**Hittites**

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(Redirected from [Hittite Empire](http://en.wikipedia.org/w/index.php?title=Hittite_Empire&redirect=no))

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| --- | --- | --- |
| **Hittite Empire** | | |
| |  |  |  | | --- | --- | --- | |  | **c. 18th century BC–c. 1178 BC** |  | | | |
| The Hittite Empire is shown in Blue. | | |
| **Capital** | | [Hattusa](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Hattusa) |
| **Languages** | | [Nesite](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Nesite) |
| **Government** | | [Absolute monarchy](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Absolute_monarchy) |
| [**List of Hittite kings**](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/List_of_Hittite_kings) | | [Pamba](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Pamba_(king)) (first) |
|  |  | [Suppiluliuma II](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Suppiluliuma_II) (last) |
| **Historical era** | | [Bronze Age](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Bronze_Age) |
| - | Established | c. 18th century BC |
| - | Disestablished | c. 1178 BC |
| **Today part of** | | [Turkey](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Turkey) [Syria](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Syria) [Lebanon](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Lebanon) |

The **Hittites** were an [Ancient Anatolian](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Ancient_Anatolian) people who established an empire at [Hattusa](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Hattusa) in north-central Anatolia around the 18th century BC. This empire reached its height during the mid-14th century BC under [Suppiluliuma I](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Suppiluliuma_I), when it encompassed an area that included most of [Asia Minor](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Asia_Minor) as well as parts of the northern [Levant](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Levant) and [Upper Mesopotamia](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Upper_Mesopotamia). After c. 1180 BC, the empire came to an end during the [Bronze Age collapse](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Bronze_Age_collapse), splintering into several independent "[Neo-Hittite](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Neo-Hittite)" city-states, some of which survived until the 8th century BC.

The [Hittite language](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Hittite_language) was a member of the [Anatolian branch](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Anatolian_languages) of the [Indo-European language](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Indo-European_languages) family. They referred to their native land as [*Hatti*](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Hatti), and to their language as *Nesili* (the language of [Nesa](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Kanesh)). The conventional name "Hittites" is due to their initial identification with the [Biblical Hittites](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Biblical_Hittites) in 19th century archaeology.

Despite the use of *Hatti* for their core territory, the Hittites should be distinguished from the [Hattians](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Hattians), an earlier people who inhabited the same region (until the beginning of the 2nd millennium BC) and spoke a language possibly in the [Northwest Caucasian languages](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Northwest_Caucasian_languages) group known as [Hattic](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Hattic_language).

The Hittite military made successful use of [chariots](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Chariot#Hittites). Although belonging to the [Bronze Age](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Bronze_Age), they were the forerunners of the [Iron Age](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Iron_Age), developing the manufacture of [iron](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Iron_(material)) artifacts from as early as the 14th century BC, when letters to foreign rulers reveal the latter's demand for iron goods.

After 1180 BC, amid general turmoil in the [Levant](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Levant) associated with the sudden arrival of the [Sea Peoples](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Sea_Peoples), the kingdom disintegrated into several independent "[Neo-Hittite](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Neo-Hittite)" city-states, some of which survived until as late as the 8th century BC. The history of the Hittite civilization is known mostly from [cuneiform](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Cuneiform_(script)) texts found in the area of their kingdom, and from diplomatic and commercial correspondence found in various archives in [Egypt](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Egypt) and the [Middle East](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Middle_East).

**Archaeological discovery**



Bronze religious standard symbolizing the universe, used by Hittite priests, from the [Museum of Anatolian Civilizations](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Museum_of_Anatolian_Civilizations)

The Hittites used [Mesopotamian](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Mesopotamian) [cuneiform letters](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Cuneiform_script). Archaeological expeditions to [Hattusa](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Hattusa) have discovered entire sets of royal archives in cuneiform tablets, written either in the [Semitic](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Semitic) [Mesopotamian](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Mesopotamian) [Akkadian](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Akkadian_language) language of [Assyria](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Assyria) and [Babylonia](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Babylonia), the diplomatic language of the time, or in the various dialects of the Hittite confederation.

Before the discoveries, the only source of information about Hittites had been the Old Testament (see [Biblical Hittites](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Biblical_Hittites)). Francis William Newman expressed the critical view, common in the early 19th Century, that, if the Hittites existed at all, "no Hittite king could have compared in power to the King of Judah...". As archaeological discoveries revealed the scale of the Hittite kingdom in the second half of the 19th Century, Archibald Henry Sayce postulated, rather than to be compared to Judah, the Anatolian civilization "[was] worthy of comparison to the divided Kingdom of Egypt", and was "infinitely more powerful than that of Judah". Sayce and other scholars also mention that Judah and the Hittites were never enemies in the Hebrew texts; in the Book of Kings, they supplied the Israelites with cedar, chariots, and horses, as well as being a friend and allied to Abraham in the Book of Genesis.

The first archaeological evidence for the Hittites appeared in tablets found at the [Assyrian](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Assyria) colony of [Kültepe](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/K%C3%BCltepe) (ancient [Karum Kanesh](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Karum_Kanesh)), containing records of trade between Assyrian merchants and a certain "land of [*Hatti*](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Hittite_empire)". Some names in the tablets were neither Hattic nor Assyrian, but clearly [Indo-European](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Indo-European_languages).

