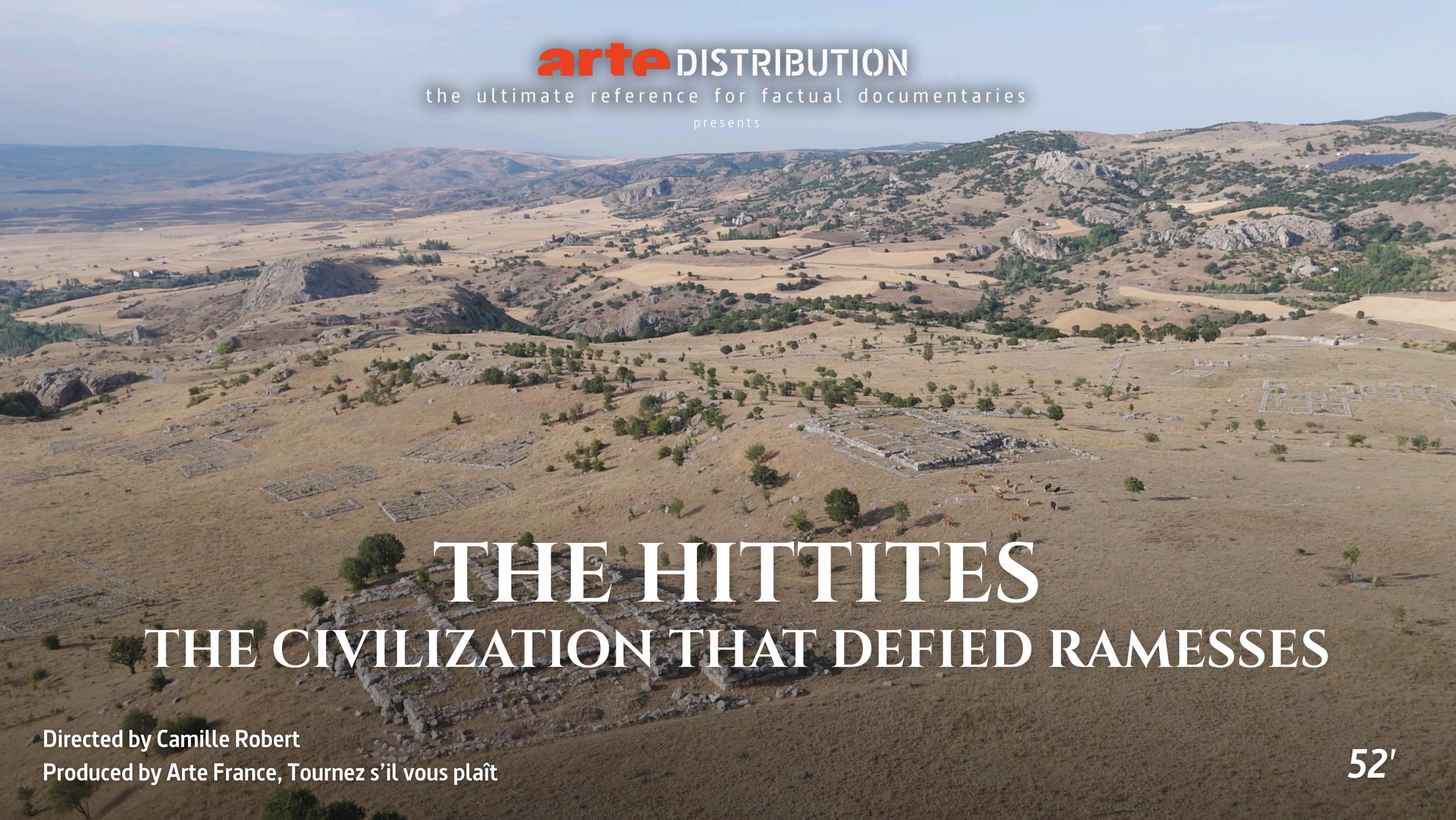


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presents

An aerial view of a vast, arid landscape with scattered ruins and a herd of animals. The terrain is dry and hilly, with patches of green vegetation and numerous stone foundations of ancient structures. A herd of animals, possibly cows or sheep, is grazing in the foreground. The sky is clear and blue.

# THE HITTITES

## THE CIVILIZATION THAT DEFIED RAMESSES

Directed by Camille Robert

Produced by Arte France, Tournez s'il vous plaît

52'



# SUMMARY

The Hittite Empire was one of the great empires of the Bronze Age. Around 1600 BC, this civilization from the Caucasus or the Balkans established themselves in Anatolia and founded a powerful kingdom centered on Hattusa, its fortified capital. For over five centuries, they reigned over a vast territory stretching from Syria to Lebanon, invented an Indo-European written language and came up with a surprisingly modern complex social hierarchy.

