

Cabot Steward

## Reaction 5: From Hattusa to Carchemish

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### Summary:

The article "From Hattusa to Carchemish" provides an in-depth examination of the process of reconstructing Hittite history, with particular emphasis on the transition from the capital city of Hattusa to the administrative center of Carchemish. Initially absent from historical consciousness, the Hittites re-emerged in the nineteenth century when explorers in Turkey and northern Syria uncovered clay tablets and enigmatic inscriptions associated with biblical references. The pivotal moment arrived with Hugo Winckler's 1906 excavations at Bogazköy, which revealed an extensive archive of diplomatic correspondence, significantly advancing efforts to decipher the Hittite language, identified as part of the Indo-European family. Early scholars, including J. A. Knudtzon, established foundational work, though the subsequent discovery of Hurrian and other regional languages within these texts introduced additional layers of complexity to the linguistic landscape.

The article further details the dramatic demise of Hattusa, attributed to intense fires, marking the onset of the Neo-Hittite period under Suppiluliuma I, who established a viceroyalty at Carchemish. This era incorporated a blend of Hittite, Hurrian, and Semitic influences, rendering the historical chronology intricate and challenging to reconstruct due to fragmented archaeological evidence and inconsistent dating. The latter portion of the

article addresses the empire's vulnerabilities and gradual decline, positing that Hattusa experienced a progressive weakening of political authority, culminating in its abandonment. Regions such as Tarhuntassa and Kizzuwatna emerged as residual centers of influence, with the increasing adoption of hieroglyphic Luwian inscriptions during this transitional phase. The text concludes by exploring the integration of Neo-Hittite culture into Syrian and Mesopotamian societies via Carchemish, noting ongoing scholarly debates spurred by discoveries since the 1970s, while acknowledging persistent difficulties in establishing a coherent timeline amidst scattered evidence.

#### Analysis:

The article "From Hattusa to Carchemish" offers a comprehensive overview of Hittite history, yet it is marred by notable logical inconsistencies that undermine its credibility. One significant flaw lies in the assertion that the empire's decline occurred gradually, which stands in stark contrast to the vivid description of intense fires that devastated Hattusa, suggesting a potential for immediate collapse. This discrepancy raises concerns about whether the author has adequately considered the profound and sudden disruption such a catastrophe could inflict upon central governance, potentially overlooking the rapid disintegration of administrative control. A second issue pertains to the transition to Carchemish as a continuation of imperial authority, where the text emphasizes its importance without elucidating the mechanisms by which this city sustained continuity amid Hattusa's downfall. The lack of detail regarding the transfer or maintenance of power leaves the argument incomplete, relying on an unverified assumption of seamless transition that fails to align with the evidence of a collapsing

capital. These gaps suggest a need for greater integration of archaeological data to support the proposed historical narrative.

Additionally, the treatment of hieroglyphic Luwian inscriptions presents another area of weakness, as the article highlights their significance without providing concrete examples or a clear explanation of their practical role in supporting administrative or cultural cohesion during the empire's decline. This omission results in an overly generalized claim that lacks substantiation, potentially reflecting an outdated perspective that attributes undue importance to linguistic shifts without evidence of their functional impact. The absence of such detail invites speculation about whether these inscriptions served as a desperate attempt to preserve identity rather than a strategic adaptation. To address these shortcomings, two pertinent questions arise: How did the sudden destruction of Hattusa immediately alter the political dynamics of the region? And what specific administrative functions did hieroglyphic Luwian inscriptions fulfill during the Neo-Hittite period? These inquiries, rooted in a careful reading of the text, underscore the necessity for the author to ground the argument more firmly in verifiable evidence, thereby enhancing the overall coherence and persuasiveness of the historical reconstruction.