



From the MixCache.com library

SAMPLE COPY

The Hittites

MixCache.com

SAMPLE COPY

Table of Contents

- **Introduction**
- **Chapter 1** In the Land of Hatti: Setting and Sources
- **Chapter 2** From Anatolian Peoples to Hittites: Origins and Language
- **Chapter 3** Hattusa Emerges: City and Capital
- **Chapter 4** Old Kingdom Foundations: Labarna to Mursili I
- **Chapter 5** The Telepinu Edict and the Shape of Kingship
- **Chapter 6** Society and Law: The Hittite Laws in Context
- **Chapter 7** Gods of a Thousand Places: Religion and Ritual
- **Chapter 8** Warriors and Chariots: The Hittite Art of War
- **Chapter 9** Diplomacy and Letters: Royal Correspondence
- **Chapter 10** Empire Builders: Suppiluliuma I and the Rise to Power
- **Chapter 11** Confronting Egypt: Muwatalli II and the Road to Kadesh
- **Chapter 12** The Battle of Kadesh and Its Aftermath
- **Chapter 13** Hattusili III and Puduhepa: Power, Piety, and Reform
- **Chapter 14** The First Great Peace: The Egyptian-Hittite Treaty
- **Chapter 15** Provinces and Vassals: Governing an Empire
- **Chapter 16** Economy, Trade, and Technology: Metals, Timber, and Horses
- **Chapter 17** Landscapes of Stone: Architecture, Fortifications, and Yazılıkaya
- **Chapter 18** Festivals and Plague Prayers: Crisis and Continuity
- **Chapter 19** Rivals on All Fronts: Mitanni, Arzawa, Assyria, and the West
- **Chapter 20** Life in the Archives: Scribes, Scripts, and Cuneiform
- **Chapter 21** The Late Bronze Age World and the Storms to Come
- **Chapter 22** Collapse and Dispersal: The End of Empire
- **Chapter 23** Neo-Hittite Kingdoms: Memory and Reinvention
- **Chapter 24** Rediscovery: Archaeology at Boğazköy and the Decipherment of Hittite
- **Chapter 25** Legacies of the Hittites: From Anatolia to Modern Imagination

Introduction

Long before the classical cities of Ionia or the imperial ambitions of Rome, a power rose out of central Anatolia that would stitch together mountains, high plateaus, and river valleys into a coherent political world. We call them the Hittites, heirs to the “Land of Hatti,” and they ruled in the heart of the second millennium BCE. Their kings carved fortifications into living rock, their chariots thundered across contested frontiers, and their scribes filled clay tablets with a record as sober as it is luminous. Yet for centuries after their disappearance, the Hittites slipped from memory, surviving only as faint echoes in later traditions.

This book tells the story of that civilization: how it emerged, governed, worshiped, fought, traded, negotiated, and finally fractured. It is a history built from stones and tablets—city walls at Hattusa, processional reliefs at Yazılıkaya, letters exchanged with great kings abroad, and administrative records that preserve the cadence of daily life. These materials allow us to reconstruct institutions and ideas with unusual clarity: a monarchy refined by edict, a legal tradition concerned with restitution more than retribution, and a religion that embraced “a thousand gods,” weaving local cults into an empire-wide sacred tapestry.

At the empire’s height, Hittite diplomats moved with assurance among the courts of Egypt, Mitanni, and Assyria, binding an often-violent world together with gifts, marriages, and treaties. Their armies fielded skilled chariotry, but their statecraft may be their most enduring achievement; the famous peace with Egypt after years of hostility set a model for negotiated order. Inside the capital, a disciplined scribal corps preserved multilingual archives that place the Hittites at the nexus of cultures and tongues. Through them we glimpse the voices of kings and queens, generals and governors, priests and petitioners.

Our knowledge, however, is neither seamless nor static. Archaeology advances by season and trench, and texts appear in fragments whose contexts must be patiently restored. Climate fluctuations, migrations, and shifting trade routes complicate neatly drawn narratives of rise and fall. In these pages, uncertainties are treated not as blemishes but as part of the historian’s craft: places where evidence is weighed, interpretations compared, and conclusions offered with appropriate care. Where debates persist, the reader will find the competing hypotheses set side by side.

