

# Over the Mountains and Far Away

Studies in Near Eastern history  
and archaeology

presented to Mirjo Salvini on the occasion  
of his 80th birthday

edited by

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and

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# Mesopotamians and Mesopotamian Learning at Hattusa, Thirty Years On

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Abstract: A review of progress in the field of Hittite studies over the past thirty years, with particular attention to contacts between Hatti and Mesopotamia and to the question of the date of the earliest writing in the Hittite language.

Keywords: archaeology, Anatolia; cuneiform, Hittite; Hittitology, history

The science of Hittitology was born a little more than a century ago when Bedřich Hrozný delivered his lecture 'Die Lösung des hethitischen Problems' to the Deutsche Orient-Gesellschaft in autumn 1915.<sup>1</sup> My own essay whose title is echoed in that of this presentation was published in 1983, 66 years later, or about three quarters on in the history of our discipline to date. I cite these two contributions not to place myself in the company of the great Czech scholar, but to emphasize just how young our *Fach* is. We began with a burst of energy and astonishing philological competence from pioneers such as Emil Forrer, Johannes Friedrich, Ferdinand Sommer, and Albrecht Götze, in addition to Hrozný himself. Significant progress in Hittite studies had already been made within a couple of decades following Hrozný's 'decipherment' of Hittite/Nesite,<sup>2</sup> and such early editions as Sommer's *Ahhijavā-Urkunden* of 1932 and Götze's *Annalen des Muršiliš* of 1933 can still be consulted with profit today.

On the other hand, many crucial advances have taken place since I began my engagement with Hittitology in 1970. Perhaps the most important is Heinrich Otten and his Marburg School's development of methodology for dating tablets by their script and ductus,<sup>3</sup> even if some practitioners have pushed this technique to unreasonable extremes.<sup>4</sup> This approach has allowed us to recognize the stages of the historical evolution of the Hittite language, which in turn has facilitated the study of grammatical problems, culminating in the appearance in 2008 of the modern grammar compiled by my late lamented teacher Harry Hoffner and the Indo-Europeanist H. Craig Melchert. The publication of the two major dictionary projects, Munich's *Hethitisches Wörterbuch*, zweite Auflage, and Chicago's *Hittite Dictionary of the Oriental Institute* commenced in 1975 and 1980, respectively. No longer must each student maintain his or her own *Zettelkasten* of vocabulary attestations.

Knowledge of the Hurrian language so influential in the last two centuries of Hatti's cultural and religious life has progressed by leaps and bounds since the discovery of the Hurro-Hittite bilingual(s) at Boğazköy in 1983,<sup>5</sup>

contributing to our understanding of both the history of the early Empire and that of Kizzuwatnaean religion. And it would be no exaggeration to state that the advances in the study of the Anatolian hieroglyphs made by David Hawkins and his associates and followers have revolutionized our interpretation of the inscriptions in this writing system.<sup>6</sup>

I must also mention the work of our archaeological colleagues. In the 1970s historians of Hatti had little material to work with beyond the – admittedly extensive – archives/libraries of Hattusa and a few tablets from Ugarit. But 1991 witnessed the publication of the letters and records from Maşat Höyük/Tapikka,<sup>7</sup> giving us insight into provincial administration in the early Empire.<sup>8</sup> In recent years, tablets have been found at several additional Anatolian sites, most importantly Kuşaklı/Sarissa<sup>9</sup> and Ortaköy/Sapinuwa.<sup>10</sup> The material from the former town has already appeared and the texts from the latter, eagerly awaited, promise to shed much light on the so-called 'Middle Hittite' period and upon the early stages of Hurrian influence on Hittite society and culture. To date, only a few scraps have been recovered from Oymaağaç/Nerik<sup>11</sup> and Kayalıpınar/Samuha,<sup>12</sup> but since these sites have now been firmly identified with major cities of Hatti, they promise to yield major collections of tablets in the future.

One significant observation already made<sup>13</sup> is that all of these bodies of material reflect the operation of a single governmental entity extending across central Anatolia—that of the Great Kings of Hattusa, showing no significant local variations. This is in harmony with the presence of a single ceramic tradition throughout the Hittite lands of Anatolia.<sup>14</sup>

Across the Taurus, excavations along the Middle Euphrates have yielded records from a number of towns under Hittite domination, including Meskene/Emar,<sup>15</sup> Mumbaqa/Ekalte,<sup>16</sup>

<sup>1</sup>Hrozný 1915.

