Landlocked? The Hittite Empire and Late Bronze Age Maritime Mediterranean Trade Networks

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The Late Bronze Age (LBA) was a booming time for business.[1] Especially during the 14th and the 13th centuries BCE, an interconnected trade and exchange network matured in the Mediterranean. While neither connectivity nor exchange were new for the Mediterranean, the scale and level of organization of this Late Bronze Age trade marked a new high for the eastern Mediterranean. Driven by peripheries rather than the centers, transactions were conducted around the eastern Mediterranean coast, followed by land or riverine shipment to core areas of the major political players.

The Hittite Empire's seeming absence from this network has puzzled students of the Late Bronze Age for a long time. The Hittite Empire was clearly one of the big players of the Late Bronze Age league of empires and regional kingdoms. The Hittites are well represented in the Amarna letters, and we know that correspondence took place between the Hittite kings and queens and the kings of Ahhiyawa, Egypt, and Mitanni, as well as the vassal states of Ugarit, Emar, and Kargamış. The Hittites successfully emerged from military conflicts with Egypt and Mittanni and went as far south as Babylon on their military pursuits. When evaluated through their texts, the Hittite Empire seems to be a well-connected member of the Late Bronze Age eastern Mediterranean sphere.

This textual connectivity, however, has traditionally not found a material correlate. When Eric Cline studied all the items of exchange between the Aegean and the rest of the eastern Mediterranean through the evidence available in the early 1990s, he was able to locate 149 foreign objects in the Aegean sites in his dataset, dating to ca. 1700–1390 BCE. Only four of these objects were categorized as coming from Anatolia.[2] The same trend continues in the latter half of the LBA, with only eight Anatolian objects found in the Aegean among a corpus of 516 objects.[3] These numbers might be updated with some additions since Cline's book was published in 1994, but the overall picture remains the same on material terms. Anatolia seems to be weakly represented in the international trade scene of the Late Bronze Age. This relative absence in trade activities painted a landlocked and isolated picture of Hatti in Mediterranean studies. Eric Cline put forward the idea that Hatti might have even imposed an embargo on Mycenaean artifacts—since the absence is reciprocal and foreign artifacts are not found in great numbers in the Hittite heartland, either.[4] This idea was supported by the fact that the archives of Hattusa, men-

1 I thank Alexis Wick, Alexis Rappas, and Matthew Harpster for their invitation to contribute to this volume and to the symposium that led to it. I am grateful to an anonymous reviewer and to Felipe Rojas for their constructive comments on an earlier draft of this paper.

2 Eric H. Cline, *Sailing the Wine-Dark Sea: International Trade and the Late Bronze Age Aegean* (Oxford: BAR, 1994), 13.

3 Cline, *Sailing the Wine-Dark Sea*, 15. Both numbers exclude shipwrecks.

4 Eric H. Cline, "A Possible Hittite Embargo against the Mycenaeans," *Historia* 40, no. 1 (1991): 1–9.

tioned above, contain only sporadic references to trade and merchants, while economic documents in general are rare.

How to reconcile these two worlds of textual abundance and material near-invisibility? Below, I start with a brief survey of Hittite economy and trade, with the specific aim to demonstrate that the textual evidence we have on these matters comes from specifically state-controlled contexts that are not conducive to drawing conclusions on private merchants and their activities independent of the state. I then invite the reader to attend to alternative forms of material wealth and culture that could be circulating on behalf of Hatti, such as organic and raw materials that are not easily traced in the archaeological record. Ultimately, I argue that there are certain scholarship biases that have shaped our view of a "landlocked" Anatolia in general and the Hittite Empire in particular. Here, I will focus on two major points: first, Hittite material culture has almost exclusively been defined through the capital city of Hattusa and its neighbors. This leads to a downplaying of the diverse communities of the southern regions bordering the Mediterranean Sea in defining what it meant to be Hittite. Said communities forged long-distance trade networks connecting the Hittite Empire to the larger Mediterranean. I demonstrate this point by briefly examining material data from cities in Kizzuwatna (Cilicia). Second, I dwell on the early modern preconceptions about Anatolia, especially the central plateau, as a barren and nearly desolate world, which have been projected back to the ancient past as academic inquiry into these regions flourished. In conclusion, I propose that re-defining the Hittite Empire beyond its central cities and dismantling the assumptions of a landlocked Anatolia can lead to visualizing a much more waterborne and water-dependent Hittite Empire than previously assumed.

