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# Hittite Art

by Jeanny Vorys Canby



When sculptured monuments in north Syrian cities dating to the Iron Age were first discovered, they were attributed to the Hittites because many were accompanied by Hittite hieroglyphs. We now know that these cities preserved only faint reflections of the art created on the Anatolian plateau during the second millennium B.C.E. when the Hittites were in power. The term Syro-Hittite art, implying a common denominator between the two areas, is only valid in the Iron Age. Hittite art proper consists of monuments made in second-millennium Anatolia where, it is clear, something new infused the artistic tradition of the preceding millennium. This new element must surely be associated with the incoming Hittites. Speaking a new

*These giant limestone sphinxes, dating to the Hittite Empire, once looked down over Hattuša from the Sphinx Gate at the highest point in the Upper City. More than 8 feet tall, they were badly damaged in the fire that destroyed the city but are still the best pieces of Hittite sculpture found to date. Their heads, forequarters, and hindquarters were carved in the round, whereas their swept-back wings and lithe bodies with curled tails were carved in high relief on the side of the door jambs. The sphinxes wear two different types of tight-fitting caps with horns, and they have long Hathor curls hanging down over their breasts. The inlay from the eyes are missing. Their plump faces, thin lips, and short chins were carved with great sensitivity. Photo of complete lefthand sphinx, above, courtesy of the Staatliche Museum, Berlin. Photo of righthand sphinx face, above left, courtesy of Eski Şark Müzesi Archaeological Museum, Istanbul.*

## The Hittites gracefully absorbed various influences while creating an art style all their own.



*The art of third-millennium B.C.E. Anatolia, into which the Hittites came, is best known from the rich tombs at Alaca Höyük in the central plateau. Virtually all of this art is characterized by flat, idol-like human figurines, like this 4 $\frac{3}{8}$ -inch bronze figure, which has all the essential shapes of the human body, but is much stylized. Photo courtesy of the Museum of Anatolian Civilizations, Ankara.*

Indo-European language, the Hittites transformed a land of small city-states into a strong united kingdom that eventually became the seat of an empire while maintaining throughout a deep respect for their predecessors in Anatolia.

Hittite art was also that of an imperial state that was strong enough and ambitious enough to vie with Egypt for control of Syria. For at least 200 years (from the fourteenth to the twelfth centuries B.C.E.) the Hittites had diplomatic relations with Egypt, and they could not have been unimpressed with the giant temples and palaces they saw there. Several elements in Hittite art suggest Egyptian influence: the megalithic architecture, the over-life-size sculpture, the important status of the sphinx, and the use of the head-dress of the Egyptian cow-goddess, Hathor. Other influences came from Mesopotamia. Like other peoples in the ancient Near East, the Hittites used the very ancient Mesopotamian cuneiform system of writing, and in learning it they adopted some of the great Mesopotamian gods and literature. The Hittites gracefully absorbed these various influences while developing an unmistakable art style of their own, their own iconography and their own peculiar style of monuments: reliefs on living rock or on enormous cut stone structures and sculptured figures embedded in cyclopean architecture. Relief was also used extensively on the surface of vessels made out of precious metals or common clay, on ivory, and on seals. Sculpture in the round was produced on a monumental scale as well as in miniature.

Stylistically speaking, Hittite art is characterized by plasticity—large, clear forms that often portray

a lively stance suggesting a specific movement. Compositions are usually simple with literally superpositioned elements, although there are a few complex compositions with interwoven elements where the relationship between the figures is noted, and real narration is found in hunt scenes. Inscriptions on the monuments are short and always in hieroglyphic script. As in Egypt, the distinction between reading and seeing is often irrelevant: Some hieroglyphs are works of art, and some figures were meant to be “read” as much as seen. Some monuments have no inscription at all. Most Hittite art is religious in character. Lively battle scenes exist in which the protagonists are divine.

We are hampered in our understanding of the development of Hittite art because there are so few monuments that can be dated exactly, or even relatively. It is particularly frustrating that no monuments can be securely tied to the very powerful and important kings of the Old Kingdom or the early Hittite Empire. Most of the work that can be securely dated belongs either in the Colony Age (nineteenth through eighteenth centuries B.C.E.) or the late Hittite Empire (the thirteenth century B.C.E.). There is, however, a discernible internal development between these two poles. The approximate dates given to uninscribed material differ from scholar to scholar according to which end of the spectrum a particular scholar judges a piece to belong.

The art of third-millennium Anatolia, into which the newcomers moved, is best known from the rich tombs at Alaca Höyük in central Anatolia. With but one exception this art is characterized by flat, idol-like human figurines and marvelously

stylized figures of animals, such as bulls (which were popular in many cultures), stags, lions, and birds. Unusual are the awesome majesty and power of the stag representations from the third millennium to the first. In the third-millennium tombs at Alaca Höyük, stags with gigantic antlers occur singly or surrounded by abstract patterns (Bittel 1976a: figures 19, 22). In Hittite art the stag hunt with obvious religious connotations is often represented. Many peoples have used raptors, such as eagles, falcons, and hawks, as symbols but usually without their prey. A raptor with its prey was another favorite Anatolian motif that the Hittites took over from the third-millennium repertoire (Bittel 1976a: figure 23) and passed on to the Iron Age.

### Early Hittite Art

In this article, early Hittite art is grouped into two periods, the Colony Age and the Old Hittite Kingdom. **The Colony Age.** This period lasted roughly from the nineteenth through the eighteenth century B.C.E. No rich tombs like those at third-millennium Alaca Höyük dating to the second millennium have been excavated, and, unfortunately, we cannot be sure whether or not objects made out of precious metals that have been purchased on the art market come from tombs. Thus, for the history of art in the early second millennium we are dependent on everyday materials, such as sealings, clay ritual vessels, and a few ivories, much of which come from Assyrian trade settlements in colonies outside the small city-states of the period.

**Ritual vessels.** It is from the many local ritual vessels that we get the flavor of the new elements in



*At the time of the establishment of Assyrian trading centers (kārums) in central Anatolia during the Colony Age, new elements were introduced to the local art. The flavor of these new elements is best seen in ritual vessels uncovered at Kültepe, the site of ancient Kaneš. Clay rhytons (ritual pouring vessels) have been found in various animal forms, including two in the shape of raptors (birds of prey) and one in the shape of a ram's head. Photos courtesy of the Museum of Anatolian Civilizations, Ankara.*



Anatolian art. These figures are, for the most part, realistically shaped, displaying none of the stylized animal shapes that were characteristic of the third millennium. There are drinking vessels in the shape of lions and antelopes as well as cups in the shape of animal heads, such as cats, eagles, pigs, bulls, rabbits, and fish, often made in pairs. There are also animal heads on spouts, rims, and handles. Other images include a man paddling a boat and another man climbing into a boat, and on

one handle a charioteer is shown shouting at his horses (Özgüç and Özgüç 1953: 338–41, plates 38, 40, 41; T. Özgüç 1983, 1986: 121, plates 47–50, color plates C, E, F: 1–4, G: 6, plates 104–08, 110, 111a.b, 113: 4a.b; Bittel 1976a). Some of these pieces are real works of art with full plastic modeling and large, clear, correctly shaped features. Particularly impressive is the hunched posture of the raptors (T. Özgüç 1986). A major sculpture is of a very large ram's head (Özgüç and Özgüç 1953). There are



This smoothly executed ivory figure of a nude girl cupping her breasts was found at Kültepe in a grave dating to the later Colony Age. Measuring about 3 7/8 inches in height, the figure is half-standing, half-seated, and wears a typical feminine hat perched on the back of her head. She has a dainty torso but large facial features and very plump hips, thighs, and legs. This figure represents an entirely different approach to the human form from that seen in the flat, idol-like figurines found at Alaca Höyük, and it foreshadows the lifelike figures of later imperial Hittite art. Photo courtesy of the Museum of Anatolian Civilizations, Ankara.

