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Sinister Bees and Desperate Pleas: Hittite Incantation Prayers

BILLIE JEAN COLLINS¹, GIULIA TORRI²

¹ Emory University, USA

² Università degli Studi di Firenze, Italy

billiejcollins@gmail.com; giulia.torri@unifi.it

Abstract. The tablet collections from Ḫattuša-Bogazköy contain a significant body of Hittite prayer literature. Particularly notable are personal prayers, *arkuwar*, made by Hittite rulers to the gods for support in historical contexts. These prayers reveal intricate rhetorical structures. While personal prayers are extensively studied, a comprehensive analysis of prayers across text genres is yet to be undertaken. This paper discusses prayers as speech acts within rituals, the structure of Hittite incantations, the relationship between orality and scribal craft, and the significance of Hittite magic traditions in the ancient Near Eastern and Mediterranean worlds.

Keywords: Incantations, Hittite Rituals, Prayers.

1. PRAYER

The Late Bronze Age tablet collections in Ḫattuša-Bogazköy have preserved a significant body of Hittite prayer literature — so significant in fact that it has been possible to trace its development as a genre over the full course of Hittite history.¹ These cuneiform texts are independent compositions the inspiration for which came from Mesopotamian hymnic literature, but which evolved into something uniquely Anatolian (Schwemer 2011: 1-43). Out of this written tradition developed the so-called personal prayers, called *arkuwar* in Hittite, referring to the plea or petition made by the Hittite kings (and queens) to the gods for support in particular historical circumstances (Laroche 1963: 3-29).² As a genre they have rightly received extensive attention for their complex rhetorical structure, their

¹ For an overview about Hittite prayers see Singer 2002 and the on-line edition in Rieken, Lorenz, Daves 2017; Singer 2002: 13-14, proposes a development of the Hittite prayers from short incantations in magic rituals.

² But also alludes to argumentation and defence as outlined by Singer 2002: 5 with previous references.

importance for illuminating Hittite history, and more.³ It is possible as well to dissect the ways in which the Hittite scribes responsible for creating these compositions married older/traditional text material with new/innovative ideas/elements (Klinger 2022: 131). Though the evidence for Hittite prayer is not limited to these personal prayers, a systematic investigation/survey of prayer across all text genres has yet to be undertaken.⁴

In the present paper we will begin with a discussion of *prayers* as speech acts contained within rituals.⁵ From there we will talk about the nature and structure of Hittite *incantations*, including their presence in prayer compositions. We then will address the relationship between orality and scribal craft before finally offering some thoughts about the place of Hittite magic traditions in the ancient Near Eastern and Mediterranean worlds.

Therapeutic ritual procedures — magic rituals — provide the richest source for Hittite prayers outside of the personal prayers. As is the case with magic across cultures, Hittite rituals are characterized by sequences of ritual actions linked to speech acts of various kinds: spells and incantations (*hukmai-*), prayers, evocations, *historiolae*, curses, and blessings (Torri 2003b: 2-8; Mouton 2016: 41-45).⁶ The sequence of actions and types of techniques employed vary depending on the origin of the ritual, but the schematic chain of magic actions and their alternation with spoken words, introduced by *verba dicendi*, seems to reveal that they were often constructed and written down by the Hittite scribal and, possibly, religious school, which drew on written and oral traditions of different origins, arranging them in a preestablished framework (Torri 2003b: 8-10).⁷

Among the speech acts that we find are what we would recognize as proper prayers, with an offering, an address to the deity, and a request for blessings. Such prayers when occurring in magic rituals are generally limited to those benefitting the royal family. An example is TEXT #1, a ritual for the health of the king and queen against a sinister (*idalu-*) bee, or ominous omen (CTH 447). The ritual is divided into seven parts, seven being a magical number, each addressed to a different deity.⁸ The deity is summoned to draw her attention to the patient, who, through the magical actions, is freed from the state of impurity. Each of the seven parts has in common the incantations against the sinister bee, which needs to be turned into a favorable bird — that is, a favorable omen. The incantation chosen here aims at directing the favor of the Sun Goddess of the Earth onto the royal couple. It opens with a sacrifice directed into the earth, which ensures the goddess's attention to the subsequent recitation. It closes — unusually — with a threat addressed to the goddess to compel her to fulfill the request.⁹

