

English version by Harris Lenowitz. Previously known as "Mursilis Sprachlähmung, the Hittite text was published by Goetze and Pedersen in Danske Videnskabernes Selskab, v. 21, 3, in the Thirties. The first English translation since then, Lenowitz's version was made with the help of Edgar Polomé, to whom it is dedicated.

(Hittite)

A CURE FOR APHASIA

"Concerning Mursilis, the Sun, the great king:

'I drove into Til-Kunnu where a tempest broke, and I feared.

'The word became little in my mouth;
the word came out broken . . .

'But I recovered, and was as before.

'But, as the years passed, one after the other, what had happened came back to play a part in my dreams.

'Then, during one dream, the hand of the god struck me, and the ability to speak left me altogether.

'I inquired of the oracle, and the Weather-god of Mannuzia was indicated.

'I sought the Weather-god through the oracle:
it was indicated that an ox for myself be given him, consumed by fire along with certain birds.

'I asked the oracle about the sacrifice, and the site where it was to be made was declared as the temple in Kummani. '

"The self-ox was adorned, and the Sun put his hand upon it, and it was sent to Kummani.

"The Sun handed over the self-ox on the day it was adorned. On this day the Sun bathed. The night before he abstained from women. When he had bathed, he put his hand on the self-ox.

"After the self-ox was sent, the Sun bathed in pure water for seven days from the going of the self-ox, during the

'For the self-ox. . .

'I had put on. . .

'... fine garments for this day. . .

'... these festival clothes. . . including:

sash

dagger

shoes

'were sent off, and brought there, as well as the
chariot and harness

'as well as

the bow

quiver

horses

'were sent, and driven there, and

the table I ate from

the goblet I drank from

the bed I slept in

the bowl I washed in, and other utensils mentioned,

'and it was declared by the god that none of them were to be used.

'the festival clothes for this occasion,

and the chariot

and the horses

'were the clothes I wore,

the carriage I stood in

'on the day the Weather-god thundered terribly, the day the
storm broke out.

'They took away all these clothes and the harnessed chariot. '

"The way they sent the self-ox on its way, the rite of
the self-ox, appears this way from the ancient writings.

"The rule was made thus, the rite for the divinity of the
ambassi and kieldia, according to the ancient writing,
and in this manner it is to be done. "

(But if the self-ox dies on the long way, as soon as they reach the site
they should drive another ox to it, adorned with the adornments, and offer
it. The adornments together with this other ox are sacrificed by burning.)

escorting of the self-ox to Kummani, and until it was offered.

"Since he had already waited so long the Sun did not delay further.

"Seven days passed . . .

"They made a burnt-offering of birds:

1 enumusia bird
1 aria itarkia bird
1 aria mutria bird
1 inia iriria bird
1 ilmia parmia bird
1 iriltehia bird
1 ulahulzia bird
1 duantehia bird
1 tahasia durusia lamb
1 kipisia punuhunsia bird
1 gameirsia bird
1 anishia pindihia bird
1 seirdihia serapihia bird
1 tatia duarnia bird
1 zuzumakia lamb

"It was ordained by the oracle that they be burned in this way . . .

". . . sent off to the Weather-god . . .

". . . and for the home altar . . .

". . . they offered each day . . .

"To the Weather-god for the ambassi: 1 sheep; for the kiieldia:
1 sheep.

"To the male gods for the ambassi: 1 sheep; for the kiieldia:
1 sheep.

"To the divine elluri: for the ambassi: 1 ox, 1 sheep;
for the kiieldia: 1 ox, 1 sheep for the altar . . .

"To the divine elluri 1 . . .

Harris Lenowitz

A NOTE ON THE TEXTURES OF "A CURE FOR APHASIA"

What I find most exciting about the Hittite curing poem is its voices: the voice of the Sun himself, that of the scribe framing the piece for the cult, and finally that of a commentator in canon law—these different voices indicated in the translation by the use of single and double quote marks and ruled lines. When the king speaks, after the scribe has drawn the border, it is the dream time. The event and the king are of course historical, but the encounter with the unknown is not of historical time. The procedures followed are, curiously, those of the "scientific method": objective investigation (finding out which god is responsible doesn't really involve any more pre-suppositions than the pre-suppositions of causality doctors use today), diagnosis-and-cure, and experimentation (implied in the fact that the cure has been accepted as rite after its use). For the scribe laying out the terms of the ritual in his own time what happened to the king is of the period of beginnings and discoveries, the king's own words of equal importance with the words that pass between gods at the formation of the world; a detail of the creation. That it all happened as told to the king (a god) and the other gods, verifies the cure for the scribe. So the voice of the scribe is surer than the king's, building as he is on an unknown truth discovered and certified.

The last movement of the text begins with the words "But if . . ." written by a commentator in the latest period of the ritual's use. The movement in the text is from the absolute reality of the time of beginnings to the approved certainty of a believer and finally to the contingent reality of a causalist—so that this single text re-presents the entire psychology of western man in miniature. The process is one through which the Bible passed, for example, more fulsomely; the Mishna, Talmud and responsa all fulfilling the third stage hinted at here. In "A Cure," then, are found: the scientific method, a cure for aphasia, the history of religion, and, most interestingly, the history of the Law's origin and man's fall.