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## Gods in Wars: Divine Support and the Theological Justification of War in Ancient Anatolia and North Syria

Vladimir SAZONOV<sup>1</sup>, Joanna TÖYRÄÄNVUORI<sup>2</sup>

**Abstract.** *In this article, the authors examine the divine support and religious justification of wars by Anatolian and North Syrian rulers in the Late Bronze Age, an epoch of international diplomacy. Notable is that many wars and conflicts in the region of Anatolia and North Syria took place in this period, which may have occasioned an increasing need to justify them by appeal to divinities.*

**Rezumat.** *În acest articol, autorii analizează contribuția divină și motivarea religioasă a războaielor de către conducători anatoieni și din nordul Siriei în Epoca Târzie a Bronzului, o perioadă favorabilă diplomației internaționale. Un aspect notabil este faptul că multe din războaiele și conflictele din regiunea Anatoliei și a Siriei de Nord au avut loc în acest moment, ceea ce e posibil să fi creat o nevoie tot mai mare de a le justifica prin apelul la divinități.*

**Keywords:** *gods in war, justification of war, divine support, Anatolia, North Syria, Hittites, Ugarit, Alalakh.*

### Introduction

Divine support for a ruler by gods or supernatural forces and religious or theological justification of wars are found in all civilizations of the ancient world. In the ancient Near East, both phenomena – divine support and religious justification of war – were inextricably linked with royal power and religion. This is why the concept must be observed in the context of royal ideology and religion.<sup>3</sup> Different aspects of warfare<sup>4</sup>, divine support, and the theological justification of war in the Ancient Near East have all been discussed by several scholars.<sup>5</sup> As Peeter Espak correctly points out: “It can be stated that in Ancient Near Eastern, Old Testament and later Christian understanding, religious warfare or the theology of war was mostly in service to a desired political goal. When there was a political need to attack someone, theological reasoning was used to justify, explain or motivate the war.”<sup>6</sup>

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<sup>3</sup> FRANKFORT 1948; ANNUS 2002; ESPAK 2015; BOTTÉRO 2001; JOHANDI 2019.

<sup>4</sup> see e.g., HAMBLIN 2006; WINTER 1985, 11–32; WINTER 1986, 205–212; MANDER 2016; SAZONOV, LAHE 2021.

<sup>5</sup> KANG 1989; ODED 1992; FALES 2000, 35–62; MAYER 2001, 123–133; BAHRANI 2008; SCHMITT 2011; ESPAK 2010, 52; 2011; SAZONOV 2016, 23–50; FINK 2011.

<sup>6</sup> ESPAK 2011, 127.

The first evidence of theology of war in the Ancient Near East dates from the Early Dynastic Sumerian ruler E-anatum (ruler of Lagaš, 25<sup>th</sup> century BCE), who tried to justify his military campaigns using divine forces in the E-anatum Stele (Stele of the Vultures). A later Neo-Sumerian text from Utu-hegal (the Victory of Utu-hegal) presents a more detailed communication of a ruler with several gods in their temples, asking for divine help in the context of a military campaign. The text consists of a series of communications between the ruler and the gods in their temples.<sup>7</sup>

In this article, we examine the divine support for and religious justification of wars by Anatolian and North Syrian rulers (Land of Hatti, Ugarit, Mukiš-Alalah, Aleppo etc.) in the Late Bronze Age (c. 1500–1150 BCE), which was an era of international diplomacy but also of many devastating wars in the region. Through a review of ancient mythological and political texts from the ambit of the Hittite Empire, we hope to demonstrate developments in the shared vocabulary of religious aspects of war (such as divine support for or justification of war, which are both often closely connected or even integrated) that evolved with the changing political circumstances in the Anatolian-Syrian region. Gods were associated with war in many ways in the ancient world, and this usually meant that they participated in the military activities of states, often providing help or support to the ruler and his army. Sometimes, rulers also tried to justify their military actions (wars, campaigns) through these divine forces. In some cases, we find divine intervention in military conflicts and wars.

In our article we attempt to show the development of the phenomenon of divine support and religious justification throughout the Late Bronze Age—from the Old Hittite period to the period of the New Kingdom—and to examine the differences between the Hittite mainland (core land) in South and East Anatolia and its vassal kingdoms in the North Syrian region. What changes in the divine justification of war can be observed across time? Are there any differences in the use of divine support for war in the core area of the Hittite empire and kingdoms in the wider Hittite ambit?

The written (cuneiform) sources analysed in this article are different in nature, origin, and genre and were composed in different periods of the II millennium BCE. Among them, there are Hittite historiographic texts written in Hittite such as *The Text of King Anitta* and several Hittite royal annals, not to mention documents such as vassal-treaties and religious texts like Hittite myths and Hittite prayers. Additionally, we discuss texts that were written in the Akkadian and Ugaritic languages in Ugarit and in other Syrian city-states of the II millennium, such as the Amarna letters, the Idrimi inscription, and the Ugaritic myths (e.g., the *Baal-Cycle*), etc. Our article proceeds by first discussing the appearance of divine support in Hittite texts

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<sup>7</sup> (SAZONOV 2016, 26; ESPAK 2013.

and its development over time, and then expands the discussion to include texts from the Hittite vassal states in the North Syrian area.

The texts in our article were examined using different combined methods of analysis, e.g., textual criticism, criticism of textual sources in Akkadian, Hittite, Ugaritic and other languages, philological analysis, historical critical analysis, diachronic and synchronic analysis. This combination of methods is useful for examining a wide variety of sources from different genres linked by a common theme, in this case that of divine support and the theological justification of war.

### The Text of King Anitta

At the beginning of Hittite historiography stands *The Text of King Anitta* (CTH 1).<sup>8</sup> *The Text of King Anitta* is a record of the conquests of king Anitta, the ruler of Neša.<sup>9</sup> In the introductory part of his text, Anitta emphasizes his close relation with the storm-god of heaven (<sup>d</sup>IM *šamê*) as did many subsequent Hittite kings (e.g., Ḫattušili I, Muršili II etc.). For example, in his annals, Hittite king Ḫattušili I emphasized his close relation not only to the sun-goddess of Arinna (<sup>d</sup>UTU <sup>URU</sup> ARINNA)<sup>10</sup>, calling himself “Beloved of the sun-goddess of Arinna”<sup>11</sup> but also to the sun-god of heaven (<sup>d</sup>UTU *šamê*) and to the storm-god.<sup>12</sup> Although one god (the storm god) is mentioned in the text of Anitta several times, we cannot find any real theological justification for Anitta’s actions, which consist of the conquest of Ḫattuša, Ullama, Ḫarkiuana, Wašḫaniya, Šalampa, Zalpuwa, Šalatiwara, and Purušḫanda. The only theological reference related to divine forces and divine support for Anitta is the note that Anitta “behaved in a manner pleasing to the storm god in heaven!”<sup>13</sup>, which must include the building of a temple for the storm-god of heaven (*ne-pi-is-za-as-ta* <sup>d</sup>IŠKUR-*un-ni*) by Anitta.<sup>14</sup> This is similar to the texts of several later Assyrian kings who integrated their building activity into the descriptions of their military campaigns<sup>15</sup>, for example, in RIMA 2, Tiglath-pileser I A.0.87.1, p. 29, viii 1–10: “The ḫamru-temple of the god Adad, my lord – which Šamši-Adad (III), vice-regent of Aššur, son of

<sup>8</sup> HOFFNER 1997; NEU 1974; WILHELM 2016; CARRUBA 2001; CARRUBA 2003; STARKE 1979; SAZONOV 2017.

