Gary M. Beckman, Trevor R. Bryce, and Eric H. Cline

The Ahhiyawa Texts

Writings from the Ancient World 28


Aren M. Maeir
Bar-Ilan University
Ramat Gan, Israel

The “Ahhiyawa problem,” the debate whether the Bronze Age Mycenaeans are referred to as the “Ahhiyawa” in Hittite texts of the late fifteenth through the late thirteenth centuries BCE, has been debated for to close to a century. Starting from Forrer’s (e.g., 1924) assertion that Ahhiyawa = Achaeans = Mycenaeans, followed by dissenters who did not accept this (in particular, Sommer 1932), believing that Ahhiyawa was a polity somewhere in Anatolia, this discussion has covered many pages with ink. Although for many this debate is over and Sommer’s view is accepted, there are still some who do not accept it (primarily Steiner 2007, but see partial reservations in Sherratt 2010 [and I recall the late Itamar Singer z”l, repeatedly expressing surprise, and even despair, that the issue still pops up periodically in the professional literature]). Thus, both from the point of view of the history of research, but more so as these texts are reflections of important intercultural contacts of the Late Bronze, with wide ramifications including the possible Bronze Age foundations of some of the traditions of the Trojan War, an accessible collection of the relevant texts, with discussions and overviews, is important.

The three authors of this volume, each of whom has contributed directly and indirectly to the discussions on the Ahhiyawa problem, are to be thanked for putting together this very handy and accessible volume. As the authors explain in the introduction, the volume...
emanates from sitting together at a supper during a conference dealing with the relations between the Hittites and the Mycenaeans held in Montreal 2006 (and we eagerly await the forthcoming publication of the conference proceedings; Teffeteller forthcoming).

The format of the volume is simple and straightforward. Following a preface, the authors provide an introduction (1–8) in which they give the background of the issue, the history of research, and set the stage for the major part of the volume (10–266), which is a presentation of all twenty-eight relevant texts (AhT 1–28). In this section, the texts are organized not in chronological order but following (for texts 1–26) the order as they already appear in Laroche 1971. To this, two relevant texts (AhT 27A–27B) from Ugarit that deal with the Ahhiyawa are added, as well as the recently published, eighth-century BCE bilingual inscription of Warika, from Çineköy, Cilicia (AhT 28). This latter text, which although much later than all the other texts, is very exciting, as there is a mention of dnnym in the Phoenician and hiyawa in the Luwian text, and the latter undoubtedly can be related to the Ahhiyawa/Achaeans. Each of the texts is introduced, provided with a transcription and an up-to-date English translation, and then discussed. The texts are followed by an extended epilogue in which the authors discuss in general Hittite–Mycenaean relations in relation to these texts, but with a focus on general aspects throughout the Late Bronze Age. The volume ends with a list of the sources of the texts, a bibliography, and indices.

All told, this volume is a very welcome addition to the basic materials available for students of the Late Bronze Age eastern Mediterranean. It also makes much of this material accessible to English readers, and the various discussions provide the background so that even the uninitiated can understand the importance and overarching significance of this topic.

There is not much to add to the volume, particularly as it is aimed for a more general scholarly public. Nevertheless, I would note for example Schachermeyr 1986 and Freu 2008 for discussions of some of the “classic” Ahhiyawa issues, as well as Singer 2009 (and now also Singer 2012, 461; and see Schmitz 2009) regarding the Ahhiyawan/Greek connection with the hiyawa mentioned in the Çineköy inscription.

Once again, the authors are to be thanked for this readily accessible and handy volume, which will be of utility for students of this and related topics for many years.

References


