

Chapter 29

The "Influence" of Sumerian on Hittite Literature.

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Influence and Contact

The question of influence between literatures should be subjected to some critical review. To speak of one literature associated with one area influencing the literature of another area might carry the assumption that there is an imbalance of power between the two in some respect, that may be expressed in terms of prestige, social domination or colonisation.

According to colonial-style thought the literature that delivers the influence might be thought of as active and originating, while the one that receives the influence is supposed to be passive and receptive. "Influence" is thus a concept that one needs to treat with care, along with the closely related concepts of core and periphery, which presuppose in their most unreflected forms a unidirectional processing of information from a culturally high-standing core area towards a culturally low-standing periphery, where the message and content of the material is in some sense diluted or misunderstood.

One methodological precaution that can be taken to prevent falling into traps associated with the notion of influence is to look at the way people have worked with literary material first and foremost from the perspective of local cultural norms, to try to understand specific literary forms on their own terms before appealing to explanations that invoke an outside agency or a derivation from an august tradition hallowed by its ancient sanctity. This involves looking at the use of literature as a social activity, embedded in a particular society at a particular time and place, perpetrated by particular agents with specific group interests which are hardly ever to be defined in terms of ethnic categories. It also involves recognising that all literature, as indeed all social activity, is in some sense hybrid, and that a pure type that is essentially characteristic of the people who lived in a particular area at the same time is unlikely to be found, even if the literature of the place and time specifically invokes such thematic categories as its derivation from ancient tradition and its preservation and transmission of special knowledge that is peculiar to a specific group of people. For an entry to theoretical consideration of ideas related to hybridity and influence, albeit applied to very different areas of research, the reader is referred in tokenistic fashion to the work of Homi Bhabha (e.g. 1994, 110-112) and Monica Fludernik (1998); for hybridity in literature and

culture through history see Amar Acheraïou (2011, 13-50), and specifically with reference to Sumerian literature see Gonzalo Rubio (2016).

If we consider the question of influence or contact between Sumerian and Hittite cuneiform literary traditions we are confronted by a major problem. It is highly unlikely that any Hittite understood the Sumerian language in anything even closely resembling its spoken form. Therefore there is no possibility that a context for literary contact such as existed between Arabic and Hebrew in medieval Spain (Drory 1993), or between Greek and Latin in the late Roman Republic (Kaimio 1979; Hutchinson 2013) existed in any sense. There is no way in which Sumerian in Hittite Anatolia (ca. 1600-1200 BC) was ever a language of administration (as Arabic was in Spanish Al-Andalus) or a language of active literary endeavour as Arabic was in the medieval period and Greek was in the late Roman Republic. However, the Hittites adopted the cuneiform script for their own use, and the cuneiform script they used was populated by word-signs that were Sumerian in origin, just as Akkadian was written using Sumerian word-signs in Mesopotamia (Marquardt 2011; Weeden 2011). It is not clear, however, whether the identity of the language from which these logographic writings stemmed was known to Hittite scribes, as they nowhere mention its name. Occasional phonetic writings of Sumerographic phrases show that some of the scribes must have known how some of the signs were supposed to be pronounced, but I think these are relatively few by comparison to other cuneiform writing traditions that tend to write Sumerograms phonetically rather than logographically. At any rate, the use of Sumerographic writings of words, which is a feature of most cuneiform during the 2nd and first millennia BC, will not be discussed any further here, where the concern is rather with texts in the Sumerian language and any types of contact there may have been between these and those of the Hittites.

The status of Sumerian in the Late Bronze Age

It is unclear when Sumerian died out as a spoken language, but almost certainly it was either before or around the time that the vast majority of Sumerian literary texts were written down as exercises in Old Babylonian school-environments during the 19th and 18th centuries BCE (Woods 2006; Sallaberger 2011). Aside from its use to write Akkadian words logographically, by the late Old Babylonian period Sumerian had become not just a language of learning, but was verging on becoming a language of the obscure, a language which had

been revealed to learned people to keep them separate from the rest of humanity, the impenetrable language of the gods. Two Mesopotamian scholastic compositions of the second millennium BCE make this view clear. The composition referred to by modern academics as *The Scholars of Uruk* tells us how the god of wisdom sent out a sage to take "the scribal art" to Uruk and "gave birth to much Sumerian in the hearts of my men" (George 2009, 89, l. 48). Sumerian by the time of this composition is so far removed from being a spoken vernacular, that its existence cannot be conceived without writing (George 2009, 110-111).

