

Introduction:
Perspectives in Hittitological Research

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In the last few years institutional commitments prevented me from contributing to the writings in honour of Ali and Belkıs Dinçol, David Hawkins, Silvin Košak, René Lebrun, Ilse Wegner: to them I wish to dedicate this volume.

I. The occasion of this workshop coincided with the end of a very positive phase for Hittitology in Italy: thanks to all our colleagues, we have seen our research sector grow in terms of its scientific autonomy – in other words, of recognition of its importance – meaning adequate public financing and more academic positions assigned to Hittitological research. However, since our interests are diversified, some colleagues have preferred to give privilege to collaboration with other research sectors relating to the ancient Near East – a choice that is certainly opportune to consolidate the entry of Hittitological research into the wider area of ancient Near Eastern history. But it is a risky choice, in my opinion, given that higher academic education is again under debate and strategic plans related to scientific research are under re-consideration; the loss of autonomy may be irreversible and bring about a slow depletion of Hittitology in Italy.

In this context, the Florentine team in Hittitology would like to bring together all the leading representatives of ancient Anatolian studies to Florence – philologists, historians and archaeologists – and draw up an account regarding the situation on the advancement of knowledge in this field of study, in order to analyse the prospects of development and define new operational plans.

II. In fact today, one hundred years after excavation first began in the Hittite capital Hattuša, the Hittitological research is now facing a new phase that involves not only consolidation and reflection on what has been acquired so far but also to increase the specialization in the fields of investigation. This phase has coincided with the departure of the great scholars who together developed the discipline, and dominated the entire subject from linguistics to philology and history; hence, it was they who imposed Anatolian studies as an area for specific and autonomous research.

A determining factor was also the continuous increase in documentation, both epigraphic and material, as a result of the discovery in Hattuša itself and on various Anatolian and Syrian sites of deposits of tablets and seals, reliefs and rock inscriptions and finds of great importance, material testimonies of the Anatolian culture from the second and first millennium. Furthermore, the land surveys recently led by Turkish researchers and international teams have given us new elements that are useful in understanding the settlement systems, the land utilization, the ways of communication and so forth; and new excavation sites have recently opened up in various areas of Anatolia.

Furthermore, if and when the capital of Muwatalli is identified, as well as the city where the court was transferred after the evacuation of Hattusa, we would probably get the documentary data that would give us the insight on the localization and distribution of power that occurred in Anatolia between the second and first millennium. As a consequence we'd probably see the appearance or re-appearance of local potentates, where a combination existed of the pluri-secular elements of the Hittite state with their own cultural realities, and perhaps some other elements brought in from outside the country.

Hence, there is a great potentiality to increase the availability of documentation; however, the main obstacle to the implementation of this potentiality is the scarcity of economic resources destined to this type of research in every country.

Although, the fact that Anatolian studies is a research sector open to ever increasing development, it has been made evident from the multiplication of settlement discoveries of the Hittite period over the last few decades. Certain surprising aspects have also turned up on the resumption of excavations on already-known sites, which show that good results are obtained when archaeological research and philology are integrated. Therefore, the overall reorganization of work was rendered necessary, and has brought a strengthening of international collaboration and a swifter procurement of work instruments, indispensable for those working in this area of research.

In Germany, the birthplace of Hittitology, it was Gernot Wilhelm who, as director of the archives in Mainz, gave the go-ahead to quickly complete the publication in the KBo series of copies of the tablets from Hattusa. He also made accessible the materials in the archives to all researchers from around the world. Thousands of tablets found in Hattusa during the excavation campaigns after 1933 will soon be available to researchers in almost complete form. Instead, from our colleagues in Turkey, we are awaiting publication of the fragments that remain unedited from previous excavations.

One fact should be noted from the initial results of this undertaking: it was possible to join fragments found in different years and, at times, in different places, either by chance or will, in order to reconstruct the original tablets.

The correct reconstruction of the tablets, combined with the progress of linguistic and palaeographic studies, has consented a definite dating of the ancient sources with a very slight margin of approximation, and has thus made available to scholars certain elements on which to develop their research.