Economy and Trade in Hatti

While a comprehensive treatment of the primary and secondary evidence on trade and economy in the Hittite world is beyond the scope of this paper,[5] I would like to specifically highlight the rarity of references to trade and merchants in the Hittite documentation. Some scholars have interpreted this as a bias of the evidence, suggesting that economic documents were mainly produced on wooden boards filled with wax.[6] Such tablets are known from references in the cuneiform archives, but the survival of wood in Anatolia's archaeological record is extremely rare because of environmental conditions. While the two wooden diptychs discovered in the Late Bronze Age Uluburun shipwreck may be attributed to any of the eastern Mediterranean countries represented in the cargo,[7] analysis performed on the wood of one of the diptychs identified the source as a type of boxwood native to southern Türkiye and northern Syria, very likely from the Amanus Mountains.[8] Thus, while the lack of economic documents can tentatively be explained by the absence of an entire genre of material culture not preserved in the archaeological record, there is no tangible evidence to prove this beyond the Uluburun diptychs and ref-

5 See Jörg Klinger, "Hittite Economics," in *Handbook Hittite Empire: Power Structures*, ed. Stefano de Martino (Berlin: De Gruyter, 2022), 605–47 for a recent overview and relevant bibliography.

6 Harry A. Hoffner, "Some Thoughts on Merchants and Trade in the Hittite Kingdom," in *Kulturgeschichten: Altorientalistische Studien für Volkert Haas zum 65. Geburtstag*, eds. Thomas Richter, Doric Prechel, and Jörg Klinger (Saarbrücken: Saarbrücker Druckrei und Verlag, 2001), 180.

7 This would include Mycenaean, Hittite, Mesopotamian (Kassite, Assyrian, and Mittannian), Levantine, Egyptian, and Cypriot artifacts. Christopher M. Monroe, *Scales of Fate: Trade, Tradition, and Transformation in the Eastern Mediterranean ca. 1350–1175 BCE* (Münster: Ugarit-Verlag, 2009), 233–34.

8 Peter Warnock and Michael Peddleton, "The Wood of the Ulu Burun Diptych," *Anatolian Studies* 41 (1991): 107–10; Monroe, *Scales of Fate*, 236.

erences to "scribes of the wood" (^{LÚ}DUB.SAR.GIŠ) in the cuneiform archives.[9] Whether these scribes were particularly concerned with drawing up economic tablets is not certain. The flexibility offered by a wooden board filled with wax could make them particularly conducive for making inventory lists that need to be corrected and updated—a trait not offered by the clay tablets that could not be altered once dried.[10]

Horst Klengel has previously suggested that Hittite merchants were directly tied to the king and long-distance trade could have been under royal monopoly.[11] Even the existence of a separate and private merchant class is debated.[12] Texts detailing the sourcing, allocation, and transportation of salt, for example, place all steps directly under royal control. Royal control over salt is documented from the Old Hittite period onwards, and salt stockpiles are mentioned within land grant documents. In the New Kingdom, salt resources were mentioned as part of border negotiations with Tarhuntassa.[13]

The question then becomes whether we can take the textual evidence we have as representative of all the domestic and international trade activities of Hatti. I would like to argue not. The Late Bronze Age documents yielded from the center of the empire come almost exclusively from state contexts, preserved in archives deliberately curated for the purposes of administration of various aspects of the Hittite world.[14] Excavations in the Hittite heartland are yet to locate and excavate private archives such as those known from northern Syrian and Levantine cities. In fact, a specific group known as "merchants of Ura" is known almost exclusively from documents unearthed at Ugarit.[15] In addition to the palace archives, Ugarit contained many other smaller and private archives that featured documents collected around a certain theme, such as magic, cult, or trade activities.[16] In the absence of such private archives in central Anatolia recording affairs unfolding beyond the royal sphere, I would like to suggest that what we know of trade in the Hittite world is dominantly related to the trade that was directly controlled by and benefitted the king and the royal court and thus does not cover the full swath of trade activities.[17]

If we accept the proposition that the Hittites had merchants and ongoing trade, the question then becomes why we are not able to see a robust corpus of material evidence of these activities. One possibility is that Anatolia mainly supplied materials that are difficult, if not impossible, to trace in the archaeological record, such as organic goods. The fraction of the trade stock made up by organic items such as foodstuff or spices has been a point of debate for the entire Mediterranean. Through a synthesis of archaeological and textual evidence available until the early 1990s, Knapp suggested that organic goods were fundamental in Late Bronze Age Mediterranean trade,

9 Doris Symington, "Late Bronze Age Writing-Boards and Their Uses: Textual Evidence from Anatolia and Syria," *Anatolian Studies* 41 (1991): 113.

10 Symington, "Late Bronze Age Writing-Boards," 118

11 Horst Klengel, "Handel und Kaufleute im hethitischen Reich," *Altorientalische Forschungen* 6 (1979): 77.

12 Hoffner, "Some Thoughts on Merchants and Trade," 181.

13 Antonio Carnevale and Giulia Torri, "The Production of Salt in the Hittite Period and its Trade in Central and Northeastern Anatolia," *Journal of Near Eastern Studies* 81, no. 2 (2022): 312–13.

