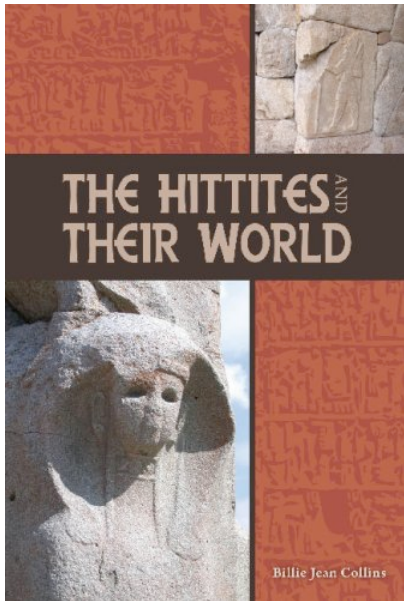


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Collins, Billie Jean

The Hittites and Their World

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Without doubt, Hittite studies have experienced an unprecedented boom over the last few years. It is encouraging that an increasing number of historical syntheses on the Hittites have appeared in print, even if their number still fails to match the multitude of publications seen in other areas of ancient Near Eastern studies. In this way, even apart from its specific merits, Billie Jean Collins's work should be seen as a welcome addition to the corpus or research literature.

A brief table of contents (vii) provides a quick overview of each chapter's core subject: "1. A Brief History of Hittite Studies"; "2. A Political History of the Hittites"; "3. Society"; "4. Religion"; and "5. Hittites in the Bible." As an aid to the reader, the numerous subchapter titles should have been included in this table of contents. In her foreword (ix-x), Collins presents a summary of the content and states the primary goals of her study: "This volume is an attempt to fill the need for a comprehensive and up-to-date survey of the contributions of Hittite studies to biblical interpretation." The author also states that the work is intended to serve as a general introduction to the history, society, and religion of the Hittites. The foreword is followed by a list of illustrations (xi-xii), the most important bibliographic abbreviations (xiii-xv), a key to transliterated words that is critical for the reader, a guide to the pronunciation of Turkish names, and a key to the

symbols used to designate the primary sources (xv–xvi).

The first chapter, “A Brief History of Hittite Studies,” begins with an introduction to the period around 1834, when Charles Texier discovered the ruins of the Hittite capital in Boğazköy. Two subchapters, “Discovery” (1–14) and “The Story Unfolds” (14–18), then provide an entertaining overview of Hittite studies from their beginnings up to the international research of the present. The most important archaeological excavations are also mentioned. A surprising omission are the archaeological surveys¹ and research concerning the Hittite economy² carried out over the last few years, work that has considerably expanded our knowledge. Collins instead emphasizes artistic artifacts as the key discoveries of recent years, particularly those that demonstrate Aegean connections, such as the bull-leaping vase from Hüseyindede-Tepesi³ and mural paintings from Temple 9 in Boğazköy, which are described as recent finds.⁴ Already in this place we must notice a deficient understanding of Hittite archaeology and their potential—a recurrent problem in the book. Yet this is perhaps not surprising—a fundamental problem in Hittite studies is that philological and archaeological research are excessively isolated from one another. Chapter 1 ends with “A Note on Chronology” (18–20), where certain problems concerning this aspect are briefly outlined, such as the lack of a Hittite calculation of times. The last short section concerning dating methods of the natural sciences is deserving of criticism, however: the author makes mention of research only undertaken in Boğazköy⁵ and fails to account for the complex problems associated with radiocarbon dating methods in an even rudimentary way.⁶

1. For the surveys, compare the methodological article by A. Tuba Ökse, “Hethiterforschung anhand von Geländebegehungen: Darstellungen der Problem und Möglichkeiten der Auswertung,” in *Strukturierung und Datierung in der hethitischen Archäologie* (ed. D. P. Mielke, U.-D Schoop, and J. Seeher; BYZAS 4; Istanbul, 2006), 167–83.

2. An overview of such work is still lacking, yet research has been conducted primarily in Boğazköy, Kuşaklı, Alaca Höyük, and Kaman-Kalehöyük on huge storage and water management installations.

3. Additional to the first publication is mentioned here: T. Sipahi, “New Evidence from Anatolia Regarding Bull Leaping Scenes in the Art of the Aegean and the Near East,” *Anatolica* 27 (2001): 107–25.

4. The mural painting fragments had already been discovered in the 1990s. Additional fragments from Temple 5 and from the palace on Büyükkale must be mentioned here; see A. Özyar, “A Prospectus of Hittite Art Based on the State of our Knowledge at the Beginning of the 3rd Millenium AD,” in Mielke, Schoop, and Seeher, *Strukturierung und Datierung*, 131–32, fig. 4.

5. Here it should be noted that the revision of previous datings is primarily based upon dendrochronological data from the Hittite provincial city of Kuşaklı-Sarissa (A. Müller-Karpe, “Remarks on Central Anatolian Chronology of the Middle Hittite Period,” in *The Synchronisation of Civilisations in the Eastern Mediterranean in the Second Millennium B.C.* (ed. M. Bietak and H. Hunger; Second Proceedings of the SCIE M 2000—EuroConference, Haindorf, 2–7 May 2001; Contributions to the Chronology of the Eastern Mediterranean 4; Vienna, 2003), 383–94.

