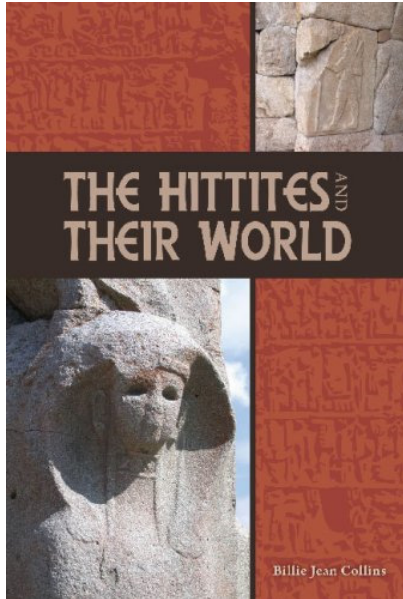


RBL 05/2009



**Collins, Billie Jean**

***The Hittites and Their World***

Society of Biblical Literature Archaeology and Biblical Studies 7

Atlanta: Society of Biblical Literature, 2007. Pp. xvi + 254. Paper. \$29.95. ISBN 1589832965.

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As the author states in her preface, this book is an attempt to fill the need for a comprehensive and up-to-date survey of the contributions of Hittite studies to biblical interpretations. She has certainly succeeded in this aim. The book gives a very complete and accessible overview of our current knowledge of the history, society, and religion of the Hittites, including biblical parallels. This review will focus primarily on the similarities between the Hittite and biblical world, which have been put together for the first time in this book.

Chapter 1, “A Brief History of Hittite Studies,” gives a good overview of the history of Hittitology and the rediscovery of the Hittites. The subchapter “Discovery” sets out with the discovery of the Boğazköy ruins by Charles Texier in 1834 and further includes the audacious lecture given by Sayce in 1879 in which he attributed these ruins together with other monuments and inscriptions in Anatolia and Syria to the “Hittites” mentioned in the Bible—a claim in fact already made by William Wright two years earlier. The subchapter concludes with a description of the first excavations of Hugo Winckler and the final identification of the capital. “Decipherment” relates the decipherment of the Hittite language in 1917 by Hrozný, who in doing so vindicated Knudtzon’s ridiculed claim of 1902 that Hittite belonged to the Indo-European language family. It also

discusses the history of the decipherment of Hieroglyphic Luwian and the most important pioneers in Hittitology. “The Story Unfolds” relates the main publications and excavations in the field. The overview is very up to date, including the latest discoveries (such as the wall paintings in Temple 9 of the Upper City of Hattuša) and recent excavations that have just begun in Turkey. Here we may add the German excavation in Oymağaaç, which the excavators hope to identify with the ancient city of Nerik (see [www.nerik.de](http://www.nerik.de)). Further, note that the excavations of the capital Hattuša have been supervised by Andreas Schachner since 2006. The chapter ends with a “Note on Chronology” discussing the numerous difficulties we face concerning the Hittite chronology. It concludes with the optimistic outlook that, based on dendrochronology, Anatolia may in the future provide the final solution to these problems.

Chapter 2, “The Political History of the Hittites,” is devoted to a chronological overview of the history of the Hittite Empire. It is divided into five subchapters (“Origins”; “From Kingdom to Empire”; “Egypt and Hatti”; “The End of an Empire”; and “The Neo-Hittite Kingdoms”), which are in turn subdivided into smaller units. After a short introduction on the Neolithicum and the Chalcolithicum, the first part, “Origins,” moves on to the debate of the homeland of the Indo-Europeans and their migration into Anatolia (“Indo-Europeans in Anatolia”). Next to the theories of migration from the Russian steppe through either the northwest or the east, it also mentions the hypothesis that Anatolia was in fact the homeland of the Indo-Europeans, who spread westward from central Anatolia in the seventh millennium, bringing agriculture with them (24). Though some may find support for this theory in evolutionary biology, it presents some insurmountable linguistic problems.<sup>1</sup> The history continues with a description of the Assyrian Colony period and the conquests of Pithana and his son Anitta (“The Assyrian Colonies”) and the population present at that time (“A Note on Ethnicity”).

