

Power and Economic Administration at the Dawn of the Hittite Kingdom: A close look at ^{LÚ}ABUBĪTUM from a broad perspective

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[Studies in economics and administration of the Old Hittite Kingdom (ca. 1670–1425 BC) are strongly hindered by the paucity of documentary sources from this period. Moreover, unlike other civilizations of the Ancient Near East, the Hittites left us very few administrative and economic texts; none of them is private in character. We can only rely, therefore, on later copies of older texts that often display religious content. To disclose the function of an official profile of the Old Hittite kingdom (^{LÚ}ABUBĪTUM), in this article, we combine the analysis of the extant Hittite sources with the information we glean from the documentation of an analogous administrator of the 18th century BC from Mari (*abu bītim*).]

Keywords: Hittite Administration, Hittite Economics, Old Hittite Kingdom, Mari, Social Profiles.

1. Introduction

In the recently published *Handbook Hittite Empire – Power Structures* (de Martino 2022), Jörg Klinger opened the paragraph *Parameters and Resources* of his chapter on Hittite Economics stating:

“There is hardly any other topic than Hittite economics for which the issue of available pertinent sources plays as a crucial role. This applies to aspects of the state, namely the questions regarding the organization and administration of economic processes in general and the fundamental question of how the Hittite kingship funded itself and what formed its economic basis and that of its institutions. It applies even more to the lowest hierarchical layer, that is the economic structure and organization of individual households in general, which is reflected less in the written sources and is generally only tangible in material culture, if at all.” (Klinger in de Martino 2022, 609–610)

The information on the Hittite administration and economy that we can glimpse from the sources of the Old Hittite Period (ca. 1670–1425 BC) are quite scanty and scattered through different text genres: from the older version of the so-named Hittite laws to the land deeds (*Landschenkungsurkunde*), from the palace anecdotes to the political testament, from the oldest versions of the instructions to the royal reprimands.

Power was bestowed directly from the gods to the king, who concretely acted as an administrator (^{LÚ}*maniyahhatalla-*) of the Hittite land (IBoT 1.30 [with duplicate KUB 48.13+] obv.

1–8). Although we cannot assess how complex was the Hittite apparatus during the Old Hittite Kingdom, especially if compared to the information gleaned from the Empire sources, we can fairly assume that the power was in the hands of a ruling elite, strictly tied to the royal family (see now van den Hout in de Martino 2022, 315).

The Hittite state was perceived as a “great family” (*šalli ḥaššatar*) led by a head of the household. The earliest power structures of the rising Hittite kingdom had probably already formed as a complex agnatic kinship within a household, in which the master asserted his power over his kindred based on traditional inheritance. In Weber’s (1978, 231) terms, “The patrimonial system consisted of a patriarchal household combined with a complex of manorial dependencies with their households, where the king family members formed the administrative staff.”

2. Hittite Officials: Preliminary considerations¹

The organization of the administrative staff was somewhat hierarchical, as inferred from the diffusion of the titles GAL (Great) and UGULA (Supervisor/Representative).

Titles of Hittite officials are mainly rendered through Akkadograms and Sumerograms. Some of them are the result of the adaptation of a foreign vocabulary in the attempt to render genuine Anatolian formations (e.g., *BĒL MADGALTI* for *au(wa)riyaš išḫa-*), others are probably the result of a semantic sliding from one language to another (e.g., ^{LU}SAG), others pure Hittite creations to identify genuine Hittite administrative profiles (e.g., ^{LU}DUB.SAR.GIŠ) (Vigo 2018, 305).

Bilgin (2018, 439) states: “Numerous titles of administrative officials encountered in the Kaneš texts indicate that even the principalities of Old Assyrian-period in Anatolia were each well organized under an administrative hierarchy”. The officials attested in the documentation from Kültepe are the closest comparable titles to the Hittite ones. For the sake of simplicity, I tabulated here below the most interesting entries in a synoptic chart (after Barjamovic 2020, 100):²

1. This study was presented at the Kolloquium for the KFG-Project (24.05.2022) of the Freie Universität of Berlin (DFG Kolleg-Forschungsgruppe 2615 “Rethinking Governance in the Ancient Near East” <https://www.geschkult.fu-berlin.de/e/rod/index.html>) that hosted me as a Research Fellow (April–July 2022). The investigation material was collected during my research at the Akademie der Wissenschaften und der Literatur in Mainz for the DFG Project no. 394841501 “Akteure und Machtstrukturen in der hethitischen Gesellschaft” (<https://gepris.dfg.de/gepris/projekt/394841501>). As such, it represents an important outcome of the research carried out for the DFG project.

