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P. TARACHA, Religion of Second Millennium Anatolia (J. MILLER)



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Piotr TARACHA, *Religions of Second Millennium Anatolia*. Dresdner Beiträge zur Hethitologie, 27. Wiesbaden, Harrassowitz Verlag, 2009. xvi-232 p. 17 × 24. € 48,—.

With this volume — reviewed already by A. Mouton, *BiOr* 59 (2012) 565-569 and R. Lebrun, *Palamedes. Journal of Ancient History* 4 (2009) 181-184 — P. Taracha has contributed significantly to as well as challenged our understanding of ancient Anatolian religious phenomena, above all with his in-depth discussion of the various intricate layers found in the Anatolian panthea, which he presents in terms of state, dynastic and local. Indeed, this aspect occupies the bulk of the work, so that topics such as prayer (§3.2.7), omen and divination (§3.2.8) and magic and myth (§§3.1.4; 3.2.9), themes lavishly attested in the textual material from Hattusa, receive only ca. 3, 5 and 14 pages, respectively, from ca. 165 in total. The title of the volume is thus slightly misleading. That said, the short synopses of these latter topics are for the most part quite judicious and can be recommended as concise primers.

The volume's general aims are spelled out explicitly (p. 5), i.e. “painting the complexity of the beliefs in the multi-ethnic and multi-cultural environment of Hittite Anatolia and tracing the interpenetration and translatability of different religious and cult traditions. Finally, [the author] has sought [to elucidate] the principles determining the structure of both the official and local pantheons and analyzed the impact that the religious policies of a new dynasty of kings in the Empire period had on their emergence and subsequent development.”

It begins with a short chapter on evidence for prehistoric religious practices, followed by a brief overview of the Old Assyrian Colony phase. The core of the presentation, on Hittite religion, is divided into sections on the Old Hittite and the Empire Periods. The volume is rounded off by an ample bibliography and indices of divine, geographical and personal names as well as a topical index, the only desideratum being a list of text passages cited. One also misses in such a synoptic volume a general map or two, as well as at least a representative selection of illustrations, especially when topics such as iconography (e.g. §2.2) are discussed, since many readers looking for an introduction to the topic can hardly be expected or even able to reference the primary literature.

A more fundamental omission is a discussion of some of the key terms used throughout the volume, such as “magic”, “cult” and “religion”. Naturally, one cannot expect some kind of definition by fiat of such finicky terms, but when one sees statements such as “In the earliest, pre-religious times, man's attitude to phenomena of nature and supernatural forces was expressed primarily in magical thinking” (p. 2), one suspects that Taracha assumes a model in which “religion” and “magic” are largely autonomous spheres separated chronologically along a developmental continuum, an assumption that is not incontrovertible, indeed one that would presumably be the view of only a small minority of scholars of religion today. It seems that Taracha intends with “religion” something akin to “(highly) organized and institutionalized religion”, which, however, one could perhaps associate with (highly) organized and institutionalized societies in general rather with substantive change in the nature of religion itself. A passage that approaches a definition of magic reads (p. 74):

“In all the cultures of the Ancient Near East, Hittite Anatolia included, magic was strictly connected with religion. ... [M]agic had a purely practical purpose, the objective being short-term protection or assurance of good things

(the latter understood concretely as long life, progeny, prosperity and in the case of the king, also the respect and obedience of his subjects), as well as elimination of some fault or impurity seen very broadly as the cause of all illness and misfortune, prevention of divine anger revealed by divination or a natural disaster or sickness, and finally reversing evil sorcery and countering real threats.”

Putting aside the oxymoron entailed in the “short-term objective” of “long life”, such a definition fails to demarcate magic from religion ancient or modern; indeed, one could assert that the “purpose” of religion would be largely the same as the role Taracha reserves for “magic”. “Prevention of divine anger”, e.g., was of course the *raison d’être* of the entire highly complex and extremely institutionalized cult apparatus. Prayer was (and is) a further technique commonly employed in order to eliminate “some fault or impurity seen very broadly as the cause of all illness and misfortune”. Similarly, Taracha sides with one author (p. 18) who writes that particular prehistoric “figurines^(sic) are likely to have been used for magical, non religious ritual and/or votive sources^(sic)”. The garbled version in Taracha’s extract, in which above all the substitution of “sources” for “purposes” renders the quote unintelligible and which also cuts out relevant sections of the quote without indicating such, actually reads, “Rather, the anthropomorphic figures are likely to have represented ancestors or totems (human figurines), and been used for magical, non religious ritual (e.g. rites of passage etc.) and / or votive purposes...” (N. Hamilton, “The Figurines”, in: I. Hodder [ed.], *Changing Materialities at Çatalhöyük; Reports from the 1995-99 Seasons* [“Çatalhöyük Research Project 5; Cambridge/London 2005] 210b [not 208, as given by Taracha]).

