

# The 'Eternal Treaty' from the Hittite perspective

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In 1259 BC, 15 years after the battle of Qadesh, the Hittite king Hattusili III drew up a treaty with the pharaoh Ramesses II.<sup>1</sup> It was intended to establish between the two Great Kings 'peace and brotherhood for all time'. Two independent versions were composed, one in the Hittite capital Hattusa, the other in Ramesses' capital Pi-Ramessé. The Hittite version was originally written in Akkadian, from a first Hittite draft, inscribed on a silver tablet, and then sent to Egypt, where it was translated into Egyptian. Correspondingly, the Egyptian version of the treaty was first composed in Egyptian, and then translated into Akkadian on a silver tablet before being sent to the court of Hattusili. There are no significant discrepancies between the two versions, and it is clear that all critical issues had been discussed and negotiated in advance of their preparation.<sup>2</sup>

A copy of the Akkadian version, which originated from Egypt, appears above the entrance to the Security Council Chamber of the United Nations in New York – presumably to serve as a symbol of the peace and goodwill and cooperation which in theory underpins the relationships between the nations of the modern world. If so, the symbol is a misleading one. The treaty belongs to a world where warfare was the norm, and peace an aberration from it. Treaties between Late Bronze Age kings were never underpinned by any broader vision of a world united in peace and harmony. They were set up for reasons of expediency and self-interest. Their concern was much more with establishing strategic alliances than with peace for its own sake. Of course, that could be said about international alliances in almost any period of history.

At the time the Eternal Treaty was concluded, four Great Kings shared power over much of the Near Eastern world. They addressed each other as 'My Brother', and were in effect members of a highly exclusive club – the club of royal brothers. They were the kings of Egypt, Hatti, Assyria and Babylon. The letters which passed between them contain fulsome expressions of love and esteem.<sup>3</sup> Yet they deeply distrusted each other and frequently squabbled. Control of the lands and peoples which lay between them was often a contentious issue. But remarkably, in a world geared to constant military conflict, major military showdowns between them were rare. How do we explain this?

The fact that there were four of them helped maintain a kind of equilibrium and stability between their kingdoms. To be sure, the great men were expected to lead their people in war, and to demonstrate outstanding prowess in the field of battle. That was an important part of the ideology of kingship. But a king could give sufficient proof of his abilities as a mighty war-leader by conducting successful expeditions against rebel vassals or independent tribes and kingdoms – particularly if he achieved victory relatively quickly and cheaply, and brought home substantial spoils from his campaigns. On the other hand, declaring war on a fellow Great King was a much more hazardous enterprise – with far more risk that the contest would be drawn out, costly, and ultimately inconclusive. Not only this. A king who felt threatened by one royal brother might well join forces with another

<sup>1</sup> On relations between Hattusili and Ramesses, see most recently Klengel 2002.

<sup>2</sup> The most recent and most authoritative edition of the treaty is Edel 1997.

<sup>3</sup> See Bryce 2003: 76–94.

to counter this threat. The aggressor could thus find himself confronted with formidable adversaries on two fronts. For a Great King bent on furthering his interests and expanding his influence on the international scene, skilful political manoeuvring rather than brute military force was often the best means of achieving his objectives. Often, but certainly not always.

The battle of Qadesh was one of the exceptions to the general rule. Tensions between Egypt and Hatti, the kingdom of the Hittites, had long been building, particularly after the kingdom of Mitanni fell to the great Hittite warlord Suppiluliuma in the second half of the 14th century. For two centuries before this, Mitanni had been one of the great powers of the Near Eastern world, overlord of an empire which extended across northern Mesopotamia, northern Syria and parts of eastern Anatolia. With its destruction, Hatti had become the new master of its Syrian territories. This brought it to the frontiers of Egyptian subject territory in southern Syria and Palestine, and paved the way for conflict with Egypt. Tensions arose particularly over control of the local kingdoms which lay between them. Both, for example, claimed sovereignty over Qadesh. Amurru on the coast was another state which came into contention. Though its rulers had initially pledged their allegiance to the pharaoh Akhenaten, one of them, Aziru, secretly negotiated with the Hittites and finally switched his allegiance to Suppiluliuma.

