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A CENTURY OF HITTITE TEXT DATING AND THE ORIGINS OF THE HITTITE CUNEIFORM SCRIPT

THEO VAN DEN HOUT

WITH very few exceptions the collection of records from the Hittite capital Ḫattuša was found in a single archaeological layer that came to an end around 1200 BC. This was the time when the Hittite ruling class decided for reasons still unknown to give up their residence and to move elsewhere. The rich and varied corpus they left behind is one of the pillars on which we base our knowledge of the language, history and culture of the Hittite kingdom and empire. It reflects the history of the earliest kings of c. 1750 BC all the way down to the last known rulers of around or shortly after 1200. The collection as a whole must be dated by the latest material in it, which gives us that approximate date of 1200 BC but it does not necessarily apply to each of its constituent elements. There are documents that were composed by the first kings of the 18th and 17th centuries BC. But when were they written down? When did the Hittites acquire their script? How was their rise to literacy and how did the corpus of texts develop over time?

The issue of Hittite text dating, the origins of the typical Hittite variant of the cuneiform script, and its introduction into Hittite society have rarely been considered in tandem. On one extreme the Hittites were supposed to have already acquired their script on their entry into Anatolia as “Hittites” *avant la lettre*, on another it was the Old Hittite king Ḫattušili I who, campaigning in northern Syria around the middle of the 17th century,¹ brought the script with him back to the Hittite capital Ḫattuša at which time the Hittites just started to write Hittite. In the first scenario there is an enormous undocumented gap in our evidence, in the second there is allegedly no problem. Obviously, text dating is of

¹ In the following I will give dates according to the Middle Chronology without, however, any prejudice towards, for instance, the Short Chronology. For a recent evaluation of the several options and their impact on Hittite historical reconstruction and the value of Hittite sources for ancient Near Eastern history in general see G. WILHELM, *Generation Count in Hittite Chronology*, in M. BIETAK, H. HUNGER (edd.), “Contributions to the Chronology of the Eastern Mediterranean” (Wien 2004), pp. 71-79.

essential importance in correctly assessing the data of the oldest known Indo-European language, be it in absolute (when do we date our texts?) or relative terms (how did the Hittite language develop over time?). In the following I will retrace the steps of the various ideas expressed on these topics since the beginnings of Hittitology, now about a century ago, up to the present day. Since the discipline seems to have reached something of a stalemate for the older phases of the Hittite language, I will subsequently suggest an alternative view.

THE PERIOD 1907 TO 1952

According to Hugo Winckler's 1907 report on the first excavation seasons at Boğazköy-Hattuša the extraordinary size of many of the tablets as well as their script reminded him of the finds from el-'Amārna in Egypt with its tablet collections dating to the early decades of the 14th century BC.¹ As far as the contents were accessible to Winckler they seemed to confirm his expectation that the oldest tablets in the collection indeed dated to the Amarna period and covered five generations hence.² When the Hittite language was "deciphered" by Friedrich Hrozný, he, too, following Winckler simply stated that the texts in general dated to the 14th and 13th century.³

The first more systematic reflections on these questions we owe to the Swiss scholar and first Hittitologist Emil Forrer. In 1921 he wrote that "mit ganz vereinzelt Ausnahmen alle Texte <in> demselben Zeitraum von etwa einer Generation für die erst damals begründete Bibliothek niedergeschrieben wurden, ... auch wenn ihre Abfassung in ganz verschiedene und z.T. sehr alte Zeit fällt."⁴ This view was not so much archaeologically motivated, it seems, as it was inspired by the fact that the script was considered so uniform that the records had to have been written over a relative brief period of time and that the names of attested scribes overwhelmingly dated to the later 13th century.⁵ Shortly

¹ H. WINCKLER, *Vorläufige Nachrichten über die Ausgrabungen in Boghaz-köi im Sommer 1907*, in "Mitteilungen der Deutschen Orient-Gesellschaft" 35 (1907), pp. 8, 14f.

² H. WINCKLER, in "Mitteilungen der Deutschen Orient-Gesellschaft" 35 (1907), p. 16.

³ F. HROZNÝ, *Die Lösung des hethitischen Problems*, in "Mitteilungen der Deutschen Orient-Gesellschaft" 56 (1915), p. 20.

⁴ cf. R. OBERHEID, *Emil O. Forrer und die Anfänge der Hethitologie* (Berlin-New York 2007), p. 55. The exceptions referred to are the sealed *Landschenkungsurkunden*. The same view was expressed in print by E. FORRER in his article *Ausbeute aus den Boghazköi-Inschriften*, "Mitteilungen der Deutschen Orient-Gesellschaft" 61 (1921), pp. 28.

⁵ Cf. E. FORRER, *Die Inschriften und Sprachen des Hatti-Reiches*, in "Zeitschrift der Deutschen Morgenländischen Gesellschaft" 76 (1922), pp. 180f.

afterwards he expanded the time span of a single generation to about a century, putting the foundation of the “library” around 1300.¹ Until the 1950’s this was to be the prevailing opinion:² the corpus as we have it dates to the 13th century although some tablets contain compositions that go back to earlier centuries. The logical next question of how these were transmitted remained unasked, let alone answered.

As to the origins of the typical Hittite cuneiform variant, scholars’ ideas reached much further back in time. The same Forrer stated in 1922 that this type of cuneiform had to have been adopted in the period of the Ur III dynasty (2112-2004 BC) since it could not be explained from the so-called Old Babylonian cursive from the days of the dynasty of Hammurabi (1894-1595 BC).³ The latter uses signs that are generally more developed than the Old Hittite variant that would come to be known as “Old Script” (os). No doubt in an attempt to narrow down the rather large gap between the borrowing from the Ur III period and the actual beginning of Hittite history around 1650 BC Forrer considered the possibility of a North Syrian intermediary but rejected this thought by lack of a fitting precursor from that area. The idea of an early Ur III borrowing had, moreover, the advantage – not made explicit by Forrer – that it circumvented another problem: since the early second millennium the Anatolians had lived for over two centuries in close contact with merchants from Assyria who maintained a network of trading posts in central Anatolia and had their own type of cuneiform that is so different from the later Hittite one that the latter could not be explained as an Assyrian offshoot. In spite of their probably daily contact with the Assyrians and their script there is no evidence that the local population ever used it to write their own Hittite language. It seemed inconceivable to most scholars that the Hittites would not have had a script and, if so, that they would have passed up the opportunity to adopt it from the Assyrians with whom they lived in such close quarters for such a long time.⁴ For a Syrian intermediary to fit the time frame it would have to

¹ “Zeitschrift der Deutschen Morgenländischen Gesellschaft” 76 (1922), pp. 182. He did, however, acknowledge the existence of an earlier “archive” that had been destroyed by the Gašgaeans. Occasionally (ibid. 182f.), according to Forrer, records had been transferred from the older collection to the later “library”: these were the *Landschenkungsurkunden*.

² Cf. F. SOMMER, *Hethiter und Hethitisch* (Stuttgart 1947), p. 40, A. GÖTZE, *Kulturgeschichte Kleinasiens* (München 1933), p. 161, E. LAROCHE, *La bibliothèque de Hattuša*, in “Archiv Orientalní” 17 (1949) p. 14.

³ E. FORRER, *Die Boghazköi-Texte in Umschrift. Erster Band* (Leipzig 1922), p. 3.

⁴ Cf. F. SOMMER, *Hethiter und Hethitisch* (Stuttgart 1947), p. 27.

be in between the Ur III period and the beginnings of the Old Hittite kingdom. This would make it contemporaneous with the Old Assyrian presence in Anatolia and thus lead to the inevitable conclusion that the Hittites while knowing the Old Assyrian script would have preferred the more complicated Syrian variant. Forrer therefore opted for the equally hypothetical scenario of a borrowing from an Old Babylonian scribal school that still knew and taught the much more conservative monumental script in cursive form.