The second part, “From Kingdom to Empire,” starts out with a description of the Hittite capital (“Hattusa, a City Fit for Kings and Gods”) and narrates the early history of the Kingdom (“The Old Kingdom”), the beginning of the empire period up to Šuppiluliuma I (“Prelude to Empire”; “From Kingdom to Empire”). The subchapter “Egypt and Hatti” describes the reigns of King Muwatalli II, famous for the battle of Kadeš, his second-rank son and successor Urhi-Teššub (“War”) and the reign of the usurper Hattušili III, the king who concluded a peace treaty with Egypt (“Peace”). “The End of an Empire” relates the fortunes of King Tudhaliya IV, the possible coup by his cousin Kurunta, and the final days of the kingdom during Šuppiluliuma II. The final subchapter, “The Neo-Hittite Kingdoms,” is devoted to the so-called Neo-Hittite city-states in Northern Syria and

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1. See on this most recently D. W. Anthony, *The Horse, The Wheel and Language* (Oxford/Princeton, 2007), esp. 75–81.

Southern Anatolia until the conquest by the Assyrians in the eighth century B.C. In the last section, “The Question of Continuity,” it is argued that, though some characteristics of these Neo-Hittite states, such as cremation, the use of Luwian hieroglyphs, and artistic styles, may point to a cultural influence from Anatolia, they do not support the idea of a major migration from Anatolia into Syria.

In the preface Collins states that “this history is presented in brief and is designed for those wanting an overview of political events unencumbered by minutiae” (ix); for a more detailed treatment the author refers to syntheses such as Bryce’s *Kingdom of the Hittites* and Klengel’s *Geschichte des hethitischen Reiches*. This chapter indeed offers a concise and accessible synopsis of Hittite history, and in the footnotes there are ample references for those wanting to know more. The information density may sometimes dazzle the lay reader, but this is compensated for by the inclusion of entertaining anecdotes and citations from the sources, such as the Hittite-Egyptian correspondence, that add some flesh to the bones of history. A slightly more critical approach toward the sources would have been desirable at times: the events as told by Telipinu in his edict are simply presented here as actual historical facts, without mentioning that this document had a clear political agenda and is anything but an objective source. It is only in chapter 3 that the political motives behind this edict are discussed (145). Further, although Telipinu may have been the first king of whom we have a treaty preserved, this does not necessarily imply that he was the first king to conclude a peace agreement (41). Further, note that Büyükkale was already part of the city plan in the sixteenth century B.C., rather than the thirteenth (35).

Chapter 3, “Society,” deals with the various aspects of Hittite life, starting out with a discussion of the role of the king and queen and the ideology of kingship (“Government”). It is cautiously suggested that the circumstance that only the Hittites and Israelites seem to have anointed their kings may point to an (indirect) borrowing (95 n. 17). The section further describes the most important court officials and the organization of the state, including the vassal states that were governed by a vassal who was bound by a treaty to the Hittite king. In the excursus “What Do Hittite Treaties Have to Do with the Sinai Covenant?” the striking resemblances between these Hittite vassal treaties and the covenant and biblical border descriptions are discussed (109–11). The second part, “Law and Society,” gives an apt summary of the limited information we have of the everyday life of the Hittites. With respect to the laws, some parallels with the Bible are listed, such as the case of murder by an unknown assailant in the countryside (Laws §IV, Deut 21:1–2), the compensation of an injured person (Laws §20, Exod 21:18–19), the clause dealing with rape (Laws §197, Deut 22:23–27), the prohibition of sex with animals (e.g., Laws §187–188, Exod 22:18), and the levirate marriage (Laws §192–193, Deut 25:5–6). With respect to the latter, we may point out a further parallel: when a man refused to marry his

deceased brother's wife, his shoes were removed as a form of public humiliation (Deut 25:9–10). Hoffner already drew attention to the resemblance with a passage in the Hittite Instructions for the Royal Bodyguard, which states that the shoe of a guard is to be removed when he fails to properly fulfill his duty.<sup>2</sup> On page 123 the Hittite custom to blind rebel leaders (and captives) who were subsequently put to work in millhouses is compared to the story of Samson.

The third subchapter, "Arts," gives an elaborate enumeration of all known Hittite rock reliefs as well the most important examples of relief vessels and minor arts, accompanied by several illustrations. It also lists the few Hittite artifacts found in Palestine and the Levant, such as the ivory board discovered in Megiddo, as well as Hittite influences visible on local Levantine arts. One of the illustrations (3.11) shows two Hittite clay towers on which certain Israelite cult stands may have been modeled. The excursus "Yazilikaya, a Royal Sanctuary" is devoted to the famous rock reliefs north east of Hattuša. The section "Letters" discusses the written legacy of the Hittites, describing the various types of documents that have come down to us. The genres historiography, mythology, and prayers are discussed more in detail, with numerous text examples. One may argue that the Uršu-text should be regarded as a humoristic composition, possibly meant for public performance, rather than an example of historiography (144). On page 146 the remarkable parallels between the apology of Hattušili III and the rise of King David are discussed. Other texts containing biblical themes, such as the legend of Zalpa, the myth of Appu, and the prayers of Arnuwanda and Mursili, are also included.

