

# Introduction

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## The Hittites and Their Language

**0.1.** The people we now call “Hittites” lived almost 4,000 years ago in the central highlands of what is today the Republic of Türkiye.<sup>1</sup>

**0.2.** The story of the rediscovery of the Hittite writing system, language and civilization has been often told. In its main lines it runs as follows. Stone blocks found in Syria at the end of the nineteenth century with hieroglyphic inscriptions chiseled into them were correctly connected to the people known from the Hebrew Bible and the Neo-Assyrian annals as the “Hittites.” At that time scholars could not know that the language of these inscriptions was not Hittite proper, but a closely related language now called Luwian. Yet the assumption that they related somehow to the ancient Hittites was correct. Similar inscriptions on rock reliefs in central Anatolia led explorers and archaeologists to the impressive ruins near the village of Boğazköy. Official excavations begun there in 1906 under the direction of Hugo Winckler and Theodore Makridi revealed a great city dating from the time of the New Kingdom pharaohs of Egypt and the Kassite dynasty of Babylonia.<sup>2</sup> Several huge archives of clay tablets inscribed in a variety of cuneiform writing very similar to the contemporary Amarna archives found in Egypt were discovered. Although many tablets were composed in Akkadian and could be read immediately, confirming the excavators’ suspicion that they had found the capital of “Ḫatti,” the vast majority were written in the native language of the Hittites.

## Decipherment

**0.3.** Two tablets in this language had been found decades earlier in the Amarna archives, representing correspondence between the Egyptian pharaoh and the king of a land called “Arzawa” (later revealed to be located in southwestern Anatolia). A Danish scholar, J. A. Knudtzon, claimed the two Arzawa letters were written in a

1. For coverage of the Hittites, their culture and history—written for the general reader—see among others: Bryce 2002, 2005, 2019; de Martino 2003a and 2022; Freu and Mazoyer 2007–2010; Hoffner 2003a; Klinger 2007; Özgüç 2002, Popko 2008; Steadman and McMahon 2011; Ünal 2002–2005. The standard scholarly treatment of Hittite history is Klengel 1999. On Ḫattuša, see Schachner 2011. For archaeology, see Hopkins 2002, Matthews 2011, and the interdisciplinary volume by Genz and Mielke 2011.

2. See Güterbock 1995b and in depth Alaura 2022 for the history.

previously unknown Indo-European language (1902). His claim came under heavy criticism from specialists in Indo-European languages. In the second volume of the edition of the Amarna tablets O. Weber maintained that—according to a letter sent to Weber—Knudtzon had eventually lost confidence in his own discovery,<sup>3</sup> leading to the inaccurate assertion by others that Knudtzon had retracted his claim to decipherment. Working with a much larger corpus of well-preserved documents in the “Arzawa language” from Boğazköy, a Czech Assyriologist named Bedřich Hrozný demonstrated convincingly that Knudtzon’s allegedly retracted theory was in fact correct, and published the first adequate grammatical sketch of what henceforth became known as the “Hittite” language (Hrozný 1915; 1917). On the methodology of Hrozný’s decipherment, see Rieken 2017b: 95–98 and Melchert 2020b: 258–59.

**0.4.** The language now called “Hittite”<sup>4</sup> was the principal administrative language of the kingdom of Ḫattuša, attested in documents from the state archives<sup>5</sup> in the capital city and from a few other sites (see in detail §§0.6–0.8). By the current most widely accepted chronology these texts date from the sixteenth to thirteenth centuries BCE. Our limited written sources leave us almost wholly ignorant about the status of Hittite as a spoken language in terms of place, time, and social classes or population groups.<sup>6</sup>

**0.5.** Hittite is a member of the Anatolian sub-branch of the widespread Indo-European family that includes Sanskrit, Greek, Latin and most of the modern languages of Europe. Other Indo-European languages of this family include Luwian, Palaic, Lycian, Lydian, Carian, Sidetic, and Pisidian. Hittite shows the typical features of an older Indo-European language: it is both synthetic, showing significant use of derivational suffixes to form words, and inflecting, marking the role of most words in a sentence by a system of endings (word-final suffixes). The historical relationship of Hittite (more correctly of the Anatolian sub-branch) to the rest of the Indo-European family is a matter of continuing debate, but this issue lies beyond the purview of the present descriptive grammar.

