the exact origins of which remain to be established.

Oracular inquiries aimed at discovering the reasons for divine wrath can often resemble prayers for exculpation from the discovered sins. Hattusili declares himself innocent in several suspected offenses against various persons (no. 21), and similar lists of political errors are contained in two fragmentary texts generally dated to Urhi-Tessub/Mursili III (CTH 297.7 and CTH 387; see Houwink ten Cate 1994: 240ff., with bibliography; see also van den Hout 1998: 46ff.; Parker 1998: 282ff.). CTH 297.7 could be a prayer directed to the Sun-goddess of Arinna and the Storm-god of Hatti (Houwink ten Cate 1974: 135), but other classifications are also possible, e.g., a trial procedure (as classified in CTH) or a mantalli ritual (for which see CHD L–N: 176ff., with literature; van den Hout 1998: 5f.). At any rate, the text is too fragmentary for a connected translation.

Rituals of offering ceremonies are as a rule appended to every prayer,
but only rarely is the ritual part recorded or preserved (see Ritual Context); and conversely, almost every ritual contains some short invocation or praise to the god. But except for large prayer portions embedded in a ritual text (as in the substitution ritual and prayer for Gassuliyawiya, no. 15), the extensive genre of Hittite rituals and oracle texts has not been mined to extract short prayerlike passages (see, e.g., Collins 1997: 164f. for CTH 716).

Besides these thematic considerations, the state of preservation also played a role in the choice of texts included in this volume. There are dozens of small prayer fragments which still await identification and joining to larger texts (CTH 385–386, 389). Only if considerable portions of a prayer are preserved, or can be safely restored, is it worth inclusion in a volume of translations. An exception has been made, however, in the case of no. 6, in order to call attention to a group of prayers written in Hurrian.

After this sifting process there are still two dozen prayers or large prayer fragments in the volume, which justifies considering the Hittite prayer as a literary genre of its own (contra Kühne 1978: 165). Contrary to the general orientation in Hittitological studies, which are mostly concerned with a structural analysis and a diachronic investigation of the literary history (Überlieferungsgeschichte) of a given prayer or groups of prayers, I have ventured a more synchronic or subject-oriented approach. The texts are grouped in several thematic-chronological clusters, each dealing with a certain problem, such as the plague, or the sickness of Gassuliyawiya. I thought it more expedient to provide for the general reader interested in Hittite religion an overview of the situations which prompted prayers, rather than to follow the highly intricate literary tradition of a text and its prototypes. Still, the basic information on the state of preservation of each text, its duplicates and parallels, and its putative literary history, is briefly indicated in the introductory sections, together with bibliographical references. For similar reasons of convenience I have provided full translations of each individual text, even if large parts of it are duplicated by parallel versions (as in the case of nos. 4a–c). This provides not only a continuous reading of a textual unit in its entirety, but also the possibility of juxtaposing and comparing the versions. As for the countless gaps and breaks typical of most Hittite tablets, I have provided restorations only if supported by parallel passages or sound logic. Tentative restorations are indicated by question marks, whereas more problematic ones are discussed in footnotes. I have tried to refrain, however, from exceedingly daring and unwarranted restorations, which risk perpetuation in general studies.
Function and Terminology: The Prayer as the Enactment of a Case in a Divine Court

Since the earliest days of Hittitology, the most common designation for “prayer” has been recognized in the verbal noun arkuwar, derived from the verb arkuwai- (Hrozny 1919: 153). Subsequent studies, especially Laroche’s study on the vocabulary of Hittite prayers (1964: 13ff.), have pointed out that arkuwar (cf. Latin arguo, argumentum) is a juridical term, referring to the presentation of a plea, an argumentation, or a defense against an accusation (cf. further Houwink ten Cate 1969: 82ff.; Lebrun 1980: 426ff.; Sürenhagen 1981: 136ff.; Singer 1996: 47ff.; Melchert 1998: 45–47). The same word is used when a servant justifies himself before his master, when a vassal king argues his case before his suzerain, or when two Great Kings take their dispute before the Divine Court. The structure and rationale of a Hittite prayer is best understood as the enacting of a case in a divine court. This accords with the typically Hittite way of approaching all relations between two parties in legalistic terms. The defendant is the king, the prosecutor is the offended god, the advocate is the addressed deity (requested to act as an intercessor), and the court of justice is the assembly of gods. The prayer is presented by the king or his representative with all the features of a lawsuit, including the confession of or exculpation from guilt, the presentation of mitigating circumstances, and the inveigling of the divine judges with flattery (hymns) and presents (vows). What is obviously missing is the “final verdict” disclosing whether the defendant’s arguments have been accepted, and whether his requests for health, long life, prosperity, victory over enemies, and divine support in general would be granted. Unlike other Near Eastern cultures, the Hittites apparently did not compose prayers of thanksgiving. They expressed their gratitude to their gods through pious deeds, such as the erection and embellishment of temples, or the dedication of cult objects, sometimes inscribed with dedicatory texts.5

