
THE LÚ^{MES} SAG AT THE HITTITE COURT

Clelia Mora
(University of Pavia)

ABSTRACT

This contribution analyzes some aspects and problems of Hittite internal administration during the period following the struggle between Urhi-Teššup and Hattusili over sovereignty in the Hatti land (13th Century BC). More specifically, it examines evidence regarding a special corpus of dignitaries (the LÚ^{MES} SAG / EUNUCHUS₂) who acquired special power during the last decades of the Hittite Empire.

RIASSUNTO

Questo contributo prende in esame alcuni aspetti dell'organizzazione e amministrazione dello stato ittita nel periodo successivo al conflitto tra Urhi-Teššup e Hattusili (XIII secolo a.C.). In particolare, vengono discusse le testimonianze relative ai LÚ^{MES} SAG (EUNUCHUS₂), un corpus speciale di dignitari che sembra aver acquisito molta importanza nella fase finale dell'Impero ittita.

KEYWORDS

Hittite state administration, LÚ^{MES} SAG

PAROLE CHIAVE

Amministrazione stato ittita, LÚ^{MES} SAG

In a recent article by Giorgieri and Mora¹, a paragraph entitled ‘Blood Ties, Loyalty Pretension, Power of Life and Death’ summarizes the difficult political situation of the dynasty (or: the faction) in power during the late Hittite Empire (second half of the 13th century B.C.). In that summary, the major problems at the heart of the country and at court were detailed in the following way²:

At first, the struggle between Urhi-Teššup and Hattusili over sovereignty was mentioned, which led to the noble families taking sides with one faction or the other; Hattusili's victory and attempts to eliminate opponents; further dynastic problems, resulting partly from this conflict; fears regarding other pretenders to the throne.

The political acts that resulted from this turbulent situation were: urgent and repeated requests to individuals and categories of officials for ‘total loyalty’; concession of privileges and benefits to individuals, families and religious institutions³ (who obviously supported the reigning king) vs. confiscation of goods belonging to members of the opposition⁴.

¹ Giorgieri – Mora 2010.

² Cf. Giorgieri – Mora 2010, 146-148, with references to previous bibliography.

³ Among these institutions, a special role was played by the ^{NA4} *hekur* and the E.NA₄ (cfr. Van den Hout 2002, Singer 2009, Mora – Balza 2010; these cult complexes, also related to the funerary cult, were real ‘centres of power’: they owned a large number of personnel, livestock and large properties.

⁴ On the dynastic and other political problems during the reigns of Hattušili III and Tuthaliya IV cf. Pecchioli Daddi 2006, 117 f.: “Hattušili had had to resort, ideologically, to divine legitimacy (by involving deities of a different tradition) and, politically, to management of his power in two ways. Firstly, by repression using legal means and the confiscation of goods and, secondly, by seeking consensus through the acquisition of international prestige and the concession of benefits to his supporters.”; and *ibid.*, 119: “Tuthaliya had to develop a policy in the country that would allow him to increase consensus and, in attempting to reconcile innovation and respect for tradition, he employed two special tools consolidated by time: the legal tool of allegiance and oath, and the administrative tool of the cult inventory, which enabled him to link up with various Anatolian potentates and exercise widespread control of his country”.

It is highly likely, after all, that famines and demographic crises were also linked to these struggles for power, at least partially.

In this contribution, that I dedicate with great pleasure to Mario Liverani, I would like to discuss some aspects of this topic by analyzing specific and new evidence that refers to an important class of court dignitaries, the LÚ^{MES} SAG, who acquired special power in the last decades of the Hittite Empire.

1. The dignitaries entitled LÚ^{MES} SAG / EUNUCHUS₂

A number of contributions have been published over the last few years about the title LÚ SAG / EUNUCHUS₂⁵ and the activities and functions of the dignitaries that bore this title. There are different views on the role the title indicated, starting from the way it was written in cuneiform script: LÚ SAG or LÚ^USAG? Hawkins⁶ prefers the former, whereas Starke (1996)⁷ adopts the latter. I agree with Hawkins' proposal and therefore in this contribution the form LÚ SAG will be used.

