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The Iconographic Continuity Between the Depictions of Storm Gods in the Late Hittite Period and the Hittite Period*

Abstract

Following the collapse of the Hittite Empire in the late 13th century BCE, the Late Hittite principalities emerged, preserving and reinterpreting Hittite religious and artistic traditions while simultaneously adapting to new socio-political contexts. This study investigates the iconographic continuity and transformation of storm deities specifically Tarhunza, the Storm God of Heaven, the Storm God of Aleppo, and Teššub between the Hittite and Late Hittite periods. Through a comprehensive analysis of monumental reliefs, inscriptions, and seals, the research elucidates the evolving visual representations of these storm gods over time. The findings reveal a remarkable persistence of core symbolic elements such as the axe, trident, and bull—that maintained the deities' traditional associations with power, fertility, and protection. Nonetheless, significant transformations are equally evident. Tarhunza, in particular, ascended as the preeminent deity of the Late Hittite pantheon, progressively assimilating attributes and functions once attributed to Teššub, the Storm God of Heaven,

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and the Storm God of Aleppo. This evolution reflects the growing ascendancy of Luwian religious traditions within Late Hittite cultural expressions. By negotiating a delicate balance between continuity and innovation, the Late Hittites harnessed storm god iconography as a means of asserting cultural identity and legitimizing political authority. This study thus offers valuable insights into the mechanisms of cultural resilience and adaptive transformation in the ancient Near Eastern world.

Keywords: The Hittites, The Late Hittites, Storm Gods, Iconography, Continuity

Geç Hitit Dönemi'nde Görülen Fırtına Tanrısı Tasvirlerinin Hitit Dönemi ile Olan İkonografik Devamlılığı

Öz

MÖ 13. yüzyılın sonlarında Hitit İmparatorluğu'nun çöküşünün ardından ortaya çıkan Geç Hititler, Hitit dini ve sanatsal geleneklerini korumuş ve yeniden yorumlamış, aynı zamanda yeni sosyo-politik gerçeklere uyum sağlamıştır. Bu çalışma, Geç Hitit Dönemi ile Hitit Dönemi arasında fırtına tanrılarının ikonografik devamlılığını ve dönüşümünü, Tarhunza, Göğün Fırtına Tanrısı, Halep'in Fırtına Tanrısı ve Teşşub'a odaklanarak incelemektedir. Anıtsal eserler, yazıtlar ve mühürlerin analizi yoluyla, bahsi geçen fırtına tanrılarının tasvirlerinin zaman içinde nasıl evrildiği gözler önüne serilmiştir. Bulgular, fırtına tanrılarının güç, bereket ve koruyuculuk ile olan geleneksel bağlantılarını sembolize eden balta, üç çatal mızrak ve boğa gibi temel unsurların kalıcılığını vurgulamaktadır. Ancak, ikonografi aynı zamanda önemli dönüşümleri de yansıtmaktadır. Tarhunza, Geç Hitit panteonunun baş tanrısı olarak öne çıkmış ve Teşşub, Göğün Fırtına Tanrısı ve Halep'in Fırtına Tanrısı ile daha önce ilişkilendirilen özellikleri ve rolleri bünyesine katmıştır. Bu değişim, Geç Hitit kültüründe Luvilere dinî geleneklerinin artan hakimiyetini göstermektedir. Geç Hititler, fırtına tanrılarının ikonografisini hem gelenek hem de yenilik arasında bir denge kurarak kültürel kimliklerini ve politik meşruiyetlerini ifade etmek için kullanmışlardır. Bu çalışma, Eski Yakındoğu'da kültürel direnç ve adaptasyon süreçlerinin anlaşılmasına katkıda bulunmaktadır.

Anahtar Kelimeler: Hititler, Geç Hititler, Fırtına Tanrıları, İkonografi, Devamlılık

Introduction

The Hittite Kingdom emerged in Central Anatolia during the Middle Bronze Age and later expanded its sphere of influence to Northern Syria and the Levant. However, it collapsed towards the end of the 13th century BCE, following the Sea Peoples' migrations that deeply affected the political and cultural structure of the Eastern Mediterranean. The Late Hittites, considered the successors of the Hittites, were organized into small kingdoms in the southern part of Central Anatolia, extending from Cilicia to the Euphrates River, and from Malatya to Hama. Many of these kingdoms became provinces of the Neo-Assyrian Empire in the 8th century BCE. The Late Hittites disappeared from the historical stage after the 7th century BCE. Thus, the Late Hittite Period, which began in the 12th century BCE, came to an end (Jasink, 1995; Bryce, 2012; Freu & Mazoyer, 2012). The Hittites, who used the Hittite language as the

