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The Hittites and Their World, by Billie Jean Collins. Archaeology and Biblical Studies 7. Atlanta: Society of Biblical Literature, 2007. Pp. xvi + 254. ISBN 978-1-58983-296-1. Paper. US\$ 29.95.

Billie Jean Collins is an Instructor in Middle Eastern Studies at Emory University and Acquisitions Editor at the Society of Biblical Literature. She is the editor of *A History of the Animal World in the Ancient Near East* (Brill).

Collins's book is an "attempt to fill the need for a comprehensive and up-to-date survey of the contributions of Hittite studies to biblical interpretation" (p. x). According to her, this book "is directed at any one interested in viewing the cumulative work on this subject as well as those seeking a succinct introduction to the history, society, and religion of the Hittites" (ibid.). For a book to be comprehensive, up-to-date and succinct, all at the same time, is a challenge.

Chapter one, "A Brief History of Hittite Studies," is a historical review of Hittite studies that covers the very first activities of Charles Texier in 1834 up to Schoop and Seeher's publications in 2006. This review covers a period of 172 years of multidisciplinary research. Collins analyzes this period in three sections: *Discovery* (pp. 1–6), *decipherment* (pp. 7–14) and *unfolding* (pp. 14–18). Finally, she provides a word on chronology (pp. 18–20). Throughout the book, Collins meticulously keeps a comprehensive dialogue with current scholarly literature.

Chapter two, "A Political History of the Hittites," provides the backgrounds of the Hittite people from their debated origins through their transition to kingdom, empire and later its collapse. The relationships with their neighbors and hostile kingdoms are discussed, particularly with the Kaska

(pp. 41–44, 66, 78), Egypt, and Assyria. The fall of the Hittite kingdom is explained by several factors. These include heavy famines as a result of failed crops and serious problems with trade routes. Collins pays particular attention to the civil wars and the unfortunate relations with Assyria that led to the battle of Nihriya when the Hittites were defeated. Ties with vassals were loose, and, ultimately, the kingdom collapsed. Following the collapse of the Hittite kingdom, the Neo-Hittite kingdoms arose.

Collins' interdisciplinary approach is visible as she ponders the diverse sources and arguments that deal with the issues under study. Caution is given whenever the issue is not clear or the evidence seems to be contradictory or mixed. There is a high level of detail as Collins brings into scope data derived from recent archeological findings. Inscriptions, tablets, correspondence and other Hittite sources are carefully analyzed with reference to their content, condition and the way they relate to the historical events.

In the lengthy chapter three, entitled "Society," Collins discusses the agrarian setting of the Hittite society and also deals with wider social dimensions such as governance, law and society, arts and literature. The literary production is discussed with reference to letters, historiography, mythology and prayers. Two excurses deal with Hittite treaties and are compared to the Sinai covenant as well as the Hittite royal sanctuary of Yazilikaya.

By the middle of the seventeenth century B.C., Hattusili I provided a model that became paradigmatic for subsequent Hittite kings. The king depicts himself as a strong and ferocious military commander, while at the same time a just and compassionate ruler (p. 92). The king was also the high priest of the storm-god and later of the sun-goddess Arinna. He was the highest legal authority in charge of capital decisions. The Hittite king was anointed during his installment and his royal robes were conferred by the deities. Strong bonds of formal oaths and an extensive administrative and military system secured the stability of the governance. The subsequent failure of some of his successors in keeping with this model is one of the reasons for a later decline of the Hittites.

Well-being of vassals, servants and even expatriates was legally regulated. Whenever Hittite laws were in collision with local ones in the vassal countries, the local laws prevailed. The Hittite legal corpus might be tracked back as far as Hattusili I. These laws were transmitted in written form until the thirteenth century. During this time they were updated in reference to the nature of contemplated penalties. Usually, physical punishment was replaced by monetary arrangement. Formal similarities as well as profound differences are evident as the Hittite laws are compared with the Pentateuch laws. The Hittite laws and the covenant code (Exod 19:1–

