CHAPTER 2

Writing and Literacy among the Anatolians in the Old Assyrian Period

2.1 The Beginnings of Writing in Anatolia

The first question that concerns us in a history of writing and reading in Hittite Anatolia, is when script made its first appearance. But then, once arrived, how successful was it? Did it take the country by storm? Was it imported by and for the Anatolians who immediately started using it? Or was it more accidental with the Anatolians looking on and only gradually grasping its advantages? As we will see, the evidence suggests that the local population was not particularly interested at first and by the time writing had won the hearts of some, the political situation changed, and the whole process had to start over again.

For Anatolia or modern-day Turkey history starts some 4000 years ago. Around the start of the twentieth century BC merchants from Assur in northern Mesopotamia set up a network of close to forty trading posts covering all of Central Anatolia and started recording their daily activities.¹ The center of this commercial network was the city of Kanesh (also known as Nesa, modern-day Kültepe) near the upper reaches of the Kızıl Irmak River. The later Hittite capital Hattusa, some 150 km to its northwest, was among the smaller stations. Anatolia with its rich mineral deposits but not much tin was an attractive market. The Assyrians imported just that, tin, much in demand for the local production of bronze, as well as textiles, mostly in exchange for metals such as silver and copper. These metals, in turn, formed the perfect export product to mineral-poor Mesopotamia. The Assyrian traders negotiated conditions for their commerce with the local Anatolian authorities and settled in the towns and villages. Perhaps their most important business tool was the writing system they used. To date over 23,000 documents have come to light, almost all from Kanesh with occasionally texts from other trading posts as well.² Currently, just

² On the numbers at Kanesh cf. Michel 2011: 95, 97.
over ninety texts dating to the Old Assyrian Period are known as having been found at Hattusa.\(^3\) All these records together offer invaluable information on the merchants’ commercial dealings, their contacts with the local population as well as with their families and business partners back home. They are written in the Semitic language known as Old Assyrian using a specific variant of the cuneiform script well-known from Mesopotamia. Although writing is attested for some 200 years from around 1950 BC onwards, the overwhelming majority of the texts were written in a two-generation period between ca. 1900 and 1860 BC.\(^4\) To what extent the Assyrians used trained scribes for their businesses is difficult to say but this particular system uses one of the most simplified cuneiform orthographies known\(^5\) and many merchants were certainly both passively and actively literate, that is, able to read and write.\(^6\)

This so-called Old Assyrian Colony Period lasted well into the 1720s with one interruption: around 1835 much of Kanesh was destroyed in what may have been an internal Anatolian military conflict and for about two or three years trade came to a halt. A sudden and dramatic drop in text production had already for unknown reasons set in around the mid-1860s but after 1835 records really reduced to a trickle.\(^7\) Archaeologists call the first period (until 1835) Kanesh 2. Business picked up again after 1832, marking the beginning of a new phase known as Kanesh 1b. But if the significantly lower volume of texts left behind by the Assyrians this time – so far only some 450 – is any indication, it may never have fully recovered and completely came to an end perhaps as late as ca. 1700. After this the site remained inhabited for some time (Kanesh 1a) but there is no more written evidence.

Central Anatolia was not a very fertile place. Strips of land with conditions favorable for agriculture were mixed with scrubby forests and the plateau in general is characterized as semi-arid steppe. Its mountainous character made the creation of a unified state encompassing the plateau and beyond a challenge that was not met until the middle of the eighteenth century BC. Until then Anatolia was a conglomeration of independent, large and small, kingdoms\(^8\) as well as probably more remote tribal communities like those of the Kaskaæans that the later king Mursili II would

describe in his Annals as “not having the rule of one.”9 Some of these may even have attracted early “international” attention witness legendary accounts from the days of Sargon and Naram-Sin in the twenty-third century B.C. Supposedly, they came to the rescue of Akkadian merchants in Purushattum (Purushanda) near modern Konya. The Anatolians sustained themselves as best they could in a diversified agropastoral economy: a combination of agriculture and herding, shielding themselves as much as possible against cyclical droughts, moving whenever necessary, and trading with neighboring communities to fill in the gaps. These ecological hurdles may have been one of the reasons for the local populations to also exploit the rich mineral resources and may have encouraged metallurgical expertise.10 In turn, the abundant presence of copper may have appealed to the business sense of the Assyrians.