official language alongside cuneiform script, also used Anatolian Hieroglyphic writing during the Empire Period. The Late Hittites, on the other hand, preferred to use only Anatolian Hieroglyphic writing and Luwian (CHLI I; CHLI II; CHLI III; Payne, 2012; Peker, 2016, 2022b). Additionally, the Late Hittites developed a unique artistic understanding that initially reflected traditional Hittite art, followed by the incorporation of local elements and artistic features from the other communities they interacted with in the region (Akurgal, 1968; USK; Genge, 1979; Darga, 1992; Bonatz, 2000). This artistic approach influenced not only the Late Hittite kingdoms but also other neighboring kingdoms and regions. The best examples of these are Aramean kingdoms known as Sam'al, located at Zincirli Höyük in the Islahiye district of Gaziantep and Bīt-Baḥiani, centered at Tell Halaf within the borders of the Hasakah Governorate in northern Syria. In the monumental structures of the aforementioned settlements, artistic influences from the Aramean, Assyrian and Phoenician traditions are evident, while elements characteristic of the Late Hittite artistic style have also been identified (von Oppenheim, 2009; Gilibert, 2011). The storm gods, constituting the focal axis of this study, occupied a preeminent position within the religious, political, and social spheres of Hittite civilization. Revered as both protectors of the state and guarantors of royal sovereignty, these deities were simultaneously believed to govern meteorological phenomena and secure agricultural fertility. Hittite kings legitimized their rule through divine sanction, explicitly invoking the favour of the storm gods, in whose honour monumental temples were erected and major religious festivals celebrated. Within the mythological corpus, the storm gods are frequently portrayed as adversaries of chaotic forces, embodying cosmic order and balance, while concurrently being linked to agrarian abundance and military triumphs. In the empire's culturally pluralistic milieu, regional storm deities were venerated across various local traditions and were gradually syncretized into the official state pantheon. Consequently, storm gods came to be acknowledged as central figures within the Hittite religious framework, perceived as sovereign divine powers exerting dominion over both the natural world and human society (Haas, 1994; Green, 2003; Taracha, 2008). This study undertakes an iconographic analysis of the continuity in the representations of storm gods across monumental reliefs, seals, and textual sources from the Late Hittite Period, in relation to their counterparts from the Hittite Empire. Within this framework, particular attention will be given to the depictions of storm deities whose presence is attested in the Hittite Period and whose names recur in inscriptions from the Late Hittite corpus. The sequence of analysis will be organized according to the

frequency and prominence of these deities' representations in the monumental record of the Late Hittite Period.

1. Storm Gods Known from the Hittite Period and Their Depictions in Monuments from the Late Hittite Period

1.1. Tarhunza

The etymological origin of the name of Tarhunza, the chief god of the Luwian pantheon, is based on the Hittite verb *tarḫu-, which means to attack with great force, strike violently, conquer, or overcome (Haas, 1994; Taracha, 2009; Hutter, 2003, 2021). It is suggested that the god is related to the storm god *Perk^wuh₃no from Proto-Indo-European society, and that after the Indo-Europeans arrived in Anatolia, they made this god's name an epithet of the storm god, which eventually became the storm god's primary name (Hutter, 2003). The number of cuneiform texts from the 2nd millennium BCE in which the name Tarhunza appears is quite limited (Starke, 1990; van Gessel, 1998). However, king Muwattalli II named the new capital in the region known as the Lower Land after the god, calling it Tarḫuntašša (Popko, 1995; Taracha, 2009). The god is also held responsible for the protection and fertility of royal vineyards (KUB 43.23; Haas, 1988, 1994; Hutter, 2003, 2021; Taracha, 2009), and is identified with the storm god Taru of the Hattians and the storm god Tarḫu(na) of the Hittites (von Schuler, 1965; Popko, 1995). In the Late Hittite Period, the most commonly seen attributes of Tarhunza are axe, trident and sword. In relief found on stele in Siverek district of Şanlıurfa, Tarhunza is depicted under a winged solar disc holding a trident in his left hand extended forward, a double-headed axe in his right hand, and a sword at his waist. The name of the god is mentioned in ŞEKERLİ inscription carved on the top of the stele (Fig. 1). In monuments found at Kahramanmaraş (CHLI I, MARAŞ 11, pl. 120-121), Kürtül (CHLI I, KÜRTÜL, pl. 122-123), and Aleppo (CHLI I, ALEPPO 2, pl. 97-98) the god is depicted in a similar composition. The same situation applies the stele inscribed with NİĞDE 2 inscription; but there is no sword on it (CHLI I, NİĞDE 2, pl.301). In addition, the relationship between Tarhunza and axe is also evident in KAYSERİ inscription (CHLI I, KAYSERİ §7).

Fig. 1. The depiction of Tarhunza on the stele with ŞEKERLİ inscription
(<https://www.hittitemonuments.com/sekerli/>).



A different example of the above composition can be seen in Karkamış. KARKAMIS A1a inscription, carved on the structure known as the Long Wall, mentions “Samarkaeen Tarhunza”, associated with the concept of conquest (CHLI I, KARKAMIŞ A1a §3, 7-15, 24-27, 36-38; Peker, 2022b).[†] A depiction of this god is also found on the Long Wall. Here, the god is portrayed holding a sword at his waist, a single-headed axe raised in his right hand, and a short trident in his left hand extended forward (Fig. 2).

