

HITTITE DAMNAŠŠARA- 'DOMESTIC'/'DAMNAŠŠARĒŠ
'HOUSEHOLD DEITIES''

H. CRAIG MELCHERT

Hitite *damnaššara-* is attested several dozen times, usually in the plural and marked by the determinative indicating a divine name. Forrer, PEQ (1937) 109f., concluded from the presence of the suffix *-ššara-* that the word refers to female deities, probably Hurrian in view of their association with the god Šuwaliyat. He noted, however, that the hunter Kešši met with *d.*'s (NB without determinative) in the company of an *elīyanku-*, which he took to mean 'dragon'. He thus interpreted *damnaššara-* to mean some kind of frightful creature that became divinized only by analogy to Egyptian tutelary snake goddesses. He was followed in this line of reasoning by Gaster, who rendered the word as 'harpies' or 'gorgons'.¹

Goetze, Lg 29 (1953) 269, suggested (divine) 'gate attendants', based on a supposed connection of Suwaliyat with the door. Güterbock combined these two previous lines of thought, RHA fasc. 68 (1961) 15 with note 21: 'I suspect that these goddesses are sphinxes, although I cannot prove it...In Kešši's seventh dream (Friedrich, ZA 49,238, lines 11-13) the *damnaššaruš* are different from both lions and serpents (*elīy[ankuš]*), cf. HW 1. Erg., p. 7). It is this circumstance, combined with the feminine suffix *-ššara-* and the woman-like appearance of the Hitite sphinxes, that makes me think of this meaning, although the sources are inconclusive (suggestive but by no means clear is KUB II 3 iii 25-32, according to which the D. can be so turned that they always look at the king), and portable sphinxes (KUB XVI 34 i 5f. seem strange.'

This self-described tentative interpretation has received wide if qualified acceptance.² A few scholars have expressed doubts: van den Hout

* Bibliographical abbreviations are those of the *Chicago Assyrian Dictionary* (CAD) and the *Chicago Hittite Dictionary* (CHD).

¹ Theodor Gaster, *The Oldest Stories in the World* (1952) 147 and 153. New York Viking.

² Houwink ten Cate, ZA 82 (1992) 233f. w/note 2, even tentatively ties the find-spot of the Bronze Tablet 35 meters from the Sphinx Gate to the appearance

JEOL 32 (1991-92) 108, note 34, qualifies the meaning as 'possible' and underscores the problem of portable sphinxes. Tischler, HEG (1991) 85f., gives only a vague definition 'Art Götterstatue in Tiergestalt(?)' and insists that the nature of the animal is quite indeterminate. We seem to be facing another instance of an all too common event in scholarship: a respected authority has given an interpretation (properly couched as a mere possibility), and the idea has been repeated for over three decades, with no one having bothered to review critically all the available evidence. Thanks to the invaluable data collection of van Gessel—without which the following analysis would hardly have been possible—such a reexamination may now be undertaken.³

We may first dispose of the suggestion 'bovine-headed monsters' by Gurney based on KBo 23.62 Vo 8-11 (cf. note 1): *damnaššaruš* []/ *LMAÉ* 'U *pé-e-[tanzi]*/ *SAG.DU.HI.A GUD.šasma[š]/ pé.larkam[zi]* 'They ca[rry] the *d.*-deities [] into the temple of the Storm-god [] they also offer them bovine heads []'. Gurney phrases his tentative suggestion in a way that implies he is basing this interpretation on the idea that the deities are receiving an offering that mirrors their own attributes. Such matching of an offering with the nature of the receiving deity is not unheard of in Hittite religion (see Hoffner, JBL 86 (1967) 400, and Haas, Gesch.Relig. (1994) 647f.). It is far from common, however, and the inference is not remotely compelling in the absence of corroborating evidence. I submit that Gurney would never even have thought of such an interpretation were it not for the preconception that the *d.*'s are some kind of frightful creatures.

We turn next to the alleged evidence for the association of the *d.*'s with gates, none of which can withstand scrutiny. It is true that Kešši in his seventh dream appears to meet with *d.*'s in front of the gate (KUB 17.1 ii 11-13): *nu=kan* 'Kiššiš ANA UR.MAḤ [*hurmuwanzī pai?*] *n=škan parā aška piddāti aška=maza pēran elīy[ankuš] damnaššaruš wemiyal* 'Kešši [went to hunt] a lion. He ran out to the gate and in front of

of *Damnaššara*-goddesses (sphinxes?) as treaty witnesses. Popko, THeth 21 (1994) 42f., explains the puzzling *ur.muš damnaššarēš* (sphinx-men?) as analogous to other theiomorphic figures ('lion-men' etc.). Haas, Gesch.Relig. (1994) 335f., supports the interpretation as sphinxes by insisting on the special association with gates. Gurney, JRAS (1977) 207, alters the meaning to 'bovine-headed monsters, or a kind of Minotaur?', based on KBo 23.62 Vo 8ff. See further below.