These ivory sphinxes, probably from the Colony Age site of Acemhöyük in central Anatolia, have the same clearly marked features of the nude female ivory figure found at Kültepe. They wear a version of the Egyptian Hathor wig but with the Anatolian addition of two large curls on the side of the head. The figure at right, a furniture ornament in the form of a female sphinx (36.70.8), is about 5 inches tall, and the sphinx relief, to the left, a fragment of a furniture plaque (36.70.11), is about 3 inches tall. Gift of Mrs. George D. Pratt in memory of the late George D. Pratt. Photos courtesy of the Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York.



also human faces on vessels similar to those from third-millennium Troy.

**Ivories.** A charming smoothly executed ivory figure of a nude girl cupping her breasts was found in a grave of the later period at the chief merchant settlement of Kültepe, the ancient city of Kañes (Bittel 1976a: figure 33). She is half-standing, half-seated and wears the typical feminine hat perched on the back of her enormous head. She has large facial features and a dainty torso but very plump hips, thighs, and legs. The little figure, who appears to be smiling, shows an entirely different approach to the human figure from that illustrated by the flat idols found at Alaca Höyük, and she foreshadows the life-like figures of imperial Hittite art.

A group of ivory figures in the Metropolitan Museum of Art in New York are now known to have come from the Colony Age city at Acemhöyük in central Anatolia (N. Özgüç 1966: 43–46; Harper 1969:

156–62). The group includes alert sphinxes seated stiffly upright, carved in the round and in relief (Harper 1969: figures 4, 8; Canby 1975: figures 9 and 10; Bittel 1976a: figure 44). These sphinxes have the same large, clearly marked features of the nude female ivory figure from Kültepe. They wear a version of the Egyptian Hathor wig but with the Anatolian addition of two more large curls on the side of the head and, in one case, on the top of the head. The heavy chest and short thick legs link these figures to later Hittite sphinxes. The posture of the Acemhöyük sphinxes is identical to that of a giant sphinx carved in relief on a large block at Alaca Höyük, which later was reused for the gate sphinxes there (Canby 1976: 237–40, figure 11). It is tempting to date this sculpture to the Colony Age or shortly thereafter, particularly because large stone sculpture dating to this period is known from a fragment found in Kültepe (T. Özgüç 1954).

## Acemhöyük produced the richest repertoire of glyptic designs for the local stamp seals.

A kneeling lion-headed human figure from Acemhöyük may also be of Egyptian inspiration (Harper 1969: figure 3, bottom left). Closer to Egyptian prototypes are a headless kneeling figure from Acemhöyük (Harper 1969: figure 12) and a complete ivory figure from Alaca Höyük (Bittel 1976a: figure 46). The large features of a lion dangling an antelope from its mouth (Harper 1969: figure 3, top right) is in the full-bodied style of the sphinxes, as is a raptor with its wings spread (Harper 1969: figure 9; Bittel 1976a: figure 47). Two more naturalistically shaped ruminants recline and stare back at the giant claw of raptors grasping their hindquarters.

**Seals.** A local adaptation of Mesopotamian cylinder seal carving is attested on some of the merchant tablets that have been found. These seals often display the characteristic Mesopotamian processions of deities marching toward a seated deity. The water god of Mesopotamia and his two-faced vizier were particularly popular figures (for example, N. Özgüç 1965: figure 13). Local Anatolian deities also have been distinguished, including numerous weather gods, some of whom are shown standing on mountains or on bulls. Unique to these seals are the large number of birds of prey and a deity standing on a stag and holding a *manned* (trained) bird on one fist, sometimes with a dead animal dangling from the other hand (N. Özgüç 1965: figures 11, 17, 19, 64–66). A bull bearing a conical “altar” on his back has also been found (N. Özgüç 1965: figures 15 a,b, 38–40, 42, 55, 58, 69). These sealings are characterized by a lively, free-form composition crowded with images. The large facial features are typically Anatolian. Clothing and the skins of



animals are indicated by linear markings, and the many loose animal heads in the field (for example, N. Özgüç 1965: figures 56, 68) may be related to the animal-shaped rhyton, an Anatolian specialty.

The local Anatolian stamp seals of this period are closely related stylistically to the ivories and rhyta. Raptors, sometimes shown hovering over or grasping animals, are a common subject (Bittel 1976a: figures 78–80). Well-shaped plastic figures of bulls and lions also have been found. In addition, there is a fine gold seal that shows a seated woman leaning reverently toward an altar (Bittel 1976a: figure 81; N. Özgüç 1968: plate XXX 2a,b).

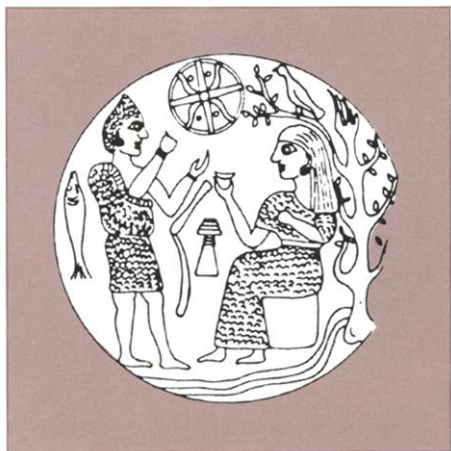
Acemhöyük produced the richest repertoire of glyptic designs, sometimes with the crowded composition displayed in the local cylinder seals: a stagman with his prey, a sphinx with a large curl like the local ivories,



Raptors hovering over or grasping animals is a frequent subject of Anatolian stamp seals dating to the Colony Age, as in this modern seal impression, left, from Hattuša, the ancient Hittite capital, currently housed in the Museum of Anatolian Civilizations, Ankara. The face of this gold stamp seal, above, from Kültepe, also in the Ankara Museum, shows a seated woman leaning reverently toward an altar. All of the local stamp seals from the Colony Age are closely related stylistically to the ivories and ritual vessels of the period. Photos courtesy of Éditions Gallimard, *L'Univers des Formes*, Paris.

a sphinx seen frontally, and goddesses with flat round hats that are typically Hittite. One extraordinary seal shows a goddess seated under a tree by the river drinking while a man in front of her raises his hands in greeting. Both figures wear tufted garments. Also in the scene are a bird in the tree and a fish, a rayed disc, and an altar in the field. Mesopotamian bull-men were adapted from the cylinder seal repertoire to fit the round surface of the stamps (N. Özgüç 1980: figures 111, 40 and 41). They are sometimes shown standing on fish beside a sacred tree, and, in a different version of the god of the hunt who was so popular, a winged stag man holds animals up by their hind legs (N. Özgüç 1980: figures 111, 49 a,b.). At Karahöyük near Konya, another site of the Colony Age that probably continued into somewhat later times, images of fish as well as a stag head and

## It may be that some material now attributed to the Empire period belongs to the Old Kingdom.



*Acemhöyük produced the richest repertoire of engraved designs on stamp seals, such as this drawing of a seal impression in clay. Dating to the Colony Age, it shows a goddess drinking underneath a tree by a river while a man in front of her raises his hands in greeting. Both figures wear tufted garments. A bird is perched in the tree, and a fish, a rayed disc, and an altar are in the field. This stamp seal, like others of the period, has clear forms with no fussy detail, and the figures are large in relation to the surface. From N. Özgüç (1980: figure III, 38c).*

many birds of prey have been found on seal impressions. Most of the designs found at this site, however, are made up of running spirals, braids, guilloches, and geometric elements often arranged in a swirling pattern (Alp 1968: 205–64).

All of the Colony Age stamp seals have large, clear, plastic forms with no fussy detail. The size of the figures in relation to the seal surface is larger than that of the cylinder seals. The same style has been found in reliefs on large clay vessels that were popular in the later Colony Age and the Old Hittite period. Fragments of such vessels have been found at numerous sites. The only complete example from Inandik (Temizer 1979: 37; T. Özgüç 1988) has four registers of relief showing a long continuous scene in which there are musicians offering food,

acrobats, a temple facade, and a graphic scene portraying a sacred marriage. The same sort of subject appears on many sherds; there were also scenes of the hunt, chariots, and an animal orchestra (Bittel 1976a: figures 139–46). The slender well-proportioned figures wear white clothing, sometimes painted with black detail. Other detail is rendered by incision.