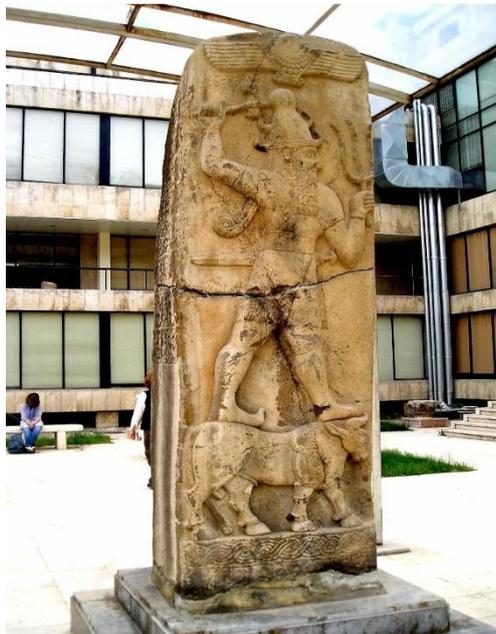
Fig. 2. The depiction of Samarkaeen Tarhunza
(Bunnens, 2021, fig. 69).



[†] Samarka has been identified with Išmerikka, mentioned in Hittite cuneiform texts and localized in the Siverek district of Şanlıurfa (Hawkins & Weeden, 2017).

In this period, Tarhunza is also associated with the bull. In MARAŞ 16 inscription, carved on a bull statue, the "Tarhunza of the Lawsuit" is mentioned, and it is stated that the statue was made for him (Peker, 2022a). Additionally, we know that a pedestal with a double-bull statue was found in the god's temple in Carchemish (USK, Karkemis Bb/2). Furthermore, on the pedestal found at the Kūlaflı Tepe site in Şanlıurfa, a bull relief is visible on the lower part, and the name of the god is mentioned in KÜLAFLI TEPE inscription on the upper part of the pedestal, although it is not fully legible (Poetto, 2017, fig. 1-3). The relationship between Tarhunza and bulls is reflected in his depiction. In TELL AHMAR 6 inscription, the "Tarhunza of the Army" is mentioned, associated with the concept of war (CHLI III, TELL AHMAR 6). In relief carved on stele with this inscription, the god is depicted under a winged solar disc, seated on a bull. He holds a double-headed axe raised in his right hand, and a short trident in his left hand extended forward. A sword is also depicted at his waist (Fig. 3).

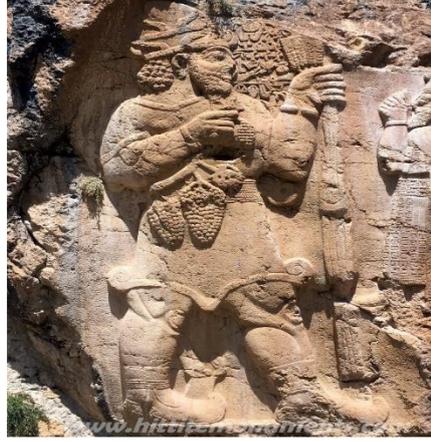
Fig. 3. The depiction of Tarhunza of the Army
(<https://www.hittitemonuments.com/tellahmar>).



In the inscriptions of the Late Hittite Period, we also see a form of Tarhunza associated with the fertility and protection of royal vineyards. In SULTANHAN (CHLI I, SULTANHAN §1-9, 12, 22-29, 34-36, 47-51), BOR (CHLI I, BOR §2-7, 8-11), İVRİZ 1 (CHLI I, §1-2) and İVRİZ 2 (Dinçol, 1994; Röllig, 2013) inscriptions, the god is referred to as the "Tarhunza of the Vineyard". The iconographic features of this form of Tarhunza can be learned from the depiction on the İvriz Rock Monument in Ereğli, Konya. In the relief on the İvriz Rock Monument, the

god is depicted holding long-stemmed ears of wheat in his left hand extended forward and a bunch of grapes pressed against his chest with his right hand (Fig. 4).

Fig. 4. The depiction of Tarhunza of the Vineyard
(<https://www.hittitemonuments.com/ivriz>, 21.01.2025)



Another form of Tarhunza, similar to the Tarhunza of the Vineyard, is Tarhunza referred to by epithet "Masahunali" in ADANA 1 inscription (CHLI III, ADANA 1). In relief carved on stele with this inscription, the god is depicted holding a grapevine in his right hand pressed against his chest and a bundle of long-stemmed wheat ears extended forward in his left hand (Fig. 5).¹

Fig. 5. The depiction of Tarhunza on stele with ADANA 1 inscription
(<https://www.hittitemonuments.com/karkamis/kargamis120.htm>)



¹ The word "masahunali," which appears as an epithet of God in the inscription, is believed to be related to the depiction on the stele. The word is derived from Luwian verb "mashani-", which means "to grow, develop, or flourish" in reference to plants. Therefore, it can be translated as "mashunali". Consequently, it can be argued that the meaning of the word is "growth, development, or abundance" (Peker, 2022b).

