

On the Aegean-Anatolian Historical and Linguistic Interface in the Final Bronze Age

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1. INTRODUCTION

In this modest contribution, some very general observations on the topic of the contacts between the Aegean and Anatolia will be made, based on the most recent works in the literature¹ and on the ongoing research carried out by the team of the ERC project PALaC, that received funding from the European Research Council (ERC) under the European Union's Horizon 2020 Research and Innovation Programme (Grant Agreement n° 757299).²

There are several ways to deal with the extremely complex problem of the Aegean-Anatolian contacts. One may concentrate on archaeology, on political history, on historical geography, or, again, on language contact. All these lines of research have been explored with increasing frequency, which resulted in different and occasionally conflicting views, that generally

range from maximalist conclusions (the Aegean-Anatolian region was a proper cultural area with extensive, constant, and close contacts between cultures that formed a continuum) to minimalist one (the Aegean area and the Anatolian areas had occasional long-distance relationships at best). As regards archaeology and political history, recent examples of the maximalist approach can be found in the research by Kelder, who, in a series of works,³ proposes that the Greek kingdom of Ahhiyawa (involving a confederate structure that may be remindful of the structure of the Achaean society in Homer) is to be considered as one of the main participants into the Ancient Near Eastern system of the regional kingdoms (I translate the felicitous label “regni regionali” by the Italian historian Mario Liverani), so that the King of Ahhiyawa is to be regarded as a Great King and a member of the “Club of the Great Kings” that existed from the Amarna Age (XIV century BCE) until the Bronze Age collapse. In a 2012 paper, Kelder states: «there is no reason to assume, as has so often been done, that Mycenaean society was inherently different from its better known Near Eastern contemporaries». ⁴ An example of an almost-opposite view is offered, for instance, by Fischer who, following an older authoritative view by Goetze,⁵ assumes that the contacts between the Ahhiyawa and the Anatolian largest kingdom, the Hittite one, were always indirect and mediated by the Luwian and

1 A more complete overview on the history of the studies can be found in the monograph BECKMAN - BRYCE - CLINE (2011). Another introduction is the one by FISCHER (2010), but cf. the critical remarks in the review by GANDER (2015).

2 This paper is derived from the talk “From languages to history: observations on the Bronze Age Aegean-Anatolian contacts” that I gave in Graz at the conference *The Aegean Interface. The Eastern Mediterranean: Ancient Meeting Place of Cultures*, December 12-13, 2019. While I am the responsible author of this work, I wish to thank Stella Merlin and Bartomeu Obrador Cursach, the linguists of my research team who oversee the investigation of the Aegean-Anatolian language contact, for their assistance and help, as well as for their painstaking work of data collection. I also thank Zsolt Simon for his valuable remarks on a former version of the manuscript, and Clelia Mora, Stefano De Martino and Massimiliano Marazzi for their bibliographic suggestions.

3 To mention a few significant works, cf. KELDER, (2010; 2012); KELDER - WAAL (2019).

4 See KELDER 2012, 49f.

5 Cf. GOETZE 1957, 183.

Lycian principalities of the Western peninsula.⁶ As is often the case, the best interpretive models are those that, through a fine-grained appreciation of the available evidence, produce a balanced interpretation that does not exceed in either direction, as the one that was recently proposed by Marazzi (2018a, 264-267; cf. also Marazzi 1992 and 2018b, 97 with fn. 3), with Ahhiyawa being a designation of Greek peoples who behave in a fashion similar to other groups that will keep emerging during the Dark Age crisis.

In a quite parallel fashion, in the field of cultural interference and language contacts a very maximalist approach has been defended, for instance, by the works of Bachvarova on the relationships between the Homeric poems and the Ancient Near Eastern literatures,⁷ and, from a more technically linguistic perspective, by Romagno, who, in a 2015 paper, exhumes the label of *Sprachbund* (“language league”) to explain some possible areal similarities that would emerge in Homeric Greek, later Greek, and Hittite. Oreshko (2018), on the other hand, recently took a fiercely pessimistic position, denying (a little too hastily, see below §4) that proper lexical borrowings between the Anatolian and the Greek languages ever existed, and stating that, considering this alleged lack of evidence, no other types of language interference should be investigated. This point deserves a further remark: that grammatical interference could only occur if many lexical loans are also present is not necessarily correct in areal linguistics. Once again, theory-aware studies on the topic of Greek-Anatolian language contacts, that differentiate the lexical level and the morpho-syntactic one, also exist. To mention the most recent ones, one should quote Bianconi (2019), with a mildly optimistic case-by-case approach (and a rich history of the studies), and Cotticelli (2021), who

concentrates on grammatical interference and takes a soundly organized, if generally pessimistic, stance.

