

Questions, Approaches, and Dialogues in Eastern Mediterranean Archaeology

Studies in Honor of Marie-Henriette
and Charles Gates

Edited by
Ekin Kozal, Murat Akar, Yağmur Heffron,
Çiler Çilingiroğlu, Tevfik Emre Şerifoğlu, Canan Çakırlar,
Sinan Ünlüsoy, and Eric Jean

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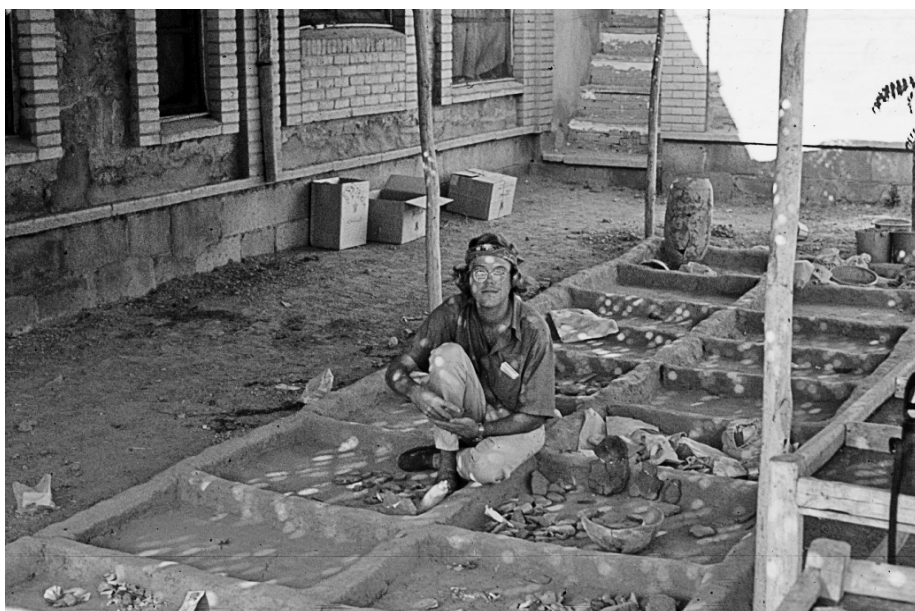
Marie-Henriette and Charles Gates at Dulles airport in Washington, DC, 2013

PHOTO BY A. VAN AS



Marie-Henriette Gates sorting pottery at Godin Tepe, 1973

PHOTO BY A. VAN AS



Charles Gates sorting pottery at Godin Tepe, 1973

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Facing Muwattalli: Some Thoughts on the Visibility and Function of the Rock Reliefs at Sirkeli Höyük, Cilicia

*Ekin Kozal*¹ — *Mirko Novák*²

Abstract

This article is an attempt to examine the functionality and the visibility of the Hittite rock reliefs at Sirkeli Höyük in its urban context, the rural landscape and network of roads arriving at the site. Two reliefs have been discovered so far. One of them can securely be dated, since the inscription refers to Muwattalli (II). The other one was mutilated in antiquity, and the identification of this Hittite king (Muršili III ?) is part of the discussion. Cup-like depressions, which are located on the reliefs, are also taken into consideration here. With the following thoughts and remarks on the function of these Sirkeli reliefs, we would like to honour Marie-Henriette and Charles Gates, two outstanding scholars in the field of Cilician archaeology, to whom we owe many important contributions. We hope that they will enjoy our small presentation, and we are looking forward to many future discussions, as fruitful as all the past ones.

Introduction

The function of Hittite open-air landscape monuments and rock reliefs is much disputed and still unresolved.³ It seems clear that there is no monocausal explanation for their existence since there are remarkable differences between those reliefs that marked natural springs (Eflatun Pınar, Fraktin), those situated at important overland thoroughfares and passes through mountains (Hanyeri, İmamkulu), and those connected with monumental architectural structures (Gavur Kalesi) and urban settlements (Sirkeli Höyük).

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We thank Dr. Johanna Tudeau (Bern) for improving the English manuscript.

