

James Burgin: *Functional Differentiation in Hittite Festival Texts. An Analysis of the Old Hittite Manuscripts of the KI.LAM Great Assembly (StBoT 65).* Wiesbaden: Harrassowitz, 2019. XII + 232 Seiten. ISBN 978-3-447-11247-5. Preis: € 68,- (D)

Besprochen von **Birgit Christiansen**, LMU München, Institut für Assyriologie und Hethitologie; ORCID-Nr. 0000-0002-7709-6456
Email: birgit.christiansen@lrz.uni-muenchen.de

<https://doi.org/10.1515/za-2022-0017>

The study under review is the first monograph emerging from the long-term project “Das Corpus der hethitischen Festrituale: staatliche Verwaltung des Kultwesens im spätbronzezeitlichen Anatolien” (HFR), led by Daniel Schwemer and Elisabeth Rieken and funded by the Academy of Sciences and Literature in Mainz. The 21-year project aims at a digital edition of the Hittite festival texts, which form the largest corpus within the Hittite written sources, and their examination from a paleographic, linguistic, historical, and religious perspective.

Burgin’s monograph offers a new edition of four Hittite texts, namely KBo 20.33+ (Ms. 1); KBo 30.32; KBo 25.62; KBo 25.61+ (Mss. 2a–c); KBo 25.12+ (Ms. 3); and KBo 38.12 (+) (Ms. 4), that, in his opinion, all belong to the KI.LAM festival (CTH 627; for this assignment and divergent views, see further below). Building on this, the author explores the question of why several texts for a festival dating from about the same period have come down to partly overlapping, but also showing differences from one another.

As Burgin points out in section 1.1, the study is based on two unproven assumptions: firstly, that the performance of Hittite festivals did not vary much from year to

year, and, secondly, that the manuscripts for one festival each describe one and the same ritual practice or ‘reality’, but from different perspectives. This in turn leads the author to the logical consequence that the texts were intended for different purposes and users. The four edited texts serve him as a “test case” to check this “multi-perspective/multi-user theory” (p. 1).

In sections 1.2–1.3, Burgin outlines the history of research on the Hittite festival texts, focusing on theories regarding their function. He subsumes the various theories under two categories: first, the ‘festival texts as scripts’ model, which has long been dominant in research, and second, the ‘administrative model’ first proposed by Klinger (1996, 2002a, 2002b, 2007) and then elaborated upon by Schwemer (2016) and Christiansen (2016). Burgin endorses the ‘administrative model’, emphasizing, however, that the majority of festival texts consists of what might be called ‘dramatic texts’. Yet, as the author correctly points out, this does not necessarily mean that they served as scripts for the performers. Instead, Burgin follows Schwemer (2016) and partly also Christiansen (2016) in assuming that the texts were (primarily) used as

records for the planning and supervision of the cult by the royal administration and as a means of preserving tradition.

Chapter 2 deals with common categorizations of different kinds of texts related to festivals. Here the author re-evaluates the term ‘outline tablet’ that other scholars defined as an abbreviated version of the more detailed texts, containing only the essential aspects of the festivals. Burgin, by contrast, rightly emphasizes that this definition does not apply to most of the texts assigned to this category. Rather, they focus only on certain aspects and events that were apparently relevant to a particular user group. Accordingly, Burgin argues that Ms. 1 (KBo 20.33+), which was previously categorized as an outline tablet covering the whole festival, is rather a ‘day tablet’ (or, ‘dramatic tablet’; pp. 14–15 *passim*). Ms. 3, on the other hand, can be described more as an outline, since it does not focus on the course of the festival activities, but takes a telic perspective, providing a global overview of the ‘Great Assembly’ as one major component of the KILAM festival.

Chapter 3 contains the edition of the four texts, consisting of short introductions to each text with information on find spots, dating, and earlier editions as well as transliterations, translations, and detailed philological commentaries.

In Chapter 4, the author provides a very useful synoptic commentary on the description of the ‘Great Assembly’ in the various manuscripts.

Chapter 5 then focuses on the various formulaic components describing the drinking ceremony of the KILAM festival. It explores the similarities and differences within the various manuscripts in terms of their occurrence and use, taking into account also drinking ceremonies of other festivals. Based on this, the author reconstructs the Hattic-Hittite drinking ceremony.

Chapter 6 centers on methodological problems of interpreting the Hittite festival texts and presents a step-by-step model for the study of the form and function of the texts. Subsequently, the function of each manuscript edited in Chapter 3 is discussed.

