

THE HITTITE INSCRIPTIONS

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So much has been written in recent years about the Hittites that the reading world has forgotten what an unknown quantity they were only twenty-five years ago. For Bible students they were merely one of many small Canaanitish tribes settled at Hebron in the days of Abraham, though the decipherers of the Egyptian and Assyrian inscriptions had already discovered the existence of a Hittite people whose seat was in northern Syria and who were powerful enough to contend on equal terms with the Pharaoh, Ramses II. But whether these latter could be identified with "the children of Heth" who were settled at Hebron, was doubted. It was true that, according to all the rules of Hebrew interpretation, the "children of Heth" would have been the same as the "Hittites" who are mentioned once or twice in the Old Testament (Judg. 1:26; 1 Kings 10:29; 2 Kings 7:6) as occupying a geographical position which left no doubt as to their identity with the Hittites of the monuments; but how to bring these Hittites of the north into the extreme south of Palestine was another matter. It had not yet been observed that, whereas in early Babylonian times Palestine was known as "the land of the Amorites," the Assyrians knew it as the land of "the Hittites" —a pretty clear indication that before the soldiers of Nineveh became acquainted with it the Hittites must have become its dominant population. In other words, they must have overrun the country and established their ascendancy in it.

This conclusion has been verified by the latest results of archaeological research. The discoveries made at Lachish and Gezer have shown that long before the Israelitish conquest Hittite culture had made its way as far as the south of Canaan, bringing with it the pottery which had been first made in the Hittite Cappadocian home north of the Halys. The cuneiform tablets of Tel el-Amarna, again, have made it equally clear that in the century before the Exodus

bands of Hittite soldiery were spreading themselves over the country, like the Normans in mediæval Europe, whose leaders sold their services to the highest bidder, and carved out kingdoms for themselves, not only in Syria, but in Palestine as well. Of one of them, Labbaya, we have a letter written in the Hittite language, though in cuneiform characters. Another of them, Arzawaya, "the Arzawan," from a city on the frontiers of Cilicia, established himself in the territory of Jerusalem. I have elsewhere given reasons for believing that the Jebusites whom the Israelites found in possession of Jerusalem were the Hittite followers of a chieftain who had captured the city and put an end to the rule of its Amorite prince, and that even Balaam, the son of Beor, from the Hittite city of Pethor, was but another Hittite free-lance who made his way into Edom and there substituted the government of a king for that of the native "dukes" (Gen. 36·32). The age of the Tel el-Amarna tablets, however, was not the first which had seen the Hittites in southern Canaan. Already before the days of Abraham an Egyptian official, whose monument is now in Paris, tells us that the Pharaoh who founded the Twelfth Dynasty had destroyed there "the palaces of the Hittites."¹

Thirty years ago it was not yet suspected that the Hittites, whether they were to be identified with "the children of Heth" or not, had come from the far north. Heth is called in the book of Genesis "the son of Canaan," and it was universally agreed that they were a Syrian people. Dr. Birch alone, the famous Egyptologist, had had an inkling of the truth. A number of terra-cotta figures had been found at Tarsus, most of them representing Greek deities or Roman gentlemen, but among them was the head of a man with distinctive and remarkable features. When this was shown to Dr. Birch, he at once recognized them as those of the Khata, or Hittites, as depicted on the Egyptian monuments. But the discovery was buried in the pages of a book written by another author, and Dr. Birch himself never followed it up. And so matters remained until 1879.

Meanwhile certain inscriptions had been found in an unknown form of hieroglyphics. Some of these had been noticed at Hamath

¹ A different view of the age when the Hittites entered Palestine, and of the evidence on the subject, will be found in the *American Journal of Semitic Languages and Literatures*, April, 1905.—EDITOR.

by the celebrated traveler, Burckhardt, at the beginning of the century, but no one had looked at them again until Sir Richard Burton rediscovered them and brought them to the notice of scholars. Shortly afterward Dr. William Wright succeeded in taking casts of them and having them removed to the Museum of Constantinople, and in an article which he wrote about them he suggested that they were monuments of the Hittites. The suggestion was, however, based upon no archæological or philological reasons, and, needless to say, was ignored by the learned world.

