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Sacred Landscapes of Hittites and Luwians

Proceedings of the International Conference
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Edited by
ANACLETO D'AGOSTINO, VALENTINA ORSI, GIULIA TORRI

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ADAPTING THE RITE TO TIME AND SPACE: THE HITTITE METEOROLOGICAL CEREMONIES

Francesco G. Barsacchi

Abstract

This paper focuses on the particular Hittite religious expression represented by the celebration of festivals connected to the natural phenomenon of thunder. Interpreted as a manifestation of the Storm-God, thunder was perceived in Hittite religious thought as potentially dangerous for the wellbeing of the king. It demanded therefore the execution of particular rites. The texts describing these ceremonies are collected under the numbers 630 and 631 of the *Catalogue des Textes Hittites*. They show several interesting features, concerning both the content and the internal structure of the compositions, which reflect in my opinion the attempt to adapt a standard ritual practice to an unpredictable event such as thunder.

1. Introduction¹

Among the hundreds of fragments of festival descriptions unearthed in the Hittite capital Ḫattusa, a particular group of texts is of special interest, casting light on a ritual praxis, i.e. the celebration of festivals and rites directly related to the meteorological phenomenon of thunder, which has no direct parallel in other Near Eastern cultures, and provides interesting insights into Hittite religious thought. The fragments pertaining to this typology of texts are currently listed under the numbers 630 (*La lune et le tonnerre*) and 631 (*Fête du tonnerre*) of the *Catalogue des textes Hittites*. This study aims at analyzing a few elements relating to the content and the internal structure of these tablets, in an attempt to underline some interesting features concerning their redaction and organization. They represent, in my opinion, a particular category of *Sammeltafeln*², being divided in thematically related sections where several festivals connected to thunder or different versions of the same rite seem to be described.

In common with every natural phenomenon of particular violence that lies beyond the possibility of human control, thunder was perceived in all ancient Near Eastern religions as a *numinous*³ power. As a manifestation of the main male god of the pantheon, the Storm-God, it causes in Hittite thought a particular religious fear which demands to be controlled and exorcised by means of appropriate ritual practices. These rites are aimed at preserving the ritual purity of the king, endangered by what is interpreted as a clear sign of divine anger, while establishing at the same time a form of religious con-

¹ This article presents some of the results of my doctoral dissertation *Le cerimonie ittite del tuono: edizione critica di CTH 630 e 631*, which was submitted to the University of Florence in April 2014 and is currently being revised for publication. The research was conducted at the Universities of Florence and Würzburg, under the joint supervision of Prof. Franca Pecchioli Daddi, Prof. Giulia Torri and Prof. Daniel Schwemer. To all of them goes my deepest gratitude. It is a particular pleasure to contribute with this short article to a volume dedicated to Prof. Franca Pecchioli Daddi, whose inspiring lessons I still recall with great delight. I thank Giulia Torri, Michele Cammarosano and Carlo Corti for reading and discussing previous drafts of this work and for their valuable suggestions. I am, of course, responsible for any and all errors or mistakes.

² For a typological classification of Hittite *Sammeltafeln* see most recently Hutter 2011: 115-120, with further literature.

³ For the concept of *numinous*, see Otto 1936.

trol over the phenomenon⁴. From the Old Hittite period, they are written down in double-columned tablets, defined in the colophons (preserved in KBo 17.74+, rev. IV 43', KBo 17.75, rev. IV 57'' and KBo 20.61+, rev. IV 14') simply as 'tablets of thunder', DUB/TUPPI *tethēšnaš*, characterized by a strong uniformity in content and structure.

Besides many fragments currently classified under CTH 631 which cannot be placed with certainty due to their fragmentary state, three compositions clearly stand out as particularly significant:

- KBo 17.74+ (with its duplicate KBo 17.11+)
- KBo 17.75
- KBo 20.61+

To these it is possible to add VSNF 12.10, certainly belonging to the same typology but very badly preserved.

CTH 630, on the other hand, collects the fragments that can be connected to a particular thunder festival, celebrated when an outbreak of thunder interrupts the celebration of an ongoing ceremony, defined both in the incipit of the composition and in the preserved colophons as «festival of the Moon-god», EZEN₄ ^DEN.ZU⁵.

KBo 17.74+, published by E. Neu in 1970 as *Ein althethitisches Gewitterritual*⁶, is the only text of this group which has been properly edited. All the compositions belong to the textual typology of the so-called «festival descriptions», *Festbeschreibungen*, but present some peculiar features. They all describe ceremonies closely related to an unpredictable event such as the sudden thundering of the Storm-God. As evident from the opening description of these texts, the development and the articulation of the ceremonies depended on the position and the action performed by the king at the very moment of the acoustic perception of the thunder.

While a standard ritual procedure is recognizable, the particular rites that mark the various moment during the ceremony were therefore subject to modifications according to time and space.

The formula which introduces the texts begins as a rule with a temporal clause which focuses on the action carried out by the king or the royal couple at the moment of the thundering and takes the form: *mān* LUGAL-*uš*...(EGIR-*an*) ^DIM/U *tetha(i)*, «when the king [...] and the Storm-God thunders [...]». The sentence is also attested in the reverted form: *mān* ^DU *tetha(i)* (EGIR-*an*) LUGAL-*uš*, «when the storm-god thunders, the king [...]».

