

Life and Society in the Hittite World



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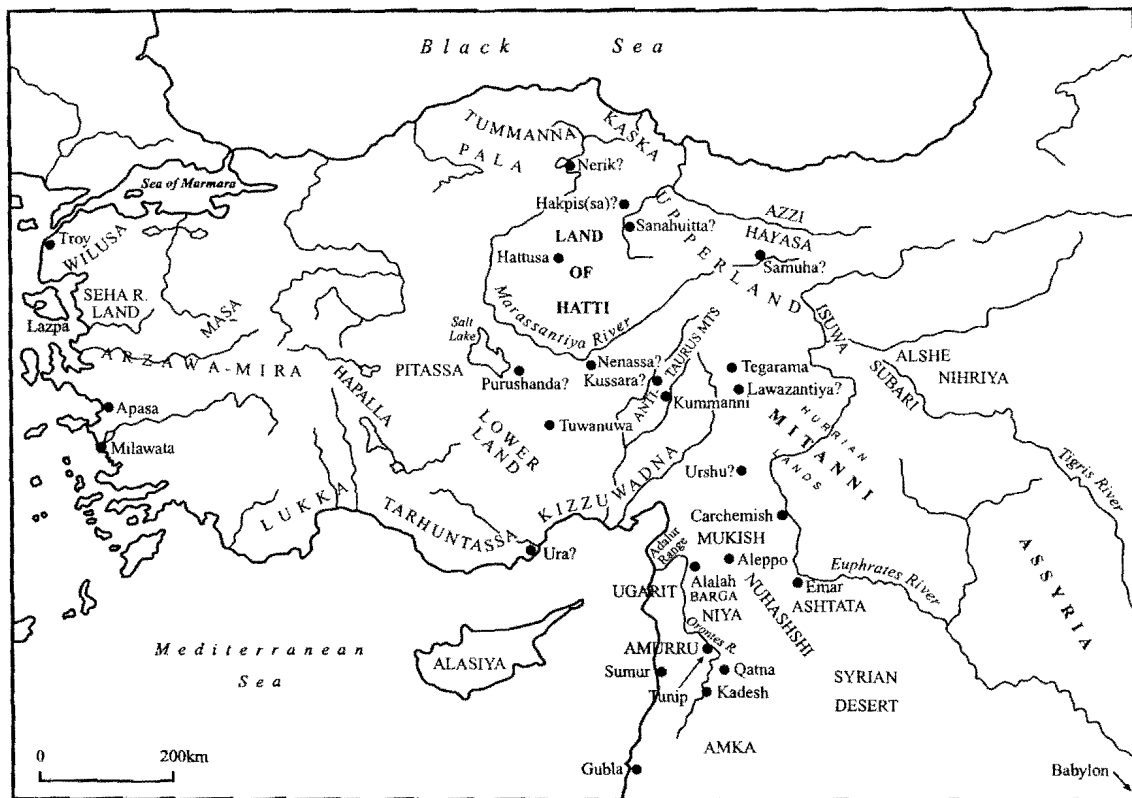
Note: All dates are approximate. Sequential reigns are bracketed when it is impossible to suggest even approximate dates for individual kings.

^a For possible earlier kings called Tudhaliya and Huzziya, see Bryce (1988a: 65 n. 3).

^b Includes period of co-regency.

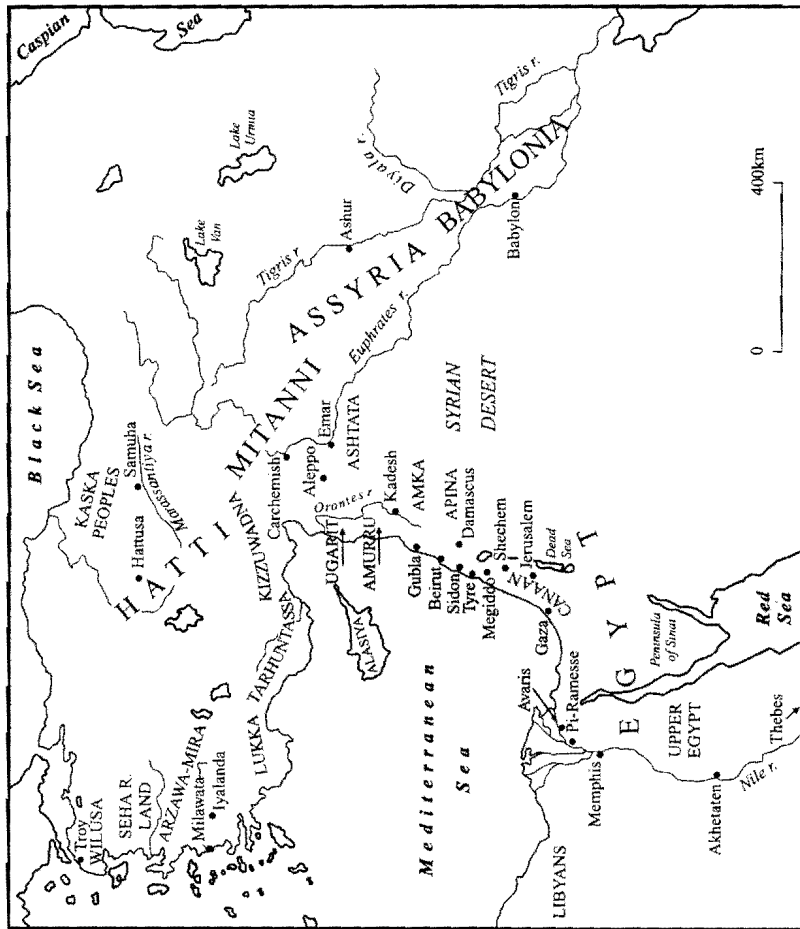
^c Conjectural Great King of Hatti, see Bryce (1988a: 354-5).

^d 2nd period as king?



Map I. The World of the Hittites

Introduction



Map 2. The Near East in the Late Bronze Age

Some 28 kilometres east of the city of Izmir on Turkey's western coast, there is a mountain pass called Karabel. Overlooking the pass is a relief cut in the face of the rock. It depicts a male human figure armed with bow and spear, and sword with crescent-shaped pommel. On his head is a tall peaked cap. A weathered inscription provides information about him—for those able to read it. Herodotos visited the monument in the fifth century BC. He describes it in his *Histories* and provides a translation of the inscription which, he declares, is written in the sacred script of Egypt: 'With my own shoulders I won this land.'¹ The conqueror does not tell us his name, but his costume is part Egyptian, part Ethiopian, and he is to be identified with Sesostris, prince of Egypt—at least that is what Herodotos would have us believe!

Twenty-three centuries later, in the year 1834, a French adventurer-explorer called Charles Texier is searching in central Turkey for the remains of a Celtic city called Tavium, referred to in Roman sources. The locals tell him of some ancient ruins 150 kilometres east of Ankara. Texier visits the ruins. They are vast—far exceeding in size anything described in Classical sources. One of the entrance gates to the city bears a relief of a warrior—armed, beardless, with long hair, wearing a tasselled helmet and a kilt. Texier is mystified. It is like no other figure known from the ancient world. The locals tell him that there are more figures nearby. They lead him to an outcrop of rock, about thirty minutes' walk from the ruins. This brings further surprises. The rock walls are decorated with relief sculptures—processions of human figures clothed in strange garments, of hitherto unknown types. The reliefs are accompanied by mysterious inscriptions, totally unintelligible. They can be neither read nor identified. But they are dubbed 'hieroglyphic' because of a superficial resemblance to the hieroglyphic script of Egypt. The whole thing remains a bewildering mystery.

We move forward four decades, to the year 1876. In London a

CHAPTER 8

The Gods

Divine Lords, lend me your ear, and listen to these my pleas!
And the words which I will make into a plea to the Divine
Lords, these words, Divine Lords, accept and listen to them!¹

Quite apart from other considerations, monotheistic religions like Christianity, Judaism, and Islam have one great advantage over their polytheistic counterparts: communication with one's god is generally a much simpler, more straightforward process. Worshipers in a multi-godded world have to deal with a plethora of deities, and constantly run the risk of incurring divine wrath by failing to identify which specific one needs supplicating or placating on a particular occasion. And when appeal is made to a number of gods, there is always the danger of inadvertently leaving out one or two, who will certainly take offence. Nor is there any clearly developed sense of divine omnipresence. In the Hittite religious milieu the worshipper had to be sure that a deity was on hand and actually listening when a prayer was offered up to him or her, so that the prayer would not go astray. The deity's current whereabouts might be unknown. Elaborate rituals might be necessary to entice him or her to the place where his or her services were required. Special priests or ritualists were often employed for the task of divine *evocatio*²—god-botherers in the true sense of the word. Sometimes extensive, time-consuming oracular enquiry was needed to determine which god's wrath was being vented on the community, and why.

Further, a multitude of gods require a multitude of temples and temple personnel, and a constant flow of gifts and sacrifices as rewards for services rendered or promised, or to ensure that services are not withheld. Monotheistic worshippers are spared much of this. Their god is both omnipresent and omniscient. Prayers can be offered to him at any place and at any time. Churches or synagogues or mosques may be built and rituals performed in his honour. But these are non-essential trappings, for the omniscient god can see into

the minds and hearts of all his creatures, and for this reason the true believer does not need to make tangible demonstration of his devotion with gifts or other material goods in order to secure the god's favours.

'An Extreme Form of Polytheism'

In place of a single omnipresent, all-knowing deity, the Hittites believed that the world was populated by a multitude, indeed a plenitude, of spirits and divine forces. The whole cosmos throbbed with supernatural life. Gods inhabited the realms above and below the earth. And on the earth every rock, mountain, tree, spring, and river had its resident god or spirit. These were not mere abstractions, but vital living entities. Even substances like silver and fire were regarded as conscious living forces endowed with human emotions: 'The fire, the son of the Sun God, bore ill will, and it came to the point that he went forth into the dark night, he slid into the dark night, and he coiled himself together like a serpent.'³

The Hittites were polytheists in the fullest possible sense. By the time of the New Kingdom they practised what has been referred to as an extreme form of polytheism.⁴ To begin with, local Hattic deities predominated, but with the political and military expansion of the Hittite world, the divine ranks of the pantheon were swelled by new members, many of whom were the gods of the city states and kingdoms that had succumbed to the military might of Hatti. The act of removing the statues of the local gods and relocating them in the temples of the conqueror physically marked the transference of these gods to the conqueror's pantheon.⁵ No longer could they be summoned by the conquered, for the material casings into which they entered had now been removed to another land. In effecting this transfer, the conqueror showed all due respect and deference to his newly acquired gods, and perhaps it was regular practice for him to go through a process of seeking the gods' consent for their transference.⁶ For their goodwill had to be secured if henceforth they were to extend their protection over, and generally act in the interests of, the land of their new worshippers.

In this land they retained their individual identities, even if they were identical in function and character and name with the gods of other conquered territories, or gods already long established in the conqueror's homeland. Thus there were a plethora of Storm

Gods, of Sun Gods, of Ishtars or Ishtar-equivalents.⁷ All were or became members of the Hittite divine assemblage and were differentiated merely by adding to their names their local places of origin. The result was an enormously complex, unsystematic, and sometimes thoroughly confusing agglomeration of deities making up the pantheon.⁸ In this respect the Hittites went far beyond the relatively systematic pantheons of the Egyptian and Mesopotamian worlds. And they took great pride in doing so. Their boast that Hatti was 'the land of a thousand gods' was hardly an exaggerated one. Palaic gods from northern Anatolia, gods from the Luwian regions of western and southern Anatolia,⁹ Hurrian gods, gods taken from a whole range of cult centres in Mesopotamia and Syria were all added into the Hittite pantheon, so that eventually the majority of the pantheon was of foreign origin. Liturgies to foreign gods were often sung or recited in the native language of their place of origin.

Leaving aside theological considerations, the Hittites' unfiltered reception of ever more deities from all regions of their expanding realm was not without its advantages. In the first place it provided another dimension to the high degree of tolerance—political, social, cultural—which Hittite kings were at pains to cultivate in their dealings with their subject peoples. It reflected a policy of what Professor Akurgal has referred to as 'conscious politically conditioned religious tolerance'.¹⁰ To boast of a thousand gods was on the one hand to demonstrate how far and over how many peoples the Hittites' conquests extended. On the other hand it demonstrated their policy not merely of tolerating but of absorbing and assimilating within the fabric of their own culture and society elements of the cultures and societies of the peoples who made up their realm. The lack of an official religious doctrine or of any form of theological dogma enshrined in sacred texts like the Bible, the Koran, or the Torah, ensured that there were no obstacles to the reception of foreign cults and deities from anywhere the Hittites wished, whether for political or other reasons.

Religious Reforms

In the final decades of the empire, attempts were made at the highest levels to bring some order to the vast array of gods who were crowding the pantheon. In her role as chief priestess, the indefatigable

Puduhepa, wife of Hattusili III, embarked on a major review of religious practices and traditions throughout the Hittite world, and began rationalizing the pantheon by establishing syncretisms between some of its chief deities, in particular identifying Hittite gods with their Hurrian counterparts. Thus the great Storm God of Hatti was now formally equated with Teshub. His consort (as recognized in the official state cult) the Sun Goddess of Arinna, chief female deity of the Hittite world, was equated with Hurrian Hepat, as reflected in the opening lines of the queen's prayer to the goddess: 'O Sun Goddess of Arinna, My Lady, Queen of all countries! You are called "Sun Goddess of Arinna" in the Land of Hatti, but in the coun-try which you have made the cedar land you are called "Hepat"'.¹¹

In her purely Hurrian milieu Hepat, who was in origin a kind of Syrian mother-goddess figure,¹² had never actually had the character of a solar deity. But her prime position alongside her consort Teshub in the Hurrian pantheon and in numerous individual cult centres in Syria and eastern Anatolia made quite natural the syncretism with the most important divine couple in the Hittite pantheon. The couple's offspring were now reduced essentially to one prominent son Sharruma, a southern Anatolian Hurrian god who was equated with the Storm God of Nerik, and a daughter Allanzu, who had a particularly close association with the cult centre Kummanni. Sharruma achieved high prominence in the last decades of the empire as the personal deity of King Tudhaliya IV. At Yazılıkaya he appears in Chamber A in the file of female deities (the only male on the female side) immediately behind his mother Hepat, and in Chamber B he is closely linked with his protégé Tudhaliya.

On one level these syncretisms were obviously aimed at reducing the multiplicity of like gods in the pantheon. But they also clearly reflect the progressive Hurrianization of Hittite culture. This had become particularly marked in Hattusili's reign, no doubt partly under his Hurrian wife's influence. The syncretizing process seems not to have extended, at least officially, below the highest level of divine society. But further efforts were made to give some sort of system to the divine ranks of the pantheon by new groupings of male and female deities into *kaluti* or 'circles', as depicted in the separate male and female files at Yazılıkaya.¹³

Such reforms were not just a matter of theological housekeeping.

They must also have been intended to promote a greater sense of coherence and unity, both cultural and political, within the empire as a whole. Not a plethora of different gods of different regions, but the same gods for all peoples and all regions of the empire. In theory the advantages are obvious, if one takes the overlord's point of view. But care had to be taken that the promotion of imperial unity, on a cultural and political level, and official attempts to rationalize and systematize the gods of the realm, did not run contrary to the spirit of tolerance in which the Hittites obviously took such pride, and to the preservation and maintenance of local traditions, local beliefs, local gods. Theological rationalization, abstract concepts of cultural homogeneity and unity count for little with local communities if they believe that the individuality and the very 'localness' and distinctiveness of the gods whom they worship are in danger of being lost to a broader, more impersonal unity.

Such considerations must have been taken into account in the comprehensive programme of religious reform, including a census of local cults, undertaken by Tudhaliya IV, perhaps in continuation of the initiative taken by his mother Puduhepa.¹⁴ Indeed the programme may well have been a collaborative one between mother and son, at least in the early years of Tudhaliya's reign. To begin with, Tudhaliya sent officials to all parts of the realm to inspect the condition of the temples and sanctuaries, their personnel and equipment. Temples that had fallen into disrepair were renovated or rebuilt, old cult equipment, old divine images were replaced with new, often of precious metals in place of original wood or stone, the numbers of temple personnel were increased, land-grants were made for the upkeep of temples and sanctuaries.

There were no doubt several reasons for this burst of religious activity. On the one level, Tudhaliya obviously sought to build up as much credit as he could with the divine powers in the ever-darkening final years of the empire. But perhaps just as importantly he was seeking to assure the peoples of his kingdom that far from threatening to destroy their cherished religious traditions, or showing indifference to them, he was in fact intent on strengthening them beyond all previous measure. This too as a demonstration that in spite of the mounting threats which were beleaguering him from many different quarters, his hands were still firmly on the reins of empire, and his concerns were still very much with the welfare of his subjects.

The Nature of the Gods

To the adherents of a religion whose god epitomizes perfect goodness, the gods of the Hittites, and for that matter those of the Near Eastern world in general, may appear to have offered little that was either morally or spiritually uplifting. By and large the gods of the ancient Near East, as indeed those of ancient Greece and Rome, were human beings on a grand scale. They were subject to the same range of emotions, like love, anger, fear, jealousy, they sometimes neglected their responsibilities, they could deceive and be deceived, they enjoyed the pleasures of the flesh, and, to judge from Hittite festival texts, they liked a variety of entertainment—dancing and music, horse races, comedy acts, mock battles, and athletics contests. 'Are the desires of gods and men different? In no way! Do their natures differ? In no way!'¹⁵

The gods' relationship with their mortal worshippers is like that of a king with his subjects, a master of a household with his servants. And like kings on earth the great gods lived in magnificent palaces, with a staff of subordinate gods to assist them in their duties and tend to their every need. Just as subjects and servants are dependent on their king or master for their welfare and well-being, so too are the worshippers of a god. And just as a master is dependent on the labours of his servants for his physical sustenance and well-being, so too a god is dependent on his worshippers. A god who neglects his responsibilities to his subordinates can become the victim of his own negligence, just like a bad master. Prayers to such a god can contain rebukes and direct appeals to his self-interest, in the hope that he will be shamed into resuming his responsibilities.

Yet prone though the gods were to the frailties of humankind, they none the less were concerned to ensure the exercise of justice, morality, and right conduct amongst their mortal worshippers. Again an element of self-interest was involved. For without such things law and order break down within society, and it was the gods as beneficiaries of the fruits of organized human endeavour who would ultimately bear the consequences of this. A life lived in obedience to the gods in which a mortal pursued no evil course ensured that the mortal would enjoy the protection and blessings of divine favour, reflected in the concept of *para handantatar*. But those who offended the gods, either through neglecting due observance of their ceremonies or through sinful conduct, would surely incur the full weight of divine wrath. A violated oath, an act of parricide or

fratricide, illegal seizure of another's rightful authority, other crimes committed by mortals against their fellow creatures would be adjudged and punished by their divine overlords.

