

## **Where can Kaskaean settlements be found? Some preliminary notes on the topography of Kaskaean land**

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### **Abstract**

Hittite sources about Kaska had no aims to describe Kaskaean land per se, but only described those Kaskaean terrains which were close to Hittite land, while most of Kaskaean lands were unknown for Hittites. Toponymy is the key for Kaskaean topography. Many Kaskaean toponyms were initially related to rivers, so it is perspective to look at names of rivers of Black Sea region. Kaska people were a branch of Hattians and a 'bridge' between Hattians and people speaking Northwest Caucasian languages. The most perspective location in Kaskaean region is Özlüce/Gelevara river. Word *Gelevara* contains component *-vara* that correlates with Hattic root *ur(a/i)* "well", "spring" and with Common West Caucasian *ƶarə* "stream", "torrent". In Kaskaean region there are no other modern names of rivers containing *-ura/-vara* component: it seems that in the basin of Gelevara the density of Kaskaean population was relatively high and Kaskaean settlements potentially can be found there.

**Keywords:** Kaska; topography of Kaska; Kaskaean toponymy; Gelevara river; Bronze Age Anatolia

### **1. Introduction into the problem**

Kaska people were people who lived in mountainous East Pontic Anatolia in the Bronze Age. Kaska people are mainly known from Hittite sources which describing Hittite – Kaska frontier<sup>1</sup>. The problem of precise borders of Kaska land still remains unsolved due to elusive nature of Kaskaean material culture remains (Yakar 2008: 817). However, it is possible to determine some landmarks as most probable and natural borders of Kaska land.

Claudia Glatz and Roger Matthews state that:

It is clear that for much of the second millennium b.c. the Devrez/Dahara<sup>2</sup> formed a natural and cultural boundary between the Hittites and the Kaska, with territory around it a fortified military zone, especially through the imperial period (Glatz, Matthews 2005: 62).

On the other hand Jak Yakar states that "the Kelkit<sup>3</sup> river could have constituted a natural border between the Hittites and the Kaška established already in the Old Kingdom" (Yakar 2008: 821).

The eastern Kaska territory could have included the Carşamba plain<sup>4</sup>, the lower Yeşihrmak and the Kelkit valleys<sup>5</sup>. The Bafra plain including the lower Kızılırmak valley, the districts of

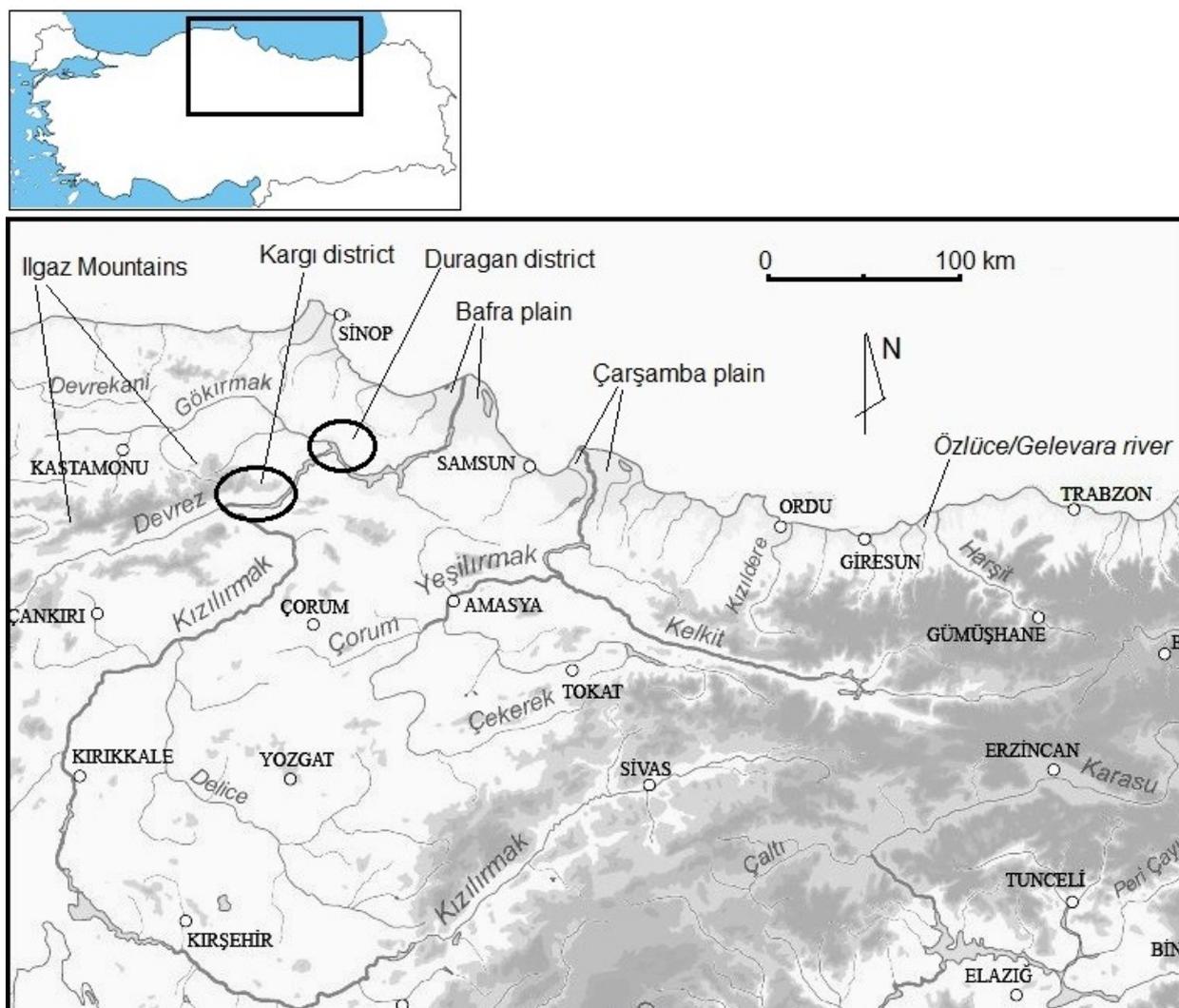
<sup>1</sup> Main Hittite sources about Kaska are the following: Treaty of Hattusili III and Tiliura, Apology of Hattusili III, Annals of Mursili II, Annals of Tudhaliya, Prayer of Arnuwanda and Asmunikkal, Maşat texts, Deeds of Suppiluliuma (for more details see: Glatz, Matthews 2005: 53)