2. The Old Hittite tablets

KBo 17.74+ // KBo 17.11+

In the Old Hittite text KBo 17.74+ and its duplicate KBo 17.11+⁷, this opening formula occurs three times.

As already recognized by G. Wilhelm⁸, the document constitutes a *Sammeltablet* where two distinct, albeit similar in content, meteorological ceremonies are collected: «wir haben [...] mit einem Akt kompilierenden Sammlung zusammengehöriger Rituale zu tun» (Wilhelm 1995: 387). The first one stretches from line 1 to line 25 of the first column of the obverse, and the second one, separated from the other by a double paragraph divider, from line obverse 28 onwards. Between the two descriptions, a short redactional insertion of only three lines summarily describes the procedures the king has to follow in the case of a second outbreak of thunder when the first rite is already finished. In this respect,

⁴ The clearest example of the religious significance attributed by Hittites to thunder is found in the composition generally known as Muršili's *aphasia*, CTH 486, where the illness of the king, interpreted as the external manifestation of a condition of impurity, is attributed to the sudden thundering of the Storm-God. Cf. Neu 1970: 65; Houwink ten Cate 1992: 92.

⁵ *Infra*.

⁶ Neu 1970.

⁷ Transcribed by Neu 1980. With respect to KBo 17.74+, KBo 17.11+ appears to be a slighter older redaction, as shown by the general aspect of the *ductus*, e.g. the density of the script and the spatial organization of the text, as well as by the presence of the older version of the signs DA and IT, a feature, however, which cannot in itself determine with certainty the relative dating of two texts. Both redactions must then be considered OS texts, and the differences between them are not such as to rule out the possibility that they may depend on different scribal habits. Two different scribes could have been responsible for the redaction of the two copies.

⁸ Wilhelm 1995: 383, 387.

the short succession of ritual acts described cannot be considered an independent rite but rather an appendix of the first ceremony, as suggested also by the fact that only a single paragraph line divides the two sections of the tablet⁹. The passage reads as follows:

KBo 17.74+ // KBo 17.11+, obv. I

- 25 *ma-a-[an (ḫa-at-kán-zi)]* ^DIM-ša 'tí'-it-ḫa LUGAL-uš lu-ut-ti-ia-aš pé-ra-an
 26 *a-r[u-wa-iz-z]i* ^{NINDA}ḫar-ši-in pá-r-ši-ia' ta lu-u[t-t]i-ia-aš da-a-i ^{DUG}iš-pa-an-tu-zi
 27 *da-a-[i t]a ši-pa-an-ti* LUGAL-uš nam-ma a-[r]u-wa-a-iz-zi

«When [they close] and the Storm-God thunders, the kin[g bow]s before the [win]dow. He breaks a thick bread and places (it) by the window, he takes an *ispantuzzi*-vase and makes a libation. The kings bows again».

Three main actions are prescribed in this section: a double bowing gesture before a window, before and after the ritual sequence, a bread breaking and a libation. These three basic acts form in a certain sense the core rite in all ceremonies connected to thunder, fully expressing their meaning and purpose: the need to appease the angry god with offerings and libations and to protect the king from the potential danger perceived in the thunder.

The first ceremony described in the tablet occurs in the building complex known as *ḫalentiu*-. The incipit reads as follows:

KBo 17.11+, obv. I

- 1 *[ma-a-an* ^DIM-aš ti-i]t-ḫa DUMU 'É'.[G]AL pí-d-da-a-i (...)
 «[When the Storm-God thun]ders, a Palace attendant runs [...]».

The hierophany represented by the thunder leads to the interruption of every ongoing action, and to the beginning of a particular sequence of rites which constitutes the thunder festival. The first ritual act performed by the king is a bowing gesture before the window (*peran aruwaizzi*), followed by a libation. It is an important preliminary act which introduces the celebration of the proper ceremony. The window, hittite ^{GIS}*luttiya*-, seems to have a particular religious meaning in all rites connected with thunder. It is one of the sacred places of the house which receives offerings during many Hittite festivals and rites, defining the symbolic limit between inside and outside¹⁰. In thunder ceremonies, it represents an opening towards the external space where the sacred has manifested itself in the thunder, assuring communication between the king and the enraged Storm-God. As observed above, the same action, a bowing towards the window, is prescribed in the short insertion between the two sections separated by the double paragraph divider. The following acts described in the first text of the tablet consist in standard drinking ceremonies, libations and the breaking of bread. Among the deities which receive offerings, the couple constituted by the Storm-God and the Hattian god Wašezzili, most likely to be identified with the Storm-God of Zippalanda¹¹, undoubtedly occupies a prominent position, which is not surprising in view of the nature of the text. The same can be observed in the other compositions of the *corpus*.

In line obv. I 24, the text explicitly states that the ceremony in the *ḫalentiu*-building is ended.

