



Sayı/Issue	65-Haziran 2026/ 65-June 2026
Makale Bilgisi/ Article Info	Araştırma Makalesi / Research Article
Başvuru Tarihi/ Submitted Date:	15 Ocak 2026 / 15 January 2026
Kabul Tarihi/ Accepted Date:	25 Mart 2026 / 25 March 2026
Atıf/Citation:	Kurşun Cengiz, P. (2026). Hereditary Sin in the Hittites: Are the Sins of the Fathers Inherited by the Children?. <i>Süleyman Demirel Üniversitesi İnsan ve Toplum Bilimleri Dergisi</i> (65). 377-392.
DOI:	10.35237/suitder.1864011
Benzerlik / Similarity: %	9

Hereditary Sin in the Hittites: Are the Sins of the Fathers Inherited by the Children?

Hititlerde Kalıtsal Günah: Babaların Günahları Çocuklara Miras Kalır mı?

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Abstract

As one of the major political actors of the ancient Near East, the Hittites provide a significant case for understanding the relationship between religion, society, and political authority within a polytheistic belief system. In Hittite thought, the relationship between gods and humans was based on mutual obligation and violations of divine duties were believed to result in collective disasters such as plagues, famine, and military defeat. Divinatory and oracular practices played a central role in identifying the causes of divine wrath and reveal that responsibility for sin could be attributed not only to the present generation but also to ancestors. Within this framework, the notion that “the sin of the father passes to the son” constituted an important interpretive principle in Hittite theology.

This study examines how the concept of hereditary sin was conceptualized in Hittite religious thought, the contexts in which it was considered valid, and the ritual mechanisms through which it was negotiated. Adopting a holistic and comparative approach, the article analyzes prayers, rituals, and oracle texts from both royal and non-royal contexts. The analysis demonstrates that hereditary sin was neither a rigid doctrine nor a marginal idea; rather, it functioned as a flexible explanatory framework used to interpret divine wrath, intergenerational responsibility, and political legitimacy in Hittite religion.

Keywords: Hereditary Sin, Inherited Sin, Wašta-, Plague, Mantalliya- Sacrifice.

Öz

Eski Yakın Doğu’nun önemli siyasal aktörlerinden biri olan Hititler, çoktanrılı inanç sistemleri ve bu sistemin toplumsal ve siyasal yapı ile kurduğu ilişki bakımından dikkat çekici bir örnek sunmaktadır. Hitit düşüncesinde tanrılar ile insanlar arasındaki ilişki karşılıklı yükümlülük esasına dayanmakta; tanrılara karşı görevlerin ihmal edilmesi ya da ihlali, salgın hastalıklar, kıtlık ve askerî yenilgiler gibi kolektif felaketlerin nedeni olarak görülmektedir. İlahi öfkenin sebeplerini tespit etmeye yönelik kehanet ve fal uygulamaları, günah ve sorumluluğun yalnızca mevcut kuşağa değil, önceki kuşaklara da

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atfedilebildiğini göstermektedir. Bu bağlamda “babanın günahının oğula geçmesi” düşüncesi, Hitit teolojisinde önemli bir yorum ilkesi olarak karşımıza çıkmaktadır.

Bu çalışma, Hitit dinî düşüncesinde kalıtsal günah kavramının nasıl anlamlandırıldığını, hangi bağlamlarda geçerli kabul edildiğini ve hangi ritüel mekanizmalar aracılığıyla yönetildiğini incelemektedir. Bütüncül ve karşılaştırmalı bir yaklaşımla, krallık ve krallık dışı bağlamlara ait dua, ritüel ve kehanet metinleri analiz edilmektedir. İnceleme sonucunda, kalıtsal günahın Hitit inanç sisteminde ne katı bir doktrin ne de marjinal bir kavram olduğu; aksine ilahi öfke, kuşaklar arası sorumluluk ve siyasal meşruiyetin açıklanmasında kullanılan esnek bir yorum çerçevesi işlevi gördüğü ortaya konulmaktadır.

Anahtar Kelimeler: Kalıtsal Günah, Miras Alınan Günah, Wašta-, Veba, Mantalliya- Ritüeli.

INTRODUCTION

Hittite religion, shaped through the interaction of Hattian, Hurrian, Luwian, and Mesopotamian traditions, represents one of the most complex religious systems of the ancient Near East. Rather than being organized around a single, omnipotent deity, the Hittite pantheon consisted of a multitude of anthropomorphic gods associated with natural phenomena, specific places, objects, and social functions. Mountains, rivers, stones, trees, and even human-made objects could embody divine presence, creating a religious universe permeated by sacred forces (Haas, 1994, p. 294). Within this polytheistic framework, maintaining correct relations with the gods was a central concern of religious life and a prerequisite for social and political stability in Hittite society.

The relationship between gods and humans in Hittite belief was fundamentally pragmatic and reciprocal (Bryce, 2002, p.145). Humans were created to serve the gods and were therefore responsible for sustaining the divine realm through sacrifices, festivals, cult journeys and daily offerings. In return, the gods were expected to grant prosperity, health, fertility, and military success. Any failure to fulfill these obligations, whether through ritual negligence, broken oaths or cultic irregularities, was believed to provoke divine anger. The anger of gods manifested itself in calamities such as famine, plague, defeat in war, and social disorder. As has often been noted, navigating a polytheistic religious environment inherently involved the risk of offending one deity while appeasing another, thereby exposing individuals and communities to divine punishment (Bryce, 2002, p. 139).

Within this theological framework, the concept of sin occupied a crucial position. In Hittite terminology, sin (*wašta-*) (Hoffner, 1967, p. 81) did not denote a purely moral failing but rather a disruption of the divinely sanctioned order that governed relations between gods and humans. Such disruptions were understood to have tangible consequences that could affect not only the individual offender but also their household, descendants and in some cases the entire land (Gurney, 2001, p. 134). Sin could be committed intentionally or inadvertently and its effects often required identification through divination, confession, and ritual remediation in order to restore balance. Oracular inquiries frequently extended the search for the cause of divine anger beyond the present generation, attributing misfortune to offenses committed in the past (Bryce, 2002, p. 140).

Although Hittite religious scholarship has devoted considerable attention to ritual practice, divine anger and the role of kingship as mediator between gods and humans, the issue of intergenerational responsibility for sin has received comparatively limited and fragmented treatment. References to inherited sin appear in studies of plague prayers, oath violations and dynastic legitimacy, yet they are usually addressed only incidentally and without a sustained conceptual framework. Moreover, previous research has tended to examine royal prayers, ritual texts and divinatory records in isolation, leaving insufficiently explored the broader religious logic that allowed the sins of ancestors to affect their descendants and the political community as a whole. As a result, the mechanisms through which hereditary sin was articulated, justified, and ritually neutralized in Hittite thought remain under-theorized.

