

The Festival of AN.TAH.ŠUM



March 27, 2019, 1800h | Urbana, Illinois

What was the Festival of AN.TAH. ŠUM?

EZEN AN.TAH.ŠUM^{SAR} or the festival of the plant known as AN.TAH.ŠUM, lasted over 30 days among the Hittites. It was performed for the Sun Goddess of Arinna, among other Hittite deities. The festivities came in the springtime, when the warmth of the sun brings back the flourishing of plant and animal life. Scholars have not concluded decisively, but some argue that AN.TAH.ŠUM^{SAR} means ‘crocus’. The Crocus Festival, among other springtime festivals of Hatti-land, was probably intended to welcome springtime and to exercise some benefic influence over the weather gods who controlled such natural phenomena as crop, livestock, and human fertility, as well as wind, rain, and flooding. During springtime festivities, stories were told, offerings were made, and prayers were delivered to assure a smooth transition between the seasons. The violent weather associated with springtime might be mitigated through these cultic activities.

Why are we celebrating it now?

As a long, cold winter ends and we begin a new era of Hittitological inquiry at the University of Illinois (“Elements of Hittite” LING 404 HTT will be offered for the first time, beginning in Fall 2019), we decided to celebrate the return of spring and explore the cultic practices of the Hittites at the same time.

What will we do at the celebration?

Documentation of the Crocus Festival and other springtime festivals are found in the Hittite corpus. These festivals included, among other activities: (probable) ritual reënactment of the Telipinu myth; evocations of the Storm God; and a procession by the king and queen of Hatti-land through a variety of cultic centers, including the city of Nerik. We will present three components of the festival, one broadly inspired by the royal procession in honor of the Sun Goddess of Arinna, while the other two (the Telipinu myth and the evocation of the Storm God) hew closely to ancient sources. The Telipinu myth will be presented in English prose for a modern audience, performed by students from the League of Linguists. Afterwards, the audience will be invited to evoke the Storm God from subterranean depths (in Hattic), followed up by a plea for untroubled waters (in Hittite).

How can I participate?

Please join us for the equinoctial procession across the Quad in honor of the Sun Goddess of Arinna, originating in front of Foellinger auditorium at 1800h. Then enjoy the short, light-hearted performance of “Telipinu: The Vanishing God” on the steps of Foellinger Auditorium. Finally, participate in the ritual evocation of the Storm God of Nerik (or Urbana, if you will). Consider wearing the color blue, as sources indicate the Hittite royals once did.