**The Old Hittite Kingdom.** For the art of the Old Hittite Kingdom, comprising roughly the seventeenth through fifteenth centuries B.C.E., we have, since the newly discovered stela of a king Tudḫaliya is dated to a later period (Neve 1986: 394–96, figures 29 and 30), some stamp-cylinder seals and two small reliefs. It may be that some of the material now attributed to the Empire period belongs here.

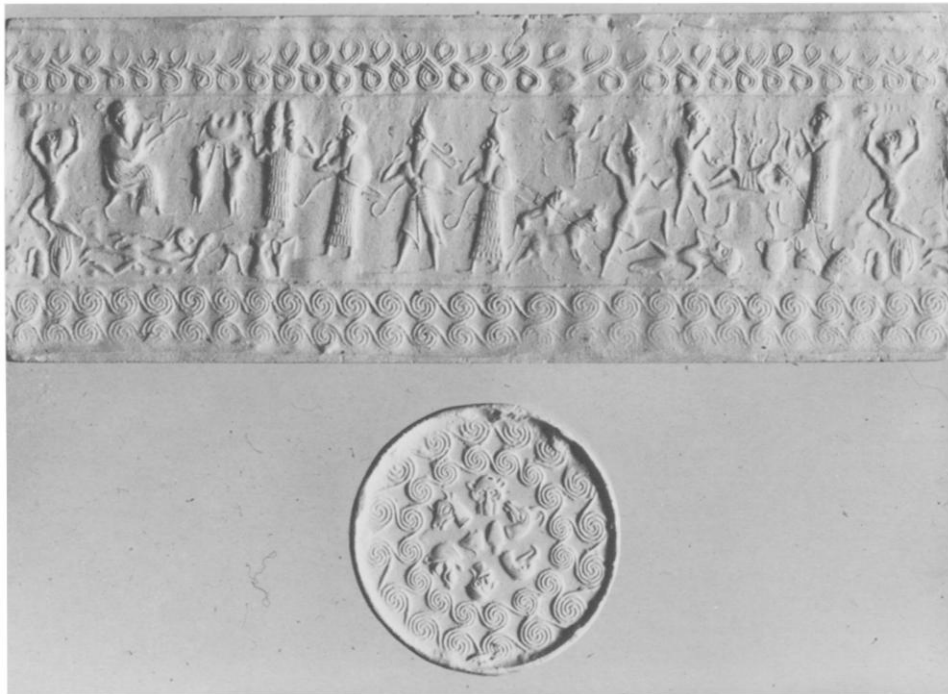
**Reliefs.** The two small reliefs dating to the Old Hittite Kingdom were uncovered during excavations at the Hittite capital, Ḫattuša (modern-day Boğazköy). One of the reliefs, which is made up of three fragments found separately and joined together (Neve 1984), shows a battle scene arranged freely over the surface. At the top a god in a speeding chariot lunges on a fallen foe; below, another god spears a victim. Parts of two other falling figures are seen in the field. These figures appear to be bareheaded, which would mean that they were mortal or, more likely, the Sun-God who, in Hittite times, wore the royal cap instead of the divine crown. Although the relief is unfinished, the outlines show a complex composition skillfully executed with figures in energetic poses. The other relief fragment (Neve 1984: plate XII c) shows a god falling down on the spear of another deity while a sec-



*One fragment of this relief on hard green stone, now on display in the Boğazkale Museum, was found in excavations at Ḫattuša, and the entire piece dates to the Old Hittite period. Made up of three fragments found separately and joined together, it stands about 2 feet tall. The relief is of a battle scene, the top of which shows the driver of a speeding chariot lunging on a fallen foe while, below, another god spears a victim. The relief is unfinished, but its outlines reveal a complex composition with figures drawn in energetic poses. Photo courtesy of Peter Neve and the Boğazköy expedition.*

ond figure stabs him and a seated winged sphinx looks on. The head of yet another god below this scene shows that, as in the other relief, the battle was spread over the surface. This relief is worn, but the vehemence of the battle is clear.

**Seals.** Another lively divine battle is shown on an exceptionally well-preserved seal in the Boston Museum of Fine Arts (Frankfort 1939: plate XLII n,o; Bittel 1976a: figures 150–52). Here a god in a short kilt lunges on a fallen figure who wears a tight cap with a streamer. Above this scene a figure (the same person?) lies



**Above:** Another lively divine battle scene dating to the Old Hittite period is shown on this modern impression of an excellently preserved hematite stamp-cylinder seal. In the righthand portion of the scene a god wearing a short kilt lunges on a fallen figure, who wears a tight cap and streamer. Above this scene a figure (perhaps the same person) lies on a funeral pyre attended by a figure who fans the flames while another figure holds a pitcher (of oil? water?). Photo courtesy of the Museum of Fine Arts, Boston. **Above right:** This bronze figurine of a deity is similar in style and subject to other combative figures in seal impressions and reliefs dating to the Old Hittite period, indicating that the battle for hegemony in heaven was a common theme in this period. Found at Dövklek in eastern Turkey, the statuette is about 7 inches tall. Courtesy of the Museum of Anatolian Civilizations, Ankara.

on a funeral pyre attended by one figure who fans the flames while another holds a pitcher. Two swimmers appear in the field. A bronze figure of a similar bellicose deity shows that the style and subject matter of the reliefs and this seal were widespread in the period (Bittel 1976a: figure 148). Imperial Hittite texts tell of myths about battles between the gods for hegemony in heaven, but as far as we know the subject was no longer represented in imperial Hittite art.

Figures on a somewhat later seal show the heavier proportions and more staid action of later Hittite art. A silver figurine in the Ashmolean Museum in Oxford, England (Canby 1969: 143–44, plate 39) corresponds

in proportion and movement to those on the seal, which suggests that it represents a new phase of Hittite art. The seal (Parrot 1951) shows a procession of gods and strange creatures that some scholars think represents a celebration of the storm god's victory over an anthropomorphic mountain—the Ullikummi of Hittite myth (van Loon 1985: 12). The seal's bottom register contains a complex scene of stag hunting led by a god carrying a spear and a bow and standing on a lion. Rushing toward the god are four deer (?), one seen from above. Approaching the god from behind is the first of three, two-horse chariots, each driven by one man, no doubt the beaters whose job it was to scare up the game. Their speed in-

creases from the first chariot to the fourth in which an archer stands alongside the charioteer. Eight stags and one doe are shown walking or kneeling, apparently unaware of their danger, or fleeing, wounded, and dead. Two lions (?) are seen in the fray. As far as I know, such a complex hunt scene is not seen outside of Egypt until the lion hunts of seventh-century Assyria, although the stag hunt in simpler form is often repeated or referred to in later Hittite art.