TEXT #1: Ritual against a Sinister Bee (CTH 447: KBo 11.10 ++ = KBo 11.72++ ii)

offering §17'': (obv. ii 17'-19'') Thereafter (there are) one black sheep, two white sheep, (and) nine (other) sheep for the Sun Goddess of the Earth. They dig the ground, and they sacrifice the sheep down, inside (the pit) and (s)he speaks as follows:

address §18'': (ii 20'-24'') "Sun Goddess of the Earth! The human being <begets(?)> the human being and keeps him alive.¹⁰ Regarding this bee, which you, Sun Goddess of the Earth, have sent, now the king and the queen are giving you this offering as a propitiatory gift (*maškan*) for this bee.

³ See the recent publication Daues, Rieken 2018 and Dardano 2019: 14-28.

⁴ If we define prayer broadly as verbal petitioning of the gods, it encompasses in a Hittite context not only the personal prayers, but also letters, myths, treaties, vows, and magic rituals. A general representation of prayers as literary product is sketched out by Daues, Rieken 2018: 6-28. The forthcoming Prayer in the Ancient World project (Leiden: Brill, <https://brill.com/display/serial/PAMW>) has provided a welcome opportunity to explore Hittite prayer in all these contexts. Our remarks in the present article draw on the insights of the section on incantations to the project.

⁵ For a theoretical approach to the Speech-Act theory see Tambiah 1968: 175-208. For an overview of the Speech Act theory in Hittite texts see Torri 2003b: 8-16 and, recently, Della Casa 2021: 67-75.

⁶ About *historiolae* in general see Francia 2013: 165-173.

⁷ On the question of the actual power of oral magical formulas once put into written form through special literary forms, see Faraone 2011.

⁸ A full edition of this ritual is by Popko 2003; Görke, Melzer 2015.

⁹ Hittite prayers often represent the negotiation between the sovereign and the deity, and the promise made to the divinity becomes the opportunity to demonstrate that the deity can only benefit from aiding the supplicant (Torri 2019: 57- 59). However, the threat directed towards the deity represents an exception.

¹⁰ For a different interpretation of this passage see Görke, Melzer 2015.

- request** §19': (ii 25'-28') "If you, Sun Goddess of the Earth, have sent it (the bee) to harm, now (for blessings) turn her around and make her a benevolent bird! (27'-28') Grant the king and the queen sons, daughters, and their grandsons! Grant them, the king and the queen, old age!
 §20': (ii 29'-30') "What sheep fleece is (thick), grant them to the king and queen, (as many) long years! (30'-34') Further grant the king this: strength on the [bat]tlefield! What countries of the enemy are hostile to him, they shall come to him, under his knee! You, Sun Goddess of the Earth, shall arrange this situation and make it favorable!
- threat** §21': (ii 35'-38') "But if you, Sun Goddess of the Earth, transgress and stand apart negatively from the king and queen, let the oath (deities) of this ritual come to seize you!"¹¹

The request for blessings here is not appreciably different from the appeals we find in the personal prayers, which similarly seek blessings for the king and his family through direct appeal to the deity — namely, progeny, long life, and victory over enemies.

TEXT #2 offers an exception to the rule that such prayers requesting support are limited to royal rituals. It is a ritual apparently performed by a private person in an emergency situation where he did not have access to a specialist.¹² Following the incipit stating the purpose of the ritual, which is a curse uttered against the person by a colleague or friend (*ara-*), an offering is made to the deity (Torri 2004: 132 and 134). This perhaps establishes the individual's credentials in the absence of a recognized specialist, enabling him to make the request of the deity (Graf 1991: 189).

TEXT #2: Ritual against "bad friendship" (CTH 458.2: KUB 17.28)

ritual (§3, ii 48-55) He puts the loaf on its place and shatters the jug. He washes his hands and goes away.¹³ Then he puts a small table before the Sun God. He puts bread on it; he puts three loaves of bread on it. He sacrifices a ram to the Sun God and they slaughter it. He offers beer and speaks in the following way:

prayer (§4, ii 56-57) "You O Sun God are constantly looking for good in the heart of man, but no one looks into your heart. (ii 58-61) Who has committed evil, you, O Sun God, were above (him). I was walking my good path. Who committed evil against me, you, O Sun God, keep looking at him! (iii 1-3) [May my house] flourish! [May the people in my family], oxen, and sheep reproduce properly! May grain grow for me!"

