

# 1 Introduction: Crisis, (A)synchronicity, and the Hittites

## 1.1 Crisis

The term “crisis” seems to be, at least in the contemporary world, not only over-used in a variety of contexts but also assuming very different nuances of meaning. For instance, it is “personal crisis”, “financial crisis”, “political crisis”, “environmental crisis”, “psychological crisis” and so on, meaning the word crisis is very general and related to many diverse topics and contexts.

This is not a surprise, since the word “crisis” does not have a single precise definition. When we observe the definitions attested in only one dictionary – for instance, the *Cambridge Dictionary* – we learn that crisis is defined as “a time of great disagreement, confusion, or suffering” but also as “an extremely difficult or dangerous point in a situation”, and again “a moment during a serious illness when there is the possibility of suddenly getting either better or worse”.<sup>1</sup> The common denominators are the negativity of the situation and the fact that an action is necessary in order to change the critical status. The fact that there are so many meanings contained within this polysemic word is explained by the fact that the ancient Greek κρίσις (krisis) derives from the verb κρίναι, which also has a variety of meanings: “to separate, to divide, to distinguish, to order, to decide”.<sup>2</sup> Even if the Greek term was originally employed in specific disciplines, such as medicine or theology, from the 17<sup>th</sup> century CE on, the term became common in reference to politics, economics, and psychology, as well as in other fields, such as history and archaeology where the term is still used without regard for precise meaning. In a very general fashion, it is possible to say that the term “crisis” describes a point in time that “separates” a before and an after, as in the original meaning of the Greek verb.<sup>3</sup>

It is already clear from the meaning(s) of crisis that the concept is strictly related to the idea of time. In fact, not only does a crisis separate a before and an after (not necessarily with a radical change) but it is also always linked to a momentous situation in which something meaningful happens, or with a specific moment in time in which a decision has to be made, or when the culmination of previous events finds its resolution at a precise point in time or becomes manifest.

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<sup>1</sup> <https://dictionary.cambridge.org/dictionary/english/crisis> (last access 27/01/2025).

<sup>2</sup> <https://en.wiktionary.org/wiki/κρίνω> (last access 27/01/2025).

<sup>3</sup> See Koselleck 2006.

It is clear that there are very few suitable theoretical approaches to investigating crises in history, particularly ancient history. For instance, J. Rüsen identifies three types of crises: 1. “Normal” crises, 2. “Critical” crises, and 3. “Catastrophic” crises. Normal crises can be dealt with through the application of known patterns, and they do not necessarily result in a change. Critical crises presuppose adjustments or changes in order to be overcome. Catastrophic crises usually have traumatic consequences, and they lead to a change in the existing patterns. In Rüsen’s view, the focus is not on the crisis itself, but on how it is handled. In particular, the central question is whether it is possible to overcome a crisis by reverting to existing patterns of interpretation: the more this is impossible, the more catastrophic the crisis.<sup>4</sup>

This approach to crisis in historical contexts can of course be applied to our study, but it lacks two fundamental elements: the first is that the focus of my study is (a)synchronic perceptions of the crises themselves and not on the resources and meaning used to overcome them. The second is that the concept of time (both the concept in general and also the perception of its meaning) is tightly intertwined with the definition of crisis.

Therefore, since the goal is to consider the element of time as related to the concept of crisis, the most suitable approach is, in my opinion, the one taken by R. Koselleck.<sup>5</sup>

Koselleck attempted to define the meaning of the word crisis in relation to its use throughout history. In order to do this, he proposed four different definitions for crisis, each related to the element of time that is crucial to the present study. According to his definition, crisis can be defined in four different ways: 1) “a chain of events leading to a culminating, decisive point at which action is required”, 2) “a unique and final point”, 3) “a permanent or conditional category pointing to a critical situation which may constantly recur or else to situations in which decisions have momentous consequences”, 4) “a historically immanent transitional phase”.<sup>6</sup>

These definitions are superbly useful for the present study, because in them the concept of time is related to all four definitions of crisis: in terms of a specific moment in the first two definitions, and as a time span (whether recurring cyclically or only occasionally) in the other two. Furthermore, in all of these definitions time is crucial also in linking the three chronological stages of the crisis: antecedent events, the crisis itself, and its aftermath. The definition that will be used in this study is, therefore, a working definition (or working definitions) of crisis. The advantage of

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<sup>4</sup> Rüsen 2013, 49–51; Rüsen 2020, 63–65.