This study aims to address this gap by examining how the belief that “the sin of the father comes upon the son” was constructed, negotiated, and ritualized in Hittite religious discourse. To this end, the article focuses on a deliberately selected corpus of royal prayers, ritual texts, and oracular records that represent distinct yet complementary discursive contexts in which inherited sin could be articulated, problematized, or ritually managed. The Plague Prayers of Muršili II (CTH 378) and the Prayer of Ḫattušili III and Puduḫepa to the Sun-goddess of Arinna (CTH 383) were chosen because they contain the most explicit formulations of intergenerational guilt, articulated within the rhetoric of royal supplication and political accountability. In contrast, the Birth Ritual of Papanikri (CTH 476) offers insight into how inherited impurity or guilt was presupposed and ritually neutralized in a non-royal, life-cycle context, without being doctrinally stated. Finally, the Oracles Concerning the Enemies of Ḫattušili III (CTH 569) illustrate how ancestral wrongdoing functioned as a diagnostic possibility within divinatory inquiry, revealing the operational logic through which past transgressions were invoked to explain present misfortune.

By bringing these diverse sources into dialogue, the article argues that hereditary sin in Hittite belief was neither a marginal notion nor a rigid doctrinal principle, but a flexible interpretive framework through which divine anger, political legitimacy, and ritual responsibility were explained and managed across different textual genres. In doing so, the study contributes to a more nuanced understanding of sin, responsibility, and intergenerational accountability in ancient Anatolian religion.

1. The Plague Prayers of Muršili II/ CTH 378

The Plague Prayers of Muršili II provide an important textual basis for discussing notions of intergenerational responsibility and inherited sin in Hittite religious thought. These prayers do not merely seek divine relief from a prolonged epidemic; rather, they associate the outbreak of collective disaster with unresolved transgressions attributed to earlier rulers. Within the conceptual framework reflected in these prayers, wrongdoing, wrongdoing whether committed by an individual, the king, or even a deceased person could constitute a collective burden capable of bringing calamity upon the entire land. Accordingly, divine wrath was investigated through dreams and oracular procedures, sins were confessed, and ritual atonement was performed in order to appease the gods. The Plague Prayers of Muršili II (CTH 378.I and CTH 378.II) are particularly significant in this respect, as they present plague as a form of collective retribution grounded in the belief that “the father’s sin comes upon his son.”

The prayer text¹, numbered CTH 378.I, initially seeks to determine the true causes of the plague inflicted upon the Land of Hatti by the gods through an extensive process of divination. In order to ensure that his plea concerning the various sins burdening the collective conscience will be heard by all the gods, Muršili addresses the entire pantheon, divided into male and female deities, as follows:

“[All] you male [gods], all female gods [of heaven(?)], all male gods [of the oath], all female gods of the oath, [all] male primeval [gods], all female (primeval) gods, you gods who have been summoned to assembly for bearing witness to the oath on this [matter], mountains, rivers, springs, and underground watercourses. I, Muršili, [great king(?)], your priest, your servant, herewith plead with you. [Listen] to me O gods, my lords, in the matter in which I am making a plea to you!”² (Singer, 2002, p. 61; Karağuz, 2020, p. 121; Ünal, 2003, p. 101)

In the following lines, Muršili describes the twenty years during which the Hittites struggled against the plague and the hardships the country endured. The king, after inquiring into the oracle, unequivocally points to various sins committed by his father, Šuppiluliuma, as the cause of the disaster. The relevant portions of the prayer are recorded as follows:

“O gods, [my] lords! A plague broke out in Hatti, and Hatti has been severely damaged by the plague. And since for twenty years now in Hatti people have been dying, the affair of Tudhaliya the Younger, son of Tudhaliya, started to weigh on [me]. I inquired about it to the god through an oracle, and the affair of Tudhaliya was confirmed

¹ CTH 378.I: A. KUB 14.14 + KUB 19.1 + KUB 19.2 + KBo 3.47 + 1858/u + Bo 4229 + Bo 9433. B. KUB 23.3.

² KUB 19.1 Vs. 1–7.

by the deity. Since Tudhaliya the Younger was their lord in Hatti, the princes, the noblemen, the commanders of the thousands, the officers, [the corporals(?) of Hatti and all [the infantry] and chariotry of Hatti swore an oath to him. My father also swore an oath to him. [But when my father] wronged Tudhaliya, all [the princes, the noblemen], the commanders of the thousands, and the officers of Hatti [went over] to my father. The deities by whom the oath was sworn [seized] Tudhaliya and they killed [Tudhaliya]. Furthermore, they killed those of his brothers [who stood by] him. [. . .] they sent to Alasiya (Cyprus) and [. . .]. And [since Tudhaliya the Younger] was their [lord], they [. . .] to him [. . .]. [. . .] and the lords transgressed the oath [. . .]”³ (Singer, 2002, p. 61; Karauğuz, 2020, pp. 121-122; Ünal, 2003, p. 101)

As can be inferred from the relevant lines of the text, during Tudhaliya the Younger’s reign over Hatti, the princes, officials, and even Muršili’s father, Šuppiluliuma, swore allegiance to him, thereby acknowledging his legitimate claim to the throne. Yet, when Šuppiluliuma attempted to seize power from Tudhaliya, those who had taken the oath of loyalty to him switched their allegiance. In doing so, they broke their divine oath and Tudhaliya the Younger was killed by these very individuals. Moreover, his brothers were subsequently exiled to the land of Alašiya (Cyprus), further violating the sacred oath.

In the continuation of the prayer, Muršili speaks of the expansion of the country’s borders and the prosperity that prevailed during his father’s reign, apparently seeking to legitimize his father’s usurpation of the throne. The phrase “O gods, my [lords], protected my father...And because Hatti [was attacked(?)] by the [enemy, and the enemy] had taken [borderlands] of Hatti, [my father kept attacking the enemy lands] and kept defeating them”⁴ (Singer, 2002, p. 62; Karauğuz, 2020, p. 122; Ünal, 2003, p. 10) can be interpreted as a reference to the dichotomy created by the gods, once protectors of Šuppiluliuma, now avengers for the same transgression. In a sense, Muršili’s rhetoric highlights a tension between past divine favor and present divine punishment implying that their former favor ultimately resulted in a plague lasting twenty years, thereby demanding divine justice. In the subsequent part of the prayer, Muršili explicitly declares that he and his land are innocent, and that the sin committed by his father, Šuppiluliuma, against Tudhaliya the Younger has brought suffering upon him and his country:

“But now you, O gods, [my lords], have eventually taken vengeance on my father for this affair of Tudhaliya the Younger. My father [died(?)] because of the blood of Tudhaliya, and the princes, the noblemen, the commanders of the thousands, and the officers who went over [to my father], they also died because of [that] affair...[Now,] I have confessed [it to you, O gods(?). Because] my father [killed (?)] Tudhaliya [and . . .], my father therefore [performed] a ritual (for the expiation) of blood. But [the land of] Hatti did not [perform] anything for itself. I performed [the ritual of the blood], but the land did not perform anything. They did nothing on behalf [of] the land.”⁵ (Singer, 2002, p. 62; Karauğuz, 2020, p. 123; Ünal, 2003, pp. 102-103)