The various terms that are often considered to represent different types of prayers (Lebrun 1980: 414ff.), are in fact parts of the overall composition. From Mursili II onwards, the arkuwar, i.e., the pleading, constitutes the main part of the text. In earlier prayers the emphasis is more often laid on the mugawar (or mugessar), “invocation, entreaty” (of the deity’s presence through an evocation and offering ritual), derived from the verb mugai-,”to invoke, to entreat”. Partly synonymous verbs are talliya-, “to evoke,” and sara huittiya-, “to draw out, attract”. Sometimes the mugawar ritual is inscribed on a separate tablet (see colophon of no.
8). The verb walliya- describes the praising of the god, but there seems to be no specific designation for the hymnic opening of a prayer (Güterbock 1978: 132). Finally, the verb wek- is used to express the suppliant’s “wish, request, petition” of his divine judges. A typical Hittite prayer contains, in different proportions, all these elements, but rarely are all of them preserved (as in no. 20).

The preserved preambles and colophons refer variously to the “invocation” of a certain god (as in no. 8), or, more often, to the “pleading” addressed to him (nos. 9, 11, 12, 19). For unknown reasons, a colophon is missing altogether from some prayers (nos. 21–22). The few preserved incipits of Hittite prayers refer to the crisis which induced the composition. The plague prayers of Mursili are spoken “when [the people] of Hatti [. . .] are dying . . .” (colophon of no. 8.E; cf. no. 11). The model prayer of Muwatalli is spoken “if some problem burdens a man(‘s conscience)” (no. 20, §1). Another typical occasion for royal prayers (not specifically mentioned in colophons) was an imminent and important military campaign. For example, at the beginning of Mursili’s reign he invoked the Sun-goddess of Arinna with the following short prayer, quoted in his annals: “Sun-goddess of Arinna, my lady, side with me and defeat for me those hostile neighbors who regularly disparaged and humiliated me and forever were bent on taking possession of your territories, O Sun-goddess of Arinna, my lady” (de Roos 1995: 1997).

“The Defendant”: The King or His Representatives

Most, if not all, recorded Hittite prayers are spoken in the name of the king, either by himself, or by an official (scribe and/or priest) praying on his behalf (see below). Most exceptions can easily be explained. The influential queen Puduhepa prays for the recuperation of her ailing husband (no. 22), and probably a similar situation generated the Hurrian prayer of Taduhepa (no. 6). The earliest prayers (nos. 1–2) are not sufficiently preserved to disclose their authorship, but they clearly deal with the defamation of the king. The only unusual case is posed by the parallel prayers for appeasing an angry god, nos. 4a–c. In no. 4b the speaker is an unnamed king; in no. 4a the speaker, Kantuzzili, is a prince and high priest speaking on behalf of his king (see below, Evolution of Hittite Prayer); no. 4c is put in the mouth of a “mortal,” which I doubt refers to a simple commoner. Rather, it is intended to emphasize the suppliant’s mortality and fragility, also expressed in pessimistic reflection upon the
human condition in the prayer itself: “Life is bound up with death and death is bound up with life. A human does not live forever. The days of his life are counted. Even if a human lived for ever, and evil sickness of man were to be present, would it not be a grievance for him?” (no. 4c, § 11 = no. 4b, § 5’).

In the last analysis, the corpus of Hittite prayers is restricted to kings, or, in rare cases, to other members of the royal family. Prayers of the ordinary pious, as in Babylonia or Egypt, have not been found in Hatti. To be sure, the king prays not only for his and his family’s health and success, but even more so for his land and his people. Mursili’s ultimate argument for divine mercy is the perishing of Hatti’s population in the plague, rather than his own safety.

The king often refers to himself in the prayers as “the priest,” because, as head of the cultic hierarchy, he bears the title “Priest of the Sun-goddess of Arinna” (Houwink ten Cate 1987). If not otherwise stated, the praying ceremony was performed by the king himself. The exceptions found in several of Mursili’s prayers only prove the rule. In the prayer to the god Telipinu it is explicitly stated that “the scribe shall read out daily this tablet to the god,” and then the scribe himself is quoted saying: “Mursili . . . and the queen . . . sent me, saying: ‘Go, invoke Telipinu, . . .’” (no. 9, §§ 1–2; cf. no. 8, § 1 and no. 11, § 1). On the other hand, in prayers which state “I, Mursili . . . am pleading/bowing down to you” (no. 12, § 1 and no. 13, § 2), there is no reason to suppose that someone else performed the praying in the name of the king. The description in no. 3, where both the king and his servant perform rituals, fully confirms this observation.