<sup>9</sup> Neša (modern Kültepe, called *kārum* Kaneš in Old Assyrian sources) was the capital of the Hittite kingdom of Anitta (18<sup>th</sup> century BCE). Anitta’s father, Pithana, ruled the kingdom from Kussara and conquered Neša, and Anitta later made Neša his capital. Later in the 17<sup>th</sup> century BCE, the capital of the Old Hittite kingdom was Ḫattuša. Neša is the reason why the Hittites were called Nesili in Hittite texts.

<sup>10</sup> For more on the sun deities of the Hittites, see YOSHIDA 1996; STEITLER 2017.

<sup>11</sup> BECKMAN 2006b, 220, § 5 A i

<sup>12</sup> *Ibid.*, § 20, A iii 37’–42’.

<sup>13</sup> BECKMAN 2006a, 217

<sup>14</sup> *Ibid.*, 218, §14 A 55–56.

<sup>15</sup> HAAS 2006, 31

Išme-Dagan (II) (who was) also vice-regent of the god Aššur, had built – was dilapidated and in ruins. I delineated its site (and) rebuilt it from top to bottom with baked bricks. I adorned it and made it stronger than before. Inside, I offered pure sacrifices to the god Adad, my lord.” Both the building of palaces and the undertaking of military campaigns had to be sanctioned by the gods.<sup>16</sup>

### The Role of Divine Forces and Theological Justification in the Annals of Ḫattušili I

The earliest Hittite annals are *The Annals of Ḫattušili I* (a Hittite-Akkadian bilingual text, CTH 4). This text is preserved very well in an Akkadian copy (KBo 10.1), on a relatively well-preserved tablet (KBo 10.2) and in fragmentary form in four further manuscripts written in the Hittite language (KBo 10.3; KUB 23.41 (+) IBoT 3.134 (+) KUB 57.48 + VBoT 13, IBoT 4.264; KBo 50.198; KUB 23.20 (+) KUB 23.33 (+) KUB 40.6).<sup>17</sup> In this text, the sun-goddess of Arinna and some other gods are mentioned more often than in *the Text of King Anitta*. Ḫattušili I was the first among the Hittite kings to be called ‘Beloved of deity X’<sup>18</sup>, in this case the sun-goddess of Arinna. She held Ḫattušili I by the hand and ran before him in battle. This is a new motif for the Hittites, and it reappears in later Hittite annals (e.g., by Muršili II).<sup>19</sup> In *The Annals of Ḫattušili I*, Ḫattušili I mentions capturing several cities, some of which were burned and destroyed but only with the permission or by order of the sun-goddess of Arinna. For example, in the 4<sup>th</sup> year of his annals, Ḫattušili declares: “[Then] I destroyed [it] in the sixth month. I, the Great King, was satisfied. The sun-god appeared in the midst of the lands. The manly deeds that [I ....] I took to the sun-goddess of Arinna”.<sup>20</sup>

Ḫattušili I mentions several times that he took over the deities of conquered cities: “[I took] its deities: the storm-god, Lord of (Mt.) Amaruk, the storm-god, Lord of Aleppo, Allatum, (Mt.) Adalur, Lelluri, 2 oxen of gold, 13 (!) statues of silver and gold, 2 model shrines, and a rear wall. And I plated it with silver and gold; and I plated the door with silver and gold”.<sup>21</sup>

Other gods are mentioned at the end of the text. When Ḫattušili I proudly declared that he destroyed Ḫaššuwa and Ḫaḥḥa, he displayed these actions to the gods: “But, I, The Great King, the Tabarna, destroyed Ḫaššuwa and Ḫaḥḥa, and [burned] them down with fire. I showed smoke to the sun-god of heaven and the storm-god. I hitched the king of Ḫaššuwa and the king of Ḫaḥḥa to a wagon”.<sup>22</sup> Ḫattušili I had already mentioned two gods – the sun-god of heaven

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<sup>16</sup> Cf. TÖYRÄÄNVUORI 2018, 54.

<sup>17</sup> BECKMAN 2009, 237.

<sup>18</sup> SAZONOV 2010, 23, 202; see also TÖYRÄÄNVUORI 2015.

<sup>19</sup> SAZONOV 2019, 76; BEAL 2003, 83.

<sup>20</sup> BECKMAN 2006b, 220, § 7; SAZONOV 2019, 68.

<sup>21</sup> BECKMAN 2006b, 21, § 11; see also SAZONOV 2019, 68.

<sup>22</sup> BECKMAN 2006b, 221, § 20.

and the storm-god – as supporting or helping his military campaigns and actions. In his annals, Ḫattušili I emphasizes his close relation not only to the sun-goddess of Arinna (<sup>d</sup>UTU <sup>URU</sup>ARINNA), calling himself “Beloved of the son-goddess of Arinna”<sup>23</sup>, but also to the sun-god of Heaven (<sup>d</sup>UTU *šamê*) and the storm-god, which is significantly different from the Anitta text composed a century earlier.