<sup>5</sup> It goes without saying that the work of R. Koselleck has been controversial in the past and still is today. The scope of this study, however, does not purpose a review of the work of Koselleck, but instead intends to find the best fit approach for a discussion of crisis with a focus on temporality.

<sup>6</sup> Koselleck 2006, 371–372.

this approach is two-fold: first, it already addresses time and its attendant difficulties, such as multitemporality and (a)synchronicity; and second, it allows the possibility of considering different types of case studies with two common denominators, namely, crisis and temporality with their specific interpretative nuances.

## 1.2 (A)synchronicity

The use and the understanding of the term “crisis” is not the only complex issue in the present study, indeed, the same can also be said about the concept of (a)synchronicity.

In order to clarify the use and meaning of the concept of (a)synchronicity in this work, it is necessary to first define other concepts that are intertwined with the idea of (a)synchronicity, such as (multi)temporality, chronology, and periodization<sup>7</sup>. The starting point is the verb “to synchronize”, whose basic meaning is “to occur at the same time”, or as is well-defined by H. Jordheim, “to synchronize refers to actions or activities that cause something to happen together, coincide, to occur or to unfold at the same time”.<sup>8</sup>

The term “synchronization” comes from the most basic meaning of the verb “to synchronize”, whose usage in everyday life is also mostly unproblematic and can refer to the activity of synchronizing watches or agendas. On a broader scale, synchronicity can refer to the introduction of the same calendar in different parts of the world or of Greenwich Mean Time.<sup>9</sup> The concept of synchronization becomes much more complicated and controversial when it is used in relation to history and historiography. For example, E. Alvater and B. Mahnkopf describe synchronization as when “the plurality of times in the plurality of world regions are drawn together to one single standardized and standardizing world time”.<sup>10</sup> The resulting consequence of this description is on the one hand a linear idea of history – one that was already diffused throughout the world in the nineteenth century albeit in different terms – and, on the other hand, the idea that there is one time frame in which all history unfolds.

However, the idea that history has one time, one speed, and one rhythm can be invalidated by the quite simple observation that history is not in sync, and, more specifically, with increasing questioning of the idea of progress itself. This does not mean, of course, that some events are not coeval, and the importance of building

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<sup>7</sup> On periodization see specifically Ch. 3.1.

<sup>8</sup> Jordheim 2017, 59.

<sup>9</sup> Jordheim 2017.

<sup>10</sup> Alvater / Mahnkopf 1996, 21.

chronologies especially in ancient history is a fundamental practice to help disentangle issues related to the sequences of kings, coeval events in different places, material culture, and so on. Nonetheless, chronologies can also raise issues, especially in the field of archaeology, as pointed out by G. Lucas, according to whom “chronology – whether relative or absolute – is theoretically problematic and for one chief reason: it presents time as a uniform, linear phenomenon.”<sup>11</sup> He goes on to argue that processes, including archaeological ones, which operate on different time scales require different approaches, meaning that he finds nonsynchronicity in archaeology as well as in other processes, therefore necessitating careful consideration of this issue in archaeological research.

What he means by the nonsynchronicity of history is that “elements, words, concepts, institutional structures, or social and political practices” feature “duration, narrative structures, visions of the future and dreams of the past, rhythms, continuities and discontinuities” in different fashions.<sup>12</sup>

History is, therefore, not squeezed in one single temporality but rather unfolds in different temporal frameworks or, in other words, history is multitemporal. There is no univocal definition of multitemporality, rather the purpose of the concept is to create a theoretical and methodological tool that can refine the understanding of history from a linear progressive succession of events to a multifaceted combination of factors.

We can define multitemporality as did G. Gurvitch with his eight types of time, all of which are connected with social manifestation<sup>13</sup>, or we could define it as the braudelian variation between the events, the cycles of the economic and social structures, and the *longue durée*.<sup>14</sup> Alternatively, multitemporality can also be interpreted as the concept of *Ungleichzeitigkeit* (nonsynchronicity) of R. Koselleck, i.e. moments of nonsynchronicity in a specific historical period.<sup>15</sup> These examples demonstrate that multitemporality can be used as a working tool for historians<sup>16</sup> and that it is still a roadmap for interpretation, even though it is not a universally established working framework. Despite this limitation, two elements can be drawn from the concept of multitemporality: first, nonsynchronicity (or asynchronicity) is – to some degree – always present in historical time; second, since asynchronicity characterizes each historical period, we can argue that it also characterizes each historical moment.

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<sup>11</sup> Lucas 2005, 10.