In the preceding section of the text, Muršili describes a plague ravaging the land. Through oracular inquiries, he identifies the cause of the epidemic and asserts that he himself is not to blame for the outbreak. Instead, he explains that his father and his entourage usurped the throne, killed Tudhaliya the Younger, and violated their oath to the gods. To put it differently, Muršili somewhat reluctantly acknowledges that “the father’s sin comes upon his son.” The subsequent step is to appease the gods, implore their mercy so that their wrath may subside, and atone for the past transgressions:

“I have [not] done any evil. Of those who sinned and did the evil, no one of that day is still here. They have already died off. But because the affair of my father has come upon me, I am giving you, O gods, my lords, a propitiatory gift on account of the plague of the land, and I am making restitution. I am making restitution to you with a propitiatory gift and reparation. May you gods, my lords, again [have] mercy on me, and let me elicit your pity. Because Hatti has been oppressed by the plague, it has been reduced in size. [And those makers of offering bread and libation pourers who used to prepare] the offering bread and the libation for the gods, my lords, [since Hatti] has been severely oppressed by [the plague], [they have died] from the plague. [The plague] does not subside at all, and they continue to die, [even those] few [makers of offering bread] and libation pourers [who still remain

³ KUB 19.1 Vs. 8–22.

⁴ KBo 58.8 Vs. 23+KUB 14.14 Vs. 25.

⁵ KUB 14.14 Vs. 32–40 + KUB 19.2 Rs. 8–12.

will die, and nobody will prepare] for you offering bread and libation any longer..."⁶ (Singer, 2002, pp. 63-64; Karağuz, 2020, p. 124; Ünal, 2003, p. 103)

The *Plague Prayer* of Muršili II, catalogued as CTH 378.I, concludes at this point. The final section of the prayer is particularly striking when examined in the context of the Hittite anthropomorphic conception of the gods. Conceived in human form, the gods depend upon human care and service; if all the people of Hatti were to perish, there would be no one left to offer them bread and drink. "*If all the people of Hatti were to perish in the pestilence, who would worship the gods?*" Muršili II implies that if the few remaining officials also died, the gods themselves would suffer. That the gods took pity on Muršili II's sincere prayer and brought an end to the plague may tentatively be inferred from the absence of further references to the epidemic in later prayers (Singer, 2002, p. 48. Karağuz, 2020, p.124).

While CTH 378.I emphasizes the violation of oaths and political transgressions as the primary source of divine anger, the second plague prayer (CTH 378.II), dedicated to the Storm-god of Hatti, expands the scope of inherited guilt by introducing additional cultic and diplomatic failures. Together, these two prayers suggest that inherited guilt was understood as encompassing sin in Hittite belief was not confined to a single type of offense but encompassed a wide range of religious, political, and ritual shortcomings.

In CTH 378.II, Muršili states that the plague had been ravaging the land for twenty years, since the time of his brothers and sisters, and implores the Storm-god to reveal the cause of the disaster through a dream or oracle. According to two tablets consulted during the divinatory process, the plague resulted from two principal offenses: the failure to offer sacrifices to the Mala (Euphrates) River and the violation of the Treaty of Kurustama, evidenced by military campaigns against the land of Amqa on Egypt's northern border (Singer, 2002, p. 58; Karağuz, 2020, pp. 125–126). Muršili explicitly acknowledges that these sins were not committed in his own time but inherited from his father, stating: "I have just confessed the sin before the Storm-god of Hatti... But the sin did not take place in my time. It took place in the time of my father" (Singer, 2002, p. 59; Karağuz, 2020, p. 127). Although the king emphasizes his personal innocence, he nevertheless assumes responsibility for his father's transgressions and seeks to appease the gods on behalf of his land.

In the subsequent section of the prayer, Muršili makes it clear that he is not responsible for the country's misfortune; nonetheless, his father's transgressions have inevitably extended to him as the reigning monarch and, by extension, to his realm:

*"O gods, my lords! So it happens that people always sin. My father sinned as well and he transgressed the word of the Storm-god of Hatti, my lord. But I did not sin in any way. Nevertheless, it so happens that the father's sin comes upon his son, and so the sin of my father came upon me too. I have just confessed it to the Storm-god of Hatti, my lord, and to the gods, my lords. It is so. We have done it. But because I have confessed the sin of my father, may the soul of the Storm-god of Hatti, my lord, and of the gods, my lords, be appeased again."*⁷ (Singer, 2002, pp. 59-60; Karağuz, 2020, p. 128)

Taken together, the Plague Prayers of Muršili II indicate a consistent conceptual association between epidemic disaster, dynastic wrongdoing, and ritual responsibility, according to which sins attributed to previous generations are understood as affecting the reigning king and the land as a whole. These texts demonstrate that intergenerational responsibility was not limited to epidemic disasters alone, but functioned as a broader explanatory model through which political disorder, cultic neglect, and divine displeasure were interpreted. This conceptual framework becomes even more pronounced in later royal prayers, where inherited guilt and ritual accountability are negotiated not only in relation to natural calamities, but also within the context of dynastic conflict and questions of legitimacy. In this respect, the prayer of Ḫattušili III and Puduḫepa to the Sun-goddess of Arinna (CTH 383), to be

⁶ KUB 14. 14 Rs. 1-30.

⁷ KUB 14.8 Rs. 1-19.

discussed in the next section, offers a complementary perspective by illustrating how the notion of inherited sin and divine anger operated within the royal household itself.

2. Prayer of Ḫattušili III and Puduḫepa to the Sun-goddess of Arinna/CTH 383

To understand and interpret the prayer text CTH 383⁸ within the framework of inherited sin, it is essential to examine the context of the reign of Ḫattušili III and the period prior to it. When Muršili II ascended to the throne, his father Šuppiluliuma's third wife, a Babylonian woman, continued to serve as the queen and used the title Tawananna as her personal name. As understood from texts CTH 70⁹ and CTH 71¹⁰, when the interests of Muršili II and Tawananna began to diverge, a major clash erupted between the two. Some time after the death of Muršili II's first wife, Gassuliyawiya, a lawsuit was filed against Šuppiluliuma's wife, Tawananna, who had married another woman of Hurrian origin called Danuḫepa/Tanuḫepa, and Tawananna was exiled from the palace (Bryce, 2005, p. 211).

Muršili II and Gassuliyawiya had four children: Muwattalli, Ḫattušili, Halpasulupi, and Massan(a)uzzi (Bryce, 2005, p. 455). When Muwattalli ascended the throne following Muršili's death, Danuḫepa held the position of Tawananna. In the reign of his brother Muwattalli, Ḫattušili, the youngest of Muršili's four children, was the most powerful figure in the Land of Hatti. Perhaps shortly after his accession, Muwattalli assigned his brother Ḫattušili the responsibility of governing the northern regions of the kingdom, beginning with his appointment as *GAL MEŠEDÍ* of the Upper Land. Meanwhile, on his way home from Syria, Ḫattušili stopped in Lawazantiya and married Puduḫepa, a priestess of the goddess Ishtar (Bryce, 2005, p. 247).