In the limited space of this contribution a complete history of the studies will not be attempted, nor shall all the details of the several perspectives from which the problem may be discussed be examined. What will be tentatively claimed in these few pages is rather that most of the issues that characterize the controversies on the Aegean-Anatolian interface may be more peacefully dealt with by applying some degree of historical critique even to the most technical aspects of the problem, such as the political-historical and linguistic ones.

2. THE KING OF AHHIYAWA IN THE HITTITE SOURCES: A GREAT KING?

That the word Ahhiyawa (also: Ahhiya)⁸ is the cuneiform Hittite designation of the Achaeans can no longer be doubted. Even though some details of the derivation of the Greek words may be open to debate among linguists and classicists, the historical hints in support of the identification are overwhelming.⁹ Less obvious is how one should identify the political entity the word referred to and understand the type and intensity of the relationships of the Ahhiyawa with Hittite Anatolia and the rest of the Ancient Near East.

8 On the two variants, Ahhiya and Ahhiyawa, and their distribution, see GÜTERBOCK (1984); for all the occurrences of the toponym see the texts collected by BECKMAN - BRYCE - CLINE (2011). Cf. also CARRUBA (1995) for a discussion on the possible origin and interpretation of the name, the connection of which with Western toponyms, however, remains problematic.

9 For a history of the studies, see BECKMAN - BRYCE - CLINE (2011), 1-4; cf. also the contribution by GÜTERBOCK (1984), which presents an excellent photograph of the state of the art in the early 1980s, the moment in which most of the scholarly world forfeited Sommer’s (1932) view that Ahhiyawa was, in fact, merely a West Anatolian polity.

6 For this view, see FISCHER 2010, 51.

7 It will suffice here to quote the extensive monograph by BACHVAROVA (2016), containing an extremely rich bibliography on the topic.

The early references to the toponym/ethnonym Ahhiya in the pre-imperial documents¹⁰ have, using Taracha's words, «ethnogeographical value and cannot be connected with the 13th century BC evidence for the Great Kingdom of Ahhiyawa».¹¹ However, as neatly and clearly outlined in a 2019 contribution by Waal,¹² there are two documents that have been used to prove that the ruler of the Ahhiyawa kingdom was considered, by the Hittite King, to be a Great King (LUGAL GAL) and a peer of his own. These texts are the *Letter of Tawagalawa* and the *Treaty of Tudhaliya IV with Šaušgamuwa of Amurru*. A couple more references by a Hittite king to an Ahhiyawa ruler as “my brother” (ŠEŠ-YA) appear in fragmentary documents (KUB 23.98 and KUB 26.91).

In general, the sources leave no doubts about the fact that the Hittite king who authored the Tawagalawa letter, probably Hattušili III,¹³ wished to recognize to this Aegean counterpart the same rank as himself. While sources sometimes lie, if the letter is in fact a letter that was written, sent, and received, then the content of the text may not be reasonably questioned. On the other hand, the fact that the evidence is concentrated in a document that dates to the aftermath of a moment of political crisis in Anatolia, means that the exact interpretation of its significance should be critically assessed.¹⁴ A fair deal of attention has been paid to the Western part of the crisis, with the reference to a war waged on Wiluša being named as a potential

candidate for the real-world counterpart of the mythical Trojan War. The Western regions of Anatolia, however, were not the only areas that suffered a period of uncertainty starting from the 1280s BCE. The coup that put Hattušili III on the throne of Hatti was followed by confused reactions by the Anatolian principalities, as testified by the (reconstructed) contents of the correspondence between Kupanta-Kurunta of Mira and Ramses II, in which the former tries to find out whether there is any truth to the voices of an Egyptian support to the fugitive Muršili III, or if Egypt did, in fact, side with the usurper Hattušili.¹⁵ It is also possible that the involvement of Mira in the affairs of the Hittite court in this phase was so deep that Kupanta-Kurunta had been more or less directly tasked with hosting and guarding the exiled Muršili III, as was proposed by De Martino (2018a). Whatever the exact details, the central decades of the XIII century were obviously a very tense and eventful time for the relationship between Hatti and the West. It is therefore very likely that the recognition of the “great kingship” of the King of Ahhiyawa was a result of Hattušili's need to consolidate his international network, in a moment in which his role as the new king of Hatti was still uncertain, and, at the same time, the warlord named Piyamaradu was compromising the stability of the Hittite influence in the Western areas of the Anatolian peninsula.