The book concludes with a summary (Chapter 7), a synoptic comparison of the texts in transliteration (Appendix I), a synopsis of the passages providing information on the drinking ceremony of the KILAM festival (Appendix II), as well as a glossary, a bibliography, and an index of the cited texts.

The edition of the texts shows great diligence and accuracy, with individual words and passages discussed in detail in the philological commentaries. In addition, the author makes significant progress by incorporating new joins, better photographs, and recent research literature,

as well as in-depth comparisons of the various texts. The study offers for the first time a complete and annotated edition of KBo 20.33+ (Ms. 1) and elucidates aspects in the texts that have not been taken into account so far. This applies, e. g., to the performance of ‘fire-eating’ among the festival activities mentioned in Ms. 1 obv. 42 and fragmentarily also in Ms. 3 iv 3 (p. 45–46). The book furthermore contains new interpretations for certain words and formulae. Thus, Burgin argues convincingly that the ‘great lyre’ (GIŠ ^dINANNA.GAL) is not construed with the verb SIR-RU (Hittite *išhamai-* “to sing”) in the texts, but forms a separate verbless clause: “(They play) the great lyre. They sing.” (p. 46). Interesting is also the comment on the *latarak-men* which, according to Burgin, might have been a variety of costumed animal imitators possibly related to the Mesopotamian deity Lā-tarāk who is represented by a figure garbed in a lion’s pelt (p. 46–47).

The translations are very thorough and appropriate. Concerning the verb *eku-* ‘to drink’ with a deity mentioned in the accusative, however, a translation with ‘to drink to deity X’ or ‘to toast deity X’ instead of ‘to drink deity X’ would fit better and prevent misunderstandings. It would also be in line with the author’s own interpretation of the formula that is based on the convincing argumentation of Melchert (1981), according to which the deity here denotes the beneficiary of the action (p. 38).

Of particular importance are Burgin’s analyses regarding the form and function of the manuscripts and the re-evaluation of the term ‘outline tablet’ which in previous research was used in a rather blurred way and often did not fit the evidence. Burgin’s revised categorization of the texts and his classification of Ms. 1 as a ‘dramatic tablet’ (or, ‘day tablet’) and Ms. 3 as an ‘outline tablet’ are very convincing.

The central question of why the texts that have come down to us for one festival show characteristic differences in content is extremely important and has not been sufficiently explored in research so far. Burgin’s two key assumptions that are the basis of the study are, however, from the reviewers point of view not always consistent with the evidence. Rather, some differences between the texts might better be explained as due to their affiliation to different festivals or different ceremonies within the KILAM festival. With respect to the latter scenario, it should be noted that Ms. 3 confirms that there were deviations between the different days of the three-day festival, as the author himself mentions (p. 27). Furthermore, also chronological change should be taken into consideration. This also coincides with information in some colophons and oracle reports, confirming that the festivals were subject to continuous change and adapted to the

needs and wishes of the gods. Burgin's assumption that the ceremonies varied only little from year to year (p. 1; 141) may overall be correct. It should be noted, however, that the examined texts might have been written down several decades apart. Although in section 6.3 the author identifies dating the texts to roughly the same time as an important methodological prerequisite for a comparative study of their function (p. 151), the study does not contain detailed information about the dating of the texts under study. Moreover, the argument that the texts have been classified by all previous editors as Old Hittite in script and language (p. 30) is not correct. Instead, Ms. 1 has been determined by Singer (1983, 74) as well as by Starke (1985, 23) to be a Middle Hittite text, while it has been described by Neu as a "borderline case" between Old Hittite and Middle Hittite ductus (Neu 1980, XVIII and 52). Ms. 4 (or, more precisely, the fragments KBo 20.26 + KBo 25.34 known at this time) have been determined by Neu (1980, 89–92) to be Old Hittite, while Klinger (1996, 238 note 429) classified the joining fragment KBo 21.68 as a "typisch mh. (I) Niederschrift". Comments on the script and language of each manuscript would thus have been important both with regard to the ongoing debate on paleographic dating and with regard to the goal of the study.

In terms of content, the various texts also show a number of discrepancies. One major difference between Ms. 1 and the other manuscripts is that it only mentions the king as the main participant in the drinking ceremony while the other texts mention both king and queen. According to Burgin, the queen might be implied, drawing on KBo 17.1 (CTH 416), where the king and queen are sometimes the subject of a sentence with the verb in the plural and sometimes with a verb in the singular. This phenomenon, however, is only of limited use for comparison with Ms. 1 where the queen is not mentioned at all. In a text focusing on the details concerning the special drink and bread service at the king's table (p. 153), it would be strange that, of all people, the queen is not mentioned at least once. One possible explanation might be that the text was composed for a functionary only responsible for the king's service, but clear evidence for this is missing.