1.2. Storm God of Heaven

Before the establishment of the Hittite Kingdom, in the Hittite text known as the Anitta Text, which narrates the campaigns of King Anitta of Kuššara, the king mentions the Storm God of the Heaven as his protective deity. After establishing order in his region, the king states that he built a temple for the god in Kaniš. Furthermore, during his campaigns, he requested that the god punish anyone who would resettle Hattuša, which he had cursed (CTH 1; Neu, 1974). It is believed that the god, typologically, is a continuation of the storm god known as Nipaš from the Kültepe II level, and that the Hittite word nepiš, meaning "sky," is connected to the name of this god (Kloekhorst, 2008; Hutter, 2021). The god, who was at the head of the royal pantheon until the Hittite Imperial Period, maintained this status in later periods in settlements such as Zippalanda and Nerik, located to the north of Hattuša (Haas, 1994; Popko, 1995; Taracha, 2009; Hutter, 2021). Unlike other storm gods associated with rain and fertility, who had a more active role, this god is known to have had a more passive character, despite having temples in these settlements and cities in the central region of the Hittites (Popko, 1995; Taracha, 2009). In the depictions from the Late Hittite Period, the god is associated with axe, trident, and sword. In relief on stele inscribed with TELL AHMAR 2 inscription, the god is portrayed beneath the winged sun disk. In his raised right hand, he holds a single-headed axe, while in his extended left hand, he holds a short trident. A sword is also depicted at his waist (Fig. 6). The same composition is also on stele with BOROWSKI 3 inscription (CHLI I, BOROWSKI 3, pl. 93).

Fig. 6. The depiction of Storm God of Heaven on the stele with TELL AHMAR 2 inscription
(<https://www.hittitemonuments.com/tellahmar>).



The god is attested in association with a bull during this period. In the relief on the stele bearing the TELL AHMAR 1 inscription, the deity is portrayed standing atop a bull and positioned beneath the winged sun disk. He holds a single-headed axe in his raised right hand, while in his extended left hand he carries a short trident; a sword is also depicted at his waist (Fig. 7). In the relief on the stele inscribed with the CEKKE inscription, the god is similarly represented atop a bull; however, notably, he is not placed beneath the winged sun disk. In this depiction, he holds a long trident in his extended left hand, while in his right hand, which is pressed against his chest, he grasps an object resembling an onion. Unlike the previous example, no sword is depicted at his waist (Fig. 8).

Fig. 7. The depiction of Storm God of Heaven on the stele with TELL AHMAR 1 inscription
(<https://www.hittitemonuments.com/tellahmar>).



Fig. 7. The depiction of Storm God of Heaven on the stele with CEKKE inscription
(<https://www.hittitemonuments.com/cekke>).



1.3. Storm God of Aleppo

In the 3rd millennium BCE, it is believed that there was a small cultic site in Aleppo (Kohlmeyer, 2009), where Storm God of Aleppo was worshipped in Ebla as “Halam's Hadda” or “Halam's God” (Haas, 1994; Taracha, 2009; Trémouille, 2000). At the beginning of the Middle Bronze Age, with the rise of the Yamhad Kingdom in Aleppo, the cult area of this god in Aleppo expanded (Kohlmeyer, 2009), and during this period, he was referred to as “Hadda of Aleppo”, “Addu of Aleppo”, or “Adad of Aleppo” (Haas, 1994; Taracha, 2009; Trémouille, 2000). The Hurrians, who were closely associated with the Yamhad Kingdom, elevated this god to a prominent position within their pantheon, ensuring that his cult spread throughout Syria (Haas, 1994; Taracha, 2009; Hutter, 2021). The Hittite King Hattušili I, as a result of his campaigns in Northern Syria and the Yamhad Kingdom, became the king who brought the cult of the Storm God to Anatolia (Gurney, 1976; Haas, 1994; Popko, 1995; Taracha, 2009). During the Hittite Empire period, the god's temple in Aleppo was rebuilt (Kohlmeyer, 2009). It is known that the god had temples in the capital Hattusa and its surrounding areas. Some of these temples were associated with agricultural themes, and the god also had specific festivals dedicated to him (Haas, 1994; Taracha, 2009). In representations from the Late Hittite Period, the god is depicted alongside symbols such as axe, trident, and sword. In relief on stela inscribed with BABYLON 1 inscription, the god is depicted beneath the winged sun disk. In his raised right hand, he holds a single-headed axe, while in his extended left hand, he grasps a short-handled trident. A sword is also present at his waist (Fig. 8). The same composition is present in relief on stela inscribed with KÖRKÜN inscription (CHLI I, KÖRKÜN, pl. 58-59).

Fig. 8. The depiction of Storm God of Aleppo on the stela with BABYLON 1 inscription
(<https://www.hittitemonuments.com/aleppo/aleppo13.htm>).