Though many researchers, myself included (e.g. Miller, “Practice and Perception of Black Magic among the Hittites”, *AoF* 37 [2010] 167-185), would thus prefer to see “magic” as but one aspect of a broadly defined phenomenon “religion” or “religious beliefs and behaviours”, various legitimate schemes are indeed extant, and it would have been advisable to at least very briefly but explicitly sketch the usage of these terms and the assumptions behind them. One might also question the distinction (p. 3) between “cult” and “magic” as being one between “regular service” and “emergency situations”, but at least here the terms are clarified, so that one understands how the author wishes to employ them. A more explicit discussion of terms and categories might similarly have alleviated some readers’ uneasiness when reading (p. 142), in a discussion of the *mugawar*, “invocations”, that “Despite their brevity these are undoubtedly real prayers”. What exactly is a “real prayer”? And what would a non-real prayer be, if indeed “real” prayers are to be juxtaposed to such?

One is also often enough confronted with oversights or insufficiently considered statements, such as when one reads (p. 18) that “Intensified urbanization processes in Anatolia during the Early Bronze Age led to the emergence of a system of city-states governed by local rulers and this caused change in the local pantheons”, while only a few lines later (p. 19) one is faced with the assessment that “without written sources it is impossible to say anything about the gods worshipped during this period”. How one is able to identify change in the local pantheons without being able to say anything about the gods is not explained. One also reads that the (p. 81) “cool rationalism of the Old Hittite period in relation to the gods was replaced with time by an emotional attitude”, which can be characterized as ill-worded and confused at best, entirely anachronistic and errant at worst. Other

phrases that may strike the reader as anachronistic include “the ruler’s theological policies” (p. 82) and Ḫattusa’s “court theologians” (86).

Some other, more concrete, claims or assumptions are quite out of date, such as when it is assumed (pp. 83, 132 f.) that the Great Temple at Ḫattusa was built during the reign of Tudḫaliya IV toward the end of the Hittite Empire period, though past and current excavators of Ḫattusa and Kuşaklı/Sarissa have been suggesting for quite some time now that it was likely built much earlier (A. Müller-Karpe, “Remarks on Central Anatolian Chronology of the Middle Hittite Period”, in: M. Bietak [ed.], *The Synchronisation of Civilizations in the Eastern Mediterranean in the Second Millennium B.C.* [Contributions to the Chronology of the Eastern Mediterranean 4; Wien 2003] 385-394; J. Seeher, “Ḫattuša – Tuthaliya-Stadt? Argumente für eine Revision der Chronologie der hethitischen Hauptstadt”, in: Th. P. J. van den Hout [ed.], *The Life and Times of Ḫattušili III and Tuthaliya IV* [PIHANS CIII; Leiden 2006] 131-146; A. Schachner, *Hattuscha: Auf der Suche nach dem sagenhaften Großreich der Hethiter* [München 2011] 79 f.).

A further shortcoming is a tendency to cite only literature arguing one side of a contemporary debate without referring to any from the other side, or worse, citing no literature at all, e.g., when asserting (p. 34) that the Hattians would likely have been related to the peoples of the northwest Caucasus (cf. e.g. J. Klinger, “Hattisch”, in: M. P. Streck [ed.], *Sprachen des Alten Orients* [Darmstadt 2006] 128-134, esp. 128 f.; and now P. M. Goedegebuure, “The Alignment of Hattian: An Active Language with an Ergative Base”, in: L. Kogan [ed.], *Babel und Bibel 4* [CRRAI 53; Moscow 2007] 949-981, esp. 949), whereby one misses a distinction between related languages and related “peoples”.

