

The Neo-Hittite City-States

INGOLF THUESEN

Introduction

In a previous paper dealing with the city-state culture of Syria I suggested that – as far as the evidence permits us to deal with those periods – the socio-political structure of Syria from the 4th to the 1st millennium B.C. exhibits a cyclic organisation: city-states developed into city-state empires, which in turn became territorial states and empires; but when an empire collapsed, city-states were formed once again (Thuesen [2000]). Apparently, the city-state culture of Syria broke up once and for all only after the conquest of the region by the Assyrian kings during the later part of the 8th century B.C.

It is tempting to expect a similar situation in Anatolia during the same millennia. However, the archaeological and historical sources do not yet allow for a full-scale application of the model. On the other hand, we now possess a substantial source material for the south-eastern provinces of Anatolia and northern Syria during the Early Iron Age. The crucial period when the region was organised into city-states covers the five hundred years from ca. 1200 to ca. 700 B.C. Based on this evidence, I will argue that there are indications that Bronze Age Anatolia in many ways followed Syria, and that the political history of western Asia may be described in very general terms as a political system fluctuating around the city-state stage as defined by Hansen (Hansen [2000]).

This contribution falls into the following parts: a brief presentation of the sources is followed by an outline of the archaeology and history, first of the whole region and then of the identifiable city-states. Finally, I discuss the political organisation of the region and assess the justice of applying the concepts of city-state and city-state culture as described by Hansen ([2000] 16-17).

Sources and Research

Neo-Hittite culture and history became known first of all from a number of monuments appearing in south-eastern Anatolia and northern Syria and dating from the period following the collapse of the Hittite empire

ca. 1200 B.C. In particular, scholars were puzzled by a peculiar hieroglyphic script which has a slight similarity to the Egyptian. Normally the script is associated with monumental architecture and was used for large conspicuous inscriptions on orthostats, steles and sculptures made of basalt. After the decipherment of the hieroglyphs the language was identified as Luwian, an Indo-European language also used by the Hittites in addition to their own Nesite (Hawkins [2000] 2). The Hittites used it for similar purposes but not on the same scale. The Luwian hieroglyphs were in particular associated with the kings and symbolised the status and power of the ruling families. There are indications, however, that the language was also used for the recording of everyday matters, as is attested by the find of lead strips with inscriptions; and it has been suggested that Luwian was a widely used *Umgangssprache* borrowed from the Luwians (Hawkins [2000] 2 note 17). Furthermore, there is the possibility that a major part of the inscriptions are lost for ever because they were written on perishable materials such as wood, wax or papyrus. Luwian monumental hieroglyphic inscriptions soon became a hallmark of the Neo-Hittites. Despite the fact that Luwian was different from the Hittite language itself, the use of Luwian hieroglyphs by the Hittite kings in Hattusa shows that the hieroglyphs were part of Hittite royal identity. One should therefore avoid linking the hieroglyphs too rigidly with the ethno-political history of the Luwians, as done by some authors (e.g. Genge [1979] 187).

Despite their impressive symbolic power, the Luwian inscriptions contain little information on the social and political organisation of the Neo-Hittite land. The inscriptions are basically dedications, mentioning names, genealogies, places, buildings and gods. There are also some examples of funerary stelae. Their contribution to our understanding of the Neo-Hittite city-state is therefore limited to the identification of kings and places. But the research is greatly facilitated by the recent publication of a comprehensive corpus of inscriptions by Hawkins (2000).

There are a number of indirect sources, however,

which can help us to reconstruct the history and political topography of the region. First, there is the recording of campaigns into Syria and Anatolia by Assyrian kings. The earliest relevant narratives date from the 12th century and then, after a long break, we have the highly informative annals of the Assyrian kings of the 9th and 8th centuries B.C., in particular those of Assurnasirpal II (883-859) and Shalmanaser III (858-824).

Another source is contemporary inscriptions in Aramaic from Syria. The Zakkur stele, for instance, offers a record of a coalition which attacked the Aramean King Zakkur of Hamath and Lu'ash (ca. 785-770 B.C.) (Riis and Buhl [1990] 36), and his building activities (Fitzmeyer and Kaufman [1992] 14-15; Gibson [1975]). Other important historical sources include the bilingual gateway inscription from Karatepe, on which the text occurs in both Luwian and Phoenician (Hawkins [2000] 45 ff.).

The material culture is more sporadically known throughout the region, and strongly biased by being centred on monumental architecture and art. Most important are the finds from Karkamis, Hama, Ain Dara and the on-going excavations in south-eastern Anatolia (Arslan Tepe) and Syria. In particular, the finds offer an insight into city-planning, architecture and monumental stone art of the Neo-Hittite kings, traditions which clearly link the material culture with the Hittites and justifies labelling the period as the "Neo-Hittite". The artwork comprises architectural elements, in particular orthostats with reliefs and inscriptions, placed on the façades of public monumental buildings in the cities. A number of free-standing sculptures are also known. Gateways were flanked with sculptures of lions, sphinxes or other mythological creatures which recall traditions known from Hittite and Assyrian palaces. However, the well-known Assyrian reliefs post-date the Neo-Hittite tradition, and that is a strong indication that this tradition originated in central Anatolia during the Hittite period. It is likely that the Neo-Hittite artisans passed on the tradition to the Assyrians. The peculiar Neo-Hittite art has been the topic of a number of systematic analyses, which have concentrated first of all on identifying the stylistic development in order to facilitate our dating of the monuments (Orthmann [1971]; Genge [1979]). More recent studies by Winter have proceeded beyond chronological issues and analysed the social and political impact of Neo-Hittite art (Winter [1983]).

An Outline of History

The Neo-Hittite era – also referred to as Late Hittite or Syro-Hittite – is relatively well delimited in time by events connected with the collapse or the founding of imperial political systems in western Asia.

The period begins around 1200 B.C. as a direct consequence of the break-up of the Hittite empire, probably caused by a demographic turbulence which hit Anatolia and the eastern Mediterranean. The Hittite capital Hattusa (Boğazköy) lost its position as the centre of an empire, and along the Levantine coast appeared migrating peoples searching for new land; in the sources they are known as the "Sea People". Egypt, another of the superpowers of the time, was also affected by the turmoil, which eventually caused the Egyptian Pharaohs to give up control over the southern Levant and return to an isolationist territorial strategy. In the east the Assyrians were rebuilding their imperial traditions, but more than 300 years were to pass before the Assyrian kings had gained enough momentum to initiate the creation of a world empire in western Asia and Egypt. It culminated with the final suppression and colonisation of the Levant and eastern Anatolia in the late 8th century B.C. and put a stop to the Neo-Hittite era.

