

How many princes can the land bear? – Some thoughts on the Zalpa text (CTH 3)

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“The queen of Kaneš/Nesa gave birth to 30 sons in a single year. Thus she (said): ‘What is th[is]? I have given birth to a crowd!’ She filled baskets with grease, put her sons in them, and set them into the river. The river carried them down to the sea, to the land of Zalpuwa. The gods recovered the children from the sea and raised them”¹.

The tale of the queen of Kaneš/Neša, the instant multiple birth of her thirty sons and daughters and their seemingly unavoidable incest is the beginning of the famous composition, which concludes with the account of the destruction of the city of Zalpa.

The tale has attracted a wide range of interpretations since the publication of KBo 22.2 by Otten and his edition of the composition in 1973². Many of the motifs featured in the legend – the instant multiple birth, the exposure of infants to nature and incest – were compared typologically to folktales of other ancient literatures³. The question, which I would like to address in this paper, concerns the relation of the tale to the historical narrative in which it is embedded. Why did the author choose to introduce his historiographic narrative, which recounts various conflicts between the Hittite dynasty and Zalpa over several generations, with this unique tale? In the following pages, I will consider the incest story from the perspective of the historical narrative, which, after all, constitutes the majority of the composition, an approach that I believe to be essential for the interpretation of both. I will then consider the consequences this interpretation suggests to the evaluation of the Zalpa text as a work of historiography.

At first, however, let us consider some of the ways in which the tale could, and indeed was, related to the historical narrative. This problem was approached in two ways⁴. One way is

¹ This and other translations from the Zalpa text are based, with some modifications, on H.A. Hoffner’s translation in *CoS I*, 1997, pp. 181-182 and in *Hittite Myths*². Atlanta 1998, pp. 81-82. I am indebted to Itamar Singer and Jost Hazenbos for valuable comments and suggestions, the responsibility remains, of course, mine.

² H. Otten, *Eine althethitische Erzählung um die Stadt Zalpa*. (StBoT 17). Wiesbaden 1973. Košak (<http://www.hethport.uni-wuerzburg.de/hetkonk>) now dates the ductus of KBo 22.2, which was considered by Otten to be Old Hittite, to the middle Hittite period. A NH copy of the text, KBo 3.38 (2BoTU 13), has been known since the beginning of Hittite studies and was studied by H. G. Güterbock, *ZA* 44 (1938), pp. 101-105 in his dissertation on the Babylonian and Hittite historical traditions. KUB 23.23, KUB 48.79 and KBo 26.126, all NH, also belong to the composition. For the different fragments cf. D. Groddek, *AoF* 25 (1998), pp. 227-229.

³ For the different motives see most recently V. Haas, *Die hethitische Literatur*. Berlin - New York 2006, pp. 20-26.

⁴ See Hoffner, *Or* 49 (1980), pp. 290-291.

to consider the tale as a pre-historical, mythological narrative, which is situated in *illo tempore*, in times immemorial before concrete historical memory⁵. In his study on collective memory, Assmann distinguishes between two kinds of memories, which he calls communicative and cultural memory respectively⁶. Communicative memory is a living memory, experienced within a lifetime. Oral history studies have shown that living memory does not span over 80 years - that is 3 or 4 generations. The historical narrative in the Zalpa text, beginning with the sentence, "when later on war broke out" and ending with the destruction of Zalpa, does indeed span over such a time span. Cultural memory, on the other hand, registers myths, memories and symbols from time immemorial, and is performed in highly ritualized form. The tale about the queen of Nesa could be thus located in this sphere of cultural memory.

The tale was in fact interpreted as a tale of origin, a foundation or a charter myth. According to Otten, the tale reflects either the foundation of Zalpa by Nesa, or the reverse: the memory of an Indo-European migration from Zalpa to Nesa⁷. In a recent article on the issue of Hittite migration in Anatolia Oettinger pursues Otten's second option viewing the tale as a charter myth of return, which echoes a distant Hittite migration from Zalpa to Nesa⁸. The tale, however, involves three journeys back and forth between the two cities - the brothers are taken by the river from Nesa to Zalpa, return eventually to their city of birth and then depart again - either all of them or the youngest brother only - after the incest scene, to Zalpa. A migration theory that accounts for all three movements has yet to be proposed⁹.

Watkins has drawn attention to striking parallels shared with other tales of origins, such as the Greek legend of the Danaids. This tale, featured in Aeschylus' drama *The Suppliants*, deals with the incestuous marriage between the fifty daughters of Danaos and their parallel cousins, the fifty sons of Aigyptos and provides a foundation myth for the house of Argos and an origin for the Dorians¹⁰. On account of these parallels between the Hittite, Greek and a further tale of

⁵ As already suggested by H. G. Güterbock, *ZA* 44 (1938), p. 105, who did not know the actual tale at the time.

⁶ J. Assmann, *Das Kulturelle Gedächtnis*³. München 2000, pp. 48-56.

⁷ Otten, *StBoT* 17, p. 64.

⁸ N. Oettinger, "Zur Einwanderung und ersten Entfaltung der Indogermanen in Anatolien", pp. 357-369 in: *2000 v. Chr. Politische, wirtschaftliche und kulturelle Entwicklung im Zeichen einer Jahrtausendwende. 3. Internationales Colloquium der Deutschen Orient-Gesellschaft 4.- 7. April 2000 in Frankfurt/Main und Marburg/Lahn*. J.-W. Meyer – W. Sommerfeld edd. Saarbrücken 2004.

⁹ Oettinger himself, *2000 v. Chr.*, pp. 363-364, acknowledges this problem, yet his suggestion to identify the tale as a Myth of Return only takes two movements into account. This difficulty was also noted by Otten, *StBoT* 17, p. 64.

¹⁰ C. Watkins, *How to Kill a Dragon. Aspects of Indo-European Poetics*. New York – Oxford 1995, p. 53; Watkins, "The Third Donkey: Origin Legends and Some Hidden Indo-European Themes", pp. 73-78 in: *Indo-European Perspectives. Studies in Honour of Anna Morpurgo Davies*, J. H. W. Penney ed. Oxford 2004. An interesting comparison to the Oedipus traditions is offered by I. Klock-Fontanille, *Les Premiers Rois Hittites*. Paris 2004, pp. 182-188.

prodigious multiple birth in the *Rigveda*, Watkins considers all three as reflecting a common Indo-European tale of origin¹¹.

