

How linguistic complexities of the Bronze Age affected the formation of Hittite identity
Kelley Tackett

At its height, the Hittite empire encompassed most of Anatolia, as well as parts of the northern Levant and upper Mesopotamia (Cline, 2003, 3), making it necessarily diverse, multiethnic, and multilingual. It was founded around 1700 BCE as an oral society (Hawkins, 2003, 129), administrated with little reference to writing. As the empire developed, so did its reliance on written material to maintain and support the growing state. Writing slowly became the established method for palace and state administration, and the corpus of texts found in the empire's capital, Hattusha, numbers more than thirty thousand (Rubio, 2005, 219). Though the oldest clay tablets in the archive are written in Akkadian cuneiform, this outside language is overtaken by the newly crafted Hittite cuneiform, which remained the official language of the empire until its collapse (van den Hout, 2005, 217). Such tablets found in Hattusha are not the only written examples left by the Hittites. Eighty stone stelae have been located (Rubio, 2005, 221), spread throughout the empire's central territory, inscribed with a mix of ideographic hieroglyphs and the Luwian hieroglyphic script. Beyond the archive of clay and scattered stone reliefs (Figure 1), writing in the Hittite empire also existed on wooden writing boards, known by their reference in cuneiform texts but never actually recovered (van den Hout, 2009, 49). That two languages and three mediums for recording them are attested as being relevant to the functioning of the Hittite empire is not surprising given the myriad groups and states included in the vast Hittite territory.

In addition to a multi-tiered system of orthography, the spoken vernacular of the empire included a distinct hierarchy, especially as the empire fell into decline. Though for several centuries Hittite was the most widely spoken language within the empire, by around 1300 BCE it

had been overtaken by Luwian (Hawkins, 2003, 141), even in the capital city of Hattusha (Figure 2). Late Bronze Age Anatolia and the Hittite empire by which it was occupied possessed a complex system of administration which relied on the interplay between language of the palace and of the people, and required distinct methods of recording empiric information in which materiality was relevant alongside content, reflecting shifts of language and migration within the empire at large. Such linguistic intricacy provides important clues regarding how citizens of the Hittite world viewed themselves in relation to their government, their communities, and the empire. By examining the function of the written scripts and spoken vernaculars of Hittite and Luwian, it will be possible to understand how these linguistic complexities play into the formation of Hittite identity and identification in Bronze Age Anatolia.

Script & Writing in the Hittite Empire

The first Hittite king to use writing in the Hittite language as a tool for reshaping the empire was Telipinu, who, at the end of the sixteenth century BCE, “formulated new rules for royal succession, and issued the earliest datable international treaty as well as a series of land donations” (van den Hout, 2009, 42). For more than a century prior to Telipinu’s implementation of Hittite script, records for the empire were written in Akkadian. The tradition of Akkadian cuneiform was brought to the empire by Syrian scribes (Hawkins, 2003, 129) who had been trained in that language. This recording of deeds in a tongue other than that which was spoken by the majority of the empire was the first known instance of Hittite diglossia.

As the writing tradition within the empire grew in strength and application, the Akkadian language was slowly overtaken by a cuneiform writing system adapted for the Hittite language. Such adaption required the creation of new symbols to signify sounds and stops found in spoken Hittite that did not exist in Akkadian phonology. The transition between methods of writing was visible in Hittite language inserts into otherwise Akkadian compositions, as well as in short texts

where “strange and inconsistent spellings betray[ed] the uncertainties of a fledgling system” (van den Hout, 2009, 42).

By 1400 BCE Hittite had become the official state language, in speech and writing (Gordin, 2011, 191; van den Hout, 2009, 42; Yakubovich, 2008, 28). Though it had long been the vernacular of the empire, the declaration presented a more centralized vision of royal power and influence. For an empire growing in strength, the chance to move from a borrowed system of written administration to one which belonged in name and structure solely to the empire itself must have been alluring. The ability for the Hittite king to rule the Hittite empire by means of the Hittite language and script mattered in the formation of a cohesive state that, though representing a diverse range of peoples, provided a foundation from which members of the empire could draw features of identity.

The move from diglossia, where Akkadian represented a standard, literary language and Hittite occupied the position of the vernacular, to a centralized, focused lexical landscape in which Hittite captured prestige on all fronts, was not a permanent one. Popularity of Hittite cuneiform lost strength alongside the gradual decline of the empire itself, leading to the formation of another diglossic system, less favorable to the strict centrality of Hittite.

By the final three generations of the Hittite empire, Luwian had replaced Hittite as the most common vernacular language (Yakubovich, 2008, 32). A key difference between this transition and that of Akkadian to Hittite relies on the historical and political significance of the Hittite language. The creeping influence of Luwian is visible in Hittite texts, through the frequent insertion of Luwian words and the increased tendency to write paragraphs regarding the religious or ritual in cuneiform that matched formulaic patterns of the Luwian language (Waal, 2011, 27). Though this exhibits an unmistakable parallel to the sway Hittite possessed over Akkadian,

Luwian was never able to make the final jump cleared by Hittite several centuries earlier. This is perhaps a matter of available time, but is more likely explained as a concentrated effort on the part of Hittite administration to preserve the Hittite language, despite the pressures of an increasingly Luwian-speaking society.

