

Archaeolinguistics and the historical study of contacts in Anatolia

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1. *The origin of things and the Indo-European problem*

1.1. *Introduction*

The query about the origin of things is a dangerous one. It is very rare, in historical sciences, for data to be old enough and complete enough to allow an uncontroversially acceptable reconstruction. Yet the temptation seems to be irresistible for scholars in many disciplines, and historians, archaeologists, and linguists are no exception. While the research carried out by the team of the project PALaC (*Pre-classical Anatolian Languages in Contact*) concentrated on the study of linguistic and cultural contacts in the historical ages of the Anatolian and “peri-Anatolian” world, it proved impossible to proceed without facing the problem of the original substrate-superstrate relationships between the Early and Middle Bronze Age cultures in these areas. As a substrate-superstrate model involves an asymmetry both in prestige and in the time of occupation of a contact region, the attempts to model interferences and influences are affected by the problem of establishing the dia-

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chronic precedence of a given culture with respect to another one, which, in turn, calls into question the problem of matching pre-literate material cultures with historical ones (by historical, we mean cultures that produced written documents, and whose official linguistic code and identities are, therefore, allegedly known).

The field of research that tries to investigate the proto-history of language-culture pairings is sometimes called “archaeolinguistics”. Examples of archaeolinguistic problems include: the identification of a material culture with a historical linguistically-defined civilization (e.g., the Luwians, or the Proto-Anatolians, with Western or South-Western Anatolian material cultures), the identification of the origin of an allegedly intrusive demographic component (e.g., the problem of the *Urheimat* of the Indo-Europeans), or, in some cases, with the involvement of the natural sciences, the attempt at matching not just the linguistic and the material *facies* of an ancient group, but also its genetic material.

In this section, we will concentrate on the first two aspects of the archaeolinguistic agenda, and we will try to offer an overview of its methodological limitations, which, in general, depend on methodological scope of the very disciplines it aims to combine, rather than on the combination thereof.

1.2. “Proto-Indo-European United”: the “sin” of the linguists

For those who study Anatolia, the query about the origin of things coincides, basically, with the problem of explaining and understanding the meaning of the Indo-European presence in the area. What are the Indo-Europeans? Many definitions may be given, and some, coming from the most optimistic scholars, may contain very precise descriptions of their cultural features: they were selective incinerators, worshipped specific deities, organised knowledge in lists of body parts or other significant taxonomies derived from their exquisite experience of the world, disliked dragons and probably invented poetry.¹ As a matter of fact, this way of thinking is historically dangerous, and it is certainly methodologically shortsighted, if not blind. The Indo-Europeans are a hypothetical cultural group of people who are assumed to have spoken a common language we reconstruct. No one was able to prove any of the hypotheses on their origin based on linguistic criteria, nor is anybody capable of explaining *when* exactly Proto-Indo-European would have

1. It would be impossible to provide here a complete list of references. The reader may, however, cf. the *Encyclopedia of Indo-European Culture* (Mallory – Adams 1997), containing entries such as *Anatomy* (17-19), *Dragon* (169), *God* (230-232), *Goddess* (232-233), *Indo-European Homeland* (290-299), *Poetry* (436-439), *Snake* (529-530).

been an undivided living spoken language. All the attempts to reconstruct the original culture of the Indo-Europeans are based on the individual judgment of scholars about what must have been a conservative ancient feature preserved in written records which, in the best possible scenario, must have been composed at least a couple of thousand years after the age of the “Proto-Indo-European Utd.”.

All ancient languages that have been recorded in an age that is *relatively* close to the age of the Proto-Indo-Europeans show traces that indicate interference from much earlier times. Sumerian, for instance, is attested at least one thousand years before the first Indo-European textual record, and yet it is certainly affected by other languages of the Mesopotamian Chalcolithic (ca. 5000-3000 BCE), as demonstrated by the presence of substrate and foreign lexical material.² Old Egyptian seems to entertain contacts with the languages of Darfur and Chad.³ Yet, when dealing with the Indo-European problem, linguists reconstruct the proto-language using – legitimately – the only available method: internal reconstruction. While this is methodologically correct, the limits of the scope should be evident before taking a step too far: the recognition of inherited phonetic and morphological material is solid,⁴ but the recognition of cultural content related to it is completely hypothetical, because semantic change is not mechanical and because the choice to consider a concept “old” enough to correspond to an original culture is subject (1) to the individual judgment of the single scholars or schools and (2) to the historically unlikely idea that a unitary culture existed that spoke the pure uncontaminated reconstructed language at a given time and in a given region. If any of this does not hold up (and, as we have argued, we believe much of it may not), the cultural reconstruction becomes extremely speculative, and the very problem of the linguistic definition of a “cultural identity” proves to be much more complex than previously recognised.⁵

2. On the existence of substrata and circulation of foreign lexical material – possibly from more than a single language – in Early Mesopotamia, see the overview and critical discussion by Rubio (1999). While the scholar suggests that the situation was a «complex and fuzzy web of borrowings whose directions are frequently difficult to determine», phenomena of interference unquestionably existed.

3. Cf. Cooper (2017), with reference to previous scholarship.

4. The solidity of the reconstruction of language-internal diachronic change depends on the absolute regularity of context-induced phonetic laws. Other kinds of linguistic change, e.g. those involving semantics and syntax, are less predictable and therefore impossible to reconstruct with certainty.

5. A related problem is, of course, the one regarding the methodological issues we face when trying to identify an original core-lexicon of Proto-Indo-European words (and concepts). For a recent discussion of these further methodological issues, cf. the observations by Simon (2020: 241-242).

Indeed, groups are normally defined by a set of behaviours that leave a trace in the material culture, and this is undeniable, but at the same time they are defined by a shared linguistic code. However, neither can the material culture be regarded to as a mechanical indicator of identity (we will come back to this point later), nor can the linguistic code be regarded as a unique homogenous language, but rather as a mixed-code deriving at the same time from inheritance and interactions. When the interactions cannot be traced back to solid comparanda, because we found ourselves beyond the limits of historical records, any reconstruction is, by definition, speculative (or, if the problem of proto-historical interactions is ignored, inherently flawed).

1.3. *Proto-Indo-European intrusion: the “sin” of the historians*

If the overconfident use of linguistic reconstruction to explore cultural history is highly risky and very problematic, the opposite approach is unfortunately not much better. If one compares the way the Indo-Europeans appear to linguists with the way the historians deal with them, a significant mismatch emerges, which, to our knowledge, has not yet been discussed in literature.

According to Mario Liverani, in his ever-green 1988 book *Antico Oriente: storia, società, economia*, what we can confidently tell about the Indo-Europeans' advent in the areas they will historically (co-)occupy is that with the crisis of the second urbanisation (or of a comparable technological and social wave), new demographic components arrived and took over the same social structures that were produced by the societies that had preceded them. It is funny that the way the linguists describe the role of the Indo-Europeans and the way we historians interpret it are apparently not just different, but actually opposite. Even funnier is the fact that this observation has never been explicitly raised in scholarly literature. On the linguistic side, we would be dealing with an exquisite innovative culture that reshaped the world with its *Weltanschauung*, while on the historical side we are dealing with an intrusive element that mostly reused technical, social, and cultural achievements and structures produced by the former major cultures in the regions affected by the new demographic wave.