The clearest reference to the king’s direct involvement in the recording of a prayer is found in the colophon of Muwatalli’s prayer concerning Kummanni (no. 19), but unfortunately the key expression is broken away: “One tablet of the presentation of the plea to the Storm-god, written down [from the mouth(?)] of His Majesty. Complete. Written by the hand of Lurma-ziti, junior incantation priest, apprentice [of . . .], son of Aki-Tessub.” However, the restoration is very plausible, and it shows that the prayer was taken down verbally from the king’s mouth, or at least he gave general instructions and approved the final version.

**“The Prosecution”: The Offended God(s)**

As a rule, every human sin is an offense against the divine world, but apparently there is a specific god who carries the complaint to the assem-

---
bly of gods. The identity of this angry god of heaven or earth is usually not
known to the suppliant, and the all-knowing Sun-god is invoked to find
him and to intercede on the suppliant’s behalf. In the prayer of Kantuzzili
the angry god appears to be, as in Babylonian prototypes (Güterbock
1958: 242), the suppliant’s personal god, who had raised him and sup-
ported him until now (no. 4a, § 1′–2′). In Puduhepa’s Prayer (no. 22, § 8″)
the malefactor who defamed Hattusili and caused his sickness could also
be a human, not only one of the Upper (Heaven) or Lower (Earth) gods.
As in a court case, the prosecutor first speaks about the evil matter, and
then the intercessor transmits the prayer of defense (no. 21, § 11′). Inter-
estingly, in his prayer concerning the cult of Kummanni (no. 19),
Muwatalli considers, among other evils, also the possibility that some
local deity caused the Storm-god’s anger (§ 2). In such a case humans are
unable to help, and the gods of the Netherworld (Anunnaki) are asked to
reconcile the Storm-god to that deity.

“The Defense”: The Interceding Gods

In principle, all the gods addressed in prayers may be considered as inter-
cessors transmitting the king’s plea to the assembly of gods convened in
Hattusa (no. 21, § 11′). However, the most frequently addressed gods,
the Sun and the Storm deities, also preside at the divine court, and thus
the distinction between intercessor and supreme judge is less manifest.
Even so, their role as advocates of the defendant in the divine court is
quite evident, for example in Hattusili’s prayer, in which the Sun-goddess
of Arinna and the Storm-god of Hatti are solicited to take up the king’s
cause in the assembly for the sake of their son, the Storm-god of Nerik
(no. 21, § 11′).

By far the most frequently addressed gods in Hittite prayers are the
solar deities in their various hypostases: the Sun-goddess of the Nether-
world (no. 1), the Sun-god of Heaven (nos. 4a–c), and, first and fore-
most, the Sun-goddess of Arinna (nos. 3, 5, 7, 8, 10, 16, 21, 22, 24). One
prayer (no. 2) is addressed to the Sun-god and the Storm-god in tandem.
The reason for the solar deity’s predominance is obvious.8 Not only is the
Sun-goddess of Arinna one of the two principal deities of the Hittite pan-
theon, but the all-seeing and impartial Sun is universally considered as
the supreme deity of justice, who in his circular daily journey meets all
the gods of heaven and earth and convenes them to the divine assembly.
Typical for the Hittite Sun-deity is his concern not only for all human beings, including the evil, the lonely and the oppressed (no. 4b, §§ 8', 10' = no. 4c, §§ 4, 5), but also for the lowest creatures, such as the dog, the pig, the beast of the field (no. 20, § 66), and “the animals who do not speak with their mouth” (no. 4b, § 10' = no. 4c, § 5).

The Storm-god is also represented in several hypostases. In the Hurrian prayer of Taduhepa (no. 6) he must be Tessub. Mursili’s “Second” Plague Prayer (no. 11) is addressed to the Storm-god of Hatti, the guarantor of the treaty between Hatti and Egypt. Muwatalli addresses his own celestial Storm-god of Lightning in no. 20, and perhaps also in no. 19 (Singer 1996: 161f.).