The first two centuries of the interregnum between the empires have often been referred to as a *dark age*; and that may very well be true if history focuses on the large territorial states and empires. To judge from the traditional emphasis on monumental art and architecture and the written sources found in such buildings, that has in fact been the dominant approach of historians and archaeologists. However, the evidence from south-east Anatolia and northern Syria from the 12th to the 8th centuries B.C. indicates that there is an alternative approach to the history and archaeology of western Asia, namely an analysis focused on city-states cultures.

Until recently scholarly literature has been dominated by the idea that a fragmented and distorted political and social situation prevailed in the Hittite provinces. During this political vacuum ancient urban centres established themselves as more or less independent kingdoms. The region of northern Syria from Hama on the Orontes in the south to the present Syro-Turkish border and beyond in the north is seen as disintegrating into "city-states" (Hawkins [1995a] 1295; Mazzoni [1995] 183). Most of the authorities on the period seem to accept this terminology without precisely describing or defining what they mean by "city-states". They simply use the term in order to distinguish the new political structure, based on much

smaller territorial entities centred on a capital, from the preceding territorial state or empire. However, one author has been more careful in her use of the term “city/state” for the phenomenon, and suggests that the situation reflects not just a regression but rather a much more complex economic and political organisation (Winter [1983] 178). However, it is the definition of city-state and city-state culture by Hansen (*op. cit.*) which allows us to re-assess the archaeological and historical evidence and provides us with much more precise premises for an understanding of the political structure of the region and a discussion of a suitable terminology.

After the conquest of the region of Syria in ca. 1340 B.C. the Hittite king, Suppiluliuma I, placed a viceroy in what may be considered the most important urban centre, Karkamis. Karkamis was located on the Euphrates on the present Syro-Turkish border. It had a strategic position in the region by controlling the trade-route that connected Mesopotamia with Anatolia and the Levant. Therefore the lineage of kings controlling the Syrian province descended directly from the Hittite throne. After the collapse of Hattusa, Karkamis was ruled by the Great King Kuzi-Tesup, a descendant of the Hittite Dynasty. This arrangement reflects a pyramidal power structure with at least three steps: all power was centralised in Hattusa under the Hittite Great King. Under him were viceroys, in the case of Karkamis a direct descendant of the Great King. This viceroy governed the urban centres of the province, each probably being administered by a governor or vassal king.

The collapse of the Hittite empire meant that the uppermost tier of the power structure was eliminated and traditionally this break-up was thought by scholars to upset the entire political and administrative structure: the disintegration of the uppermost level, represented by the Great Kings of Hattusa, also caused the lower levels to fall apart, triggering a dark age. This understanding of the situation was based on unreliable Egyptian sources which also mention the fall of Karkamis, an event that cannot be confirmed either archaeologically or historically. New discoveries of seals and interpretations of text from Arslan Tepe show that Karkamis was not involved in the fall of Hatti. The royal family of Karkamis remained in power in an unbroken line of descendants of the Hittite king. But this king now appeared as the Great King, Hero of Karkamis, and apparently he was honoured as such by some of the surrounding cities (Hawkins [1995] 1300). It is uncertain why and how the Egyptians became misinformed about the situation

in northern Syria. They may on purpose have generated a picture of general chaos in order to explain their own territorial implosion and retreat from southern Levant. Or perhaps they lacked precision in their politico-geographical terminology, as did the Assyrians, who tended to apply the label “Hatti” to both the Hittite empire and the Neo-Hittite kingdoms. Alternatively, it may be argued that they accepted the king of Karkamis as a direct successor to the Hittite royal powers.

Scholars have explained the events around 1200 B.C. as caused by migrations, for instance the relocation of the Khatti from Central Anatolia to the urban centres in the south-east (Hawkins [1995] 1297) or even a migration of people from western Anatolia and Cilicia into the Neo-Hittite region (Gurney [1954] 39 ff.). This theory was primarily based on the linguistic evidence, which shows that the Neo-Hittite kings preferred the Luwian language for monumental dedicatory inscriptions.

The archaeological and historical evidence from the period shows that the region was prosperous and that Karkamis was a natural centre of a kingdom. Trade in raw materials or fabrics, particularly metals and luxury goods, turned the city into a strong economic and political centre, which for a long time avoided attacks from the Assyrian army (Winter [1983]).

But Karkamis seems soon to have lost its central position. The region tended to disintegrate into a number of independent kingdoms, each located around one of the major urban centres. The process gathered momentum with the appearance of Aramaic-speaking people, who became masters of several of the north Syrian cities and sometimes replaced the Neo-Hittite rulers. As argued by Schwartz, the Arameans were probably an imbedded and latent political factor; they had strong ties with pastoral groups in the region, and exploited the turmoil generated by the Sea People and the collapse of the Hittite Empire (Schwartz [1989]). Also, the growing troubles with Assyrian kings demanding tribute or looting the towns and cities of the region did not result in a combined effort to keep the Assyrians at distance by forming stronger territorial states, but rather seems to have stimulated alliances and intrigues across cultural and ethnic boundaries.

The Neo-Hittite period can be divided into two main phases, as suggested by Mazzone ([1995] 189). The first phase covers the period from the 12th century to the mid 9th century B.C. This period is characterised by the rise of kingdoms each centred on a town. Some of these towns were new foundations,

but some were refoundations of earlier urban centres now embellished with monumental iconography. The second period covers the ca. 150 years from the mid 9th century to the Assyrian conquest in the late 8th century B.C. This phase saw the growth of centres and also an increasing concern for security expressed in the building of fortified strongholds throughout the region. It is easy to see a direct link between this development and the increasing Assyrian economic and territorial interest in the Levant and Anatolia.