During this period, the god is recognized as being associated with bull. One of the orthostats found in the god's temple in Aleppo, dating to this period, depicts the god as a figure holding a mace in his right hand, bent toward his shoulder, and the reins of a chariot drawn by two bulls in his left hand (Fig. 9). In ALEPPO 4 inscription on this orthostat, the god's name is read as "Divine Mace" (CHLI III, ALEPPO 4 §(a)).

Fig. 8. The depiction of Storm God of Aleppo on the orthostat with ALEPPO 4 inscription
(<https://www.hittitemonuments.com/aleppo/aleppo06.jpg>).



1.4. Tešsub

It is believed that Tešsub's name is derived from Hurrian adjective "teššai", meaning "high," "sublime", or "powerful" (Haas, 1994). It is known that, in the 3rd millennium BCE, the god did not hold a significant position in the Hurrian pantheon. However, like other storm gods in Mesopotamia and the Levant, his importance grew in the 2nd millennium BCE, and he eventually became the chief god of the Hurrian pantheon (Popko, 1995; Taracha, 2009; Hutter, 2021). As a storm god, he was associated with rain and fertility, but what distinguished him from other storm gods was his connection to rivers (Haas, 1994; Popko, 1995; Taracha, 2009; Trémouille, 2000). It has been suggested that this god was equated with Old Babylonian storm and war god Tišpak (Edzard, 1965). During the Hittite Empire period, with the increasing influence of the Hurrians, the god was elevated to the head of the royal pantheon (Gurney, 1976; Popko, 1995; Taracha, 2009; Hutter, 2021). It is known that the god was worshipped across a wide geographical area, from Central Mesopotamia to Central Anatolia, and had sacred sites (Haas, 1994; Popko, 1995; Taracha, 2009; Hutter, 2021; Trémouille, 2000). However, the most significant of these were the cities of Kumme or Kummiya hought to be located east of the Habur River, which is mentioned in Hurrian myths (Laroche, 1946-1947; Haas, 1994; Popko, 1995; Taracha, 2009; Hutter, 2021; Trémouille, 2000) and Kummanni in the region of Kizzuwatna (O. Gurney, 1976; Haas, 1994; Popko, 1995; Taracha, 2009; Hutter, 2021;

Trémouille, 2000). Teššub is depicted in Late Hittite Period monuments with curved sword, bundle of lightning and sword. On the middle section of an Arslantepe orthostat inscribed with MALATYA 8 inscription, the god is depicted holding a curved sword in his raised right hand and a bundle of lightning in his extended left hand. A sword is present at his waist (Fig. 9). A similar composition is also present in another Arslantepe orthostat inscribed with MALATYA 11 inscription. However, in this depiction, the god is shown with a curved sword in his raised left hand and a bundle of lightning in his extended right hand (CHLI I, MALATYA 11, pl. 151).

Fig. 9. The depiction of Teššub on the middle section of the orthostat with MALATYA 8 inscription
(<https://www.hittitemonuments.com/arslantepe/arslantepe>).



In addition, the god is also associated with bull in this period. On the left section of the orthostat inscribed with MALATYA 8 inscription, the god is depicted atop a chariot drawn by two bulls. In this representation, the god holds a curved sword in his raised right hand, the reins of the chariot in his left hand, and a sword is also present at his waist (Fig. 10).

Fig. 10. The depiction of Teššub on the left section of the orthostat with MALATYA 8 inscription
(<https://www.hittitemonuments.com/arslantepe/arslantepe>).



2. The Depictions of the Gods in the Hittite Period

2.1. Tarhunza

In the Hittite period, a text related to the plague prayer of Uhamuwa from Arzawa mentions a chariot of the storm god (HT 1 ii 24 ff.; Popko, 1995; Taracha, 2009; Hutter, 2021, 2003). Since Arzawa was a Luwian settlement during this period, it has been suggested that the storm god in question was Tarhunza (Hutter, 2003, 2021; Taracha, 2009). However, it is also known that the Hittite kings organized in honor of storm god, who was known by epithet "piḫaššašši," derived from Luwian word "piḫaš/piḫatta," meaning brightness, on the nineteenth day of AN.TAḪ.ŠUMSAR Festival. So, this storm god is believed to be a different form of Tarhunza (Haas, 1994; Popko, 1995; Taracha, 2009; Hutter, 2003; Rutherford, 2020). According to the theory that traces the origins of Tarhunza to Proto-Indo-European society, the association of the storm god with horses, unlike other storm gods, is considered a legacy of the Proto-Indo-European heritage (Hutter, 2003). When we examine the depictions, statues, and statue bases from the Late Hittite period, we observe that Tarhunza does not have any connection to horses during this time. Instead, like other storm gods, the god is associated with the bull in this period. This situation can be explained by the sociopolitical and geographical conditions of the period. According to this, the Luwians, who were the dominant power in the Late Hittite kingdoms, could associate their chief god with bull, in response to the political and geographical changes they faced after the collapse of the Hittite Kingdom. In this way, they could make an important move to maintain their existence in the region.