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The abbreviations are those of the *Chicago Hittite Dictionary* (H.G. Güterbock[†] – H.A. Jr. Hoffner[†] – Th.P.J. van den Hout – P.M. Goedegebuure eds.), Winona Lake – Chicago, 1989–. I wish to thank the two anonymous reviewers who spotted numerous typos and several errors. As befits our trade, the ideas and remaining mistakes of style are all my own.

2. The translations proposed here are based solely on the role of the functionaries in the Hittite society. Legenda: OA = Old Assyrian; OB = Old Babylonian; MA = Middle Assyrian.

Hittite Official Title	Translation	Possible Old Assyrian Equivalent
LÚ ^{ABUBĪTUM}	“Father of the house” (i.e., Administrator of royal estates?)	not attested
LÚ ^{AGRIG} (LÚ ^{maniyaḫatalla-})	Storehouse administrator	<i>alahḫinnum?</i> LÚ ^{NINDA} in MA? LÚ ^{AGRIG} is usually <i>abarrakkum</i> in Akkadian sources
LÚ ^{antuwašalli-}	Majordomo?	<i>rabi bētim</i>
BĒL MADGALTI/ <i>a(wa)uriyaš išha-</i>	Lord of the watch(tower?)	<i>rabi maššarātim</i>
GAL (LÚ.MEŠ) ^{DUB.SAR}	Great among the scribes	not attested
EN É ^{ABUSSI}	Lord (Great) of the storehouse	<i>rabi ḫuršātim</i>
EN KARAS/ ^{tuzziyaš išha-}	Lord (Great) of army	<i>rabi sikka/itim?</i>
GAL SAGI(A)	Great among the cupbearers	<i>rabi šāqê/šaqiātim</i>
EN KUR-TI	Representative of the territory?	<i>bēl mātīm</i>
EN URU ^{-LIM}	Representative of the village?	<i>bēl ālim</i>
GAL (LÚ.MEŠ) ^{NIMGIR}	Great among the workforce recruiters?	<i>rabi nāgirē</i>
GAL (LÚ.MEŠ) ^{GIŠ} BANŠUR	Great of table-men	<i>rabi paššurē</i>
GAL (LÚ.MEŠ) ^{DUB.SAR.GIŠ}	Great among the “scribes-wood” (i.e., accountant)	not attested
GAL DUMU.MEŠ.É.GAL	Great among the palace attendants	<i>bēl(at) bētim</i>
GAL GEŠTIN	Great of wine/vine (i.e., Chief commander)	<i>rabi karānim</i>
GAL LÚ.MEŠ ^{GIŠ} GIDRU	Great among the staff-bearers	<i>rabi ḫaṭṭim</i> and <i>ša ḫaṭṭim</i>
GAL (LÚ.MEŠ) ^{KARTAPPI}	Great among the charioteers (“groom” in OB Akkadian)	not attested

GAL (LÚ.MEŠ)KUS ₇ /IŠ ³	Great among the chariot fighters	not attested
GAL (LÚ.MEŠ)MEŠEDI	Great among the royal bodyguards	not attested
GAL (LÚ.MEŠ)MUŠEN.DU	Great among the augurs	not attested
GAL NA.GAD	Great among the stock breeders	Cf. <i>rabi alpatim</i> (CAD, A/1, 372)
GAL ŠA.TAM	Great chamberlain	not attested
GAL (LÚ.MEŠ)SANGA	Great among the priests	not attested
GAL (LÚ.MEŠ)SIPA	Great among the shepherds	<i>rabi rā'ē</i> (According to Barjamovic 2020, 100)
GAL (LÚ.MEŠ)GIŠŠUKUR	Great among the spearmen	not attested
GAL UKU.UŠ	Great among the (free?) infantry	<i>rabi sābē?</i> (Tentatively Barjamovic 2020, 100)
GAL MUBARRI	Great of litigations	not attested
GAL (LÚ.MEŠ)MUḤALDIM	Great among the cooks	not attested
LÚHAZANNU	City administrator	not attested ⁴
LÚSAG	Courtier	not attested
MAŠKIM.URU ^{KI}	City magistrate?	not attested
ŠAKIN MĀTI	Governor? ⁵	not attested
LÚSUKKAL	Undefinable: the translation “Vizir” in Hittite contexts appears to be misleading	not attested, but see <i>rabi šukkallim</i> (according to Barjamovic 2020, 100)
GAL NIMGIR.ÉRIN.MEŠ	Great among the workforce recruiters	not attested
LÚuri(y)anni	Undefinable	not attested