If the position defended by the most optimistic linguists who think they can describe the original Indo-European culture has been shown to be methodologically weak, we will now proceed to discuss the symmetrical weakness of the minimalist view that may arise from a reductionist interpretation of Liverani's brilliant observation.

The symmetry of the two flawed approaches is striking. Just as impeccable as the methods of internal linguistic reconstruction, if they remain language-internal, equally impeccable is Liverani's observation about the social reuse of the former structures by the new leading cultures after the *emergence* of the Indo-European element in many areas of Eurasia. The relationship between the Hittite element and the Hattian one resembles that between the Mycenaean and the Minoan ones, as well as that between the Indo-Iranian elements and the non-Indo-European components of Iran and the Indian Subcontinent.⁶ Even smaller areas, like Sicily, may have followed this very pattern.

Yet even in this case a methodological leap often occurs when we try to move from the *description of historical data* to the attempt to use them to describe proto-historical patterns.

One thing is to observe that the historical civilizations that used Indo-European languages co-existed with civilizations that did not; another thing is assuming that we can, based on this fact, establish that the presence of the Indo-European element was geographically intrusive with respect to the non-Indo-European one in a given region.

The very fact that we cannot, out of sheer methodological impossibility, identify either the cultural identity frameset or the linguistic identity of proto-historical and pre-historical groups, means that we simply cannot state anything safely as regards the chronology of the arrival of specific cultural and linguistic elements in an area. The fact that the Hattians were not Indo-European does not imply that they were settled in Anatolia before what a migrationist theory would deem the "arrival" of the Hittites and Luwians (or rather Proto-Anatolian), nor can the degree of internal variance in alleged demographic waves in terms of linguistic and cultural "lineage" be safely assessed.

2. *Let's move backwards*

2.1. *The linguistic and cultural map of Anatolia during the Late Bronze Age*

As the imperialistic adventure of the 14th century BCE's Hittite rulers⁷ produced a wave of diffusion of the Anatolian linguistic (and epigraphic) traditions

6. On the non-Indo-European substrata of the Indian subcontinent see the introduction by Woodard (2008: 3-5).

7. We obviously refer to the formation of the so-called Hittite Empire during the 14th century BCE: while the use of the term "empire" is probably too daring when applied to interregional

outside of their original areas, let's start our journey backwards from the situation we can assess from the early Late Bronze Age (from the 16th century BCE).

The cuneiform sources that are available, and their interpretation by historians, archaeologists, and linguists, allow us to describe at least a few “civilizations” that inhabited Anatolia and modern Eastern Turkey.

The Hattian component is the only linguistically attested non-Indo-European one and we can assume that, at this stage, it coexisted with Hittite at least in the central bend of the Kızılırmak river,⁸ with Hittite possibly having spread from the South Eastern parts of Cappadocia (but this is a case of political expansion, not a proto-historical migration!). As for the Indo-European ones, we can place the Hittite area in the same area as the Hattian one (with a wider extension to the lands south of the river, regardless of the direction of such an expansion). The Palaeans were probably settled in the North, somewhere in Bithynia and Paphlagonia,⁹ while the Luwians were generically settled both in the Central and Western Anatolia and in Cilicia, where we know from historical sources that the Northern Mesopotamian Hurrian elements were beginning to intrude (again, in terms of political expansion, perhaps producing some sort of mixed culture that might already have had some impact on the local linguistic varieties).

Other components are however more difficult to place in a specific geographical position. This is especially valid for the best attested Iron Age languages: Lycian (A and B), Lydian, and Carian (as well as the later Sidetic and Pisidian) certainly did not appear out of the blue during the 1st millennium BCE.

The geographical collocation of the Bronze Age forefathers of the Lycians (the peoples of Lukka) in almost the same region that the Lycians will occupy during the Iron Age is generally unproblematic, at least if one deals with the issue at a

formations that preceded the Neo-Assyrian and Achaemenid ones, the wide geographical horizon of the Hittite influence is what matters for the purpose of the present paper, because it was certainly responsible for the diffusion of the Luwian linguistic element to Syria.

8. For a discussion of a possible wider area of diffusion of Hattian (or, at least, of Hattian toponyms), see Simon (2018: 263-264), with reference to previous scholarship.

9. But see Simon (2018: 263-264) for the possibility of a wider diffusion.

macroscopic level.¹⁰ As for the Carians, whether or not they can be identified with the Bronze Age land of Karkiša remains open to debate.¹¹

The problem of the origin of the Lydians on the other hand is extremely interesting, as it represents a fantastic example of how two half-hints should not be considered equivalent to a whole piece of evidence, especially when they do not complete each other but actually represent generalisations within the frameset of different scientific approaches. The “Lydian homeland” would allegedly lie in the northwestern part of the Anatolian peninsula. While the material culture that emerges in the Hermos area around the 12th century BCE¹² may or may not be connected with the Lydian peoples, the idea that their original geographical region extended further to the North derives from surprisingly weak and scattered arguments. First, it has appeared linguistically tempting to consider Lydian as closer to the Luwic languages than to Hittite.¹³ While cultural evidence, being late, should not be used to support linguistic genealogical proximity, some other arguments are more technical, and include, for instance, the presence of shared morphological traits. The problem of the filiation of Lydian is complex and we are not going to discuss it here; it will suffice to emphasise that genealogical proximity, if any, does not entail geographical contiguity at all stages of the diachronic development of an area. That the Lydians were probably always settled in the Western area of Anatolia is also historically and archeologically convincing. The problems come when one proposes a northern homeland, such as the one suggested in the following map, based on the one published by Melchert (2003: 9 Map 1):

10. But cf. the outstanding monograph by Gander (2010), with detailed discussion of many specific details that remain problematic.

11. Cf. Simon (2015) for a critical discussion; Hawkins (2013: 36) for a reply to Simon’s criticism (the article appeared before Simon’s one, but it quotes the original conference presentation). Cf. also Schürr (2018) and Oreshko (2019, in particular 140-144).

12. For an overview see Roosevelt et al. (2018).

13. For a recent overview and proposal regarding the genealogical relationships of the Anatolian languages, see Rieken (2017).



Figure 1: the alleged Lydian homeland

The position of the tentative collocation of the label “Lydian” (duly followed by a question mark) in this map is basically that of the heart of Mysia. Why Mysia? If one ignores the obviously unreliable observation by Strabo (*Geography* XII 8.3, Jones 1928) according to which the Mysian language would have been *μυζολύδιον ... καὶ μυζοφρύγιον* (a mix of Lydian and Phrygian), the only serious reason would be that Lydia proper was probably a part of a Luwian area in the Late Bronze Age.¹⁴ As the southern regions are no viable alternative, because they correspond to Caria and Lycia, a possible solution appears to be to move north.