## The Text Corpus

**0.6.** Hittite cuneiform tablets and tablet fragments found at the capital city number well over 30,000, most recovered from the royal archives of the capital city, Ḫattuša, close by the modern town of Boğazkale (“gorge castle”). This town earlier bore the name Boğazköy (“gorge village”), which before the standardized writing of contemporary

3. Weber and Ebeling 1915: 1074, but for full recognition of Knudtzon’s achievement, see Singer 2005.

4. The alternative name “Nesite” is rarely used, although the Hittites’ own designation for their language was *ne/ašili*, *nešumnil* “(in) the language of (the city of) Neša” (also known as Kaneš, see Güterbock 1958). For orientation in the subject of the various names used in ancient and modern times for this people and their language, see Güterbock 1959 and compare Yakubovich 2022.

5. Use of the term “archives” is merely conventional and is not meant to prejudice the much debated question of “archive” vs. “library” regarding document collections in the ANE. See the ample bibliography given by Francia (2009: 219–20), as well as Alaura 2015 (with further refs.). Cp. also van den Hout 2015, esp. p. 224.

6. For perspectives on this problem, see Wilhelm 2002b and Yakubovich 2022.

Turkish appeared in archeological and philological literature of the twentieth century as “Boghazköy,” “Boghazköi,” “Boghaz Keui,” etc. Although the official name today of the town is Boğazkale (“gorge castle”), it is customary in scholarly literature to continue to use the name Boğazköy (sometimes spelled without the Turkish ğ as Boghazköy), and we will do so in this grammar. The vast majority of the excavated tablets are conserved today in Turkish museums in Ankara, Istanbul, Boğazköy, Çorum and Sivas. Other notable collections are found in the the British Museum and the Louvre, with much smaller holdings in various academic institutions or museums in America, England, Europe and the Middle East, and isolated fragments in private holdings.

**0.7.** Most known Hittite cuneiform texts were found at sites in central Turkey (Boğazköy, Alaca Höyük, Maşat Höyük, Ortaköy [Çorum], Kuşaklı, Kayalıpınar). A much smaller number were found in the tablet archives of ancient peoples of the Mediterranean littoral (Syria<sup>7</sup> and Egypt<sup>8</sup>) who had diplomatic relations with the Hittites.

**0.8.** Although over the nearly 100 years of discovery and publication a very large corpus of Hittite texts and fragments has been published, there still remains a substantial number in Turkish museums awaiting publication. And although it seems unlikely that any further large source of clay tablets will be found in Hattuša, beginning in 1990 a cache of more than three thousand tablets has been excavated from Ortaköy (ancient Şapinuwa) in the Çorum Province of Turkey (Süel 2002). This archive dates from the Middle Hittite period (ca. 1400–1350). As it is published, it is shedding valuable light not only on this relatively poorly understood period in the history of the Hittites (Süel 2001), but also on a crucial period in the development of their language between the Old and New Hittite periods. Also of considerable interest are Hattian-Hittite texts (see Soysal and Süel 2016) and Hurrian texts.<sup>9</sup> On the tablets and texts in Akkadian, Hittite, and Hurrian from Kayalıpınar, see the volume edited by Rieken (2019). Although it seems likely that in the coming decades additional small archives will be found at other provincial centers of the Hittite heartland, the weight of textual evidence will continue to be the large harvest of tablets from the capital city. Approximately 116 tablets or large fragments from the now completed excavations at Maşat Höyük (ancient Tapikka) were published by Alp (1991a; 1991b). We can therefore expect no additional tablets from Maşat. A smaller number of tablets from the ongoing excavations at Kuşaklı (ancient Şarišša) directed by Andreas Müller-Karpe have been published by Gernot Wilhelm (1995; 1997; 1998; 2002a). Scattered individual tablets from Emar, Alalakh, Ugarit and Amarna have been published in excavation reports and journal articles.