<sup>12</sup> Jordheim 2017, 66.

<sup>13</sup> Gurvitch 1958.

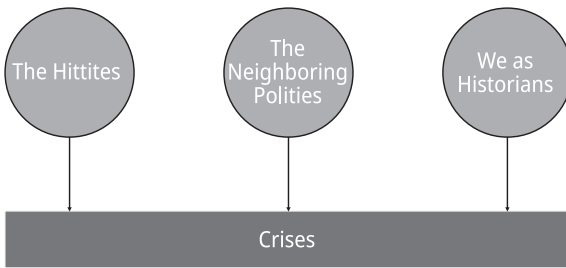
<sup>14</sup> Braudel 1958.

<sup>15</sup> Koselleck 2000.

<sup>16</sup> For a more in-depth analysis and a general state of the field see Jordheim 2014.

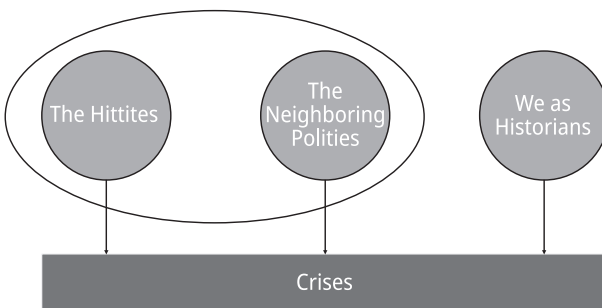
These elements have a significant implication for this study, specifically that asynchronicity must be at work – at least in theory – in each case study.

Having discussed synchronicity and temporality, it is necessary to bring this study into the picture and, consequently, to slightly switch perspective once again. The three perspectives that are taken into consideration, namely that of the Hittites, the one of the neighboring countries, and ours as historians can be thought of as three separate mathematical sets (see Fig. 1), each of which has its own perspective on and interpretation of the crises.



**Fig. 1:** Scheme of the connection between crises and the three perspectives.

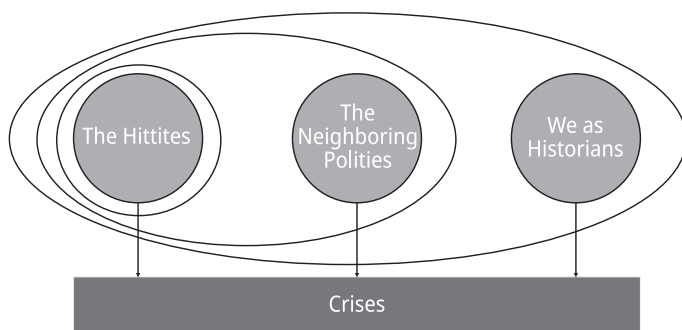
If we add the dimension of temporality, without any implication yet concerning either (a)synchronicity or any theory of multitemporality, the perspective of the Hittites and that of their neighboring countries are included in a single set, and our perspectives as historians are in a different set, since we exist in a different temporality (Fig. 2).



**Fig. 2:** Scheme of the relations between the perspectives #1.

These schemes are, of course, fairly intuitive, indeed we could even say they are only common sense. However, things change when one further dimension comes

into play, namely, multitemporality, which can be schematically represented as follows (Fig. 3):



**Fig. 3:** Scheme of the relations between the perspectives #2.

Now three different temporalities can be detected, which are, however, not necessarily distinct from one another.

Within the first temporality, that of the Hittites, each event or series of events also has its own temporality. The second temporality is the one of the “regional system” (or “oligopoly”) that has its own rhythm, structures, continuities, and discontinuities. As M. Liverani defines it:

A king who cannot officially pretend to be the only ruler in a universe of subject, nevertheless does not necessarily considers everyone to be his equal. There remains a hierarchy in plurality, the result of a determination on the part of the powers to keep the partial, regional centrality that they have already attained. In this situation, an “oligopoly” arrangement is best suited to the interests of its members.<sup>17</sup>

In other words, the system is organized as a “Great Powers’ Club”<sup>18</sup>, each with a regional center, i. e. Egypt, Hittite Anatolia, Babylonia, Assyria, Mittani, Ahḫiyawa, and some subordinate polities that depended on one of the Great Powers. Since the Hittites were part of the regional system, their temporality partially overlaps or is at least tangent to that of the system, if, however, not completely superimposable.

The third temporality, ours as historians, has different features but also includes the other two temporalities.

The final element to be considered is the question of where (a)synchronicity comes from. Two factors are crucial in answering this question: the sources and

<sup>17</sup> Liverani 2001, 39.

