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Water and the Gods:
Ponds and Fountains in the Hittite State Cult
according to Hittite Textual Evidence¹

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In the Hittite cuneiform texts, water is considered to be an agent of purification; it is used both for sprinkling and bathing during rituals.² The sacred character of water is also attested, since watercourses and springs are divinized and worshipped as members of the Anatolian pantheons.³ Water deities are numerous in Hittite Anatolia, as are watercourses and springs in the Anatolian landscape.

Bodies of water are also used in divination. This is the case of the *altanni*-pond in which ichthyomantic inquiries are performed.⁴ River ordeals are also attested: the River god judges someone's innocence or guilt.⁵ In the present study, yet another aspect of water will be examined, namely the functions of ponds and fountains in the Hittite state cult according to Hittite cuneiform texts. Four main aspects will be explored more specifically: I) ponds and fountains as places for purification; II) ponds and fountains of the gods; III) ponds and fountains as places for sacrifices both in ritual and cultic contexts; IV) ponds and fountains as places for cultic events.

Before entering into details, preliminary remarks on the Hittite vocabulary of still water are in order. Four keywords will be studied in context:

- 1) the logogram TÚL which can be translated as “spring”, “fountain” or “pond”. This logogram is the most frequent in the Hittite texts.
- 2) The hittite *luli*- which mainly designates a lake or a pond.⁶

¹ This study is a philological supplement to the article I co-wrote with Dr. Y. Erbil (Erbil and Mouton 2012). I have added many extracts of Hittite texts thanks to my extensive use of the files of the Akademie der Wissenschaften of Mainz in November 2017. My thanks go to Pr. D. Schwemer and Pr. G. Müller, as well as to Dr. C. Steitler and Dr. S. Košak, for granting me access to their files. I have personally collated all the extracts I quote in this study, either from the 3D or from the 2D online photographs of the *Konkordanz* website (S. Košak, hethiter.net/: hetkonk (v. 1.97)).

² Mouton 2012, 80; Murat 2012.

³ Haas 1994, 464-465.

⁴ Lefèvre-Novaro and Mouton 2008.

⁵ Laroche 1973.

⁶ *CHD* L-N, 80-82.

3) The hittite *wattaru-* which can be translated as “spring” or “fountain”. *wattaru-* can be accompanied by the divine determinative; there is at least one attestation of a priest of the deity Wattaru.⁷ A *wattaru-* can be located in the immediate proximity of a temple, as a passage in a text describing the *purulli*-festival shows:

“The *fountain* (hitt. *wattaru-*) which (is) near the gate of the *hešta*-temple ...”⁸

4) The hittite *altanni-*. This term is less frequent.⁹ It is mainly associated with ichthyomancy, hence its probable translation as “pond”, although other meanings might also occur here and there.

The logogram TÚL seems to render all the Hittite terms listed here.

Because of the nebulous character of this Hittite vocabulary, the terms “pond”, “fountain” and “spring” will be in italics in my translations, as they are hypothetical by nature. The ambiguity of the selected keywords should be kept in mind. I suspect that such an ambiguity might have been maintained intentionally in the Hittite language; a fountain could easily be considered a spring embedded in an architectural edifice.

An invocation addressed to the Storm god of the city of Nerik enumerates three categories of water sources as divine passageways: a watercourse, the sea, and a body of still water:

“Come from the Mar[aššant]a river (or) from the bank of the Zumazuwanta stream!
Come from the city of Zalpa, from the sea! Come from the *spring* (log. TÚL) of Nerik,
your beloved (city)!”¹⁰

In a prayer of the Great King Muwatalli II, other water sources are listed:

“If, Storm god, my Lord, mountains, watercourses, *ponds* (hitt. *altanni-*), *springs* (log. TÚL), *šayatti-s* of the land angered (you), [n]ow, may the gods of the netherworld reconcile the Storm god with the mountains, the watercourses, the *ponds* (hitt. *altanni-*), the *springs* (log. TÚL)!”¹¹

Hitt. *šayati-* which is preceded by the TÚL determinative is a *hapax legomenon*. For this reason, we cannot determine whether it designates a particular type of body of still water or a

⁷ Bo 2689 ii 24: van Gessel 1998, 560.