A silver relief vase rhyton in the shape of a stag's forequarter, now part of the Norbert Schimmel collection in the Metropolitan Museum of Art in New York, cannot be too far in time from the seal just described



## Art of the Empire period is characterized by rock reliefs and various forms of sculpture.



(Muscarella 1974: number 123; Bittel 1976a: figure 169). Around the neck of the vessel is a frieze in relief picturing two gods who, on the basis of Hittite texts that describe cult images, can be identified as the divine Protectors of the Wild Fields (Güterbock 1983: 207–08). One of the gods sits in front of an altar holding a cup up to his lips while a falcon perches on his left fist. In front of him a smaller figure wearing a short skirt and no crown stands on a stag. He raises a curved stick in his right hand, and he carries a falcon on his left fist. Three “priests” half wrapped in cloaks approach these divine figures. The first pours a libation, the



The more staid action and heavier proportions of later Old Hittite art are represented by this silver figurine, left, bought in Nezero, Thessaly, now in the Ashmolean Museum in Oxford, England. About 3¼ inches tall, the figure corresponds in proportion and movement to the figures on this modern impression of a stamp-cylinder seal, above, which dates to the late Old Hittite period, and thus suggests a new phase in Hittite art. The seal has scenes in two registers. The top register shows a procession of gods and strange creatures that some scholars think represents a celebration of the Storm-God’s victory over an anthropomorphic mountain, the Ullikummi of Hittite myth. The bottom register contains a very complex hunt scene, which is not seen outside of Egypt until the lion hunts of seventh-century-B.C.E. Assyria. Photo of figurine courtesy of The Visitors of the Ashmolean Museum. Photo of seal impression courtesy of the Louvre, Paris.

second holds up pieces of bread, and the third kneels offering a spouted vessel. Behind the seated deity a stag lies beside a tree, its legs are folded over its body suggesting that it is dead. Two spears, a quiver and a falconer’s pouch (?) lie beside the stag. The dead stag lying beside hunting gear juxtaposed with the falconer god standing on a stag suggests that the stag had to be conquered before it became the special animal of the Protector God of the Wild Fields; this perhaps explains the stag hunt on the Louvre seal.

### Art of the Hittite Empire

This period, which lasted from the fourteenth to the twelfth century B.C.E., is characterized by reliefs and sculpture that can be grouped into four main areas: the sculpture of Alaca Höyük, architectural sculpture, rock reliefs, and sculpture in the round.

**Sculpture of Alaca Höyük.** The ear-

liest monument of imperial Hittite art, dating to the fourteenth century B.C.E. or earlier, is at Alaca Höyük in central Anatolia where the gateway to a sacred area was carved with an elaborate sculptural scheme (Bittel 1976a: figure 209). Bases of the monument’s projecting towers were covered with two and three registers of reliefs. The lower register continued around the side face of the left tower and into and around the inner chamber of the gate. Emerging from the stone on the outside faces of the door jambs are the imposing forequarters of two giant sphinxes. It is believed that the inner doors of the gate may have been decorated with smaller sphinxes. Like the lower courses of later buildings at the Hittite capital of Hattuşa, the blocks on which the Alaca sculptures were carved are cyclopean. The sphinxes were carved on single stones that are almost 13 feet high and 6½ feet thick. The half-life-size

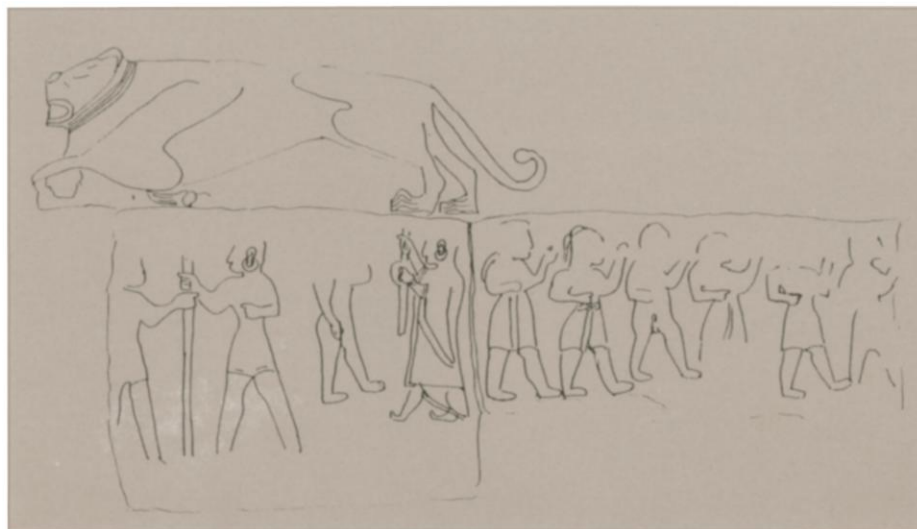
*This relief around the neck of a silver rhyton in the shape of a stag's forequarter, shown in sections, probably dates to about the time of the stamp-cylinder seal from the Louvre and possibly helps explain its complex hunt scene. The neck of the vessel has a frieze depicting two gods who, on the basis of Hittite texts, can be identified as the divine Protectors of the Wild Fields. Photo courtesy of the Norbert Schimmel collection, Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York.*



*The forequarters of two giant sphinxes flank the gateway to the sacred area of Alaca Höyük, the earliest monument dating to the Hittite Empire. Only some details of dress are still visible, including cowls that end in large curls over the breasts in a version of the Egyptian hathor wig that is very similar to that found on the Acemhöyük sphinxes dating to the Colony Age. These wigs bear a new addition, however, a conical element with a boss and a ribbon above the cowl. The sphinxes are more than 7½ feet tall and were carved out of single stones that are almost 13 feet tall and 6½ feet thick. Notice the outline of an earlier and much larger seated sphinx on the block in the far lefthand corner. Photo by Jeanny Vorys Canby.*



## The earliest monument of imperial Hittite art is at Alaca Höyük in central Anatolia.



*The walls to the sacred area at Alaca Höyük were carved in an elaborate sculptural scheme. One relief, which spans half of the bottom register of the facade of the left tower, shows a royal procession marching toward the Weather-God, symbolized by a bull standing on a pedestal. The procession continues past the Weather-God along the side face of the tower where two royal standard-bearers face each other (shown in lefthand block of drawing above). It has been suggested that this 38-inch-high sculpture of a lion crouching over a small bull should be placed above the block containing the Weather-God, with the forepart of the lion extending beyond the block. This reconstruction would place the winged disc (indicating royalty) on the side of the lion sculpture just above the standard on the side face of the tower, which would suggest that all of the figures on those blocks are royal. Beyond the standard-bearers, a small naked figure, probably an infant prince, faces an attendant, and in front of this group other royal children march toward the Sphinx Gate. Photo, and drawing adapted from Mellink, by Jeanny Vorys Canby, photo with permission of the Museum of Anatolian Civilizations, Ankara.*

figures of the reliefs tend to mask the monumentality of the architecture. These reliefs are carved on blocks that are about 3 feet wide, a foot high, and up to 3 feet thick.

The bottom register of the facade of the left tower has two scenes carved in relief (Bittel 1976a: figures 212, 214). In one scene, oriented to the right, a procession, led by the king and queen, marches toward the Weather-God, here symbolized by a bull standing on a pedestal. The king carries a curved staff down at his right side, and he lifts his left hand in a gesture of worship. The queen has her right hand up in adoration. The royal procession continues around to the side face of the tower where two royal standard-bearers face each other. It has been suggested that the large sculpture of a lion crouching over a small bull should be placed above the bull statue standing on a pedestal in front of the king, with the forepart of the lion projecting beyond the front face of the tower (Mellink 1970: 21–24). Such a reconstruction would place the winged disc (indicating royalty) on the side of the lion sculpture, above the standard on the side face of the tower, which would suggest that all the figures there are royal. Beyond the standard-bearers a small figure, probably the crown prince, faces an attendant, and in front of this group other royal children march toward the Sphinx Gate (Canby 1986: figures 5–7).

The block immediately left of the royal couple on the front face is missing, but the procession continues on the third block, which shows a priest leading a goat by the horns and three rams. The well-shaped animals, grouped in twos, are shown overlapping in a suggestion of



depth seen nowhere else on the Alaca reliefs. Next come three priests (Bittel 1976a: figures 212–14). Ending the procession are two small persons wearing short skirts, presumably acrobats (Bittel 1976a: figure 218). One has his foot on the edge of a ladder that leans to the right. At the bottom of the ladder another small figure stands with hands raised in adoration.

The second scene, in the same register but oriented left toward a giant bull rhyton, shows a figure playing a stringed instrument followed by another figure carrying an animal rhyton or an instrument that looks like bagpipes, and a third figure who may be playing a wind instrument (Bittel 1976a: figures 218 and 219).

