



News & Notes

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THE HITTITES: Who Were They And Why Do We Study Them?

Hans G. Güterbock

The Hittites were a people who lived in Anatolia during the second Millennium B.C. Knowledge of their language, history, and civilization is of relatively recent date. The name, Hittites, is taken from the Old Testament, but the biblical passages do not give much information about the people. The Greeks knew nothing about the Hittites, not even the name. It was the discovery of thousands of clay tablets near the Turkish village of Boghazkōy (today Boghazkale), ca. 150 miles east of Ankara, in 1906-7, which made possible the recovery of this forgotten people.

The tablets are inscribed in the cuneiform script of Babylonia, and some of the Boghazkōy texts are actually written in the Babylonian language. From these it became immediately clear that the site was the capital of the country called Hatti. But the majority of the tablets was in an unknown language. They could be read, since the script was known, but the language had to be deciphered. How this was achieved has been told many times and would take up too much space here.¹ The Czech Assyriologist Bedrich Hrozný made the breakthrough during the First World War; his results were published in book form in 1917. It was after the War, in the 1920s, that German scholars took up his work and laid the ground for what came to be known as Hittitology.

What did we learn from the Hittite tablets? First of all, that the Hittite language belongs to the Indo-European family of languages (hereafter IE). This discovery of Hrozný's came as a great surprise and was at first received with disbelief. Secondly it was learned that the tablets also include texts in languages other than Hittite. Of these, we single out the following (apart from Babylonian already mentioned): Luwian, another IE language, related to but distinct from Hittite, spoken in the south and southwest of Anatolia; Hurrian, a non-IE, non-Semitic, language spoken in North Mesopotamia and North Syria; and a language which the Hittites called *hattili*; "the language of Hatti." It is radically different from what we call "Hittite"; it does not belong to any known group of languages and is still not fully understood. The paradox that "the language of Hatti" (called Hattic by scholars) is different from the IE language used in the chancellery of the Land of Hatti (the language we call "Hittite") can only be explained like this: The speakers of the IE language must have come into Anatolia from the outside, just as IE speakers came into India, Greece, Italy, etc. The date of their arrival must fall some time before 2000 B.C., and most probably they came from the east. They settled in a country called Hatti, whose name they kept for their own state while applying the term *hattili* to the language they found spoken there. What then, did the Hittites call their own, IE language? They called it

"the language of Nesa". Nesa is Kanesh, present-day Kültepe near Kayseri, where the IE Hittites seem to have ruled for some time before conquering Hatti-land. The Hittites took over from the Hattians most of their principal gods and goddesses, and it is for their cult that they recorded Hattic texts. Archaeology also has shown that the material culture of the Hittite kingdom is based on that of an earlier period. The question asked by many: Who are the Hittites? Where did they come from? —can best be answered like this: they are the population of Central Anatolia (whether aboriginal or not we cannot tell), ruled by speakers of an IE language who came from the homeland of the Indo-Europeans, wherever that may be.



Hittite small tablet from Boghazkōy.

What is the importance of Hittite studies for us? The Hittite records have taught us the history of one of the great powers of the Near East, an empire that had dealings, peaceful and warlike, with Assyria, Babylonia, Egypt and others and brought North Syria as far south as Meskene on the Euphrates and Kadesh on the Orontes under its domination. A raid on Babylon by the early Hittite king Mursili I and the famous treaty between Hattusili III of the New Kingdom and Ramesses II are just two of the highlights. A collection of about two hundred laws provides material for comparison with such legal codes as that of Hammurabi and the Mosaic laws. State treaties and royal letters give insights into diplomacy and international law of the period. History of religion finds a rich material in the numerous religious texts, which include royal prayers, magic rituals, detailed prescriptions for the performance of the cult and myths. While some myths were told about original

