Originalveröffentlichung in: Birgitta Eder, Regine Pruzsinszky (Hg.), Policies of exchange. Political systems and modes of interaction in the Aegean and the Near East in the 2nd millennium B.C.E (Oriental and European Archaeology, Bd. 2), Wien 2015, S. 339–348; Online-Veröffentlichung auf Propylaeum-DOK (2024),
DOI: https://doi.org/10.11588/propylaeumdok.00006073

Archaeology of Exchange: Evidence for Supra-Regional Contacts According to the Archaeological Sources in Ḫatti

Mirko Novák

Abstract: International relations often find their expression in the material remains discovered in archaeological excavations. However, they are ambiguous and difficult to interpret. This paper addresses the problems of interpretation of archaeological traces of international exchange. A good case study is the Hittite empire: On the one hand, only few indications for external exchange can be traced in its heartland. Even the very few iconographical adaptations from abroad were re-interpreted and transferred into an own genuine spiritual concept. On the other hand, the impact of Hittite art production as well as language and script use remained very limited, even in the dependent territories in Cyprus and the Northern Levant. Hence, the political importance of the empire is not reflected in the cultural impact on its neighbors and vassals. It was just after the collapse of the empire that Hittite culture with its iconography, hieroglyphic script and Luwian language could emerge in the northern Levant and partially replace the traditional elements. This short examination will question the reasons behind this situation.

Keywords: Hittite empire, iconography, architecture, Neo-Hittites, mountain god

Introduction

On the basis of archaeological sources, evidence for supra-regional contacts is easy to recognize, but difficult to interpret. Often, it is not possible to decide whether foreign goods discovered in certain regions attest a direct exchange of gifts, or commercial trade via one or several intermediating distributers, or tributes and booties obtained in military forays. Furthermore, in most cases it is difficult to distinguish original imports from well-made imitations without analyzing the material of which they are made. A lack of foreign goods does not necessarily reflect a lack of international contacts. It is likely that goods, especially precious ones, were removed from their original place in the course of the abandonment of a settlement. For instance, it is obvious that often metals were smelted and re-used. Nevertheless, the question, as to whether international contacts are represented in the archaeological records or not, needs to be asked. The main task is to analyze the archaeological context of such goods and scrutinize the indications provided in written sources, if available.

In the case of the Hittite empire (see color maps 1 and 2 p. 7–8), there is a surprising scarcity of well recognizable imports in the heartland, even though written sources provide evidence that the Hittite kings did receive tributes, booties and gifts from abroad. The situation is completely different in the Levantine vassal kingdoms and the southern provinces of the empire, where excavations have brought to light much greater numbers of Egyptian, Aegean and Mesopotamian imports and imitations.

But first, some general considerations should be addressed.

Archaeology of exchange: some considerations

Archaeology deals with the material remains of past cultures. It not only tries to figure out the social conditions, and the circumstances of life in past societies, but also the ideological, politi-

cal and religious concepts. All of these aspects can be studied by analyzing the material remains properly. Moreover, archaeology seeks to understand the development of architecture and visual arts as part of programmatic or individual expressions. Furthermore, infra- and interregional contacts and processes of exchange are of interest. In addition to that, written sources, which are sometimes available, can give conclusive or contradictive information. As for the topic of this paper, it is of primary interest, which indications for interregional contacts may be derived from the material remains.

Different kinds of objects or features offer hints of interregional contacts:

1. (real) imports,
2. imitations of foreign goods,
3. raw materials, which were not available inside the territory of a political entity,
4. administrative objects like seals, tablets etc., which can be traced back to another region or deal with intercultural contacts.
5. Furthermore, iconography, adapted from foreign cultures, indicates strong contacts.

Imports can be distinguished either as valuables in and of themselves, or simply as containers (e.g. ceramic vessels) for the transportation of other goods, including organic ones which have not been preserved.

There are several reasons for the distribution of "foreign" goods: They might have been trade-goods, tributes and/or booties, gifts or products of travelling artisans.