In order to understand the complexity of the political geography during the Neo-Hittite era one must take into account that the region was home to a number of language groups, which perhaps reflect a high ethnic diversity as well. The major recognisable languages are: Luwian, Aramaic, Phoenician, Hurrian and Assyrian. Traditionally, most scholars have distinguished between a Neo-Hittite and an Aramean population and/or political dominance. The argument is that the kings have names which associate them with either one or other language group. If we accept this dichotomy as evidence of political opposition, the political landscape turns out to be a very complex ethnic constellation without any geographical coherence. The northern kingdom of Sam'al with its capital Zincirli, for instance, was ruled by an Aramean king who used Hittite iconography to demonstrate his powers. Hamath in the south was ruled by a Neo-Hittite king until around 800 B.C. when a new Aramean family succeeded to the throne. The change of dynasty seems to have resulted in some changes in monumental iconography, as testified by a huge Hittite stele which was degraded and turned into a threshold stone in the entrance to what was probably a small palace or public building (see also below).

Another indication is the way alliances were negotiated in the region, for instance the conflict between King Zakkur of Hamath and a coalition of the Aramean kings of Damascus and Arpad and five Aramean or Neo-Hittite kingdoms (Dion [1995] 1285). Or the alliance of several kings in the region to protect Hamath against the Assyrians in 853 (ibid. 1285). Both examples show that the diversity of ethnic and/or language groups did not necessarily play a dominant role in the formation of political constellations. Consequently, an analysis of the city-state culture of the region ought to include some of the major Aramean kingdoms such as Sam'al and Aramean Hamath. The names of other Aramean kingdoms or "houses", however, seem to reflect tribal structures, and are perhaps better understood as a different kind of political organisation, despite the fact that they also tended

to establish themselves around urban centres like the surrounding Neo-Hittite monarchies. Finally, some of the Aramean kingdoms tended to expand geographically and became territorial states rather than city-states in the proper sense (Dion [1995] 1286).

Neo-Hittite Kingdoms

The following list of Neo-Hittite kingdoms summarises the available archaeological and historical evidence in so far as it is relevant for the description of the region as a city-state culture. The location of each kingdom is shown in Fig. 1.

Karkamis (Hawkins [1997] 423-24). The site is strategically located on the west bank of the Euphrates at modern Jerablus on the Turkish-Syrian frontier. Several important trade routes crossed each other at this point, and that made the city a major centre of the region centuries before the Neo-Hittite era. The city is already mentioned in the Ebla and Mari archives from the 3rd and 2nd millennium, and it was chosen by the Hittite kings as the seat of the viceroy ruling the Syrian province. In the Luwian inscriptions Karkamis is also described using the hieroglyphs for "city".

Due to the location of the mound literally on the modern border, most of the archaeological investigations date back to the period before World War II. Already before World War I remarkable sculptures and inscriptions were excavated by Woolley, including a Temple of the Storm-God, the Processional Entry and the Royal Buttress. The monuments were decorated with relief orthostats and monumental hieroglyphic inscriptions.

The area enclosed by the outer wall covered more than 90 ha, which made it the largest urban centre of the region (Fig. 2). The defence consisted of several walls or ramparts that protected an outer city with private houses and an inner city with gates, temples, the Great Staircase and *hilani*-buildings. A fortified citadel was located by the river at what was probably the centre of the city; but no significant remains have been identified. According to Mazzoni a new lay-out of the citadel, squares and public buildings with façade sculptures took place during the late 11th and early 10th centuries B.C. (Mazzoni [1995] 182). Thereafter there is a change in iconography marked by the disappearance of the traditional Hittite motifs such as the god on a stag, and mountain gods supporting the winged disc (ibid. 183).

The kingdom controlled the fertile plain and valleys in the vicinity of the city which had a high agricultural

