

SOME CONSIDERATIONS ON HITTITE SCRIBES*

Cem KARASU

There is no doubt that Hittite scribes have a great importance in the research of Hittite culture and civilization. So far, the number of tablets which have been discovered in the archives of Boğazköy has gone over 25000. Especially the bronze tablet that was unearthed in 1986¹ bears the quality of the evidence showing to what extent the Hittite scribes carried this art of writing. The inscribing of these writings on materials that will enable them to reach our times even the generations following us, and their being kept in an order almost close to archive or library systems² was certainly performed by the so-called scribes who had a very important status among Hittite social classes. Along with the scribe status within the community, they held very important positions in the state protocol. Scribes also fulfilled protocol duties which could be considered among their most important duties, when they were among top officials of the state as witnesses of the treaties made between Hittite state and her vassals and other foreign states. The scribes who undertook these important duties in the Hittite community also held various ranks and titles among themselves, and in Hittite texts their titles were indicated in Sumerian ideograms or logograms. In general and especially, what is called the "chief scribe" or "the head of the scribes" or "the senior scribe" GAL DUB.SAR or GAL DUB.SAR^{MEŠ} were the words used for these.

* The Turkish version of this paper was published in Ankara in 1992 within the publication of The First International Hittitology Convention which was held in Çorum in July 19-21, 1990. Some additional footnotes have been provided in the light of new publications based on a new finding.

1. P. Neve, Die Ausgrabungen in Boğazköy-Ḫattuša 1986, Archäologischer Anzeiger Berlin (1987) and H. Otten, Die Bronzetafel aus Boğazköy, Ein Staatsvertrag Tuthalijas IV., StBoT Beiheft 1 Wiesbaden (1988).
2. For further information see E. Laroche, La Bibliothèque de Ḫattuša, Archiv Orientalní Praha (1949) 7-13; H. Otten, Bibliotheken im Alten Orient, DAS ALTERTUM 1/2 Berlin (1955) 67-81 and also see Archive und Bibliotheken in Ḫattuša, Cuneiform Archives and Libraries, Papers read at The XXX^c Rencontre Assyriologique Internationale Leiden, July 4-8, 1983 Istanbul (1986) 184-190.

In the article entitled 'La Bibliothèque de Hattuša' published in *Archiv Orientalní XVII* in 1949 by the French Hittitologist Emmanuel Laroche, ω SAG indicated as "chief" or "chief (scribe)" or sometimes in its form without its determinant SAG or rarely ω SAG.UŠ were the forms that we observed. Let us state that these two titles so far as we know do not occur together in the tablets. To our conviction, in all probability the scribes who held these titles in spite of overtaking the same duties, that is, overseeing and supervision duties, we believe that this may have resulted from a sort of time difference, a form of difference of title.

The actual "scribes" who inscribed on clay tablets or in other words scribes called "clay tablet scribes" as they inscribed on the most widely used inscription material "clay" by Hittites, were indicated as DUB.SAR or ω DUB.SAR in logograms. There is also another title which we could perhaps place it somewhere between student and scribe and indicated as "junior scribe" or "assistant scribe" ω DUB.SAR TUR. The scribes whose titles we have so far tried to indicate, as we stated before, inscribed on clay tablets. However, we should immediately mention here the bronze tablet we have already referred to, and which was published by Professor Dr. Heinrich Otten. The scribe of this tablet, "the man from *Ukkija* son of *Lupakki*, *Haluziti*" also used the same title, that is, the logogram ω DUB.SAR. Along with all these, certain officials such as ω A.ZU.SAG, "chief medical officer", ω A.ZU "medical officer", ω A.ZU "medical officer", ω A.ZU TUR "assistant medical officer" or "young medical officer", EN ^{URU}Hurma and EN ^{URU}Nerik "city lords", DUMU.É.GAL "the palace official", UGULA É.GAL "the chief official of the palace" and GAL ω MUḪALDIM "the chief cook" are seen to have taken up the job of the scribe as a second branch.³

Although we do not have much information about how Hittite scribes were trained, in certain colophons while scribes provide information about themselves, they give us some clues on this. In fact, the logogram EN GIŠ.KIN.TI "craftsman" or "master of the craft" was interpreted by Professor Dr. Hans G. Güterbock in his paper presented at the XX^e Rencontre Assyriologique Internationale in 1972 entitled "The Hittite Temple According to Written Sources", as "teacher of scribes"⁴, and together with this interpretation the word such as "student, apprentice" or "trained person" which are the meanings of the logogram GÁB.ZU.ZU, should give us the evidence that the scribes were trained in the relationship of teacher-student or artisan-apprentice. Again we must add here the