The second text contained on the tablet, as correctly pointed out by G. Wilhelm (Wilhelm 1995: 387), shows a much larger degree of ritual elaboration. It describes a festival that lasts for three days and takes the form of daily (cf. Obv. II 61: *šiwatti tuḫḫušta*, «in the day (it) is finished») and nightly (cf. rev. IV 26: *išpanti tuḫḫušta*, «in the night (it) is finished») rites. The ceremony begins when the king is outside, on the chariot *ḫuluganni*-.

⁹ Thus also Wilhelm 1995: 386, according to whom «händelt es sich bei dem 2. Ritual eher um eine Verhaltensvorschrift für den König als um ein wirkliches Ritual».

¹⁰ For the symbolic value of the window in Hittite literature and its use as a literary *topos* see, most recently, Christiansen 2007: 143-152. Cf. also Haas 1994: 276ff.; Popko 1978: 44-48.

¹¹ See Pecchioli Daddi 1998: 25. The observation of Yoshida 1996: 324, according to whom the couple: «(Wettergott) Wettergott von Zippalanda hat nach bisherigem Wissen sonst nichts oder kaum etwas mit Gewitter [tethēššar] zu tun und erhält kein Opfer in Gewitterfesten», must thus be largely reconsidered.

KBo 17.74+, obv. I

- 28 *ma-a-a*[n^DIM-*a*]š *ti-it-ḫa* LUGAL-*u*š^{GIŠ}*ḫu-lu-*[*ga-an-n*]i-*az kat-ta ú-iz-zi*
 «When [the Storm-God thunders, the king] goes down [from the] *ḫulu*[*ganni-*] chariot».

Immediately after hearing the thunder, he gets down from the chariot, he bows to the ground and makes a libation. Then he reaches a city whose name is not mentioned in the text, thus leaving open the possibility that the rite was conceived in order to be adapted to different situations, even though the name of the city might as well be understood. The continuation of the rite, which starts the day after the thundering and includes sacrifices, libations and drinking ceremonies performed by the royal couple, will not be analyzed in detail here. I will merely underline the importance of the ritual practice, described in the lines obv. I 39-42, centered on the manipulation of the object called *ḫulliš*, probably to be identified with juniper wood¹², which is thrown into water and then used to purify the king. Closely connected to this operation is the ritual use of the substance called *tuhḫueššar*, which is given to the king, who then seems to cut it off (*tuhš-*)¹³. The meaning of the whole operation is clearly a ritual purification of the king, whose state of holiness is being somehow endangered by the god's wrath. The same operation is described in VSNF 12.10, rev. IV 16'-21'¹⁴.

3. The Middle Hittite tablets

KBo 17.75

Compared to the Old Hittite *Sammeltafel* KBo 17.74+, KBo 17.75 presents some more problematic features. It is a later text (MH/MS), as shown by its Middle Hittite script¹⁵ as well as by its grammatical and linguistic features¹⁶. Like the second festival description collected in KBo 17.74+, the rite begins «when the king goes out and the Storm-God thunders»:

KBo 17.75, obv. I

- 1 [m]a-^la'-an LUGAL-*u*š *a-ra-aḫ-za pa-iz-zi* EGIR-*an-na* ^DIM-*a*š *te-et-ḫa-(i)*
 2 [n]a-*aš-ta* LUGAL-*u*š^{GIŠ}*ḫu-lu'*-*ga-an-ni-ia-az kat-ta ti-i-e-ez-zi*
 3 *na-an* GAL DUMU^{MES} É.GAL *k[i-i]š-še-ra-an e-ep-zi na-aš-kán* ^{GIŠ}KIRI₆-^lni'
 4 *ti-i-e-ez-zi* ^{GIŠ}GU.ZA-^lma' *kat-ta-an LÚME-ŠE-DI e-ep-zi*
 5 *na-aš da-ga-a-an [a-ru-wa]-a-iz-zi*

«When the king goes out and the Storm-God thund[ers] the king gets down from the *ḫuluganni*-chariot. The chief of the Palace attendants takes him by the hand and brings him to the garden. A member of the Guard takes the throne and puts it on the ground».

Also in this case, the king is on the *ḫuluganni*-chariot. A GAL DUMU^{MES} É.GAL, a «chief of the palace attendants», takes him to a place indicated by the logogram KIRI₆, a «garden», where the king bows to the ground. No more specific indications as regards the place where the rite takes place are given. This ambiguity, together with the standardized character of many of the rites described, appears as a typical feature of all the compositions collected in CTH 631, which are not to be seen as 'real' descriptions of festivals, but rather as particular scribal works composed with a practical purpose: collecting a general report of the rites to be performed when violent thunder storms, in specific circumstances, endangered the wellbeing of the king.

¹² As already observed by Christiansen 2006: 88. However, cf. also Rieken 1999: 400, who hypothetically translates the term as *Holzkohle*, 'coal'.

¹³ On this substance, see Zeilfelder 2000: 497-508, who identifies it as a sort of aromatic resin of semi-liquid consistency, used in several ritual contexts for purifications. The semantic connection between *tuhḫueššar* and the substantive *tuhḫu(w)ai-*, «smoke», already proposed by Güterbock 1964: 106ff. would thus lie in the particular smell emitted by the *tuhḫueššar* substance. For a different interpretation, see HW²: 317; Kloekhorst 2008: 892-893.