### **Divine Forces and Theological Justification in Hittite Prayers**

We have very few materials from prayers from the period of the Old Kingdom that represent elements of divine support and even less (if at all) that represent theological justification. There are a few prayers (CTH 371; CTH 389.2; CTH 385.10) that can be dated to the period of the Old Kingdom by their linguistic characteristics and thematic features, although they are preserved only in Middle or Late Hittite copies and versions.<sup>24</sup> Even these few prayers, which probably originated in the period of the Old Kingdom and are addressed to several gods, do not give us any further information about the theological justification of Hittite kings, but they definitely provide information about divine support to rulers. Hittite prayers are a good example, because they are a source that also displays the evolution of Hittite religion and royal ideology and reflects several changes that took place during the Middle Hittite period, as M. Popko remarks.<sup>25</sup>

Earlier in the Old Hittite period, prayer was represented very modestly, and prayers were akin to spells recited during magical rituals that contained benedictions for the king. Later, benedictions were more developed, such as the invocation to the sun-goddess of Arinna. We do not have many texts from the Middle Hittite period, but a few of them contain evidence that is related to the theology of war. This evidence is found in a few preserved prayers (probably Middle Hittite in origin) that were written in Middle Hittite ductus.<sup>26</sup> For example, in the prayer *Invocation of the Sun-god and the Storm-god against Slander* (CTH 389.2) we read: “You alone, O gods, have put the kingship in my hand. Mine is the entire land and its [popula]tion, and I govern it. He who is not respectful of the gods or is not respectful [of the kingship (?)], I will smash him, and [...] him. [Whoever uses] their evil mouth against me [before] the gods, [and whoever] carries [evil] on their lips”.<sup>27</sup> However, this is not real evidence for theology of war but an interesting passage that shows a ruler’s close ties with his gods and his readiness “to smash enemies” for the sake of these gods.

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<sup>23</sup> BECKMAN 2006b, 220, § 5 A i.

<sup>24</sup> SINGER 2002, 21.

<sup>25</sup> POPKO 1995, 102.

<sup>26</sup> SINGER 2002, 27.

<sup>27</sup> SINGER 2002, 24, § 3 obv. 11'-15'.

Another prayer, *Invocation of the Sun-goddess of Arinna for the Protection of the Royal Couple* (CTH 385.10), is more interesting and provides further relevant information on divine support in military conflict. It should be noted that this text is, in its style and form, typical of the cult of the Old Hittite period, and it “echoes the Old Hittite ideology of kingship”.<sup>28</sup> This text gives some information regarding the elements of an ideology of war that could even have originated in the Old Hittite period (although, there is no actual evidence of this), and in the part of this prayer that is a Hymn to the sun-goddess of Arinna, we find the following (§ 6 ii 4'-11'): “She [the sun-goddess of Arinna] gave them a battle-ready, valiant spear saying: ‘May the hostile foreign land perish by the hand of the labarna, and let them take goods, silver and gold to Ḫattusa and Arianna, the cities of the gods!’”<sup>29</sup>

### **New Kingdom Period: From Tudḫaliya I to Šuppiluliuma I**

During the New Kingdom Period, Tudḫaliya I (late 15<sup>th</sup> c. BCE) mentions divine support for his military actions, recording in his annals<sup>30</sup> that several gods (a group of gods) – the sun-goddess of Arinna, the storm-god of heaven (sky), Inar of Ḫattuša, Zababa, Ištar and others – helped him defeat the army of Asuwa.<sup>31</sup> The next text, the *Manly Deeds of Šuppiluliuma I*<sup>32</sup>, is an annalistic text about the reign of Šuppiluliuma I (1344–1322 BCE) and his deeds (conquests, etc.) that was written by his son, Muršili II (1321–1295 BCE). Muršili II was interested in recording the history of his rule along with that of his father, and he allowed the recording of the deeds of his father Šuppiluliuma I. (*Manly Deeds...*). Muršili II mentions several times in the *Manly Deeds of Šuppiluliuma I*<sup>33</sup> that gods helped his father not only to win battles, but to deport prisoners of war and conquered civilians as well: “While he was fortifying Almina, he sent forth Urawanni and Kuwatna-ziti, the great ‘shepherd’, into the country of Kašula in order to attack. And the gods of my father helped them, (so that) they conquered all of the country of Kašula and brought its population, cattle and sheep before my father. The deportees whom they brought were one thousand”.<sup>34</sup>

Like in all earlier Hittite annals, and like in the annals of Muršili II, the *Manly Deeds of Šuppiluliuma I* are full of divine support of royal deeds. In them, the military campaigns of Šuppiluliuma I are described in the following way: “And the gods helped my father: the Sun

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<sup>28</sup> SINGER 2002, 24; HAAS 1994, 430

<sup>29</sup> SINGER 2002, 26.

<sup>30</sup> NEU 1986; TARACHA 1997.

<sup>31</sup> DEL MONTE 1986, 59, KUB 23.11 obv. ii 21'-32' (3).

<sup>32</sup> GÜTERBOCK 1956; DEL MONTE 1993, 40–45.

<sup>33</sup> HAZENBOS 2006, 235–239.

<sup>34</sup> GÜTERBOCK 1958, 91; KBo 5.6, A i 31'-37'

Goddess of Arinna, the Storm God of Ḫatti, the Storm God of the Army, and the Lady of the Battlefield, (so that) he slew the whole aforementioned tribe, and the enemy troops died in multitudes”.<sup>35</sup>

### The Role of Divine Forces and Theological Justification in the Annals of Muršili II

Muršili II had two versions of his annals written: the *Ten Year Annals* and the *Extensive Annals*.<sup>36</sup> The *Extensive Annals* of Muršili II are more fragmentary than the *Ten Year Annals*, especially at the beginning (CTH 61 II, 1 I, 2–10 ii, 1). The records of the first year (KUB 19.29 obv. i; AM 24 ff) and the fifth year (CTH 61 II, 3 I, 2'–8') are not preserved as well as in the *Ten Year Annals*, and the sixth year is totally missing. As the *Ten Year Annals* are better preserved and both annals were written by same king (Muršili II), we will focus on the *Ten Year Annals*. In the main text of the annals, the ten years of Muršili's reign are described in quite a detailed manner but in a rather laconic and dry style. The text ends with a short epilogue in which Muršili II summarizes his ten years of reign:

“I have already been king for 10 years since I sat on the throne of my father. I have conquered these enemy lands in 10 years by my own hand. The lands that the princes and lords conquered are not in this account. What the sun-goddess of Arinna, my lady, extends to me I will accomplish, and I will set it down (i.e., in word of tablet)”.<sup>37</sup>

Throughout his text, King Muršili II attributes all his military accomplishments to divine favour and protection.<sup>38</sup> This also makes both annals of Muršili II different from the *Annals of Ḫattušili I*. Muršili II repeats the name of the sun-goddess of Arinna, the patron of his dynasty, several times, nearly incessantly, but mentions other deities often as well. However, the sun-goddess of Arinna is the one who “ran before him in battle.” The *Annals of Ḫattušili I* had already described the sun-goddess of Arinna as a god who “ran before him in battle”.<sup>39</sup> Despite the same expression, there is a difference.