However, while Greek writers were apparently very fond of foundation myths and genealogies, as the pertinent rich literary material from the Ancient Greek world may suggest¹², in Hittite literature tales of origin are very rare. The closest parallel is found in the fragmentary exposure tale preceding the historical narrative concerning Anum-Hirbi (CTH 2)¹³, which probably originated in one of the urban centres in Syria in which this king ruled¹⁴.

It is the two cities involved in the tale - Kaniš/Nesa and Zalpa/Zalpuwa, both of which played a major role in pre-Hittite Anatolia - that has invited scholars to interpret the tale in terms of a charter myth. The Zalpa of the composition is usually identified with the northern Zalpa/Zalpuwa located where the Kızılırmak joins the Black Sea, which can perhaps be identified with İkiztepe¹⁵. This generally accepted assumption is elegantly based on the identification of the unnamed river that took the boys to the sea with the Kızılırmak¹⁶. This northern Zalpa/Zalpuwa seemed to have played a major political role in pre-Hittite Anatolia. Furthermore, the city and particularly the sea beside which it was located are closely related to the institution of Old Hittite kingship¹⁷.

It is, however, the appearance of the city of Kaniš/Nesa in the tale, which mostly suggests its interpretation as a tale of origin. It is well known that the Hittites designated their own

¹¹ Watkins, *Studies Morpurgo Davies*, pp. 65-80.

¹² I. Malkin, *Ethnicity and Identity in Ancient Greece* (in Hebrew). Tel Aviv 2003, pp. 60-72. For an influential study of these traditions and Greek Ethnicity, cf. J. M. Hall, *Ethnic Identity in Greek Antiquity*. Cambridge 1997.

¹³ W. Helck, "Beiträge zur Altertumskunde Kleinasiens", in *Fs. Bittel*. Mainz 1983, pp. 271-281. Cf. however, the comments of J. L. Miller, *AoF* 28 (2001), pp. 97-99 concerning Helck's frequent restorations of the text in his treatment of CTH 2. For this exposure tale see also Güterbock, "Hethitische Literatur", in *Neues Handbuch der Literaturwissenschaft*, I. W. Röllig ed. Wiesbaden 1980, p. 219 and A. Ünal, "Das Motiv der Kindesaussetzung in den altanatolischen Literaturen", in *Keilschriftliche Literaturen. Ausgewählte Vorträge der XXXII^e Rencontre Assyriologique Internationale, Münster, 8.-12. 7. 198.*, K. Hecker - W. Sommerfeld edd. Berlin 1986, pp. 132-135.

¹⁴ For the life and times of Anum-Hirbi see now Miller, *AoF* 28 (2001). Whether incidentally or not, the historical part of CTH 2 also describes an ensuing battle against a city named Zalpa, which should be identified, following Miller, *AoF* 28 (2001), p. 99, with the Syrian Zalwar. Due to this similarity, Ünal, *Keilschriftliche Literaturen*, pp. 132-135, suggests to locate the Zalpa of CTH 3 in Syria too.

¹⁵ U.B. Alkim, *AnSt* 25 (1975) pp. 27ff; Haas, *MDOG* 109 (1977) p. 18, but cf. G. Steiner, "Acemhüyük = Kārum Zalpa 'im Meer'", in *Aspects of Art and Iconography: Anatolia and its Neighbors. Studies in Honor of Nimet Özgüç*. M. J. Mellink et al edd. Ankara 1993, pp. 579-599.

¹⁶ For a recent treatment of the different Zalpas in the Hittite texts cf. Miller, *AoF* 28 (2001), pp. 70-77 with previous literature. Steiner, *Studies N. Özgüç*, pp. 587-599, contests this identification.

¹⁷ For a discussion of the pertinent material Cf. J. Klinger, *StBoT* 37, pp. 112-127; Klinger, " 'So weit und breit wie das Meer...' – Das Meer in Texten hattischer Provenienz", in: *The Asia Minor Connexion: Studies on the Pre-Greek Languages in Memory of Charles Carter*. (Orbis Supplementa 13). Y. L. Arbeitman ed. Leuven - Paris 2000, pp. 151-172.

language as ^{URU}*nišili*, *nešumnili* or *našili* “in the language of the town Nesa”¹⁸. To modern scholarship, the sheer appearance of Kaneš/Nesa at the beginning of the tale indicates that we are dealing with a Hittite tale of origin¹⁹. However, the text does not make any explicit claim of origin or of a relation between Kaneš/Nesa and Hattusa. Whereas the former city appears exclusively in the incest tale, the historical part, “when later on war broke out” (KBo 3.38, I 7’) deals from the outset with a series of conflicts between Zalpa and Hattusa – Kaneš/Nesa is not mentioned in the historical part at all²⁰. Zalpa is the element which is constant throughout the text. The often-postulated relation/continuity between Kaneš/Nesa of the incest tale, and Hattusa of the historical narrative, remains a matter of interpretation.

Yet would a Hittite audience also share this modern assumption and identify the queen of Kaneš/Nesa as his primordial ancestor? Did the “Hittites” themselves consider Kaneš/Nesa as their place of origin? In order to approach this question, a distinction should be drawn between the *etic* perspective - the observers/scholars’ ideas about “objective” ethnic affiliation of a certain group - and the *emic* view: the group’s own ideas about its origin. These two notions may, however, sometimes contradict one another²¹.

From an *etic* perspective, there is evidence that Hittite speakers were to some extent concentrated in pre-Hittite times in the region between Kaneš/Nesa and the Upper Euphrates²². Considered from an *emic* perspective, the evidence that the “Hittites” themselves, as we know them from the written record left in their capital, viewed Kaneš/Nesa as their place of origin, is very meager. Independent of the Zalpa text, it is based on the designation of the language as Nesite and on Anitta’s association with this city.