Another somewhat esoteric work (*KAR 4 rev. 20*; Ebeling 1919, 8) tells us how the world was divided into the learned (*ummânu ana ummâni*) and the stupid (*nû'u ana nû'i*). This is part of a bilingual Sumerian-Akkadian creation myth which appears in the position where a translation or explanation would usually be placed in the right hand column of the Syllable Alphabet A, the first cuneiform syllable-forming exercise many scribes would ever have learned (Cavigneaux and Jacques 2010). By this time in the late second millennium BCE most lexical lists were provided with explanatory columns, which may make sense if you have a list of meaningful words or signs for the explanations to correspond to on the left hand side, but seems obscure for Syllable Alphabet A, which mostly consists of allegedly meaningless sounds and syllables, as well as a few personal names. This brief creation story has been referred to as a charter myth for the scribal caste (Cavigneaux and Jacques 2010, 10-11). The insertion of this myth into the explanatory column of a lexical list learned by beginner scribes, which otherwise consists of repeated sounds and occasional names, indicates heremeneutic associations with the material of learning, with what J. Cale Johnson has called the "infrastructure" of scholarship (Johnson 2015; Johnson and Geller 2015, 31). The Hittites do not seem to have used Syllable Alphabet A in scribal education, although there is possibly one fragment that may be related, and indeed may belong to the more advanced Syllable Vocabulary A, in which the meaningless syllabic sounds arranged for practice in Syllable Alphabet A were given speculative meanings (Farber 1999, 127; Scheucher 2012, 351). In fact recent studies have shown that the preserved Hittite lexical material, as used for scribal education in Mesopotamia, for the large part belonged to the advanced spectrum of the Mesopotamian curriculum (Scheucher 2012), although indirect evidence indicates that they do seem to have been aware of some of the more elementary exercises (Klinger 2005, 112-113; Weeden 2011, 92). There are none of the typical practice

tablets known from Mesopotamian school contexts found in the temple and palace archives of the Hittite capital. This could conceivably be an accident of discovery, meaning the scribal education might have happened elsewhere and only the most accomplished products were transferred to the archive or library. However, this would presuppose a use of cuneiform in domestic contexts, which does not seem to correspond to the overall picture we have of cuneiform at Hattusa, where it seems to be largely restricted to use by scribes in the service of the ruling family, who curated collections which had developed to cater to the protection of their masters from impurity and the justification of their actions in the eyes of the gods (van den Hout 2005; Weeden 2011b).

This social context of Hittite cuneiform writing, which seems with few exceptions not to have been used for personal economic purposes such as on a large portion of the documentation from Mesopotamia, should have some repercussions for our perception of the kind of social activity that is subsumed under Hittite cuneiform writing (Weeden 2011b). Some modern scholars point to an apparent division of labour among Hittite scribes (van den Hout 2015; slightly differently Gordin 2015, 355). Only a professional elite among the scribal guild may have been concerned with composing or altering texts of learning, while others were concerned with the lugubrious and tedious tasks of actually writing the texts out on tablets. If such a division existed, we might a priori assume, subject to further research, that those scribes who belonged to the category that we might reify as being "scholars" rather than "clerks" might have been interested in similar hermeneutic procedures as were their Mesopotamian counterparts. These frequently involved the use of Sumerian, accessed from the lexical lists, as a hermeneutical key to understanding omens, where the positive or negative outcomes of events are inscribed by the gods in the fabric of the world, and traditional literature, which formed the basis for interpreting and guiding the behaviour of human beings, frequently using similar hermeneutic procedures with Sumerian at their base (For such scholarly procedures in first millennium BC Mesopotamia see Frahm 2011). While this assumption seems a priori quite likely given some of the other contexts mentioned above, it is not a field on which much research has been done, and it does in fact militate against certain common assumptions concerning the reception of Mesopotamian traditional literature at Hattusa, namely that Hittite scribes misunderstood and wrongly transmitted the material that they had inherited from the Mesopotamian literary tradition. These assumptions need to be questioned (Veldhuis 2014a, 29).

In the following we will look at the various types of Sumerian-language documents that are available from Boğazköy-Hattusa and consider what they were used for and what evidence there may be for there being any kind of connection between these and Hittite language texts from the same site. We shall then consider some examples of Hittite language texts which have been identified as having a close connection with Sumerian texts from Mesopotamia and look at how this might have been conveyed.

The Use of Sumerian Texts at Hattusa

A thorough presentation and selective analysis of the number of texts on tablets found at Hattusa that contain Sumerian literary material, excluding lexical lists, has been provided by M. Viano in the framework of a study on the reception of Sumerian Literature in the "western periphery" (Viano 2016). This study sought to investigate the streams of transmission through which Sumerian literature reached Hattusa using methods of palaeographic and orthographic analysis. The majority of the Sumerian literary tablets, 35 of them, contain incantations, sometimes whole collections of them. There is some debate as to whether incantations should be termed literary or not, given that these are essentially use-oriented compositions and that they received different ancient genre specifications (e.g. *én*, 'incantation') to various types of composition more traditionally associated with what we call literature today (e.g. *šir*, 'song'). However, Sumerian incantations from Mesopotamia typically contained *historiolae* of a narrative type which are used to explain and guarantee the efficacy of the incantation (George 2016, 12). Mostly there is little or no trace of the mythological narratives contained therein in other, more formal literature, which may be an indication that they belong to either a more popular and separate narrative register or an older one. However, the quantity of these types of texts in the total of tablets containing Sumerian language material outside of the lexical lists at Hattusa certainly warrants that one discuss them under the rubric of Sumerian literature at Hattusa.