The prayer inserted in this ritual (§4) is a proper prayer composed of an *invocatio* (ii 56-57), an *argumentum* or narrative (ii 58-61), and a *preces* or wish (iii 1-3) containing requests addressed to the god (Graf 1991: 189; Torri 2004: 138). The ritual preparations recall the offerings made to the Sun God on the roof in the personal prayers, and were probably likewise performed on a roof (Torri 2004: 137-38). And the prayer, again like the personal prayers, was performed to address a specific problem—namely, the curse directed at the individual. Interestingly, the preceding offerings and sacrifice also preclude any notion that the individual acted alone; he must have had help (Torri 2004: 139). In sum, although it was performed by a private person, this prayer shares the structure, language, and theology of the official prayer literature represented by the royal personal prayers. Both TEXTS #1 and #2 then, despite the very different identities of the supplicants, are products of the same written tradition of the Ḫattuša scribes, even if TEXT #2 proves to be an adaptation of a genuinely private and organic display of piety.

¹¹ KBo 11.10 ++ = KBo 11.72 ++ ii

35 [(*ma-a-na-at-kán tág-na-aš* ^DUT)]U-uš *šar-ra-at-ta-ma*

36 [(*nu-uš-ša-an* LUGAL-*i* MUNUS.LUGAL-*i*)]a *ḫa-ar-ap-ši*

37 [(*nu-ut-ta ú-it-tu₂ ke-e-el š*)]A SÍSKUR

38 [(*li'-in-ki-ya-an-za e-ep-du*)]

¹² According to a proposal of Torri (2004: 139-140) who also edited the text (Torri 2004: 129-141).

¹³ Ritual moves to a rooftop.

2. INCANTATION

Hittite rituals are famously rich in magic spells or incantations (Hutter 2012: 153-171). Incantations (Hitt. *Hukmai-*, *Huek-*) are magic formulas intended to produce an effect on a person or an aspect of the real world (Hutter 2012: 160-161). The content of effective incantations in Hittite rituals and their strong connection with the natural world have been described as a survival of popular or folkloric knowledge. They use natural categories that are easily recognizable by the inhabitants of a specific region. They draw on a set of natural phenomena that was an integral part of popular culture: water that runs off into the earth or fire that burns pinecones can easily represent an evil to be banished. The combinations of actions and words in the performance of a ritual produce the imperative transfer of qualities from the substance or the element to a recipient, the object of the magic action. Incantations and their power can only become effective when associated with significant ritual actions that accompany and mimic the words, consequently reinforcing them to make them effective (Torri 2003b: 23-34).

Hittite scribes, with their different origins and expertise and their mastery of texts from different areas, were handing down the rituals, adapting them to different occasions and working toward their final canonization. At the same time, they shared the same cultural code with the rest of the diverse Anatolian population (Torri 2003b: 8-34) and by reworking this code, rendered it into the standardized wording that we find in the rituals in our possession.

Like the personal prayers, which are full of rhetorical features, spells are often formed by complex figures of speech and rhythmic formulas.¹⁴ Spells in the form of analogic magic incantations are especially prevalent and were used both to heal the ritual patient and to ward off evil. These are introduced by *verba dicendi* (“I/S(he) speak(s) [as follows]”). They are composed of a protasis that begins with the deictic particle “just as” (*māḥḥan*). This construction is followed by the apodosis or main clause, a directive/imperative introduced by the modal adverb *apēnišsan*, “likewise.” (Torri 2003b: 35-40) As for example in TEXT #3a from the myth of Telipinu:

TEXT #3a: Myth of Telipinu (CTH 324.1: KUB 17.10++ ii)