The Hittite’s own designation of their language as Nesite only suggests, however, that they conceived their language, but not necessarily themselves, as originating in this region²³. Language is not always a criterion of ethnic identity²⁴. Hittite civilization, which is a mixture of different cultural and linguistic elements, illustrates this notion perfectly²⁵. Hittite identity was

¹⁸ CHD L-N, 1989, p. 454.

¹⁹ See for example Watkins, *Studies Morpurgo-Davies*, p. 71; Oettinger, *2000 v. Chr.*, pp. 361-366.

²⁰ Note that the first conflict in the historical part is already (temporarily) resolved by a peace treaty between inhabitants of Zalpa and Hattusa (KBo 3.38, I 18’-19’). The grandfather of the king seems to have reigned in Hattusa, as already noticed by R. H. Beal, “The Predecessors of Hattusili I”, in *Hittite Studies in Honor of H. A. Hoffner on the Occasion of His 65th Birthday*, G. Beckman, R. Beal, G. McMahon Edd. Winona Lake, Indiana 2003, p. 25. For a different interpretation of the role of Hattusa in the text s. J. Klinger, *StBoT* 37, pp. 117-122.

²¹ I. Malkin, *The Returns of Odysseus: Colonization and Ethnicity*. Berkeley 1998, p. 56. S. Fenton, *Ethnicity*. Oxford 2003, p. 88.

²² I. Singer, *JIES* 9 (1981), pp. 125-129.

²³ See for example the designation of Italian as “Florentine” in Italy of the 19th Century, mentioned by R. Stefanini, “Towards a Diachronic Reconstruction of the Linguistic Map of Ancient Anatolia”, *Eothen* 11, pp. 783-784 n. 1.

²⁴ J. M. Hall, *Ethnic Identity in Greek Antiquity*. Cambridge 1997, pp. 21-22.

²⁵ The term Hittite civilization was coined by Güterbock, *Oriens* 10, 1957, pp. 233-234: (...) we must strictly separate two spheres: linguistic and cultural. Since the name “Hittite” has, for forty years, been

mainly constructed in political, not linguistic terms²⁶. Other elements of “Hittite” identity were affiliation with the land and the cult of its true owners – the gods²⁷. The Hittites designated themselves the inhabitants of the “Land of Hattusa”²⁸. Hittite was the official administrative language of the empire, but was not used as a marker of ethnic identity²⁹. It is well known, for example, that during their cult practices the Hittites addressed their gods in their respective native languages – Hattic, Palaic, Luwian, Hurrian or Hittite³⁰. These gods may have originated from different places, yet they were all part of “Hittite” cult³¹. The singer(s) of Kaneš/Nesa and the gods that they were chanting to in Hittite were a matter of controversial scholarly debate, especially regarding the value of the evidence to a diachronic reconstruction of religious layers in Anatolia³². Definitive conclusions are difficult in view of this rich, complex and sometimes contradictory material, but the evidence does seem to show that Nesite singers or the gods who preferred to be worshipped in that language, did not enjoy any privileged position within these cultic practices. In fact, the singer(s) of Kaneš/Nesa and their gods, with the exception of Inar,

applied to the main language of the Boğazköy archives, we cannot easily abandon it (...). The speakers of this language took part in what may be called “Hittite civilization”, but the latter is a mixed culture and cannot in its entirety be ascribed to a single ethnic group. Consequently, the name “Hittite” must mean one thing if applied to a language, another thing if applied to a civilization.

²⁶ For recent discussions of the term “Hittite” s. T. Bryce, *The Kingdom of the Hittite*. Oxford 1998, pp. 16-20; Klinger, *StBoT* 37, pp. 81-91; F. Starke, “Hattusa”, in *Der Neue Pauly*. Band 5, H. Cancik / H. Schneider edd. Stuttgart 1998, 1998, p. 186.

²⁷ A. Gilan, “Hittite Ethnicity? – Constructions of identity in Hittite Literature”, in *Proceedings of the Conference “Hittites, Greeks, and their Neighbors in Ancient Anatolia* (Atlanta, 17-19 September, 2004. M. Bachvarova, B.J. Collins, I. Rutherford, edd., forthcoming.

²⁸ Starke, “Hattusa”, in *Der Neue Pauly* Band 5, pp. 185-186. Cf. also Starke, *ZABR* 2, 1996, pp. 140-182 discussion of the constitution of the Hittite Kingdom as a political body. In this article he distinguishes between the terms DUMU^{MES} and LÚ^{MES URU} HA-AT-TI and argues that the term LÚ^{MES URU} HA-AT-TI (*hattusumenes*) ‘Hittites’ exclusively denotes members of the extended royal family, who also constituted this political body (p. 153 with n. 54).

²⁹ On Hittite as a language of power and its relation to Luwian see now Th. van den Hout, “Institutions, Vernaculars, publics: The Case of Second-Millennium Anatolia”, in *Margins of Writing, Origins of Cultures*, S.L. Sanders ed. Chicago 2006, pp. 217-256.

³⁰ See most recently A. Archi, “The Singer of Kaneš and his Gods”, in *Offizielle Religion, lokale Kulte und individuelle Religiosität. Akten des religionsgeschichtlichen Symposiums “Kleinasien und angrenzende Gebiete vom Beginn des 2. bis zur Mitte des 1. Jahrtausends v. Chr.” Bonn, 20.-22. February 2003*, M. Hutter, S. Hutter-Braunsar edd. (AOAT 318). Münster 2004, p. 11.

³¹ Klinger, *StBoT* 37, p. 15 in his discussion of the term Kultschicht, already made this point.