Anatolian (Hattic) deities, others were borrowed from the Hurrians who, in turn, had taken over many Babylonian motifs. Of the Babylonian epic of Gilgamesh there existed in the Hittite capital a Babylonian, a Hurrian, and a Hittite version, the latter two being free renderings rather than literal translations. The concept of several generations of gods who ruled the universe one after the other can be traced from Babylonia through Hurro-Hittite epics found at Boghazköy and the work of a Phoenician writer said to have lived "at the time of the Trojan War" (ca. 1200 B.C.) to the *Theogony* of the Greek poet Hesiod of the eighth century B.C. This myth may have reached the Greeks through the Phoenicians in the eighth century. However, the presence on the west coast of Anatolia of Mycenaean settlements suggests that these early Greeks may have had direct contact with the Hittites, who, before 1300 B.C., had incorporated the coastal area in their empire.



Hittite tablet from Boghazköy.

Long before the discovery of the Hittite texts explorers noticed rock reliefs of an unfamiliar style in Anatolia. At that time no one could even have thought of attributing them to the Hittites. Beginning with the 1870s building blocks and stelae turned up in Syria which were inscribed with a strange kind of writing resembling some kind of "hieroglyphs" but different from the known Egyptian hieroglyphs. It was then remembered that some of the rock monuments of Anatolia were also accompanied by brief inscriptions composed of similar signs. Since this script was distributed over an area where Hittites were suspected to have lived on the basis of Egyptian, Assyrian, and biblical sources it was called "Hittite hieroglyphs". For a long time attempts at deciphering this script were unsuccessful. Again, the story of the decipherment cannot be included here. Let me only mention that our colleague, Professor Gelb, was one of the pioneers in this field. By now we know that the language written in these hieroglyphs is not Hittite but Luwian, the IE language mentioned at the beginning of this paper. Most of the hieroglyphic Luwian inscriptions date from between 1000 and 700 B.C., a period after the downfall of the Hittite empire; they can be attributed to rulers of small states that carried on some kind of Hittite tradition in southeastern Anatolia and North Syria. The whole region was still referred to as *Hatti* by the Assyrians, who finally conquered all these petty kingdoms. The Hittites mentioned in the period of the Israelite monarchy are also such "Late Hittites" as we call them.

However, the hieroglyphic script was used already by the Hittites of the second millennium, both on seals and on stone monuments (in contrast to the Assyrians the Hittites never



King Tudkhaliya IV protected by his god Sharrumma (name of god in front, name of king in back). Rock relief of Yazilikaya near Bobhazköy.



Impression of seal of King Tudkhaliya IV. Hieroglyphs in center and cuneiform in outer circle.

used the cuneiform script on stone). Seal inscriptions accompanying reliefs consist only of names, the oldest seals (17th? -16th centuries) show only symbols. We therefore cannot tell which language, Hittite or Luwian, these older hieroglyphs represent. But from the second half of the thirteenth century we have long royal inscriptions in hieroglyphs that are clearly in Luwian. This may be explained by the assumption that Luwian by that time had replaced Hittite as the spoken language. One important fact is that the kings had seals on which their names were written in both hieroglyphs and cuneiform. The discovery of these bilingual seals at Boghazköy in the 1930s made it possible to date a number of monuments to individual monarchs of the late Empire (13th century B.C.). By stylistic comparison other works of art could then be dated to the same period. Once the art of the Empire period had thus been identified the difference in style between it (14th-13th centuries) and the art of the Late Hittite period (1000-700 B.C.) became clearer. It is from this Late Hittite art that the Greeks borrowed some of the motifs of the so-called Orientalizing style.

Returning from hieroglyphic Luwian to the Hittite language of the cuneiform tablets of the Hittite kingdom, we have to stress the importance of Hittite studies for historical linguistics. Since the oldest Hittite tablets date from ca. 1600 B.C. they are by far the oldest written texts in any IE language. In recent years we have learned to distinguish grammatical forms and spellings of the oldest Hittite period (16th-15th century) from those of the Empire period (14th-13th century). Obviously this distinction is important for historical linguistics as it shows changes within a defined period. The *Hittite Dictionary of the Oriental Institute*, in presenting all attested forms of a word, therefore carefully notes the age of the individual examples. Beyond that it is clear that a definition of the meaning of a word which is based on all the available evidence is the only sound basis for the understanding of texts.