§23: (obv. ii 28'-32') Here, Telipinu, I have sprinkled your paths with fine oil. You, Telipinu, walk in the path sprinkled with fine oil! Let *šaḥi-* wood and *ḥappuriya-* wood be your bed!¹⁵ **Just as** (*māḥḥan*) the reed and the rush are firm, may you, Telipinu, **likewise** (*apēnišsan*) be firm! (Rieken, Lorenz, Daus 2012)

Here the spell serves to pacify the deity, who is addressed directly, so that fertility may return among humans and animals. Bappi's ritual — TEXT #3b — similarly contains an incantation addressed to the goddess — *Ḥuwaššanna* — who has caused the supplicant to become ill (Görke 2015):

TEXT #3b: Bappi's Ritual (CTH 431: KUB 17.12 iii)

§11¹⁶: (rev. iii 8'-15') **Just as** (*māḥḥan*) this fig contains in its interior a thousand seeds and as this raisin contains in its interior the wine, so may you, O goddess, my Mistress, **in the same way** (*QĀTAMMA*) hold the ritual patron in goodness! And may the ritual patron also please the deity like oil (and) honey!”

Another frequent construction within the magic ritual incantations is the use of the particle *kāša*, which can have spatial (“here”) or temporal (“just now”) significance (Steitler 2020: 365-381). In the former case, its purpose is to focus the deity's attention on the actions being performed in the moment (and thus has a performative aspect). This formula too is followed by a directive. TEXT #4 is an example:

TEXT #4: Ritual of ŠamuḤa for the purification for the royal couple, the second tablet (CTH 480: KUB 29.7+)

§18: (rev. 36-37) Then they give him a bulb of ga[rlic] and he meanwhile speaks as follows: “If someone rec[it]es before the deity in the following way: ‘As this garlic is **wrapped** (*anda ḥūlaliyanza*) with skins,¹⁷ and the one does not detach from the other (*arḥa ŪL tarnai*), may evil deeds, the broken

¹⁴ On the formal structure of spells in Mesopotamian rituals and incantations, see Ceccarelli 2024: 91-145.

¹⁵ Following a proposed emendation of HW² H, 275b. (see also Torri 2003b: 66 with previous literature). Differently Rieken, Lorenz, Daus 2012 with n. 28.

oath, the curse, and impurity, like a garlic, be wrapped on the temple *anda hūlaliyan hardu*!)’ (39-41)
 Now (*kāša*), I have just **peeled** (*arḫa šippanun*) this bulb of ga[rl]ic and left a paltry stalk of it. Let him (i.e., the deity) **likewise peel** (*QĀTAMMA šippaiddu*) the evil deed, the broken oath, the [cu]rse, the impurity, befo[re th]e god! May the deity and the patient be purified [of t]hat deed!”

Here the language of binding, suggested by the **wrapping** (*hūlaliya-*) and unbinding (*tarna-*) suggested by the act of **peeling** (*šappai-*) denote the idea of bewitchment as a bond that constricts the victim (Puértolas Rubio 2019: 61).¹⁶ The rites are intended to purify the temple and the patients (the royal couple), against whom someone has spoken curses in front of the deity who resides in the temple. At the same time, the deity itself becomes the guarantor and witness of the change brought about through the performance of the ritual. In the process the malevolent actions and curses supposedly pronounced by the sorcerer are also described (Puértolas Rubio 2019: 60-61).

A handful of incantations are found in both magic rituals and prayers. Both genres were the product of the scholar-scribes who drew on the same reservoir of traditions to compose their texts (Torri 2003a: 221-222). In TEXTS ##5 and 6, incantations appear in different combinations in texts from different eras. Two motifs in particular occur repeatedly. The motif of releasing the exhausted one appears in **5a**, **b**, and **c**. The first is an Old Hittite ritual (16th century BC), the second from the early empire (15th century BC), and the third appears in one of Mursili II’s plague prayers (14th century BC). The motif of the rear wheel not catching up to the front occurs in **5a**, but also **6a**, an Old Hittite prayer, and **6b**, again in the ritual of Ḫantitaššu.