<sup>18</sup> Liverani 2000.

the multitemporalities themselves. As already mentioned, the sources are not, of course, complete, and it is also safe to say that none of the actors involved (including us as historians) had access to the totality of the sources available. Therefore, access to a different subset of sources represents a first cause of asynchronicity. Second, the existence of three different temporalities with partially different rhythms, structures, and narratives causes an asynchronic perception of the events, like three concentric spheres each moving in overlapping orbits at a different pace, synchronizing only partially and from time to time.

### 1.3 The Hittites

It is of course beyond the purpose of this study to give an in-depth description of Hittite culture and history, but in order to better understand the considerations that are part of the case studies, it is in my opinion necessary to set some coordinates.<sup>19</sup>

Hittite culture flourished in Anatolia between the 17<sup>th</sup> and the end of the 13<sup>th</sup>/beginning of the 12<sup>th</sup> century BCE (End of the Middle Age and Late Bronze Age) and had its center – at least as far it is possible to reconstruct from the written sources – in the capital city of Ḫattuša (modern-day Boğazkale).

Since the first excavation campaigns in the early 20<sup>th</sup> century, archaeologists have found about 30,000 written clay<sup>20</sup> tablets and fragments, which have provided profound insights into Hittite culture.

The texts belong to different genres, specifically: cultic texts (rituals, descriptions of festivals, prayers), legal texts (treaties, decrees, edicts, court records, instructions and oaths, and land donations), letters, omens and oracles, literary texts and myths, school texts, administrative texts (*inter alia* cult inventories, text catalogues), and historiographic texts.<sup>21</sup>

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<sup>19</sup> The most updated collected work on the topic is de Martino (ed.) 2022.

<sup>20</sup> Concerning the material on which the documents were written, there are significant exceptions: first, it is *communis opinio* that many documents were written on a support that has not been preserved (see Marazzi 1994, Waal 2011, Cammarosano *et al.* 2019); second, among the written sources there is the so-called Bronze Tablet, a treaty between the Hittite king Tutḫaliya IV and his cousin Kurunta, king of Tarḫuntašša, written on bronze. Some documents mention other metals as support for the writing of documents, like silver and gold (for silver tablets see CTH 91, obv 1–3; for the reference to a gold tablet see CTH 50, left edge 6; for reference to an iron tablet see CTH 106.II.2, obv. 21).

<sup>21</sup> For a complete overview the reference work is still the *Catalogue des textes Hittites* by E. Laroche, first published in 1971, and now also available online: <http://www.hethport.uni-wuerzburg.de/CTH> (last access 27/01/2025).

The Hittite written sources offer a rich tapestry composed of the complex interplay of powerful societal and cultural forces in a multicultural and multilingual environment.<sup>22</sup> The complexity of this situation is reflected in the fact that several different languages are attested in the texts. In fact, since the beginning of Hittitology, scholars have been able to identify several different languages in the Hittite written sources: Hittite, Luwian, Palaic (all three being Indo-European languages), Akkadian (Semitic), Sumerian, Hurrian, and Hattic (the linguistic group to which the last three languages belong is still debated).<sup>23</sup> Not all of these languages are attested at the same frequency in the texts. The majority of them are written in Hittite, but Akkadian and Hurrian are also well-attested, while the other languages are much less common.

Thanks to the written documentation from Ḫattuša, as well as from other sites inside and outside Hittite Anatolia, it has been possible to reconstruct the sequence of the Hittite kings (s. Fig. 4)<sup>24</sup>. However, while the succession of the Hittite kings is still partially debatable, especially for the phase that precedes the beginning of the archives in Ḫattuša,<sup>25</sup> the list of the kings from Ḫattušili I, the first king undoubtedly documented in the texts, to Šuppiluliuma II, the last king known from the sources, it is quite certain.

Old Kingdom	Middle Kingdom	Empire
Ḫuzziya (I) (?)	Alluwamna	Šuppiluliuma I
Labarna (?)	Ḫantili II	Arnuwanda II
Ḫattušili I	Taḫurwaili	Muršili II
Muršili I	Zidanta II	Muwatalli II
Ḫantili I	Ḫuzziya II	Muršili III (Urḫi-Teššup)
Zidanta I	Muwatalli I	Ḫattušili III
Ammuna	<b>(Early Empire)</b>	Tuthaliya IV
Ḫuzziya II	Tuthaliya I/II	Arnuwanda III
Telipinu	Arnuwanda I	Šuppiluliuma II
	Tuthaliya III	

**Fig. 4:** Chart of the Hittite kings and of the periodization of Hittite History.

Therefore, we have an accurate, albeit general, succession list of the Hittite kings.