24:11) include casuistic laws. Also both codes are meant to be used by judges. Both codes deal with the same issues in similar ways; therefore, although written in different languages (Hittite and Hebrew) there are semantic and syntactical similarities in the texts. The Hittite cases that are portrayed deal with exceptional situations while the Hebrew cases are paradigmatic. However, there are also some significant differences. Hittite laws are secular laws while Pentateuch laws are considered as given by God. Laws in the Pentateuch are morally superior. Hittite laws gave preference to local legal tradition and thus were not absolute (pp. 118–20). When drawing comparisons between Hittite and biblical data, Collins points to a possible dependence because Hittite traditions were well known in the Levant even up to Egypt. Care must be exercised, however, as similarities might be surpassed by deeper differences when a careful analysis is performed. Collins also identifies conceptual similarities between the Hittite treaties and the Sinai Covenant (pp. 109–11). The comprehensive nature of Collins' evaluation is shown as she deals even with the details of Hittite artistic manifestations (pp. 126–41).

Chapter four deals with religion which permeated every aspect of Hittite life and was critical in political articulation (p. 157). Water sources provided a way of communication with the underworld and their dwellers. The Hittite pantheon was numerous, complex and expansive and required the services of a full-time official priesthood and their staff, similar to the levitical ministry of the Old Testament. Temples were mainly reserved for official use and the access to these places was banned for common citizens (pp. 160–62).

Religious festivals were numerous and well structured. The main festivals had set dates and were royal responsibility. The Hittite cult included libations, incense and sacrifices. There were Hittite rituals similar to the peace offering and the burnt offering that can also be found in the levitical ritual system. Divination and contact with the dead was a common element of Hittite religion. These elements were banned in Israelite culture. Divination was part of any important decision-making process at the level of the official or even daily life. Prayer was a way of communication with deities. These deities had to do with the main aspects of the kingdom as well as human life. Adversity was seen as a result of accidental transgression, sorcery, demoniac activity or even an angry deity. Rituals and legal procedures dealt with impurity and transgression. Due to his ritual importance, the purity of the king was carefully protected. In the Israelite culture, the priest and the king were separated offices. Magic and medicine were closely tied in Hittite culture. The Hittites borrowed much of their preserved cosmogony and cosmology from the Hurrians and Mesopotamia.

Death was seen as the goddess Gulsēs' cutting the thread of someone's life. Then the sun-goddess of the earth would take the soul of the deceased to her realm in the underworld. Once there, existence is characterized by no pleasure, no relations at all but just eating mud and drinking wastewaters, (p. 193). Kings had the opportunity to go to their ancestors upon death and then rest in a pastoral paradise in heavens. Kings became deities after their death and their statues received the homage of their descendants in Hattusa. It seems that the ancestral cult was widespread in Hittite society. Some traditions reflected in Hittite religious literary production were well known in the Levant and might represent a common heritage. A careful analysis provides interesting formal similarities with biblical literature while clear differences will also arise.

In chapter five, "Hittites in the Bible," Collins discusses several theories in order to explain the presence of the Hittites in the Bible and the presence of similarities in covenant forms, religious practices and literary traditions. The issue proves to be elusive. Collins recognizes that although the biblical data seems to reflect the ethnic and political scenario of the Late Bronze Age, the available data is incomplete (p. 204). Therefore, no solid conclusions may be reached. Collins brings abundant archeological and historical data into the discussion as she deals with the issue. Finally, Collins concludes the nature of the contact between the Hittite culture and the Israelites suggests that this contact was at the level of the educated elite. Additionally, Collins argues that the presence of Hittites in Palestine might be explained without the need of an extensive migration but because of the relationships between Hittites and Egyptians having to use Palestine as their "driveway."

In the "Afterword," Collins reviews and celebrates the rich Hittite heritage manifested in legal and ritual forms, concepts, vocabulary and literary traditions. A case for the Israelites' borrowing from the Hittites cannot be settled due mainly to the scarcity of evidence but what is more important is the fact that the Hittite culture is an excellent background to understand much of the world of the Bible and vice versa (p. 223).

"Further Reading" (pp. 225–27), provides a brief and classified bibliography on Hittite studies. In summary, *The Hittites and Their World* accomplished its goal by providing what it promised: a solid and concise presentation of the state of the art in Hittite studies. The graduate reader will enjoy this comprehensive and up-to-date analysis.

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