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Religions  
of Second Millennium Anatolia

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## PREFACE

My studies on Hittite religion have brought me to the conclusion that discrepancies existing between earlier views concern not only the identity of particular deities and the nature of their cult, but also the rather more fundamental question of why Hittite religion changed so radically under the Empire. Several issues remain to be analyzed for a better understanding of the religions of Hittite Anatolia and their development, but even so, recent progress in the field merits a review of the extended source base, which includes relevant, newly published texts and fresh studies on specific issues. I have put it to myself to evaluate the new propositions and to offer a synthesis of my own views on the subject. The present book is the effect of that work. I am fully aware that definite answers to many questions are still lacking. Neither can I presume to gain full approval of most Hittitologists for all the views presented here. In particular, the opinion that a new dynasty originating from a strongly Hurrianized Kizzuwatnean milieu seized power in Ḫattuša at the outset of the Empire period still finds many opponents. In my view, however, it was this fact that determined the new cultural image of Hittite Anatolia and with it the change that occurred in the official pantheon and cult of the Hittite state.

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by reading and commenting on parts of the manuscript. Needless to say, I alone am responsible for the views expressed here.

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Piotr Taracha  
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## INTRODUCTION

For the scholar of antiquity Asia Minor, also called Anatolia, is a fascinating region. Civilizations have been born and have flourished here since the Neolithic Age. Their expansion, resulting from migrations and the transfer of cultural values, has contributed to the Neolithization of prehistoric Europe and has had an overwhelming impact on the formation of Bronze Age culture in Crete, as well as the Mycenaean and Greek world which grew out of it, later determining the cultural face of Graeco-Roman antiquity. In the first millennium BC, the greatest accomplishments of Babylonian civilization followed the road from Mesopotamia to the Aegean to reach the Greeks. Asia Minor, which lay on this route, did not just act as an intermediary in the process of transferring the ideas of the East; it actually shaped this process, contributing much of its own. Not the least in the sphere of religion.

This presentation of the most ancient Anatolian beliefs needs a brief introduction. The religions of Asia Minor were formed in the realm of the Ancient Near East where the personification and anthropomorphization of divinities had been going on ever since the Neolithic. Beliefs typical of primitive societies, characterized by animism, fetishism, totemism and primitive magic, were transformed as a result of these processes into a polytheistic religion. Being one of the important regions of Neolithic development, Anatolia played a significant role in this process, the origins of which can be perceived in the way Neolithic communities grasped the essence of divinity, still far distant from the might of the later gods. Social changes were of intrinsic importance for the development of this process, as much as the ever strong belief of ancient man, deriving from prehistoric magic, in the uniformity and interrelation of everything that exists. The question is, however, why man created gods in his own image. Mainly because it was a way of taming the incomprehensible and dangerous in the world around him. Man sought in the gods a partner to negotiate with, according to the *do ut des* principle – influence their decisions with appropriate gifts, curry favor and protection, appease anger. The *do ut des* principle lies at the root of

the practice of offering sacrifices to the gods.<sup>1</sup> Ancestor cult also goes back to the earliest times. Undoubtedly derived from pre-Neolithic tradition, this cult drew from a belief in the afterlife and was expressed in part by special treatment of mortal remains of the dead members of a community or family and the burial place. Images of the deceased were prepared and rites, including sacrifices, celebrated in their honor.

Contact with the gods was facilitated by their humanized appearance. Divinities were given material form – as an idol, figurine or statue – and they had need for a home – a shrine. Later (but not before the developed Chalcolithic), the gods took power over man and the world. They began to be perceived as creators and guardians of the cosmic order, determining the course of events in nature and in the life of every man. Like the earthly rulers, they demanded daily service provided by priests within the frame of a regularly celebrated cult, as well as homage expressed in hymns and prayer. The latter, frequently enriched with a hymnal part, was intended as a means of persuading the gods to man's point of view and inducing them to fulfill his or her needs and expectations.

The anthropomorphization of divinities is a trait characteristic of civilizations of the Ancient Near East. Consequently, the appearance of anthropomorphic cults in Europe should be considered the effect of Near Eastern influence. At the same time, the anthropomorphization determined the polytheistic nature of religion. The gods divided among themselves power over the cosmos, underworld, elements and forces of nature and the various spheres of man's life. This was also reflected in the hierarchic pantheon structure modeled on contemporary social relations. With the emergence of bigger political entities in the Ancient Near East, the position of a divinity was often decided by the political situation. Anatolia in Hittite times is an excellent example. The pantheon of the capital Ḫattuša, which also incorporated the divinities of the traditional 'holy cities' and more important local centers, became the state pantheon and the gods standing at its head were charged with protection of the king and kingdom.

In the earliest, pre-religion times, man's attitude to phenomena of nature and supernatural forces was expressed primarily in magical thinking. It does not mean that magic lost importance with the emergence of polytheistic religion. The gods were

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1 The concept of personification and anthropomorphization of the gods in the Ancient Near East has been propounded by M. Popko, whom I am grateful to for inspiring scholarly discussion.

included in magical rites. Summoned by appropriate spells and practices, they were present physically, often in the shape of figurines made for a given occasion. Mythological incantation brought them onto the stage of events and involved them in the action. The psychological factor was undoubtedly of considerable importance. In the participants' view, magic done parallel in the world of the gods reinforced the effectiveness of the rites. Under such circumstances, new mythological themes tended to emerge *ad hoc*. The Anatolian myths of which we have knowledge were inextricably connected with ritual and their development into literary compositions had only just begun.