3 Glatz and Plourde 2011.

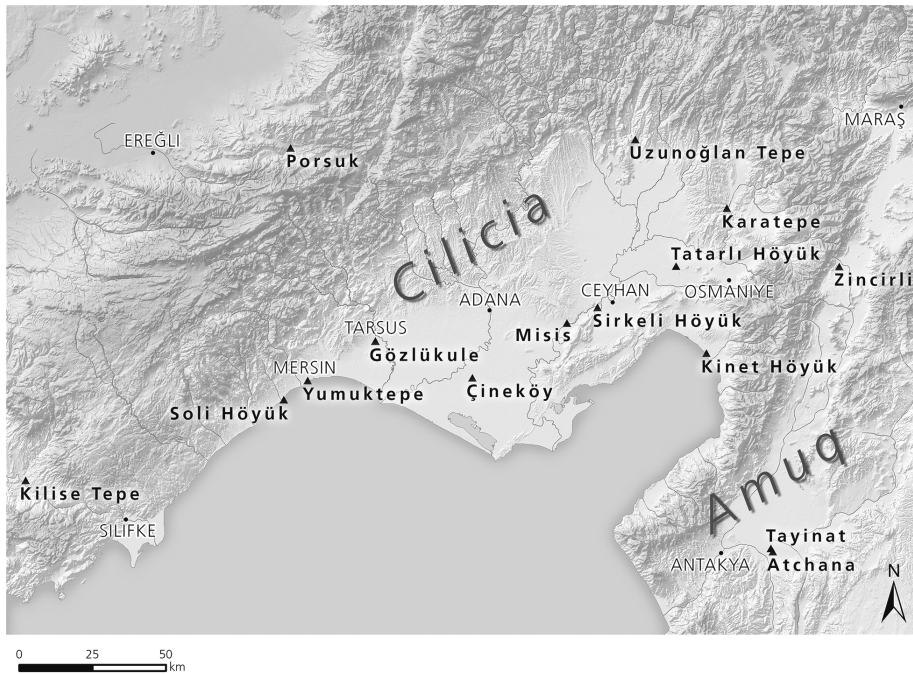


FIG. 1 Cilicia (© Susanne Rutishauser, IAW Bern)

The two Hittite rock reliefs located at Sirkeli Höyük are of some importance, especially because the one depicting Muwattalli II (*ca.* 1290–1272 BCE)⁴ is the earliest relief securely attributed to a king.⁵ The relief of Muwattalli II was first examined and published by Hans Gustav Güterbock during the campaign of John Garstang in 1936–1937, which was a part of the Neilson Expedition to Cilicia.⁶ At that time the Ceyhan River flowed directly next to the rock outcrop on which the relief is carved. A photograph showing Güterbock on a ladder placed in the water gives an impressive view on the situation.⁷ Güterbock published a second short note on the relief in 1997.⁸ During later Sirkeli Höyük campaigns, which were directed by Barthel Hrouda (1992–1996) and Horst Ehringhaus (1997), a small earthen platform was filled up to enable the visitors to walk up to the reliefs. In 2015, with the generosity of Alemdar Öztürk, the mayor of Ceyhan, the

4 On the history of Muwattalli II see Klengel 1999, 202–218.

5 A new examination of the inscription will be published by David Hawkins soon. We thank him for giving us access to his manuscript.

6 Garstang 1937.

7 Güterbock in Garstang 1937, 66–68; Hrouda 1997a, pl. 5:3.

8 Güterbock in Hrouda 1997a, 104.



FIG. 2 Satellite image with traces of the ancient river course

Swiss-Turkish mission built a wooden platform here for visitors. During Hrouda's 1994 campaign, a second relief was discovered by Ehringhaus, only a few meters away from the Muwattalli relief. It had been chiselled out in antiquity.⁹ This relief definitely represented a Hittite figure, displaying an identical but mirrored image of the Muwattalli relief.

The present paper deals with the ancient landscape around Sirkeli Höyük and the Late Bronze Age (LBA) structures at the site. The aim is to analyse the location, the visibility and the functionality of these two reliefs and of further potentially planned reliefs.

Location of Sirkeli Höyük and the Reliefs

Sirkeli Höyük, which is one of the largest settlement mounds in Plain Cilicia, is situated on the left bank of the Ceyhan River (ancient *Puruna* and *Pyramos*) right on the pass where the river breaks through the Misis Mountains and at the interface of Yukarıova (Ceyhan Ovası) and Çukurova (FIG. 1, FIG. 2). The site lies on the important thoroughfare from Syria to Central Anatolia, passing through