In 1931 Albrecht Götze considered the same two options more explicitly but did not commit himself:¹ either some Syrian mediator or the Hittites themselves might have had their script already and thus felt no need for the Old Assyrian one.² Possible sources included Sargon's legendary sojourn in Anatolia. As late as 1947 Ferdinand Sommer took things a step further: that the Hittites might have been without a script of their own during the Old Assyrian Colony Period was so unthinkable for him that it was the ultimate argument that they must already have acquired their cuneiform script when they entered Anatolia. He even used this as an argument in favor of an entry into Anatolia from the east: where else would they have picked up the cuneiform writing system?³

Without touching on the question of Anatolian-Old Assyrian relations Benno Landsberger and Hans Güterbock claimed in the late 1930's that a borrowing from the Ur III period was unnecessary and even improbable:⁴ the typical Hittite cuneiform showed that it had shared paleographic developments with the Middle Babylonian and Middle Assyrian cuneiform variants and thus must be more recent. Returning to the initial impressions of Winckler and Hrozný, they pointed at its resemblance to the ductus visible in the Amarna texts which also had certain traits that were absent from standard Old Babylonian. Perhaps, so they suggested, the "westländische Koine" to which both the Amarna and the Hittite script belonged, went back to an Assyrian tradition exported to the west. At the same time Güterbock clearly stated in the second part of his 1938 dissertation that during the reign of Anitta the Hittites wrote Old Assyrian in the Old Assyrian cuneiform witness the then recently

¹ "Zeitschrift für Assyriologie" NF 6 (1931), pp. 72f.

² cf. also A. GÖTZE's, *Kulturgeschichte Kleinasien* (München 1933), pp. 66, 81, 172. In the 1933 edition of his *Comparative Grammar of the Hittite Language* (Philadelphia) Edgar STURTEVANT (p. 33) quoted both FORRER and GÖTZE.

³ F. SOMMER, *Hethiter und Hethitisch* (Stuttgart 1947), pp. 8f.

⁴ B. LANDSBERGER, H. G. GÜTERBOCK, *Das Ideogramm für simmiltu* ("Leiter, Treppe"), in "Archiv für Orientforschung" 12 (1937-1939), pp. 55-57.

(1935) published document found at Alişar written in Anitta's name and said to have been sealed with his seal.¹ He therefore supposed the Anitta-Text to have been written in Assyrian and only later translated into Hittite.²

The observations of Forrer, Goetze, and Landsberger/Güterbock had been of a purely paleographic nature comparing Hittite sign shapes with their Old Akkadian and Old Babylonian counterparts.³ In his 1941 *Introduction to Hurrian* Ephraim Speiser added "orthographic-phonetic" considerations and for the first time adduced the Hurrians as the source for the Hittite cuneiform variant. The "Akkado-Hittite" syllabary as found in Nuzi, Amarna, and Boğazköy had a number of features in common that likewise could easily be explained from Old Akkadian but were not found in Old Babylonian. Such characteristics included the use of the PI-sign for /wa/ and BI for /pi/ (pí), the QA-sign as allograph (ka₄) for KA and GA and no special signs for the emphatics, the Š-series to render /s/ and the Z-series for the dental affricate /ts/, and the ignoring of the voiced-voiceless opposition offered by the Old Babylonian writing. Combining the lack of evidence for early Akkadian-Hittite contacts with the positive observation that the Hittites used the same graphic means (double vs. single writing of intervocalic stops) as (Mittani-)Hurrian to express phonological opposition, he concluded that "the Hittite syllabary is an adaptation of the Hurrian system of writing."⁴ Although Speiser's wording is decidedly more vague, the latter statement has usually been interpreted to mean that the Hittites had directly borrowed their cuneiform variant from the Hurrians. At that point the oldest Hurrian source written in this Akkado-Hittite syllabary was the Mittani letter "dating from ca. 1400",⁵ just early enough for the general impression that the bulk of the Hittite corpus dated to the 13th century.

A somewhat different approach was taken by Emmanuel Laroche in 1949.⁶ He looked at the preserved colophons with scribal names and laid

¹ I. J. GELB, *Inscriptions from Alishar and Vicinity* (Chicago 1935), pp. 19-21 (Text 1).

² H. GÜTERBOCK, *Die historische Tradition und ihre literarische Gestaltung bei Babyloniern und Hethitern bis 1200. Zweiter Teil: Hethiter*, in "Zeitschrift für Assyriologie" 44 (1938), pp. 142f.

³ Cf. especially the table in E. FORRER, *Die Boghazköi-Texte in Umschrift. Erster Band* (Leipzig 1922), p. 2.

⁴ E. SPEISER, *Introduction to Hurrian*. (New Haven 1941), pp. 13f., 61. This way of expressing the phonological opposition had been described earlier by E. STURTEVANT, *Comparative Grammar of the Hittite Language* (Philadelphia 1933), pp. 73-86.

⁵ E. SPEISER, *Introduction to Hurrian*. (New Haven 1941), p. 4.

⁶ *La bibliothèque de Hattuša*, in "Archiv Orientalní" 17 (1949), pp. 7-23.

out in more detail than Forrer had done that the overwhelming majority of them stemmed from the reigns of Ḫattušili III and Tudḫaliya IV, that is, the middle and second half of the 13th century.¹ Among them were those with Hurrian, Kizzuwatnean and Cappadocian names. Combining these observations with the Hurrian-mediated Old Akkadian writing conventions and the *communis opinio* that no Hittite texts were recorded before 1400 BC, he claimed that scribes from south-west Anatolia (Kizzuwatna), where Indo-European Anatolian languages (Luwian) and Hurrian met, were responsible for the cuneiform writing system that became so characteristically Hittite.²

THE PERIOD 1952-1969

While the Mittani-Hurrian cuneiform could be considered a possible source for the Hittite one from both an orthographic and paleographic standpoint, the notion of apparent scribal inertia or disinterest on the side of the Hittites while living with the Assyrians persisted although it had been rarely addressed explicitly since the days of Forrer, Goetze, and Sommer. The problem, on the other hand, of the chronological gap between the moment our corpus had been written down and when many texts had actually been composed seemed to be solved when in Boğazköy, during the first post-World War II campaign of 1952, a fragment was found in a clearly pre-13th century level. The fragment in question was 29/k, soon published as KBo 7.14 (1954). It became known as the Zukraši Text so named after the general of the king of Aleppo mentioned in the text. The events narrated in the text were to be dated to the days of Ḫattušili I and his Syrian campaigns of around 1650 BC. The ductus of the fragment was characterized by a dense script with few word spaces. Especially striking was the fact that the simple connector *nu* was followed by the next word without any intervening space. This feature was already known from some tablets whose compositions likewise dated from the reign of Ḫattušili I.³ In his preliminary report on the excavation season Heinrich Otten combined these various strands of information and declared the tablet an “Originaltafel” from the 17th century.⁴ As said, the same scribal characteristics had already been observed on a number of tablets and fragments that had come from earlier exca-

¹ “Archiv Orientalní” 17 (1949), pp. 11f.

² “Archiv Orientalní” 17 (1949), p. 14.

³ Cf. H. OTTEN, *Die inschriftlichen Funde*, in “Mitteilungen der Deutschen Orient-Gesellschaft” 86 (1953), p. 60 w. n. 2.

⁴ “Mitteilungen der Deutschen Orient-Gesellschaft” 86 (1953), p. 63.

vations but what had hitherto perhaps been considered an idiosyncrasy of a 13th century scribe or group of scribes now took on chronological significance.¹ All such texts could now be dated to the first period of Hittite history. What was later to be recognized as “Old Script”, however, still went undetected: just as Forrer had stated in the early 1920’s, Otten explicitly remarked how, once the Hittites had borrowed their script, it had apparently gone on to exist “ohne eigene Weiterentwicklung.”²

The implications of this find and of Otten’s conclusions were far-reaching. The corpus as it was left by the Hittite ruling class around 1200 BC was no longer a chronologically rather undifferentiated mass of records all written down within about one century or century and a half, but turned out to be a diverse group accumulated over almost 500 years from the mid-1600’s to shortly after 1200. It also meant that because of its having been found almost completely in a single archaeological stratum, that the Hittites apparently had held on to certain documents and records for hundreds of years. Although it was nowhere stated explicitly, it also ruled out a Mittani-Hurrian origin for the Hittite cuneiform on purely chronological grounds.