Vengeance might sometimes be slow in coming. But sooner or later the penalty for sinful conduct must be paid—even by a subsequent generation, for the Hittites firmly believed in the notion of the sins of the fathers being visited upon their sons. Thus in King Mursili II's Second Plague Prayer: 'It is indeed true that man is sinful. My father sinned and offended against the word of the Storm God, My Lord. Though I myself have in no way sinned, it is indeed true that the father's sin falls upon his son, and my father's sin has fallen upon me.'¹⁶ More comprehensive still are the threats of divine vengeance directed at temple officials: 'When someone arouses a god's anger, is it only on him that the god takes revenge? Does he not also take vengeance on his wife, his children, his descendants, his family, his male and female slaves, his cattle and sheep together with his crop? Will he not destroy him utterly? Be sure to show special reverence for the word of a god!'¹⁷

Any god could be invoked as a defender of justice and punisher of wrongdoing. Thus Hattusili III proclaimed that his patron deity Ishtar had acknowledged the justice of his cause in his conflict with Urhi-Teshub and guaranteed his final victory. The Storm God too was sometimes invoked as a god of justice. When vassal and international treaties were drawn up, all the gods of both treaty-partners were called upon to witness and protect the terms of the treaty, and to punish violation of these terms. They alone had the power and the right to do so, for such agreements once divinely endorsed became sacrosanct and inviolable.

Hittite prayers often have the character of a defence made before a judge in a lawcourt, a concept common to many religious systems both ancient and modern. In the Hittite world, the most frequent type of prayer was the *arkuwar* (cognate with English 'argument' from the Latin *argumentum*) in which the worshipper pleaded his case before a divine judge, defending himself against an accusation, or justifying an action of which he stood accused, and perhaps confessing to some wrongdoing in the hope that the god would deal more leniently with him.¹⁸ Considerations of right and justice rather than grace and mercy generally determined how gods judged and dealt with those who appeared before the divine tribunal. Yet they might be prevailed upon to discard their hostility and to show a

quality of unstrained mercy, by prayers and rituals of a type designated by the term *mugawar*: 'O Sun God, My Lord, Just Lord of Judgement, King of the Universe. You rule constantly over the lands. You alone bestow victory. You alone in your justice always have mercy. You alone are just, you alone always have mercy, you alone respond to prayers of supplication. You alone are a merciful Sun God. You alone always show mercy.'¹⁹ Just as a master may forgive a slave who confesses to having done wrong so, one may hope, a god will treat kindly a sinful but contrite suppliant.

Solar Gods

In the introductory lines of the Hittite Appu myth (see Chapter 12), reference is made to a deity 'who always vindicates just men, but chops down evil men like trees'. The deity, unnamed, is almost certainly the Sun God, supreme Lord of Justice in the Hittite world and a close counterpart to the Babylonian Shamash. He is the god who appears first (almost invariably) in the list of deities invoked in treaties,²⁰ he who as the all-seeing divine power presides over justice and right conduct on earth. 'O Sun God of Heaven, My Lord, Shepherd of Mankind!' prays King Muwatalli, 'You rise, O Sun God of Heaven, from the sea and go up to heaven. O Sun God of Heaven, daily you sit in judgement upon man, dog, pig, and the wild beasts of the field.'²¹

Of all the surviving Hittite royal prayers, more than half are addressed to solar deities. The obvious reason, comments Dr Singer, is the Sun's central function as the 'shepherd of mankind', a Mesopotamian concept in origin. 'A suppliant who is uncertain of the reason for which he is being punished by the gods naturally directs his prayer to the all-seeing Sun, who can reveal his sin and can soften his punishment. The Sun is best informed not only on "terrestrial" matters, but, as the "Sun God of the Gods", he is also aware of all that happens up in heaven and can reveal the cause of the anger of other gods.'²² This concept of a supreme Lord of Justice, an all-seeing Sun God of the Gods, a god who appears to all humankind as a universal celestial disc shedding light and warmth on all lands, might seem to indicate that here at least was a deity who was everywhere recognized as a single, indivisible, divine omnipresence. Yet neither here nor anywhere else is such a notion to be found in Hittite religious tradition. As other gods appeared

in multiples, so too there were a number of solar deities—and of both sexes.

The concept of a female sun deity was adopted initially from the indigenous Hattic culture. By the Hittite period, if not earlier, there were dual aspects to the deity's role, for she was both a goddess of heaven and a goddess of the underworld; she was honoured as 'Queen of Heaven' and 'Torch of the Hatti-Land', while her chthonic associations were indicated by her epithets 'Mother-Earth', 'Queen of the Earth'.²³ The concept of duality may have arisen out of attempts to explain the sun's disappearance below the western horizon in the evening and its reappearance on the eastern horizon the following day. What happened to it in between times? It must have passed the night in the netherworld regions—as Sun Goddess of the Earth, Mistress of the Underworld. But why a female deity? Was the nature of the sun sexually transformed according to the hours of the day?²⁴ Did the duality arise from two separate traditions which were never properly reconciled—that of a predominantly male-oriented sky-god cult representing an intrusive Indo-European element into central Anatolia, and that of an earth-goddess cult originating with the autochthonous population of the region? Something similar has been postulated for the early development of Greek religion in the second millennium. But this is all very speculative, and we should remember that the Hittites were quite comfortable with the notion of a deity who had both male and female aspects, reflecting the different roles which the deity fulfilled in different contexts.

In her chthonic role the Sun Goddess was commonly identified with the Hattic goddess Lelwani, Queen of the Gods of the Infernal Regions.²⁵ Lelwani's cult had been established in Hattusa during the Old Kingdom, and already at that time she had a temple or cult centre within the palace complex on Büyükkale. But it was in the last century of the New Kingdom, in the reign of King Hattusili III, that she came into particular prominence. This was due primarily to Queen Puduhepa, who considerably raised the goddess's profile by praying constantly to her for the restoration of the health of her forever ailing husband, and rewarding her handsomely whenever His Majesty's condition took a turn for the better (see Chapter 9).

Of the divine circle (*kaluti*) of solar deities to which Lelwani belonged one figure stands out conspicuously from the rest—the great Sun Goddess of Arinna (Hattic name Wuru(n)semu). The

goddess was so named from her close links with the city of Arinna, one of Hatti's most important cult centres lying a short day's journey from the capital. This Sun Goddess, consort of the mighty Storm God, and highest-ranking female deity in the Hittite pantheon, was regarded as patron and protector of the Hittite state and monarchy: 'Queen of the Land of Hatti, Queen of Heaven and Earth, Mistress of the kings and queens of the Land of Hatti, directing the government of the King and Queen of Hatti'.²⁶ It was to her above all that the prayers to solar deities were addressed.

In a prayer spoken by King Mursili, she is addressed as though she were male: 'You alone are the Lord (EN-as) of just judgement'.²⁷ One explanation offered for this form of address is that the passage in question was taken from a hymn to the Babylonian Sun God Shamash, addressed as 'Sun God, My Lord, Just Lord of Judgement', without adapting the words to make them consistent with an invocation to a female deity.²⁸ Yet as we have noted, the Hittites had no difficulty with the notion that deities who performed both male and female roles had both male and female sides to their persona, and it was appropriate to address and depict them as male or female according to the particular role in which they were engaged at the time. This is particularly evident in Hittite concepts of the goddess Ishtar, as we shall see below.

The Storm God

From the very beginning the Storm God held the most exalted place among the gods of the Hittites.²⁹ He was the preserver of order in the cosmos, and the supreme overlord and protector of the Land of Hatti. The king was his deputy on earth. The maintenance of life itself depended on his benevolence; the most cataclysmic natural disasters were due to his wrath. He personified the forces which brought thunder and lightning and storms to the land; he also came in the form of the soothing, gentle rain of heaven that brought new life and growth to fields and meadows. To an agriculturally based society like the Land of Hatti his favour and goodwill were indispensable. If he withheld his life-giving rain, the land was plunged into drought and famine; his wrath in the form of devastating storms destroyed the land's crops and orchards and gardens—and again there was famine. He dwelt amongst mountain-tops close to the heavens, his natural sphere, and travelled across the mountains in a

chariot pulled by a pair of bulls. In art he is depicted with axe and lightning flash. The bull is his sacred animal, the symbol of his strength and his powers of fertility.

As we might expect, the cult of a powerful sky-god who controlled and unleashed mighty elemental forces and who in benevolent mood made the lands fertile and prosperous was well nigh a universal one in the ancient Near East. He was particularly prominent in those lands that suffered much from the ravages and were greatly dependent on the blessings of such forces. In his overall concept and functions, he was essentially the same god wherever he was worshipped, though there were some regional variations in his titles and trappings. In Anatolia his pre-Hittite Hattic name was Taru, his Luwian name Tarhunt-. In the Hurrian religious milieu, particularly in south-eastern Anatolia and northern Syria, he was known by his Hurrian name Teshub. He was the Akkadian Adad (west Semitic Hadad). In the Ugaritic script he was called Ba'lu, 'Lord'. Old Testament Yahweh had much in common with him, and his chief powers and functions were also those exercised by the Greek god Zeus, Roman Jupiter. Yet in each region where he held sway his worshippers thought of him not as a universal god, a god of all peoples, but as a god specific to them. *They* were his special people. *Their* enemies were his enemies, against whom his protection might be sought. He shared with them in the spoils of their victories, he suffered with them the consequences of their defeats.

Even within regions he was conceived of as very function- and location-specific. The texts provide us with a bewildering multitude of Storm Gods. There are Storm Gods of the army, the military camp, the palace, the door-bolt of the palace, the rains, the fields and the meadows. Specific individual Storm Gods are associated with the dozens of sub-regions, districts, communities making up the Hittite kingdom, each god anchored to his location by the label applied to him: the Storm God of Nerik, of Samuha, of Zippalanda, of Manuzziya, etc. These may all have begun their existence as independent local deities of independent small communities—deities who coincidentally had many features in common, as one might expect in agricultural societies whose life and livelihood centred upon the productivity of the soil and the benevolence of the elements. With the absorption of the communities into the Hittite kingdom and the adoption by the Hittite bureaucracy of the cuneiform script, the local gods were labelled with the common

Mesopotamian ideogram for Storm God, but retained their own individual local identities.

Whether or not they really were no more than local versions of the one god was a question to which the Hittites probably gave little thought, at least before the reform programme instigated by Puduhepa. Hittite religion was not much bothered with theological speculation and contemplation. It was much more oriented to the practical, the pragmatic, the functional, the expedient. And even if one suspected that all Storm Gods were really one and the same (similarly all other deities labelled with the same name and/or having similar characteristics), why take the risk of being wrong and gravely offending a local deity whose favour and good will might be urgently needed? Thus King Mursili II went to great lengths to identify a specific local Storm God as the cause of his speech affliction, in order to undertake the rites of appeasement which were the necessary preliminary to his cure. Simplistic and unsophisticated as Hittite theology may appear to be, one has only to reflect on the bloody conflicts which repeatedly plagued the Byzantine world, the result so often of disputes over abstruse theological issues, to appreciate the practical wisdom of a policy of absolute tolerance which the Hittites demonstrated in dealing with the multitude of religious beliefs and activities of the peoples making up their world.

From Old Kingdom times the Storm God of Hatti and the Sun Goddess of Arinna were the paramount couple in the Hittite pantheon, and presided over what might loosely be called a divine royal family. Their numerous offspring include lesser Storm Gods, notably those of Nerik and Zippalanda, a daughter Mezzulla (a Hattic name in origin), whose chief cult place was also Arinna and who like her mother was worshipped in the form of a sun disc, and a granddaughter Zintuhi. Also prominent amongst their children is the god Telipinu, 'who harrows and ploughs and irrigates and makes the grain grow'. Again a Hattic deity in origin (whose cult had spread into southern Anatolia by the fourteenth century bc), he is best known for his close association with the mythological tradition of the Vanishing God (see Chapter 12).

Thus already from the beginning of recorded Hittite history there was a belief in some sort of hierarchical ranking within divine society, with a broad distinction between a small number of deities occupying the first rank in the pantheon and deities of lesser status down to the very localized spirits of trees, rivers, and springs. The

lower-ranking deities might sometimes serve as intermediaries for conveying prayers or requests of mortal worshippers to their colleagues on the more exalted levels of the hierarchy, just as one might appeal to the king of Hatti through lower levels of the royal bureaucracy. Thus Puduhepa asked both Mezzulla and Zintuhi to act as messenger gods on her behalf, to convey her prayers to the Storm God and Sun Goddess, their divine parents and grandparents respectively.

In the reign of King Muwatalli II (c.1295–1272), barely a century before the end of the Hittites' Bronze Age kingdom, a new version of the great god of elemental forces made his appearance in the divine assembly—the Storm God of Lightning (*pihassassi*). We have no earlier record of this god in our sources, and he may in fact have been a newcomer, introduced into the pantheon by Muwatalli and given high prominence as His Majesty's personal deity and intermediary with the rest of the assembly: 'The gods whom I have invoked with my tongue and have pleaded to them, intercede for me with these gods, with all of them!' Muwatalli prays. 'Take the words of my tongue . . . and transmit them before the gods!'³⁰ It may be that the newcomer's appearance in the pantheon was closely associated with Muwatalli's shift of the royal capital from Hattusa to Tarhuntassa.³¹ At all events from this time on the god remained firmly linked with Tarhuntassa as its patron deity, even after the royal seat was transferred back to Hattusa following Muwatalli's death.

Ishtar

Throughout his life King Hattusili III had dedicated himself to the service of the goddess Ishtar. This sickly youngest son of Mursili II had not been expected to survive his childhood. But the goddess had appeared in a dream to his brother Muwatalli with the promise that the child would live if he were made a priest in her service. And so it came to pass. Under Ishtar's guidance and protection, Hattusili went on to achieve great things, in the process seizing the Hittite throne from its rightful incumbent, his nephew Urhi-Teshub. He was never in any doubt about the rightness of his actions (at least in his official declarations), for his patron goddess Ishtar was always by his side, bestowing upon him her divine favour, shielding him against all his enemies and granting him victory over them.

The goddess identified in our Hittite texts by the Akkadogram

ISHTAR, the Babylonian equivalent of Sumerian Inanna, makes her first attested appearance in Anatolia in the texts of the Assyrian Colony period. By the middle of the fifteenth century her worship had spread westwards from Hurrian Nineveh in northern Mesopotamia through northern Syria and from there into eastern Anatolia. Frequently appearing under her Hurrian name Shaushka,³² she had important cult centres dedicated to her at Samuha on the Upper Marassantiya river or Upper Euphrates and Lawazantiya in Kizzuwadna.

Like the Sun Goddess, she had both male and female aspects to her character, visually illustrated by sculptural representations of her in both male and female garb, and her appearance at Yazılıkaya in the files of both male and female deities. In her female aspect she was goddess of love and sexuality, and was often depicted without any garb at all. In her male aspect, she was god of war, god of the battlefield; her animal symbol was the lion, her weapon the mace. Her war-god aspect was by far the dominant one in her Hittite and Hurrian milieu. But it was her dual aspect which enabled her to exercise to the full her powers over human activity and behaviour. For as she chose she could move men to peace and love and harmony, or to hatred and conflict. Her dual aspect also enabled her to deprive the enemy of their manhood on the battlefield, to 'change them into women' and so render them incapable of fighting.

In any case the goddess's two aspects were not so very far apart. For Ishtar's brand of love often equated with aggressive sexuality, as in Gilgamesh's encounter with her, arousing passions closely akin to those which incite men to war. So too the similarity of the experiences and dangers, the passions and emotions, generated by love and war provide one of the favourite *topoi* of Latin erotic poetry in the Augustan age, and one of Virgil's main themes in his *Georgics*.

Other Deities

All mountains, rivers, and springs were inhabited by or identified with gods or spirits—generally male in the case of mountains, female in the case of rivers and springs. Mountains were themselves gods or sacred numinous regions where gods dwelt or assembled. The rugged Anatolian plateau and the great sweeps of mountain ranges in Anatolia and northern Syria provided a fitting environment for their activities and their worship.³³ Mountain-gods figured frequently in the state cults of Hatti and among the oath-gods in the

state treaties. Some had independent status, others of more humble status appear to have functioned as servants of the Storm God. The latter had a number of mountains associated with his worship, one of the most famous being Mt Hazzi (= later Mt Kasios) in northern Syria near the mouth of the Orontes river. In mythological tradition Hazzi was well known as the setting for the conflict between Teshub and Ullikummi in the Hurrian Kumarbi myth cycle (see Chapter 12). The mountain's place in Hittite religious tradition provides a further instance of the importation of Hurrian elements into the Hittite world, particularly in the last century of the New Kingdom. It also provides a locational link between Near Eastern and Classical mythological tradition, as we shall discuss below.

The pantheon included a number of tutelary, or protective deities, both male and female, often identified by the Sumerogram LAMMA, used as a title and represented in the iconography by a hunting bag (*kursa-*) which served as a cult image.³⁴ These deities functioned as guardian spirits of individual persons, of places including the home, and of particular activities. A number of festivals were held in their honour, including one which was dedicated to all the tutelary deities of the Hittite world.³⁵

Of the dozens, indeed hundreds, of other gods making up the Hittite pantheon, the majority scarcely ever appear in our texts, and we know little about them except their names or titles. Those who appear to have played a more significant role in Hittite religious life include³⁶

(amongst the males):

A war god Wurunkatte (a Hattic name which literally means 'King of the Land'), the equivalent of Mesopotamian Zababa, who appears among the oath-gods in state treaties, and in whose honour an annual festival was celebrated by the king and queen.³⁷ In the iconography he is depicted standing on a lion and brandishing lance and shield.

The Moon God Arma (Hurrian Kushuh), who appears among the oath-gods invoked in rituals and treaties, but otherwise keeps a low profile amongst his fellow gods. His Hattic equivalent Kasku features in the Hattic myth of the moon who fell from the sky.³⁸

(amongst the females):

Inar(a), a Hattic goddess in origin, and an important female member of the Hittite pantheon in the Old Kingdom, when she was honoured

as patron goddess of Hattusa. She was also patron and protectress of wildlife, roughly equivalent to Greek Artemis.³⁹

Halmasuit, also a Hattic goddess in origin, who was worshipped as the deified Hittite throne. Her initial association with Hattusa dates back to the Assyrian Colony period when she had been the deity responsible for delivering the city to the Nesite king Anitta.⁴⁰

Kamrusepa (Hattic Katazipuri), the goddess of magic who served as midwife in birth-rituals⁴¹ and acted as guardian of herds and households.