¹⁴ See now Barsacchi 2014: 245-246.

¹⁵ Among other paleographic features, it is interesting to note the presence of the signs AZ with the little ZA subscribed and E with the vertical wedge in level with the higher horizontal.

¹⁶ The presence of the conjunction *nu* instead of *ta*, the predilection for logographic instead of phonetic writings and, from a morphological point of view, the use of the *-ri* form in the present indicative endings of the medio-passive conjugation are the most significant elements that indicate a later phase of redaction. Among the linguistic features catalogued by Melchert 2008: 525-531, as typical of a Middle Hittite phase, we find the use of *andan* with the locative meaning 'inside' and that of the enclitic personal pronoun *-e* instead of *-at* in the 3rd person plural inanimate.

The fragmentary state of lines 10-21 does not allow us to understand how the rite continues. Starting from line obv. I, 22, a new rite seems to be described:

-
- 22 *ma-a-an* x[]-*ma* LUGAL-*uš*
 23 I-NA É.DU₁₀ ÚS.SA¹ p[*a*²-*iz-zi* (?) EGIR-*a*]n-*na* D^{IM}-*aš*
 24 *te-et-ḫa-i nu* LÚ.MEŠ³ Ú-BA-RŪ-TIM¹ x x [x (x)-*t*]a²
 25 *nu-uš-kán pa-ra-a pé-e-ḫu-da-an-[z]i*
 «When [...] and the king g[oes²] to the bath-house [and] the Storm-God thunders, the foreign guests [...] and they lead them out».

The introductory formula closely resembles the formula already seen as typical of thunder ceremonies. In this case, the thunder interrupts a movement of the king to the so-called «bath-house», É.DU₁₀ ÚS.SA, probably together with his court. The lack of the double paragraph line which one would expect as divider between the two parts of the text is striking. The second one could thus be regarded as a description of the ritual actions to be performed when a second instance of thunder interrupts the original rite, making a modification of the normal procedure imperative. The development of thunder ceremonies necessarily shows a high degree of flexibility, dependent as it is on the variation of the meteorological situation. More important than the description of the continuation of the festival, in which the sequence of actions and events was probably well codified from older periods, was the exact account of the modifications in its basic structure necessitated by unpredictable events. The same urgency explains the redactional insert represented by KBo 17.74+ // KBo 17.11+, obv. I 25-27.

The colophon, fully preserved, does not help us in understanding the character of the text, defining the tablet only as «tablet of the thunder», as in KBo 17.74+. It is interesting to note the presence, in line rev. IV 50¹⁷, of the expression ANA G^{IS}ḪUR-*kán ḫandan*, which seems to suggest that the copy has been redacted on the basis of (or in accordance with, according to the meaning attributed to this controversial formula¹⁷) a wooden record. This is not without significance, in that it could indicate that the ceremony described was actually performed at the time of the redaction of the tablet¹⁸.

KBo 20 61+

KBo 20.61+, another Middle Hittite composition, displays perhaps the most peculiar features among the texts collected in CTH 631. To the fragments of the tablet I now add KBo 17.77, which is attributed to the shelf list KUB 30.57+KUB 30.59 (CTH 276)¹⁹ in the online *Konkordanz*²⁰, but which represents, in my opinion, the colophon of this text, as seems to be confirmed by both the handwriting and the outline of the fragment²¹. It is in indirect *join* with the rest of the fourth column, which is lost in lacuna after a few lines. The peculiar articulation of the colophon²², where different incipits are mentioned, confirms the fact that the composition is in some sense a compilation.

The ceremony begins «when the king and the queen sit in the great assembly and the Storm-God thunders»:

KBo 20.61+, obv. I

- 1 *ma-a-an šal-la¹-i a-še-eš-ni* [L]UGAL MUNUS.LUGAL *a-ša-an-zi*
 2 EGIR-*an-na* D^{IM}-*aš ti-it-[ḫ]a nu* DUMU^{MEŠ} LUGAL
 3 DUMU.MUNUS^{MEŠ} LUGAL LÚ.MEŠ³DUGUD^{TIM} LÚ.MEŠ³Ú-BA-RŪ-TIM
 4 PA-NI LUGAL *ku-i-e-eš a-ša-an-zi nu-uš ar-nu-an-zi*
 5 *nu-uš-kán* LÚ^{MEŠ} G^{IS}GIDRU *pa-ra-a pé-ḫu-da-an-zi*
 «When the king and the queen sit in the great assembly and the Storm-God thunders, they make the sons of the king and the daughters of the king, the dignitaries, the foreign guests and those who sit in front of the king rise, and the “staff-men” lead them out».

¹⁷ For different interpretations of this controversial expression see, among others: Singer 1983: 41; Starke 1990: 459; Marazzi 1994: 144-148, 153; Schwemer *forthcoming*; Waal 2011: 22-26, all with further literature.

¹⁸ As correctly pointed out by Lorenz 2014: 459-474.

¹⁹ Where the composition seems to be actually mentioned, in ll. 8'-10' of the left column. Cf. Dardano 2006: 49.