Meanwhile, the scenario of a Syrian intermediary initially considered as a theoretical possibility by Forrer and Goetze, could now be revived after Sir Leonard Woolley had excavated the ruins of ancient Alalakh just north of the modern Syrian border in the years 1937-1939 and 1946-1949. In 1953, the same year that Otten had published the Zukraši fragment, the Alalakh texts were published in partial transliteration and handcopies by D.J. Wiseman.³ Woolley had unearthed from Level VII some 300 tablets that showed a ductus which, albeit not identical to the Hittite one, was very close to it and looked like a reasonable forerunner. It was Güterbock who in his 1954 article on “The Hurrian Element in the Hittite Empire” first mentioned the similarities of the Syrian ductus used at Alalakh VII and the Hittite cuneiform.⁴ The city had belonged to the kingdom of Yamhad with its center in Aleppo/Halab and personal names attested in the Level VII texts showed a sizable Hurrian influence, thus

¹ Cf. H. OTTEN, *Schrift, Sprache und Literatur der Hethiter*, in G. WALSER (ed.), *Neuere Hethiterforschung* (Wiesbaden 1964), p. 13.

² *Die inschriftlichen Funde*, in “Mitteilungen der Deutschen Orient-Gesellschaft” 86 (1953), p. 63, cf. also *ibid.* p. 60: “Die Schrift ... entspricht aber in ihrem Duktus völlig den neuheithitischen Formen.”

³ D. J. WISEMAN, *The Alalakh Tablets* (London 1953).

⁴ H. GÜTERBOCK, *The Hurrian Element in the Hittite Empire*, in “Cahiers de Histoire Mondiale” 2 (1954), pp. 383-394.

bringing the Hurrian element back into the discussion about the origin of the Hittite script. Alalah VII, moreover, offered a perfect historical link for a borrowing: it had been the Old Hittite king Hattušili I who had destroyed the city in the second year of his reign and his grandson and successor Muršili I had put an end to the kingdom of Yamhad as a whole by taking Aleppo. Acknowledging Sturtevant's and Speiser's observations on the peculiarities that Hittite orthography shared with that of the Hurrian Mittani letter, Güterbock hypothesized that these contacts could be "considered a possible occasion for such a borrowing."¹

In 1961, in one of the few contributions entirely devoted to "The Akkado-Hittite Syllabary and the Problem of the Origin of the Hittite Script" Thomas Gamkrelidze compared the orthographic-phonological characteristics of the Hittite system with the other members of the Akkado-Hittite group in more detail than any one before him.² According to him the Hittite system shows no substantial orthographic deviations from this group and especially not from Mittani Hurrian, in the use of the PI sign for /wa/, of QA as /ka₄/, in the lack of emphatics or in the failing distinction between voiced and voiceless stops as offered by the Old Babylonian syllabary. These features and the double vs. single writing to compensate for the latter in particular would allow a direct borrowing from Hurrian à la Speiser. However, the sibilants do not:³ Hurrian has a phoneme /s/ as shown by the alphabetic texts from Ras Shamra and the Mari texts and the words written with the S-series in the Mittani letter are thus best taken as representing /s/. This makes it difficult to believe that the Hittites would have chosen to represent their /s/ with signs of the Š-series. Likewise the Hurrian voiced sibilant /z/ was written with signs from the Z-series and this does not explain why the Hittite ζ stands for the dental affricate /ts/.⁴ Gamkrelidze also rejected Speiser's theory of the Hittite syllabary being dependent on the Hurrian because he, too, held on to the idea that the Hittites could not possibly have lived side by side with the Assyrians without having adopted their script.⁵ Therefore, the Hittite cuneiform must antedate the Old Assyrian variant which

¹ *The Hurrian Element in the Hittite Empire*, in "Cahiers de Histoire Mondiale" 2 (1954), p. 392. GÜTERBOCK repeated his views in a review in the "Orientalistische Literaturzeitung" 1956, p. 516, adding that, of course, the place of borrowing did not necessarily have to be Alalah itself.

² "Archiv Orientální" 29 (1961), pp. 406-418.

³ "Archiv Orientální" 29 (1961), pp. 409f.

⁴ For an excellent summary of GAMKRELIDZE's reasoning cf. G. HART, *Problems of Writing and Phonology in Cuneiform Hittite*, in "Transactions of the Philological Society" 1983, pp. 104f.

⁵ "Archiv Orientální" 29 (1961), pp. 411f., 413 n. 30.

would lead to chronological difficulties vis-à-vis the much later Nuzi and Mittani syllabaries of the 15th-14th century.¹

With some chronological stretching the 1952 find of the Zukraši fragment (“an original inscription dating from the beginning of the seventeenth century”²) meant for Gamkrelidze that the Hittites had already had a full-fledged cuneiform writing system in place “at the end of the eighteenth century.” He thought it “quite natural to assume” therefore that the Anitta text (“20th-19th cent. B.C.”³) had been composed in Hittite and in the same script as that of the Zukraši fragment.⁴ As a consequence the origins of the Hittite cuneiform had to be projected even further back to a moment before the beginning of the second millennium. If, however, the Hittite cuneiform could not be directly derived from the Old Akkadian one, there must have been an intermediary that provided the model for both the Hittite and Hurrian systems: this was the North Syrian system as known from Alalah and Qatna. The contacts of especially Alalah with the earliest Hittite rulers Hattušili and Muršili showed the “close links between N. Syria and the Hittite world as early as the beginning of the second millennium B.C.”⁵

With the proven existence of exemplars from the 17th century through the Zukraši fragment, Annelies Kammenhuber in her 1963 (but published in 1969) contribution to the volume on *Altkleinasiatische Sprachen* in the *Handbuch der Orientalistik* gave up the idea that the Hittite script had been borrowed from the Mittani Hurrians and that the corpus was largely a product of the 13th century. She repeated Otten’s statement that the sign shapes had not really changed over the course of some 400 years of Hittite history.⁶ She rejected, however, Gamkrelidze’s attempt to prove that the Hittites had already acquired a script before the period

¹ GAMKRELIDZE, in “Archiv Orientalní” 29 (1961), pp. 412 n. 22, did, however, reject SOMMER’s idea (see above) that the incoming Indo-Europeans picked up the cuneiform script along their way into Asia Minor, because it “is fairly certain that writing originates among sedentary tribes along with the appearance of state organization.” This is not necessarily true: see M. MACDONALD, *Literacy in an Oral Environment*, in P. BIENKOWSKI, CHR. MEE, E. SLATER (edd.), *Writing and Ancient Near Eastern Society. Papers in Honour of Alan R. Millard* (New York-London 2005), pp. 58-64, and 74.

² “Archiv Orientalní” 29 (1961), pp. 412.

³ “Archiv Orientalní” 29 (1961), p. 413.

⁴ It seems somewhat inconsistent when GAMKRELIDZE, in “Archiv Orientalní” 29 (1961) p. 413 n. 30, in order to explain the inscription on the spearpoint of the same king Anitta, concedes that the Hittites could have used the Old Assyrian script “in earlier periods ... for inscribing texts in Akkadian.”

⁵ GAMKRELIDZE, in “Archiv Orientalní”. 29 (1961), pp. 413.

⁶ *Altkleinasiatische Sprachen* (Leiden-Köln), p. 162.

of the Old Assyrian trading network in Anatolia because the earliest evidence for the Syrian variant was from Alalah VII, that is, the 18th-17th century.¹ It would not explain, moreover, why documents like the letter of Anumherbi, king of Mama, to Waršama of Kaneš used Old Assyrian language and script instead of the “Hittite” language and script. Seeing the introduction of script as a sign of higher culture she suggested that the (Indo-European) Hittites of Anitta’s days had not yet assimilated to the *Kulturhöhe* brought in by the Assyrians and had felt no need for a script *tout court*. It was only with the reign of Hattušili I that they chose to adopt a North Syrian cuneiform variant. In his presidential address to the American Oriental Society of 1962² Güterbock reiterated this view (which he had already tentatively expressed in 1954) but now added that, although one might have expected the Hittites to have written initially in Akkadian only, it was clear that “the step to writing Hittite was, however, already taken during Hattusili’s own reign; for we have fragments of an elaborate account of his war ... written in the Old Hittite language and in the old handwriting.” Akkadian versions of several Old Hittite compositions, though, show that “this was still regarded the proper means of written expression.”³

Writing in 1964 Frederic Bush repeated the arguments of Speiser and Gamkrelidze for a non-Babylonian but rather Old Akkadian origin of the type of sign forms that one finds in the Boğazköy texts but nevertheless sought to keep the ties with the Hurro-Mittanian writing system. To avoid the chronological problem caused by the Zukraši-Fragment he pointed at the existence of an early Hurrian state in Upper Mesopotamia in the late Akkad or Ur III Period as evidenced by the Tiš-atal inscription. That state must have borrowed and adapted the Old Akkadian syllabary and although Bush does not explicitly say so, this writing system must have given off the model for both the Hittite and the Hurro-Mittanian cuneiform.⁴

¹ *Altkleinasiatische Sprachen* (Leiden-Köln), pp. 161-164. Although the book came out in 1969, KAMMENHUBER’s manuscript is explicitly dated to October 1963 (cf. KAMMENHUBER *ibid.* p. 357).