-
3. For the places of the texts see F.P. Daddi, *Mestieri, professioni e dignità nell'Anatolia itta Roma* (1982) 166; for chief medical officer and assistant or young medical officer see C. Burde, *Hethitische medizinische Texte*, StBoT 19 Wiesbaden (1974) 10.
 4. Also see F.D. Daddi, *op. cit.* 201 "maestri-scribi".

impression that the profession of a scribe passed mostly from father to son, or a professional was selected from families who had a respectable status in the Hittite community, i.e. the profession was in the hand of trustworthy individuals.

In the colophons found at the last parts of the tablets of festival texts which are encountered quite frequently among Boğazköy tablets, the phrase *ANA GIŠ.ḪUR-kán ḫandan*⁵ meaning "it is arranged according to wooden tablet", or in other words "according to the original tablet is frequently encountered". This means that the text is first drafted on a temporary wooden tablet and later the same text is transcribed on the clay tablet which is to be permanent. Unfortunately, since these wooden tablets are not durable, we have not come into possession of even one of them in Anatolia.⁶ It is likely that the meaning of the Sumerian term *GIŠ.ḪUR*, generally denotes "drawing, plan, draft or outline"⁷ according to researchers. The belief thought that hieroglific characters were used on these tablets is partly accepted⁸.

Differing from the scribes inscribing on clay tablets, the scribes writing on wooden tablets did not have as much significance among the Hittite social classes.⁹ These scribes in addition to their professional duties, used to undertake duties in various rituals and ceremonies in the palace and in the temples.

5. For the places of the texts referred to see A. Kammenhuber, *Materialien zu einem hethitischen Thesaurus*, Lieferung 11 Heidelberg (1989) 123-125.
6. A wooden writing-board set was discovered in a sunken ship off Uluburun near Kaş in southern Turkey dated to the 14th century B.C.: (R. Payton, *The Ulu Burun Writing-Board Set*, *AnSt.* XLI London (1991) 99-106; P. Warnock and M. Pendleton, *The Wood of The Ulu Burun Diptych*, *AnSt.* XLI 107-110; D. Symington, *Late Bronze Age Writing-Boards and Their Uses: Textual Evidence from Anatolia and Syria*, *AnSt.* XLI 111-123). I was able to study the writing-board set in the Museum of Underwater Archaeology in Bodrum. For their assistance I should like to thank Mr. Oğuz Alpözen, the director of the museum, and Mr. and Mrs. Aykut-Aynur Özet. The so-called writing-board set is rather small I had the impression that such a board might have been used for writing short notes or letters. It became clear to me that the wax, which may have been used in such sets, was easily protected during transportation when the set was closed. I should like to add that the same set could always be re-used.
7. For the meanings of *GIŠ.ḪUR* (=akk. *uṣurtu(m)*) see J. Friedrich, *HW* Heidelberg (1952) 274; R. Borger, *ABZ* Neukirchen-Vluyn (1978) Nr.401; W. von Soden, *AHW* III Wiesbaden (1981) P.1440; R. Labat, *Maunel d'épigraphie akkadienne* Paris (1988) 6.ed. Nr.401; C. Rüster and E. Neu, *HZL* Wiesbaden (1989) Nr.178, and see also *StBoT* 35 (1991) pages: 18, 57, 80 (?). For *gulzattar*, the probable Hittite equivalent of *GIŠ.ḪUR* see S.Alp, *HBM* Ankara (1991) 337-338 and D. Symington, *op.cit.* p.113 and fn. 16-17.
8. See H. Otten, *Das Altertum* I Berlin (1955) 80-81 also *NHF=Historia* 7 Wiesbaden (1964) 17; I. Singer, *StBoT* 27 Wiesbaden (1978) 41; D. Symington, *op. cit.* 115-116 (see fn.6 above).
9. See H. Otten, *op. cit.* 79.