The biggest problem with this line of thinking is the confusion between the “politically Luwian” area and the “culturally/demographically Luwian” area.¹⁵ Even if the Ephesos/Sardis region was part of a world that was politically dominated by the Luwian-speaking(?) dynasties of Western Anatolia, this tells us little as regards the presence of a local Lydian demographic component, that may very well have been already there.¹⁶ The history of the Ancient Near East is constellated with situations in which substrata are invisible or almost invisible until a catastrophic

14. Another argument that appeared in literature, based on the alleged etymologies of the very toponym Maša, has been convincingly refuted by Simon (2021: 189).

15. The very concept of a politically Luwian area is certainly confusing: we simply use it to refer to a kingdom ruled by a king who bears a Luwian name and acts as an opponent to the Hittite campaigns in Western Anatolia. This would, e.g., apply to Arzawa, but also to the Šeha River Land.

16. For a critical discussion of the evidence for the diffusion or Luwian in Western Anatolia, see Yakubovich (2010), Chapter 2. A lively debate followed, which cannot be discussed in detail, but was very recently critically assessed by Melchert (2020).

socio-political change makes them emerge and reach the surface. The Aramaeans were almost certainly already settled in Syria centuries before the Dark Age crisis overturned the Bronze Age socio-cultural and political constructs, and the same pattern applies to the emergence of the Indo-European elements in Elam or the Chaldean elements in Southern Mesopotamia.

This means that there are no compelling historical reasons to think that the Lydians moved to Lydia from Northern regions. Are there compelling linguistic reasons to think that? As a matter of fact, Lydian shares with Luwian and Lycian at least one important feature that is easily explained as a contact-induced areal shift: the so-called *i*-mutation, changing in /i/ the thematic vowel of the animate nouns and adjectives, only at the direct cases (nominative, accusative). As this change cannot be described in terms of a phonetic sound-law, it is unlikely to be a genetic inheritance (although the possibility, of course, exists), so its areal diffusion (e.g. in Luwian, Lycian, and Lydian, to mention only the major attested languages) would be a very suitable explanation if the area in which these languages were used coincided with what we could indicate as “southern” or “southwestern” Anatolia.

Apart from the cultures and areas we can at least tentatively describe, even for the Late Bronze Age there are portions of Anatolia as well as of the non-peninsular portions of modern Turkey that remain impervious to reconstruction.

Moving from Bithynia towards the Pontus, we first encounter the regions that are commonly identified with Pala and Tummana, the former considered, in principle, to be the area of origin of the population(s) that spoke Palaic. Identifying a clear boundary between the area one may want to reconstruct as culturally Palaic and the areas that were Hattian and later Hittite, is difficult. It is also difficult to establish the extension and diffusion of a culturally Palaic region (or even of a corresponding political entity). In general, Pala is also connected with the area of Hakpiš, which during the Hittite imperial age, was a stronghold against the diffusion of the non-Indo-European and allegedly tribal Kaška peoples (for a synthesis on Pala, Corti 2017). Whether the diffusion of the Kaška should be seen as intrusive – replacing the former Palaic culture – or rather as the emergence of a demographic component that already inhabited the area is impossible to tell, unless one wants to support a hardly believable pan-migrationist model of ancient history.



Figure 2: the map of the Anatolian polities mentioned in the Hittite texts, based on the analysis by Devecchi (2017)

Another problematic area is obviously the North West, at least if one refuses – or at least doubts, as we do – the northern Lydian homeland hypothesis. The identification of a few pretty convincing Luwic loanwords that enter Greek and show a peculiar presence of voiced initial stops led Simon (2017a) to hypothesise that a Luwic language that did not neutralise the sonority opposition of initial stops might have existed somewhere on the northern coast of Western Turkey.¹⁷ This hypothesis, in our opinion, has merit, but it slightly overemphasises the regularity of sound-change and preservation in contact scenarios. This means that if transmission was possible *not only* in case of a peculiar Luwic language with voiced initial stops, the

17. Simon (2017a: 253): «die Region des nördlichen Aktivitätsbereichs der Mykener entlang der Westküste Kleinasiens».

area of transmission of loans like δέπας (a goblet), γάγγαμον (a net), and βορβύλα (a food) could have been any Western Anatolian region with a significant Mycenaean presence (provided that the borrowing happened in the Bronze Age, which can be proven only for Gr. δέπας Mys. *di-pa*, if it is indeed a loan).¹⁸

In any case, all these problems regard the final centuries of the Late Bronze Age, when historical hints of a Luwian presence exist even in the northern areas of western Anatolia. Especially starting with the 14th century BCE, historical and archaeological data demonstrate that Mycenaean groups were settled in specific sites of Asia Minor too, and the poorly but positively preserved materials from the Hittite diplomatic interactions with the Ahhiyawa polity as well as with the kingdom of Wiluša – the latter being now almost unanimously¹⁹ identified with Homeric Troy – might hint at the fact that the Northern areas of the coasts may have also been an interface area.

Regardless of the details which are unknown, and of the actual intensity of the contacts, which is still debated by scholars,²⁰ the Late Bronze Age Greek-Anatolian interface scenario seems to result from an eastbound expansion of the sphere of influence of the Mycenaean world. On the contrary, the situation in the first centuries of the Late Bronze Age, which may have resulted in later substrate patterns, is unknown (which implies that trying to connect any later archaeological *facies* with one of the *known* cultures of Western Anatolia, such as the Luwic peoples or the Lydians, is extremely risky).

If different methodological views may lead to a more or less pessimistic attitude towards the reconstruction of the situation in the North-West, the North-East is quite unanimously considered mysterious. The historical data we possess for the Hittite imperial age (starting from the mid 14th century BCE) about lands like Azzi and Hayaša would point to a politically fluid situation, but this may depend on the filter of the Hittite perspective. Indirect linguistic links, such as the hypothetical connection of the toponym Hayaša with the modern name of Armenia (*Hayas-tan*),²¹ might perhaps have some merit, but toponyms are easily maintained even

18. For details see Simon (2017a).

19. For further details, see now Giusfredi (in press), with reference to previous scholarship. For a recent paper arguing against the identification, see also Schürr (2019).

20. Cf. Giusfredi (in press).

21. The connection is doubtful for both formal and historical reasons. On the formal similarity issues, see Kitazumi (2013). Historically, no traces exist of a continuation of the toponym in Urartian (a language that must have existed even during the Bronze Age, even if it is undocumented), where on the contrary, the toponym Armenia might have formally originated as a denomination for the

after large cultural and linguistic shifts, so even the available hints are not really helpful for reconstructing the situation of the Eastern Pontus region at the beginning of the Late Bronze Age. As for Eastern Anatolia, the political formations of Alzi and Išuwa are equally mysterious when it comes to the matter of their population and culture: they acted as interfaces between the Hittite and Hurrian areas of influence. The names of the Išuwean rulers are indeed Hurrian (among others, Ali-Šarruma and Ehli-Šarruma, cf. Devecchi 2017), but also in this case we are dealing with names from the royal élite that do not necessarily reflect the composition of the population. The Luwian names from the Korucutepe sealings (Güterbock 1973) may reflect an imported Hittite élite.