Muršili II does not only declare that the sun-goddess of Arinna ran before him in battle, as did Ḫattušili I, but also that “the mighty storm god, Mezulla, and all the gods ran before him”.<sup>40</sup> This means that there is an expansion of the old tradition. Theological explanations of war and references to divine support in military undertakings were used by Hittite kings since Anitta, but they became more elaborate and complex during the time of the

<sup>35</sup> GÜTERBOCK 1956, 75; 2BoTU 37 i 4'–7'.

<sup>36</sup> GÖTZE 1933; GRÉLOIS 1988; NEMIROVSKI 2005.

<sup>37</sup> MINECK 2006, 258, § 38.

<sup>38</sup> MINECK, 2006, 253.

<sup>39</sup> BECKMAN 2006b, 220, § 5.

<sup>40</sup> MINECK 2006, 256, § 21.



New Kingdom (since Tudḫaliya I).<sup>41</sup> As noted above, Muršili II, like Tudḫaliya I a century earlier, tried to justify his wars and his reign with the support of the gods, and he emphasized that the gods made him victorious. Divine forces played a bigger role in the *Annals of Muršili II* than in the *Annals of Ḫattušili I*. Therefore, it can be said that divine support was particularly important to Muršili II.

Of course, there are other new elements as well. For example, just as there were changes in Hittite royal titulary after the Old Kingdom period, we see these changes reflected in Muršili's annals. Ḫattušili I began his texts with the formula: "I, the Great King, the Tabarna, Ḫattušili, king of the land of Ḫatti, ruler of the city of Kuššar", while Muršili II used a different titular formula at the beginning of his introduction to the annals: "Thus says My Sun (My Majesty) Muršili, King of Ḫatti-land, Hero, son of Šuppiluliuma, Great King, Hero". The royal titular formula of Muršili II differs from other royal titular formulas of the first annals of the new Kingdom – the *Annals of Tudḫaliya* and the *Annals of Arnuwanda* – because Muršili II, like Šuppiluliuma I, used the royal epithet "My Sun" (<sup>d</sup>UTU<sup>š</sup>)<sup>42</sup>, which was introduced by Hittites before Šuppiluliuma I (probably by Zidanta II)<sup>43</sup>, but Muršili II was the first to use this epithet in royal annals.

In his annals, Muršili II also continued to use the royal epithet "Hero" (UR.SAĞ), which was used by several kings before him (Arnuwanda II). Muršili II mentions the deportation of people in the fifth year of the *Ten Year Annals*, and, of course, he does so in relation to the gods: the gods justified this act and ordered and even helped Muršili II to deport people. The annals say: "The sun-goddess of Arinna, my lady, the mighty storm god, my lord, Mezzulla and all the gods ran before me and I conquered the entire land of Arawanna. There were 3,500 civilian captives that I conducted to the royal house".<sup>44</sup> We can also find information about the deportation of people in the *Extensive Annals* of Muršili II (in the second year).<sup>45</sup>

### **Divine Forces and the Theological Justification of War in Hittite Narrative Texts**

The motif of divine battles and fights can be found in many Hittite mythological texts – e.g., the myth *Illuyanka and Tešub* (CTH 321)<sup>46</sup>, at the beginning of which the serpent Illuyanka was victorious over the storm god Tešub:

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<sup>41</sup> HOFFNER 1975, 49–62

<sup>42</sup> See more in SAZONOV 2010, 229, 230; 2012; BECKMAN 2002, 37–43.

<sup>43</sup> BECKMAN 2002, 37.

<sup>44</sup> MINECK 2006, 257, § 28

<sup>45</sup> KUB 16.16 obv. i; AM 26 ff.

<sup>46</sup> BECKMAN 1982; SAZONOV 2009.

§ 3 (A i 9'-11') "When the Storm God and the serpent fought each other in Kiskilussa, the serpent defeated the Storm God".<sup>47</sup>

Later, Tešub "takes revenge" with the help of other gods and a man called Hupasiya. With his help, Tešub was able to kill Illuyanka:

§ 10-12 (B i 9'-18') "The serpent and [his offspring] came up, and they ate and drank. They drank up every vessel, so that they became drunk."

"Now they do not want to go back down into their hole again. Hupasiya came and tied up the serpent with a rope."

"The Storm God came and killed the serpent, and the gods were with him".<sup>48</sup>

In *the Song of Kumarbi* (CTH 344)<sup>49</sup>, originally a Hurrian myth, the main motif is of two antagonistic storm gods, Kumarbi and Tešub, fighting against each other. The combatants are both from different and opposite worlds. As Hoffner argued, "Kumarbi is a netherworld god, whereas Tešub is a celestial god." In *the Song of Kumarbi* (Text 14), Kumarbi's father Alalu is driven from the throne by Anu and takes refuge from Anu in the netherworld (the "Dark Earth"). Later, when Anu flees from Kumarbi, he heads for the sky.<sup>50</sup> Already at the beginning of the text (which is only partially preserved), we can see divine battles or wars of the gods for the kingship of heaven<sup>51</sup>:

§ 3 (A i 12'-17') "For a mere nine years, Alalu was king in heaven. In the ninth year, Anu gave battle against Alalu, and he defeated Alalu. He (Alalu) fled before him and went down to the Dark Earth. Down he went to the Dark Earth, and Anu took his seat on his throne. Anu was sitting on his throne, and weighty Kumarbi was giving him drink. (Kumarbi) was bowing down at his feet and placing in his hand the drinking cups."

§ 4 (A i 18'-24') "For a mere nine years, Anu remained king in heaven. In the ninth year, Anu gave battle against Kumarbi. Kumarbi, Alalu's offspring, gave battle against Anu. Anu can no longer withstand Kumarbi's eyes. Anu wriggled loose from his (Kumarbi's) hands and fled. He set out for the sky. (But) Kumarbi rushed after him, seized Anu by the feet/legs, and dragged him down from the sky".<sup>52</sup>

After his struggle with Anu, the god Alalu, the supreme ruler of heaven, loses his power, and the god Anu is enthroned as a result of his later battle with the god Kumarbi. Gods seem to act without any justification for their actions, but this is because they are gods and do

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<sup>47</sup> HOFFNER 1998, 11.

<sup>48</sup> HOFFNER 1998, 12.

<sup>49</sup> HOFFNER 1998, 42-45.

<sup>50</sup> HOFFNER 1998, 41.

<sup>51</sup> VAN DONGEN 2011.

<sup>52</sup> HOFFNER 1998, 42.

not need divine justification. There seems to be a clear difference between the actions of kings and gods in this regard. *The Song of Ullikummi* (CTH 345) is also a mythological text of Hurrian origin in which we find the motif of divine battle.<sup>53</sup> In it, a sentient rock monster by the name of Ullikummi is created by Kumarbi and becomes the enemy of the storm-god Tešub.