In these circumstances the Assyrians lived for well over two centuries among the natives in Kanesh. In terms of material culture they assimilated successfully,11 it seems, to local conditions and in the course of time also socially: there is ample evidence of Assyrian-Anatolian marriages and inevitably some level of bilingualism on both sides must have resulted from this.12 Judging by their names and loanwords in the Assyrian records some or even many locals spoke (the Indo-European languages) Hittite and Luwian, others the unrelated Hattian language, and to the south there may have been also some Hurrian speakers around.13 Given their long presence in Anatolia and the evidence of close interaction between the Assyrians and the local population it is no surprise that on occasion the local Kaneshites started to adopt the foreign cuneiform script for their own purposes.14 This probably started late in Kanesh 2 and is especially true of the Kanesh 1b phase but on the whole the volume of native Anatolian writing remains small.15 All evidence, however, shows that they did so using the Assyrian language: no documents from this period have ever been identified as being written in any of the other languages around, whether Hittite, Luwian, Hattian, or Hurrian. The only traces of languages other than Assyrian are the several Akkadianized loanwords from Hittite-Luwian while Anatolian authorship is sometimes betrayed by, for instance, mistakes against Assyrian grammar that

9 IN A U R G A U L ša 1 - e n  t a p a r i t hap ša KBo 3.4 iii 74–5 (Annals of Mursili II, CTH 61, NS), ed. by Grégois 1988: 68, 85 (in his overall line count 77–8).
10 For a detailed description of Anatolian ecology and the resulting political economy see Burgin 2016 with extensive literature.
11 Larsen 2015: 244.
can most easily be explained from an Anatolian (Indo-European) grammatical point of view. There is also the unequivocal evidence of two letters exchanged between local kings using the Assyrian script and language. One is the letter, found in the palace at Kanesh 1b, sent by Anumherbi, king of Mama, just across the Anti-Taurus mountains towards Syria, addressed to Warshama, king of Kanesh in the first half of the eighteenth century BC. The text deals with a diplomatic conflict between the two rulers after the violation of Anumherbi’s territory by a vassal king of Warshama and has nothing to do with Assyrian commercial affairs. The other is a text, found in Boğazköy in 2018, written by Wiusti to the king of Harsamna (Harsaman) about trade in iron. Wiusti must be the same name as Piusti, king of Hattus, known from the Anitta Text (see §2.2). Both documents suggest that local kings recognized the advantages of a script for long-distance communication and at least occasionally adopted the Old Assyrian writing system and language to correspond with one another.

2.2 Anitta and the First Unified Anatolian Kingdom

It was not until around 1750 BC, during the Kanesh 1b period, that a local warrior by the name of Anitta following in the footsteps of his father Pithana for the first time successfully combined several of the smaller Central Anatolian polities into a unified kingdom. Originally coming with his father from the town of Kussar, probably further to the east, he conquered Kanesh and then chose it as his power base. From there he made himself a kingdom stretching from the Pontic Mountains in the north to the region immediately south of the Kızılırmak. One of the other Anatolian kings, the ruler of Purushattum, acknowledged him as a peer and welcomed him to the company of Anatolian kings. In Anitta’s own words, one of his exploits was the destruction and cursing of what would later become the Hittite capital Hattusa:

Whoever becomes king after me and resettles Hattusa, may the Stormgod of Heaven be-head him!

16 Dercksen 2007, Kryszat 2008: 234–6, Michel 2011: 107–8, Waal 2012: 289, Kloekhorst 2019: 9. The mistakes in question may also have been made by second- or third-generation Assyrians who, having grown up in Anatolia, might have lost the intricacies of their (grand)parents’ grammar.

17 According to Michel 2011: 109–10, Anumherbi had probably used an Assyrian scribe but Guido Kryszat (personal communication) thinks the text was not written by a native speaker of Akkadian.

18 Ed. by Balkan 1957. 19 KBo 71.81. 20 Dercksen 2010.


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Anitta’s rule is on record for using both the Old Assyrian cuneiform and the language for internal purposes. We have a small tablet probably issued by him and mentioning him as king.\(^{22}\) (Fig. 2.1) and in Kanesh a spearhead was found with the simple inscription: “Palace of Anitta, King.”\(^{23}\) As it stands, it reads as administrative more than anything else, almost as if it were a return address in case the object got lost.\(^{24}\) In fact, it is a typical example of early, highly object-related script usage marking one’s possession.\(^{25}\)