The creation of this second diglossia in the Hittite world is not unique to it. Sargon II, a Neo-Assyrian king, refused to receive mail written in Aramaic, a common vernacular with a popular alphabet, insisting that letters to him be written in Akkadian, with cuneiform, on a clay tablet (Charpin, 2010, 94). Other contemporary examples of state-standardized language include Old Babylon's continued use of Sumerian for written texts, despite its being a language only spoken in artificial contexts, such as by priests or in school, and twenty-first to seventeenth century BCE Mari, where Akkadian was the language of written culture and Amorite the spoken vernacular (Charpin, 2010, 93 and 120).

Oral tradition, wooden writing boards, & the Hattusha archive

More than thirty thousand clay cuneiform tablets were recovered from the Hattusha archive (Figure 3). Yet when compared in content to archives found in contemporary Near Eastern civilization, several key aspects of administration are absent (Waal, 2011, 31; van den Hout, 2009, 42). Items prevalent in corpora from surrounding Bronze Age archives but missing from Hattusha include accounts of grain distribution, deliveries, and lists of offerings, rations, and workmen (van den Hout, 2009, 45). The lack of such texts can be interpreted in several ways: that there were never written records of this type in Hattusha and instead such tasks were managed by oral administration (van den Hout, 2009, 43); that the texts did exist, but were written on wooden writing boards which did not survive the passage of time (Waal, 2011, 29); or that there was a combination of the above, with a system of administration that retained oral

practices after the implementation of writing in addition to a practice of inscribing information on wooden tablets.

It is nearly impossible to fully recover a purely oral worldview from a literate perspective, and attempts to do so tend to involve modern projections. When asked to think of a word, a “literate person will normally (perhaps always) have some image, at least vague, of the spelled-out word” and be quite unable to separate the graphic representation from the sound of the word itself (Ong, 1982, 12). The common assertion that “oral verbalization was essentially the same as written verbalization” (Ong, 1982, 10) assumes the shift to writing was a simple transfer of thought from air to page. Treating the analysis of oral societies as such overlooks the complex workings and nuanced efforts of oral tradition.

The critics of the oral administrative theory in the Late Bronze Age (Waal, 2011, 31) argue that the Hittite empire was too vast, too complicated, to rely heavily on oral habits. This viewpoint ignores the intricate relationship much of the empire might have possessed with literacy, an often inaccessible thing, and entirely discounts how local administration and citizens outside of the elite circles might have managed their business. Additionally, this limited perspective relies on the concept that oral societies were ineludibly primitive ones, an idea which has been thoroughly debunked in recent scholarship (Ong, 1982, 10). Beyond this, there is one recorded tablet referring to the continued use of oral contracts binding individuals or alliances during the empire, characterized by the performance of symbolic gestures and utterance of solemn words with witnesses, who “committed to memory the affair” (Charpin, 2010, 154). Evidence such as this, as well as the argument that the development of and reliance on writing was a method for documenting oral agreements and activity, allowing the “spoken word to survive the one who uttered it” (Charpin, 2010, 177), implies some kind of coexistence between

oral and written administration, one which doesn't necessarily mean the Hattusha archival gap was mostly oral, but which certainly increases the plausibility that it could have been so.

The second possibility for the 'missing' tablets in the Hattusha archive is the presence of frequently mentioned—though, as yet, never recovered—wooden writing boards (Waal, 2011, 21). That these boards existed is not doubted. The more interesting question deals with their particular use, taking into account not just what was written on these boards, but *how* it was written. Thus, these wooden boards are a possible two-part solution to the archival gap, depending on whether they were inscribed with Hittite cuneiform or Luwian hieroglyphs.

Just as some levels of the Hittite empire must have run on oral communication, due to the inaccessibility of total literacy, it is known that some aspects of the archival gap were, in fact, written on wood (Figure 4). Clay cuneiform tablets reference “the keeping of daily affairs such as the delivery and distribution of goods, distribution of cult supplies and the making of inventories” (Waal, 2011, 25) as being inscribed on wood. Here 'daily' life does not mean private life, but is in reference to the main characteristic of the wooden boards being their short-term quality, as well as their adaptability and ease of transport (van den Hout, 2009, 50). The short-term nature of the boards and perishable nature of some tasks known to be embedded on them suggests a level of low prestige for this form of writing.

Presented here are two main possibilities for the archival gap in Hattusha: one focused on oral communication, helping define the extent to which writing was necessary in the functioning of the empire; and another that identifies the uses of wooden boards and could play a major role in determining the relationship between the two main scripts and the identities of those who interacted with them.