<sup>2</sup>I place 'decipherment' in quotes, because the script of the Boğazköy documents was of course already well understood to Assyriologists from its use in Mesopotamian texts. On Hrozný's achievement, see Beckman 2011: 518-521 and cf. Siegelová 2015.

<sup>3</sup>See van den Hout 2012a: 152-153 for the distinction between these terms.

<sup>4</sup>See, for example, the system as set forth by Starke 1985: 21-31 and the criticisms voiced early on by Berman (1981) of the overly optimistic claims of precision by some students of Otten.

<sup>5</sup>Neu 1996; Richter 2012: XI-XIV sketches of the progress of the study of Hurrian. See also his copious bibliography.

<sup>6</sup>For an overview, see Payne 2014: 7-9.

<sup>7</sup>Alp 1991a; 1991b; archaeological report Özgüç 1978.

<sup>8</sup>See Beckman 1995.

<sup>9</sup>A useful introduction is presented by Müller-Karpe 2017. The epigraphic finds were published by Wilhelm 1997.

<sup>10</sup>See M. Süel 2008 and 2015, and for a description of the textual finds, A. Süel 2009 and 2017: 635.

<sup>11</sup>See Czichon 2010 for the identification and Czichon *et al.* 2016 for the most recent archaeological report.

<sup>12</sup>See, most recently, Müller-Karpe *et al.* 2014 and 2017.

<sup>13</sup>van den Hout 2012b: 80-81.

<sup>14</sup>See Schoup 2011.

<sup>15</sup>Arnaud 1985; 1987. For continuing research, see Faist *et al.* 2007 and earlier installments in their series of bibliographies.

<sup>16</sup>Mayer 2001; Beckman 2008.

Tell Fray,<sup>17</sup> and Tell Afis/Ḫatarikka(?).<sup>18</sup> In the Habur, excavation of several Middle Assyrian sites, especially Tall Sheikh Hammad/Dūr-Katlimmu,<sup>19</sup> has produced information concerning the government of Hatti's major rival in the region and concerning diplomatic contacts between the powers. For instance, we have a note from an Assyrian governor attesting the passage of a Hittite diplomat through the Jezirah on his way home from the Assyrian court.<sup>20</sup> We may also mention Qatna to the west, where renewed excavation has produced a small archive documenting the maneuvering of a local ruler at the time of the conquest of Mittani by Suppiluliuma.<sup>21</sup> Data from all of these sites has enabled us to say much more about the Hittite subjugation of Syria and the structure of imperial rule there than could have been dreamed of thirty years ago.

Let me now turn at last to a summary of what we currently know concerning the influence of Mesopotamian conceptions and learning in second-millennium Anatolia. The impact of the culture of Babylonia and Assyria upon Hatti was significant. Indeed, Hittite civilization as reflected in the archives<sup>22</sup> is better described as a peripheral Mesopotamian cultural formation than as an early Indo-European culture like those of Vedic India, early Rome, or archaic Ireland. To a considerable extent this is due to the fact that the adoption of the cuneiform writing system – more about this later – entailed the acceptance of other aspects of the Mesopotamian civilization in which it had been created and developed.<sup>23</sup>

Instruction in cuneiform everywhere customarily involved the copying by students of previously prepared texts, and thereby both the original language of the teachers – Akkadian in the case of Hatti – and the literary genres of the source culture became familiar to the pupils – here Anatolians.<sup>24</sup> The very earliest manuscripts produced for the Hittite élite – although not necessarily by native Anatolian scribes – were written in Akkadian, and this tongue was employed throughout Hittite history for international correspondence and most diplomatic instruments.

The presence of native Mesopotamian scribes as 'guest professors'<sup>25</sup> is attested sporadically at Hattusa and other Hittite sites,<sup>26</sup> and these visiting experts sometimes brought tablets from their homelands, presumably for use in instruction. This is seemingly the best explanation for the recovery of such material of no utilitarian value as a Middle Assyrian *līmu* list (CTH 817) and a Kassite royal inscription<sup>27</sup> at the Hittite capital. Other tablets may also be recognized

by their clay matrix and/or their script as imports from the south.<sup>28</sup>

Hittite literature owed much to Mesopotamian models.<sup>29</sup> For example, certain Hittite prayers to the Sun-goddess lean heavily on Akkadian forerunners,<sup>30</sup> and elements of the Gilgamesh epic are found at Hattusa in two Akkadian versions as well as in Hurrian- and Hittite-language adaptations.<sup>31</sup>