The script on a monument at [Boğazköy](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Bo%C4%9Fazk%C3%B6y) by a "People of Hattusas" discovered by [William Wright](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/William_Wright_(missionary)) in 1884 was found to match peculiar [hieroglyphic](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Logogram) scripts from [Aleppo](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Aleppo) and [Hamath](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Hamath) in Northern [Syria](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Syria). In 1887, excavations at Tell El-[Amarna](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Amarna) in [Egypt](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Egypt) uncovered the diplomatic correspondence of Pharaoh [Amenhotep III](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Amenhotep_III) and his son [Akhenaton](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Akhenaton). Two of the letters from a "kingdom of *Kheta*"—apparently located in the same general region as the Mesopotamian references to "land of *Hatti*"—were written in standard Akkadian cuneiform script, but in an unknown language; although scholars could read it, no one could understand it. Shortly after this, [Archibald Sayce](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Archibald_Sayce) proposed that *Hatti* or *Khatti* in Anatolia was identical with the "kingdom of *Kheta*" mentioned in these [Egyptian](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Egypt) texts, as well as with the biblical Hittites. Others, such as [Max Müller](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Max_M%C3%BCller), agreed that *Khatti* was probably *Kheta*, but proposed connecting it with Biblical [Kittim](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Kittim), rather than with the "[Children of Heth](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Children_of_Heth)". Sayce's identification came to be widely accepted over the course of the early 20th century; and the name "Hittite" has become attached to the civilization uncovered at Boğazköy.

During sporadic excavations at Boğazköy ([Hattusa](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Hattusa)) that began in 1906, the archaeologist [Hugo Winckler](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Hugo_Winckler) found a royal archive with 10,000 tablets, inscribed in cuneiform Akkadian and the same unknown language as the Egyptian letters from *Kheta*—thus confirming the identity of the two names. He also proved that the ruins at Boğazköy were the remains of the capital of an empire that, at one point, controlled northern Syria.

Under the direction of the [German Archaeological Institute](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/German_Archaeological_Institute), excavations at Hattusa have been underway since 1907, with interruptions during both wars. Kültepe was successfully excavated by Professor [Tahsin Özgüç](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Tahsin_%C3%96zg%C3%BC%C3%A7) from 1948 until his death in 2005. Smaller scale excavations have also been carried out in the immediate surroundings of Hattusa, including the rock sanctuary of [Yazılıkaya](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Yaz%C4%B1l%C4%B1kaya), which contains numerous rock-cut relief's portraying the Hittite rulers and the gods of the Hittite pantheon.

**Museums**

The [Museum of Anatolian Civilizations](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Museum_of_Anatolian_Civilizations) in [Ankara](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Ankara), [Turkey](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Turkey) houses the richest collection of Hittite and Anatolian artifacts.

**Geography**



The maximal extent of the Hittite Empire ca. 1300 BC (red), bordering on the Egyptian Empire (green). The Hittite Old Kingdom is shown in darker red

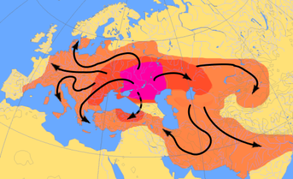
Main article: [Geography of the Hittite Empire](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Geography_of_the_Hittite_Empire)

The Hittite kingdom was centered on the lands surrounding [Hattusa](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Hattusa) and [Neša](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Ne%C5%A1a), known as "the land [Hatti](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Hittite_empire)" (URU*Ha-at-ti*). After Hattusa was made capital, the area encompassed by the bend of the [Halys River](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Halys_River) (Hittite *Marassantiya*, [Turkish](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Turkish_language): *Kızılırmak*) was considered the core of the Empire, and some Hittite laws make a distinction between "this side of the river" and "that side of the river", for example, the reward for the capture of an eloped slave after he managed to flee beyond the Halys is higher than that for a slave caught before he could reach the river.

To the west and south of the core territory lay the region known as *Luwiya* in the earliest Hittite texts. This terminology was replaced by the names [Arzawa](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Arzawa) and [Kizzuwatna](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Kizzuwatna) with the rise of those kingdoms. Nevertheless, the Hittites continued to refer to the language that originated in these areas as [Luwian](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Luwian). Prior to the rise of [Kizzuwatna](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Kizzuwatna), the heart of that territory in [Cilicia](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Cilicia) was first referred to by the Hittites as [Adaniya](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Adana). Upon its revolt from the Hittites during the reign of [Ammuna](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Ammuna), it assumed the name of [Kizzuwatna](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Kizzuwatna) and successfully expanded northward to encompass the lower [Anti-Taurus](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Anti-Taurus) mountains as well. To the north, lived the mountainous people called the [Kaskians](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Kaskians). To the southeast of the Hittites lay the Hurrian empire of [Mitanni](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Mitanni). At its peak, during the reign of [Mursili II](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Mursili_II), the Hittite empire stretched from [Arzawa](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Arzawa) in the west to [Mitanni](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Mitanni) in the east, many of the [Kaskian](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Kaska) territories to the north including [Hayasa-Azzi](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Hayasa-Azzi) in the far north-east, and on south into [Canaan](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Canaan) approximately as far as the southern border of [Lebanon](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Lebanon), incorporating all of these territories within its domain.