⁸ KUB 30.32 i 14 (Haas and Wäfler 1976, 96): *wattaru kuit* ^É*heštāš āški*.

⁹ *HW*² A, 62-63.

¹⁰ KUB 36.90+ Rev. 29'-32' (Rieken *et al.* 2016a, § 4'): [*arh*]a ¹⁷Mar[aššant]aza ¹⁷Zumazuwantaza wappuwaza ehu ^{URU}Zalpaz arunaza ehu *IŠTU* TÚL ^{URU}Nerik tuedaz āššiyandaz ehu.

¹¹ KBo 11.1 Obv. 29-30 (Rieken *et al.* 2016b, § 5): *mān=ma=kan* ^DU=*ma* EN=*YA* HUR.SAG^{MEŠ}-*uš* I₇^{MEŠ}-*uš* *altannuš* TÚL^{HÁ} TÚL^{TÚL}*šayattiuš* KUR-*eaš* TUKU.TUKU-*nuan harkanzi* [*ki*]nun=*a* DINGIR^{MEŠ} ^DA.NUN.NA.KE₄ ^DU-*an ANA* HUR.SAG^{MEŠ} {*A*} I₇^{MEŠ} *altanniaš* TÚL^{HÁ} *menahhanda takšulāndu*.

toponym. The first interpretation seems slightly more plausible to me, because ^{TÚL}*šayati-* is not repeated in the second enumeration of this extract, as if it were included in the broader category of the TÚL. The *altanni-pond* is also distinguished from the other types of bodies of still water in this extract.

I. Ponds and Fountains as Places of Purification

Hittite religious texts insist on the purificatory power of water, be it running or still, as is the case in a ritual for the purification of a house, in which an incantation states:

“She has spoken to the *springs* (log. TÚL) (...). She has spoken to Bitin[hi], the deity of water (in those terms): ‘Give me the water for which I came, (namely) the water of purification which purifie[s] blood(shed and) perjury (...)!’”¹²

Several texts mention water drawn from a fountain(?) among the ritual paraphernalia, like in the following fragment of a ritual text:

“[...] a jug of water of the *fountain* (hitt. *wattaru-*)”¹³

It is possible that this water was used for purification during the ritual.

A text that describes a Kizzuwatnian month festival of Ištar of Niniveh includes the following sequence:

“The AZU-ritual practitioner takes the goddess. Then, the queen washes the goddess with water (a duplicate adds: of seven *fountains* (hitt. *wattaru-*)) that they had (drawn) with seven jugs.”¹⁴

Seven fountains(?) are also mentioned in the text of the ritual of Palliya, King of Kizzuwatna:

“He took the water of purity from seven *fountains* (log. TÚL) of the city of Lawazantiya.”¹⁵

¹² KBo 10.45+ ii 30-32 (Otten 1961, 124): TÚL-*aš memiešta* (...) bitin[hi?] A-*aš DINGIR-LIM-ni memiešta A-ni=wa kuedani uwanu[n] nu=wa=mu apāt wātar pešten parkunummaš=wa [k]uiš uitenanza ešhar NĪŠ DINGIR-LIM parkunu[zi]*.

¹³ KBo 47.201 left col. 9’ (Groddek 2011, 158): [...]x ^{DUG}HAB.HAB *wattarwaš wātar*. See also KBo 24.12 i 6 (Görke 2016, § 2): *wattarui wātar hā[ni]* “She (i.e., the ritual practitioner) dr[aws] water in the *fountain*.”

¹⁴ KUB 27.16 i 22’-29’ and duplicate KBo 40.34+:4’-11’ (Beckman 2015, 45-46, § 4’): *nu* ^{LÚ}AZU DINGIR-LAM *dāi nu wātar* (dupl. adds: [Š]A 7 *watru*) *kuit IŠTU 7* ^{DUG}KUKUB *harkanzi nu MUNUS.LUGAL DINGIR-[(LAM)] apēz uetenaz* (dupl. *uiten[az]*) *ārri*.