### **Theological Justification of War and the System of Hittite Vassalage**

With regard to the evolving divine support and sometimes even theological justification of war in the Hittite Empire, it is also interesting to look at how war and military undertakings were justified theologically in the broader Hittite sphere of influence, especially among the North Syrian vassals and allies of the Hittite Empire. While the relationships that the Hittites had with the North Syrian kingdoms changed over time, at the height of the Empire, the Hittites ruled the North Syrian region from the city of Carchemiš, the seat of the Hittite viceroy.<sup>54</sup> There were several kingdoms in the former area of the Mitanni kingdom in North Syria that more or less firmly belonged to the Hittite Empire, but only two of them left an extensive number of texts that, therefore, form the focus of investigation in this article: Ugarit and Mukiš-Alalah.

Ugarit was the more independent one of the two kingdoms. As an important port-city and a trade emporium on the Levantine coast, Ugarit enjoyed more freedoms throughout its history than other North Syrian kingdoms. It only came under the strict vassalage of the Hittite kings under Muršili II in the 13<sup>th</sup> century BCE, during the reign of Niqmepa, the fifth of the last kings of Ugarit. For most of its history, and certainly during its golden age, the city had been independent of both the Hittites and the Egyptians, who were also vying for control of Northern Syria. In most of the major battles in its recorded history, Ugarit was a military ally of the Hittites, not a subjected auxiliary force.<sup>55</sup>

Ugarit had a large standing army and was one of the military powerhouses of North Syria. The Ugaritic army was composed of chariots, archers, infantry and supply troops, and it seems to have been made up of both conscripts and professional soldiers.<sup>56</sup> Ugaritic armies participated not only in the Battle of Qadeš (KRI 2.14) but also in the Battle of Nihriya (RS 34.165, KBo 4.14) and several smaller skirmishes, including defensive wars, border conflicts, and internal conflicts with Siyannu, Mukiš, Nuhhasse, Niya, and the Umman-Manda.<sup>57</sup> Unlike the other North Syrian kingdoms, Ugarit had actually allied itself with the Hittites against the

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<sup>53</sup> HOFFNER 1998, 55–65.

<sup>54</sup> ČECH 2020: 32.

<sup>55</sup> TÖYRÄÄNVUORI 2021.

<sup>56</sup> VIDAL 2006, 653.

<sup>57</sup> VIDAL 2014, 301; ČECH 2020, 32.

Egyptians in the battle of Qadeš, winning favours from the Hittite overlord. Hittite kings frequently requested both chariots and warships from the Ugaritic kings, especially once the contract of vassalage (RS 17.340) had been made between Muršili II and Niqmepa. However, Ugarit remained reluctant to give control over its military force to the Hittites, opting instead to pay heavier tributes and to maintain control of its own forces<sup>58</sup>, and especially to keep its numerous chariots in a local position (KTU 2.33), at least until the final years of the city (RS 20.238).

The kingdom of Mukiš is another North Syrian kingdom that was in the political ambit of the Hittite empire from the mid-14<sup>th</sup> century BCE. It was Ugarit's closest neighbour, and the villages on their borderlines periodically changed ownership. Mukiš, whose capital was Alalaḥ (*Tell Atchana*), was probably the richest of the North Syrian kingdoms, partly due to its location in the once fertile Amuq Valley.<sup>59</sup> A corpus of texts was found at Alalaḥ, but unlike the Ugaritic texts, these are all written in the Akkadian language, and no evidence of the coastal regional script exists. The city had a long literary history, and the earliest texts from the city are found in the archives of Mari in the Upper Euphrates, written in the 18<sup>th</sup> century BCE.

In addition, Alalaḥ was also the seat of the king of Aleppo following the Mitanni conquest of Yamḥad, the Yamḥadian royal house continuing in the city. The king of Alalaḥ actually bore, for a time, the title of the King of Aleppo.<sup>60</sup> Due to the centrality of the Yamḥadian royal house among the North Syrian kingdoms in the Amorite Kingdom Period (2000–1595 BCE), it is only natural that subjecting Mukiš and making the king of Alalaḥ a Hittite vassal was necessary for securing the allegiance of the other North Syrian kingdoms. This is why Mukiš was under much stricter Hittite control than its southern neighbour for the latter part of the Late Bronze Age. If there is some uncertainty as to the status of Ugarit under the Hittite system of vassalage, there seems to be no doubt that Alalaḥ was under the control of the Hittite viceroy in Carchemiš at this time. Therefore, we may expect the theological justification of war to somewhat differ between the three examples discussed in this article, but also to depict some shared characteristics.

### **Divine Support for War in the Ugaritic Narrative Texts**

No royal inscriptions have been found at Ugarit. The genre of the public royal monument or historical account chronicling the mighty deeds of the king is entirely missing<sup>61</sup>, and one can only speculate why this is so. The history of Ugarit is certainly filled with events

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<sup>58</sup> ČECH 2020, 32.

<sup>59</sup> CASANA 2009, 10.

<sup>60</sup> OLIVA 2005, 1.

<sup>61</sup> SANDERS 2008, 99.

that could well have been eulogized in monumental form, and the city has many examples of iconographic depictions of similar events – the foremost among them being the ivory reliefs found at the royal palace.<sup>62</sup> The reasons might include the relatively secure location of the city, protected by both the sea and the Jebel al-Ansariyah range (if such inscriptions were meant to function as warnings to future conquerors), the secure and long-lasting dynastic line of the city (if such inscriptions were meant for the erudition of future kings), wide-spread literacy in the city (if such inscriptions were meant only for an elite to read), or the nearness of the city to the abode of the storm god on Mt. Saphon (if such inscriptions were meant to be read by the gods themselves).

Similarly, Ugaritic texts are silent regarding military standards, but military standards are found in iconographic depictions.<sup>63</sup> According to Vidal, one of the uses of these standards was to show the support of the deity to the soldiers at the start of a battle. Regardless of the absence of royal inscriptions detailing actual military campaigns by the Ugaritic kings, we must look to the Ugaritic narrative texts for information on divine support for war in the kingdom. According to Čech, Ugaritic texts contain descriptions of battles that never happened, battles that would happen in the future and battles without description, but they have no descriptions of actual battles.<sup>64</sup>

The problem with using narrative texts to study the theological justification of war at Ugarit comes from the fact that it is not entirely certain whether the texts were composed at Ugarit or whether they were merely popular texts copied there. It is known that several tablets found at Ugarit had been written at Ḫattuša.<sup>65</sup> But whether the texts were composed or merely copied in the city, we can be fairly certain that they were read to the king and hence shared ideological aspects familiar to and accepted by the Ugaritic royal house. Čech even suggests that Baal functions as a personification or deification of the kingdom in the story and that the storm god's battle represents the battle of the nation.<sup>66</sup>

*The Baal-Cycle* (KTU 1.1–1.6), which is the best-known text from Ugarit, is a text that contains religious content. Although it features combat as its central theme, it is not a text that concerns war or the theological justification of war, apart from one scene in which the goddess Anat is described as engaging in battle with human soldiers for fun:

“The gates of the house of Anat are closed, and she meets warriors at the foot of the mountain. Look! Anat fights in the valley, battles between two cities. She fights the people of

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<sup>62</sup> CAQUOT and SZNYCER 1980, pl. XXVIII, XXIX.