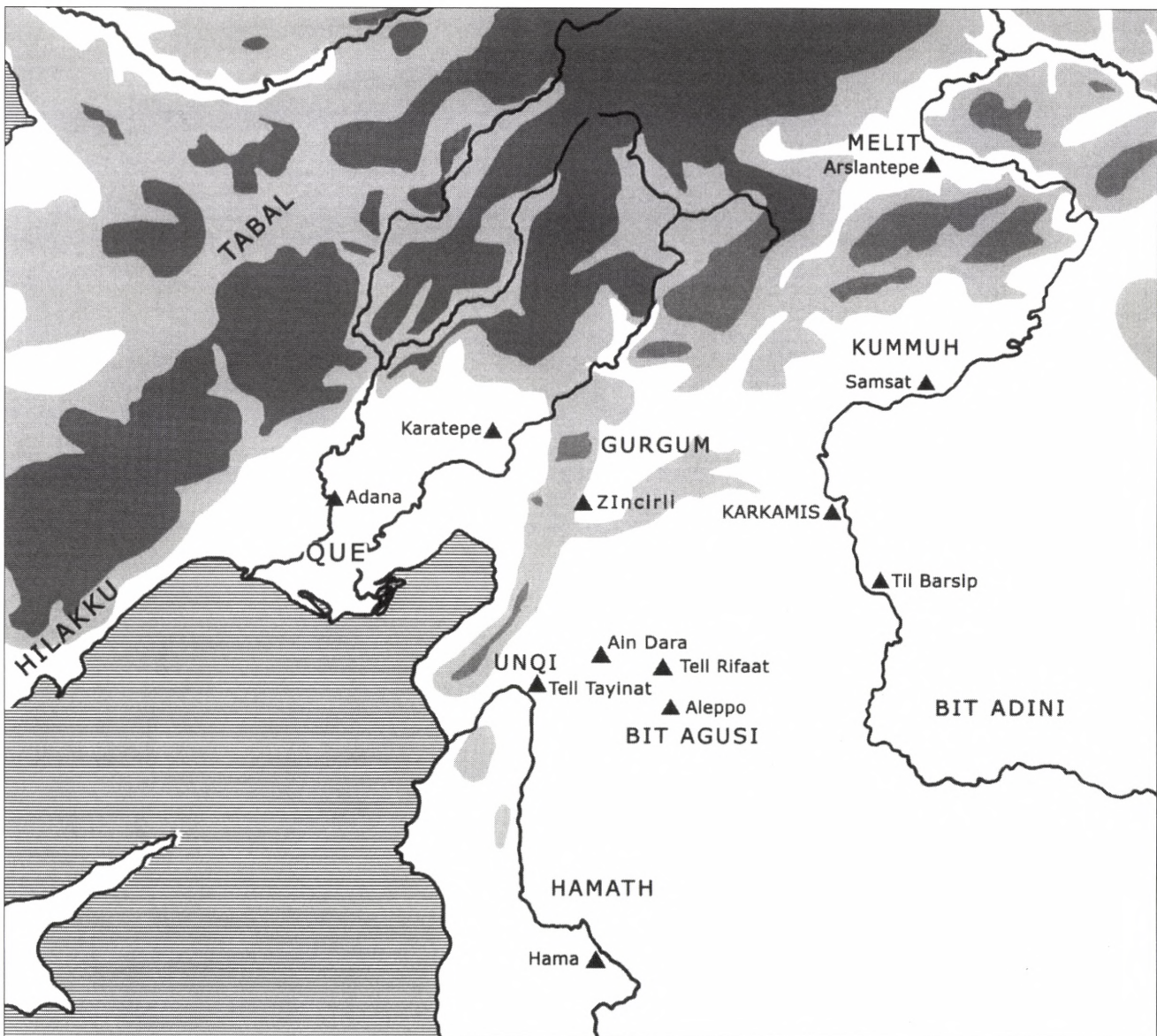


Fig. 1. Map showing the location of Neo-Hittite and Aramean city-states in northern Syria and south-eastern Anatolia during the Iron Age and some of the major sites mentioned in the text.

potential based on dry farming. The main crops were wheat, barley and wine. More than 30 smaller mounds have been identified in this area, indicating a settlement pattern of a capital surrounded by many smaller towns and villages (Winter [1983] 177-78). The land south and east of the Euphrates was controlled by the Aramean state of Bit Adini, with its capital at Til Barsip (Tell Ahmar), which was conquered already in 856 B.C. by the Assyrian king Shalmanaser III. However, stylistic affinities with the monuments of Karkamis and stelae found in Til Barsip suggest that the Aramean kingdom was short-lived and preceded by a Neo-Hittite dynasty named Masuwari (Hawkins [1995b] 91). If one identifies the agricultural hinter-

land of Karkamis with the plain and valleys west of the river and excludes the mountainous regions to the north, the territory of the kingdom can be assessed at over 750 km².

The Neo-Hittite history of Karkamis can be traced back into the Imperial Hittite period, when Suppiluliuma I installed his son as viceroy in charge of the Syrian province. His line continued to rule Karkamis after the collapse of the empire, and Kuzi-Tesup, king of Karkamis, had the titles Great King and Hero, which indicates that he was seen as the ruler of the surviving segments of the Hittite empire. The sources describe the dependent kings as Country Lords, not as kings (Hawkins [1995b] 88). The kingdom continued

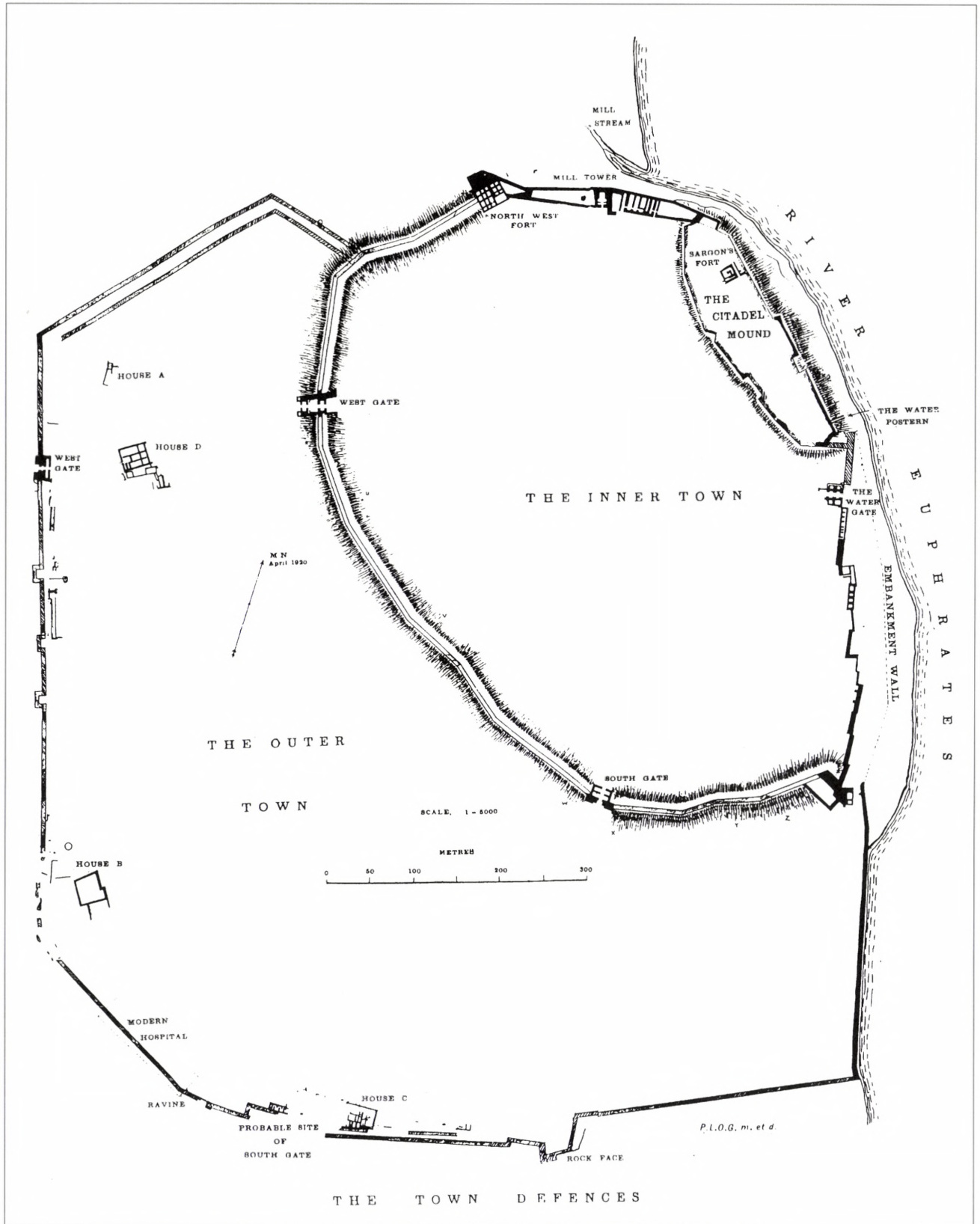


Fig. 2. Plan of Karkamis after Woolley (1921).

until 717 B.C., when it was incorporated into the Assyrian empire under Sargon II. Even though the Assyrians extended their zone of interest to the Levant and Anatolia during the 9th century, they seem to have avoided a direct confrontation with the kings of Karkamis. Apparently, the kingdom had sufficient strength to be a serious opponent to the Assyrians in the 9th century B.C. during the reigns of Assunasirpal II and Shalmanaser. By circumscribing the kingdom of Karkamis these two kings seem to have preferred a geographical solution to military confrontation in order to obtain control over the transportation of goods in the region (Winter [1983]).