³² Cf. the discussions of A. Kammenhuber, *ZA* 66 (1976) pp. 68-88, Starke, *ZA* 69 (1979), pp. 47-120, Klinger, *StBoT* 37, pp. 6-16 and Archi, *Offizielle Religion*, pp. 11-26. For the gods of Kaneš/Nesa see Haas, *Geschichte der hethitischen Religion*. (HbOr, Erste Ab., Bd. 15). Leiden – New York 1994, pp. 612-615.

only played a relatively minor role in Hittite official cult³³. In the Old Hittite period, in which the Zalpa text originated, cult was usually held in Hattic³⁴. This, however, is in striking discrepancy with the fact that Hittite was the language of royalty and power – spoken by and denoting the ruling elite³⁵. One would expect to find Nesite gods and chants in Hittite precisely there – in the state cult. One notable exception is the chanting in Hittite to the deity Inar, already in the Old Hittite period, which could be explained by the tutelary function of the deity and its close relation to Hattusa and to the royal family³⁶. Notwithstanding, the relatively minor role of the gods of the Nesite circle in the Hittite state cult speaks in my opinion against the notion that the Hittites affiliated themselves with Kaneš/Nesa.

Sources concerning other spheres of Hittite religious life also do not support the thesis that the Hittites themselves considered Kaneš/Nesa as their place of origin. The city had already been destroyed sometime before the beginning of the archives in Hattusa³⁷. Yet no Hittite king, to my knowledge, ever felt himself obligated to rebuild the city or to restore its cult, although the ruins are located in the heartland of the kingdom. As far as I can see, the city is not included as a station in the trips taken by the Hittite king in the great festivals³⁸. This negative evidence should be contrasted with the rich material documenting the affiliation with the city and cult of Nerik throughout Hittite history³⁹.

As the cruciform seal impressively demonstrates, the empire period kings looked back and related themselves to a long ancestral tradition⁴⁰. Their selection of “throne names”⁴¹, the offering-lists to deceased members of the royal family⁴² and other cult practices within the great

³³ According to Archi, *Offizielle Religion*, p. 24, the singer(s) of Kaneš/Nesa were chanting to gods who, with the exception of Inar, were not normally featured in the main pantheons, “but also (to) local deities who were held to be close to the most immediate needs of the Hittite speaking population.” Yet, since almost nothing is known about popular religion in Hittite Anatolia on the one hand, and the true socio-linguistic situation in Hattusa (H. C. Melchert, *The Luwians*. (HdO 68). Leiden - Boston 2003, p. 13) on the other hand, the last sentence of Archi’s conclusion is rather speculative.

³⁴ Archi, *ebenda*, p. 23.

³⁵ Bryce, *The Kingdom of the Hittites*, pp. 17-18; Melchert, *The Luwians*, p. 15; van den Hout, *Margins of Writing*, p. 234.

³⁶ Klinger, *StBoT* 37, p. 161.

³⁷ K.R. Veenhof, *Akkadica* 119-120 (2000), p. 149 dates the end of level Ib of the Kārum Kaneš to ca. 1685/80 BC.

³⁸ For the itineraries in the great festivals, see now the overview by M. Nakamura, *Das hethitische nuntarriyašša-Fest*. Leiden 2002, pp. 11-12 and p. 438.

³⁹ For the material concerning Nerik, V. Haas, *Der Kult von Nerik*. (Stud. Pohl 4). Rome 1970.

⁴⁰ Published by Dinçol et alii, *Istanbuler Mitteilungen* 43 (1993), pp. 87-106. For recent treatments, see Beal, *Studies Hoffner*, pp. 31-33 and Miller, *StBoT* 46, pp. 7-9.

⁴¹ The empire-period Hattusili relates himself, for example, in his “Autobiography” with his Old Hittite ancestor Hattusili I. For a recent translation of this text with previous literature see van den Hout, *CoS* I (1997), pp. 199-204.

⁴² Edited by Otten, *MDOG* 83 (1951) pagine. See most recently Beal, *Studies Hoffner*, pp. 15-21.

festivals⁴³ all demonstrate the affiliation of the empire period kings with the past. Anitta and his father Pithāna are not mentioned in the offering-lists and are likewise missing in the section dedicated to the Old Hittite kings in the cruciform seal. No Hittite king named himself after the two. On the other hand, the evidence seems to indicate that at least in the empire period a certain Huzziya was considered as the founder of the ruling dynasty⁴⁴. A king Huzziya is indeed mentioned in the Anitta Text, but interestingly as a king of Zalpa (§11)⁴⁵.

Nevertheless, most scholars attribute some kind of continuity between the Kussaran dynasty of Pithāna and Anitta and the Hittite Kingdom, although scholarly opinion definitely differs on the exact nature and quality of this relation⁴⁶. Yet besides the association with Kussara, which Anitta shares with Hattusili I, there is nothing to suggest that the Hittites identified Anitta, the destroyer of Hattus, as an ancestor. In fact, Anitta is not a very suitable candidate for a founder figure because of his destruction and curse of the city (§12) that later would become the Hittite capital⁴⁷. In fact, we know of this curse only because no Hittite scribe ever bothered to erase it from the three different copies of Anitta's inscription(s), found in Hattusa. In any case, the connecting link to Anitta is Kussara, not Kaneš/Nesa.

To conclude, it seems to me that modern Hittitology is more strongly attached to the city of Nesa than the Hittites themselves were. The evidence for an Hittite *emic* affiliation with the city – and there are indeed some interesting indications for it, such as the famous “Song of Nesa” in the Puhanu-Text– deserves, in my opinion, to be reconsidered and studied within a broader methodological framework. I will return to this on another occasion. An alternative, and tentative, explanation for the appearance of the queen of Kaneš/Nesa at the beginning of the tale will be offered later on.

The second way to interpret the way in which the tale may function within the larger historical narrative is to assume that the tale serves as a justification for the later destruction of Zalpa by the Hittites, as narrated in the historical part. According to this interpretation, which is shared by many commentators on the text, the later destruction of the city is legitimized by the

⁴³ For some of these practices see now D. Schwemer, “Von Tahirpa nach Hattusa. Überlegungen zu den ersten Tagen des AN.TAḪ.ŠUM-Festes”, pp. 395-412, in *Offizielle Religion, lokale Kulte und individuelle Religiosität, Akten des religionsgeschichtlichen Symposiums “Kleinasien und angrenzende Gebiete vom Beginn des 2. bis zur Mitte des 1. Jahrtausends v. Chr.* Bonn, 20.-22. Februar 2003, M. Hutter, S. Hutter-Braunsar edd. *Alter Orient und Altes Testament* (AOAT 318). Münster 2004, p. 409 with n. 50-51 and previous literature.