¹⁵ KUB 7.20 Obv. 4-5 and duplicates KBo 9.115(+) i 3-4 and KBo 14.125(+) Obv. 3-5 (Beckman 2013, 115, § 2): *IŠTU 7 TÚL*^{HÁ} (dupl. TÚL^{MEŠ}) *šehelliya uidā[(r)]* (dupl. *uedār*) ŠA ^{URU}Lawazzantiya (dupl. ^{URU}Lawazzantiya) *d[(āš)]*.

Similarly to what happens during the month festival of Ištar of Niniveh, during Palliya's ritual, the statue of the Storm god of the city of Kummanni is bathed with the water of purity that was drawn from seven distinct water sources. In these last two extracts, water drawn from fountains(?) has the power to purify a divine image.

II. Ponds and Fountains of the Gods

Several Hittite texts allude to the special connection of a fountain(?) with a particular deity. This is the case in the following conjurations for the benefit of the Hittite Great King:

“The *fountain* (hitt. *wattaru-*) of the [S]un deity came (to be made). How (was it) [made]? It (was) built in stone from top to bottom, (its) *pond* (hitt. *luli-*) (was) cover[ed of ...]. Leopards guard it. Its water flows from the *pond* (hitt. *luli-*) [...]. May the pebbles (of this *fountain*) protect Lab[arn]a (i.e., the Hittite Great King), the [Ki]ng! May he becom[e] iron of the Sun deity! § They make the *fountain* (hitt. *wattaru-*) of the Storm god. How (was) the *fountain* (hitt. *wattaru-*) made? It (was) built with copper, it (was) roughcasted with *arzila-*, it (was) covered with iron. (Then), the mother of the Storm god went [do]wn (there) for the second time. They sat down. For the Storm god, she (is) his mother, but for [Lab]arna she (is) his bond. (These are) the words of the pebbles (of the *fountain*). (It is) finished.”¹⁶

This text is a combination of conjurations and mythological narratives, hence its complexity. It shows that some man-made bodies of water were closely associated with specific deities.¹⁷ The association of these places with royal ideology is also clear. Such is also the case of the Eflatunpinar cultic complex,¹⁸ which could very well be the fountain of a particular god, maybe a Storm god. Indeed, the statues of bulls that flanked the pond of the Eflatunpinar complex associate that pond with such a god. Maybe similar conjurations were uttered during cult festivals at the Eflatunpinar complex whenever the Hittite Great King was present in the

¹⁶ KBo 21.22 :36-45 (Archi 1979, 46-47 and Kellerman 1978, 200 and 202): ^D[U]TU-waš wattaru uit n=at māhh[an iyan] kattašara=at=kan NA₄-ta uedan iškiy[an ...] luli-[...] n=at paršanieš pāhšanta wātar=šed=a=kan [...]ūliaz arašzi n=an pahhašnuandu Lab[arn]an [LUG]AL-un paššileš n=aš ^DUTU-wa<š> AN.BAR kišar[u] § ^DIM-aš wattaru ianzi nu=wa wattaru māhhan iyan kunnanit=at uedan arzilit=at haniššān AN.BAR=at iškiyan n=ašta ^DIM-naš tān annaš[=š]iš [katt]anta pait n=at=za ešat ^DIM-ni=aš AMA=ŠU [Lab]arni=ma=aš išheššaš=šit AWĀT^{NA₄}paššilaš QATI.

¹⁷ A mythological text also mentions three fountains(?) built for a mother-goddess: CTH 336.2 (Rieken *et al.* 2009a, § 6’”).