14 So far, cuneiform tablets and fragments have been discovered in Hattusa (where the majority of all Hittite written evidence originated), Alaca Höyük, Kayalıpınar, Maşat Höyük, Ortaköy, Oymaağaç, and other sites in very small numbers: Jörg Klinger, "The Hittite Writing Traditions of Cuneiform Documents," in *Handbook Hittite Empire: Power Structures*, ed. Stefano de Martino (Berlin: De Gruyter, 2022), 99. The crushing majority of these tablets come from state archives.

15 See Monroe, *Scales of Fate*, 194–96 for an overview of these texts.

16 Gregorio del Olmo Lete, *The Private Archives of Ugarit: A Functional Analysis* (Barcelona: Edicions e la Universitat de Barcelona, 2018), 9–11.

17 Klinger, "Hittite Economics" argues for a similarly "one-sided impression:" 635, n. 112.

but demand for these items was not constant or homogeneous: changing circumstances created different patterns of mobility for organic goods.[18] As an example, around 120 Canaanite jars filled with terebinth resin were found on the Uluburun shipwreck, placing resin among the possible organic compounds in Late Bronze Age trade.[19]

Recent studies have suggested that Hatti might have functioned as a wealth economy. Rather than trying to control all items of subsistence for collection and redistribution in a staple finance model, a wealth economy model tries to control precious raw materials and the items fashioned out of them, which will yield much larger profits per the amount of volume needed to be stored and controlled by the administration.[20] The Hittite state operated on multiple levels, with the bulky staple goods controlled on the level of primary production (such as taxing the harvest), while the state controlled the secondary products (i.e., finished objects as opposed to the raw material) and the mobility of prestige items, i.e., their trade.[21] Most of these prestige items are produced of materials that are hard to trace archaeologically, either because they are organic or because they were metals that continued to be smelted and recast.

Here, metals and metallurgy deserve specific mention. From the early days of its consolidation, Hittite power was intricately linked to the control of the rich metal sources in Anatolia. The visibility of Anatolian metal in the Bronze Age trade networks, however, has been a source of debate for decades.[22] A recent analysis of the tin discovered in the Uluburun shipwreck finally demonstrated that two-thirds of the entire Uluburun tin cargo came from Anatolian tin sources along the Taurus Mountains, while the remaining one-third came from central Asian sources in Uzbekistan and Tajikistan.[23] This would amount to approximately 650 kg of tin coming from the Taurus Mountains discovered in one shipwreck alone.[24]

18 A. Bernard Knapp, "Spice, Drugs, Grain and Grog: Organic Goods in Bronze Age East Mediterranean Trade," in *Bronze Age Trade in the Mediterranean*, ed. Noël H. Gale (Jonsered: P. Åströms Förlag, 1991), 52.

19 Cheryl Haldane, "Direct Evidence for Organic Cargoes in the Late Bronze Age," *World Archaeology* 24, no. 3 (1993): 352–53.

20 Marcella Frangipane, "Different Models of Power Structuring at the Rise of Hierarchical Societies in the Near East: Primary Economy Versus Luxury and Defense Management," in *Development of Pre-State Communities in the Ancient Near East: Studies in Honour of Edgar Peltenberg*, eds. Diane Bolger and Louise C. Maguire (Oxford: Oxbow Books, 2010), 84; James Burgin, "Aspects of Religious Administration in the Hittite Late New Kingdom," (PhD diss., University of Chicago, 2016), 84–91; Theo van den Hout, "Hittite Society, Economy, and Rituals," *Orient* 55 (2020): 4–5; James Burgin, *Studies in Hittite Economic Administration Volume 1* (Wiesbaden: Harrasowitz Verlag, 2022), 73–99.

