

ANATOLIAN CIVILIZATIONS:

"FROM HITTITES TO THE PERSIAN DOMINATION"

Text written by Erdal Yavuz

Anatolia, also called Asia Minor, at the crossroads of Asia and Europe, has been the home of numerous peoples during the prehistoric ages, with well-known Neolithic settlements such as Catalhöyük, Çayönü, Hacilar to name a few.

The settlement of legendary Troy also starts in the Neolithic period and continues forward into the Iron Age.

Anatolia offered a mild climate with reliable and regular rainfall necessary for a regular agricultural production. Besides the timber and stone essential for construction but deficient in Mesopotamia, Anatolia had rich mines, which provided copper, silver, iron, and gold.

Since the peninsula is a land bridge between Asia and Europe as well as the Mediterranean and the Black Sea, trade to and from the region also had been important since the prehistoric times. All the above particularities made Anatolia very attractive for the peoples of other regions.

Anatolia functioned as a bridge connecting the West with the great empires of the East. When migrating groups passed over this bridge, some of their people often remained and settled, as had occurred when the Hittites entered Anatolia. The newcomers generally adapted themselves to existing cultural patterns, and the geography of the country gave rise to the growth of a great number of small local cultures in history.

Among the peoples who have permanently settled in certain regions or occupied temporarily are Trojans, Thracians, Phrygians, Lydian's, Cimmerians, Persians, Greeks, Macedonians, Lucians, Assyrians, the so-called Sea Peoples, Phoenicians, Gallia's, Jews, Romans etc.

The most enduring settlement and culture was that of the Hittites starting about 1800 B.C and lasting more than a thousand years.

Before the Hittites, Central Anatolia, or "Hatti-Land" as Assyrian name given to the area falling in the west of the Euphrates, was inhabited by the Hattians between the 3rd and 2nd millennia BC.

Their center was Hattusas (in Boğazköy near Yozgat) which will also be the capital city of the Hittite kingdoms.

Hattians spoke a language related to the Northwest Caucasian language group eventually merged with the Hittites, who spoke the Indo-European Hittite language.

In the east and south east Anatolia, one of the earliest state builders were the Hurrians, entering the scene toward the end of the 3rd millennium BC

Hurrians occupied large sections of eastern Anatolia and later the Cilicia region (From Alanya to Mersin including the Taurus Mountains) and had a strong influence on the Hittite culture, language and mythology.

However the Hurrians lost all political and cultural identity by the last part of the 2nd millennium BC.

Hittite Language

Bedrich Hrozný, 1879-1952). a Czech professor at the University of Vienna, in 1916 deciphered the Hittite language. The starting point was a phrase, on an inscription in cuneiform: **"NU NINDA-AN EZZATENI, VATAR-MA EKUTENI"**

Since many Babylonian words were included in Hittite texts, the clue was provided by the Babylonian word *ninda*, which means "food" or "bread." Hrozný asked himself a simple question: What does one do with food or bread? The answer, of course, was, one eats it. So the word *ezzateni* must be related to eating. Then the -an suffix on *ninda* must be a marker for a direct object.

With these two propositions in hand, Hrozný looked at both the vocabulary and the grammar of Indo-European languages. He noted that the verb to eat is similar to Hittite *ezza-* not only in English, but also in Greek (*edein*), Latin (*edere*) and German (*essen*), and especially in medieval German (*ezzan*).

If that was true, the second line of the inscription was not much of a problem, since it began with the word "vatar", which could easily be translated as English water or German wasser.

Hrozný proposed the reading of the whole sentence as:

"NOW BREAD YOU EAT, WATER YOU DRINK"

And this turned out to be right for the whole Hittite language, it was of Indo-European origin!

Some of the sources used in this text:

<http://www.fordham.edu/halsall/ancient/asbook03.html>

<http://www.ancientanatolia.com/>

<http://lexicorient.com/>

<http://www.focusmm.com/civimenu.htm>

<http://www.etana.org/abzu/>

<http://home.comcast.net/~chris.s/myth.html>

<http://history-world.org/hittites.htm>

The Hittite Empire

Entering into history from yet unknown origins, the Hittites will rule a great empire that stretched from Anatolia to Syria and Palestine. Their invasion will bring the end of the Old Babylonian empire in Mesopotamia (1900-1600 BC).

With such a close contact with Mesopotamia, the Hittites will also adopt certain laws, customs and literature of the Old Babylonians thus continuing the long heritage of Sumerian culture.

Their trading with all the civilizations and peoples of the Mediterranean helped the transmission of Mesopotamian thought, law, political structure, economic structure, and ideas around the eastern Mediterranean region.