² Published as *A View of Hittite Literature* in “Journal of the American Oriental Society” 84 (1964), pp. 107-115.

³ “Journal of the American Oriental Society” 84 (1964), p. 108.

⁴ F. BUSH, *A Grammar of the Hurrian Language* (Diss. Brandeis University 1964); this view was repeated by G. HART, *Problems of Writing and Phonology in Cuneiform Hittite*, in “Transactions of the Philological Society” 1983, pp. 105f., 110, 111.

THE PERIOD 1969 TO THE PRESENT

The find of the Zukraši fragment had enabled scholars to recognize an uncontaminated older language stage and from the mid-60's onwards an often heated debate ensued about the relative dating of texts with the Old Hittite "originals" as a fixed point of departure. This exchange, focusing mostly on linguistic characteristics, need not be summarized here as it has been reconstructed in some detail already.¹ However, the find of the Zukraši-fragment lay already back by more than a decade now and it was still thought that the sign forms were largely identical to those known from the 14th and 13th century texts. This changed with the publication of *Ein althethitisches Ritual für das Königspaar* in 1969² by Otten and Vladimír Souček. They compiled a short list of twelve signs, citing for each an old form as it appeared on the main exemplar KBo 17.1 of the Old Hittite ritual compared with mostly two shapes of the same sign as they had been given by Forrer in his 1922 list.³ In 1972 the *Hethitische Keilschrift-Paläographie* by Christel Rüster offered a more thorough comparison of older and younger sign forms as attested in eleven carefully selected manuscripts.⁴ In a brief introduction to the book Otten explicitly called the recognition of the paleographic differences a correction of his initial observation that the sign shapes on the Zukraši-fragment were the same as those of later texts⁵ and he ended with a list of eighteen signs that were especially significant for dating purposes.⁶ Interestingly, only three of these signs had also been part of the initial list in StBoT 8.⁷ A more detailed description by Erich Neu and Rüster of how one was to go about dating Hittite texts incorporating paleography followed a year later (1973) in the first *Festschrift* for Otten. In 1975, finally, Neu and Rüster published a second *Keilschrift-Paläographie*⁸ offering a

¹ Vgl. S. HEINHOLD-KRAHMER, I. HOFFMANN, A. KAMMENHUBER, G. MAUER, *Probleme der Textdatierung in der Hethitologie* (= THeth. 9, Heidelberg 1979).

² H. OTTEN, V. SOUČEK, *Ein althethitisches Ritual für das Königspaar* (Wiesbaden 1969 = StBoT 8).

³ cf. *Ein althethitisches Ritual für das Königspaar* (Wiesbaden 1969 = StBoT 8), p. 43; the signs were GA, TA, ŠA, E, UN, UT(U), NA, KI, ḪAR, URU, LI, ME-EŠ.

⁴ Chr. RÜSTER, *Hethitische Keilschrift-Paläographie* (Wiesbaden 1972 = StBoT 20).

⁵ *Hethitische Keilschrift-Paläographie* (Wiesbaden 1972 = StBoT 20), p. vii.

⁶ *Hethitische Keilschrift-Paläographie* (Wiesbaden 1972 = StBoT 20), p. x: TAR, AK, SAG, IK, KÙ, NI, NAM, GI, UK, AZ, ZU, DU, AL, E, URU, Û, LI, ŠAR.

⁷ I.e., E, URU, and LI.

⁸ E. NEU, Chr. RÜSTER, *Hethitische Keilschrift-Paläographie II* (Wiesbaden 1975 = StBoT 21).

selection of eleven New Hittite manuscripts (with the exception of KUB 24.4+ which was considered a possible Middle Script tablet¹). All were datable because of either royal or scribal names but the compositions often went back to pre-New Hittite times. This made it possible to study the degree of modernization of each of the manuscripts and their retention of older forms.

The recognition of the Old Hittite ductus (*althethitischer Duktus*) – or Old Script (“os”) as it came to be called in English – was a watershed moment. Since the find of the Zuckraši-Text a substantial overhaul of both Hittite political and linguistic history had been hotly debated through a combination of linguistic observations going back to the few tablets that showed the same general scribal characteristics as the Zuckraši-Text and other fragments displaying similar grammatical features.² Conclusions based on the latter group were subject to considerable skepticism, however, because of the constant copying by scribes and the danger of modernization, conscious or unconscious, or possible archaizing tendencies. But now careful paleographic observations made it possible to draw up “objectively” differentiated sub-corpora and a history of the Hittite language based on non-linguistic criteria lay ahead. One could actually see the language develop over the centuries. Over the next decades a detailed paleographic system in three major stages (os c. 1650 - 1500 - Middle Script [MS] 1500 - 1350 - New Script [NS] 1350 - 1180 BC), each with subdivisions³, was developed that by the end of the 20th century had found all but general acceptance.⁴ With this a satisfactory answer to at least one of the two questions raised at the beginning of this essay seemed to have been found, that is, regarding the internal development of the Hittite text corpus and language.

¹ s. *Hethitische Keilschrift-Paläographie II* (Wiesbaden 1975 = StBoT 21), p. 3.

² For the main players in this discussion (Onofrio CARRUBA, Philo HOUWINK TEN CATE, Annelies KAMMENHUBER, Erich NEU, Heinrich OTTEN et al.) see the *Forschungsgeschichte* in S. HEINHOLD-KRAHMER ET AL., *Probleme der Textdatierung in der Hethitologie* (Heidelberg 1979 = THeth. 9), pp. 7-62.

³ See the table in F. STARKE, *Die keilschrift-luwischen Texte in Umschrift* (Wiesbaden 1985 = StBoT 30), p. 27.

⁴ See E. NEU, *Althethitische Ritualtexte in Umschrift* (Wiesbaden 1980 = StBoT 25), pp. xiii-xxii, F. STARKE, *Die keilschrift-luwischen Texte in Umschrift* (Wiesbaden 1985 = StBoT 30), pp. 21-27, J. KLINGER, *Untersuchungen zur Rekonstruktion der hattischen Kultschicht* (Wiesbaden 1996 = StBoT 37), pp. 32-39. It should be noted that for (datable) texts in Hittite the ms period is really represented from around 1400 only with texts from the reigns of Tudḫaliya I and Arnuwanda I. For the 15th century we just have the *Landschenkungsurkunden* in Akkadian.

There were at first, however, considerable objections against the methodology employed by Neu and Rüster in devising the paleographic system.¹ The critique concerned not so much the reality of the os which was widely accepted, as the transitional stages towards the latest period of the Hittite text corpus and the sometimes confusing array of terms describing the various phases.² As Otten and Souček stated in StBoT 8,³ assuming a not too long interval between the events referred to in the Zukraši-text and their recording in KBo 7.14, its chronological position at the beginning of Hittite history seemed relatively assured (see however below). The same could be said of texts safely assigned to the last few kings of the empire shortly before and around 1200 BC. But the further removed one gets from either of these two vantage points, the more the uncertainty grows about the relation in time between events and their recording and, as a consequence, about the representativeness of the script and the language for any particular stage. Also, the selection of texts in the two *Keilschrift-Paläographien* was not very wide and the dating of some of them was open to debate which made the conclusions drawn less convincing.