The possibility of detecting in later Hittite sources Old Assyrian titles is by no means proof that the Hittite chancery adopted officials' terminology from there. Moreover, any comparison from a diachronic perspective requires a full knowledge of the offices for every profile, at least, of

3. Cf. Weeden 2011, 254–258.

4. Given the role played by the “city assembly” and that of the ruler (*rubā'um*) of a city-state, as testified, for instance, in the documentation from Kültepe/Kaneš, the absence of a *hazan(n)u* is understandable. We otherwise find the Akkadian term *iššiakkum* “city ruler”, probably a translation of the Sumerian *énsi*, but on an Assyrian seal used by the king of Aššur; thus, not compelling for our comparison.

5. The title is probably the Akkadian rendering of the title EN KUR^{TI}, since it is almost attested in Hittite documents that deal with foreign affairs.

one of the two contexts (Old Assyrian, Hittite).⁶ Yet, the presence of titles like Great among the stewards, Great of wine, Great of the gardens, Great among the horsemen, and many others, suggests that the origin of the administrative structure in Old Assyrian Anatolia may go back to a similar household organization of the patriarchal ruler (Bilgin 2018, 439). Moreover, “References to chiefs of “tables” and “cupbearers” point to a society that placed emphasis on court ceremonial. The written and material records suggest that local elites maintained coherence and legitimized social differentiations through festive display and cultic reenactment” (Barjamovic 2020, 98). The same applies to the Hittite context: many officials who find correspondence in Old Assyrian sources partake in cults and festivals, as to say, the major occasions for power legitimation, social differentiation, and economic administration. This is particularly illustrated by the *interpretatio visiva* of the banquet scene in the Old Hittite palace anecdotes (CTH 8: KBo 3.34 [§§ 35–37] iii 15’–25’ [Manuscript A: OH/NS: Cf. Dardano 1997, 19–20]) that has been set up because the speech of the king was meant to be an admonishment for the core of the Hittite elite (Cf. Gilan 2007, 301; Gilan 2015, 129), that is to say, those who exercised power in the name of the king: the king’s brothers (*AḪI LUGAL*), the natural sons of the king (*kardiy[a=ššaš]* DUMU.MEŠ) who were lords in the conquered settlements (CTH 19.II.A, §§ 3–4), and the relative of the father of the king.

The analysis of the Old Assyrian titles offers a lot of raw data. It would take a serious effort to combine all of that and analyze it from a comparative perspective, but it is a fertile topic.

One of the research questions to be addressed is trying to follow the evolution of titles like Great of wine or Great among the shepherds. It is not an easy task to accomplish, as we lack the documentary evidence which could represent the evolution from a patrimonial organization—that we can speculate would have existed in the first phase of the Old Hittite Kingdom—to a more complex system as testified in the Hittite Empire sources.

To get a glimpse of the power structure of what has developed into the “great family”, we should, therefore, start by looking at the basic structure of a household in Anatolia during the first half of the second millennium BC from different perspectives. We could find the pattern replicated on a larger scale there.

The present contribution focuses, therefore, on one title that potentially testified to the organization of power and administration at the dawn of the Hittite kingdom.

3. *abu bītim in Mari: A brief excursus*

Within the official Hittite documentation, we find many titles that are expressed through Akkadograms and Sumerograms, and they are well known from previous sources of the Ancient Near Eastern chanceries. “Given that we eventually ask how broadly Near Eastern these notions may have been, it is worth observing that the Hittite cuneiform tradition took them over almost completely during the second half of the second millennium BC. One could argue that foreign Mesopotamian categories were forced onto Anatolian social patterns that did not fit them, but even if this were true, the categories seem to have become integral to Hittite expressions” (Fleming 2004, 131).