**History**

**Background**



Map of Indo European migrations from ca. 4000 to 1000 BC according to the Kurgan model. The Anatolian migration (indicated with a dotted arrow) could have taken place either across the Caucasus or across the Balkans. The magenta area corresponds to the assumed [*Urheimat*](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Urheimat) ([Samara culture](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Samara_culture), [Sredny Stog culture](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Sredny_Stog_culture)). The red area corresponds to the area that may have been settled by Indo-European-speaking peoples up to ca. 2500 BC, and the orange area by 1000 BC.

Around 5000 BC, the region centered in [Hattusa](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Hattusa), that would later become the core of the Hittite kingdom, was inhabited by people with a distinct culture who spoke a non-Indo-European language. The name "[Hattic](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Hattic_language)" is used by Anatolianists to distinguish this language from the [Indo-European](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Indo-European) [Hittite language](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Hittite_language) that appeared on the scene at the beginning of the [2nd millennium BC](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/2nd_millennium_BC) and became the administrative language of the Hittite kingdom over the next six or seven centuries. As noted above, "Hittite" is a modern convention for referring to this language. The native term was *Nesili*, i.e. "In the language of [Neša](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Ne%C5%A1a)".

The early Hittites, whose prior whereabouts are unknown, borrowed heavily from the pre-existing Hattian and Hurrian cultures, and also from that of the [Assyrian](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Assyria) colonisers — in particular, the cuneiform writing and the use of cylindrical [seals](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Seal_(device)).

Since Hattic continued to be used in the Hittite kingdom for religious purposes, and there is substantial continuity between the two cultures, it is not known whether the Hattic speakers — the [Hattians](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Hattians)— were displaced by the speakers of [Hittite](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Hittite_language), were absorbed by them, or just adopted their language.

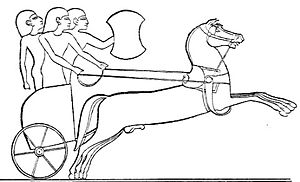
**Origins**

It is generally assumed that the Hittites came into [Anatolia](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Anatolia) some time before 2000 BC. While their earlier location is disputed, there has been strong evidence for more than a century that the home of the Indo-Europeans in the fourth and third millennia was in the [Pontic Steppe](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Pontic_Steppe), present day [Ukraine](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Ukraine) around the [Sea of Azov](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Sea_of_Azov).

The arrival of the Hittites in Anatolia in prehistoric times was one of a [superstrate](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Superstrate) imposing itself on a native culture, either by means of conquest or by gradual assimilation. In archaeological terms, relationships of the Hittites to the [Ezero culture](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Ezero_culture) of the Balkans and [Maikop culture](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Maikop_culture) of the Caucasus have been considered within the migration framework. The [Indo-European](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Indo-European_languages) element at least establishes Hittite culture as intrusive to Anatolia in scholarly mainstream (excepting the opinion of [Colin Renfrew](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Colin_Renfrew), whose [Anatolian hypothesis](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Anatolian_hypothesis) assumes that Indo-European is indigenous to Anatolia).

The Hittites and other members of the Anatolian family then came from the north, possibly along the [Caspian Sea](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Caspian_Sea). Their movement into the region set off a [Near East mass migration sometime around 1900 BC](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Middle_Bronze_Age_migrations_(Ancient_Near_East)). The dominant inhabitants in central Anatolia at the time were [Hurrians](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Hurrians) and [Hattians](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Hattians) who spoke non-[Indo-European languages](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Indo-European_languages) (some have argued that Hattic was a [Northwest Caucasian language](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Northwest_Caucasian_languages), but its affiliation remains uncertain). There were also [Assyrian](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Assyria) colonies in the country; it was from the Assyrians that the Hittites adopted the [cuneiform](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Cuneiform) script. It took some time before the Hittites established themselves, as is clear from some of the texts included here. For several centuries there were separate Hittite groups, usually centered around various cities. But then strong rulers with their center in [Boğazköy](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Bo%C4%9Fazk%C3%B6y) succeeded in bringing these together and conquering large parts of central Anatolia to establish the Hittite kingdom.

**Early period**



Hittite chariot, from an Egyptian relief

The early history of the Hittite kingdom is known through tablets that may first have been written in the [17th century BC](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/17th_century_BC), possibly in Nesian; but survived only as Akkadian copies made in the 14th and 13th centuries BC. These reveal a rivalry within two branches of the royal family up to the Middle Kingdom; a northern branch first based in Zalpa and secondarily Hattusa, and a southern branch based in [Kussara](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Kussara) (still not found) and [Kanesh](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Kanesh). These are distinguishable by their names; the northerners retained Hattian names, and the southerners adopted Nesian and Luwiyan names.

Zalpa first attacked Kanesh under Uhna in 1833 BC.

One set of tablets, known collectively as the [Anitta](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Anitta) text, begin by telling how [Pithana](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Pithana) the king of Kussara conquered neighboring Neša (Kanesh). However, the real subject of these tablets is [Pithana](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Pithana)'s son [Anitta](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Anitta) (r. 1745-20), who continued where his father left off and conquered several northern cities: including [Hattusa](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Hattusa), which he cursed, and also [Zalpuwa](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Zalpuwa) ([Zalpa](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Zalpa)). This was likely propaganda for the southern branch of the royal family, against the northern branch who had fixed on Hattusa as capital. Another set, the Tale of Zalpa, supports Zalpa and exonerates the later Hattusili I from the charge of sacking Kanesh.