Another problem concerned the relative chronology of the alleged stages of paleographic development. What seemed to be taken as chronologically successive periods might, for instance, as well be hands of younger scribes working alongside older colleagues at the very same time. A particularly compelling example of this was brought forward by Howard Berman in his review of Neu's *Althethitische Ritualtexte in Umschrift*.⁴ In the introduction to this work Neu had identified two successive types of script within the os, *Typ I* and *Typ II*. Looking at the consistency with which the vowels /e/ and /i/ were written and kept apart in the various manuscripts (or not) Berman had to conclude that the two types were "in use concurrently during the Old Hittite period."⁵

To this one can add the somewhat unsettling instances of joins between fragments whose script had been characterized previously as be-

¹ For this see the summary in S. HEINHOLD-KRAHMER ET AL., *Probleme der Textdatierung in der Hethitologie* (Heidelberg 1979 = THeth. 9), p. 54-62.

² Vgl. z.B. A. KAMMENHUBER, *Das Ende des typisch alten Duktus im Hethitischen*, in M.A. DANDAMAYEV ET AL. (edd.), *Societies and Languages of the Ancient Near East. Studies in Honour of I. M. Diakonoff* (Warminster 1982), p. 151; for a listing of the terms used cf. ST. DE MARTINO, *Il ductus come strumento di datazione nella filologia ittita*, "La Parola del Passato" 47 (1992), p. 88.

³ *Ein althethitisches Ritual für das Königspaar* (Wiesbaden 1969 = StBoT 8), p. 42.

⁴ E. NEU, *Althethitische Ritualtexte in Umschrift* (Wiesbaden 1980 = StBoT 25).

⁵ "Bibliotheca Orientalis" 38 (1981), pp. 653f.

longing to different stages¹ which seem to betray a certain degree of uncertainty or subjectivity in dating text fragments. There are also some rare cases of “later” sign forms turning up in manuscripts that are otherwise classified as os.²

Meanwhile, the question of the origin of the Hittite cuneiform and the development of literacy seemed to have receded into the background since Gamkrelidze’s detailed study and its immediate reactions. Two scholars, Laroche and Güterbock, returned in more or less explicit terms to the older idea that during the Old Assyrian period Hittites had already been familiar with and had used a Syrian-based variant of cuneiform writing. Having largely eschewed the scholarly upheavals surrounding the dating discussion of the 1960’s and 70’s Laroche addressed the question of the Hittite cuneiform and its introduction again in 1978.³ He distinguished three phases in the history of Hittite writing. He took the use and steady decline of Akkadograms over the course of Hittite history as a hint that writing in Hattuša had initially been the realm of Babylonian scribes writing in Akkadian for their Hittite masters and teaching a first local generation. He remained agnostic, however, as to where the typical Hittite cuneiform variant in its oldest form exactly had come from.⁴ The second phase started after the devastating raids on the

¹ Cf. A. KAMMENHUBER, *Das Ende des typisch alten Duktus im Hethitischen*, in M. A. DANDAMAYEV ET AL. (edd.), *Societies and Languages of the Ancient Near East. Studies in Honour of I.M. Diakonoff* (Warminster 1982), pp. 152-154, D. GRODDEK, *Eine althethitische Tafel des KI.LAM-Festes* (München 2004), p. 10.

² Compare, for instance, the newer shapes of AL in KBo 17.1 ii 19 and 36, as already indicated by S. HEINHOLD-KRAHMER ET AL., *Probleme der Textdatierung in der Hethitologie* (Heidelberg 1979 = THeth. 9), p. 99, or the later shape of AZ in KBo 3.22, 61 (for the alleged later forms of URU [thus HEINHOLD-KRAHMER ET AL., *ibid.*] in the same manuscript see, however, E. NEU, StBoT 26, x n. 7). Note also the new IK in KBo 25.112 i 5 (confirmed by collation of the original; I am very grateful to the Director of the Anadolu Medeniyetleri Müzesi in Ankara and the curator of the tablets, Dr. Rukiye Akdoğan for the permission to collate this fragment in the summer of 2008), given as a typical example of the ductus type I by E. NEU, StBoT 25 Tafel I. The fact that it was written vertically in the intercolumnium does not change the fact that this shape was apparently known to the Old Hittite scribe but suppressed(?) by him elsewhere in favor of the older variant (cf. ii 12, 13, 19, 20, iii 3, 4, 8, 9, 12, 20).

³ E. LAROCHE, *Problèmes de l’écriture cunéiforme hittite*, in “Annali della Scuola Normale Superiore di Pisa” 1978, pp. 743f., 747f.

⁴ Parenthetically E. LAROCHE, in “Annali della Scuola Normale Superiore di Pisa” (1978), p. 747, offered “(Ebla)?” That there existed Eblaite-Kaneshite contacts is clear from the mention of Eblaite traders in Old Assyrian texts, cf. J. G. DERCKSEN, *The Old Assyrian Copper Trade in Anatolia* (Istanbul-Leiden 1996), p. 201, and see *ibid.* pp. 153, 160, 164 (reference courtesy Edward Stratford).

capital by the Gašgeans in the 15th century. It was followed by a renewed interest in Syria in the Amarna-period. The Amarna-Syrian ductus imported from there and observable in certain documents after Telipinu was part of a first reorganization of the Hittite administration after the Gašgaea destruction. This Syrian ductus existed side by side with the continuing Hittite one. It was in this period that the bilingual Akkadian versions of texts like the Annals of Ḫattušili I, the Telipinu Proclamation and the Uršu-Text were made, not as products of Akkadian scribes but of native Hittites who had learned the language in school. The third and last phase was initiated by Ḫattušili III after yet another destruction and subsequent restoration of the “library” in Ḫattuša.

On the basis of evidence for contacts between Central Anatolia and Mari in the Old Assyrian period on the one hand and recent theories about the Hittite primacy of the Anitta-Text Güterbock considered it in 1983 “by no means impossible” that Anitta had employed both Assyrian and Syrian-trained scribes: the former when dealing with the merchants, the latter for writing Hittite.

The 1989 sign list by Rüster and Neu stated as the *communis opinio* that the Hittite cuneiform goes back to an Old Babylonian cursive as it was used in northern Syria in centers like Alalah (Level VII) and that it was probably brought to Ḫattuša in the context of Ḫattušili I’s campaigns in that region.¹ This by now fairly widespread notion had not led to serious re-evaluations of the state of Hittite literacy during the Old Assyrian period. This in spite of the fact that there was evidence of Anatolians sometimes having used the Assyrian script for their own internal purposes and that, when they did, it was in the Old Assyrian language. This suggests that people turned to Assyrian scribes when the need to have something written down arose (or that some might actually have learned to write the script themselves) but that no real need was felt by the local ruling elite and their people for a script to write down their own language for purely internal purposes. That there still is a certain surprise and maybe even a lingering uncomfortable feeling about this among modern scholars may explain the excitement when among the more than 20,000 Old Assyrian records in Anatolia a tablet was identified that showed the north Syrian ductus.² The tablet is known as

¹ *Hethitisches Zeichenlexikon* (Wiesbaden 1989), p. 15.

² Cf. K. HECKER, *Zur Herkunft der hethitischen Keilschrift*, in “Studies on the Civilization and Culture of Nuzi and the Hurrians” 8 (1996), pp. 291-303. The find was originally made public by HECKER at the first International Hittitological Congress in Çorum in 1990, published in its proceedings two years later and republished in the venue quoted here.

Kt k/k 4 and is supposed to come from the Kültepe Ib Level. Meanwhile several other such Syrian tablets are said to have been recognized.¹ Karl Hecker, the editor of the text, points out that the route from Assur to the Anatolian heartland led through Northern Syria and that Syrian influences have been shown in Old Assyrian glyptic from Kaneš. In short, there is evidence of a Syro-Anatolian transfer of goods that might have included script as well. The text in question is, admittedly, an incoming letter from Syria exchanged between a sender Eḫliaddu and its recipient Unapše. Both names, the former a Hurro-Semitic compound, the latter Hurrian, are at home in Alalāḫ, albeit Unapše attested in Alalāḫ Level iv (13th cent.) only.² The text mentions North-Syrian towns like Tunip, Ḫaššu, and Qatna and the language is clearly Babylonian and not Old Assyrian. In spite of the title of his article (“Zur Herkunft der hethitischen Keilschrift”³) Hecker’s goal is simply to show that the Syrian ductus was not completely absent from Kaneš. It does not mean, thus Hecker, that Piṭḫana or his son Anitta would have introduced the Syrian cuneiform variant in Kaneš. As he rightly points out, all official documents attributable to both kings fully adhere to Old Assyrian scribal conventions both in language and script.