The front face of the right tower

has a relief showing a goddess seated within a niche. The goddess, who holds a cup in her right hand and the base of a pitcher in her left, is being approached by three human figures (Bittel 1976a: figure 216). The rest of this facade is missing. On the side of the right sphinx is the preserved image of the lower part of a king, or the Sun-God, who stands on a double-headed eagle that grasps a hare in each claw (Bittel 1976a: figure 210).

Above the processions on the facade of the left tower were two more registers showing hunting scenes. (They have been moved to the Museum of Anatolian Civilizations in Ankara.) The familiar stag hunt is carved here in a remarkable narrative composition (Bittel 1976a: figures 224 and 225; Mellink 1970:

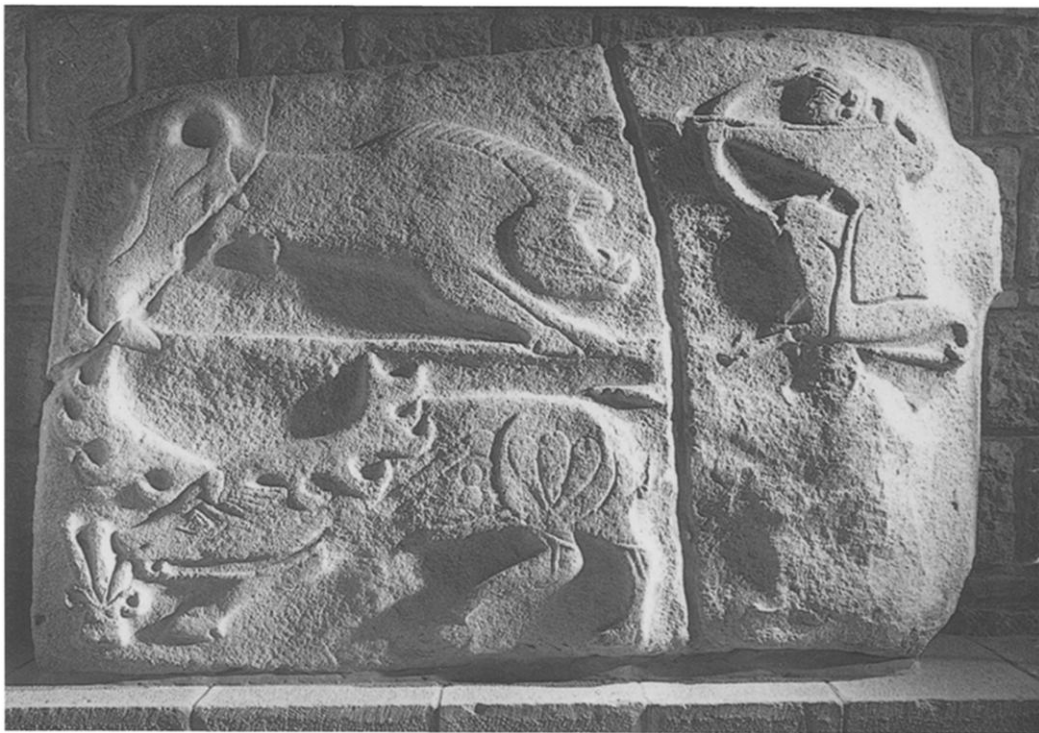
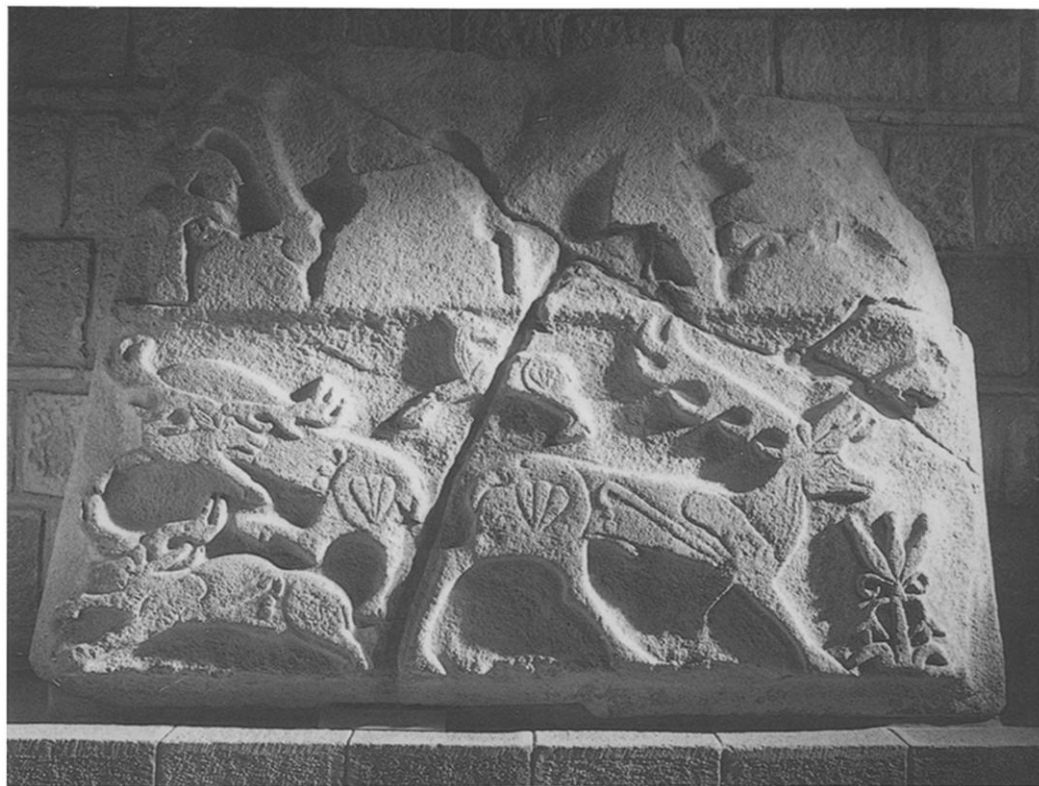
*This roughly 4-foot-high grey basalt block from the facade of the left tower at Alaca Höyük shows the end of one sculptural scene and the beginning of another. In the right-hand portion of the block are two small figures wearing skirts. One figure balances on the edge of a ladder while the other stands at the bottom of the ladder with his hands raised in adoration. Presumably acrobats, these figures end the long procession oriented right toward the Weather-God. Beside them, another figure plays a wind instrument in a scene oriented left toward a giant bull rhyton. Photo courtesy of Éditions Gallimard, L'Univers des Formes, Paris.*

19–20). An archer kneeling right takes aim at an unsuspecting stag that he has lured toward him by tethering a captured stag to a tree, thus attracting other stags to protest encroachment on their territory. Behind the intended victim, two other stags and a fawn have seen the hunter and are fleeing. In the registers

above this stag hunt, another kneeling archer hunts other animals, one an angry boar charging with its head down (Bittel 1976a: figure 225). The unfinished scene to the left seems to picture the pouring of a libation over a large object lying beside a tree (Mellink 1970: plate I a-b), a scene similar to that of the dead stag pictured in relief on the silver rhyton in the shape of a stag's forequarter described in the previous section.