Anitta was succeeded by Zuzzu (r. 1720-10); but sometime in 1710-05, Kanesh was destroyed taking the long-established Assyrian merchant trading system with it. A Kussaran noble family survived to contest the Zalpuwan / Hattusan family, though whether these were of the direct line of Anitta is uncertain.

Meanwhile, the lords of Zalpa lived on. Huzziya I, descendent of a Huzziya of Zalpa, took over Hatti. His son-in-law Labarna I, a southerner (of Hurma) usurped the throne but made sure to adopt Huzziya's grandson Hattusili as his own son and heir.

**The Old Kingdom**

The founding of the Hittite Kingdom is attributed to either [Labarna I](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Labarna_I) or [Hattusili I](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Hattusili_I) (the latter might also have had Labarna as a personal name), who conquered the area south and north of Hattusa. Hattusili I campaigned as far as the [Amorite](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Amorite) kingdom of [Yamkhad](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Yamkhad) in [Syria](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Syria), where he attacked, but did not capture, its capital of [Aleppo](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Aleppo). His heir, [Mursili I](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Mursili_I), conquered that city in a campaign conducted in 1595 BC. Also in 1595 BC, Mursili I (or Murshilish I) conducted a great raid down the Euphrates River and captured [Mari](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Mari,_Syria) and [Babylon](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Babylon), ejecting the [Amorite](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Amorite) founders of the Babylonian state in the process. However, the Hittite campaigns caused internal dissension which forced a withdrawal of troops to the Hittite homelands. Throughout the remainder of the sixteenth century BCE, the Hittite kings were held to their homelands by dynastic quarrels and warfare with the [Hurrians](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Hurrians)—their neighbors to the east. Also the campaigns into Syria and Mesopotamia may be responsible for the reintroduction of [cuneiform](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Cuneiform) writing into Anatolia, since the Hittite script is quite different from the script of the preceding Assyrian Colony period.

Mursili continued the conquests of Hattusili I. Mursili's conquests reached southern [Mesopotamia](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Mesopotamia) and even ransacked [Babylon](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Babylon) itself in 1531 BC. Rather than incorporate Babylonia into Hittite domains, Mursili seems to have instead turned control Babylonia over to his [Kassite](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Kassites) allies, who were to rule it for the next four centuries. This lengthy campaign, however, strained the resources of Hatti, and left the capital in a state of near-anarchy. Mursili was assassinated shortly after his return home, and the Hittite Kingdom was plunged into chaos. The [Hurrians](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Hurrians) (under the control of an [Indo-European](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Indo-European) [Mitanni](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Mitanni) ruling class), a people living in the mountainous region along the upper [Tigris](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Tigris_River) and [Euphrates](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Euphrates_River) rivers took advantage of the situation to seize Aleppo and the surrounding areas for themselves, as well as the coastal region of Adaniya, renaming it [Kizzuwatna](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Kizzuwatna) (later [Cilicia](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Cilicia)).

Following this, the Hittites entered a weak phase of obscure records, insignificant rulers, and reduced area of control. This pattern of expansion under strong kings followed by contraction under weaker ones, was to be repeated over and over again throughout the Hittite Kingdom's 500-year history, making events during the waning periods difficult to reconstruct with much precision. The political instability of these years of the Old Hittite Kingdom, can be explained in part by the nature of the Hittite kingship at that time. During the Old Hittite Kingdom period prior to 1400 BC, the king of the Hittites was not viewed by the Hittite citizenry as a "living god," like the [Pharaohs](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Pharaoh) of Egypt, but rather as a first among equals. Only in the later period of the Hittite Empire, from 1400 BC until 1200 BC, did the kingship of the Hittites become more centralized and powerful. Also in earlier years the succession was not legally fixed, enabling the "war of the Roses" rivalries between northern and southern branches.

The next monarch of any note following Mursili I was [Telepinu](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Telepinu) (ca. 1500 BC), who won a few victories to the southwest, apparently by allying himself with one Hurrian state ([Kizzuwatna](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Kizzuwatna)) against another ([Mitanni](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Mitanni)). Telepinu also attempted to secure the lines of succession.

**The Middle Kingdom**

The last monarch of the Old kingdom, Telepinu, reigned until about 1500 BC. Telepinu's reign marked the end of the "Old Kingdom" and the beginning of the lengthy weak phase known as the "Middle Kingdom." The period of the 15th century BCE is largely unknown with very sparse surviving records. Part of the reason for both the weakness and the obscurity is that the Hittites were under constant attack, mainly from the [Kaska](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Kaskians), a fellow [Indo-European](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Indo-European) people settled along the shores of the [Black Sea](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Black_Sea). The capital once again went on the move, first to [Sapinuwa](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Sapinuwa) and then to [Samuha](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Samuha). There is an archive in Sapinuwa but it has not been adequately translated to date.

It segues into the "Hittite Empire period" proper, which dates from the reign of [Tudhaliya I](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Tudhaliya_I) from ca. 1430 BC.

One innovation that can be credited to these early Hittite rulers is the practice of conducting treaties and alliances with neighboring states; the Hittites were thus among the earliest known pioneers in the art of international politics and diplomacy. This is also when the Hittite religion adopted several gods and rituals from the Hurrians.