Another important discovery was published by Mirjo Salvini in 1994.⁴ It concerned, among others, a letter written by Ḫattušili I to a local North-Syrian king by the name of Tunip-Teššub and preserved in practically pristine condition. Its provenance, unfortunately, is unknown but the document (like the others published by Salvini along with the letter⁵) is likely to stem from the area of the addressee. As Salvini states,

¹ K. HECKER, “Studies on the Civilization and Culture of Nuzi and the Hurrians” 8 (1996), pp. 303. The three pieces (Kt 90/k358-360) discovered by C. MICHEL are listed by her in *Tablettes paléo-assyriennes de Kültepe* (Paris 1997), p. 59 (reference courtesy C. MICHEL). K. R. VEENHOF, *The Old Assyrian List of Year Eponyms From Karum Kanish and its Chronological Implications* (Ankara 2003) identified Kt 91/k 539 and quotes from it *ibid.* p. 17 (“Give the tablet to a scribe who understands Shubarean [i.e., Hurrian] and let him read it”). The line in question would seem to fit a North Syrian origin of the tablet better than an Anatolian or Assyrian one.

² On Hurrians in the Kültepe Texts see now G. Wilhelm, in J. G. DERCKSEN (ed.), *Anatolia and the Jazira During the Old Assyrian Period* (Leiden 2008), pp. 181-194.

³ This title was taken from the opening chapter of CHR. RÜSTER, E. NEU’s *Hethitisches Zeichenlexikon* (Wiesbaden 1989).

⁴ M. SALVINI, *Una lettera di Ḫattušili I relativa alla spedizione contro Ḫaḫḫum*, in “Studi Micenei ed Egeo-Anatolici” 34 (1994), pp. 61-80 with Tav. I-IV.

⁵ One of the other texts is a prism with lists of Ḫabiru people with many Hurrian names: cf. M. SALVINI, *The Ḫabiru Prism of King Tunip-Teššup of Tikunani* (Roma 1996), p. 9f. W. RÖLLIG, *Sprachen und Schriften der Levante in Anatolien*, in M. NOVÁK, FR. PRAYON,

here we have “finalmente ... una tavoletta originale, sicuramente datata all’Antico regno ittita, e per di più al suo fondatore.”¹ The author offers a valuable and detailed paleographic comparison of the letter’s sign inventory with that of, among others, Hecker’s *Kt k/k 4* and the *Land-schenkungsurkunde* known as the İnandık Tablet which back then was still assumed to date to the reign of Ḫattušili I. Salvini observes how the ductus of the letter is much closer to the former than to the latter but stops short of farther reaching conclusions.

The origin of the Hittite cuneiform has been the focus of two recent articles by Jörg Klinger.² Starting from the premise that the script must have been brought in by Akkadian scribes who – one would expect – taught a first local generation, he wonders about the complete lack of os manuscripts of such Mesopotamian classics as the Legends of Sargon and Naram-Sin or the genre of lexical texts, the staple of the Akkadian scribal student. Also, the absence of Akkadian versions of os texts (e.g., the Anitta Text, the Tale of Zalpa or the Palace Chronicles) is surprising. Moreover, the ductus of Akkadian manuscripts from the Old Hittite kingdom (*in casu* the Tunip-Teššub letter and the Uršu-Text) is clearly different from the Hittite one but supposedly stems from the same period. This forces him to conclude that there were two distinct groups of scribes simultaneously working in Ḫattuša: one for texts in Akkadian and one for texts in Hittite. Klinger is also the first scholar to realize that it may be unlikely to assume that once the cuneiform script had been introduced, local scribes immediately started writing Hittite (see below): there must have been a period of learning, of experimenting. Therefore, if Hittite was already being written under Ḫattušili I it seems better to assume with Klinger that the actual introduction of the script had preceded him. Although Hecker’s identification of the North Syrian ductus already in the Old Assyrian period offered an attractive solution for this problem, Klinger does not explicitly use it as an option.

A.-M. WITKE (edd.), *Die Außenwirkung des späthethitischen Kulturraumes* (= AOAT 323), p. 208, sees this as an argument that the Hurrians were intermediaries in the transfer of the Hittite cuneiform.

¹ M. SALVINI, in “Studi Micenei ed Egeo-Anatolici” 34 (1994), p. 69.

² *Wer lehrte die Hethiter das Schreiben?*, in S. ALP, A. SÜEL, III. Uluslararası Hititoloji Kongresi Bildirileri, *Acts of the IIIrd International Congress of Hittitology* (Ankara 1998 = ICH 3), pp. 365-375, s. also id., *Zur Paläographie akkadischsprachiger Texte aus Ḫattuša*, in G. BECKMAN, R.H. BEAL, G. McMAHON (edd.), *Hittite Studies in Honor of Harry A. Hoffner* (Winona Lake 2003), pp. 237-248. The latter article is, however, for the purposes of this contribution less relevant since it deals mainly with the use of non-Hittite ductus forms in the 14th century and later.

The latest attempt at dealing with the complicated question of the origin of the Hittite script proposes to see much more of a continuum in writing in Hittite Anatolia and considers a single source for its cuneiform script as simplistic. Given occasional indications that local Anatolians did use the Old Assyrian cuneiform Sylvain Patri¹ finds it improbable that the Hittites would not have written until Ḫattušili I ascended the throne. In the article he reconstructs the Hittite phonological system on the basis of loanwords and Hittite names in non-Hittite sources and focuses on the single vs. double writing in order to bring out an opposition that Patri ultimately describes in terms of non-aspirated vs. aspirated.² Although an “innovation spécifiquement Hittite,” he sees the roots of this system already reflected in the way Assyrians adopted Hittite loanwords in their texts which was subsequently institutionalized by the Hittites.

THE PRESENT SITUATION

Recently, new dissenting voices are being heard and the currently used dating system has come under pressure. It has been shown by Jared Miller³ and Maciej Popko⁴, for instance, that some texts that had been labeled os, could only have been written after 1500 BC, that is, when the os period according to the above system had already ended. Sign shapes that were once seen as solid criteria for paleographic distinction now turn out to be less trustworthy.⁵ Both scholars propose an expansion of the chronological range of the os all the way up to Tudḫaliya I, that is, the end of the 15th century. In general it has been recognized that the distinction between os and ms is one of ductus (i.e., general characteristics of a scribal hand like density, slant, beginning of lines very much

¹ S. PATRI, *Perception et adaptation des consonnes hittites dans certaines langues méditerranéennes du XIII^e siècle*, in “Zeitschrift für Assyriologie” 98 (2008), forthcoming.

² This is the same conclusion that GAMKRELIDZE, “Archiv Orientalní” 29 (1961), p. 418, had reached.

³ *Studies in the Origins, Development and Interpretation of the Kizḫuwatna Rituals* (Wiesbaden 2004 = StBoT 46), 463f. n. 773.

⁴ M. POPKO, *Einige Bemerkungen zum alt- und mittelhethitischen Duktus*, in “Rocznik Orientalistyczny” 58 (2005 [2006]), pp. 9-13, and *Althethitisch? Zu den Datierungsfragen in der Hethitologie*, in D. GRODDEK, M. ZORMAN (edd.), *Tabularia Hethaeorum. Hethitologische Beiträge. Silvin Košak zum 65. Geburtstag* (Wiesbaden 2007), pp. 575-581.