A question of Hittite diglossia

With the clear delineation between hieroglyphs carved in stone and cuneiform in clay, wooden writing boards fall somewhere in-between. These boards are relevant to understanding more fully the Hittite diglossia, particularly in the final three generations of the empire, and the role of language in the formation of identity for the people living in Anatolia and beyond. Whichever script adorned the writing boards would change the outcome of this analysis, either privileging Luwian as a language of ritual and prestige or presenting Hittite as a standardized language of empire, maintained for tradition and to emphasize the centrality and power of a state in decline.

For the wooden writing boards to be inscribed with cuneiform Hittite would reflect an extension of the cuneiform tradition in clay. Though clay was inexpensive as a raw material (Charpin, 2010, 69), resource availability might have accounted for the switch in method for what were generally more menial tasks. Or, some form of pre-definition might have sorted these impermanent records, to be either kept or discarded. If the theory of a resource-induced material dichotomy is discounted (Waal, 2011, 29), there is little practicality to requiring two mediums with distinct roles in palace administration for information recorded in the same language and script for the same audience. With these circumstances, it makes sense that a second writing system—namely, Luwian—would be utilized.

When inscriptions are found regarding the scribal tradition itself, distinct terminology is used for writing on wood in comparison to clay (Waal, 2011, 22). The word applied to a palace ‘scribe’ was DUB.SAR, while a ‘scribe-writing-on-wood’ was called DUB.SAR.GIS (Waal, 2011, 22). This difference in vocabulary points to both a recognized division between the mediums used for writing and between the types of ‘scribe’ who performed the act of writing. The latter idea supports the existence of a hierarchy of scribes, from members of an elite palace

tradition to more of a ‘clerk’ figure without the training or status to use the privileged medium of clay (van den Hout, 2009). It makes sense that there would be levels of literate administration, and comparison with contemporary and later Near Eastern civilizations suggests the separate terminology is reminiscent of a change in script as well as material and status.

Both Neo-Babylonian texts and tablets found at Persepolis distinguish between the medium and script used by scribes. In the Persepolis archive, a scribe writing in alphabetic Aramaic was called by a term meaning ‘scribes (writing) on leather’ (Waal, 2011, 22), a material known for Aramaic inscriptions because the alphabet was easily written in ink. Neo- and Late-Babylonian scribes who wrote in alphabetic script were designated by a Sumerogram different from those writing in a divergent script (Waal, 2011, 22). These vocabulary traditions are similar to the distinction made in Hittite texts, supporting the idea that scribes writing on wood were different in both script and medium from clay.

In addition to specific terminology between types of scribes, there is a distinction within the verb ‘to write’. This verb, GULŠ, meaning ‘to write or draw’ is never used in reference to clay tablets, but is found frequently regarding the wooden writing boards, even attested in a few cases in relation to stone—a material on which Luwian was certainly written (Waal, 2011, 23) (figure 8). There is no single corresponding word used when writing about text on clay, with references split between an ideographic Akkadogram covering an underlying, unknown Hittite word or the verb TUPPI, semantically closer to the composition or sending of the document rather than the actual writing process (Waal, 2011, 24).

There are accounts in clay of court procedures which were recorded both in cuneiform and on wooden writing boards (Waal, 2011, 27). There could have been some administrative purpose to having two otherwise identical copies on two different mediums of the events, but it

seems more likely that the materials were meant for two different audiences, perhaps in two different scripts. The court is, interestingly, “the precise location where the spheres of the palace and the common people would have met” (Waal, 2011, 27), and so it is not a stretch to suggest that it was also the location where the scripts of the palace and the common people might have overlapped.

More than cases of verb choice and usage, the development of a cursive Luwian script supports the hypothesis that wooden boards were inscribed with Luwian rather than Hittite cuneiform. No cursive Luwian is recorded on stone, nor are there any texts found in clay using this writing system (Waal, 2011, 28). Rather, evidence of the script was first shown on personal seals (Hawkins, 2003, 133). The development of a more legible script to replace the hieroglyphic language, made with more abstract, simpler shapes, is “commonly interpreted as the result of frequent handwritten usage” (Hawkins, 2003, 119). Since, outside of the personal seals, there is no record of this frequent handwritten usage, it would make sense to suggest that perhaps it was written on a softer medium which has not been preserved, namely, wooden writing boards (Rubio, 2005, 46).

Access to written texts

Luwian as a language of the general populous rather than a prestige form within the Hittite linguistic schema changes both the relationship of the people on the periphery to the palace elite as well as of the palace elite to their own centralized power construction. Though any person’s identity is multifaceted, the language of those holding power is relevant to the livelihood of an individual and to their own sense of belonging within the empire. The dichotomy between Hittite and Luwian plays into this by way of maintaining a break between the majority language spoken as a native tongue and the administrative language, potentially known as a vernacular to none. For a long time in the more modern west, students learned to read

only in Latin, a dead language, and “it is therefore quite possible that a cultural phenomenon of the same order existed” in the Near East (Charpin, 2010, 44) and, by extension, in the Hittite empire itself.