Akhenaten himself may have been preparing a major campaign into Syria at the end of his reign to wrest back control of his lost Syrian territories, but this was aborted by his death.<sup>4</sup> Similarly, at the very end of Tutankhamun's reign, the Egyptians attempted to regain Qadesh, now firmly in the Hittite camp, by launching a foolhardy attack upon it. A Hittite expeditionary force dispatched by Suppiluliuma inflicted a devastating defeat on the attackers. With the demise of its 18th dynasty, Egypt offered no further serious challenge to Hittite territorial claims in the Syro-Palestinian region – until the rise of the 19th dynasty some 30 years later. Under Seti I, second ruler of the dynasty, Egypt once more set its sights on regaining the influence it had once exercised in Syria-Palestine. Inevitably, this set the scene for fresh conflict with Hatti. Hittite and Egyptian forces clashed in a first battle at Qadesh, and the result, it seems, was a resounding Egyptian victory. The Hittite king Muwattalli lost both Qadesh and Amurru to the pharaoh.<sup>5</sup> Seti's son Ramesses II enthusiastically took up where his father left off. Both pharaohs clearly saw themselves in the mould of the great warrior-king Tuthmosis III, whose extensive conquests in Syria carried Egyptian arms all the way to the Euphrates.

The Hittites might well have feared that a resurgent, aggressive Egypt posed a serious threat to all their subject territories in Syria, including the viceregal seats at Carchemish and Aleppo. Muwattalli made extensive preparations to counter the threat. He assembled a vast army at Qadesh to meet Ramesses' forces, which had set out from Pi-Ramesse in May, 1274. As is well known, the famous encounter between Ramesses and Muwattalli which looked like turning into a total rout of the Egyptian forces, ended in a stalemate. However, Muwattalli was the ultimate victor. After fending off the Hittite onslaught, Ramesses promptly withdrew far to the south. His retreating forces were pursued by Muwattalli to the Land of Aba (the region around Damascus). Aba fell to the Hittites, and before returning to Hatti, Muwattalli placed it under the control of his brother Hattusili, who had played a major role in the battle.

This was the Hattusili who eventually succeeded to the Hittite throne and drew up a treaty with Ramesses, 15 years after the great military showdown. Why did these two war opponents finally decide to come to terms? It was hardly because of any warming in the personal relationship between them.

<sup>4</sup> See Izre'el and Singer 1990; Bryce 2003: 181–4.

<sup>5</sup> See Murnane 1990: 51–8; Bryce 2005: 227–30.

To be sure, the letters which they exchanged contain the usual protestations of love and esteem for each other, so typical of Late Bronze Age royal correspondence.<sup>6</sup> But their communications are frequently acrimonious – filled with complaints and threats and accusations. The relationship between them was, by and large, one of hostility and distrust. So why did they conclude a treaty?

Amongst other things, the treaty was an implicit recognition by both partners of a territorial *status quo*. On the Egyptian side, Ramesses had lost his taste for fresh enterprises in Syria, and was content to maintain the northern frontier of his Syro-Palestinian territories in the region of Damascus. One of his main concerns now was to ensure the security of his own homeland, particularly from invasion by Libyans in the west. Apart from this, his energies were now directed to monumental construction projects, and to building his kingdom's wealth through trade and the exploitation of its mineral-rich regions, rather than to ambitious military enterprises. Even so, he may have felt the need for some significant achievement in the international arena to bolster his image amongst his subjects. In the absence of any great military triumphs abroad in recent years, perhaps the next best thing was a major diplomatic achievement – an alliance with the long-term enemy of Egypt. Ramesses could represent the treaty as a settlement sought by the Hittite king, abjectly suing for peace.

On the Hittite side, Hattusili had no intention of seeking to expand his Syrian holdings south of their present limits. The battle of Qadesh had confirmed Hatti's sovereignty over all the territories it wanted in the region, and no further expansion of Hittite territory was justifiable or desirable. Hattusili needed all his available resources for shoring up other less stable parts of his realm. In the far west, the Mycenaean in collaboration with local insurrectionists were posing a serious threat to the security of Hatti's western Anatolian subject states. In the north, the Kaskan tribes of the Pontic zone continued to threaten the Hittite homeland's northern frontiers, and in the east an ambitious and increasingly aggressive Assyria endangered virtually all of Hatti's territories in northern Syria. A treaty which gave assurance of stability on Hatti's southernmost frontier clearly had much to recommend it.