⁵ So, for instance, G. WILHELM apud J. SEEHER, *Die Ausgrabungen in Boğazköy-Ḫattuša* 2004, in “Archäologische Anzeiger” 2005, p. 77 n. 18, who has now cast doubt on the validity of the TA sign as a possible dating criterion. The allegedly os form with the heads of its two inscribed verticals sticking out above the upper horizontal, can be observed in charters dated to the late-15th century. The later form of TA with the heads hanging from the upper horizontal is attested in a charter to be dated around 1500.

to the left) rather than individual sign shapes.¹ Fragments that had been identified separately as os and ms proved to be joining each other as parts of one and the same original tablet. Finally, the fragment of the Zukraši tablet that had triggered the entire system and provided its sole mooring is nowadays classified as undetermined (“ah. ?/mh. ?”²). In traditional chronological terms this means that it could have been written anywhere between 1650 and 1400 BC. This dating renders it useless as the basis for the system it was supposed to provide.

To this we may add some objections concerning the introduction of scripts in general.³ When a society decides to adopt a script from elsewhere, writing in its own vernacular does not happen overnight but may take a generation or more to develop. Foreign scribes from the society whose script is adopted are “imported” but since they are not likely to be fully conversant in the host language that moreover has no scribal conventions anyway, they will write what they are asked to record in their own language. They will also train local scribes in their own language. It may be the scribes of that generation who after having been fully trained will take the first experimental steps toward writing down the host language but it may as well be later. Another important element in this is that the foreign language may become the language that is associated with the status of writing, a status of learnedness that is not easily shed by the newly trained scribes. If we assume that Ḫattušili I had imported the cuneiform script, it would therefore be surprising or perhaps even unlikely that there had immediately been an active chancery drafting internal documents in Hittite. Since we do have Hittite compositions that have to be attributed to Ḫattušili and his successor Muršili I, Jörg Klinger suggested – as we saw – for precisely this reason that the introduction would likely have preceded Ḫattušili in spite of the fact that there is no record to support this.⁴

In view of these objections a fresh approach seems called for. Two approaches remain. We can look at:

¹ S. J. KLINGER, *Wer lehrte die Hethitern das Schreiben?*, in S. ALP, A. SÜEL, III. *Uluslararası Hititoloji Kongresi Bildirileri, Acts of the IIIrd International Congress of Hittitology* (Ankara 1998 = ICH 3), 372 n. 19; cf. also M. ПОПКО, in *Althethitisch? Zu den Datierungsfragen in der Hethitologie*, in D. GRODDEK, M. ZORMAN (edd.), *Tabularia Hethaeorum. Hethitologische Beiträge. Silvín Košák zum 65. Geburtstag* (Wiesbaden 2007), p. 576.

² Cf. <http://www.hethport.uni-wuerzburg.de/hetkonk/>.

³ For this see TH. VAN DEN HOUT, *Reflections on the Origins and Development of the Hittite Tablet Collections in Ḫattuša and Their Consequences for the Rise of Hittite Literacy*, forthcoming.

⁴ S. J. KLINGER, *Wer lehrte die Hethitern das Schreiben?*, in S. ALP, A. SÜEL, III. *Uluslararası Hititoloji Kongresi Bildirileri / Acts of the IIIrd International Congress of Hittitology* (Ankara 1998 = ICH 3), pp. 369, 374.

- the only securely datable tablets, that is, those that in diplomatic terms are called “true and legally authentic originals” written at the moment when they were first issued and of which it can be ruled out that they were copied at a later moment. These are first of all sealed records and graffiti on objects

- testimonia of writing in Hittite society: what do compositions attributable to Old Hittite kings tell us about chanceries and their administrative practices, about tablets and archives?

Let us first look at the second approach. To be sure, there was writing going on: Hattušili issued what is commonly known as his “Political Testament” which, so the decree itself stipulates, should be read out loud to his successor on a monthly basis. A remark in his annals makes it clear that they were written down on a publicly displayed statue of himself or very near it. Similarly, there are references to tablets in texts that can be ascribed to Hantili I, Ammuna and Telipinu. None of these texts as we have them are old exemplars but all are clearly 13th century scribal products. Of the Old Hittite compositions only a single one can be proven to be a true and legally authentic original written when it was first issued: the letter of unknown provenance written in the name of Hattušili I in Akkadian to a local Syrian king called Tunip-Teššub and published by Salvini in 1994 (see above). Being a letter it is one of those unique “originals” and the ductus is not the Hittite one but the northern Syrian variety. When looking at scribes, archival practices, and other indicators of scribal administrative practices we can be brief: not a single observation brings us beyond 1500 BC., that is, before the period of the Hittite king Telipinu.¹

Returning to the first approach, that is, restricting ourselves to records that are with certainty datable on non-paleographic, non-archaeological but purely diplomatic grounds, we can make up the following list of documents up to about 1400 BC:

<i>date</i>	<i>record</i>
middle/late 17th cent.	letter of Hattušili to Tunip-Teššub
c. 1550	ax of Ammuna ²
c. 1520- c. 1400	charters (c. 60)
c. 1490	treaty of Taḫurwaili

¹ For more detail cf. Th. van den Hout, forthcoming.

² M. SALVINI, *Un documento del re ittita Ammuna*, in “Studi Micenei ed Egeo-Anatolici” 32 (1993), pp. 85-89.

c. 1450	texts written by Ḫanikuili ¹
c. 1400	sword of Tudḫaliya I

Of the above documents the oldest one, as we saw, does not yet display the typical Hittite ductus. The earliest record to do so is the lugged ax bearing the inscription

tabarna Ammuna LUGAL.GAL ša išar INIM ušpaḫu BA.ÚŠ

“Tabarna, Ammuna, Great King: whoever violates (his) just word will die”

From then on, starting with around 60 sealed charters (*Landschenkungs-urkunden*), the ductus seems firmly established. All documents are internal records except for the treaty with king Taḫurwaili of Kizzuwatna which is an international diplomatic document. Documents other than the charters are hardly available until the late 15th century. Only with the ascension of Tudḫaliya I around 1425 BC does Hittite literature finally take off and a steady stream of compositions datable to him and his successors starts flowing until the end of the Hittite empire shortly after 1200 BC. The surprising fact about the above table, however, is that all of the texts are in Akkadian, not in Hittite. Especially interesting are the charters that are written in a completely Akkadian formulary language (“The Great King has taken and given to PN as a gift. In the future nobody shall sue PN over it. The Labarna’s words are made of iron, they are not to be rejected, not to be broken. Whoever falsifies them, his head shall be cut off. This tablet PN, scribe, has recorded in GN in the presence of PNs.”) with a number of Hittite technical terms inserted. The last known charter dates to around or just after 1400 BC and is completely in Hittite except for the Akkadian skeleton in which it is framed. By this time we no longer encounter any Akkadian versions of Hittite internal records. The evidence as we have it can be tabulated as follows:

		compositions attributable to ²	contemporary records in non-Hitt. cuneiform	contemporary records in Hitt. cuneiform
Hittite kings				
Anitta	c. 1750	x (Hitt.) ³	x (Akk.) ⁴	

¹ For these s. TH. VAN DEN HOUT, forthcoming.

² References will be given to the entries in E. LAROCHE, *Catalogue des textes hittites* (Paris 1971); for the most recent information the reader is referred to the website of S. KOŠAK’s, *Konkordanz der hethitischen Keilschrifttafeln* at <http://www.hethport.uni-wuerzburg.de/hetkonk/>.

³ = CTH 1.

