

Early Iron Sites

Hattusa

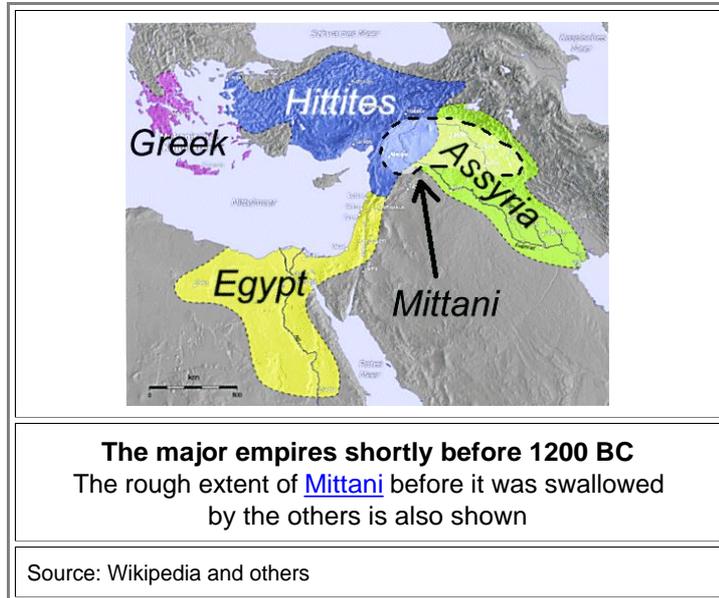
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Hattusa, often also referred to by the name of the modern town **Bogazköy** (or Bogazkale) next to it, was the capital of the **Hittite empire**. The Hittites are interesting for several reasons:

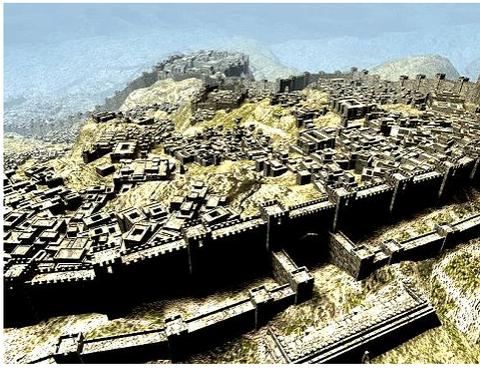
- The Hittites had all but vanished from human memory already during classic antiquity - despite the fact that they once controlled a mighty empire! Only a few obscure lines in the Bible left some hints.
- Even the early archeologists, who already knew plenty about the ancient Mesopotamian and Egyptian cultures, had no clue or misread whatever there was.
- While the existence of the Hittites slowly became known at the end of the 19th century, the turning point was the discovery of the royal (Hittite) archives in Hattusa by the German archeologist **Hugo Winckler**. While written in the by then familiar cuneiform, their language was unknown but was the same as the language used in some letters found in the Egyptian Royal archives in [Amarna](#). A Hungarian scientist, Bedrich Hrozný, figured out the language and made it common knowledge in 1917.
- Nobody really knows where the Hittites came from and how they somehow crowded out the [Hattian culture](#) in Anatolia, starting around 1800 BC. Their language is of the Indo-Germanic type while that of the Hattians was not. That makes sure that those cultures have different roots.
- It is also not clear why the Hittites sort of vanished around 1200 BC for good without leaving lasting memories and few recognizable remains.

For us the Hittites are interesting because they were (and to some extent still are) supposed to be the "**inventors**" of iron / steel. Modern archeologists seem to be increasingly sceptical about that claim. It essentially comes from [written evidence](#) - the royal archives - since there are almost no findings of iron artifacts in the Hittite area.

The map below demonstrates that the Hittite empire in its prime matched all other known major empires in the second millennium. The map is rather similar to the one showing the [collapse of the Bronze age](#)



Hattusa was a major city. Below is a drawing showing what (parts of it) must have looked like, and some of the present day remains.



What Hattusa must have looked like

Source: Tourist information in the Web.



Some present day remains after excavation and partial restoration. On the left is the big temple of the lower city

Source: Tourist information in the Web

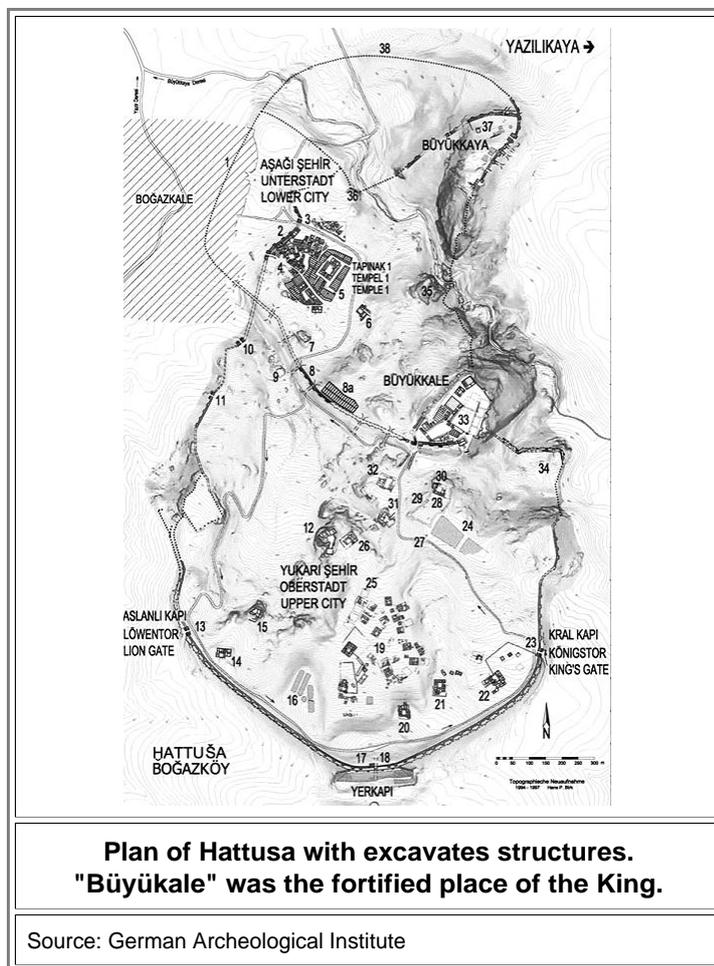
- The German Archeological Institute supplied the impressive picture below plus a Website with much information [1\)](#)



The "Büyükkaya" (= big rock) part of Hattusa)

Source: German Archeological Institute

- The full extent of Hattusa can be estimated from this drawing.



I will stop here describing Hattusa and the Hittites and give a comment instead dealing with the question: Why were the Hittites so quickly forgotten?

- After all, they were great scientists and engineers who - maybe - invented iron and build not only major cities but dammed rivers. They obviously also were good organizers and soldiers who conquered a large part of the "known" world and traded far and wide. Yes - but they were not good advertisers and artists. They did not cover any flat surface with pretty hieroglyphics and pictures advertising the amazing achievements of their God-like rulers, nor did they erect gigantic pyramids to entomb said rulers. No beautiful sculptures of [shaply naked women](#) either. And so on.
There is a lesson for engineers in there somewhere.

¹⁾ The German Archaeological Institute (DAI) is a "scientific corporation" of the Federal Institution under the auspices of the Foreign Office. The link is <http://www.hattuscha.de/>