9 Ehringhaus 1995a; Ehringhaus 1995b; Hrouda 1997a, pl. 7.

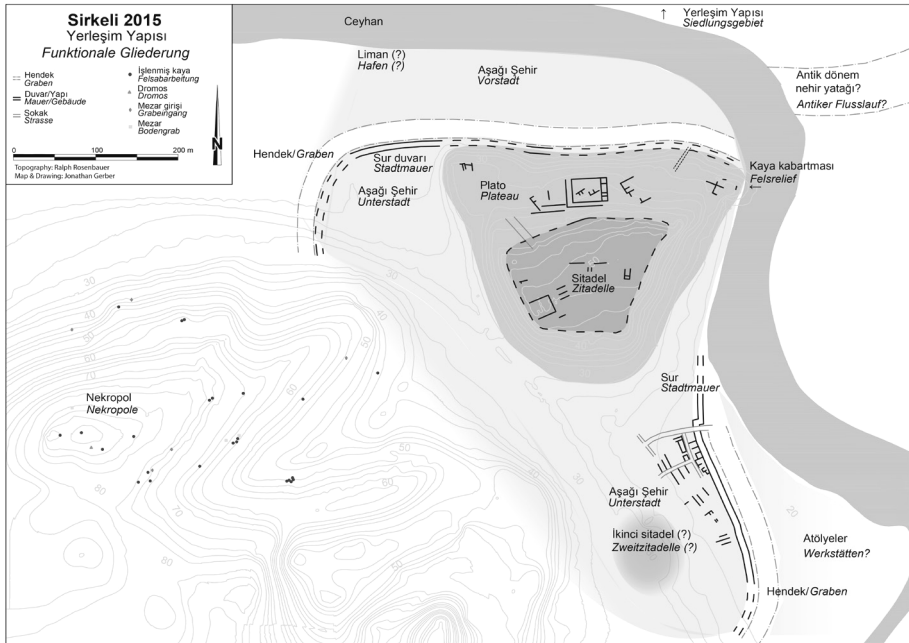


FIG. 3 Reconstructed city plan of Sirkeli (© Jonathan Gerber, IAW Bern)

the Cilician Plain via the Amanus and Syrian Gates in the east and the Cilician Gates and the Göksu Valley in the West. The modern highway, the old road and the railway still pass by the mound along this ancient route. Moreover, the site is situated *ca.* 40 km upstream from the coast on as side road linking the potential harbours at Karataş and Yumurtalık to Central Anatolia via Kozan, Feke and the Gezbel pass. The location of the site is understood to have preserved its importance also in later and modern ages.

The settlement is composed of: i) an 8 ha citadel mound, subdivided by elevation and fortification into a lower plateau and a higher inner citadel; ii) a southeastern and southern “Lower Town” of an additional minimum area of 12 ha; and iii) an extramural workshop areas to its north and east (FIG. 3). There is a suburb on the opposite side of the river to the north and a necropolis on a natural hill to the southwest. A smaller secondary mound lies to the south of the main mound and has been severely destroyed by road and railway constructions and recent mining activities. However, it was located *intramuros*, thus forming a kind of second elevated citadel.

With a size of over 20 ha *intramuros*, with the additional suburbs, workshop areas and a necropolis, the ancient settlement was one of the largest Bronze and Iron Age towns of Plain Cilicia. In the Bronze Age it first belonged to the kingdom

and later to the Hittite province of Kizzuwatna, and in the Iron Age it was a city that was a part of the kingdom Hiyawa/Kawa, which later became the Assyrian province of Que. The city is not identified yet, but there are good reasons to believe that Tatarlı Höyük and Sirkeli Höyük, which are the two largest settlements in Yukarıova (the eastern part of Plain Cilicia), should be identified with the important cult towns of Lawazantiya/Lusanda and Kummanni/Kisuatni respectively.¹⁰ If this is true, than Sirkeli Höyük / Kummanni was of religious importance both for the people of Kizzuwatna and the Hittite Empire.

The Images and their Identifications

Two imperial Hittite rock reliefs were carved into the natural rock outcrop that forms the eastern flank of the main citadel mound at the northeastern corner of the mound. The relief of Muwattalli II is one of the few Hittite reliefs that can be dated precisely (FIG. 4, FIG. 5). The inscription behind the head of the relief mentions not only the name of Muwattalli but also that of his father: “Muwattalli, Great King, the Hero, son of Muršili, Great King, the Hero”. The king is depicted with his long robe and *kalmuš* in his left hand. His right arm is bent, with the elbow at the level of the waist and the closed hand pointing upwards. There is a round skullcap on his head, and he wears pointed shoes.¹¹ This depiction is comparable with the Sun God image from Chamber B at the Südburg in Boğazköy (with the exception of the winged sun disc),¹² as well as with the two depictions of Tudḫaliya at Yazılıkaya – one in Chamber A¹³ showing him alone, and the other in Chamber B under the protection of Sarruma (*Umarmungsszene*).¹⁴

The second relief lies some 14 m north of Muwattalli's image (FIG. 6). In between, the rock face is stepped, forming different niches for each relief. Despite the fact that the second relief was mutilated in antiquity, the figure can be reconstructed according to the remaining traces. The figure wears the same garment and shows the same gesture as Muwattalli, but mirrored, thus looking to the right. Both figures bear their inscriptions on the back of their heads, although the inscription of the second relief was damaged in the past.