Other gods addressed in prayers are Telipinu (no. 9), the Storm-god of Nerik (no. 23), and Lelwani, who is invoked in cases of grave illness (no. 15; no. 22, §§ 8"–9"). An idiosyncracy of Hittite prayers are the intercessions of divine acolytes, who are asked to mediate between the suppliant and the supreme deity to whose circle they belong (Güterbock 1958: 242; Houwink ten Cate 1969: 88). In no. 1 the large entourage of the Sun-goddess of the Netherworld is invoked. In no. 19 Muwatalli invokes several Kizzuwatnean deities to dispel the Storm-god’s anger. In no. 20 the same king invokes the bull Seri, the Sun-god of Heaven, and the Storm-god of Lightning, dedicating to each of them a separate hymn. In her prayer to the Sun-goddess of Arinna (no. 22) Puduhepa appends separate invocations to Lelwani, Zintuhi, Mezzulla, and the Storm-god of Zippalanda, vowing to give them presents if her husband is cured.

The prayers addressed to the assembly of gods in its entirety constitute a special category within the genre of Hittite prayers (Houwink ten Cate 1987; Singer 1996: Ch. VIII). The rationale behind this exceptional form of imploring the divine world seems to be a failure to receive the hoped-for response from previously addressed individual deities (Singer 1996: 151). In this typically systematic Hittite approach, the desperate suppliant turns to the entire pantheon in a last effort to reach out to even the remotest of deities who might have caused the calamity. Mursili addressed two of his plague prayers to the assembly of gods, one arranged “geographically” by local gods (no. 13), the other “typologically” by categories of deities (no. 14). The full development of the type is represented by Muwatalli’s model prayer (no. 20), in which he addresses by name no less than 140 local deities. After the religious counter-reform of Hattusili and Puduhepa, this special type of prayer seems to have disappeared.
The Defendant Pleads His Case, or, How to Persuade a Hittite God

A priori, the pleading king assumes responsibility for any sin committed by him, by his predecessors, or by his subjects. A total denial of guilt is impossible in a divine court. Having said that, the possibilities of exculpation, self-justification, even protestation against unfair punishment, are remarkably manifold in Hittite prayers.

The reasons for divine wrath are disclosed through various methods of divination. The discovered sin is regarded as a collective burden on the entire Hittite society. It threatens to exact its heavy toll of punishment until it is fully confessed and propitiated. The sins of a king, even a deceased one, may bring calamity upon the entire land, and vice versa, the sins of the population may fatally affect the king himself (Furlani 1934: 37). In the oracular inquiries of Mursili and his successors responsibility for the sins is often attributed to the father and/or the forefathers of the suppliant. Suppiluliuma’s sins revealed in the plague prayers (nos. 8–14) are particularly heavy (murder of Tudhaliya the Younger; transgression against the oath with Egypt; neglect of the offerings to the Mala River), but Mursili, Muwatalli, and Hattusili also get their fair share in texts written by their successors (trial of Tawannanna; trial of Danuhepa; deposition of Urhi-Tessub, respectively). Mursili and Hattusili both refer to their young age and ignorance when the respective sins were committed (no. 14, § 12’ and no. 21, § 2, respectively), but the former also acknowledges that “the father’s sin comes upon his son, and so the sin of my father came upon me too. It is so. We have done it” (no. 11, § 8). Forgiveness is then demanded from the gods, just as a servant who confesses his sin is forgiven by his master (no. 11, § 9). Another recurring argument is that the persons who committed the sins have already died (no. 12, § 8; no. 21, §§ 2, 4’), and their sins have long been avenged many times over (no. 11, § 9). Hattusili even goes so far as to protest against the protraction of such old sins, committed by others, to his own days. This is simply “not right,” he audaciously claims (no. 21, §§ 2, 4’), using an expression freighted with ethical connotations (see Cohen 1997; 2002).

Having exhausted the non mea culpa arguments, the defendant tries to minimize the gravity of his own sins. Muwatalli reminds his god that “since we are only human” some offending words may have come out from his mouth unintentionally (no. 19, § 12’; cf. also no. 20, § 4). These evil words are stored somewhere in the dark earth, and the gods of the
Netherworld should find them and dispel them (ibid.). Puduhepa solicits help for her ailing husband by quoting the saying that "to a woman of the birthstool the deity yields her wish" (no. 22, §§ 6, 15′). Another recurring motif is that of the "orphan king" who implores the gods to become his parents (no. 2, § 2; no. 4c, § 17; cf. also § 24).