The preservation of a Hittite language and writing system would have been relevant to the interests of the empire in a variety of ways, despite the problem of popular communication and growing linguistic trends away from Hittite in the empire. The retention of the Hittite language and script would have helped reinforce the sense of dynasty, of “unbroken family continuity” through a succession of generations (van den Hout, 2005, 234). Hittite was to remain the language of royalty, which instead of indicating continued political supremacy by a particular group, reflected an important dynastic tradition. A standard language encourages the idea of a shared language, even if it is inaccessible to an amount of the population. This shared language, and implied experience, is then a useful tool for identification among those exposed to it, as well as a method of gaining legitimacy for those in power. Examples of this abound, from the traditional roles of Sanskrit and Arabic to Old Church Slavonic (Rubio, 2005, 94).

While the cuneiform tablets found in the Hattusha archive were intrinsic to palace dealings and could all, in some form, be traced back to the king (van den Hout, 2005, 235), Luwian stone monuments were quite public and scattered throughout the empire, though mostly concentrated in the central regions (Bilgin, 2016). The majority of Luwian stone inscriptions are attested to in the final three generations of the empire, while some may have been created after its fall (Hawkins, 2003, 146). During this period of time, a growing Luwian presence in Hattusha (van den Hout, 2005, 224) is evident not least in the change from Hittite to Luwian as the most common language. Many of the hieroglyphic inscriptions are accompanied by relief carvings of a historically powerful leader, the king ruling at the time of construction, or a representation of the

divine (Bilgin, 2016). As a form of royal propaganda, presenting the text in Luwian would have been practical from a standpoint of addressing the increasingly large Luwian-speaking population present in the empire.

Yet Luwian might have been chosen for more reasons than simply its status as a common vernacular. As the language of popular communication, Luwian may have become “the preferred vehicle of all-purpose written communication outside the palatial sphere” (Yakubovich, 2008, 32). The Luwian hieroglyphic system is based on a set of ideographs, which unlike the abstract cuneiform writing system, can be interpreted without years of study and memorization of signs. More than this, the ideographic language that developed into these hieroglyphs has no basis in a spoken tongue (Yakubovich, 2008, 18). Rather, the symbols, recognizable as the object they are meant to represent, could be read in Hittite, Luwian, Akkadian, Hurrian, or any number of locally known languages present in the region. This could have been a significant motivating factor in the commission of such monuments, taking advantage of a language system more intelligible to viewers, with the Luwian language association included “as part of the package deal” (Yakubovich, 2008, 32). While most rock relief inscriptions are a mix of hieroglyphs which are markedly Luwian and ideographs, this combination does not drastically change the intelligibility of the signs, simply the connotation of the characters. Unlike the pictorial Luwian script, in cuneiform there is no visible link between the signified, what is meant, and the signifier, what is seen (Saussure, 1959, 66).

Whether it was a consideration of popular language or linguistic accessibility, that these rock monuments were not carved with cuneiform was a deliberate action, one that would not have been missed by their viewers. In semiological systems like language, “elements hold each other in equilibrium in accordance with fixed rules” and the notion of identity “blends with that

of value and *vice versa*” (Saussure, 1959, 110, emphasis original). Though it’s unlikely the average viewer of a stone relief would have taken the time to equate any linguistic decisions to the interplay between value and signs, viewer and signified, the underlying notions would still have been relevant. A Luwian speaker, recognizing that Hittite is the language of the elite, could have seen Luwian carvings and recognized the value placed on the language through that act. Even if the intention was not propaganda for the masses, the validation of Luwian script, the promotion of a written language visually accessible beyond the narrow, exclusive function of cuneiform, was meant to include those outside the Hittite-literate circle of the palace. A link exists between the material, the writing system, and the language on one hand, and the “symbolic value that could be attached to the use of cuneiform” on the other (Charpin, 2010, 94). Despite the existence of a material hierarchy—stone, clay, wood—in this instance, the content is arguably more important than form. Writing Luwian in stone, alongside and around images of the great and divine, gives it a value beyond popular knowledge, a value that might have been translated by its speakers as reflecting their own.

Popular literacy

More than questioning who could access to a certain form of writing, it’s important to explore who might have had the ability to interact with it. It cannot be assumed that every king, high official, or administrator was literate, or that the literacy they possessed matched that of those trained in the scribal tradition. To make this examination not simply of the elite circles but of the empire at large, it is necessary to break down the concept of literacy. There are two main categories that will be used to describe literate individuals in the Hittite empire here, though both can be broken down themselves into more specific notions: active and passive literacy. The latter is the ability to read, while the former is “the set of pervasive competencies and the knowledge that is required to participate in literate society” (Illich, 2003, 2).