Moving towards south-eastern Anatolia, the same principle applies to the region known as Pahhuwa, where there is virtually no way to formulate hypotheses regarding local linguistic substrata (Devecchi 2017).²² Onomastic evidence from this region is likewise meagre, and eventually inconclusive. A local, but not necessarily indigenous, functionary attested on the single seal coming from the Late Bronze Age levels of Arslantepe, i.e. Hittite Malitiya, bore a Luwian name, Kurunti(ya) (CERVUS₃-ti). Another name attested on a seal certainly dating to the pre-Empire Late Bronze Age, but migrated into Iron Age levels, is *Pi-ti-ku-sà²*, which might contain the Hurrian element *benti(p)*- “rightful, right (velsim.)” as its first element (Mora *apud* Manuelli 2013: 268-269). Throughout the earliest Late Bronze Age phases (Level VB: ca. 17th-15th BCE) archaeological assemblages from Arslantepe display an interesting combination of Central Anatolian elements and local traditions continued from the Middle Bronze Age (Manuelli 2013). Strong contacts with the Upper Euphrates area, roughly corresponding to Išuwa, are evident throughout the Late Bronze Age sequence. This would concur with the historical information to show that the Arslantepe/Malitiya area worked as a sort of buffer zone between the Hittite core and the easternmost peripheries, to be seen in the context of international power struggles first with Mittani and later with the Middle Assyrian kingdom.

mixed Aramaic-Urartian area of the Upper Tigris (KUR *Arme* in the Sarduri texts; cf. Diakonoff – Kashkai (1981: 11), but also the different critical interpretation offered in Schmitt (2008); one may wish to cautiously compare the name of the first ruler of Urartu, *Aramu*, as a proof of the linguistic and cultural cohabitation in the area).

22. The name of Mita, recorded in the Hittite sources, must however be mentioned. Its apparent similarity to the Phrygian name of Midas was already noticed by Gurney (1948: 45-47), but while the comparison might yield historical speculations (Wittke 2004: 61-62), no connection has been proved in a conclusive fashion.

2.2. *The Middle and Early Bronze Age*

A holistic understanding of Middle Bronze Age (ca. 2000-1650 BCE) cultural-linguistic dynamics has to cope with a state of the art that is even more polarised than the one seen for the Late Bronze Age. On one hand, an impressive amount of textual data retrieved from the *kārum* of Kaneš (or Neša)/Kültepe depicts in great detail the commercial activities carried out by Old Assyrian merchants in Central Anatolia (Larsen 2015). These documents also yield abundant background information on the Anatolian socio-cultural scenario that confirms that Indo-European groups were already settled in the region, cohabiting with non-Indo-European Anatolians (e.g. Hattians), as well as with the foreign merchants seasonally or permanently residing in the main commercial stations (Michel 2002; Dercksen 2004; Goedegebuure 2008). Significantly, in later documents, Hittites will call their own language *nešili*, i.e. “Nešaeen”, thus suggesting that this was the main linguistic component with which Assyrians interacted at Kaneš/Neša. This would align with available onomastic data drawn from the *kārum* tablets that would point to Hittite, or better a variant thereof (Kloekhorst 2019), as the main component among others (see below). On the other hand, the Kültepe texts relate only to a fraction of Anatolia, comprising the Central and Eastern inland regions, leaving other areas completely out of focus. Unfortunately, the archaeological evidence can compensate only in part to this unbalanced situation. In fact, entire patches of land that are also situated outside the Old Assyrian trade network, especially the West, still remain ignored or poorly explored.²³ In this state of the art, any tentative reconstruction of ethno-linguistic interactions aiming to proceed beyond the Old Assyrian epigraphic corpus shall by necessity start from it.

The Old Assyrian trade network in Anatolia was part of a large commercial enterprise financially supported by central institutions, i.e. the palace and temples, as well as influential households residing in the Assyrian capital Aššur, but materially carried out by individual trade agents moving back and forth from different locations abroad and often residing there for relatively long periods. The bulk of the written documentation is thus represented by letters, receipts, and contracts, written in Old Assyrian cuneiform on clay tablets, and exchanged among various stakeholders involved in the network. Notwithstanding the contingent use and mundane matters mostly dealt with, these documents incidentally provide quite a

23. It is symptomatic of this state of the art that some of the most recent overviews on Anatolian pre-Hellenistic civilizations (Sagona – Zimansky 2009; Steadman – McMahon 2011) almost completely ignore Western Anatolia in their sections on the Middle Bronze Age.

clear picture of the indigenous Anatolian socio-cultural landscape, including geographical information that, compared with the later Hittite documentation and the available archaeological data, enables a quite safe reconstruction of the network's spatial scope (Barjamovic 2011; 2017). We know therefore that Assyrian commercial activities in Anatolia relied on a series of stations, hierarchically organised in *kārum* (main station) and *wabartum* (minor station), associated with major indigenous urban centres. The *kārum* of Kaneš, modern Kültepe (Kayseri province), was the primary node in this system, towards which all commodities and communications converged before flowing in either direction of trade.

The centres directly involved in the Old Assyrian network were distributed over a wide area, extending between the Taurus, the bend of the Halys River, and the Phrygian highlands down to the northern Konya plain. Other areas of Anatolia known for their relevance throughout the Bronze Age remained quite marginal in the Old Assyrian network if not even out of its focus. The most striking among such cases is certainly Cilicia, that yet represents a well-known natural passage and, since early prehistory, one of the main gateways in overland connections between Central Anatolia and the south and east (Renfrew – Dixon – Cann 1966; Palmisano 2018: 141-44). Another important area to consider in relation to trade networks but ignored by Old Assyrian routes is Western Anatolia that throughout the Early Bronze Age had represented the main interface between Aegean and Near Eastern spheres of interaction (Korfmann 2001; Şahoğlu 2005; Efe 2007). Unlike Western Anatolia, arguably too far from the Assyrian merchants' reach to be directly involved in their activities, Cilicia could be easily accessed from the Levant through the Amanus passes and has been part of the Syro-Mesopotamian system of contacts since the Chalcolithic period. Therefore, the exclusion of Cilicia from the Old Assyrian network would require another explanation more than mere geography, taking into account the commercial realities of the Near East during the Middle Bronze Age.

To begin with, it is now clear that the Assyrians were not alone in the commercial landscape of the Near East but part of a wider system of interlocking networks that joined Central Asia to Southeastern Europe (Barjamovic 2018; Massa – Palmisano 2018). In this context, Aššur was just one among several hotspots in Near Eastern trade, others being known from Lower Mesopotamia (Sippar), the Middle Euphrates (Mari, Karkemiš), the Levant (Ebla, Aleppo, Ugarit), and the Aegean (Minoan Crete). Likewise, there are reasons to think that several interacting circuits were active in Anatolia itself. An oft-cited Old Assyrian text warns an Anatolian ruler against dealing with 'Akkadian'-i.e. Babylonian-merchants, thus

incidentally revealing the presence of competing agents operating in nearby networks (Çeçen – Hecker 1995).

