

THE HITTITES - Curated Transcript of BBC In Our Time podcast  
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In Our Time is hosted by Melvyn Bragg. Melvyn's guests on this podcast are:

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Professor of Archaeology at the University of Glasgow

Ilgi Gercek  
Assistant Professor of Ancient Near Eastern Languages and History at Bilkent University

And

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Transcript:

[Melvyn Bragg] Hello. Around 1274 BC, there was a mighty chariot battle at Kadesh in modern Syria, to be followed by what's often called the first known peace treaty, the Treaty of Kadesh. The Egyptians were one part of the treaty, but the identity of the other remained a mystery until the 20th century, when they were identified as the Hittites from what is now Turkey. And in the last century, with more and more discoveries, the interest in these Hittites of the late Bronze Age has snowballed, not least for the light they throw on life on the Aegean coast, where their contemporaries the Mycenaeans reputedly fought the Trojan War. With me to discuss the Hittites are Claudia Gladz, Professor of Archeology at the University of Glasgow, Ilgi Gercek,

Assistant Professor of Ancient Near Eastern Languages and History at Bilkent University in Turkey and Christoph Bachhuber, Lecturer in Archeology at St John's College, University of Oxford.

[Melvyn Bragg] Christoph, what reason did anyone in the late 19th century have to think that the Hittites ever existed?

[Christoph Bachhuber] We need to sort-of travel back down to the mid to late 19th century. And as we suggested in your introduction, there was already in the mid to the 19th century intense interest in the ancient world. And this interest was really driven by two historical traditions. On the one hand, you have the classical tradition and the sort of ancient chroniclers like Herodotus, who wrote extensively and colorfully on the sort of contemporary civilizations. This would be about the fifth century BC - so the Egyptians, the Babylonians, etc. From the classical tradition, there is a resounding silence on the civilization we call the Hittites. It is as if they never existed. And then there is the biblical tradition, which is really the Old Testament, and indeed the term Hittite, the very word Hittite, we have borrowed, in a sense, from the Old Testament. And here the overwhelming impression of the Hittites in the Old Testament and in several books of the Old Testament is of people who may have been nomadic or semi nomadic dwelling perhaps in the deserts of Syria, yet there's also some references to Hittite kings or inevitable armies. But nevertheless, by the, let's say 1870, there was no archeological notion of the Hittites. They do not exist archeologically.

[Melvyn Bragg] So what changed it then?

[Christoph Bachhuber] It took a number of individuals, travelers and scholars, really, to begin piecing together very, very disparate evidence, hieroglyphic inscriptions on rock monuments stretching across the length of Turkey and into northern Syria. Now, these hieroglyphs bear no relation whatsoever to Egyptian hieroglyphs. So this was a mystery. The other strand of evidence indeed comes from ancient Egypt new kingdom, Egypt in particular, where Egyptian pharaohs recorded a conflict with a formidable power from the kingdom of Hatti. The third strand of evidence, of course, is the Hittites in the Bible. And it took one scholar in particular, Archibald Sayce, then at the University of Oxford, to piece together all these strands of evidence and to raise the idea, or even the hypothesis that those inscriptions across the length of Turkey and northern Syria belong to a Hittite empire.

[Melvyn Bragg] So you've got a start there. ...It seemed to develop very quickly that people went out there to dig, to do the usual archaeological explorations and quickly discovered that there was quite a big civilization now extant and hadn't been heard of for 3000 years?

[Christoph Bachhuber] Yes, actually it wasn't that quick.

[Melvyn Bragg] Quick in the archeological sense.. we are talking about 3000 years down to about 50. That's quick.

[Christoph Bachhuber] But it did take about 30 years after Archibald Sayce published this hypothesis of a Hittite state and empire, that archeologists began testing this hypothesis. And there were two archeologists in particular, Hugo Winkler and Theodor

Makridi, who set out in 1906 to find a Hittite city somewhere in what is today Turkey. And they focused their attention on a site called Bogazkoy. Based on travelers accounts of this unusual city called Bogazkoy in central Turkey, Theodor Makridi and Hugo Winkler began an excavation at the site and with no notion, of course, that this would actually be a Hittite site, but a hypothesis. And within two weeks of their excavation, they came down upon a royal archive in cuneiform of the Hittite state and empire.

[Melvyn Bragg] Thank you very much. Claudia, these 30,000, I think, cuneiform tablets, what did they reveal about the Hittites? First of all, what they reveal. How easy were they to read?