### *Chronology of Texts and Manuscripts*

**0.9.** Thanks to the magisterial essay of Klinger (2022), I may be very brief on this topic. I reject like him in the strongest terms all claims that one cannot distinguish

7. Alalakh, Ugarit and Emar.

8. Amarna.

9. For further texts search under “Or.” in the online Konkordanz (see §0.11).

Old Script from Middle Script: Popko 2007 (and prior works), van den Hout 2009a (et alibi), and all others. I maintain the full validity of the division of manuscripts between OS and MS. To Klinger’s compelling arguments I add only that if the relative chronology of OS and MS manuscripts were not in its essentials valid, we could never have achieved the coherent synchronic grammar for Old Hittite that we have.<sup>10</sup>

### *Text Corpus for This Grammar*

**0.10.** Analyses of Hittite grammar in this work are based on effectively the same OH/OS, MH/MS and NH corpora as those given by Goedegebuure (2014: 12–32).<sup>11</sup> Since its importance is not always fully appreciated, I stress that just as OH and MH grammar must be based in the first instance on contemporary manuscripts, NH grammar must be likewise based on assured NH compositions. Only then can we judge the status of features attested in the numerous NS manuscripts that are either clearly copies of OH and MH compositions or are undatable. Such copies often do preserve archaisms and are very helpful in confirming the reality of very rare or wholly unattested uses in OS and MS, but they must be used with caution: only those that cannot be motivated as innovations (based on NH compositions) or as errors may be used as evidence for OH and MH grammar. I must insist that it is not only otiose but in fact seriously distorting to try to explain as part of Hittite grammar usages attested only in NS copies. There are too many demonstrable hypercorrections and other errors made by NH copyists to base anything solely on such material.<sup>12</sup> For similar reasons, texts that are translations (most mythological texts) or modeled on foreign sources (e.g., the incantation portions of therapeutic rituals) must be used with the same caution, since some instances of “translationese” are undeniable.

## **Modern Resources for Study**

### *Cuneiform Editions*

**0.11.** Of the excavated tablets most of those from Boğazköy have been published as facsimile editions (drawings) in the following publications: 60 volumes in the series

10. That a handful of mistakes were made in the pioneering period of manuscript dating is to be expected. One must agree with Klinger (2022: 288–89, note 90) that what is remarkable and affirms the fundamental validity of the methodology and its material basis is how few there are. See also Klinger 2022: 260–66 for serious correctives to the received history of how OS was “discovered.”

11. And in general in cases of divergence I follow the datings of the CHD versus those of the online Konkordanz. One exception is that I share in the apparent consensus that KUB 43.23 is a MS copy of an OH text. Hence some morphological forms marked in paradigms as OS in GrHL<sup>1</sup> by boldface are no longer so designated.

12. The same caveat applies to MS copies of OH compositions (e.g., KUB 17.10) or works whose date of composition cannot be determined. It is frustrating that this stricture makes use of nearly all *likely* MH rituals as primary material questionable, but we cannot take shortcuts. I cannot here spell out in detail my reasons, but I must reject the widespread use of KBo 39.8 (a very bad MS *copy* of the Mastigga Ritual) as a primary basis for MH grammar. Likewise, while I have followed the convention of designating KUB 31.127+ as OH/NS, it is very unlikely that this is in any true sense a direct NH copy of an OH model: cf. Schwemer 2015: 375. It is thus also a very unreliable basis for establishing grammatical features of any period.