The reasons for the imitation of "foreign" goods were either the high value of foreign objects (as symbols of wealth and prestige) in times when authentic imported goods and objects were rare and difficult to obtain. Another explanation is the conscious incorporation of foreign ideas into the own repertoire due to an asymmetric [political or economic] relationship. In the latter case the imitations quickly became part of the local repertoire and were not considered as "foreign" any more.

Hittite foreign contacts – archaeological traces

Several attempts have been undertaken to trace foreign imports in Ḫattuša and other cities of the Hittite "inner land" on the one hand[1] and Hittite exports or any other sort of Hittite impact on the cultures of neighboring regions on the other. In both cases the results have been disappointing:

A relatively small number of imports has been retrieved from Hittite cities. This might be explained by the removal of precious goods, including imports, during the systematic abandonment of the palaces and temples in the "inner lands" at the end of the Imperial period. However, the question remains, why even ceramic sherds were removed, thereby leaving only small amounts of Aegean, Levantine, Mesopotamian or Egyptian pottery. There seem to have been other reasons for the lack of imported material: For example, the distribution of Mycenaean and Cypriot ceramic wares and the south Anatolian or Red Lustrous Wheel-Made Ware suggests reduced contacts and material exchange between the Hittite empire and the Mycenaean world, which probably resulted from political issues.[2] Moreover, a look at the Hittite imperial art and architecture indicates how little foreign influences there were. Nevertheless, there were some adaptations of foreign elements of iconography: The Egyptian sphinx and the Babylonian mountain god were copied, but the appearances of both were altered and they were set in a different context. Obviously, they were interpreted in a new way. This can be explained by taking a closer look at the mountain god for example:

The image of a god consisting of a human trunk and a conic shed-covered skirt, which represents a mountain, had already been developed during the Old Babylonian period: The so-

[1] Genz 2006a; Kozal and Novák 2007; Kozal forthcoming b.

[2] Kozal 2003, 2007, 2012.

Fig. 1: Façade of the Innin Temple of Kara-Indaš found at Uruk

called *Statue Cabane* from Mari[3] is a depiction of the rising sun-god Šamaš. Since the sun-god was seen as an anthropomorphic figure in Babylonia, this depiction has to be interpreted as a shortened illustration of Šamaš appearing between the peaks of the eastern mountains in the morning. Scenes found on cylinder seals show him climbing the mountains, and opening the "gates" between them with the help of a saw or a key.[4] Since it was not easily possible to depict this complete image as a statue, it can be argued that the iconography might have been abbreviated, leaving it to the visitor's knowledge of the whole scenery to understand and interpret it correctly. With the beginning of the Kassite rule over Babylonia, another type of mountain god appeared. His image appeared on the famous façade of the Innin Temple of Kara-Indaš[5] (fig. 1) and on many cylinder seals[6]. In these instances, he is depicted similarly to the *Statue Cabane*, but now he is holding beaker. This and his relationship to the female water serving goddess on the façade of the Innin Temple identify him as a minor deity. His name and particular function, besides being an apotropaic god, still have to be determined. However, he seems to have been regarded as being fairly important, as suggested by his frequent appearance in Kassite art. Since the Kassites originated from the mountainous regions of the Zagros, the mountain god

3 Orthmann 1975, fig. 161.
4 Orthmann 1975, figs. 135e and 136a.
5 Orthmann 1975, fig. 169.
6 Orthmann 1975, fig. 269e.

Fig. 2: Reliefs of subjugated mountain gods in Eflatun Pınar

presumably reflected beliefs of these immigrants. Nevertheless, it became common practice to depict him in Babylonia from the 15th century onwards. He is also attested in Assyria, as for example on the famous "Well Relief" from Assur, which probably bears an image of the god Ebiḫ or Assur.