⁴ S. I. J. GELB, *Inscriptions from Alishar and Vicinity* (Chicago 1935), pp. 19–21 (Text 1), and T. ÖZGÜÇ, *The Dagger of Anitta*, in “*Belleter*” 20/77 (1956), pp. 33–36.

		compositions attributable to	contemporary records in non-Hitt. cuneiform	contemporary records in Hitt. cuneiform
Hittite kings				
Ḫattušili I	c. 1650	x (Hitt. / Akk.) ¹	x (Akk.) ²	
Muršili I	c. 1600	x (Hitt. / Akk.) ³		
Ḫantili I		x? (Hitt.) ⁴		
Zidanta I				
Ammuna		x (Hitt.) ⁵		x (Akk.) ⁶
Ḫuzziya I				(x? (Akk.)) ⁷
Telipinu	c. 1500	x (Hitt. / Akk.) ⁸		x (Akk.) ⁹
Taḫurwaili				x (Akk.) ¹⁰
Alluwamna				x (Akk.)
Ḫantili II				x (Akk.)
Zidanta II		x (Akk.) ¹¹		x (Akk.)
Ḫuzziya II				x (Akk.)
Muwatalli I				x (Akk.)
Tudḫaliya I	c. 1425	x (Hitt.) ¹²		x (Akk.) ¹³
Arnuwanda I	c. 1400	x (Hitt.) ¹⁴		x (Hitt.-Akk.) ¹⁵

¹ = CTH 4, 5, 6, 14, 15.² This is the letter to Tunip-Tešsub.³ = CTH 12, 13.⁴ = CTH 10.1, 11?⁵ = CTH 18.⁶ This is the ax published by M. SALVINI, in "Studi Micenei ed Egeo-Anatolici" 32 (1993), pp. 85-89.⁷ Only if any of the anonymous *Landschenkungsurkunden* could be ascribed to him (cf. G. WILHELM, *Zur Datierung der älteren hethitischen Landschenkungsurkunden*, "Altorientalische Forschungen" 32 [2005], p. 276).⁸ = CTH 19, 20, 22.⁹ Except for the treaty of Taḫurwaili (next) this and the following entries in this column up to and including Muwatalli I refer to the *Landschenkungsurkunden* issued and sealed by these kings (see CTH 221-222).¹⁰ This is the sealed copy of the treaty of Taḫurwaili with Eḫeya of Kizzuwatna, s. H. OTTEN, *Das Siegel des hethitischen Großkönigs Taḫurwaili*, in "Mitteilungen der Deutschen Orient-Gesellschaft" 103 (1971), pp. 59-68.¹¹ = CTH 25.¹² For a list of possible Hittite texts to be ascribed to this king s. H. KLENGEL, *Geschichte des hethitischen Reiches* (Leiden, Boston, Köln 1999), pp. 104-107.¹³ This is the sword of Tudḫaliya for which s. A. ERTEKIN, I. EDİZ, *The Unique Sword from Boğazköy/Ḫattuša*, in M. J. MELLINK ET AL., *Aspects of Art and Iconography: Anatolia and its Neighbours. Studies in Honour of Nimet Özgüç* (Ankara 1993), pp. 719-725, and A. ÜNAL, *ibid.* pp. 727-730.¹⁴ For a list of possible Hittite texts to be ascribed to this king s. H. KLENGEL, *Geschichte des hethitischen Reiches* (Leiden, Boston, Köln 1999), pp. 116-120.¹⁵ = CTH 223.

The third column (*compositions attributable to*) gives the evidence we have, selected on contents: the records in question, either in Hittite (“Hitt.”) or Akkadian (“Akk.”), mention a king as the author of the text or contain historical information that allows us to attribute it to that king. However, these documents are either 13th century copies or are written in OS or MS that we cannot date with any precision. The fourth column (*contemporary records in non-Hitt. cuneiform*) mentions the kings for whom we have records that we can assume to be contemporaneous, true and legally authentic originals, that is, issued or made in that king’s reign and never copied. Their cuneiform script is, however, not yet the familiar Hittite one. The fifth column, finally, likewise lists contemporaneous records but this time in the Hittite cuneiform variant.

So, on the face of the evidence one might formulate the following alternative hypothesis: the Hittite cuneiform as we know it is likely to have been introduced from a north Syrian source somewhere between the reign of Hattušili I and the first half of the 16th century. Given the time needed for its development from that source into the characteristic Hittite variant, an earlier date may be more likely than a later one. In keeping with typological parallels from elsewhere, initially the language of the documents was that of the source of the script: Akkadian. In the course of the 15th century Hittite emerges in written form in the charters for technical terms that were either not available in Akkadian or that came more naturally to the early generations of scribes that had been trained in a Hittite environment. While the Akkadian formulary of the *Landschenkungsurkunden* may have continued for reasons of tradition, using Hittite for other genres (e.g. the Laws) possibly started already early in the 15th century. The use of Akkadian for internal purposes had completely disappeared by the end of the 15th century. The Akkadian formulary of Arnuwanda’s charter KBo 5.7¹ is the very last vestige of this tradition. All other compositions datable to Tudḫaliya I and Arnuwanda I are available in Hittite only with no evidence of Akkadian versions. Our corpus of documents, hitherto paleographically dated as OS or MS, was probably written down during the 15th and first half of the 14th century.

ADVANTAGES AND CONSEQUENCES

The advantages of this alternative are that it closely follows the available evidence and needs the least suppositions or extrapolations. We need

¹ CTH 223

not suppose that upon the introduction of the cuneiform script (during the reigns of Ḫattušili I and Muṣšili I?) Hittite was immediately written, or, if we push the introduction of the script back to a period before Ḫattušili,¹ we do not need to assume that writing was done but that we just do not have any records of those early days. It also provides a better explanation for the use of Akkadian in Hittite literature in general. Previously this seemed fairly random: some documents were in Hittite only, some in Akkadian only and some existed in both without any meaningful distribution, either chronological or otherwise. More in particular, there was likewise no explanation for the relatively sudden emergence of the genre of LSU as well its demise. The use of Akkadian now better fits typological evidence of script introduction in societies in general.

The recognition that what we call OS may extend to the end of the 15th century implies that the Old Hittite linguistic features in texts that show OS, must have lasted longer as well. The Middle Hittite language phase as it is commonly defined is based on compositions dated to the period running from (Tudḫaliya I and mostly) Arnuwanda I up to and including Šuppiluliuma I.² This is because records in Hittite datable between Telipinu and Tudḫaliya I are unknown: the Akkadian-language *Landschensurkunden* are the only documents that can be dated with certainty to this period. The grammatical features that define Middle Hittite and that can be seen as innovating vis-à-vis the preceding Old Hittite language period were recently ascribed by Craig Melchert as due to “the major changes instituted by Tudḫaliya I”³ and as coming to the fore in the texts from the reign of his successor Arnuwanda. This implies that indeed the OH/OS period extended to well into the 15th century when I assume the OH/OS corpus to have been written down.

Two figures seem to emerge as crucial in all of this: the Hittite king Telipinu of around 1500 and his successor of some 75 years later, Tudḫaliya

¹ Thus J. KLINGER, *Wer lehrte die Hethiter das Schreiben?*, in S. ALP, A. SÜEL (edd.), *Acts of the 11th International Congress of Hittitology* (Ankara 1998), p. 374.

² s. most recently H.C. MELCHERT, *Middle Hittite Revisited*, in A. ARCHI, R. FRANCA (edd.), *VI Congresso Internazionale di Ittitologia* (= “Studi micenei ed egeo-anatolici” 50 [2008]), pp. 525-531.

³ H. C. MELCHERT, in “Studi micenei ed egeo-anatolici” 50 (2008), p. 529. The changes MELCHERT identifies as essential in this transition have to be viewed at least in part in light of the observations by E. RIEKEN, *Zum hethitisch-luwischen Sprachkontakt in historischer Zeit*, in “Altorientalische Forschungen” 33 (2006), pp. 271-285, and those by ILYA YAKUBOVICH in his still unpublished Chicago dissertation *Sociolinguistics of the Luwian Language* (Chicago 2008), where they describe the important role of the Luwian language in the development of the Hittite language.

1. It may have been Telipinu who decided to start recording land tenure through the LSU and thereby started a first administration that recorded and kept records for future reference. He is known to have reformed the country in several ways in the document known as the Proclamation or Edict of Telipinu. He was also the king who after almost a century of military and political weakness concluded the first international treaty. Each of these elements called for an administration using writing and each of these writings in turn triggered more writing. The fact that there is no evidence for an Akkadian version of the Laws and the presence of the OH corpus of ritual texts suggest that the switch to Hittite-only documents may have been made relatively early with the charters just sticking to the Akkadian formulary language. By the time Tudḫaliya I came to the throne towards the end of the 15th century this process was completed and the use of Akkadian for internal purposes was discontinued. With him “a new era begins”¹ when the Hittite state anew established itself as one of the major players of the “global” politics of the second millennium B.C.

¹ Thus the title of the chapter in T. R. BRYCE's, *The Kingdom of the Hittites* (Oxford 2005), pp. 121-153, describing the period “from Tudḫaliya I/II to Tudḫaliya III (c. 1400-1350)”

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