Parallel to the publication of the ancient texts are the great ongoing projects of the Hittite dictionaries. When the projects are completed, the new dictionaries will replace the 1952 "historical" dictionary of J. Friedrich.

Lastly, as to the research on Anatolian languages and cultures, we today see a remarkable advancement and an ever greater specialization (it is no longer thinkable today that a scholar can confront with the same competence linguistic, historic, cultural, and philological themes), which has also brought about a notable development of the studies on minor Anatolian languages, Indo-European and otherwise.

Overall, even in the study of the Anatolian languages, one must be aware of the need to have solid scientific research tools and detailed data banks and to make certain of any

point acquired before going ahead with their interpretative work.

This means it is necessary to separate certain data from the residue of old interpretations that are outdated by new documentary proof, but which have survived by force of inertia and the prestige of the scholars who proposed them.

There is the same need in the research on Hittite history and culture.

Books published in the last decades on the history and religion of the Hittites surely mark advancement on the level of data compared to previous work; however, they should not be considered definitive. The history of the Hittites, the organizational structure of the state that dominated the Levant for centuries, the legislative, juridical and ideological tools of power (namely, the system of power), the relationship between true religiosity and the official religion, and of the political apparatus, remain in large part yet to be analysed.

If the overall, and useful, reconstructions present elements of criticality, the textual, philological and historic studies on specific aspects of history and Hittite religion have, instead, produced very important results, even if a great deal remains to be analysed, especially in the cultural ambit. Let's think about the studies on mythology, which have allowed us to overcome old prejudices, and those on the prayers, and literature and documentary typologies, from where emerged the complexity and multiplicity of relationships among the cultures in Hittite Anatolia, the comprehension of which is often complicated by scribal uses. These studies prove clearly we have to distinguish between the culture of the scribal *élite* with their conventions or, sometimes, their games, and the real culture, an expression both of the ruling class and the basic communities.

From the definition of these aspects derives the real comprehension of the Hittite culture and the concept itself of what "Hittite" means.

III. About the definition of Hittite culture, or better, according to recent anthropological and sociological trend, about the Hittite identity, I would like underline some things.

To speak of the Hittites as an Indo-European people is only a descriptive fact that pertains to the structure of the language (to the lexicon only partly). But the Hittites are a much more complex cultural reality, formed and influenced by all the cultures present on Anatolian territory and open to the outside world – a culture strictly correlated to the Near Eastern and Levantine context where it is located, whose originality depends on the specificity of the Anatolian world in terms of material and human resources, and ecological and geographical situation.

The Anatolia of the second millennium B.C. had a distinctly vast multiculturalism. This is documented in the 19th and 18th centuries (in the tablets of the Assyrian merchants in Kaniš / Neša) by anthroponyms and theonyms belonging to different languages. Subsequently, multiculturalism is evident during the period of the existence of the Hittite state, from written texts in the various languages spoken in Anatolia. These texts were composed inside the scribal school of Hattuša, conserved in the archives and libraries of the capital (and in other cities) and utilized for religious practices (in festivals, rituals, and myths): this is an exceptional case in the Near East.

In the Hittite state, therefore, several languages were spoken, and not only dialects of

one common language; and what we call "Hittite" was in fact the official state language used for writing all documents of a political and administrative nature as well as most religious texts. The other non-Indo-European and Indo-European Anatolian languages were used especially as a cult language in the liturgies of festive celebrations, in magic rituals and mythological texts.

Once the obstacle of comprehending these other unknown languages was overcome, if at all, scholars tried to pinpoint the distinctive elements of the various Anatolian cultures - linguistic elements (which are the easiest to trace), religious elements (the gods of the different communities), and elements in the cult (specific ritual habits) - but known, distinctive traits, which the ancients would refer to, do not emerge: in other words, the interferences and superimpositions seem to prevail.

This may depend not only on the type of documentation available to us, forever mediated by the centralized political power, but also, in my opinion, by the type of state organization that the Hittites set up, that is bent not on separation and distinction but on inclusion and evaluation of all different constituent elements. When the state, along with the scribal school, was set up and chose Hattuša as the central seat of political administration, the Anatolian cultural traditions and languages voicing them found scope for expression, thereby elevating them for the first time to the rank of written languages.

