I deliberated for some time with which topic a Hittitologist would best serve the ends of these proceedings, and finally decided that a synopsis on the Hittite incantation literature or healing rituals with its diverse traditions and most of all, its close affiliation with the Babylonian art of incantation, would make most sense. With this paper I intend to explain the importance of Hittite ritual and incantation literature or, in the spirit of this theme of this volume, of Hittite magical science of healing for the study of Akkadian ritual literature as a whole.

According to Hittite belief, any divergence from a state of normality, be it on an individual level, in a social group, or in nature, is viewed as a threat and can only be repelled through a ritual act. Such threats are primarily disorders either of a physical, or more important, a mental nature. Moreover, there are negative omens, criminal acts, family troubles, economic, military and natural disasters like droughts or severe storms. From a perspective of the ritual, all such distressing events are alike in that they represent a serious disruption of the normal state of affairs. The task of the ritual is hence to reinstate normality.

Troubled normality is conceived of as a state of constraint, whereas normality as one of ease. In this sense the following terms lauwar “to be loose” and hamenkuwar “to be attached” are diametrically opposed to each other in a magical dualism.

An individual in a state of attachment or bewitchment is doomed to suffer psychosomatic disorders, of which the subjective symptoms are usually described as fear of “evil gossip of the community” (EME pangauwaš), “burden of the soul” (ištanzanaš impaš), “constriction of
the body” (tuekkaš taššiyatar), a state of being pinned down (taruwant), of confinement, or strong excitement. As though in a state of captivity the bewitched is “like a sheep in a pen, like a bull in a shed, like a dog in a kennel, like a pig in a pigsty”. This condition of suspension leads to a sleepless condition, evil dreams,1 fear and nightmares “as if someone keeps seeing a deadly ghost night after night”; it also leads to ill-fated omens like “evil” and “hideous birds”, to impotence, miscarriages, and even paralysis, blindness and various diseases of the head. This state inflicted by witchcraft is thus transferred to the sorcerer, in which it is stated that “the witchcraft shall be like a head scarf and shall be pressed to his head . . . shall act like a belt, and tie him up”.2

The cathartic ritual which tries to release the patient from the described condition effectuates in the first place the abilities of self-healing. Accordingly diverse is the application of one and the same ritual for the alleviation of the spell.

The remarkably large amount of magical rituals in comparison to the rest of the Hittite epigraphic corpus exemplifies how common such psychosomatic disorders were. An idea of the magnitude of the corpus embracing Hittite, Hittite-Hattian, Hittite-Luvian and Hittite-Hurrian rituals, is obtained from a glance at Laroche’s Catalogue des Textes Hittites.3

A classification of the ritual literature from Boğazköy is best carried out according to the various priestly classes involved in the performing of such rituals. Therefore one may differentiate between the following prominent categories: first of all, there are cathartic rituals which are usually linked to the sphere of the AZU-priest4 as opposed to the rituals carried out by the female magician MUNUSŠU.GI, who as a rule is mentioned by name. These rituals usually counteract witchcraft. Following the recitals contained in the rituals, we must distinguish rituals from a Hattian, Luvian, and Hurrian setting on the one hand, from ones with a Babylonian background on the other. Closely related to the ŠU.GI-rituals from the Hattian

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1 KUB 5.7, edition K. van der Toorn 1985, 125–33.
3 E. Laroche 1971.
4 Their function rather seems to correspond with the Babylonian (w)āšipu-priests than the barû-priests represented by sumerogram AZU.