Other small kingdoms were located north and west of Karkamis. To the north lay the kingdom of Kummuh with Neo-Hittite rulers, to the north west the Aramaic kingdom of Sam'al, and to the west the kingdom of Aramaic Bit Agusi with its capital Arpad, located north of Aleppo. There may not have been physical borders between the states as the Taurus mountains split the landscape up into natural enclaves.

The extraordinary wealth of the kings of Karkamis is apparent not only from the amount of tribute they paid to the Assyrians, but also from the monumental scale of art and architecture. Stylistic analysis of the monuments suggests that the symbolic imagery of Karkamis was setting the standard for the whole region, and the city seems to have housed a centre for artist-craftsmen (Winter [1983] 181). The craftsmanship was originally inspired by imperial Hittite traditions, but tended to take its own direction. The main focus was on stone carving for wall-reliefs and stelae, but on small luxury objects as well, such as objects carved in ivory and soft stone and purple-dyed fabrics. Ivory pyxides produced in Karkamis, for example, were found in Assyrian Nimrud. The main income, however, was derived from trade in copper and iron. That trade was the main concern, too, of the Assyrians living in the region, and competition was probably what caused the Assyrians to subjugate the northern neighbours of Karkamis in order to cut off its access to raw materials (*supra* 45).

Kummuh (Commagene). The Neo-Hittite kingdom of Kummuh is known almost exclusively from inscriptions. It was located upstream on the Euphrates from Karkamis, and probably comprised the plain around the modern, but now flooded, town of Samsat, the capital of the ancient kingdom. The mountains formed natural borders on all sides. To the north was located Malatya (Melid) and to the west Gurgum, both ruled

by Neo-Hittite kings. It is difficult to estimate the size of its agricultural hinterland but, to judge from the size of the plain and the catchment system for the river around Samsat, it may well have been equal in size to that of Karkamis.

The most important piece of historical information about Kummuh is that the king acted as a client of the Assyrians and probably assisted them in their attempt to monopolise the important resources of copper and iron and to divert the trade from Karkamis to centres controlled by themselves.

Malatya (Assyrian *Melit*) (Frangipane [1997] 212-15). An important kingdom north of Kummuh is known from a number of impressive archaeological monuments and inscriptions. They testify to the existence of a Neo-Hittite kingdom lying in the plain of Malatya and centred on modern Arslantepe. Earlier French and recent Italian excavations of the site as well as investigation of the region have given some insight into the physical structure and have revealed, for instance, a monumental gateway flanked by sculptured lions dating to the late 12th or early 11th century B.C. (Mazzoni [1995] 182), a number of wall-reliefs, and a large statue of a ruler of the city.

Arslantepe covers an area of 31 ha, which means that it was much smaller than Karkamis. But the city is assumed to have controlled the surrounding plain of Malatya and the plain of Elbistan too. Its location had a strategic importance in that it bordered on Urartian territory to the north-east. It is not possible to give a precise estimate of the agricultural hinterland, but a rough calculation of the land around Malatya at an altitude between 2,500 and 3,000 m above sea-level makes 800+ km².

Malatya was one of the cities that survived the fall of the Hittite empire, and the finds of seals and the Karahöyük stele show that, after the collapse, the kings of the city were dependent on the Great King of Karkamis. Later Assyrian and Urartian sources describe Malatya as either a city or a country. Malatya participated in the alliance headed by the Aramean king of Damascus and Arpad against King Zakkur of Hamath. The city fell to the Assyrian forces in 712-708 B.C., but was apparently revived as an independent state for a brief interval around 675 B.C. (Hawkins [1995b] 90).

Gurgum. The kingdom of Gurgum, with its capital Maras, was located west of Kummuh and north of the Aramean kingdom of Sam'al. Very little is known except for funerary stelae with Luwian inscriptions.

The city probably had its hinterland on the plain surrounding the city of Maras, an area of ca. 500 km². It was separated from neighbouring kingdoms by mountains, except for Sam'al, which was located further down the valley. Gurgum was annexed by the Assyrians in 711 B.C.

Sam'al. The kingdom of Sam'al with its capital at Zincirli, a site of 37 ha, does not belong properly to the list of Neo-Hittite city-states, as most of its history refers to Aramean kings. However, the architecture and the sculpture are of typical Hittite style (Hawkins [2000] 7); and the "Kranzhügel" lay-out of the town shows close affinity with other towns of northern Syria. The kingdom therefore testifies to the ethnic complexity of the region during the Neo-Hittite period and, like other kingdoms of the region, it may have had a Hittite background (Assaf [1997b] 132).

Tabal. The south-east corner of Central Anatolia was carved up into several city-states in the 8th century B.C. Unfortunately, they are poorly documented. During the late 8th century there seem to have been two larger units, Tabal to the north and Tuwana to the south. The latter bordered on the kingdoms of Hilakku and Que in the Cilician plain. The Phrygian interest zone began north-west of Tabal and Tuwana.

Que (Cilicia). During the 2nd millennium the Cilician plain formed an independent kingdom, Kizzuwatna, with a mixed Luwian and Hurrian population. The importance of the plain is, once again, connected with its strategic position as a link between Syria and Central Anatolia. The plain contained two urban centres: Hilakku in the west, and the better documented Que in the east.