The 'Assyrian factor' warrants further comment. Suppiluliuma's destruction of the Mitannian empire had let loose Mitanni's vassal Assyria, which rapidly began to fill the political vacuum left by its former overlord east of the Euphrates. Assyria swept under its control the kingdom of Hanigalbat, the last remnant of Mitanni and now a puppet state of the Hittite empire. The Hittites gave little if any assistance to local resistance movements in Hanigalbat, abandoning the state which they had pledged to support to the mercies of its Assyrian conquerors. But the ongoing Assyrian threat could not be ignored. Particularly as one of the Assyrians' ultimate objectives was, almost certainly, to establish direct access to the Mediterranean coast. To achieve this, Assyria needed control of the territories lying between the Mediterranean and the Euphrates. The western bend of the Euphrates, between Carchemish and Emar, provided the shortest distance from the river to the sea – and also to the wealthy kingdom of Ugarit, with its well-established international trading emporia and its excellent harbours. It must have been an extremely enticing prospect for the Assyrians. But Ugarit and the lands lying between it and the Euphrates, including the viceregal kingdom of Aleppo, belonged to Hatti. Assyrian attempts to gain control of territories in Syria, which would have provided them with access to the Mediterranean, would inevitably have meant war with the Hittites. Indeed in the reign of the Hittite king Mursili II, the Assyrians had already indicated the direction of their continuing expansion by attacking and occupying the Hittite viceregal kingdom of Carchemish.<sup>7</sup> Though their occupation was

<sup>6</sup> For a comprehensive edition of all the surviving correspondence, see Edel 1994.

<sup>7</sup> Goetze 1933: 116–19.

short-lived before Mursili drove them out, it was simply a matter of time before they once more invaded Hittite territory west of the Euphrates.

This provided Hattusili with a strong motive for concluding a treaty with Ramesses, who would be bound by the terms of the alliance to come to Hatti's assistance if Assyria invaded Hittite territory. Egypt was less directly threatened by Assyria. But it must also have had concerns about the upstart kingdom's rapid development and expansion. Should Assyria succeed in extending its conquests to the coast of northern Syria, its next objective could well be the lands and cities lying further to the south which belonged to Egypt. A Hittite-Egyptian military alliance would act as a strong deterrent against Assyrian military enterprises in Syria and Palestine. For if Assyria did launch an invasion across the Euphrates, its army faced the prospect of waging war on two fronts with the forces of two Great Kings – one coming from the north, the other from the south. Admittedly, the treaty makes no specific reference to a possible attack by Assyria in the clauses which deal with mutual defence obligations. But in general terms, provision is clearly made for such an eventuality:

If an enemy comes against Hatti, and Hattusili, Great King of Hatti, sends to me (Ramesses) (and says): 'Come to my aid against him', then Ramesses, Great King, King of Egypt, must send his infantry and his chariotry, and they will defeat his enemy and take revenge on Hatti.<sup>8</sup>

To the best of our knowledge, Assyria made no attempt to carry its battle standards across the Euphrates during Hattusili's reign – even though with its frontiers now extending to the east bank of the Euphrates, it was well positioned to do so. Quite possibly, the Egyptian-Hittite alliance did prove an effective deterrent against such an enterprise.

Considerations of a more personal nature may also have played an important role, perhaps an even more important role, in bringing about the pact between Hattusili and Ramesses. Particularly on the part of Hattusili. And it is to Hattusili's personal motives for concluding the treaty that the rest of this paper will be devoted.

A few words first about the king's background.<sup>9</sup> The youngest of the four children of Mursili II, Hattusili was a sickly child, not expected to survive his childhood years. But with the help of his patron goddess Ishtar, he not only survived, but went on to enjoy a long and illustrious career. He became the chief support of his brother Muwattalli, who succeeded to the Hittite throne after their father's death. Shortly after his accession, Muwattalli appointed Hattusili to the important post of governor of the Upper Land, the region lying on the northeastern frontier of the Hittite homeland. One of Hattusili's prime responsibilities was the defence of the region, parts of which had long been under enemy occupation. In a series of brilliantly executed military campaigns, he drove out the enemy forces and established his authority firmly over the entire region. Hattusili now became virtually king of the northern half of the Hittite homeland.