⁴⁴ Beal, *Studies Hoffner*, pp. 31-32.

⁴⁵ The Anitta-text (CTH 1) was edited by E. Neu, *Der Anitta-Text*. (StBoT 18). Wiesbaden 1974. See now the edition of O. Carruba, *Anittae Res Gestae*. (Studia Mediterranea 13. Series Hethaea 1). Copiano 2003. Hoffner, *CoS I*, (1997), 182-184, offers a recent English translation of the text and previous literature. See now also Haas, *Hethitische Literatur*, pp. 28-31.

⁴⁶ Starke's, *Der Neue Pauly*. Band 5, 1998, p. 189, equation of Anitta with Labarna (I.) and his claim of unbroken continuity between Anitta's empire and the Old Hittite Kingdom may represent one end of the spectrum. The following arguments definitely represent the other end.

⁴⁷ See also Miller, *AoF* 28 (2001), p. 98.

incest sin committed by the sons⁴⁸. However, a closer look at the tale may raise some questions concerning this interpretation.

In his recent treatment of the tale within his study of the *natta āra* expression Cohen shows that the participants in the incest story were all ignorant of their imminent sin⁴⁹. In fact, the narrator even gets himself into some difficulties in trying to emphasise this. Although the sons learn from the people of Tamarmara about their true identity, they do not recognize, with the exception of the youngest, their sisters. The gods themselves change their *karrat*- so that their mother, the queen of Kaneš/Nesa will not recognize them and thus will give them her daughters in marriage. As Cohen points out, according to the Hittite laws, an offender is punished only if he knowingly committed *hurkel*-⁵⁰.

Cohen concludes his discussion of the incest tale as follows: ‘It can be stated that the author’s intent was not to blame a particular participant, representative of a singular ethnic or geographically located group, since all involved acted out of ignorance.... Rather, the intent was to formulate a sexual prohibition which heightens the sense of group distinction and social awareness’⁵¹. Yet if this is indeed so, and all the participants involved are innocent, how could the incest tale legitimize the destruction of the city? Anyway, why is Zalpa to be blamed for an offence conducted in Nesa by princes and princesses originating from Nesa in the first place?

If anyone is to be blamed, it is the gods. Indeed, the incest tale ends with a divine prophecy. KBo 22.2 breaks exactly at the act of incest (obv. 20). The narrative is resumed in KBo 3.38, according to Otten, only very shortly after the break⁵². Someone (the princes, or just the youngest one), is returning to Zalpa and offerings are given to the Sun Deity and to the Earth. The scene ends with a prophecy of the Sun Deity concerning Zalpa. Unfortunately, from this prophecy only the beginning of line 6’: [p]a-id-du mi-i-ya-ru URU²Za-al-pu-u-wa-aš [] x x [... has survived. This is usually taken as in inverted word order and translated as a benediction to Zalpa: “Henceforth let Zalpa prosper”⁵³. However, the subject of *paiddu miyaru* could just as well be located at the missing end of line 5’, whereas with Zalpa a new clause begins⁵⁴. Thus, the sun deity could have prophesized Zalpa another, possibly negative fate, which would better fit to the following sentence “when later on war broke out”. A benediction from the sun deity to a city

⁴⁸ See for example Singer, *IOS* 15 (1995), p. 124: (The tale) “is clearly an aetiological justification for the domination of Hattusa and its ruling dynasty”. According to Oettinger, *2000 v. Chr.*, p. 362 serves the tale as a warning to future enemies of the kingdom.

⁴⁹ Y. Cohen, *Theth* 24, pp. 76-77.

⁵⁰ Cohen, *Theth* 24, p. 77 n. 338.

⁵¹ Cohen, *Theth* 24, pp. 77-78.

⁵² Otten, *StBoT* 17, p. 36.

⁵³ Otten, *StBoT* 17, p. 9: “es soll dazu kommen, daß die Stadt Zalpuwa gedeiht[...]”. CHD L-N, 1989, p. 115b with the translation above and the restoration [p]a-id-du mi-i-ya-ru // URU²Za-al-pu-u-wa-aš [nu² EG]IR.U[D-^M...]. For phraseological constructions with *pai*- see Th. van den Hout, “Studies in the Hittite Phraseological Construction I: Its Syntactic and Semantic Properties”, *Studies Hoffner*, pp. 177-203.

⁵⁴ Güterbock, *ZA* 44 (1938), p. 102, places a comma between “möge gehen und gedeihen” and “Zalpuwa” in his translation of the sentence. Watkins, *Studies Morpurgo Davies*, p. 70 translates “Let it go and strive. Zalpa(’s?) ...”.

just about to be destroyed could only be ironic.

However, why should the destruction of Zalpa be justified or legitimized by an ambivalent incest tale in *illo tempore* in the first place? The reasons for the destruction of the city are given simply and straightforwardly at the closing passage of the text (KBo 22.2 rev. 10'-15').

“In the third year the king went and blockaded Zalpa. He remained there for two years. He demanded the extradition of Tabarna and Happi, but the men of the city would not give them up. So they besieged them until they all died. The king returned to Hattusa to worship the gods, but he left the LUGAL ŠU.GI there. He went up against the city (saying): ‘I will become your king’. But the population was with them (the rebels), so he destroyed the city”⁵⁵.

Zalpa fell because its inhabitants supported the rebels Happi and Tabarna up to the very end. The text does not give further information about the identity of Tabarna⁵⁶. Happi, on the other hand, is a prince who fell out of the Hittite king’s favour (KBo 22.2, rev. 4'-6'):

“Happi spoke to the men of Zalpa: ‘I am not loved by my father. I went to Hattusa risking my life and the Zalpans were with me, 100 men, weren’t they? Yet they did not die’ “

It is more than probable that Tabarna and Tamnassu, who is captured by the king and brought to Hattusa (KBo 22.2, rev. 9'), were also rebellious members of the royal family⁵⁷. The previous conflict, involving the grandfather of the king and the father of the LUGAL ŠU.GI, likewise evolved around a prince, Hakkarpili, who was sent to rule Zalpa on the request of the elders of the town (KBo 3.38, obv. 21'-22'). The following scene, which consists of a dialogue between Hakkarpili, Kiswa and the inhabitants of Zalpa, is unfortunately very fragmentary. Nevertheless, it seems that Hakkarpili, just like Happi after him, made himself unfavourable to the king, presumably because he did not follow his instructions, given in the previous paragraph (KBo 3.38, obv. 23'-25'). He possibly even incites the Zalpans to go to war against the king⁵⁸. The fact that Kiswa comes to Hattusa and informs the king⁵⁹ strongly suggests that Hakkarpili is the wrongdoer in this episode.