In the final years of his reign, Muwattalli faced a major internal crisis centered around his stepmother, Danuḫepa. Danuḫepa maintained her role as queen even after Muršili's death, following established custom. However, their relationship was clearly strained. Tensions increased when Muwattalli eventually brought her to trial, due to religious transgressions. Danuḫepa was found guilty of the accusations against her, removed from her position, and exiled from both the court and the city. Her sons and attendants also suffered the consequences of her fall from power (Bryce, 2005, p. 242). Before Muwattalli died without leaving a direct male heir, he designated his son Urhi-Tešhub as his successor. Urhi-Tešhub, who could not be accepted as the legitimate heir by Ḫattušili, ascended to the throne as Muršili III, but became his uncle's target. In the early days of Urhi-Tešhub's reign, uncle and nephew probably worked closely together. According to Ḫattušili, his nephew's jealousy was the chief cause of the increasing hostility between them (Bryce, 2005, p. 259). The conflict eventually ended in a decisive defeat for Urhi-Tešhub after which Ḫattušili III ascended the Hittite throne. Yet, in contrast to her earlier disgrace, Danuḫepa was later reinstated to royal favor. Seal evidence designates that Danuḫepa once again reigned as Hittite queen during the reign of Urhi-Tešhub, probably with the support of Ḫattušili (Bryce, 2005, p. 244).

In light of the present analysis, it would be appropriate to revisit the prayer text CTH 383, which provides a valuable catalogue of controversial events dating back to the reign of Muršili. Singer evaluates this prayer as the most overtly "political" of all Hittite prayers. The main subjects discussed in the prayer text are Muršili's conflict with Tawananna, Muwattalli's relocation of the royal capital to Tarhuntassa, his lawsuit against Danuḫepa and his sons, the accession of Urhi-Tešhub to the throne by Ḫattušili, and the ensuing civil war between the two. The prayer also emphasizes Ḫattušili's piety and

⁸ CTH 383 = KUB 21.19 + 1193/u (+) KUB 14.7 + 1303/u (+) Bo 4222 + 338/v.

⁹ CTH 70 Neither Arnuvanda II nor Muršili II acted against the *Tawananna* following Šuppiluliuma's death. The text records that the *Tawananna* had allegedly committed some misconduct during Šuppiluliuma's lifetime, but Muršili did not reveal these matters. Furthermore, it is stated that the *Tawananna* allegedly cast a spell on Muršili's wife, cursed her, and even caused her death; nevertheless, the queen did not make use of this information and did not even inform her husband (Singer, 2002, pp.75-77).

¹⁰ CTH 71: Muršili II held the *Tawananna* responsible for his wife's death, based on a divination. Although the prophecy prescribed the death penalty, she was instead merely stripped of her duties as both queen and priestess. In his prayer, Muršili emphasized that the *Tawananna* was still alive and well, whereas his wife had died, and he expressed profound grief over this loss (Singer, 2002, pp.77-78).

his personal sacrifice to the city of Nerik, but these qualities contrast sharply with Urhi-Tešub's betrayal of the gods. (Singer, 2002, p. 97). The text is extremely important as it shows how the concepts of intergenerational responsibility and divine will were understood in the Hittite royal family. In the prayer, Ḫattušili III and Puduḫepa emphasize the distinction between personal responsibility and the actions of ancestors. They address Arinna to the Sun Goddess, declaring that he is in no way responsible for the crimes her father, Muršili, committed against the gods during his lifetime, that he was still a child at the time and had no involvement in these events. Similarly, during the trial against Tawannanna, he asserts that he played no personal role in restricting the queen's power. Another key point emphasized in the text is that the will of the Sun Goddess of Arinna was decisive in these matters. Ḫattušili states that he does not know whether the incident occurred in accordance with the goddess's will or for some other reason. It is also underlined that criminals are punished and paid according to the Goddess's will, yet he himself is exempt from this process. The relevant lines are as follows:

*"Ḫattušili, your servant and Puduḫepa, your maid, have made this plea as follows: Whenever my father, Muršili, while still alive, offended the gods, my lords, by some deed, I was in no way involved in that deed of my father; I was still a child. When the case against Tawannanna, your maid, took place in the palace, how my father curtailed the power of Tawannanna, the queen, though she was the servant of the deity, you, O goddess, my lady, were the one who knew in [your] soul, [whether the curtailing of the power of the queen] was your wish [or whether it] was [not your wish. He caused] the curtailing of the power [of Tawannanna, but I was not involved in the matter] at all. It was [a matter of compulsion for me. If the goddess, my lady, is] somehow [angry about that matter, then] the one who conducted [that case against Tawannanna has already died (has become a god). He stepped down from the road and has already paid for it] with his head. [But I] was not involved [in that decree. I was still a child. O Sun-goddess] of Arinna, my lady, [do not protract that affair against me. To protract such a thing against me during my days is not right]."*¹¹ (Singer, 2002, pp. 97-98; Karauğuz, 2020, p.155)

As stated in the relevant sections of the text, Ḫattušili III declares that those who wronged the Tawannanna had already paid the price for their sins. Danuḫepa, like the Tawannanna before her, was accused during the reign of Muwattalli II, found guilty after a trial, and fell from power along with her sons, attendants, lords, and subordinates. In his prayer, Ḫattušili III asserts that he was in no way involved in the incident in question and that he had remained silent at the time. He reiterates that those involved in the offense had already lost their lives and that it would be unjust to revive matters that had not occurred during his own reign:

*"When it came to pass that the case against Danuḫepa, your priestess, took place in the palace, [how he curtailed the power of] Danuḫepa until she was ruined together with her sons and all her men, lords and subordinates, that which was inside the soul of the goddess, my lady, nobody knew, namely, whether the ruination of Danuḫepa was the wish of the Sun-goddess of Arinna, [my lady], or whether it was not her wish. In any case, I was not involved in that matter of the ruination of Danuḫepa's son. On the contrary, when I passed judgement over him, he was dear to me. Nobody was destroyed by the order of the word of my mouth. The one who did that evil thing—if somehow the Sun-goddess of Arinna, my lady, became angry over the matter of Danuḫepa—that one who did that matter of Danuḫepa has already died (has become a god). He stepped down from the road and paid for it with his head. O Sun-goddess of Arinna, my lady! Do not drag up again the matter of Danuḫepa against me and the land of Hatti during my days! To drag up again such a thing against me during my days is not right. The one who has carried out the matter of Danuḫepa, that one has already paid for it himself."*¹² (Singer, 2002, pp. 98-99; Karauğuz, 2020, pp. 156-157)

The statements in the final section of the prayer text CTH 383, before it breaks off "[. . .] gods [. . .] I, to the gods [. . .] was [. . .] I [did not . . .] him/her [. . . and] I did not do evil at all. [. . .] My wife [. . .] for me before the gods [. . .] [. . .] a blood-relation of mine [. . .] put down in front of yourselves [and investigate it(?) . . .] he/she killed [. . .] he/she himself died [. . .]"¹³ (Singer, 2002, p. 99) present another example of the king's attempt

¹¹ KUB 21.19 Vs. I 14-40.

