

# A HITTITE QUEEN AND JAMES HENRY BREASTED: TWO DREAMS COME TRUE

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On a winter night somewhere around the middle of the thirteenth century BC, the Hittite queen Puduhepa had one of her many dreams. Tossing and turning in her bed she found herself in the palace with a prince-like person who tells her he will show her what had happened in “your house”:

“He led me into some kind of place and there were even some deep storage pits but it was as if these storage pits had already been emptied out. Some wooden chests were lying around and in them a lot of old cheese, old figs, and old raisins had gone bad. Then that prince said: ‘Look, they already emptied out what was in the storage pit. They should clean it!’ So they swept and cleaned it.”

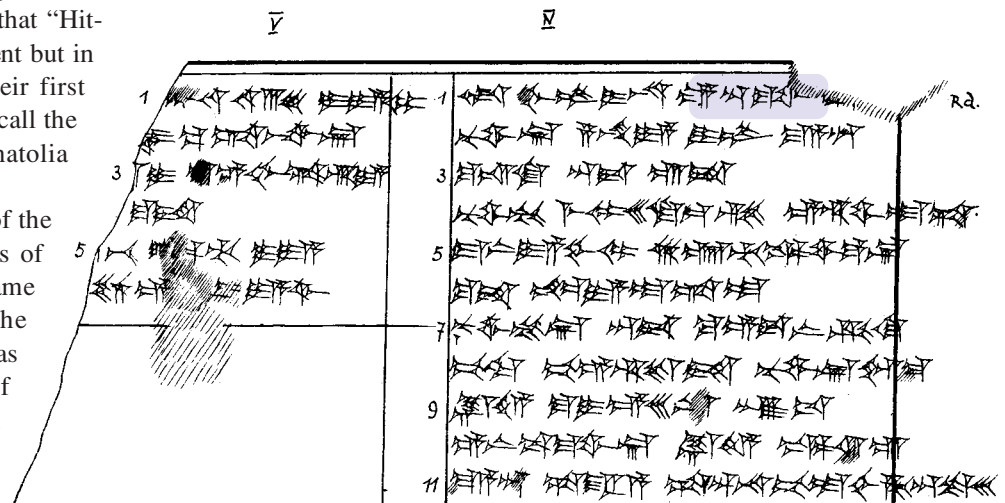
As was the custom, the queen would have consulted the royal dream interpreters and it was perhaps for this reason that the upsetting vision was recorded but in hindsight one could see it as foreshadowing the end of the Hittite Empire. Around 1180 BC, within seventy-five years or less from the night the queen had her dream in Ankuwa, the Hittite Empire collapsed and the Hittite ruling class gave up the capital Hattusa. Leaving behind what they considered unnecessary, they cleared out the silos and storerooms, emptied their offices and palaces, and left for an as yet unknown destination.

When they did, it was not just the Hittite language and the cuneiform script that disappeared from Anatolia. At that same moment the Hittites and their more than 500 year history were all but erased from the historical record for over 3,000 years. Although their empires also vanished, Egyptians and Assyrians continued to be part of “modern” western memory thanks to Greek and Roman historians and the Old Testament. The decipherment of Egyptian hieroglyphs and Assyrian cuneiform by the middle of the nineteenth century only added to the interest in these cultures. It is true that “Hittites” are mentioned in the Old Testament but in almost all cases that term refers to their first millennium successors of what we now call the Neo-Hittite city states in southeast Anatolia and northern Syria.

It was only with the decipherment of the Hittite language in 1915 that their tens of thousands of tablets and fragments became accessible and understandable. The Hittites were ready to be “reinvented” as Hans Güterbock, one of the pioneers of Hittitology who, with Harry Hoffner, founded the Chicago Hittite Dictionary, put it. The rediscovery of the Hittites gave rise to a wave of scholarly interest. In Turkey, Kemal Atatürk pro-

moted Hittite studies and both in Europe and the United States archaeological projects were launched. In 1928 James Henry Breasted already envisioned a Hittite Dictionary and sent out two expeditions to Turkey in the 1920s and 1930s. The “Syrian-Hittite” expedition was aimed at the Amuq Valley in southeastern Anatolia and northern Syria where Neo-Hittite city states like Tell Tayinat were unearthed, about which my colleague K. Aslihan Yener writes in this same issue. The other “Anatolian-Hittite” one, focused on the heartland, the center of Hittite civilization for much of the second millennium BC.