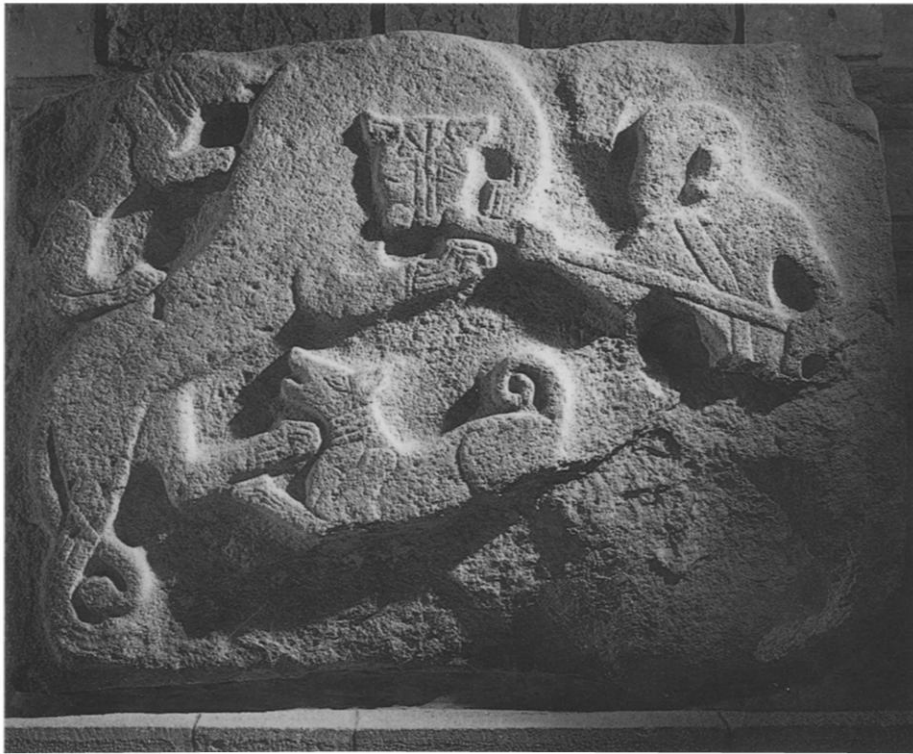
Other hunt scenes exist on loose blocks at Alaca Höyük, including a bull charging with its head lowered and a lion being hunted by a spearman on foot (Bittel 1976a: figures 226 and 227). The lion rears up to grab the hunter's spear with its front paws. The lion's forequarter is twisted around to present the enraged beast full-face. Barking dogs—one under the lion's belly, the other on its back—add to the excitement of the scene.

These reliefs have a style all their own. There is very little modeling on interior surfaces, perhaps because the reliefs were unfinished. The large sculpture of a lion crouching over a bull, described previously, shows that there were artists who could handle sculpture in the round. The rams and the charging bull and boar are naturally shaped, and the twisted lion and the stags looking back or fleeing are courageous, if not successful, experiments in new compositions. The same inconsistency in treatment is found in the human figures. The kneeling archer is convincingly shaped as are some of the figures in short skirts whose knees are correctly located. The knees of the draped priests are much too low, though, suggesting that the sculptor felt he must show one knee exposed. The feet are of all different sizes and shapes. Some figures are



*Above the processions on the facade of the left tower at Alaca Höyük were two more registers showing hunting scenes. These blocks, which have since been moved to the Museum of Anatolian Civilizations in Ankara, show the familiar stag hunt carved in a remarkable narrative composition. In the bottom register, which is spread over the bottom portions of the two blocks shown above, with the block at top to the left, the weathered form of a kneeling archer takes aim at an unsuspecting stag while two other stags and a fawn flee. In the upper register, also spread over the two blocks, another kneeling archer takes aim at other animals, one an angry boar charging toward the hunter with its head down. The scene in the lefthand portion of the upper register is unfinished, but it seems to picture the pouring of a libation over a large object lying beside a tree. Photos courtesy of Éditions Gallimard, L'Univers des Formes, Paris.*

## Some reliefs found on man-made structures have no inscriptions and are therefore hard to date.



*This loose basalt block from Alaca Höyük, also housed in the Museum of Anatolian Civilizations in Ankara, shows a lion being hunted by a spearman on foot and two barking dogs. Rearing up on its back legs, the lion tries to grab the hunter's spear with its front paws. Its forequarter is twisted around to present the enraged beast full-faced, a bold artistic attempt by the Hittite artist. Photo courtesy of Editions Gallimard, L'Univers des Formes, Paris.*

barefooted shown front face; others wear shoes shown in profile. It is puzzling that the ground line is inconsistent even though the figures are obviously arranged in continuous scenes. It may be that these peculiarities resulted from the sculptor's realization that each figure would be "read" rather than viewed. The artists at Alaca did not rely on writing to help explain the scenes. On only one block at the site is a figure identified by writing, the Weather-God (Bittel 1976a: figure 221). The god's name is given in hieroglyphic ideograms that, unfortunately, tell us nothing about the underlying language.

Only some details of dress are still visible on the worn sphinx pro-

toches at Alaca Höyük (Bittel 1976a: figures 209–211). The giant creatures, more than 7½ feet tall, wear a cowl that ends in large curls over the breast—a version of the Egyptian Hathor headdress very close to that on the Achemhöyük sphinxes described in the section on Early Hittite Art. At Alaca Höyük, however, there is a conical element with a boss and a ribbon above the cowl. The heavy unarticulated chest bulges out and joins the body at the knees of the short, heavy legs. Hanging in front of the ears are ribbons that join a rosette band at the throat. **Architectural sculpture.** Some of the other reliefs that have been found on man-made structures have no in-

scriptions and, therefore, are hard to date. The best and most important of these are on the monolithic gates symmetrically arranged at the Upper City of the Hittite capital, Hattuşa, now known to be filled with temples (most recently, Neve 1988: figures 1, 5).

On the left of the inside (city-side) door of the eastern arched gateway, known as the King's Gate, is a figure of a god more than 7 feet tall (Bittel 1976a: figures 267–268, 339). Dressed in a short decorated kilt and carrying an axe in his right hand, the god walks forward with his left foot heel down. His left arm is bent up with fist clenched in a sort of salute to those who were leaving the city. The figure was carved in a very high relief. His eyeball, chest hair, and skirt are incised in elaborate detail, which is unusual. More than half of the benign face is shown, and those passing through the gate looked straight into the god's right eye. There was no other sculpture on this gate.

At the west side of the Upper City is the monument called the Lion Gate. Here the sculpture carved on the outside door jambs is directed at those entering the city. On either side is the forequarter of a heavy-chested lion who stands with its mouth open, tongue hanging down. The panting beasts are relaxed as they guard the city. These sculptures also were carved on very large arched blocks. Each mane is rendered in a complicated pattern of incised tufts. Such surface detail, as has been noted, is rare in Hittite art.

At the highest point of the Upper City (Yerkapı), midway between the gates just described, were two processional staircases leading up the glacis to a small door through the fortifications (Bittel 1976a: fig-

Art of the Hittite Empire is also characterized by bold architectural sculpture, including this well-known figure of a god who stood on the left inside side of the eastern arched entrance, known as the King's Gate, to the Upper City of the Hittite capital of Hattuša. The figure, shown here in detail, stands more than 7 feet tall. He grips an axe in his right hand, and his left arm is bent upward at the elbow with his hand clenched in a fist in a kind of salute to passersby, as those leaving the city looked straight into his right eye. Photo by Jeanny Vorys Canby with permission of the Museum of Anatolian Civilizations, Ankara.

ure 99). On the left outside door jamb was the forequarter of a leonine being with Hathor curls and a rosette tree above the missing head. On the small inside door, looking down over the city were two sphinxes, each about 8½ feet tall. They were badly shattered in the fire that destroyed the city; still these sphinxes are the best pieces of Hittite sculpture found to date. Their heads, forequarters, and hindquarters were carved in the round. Their swept back wings and lithe bodies with tails curled up were carved in high relief on the side of the door jambs. They wear two different types of tight-fitting caps with horns (Canby 1975: 243). They have long Hathor curls hanging down over their breasts, and their plump faces with thin lips and short chins were carved with great sensitivity. The inlay from the eyes are missing. The elegant style of these pieces is in marked contrast to that of the sphinxes with short conical hats, found more recently in Temple 3 in the Upper City (Neve 1987: 397–400, figure 18 a-d).