¹² KUB 14.7 Vs. I 16-20+ Vs. II 1-22.

¹³ Bo 4222 Rs. 1-11.

to prove his innocence. Even though the full context remains obscure due to the fragmentary nature of the text, these lines clearly relate to Ḫattušili III's declaration before the gods, emphasizing his purity from the accusations made against him. The king specifically emphasizes that he has committed no wrongdoing against the gods or harmed anyone; he also expresses the queen's own radiance before the gods. Thus, the individual defense of the kingdom is reinforced by familial support. Furthermore, the text mentions a blood relative being brought before the gods for examination, after which the person is either killed or died. This statement indicates that the crime is investigated at a divine level, and the final outcome is determined by divine justice.

Thus, the prayer of Ḫattušili III and Puduḫepa reveals a deliberate attempt to renegotiate the concept of intergenerational responsibility articulated in earlier plague prayers. Unlike Muršili II, who accepts inherited guilt as an inescapable burden, Ḫattušili III consistently emphasizes personal innocence, temporal distance, and the prior punishment of those directly responsible. In this respect, CTH 383 demonstrates that intergenerational sin in Hittite thought was not a rigid or uniformly applied doctrine, but a flexible concept that could be contested, reinterpreted, or strategically limited in accordance with political legitimacy and royal self-representation.

3. The Ritual of Papanikri of Kummanni/ CTH 476

While the prayer of Ḫattušili III and Puduḫepa reflects the negotiation of inherited guilt at the level of royal discourse and political legitimacy, Hittite conceptions of sin and responsibility were not confined to the sphere of kingship alone. The logic of inherited impurity and divine displeasure also operated at the level of the human body, birth, and ritual practice. In this respect, ritual texts provide a complementary perspective by revealing how potential guilt, impurity, or divine imbalance was anticipated and addressed even before individual agency could be fully established.

The Papanikri text (KBo 5.1) describes a birth and purification ritual that offers important insight into how notions of impurity, divine will, and potential inherited imbalance were ritually managed from the very beginning of life. The ritual is linked to Hurro-Luwian traditions originating from Kizzuwatna. Beckman argues that the text's original composition dates to the 15th-14th centuries BCE at Kizzuwatna; existing copies are attributed to the 13th-century BCE Neo-Hittite writing tradition (Beckman, 1983, p. 116). The ritual text clearly demonstrates that birth is perceived not only as a biological but also as a cosmic-religious event; the instruments of birth (chairs, stakes, vessels, etc.) are sacred, and their degradation is attributed to divine will. The text begins by linking Papanikri, who will lead the birth ritual, to Kummanni, the capital of Kizzuwatna. The expressions that are shown in the continuation of the physical parts of the birthing chair are not only perceived as objective damage but also as a sign of divine invisibility are adjusted as follows:

*"Papanikri, patili-priest of the land of Kummanni, says as follows: 'If a woman is (seated) upon the birth-stool, and the dish of the birth-stool is damaged, or a peg is broken-then if the woman has not yet given birth, but is (still) seated thereupon, then the boards they open again. But it (the birth-stool) is no longer pure'"*¹⁴ (Beckman, 1983, p. 116; Strauß, 2006, p. 295; Karauğuz, 2022, p. 225)

Evidently, the ritual purity and physical integrity of objects play a central role in childbirth rituals. A damaged birthing chair, even if ritually restored, is no longer regarded as "pure." In such a case, the broken birthing chair and other ritual implements are taken to the city gate, where a bird is sacrificed to the god Alitapara for their purification. The chair is then brought back to the birthing room and the ritual procedure is reconstituted (Strauß, 2006, p. 295; Karauğuz, 2022, p. 226). Once physical and ritual purity are restored, the woman may resume the birthing process. The text continues as follows:

"Then the patili priest brings the birth stool and the equipment to the šinapši. He places them outside in a desolate place. The woman gives birth there inside. The patili-priest speaks thus to the woman: "Investigate by means of oracle the sign that occurred to you in the karimmi-Sanctuary. She consults an oracle: If any god is angry

¹⁴ KBo 5.1 Vs. I 1-6.

with her, she sacrifices to him. Then he makes two basins (into) birth stools and a lid for (each of) them. He makes two basins and he makes four pegs."¹⁵ (Strauß, 2006, p. 295; Feder, 2011, pp. 9-10; Karauğuz, 2022, p. 226)

The relevant section of the text indicates that the birthing chair and the associated ritual paraphernalia, once ritually purified, were first taken to the *šınapši*¹⁶ and then placed outside in an undisturbed location. While the woman gives birth within the ritual space, the patili priest consults the gods' will through an oracle on her behalf; if any deity is found to be angered, the woman must offer a sacrifice to appease them. The priest then constructs two new basins for the birthing chair together with four stakes fitted with appropriate lids. This practice aims to rearrange ritual objects and restore purity. In the subsequent stages of the ritual, birds, sheep, and various food offerings are presented to the gods on successive days, after which the birthing chair is offered to the gods once again¹⁷ (Strauß, 2006, p. 295; Feder, 2011, p. 10; Karauğuz, 2022, p. 226).

The following section of the text reflects the Hittite conception that sin could be transmitted across generations. The relevant lines read as follows:

"If your mother or father have committed some sin in the end, or you have just committed some sin as a consequence of divine intervention or in a dream, and the birth stool was damaged or the pegs were broken, O divinity, she has made atonement for her part two times." Then the ritual patron shall be pure again"¹⁸ (Strauß, 2006, pp. 296-297; Feder, 2011, p. 10; Karauğuz, 2022, p. 227)

The following phrase in the text, *"If your mother or father have committed some sin in the end, or you have just committed some sin as a consequence of divine intervention or in a dream, and the birth stool was damaged or the pegs were broken"* reflects the strong belief that an individual's misfortune or the malfunction of ritual instruments could be attributed not only to one's own behavior but also to the sins of one's parents. Thus, a physical disruption occurring during childbirth was interpreted as a revelation of the sins of past generations and the subsequent manifestation of divine justice. Another noteworthy point is that dreams were considered a means of conveying divine justice. In the Hittite belief system, prophecies and dreams were accepted as tools reflecting the divine will, so in this ritual, the woman giving birth was expected to sleep and dream in the temple.

The ritual continues with further offerings to the gods, including oil and bread. The birthing chair and stakes are then subjected to a second purification process; in some cases, these objects are burned in a fire or broken into pieces and removed. Once the purification is complete, the ritual implements are either taken away from the city gate or destroyed; a procedure believed to eliminate evil and impurity from the city. Ultimately, the priest concludes the ceremony with a prayer of supplication to the gods, declaring the ritual bearer clean once again (Strauß, 2006, pp. 296-297; Feder, 2011, p. 10; Karauğuz, 2022, p. 227). In this sense, the Papanikri ritual is of particular importance as it reveals the theological foundation of the ceremony: the reflection of divine justice upon the ritual object and the Hittite conception of guilt and atonement transmitted through family and lineage.