We do not know for certain what language Anitta’s mother tongue was, but a good case can be made for a strong Indo-European element in the population of Kanesh.\(^{26}\) Anitta, moreover, is the author of an account of his conquests ("The Anitta Text") preserved in Hittite containing the above curse.\(^{27}\) In it, he narrates his exploits starting from the capture of Kanesh along with his father up to the founding of his kingdom encompassing most of Central Anatolia. The text has not come down to us in a contemporary copy but only as copies from the later tablet collections at Hattusa. The oldest was probably written down somewhere between 1650 and 1400, all others stem from the thirteenth century BC. The text, as we have it, is a compilation consisting of two or three original parts. Anitta concludes the first section as follows:

"These words [...] on/with(?) a tablet at my gate. Let [n]obody in the future destroy this tablet! Whoever destroy[s] it [shall b]e [Nes]a’s enemy!"\(^{28}\)
Fig. 2.1 Small tablet with Anitta’s name (obv. 1) from Alişar Höyük (from Gelb 1935:Pl. I).
Even though the verb is lost it is clear that the first part of the text, including the curse ("this tablet"), was kept or displayed in some written form in or near a city gate in Kanesh. The obvious question is: in what language and what script? And why? To the latter question we will turn at the end of this chapter, but let us first consider the language and script. In the past scholars have observed that the grammar of the Hittite text shows no signs of Assyrian influence and might therefore have originally been composed in Hittite.\footnote{Neu 1974: 132.} Although possible, this would be unique: all known records from the Old Assyrian period produced in Anatolia by Anatolians use both the Old Assyrian writing system and language. Typologically speaking, this is normal and what one expects: a society adopting a script from another society with a different language usually starts writing in the language of the other society. There are several reasons for this. First of all, it is not easy to write one’s own language in a system not designed to do so.\footnote{For more on this process see Chapter 6.} The two languages may well have very different phonological systems (as Indo-European Hittite-Luwian and Semitic Assyrian do in this case) and time is needed to figure out how to express one’s own language efficiently and in a way that is understandable to all those participating in the new technology. Using a new script to write the vernacular often takes considerable time experimenting. Also, foreign scribes need time to master the host language while the new, but previously illiterate, local scribes have to learn the writing technique, with all its fine motor skills, and script. Sometimes tradition plays a role: since the first local scribes learn the script along with the foreign language, it may not only be easier or more convenient but perhaps also prestigious and a sign of (quasi-)learnedness to use the other language.\footnote{Andrén 1998: 147.} In the ancient Near East we see it happening in the case of Sumerian in Akkadian-speaking Mesopotamia, and in the use of the Assyrian dialect in the earliest inscriptions from Urartu from the reign of Sarduri I (ca. 840–820 BC) before they started writing in the Urartean language itself.\footnote{Wilhelm 1986: 99, Salvini 1995a: 36–8; more in general see Yakubovich 2015: 49–50.} In similar fashion, the Japanese initially wrote in Chinese and the Romans in Greek.\footnote{Feeney 2016: 22–3, 132–3, 173–5.}

A final element in all this, is that writing and recording may have been important for the Assyrians to maintain their own identity. The Assyrian presence in Anatolia has been described in anthropological terms as a so-called \textit{trade diaspora}. In such a system it is essential to commercial success for the guest community (the Assyrians) to uphold their own identity, materially
and socially, as far and as long as possible. While the Assyrians no doubt had to make concessions on a material level (they could hardly move their entire household to Anatolia) and seem to have done so to a large extent, not only their language but also simply using script must have set them off quite effectively from the locals and they may have wanted to keep it that way. The local population may not have been that keen initially to start using the cuneiform script for their own purposes and the Assyrians may not have been eager to share it. But then, was the Old Assyrian cuneiform the only script around and available to Anitta? If so, the choice of the first Hittite dynasty at Hattusa, some three generations later, for a totally different type of cuneiform is very surprising. It suggests a complete break in tradition and a state of illiteracy for Labarna and his descendants, as if they were unfamiliar with the Assyrian script. Had they known it wouldn’t they have continued using it? Alternatively, could Anitta already have known and used the cuneiform variant current in Syria at the time, which is considered the forerunner of the later Hittite cuneiform?