*Keilschrifturkunden aus Boghazköi* (KUB), 71 volumes in *Keilschrifttexte aus Boghazköi* (KBo), 4 volumes in the Turkish series *Istanbul Arkeoloji Müzelerinde Bulunan Boğazköy Tabletleri* (IBoT) and a handful of other volumes not part of a lengthy series.<sup>13</sup> The task of publishing facsimile editions of Hittite cuneiform texts from the Boğazköy excavations is in the hands of the Boğazköy Archive of the Academy of Sciences of Mainz, Germany, whose former directors were Heinrich Otten and Gernot Wilhelm and whose current director is Daniel Schwemer. This center for research maintains a wide range of research resources: some available only to scholars visiting the site at Mainz (such as the comprehensive lexical files), and many available online at the *Hethitologie Portal Mainz* (<https://www.hethport.uni-wuerzburg.de/HPM/index.php>), including the online edition of Silvin Košak's *Konkordanz der hethitischen Texte* [see further below], digitized photos of tablets, a collection of personal names, a bibliography, and online editions of many genres of Hittite texts. Further projects underway and planned will largely fill remaining lacunae in the text editions.

### Commentaries

**0.12.** Since the early days of Hittitology in the twentieth century Hittite compositions of many textual genres have been reconstructed from the tablets and presented in transliteration with critical notes, commentary and (often) lexical indices. The earliest such series was the *Boghazköi Studien*, edited by Ferdinand Sommer and published in Leipzig, Germany, in which the following important editions appeared: Hrozný 1917, 1919; Sommer 1920, 1922; Weidner 1923; Sommer and Ehelolf 1924. A second important series, also published in Leipzig, was that called *Hethitische Texte*, also edited by F. Sommer and constituting a subdivision of the more comprehensive series *Mitteilungen der Vorderasiatisch-Aegyptischen Gesellschaft*. Today such editions appear in series that also publish thematic studies on Hittite topics: leading German series are *Studien zu den Boğazköy-Texten* (StBoT), presently edited by Elisabeth Rieken and Daniel Schwemer, *Texte der Hethiter* (THeth), edited by Paola Cotticelli-Kurras, and *Dresdener Beiträge zur Hethitologie*, edited by Detlev Groddek. Notable Italian series are *Eothen*, edited by Stefano de Martino, and *Studia Asiana* (StAs), edited by Alfonso Archi and Giulia Torri.

### Sign Lexicon

**0.13.** The authoritative sign lexicon for Hittite texts is Christel Rüster and Erich Neu, *Hethitisches Zeichenlexikon: Inventar und Interpretation der Keilschriftzeichen aus den Boğazköy-Texten* (Wiesbaden: Harrassowitz, 1989), abbr. HZL, compiled by two experts in the field. Rüster assisted Heinrich Otten for many years in producing excellent hand copies for the KBo series. Neu produced some of the standard guides for the dating of Hittite cuneiform texts on the basis of paleography. The volume not only

13. *Ankara arkeoloji müzesinde bulunan Boğazköy tabletleri* (ABoT), Hittite Fragments in American Collections (HFAC), Fragments hittites de Genève (FHG), Fragments hittites du Louvre (FHL), *Hittite Texts in the Cuneiform Character in the British Museum* (HT), *Kuşaklı-Sarissa* (KuSa), *Verstreute Boghazköi-texte* (VBoT). See also refs. in the preceding paragraph.

contains the complete known repertory of signs, but virtually all known variants in the appearance of signs, arranged under each entry in roughly chronological order. Under each sign entry are listed not only syllabic values, but also all known examples of its meaning as a logogram and its use as a component of multi-sign logograms (Sumerograms and Akkadograms) and logographically written proper names which contain the sign in question. Of particular value to beginners, at the back of HZL are alphabetized lists of Sumerograms and Akkadograms with German and Turkish translations, logographically written proper names (divine names, personal names, geographical names), tables of common CV, VC and CVC signs, and of easily confused signs.

### **Grammars**

**0.14.** For over forty years the best instructional grammar of Hittite was Johannes Friedrich's *Hethitisches Elementarbuch* (2nd ed. 1960), abbr. HE.<sup>14</sup> There is now a gratifying abundance of instructional grammars/primers for Hittite in multiple languages: Francia 2012 (2nd ed.), van den Hout 2011, Rieken 2022 (3rd ed.), Vanséveren 2006, Zeilfelder 2003 and 2011 (2nd ed.). Yakubovich 2020a and Rieken 2021a offer concise but fully current summaries of Hittite grammar. Hoffner (2010a) provides a grammatical sketch of the Middle Hittite texts from Mašat.