The hypothesis that the various manuscripts reflect the same reality from different perspectives is further called in question by the fact that Ms. 4 mentions actions taking place on day 2 of the festival that according to Ms. 3 do *not* happen on that day. Burgin explains this discrepancy by assigning Ms. 3 to the 'Regular Festival series' and Ms. 4 to the 'Great Festival Series' (pp. 28–29). This, however, implies that we deal with at least two different types of the KI.LAM festival and thus not one, but at least two realities.

An even more serious divergence between the texts noted by the author is the fact that in the musical and dance accompaniment the gods in Mss. 2a–c are grouped in a different way than in the other manuscripts. Other scholars therefore came to the conclusion that Mss. 2a–c belong to a different festival. According to Burgin, by contrast, they might either belong "to an Old Hittite Great Assembly that was nearly indistinguishable from the KI.LAM, or were a set of texts forming a specialized component of the KI.LAM Great Assembly itself" (p. 29). Based on his comparison of the drinking ceremony in each manuscript, the author considers the second explanation more likely, arguing that the omissions in Mss. 2a–c can be sufficiently explained by the exclusive focus of the texts on the regular offerings (pp. 29 and section 5.3.2. and 6.5). However, the basis for this is rather sparse. As the author states, the mention of the departure of the LÚ.MEŠDUGUD, combined with "step-by-step similarities of Mss. 2a–c with the other manuscripts" might be taken as evidence for this (p. 157). The deviations in the naming of the gods, however, rather suggest that Ms. 2a–c belong to another festival or that the KI.LAM festival was subject to greater changes or variations than the author assumes.

As these examples show, the evidence is not always easy to reconcile with Burgin's core hypotheses. As far as the methodological approach is concerned, it would presumably have been more productive to consider several different scenarios right at the beginning and to decide on the basis of the evidence which one is more probable in the individual case.

Such an approach also helps to avoid the risk of incorrect restorations on the basis of alleged parallels. An example for this is the restoration of [NI]N.DINGIR at the beginning of the line in Ms. 1 obv. 27. Despite the author's claims (p. 42), the reading remains unclear, the traces seem to be more in line with the reading -r]a-an suggested by Neu (1980, 54), Singer (1984, 90) and Groddek (2004, 48). The restoration of [NI]N.DINGIR is mainly based on Ms. 3 rev. iii 9. The two passages are, however, not parallel to each other, as Burgin himself notes. In Ms. 3 rev. iii 8–9, the sentence NIN.DINGIR-ša ekuzi "the NIN.DINGIR priestess drinks" is preceded by a sentence with the king and queen as subject of a partially broken verbal sentence with presumably ^dZayu as the object and akuanzi as verb "the king and queen drink to the god Zayu". In Ms. 1 obv. 27, however, only the drinking of the NIN.DINGIR to the god Zayu is referred to. According to Burgin, the omission of the king and queen in Ms. 1 might be due to the condensed language of the text. Yet, since its focus is on the drinking ceremony with the king as the main protagonist, it is unlikely that in Ms. 1 obv. 27 only the drinking of

the NIN.DINGIR priestess is mentioned. Furthermore, for syntactic reasons the restoration of LUGAL at the end of the line proposed by the author is improbable (pp. 42–43)

In addressing research of other scholars, it is worth mentioning that Burgin interprets some statements in a different way than the reviewer. Thus, the term ‘cheat sheets’ (p. 4) would, from the reviewer’s point of view, be in line more with the assumption that the texts served as memory aids during the ceremony than with Klinger’s hypothesis that the texts were, instead, administrative in nature and primarily intended to ensure the correct and regular provisioning of the gods.

Also the comment on p. 10 concerning a statement by Christiansen (2016, 56) is based on a misunderstanding. The quoted statement referred to as scenario 1 (“So können die Texte beispielsweise verschiedenen Kultakteuren an die Hand gegeben worden sein, um diese mit dem Ablauf des jeweiligen Festes vertraut zu machen”) was not meant to say that the texts were used in “real time”, as the author assumes. Rather, it was intended to convey that the texts might have been used by the administrative staff as an aid to familiarize the performers with the procedures in advance. Burgin, by contrast, does not address this important question of how the performers were made familiar with the procedures, although he labels as convincing Christiansen’s (2016) comparison with modern liturgies such as the Catholic Mass, which also serve *inter alia* as teaching material for the participants.