It has indeed been suggested that perhaps the Old Assyrian and Syrian cuneiform variants had been used at Kanesh side by side: in his dealings with the merchants, Anitta (or more likely his scribe or scribes) might have used the Assyrian writing system and written in the Assyrian language, and for internal purposes the Syrian one in Hittite. The latter is important because usually a society importing a script from another group that speaks and writes a different language, needs some time to figure out how to write their own language in the new script (see Chapter 6). The assumption, then, that Anitta’s administration already comfortably wrote in Hittite for internal purposes, would push back the introduction of the Syrian cuneiform by some time. Did this already happen under Anitta’s father in the town of Kussar? And if so, from where did the Anatolians get it? The reason this possibility is entertained goes back to two tablets found at Kanesh 1b written not in the Old Assyrian cuneiform but in a Syrian ductus and in a Syrian-influenced Old Babylonian dialect. Both were exchanged between persons bearing Hurrian names, some of them known from the Alalah VII texts. In all likelihood the documents were sent from Syria and

34 On the trade diaspora model see Stein 2008, for the language as a distinctive element 34; for a critique see Larsen 2015: 149–50.
35 Güterbock 1983: 24–5; if the correspondence between Anu-herbi of Mama and Warshama of Kanesh (see §2.1) is considered internal, then that already speaks against this distinction.
37 The linguistic identity of the sender’s name of Kt 90/k 360 (Zi/Haʔ-an, see Michel 2010: 72–76) remains unclear.
therefore not written in Anatolia nor do they allow us to draw any conclusions on the familiarity with this kind of cuneiform script among either the Assyrians or Anatolians at Kanesh. The texts only reflect the Hurrian milieu of northern Syria and their business contacts with Anatolia and it is no surprise two Hurrians would write each other in the script (Syrian) and language (Old Babylonian) familiar to them. The presence of these two texts at Kanesh hardly suffices as a credible source for the later Hittite cuneiform nor are they enough to justify assuming that Anitta’s text was written in this rather than the Old Assyrian ductus.

The possibility of a separate and older writing tradition in Hittite and in the familiar Hittite ductus has been tentatively raised again after a recent mineralogical analysis of a group of fifty clay tablets found at Hattusa, among which the Old Hittite (OH) exemplar of the Anitta Text. The so-called portable X-Ray Fluorescence analysis places almost all tested Hattusa tablets within a coherent group made of so-called “Hattusa fabric.” A few tablets, however, show a different clay composition, suggesting a different place of manufacture and writing of the text in question. The Old Kingdom tablet of the Urshu Text (see Chapter 4.3), for instance, shows petrographic affinities with the Upper-Euphrates area, and the thirteenth century BC Tawagalawa Letter was written on clay coming from the Anatolian west coast. For both texts these results are very valuable but not surprising. In this company, the OH tablet of the Anitta Text, KBo 3.22, is described as “probably Hattusa fabric.” The authors do not make clear what the implications of the addition of “probably” are: does the clay still come from Hattusa or not? Did the source of the clay used for this tablet come from Hattusa but removed at some distance from the capital, and is this distance a few hundred meters, some kilometers, or several dozens of kilometers? As the authors state in the article, “clay selection for the production of cuneiform tablets . . . was not always consistent.” Yet they ask, “is it possible to think of an older Hittite writing tradition starting in a different place may be in Kuššara, the hometown of Hattušili [I]? Kussar is usually located somewhere east of Kanesh, at roughly 150–200 km from Hattusa. Can that still qualify as Hattusa fabric? For comparison, among the Hattusa tablets tested, there are two Old Assyrian texts. One could be a local product, the other is probably a letter originating from somewhere else. Both apparently show a very different clay composition that places them at quite some distance from the Anitta Text and the

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Hattusa tablets. Without any further explanation, then, this seems like a weak foundation for a far-reaching hypothesis. Again, not only would early Anatolian kings have acquired writing skills before settling in Hattusa, they would already have made the step from writing in Akkadian to writing in Hittite and the typical Hittite cuneiform would already have developed from its Syrian origins (see Chapter 3).