[Claudia Glatz] Winkler and Makridi found these massive amounts of cuneiform tablets. Many of the tablets that they found were written in Akkadian, which is a Semitic language at home in what is today the plains of central and northern Iraq, which had already been deciphered by the mid 19th century. And so these tablets could be read immediately. Other tablets, notably those written in Hittite, took a little longer to decipher. But even just from these Akkadian tablets, a pretty clear picture was emerging about Hattusa and its status as an imperial capital in the 14th and the 13th century whose political and military reach seems to have reached all the way to coastal regions in western Turkey and, on the other end, to the Euphrates Valley in the east and into northern Syria. In the later second millennium, Akkadian was a lingua franca used in international diplomacy and correspondence. And so some of the tablets that they were finding were letters to Egypt, to Babylon and other places, but also vassal correspondence and treaties. And so really a year after Winkler and Makridi started excavating they could piece together the outlines of Hittite imperial history and international relations. And that then could be connected to discoveries made elsewhere - notably in Egypt including the Amarna archives of international correspondence between the Egyptian pharaohs of Amenophis the Third and the Fourth (otherwise known as Akhenaten) with the Hittite court, but also other royal courts in the wider region.

[Melvyn Bragg] So what you're talking about is a well developed, in those times, in those terms, civilization. There was a one city wall [that] stretched for 8 or 9 kilometers there were festivals, there was a royal court, there were big grain centers and so on.

[Claudia Glatz] The Hittites were part of this kind of club of great powers, Egypt, Mitania, Assyria and Babylonia, who referred to each other as these brothers and exchanged elaborate diplomatic gifts and divided the rest of the region up amongst themselves. In terms of the central Anatolia, which is the core region or the heartland of this Hittite political entity, these early excavations by the Turkish-German team brought to light some of Hattusa's most iconic monumental structures, like the royal palace on this dramatic rock outcrop on Büyükkale, which means a big castle in Turkish. And the spectacular finds that were retrieved kind of set the tone for the rest of the archaeological work that's taking place and still is taking place in Turkey. And so what we have is a lot of monuments, a lot of temples and a lot of institutional structures, public buildings that have been excavated at the range of sites, administrative hubs of different sizes distributed around the central Anatolian plateau, where local officials were in charge of collecting agricultural surplus from surrounding communities and forwarding it to the central capital at Hattusa.

[Melvyn Bragg] Ilgi, can I get to this now? Who ruled? Who was in charge of it? Was there an invented royal family? How did the system work? Can you take us in that direction?

[Ilgi Gercek] This land was ruled by one dynasty, one family, from practically its beginning to its end. And the Hittite royal family. Although the rules of royal succession and how things went were a little bit different. Our sources suggest that this was a very centrally the core territory was a centrally administered area.

[Melvyn Bragg] Were they gods like the pharaohs in Egypt gods? Or what function did these gods have?

[Ilgi Gercek] The Hittites famously referred to their pantheon as the thousand Gods of Hatti. And this wasn't an exaggeration - not really. So the Hittites were polytheists, but the Hittite pantheon grew over the course of Hittite imperial expansion to include prominent deities of regions subject to Hittite rules. So the Hittite kings themselves, with one possible exception, were not really considered deities as they lived, but when they died, that they became deities. In fact, the Hittite expression to die when referring to a member of the royal family is to become a god.

[Melvyn Bragg] They had gods of everything, didn't they? Rivers, waterfalls, mountains, rocks.

[Ilgi Gercek] They did. Yes, they did. So they had, on one hand, proper deities. Like at the top of the hierarchically organized pantheon, you have the storm god of Hatti and his consort, the sun goddess of the town Arinna, along with their own progeny. But they also had features of the natural landscape, such as mountains and rivers, springs, and they even thought of parts of temples such as hearts or pillars as divine or numinous. And we know the names of not only the state pantheon, but also the pantheons of numerous local towns, small or large, scattered across the Hittite heartland.

[Melvyn Bragg] Christoph what do we know about the capital, Hattusa? What does that tell us about the hitters? What did you find there? That was a huge find for archaeologists early on to strike at the heart of the matter, it seems, from what I've read.

