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Source: *Iraq*, Vol. 25, No. 2 (Autumn, 1963), pp. 124-130

Published by: British Institute for the Study of Iraq

Stable URL: <http://www.jstor.org/stable/4199742>

Accessed: 23-04-2017 11:56 UTC

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WARFARE IN ASIA MINOR

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THE brief discussion of warfare in Asia Minor which here follows will be limited to the Hittite period (about 1800–1200 B.C.). It is the only period of Anatolian history illuminated by written sources which are indispensable for deeper penetration into life, motivations and thinking of the ancient. I have to forewarn you that nothing much can be said that has not been said before.

No doubt warfare in Asia Minor goes back to the very beginnings when the land was first settled. But what could be said about warfare in prehistoric times? Only the fortifications of the prehistoric settlements have survived, the weapons found in them; the tombs of their warriors and that which accompanied them into the beyond. These relics acquire significance beyond the antiquarian interest they command as soon as they can be fitted into a comprehensive picture of historical development; as soon as states, archaic and primitive as they may seem, city-states, kingdoms etc., emerge. This is the case in Asia Minor with the beginning of the second millennium B.C.

Archaeologically speaking the Hittite period in its entirety falls into the Bronze Age, more precisely into its middle and late phases. The catastrophe which marks its end—observable almost everywhere in the Near East—ushers in the Iron Age. This is an incision which means more than merely the introduction of a new material, incidentally important for the history of warfare.

Development in the centuries comprising Hittite growth, greatness and downfall does not by any means move in an evenly rising and then suddenly broken curve. The middle part of the span is occupied by the so-called ‘Dark Age’; the length we assign to it depends on our views on the vexed and often discussed problem of chronology. Fortunately, it need not be taken up here again; may I be pardoned for re-affirming my conviction that it actually existed and cannot be erased from history by manipulating some figures.

What is important for us here is the role played in the Dark Age by the Hurrians and by the thin layer of Indians which revitalized them from about 1650 on. For to them can be traced a fundamental change in the technique of warfare which is recognizable everywhere in the Near East at that time and characterizes the period as nothing else. It is the introduction of the light horse-drawn chariot. The impact of the new machine—this it may be called with full right—on warfare generally and also on the structure of society can be observed nowhere better than among the Hittites. Chariots in action are

vividly shown to us in the Egyptian cycles depicting the battle of Qadeš, the culmination of the war between Ramesses II and Muwatalliš.

Nothing much further need be said about the Hurro-Indic origin of the innovation. To the philologists it is proved by words used in connection with horse and chariot. The word for the chariot warrior, *mariyanni*, is Indic in Hurrian disguise. Kikkuli, the Mitanni man, whose training manual has come down to us in a Hittite version on clay tablets excavated at Boğazköy calls himself an *aššušanni*, a term clearly based on *aśva-*, the Indian word for 'horse'. Moreover Kikkuli uses Indic terminology for technical details of his training procedures.

The materials used in the manufacture of chariots—from Egyptian texts we know a little about them—point to the Ararat region as the place where the light chariot was, if not invented, certainly perfected.

The significant innovation, however, is neither the improvement in its construction nor the introduction of the horse to draw it. To be true, the machine had now become both lighter and sturdier, above all much more manoeuvrable. To be true, horsemen had been able to breed a hardier strain of animals and had—no mean achievement—succeeded in training them as dependable teams. Nevertheless, the significant thing had been to combine these two elements and to put well-trained animals before the new kind of vehicle. Only in this way the innovation could be used militarily. The result was that henceforth warfare was essentially different from what it had been before.

Chariotry occurs already in the earliest Hittite texts we possess. Anittaš of Kuššar—a contemporary of the Old Assyrian colonies just before the Old Hittite Kingdom was founded—speaks of 1400 men and 40 chariots. It is difficult to envisage what those chariots were like. However, they may already have been two-wheelers; they were hardly four-wheelers any more—four-wheeled wagons in religious use can be seen on 'Cappadocian' seals. But, if two-wheelers, they cannot have reached as yet the perfection of the classical period. One might compare the (heavily restored) chariot model from Ras Shamra, or still better, the archaic chariot of the Storm God as it appears on a much later relief from Malatya.

The effectiveness of chariotry depended on its swiftness and manoeuvrability, in part also on its weight. When used in massed assault no infantry could possibly withstand them. The Egyptians experienced that at Qadeš. The Hittite chariotry had one other advantage over the Egyptian; it operated with a crew of three: besides the chariot *warrior* who did the fighting, a separate chariot *driver* and a third man whose function it was to cover him with a shield from hostile missiles. The chariot driver is called *kusi*—a Hurrian word,—the third man probably *šanamu*, which is likely to be Hurrian in origin too. Since the bow formed part of the chariot's standard equipment the charge of the chariot was preceded by a swarm of arrows. Once the charge was halted and fighting on foot followed the Hittites had an advantage of numbers.

The superiority of the new war machine before it became universally known and employed, had no doubt worked much in the favour of the Hurrians. The chariot warriors were able to extend their domination not only to Upper Mesopotamia, but from there also to Cilicia and Anatolia on the one hand and to Syria and Palestine on the other.