**The New Kingdom**



Tudhaliya IV (relief in [Hattusa](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Hattusa))

With the reign of [Tudhaliya I](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Tudhaliya_I) (who may actually not have been the first of that name; see also [Tudhaliya](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Tudhaliya)), the Hittite Kingdom re-emerges from the fog of obscurity. Hittite civilization entered the period of time called the "Hittite Empire period." Many changes were afoot during this time, not the least of which was a strengthening of the kingship. Settlement of the Hittites progressed in the Empire period. However, the Hittite people tended to settle in the older lands of south Anatolia rather than the lands of the Aegean. As this settlement progressed, treaties were signed with neighboring peoples. During the Hittite Empire period the kingship became hereditary and the king took on a "superhuman aura" and began to be referred to by the Hittite citizens as "My Sun." The kings of the Empire period began acting as a high priest for the whole kingdom—making an annual tour of the Hittite holy cities, conducting festivals and supervising the upkeep of the sanctuaries.

During his reign (c. 1400 BC), King Tudhaliya I, again allied with [Kizzuwatna](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Kizzuwatna), then vanquished the Hurrian states of [Aleppo](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Aleppo) and Mitanni, and expanded to the west at the expense of [Arzawa](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Arzawa) (a [Luwian](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Luwian) state).

Another weak phase followed Tudhaliya I, and the Hittites' enemies from all directions were able to advance even to Hattusa and raze it. However, the Kingdom recovered its former glory under [Suppiluliuma I](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Suppiluliuma_I) (c. 1350 BC), who again conquered [Aleppo](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Aleppo), reduced Mitanni to tribute under his son-in-law, and defeated [Carchemish](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Carchemish), another Syrian city-state. With his own sons placed over all of these new conquests, [Babylonia](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Babylonia) still in the hands of the [Kassites](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Kassites), this left Suppiluliuma the supreme power broker in the known world, alongside [Assyria](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Assyria) and [Egypt](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Egypt), and it was not long before Egypt was seeking an alliance by marriage of another of his sons with the widow of [Tutankhamen](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Tutankhamen). Unfortunately, that son was evidently murdered before reaching his destination, and this alliance was never consummated. However, [Assyria](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Assyria) began to grow in power also, with the ascension of [Ashur-uballit I](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Ashur-uballit_I) in 1365 BC. Ashur-uballit I attacked and defeated [Mattiwaza](http://en.wikipedia.org/w/index.php?title=Mattiwaza&action=edit&redlink=1) the [Mitanni](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Mitanni) king despite attempts by the Hittite king [Suppiluliumas I](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Suppiluliumas_I), now fearful of growing Assyrian power, attempting to preserve his throne with military support. The lands of the [Mitanni](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Mitanni) and [Hurrians](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Hurrians) were duly appropriated by Assyria, enabling it to encroach on Hittite territory in [Asia Minor](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Asia_Minor), and [Adad-nirari I](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Adad-nirari_I) annexed [Carchemish](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Carchemish) from the control of the Hittites.

After [Suppiluliumas I](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Suppiluliumas_I), and a very brief reign by his eldest son, another son, [Mursili II](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Mursili_II) became king (c. 1330). Having inherited a position of strength in the east, Mursili was able to turn his attention to the west, where he attacked Arzawa and a city known as Millawanda in the coastal land of [Ahhiyawa](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Ahhiyawa). Many recent scholars have surmised that Millawanda in Ahhiyawa is likely a reference to [Miletus](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Miletus) and [Achaea](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Achaea) known to [Greek](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Greece) history, though there is a small number who has disputed this connection.

**Battle of Kadesh**



Egyptian pharaoh [Ramesses II](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Ramesses_II) storming the Hittite fortress of [Dapur](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Siege_of_Dapur).

Main article: [Battle of Kadesh](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Battle_of_Kadesh)

Hittite prosperity was mostly dependent on control of the trade routes and metal sources. Because of the importance of Northern Syria to the vital routes linking the Cilician gates with Mesopotamia, defense of this area was crucial, and was soon put to the test by Egyptian expansion under Pharaoh [Rameses II](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Rameses_II). The outcome of the battle is uncertain, though it seems that the timely arrival of Egyptian reinforcements prevented total Hittite victory. The [Egyptians](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Egyptians) forced the Hittites to take refuge in the fortress of Kadesh, but their own losses prevented them from sustaining a siege. This battle took place in the 5th year of Rameses (c.[1274 BC](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/1274_BC) by the most commonly used chronology).

**Downfall and Demise of the Kingdom**



[Egypto-Hittite Peace Treaty](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Egyptian-Hittite_peace_treaty) (c. 1258 BC) between [Hattusili III](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Hattusili_III) and [Ramesses II](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Ramesses_II) is the best known early written peace treaty. [Istanbul Archaeology Museum](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Istanbul_Archaeology_Museum)

After this date, the power of both the Hittites and Egyptians began to decline yet again because of the rising power of the [Assyrians](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Assyria). The Assyrian king [Shalmaneser I](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Shalmaneser_I), had seized the opportunity to vanquish [Hurria](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Hurrians) and [Mitanni](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Mitanni), occupy their lands, and expand to the head of [Euphrates](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Euphrates) in [Anatolia](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Anatolia) and into [Babylonia](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Babylonia), [Iran](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Iran), [Aram](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Aram_Damascus) ([Syria](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Syria)), while [Muwatalli](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Muwatalli) was preoccupied with the Egyptians. The Hittites had vainly tried to preserve the [Mitanni](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Mitanni) kingdom with military support. Assyria now posed just as great a threat to Hittite trade routes as Egypt ever had. Muwatalli's son, [Urhi-Teshub](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Urhi-Teshub), took the throne and ruled asking for 7 years as [Mursili III](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Mursili_III) before being ousted by his uncle, [Hattusili III](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Hattusili_III) after a brief civil war. In response to increasing Assyrian encroachments into Hittite territory, he concluded a peace and alliance with [Rameses II](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Rameses_II), presenting his daughter's hand in marriage to the Pharaoh. The "Treaty of [Kadesh](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Kadesh)", one of the oldest completely surviving treaties in history, fixed their mutual boundaries in Canaan, and was signed in the 21st year of Rameses (c. [1258 BC](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/1258_BC)). Terms of this treaty included the marriage of one of the Hittite princesses to the Pharaoh Rameses.