[Christoph Bachhuber] It is a huge city. The defensive wall, the circuit wall, is over 8 km in length. And I think what is remarkable about Hattusa really, is its landscape, because it is built up onto a mountain, and you almost get the impression that it is a castle. It is a heavily defensive, very well fortified city built up into the foothills of the Pontic mountains. The city itself is, and Claudia hinted at this problem earlier, so within the walls it is really exclusively state-focused palaces, temples, etc. There is no sense whatsoever that most of the population lived within Hattusa, within the walls of Hattusa. It seems to be just a massive state project of temple construction, ritual, etc, etc. So Hattusa itself is really this kind of elite enclave, heavily, heavily defended enclave up on a mountain. And I think a castle is almost an outsized castle would be a way to imagine this city. And so the city itself, we mentioned already, so Claudia, has already mentioned Büyükkale as the kind of acropolis where the palace is located. And from that acropolis you can look down onto the city, and even today you can climb up into

the acropolis and see the various temple foundations. You can trace the foundations of the city wall. It is really stunning, actually, the vistas. And of course, you can look up into the north and see the Pontic mountains and you really get the sense that you're almost in a sort of eyrie or a castle even up above the landscape.

[Melvyn Bragg] ...Claudia, what can we glean then? I'm trying to get, for the listeners and for myself, this sounds like a very big well-developed, civilization with its many gods, with its rituals. Maybe you could tell us about the rituals, Claudia, when they bound them together? I mean, I'm fascinated by the idea that all this was developed, they were big enough to take on the Egyptians and fight a draw, where the Egyptians claim victory, but so do the Hittites, and historians, people like you now, said, no, the Hittites shaded it. It was all about that, then it vanished. So I want to build up a feeling of what it was like before it vanished. So what can we glean about the rituals that bound them together? What sort of civilization ... was it Claudia?

[Claudia Glatz] So rituals formed a very important part -- very important aspect of official Hittite culture. Now, I say official culture because all of the ritual and festival texts, but also much of the buildings and the places where these rituals would have taken place are all very directly associated with the state. So that the tablets were found in public buildings, etc. The festivals and the rituals themselves would have been associated with these structures as well. Our archeological perspective, again, is restricted to these public monuments and some elite residences that were executed in a capital city, but also in other sites associated with the Hittite state, like at Maşat Höyük, which is called Ancient Tappika, at Ortaköy, Hittite Shapinuwa, at Kuşaklı, ancient Sarissa and at Oymaağaç Höyük, which is of the cult center of Nerik. So there is no doubt that ordinary people would have conducted rituals in their own houses or village communities.

[Melvyn Bragg] So all more extraordinary that in about 1200 BC, this more or less vanished. We'll come back to this. Igi, but can we just explore what we have now found before we talk about how it's so mysteriously vanished? Can anyone read Hittite?

[Igi] Yes, we can definitely read Hittite. The excavation of Hattusa, modern Boğazköy, or Boğazkale, as it's also called today, started in 1906 and soon about 10,000 tablets were found.

[Melvyn Bragg] How big was the city? Sorry. Do we know the population of the city?

[Igi Gercek] Claudia? Would we be able to give an estimate?

[Claudia Glatz] 10,000 to 15,000.

[Igi Gercek] About 30,000 tablets are now extant from the Hittite archives, and the majority of these tablets were written in then unknown language at 1906, but a smaller portion had been written in Akkadian. So at that time the cuneiform script had already been deciphered and the Akkadian language was well understood and considerable advances were being made in understanding Sumerian as well. So the recovery of the Hittite language was not a true decipherment because the first scholars to work on this language could actually read the sounds of the syllabic cuneiform signs. And it was a

matter of determining whether the language recorded was related to any known language family. And it is. We know that Hittite is the first recorded Indo-European language from the Anatolian branch of the Indo European language family. And this makes it a relative of not only ancient languages like Latin and Greek and Sanskrit, but several modern languages as well. So once it was determined that Hittite was Indo European, it was just a matter of then understanding the language, finding cognates and finding out the meaning of words by comparison to other Indo-European languages.

[Melvyn Bragg] Was there any Rosetta-Stone moment?

[Ilgi Gercek] Since they could already establish the sounds of the signs, they could then read them out loud. It was just a matter of understanding the language. But I mean, it helped, of course, that they could already read Akkadian and a sort of sketch of Hittite history had already been established, thanks to the documents in Akkadian. Some of these diplomatic documents that Claudia already mentioned. So they knew what Hittite history looked like a little bit while trying to decipher the language that we now call Hittite. And I can also add that Hittite was not the only Indo-European language spoken in Anatolia. In fact, the Hittite archives have revealed a very linguistically and culturally diverse population in Anatolia. Aside from Hittites, there were the Indo-European languages, Luwian and Palaic, which are also attested in the Hittite archives, and languages like Hattic and Hurrian, which are linguistic isolates and of course, documents in Sumerian and Akkadian, although the former, Sumerian is not well documented in the Hittite archives.

[Melvyn Bragg] Thank you very much. Christoph, you wanted to say something about the Rosetta Stone connection. The possible...

