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A THEORETICAL PERSPECTIVE OF THE *TELEPINU MYTH*: ARCHETYPES AND INITIATION RITES IN HISTORICAL CONTEXTS*

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Summary: A Theoretical Perspective of the *Telepinu Myth*: Archetypes and Initiation Rites in Historical Contexts

Research on the *Telepinu Myth* (CTH 324) has shown that it is an inexhaustibly rich document and that therefore the different, and sometimes conflicting, lines of analysis need to be pursued further. In the light of the symbolic evidence presented by this mythological tradition, we propose to focus on the privileged position granted to spatial symbols and to hypothesize the function this Myth served in specific contexts of the Hittite history, characterized by the increase and reduction of lands under Hittite jurisdiction. In this regard, we propose to evaluate the symbolic function that the *Telepinu Myth* displayed in order *to rebuild* the sacred space of the territories governed by the Hittites, when they were undergoing changes brought about by increased political and military contact with neighboring societies.

Keywords: *Telepinu Myth* – Hatti – Archetypes – Initiation Rites

Resumen: Una perspectiva teórica del Mito de *Telepinu*: Arquetipos y ritos de iniciación en contextos históricos

Las investigaciones sobre el Mito de *Telepinu* (CTH 324) han demostrado que su riqueza es inagotable y que las diferentes vías de análisis, en ocasiones contrapuestas, merecen seguir ampliándose. En virtud de la evidencia simbólica que presenta esta tradición mitológica, proponemos visualizar el lugar privilegiado que ocupan los símbolos del espacio e hipotetizar la función que tuvo este Mito durante contextos específicos de la historia hitita, caracterizados por el aumento o la reducción de las tierras bajo jurisdicción hitita. Finalmente, proponemos evaluar la función simbólica que el Mito de *Telepinu* desplegó para *reconstruir* el espacio sagrado de los territorios gobernados por los hititas, cuando estos sufrían modificaciones causadas por la intensificación de los contactos políticos y militares con otras sociedades vecinas.

Palabras Clave: Mito de *Telepinu* – Hatti – Arquetipos – Ritos iniciáticos

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INTRODUCTION

According to most scholars, the *Telepinu Myth*—which narrates the god’s escape due to an uncontrollable anger which could cause the destruction of the entire Hittite world—was put in writing in three different versions between the 15th and 13th centuries B.C.¹ (TMI, TMII, TMIII).² Scholars detected the presence of grammatical archaisms and of certain orthographic characteristics that indicate the versions belong to Middle and New Hittite Script. However, as Th. van den Hout pointed out, paleographic criteria for dating Hittite religious texts are not as solid now as they were some years ago, and “the interpretation behind the labels OS (Old Script) and MS (Middle Script) is very much in flux now.”³ In consequence, as he suggests, it has become impossible to date precisely the Anatolian Myths dated in these script types:

“[The] corpus of non-datable OS and MS religious texts would have to have been written down in the 15th and earlier 14th century and our distinctions between the two corpora may have been influenced by subject matter rather than real paleographic differences.”⁴

Being aware of these dating difficulties, and also of the privileged position that the symbols of space have in the *Telepinu Myth*, I will consider the relationship between this mythological tradition and specific historical situations in which the territory under Hittite control suffered strong changes, focusing in two paradigmatic periods to analyze such relationship: the reigns of Arnuwanda I (*ca.* 1400-1370 B.C.) and Šuppiluliuma I (*ca.* 1350-1319 B.C.).⁵

The specific historical circumstances that surrounded the reigns of Arnuwanda I and Šuppiluliuma I act as paradigms to explain how this myth

¹ Pecchioli Daddi and Polvani 1990: 72; García Trabazo 2002: 106; Freu and Mazoyer 2007: 337.

² All translations in the article are taken from Hoffner 1998: 15-20. I take the correlation between the texts cited by Pecchioli Daddi and Polvani 1990: 71. CTH 324. – *First version*: A. KUB XVII 10; B. KUB XXXIII 2 = A I 16 ff.; C. KUB XXXIII 1 = A III 28 ff.; D. KUB XXXIII 3 = A IV 11 ff.; E. *KBo XXVI 132 = C III 8 ff. – *Second version*: A. KUB XXXIII 4 + IBoT 141; B. KUB XXXIII 5; II A = I 14 ff.; C. KUB XXXIII 6 (+) 7; III = B III; D. KUB XXXIII 8; III = A IV 6 ff. – *Third version*: A. KUB XXXIII 9; B. KUB XXXIII 10 = A II 7 ff. – Excerpts: KUB XXXIII 12; 2. KUB XXXIII 11; 3. KUB XXXIII 14; 4. KBo XXVI 127. I must also point out that even though the versions were rewritten on several occasions, none of them has been preserved in full.

³ Van den Hout 2007: 75. See also Miller 2004.

⁴ Van den Hout 2007: 95.

⁵ Freu y Mazoyer 2007: 311.

could have possibly displayed an important symbolic function regarding space representations. In fact, both historical contexts translate into important territory *fluctuations*. In this respect, while during the reign of Arnuwanda I the Hittite territory was significantly diminished due to the advance of the Kaška along the northern border (Fig. 1), during the reign of Šuppiluliuma I the territory under Hittite control grew considerably as territories located in the Levant and Upper Mesopotamia were incorporated into the kingdom (Fig. 2).

