Greek Studies: Interdisciplinary Approaches
Series Editor: Gregory Nagy, Harvard University

"*Black Ships and Sea Raiders: The Late Bronze and Early Iron Age Context of Odysseus' Second Cretan Lie* is a tour de force that picks up the story of the Trojan heroes where Homer's *Odyssey* and Old Testament tales of the Philistines leave off, giving us new answers by redirecting emphasis to maritime technology and culture along with an astounding collection of Bronze Age textual sources. In doing so, it redirects us from the lopsided attention on the Philistines to the Sherden and other 'Sea Peoples.' While many questions continue to make the Bronze Age collapse a topic of intense fascination, Jeffrey P. Emanuel has written a page-turner from start to finish."
　　　　　—Louise A. Hitchcock, University of Melbourne

"In this broad-ranging and well researched monograph, Emanuel illuminates the archaeological and historical realities of the 'Sherden,' one of the main groups of the 'Sea Peoples' of the Late Bronze and early Iron Ages of the central and eastern Mediterranean. In doing so, he masterfully interweaves the Homeric epic, the ancient near eastern (and in particular Egyptian) written sources, and the archaeological evidence from various regions of the eastern Mediterranean. The result is commendable indeed and is recommended for all those interested in the history and culture of the Bronze and Iron Age Mediterranean."
　　　　　—Aren Maeir, Bar-Ilan University

"Emanuel brings together a wide range of evidence from the Mediterranean and Near East, combining this with an in-depth study of ships, shipbuilding, and maritime routes in the Late Bronze and Early Iron Age. The result is an engaging book—well researched, well written, and presenting some dramatic new ideas about Mediterranean mobilities."
　　　　　—Naoise Mac Sweeney, University of Leicester

The end of the Bronze Age in the Eastern Mediterranean was a time of social, political, and economic upheaval—conditions reflected, in many ways, in the world of Homer's *Odyssey*. Jeffrey P. Emanuel examines the *Odyssey's* Second Cretan Lie (xiv 191–359) in the context of this watershed transition, with particular emphasis on raiding, warfare, maritime technology and tactics, and the evidence for the so-called "Sea Peoples" who have been connected to the events of this period. He focuses in particular on the hero's description of his frequent raiding activities and on his subsequent sojourn in the land of the pharaohs, and connections between Odysseus' false narrative and the historical experiences of one particular Sea Peoples group: the "Sherden of the Sea."

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Emanuel

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Contents

Chapter One

Epic, Oral Tradition, and Archaeology

ἄνδρα μοι ἔννεπε, μοῦσα, πολύτροπον, ὃς μάλα πολλὰ
πλάγχθη, ἐπεὶ Τροίης ἱερὸν πτολίεθρον ἔπερσεν·
πολλῶν δ᾽ ἀνθρώπων ἴδεν ἄστεα καὶ νόον ἔγνω,
πολλὰ δ᾽ ὅ γ᾽ ἐν πόντῳ πάθεν ἄλγεα ὃν κατὰ θυμόν,
ἀρνύμενος ἥν τε ψυχὴν καὶ νόστον ἑταίρων.
ἀλλ᾽ οὐδ᾽ ὣς ἑτάρους ἐρρύσατο, ἱέμενός περ·
αὐτῶν γὰρ σφετέρῃσιν ἀτασθαλίῃσιν ὄλοντο

Tell me, O Muse, of the man of many devices, who wandered full many ways
after he had sacked the sacred citadel of Troy. Many were the men whose cities
he saw and whose mind he learned, aye, and many the woes he suffered in his
heart upon the sea, seeking to win his own life and the return of his comrades.
Yet even so he saved not his comrades, though he desired it sore, for through
their own blind folly they perished…

Odyssey i 1–7[1]

So begins the Homeric epic about the hero Odysseus, the πολύτροπος 'many–
sided, much–traveled, versatile, ingenious' man, and his decade of wander-
ings following the Achaean sack of Troy. These wanderings took the hero to
places like the city of the Kikones, Phaiakia, the land of the Cyclopes, and
even Hades itself, with myriad stops in between—including, via false *ainos*,
Crete, Egypt, Lebanon, and Libya—before finally returning him to Ithaka,
ten years after he first set sail for home and twenty after his initial
departure. Trials like these were not unique to Odysseus: other
tales of suffering in the aftermath of the Trojan War can be
found amidst the "framework of heroic portraits" that make up the epic
tradition, from Menelaos' eight–year journey home (*Odyssey* iv 81–85)
to Agamemnon's murderous reception at the hands of his wife's lover,
Aigisthos (*Odyssey* xi 409–411).[2] A major aim of this study is to chip away at

1

one such individual story—Odysseus' Second Cretan Lie—for the purpose of shedding light on the interplay between a Homeric individual and the historical and archaeological background. As we shall see, at least some of the wanderings and sufferings of Homer's epic heroes in general, and of Odysseus in particular, are not out of place when viewed against the larger tapestry of the chaotic transition from the Late Bronze Age to the Early Iron Age in the years surrounding the beginning of the 12th century BCE.

