

The Elements of Hittite

Hittite is the earliest attested Indo-European language and was the language of a state which flourished in Asia Minor in the second millennium BC. This exciting and accessible new introductory course, which can be used in both trimester and semester systems, offers in ten lessons a comprehensive introduction to the grammar of the Hittite language, with ample exercises both in transliteration and in cuneiform. It includes a separate section of paradigms and a grammatical index, as well as a list of every cuneiform sign used in the book. A full glossary can be found at the back. The book has been designed so that the cuneiform is not essential and can be left out of any course if so desired. The introduction provides the necessary cultural and historical background, with suggestions for further reading, and explains the principles of the cuneiform writing system.

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THE ELEMENTS OF
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THEO VAN DEN HOUT
University of Chicago



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PREFACE

When I learned Latin and Greek at high school in Amsterdam, we used books called *Tirocinium Latinum* and *Graecum*. *Tirocinium* means “the first military service, the first campaign of a young soldier.” The books spread the grammar of the two languages over a number of lessons, each lesson introducing different parts of the language and ending with an exercise. Initially, the individual sentences were very short and elementary, but Lesson 1 already ended with a little story (*Marcus dolorem habet*) that we had to translate and then recite from memory. Learning Hittite and other ancient languages at university, however, was a quite different experience. All pedagogy seemed suddenly thrown overboard: The professor ran through the grammar and we were plunged right into the first real text. Years later, teaching Latin and Greek at my old high school myself, new pedagogical ideals had meanwhile outlawed the use of sentences out of context, and lessons consisted from the very beginning of made-up stories only.

When I started teaching Hittite at the University of Amsterdam in 1990, I wanted to try something different. Writing up stories about a fictional Hittite Marcus was and still is out of the question: We do not yet understand all the intricacies of the Hittite language and cannot claim that we can write flawless classical Mursili-prose. But the *Tirocinium* model with individual sentences might work as long as the sentences come from real texts. My other model here has been the *Lehrbuch des Akkadischen* (Leipzig 1984) of Kaspar K. Riemschneider, who did just that. However, he did not include the cuneiform script in his book. Cuneiform is not just aesthetically pleasing and fun, but is also an integral and essential part of the language as we learn it. Learning ancient Near Eastern languages without it is like learning to fly in a simulator but never really getting off the ground.

The resulting textbook is not a reference grammar. For this we have the excellent *Grammar of the Hittite Language, Part I: Reference Grammar* by H. A. Hoffner and H. C. Melchert (Winona Lake, IN 2008), to which I refer in every section (abbr. [GrHL] with paragraph numbers) in the hope that it will encourage some students to seek more in-depth information. My book does, however, cover the entire grammar and incorporates the Hittite cuneiform script, which most Hittite primers do not do. After a general introduction to the place of Hittite within the Anatolian languages, to Hittite literature, the use of (clay) tablets, the cuneiform writing system and Hittite phonology, ten lessons divide up all morphology and treat all necessary phonological and

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syntactic phenomena. Each lesson is structured in the same way: Seven sections each discuss a different part of the grammar. The following sections are distinguished:

1. Noun and adjective
2. Pronoun
3. Verb
4. Syntax, semantics, word formation
5. Phonology
6. Sumerian and/or Akkadian; numerals
7. Cuneiform

After ten lessons the basic grammar has been covered, and 134 cuneiform signs have been introduced. The sixth section of the first six lessons contains the barest minimum of what a student should know of Sumerian and Akkadian to be able to read a Hittite text. The same section of Lessons 7, 8, and 9 offers information on Hittite numerals.

Five appendices contain all paradigms given in the preceding lessons (Appendix 1), a source list of all sentences used in the exercises (Appendix 2), an index of syntactic and phonological phenomena discussed in the grammar (Appendix 3), a list of all signs introduced in the lessons supplemented by additional signs attested in KBo 3.4 (Muršili II's *Ten-Year Annals*) (Appendix 4), and a full Glossary of all words in the exercises and in KBo 3.4 (Appendix 5).