Given the pervasiveness of cuneiform administrative texts, it can be assumed that most palace officials possessed at least passive literacy. The content of the tablets supports this, as it covers a diverse range of inventories and ritual happenings, relevant to the maintenance of the capital at large. Also interesting in this consideration is the language used on officials' seals. The names represented on seals recovered belonging to privileged families are written in ideographic characters, sometimes with a formulaic Hittite cuneiform inscription that thanks the king for his favor (Hawkins, 2003, 141). The names of these officials contain no distinguishing marks to identify the underlying language (Yakubovich, 2008, 30), similar to how the signatures of scribes, particularly toward the final generations of the empire, are in unmarked hieroglyphs, even on clay (Gordin, 2011, 181). To the officials whose seals have been found, the set of symbols "whose pictographic shapes would be easily recognizable even to an illiterate person" (Yakubovich, 2008, 30) might signify their own inability to read more than pictographs, but could also be politically symbolic as a signature legible to those without training in literacy (figure 5), or representative of a multi-lingual society where it was common practice to write names in symbols rather than syllables.

It's certainly possible that these officials could interact with language beyond the recognition of characters. High officials in Mari—administrators, members of the military, diviners, even kings—were able to read and write letters on their own (Charpin, 2010, 62). Additionally, a letter sent in 721 BCE to Sargon II was signed from "your servant Sin-na'di", who requested a scribe be sent to him since he lacked one, implying that he wrote the letter himself. While the letter contained blunders of spelling and style, it was entirely legible (Charpin, 2010, 63). In the Old-Babylonian city of Sippar, some of the nuns-*naditum* were able to write in cuneiform, with "a woman in the milieu defin[ing] herself as a scribe". Beyond this,

the scribes within palace harems were women, and female scribes sometimes appeared in the dowry of princesses. There are even letters recovered from daughters of kings in the royal Assyrian family discussing their own literacy schooling (Charpin, 2010, 63-64). These examples, while certainly suggesting passive literacy, imply in many cases an active literacy as well. If the tradition of a more wide-spread literacy existed in contemporary and later Near Eastern societies, it bolsters the argument that in the late Bronze Age Hittite empire, this phenomenon also existed.

The question of palace literacy is examined here through officials who were literate in cuneiform, despite the Hittite language failing to be the native vernacular of even the elite. The benefits and incentives to maintain a standard language have already been discussed, as well as the prevalence of such linguistic tradition throughout the Near East. More interesting, though, to the question of popular literacy in the context of a standardized language, is the visible intrusion of the common vernacular, even among trained scribes working with clay and cuneiform.

That the scribes of the palace who were responsible for crafting the Hattusha archive were literate in both Hittite and Luwian is a certainty (van den Hout, 2009, 30). Any familiarity writing in Luwian would support the hypothesis that the script was used on non-surviving mediums, since materials for practice and implementation of the script have not been recovered beyond the monumental stela. These stela, largely dated within the final generations of the empire, cannot alone provide enough evidence to support what is visible as a significant scribal tradition, with Luwian influence apparent in a diverse range of texts from the Hattusha corpus.

Code-switching is first attested to in the fourteenth century BCE (Rosenkranz, 2005, 231), which corresponds with a growing Luwian presence in Hattusha (Waal, 2011, 32). Texts which included entire paragraphs or sections in Luwian, written in cuneiform, were almost entirely ritual or religious, and the distribution of Luwian words in texts from the general corpus

mimics these genres as well, though is not limited to it. This distinction is the same one signifying Hittite encroachment upon Akkadian a few centuries earlier (van den Hout, 2009, 42). Luwian lexical inserts are recognizable by a gloss, (Yakubovich, 2008, 32; Hawkins, 2003, 128) or a particular wedge-marking by the scribe, which identifies the words. These glossed words are found in texts dealing with literature, history, administration, myth, hymn, vows, and medicine, among others (Hawkins, 2003, 128). In addition, one text has been found which provides rare evidence for Hittite-Luwian alloglottography, or the practice of writing a text in one language which is meant to be read in another (Rubio, 2005, 33). This is the NISANTAS text, appearing to be a rough draft of a Luwian rock inscription written in cuneiform on a clay tablet. It “exactly follows the model of hieroglyphic inscriptions and not that of the usual cuneiform royal edicts and similar records” (van den Hout, 2005, 234) and shows a court scribe as “intimately familiar with Luwian and able to switch” between the languages (Waal, 2011, 30). That the hieroglyphic inscriptions were potentially being drafted by the same scribes that kept palace records is an important note regarding scribal bi-literacy in both Hittite and Luwian hieroglyphs. This bi-literacy is evident in other Near Eastern corpora, such as in Old Babylon when Akkadian words were used frequently in Sumerian texts, in Nuzi where Hurrian words slowly infiltrated texts in Akkadian, or in Qatna, where texts have been found which display a “curious mix of sentences that begin in Akkadian and end in Hurrian” (Charpin, 2010, 94).

If Luwian were a scribal vernacular, it becomes increasingly possible that it was the vernacular of the palace elite as well, given the status of many palace scribes as of affluent families (Gordin, 2011, 184). Following this, the argument that the Luwian rock reliefs were purely meant as propaganda for a Luwian-speaking population must include the palatial administrators themselves in that speech community. If true, Hittite cuneiform becomes truly a

scribal relic, an antiquated script perpetuated for the preservation of dynasty but frequently infiltrated by vernacular language which was native to both officials making the utterances and the scribes recording them.