²⁰ Košak, *hethiter.net/:* *hetkonk* (v. 1.91).

²¹ I am indebted to Michele Cammarosano for the collation of the fragments carried out for me in September 2013 at the Museum of Anatolian Civilizations of Ankara.

²² *Infra*.

The ‘great assembly’, whose celebration is documented from the Old Hittite period, constitutes a particularly significant moment from a religious and a symbolic point of view²³. The interruption of the ceremony caused by the thunder needs a ritual response, which takes the form of a thunder festival. Typically, the first sequence of rites takes place before the window, where libations and the breaking of bread, accompanied by songs and music, are performed. The fragmentary state of the first column of the text does not allow a full comprehension of the rite, which ends with the distribution of food and beverages to the participants by some categories of palace functionaries, immediately before the standard action of shouting: «curtain!» and the closure of the palace for the night, at the lines obv. II, 16-17.

At this point we find the sentence: «The following day [they celebrate (?)] the festival of the thunder», followed by a double paragraph line, upon which it is possible to read, even though in broken context: [...]*ta hukanzi*, «they slaughter».

- KBo 20.61+, obv. II
 16 (...) ^{KUŠ}NÍG.BÀR
 17 [*hal-zi*]-*ia ta ha-at-kán-zi iš-p[a-a]n-ti*
 18 [x x x]x *lu-uk-kat-ta-ma EZEN₄ ti-it-ḫi-iš-na-aš*
 19 [*i-ia-an-zi* (?)](x x)(-)*ta hu-kán-zi*

«[There is a shout]: “curtain”! and they close for the night. [...] The day after [they celebrate (?)] the festival of the thunder...] they slaughter».

This passage, where the only attestation of the expression *EZEN₄ tetḫešnaš* in a text included in CTH 631 is documented, poses several interpretative problems.

The double paragraph line seems to end the first composition and to signal the beginning of the second one, as usual for Hittite *Sammeltafeln*. The following paragraph, in fact, begins with the standard introductory formula of this category of documents, describing how the Storm-God thunders when the palace is being open, and the king comes from the «inner chamber»:

- 20 [*m*]*a-^la-an ^ḫha-le-en-tu^l-u-i ḫa-aš-ša-an-zi*
 21 ^{KUŠ}NÍG.BÀR-*aš-ta uš-š[i-ia-an]^lzi^l L[UGAL-u]š-kán*
 22 *tu-un-na-ak-ki-[iš-na-az ú-iz-z]i EGIR-an*
 23 ^DIM-*aš ti-it-ḫ[a LUGAL-uš^G]š^llu-u[t-ti-ia]*
 24 *pé-ra-an ti-i-e-e[z-zi nu] a-ru-wa-a-iz-^lzi^l*

«When they open the *ḫalentiu-* building, and they draw the curtain, and the king [come]s [from the] inner chamber, but it thunders, [the king] go[es] before the win[dow and] he bows».

The formula is repeated in the colophon, KBo 17.77, where the single compositions collected on the tablet are mentioned according to their respective *incipit*.

The last sentence of the former paragraph, however, clearly seems to indicate a continuation of the rite on the following day. The opening of the palace, and the act of drawing the curtain which opens the second composition in lines obv. II 20-21, constitute a standard morning operation in festivals that last for more than one day²⁴. Moreover, there is a strong continuity between the two parts of the text as regards the rites and the cult functionaries mentioned. Despite the indication on the paragraph line, an animal slaughtering, as far as it is possible to understand, is not mentioned in the following sections of the text.

The same situation can be observed at the beginning of the third column, at lines rev. III 2-7, where the interruption of the rites for the night is followed by what seems to be the beginning of a new, occasional, ceremony, originated by the emergence of the thunder «when they open (i.e. the palace), they draw the curtain and the king goes out». In this case, a single paragraph line divides the two different sections of the tablet:

²³ See Archi 1979: 197-214.

²⁴ See Lorenz forthcoming.

- KBo 20.61+, rev. III
 2 (...) [^{KUS}NÍG.BÀR]
 3 *ḥ[al-zi-i]a ta iš-pa-an-ti [ḥa-at-kán-zi]*
 4 *lu-uk-kat-ta EZEN₄ ti-it-ḥi-i[š-na-aš i-ia-an-zi (?)]*
-
- 5 *ma-a-na-pa ḥa-aš-ša-an-zi [^{KUS}NÍG.BÀR-an u-uš-ši-an-zi]*
 6 LUGAL-uš a-ra-aḥ-za pa-i[z-zi]
 7 ^DIM-aš ti-it-ḥ[a(-)]
-
- 8 *n[a-a]š-ta LUGAL-u[š^{GIS}ḥu-lu-ga-an-ni-ia-az (?)]*
 9 *kat-ta 'ú-iz-zi' n[du da-ga-an (?)]*
 10 *a-ru-wa-a-iz-z[i] ^L[^U]*
 «T[here is a shout]: [“curtain”!] and [they close] for the night. The day after they [celebrate (?) the festival of thun[der]. When they open and [they draw the curtain], the king go[es] out [...] the Storm-God thunders [...]. Then the king gets down [from the *ḥuluganni*- chariot (?) and he bows [to the ground (?)], the ma[n...].»