All the scholars who have recently discussed this topic agree on the fact that the LÚ^{MES} SAG were a specific category of dignitaries who were particularly close to the king, having sworn loyalty oaths to him⁸. This class of dignitaries was mentioned almost exclusively in the 13th Century B.C. texts⁹. At this time, the LÚ^{MES} SAG presumably acquired specific functions and duties linked to the king himself and his protection¹⁰. Scholars do not agree on the 'social status' of the LÚ^{MES} SAG. According to Starke they were a special corps that was linked to the classes of princes and lords; in his opinion, in the 13th Century, this corps corresponded to the previous 'Grandeess'¹¹. However, Hawkins maintains that "the unifying feature of this group was not that they were an élite corps originating from the princes and lords, but that they were an essentially inferior group, eunuchs, who nevertheless rose to highly prominent, important and influential position"¹². According to Pecchioli Daddi's analysis, "In this comprehensive oath-taking by the 'lords', 'princes' and SAG men there is also probably an attempt by Tuthaliya to involve those who have obtained autonomy from the central power and who are 'king' in their territories"¹³.

There are two other problems that have been discussed in recent studies regarding this category of officials: whether they were or were not eunuchs and whether the titles LÚ SAG and EUNUCHUS₂ can be combined, respectively, with the titles DUMU.LUGAL and REX.FILIUS¹⁴.

⁵ The equivalence between the cuneiform and the hieroglyphic title is established thanks to evidence provided by the seals from the Nişantepe-Archive: cf. Hawkins 2002, Herbordt 2005, no. 305. Cf. Hawkins 2002 again on the case of seal C21 from Emar (Beyer 2001, 162), where another digraphic reading seems to be given that has not yet been explained.

⁶ Cf. the discussion in Hawkins 2002, 117-118. Cf. also Pecchioli 2006, 119: "LÚ SAG (not LÚ^USAG)".

⁷ Cf. also Torri 2010, who follows the reading of LÚ as determinative (at least in the text KUB 32.133) proposed by Miller (2004).

⁸ Cf. CTH 255.2 and 255.1, edited by E. von Schuler (von Schuler 1957). Cf. also Miller 2013, 282 ff.

⁹ On the question of the chronology cf. also Starke 1996, 145. A LÚ SAG is quoted in a fragment of Mursili's Annals (cf. Hawkins 2002, p. 224).

¹⁰ Cf. especially Starke 1996 on the special role played by the LÚ^{MES} SAG in the final period of the Empire.

¹¹ Cf. Starke 1996. On this subject cf. the different opinion of Pecchioli Daddi 2006, 124: "I do not know if, as Starke holds, the SAG term replaced the word 'Grandee (GAL)' in the 13th century; it seems, however, that the personages so designated, 'grandees' or not 'grandees', are presented in the Hittite texts as the people who make up the king's entourage, his trusted men, and, in this sense, men of the head (the king's men)". On the role of the LÚ^{MES} SAG cf. also Pecchioli Daddi 1977, 181; Singer 1983; Herbordt 2005, 95.

¹² Hawkins 2002, 222.

¹³ Pecchioli Daddi 2006, 124.

¹⁴ On these problems that are not dealt with here in detail, cf. Hawkins 2002; cf. also Pecchioli Daddi 2006, Giorgieri 2008, Mora 2010. For some remarks cf. below.

If we examine the ‘oaths’ the LÚ^{MES} SAG made to Tuthaliya¹⁵ after his accession to the throne, it is clear that they are unusual compared to oaths made in the previous period¹⁶: not only do they insist upon themes such as faithfulness and loyalty to the king and his descendants, but the documents also show evidence of requests for ‘spying’ and denouncing any plots or conspiracies against the king and mention a special relationship that bound the LÚ^{MES} SAG to the sovereign himself. These factors seem to indicate that the LÚ^{MES} SAG constituted a sort of elite corps who were able to ensure absolute protection and loyalty to the king.