SPATIAL SYMBOLOGY IN THE *TELEPINU MYTH*

In order to analyze the symbols displayed throughout the myth, I will take into consideration the contributions made by Mircea Eliade and Gilbert Durand, since they provide significant tools for understanding representations of the world that are guided by a strong desire to connect with the sacred.

Myths and Spatial Symbols

Mircea Eliade considered that some societies develop a remarkable “nostalgia for a periodical return to the mythical time of the beginning of things.”⁶ According to him, one type of myth related to the “primordial time” is characterized as “initiatic” due to its functions and the symbols associated with the topic of *regressus ad uterum* that usually appear in them. This type of myth is traditionally associated with the theme of the rebirth after a return to the matrix, to the chaotic or embryonic pre-formal state. Usually in this kind of myths and rites, there are meaningful spatial representations: the return to the *womb* linked to a *warm, axial and intimate space*,⁷ or the passage between worlds or states through a *threshold*—particularly in images of a narrow gate or a bridge.

Durand remarks the nature of the *archetypes* and their central role in the symbolic analysis of mythical documents.⁸ He states that there are two large

⁶ Eliade 1959: xi.

⁷ Moreover, this world is represented as a “central space,” an *ordered zone*; in contrast with the surrounding space, which has not been consecrated by the gods in the beginning and is thus interpreted as a *chaotic zone*, that is, a place without structure or orientation. Eliade 1992: 86-87; 1998: 21-25.

⁸ Durand defines an archetype as a *semantic nucleus* around which other images of a certain discourse gravitate (forming what he calls “constellations of images”). As Durand pointed out,

constellations (or regimens) identified by archetypes that, in the myths, become intertwined and complement each other—being the predominance of one or the other only apparent. Thus, the “daytime regime”—whose archetypes are the *hero* and the *light*—and the “night-time regime”—whose archetypes are the great *mother-goddesses*, the *central spaces* and the *cosmic tree*, among others⁹—seem to be mixed in the *Telepinu Myth*.

Therefore, I will proceed to interpret the symbols and archetypes present in the *Telepinu Myth* in the light of the concepts provided by Eliade and Durand.

The *Telepinu Myth*

Telepinu’s cult seems to have been Hattic in origin.¹⁰ In the Hittite world, Telepinu was the son of the Hattic Storm God,¹¹ the deity which later became an important god of Ḫatti.¹² However, it is not clear whether Telepinu was also the son of the Sun Goddess of the city of Arinna, or of Ḫannaḫanna, the *mother of all Hittite gods*—including the Storm God, as noted by Galina Kellerman. Despite the potential ties with these goddesses and with the tutelary god of Ḫatti, Telepinu has not been easily placed in the Hittite pantheon, and this has led to very divergent hypotheses about his nature, as well as about his myth.¹⁴

Scholars have sustained diverse arguments in order to explain the many versions of the myth.¹⁵ I prefer to point out that these are probably three different versions of a sacred story we might never know completely. For this reason, I will analyze the more relevant archetypes and spatial symbols of all the fragmentary texts, but I will not consider them to constitute a single *canonical* version.

the analysis of symbols should not only regard its associations to other symbols, but should also consider the isolated symbol. Durand 2004: 45, 64; Garagalza 1990: 32; García Gual 1995.

⁹ However, to Durand it seems that different societies focus their imagination on one of these two regimes: modern “Western” societies tend to represent reality according to the family of “daytime regime” symbols, whereas “mythical discourse” societies do so according to the “night-time regime.” Durand 2000: 98, 104-110; Durand 2004: 372; Franzone 2005: 121-131.

¹⁰ Hoffner 1998: 10. See also Klinger 1996.

¹¹ The Hattic element *-pinu* means “son”. However, there is no certainty about the element *Teli-* (see e.g. García Trabazo 2002: 106).

¹² For a detailed account see Hutter 1997: 72; Beckman 1989: 99; Bryce 2002: 143.

¹³ See Kellerman 1987: 118, 129, 130.

¹⁴ Gaster 1973; Eliade 1978: 143; Macqueen 1959; Pecchioli Daddi and Polvani 1990: 76; Hoffner 1998: 14; Gonnet 1988, 1990, 2001; Mazoyer 2002; Bryce 2002: 13-14.

¹⁵ Some scholars have considered the three versions as a single unified work (Kellerman 1986). However, such unity is now considered artificial (Pecchioli Daddi and Polvani 1990: 73; García Trabazo 2002: 108).