Subsequently, he played a major role in the battle of Qadesh, as commander of the infantry and chariotry recruited from the northern kingdom. And after Qadesh, Muwattalli sent him south to take command of the land of Aba (in the region of Damascus), after the defeat of the Egyptian forces there. While he was in Aba, worrying reports came from his northern kingdom of uprisings there, and fresh

<sup>8</sup> After Beckman 1999: 98.

<sup>9</sup> Our information about Hattusili's life and career comes primarily from the document commonly referred to as the *Apology* of Hattusili, ed. Otten 1981.

incursions by enemy forces, particularly the Kaska people. As soon as Muwattalli released him from his Syrian command, he returned to his northern kingdom, drove the Kaskans back across the frontiers and restored his control over the rest of the region.

Muwattalli died several years after Qadesh, leaving no son of the first rank – that is, no son by his principal wife – to succeed him. However, he had a son called Urhi-Teshub by a concubine, a wife of the second rank. In accordance with the laws of royal succession, this son became by default his father's legitimate successor. And Muwattalli had made clear that Urhi-Teshub was to succeed him. Probably around the same time, he assigned to Hattusili's protection a second son, Kurunta, presumably of the same status as Urhi-Teshub, but younger.

Hattusili honoured his brother's wishes by declaring his support for Urhi-Teshub, who adopted the throne-name Mursili on his accession. To begin with, uncle and nephew probably worked closely together. But tensions grew between the pair. Urhi-Teshub became increasingly concerned about the power his uncle wielded, and began stripping him of all his offices. Finally Hattusili retaliated. He declared war on his nephew, and enticed him into leading his forces north to the Upper Land for a showdown. This proved disastrous for Urhi-Teshub. Hattusili commanded considerable support in the region, which had benefited from many years of stability under his command. The king was defeated, captured, and brought back to Hattusa as his uncle's prisoner. Here he was formally deposed, and sent to a place of exile in Syria. Hattusili now seized the throne.

The usurper did not keep his nephew completely out of circulation, but appointed him governor of a number of cities in the Nuhashshi Lands, the region in Syria to which he had been banished. This was a major blunder. Urhi-Teshub was determined to get his throne back, and his relocation in Syria provided him with convenient access to both Babylon and Assyria. He entered into secret negotiations with Babylonian officials, and dispatched a letter to the Assyrian king Shalmaneser I. Presumably, in both sets of communications, his aim was to win support for his restoration to the Hittite throne. When word reached the Hittite court of his dealings with Babylon, Hattusili immediately ordered that he be shifted to a new location. But Urhi-Teshub escaped his Hittite minders, fled from Syria, and resurfaced at the court of the man who had been his father's bitterest enemy – Ramesses, pharaoh of Egypt.

All this had a profoundly unsettling effect on Hattusili's regime. To understand why, we should begin by emphasizing one very important aspect of the treaties. They were agreements not between states but between two persons – Great King and Great King, or Great King and vassal ruler.<sup>10</sup> A vassal swore an oath of allegiance to his king alone, not to the kingdom over which he ruled. He also pledged support for his king's successors, provided these were the king's own lineal descendants. If a usurper seized the Hittite throne, the vassal was automatically freed from his treaty obligations, except that he might be called upon to help restore the legitimate king. International treaties were also personal compacts between two Great Kings, and remained in force only for so long as both kings occupied their respective thrones.

In his *Apology*, Hattusili tried to justify his seizure of the throne and the shift of the succession to his own family line. But his elaborate defence of his actions cannot disguise the fact that his coup was blatantly illegal. This was later quite frankly admitted by his son and successor Tudhaliya. The rulers of all the Hittite vassal states were bound to remain loyal to Urhi-Teshub, and to reject the new occupant of the Hittite throne. Indeed Hattusili's coup led to a number of divisions within the Hittite

<sup>10</sup> For a selection of these treaties, see Briend *et al.* 1992, Beckman 1999: 11–124.

world, both inside the homeland as well as in the vassal states. What intensified these divisions was the fact that Urhi-Teshub had by no means accepted his fate. On the contrary, he looked for every possible avenue of support in his bid to reclaim his throne. This included approaches to the other three Great Kingdoms – Babylon, Assyria, and Egypt. Undoubtedly, his determination to wrest power back from his uncle had serious implications for the stability of the Hittite empire as a whole.