The “moral arguments” listed above seek to arouse the gods’ empathy for their excessively suffering servant. An entirely different rationale is subsumed in the “beneficial arguments,” by which the supplicant tries to demonstrate to his gods that it is in their best interest to put an end to the misery of the king and his people. This line of defense takes up proportionately more space in the texts, showing perhaps that the Hittites thought that, after all, even gods would more willingly act out of self-interest than out of mercy for their servants. The ravages caused by the Kaska tribesmen to Hittite cult centers in the north are described at length in the prayer of Arnuwanda and Asmunikal (no. 5), whereas Muršili’s plague prayers lay the emphasis on the decimation of the cult personnel (nos. 8–14). The gods are simply requested to realize that if the disastrous situation continues there will be nobody left to prepare their sacrificial bread and libations. Closely related is the “only in Hatti” motif, whereby the gods are persuaded that in no other land would they be so generously treated as in their own “homeland” (no. 5, §§ 2′ff.; no. 8, §§ 2f.). The most “personal” argument of this kind is found in Hattusili’s and Puduhepa’s insistence on their dedication to the Storm-god of Nerik and his cult-places (nos. 21–22). They expect compensation from the young god’s parents, the Sun-goddess of Arinna and the Storm-god of Hatti, just as a wetnurse would get her reward from the parents of a child that she had brought up (no. 21, § 9′).

The ultimate modus of the do ut des principle is the conditional vowing of presents. In most prayers the reward promised to the gods if they respond to the supplicant’s wishes is just a better execution of the prescribed rites, along with constant praise and adulation (e.g., no. 12, §§ 7–8). Puduhepa, however, vows specific cult objects to the gods addressed in her prayer if they keep Hattusili alive (no. 22): for Lelwani a full-size silver and gold effigy of Hattusili (§ 9′); a [great] ornament for Zintuhi (§ 12′); an endowment of [towns?] with their inhabitants for Mezzulla (§ 14′); and a golden shield weighing two minas for the Storm-god of Zippalanda (§ 16′). Her son Tudhaliya vows to build a temple for the Sun-goddess of Arinna in her town, if he returns victorious from the battlefield (no. 24, § 2′).
The Ritual Context

A description of the ceremonies and rituals performed in conjunction with praying is rarely preserved in the Hittite texts. The general assumption is that even when there is no clear indication to this effect, the presentation of the prayer was always embedded in a ritual of offering ceremonies (Houwink ten Cate 1969: 87). This shortage in textual data, coupled with the lack of pictorial evidence, enhances the importance of the two extant descriptions: in Muwatalli’s prayer to the assembly of gods (no. 20; Singer 1996: Ch. IX), and in an early incantation to the Sun-goddess of Arinna (no. 3).

In both prayers the action takes place at daybreak on the roof. Muwatalli’s prayer does not specify on which roof (no. 20, § 1). In no. 3 the king goes with his servant to the sacred salimani at daybreak, and the ritual ends on the roof of the temple of the Sun-goddess of Arinna (§§ 12″–13″). In both prayers the suppliant faces the rising sun, and no. 3, § 1 even specifies that the prayer must be performed on a clear day. One should not generalize from two examples for the entire corpus, but the close parallel between the only preserved rituals is noteworthy, especially in view of the fact that Muwatalli’s prayer is not specifically addressed to a solar deity. As the sun rises, the king performs the libations and the breaking of the bread, and then says his prayer. Muwatalli’s prayer provides detailed data on the kind and the quantity of offerings presented to each deity (or group of deities) on two wickerwork offering tables set up on the roof (Singer 1996: 156). Eventually, the offerings are burnt on two fireplaces of wood.

The Muwatalli prayer does not refer to other participants in the ceremony, but no. 3, § 2 specifies that “nobody should bow down and nobody should say anything,” obviously referring to some audience. The same emerges from two parallel prayers of Mursili which conclude with the statement: “And the congregation cries out ‘So be it!’” Perhaps the list of governors appended to some copies of the prayer of Arnuwanda and Asmunikal (no. 5) is also relevant to the question of the audience present at the recitation of royal prayers.

There is rarely any indication regarding the city in which a praying ceremony was performed, but the obvious assumption is that usually the king prayed in the capital. According to the colophon of no. 8 the scribe reciting the prayer on behalf of Mursili invoked the Sun-goddess of
Arinna for seven days in Hattusa and for seven days in Arinna. In no. 7 (which served as a prototype for no. 8) the fragmentary colophon refers to Arinna, Zi[ppalanda], and a third, unpreserved name (Hattusa?). The prayer recorded in no. 8 was recited for two weeks, whereas in no. 9 no time limitation is indicated: “When the scribe presents daily a plea on behalf of the king before Telipinu.”

The posture and gestures of the suppliant can only be glimpsed through textual references, which use in connection with praying the verbs “raise the hands,” “bow” or “kneel down.” None of the pictorial representations of the Hittite royal pair can specifically be associated with a praying ceremony (as claimed by Furlani /Otten 1957–1971: 171), though the presentation of sacrificial offerings is often portrayed in Hittite reliefs.