Hattusili's son, [Tudhaliya IV](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Tudhaliya_IV), was the last strong Hittite king able to keep the Assyrians out of the Hittite heartland to some degree, though he lost territory to them, and was heavily defeated by [Tukulti-Ninurta I](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Tukulti-Ninurta_I) of Assyria in the [Battle of Nihiriya](http://en.wikipedia.org/w/index.php?title=Battle_of_Nihiriya&action=edit&redlink=1). He even temporarily annexed the island of [Cyprus](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Cyprus), before that too fell to Assyria. The very last king, [Suppiluliuma II](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Suppiluliuma_II) also managed to win some victories, including a naval battle against [Alashiya](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Alashiya) off the coast of Cyprus. But it was too little and too late. The Assyrians, under [Ashur-resh-ishi I](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Ashur-resh-ishi_I) had by this time annexed much Hittite territory in Asia Minor and Syria, driving out the [Babylonian](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Babylonian) king [Nebuchadnezzar I](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Nebuchadnezzar_I) in the process, who also had eyes on Hittite lands. The Sea Peoples had already begun their push down the [Mediterranean](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Mediterranean) coastline, starting from the [Aegean](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Aegean_Sea), and continuing all the way to [Philistia](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Philistia)—taking [Cilicia](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Cilicia) and [Cyprus](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Cyprus) away from the Hittites en route and cutting off their coveted trade routes. This left the Hittite homelands vulnerable to attack from all directions, and [Hattusa](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Hattusa) was burnt to the ground sometime around 1180 BC following a combined onslaught from new waves of [Indo-Europeans](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Indo-Europeans), the [Kaskas](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Kaskas), [Phrygians](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Phrygians) and [Bryges](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Bryges). The Hittite Kingdom thus vanished from historical records. The end of the kingdom was part of the larger [Bronze Age Collapse](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Bronze_Age_Collapse).

**The Syro-Hittite Kingdoms**

Main article: [Syro-Hittite](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Syro-Hittite)

By 1160 BC, the political situation in Asia Minor looked vastly different from that of only 25 years earlier. In that year, the Assyrian king [Tiglath-Pileser I](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Tiglath-Pileser_I) was defeating the [*Mushku*](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Mushku) ([Phrygians](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Phrygians)) who had been attempting to press into Assyrian colonies in southern Anatolia from the Anatolian highlands, and the [Gasga](http://en.wikipedia.org/w/index.php?title=Gasga&action=edit&redlink=1) people, the Hittites' old enemies from the northern hill-country between Hatti and the Black Sea, seem to have joined them soon after. The Phrygians had apparently overrun [Cappadocia](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Cappadocia) from the West, with recently discovered epigraphic evidence confirming their origins as the Balkan "Bryges" tribe, forced out by the Macedonians.

Although the Hittite kingdom disappeared from Anatolia at this point, there emerged a number of so-called [Neo-Hittite](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Neo-Hittite) kingdoms in Anatolia and northern Syria. They were the successors of the Hittite Kingdom. The most notable Syrian Neo-Hittite kingdoms were those at [Carchemish](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Carchemish) and [Milid](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Milid) (near the later [Melitene](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Melitene)). These Neo-Hittite Kingdoms gradually fell under the control of the [Neo Assyrian Empire](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Neo_Assyrian_Empire) (911- 608 BC). Carchemish and Milid were made vassals of Assyria under [Shalmaneser III](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Shalmaneser_III) (858–823 BC), and fully incorporated into Assyria during the reign of [Sargon II](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Sargon_II) (722-705 BC).

A large and powerful state known as [Tabal](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Tabal) occupied much of southern Anatolia. Known as Gk. Τιβαρηνοί Tibarenoi, Lat. Tibareni, Thobeles in Josephus, their language may have been [Luwian](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Luwian), testified to by monuments written using Luwian hieroglyphics. This state too was conquered and incorporated into the vast [Assyrian Empire](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Assyrian_Empire).

Ultimately, both Luwian hieroglyphs and cuneiform were rendered obsolete by an innovation, the [alphabet](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Alphabet), which seems to have entered Anatolia simultaneously from the [Aegean](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Aegean_civilization) (with the Bryges, who changed their name to [Phrygians](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Phrygia)), and from the [Phoenicians](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Phoenicians) and neighboring peoples in Syria.

**Biblical narrative**

Hittites are mentioned throughout the book of Genesis; in Ch. 23, there is a mention of two named Hittites; Ephron and his father, Zohar. [Abraham](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Abraham) buys a "cave in the field of Machpelah near Mamre (which is at Hebron) in the land of Canaan" from a Hittite for a burial site.