Outside of the clearly delineated circles of stone, clay, and wood, Hittite was the standard language of the palace, though Akkadian was still used infrequently for inscriptions on durable materials, such as the sword dedicated by Tuthaliya I after a military victory (Yakubovich, 2008, 16). There is only one example of Luwian written on a private object. This is a silver bowl, known as the ANKARA bowl (figures 6, 7), “which was clearly made for the use of elites” (Yakubovich, 2008, 16). Given the defined linguistic formulae used throughout Hattusha, a bowl inscription in Luwian, dated between the fourteenth and thirteenth centuries BCE, before its rise as popular vernacular, may have been a social faux pas (Yakubovich, 2008, 16) or rare object brought from outside the empire; either would explain why it is the only surviving private Luwian inscription which falls on this intersection of material and language.

Conclusions

After the disintegration of the Hittite empire in the early twelfth century BCE, the cuneiform writing system was abandoned in central Anatolia (Yakubovich, 2008, 32). This collapse of Hittite cuneiform alongside the empire is a telling factor in the tradition of its association with the elite and palatial administration (Waal, 2011, 32). A writing system used primarily for administrative purposes “cannot survive without state sponsorship” (Yakubovich, 2008, 32), and Hittite cuneiform was no exception.

With this collapse of empire and continuation of the Luwian script and vernacular, it is clear that Hittite cuneiform was not a script of public influence. Yet this lack of influence does not mean it was irrelevant to the linguistic complexities present in the Hittite Bronze Age. A Hittite administration that used Luwian for its public monuments, and potentially as its own

vernacular, might have intended the script as symbolic of an “alleged solidarity” between Hittite kings and the “common population of the empire” (Rubio, 2006, 235). It might also have been simply that hieroglyphic characters were the most efficient solution to reaching the largest amount of people, as even an illiterate citizen could differentiate between cuneiform and hieroglyphs. But through this analysis of the roles played by Hittite and Luwian, with their respective scripts on their specific materials, it seems that the identity of the common citizens is not the only one affected by this linguistic landscape. The elite of the palace clearly perpetuate the Hittite script far beyond its decline and disuse, maintaining an antiquated scribal tradition likely unintelligible to most of the empire. This distinction is an important facet to their own identities, and in the desire to remain connected to the concept of dynasty and continued traditions remnant of the empire’s greatest age. Upholding this scribal tradition in the face of a Luwian vernacular was a calculated method, one that required more work and education but which resulted in clear lines of language drawn in the political landscape. This elite identity was drawn from their palatial status, their proximity to dynasty, and their knowledge of a script archaic yet deeply relevant to the function of the state.

Outside of this sphere, common identity related to language in a different way. The visibility of rock-cut monuments bearing reliefs of kings and gods alongside a vernacular language in an accessible script allowed common citizens to recognize themselves within the image of the Hittite empire. Using Luwian was the most accessible way for the king to communicate at large, but it also symbolized Luwian’s deep connection to the empire, and that it could exist on the same stelaes as the royal and divine. To a native speaker of Luwian, this validation of language could have also meant a legitimacy of self, and the ability to belong to the empire as a citizen, even if not a Hittite-speaking one. Thus, language cannot encompass

identity, but it can certainly play among the many facets that do make up an individual's personal identification and alliance. This is how the linguistic landscape of Bronze Age Hittite Anatolia influenced the identity of its speakers and surrounding citizens. The existence of multiple tongues and scripts and mediums of communication meant a more twisted path to understanding the role of each piece within the larger empire, but such complexity allowed the reveal of nuanced and profound connections otherwise covered by wood, clay, and stone.

References

- Bilgin, Tayfun. "Hittite Monuments." *Hittite Monuments*, 2016, www.hittitemonuments.com/.
- Charpin, Dominique. *Reading and Writing in Babylon*. Harvard University Press, 2010.
- Cline, E. *1177 BC: The Year Civilization Collapsed*. Princeton; Princeton University Press, 2003. Prologue.
- Gordin, Shai. (2015). *Hittite Scribal Circles*.
- Gordin, Shai. (2011). The Tablet and its Scribe. In: *Akademie Verlag*. Pp. 178-198.
- Hawkins, J. (2003). Scripts and Texts. In: *The Luwians*. Pp. 128-169.
- Illich, Ivan, et al. "A Plea for Research on Lay Literacy." *Literacy and Orality*, Cambridge University Press, 2003, pp. 28–47.
- Luwian Hieroglyphs. Encyclopedia Britannica, 2017, media1.britannica.com/eb-media/35/146935-004-DE278E07.jpg.
- Mora, Maria Elena Balza-Clelia. (2011). The Two Scribal Traditions of the Late Hittite Empire. In: *Akademie Verlag*. Pp. 214-225.
- Ong, Walter J., and John Hartley. *Orality and Literacy: the Technologizing of the Word*. Routledge, 1982.
- Sanders, Seth Larkin., and Gonzalo Rubio. "Writing in Another Tongue: Alloglottography in the Ancient Near East." *Margins of Writing: Origins of Culture*, University of Chicago, 2005, pp. 33–67.

