

Middle Hittite Revisited*

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“Middle Hittite” is widely used to refer to a stage of the language on a par with “Old” and “Neo-Hittite”. We thus expect it to be defined on the basis of linguistic criteria.¹ However, Middle Hittite has long been associated with the

* I am grateful to M. Popko for making available to me in advance of publication his forthcoming article “Einige Bemerkungen zum alt- und mittelhethitischen Duktus”, which will appear in *Rocznik Orientalistyczny*. The independent convergence between some of his results and mine is heartening, but there are also serious differences in our overall conclusions. Under these circumstances it seems best to forgo citation of and debate with his views here. I do welcome his proposals as another sign that the time has come for a thorough and vigorous reassessment of both Middle Hittite and Middle Script.

¹ See e.g. E. Neu and C. Rüster, *Hethitische Keilschrift-Paläographie II* (Studien zu den Boğazköy-Texten 21), Wiesbaden 1975, p. vii, E. Neu, “Zum sprachlichen Alter des Hukkana-Vertrages”, *KZ* 93 (1979), pp.64-84, and E. Neu, “Zur Datierung der hethitischen Pferdetexte”, *Kaniššuwat. A Tribute to Hans G. Güterbock on His Seventy-Fifth Birthday*, H. Hoffner & G. Beckman, eds., Chicago 1986, pp. 151-163.

concept of a “Middle Kingdom” in Hittite history. For an excellent discussion of the history of this problem complex see the recent treatment by Alfonso Archi.² The notion of a true “Middle Kingdom” has been severely criticized and now largely abandoned,³ but the use of “Middle Hittite” to characterize the historical period from the immediate successors of Telipinu through the reign of Suppiluliuma I persists.⁴ Such a usage implies that the unity of the period in question can still be maintained on *linguistic* grounds, but this claim is highly problematic when no linguistic evidence is in fact presented to support it.⁵

² A. Archi, “Middle Hittite—“Middle Kingdom”,” *Hittite Studies in Honor of Harry A. Hoffner, Jr.*, G. Beckman et al., eds., Winona Lake 2003, pp. 1-12.

³ For example Archi, *Studies Hoffner*, pp. 9-12.

⁴ See e.g. H. Klengel, *Geschichte des hethitischen Reiches*, Leiden - Boston - Köln 1998, pp. 85-134.

⁵ For example, J. Miller, *Studies in the Origins, Development and Interpretation of the Kizzuwatna Rituals* (Studien zu den Boğazköy-Texten 46), Wiesbaden 2004, p. 463, n. 773, claims that “numerous documents which were according to these criteria dated as OH are in fact exemplary MH documents!”, but he offers no linguistic evidence that the language of the texts cited is Middle Hittite. I am indebted to M. Popko for this reference.

The question I wish to address here is then: is the concept of Middle Hittite as a synchronic stage of the language still justified? If so, on the basis of what criteria? My reassessment of the evidence is based on the following premises. First, the grammar of Middle Hittite, like that of Old and Neo-Hittite, must be based in the first instance on assured compositions of the period attested in contemporary manuscripts. In the case of Middle and Neo-Hittite this means in effect on the basis of *historical* texts. Ritual texts and translation literature cannot furnish probative evidence, since their date of composition cannot be determined on independent grounds.⁶ The evidence of such texts can only adduced once we have established the grammatical features of MH based on historical texts of the period.

⁶ I reject all attempts to date such texts in terms of “cult layers”, content, style, or *assumptions* regarding the earliest possible date of foreign influences. For this reason I cannot accept the arguments of D. Groddek, *AfO* 29 (2002), p. 86, n. 33, who denies the valid claim of D. Salisbury, *JCS* 51 (1999), p. 70, that *andan* was lost in late MH, on the specious grounds that she had overlooked many occurrences of the word in MS. Not a single one of the texts cited by Groddek is probative, since none is a historical text whose composition can be independently dated to MH. In fact, *andan* does occur in some MH historical texts, on which see below.