But also the first episode - ‘when later on war broke out’ - involves a conflict within the court. A certain Tabarna is mentioned and a daughter, presumably of the grandfather of the king, that was murdered by Alluwa, the ^{LU}ŠÀ.TAM “the Chamberlain” of the king of Zalpa. As a result, the grandfather of the king marched against Zalpa. Alluwa died in that battle. Sixty households were settled in Tawiniya (KBo 3.38, obv. 7'-17').

In summary, thus far the historical narrative culminating in the destruction of Zalpa deals with the subject of rebellious princes and the tragic outcome of their mutinies. The message

⁵⁵ Translation after Starke, StBoT 23, p. 183. For another attestation of ÉRIN^{MEŠ} as “population” see IBoT 1.30, obv. 3 (CHD L-N, 1989, pp. 451-452).

⁵⁶ For this Tabarna see, among others, Klinger, StBoT 37, pp. 119-120, with further literature.

⁵⁷ Tamnassu is mentioned in the very fragmentary beginning of the rev. of KBo 3.38 (with duplicate KUB 23.23, see Groddek, *AoF* 25 (1998), pp. 228-229. The broken context strongly suggests, however, that Tamnassu was of royal blood or was made king (6').

⁵⁸ If KBo 3.38, obv. 28': ḪUL-lu war-zi nu ku-ru-ur e-ep-ten “he holds evil, so make war” indeed refers to the king.

⁵⁹ Following Groddek’s restoration of KUB 23. 23, obv. 17', *AoF* 25 (1998), p. 228.

seems to be that Zalpa was not only destroyed once because of princes rising up against the king. In fact, the entire history of relations between Zalpa and the Hittite ruling dynasty, starting with the grandfather of the king, was shaped by the destruction wrought by rebelling princes or by murders within the dynasty.

Murders within the dynasty and strife within the royal family plagued the Hittite Kingdom throughout its history and probably even led to its final demise. This theme was also reflected in Hittite literature throughout Hittite history. Old Hittite political literature, most notably the so-called Political Testament of Hattusili I (CTH 6) and the Telipinu Text (CTH 19), repeatedly stresses the importance of unity within the royal family for the stability and success of the kingdom.

“[For]merly”, writes Telipinu in the historical introduction to his Text, summing up the essence of Hittite political thought, “Labarna was great king and his [son]s, [brothe]rs, his in-laws, the men of his family and his troops were united. The Land, however, was small but wherever he went on campaign, he held the enemy subdued by (his) might. He defeated the lands, one after another, stripped (?) the lands of their power and made them the borders of the sea. When he came back from campaign, however, each (of) his sons went somewhere to a country: Hupisna, Tuwanuwa, Nenassa, Landa, Zallara, Parsuhanta (and) Lusna, the(se) countries they each governed and the great cities made progress”⁶⁰.

Labarna’s practice of government – sending princes to govern different parts of the kingdom – was replicated by his successors throughout the history of the Hittite empire. It is well known that the extended royal family played an overwhelmingly important role in Hittite politics. This system of government, however, also conceals a permanent danger to the ruling monarch. The empire age king Tudhaliya, suffering the consequences of his father’s usurpation of the throne, explicitly articulates this peril in his instructions to the LÚ.MEŠ.SAG⁶¹:

“Protect His Majesty as well as the seed of His Majesty for His Majesty has many brothers. There are also many [brothers of his father]. The land of Hattusa is filled with the seed of kingship. In Hattusa the seed of Suppiluliuma, the seed of Mursili, the seed of Muwatalli (and) the seed of Hattusili are many. Protect no man for lordship other than the seed of Tudhaliya”.

Tudhaliya understood the dangers of the Hittite system of government very well: a multitude of princes is a permanent threat to king and kingdom. This, however, brings us directly back to the incest tale at the beginning of the Zalpa text.

As correctly noted by Ünal, the whole incest story is triggered by the amazing number of thirty children, instantly borne by the queen of Kaneš/Nesa⁶². She herself expresses her bewilderment – ‘What is th[is]? I have given birth to a crowd!’ – And consequently decides to expose her children to the river. But also the following scene – the dialogue between the sons and the inhabitants of Tamarmara – evolves around the strangeness of their birth. In the

⁶⁰ Translation by Th. van den Hout, *CoS I*, 1997, p. 194.

⁶¹ KUB 26.1, I 8-16. The translation follows the CHD L-N, 1989, p. 245b.

⁶² A. Ünal, *Keilschriftliche Literaturen*, pp. 130-131.

dialogue, triggered by the sexual act with the donkey⁶³, the sons reply to the men of Tamarmara (KBo 22.2, obv. 11-15):

“Where we came (from), a woman gives birth to [one or two] sons (at one time). Yet (our mother) begot us (all) at one time’ The men of the city said: ‘Once our queen of Nesa gave birth to thirty daughters at one time, but the sons have disappeared.’ The boys said to themselves: ‘We have found our mother whom we have been seeking. Come, let us go to Nesa’”.

However, although the sons are now aware of their identity, the gods intervene and change their *karrat*- so that the mother and her sons would not recognize each other (KBo 22.2, obv. 17, 18). As noted by Cohen, the expression *natta ganeš(š)*- “not recognize” is of central importance for the understanding of the tale⁶⁴. I wonder whether the queen of Kaneš/Nesa was not chosen for her leading role in the tale simply as a pun, as a word play on *ganes(s)*-, *kanes(s)*-⁶⁵.