TWO TAPESTRIES: EPIC AND HISTORY

Before we begin, it is necessary to cover some background on epic and oral tradition, and on their tangled relationship with that modern invention which we call "history." Unfortunately, the largest and most tantalizing question—when and where did the characters and events of epic originate, and what relationship do they have with people that actually lived and events that actually happened?—is, on the whole, unanswerable. Myth and oral tradition occupy a unique space within human communication, vested as they are with motifs, artifacts, content, and meaning that is simultaneously reflective both of years long past and of the present.

However, epic and oral tradition also can—and almost certainly do—transmit some measures of historical truth within the received fiction. This does not mean that exact historical connections should be sought between characters, events, and descriptions contained in myth, and it certainly does not mean that epic works should be treated as historical texts. Such a search is bound to end in futility, in no small part because epic is the product of such a lengthy compositional process that single characters, events, or even objects can simultaneously represent analogues that are centuries apart in historical time. A classic example of this is the shield of the Trojan hero Hektor, which Homer first describes as a tower shield of the type seen in iconography from the Bronze Age shaft graves at Mycenae (Fig. 1.1):
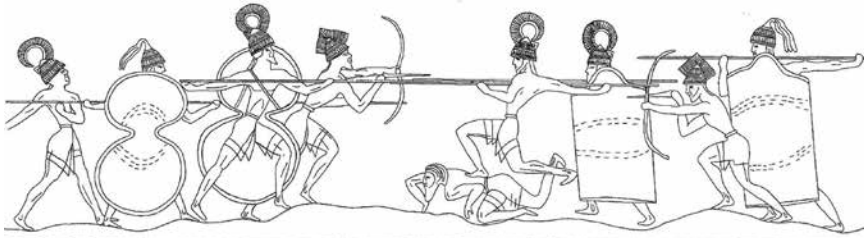
Figure 1.1.   Battle depicted on the "Warrior Krater" from Shaft Grave IV at Mycenae
Blakolmer, F. 2007. "The Silver Battle Krater from Shaft Grave IV at Mycenae: Evidence of Fighting 'Heroes' on Minoan Palace walls at Knossos?" In Morris, S. P. and Laffineur, R., eds. *EPOS: Reconsidering Greek Epic and Aegean Bronze Age Archaeology*. Liège. Plate LVII1.

ἀμφὶ δέ μιν σφυρὰ τύπτε καὶ αὐχένα δέρμα κελαινὸν
ἄντυξ ἣ πυμάτη θέεν ἀσπίδος ὀμφαλοέσσης

…the black rim of hide that went round his shield beat against his neck and his ankles

Iliad VI 117–118[3]

Scarcely one scroll later, this object has leapt forward in time nearly half a millennium, becoming the circular shield known from the end of the Bronze Age and the succeeding Iron Age (Fig. 1.2):
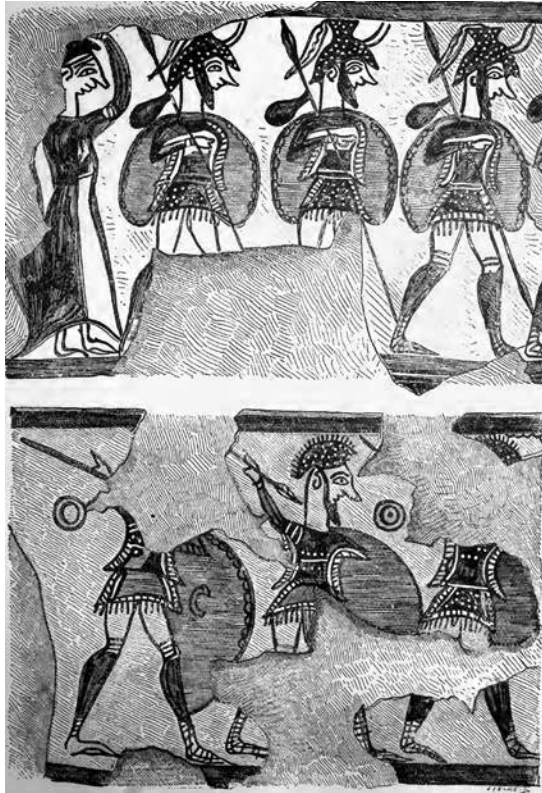
Figure 1.2.   LH IIIC 'Warrior Vase' from Mycenae, featuring parallel processions of armed men in 'hedgehog'-style helmets and in helmets with horns and plumes
Tsountas, Ch. and Manatt, J. I. 1897. *The Mycenaean Age: A Study of the Monuments and Culture of Pre-Homeric Greece*. London. Plate XVIII.