From the texts of the time of Zimrī-Līm of Mari (ca. 1775–1762 BC), we know that what we traditionally designate the four “districts” (*halšū*), Mari itself, Terqa on the Middle Euphrates,

6. Cf. Barjamovic 2020, 99.

Saggarātum, and Qatṭunān in the Khabur Valley, were managed by an official (*šāpiṭum*), who was, in fact, appointed by the king of Mari to exercise his governorship (*šāpiṭūtum*). It seems that at least during the reign of Zimrī-Līm, the governors of districts were assisted by the *abu bītīm* (“father of the house”). We have no specific documentation to trace the origin of the *abu bītīm*.⁷ However, it is possible that the title in Mari society originated in the tribal background of the semi-nomadic population of the middle-Euphrates region, to which a great part of the Mari population was still close.⁸ It can be the reason why some scholars have interpreted it as a chief of tribal communities that had common blood ties (Marzal 1972, 360; 369–370). If so, originally, the *abu bītīm* would have represented the link between the central authority and the village community. From the extant sources of Mari, it is clear, however, that the office already underwent a profound evolution at the time of king Zimrī-Līm because it played the role of an administrator in the organized state of Mari, and, most importantly, it was directly appointed by the king (Marzal 1972, 361). So, it was no longer a person who held the natural authority over his extended family or a group of semi-nomads (Marzal 1972, 370). According to the textual evidence, the *sugāgu* exercised the local authority on the tribal semi-nomadic population subjected to the royal administration. It must be stressed, though, that the *abu bītīm* in Mari was not under the jurisdiction of the *šāpiṭum* but responded to a kind of ministry of the economy (*šandabakkum*: Cf. Charpin 2010, 68f.; Charpin 2014, 409).

In the Mari texts, the title *abu bītīm* occurs in the following forms:⁹

Textual Reference	Orthography
ARM I 18: 34	<i>a-bu É</i>
ARM I 73: 53	LÚ <i>a-bu É</i>
ARM VII 190: 16; 214: 7	<i>a-bu-ut É-tim</i>
ARM X 166: rev. 10'	<i>a-bu É-tim</i>
ARM XIII 36: 7	LÚ <i>a-bu É-tim</i>
ARM XIV 4: 25	LÚ.MEŠ <i>a-bu É-tim</i>
ARM XXIII 489: 6	<i>a-bu É-tim ša é-kál-lim</i>

The Akkadian expression preceded by LÚ seems to show that it was understood as a title (*Amtbezeichnung*), although we do not know whether, in Mari, the tendency was to constantly characterize the professions using the determinative (See, for instance, *ša šikkātīm*). The *abu bītīm* acted as a steward officially in charge of managing the king’s household (É) in a province alongside the local governor. He was responsible for collecting and recording taxes for the central administration, generally providing the household he was in charge with cereals (mostly barley),

7. But see, for instance, the attestations in an Old Babylonian letter (PBS 38: 7, 9) found in Nippur.

8. Weeden (2011, 139) claimed that the expression *a-bu é* of OB Mari was most probably adopted from Syria.

9. I tabulated here only the most interesting orthographic variations.

animals (especially sheep), silver, and wood (Marzal 1972, 368–369; Lion 2001, 148–150). He also cared for public buildings (e.g., ARM III 84) and recruited specialists and workforces (e.g., ARM XXVI/2 398). The *abu bītim* had to be a trustworthy person (*abu bītim taklam*: ARM I 18: 34; 73: 53), who could be eventually promoted to a higher rank, as was probably the case of Yašim-Sūmū, *abu bītum* in Kargamiš, subsequently promoted *šandabakkum* in the central administration, although we cannot exclude this is a case of homonymy (Cf. Lion 2001, 147).¹⁰

Even the Amorite king Šamši-Addu I recommended to his son Yašmaḥ-Addu in Mari to appoint a new governor (*šāpiṭum*) and another *abu bītim* in the neighbouring province of Tuttul (ARM I 73: 51–55). The plural forms LÚ.MEŠ *a-bu É-tim* in ARM XIV 4 and ARMT XXVI 8 (here indicated by personal names) shows that a household (e.g., the one of Asqudum) could have more than one *abu bītim*.

The form *ab-bu-ut É-tim* has been interpreted by CAD (s.v.) as a West Semitic plural (Cf. Marzal 1972, 360). According to Lion (2001, 150), it is a “nom abstrait (nom de la fonction)”, meaning that *abūt bītim* can be tentatively translated as “stewardship/administration” (Cf. Charpin 2010, 68–69).

Most importantly, we know that there was an *abu bītim* in the palace of Mari (ARMT XXIII 489: *abu É-tim ekallim*). From one clear occurrence, at least, we know that a certain Šub-Nalū acted as a functionary in the palace of Mari (Cf. ARMT XVI/1: 198). He supervised the royal expenses; he was in charge of registering the provisions in terms of metals, textiles, and cattle, no less the delivery of agricultural products to the royal palace (Lion 2001, 187).