Three years later another inscription in the same form of writing was published by Canon Davis in the *Transactions of the Society of Biblical Archæology*. It was engraved upon a rock at Ibriz on the northern border of the ancient Cilicia, and accompanied the figures of a god and priest which are in a peculiar style of art. How the hieroglyphics, which we had agreed to call "Hamathite," came to be in the north of Cilicia was a puzzle; no one questioned, however, that they had been introduced from Syria. But at Ibriz we are in Asia Minor, and in Asia Minor travelers had already come across rock-sculptures of a remarkable character and unknown origin. In Cappadocia, at Boghaz Keui, north of the Halys, there was a long series of them; one had been observed in the ancient Phrygia, and in the ancient Lydia, not far from the ruins of Sardis; there were two others in a pass called Kara-bel. These two are already mentioned by the old Greek historian Herodotus, who believed them to be monuments of the Egyptian conqueror Sesostris, and hieroglyphics could still be detected on one of them which were supposed to be Egyptian.

In the summer of 1879 I was making preparations for a journey of exploration in Asia Minor, and one morning, while I was staying with Canon Isaac Taylor, the truth suddenly flashed upon me. The art of the monument at Ibriz and that of the monuments in Cappadocia and Lydia are one and the same, and since the hieroglyphics of Ibriz are identical with those of Hamath, the mystery of the "Hamathite" texts is solved.

And it is solved for this reason: Mr. George Smith, the Assyriologist, had discovered on the site of the ancient Hittite capital, Carchemish, a long inscription in "Hamathite" characters which

had once belonged to some building in the town. There had been a growing conviction among scholars that the hieroglyphics of Hamath, which bore no resemblance to any known form of writing, were really those of the Hittites, and the discovery at Carchemish went far to confirm the belief. Subsequent excavations on the spot made it almost a certainty. The Hittites, however, were still supposed to have been a Syrian people, though I had already begun to doubt whether this was actually the case, partly on account of the evidence of the Assyrian monuments, but more especially because the cuneiform inscriptions of Armenia, my decipherment of which was at this very time being made ready for the press, had made it clear to me that one of their principal seats was on the frontiers of Cappadocia.

Hence it was that, when once the connection between the monuments of Hamath and Carchemish, of Cappadocia, of Ibriz, and of Lydia, had been pointed out, the conclusion was inevitable. In Syria they were confined to the district which was occupied by the people called Hittites by their neighbors—whether Egyptian, Hebrew, Assyrian, or Armenian—and they extended northward into that very region of Asia Minor from which the cuneiform monuments indicated that the Hittites had originally come. The peculiar art and system of writing, accordingly, which modern discovery had revealed to us must have belonged to a people who, as we had learned from the inscriptions of Egypt and Assyria, once played a leading part in the history of western Asia, but who alone of the races that had done so possessed an art and a writing which were still unknown. They were unknown no longer; the “Hamathite” hieroglyphics must be of Hittite origin.

At once much was explained which had hitherto been a difficulty to the historian. We could now understand how it was that the Hittite, living in his struggle with the Egyptians, was able to summon allies or vassals, not only from Syria, but from Asia Minor as well, and why the strongly marked and somewhat ugly features of the Hittites, as portrayed by the Egyptians, and even their mountaineers’ shoes, should be met with again on the monuments of Cappadocia. When, moreover, I came to examine the photographs of these same Cappadocian monuments, I found that certain signs occurred upon them, in which previous writers had seen only “symbols” or “em-

blems," but which were the very characters that were met with again in the Hittite texts of Hamath and Carchemish.

I wrote to the Academy describing my discovery, and staking the truth of it on my finding that the hieroglyphics at the side of the mysterious figure, which Herodotus had imagined to be that of the Egyptian Sesostris, were not Egyptian at all, but Hittite. A few weeks later, under the escort of some thirty Turkish soldiers—for the place happened to be a veritable nest of Greek brigands—I found myself standing in the pass of Kera-bel in front of the figure. Most of the day was passed in making squeezes and copies of the inscription, in examining the companion figure, which had unfortunately suffered much from the ill-usage of man, and in thoroughly exploring the pass. But the main object of my expedition was fulfilled; my prophecy was verified, for the characters engraved before the face of "Sesostris" were the Hittite characters of Carchemish.