21 Burgin, *Hittite Economic Administration*, 90.

22 The most intense portion of this debate unfolded between James Muhly and Aslıhan Yener over whether southern and southeastern Anatolian tin sources could have engendered a complex metal industry in the Early Bronze Age. While Yener argued that the sourcing and working of tin was a multi-nodal endeavor that included Taurus sources, Muhly looked to places outside of Anatolia as primary players. James D. Muhly, "Sources of Tin and the Beginnings of Bronze Metallurgy," *American Journal of Archaeology* 89, no. 2 (1985): 275–91; James D. Muhly, "Early Bronze Age Tin and the Taurus," *American Journal of Archaeology* 97, no. 2 (1993): 239–53; Ernst Pernicka, G. A. Wagner, James D. Muhly and O. Öztunalı, "Comment on the Discussion of Ancient Tin Sources in Anatolia," *Journal of Mediterranean Archaeology* 5, no. 1 (1992): 91–98; K. Aslıhan Yener et al. "Kestel: An Early Bronze Age Source of Tin Ore in the Taurus Mountains, Turkey," *Science* 244, no. 4901 (1989): 200–3; Aslıhan K. Yener and Pamela B. Vandiver, "Tin Processing at Göltepe, an Early Bronze Age Site in Anatolia," *American Journal of Archaeology* 97, no. 2 (1993): 207–38; K. Aslıhan Yener and Pamela B. Vandiver, "Reply to J. D. Muhly, 'Early Bronze Age Tin and the Taurus'," *American Journal of Archaeology* 97, no. 2 (1993): 255–62; K. Aslıhan Yener, *Domestication of Metals: The Rise of Complex Metal Industries in Anatolia* (Boston: Brill, 2000).

23 Wayne Powell et al., "Tin from Uluburun Shipwreck Shows Small-Scale Commodity Exchange Fueled Continental Tin Supply across Late Bronze Age Eurasia," *Science Advances* 8, no. 3766 (2022).

24 Cemal Pulak, "The Cargo of Copper and Tin Ingots from the Late Bronze Age Shipwreck at Uluburun," in *Anatolian Metal I*, ed. Ünsal Yalçın (Bochum: Deutsches Bergbau-Museum, 2000), 138–40 has previously estimated the weight of the

In sum, then, both the textual and the material evidence we have on the maritime trade networks of the Hittite Empire need closer scrutiny. While the textual evidence comes almost exclusively from state archives highlighting the role and the benefit of the king in these affairs, the material evidence lacks the preserved organic, raw, and recycled materials. Beyond these, I argue that we are also adopting a reductive and narrow view of what it means to be Hittite that privileges the part of central Anatolia within the bend of the Kızılırmak River. I now turn to how we can start to remedy this by giving more emphasis and agency to the various regions incorporated into the Hittite state throughout its almost 500-year history.

Defining Hittite beyond the Heartland

Hittite political power was first consolidated in central Anatolia, specifically in the region within the bend of the Kızılırmak River, during the mid-17th century BCE. The Hittite state ventured out from this base quite early on in its political life. One of the earliest areas of intervention at the end of the Middle Bronze Age (MBA, during Hattusili I's reign) was Kizzuwatna (Cilicia). Central Anatolian wares and architectural traits are already visible in Kizzuwatna in the 16th–15th century BCE, as exemplified by the fortification wall at Soli Höyük[25] and the standard plain wares in Kinet 15C, Yumuktepe VIII, and Tarsus A IV levels.[26] Following a period of independence during the later 15th century BCE, a treaty signed with Šunaššura, king of Kizzuwatna, at the very beginning of the 14th century BCE led to the annexation of Kizzuwatna to the Hittite Empire, marking the beginning of a more aggressive episode of Hittite expansion to the Levant and northern Syria using Cilicia as a launching pad.[27] Kizzuwatna was connected to central Anatolia through overland routes going through the Taurus Mountains including the Zamantı River Valley. In the later centuries of the empire, the Zamantı route was marked with a series of landscape monuments dedicated by Hittite kings as well as princes and officials at the sites of Taşçı, Hanyeri, İmamkulu, and Fraktin, attesting to the continued importance of this connection.[28] The marking of this major route is a testament to the political, physical, and mental importance the connection to Kizzuwatna held in Hittite imagination.

In both episodes, the impact of central Anatolia on Kizzuwatna seems to have been sudden and effective. For Marie-Henriette Gates, the director of the now-concluded excavations at the site of Kinet Höyük, this transformation seems to have been abrupt in the larger Cilician region, where local painted wares of the MBA were replaced by both new plain wares and forms that belong to the central Anatolian tradition.[29] At Kinet itself, plain wares from central Anatolia flooded the assemblage. Already in the mid-16th century BCE, in Kinet Period 15, there is standardization of ceramic forms

tin aboard the Uluburun to be one ton, fitting to the 10 tons of copper discovered, to produce 11 tons of bronze according to the traditional 1:10 ratio. Christopher Monroe, "Sunk Costs at Late Bronze Age Uluburun," *BASOR* 357, no. 1 (2010): 23.

25 Remzi Yağcı, "A Grave at Soli Höyük from the Hittite Imperial Period," in *Prof. Dr. Haluk Abbasoğlu'na 65. Yaş Armağanı: Euergetes*, eds. İnci Delemen, Sedef Çokay-Kepçe, Aşkım Özdizbay, and Özgür Turak (Antalya: Suna-İnan Kıraç Akdeniz Medeniyetleri Araştırma Enstitüsü, 2008), 1217.