If the reference to the King of Ahhiyawa as a Great King in this context can be explained as a form of *captatio benevolentiae* and linked to a specific contingency, it is clear that the hypothesis of a stable participation of a Mycenaean ruler in the network of the Ancient Near Eastern Great Kings in the post-Amarnian world becomes much weaker, and speculative at best. Nor does the problematic,

10 CTH 147 (Indictment of Madduwatta; BECKMAN - BRYCE - CLINE 2011, 69-100), CTH 571 (Oracle; BECKMAN - BRYCE - CLINE 2011, 220-233), Or. 90/1600 + Or. 90/1706 (Letter; SÜEL, 2014).

11 TARACHA 2018, 215-216. See also MARAZZI 2018, 265-266; YAKUBOVICH 2010, 79.

12 See WAAL 2019, 9-30.

13 The identification of the king with Hattušili III is now convincingly defended by HEINHOLD-KRAHMER (2020b, 366-376).

14 For similar observations on the limited duration of the recognition of the rank of Great King to the Ahhiyawa ruler, cf. STEINER (2007).

15 We possess evidence of Ramses' reply (CTH 166). For an interpretation, see BRYCE (2003, 72) and CORDANI (2017, 92-94).

erased reference to Ahhiyawa among the “Great Kingdoms” in the Šaušgamuwa treaty change the situation.¹⁶ The insertion was, obviously, either a mistake or something that was corrected in the official version of the treaty, because it was cancelled by the scribe (for further discussion on the reasons of the emendation see De Martino 2018b)¹⁷. If it were a mistake, the reason may have been that the scribe had memorized Ahhiyawa among the names of the important kingdoms during the reign of Tudhaliya’s predecessor. If, as it seems more reasonable to suppose, we assist to an early stage of preparation of the treaty, the Hittite court eventually decided not to carry on with the attempt at treating Ahhiyawa as a “Great Kingdom”. Neither of these two hypotheses would contradict the scenario that has been proposed, with Ahhiyawa being occasionally included in the list of “peers” of Hatti only in letters and documents addressed to its ruler(s), without it entering the proper diplomatic network that involved Egypt and the Syro-Mesopotamian world.

The advantages of this weak interpretation are manifold (see, in general, Marazzi 2018, for further discussion). First of all, we need not assume that the correspondence between the Hittite court and the Ahhiyawa was written in cuneiform Akkadian, which sounds hardly credible as no evidence exists either of the presence of such documents or of the presence of scribes trained in Akkadian to the West of Hatti (even the scribes of Arzawa, for the Letters EA 31 and 32 found in Egypt, had to resort to Hittite: how credible is it that some 50 years later Akkadian was used and mastered in Greece?). Furthermore, if Ahhiyawa was, in fact, a major power in the Ancient Near Eastern network, we would certainly expect many more mentions of it

outside of the Hittite archives. But apart from Alašiya (Cyprus), which was, at this stage, not necessarily a Greek polity,¹⁸ it would be inappropriate to state that the Western interface areas played a significant role in the Amarnian and post-Amarnian diplomatic and international documentation. That the contacts were a specific Anatolian fact, and that the temporary addition of Ahhiyawa to the list of the Great Kingdoms was a specifically Anatolian feature linked to a precise historical contingency, also reflects the scenario that was reconstructed by other scientific approaches to the problem. Direct contacts between the literatures of Greece and the non-Anatolian Ancient Near Eastern world have not been demonstrated, and the examples of language contacts are very weak for the Mycenaean phase, and become more frequent in the Iron Age, when the circulation of goods and words happened via the maritime routes and generally originated in the Levant (see below, §5).

3. AHHIYAWA: A LARGE TERRITORIAL KINGDOM OF ASIA MINOR?

When declaring his support to the hypothesis that the Ahhiyawa ruler was, in fact, a member of the “Club” of the Near Eastern Great Kings, Kelder also implies that the kingdom needs to have been a large territorial entity.¹⁹ The implication is, with very cautious phrasing, carried towards a rather bold conclusion in the final statement made by the author, that «the growing body of circumstantial evidence for a unified Mycenaean state now seems overwhelming».²⁰ Kelder does not write in a clear fashion that Ahhiyawa was the Hittite name of the Mycenaean federation and

¹⁶ The reference to Ahhiyawa is in CTH 105 iv 3 (BECKMAN - BRYCE - CLINE, 2011 60-61).