Hence the persistent efforts Hattusili made to win acknowledgment as the Great King of Hatti from both his peers and his own subjects. The two were connected. It was very important for a new king to gain peer recognition as a means of establishing his credibility amongst his subjects – especially when his right to rule was in dispute. The task was no easy one for Hattusili. Particularly worrying was the news that Urhi-Teshub had fled to Egypt, where the pharaoh had apparently granted him refuge. Demands for his extradition were ignored. Does this mean that Ramesses, initially, still recognised Urhi-Teshub as the rightful King of Hatti, and might in fact help him regain his throne? We do not know if the pharaoh had any such intention. But the opportunity to destabilise the regime of the man who had been one of his chief opponents at Qadesh – simply by refusing to give up Urhi-Teshub – must have been a distinctly appealing one.<sup>11</sup>

Hattusili had more luck with Babylon, at least to begin with. He succeeded in securing an alliance with the Babylonian king Kadashman-Turgu, who obligingly severed diplomatic relations with the pharaoh. He may even have offered military support to Hattusili if it came to a showdown with Ramesses over Urhi-Teshub. Unfortunately, Kadashman-Turgu died within a year or so of drawing up a treaty with Hattusili, and his son and successor, the young Kadashman-Enlil II, had no intention of following in his father's footsteps. In fact he quickly restored relations with Egypt, and there was a noticeable cooling in Babylon's relations with the new regime in Hattusa. This information comes from the draft of a letter which Hattusili wrote to Kadashman-Enlil.<sup>12</sup>

The Assyrian king Adad-nirari showed no greater enthusiasm for this regime. In fact he simply ignored it, which provoked a letter of complaint from Hattusili:

When I assumed kingship, you did not send a messenger to me. It is the custom that when kings assume kingship, the kings who are his equals in rank send him appropriate greeting-gifts, clothing befitting kingship, and fine oil for his anointing. But you have not yet done this.<sup>13</sup>

Indeed, one of the Assyrian kings, Adad-nirari or his successor Shalmaneser, contemptuously dismissed Hattusili's claim to kingship: 'You're no real king,' he said. 'You're just a substitute for one.'

Hattusili might well have hoped for a more positive response from Assyria. Some years earlier, when Adad-nirari sought recognition from Urhi-Teshub as a royal brother, he had been treated as an upstart and rebuked for his impertinence.<sup>14</sup> And Urhi-Teshub had given a hard time to Assyrian envoys who came to his court. Hattusili sought to distance himself from his nephew's attitude towards Assyria, and seems to have gone out of his way to appease the Assyrian regime. No doubt this was partly because he wanted to avoid a confrontation with Assyria over Hittite subject territories in the Euphrates region.

<sup>11</sup> Further on the Urhi-Teshub affair and the strain it put on relations between Hattusili and Ramesses, see Bryce 2003: 213–22.

<sup>12</sup> Translated by Beckman 1999: 138–43.

<sup>13</sup> For surviving passages of this fragmentary letter, see Beckman 1999: 147–9.

<sup>14</sup> See Beckman 1999: 146–7.

But personal considerations to do with Hattusili's kingship may well have been a significant factor in the usurper's attempts to cultivate good relations with his Assyrian counterpart.

Of course, what Hattusili needed most of all was an accommodation with Ramesses. The pharaoh was widely respected throughout the Near Eastern world, both by his peers as well as by his peers' subjects. He was in effect the senior member of the club of royal brothers. And his endorsement of Hattusili as the legitimate king of Hatti might go a long way towards reconciling disaffected elements in the Hittite kingdom to Hattusili's regime – particularly if the pharaoh finally handed back Urhi-Teshub into the usurper's custody. But the longstanding enmity between Ramesses and Hattusili was not easily resolved. Even in the lead-up to the treaty, there are threats and accusations on both sides. And when Ramesses' good faith was put to the test by yet another demand from Hattusili for the extradition of Urhi-Teshub, relations were not improved when Ramesses declared that he could not give up Urhi-Teshub, because the bird had flown the coop. In fact he was now back in Hittite territory!