6. Radiocarbon dating, as has been performed in Boğazköy, has proved difficult in establishing absolute

In chapter 2 Collins presents a seventy-page overview of the “Political History of the Hittites,” which encompasses both the before and after of Hittite culture, thus covering a thousand-year span of history. First Collins briefly outlines the geography of Anatolia. In the following subchapter on “Origins” (21–31), a common pattern in numerous historical accounts is repeated: a superfluous description of the early Neolithic settlements in Çatal Höyük is followed by brief description of rich Early Bronze Age graves from Alaca Höyük.⁷ The formation of complex social structures especially in the Early Bronze Age that was so important to Hittite culture can at best only be guessed at from this discussion. With the short section on “Indo-Europeans in Anatolia,” however, the book begins to gain more traction. Collins’s survey of “The Assyrian Colonies” also demonstrates a number of strengths. Without doubt, the true beginnings of Hittite culture take place in the final phase of this mid-Bronze Age period. The section titled “A Note on Ethnicity” then turns to the various ethnolinguistic groups (Hittites, Luwians, Hattians, Hurrians, etc.) that can be traced through written records. The following subchapter, “From Kingdom to Empire” (32–52), begins with a brief description of the Hittite capital. The actual political history then begins with the sections “The Old Kingdom,” “Prelude to Empire,” and “From Kingdom to Empire.” By this point in the book it would have been appropriate to include a discussion regarding the periodization of Hittite history, because a number of researchers—above all, philologists—interpolate a third, Middle Hittite Period between the Kingdom and the Empire.⁸ This is hardly a marginal problem, as each term implies an alternate set of dates and historical content. With “Egypt and Hatti” (53–64), the focus shifts to the historical period important for the entire Levantine region that begins with a military conflict (Battle of Qadesh) and culminates in the *pax Hethitica-Aegyptiaca*. “The End of an Empire” (65–79) includes recent research concerning the passing of the Late Bronze Age Hittites. The following subchapter, “The Neo-Hittite Kingdoms” (80–90), then takes up the continuation of Hittite culture under other auspices in southeast Anatolia/northern Syria. All in all, chapter 2 is a good, if quite abbreviated, overview of political history, about which a number of supplementary comments might be made, but that still by and large can be

chronology, as has dendrochronology, which also does not permit easy conclusions to be drawn, but which Collins views as the solution for the chronological questions (22). Decisive for the utility of such data is the state of the archaeological find and the corresponding documentation. In this regard, see my critical remarks in “Dendrochronologie und hethitische Archäologie—Einige kritische Anmerkungen,” in Mielke, Schoop, and Seeher, *Strukturierung und Datierung*, 77–94. In this compendium, for which Collins has a limited awareness, there are numerous other articles regarding the problems of chronology in Hittite archaeology.

7. Collins’s list of Bronze Age sites (22) includes an error: instead of “Tarsus,” the text says “Tarsis.” The latter is a place mentioned in the Bible that is located on the Iberian Peninsula.

8. The author herself quite inadvertently hearkens back to this as she cites a “Middle Hittite-period wisdom text” in the “Society” chapter (152).

described as inclusive and successful. The original citations provided in this and the following chapters bring the text to life and provide valuable insight into the character of original Hittite documents.

The third chapter, “Society,” begins with a discussion of the agricultural foundations of Hittite culture. Before proceeding to a subchapter on “Governance” (92–109), which contains sections on “The Kingship,” “The Queenship,” “The Royal Court,” and “The Royal Administration,” Collins initially provides an instructive introduction to concepts that inform us about Hittite social norms. This is followed by an excursus titled “What Do Hittite Treaties Have to Do with the Sinai Covenant?” (109–11), which would have been better suited as an element of the final chapter. In the subchapter “Law and Society” (111–26), the author goes on to depict the intense integration of all elements of society in the system of governance. The subsequent section, however, titled “The Socioeconomic Structure of the Kingdom,” remains too vague. This is the result of a gap in scholarship; broad-based methodical reflections on the character of the Hittite economy are largely lacking. The fragmented information provided by primary sources (philological and archaeological) are seldom integrated into economic models.⁹ In the section that follows, “Daily Life,” Collins bemoans the lack of knowledge in this area of interest but fails to engage in a discussion of archaeological sources that could have considerably enriched the discussion. Yet blame must be assigned in this respect to archaeologists, who have devoted scant attention to the analysis of archaeological material from the perspective of daily life. The subchapter “Arts” (126–138) invoked some consternation on the part of the present reviewer, for the discussion fails to move beyond the pure presentation of specific objects and cannot be seen as an up-to-date treatment of this corpus of historical sources.¹⁰ Particularly in the presentation of figurative works, one would expect a consideration of questions concerning contexts, iconography, and the social meaning of art. This subchapter is followed by a second excursus titled “Yazılıkaya, a Royal Sanctuary” (139–41). The next subchapter, with the title “Letters” (141–55), includes the sections “Historiography,” “Mythology,” and “Prayers,” which provide an interesting depiction of the Hittite literary legacy.