**Government**

The head of the Hittite state was the king, followed by the heir-apparent. However, some officials exercised independent authority over various branches of the government. One of the most important of these posts in the Hittite society was that of the [Gal Mesedi](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Gal_Mesedi) (Chief of the Royal Bodyguards). It was superseded by the rank of the [Gal Gestin](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Gal_Gestin) (Chief of the Wine Stewards), who, like the *Gal Mesedi*, was generally a member of the royal family. The kingdom's bureaucracy was headed by the [Gal Dubsar](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Gal_Dubsar) (Chief of the Scribes), whose authority didn't extend over the *Lugal Dubsar*, the king's personal scribe.

**Language**

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| Part of [a series](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Category:Indo-European) on |
| [**Indo-European**](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Indo-European) **topics** |
|  |
| [Indo-European languages](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Indo-European_languages)   * [List of Indo-European languages](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/List_of_Indo-European_languages)   + [Albanian](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Albanian_language)   + [Armenian](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Armenian_language)   + [Balto-Slavic](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Balto-Slavic_languages)   + [Celtic](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Celtic_languages)   + [Germanic](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Germanic_languages)   + [Hellenic](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Hellenic_languages)   + [Indo-Iranian](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Indo-Iranian_languages)   + [Italic](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Italic_languages) * **Extinct**   + [Anatolian](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Anatolian_languages)   + [Tocharian](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Tocharian_languages) * [Paleo-Balkan languages](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Paleo-Balkan_languages) |
| [Proto-Indo-European language](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Proto-Indo-European_language)   * + [Accent](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Proto-Indo-European_accent)   + [Vocabulary](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Indo-European_vocabulary)   + [Particles](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Proto-Indo-European_particles)   + [Phonology](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Proto-Indo-European_phonology)   + [Pronouns](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Proto-Indo-European_pronouns)   + [Sound laws](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Indo-European_sound_laws)   + [Ablaut](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Indo-European_ablaut)   + [Root](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Proto-Indo-European_root)   + [Nominals](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Proto-Indo-European_nominals)   + [Numerals](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Proto-Indo-European_numerals)   + [S-mobile](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Indo-European_s-mobile)   + [Verbs](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Proto-Indo-European_verb) |
| Indo-European peoples   * **Europe**   + [Albanians](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Albanians)   + [Balts](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Balts)   + [Celts](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Celts)   + [Dacians](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Dacians)   + [Greeks](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Greeks)   + [Illyrians](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Illyrians)   + [Italic peoples](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Italic_peoples)   + [Germanic peoples](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Germanic_peoples)   + [Phrygians](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Phrygians)   + [Slavs](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Slavic_peoples) * [Thracians](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Thracians) * **Asia**   + [Anatolians](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Ancient_Anatolians)   + [Armenians](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Armenians) * [Indo-Iranians](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Indo-Iranians) ([Indo-Aryans](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Indo-Aryan_peoples) • [Iranians](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Iranian_peoples)) * [Tocharians](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Tocharians) |
| [Proto-Indo-Europeans](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Proto-Indo-Europeans)   * + [Homeland](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Proto-Indo-European_Urheimat_hypotheses)   + [Society](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Proto-Indo-European_society)   + [Religion](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Proto-Indo-European_religion) |
| Indo-European archeology   * + [Abashevo](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Abashevo_culture)   + [Afanasevo](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Afanasevo_culture)   + [Andronovo](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Andronovo_culture)   + [Baden](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Baden_culture)   + [Beaker](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Beaker_culture)   + [Catacomb](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Catacomb_culture)   + [Cernavodă](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Cernavod%C4%83_culture)   + [Chasséen](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Chass%C3%A9en_culture)   + [Chernoles](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Chernoles_culture)   + [Colchian](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Colchian_culture)   + [Corded ware](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Corded_Ware_culture)   + [Cucuteni](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Cucuteni-Trypillian_culture)   + [Dnieper-Donets](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Dnieper-Donets_culture)   + [Funnelbeaker](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Funnelbeaker_culture)   + [Gumelniţa–Karanovo](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Gumelni%C5%A3a-Karanovo_culture)   + [Gushi](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Gushi_culture)   + [Hallstatt](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Hallstatt_culture)   + [Karasuk](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Karasuk_culture)   + [Kemi Oba](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Kemi_Oba_culture)   + [Khvalynsk](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Khvalynsk_culture)   + [Kuru-Araxes](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Kura-Araxes_culture)   + [Lusatian](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Lusatian_culture)   + [Kurgan](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Kurgan_culture)   + [Koban](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Koban_culture)   + [Leyla-Tepe](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Leyla-Tepe_culture)   + [Jar-Burial](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Jar-Burial_Culture)   + [Jastorf](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Jastorf_culture)   + [Khojaly-Gadabay](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Khojaly-Gadabay_culture)   + [Maykop](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Maykop_culture)   + [Middle Dnieper](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Middle_Dnieper_culture)   + [Narva](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Narva_culture)   + [Nordic Bronze Age](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Nordic_Bronze_Age)   + [Novotitorovka](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Novotitorovka_culture)   + [Poltavka](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Poltavka_culture)   + [Potapovka](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Potapovka_culture)   + [Samara](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Samara_culture)   + [Seroglazova](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Seroglazovo_culture)   + [Shulaveri-Shomu](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Shulaveri-Shomu_culture)   + [Sredny Stog](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Sredny_Stog_culture)   + [Srubna](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Srubna_culture)   + [Terramara](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Terramare_culture)   + [Trialeti](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Trialeti_culture)   + [Tumulus](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Tumulus_culture)   + [Unetice](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Unetice_culture)   + [Urnfield](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Urnfield_culture)   + [Usatovo](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Usatovo_culture)   + [Vučedol](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Vu%C4%8Dedol_culture)   + [Yamna](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Yamna_culture) |
| [**Indo-European studies**](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Indo-European_studies) |