³ See Ben H. L. van Gessel, *Onomasticon of the Hittite Pantheon* (= *HbOr*, Erste Abt., Bd. 33), 439-440. Leiden: Brill.

the gate he met eel-snakes (and?!) *dammaššara*'s.' But if one infers a special association of the *d*-'s with gates based on this passage, then by the same reasoning one must conclude the same for the *elīyanku/īliyanaka*-. The overall attestation of the latter word shows that this is false: see Puhvel, HED 1/2 (1984) 358f., and especially Katz.⁴

In the *itkalzi* ritual KUB 29.8 ii 3 the ^{LÜ,MEŠ}*dammaššarēš* are mentioned in the context of a gate. However, the preceding context (see lines i 44-45) shows that this is not an ordinary gate, but one specially constructed for purposes of the ritual. On such gates see Hoffner, AuOr 5 (1987) 283. As is typical, the entire surrounding ritual action takes place in and around the ritual gate. The mention of the *dammaššara*-men near the gate is thus merely a function of their participation in this portion of the ritual—they could hardly appear anywhere else—and they are no more specially associated with it than any of the other persons and objects in the ritual.

Finally, in KUB 7.2 i 15-17 (Ritual of Pupuwanni) we find: EGIR-ŠU^{ma} 'U 'UTU 'LAMMA 'Gulšūš/ [^d*Dammaššarēš*ŠA IM tenzi n=aš KÁ-aš andarza/ [GÜB']-li' ^{GIS}*ašari tianzi* 'Afterwards they make the Storm-god, Sun-god, Tutelary Deity, Fate Goddesses and [*d*]-deities of clay and place them inside the gate on the [left] door.' No one would claim that any of the other deities mentioned belong especially to gates. The passage gives no basis for inferring any such relationship for the *d*-deities either.

The real spatial associations of the *dammaššara*-deities were already demonstrated by Goetze, Lg 29 (1953), although for some reason he drew the wrong conclusion from his own evidence. The *d*-deities are among the 'holy places' in temples or houses where worship takes place. These various locations in the room are all worshipped prior to any other ritual activity. The purpose clearly seems to be analogous to that of sterilizing a modern operating room: by sanctifying all the key elements of the inner space, one assures that no evil force can penetrate the area in which the main ritual is to take place. Contrary to Goetze and others, the order of mention of these key elements does *not* argue for any association of the *dammaššara*-deities (or of Šuwaliyat) with the door or gate (nor even with the other peripheral element, the window). I cite below five reasonably complete

⁴ Joshua Katz. How to be a Dragon in Indo-European: Hittite *īliyanakus* and its Linguistic and Cultural Congeners in Latin, Greek, and Germanic. In *Mhr Curad. Studies in Honor of Calvert Watkins*, ed. J. Jasanoff et al., 317-334. Innsbruck: IBS.

passages that stand for many more of the same general structure (see Goetze, loc. cit., for more examples):

KUB 10.11 iv 7-16 (Offerings to Royal Images): UGULA ^{LÜ,MEŠ}MUḪALDIM *mamal ZAG.GAR.RA-ni peran 3-šu šulhāi* <sup>*Dammaššarēš*> *a peran 1-šu* ^{GIS}*Šuwaliyati 1-šu GUNNI ištarna pedi 1-šu* ^dDAG-*li 1-šu* ^{GIS}AB-*ya 1-šu* ^{GIS}PA DINGIR ^{LÜ,MEŠ}1-šu 'The chief of the cooks pours out groats three times in front of the sacrificial table; also once in front of the *d*-deities, once to Šuwaliyat, once to the middle of the hearth, once to the throne, one to the window, once to the scepter of the deity.'