The main ancient city of the region, Adana, has not yet been identified with certainty, but is known to have been attacked by the Sea People. The most important archaeological finds come from Karatepe in the north-eastern corner of the plain, where there is a hill-top fortification with two monumental gates lined with basalt orthostats, sculptures and portal lions (Hawkins [2000] 45). The orthostats are covered with reliefs and bilingual inscriptions in Phoenician and Luwian. The texts deal with the territorial extension of the state, the legitimacy of the king, and how the king brought prosperity by filling granaries and breeding horses. It is also mentioned how he strengthened the borders with walls and fortifications. The Old Testament mentions that Solomon traded horses with Que (I Kings 10:28).

Otherwise it is known that the king of Que was also a member of the alliance led by Damascus and Arpad against Zakkur of Hamath. In ca. 729 B.C. Cilicia was probably controlled by the Assyrians.

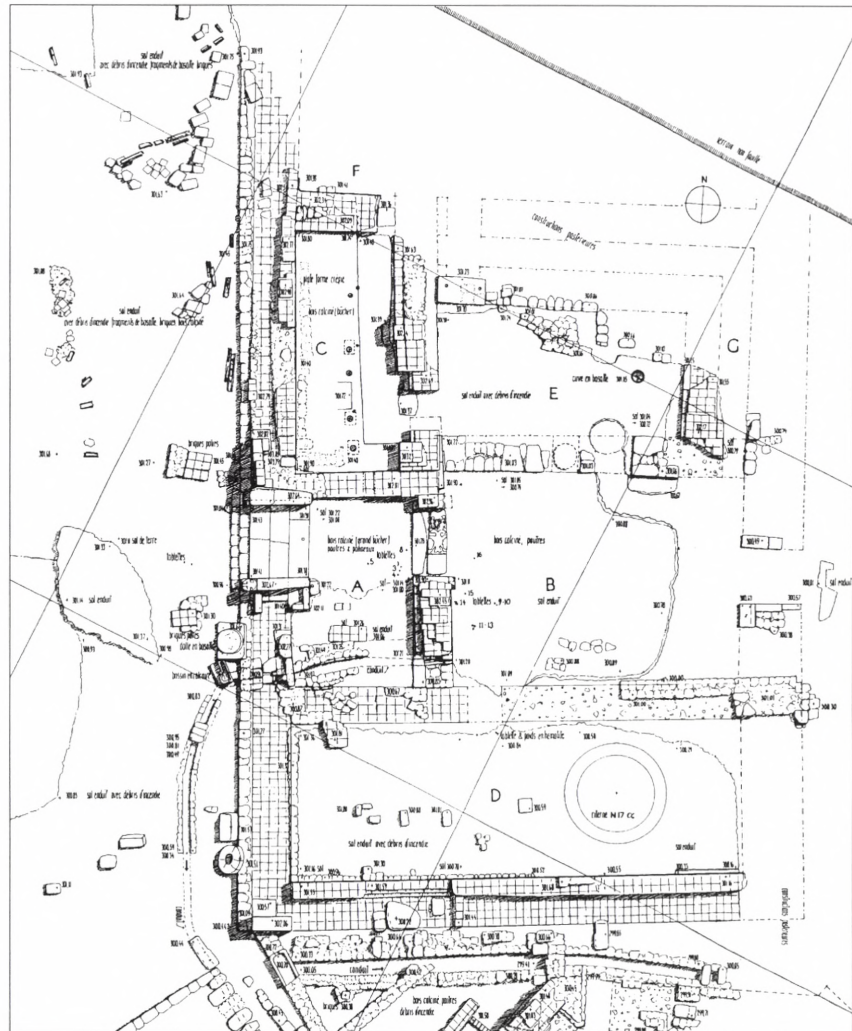
Unqi (Dornemann [1997] 115-17). The kingdom of Unqi is located in the plain of Amuq, a large plain bounded by mountains and intersected by several streams and rivers, e.g. the Afrin and the Orontes. The Amuq plain was systematically investigated between 1933 and 1937 by an American archaeological expedition and fieldwork has recently been resumed by the Oriental Institute, Chicago. Some of the more important of the numerous tells which are situated in the plain were excavated and have provided us with a good chronological framework for the history of the region. Kinalua, however, the capital of the Neo-Hittite period, has not yet been identified with certainty, although the centre was apparently moved to Tell Tayinat after the Bronze Age centre of Alalah (Tell Achana) had been destroyed by the Sea People. At Tayinat was found a series of monumental palaces of the typical Syrian *hilani*-style, built of mudbricks in timber frame and decorated with orthostats – a Hittite technology. The finds include remains of an outer town with a gateway apparently built during the 9th century B.C. (Mazzoni [1995] 188).

The most remarkable discovery, however, was the remains of a temple of Ishtar-Sawuska. It was found at Ain Dara in the Afrin valley (Assaf [1990] and [1997a] 33-35), and identified through the lions and the Mountain God depicted in the reliefs that decorated the lower part of the walls of the temple. Lions and sphinxes flanked the entrances as in contemporary Neo-Hittite buildings also showing links to Anatolia and Boğazköy. Although it was a large urban settlement during the Neo-Hittite era, the site has not been identified as the capital, but it may have been a ritual centre. A parallel is Halep (Aleppo), where the Hittite Storm God was worshipped even though the city was located in the middle of the Aramean kingdom of Bit Agusi, which had Arpad as its capital.

Recent archaeological excavations of the citadel mound in Aleppo have revealed relief-orthostats of Hittite tradition, which in future may shed further light on the relation between the Hittite and the Aramean aspects of the civilisation of the region (Khayyata and Kohlmeyer [2000] 733 ff.)

The Unqi kingdom and its capital controlled a rather large territory, *viz.* the plain of Amuq, covering more than 1,400 km². To the south it bordered on Hamath, to the east on the Aramaic kingdom of Bit

Fig. 3. Building III in the Royal Quarter of Hama. Hittite stele found as threshold in a doorway between rooms A and B.



Agusi, and to the north on the kingdoms of Sam'al and Que. That the kingdom profited from overseas trade is evident from the finds in Tell el-Judeideh of pottery imported from Cyprus, Egypt and the Aegean.

Hamath (Riis [1948]; Fugmann [1958]; Riis and Buhl [1990]). The kingdom of Hamath is relatively well documented due to the Danish excavations on the citadel mound (1931-38). A palatial area with monumental architecture was discovered, including a gateway flanked by lions. At the lower level were a huge building with store-rooms, a small palatial building of the *hilani*-type, and remains of an internal gateway indicating a subdivision of the citadel into walled quarters, as attested in Zincirli.