While Taracha’s novel suggestions regarding the state, dynastic and local panthea certainly deserve serious consideration, some of the conclusions drawn seem perhaps not to be unequivocally supported by the evidence. For example, Taracha states that (p. 87), “Standing out in this conception of a [state] pantheon is the idea of a territorial state, which”, he immediately notes, “failed to cover all the lands making up the Hittite Empire”, including rather “foremost the gods of Ḫatti from the region in the bend of the Kızılırmak, those of the Upper Land in^(sic) the upper course of this river, the Lower Land incorporating the Konya Plain and eastern Pamphylia, and Kizzuwatna in southeastern Anatolia”. One wonders, however, if the very fact that the state pantheon consisted for the most part of deities from central Anatolia rather than the larger empire, might militate against the repeated assertion that this state pantheon was deliberately so constructed by the dynasty’s “court theologians” (p. 86), suggesting instead that the constitution of the pantheon was perhaps as much a product of the heterogeneous cultural background of the ruling family, the ruling classes and regional variation than an intentionally, artificially constructed instrument of political rule.

A central tenet of Taracha’s assessment of the state, dynastic and local panthea is his conviction that Tudḫaliya I – whom he distinguishes from Tudḫaliya II (∞ Nikkalmati) – would have been the founder of a new, Hurrian dynasty (pp. vii, 4, 33 and *passim*). He laid out his reasoning for this belief in his paper “On the Dynasty of the Hittite Empire”, *Gs. Forrer* (2004) 631-638, and expanded upon it in “The Storm-God and Hittite Great King”, *SMEA* 50 (2008) 745-751, a belief which is necessarily connected with the assumption of the sequence Tudḫaliya I – Ḫattusili II – Tudḫaliya II at the beginning of the Middle Hittite Period. As Taracha acknowledges (*Gs. Forrer* 632), this has become the view of a small minority in

recent years in face of evidence that has been interpreted by most researchers as suggesting dynastic continuity in general as well as the conflation of Tudḫaliya I and II into a single ruler and the expunging of Ḫattusili II specifically (e.g. H. Klengel, *Geschichte des Hethitischen Reiches* [HdO I/34; Leiden/Boston/Köln 1999] 110 f. and n. 111; J. D. Hawkins, “The Seals and the Dynasty”, in: S. Herbordt – D. Bawanypeck – J. D. Hawkins, *Die Siegel der Grosskönige und Grossköniginnen auf Tonbulln aus dem Niṣantepe-Archiv in Hattusa* (BoHa 23; Mainz 2011) 85-102, esp. 86-91 (for earlier literature see Beal, *Gs. Imparati*; J. Klinger, “Überlegungen zu den Anfängen des Mittani-Staates”, in: V. Haas [ed.], *Hurriter und Hurritisch* [Xenia: Konstanzer Althistorische Vorträge und Forschungen 21; Konstanz 1988] 27-42; O. Carruba, “Beiträge zur mittelhethitischen Geschichte I/II”, *SMEA* 18 [1977] 137-195, esp. 140 f., and O. R. Gurney, Review of Otten, *Quellen*, in *OLZ* 67 [1972] 451-454). Two recent works of note regarding the period are M. Marizza, *Dignitari ittiti del tempo di Tuthaliya I/II, Arnuwanda I, Tuthaliya III* (Eothen 15; Firenze 2007) and F. Fuscagni, *La fase iniziale del Medio Regno ittita: fonti e problemi* (Diss. Napoli 2003) (*non vidi*). Taracha’s tripartite pantheon thus stands or falls to a large degree on this point. Though stubborn questions regarding relations among the royal family of this period certainly remain, so that the final verdict has not yet been handed down and all informed alternative suggestions must be given a fair hearing, most readers are unlikely to be convinced that Taracha’s explication of his tripartite pantheon supports the idea of dynastic change or vice versa.

In this context, it is of note that one reason for Taracha’s assumption of dynastic change is his assertion that the dynastic cult of the royal family of the Empire Period was purely Hurrian (*Gs. Forrer* 631). Though unorthodox hypothesis, again, are certainly welcome – indeed are the driving force behind furthering understanding – it should be noted that this claim runs counter to essentially all other assessments of the Anatolian pantheon of the period, as Taracha himself appropriately points out (pp. 92-95, with ns. 480-481, 484; cf. e.g., D. Schwemer, “Das hethitische Reichspantheon. Überlegungen zu Struktur und Genese”, in: R. G. Kratz – H. Spieckermann [eds.], *Götterbilder – Gottesbilder – Weltbilder. Polytheismus und Monotheismus in der Welt der Antike*, Bd. I: *Ägypten, Mesopotamien, Kleinasien, Syrien, Palästina* [Forschungen zum Alten Testament 2/17; Tübingen 2006] 241-265; G. Beckman, “Pantheon. A. II. Bei den Hethitern”, *RIA* 10 [2004] 308-316). There is thus also an element of circularity in Taracha’s reasoning. He sees a strictly Hurrian dynastic pantheon of the Empire Period as an indication that this dynasty must have replaced that of the Old Kingdom, but he defines the dynastic pantheon as purely Hurrian, in contrast to the great majority of other researchers, in large part because he sees the Empire Period dynasty as a Hurrian replacement of the Old Kingdom royal family.