KBo 21.49 iii 5-16 (Offerings to Royal Images): ^{LÜ}MUḪALDIM *ištarnanāš pē/ran* 3-šu *španti* ^d*Dammaššarēš 1-šu* ^{GIS}*Šuwaliyati peran 1-šu* LÜ ^{GIS}BANŠUR *aš šarā šuppiyahli* § ^d*Hurtaliyaš peran 1-šu haššē peran 1-šu* ^d*Habmaššūitti 1-šu* ^{GIS}*lutiya 1-šu* ^{GIS}PA.HI.A *aš peran 1-šu* ^{GIS}*hattalite/aš GIŠ-rui* 1-*šu* 'The cook libates three times in front of the sacrificial table(s), once to the *d*-deities, once in front of Šuwaliyat. The table-man cleans "up". [He libates] once in front of the *h*-vessels, once in front of the hearth, once to the Throne, once to window, once in front of the scepters, once to the door-bolt.'

KBo 2.30 Ro 1-5 (Offerings to Royal Images): ^d*Dammaššarēš* [1-*šu*] ^{GIS}*Šuwaliyati* [1-*šu*] *haššē 1-šu* ^{GIS}DAG-*li* [1-*šu*] ^{GIS}*lutiya* [1-*šu*] ^{GIS}PA.HI.A *aš* [1-*šu*] '[Once] to the *d*-deities, [once] to Šuwaliyat, once to the hearth, [once] to the throne, [once] to the window, [once] to the scepters....'

KUB 58.48 iii 9-13 (KI.LAM Festival) (see for attribution van den Hout, JEOL 32 [1991-92]): GAL ^{LÜ,MEŠ}MUḪALDIM *paizzi memal dai* ^{NÜ,MEŠ}*huwašiya peran 1-šu šulhāi haššē 1-šu* ^d*Dammaššarēš peran 1-šu* *hattalāš peran 1-šu* *hattalwaš GIŠ-rui 1-šu namma haššē tapuša 1-šu* 'The chief of the cooks proceeds to take groats. He pours (them) out once in front of the cult-stone, once to the hearth, once in front of the *d*-deities, once in front of the wall, once to the door-bolt, then once beside the hearth.' (similar KUB 59.22 iii 25-34 with OH gen. pl. ^d*Dammaššaran*). KBo 21.52 ii 6-9 (KI.LAM Festival): GAL ^{LÜ,MEŠ}MUḪALDIM 1 NINDA.GUR₃.RA *paršiya/ tzen* ^d*Dammaššarēš peran/ dai* 1 NINDA.GUR₄.RA *paršiyanta* <*n*> / *išpanduziaz peran dai* 'The chief of the cooks breaks a boule and puts it in front of the *d*-deities. He puts one broken boule in front of the libation-vessels.'

Please note the order of occurrence in the passages above: in the first, the *d*-deities and Šuwaliyat are mentioned between the sacrificial tables and the hearth and throne; in the second, between the sacrificial tables and the *hurtali*-vessels, hearth, and throne; in the third

we do know not what precedes, but again they are followed by the hearth and the throne; in the fourth, we find the cult-stone, hearth, *d*-deities, and the wall; and in the fifth, the *d*-deities followed by the libation vessels. The *dammaššara*-deities are *never* cited next to the door-bolt or even the window. The last two places are mentioned last in these series, as one would expect, given their peripheral location. The *dammaššara*'s, on the other hand, are clearly deities of *internal* space, closely associated with the altar, hearth, and throne.

As to their role, these deities clearly have a monitoring function, as shown by the famous passage of KUB 2.3 iii 25-32 (= KBo 25.66 i 6-10; KILAM Festival): '*Dammaššarušša* *wahnuwanzi n=as=kan IGI.HLA-wa LUGAL-i anda neyanzi š kuwapit kuwapit LUGAL-uš iriškizzi*' *Dammaššarušša QATAMMA=pat wahnuškanzi* 'They also turn the *d*-deities. They turn them (with) their eyes towards the king. Whenever the king makes the rounds (of worship), they also likewise keep turning the *d*-deities (in that direction).' As noted earlier, the *dammaššara*'s also at least once have the role of witnesses or guarantors of a treaty oath, in the company of the Storm-god of Hatti (KUB 14.8 Ro. 33-36; Plague Prayer of Mursili): LÚ.MEŠ URU.Mizri kuit LÚ.MEŠ URU.Hattiya IŠTU^a IŠKUR URU.Hatti *lingnuwanies*' *Dammaššaruššakan kuit INA ŠA^{BI} È* IŠKUR URU.Hatti *BELLA=YA memiyani=kan* LÚ.MEŠ URU.Hatti=*pat hūdāk šariyer* 'That the men of Egypt and the men of Hatti were bound by oath by the Storm-god of Hatti, that the *d*-deities (were) inside the temple of the Storm-god of Hatti, my lord, (and) that it was the men of Hatti who at once broke their word.' There are also a number of passages suggesting that these deities were often portrayed as figurines or images that could be carried from place to place or that could be said to 'go' themselves as part of processions.⁵