Main article: [Hittite language](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Hittite_language)

The Hittite language (or Nesili) is recorded fragmentarily from about the 19th century BC (in the [Kültepe](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/K%C3%BCltepe) texts, see [*Ishara*](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Ishara)). It remained in use until about 1100 BC. Hittite is the best attested member of the [Anatolian](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Anatolian_languages) branch of the [Indo-European language family](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Indo-European_language_family).

The language of the Hattusa tablets was eventually deciphered by a [Czech](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Czechs) linguist, [Bedřich Hrozný](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Bedrich_Hrozny) (1879–1952), who, on 24 November 1915, announced his results in a lecture at the Near Eastern Society of Berlin. His book about the discovery was printed in [Leipzig](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Leipzig) in 1917, under the title *The Language of the Hittites; Its Structure and Its Membership in the Indo-European Linguistic Family*. The preface of the book begins with:

The present work undertakes to establish the nature and structure of the hitherto mysterious language of the Hittites, and to decipher this language [...] It will be shown that Hittite is in the main an Indo-European language.

For this reason, the language came to be known as the [Hittite language](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Hittite_language), even though that was not what its speakers had called it. The Hittites themselves apparently called their language *nešili* "(in the manner) of (the city of) [Neša](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Ne%C5%A1a)" and hence it has been suggested that the more technically correct term, "Nesite", be used instead. Nonetheless, convention continues and "Hittite" remains the standard term used.

Due to its marked differences in its structure and phonology, some early [philologists](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Philology), most notably [Warren Cowgill](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Warren_Cowgill), even argued that it should be classified as a sister language to Indo-European languages ([Indo-Hittite](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Indo-Hittite)), rather than a daughter language. By the end of the Hittite Empire, the Hittite language had become a written language of administration and diplomatic correspondence. The population of most of the Hittite Empire by this time spoke [Luwian](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Luwian) dialects, another Indo-European language of the Anatolian family that had originated to the west of the Hittite region.

**Religion and mythology**

Main article: [Hittite mythology](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Hittite_mythology)

Hittite religion and mythology were heavily influenced by their [Hattic](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Hittite_empire), [Mesopotamian](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Mesopotamian_mythology), and [Hurrian](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Hurrians#Religion) counterparts. In earlier times, [Indo-European](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Indo-European_mythology) elements may still be clearly discerned.

"Storm gods" were prominent in the Hittite pantheon. [Tarhunt](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Tarhunt) ([Hurrian](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Hurrian)'s Teshub) was referred to as 'The Conqueror', 'The king of Kummiya', 'King of Heaven', 'Lord of the land of Hatti'. He was chief among the gods and his symbol is the bull. As Teshub he was depicted as a bearded man astride two mountains and bearing a club. He was the god of battle and victory, especially when the conflict involved a foreign power. Teshub was also known for his conflict with the serpent [Illuyanka](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Illuyanka).

**Biblical Hittites**

Main article: [Biblical Hittites](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Biblical_Hittites)

The [Hebrew Bible](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Hebrew_Bible) refers to "Hittites" in several passages, ranging from Genesis to the post-Exilic [Ezra-Nehemiah](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Ezra-Nehemiah). Genesis 10 (the [Table of Nations](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Table_of_Nations)) links them to an eponymous ancestor Heth, a descendant of [Ham](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Ham,_son_of_Noah) through his son [Canaan](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Canaan_(Bible)). The Hittites are thereby counted among the Canaanites. The Hittites are usually depicted as a people living among the Israelites — Abraham purchases the Patriarchal burial-plot of Machpelah from "Ephron HaChiti", Ephron the Hittite; and Hittites serve as high military officers in [David](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/David)'s army. In 2 Kings 7:6, however, they are a people with their own kingdoms (the passage refers to "kings" in the plural), apparently located outside geographic Canaan, and sufficiently powerful to put a Syrian army to flight.

It is a matter of considerable scholarly debate whether the biblical "Hittites" signified any or all of: 1) the original [Hattians](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Hattians); 2) their Indo-European conquerors (Nesili), who retained the name "Hatti" for Central Anatolia, and are today referred to as the "Hittites" (the subject of this article); or 3) a Canaanite group who may or may not have been related to either or both of the Anatolian groups, and who also may or may not be identical with the later [Neo-Hittite](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Neo-Hittite) ([Luwian](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Luwian)) polities.

Other biblical scholars have argued that, rather than being connected with Heth, son of Canaan, the Anatolian land of *Hatti* was instead mentioned in Old Testament literature and apocrypha as "[Kittim](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Kittim)" (Chittim), a people said to be named for a son of [Javan](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Javan).

**See also**

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|  | [***Ancient Near East portal***](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Portal:Ancient_Near_East) |

* [List of Hittite kings](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/List_of_Hittite_kings)
* [List of artifacts significant to the Bible](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/List_of_artifacts_significant_to_the_Bible)
* [Short chronology timeline](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Short_chronology_timeline)

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