[Christoph Bachhuber] Yes. So Ilgi, I think, clarified that there wasn't that kind of moment with the Boğazköy archive. But I mentioned at the beginning the hieroglyphic inscriptions, which are indeed, so Ilgi just mentioned, Luwian as one of the Indian-European languages that was spoken within this Hittite realm. And there was indeed a Rosetta Stone moment for the hieroglyphic inscriptions. And that was very similar to the Rosetta Stone, where there is a monument, a rock monument, inscribed in different scripts and languages, Phoenician on the one hand, which was a known script, of course, in a known language, a West-semetic, very closely related to Hebrew, et cetera, and then the same text in Luwian hieroglyphs. So that was several decades, maybe five, almost six decades after Boğazköy. But that was indeed, I think, a very closely analogous Rosetta Stone moment. And if you remember, it was Luwian hieroglyphs at first alerted people like Archibald Sayce to some extensive political entities, some empire even, across Turkey and into northern Syria.

[Melvyn Bragg] We've heard about different about different tribes, countries, whatever. Can we concentrate on the Hittites now, and what made the Hittites Hittites? Were they a people, were they a culture? Were they subject to a particular king at a particular time?

[Christoph Bachhuber] If we think about how a Hittite might identify themselves, they didn't call themselves Hittites. I already said Hittite is a biblical term. So we borrowed the biblical term to call the Hittites Hittites. They referred to themselves as people of

the land of Hatti. And this land of Hatti really is, and Claudia sort-of mentioned already, that the geography of the Hittite State and Empire, it is in central Anatolia, central Turkey today, defined by a number of Hittite cities. So they self-identified with a place, the Land of Hatti. And I think what is intriguing about the land of Hatti. Hatti has one of these languages that Ilgi mentioned, Hattic, that is not Indo European, it is not related to Hittite whatsoever, and it was spoken by people probably who lived in this landscape before the Hittites, in a sense, set up camp. They are identifying themselves with the land of Hatti, which originally wasn't even their land. And I think this says something about the Hittite identity broadly, in that it is an empire it is something that is extensive and expansive and it appropriates things. It appropriates languages. It appropriates gods even. It appropriates everything that it subjugates. And so Hittite as an entity is almost this amalgam of different languages, different cosmologies. It's certainly benefiting from vassals of these different regions, all of which, of course, spoke different languages, etc.

[Melvyn Bragg] Claudia, they had systems of storing grain. Can you tell the listeners about that? They seem to be extraordinarily grand and effective.

[Claudia Glatz] We know that private individuals and communities could own land themselves, but the temple and palace institutions were big landholders and generally just big economic players. In addition to their religious and political administrative roles. And the role of these institutions in the extraction, storage and redistribution of grain, we can see reflected in really massive storage facilities at the Hittite capital, but also in other cities. So for instance, the temple, the great temple that is located in the lower city of Hattusa, I think Ilgi just mentioned it as well, was dedicated to the storm god Teshub and the sun goddess of Arrina. Excavated are about 80 storage rooms, but there could have been as many as 200 with large pithoi inside. And at Hattusa, Kuşaklı,... (Kameron-Kalihuk??) there were also large underground grain silos. The most impressive silo dates to the later 16th century - so quite early in Hittite history. It covers about half a hectare and has 32 monumental storerooms which could hold something between 7000 to 9000 cubic metres of grain. Taken together, the storage facilities in Hattusa could feed about 30,000 people, is the estimate, for about a year. With the grain that is stored, which as we've just talked about, if we assume that 15,000 people or so lived in Hattusa, it's double the number of inhabitants.

[Melvyn Bragg] We're talking about something on a very big scale. It's terrific. It's very impressive.

23:10

[Claudia Glatz] The circumscription of the surplus from farming communities is of course itself an arena in which the political power of the Hittite state is performed, but also where these local communities engage in kind of the negotiation and sometimes the subversion of this power and tax collection. In the central Hittite empire this appears to have been in the hands of local communities, the so-called men of the town or district and also a Hittite official who was responsible for forwarding this produce to the capital. There's some mentioned in Hittite texts of kind of long-winded negotiations over that tax reductions, but there is a much bigger body of knowledge from other historical and ethnographic sources about what happens at the time of this tax extraction. And it's always a dramatic and negotiated occasion with attempts to get away with partial payments and other ways of tricking the tax official.

[Melvyn Bragg] You mentioned the word power. Ilgi, what about the Hittite armies? Were they in constant warfare along their borders? Were they well, can you give us some idea of the fighting power of the Hittite community? Country.