The tablets of the archives at Hattusa are written in different styles of cuneiform. Hittite cuneiform as written at Hattusa has a distinctive character and can be broadly dated according to the sign-forms it uses to an older period (late 16th to late 15th centuries), a middle period (late 15th to mid 14th century) and a late period (mid 14th to ca 1200 BCE). There are also tablets found at Hattusa which are written entirely in foreign styles of cuneiform and may well have been imported, or written by foreign scribes in Hattusa. In the

case of the Sumerian language tablets these "foreign" tablets can be divided, according to Viano (2016, 133-135), into those which have a Babylonian-style script, or those which appear to be written in script-types that derive from the closely related styles known from the northern Mesopotamian Late Bronze Age imperial centres of Mittani and Assyria.

On the basis of the script, tablet format, and above all of the spelling conventions, Viano plausibly suggested that a small group of tablets given the Hittitological catalogue number CTH 800 (Laroche 1971), which contain Sumerian incantations, belonged to the oldest stratum of Sumerian at Hattusa (Viano 2016, 229-235). He compared spelling conventions from northern Babylonian centres such as Me-Turan (Tell Haddad) on the Diyala river (2016, 146-228). Viano convincingly shows that the group of Boğazköy tablets showing this Late Old Babylonian writing style must have come from a northern Babylonian scribal milieu rather than those connected to Nippur in southern Mesopotamia. One tablet in particular (KUB 30.1) shows a variant form of an incantation that is also attested at Me-Turan (Viano 2016, 232-233). Physical format and layout are often good indicators of transmissional context, so I would emphasise that this fragment from Boğazköy shows a particular similarity in format and spelling, but not in content, to a tablet in the Manchester Museum which is supposed on the basis of its writing style to come from the Sippar region and date to the Late Old Babylonian period (MMUM 35516+, Alster 1992). Viano's more speculative proposal (2016, 235) that the group of tablets was picked up along with specialists in exorcism (*āšipū*) by Mursili II in the course of his campaign to Babylon (1595 BCE) is to be regarded with caution, although it is an attractive suggestion. Certainly one should imagine the tablets coming with Babylonian scholars who knew how to read them. Whether this needed to be through conquest or not is a different matter.

Despite the difficulties in distinguishing Old and Middle Babylonian palaeography, i.e. in telling the difference between tablets written roughly in the first half of the second millennium BCE from those of the second half of the same millennium in the area of central Mesopotamia, this group of tablets is likely to be the oldest stratum of Sumerian language texts found at Hattusa and consequently the tablets on which they are written are also broadly speaking among the oldest cuneiform material from the Hittite capital. Most of the tablets from this group that have find-spots were also found in the archives on the citadel at Hattusa, Büyükkale, where one sometimes finds older and selective copies of texts, as opposed to the

archive of the House on the Slope and the tablet deposits in the magazines of Temple 1 in the Lower City, where later and multiple copies of tablets tend to be found.

As we will discuss in more detail below, Christopher Metcalf has successfully made the point that Hittite scholars actively sought out and adapted Mesopotamian literary material that was relevant to their own interests (Metcalf 2015a). This perspective runs counter to the view that Hittite Anatolia was a passive recipient of Mesopotamian cultural material that radiated out to the west and north in a pre-packaged form. What would have been the relevance of this collection of incantations, however? The heavily phonetically written Sumerian could have been used to learn cuneiform, perhaps, but it is difficult to see how this would have been achievable without having the logographically written Sumerian to compare it with. It can only really have been an interest in specific magical practices which motivated this act of collection. One of the frequently recurring motifs, not only in this group but in many of the later groups of Sumerian incantations found at Boğazköy, is the *historiola* of Marduk and Ea, usually referred to as the Marduk-Ea formula, which often appears in an abbreviated form (George 2016, 2-4). Marduk (Sumerian *Asalluhi*) notices the manifestation of an illness or a case of demonic possession and goes to ask Ea (Sumerian *Enki*) what to do about it. Ea tells him that he knows the solution already and there frequently follows an instruction for treatment or an incantation. This Marduk-Ea formula is not found at all in Hittite literature to my knowledge, although it is relatively frequently attested in the Sumerian tablets from Boğazköy. There is thus no sense in which we can talk of a transfer of this particular literary/magical motif from Sumerian to Hittite.