TEXT #5a: Old Hittite Blessings for the King Labarna (CTH 820: KUB 60.44 ++)

§1 ^(obv. 1’-6’)[I am going to release the exhausted one]. They yoke [the rested one(?)], I am going to yoke [the rested one]. As the rear [wheel] cannot find the front [wheel], let [also the evil(?)] not find the [] of Our Sun (i.e., the king).” (trans. Torri 2003a: 220)

TEXT #5b: Ḫantitaššu’s Ritual (CTH 395: KBo 11.14)

§10 ^(ii 15-18)You, O Sun God, go and [...] three, four, and five times: ‘let [...] in the meadow! Release the exhausted one and yoke the rested one. Release the exhausted one and yoke the rested one.’” (modified transl. from Torri 2003a: 220-221)

TEXT #5c: Plague Prayer of Muršili II (CTH 376.I: KUB 24.3 ++)

^(ii 39-44)Turn the plague, the hostility, the famine, and the severe fever towards Mittanni and Arzawa. Rested are the belligerent lands, but Harti is a weary land. Release the exhausted one and yoke the rested one.” (transl. Torri 2003a: 221)

TEXT #6a: Old Hittite Invocation against Slander (CTH 389.2: KUB 36.91 +)

^(ii 8’-12’)As the snake does not [miss] its hole, may the evil word return to his [the slanderer’s] own mouth. As the rear wheel cannot find the front wheel, may the evil word in the same way not find the [king and the queen].” (transl. Torri 2003a: 220)

TEXT #6b: Ḫantitaššu’s Ritual (CTH 395: KBo 11.14)

§11 ^(ii 20-26)Just as the *kappi*-seed/small seed escapes the millstone, so too may the ritual patron escape the mouth of Agni (Fire). As the rear wheel cannot catch up to the front, may the evil day not find the ritual patron. Are not my words the words of the Sun God and Kamrusepa? Let them become the incantations (*Hukmauš*) of a mortal.” (transl. Torri 2003a: 218)

The shared motifs between them indicates speech acts that were considered especially effective, but also that incantations were no more or less appropriate for addressing the gods than the verbal petitions that define Hittite personal prayer. The practice of ritualists identifying themselves with a deity in the last example (**6b**) is found

¹⁶ The principle of Hittite magical thought, based on the binary relationship between opposites, “pure/impure” and “bound/unbound,” recurs in these spells and those presented in the following pages. A description of this principle can be found in Haas 1987-1990: 235-237.

across cultures and serves to collapse the “boundaries between the human situation and the mythical dimension” (Frankfurter 1995: 469-470). But by this appended declaration, the recitation also accesses well-known mythological narratives about the goddess of magic and the Sun God — narratives that, because of their familiarity, further strengthen the power of the recitation.

Magic rituals were practical texts, often giving little more than a description of the sequence of actions that a magician had to perform (Torri 2003a: 216). However, in the Hittite capital Hattuša they may have also become a *literary* product, not always used for practical purposes, that a literate class of scribes used for instruction (Marcuson, van den Hout 2015: 143-168). The fact that these texts, regardless of their supposed origin and occasion, often follow an established compositional pattern leads us in this direction.

Connected to these considerations is the problem of the relationship between local, oral tradition and Hittite scribal form.¹⁷ Spells, often formed by complex figures of speech and rhythmic formulas and inserted so abundantly in some of the magic rituals, are interpreted as testimony of a preexisting oral tradition (Francia 2013: 165-166). Some scholars, on the other hand, consider those spells to be the result of an intervention of the scribes who formulated the rituals (Torri 2003a). Because the surviving ritual compositions were scribal products removed from their original performative contexts, the question arises whether they, and more particularly, their oral components, were actually intended to be performed (Frankfurter 2019: 608). The role of the written dimension in transforming and fixing what were probably originally oral products inevitably raises questions about reception.