An unfinished stela more than 24 feet tall was found lying on a hillside at the site of Fasillar in south central Anatolia (Bittel 1976a: figure 264). On the front face of the stela is a god wearing a conical cap with his right arm raised above his



## Most characteristic of imperial Hittite art are the rock reliefs found all over Asia Minor.



head and his left arm extended forward at shoulder height; this god stands on the head of a mountain god, a small figure whose hands are clasped and who is flanked by two large lions. Not far away, at the spring at Eflâtun Pınar, large ashlar blocks, each with a single figure on it, were put together to form a typically Hittite, layered composition (Bittel 1976a: figure 257). A god and goddess looking forward are seated under winged sun-discs that are supported by three piers of genii, one on top of another. The composition is crowned by an enormous winged disc supported on either side by two piers of winged genii, one on top of another.

**Rock reliefs.** Most characteristic of imperial Hittite art are the rock reliefs that have been found all over Asia Minor. These figures are given no architectural framework on the rock surface.

At Gâvur Kalesi, about 37 miles south of Ankara, are two figures, one a god approaching a seated figure (Bittel 1976a: figures 199 and 200). Here the carving may be related to traces of well-laid walls and a door (Akurgal and Hirmer 1962: figures 98–99). In Cilicia near Keben, on a steep slope overlooking the Gök River, 13 feet above the ground, is a small figure of a goddess facing right. She has both hands extended, perhaps holding a branch (Taşyürek 1976). Neither of these monuments is inscribed. On a high rock outcropping in far western Anatolia, at Akpınar near Manisa, in a niche almost 30 feet high, is a large seated figure facing forward that has been known since Greek times (Bittel 1976a: figures 204 and 205). It has usually been thought to be a female figure, but a recent reexamination of the sculpture has led to the claim that the figure has a beard and wears

*Most characteristic of Hittite imperial art are rock reliefs found all over Asia Minor. At Firaktin, probably on an ancient road, figures of king Ḫattušili III pouring a libation to a god and queen Puduḫepa pouring a libation to a seated goddess Ḫebat were carved side by side. A hieroglyphic inscription was carved to their right. A cast of the unfinished relief, shown here, is on display in the garden of the Kayseri Museum. Photo by Jeanny Vorys Canby.*

the typically male conical hat (Spanos 1983). The inscriptions at the side appear to be personal names (Güterbock and Alexander 1983).

Other monuments are accompanied by royal names written in hieroglyphs. Two date to the time of Ḫattušili III (around 1275 to 1250 B.C.E.). At Firaktin in Cappadocia, south of Mount Ergias, probably on an ancient road, figures of the king pouring a libation to a god and queen Puduḫepa pouring a libation to the seated goddess Ḫebat were placed side by side (Bittel 1976a: figures 194, 196, 198). In many pho-



## The greatest Hittite rock monument is the open-air sanctuary, Yazılıkaya.



*The lack of an architectural framework in all rock reliefs dating to the Hittite Empire is evidenced in this relief of a Hittite prince carrying a bow and wearing a divine cap. More than 7½ feet tall, the relief is located in western Anatolia, at the pass at Karabel southeast of Izmir. Photo by Jeanny Vorys Canby.*

tographs the unfinished relief gives the impression of awkwardly short-waisted figures, perhaps the result of the angle at which the photographs were taken. At nearby Taşçı, three separate figures were carved facing right on a rock face not far above the level of a stream. In Cilicia, on an outcropping at a bend in the Ceyhan River, is a rather crude representation of King Muwatalli II (1306 to 1282 B.C.E.) wearing ceremonial robes. All of the last five reliefs are located in places where the sculptor would have needed scaffolding, which suggests that the locations were chosen for symbolic reasons.

Four reliefs showing princes or minor kings with their names spelled out also have been found. In Cilicia, a prince dressed in a short kilt and carrying a bow was carved on a rock overlooking the Ceyhan River at Hemite, about 25 miles north of the relief of King Muwatalli. At a pass in eastern Anatolia, in the Taurus Mountains at Hanyeri (Gezbel; see Alkım 1968: figure 111; Bittel 1976a: figure 201), the prince faces a group of figures: the bull of the Weather-God standing with its hind legs on a rectangular mountain and its forelegs on the personification of a mountain. An even more elaborate relief was carved on a giant boulder at Imamkulu, which is on the road to the Hanyeri pass (Bittel 1976a: figure 203). In front of a prince the Weather-God mounts his chariot, which is pulled by bulls all standing on three bowing mountain gods who, in turn, stand on genii. A bird flies in the air. To the right a winged goddess opens her cloak and stands nude on a tower of four eagles with one head. In far western Anatolia, at the pass at Karabel, southeast of Izmir, is another prince with a bow



The greatest Hittite rock monument is the open-air sanctuary Yazılıkaya, located just a short walk from the Hittite capital, Ḫattuša. A natural outcropping of rock formed two semienclosed chambers that served as a kind of cella to a small temple in front. Both chambers are decorated in rock reliefs. In the large chamber, on the wall opposite the grand procession, is this 8½-foot-tall carving of Tudḫaliya, probably the fourth Hittite king identified by this name. Large and stocky, the figure is wrapped in ceremonial robes and wears a tight-fitting cap. Above his extended right arm is an elaborate, carefully carved cartouche. Because the figure is depicted as standing on a sacred mountain, some believe he represents Tudḫaliya after his death when, according to Hittite belief, he became a god. Photo by Jeanny Vorys Canby.

who, in this case, wears a divine hat (Bittel 1976a: figure 206).

The greatest Hittite rock monument is the open-air sanctuary, Yazılıkaya, a short walk from the Hittite capital, Ḫattuša (Bittel and others 1975; Bittel 1976a: figures 232–41). A natural outcropping of rock formed two semienclosed areas that served as a sort of cella to a small temple in front. On the walls of the larger bay is a relief showing a grand procession of gods and goddesses gathered for a new year's festival. The gods from the left and the goddesses from the right meet on the back wall where the chief deities of the realm are pictured. On the left, the great Weather-God stands on two bowing mountain gods. He faces the Sun-Goddess of Arinna, here given her Hurrian name, Ḫebat. She stands on a lioness that, in turn, stands on rectangles symbolizing mountains. Peeking out from behind the legs of

the two deities are two divine bulls. Behind the goddess her son, Šarruma, stands on a smaller leonine creature, which also stands on rectangular-shaped mountains. Behind this god the granddaughters of the Weather-God are depicted as standing over a double-headed eagle.

The composition here is very simple. Even the many-layered main scene is straightforward. The spacing of the figures suggests that the procession, as it wound its way in and out of the natural rock face, was slow and stately. Many of the deities are identified by names written in Hittite hieroglyphs, phonetically or logographically. Most of the names that can be read are Hurrian, and the gods appear to be arranged in the same order as in Hurrian texts. The style of the figures and the type of monument, however, are entirely Hittite. No king's name appears in the procession, but an over-life-size

figure of one of the kings named Tudḫaliya—a foot taller than the greatest god of the procession—was carved on an opposite wall of the large chamber (Bittel 1976a: figure 253). Many scholars think this relief indicates that Tudḫaliya (usually identified with the fourth king of this name) had the great line of figures carved, but I think the king's figure was a later addition. The king stands wrapped in ceremonial robes wearing a tight-fitting cap. He is stocky with a very large head and enormous ears but rather delicate features. Over his extended right hand is an elaborate, carefully carved cartouche. Some believe the figure represents the king after he had died, or, as the Hittites said, had “become a god,” since he is depicted as standing on a sacred mountain.