Kubaba was another minor deity in the Hittite pantheon. From at least the Old Babylonian period she had been the city goddess of Carchemish. She was adopted into the Hittite pantheon when King Suppiluliuma I conquered Carchemish and made it a viceregal kingdom. But it was only after the fall of Hattusa, in the neo-Hittite period, that the goddess achieved high prominence, in northern Syria and south-eastern Anatolia, corresponding with the increasingly important role now assumed by Carchemish. In the course of the early first millennium BC, her influence became widespread in Anatolia. She had connections with the mother-goddess of the Phrygians, and her cult was adopted in Lydia where according to Herodotos she was called Kybebe.⁴² Henceforth her worship may have spread across the Aegean, via the civilizations of western Anatolia. It is generally believed that she was the goddess who came into contact with the Greek world under the name Kybele (Cybele), the goddess whose cult was later to enjoy great popularity in many parts of the Roman empire. However, some doubt has recently been cast on the equation.⁴³

Oracles

Just as the smooth management of the kingdom's affairs depended on effective communication between the king and his officials, so too the well-being of the land depended on advice and guidance which the king received in communications from his divine overlords. Sometimes messages from above might be sent by way of omens, often in the form of natural phenomena like lightning flashes, eclipses, or thunderstorms. The colour and shape of the moon could also convey a divine message. But while omens of a celestial or astronomical nature figure prominently in the Hittite collection of omen texts (which are virtually all of Babylonian origin),⁴⁴ there were

many other types as well; for example, the omens observed at the time of a new-born child's birth, which provided a basis for casting the child's horoscope. Features of the birth itself, including whether it was premature, had a direct bearing on this. As did also the month of the year in which the birth took place:

If a child is born in the first month (of the year), this child will demolish his house.

If a child is born in the second month, this child will be healthy of heart.

If a child is born in the fourth month, this child will be sickly.

If a child is born in the fifth month, this child's days will be shortened.

If a child is born in the seventh month, a god will favour the child.

If a child is born in the eighth month, this child will die, and if it does not die, great distress will seize upon the father and the mother of the child.⁴⁵

Here as in other cases knowledge of precedent must have played an important role in the interpretation of omens. Texts were consulted, including those inscribed on various models, to indicate what a particular omen or series of signs portended on the basis of what had happened in the past.

Sometimes a god sent information in the form of a dream. We know of at least two occasions when the prince Hattusili (later King Hattusili III) benefited from advice conveyed in this way by the goddess Ishtar. A king might learn in a dream that his life was in imminent danger; but the dream came in sufficient time for him to take appropriate preventative measures by arranging a substitution ritual (see Chapter 11). It was only rarely, however, that information so acquired was offered on the god's own initiative. More often than not an enquirer had to seek it out, through the process of incubation. This meant spending the night in some appropriate holy place in the hope that as the enquirer slept the god would provide an answer to his enquiry via a dream. If the enquirer was so favoured, he recounted his dream the following morning to the local seer who then provided him with an interpretation. But dream experiences seem not to have been a particularly popular way of soliciting a god's advice. Although they could be a quick and relatively inexpensive way, too much had to be left to chance. A great deal depended on how accurately the enquirer could remember the details of his dream, on how much he could trust the ability or the honesty of its interpreter,⁴⁶ or indeed on whether the dream offered for interpretation really did come from the god.

There were a range of other ways in which the divine will might be ascertained or divine advice solicited—through the process of oracular enquiry. In theory the process was quite simple. Using the services of an expert in the art of divination, the enquirer put his question to the god, an action was performed or a series of observations were made, and the outcome of the action or observations—in effect the god's response—was interpreted by the expert. But the god communicated only by means of signs, and it required extensive training to recognize, analyse, and translate the signs into an intelligible response. Even then the standard oracular response was laconic in the extreme—a simple yes or no. Which meant that to have any hope of obtaining the information he was after, the enquirer had to ask leading questions of the god: 'Are you angry because. . . ?' 'If I take this course of action, will the outcome be. . . ?' If the answer was negative, the whole process had to be repeated, with no hints from the god as to whether the enquirer was getting any warmer. It could be a long, drawn-out business, particularly in cases where the person seeking the information had fallen victim to divine wrath and had no idea why. The god might have been brooding over a particular offence for many years, and on the 'sins of the fathers' principle the luckless enquirer might not himself have been to blame. In fact he might eventually discover that the punishment being inflicted upon him was due to an offence committed many years earlier by his father.

The oracles were of various types. Lot- or KIN-oracles involved the use of a board with symbols drawn on it representing various aspects or activities of life. The actual procedure for seeking a divine response is unknown, though presumably it involved an action by the consultant involving the board, perhaps casting dice or some other form of token upon it. The outcome of the action was interpreted by a diviner, in this case one of the so-called 'Old Women' (see Chapter 11).

These women also conducted the enquiries associated with snake- or MUSH-oracles. In this case a basin marked out in sections, each with a special designation (e.g. 'life', 'sin', 'temple', 'house', 'prison'⁴⁷), was filled with water and a water-snake released into it. The reptile's movement through the sections so marked provided the basis for the Old Woman's interpretation of the divine will.

Bird- or MUSEN-oracles were the province of trained augurs, sometimes apparently of slave origin. From a position in a marked-out

area of land or *temenos*, often near a river, they closely scrutinized the types and behaviour of the birds who came within the bounds of the *temenos*.⁴⁸ Every detail was carefully noted. Not only were the birds' flight patterns, formations, direction of flight, and landings and take-offs carefully recorded, but also details of their individual behaviour—the sounds they made, the directions in which they twisted their beaks, the movement of their feet. Excellent eyesight and acute hearing must have been essential requirements of the job along with expertise in the interpretation of all these details.

A great deal of importance was attached to this form of enquiry. It was used, for example, in association with military enterprises. Augurs were amongst the personnel who accompanied the army on its campaigns, ready to consult the auspices whenever the field commander called upon them to do so. Indeed we hear of one occasion on which a commander delayed military action until such time as the auspices, in the quite literal sense of the word, could be taken.⁴⁹ The Romans too practised this form of oracular consultation. In fact according to one body of legendary tradition appearing in the surviving fragments of the epic poet Ennius it played a decisive role in selecting Romulus as the founder of Rome.

Extispicy was another of the oracular practices which the Hittites adopted from Babylonia. The messiest and probably the most expensive of all forms of oracular enquiry, it involved the examination of the still pulsing entrails of freshly slaughtered sheep, particularly the liver, but also the heart, gall bladder, and intestines. As was the case in the Old Babylonian period, clay models of livers were kept for consultation purposes, each marked out in sections with inscriptions identifying its individual features. Each feature had a special meaning and significance. A comparison of the freshly sacrificed animal's liver with the model provided the basis of the diviner's interpretation of the god's response.

The texts which record oracular enquiries set down the question and the god's response, and if the latter was negative, another question and another response until a positive result was obtained. These recorded processes sometimes provide us with quite sensitive information not obtainable from other sources, since in his attempts to determine the reason for divine wrath a king might be obliged to unlock some embarrassing family skeletons otherwise kept well hidden from the official records. The list of possible offences, any one of which might have offended the god, reads rather like a

confessional—a breach of an oath, a murder here and there, squabbles in the royal household, trumped-up charges against an innocent man.

Even if all procedures had been meticulously carried out, there might still be some doubt as to whether a god's response had been correctly understood. That was the advantage of having a number of alternative oracular procedures. A second one could always be used to double-check the result obtained from the first. Budgetary considerations were also a factor. Liver divination, for example, must have been prohibitively expensive for all but the wealthiest classes. At the lower end of the socio-economic scale much cheaper procedures were available, all the way down to the interpretation of patterns formed by drops of oil in a vessel of water, a kind of Hittite equivalent to reading tea-leaves.

The Temples and their Divine Residents

In its overall functions the Hittite temple probably had much in common with the medieval monastery. The core function, the prime purpose of each institution, was service to the deity. Beyond that, both were landowners, both were self-contained economic and industrial units, and both were centres of learning, or at least repositories of scribal tradition. No doubt some of the larger temple establishments became, like many monasteries, rich and powerful institutions within the state. They owned extensive tracts of prime agricultural land whose income supported their personnel and cultic operations and probably left a good deal in surplus. Whether their wealth and influence led to the kind of friction between temple and palace that one observes in Early Dynastic Sumer remains unknown. But given the king's supreme authority and active role in the religious as well as the administrative life of the kingdom, this seems unlikely. In any case the substantial power which Queen Puduhepa exercised over the kingdom's religious affairs, and the extensive involvement of her son Tudhaliya in a comprehensive programme of religious reform, must have greatly minimized the possibility of temple establishments operating independently, or contrary to the wishes or interests, of the crown.

From the common person's point of view, the temples were very exclusive institutions. Unlike mosques and churches which serve primarily as places of assembly for all the god's worshippers, access to

Hittite temples was highly restricted. On festival occasions the temple became one of the venues where the king and his family and royal retinue and other participants shared in the festival celebrations. But on a day-to-day basis only authorized temple staff were generally to be found in the temple. The regulations for temple officials make allowance for certain other persons to be given access under certain conditions; but a foreigner guilty of temple trespass forfeited his life. To enter a temple without authorization and look upon the god was a serious act of desecration: 'People should not look at the Storm God; but a woman looked in at the window and a child went into the temple.'⁵⁰

In a quite literal sense, temples were the houses of the individual gods (indeed the Hittite temple is literally called 'the house of the god') to whom they were dedicated. Lesser gods and spirits were confined to particular localities. But the great gods could leave their chief dwelling places—their celestial palaces and pastoral estates—and roam freely through the cosmos. From time to time they took up residence in their temples, which were rather like divine resort hotels, providing their residents with rest and recreation leave from their normal activities. Of course their presence in their temples was particularly required on the occasions of the festivals which were held in their honour and in which they were actual participants. There were rituals for summoning a god to his temple: 'O Cedar-gods! See! I have covered your ways with the scarf that goes with the long gown and have spread for you fine flour and fine oil. So walk you over it to this place! Let no fallen tree impede your feet, let no stones inconvenience your feet! The mountains shall be levelled before you, the rivers shall be bridged before you!'⁵¹

Once summoned, the god might use as his first stopping-place on earth a mountain which lay in the vicinity of the temple to which he had been summoned, and from there he came to his temple and entered into his cult image in the temple's innermost sanctuary. The image became the god's earthly casing. His physical needs now had to be attended to. On a daily basis he had to be washed, anointed, dressed in clean garments, and given food and drink. This was the task of duly appointed priests and other temple officials. Precise instructions were laid down for the services to be performed. Firstly there was insistence on absolute cleanliness of food preparation areas and those who were to prepare it:

Those who prepare the daily loaves must be clean. They must be bathed and groomed, and their hair and nails removed. They must be clothed in clean garments. They must not prepare the loaves while in an unclean state. The bakery where the loaves are baked must be swept and scrubbed. Further, no pig or dog is permitted at the door of the place where the loaves are broken.⁵²

Anyone guilty of serving the god from an unclean vessel was made to drink urine and eat excrement as punishment. More severe were the penalties for those who prepared the god's food while in an unclean state, as a result of having the previous night engaged in sexual intercourse. A kitchen-hand of the god who had so indulged must bathe at the following sunrise, before having any contact with the god's food. Failure to do so incurred the death penalty—a punishment imposed upon any other servant who had knowledge of his fellow's unclean state and failed to report it.

The death penalty was also prescribed for misappropriating the food and drink that had been prepared for the god—bread, beer, and wine: 'If you ever take sacrifices which have been placed before the gods and fail to convey them to the gods themselves, and you withhold them from the gods, and keep them in your own houses, and your wives, children, or servants consume them, or if you give them to the god in several portions—you will be held responsible for dividing them. Do not divide them. He who does so shall be killed.'⁵³

On a daily basis, a meal was placed on an offering table before the god's image. What happened to the food and drink which the god did not consume? The instructions to the temple officials take account of this necessary consideration by giving permission to the officials to consume, within three days, anything left over from the god's meal.

There were strict regulations regarding the nature of the offerings which were acceptable to the gods—above all the first fruits of the produce—and particularly strict regulations to prevent the misappropriation of any offerings or gifts presented to the gods. For example, no official could take for himself the silver, gold clothing, or bronze implements dedicated to the gods. Similar items might, however, be given as a gift to a man by the palace. If so, he must have certification to this effect, stating the weight, the festival where the presentation was made, and the witnesses present at the time. If the recipient of a gift subsequently wished to sell it, he must do so in public with the 'lords of Hatti' present. An inventory was to be made of what the purchaser bought. This had to be taken to the palace to

receive an official seal, presumably validating the vendor's right to sell the item or items. Both vendors and recipients of such items who failed to observe these formalities were liable to the death penalty. Such measures were clearly aimed at persons who had misappropriated or illegally received items from either temple or palace and claimed that they had obtained them legitimately through either gift or sale. Illegal trafficking of this kind undoubtedly occurred, perhaps on a fairly regular basis. The insistence on certification of ownership and on obtaining licences of sale when legitimate exchanges took place, along with the severity of the penalty for those who failed to comply with the regulations, were obviously designed to limit if not prevent absolutely the theft of and black-marketeering in temple and palace property. One is reminded of the regulations which many countries have put in place today in relation to the antiquities trade.

Images of the Gods

Since the gods never physically manifested themselves to mortals, never appeared to them in the flesh so to speak, it was impossible to tell what they actually looked like.⁵⁴ But they were credited with certain physical attributes which enabled them to be visually represented, in one or more of several forms. Occasionally they were depicted in the abstract; thus in a text which presents information on the whereabouts of certain cult objects, a priest Hutarli refers to representations of the Sun Goddess of Arinna and her daughter Mezzulla as gold and silver discs respectively.⁵⁵ Occasionally they might have been depicted in animal form, though the only known instance of this is the representation of the Storm God as a bull—as on a relief panel at Alaca Höyük (discussed in Chapter 11). This is not an indication of theriomorphic worship in the Hittite world. Rather the bull symbolized one of the Storm God's most important attributes—his embodiment of the male fertility principle in nature.

Gods could also be represented by a type of cult object or totem, referred to mainly in festival texts and cult inventories by the term *huwasi*. In its basic meaning a *huwasi* was apparently a stone stele sometimes carved with a relief which was set up on an altar in a temple's sanctuary, and treated exactly the same way as a statue of the god; it was washed, anointed, clothed and given food and drink. Other *huwas*, probably larger than those in the temples and only roughly hewn or left in their natural state, were set upright in the

open fields, in groves near springs or rivers, or on mountain-tops. Each stone represented a specific deity, and together they marked off a sacred area, signifying a place where the gods were actually present. Here in the course of the great festivals of spring and autumn came a procession of celebrants in which the statues from the gods' temples were paraded. The term *huwasi* seems also to have been used of the area itself as marked out by the individual stones.⁵⁶ We have no idea of the size or actual arrangement of these stones. It is conceivable that they differed from their temple counterparts not only by being rough-hewn or left in their natural state, but also in their size. If they were in fact of monumental proportions, their assemblage might have borne some resemblance to the earlier British henges.

In the vast majority of cases the gods were represented in human form. Which is hardly surprising, given their essentially human characteristics, needs, and frailties. In the latter part of the New Kingdom, the statues of the gods set up on bases in the sanctuaries of their temples were life-size or larger. They were made of precious and semi-precious metals—gold, silver, iron, bronze—or else of wood plated with gold, silver, or tin and sometimes decorated with precious materials like lapis lazuli. The main features of the monumental works were probably reproduced in miniature. In the context of the census of local cult centres commissioned by Tudhaliya IV, a statuette of the goddess Iyaya, chief deity of the town Lapana, is described thus: 'The divine image is a female statuette of wood, seated and veiled, one cubit (in height). Her body is plated with gold, but the body and the throne are plated with tin. Two wooden mountain sheep, plated with tin, sit beneath the deity to the right and the left. One eagle plated with tin, two copper staves, and two bronze goblets are on hand as the deity's cultic implements.'⁵⁷

Images of deceased kings might also be found in the temples. And on at least one occasion the statue of a living king was promised to a temple, that of the goddess Lelwani. Queen Puduhepa offered Lelwani a full-size statue of her husband Hattusili, should the goddess cure him of his illnesses and grant him long life; the statue would be of silver, 'as tall as Hattusili himself, with head, hands, and feet of gold', and hung about with precious ornaments.⁵⁸

Without these verbal descriptions, we would have little idea of the size, composition, or appearance of Hittite monumental statuary. Not a trace of any of this statuary survives, apart from a few statue

bases, and we can draw only limited conclusions about it from occasional descriptions in the texts, and from a few surviving relief sculptures. From the texts we learn of a representation of the Storm God as a seated figure plated with gold, holding a mace in his right hand, and in his left hand a golden hieroglyphic symbol—*sig*, meaning 'good'. He was supported on two mountains represented by two silver-plated male figures. We have textual information about physical representations of other deities. A statue of the goddess Ishtar/Shauška depicted the goddess seated, holding a cup in her right hand, with wings sprouting from her shoulders. A silver-plated sphinx was to be seen beneath the silver statue base. The goddess was flanked by her servant goddesses Ninatta and Kulitta, fashioned in silver with eyes encrusted with gold. The warrior god Zababa was depicted in the form of a silver statue armed with mace in his right hand and shield in his left, and beneath him a lion standing on a silver pedestal. Animals were frequent companions of divinity. Gods are described as standing on lions, leopards, and bulls. The lion appeared as a companion to Ishtar, to the warrior god Zababa, and to the Moon God Kushuh. The stag was companion to the Tutelary God of the Fields.

So much we learn of divine images from our texts. Unfortunately the monumental statues have long since disappeared, leaving us with but a few remnants of the religious iconography of the Hittite world—a small number of statuettes, a couple of impressions from Old Kingdom cylinder seals, and a few scattered reliefs, still often *in situ* and badly weathered. When we come face to face with these remnants for the first time, we may find little to impress us in these gods of the Hittites, gods who embody the mighty elemental forces which control the cosmos and everything within it, gods who lead kings to great victories, who unleash devastating storms, who in benevolent mood confer great blessings on their worshippers. Undoubtedly the loss of the great statues, gleaming with precious metals and once bathing their temple sanctuaries in the glow of their reflected light, has deprived us of the most impressive genre of Hittite religious iconography. What is left to us is a collection of miniature divine figures—short, squat, sometimes with little strutting legs, and somewhat bland, even vacuous facial expressions and bulging eyes—and rock reliefs which out of context may appear stiff, ill-proportioned, static, and impersonal. Rather more lively are scenes depicting gods on Old Hittite cylinder seal impressions—a



Fig. 4. Gold figurine of god

kilted god dispatching a fallen enemy with his sword, a hunting scene depicting a god hunting deer and standing on a lion.