Once the constitution of the state with Hattuša as its capital was established, the people we call "Hittite" adopted a definition of their political entity and of themselves associated to the territory: KUR^{URU} *Hatti* is the state and LÚ^{MES} ^{URU} *Hatti* are its inhabitants - a definition, and if we wish an identity of the territorial type. But *Hatti* is not a precise territorial area with defined borders, except for the coastline, *Hatti* (at times, *Hattuša*) is the territory governed by the king of Hattuša that may have, depending on the period, variable extensions.

In truth, the territory of Hatti stretches out until it reaches a territory that is politically organized according to the model of the palatine state: while the tribal areas are considered "empty" and deserted and, once they are conquered (or re-acquired), they become (or become again) "land of Hatti" (typically are the Kaška territories in the north of Anatolia), the territories of western Anatolia, which are organized into local potentates, or the areas of eastern Anatolia, which are organized into tribal confederations (or later the Syrian states), they belong to the political orbit of Hatti, but strictly speaking they are not Hatti.

The relationships with these other territories are regulated by sworn treaties through which peace is kept (*takšul*), a condition to which the Hittite sovereigns routinely aspired to and managed to maintain only partially in the second half of the 13th century in the period which Itamar Singer defines *pax hethitica*.

Therefore, Hatti is a territory of variable dimensions and the people of Hatti are all those who inhabit it, as are their languages and traditions - traditions toward which the central power shows respect when they are consistent with the system.

Hatti is a territory *handan* or "in order" and *parkui* or "pure and without sin" where fair offers are made and where there is the awe of the gods (*naḥšarat*); it is the territory that the gods have created and trusted to the sovereign, because it is he who maintains order by

their will. The people and country of Hatti are created jointly by the gods and exist as a function of the "house of the Sun God" and hence of the house of the king who represents it: concomitantly, the birth of a territorial and politico-institutional identity (Hatti does not exist without the people of Hatti and neither of them exists without the king who governs on behalf of the gods and guarantees the maintenance of this cosmos separated by primordial chaos).

The scribes of Hattuša thus give a picture of an Anatolian cultural identity associated with its territory and state institutions, a cultural identity that is always multiethnic and gives expression to all its components which naturally vary over the course of more than 400 years in the life of the "Hittite" state, but no one is excluded.

Thus, from the official documentation, it emerges that:

The term Hittite does not define an ethnic group with its own language or a specific territory, specific divinities, customs or traditions distinct from those of any other ethnic group.

The term "Hittite" refers to a multi-faceted and complex reality whose constitution has been contributed to by all the Anatolian cultural components as a result of the work of constant political mediation adopted by the reigning dynasty and the ruling class.

"Hittite" also means the songs written in the Hattian language, the myths that have gods as protagonists bearing Hurrian or Luwian names, and rituals dictated by the magicians of Pala and Luwiya; "Hittite" means the legislative texts or historiographic texts written in the official language of the state or in Accadian, the language of international communications.

The Hittite state appears as a multiethnic state within, where tolerance and respect is practiced toward all the traditions compatible with the system; it is an organization that faces the outside world, yet with its own political and territorial identity, and defined borders alongside the great powers of the Near East, while the small, subordinate states to which it recognizes a specific territorial identity are in some way part of the country of Hatti because it is bound by its own treaties and personal relationships.

On the basis of this system there is the political wisdom of some great sovereigns of Hattuša who have chosen cohesion and avoided conflict among the groups that are different in language and local tradition, sidestepping the fact that these groups would recognize their own identities. All people are Hatti people; they speak different languages, but they have common institutions; the sovereign guarantees the rights of the various communities belonging to the territory that he governs and administers; he venerates and honours the gods of all the people (each god has its own *sacellum* in the capital and receives homage during the events like the great state festivals, and even local festivals); apparently, ethnic discrimination does not exist toward those who are "different", once they have accepted the communal rules of living.

These are the features that determine the originality of the Hittite culture among the cultures in the Near East, and not the fact they speak an Indo-European language.