At any rate, the incest with the thirty sisters is made unavoidable by the gods. The message of the tale, in my opinion, is plain and straightforward. The existence of so many princes and princesses inevitably leads to no good. According to this interpretation the incest tale serves neither as a pre-historical introduction to the narrative concerning the relations between Zalpa and Hatusa, nor as a mythological justification for the destruction of the city. In my opinion, the incest tale provides a powerful and effective allegory not only to the historical narrative that follows it but also to one of the most acute political problems that occupied the Hittites throughout their history. Rather than interpreting the movements of the princes to Zalpa and back as reflexes of ancient migrations or city foundations, one could consider these as reflecting spatial movements of princes as part of the practice of government. Princes were sent away by their fathers, like Hakkarpili in the Zalpa text, to govern different parts of the kingdom, others became princes by entering the king’s household by adoption or by the institution of *antiyant* marriage. Daughters were sent to foreign courts to be married. Princes who had fallen from favour were given households in the provinces and were not allowed to return to capital. A multitude of princes and princesses may also be a threat to this system of government.

Furthermore, a prodigious instant birth of 30 princes poses another acute problem, which is faced by most monarchies - the problem of succession to the throne. The incest tale provides a solution in that it enables the youngest son to be separated from the rest and return alone to Zalpa (KBo 3.38, obv. 2’). This is, however, only a temporary solution. The Sun Deity had wished, as we have seen, something to be abundant and to prosper. It is therefore tempting to suggest that what is meant here is the progeny of this prince and that this should be restored to the broken end of line 5’. With an abundant royal family, troubles starts all over again and Zalpa will demise, as the historical narrative indeed conveys. Before I conclude my remarks, I would

⁶³ See now Watkins, *Studies Morpurgo Davies*, pp. 73-78.

⁶⁴ Cohen, Theth 24, p. 77 n. 338. For *ganes(s)*-, *kanes(s)*- see Puhvel, HED K, (1997), pp. 42-46.

⁶⁵ As noted by Oettinger, 2000 v. *Chr.* p. 361 n. 10, MUNUS.LUGAL ^{URU}KA-NI-IŠ was probably read *Nesas hassussaras* by a Hittite scribe, but as the adverb *kanisumnili* (Otten, StBoT 17, p. 15) shows, both writings of the city’s name were in use. For the two forms and their origin see Güterbock, *Eretz Israel* 5 (1958), pp. 46-50. For word plays on the names of towns in ritual context see D. Bawanyeck, Theth 25 pp. 80-81.

like briefly to address three further issues: the identity of the LUGAL ŠU.GI, the function of the Zalpa text and its evaluation as a work of historiography.

The historical narrative, which follows the Incest tale, has been known since the dawn of Hittitology. The text, however, was only rarely used for the reconstruction of Old Hittite history, as Beal recently pointed out⁶⁶. One of the main complications in the utilization of the text for the reconstruction of Hittite history lies in the fact that next to the “king” and the “grandfather of the king” we also find the “old king” (LUGAL ŠU.GI) and even the “father of the old king”⁶⁷. In his recent, excellent treatment of the text, Beal convincingly equates the “king” in the Zalpa text, usually assumed to be Mursili, with Hattusili I⁶⁸. The “old king” is identified by Beal as Labarna I, Hattusili’s uncle, thus assuming a coregency between Labarna I and Hattusili⁶⁹. In my opinion, however, Beal dismisses too soon the possibility, already suggested by Pecchioli Daddi⁷⁰, that the “old king” and his father are to be distinguished from the Hittite ruling line, represented in the text by “the king” and his grandfather⁷¹. The title LUGAL ŠU.GI “old king” is quite singular in the Hittite material. The empire-period copyist had his difficulties with this title, emending it to LÚ.MEŠ GAL “grandees”⁷². In his commentary of the last paragraph of the text, Otten interprets the situation as coregency⁷³. The emendation of the NH scribe suggests, however, that he understood the relation between the “king” and the “old king” as hierarchical, and it seems to me that his interpretation should be preferred. In the last passage (KBo 22.2, rev. 10’-15’), given above, the “king” is clearly in charge, he besieges the city, demands the extradition of the rebel princes Happi and Tabarna, returns afterwards to Hattusa to worship the gods and leaves the “old king” to finish the job. The “old king”, now alone in charge, declares his wish to become king in Zalpa, a title which throughout the Zalpa text was reserved for sons, that is to subordinates, of the Hittite kings (the “king” and his “grandfather”). This does not fit at all, in my opinion, to an aged Labarna I., who after all, was a major Old Hittite king⁷⁴. Why would this Labarna want to become a king of Zalpa? The reason for the “old king’s” ambitions to the throne of Zalpa becomes evident, however, when the circumstances in which his father is mentioned are considered. Following Klinger’s reconstruction of KBo 3.38, obv. 19’-20’: *A-BI A-BI LUGAL-^{URU}ma Hu-ur-ma-an A-NA A-BI LUGAL ŠU.G[I] x* it seems the “grandfather of the king” gave the city of Hurma to the “father of the old king”, a fact which is central to Beal’s historical

⁶⁶ Beal, *Studies Hoffner*, p. 21.

⁶⁷ Following Klinger, *StBoT* 37, pp. 117-118.

⁶⁸ Beal, *Studies Hoffner*, pp. 22-25 following suggestions by Pecchioli Daddi, *OAM* 1 (1994), p. 77 and S. Bin-Nun, *Theth* 5, p. 56. For the identification of the “king” with Mursili, see the literature cited by Beal, *Studies Hoffner* p. 22 n. 51.

⁶⁹ Beal, *Studies Hoffner*, pp. 24-26, 34-5.

⁷⁰ Pecchioli Daddi, *OAM* 1 (1994), p. 86 considers the “old king” and his father as Zalpan proponents of the Hittites.

⁷¹ Beal, *Studies Hoffner*, p. 22 n. 49.

⁷² Klinger, *StBoT* 37, p. 118 n. 150, CHD L-N, 1989, p. 224a. KUB 23.23, obv. 11’-12’, which fills the gap at the end of the obv. (D. Groddek, *AoF* 25, p. 228) does mention some grandees.