The problem in addressing such questions is that we still know very little about the processes by which local, oral incantations were introduced into the Hittite repertoire. That said, just a few possible examples of this process have come to light. A Luwian birth ritual attributed to a woman named Pittei (Giorgieri 2004: 409-426) shows signs of having been a draft inscribed by a scribe on a scrap piece of clay as the native Luwian-speaking expert dictated to him in Hittite. It includes *historiolae* and incantations containing numerous Luwian words (indicated in bold in TEXT #7) that are designed to protect the mother and newborn in the event of an ill omen involving the moon:

TEXT #7: Birth Ritual of Pittei (CTH 767.7: KUB 44.4+)

“(rev. 22-24) Tongues, tongues, where are you going? We are going to **flatten** (:palḫuna *paiweni*) out the rock... We are going to **break** (*duwarnum[anzi] paiweni*) the obsidian. Likewise to cage (GIŠ-*ruanzi* KI.MIN) the lion. Likewise to **fetter** the wolf (:patalḫauna KI.MIN). Likewise to **lift** (lalauna!) the ***zammantis*** boy (i.e., the newborn).” (transl. Bachvarova 2013: 140)¹⁸

Similar incantations are found in another ritual known as “The Lord of the Tongue” (TEXT #8). In this text, however, the incantations are fully edited and adapted to the Hittite morphological norm as discussed by Ilya Yakubovich (2010: 404):

TEXT #8: “The Lord of the Tongue” (CTH 338: KUB 12.62)

“(obv. 10⁷-12⁷) 10 Tongue, my lord, where are you going? I am going to devour the road, I am going to cage the lion, I am going to pluck the *alili*-bird, I am going to lift the human.” (trans. Bachvarova 2013: 148)¹⁹

Whether CTH 338 is an adapted version of Pittei’s original incantation or of another, similar text (Yakubovich 2010: 404), its oral origins are in evidence, even after scribal modification, which leaves open the promise that other incantations in Hittite remain true in essence to their own oral origins.

A similar case is attested in two other texts cataloged as Blessings for the King Labarna, respectively designated as CTH 820.4 (MH; TEXT #9a) and CTH 820.5.1 (LH; TEXT #9b). The ritual context of these incantations

¹⁷ See about this topic also Francia 2013: 172.

¹⁸ Similar interpretation by Giorgieri 2004: 410.

¹⁹ On this text and its poetic style see Francia 2013: 170, and Francia 2016: 3-4, who interprets this passage differently: “[Vado] dalla strada *per divorare*; vado dal leone *per fissar(lo) (magicamente)*; vado dal fiore *per raccorglierlo*; vado dall’uomo *per parlare*.”

is not entirely clear, although Charles W. Steitler has recently demonstrated that they were originally construction rituals, symbolically connected to the construction of kingship.²⁰

TEXT #9a: Blessings for the King Labarna (CTH 820: KBo 21.22)

§5 (obv. 22 '26') "Open!" – "Where are you from?" – "I come from a pure (place)." – "From which pure (place)?" – "From the *zahanittena*." – "From which *zahanittena*?"²¹ – "From the Temple of the Sun deity." – "From which Sun deity?" – "His figure is new, his chest is new, his [head] is new, his manliness is new; §6 (l.e. 27 '28') His [te]eth (are that) of a lion, [his] ey[es] (are that) of an eagle and he lo[oks around] like an eagle."

TEXT #9b: Blessings for the King Labarna (CTH 820: 1.A, KBo 13.22+ = 1.B, KUB 55.2)

§3 (1.A1+2 rev. 1-5 = 1.B obv. 5 '7'; rev. 1-2) The palace servant says: "Open!". The Old Woman (^{MUNUS}ŠU.GI) says: "[From where] do you come (Pl.)?" Thus [the palace servant (DUMU.LUGAL)] (answers): "From a pure pl[ace]." The Old Wo]man (says): "From which pu[re] (place)?" The palace servant (answers): "From the *zahane[ttenna-]*." [The Old Woman (says)]: "From which *zahanettenna-?*" The palace servant (answers): "From the temple of the Sun deity." The Old Woman (says): "What (does) the Sun deity (look like)?" §4 (1.A1+2 rev. 6-10 = 1.B rev. 3-5) "His figure is new, his chest is new, his manliness is new. His head is of iron, his teeth are that of a lion, his eyes are that of an eagl[e] and he looks around like an eagle."²²

The two texts feature a dialogue: in the first case, the older text does not provide any information regarding the actors, whereas in the more recent version, they are identified as an Old Woman (^{MUNUS}ŠU.GI) and a palace servant (DUMU.LUGAL). The incantation in the second text (TEXT #9b) appears to be a fully edited adaptation of the first one (TEXT #9a), which depicts a dialogue without mentioning the actors, as if it had been hastily written down by the scribe.