What we may characterize as Mesopotamian scholarship and science are present both in Akkadian – and sometimes Sumerian – originals (CTH 800–13) as well as in Hittite translation.<sup>32</sup> Attested are reference works on lexicography (CTH 299–309),<sup>33</sup> medicine (CTH 808),<sup>34</sup> extispicy (CTH 547–57),<sup>35</sup> the interpretation of various ominous terrestrial phenomena (CTH 536–45),<sup>36</sup> hemerologies (CTH 546),<sup>37</sup> and astronomy/astrology (CTH 531–35).<sup>38</sup> Some of these practices were not actually employed in Hatti, as far as we can tell, but the imported technique of extispicy was intensively practiced there – if as part of a binary system incorporating several other types of oracle,<sup>39</sup> as shown by a large body of reports of the results of such consultations (CTH 561–70).<sup>40</sup>

Particularly interesting is the fact that the clay liver models from the Hittite capital reflect a Mesopotamian tradition free of Hurrian influence,<sup>41</sup> in sharp contrast to the extispicy compendia and diviner's reports from Hattusa, which are replete with Hurrian technical terms.<sup>42</sup>

When religious concepts must be expressed through a borrowed medium, features of the source culture are inevitably if unconsciously brought in along with the writing system. This is the case, for example, of Hittite conceptions of the Sun-god.<sup>43</sup> Yet other Mesopotamian material was intentionally imported and adapted to local needs. For instance, the deities Ištar/Šaušga of Nineveh,<sup>44</sup> the Storm-gods of Aleppo,<sup>45</sup> Assur, and Harran,<sup>46</sup> and the Babylonian Marduk<sup>47</sup> were all introduced into Hatti, where they joined the 'Thousand Gods' of the realm, and in some cases were syncretized with native gods or goddesses.

<sup>17</sup> Archi 1980.

<sup>18</sup> Archi and Venturi 2012.

<sup>19</sup> Cancik-Kirschbaum 1996. This volume presents the Middle Assyrian letters from the excavations. Other records discovered at the site are of lesser importance for our topic.

<sup>20</sup> Cancik-Kirschbaum 1996: 129–139, no. 8.

<sup>21</sup> Richter and Lange 2012.

<sup>22</sup> Of course this observation may not be accurate for the lifeways of the majority of the population, of which we remain largely ignorant.

<sup>23</sup> Beckman 1983.

<sup>24</sup> Wilhelm 1992; Sassmannshausen 2008; Fincke 2012. For Sumerian at Hattusa see Cooper 1972; 1973 and Klingner 2010; 2012.

<sup>25</sup> Note the case of Anu-šar-ilāni, discussed in Beckman 1983: 103–106. An extremely interesting parallel is provided by the career of the Babylonian Marduk-nadin-aḫḫe, active as a 'royal scribe' in Assyria during the Middle Assyrian period; see Wiggemann 2008.

<sup>26</sup> From the Mašat archives we may now add several names to the list of Mesopotamian scribes active in Hatti: Mār-ešre, Adad-bēli, Ili-tukultī, and Ili-kakkabi(?). See Alp 1998.

<sup>27</sup> Lambert 2013: 268.

<sup>28</sup> See Beckman 1983: 103 with n. 33, and cf. the work of Goren *et al.* 2011 on the provenience of the clay matrix of tablets found at Boğazköy.

<sup>29</sup> Klingner 2012; Beckman 2009: *passim*; 2013. Because of the paucity of texts from the 'stream of tradition' thus far recovered from contemporary Assyria and Babylonia, the Hattusa archives have the distinction of preserving the earliest examples of a number of compositions from the Mesopotamian scholarly canon.

<sup>30</sup> Güterbock 1958; Metcalf 2011; 2015: 79–103; cf. Archi 1983.

<sup>31</sup> Klingner 2005; Beckman 2003, 2019.

<sup>32</sup> In general see Riemschneider 2004; Haas 2008; Rutz 2012.

<sup>33</sup> Otten and von Soden 1968; Fincke 2011; Scheucher 2012.

<sup>34</sup> Köcher 1952–1953; Giusfredi 2012; Fincke 2010.

<sup>35</sup> De Vos 2013.

<sup>36</sup> Hoffner 1993; Cohen 2007.

<sup>37</sup> Fincke 2004; 2009.

<sup>38</sup> Weidner 1923; Leibovici 1956; Güterbock 1988.

<sup>39</sup> For a concise description of Hittite oracle practice, see Beckman *et al.* 2011: 183.

<sup>40</sup> Kammenhuber 1976; Archi 1982.

<sup>41</sup> De Vos 2013: 98–100. See now my review, 2017.