Apart from the reliefs of the famous sanctuary at Yazılıkaya (see below), images of gods sculpted from living rock or from dressed stone are found at a number of locations in Anatolia. For example a set of ashlar blocks at Eflatun Pinar (near Lake Beyşehir, in the region of Classical Pisidia) depicts two enthroned figures who probably represent male and female sun deities; each is flanked by a pair of hybrid monsters holding sun discs, and the whole scene is surmounted by a large winged sun disc supported by lion-headed demons. Seated male and female deities are also depicted in a rock relief at Firaktin in Cappadocia, as recipients of libations offered by Hattusili III and Puduhepa (the former to the Storm God, the latter to the Sun Goddess). At Fasillar in southern Anatolia an unfinished stele almost 8 metres in height depicts a god standing on a mountain-god, with right arm raised above his head and left arm extending from his shoulder.

Gods are generally (though not always) easy to recognize in these depictions, but only rarely because they are of a size or general appearance which sets them apart from their mortal worshippers. Rather they are identifiable from the dress, symbols, and various accoutrements conventionally associated with them. The basic garb of a male god is a short, sleeveless tunic which extends to just above the knees. The sword with curving blade and crescent-shaped pommel is the standard dress weapon for a god, though other weapons also appear as accoutrements of particular deities—the mace, the spear, or the bow. Male gods wear conical caps, tapering towards a peak. The caps worn by mountain-gods droop over at the peak, a little like Mr Punch's cap. A god's status in relation to his fellows is indicated by the horns attached to his cap, front and back or on either side. The greater the number of horns the higher the god's place in the divine pecking-order. Occasionally the caps are also adorned with symbols in the form of halved ellipses. Such symbols represent the divine ideogram (as we know from the hieroglyphic script) and are generally reserved for the most exalted of the gods. At Yazılıkaya the symbols can also be seen above the outstretched hands of the chief god and goddess, and behind the chief goddess as well, attached to a pair of human legs. Goddesses wear cylindrical hats, sometimes referred to by the term *polos* (*poloi* in the plural), and in the rock sanctuary at Yazılıkaya crenellated in the manner of the battlements of a city. Their bodies are clad in full-length garments, which have loose-fitting long sleeves, are belted at the waist, and below the waist fall in pleats to the ankles. The deities of both sexes wear another piece of typical Hittite apparel—shoes with upturned toes.

Goddesses are depicted fully in profile, male gods with head in profile, upper torso frontal, and lower torso in profile.⁵⁹ The resulting distortion and lack of perspective may in part reflect the limitations of working in very shallow relief. They may also reflect the simple transference to relief sculpture of the artistic conventions adopted in two-dimensional painted friezes or painted shallow wall reliefs, which probably adorned interior walls of palaces and other important buildings in the Hittite world as elsewhere in the Near East. Yet it is not unlikely that contacts with Egypt had the most direct influence in shaping the artistic conventions of the Hittite world. In Egyptian art the emphasis was on depicting, in explicit detail, all important features of the persons and objects the artist was

instructed to record. This inevitably resulted in some distortion in the representation of human and divine figures, and a lack of overall compositional coherence since such figures do not readily relate to one another in a particular scene. But we need to judge this art on its own terms—as essentially representational rather than naturalistic. For the Egyptians, the most important requirement in visual presentations was to provide as comprehensive and as detailed a pictorial record as possible. In sepulchral art this was essential in ensuring the full materialization in the afterlife of the persons and objects so depicted. Such considerations played no small part in establishing artistic conventions in Egypt—conventions which may then have been adopted in the Hittite world, though now largely divorced from the contexts and considerations which had brought them into being.

The reliefs at Yazılıkaya are generally regarded as the pinnacle of Hittite artistic achievement. Yet in using the term 'art', we should be careful not to attempt to judge this achievement by criteria which are inapplicable to it. The sculptor's task, first and foremost, was to present in visual form a hierarchical progression of the most important deities of the by now thoroughly Hurrianized Hittite pantheon. This he undoubtedly succeeded in doing. In the main series of reliefs in Chamber A, the individual deities were clearly identified by hieroglyphic inscriptions and by attributes specifically associated with them (particular weapons, symbols of office, lesser gods, companion animals). Their importance in the divine hierarchy was made clear by their size and position in the series. Basically what we have is a pictorial counterpart to the lists of deities who figure in prayers, festival texts, and treaties.⁶⁰ The sculptor had one prime aim—to record with absolute clarity the deities whose presence at Yazılıkaya was to be invoked for the festivals and ceremonies which took place there. The impression which the reliefs may appear to convey of two processions of deities, male and female, moving towards each other is almost certainly a misleading one due largely, perhaps, to the representation of the deities' legs in profile. The figures are static, stereotypical, and compositionally unrelated to each other (except for those standing on lesser gods). On aesthetic grounds such reliefs might well be judged inferior to the artistic output of other ancient civilizations. But to criticize them on these grounds begs the question of what their purpose really was and is probably no more justified than finding fault with lists of deities in treaties and religious texts for their lack of literary merit.

Yet for all their artistic naivety, the reliefs at Yazılıkaya possess a solemn, austere dignity which contributes much to the aura of the sanctuary as a revered and holy place, perhaps the holiest place in the Hittite world. Even today one needs little imagination to sense that this was indeed a setting for an assembly of great gods, for special sacred ceremonies. But it is difficult to have a full appreciation of this without being there, in the original setting. There is a total harmony between the shallow relief panels and the rock surfaces on which they are carved. The figures conform with the contours and irregularities of the sanctuary's natural walls. They blend with rather than dominate the surface, as though in recognition of and out of respect for what nature has formed. And in places the shallowness of the reliefs, particularly those that are now much weathered, conveys the impression of figures actually in the process of emerging from the rocks on which they appear. They serve to remind us that in the Hittite world all parts of nature were the dwelling places of vital living forces.

CHAPTER 9

The Curers of Diseases

Seeing with eyes of wholeness means recognizing that nothing occurs in isolation, that problems need to be seen within the context of whole systems. Seeing in this way, we can perceive the intrinsic web of interconnectedness underlying our experience and merge with it. Seeing in this way is healing.

(Einstein, *Glimpses of Wholeness*, 1947)¹

As elsewhere in the Near East, medicine in the Hittite world was a skilled and respected occupation. It was also an internationally shared one. Medical expertise frequently crossed national boundaries, and foreign doctors found ready acceptance in the lands of their neighbours, particularly if they came from Egypt or Babylon. On more than one occasion the kings of these countries lent doctors to Hattusa for service in the Hittite court. And to judge from their names, doctors of Luwian and Hurrian origin, probably from Kizzuwadna, also practised their profession in Hattusa.² Like the 'curers of diseases' in Homer's world, professional healers could expect a warm welcome in whatever lands they travelled.

In Hittite texts doctors are designated by the Sumerogram ^{LÚ}A.ZU or the Akkadogram *ASÚ*. They were mostly male, to judge from the few surviving names of individuals who bore this title. But female doctors were not unknown,³ and as we shall see, women were particularly prominent in other areas of the healing arts—notably the authors and practitioners of healing and restorative rituals known as the 'Old Women' (see Chapter 11). Another group of women participated in birthing and its associated rituals as midwives, firstly assisting with the actual birth, and subsequently uttering incantations for the well-being, health, and long life of the new-born child: 'And come! As the wind and rain cannot lift the rock sanctuary from its place—because in this (house) he was born—likewise let not an evil thing lift his life from its place! And let it likewise be protected! And let it be alive for eternity!'⁴

kings could consult the spirits of their ancestors for information about future events. With similar purpose too Aeneas consults the ghost of his father Anchises during his visit to the Underworld.

Necromancy, the raising up of the spirits of the dead, is found also in Babylonian and neo-Assyrian contexts. Here too the practice was often intended to question the dead about the future. But the considerable risks involved in releasing the dead into the upper world meant that only the most skilled practitioners should engage in necromantic rites. They should do so only on rare occasions, and even then only when they were experienced in the appropriate rituals for countering the possible adverse side-effects of summoning up the dead.

In general the conduct of rituals in the Near Eastern world was a complex business requiring the skills and expertise of those specially trained in the appropriate procedures. The ritual practices of the Hittite world are well documented in our surviving texts. It is to the beliefs, procedures, and personnel associated with Hittite rituals that we shall turn our attention in the following chapter.

CHAPTER I I

Festivals and Rituals

The king's ablutions are complete, his body now cleansed of all defilement. An attendant stands by to assist him don ceremonial garb—for one festival a blue robe, for another a simple white garment, a rough shepherd's mantle, and black shoes.¹ A close-fitting skull cap and earrings of gold add the final touch. Whatever his trappings, the king is but the servant, the slave, of a higher authority in whose honour the forthcoming ceremonies and festivities will be held. Throughout the festivities he will acknowledge his subservience, by bowing or kneeling before the appropriate god, and praying to him with hands held upwards. He now enters the palace throne-room, where he is joined by his consort, high priestess of the realm. She too has undergone thorough ritual cleansing. The chief of the royal smiths presents the king with a crook and a spear—of iron, gold, or silver as the occasion warrants. The crook symbolizes the king's judicial power, delegated by the Sun God, the spear his military power. Sometimes in the course of the festival he may exchange his priestly robes for a soldier's garb.

In the palace courtyard his entourage has been assembled—the dignitaries of the realm, the royal bodyguard, the priests and other temple personnel, the singers, the instrument-players, the actors, the acrobats, the dancers. A scribe is consulting his list, checking to make sure that everyone is present. Finally, all is in readiness. A hush falls over the gathering as the doors of the palace open and the royal couple emerge into the courtyard. The king briefly surveys his entourage before leading the way through the main gate and out of the palace precincts. He and his queen mount the chariots awaiting them. Here too are the ox-drawn carriages which will convey the sacred statuettes. But pride of place is taken by the image of the god, brought from the innermost recesses of his temple for the occasion. His polished, jewel-encrusted, golden surface gleams in the spring sunlight. This is no mere inanimate object. It is occupied by the god himself. He has quite literally entered into his image, and will remain there as guest of honour in the

ceremonies to follow. He looks forward with relish, so his worshippers believe, to the feasting and entertainment which he will share with them. The king is presented with a ceremonial axe in exchange for his spear. It is time for the procession to begin its journey.

A substantial part of the Hittite year was occupied with the celebration of religious festivals, as indicated by the large number of festival texts, far surpassing all other written sources, in the archives of the royal capital.² Up to 165 festivals were incorporated into the official calendar, and no doubt there were many local community and rural festivals which were never recorded in a permanent form. The state-sponsored celebrations imposed considerable demands on the kingdom's resources, in terms of time, personnel, equipment, and consumable items. Some lasted just a few hours, some several days. But the most important ones continued for several weeks, or more. Many required the king's personal participation, even if he had to cut short a military campaign to attend them, though there were certain occasions on which the queen or a prince or even a symbolic animal-hide could deputize for him.³ Many festivals were held annually, some at more frequent intervals, and others perhaps only once every eight or nine years. Procedures had to be followed in meticulous detail, for the slightest error could invalidate the entire process.

There was no doubting that their performance at the prescribed times was essential to the welfare of the kingdom. They were the most tangible expression of the people's devotion to their gods, and in terms of the agricultural year many were strategically scheduled to maximize divine goodwill at a time when this would have the most beneficial effect. The large number of festivals was obviously a reflection of the large array of gods in the pantheon. There was some scope for rationalization, achieved by dedicating certain festivals to a number of gods all at once, or to all the gods at once. But some gods required exclusive attention, and it was always better to play it safe and avoid the risk of offending any of them—which might well occur if they were not given the recognition they thought was their due.

The Conduct of the Festivals

The crucial times of the agricultural year were autumn, between September and November, and spring, between mid-March and mid-June, the times respectively of the reaping and the sowing. Not

surprisingly, these were the periods when a number of the major festivals were celebrated. So much depended on the benevolence of those in whose honour they were held—the fertility of the soil, the abundance of rain, the fruitfulness of the harvest, the increase in flocks and herds and game for hunting. Of course the gods in question could not be neglected at any time of the year. Like any master, their needs and comforts and pleasures required constant attention. But there were certain times when it was wise to ensure their benevolence by treating them and entertaining them on a more than usually lavish scale. Hence the festivals held in their honour.

The texts recording these occasions may not in themselves make riveting reading; they are full of baldly stated minutiae, sometimes repeated over and over again, with little variation from one text to another. But they were after all intended purely as reference manuals for the guidance of the participants in the ceremonies. To appreciate fully their value to us as a source of information, we must look beyond their repetitive formulaic expressions to the actual religious experiences which they reflect. Even though no complete text of any of the festivals survives, the fragments provide considerable insight into one of the central activities of the Hittite state. The detailed descriptions of the ceremonial rites, the texts of the liturgies and recitations, the inventories of the equipment and other paraphernalia to be used in the ceremonies, the food and drink to be consumed by god and worshippers, and the programme of singing, dancing, acting, and sports contests which accompanied the celebrations help us to recreate something of the colour and vigour, the sights, the sounds, the smells of Hittite religious practice in its most active, tangible form. Here indeed was a show, here indeed hospitality and entertainment, worthy of the gods.

The festivals often involved visits to many holy sites, within the capital itself, in the open countryside, and to other centres of the Hittite realm. We can retrace the path of a festival procession as it leaves the palace gate and proceeds along the ceremonial way, exiting the city through the so-called King's Gate, and passing outside the walls before again entering the city through the Lion Gate.⁴ We can imagine the processional way lined with the city's inhabitants and foreign visitors, awaiting the spectacle soon to pass by them. In the distance the songs of the musicians, the sounds of the drums, cymbals, tambourines, and castanets can be heard, growing ever louder as the procession approaches.⁵ The crowd catches sight of the statue of the divine guest of honour, a gleaming monumental

image towering over the celebrants. This is a rare, once-a-year opportunity for the people to see the great god's image, otherwise hidden away in the recesses of his temple from all but the few specially appointed to his service. So too as the procession passes by, the onlookers may gain a passing glimpse of their king and queen, well protected and isolated from the crowd by an entourage of attendants and a phalanx of royal bodyguards. Closer at hand, acrobats, jugglers, red-robed jesters, dancers performing their steps to lute accompaniment, all in brightly coloured costume, provide entertainment for the spectators. Of course their job is primarily to entertain the god. But who among them could fail to play up to a responsive, on-the-spot, crowd in festive mood? The whole atmosphere might seem more appropriate to a carnival procession than to a religious one. But that is what a joyous celebration calls for. That is what the god himself wants.

The processional itinerary includes stops for visits to the city's temples. Here too performers and other attendants are on hand to greet the royal couple at the temple's entrance.⁶ A whirling dance of welcome is performed.⁷ Hymns are sung or intoned. Throughout the ceremonies to follow,⁸ various cultic calls are made by designated performers and attendants—'aha!', 'kasmessa!', 'missa!'. The king enters the temple's *cella*, after thoroughly washing his hands and drying them on a perfumed towel provided by an attendant. He makes libation at the holy places within the *cella*—an offering table, a hearth, a throne, a window, even a doorbolt. A feast follows. The god is the guest of honour, the king his host. A great variety of meats and breads and pastries have been prepared—under conditions of the strictest hygiene, for the food served to god and king must be free of taint or defilement of any kind. The king again washes his hands, and then breaks one of the loaves. Some are fancily shaped to resemble a human figure or part thereof, perhaps a hand, finger, or tongue, some are shaped like animal figures, perhaps a bird, piglet, or cow, some like inanimate objects, perhaps a ball, ring, or wheel. The king is handed a silver cup brimming with wine and fashioned in the form of a bull or stag. From it he solemnly 'drinks the god'. This is a sacramental act. By it the king comes into mystical union with his divine guest, for the cup symbolizes the god himself.⁹ God and king are now joined by the other guests. A herald shows them to their places at table. The king offers the god the choicest cuts of meat, grilled or roasted, from the sacrificed animals—hearts, livers, kidneys, succu-

lent thighs, and fat (to which the gods were quite partial). The atmosphere now becomes more relaxed as the rest of the company tuck in.

The king winks at his attendants, a sign for the entertainers to appear. The dancers and acrobats have saved their best routines for the occasion, for this is not merely a royal but a divine command performance. The dancers' performance recreates a hunt, its thrills and its dangers. The performers are dressed as leopards, their actions mimicking the graceful movements of the hunters' feline prey. They always ensure that they face towards the king. The highlight of the programme is a wrestling match between two local champions. This is a form of entertainment in which the deity seems to have taken particular delight. When all is done, the meal and the entertainment concluded, the king departs, after once more washing and drying his hands.

Festival processions often took the celebrants and the images of their gods beyond the city limits to holy places in the open countryside marked off by the *huwasi* stones. Here too sacrifice was made to the god, and a feast held for him and his worshippers. Once more there was entertainment for the whole company—mock battles, including a contest between two sides representing the 'men of Hatti' and the 'men of Masa' (which the former always won¹⁰), more wrestling, perhaps a weight-lifting contest, foot races, horse races, and archery contests with the king acting as judge. There were prizes for the winners (tunics for first and second place-getters in a foot race) and sometimes embarrassing but light-hearted penalties for the losers.¹¹ All in the spirit of the fun and festivity of the occasion.