The footsoldier, once reigning supreme, was now much reduced in importance. At least in open battle. In mountain warfare—and much of Anatolia is mountainous—he still had to bear the brunt of the fighting. He also continued to play his part in defending and attacking the numerous fortified towns. The dress in which he appears on Anatolian sculptures—short tunic and short kilt-like lower garment—is probably his battle dress; the long upper garments were shed and carried by the baggage train when a swift advance was intended.

We know very little about the methods by which Hittite armies were maintained in times of peace or during periods between campaigns. Charioteers were highly trained professionals, and thus useless for any other purpose but war. They had to live and we must assume that the king endowed them with land belonging to the crown or the palace, fiefs large enough to support them and their families together with their horses and their retainers. Thus they were almost instantaneously at the king's beck and call. There must also have existed a kind of standing army because a fair number of footsoldiers were always needed. The case of the royal body guard may have been a special one, but garrisons had to be furnished, fortified positions occupied and the king had to keep some troops on hand for emergencies. Such units seem *also* to have been maintained by the feudal system; it provided them with fiefs on which they found their livelihood while obligating them to service, including military service, for the liege-lord.

We are badly informed about the various army ranks. A number of terms could be quoted from the texts, but their order remains largely unknown.

Among the many rituals that have come down to us there is the description of the ceremonies performed when soldiers were sworn in. The recruits were shown a number of objects and beings which either by their nature were incapable of achieving certain functions or were purposely incapacitated. A curse is invoked inflicting with the respective deficiency anybody who should break his oath. The soldiers then call upon themselves the mentioned punishment by ceremoniously saying: "be it thus!"

Before I go any further let me say a word about the Hittite concept of war and let me quote an example to make this clear. When Muršiliš II had decided to subject anew the Arzawa Land which had defected, he put before the rebellious Arzawa king a formal request to submit to his overlord. When it was rejected, he declared: "Let us fight then! May the Storm God, my lord, decide our lawsuit!" In other words, the controversy which had arisen between the two parties was considered as a legal case. Now, a lawsuit between two ordinary individuals may turn out too difficult for the highest court to judge so that it

must be turned over to the *gods* to decide by ordeal. In the same way, the lawsuit pending between two kings neither one of whom concedes himself to be in the wrong must be brought before the gods who will decide by the ordeal of war. This explains at the same time why the combatants watch out for miraculous happenings like the falling of a meteor, the collapse of a wall etc.; they may presage the stand which the gods will take.

Just as, in a general war, the governors of provinces had to lead their contingents to strategically situated places which the king as the highest in command determined, so had the vassals, under the treaties they had concluded, to furnish their levies. In this way, quite sizable armies could be mustered. The best known example is the Hittite-Egyptian war. This was probably a supreme effort; one has calculated that the Hittites gathered about 30,000 men from all over their Empire and concentrated them in Northern Syria. Muršiliš' war against the Arzawa Lands in the west must have been the same in reverse; we hear that the king of Kargamish (in Northern Syria) in preparation for this operation marched contingents through the Taurus to join his brother, the Great King. These marches covered long distances; but this seems to have been nothing unusual. The logistic problems solved on such occasions must have been quite formidable; they were apparently mastered without undue strain.

The Hittites were a continental power. From the central Anatolian plateau they expanded and old king Labarnaš boasts that he made the sea the border of his land; the same certainly happened again during the Empire period. Nevertheless, Hittite kings never ventured out on to the sea. One might say they appear clearly at a disadvantage as soon as they reached the coast. This is so in their dealings with the kings of Arzawa, still more so when they got into conflict with the Ahhiyawa princes, and Alašiya (Cyprus) probably always remained independent. The lack of a navy contributed greatly to their downfall; it prevented them from mastering the fatal assault of the Sea-Peoples. It is true that recently we have heard about a sea battle on that occasion. But it is quite clear that the ships were actually furnished by the kingdom of Ugarit on the Phoenician coast.

The art of fortification was highly developed in Asia Minor. One has merely to look at the capital Ḫattuša-Boğazköy to appreciate the height which it had reached. Three reasons can be adduced for this phenomenon. Firstly, urbanization had come rather early to Anatolia. The natural lay-out of the country did not favour unification of urban centres into larger political units. On the contrary, the development was directed toward small units and, in consequence, to rivalry between them. They had to be fortified to survive. This stage is reached when the earliest inscriptions begin to speak to us.

On a larger scale, this was repeated after finally the Old Hittite Kingdom had crystallized around Ḫattuša. The newly discovered annals of Ḫattušiliš I (ca. 1700 B.C.) attest a first—as far as we know at present—invasion of the

Ḫurrians, and under his second successor Ḫantiliš the Pontic region was torn from the young state by the Kaškeans in what must have been a catastrophe. These persistent enemies then enter history for the first time. It was with their first appearance that Ḫattuša, the capital, until then unprotected by any artificial means, was fortified.

Then, thirdly, came the introduction of the light chariot into warfare with all of its consequences. A modern historian of warfare has said that under the new conditions armies, "running away from the chariots, sought protection in walled cities". The result was a development of siege warfare.