A number of elements now convincingly points to the Cilician involvement into one or more of these non-Assyrian networks. A *bullā* with an Akkadian cuneiform inscription unearthed at Tilmen Höyük suggests that in the early 2nd millennium BCE this site participated in trading activities possibly controlled by Babylonian centers (Marchesi 2013). Significantly, Tilmen is located close to the Amanian Gates (Bahçe Pass) giving access to the Cilician Plain, and thus controlling traffic in this direction. In the Cilician Plain itself, cylinder seals belonging to North-West Syrian stylistic traditions have been found at Tatarlı Höyük (Girginer – Collon 2014), while Tarsus has yielded an Old Babylonian seal (Goldman 1956: 230 Fig. 393, no. 28.35810; Palmisano 2018: 72-74). A few kilometres to the west, Sirkeli is now yielding evidence of a very extensive upper and lower town complex dating to the Middle Bronze Age that may well parallel the compound of citadel and *kārum* featuring Kaneš and other Old Assyrian trading posts in Central Anatolia. On the top of that, several finds from the Middle Bronze Age levels at this site seem to attest connections with North-West Syrian centres (Elsen-Novák – Novák 2020).

In turn, Cilicia was certainly well connected with Central Anatolia, as part of a circuit interlocking with the Old Assyrian network. Stamp seals/impressions belonging to Central Anatolian traditions feature at Sirkeli and Tilmen Höyük (Hrouda 1997; Marchetti 2011: 80-81, 94-95 Fig. 4.32). Crescent-shaped loom weights, typical of Central Anatolian weaving practices, are also common in Cilicia (Ahrens 2019, with further literature). Conversely, Cilicia might have worked as a gateway for the diffusion of Old Syrian- and Old Babylonian-style seals/impressions in Central Anatolia (Barjamovic 2019: 76; Palmisano 2018: 72-74). Specimens of Syro-Cilician ware, a class of painted pottery produced in Cilicia and the Levant between the 18th and the 16th century BCE, made their way to the Old Assyrian *kārum* of Acemhöyük and Kaneš, possibly via Porsuk, on the Cilician Gates (Bulu 2017; Matessi [in press]).

Due to its central position and rich settlement history, another major area of interaction during the Middle Bronze Age must have been the Konya plain (Massa et al. 2020; Barjamovic 2019). This region was only marginally involved in the Assyrian trade through the *wabartum* of Uš(š)a, which is, however, poorly attested in the *Kārum*-period corpus (Barjamovic 2011: 335-336, 370-372; Barjamovic – Gander 2015). Published archaeological record for the Middle Bronze Age in the Konya plain, almost exclusively limited to the glyptic corpus excavated at Konya-

Karahöyük (Alp 1968), supplements some additional material.²⁴ According to Barjamovic (2019: 75) the main referent of trades carried out in the Konya plain could have been Ebla, a hypothesis supported by the finding of several Old Syrian-style cylinder seals/impressions at Konya-Karahöyük. If so, the Konya plain would have been closely tied with Cilicia, possibly along trajectories of contact already at work in the Early Bronze Age (Efe 2007). As a matter of fact, specimens of crescent-shaped loom weights of Central Anatolian style closely matching Karahöyük examples have been found at Kilise Tepe, in the Göksu valley, which represents the natural link between Cilicia and the Konya plain (Collon – Symington 2007: 464).

In addition to the overland networks, seaborne contacts ought to play into the Middle Bronze Age patterns of interaction in Anatolia (Massa – Palmisano 2018). These mainly involved a Cypriot and an Aegean circuit. The former reached Central Anatolia, at Kültepe, through North Syrian and/or Cilician mediation (Kozal 2017: 88-89, 94). Middle Bronze Age Aegean artifacts do not seem to reach beyond the Minoan colonies on the Ionian coast (Kozal 2006: 185-188). However, some use of Aegean weighting systems is documented at Kültepe, thus indirectly attesting far-reaching connections between the Aegean and the Assyrian trading network (Palmisano 2018: 54-56). Even with the lack of direct archaeological proof, there is little doubt that inland Western Anatolia played a major role in enhancing these relations, nesting upon trajectories of material flow already at play during the Early Bronze Age (Massa and Palmisano 2018). The *kārum* of Puruṣhattum (Hittite Puruṣhanda) known from the Kültepe tablets seems to have worked as an interstitial market marshalling the interchange between the Assyrian and the Aegean/Western Anatolian trading circuits (Barjamovic 2011: 357-377).

As already emphasised, the linguistic map broadly arguable from the historical records of the Late and Middle Bronze Ages did not come out of the blue, but had a long incubation in the 3rd millennium BCE, termed the Early Bronze Age, and possibly even earlier. This period is not documented by native records and very little by foreign ones. The (semi-)fictional accounts of Akkadian kings' ventures in Central Anatolia, known only from later versions, concur with the archaeological record to indicate the presence of long-distance trading networks prefiguring subsequent ones (Osborne 2018). A few possible Anatolian names and a suggested loanword in the Ebla tablets would indicate that Anatolian languages were already present in the region and its surroundings by the 24th century BCE (Watson 2008;

24. Some scholars identify Konya-Karahöyük with Uṣša itself: see Forlanini (1998: 226); Barjamovic – Gander (2015: 507). But see also the later Forlanini (2008: 67), who proposes a localisation in the district of Kadınhanı, northwest of Konya.

Archi 2011). Beside these few hints, in addressing the Early Bronze Age we technically enter into the darkness of a mute prehistory. Therefore, any assessment of linguistic relevance for the Early Bronze Age and earlier periods can only be made by proceeding backwards from later sources and tested whenever possible against the archaeological record. Here we come to a first conundrum in our analysis: how deep in time does the linguistic situation attested in Anatolia during the 2nd millennium BCE have its roots? Given the affiliation of Proto-Anatolian to the Indo-European family, the answer to this question strictly depends on our views on the relationship between Anatolia and Indo-European population groups.

Traditionally, Anatolian is considered to have separated early from the Proto-Indo-European family, because of some features that make the group stand out among related languages. While some aspects of this problem have been convincingly reviewed and revised in recent years (see Melchert [in press] with extensive reference to previous scholarship), a recurring problem is the absence, in Hittite, of some categories that emerge in other branches of the family. There is no need here to delve into the details of this problem, but we consider nonetheless useful to briefly discuss its broader implications.