Furthermore, regarding Miller’s (2004) and Christiansen’s (2006) core theses on incantation ritual texts and their function, the labels “scholastic model” and “esoteric knowledge” (p. 6) are somewhat exaggerated and might be misleading since neither Miller nor Christiansen excluded the texts from being related to ritual practice. Instead, they emphasized that most texts, judging by their form and content, were not records of ritual performances, but rather manuals that served as reference literature for the performance of rituals. The main difference between the festival texts and the incantation ritual texts is that the former relate to regularly occurring and planned ceremonial events, while the latter are designed to overcome specific states of crisis that mostly affect individuals and certain groups of people and do not occur at regular time intervals. Thus, the relation to ritual practice was probably more flexible in the case of the incantation rituals.

To summarize, the book is a very important study of high quality that makes great strides in the study of the Hittite festival texts. Most noteworthy are the detailed comparisons of the edited texts and ceremonies and the demonstration that the texts do not record the essential

components of the ceremonies, but rather focus on certain aspects of the festival. Burgin’s rationale for rejecting the classification of the Old Hittite tablet KBo 20.33+ as an ‘outline tablet’ as well as his general discussion on the category of ‘outline tablets’ are also convincing. Regarding the author’s “multi-perspective/multi-user theory”, the evidence is sometimes in conflict with it. Rather, the variations between different manuscripts might in these cases better be explained by changes in the festivals over time or the existence of similar but different festivals. Further insight into this might be gained by the study of younger manuscripts belonging to the KI.LAM festival and the examination of other festival texts, but this would have been beyond the scope of the present studies. Both the author and the editors of the series ‘Studien zu den Boğazköy-Texten’ are to be thanked for the publication of the study which provides a fertile ground for further research. The fact that such a book has been presented after only a few years of work in the HFR project promises substantial progress and important publications in the years ahead.

Bibliography:

- Christiansen, B. (2006): Die Ritualtradition der Ambazzi. Eine philologische Bearbeitung und entstehungsgeschichtliche Analyse der Ritualtexte CTH 391, CTH 429 und CTH 463. StBoT 48. Wiesbaden (title mistakenly cited by Burgin as: ‘Der Ritual Ambazzi’)
- (2016): Liturgische Agenda, Unterweisungsmaterial und rituelles Traditionsgut. Die hethitischen Festrualtexte in kulturvergleichender Perspektive, in: G.G.W. Müller (ed.), „Liturgie oder Literatur?“ – Die Kultrituale der Hethiter im transkulturellen Vergleich StBoT 60. Wiesbaden, 33–68
- Groddek, D. (2004): Eine althethitische Tafel des KI.LAM-Festes. International Journal of Diachronic Linguistics Supplements 1. München
- Klinger, J. (1996): Untersuchungen zur Rekonstruktion der hattischen Kultschicht. StBoT 37. Wiesbaden
- (2002a): Zum ‘Priestertum’ im hethitischen Anatolien, Hethitica 15, 93–111
- (2002b): Reinigungsriten und Abwehrzauber. Funktion und Rolle magischer Rituale bei den Hethitern, in: Kunst- und Ausstellungshalle der Bundesrepublik Deutschland (ed.), Die Hethiter und ihr Reich. Das Volk der 1000 Götter. Bonn, 146–149
- (2007): Die Hethiter, München (the study is erroneously missing from Burgin’s bibliography)
- Melchert, H. C. (1981): “God-Drinking”: a Syntactic Transformation in Hittite, JIES 9, 245–254
- Miller, J. L. (2004): Studies in the Origins, Development and Interpretation of the Kizzuwatna Rituals. StBoT 46. Wiesbaden
- Neu, E. (1980): Althethitische Texte in Umschrift. StBoT 25. Wiesbaden

- Schwemer, D. (2016): Quality Assurance Managers at Work. The Hittite Festival Tradition, in: G.G.W. Müller (ed.), *Liturgie oder Literatur? Die Kultrituale der Hethiter im transkulturellen Vergleich*. StBoT 60. Wiesbaden, 1–29
- Singer, I. (1983): *The Hittite KI.LAM Festival, Part One*. StBoT 27. Wiesbaden
- (1984): *The Hittite KI.LAM Festival, Part Two*. StBoT 28. Wiesbaden
- Starke, F. (1985): *Die keilschrift-luwischen Texte in Umschrift*. StBoT 3. Wiesbaden