The Story of Ephesus

It is hard to imagine today but the Roman province of Asia, a part of modern Turkey, what we might call Western Anatolia, was one of the richest, most civilised, most urbanised, and most intellectually alive provinces of the entire empire. By the first century AD, Ephesus was its capital. Now it is a ruin which due to the accumulation of silt over the centuries is now eight kilometres from the sea. Then it was a port, a great and thriving city, a centre for trade, religion and culture. Being on the edge of the Aegean Sea and with routes inland it was the link between the West and the land of Anatolia, and even further east to Persia and beyond. In addition to merchants and seaman, it was a major centre for pilgrims who travelled to worship various deities and in particular the goddess Artemis, whose temple was one of the seven wonders of the Ancient world. According to modern statistical methods, its average residential population would have been 71,587, the fifth largest city of the Roman Empire after Rome (923,406), Alexandria (410,535), Antioch (124,936) and Carthage (102,079).[1] All of that gives us some idea of its regional and international importance.

Going back to the second millennium, the Late Bronze Age, a time before the arrival of Greek colonists, this region had been inhabited by an Anatolian people who were called the Arzawa by their powerful eastern neighbours, the Hittites. The Arzawa Lands were not governed under one stable structured political entity. Five Arzawa states have been identified: the Kingdom of Arzawa itself, Mira-Kuwaliya, Seha River Land, Hapalla and Wilusa.[2] Cohesion within these regions may not have been very strong either. For example, the archaeological record for the city of Beycesultan, built on a tributary of the Maeander River and one of the largest settlements in western Anatolia, suggests that there was little attachment to any other populations either east or west.[3] However, at one point in the mid-fourteenth century BC, the Arzawa came together under King Tarhundaradu as a substantial force in opposition to the Hittite Empire. As demonstrated by Egyptian diplomatic correspondence (the Armana Letters, EA 31 and EA 32) King Tarhundaradu had sufficient status to be honoured with diplomatic relations with Pharoah Amenhotep III (1400-1353 BC).[4]

The capital of the Kingdom of Arzawa has been recognised as Apasa, a city on the shore of the Aegean Sea near the mouth of the River Cayster. There is a consensus that this

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[1] John Hanson and Scott Ortman, 'A Systematic Method for Estimating the Populations of Greek and Roman Settlements', *Journal of Roman Archaeology* 30 (2017): 319.
[2] Trevor Bryce, *The Kingdom of the Hittites* (Oxford University Press, 1999), 55.
[3] Naoíse Mac Sweeney, 'Hittites and Arzawans: A View from Western Anatolia', *Anatolian Studies*, no. 60 (2010): 22.
[4] Harry A. Hoffner, *Letters from the Hittite Kingdom* (Society of Biblical Lit, 2009), 274; William Moran, *The Armana Letters* (Johns Hopkins University Press, 1992), 101–3.

was the original site of the Greek colony which became Ephesus.[5] The importance of Apasa is displayed when it appears as a major enemy of the Hittite king, Mursili II. The Hittite records demonstrate the efforts he took to crush the Arzawa opposition. Apasa represented a major campaign which even required military support from Mursili's brother Sarri-Kusuh, based in Carchemish on the banks of the Euphrates. He and his troops would have covered over one thousand two hundred kilometres in order to join Mursili's siege and at 25 km a day would have been travelling for eight weeks.

Before hostilities began, Mursili credits the Hittite storm god, Tarhunna, the supreme god of the Hittite pantheon with an initial attack on Apasa and its king, Uhhaziti:

> When I marched forth and when I reached Mount Lawasa, My Lord, the mighty Storm God, revealed to me his divine power. He unleashed a thunderbolt and my army saw the thunderbolt and the Land of Arzawa saw it. The thunderbolt proceeded and struck the Land of Arzawa and struck Apasa, the city of Uhhaziti, and brought Uhhaziti to his knees, and he fell ill.[6]

And then he honours all of his gods with the final victory including Tarhunna's consort, the Sun-Goddess of Arinna and their daughter, Mezzulla:

> And my Lady, the Sun-Goddess of Arinna, and My Lord, the mighty Storm God and Mezzulla and all the gods supported me. I defeated Piyama-Kurunta, son of Uhhaziti, together with his infantry and chariotry, and I struck him down.[7]

Strabo (c.64 BC - c. 24 AD) writes of a people called the Carians living in Ephesus at the time when the Ionian Greeks were arriving in the region.[8] Pausanius describes some of the locals as "Leleges, a branch of the Carians" but states that they were mostly Lydians inhabiting an upper city. Then there were other peoples including Amazon women, who lived around a sanctuary devoted to an Anatolian mother-goddess.[9]