Since 1879 several more Hittite inscriptions have come to light in various parts of Asia Minor. Professor Ramsay has shown that they follow the lines of the early roads which led from the Hittite capital at Boghaz Keui in Cappadocia to Smyrna, the Ægean, on the one side, and to Cilicia and Syria on the other. We have learned a good deal more, too, about Hittite history. The Tel el-Amarna tablets have enabled us to trace the history of the Hittite occupation of Syria and Palestine, and cuneiform texts in the Hittite language have been discovered at Boghaz Keui. But the Hittite hieroglyphics themselves have resisted attempt after attempt to decipher them. Key after key was tried in vain; the lock refused obstinately to turn. I myself came to the conclusion that the problem was insoluble, unless a bilingual inscription could be discovered.

And yet I now believe that the key has at last been found; that the lock has turned, and the problem has been solved. Within the limits of this article, however, I can only very briefly indicate how this has come to pass, or how the results of the solution have been verified.

Already in 1879 a comparison of the Boghaz Keui monuments with those of Hamath and Carchemish gave me the "determinative" or ideograph of "deity." A year and a half later I pointed out that a particular character which represents a yoke must be the suffix

of the nominative singular, and that, as the majority of Hittite proper names mentioned in the Egyptian and Assyrian inscriptions terminate in *s*, it was probable that it denoted this letter. I also brought to light a bilingual inscription in Hittite and cuneiform characters on the so-called silver "boss of Tarkondemos," a knowledge of which I owed to Dr. Mordtmann; this furnished us with the ideographs of "king" and "country," as well as with the phonetic values of three characters. Unfortunately, it also led us astray, owing to what was at the time an inevitable misinterpretation of the Hittite hieroglyphics, and, still more unfortunately, owing to the defective nature of our copies of the Hittite inscriptions, I confused together the two ideographs of "king" and "district"—a confusion which not only had much to do with the failure of my subsequent attempts at decipherment, but in which I was followed by all the other scholars who attempted it. For years, therefore, the decipherment remained at a standstill; I succeeded in identifying the name of the Cilician god Sandes, as well as one of the vowels, while Mr. Halévy identified another vowel, and Dr. Peiser pointed out that a particular character was used to divide words, at all events in the later inscriptions, and that another character denoted a "place," or, as he less correctly conjectured, "a town." But this was all; for we already knew that the language concealed under the hieroglyphics was distinguished by the use of suffixes which were represented by a limited number of characters, the word itself being generally expressed by an ideograph; and Dr. Hayes Ward, with only the Hamath texts to work upon, had long since shown that the lines ran alternately from right to left and from left to right.

Many years ago an eminent Dutch numismatist, the late Mr. Six, suggested to me that a particular group of characters in the Carchemish inscriptions denoted the name of the city. Led astray by my misinterpretation of the bilingual inscription, I did not see my way to the adopting of his suggestion, which was, however, taken up by Professor Jensen, who was thereby fortunate enough to identify the values of some more characters. But he still continued to confuse together the signs for "king" and "district," and moreover, took a retrograde step by supposing the ideograph of "deity" to mean a "town;" this, and the substitution of arbitrary conjecture for

scientific verification, has caused his system of decipherment to share the fate of its predecessors. By this time, however, new texts had come to light, and we learned from them that the goat's head, which on the boss of Tarkondemos represents the name of the god Tarkus, interchanges with the nominative suffix (*i*)s. There was thus proof that the Hittite characters, like those of the cuneiform syllabary, could have more than one value according to their ideographic or phonetic use. I had also pointed out that the reading of a particular ideograph, which depicts the head of a high-priest, and is more than once written phonetically in the Carchemish inscriptions, has been given us by the Greek writers, and that we thus know the values of two more characters, *ka* and *li*, *ka* being denoted by a rabbit's head.