Taken together, the Papanikri ritual reveals that in Hittite religious thought, sin and impurity were not merely moral categories but cosmological conditions capable of manifesting through bodies, objects, and lineage, necessitating ritual intervention to restore both individual and communal equilibrium.

4. Oracles concerning enemies of Ḫattušili III / CTH 569

While the Papanikri ritual demonstrates how inherited impurity and divine imbalance were ritually managed at the level of the body and material objects, Hittite concern with transmitted guilt extended equally into the political and judicial sphere. This dimension is particularly evident in large-scale oracular inquiries, where past crimes, curses, and unresolved offenses were systematically

¹⁵ KBo 5.1 Vs. I 12-21.

¹⁶ "the birth chamber/house": Erginöz Şahinbaş, 1999, pp. 200-201; "part of the temple": Ünal, 2016, p. 480.

¹⁷ KBo 5.1 Vs. I 12-21.

¹⁸ KBo 5.1 Vs. I 41-47.

investigated in order to secure divine favor and political stability. One of the most comprehensive examples of such practices is preserved in CTH 569, an extensive oracular dossier concerning the enemies of Hattušili III and the lingering effects of their actions upon the reign of Tudhaliya IV.

The fragments KUB 16.32 + KUB 50.6 of CTH 569, likely preserving the largest surviving Hittite oracular inquiry, concern the deeds of Tawananna, Danuḫepa, Urhi-Tešhub, Ḫalpaziti, Armatarḫunta, and Šaušgatti, who were enemies of Hattušili III. CTH 569, the longest such text in the Hittite corpus, dates back to the reign of Tudhaliya IV (Hout, 1998, p. 136). The accession of the new Great King Tudhaliya IV, son of Hattušili III, was marked by tension and uncertainty. In the recent past, many had cursed both the reigning kings and the would-be rulers. The curses of the past were believed to persist, threatening Tudhaliya's rule. Consequently, extensive prophetic investigations were conducted to secure his accession, identify those responsible, and find a means to remove the curses. Through these investigations, Tudhaliya IV sought to purify himself and the kingdom from the crimes and curses inherited during his father's reign.

Some of the older members of the Hittite dynasty, who were subjects of oracular inquiry, are discussed in CTH 383. Tawananna, a Babylonian princess, became the last wife of Šuppiluliuma I and stepmother of Arnuwanda II and Muršili II (Hout, 1998, p. 42). Danuḫepa, the last wife of Muršili II, lived through the reigns of Muwatalli II and Urhi-Tešub/Muršili III (Bryce, 2005, p. 211). A conflict arose between Danuḫepa and Muwatalli II, reportedly linked to succession politics. She was tried, found guilty, and exiled from the palace and capital, but later regained her position as Tawananna during the reign of Urhi-Tešub/Muršili III (Hout, 1998, pp. 50–52; Bryce, 2005, pp. 242–244). Urhi-Tešub, the biological son and designated heir of Muwatalli II, ascended the throne as Muršili III. Distrustful of his uncle Hattušili, governor of the Upper Lands under Muwatalli II, he soon entered into open conflict with him. Their struggle culminated in a confrontation at Samuha, where Urhi-Tešub was defeated and Hattušili III became king (Bryce, 2005, pp. 246–264).

Ḫalpaziti, priest-king of Halpa, supported Armatarḫunta, who had been removed from the governorship of the Upper Land when Hattušili III was appointed (Hout, 1998, pp. 57–59). Armatarḫunta, son of Zida (brother of Šuppiluliuma I) and cousin of Muršili II, had previously held this office but lost it under Muwatalli II in 1295 BCE. He subsequently conspired against Hattušili III, allegedly employing magic during two separate attempts. After investigation and trial, Armatarḫunta and his family were accused of witchcraft. Although he was pardoned, his wife and son Šipaziti were exiled to Alašiya (Hout, 1998, p. 61). Under Urhi-Tešub, Šipaziti was recalled and assigned to raise troops against Hattušili III in the Upper Land (Bryce, 2005, p. 262). Šaušgatti, likely Armatarḫunta's wife, was also among those exiled on charges of witchcraft (Hout, 1998, p. 67).

The purpose of CTH 569 was to lift the curses of six deceased members of the royal family, who had suffered injustice and/or oppression in the past, and to purify Tudhaliya IV's kingdom. The issues surrounding his father's most powerful enemies and their descendants posed a spiritual burden for Tudhaliya IV. Consequently, the king resorted to oracular investigation to determine through whom the curse had been transmitted and to purify both himself and the kingdom by ending it. These investigations were carried out in two stages. The first stage, discussed in KUB 16.32, took place during the early years of Tudhaliya's reign while his father was still alive. The second and more recent stage begins where KUB 50.6 took over and was likely implemented much later (Hout, 1998, pp. 36–37).

Text CTH 569, drawing on the Hittite belief that "sins are passed down from father to son," suggests that a sin committed by an ancestor must be expiated by a descendant through *mantalliya*-sacrifice. The *Mantalliya* ritual is a purification practice intended to remove evil, impurities, and sins from an individual or family. However, it not only serves an individual cleansing function; it is also directly related to the concept of "hereditary sin," which is thought to be passed down through lineage. Within this framework, *mantalliya*-sacrifice aims to restore divine balance at both the individual, familial, and societal levels by transferring evil influences to an animal or object and destroying them at the conclusion of the ritual (Ünal, 1974, p. 171). Thus, the *mantalliya* sacrifice can be considered a

practical manifestation of the Hittite belief that sin and evil can be passed down from generation to generation. Ünal emphasizes that *mantalliya*-sacrifice cannot be considered a simple offering. According to him, this ritual is a comprehensive and complex practice of offering sacrifices intended to appease and atone for the spirits of those who suffered great injustice during their lifetimes or were brutally killed as a result of political intrigues (Ünal, 1975, p. 172). Since the ritual's purpose is to appease the spirits of the dead, one of the participants must be deceased (Sevinç Erbaşı, 2013, p. 350). Indeed, as shown in the sample text below, *mantalliya*-sacrifice was not offered if the person whose rights were believed to have been usurped was still alive.