During the Neo-Hittite period Hamath had a history similar to other kingdoms located on the fringe of the plateau and the steppe, as for instance Til Barsip (see Karkamis, *supra* 46). The date of the establishment of

a Neo-Hittite kingdom is uncertain, but Hittite traditions were dominant already during the 12th century after the collapse of the empire. That is attested by the find of large cremation cemeteries, a tradition that is closely associated with the Hittites (Riis [1948]). After 1000 B.C. the kings are better known, and some had Hurrian names (Urhilina). However, the Neo-Hittite lineage was replaced by Aramean kings around 800 B.C. and they ruled until the city fell to the Assyrian king Sargon II in 720 B.C..

It is not clear what the shift from kings with Neo-Hittite to Aramaic names meant in terms of material culture and iconography. Apparently the city plan continued unchanged, but the re-use of a Hittite stele as the threshold in a building indicates a certain level of disrespect for the earlier rulers and their traditions (Fig. 3). However, lions continued to flank the gates and were also found as free-standing colossal sculptures (Fig. 4).



Fig. 4. Portal lion flanking the gate entrance as found in the excavation of the Citadel in Hama. Nationalmuseet Antiksamlingen.

A number of basalt stones with hieroglyphic inscriptions were found in Hama but never *in situ*. It is impossible to tell when they were removed from their original position as orthostats (Fig. 5).

The kingdom of Hama controlled the central Syrian territory from the Mediterranean to the desert. In the north it bordered on Til Agusi and Unqi, but for a period it may have been separated from the latter by the kingdom of Lu'ash (Tell Afis), located 110 km north of Hama. However, King Zakkur referred to himself as the king of both lands on the stele he erected after his victory over a coalition of neighbouring kings led by the king of Damascus.

The Neo-Hittite Kingdoms Analysed as City-States

Forming a City-State Culture

The concluding section of this contribution attempts to test the available evidence against the criteria set up by Hansen. As has been shown, the region comprising

north Syria and south-east Anatolia was split up into a number of small kingdoms during a rather long period of time, stretching from the collapse of the Hittite empire around 1200 B.C. and lasting until the Assyrian colonisation of the region towards the end of the 8th century B.C. Historical complexity reflects demographic diversity in terms of both language and ethnicity. This is in fact a major characteristic of the Syro-Levantine region throughout history, and is not specific to the Iron Age. The main languages were Luvian and Aramaic, and eventually the latter became the *lingua franca* of western Asia. One should avoid any direct equation of the linguistic complexity within the region with the simultaneous ethnic diversity. On the other hand, a number of different socio-economic structures are attested simultaneously. The two dominant strata of the population were the pastoral groups of herders attached to the steppe and the urban dwellers settled in numerous cities and towns located at points of strategic importance for trade and traffic through the region. Another important compo-

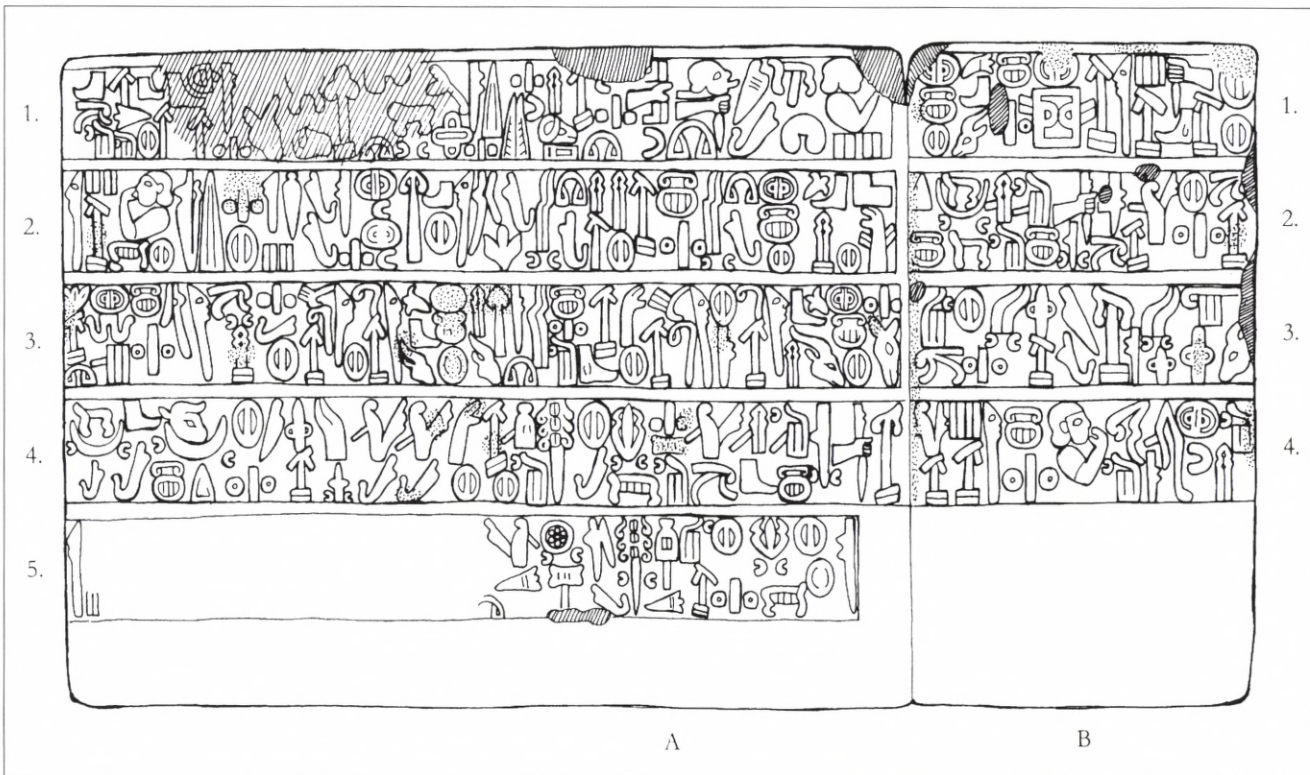


Fig. 5. Hittite hieroglyphic inscription on basalt orthostat from Hama. After Hawkins (2000).

ment is the Phoenician merchants who established a series of city-states along the Syro-Lebanese coast and opened long-distance sea-going trade in the Mediterranean (Niemeyer [2000]). Finally, the region was almost constantly under pressure from the Assyrian kings who for a long period extracted tribute from the local kingdoms until, finally, they incorporated the entire region into the Assyrian empire.