Second, I follow what appears to be a growing consensus in accepting the arguments of E. Neu that the language of the texts of Suppiluliuma I is MH.⁷

Third, thanks to the efforts of numerous scholars, I view as sufficiently established the innovative linguistic features demarcating Neo-Hittite (beginning with Mursili II) from Middle Hittite. The focus here will therefore be on attempting to find innovative features that distinguish Middle Hittite from Old Hittite—a problem that has heretofore never been adequately addressed.

My survey of MH historical texts yielded eight linguistic innovations that appear to be characteristic of this period. Some of these are morphological, some syntactic. The first is the replacement of *-e* by *-at* as the form of the enclitic animate nominative plural pronoun.⁸ The second is the initial appearance of the enclitic conjunction *-ma* after words ending in consonant instead of non-

⁷ E. Neu, *KZ* 93 (1979), pp.64-84.

⁸ I must note explicitly that on linguistic grounds I take the Treaty of Zidanza II with Pilliya as an OH text in OS, contra Miller, *Studies*, p. 463, n. 773, and J. Klinger, “Synchronismen in der Epoche vor Šuppiluliuma I. - einige Anmerkungen zur Chronologie der mittelhethitischen Geschichte”, *Atti del II Congresso Internazionale di Hittitologia* (Studia Mediterranea 9), O. Carruba et al., eds., Pavia - 1995, p. 242, n. 22.

geminating *-a*.⁹ The third is the occurrence of *kattan* alongside *katta* as a postposition meaning ‘beside, next to, with’.¹⁰ The fourth is the replacement of *andan* by *anda* in the locative sense ‘in(side)’.¹¹ Since *anda* continues to be used in other senses, it is important to note that only its appearance in the innovative locative use is diagnostic. The fifth innovation is the required use of the reflexive

⁹ For the original complementary distribution of *-ma* and non-geminating *-a* in OH see E. Rieken, “Die Partikeln *-a*, *-ja*, *-ma* im Althethitischen und das Akkadogram *U*”, *125 Jahre Indogermanistik in Graz*, M. Ofitsch & C. Zinko, eds., Graz 2000, p. 412, following Melchert. I must emphasize that the full replacement of *-a* by *-ma* spanned the entire MH period, with the appearance of *-ma* after the accented personal pronouns such as *ammuk* and *zik* taking place only in the language of Mursili II.

¹⁰ In OH/OS we find only *katta* in this sense, as established by F. Starke, *Die Funktionen der dimensionalen Kasus und Adverbien im Althethitischen* (Studien zu den Boğazköy-Texten 23), Wiesbaden 1977, pp. 181-187.

¹¹ Salisbury, *JCS* 51 (1999), p. 70. Cf. note 6 above.

particle *-za* in nominal sentences or with the verb ‘to be’ in the first and second persons.¹²

Current evidence from original compositions in contemporary manuscripts suggests that the above innovations are categorical. That is, in a given text we find consistently either the old or new usage for a given feature. The remaining innovations show a gradual pattern in which both the old and new usages can cooccur in the same text. One is the replacement of *ūk* by *ammuk* as a subject ‘I’. Another is the replacement of the enclitic animate accusative plural pronoun *-uš* by *-aš*, which took place last in the position after *nu*, where we sometimes find both *n=uš* and *n=aš* in the same text.¹³ Finally, there is the sporadic use of nominal animate plural *-eš* for accusative plural, and of accusative plural *-uš* for nominative plural—that is, the first stage of the eventual merger of these two cases in Neo-Hittite.¹⁴

¹² H. Hoffner, “On the use of *-za* in Nominal Sentences”, *JNES* 28 (1969), pp. 225-230. As he shows, in the plural the appropriate enclitic personal pronoun may appear instead of the particle *-za*.

¹³ On this innovation see O. Carruba, *Or NS* 40 (1971), pp. 216-219 and E. Neu, *Kaniššuwar*, p. 156.

¹⁴ On this merger see H. C. Melchert, *Atti del II Congresso*, p. 270, following L. McIntyre.

One serious limitation in assessing the validity of even these innovations for establishing MH is the fact that many of the relevant texts are either very short or fragmentary. Thus we unfortunately cannot determine for many of the texts whether they show a given innovation or not.¹⁵ Nevertheless, I believe that we may draw some useful conclusions on the basis of these features, as summarized in Table 1. First, the use of *-at* for the animate nominative plural and at least some instances of *-ma* after words ending in a consonant appear to be common to all MH historical texts. Thus at least these two innovations may be cited as features distinguishing MH from OH. It is likely that we may add to these *kattan* in the sense ‘beside, with’, but this is not yet assured.