⁷³ Otten, *StBoT* 17, p. 55.

⁷⁴ According to the historical introduction of the Telipinu-Text and the cruciform-seal.

reconstruction⁷⁵. Yet why does the narrator of the Zalpa text bother to give us this valuable piece of information in the first place? The context (KBo 3.38, obv. 18'-25') is fragmentary, but several interpretations are possible. Either the elders of Zalpa request a son from the grandfather of the king because he sent the "father of the old king" to govern Hurma, thus suggesting that the "father of the old king" was actually supposed to rule Zalpa⁷⁶. This would explain why his son, the "old king", claims for himself the kingship of Zalpa at the end of the composition. Alternatively, the elders of Zalpa request a son from the 'grandfather of the king' but receive the son of the "father of the old king". Thus, the function of the information concerning Hurma is to introduce this new figure to the narrative. Note that Hakkarpili refers to the king as 'king' and not as 'my father' (KBo 3.38, obv. 27', 34')⁷⁷. This would make Hakkarpili himself the "old king", who renews, at the end of the composition, his ambitions to govern the city that was originally given to him⁷⁸. In both cases, the "old king" seems to be a minor king of local importance, rather than a coregent of the king in Hattusa. Supportive of this is the fact that both the "old king" and his father are only mentioned once, respectively, whereas the 'grandfather of the king' and the 'king' are both campaigning several times against Zalpa. In fact, if one follows Groddek's reconstruction of KBo 3.38, obv. 36': *ṁKi-iš-wa-aš-ša ú-it nu L[UGAL-]i me-mi-iš-ta*⁷⁹ it seems that the narrative moves flawlessly from the 'grandfather of the king' to the 'king', thus leaving no room for a regency between them. Therefore, I suggest that the notion of coregency in the Zalpa text should be renounced. For the reconstruction of early Hittite history the text offers a 'king' that was preceded by his 'grandfather'.

There is, however, another reason why the text is so difficult to utilize historically. Whereas the names of the Zalpan royalties or of the rebelling princes are given, the names of the king and his grandfather, the 'old king' and his father are not. Furthermore, there is nothing to suggest, although beginning, end and colophon are intact, that a king is the fictional author of the text - that the text represents a speech of a king, an important characteristic of Hittite historiography⁸⁰. All this strongly suggests that the Zalpa text is not conceived as a work of propaganda, celebrating the destruction of Zalpa for generations to come, because otherwise one would expect the name and titles of the celebrating king to be given.⁸¹ In my opinion, the

⁷⁵ Beal, *Studies Hoffner*, pp. 22-31.

⁷⁶ Note the conjugation particle *-ma*. According to Beal, *Studies Hoffner*, p. 21, the act of giving the city of Hurma only may have inspired the elders of Zalpa to request a son.

⁷⁷ The fact both Hattusa and the elders of Zalpa ask for a son (KBo 3.38, obv. (20')... *URU Ha-at-tu-ša-aš-ša* (21') *Ṭ LU.MEŠ ŠU.GI URU Za-al-pa* ... speaks also in favour of the second option.

⁷⁸ The examples collected by the CHD L-N, 1989, pp. 223-227 **mi(ya)hu(wa)nt* do not allow, however, a translation 'ex-king, former king' for LUGAL ŠU.GI., as suggested for example by O. Soysal, *Mursili I. Eine historische Studie*. (Diss. Julius-Maximilians-Universität). Würzburg 1989.

⁷⁹ Groddek, *AoF* 25 (1998), p. 228.

⁸⁰ Güterbock, "Hittite Historiography: A Survey", in H. Tadmor – M. Weinfeld (eds.). *History, Historiography and Interpretation*. Jerusalem 1983, pp. 21-35.

⁸¹ As already noted by Archi, *Athenaeum* 47 (*Fs. P. Meriggi*). Pavia 1969, p. 9. For the function and audience of the Hittite "annals" see recently H. Roszkowska-Mutschler, "Zu den Mannestaten der

existence of the incest tale at the beginning of the text reduces the likelihood that the text was composed as a prelude to a treaty or in anticipation of a further campaign against Zalpa, as Beal suggests⁸². Instead, I consider the Zalpa text to be a didactic work of historiography, addressed not for future generations like the ‘manly deeds’ but for contemporary use, for an audience who knew exactly who the ‘king’ and the ‘grandfather of the king’ were. In fact, one could postulate the ruling elite in court – i.e. princes and other members of the extended royal family – as the audience of this didactic work of historiography.

Finally, the quality of the Zalpa text as a work of historiography should not be underestimated because of its unique mixture of history and legend. ‘Hard’ historical narratives and folktales coexist peacefully side by side in various sections in Herodotus’ Histories. As Griffiths points out, Herodotus does not only seek to delight and amuse his audience by the inclusion of folktales, he also understood ‘How much suggestive depth can be added to a narrative by the selective inclusion of stories with an aura of the irrational’⁸³. It seems to me that the nameless author of the Zalpa text understood this principle as well⁸⁴.

hethitischen Könige und ihrem Sitz im Leben”, in *Silva Anatolica. Anatolian Studies Presented to Maciej Popko on the Occasion of his 65th Birthday*, P. Taracha ed. Warsaw 2002, pp. 289-300 and Gilan, “Die hethitischen ‘Mannestaten und ihre Adressaten’”, in *Acts of the 5th International Congress of Hittitology, Corum, 2-6 September 2002*. Ankara 2005, pp. 359-369.

⁸² Beal, *Studies Hoffner*, p. 24 with n. 64.

⁸³ A. Griffiths, “Euenius the Negligent Night watchman (*Herodotus* 9. 92-96)”, in R. Buxton ed. *From Myth to Reason?*. Oxford 1999, p. 182.

⁸⁴ For a more comprehensive discussion of the text within Old Historiography in general, see my forthcoming PhD. dissertation. A different take on this question, which likewise emphasizes the historiographic nature of the Zalpa text, is offered now by C. Corti, *Studia Asiana* 3. Roma 2005, pp. 113-121.