The two main periods of Hittite history are customarily referred to as the Old Kingdom (1700-1500 BC) and the New Kingdom, or Empire (1400-1200). The less well-documented interlude of about a hundred years between the Old and New Kingdoms is sometimes referred to as the Middle Kingdom. The empire was at its greatest from 1400 to 1200 BC. After this period the Hittite cities and territories continued to exist until 717 BC, and were finally conquered by Assyrians and others.



Extent of the Hittite Empire

In brief it may be said that the phase from 2000 to 700 in Anatolia was marked by the Hittites and may justly be called the "Hittite Period".

In the Hittite records, a prince with the name Anitta is considered the traditional founder of the Hittite dynasty, but it took some more time to establish an organized state which was later to be established by Hattusilis I, who built the town Hattusas (at Boğazköy in Çorum).



A view of Hattusas

The foundation of the Hittite "state" may be considered as the earliest regular and steady organization in Anatolia. The main center was Hattusas which has become later the capital of Hittites for over the centuries.

A particularity concerning the Hittite rule, which is also observed in other empires of the Near East, is about the administration of the territory. The land is considered to belong to the king or the state and the districts are left to the administrators in return for their contribution in taxes and obligations to provide soldiers to the central administration.

During the reign of king Telepinus the reforms further reinforced the power of the central state and the concept of justice. Among them was the foundation of a high court called Pankus which had a power even to judge the King himself.

In the Edict of Telepinus is his program of political reforms. Citing examples of the political evils that had resulted in the past from aristocratic disunity at the death of a monarch, he laid down a precise law of succession, specifying an exact order of precedence to be observed in the selection of a new ruler.

He further prescribed that the nobles must again stand united in loyalty to the throne, and if they are dissatisfied with the conduct of the king or of one of his sons, they must have recourse to legal means.

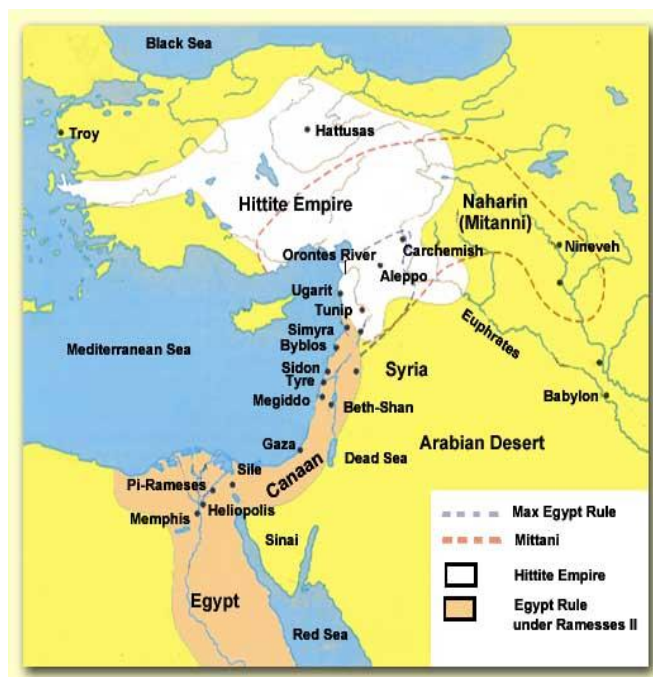
The Supreme Court for punishment of wrongdoers was the pankus. The meaning of the word pankus (pankush) has been much discussed; it has been taken to mean a general assembly, composed of the fighting men and servants of the king. (Maybe like the *Divan* of the Ottoman Court!)

Towards the end of the Old Kingdom, Hittites made successful campaigns against Aleppo (in Syria) and marched towards Babylon and put an end to Hammurabi dynasty.

During the 14th Century BC a brief decline period began in Anatolia and most of the territories captured and conquered earlier were lost. This period of weakness, foreign invasions and fights over the throne is sometimes called "The Middle Kingdom" and continued until 1380 BC and Hittites unified again around the Prince Suppiluliuma.

This epoch is called The New Kingdom or Imperial Period during which Hittites competed with and challenged Egypt for the supremacy in the region.

The Hittite king Suppiluliuma dominated the history of the Middle East during the 14th century BC, although the dates of his reign are in question. He was originally thought to have ascended the throne about 1380 and to have reigned for roughly four decades.



Hittite and Egypt at the period of confrontation

During the early years of reign Suppiluliuma consolidated the Hittite homeland and improving the defenses of Hattusas, the greatly extended city walls was built, enclosing an area of more than 120 hectares.

Then the Hittite Empire began to expand in south east and most of the north Syrian cities were submitted.