¹⁵ It is for this reason that many well-known MH historical texts do not appear in the table below. To be fully explicit, my survey did include all of the following texts, but in their extant form they either give no evidence regarding the diagnostic features or only isolated evidence (as noted): Sunassura Treaty (KUB 8.81+KBo 19.39); Annals of Tuṭḫaliya (KUB 23.12); Letter (ABoT 60) (*kattan*); Letter (ABoT 65) (*n=at* and *-za* + 1stP); Letter (VBoT 2); Zidanza II Landgrant (KBo 32.184); Muwattalli I Landgrant (KBo 32.185); Arnuwanda & Ašmunikal Landgrant (KBo 5.7) (locative *anda*); ‘Protocol (KBo 16.24+25) (*n=uš* 1x); *Bēl madgalti* Instructions (KUB 13.1+) (*n=aš* 1x), (KUB 26.17) (*n=aš* 1x); Oath of Ašḫapala (KBo 16.50); Kantuzzili Prayer (KUB 30.10) (*ūk*).

All the other features cited appear to belong to a later layer of innovations. On the basis of the locative use of *andan*, consistent use of *ūk* as ‘I’, and exclusive use of accusative plural *-uš*, I conclude that the treaty of KBo 16.47 (CTH 28) must belong to the relatively early period of MH (period 1 in Table 1). Their sharing of the first two features likewise suggests that the Kaska Treaties of CTH 139 (KBo 8.35+ etc.) are also early MH compositions, but the absence of evidence for the enclitic accusative plural pronoun leaves some room for doubt.

My further division of the remaining historical texts (into periods 2 and 3 in Table 1) must be regarded as quite provisional, because it is based on a single feature: the use or non-use of the reflexive in nominal and ‘to be’ sentences with the first and second person. The Kaska treaty KUB 23.77+ (CTH 138) shows the older usage, while the Mida of Pahhuwa and Madduwatta texts and the Maṣat Letters show the newer. While I regard this difference as significant, no chronology based on a single feature can be regarded as anything but tentative.

A further problem is the frustrating lack of evidence for this feature in the Treaty KBo 16.27 (CTH 137), which must belong to the reign of Arnuwanda I. I have placed this text in group 2 in the table, implying that it would show the older usage. I have made this choice based on the evidence of the Prayer of Arnuwanda and Ašmunikal cited below. Since the Mida and Madduwatta texts are generally

also dated to Arnuwanda I on historical grounds,¹⁶ this would mean that the innovation took place *during* his reign. The cooccurrence of both the older and newer usage in the language of a single generation would hardly be shocking. An alternative would be to date the Mida and Madduwatta texts somewhat later. This issue clearly cannot be settled solely on current linguistic evidence. I also repeat that the very validity of a division into the periods labeled here 2 and 3 is far from assured.

As noted above, we must first establish MH grammar on the basis of historical texts. However, once we have done so, we may at least cautiously adduce other genres, seeing what the distribution of diagnostic features is in these texts. Table 2 shows the results for a *representative* selection of such texts—an exhaustive survey of texts in MS that might be MH compositions is beyond the scope of this paper. Once again we are frustrated in drawing firm conclusions by the absence of evidence for many of our features in some of these texts. Nevertheless, two points seem reasonably clear.

First, the widespread use of *anda* in a locative sense in place of *andan* and the appearance of *-aš* as animate accusative plural instead of *-uš* at least in environments other than after *nu* assure that all of these texts are from relatively late in the MH period. I have tentatively placed the “Third Horse Training Text”

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in period 2 as perhaps the earliest of these texts on the basis that it shows more than 70 examples of $n=uš$ and none of innovative $n=aš$. The high number of instances of $n=uš$ makes it very unlikely that the absence of $n=aš$ is due to chance.¹⁷ I have also placed the Ritual for Tutḫaliya I and Nikkalmati and the Prayer of Arnuwanda I and Ašmunikal in period 2, based on their showing the non-use of the reflexive in nominal and ‘to be’ sentences with the first and second person. For reasons given above this assignment must be viewed as tentative, as well as the very notion of a division of these texts into two periods “2 and 3”.