It is also thought that the small bay served as a funeral chapel for the same king. The reliefs here are quite different from those in the procession, as each depicts a single unconnected scene. On one wall is a picture of a giant dagger partly sunk into the rock (Bittel 1976a: figures 252, 254). The hilt of the dagger is made up of two lions, shown vertically, in a stalking position; above



**Above:** Reliefs in the small bay at Yazılıkaya are different from those in the long procession, as each depicts a single unconnected scene. One relief, partly sunk into the wall, is of a giant dagger. The hilt of the dagger is made up of two lions shown vertically in a stalking position; above them are two lion protomes surmounted by the head of a god. **Right:** A comparable ceremonial axe was found in a hoard at Şarkışla. Decorated with numerous images, including falcon heads, a lion protome, and a winged sun disc supported by two bird-men, the axe contains a rich compendium of Hittite motifs. Photo of dagger god by Jeanny Vorys Canby; photo of axe courtesy of Kurt Bittel.



them are lion protomes surmounted by the head of a god, probably Nergal, the Mesopotamian god of the underworld, or his Anatolian equivalent. These elements are convincingly combined. A comparable ceremonial weapon, an axe, was found in a hoard at Şarkışla in eastern Cappadocia (Bittel 1976a: figure 341; 1976b: 20–27, plates VII–XII). The curved end of the blade has falcon heads on either side, and on both flat sides, at the bottom, is a figure whose body disappears into a U-shaped object. The figure wears a short-sleeved long dress tightly belted. On one face a tall conical hat has horns,

but none are depicted on the other. The figure supports the paws of a crouching lion protome. On the back of the lion a god stands wearing a high conical hat with horns and dressed in the robe of the Hittite king or Sun-God. Above this figure is a winged sun disc supported by two bird-men. The butt of the blade has three falcon-headed lions with wings on the flat side and a winged lion above and below the shaft hole on the narrow side.

On the face opposite the Dagger-God in the small chamber at Yazılıkaya, twelve gods with scimitars over their shoulders are shown running in unison, their bodies overlapping (Bittel 1976a: figures 250 and 251). These gods, who are shown at the end of the procession in the main chamber, are associated with Nergal in a Hittite text (Güterbock 1975b: 191–92). Behind and facing in the same direction as the Dagger-God is a figure of King Tudḫaliya IV (around 1250 to 1220 B.C.E.) beside the towering figure of his personal god, Šarruma (Bittel 1976a: figures 252 and 253). The god encircles the monarch's shoulders in order to grasp his right hand and guide him—a subtle composition mirroring the relationship between a king and his personal god expressed in the Hittite texts. All scenes face the end of the small chamber where there is a statue base with a nearby inscription, which, again, gives the name of a Tudḫaliya. Some very large feet have been found that may belong to this statue (Neve 1982: 389–91, figures 8–10).

Most scholars date the reliefs in both the small chamber and the main chamber to the same period, the late thirteenth century B.C.E. Clearly, however, there is a stylistic

difference between the long scene in the main chamber and the individually composed scenes in the small chamber. The latter reliefs are not physically joined, and they do not agree in scale, ground line, or basic composition. Instead of the concrete layering of symbols that characterizes the main scene of the procession, elements are woven into the complex single figure of the Dagger-God in the small chamber. The graceful expression of the king's intimate, dependent relationship with his personal god in the small chamber bears little resemblance to the arrogant representation of the deified king in the main chamber. The proportions of the latter king are different from those of the king in the small chamber, and the delicate face is very different from the heavy features of the running gods (Bittel 1976a: figure 251). However the various scenes at Yazılıkaya should be dated, they show the wide range of sculptural approaches achieved by the Hittites by the end of their empire. The high relief at Yazılıkaya is very worn and damaged, but where the surface is preserved it shows broad, clear forms smoothly finished without much interior modeling or incised detail, such as seen at the Lion Gate and the King's Gate.

**Sculpture in the round.** Very little sculpture in the round has been preserved, but we know that it did exist because of the sculptured feet (mentioned above) and the large cloaked body of a figure more than 5½-feet tall found in a level preceding the gate sculpture at Alaca Höyük (Koşay 1973: 78–79, plates XL-XLI). Also found in early imperial levels at Hattuša is the half-life-size head of a goddess or queen (Bittel 1976a, 1984). The figure's eyebrows are rendered in



*Sculpture in the round was another artistic expression of the Empire period. Both this half-life-size head of a goddess or queen, left, and this over-life-size face fragment, photographed to the side and front, below, were uncovered at Hattuša. The female head, which was found in the Lower City, is carved out of green stone and measures about 6 inches in height. Her eyebrows are rendered in a plastic curve, and her strange ears are similar to those of the sphinxes found recently in the Upper City. The piece resides in the Boğazkale Museum. The face fragment, which was found on the slopes of the great fortress Büyükkale, was very sensitively carved out of limestone. Its preserved height is more than 12 inches. Photo of female head and face fragment courtesy of Peter Neve and the Boğazköy expedition.*

a plastic curve, and her strange ears are similar to those of the sphinxes found in the Upper City (Neve 1987: figures 18 a-d). A fragment of a very sensitively carved over-life-size human face was found on the slopes of the citadel (Boehmer 1972: 208, number 2156, plate LXXX).

Numerous figures known from Hittite stone sculpture as well as other types of sculpture were produced in precious materials on a

tiny scale. Although they display the bold, clear forms that are typically Hittite, these pieces are often more subtly and meticulously handled than most of the larger sculptured pieces. There are gold gods with hyperextended knees (Bittel 1976a: figures 167–68), and a gold figure of a woman seated as if rocking while staring into a bowl (her oracular mirror?) is quite remarkable (Bittel 1976a: figure 171; see Güterbock

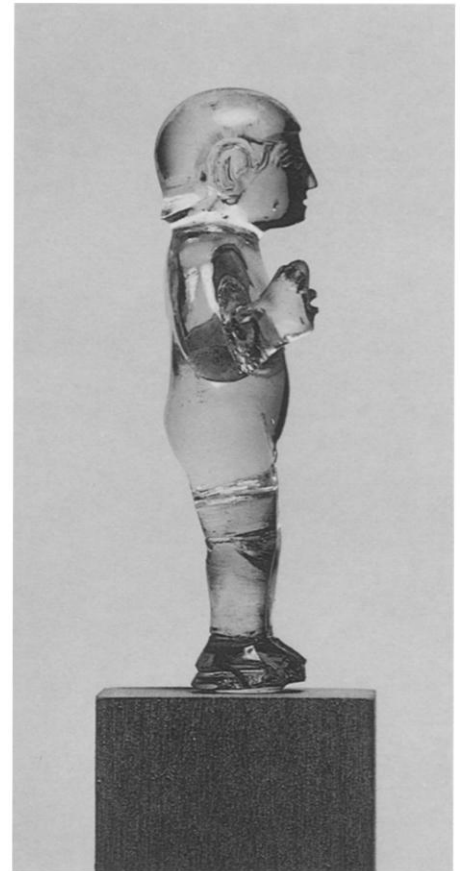


1961: 149; Haas 1977: 87). Also made of gold is a fine pendant, part of the Norbert Schimmel collection, showing a special child attended by a female figure (Bittel 1976a: figure 173) The structure of a baby's body is skillfully rendered in a rock crystal figure (Canby 1986: 54–57, figure 5–1). We also have, from the excavations at Tarsus, a cloaked rock crystal figure (Bittel 1976a: figure 176). Made of ivory are a figure of an older child from Nuzi (Bittel 1976a: figure 174), a mountain god from Ḫattuša (Bittel

1976a: figure 248), and an elaborately carved plaque from Megiddo (Frankfort 1954: 130, figure 57).

### Conclusion

In spite of the numerous artifacts, monuments, and rock reliefs that have been found so far, we still have a great deal to learn about Hittite art. Fragments of wall painting with designs have been found in the Upper City of the Hittite capital at Ḫattuša (Neve 1983: 438–39, figure 11), and there is a wealth of new sculptured



*Numerous Hittite figures were carved out of precious materials during the Empire period, but on a tiny scale. This fine gold pendant, at left, which actually measures less than 2 inches, depicts a child sitting in a nurse's lap. Photo courtesy of the Norbert Schimmel collection in the Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York. The body of an infant is skillfully rendered in this rock crystal figure, above, which is almost 3 inches tall. Courtesy of the Walters Art Gallery, Baltimore.*

fragments of types we knew nothing about until recently (Neve 1987: figures 11, 17, 18; 1988: figures 20–22). The first royal Hittite tomb was uncovered by Peter Neve at Ḫattuša in 1988, and it has two relief blocks. Wandering shepherds will no doubt come upon more rock reliefs, all of which will help us better understand the development of Hittite art.

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