Due to the very careful way in which the relief has been chiselled out, leaving no possibility to identify the depicted figure, an act of pure vandalism can be

10 Forlanini 2013.

11 Ehringhaus 2005, 95–99, fig. 175; see also Kohlmeyer 1983, 95–101, and Glatz and Plourde 2011, 45–46.

12 Neve 1993, 63–80, figs. 211–212.

13 Seeher 2011, 82–83, figs. 86–88.

14 Seeher 2011, 110, figs. 112–120.

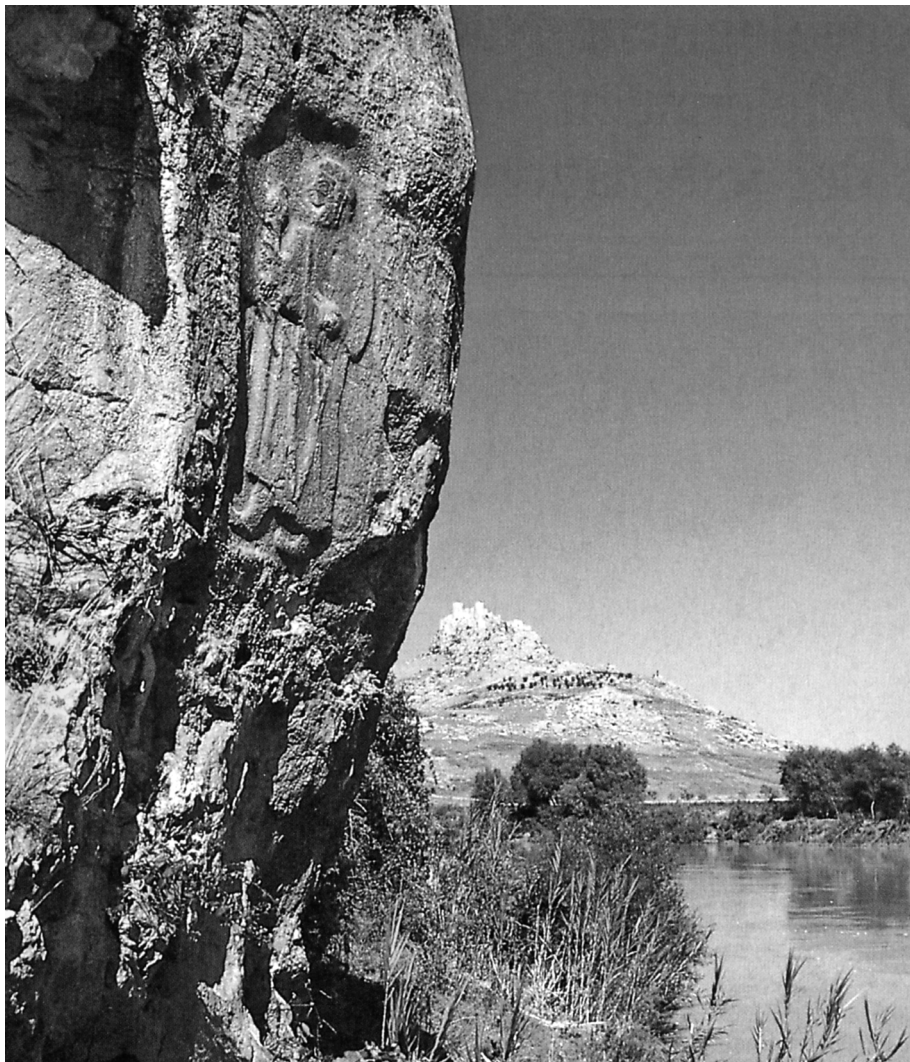


FIG. 4 Muwattalli's relief (© Horst Ehringhaus)

excluded. Dating the destruction to the times of Byzantine iconoclasm or Islamic fundamentalism can also be excluded since the nearby Muwattalli relief has remained untouched. This hints to a deliberate destruction by people who not only would have known very well to whom the images were dedicated but also respected Muwattalli, all the while subjecting the other figure to a *damnatio memoriae*.

It seems therefore likely to us that the second relief was representing one of Muwattalli's two sons, either Ur̥i-Teššup, also known as Great King Muršili III, or Kurunta, who claimed the title of Great King and later became the ruler



FIG. 5 Muwattalli's relief with the newly established platform (© Alexander Ahrens, IAW Bern)