Ramesses suggested several places where his royal brother might find him – maybe in Qadesh, maybe in Aleppo, maybe in Kizzuwadna. Hattusili responded angrily: 'He did *not* go to Qadesh! He did *not* go to Aleppo! He did *not* go to Kizzuwadna!' If he *had* turned up in any of these lands, the king's own loyal subjects would surely have handed him over. Ramesses dismissed this response with contempt. 'Your subjects are not to be trusted!', he said. Hattusili refused to accept Ramesses' claim that Urhi-Teshub was no longer in Egypt. But was Ramesses actually telling the truth? And if so, what had become of Urhi-Teshub? Two things seem certain. The first is that Ramesses *was* in fact telling the truth. Urhi-Teshub had indeed left Egypt, with or without the pharaoh's consent, and had returned to Hittite territory. Secondly, he still commanded considerable support amongst his former subjects, as Ramesses suggested. But where did he end up? We shall return to this.

Hattusili strongly denied that there were elements in his kingdom who remained loyal to Urhi-Teshub. But he must have been aware that he himself had yet to win over many of his subjects. Formal endorsement by the other Great Kings would have done much to enhance his status in the eyes of these subjects. His approaches to Babylon and Assyria had met with unsatisfactory responses, or no responses, or outright rebuffs. This made it all the more important that he gain recognition as Great King of Hatti from the man whose reputation stood higher in the Near Eastern world than that of any of his contemporaries – Ramesses of Egypt. In view of the past history of Egyptian-Hittite relations, he must sorely have resented the necessity of doing this. But eventually Ramesses gave him what he wanted – though only after Hattusili had complained that the pharaoh had addressed him as though he were a servant. Ramesses responded angrily:

That I would have written to you as to a servant from amongst my servants is simply not true! Have you not received the kingship, and did I not know this? Was it not in my heart? You are a Great King in the Hatti Lands! You are a Hero in all lands! The Sun God and the Storm God have granted that you exercise kingship in the Hatti lands in the place of your grandfather.<sup>15</sup>

This acknowledgement of Hattusili as King of Hatti was formalized in the Eternal Treaty, a pact between two Great Kings of equal status:

<sup>15</sup> For a full translation of what remains of this letter, see Edl 1994: 50–51, no. 20.

The treaty which Ramesses, Beloved of Amon, Great King, King of Egypt, Hero, concluded on a tablet of silver with Hattusili, Great King, King of Hatti, his brother.<sup>16</sup>

This more than anything else put the seal of approval on Hattusili's occupancy of the Hittite throne. It must have carried considerable weight not only amongst Hattusili's peers, but amongst many of the king's own subjects.

We have a clear instance of this in a letter which Ramesses wrote to a man called Kupanta-Kurunta, king of the land of Mira, the largest and most powerful of the Hittites' western vassal states. Kupanta-Kurunta was bound by an oath he made originally with Urhi-Teshub's grandfather Mursili to protect Mursili's rightful successors in his direct family line. Urhi-Teshub was one of these successors. Kupanta-Kurunta was in a quandary. Should he now violate his oath by switching his allegiance to the usurper? Urhi-Teshub's flight to Egypt prompted Kupanta-Kurunta to write to Ramesses, apparently to find out whether he was supporting the fugitive's bid to regain his throne. The Mira king's future course of action could well have been determined by Ramesses' response. If Urhi-Teshub had Ramesses' support, Kupanta-Kurunta might well have remained loyal to him, and rejected Hattusili. In this event, Hattusili's hold over his western states could have been seriously imperilled. But Ramesses came down unequivocally in favour of Hattusili. In his reply to Kupanta-Kurunta, he wrote:

Take note of the good alliance which the Great King, the King of the Land of Egypt, made with the Great King, the King of the Land of Hatti, my brother, in good brotherhood, in good peace. The Sun God and the Storm God have granted this forever.<sup>17</sup>

We hear no more of Kupanta-Kurunta. But the likelihood is that he did finally pledge his allegiance to Hattusili. And in the reign of Hattusili's successor Tudhaliya, Mira almost certainly provided the 'replacement' regime in Hattusa with a valuable source of support in dealing with the problems of the volatile western Anatolian region.

