

## Essex Egyptology Group - Meeting Report by Alison Woollard

### Peter J Brand - Ramses II and the Hittite Empire: War and Peace in the Late Bronze Age"

At the beginning of June, we were joined on Zoom by Professor Peter J Brand from the University of Memphis for his talk entitled: "Ramses II and the Hittite Empire: War and Peace in the Late Bronze Age". Listening to a talk which goes beyond Egypt always takes me out of my comfort zone and results in a clearer understanding of the civilisations of the whole area. Yes, I've heard of the Hittites but where were they? What did they do? Along with the Assyrians, Babylonians and Egyptians they were one of the major forces in the area and occupied what is now Turkey. Military campaigns and diplomacy chart the changing fortunes of each of these powers in the area. The peace treaty between Ramses II and the Hittites following the battle of Kadesh is the first known peace treaty and its significance is marked in the United Nations building in New York where a copper replica hangs on the wall.



Replica of Peace Treaty between Hattusilis and Ramses II

The Egyptians and Hittites had been fighting over the area of northern Sinai containing Kadesh for a long time with pictures of Hittite captives occurring in the buildings of Tutankhamen, Horemheb and Set I. Ramses II decided to continue the conflict culminating in his 'victory' at the Battle of Kadesh. The historical record of the battle comes mainly from Egyptian sources which portray it as a great success for Ramses but he did not capture Kadesh and the battle appears to have been a 'draw'. The Hittites wanted to capture and kill Ramses so neither side achieved their aim. The Egyptian

exaggeration of Ramses achievement appears to have been ideological: they were glorifying the role of the pharaoh not recording facts.

After Kadesh Ramses continued military campaigns in the area with attacks on Dapur recorded in Luxor temple and the Ramasseum. Ramses' personal bravery is emphasised. However, the Hittite rulers had problems and sent letters to Ramses asking for an end to the hostilities. Ramses refused this offer of peace which is hard to understand as both sides were getting nowhere. Again, it was probably a case of Ramses not wanting to lose face. It was only when the Hittites repeated their requests for peace, which Ramses could portray as the Hittites 'begging' for peace, that he could finally make peace with honour.

In Ramses' 21<sup>st</sup> regnal year silver tablets containing the text of a peace treaty were exchanged. The Egyptian one was found in the Hittite state archive and the Hittite copy, translated into hieroglyphs, appears on stelae in Karnak temple and the Ramasseum. The two versions are not identical but they contain the same major clauses: a non-aggression pact, a mutual defence alliance, the extradition of fugitives, Egyptian support for the Hittite king's successor and sacred oaths to the gods.

The two states were indeed working together. Letters sent between the royal families of each state suggest the treaty was very welcome. Nefertari sends a 12-strand necklace to the Hittite royal family with a letter saying how wonderful it was now that they had made peace. The Hittites sent a gold cup to the 'great King of Egypt'.

It wasn't just objects which travelled between the two courts. Ramses married not one but two Hittite princesses. An imaginary scene carved onto a stela at Abu Simbel shows the Hittite king delivering his daughter in person. The Hittite queen, Puduhepa, conducted tense negotiations with Ramses about the dowery and bride price which feel more like haggling. Ramses complains about delays to the arrival of the princess. They exchanged expensive gifts and letters bearing her seal survive.

### The Seal of Puduhepa

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