26 Mirko Novák and Susanne Rutishauser, "Kizzuwatna: Archaeology," in *Hittite Landscape and Geography*, eds. Mark Weeden and Lee Z. Ullmann (Leiden: Brill, 2017), 140.

27 Ekin Kozal and Mirko Novák, "Alalakh and Kizzuwatna: Some Thoughts on the Synchronization," in *Overturning Certainties in Near Eastern Archaeology: A Festschrift in Honor of K. Aslıhan Yener*, eds. Çiğdem Maner, Mara T. Horowitz, and Allan S. Gilbert (Leiden: Brill, 2017), 300–1.

28 Alvise Matessi, "The Ways of an Empire: Continuity and Change of Route Landscapes across the Taurus during the Hittite Period (ca. 1650–1200 BCE)," *Journal of Anthropological Archaeology* 62 (2021): 8–10.

29 Marie-Henriette Gates, "2009 Season at Kinet Höyük (Yeşil-Dörtyol, Hatay)," in *32. Kazı Sonuçları Toplantısı 3. Cilt*, eds. A. Naci Toy, Haydar Dönmez, and Ömer Ötgün (Ankara: Allâme, 2011), 187.

and technologies in line with the traditions of the Hittite center.[30] Standardization is so extensive that it "wiped out every trace of the Middle Bronze Age serving vessel, tableware and painted drinking set, and replaced them with Hittite dining conventions."[31] In the second wave of encounters between central Anatolia and Kizzuwatna following the Šunaššura treaty, more sites in Cilicia are taken within the ceramic, architectural, and scribal production sphere of the empire. At the site of Soli in Mersin, the 14th and 13th centuries BCE are well represented with workshops and monumental buildings. These architectural contexts yielded a bulla and a seal impression on a jar handle, both with Luwian hieroglyphics, and various examples of monochrome ware and Red Lustrous Wheel-Made Ware (RLWmW).[32] In Tarsus's Late Bronze Age IIA levels (ca. 1425–1200 BCE), plain wares made according to central Anatolian conventions, which were rare in the previous periods, became the most dominant part of the assemblage.[33]

Like any colonial interaction, central Anatolia's hold over Kizzuwatna was not a one-way street. As Hittite power was getting stronger in Kizzuwatna, this region started to have a strong hold on central Anatolia. At the climax of the empire, a dynasty of kings with strong links to Cilicia ruled in Hattusa. Queen Puduhepa of the 13th century BCE continuously mentioned her Kizzuwatnan origins. A priestess in Kizzuwatna before becoming queen, Puduhepa undertook a sustained systematization of Hittite religion and cult, bringing religious elements from Cilicia to clear focus also in the center.

At the same time, however, Cilician sites demonstrate continuity of their unique trajectories. In Kinet Höyük, local ways of producing cooking pots endured.[34] In Tarsus-Gözlükule, archaeometric analyses showed that plain Hittite wares were locally produced, demonstrating interaction between the local workshops and central Anatolian sites.[35] In Mersin-Yumuktepe, cross-hatched red painted pottery continues through the Late Bronze Age II period alongside plain wares with central Anatolian affiliations.[36] An intramural urn cremation burial dating to the 13th century BCE at Soli includes a range of burial gifts consisting of local and foreign objects.[37] A bulla dating to the first half of the 13th century BCE suggests that the burial belonged to an individual named Parnapi, most probably a military officer, since his title included a sword/dagger.[38] Objects with international pedigree such as an uninscribed Egyptian scarab amulet and a very small fragment of a White Slip II Cypriot milk bowl made their way into the tomb, while a bead and a bronze pin are in line with the Anatolian tra-

30 Sena Baskın, "LBA I Ceramics from Kinet Höyük Period 15. A Statistical Assessment of the Cross-Regional Standardization of Hittite Ceramics in Late Bronze Age Anatolia" (MA thesis, Bilkent University, 2022).

31 Marie-Henriette Gates, "The Hittite Seaport Izziya at Late Bronze Age Kinet Höyük (Cilicia)," *Near Eastern Archaeology* 76, no. 4 (2013): 229.

32 Yağcı, "A Grave at Soli," 1217.

33 Steve Karacic, Matthew Jameson, and Arlo B. Weil, "A Burning Issue: Firing Temperatures and the Production of Late Bronze Age Pottery from Tarsus-Gözlükule, Turkey," *Journal of Archaeological Science: Reports* 9 (2016): 600

34 Baskın, "LBA I Ceramics from Kinet," 124.

35 Steven Karacic, "Archaeology of Hittite Imperialism and Ceramic Production in Late Bronze Age IIA Tarsus-Gözlükule, Turkey" (PhD diss., Bryn Mawr College, 2014), 36–37.

