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[Review of: B.J. Collins (2007) The Hittites and their world]

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DOI

[10.2143/BIOR.66.1.2038044](https://doi.org/10.2143/BIOR.66.1.2038044)

Publication date

2009

Document Version

Final published version

Published in

Bibliotheca Orientalis

[Link to publication](#)

Citation for published version (APA):

Eerbeek, J. (2009). [Review of: B.J. Collins (2007) The Hittites and their world]. *Bibliotheca Orientalis*, 66(1-2), 202-205. <https://doi.org/10.2143/BIOR.66.1.2038044>

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COLLINS, B.J. — The Hittites and their world. Society of Biblical Literature, Atlanta, 2007. (23 cm. XVI, 254). ISBN 978-58983-296-1. \$ 29.95.¹⁾

In recent years there has been an increasing interest for the Late Bronze Age Kingdom of the Hittites in (central) Anatolia (present-day Turkey). Television documentaries, museum exhibitions and popular scientific books have contributed significantly in restoring interest in the Hittites, both within and outside the academic world. Bearing in mind the large number of 'Hittite books' that is currently available, it seems reasonable to ask, whether B.J. Collins' new monograph, titled "The Hittites and their World", has appeared at the right time.

"The Hittites and their World" consists of five Chapters and an Afterword. Chapter 1 provides a brief overview of the "History of Hittite Studies", including the (re-) discovery of the Hittites (p. 1-6), decipherment of Hittite cuneiform and Luwian Hieroglyphic script (p. 7-14) and an overview of (recent) archaeological research in (central) Anatolia (p. 14-18).

The second Chapter, titled "The Political History of the Hittites", constitutes a rough summary of Anatolian history; from the Neolithic period (c. 7th millennium BC) until the Assyrian annexation of the Neo-Hittite Kingdoms in North Syria (c. 9th-7th century BC). Highlighting some of the major (political) events in Hittite (pre-) history, the Chapter is divided into four chronological sections: "Origins" (p. 21-32) (c. 7400-1775 BC); "From Kingdom to Empire" (p. 32-52) (c. 1670-1321 BC); "Egypt and Hatti" (p. 53-64) (c. 1295-1237 BC); "The End of an Empire" (p. 65-80) (c. 1237-1190 BC); "The Neo-Hittite Kingdoms" (p. 80-90) (c. 12th century-late 7th century BC). On page 76, in the section "The End of an Empire", the author remarks that "starving peasants abandoned their villages in droves to seek more favorable conditions by land or sea". However, evidence to support this claim seems to be missing.²⁾ Indeed, when it comes to "peasants" in the rural hinterland, we are confronted with a *hiatus* in Hittite archaeology, because archaeological research in the *Halys* basin has largely been dominated by excavations at (semi) monumental (tell) sites, examples of which are the Hittite capital *Boğazköy-Hattuša*, *Kuşaklı-Şarışsa* and *Ortaköy-Şapinuwa*.³⁾

Illustrative in this respect is recent work by H. Genz on the Early Iron Age pottery, from *Boğazköy-Hattuša*.⁴⁾

¹⁾ I would like to thank Dr. G.J.M. van Wijngaarden and Prof. J. Hazenbos for reading an earlier version of this review. Needless to say, any mistakes are the author's responsibility.

²⁾ The potters' workshops, established in the *Upper City* of *Boğazköy-Hattuša*, around the end of the 13th century BC, might provide one example of Hittite civilians, previously living in the rural hinterland seeking refuge within the city walls (Müller-Karpe, A., 1988: *Hethitische Töpferei der Oberstadt von Hattusa: ein Beitrag zur Kenntnis spät-großreichszeitlicher Keramik und Töpferbetriebe unter Zugrundelegung der Grabungsergebnisse von 1978-82 in Boğazköy*, (Marburger Studien zur Vor- und Frühgeschichte Bd. 10) Marburg/Lahn).

³⁾ A field survey, conducted by R.M. Czichon (1996-1999), showed that the (rural) hinterland of *Boğazköy-Hattuša* was scattered with (small) rural settlements (cf. *Mitteilungen der Deutschen Orient-Gesellschaft zu Berlin* Vol. 129-131 (1997-1999)).

⁴⁾ Genz, H., 2004: *Büyükkaya. I. Die Keramik der Eisenzeit. Funde aus den Grabungskampagnen 1993 bis 1998*, (Boğazköy-Hattusa 21) Mainz; *idem*, 2005: Thoughts on the Origin of the Iron Age Pottery Traditions in Central Anatolia, in: A. Çilingiroğlu/G. Darbyshire (eds.), *Anatolian Iron Ages 5* (British Institute of Archaeology at Ankara Monograph 31), 75-84.