There is, I believe, another reason why Hattusili was keen to establish a permanent, stable relationship with Egypt. In the last century of its existence, Hatti seems to have suffered increasingly from shortfalls in its grain production, becoming increasingly dependent on supplies imported from outside. During Hattusili's reign, a Hittite prince called Heshmi-Sharrumma was sent to Egypt to organize a shipment of grain back to his homeland. This perhaps was a prelude to the regular importation of grain from Egypt into the Hittite world, and may well have been one of the by-products of a permanent peace with Egypt. Recent excavations at Hattusa have unearthed two sets of grain-storage depots in the city, perhaps of late date. Their capacity was sufficient to provide an annual grain ration for 20,000 to 30,000 people, and there were no doubt other grain storage areas within the city as well. The newly discovered silos may well have been built for long-term storage of grain imported from abroad, to be used particularly in times of shortfalls in local production.

While the Hittite and Egyptian versions of the treaty follow each other fairly closely, there is one section in the Hittite version which has no counterpart in the Egyptian. It has to do with the royal succession:

<sup>16</sup> After Beckman 1999: 96.

<sup>17</sup> The letter is translated by Beckman 1999: 130-1.

And the son of Hattusili, King of Hatti, shall be made King of Hatti in place of Hattusili, his father..... And if the people of Hatti commit an offence against him, then Ramesses.... must send infantry and chariotry to his aid and take revenge for him.<sup>18</sup>

Ramesses apparently felt no need for a matching clause in the Egyptian version. Its insertion in the Hittite version clearly reflects Hattusili's sense of insecurity – above all, his concern that his son's succession be kept secure against threats from his own people, with Egyptian support if need be. Most likely he had in mind dangers posed by collateral branches of his own family. His son and successor, Tudhaliya, spells out the situation more precisely in a set of instructions to his officials:

The Land of Hatti is full of the royal line: in Hatti the descendants of Suppiluliuma, the descendants of Mursili, the descendants of Muwattalli, the descendants of Hattusili are numerous. With regard to kingship, you must acknowledge no other person (but me, Tudhaliya), and protect only the grandson and great grandson and descendants of Tudhaliya.<sup>19</sup>

The greatest threat to Hattusili's line came from Muwattalli's offspring and descendants, who had been wrongly deprived of their inheritance. Hattusili and Tudhaliya had not only Urhi-Teshub to worry about. Muwattalli had another son, Kurunta, who had been assigned to Hattusili's guardianship. Initially Kurunta remained loyal to Hattusili's family – and for this Hattusili rewarded him by making him ruler of the prestigious kingdom of Tarhuntassa in southeastern Anatolia. Hattusili and subsequently Tudhaliya gave him special privileges and concessions, in an effort, presumably, to retain his loyalty.<sup>20</sup>

Did they succeed? Epigraphic evidence may provide the answer. Seal impressions bearing the hieroglyphic inscription *Kurunta, Great King, Labarna, My Sun* have recently turned up in Hattusa. And more recently again, a rock relief has been discovered at Hatip (17 km south-west of Konya) with the inscription *Kurunta, the Great King, [the Hero], the son of [Mu]wattalli, the Great King, the Hero*. Of particular significance is the title 'Great King'. No-one in the territories covered by the Hittite kingdom could use this title other than the king of Hatti himself. How then do we explain its use in these hieroglyphic inscriptions? The likelihood is that Kurunta did in fact break his allegiance to Hattusili's son Tudhaliya, proclaiming himself as the rightful Great King of Hatti. Perhaps for a short time he even succeeded in occupying the throne in Hattusa, if we can so judge from his seal impressions found in the capital. But it has been argued that these could just as well indicate preparations for an attempted coup which never took place. In any case, we can conclude from another recently discovered inscription, the so-called Südburg inscription in Hattusa,<sup>21</sup> that some time after Tudhaliya's treaty with Kurunta, Tarhuntassa severed its links with the regime in Hattusa – perhaps at Kurunta's instigation. That could explain the hieroglyphic inscription near Konya, which gives to Kurunta the title Great King, son of the Great King Muwattalli. We may speculate that the rock bearing this inscription served as a boundary marker for a breakaway kingdom which would be reunited with Hatti only when

<sup>18</sup> After Beckman 1999: 98.