Some scholars interpret the peculiarities of Anatolian as a simplification from an earlier complexity that was instead retained by the other Indo-European languages (*Schwundhypothese*). Others, on the contrary, retain that Proto-Anatolian preserves a pristine situation that would have evolved later in more complex systems.²⁵ Advocating the latter view, starting from the 1920s it was proposed that Hittite, and thence Proto-Anatolian as later defined, was not a daughter language of Proto-Indo-European but rather a sister thereof, and that both Proto-Anatolian and Proto-Indo-European branched out from a common ancestor, later termed “Indo-Hittite” by Sturtevant (1933). Until recently (Drews 2001; Carruba 2009; Kloekhorst 2016), this view was considered too maximalist and remained peripheral to the mainstream debate on Anatolian linguistics.²⁶ Conversely, the identification of Anatolia as a cradle for Indo-European cultural frameworks, more or less inspired by the Indo-Hittite hypothesis, gained much credit in archaeological research. Besides earlier attempts (Childe 1957⁶), the most influential voice in this respect became Renfrew (1987; 2003) with his “language/farming dispersal” model

25. See Cotticelli-Kurras (2009) and Pisaniello (2020: 29-33) for more details on this debate.

26. Giusfredi (2020a: 18) points out that calling the first stage of a proto-language “Indo-European I,” “Indo-Hittite,” or “Indo-European with Anatolian” is, in fact, merely a labelling issue. As long as one agrees that Anatolia was the first group to separate from the common family, the only merit of using the label “Indo-Hittite” is the iconicity of the compound.

that proposes a correlation of the Indo-European expansion with the spread of farming from South-Central Anatolia to Europe around 6500 BCE. The model is quite simple because it requires a single factor, the increase in productivity allowed by agriculture, to explain the main motors deemed necessary for large-scale language diffusion: the demographic growth of Indo-European communities and the acceptance of their ‘superior’ economic organization and related socio-cultural features, including language, by receptive populations of indigenous foragers. From a linguistic point of view, Renfrew focuses on a negative evaluation of ‘linguistic paleontology’ methods but presents comparatively little positive clues in support of his model.

Renfrew’s theory did not meet wide acceptance among historical linguists, who generally retain as unlikely the preservation of the strong similarities encountered among Indo-European languages over the long period (ca. 5000 years) between the Neolithic and the earliest documented linguistic evidence; not to mention the latest attestations (1st millennium CE), which would require an additional 3000 years of conservation of early features (Anthony 2007: 75-81; Melchert 2011). Moreover, a substantial vocabulary, coherently shared among several Indo-European languages including Anatolian ones, such as the vocabulary for “wool,” “yoke,” and “hitch-pole”, is deemed to relate to technological innovations of the 4th and 3rd millennia BCE and thus could not find a way into even late Neolithic language families (Sherratt – Sherratt 1988; Darden 2001; Anthony 2007: 75-81).

The “language/ farming dispersal” model is at least defensible for the European cultural scenario, but it loses even more of its explanatory power when dealing with the eastward trajectories, involving Tocharian and, above all, the Indo-Iranian group. Mesopotamian cuneiform tablets document intense relations with the Iran area since the mid-3rd millennium BCE, and yet the earliest secure traces of an Indo-European penetration begin during the 2nd millennium. Leaving aside the problem of the Harappan script of the Indus Valley and the unknown language(s) codified thereby, the earliest attested one in the Iran area is Elamite, a non-Indo-European language spoken in south-western Iran at least until the early first millennium BCE and still used by the Achaemenid Great Kings in their official inscriptions. In order to cope with these obstacles, Renfrew is forced to accept the traditional later dating for the formation of the Indo-Iranian group (3rd millennium BCE; Renfrew 1996; Mallory 2001), which fits poorly into the general picture.

Rejecting on these bases the “language/ farming dispersal” model, and with it the Anatolian homeland hypothesis, philologists and historians generally agree that Indo-Europeans were intrusive into Anatolia and consequently any contact scenarios must have taken place *after* their arrival and settlement in the region. The classi-

cal view, first proposed by Gimbutas (1970), dates the earliest expansion of Indo-European languages and populations between 4500 and 3000 BCE in conjunction with the diffusion across Eurasia of monumental barrow tombs, the so-called *kurgans*, which occurred in multiple waves originating from the steppes of Ukraine and South Russia. The main pillars of this hypothesis are supposed analogies between the ‘Kurgan-culture’, largely centered on a pastoral economy and characterised by high mobility enhanced by horse riding and carts, and the hypothetical Indo-European culture reconstructed through the Proto-Indo-European proto-lexicon. Successive migration waves, coupled with the military advantage offered by horse riding, would have allowed aggressive Indo-European pastoralists to prevail over indigenous “Old European” agriculturalists, thus leading to the final success of Indo-European languages. In a thorough synthesis, Anthony (2007); (see also the more recent Anthony – Ringe 2015) has revisited and mitigated the *kurgan* hypothesis, in the frame of a more solid theoretical approach on migration processes. The strong militarism of Gimbutas’ reconstruction is thus rejected and replaced by a case-by-case analysis of cultural interactions across Eurasia from the Neolithic to the Late Bronze Age (ca. 6000-1500 BCE), taking into account the social and technological means available in this context. The evidence is clearly too patchy to allow following in all details the multiple streams of migration and cultural encounters involved in the revised *kurgan* model, which unavoidably makes many of Anthony’s arguments highly speculative. Nonetheless, seen as a whole, this model seems to offer the closest match with the reconstructed historical and linguistic scenario of the Indo-European expansion in both geographic and chronological terms.

A broad consensus among linguists, including those supporting the Anatolian homeland hypothesis, believes that Anatolian languages started to diverge from one another no later than ca. 2300 BCE and probably much earlier, at the turn of the 4th and 3rd millennia BCE (Melchert 2011). This would point to a separation of Proto-Anatolian from the other Indo-European branches within the 4th millennium (Darden 2001; Lehrman 2001), which is broadly compatible with the scenario reconstructed through the revised *kurgan* model. If this is so, we are then confronted with the problem of how did Indo-European groups first enter the Anatolian peninsula and what kind of interactions did they entertain with each other and with the local ethno-cultural environment, including other non-Indo-European populations, e.g. the Hattians. Unfortunately, the archaeological evidence currently at our disposal is unfit to provide a definitive solution to this problem.

To begin with, there is no cultural break in the Anatolian prehistoric record hitherto available from the Early Chalcolithic period onwards that cannot be explained in terms of internal processes. We are thus to exclude at the onset any hy-

pothesis of swift large-scale migration.²⁷ In the absence or current unavailability of any coherent set of material evidence allowing a systemic approach to the problem of Indo-Europeanisation in Anatolia and its trajectories, scholars have generally preferred to isolate individual features deemed proxies for an “Indo-European” material culture. This approach appears most symptomatic in scholarly evaluations about the Early Bronze Age cemetery of Alaca Höyük, in North-Central Anatolia.