As the main target in the highlands of central Anatolia the site of Alishar was chosen. Under the supervision of Hans von der Osten excavations took place between 1927 and 1932. In 1993 Ron Gorny, a recent Ph.D. from the University of Chicago, returned for one season. With the Hittite capital Hattusa already claimed by the Germans, this site was an interesting and promising choice. Although never a major center of power, the site witnessed all the changes in Anatolia for more than 5,000 years before the beginning of the modern era. With its rich mineral resources central Anatolia attracted newcomers from east and west already early on. It is through such newcomers that Anatolia enters history for the first time: not long after 2000 BC Assyrian merchants started up a large network of trading stations all over Anatolia in which Alishar played a role. The Assyrians were interested in gold and silver especially but also wool. In exchange they brought the much needed tin for the making of bronze. For over two centuries (ca. 1775–1735 BC) the merchants lived in the Anatolian cities negotiating with the local authorities and trading with the town’s people. Their lives and worries have been preserved in the thousands of clay tablets of their administration that they left behind. One of these tablets found in Alishar carries twice the name of Anitta, the first “Hit-



Portion of Hittite text KUB 31, text no. 71. Ankuwa’s name is highlighted



**Vessel fragment with stags. Baked clay. Alishar Höyük. Phrygian. Eighth century BC. OIM A10266**

tite” king of around 1750 BC. We know him well from what is often called the oldest text of our own Indo-European language family: the Hittite Anitta text. In it he tells of his exploits and successes. With particular pride he mentions the destruction of Hattusa, how he sowed cress on its ruins and cursed anyone who would dare resettling it. Despite his bravado, within a century Hattusa became the center of the new Hittite kingdom under a dynasty of kings whose lineage may well go back to Anitta.

Alishar became part of the core of that same Hittite Empire. Since Hittite texts were never found there, we still do not know its ancient name. But ancient Ankuwa, the residence where the queen had her dream, has always been seen as the most likely candidate. Ankuwa is well known from Hittite texts. In the later seventeenth century BC, in the very early days of the Hittite kingdom a man by the name of Ashkaliya unhappily lived there. He is mentioned in one of the fragments of Hittite texts from Hattusa that is on display in the new galleries. A Hittite king tells the sad story:

“Ashkaliya was overlord in the town of Hurma and he was a gentleman in every respect. But people denounced him to my father so he had him moved and brought to Ankuwa. It was in Ankuwa that he made him administrator. He was a prominent man but he died in disgrace: in the town of Kuzuruwa he embezzled some birds (because) the birds of Ankuwa were too skinny!”

Ankuwa was also a place where Hittite kings often spent the winter probably because of its milder climate than the capital with its higher elevation.

Finds from Alishar confirm its Hittite status in the second millennium. The ceramics and the context in which they were found recall Hittite practices that we know from the clay tablets from Hattusa. The fragments of relief vases are especially characteristic. The fragments probably date to around 1500 BC and can be directly compared to similar pieces from other Hittite sites. Sealings with the so-called Hieroglyphic Luwian signs on them were also found at Alishar. These sealings as well as the text mentioning Anitta still remain in Turkey, but the ceramics and other finds that you find in the “Alishar case” in the new galleries tell the same story of Hittite culture.

When the Hittite Empire breaks down and vanishes, it seems as if central Anatolia is left in disarray, exposed to the incoming hordes from the Balkans pushing others eastwards in front of them. When in the early first millennium the dust settles, new political patterns emerge. Alishar had now become part of the Phrygian kingdom of King Midas, reigning from Gordion. On his west flank the Lydian kingdom of Gyges and Croesus is on the rise, to his south and east are the Luwian kings in their city states. But Midas himself looked beyond those areas: he was the first Anatolian to consult the oracle of Apollo at Delphi and gave them his royal throne as a gift. He also married the daughter of a Greek local ruler on the west coast of Anatolia. From the Levantine coast in the east Phoenician traders crossed the Taurus Mountain range and reached into the Anatolian highlands. It is through this contact that the Phrygians probably picked up their alphabet. About a hundred Phrygian inscriptions can be found all over central Anatolia and Midas figures in several of them. Known from legend as the gold-obsessed ruler with the donkey ears, in real life he was a shrewd and opportunistic politician changing sides from his fellow Anatolians to collaborate with the Assyrian king Sargon.

Today, less than hundred years after central and southeast Anatolia opened up to archaeological excavations, the Oriental Institute is about to re-open its gallery devoted to Anatolian culture and history through objects from its own excavations at Alishar and Tell Tayinat. What is more, the Institute is back in Anatolia with campaigns in the Amuq, and the Hittite Dictionary that Breasted dreamed of is well under way in Chicago.