4. LÚABUBĪTUM: *At the dawn of the Hittite administration*

One of the most interesting and less studied offices in the Hittite sources is the LÚABUBĪTUM. In 1982, Franca Pecchioli Daddi, in her book *Mestieri, Professioni e Dignità nell’Anatolia ittita*, carefully collected all the occurrences of this title in Hittite sources (Pecchioli Daddi 1982, 517–520).¹¹ Tayfun Bilgin, in his recent treatise on Hittite officials and Hittite administration, did not study the office of the LÚABUBĪTUM, apart from brief references in the book (Bilgin 2018, 504 s.v.). We assume that it was not treated because there are no prosopographic indications for this office that were, in fact, the basis of Bilgin’s investigation.

Mark Weeden (2011, 139, with previous literature at note 610) wrote: “The consistent writing of the two words without any wordbreaks, may indicate that this was felt to be a single word: LÚABUBĪTUM. The use of the Sumerogram É with Akkadographic complement in this word indicates that the Akkadian sound is primary.” However, we have no clear signs to interpret the LÚABUBĪTUM as a mask for a Hittite or foreign word (see below).

Here follows a synoptic chart of the orthographic variations of the word in Hittite texts:

10. According to Grégory Chambon (pers. comm.), this is likely a case of homonymy. I thank Grégory for having checked § 3 of the present article.

11. To her list (Pecchioli Daddi 1982, 517), the following attestations can now be added: KUB 59.30 (+) VBoT 130, obv. 8’; KBo 53.129, 1’; KBo 49.290, 3’; KBo 59.130, 2’; KUB 58.19 iii 2; KBo 45.193, 3’; KBo 41.130 I 5’; KUB 51.12, obv. 3’; KUB 55.5 iv 19’; KUB 58.58, obv. 7; KUB 59.2, obv. 10; KUB 59.17+ rev. 2, 6; ABoT 2.123, obv. 2’; VS NF 12.11 iii 12’; Bo 4097: 3’, 9’.

Attestation	Text Genre	Orthography	Dating of the text
KBo 12.4+ iii 7	(CTH 19.II.G) ‘Edict of Telipinu’ (§34)	(in NS duplicate KBo 12.6, 4: LÚ.MEŠ [?] A-B]U-É-TIM)	MS ^{???}
KBo 3.1+ 3.68 + KBo 12.5 ii 62, 70; iii [1]	(CTH 19.A) ‘Edict of Telipinu’ (§§32–34)	LÚ.MEŠ [?] A-BU-BI-TUM, LÚA-BU-BI-TU (dupl. KUB 11.2+, 9’: LÚA-BU-BI-TUM)	NS
KUB 10.13 iv 23	(CTH 627.3.b.B) Fragment of KILAM festival?	LÚA-BU-U-BI-TUM	NS
IBoT 3.46 r. edge 2’	(CTH 670.1900) Festival fragment	LÚ.MEŠ [?] ABU-(BI-)TI	NS
KUB 10.39 iii 4	(CTH 670.1944) Festival fragment	LÚ.MEŠ [?] É.GAL LÚA-BU-BI-TI-I	NS
Bo 3008 i 2, 1[1]	(CTH 670.1967) Festival fragment	É LÚA-BU-BI-TI	NS

The office of the LÚABUBĪTUM is attested predominantly in festivals. In most of these occurrences, the title is linked to a house (É). From there, offerings and provisions were taken to celebrate festivals. We do not know exactly when the office of the LÚABUBĪTUM was instituted. According to Bilgin (2018, 408), the office was introduced at the time of king Telipinu (ca. 1525–1500 BC), probably because the oldest attestation is attested in the so-named Edict of Telipinu, although the text came to us through later copies.

In this respect, the chart listing the palaeographic distribution of offices offered by Bilgin (2018, 410) is misleading, as the LÚABUBĪTUM is attested mostly in New Script copies (ca. 1350–1260 BC) of texts of an old tradition. For the sake of this study, we briefly present just a selection of the most important entries.

The power and ranking of the LÚABUBĪTUM within the hierarchical structure of the Hittite society are testified by several occurrences in which he is listed among the “Greats” of the Hittite Kingdom: In the Edict of Telipinu, the king sets out the obligations for the “Greats” (LÚ.MEŠ[?]GAL-TIM), “those who are greats in the royal house” (CTH 19.II.G: KBo 7.15 + KBo 12.4 ii 8’: [(LUGAL-aš p]arni kuesš šallae[š]) in respect to their subordinates. The other “Greats” who are referred to in the text are the Great among the palace attendants (GAL DUMU.MEŠ.É.GAL), the Great among the royal bodyguards (GAL LÚ.MEŠ[?]MEŠEDI), the Great of wine (GAL GEŠTIN), the Great among the chariot fighters (GAL LÚ.MEŠ[?]KUŠ₇), the Overseer of the workforce recruiters (UGULA LÚ.MEŠ[?]NIMGIR.ÉRIN.MEŠ), and the Great among the spearmen (GAL LÚ.MEŠ[?]GIŠŠUKUR).

