Gold Figurine of a God
The British Museum

Hittite, about 1400-1200 BC
From Anatolia (modern Turkey)

This tiny gold figure wears the very distinctive Hittite version of the horned headdress, the usual way of depicting deities in Mesopotamia. The curved weapon he carries could be a sword, or perhaps a hunting weapon identifying him as a god of hunting.

Thousands of tablets from the Hittite capital of Hattusa (modern Bogazköy in central Turkey) reveal that the state religion was based on the worship of natural phenomena such as weather, sun, mountains and water. These were all depicted in human form, distinguished by their horned headwear. The Hittite king played a central role in religious rituals. These included his being bathed to wash away collective sin.

The Hittites adopted many of the deities of the surrounding regions, including those of the Hurrians. As the empire expanded into Syria during the fourteenth century BC, so did the pantheon. The Hittites themselves spoke of a thousand gods, and Mesopotamian and Syrian gods were either equated with their own deities or simply added to the list. Among the most important male gods was Teshub, the Hurrian storm god, whose animal symbol was the bull. He was the husband of the goddess Hepat, and they were equated with the weather-god of Hatti and his consort, the sun-goddess of Arina.