The chapters that follow move from origins to legacy. We begin with landscape and sources, then trace royal power from its Old Kingdom foundations through imperial expansion and reform. Society and law, religion and ritual, war and diplomacy, economy and technology, art and architecture—each receives focused attention. We

then situate the Hittites within the wider Late Bronze Age, exploring both the connective tissue of international exchange and the pressures that led to imperial contraction, collapse, and reconfiguration in Neo-Hittite polities.

Finally, we consider what it means to remember the Hittites today. Their story is at once distant and familiar: a reminder that states are fragile yet resilient, that belief and policy cannot be disentangled, and that archives—however humble—can outlast palaces. By following the Hittites from emergence to afterlife, we encounter a civilization that shaped its world and, in rediscovery, continues to shape ours.

SAMPLE COPY

CHAPTER ONE: In the Land of Hatti: Setting and Sources

To truly understand the Hittites, we must first situate them within their ancient world, a land they called Hatti. This heartland of their civilization wasn't a boundless desert or an island nation, but a distinctive geographical tapestry woven from high plateaus, rugged mountain ranges, and fertile river valleys. Central Anatolia, the modern-day Türkiye, served as the stage for their rise and reign, a crossroads between East and West, where diverse peoples and ideas converged. This unique setting profoundly influenced their development, their military strategies, their economy, and even their religious beliefs.

Imagine stepping back in time, not to the familiar sun-drenched coastlines of the Aegean, but into a more formidable, interior landscape. The dominant feature of Hatti is the Anatolian plateau, an elevated expanse averaging around 1,000 meters (3,300 feet) above sea level. This isn't a flat, monotonous plain, but a variegated terrain punctuated by volcanic peaks, salt lakes, and steppes. Summers here are hot and dry, while winters can be bitterly cold with significant snowfall, a far cry from the milder Mediterranean climate often associated with ancient civilizations. This climate dictated agricultural cycles and animal husbandry, shaping the rhythm of daily life.

Flanking the plateau are formidable mountain ranges. To the north, the Pontic Mountains run parallel to the Black Sea, creating a natural barrier and funneling trade and communication along specific routes. To the south, the Taurus Mountains, a grand arc of peaks, separate the Anatolian interior from the sunnier coastal plains of Cilicia and Syria. These mountains were not merely obstacles; they were sources of vital resources. Timber, particularly cedar, was abundant and highly prized, used in construction and shipbuilding. More importantly, these ranges held the keys to Anatolia's mineral wealth, particularly copper, silver, and lead, which fueled the Hittite economy and their sophisticated metallurgical industries.

Major rivers cut through this rugged landscape, acting as lifelines for agriculture and arteries for communication. The longest and most significant was the Kızılırmak, known in antiquity as the Marassantiya or Halys. This great river, carving a wide arc across the plateau, created fertile floodplains and provided water for irrigation, allowing for the cultivation of cereals like wheat and barley, the staples of the Hittite diet. Other rivers, though smaller, also played crucial roles, defining regional identities and facilitating movement within the Hittite sphere of influence. The intricate network of rivers and mountains meant that control over key passes and fertile valleys was paramount for any power seeking to dominate the region.

The capital city itself, Hattusa, was strategically placed in this varied terrain. Perched on a rocky outcrop overlooking a fertile plain, it commanded natural defensive advantages. The surrounding landscape provided not only agricultural sustenance but also building materials—the very stones used to construct its impressive fortifications. This interplay between natural environment and human ingenuity is a recurring theme in the Hittite story. They didn't just exist within their landscape; they actively shaped and were shaped by it.

Beyond the immediate confines of their heartland, the Hittites' geographical position placed them at a critical juncture in the ancient world. To the west lay the Aegean and the nascent Mycenaean civilization, a realm of maritime powers and island kingdoms. To the south, across the Taurus Mountains, stretched the Levant and Mesopotamia, home to Egypt, Mitanni, and Assyria, powerful empires with whom the Hittites would engage in both fierce conflict and intricate diplomacy. Their location ensured they were never truly isolated, constantly exposed to new ideas, technologies, and peoples from all directions.

Understanding the Hittites also requires an appreciation of their temporal setting: the Late Bronze Age, roughly from 1600 to 1200 BCE. This was an era characterized by interconnectedness, with a vibrant international system often referred to as the "club of great powers." Empires communicated, traded, and sometimes warred across vast distances. Diplomatic exchanges, often conducted in Akkadian cuneiform—the lingua franca of the age—reveal a world far more complex and interdependent than previously imagined. The Hittites were full and active participants in this intricate dance of power and prestige.