Finally, as another argument in favor of an exposure to Syrian cuneiform writing that Anitta might have used to write his res gestae and for a resulting borrowing by the Anatolians, some scholars have referred to the “mountain road of Pithana” mentioned in an edict from Ugarit issued by the later king Mursili II (last quarter of the fourteenth century BC) concerning border affairs. The mountain pass, so the thinking goes, would have taken its name from an alleged military campaign into Syria by Anitta’s father, Pithana. Erich Neu presented this reference with all due caution as a possible hint at a folk tradition that once this Pithana had traveled there and thus could have been the conduit for the North Syrian cuneiform variant. The attestation, however, of later namesakes of Pithana and the total absence of any internal records in the Syrian cuneiform make this interpretation of the passage very tentative. Moreover, if the Syrian writing system had been known to the Anatolians to the extent that at some point they consciously preferred the Syrian variant over the Assyrian, the overwhelming presence of the latter and its relative simplicity make it almost necessary to assume that the Syrian system had already been known to them before the Assyrians immigrated with their writing system; only cultural conservatism could have induced the local population to stick with the Syrian cuneiform variant and prefer it over the Assyrian. In the current state of our evidence that seems too much of a stretch. In view of the ca. 450 Assyrian tablets (as opposed to the more than 23,000 from Kanesh 2) known thus far from Kanesh 1b and all we know of the close Anatolian-Assyrian interaction, there is no reason to assume that at this late stage the local Anatolian population would have shown any great interest in the Syrian ductus.

43 Goren et al. 2011: 687 (description), 694 Fig. 6.
44 RS 17.62 + 17.237, see Lackenbacher 2002: 134–5 w. lit.
45 Neu 1974: 135; see also Weeden 2011a: 62–3 w. n. 283. Mark Weeden kindly alerted me to another possible reference to a “servant of Pithana” found as far east as Tell Rimah (west of Mosul) published by Lacambre & Nahm 2015; even if this were Anitta’s father (which remains uncertain) it does not necessarily imply that he had been at Tell Rimah himself.
46 Thus Gamkrelidze 2008: 171.
2.3 Central Anatolia: An Illiterate Society in the Old Assyrian Period

All in all, the Anatolians of the Old Assyrian period do not seem to have been that eager to bring writing into their daily lives. As opposed to the situation in the later Hittite kingdom that started around 1650 BC at Hattusa, both the local population living among the Assyrians, and members of the ruling class must have been exposed quite regularly to them writing and doing their business. For centuries if not millennia they had sustained themselves in their ecologically fragmented societies in ways that demanded no written records. Although occasionally already attested for Kanesh 2 native Anatolian literacy seems to have taken off mostly after the destruction that marks the caesura between Kanesh 2 and 1b. It was towards the end of the Assyrian period that the local Anatolian population and ruling elite started to show interest in writing but neither the volume nor the character of Anatolian writing shows an active engagement that permeated their daily existence. The situation is almost paradoxical: it was not until the Assyrian presence had dropped significantly that the native population started using their writing system and language to put in writing several types of agreements that before then they must have concluded orally. But perhaps it is not that much of a paradox if in the context of the trade diaspora with a significantly reduced Assyrian population their hold on the script had perforce loosened.

In the present state of our evidence I consider it unlikely that we can take the two documents found at Kanesh 1b in the Syrian ductus as vestiges of an otherwise hidden or lost world of native writing in an attempt to “save” the Anatolians in the Old Assyrian period from illiteracy. As we will see, the Anatolian hieroglyphs cannot help us either. The earliest individual hieroglyphic signs that later turn up as part of that writing system do not predate the Old Kingdom⁴⁷ and we have to wait until about 1400 BC for their first attestation as a fully-fledged script. And, finally, the petrographic analysis of the OH exemplar of the Anitta Text does not seem to justify the speculation of a pre-Hattusa Hittite writing tradition. As a consequence, everything points to a situation where Anatolia under Anitta may have been on the verge of further implementing the Old Assyrian writing system but when Anitta’s kingdom broke down and the Assyrians had left, the incentive and inspiration were gone.⁴⁸ Anatolians had finally started using

⁴⁷ See Chapter 7.
⁴⁸ Cf. the question in Kryszat 2008: 237 (“the most pressing question is why they abandoned it after the end of the Assyrian presence in Anatolia”).
the Assyrian cuneiform either because it was fashionable or prestigious, but there may never have been a real need or at least not a need that persisted after the demise of Anitta’s kingdom and the Assyrian trading network.\(^49\) Nor did they ever get beyond the first stage of writing in the foreign language. With the Assyrians gone and Anatolia embarking again on a period of economic stagnation and sinking back into their former status of independent city states they may have had other worries and writing disappeared from their daily lives.