The Reliefs at Alaca Höyük

Visual representations of parts of a festival programme may feature among the reliefs at the site now called Alaca Höyük,¹² situated c. 150 kilometres north-east of Ankara. The reliefs are carved in registers on the bases of the towers flanking the main entrance to the city, the lower register continuing into the interior face of the gatehouse on the west side. As we approach the gate we see a sacred procession depicted. The king and the queen are the dominant figures in the scene on the west tower. The king as chief celebrant wears a long priestly robe and carries the *kalmus*, his curved staff of office. Also depicted, in two registers, are the cult officials and the animals for

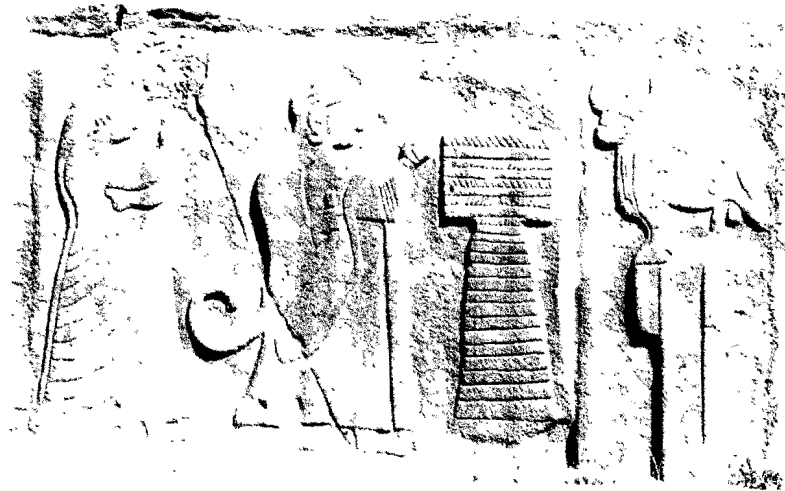


Fig. 5. Royal couple worship Storm God represented as bull, relief from Alaca Höyük. Photo: Feza Toker of Ekip Film

sacrifice. The royal couple face towards an altar, behind which a bull is depicted, standing on a platform. This is almost certainly a zoomorphic representation of the Storm God, one of the two deities who are the divine guests of honour in these sacred rites. His counterpart appears as the recipient of honours on the east tower, a goddess seated on a throne, no doubt the Sun Goddess of Arinna, chief female deity of the Hittite pantheon. To the left of the Storm God scene we see other figures depicted, a sword-swallower and two men associated with a ladder. The latter very likely depict the 'ladder-men' who appear amongst the entertainers in several ritual texts.¹³ A lute-player is also there, perhaps even a bagpiper. Almost certainly these represent the musicians and acrobats and other entertainers who played an integral role in festival performances—though the precise significance of the 'ladder-men' has been the subject of some debate.¹⁴

Other reliefs, though now out of their original context, seem also to belong to the same composition. Appearing on two large blocks, each with two registers, they depict hunting scenes. There is a lion-hunt, a brilliantly conceived and executed scene in which the artist has chosen to portray the climactic moment. A lion who has reared up in pain and rage tries to grab the spear which a huntsman has

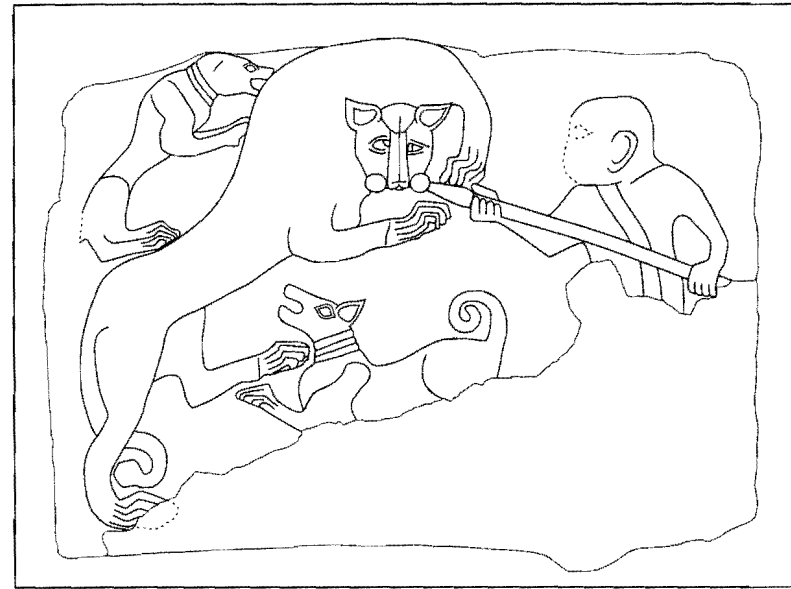


Fig. 6. Lion hunt, relief from Alaca Höyük

plunged into his neck and shoulders. The huntsman's two dogs torment the enraged and mortally wounded beast, whose fury and suffering are emphasized by his head being turned fully towards us. The dogs are barking in a frenzy of excitement at being in at the kill. One is under his belly, the other leaps on his back. Our eyes pass to another scene where a fierce bull is depicted, its head lowered ready to charge its assailants, its enormous tongue lolling from its mouth. Other scenes depict a stag-hunt, a lion pouncing upon a calf, and another huntsman who has drawn back his bow ready to fire his shaft at a wild boar bearing down upon him.

Despite the extreme flatness of the reliefs¹⁵ and errors in anatomical detail, the hunting scenes contrast strikingly, in terms of their violence and realism and dramatic impact, with the normally tranquil and often static scenes of Hittite art. Hunting figures amongst the activities recreated by the dancers in their festival performances, and that may explain the hunting scenes here. The Anatolian countryside provided a range of game for huntsmen—lions and wild bulls, leopard, wolf, deer, hare, and wild boar.

The Major Festivals

Festivals celebrating a wide range of activities, particularly those associated with agriculture, were held at all times of the year. Some were of major national importance and necessitated the king's presence, others were more localized; some were named after seasons of the year, others after the activities which they celebrated (like the grape harvest), and others after a particular feature of the festival programme. Four major festivals provided the high spots of the festival calendar. Two were held in spring, and at least one in autumn. The spring festivals were the AN.TAH.SUM or 'crocus' festival, and the *purulli* festival. The *nuntarriyashas* festival, the 'festival of haste', was celebrated in autumn; this may also have been the season, though less certainly, of the KI.LAM or 'gate-house' festival.

Of the two spring celebrations, the AN.TAH.SUM festival was performed 'for the Sun Goddess of Arinna and the gods of the Hatti Land'. Lasting some thirty-eight days, its rites took place in Hattusa and other important religious centres of the homeland.¹⁶ It had much in common with the *purulli* festival, which lasted for just under a month. So named from the Hattian word for 'earth', this festival belongs within the old Hattic tradition, and features the originally Hattic deities Telipinu, the Storm God, and Inar(a).¹⁷ The king and queen were again the chief officiants. Beginning in Hattusa the festival procession passed through a number of towns, including Arinna, the city of the Sun Goddess and a day's journey from the capital, before reaching its destination.¹⁸ Traditionally this was Nerik, the city in the northern part of the homeland dedicated particularly to the worship of the Storm God. Here the festivities reached their climax. Here there was a general assemblage of gods for the occasion, just as in Babylon all the gods gathered in deference to their chief Marduk, to celebrate the year's beginning.

In view of the peculiarly important place which Nerik claimed in Hittite religious life, its capture by the Kaskans during the reign of King Hantili II¹⁹ was a disaster of the gravest proportions, not merely or even primarily for strategic reasons, but because it was so intrinsically important to the kingdom's religious life. We need only reflect on the emotions generated in more recent times by the loss of a holy city to an 'infidel' enemy to appreciate the full significance of the fall of the city. While Nerik was under enemy occupation, the city of Hakmis (Hakpis) in the northern part of the kingdom took over its

cultic functions. But after several hundred years in enemy hands, Nerik was finally liberated by the man later to become King Hattusili III and resumed its status as one of the leading cult centres of the Hittite world.

The spring festival, which reached its climax in Nerik, celebrated the regeneration of the powers of nature. It was a time of renewals, of reconfirmation of the gods' endorsement of the king's authority, of regeneration of the life and health and vigour of the king and his consort. There was a direct connection between the king's well-being and the rhythm of nature which was essential to the growth process.²⁰ Two Hattic myths which have to do with the notion of death followed by new life were closely linked with the *purulli* festival: the myth of the god Telipinu and that of the dragon Illuyanka. In all likelihood both myths were performed during the course of the festival, as a ritualistic re-enactment of the process of regeneration of life at the year's beginning. We shall have more to say about this below (Chapter 12).

Like the spring festivals, the autumn *nuntarriyashas* festival, the 'festival of haste' (whatever that may mean), lasted several weeks and involved visits to holy places both within and beyond Hattusa.²¹ On the other hand the KI.LAM festival, the 'festival of the gate-house', lasted only three days and was confined entirely to the capital and its immediate environs.²² The term 'gate-house' indicates visits to a number of locations, with the procession commencing from the gate of the royal palace and passing to the gates of various temples and storehouses and apparently the city's treasury. The procession featured the Storm God, whose image was brought from his temple for the occasion and paraded through the streets in an ox-drawn carriage. But many other deities, over thirty of them, were also honoured in the festival.

The Role of Yazılıkaya in the Festival Programme

Any general discussion of Hittite festivals inevitably raises the question of the purpose and function of Yazılıkaya, the natural rock sanctuary lying a kilometre north-east of Hattusa.²³ Yazılıkaya almost certainly played an important role in the festival programme. But what precisely was this role? Human association with the site dates back to the third millennium or earlier. And from at least 1600 the site was in use by the Hittites, who initially left it in its natural state.

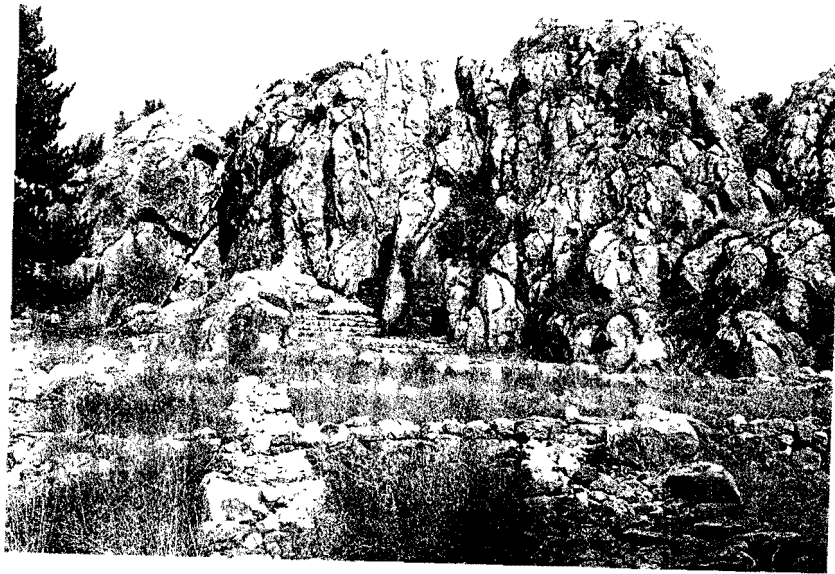


Fig. 7. Yazılıkaya

During Hattusili III's reign a gatehouse and temple complex with interior court and inner sanctuary was constructed across the front of the site, replacing an earlier wall and shutting off direct access into the sanctuary's two rock chambers. The archaeologist Kurt Bittel, who directed excavations at Hattusa from 1931 until succeeded by Peter Neve in 1978, remarked on the strikingly careless manner in which the complex was erected—in contrast to the very solid construction of the known Hittite temples—with foundations set on rubble and hardly anywhere going down to bedrock. He concluded that the lightly constructed buildings in front of Yazılıkaya could hardly have withstood the regular ritual usage attested for the daily cult of a normal Hittite temple, and that the sanctuary was used only on special limited occasions in the course of the year.²⁴

What were these occasions? There can be little doubt that Yazılıkaya with its imposing and largely unparalleled gallery of reliefs, most notably its impressive parade of deities in 'Chamber A', was an important and revered site. Yet its full significance still eludes us. What clues do we have? Behind Chamber A is a narrow passage, guarded by a pair of winged and lion-headed demons leading to the smaller 'Chamber B'. On the right of this chamber as one enters is a sculptured frieze of twelve identical gods (indicated by their cone-

shaped caps) corresponding to a similar group bringing up the rear of the procession of male deities in Chamber A, except that in this case they are carrying sickle-shaped swords. On the opposite wall are two closely linked figures. The larger one is identified by a hieroglyphic inscription as the god Sharruma, son of Teshub and Hepat, the smaller by the royal cartouche surmounted by a winged sun-disc as the god's protégé King Tudhaliya (IV). The god extends his left arm round the shoulder of the king, and also clasps his right wrist, as a symbol of divine protection.²⁵ Tudhaliya also appears in Chamber A, on the wall opposite the main group of deities, in a 3-metre-high relief. In both reliefs he appears in priestly garb, long robe, shoes with upturned toes, close-fitting skull cap and carrying a *kalmus*, the staff whose end curves upwards in a spiral.

On the same wall as the Sharruma–Tudhaliya relief in Chamber B the so-called 'dagger-god' relief was carved. The top part of the relief consists of a human head (evidently that of a god since it wears a conical cap), underneath which are the foreparts of two lions and beneath them two lion-skins hanging head-down. All this forms the 'hilt' of the dagger. The lower part of the relief is in the form of a double-edged blade with a distinct midrib. However, the bottom half of the blade is not visible, and almost certainly the relief as a whole is intended to represent a dagger plunged into the ground. In discussing the interpretation of this relief, scholars have drawn attention to a Hittite ritual which deals with deities banished to the Underworld and describes how an incantation priest makes clay images of them in the shape of swords and fixes them into the ground.²⁶ Professor Bittel compared the relief with a bronze sword found in the region of Diyarbakır with an inscription dedicating it to Nergal, god of the Underworld.²⁷

The twelve identical gods depicted in both chambers may also have netherworld associations, and the remains of burials, both inhumations and cremations, in the niches and crevices of rocks on either side of the path between Hattusa and Yazılıkaya add further to the impression of a site that has to do with death and the afterlife. All the figures in Chamber B face towards the north end of the chamber, and were probably intended to relate to a monument which once stood there—a statue of a god, perhaps, or of a king.

It has long been suggested that Yazılıkaya was the principal place where the Hittite New Year festival was celebrated, the Hittite 'House of the New Year', like the *bīt akītu* of Babylonian tradition. The site's apparent netherworld associations would not be inconsistent with this. Death and new life were commonly juxtaposed in the



Fig. 8. Dagger-god, relief from Yazılıkaya

ancient world, for in the cyclic pattern of things, decay and death are followed by new beginnings, new growth, new life. We can envisage that to this, perhaps the holiest of all open-country sanctuaries in the Hittite world,²⁸ came a procession of celebrants at the year's beginning. Here at this time perhaps all the important gods assembled, just as they are depicted and individually identified in Chamber A, and just as the statues of the Babylonian gods were assembled in the Babylonian *bīt akītu*. There was no more crucial time of the year to seek the gods' favours. There was probably no more important place where this was to be done.

Yazılıkaya may thus have served as a place for celebrating the rites

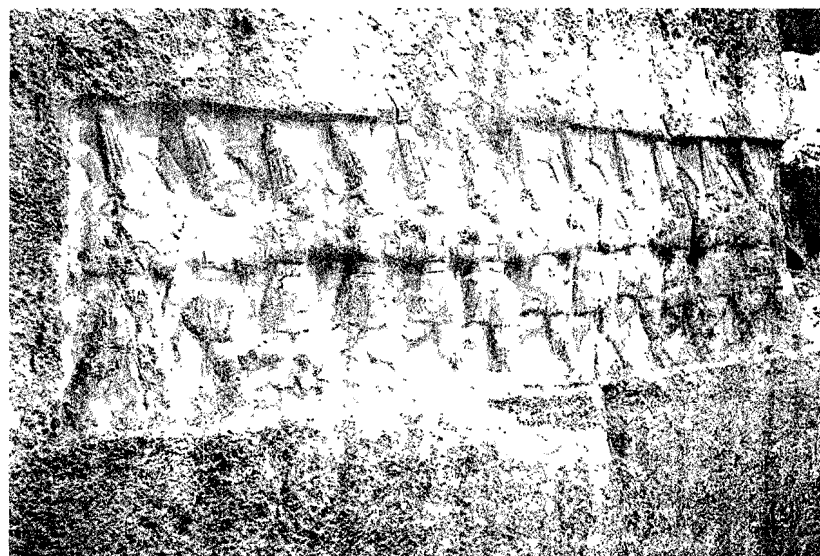


Fig. 9. The twelve gods, relief from Yazılıkaya

of spring, in the presence of all the chief deities of the land.²⁹ In the kingdom's last decades, it may also have served as a mortuary chapel, a place of ancestor worship where the royal family paid homage to its dead.³⁰ And here perhaps a Great King was interred. We have noted in Chapter 10 that after due ceremony a king's bones were finally put to rest in a *hekur*, a 'stone house'.³¹ The prominence of the reliefs of Tudhaliya IV, the only human figure depicted at Yazılıkaya, suggest that Chamber B may have been his *hekur*, his tomb. We are told that his son Suppiluliuma (II) set up a statue to him in his *hekur*.³² Conceivably, the base at the north end of Chamber B, towards which all the reliefs are oriented, once supported a monumental image of Tudhaliya, for veneration and service by that exclusive group of family members allowed entry to a king's tomb after his death.

Rituals

The Hittites drew a distinction between festivals, designated by the Sumerogram *EZEN*, and rituals, to which the term *siskur* applied; the former referred to 'group religious ceremonies designed to worship

and provide offerings to the gods', the latter to 'magical procedures often performed by and for individuals to address specific maladies'.³³ In a broader sense, the term 'ritual' could be said to encompass any symbolic action or performance aimed at bringing about a particular outcome, or commemorating or enhancing a particular event. In any case the distinction between festival and ritual is not an absolute one since many of the procedures carried out during the course of a festival—the washing of hands, the drinking of the god, the breaking of bread, the ceremonial dances—were clearly ritualistic in character. Indeed a festival programme is to a very large extent made up of a series of rituals.

On the other hand, many of the recorded rituals from the Hittite world were clearly designed to cater for the needs of specific individuals on specific occasions. But in whatever context a ritual is performed, one of its characteristic features is that it seeks to achieve a particular result by a procedure or activity which in itself has no *direct* practical value. To till the soil and irrigate the fields may be essential to ensuring a good harvest. But these are not ritual activities. To conduct a ceremony of the plough and perform a fertility dance *are* ritual activities. They will not cultivate the ground or put seeds in it or water the seeds. But in the belief of the performers they are just as essential to the harvest's success. A midwife needs to be skilled both in practical birthing procedures as well as in the performance of the appropriate birth rituals to ensure that a baby is safely delivered. A doctor needs to be skilled both in practical medical procedures as well as in the appropriate spells and rituals and incantations in order to effect many a cure. Practical and ritualistic—the one complements and reinforces the other.

The essence of ritual is *activity*, often multi-sensory activity: the actions, gestures, movements of the participants, the sound of invocations, the herald's cries, the liturgical chanting with musical accompaniment, the fragrant odour of aromatic substances, the stench of sacrificial blood, the sight and sound and smell of fat hissing on the flames, the taste of holy wine on the tongue as one drinks the god, the physical sensation of being washed and scraped of all bodily defilement.