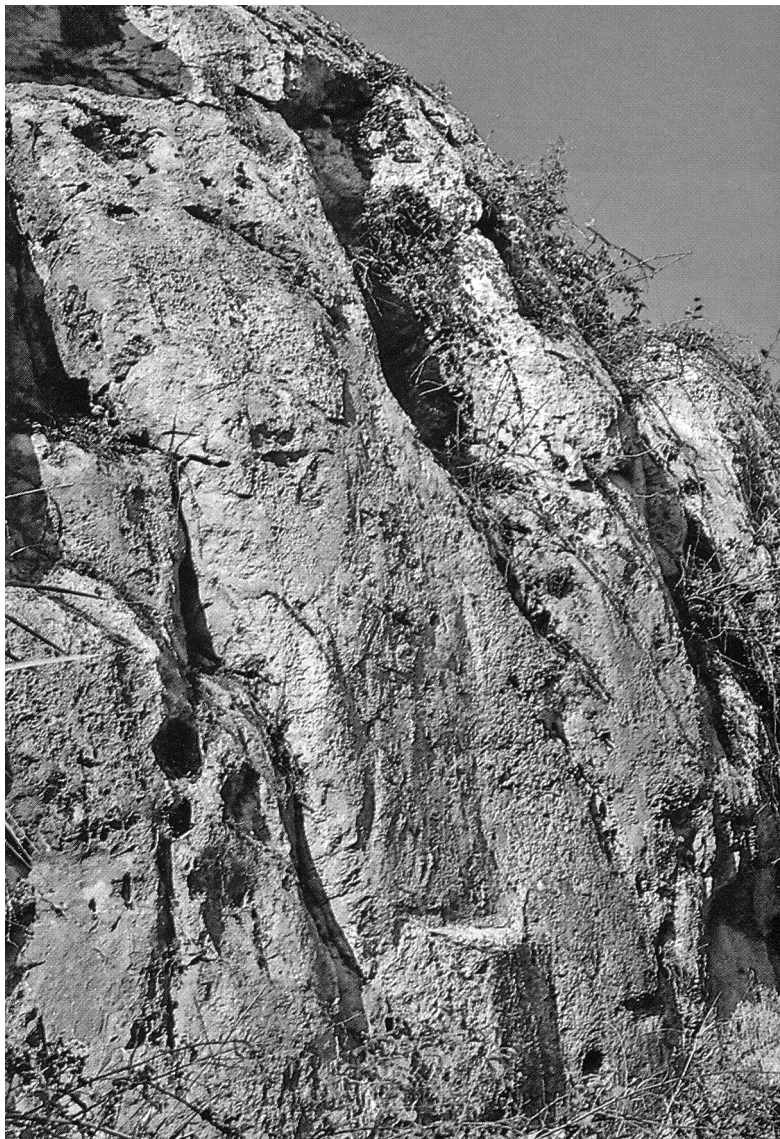


FIG. 6 Mutilated second relief (© Horst Ehringhaus)

of Tarḫuntašša. We prefer to identify the person on this second relief of Sirkeli Höyük as Urḫi-Teššup, since he, unlike his brother, underwent an official *damnatio memoriae* in Hatti after the *coup d'état* by his uncle Hattušili II ("III"). Urḫi-Teššup became the king of Hatti after the death of his father and gained the throne name Muršili. He moved the capital back from his father's residence in Tarḫuntašša to Hattuša, where he stayed seven years on the throne, before he lost power to his

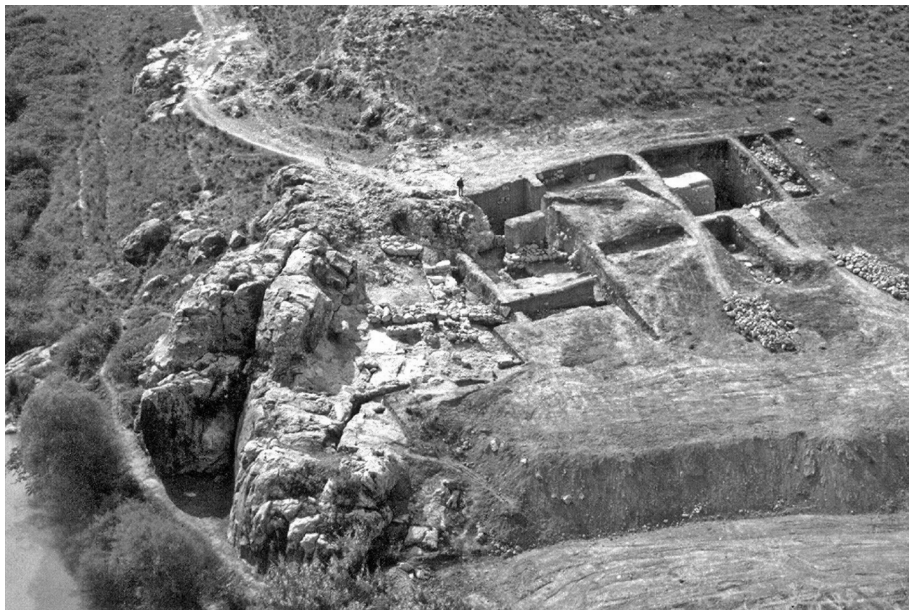


FIG. 7 Photo showing the Steingebäude, seen from the North with the relief rock on the left side (© Horst Ehringhaus)

uncle. He had to live in exile in several places in the Levant and finally in Egypt.¹⁵ During the time of Hattušili II/III, he was mentioned exclusively with his Hurrian birth name Urḫi-Teššup (especially in Hattušili's apology), which hints at an attempt to disregard his time as king. It can be assumed that the erased relief at Sirkeli depicted Muršili III rather than Kurunta and was destroyed at Hattušili's order. In this case, the father and the son would have been portrayed next to each other. They would be wearing the same garments but facing different directions: Muwattalli's face is turned to the south whereas Muršili (?) faces the north, so they are looking in different directions and don't face each other.