In the Edict, the king admonishes the “Greats” to offer a fair trial for those princes who sin: They cannot alienate properties of a condemned prince (CTH 19.II.E: KUB 11.6 ii 62). However, their power seems limited by what the Hittitologists call the “council” (*panku-*) since in a passage of the Edict, the king admonishes the *panku-* to tear to pieces everyone among the “Greats” —being of first or lower rank (KBo 3.1 iii 72: *mān=aš EGIR-izziš ḫantezziš*)— would behave evilly.

In a New Script copy of an old Hittite KILAM-festival text (CTH 627.3.b.B: KUB 10.13), the king toasts with the highest officials (LUGAL-*uš A-NA BE-LU^{MEŠ}-TIM kiššarī akuwanna pāi* [KUB 10.13 iv 20’–22’]) of the court; among others: GAL *MEŠEDI* (iv 23’), GAL DUMU.MEŠ.É.GAL, ^{LÚ}A-BU-U-BI-TUM (iv 24’: Cf. parallel text KBo 25.176 + l.e. 1: ^{LÚ}A-BU-BI-TI), GAL GĒSTIN (iv 25’), GAL ^{LÚ.MEŠ}KUŠ₇ (iv 25’), ^{LÚ.MEŠ}DUGUD ^{LÚ.MEŠ}ŠUKUR (iv 26’).¹² All these occurrences testify to the prestige and power of the ^{LÚ}ABUBĪTUM since the Old Hittite Period.

In the text from the Cult of Zalpa (CTH 667.1), offerings of bread are taken from the “house of the ABUBĪTUM of the right” (KUB 59.30, obv. 8’: É ^{LÚ}A-BU BI-]TI ZAG-na-aš) to celebrate the god Ḫalipinu during the “Festival of the Month” (EZEN₄ ITU^{KAM}) and the “Spring festival” (EZEN₄ DIŠI/Ú.BAR₈/ḫamešḫandaš).

The ^{LÚ}ABUBĪTUM also actively participated in rites. In the alleged older version¹³ of the outline tablet of the AN.TAḪ.ŠUM-festival (KUB 30.39 + KBo 24.112 + KUB 23.80 = CTH 604.B), the “^{LÚ}ABUBĪTUM of the right” slaughters an animal by the drinking vessel of the Storm-god of Zippalanda (KUB 30.39++ i 23: ^{LÚ}A-BU-BI-DU ZAG-aš ḫu¹-ek-zi). Subsequently (i 28), he carries ash (SAḪAR.ḪI.A-*uš*: restored after KBo 10.20 i 42) out of the *ḫešta*-house. The newer version of the same outline (KBo 10.20 i 30ff.) presents a different scenario: The “fathers of the house of the right” (here in the plural form: ^{LÚ.MEŠ}A¹-B[U-BI-TI] slaughter (line 31: [*ḫ*]u-k[*án*]-zi) [an animal?] by the drinking vessel of the Storm-god of Zippalanda (parallel to KUB 30.39++ i 23); they open the pithos of the Storm-god of Zippalanda in the palace (line 37: É.GAL) of the ^{LÚ}ABUBĪTUM ZAG-aš, and finally, they take eight oxen and several sheep out of the palace (É.GAL) of the ^{LÚ}ABUBĪTUM (i 41). The alleged older outline tablet displays the forms ^{LÚ}A-BU-BI-DU ZAG-aš (i 23) and ^{LÚ}A-BU-BI-TU (i 28), whereas the newer version has ^{LÚ.MEŠ}A¹-B[U-BI-TI] ZAG-aš (i 30); É.GAL ^{LÚ}A-BU-BI-TI (i 37); É.GAL ^{LÚ}A-BU-BI-TI (i 41).

Although in the majority of festival scenarios reference is made to the house (É) of the ^{LÚ}ABUBĪTUM, where supplies were probably collected to celebrate festivals, sometimes we find the term palace (É.GAL) of the ^{LÚ}ABUBĪTUM: So, in a passage of the “Festival of the Month” (EZEN₄ ITU^{KAM}) CTH 591: KBo 10.39 iii 3)¹⁴ the personnel of the “Palace of the ^{LÚ}ABUBĪTUM” (^{LÚ.MEŠ}É.GAL ^{LÚ}A-BU-BI-TI-I)¹⁵ brings in three *šarnešnil*-thick-breads.