The first part of the text, which can be considered within the context of *mantalliya*-ritual, aimed at eliminating "the influence of ancestral sins on the lineage," focuses on Danuḫepa. This section includes statements regarding the reorganization of Danuḫepa's cities, the dedication of a mansion from each of these cities to "the deceased," presumably Muwatalli II, and the restoration of Danuḫepa's deities. In this context, the act of "...out of each city one estate they [will start taking] and they will give it to the deceased..." serves the ritual function of restoring the soul of the deceased king and purifying the royal line of sin. The imposition of taxes on the cities and the reinstatement of Danuḫepa's gods reflect an attempt to reestablish political-religious order in the country. The culmination of the purification process is the relocation of the *ulihš* of Halpa's city gods, during which His Majesty completes *mantalliya*-rituals. At this stage, *mantalliya*-sacrifice functions as a conciliatory offering to the damned who have died or to their divine representatives; nevertheless, the text does not specify the exact nature of the sacrificial offering. The relevant lines are as follows:

"The cities of Tanuḫepa which [they [will hand] over), out of each city one estate they [will start taking and they will give it to the deceased and the one city [which] to them. They will populate it and bring the Gods of Tanuḫepa back in or what cities they have, those [they will make?] tributarly and to the deceased they will start offering tribute. But now, when they carry up the ulihš of Halpa's city gods, the Majesty [will] complete the mantalli-rituals to them. When, then, the king of Kargamiš comes up (there), they will send Katapaili down out to him and when they c[eleb]rate the deity on its own premises, they will 'put him on the road' (i.e. satisfy him) and found a priesthood the[re] (and install) whoever will be ascertained" ¹⁹ (Hout, 1998, p. 179)

The text continues with a section crucial for understanding the conditions under which *mantalliya*-ritual was performed. In the relevant lines, His Majesty explains why he did not complete *mantalliya*-ritual for Urhi-Tešhub's sons, justifying his decision by stating that he had not wronged them *"I had not wronged them"* and that the person who had actually harmed them was still alive. Consequently, the ritual was not completed since "the source of the sin has not yet been eliminated." The phrase *"because his soul has not been pacified"* reflects the belief that the ritual could only be concluded once the spirits of the deceased had been appeased. These lines, in effect, demonstrate King Tudhaliya's rejection of the strong Hittite belief that "the sins of the ancestors are transmitted to future generations" highlighting his view of responsibility and atonement as primarily individual in nature. The following lines read:

"Concerning the fact that it was not ascertained for My Majesty to 'complete the mantalli-rituals to the sons of Armatarḫunta, because I, My Majesty, had not 'and (because) the one who did wrong them, is still alive and because his soul (has) not (been) pacified, therefore, it was [not estab]lished to bring the manialli-riwals o an end." ²⁰ (Hout, 1998, p. 181)

Another passage, clearly reflecting the Hittite belief that a curse was effective not only at the individual but also at the dynastic level, details how the impact of Urhi-Tešub's curse on the royal dynasty was understood, and the ritual and divinatory processes employed to purify it. The section first reports that the question of sending an envoy to Urhi-Tešub was submitted to the oracle and that the signs were negative four times during interrogations conducted by both the Old Women and the oracle. In light of these negative signs, it was decided not to send any message or envoy to Urhi-Tešub. Instead,

¹⁹ KBo 16. 32 obv. II 1-13.

²⁰ KBo 16. 32 obv. II 14-23.

it states that the curse will be purified from its effects, including the purification of “the gods of the kingdom, the royal seats, and the thrones,” and that even His Majesty (Tudhaliya IV) himself will be purified. These statements reflect the belief that the curse affected not only the individual but also the sacred structure of the kingdom and the elements of its legitimacy. Furthermore, the “honoring” of Urhi-Tešub’s sons and wives points to the idea that the curse should be balanced by a conciliatory action, not merely a punishment.

Mantalli-rituals mentioned in the text were also determined through oracle inquiry, meaning that the divine will dictated which purification actions were appropriate. The questions posed in the final section “*will the evil be (collectively) removed from our house*” ve “*will in future the evil of Urhi-Tešhub not pull back the robe at us anymore?*” reveal that the ultimate aim of the ritual was the permanent removal of the curse. The relevant part of the text is recorded as follows:

“We [continued] the inquiry [as follows]. They will proceed [to send [an envoy] to Urhi-Tešhub. As the matter (stands), [accordingly they will write (it)]. Will we not stir up evil [for ourse]lves by that deed, will we not open up [the affair]”? [Through the Old Wom]an, the augur: unfavorable; through the diviner: the signs? four times? unfavorable.” It was [not ascertained to send (word) [to U]r[hiteššub] and they [ac]ted as follows]. [From the curse of Urhi[teššub] they will [cleanse [the] gods of kingship, the places of kingship (and) the thrones, and His Majesty will cleanse himself. Compensations they will take and bring them away from kin[gshi]p. His sons and wives they will show recognition. We will make the mantalli-rituals vis-a-vis the sons (and) His Majesty the subject of an oracle inquiry and if they are ascertained, they will perform them, If, however, they are not ascertained, they will not [per]form them ‘but we will not send an envoy to Urhi-Tešhub and we will certainly not pull the robe back at him. If the evil of Urhi-Tešhub through that deed is solved for us, will the evil be (collectively) removed from our house? And will in future the evil of Urhi-Tešhub not pull back the robe at us anymore? Through three oracle types: favorable.”²¹ (Hout, 1998, p. 189)

The final sentence “*“[The sons? of Urhiteššub will (perform) mantalli-rituals (together) with His Majesty. [If then they will bring His Majesty [n]o [further] evil , (the result) of three oracle types: favorable”²² (Hout, 1998, p. 189)* indicates that, with this purification performed by Tudhaliya IV, it was declared that evil had been removed from the kingdom.

Taken as a whole, CTH 569 demonstrates that in Hittite religious thought, inherited sin and divine displeasure were not abstract theological notions but concrete forces capable of shaping political legitimacy, dynastic continuity, and the stability of the state. Through extensive oracular inquiries and the performance of *mantalliya*-rituals, the Hittites sought to identify the transmission of guilt across generations and to neutralize its effects through ritually sanctioned means. The text reveals that responsibility for ancestral wrongdoing was negotiated at the intersection of divine justice, ritual practice, and royal authority, where purification functioned not merely as expiation but as a mechanism for restoring cosmic and political order. In this respect, CTH 569 provides a crucial example of how the belief in hereditary sin was operationalized within the highest levels of Hittite governance.

CONCLUSION

Within the scope of this study, the analysis of selected Hittite royal prayers, ritual texts, and oracular records indicate that polytheism shaped not only ritual and belief systems but also notions of social order, political authority, and intergenerational responsibility. The belief that every being and object in the universe was associated with a divine power structured the relationship between gods and humans around service, obedience, and the fulfillment of obligations. Within this framework, the violation of duties owed to the gods was not perceived solely as an individual transgression but as a disruption with collective implications for the family, community and state. This perspective is

²¹ KUB 50.6 Rs. III 40-62.

²² KUB 50. 6 Rs. III 63-65.

particularly evident in royal contexts, where the king's religious and political role and the idea that mistakes committed by the ruler or his predecessors could affect future generations contributed to the articulation of intergenerational responsibility and sin.

CTH 378, 383, 476, and 569 demonstrate how sin, transgression, and purification were addressed through ritual and oracular practices, while also revealing the mechanisms by which individuals associated themselves with the sins of past generations. Muršili II's plague prayers and the prayers of Hattušili III and Puduhepa addressed to the Sun Goddess of Arinna highlight the conscious distinction between personal responsibility and the actions of ancestors and the central role of divine justice. The Papanikri ritual provides a powerful example through ritual practice that sin is not only individual but also social and can be transmitted through lineage. CTH 569 emphasizes the importance of ritual and divination practices aimed at alleviating the spiritual and social burden created on the current ruler by the crimes and violations committed by the royal family in the past

The available textual and ritual materials suggest that Hittite religion operated within a pragmatic and theocratically structured framework. The god-human relationship was articulated through service, ritual performance, and the fulfillment of obligations, as reflected in prayers, oracular texts, and purification rituals. Within this framework, the consequences of mistakes and sins could extend beyond the individual and affect broader social units, thereby linking the maintenance of divine order to both individual and collective responsibility. In this sense, Hittite religious texts provide valuable material for examining how concepts of social responsibility and divine justice were articulated within the religious and political landscape of Hatti Land.