In general the characteristics of a city-state culture according to Hansen match the situation in the Neo-Hittite territory. In the following the number in brackets refers to the list of characteristics by Hansen ([2000] 16-17):

(1) The population did not speak the same language but was multilingual and shared a common culture with strong affinities to the Hittites. The king of Karkamis boasted of his linguistic abilities, claiming that he knew twelve languages and could read and write four (Hawkins [2000] 131).

(2) The region was composed of several enclaves, often situated in plains and valleys between mountain ranges.

(3) Interaction was primarily by land along thousand-year-old routes and rivers.

(4c) The rise of the city-state culture in the region clearly followed the collapse of an empire.

(5) The number of city-states or kingdoms within this region seems relatively stable throughout the period, despite the fact that some kingdoms shifted from one language identity to another. Typically the early north Syrian city-states located on the fringe of the steppe became Aramean.

(6) There were numerous instances of conflict between the kingdoms, usually independent of their cultural or linguistic affinity, cf. the alliances sometimes formed between opposing groups of kingdoms, but sometimes uniting the kingdoms in order to confront the Assyrian enemy. In some cases kingdoms were allied with the Assyrians against their neighbours (Kummuh).

(7) In peacetime there was considerable trading activity and cultural exchange. For instance, Karkamis seems to have prospered from trade and crafts, and the kingdoms of the region seem to have shared traditional centres for worship such as Halep.

(8) There are no documented examples of kingdoms swallowing up one another during the period, unless the case of Zakkur's double title as king of Hamath and Lu'ash is the result of such activities. On the other hand the formation of alliances and leagues is well attested.

(9) The only possible case of a central kingdom

dominating the entire area appears at the very beginning of the era, when Karkamis inherited – at least *pro forma* – the role of the Hittite empire, and its kings used the title of Great King. This situation, however, was short-lived, and is better understood as a reminiscence of the empire after it had received its fatal blow.

(10) This situation also reflects a hierarchical system based on the traditional prestige of, for instance, Karkamis and the wealth of the various kingdoms.

(11) During the 9th and 8th centuries B.C. the kingdoms often had to pay tribute to the Assyrians and can therefore in this final phase be seen as dependent city-states.

(12) There are no sources which allow us to say anything with certainty about the identity of the citizens and their view of outsiders. No self-designation of land, people or language has yet been found. The cultural and ethnic complexity may speak for a rather open and tolerant situation, and it is also remarkable that the kingdoms in the surviving record did not share any particular identity or political interest and culture (Kuhrt [1995] 411).

(13) The Neo-Hittite and Aramean kingdoms ceased to exist as a result of the conquest and territorial expansion of the Assyrian kings.

(14) If the Neo-Hittite kingdoms are seen as a city-state culture – and there are many good reasons to do so – it existed within a general city-state matrix of the Levant. To the south were the Aramean city-states (Thuesen [2000]), along the Levantine coast the Phoenician city-states (Niemeyer [2000]) and in southern Levant the Philistine city-states (Strange [2000]).

(15). Whether or not the Neo-Hittite city-states were part of a repeated cycle of political systems is impossible to say since we lack relevant sources. On the basis of the evidence from Syria, Palestine and Mesopotamia, it is tempting to surmise that the Anatolian region followed the same fluctuation between empire and city-states. In any case, there can be no doubt that most of the Neo-Hittite capitals had a long history as urban centres of the region, and they testify to a continuity of urbanism which links the Iron Age with the earlier Bronze Age (Mazzoni [1995] 83).

In conclusion, it can be argued that the Neo-Hittite kingdoms fulfil most of the criteria set up for a city-state culture as defined by Hansen.

The characteristics of the individual city-states in the Neo-Hittite era further confirm this identification. Most of the Neo-Hittite kingdoms conformed to the size criteria suggested by Hansen. The territory was

probably within the range of 500-1,000 km², but larger city-states (e.g. Unqi and Hamath) did exist. Often the capital was a large urban centre of 30+ ha, located centrally on a plain, with mountains as a natural border. In the capital the king resided in a fortified citadel. The typical royal city was structured around the citadel with private houses and temples situated in a separately walled lower town. Second-order towns may have grown up around religious centres, as for instance in Halep and Ain Dara. Concerning the question of self-sufficiency, the Neo-Hittite kingdoms certainly profited from an agricultural hinterland, but wealth first of all accumulated due to extensive trade of raw materials, especially metals, and luxury goods such as ivory objects and purple-dyed fabrics. The city-states of the region shared many cultural and religious traditions such as Hittite architecture with lions and sphinxes flanking the gateways and the use of hieroglyphs for inscriptions on sculpture and orthostats. There are even indications that the goddess Kubaba of Karkamis was paired with the Aramean Rakib-El of Sam'al (Dion [1995] 1290). However, according to the documented defensive alliances, the political identity did not follow any linguistic, ethnic or religious identity.

To sum up, it seems adequate to characterise the Neo-Hittite era as a period in which the north Syrian and south-east Anatolian region was split up into a number of city-states, as has often been suggested by scholars. One may even take one further step and interpret the civilisation as a city-state culture, which, in a *longue durée* perspective, re-appeared several times in western Asia. The city-state culture can be traced back to the 3rd millennium, perhaps even into the 4th millennium, as suggested by the Syrian case (Thuesen [2000]). Considering the duration of the city-state culture compared with the duration of its counterpart, the territorial states and empires, one might suggest that the history of western Asia before the Assyrian conquest in the late 8th century is better described from a city-state perspective than from the traditional view that the region was the scene of a series of empires interrupted by disintegration into a number of small kingdoms.

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For a good overview of Neo-Hittite history, see e.g. Hawkins (1995b). For the contemporary Aramean history see e.g. Mazzoni (1995) and Dion (1995). For the urbanisation of Assyria, see Kühne (1994). The best introduction to the archaeology and history of the sites mentioned in the text is *The Oxford Encyclopedia of Archaeology in the Ancient Near East* (1997).