But I still did not see the consequences of this discovery, and it was not until casts and squeezes and photographs, and in some cases the original inscriptions, had at last replaced the old faulty eye-copies on which we had had to rely, that the key to the interpretation of the monuments was, as it were, forced into my hands. An examination of the original texts showed that we had confused two wholly different characters together, the ideograph of "king" and the ideograph of "district," which were carefully distinguished one from the other by the Hittite scribes. This fact once ascertained, it was easy to pick out the geographical names in an inscription, and through them to obtain at last some chance of determining the phonetic values of the characters. The first result of this was to show that Mr. Six was so far right in his suggestion about the name of Carchemish that the group of characters composing it has the "determinative" of district attached to it, and consequently must denote a local name. The second result was even more satisfactory. The name is written with four characters, the first being one which is not found elsewhere, and may therefore be supposed to represent a closed syllable; the second is the rabbit's head, for which I had already found the value *ka*; the value of the third was long since known from the bilingual "boss" to be *me*; while the fourth is the head of the goat. We thus have the word **-ka-me-is*; all we have to do is to assign the value *kar* to the first character, and "Carchemish" stands before us. To clinch the result, it needed only the fact that, with one exception, the name never occurs except in the inscriptions of Carchemish, and that

it occurs in them all in close connection with titles like "king." The mystery of the Hittite inscriptions is a mystery no longer!

Thus possessed of the clue, the further decipherment of the texts has been merely a matter of time and patience. There were two lines along which the decipherer could work, the geographical names and the grammar. The grammar afforded more help than might have been imagined. The language of the Hittites was suffixal, and the suffixes are usually written phonetically. What they were can be ascertained partly through the proper names recorded in the Egyptian and Assyrian inscriptions, partly through the Hittite texts themselves which are written in cuneiform characters. For such texts fortunately exist. Two of them are among the Tel el-Amarna tablets, where the name of Tarkundaraba, king of Arzawa, made scholars conjecture that the unknown language of the two tablets might be Hittite—a conjecture which has now been verified by the discovery of cuneiform tablets in a similar language at Boghaz Keui, the great Hittite capital.

Unfortunately, the Hittite hieroglyphic monuments at present known to us are few in number, and most of them are more or less mutilated. Moreover, they belong to different ages and different localities, thus increasing the difficulty of reading them. Had we more perfect materials, the work of decipherment would have progressed far more rapidly than is now possible. But even as it is, I can now translate several of the texts throughout, and—fragments of course excepted—can tell what is the general sense of the rest. Sometimes it is a geographical name which gives us the clue to the value of a character. Thus on a monument found on the site of the ancient Tyana, the name of the district over which the priest-king ruled is written **-a-(ua)n-a-n-a-s*. As *-nas* is the nominative of the suffix which denotes "land of," the name of the city is **(u)ana*, and we need therefore have no hesitation in giving to the first character the value of *tu*.

Sometimes it is through the interchanges of characters that great values are obtained. When once we know that *s* or *m* or *n* is represented by a certain character, it becomes clear that all other characters which interchange with it in geographical names or in the same suffixes must have the same or a closely allied value. And so, little by little, our Hittite syllabary is built up.

But, after all, the phonetic characters occupy only the half, and not always the half, of a Hittite inscription. A large part of it consists of ideographs and "determinatives" which usually bear their meaning on their face. The determinatives are especially useful, as they tell us where we have a title or geographical name, or even such objects as stones and wood.

Before, however, a system of decipherment can be accepted as successful, it must not only be based upon a scientific method, and result in the right kind of grammar and in translations which accord with common-sense, but it must also be able to stand the test of verification. And the best form of verification is that which has been called verification by undesigned coincidences. Where the result of the decipherment is to produce, without forcing or intention, names, facts, and grammatical forms which agree with those furnished by other sources, the system of decipherment may be regarded as sound. Details, indeed, may have to be modified with the increase of materials, but the main facts have been acquired once for all. That my decipherment of the Hittite texts has stood this final test of verification will be seen from one or two illustrations.