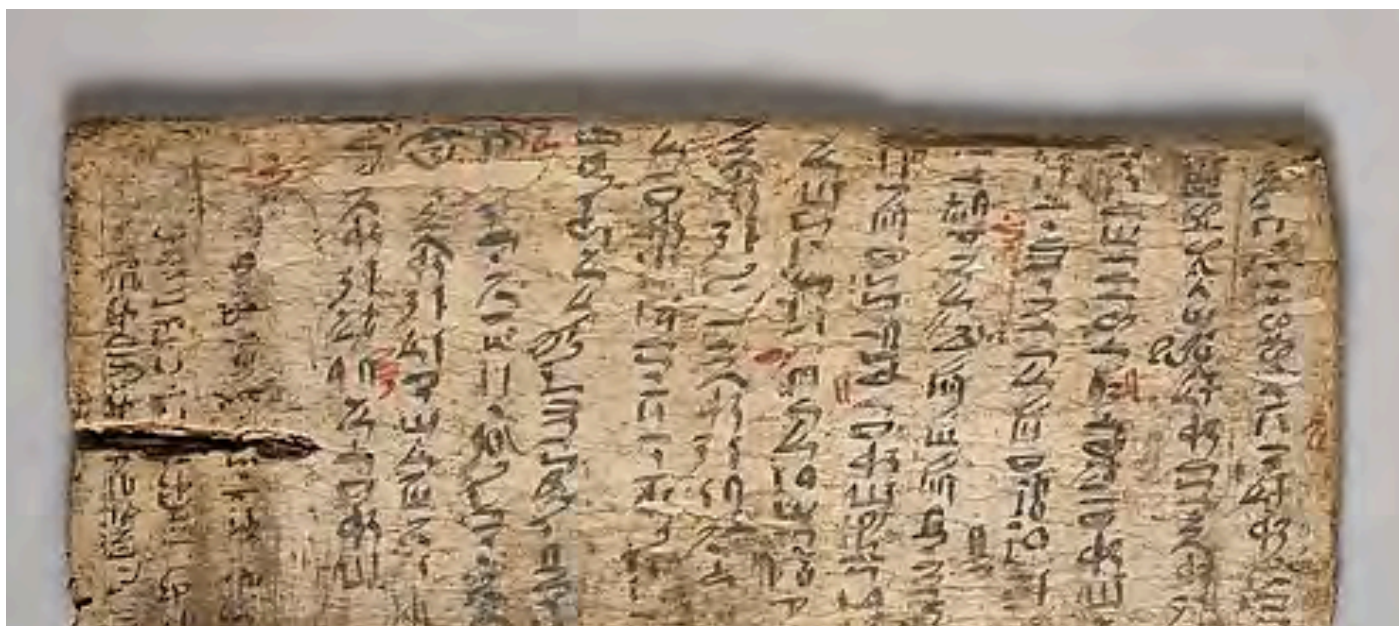


Figure 2. Yazilikaya hieroglyphic sanctuary of Hattusha, stone carvings visible in the middle right of the photo. From Getty Images.

Figure 3. Clay cuneiform tablet from the Hattusha archive. From: University of Pennsylvania Museum of Archaeology and Anthropology.



Figure 4. Middle Kingdom Egyptian wooden writing board. Characters marked in paint. From: MET museum collection.