<sup>19</sup> For an edition of the full text of this document, see von Schuler 1957: 8–21.

<sup>20</sup> These privileges and concessions are spelt out in the treaty inscribed on a bronze tablet discovered in 1986 just inside the south wall of the Hittite capital. The treaty, drawn up between Tudhaliya and Kurunta, has been edited by Otten 1988.

<sup>21</sup> Edition in Hawkins 1995.

the descendants of Muwattalli reclaimed their legitimate inheritance. In the meantime, they defiantly and consistently asserted their right, over the claims of the descendants of Hattusili, to produce rulers with the title 'Great King of Hatti'.

There may be further indications of this. During the 1970s, a number of hieroglyphic inscriptions were found at several sites in southeastern Anatolia. They were composed by a man called Hartapu, whose name is accompanied, once again, by the title 'Great King'.<sup>22</sup> Hartapu also gives us the name of his father, Mursili, who is similarly entitled a Great King. We recall that Mursili was the throne-name of Urhi-Teshub. He was thus the third Hittite king called Mursili. It is likely that these inscriptions date to the last decades of the Late Bronze Age, and that the Mursili in question is Urhi-Teshub. We do not know what happened to Urhi-Teshub after his departure from Egypt. But we know that he had sons, and one of these may well have set himself up with the title of Great King, perhaps as successor to his uncle Kurunta, in the land of Tarhuntassa. If we can so judge from the spread of the inscriptions to which we have just referred, our supposed breakaway kingdom would have deprived the regime in Hattusa of a substantial portion of its subject territory, in a strategically important region. It also posed a serious, ongoing threat to the current regime in Hattusa.

Hattusili no doubt became aware, soon after his succession, of the dangers he and his successors faced because of his usurpation, especially from the family who had been displaced from kingship. His hope was that Ramesses' endorsement of his own position, and by implication that of his lineal descendants, would provide some security against future challenges, particularly if the pharaoh honoured the terms of the treaty and was ready to provide military support for the current ruling dynasty in Hattusa if any attempt was made to unseat it. As it happened, the succession remained in Hattusili's line till the fall of the kingdom in the early 12th century. So this particular treaty obligation was never put to the test.

Was the treaty *ever* put to the test? We know of no specific cases where its terms were invoked. However, it had the effect of easing tensions between Hatti and Egypt, and in 1246 the alliance was consolidated with the first of Ramesses' two marriages with a Hittite princess, daughter of Hattusili. A second marriage between Ramesses and one of Hattusili's daughters, probably not long after her father's death, may have followed a possible renewal of the treaty with Hattusili's son Tudhaliya. It is also possible that the Egyptian-Hittite alliance continued to act as a deterrent against Assyrian military enterprises in Syria. Even after the Assyrian king Tukulti-Ninurta inflicted a devastating defeat on Tudhaliya's forces in the Tigris region, in the so-called battle of Nihriya,<sup>23</sup> he refrained from invading Hittite territory in Syria, but turned instead against his southern neighbour Babylon.

To conclude, there were a number of reasons prompting Hattusili to establish an alliance with his kingdom's long-term enemy. But I suggest that the most important was the legitimacy which the agreement conferred upon Hattusili's occupancy of the Hittite throne. The Egyptian-Hittite pact is one of the most famous of all treaties, and is supposed to serve as a source of inspiration for nations of the modern world. But I wonder if it would ever have come into being but for the fact that a Hittite king squabbled with his nephew and seized his throne.

I have discussed the treaty almost entirely from the Hittite perspective, particularly Hattusili's perspective. But that gives us only one side of the picture. Which still leaves us with the question: What was in it for Ramesses?

<sup>22</sup> See Hawkins 2000: 433–42.

<sup>23</sup> Singer 1985.

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