24:29

[Ilgi Gercek] Yes. The royal annals certainly give this impression that the Hittite armies, and they did have a standing army and could seasonally recruit more soldiers whenever necessary, so they give the impression that the Hittite army was always perpetually involved in fighting. Some of it might be propaganda, but it seems that they did need to use their army to protect their land, but also to conduct military campaigns that seem to have been mostly economically motivated. And when I say for economic reasons, it seems that one of the biggest problems the Hittite empire faced was the need for manpower. Droughts and famines and wars considerably depleted the populations in Hatti. And there was also the fact that a lot of people didn't want to be Hittite subjects to pay taxes or to be conscripted into the army, and they escaped. So when we look at the royal annals, we see that a lot of military campaigns ended in the deportation of massive amounts of people into Hatti to be put to work there in agriculture or animal husbandry building projects or recruited into the army.

[Melvyn Bragg] Thank you. Christoph, what do we know about the Battle of Kadesh in 1074, where they seem to have fought at least to a draw, with what we think of as the great Egyptian empire and the technology? It was a battle largely waged by men on chariots. So that's taking us quite a way. Can you just give us some give us your view or not on the Battle of Kadesh? What happened?

26:18

[Christoph Bachhuber] Yeah. So I'll just pick up from Ilgi and we had to imagine this was probably the largest military campaign that the Hittites ever waged, right. And so we can also imagine the intense conscription and the recruitment for this campaign drawing from people all over the empire, perhaps unwillingly, perhaps somewhat unwillingly. But anyway, this is sort of a classic imperial conflict, where Hittite imperial interests were expanding to the south south from the highlands of Turkey and ancient Anatolia, and Egyptian imperial interest was expanding from the south right up through the southern Levant and into Syria. And the frontier in this conflict emerged at the Orantes River, which is where the city of Kadesh is located. Now, Kadesh was annexed originally by the Egyptians - Seti I. And that was really the northern limit of Egyptian imperial expansion. And so the son of Seti I, Ramses II, was alerted to a massive troop movement of the Hittites down the chariot forces, as you mentioned, down towards this frontier. So Ramses II himself led an army, a chariot army, as you already mentioned, up to towards this frontier at the Orantes River. The Hittite army was led by the king, Muwatalli II. So these are armies led by kings in conflict around this city of Kadesh. So you rightly observed that the battle ended in a draw. If you read the Egyptian sources, you wouldn't think that at all. The Egyptian monuments, the inscriptions of Ramses II declare a victory for Egypt. And if you only knew the Egyptian sources, you would be convinced, I guess, or at least if you just relied entirely on the monuments of Ramses II, but what we do know is that Egyptians lost control of Kadesh. They no longer had that sort of annexation of Kadesh. And we also know from later letters between the Hittite kings and Egyptian kings, diplomatic correspondence, that the Hittite kings were complaining that the Egyptians continue to have on their



mortuary temples this description, this representation of an Egyptian victory at Kadesh. So the battle really did end in a draw.

[Melvyn Bragg] Should we think, Claudia, should we think of the Hittite lands as tightly and centrally controlled? Or was it altogether looser? Where are we there?

29:06

[Claudia Glatz] Yes, we've already heard about the treaties and the agreements that were concluded with these other political entities. And some of them also include states that ultimately become Hittite vassals. And these are either defeated in a military sense or enticed to seek the protection of the Hittite great king against other local, usually local, smaller local enemies. So, in turn, these vassals, especially the really prosperous ones, like the trading city of Ugarit on the Mediterranean coast, had to pay a lot of tribute, usually precious metals and some garments, be ready to join the Hittite military campaigns like the one at Kadesh that Christoph just described for us. And the kings also had to come to Hattusa regularly to show their deference and respect, and they had to agree to refrain from independent foreign relations. So, technically, these local dynasties remained in charge of the day to day running of these newly incorporated areas. But there was at times quite significant interference and supervision in the form of scribes and other officials from the court at Hattusa, but also the Hittite vice-regal seat at Carchemish, which is a large, monumental site located right on the Syrian-Turkish border at the moment, and who helped to kind-of-run these Syrian territories on behalf of the Hittites.

[Melvyn Bragg] Ilgi, can you tell us briefly about the stability of the Hittites? Was there a long line of dynasties?