Contrary to Hittite pottery, Early Iron Age ceramics from central Anatolia are usually handmade and at least part of the assemblage carries some sort of geometric (red) painted decoration. Interestingly enough, there are a number of shapes and decorative motifs, which are reminiscent of pottery traditions prevalent in Anatolia during the Early and/or Middle Bronze Age.⁵⁾ According to Genz, there are two hypotheses to account for the resurfacing of pre-Hittite traditions during the Early Iron Age: (1) Early and/or Middle Bronze Age pottery traditions might have 'survived' in the rural hinterland, or (2) in areas located outside the Hittite Heartland, such as the northern Black Sea or *Kaška* region. In any case, due to the lack of archaeological research in both regions,⁶⁾ neither hypothesis can be falsified. As a consequence, the (archaeological) identity, of the Early Iron Age settlers and/or conquerors of *Boğazköy-Hattuša* remains elusive. Moreover, the excavation of (small) rural tell sites might also yield interesting insights, regarding the extent to which the centralized government influenced daily life in Hittite (rural) society, at least as far as material culture is concerned; a point that was previously raised by J. Yakar in his "Ethnoarchaeology of Anatolia".⁷⁾

In Chapter 3 ("Society") Collins discusses a number of subjects, related to the (social) structure ("Governance") (p. 91-111), daily affairs ("Law and Society") (p. 111-26), handicrafts ("Arts") (p. 126-41) and writing tradition ("Letters") (p. 141-55) in Hittite society. On page 123, at the beginning of the paragraph "Daily Life", the author remarks that, despite over a century of archaeological research at *Boğazköy-Hattuša*, still, so little is known about the daily lives of most Hittite citizens. Indeed, our current understanding of Hittite society is highly 'elitist' in character, which can be fully attributed to the largely "... exclusively royal focus of our sources..."⁸⁾ The paragraph "Daily Life" discusses a number of entries from the "Hittite Law Code", focusing on marriage, sexual affairs and labor issues. According to the author, the "Hittite Law Code" represents the only record with an exclusively 'common people-focus'. Nevertheless, even though laws may reflect actual *praxis*, they are ultimately prescriptive and prohibitive in nature.⁹⁾ In this respect, (personal) letters, such as *Bo 2006/01*, recently found at *Boğazköy-Hattuša*¹⁰⁾ and the letters from the archive at

Maşat-Tapiqqa, might be more informative, simply, because they allow us to catch a glimpse of the day-to-day routines and troubles that were encountered by the subjects of the Hittite king.¹¹⁾

A characteristic feature of "The Hittites and their World" is constituted by references to the Bible, recurring throughout the book (see discussion below for Chapter 5, "Hittites in the Bible"). In Chapter 3, the author makes a comparison between Hittite diplomatic treaties and the Biblical Sinai Covenant (p. 109-11). She concludes, partially drawing on the work of J.A. Berman,¹²⁾ that certain aspects of the Hittite treaty "were carried over into the Bible" (p. 111), supposedly reflected in the use of a similar set of basic structure elements (e.g. historical prologue, mutual obligations, deposition of the treaty within the temple and list of witnesses), as well as the very nature of both types of documents, being "self-subjugation" treaties.

The fourth Chapter of "The Hittites and their World" ("Religion") deals with different aspects of Hittite religion; this can be considered the author's original field of expertise. The first part of the Chapter (p. 157-72), titled "The Official Religion", treats the organization of the cult ("Priesthood"; "Places of Worship"; "Festivals") and methods, employed by the Hittites to satisfy and/or appease the gods ("The Sacrificial Cult"; "Divination"; "Prayer"). In the remainder of Chapter 4 the author discusses the state pantheon and the Hittites' 'obsession' with purity and 'ritual cleansing' ("Deities and Demons"; "Sin and Pollution"; "Ritual Power"). The Chapter's last section deals with "Death and Afterlife" (p. 192-5) in Hittite society, in which we are, yet again, confronted with the seeming lack of mortuary evidence, at least as far as the archaeological record is concerned. Therefore, it might be interesting to add here, that a recent field survey, conducted by R.M. Czichon (1997-1999) in the hinterland of *Boğazköy-Hattuša*, yielded new evidence for burial-sites outside the capital city (see footnote nr. 3).

The last Chapter (5) provides a concise account of "Hittites in the Bible"; an important Chapter, because "The Hittites and their World" is published in the *Society of Biblical Literature* series (Number 7). The Chapter serves two main purposes. Firstly, the author tries to 'identify' the so-called "Palestinian Hittites" who are mentioned in the Hebrew Bible, concluding that only a handful of passages can be associated with the relationship between Israel and the Neo-Hittite Kingdoms in North Syria, during the early first millennium BC (p. 198-200). The 'other' "Palestinian Hittites" (supposedly living in the Judean Hills) 'enter the picture' following the destruction of the Neo-Hittite kingdoms by the Assyrian king *Sargon II* (late 7th century BC), in which case, the term "Hittite" is transformed into an imaginary counter-identity, marking the social and/or political boundary between the Israelites and the 'Others' living in the adjacent northern hill country (p. 209).