In Anatolia the mountain god does not appear until the mature Imperial period, when he can be seen e.g. on the rock reliefs at Yazılıkaya or Eflatun Pınar (fig. 2), on seals and as small figurines. The mountain god might represent either divine mountains in the row of male gods in Yazılıkaya[7] or a subject of the main deity, namely the storm god, as it is the case on the main scenes in Yazılıkaya[8] and in Eflatun Pınar[9]. Even though the iconography looks very similar to its Babylonian forerunners and was most probably adopted from the Kassites, it was interpreted differently and in a genuinely Hittite way. Presumably, it was brought to Anatolia by Babylonian sculptors: In a letter to the Kassite king Kadašman-Enlil II (KBo 1 10+), Ḫattušili III expressed his request for Babylonian sculptors.[10] Although it is very likely that these specialists were responsible for the emergence of the (Babylonian) iconography and the style, they still had to follow the specifications of the Hittite orders, which gave the Hittite mountain god his characteristic appearance. Hence we can see how limited the influence of foreign elements on Hittite art was, even if single iconographies were adapted. In the end, the spiritual background remained a local one. Some exceptions like the "Smiting God", who was derived from northern Mesopotamia and the northern Levant and found his way into both the belief and iconographical system of the Hittites, do not necessarily contradict this general tendency.

For a more complete picture I want to mention the transfer of materials and goods in the opposite direction. The Hittite empire was one of the major powers of its time and controlled the entire northern Levant for almost two centuries. As a result, one should expect a strong impact of Hittite culture there and a high number of Anatolian imports. Still, the reality is surprising: The attestation of Hittite objects in Late Bronze Age Syria[11] or Cyprus[12] is elusive.

7 Seeher 2011, 37–40 (Relief Nos. 13–17) with figs. 28, 30 and 31.
8 Seeher 2011, 66, fig. 64 (Relief No. 42).
9 Emre 2002, 222, fig. 4; Seeher 2011, 41, fig. 34.
10 Bonatz 2002.
11 Genz 2006b.
12 Kozal forthcoming a.

Besides some recently discovered objects from Tell Afis[13], the famous ivory plaque from Megiddo[14] belongs to a very small group of examples. At sites like Emar and Ugarit, Hittite seals and seal impressions are the only indication for Hittite administration discovered in significant quantities.[15] Hittite iconography did not have an influence on the monumental art of the Levant or northern Mesopotamia; the only features of Hittite architecture that appear in the Levant are the Postern Gate in Ugarit[16] and a fortress in Alalaḫ[17].

Explanations impossible?

During the Imperial period, the Hittites did not only refuse to adapt foreign elements in their culture, but they were obviously not interested in their neighbors' and vassals' craft-products. The textual evidence reflects this situation: In the vassal contracts, the tribute, which had to be paid to the Hittites, was calculated exclusively by the value of the raw material, irrespective of the type of the objects (metal vessels etc.). In this regard, the Hittites did not differ from the Babylonians. As shown by a letter from Burna-Buriaš II to Pharaoh Akhenaten (EA 7, 70–72), the Kassite king smelted all the precious Egyptian gifts he had received. According to the text, he was disappointed by the low quantity of the gold.[18] Thus, it is not surprising that the Babylonian art of this period shows only few signs of foreign influences. Probably a kind of cultural self-consciousness, or even ignorance, was characteristic of Babylonian art and architecture, giving it a very specific appearance. Hence, the situation we face in Hittite Anatolia is not unique. But surprisingly, and contrary to Babylonia, the Hittite culture had no significant impact on the culture of the Levant. This contradicts the enormous political and military power of the empire.

During the Late Bronze Age, the art and architecture of the Levantine polities can be described as eclectic or hybrid, taking elements from Babylonia, Mittani, Egypt and the Aegean and creating a new style, which is often referred to as the "international style".[19] The background of the adaptation of foreign elements was the desire to represent and express the own mercantile power and international relationships. Since the Levant was the interface of international trade on the one hand, but was fragmented into small and competing polities without chance to keep up with the major powers in Mesopotamia, Egypt and Anatolia on the other, this modus operandi was a major tool of propaganda.[20] The number of gifts and trade goods, which were received from abroad, indicated the importance and status of each polity, especially if the objects came from one of the major empires. The same can be said for the matter of provenience: The own prestige was measured by the number of regions, to which mercantile contacts were established and maintained. However, this purpose was not only fulfilled by imports or imitations, but the incorporation of foreign elements in the local art production had a similar effect. Thus, it is not surprising to recognize elements of Minoan and Mycenaean as well as of Babylonian or Egyptian origin in the art of the Levant. Still, the absence of Hittite elements is astonishing.