In another campaign an interesting affair took place when the Hittite army was encamped before Carchemish (near Gaziantep). A messenger arrived from the queen of Egypt with a proposal that

he should send one of his sons to become her husband. She was Queen Ankhesenamun the widow of Tutankhamen who was forced to marry somebody she does not want. Suppiluliumas agreed to her request and sent her one of his sons, but he was murdered when he reached Egypt.



Queen Ankhesemen

The Proposal of Marriage!

Or, "Marriage as a tool of foreign politics"

After the sudden death of Tutankhamun a letter was sent from Ankhesenamun to the Hittite King Suppiluliumas (it should be noted that the actual queen who sent this letter cannot be definitely stated but the most favored author is Ankhesenamun. (It is also probable that it was Nefertiti Ankhesenamun's mother that sent the letter). The letter requested that the Hittite king send one of his sons to marry the widowed Queen and so be the next pharaoh of Egypt. In the letter the queen states that;

'My husband has died and I have no son. They say about you that you have many sons. You might give me one of your sons to become my husband. Never shall I pick out a servant of mine and make him my husband!....I am afraid!'

This strange and unprecedented letter received a very suspicious response. The Hittite king sent an official to Egypt to investigate. He met with the queen and brought back a second message:

"Had I a son, would I have written about my own and my country's shame to a foreign land? You did not believe me and you have said as much to me! He who was my husband has died. A son I have not! Never shall I take a servant of mine and make him my husband! I have written to no other country; only to you have I written! They say your sons are many: so give me one of your sons! To me he will be husband, but in Egypt he will be King!"

Suppiluliumas was finally convinced he sent his son, the Prince Zannanza, to Egypt. The plan was obstructed by Egyptians not wanting see a foreigner on the throne of Egypt and the Hittite Prince was killed.

<http://www.kingtutone.com/queens/ankhesenamun>
<http://nefertiti.iwebland.com/>

However the relations deteriorated as under the reign of a new pharaoh Seti (1290-79 BC) Egypt, began to recover and advanced as far as Kadesh.

A war between this two "superpowers" at Kadesh (located in Syria) is even today a popular subject of history. Kadesh was first seized by the Egyptian king Thutmose III in the 15th century BC. It remained an outpost of Egypt until it came under Hittite rule in the mid-14th century BC. In 1275 BC it was the scene of a battle between Ramses II and the Hittite king Muwatallis.

This war between two most powerful states in the Middle East area has resulted in the first written international treaty known to us as "Kadesh Treaty ". Although this treaty was written originally in Akkadian language, copies in Hittite and Egyptian have been made. *(For a detailed account of this war see: www.touregypt.net/featurestories/kadesh.htm)*

Some clauses of the Kadesh Treaty:

"Treaty of Rea-Mashesha-Mai Amana the great king, the king of the land of Egypt, the valiant, with Hattusilis, the great king of the Hatti land for establishing good peace and good brotherhood worthy of great kingship forever. These are the words of Rea-Mashesha-Mai Amana: Now I have established good brotherhood and good peace between us forever. In order to establish good peace and good brotherhood in the relationship of the land of Egypt with the Hatti land forever.

(I speak)thus: Behold, as for the relationship between the land of Egypt and the Hatti land, since eternity the god does not permit the making of hostility between them because of a (valid) treaty forever."

"If an enemy from abroad comes against the land of Egypt and Rea-Mashesha-Mai Amana, the king of the land of Egypt, your brother sends to Hattusilis, the great king of the Hatti land, his brother saying: " come here to help me against him-lo Hattusilis, the king of the Hatti land shall send his footsoldiers and his charioteers and, shall slay the enemies

From the Istanbul Archeological Museum page:
http://www.istanbulportal.com/istanbulportal/Kadesh_Tr

The main problems of the next period was the Assyrians penetrating south east Anatolia. But this threat and other difficulties was surmounted by the cooperation of now friend and ally Egypt. However the unpredicted end of the Hittites did not come from the Assyrians, but it came from the West.

A mass of attacks from what was called "Sea Peoples" of yet debated origin destroyed much of Asia Minor including the Hittite State about 1200 BC. Since then the Hittites have never been able to restore their state again. Those who survived have established themselves as small city states.

The remaining Hittite cities and towns have been totally destroyed later by the Assyrians. Thus, from around 700 BC, all of the Hittite towns have been incorporated into Assyrian states and provinces. The vacuum created by the disappearance of the Hittites in Anatolia was Phrygians known by their famous king Midas, and by Urartians in the eastern Anatolia.