The most vital part of Hittite life is addressed in chapter 4, "Religion." Collins gives a high-quality synopsis of our knowledge on this subject, which is mainly based on official documents of the royal archives, such as rituals, festivals, cult inventories, and instructions supplemented by archeological records. The chapter is divided into five main parts: "The Official Religion"; "Deities and Demons"; "Ritual Power"; "Cosmogony, Cosmology, and Eschatology"; and "Death and Afterlife." The interesting parallels already observed by Milgrom between the duties mentioned in the instructions to the Hittite guard and that of the Levites described in the Priestly Code are treated on pages 159–60.<sup>3</sup> Here we may add that the Hebrew term *kōmer*, designating a non-Israelite priest, may be derived from Old Assyrian *kumru* and Hittite *kumra*.<sup>4</sup> The chapter further includes a

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2. H. Hoffner, "The Hittites and Hurrians," in *Peoples of Old Testament Times* (ed. Wiseman; Oxford, 1973), 196–228, esp. 219.

3. J. Milgrom, "The Shared Custody of the Tabernacle and a Hittite Analogy," *JAOS* 90 (1970): 207.

4. See I. Singer, "The Hittites and the Bible Revisited," in *I will Speak the Riddle of Ancient Times: Archaeological and Historical Studies in Honor of Amihai Mazar on the Occasion of His Sixtieth Birthday* (ed. M. Maier et al.; Winona Lake, 2006), 723–56, here 747.

passage from a festival of Tešsub and Hebat in Lawazantiya that may shed some light on the strange encounter with Jacob in Gen 32:23–32 (164). With respect to divination, one may also include the possible Anatolian origin of the Hebrew divinatory term *pur* “lot” with the Hittite equivalent *pul*.<sup>5</sup> In the excursus “Did the Hittites Practice Necromancy?” the author concludes that the calling up of the dead to predict the future (compare 1 Sam 28:8) is not attested in Hittite religion. One could seek contact with the dead, but this was done only to appease the souls. Collins further draws attention to the strong resemblance that the Hittite ritual involved shows to the ritual performed by Odysseus in *Od.* 11. The excursus also discusses the seventh vision of Zechariah (5:5–11), in which a female symbolizing evil is placed inside a vessel sealed with a lead lid and carried off to Babylon. This passage shows strong resemblance with a Hittite myth where the maleficent demon *tarpi* (possibly to be connected with Hebrew *teraphim*) is placed in a bronze cauldron with a lead lid and placed on the bottom of the sea (170). On page 180 the use of blood as detergent in rituals described in Lev 14 and 16 is compared with the occasional purification with blood in Hittite rituals, a practice that was introduced from Hurrian Kizzuwatna. In addition, some biblical passages involving analogic magic (Ps 109:17–19) and healing rituals (2 Kgs 4:32–25; 1 Kgs 17:21) are compared to Hittite (and Mesopotamian) rituals (183–85). Of course, the well-known parallel between the Hittite substitution ritual and the biblical scapegoat rite described in Lev 16 is also presented here, including the possible etymology of the name Azazel (186–89). Collins’s attempt to link the offering of five gold mice (along with five golden tumors) in the episode of the Philistines and the ark of the covenant (1 Sam 5–6) to the Kizzuwatnean scapegoat tradition, where mice were sometimes used as substitutes, seems somewhat far-fetched. She argues that, since mice were considered unclean in Israel, the offering of these animals would make little sense but could reflect a Philistine custom. If the Philistines indeed have an Anatolian-Aegean ancestry, the mice-offering could thus be explained as a “repurposing” of an Anatolian scapegoat rite. However, it seems more likely that the five golden mice, just like the five golden tumors, are to be understood as offerings shaped in the form of the calamities by which the Philistines were being plagued. In fact, this is what Collins herself also seems to conclude at the end, when comparing the mice and tumor offerings to the ritual of Samuha, in which gold and silver images of oaths and curses are offered as gifts for the offended deity (189). The section “Cosmogony, Cosmology, and Eschatology” mentions a Hittite ritual of Syrian origin containing an allusion to creation, which might bear a slight resemblance to the Genesis tradition, as well as a possible but far from certain Hittite example of eschatology (191–92). A further religious analogy may be

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5. *Ibid.*, 751.

found in some passages of the Bible that bear resemblance to Hittite vows in their construction, such as Gen 28:20–22; Sam 1:11; Judg 11:30–31.<sup>6</sup>