30:45

[Ilgi Gercek] From its foundation to its demise, actually, the Hittite state was ruled by one dynasty, one extended family. However, peaceful royal succession was the exception, it seems, rather than the rule. For instance, most of the Old Kingdom, a relatively long period in Hittite history, is very poorly understood precisely because contenders for the throne were busy stabbing one another in the back. This is the period from the reign of king Hantili I, the third documented king in about 1590s, to the reign of Tudḫaliya I in about the 1400s, which for us marks the beginning of the early empire period. So to give one example, this king, Hantili I, who I just mentioned, came to power by assassinating his predecessor. That was Muršili I. Hantili and his sons were assassinated by Hantili's son-in-law, Zidanta. And that one in turn, was murdered by his own son, Ammuna. So it went for a long while, despite efforts by one Hittite king, Telipinu, to sort of iterate or reiterate the rules of royal succession through an edict that we call the Edict of Telipinu. Still, this didn't solve problems, and this was a problem until the end of the Hittite Empire, basically.

[Melvyn Bragg] Thank you. Christoph, according to recent theories, what connects the Hittites to the Trojan Wars?

32:23

[Christoph Bachhuber] This work is largely based on Hittite political geography, which is itself a text based study of the places that are recorded in annalistic texts or diplomatic correspondence within the Hittite archives. And what people have begun to

piece together is what western Anatolia, western Turkey, looked like politically, geographically, from the perspective of the Hittites. And two places or two geographic entities we can call to that have emerged as perhaps relevant to the Trojan War. So, on the one hand, you have references to a formidable power called the Acheawans, which for a long time now, linguists have understood Acheawa to be cognate with the Achaeans. And that is one of the terms that Homer used to describe the Greek combatants in the Iliad. So you have, on the one hand, an adversary, let's say, in Achiawa that was clearly meddling with Hittite imperial interest in Western Turkey or Western Anatolia. The other place name that is of interest is a place that the Hittites called Wilusa. And here, also, linguists and philologists have drawn a cognate relationship between Wilusa, Hittite Walusa and Ilian - one of the terms that Homer used to describe the place, the city of Troy i.e. the Iliad, Iliad, et cetera. Hittite Wilusa is cognate with Ilian, Hittite Achiawa is cognate with the Achaeans or the Greeks. So what the political geography is suggesting is that Wilusa is a sort of, to some extent, a minor political power that is caught between a power struggle between the Acheawans, on the one hand, and the Achaeans. If we were to buy this hypothesis, and the Hittites and Wilusa as a place, i.e. Ilian, i.e. Troy, as it is caught between this power struggle between the Achiawans and the Hittites is switching allegiances. It is a very sort-of complicated politic of a vassal.

[Melvyn Bragg] This is an absence in the conversation so far, which is the Hittite women in the records, we say they're being in great demand as brides among their neighbors. How did that work?

[Christoph Bachhuber] Well, one very good example of this comes back to... it follows on the Battle of Kadesh. And you'd mentioned in the introduction that there was a peace treaty signed between or agreed between the Hittites and the Egyptians. And that was maybe 15-20 years after the Battle of Kadesh and it established not only peace between the two empires, but also an alliance between the two empires. And that peace treaty itself was sealed to-some-extent with a gift exchange that included the Princess of Ḫattušili III as wife to Ramses II. We know her Egyptian name only we don't know her type of name, but she was, in a sense, exchanged to Ramses II as a gift, in a kind of diplomatic correspondence, not far from what Claudia had suggested already. With the amount of correspondence, as always, complex diplomacy. So there you have very compelling evidence for how a Hittite royal could be used politically to cement an alliance between two powers.

[Melvyn Bragg] Claudia, what brought the Hittite Empire to an end? This is as fascinating as the fact that it grew to be such a complicated interesting inventive society with its cunieform tablets and so on and so forth. And then the word vanished has been used in some of the notes I've been reading, some of the stuff I've been reading, so it vanished! How did it vanish and how did it not really reassert itself for 3000 years? Two questions. Could you answer the first of them?

36:56

[Claudia Glatz] The short answer is that we don't know for sure why the Hittite Empire collapsed. There are a number of theories that privilege one or another factor. So, for instance, we have very recent theories that concentrate on climate changing or the worsening of climatic conditions in the wider East-Mediterranean region. A more traditional external factor that's usually brought into the conversation of the sea people

although, as we said before, the core area of the Hittite Empire lies on the central plateau a thousand meters high and 500 km away from the Mediterranean Sea. There have been more systemic perspectives that kind-of juxtapose the highly centralized, or what seems to be a highly centralized and tightly structured Bronze-Age palatial economic system with their monopolies over the production and exchange of specific goods with what comes afterwards which is a more decentralized maritime trading world in the Iron Age as some of the factors. And as this world is developing, the palatial late Bronze Age world slowly comes to a close. Now on their own, neither the cataclismic climate-change model or any of the other scenarios sit very comfortably with the Hittite case, although aspects of each of them played into Hittite political collapse. I would also throw in trends towards initial Hattusa driven decentralization political decentralization that in the end kind of backfires on them with local policies like Carchemish, but also Tarḫuntašša and other areas becoming more powerful than originally intended, and challenging central sovereignty.

