

# Hittite

## Practices

The religion of the Hittites was a mixture of religions. It incorporated popular elements of indigenous central Anatolia with some external influences largely of Hurrian origin.

Cremation was the preferred practice, especially for the King or Queen. However the ordinary people were either buried or cremated. Funerary offerings for the common people were small, often coming from a funeral feast.

In Hittite rituals the body is burnt on a funeral pyre that is quenched with a liquid such as wine or beer. The bones are picked out of the fire and then dipped in oil or fat, then wrapped in a linen cloth or fine garment. The wrapped bones are placed on a chair or stool. The bones are often interned in a stone chamber. Then a feast is held.<sup>1</sup>

12 thick breads are placed around the fire pits and those who assisted with picking out the bones are feed with this bread.<sup>2</sup>

Most of the funeral rites we know about were for kings and queens. In these we see offerings presented to the deceased as well as the gods at various points. The dead was also symbolically outfitted for what they would need in the next life. Additionally the spirit of the dead was appeased of any anger that he may have had towards those who remained alive. The conception seems to be that life after death continues in a way similar to life during mortality.

The netherworld figured significantly in the Hittite cosmological; caves, springs, dug pits, and tombs provided passageways to the underworld. The sun traversed the sky during the day and crossed the underworld at night and therefore was the chief god of the netherworld. The netherworld (or deep sea) was seen as the place where impurities were banished through elimination rituals.<sup>3</sup>

## Deities and Important Concepts

- Teshub / Tara / Tarhun  
Storm/Weather god who is chief among the gods. His symbol is the bull and he is known as 'The Conqueror', 'The king of Kummiya', 'King of Heaven', 'Lord of the land of Hatti'.<sup>4</sup>
- Hebat / Hepi / Hepatu  
The matronly wife of the Storm-god. She is sometimes depicted standing on her sacred animal, the lion.<sup>5</sup>
- Lelwani  
Goddess of the underworld.<sup>6</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> "Of the Hittites and Homeric Rituals." Common Points in Burial Customs... N.p., n.d. Web. 08 May 2013. <http://www.aai.freesevers.com/Common%20Points%20in%20Burial%20Customs%20of%20the%20Hittites%20and%20Homeric%20Rituals.htm>

<sup>2</sup> "Royal Funerary Rituals." Royal Funerary Rituals. N.p., n.d. Web. 9 May 2013. <http://www.hittites.info/translations.aspx?text=translations/rituals%2fFunerary+Rituals.html>

<sup>3</sup> "Religions of the Ancient World." Google Books. N.p., n.d. Web. 08 May 2013. p. 196. <http://tinyurl.com/cb7lo2z>

<sup>4</sup> Siren, Christopher B. "Hittite/Hurrian Mythology REF 1.2." Hittite/Hurrian Mythology REF 1.2. N.p., n.d. Web. 08 May 2013. <http://tinyurl.com/d84t2bs>

<sup>5</sup> Ibid.

<sup>6</sup> "Hittite Mythology." Wikipedia. Wikimedia Foundation, 20 Apr. 2013. Web. 08 May 2013. [http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Hittite\\_mythology](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Hittite_mythology)

## Modern Adaptations

- Pour wine or beer on some lit charcoal. Say something like 'We extinguish these sparks, which represent the life that name shared with us. We do so to honor their passing from this life to the netherworld.'
- Place the urn of cremated remains on a chair for a man or on a stool for a woman. Speak of how the deceased is now seated with the ancestors.
- Have a table of 12 loaves of bread. Share the bread with those present to strengthen them in their time of grieving.
- Speak of death as being a sea that purifies the deceased, releasing them from things they left undone and removing any impurities.
- Ask the deceased to let go of all anger and thus ascend to their divine fate.
- Have a feast at which a portion of the food is offered to the dead.

## Sample Readings

### ***King's prayer addressed to the Sungod***<sup>7</sup>

Sungod of Heaven, my Lord, what have I done that you have taken from me (my) th[rone] and given it to someone else?... You have summoned me to the (ghosts of the) dead and, be[hold], (here) I am among the (ghost of the) dead. I have shown myself to the Sungod of Heaven, my Lord, so let me ascend to my divine fate, to the gods of Heav[en] and [free] me from among the (ghosts of the) dead.

### ***Said at the interment of the cremated remains into a tomb***<sup>8</sup>

And have this meadow duly made for him, O Sun-god! Let no one wrest it from him or contest it with him! Let cows, sheep, horse, (and) mules graze for him on this meadow.

## Resources

Life and Society in the Hittite World

<http://www.ling.upenn.edu/~rnoyer/courses/51/BryceHittiteSociety.pdf>

While this does not specifically address Hittite funerals, it has a wealth of information about the Hittite religion.

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<sup>7</sup> Collins, Billie Jean. "The Hittites and Their World." Google Books. N.p., n.d. Web. 15 May 2013. <http://tinyurl.com/b6ptwdb>

<sup>8</sup> Ibid.