36 Éric Jean, "The Cross-Hatched Red Painted Pottery Tradition at Mersin-Yumuktepe," in *Late Bronze Age Painted Pottery Traditions at the Margins of the Hittite State. Papers Presented at a Workshop Held at the 11th ICAANE (München 4 April 2018) and Additional Contributions,* eds. Federico Manuelli and Dirk Paul Mielke (Oxford: Archaeopress, 2022), 131.

37 Yağcı, "A Grave at Soli Höyük," 1217–18.

38 Ali Dinçol and Belkıs Dinçol, "Neue hethitische Siegelabdrücke aus den Ausgrabungen von Soli und aus der Privatsammlung Halûk Perk," in *Prof. Dr. Haluk Abbasoğlu'na 65. Yaş Armağanı: Euergetes*, eds. İnci Delemen, Sedef Çokay-Kepçe, Aşkım Özdizbay, and Özgür Turak (Antalya: Suna-İnan Kıraç Akdeniz Medeniyetleri Araştırma Enstitüsü, 2008), 383–84.

ditions of LBA burials.[39] The choice to deposit objects with links to Cypriot, Egyptian, and Anatolian geographies for the cremation burial of Parnapi is significant. These objects can be interpreted in many different ways, ranging from family heirlooms to the conscious demonstration of the identity of Parnapi as a well-connected and cosmopolitan individual. All these interpretations, however, require Soli to be a site with established connections to be able to acquire these artifacts.

In sum, the material remains from Cilician sites suggest that they were well integrated into the Hittite imperial sphere, actively selecting which aspects of Hittite material practices they wanted to adopt. At the same time, many of these sites continued their maritime connections, as very well evidenced by Soli. If we abandon a strictly central Anatolian-driven definition for the heartland of the Hittite Empire and acknowledge that Kizzuwatna was as much "centrally Hittite" as the sites within the bend of the Kızılırmak River, we start seeing a much more waterborne Hatti that participated in the Late Bronze Age trade networks. Such a perspective would require leaving behind the dominant trend in Mediterranean and ancient western Asian studies to see Anatolia as peripheral to the rest of the eastern Mediterranean. This brings me to my last point, namely how the early modern imaginations of a barren (central) Anatolia situated it as a peripheral region to the larger Mediterranean. The Hittites, with their roots perceived to be in the central plateau, were among the historical cases to suffer from this disproportionally negative perspective.

A Barren World

A quick glance at the 19th century traveler's accounts to Türkiye demonstrates that the dominant view of central Anatolia is of a barren world that is contrasted with western Anatolia. John Anthony Cramer's 1832 account *A Geographical and Historical Description of Asia Minor*, for example, talks about Ionia, Lydia, and Caria as having "genial temperature" and "extreme fertility." This is opposed to large portions of Phrygia and Galatia (both denoting parts of central Anatolia), which are described as "nearly deserted because of the barrenness of the ground."[40]

An even less welcoming account comes from Sir William Mitchell Ramsay's 1890 publication *The Historical Geography of Asia Minor*:

> "Planted like a bridge between Asia and Europe, the peninsula of Asia Minor has been from the beginning of history a battlefield between the East and the West. (…) The great mass of Asia Minor consists of a plateau, 3000 to 5000 feet above sea-level, around which there is a fringe of low-lying coast-land. The plateau is like a continuation of Central Asia, vast, immobile, monotonous. The western coasts on the Aegean Sea are full of variety, with a very broken coast-line and long arms of the sea alternating with prominent capes.
>
> In this scenery also, the plateau presents an equally strong contrast to the western coast. The plateau from the Anti-Taurus westwards consists chiefly of great gently undulating plains. The scenery, as a rule, is monotonous and subdued; even the mountains of Phrygia seem not to have the spirit of freedom about them. The tone everywhere is melancholy, but not devoid of a certain charm, which, after a time, takes an even stronger hold of the mind than the bright and varied scenery of the Greek world. Strong contrasts of climate between the long severe winter and the short but hot summer, a fertile soil dependent entirely on the chances of an uncertain rainfall, impressed on the mind of the inhabitants the insignificance of man and his dependence on the power of nature. The tone can be traced throughout the leg-

39 Yağcı, "A Grave at Soli Höyük," 1217–21.

40 John Anthony Cramer, *A Geographical and Historical Description of Asia Minor* (Oxford: University Press, 1832), 9–10.