¹⁸ Erbil and Mouton 2012, 67-70.

context of a royal pilgrimage.¹⁹ The association between a fountain or a spring and a Storm god is also attested in the prayer of Muwatalli II:

“If someone has knocked down the throne of the Storm god (or his) *huwaši*-stone, or if someone has plugged (his) sacred *fountain* (log. TÚL), [...] I will put this back in order.”²⁰

Water of a spring or a fountain is sometimes described as *šuppi*- “sacred”, as in the following passage of a mythological narrative:

“The queen [brought] sac[red w]ater from a *fountain* (hitt. *wattaru*-) [and] she poured [it] above (the hearth).”²¹

III. Ponds and Fountains as Places for Sacrifices

Due to their special connection to particular deities, ponds and fountains are often places where sacrifices took place. As an illustration of such a phenomenon, the text of the Kizzuwatnian ritual of Ammihatna states:

“He (i.e., the ritual practitioner) goes to the watercourse. He breaks two loaves of flat bread and then throws them into the watercourse. He takes two jugs of wine and then he makes libations into (the watercourse) with the two jugs of wine. Afterward, he takes two *hakkunna*-vessels of fine oil, and then he makes a little bit (of it) drip into the watercourse.”²²

Still water receives various offerings to be transmitted to the gods. The extract quoted above refers to bread, wine and fine oil. Other texts mention animal sacrifices that occur above a pond, for instance,²³ and a Kizzuwatnian ritual text mentions seven springs(?) both as recipients of bread sacrifices and as passageways through which the cedar-gods could be

¹⁹ See also Erbil and Mouton 2012, 70.

²⁰ KBo 11.1 Obv. 40-41 (Rieken *et al.* 2016b, § 7): *mān* ^{GIŠ}GU.ZA ^{DU} NA⁴ZI.KIN *kuiški katta laknut našma=kan šuppa TÚL kuiški šahta nu?* [...] *n=at EGIR-pa SIG₅-ahmi*.

²¹ FHG 2+ iii 23'-24' (Rieken *et al.* 2009b, § 6'): [*udaš=ka*]n *wattarwaš* MUNUS.LUGAL-*aš šu*[*ppi w*]ātar [*n=at=š*]an *šer lāhuwaš*.

²² KBo 5.2 i 46-51 (Strauss 2006, 222): *n=aš=kan I₇-i parā paizzi nu 2 NINDA.SIG paršiya n=at=kan I₇-i anda pešiyazzi nu 2* ^{DUG}KUKUB GEŠTIN *dāi nu=kan IŠTU 2* ^{DUG}KUKUB GEŠTIN *anda šipanti namma Ì.DÙG.GA 2* ^{DUG}*hakkunnauš dāi n=ašta I₇-i anda tepu zappanuzzi*.

²³ Erbil and Mouton 2012, 70.

attracted.²⁴ The fact that bodies of running and still water are viewed as passageways into the realm of the gods is illustrated by several Hittite texts.²⁵ For instance, the ritual of purification of a house that was already quoted above states:

“I, the mortal, came to the riverbanks in order to call the ancient gods.”²⁶

Another example is in the so-called ritual of Kizzuwatna:

“Afterward, [they] attrac[t] the deity through the watercourse. Among (other things), [he (i.e., the ritual practitioner)] prepare[s] the following for the watercourse: he breaks seven loaves of flat bread and he libate[s] wine. Afterward, [they] bur[n] three birds (...).”²⁷

IV. Ponds and Fountains as Places for Cultic Events

In cultic contexts, the Hittite king and queen were not the only ones to perform ritual and cultic acts near a water source. Priests, and more specifically *šankunni*-priests, also appear in these environments, as is the case in the following sequence of a cultic festival:

“In front of the *fountain* (log. TÚL), (but) far removed, they cut their heads (i.e., of sacrificial animals). The *šankunni*-priest(s) sprinkle water over them. The young men wash themselves in front of the same *fountain* (log. TÚL), (while) they (i.e., the *šankunni*-priests) sprinkle water over them.”²⁸

A cult inventory describes a Spring festival performed in honor of a divinized fountain(?):

“A statue: a seated woman (of) iron. The great *fountain* (log. TÚL). My Sun (i.e., the Hittite Great King) made (her). They bring (her) to the temple of the Storm god. § When they celebrate the Spring festival for the great *fountain* (log. TÚL), they wash (themselves). The *šankunni*-priest [washes himself], they wash the goddess. They clean the *fountain* (log. TÚL). The *šankunni*-priest takes the goddess from (before) the altar and he carries her outside the te[mple]. He brings the goddess to the *fountain* (log. TÚL).