<sup>42</sup> See my translation of KUB 5.6++ in Beckman *et al.* 2011: 183–209.

<sup>43</sup> Beckman 2012.

<sup>44</sup> Beckman 1998.

<sup>45</sup> Klengel 1965.

<sup>46</sup> Richter 2002: 304.

<sup>47</sup> Kammenhuber 1990.



A small number of Mesopotamian rituals made their way to Hattusa (CTH 800–813),<sup>48</sup> and Babylonian elements were also taken over into Hittite rites, on occasion transposed in their entirety.<sup>49</sup> At other times the southern tradition supplied particular elements of a ritual, such as Akkadian-language incantations to be spoken as part of a ceremony otherwise framed in Hittite.<sup>50</sup>

As for art, we can easily recognize that the iconography of Hittite glyptic and stone reliefs is descended from that of the cylinder seals brought to Anatolia by the Old Assyrian traders. Furthermore, it has been argued convincingly that the sole known Hittite royal cylinder – as opposed to the stamp seals commonly in use in Hatti – cut for Tudhaliya IV, was inspired by Assyrian glyptic.<sup>51</sup>

Before I close, I'd like to discuss in greater detail the very basic problem of the adoption of the cuneiform script in Hatti. In a series of impressive essays,<sup>52</sup> Theo van den Hout has challenged our received ideas about the chronology of Old Hittite texts by positing that cuneiform, while in sporadic use from the founding reigns of the Hittite state, was not widely employed in Hatti before the last quarter of the 16th century BC (middle chronology), during the reign of Telipinu.<sup>53</sup> This would entail bringing forward the date of the original inscription of such documents in Old Hittite as the Anitta text, the Laws, the Palace Chronicle, and various other historical records by 100 or more years.

Van den Hout's argument rests on a number of observations, the most important of which strike me as: 1) newer studies<sup>54</sup> have shown that the Old Script was employed down until the time of Tudhaliya I/II, and if this scribal hand had been adopted for writing Hittite around 1650 BC, this would imply a very long period of use without much internal development; 2) the earliest certainly original tablets – those which van den Hout calls 'true and legally authentic originals',<sup>55</sup> all of which are written in Akkadian, date to the reign of Telipinu or only a bit earlier; 3) the oldest preserved Hittite-language manuscripts<sup>56</sup> seem to date to the 15th or early 14th century BC;<sup>57</sup> 4) there are no known Old Script Hittite-language manuscripts of such major compositions of early Hittite history as the Hattusili I Bilingual Testament (CTH 6), Hattusili's Annals (CTH 4), or the Telipinu Proclamation (CTH 19); and 5) in other historically attested instances of the borrowing of a writing system, the recipient culture at first utilized the language of the lenders for their own texts, only later adapting the script for its own tongue.<sup>58</sup>

While van den Hout's argumentation is very enticing, two major problems make me hesitant to accept it.<sup>59</sup> First of all, neither Hattusili's Testament, his Annals, nor the Telipinu text appear to be translations from Akkadian, and they do not strike me as the sort of compositions that might have been passed down orally, as van den Hout suggests.<sup>60</sup> Furthermore, the Testament is addressed to the assembled ruling class of Hatti (i-ii 1–2), so it should have been comprehensible to a large number of Hittites and therefore best composed in their native language. Van den Hout's suggestion<sup>61</sup> that the text was translated on the fly also strikes me as unlikely. Similarly, the tablet recording the old king's words is to be read aloud monthly to his heir Mursili (iii 56–57). Was this boy a speaker of Akkadian?

Finally, if these records of the first reigns were translated from Akkadian only at the time of Telipinu or a bit later, why would the chancellery have bothered with texts of no further practical use such as the Testament or the collection of anecdotes we call the Palace Chronicle (CTH 8–9)?

Perhaps an even bigger obstacle to accepting van den Hout's reconstruction of the late development of native literacy in Hatti lies in the mention in several early compositions of the personage known as the *ABI LUGAL*, 'the Father of the King.' This use of this designation would make sense only in a text composed in the reign of the person referred to here as the *LUGAL*. A writer in a later period discussing this era – or a scribe copying an older tablet – would certainly have substituted the personal royal names of the ruler and his predecessor and progenitor. If the attestations of the *ABI LUGAL* in the Palace Chronicle (CTH 8–9) and the Zalpa text (CTH 3) indeed refer to the reign of the first or second Hittite monarch, as almost every Hittitologist believes,<sup>62</sup> then the extant Old Script Hittite-language fragments of these texts<sup>63</sup> must have been inscribed prior to the time of Telipinu.