In the Ancient Near Eastern attitude to the gods, cult and magic are not always exactly distinguishable. The respective rituals were complementary and were intended as a means and a way of contacting the gods and influencing their decisions. Celebrating divine cult was tantamount to regular service, both everyday and during festivals taking place in accordance with a calendar cycle or being addressed to a given divinity. Magical practices, bolstered by the power of incantations which were ordinarily accompanied by sacrifices to the gods, were kept for emergency situations, in the face of danger or disaster, when appropriate magic techniques and insistent persuasion in the form of spells, appropriate 'compensation' and sacrifices were supposed to induce and even force the gods to change their decision or to take a positive one in specific matters. It is natural that magic played a particularly significant role in everyday life.

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Much has been written on the subject of Hittite religion. Pioneering studies appeared in the 1930s.<sup>2</sup> Emanuel Laroche's *Recherches sur les noms des dieux hittites* was of prime importance for further studies.<sup>3</sup> Later discussions of Hittite religion range from brief encyclopedic items to comprehensive monographs.<sup>4</sup>

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2 Götze 1933: 122ff.; Delaporte 1936: 241ff.; Furlani 1936. Cf. also R. Dussaud apud Dhorme – Dussaud 1945: 333ff.

3 Laroche 1946-1947.

4 See, e.g., Güterbock 1950; 1964b; Gurney 1952: 132ff.; 1977; Otten 1964; Vieyra 1970; di Nola 1971; Hartmann 1972; Kümmel 1973a; Ringgren 1979: 185ff.; Oelsner 1984; Ebach 1986; Hoffner 1987a; 1989; Beckman 1989; Laroche 1991; Gonnet 1992; Pecchioli Daddi – Polvani 1994; Bryce 2002: 134ff.; Beckman 2003-2005b; 2005a; 2007; Collins 2007: 157ff.; Taracha 2008c.

The 1990s saw two monographic studies on Hittite religion written by eminent scholars. In 1994 Volkert Haas published his monumental *Geschichte der hethitischen Religion*. This exhaustive study collected valuable information on different categories of gods, pantheons and cults, but it was criticized by reviewers for what seems to be a lack of clear focus on the Hittite sources themselves for an understanding of Hittite religion and its temporal development.<sup>5</sup> Maciej Popko's *Religions of Asia Minor*, which came out in 1995, presents an innovative approach, discussing the changes in Hittite religion from a historical point of view, according to the common division into three main periods: Old Hittite, Middle Hittite and Empire.<sup>6</sup> These two monographs have remained a principal source of knowledge on Hittite religion for the past decade or so. Meanwhile the past ten years have seen a rapid flow of studies on specific issues,<sup>7</sup> as well as further monographs, the most important one being Ben van Gessel's richly informative *Onomasticon of the Hittite Pantheon*,<sup>8</sup> an indispensable tool for present and future scholars of Anatolian religions in Hittite times. Synthetic approaches to a study of Luwian<sup>9</sup> and Hurrian<sup>10</sup> beliefs should also be noted.

Any religious development, whether of local or state pantheons, as well as changes of cult, should be perceived as a dynamic process and as such, treated from a diachronic point of view. This book has therefore been structured after Popko's *Religions* with the reservation that the only break that exists in Hittite history and the history of Hittite religion in particular is the break between the Old Hittite and the Empire period.<sup>11</sup> Chapter one, which essentially expands on this Introduction, sketches the roots of Anatolian beliefs and religious systems from the earliest times through the beginning of the historical age at the outset of the second millennium BC. Thereby, it was deemed necessary for a better understanding of the later religions of Hittite Anatolia to outline in brief the processes of the embodiment of the gods, the

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5 Haas 1994a. See also reviews of Haas's book by Popko 1995b; Beckman 1997a; Hoffner 1997b.

6 Popko 1995a.

7 All new literature could be incorporated into the text of this book until April 2008.

8 van Gessel 1998.

9 Hutter 2003.

10 Trémouille 1999a; 2000a.

11 A further division of the Empire period into Middle and New Hittite is based on linguistic periodization and changing graphic customs; hence it does not contribute to defining historical periods. See, e.g., Archi 2003.



emergence of anthropomorphic cults and the beginnings of polytheism. The author has deliberately avoided discussing developments in Anatolian religions after the fall of the Hittite Empire (their presentation in Popko's monographic study has lost nothing of its value), even though he has on occasion included information concerning the worship of particular gods at a later time, well in the first millennium BC. In this book, he has set himself the primary purpose of painting the complexity of the beliefs in the multi-ethnic and multi-cultural environment of Hittite Anatolia and tracing the interpenetration and translatability of different religious and cult traditions. Finally, he has sought the principles determining the structure of both the official and local pantheons and analyzed the impact that the religious policies of a new dynasty of kings in the Empire period had on their emergence and subsequent development.