<sup>63</sup> VIDAL 2014, 297.

<sup>64</sup> ČECH 2020, 31.

<sup>65</sup> BACHVAROVA 2016, 31.

<sup>66</sup> ČECH 2020, 36

the seashore, strikes the men of the sunrise. Under her are heads like balls, above her hands like locusts, like grasshoppers are heaps of warrior-hands. She fastens heads on her back and fixes (severed) hands to her belt. She gleans knee-deep in the blood of warriors, neck-deep in the gore of soldiers. She drives off prisoners (of war) with a club, the enemy (before her) with her bow.<sup>67</sup>

It is unclear who the people of the seashore and the men of the sunrise are in this passage, but a Levantine character may be ascribed to them. While the reference need not be to any historical war, the description would certainly not have been out of place as a portrayal of the aftermath of the Battle of Qadeš, given the heaps of warrior-hands that are actually depicted in the Abu Simbel reliefs of Ramesses II.<sup>68</sup>

Anat seems to have been the primary deity at least for the common soldier. Her name is found not only in Ugaritic texts but also as a theophoric element in personal names of soldiers, inscribed on arrow heads from the Levantine area<sup>69</sup>, and as a divine name in the Aramean-Judean military garrison in Elephantine, where the syncretistic deities Anat-Bethel (TAD C3.15) and Anat-Yahu (TAD B7.3) were worshiped by soldiers and their families at the local temple. Anat may not have been referred to for the theological justification of war on the national level, but she certainly seems to have been employed in forging a military cult and in mobilizing the common soldier. The belligerent goddess was not a protective figure for the soldier but was a protective figure for the king. The Ugaritic crown prince is seen in an iconographic depiction from the palace as sucking from the teat of the warrior goddess, possibly as an acknowledgment that the power of the monarchy flows from its standing army. In a way, the warrior goddess was the well-spring of the nation.

The goddess also features in one of the epic stories, the *Tale of Aqhat*.<sup>70</sup> There is no historical war in the tale in which a god helps Aqhat<sup>71</sup>, but the tale does concern a warrior. Aqhat is a warrior prince in possession of a bow that is coveted by the goddess. This is likely in reference to the composite bow that was a new military technology introduced in the Late Bronze Age.<sup>72</sup> Anat offers the warrior prince gold and silver for the bow, and, upon his refusal, even immortality: “Ask for life, warrior Aqhat! Ask for life and I will give it to you, deathlessness I will bestow you. I will let you count your years with Baal, and with the sons of Ilu your

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<sup>67</sup> KTU 1.3 II 3'-16'.

<sup>68</sup> HEALY 2000.

<sup>69</sup> SMITH 2014, 494.

<sup>70</sup> KTU 1.17-1.22.

<sup>71</sup> KANG 1989, 74.

<sup>72</sup> MARGALIT 2011, 484.

months” (1.17 VI 26’–29’). Aqhat refuses the goddess, insisting that women have no business possessing such weapons:

“Do not tempt me, maiden! To a hero your guile is phlegm. What does a man get in the end? What does a man take as his fate? Glaze is poured on the head, lye over my skull ... the death of everyone (else) I shall die, and I too shall be dead! And another word I will say: bows are [the weapons] of soldiers – are women now to go hunting?”<sup>73</sup>

Aqhat’s refusal of the goddess is interesting because she was the patron goddess of soldiers. Anat has the warrior killed for this insult, but both mourn and eulogize him after his death. The warrior prince is not killed in battle but is murdered at the behest of the goddess, leading to a drought that lasts for several years. Anat also hires the help of Yatpan, the Sutean warrior, to attack the town of Abiluma. The end of the text is missing, but the final scenes take place in the military camp of Yatpan where the sister of Aqhat has come to avenge her brother, dressed like a warrior that is disguised as a woman. She clearly petitions the gods for success in her undertaking and mentions the rites performed by her father Danel before leaving for the military camp, but the gods are not individually named in the text:

“My father presented an offering for the gods, into the heavens he sent incense, to the stars the scent of the Harnemites. Therefore, bless me, I would go blessed! Empower me, I would go empowered! I will slay my brother’s slayer, make an end of the one that finished my brother.”<sup>74</sup>

The ending of the story is unfortunately missing, so it is difficult to know what the moral of the story was. Still, it seems clear that, while the goddess Anat possessed many characteristics valorised by soldiers, as did Aqhat’s sister Paghit, the ideal soldier was not female, and war was not the business of women.

In the *Epic of Kirta* (KTU 1.14–1.16), war is theologically justified by the king’s desire for progeny. The *Epic of Kirta* is often interpreted as having a historical core.<sup>75</sup> King Kirta has lost all his wives and desires a legacy, a son to continue his house. He not only prays to Ilu but, at the behest of the god, performs rituals that are meant to guarantee success in his military undertakings. Ilu also instructs the king on the mustering of armies, the gathering of supplies and even on how to march. At the behest of Ilu, sacrifices are also made to the storm god Baal:

“Raise your hands to the sky. Sacrifice to Bull El, your father! Adore Baal with your sacrifice, the son of Dagan with your offering! Let Kirta descend from the rooftops! ... Let the army be supplied and go forth, the host of hosts be supplied. Let the escorting army go forth!

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<sup>73</sup> KTU 1.17 VI 34’–41’.

<sup>74</sup> KTU 1.19 IV 29’.

<sup>75</sup> KANG 1989, 73.

Let your host be a very large force, as many as three hundred multitudes. Soldiers beyond number, archers beyond counting.”<sup>76</sup>

At the request of the god, Kirta attacks a neighbouring kingdom to get himself a wife to marry. On his way, he stops at a shrine of the goddess Asherah, making a vow to bring a tribute of gold and silver to the goddess upon the success of his military undertaking.