Our knowledge of the Hittites, unlike that of some other ancient civilizations, is remarkably direct, thanks to their prolific scribal practices. The primary sources for their history are tens of thousands of clay tablets unearthed primarily from Hattusa, the Hittite capital. These tablets, inscribed with cuneiform script, were discovered in vast archives, providing an unparalleled window into their world. Imagine a modern library, but instead of paper books, shelves upon shelves of clay tablets, each meticulously inscribed and cataloged. This is the treasure trove that modern archaeologists and philologists have painstakingly pieced together.

These clay tablets are not just dry administrative records, though those are certainly present in abundance. They encompass a vast range of genres: royal annals detailing military campaigns and construction projects, treaties with vassal states and rival empires, legal codes outlining civil and criminal offenses, religious texts including myths, rituals, and prayers, and even literary works. We have letters exchanged between kings, records of economic transactions, and fascinating divinatory texts seeking to discern the will of the gods through omens and dreams. This sheer volume and diversity of texts make the Hittites one of the best-documented civilizations of the

ancient Near East.

The decipherment of the Hittite language itself was a monumental achievement of early 20th-century scholarship. In 1906, excavations at Boğazköy (the modern name for Hattusa) uncovered a large archive of tablets. While some were in Akkadian, many were in an unknown language. In 1915, Bedřich Hrozný, a Czech scholar, famously demonstrated that Hittite was an Indo-European language, a discovery that revolutionized our understanding of the spread of this language family. This linguistic breakthrough opened the floodgates, allowing scholars to directly access the Hittites' own voice.

Beyond the written word, archaeological evidence plays an equally crucial role. The ruins of Hattusa itself are a testament to Hittite power and architectural prowess. Massive city walls, some standing several meters high, with impressive gateways adorned with carved reliefs of gods and animals, speak to their defensive capabilities and artistic sensibilities. The remains of temples, palaces, and administrative buildings provide tangible evidence of their urban planning and daily life. Excavations have also revealed residential areas, workshops, and storage facilities, painting a more complete picture of what it was like to live in a Hittite city.

Other Hittite sites across Anatolia and beyond also contribute to our understanding. Rock reliefs carved into natural rock faces at places like Yazılıkaya, just outside Hattusa, offer vivid depictions of Hittite deities and royal rituals. These open-air sanctuaries provide invaluable insights into their religious beliefs and iconography. The discovery of seals, pottery, tools, and other artifacts at various locations further enriches our understanding of their material culture, trade networks, and technological capabilities. Each shard of pottery, each fragment of a wall, adds another piece to the grand mosaic of Hittite history.

However, despite this wealth of information, our knowledge is not without its gaps and challenges. The archaeological record is, by its nature, incomplete. Not everything survives the ravages of time, and much remains buried, waiting to be discovered. The textual record, while extensive, is also fragmented. Many tablets are broken, and some genres are more richly represented than others. For instance, while we have extensive royal propaganda, the voices of common people are naturally less prevalent. We rely on interpretations, often piecing together tantalizing clues from various sources to reconstruct events and understand motivations.

The interpretation of these sources is an ongoing scholarly endeavor. Different scholars may emphasize different aspects of the evidence, leading to varying interpretations of events, social structures, or religious practices. These academic debates are not a sign of weakness, but rather a healthy part of historical inquiry, pushing us to constantly re-evaluate and refine our understanding. As new discoveries are made and new analytical tools emerge, our picture of the Hittites continues to

evolve, becoming ever more nuanced and detailed.

In essence, we approach the Hittites as ancient detectives, sifting through the evidence they left behind. The land of Hatti, with its mountains, rivers, and plateaus, provided the physical context. The rich textual archives and archaeological remains offer the tangible clues. By carefully examining these sources, by understanding their limitations and potential, we can begin to reconstruct the story of a civilization that, for centuries, shaped the destiny of the ancient Near East and then, for millennia, lay hidden beneath the Anatolian soil. It is a journey into a world both ancient and surprisingly familiar, a testament to the enduring human capacity for organization, innovation, and belief.

SAMPLE COPY

This is a sample preview. Purchase the book to read the full content.

Visit MixCache.com to purchase the complete book.

SAMPLE COPY