Αἴας διογενὴς προΐει δολιχόσκιον ἔγχος,
καὶ βάλε Πριαμίδαο κατ᾽ ἀσπίδα πάντοσ᾽ ἐΐσην

Then Ajax threw in his turn,
and struck the round shield of the son of Priam

Iliad VII 249–250

As archaeologist Susan Sherratt asked, "So where is history in all this? I have no doubt that something (or perhaps many things) that we might just call real history in some sense of the word is there, lurking in the palimpsest of Homeric oral prehistory. But the question of whose history, and when and where, is something we can probably never untangle."[4]

Whatever measures of truth may be contained in the Homeric epics cannot truly be accessed without peeling back the layers of the received text. These layers are abundant: a characteristic of oral tradition is composition–in–performance, which lends itself, over time and a broad geographic area, to many slightly different versions of a single story.[5] Add to that the agglutinative nature of epic poetry, which has among its progenitors "a vast reservoir of inherited myths, legends, and tales, the conflation of which has left traces and sometimes, at least by literary standards, rather glaring anomalies of structure and detail."[6] A potential example of such an "inherited myth" is the set of false *ainoi* in Homer's *Odyssey* known as the "Cretan Lies." The length and detail of these micronarratives, writes classicist Steve Reece, combined with "the remarkable contrast of our poet's vague notion of the topography of the Peloponnese to his quite detailed knowledge of Crete," may mark these false *ainoi* as remnants of an alternative version of the epic in which they were presented as truth rather than fiction.[7]

While this is probably the case, as other studies have also shown, the specific circumstances of the composition and incorporation of this and other variants will never be fully understood.[8] It *is* clear, though, that Homeric poetry overall is simultaneously *expressive* of Indo–European themes that predate the Greek language itself; *reminiscent* of the earliest phases of Greek prehistory and before, like the 16th century BCE Shaft Grave culture of Mycenae and the settlement of Akrotiri; and *reflective* in many aspects of the beginning of the watershed Archaic period in the eighth century (and beyond).[9] This is compounded by the necessary disconnection, or poetic distance, between the performance of Homer's epics and the age(s) and events they purport to recount, which further precludes simple one–to–one identifications of these passages with archaeological remains or other material evidence of historical peoples and events.[10]

These issues begin to illustrate the problematic nature of attempting, in the words of one scholar, "to create a serious history out of fantasy and folklore."[11] However, interwoven into this complex tapestry are details of varying size

and import which can be seen as reflecting the world of the Late Bronze Age and the early years of the Iron Age, or roughly the 14th through 12th centuries BCE. Familiar personal names and toponyms like *Alaksandu*, *Attarissya*, *Mopsos*, *Wiluša*, and *Aḫḫiyawa* peek out at us from ancient texts, reminding us, respectively, of Alexander, Atreus, Mopsus, Ilios, and Achaea. The general geopolitical makeup of the world described in the *Iliad* also seems to accurately reflect the historical presence of a Mycenaean coalition on the western side of the Aegean and an Anatolian power to the east, with whom they had frequent tension.[12] However, the eastern power at this point in history was not Trojan at all; instead, it was the Hittites who ruled much of Anatolia and northern Syria from their seat at Ḫattuša (modern Boğazköi). Interestingly, documentary evidence shows that some of the historical tension between Mycenaeans and Hittites in the Late Bronze Age did, in fact, focus on Troy.