Hawkins makes some interesting points on this topic about the text SAG 2 (= CTH 255.1); he says “Just where col. iii begins to fail, a double ruling marking the beginning of a new text is visible, followed by an indication that it is now the LÚ^{MES} SAG who are being addressed [...]. Thus in SAG 2 the sworn obligations of the lords and princes are sharply demarcated from those of the LÚ^{MES} SAG. The sense of SAG 1 and SAG 2 together is that the LÚ^{MES} SAG form the king’s closest entourage, so that the lords and princes have to seek access to him through them”¹⁷. Furthermore, even though the text for the LÚ^{MES} SAG oath includes similar warnings and clauses to the text for the princes and lords, it seems to be more specific and detailed, especially the parts concerning the duty of information and control against potential enemies of the king¹⁸. It describes a corps of extremely trustworthy and loyal people, who are totally devoted to the king (at least these were the king’s intentions). The difference between the two texts (one directed exclusively to the LÚ^{MES} SAG, the other to the princes and lords as well) may be due to the dating to two different moments, which were nevertheless close in time¹⁹. In any case, these texts undoubtedly come from periods of strong dynastic and political crisis, as pointed out by Starke²⁰.

The publication of the seals and the sealed *bullae* / *cretulae* from the recent excavations in Hattusa’s Upper city²¹ is of great significance for the study and for our knowledge about the court officials and dignitaries during the last reigns of the Hittite empire, and especially for the information they provide on the names of the officials and on their number. These seals provide new information on the officials entitled EUNUCHUS₂. In the next section there is a brief discussion about this subject.

2. Evidence from the seals

Among the several depots of sealed *bullae* / *cretulae* found in different locations within the Hittite capital Hattuša and elsewhere in Anatolia, the Nişantepe / Westbau depot, in the Upper City, is the most important due to both the large number of *cretulae* it contained and the high level of the seal owners (who were mainly kings, princes and high dignitaries). The seals of princes and officials were published by S. Herboldt in 2005. As

¹⁵ CTH 255.1 (§§ 22 ff.) and CTH 255.2. The former text, whose beginning is not preserved, is ascribed to Tuthaliya for comparison with the latter.

¹⁶ Cf. Pecchioli Daddi 2006, 120: “The provisions contained in the two Tuthaliya documents dwell exclusively on the subject of fidelity to the king and his direct descendants, to whom absolute loyalty is called for under any circumstance. (...) instead, they are totally unlike the specific provisions recurring in the oaths of the Middle Hittite period”. For a brief analysis and summary of the contents, cf. also Giorgieri – Mora 1996, 56-59.

¹⁷ Hawkins 2002, 221. On this topic cf. also von Schuler 1957, 30 ff., Giorgieri – Mora 1996, 58.

¹⁸ The obligation of informing is a traditional habit in the ancient Near Eastern courts. For an interesting MB evidence see Durand 1991, 65 ff.

¹⁹ If indeed both oaths were issued by Tuthaliya IV.

²⁰ Cf. Starke 1995, 78 ff., where the author points out the similarities between these texts and the Assyrian ‘Thronfolgeregelung’ of Esarhaddon in the 7th Century B.C.

²¹ Herboldt 2005, Dinçol – Dinçol 2008.

Herbordt underlines (Herbordt 2005, 94 ff.), the title LÚ SAG / EUNUCHUS₂ is very important, and is attested on a high percentage of seals: 102 seals contain this title out of a total of 281 seals of high officials, i.e. 36%²². In short, the number of seals whose owners had the title LÚ SAG in the Nişantepe-depot is inferior only to the number of seals whose owners bear the titles MAGNUS.REX, REX.FILIUS and SCRIBA²³. Furthermore, in Herbordt's table 11 ('Auflistung der hohen Würdenträger'²⁴) there are 30 names with the title EUNUCHUS₂ out of a total of 86 names of high officials. This means that this group (or 'corps') of officials held an important position at the Hittite court and had a large number of members at the end of the Hittite Empire. But there is another reason for thinking that the title EUNUCHUS₂ was very important (see following remarks).

I would like to begin this brief survey with the seal of a certain Tiwatuwa (No. 460 in Herbordt's Catalogue) which is especially of interest. The seal was originally a cylinder-seal²⁵, and it probably bore a digraph (hieroglyphic and cuneiform) inscription²⁶; Tiwatuwa's title was PITHOS.VIR.DOMINUS.