²⁴ Erbil and Mouton 2012, 61.

²⁵ See other examples in Erbil and Mouton 2012, 70.

²⁶ KUB 10.45+ i 52'-53' and duplicates KUB 41.8+ i 22'-23' and KBo 55.46 i 5' (Otten 1961, 120): *U DUMU.LÚ.U19.LU [(wappuw)]aš karuiliyaš DINGIR^{MEŠ}-aš kalleššuwanz[i] uwanun.*

²⁷ KBo 27.193+ iii 48-52 (Ünal 2017, § 18'): *EGIR=ŠU=ma DINGIR-LAM IŠTU I7 SUD-a[nzi] ŠÀ.BA ANA I7 kiššan hant[ezzi] 7 NINDA.SIG paršiya GEŠTIN=ya šipant[i] namma 3 MUŠEN (...) wa[rnuwanzi].*

²⁸ KUB 58.60 vi 1-10 (García Trabazo and Groddek 2005, 158; *CHD* Š, 431): *n=aš=kan PANI TÚL EGIR-pa tūwa SAG.DU^{MEŠ}=ŠU kuranzi LÚSANGA=ma=aš=kan wātar šer arha pappar<r>aššanzi LÚ.MEŠGURUŠ=<š>maš PANI TÚL=pat arranzi watar=ma=aš=kan šer [a]rha papparšanzi[i].*

They set the goddess in front of the *fountain*. The *šankunni*-priest dedicate[s] a sheep to the great *fountain* (log. TÚL) and they slaughter it in the *fountain* (log. TÚL). They take the consecrated meat cuts. Six loaves of *da[nnā]*-bread, a bowl of beer. They break thick bread on the altar, they empty a rhy[ton]. Two *SŪTU*-measures of flour, four jugs of beer to provide. They drink, [they eat]. They provide cups. The *hazqara*-women bring fruit(s); they crown the goddess with a garland. People wear garlands; they give big and small cattle. They press cheese, they place (it) in front of the goddess [and they also give (some) to the] people. They entertain the goddess. The [*hazqara*]-women carry the goddess back to the temple. They set (her back in front of) the altar. They break two loaves of bread of a handful (and) they libate beer. § [T]otal: a sheep, two *SŪTU*-measures of flour, five jugs of beer: the city [gives] (them for) the Spring festival.”²⁹

Another cult inventory describes an analogous ceremony, only this time the preserved part of the text does not specify whether this other ceremony is also performed in honor of a divinized fountain or spring:

“The next day, they bring the deity down to the *pond* (hitt. TÚL-*altanni*-). They bring thick bread (and) pithoi in front of [*the pond*]. The *hazqara*-women walk behind (in procession). They wash the deity in front of the *pond* (log. TÚL). In front of the altar, they remove [the deity’s] dress. They dedicate a sheep. On the altar, [...]. The *hazqara*-women go to the fruit(s); they bring flower(s). They cook [...] (and) they place the consecrated meat cuts. [They] break the thick bread into the pithoi. They place *marha*- and *ippiya*-foodstuffs (and) [they empty] rhytons. They pour *groats* into the *pond* (log. TÚL). [...] Three *SŪTU*-measures of flour, two jugs of beer to provide. [They] drink,