How to explain then the discrepancy between the use of the double paragraph line and the presence of the second introductory clause on the one hand, which seem to indicate the beginning of a new ceremony, and, on the other hand, the clear hints at a continuation of the thunder festival on the following day?

In my opinion, KBo 20.61+ could be analyzed as the description of a thunder festival extended with the inclusion of two redactional additions. These describe the rites that have to be performed *in the event that* a new episode of thunder, at the beginning of the following day, necessitates a modification in the regular continuance of the ceremony. The scribe, in other words, seems to have decided not to insert in the tablet the description of the entire festival, summarizing its continuation in the phrase: «the following day they [celebrate (?) the festival of the thunder». The first rites performed in connection with the atmospheric hierophany were probably the most significant from a religious point of view, being aimed at preserving the ritual holiness of the king, and needed therefore to be accurately described. The ritual frame developed around these basic apotropaic rites might well have had a more standard character. If this hypothesis is correct, the following sections of the tablet could be interpreted as the description of the modifications to the original rite necessitated by the sudden emergence of more outbreaks of thunder during the following days of the ceremony. According to the actions performed by the king and his position at the moment of the acoustic perception of the phenomenon, the festival continues in partially different ways.

The *incipits* of the different sections are then repeated in the colophon, represented by KBo 17.77. The uncommon use of the conjunction *našma* between them also seems to indicate that we are dealing with alternative versions of the same ceremony, rather than with entirely different compositions.

- 14' [DUB x^{KAM}] *ti-it-ḥ[é-eš-n]a-^Laš ma¹-a-an* [LUGAL MUNUS.LUGAL]
 15' [*šal-la*]-^Li' *a-še-eš-ni a-ša-an-zi* E[GIR-an-na]
 16' [^DIM-aš] *ti-it-ḥa-i na-aš-ma-kán* [ma-a-an LUGAL-uš]
 17' [x x (x)] x *ku-wa-pí tu-un-na-ak-[ki-iš-na-za]*
 18' [*ú-iz-zi*]i [^DIM]-*aš-ma ti-it-ḥa-[i]*
 19' ^Lna¹-[*aš-ma ma-a-an*] LUGAL-uš *a-ra-aḥ-[za pa-iz-zi]*
 20' [^DIM-aš-ma (?) *ti-it-ḥ*]a-^Li' x x [
 21' (traces)

«[...] tablet] of the thunder: when [the king and the queen] sit in the great assembly [and the Storm-God] thunders, or [when the king...] when he [comes from] the inner chamber but the [Storm-God] thunders, or [when the ki]ng [goes] out [and the Storm-God thun]ders [...].»

I am aware that this is only one of the possible explanations for the peculiarities shown by KBo 20.61+, and that several problems, such as the incongruent use of the double paragraph line in the text, still have to be resolved. On the other hand, analyzing the tablet simply as a standard *Sammeltafel*, collecting together three distinct thunder ceremonies would, in my opinion, be misleading, considering the clearly structured daily articulation of the ceremony it describes. One and the same festival description, then, but constantly modified in accordance with the atmospheric situation.

4. *The Moon and the Thunder*

The clearest example of the adaptation of a rite to the contingent situation is represented by the so-called «festival of the Moon and the Thunder», whose fragments are collected under the catalogue number CTH 630. This very peculiar composition is preserved on several tablets, which date to different periods. In particular, it is possible to identify a Middle Hittite version of the festival, represented by the tablet KUB 32.135+, with its duplicate KBo 20.63, and by KBo 23.64+KBo 24.88, and a Late Hittite version, preserved in KBo 25.178 and KBo 21.88+KBo 20.70.

The observation of the textual material allows us to identify more than one redaction of the main festival description. The preserved colophons, all of them mentioning the title of the composition, hint at the existence of at least a version enumerated by tablets and a version enumerated by days, similarly to the observation of I. Singer (Singer 1983: 114) with regard to the KILAM festival. The ceremony seems to last for at least three days.

According to E. Laroche (Laroche 1973: 89), the text is the result of the combination of two originally distinct Hattian festivals, realized by the Hittite scribal school at the time of the alleged ‘religious reform’ of Tutḫaliya IV, whose nature and extent, however, has now been largely revisited²⁵. This would explain, according to Laroche, the false archaisms and the formal and structural contaminations which he finds in the composition, and especially in the long list of Hattian deities included in two of the tablets, KUB 32.135+ and KBo 21.88+. The comprehension of the text cannot be separated, in my opinion, from the broader picture represented by Hittite thunder ceremonies. As we have seen, the ritual development and the organization of these festivals are closely dependent on variable causes.

Strictly speaking, it is correct to say that there is not a ‘thunder festival’, in the sense of a fully structured ceremony repeatable through time in the same form. Every ceremony of this kind constitutes a ritual response to a specific situation. Far from being just the fusion of two distinct ceremonies, the fragments of CTH 630 constitute the original product of the superimposition of the rites connected with the festival of the Moon-god, whatever this expression indicates²⁶, with the particular apotropaic rites that were typical of thunder ceremonies, whose performance, however, largely depended on non-predictable factors.