The Alaca Höyük cemetery is a complex of fourteen shaft graves roofed with timber beams that yielded an astonishing wealth of metal and other objects deposited as burial offerings (Koşay 1944; Koşay – Akok 1966; Gürsan-Salzmänn 1992). Most graves contained adult individuals facing west in a flexed position, while others displayed secondary inhumations of either articulated or disarticulated bodies. Substantial animal sacrifices accompanied the burials. In particular cattle hides, resulting in patterns of skulls-and-hooves after the skin deterioration, were deposited in pairs on the top of the graves. The highly symbolic value attached to cattle hides, as well as the grave architecture and the rich paraphernalia, bear resemblances to the *kurgan* burials of the Maikop culture, in the North-West Caucasus, and the Yamnaya horizon of the Russian steppe. On this basis, Gimbutas (Gimbutas 1970: 181-182; see also Bachhuber 2015: 13) proposed that the Alaca Höyük tombs and the similar complex of Horoztepe, ca. 170 km north east of Alaca, were the work of Indo-European chiefs coming from the Caucasus. Bronze standards and stag and bull figurines, the most evocative finds in the Alaca Höyük metal assemblage, have been interpreted as fittings for wagons, whose traction could be on the other hand, symbolically represented by the pairings of cattle. On this basis, Orthmann (1967) and others (e.g. Mansfeld 2001) drew parallels with the interment of wagons, as practiced in the 2nd millennium BCE barrow burials at Trialeti in the Caucasus, where pairings of cattle are also represented by skulls and hooves.

The main problem with these proposed parallels is chronological. The contextualization of the Alaca Höyük cemetery has for a long time been at the centre of scholarly debates, with arguments revolving around cross-dating comparisons and often unreliable stratigraphic data (see remarks by Özyar 1999). However, recent radiocarbon dates would bracket the foundation and use of the burials within the earlier phases of the Early Bronze Age, between 2800-2600 BCE (Yalçın 2011). This makes the Alaca Höyük cemetery several centuries younger than the Maikop kurgans, now firmly set around the mid-4th millennium BCE (Anthony 2007: 290,

27. Significantly, recent archaeobiological research also shows a general genetic continuity in Anatolian population groups from ca. 6500 down to the end of the 2nd millennium BCE (Skourtanioti et al. 2020).

with literature), and about one millennium older than the Late Trialeti complex (Sagona 2017: 332-338). The Yamnaya wagon graves of the Pontic-Caspian steppes would offer a closer chronological match (3400-2600 BCE, Anthony 2007: 300-339), but then intermediate geographic links are missing making any cross-comparison a hazardous exercise. Be this as it may, the whole wagon burial argument can be misleading. Considering the good preservation of wooden planks making up the roofs of the Alaca Höyük tombs, one would also expect to find equally well-preserved wagon components were these included in the funerary equipment (Zimmermann 2006: 512-514). As Zimmermann insists, the association of the highly elaborated bronze standards from Alaca with wagons also finds no firm support in either contemporary or later figurative evidence from Anatolia.²⁸ On the other hand, the ritual association with cattle does not set Alaca Höyük apart from coeval funerary contexts in Anatolia. Cattle hides' patterns of skull-and-hooves feature in the EBA III funerary assemblage from Resuloğlu, not far from Alaca Höyük, while whole bull carcasses have been buried in pairs the necropoleis of Demircihöyük-Sarıket (ca. 2700-2550 BCE) and Çavdarlı Höyük in Central West Anatolia (Massa 2014). In neither of these cases are cattle associated with any evidence of vehicle transportation, and the animal remains are rather interpreted as the result of consumption in funerary feasts celebrated in honour of high-status individuals. Some distant relations of Anatolian cattle burials with sacrificial practices of the northern Pontic steppe or the Caucasus cannot be excluded, but these are no more than vague reminiscences locally reinterpreted within sets of regionally diverse traditions.

Due to the general impossibility of matching a specific assemblage of cultural-material findings with any of the leading hypotheses of an Indo-European original penetration in Anatolia, the identification of an Indo-European area (or, more specifically, a Hittite or a Luwian one) as opposed to a non-Indo-European (e.g. a Hattian one) is precluded. Even the diachronic anteriority of the settlement of one or another linguistic group can only be assumed in a speculative fashion.

Speakers of Indo-European languages are more likely to have entered Anatolia through slow-paced movements of small groups, which are generally more elusive, if not altogether invisible in the archaeological record.²⁹ This bears consequences as to the possibility to recognise the geographical collocation of the different Anatolian or non-Anatolian cultures that ended up producing the Middle Bronze Age

28. But see Bachhuber (2015: 36-37), on objects from private collections said to be originating from near Alaca Höyük.

29. For an archaeological approach to migration see Anthony (1990).

mixed-culture we may reconstruct from the earliest documentary archives. This scenario would also require us to explain sociolinguistic mechanisms of assimilation through dynamic peer-to-peer interactions between coexisting communities of speakers rather than the top-down imposition of a language, or group of languages, over a substratum through military or demographic prevarication (Melchert 2003: 21, with further literature).

3. *Matching linguistic and archaeological data*

A scenario in which the Indo-European and non-Indo-European settlements of Anatolia result from gradual slow-paced movements does not deny migrations as a general model, but it certainly reduces their implications when one comes to the matter of trying to describe the “homelands” of a cultural group that can, at best, be described as the result of a process of speculative reconstruction. This applies not only to the *Frage nach der indogermanischen Urheimat*, but also to any anti-parallel attempts at looking for the Hattians in the cultural-material assemblages of a given northern or eastern peripheral area of the Anatolian region.

This statement, however, should not be taken too pessimistically, as some sort of *crux desperationis*. Indeed, a less polarised situation is certainly a promising scenario when we come to the later phase of the Early Bronze Age and to the beginning of the Middle Bronze Age. Indeed, the picture we begin to be able to draw for the centuries of the Assyrian trading posts in Cappadocia is certainly better, but it should not be projected as a consistent pattern over too large an area. The situation emerging from the epigraphic documents of the *kārum* Kaneš, for instance points to the presence of a number of different peoples in the city, including Hittites and Assyrians (the larger components), a significant minority of peoples with Luwian names, some Hattian names, and a few Hurrian ones (cf. Bilgiç 1954; Garelli 1963: 155-158; Wilhelm 2008; Yakubovich 2010; Kloekhorst 2019; Giusfredi 2020b; Yakubovich 2020). The non-Assyrian networks in Anatolia, hitherto known from archaeological data alone, might have been superimposed on a similarly mixed situation but with different proportions and, perhaps, even different languages. Had we access to larger collections of documents from other gateways of the trading network, e.g. Hattuša, we may expect the situation to be different (perhaps with more Hattian names and fewer Hurrian ones?). Had we access to documents coming from the gateways of the western networks, e.g. Purušhanda, or to some archive in the Konya plain we may expect an equally mixed scenario, but the Luwian onomastic material would in all likelihood prevail over a minority of

Hittite, Hattian, and Semitic names. In Cilicia we might expect a prevalent Hurrian and Luwian melting pot, with very little Hittite or Hattian.

The evidence for a mixed and to some extent multilingual society is still overwhelming for Middle Bronze Age Anatolia. Even though some specific details can be challenged, the case made by Goedegebuure (2008) for Hattian-Anatolian linguistic contacts pre-dating the Kārum-period is still solid:

1. Hattian exhibits some structures that typologically pattern with OV languages and are unusual in VO languages, including the: modifier – noun order; *in situ* wh-element³⁰ in questions; proper noun preceding common noun in appositions; predicate-copula order in copular clauses.³¹

2. If the *-šara-* and *-(a)šri-* non-grammatical natural feminines of Anatolian are agglutinative-like structures (as argued in Giusfredi – Pisaniello 2020), then they may have been induced by the influence of Hattian natural gender feminines. Assuming this explanation is correct, the structures would have originated before the Kārum-period, because by that time they had already entered the anthropomorphic material.