Secondly, the author tries to explain how Hittite cultural elements (literature, rituals etc.) found their way into the Hebrew Bible. In addition to the previously mentioned

⁵⁾ Cf. Postgate, J.N., 2007: The ceramics of centralisation and dissolution: a case study from Rough Cilicia, *Anatolian Studies* 57, 141-50.

⁶⁾ For a recent overview of archaeological research in the *Kaška* region see: Glatz, C./R. Matthews, 2005: Anthropology of a Frontier Zone: Hittite-Kaška Relations in Late Bronze Age North-Central Anatolia, *Bulletin of the American Schools of Oriental Research* No. 339, 47-65; Yakar, J., 2007: The archaeology of the *Kaška*, in A. Archi/R. Francia (eds.), *VI Congresso Internazionale di Ittologia* (Studi Micenei ed Egeo-Anatolici Vol. 49-50), 817-27.

⁷⁾ Yakar, J., 2000: *Ethnoarchaeology of Anatolia: rural socio-economy in the Bronze and Iron Ages* (Publications of the Institute of Archaeology 17), 20, 237.

⁸⁾ Van den Hout, T.P.J., 2002: Another View of Hittite Literature, in S. De Martino/F.P. Daddi (eds.), *Anatolia Antica: Studi in Memoria di Fiorella Imparati* (Eothen 11), 857.

⁹⁾ Another text genre that could have been included here is constituted by the instructions for high officials, especially the instruction for the *BEL MADGALT* or "Commander of the Border District" (von Schuler, E., 1957: *Hethitische Dienstweisungen für höhere Hof- und Staatsbeamte: ein Beitrag zum antiken Recht Kleinasiens* (Archiv für Orientforschung Beiheft 10), 36-65; Daddi, F.P., 2003: *Il vincolo per i governatori di provincia*, (Studia Mediterranea 14) Pavia).

¹⁰⁾ Wilhelm, G. apud Schachner, A., 2007: Die Ausgrabungen in *Boğazköy-Hattuša* 2006. *Archäologischer Anzeiger* 2007/1, 86-8.

¹¹⁾ In his book, "Die Hethiter: Geschichte - Gesellschaft - Kultur" (2007), J. Klinger (p. 67) remarks that the letters from the archive at *Maşat-Tapiqqa* "belegen sehr schön die täglich anfallenden Vorgänge, um die man sich zu kümmern hatte".

¹²⁾ Berman, J.A., 2006: God's Alliance with Man, *Azure* 25, 79-113.

relationship between Hittite diplomatic treaties and the Biblical Sinai Covenant (see above), there is another parallel, for which, according to Collins, “direct Hittite influence is unmistakable”, i.e., the story of *King David’s* rise to power that was supposedly modeled on *Hattušili’s Apology* (p. 146, 222). The author concludes that the so-called *pax Hethitica-Egyptica*, lasting about eight decades, best accounts for the “rich and varied nature of the cultural parallels described in this volume” (p. 216). Indeed, “The Hittites and their World” is laden with such (Hittite-Biblical) comparisons. This is exactly what sets this book apart from, say, other general works on the Hittites: its explicit focus on the (cultural) influence of the Hittites on the Biblical World. Thus, besides their known willingness to absorb and therewith preserve aspects of different cultural traditions, especially in the religious sphere, “The Hittites and their World” makes clear that the Hittites were actively involved in ‘cultural transmission’ as well.¹³⁾

Generally speaking, most of the information in Chapters 1 to 4 can also be found in T. Bryce’s “The Kingdom of the Hittites” (2005) and “Life and Society in the Hittite World” (2004). Collins, on the other hand, deliberately omitted *minutiae* and other small details from the running text (especially ‘puzzling’ names and geographic designations), rendering “The Hittites and their World” easier to read for a non-specialist audience. Readers, requiring more detailed and/or specialist information, will find a list of “Further Reading” at the end of the book (p. 225-7) and lavish footnotes, accompanying the individual Chapters with up-to-date bibliographical references. The book’s special interest for the (cultural) influence of the Hittites on the Biblical World, readability/accessibility, as well as the ‘uptodateness’ of its bibliographical references, make “The Hittites and their World” worth reading.

Amsterdam, October 2008

J. EERBEEK

¹³⁾ Cf. Hutter, M., 2003: Chapter Six: Aspects of Luwian Religion, in C. Melchert (ed.), *The Luwians*, (Handbook of Oriental Studies Vol. 68), 277; Singer, I., 2005: On Luwians and Hittites, *Bibliotheca Orientalis* 62 (No. 5-6), 442.