The Cosmic and Chaotic Pre-formal Space

After a twelve-line gap which constitute about a third of the TMI, the tale begins indicating how Telepinu wakes up infuriated, coming out and shouting, “Let there be no intimidating language.”¹⁶ In fact, this passage can be understood in two different ways: the god is either asking not to be disturbed or intimidated because he feels threatened, or rather, he is demanding that no one stand in the way of his hasty flight. This explanation is later rendered in the text: “[Then] he drew [on the right shoe] on his left foot, and the left [shoe on his right foot].”¹⁷ This image suggests that the harmony of the cosmos was in danger, that the normal order of things was altered. The hasty movement and the confusion present in this first image foreshadow the coming crisis, which upsets the world due to the god’s feeling of anger. Right from the start, this personal imbalance becomes a collective imbalance, spreading out towards all living beings, objects, and even gods:

*“Mist seized the windows. Smoke [seized] the house. In the fireplace the logs were stifled. [At the altars] the gods were stifled. In the sheep pen the sheep were stifled. In the cattle barn the cattle were stifled. The mother sheep rejected her lamb. The cow rejected her calf.”*¹⁸

This is a description of events which clearly expresses the penetration by disruptive agents into safe places. It tells about the *fog* and the *smoke* that enter the house, the hearth, the altars and the fold, representing the intrusion of chaos in the places that Durand defined as archetypes of the “night-time regime”: the “center” and the “secret intimacy,” valued as positive aspects of life.¹⁹ In this sense, the mythical description of the smothered wood and the dead hearth, as disruptive agents, symbolize the crisis of the *central spaces of the Hittite world*.²⁰

¹⁶ Hoffner 1998: 15.

¹⁷ Hoffner 1998: 15.

¹⁸ Hoffner 1998: 15.

¹⁹ Durand 2004: 249-267. In fact, as Durand suggested, the positive symbols of this constellation are associated with *matter* as an agreeable and welcoming place, as a warm and intimate space where one seeks to be (whether it is represented as the earth, the womb of a mythical monster, or a cavern). Durand 2004: 199.

²⁰ It is known that inside the Hittite houses the fireplace was always kept burning as a symbol of life. While, on the other hand, its extinction signified the death or bad fortune of the whole family (e.g. Hutter 1997: 83).

As societies equate in the “mythical discourse” the house with the body and the cosmos,²¹ the crisis mentioned in the myth seems to spread out towards the whole cosmos. Then, it should be noted the analogous way in which chaos infiltrates into the divine body of Telepinu, the house and the Hittite world in general, just as the uncontrollable anger that takes possession of the god’s acts sends him away from his land and invades the “central spaces” in the form of smoke in the house and of fog on the window.

In fact, both the images of smoke and fog represent suspended particles that darken and thicken the clear air, making it impossible to define and delimit objects (to “see clearly”), thus resulting in confusion. It reflects the idea of blindness mentioned by Durand in respect to the “daytime regime”—where the “shadows,” the “darkness,” the “night-time” and the “blackness” are considered symbolically negative, while the *eye* and the gaze are archetypes that represent *transcendence* and rational knowledge, being *blindness* its symbolical antithesis.²² If we consider that the images of sight/blindness can also be found in TMII and III, then the presence of the smoke and fog as elements that distort sight—and of course these elements are related to chaos’ symbolism as well as *death*—become significant. As I will point out later, in those versions there is an attempt to return to the previous order of things through the act of cleaning Telepinu’s *eyes*, which strengthens the idea of a link between chaos and an impeded sight.

As the story unfolds, Telepinu “became enraged and removed everything good”²³ leaving towards a territory that is different from the “central” territory; he takes away to that “other” space the goodness he once gave to the Hittite world: “Telepinu too went away and removed grain, animal, fecundity, luxuriance, growth, and abundance to the steppe, to the meadow.”²⁴ The symbolism prevalent in this passage is one of Telepinu moving from one world to the other, from a “built” space towards a “wilderness” of steppes, meadows, fields, and moors; that is, from an inhabited place to one uninhabited by the gods and the living beings of the Hittite world.

I purposely highlight the marked contrast between the closed spaces of the cosmos and the open and free environment to where the god leaves; in other words, between the architectonic qualities of the earlier space (the house, the stable, the altar) and the natural environment to which he went. It is told that

²¹ Eliade 1998: 126.

²² Durand 2004: 130-157.

²³ Hoffner 1998: 15.

²⁴ Hoffner 1998: 15.

“*Telepinu too went into the moor and blended with the moor. Over him the halenzu-plant grew. Therefore barley (and) wheat no longer ripen. Cattle, sheep, and humans no longer become pregnant. And those (already) pregnant cannot give birth.*”²⁵ As can be clearly seen, Telepinu, after going through different places, *integrates* himself to an “other” environment, to the point where plants grow over his body and turn him and the wilderness with which he has blended into a *unity*.

Incidentally, the image of those moory, fluctuating, and unstable lands refers to locations that are completely different from the place described as cosmic in the beginning of the story. This environment, usually filled with a mixture of partially decomposing vegetation, algae, *rodents*, *frogs* and *toads* (which tolerate the stagnant waters), as well as large numbers of *insects* (such as *aquatic larvae*), coincides with what Eliade and Durand refers about the symbolism of chaos,²⁶ thus implying this is an unconsecrated and therefore unstructured and formless environment.

Certainly, the very idea of the moor vegetation covering Telepinu’s body brings to mind the image of an enfolding environment that traps the god and incorporates him into the disorder of branches, leaves and maybe even roots of the undergrowth. Even more, “the outside” absorbing Telepinu into itself presents symbols associated with a *return to the primordial chaos*, with the regression to a pre-formal, embryonic state, dawn of a rebirth on a higher state of being and existence. As other initiation myths and rites, the *Telepinu Myth* presents the typical symbolism of the return to the *telluric womb*.²⁷ Note also that this pre-formal space appears as a welcoming environment, as a place that Telepinu neither tries nor wishes to abandon—as proven by the fact that leaving it makes him shout, thunder and storm angrily. In other words, the symbols associated with Telepinu’s stay outside the cosmos allude both to a wild and chaotic space and to a *refuge for a rebirth*.