Even if preserved in later copies, the festival described in CTH 630 certainly contains elements of ancient Anatolian tradition, as correctly pointed out by Laroche. The celebration of meteorological ceremonies is attested from the Old Hittite period, as testified by KBo 17.74+ and its duplicate. The existence of a Middle Hittite version of the Moon and Thunder festival indicates a textual tradition which dates to the same period and is probably to be connected with an earlier stage of local beliefs. This seems to be confirmed by the two long lists of deities already mentioned, which describe what undoubtedly constitutes a Hattian pantheon, and can be compared with the deities of the ‘great assembly’ of the KILAM festival²⁷.

Unfortunately, the fragments belonging with certainty to this group allow only a partial reconstruction of the festival outline.

From the incipit, preserved in both duplicates KUB 32.135+ and KBo 20.63, we know that the composition describes the rites performed when an outbreak of thunder interrupts the celebration of the festival of the Moon-god, EZEN₄ D_{EN}.ZU²⁸.

KUB 32.135, obv. I

- 1 *ma-a-an* D_{EN}.ZU-aš EZEN^{NI}₄ *wa-ar-pu-wa-an-zi*
- 2 *nu-za* LUGAL-uš *wa-ar-ap-zi ma-a-aḫ-ḫa-an-ma-kán* LUGAL-uš
- 3 *IŠ-TU É.DU*₁₀ *ÚS.SA ú-iz-zi nu te-e-et-ḫa na-aš-ta*¹
- 4 *ma-a-an* LÚ^D_{IM} *an-da na-a-ú-i tar-na-an-zi nu* EZEN₄ D_{EN}[30]

²⁵ See now Cammarosano 2012a: 345ff; 2012b: 14-33.

²⁶ In view of the lunar character of the Hittite calendar, on which see Del Monte 1988, 51-56, it is likely that the ‘festival of the Moon’ was somehow connected with the festivals of the month, or ‘monthly festivals’, i.e. the ceremonies performed monthly at every new or full moon, and often mentioned in cult inventories as part of local liturgical calendars. The celebration of a festival of the Month is documented also in the domain of the so-called state cult. Cf. the fragments collected in CTH 591, published by Klinger 1996.

²⁷ Laroche 1973: 83-89. Cf. also Singer 1983: 101-103.

²⁸ Cf. the writing D₃₀ in obv. I 8.

5 *ar-ḫa da-a-li-ia-an-zi nu* EZEN₄ *te-et-ḫu-wa-aš*

6 *i-ia-an-zi*

«When “the washing” for the festival of the Moon-god (takes place)²⁹, the king washes himself, but when the king comes from the bath-house and it thunders, then, if the man of the Storm-god has not yet been engaged, they leave the festival of the [Moon-god] and celebrate the festival of the thunder».

In particular, the text specifies that the action interrupted by the thunder is a movement of the king from the «bath-house», where he has performed the ritual ablution, expressed by the verb *warp-*, prescribed for the celebration of the Moon festival. It must be a particularly meaningful moment in Hittite ritual praxis, considering that a clap of thunder during an analogous occasion, «when the king goes to the bath-house», originates the celebration of the second ceremony described in the text KBo 17.75.

In this case, the text prescribes that, if the cult functionary known as «man of the Storm-God»³⁰ has not yet been engaged in the celebration, the Moon festival can be interrupted and the thunder festival is celebrated in its place.

If, instead, the «man of the Storm-God» is already present, the celebration of the moon festival and of the thunder festival are mixed together, and the two ceremonies are performed jointly:

7 *ma-a-na-aš-ta* LÚ^DIM-*ma an-da ka-ru-ú tar-na-an-za*

8 [*nu*] EZEN₄^D30 EZEN₄ *te-e-et-ḫu-wa-ša an-da*

9 [*i-mi-i*]a-an-ta-ri na-at *ták-ša-an ki-ša-an-ta-ri*

«Otherwise, if the Man of the Storm-God has already been engaged, the festival of the Moon-God (and) the festival of the thunder are mixed and they are performed jointly».

In the composition, only this first situation is described. Once again, the standard celebration of the thunder festival is not contained on the tablets, which describe only the adapted version of the original rite.

On the first day, after the canonical libations before the window and the bread offerings for the Storm-God, a bull and a ram are slaughtered and offered. Then the «great assembly» takes place. The indication, in KUB 32.135+, obv. I 30-32, that the king and the queen eat the ‘pure sheep’ that is usually cooked for the festival of the moon is a clear sign of the complete adaptation of the ongoing ceremony to the new situation modelled by the atmospheric hierophany.

The aforementioned lists of deities which receive offerings during the great assembly are preserved in fragments KUB 32.135+ and KBo 21.88+KBo 20.70, but it is questionable whether the last of these belongs to the same composition. The two lists show in fact several discrepancies as regards the names and the position of the deities mentioned, which, as stated before, certainly belong to the Hittite nucleus of Hittite religious belief. Although some later contaminations can be recognized³¹, both lists are certainly based on Old Hittite models.