**The Evolution of the Hittite Prayer**

Short spells and requests for blessings pronounced by an officiating priest on behalf of the royal family are already embedded within Old Hittite magical rituals and festival texts. For example, the following incantations appear in the ritual for the purification of the royal couple (Otten/Souček 1969: 22–31): “Mercy, O gods! I have hereby removed the impurities of the king, the queen and the people of Hatti. . . . Just as the Sun-god and the Storm-god are everlasting, so let the king, the queen and the children be everlasting!” Such prayerlike passages, which belong to the Old Anatolian cult layer (Popko 1995: 81f.), are occasionally found also in Hattian (Klinger 1996: 738f.) and Luwian (Starke 1990: 519f.) rituals.

The short Old Hittite requests for blessings developed into larger invocations requesting the god(s) to protect the king from perjury (nos. 1–2) or to grant him success and victory on the battlefield (no. 3). These are rather general requests of well-being, still lacking reference to some concrete occasion, as is typical for later personal prayers. The exact date of these early invocations is difficult to establish. They contain typical Old Hittite linguistic elements, but the extant copies exhibit only Middle or Late Hittite scripts.

The first Hittite prayers attributed to specific persons are those of Kantuzzili (no. 4a), Arnuwanda and Asmunikal (no. 5), and Taduhepa (no. 6), all figures of the Early Hittite Empire in the first half of the 14th
century B.C.E. In this period, characterized by a marked Hurrian influence (for example in Hurrian royal names), hymns and prayers written in Hurrian make their first appearance (Wilhelm 1991; 1994). It is difficult to indicate the source of these poorly understood compositions for lack of comparative material, but their origin may well have been in some northern Syrian or south(east)ern Anatolian region in which Hurrian was not only spoken but also written as a culture language (Wilhelm 1991: 40; cf. also Singer 1995: 126ff.). Kantuzzili, the high priest of Kizzuwatna, played a dominant role in the introduction of the new genre of personal prayer, which contains some of the most powerful imagery in Hittite literature (Singer 2002b).

No prayers of Suppiluliuma I, the great conqueror of the Hittite Empire, have so far been found. But his son Mursili II (c. 1321–1285), the most prolific of Hittite kings, has left us no fewer than a dozen prayers, two thirds of which are preoccupied with his plague- and enemy-oppressed kingdom (nos. 8–14), and one third of which deals with the tragic loss of his wife (nos. 15–18). Mursili’s direct authorship has been questioned by some who deny the ability of kings to compose a text. But as pointedly phrased by Güterbock (1964: 111), “Mursili’s personality speaks so vividly from the texts that go under his name that it is obvious that he must at least have given directions for their formulation, if he did not actually dictate them.” This holds especially true for the prayers dealing with the sickness and death of Gassuliyawiya, which contain some of the most touching personal testimonies in Hittite literature. On the other hand, in some of the prayers dealing with the plague Mursili incorporated, almost verbatim, an older invocation to the Sun-goddess of Arinna (no. 7), which is itself an adaptation of a Babylonian hymn to Shamash.

From Muwatalli II (c. 1295–1272) we have two well-preserved prayers (nos. 19–20) and fragments of a third, which is not included in this volume (see Singer 1996: 165ff.). Although Muwatalli occasionally repeated metaphors from his father’s prayers, his compositions are distinguished by originality and exhaustiveness.9

The usurper Hattusili “III” (c. 1267–1237), his queen Puduhepa, and their son Tudhaliya “IV” (c. 1237–1209) have left us three prayers (nos. 21–22, 24) and many fragments of others, three of which are included in this volume (no. 23). The closely related prayers of Hattusili and Puduhepa exhibit a highly intimate personal style, differing from that of their predecessors. No prayers have come down to us from the last king of the Hittite Empire, Suppiluliuma II.
The Prayers as a Source for Hittite Religion, History, and Thought

Prayers are among the most personal and imaginative of Hittite texts, and thus provide various important insights into the intellectual world of Hittite royalty. Obviously, the best illuminated aspects are the various domains of religion, as shown in the following examples. The human-like nature of gods, both physical and mental, is particularly highlighted in prayers. The supplicant often refers to the eyes and the ears of a deity, but in no. 1, § 4’ we also find a rare reference to the “thousand eyelashes” of the Sun-goddess of the Netherworld. “The innermost soul” (no. 4a, § 6’) of the gods can at times be unforgiving and vengeful (e.g., no. 12, § 8), and at others merciful and well-disposed (no. 13, § 3). The latter is evident especially in the hoped for future and the idyllic past: “O gods, my lords! Since ages past you have been inclined towards [men] and have [not] abandoned mankind. And mankind [became] populous and your divine servants [were] numerous.”. However, at present the gods irrationally decimate Hatti’s population, eventually causing damage also to themselves. When nobody is left to serve them, they are bound to blame their victim Mursili (no. 10, § 3’): “Why [don’t you give us] offering bread and libation?”