The story narrates that later the Storm God said “My son Telepinu is not there. He became enraged and removed everything good.”²⁸ Faced with this situation, it becomes necessary for “the great and the small gods to search for Telepinu,”²⁹ the missing god. The Sun God begins the search by sending the swift eagle, “Go, search the high mountains. Search the deep valleys. Search

²⁵ Hoffner 1998: 15. The emphasis is mine.

²⁶ See Durand 2004: 77.

²⁷ Eliade 1965: xiv.

²⁸ Hoffner 1998: 15.

²⁹ Hoffner 1998: 15.

the Blue Deep.”³⁰; yet the swift eagle finds nothing. Under such circumstances, the Storm God tells the goddess Ḫannaḫanna:

“‘How shall we act? We are going to die of hunger.’ Ḫannaḫanna said to the Storm God: ‘Do something, Storm God. Go search for Telepinu yourself. The Storm God began to search for Telepinu. In his city (the Storm God) [grasps] the city gate, but can’t manage to open it. Instead the Storm God broke his hammer and his wedge (?). He wrapped himself up (in his garment) and sat down. Ḫannaḫanna sent [a bee]: ‘Go search for Telepinu.’”³¹

At this point, it is highly significant that the Storm God himself, one of the main Hittite deities, failed in his task, and cannot even go through a *door*. Thus, on the symbolic level there is an opposition between a cosmic space and a chaotic space, separated by a *door difficult to cross*, even for the most powerful god of Ḫatti. If the *gate* was a landmark between two opposite zones, then we can understand why the god found it such a hard obstacle to overcome: the gate is an essential element of the *threshold zone*. This might be the most plausible explanation for the failure of the Storm God, who actually had the power and the strength to fight entire armies. Moreover, it is significant that after his failure, the Storm God remained inside and sat down, adopting a *passive attitude*, which reveals that it was indeed a barrier that separates both worlds.

The frustrated search continues when the goddess Ḫannaḫanna sent the *bee*, even despite the Storm God’s doubts about the insect’s success in a task which he was not able to carry out. “[The Storm God] said [to Ḫannaḫanna]: ‘Since the great gods and the small gods have been searching for him, but haven’t found him, will this [bee find] him?’”³² The Storm God said: “His wings are small, and himself is small, and in addition he is...”³³ In order to interpret the symbols associated with the small bee, possibly a “double” of the motherly body of Ḫannaḫanna—as we pointed out, one of the main archetypes of the “night-time regime”—we must first take a look at the presence of this *Mother Goddess* in the tale.

As Kellerman remarked, Ḫannaḫanna was a goddess who preceded the birth and set the destinies of the newly born,³⁴ which is highly significant inasmuch

³⁰ Hoffner 1998: 15.

³¹ Hoffner 1998: 15.

³² Hoffner 1998: 15.

³³ Hoffner 1998: 15.

³⁴ Kellerman 1987: 112.

as Telepinu, before returning to the cosmos drawn back by this goddess, was in an *embryonic state*.³⁵ Considering her characteristic functions along with Durand's notions that the *great mother goddesses* are beneficial deities, protectors of the home, the microcosmos and the family,³⁶ I propose that *Ḫannaḫanna's role in the tale is archetypical of the positive qualities of the cosmos as an "ordered center."* This would explain why it is she who succeeded in bringing Telepinu back to the Hittite sacred space. In other words, the *Mother Goddess defines here the qualities of the cosmic space* described in the beginning of the story, the space invaded by the agents of chaos (smoke and fog). Thus, Ḫannaḫanna constituted a force of attraction that finally restored the deity to the "navel" of the Hittite world in order to "cosmosize" him.

In this regard, Durand makes an important point in his analysis of the images of the *great mother goddesses*. These images are associated with the notions of "container" and "contents," such as the mother's milk and its analogous substance, honey.³⁷ Therefore the "container/contents" symbolism appears in the story as the bee's wax and honey which purify Telepinu and lead him back towards the intimacy of the Hittite world.³⁸ As the section following the bee's departure is not preserved in the TMI, I will take into account versions II and III to see the symbolic features this mythical tradition presents in relation to the return of the god.

The Bee's Departure and Mission

After the section in which the bee is sent out, there is a large gap in the TMI, which becomes legible again when the rituals for "pacifying" Telepinu have begun. The second and third versions add the directions Ḫannaḫanna gave to the insect. The goddess sent the bee telling: "[... 'You, O bee, should look for Telepinu]. And when you find (him), sting [him on his hands and feet. Make] him stand up. [Take wax] and [wipe off] his *eyes* and his hands. *Purify him and bring him back to me.*"³⁹ As Hatice Gonnet has noted, the purpose of the bee sting could be to wake Telepinu up, making him return to an active

³⁵ Kellerman 1987: 117.

³⁶ Garagalza 1990: 79.

³⁷ "Milk and honey are sweetness, delights of the regained *intimacy*." Durand 2004: 267.