> ends and the religion of the plateau. The legends are always sad – Lityerses slain by the sickles of the reapers in the field, Marsyas flayed by the god Apollo, Hylas drowned in the fountain – all end in death during the prime of life and the pride of art. But the scenery of the Aegean coastlands is as bright and varied as that of Greece itself. There is not a trace of monotony or melancholy in the contrast alternation of sea and promontory, of sharp rugged mountains and deep fertile valleys. (…) The thought of death is never present where the incitements of life and action are so great.
>
> Thus the plateau is in every way characterized as a border-land between the East and West, and a battlefield between the Oriental and the European spirit. The idea of this great struggle was a formative principle which molded the gradual development of the Iliad, and gave tone to Herodotus's epic history."[41]

These three paragraphs provide a lot of issues to unpack (each worthy of their own historiographical paper), but I will highlight three: the definition of Anatolia as exclusively the central plateau, its designation as a bridge, and the subjective and negative readings of various landscape elements.

First, Ramsay defines Anatolia only as the central plateau. This starkly contrasts with the current internal view of Anatolia as the peninsula on which most of the Turkish Republic is located, leaving out just the area defined by the Bosphorus and the Dardanelle straits to the northwest. In contemporary archaeological practice, this broader definition is embraced. For example, in their introduction to the *Oxford Handbook of Ancient Anatolia*, Gregory McMahon and Sharon Steadman are very clear that fuzziness only exists in the southeastern and the eastern border, while Anatolia expands until the seas in any other direction: "On its northern, western, and southwestern perimeters, Anatolia has very clear boundaries. With an exceptionally long coastline, it enjoys access to the Black Sea, Sea of Marmara, Aegean, and Mediterranean. Defining its eastern and southeastern boundary is a bit more problematic."[42] This more expanded perspective runs the risk of projecting the nationalistic claims of a homogenous Turkish Republic backwards, washing over the conflicts and tension experienced between various communities in the past.[43] It is important to recognize that this vast area was "never a (culturally or politically) unified geographical entity in antiquity" and embodied shifting alliances and communities across time and space.[44] The part of central Anatolia within the bend of the Kızılırmak River can be identified as one of these units topographically, geographically, politically, and culturally during parts of the Hittite period, while this designation would not hold in any other period in antiquity. Ramsay's identification of Anatolia as the central plateau, thus, is a cyclical argument: Anatolia is a desolate and melancholic landscape, so only the parts of the peninsula that fit that statement can be called Anatolia, leaving out vast stretches such as the Mediterranean and the Aegean coast, or the lush mountainscapes of the Pontus or the Taurus.

My second point, i.e., Ramsay's designation of Anatolia as a bridge between the east and the west, also has implications for how we define Anatolia. Ramsay is hardly alone to be blamed for this, as Anatolia's designation as a bridge connecting Europe with Asia is a trope still common today. When employed for

41 William M. Ramsay, *The Historical Geography of Asia Minor* (London: John Murray, 1890), 23–24.

42 Gregory McMahon and Sharon Steadman, "Introduction: The Oxford Handbook of Ancient Anatolia," in *The Oxford Handbook of Ancient Anatolia: (10,000–323 BCE)*, eds. Gregory McMahon and Sharon Steadman (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2011), 4.

43 Felipe Rojas, *The Pasts of Roman Anatolia: Interpreters, Traces, Horizons* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2019), 5.

44 Ömür Harmanşah, *Place, Memory, and Healing: An Archaeology of Anatolian Rock Monuments* (London: Roıutledge, 2015), 6.

ancient contexts, the bridge metaphor situates Anatolia as a purgatory, a liminal zone of neutrality, a void waiting to be filled by whichever power manages to expand to it and thus systematically strips Anatolian communities of their own voices and places in history. In fact, Ramsay's own reading of the central plateau as a borderland where a symbolic battle between the east and the west is continuously enacted speaks to this kind of emptiness, seen fit for this geography. In terms of our specific topic, I would like to propose that the bridge metaphor had a bearing on how Anatolia was situated within different kinds of hydraulic traditions. The *west*, upheld by Greece and Rome, was seaborne, with their political ambitions and cultural identities seen to be intertwined with their interaction with and control over the Aegean and the Mediterranean Seas, respectively. The *east*, represented by Mesopotamia, Egypt, and India, were shaped around the Tigris, the Euphrates, the Nile, and the Indus Valley. Anatolia, i.e., the "bridge" in between, could not have either by definition, because a bridge must be different to be able to connect two sides. This means that if there are similarities between the bridge and either of its ends, these by default cannot be part of the bridge. Thus, western Anatolia becomes part of the west with its Aegean coast, southeastern Anatolia becomes part of the east as part of the Mesopotamian landscape, while the southern and northern coasts get integrated into the Mediterranean and Black Sea networks. Within this scheme, the "bridge," and thus "Anatolia," actually is only the central plateau. Closing the cyclical argument full circle, the plateau then must be rendered as an isolated, neutral, and monolithic mass to properly take on this job.