<sup>22</sup> On the linguistic contacts see most recently Giusfredi *et al.* 2023.

<sup>23</sup> On the newly discovered language, Kalasmaic, see <https://www.uni-wuerzburg.de/en/news-and-events/news/detail/news/new-indo-european-language-discovered> (last access 27/01/2025).

<sup>24</sup> On this periodization see Ch. 1.3.1.

<sup>25</sup> Extensively on the topic see recently Klinger 2022 and van den Hout 2021, 38–56.



However, for the purposes of this study, two further aspects of Hittite history and culture should be mentioned. The first concerns the state of the documentation, in particular its dating. The majority of the documents date to the last period of the Hittite history, the so-called Empire Period, and their language is marked by researchers as “junghethitisch” (New Hittite) or “spätjunghethitisch” (Late New Hittite).<sup>26</sup> A significant number of texts labelled as “jh” or “sjh” are copies or revised versions of older documents.<sup>27</sup> However, the number of actual documents dated to the Old or the Middle Kingdom (“althethitisch” – Old Hittite and “mittelhethitisch”- Middle Hittite) is relatively small in comparison to the later texts.<sup>28</sup> Since this study of crises and their perception in Hittite Anatolia is based on the written sources, this distribution of texts by date must be kept in mind since it may influence – at least in part – our interpretation and evaluation of the case studies.

The second aspect is strictly historical and is related to the international sphere of influence of the Hittite polity. In fact, the period of the “Great Powers’ Club”,<sup>29</sup> i.e. the international society of the Great Kings, independent monarchs<sup>30</sup> who controlled subordinated polities, began only with the reign of Šuppiliuma I – also when the Empire period began – and continued until the end of the written sources from Ḫattuša during the reign of Šuppiliuma II. During the 14<sup>th</sup> and 13<sup>th</sup> century BCE the Great Kings were in constant contact in the form of letters written in cuneiform, usually in Akkadian, on clay tablets, as well as with goods and people.<sup>31</sup> Therefore, in this period the international connections were closer and better documented than in the previous periods of the Hittite history, which allows

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26 See S. Košak, hethiter.net: hetkonk (2.plus): [https://www.hethport.uni-wuerzburg.de/hetkonk/hetkonk\\_abfrageF.php](https://www.hethport.uni-wuerzburg.de/hetkonk/hetkonk_abfrageF.php) (last access 27/01/2025). For a recent contribution on the dating of the texts with paleography see Klinger 2022 with the discussion of the previous literature.

27 The *Chicago Hittite Dictionary* distinguishes between language and script, when a text shows a discrepancy between the two.

28 See S. Košak, hethiter.net: hetkonk (2.plus): [https://www.hethport.uni-wuerzburg.de/hetkonk/hetkonk\\_abfrageF.php](https://www.hethport.uni-wuerzburg.de/hetkonk/hetkonk_abfrageF.php) (last access 27/01/2025).

29 Liverani 2000.

30 These monarchs are the Hittite king, the Egyptian pharaoh, the king of Babylonia, the king of Mittani (until its conquest by Šuppiliuma I), the king of Assyria (from a later point in time) and the king of Aḫḫiyawa (for a short period). Subordinate to Ḫatti were Ugarit, Amurru, Nuḫašše, Aleppo, Karkemiš, and Tarḫuntašša as well as the Arzawa-polities such as Mira-Kuwaliya, the Šeḫa-River-Land, Ḫapalla and Wiluša, and other Anatolian territories like Ḫayaša. Not all these polities were subordinated to Ḫatti for the whole Empire period, but with these polities the subordination was ratified by means of a treaty, in which the Hittite kings established the conditions of the subordination and, more generally, of the relation between them and the subordinate polities.

31 See Zaccagnini 1973 and 1990.

historians to explore the international situation through multiple perspectives, not only that of the Hittites.

If the first aspect, the chronological origination of the sources, especially affects our own perception of the Hittite crises as historians and supports our exploration of the perspective of the Hittites themselves, the second aspect, namely the preservation of documents from multiple contemporary cultures and polities, also helps shape our understanding of the crises as perceived by the peoples surrounding the Hittites, since they share a common infosphere.<sup>32</sup> The richness of sources is of course always an advantage for interpretation by the historian, however, it has to be underlined that richness of source does not necessarily mean their uniform distribution, meaning that some perspectives may remain inaccessible because they are not represented in the documentation, resulting in an incomplete picture of the multiplicity of perspectives on a crisis.