On the basis of the evidence just presented, I conclude that the *Dammaššareš* are neither sphinxes nor any other kind of apotropaic gate-keepers, but rather deities of *internal* spaces in the house or temple with monitoring functions, closely associated with altar, hearth, and throne. While cross-cultural comparisons are never more than approximate, I believe the above characteristics justify a functional comparison to the Roman *Penātes*. The latter are also deities of internal space (cf. *penitus* 'within'), closely associated with the hearth

⁵ They need not be repeated in full here. See among others KUB 16.34 i 5ff., KUB 30.42 i 9-10, KUB 10.98, 1-3, or KBo 10.27 iv 8-16.

(in house and temple). They are tutelary deities of the house, but also oath gods beside Jupiter.⁶

So much for the *dammaššara*-deities. Two passages where *dammaššara*- is not marked with the determinative for divinities have thus far been totally ignored. To be fair, one of these is relatively new, but the other is not. The first is KBo 39.39 iv 17-18 (a ritual fragment): 2 MĀŠ.GAL *dammaššaruš* [...] *gimraš pianz[i]*. An unbiased reading of the first line can only take *d*. as an epithet of MĀŠ.GAL: 'two *d*. he-goats'. These are in all likelihood the object of *pianzi*, referring to a ritual offering. We have ample evidence for *gimraš* as a genitive singular epithet of various animals, meaning 'of the countryside, steppe, wilderness, range-land, range', as per Puhvel, HED 4 (1997) 175. He aptly compares Hittite *gimraš hūitar* 'beasts of the field' with Akkadian *būl šeri*. We also find GUD.ĀB *gimraš* 'cow of the open range' (KUB 2.1 iii 26 & KUB 25.15 Vo 18) and GUD.MAH *gimraš* 'bull of the open range' (KBo 5.5 iv 4). We may therefore reasonably assume a numeral and name of an animal in the lacuna in our line 17: 'They give two *d*. he-goats and [so many ___] of the open range.'

What would make a suitable pendant for 'of the open range'? Given the independent evidence for the *dammaššara*'s as deities of internal space in the house, I submit that *dammaššara*- is fundamentally an adjective meaning 'domestic, of the house(hold)'. The deities are merely a substantivization of the adjective in the plural: 'those of the household'. The LÚ.MEŠ *dammaššareš* are likewise 'men of the household', probably not servants, but dependents comparable to Lycian *prineziye*- (Greck *oikétoi*).

The evidence of the passage above suggests a similar solution for KUB 30.56 iii 23-24, which had puzzled Laroche, CTH (1971) 181f.: [mān]x² DUMU.NITA ŠA UDU.SIR *dammaššaruš* [...] [MU-ū mey]ani *yan[zī]* '[When] they treat a boy [with ...] of a *d*-ram in the course of the year'. Just as we have two household he-goats, we may also have a household ram. That is, in both cases we have animals that are not merely domesticated, but are in fact kept around the household rather than allowed to graze the open range.

Since *dammaššara*- is an adjective that can serve as an epithet of male animals, the word clearly does not contain the suffix of *haššuššara*- 'queen' and so forth.⁷ We are facing rather the appurtenance

⁶ See Georg Wissowa, *Religion und Kultus der Römer* (1912) 161ff. München: Beck.

⁷ The sex of the *dammaššara*-deities is thus indeterminate. For a possible indication that they are indeed female see Goetze, Lg 29 (1953) 269, who cites *dŠuwa-hyat[ti]*/ DINGIR.MUNUS.MEŠ²ya in Bo 2597 (now = KUB 56.45 ii 5-6).

suffix of Hittite *šakuwaššara-* ‘whole, integral’ and the productive set of Luvian substantivized stems represented by ^{NAM}*kuttaššara/i-* ‘orthostat’ < *kult-* ‘wall’.⁸ The root etymology for our stem is transparently that of PIE **de/om-* ‘house’. Hittite *damm(a)* ‘house(hold)’ could represent **de/omn(o)-* or **dpmo-*, which recall but do not exactly match the similar Avestan *dāmāna-/nmāna-* ‘dwelling’ or Old Irish *dammāe* ‘material’. The details of the derivation need not detain us here.