A third relief was planned half way between the two reliefs. The face of the rock had already been prepared and smoothed out. A square field can still be easily discerned today. However, for uncertain reasons, this relief was never executed.

The *Steingebäude* and 'Shallow Cups'

The *Steingebäude* is a building excavated by B. Hrouda and H. Ehringhaus in 1996 and 1997 (FIG. 7). It is situated on top of the same rock outcrop that bears the reliefs

¹⁵ Klengel 1999, 218–235.



FIG. 9 Photo showing the Shallow Cups over the two reliefs

Access was possible through the west room. The foundations of the extremely thick walls of the main room are made of gigantic stones, resting immediately on the rock. The walls are 2 m thick and preserved to a height of about 75 cm. Whether they consisted exclusively of stones, which are not *in situ* any more, or were made of mud brick in the upper parts cannot be determined with certainty. Due to the debris discovered during the excavations, the latter alternative seems more likely, however. The mud brick superstructure may have vanished as a result of the melting of the mud bricks. The east side of the room and parts of its south side are defined by the higher parts of the rock. The broad entrance to this room is situated on the west wall. A zebu bull's head was found to the west of this doorway.¹⁶ The only installation inside the room was a ramp cut out of the natural bedrock in the northern and lower part and artificially built by stones in its southern and higher part. This ramp was presumably the substructure of a staircase, perhaps consisting of wooden stairs that would not have been preserved. It facilitated access from the room up to the top of the higher parts of the outcrop close to the eastern edge. On this upper level two more interesting features have been discovered: the

¹⁶ Ehringhaus in Hrouda 1997a, 109–115.

so-called 'shallow cups' (Fig. 9). Such cup-like depressions, also designated as cup marks, are frequently associated not only with statues and tombs but also with Hittite rock reliefs. This connection is by no means a coincidence. For example, at Fraktin two of these cup-like depressions are situated on the rock above the two reliefs.¹⁷ At Sirkeli, one depression measures 32 cm in diameter and 20 cm in depth, and the other 26 cm in diameter and 15 cm in depth.¹⁸ The function of these depressions has already been discussed extensively, and so an elaborate repetition is not necessary here. David Ussishkin convincingly argued that they were used in cultic activities, namely for libation.¹⁹ According to Charles Burney, these cup-like depressions are more specifically related to the ancestor cult, as they represent the cultic ditch in the reflection of the netherworld.²⁰ The ancestor cult was practised by both the gods and the kings.

A third depression has been detected at Sirkeli on another rock some 100 m south of the Muwattalli relief (Fig. 10). Nowadays the top of the rock is on ground level and therefore its clearly smoothed straight east face is deeply covered under the earth. If we expect a relief under each 'shallow cup,' then the face of this rock has to be revealed through excavation.

However, the special function of the *Steingebäude* is clear from the monumentality not of its rooms but of its walls, made of gigantic stones, as well as due to the zebu bull's head, which might have been fixed originally at the lintel and surely had a symbolic meaning. Moreover, its integration with the same rock with the reliefs and the 'shallow cups' indicates a special purpose. All these elements form an extraordinary ensemble. We will come to this later.

Late Bronze Age Settlement and Landscape²¹

The investigation and reconstruction of the urban development of the site embraced in its ancient landscape through its occupational history is one of the main goals of the recent project.²² In this respect, settlement size, structure, and layout, as well as fortifications and large buildings, are examined. Besides excavation and intensive archaeological survey at the site, geophysical survey (geomagnetic, geoelectric tomography, ground-penetrating radar) and high-resolution satellite imagery have been applied. These studies yielded information not only about