### 1.3.1 A Word on Periodization

Since historians like Marc Bloch<sup>33</sup> and Jacques Le Goff<sup>34</sup> underlined the interconnection between time and history, it became clear that periodization is an intrinsic concept when dealing with history.

As mentioned in the earlier discussion of the concepts of (a)synchronicity and multitemporalities in section 1.2, the idea of periodization presents three significant characteristics. First, it is conventional, meaning that it is – at least most of the time – not related to dates and/or facts that, although significant or even crucial, do not necessarily mark the end of a historical phase. For instance, the year 476 CE as the end of the Roman Empire is conventional, since Romulus Augustus was deposed in that year, but the Empire, albeit with remarkable changes, actually survived long past that date. Second, periodization always offers an etic perspective, since in the great majority of the cases, it is the historians' own perception that leads a specific periodization of a time, phase, or era in what D. Blackbourn

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<sup>32</sup> The concept of “infosphere” was introduced by Luciano Floridi and it is defined as “lo spazio semantico costituito dalla totalità dei documenti, degli agenti e delle loro operazioni” [the semantic space constituted by the totality of the documents, of the agents, and of their operations] (Floridi 2002). Of course, the Hittites and their neighbors did not share the totality of the infosphere, but the degree of the circulation of the information was certainly higher than in the previous period, at least on an international level.

<sup>33</sup> Bloch 1992.

<sup>34</sup> Le Goff 1992.

defines as “conceptual units”.<sup>35</sup> Third, it is strictly related not only to the temporal axis but also to the spatial axis: In fact, expressions like “the Italian Renaissance” or “the France of Louis XIV” have been used by historians for decades.<sup>36</sup>

The truth, however, is that it is practically impossible to eliminate periodization: Even the distinction between BCE and CE presupposes a periodization of history, so too does the idea of past and present.<sup>37</sup> Furthermore, the tripartition of Antiquity, the Middle Ages, and Modernity still has some influence. As W. Green wrote in the 1990s, “periodization is rooted in historical theory. It reflects our priorities, our values, and our understanding of the forces, continuity and change”<sup>38</sup>. Indeed, periodization is hard to avoid, despite efforts of historians like R. Koselleck and F. Braudel, who since the end of World War II addressed the problem of historical time which led, as shown in section 1.2, to the concept of multitemporalities. However, it is not necessary to completely eliminate periodization, since it is sufficient to remember that each periodization represents an etic perspective, and that in ancient cultures it is unusual to find an emic periodization, as is the case for the Hittites, who did not leave any reflections or clues about their own periodization of their history.

Hittite history has not been and still is not immune to etic periodization.

The duration of Hittite history, as meant by the etic periodization of modern historians, is determined by the duration of the written sources from the capital Hattuša, meaning that it lasted for about 450 years, from the middle of the 17<sup>th</sup> to the beginning of the 12<sup>th</sup> century BCE. These 450 years have been subject to several kinds of periodization, due to different factors such as language, the event-related history, the succession of the kings and what was narrated in the written sources.

The periodization of Hittite history was (and partially still is) influenced by several factors. First, for several decades the sequence of the kings could not be established with certainty and some lines of succession are still debated, in particular the predecessors of Tuthaliya I.<sup>39</sup>

Second, the language clearly shows three phases, with specific paleographic and linguistic features: Old, Middle, and New Hittite, the last of which further developed into Late New Hittite. However, as A. Archi stated “linguistic periodization

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<sup>35</sup> Blackbourn 2012, 301.

<sup>36</sup> Lorenz 2017, in particular p. 122.

<sup>37</sup> See Lorenz 2017.

<sup>38</sup> Green 1995, 99.

<sup>39</sup> See Götze 1968, Gurney 1974, Freu 1987 and 2002, Klinger 1995, Stavi 2011 and 2015. See also, concerning the sequence of the successors of Telipinu, the list related to the land donations in Rüstler / Wilhelm 2012, 58.

and, above all, graphic customs do not necessarily go hand in hand with historical periods”<sup>40</sup>, therefore it has been long debated whether a historical phase that can be defined as “Middle Kingdom” could ever be historically identified.