Strabo writes that the Ionians drove out the local peoples identifying Androclus, son of the Athenian king, Codrus (reigned c. 1089 – c.1068 BC), as the leader of those colonists who around 1000 BC settled in the place that would now be called Ephesus.[10] Pausanius confirms Androclus as the Ionian leader but provides more detail about the conflict. He says that the Greeks expelled the Leleges and the Lydians who inhabited the upper settlement but made peace with those people who lived around the sanctuary by the sea exchanging oaths of friendship. The settlement by the shore with a freshwater

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[5] J. D. Hawkins, 'Tarkasnawa King of Mira "Tarkondemos", Boğazköy Sealings and Karabel', *Anatolian Studies* 48 (1998): 7, 22.
[6] Bryce, *The Kingdom of the Hittites*, 210.
[7] Bryce, *The Kingdom of the Hittites*, 210–11.
[8] Strabo, *Geography*, trans. H. C. Hamilton and W. Falconer, III (George Bell & Sons, 1903), sec. 14.1.3, https://www.perseus.tufts.edu/hopper/text?doc=Perseus:text:1999.01.0239.
[9] W. H. S. Jones and H. A. Omerod, trans., *Pausanias. Description of Greece*, Loeb Classical Library (Harvard University Press, 1918), sec. 7.2.7-8.
[10] John Kraft et al., 'The Geographies of Ancient Ephesus and the Artemision in Anatolia', *Geoarchaeology* 22 (January 2007): 123, https://doi.org/10.1002/gea.20151.

spring nearby appears to have been a place of worship dedicated to an Asiatic mother goddess, which Pausanius claims was founded by two of the local inhabitants called Coresus and Ephesus. The Greeks added their worship of Artemis until, eventually, a process of assimilation led to the identification of a single goddess.[11] This became the Sanctuary of Artemis otherwise known as the Artemision, whereas the Greek polis was built on a hill to the north-east.[12]

A temple was built and relations between the Ionians and Lydians became cordial. So by the time of wealthy Croesus (reign c. 585-c.546), King of Lydia,[13] many Lydians were living in Ephesus. Kings of Lydia had married their children with those of the rulers of Ephesus and Croesus was the uncle of Pindar, the tyrant of Ephesus. The ambition and wealth of Croesus led to him demanding sovereignty over Ephesus to which according to Herodotus the response of the Ephesians was to tie the polis to the temple by cables and thus claim the sanctuary of the goddess. Thus, the city of Ephesus was consecrated to the goddess Artemis. Croesus spared the city and using his massive wealth funded the rebuilding the temple. Paying less attention to the Greek historians and interpreting the archaeological findings, Dr Kevin Leloux of the University of Liège suggests that the city had already been consecrated before the conflict and that the temple was already in the process of reconstruction. Nevertheless, Croesus would have contributed several elements to the reconstruction.[14]

Lydia was a wealthy and powerful empire but its hegemony over Ephesus and other Ionian cities did not last because Croesus took the fatal decision of attacking the growing Persian Empire of Cyrus II. Having lavished treasures on both the Delphic Oracle, the mouthpiece of Apollo, and on the sanctuary of Amphiaraus, he expected favourable prophesies. Both returned the same message to Croesus which indeed did sound positive, “that if he should send an army against the Persians, he would destroy a great empire”.[15] Unfortunately for Croesus, that “great empire” was Lydia and he was defeated by Cyrus II, who would become “the Great”, at the battle of

This was a glorious temple but it was eventually burnt down on a summer day in 356 BC, which also happened to be the day on which Alexander, son of Philip of Macedonia, was born.[16] Strabo insists that in spite of an offer by Alexander, who had since become

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[11] Anton Bammer, ‘Recent Excavations at the Altar of Artemis in Ephesus’, *Archaeology* 27, no. 3 (1974): 204.
[12] Kevin Leloux, ‘The Campaign Of Croesus Against Ephesus: Historical & Archaeological Considerations’, *Polemos: Journal of Interdisciplinary Research on War and Peace* 21, no. 2 (2018): 49.
[13] Croesus ruled over Western Anatola with his capital at Sardis on the river Pactolus, a tributary of the Hermus which flowed into the Aegean Sea near Smyrna.
[14] Leloux, ‘The Campaign Of Croesus Against Ephesus: Historical & Archaeological Considerations’, 59.
[15] Herodotus, *Histories*, trans. A. D. Godley (Harvard University Press, 1920), sec. 1.53.3.
[16] Plutarch, *The Parallel Lives*, VII, Loeb Classical Library Edition (Harvard University Press, 1919), sec. 17.3.5.

Great, and a calumny that they had used Persian treasure, it was the citizens of Ephesus who had financed the new temple of Artemis themselves through their own gifts and through the sale of the pillars from the previous temple.[17] This glorious temple measured 118 m x 51 m surrounded by forty-two pillars 19 m in height supporting the roof with eight of them in front.

[17] Strabo, *Geography*, sec. 14.1.22.