We have not yet accounted for one example of *dammaššara-*, that in the dream of Kešši. The other evidence for our word as an adjective, specifically an epithet of animals, when it is not marked by the determinative for divinities, strongly suggests that it is likewise an epithet here: *elīy[ankuš] dammanaššaruš*. The assumption of an asyndetic pair of nouns was based entirely on the false idea of ‘sphinxes’ or ‘gorgons’. I find it plausible that the Hittites had snakes around their dwellings, and a meaning ‘household snakes’ is not impossible. However, the context makes clear that the sight of the snakes is an evil omen. Furthermore, Katz has made a strong case that *ilīyanka-* (and its stem variants) refers specifically to ‘eel-snakes’ that typically live in (watery) pits.⁹ Would Kešši have been frightened by the appearance at his gate of ordinary household snakes? It seems more likely that he would have been disturbed to meet with eel-snakes that should not normally be found there.

There is one more passage containing our adjective that has not been previously discussed to my knowledge (KUB 32.121 ii 28ff.; Ritual of Šalašu): [... *šē-ni wēnanteš tešpēkan* / [...] *werizāšteni šarazaškan uel* / [...] *uš nu taganzīpan arha* / [...] *mahhan pašanut anda-mašškan* / [...] *ayaltieš dammaššarēš* / [...] *na-aš dammaššarēš* / [...] *i nzaškan É.ŠA-ni⁷ anda* / [...] *x-anzi nzaškan* URU *Nīnuwa* / [...] *x tēlhuanzi apīyaz* (or *apīyaz?*) / [...] *x-anuš DINGIR.MEŠ-aš UR.SAG-iš* [...] ‘You [], oh Waters! In sleep/dream [] you take fright. S/hc/it has come up, [(the)]us, and broken open the earth like a []. In(to) [] d. springs’ [] d. []. And them (anim.) into the inner chamber they []. And (in⁷) Nineveh they pour it/them (nt.) out. There (or from the bothros) [] *Janus*, hero of the gods [...]’.

The sense of this unfortunately very fragmentary passage obviously is less than certain. What does seem tolerably clear is that some set

⁸ This formal analysis of *šakuwaššara-* is independent of the question of whether the base noun really is *šakua-* ‘eye; sight’, as very tentatively suggested in Melchert, *Journal of Ancient Civilizations* (Changchun) 8 (1993) 107, note 7.

⁹ See the work cited in footnote 2, *passim*.

of waters is addressed (*wēnanteš* = ergative, here vocative plural). The later occurrence of the verb ‘pour out’ confirms that some kind of waters are present. There is also some kind of frightful event (perhaps a nightmare), which probably includes someone or something ripping open the earth (on the sense of *arha pašanut* see the CHD, Volume P (1994-97) 187). Under these circumstances I think the restoration and reading [^{PU}š] *ayaltieš* ‘springs’ is at least plausible. If this is true, then *dammaššarēš* in its first occurrence is an epithet of springs. ‘Household springs’ makes little sense, especially in this context (though one may note the possible presence of É.ŠA-ni ‘in the inner chamber’). Given the evidence for springs, water, and a violent upheaval of the earth, I wonder whether we must assume the existence of a second homophonous adjective *dammaššara-* ‘of/pertaining to an abyss/chasm’. That is, the reference here would be to subterranean springs violently brought to the surface and pouring through a dwelling (in Nineveh?). Likewise, then, the *elīyankuš dammaššaruš* would be ‘subterranean eel-snakes’, a most suitable epithet in view of their nature as explicated by Katz.¹⁰

For obvious reasons I am reluctant to posit a second distinct adjective ‘of the deep’ or the like based on just two passages, one of which remains quite obscure. However, I also did not wish to minimize the difficulties they present for a meaning ‘domestic, of the household’. I am convinced that the latter meaning does account well for *dammaššara-* as an epithet of animals and as the name of deities whose true nature is that of tutelary gods of internal space, comparable to the Roman *Penātes*.

¹⁰ A suitable PIE etymon for a putative base **dhp̄bhno-* would be seen in Greek *taphrós* ‘ditch’ and Old Prussian *dambo* ‘Grund’; perhaps also in Armenian *damban* and Greek *táphos* ‘tomb’. But compare on the last two, James Clackson, *The Linguistic Relationship Between Armenian and Greek* (1994) 120f. Oxford: Blackwell.