Chapter 5, “Hittites in the Bible,” deals with the important question of how we can explain the fact that the Bible preserves so many echoes of the Hittite world. First, the problem of the identity of the biblical Hittites is addressed (“Who Were the Biblical Hittites?”). Only five attestations in the Bible can be seen as actually referring to the Neo-Hittite states in northern Syria and southern Anatolia that prospered in the beginning of the first millennium B.C., the time when the earliest passages of the Hebrew Bible may have been composed. In these five cases, the biblical Hittites are consistent with our historical and geographical knowledge of these city-states and in consonance with the Neo-Assyrian usage of the term “land of Hatti.” Most Hittites, however, occur in a context where they seem to refer to an indigenous people living within Palestine. They are mentioned in the more-or-less standard list of nations that inhabited the region before the arrival of the Israelites. As Collins states, the list may arguably reflect the ethnic and political make-up of the northern Levant at the end of the Bronze Age. However, the biblical Hittites are found living more to the south, within the Judean hill country. How is this to be explained? Collins suggests that after the Hittites disappeared from history following the fall of Karkamiš in 717 B.C., a collective memory of the Hittites still existed, transmitted orally and/or by means of historical records. Under influence of Neo-Assyrian usage (the “wicked Hittites”), the term *Hittites* became merely a rhetorical tool used by people who had no direct memory of the historical Hittites. As she points out, the main themes of the passages mentioning the list of nations are the conquests of nations and the prohibition against intermarriage. She proposes that the term *Hittites* was used to designate a convenient “Other,” offering a negative counteridentity against which a collective identity for the Israelites could be constructed. Only the Hittites Uriah and Ahimelech may actually be seen as foreigners coming from the Neo-Hittite kingdoms (“Ahimelech and Uriah”). The possibility that there were actually Hittites living in the south of Palestine is not discussed here; it is merely stated at the end of this subchapter and at the beginning of the next that there is no firm evidence for a significant Hittite population there at any time in history.

The second part of the chapter, “The Case for Contact,” explores the possibilities for contact. How can we explain the cultural parallels and influence on law, religion, and literature? The idea that this transmission took place by means of migration, either during the existence of the Hittite Empire (the Kurušamma treaty) or after its catastrophic end, is dismissed. Apart from the lack of firm archeological evidence for Anatolian presence in Palestine, Collins concludes that cultural exchange seems to have taken place at the level

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6. See on this J. de Roos, *Hittite Votive Texts* (Leiden, 2007), 53.

of an educated elite rather than by migratory groups of mercenaries, farmers, or refugees. Following Singer, she argues that most plausible time for transmission was during the *pax Hethitica-Aegyptiaca* in the thirteenth century B.C. In this period, the two great powers entertained intensive contacts through correspondence, exchange of goods, and diplomatic expeditions.<sup>7</sup> This resulted in an intensified presence of diplomats, craftsmen, doctors, musicians, and the like from Anatolia in Palestine, forming the perfect environment for cultural transmission.

In the “Afterword” the complex question of how to interpret and value the numerous above-discussed parallels between the Hittite and the biblical world is finally addressed. The handful of “culture words” that Hittite and the Hebrew Bible have in common may be evidence of an ancient relationship between Semitic and Indo-European speakers in the ancient Near East. Certain legal and social parallels may be seen as two adjacent cultures reacting in the same way to analogous situations. Some parallels are clearly to be considered as real phenomena, traditions that were common in the overall region, whereas others are the results of the shared literal heritage of the “cuneiform culture” of Mesopotamia. In the field of rituals, the Hittites and Israelites owe a great deal to a common source: the Hurrians. Collins sees a clear, direct influence in two cases: the similarities between the Apology of Hattušili III and the story of David’s rise to power and between the Hittite treaties and the covenant. At the end, she rightly emphasizes that the most important question is not whether the Israelites borrowed certain elements from the Hittites or not but how the understanding of Hittite society can contribute to our knowledge of the biblical world.

“Further Reading” gives useful suggestions for additional literature, including the most important English monographs in the field of Hittitology. The three extensive indices at the end, of subjects, ancient texts, and modern authors, contribute to the book’s overall usability. The illustrations are well chosen and sufficient; only in chapter 5 would the inclusion of a map have been welcome, considering the numerous geographical references. All in all, the book forms an excellent and accessible introduction into the world of the Hittites and their impact on the biblical world.

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7. I. Singer, “The Hittites and the Bible Revisited,” in Maier, *I will Speak the Riddle of Ancient Times*, 723–56.