### **Dictionaries**

#### *Hittite Language*

**0.15.** Still the best concise coverage of the entire Hittite vocabulary is Johannes Friedrich's *Hethitisches Wörterbuch* (1st ed. 1952), abbr. HW,<sup>15</sup> with its three supplements, reprinted posthumously under one cover as Friedrich 1991. Although this work was last updated (in the third supplement) in 1966, it is marked by a careful, cautious and accurate approach, and is a model of conciseness. It provides a German translation of all words whose meanings were known to Friedrich, a selection of inflected forms, a brief bibliography of studies of the word's meaning, and sometimes a proposed etymology. A more recent Hittite-German word list which covers the entire alphabet is Tischler 2008, one merit of which is its updated list of Sumerograms (with cross references for the many whose readings have changed), but it lacks many useful features of Friedrich's earlier work, e.g., the inflected forms and the bibliographies and the list of Hurrian vocabulary. Ünal (2007) offers the unique advantage of being accessible to readers of both German and English (and in print or e-book format).

**0.16.** Two projects have been underway since the 1970s to produce complete dictionaries of Hittite on the scale of Wolfram von Soden's *Akkadisches Wörterbuch* and the *Assyrian Dictionary of the Oriental Institute of the University of Chicago*. They are the revised and augmented second edition of Johannes Friedrich's *Hethitisches Wörterbuch*, begun under the direction of Annelies Kammenhuber of the University

14. Reprint, 3rd ed. unaltered (Heidelberg: Winter) 1974.

15. To be kept apart from HW<sup>2</sup>, on which see §0.16.

of Munich, Germany, and continued by Inge Hoffmann and others. This dictionary (abbreviated as HW<sup>2</sup>) began its coverage with A and has reached the first portion of K.<sup>16</sup> The second project is *The Hittite Dictionary of the Oriental Institute of the University of Chicago*. Work began in Chicago in 1974 under the joint direction of Hans G. Güterbock and Harry A. Hoffner, Jr. on the basis of lexical files collected over a period of ten years (1965–1975) by Hoffner and augmented by CHD staff over the following years. In order to avoid immediate overlap with the Munich project, the CHD began its published coverage with L. To date, volumes covering words beginning with L, M, N, P and S have appeared. The CHD has begun placing a partially modified version of the text of published volumes online, so that articles can be consulted over the Internet with the use of browser software. Both these projects attempt to include treatments of all known words appearing in published texts, whether or not their meanings have been determined, and to reproduce together with context notations and full translations of representative occurrences of these words. This enables users with limited access to the original sources to appreciate and weigh the evidence for determining the word's meaning. The CHD also includes notations indicating the best estimate of the date of original composition and of the copy of many cited sources. Using this documentation a user can trace the chronological development in the various meanings and grammatical usages.

**0.17.** The important multi-volume work, Jaan Puhvel, *Hittite Etymological Dictionary* (1984–2021), abbr. HED, completed through S, is useful for more than etymological considerations. Puhvel conscientiously lists all inflected forms of the studied words, gives translations of selected passages in which the inflected forms occur, and has useful semantic discussions. HED provides no dating of the forms and thus cannot show diachronic development within the attested language.<sup>17</sup> Johann Tischler's *Hethitisches Etymologisches Glossar* (1983–2016), abbr. HEG, is now complete. It attempts to acknowledge and to some degree assess all serious etymological proposals known to the author. A more critical approach focusing on the likely or assured Indo-European portions of the Hittite lexicon is offered by Kloekhorst (2008a), abbr. EDHIL.<sup>18</sup>

### *Other Languages of Ḫattuša*

**0.18.** The Luwian lexicon as reflected in cuneiform texts from Ḫattuša is now covered in Melchert 2024 and in the published Cuneiform Luwian entries of eDiAna Digital Philological-Etymological Dictionary of the Minor Ancient Anatolian Corpus Languages (<https://www.ediana.gwi.uni-muenchen.de/>), but one should also consult Yakubovich and Mouton 2023.<sup>19</sup> Soysal (2004) presents a complete picture of the then

16. The HW<sup>2</sup> will not continue beyond K, but there is hope that funding will be found to finish K.

17. Per the author (p. c.), the HED will stop with the letter S.

18. While it offers only selected text passages, the EDHIL, like the HED, rests on a very sound and thorough philological foundation. A strength is that its individual etymologies are constrained by a coherent and thoroughly elaborated model of the prehistory of Hittite, presented before the lemmata. Kloekhorst thus carries out the plan that Kronasser (1966) envisioned but did not live to complete.