The presence of a cuneiform inscription on non-royal seals is a feature that appears alien to the Anatolian production, if compared to the Syrian documentation; for example, the ratio of the seals with a cuneiform inscription in the Nişantepe-depot is very low (about 1%) when compared to the ratio calculated for the seals of princes and officials from Karkamiš, or the ratio calculated for the 'Syro-Hittites' seals from Emar: more than 30% of the seals from Karkamiš²⁷ that belong to princes or court dignitaries contain either a double inscription or only a cuneiform inscription. Furthermore more than 10% of the cylinder and ring seals from Emar²⁸ are digraph seals²⁹. There was a different situation in North Syria, where local traditions were clearly still preserved. We can therefore hypothesize that the owners of the digraph seals from the Nişantepe archive either came from the north-Syrian cities that were controlled by the Hittites in the late imperial period³⁰, or held important positions within the Hittite court³¹ (or both of these hypotheses). The titles on the digraph seals from the Nişantepe archive are as follows³²: PITHOS.VIR.DOMINUS (3 and 460³³, i.e. Tiwatuwa's seal³⁴); EUNUCHUS₂ (4, 281, 305: on three seals³⁵); EUNUCHUS₂, VIR, SCRIBA (162); SCRIBA-*la* (217);

²² Cf. Herbordt 2005, 93 ff. for details.

²³ Cf. Herbordt 2005, 'Liste der Titel und Berufe', 372 ff.

²⁴ Herbordt 2005, 93-94; cf. also Hawkins' list (Hawkins 2002, 227).

²⁵ The seal is impressed on many *cretulae* found in the Nişantepe-archive (cf. Herbordt 2005, 196).

²⁶ See Hawkins' interesting reading of the strange signs alongside the hieroglyphic inscription (cf. Hawkins 2005, 275: "The element separating the name from name + title appears to be sportively rendered Cuneiform giving a sort of digraph to the name").

²⁷ Mainly cylinder or ring-seals.

²⁸ Cf. Beyer 2001.

²⁹ Cf. Mora 2005, 239; for a discussion on this topic see also Mora 2010.

³⁰ See Mora 2010 for a discussion on this issue. The hypothesis of a North-Syrian origin is also linked to the fact that most of the seals have a ring or cylindrical shape.

³¹ In this case, the use of a digraph seal should be regarded as a sign of distinction, linked to the high level of the office.

³² See table in Mora 2010, 177 (in this table, the shape of seal 281 should be corrected from ring-seal to cylinder-seal).

³³ The number in brackets refers to Herbordt's Catalogue (Herbordt 2005).

³⁴ See above.

³⁵ In addition, see seals 137-139: the holder was Innarawa (for whom cf. Laroche, NH, No. 456); on the first seal (a ring) the name is only written in cuneiform; on seals 138 and 139 (stamp seals) the name written in hieroglyphic script has the titles EUNUCHUS₂ and L 414-DOMINUS. The holder of the two types of seals was likely to have been the same individual, so seal 137 could provide "a cuneiform version, almost a digraph, to support the argued reading of the Hier. Inscriptions of nos. 138-140" (Hawkins 2005, 256). Cf. also Hawkins 2006, 51, for the reading of this name in hieroglyphic script.

MAGNUS.PASTOR, SCRIBA-*la* (248)³⁶. Seals 3 and 4 in Herbordt's catalogue bear the same name, Alalimi; since the titles PITHOS.VIR.DOMINUS and EUNUCHUS₂ may combine (i.e. we have evidence that the two titles may refer to the same individual³⁷), the holder of these two seals might be the same person, named Alalimi. The most attested titles in the above list are PITHOS.VIR.DOMINUS³⁸ and EUNUCHUS₂ (without considering SCRIBA).

Therefore the officials entitled EUNUCHUS₂ must have been amongst the most important officials during the final period of the Hittite empire, and this is also highlighted when we consider the names of the individuals that hold them and the other titles that some of them bore³⁹. Furthermore, following a hypothesis I have previously proposed in other contributions⁴⁰, we can suggest that the dignitaries whose names appear on the seals found in the Nişantepe-depot were not only controllers, but also recipients of incoming goods: the great number of EUNUCHUS₂ attested on these seals and engaged in this activity could be another clue to their importance⁴¹.