In spite of their exposure to writing the native population at Kanesh thus chose to remain illiterate during most of the Old Assyrian Period and when they finally may have been ready to adopt their writing system, the political situation made the choice for them. In the history of writing this is nothing unusual. The Aztecs and Mixtecs of Central Mexico were well aware of Mayan society and their script but it never prompted them to adopt it or to start their own.\(^50\) The tenth century AD Rus were selective in their written contacts with the Byzantine Empire, complying with what was required of them but did not apply any such administrative measures to their own society.\(^51\) If a society runs well without script as “language recorded graphically,”\(^52\) the urge to adopt it is often weak or even resisted.\(^53\) Literacy needs a reason: “for literacy to take root in a society it has to have meaning, it needs to have obvious and valuable uses, to be ‘relevant’ or empowering in some way; and it needs to be in a language that is actually used by the people learning to read.”\(^54\) This case can be and has been made for Central Anatolian society in the Old Assyrian Period as well. Neither for Kanesh 2 nor for 1b is there any evidence for a local administrative system at the state level using, for instance, seals.\(^55\) Yet the Old Assyrian documents make it clear there was “a highly structured administration in which each economic sector was represented.”\(^56\) It was the local merchants

\(^{49}\) Cf. Spooner & Hanaway 2012: 57 writing about medieval Middle-Eastern societies: “Although writing was within the intellectual reach of all, it attached to only certain positions in the society; if you did not occupy one of those positions, being able to write was not only of no use to you, it was of no interest.”


\(^{53}\) Franklin 2002: 7.

\(^{54}\) Thomas 2009: 13, see also McKitterick 1989: 1, and Susan Sherratt 2003: 229 (“[Writing] is not something that people automatically embrace just because they have become aware of the possibility and have encountered the technology. The conditions have to be right. In other words, an appropriate cultural context is needed in which writing can be put to some perceptibly useful purpose”).

\(^{55}\) Dercksen 2002, 38 (“Das vermutliche Fehlen einer eigenen Schrift und eigener Siegel bedeutet, dass die einheimische Palastorganisation bis dahin wahrscheinlich sehr gut ohne sie auskam”), 39.

\(^{56}\) Michel 2011: 112.
inspired by their Assyrian colleagues who in Kanesh 2 adopted the cylinder seal albeit with their own indigenous iconography. This was followed by a renewed popularity of the typical Anatolian stamp seal during Kanesh 1b. Such seal impressions have also been unearthed at Acemhöyük, Konya-Karahöyük, and Alişar Höyük in levels roughly contemporaneous with Kanesh 1b. For earlier periods the evidence for administration of some kind in Central Anatolia is extremely scarce. A few stamp seals with geometric designs roughly dating to the Early or Middle Bronze Age have been found at Hattusa. Further east, but still considered Anatolia, the situation is better. Seal-based organization had been in use already during the Middle Chalcolithic at Değirmen-tepe (ca. 4500 BC) and in the late Chalcolithic (3500–3000 BC) and Early Bronze Age (third millennium BC) at Hacinebi and Arslantepe. Especially the latter site provides a prime example of a detailed and sophisticated bookkeeping system without the need for a script. All this is to show that Anatolian societies were perfectly content with their own ways to administer and conduct transactions and saw no need to upgrade their systems by a wholesale adoption of the Assyrian cuneiform.

Returning to the question of the language and script of Anitta’s res gestae, in the end the evidence at hand only seems to allow for Anitta having had the first part of his text written in the Old Assyrian language and cuneiform. Witness the tablet, the spearhead, and his text at the gate, all proudly mentioning his name, he had started to discover the power of writing and even if the local Anatolians showed little interest, he wanted to show this off for everybody to see. The step to full implementation of writing was still far away, however, let alone to start writing in Hittite. There is no reason to assume that the existence of the composition excludes a “sudden and total interruption in writing” between Anitta’s demise and the rise of the Old Hittite kingdom under Labarna and his successors. Rather, the lore that arose around the founder of the very first Hittite kingdom inspired stories that were kept alive orally in Hittite, which in the end resulted in the text, as it has come down to us in its entirety. Alfonso Archi’s observation that the Anitta Text’s “literary form excludes its having been transmitted orally as it lacks the necessary narrative tone” does not say that the text could not have been memorized, all the more so since the text goes back to two or three fairly short originally distinct narratives.
combined in the Old Kingdom. And who are we to judge how accurately the Hittite version reflects the originals? Also, Anitta and the Old Kingdom were only separated by about three generations. The resulting stories served to give the recently established kingdom some historical depth and legitimacy and were no doubt considered to have pedagogical value as well. The Old Kingdom compilation and redaction was to live on for several centuries in the Hittite state that was to emerge in the city Anitta once cursed.

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