From a text of the Hittite period, we learn that the weapon of Tarhunza is spear (KUB 43.23 rv. 15-16'; Haas, 1988). However, in depictions from the Late Hittite period, the god's attributes include axe, trident, and sword. This situation can also be explained within the framework of the assumption mentioned in the previous paragraph. Although representations of the god from the Hittite period do not feature motifs of grape and wheat, the association of these symbols with the deity during the Late Hittite period can be traced to his earlier role as protector of royal vineyards and agricultural fertility. The epithet "Tarhunza of the Vineyard," attested in Late Hittite inscriptions, and its correlation with these agricultural motifs and fertility-related concepts, constitutes the most compelling evidence for the continuity and transformation of the god's attributes across periods.

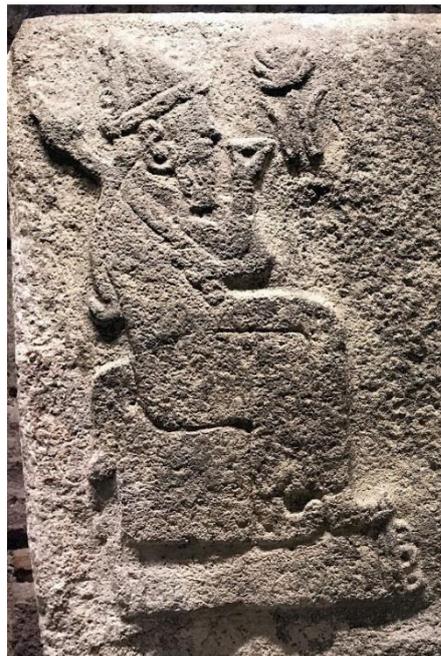
2.2. Storm God of Heaven

In cuneiform texts from the Hittite period, three depictions of the god are mentioned. The first of these describes the god represented by a silver-plated figure standing on two mountains,

with a silver pedestal beneath the figure. Below the pedestal, there are two silver vessels in the shape of animals (KUB 38.2 obv. ii 11-13'; von Schuler, 1965; Gurney, 1976; Haas, 1994; Hutter, 2021). However, no such depiction of the god exists in the Late Hittite Period.

In the second written depiction, the god is portrayed in seating position. He holds a mace in his right hand, while he grasps gold, symbolizing goodness, in his left hand (KUB 38.2 obv. ii 8-10'; von Schuler, 1965; Gurney, 1976; Haas, 1994; Hutter, 2021). A figure similar to this description can be seen on one of the orthostats found in Alacahöyük. The orthostat, now on display at the Ankara Anatolian Civilizations Museum, features a deity figure. The figure is seated on a throne, positioned on the left side of the orthostat, facing right. In its right hand, resting on its chest, it holds a cup, while its left hand, wrapped around the lower part of its right arm, clutches a mace (Fig. 11). On the upper right part of the figure, the name of the god is inscribed in ALACA HÖYÜK 1 inscription (Peker, 2021).

Fig. 11. The depiction of storm god of hevaen on the orthostat with ALACA HÖYÜK 1 inscription)
(<https://www.hittitemonuments.com/alacahoyuk/ALACA>).



Such a depiction of the god does not exist in the Late Hittite Period; however, a connection can be made between the symbol resembling an onion in the god's right hand, engraved on the CEKKE inscription, and the sign of goodness mentioned in the depictions above. If this is the case, it can be argued that a symbol attributed to the god during the Hittite Period is represented in a different form in the Late Hittite Period.

In the third written depiction in the Hittite Period, the god is described as being represented by a bull made of silver with golden adornments, standing on four legs (KUB 38.12 obv. ii 13'; Haas, 1994; Taracha, 2009). However, there isn't such depiction of the god in the Late Hittite Period. At this point, we might consider that depictions of Storm God of Heaven in the Late Hittite Period were assimilated within the representations belonging to Tarhunza. The bull statue dedicated to Tarhunza of the Lawsuit stands as one of the most significant pieces of evidence for this. Additionally, other depictions of Storm God of Heaven are found to be identical to those of Tarhunza. This situation, as seen in the example of Tarhunza, can be linked to the dominance of the Luwians in the Late Hittite kingdoms.

2.3. Storm God of Aleppo

In the temple of Storm God of Aleppo at Aleppo, the god is depicted in smiting position, with both hands raised on an orthostat dating to the Hittite Period. The god figure, wearing a sword at his waist, is accompanied by ALEPPO 5 inscription at the upper part of the figure, which names the god (Fig. 12). In the Late Hittite Period, however, no such depiction of the god exists.

Fig. 12. The depiction of storm god of ALEPPO on the orthostat with ALEPPO 5 inscription
(<https://www.hittitemonuments.com/aleppo/aleppo09.jpg>).



On İmamkulu Rock Relief from the Hittite Period, Storm God of Aleppo, whose name is written in İMAMKULU inscription on the relief, is depicted driving a chariot drawn by two bulls. The god holds a mace in his right hand, which is bent towards his shoulder, while holding the reins of the chariot with his left hand. He wears a sword at his waist (Fig. 13).