HITTITE CHRONOLOGY

Around 1900 BCE: The first appearance of the Hittites in history. They invaded the region which came to be known as Hatti.

Around 1800: The Hittites conquers the town Hattusas.

1680-1650: The Hittite king, Labarna, establishes what came to be known as the Old Hittite Kingdom, and made Hattusha its capital. Under his rule most of Anatolia is captured.

1620-1590: Under King Mursili I Babylon is conquered.

1500: The death of Telipinu. He is the last ruler of the Old Kingdom whose

First half 15th century: The Hittite kingdom declines due to internal strife and external warfare.

Around 1400: Revival of the Hittite kingdom.

1380: Prince Suppiluliuma takes over the throne during a period of weakness and foreign invasions. Suppiluliuma defeats the enemies of the country, principally Mitanni, and extends the territories to areas that had been under Egyptian control.

About 1276: Battle at Kadesh, one of the most famous battles of the ancient world, in which Ramses II of Egypt claims a victory, but the Hittites, nevertheless, remain in Syria. Probably the battle was inconclusive.

About 1262: The Hittite King, Hattusilis III, agrees upon a peace treaty with Ramses 2, and gives his daughter in marriage.

About 1193: Invasion of the Sea Peoples, who bring the Hittite kingdom to its ruin.

12th- 8th centuries: Many migrations take place in the area, the Phrygians being the most important group. It is believed that a Hittite identity survives among the Cilicians and the Syrians. Throughout this period people lived in independent "feudal" city-states.

Until 710: Most of the existing city-states have conquered by the Assyrians.

The Phrygian Period

Following the destruction of Hittite Empire many small kingdoms emerged here and there, and they ruled in Anatolia between 1,250 - 750 BC. Among them the most significant is the Phrygian Kingdom which was established in the central Anatolian plateau.

The Phrygians originated from the Danube area, from where they migrated into Thrace and later crossed the Dardanelles and settled in and around Troy and soon after spread over the central and western Anatolia.

Their "capital" was Gordion (near Polatli) which was also an important Hittite outpost has a rich and turbulent history.



The city became more active when Phrygians settled there beginning in the 9th century. It reached its highest prosperity under the Phrygians in the 8th century. By 690 Cimmerians had invaded the area and destroyed the city. Lydians repaired the city, but in 547-546 Cyrus and his army destroyed it again. Under the Persians, however, it regained its place as a commercial and military center.

Alexander the Great in 333 BC cut the famous "Gordian knot" (believed that whoever could undo it would be the next ruler of Asia) and took the city out of Persian control.

In 278 BC it was conquered and ruined by the Gauls coming all the way from France and became a part of the Galatia. By 200 AC the city was completely deserted.

Phrygian civilization was on a land covering Ankara, Sinop, Konya in eastern Anatolia and Manisa on the west. However, Phrygians have never been able to control the whole part of Anatolia and there is no evidence of them along the Aegean and Mediterranean coastlines.

Phrygian state was at its peak, under the king Midas, Anatolia was invaded by a new people coming from the north of Black Sea known as Cimmerois in Greek sources, now called the Cimmerians. *(Today we remember this name through Conan the Barbarian, the famous cartoon character).*

Gordion the capital city was plundered and burned and by Cimmerians.

After destroying the Phrygians, Cimmerians continuing their march towards west, destroyed and sacked many Ionian cities including Miletus and Smyrna.

Cimmerian invasion lasted for 80 years, and this period of 80 years in Anatolia was known as a period of terror and fear. The Assyrians gave Cimmerians a heavy attack in the year 679 BC and the remains of this people were destroyed by the Lydians in 609 BCE.

Another well known mythical figure from Phrygia is the famous King Midas. Historically, it is known that a king named Midas ruled Phrygia in the late eighth century BC.

In Greek and Roman mythology, Dionysus granted him the power to turn everything into gold by touch.

But when even the food that he touched turned to gold, Midas begged to be relieved of his gift. Dionysus allowed him to wash away his power in the Pactolus River (Gediz), which afterward had gold-bearing sands.

In another legend Midas was given ass's ears by Apollo for preferring, in a contest, the music of Pan to that of Apollo. Midas preserved his shame from all but his barber, who, wishing to tell it, whispered it into a hole in the ground. The reeds that grew out of that hole, however, murmured the secret whenever the wind blew through them.

Later considered to be being a mythological character, there was also a king of Phrygia named Midas in the 8th cent. B.C.

Phrygia was best known as a center of the cult of Cybele Deity of the ancient Mediterranean world. Her cult originated in Phrygia in Asia Minor and spread to the Greek world, where she was identified with Rhea. It reached Rome by the 3rd century BC and became a major cult during the empire.

