

UNDER CONSTRUCTION

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**Sacred Time in
Hittite Anatolia:
Some Considerations on
the Hittite Calendrical
Organisation**

The correct temporal organisation of the cult activities represented a fundamental aspect of Hittite religious life. A passage of the well-known Hittite text collecting the instructions for the Temple Personnel insists on the importance of celebrating the festivals “at the right time.” The Hittite king Mursili II, in his Annals, frequently mentions the necessity of interrupting a military campaign in order to fulfil religious obligations.

The nature and organisation of sacred time in Hittite Anatolia represents a complex problem, which has generally received little attention. In my contribution, I will briefly reconsider the Hittite religious calendar as a whole, analyzing the main issues connected with the Hittite calendrical organisation, such as the problem of the beginning of the year and the lunar nature of the Hittite month. On this background, I will examine some rites related to the moon cycle, focusing in particular on the so-called “monthly festivals” indicated in the texts with the Sumerographic writing EZEN4 ITUKAM. These ceremonies were performed in connection with specific lunar phases and represented an important part of both local cult calendars and the official cult of the state. The monthly festival celebrated by the Hittite king at the new moon could be identified with the “Festival of the Moon” mentioned in the incipit of the composition defined by the sources as “Festival of the Moon and the Thunder” (CTH 630).