²⁹ KUB 17.35 iii 23-38 (Archi 1973, 23): 1 ALAM¹ MUNUS TUŠ=za AN.BAR TÚL GAL ^DUTU-ŠI DŪ-at ŠÀ É.DINGIR-LIM ^{DU} pedanzi § mān ANA TÚL GAL EZEN₄ TEŠI DŪ-anzi ŠE.NAGA-zi ^{LŪ}SANGA-za [ŠE.NAGA-zi] DINGIR-LUM ŠE.NAGA-zi TÚL=kan šarā šanhanzi ^{LŪ}SANGA=kan DINGIR-LUM TA ^{GIŠ}ZAG.GAR.RA ME-i n=an=kan TA É.[DINGIR-LIM] parā udai nu DINGIR-LUM INA TÚL pēdai DINGIR-LUM P[ANI TÚL] taninuwanzi nu=kan ^{LŪ}SANGA 1 UDU ANA TÚL GAL BAL-[ti] ŠÀ TÚL=an=kan hukanzi šuppa tianzi 6 ^{NINDA}da[nnāš] 1 ^{DUG}huppar KAŠ INA ^{GIŠ}ZAG.GAR.RA NINDA.GUR₄.RA paršianzi BI[BRU=kan] šunnanzi 2 BĀN ZĪ.DA 4 DUG KAŠ aššanumaš NAG-zi [GU₇-zi] GAL^{HA}=kan aššanuwanzi MUNUS.MEŠ haziqarā GURUN uda[nzi] DINGIR-LUM GILIM-anzi UN^{MEŠ}-na=za GILIM-izzi GU₄ UDU pišqa[nzi] GA.KIN.AK¹ dammaššanzi PANI DINGIR-LIM tianzi UN^{IM}[EŠ=ni=ya pianzi] DINGIR-LUM=ma=aš=kan duškanzi DINGIR-LUM INA É.DINGIR-LIM MUNUS.MEŠ[haziqarā] arha pēdanzi ^{GIŠ}ZAG.GAR.RA taninuwanzi 2 NINDA UPNI paršianzi KAŠ BAL-anzi § [Š]U.NIGIN 1 UDU 2 BĀN ZĪ.DA 5 DUG KAŠ 1 EZEN₄ TEŠI URU-aš [peškezzi].

they eat]. They entertain the deity. In the eveni[ng], they carry [the deity] away; [they] set (it back) near the altar.”³⁰

Hittite texts attest that ponds and fountains are places where ritual and cultic events occur. This can be explained by the numerous virtues of water in the eyes of the ancient Anatolians: water washes body and spirit, in other words, it purifies those who need to rid themselves of impurity. As water is contained in natural or artificial holes in the ground, it connects the world of men with the invisible realm of the gods and spirits. As such, bodies of both running and still water are used as passageways into the other world and as receptacles for the gods at the same time. Gods can actually reach the world of men through water sources.³¹ This in turn explains the divine character of all bodies of water in the Hittite religion; similar to mountains or even to the Dark Earth (the Hittite name for the netherworld, and also the ground itself),³² they are not mundane elements of the topography, but rather divine intermediaries between mortals and their other gods.

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³⁰ KBo 26.182 i 7-17 (Hazenbos 2003, 69): [I]ukat=ma=kan DINGIR-LUM TÚLaldaniya GAM petanzi NINDA.GUR₄.RA DUGharši PANI [TÚLaldani?] pē harkanzi EGIR-an MUNUS.MEŠhazgarai iyatari DINGIR-LUM=kan PANI TÚL-TI warpanzi PANI GIŠZAG.GAR.RA-ni [ANA DINGIR-LIM] TUG-TUM šer arha danzi nu=kan 1 UDU BAL-anzi GIŠZAG.GAR.RA-ni [...] MUNUS.MEŠhazgarai GURUN-i paizzi alil udanzi ...[...] zanuwanzi šuppa tianzi NINDA.GUR₄.RA GIŠharšiaš parši[anzi] marhan ippian tianzi BIBR[U^{HA}=kan šunnanzi] memal TÚL-TI GAM-anda šuhanzi [...] 3 BÁN ZÌ.DA 2 DUG KAŠ aššanumaš N[AG-zi GU₇-zi] DINGIR-LUM=ma=aš=kan duškanzi neku[z mehuni DINGIR-LAM] arha petanzi GIŠZAG.GAR.RA-ni tanin[uanzi].

³¹ See also Erbil and Mouton 2012, 60-63.

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