What were the reasons? Did the Hittite empire appear too late in the concert of major powers, after the Levantine art had already been established, thus reflecting a state of development prior to the Hittite rise to power and importance? Was the commercial contact between the Levant and Anatolia too insignificant to have any influence on Levantine iconography? Were the Hittite products too unattractive, or did they lack symbolic or real value for consumption

13 Archi and Venturi 2012.
14 Orthmann 1975, fig. 372.
15 Beyer 2001; Jablonka 2006.
16 Naumann 1971, 302–4.
17 Yener forthcoming.
18 Kozal and Novák 2007, 337.
19 On the definition and the discussion of this terminology cf. Feldman 2002 and 2006.
20 For this see the comprehensive study by Ahrens forthcoming.

and imitation? Was the Hittite iconography too specific and not understandable for the peoples of the Levant? Or was Hittite culture generally considered as inferior to its Babylonian or Egyptian competitors, regardless of political or military power?

At present, these questions cannot be answered satisfactorily and the reason for the lack of recognizable contacts remains obscure. Nevertheless, it is even more surprising to see how the situation changed dramatically after the empire's collapse.

The emergence of Neo-Hittite culture

Already during the last decades of the Hittite Imperial period a process of cultural change can be observed in the northern Levant: Temples such as the ones in Aleppo[21] and Ain Dara[22], which had already existed for centuries before and followed a typical Syrian layout, were suddenly renewed and decorated with bas-reliefs carved in Hittite style and iconography.

Moreover, the Luwian hieroglyphic writing-system emerged, which was followed by the gradual abandonment of the cuneiform script. This situation was enhanced by the collapse of the Hittite empire around 1200 B.C.E., when, after 1100 years of use, cuneiform writing disappeared completely in the Levant. Only the Assyrian conquest of the Levant some centuries later brought a revival of cuneiform writing. In the iconography of stelae and bas-reliefs we find depictions of gods and kings which are very similar to the imperial Hittite patterns, as can be observed on the reliefs from Aleppo, for example. The storm-god was depicted twice here: First as a charioteer[23], wearing a short skirt, a pointed helmet and Krakow shoes, thus appearing very similar to the representations on the İmamkulu relief from the 13th century B.C.E. and on royal Hittite seals. In a second instance, he is shown dressed very similarly and standing in front of King Taitas.[24] Furthermore, images of the mountain god in Hittite style are attested in Ain Dara and in Aleppo (fig. 3).

The reasons for the emergence of Luwian script and Hittite iconography in the northern Levant cannot be explained without some doubts remaining. In the end, it seems most likely that it was caused by a movement of people, probably only the elites (ruling classes, scribes, and priests) from the abandoned cities in central Anatolia. The migration was probably caused by civil wars that broke out during the last two generations of Hittite kings, involving mainly the inner lands, but also affecting regions such as the Lukka countries or Tarḫuntašša. As a result, parts of the elites of the involved regions took refuge in the safer territories of the southern vassal states. They seem to have replaced the local elites of these urban societies, who as a consequence were forced to emigrate themselves. Probably they formed the core of what later became the new ethnicity of the "Aramaeans".

The Anatolian immigrants were familiar with the Luwian language and hieroglyphic writing and actually preferred them, whereas the use of the cuneiform script, affiliated with Akkadian, died out. It was no longer used for monumental royal inscriptions, economic documents or letters. Moreover, the new elites also promoted other aspects of Hittite culture, namely the iconography of deities or royalties. The result of all this was the creation of Neo-Hittite art, also known as "Syro-Hittite". In connection with some Syrian traditions (mainly architecture), it became an expression of a newly established cultural identity.

Conclusion

This short overview has shown that some formal exchange of particular elements and styles as well as objects can be traced during the Hittite Imperial period. But in general, the inner lands

[21] Kohlmeyer 2012.
[22] Novák 2012.
[23] Gonella et al. 2005, 99, fig. 138.
[24] Gonella et al. 2005, 92, fig. 124.