Some elements of magical practice from the incantation, particularly alleged acts of witchcraft that the exorcist seeks to defend the patient against, are also found in Hittite anti-witchcraft ritual texts: the evil eye (Mouton 2010, 111), the making of a figurine (Mouton 2010, 114-115). It seems unlikely that these elements of imagined ritual practice in Anatolia owe their origin to these Sumerian incantations, as they are universal expressions of anxiety about the powers imagined enemies might be conjuring against one (Miller 2010). D. Schwemer has argued that Hittite scribes looked for ritual and magical tablets when the local tradition seemed lacking in a particular regard. Thus they did not import building rituals, of which they had many local ones, but they did import medical prescriptions (Schwemer 2013, 164).

Incantations using motifs such as the evil eye, but also the Marduk-Ea formula, continued to be imported into Hattusa not only from Babylonia but also from Mittani and Assyria. There are also examples that were written in the typical Hattusa form of cuneiform script. Clearly Hittite scribes were writing this material down for some reason, possibly educational, depending on the specialism of a foreign scholar who might have been educating Hittite ones, although this does not have to exclude an interest in their practical use (Schwemer 2013, 158). The later tablets mostly come from the areas of northern Syria and Mesopotamia in which first the Mittanian and then later the closely related Assyrian form of the cuneiform script were used, although a precise localisation is not possible (Viano 2016, §5.2). They include bilingual fragments with Akkadian translations and are also often in a more standard orthographic Sumerian rather than the heavily phonetic versions referred to above. It is thus possible that they played something of a role in scribal education, as they had a little more resemblance to the kind of Sumerian words that Hittite scribes would actually need to write as logograms, although this a priori assumption does not seem to fit the actually attested evidence very well. However, it is also quite possible that the function of these texts by this time at Hattusa was something related to learning, but of a much more erudite and scholastic nature.

Sumerian Literary Texts at Hattusa

Eight Sumerian literary compositions are attested on tablets found at Hattusa which are also known from Mesopotamia as well as from the north Syrian centres of Emar and Ugarit (Viano 2016, 133). By contrast to the previous category, incantations, none of the 12 tablets containing Sumerian literary compositions found at Hattusa has a clearly identifiable non-Boğazköy script-type. In fact one duplicate manuscript of the composition known as *The Message of Ludingira to his Mother* is found in Ugarit in a trilingual ([Sumerian] — Phonetic Sumerian — Akkadian — Hittite) version written in the typically Hittite style of cuneiform, which is not normal at Ugarit otherwise, and was presumably imported from Hattusa or written there by a scribe trained in Hattusa (Viano 2016, 256-265). The tablets all date to the 13th century BCE on the basis of palaeography and are with the exception of one prism written in columns, like lexical lists, maximally containing orthographic Sumerian, phonetic Sumerian, Akkadian and Hittite versions. However, many of the manuscripts are very

fragmentary and it is not always possible to tell if they contained particular columns or not. Most of the tablets date from early excavations during which find-spots were not recorded.

Composition	Manuscripts	Known find-spots	Languages
Hymn to Iškur-Adad	4	2 from House on the Slope	Sumerian, Phonetic Sumerian, Akkadian, Hittite
Message of Ludingira	3	1 from Ugarit	(Sumerian), Phonetic Sumerian, Akkadian, Hittite
Edubba E	1	?	Sumerian, Phonetic Sumerian, (Akkadian), (Hittite?)
Nergal D	1	?	Sumerian (Akkadian)
Hymn to Nergal?	1	?	Sumerian, Akkadian
Unidentified Hymn to Nanna?	1	?	Phonetic Sumerian
Letter of Lugal-Ibila to Lugal-Nesag (prism)	1	?	Sumerian, (Akkadian)
Dumuzi-Text	1	Büyükkale (citadel) A	Sumerian, Akkadian

Table 29.1: Sumerian Literary Texts found at Hattusa, after Viano 2016, 133 (see for detail).

The collection seems to be rather random at first sight, and one view holds that Hittite scribes were using this material for advanced school-related learning purposes, with little understanding of the content or interest in the functional aspect of the texts concerned (Klinger 2010, 339). Two of the compositions (Edubba E and the Letter of Lugal-Ibila) are concerned with school-life, it is true. Most of the tablets are unfortunately so fragmentary that it is difficult to say anything coherent about them, apart from that the Hittite scribes and scholars either had a very poor grasp of Sumerian, or that they were doing something fundamentally other with these texts than trying to copy them out and reproduce them as versions of Mesopotamian originals.