Fig. 13. The depiction of storm god of ALEPPO on İMAMKULU Relief
(Ehringhaus, 2005, fig. 133).



In the depiction on the orthostat found in the temple of the god in Aleppo, which dates to the Late Hittite Period and we previously examined, the god is represented in a similar composition. Thus, we can observe that the relationship between the god, the bulls, and the mace continued into the Late Hittite Period. Additionally, the reference to the god as "Divine Mace" in ALEPPO 4 inscription shows that the concept of mace was directly associated with the god during this period. On the other hand, in this period, similar to Storm God of Heaven, we also see that depictions of Storm God of Aleppo were assimilated within the representations of Tarhunza. The depictions on the stelae bearing BABYLON 1 and KÖRKÜN inscriptions serve as key evidence for this. This can be seen in parallel with our inference regarding the changes in the depictions of Tarhunza and Storm God of Heaven.

2.4. Teššub

In Hurrian myths, there is a pair of bulls named Šeri (šu) and Hurri, which pull the chariot of Teššub known as the king of the sky (Laroche, 1946-1947; von Schuler, 1965; Gurney, 1976; Haas, 1994; Popko, 1995; Taracha, 2009; Hutter, 2021). Additionally, a pair of mountains named Namni, associated with the Mt. Amanus, and Hazzi, associated with Mt. Kel, are also dedicated to him (Gurney, 1976; Haas, 1994; Popko, 1995; Taracha, 2009; Hutter, 2021). In Yazılıkaya Reliefs, the god is depicted standing on top of a pair of mountains. He holds a mace in his right hand, and a bull is shown between his legs (Fig. 14). The bull's name is read as "Sacred Calf of Teššub" (Masson, 1981).

Fig. 14. The depiction of Teššub on Yazılıkaya Reliefs
(<https://www.hittitemonuments.com/yazilikaya>).



On the Arslantepe orthostat, dated to the Late Hittite Period and inscribed with MALATYA 8 inscription, the god is depicted with bulls. This shows that the relationship between the god and bulls continued during this period. The absence of the god being depicted on a mountain pair, as seen in the Hittite Period, can be explained not by a cultural difference, but rather by the lack of space on the orthostat to include the mountain pair or by geographical reasons.

The figures of storm god carrying curved sword and bundle of lightning on cylinder seal impressions dating to the Hittite Period and found in Nuzi are thought to represent Teššub (Haas, 1994; Stein, 1988). If we accept this assumption as correct, we can interpret the depiction of the god with a curved sword and a bundle of lightning on the Arslantepe orthostats as a continuation of a tradition inherited from the earlier period. Moreover, the presence of lightning among the god's attributes in the Hittite Period also seems to support this argument (Hutter, 2021). However, if that is not the case, it would mean that the depiction style for storm gods seen in the earlier period was also used for Teššub in the Late Hittite Period.

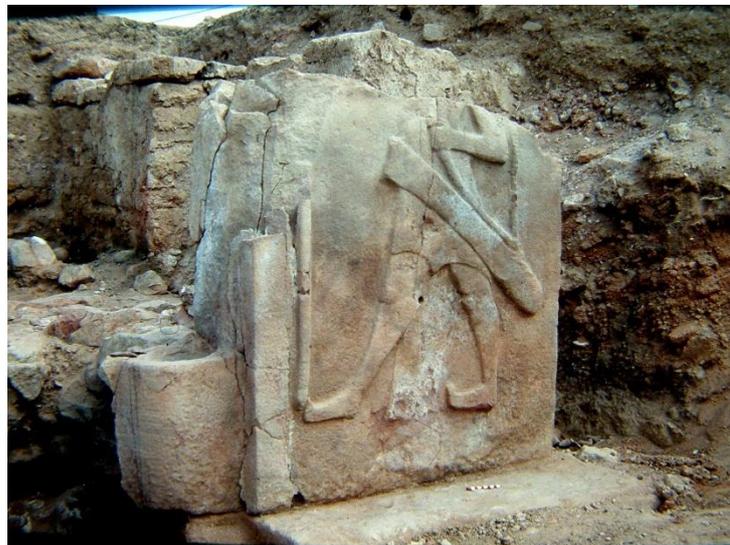
In addition to these, we also know that there are other depictions of Teššub from the Hittite Period. In Fraktin Relief, the god is depicted holding a curved staff in his right hand, resting on his shoulder, and holding a symbol of goodness in his extended left hand, with a sword at his waist (Fig 15). On an orthostat found in Ortaköy, the god is depicted with a spear in his extended right hand, a bow on his left shoulder, and a quiver at his waist (Fig. 16). Furthermore, it is

known that in this period, the god is also associated with axe and winged lion (Haas, 1994; Süel, 2015).

Fig. 15. The depiction of Teššub on Fraktin Relief
(<https://www.hittitemonuments.com/fraktin>).