¹⁷ On the preserved versions of the treaty cf. DEVECCHI (2015, 226).

¹⁸ On the complex problem of the ethnical, linguistic, and political history of Cyprus in the Late Bronze Age, cf. the overview offered by I. VOSKOS and A.B. KNAPP (2008, 659-684).

¹⁹ See KELDER, 2012, 42-44.

²⁰ See KELDER, 2012, 50.

that the King of Ahhiyawa was its supreme authority, but this would evidently be the natural conclusion of this kind of reconstruction. A comparable view is defended by Pomeroy et al.,²¹ which clearly indicates that the theory has a wide support among scholars in classics.

A similar position is taken by Beckman, Bryce and Cline (2011, 3-5)²², who show cautious support for the position taken by Kelder in an earlier work,²³ in which the idea that Ahhiyawa would coincide with the whole of the Mycenaean network was defended in an even stronger way.

If we take a step back and consider the meaning and implications of such an interpretation, it will become completely obvious why this position has serious consequences regarding the issue of the contacts between Hatti and the Aegean. For the Hittites to have a conception whatsoever of such a thing as “mainland Greece”, we need to assume that diplomatic relationships were (1) stable and (2) long-distance. In other words, we need to assume that the letters authored by the Mycenaean polity were sent from Mycenae and that those authored by Hattušili and Tudhaliya ultimately reached the court of a supreme wanax. It must be stressed that there is a significant difference between the proposal of identifying Ahhiyawa with the whole Mycenaean world, centered in mainland Greece, and hypothesizing a direct connection with the Eastern Greek islands, which were obviously known to the Hittites and involved in the military events of the XIII century BCE (as pointed out once more and very convincingly defended by Hawkins in a recent contribution).²⁴

21 POMEROY *et al.* (2008, 39).

22 References provided by the three authors includes earlier scholarship: HAWKINS (1998), who proves that Ahhiyawa was not limited to the coastal areas of Asia Minor but included the Aegean islands; NIEMEIER (1998) who made a case for an identification with mainland Greece; STEINER (2007), who, on the contrary, wrote against the identification.

23 See KELDER (2010).

24 See HAWKINS 2020, 358-360.

Once the general scenario has been sketched in an unbiased fashion, it is time to move back to the problem of the definition of “large territorial kingdom” and examine the way this would or would not apply in the circumstances under discussion. The extension and structure of a putative Mycenaean federation during the age that corresponds to the Late and Final Bronze Age of the Ancient Near Eastern chronologies (ca. 1600-1180 BCE) represent a matter for Mycenologists to discuss. Assuming that such a formation existed, however, from the perspective of the Anatolian studies the question we should ask is how evident this would have been to the Hittites. While data about maritime routes stretching towards the Aegean and the Mediterranean are indubitable (and suffice it to mention the famous case of the Uluburun relict),²⁵ the seaborne activities of the Eastern kingdoms (both great and small) of the Final Bronze Age are generally concentrated in the easternmost areas of the Mediterranean: they do involve Cyprus (think of the diplomatic relationships between the Great King of Alašiya and the Amarna pharaoh, or, again, of the naval campaigns by Šuppiluliuma II)²⁶, but it is one thing to assume a gradual network of indirect contacts limited to the

25 On the Mycenaean commercial links with the Ancient Near East and the Levante, cf. JASINK - MARINO (2007, 424-426, with reference to further literature), where, however, the importance of the problematic reference to Ahhiyawa in the Šaušgamuwa treaty is not discussed in a sufficiently critical fashion. A more updated critical discussion is offered by MARAZZI 2018a and 2018b, with extensive references to previous scholarship

26 There are eight Alašiya-letters in the Amarna archives (EA33-40). As for the campaign by Šuppiluliuma against Cyprus, and for the relationship between Alašiya and Hatti, I follow the reconstruction summarized in DE MARTINO (2016, 104-105); for the problem of the attribution of KBo 12.38 to the last Hittite emperor cf. also the discussion in DEVECCHI (2015, 271).

peripheries²⁷ of the Aegean and Anatolian areas respectively (with letters exchanged reaching a local Greek authority in Anatolia or on the Eastern Mediterranean islands), it is another to hypothesize that the extension of the Mycenaean kingdom or federation was evident to the Hittites and that this played a role in the importance its kings were given within the Near Eastern diplomatic scene.