From this perspective it is also important to mention that the majority of the written records have been dated to the Late Hittite period, while documents from the earlier phases are scarce.<sup>41</sup> In particular, the historical narratives dealing with the kings between Telipinu and Tuthaliya I are almost completely absent, which has led to different evaluation of this period of time, since the very beginning of Hittitology.<sup>42</sup>

The possibly most debated topic was (and still is) the period between Telipinu and Tuthaliya I, and in more general terms, the beginning of the Hittite Empire.

The first – and in some ways the traditional – threefold periodization was proposed by E. Forrer, who defined these three periods as *altes Hatti-Reich*, *mittleres Hatti-Reich* and *neues Hatti-Reich*, following the terminology of the periodization of Ancient Egypt and preferring the term “New Kingdom” instead of Empire, which would later become common, and indicating Šuppiluliuma I as the king under whose authority the New Kingdom began.<sup>43</sup>

According to A. Götze, the Empire began with Tuthaliya I, while the period from Telipinu to Tuthaliya was a gap for which he did not use a specific term at first.<sup>44</sup>

The terminology *mittleres Reich* was used by H. Otten to define the period between the end of the reign of Telipinu and the beginning of the reign of Šuppiluliuma I.<sup>45</sup>

The fact that on a linguistic and paleographic level Middle Hittite can be clearly distinguished from Old and New Hittite sustained the periodization of three periods, and the dating of the Middle Kingdom to the time between Telipinu and Šuppiluliuma became “traditional”.<sup>46</sup>

A. Archi in particular questioned the equation of Middle Hittite with the Middle Kingdom period, and in particular the dating of the beginning of the Empire to

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<sup>40</sup> Archi 2003, 5.

<sup>41</sup> See, for the dating of the single documents [https://www.hethport.uni-wuerzburg.de/hetkonk/hetkonk\\_abfrageF.php](https://www.hethport.uni-wuerzburg.de/hetkonk/hetkonk_abfrageF.php) (last access 27/01/2025).

<sup>42</sup> I will not take on the problem of Hittite chronology, since it goes far beyond the scope of this research. For reference see, among others, Wilhelm / Boese 1987, Astour 1989, Wilhelm 1991, de Martino 1993 (with previous studies).

<sup>43</sup> Forrer 1926.

<sup>44</sup> Götze 1928. For the same periodization see also Gurney 1952, Laroche 1955, Bittel 1976, 306, Cornelius 1979, *passim*.

<sup>45</sup> Otten 1951.

<sup>46</sup> Klengel 1999, 85–134.

the reign of Šuppiluliuma I.<sup>47</sup> This led to a double periodization and to the definition of the period between Tuthaliya I and Šuppiluliuma I as “Early Empire”.<sup>48</sup> However, this twofold view of Hittite history is still a periodization. A different periodization can be found in the volume *The Kingdom of the Hittites* by T. Bryce, in which the author outlines the history of the Hittites according to the sequence of the kings, without further periodization.<sup>49</sup>

The recently published *Handbook Hittite Empire*, edited by S. de Martino,<sup>50</sup> avoids periodization either with or without the Middle Kingdom. However, periodization is still present, since Hittite history is divided into “The Dawn of the Hittite Kingdom”, “The Expansion of Hatti and Resistance to Unification”, “The Restoration of Order: Telipinu, Pretender or Reformer?”, “A Turning Point in the History of Hatti: The Reign of Tuthaliya I”, “The Imperial Dimension”, “Divine Punishment: The Plague and its Political and Economic Effects”, “A New Political Vision and the Transfer of the Capital”, “The Reign of Hattušili III: Looking for Legitimacy and Stability”.<sup>51</sup> In this handbook the traditional method of periodization is no longer present, and there is an attempt to go over periodization by presenting Hittite history according to historical-political events that constitute – at least from what we can infer from the written sources – pivotal points and/or changes in the political, economic, social, and religious structure of Ḫatti. Nonetheless, this way of presenting Hittite history is also conventional and dependent on an etic perspective, just like any other type of periodization.

It is, of course, impossible to solve the fundamental problem, since the written record gives us no clue about any emic system of periodization. Also, periodization can still have a didactic function.

Since periodization is – by definition – conventional and etic, I think that for the sake of this research a pragmatic approach is needed. First, it is important to be aware of the issues that can influence the way(s) we periodize Hittite history and therefore to be aware that whatever periodization we choose, it will always be shaped – at least partially – by these issues. Second, we have to consider the case studies. Since, as it will be shown in the next paragraph, one case study is the reign of Telipinu and its aftermath, in other words, the transition between Old and Middle Kingdom, and the others – the Battle of Qadesh, the reign of Ḫattušili III, the end of the Hittite Empire – are set in a scenario in which Ḫatti is part

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<sup>47</sup> Archi 2003.