Rivals of Pharaoh Ramesses II during the famous Battle of Kadesh, they suddenly disappeared around 1200 BC, leaving behind a mystery that remains unsolved to this day. Since the rediscovery of Hattusa in the 19th century, new archeological excavations have gradually brought this forgotten civilization back to life and revealed the secrets of a people who shaped the history of the ancient Near East.

How did such a powerful empire collapse so suddenly?

# PRODUCER'S NOTE OF INTENT

In 2022, during the production of our film *The Champollion Brothers: The Egypt Code Breakers* for Arte, we focused on the Battle of Kadesh, immortalized in the temples of Ramesses II.

However, this account glorifying the Pharaoh's victory concealed a very different reality: that of a uncertain clash against a forgotten people known as the Hittites.

Who were these opponents capable of rivaling one of the most powerful empires of the ancient world?

↳ *Ongoing excavations at Hattusa and its ruins, Turkey*



Since the rediscovery of Hattusa in the 19th century, the Hittites have fascinated archaeologists. But in recent years, archaeological excavations have yielded spectacular discoveries: in 2023, in Hattusa, Andreas Schachner and his team unearthed a new language - that of Kalasma - an engraved ivory piece, and more than 250 previously unknown Hittite hieroglyphs. What do these messages from the past tell us?

At Usakli Höyük, Anacleto D'Agostino is exploring a vast circular ritual space and has discovered one of the oldest mosaics in the Near East. Could he have found the legendary holy city of Zippalanda?

These advances are revolutionizing our understanding of this great Bronze Age civilization, while reviving an essential question: Why did the Hittite Empire disappear?

We will follow this research process closely, alongside leading experts: Schachner, D'Agostino, Éric Jean, Stuart Manning, and Alice Mouton, who are all driven by the same desire: to bring the fascinating and little-known history of the Hittites to the attention of the general public.

It is this shared passion that constitutes the spirit of this new documentary.

# DIRECTOR'S STATEMENT

This film will first and for all be an archaeological investigation, an immersion into the heart of the great Hittite sites, working closely with the scientists who are rediscovering this forgotten civilization step by step.

We will follow their research, their hypotheses, their doubts, and their discoveries, both in the field and in the storerooms of museums in Istanbul and Ankara, where Hittite clay tablets and art objects are preserved.

From the laboratories of Cornell to the excavation sites of Hattusa, the narrative will unfold each time the team makes a new discovery, conveying all the tension and twists and turns of a real historical investigation.



↳ *View of the archaeological site of Usakli Höyük, Turkey*



### **On-location interviews and the thrill fieldwork**

On-location interviews will capture both the scientific explanations and human emotions of these passionate researchers. As Brian Bauer once said, “There is no good excavation without emotion.” We will seek to convey this emotion, which is an essential driving force behind research, and to pass on rigorous, captivating, and sensitive knowledge.

### **Spectacular footage**

Great visual care will be taken during filming: the Hittite sites, with their rare visual power, will be filmed using lightweight drones and a Sony A7S camera on a Ronin S gimbal, for smooth, stable, and immersive footage. The goal is to immerse viewers in the grandiose beauty of these Anatolian landscapes, between sky and stone.

### **3D reconstruction and animated maps**

Thanks to a unique 3D reconstruction created in collaboration with archeologists from Hattusa, the Hittite capital will progressively come back to life before our eyes, until its final reconstruction. Animated maps will illustrate the empire's expansion over the centuries, providing a clear understanding of its size and power.

### **A new take on a legendary battle**

Using parallax techniques and animation in After Effects we will bring the Battle of Kadesh to life through the fresco of Ramesses II's at Abu Simbel. This is a visually powerful way to revive one of the most legendary battles of ancient times.



↳ *Excavations at the Usakli Höyük site, with the discovery of a ritual space and a mosaic*

# PARTICIPANTS



**Andreas Schachner**  
**German Archaeological Institute**  
→ Archeologist



**Sturt Manning**  
**Cornell University (USA)**  
→ Archeology professor



**Anacleto D'Agostino**  
**University of Pisa (Italy)**  
→ Archeologist



**Alice Mouton**  
**French National Centre for Scientific  
Research (France)**  
→ Expert on Hittitology



**Claude Obsomer**  
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