Apparently, there is no distinction between the house (É) and the palace (É.GAL) of the ^{LÚ}ABUBĪTUM, and we have no clear elements to disambiguate them. In the oracle to determine the celebration of a subsidiary festival (*ḫadauri*) during spring and autumn (CTH 568.B: KUB 22.27+),

12. The same expression as in KUB 10.13 iv 26’ (^{LÚ.MEŠ}DUGUD ^{LÚ.MEŠ}ŠUKUR) also occurs in the Palace Anecdotes: KUB 36.104 iv 7’, 9’.

13. This outline accounts 35 days. The newer version (38 days) would be KBo 10.20 (CTH 604.A). Cf. Güterbock 1970, 108.

14. OH/NS. The *scriptio plena* might point to a NS of an Old Hittite text. Cf. *ḫu-u-ya-an-za* in iii 2; *ḫu-u-i-ya-an-zi* in iii 8.

15. CHD, Š/II: 286, s.v. translates: “The palace servants (and) the intendant...”, but it is clear from the undetermined case that the personnel is that of the palace of the ^{LÚ}ABUBĪTUM.

when the king has come from a city (in lacuna) in the palace of the ^{LÚ}ABUBĪTUM, the provision is taken from the palace of the ^{LÚ}ABUBĪTUM. And then, when from the city of Kašaya the king comes, and the spring festival is celebrated in the house of the ^{LÚ}ABUBĪTUM (iii 34': I-NA É A-BU-BI-TI), the provisions are that of the palace of the ^{LÚ}ABUBĪTUM (iii 35': *ḥalkuešsar ŠA É.GAL A-BU-BI-[TI]*). When finally the king moves from Arinna to celebrate the micro-festival of the back-journey —i.e., after having celebrated the festival for Arunit sometimes during the *nuntarriyašḥaš* days 17th–19th¹⁶— to the palace of the ^{LÚ}ABUBĪTUM, the provisions are only (-*pat!*) those of the palace of the ^{LÚ}ABUBĪTUM: These are the spring celebrations of the house of the ^{LÚ}ABUBĪTUM of the right (iii 47'–48' restored after ABoT 1.14++ v 7'–8').

These palaces might have been located in provincial districts (*telipuri*^{H.A.}) where the ^{LÚ}ABUBĪTUM managed to collect supplies (*ḥalkuešsar*^{H.A.}) in terms of cattle, sheep, and wheat. Nonetheless, just as we have seen for the *abu bītim* in Mari, the Hittite ^{LÚ}ABUBĪTUM seems to be also active in the Hittite capital: On the 16th day of the *nuntarriyašḥa*-festival (CTH 626.Ü.1B: KUB 10.48) the king travels to Ḫattuša via Tippuwa; the (temple-)personnel of the Storm-god in Nirḫanta piles up (*ḥarpānzi*) the wooden[?]-piles¹⁷ by the river, and the “Great Assembly” (*šalli ašešsar*) gathers in the “gathering-hall(?)” (^É*ḫalentuwa*. Cf. Taracha 2017) in Ḫattuša (ii 20–21). (All) Ḫattuša is summoned (*lit.* “sits (down)”: ii 21: ^{URU}*Ḫattušaš ešari*). Meanwhile,¹⁸ in the “House of the ^{LÚ}ABUBĪTUM” they celebrate the festival of the journey (to?) Nerik (ii 22–23: A-NA DINGIR.MEŠ A-BU-BI-TI EZEN₄ ŠA KAŠKAL ^{URU}NE-RI-I[K]) for the “gods of the ^{LÚ}ABUBĪTUM”. Mark Weeden (2011, 140) thinks that the day is celebrated in Ḫattuša at the house of the ^{LÚ}ABUBĪTUM, who is in charge of the city, while the king is in another city. Carlo Corti (2018, 52) endorses this proposal by presenting the evidence (KUB 2.15+ v 16–24), hence demonstrating that the king usually went to Nerik.

5. Concluding remarks and perspectives

As we have seen, all the occurrences discussed here are New Script copies of texts transmitted over the centuries to preserve the tradition (Cf. Schwemer 2012, 44–47). Assuming that particular festivals, like the KILAM and the “Festival of the Month” are a relic of past religious-economic practices (Cf. Vigo 2019, 146–147); we can propose that the office of the ^{LÚ}ABUBĪTUM traces its origin back to the early stages of the Hittite kingdom.