[Melvyn Bragg] Sorry, Ilgi would you like to add to that? Do you have views on that? About the collapse of demise, vanishing, all words seem to be reasonably applicable, of this empire?

[Ilgi Gercek] Aside from what Claudia has described, I would also like to add that several populations within Anatolia or situated along its borders had been resisting Hittite rule, and sometimes very successfully for a very long time. So if we get back to the dynamic that I mentioned earlier, that most people didn't want to be subjects and they were constantly trying to run away from Hittite rule, this must have been one of the contributing factors as well, that the populations, even in the Hittite heartland, were waiting for the opportunity to cease -- to be independent -- and to escape the yoke of Hatti.

[Melvyn Bragg] Claudia?

39:51

[Claudia Glatz] So I just wanted to add something to what Ilgi was saying and mention another aspect of Hittite campaigning and warfare that we've also talked about already. And these are these deputy populations which are taken from areas that the Hittites conquered and then resettled on the central Anatolian plateau, often close to where the Kazakha border was. And I think this created also kind of a disenfranchised population that was either outright hostile to Hittite interests and culture or was entirely disinterested in it. And that is part of why in the central Hittite area, particularly at Hattusa, the capital, after the administrative apparatus leaves the city and part of it is destroyed, we see very little of the culture of the Hittites that we associate with the Hittite state and with the Hittite empire in this, the core region continues into the early Iron Age. And that may be one explanation why it vanishes in the way that Melvin described in his introduction to that.

[Melvyn Bragg] Well, thank you very much.

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And the In Our Time podcast gets some extra time now with a few minutes of bonus material from Melvin and his guests.

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[Melvyn Bragg] What do you think we missed out that's important that we should have included?

41:30

[Claudia Glatz] One of the things that may have not come out quite as much in the recording so far is that what we really are lacking in our understanding of the Hittite state and not its grand and glitzy relationships with other great powers, but how, on the one hand, it really worked at home but also what was the experience of normal people, of ordinary, you know, Central Anatolian or South Anatolian or Northern Syrian people of this empire? And, you know, empires are not fun things to be dominated by, and how are they engaging with and resisting the various strategies that these empires employ to extract resources to affect compliance and things like that? So the survey work, I think, is really important because this is, at the moment, the archeological method that will give us some insights into what's going on out in the countryside and maybe capture the lives of or begin to capture the lives of normal people. Although, in the end, we would need to excavate some of these farmsteads, some of these villages, in order to really get a better idea. Did they pray to the same gods as we see in the Hittite central pantheon, or were there more localized rural traditions that were maybe continuing from a previous period? We don't know any of these things yet about Hittite society.

[Melvyn Bragg] Ilgi, Do you want to take this up?

43:05

[Ilgi Gercek] I'd also like to emphasize the imbalanced textual situation as well. All the texts that we have, those 30,000 tablets and fragments have been produced by the state and for the state. So the available documentation and the modern narrative of the Hittites that's based on it is naturally statist and centralist, in fact, royalist to a certain extent. So we can say a lot about the king, the administration, the extended royal family. And this is something very different from other periods and places in Mesopotamia as well as Anatolia. We have no private documents. I mean, if you compare this to the previous period in Anatolia, the Karum period, the Old Assyrian period, all we have are private archives. And when you get to the Hittite period, pretty much all you have are state archives. So this statist or state centered narrative has to be balanced, if not by textual finds, then by archeological work as survey and excavation of smaller-scale places, as Claudia said. So there is to have a more balanced view of Hittite society - one that doesn't exclude the people of Anatolia.

[Melvyn Bragg] Christoph?