According to the previous examples we may propose that some of these recitations, dialogues, and particularly analogic spells, were considered effective enough that they became integrated into the written tradition, suitable for use in other compositions. The fact that those other compositions include personal prayers, which we can confidently state were intended to be recited, suggests that incantations were also intended to be performed at some point in the ritual's life.

3. INCANTATION AS PRAYER

Echoing the conclusions of Fritz Graf for ancient Greece (1991: 194), Hittite incantations and prayers are coterminous. For the Hittites there is no distinction between incantations and prayers in terms of their effectiveness. Both seek to transform a situation in the real world. Both are performed orally in a group setting. Like prayers, incantations can address the deity directly (TEXT ##3a and 3b). Finally, both rely on rhetorical tools based on the premise that speaking the right way will ensure success. So goes the plea in Ḫantitaššu's ritual: "You, O Sun God, eat! Because I am continually reciting and incanting these things, grant them to me, O Sun God" (CTH 395 §11'). Only in cases of magic intended to do harm — real or imagined — does the utterance cross over into illegality (Hitt. *alwanzatar*, Sum. Ḫ₇; Mouton 2010), as in the curses made before the deity in TEXT ##2 and 4.

²⁰ Editions by Galina Kellerman (1978: 199-208) and Alfonso Archi (1979: 43-44) Recently Charles W. Steitler (2017: 134-136) proposed that CTH 820.4 could be interpreted as a real construction ritual (parallel to a Hattian ritual). According to him CTH 820.5.1 (Steitler 2017: 259-271), was probably part of a ritual composed for the strengthening of the king. It is based on fragments in the Hittite language that have a counterpart in the Hattian language (CTH 820.5.2; Steitler 2017: 259-260).

²¹ About this unknown word see HEG IV/16: 608. It is attested only here and in the parallel version CTH 820.5. According to the context it is a cultic space, particularly pure, which can be identified with the temple of the Sun deity.

²² Following Steitler 2017: 263 it is proposed the reading is *ud-da-ni-iš-še-t[a-wa...]*, as variant of *udne*, according also to the possible parallel in Hattic language *te=wu₁r*. However, the possible mistake in the use of the case, dative rather than nominative, arouses some perplexity in adopting this solution.

Within the context of Near Eastern religion, Hittite magic rituals are a distinctly original cultural product. Although, in composing their magic texts, the Hittites borrowed and reworked motifs and practices from Syria and other populations of Anatolia, the influx of Mesopotamian rituals into Anatolia followed a different transmission process. As Daniel Schwemer has observed, Babylonian magic craft was popular and in great demand in Ḫattuša, but it coexisted with the Anatolian ritual tradition, and their interaction was apparently limited to a small number of examples (Schwemer 2013: 165-166). The similarity of certain symbolisms, used in incantations, such as the opposition between right and left in the ritual actions preceding TEXT #2: “He breaks the loaf **on the left** and puts it on the ground, then he offers wine **on the left**, and speaks in the following way (KUB 17.28 ii 37-39; Torri 2013, on-line edition)”; or binding and unbinding (TEXT #4) have been placed in relation to the Mesopotamian tradition of the *Šurpu* and *Maqlû* series, and the Namburbi rituals (Strauß 2002: 326; Puértolas Rubio 2019: 61). More generally, oral rites, such as the incantations, accompanied by manual rites involving the manipulation of materials, performed and recited by professional healers, can be understood in both Anatolia and Mesopotamia as methods to deal with and eventually solve human crises (Abusch 2015: 1-3). Possible analogies between magic traditions are therefore to be considered as sources for cross-cultural similarities rather than cases of cultural borrowing (Schwemer 2013, 147).

The Hittite desire to collect ritual knowledge, however, was not a *theoretical* thirst for knowledge, as Daniel Schwemer (2007: 256) has pointed out.²³ “Foreign” rituals were collected from different regions throughout Anatolia and northern Syria in order *to be used* at the royal court. By integrating them to greater and lesser extents into their existing body of religious literature, the Hittite scribes have left us with a unique record of prayer traditions from across Anatolia.

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²³ See also Miller 2004: 458-461.

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