During the reign of the first Hittite kings (ca. 1670–1580 BC), the ^{LÚ}ABUBĪTUM must have been the link between the village communities and the central authority of Ḫattuša, if we rule out other early locations of power, such as Ḫurma or Kuššar(a). It cannot be excluded that the office of a “father of the house(hold)” was indispensable even before, in the fragile timespan between the end of the reign of Zuzu of Nēša (ca. 1725–1710 BC) and the reign of the Hittite king Ḫuzziya I (ca. 1690–1670 BC), whose name is attested on the notorious cruciform seal. The transitional period between the fall of the Anatolian “city-states” and the Hittite expansionism towards the Black Sea region and the Konya Plain —testified in the Tale of Zalpa, as well as in the Edict of

16. Steitler 2017, 305.

17. Cf. KUB 25.13++ i 25–26. For *ḥarpuš* (ii 18) cf. EDHIL, 312. Alternatively, one could assume the following: “the ‘men of the Storm-god’ gather themselves (=kan?) in group” (*ḥarpuš* = relative accusative? Cf. HW², Ḫ, 330 s.v. *ḥarpa-/ḥarpi-*).

18. Cf. IBoT 2.8 obv. 10: A]-BU-BI-TI=ma. GrHL, §29.35, p. 398f. admits the use in concurrent actions. CHD, M s.v. remains sceptic.

Telipinu— required not only a new political agenda, perhaps already promoted by Anitta, but the creation of a new regional network that could make dialoguing the emergent Hittite capital(s) with the rural environment. The process of adaptation was surely long and very difficult to reconstruct historically. Although promoted under the aegis of religious activities (official festivals and local cults), the relation between central authority and community villages must have been adapted according to different political scenarios. So, it is understandable that the office of the ^{LÚ}ABUBĪTUM changed over time accordingly. The “father of the house” of the Hittite administration, who has many features in common with the *abu bitīm* of Mari, had different duties in different periods. The cult arrangements implemented by the Hittite kings over time surely affected tasks and duties, no less the prestige and the ranking of the ^{LÚ}ABUBĪTUM.

However, the Hittite cult amendments always complied with the tradition. At least one of the discussed texts (KUB 22.27+) —which according to Philo Houwink ten Cate (1986, 108–109), could be part of a reform of the festivals AN.TAḪ.SUM^{SAR} and *nuntarriašḫa-* during the time of Muršili II (ca. 1321–1295 BC)— often refers to older tablets (*e.g.*, ABoT 1.14+ iii 18–19: *annalaz tuppianza QĀTAMMA iyan*).

The office of the ^{LÚ}ABUBĪTUM was still present in the Empire Period (ca. 1350–1180 BC): In the opening section of the *Landschenkungsurkunde* for Ura-Tarḫunta —also labeled *Freibrief*¹⁹ (CTH 224: KUB 26.58), Ḫattušili III (ca. 1267–1237 BC), tried to explain the background situation to justify the exemptions in favour of Ura-Tarḫunta: “Kantuzzili (the father of Ura-Tarḫunta), who was a ^{LÚ}ABUBĪTUM, he [threatened (me) wickedly] and I was hostile to him; Ura-Tarḫunta, son of Kan[tuzzili] changed to the side of His Majesty, and I rewarded him”.

The meaning of the Hittite expression ^{LÚ}ABUBĪTUM is ultimately unintelligible, and we wonder whether it could be a mask of a single word attested elsewhere in Hittite sources (Vigo 2023). We can only speculate that this office and the title attached to it reflect a social reality of the early stages of the Hittite kingdom. As such, perhaps it entered Anatolia from the Syrian region at the end of the 18th century BC, independently from the social context of Mari, where we can find a more institutionalized administrative profile that did not respond to the regional governor (*šāpiṭum*) —subjected, in turn, to the *šukkallum*— but to the “royal accountant” (*šandabakkum*). Whether the Mariote *abu bitīm* and the Hittite ^{LÚ}ABUBĪTUM have a common matrix, we cannot say. Still, the meagre reference in texts of Hammurabi’s period (ca. 1792–1750 BC) may support such a hypothesis.

6. Bibliography

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19. Cf. Götze, Inhaltübersicht of KUB 26; Klengel 1999, 240 [A 11]: Dekret Ḫattušilis III. Cf. Archi 1971, 202f.

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