Fig. 16. The depiction of Teššub on the orthostat in Ortaköy
(<https://www.hittitemonuments.com/ortakoy>).



At this point, when we look at the storm gods from a broader perspective, comparing the Hittite Period and the Late Hittite Period, a different picture emerges. During the Hittite Period, the chief god of the royal pantheon was Teššub. However, over time, this influence diminished, and the role of the chief god in the Late Hittite region was attributed to the storm god of the Luwians, Tarhunza. This shift is also evident in the fact that Teššub appears very rarely in the

inscriptions (CHLI I, TELL AHMAR 1 §2-3; CHLI III, TELL AHMAR 6 §1-3). Additionally, the transfer of attributes from Teššub to Tarhunza highlights a particular aspect of the political and cultural changes in the Late Hittite region.

Conclusion

The Late Hittite Period, emerging from the collapse of the Hittite Empire in the 12th century BCE, was characterized by profound political disintegration and cultural reconfiguration. Despite the fragmentation of centralized authority into a constellation of smaller polities, these successor states preserved and reinterpreted the iconographic and religious traditions inherited from their Hittite antecedents. In this context, the depictions of storm deities functioned both as conduits of cultural memory and as instruments for articulating new socio-political realities. Through the selective adaptation of Hittite motifs and the incorporation of local and regional elements, the Late Hittites crafted a distinctive artistic and religious synthesis, reflecting their resilience and capacity for innovation amid shifting historical conditions. The iconographic analysis of storm gods from the Hittite to the Late Hittite periods reveals a complex dialectic of continuity and transformation, emblematic of the Late Hittites' endeavor to sustain their cultural heritage while negotiating emergent socio-political frameworks. This study elucidates how the visual representations of these deities served not merely as expressions of religious devotion, but also as potent symbols of cultural identity and instruments of political legitimation. Tarhunza, the preeminent deity of the Luwian pantheon, retained a central position within the religious landscape of the Late Hittite polities. His enduring attributes—such as the axe, trident, and bull—attest to a continuity with earlier iconographic traditions, while the elaboration of his association with fertility and the royal vineyards, notably through the integration of wheat and grape motifs, reflects a strategic rearticulation of his imagery to address new socio-economic realities. This iconographic expansion underscores the adaptive mechanisms employed by the Late Hittites to maintain the relevance of traditional religious symbols within evolving contexts. The Storm God of Heaven, a paramount figure within the official Hittite pantheon, likewise maintained his symbolic authority in the Late Hittite corpus, albeit with significant modifications. Iconographic elements distinctive to the earlier period—such as his enthroned representations and associations with mountainous landscapes—were increasingly subsumed into the broader visual lexicon of Tarhunza. This syncretism illustrates not only the ascendancy of Luwian cultural identity within the Late Hittite milieu but also an intentional endeavor to integrate diverse religious traditions into a cohesive and politically expedient framework.

Similarly, the Storm God of Aleppo preserved his regional prominence through a relatively stable iconographic repertoire, including the bull, mace, and chariot, which continued to underscore his functions as protector and divine warrior. His epithet as "Divine Mace" in Late Hittite inscriptions reinforces his enduring association with military power and sovereignty. Nonetheless, his imagery, like that of the Storm God of Heaven, gradually converged with that of Tarhunza, reflecting a broader trend toward the consolidation of religious iconography aimed at fostering cultural and political cohesion. In contrast, Teššub, the supreme deity of the Hurrian pantheon during the Hittite imperial period, experienced a marked diminution in prominence within the Late Hittite religious landscape. Although some of his primary attributes—such as the lightning bundle and bull symbolism—persisted, much of his iconographic distinctiveness was gradually absorbed into the figure of Tarhunza. This development evidences a broader cultural realignment, wherein Luwian religious elements superseded earlier Hurrian influences, mirroring the political and societal transformations that redefined the Late Hittite polities in the post-imperial era. The iconographic evolution of storm deities during the Late Hittite Period thus reflects a dynamic process of cultural negotiation, in which traditional motifs were selectively preserved, adapted, or reinterpreted in response to contemporary exigencies. While core symbolic elements—such as the bull, mace, and lightning bundle—endured as markers of divine protection and royal authority, the introduction of agricultural motifs and the fusion of regional iconographies signal a pragmatic reconfiguration aimed at sustaining religious and political relevance. The diminishing prominence of Teššub and the increasing dominance of Luwian-influenced storm god imagery further attest to the recalibration of the religious hierarchy in favor of localized expressions of divine sovereignty. Ultimately, the Late Hittite visual discourse surrounding storm gods embodies a sophisticated interplay of tradition and innovation, illustrating both reverence for the Hittite past and the creative adaptation required to navigate the uncertainties of a fragmented political landscape. Future research may profitably focus on examining regional iconographic variations and external cultural influences, thereby offering a more nuanced understanding of the mechanisms of cultural continuity and transformation in the Anatolian and northern Syrian contexts during the first millennium BCE.

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