“They march a day and a second. After sunrise on the third (day), he arrives at the shrine of the Tyrian Asherah, the goddess of the Sidonians. There he makes a vow, the Noble Kirta: ‘As the Tyrian Asherah lives, the goddess of the Sidonians – Should I take Huraya to my house, bring the young woman to my court? I will double (her weight) in silver and a third of her I will give in gold!’”<sup>77</sup>

Kirta, however, reneges on his promise, which makes the goddess grow angry, and she strikes him with a deadly illness. However, while the king seeks favour from Asherah to win the war, it is the god Ilu that supports Kirta in his ambition.<sup>78</sup>

The gods are rarely mentioned in the letters that concern actual military activities. Even the most famous of them, the so-called *General’s Letter* (RS 20.33) only makes one vague reference to ‘the heavens’. But there is one ritual text (KTU 1.119) that seems to concern a ritual of war:

“If a strong enemy attacks your gate, a warrior your walls, lift your eyes to Baal (and say): Oh Baal, drive away the strong enemy from our gate, the warrior from our walls! Baal will hear your prayer. He will drive away the strong enemy from your gate, the warrior from your walls.”

It seems that the favour of the gods, especially the gods upon whose territory military campaigns were made, was necessary for the successful undertaking of a campaign. Promises and oaths made to the gods were to be upheld, as oath-breaking was a major cause for misfortune in war. Broken oaths, even by one’s ancestors, could cause a sudden turn in one’s military fortunes, so upholding the proper ancestral rites and assuring one’s legacy depended on the favour of the gods – in Kirta’s case, the goddess Asherah. While many letters are known from this period, especially in the corpus of the *Amarna Letters*<sup>79</sup>, the trend of not mentioning divinities seems to hold true.

This is somewhat surprising given the number of references to wars, battles, and skirmishes within the letters, many of which were written by the Syrian kings to the Egyptian pharaohs. The pharaohs to whom most of the letters are addressed (Amenhotep III and IV, father and son) are consistently called <sup>d</sup>UTU-si “My sun-god” by the Syrian kings, and they

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<sup>76</sup> KTU 1.14 II 22’–40’.

<sup>77</sup> KTU 1.14 IV 34’–43’.

<sup>78</sup> KANG 1989, 73.

<sup>79</sup> RAINEY 2014.



clearly petition the Egyptian king to grant both permission and blessing upon their undertakings, so in a sense their wars do receive theological justification. In only one letter, EA 2 from the Babylonian king Kadašman-Enlil, is the pharaoh called the storm-god instead of the sun-god. But gods are explicitly mentioned in very few letters only.

Among these, there is the letter EA55 from the king of Qatna to Amenhotep III, which states:

“My lord knows it. My lord [...] the ancestors of [my lord...] and now the king of the land of Ḫa[tti] has burned them with fire. As for the gods and the elite of the c[ity of Qat]na, the king of the land of Ḫatti has taken them away [...]” (38'-43').

“My lord, a (statue of) the sun god, the god of my father, each of your ancestors made, and the name (of each one) was placed before him. But now, as for the sun god, the god of my father, the king of the land of Ḫatti has taken them. And my lord knows them, the manufacture of (those) gods, just as they are” (53'-59').

According to the letter, the Hittite king, possibly Šuppiluliuma I, had taken the gods of Qatna either as booty or as hostages after his military victory. The statues of these gods may have been purposefully conflated with the image of the pharaoh to rouse anger in the monarch and to whip him into some kind of a retaliation that seems not to have taken place.

Another letter that makes explicit reference to gods is EA 167 from Aziru, the Syrian king of Amurru:

“So thus, Tutu and the king, my lord, and the senior officials (must swear): ‘If we have imputed anything that is unseemly to Aziru.’ So thus you must swear by my deities and by Aten. And then I and Ḫatip the servant of the king are guiltless.”

It is noteworthy about the letter that not only are the anonymous but likely Syrian king and his officials requested to swear by the personal deities of Aziru of Amurru to prove their innocence in the matter that they are accused of, but they are also required to swear by the newly fashioned Egyptian deity Aten, the personal god of Akhenaten – the son of Amenhotep III.

While these texts do not allow us to access the self-presentation of Syrian kings regarding their military undertakings, there are certain ideological characteristics shared by the texts that can be used to draw some conclusions. The most important divinity at Ugarit was the storm god Baal, but while he is connected to combat in the texts, the god's connection to war itself seems almost entirely missing – apart from a very practical, ritual text. The god Ilu features in several texts in relation to war, which is probably due to the question of legacy and inheritance that seems central to the narrative texts. Ilu seems to facilitate war, especially in teaching the rites and rituals to be performed before undertaking a campaign.

The goddess Anat is likewise very much connected to war, but her connection may have come from her patronage of the troops and the common soldier. Anat was the warrior's warrior, but she did not justify war to the nation; she merely protected the warrior once he was already at war. It is surprising that it is Asherah, the mother goddess with no apparent connection to war or battle, that is mentioned as the divine force ensuring victory in the Ugaritic narrative texts. However, according to Sanders, there are indications in the ritual and political texts from the city that not only the king but also the people were considered agents of history and religion.<sup>80</sup> This may account for some of the differences in the use of divine forces in the theological justification of war at Ugarit.

### **Divine Forces and Theological Justification of War in Alalakh: The Idrimi Inscription**

For the present inquiry, the most relevant text from Alalakh is the so-called *Idrimi Statue Inscription*<sup>81</sup>, which was written on the magnesite statue of Idrimi (BM 130738) in the 15<sup>th</sup> century BCE. Royal inscriptions are inherently biased, and they are motivated by the interests of kings for which reason they must be used with caution when it comes to the reconstruction of history.<sup>82</sup> As vehicles for royal ideology, they are, however, useful for investigating ideological concerns such as the justification of war. Idrimi was a prince of the royal house of Yamhad (Aleppo) who fled the city after its capture by Mitanni. Idrimi tours around the Levant before settling in the city of Alalakh in the Syrian kingdom of Mukiš and achieves several military victories under the banner of Alalakh. He describes himself as “Idrimi, son of Ili-ilimma, servant of Tešub, Hebat and Shaushka, the lady of Alalakh, my lady.” It seems that his gods are not Amorite gods but Hurrian ones, and while he claims that they are the gods of Alalakh, they appear to be his personal deities. Idrimi describes his reason for settling in Alalakh:

“In Aleppo, my paternal home, an outrage had occurred, and we fled. The lords of Emar descended from the sisters of my mother, so we established ourselves in Emar. My brothers, who were older than I, lived with me also. But none considered things that I considered; I thought: ‘He who is in the house of his father is the noble son of a prince. He who is among the people of Emar, however, is a slave.’”