In most enumerations of deities the pantheon is divided into two “horizontal” moieties, gods and goddesses (see especially the long list of local gods in no. 20), and two “vertical” ones, gods of heaven and earth (or primeval gods), the latter called in no. 19, § 2 by their Mesopotamian designation (Annunaki). Both groups bow down when the Sun-god crosses “the gate of heaven” (no. 8, § 4) in his quadriga (no. 4c, § 6). A unique and enigmatic reference to the Sun-god arising from the sea is found in Muwatalli’s great prayer (no. 20, § 66). Other deities are not as vividly described, but the prayer of Puduhepa contains the parade example of a theological syncretism: “In Hatti you gave yourself the name Sun-goddess of Arinna, but the land which you made, that of the cedar, there you gave yourself the name Hebat” (no. 22, § 2). The cult of the gods is described in much detail, aiming to demonstrate that in no other land would they be treated as well as in Hatti (e.g., no. 5, §§ 1ff.; no. 8, §§ 2ff.). Evidently, each king had his own favorite deities whom he more attentively served than the others, but, quite interestingly, Mursili claims to have a non-discriminating attitude: “When I celebrated the festivals, I busied myself for all the gods. I did not pick out any single temple” (no. 11, § 2). The ways befitting the virtous observant are listed in Kantuzzili’s
exculpation: not to swear by god and then break his oath, not to eat sacrosanct food, not to expropriate an ox or a sheep of the gods, not to eat or drink without sharing (no. 4a, §§ 3'f.).

In the domain of black magic we have the grave, though somewhat obscure accusations of Mursili against his Babylonian stepmother, who allegedly killed his wife through sorcery (no. 17, §§ 3'–4'). The substitute ritual aimed at saving Gassuliyawiya (no. 15) closely resembles the ritual for the installation of a substitute king (Kümmel 1967). The angry gods are evoked by aromatic substances to return to their abode from wherever they are: in heaven among the gods, in the sea, in the mountains, or in an enemy land (no. 8, § 1; no. 9, § 3). Methods of divination are listed in the infinite quest for the reason of the gods’ wrath: seers, diviners, old women, augurs, “men of god” (prophets?), dreams and incubation (no. 4a, § 6'; no. 8, § 7; no. 11, § 11).

Generally speaking, prayers are seldom a major source for the reconstruction of history. Hittite prayers, however, because of their pragmatic character, contain important, sometimes even singular historical information. Besides the hymnic parts, much shorter than in other Near Eastern corpora, the Hittite prayer consists of a sincere “dialogue” between the suppliant and his god, in which he reports all his problems and fears. In that respect, a confession in a prayer is a more reliable source than the usual genres of historiographic writing, in which emphasis is laid on success rather than failure, on praiseworthy deeds rather than contemptible transgressions.

The prayer of Arnuwanda and Asmunikal provides the most detailed source for the deteriorating situation in the north, with a list of towns captured and ruined by the Kaska tribes, first and foremost Nerik (no. 5, §§ 28'ff.). A century later Hattusili describes in poetic terms how he lifted Nerik up “like a stone out of deep water,” and how he rebuilt the revered city which nobody before him managed to liberate (no. 21, § 8'). Mursili II is no doubt the most important provider of historical data, from a rare reference to his illustrious namesake’s conquest of Aleppo and Babylon (no. 8, § 8), down to the military difficulties of his own days (ibid.). Most important, however, are the facts he reveals about his father’s reign. The circumstances of Suppiluliuma’s usurpation of the throne, after the assassination of the legitimate heir, Tudhaliya the Younger, and the exile of his brothers to Alasiya (Cyprus), are recorded exclusively in one of the plague prayers (no. 12, § 3). Of utmost importance are also the data concerning Suppiluliuma’s dealings with the Egyptians, which tally with the evidence recorded in the Deeds (see...
Güterbock 1960; Bryce 1998: 192ff.). We hear about the Kurustammat Treaty, the Egyptian widow’s letter, the murder of Suppiluliuma’s son, the two attacks on Amqa led by the generals Lupakki and Tarhunta-zalma, and finally, the plague caused by the Egyptian prisoners (no. 11, §§ 4f.; no. 13, § 5; no. 14, §§ 11’ff.). As for Mursili’s own reign, we learn mainly about his agitated relations with his devious step-mother (nos. 15–18), but an oblique reference to a solar eclipse in his tenth year (no. 17, § 7) may provide a valuable anchor for Hittite absolute chronology. The prayers of Hattusili and his wife are naturally preoccupied with the justification of his regime by highlighting his military and religious achievements in the north, primarily the liberation and restoration of Nerik (no. 21, §§ 8’ff.; no. 22, §§ 2ff.). However, Hattusili also refers to other important events, such as the controversial legal suits against Tawananna (no. 21, § 2) and Danuhepa (§ 4’), and Muwatalli’s transfer of the capital to Tarhuntassa (§ 3’).

