

INDIVIDUAL RESEARCH

RICHARD H. BEAL

Richard H. Beal spent much of his time reference-checking and otherwise preparing the first fascicle of the Hittite Dictionary's Š volume for publication, which is now virtually ready for press.

In addition to this Hittite Dictionary work, he has written an article discussing the sorts of questions Hittites asked their gods through oracles and what can be gleaned from this about Hittite society. Through long series of yes or no questions, the Hittites asked what god or gods might have made the king sick and what needed to be done to solve the problem. Often testimony of all sorts of derelictions in the temples would be placed before the god: "The eyebrow of the god has fallen off. The tail of one of the harnessed billy goats has fallen off. The pearls on the rhyton are broken off. An alabaster cup is smashed and the jewel-inlaid rhyta are missing. Is this why you are angry?" So much for the ancients living in some sort of superstitious dread of the gods. In other texts, the gods were asked where the king should spend the winter and whether any of a number of terrible things would happen during the winter. Military campaigns were laid out and possible leaders mentioned for the god's opinion. Interestingly, the idea was to separate divinely acceptable from unacceptable, leaving the final decisions among the acceptable suggestions to the king. Only one question out of thousands deals with "fertility," which indicates that "fertility" is more an issue of modern scholars than of ancient Hittites. Beal also wrote "'Ethics & Law' in Hittite Anatolia" and "Oracles and Prophecy" for *Religions of the Ancient World*; "Hittite POWs" for *The Encyclopaedia of Prisoners of War*; and "Hittite Historiography" for *Archaeology Odyssey*. In addition, a review of *Systematische Bibliographie der Hethitologie 1915–1995*, by V. Souček and J. Siegelová, for *Archiv für Orientforschung*, and a review of *Hittite Diplomatic Texts* (second edition), by G. Beckman, for the *Journal of the American Oriental Society* have been completed. Finally, he spent the last two weeks of June on vacation in the student's room of the Department of Western Asiatic Antiquities in the British Museum, reading the easier portions of Assyrian and Babylonian medical texts and so helping JoAnn Scurlock on her project to understand ancient Mesopotamian medicine, before the tablet collection was closed to move to new quarters in the museum.