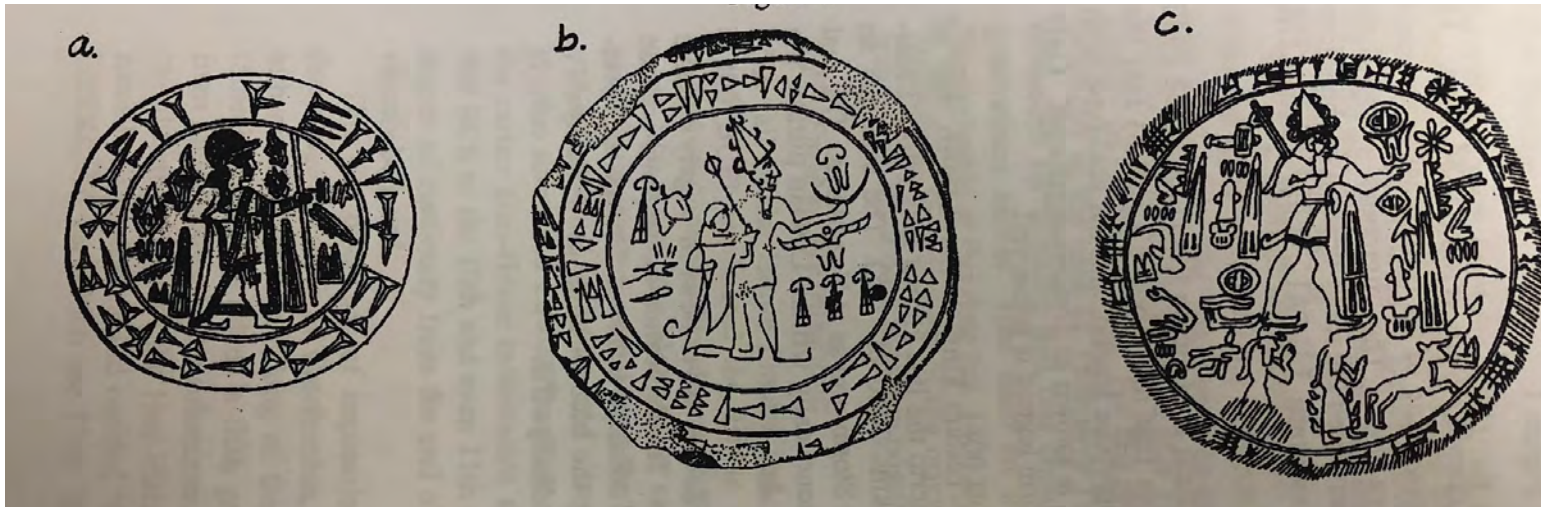


Figure 5. Three Hittite seal impressions. Example 'a' is digraphic, with Hittite cuneiform and Luwian hieroglyphs. Also digraphic is example 'b', with only the inner ring of cuneiform preserved. The third impression, 'c' is unique in containing a phonetically written Luwian phrase as well as unmarked hieroglyphs and Hittite cuneiform. From: Hawkins (2003).

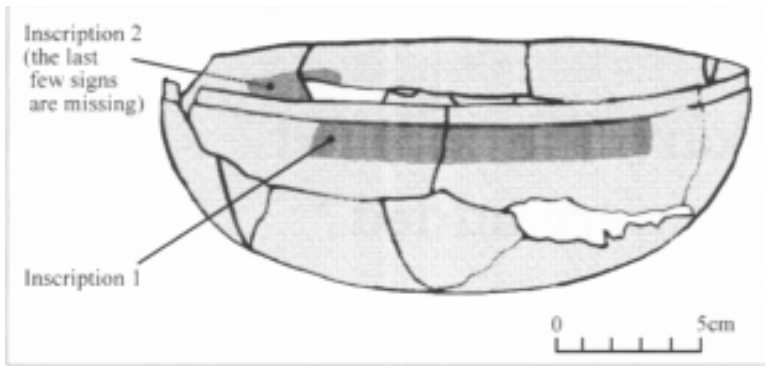


Figure 6, 7. A recreation of the ANKARA bowl and a drawing of the Luwian hieroglyphic inscription. From: Hawkins (2003).

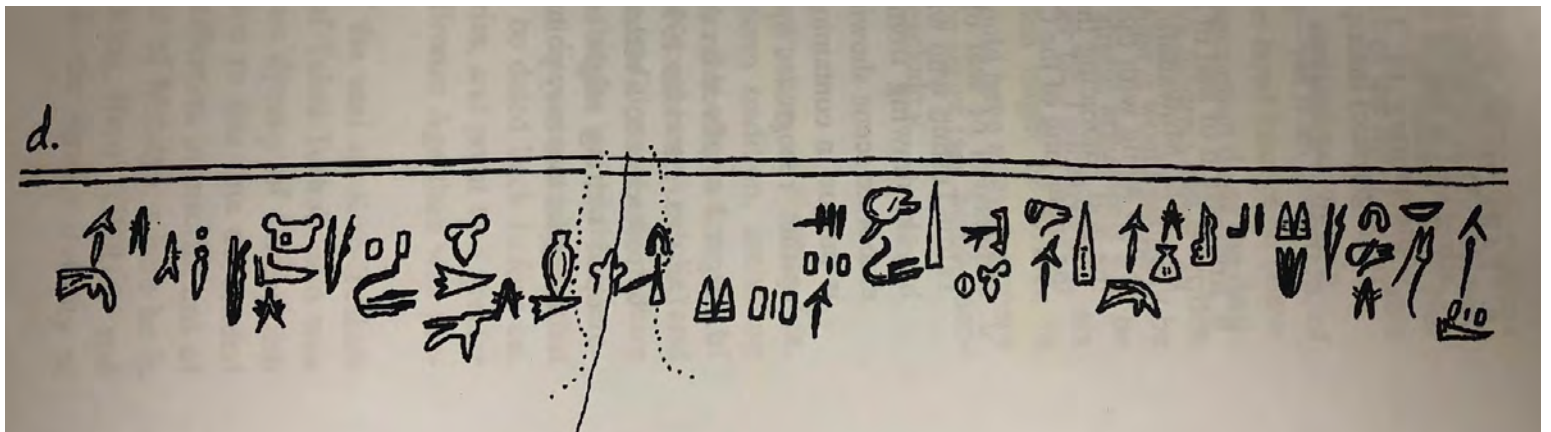


Figure 8. Luwian hieroglyphic stone inscription. From: Encyclopedia Britannica.