In other words, in spite of the circumstantial evidence that one can successfully reconstruct by skillfully composing a puzzle of archaeological, philological, and historical data, nowhere is there a solid indication of the fact that the Hittites had any conception of the extension of the Mycenaean civilization beyond the coastal areas of Asia Minor that they controlled and the islands nearby.

4. THE TROJANS AND THE TROJAN WAR

While my claim in this short contribution is that a methodologically rigorous approach would still require describing the Aegean-Anatolian interactions as involving merely *the peripheries* of the two areas, a point of convergence that cannot be neglected is the existence - allegedly on both sides - of a textual memory of the Trojan War. Troy, the modern site of Hisarlık, discovered by Schliemann, has been excavated and studied for almost 150 years.²⁸ Given the overwhelming amount of evidence, the identification of the Homeric Ilios with cuneiform Hittite Wiluša has

27 It is important to stress that, from an archaeological and historical perspective, Liverani (1986, 405-413) came to a similar conclusion regarding the *political* relationship between the Mycenaean world and the Near East: «il mondo miceneo non scrive accadico, non stipula trattati internazionali, resta ai margini politici di quel mondo vicino-orientale nel quale tanto vistosamente si inserisce sul piano strettamente commerciale» (p. 411).

28 Cf. the publications by DÖRPFELD (1902); BLEGEN *et al.* (1950-1958); BLEGEN (1963); KORFMANN (1998); ROSE (2014); MAC SWEENEY (2018). This is, of course, merely a representative selection: further references can be found in the quoted works.

been accepted almost unanimously by scholars, in spite of the caution expressed by Güterbock's 1986 famous article.

I too believe in the identification, and I am not attempting to challenge it. Some aspects of the problem are, however, still a subject for discussion. What is relevant for the limited scope of this modest contribution is trying to understand whether a common myth of the Trojan War (the fabulous "Wilušiad" mentioned by C. Watkins)²⁹ could exist. This is a point of interest because, if a single major event that can be identified with the Trojan War entered the main mythological traditions of both the Anatolians and the Greeks, this would possibly contradict the idea that the contacts between the two cultural areas were merely peripheral.

Unfortunately, the textual materials on the Anatolian side are not very helpful. Once we establish that some mythemes did migrate from the Eastern traditions to the Greek ones over a long period of time,³⁰ and that Wiluša is indeed a Hittite toponym employed in contexts that refer to a long military and political crisis that lasted at *least* from the 1280s to the 1230s BCE, we have not proved anything more than the existence of a possible historical comparandum and the obvious permeability of the Aegean-Anatolian cultural boundary. We do not need a large intercultural area of stable and intensive medium-to-long-distance contacts to explain any of these data.

Bolder claims, however, may be made. In light of the identification between Homeric and Anatolian anthroponyms, specific events that belong to the aforementioned Wilušan crisis have been suggested to be the very historical

29 C. WATKINS (1986; 1995, 146). The hypothesis is mostly based on the analysis of the phrase *alati Wilušati* in CTH 772.1: 45-46, allegedly calqued by the Homeric Ἰλίου ἀπεινής (Iliad 9.149).

30 On the literary circulation between Anatolia and the West, a general reference to Bachvarova's book (2016, with extensive references to previous scholarship) will suffice here.

counterpart of the Trojan war.³¹ The equiparation of the name Alakšandu (the king of Wiluša who signs a treaty with the Hittite emperor Muwatalli II) with the Greek Ἀλέξανδρος is linguistically convincing,³² but it can be easily and dangerously transformed in an identification of the very king Alakšandu and the Homeric figure of Alexander Paris, who, indeed, according to the myth should belong to the Trojan royal family. This would hint at a collocation of the Trojan war in a phase that is not far from the first decades of the XIII century BCE. Combining the data from the quasi-contemporary Manapa-Tarhunta letter, that refers to an Ahhiyawan involvement in the rogue warlord Piyamaradu's military activity in the Troad, with the references to a previous war at Wiluša contained in the Letter of Tawagalawa³³ (composed, probably, one generation later), one can easily conclude that Wiluša and the Ahhiyawa were involved in a war exactly during the period we just mentioned. One could almost be tempted to claim that the historical event that was then translated into an epic by Homer was found.