1.C.W. Ceram, *The Secret of the Hittites: The Discovery of an Ancient Empire*. New York, Alfred A. Knopf, 1956. A good overall review is O.R. Gurney's *The Hittites* (London, Penguin, 1980) but this has not yet been published in the U.S.

Who Are The Docents And What Do They Do?

"Who is a docent?" many ask. "Docent" is a common word which is gaining in usage, especially in connection with museums. One dictionary states that a docent in some American universities is a teacher or lecturer not on the regular faculty. Peggy Grant, chairman of the volunteer guide program and herself a docent, says a docent is one who is a "learner, listener".

It was in 1965 that Institute Director Robert Adams asked Carolyn Livingood to organize a guide program. Today, Peggy Grant has a roster of some 120 fully trained docents, who are committed to volunteer three to four consecutive hours on the same day each week. A docent enrollee takes a carefully planned course of eight days of lectures given by Institute professors and graduate students, of film showings, and of guided study tours through the galleries of the museum. A



Annual Docent Christmas Party

bibliography and kit of reading materials are available for home study.

The volunteer guide program is responsible for the recruiting, training, and scheduling of docents, all of whom are Institute members. These docents lead tours through the galleries, or act as sales people in the Suq. The museum and Suq docents meet monthly for docent day programs to increase their knowledge of the ancient Near East, to broaden their understanding of the objects in the galleries (all in all, there are about 80,000 objects available for display on a rotating basis), and to learn how to interpret these objects in the best way possible for the public.

Some docents volunteer in the Suq office and stockroom, in the museum registrar's office, photography department, conservation laboratory, in museum archives, and in the membership office. Some restore ceramics, and others with specialized interests, volunteer in assisting faculty members on a regular basis. They also observe and carry out special projects.

Docents, for example, saw the need for a professional education program, wrote the grant proposals for the Illinois Arts Council to begin the program, then contributed "seed" money to realize the program. As a result today there is a full-time professional educator who works closely with the museum guide volunteers.

Last spring before the 50th anniversary celebration of the opening of the museum in the present building, several docents decided that the museum had to be "spruced" up. This roving reporter, one beautiful sunny afternoon, found herself almost entangled in ladders, buckets, sponges, and docents, as she turned the corner on 58th Street and came charging for the front door before closing time. What was up? The relief sculpture of "East Meets West" decorating the tympanum above the main entrance, designed by Ulrich W. Ellerhusen, is of great pride to Chicagoans and internationally known. It needed cleaning, so the docents, in their spare time, were cleaning it up in time for the party!

The most recent enterprise of ingenuity and perseverance is the four-year project completed by Lilian Cropsey and her "committee of four". It is the object card file now in the volunteer office, available for use by the docents. The file contains a card for every object on display in the museum, listing the provenance, period, description, and known bibliography of each piece. The cards are arranged according to their registration number, under the museum location (alcove and case number) of the object. There are two aids essential to its use, which have also been completed: a gallery chart, showing the location of cases or, if there is no case, the location of the object; and a case chart, which shows the location of each object by a geometrical or representational drawing of it and by the registration number of the object.



Annual Docent Christmas Party

Yes, it took four years to complete this file. Now several volunteers are already at work on its second phase. They hope to create a bibliography appropriate for the docents' use. It will consist of a short list, or perhaps a summary, of articles or excerpts from catalogs or books about different types of objects, such as Egyptian pottery, glass, jewelry, Kassite stones—you name it! And if you are interested in joining this "work crew", telephone the docent office.

