

## INDIVIDUAL RESEARCH

### Richard H. Beal

In 1994/95, **Richard H. Beal** spent much of his time seeing the first fascicle of the Chicago Hittite Dictionary's P Volume *pa-* to *parā* through publication. Immediately following that, work on the copy-editing of the second fascicle (*parā* to *pattar*) was begun. This fascicle too was seen off to the printers in July 1995.

Aside from this, he has coauthored with fellow research associate Billie Jean Collins an article on the Hittite word *pankur*, which will appear in the journal *Altorientalische Forschungen*. He has also been working on a review of a volume of Puhvel's *Hittite Etymological Dictionary* and on the translation of several oracle texts for a volume to be edited by William Hallo of Yale.

A much expanded version of his lecture, "Hittite Oracles: Questions and Answers," originally delivered to a symposium on "Magic and Divination in the Ancient World" held at Berkeley in February 1994, will be published by Styx Publications of Gröningen in a volume of papers from this symposium. It discusses the various types of questions put to the gods by Hittite officialdom. These consist of often elaborate descriptions of plans, or concerns ending with a yes or no question such as "do you O gods approve?" or "is this our problem?" to which the deity was directed to answer yes or no using one of various divinatory languages. These languages were "extispicy" (reading of various abnormalities in the innards of sheep, a science borrowed from Mesopotamia via the Hurrians), "sheep behavior oracles" (watching the sheep on the way to slaughter for extispicy), "augury" (watching the flights and other actions of birds in a designated field, a largely Hittite invention), "symbol oracles" (a predecessor of the rat in the maze), and "snake oracles" (watching a snake in a watery maze). The article summarizes previous scholarship and attempts to further understand these divinatory languages. It is interesting to note that while augury was performed by male "bird-watchers" and extispicy and sheep behavior oracle by male diviner-exorcists, the symbol oracles were performed by a female professional diviner-exorcist. By studying these oracle questions we find many otherwise unrecorded aspects of Hittite society and cult and see a method the Hittites used to question their gods in order to gain psychologically some way of control over their environment and destiny.

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