<sup>2</sup> See pic. 1 .

<sup>3</sup> See pic. 1.

Duragan, Kargı<sup>6</sup>, could have constituted the central Kaška region. The Sinop and Kastamonu provinces<sup>7</sup> including the area south of the Ilgaz Mountains<sup>8</sup> could have been territories inhabited not only by the western Kaška tribes, but also by farmers of Dahara River Land, identified with the eastern Gökırmak valley<sup>9</sup>, as well as communities of Tummana and Pala<sup>10</sup> (Yakar 2008: 821)

Thus, it is possible to draw a preliminary map of Kaskaean land (see pic. 1).



Pic.1. The map representing main locations mentioned in the text

It should be specially noted that most works devoted somehow to the topography of Kaska: Glatz C., Matthews R. 2005; Matthews R., Glatz C. 2009; Yakar 2008 and so on focus attention on places mentioned in Hittite sources, i.e.: on Hittite settlements in the frontier zone or on

<sup>4</sup> See pic. 1.

<sup>5</sup> See pic. 1.

<sup>6</sup> See pic. 1.

<sup>7</sup> See pic. 2.

<sup>8</sup> See pic. 1.

<sup>9</sup> See pic. 1.

<sup>10</sup> See pic. 2.

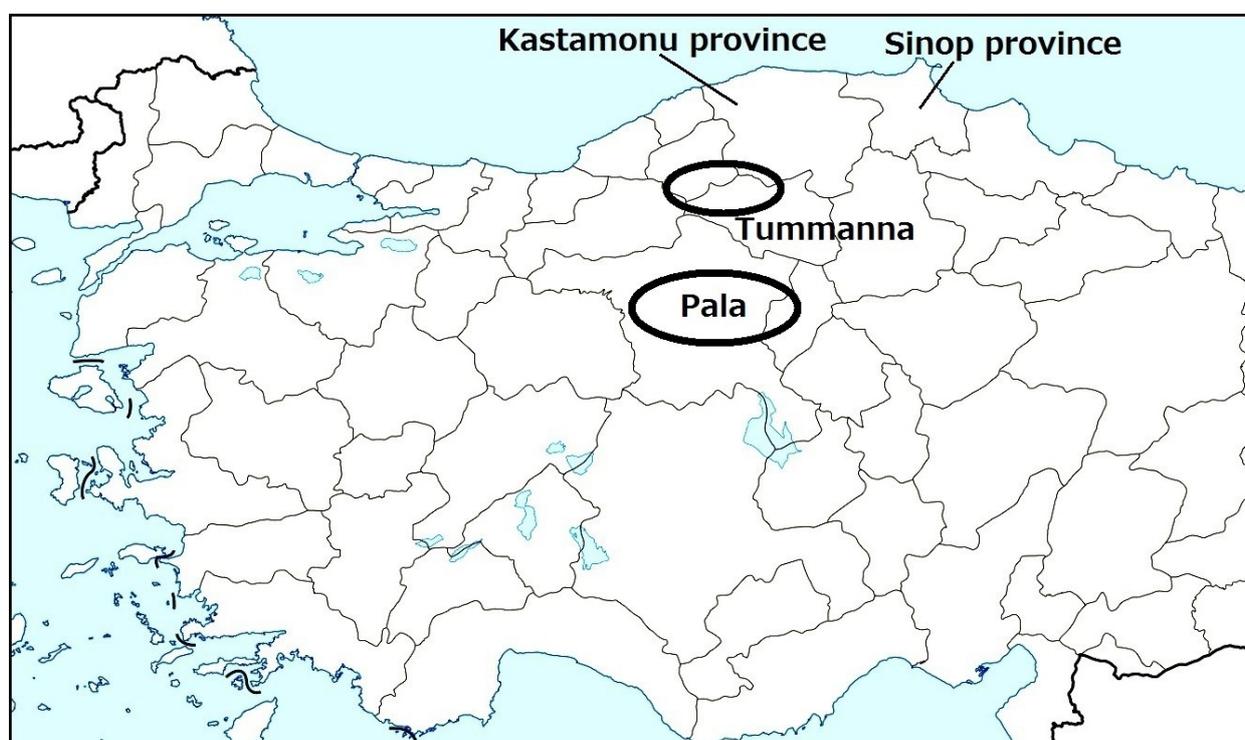
Hittite settlements occupied by Kaska and almost no attention is paid to the problem of discovering of pure/genuine Kaskaean settlements.

Ahmet Ünal points on the fact that Hittite sources didn't describe Kaska impartially, they describe Kaska people as savage and barbarian (Ünal 2003: 48 – 49), and he points on the fact that Hittite statements about Kaska should not be considered uncritically (Ünal 2003: 57).

Thus, it is possible to say that Hittite sources actually had no task to describe Kaskaean settlements, that's why they actually are indirect sources about Kaskaean settlements since they provide some information about some Kaskaean settlements in the area of Hittite – Kaska frontier. And there evidently were many Kaskaean settlements which were unknown for Hittites and were not described anyhow in Hittite recordings.

Another problem is the fact that still no undoubtedly identified Kaskaean settlement has been found.

In this short paper I try to draw a preliminary outline of Kaska topography not from the point of view of Hittite sources, but from the point of view of Kaska.



Pic. 2. The scheme representing the location of Kastamonu and Sinop provinces and approximate location of Pala and Tummanna terrains. (Locations of Tummanna and Pala are determined after Matthews R., Glatz C. 2009: 58.)

## 2. Ethnic relatedness of Kaska helps to determine possible locations of Kaskaean settlements

Ahmet Ünal says that Kaska people were actually a branch of Hattians, i.e.: the Kaska were those Hattians who weren't assimilated by the Hittites (Ünal 2003: 57). Same ideas have also been spoken out by Itamar Singer (Singer 2007: 176). The same ideas have been spoken out by G. G. Giorgadze (Giorgadze 1961) who points on the fact that many place names in the territory

of Kaska can be decoded through Hattic language, and by G. A. Melikishvili (Melikishvili 1954). And earlier such ideas were also spoken out by Emil Forrer (Diakonov 1968).

In order to prove that Kaska and Hattians were relatives here the following logic line can be used:

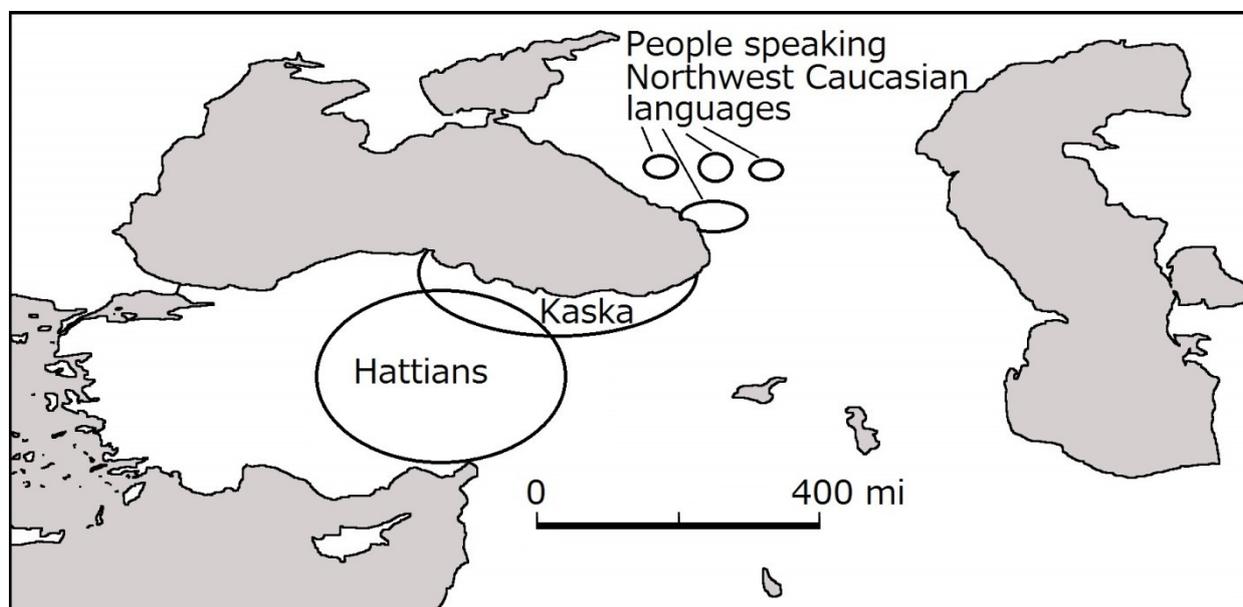
Hattian language is a relative of Northwest Caucasian languages (for more details see: Dunaevskaya 1960; Arzinba 1979; Ivanov 1985; Akulov 2018).

On the other hand, in modern Ossetian language words *кæсгон* [kəʃgon], *кæсгæммæ* [kəʃgəttə] are used to denote Adyghe/Circassian people. In Old Armenian Adyghe people were named *gashk'* in Old Georgian they were named *kashag/kashaki*; in Byzantium the region of Adyghe people was named *Kasahia*, Arab people named Adyghe people using word *kashak*, in Old Russian Chronicles word *kasog/kosog* was used in order to name Adyghe people (Melikishvili 1954: 70). These facts suggest that word *kaska/kashka* can be used to denote people speaking some Northwest Caucasian languages.

Thus, we have the following:

Hattians were relatives of Adyghe people and Kashka were relative of Adyghe people, and due to the transitivity of relatedness it is possible to state that Hattian and Kaska people were relatives. It is possible to suggest that Kaska people were a 'bridge' between Hattians and modern people speaking Northwest Caucasian languages.

It seems highly possible that Kaska people spoke a language that was very close to Hattian and so it is possible to conclude something about the location of potential Kaskaean settlements analyzing place names and landscape.



Pic. 3. The map representing the location of Hattians, Kaska, and people speaking Northwest Caucasian languages

### 3. The Gelevara river as a perspective place where Kaskian settlements could be found

The Kaska are generally depicted as people whose main activity was transhumance pastoralism (see: Gerçek 2017).

I suppose that there could be different groups of Kaska, i.e.: there could be pastoralist Kaska and could be sedentary Kaska living on the seashore and practicing fishing, sea gathering and so on. Anyway, I suppose it can be rather evident that rivers were the matter of high importance for any Kaska, and that many Kaskaean toponyms were initially related to rivers.

And if we take a look at rivers of East Pontic Anatolia/Black Sea region the most interesting and perspective place evidently is Özlüce/Gelevara river<sup>11</sup>.



Pic. 4. Locations of potential Kaskaean settlements (orange spots) in the lower flow of the Gelevara river (the map has been made of a screenshot of Google maps)

<sup>11</sup> See pic. 1.

Why is it possible to say that there can be Kaskaean settlements along the Özlüce/Gelevara river? Since one of the names of the river (Gelevara) contains component *-vara*, that evidently correlates with Hattic root *ur(a/i)* that means “well”, “spring” and with Common West Caucasian root *ƒarə* that means “stream”, “torrent” (for more details see: Chirikba 1996: 426). In the region where Kaska people lived there also are other place names with the same component *-ura/-vara*, but there are no other modern names of rivers containing this component. That’s why I suppose it is a very interesting issue when this component *-ura/-vara* is in the currently used name of a river, i.e.: this fact suggests that in the corresponding terrain population density of Kaska people was rather high and so the probability of finding Kaskaean settlements there seems to be relatively high.



Pic. 5. Locations of potential Kaskaean settlements in the middle flow of Gelevara river (map has been made of a screenshot of Google maps)



Pic. 6. Locations of potential Kaskaean settlements in the upper flow of the Gelevara river (the map has been made of a screenshot of Google maps)

And having taken even a rather superficial look at the map of the river for example in Google maps (pic.: 4 – 6) I can see some places which look very convenient for settling settlements and where some Kaskaean settlements probably could be found, i.e.: it would be useful and perspective to do some surveys in the basin of the Gelevara river.

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