A further supporting pillar in Taracha’s reconstruction of Hittite pantheon is that the ensemble of deities at Yazılıkaya depicts the dynastic pantheon (*Gs. Forrer* 631, n. 4; id., “Fremde Gottheiten und ihre anatolischen Namen. Betrachtungen zur hethitischen Religion des Großreichszeit”, in: M. Hutter – S. Hutter-Braunsar [eds.], *Offizielle Religion, lokale Kulte und individuelle Religiosität* [AOAT 318; Münster 2004] 451-460), in contrast to the (or one of the) more commonly held view(s) that, e.g. Yazılıkaya may have been associated with the *ḫuwasi*-cult of the Stormgod (e.g. Schwemer, “Reichspantheon”, 263 ff.). This alternative suggestion is not addressed by Taracha (cf. p. 93 f., n. 484, where it is mentioned but not dis-

cussed) in his otherwise successful demonstration that Yazılıkaya does not necessarily represent the state pantheon, as is often assumed. Thus, a thorough, critical assessment of Taracha's innovative conception of the dynastic cult of the Hittite royal family of the Empire Period, though not to be discounted *a priori*, is certainly necessary.

That said, unanswered questions certainly remain, such as what to make of Suppiluliuma's origins in light of Henti, his first queen, now being attested as daughter of a Great King; how exactly the sequence of the cruciform seal is to be understood and restored; and how the sudden flurry of attestations of Kantuzzili are to be distributed. And these questions still stand in the way of any complete and conclusive reconstruction of the ancestry of Suppiluliuma and the familial structure of the royal family between Tudḫaliya I and Suppiluliuma I, as summarized most clearly and succinctly by Hawkins, "Seals and Dynasty" (for recent discussion and attestations see S. de Martino, "Some Questions on the Political History and Chronology of the Early Hittite Empire", *AoF* 37 [2010] 186-197; Hawkins, "Seals and Dynasty", 87-89).

The four strongest arguments against a Tudḫaliya I – Hattusili II – Tudḫaliya II scheme remain (i) the absence of Tudḫaliya and Hattusili in the offering lists [as M. Forlanini, "Hattušili II. – Geschöpf der Forscher oder vergessener König?", *AoF* 32 (2005) 230-245, p. 234, has stated, the insertion of a further Tudḫaliya and Hattusili leads to the odd situation in which we "zwei legitime Könige vor uns haben, die unerklärlicherweise in den Opferlisten nicht erwähnt sind, wo jedoch alle legitimen Könige vor und nach ihnen (und in genauer chronologischer Ordnung) Platz finden"]; (ii) indeed the failure of these kings to appear in any texts or seals whatsoever; (iii) the scheme's requirement that a series of rulers attesting synchronisms with the Hittite kings in question be doubled for no other reason (J. Freu, "Les débuts du nouvel empire hittite", in: J. Freu – M. Mazoyer, *Les débuts du nouvel empire hittite; Les Hittites et leur histoire* [Paris 2007] 1-311, Tab. 311; id., "De l'indépendance à l'annexion: Le Kizzuwatna et le Hatti aux XVI^e et XV^e siècles avant notre ère", in: É. Jean et al. [eds.], *La Cilicie: espaces et pouvoirs locaux* [Paris 2001] 13-36, Tab. 31); (iv) and the likelihood, as tenuous as it is, that Tudḫaliya I, son of Kantuzzili, who should, according to the Tudḫaliya I – Hattusili II – Tudḫaliya II scheme, be the conqueror of Aleppo, also campaigned in the West, which is supposed to have been a diagnostic feature of Tudḫaliya = Nikkalmati (D. Groddek, "Neues zu ^mSUM-*ma*-^dLAMMA und CTH 142", *AoF* 36 [2009] 159-170).

Taracha's volume therefore goes out on a limb by asserting a rather novel conception of the Hittite pantheon of the Empire Period. This can be seen as a welcome attempt at improving our understanding thereof, and it is certainly worth considering, even if it may, in the end, be shown to rest on an unsustainable historical reconstruction.

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