Fig. 3: Relief of a mountain god found at Ain Dara

of the Hittite empire remained relatively isolated, and large-scale exchange with other regions was restricted to raw materials. As a result, the Hittites refused to adopt iconographical concepts and elements from abroad to any greater extent. Probably a cultural self-consciousness was responsible for the limited interest in foreign goods and iconographical elements. Further, foreign iconography was not considered acceptable for the expression of Hittite religious or ideological concepts. Rarely was anything adapted, and if it happened, it was associated with a conceptual re-interpretation.

On the other side few Hittite products found their way abroad, even into the Levantine vassal states. The reason for this remains obscure. Possibly, in the Levant Babylonian, Egyptian and even Aegean products were associated with a higher level of prestige, with which the Hittites could not compete. Even Hittite iconography did not influence the culture of the Levant, northern Mesopotamia or Cyprus on a significant scale, not to mention the culture of the other major powers Babylonia, Assyria or Egypt.

In a way, it is ironic that the Hittite empire had to collapse so that its iconography, script, and religious concepts could emerge in the northern Levant.

Acknowledgements

I am indebted to Dr. Ekin Kozal for her remarks, and Alexander and Brand E. Sollee for improving the English manuscript.

Prof. Dr. Mirko Novák
Institute for Archaeological Sciences
Department of Near Eastern Archaeology
University of Bern
SWITZERLAND
novak@iaw.unibe.ch

Bibliography

Abu Assaf, A. 1990. *Der Tempel von Ain Dara.* Damaszener Forschungen 3. Mainz: Zabern

Ahrens, A. Forthcoming. *Aegyptiaca in der nördlichen Levante. Eine Studie zur Kontextualisierung und Rezeption ägyptischer und ägyptisierender Objekte in der Bronzezeit.* Orbis Biblicus et Orientalis SA 35. Fribourg: Academic Press.

Archi, A., and F. Venturi. 2012. "Hittites at Tell Afis (Syria)." *Orientalia* NS 81(1):1–55.

Beyer, D. 2001. *Emar IV. Les sceaux*. Orbis Biblicus et Orientalis SA 20. Fribourg: Academic Press.

Bonatz, D. 2002. "Fremde „Künstler" in Ḫattuša. Zur Rolle des Individuums beim Austausch materieller Kultur in der Späten Bronzezeit." In *Brückenland Anatolien? Ursachen, Extensität und Modi des Kulturaustausches zwischen Antolien und seinen Nachbarn*, edited by H. Blum, B. Faist, P. Pfälzner, and A.-M. Wittke, 69–83. Tübingen: Attempto.

Emre, K. 2002. "Felsreliefs, Stelen, Orthostaten." In *Die Hethiter und ihr Reich. Das Volk der 1000 Götter*, edited by Kunst- und Ausstellungshalle der Bundesrepublik Deutschland, 218–33. Stuttgart: Theiss.

Feldman, M.H. 2002. "Luxurious Forms. Redefining a Mediterranean 'International Style' 1400–1200 BCE". *ArtB* 84(1):6–29.

Feldman, M.H. 2006. *Diplomacy by Design: Luxury Arts and an "International Style" in the Ancient Near East 1400–1200 BCE.* Chicago: University of Chicago Press.

Genz, H. 2006a. "Imports and their Methodological Implications for Dating Hittite Material Culture." In *Structuring and Dating in Hittite Archaeology*, edited by D.P. Mielke, U.-D. Schoop, and J. Seeher, 185–96. Byzas 4. Istanbul: Ege Yanıları.

Genz, H. 2006b. "Hethitische Präsenz im spätbronzezeitlichen Syrien." *BaM* 37:499–509.

Gonella, J., W. Khayyata, and K. Kohlmeyer. 2005. *Die Zitadelle von Aleppo und der Tempel des Wettergottes.* Münster: Rhema.

Jablonka, P. 2006. "Emar und Troia: Zur Verbreitung hethitischer Hieroglyphensiegel." *BaM* 37:511–29.