Finally, Ramsay continuously despises the landforms in comparison to the Aegean and makes qualitative judgements, such as the mountains of Phrygia not having the spirit of freedom. I refuse to believe that a mountain in central Anatolia can feel subdued on its own. Think, for example, of the Kaska communities in Late Bronze Age Anatolia, whose possibility of existence seems to have been drawn from living in the mountains. Surely, when we look at landscapes, we feel things, we imagine things. That strong emotional response landscapes stir in us is the reason why they are so evocative. However, whether we see freedom or subjugation is not inherent in a landscape but is instead defined by the experiences, cultural framework of references, and the priorities of the viewer. In his seminal work *Wisdom Sits in Places*, Keith Basso provided powerful examples of how an attachment to and an intimate knowledge of the landscape can alter engagement with it. Basso's examples come from the western Apache communities of Arizona, who grant places names that invoke mental images, such as *Water lies with mud in an open container*. *Snake's Water*, a fossil spring today overrun by vegetation, used to be an active spring with snakes nesting beneath its rocks. Members of the community would come here to get water, thanking the spring for its abundance.[45] The story of this abundant spring of the past no longer matches the drier landscape of today, especially in the eyes of a visitor lacking the context and stories of *Snake's Water* on a scorching hot summer day.

Basso's depiction of *Snake's Water* is a good comparison for travelers of the 19th century encountering the central Anatolian landscapes for the first time. Most such travel would have been undertaken in the summer—Ramsay, for example, suggests that he spent most of his 1886, 1887, and 1888 summers traveling in Anatolia.[46] The central Anatolian climate has hot and dry summers, which are complemented by abundant precipitation during the remaining seasons that feed a vibrant and enormous aquifer. During the 19th century, travelers were traversing a landscape draped over a very rich, yet invisible, body of water. For example, the seem-

45 Keith H. Basso, *Wisdom Sits in Places: Landscape and Language among the Western Apache* (Albuquerque: University of New Mexico Press, 1996), 14–15.

46 Ramsay, *Historical Geography*, 3.

ingly remote and barren Hattusa had access to abundant water all year round through various wells, even when the surface waters would be seasonally dry.[47] The lively world of Hittite cult and ritual related to various water features demonstrates that the Hittites thought of their landscapes as anything but arid.[48]

I am not trying to suggest that central Anatolia is a lush tropical forest. Of course, the central plateau is very different than the coastal regions of Anatolia. But it also is not the barren and desolate world 19th century travelers lead us to believe. This might be harder to believe today than in the past, as many Turkish cities have been systematically desiccated in the past century through various interventions ranging from the Devlet Su İşleri's (State Hydraulic Works in Türkiye) drainage of large water bodies to prevent malaria to municipalities burying entire riverbeds underground to make way for infrastructure projects. Ankara's rivers, for example, have been systematically pushed underground to build roads over them for the ever-expanding population. They are still preserved in the urban collective memory with place names such as Kavaklıdere, Bülbülderesi, or Bentderesi.[49] What is alarming is that within the framework of asymmetrical power relationships fostered by colonialist, orientalist discourses, these biases emphasizing a desiccated landscape, belonging to the privileged elite of Europe who could take extended trips to the exotic lands of the east over the summer months, became one of the major representations of Anatolia, amplified through the visibility of its constructors.

Conclusion

So, where does this leave those of us who are invested or interested in Hittite studies? In this paper, I highlighted the biases that I see as prevailing in Mediterranean archaeology: the definition of the Hittite Empire mainly through central Anatolian sites, not connected to the rest of the international system of its age, which, in turn brings early modern biases into the discussion, leading Hatti to appear as an isolated empire of the barren lands. I remain hopeful that the recent proliferation of archaeological projects in the borderlands of the Hittite Empire will continue to challenge and change this picture and push us to expand the geographical and cultural horizons of the land of Hatti. However, there is still a lot of work to be done to characterize the landscapes of the Hittite Empire on their own terms. On this, I will conclude with questions instead of answers: what is Anatolia? How do we define it? How do we study it? How do we start to envision Anatolia as part of the larger Mediterranean but on its own fair terms, with its ports, coasts, and rivers, but also its steppe, plains, and mountains? How do we do justice to the liquid history of Anatolia, to borrow a term from the description of the symposium that birthed this volume, while not alienating its mountains, plains, and plateaus?

47 Andreas Schachner, "Hattusa and its Environs: Archaeology," in *Hittite Landscape and Geography*, eds. Mark Weeden and Lee Z. Ullmann (Leiden: Brill, 2017), 37.

48 See N. İlgi Gerçek's contribution in this volume.

49 Mehtap Yılmaz and Özge Yalçıner Ercoşkun, "Ankara'da Ulaşım Sistemlerinin Altında Kalan Dereler: Bentderesi Örneği," *IBAD Sosyal Bilimler Dergisi* 7 (2020): 1–10.