The evidence is scant, but it is interesting that two of the manuscripts of the Hymn to the Storm-god (Sumero-Akkadian Iškur-Adad) came from the House on the Slope in the

Lower City (Viano 2016, 133). This contrasts with the find spots of the majority of the incantations mentioned above, which were found in the archives in Building A of the palace on Büyükkale, the citadel of Hattusa, where library or archive single copies of compositions often tended to be kept. The storm-god (Hittite Tarhunna) was the chief god of the Hittite pantheon, so it is unsurprising that Hittite scholars were interested in tablets of compositions in his honour. Among the manuscripts of the Hymn to the Storm-god one provides us with the only example found thus far of a bilingual Sumerian — Hittite manuscript (KUB 4.5). The majority of bilingual tablets are Sumerian — Akkadian, and trilingual Sumerian — Akkadian — Hittite are also found. This manuscript may thus give us an interesting insight into what Hittite scribes were doing with the Sumerian version of this composition beyond its mediation through the language of Akkadian, which was better known at the time. Of course, one cannot exclude that the Akkadian version was in some manner orally added, but it is interesting that this manuscript was made at all and it does seem that the translator is here working directly from the Sumerian rather than an Akkadian intermediary, although given the fragmentary nature of the preservation this is a tentative supposition. A further tablet (KBo 12.72, 9'-12') in fact partly contains an Akkadian version of the same passage, but this does not seem to have necessarily played a role in producing the Hittite "translation". KUB 4.5 (Schwemer 2001, 193; Klinger 2010, 319-320; Metcalf 2015b, 88; Viano 2016, 255-256):

9'	ki-bi lu-na-me	<i>nu-uš-ši LÚ-tar-š[i-it]</i>
10'	in-pa-a-da	<i>Ú-UL ku-iš-ki š[e₂₀-ek-ki]</i>
11'	en-na tù-uš-ka-ra	<i>EN-aš li-li-wa-an-za d[am-me-tar]</i>
12'	giri ₁₇ -za-al iš-kur	<i>me-ek-ki me-mi-iš-kat-t[a]</i>
	No-one reveals his location, the lord Iškur who dwells in ab[undance]	No one k[nows?] his manliness the swift lord ... promised much a[bundance]

In this part one has an equivalence between (Phonetic) Sumerian lu-na-me (= orthographic Sumerian lú-na-me = "no-one") and the logographic writing in the Hittite column LÚ-tar-š[i-it] = *pesnatarsit* = "manliness". The meaning "no-one" is given in the Hittite by Ú-UL ku-iš-

ki, but it is hard to doubt that the LÚ-*tar-š[i-it]* has been formed as a reflection on the construction of the Sumerian *lu-na-me*. Phonetic *lu* (orthographic *lú*) corresponds to Hittite logographic LÚ (= *pesna-* ‘man’). Sumerian *na-me* in fact includes a particle *na* which can be used as a negative under certain syntactic circumstances, together with the copula *-me*, but it looks as though the Hittite interpreter has run the two elements together and produced the Sumerian abstract prefix *nam-*, which in Hittite corresponds on the level of one to one equation with the Hittite abstract suffix *-atar*, which is represented by the phonetic complement *-tar* (Metcalf 2015b, 48 fn. 53). Thus the Sumerian *lu-na-me* is in fact reproduced twice in the Hittite, once as a translation (*Ú-UL ku-iš-ki*), once as a speculative etymological interpretation (LÚ-*tar-š[i-it]*). The Sumerian *ki-bi*, ‘his location’, on the other hand is not reproduced in the Hittite at all. Do we book this as a mistake on the part of the Hittite scribe? Or do we recognise that their interest in this passage may have been a different one to that which we assume to be the function of accurate translation? Speculative etymology is a frequently encountered phenomenon in Babylonian scholarship, and there is no substantial reason why the Hittites should not also have been engaging in it. Here the logographically written phrase arrived at by the process of speculative etymology, *pesnatar* ‘manliness, manly deeds’, is a concept well known from Hittite royal ideology, given that the Hittite king's exploits are referred as his ‘manliness’. Possibly we should conceive of this process as one of selection and exclusion, rather than as misunderstanding and omission in translation.

The next lines also present numerous problems, which are usually seen as misinterpretations of a lost orthographic Sumerian column. The Sumerian *giri₁₇-zal* seems to correspond to *memiskatt[a]*, ‘promised (lit. spoke)’, meaning that the polyphonous Sumerian sign KA has here been interpreted as Sumerian *enim* = ‘word’ rather than *giri₁₇* = ‘nose’, both of which can be written using that same single sign (Klinger 2010, 321). One should also note that the writing KA-*zal* (= *giri₁₇-zal*) occurs in a significant context in the Hurro-Hittite *Song of Going Forth*, where it may be a writing for the Storm-god (van Dongen 2012, 73-74; Metcalf 2015b, 88). One should also note that Sumerian *iš-kur* could be read as Akkadian *izkur* ‘he spoke’, the exact equivalent of Hittite *memiskatta*.