<sup>48</sup> Among others Archi 2005, Gerçek 2017.

<sup>49</sup> Bryce 2005.

<sup>50</sup> See de Martino (ed.) 2022.

<sup>51</sup> de Martino 2022a, 205–270.

of the Great Powers' Club, i.e. from the reign of Šuppiluliuma I onward, the reference to Old Kingdom, Middle Kingdom, and Empire is still the most suitable.

## 1.4 The Case Studies

The choice of the case studies is determined by various factors. Firstly, the availability and reliability of written sources is an important element for selecting the case studies.

While not all cases have the same number or variety of sources, as well as different textual genres and geographical origins, it is essential to ensure that the case studies are, broadly speaking, well-documented. This allows for a comprehensive understanding of the type of crisis each case represents, as well as the (a)synchronic perception of these crises.

A further factor that must be considered is that all case studies have already been defined as crises by the scholarship, or at the very least, the critical aspect of each case has already been emphasized. This has two consequences. First, it reveals how contemporary historians perceive and evaluate each individual case study, providing a basis for comparison with other perspectives. Second, it allows for a focused analysis of specific elements to understand the nature of the crisis represented by each case study.

Going back to the definitions of R. Koselleck, a crisis can be: 1. "a chain of events leading to a culminating, decisive point at which action is required", 2. "a unique and final point", 3. "a permanent or conditional category pointing to a critical situation which may constantly recur or else to situations in which decisions have momentous consequences", and 4. "a historically immanent transitional phase".<sup>52</sup>

Indeed, the selection of the case studies is based on the criteria discussed above, but it is, in the end, a personal choice. Indeed the correlation between a single case study and a specific definition of crisis can be further discussed, since a single case study may be able to fit two or maybe even more definitions. My goal is to show how the study of specific cases, defined according to precise criteria, point towards a variety of (a)synchronic perceptions of the crises and, consequently, how multitemporality plays an important role in the construction of these perceptions.

Within Hittite history, I have chosen four case studies, each of which fits one of Koselleck's definitions of a crisis.

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<sup>52</sup> Koselleck 2006, 371–372.

The Battle of Qadesh, fought between the Hittites and Egyptians, serves as a prime example of a crisis in which a series of events culminated in a pivotal moment. In this case, I will highlight the importance of asynchronicity in shaping the perception of the crisis from various perspectives.

The definition of crisis as a final point describes perfectly the crisis that ultimately led to the fall of the Hittite Empire or at the very least, the end of the written records from Ḫattuša and of the regional system as it was structured in the Late Bronze Age. In this particular case, the concept of multiple temporalities can be applied, not only in regard to the historical events that caused the empire's demise, but first and foremost in terms of how this final crisis is perceived.

A perfect example of a crisis that can be considered a historically immanent transitional phase is the reign of Ḫattušili III. Traditionally, the reign of Ḫattušili III is seen as the apogee of the Hittite Empire and not considered a time of crisis. However, I will show how the sources reveal the crucial moments of this king's reign as critical.

Finally, the most complex case study is the reign of Telipinu, which marks, according to the traditional periodization of Hittite history,<sup>53</sup> the transition from the Old Kingdom to the Middle Kingdom. This case study is particularly complex for two reasons. Firstly, the available sources are limited, which has inevitably led to a variety of interpretations of this period. Secondly, the narrative is only the one of Telipinu without the possibility of confronting it with other sources. However, I believe it is possible to demonstrate that this period can be described as a crisis perceived as a critical situation that could recur.

On a methodological level, each case study will be presented individually. First the main features of each case will be presented, and then the available sources will be surveyed, in order to understand which different perspectives are represented, and how and why the sources have been interpreted.

The second step of the investigation is a survey of the sources and a discussion of the secondary literature on the case study. In particular, where they are available, the different interpretations will be outlined.

The third and crucial step is the comparison of the data from the sources with their modern interpretations in order to discover and describe the perception of each crisis from the three different perspectives and to show how (a)synchronicity works in each case.

The goals are various: first, to find out whether a crisis is perceived as such by all three perspectives, why it is or isn't and how is this supported by the sources; second, to underline (a)synchronicity, to understand where it comes from and

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<sup>53</sup> See Ch. 2.1.

how it works; third, to reflect on the consequences of (a)synchronicity and multitemporality in the evaluation of crises in ancient history.