Still, the discrepancies are as significant as the hints that would support a match. Why is Paris not the king? Why is a predecessor of Alakšandu named Kukuni, a name that, if the

identification is correct, would be (very tentatively) matched by that of Κύκνοϛ, an ally of Troy whose name appears in the Homeric cycle (the earliest datable attestations being in Pindar, *Odes* II 148)?³⁴ These problems could be solved by conceding that literary re-elaboration was at work and not all the details of the Greek traditions need to reflect the historical truth. But if re-elaboration can be invoked by the maximalistic approaches when it comes to allowing discrepancies, then the very quest for an identification of the Trojan war loses its significance and its very purpose. The myth of the ten-year long siege of the city, if it should be historically explained, could very easily be allegorical for a long period of conflicts in a peripheral area of the Mycenaean world. In other words, the best candidate to be the historical event that was turned into the mythical siege may not be a single military event, but rather the whole military crisis that lasted, in the Wilušan area, for decades, starting at least from Muwatalli's reign. While the idea that the circumstance was important enough for the Anatolians to trigger the composition of myths similar to the Iliad is neither proven nor disproven, it must be admitted that the alleged formulaic match between [F]ῆλιος αἰπεινή in Homer and *alati Wilušati* in the Ištānuwa songs is by no means a strong enough piece of evidence to state that a Luwian myth was exported into Greece during the Final Bronze Age.³⁵

31 I refrain here from entering the complex problem of the alleged Luwian ethnicity of the Trojans, which remains, to date, unknown. Certainly, the finding of a single Hieroglyphic Luwian seal (E9.573; see HAWKINS - EASTON, 1996) in the site of Hisarlık is no proof that the Trojans were, in fact, Luwians. It does not even prove that Luwian was one of the languages used in Troy, as the circulation of single, small artifacts can happen very easily. For further details cf. the recent discussion in MORA 2016.

32 GÜTERBOCK (1986, 34) maintained some caution; the identification is, however, linguistically unproblematic if one considers that adaptations in contact scenarios often involve approximation and do not follow regular phoenic rules.

33 CTH 181 iv 7-9, see the edition in HEINHOLD KRAHMER 2020a, 35.

34 I thank Stella Merlin for surveying the classical sources about Κύκνοϛ. If one excludes those referring to his namesake who was instead killed by Heracles, all other sources are generally late.

35 See above fn. 29. One should also consider that this occurrence of *Wiluša-* lacks the regular cuneiform determinative URU used for city-names, and the very translation of Luwian *ala/i-* with “high, steep” is far from certain.

5. THE IMPLICATIONS FOR LINGUISTIC CONTACTS BETWEEN ANATOLIA AND THE AEGEAN

Obviously, a weaker theory of the Aegean-Anatolian contacts such as the one defended in these pages has implications for the interpretation of the data pointing at positive cultural and linguistic contacts between the two areas. Denying such contacts is no longer a defensible approach: the cuneiform Hittite data that refer to the Ahhiyawa are unquestionable and significant, and the archaeological records leave no doubts about the Greek activities in the Eastern Mediterranean starting from the Final Bronze Age. One may, however, briefly reconsider the way in which we decide to contextualize and categorize them.

A first issue that often emerges in works dedicated to Aegean-Anatolian cultural contacts is the chronological one. While the evidence for contacts in the Bronze Age is overwhelming, but the reflexes in the Greek sources are, except for very few personal names in the Linear B records, significantly later. We do not have a clear idea of how the materials that converged in the final *Verschriftlichung* of the Homeric poems looked like before the full Iron Age, so there is no way to tell whether the diffusion of *topoi* such as the releasing of the prisoners (remindful of the Hurrian-Hittite *Song of Release*), or the cry of Achilles after Patroclus' death (remindful - but is it really? - of Gilgameš's mourning Enkidu), entered the Aegean world by means of Mycenaean-Luwian/Hittite Bronze Age contacts, or if they entered in a later phase, possibly during the Dark Ages of the XII and XI centuries BCE, or, again, if they represented parallel developments of quasi-universal topics (in a fashion similar to the Eastern/Western parallel developments theorized by Haubold 2013, 71-72). The likeliest option is probably that they were gradually absorbed over the centuries by means of peripheral interactions. This problem can be raised regarding virtually

every shared feature that was discussed in literature, to the point that in some cases the evidence quoted by the scholars is *so late* that it could be debated whether it makes sense to discuss it at all.³⁶

If the diffusion of something as ill-defined as a "cultural feature" is obviously difficult to track, the other kind of evidence that is frequently discussed when dealing with Greek-Anatolian contacts, language contact, is much more visible and recognizable.