The primary meaning of *giri₁₇-zal* in Sumerian, however, is ‘joy, abundance’, literally ‘having a shiny nose’, corresponding to the restored Hittite word *dammetar* ‘abundance’, which is restored on the basis of the duplicate manuscript with the Akkadian version (KBo

12.72, 11'-12'), which reads *ša ina hegalli ašbu* 'who dwells in abundance'. The Hittite word for 'joy' is *tuskaratt-*. Is it a coincidence that the Sumerian word preceding *giri₁₇-zal* is spelled *tù-uš-ka-ra*? The conventional understanding of this writing assumes that it is a misspelling for Sumerian *dúr ġar-a*, 'who founds (his cultic) seat', which it may well be, given that the same Hittite cuneiform sign could correspond to Sumerian *dúr* or *tuš* (e.g. Viano 2016, 256). It cannot be excluded, however, that it is a re-interpretation on the basis of the homophony of a Hittite word with the meaning of the following Sumerian word as well as of the polyphony of the cuneiform sign *KU* = *dúr* or *tuš*. The polyphony of *KA* = *enim* 'word' or *giri₁₇* 'nose' also seems to be being exploited. In the Hittite column on our bilingual manuscript we also have a further adjective, *liliwanza*, 'swift', which does not appear to correspond to any of the Sumerian words, but has also been tentatively proposed to have been derived from the polyphonic sign *DU* = phonetic *tù* or logographic 'go' (Klinger 2010, 321). It is also the word used to describe the eagle or bee who is despatched to look for the missing god in the numerous Hittite mythological narratives of that type (e.g. KUB 17.10 i 23; KUB 33.33, 8). Could this be a Hittite correspondence to the unknown location (*ki-bi*) of the god's cultic seat alluded to in the previous line of the Sumerian text, but not otherwise translated in the Hittite?

The Hittite column of this text is thus possibly to be conceptualised more as a field of experimentation, where multiple relationships between the Sumerian and the Hittite can be explored, rather than as a full and accurate translation that brings out all elements of the Sumerian. Quite possibly further aspects of the Sumerian could be explained orally, the speculative etymology being the only one that needed to be recorded in writing. There is also apparently no problem with one Sumerian phrase being given two Hittite "translations", and the phenomena of polyphony and homophony seem to be being exploited repeatedly over a short passage.

None of the above interpretations of this difficult text can be said to be demonstrably correct, but merely indicate an alternative to the approach criticised by Niek Veldhuis (2014a, 29) which brands all cases of deviation from the Mesopotamian "original" as cases of mistaken understanding. Of course it is not possible to put oneself inside the head of the ancient scribes and work out what they were thinking. More research, however, may establish that such deviations fit into consistent patterns of interpretation by Hittite scholars. It does not

appear that translating in the way we understand it today is what they were doing with this text, although translating was a well-established scholarly practice at Hattusa.

Sumerian Literary Texts and Hittite Translations

We now move on from the one case where we seem to have a Hittite version corresponding directly albeit bizarrely to a Sumerian text on a tablet from Hattusa to a case which has recently been flagged as involving an apparent translation, and no speculative etymological interpretation, of a text that is only otherwise attested in Sumerian and in Sumerian-Akkadian bilingual versions in Mesopotamia (Metcalf 2011; 2015a). The series of closely related Hittite language compositions involving the prayer of a mortal, the prayer of someone called Kantuzzili and a prayer of an unknown king to the sun-god, that are preserved at Hattusa, date back to the late 15th century and are given the catalogue numbers CTH 372-374, had long been recognised to contain numerous elements in common with various Babylonian compositions in honour of the sun-god Sumerian Utu/ Akkadian Šamaš. However, it was debatable to what extent the Hittite compositions represented a more or less free composition that borrowed heavily from Babylonian motifs rather than being a rendering of a particular Babylonian composition. Several copies of a monolingual Sumerian version of a hymn to the sun-god Utu from the northern Babylonian site of Tell-Haddad/Me-Turan in the Diyala region (Cavigneaux 2009), a text also found at Sippar and Susa, which was linked with a bilingual version that was already known, were shown to have close relations with the Hittite composition to such an extent that large parts of the latter could only be considered to be a translation of the former (Metcalf 2011).

The following illustration reproduces Christopher Metcalf's identification of the similarities between the versions of one famous passage in the Sumerian and the Hittite and relies on his presentation of the text (Metcalf 2015a):

Sumerian

A rev. 10'

diġir-ġá níġ-ge₁₇-ga-a-ni ħa-ma-bé šà-bi ġál ba-ra-ab-taka₄-a níġ-nam-ma-a ga-zu

Let my god tell me me what offended him, let him reveal its meaning to me, may I know everything

Hittite

KUB 30.10 obv. 24'-25' (CTH 373)

[*ki-nu-n*]a-mu-za am-me-el DINGIR-IA ŠÀ-ŠU ZI-ŠU *hu-u-ma-an-te-[et]* kar-di-it ki-
i-nu-ud-du nu-mu wa-aš-du-ul-mi-it [*te-e-ed*]-du ne-za-an ga-né-eš-mi

Now let my god reveal to me his heart (and) soul with all (his) heart and let him tell me my sins, that I may know them.