Idrimi looks especially to the storm god Tešub to sanction his military campaigns, and he will not undertake them until the god is favourable: “I stayed among the Hapiru-people for seven years. I let birds fly and sacrificed lambs. In the 7<sup>th</sup> year, Tešub turned to me. Thereupon, I built ships. I let the Nulla-soldiers board the ships. By sea, I approached the country Mukiš

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<sup>80</sup> SANDERS 2008, 107.

<sup>81</sup> UF 13, 201–268.

<sup>82</sup> SURIANO 2014, 2.

and reached the mainland in front of the mountain Hazzi I climbed.” Hazzi, Mt Casius, was a sacred mountain of the storm god. It is interesting that the inscription uses the Hurrian name Tešub for the storm god since Hadad/Adad of Aleppo, the patron god of Yamḥad, would certainly have been known by his Semitic name to the inhabitants of Idrimi’s new kingdom, Mukiš.

Idrimi battled the Hurrian king Battarna for seven years, and Idrimi himself claims that the end of the hostilities was due to him reminding the Hurrian king of the oath sworn by their forefathers, i.e., that Battarna’s as an oath-breaker’s campaign was not blessed by the gods:

“The powerful king heard of the efforts of our ancestors and the mutual oath and was afraid of the contents of the oath. Because of the wording of the oath and because of our efforts, he sent a gift. In Kinumu, the following month, I made sacrifices liberally.”

Idrimi’s description (81’–91’) of what he did after his victory over and capture of seven Syrian cities (Passahe, Damarutla, Hulahhan, Zila, Ie, Uluzila and Zaruna) is reminiscent of the Ugaritic Baal-Cycle and Baal’s building projects following his victory over Yamm (the Sea):

“I built a palace. I made my throne like the throne of kings. I made my brothers like royal brothers, my sons like their sons and my relatives their relatives. The inhabitants who were in my land I made to dwell securely, and even those who did not have a dwelling I settled. Then, I organized my land and made my cities like our ancestors did. Just as our ancestors had established regular rites for the gods of Alalaḥ [Tešub, Hebat and Šauška], and just as our forefathers had performed sacrifices, I constantly performed them. These things I did, and I entrusted them to my son Tešub-nirari.”

Idrimi’s victories may have been due to his cunning, to his good advisors, to opportune conditions, or even to good luck. In the inscription, however, he both attributes his victories to the gods of his city and is also careful to make it known that he did not proceed without their approval, to the extent of waiting seven years for the storm god Tešub to sanction his undertaking. The seven years mentioned in the text may have had ideological significance and its mention in the inscription does not necessitate that such a period of waiting has a historical correspondence. He also presents his peace with the Mitanni king not only as a victory for himself but accords it to Battarna’s failure to honour promises made to the gods by his ancestors. Idrimi himself, naturally, not only upheld the promises that his ancestors had made to the gods, but also made sure to impart to his son and heir the same respect for ancestral deities.

## Conclusion

As we can see, divine support, divine intervention, and an ideology of (divine) warfare developed in the Hittite world throughout the whole of Hittite history and became better formulated and more complex with the passing of time, reaching their apex during the New Kingdom Period. If we can observe barely any divine support for Anitta's deeds in the *Text of Anitta*, then Ḫattušili I, who ruled 100 years later, already elaborated this phenomenon more explicitly and referred to gods in support of his aggressive politics and military actions (*The Annals of Ḫattušili I*). The phenomenon of divine support for war can be found in an even more sophisticated and developed manner during the New Kingdom, in the *Annals of Tudḫaliya I*, in the *Manly Deeds of Šuppiliuma* and in the annals written by Muršili II, etc. In some cases, we even have outright theological justification of wars.

As we can see, ideology, religion, and theology played an insignificant role in conflict and warfare and especially in the divine support of war in Hittite Anatolia at the time of Anitta in the 18<sup>th</sup> c. BCE. This, however, changed dramatically across the time, and in the *Annals of Ḫattušili I*, the role of gods has increased considerably, and the king began to refer to the gods in justification for his actions (also in war). Later, in the epoch of the New Kingdom, since the time of Tudḫaliya I, and especially since Muršili II, the role of the gods became even more elaborate and sophisticated, and the kings mention several gods or a group of gods, instead of only two or three of them (as was done by Ḫattušili I) that helped them in wars and in military campaigns. We have several pieces of evidence from Hittite sources in which the ruler uses proper theological justification for his military campaign or for the invasion of another country, and the most elaborate of these are the annals of Muršili II.

Similar themes of divine support and the occasional theological justification of war are also found in the texts of the vassal kingdoms of the Hittite Empire, with the exception that, on the ideological level, the Hittite kings were the representatives of the gods for the Syrian kings. This is a clear difference between the texts from the core area of the Hittite Empire and the texts from the kingdoms of the Hittite ambit. Many of the wars fought by the major international players of the Late Bronze Age were fought on the battlefields of North Syria, which is why war is a common occurrence in the texts of the peoples based there. Unlike in the Hittite texts, the petitioning of the gods before military undertakings is a common trope in the texts from Ugarit and Alalakh. The same may have been true of the other Syrian vassals of the Hittite kings, but fewer texts have remained from them. These petitions were also accompanied by rituals meant to ascertain good fortunes in war. The petitioned deities changed depending on the place of origin of the petitioner and the place that was attacked. Both one's ancestral

gods and the gods of the enemy needed to be respected for a campaign to be successful, and peace could also be made on behalf of the gods of both parties only.

In the North Syrian kingdoms, proper conduct of war concerned not only the present but also the past and future generations. A victory or defeat could be decided by the conduct of one's ancestors, and teaching one's descendants the proper way to petition the gods for success in war was supremely important. While the storm god was likely the most important deity concerning the theological justification of war among the North Syrian kingdoms, this role of the god is not always clearly formulated in the texts. Goddesses were also petitioned for success in war, but there was a clear difference in how common soldiers and kings apprehended the gods, especially the widely popular warrior goddess Anat. While soldiers and warriors looked to the goddess for success in battle, she functioned as the nursemaid of the king. While the petitioning of divine support for military undertakings was likely shared by kings across the entire ancient Near East, Anatolia and North Syria formed a cultural ambit where influences were readily exchanged both from Anatolia to Syria and from Syria to Anatolia. In the texts from these areas, we can see details and motifs that are particular to either region but also themes that are shared by both areas. It is noticeable that the political relationship of overlord and vassal or subject kingdom can be seen not only in the political correspondence of the kingdoms but also on the ideological level, in the texts that the Hittites wrote for their own gods and the Syrians wrote for theirs. The hierarchical relationships of the kingdoms of Anatolia and North Syria are so ingrained that they influenced the very core of how the divine support of war was formulated in the texts.

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