Last but not least, the corpus of Hittite prayers is perhaps the principal repository of Hittite contemplative thinking, particularly valuable in view of the conspicuous scarcity of Hittite wisdom literature (for which see Beckman 1997b, with bibliography). In face of military catastrophe, grave illness, or the death of a loved one, man disregards the conventional rules of prudent phrasing, and cries out from the bottom of his heart for deliverance and for a better comprehension of his world. We discover in these prayers many a moralistic reflection and poetical gem, often characterized by a deeply pessimistic concept of life.

Metaphors and similes draw from the observation of nature and everyday life: “As the snake does not [miss] its hole, may the evil word return to his own mouth” (no. 2, § 5’); “The bird takes refuge in the cage and it lives. I, too, have taken refuge with the Storm-god of Lightning and he has kept me alive” (no. 20, § 71; cf. no. 11, § 9); “Just as the Storm-god fills the mother’s breast for our benefit, [so let . . .]. And just as we are satisfied with cold water, in this same way [let] the Stormgod, my lord, [give us(?)] water(?)[ . . .]” (no. 19, § 12’); “Wherever I flow like water, I do not know my location. Like a boat, I do not know when will I arrive at land” (no. 4b, § 26”; cf. no. 4c, § 18); “As the rear wheel does not catch up with the front wheel, [let] the evil word likewise [not catch up with the king and the queen] (no. 2, § 6’); “The merchant man holds the scales under the Sun and falsifies the scales. But I, what have I done to my god?” (no. 4b, § 16’ = no. 4c, § 15).

Human suffering is portrayed in powerful words especially in Mursili’s mourning of his wife (no. 18) and in the prayer of Kantuzzili to an angry
god (no. 4a). In the latter we also encounter the cynical remark on the perfidious nature of men: “Do not denigrate my reputation in the presence of other humans. Those to whom I did good, none of them saves [me]” (no. 4a, § 12'). A daring protest against collective punishment of the good together with the evil appears in the prayers of Mursili (no 8, § 10) and Muwatalli (no. 19, §§ 6, 10). The helplessness of human beings vis-à-vis divine wrath is pointedly expressed by Mursili: “To mankind, our wisdom has been lost, and whatever we do right comes to nothing” (no. 8, § 7).

Finally, the basic human condition is epitomized in the following reminder to the immortal gods: “Life is bound up with death and death is bound up with life. A human does not live forever. The days of his life are counted. Even if a human lived forever, and evil sickness of man were to be present, would it not be a grievance for him?” (no. 4a, § 5').

Notes

1. Cf., e.g., Farber 1995: 1900 for the Mesopotamian magico-religious thought and terminology, which completely ignores the distinctions reflected in our definitions.


3. Cf., e.g., Foster 1993: 39: “Hymns tend to be lyrical expression of praise, together with pleas for general well-being. Prayers tend to be petitions for personal well-being.”

4. Note, e.g., that CTH 376 (Hymne et prière de Mursili II à déesse d’Arinna) lumps together plague prayers (A–E) and a prayer for the health of Gassuliyawiya (F). For a tentative reclassification of this entry, see Carruba 1983.

5. See, e.g., the sword dedicated by Tudhiliya to the Storm-god on the occasion of his victory over Assuwa (Ertekin/Ediz/Ünal 1993).

6. In any case, it hardly points to a “democratization” of Hittite prayers in the early empire, as claimed by Lebrun 1980: 419.

7. Whether the king could read or not is irrelevant. Even if he was illiterate, as some maintain (Güterbock 1964: 111), he could still recite his prayers, as any believer can.

8. The predominance of solar deities is even more conspicuous in Egyptian prayers (Assmann 1991: 827).

9. I differ on this point from Güterbock (1958: 245), who maintained that “it is obvious that Muwatalli’s prayer is much inferior to those of Kantuzzili and Mursili.”