17 Ussishkin 1975, 85–86, figs. 2–3.

18 Ussishkin 1975, 86–89, figs. 4–6.

19 Ussishkin 1975.

20 Burney 2004, 19–21.

21 See also Kozal 2013.

22 Kozal and Novák 2013.

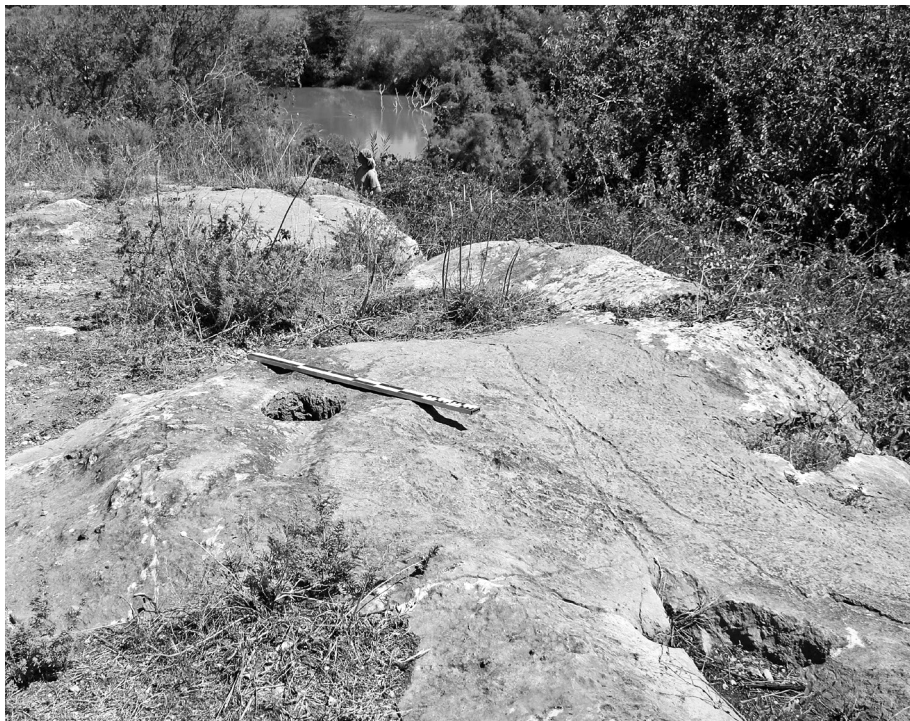


FIG. 10 Third 'shallow cup' south of the other two (© Laura Simons, IAW Bern)

unexcavated architectural remains, but also ancient riverbeds. Excavation of four sectors (A, C, D, and F) has been oriented accordingly to test the findings of satellite imagery and geophysical prospection. Sector A is located in the north-western corner and Sector C in the middle of the plateau. Sector D is situated on the southwest side of the citadel at its highest point. Sector F, which is in the southeastern lower town, was discovered recently by the geophysical investigations and followed by excavations.

In Sector A a large substantial building is still being excavated since 2006. The preliminary results show that the building was occupied from LB II into Iron II, succeeded by domestic architecture. In Sector C no LBA levels have been reached until now. In the neighbouring trenches of Hrouda however, LBA material has been revealed, thus providing evidence for the occupation of the whole plateau in that period.

Inside the fortified upper citadel, several trenches were excavated by Hrouda. Recent excavations have focused on a huge square building discovered by geophysical prospection in the southwestern fringe, labelled Sector D. Here a similar sequence to Sector A has been revealed, dating from the LBA to Iron Age III. Here

we are dealing with a large building on the summit of the citadel, presumably a public building. Hrouda's excavation in the nearby Area 6 also yielded another neighbouring LBA building with stone foundations.

All these remains point to the urban nature of the LBA settlement. The ceramics reflect a Central Anatolian character, providing evidence for a strong Hittite impact.

Similar LBA material has also been collected during the survey of the northern suburb and the western Lower Town. The area north of the mound is nowadays a crop field that is cultivated regularly, making large-scale excavations impossible. However, a test trench opened in this field (Sector B) close to the northern border of the mound has revealed the upper phase of the fortification wall at a depth of *ca.* 3 m under river sediments. The materials on the topsoil in this area could have been washed down from the mound. However, this small test trench must not be representative of the complete area. Geophysical prospection has detected a canal-like structure *ca.* 30 m wide north of the fortification, running parallel to the north side of the mound. This is probably a ditch that runs around the fortification of the citadel. The strip between this ditch and the Ceyhan River was obviously used as a workshop area: defective pottery fragments were found during the survey, exactly at the spot where a kiln was detected through geophysical prospection. This evidence testifies to a link between the material on the surface and the geophysical findings under the earth. The material on the surface can thus be taken into consideration when questioning the dating of the northern lower town.

In contrast with the northern area, the southeastern Lower Town was not ploughed and therefore yielded a very limited amount of material. LBA pottery was not found on the surface. A dense settlement surrounded by a double fortification wall with a gate was found during geophysical prospection. Sector F was opened at the location where the gate was detected. The upper phases of the inner fortification wall with adjacent domestic architecture were recovered. They date from the Iron Age. Lower levels have not yet been reached, and it is therefore not yet possible to determine the initial occupation of the southeastern lower town. However, we can at least present here a feature of topography which was important in the Iron Age and which might have been projected by the earlier LBA architecture. The entrance to the Iron Age Lower Town from the southeast must have been through the southeastern gate that is detected both by geophysical prospection and in excavations. Today, the Ceyhan River runs directly east of the gate, thus blocking the entrance. This suggests that the river had a different course in earlier times.