—Elda Maynard

DOCENT TRAINING

The spring Docent training program will begin on Saturday, April 9 and continue for 8 consecutive Saturdays. Docents in training will attend the Members' course (see next *News and Notes* for details) given by Joe Greene from 10 to 12, followed by a lunch-seminar and gallery workshops. Members interested in registering should call for an interview with Peggy Grant, Volunteer Chairman, or Joan Barghusen, Educational Coordinator, at 753-2573. There is a charge of \$20 for materials, but there is no fee for the course.

MARCH LECTURE

Norman Golb, Professor in the Department of Near Eastern Languages and Civilization, will present an illustrated lecture entitled *The Dead Sea Scrolls: A New Approach to the Study of their Origins* on Wednesday, March 2 at 8 PM in Breasted Hall.

FREE SUNDAY FILMS: FEBRUARY 1983

All films are shown at 2:00 PM in Breasted Hall, The Oriental Institute

February 6	The Archaeologist and How He Works
February 13	Megiddo: City of Destruction
February 20	Egypt: Gift of the Nile
February 27	Iraq: Stairway to the Gods

In conjunction with the Quest for Prehistory exhibit, the film *The Archaeologist and How He Works* will be shown on the first Sunday of each month through June, 1983.

THE SUQ 

1983 CALENDAR

Commissioned by the SUQ
from Papyrus Institute in Egypt

Hand Painted Papyrus
"Menna Hunting in the Marsh"

Papyrus may be framed for later use.

MEMBERS SPECIAL: \$31.00

Postage 1.25 7% tax IL residents

NEW SUQ CATALOGUE: .50

WINTER WORKSHOPS FOR CHILDREN

MAGIC AND ITS USES IN THE ANCIENT NEAR EAST
February 19 10-12

Gallery tour: A look at amulets and other evidences of the practice of magic, with attention paid to a broader understanding of magic as pre-scientific thinking.

Project: A chance to make your own amulet and to learn about its special significance.

FACES OF THE PAST February 26 10-12

Gallery tour: A look at the ancient peoples of the Near East as they represented themselves - in statues, relief carvings and paintings - with emphasis on comparing and contrasting.

Project: A portrait of an ancient person, or perhaps of oneself - choice of medium.

Children ages 6 - 12 are eligible. Each two-hour workshop includes gallery study of the topic of the day and a related hands-on project. Advance registration is required and there is a fee of \$5.00 per workshop.
Call 753-2573 for reservations and information.

AGAIN, BEGINNING HIEROGLYPHS BY MAIL

This winter there is once again a chance to take beginning Egyptian Hieroglyphs by mail. Peter Piccione will teach the eight lesson course starting the first of March. He will send you lesson notes and exercises, and when you have returned your exercises to him, he will correct them and answer any questions you might have. The course will take you about ten to twelve weeks depending on the speed with which you work.

Mr. Piccione recommends borrowing or purchasing a copy of Gardiner's Egyptian Grammar, 3rd Edition. The Suq has this text for sale, \$37.50 less 10% for members, plus \$2.50 postage and packing, plus 7% sales tax for shipping in Illinois. Cost of the course is \$70 to members.

Please enroll me in Egyptian Hieroglyphs by Mail.

- My check for \$70 is enclosed.
 I am a member.
 I am not a member, but enclose a separate check for \$20 to cover a one-year membership.
 I would like to order Gardiner's Egyptian Grammar from the Suq. I enclosed a separate check (\$37.50 minus 10% discount for members, plus \$2.50 postage plus 7% sales tax in Illinois).

Name _____

Address _____

City _____ State _____ Zip _____

Please make all checks payable to THE ORIENTAL INSTITUTE. Please register by Feb. 28, 1983. MAIL TO: Membership Secretary, The Oriental Institute, 1155 E. 58th St., Chicago, IL 60637.

We are indebted to Connie I. Bradley for the photograph on page 119 of the 1981-82 Oriental Institute Annual Report.



The Oriental Institute

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