3. Activities, tasks and duties of the LÚ^{MEŠ} SAG

As we have seen, the LÚ^{MEŠ} SAG category seems to have acquired a certain importance during the reign of Tuthaliya IV, probably because of the serious political and dynastic problems that this king had to face. The members of the LÚ^{MEŠ} SAG corps had to follow a very strict protocol, as indicated in the oath texts SAG 1 and SAG 2. These rules bound them to total loyalty to the king and his descendants. As we have already observed, this request for absolute loyalty was based on the serious dynastic crisis that the country and the royal family were going through, which was probably the very reason for the establishment of this corps⁴².

Without considering the problem of whether the LÚ^{MEŠ} SAG were (or were not) eunuchs⁴³, in the main sources they appear as high officials to whom very important and delicate tasks were conferred: they had to protect the king and his family; they were obliged to denounce every hostile action or piece of information they became aware of; they had access to the innermost rooms and to the state secrets; they could be assigned important diplomatic missions; they had to stay pure so as not to contaminate the king's body⁴⁴. Some individuals who bore the title LÚ SAG also had other titles, for example Anuwanza who was a scribe, 'Lord of Nerik', and LÚ SAG⁴⁵, or Palla who was a scribe,

³⁶ In other Hittite depots of sealed *cretulae* the seals with double inscription are almost always absent. I do not consider Nişantepe seals 468 and 504-506, which can be connected to the royal seals category.

³⁷ See Hawkins 2002, 225 (on the Tabrammi's seal from Ugarit) and 227 f.; cf. the seal of Pihamuwa (no. 299 in Herbordt's catalogue), on which the two titles are present too.

³⁸ For the title PITHOS.VIR.DOMINUS cf. Hawkins' analysis, where he emphasizes the fact that this title was held by important individuals; nevertheless Hawkins adds, "it seems that there is no obvious correspondence with a title in cuneiform documents" (Hawkins 2005, 306).

³⁹ For Anuwanza, Palla, Taprammi see next paragraph. As I have already mentioned, Hawkins' study (Hawkins 2002) provides a table of the names with the title EUNUCHUS₂ that can be found on the Nişantepe seals. His study also examines some LÚ^{MEŠ} SAG who were deemed important in some cuneiform texts.

⁴⁰ Cf. Mora 2006, Mora 2007.

⁴¹ On the Hittite seals that come from different places, this title is not as frequently attested (cf. Mora 1988, title L 254).

⁴² Cf. also Giorgieri 2008, 356 f.,

⁴³ On this problem see above (§ 1 and note 14) and the in-depth analysis by Hawkins (2002).

⁴⁴ Cf. von Schuler 1957, 34 ff.; for a detailed analysis of the duties see also Starke 1996, 165 ff. (with references to the oaths in notes 108 ff.).

⁴⁵ On this individual cf. van den Hout 1995, 238 ff.; Torri 2010. Cf. also Starke's observations (Starke 1996, 160 ff.) on the individuals who bore the title LÚ SAG as well as other titles (and on the fact that Anuwanza,

Lord of Hurma and LÚ SAG⁴⁶. In addition, the two titles *kartappu* and LÚ SAG⁴⁷ are frequently found together.

An important Hittite official who bore many titles was named Taprammi, attested in documents (either in cuneiform or in hieroglyphic script) from Ugarit, Hattusa and other Anatolian sites. The titles associated to Taprammi are: LÚ *ša re-ši É.GAL-lim*, EUNUCHUS₂, SCRIBA, PITHOS.VIR.DOMINUS⁴⁸. The activities performed by this individual in different regions of the Hittite Empire testify the missions and the duties the LÚ^{MES} SAG / EUNUCHUS₂ were asked to perform (see above). The name of a certain Taparami, who could correspond to the same individual as the one mentioned above, is quoted in the inventory text KBo 18.161: in this occasion, Taparami probably performed an important activity related to checking (or assigning) incoming goods⁴⁹.