Another element which seems to indicate a substantial continuity in the textual tradition from the Old Hittite period is contained in KBo 25.178, a text belonging to the second day of the festival, as confirmed by the colophon in lines rev. IV 20’-22’. Towards the end of the fourth column, in a fragmented context, ritual actions are performed by the DUMU.LUGAL, ‘the prince’ in the building defined as the «house of the ZABAR.DAB functionary», literally the «holder of the bronze bowl», probably a building used to collect the ceremonial wine, to be identified with the É.GEŠTIN³². In particular, a libation for a group of seven deities is mentioned³³. This operation recalls the one performed by the prince in the Middle Hittite text KBo 20.44+, concerning the rituals performed during the AN.TAH.ŠUM festival in the temple of the Sun-goddess, on the seventh or eighth day of the celebration³⁴. In this case, a partially different group of seven deities receive offerings from the prince in the É.ZABAR.DAB building, in lines rev. III 7’-10’. Both texts are testimonies of the same rite, and they show strong similarities with what emerges

²⁹ Pace Ünal 1998: 76, the verbal form *warpuwanzi* can’t be translated as a present tense 3rd person plural of *warp-*, for which a form *warpanzi* would instead be expected. The verb can in my opinion only be interpreted as a substantivated infinitive in a nominal sentence.

³⁰ On which see Ünal 1998: 67-82.

³¹ Laroche 1973: 86-87.

³² The role of the DUMU.LUGAL in Hittite festivals has been thoroughly studied by Torri 2004: 461-469.

³³ On which see Yoshida 1996: 88-94, in particular 91-92.

³⁴ Published by Yoshida 1992: 121-156.

from an Old Hittite document, KBo 25.51+³⁵, currently filed among the fragments of thunder festivals under CTH 631, but probably to be assigned elsewhere. The rites performed by the prince in the «house of the wine», in other words, seem to reflect a ritual praxis which can be related to the oldest Hittite period.

5. Conclusion

To sum up, the apotropaic rites performed by the Hittites on the occasion of particularly violent thunder storms constitute a very particular form of religious tradition, which has no parallel in other ancient Near Eastern cultures, where thunder as a natural phenomenon has a strong significance in oracular praxis³⁶ but does not seem to be reflected directly in religious worship.

The need to adapt a standard ritual procedure to an unpredictable event such as thunder lies at the basis of the production of a special type of documents. The ‘tablets of the thunder’, as the compositions collected in CTH 631 are defined in the colophons, constitute in my opinion a peculiar kind of redactional work where, in distinct sections, both the description of the festival connected to thunder and that of the modifications to the original ceremony necessitated by the ongoing meteorological situation are collected. The Old Hittite *Sammeltafel* KBo 17.74+ // KBo 17.11+, with its short redactional insert dividing the two festival descriptions collected on the tablet, could represent an earlier stage of this practice, fully developed in the later, Middle Hittite compositions, entirely dedicated to the description of a single ceremony and its (eventual) continuation or modification. This work reflects the need to have a well-established ritual procedure by means of which to respond to a situation perceived as potentially dangerous, the sudden thundering of the Storm-God, an event with a strong religious significance that cannot be predicted with certainty and is therefore particularly feared.

These rites constitute the reflex of ancient religious concepts probably dating back to the Hattian cultural *milieu*. Indeed, the presence of OH/OS copies indicates an old Anatolian background for these compositions, as confirmed by the relevant position that the dyad: Storm-God-Wašezzili occupies in all the divine lists. The presence of Late Hittite copies of the festival of the moon and the thunder proves the continuation of this festival tradition until the latest phase of the Hittite empire.

Before concluding, a short consideration is in order. All the texts collected in CTH 630 and 631 reflect only the ‘official’ aspect of the particular form of Hittite religious expression represented by the thunder festivals. However, these ceremonies were also celebrated at a local level. Several cult inventories, in fact, mention the celebration of ‘thunder festivals’ as a regular activity which took place annually in several cult centers and was, in any extent, part of local religious calendars. In particular, ceremonies connected to thunder are attested in Nerik (cf. KUB 53.21, obv. 10³⁷), Hurma (cf. KUB 56.56, rev. IV 9³⁸) and Karahna (cf. KUB 38.12, obv. II 9, 23³⁹). Apart from a few scarce indications concerning the goods to be prepared for the festival and the deities involved, nothing of this local religious tradition is known. The absence of the royal couple as main executor of the rites certainly implied some differences in the development of the whole ceremony, which was not centred on the ritual purification of the king but had most likely the character of a seasonal festival⁴⁰, performed on a regular basis as part of the cult due to local weather deities, and thus not necessarily dependent on contingent circumstances such as the festivals collected in CTH 630 and 631.

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³⁵ +KBo 30.31+FHL 17+VSNF 12.53. Cf. Košak, hethiter.net/: hetkonk (v. 1.91), with further references.

³⁶ See the meteorological *omina* of the series *Enūma Anu Enlil* recently published by Gehlken 2012.

³⁷ CTH 678.

³⁸ CTH 670.

³⁹ CTH 517.

⁴⁰ I have given more detailed indications concerning the presence of thunder festivals in local cult calendars and the period of their celebration in a communication presented at the 9th International Congress of Hittitology, held in Çorum (Turkey) on 1-7 September 2014.

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