Homer's lack of awareness of the Hittites seems troubling at first blush, particularly when it comes to efforts to draw even modest parallels between the narratives of the *Iliad* and *Odyssey* on one hand, and our current information about the events and individuals of the Bronze Age on the other. This may be partially explained by the "bricolage" nature of the epic composition, of course, but it may also result from the radical changes that swept the Eastern Mediterranean in the years surrounding 1200 BCE. The chaos and disorder of the *Odyssey* also seem reflective of this late second millennium transition from the Late Bronze to the Iron Age, which was characterized by the threats, marauding, and rending of the social fabric governing society itself. Each of these is a hallmark of the Late Bronze Age's *terminus* in the years surrounding 1200 BCE in the Aegean and Eastern Mediterranean, with its palatial collapses, movements of peoples, and disruption of the international trading networks that had fostered widespread communication and fueled generations of elites' conspicuous consumption and display. As we shall see further below, the collapse of civilizations at the end of the Bronze Age did not just affect Greece, where the palatial system and Linear B writing were permanently lost and a post–Mycenaean "Dark Age" several centuries long was ushered in. The Hittite empire was also largely extinguished at this time, and seems to have been lost from memory in the Aegean region altogether—perhaps part of the reason for its absence from the world of Homer.[13]

Not all events in the years surrounding the Late Bronze–Early Iron Age transition were negative, particularly if one considers the situation from the point of view of those outside Eastern Mediterranean society's topmost stratum. Among the positive, forward–looking developments at this time was an acceleration in maritime innovations—particularly tactics and technology. Groundbreaking developments in ship design and construction provided sailors with an engine of raiding, warfare, and transportation the likes of which had never been seen, allowing naval operations to be conducted more effectively than ever before. This is among the more granular topics that will be addressed in this study, along with

the conduct and expansion of piracy and coastal raiding, as well as the move-
ments and experiences of specific peoples associated with these actions.

ODYSSEUS' SECOND CRETAN LIE

ἀλλ᾽ ἄγε μοι σύ, γεραιέ, τὰ σ᾽ αὐτοῦ κήδε᾽ ἐνίσπες
καί μοι τοῦτ᾽ ἀγόρευσον ἐτήτυμον, ὄφρ᾽ ἐὺ εἰδῶ:
τίς πόθεν εἶς ἀνδρῶν

But come…tell me of thine own sorrows, and declare me this truly, that I may
know full well. Who art thou among men, and from whence?

Odyssey xiv 185–187

This question, posed to Odysseus by the Eumaios the swineherd, prefaces
the portion of Homer's *Odyssey* that will serve as the lens for this study. The
hero's 'Second Cretan Lie,' found in *Odyssey* xiv 191–359 and retold in part
at xvii 424–441, will be analyzed here with a focus on interpreting the details
and identifying parallels to this myth within the historical and archaeological
records. We shall consider three elements of Odysseus' story in particular
within the setting of the Late Bronze–Early Iron Age transition (the late 13th
and early 12th centuries BCE). My aim is to demonstrate these elements' con-
sistency *generally* with the historical reality of this period, and *specifically*
with the experiences of the so–called *Š3rd3n3 n p3 ym* 'Sherden of the sea'
(fig.1.3), one of the groups identified with the so–called 'Sea Peoples' who
are best known from their portrayal in Egyptian records as foreign invaders
who laid waste to empires across the Near East during this tumultuous period.
　　These elements are*:*

1. Odysseus' declaration that he led nine successful maritime raids prior to
   the Trojan War (*Odyssey* xiv 229–233);
2. His ill–fated assault on Egypt, separately recounted to Eumaios (xiv
   245–272) and to Antinoos (xvii 424–441); and
3. His claim not only to have been spared following his disastrous Egyptian
   raid, but to have spent a subsequent seven years in the land of the pha-
   raohs, during which he gathered great wealth (xiv 285–286).