The fact that the title LÚ SAG is often associated to other titles led to its interpretation as ‘a general term for high officials in the entourage of the king who have access to top state secrets’⁵⁰. In my opinion however, the term refers to the members of a specially ‘selected corps’ of individuals who already had a link to the king or to the court for different reasons. Thus, the title LÚ SAG was added to other titles when the dignitary in question already had a profession or specialisation⁵¹.

As Hawkins (2002) observed, there is no evidence that the titles DUMU.LUGAL and LÚ SAG can combine (in cuneiform texts), or that the titles REX.FILIUS and EUNUCHUS₂ (on hieroglyphic documents) may refer to the same individual⁵². It is therefore almost certain that this special corps did not include members of the royal family. We find interesting information regarding this issue in three important documents from the 13th Century B.C. (‘Bronzetafel’, KBo 4.10+, KUB 26.43⁵³). Officials designated as LÚ SAG (Anuwanza, Palla, EN-tarwa) are only attested in the witness list in KUB 26.43, the grant for the Šahurunuwa’s heirs⁵⁴. This could indicate that the title LÚ SAG was assigned to these officials at a later date and, as Starke underlines, that at the time the treaty on the ‘Bronzetafel’ was written, the witnesses were chosen from members of the royal family⁵⁵. Soon after that the political situation probably changed and the LÚ^{MES} SAG were included in the witness list⁵⁶.

This leads us to consider how the state was organized and how power was managed in the late imperial period. Traditionally the state organization is considered to be a

“in den zahlreichen Tafelkolophonen, die ihn namentlich als Verantwortlichen nennen, nie als DUB.SAR oder als EN^{URU}Nerik, sondern ausschliesslich als LÚ SAG (...) ausgewiesen ist”).

⁴⁶ Cf. van den Hout 1995, 216 ff.; Torri 2010, 391: “Also his career seems to have started in this building [the *Haus am Hang*]. Later he became a court officer (SAG) and Lord of Hurma”. Both Anuwanza and Palla are quoted as witnesses in the grant text of Šahurunuwa (see below).

⁴⁷ See Pecchioli Daddi 1977, Singer 1983, 10, Hawkins 2002, 224 f., where the passage in KBo 4.14, iii 47 ff. is quoted; Herboldt 2005, 91.

⁴⁸ Cf. d’Alfonso 2005, 169 ff.; Mora 2006, 139 ff.; Torri 2010, 390.

⁴⁹ Cf. Mora 2006, 139 ff.

⁵⁰ Singer 1983, 10.

⁵¹ Cf. the case of Palla, quoted above.

⁵² Cf. some observations in Mora 2010, but possible exceptions do not contradict the gist of the hypothesis.

⁵³ For a detailed discussion on these witness lists and for the prosopographical analysis of the princes and officials they contain cf. van den Hout 1995; for important remarks cf. also Starke 1996, 158 ff.

⁵⁴ Palla is quoted also among the witnesses of KBo 4.10+, but only as EN Hurma and not with the title LÚ SAG.

⁵⁵ Cf. Starke 1996, 158.

⁵⁶ It is possible that the different type of text (which is not a treaty) allowed more ‘freedom’ in the choice of witness.

‘Familienbetrieb’⁵⁷, where the “family ties clearly played a major role in the formation of the cohesive group of loyal adherents that the leading elite attempted to construct, with the dual aim of guaranteeing the security of the king and controlling the main power centres. [...] Despite the complexity of this newly⁵⁸ organised structure, family ties definitely still played an important role”.⁵⁹ However, given that a group of officials who were totally loyal to the king and who were chosen from outside the family unit was established during the 13th century BC, the last Hittite kings seem to have tried to move away from the Hittite tradition of family ties. This special group of individuals, selected on the basis of different requirements (other than being a family member) and related to the king in other ways, was probably created to protect the king – and everything the king represented – even from danger that derived from the ‘family’ itself⁶⁰. The king probably entrusted these officials with the important task of a final attempt to save him, his descendants and the institution of monarchy as total, unquestionable power.