Known by a variety of local names, Cybele was venerated as "the mother" of gods, humans, and animals. Her lover was the fertility god Attis. Her priests castrated themselves when they entered her service, and on her festival day they spattered their blood on her altar and her sacred pine tree.

May the “Cybele Cult” be the origin of the “Noel Tree” and “Nahl” of the Ottoman festivities?

“In Phrygia, in honor of the crucified and resurrected savior Attis, a pine tree was cut on the twenty second of March, and brought into the sanctuary of the mother-goddess, Cybele. There it was wrapped with woolen bands and decorated with violets. The figure of a young man was tied to the middle of the branch.

Next day took place a ceremonial lament and blowing of trumpets. The twenty four of March was known as the Day of Blood. The high priest drew blood from his arms and the lesser clergy whirled in a dervish-dance. With the sounds of drums, horns, flutes, cymbals until rapt in ecstasy they wounded their bodies with knives and bespatter the altar and tree with their blood... in imitation of the god whose death and resurrection they were celebrating.”

From: Joseph Campbell, *The Hero with a Thousand Faces*, Princeton University Press, 1973, p.93

Lydian Period

As the Urartian kingdom in the east and the Phrygian kingdom in central Anatolia, were coming to their end, a new kingdom based in the city Sardis near Manisa emerged in the western Anatolia. Ruled roughly from 690 to 540BC their territory extended from the western Black Sea and to the Lycian coast on the Mediterranean.

The most famous name of Lydia is Croesus (ruled 560 to 546 BCE.), inherited a prosperous state and he also made his contribution to make Lydia even more powerful and wealthier. Later he will be eternalized as the symbol of wealth. We know him by the saying “as rich as Croesus (Karun)”.

He is also mentioned in Koran (Surah 28: Kisas, verse 79) as “a lord of mighty good fortune”.

Recently he was also remembered by number of objects belonging to the “Treasure of Croesus” stolen from the Archeological Museum in Usak, and replaced with copies.

Lydia reached the zenith in political and cultural development and wealth when Croesus was the king. He started a military campaign against Ephesus, and then other Aegean cities. Almost all of western Anatolia, except the Lycians in southwest, came under the Lydian domination. During the Lydian domination Ephesus was rebuilt and the Artemis Temple which was destroyed by Cimmerians earlier was reconstructed.

Croesus, to expand his borders and include Cappadocia in his state launched a campaign against Persians. Croesus crossed the river Halys (Kızılırmak) and faced the Persian army. After an inconclusive

battle he decided to attack Persians again in the following year, but the Persian king Cyrus the Great followed him, defeated the army of Croesus on the plain of Sardes. A detailed account of this war takes place in the famous “History” of Herodotus.

An interesting story on this event is when Cyrus conquered Sardis; his soldiers started looting the wealth of this city. Cyrus told Croesus, pointing out to screams by the soldiers, “they sack your city”, and Croesus told him back, “not my city any longer, they sack your city”. That was the end of Lydia.

Persian Period

From 547 to 330 BC most parts of Anatolia will be under the domination of the Persian Empire.

When Cyrus (reigned 550 to 529 BC) representing ruling dynasty called Achaemenid took the throne of Persia, the Near East was divided between the Medes, Babylonians, Lydians and Cilician kingdoms. After defeating the Medes Persia extended his territories as far as the river Halys in Central Anatolia. Cyrus' main target was to expand his borders towards west and to control the main harbors of the Mediterranean and trading roads from east to west. This was realized by the defeat of the Lydian state in 547 BC. Later, he was to bring the Babylonian kingdom under the Persian domination in 539 BC. Persia had gained the control of the near east and Greece. Greek city states in Asia Minor, with the help of Spartans, put some resistance against the Persians, however they never succeeded permanently.

Cyrus began ruling the areas he captured by appointing local military rulers who were called “Satraps”. When Cyrus the great died in 529 BC, he left behind him, an empire extending from Thrace to Indian Ocean.

For the next two centuries, until the arrival of Alexander the great and the conquest of Persia by him, the Persian Empire was the super power of the ancient world. From then on for three centuries, the history of the Near East including Anatolia is considered as the “Hellenistic Period”. This Hellenistic Period covers from the death of Alexander the Great in 323 BCE, to the death of Cleopatra and annexation of Egypt by the Romans in 30 BCE. It was the age of many Kings who were former generals of Alexander. Kings constantly fought with each other for territory, wealth and glory. Many kings died at the battlefields fighting against their rivals. These frequent wars came to weaken the Hellenistic kingdoms, and they were all absorbed by first Parthian kings and later by the Romans.