At the heart of much ritual activity lies the notion of sympathetic or mimetic magic—involving the belief that a desired result can be achieved by acting it out in analogy, using token symbols. Thus in a ritual designed to eliminate a source of pollution:

They make a basin . . . and from it they build a small ditch leading to the river. Into it they put a boat lined with a little silver and gold. They also make small 'oaths' and 'curses' of silver and gold and place them into the boat. Then the ditch which empties the basin carries the ship from the basin into the river. When it disappears, she³⁴ pours out a little fine oil and honey, and while doing so speaks as follows: 'Just as the river has carried away the ship and no trace of it can be found any more—whoever has committed evil word, oath, curse and uncleanness in the presence of the god—even so let the river carry them away! And just as no trace of the ship can be found any more, let evil word no longer exist for my god; neither let it exist for the sacrificer's person! Let god and sacrificer be free of that matter!'³⁵

Some of the most interesting rituals are those most closely associated with the lower levels of society far removed from the world of the state festivals, for these rituals, collected throughout the kingdom by royal scribes, afford us rare glimpses into the lives of the common people of the Hittite world. There were rituals for every stage in a person's development, from birth through puberty to death, to protect that person during his or her transition from one stage to the next, warding off evil forces, setting right what has gone wrong. The majority of rituals, comments Professor Beckman, have the purpose of restoring a person to his/her proper functioning within a particular sphere of life.³⁶ There is a ritual designed to restore a man's sexual potency, another to cure a stomach disorder, another to restore domestic bliss to a feuding household, another to purify a household from all evil influences.

The Ritualists

To ensure their effectiveness, rituals need to be carried out by properly qualified persons hired for the purpose. Prominent amongst the experts in ritual procedure, which included many males, were a group of female practitioners whom we commonly refer to as the 'Old Women',³⁷ misleadingly so if the term conjures for us the notion of a pack of toothless, half-crazed old crones. The Hittite term for them is *hasawa*, perhaps originally used of midwives, since it literally means not 'old woman' but rather '(she) of birth'.³⁸ At all events the women so designated were multi-skilled professionals who may often have collaborated with doctors, augurs, incantation priests, and other practitioners in the arts of ritual performance, healing, and divination. As was the case with scribes, many may have been

continuing a family tradition, inheriting an occupation which in some cases at least appears to have been passed down through successive generations of the same family.³⁹ The names of fourteen of these women have survived, as authors of rituals which they practised. The women in general were almost certainly literate, and may well have been multilingual to a greater or lesser degree. A range of languages are used in the liturgical and ritual texts, including ancient Hattic, Luwian, Palaic, Hurrian, and Babylonian. These reflect the traditional languages of the particular cultic areas where the rituals originated. Many of the rituals must have required incantations to be uttered by the performers in languages other than their own native tongue, even if their knowledge of these languages was confined to the terminology of ritual. Presumably if a particular situation called for a ritual which had been composed in Hattic or Luwian or Hurrian, it would have to be performed in that language to ensure its effectiveness.

It is not unlikely that the 'Old Women' (to keep the conventional term) had a regular consultancy practice covering a wide range of situations, and presumably access to a considerable source of material on which they could draw in performing a ritual appropriate to a particular situation. Even at the humblest level rituals were complicated affairs, given all the paraphernalia required for their successful accomplishment, including foodstuffs and other consumable items of clay, wax, tallow, and wool, animals for sacrifice, and a range of ritual instruments. The slightest error could invalidate the whole procedure. Ritual texts, like records of festival programmes, have the appearance of step-by-step instruction manuals, for careful consultation by the practitioner at every stage of the process—the collection of all the materials required for the ritual, their conveyance to the place where the ritual was to be performed, the time of the performance, the words to be uttered, the chants to be sung, the procedures to be followed in meticulous detail. There was obviously a limit to how much the ritualists could commit to memory, even when they themselves had authored a particular ritual. And there may have been many cases where a situation requiring their services arose with little or no warning. Almost certainly there was a large stock of recorded material on which they could call, to ensure that they always had something ready to hand for every conceivable occasion.

Their services, conducted in the open air or in the client's own

home as the situation warranted, probably did not come cheaply, especially since the client must also have been liable for the costs of the consumables required by the ritual. It does seem, however, that the cost of treatment could be tailored to meet the client's ability to pay, with less expensive items being used for a client of modest means, apparently without affecting, or at least seriously diminishing, the ritual's potency. For example, a particular ritual may have called for the sacrifice of a donkey, a not inexpensive item to judge from the prices of livestock in *The Laws*, which would have added considerably to the cost of the ritual. In place of a live animal, however, a poor man was permitted to substitute one of clay for the ritual's purposes.⁴⁰

The Substitute

The concept of substitution is embodied in a great many rituals.⁴¹ Indeed the concept is a very widespread one, occurring in many civilizations, ancient and modern, in many different forms. Basically, it involves the belief that in certain situations a substitute can take on the identity of some other person or thing. This enables it to serve as a stand-in when the original is not available, or to assume the original's burdens or afflictions, or contrarily to be used as a means of transferring burdens or afflictions to the original. Sir James Frazer in *The Golden Bough* traced the concept back to primitive humankind. The 'savage', he said, recognized that he could relieve himself of a physical burden, like a load of wood or stones, by getting someone else to carry the load for him; by extension he thought he could also transfer to someone or something else other kinds of burdens and afflictions—physical ailments, grief, and pain. In its more sophisticated forms, the substitution ritual often possessed a distinct moral and ethical element, involving the belief that not only one's physical afflictions but also the burden of one's sin or guilt could be transferred to another being. In Christian theology the martyrdom of Jesus Christ is the ultimate manifestation of the substitution concept.

From as far back as the Mesopotamian story of the goddess Ishtar's release from the Underworld and her replacement by the shepherd god Dumuzi, literature has abounded in illustrations of the substitution concept. It surfaces many times, for example, in Classical Greek literature. Thus in Euripides' play *Alcestis* the eponymous

heroine volunteers herself as a substitute for her husband Admetos when he is told that his death is imminent and can only be avoided if he finds someone else willing to die in his place. In a quite different context, an example of substitution is provided by Herodotos, who records the Egyptian custom of heaping curses upon the severed head of an ox, praying that any evil likely to threaten the land may fall upon it; the ox's head is then thrown into the Nile (or else sold in a market-place if there happens to be one nearby with Greek traders present).⁴² Like the scapegoat of biblical tradition (see below), the ox serves as a substitute victim, having heaped upon it and bearing away the afflictions of the people for whom it has been sacrificed.

A substitute ox was a central feature of the procedures which King Mursili II followed in order to rid himself of his speech affliction (see Chapter 9). The ox was to be sent to the temple of the Storm God in Kummanni, along with a wagon-load of the king's possessions, in particular the garments and the accoutrements he had worn on two critical days—the day when the affliction first befell him and the day when the ritual of appeasement began. Here the ox and the accompanying items were to be burned as an offering to the Storm God. In the typically pragmatic Hittite way which left nothing to chance, a second ox was kept in reserve for the journey—a substitute for the substitute—in case the first died en route.

Animals commonly featured in rituals as substitute victims—preferably live ones, though as we have seen above, clay replicas were permissible for budget-constrained clients. Asses, oxen, birds, dogs, sheep, and pigs were all considered appropriate for substitution purposes. Thus in a ritual designed to restore harmony to a strife-torn household:

They drive up a black sheep, the Old Woman presents it to them (*the sacrificers—i.e. the pair who have hired the Old Woman*), and speaks as follows: 'For your heads and all parts of your bodies the black sheep is a substitute. In its mouth and its tongue is the tongue of curses.' She waves it over them. The two sacrificers spit into its mouth.⁴³ They cut up the sheep and dismember it. They kindle the hearth and burn it. . . . The Old Woman takes a small pig, she presents it to them and speaks as follows: 'See! It has been fattened with grass and grain. Just as this one shall not see the sky and shall not see the other small pigs again, even so let the evil curses not see these sacrificers either!' She waves the small pig over them, and then they kill it. They dig a hole in the ground and put it down into it.⁴⁴

The substitute serves as a kind of receptacle for the pollutants and evil forces which have been afflicting those for whom the ritual has been conducted, and the ritual process involves the transfer of these contaminants from sufferer to substitute. The transfer may be effected by a number of means—by verbal identification of the bodily parts of the substitute with those of the sufferer, by fashioning a substitute image in the likeness of the sufferer, on the principle that like attracts like, by the sufferer touching the substitute or spitting into its mouth, or by simply waving the substitute at or over the sufferer. Of course the process of merely transferring contaminants to a substitute does not eliminate them, any more than we solve a garbage problem by tossing our domestic waste into our neighbour's backyard. In the course of the ritual, or after it had been completed, it was essential to ensure the correct disposal of the contaminants.⁴⁵ Failure to do so could be construed as a wilful act of sorcery, liable for judgement before the king's court with possible dire consequences.⁴⁶

Depending on their nature, the pollutants might be disposed of by incineration or burial (which thus consigned them to the Underworld), or by conveying them somewhere else. They could, for example, be set adrift on a river, like the replica silver and gold curses and oaths referred to in the pollution ritual we have dealt with above, or the ox's head thrown into the Nile. The substitute might also serve as a removalist, like the ox in King Mursili's ritual. This calls to mind Aaron's ritual with the two goats in Leviticus 16; one served as an atonement offering to the Hebrew god, the other—the 'scapegoat'—carried the people's iniquities into the wilderness. Mursili's substitute ox combined both these functions; it conveyed the affliction away from the king, and served as an atonement offering to the god. Donkeys and rams could also be used as carriers, to convey pestilence ritually transferred to them into an enemy's country. Even a mouse might serve as a carrier: 'She (the Old Woman) wraps up a small piece of tin in the bowstring and attaches it to the sacrificers' right hands and feet. She takes it off them again and attaches it to a mouse, with the words: "I have taken the evil off you and transferred it to this mouse. Let this mouse carry it on a long journey to the high mountains, hills and dales!"'⁴⁷

Members of the royal family sometimes sought to divert their afflictions, almost invariably attributable to divine wrath, to a human substitute. Thus Mursili II's beloved and desperately ill wife Gassulawiya sent a woman of great beauty to Lelwani, supposedly

responsible for her ailment, in the hope that she would be accepted as a substitute for the queen: 'If you, O God, are seeking ill of me. . . this woman shall be my substitute. I am presenting her to you in fine attire. Compared to me she is excellent, she is pure, she is brilliant, she is white, she is decked out with everything. Now, O God, My Lord, look well on her. Let this woman stand before the god, My Lord.'⁴⁸ We cannot be sure whether the queen's substitute was to be offered up as a human sacrifice. The fragmentary nature of the text leaves this unclear. In any case the deity remained unmoved. Gassulawiya never recovered from her illness.

There was a substitution ritual designed to protect a king threatened by an outbreak of plague while returning home from a successful military campaign in enemy territory.⁴⁹ In this case the ritual prescribed that a male prisoner and a female from the enemy land be seized and brought before the king. The king removed his clothes and they were put on the male prisoner, and the female was clothed in female garb. The king uttered the words: 'If any male god of the enemy land has caused this plague, thus I have given him a man suitably attired as a substitute. May you, male god, be fully satisfied with this man thus attired, and henceforth be well disposed to the king, the lords, the army, and the land of Hatti, and may this prisoner take the plague upon himself and carry it back to the enemy land!' The procedure was repeated with the female prisoner for the benefit of a female deity. There were also animal substitutes, a bull and a female sheep decked out with earrings, and red, green, black, and white wool, to which the plague was transferred and which would also act as its carriers back to the enemy land.⁵⁰

The stability of the kingdom depended to a very large extent on the health and well-being of its sovereign. But the sovereign was forever vulnerable to divine wrath, for he was responsible not only for offences which he himself had committed, but also for those of other members of his family, including his ancestors, or indeed for offences committed by his subjects in general. Conscientious celebration of the festivals in the religious calendar might go a long way towards keeping the gods on side. But there was no absolute guarantee of this, and it was as well to take further precautions, anticipating as far as one could any misfortune or disaster likely to overtake the king. Sometimes an omen or oracle might give warning of an imminent threat to his life. That was the signal for prompt preventative measures, with the appropriate ritual text ready to hand: 'If

death is predicted for the king, whether he sees it in a dream or it is made known to him by divination from the entrails or by augury, or if some omen of death occurs in front of him, this is the ritual for it.'⁵¹

Thus reads the concluding statement, or colophon, to one of two recorded versions of the procedures to be followed in a substitute ritual.⁵² Extending over two nights, the ritual was triggered by a sign from the Moon God and involved the use of three substitutes: a live animal, a live human being, and a life-size wooden image of a human being, decked in royal robes with eyes and earrings of gold. Although the sign had come from the Moon God, there could be no certainty that he was in fact the deity to whom the king had given offence. All possibilities had to be covered, with substitute victims appropriate to each of them. The king first addressed the Moon God: 'Since you, O Moon God, My Lord, have given an omen, if you have declared evil for me, see! I have provided substitutes in my place. Now take these and set me free!'⁵³

The animal substitute, a bull, was taken to an elevated place and there, in full view of the Moon God, was sacrificed and its body burnt—thus representing the death and cremation of the king. The live human substitute was for the upper-world gods, the wooden effigy for those of the netherworld. Allowance had to be made for the possibility that either one or the other of these groups of deities had taken offence and needed to be appeased: The king says: 'This is the living supernal substitute for me, and this effigy is the infernal substitute for me. If you, heavenly gods, have afflicted me with evil or shortened my days, months, or years, this living substitute man shall stand in my place; mark him well, O heavenly gods. But if the Sun Goddess of the Underworld and the infernal gods have afflicted me, then this effigy shall stand in my place; mark it well, O infernal gods.'⁵⁴

The ritual required that the king's substitute actually became king in his place, for the period in which he was particularly at risk. The live human substitute was a prisoner-of-war who had been selected for the occasion and anointed with 'the fine oil of kingship'. The real king stripped himself of all his regalia and presented them to the substitute: 'See, this man (is now) king! I have bestowed on this man the name of kingship, I have bestowed on him the garb of kingship, I have put on him the (royal) diadem.'⁵⁵ The substitute dismissed the real king from the palace. No longer did anyone even speak his name. His replacement was king in all respects. He was wine and

dined, he slept in the royal bedroom, he was guarded by the royal officials. This continued until the seventh day. But his period of kingship was hardly one of unallayed pleasure, for it had been foretold that the king's life would be brief, and if the prophecy was fulfilled, it would be fulfilled while the substitute occupied the throne. If he survived to the seventh day, his kingship came to an end. And then he was sent back to his own land none the worse, it would appear, for his experience. Perhaps the offering of him as a substitute was atonement enough for the gods; perhaps like the scapegoat he served to convey from the palace and the kingdom all trace of the evil which had initially inspired divine wrath.

The Hittite ritual of the substitute king recalls an earlier Mesopotamian practice. In accordance with this practice a substitute was appointed at critical periods, when omens like eclipses presaged dangers for the real king. But it appears that the substitute, when his brief period of glory came to an end, was executed, to ensure that the gods were fully appeased—unless the real king happened to die at just that time. This did indeed happen when King Erra-imittī of the Isin dynasty died from quaffing a bowl of hot broth during the 'reign' of his substitute, the gardener Ellil-bāni. Clearly the gods had taken matters into their own hands. They were now satisfied, and no further atonement was needed. Ellil-bāni reaped the benefits of the situation and continued to occupy the throne—except, no doubt, for those brief periods when a substitute took his place.⁵⁶

Magic

It is clear that the success of a ritualistic performance depended in large measure on the potent forces of magic which the ritual activated.⁵⁷ In broad terms magic has been defined as 'a reasoned system of techniques for influencing the gods and other supernatural powers that can be taught and learned . . . Magic not only manipulates occult forces but also tries to master the higher supernatural powers with which religion is concerned'.⁵⁸ Healing and purification rituals involved good magic—white magic—which had the power to cleanse an afflicted person or building or field or country of the evil forces which defiled it. This sometimes involved the use of apotropaic images; for example, figures of animals buried in the foundations of buildings—or placed at their entrance: 'They make a little dog of tallow and place it on the threshold of the house and say:

"You are the little dog on the table of the royal pair. Just as by day you do not allow other men into the courtyard, so do not let in the Evil Thing during the night."⁵⁹ White magic was used to negate and expel the counter-influences of sorcery, black magic. These were generally not demons as they were in the Babylonian conception, but rather powerful impersonal forces, responsible for many of the misfortunes and afflictions which plagued humankind—individuals, families, communities, whole states.⁶⁰

Their powers might be unleashed through an act of carelessness—for example, failure to dispose in the correct manner of pollutants removed from a patient or building during a ritual of purification. But more often than not, they were deliberately activated with malicious intent. To do so was an offence dealt with by the highest authority in the land. The Laws stipulate that those accused of making clay images for magical purposes will be called to account before His Majesty's court.⁶¹ A hair from the intended victim's body, or an item of his clothing, might also be used by the practitioner of black magic. Even the act of pronouncing someone's name while killing a snake⁶² resulted in a hefty fine (one mina, or forty shekels, of silver) for a free man and death for a slave.⁶³ If you were the victim of such an act, a ritual was necessary to remove the spell or curse from you, and to cast it back upon the perpetrator: 'Next she (the Old Woman) likewise fashions a strand out of green wool and says as follows: "Whoever has used sorcery against this person (the patient), and whoever has rendered (him or her) green—I am now removing the sorcery and the green from him/her and will give it back to its originator." Then she wraps the strand around the (magic) figures.'⁶⁴

It was a charge of witchcraft that led to the downfall of Arma-Tarhunda, governor of the strategically important Upper Land during the reign of King Muwatalli (II). As we have noted, Arma-Tarhunda was related to the royal family, and had the misfortune to be the arch-rival of the king's brother Hattusili, later to occupy the throne as Hattusili III. Prior to this Muwatalli had made his brother governor of the Upper Land in place of Arma-Tarhunda, much to the latter's fury. It was Hattusili who had brought the charge of witchcraft, to counter an indictment which Arma-Tarhunda had brought against him: 'Furthermore he and his wife and his son began to bewitch me. He also filled Samuha, the city of the deity, with witchcraft.'⁶⁵ One cannot help suspecting that Arma-Tarhunda's charge (whatever it may have been) was not unjustified, and Hattusili's a

trumped-up one; it was certainly well within the capability of the wily and ruthlessly ambitious young prince to resort to such measures to rid himself of an inconvenient rival. In any case Muwatalli found against the defendant, and handed him over to Hattusili for punishment, thus ensuring the removal of one of the chief obstacles in his brother's career path. Yet Hattusili's treatment of Arma-Tarhunda was surprisingly mild: he let him go free and returned to him half his confiscated property; subsequently he attempted a reconciliation with his family. All this, he claims, he did out of pity, for Arma-Tarhunda was now an old man. More likely he was acting out of remorse—for a charge unjustly laid.