While a precise taxonomy could be much more complex,³⁷ language interference phenomena can be roughly categorized into two different types: lexical interference (including loanwords, *Wanderwörter*, some kinds of calques), and grammatical interference (affecting the structure of the language on the phonological or morphosyntactic layers).

The recent attempt by Oreshko (2018) to deny the existence of lexical exchange between the Aegean area and the Anatolian one is too hasty. Firstly, it is limited to a small sample of analyzed words (compare the recent collection by Simon 2018 for a larger case study). Secondly, it tends to exclude the possibility that words were borrowed unless there was a specific lexical gap in the target language, a statement that is certainly not correct in the field of contact linguistics (I quote from p. 109: «a crucial prerequisite for a borrowing from a foreign language in a situation of casual language contact, is that the respective word is absent in the receiving language»).

Anatolian loans in Greek and shared

36 This is the case, for instance, of the practice of sacrificing and burying pigs, attested in the Hittite ritual KUB 17.28 and compared, in a work by B.J. COLLINS (2006), to the Greek practice of pig-burials in the *thesmophoriae*. While archaeological evidence of burial of animals in Asian Minor Greek sanctuaries exist, as duly observed by the author, the information about the mystic festival is only carried by a late scholion to Lucian (Scho.Lu.80.2.1). Therefore, quoting it with reference to the diffusion of an Anatolian ritual practice to Greece seems quite incautious.

37 See S. THOMASON (2001) for a very insightful and influential overview.

Wanderwörter existed, but in many cases the circulation involved Iron Age networks such as the Levantine West-Semitic one or the West Anatolian vernaculars of the 1st millennium BCE, which redefines the frameset in terms of *longue durée*.³⁸

When limiting the survey to the 2nd millennium, the amount of available material is quite modest. The forms that are attested in Linear B and can be safely compared with Anatolian words are currently three: *di-pa*, a vessel (Simon 2016 and 2017), *ku-wa-no*, a mineral (Giusfredi 2017), *mo-ri-wo-do* “lead” (Melchert 2008). Of these, only the first and the third seem to qualify as something more specific than a *Wanderwort*, while *ku-wa-no* is probably a word that circulated, with culture-specific semantic differences, in the Eastern Mediterranean, so it cannot be used to demonstrate direct borrowing. Other words have been mentioned in literature, such as *da-pu₂-ri-to-jo* “labyrinth” (see Valerio 2017), or *ko-wo* “fleece” (cf. Simon 2019, 297-299), but the exact Anatolian model language is difficult to identify. As for further hypotheses, which abound in literature, such as the *e-re-pa* “elephant”, or the *a₃-za* “goat”, they can generally be explained as either inherited words or as *Wanderwörter* of unknown origin (not necessarily involving the Anatolian area, as in the case of the unsupportable connection *Myc. e-re-pa* : Hitt. *lahpa-* “ivory”, on which cf. Simon 2018, 390).

38 Cf. Zs. SIMON (2018), for a general overview on the types of borrowed lexical material in Greek. On the possible Anatolian origin of the word for “copper”, κῦαρος, see also GIUSFREDI (2017). Non-Anatolian Near Eastern words also exist, even if not all of them were recognized, but they are also frequently mediated by Levantine Semitic languages. Several examples are contained in Rosół, (2013, with a summary on the date of the loans at pp. 218-219). In general, it will suffice here to remark that the majority of the available Near Eastern lexical material in Greek is not easily dated to the II millennium BCE.

Furthermore, lexical interference is not a more compelling indication of intensive cultural exchange than the circulation of literary materials through mediated or gradual contacts via a permeable periphery. Lexical interference, indeed, can happen quite easily, even between cultures that were in indirect or loose contact with each other. For it to demonstrate the presence of intensive contacts, it needs to involve a massive circulation of lexical material, such as the one that will occur during the full Iron Age, when the Greek culture was strongly projected towards the Eastern Mediterranean and Asia Minor.