³⁸ The fact that it was that small bee who actually found Telepinu reminds of Durand's idea that the night-time regime has a tendency to imagine things in "miniaturized" form; that is, small things are given more importance, whereas the daytime regime values what is "up" and "large" in contrast with what is "down" and "small." Durand 2004: 130-157, 213-222.

³⁹ Hoffner 1998: 19, 20. The emphasis is mine.

position.⁴⁰ Moreover, as I stated before, the cleaning of the eyes may be easily associated with the *clarification of vision* which would leave behind the general confusion typical of a lapse into chaos, and indicate a future passage into order. As a symbol opposed to darkness/death, the “clean eyes” here signify *the possibility of seeing a future world*, associated to light/life.

The TMIII recounts that:

*“the bee searched the high mountains; it searched [the deep valleys; it searched the Blue] Deep. The honey was exhausted in its interior, [the ...] was exhausted [in its...]. But it [found] him [in a meadow in the town of Liḫzina], in a forest. It stung his hands and feet, so that he got up.”*⁴¹

The bee found Telepinu in a place called Liḫzina. This might be a meadow in a forest of the town called Liḫzina, as Harry Hoffner’s translation seems to suggest.⁴² Then it would seem that the features of the town “contradict” those of the “other” place defined in our analysis of the TMI as pre-formal, “unstructured,” “non-built” and “wild”. However, the cosmic qualities of a town are here diminished due to the reference to spaces free of town structures. For example, it should be noted the predominance of nature over buildings: then, this passage needs to be read according to the symbols of an “other” environment. As it is mention in TMIII, in this environment Telepinu stood up angrily because he had been woken up: “I was both angry and [sleeping]. [Why did] you [plural][arouse] me when I was sleeping? Why did you make [me] talk, when I was sulking?” [Telepinu] became (even more) angry. [He... ed] the spring...He drew the rivers and brooks (?).”⁴³

Eliade has highlighted the close symbolic link between *sleep* and *death*, and has interpreted that *waking up* means recognizing the true identity of the soul, “for not sleeping is not only a victory over physical fatigue, but above all, giving proof of spiritual strength.”⁴⁴ Therefore, it is likely that the symbolism of the dream alludes here to a phase of preparation for a new birth⁴⁵ denoting

⁴⁰ Gonnet 2001: 151.

⁴¹ Hoffner 1998: 20.

⁴² Liḫzina was probably located in Northern Anatolia, as the center of a Hattic cult to the Storm God of Liḫzina. Pecchioli Daddi and Polvani 1990: 86; Gonnet 2001: 151-152; García Trabazo 2002: 119.

⁴³ Hoffner 1998: 20.

⁴⁴ Eliade 1992: 136-137. The translation is mine

⁴⁵ It is a stage in which the initiation myths and rites are full of symbols of death, such as darkness, the cosmic night, the telluric womb or a monster’s womb.

a regression to a pre-formal state rather than a total annihilation; a *latent mode of being* associated with germination or embryology.⁴⁶

Following these ideas, I conclude that Telepinu, after being forced to come out of his “telluric refuge,” suffered the pressure of having to “give proof of his potential for being,” of his “spiritual strength”: the qualities he was forced to regain. In other words, Telepinu was forced to be reborn of the forces of nature in order to give new life to the world he had left at the mercy of chaos.

A Return to the Cosmic Order

In versions I and II, after the bee’s mission, there is a transcription of the rituals performed upon Telepinu for dissipating his *anger*.⁴⁷ Water is used for curing him; a kind of fruit (*parḥuena*) for driving the anger out of his heart; there is also mention of figs, olives, malt, grape juice, honey and wax.⁴⁸ Moreover, one of the rituals is very meaningful: a *path* is made for the god to walk along upon his return. Both versions read “I have just sprinkled your paths, Telepinu, with sweet oil. Set out, Telepinu, on paths sprinkled with sweet oils. Let *sahis* (boughs) and *ḥappuriyašaš* (boughs) be pleasant.”⁴⁹ I suggest that the purpose of the space sprinkled with fine oil was to mark a direction which would lead the god from chaotic to cosmic space. If the path is understood—just as the bridge or the gate—as a “place of passage” and therefore symbolically difficult to go through, the ritual preparation for the god would be aimed at *lightening* and *easing* the return. And, indeed, among the Hittites, paths of oil, honey, fabric, and cereals were frequently prepared for attracting the gods to their land.⁵⁰

However, when Telepinu came back he was still infuriated. A strong parallel can be found between this disruptive force—the anger that inhabits Telepinu’s body—and the events that took place in the cosmic order when it was invaded by smoke and fog. The following relevant passage reveals this analogy between the intrusion of chaos in the body and in the central spaces:

“May Telepinu’s anger, wrath, sin, and sullenness depart. May the house release it. May the middle... release it. May the window rele-

⁴⁶ Eliade 1965: xiv.

⁴⁷ On Telepinu’s anger, see García Trabazo 1998: 63-75.

⁴⁸ García Trabazo 2002: 124-126.

⁴⁹ Hoffner 1998: 16. TMI.

⁵⁰ Pecchioli Daddi and Polvani 1990: 81; García Trabazo 2002: 123, 126.

