

There is also a relevant Hittite text from the late fifteenth or early fourteenth century BCE that prescribed an eight- or nine-day regimen for commissioning a satellite cult installation for the “Deity of the Night” (in the case of this text, the female deity Pirinkir) (Miller 2004; Beckman 2010). The deity itself was to be made from gold, decked out in accoutrements of a variety of precious stones. The process for installing the deity is long and complex, but on the fifth day, before leaving the old temple behind, the text in section 22 prescribes the following utterance: “Honoured deity! Preserve your being, but divide your divinity! Come to that new house, too, and take yourself the honoured place!”¹⁵ As with the Akkadian rituals described above, once the statue is installed in the cult place, sacrifices are made to facilitate the deity’s first meal. Gary Beckman points out that communal meals are the most frequent rituals described in the Hittite temple texts (Beckman 2010, 88). He also highlights “the frequent attribution of the construction to deities rather than the actual human builders” (2010, 89).

These rituals represent the most explicit reflective practices associated with the intuitive conceptualizations of divine agency as communicable, and of certain inanimate objects and substances as animable by that agency.¹⁶ The variations in details, including the degree of independence of the image, the number of manifestations, the associations between the deities and the locations, and the types of materials used are all products of diverse reflective considerations taking place within different economies and sociomaterial ecologies. If the question of whether or not the image was a “full” or “partial” manifestation of the deity emerged at all, it would have done so situationally and would have been addressed within the relevant rhetorical contexts. There is no need to impose a systematic ontology on the discussion.

What is consistent across all these practices and societies is the intuitive perception of the partibility of divine agency and its communicability through material media. These intuitions need not be explicitly manifested in praxis or in reflective rationalizations of that praxis in order for them to be influential, of course. Related rituals and concepts of enlivened statues from other societies

¹⁵ The translation is from Miller 2004, 290. Beckman (2010, 83) renders, “O esteemed deity, guard your person, but divide your divinity!” For a specific discussion of the verb “divide,” see Beal 2002. For a broader discussion of the Hittite conceptualization of the divine, see Taggar-Cohen 2013.

¹⁶ Herbert Niehr (1997, 78) notes related features of some Phoenician and Aramaic inscriptions: “After a Phoenician temple had been built or restored, the divine statue had to be erected in the sanctuary. This is referred to with the phrase ‘I/we caused the deity to dwell in it’ (*yšb yipihil*). In a Punic inscription, a god’s entrance into a sanctuary is indicated by the verb *bw*’ without mentioning the statue, but by stating the divine name only. Several Phoenician and Aramaic inscriptions mention votive statues or stelae placed in front of the divine statues in the temples.”