　　A secondary purpose of this study, carried out in service of the first, is to
examine these tales of Odysseus and the evidence for the Sherden within the
context of the Late Bronze–Early Iron Age transition and the Sea Peoples
phenomenon, with particular emphasis on the development, spread, and utili-
zation of maritime tactics, technology, and capabilities at this time.
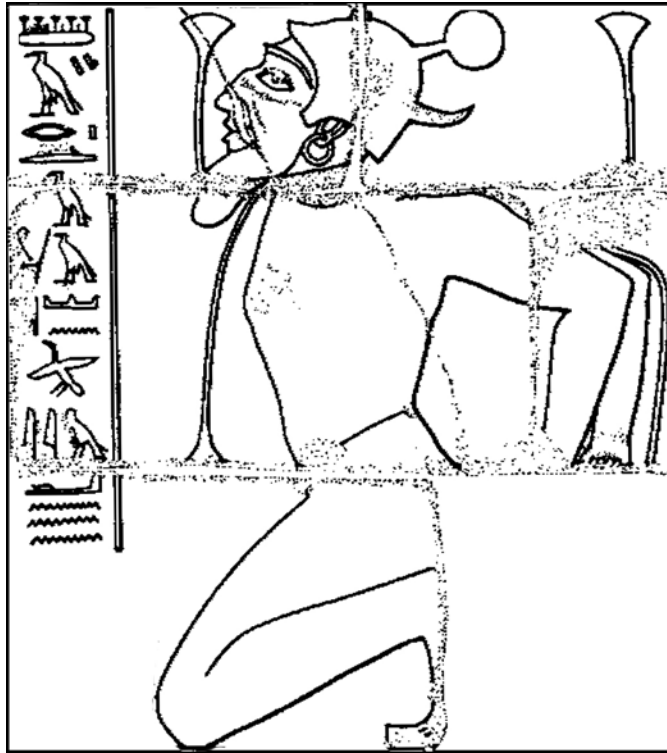
Figure 1.3. Captive from the front pavilion wall at Medinet Habu. The figure serves as the determinative for the caption, which reads *Š3rd3n3 n p3 ym* 'Šrdn of the Sea'

Epigraphic Survey. 1970. *The Eastern High Gate with Translations of Texts*. After Plate 600b. Courtesy of the Oriental Institute of the University of Chicago.

The transition from the Late Bronze to the Early Iron Age was a period of rapid and radical maritime innovation in the Aegean and Eastern Mediterranean. Changes in ship design and rigging revolutionized seafaring in the region, allowing for greater freedom of movement on the seas and beginning a process of development and innovation that would eventually spawn divergent lines of ship development in the Aegean and on the Phoenician coast, thus setting the stage for the great maritime powers of the first millennium BCE.

The role that seagoing ships and maritime acumen play in their respective narratives is a key commonality between Odysseus' Cretan avatar and Sherden warriors. The term "narrative" has two distinct meanings here: for Odysseus, that narrative is the tale he tells to Eumaios and to Antinoos, which within the larger narrative of Homer's epic is, of course, false. For the Sherden, on the other hand, the narrative in question is conveyed through external sources

(primarily Egyptian), from which a "true" history can, at least in principle, be gleaned. In this case, I also argue that a close examination of the evidence for the ships of this period can help us better understand the connection between the 'Cretan' Odysseus and the Sherden, as well as their ultimate place in the events that marked this transformational period in the ancient Mediterranean.

STRUCTURE AND CONTENT

The intent of this study is to explore the relationships between Odysseus' 'Second Cretan Lie' and related passages from the Homeric epics, and the literary, iconographic, and material evidence from the Late Bronze–Early Iron Age transition.[14] This introduction is followed by a chapter addressing the chronology, methodology, and approach, with particular emphasis on the interpretation of documentary evidence and material remains. Chapter 3 then uses *Odyssey* xiv 229–233 as a point of departure for an evidence–based discussion of maritime interconnections, piracy, and raiding in the internationalist Late Bronze Age and the chaotic transition to the age of Iron that followed it, with particular emphasis on the evidence for an increase in coastal threats. This chapter also addresses "piracy" and "warfare" as definable and differentiable concepts, and leverages primary sources from Ḫatti, Ugarit, and 18th and 19th dynasty Egyptian records to explore the roles of piracy, raiding, and the mariners who carried out these activities in the Late Bronze Age and the Late Bronze–Early Iron transition.

Chapter 4 discusses the role of Mycenaean Greece in the Late Bronze Age Eastern Mediterranean, including the "Aḫḫiyawa Question," evidence both for direct trade and foreign contacts in the 13th century BCE (the Late Bronze II/Late Helladic IIIB), and the possibility that female workers listed in the Linear B tablets as *ra–wi–ja–ja* were human plunder of the type mentioned several times over in both *Iliad* and *Odyssey*. This chapter also addresses the collapse of the Late Bronze Age order in the Eastern Mediterranean, and discusses the wide range of interactions between those peoples who were on the move at this time and their indigenous hosts. The slow build and final palatial collapse in the Aegean is examined, as well, with specific focus on the evidence for the so–called "state of emergency" in the last days of Pylos on the southwestern Peloponnese, and on three sets of much–discussed Linear B texts from this site known as the "Rower Tablets."