*ase it. May the hinge <release it.> May the middle courtyard release it. May the city gate release it. May the gate complex release it. (...) May it not go into the fruitful field, garden, or forest. May it go the route of the Sun Goddess (of the Dark Earth)."*⁵¹

Thus, forced to leave a space symbolically linked to the idea of a telluric uterus, the god is led by the persistent action of gods and men to grant *eternal* life to the cosmos, along with all his virtues. In fact, this myth not only narrated how the gods originally restored order in the sacred places—and, consequently, how men could do so in chaotic situations by ritually actualizing this myth—but also the rebirth of the god. Furthermore, it brought the previous chaos to an end, a fact linked to the new mode of existence of the god. I refer specifically to the god's ability to give eternal life and permanent well-being to the Hittite kingdom.

In order that the Hittite world acquires these qualities, the myth presents a large number of images alluding to a new beginning, such as the embryonic situations of Telepinu. Among these images, *sleep* is especially important, for even if Telepinu is not a god who dies, the presence of sleep, so closely bound to the symbolism of death, lead us to think that after the "chaotic stage" a new situation began for the god, as for the whole cosmos. Note that in the TMI's version,

*"Telepinu came back home to his house and took account of his land. The mist released the windows. The smoke released the house. The altars were in harmony again with the gods. The fireplace released the log. In the sheepfold he released the sheep. In the cattle barn he released the cattle. Then the mother looked after her child. The sheep looked after her lamb. (...) And Telepinu too <look after> the king and queen and took account of them in respect to life, vigor and longevity."*⁵²

Further supporting the hypothesis that this myth assures the future well-being previously not granted by this god, there is a very meaningful mention of the planting of a *tree*. The TMI reads: "Before Telepinu stands an *eyan*-tree (or pole). From the *eyan* is suspended a hunting bag (made from the skin) of a sheep. In (the bag) lies Sheep Fat. In it lie (symbols of) Animal Fecundity and Win. In it lie (symbols of) Cattle and Sheep. In it lie Longevity and Progeny."⁵³

⁵¹ Hoffner 1998: 17. TMI.

⁵² Hoffner 1998: 18.

⁵³ Hoffner 1998: 18.

Durand's analysis of the symbolism of *trees* (originally associated with fire, the sacrificial element *par excellence* providing total destruction and rebirth), reveals how they are associated to the idea of transcendence, of death followed by resurrection. In this sense, as Durand suggested, the *tree* conjures up the drama of *death followed by resurrection*. Furthermore, Durand's description of the meaning of trees is in accordance with the ideas of *eternity*, *continuity*, *well-being*, and *prosperity* the Hittites ascribed to this tree—an oak, fir or perhaps fruit tree.⁵⁴ In line with these notions, and despite the fragmentary information given by the texts, I consider that the aim of this tradition was the *permanent well-being in public spaces, through the return of the god Telepinu with renewed powers*.

Now it is time to study the function this tradition played in the official cult and how this tradition relates to the construction of the *sacred space* during historical periods characterized by territorial changes.

THE *TELEPINU MYTH* AND ITS SOCIO-HISTORICAL SETTING

In order to understand the ideological relevance of the writing and rewriting of a tradition as old Telepinu's, it should be reminded that it was a sacred story, and as such it was regarded as a guideline for the present and future. Thus, this tradition becomes a fundamental key for unlocking the representation of the Hittite world and its symbolic space.

As I noted above, Ḫannaḫanna and Telepinu represented, respectively, the central location of the cosmos, and the transcending of that world. In other words, while the great Mother Goddess showed the positive features of an ordered cosmos, as an archetype of “center” images, Telepinu, linked to the “evergreen tree,”⁵⁵ conjures up images of progress, new life and an eternal future, or as the TMI states, with “Longevity and Progeny (...) Plenty, Abundance, and Satiety.”⁵⁶

I also pointed out that these archetypes are closely related to the images found in initiation myths and rites. Initiation symbols are spread throughout the story, drawing attention to the idea that access to a higher mode of being requires a new gestation and birth, after a return to the chaotic embryonic state.

⁵⁴ On this tree see Imparati 1982: 237; Pecchioli Daddi and Polvani 1990: 84; García Trabazo 2002: 138.

⁵⁵ See Bernabé 1987: 29; Hoffner 1998: 11; Freu and Mazoyer 2007: 367.

⁵⁶ Hoffner 1998: 18.

In this regard, the god's new birth can be understood also as a rebirth of the sacred spaces, which not only return to their original order but also acquire eternal life. Therefore, the story probably had a double function: on the one hand, it explained how to reconstruct the sacred and perennial nature of central spaces at critical times in Hittite history, when these spaces were being threatened by the intrusion of disruptive agents; on the other hand, it restructured the cosmos at moments characterized by the expansion of the territory ruled by the Hittite king.

The myth fulfilled its first function during socio-historical situations characterized by a symbolic destabilization of the territories that made up the Hittite's ordered world, such as during the reign of Arnuwanda I. The myth narrates how the gods, in distant but equally hard times, had managed to restore the sacredness of central spaces. In this way, in different contexts of its history, when the Hittite world was being threatened by destruction—either due to internal sociopolitical or economic conflicts or to the danger of a military advance upon it—this myth gave meaning to that reality and, as an exemplary model and as absolute truth, also assured that the Hittite cosmos would regain its harmony and welfare.