44:28

[Christoph Bachhuber] Yeah, to extend on these points. And this, I think, maybe relates a little closer to what Claudia was saying. So thinking about the archaeology of empire and the experience of empire, there is a lot of work going on now. For example, within the Roman Empire particularly, I would say the most ground-breaking work is actually in this country, in Britain, trying to get some sense of how local elites or not lived within that sort of hegemonic structure of Roman imperialism. And again, there's a lot of working on this country where that is becoming more and more accessible, let's say, to both archaeologists and historians. And similar points, you're not really having any

sense of what is happening in the kind of day to day or in the kind of non elite context of the Hittite cities and landscapes, et cetera. We still also have very, very little understanding of how in Syria or even southern Turkey or western Turkey, we simply don't have the data to access how people lived within the hegemonic context of Hittite imperialism. And this is quite different, for example, of course, we've got the Roman example, but even in the Assyrian as an example, if we think about the Assyrian Empire, there is a lot of compelling evidence, visual culture, written culture, of how local elites, non-Assyrian people in ways assimilated themselves or negotiated these sort of complex identities as both local and also Assyrian. That is simply invisible. Archaeologically, textually, or visually. And does this reflect the archeological data? I don't know. We simply can't answer these kinds of questions. How did local people experience Hittite imperialism? We are really far from that. And I would say Claudia has probably come closest to addressing these questions with very limited data sets. I don't know, Claudia, if you want to pick up on that a little bit.

[Claudia Glatz] Well, thanks, Christoph. Just maybe continue along that same line of thinking. Another thing that we really need to do more work on is the Hittite texts give us a sense of the persistence of this hegemonic structure. And it's true, it somehow hangs in there for several hundred years. So it clearly is successful in some ways, but I think we're ignoring other aspects of the text, which is kind of a pervasive sense of rebellion and upheaval and contestation. And Ilgi has mentioned this also in our discussion a few times as well. How do we translate this into archeological work? The way we think about the state pervades our research questions. It pervades our interpretation. What seems a plausible interpretation even. So, for instance, when archaeologists find a disruption horizon at the site, the most accepted way to interpret it or the most uncontested in the archeological community would be to say, well, the Hittite king Suppilulima, or somebody else, came by and destroyed the site. But there might be other reasons for why the site was destroyed at the time of when the Hittites passed by or when they were incorporating the site into their empire. And it could be a form of protest. It could be a way of abandoning a place that could be taxed, that could be controlled or otherwise. So we need to shift our way of thinking about these things to kind of decenter, in a sense, decolonize our way of thinking about the ancient empires as well.

[Melvyn Bragg] Christoph, I understand you're still working there doing archaeological digs, is that right?

[Christoph Bachhuber] Yes not in the land...

[Melvyn Bragg] What do you hope to find? What would be a big find for you, as it were?

48:24

[Christoph Bachhuber] Yeah, well, we have a big find. It wasn't from an excavation. It was from a survey. And this story relates back to Muwatalli II, who led the Hittite armies at the Battle of Kadesh. He did another remarkable thing and moved the capital of the Hittite state, Hittite empire, from Hattusha to a place, I think Claudia had already mentioned, to a place called Tarantasha. Much in the same way, for those familiar with the ancient Egyptian history, Akhenaten moved the capital from Thebes to Amarna. So

unlike Amarna, we have no idea, really, where Tarḫuntašša' is. It hasn't been identified archaeologically. And so we began a survey in a region just to the south of the Land of Hatti, which is the modern Konya Plain which in Hittite political geography is called the Lower Land. And we set off on this survey not to find Tarantasha, but it has long been hypothesized that Tarantashashould be in this landscape. It should be south of Hattusa. It could be in a very agriculturally, fertile Konya Plain, which is where we conducted our survey. And we focused our survey, on the one hand, getting a big picture of this landscape, you know, what happened to this landscape as it was annexed by the Hittites. What happened during Hittite intervention? What happened after the Hittite intervention? And what is remarkable for us, and we have a hypothesis, is that one site in particular called Türkmen-Karahöyük is much, much bigger in the late Bronze Age, i.e. during the Hittite intervention, than any other site in that region. And in 2019, a colleague was doing an intensive survey at the site of Türkmen-Karahöyük, and a villager had found a Luwian hieroglyphic inscription at the site and alerted my colleagues to that find. This Luwian hieroglyphic inscription relates to a king called Hatapu who actually postdates the Hittite empire but sits within this adjacent region that may not have collapsed like the Hittite state did. In fact, every indication right now is that there is a continuity in this landscape, the Lower Land, that we don't see in the land of Hatti. And this Luwian hieroglyphic inscription, in a sense, even though it postdates the Hittite imperial period, is testament to that continuity. So we have thrown it out there as a hypothesis that I think can only be proven or disproven with an extensive excavation, that this may indeed be the lost capital of Tarantasha, i.e. where Muwattalli II moved the Hittite capital from Boğazköy to Tarantasha. But it remains a hypothesis. Obviously, it will take years of excavation to prove or disprove this.

[Melvyn Bragg] Well, thank you all very much indeed.

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In our time with Melvin Bragg is produced by Simon Tillotson.