There seems to be a close resemblance between the titles of scribes of wooden tablets and those of scribes on clay tablets. And this is stated with the GIŠ ideogram meaning "timber, wood, firewood" or "board" following the word DUB.SAR meaning scribe. Probably "chief wooden tablet scribe" or "wooden tablet scribe", their functions related with tablet scribing being equal, comprised the meaning in the logogram 𒌷DUB.SAR.GIŠ or without a determinant DUB.SAR.GIŠ. They stated their titles in this way.

In addition to those we have enumerated above, the phrase "it is arranged according to the wooden tablet" appeared on some of the festival texts we have already mentioned, and generally the name of two scribes were mentioned on these tablets. One of the two was mentioned as 'the wooden tablet scribe' while the other as 'the scribe of clay tablet'.

In front of the name of the first scribe the sumerogram KASKAL¹⁰ meaning "road, journey, expedition" or "times, turn" takes place. The first person to deal with this problem was the Italian researcher Lorenza M. Mascheroni in the year 1983 in *Hethitica V* in her article entitled "A Propos d'un Groupe de Colophons Problématiques", at the same time she cited some colophons that occurred in this way. Later, the Dutch Professor Houwink ten Cate dwelled widely on this issue in the footnote 41 of her article entitled; "Brief Comments on the Hittite Cult Calendar" which was published in the second *Festschrift* for Professor Dr. H. Otten. As far as we are convinced, the fact that the word KASKAL takes place before the scribe name, is again related with the inscribing of the wooden tablet. For one thing, why did Hittite scribes feel the compulsion of inscribing "the festival texts" first on wooden tablets and later transcribed them on to permanent clay tablets? Naturally, one has to think on these questions. Again as we believe, one of the most important reasons for writing on wooden tablets is their being light in weight and easy to transport. Another reason could be thought of as the possibility of their destruction being very little during transportation. One has to inquire into how the inscription was done on the tablet, and if a method had been developed by the Hittite scribes for this, which in all probability must have been a very practical system.¹¹ As it is known, "the festival texts" including those occurring in *Hattuša* illustrate such celebrations taking place in natural atmosphere. It should not be wrong to think that the subjects were written on wooden tablets prepared as draft materials in the atmosphere when ceremonies occurred by the wooden tablet scribes, later they were transcribed on wet clay tablets which were baked and turned as durable as brick, and were stored together in archives to be used later when needed.

10. For palša-, the Hittite equivalent of KASKAL see HW Erg. 2. p.19 and CHD Vol. P Fas.1 (1994) 69 ff.

11. See fn.6 above.

We are of the opinion that the word KASKAL may have been a title related to scribes undertaking duty for scribing the events during the ceremony in natural medium the first time and that may have been an expression denoting the journey of the scribe to this atmosphere, that is, to the place where the ceremony was to take place. Therefore, for such scribes that had occurred on colophons, titles such as "the scribe of the journey" or "the scribe for the expedition" were conveniently used¹². Furthermore, according to the article by Professor Houwink ten Cate who wrote in the footnote which we have mentioned, and the book of Studien zu den Boğazköy-Texten 27 by Itamar Singer "The Hittite KI.LAM Festival (Part One)" Wiesbaden 1983 pages 40-42, as well as on pages 95-109 of "A Propos d'un Groupe de Colophons Problématiques", Hethitica V, Louvian 1983 by Lorenza M. Mascheroni stated by her as a technical term EGIR-*an tarnummaš* and the expression *ištarnijaš* EGIR-*an tarnummaš* must have been certain notes in the form of a warning made by scribes to each other during the transfer of the inscription from the wooden tablet on to the clay tablet¹³.

-
12. Cf. CHD vol. "P" Fas.1 (1994) 77 'KASKAL here might mean something like "tracing" of the original tablet or following the master scribe's track.'
13. Cf. H.A. Hoffner, An English-Hittite Glossary, RHA 80 Paris (1967) 40 "EZEN *parā tarnummaš*"; A. Ünal, Hitit Sarayındaki Entrikalar Hakkında Bir Fal Metni (KUB XXII 70=Bo 2011) Ankara (1983) 11 "*parā tarnummaš* (dışarı bırakma bayramı)"; also cf. KBo XXII 11 Rs. IV 22 [; 12 Rs. IV 23 [;13 Rs. III+IV? [;15 Lk. Rd. 1; 19 Un.Rd. 1]; 117 Rs.x+1[?, we are convinced that another form of this expression is likely.