The ‘sins’ in the Hittite (*wasdul*) correspond to ‘what has offended him’ in the Sumerian (níĝ-ge₁₇-ga-a-ni). The position of *wasdul* ‘sins’ has been transposed with that of ‘its meaning’, Sumerian šà-bi, and ‘his heart (and) soul’, where the Hittite uses a Sumerogram to write the word for ‘heart’, ŠÀ-ŠU, has been substituted for ‘its meaning’. The substitution of a phrase using ŠÀ is significant, as it may bear on the question of whether the Hittite was translated directly from a Sumerian text or from an Akkadian intermediary. In this case one might think the translator had simply taken the Sumerian word šà-bi ‘its meaning (lit. its heart)’, and used the nominal part šà ‘heart’ to write a Hittite phrase. The question is not so easily answered, however. The Hittite phrase *humantet kardit* ‘with the whole heart’, does not occur in the Sumerian text at all, and can be compared with an Akkadian expression known from other contexts: *libbum gamrum* ‘whole heart’ (Metcalf 2015a, 46 with fn. 18). Unfortunately we do not have the Akkadian version at this point, so we do not know if it contained this phrase and consequently that the Hittite has translated from the Akkadian. At another point in the sentence, however, we do have a partial Akkadian translation from a bilingual manuscript (ms E, BM 78614, ed. Wasserman 1997) and this appears different to both Hittite and Sumerian. Where both the Hittite and the Sumerian have ‘I know’ (*ganesmi* ‘I know’ or ga-zu, ‘may I know’, respectively), the Akkadian has *lummid* ‘inform (me)’, in the imperative (ms. E rev. 2’). However, this bilingual Sumerian—Akkadian tablet does not have to have been the only Akkadian version of the composition that was in circulation, thus the aberrant grammatical construction cannot be taken as an indication that the Hittite and the Sumerian are more closely related to each other than the Akkadian.

The passage continues as follows in the Sumerian:

A rev. 11'-12'

máš-šu-gíd-gíd dutu-kam usu-kam ha-ma'(BA)-bé šà-bi

ensi(EN.<ME>.LI) x x x-a-bi ḫa-ma-bé šà-bi

May the diviner, the one of Utu, the one of the liver omen, tell me its meaning

May the dream-interpreter tell me its meaning (another manuscript adds: let him
reveal its meaning to me, [may I know] everything)

The Hittite version from the prayer of Kantuzzili (CTH 373) continues:

KUB 30.10 obv. 25'-28'

*na-aš-šu-mu DINGIR-IA za-aš-ḫé-ia me-e-ma-ú nu-mu-za DINGIR-IA ŠÀ-šu ki-nu-
ud-du [nu-mu wa-aš-d]u-ul-mi-it te-e-ed-du ne-za-an ga-né-eš-mi na-aš-ma-mu
MUNUS^SENSI me-e-ma-ú [na-aš-ma-mu Š]A DUTU LÚAZU IŠ-TU UZUNÍG.GIG
me-e-ma-ú nu-mu-za DINGIR-IA ḫu-u-ma-an-te-et kar-di-it [ŠÀ-ŠU ZI-ŠU] [ki-i-nu-
ud-du] nu-mu wa-aš-du-ul-mi-it te-ed-du ne-za-an ga-né-eš-mi*

Let my god either speak to me in a dream – let my god reveal his soul to me and let him tell me my offences so that I may know them – or let a female dream-interpreter speak to me, or let a diviner of the Sun-god speak to me (upon reading) from a liver! Let my god reveal his innermost soul to me with all his heart, and let him tell me my offences so that I may know them!’ Translation Metcalf (2015a, 46).

With some transposition of elements, this is once again a fairly literal translation of what is found in the Sumerian.

No modern scholar has thus far dared to assert that the Hittite version is a direct translation from Sumerian. It seems almost inconceivable that this could be the case if our only evidence of Hittite interaction with Sumerian texts as evidenced on tablets found at Hattusa is so peculiar that it can be explained either as a garbled misunderstanding or as a speculative etymological intervention, as we saw above with the Hymn to Iškur. The only way to reconcile the fact that passages from *Utu the Hero* appear in a quite literal translation at Hattusa and the assumption that Hittite scribes understood very little Sumerian or used Sumerian in a different way to what we would consider translation, is through positing an Akkadian intermediary. Yet an Akkadian transmission, however likely it may be, is an assumption and remains to be demonstrated. One piece of evidence that needs to be

considered additionally is the fact that a fragment of a bilingual Sumerian/Akkadian *Incantation to Utu* (KUB 4.11; Klinger 2010, 329-330), which in some senses could be called a companion piece to the *Utu the Hero* and contains some of the same elements of imagery, has also been found at Hattusa. This incantation is attested in Mesopotamia from the Old Babylonian through to the first millennium BC (Alaura and Bonechi 2012, 16 with fn. 66). However, the fragment from Hattusa dates on palaeographic grounds to the 13th century BCE. Even if the manuscript might be a copy from an earlier one, this is a period much later than the time of the re-working of the Sumerian/Akkadian Hymn to Utu in the late 15th or early 14th century BCE. The evidence for the Akkadian transmission of the Sumerian Utu-hymn is thus still missing a link.