In chapter 4, “Religion,” Collins first considers “The Official Religion” (157–72), which includes the subjects of “The Priesthood,” “Places of Worship,” “Festivals,” “The Sacrificial

9. One of the few exceptions is the work of A. Gilan: “Formen der Transaktion im hethitischen Staatskult— Idee und Wirklichkeit,” in *Geschenke und Steuern, Zölle und Tribute: Antike Abgabenformen in Anspruch und Wirklichkeit* (ed. H. Klinkett, S. Kubisch, and R. Müller-Wollermann; Leiden, 2007), 293–322.

10. See the fundamental remarks on this topic by H. Kühne: “Gedanken zur kunstgeschichtlichen Betrachtungsweise in der Archäologie,” in *Fluchtpunkt Uruk: Archäologische Einheit aus methodischer Vielfalt: Schriften Für Hans Jörg Nissen. Internationale Archäologie* (ed. H. Kühne, R. Bernbeck, and K. Bartl; Studia honoraria 6; Rahden/Westf., 1999), 342–51.

Cult,” “Divination,” and “Prayer.” An additional excursus titled “Did the Hittites Practice Necromancy?” is also included. In the discussion of the temples one should add that the structure of these buildings is similar to the design of palaces and thus a temple may be described as a “palace for the gods.”¹¹ In the following two subchapters, “Deities and Demons” (173–90) and “Cosmogony, Cosmology, and Eschatology” (191–95), the subjects of “Sin and Pollution,” “Ritual Power,” “Sorcery,” and “Death and Afterlife” are extensively illuminated. This chapter systematically and competently guides the reader through the complex religious beliefs of the Hittites, some of which may seem strange to us today.

The congruencies between the Hittite world and the Bible described in a number of different places in previous chapters—especially in the spheres “Covenant Forms,” “Religious Practice,” and “Literary Traditions”—inevitably lead to questions concerning possible direct links. Collins takes up this question more thoroughly in the last chapter, “Hittites in the Bible.” First, she addresses the obvious question, “Who Were the Biblical Hittites?” (197–213). References of late Hittites contemporaneous with the time of the record of the Bible are ultimately only marginal, as no direct connections have been demonstrated. More interesting are the contexts in which Hittites are cited as indigenous inhabitants of Palestine. Collins ultimately ascribes this to an abstract concept of the “Other,” which the Israelites used to construct their own separate identity. In a subchapter, “The Case for Contact” (213–18), she explores possible traces of Hittite culture. She ultimately locates such traces in the time of the *pax Hethitica-Aegyptiaca* in the Late Bronze Age, during which elements of Hittite culture are asserted to have spread geographically via individual migration and were handed down to the Iron Age. The archaeological evidence is certainly scant, yet the overall situation suggests nonetheless that a connection might have been possible.

In an afterword (219–23), Collins presents in her book a range of conclusions regarding the Hittites and their world and why they represent an important area of study. Many Near Eastern cultures have left a mark on our own culture, and that of the Hittites is no exception. This is most apparent in the connections to the Bible. In this way, our knowledge of the Hittites may serve to illuminate our understanding of the Bible and clarify the manifold roots of our own Western culture.

The conclusion of the work consists of suggestions for “Further Reading” (225–27), organized according to individual topic areas. The present reviewer finds the unrepresentative selection and particularly its restriction to English-language works a

11. R. Naumann, *Architektur Kleinasiens: Von ihren Anfängen bis zum Ende der hethitischen Zeit* (end ed.; Tübingen, 1971), 451.

great failing of the book. At the very least, a reference to the important “Hittite Bibliography” should have been included here.¹² A subject index, an index of ancient texts, and an index of modern authors do finally turn the book into a usable tool for further research. The latter index is indeed necessary, as the author has chosen to use a citation system in her footnotes that is quite unfriendly to the reader: in its initial citation, a reference is written out completely, but in following references, only abbreviated. This renders direct work with the sources more cumbersome than it should be.

The goals stated at the beginning of the book—that is, to highlight the connections between Hittite culture and the Bible and to provide an introduction to the history, society, and religion of the Hittites—necessarily leads to a certain unevenness between the individual chapters. While the first chapters, which are strongly based on the approaches used in other syntheses, have a generally factual character, the discussion becomes progressively more concentrated—particularly in the two final chapters, which actually represent specialized essays. This is no doubt due to the fact that they comprise the author’s area of special research interest. This does not, however, negate the value of the book. By means of the introduction in the first chapter and the connections with the Bible that she presents, Collins gradually guides her reader toward her principal goal. The comments presented in this review essentially represent the marginalia of an archaeologist and should not belie the fact that Billie Jean Collins has succeeded in writing an interesting work that is worth reading, one that is certain to have a lasting positive impact on Hittite scholarship.

12. V. Souček and J. Siegelová, “Systematische Bibliographie der Hethitologie 1915–1995” (Prague, 1996), also available at <http://www.hethport.uni-wuerzburg.de/hetbib/> and <http://www.hethport.uni-wuerzburg.de/hetbibs/>.