The mere allegation of witchcraft may well have generated concerns and emotions which were almost sufficient in themselves to secure a conviction. To judge from the Proclamation of King Telipinu, even a knowledge of the black arts rendered one liable to prosecution. And persons who knew of but failed to denounce those suspected of having such knowledge were themselves liable to punishment: 'In Hattusa hereafter sorcery must be exorcized. Whoever in the (royal) family knows about sorcery, you must seize him and bring him to the gate of the palace. Whoever does not bring him here—it will come about that things will go badly for this man and his house.'⁶⁶

This has a familiar ring about it. Note the progression: practice of the 'black arts' is an offence; then mere knowledge of the black arts becomes an offence; then knowledge of and failure to report those who practise or know the black arts becomes an offence. Herein we have an early attested example of a phenomenon of human behaviour that surfaces every so often in recorded history. It is what we call witch-hunting.

CHAPTER 12

Myth

The god Telipinu has flown into a rage. He puts on his shoes and departs the land. Crops wither and die, sheep and cattle reject their young and become barren, men and gods starve. In great alarm the Storm God, father of Telipinu, dispatches an eagle to search for his wayward son. The search is in vain. The Storm God himself attempts to seek him out. Again to no avail. No god, great or small, can determine his whereabouts. In desperation the Storm God sends a bee to look for him. The bee searches on high mountains, in deep valleys, in the blue deep. Finally, in a meadow, it discovers Telipinu. It stings his hands and feet, bringing him smartly upright, and then soothes the pain of his stings by smearing wax on the affected parts. But the god's anger remains unabated. Indeed his fury is increased by his rude and painful awakening. In an orgy of destruction, he unleashes thunder and lightning and great floods, knocking down houses and wreaking havoc on human beings, livestock, and crops. Then Kamrusepa, goddess of magic, is sent to pacify him and bring him back. She conducts a ritual for this purpose. By the process of ritual analogy Telipinu's body is cleansed of its anger. The god's way home is made smooth by spreading oil and honey upon it. Telipinu returns and once more cares for his land. All is restored to normal. The land once more becomes fruitful.

The story of the Vanishing God is part of a small body of native Anatolian mythological tradition which has come down to us via the Hittite archives.¹ Remnants of a number of versions of the story have survived, featuring different gods (including the great Storm God himself), though it is generally the god Telipinu who has the starring role. Even his story appears in several different versions. We have parts of at least three of these, and although none are complete we can piece together from their fragments a number of elements which are probably common to all of them. Telipinu was a Hattic god in origin who retained some prominence throughout

the period of the Hittite kingdom. Sired by the Storm God, he too sometimes displayed formidable Storm God characteristics, as illustrated by the destructive elemental forces unleashed by him in the Vanishing God tradition. The tradition almost certainly dates back to the early Old Kingdom, or even earlier to pre-Hittite times, though it survives only in Middle and Late Hittite texts (that is, texts of the New Kingdom).

A story recited, a tale told. This in essence is what a myth is. The notion of something *spoken* is in fact inherent in the word. 'Myth' is derived from Greek *mythos* whose prime meaning 'utterance, a thing said', was extended to refer to anything spoken or recited, particularly a story. The Vanishing God myth has all the elements of a story recited. But not merely this. In its written form it provides a script for a full-scale dramatic performance. There is a cast of characters who deliver short speeches linked by narrative:

NARRATOR: The pastures and the springs dried up, so that famine broke out in the land. Humans and gods were dying of hunger. The Great Sun God made a feast and invited the Thousand Gods. They ate but could not get enough. They drank but could not quench their thirst. The Storm God remembered his son Telipinu:

STORM GOD: My son Telipinu is not there. He became enraged and removed everything good.

NARRATOR: The great and small gods began to search for Telipinu. The Sun God sent the swift eagle:

SUN GOD: Go search the high mountains! Search the deep valleys! Search the Blue Deep!

NARRATOR: The eagle went, but did not find him. He reported back to the Sun God:

EAGLE: I could not find Telipinu, the noble god.

STORM GOD (to *Hannahanna*): How shall we act? We are going to die of hunger!

HANNAHANNA²: Do something, Storm God. Go search for Telipinu yourself!³

Stage directions are inserted in the script, as much for the guidance of the actors as for their audience:

NARRATOR: Telipinu came in anger.

STAGE DIRECTION: *He thunders together with lightning. Below he strikes the Dark Earth.*

NARRATOR: Kamrusepa saw him and moved for herself [with(?)] the eagle's wing. She stopped it, namely anger. She stopped it, the wrath. She stopped sin. She stopped sullenness.

Props to be used in the performance are also indicated by stage directions:

Before Telipinu there stands an eyan-tree (or pole?).⁴ From the eyan is suspended a hunting bag made from the skin of a sheep.

The lines spoken by narrator and actors provide but one element of a performance in which sight and sound are blended in dramatic presentation. The performance is visually enhanced by the actions and costumes of the actors, garbed as animals or gods, decked out with all their appropriate insignia and symbols, moving rhythmically in ever-changing patterns and tableaux as they mime the actions conveyed by the narrator's words, as they react and respond through gesture, facial expression, and bodily movement to each stage of the unfolding drama. There is music throughout the performance. The actors accompany their movements with singing and chanting, sometimes in unison, sometimes individually. There is also instrumental music—the rumble of drums and the clash of cymbals in the more violent scenes as the angry, wayward god vents his wrath by unleashing thunder and lightning; the soothing tones of the lute in the quieter, more solemn scenes as the god's anger is drained from him and he is finally enticed home.

At least in theory, the performance was not intended primarily for the entertainment of an assembled audience. If the audience were in fact entertained, that was a perfectly acceptable by-product; no god could take exception to that. But the myth itself merely provided the context for the performance's essential purpose—a ritual designed to induce a delinquent god through analogic magic to abandon his wrath and return to his responsibilities. The ritual passages, in their phraseology and content, and particularly in their application of analogic magic, recall many of the purificatory rituals of the Hittite land. And the leading ritual practitioner in the myth, Kamrusepa, goddess of magic, served as the divine counterpart of the 'Old Women', speaking and acting very much as they did:

Kamrusepa says to the gods: '... Telipinu is angry. His soul and essence were stifled like burning brushwood. Just as they burned these sticks of brushwood, may the anger, wrath, sin and sullenness of Telipinu likewise burn up. And just as malt is ineffective, so that they don't carry it to the field and use it as seed, as they don't make it into bread and deposit it in the Seal House, so may the anger, wrath, sin and sullenness of Telipinu likewise become ineffective. ...'

The Myth-Ritual Nexus

The fact that myth and ritual have so frequently been associated through the ages has led to a widespread and long-held assumption that the two are invariably linked. This assumption goes too far, and exceptions to it can readily be found. Nevertheless, there are clearly many instances in many civilizations where a close nexus between myth and ritual does exist, as in the case of our Vanishing God. Which raises a further question. Does myth give rise to ritual, or ritual to myth? Arguably, it is possible to find examples of both. But in cases like the Vanishing God, myth almost certainly preceded ritual. The Hittite land fell frequent victim to a range of natural disasters—devastating storms, drought, plague, famine—occurring at unpredictable intervals and attributable to malevolent supernatural powers. While humankind had no practical means of controlling these powers, it could seek to influence them through other means. But in order to do so, one needed first to understand how they operated, how they behaved, how they thought. This in effect meant reducing them to human terms, and putting them into the context of human behaviour and experience. A superhuman power with human desires, failings, and vulnerabilities can more readily be dealt with than vague impersonal forces which lie beyond human conceptualization. The land is afflicted by a prolonged drought. There is some being responsible for this. It must be a being who has power over life-sustaining elements, fertility of soil and livestock, growth-inducing rain. Why has it withheld these elements? Reasons are given in terms of human emotions—and the rudiments of a myth are created. How can things be set right? By seeking to drive from the being the negative human emotions which have led to its malevolence, in this case its wrath and sullenness, as one would seek to drive out the wrath from a feuding household. How does one do this? Through the process of analogic magic. If a human being can thus be purified, so too can a god—if a god is but a human on a superhuman scale.

At first sight the Vanishing God tradition appears similar in concept to traditions from other civilizations which concern the disappearance of fertility deities and the consequent withering of life on earth. Thus in Mesopotamian tradition the abduction of the shepherd-god Dumuzi to the Underworld. In Greek tradition Persephone's abduction to the same region has similar conse-

quences, because of the grief of her mother, the earth goddess Demeter. The Mesopotamian and Greek myths serve to explain the regularly recurring cycle of seasons, with growth and new life heralding Dumuzi's and Persephone's return to the upper world for six months in every twelve. But the Vanishing God tradition is of a different order. There is no sense here of a predictable recurrent pattern. Rather the emphasis is on the god's whimsical behaviour. Without warning, it seems, he abandons the land in a fit of pique—for reasons which the fragmentary texts have not preserved and which in any case are probably quite incidental—and his disappearance and prolonged absence are quite beyond the normal order of things, causing as much concern to his fellow gods as to his mortal worshippers.

The myth and the ritual which it incorporates have very much a reactive character. There is no sense of looking forward to the future. Rather the impression is of a response to a crisis which has already happened, is still current, and falls outside the natural cycle of the seasons. It is possible that the myth was routinely acted out at the annual *purulli* festival at the beginning of spring (as an anticipatory or precautionary measure?). But in addition, if not alternatively, it may have been performed at other times as well, in response to a critical situation, and particularly at times of imminent serious shortfalls in the land's food production, whether due to drought, or crop-destroying storms, or a decline in soil and livestock fertility. Such crises may have become ever more frequent during the kingdom's last decades.

The Illuyanka Myth

This is the text of the *Purulli* Festival. . . . When they speak thus: 'Let the land prosper and thrive, and let the land be protected'—and when it prospers and thrives, they perform the *Purulli* Festival.

So begins the earlier of two versions of the myth of Illuyanka,⁵ a serpent (that is what his name means) who crawls from the bowels of the earth to engage in mortal combat with the Storm God. The myth tells of the combat, which ends with the triumph of the Storm God and the death of Illuyanka. But victory does not come easily. Initially the serpent gains the upper hand, inflicting a resounding defeat on the god, who is forced to call in outside assistance, both divine (in the earlier version) and human (in both versions). Only then, and even

then only through trickery, does he succeed in overcoming his adversary and killing him.

This much do the two versions of the myth have in common. Both versions were written on a single tablet by a scribe at the dictation of a priest called Kella. Like the myths which belong to the Vanishing God tradition, the story of Illuyanka comes from native Hattic tradition. Indeed the place-names mentioned in the story, Ziggarratta and Nerik, place it firmly in the once predominantly Hattic region of central Anatolia, lying north of Hattusa and extending towards the Pontic coast. Like the Vanishing God tradition, it was probably first committed to writing during the Old Hittite period,⁶ though all surviving copies date to the New Kingdom.

As the official cult-myth of the *purulli* festival, the story of Illuyanka was no doubt acted out on one or more occasions during the course of the festival—almost certainly at Nerik, where the celebrations reached their climax, and perhaps at other venues on the festival route as well. Its purpose must have been to strengthen through ritual enactment the process of regeneration of life at the year's beginning, symbolized by the Storm God's triumph over Illuyanka, who represents the forces of darkness and evil. Yet though he is vanquished and slaughtered Illuyanka will rise again to do battle, his life renewed as a snake renews itself by sloughing its skin. Like the Babylonian Marduk, who vanquishes and dismembers Tiamat but must do battle afresh with her every year, the Hittite Storm God will forever have to renew his combat with his adversary. That is in the nature of things. The struggle is a constant one; Illuyanka is never completely overthrown and the Storm God's battle with him must be fought year after year. It is appropriate that the ritual enacted to represent this is performed at the most crucial time of the year, to reactivate through sympathetic magic the powers that hold in check the destructive elemental forces hostile to civilized existence. Constant vigilance and effort are needed, by man and god alike, for whenever the dark forces represented by Illuyanka gain the upper hand, the crops will not grow, the rain will not fall.

The theme of a hero, human or divine, pitted in a fight to the death against a monster (often a serpent or dragon, or with reptilian body-parts) representing the forces of evil is typical of the mythology of many civilizations. The myths of the ancient Greeks abound in examples—Zeus and Typhon, Apollo and Python, Bellerophon and

Chimaera, Perseus and Medusa, Herakles and the Hydra—with derivatives like St George and the Dragon in more recent times. Sometimes even when the hero is a god, and despite all the weapons in his armoury, his success can only be achieved with the assistance of a mortal. In Greek tradition it was only through the services of a mortal, Herakles, that Zeus and his fellow gods finally triumphed over the Giants, the monstrous sons of the Earth sprung from the blood of the mutilated Ouranos (see below). So too in both versions of the Illuyanka myth, which differ quite markedly in many of their details, a mortal is pressed into service to help rescue the god from total and irreversible defeat. In the first version his name is Hupasiya. The Storm God's daughter seeks him out and asks him to join forces with her. He agrees to do so on condition that she sleeps with him. Which she does. The plan is put into effect:

Inara led Hupasiya away and hid him. She dressed herself up and called the serpent up from its hole, (saying:) 'I'm preparing a feast. Come eat and drink.' So up came the serpent and his children, and they ate and drank. They drained every vessel and became drunk. Now they do not want to go back down into their hole again. Hupasiya came and bound the serpent with a rope. Then the Storm God came and slew the serpent, and the gods that were with him.⁷

In the second version of the myth, we are at the point where the serpent has defeated the Storm God and taken his heart and eyes. Again subterfuge is called for. The Storm God sires a son by a poor mortal woman, and on reaching manhood the son marries Illuyanka's daughter and becomes a member of his father-in-law's household. This is in accordance with the Storm God's plan, who now instructs his son: 'When you go and live in your wife's house, demand from them my heart and eyes (as a brideprice).' The son's new family voluntarily hands over to him the requested items, without suspecting, apparently, who the real author of the request is. The plan has worked. With his bodily parts all back in place, the Storm God once more does battle with his adversary, and this time kills him.

The tradition has a number of curious features which set it quite apart from most other monster-slaying myths. In the first place the hero can hardly be said to cover himself in glory. In both versions of the tale he is ignominiously defeated by his opponent. In the first version his ultimate success comes only after his daughter has taken

the initiative and rendered the serpent utterly helpless with the aid of her mortal assistant. In both versions deception and trickery are used where the god's physical prowess has failed. Not that deception and trickery were necessarily bad things in themselves if the end warranted such means (as exemplified also in the Homeric code of heroic conduct). But the Storm God's behaviour raises other moral questions. In the first version the slaughter of the serpent and his sons grossly violates the obligations of hospitality which codes of social behaviour in almost all civilizations, ancient and modern, insist on being scrupulously observed. If, as Professor Hoffner notes, a man gives shelter and food to another, he is bound by the time-honoured obligations of a host to ensure that his guest is protected from all harm.⁸ Illuyanka and his sons have been guests at the table of the Storm God's daughter and are still under her protection, according to the laws of hospitality, when they meet their deaths at the hands of her father. In the second version the Storm God's victory depends on another deliberately engineered act of betrayal. The god has produced a son for the purpose of marrying into the serpent's household, in effect becoming a member of his family. It reflects a situation familiar enough in Hittite society, where matrilocal marriages were apparently not uncommon (see Chapter 7). In such a situation the husband's first loyalty was clearly due to his new family. Yet the marriage of the Storm God's son is a perversion of this. It is to be used as a means of bringing about his father-in-law's destruction.

The involvement of a mortal in both versions of the myth has been seen as a kind of statement of the need for joint effort between god and man in ensuring that the cosmos functions properly and that evil destructive forces are kept at bay; each has his own contribution to make to the process. Given the actual role played by man and god in the myth, that interpretation is not easy to sustain. In both versions the mortals end up as the victims of their actions. In the first, Hupayasa finds himself a prisoner of the goddess to whose service he has given himself, forever denied the right of returning to his wife and children for whom he passionately longs. A punishment for his *hubris*, his arrogance, in demanding that the goddess sleep with him as a reward for his services? That is often assumed, but is certainly not evident from the text itself. Nor do we know his ultimate fate, for the text is broken at the point where it was apparently narrated. In the second version there is no doubt about the mortal's fate. The moral dilemma he faces is an understandable one; his loyalties to his

natural father are in conflict with those he owes to his new family. It is the latter whom he ultimately betrays. Wracked with guilt at this betrayal and because of his part in his father-in-law's death, he begs the Storm God to kill him too. Whether as an act of mercy, an act of wrath at his son's remorse, or as an act of sheer indifference now that his son has served his purpose, the Storm God promptly obliges.

The myth may lack the sophistication of the more developed literary products of Hurrian culture. Yet the issues which it raises seem to go well beyond a simple, clear-cut conflict between the forces of good and evil. Why is the Storm God portrayed in such a negative, lacklustre way, especially in a text which was acted out in a festival in which he played a starring role? The contrast with the portrayal of Marduk in the Babylonian creation myth, to take but one example for comparison purposes, is striking. There is of course a risk of our reading more into the tale, in both its versions, than was originally intended or was apparent to those who recorded, read, or heard it, or participated in its performance. And for all we know the apparent complexities of the tale may have simply been due to its being cobbled together from several early and originally independent folk tales now lost to us. On the other hand it is difficult to believe that in a society which was closely attuned to a range of social and moral issues there were not some who pondered on the tale's moral implications. Or was the only important thing that the Storm God eventually triumphed, regardless of how his victory was achieved or who fell victim in the process? Even if this were the case, those who saw the performance must have had some sensitivity to the pathos of the mortal's plight in both versions. 'It is not too much to claim', comments Professor Hoffner, 'that the author intended the audience to feel the tragedy. Such a plot may not be "literary" in the strict sense, but it is surely evidence for good story-telling technique!'⁹

Other Anatolian Myths

The Vanishing God group of myths and the two versions of the Illuyanka myth are the most prominent examples of the small corpus of Anatolian myths and folk tales surviving in the Hattusa archives. They owe their survival in large measure to the fact that many were incorporated into rituals which were collected throughout the kingdom by royal scribes. But they can be no more than a tiny sample of what was probably a rich body of native mythological

tradition, typical of pre-literate societies, extending well back before the Hittite period. Much may never have been recorded in written form. Much else may initially have been recorded during the Old Hittite period, but unlike the Vanishing God and Illuyanka tales failed to survive in the texts beyond that period. Some tales that do survive are frustratingly incomplete, like the Hattic myth which recounts how the moon (Hattic Kasku) fell from the sky, was pursued by the Storm God and other deities and finally, we may conclude (though the text is broken at this point), restored to his original place. A ritual text, also very fragmentary, accompanies the myth, thus providing the reason for its preservation in written form. Unfortunately not enough remains of either myth or ritual to indicate their full significance.