We possess a text from Boğazköy (composed in Akkadian) which shows advanced siege techniques at an early time (*K. Bo.* I, 111); the text reports on events that must have happened before Muršiliš I (middle of the 17th century). In the present context we are particularly interested in the detail that the king gives orders for a battering-ram "as the Ḫurrians use it" to be constructed and that it shall be brought forward against the city wall by means of an earthen dam, presumably across the moat. It deserves special note that the battering-ram is here credited to the Ḫurrians. It seems that they who had made the open battle obsolete were also instrumental in devising means to reduce fortresses into which conventional armies had been forced to retire.

The frontiers most exposed to enemy attack were those in the north where the unruly Kaškeans incessantly threatened to sally forth from their wooded mountains and to raid the rich towns of the open plateau. Also the southwestern frontier against the Arzawa Lands was continually endangered. These are the regions where frontier guards were stationed. Their organization is described in the "instructions" for their commander, the *awariyaš išbaš* (Akk. *bēl madgalti*). When studying them I have always felt reminded of the Roman *limes* between Rhine and Danube. Based on a system of fortified camps, border guards watched day and night over all possible approaches; they manned a string of posts and actively patrolled the open spaces left in between; resistance had to be prepared in case the enemy made any inroads. Furthermore, the military installations had to be kept in good condition ready for any eventuality. Supplies had to be stored and refurbished whenever necessary.

Warfare was naturally a seasonal affair. Campaigns began in spring and were suspended during the inclement part of the year. Everybody who has experienced an Anatolian winter or travelled over Anatolian roads in inclement weather will easily understand that. This procedure had the additional advantage that during the interval between campaigns the king could attend to his administrative duties and, above all, see to it that the festivals of the gods were properly celebrated. After all the help of the gods was always needed to make a military operation a success.

What with the intimate connection between warfare and kingship and between kingship and religion, it is in no way surprising that religious ceremonies accompany all war-like actions. Not only the king himself, but also the army

had to be ritually clean. Had the army suffered a defeat, according to the views of the time attributed to divine anger, the reason for this anger had to be eliminated, the god in question pacified and the army lustrated. It is the only occasion at which human sacrifice was still practised; the army had to march through a "gate" erected from sticks of wood and between the two halves of a sacrificed prisoner. One believed that the contamination which had made the army unfit to conquer the enemy could not pass such an obstacle and thus was left behind. Military actions were regularly preceded by consultation of omens and their advice was strictly followed. A victory was credited to the gods who—as the texts say—marched in front of the king and his army.

Since all depended on the gods' help, it is only natural that they had part in the booty that was brought home. In particular, precious things or statues of the gods of defeated towns were placed in the temples of the gods at home. Otherwise the booty consisted of prisoners, cattle and sheep; by the customs of war it was distributed among those who had carried the victory, the king himself taking the lion's share.

An important part of the booty were the skilled craftsmen who—*glebae adscripti*—lived in conquered towns. They were deported to Hittite territory and settled there to serve the needs of the conqueror in palace or temple.

Sometimes selected conquered territory was emptied of all its inhabitants and consecrated to the gods. It was, *e.g.*, dedicated as pasture to the bulls drawing the Storm God's chariot. A solemn curse was inflicted upon anybody who resettled such towns and thereby withdrew them from the god's use. Also, it might have been sown with salt in a symbolic ceremony. It is a curious fact that Hattuša itself had been subjected to such treatment by Anittaš of Kuššar; nevertheless it had been rebuilt and in fact became the capital of a prosperous empire.

The political success that the Hittites enjoyed, the fact that they eventually established the most powerful state of the Near East justifies the conclusion that they had mastered the military art to the fullest extent and that they had used every chance it offered to good advantage.

Some scholars have asserted that their early acquaintance with iron explains at least part of the superiority they gained; that they held a virtual monopoly in the new material and the processes which forged it into weapons. It has been suggested that they tried to keep the secret for themselves, concealing it from the rest of the world. The assertion is unsupported by evidence. Moreover, no military secret has ever been kept from the enemy for any length of time. Iron had occasionally been used before the Hittites in both Mesopotamia and Asia Minor and, as far as we can see, the terminology of iron working, including the word for the metal itself and for an iron product like steel is not Hittite in origin. The original centres of metallurgy lay probably further toward the east. If the Hittites possessed iron and learned to work it, the other nations of the world could have done likewise.

War and warfare were subjects which were continually experienced and practised by the peoples of the Near Eastern world. Victory and defeat spelled out their fate and destiny. It depended on what the gods ordained. And to the gods the king had to render account. This duty led, among the Hittites, to an entirely unsuspected result of a literary nature: the development of an annalistic style. Its rise can be observed. The reports which Anittaš and Ḫattušiliš I rendered on their achievements are still primitive. But those of Šuppiluliumaš and Muršiliš have taken on an artistic style, a style of dramatic distinction, never matched by their contemporaries in Mesopotamia. It goes far beyond the merely factual. It reveals the Hittites not only as makers of history, but also as excellent historians. Those who came afterwards learned from them and yet, they did not reach the same force of expression and height of style. It took centuries before the Hittites found their equals.