The ancient sources relate Arnuwanda I's reign with countless invasions of the Kaška tribes along the northern territory and the destruction of important cult centers in the Hittite nuclear area. Those were certainly turbulent times for the inhabitants of the northern regions of the Hittite territory, but also for its king and queen (Ašmunikal) who had to hold the kingdom together at a time when the networks of subordination were affected by conflicting interests.⁵⁷ Under such circumstances the reading of the myth made sense in that it described how the Hittite world, which had suffered these circumstances in the past due to the god's rage and subsequent absence, had indeed survived, thus providing a *sense* to the crises. Moreover, the myth served the function of providing a certain *assurance* based on the tradition that Hatti would have a promising future, and that the crisis of central spaces would be over—as it had in “the beginning”, when anger, smoke and fog left the houses, windows, temples, and all those places that comprised the Hittites' cosmos.

As a result, the governing elite, forced to endure circumstances that endangered the sacredness of their world, found highly satisfactory answers in this ancient tradition. During the reign of Arnuwanda I, stories like this one had probably provided both the reasons for the critical present—the disappearance of an enraged deity—and the steps the king had to take for

⁵⁷ Houwink Ten Cate 1979; Hoffner 1972; Macqueen 1995: 1091; Bryce 2005a: 142-144.

overcoming them—performing, as the gods had, the rituals that would bring back and pacify the offended deity. It can be hypothesized that the Hittites under Arnuwanda I took the myth as a model and example, recounted its events, put it writing, and performed it as a rite, in order to act upon and transform the present, just as the gods had done in time immemorial. The ritual recreation of the myth might also have been partial, a recreation only of the gestures and the actions that would dispel the god's anger; since the “expiatory” procedure (*mugawar*) included in the myth was a very common practice among Hittites when they wanted to attract an angered deity and restore the cosmic order.⁵⁸

The myth's second function is related to periods such as Šuppiluliuma I's, characterized by the incorporation of territories to the Hittite realm. After the conquests, the territorial transformation required a restructuring of the symbolic space. It is possible that in times when the territory under Hittite jurisdiction varied considerably in size, the reality of the new sociopolitical organization required a consistent reconstruction in the symbolic level. This fact would explain why the function of this myth in specific sociopolitical contexts (such as Šuppiluliuma I's) was to *destroy symbolically the old Hittite world*, so as to rebuild it according to the parameters of its new territoriality.

Thus, the re-writing and ritualization of a myth like Telepinu's became necessary for expressing the novel spatial and territorial situation of an expanding kingdom. In this sense, the recreation of the myth's crisis and renovation of the cosmos played a significant role in the symbolic construction of a new spatial order resulting from a new historical situation. In fact, the *Telepinu Myth* abolished time and in doing so generating an absolute beginning, allowing the Hittites to cosmosize the new central spaces of the sociopolitical entity. This would be done through the symbolic destruction of the previous world, a necessary step for *any novelty* among “mythic discourse” societies.

CONCLUSION

I have proposed an interpretation of the symbolic meaning of *Telepinu Myth* and also hypothesized its function in specific historical situations. In short, I sustained that this oral tradition was written down at certain critical moments of Hittite history because of its significance in the construction of a sacred

⁵⁸ For this reason some specialists considered that the *Telepinu Myth* was an expiatory ritual where the Myth was inserted, and not vice-versa. Bernabé 1987: 39; Pecchioli Daddi and Polvani 1990: 75; García Trabazo 2002: 109.

space. The myth functioned by renewing the sacredness of the Hittite world in historical circumstances marked by intense military activities, hostile coalitions, and doubtful loyalties that threatened the integrity of the Hittite organization. I focused the attention on two different socio-historical situations: Arnuwanda I's reign, when the northern border was being threatened by the advance of the Kaška; and Šuppiluliuma I's reign, a time of expansion of the Hittite territory.