The problem of grammatical interference is different. For languages to project grammatical features on other languages, a long and intensive period of contact is necessary, such as the one that occurred in the late antique, medieval, and modern age in the Balkans.³⁹ Comparable cases in the ancient world may have existed, but, in the Near Eastern Area, the identification of large interregional areas of grammatical interference has so far produced no clear results, with areas of local interference being often limited to small city-states or networks. Examples include (but are not limited to) the possible III millennium BCE Sumero-Akkadian interference area in Southern Mesopotamia;⁴⁰ the Late Bronze Age multilingual city of Hattuša;⁴¹ and, for the Iron Age, the Luwo-Aramaic local area of interference of Sam'al.⁴²

As for the Aegean-Anatolian interface, the hypothetical examples of grammatical influences of Anatolian on Greek generally do not regard Mycenaean, but the language of the Homeric poems, which is famously difficult to date. Assuming that some of its features go back to the Bronze Age, we will briefly need to mention

39 On the Balkan area, cf. WEINREICH (1953) and more recently MATRAS (2009, 266).

40 EDZARD (1977); PEDERSÉN (1989); DEUTSCHER (2000, 20f.).

41 See YAKUBOVICH (2010).

42 See GIUSFREDI - PISANIello, *in press*.

them, proposing that they can be divided in three groups. The first group includes alleged contact-induced phenomena that can be and have been explained as truly inherited Greek features, and should thereby be rejected. Examples include the alleged extension of the *-ske-* suffix to unexpected verbal forms in Homer or the use of modal particles.⁴³ The second group includes formulaic calques, such as the sequence $\tau\acute{\iota}\varsigma \tau\alpha\rho$ calquing Luwian *kuis-tar*,⁴⁴ or other isolated constructions that present parallels in Anatolian (cf. in general Dardano 2013). In these cases, contact may indeed be at work, but the phenomena are limited to literary language and depend on literary interference rather than reflecting actual changes in the *langue* of Greek. Finally, a third group of changes seems to be legitimately explainable in terms of proper areal tendencies. One may quote, for instance, the phonotactic constraint against initial /r/, present in Greek, Anatolian, Hurrian and Hattian, or the rather idiosyncratic ending $-\mu\epsilon\nu$ of the first plural person in the Eastern Greek dialects, matching the Hittite and Luwian endings of both the past and the present paradigms.⁴⁵ However, even if some of these phenomena depended on areal convergences, it is extremely unlikely, if possible at all, that they took place during the historical age of the contacts between the Hittites and Luwians and the Greeks of Asia Minor (how did some of these changes affect Greek as a whole? Why has Western Greek no initial /r/ either?). This forces us to consider the much likelier possibility that the shared innovations of Greek and the *geographically* Anatolian languages rather reflect proto-historical convergences, which may have taken place in different areas and at different stages.⁴⁶

43 E.g. F. DE DECKER (2021), with references to previous scholarship.

44 See BIANCONI 2015, 147-148, for references to previous scholarship.

45 See BIANCONI 2015, 139-140.

46 Compare here the very important observation by GARCÍA RAMÓN (2011, 43), who stresses that some areal convergences may have occurred in proto-historical times.

All in all, the available data, while not excluding some forms of linguistic interaction during the Late Bronze Age, seem to confirm the critical approach that was already taken by Hajnal (2014, 2018).

The overall scenario, that can be described as characterized by the absence of conclusive data for the existence of extensive and intensive bilingual areas, has consequences for the matter of combining the linguistic picture with the historical one. Indeed, while the quasi-absence of proper grammatical interference at work *in historical times* would not necessarily imply that contacts were moderate, its presence would have required a stronger intensity. In other words, the pattern of linguistic interference between the Aegean area and the Anatolian one does not strictly exclude any possibility, but it is consistent with the cautious (and in my opinion more economical) model defended in these pages.

6. TENTATIVE CONCLUSION

With respect to political history, cultural interference, and language contact, the evidence currently available regarding the interactions between the Aegean Mycenaean world and Bronze Age Anatolia is perfectly compatible with a model involving what I would label as “contact between peripheries”. On one hand, the reference to the King of Ahhiyawa as a Great King is best explained as an occasional (although very significant) consequence of a specific historical contingency; on the other, data pertaining to literary interference imply, in all likelihood, a mild attrition over the *longue durée*. The same situation occurs when one considers the problem of language contact: synchronic grammatical interference appears limited, if not absent, while the exchange of lexical material occurred over several centuries, often involving the Iron Age Levant area, and does not necessarily need to be described as connected to a Bronze Age pattern of highly intensive contacts.

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