The chief goddess of Carchemish had the name of Khalan, and in Carchemish inscriptions the word "Carchemishian" is followed by *Khalam-mes*, "the Khalamnite" or "man of Khalam," the suffix *-mes* signifying "belonging to." The title is one which long puzzled me greatly, and at one time I supposed that it must be a proper name. It never occurred to me that the explanation of it was found upon the Assyrian monuments. Here we read from time to time of mercenary soldiers called Akhlammi, but I never thought of connecting these Akhlammi with my Hittite Khalammé until one day, when reading over again the great inscription of Tiglath-pileser I, I noticed that he describes them as being properly the inhabitants of the very district in which Carchemish stood. They were, in fact, named after the supreme goddess of the country, just as the Armenians of the cuneiform inscriptions were named Khaldians after their supreme god, Khaldis.

Khalam is an interesting name, since from it the Assyrians derived their name for Aleppo, Khalma-n (a), "the town of Khalam." It was at Helam or Khalam that David overthrew the king of Zoba

when "he went to recover his border at the river Euphrates" (2 Sam. 8:3; 10:16), and Khalaman is transformed by Josephus into the commander of the Syrian host. In Egyptian the name of Khalaman appears as Khilip, or Khalip, and this on an Assyrian seal now in the Berlin Museum becomes Akhlib.

Another verification of my decipherment may be found in the agreement of the facts brought to light by my translations with the political and theological systems of Asia Minor, as described by Professor Ramsay. There is the same government by a priest-king, the same theocracy, the same adoration of fetishes or symbols in place of images, the same triad of divinities, the same dedication of a city or people to its supreme god. If we turn to the grammar, the result is the same. One of the few words in the Hittite cuneiform tablets whose meaning is known is the preposition *kasma*, "for." Long before I knew anything about this cuneiform *kasma*, I had found precisely the same word in the hieroglyphic texts, with the same signification and followed by the same case.

After these examples of "verification" I can now venture to conclude with the translation of two Hittite inscriptions, in full confidence that the majority, at least, of my readers will no longer feel skeptical in regard to it. The first inscription is one of the oldest that have come down to us, and was discovered on the site of Carchemish:

The bearer of the sacred disk of Carchemish, of the lands of Ammi and Kas, Khalam-sar(?)me, the great prince am I, the exalter of the sacred *unan* tree of the god Aramiz, the king of the earth, supreme over the Nine; to whom the goddess Khalam has given Kas, the mighty, the great [prince] am I, the priest of the Nine great gods, loving the Nine sanctuaries, princely royal; on the altar (?) of the sacred stone this cross of the Nine great gods I have provided; the son of Mutâli, the great, the powerful prince the great prince am I.

A representation of the sacred disk is engraved on the rocks of Boghaz Keui, and Dr. Arthur Evans has discovered that in Crete also there was a worship of the cross, which in this inscription is represented ideographically—thus admitting of no doubt as to its nature—though elsewhere it is written phonetically (*anê*). Kas was the Hittite region west of the Euphrates, and a cuneiform tablet found at Boghaz Keui seems to indicate that the latter city was regarded as its capital; Ammi was northern Syria between Pethor and the

Orontes, as we gather from the Tel el-Amarna tablets; and the sacred *unan* tree, according to the Egyptologists, was the cypress. Mutâli is a well-known Hittite name, and Khalam-sar(?)me means "Beloved of Khalam," the signification of the ideograph which forms the second element in the name being known, though the pronunciation of it is still uncertain.

The second inscription is of a very much later date, and comes from the ruins of the Cilician city Tyana:

Aimgalas, the Tyanian king, the priest, the powerful bearer of the sacred disk, the powerful prince, the Catasnian of Cilicia, the citizen of the city of the Eniti, the prince of the royal city; the sacred stone of the god Sandes in this city of the Eneti as it was before, anew I have erected.

The name Aimgalas is written Aingolas in the Greek inscriptions of Cilicia, and Mugalla by the Assyrians, and a king of the Eneti is mentioned in a cuneiform text from this part of the world where the name is written precisely as it is in the Hittite hieroglyphics.