Whether there is an Akkadian transmission or not, Metcalf (2015a) has shown how motifs attested in a Sumerian text from the Old Babylonian period have been adapted into a fairly literal translation in Hittite. These motifs are then re-used in the burgeoning genre of royal prayers that is attested at Hattusa from the later 14th and 13th centuries BCE (Singer 2002), where the trope of asking the god to reveal by different methods precisely what the king or country has done wrong to deserve punishment is attested quite frequently, although using methods of divination that have a more Anatolian characteristic, such as the female ritualist translated as the "Old Woman" or augurs who observe the flights of birds. The addressee of the prayer also changes through time from a male sun-god to the storm-god, the head of the Hittite pantheon, his consort the sun-goddess of Arinna, or the god Telipinu. While this change in focus can certainly be classified as a local adaptation, it should be remembered that a close relationship between the sun-god Utu/Šamaš and the storm-god Iškur Adad pertained in Mesopotamia as regards activities related to oracular inquiry (Alaura and Bonechi 2012, 76), so that the sharing of laudatory motifs between the two deities should not be too surprising.

We thus have to do with a process of careful adaptation and elaboration of originally Sumerian material within the context of local paradigms. Hittite scholars would appear to be selecting specific material to adapt which corresponds to their local interests. It is certainly not the case that there was no oracular activity in Anatolia before the translation of *Utu the Hero* or its probable Akkadian counterpart, nor is it likely that the gods were not asked in prayers to reveal the cause of their displeasure before Utu arrived in Anatolia. However, the

efficacy of a prayer depends greatly on the words that are chosen, and the choice of the appropriate words is no doubt the work of scholars.

Concluding remarks

The Sumerian language remains at Hattusa are rather scant and still contain many contradictions. The earliest material belongs to the incantation genre and imports of this type continued throughout the history of the Hittite occupation with Mesopotamian texts, without it being apparent that elements specifically particular to the Sumerian incantations were transferred into Hittite language texts. Certainly it would appear that scholars were working on the sparse Sumerian literary material found at Hattusa at the latest by the 13th century BCE, and it may be the case that they were also using it as a means of hermeneutic exploration, practising the recognition of polyphony, homophony and polysemy in cuneiform writing. This is not just a matter of scholastic playfulness and "scribal fancy". For the scholars who worked on Babylonian omens in Mesopotamia it was a means of researching the instructions and messages of the gods as written in the material of the world, using the obscure Sumerian language as a point of access. One cannot exclude that similar concerns motivated Hittite scholastic study of omens or other texts, even if, as J. Klinger (2010; 2012) has pointed out, the collection of Sumerian literary texts from Hattusa seems too disparate to conceive of a coherent strategy for its collection. It may be that it is simply the fact that the material was in Sumerian which sufficed as a motivation for its collection. Here I think it is important not to make too strict a dichotomy between scholastic/academic and practical uses. The texts are studied because they contain clues that can help those who can decipher them to understand the world and guarantee the protection of their rulers and thus their land. Of course they are studied by scholars, most likely those who belong to the elite of the administration. These were probably the same people who studied the complex lexical list *Erimhuš*, which explored the semantic relationships between words in Sumerian, Akkadian and (at Hattusa) Hittite (Veldhuis 2014b, 235-236).

A different kind of research into material that ultimately originated in Sumerian texts appears to be presented by the earlier and quite literal translation of the Sumerian *Utu the Hero*, where translation, likely from or via the mediation of Akkadian, seems to have been performed in a manner that comes close to being identifiable as such from our modern perspective. It is unclear if a possibly related bilingual *Incantation to Utu* (KUB 4.11)

belongs with this or not in terms of the time of its collection in Hattusa as a composition for study, or whether that should be placed closer to the more exploratory practice of investigating Sumerian texts that we appear to have by the 13th century. Other extensive Hittite translations also date from the Middle Hittite period (15th century BCE), such as the famous Hurrian-Hittite bilingual (Neu 1996). Perhaps this translation of parts of *Utu the Hero* was even an activity that was performed elsewhere, possibly outside of the Hittite capital, by the kind of scholars who specialised in translation rather than speculation, possibly even in a centre where this text was more at home such as northern Mesopotamia.

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