Genişletilmiş Özet

Hitit dini, Hatti, Hurri, Luvi ve Mezopotamya kökenli unsurların senteziyle oluşmuş, çok katmanlı ve çoktanrılı bir inanç sistemi olarak Antik Yakın Doğu dinleri arasında özgün bir konuma sahiptir. Bu sistem, evrende var olan her nesne, olgu ve mekânın kendine özgü bir tanrısal güçle ilişkilendirildiği parçalı bir kutsallık anlayışına dayanır. Homojen bir yapı sergilemeyen Hitit panteonunda tek ve mutlak bir tanrı fikri yoktur. Bunun yerine dağlar, kayalar, ağaçlar, sular ve insan yapımı nesneler dâhil olmak üzere her unsurun kendine ait bir tanrısı ya da koruyucu ruhu bulunduğu inanılmıştır. Yalnızca bireysel dindarlığı değil, aynı zamanda toplumsal ve siyasal düzeni de doğrudan şekillendiren yapı bu çoktanrılı anlayıştır.

Hitit dinî düşüncesinde tanrı-insan ilişkisi esasen pragmatik ve karşılıklılık ilkesine dayalıdır. Tanrılar antropomorfik özellikler taşımakta; beslenme, giyinme, eğlenme ve barındırılma gibi ihtiyaçlarının insanlar tarafından karşılanması beklenmektedir. Bu sebeple sunular, bayramlar, kült gezileri ve düzenli ritüel uygulamalar tanrılarla uyumlu ilişkilerin sürdürülmesinde merkezi bir konumdadır. Ritüellerin yürütülmesinden başta kral ve kraliçe olmak üzere rahipler ve rahibeler sorumludur. Bu uygulamalar, yalnızca dinî değil, aynı zamanda siyasal bir görev olarak da algılanmıştır. Hitit toplumunda tanrılara sadakat göstermek, krala ve dolayısıyla devlete bağlılıkla eşdeğer olarak değerlendirilmiştir.

Bu bağlamda Hititler, günahı (*wašta-*) ahlaki bir kusurdan ziyade tanrılara karşı işlenmiş ve ilahi düzeni bozan bir suç olarak tanımlamışlardır. Günahın sonuçları yalnızca bireysel düzeyde kalmamış; aileyi, soyu ve hatta tüm ülkeyi etkileyebilecek kolektif felaketler doğurabileceğine inanılmıştır. Salgınlar, kıtlıklar ve askerî yenilgiler çoğu zaman tanrısal öfkenin tezahürü olarak yorumlanmış; bu öfkenin nedenlerini tespit etmek amacıyla kehanet ve fal uygulamalarına başvurulmuştur. Kehanet soruşturmaları, günahın kaynağının yalnızca mevcut kuşakta değil, geçmiş nesillerde de aranabildiğini ortaya koyması bakımından özellikle önemlidir. Bu anlayış, Hitit teolojisinde "babanın günahının oğula geçmesi" şeklinde ifade edilen kalıtsal günah düşüncesinin temelini oluşturmuştur.

Teokratik yönetim anlayışının bir yansıması olarak kalıtsal günah kavramı, özellikle kraliyet ailesi bağlamında daha belirgin hâle gelmiştir. Kralın hem dinî hem de siyasal otorite olarak tanrılar ile halk arasında aracı konumunda olması dolayısıyla bizzat kendisinin veya atalarının işlediği günahların tüm

ülkeyi etkileyebileceğine inanılmıştır. II. Murşili'nin Veba Duaları (CTH 378), bu anlayışın en açık örneklerinden birini sunmaktadır. Murşili, veba salgınlarını babası Šuppiluliuma'nın işlediği suçların bir sonucu olarak yorumlamış; kehanetler aracılığıyla tanrısal öfkenin kaynağını araştırmış ve atalarının günahlarının bedelinin kendisine ve ülkeye yansıdığını ifade etmiştir.

Benzer şekilde, III. Hattuşili ve Puduhepa'nın Arinna'nın Güneş Tanrıçası'na sundukları dualar (CTH 383), kuşaklar arası sorumluluğun mutlak bir ilke olmadığını; bireysel masumiyet, zamansal mesafe ve önceki kuşakların cezalandırılmış olması gibi gerekçelerle sınırlandırılabilirdiğini ortaya koymaktadır. Metin, kraliyet içi çatışmalar ve taht mücadeleleri bağlamında tanrısal iradeye uygun davranmanın ve geçmişteki günahların telafi edilmesinin önemini vurgulamaktadır.

Papanikri Doğum Ritüeli (CTH 476), günah ve kirlilik kavramlarının soy yoluyla aktarılabilirdiği varsayımının kraliyet dışı bir bağlamda doğum ve arınma ritüelleri aracılığıyla ne şekilde yönetildiğini ortaya koyması bakımından önemlidir. Ritüel nesnelerin kutsallığı, rüya ve kehanet yoluyla tanrısal iradenin sorgulanması ve gerekli durumlarda adak sunulması, bireysel ve ailevi günahların telafi edilmesine yönelik uygulamaları yansıtmaktadır. Son olarak, III. Hattuşili'nin Düşmanları Hakkında Kehanet Metni (CTH 569), atalara ait suçların siyasal meşruiyet ve hanedan sürekliliği üzerindeki etkilerinin kehanet ve *mantalliya*- ritüelleri yoluyla bertaraf edilmeye çalışıldığını işaret etmektedir.

Bu çalışma, söz konusu metinlerin karşılaştırmalı analizi yoluyla Hitit inanç sisteminde kalıtsal günahın ne marjinal bir düşünce ne de katı bir doktrin olduğunu; aksine tanrısal öfke, siyasal meşruiyet ve ritüel sorumluluğu açıklamak için kullanılan esnek bir yorum çerçevesi işlevi gördüğünü ortaya koymayı amaçlamaktadır. Böylece çalışma, Hitit dininde günah, sorumluluk ve kuşaklar arası hesap verebilirliğin nasıl kavramsallaştırıldığını göstererek Antik Anadolu din tarihi araştırmalarına katkı sunmayı hedeflemektedir.

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CTH 476: Koşak, S. hethiter.net/: TLHdig KBo 5.1 (2021-12-31)
CTH 569: Koşak, S. hethiter.net/: TLHdig KUB 16.32 (2021-12-31)
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Article Information:	
Ethics Committee Approval:	It is exempt from the Ethics Committee Approval
Informed Consent:	No participants.
Financial Support:	The study received no financial support from any institution or project.
Conflict of Interest:	No conflict of interest.
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