19. In the continued absence of a full dictionary of Hieroglyphic Luwian one should consult Hawkins 2000 and the works cited in GRHL1 §0.17 plus the published online Hieroglyphic Luwian entries in eDiAna. Eagerly awaited is Hawkins 2024 with its editions of the Empire period texts, including those from Ḫattuša.



extant Hattian lexicon but could not incorporate the new evidence of the Ortaköy texts (cp. §0.8). Richter (2012) summarizes research on the Hurrian lexicon to that date.

### *Text Catalogues*

**0.19.** No one can adequately keep up with Hittite textual evidence without a catalogue of known text compositions. This is particularly so, because one not only has to identify and locate all the known compositions, but also reconstruct their texts from myriads of joins and duplicates. For several decades the field relied on the foundational work of the French Hittitologist Emmanuel Laroche, whose indispensable catalogue of Hittite texts, published originally in installments in the journal *Revue hittite et asianique* was subsequently produced in a revised and enlarged second edition as *Catalogue des textes hittites*, abbr. CTH. Laroche provided a supplement in *Revue hittite et asianique* 30 (1972): 94–133. But half a century has inevitably led to significant revisions, and one should now consult the online version S. Košak—G. G. W. Müller—S. Görke—Ch. W. Steitler, [hethiter.net/](http://hethiter.net/): CTH (2022-02-17) (<https://www.hethport.uni-wuerzburg.de/CTH/>).

### *Name Collections*

**0.20.** The latest tool for all categories of names in Hittite texts is the Hittite Name Finder initiated by Michele Cammarosano (<https://cuneiform.neocities.org/laman/finder.html>). While still in development, it currently offers the only lists of geographic, personal, and divine names with attestations from all published autographs (most notably KUB and KBo).

### *Toponyms*

**0.21.** The first significant collection of toponyms in Hittite texts was made by Hayri Ertem 1973 in a volume composed in Turkish. The standard work remains that of Giuseppe del Monte and Johann Tischler 1978 with a supplement by del Monte (1992). Here will be found not only the text references but translations of the immediate context of the more significant toponyms and a relatively complete bibliography of studies positing a location for the toponym in question. Now also to be consulted are the various chapters in Weeden and Ullmann 2017.<sup>20</sup>

### *Personal Names*

**0.22.** The first comprehensive collection and study of the personal names of the Hittite texts was Laroche 1951b and 1955. A revised and much augmented second edition was Laroche 1966. Additions to this second edition were published in Gary Beckman 1983a. The Hethitologie Portal Mainz website now contains a *Répertoire onomastique*

20. Also of relevance for Hittite geography is Barjamovich 2011 on toponyms in texts of the Old Assyrian Colony Period (review by Forlanini 2012).



composed by Marie-Claude Trémouille in 2002, but cf. §0.20. Further relevant studies include Zehnder 2010 and Kloekhorst 2019a (review Yakubovich 2020b).

### *Divine Names*

**0.23.** For many years the only systematic and comprehensive collection of divine names was Laroche 1947. The new comprehensive collection by Ben H. L. van Gessel (1998–2001) has the advantage of completeness and great detail. Every attested occurrence is listed together with bibliography on the deity so designated. But unlike Laroche’s work, van Gessel’s does not group the various deities according to their ethnic provenience, nor is there much discussion of the deities whose names are catalogued. For this one must consult the comprehensive volumes on Hittite religion by Volkert Haas (1994) and Maciej Popko (1995) and individual studies.