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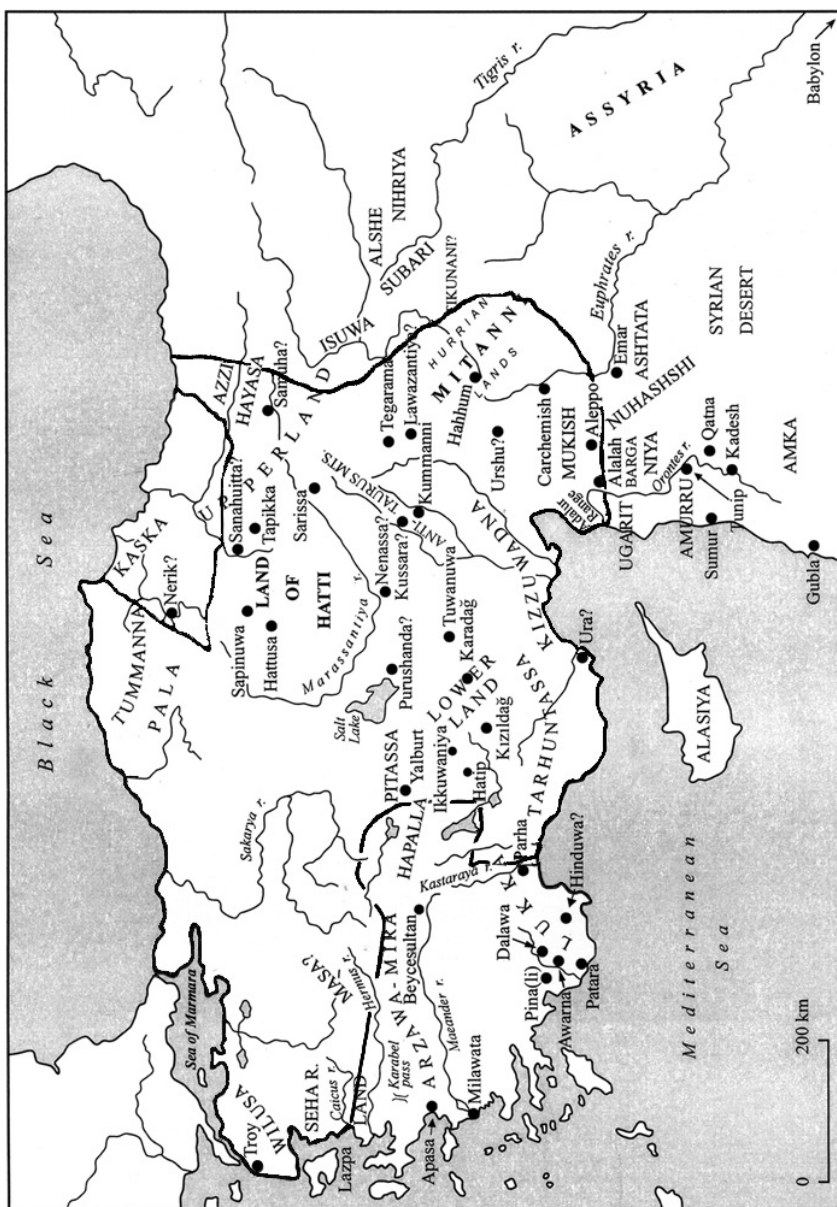


Figure 1. The Kingdom of the Hittites during Arnuwanda I's reign. (Based on Bryce 2005a: 42)

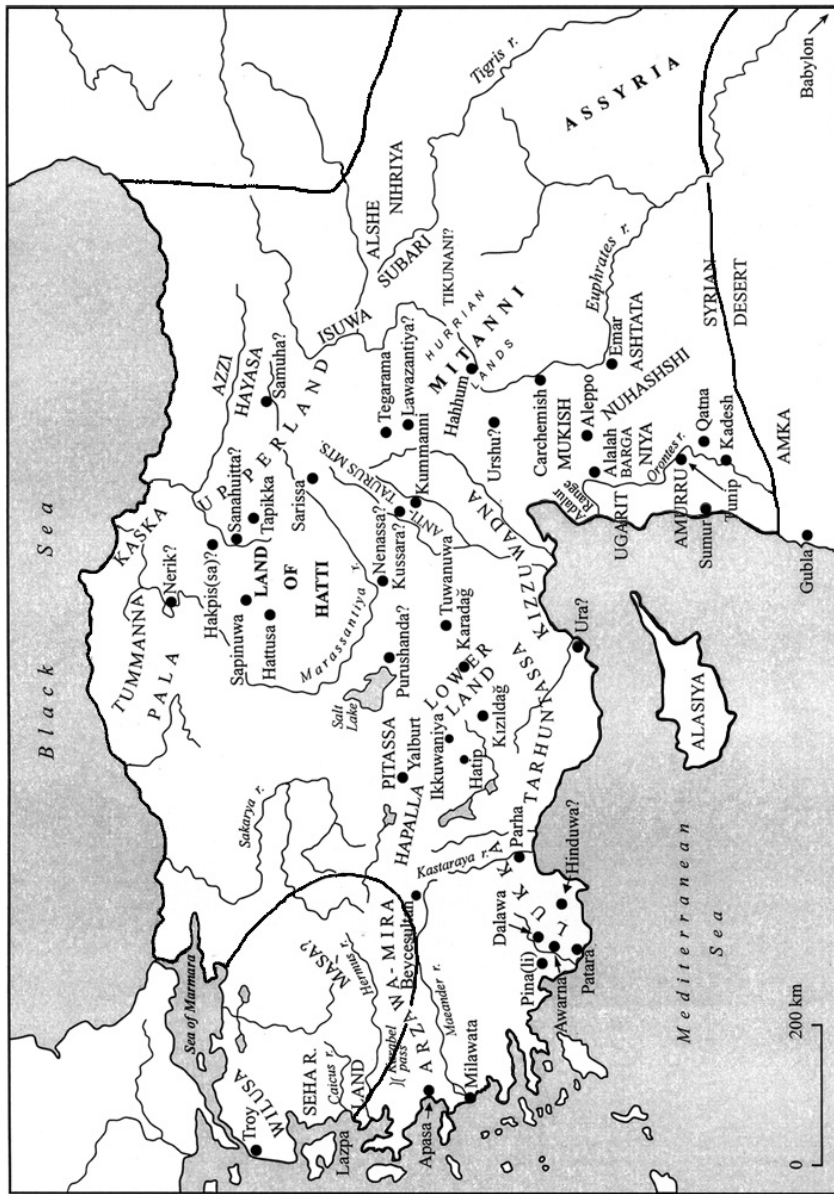


Figure 2. The Kingdom of the Hittites during Suppiluliuma I's reign. (Based on Bryce 2005a: 42)