The means that were used to keep the group cohesive and trustworthy (not an easy undertaking, given the climate of suspicion and conspiracies) are described in the texts we referred to, and above all in the oaths that contained the customary threats and punishments for those who did not respect it. It is also likely that those who complied with the constraints stipulated in the oaths and behaved according to expectations were rewarded with gifts and privileges⁶¹. To understand more about the threats and punishments that were applied to those who broke the rules, we can consider the contents of a text whose genre and specific period of reign has not yet been determined with certainty: KBo 4.14⁶². All the scholars who have worked on this text agree however, that it should be dated to the period of the last Hittite kings starting from Tuthalija IV.

This text includes a long list of complaints and allegations that a Hittite king, whose name is not preserved, made against an important unidentified individual who was certainly very close to the king.

If we compare the allegations made in this document with the rules laid down in the oath texts for the LÚ^{MEŠ} SAG, there are some very obvious similarities⁶³. The rules listed in the oaths are repeated in the text KBo 4.14 in the form of constant demands for loyalty, fidelity and sacrifice to the king. We do not know who this text was written for, neither have we been able to attribute it with certainty to a specific genre⁶⁴. As we have already mentioned, KBo 4.14 and the LÚ^{MEŠ} SAG oaths were undoubtedly drawn up at a similar time and in a similar political context. We can therefore assume they are closely linked: KBo 4.14 may have been written as a warning for one of the LÚ^{MEŠ} SAG who had not obeyed the rules.

At the end of his contribution on the ‘Regierung’ of the Hittite State and the role of the LÚ^{MEŠ} SAG, Starke (1996) examines some passages of the oaths (SAG 1 and SAG 2), emphasizing the importance of this group of officials. In SAG 1, § 10, for example, it is

⁵⁷ Cf. Haas 1999, 180.

⁵⁸ With respect to the previous period.

⁵⁹ Giorgieri - Mora 2010, 147.

⁶⁰ See the beginning of SAG 1, where reference is made to the great number of the king’s descendants in the kingdom of Hatti (cf. also Giorgieri 2008, 366⁹⁰).

⁶¹ See Mora 2006, on the case of Taprammi.

⁶² On the character of this document and for bibliographical references see Giorgieri – Mora 1996, 66 ff. and 2010, 140 ff. For recent discussions cf. Bemporad 2001, Freu 2007.

⁶³ On these similarities cf. also Starke 1996, 166 ff., 178.

⁶⁴ Oath, edict, treaty or instruction? None of the hypotheses proposed so far have been convincing.

said that the LÚ^{MEŠ} SAG “den ganzen Körper [NÍ.TE] der Majestät in der Hand haben⁶⁵”, which would indicate that the LÚ^{MEŠ} SAG “auch bestimmenden Einfluß auf das Wohl des ganzen kollektiven Körpers des Staates haben”⁶⁶. According to Starke, if this passage is compared with others in the same text, the LÚ^{MEŠ} SAG seem not only to have “den Körper des Königs” in their hands, but also “den Willen [ZI] des Königs”. Although Starke’s interpretation of the use of the terms NÍ.TE and ZI in the oath text is discussed⁶⁷, I think his opinion on the importance of the role and the power of the LÚ^{MEŠ} SAG (“eine eigene politische Potenz”⁶⁸) is undeniable.

The establishment of (or the increased importance that was attributed to) this special corps - the LÚ^{MEŠ} SAG - in the final stages of the Hittite Empire therefore seems to be an important novelty in the context of Hittite politics and in the organization of the state. Not only did the king surround himself with these individuals to whom he gave the role of advisors, trusted emissaries and ‘secret police’, but he also went against traditional family constraints by excluding members of the royal family from this special ‘corps’.

Blood ties seem to become less important in the autumn of the Hittite monarchy, but other types of bonds and merits had begun to take root.

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⁶⁵ Starke 1996, 176.

⁶⁶ Starke, *ibid.* On this issue cf. Taracha 1998, with reference to Starke 1996 and to van den Hout 1994, 63 and note 99. On the symbolic presence of the Pharaoh’s body in the Amarna letters cf. Liverani 2010.

⁶⁷ Cf. van den Hout 1998, 2^s; Giorgieri 2008, 363⁷¹.

⁶⁸ Starke 1996, 181.

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