Note also that §55 of the Hittite Laws (CTH 291) also refers to the *ABI LUGAL*, which means that at least this paragraph existed before Telipinu, despite Hoffner's assignment<sup>64</sup> of the collection as a whole to this ruler. Furthermore, the colophon of manuscript D of the Laws (KBo 6.6 iv 2, Late Script) attributes the text to ŠA *ABI* <sup>d</sup>UTU<sup>51</sup>. Of course it is well known that the father of Telipinu was not a king.

I believe that we might be chasing a chimera in seeking the origin of cuneiform in Late Bronze Age Anatolia, for there is no reason to believe that the script was introduced to Hatti by a single scribe or school once and for all on a particular occasion.<sup>65</sup> The very earliest texts, both Akkadian in language, seem to have been written by scribes impressed into service on the spot in southeastern Anatolia. The letter of Hattusili I to Tunip-Teššub<sup>66</sup> was probably retrieved illegally from the latter's residence, Tikunani, to be sought somewhere in the vicinity of modern Mardin.<sup>67</sup> And while it was excavated by Winckler at Boğazköy, the Siege of Uršu Text (CTH 7) has been

<sup>48</sup> Schwemer 1998; 2004; Farber 2001.

<sup>49</sup> As in Beckman 2007.

<sup>50</sup> Strauss 2002; Beckman 2014.

<sup>51</sup> Herboldt 2008: 165–167.

<sup>52</sup> van den Hout 2009a; 2009b; 2011; 2012a; 2012b.

<sup>53</sup> van den Hout 2011: 902–904. Popko 2007 independently made a similar claim.

<sup>54</sup> E.g., Miller 2004: 463–464, n. 773.

<sup>55</sup> van den Hout 2011: 904. That is, documents bearing the seal of a particular king that may therefore be assumed to have been inscribed during his reign. In this instance, these are several *Landschenkungsurkunden* and the treaty with Išputaššu of Kizzuwatna (CTH 21).

<sup>56</sup> These are generally thought to include KBo 22.1 and KBo 18.151.

<sup>57</sup> van den Hout 2009b: 33.

<sup>58</sup> As noted by van den Hout 2009a: 88, the best example of this in the ancient Near East is to be found in the records of the first-millennium kings of Urartu.

<sup>59</sup> See already the critique of Archi 2010.

<sup>60</sup> van den Hout 2009a: 95. Perhaps the historical introduction to Telipinu's proclamation could have been transmitted in this manner, but this is unlikely in regard to the sections dealing with storehouses (É<sup>NA4</sup>KIŠIB) and agricultural administration (§§ 35ff.).

<sup>61</sup> van den Hout 2009a: 93–94.

<sup>62</sup> See, for example, Singer 2001: 288–289.

<sup>63</sup> These are KBo 22.2 for CTH 3, and KUB 36.104 for CTH 8.

<sup>64</sup> Hoffner 1995: 214.

<sup>65</sup> See already van den Hout 2012a: 165.

<sup>66</sup> Salvini 1996: 107–114.

<sup>67</sup> Charpin 2000.

shown by X-ray fluorescence analysis of its fabric<sup>68</sup> to have likely been created in the Upper Euphrates region. Perhaps it was brought to Hattusa from Kuššar<sup>69</sup> when the former city became the capital.

Soon thereafter, scribes from Alalah or its vicinity<sup>70</sup> introduced to Anatolia the variety of north Syrian cuneiform that ultimately gave rise to the Old Hittite script, and over the following decades and centuries additional practitioners from Syria as well as Assyria and Babylonia brought – or in some instances reintroduced – to Hattusa the sign forms characteristic of the New Script and Late New Script.

Of course there remain significant gaps in our understanding of the importation and utilization of Mesopotamian culture in Hatti. In sharp contrast to the lot of the historian of more modern times, who must decide just what elements among a blizzard of information to consider in reconstructing the past, the cuneiformist must take account of all available data, textual and archaeological, tangible and theoretical, in his or her research. And then he or she must be prepared to rethink almost everything in the light of newly-discovered evidence.

Given how much has been added to our store of knowledge about the Hittites and their culture in the last quarter century, a significant portion of it by Professor Salvini, who can anticipate what more will be learned in the next 25 years?

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<sup>68</sup> Goren et al. 2011: 694.

<sup>69</sup> For the location of this town see Barjamovic 2011: 143–150.

<sup>70</sup> See van den Hout 2012a.

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