Kohlmeyer, K. 2012. "Der Tempel des Wettergottes von Aleppo. Baugeschichte und Bautyp, räumliche Bezüge, Inventar und bildliche Ausstattung." In *Temple Building and Temple Cult. Architecture and Cultic Paraphernalia of Temples in the Levant (2.–1. Millennia BCE)*, edited by J. Kamlah and H. Michelau, 55–78. Wiesbaden: Harrassowitz.

Kozal, E. 2002. "Hethitische und hethitisch beeinflußte Objekte aus Zypern." In *Mauerschau, Festschrift für Manfred Korfmann.* Vol. 2, edited by R. Aslan, S. Blum, G. Kastl, F. Schweizer, and D. Thumm, 651–61. Remshalden-Grunbach: Greiner.

Kozal, E. 2003. "Analysis of the Distribution Patterns of Red Lustrous Wheel-made Ware, Mycenaean and Cypriot Pottery in Anatolia in the 15th–13th Centuries B.C." In *Identifying Changes from Bronze to Iron Ages in Anatolia and its Neighbouring Regions, Proceedings of the International Workshop Istanbul, November 8–9, 2002*, edited by B. Fischer, H. Genz, E. Jean, and K. Köroğlu, 65–77. Istanbul: Ege Yayınları.

Kozal, E. 2007. "Regionality in Anatolia between 15th and 13th Centuries BC: Red Lustrous Wheel-made Ware versus Mycenaean Pottery." In *The Lustrous Wares of Late Bronze Age Cyprus and the Eastern Mediterranean.*

Papers of a Conference, Vienna 5th–6th November 2004, edited by I. Hein, 141–48. Wien: Verlag der Österreichischen Akademie der Wissenschaften.

Kozal, E. 2012. "Son Tunç Çağı. Anadolu ve Komşuları." In *AreoAtlas* 2012(1), edited by N. Karul, 282–93.

Kozal, E. Forthcoming a. "An Outlook to Cypro-Anatolian Connections in the 2nd Millennium BC."

Kozal, E. Forthcoming b. *Fremdes in Anatolien. Importe aus dem Ostmittelmeerraum und Mesopotamien als Indikator für spätbronzezeitliche Handels- und Kulturkontakte*. Schriften zur Vorderasiatischen Archäologie 10. Wiesbaden: Harrassowitz.

Kozal, E., and M. Novák. 2007. "Geschenke, Tribute und Handelswaren im Hethiterreich." In *Geschenke und Steuern, Zölle und Tribute. Antike Abgabeformen in Anspruch und Wirklichkeit*, edited by H. Klinkott, S. Kubisch, and R. Müller-Wollermann, 323–46. Culture and History of the Ancient Near East 29. Leiden: Brill.

Naumann, R. 1971. *Die Architektur Kleinasiens. Von ihren Anfängen bis zum Ende der hethitischen Zeit*. Tübingen: Wasmuth.

Novák, M. 2012. "The Temple of Ain Dara in the Context of Imperial and Neo-Hittite Architecture and Art." In *Temple Building and Temple Cult. Architecture and Cultic Paraphernalia of Temples in the Levant (2.–1. Millennia BCE)*, edited by J. Kamlah and H. Michelau, 41–54. Wiesbaden: Harrassowitz.

Orthmann, W. 1975. *Der Alte Orient*. Propyläen Kunstgeschichte 14. Berlin: Ullstein.

Seeher, J. 2011. *Gods carved in Stone. The Hittite Rock Sanctuary of Yazılıkaya*. Istanbul: Ege Yayınları.

Yener, K.A. Forthcoming. "New Excavations at Alalakh: The 14th and 12th Centuries BC." In *Across the Border. Late Bronze–Iron Age Relations between Syria and Anatolia. Proceedings of a Symposium Held at the Research Center of Anatolian Studies, Koç University, Istanbul, May 31. June 1, 2010*, edited by K.A. Yener. Leuven: Peeters.

List of illustrations

Fig. 1: Façade of the Innin Temple of Kara-Indaš found at Uruk (after Orthmann 1975, fig. 169).

Fig. 2: Reliefs of subjugated mountain gods in Eflatun Pınar (after Emre 2002, 222, fig. 4).

Fig. 3: Relief of a mountain god found at Ain Dara (after Abu Assaf 1990, pl. 44).