I have used this method every year since 1990, tweaking and revising it along the way according to classroom experience. It can be used in a trimester or semester system, although one trimester is almost certainly too short to discuss everything. Once the Introduction and Lesson 1 have been covered, the beginning of each class should be devoted to the homework of the previous lesson. I always take a break after Lesson 5. I give the students some self-made English sentences to be translated into Hittite and have them one by one write their translations on the blackboard. I encourage them to use as many clitics as possible, throwing in the odd sentence particle here and there. This is an excellent exercise to rehearse all the grammar of the preceding lessons before we continue. I have not included the English sentences I usually give my students: Every instructor can make up his or her own using the vocabulary of the first five lessons.

Lesson 6 introduces the relative sentences, in my experience the biggest hurdle for the beginning student. I have tried to include enough examples, but it may be worthwhile for an instructor to collect more examples and devote another break to them.

Another and more general problem is the fact that the sentences in the exercises can be difficult to translate without some knowledge of the wider context.

Although the instructor can and should alleviate this in class, I have tried to counter this in two ways. First of all, I sometimes add brief but general explanatory remarks about a sentence's context.

Secondly, I have cut the entire *Ten-Year Annals* of Muršili II into ten pieces, leaving out only a few very fragmentary passages. Each lesson thus ends with a passage from the *Annals*, beginning with the prologue in Lesson 1 and ending with the epilogue in Lesson 10. Of course, in Lessons 1 and 2 nothing can be translated yet, so a full translation is given, but the cuneiform handcopy can be used to identify the first cuneiform signs, and some forms can be parsed already. In Lessons 3, 4, and 5, increasingly less is rendered into English, until as of Lesson 6 onwards students can be asked to translate everything themselves. The translated parts of Lessons 3–5 provide the maximum context possible for the parts the students have to do themselves, and they lay the groundwork for their complete translation in the last five lessons. Not only is it stimulating for students to read a coherent text, but they will also be able to say after ten lessons that they have read the entire *Ten-Year Annals* of Muršili. Although the sections become quite long in the end, the text is fairly repetitive, and the student quickly gets used to the vocabulary and constructions used by Muršili, as well as to the typical Hittite annalistic style. At the same time, the cuneiform copy provides the most realistic material to practice the signs.

I want to thank Françoise Tjerkstra and Joost Hazenbos for their remarks and criticism of the earliest Dutch versions. I am greatly indebted to my students James Burgin and (especially) Hannah Marcuson, as well as to Ben van Gessel, for their help with this latest version. I also thank Michael Sharp of Cambridge University Press for pushing me to publish this book after so many years and for the pleasant cooperation. A final thanks goes to all my fellow Hittitologists past and present: Being a beginner's grammar, it contains no footnotes referencing secondary Hittitological literature with all its discussions and hard-fought achievements of our roughly century-old discipline. In fact, this *Tirocinium Hethiticum* owes everything to past studies in Hittitology and to all colleagues who will find their contributions in the paragraphs to come without being mentioned.

Theo van den Hout

ABBREVIATIONS

abl.	ablative	Hier.	Hieroglyphic
acc.	accusative	Hitt.	Hittite
act.	active	HW	<i>Hethitisches Wörterbuch</i>
adj.	adjective	HZL	<i>Hethitisches Zeichenlexikon</i>
adv.	adverb		
Akkad.	Akkadian	i.e.	id est, that is
all.	allative	ind.	indicative
CHD	<i>Chicago Hittite Dictionary</i>	inf.	infinitive
com.	common gender	instr.	instrumental
conj.	conjunction	KBo	<i>Keilschrifttexte aus Boghazköi</i>
CTH	<i>Catalogue des textes hittites</i>	KUB	<i>Keilschrifturkunden aus Boghazköi</i>
Cun.	Cuneiform	lit.	literally
dat.	dative	loc.	locative
dep.	deponent	med.-pass.	medio-passive
DN	divine name	neut.	neuter
e.g.	exempli gratia, for instance	nom.	nominative
Engl.	English	obv.	obverse
etc.	et cetera	part.	participle
gen.	genitive	plur.	plural
GN	geographical name	PN	personal name
GrHL	<i>Grammar of the Hittite Language</i>	postpos.	postposition
HED	<i>Hittite Etymological Dictionary</i>	pres.	present
HEG	<i>Hethitisches etymologisches Glossar</i>	pret.	preterite
		rev.	reverse
		sing.	singular
		Sum.	Sumerian
		voc.	vocative