Native themes occasionally find echoes in Classical Greek tradition. The Sun God's lust for a beautiful cow whom he impregnates after turning himself into a handsome youth recalls that group of Greek tales which present variations on the theme of human-bovine couplings, Zeus and Europa, Zeus and Io, Pasiphae and the bull. (One is tempted to remark that in the Hittite context, it is somewhat surprising to find that a sexual act which is strictly forbidden in Hittite law is committed by the supreme god of justice.) In the sequel to the Hittite story the cow is horrified at the two-legged offspring, a human male child, which results from her coupling, and is only prevented from eating the child by his sire's intervention. What follows is obscured by the text's very fragmentary state at this point, and the complete loss of a passage about seventeen lines in length. When the text resumes, there is a fragmentary reference to great rivers, and apparently to some measures taken by the god for the protection of the child. Finally the god leads a fisherman, himself childless, to where the child, an apparent foundling, lies. Gathering him up, the fisherman takes him home to his wife and persuades her to feign labour pains. She does so, deluding the villagers into believing that she is delivered of a child of her own. The story ends abruptly here, but we know that it continued on another tablet now lost to us.¹⁰

Incomplete though it is, enough of the story survives to suggest that it may be an early example of a well known and widespread narrative tradition: A child is born in secret; its father is often (though not invariably) a god. The mother cannot rear it as her own, either because of the disgrace associated with its birth, or because reports of its birth would put it in great danger. The child is therefore

entrusted to destiny by being set adrift on a river or in the sea until it is discovered, safe and sound, and reared, generally by a childless couple of humble circumstances. This in essence is the story of the origins of the Akkadian king Sargon, of the Hebrew Moses, of the Persian king Darius, of the Greek hero Perseus, of Romulus, founder of Rome.¹¹ In each of these cases the foundling grows to manhood and achieves great things, generally as a leader of his people and often at the expense of a king from whom his birth has been kept secret—a king forewarned that just such a person would one day overthrow him, or liberate his people from him. In the Hittite story, the role of the fisherman and references to 'great rivers' raise the possibility that in this case too the rejected infant had been set adrift on water until, under his real father's guidance, he was found and reared by his adoptive parents. If so, perhaps like his counterparts in similar stories, he grew to manhood and became a great leader of his people. Perhaps this was narrated in the final missing tablet of the story. That would make it one of the earliest surviving examples of a tradition which was to resurface constantly in a number of civilizations over at least the next thousand years.

The motif of exposing babies by setting them adrift on a river occurs again in a Hittite context in the so-called legend of Zalpa.¹² The queen of Kanesh, so the story goes, gave birth to thirty sons in a single year. Horrified by this enormous brood she placed them in reed baskets caulked with mud and set them on a river (the Hittite Marassantiya, Classical Halys, and now the Kızıl Irmak), which carried them to Zalpa on the Black Sea. After growing to manhood the sons returned to Kanesh/Nesa, where their mother had subsequently given birth to thirty daughters. Unaware of the family relationship, the brothers were on the point of marrying their sisters when the youngest brother suddenly found out the truth. Realizing that they were all about to commit incest, he urgently called upon his brothers to halt proceedings. At this point the text becomes unclear and we cannot be sure whether or not his advice was taken, though the story does serve to provide a further instance of the Hittites' abhorrence of incest. With the resumption of the text, the story takes on more of a historical cast, with an account of hostilities between Hattusa and Zalpa in the reign of King Hattusili I, ending in Zalpa's destruction.

The events narrated in the first part of the tale serve to explain and justify the historical events with which the tale ends, just as the fourth

book of Virgil's *Aeneid*, the Dido-Aeneas love story, provides an explanation for the eventual historical conflict between Rome and Carthage which ends in the latter's destruction. The Zalpa story's hybrid character, beginning as myth or legend, ending as genuine history, makes it virtually unique in Hittite literature. But even in the legendary-mythical episode, some scholars have seen a kernel of historical truth, with the journey of the brothers from Zalpa on the Black Sea to Kanesh being a supposed reminiscence of an actual historical immigration from the north.¹³ Although the earliest surviving text of the story dates to no earlier than the sixteenth or fifteenth century, it is possible that the story itself originated long before this, perhaps dating to the arrival of Indo-European elements in eastern Anatolia towards the end of the third millennium. The connection which some have sought to make between the Zalpa tradition, with its exposure of male and retention of female babies, and the Amazon tradition of Greek mythology is rather more fanciful.

Another Hittite tale which may have faint echoes elsewhere concerns the two sons of the wealthy and hitherto childless Appu. The sons are called 'Evil' and 'Just' by their father, and they live up to their names. 'Evil' attempts to cheat his brother in the division of their father's estate, just as the wastrel Perses sought to cheat his brother Hesiod of his share of their father's patrimony.¹⁴ In both biblical and Egyptian literature we find instances of pairs of good and evil brothers, with the latter attempting to swindle the former, and as often as not receiving their come-uppance from a just god.

The Kumarbi Epic Cycle

We have noted that much of what is left of native Anatolian mythological tradition has survived because of its incorporation in rituals preserved as integral components of religious festivals. Myths of foreign origin, on the other hand, were of a somewhat different nature, and owe their preservation in Hittite texts to rather different reasons. In their written form they were introduced into the Hittite world from the culturally more sophisticated civilizations lying to their south-east, notably from Babylon and the Hurrian cultural sphere. They entered the Hittite land through the agency of professional scribes, and their preservation was in large measure due to the use made of them within the milieu of the scribal schools. Scribes learnt the skills of their profession partly by copying and recopying

the 'classics' of cuneiform literature; and foreign scribes who were imported into the Hittite world brought with them and passed on not only their literacy skills but also a knowledge of the major literary traditions of their own and neighbouring lands.

These traditions are called 'literary' in the sense that they appear to have been composed and recorded primarily for their own sake, not as mere adjuncts to rituals. They obviously had entertainment value, and in the context of the extensive religious reform programme of the thirteenth century may have had a broader educative purpose which went well beyond their use as scribal school exercises. They have been described as 'rich in theological instruction needed for the Hittites to better comprehend the personalities of the gods and the organization of a pantheon that was growing increasingly complex'.¹⁵ Yet in their earlier stages they may not have been as completely divorced from the world of ritual and analogic magic as they later appeared to be. Their world too is one of forces in conflict, of gods doing battle with and finally prevailing over monsters. And although in the form in which we find them in the Hittite texts they may lend themselves less readily to dramatic re-enactment, this would not have been impossible with effective use of symbols and conventions. It is not inconceivable that in their original form they did have ritualistic functions and were acted out accordingly. In terms of complexity of plot and structure and range of characters they may be considered more sophisticated than the homegrown Anatolian products. Yet as we have seen, the latter are not without their complexities, in terms of the questions which they raise and the issues with which they deal, even if this is sometimes belied by the relative naivety of their expression.

The most substantial and most important body of imported mythological tradition is the Hurrian cycle of myths featuring Kumarbi, 'father of the gods'.¹⁶ The cycle consists of a series of 'songs', episodes in verse form, of which two are particularly prominent, the Song of Kingship in Heaven and the Song of Ullikummi.¹⁷ The first relates the struggle between successive generations of gods for sovereignty in heaven: Alalu is overcome by Anu, Anu by Alalu's son Kumarbi, who bites off and swallows Anu's genitals and thereby becomes impregnated with three deities—the Storm God Teshub, the Tigris River, and Tasmisu (Hittite Suwaliyat). The precise details of what followed these events remain uncertain because of the fragmentary state of the text. But presumably the song went on to tell of

the birth of Teshub (by one means or another), an ensuing struggle with his surrogate parent Kumarbi, and his eventual triumph.

The song of divine conflict is sometimes referred to as the *Theogony*, 'the Birth of the Gods', because of its similarities to the Greek poet Hesiod's poem of that name. The title is rather more apt in the latter case since like the Babylonian Myth of Creation it does deal with the procreation of gods as well as with their subsequent conflicts, whereas what we have of the Hurrian-derived composition launches almost immediately into the generation conflicts and confines its account of procreational matters to the peculiar pre-natal history of Teshub and his two siblings: 'Stop rejoicing within yourself!', the emasculated Anu tells his conqueror. 'I have placed inside you a burden. First I have impregnated you with the noble Storm God. Second I have impregnated you with the irresistible Tigris River. Third I have impregnated you with the noble Tasmisu. Three terrible gods I have placed inside you as burdens. In the future you will end up striking the boulders of Mount Tassa with your head!'¹⁸

It is this bizarre detail that provides one of several points of comparison with the Hesiodic composition. The gods of three successive generations in the Kumarbi myth—Anu (heaven), Kumarbi (father of the gods), and Teshub—correspond precisely to Ouranos (heaven), Kronos (Phoenician El), and Zeus in Hesiod's poem. Just as Kumarbi emasculates Anu, so too does Kronos mutilate his father Ouranos. In both cases, the dismembered genitals produce further offspring—in the Kumarbi tradition three deities who rise up against the mutilator, in the Hesiodic a race of Furies and monstrous giants who are produced when the blood of the severed parts seeps into the earth; the latter rise up against all the gods but are defeated and imprisoned in the earth. Kumarbi and Kronos are both forewarned of the threats they face—Kumarbi from the offspring, now growing within him, of his mutilated predecessor, and Kronos from one of his own conventionally produced offspring. In spite of measures taken by Kronos and presumably also by Kumarbi to forestall this (the relevant passage of the Hittite text is lost), the prophecy comes to pass. Kumarbi is overthrown and replaced by Teshub, Kronos by Teshub's Greek counterpart Zeus. In each case this marks the beginning of a new era, the Teshub-led pantheon of the Hurrian-Hittite world, the Zeus-led Olympian pantheon of the Greek world.

One difference between the Near Eastern and Greek traditions is

that the former begins one generation earlier, at least as far as the male gods are concerned. Alalu has no counterpart in Hesiod's *Theogony*, which begins with Ouranos, the counterpart to Alalu's successor Anu.¹⁹ There is a further difference. In Hesiod's version, the successive generations of gods all belong to the one family: Gaea is the mother and wife of Ouranos, who sires all her children including Kronos, later to become the father of Zeus. In the Near Eastern tradition on the other hand, the warring gods come from two separate families and appear in alternate generations: Alalu and Kumarbi represent one family line, Anu and Teshub the other.²⁰ Professor Hoffner remarks that these opposing families are from opposite spheres: 'Kumarbi is a netherworld god, whereas Teshub is a celestial god . . . Kumarbi's father Alalu is driven from the throne by Anu and takes refuge from Anu in the netherworld. Later, when Anu flees from Kumarbi, he heads for the sky. When one assembles a list of the deities in these myths who give allegiance to one side or the other, the opposition of netherworld and sky is confirmed.'²¹

Does this provide an indication of the myth's original purpose? In its earliest form it might have been associated with a ritual depicting a contest between forces of netherworld and upper world, and the ultimate triumph of the latter. However, with the myth's progressive development and elaboration in literary form, its links with its original ritual context became increasingly tenuous, though even by the time it reached the Hittite world these links were still detectable in the conflicts between gods from opposing families representing opposing forces or spheres of nature.

When the tradition surfaced in the Greek world, it retained the account of struggles between successive generations of gods. But a key element was now missing. No longer was the battle arena occupied by members of opposing families representing opposing forces of nature. The contestants all belonged to a single family line. That reflects a major shift in the tradition, and a major narrowing of its limits, from a cosmogonically to a generationally based conflict. It was the end of any last vestige of the tradition's ritual origins. Hesiod's poem has nothing to do with ritual. It tells a story, and in the process establishes a genealogical framework for the early generations of gods and provides a context for the emergence and triumph of the Olympians. The poet himself, Herodotos tells us, was largely responsible for the arrangement of his material, and presumably also for its selection. He may well have been aware that there were

two competing divine genealogies in the original tradition on which he drew. But once the tradition had been cut adrift from its ritual origins, this became an extraneous detail. There was no longer any point in cluttering the genealogical scheme of things with two separate family lines.

A common feature of many *theomachias* is that no matter how thoroughly and comprehensively the losers are defeated, sometimes to the point of total dismemberment, they re-emerge to fight the victor another day, or else find or create a formidable monster to do this for them. From the rest of the songs in the Kumarbi cycle, fragmentary though they are, it is clear that the Storm God's ascendancy after his triumph over Kumarbi is far from secure. He may even have been replaced for a time by another god, LAMMA,²² but he was in any case subject to further challenges from Kumarbi. These come to a head in the second major text of the song cycle, the so-called 'Song of Ullikummi'. Seeking to create a champion to act on his behalf for a final showdown with Teshub, Kumarbi mates with a mountain peak. A diorite monster results from the union. 'Henceforth let Ullikummi be his name,' says Kumarbi. 'Let him go up to heaven to kingship. Let him suppress the fine city of Kummiya (the Storm God's city). Let him strike Teshub. Let him chop him up fine like chaff. Let him grind him under foot like an ant. Let him snap off Tasmisu like a brittle reed. Let him scatter all the gods down from the sky like flour. Let him smash them like empty pottery bowls.'²³

At Kumarbi's bidding, his son is secretly conveyed to the netherworld after his birth by the Irsirra deities and placed on the right shoulder of Ubelluri, whose feet are in the netherworld but who supports heaven and earth like the Greek Atlas. 'Let him grow higher each month, each day,' Kumarbi orders. And so it comes to pass. When he has grown so large that the sea comes only to his middle, the Sun God sees him and is greatly alarmed. He reports the news to Teshub, who resolves to do battle with the monster. But when he sees him he is filled with dismay: 'Teshub sat down on the ground and his tears flowed like streams. Tearfully Teshub said, "Who can any longer behold the struggle of such a one? Who go on fighting? Who can behold the terrors of such a one any longer?"'

Teshub is powerless against such an opponent. His sister Shaushka volunteers to approach Ullikummi and attempt to win him over by her songs and her charms. To no avail. 'For whose benefit are you singing?' a great sea-wave asks of her. 'For whose benefit

are you filling your mouth with wind? Ullikummi is deaf; he cannot hear. He is blind in his eyes; he cannot see. He has no compassion. So go away, Shaushka, and find your brother before Ullikummi becomes really valiant, before the skull of his head becomes really terrifying.'

Teshub engages, unsuccessfully, in a first battle with Ullikummi. The monster continues to grow until it reaches the very gates of Teshub's city Kummiya. In desperation, and at the suggestion of his brother Tasmisu, Teshub makes a final appeal to Ea, the Mesopotamian god of wisdom, formerly a supporter of Kumarbi. Ea resolves to bring the conflict to an end. He calls for the cutting tool originally used to sever heaven from earth and uses it to cut Ullikummi from Ubelluri's shoulder. The monster's power is destroyed, and Ea urges the gods to do battle with him. They respond with alacrity, 'bellowing like cattle at Ullikummi'. Teshub mounts his war-wagon and charges to the sea. Though the end of the story is lost, Teshub must have confronted Ullikummi and perhaps also Kumarbi in a final showdown, and defeated them. Once more his sovereignty is secure.

Again, a number of parallels to the song can be found in Greek, more specifically Hesiodic, mythological tradition, in which the serpent monster Typhoeus rises up against Zeus after the latter's defeat of the Titans and tries to seize his throne from him. Closer still is the parallel between Ullikummi and Typhoeus/Typhon preserved in a later Greek tradition in which Typhon like Ullikummi grows to such a towering height that he reaches the heavens.²⁴ And most significantly the Teshub-Ullikummi and Zeus-Typhon conflicts are fought out in the same location, Mt Hazzi/Kasios on the coast of northern Syria.

Though clearly Hurrian in origin we cannot, in the absence of the original Hurrian text, determine how closely the Hittite version of the Kumarbi song cycle followed the original. The possibilities range from an actual translation to an essentially new composition based on an imported Hurrian tradition. The Hurrian tradition itself had clearly drawn on earlier Mesopotamian traditions, as evidenced by the Babylonian names of the deities Alalu, Anu, Enlil, Ea, and also by the very notion of gods from successive generations competing for divine sovereignty, and of vanquished gods rising up to do battle once more with their victors. In the original Mesopotamian context myth and ritual were in all probability closely integrated.

This gives rise to an obvious question. Once the myth was cut adrift from a ritual context, why was it preserved, firstly in a Hurrian milieu, then in a Hittite? Hardly because it was seen as providing a repository of spiritual or moral guidance like the canonical scriptures of a number of other religions. With the best will in the world it is very difficult to see anything at all spiritually or morally uplifting in the Kumarbi tradition. Perhaps it served to celebrate Teshub's ultimate triumph, although like his Storm God counterpart in the Illuyanka myth Teshub's own role in achieving this triumph was quite a secondary and none too glorious one; he gives way to despondency and tears on first seeing the monster, progress towards the monster's defeat is made only through the initiative of other deities, and his final victory comes only after Ea has virtually handed it to him on a plate, so to speak. None the less the song cycle had clearly become an integral part of Hurrian cultural tradition and it was this no doubt which ensured its preservation in a Hittite milieu within the context of the progressive Hurrianization of Hittite culture. Professor Lebrun comments on the educative value of the Hurrian myths: '[They] offered the Hittites a basic religious framework and defined the function as well as the kinship of certain gods; at the same time they gave explanatory shape for the hierarchy among the gods.'²⁵

All this implies that the myths were not simply put on tablets and then buried away in palace archives. Rather they must often have been dusted off and recited before appropriate company. This may well have been a regular feature of the court activities of Hattusili III and probably also that of his son and successor Tudhaliya IV. The common factor in both cases was the Hurrian-originating queen Puduhepa, wife of one king, mother of the other, and a leading figure in the religious reform programme. Recitations of works like the Kumarbi song cycle may well have played a significant part in this programme, very likely with mandatory attendance at the performances by appropriate officials in the palace and temple bureaucracy. This was probably no great burden. After all the songs were not tedious litanies of repetitive formulaic phrases but exciting stories worth hearing over and over again. They had considerable entertainment value with their parade of monsters, battles, and other violent deeds, and their bizarre sexual unions, described in explicit detail—features which probably also ensured that tales from the cycle had wide

currency on a popular level throughout the kingdom. Reciters of such tales were no doubt as common in the village communities of the Hittite world as they have been in non-literate communities of all ages.