3. Palaic and Hattian may share a free morpheme *-pi* (written by the sign BI) with contrastive function, as opposed to the inherited *-pa* of Luwian and *-(m)a* of Hittite.³² The induction of a morpheme is a kind of borrowing that requires more intense contact than the exchange of lexical loanwords.

4. Palaic and Hattian may also have shared a labial or bilabial fricative, rendered in cuneiform as *WA_a* and *WU_u* in the Hittite scribal praxis. If the feature is shared, it involves structural phonological interference.

30. Goedegebuure (2008: 163) speaks of «free placement of question - word».

31. Other examples by Goedegebuure (2008: 163), such as the SOV instead of VSO order in initial clauses and the position of the subordinate clause, are best left out: the former is hard to assess in written-only languages, and the latter may easily depend on the line by line rendering in translation texts. However, they are theoretically impeccable and may be valid as well. It is also worth noticing that language contact is only one of the possible explanations for even the more convincing patterns presented by Goedegebuure: typological universals are not infallible, and languages exist that seem to simply exhibit contradictory patterns such as OV order and head initial prepositional phrases (Latin being the most obvious example).

32. On Hittite *-(m)a* see Hoffner – Melchert (2008: 395-399); on Luwian *-pa* cf. Giusfredi (2020a: 175-177).

Combined with the mixed onomastic material and the traces of linguistic interference coming from the *kārum* archives, the picture appears consistent with a culturally mixed Anatolia that must have existed even in the Early Bronze Age.

This, in turn, has consequences on the way we should assess the mixed nature of the Late Bronze Age Anatolian society. This pattern derives, in all likelihood, from earlier phases in which contacts had been at work for centuries, so that the non-linguistic data we can collect from the pre-literate ages of Anatolian prehistory probably reflect culturally and linguistically fluid situations, rather than “original” polarised *Urheimaten*. That interference may last long and even occur in different waves is after all, demonstrated by the way the Mesopotamian cultural and linguistic elements entered into the world that would eventually become “Hittite”. A first known penetration happened during the Middle Bronze Age, with the Old Assyrian trades and with the emergence of Anatolian scribes trained in Assyrian, but with surprisingly little influence on the future status of Akkadian among the Hittites. A second one must have happened between the age of Anitta and the first historical rulers of the kingdom (in this case, probably via the North-Syrian interface, as proven by some Syro-Mesopotamian features of the Akkadian scribal praxis of Old Hittite Hattuša). A third one occurred during the 15th-14th centuries, with a strong role played by the mediation of the Hurrian world. Yet even in a case like this one that involves medium-to-long distance contacts and for which we possess massive historical and documentary evidence, it is sometimes hard or even impossible to establish whether a given cultural or linguistic feature of an element was borrowed during an earlier or a later “wave of interference”.

When massive historical and documentary information is *not* at hand in a general context of mixed cultures in constant attrition and contact with each other, there is no reason to assume that a given non-literate cultural *facies* represented some sort of ethnically recognisable group at its pure state. While the details of proto-historical contact cannot be easily described, especially (but not exclusively) when they regard languages, a fluid scenario that involves an early exchange and circulation of cultural material could be particularly fitting in order to explain some open problems of early language contact proper. For instance, there is evidence, in the Kaneš corpus, of Anatolian mixed-names. It deals with compound personal names that contain both an Anatolian element and an unrecognisable one, which, in more than a few cases, also appears unlikely to be Anatolian. Several examples ending with Luwian-*nani*, “brother, sibling” are, for instance, listed by Yakubovich

(2010: 219), and at least one, *té-li-na-ni*, might even have contained, in our opinion, a Hattian word as its first element.³³

Another even more promising field of application of a framework that involves early contacts pre-dating the historical age by far as well as a quasi-generalised multicultural scenario regards some very specialised elements of the Hittite “political” lexicon, the “origin” of which has been contended between the supporters of an Indo-European explanation and the supporters of a Hattian one. A fresh and recent example is the noun *tuhukanti-*, which indicates the “crown prince”. It was traditionally supposed to be a Hattian term, but Rieken (2016) has shown that some of its features (application of an *i*-theme or perhaps even of *i*-mutation, application of derivational suffix *-ahid-*, secondary rendering of a consonantal cluster as both *tahuk-* and *tuhuk-*) would point to Luwian. As a matter of fact, these data do not necessarily point to a Luwian *origin*, but rather to a phase of transmission that involved Luwian (or Luwic).³⁴ The prevalence of occurrences that pertain to Hattian contexts, combined with Rieken’s felicitous observations, may very well be consistent with a model of complex circulation of the word (as well as of the cultural construct it has as a referent) in an early Anatolian world in which many linguistic and cultural components were already interfering with one another. Of course, the framework would be equally fit for the possibility that loans from Anatolian to Hattian also existed, which would allow the combination of the historical-philological and the linguistic evidence as regards two other highly-debated royal titles of the Hittites, the maybe-Hattian-maybe-Luwian *Tabarna* and *Tawannanna*, for which an Indo-European explanation seems now to be almost certain, but which certainly were borrowed into Hattian (and may have been transmitted to the Hittite royal lexicon by contact with the Hattians, in spite of the ultimate Indo-European etymology). The presence of Akkadian loans (Soysal 2004: 179-180) that somehow entered Hattian (e.g. *kusim*, *kušim* ‘throne(?)’ < *kussûm*, *kussium*; *kazzue* ‘cup’ < *kāsu*) would also be quite efficiently explained in an early context of complex cultural and linguistic interference.

33. We do not wish to suggest this analysis as conclusive, because the presence of mixed compound names is a very delicate topic. As for the first element of the compound, the form we compare here is *teli*, “great, big”, on which cf. Soysal (2004: 313).

34. For a similar view, see Simon (2017b: 386), who accepts the presence of Luwian inflectional features, but correctly points out that «allerdings folgt daraus nur, dass dieses Wort auch im Luwischen vorhanden war, es muss aber keineswegs ein Erbwort sein».

4. Conclusion

In this paper, we have examined the problem of how the study of linguistic and cultural contacts during the historical phases of the history of pre-classical Anatolia could and should be connected with the discussion of the prehistorical and proto-historical patterns known from the non-written sources. Moving backwards from the Late Bronze Age, we dealt with the problem of the core and peripheral areas, as well as with the theoretical issue of the alleged “original” location of linguistically-described populations and groups. We illustrated the limits of the most optimistic approaches, and tentatively proposed an alternative framework, in which the groups of people in Anatolia formed a complex mixed-cultural set well before the age of the first written records, which fits well within the archaeological information as well as the existence of very early evidence for language contact involving at least those languages that we are able to recognise.

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