Satellite imagery shows that the Ceyhan River changed its course east of Sirke-li Höyük several times (FIG. 2). It can be detected that the current bend is a more recent development of the preceding southward shift of the river's course. This was already observed by Ludwig Masch (Munich) in a geological survey connected with

Hrouda's investigations,²³ and it is also confirmed by the observations from 1997 to 2006 when an island on the river just opposite the Muwattalli relief disappeared due to the abandonment of the northern branch of the river. Although we cannot date the clearly visible ancient courses and the shifts of the river, we may assume that the course of the ancient river during the occupation of Sirkeli Höyük ran far to the north of the recent bend and approached the mound directly from the east. Contrary to the situation today, it would not have run parallel to the eastern fringe of the mound and the rock outcrop with the reliefs. This would mean the ancient thoroughfare coming from the Amanus Gates and continuing towards Adana and later to the Cilician Gates passed by Sirkeli Höyük on its northern side and not, as is the case today, on its southern side. It makes much more sense to have the identified city gate on the one side and the northern plateau—the lower and presumably also more 'public' part of the citadel—on the other side. Access to both the Lower Town and the citadel would thus have been arranged from the north.

These reconstructions have implications regarding the visibility of the reliefs. Today the river prevents a good view of the reliefs. But a person entering the LBA town coming from the east, that means from Syria, would have encountered the reliefs instantly. There is no evidence that the reliefs were hidden inside the fortifications as has been assumed for other reliefs like Gavur Kalesi.²⁴ In other words, the reliefs must have been not only directly visible to people entering the town from the east but must have also dominated the landscape towards the eastern gate.

Interpretation

To sum up the results so far: the ancient road may have approached the ancient city of Sirkeli Höyük exactly at the level of the reliefs, making them well visible to everybody reaching the city from the east along the "Cilician transverse highway"²⁵ from Syria. There were at least two reliefs. A third one can be suggested due to the existence of a third shallow cup. In addition, one more relief had been planned but was never executed. The *Steingebäude* and the area of the shallow cups were both visible as well and were seemingly hovering over the royal images. The prominent rock face at the northeastern edge of the citadel with the reliefs and the building was therefore a clear marker of the importance of the city and its relationship to the Great King Muwattalli.

The reliefs, the *Steingebäude*, and the shallow cups are components of the same ensemble, with clearly interrelated functions. Although we do not have any

23 Masch in Hrouda 1997, 133.

24 Kühne 2001.

25 Forlanini 2013, 3.

written evidence for its interpretation, we do have some hints: the ornate of King Muwattalli is identical with that of the Sun God in Hittite iconography. This could indicate a deification of the king even though the figure is not wearing a horned cap. Hittite kings were deified only after their death, which was described as “becoming a god.”²⁶ However, as shown by Burney, the shallow cups seem to belong to the ancestor cult,²⁷ which would also place the reliefs and the *Steingebäude* in this context. Other reliefs of Hittite kings displaying either similar or comparable god-related iconographies and connections with shallow cups could then also be considered in the context of the ancestor cult. This has been suggested for Yazılıkaya and cannot be excluded for Fraktin.

Theo van den Hout following H. Otten raised the idea that the ^{NA4}*hegursAG*.UŠ of Muwattalli II, mentioned in the treaty between Kurunta and Tudḫaliya III (“IV”) on the Bronze Tablet from Hattuša, might have been located in Sirkeli, in connection with the relief.²⁸ This building was a memorial for the deceased, and thereby deified, Great King. In the treaty, Kurunta was guaranteed access to the memorial which lay outside his territory. If van den Hout’s idea turns out to be correct, then our *Steingebäude* might be identified with the ^{NA4}*hegursAG*.UŠ of Muwattalli II. But why then in Sirkeli? Could it be that Muwattalli died on his way back from Syria to his capital Tarḫuntašša? He must have passed by Sirkeli, taking the “Cilician transversal highway” to reach his residence located somewhere in Rough Cilicia or in the southern Konya Plain, localizing to the northwest of Cilicia. This would also fit well with the proposed identification of Sirkeli Höyük with the cult town of Kummanni.

This is a very attractive interpretation indeed, especially for the excavators of Sirkeli Höyük! However, as likely as it might appear, nothing has been proven yet, and there is a strong argument against it: the second mutilated relief shows clearly an identical iconography. Whether our identification of this image with Urḫi-Teššup or that of Hrouda and Ehringhaus with Kurunta is correct, the persons in question were alive when the image was carved. An ancestor cult would then be most unlikely.

We cannot provide definitive answers to the issues treated here yet, but we do hope that further research at Sirkeli Höyük will lead to more arguments in favour or against our interpretation of the ensemble.

26 Haas 2000, 53.

27 Burney 2004, 19–21.

28 Van den Hout 2002, 89–90; Balza and Mora 2011, 221–222.

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