Second, the combined evidence of the use of the reflexive in nominal sentences and the use of *ammuk* as a subject suggest that the Kuşaklı letters and the texts showing Hurrian influence (the Hurro-Hittite Bilingual, the Ritual of Samuha, KUB 29.7, and the evocation ritual of KUB 15.34) all come from the late period of MH.¹⁸ The very late date of the Hurro-Hittite Bilingual and the Ritual of Samuha is further confirmed by the appearance in each of the use of

¹⁷ On the other hand, the listing of IBoT 1.36 as using only $n=uš$ and the Hurro-Hittite Bilingual as showing only $n=aš$ should be given no weight, since in each case we have only a single example!

¹⁸ I must, however, make explicit that listing the Kuşaklı letters as showing *only ammuk* in this use is not significant, since we have only a single example.

andan as a postposition meaning ‘(in)to’, a feature otherwise attested only in Neo-Hittite compositions.¹⁹

We may now return to our main topic: the overall status of a linguistically defined “Middle Hittite”. There do appear to exist several innovations that demarcate Middle Hittite from Old Hittite. However, it is impossible to define a single synchronic grammar for the entire Middle Hittite period on a par with Old and Neo-Hittite.²⁰ Therefore as a linguistic concept Middle Hittite is useful only as a label for the transition period during which a succession of innovations cumulatively transformed the grammar of Old Hittite into that of Neo-Hittite.

¹⁹ As established by Salisbury, *JCS* 51 (1999) 61-72. The false claim of Groddek, *AfO* 29 (2002), p. 86, n. 33, that *anda* and *andan* fall together and cooccur in the same usage in NH is again based on his failure to establish the grammar of NH using only assured NH compositions, i.e. historical texts. Cf. fn. 6 above.

²⁰ All synchronic language states are, of course, ultimately fictions in the strict sense, and the boundaries between them arbitrary, because language change is constant. Nor would I deny the existence of some innovations *within* the OH and NH periods. However, internal variation in OH and NH is limited, and we can establish coherent grammars that are generally valid for each of them. This is not true for MH.

A few of these innovations took place early in Middle Hittite, perhaps tied to the period of political and social instability following the death of Telipinu. Existing evidence suggests that the language of Zidanza II was still Old Hittite and that the linguistic effects of the socio-political developments took some time (perhaps several decades) to appear. Most existing Middle Hittite compositions and a further set of linguistic innovations apparently date from the reign of Arnuwanda I and the period immediately following. If this impression is correct, this wave of innovations probably reflects the major changes instituted by Tuthaliya I and shows the typical one-generation lag in linguistic innovation after significant socio-political change.²¹ One may compare for this phenomenon within Hittite the well-established gap between the founding of the New Kingdom by Suppiluliuma I and the linguistic innovations of Neo-Hittite beginning with his son Mursili II.²²

The very modest number of diagnostic innovative features identified so far, combined with the limited and often fragmentary nature of our Middle Hittite

²¹ On the significance of the reign of Tuthaliya I see Archi, *Studies Hoffner* pp.

11-12.

²² A similar one-generation lag in linguistic innovation appears in the history of Chinese in the transition from the Sui Dynasty to the early Tang, 6th-8th centuries CE.

textual evidence (especially the crucial historical texts), precludes our drawing firm conclusions about Middle Hittite chronology solely on the basis of linguistic criteria. I do hope to have shown that linguistic evidence can contribute to and must be addressed in the ongoing debate about the chronology of this period in Hittite history.²³

²³ In order to prevent very serious confusion in this debate, I must also insist that those who use the label “Middle Hittite” in referring to *texts* make explicit whether they are making such a claim on the basis of linguistic or non-linguistic evidence. It should be self-evident that each discipline has the right to draw boundaries between historical periods where it sees fit. If historians can agree that the boundary between “Old” and “Middle” in Hittite history was at the end of the reign of Telipinu, so be it. As the other cases cited above show, this does not mean that the language changed significantly at the same time. So we must be careful not to confuse one type of facts with another.