Chapter 5 is dedicated to considering the inscriptional evidence for the arrival and activities of the Sea Peoples in the Eastern Mediterranean. The most prominent of these records come from three Egyptian pharaohs, Ramesses II (1279–1213 BCE), Merneptah (1213–1203), and Ramesses III (1184–1153),

whose reigns span the vast majority of the roughly 125–year period between Ramesses II's ascension to the throne early in the 13th century BCE and the assassination of Ramesses III in the middle of the 12th century. This chapter examines the interactions between each of these pharaohs and elements of the Sea Peoples, beginning with the voluminous references at Ramesses III's "mansion of a million years" at Medinet Habu. From there, the discussion moves backward in time to the 13th century BCE, where it touches on Ramesses II's defeat of Sherden raiders at sea and his line of forts along the Nile Delta and Mediterranean coast, which may have been established in part as a defense against further seaborne threats, and on Merneptah's battle against migratory Libyans who were accompanied by some Sea Peoples groups.

Chapter 6 reviews the circumstances surrounding the palatial collapses in the Aegean and Ancient Near East at the end of the Late Bronze Age, the corresponding establishment of "refuge settlements" on Crete and Cyprus in particular, and changes in the iconography of warriors and warfare in both the Aegean and the Eastern Mediterranean,[15] with particular emphasis on possible self–representations from Cyprus and the Levant and what those can tell us about the integration, mobility, and status of at least some individuals among these groups. Chapter 7 continuous the exploration of these new warriors, who are shown on Aegean–style pottery and in Egyptian relief taking part in battles on land and sea. These warriors' appearance in Eastern Mediterranean iconography (painted pottery, glyptic, and relief) is examined in detail, with particular emphasis on the comparative representational methodologies of Mycenaean pictorial pottery and painted Egyptian relief. This chapter also addresses Submycenaean "warrior burials" from around the mainland, Aegean islands, and on Cyprus which have been connected in the past to Homer's "returning heroes," and discusses post–palatial society in the Aegean, with particular emphasis on shifts in social organization and the lack of darkness in this "Dark Age."

Chapter 8 is the most comprehensive and technically involved section of this study. It addresses the Helladic oared galley, a revolution in maritime technology—and ancestor to the sailing vessels of the first–millennium maritime powers in Greece and Phoenicia—that makes its first appearance in the years surrounding 1200 BCE as an instrument of naval warfare.[16] This chapter explores the background of this vessel type and the development and use of its constituent parts, and analyzes the impact of both crew and fleet sizes on its role in both piracy and naval warfare, both through primary sources and in the context of Odysseus' fictive piratical activity, where a close reading of Homer's narrative can serve as a case study in its use. Visual evidence plays a central role in this portion of the study, with iconography from the Aegean, the Levantine coast, Egypt, and the East Aegean–West Anatolian Interface,[17]

providing comparative examples of the development and representation of this vessel type around the region.

Chapter 9 concludes the study by revisiting the initial discussion of oral tradition, visual language in the Late Bronze Age, and the search for historicity in epic poetry. This chapter also further surveys the Sherden and their roles in Egyptian society, which included being conscripted into the Egyptian army, participating in raids, and acquiring material wealth in the service of the pharaoh.[18] In conclusion, this chapter also notes where the stories of the Sherden and Cretan Odysseus diverge, with the latter departing Egypt after seven years to continue his wandering, while the former became increasingly integrated and acculturated into Egyptian society, creating new lives for themselves in the land of the pharaohs, complete with wives, children, and ownership of land that could be passed down through generations.

This study is not intended to serve as an argument for the supposed historicity of the Homeric epics, nor is it intended to be an exhaustive survey of historical parallels between the Odyssey and the archaeological data we currently possess on the periods reflected in these myths. These have been subjects of scholarly inquiry on various levels for many years now, and the debates surrounding them are unlikely to end any time soon. Instead, the analysis presented here focuses on the development and spread of the oared galley, the possible role of the Sea Peoples in this transfer, and parallels between the actions and experiences of Odysseus' Cretan avatar and one Sea Peoples group about whom a close reading of the textual, iconographic, and material evidence can tell us a great deal: the "Sherden of the Sea."

Chapter Two

Structure and Methodology

This analysis deals with three major categories of evidence: *documentary*, in the form of texts; *iconography*, primarily in the form of reliefs, painted pot-tery, and seals; and *material remains*. The contents of these categories will by necessity span the Aegean and Eastern Mediterranean, from the Greek mainland to Crete, the Cyclades, Cyprus, Egypt, the Levant, the Hittite em-pire, and the East Aegean–West Anatolian Interface.
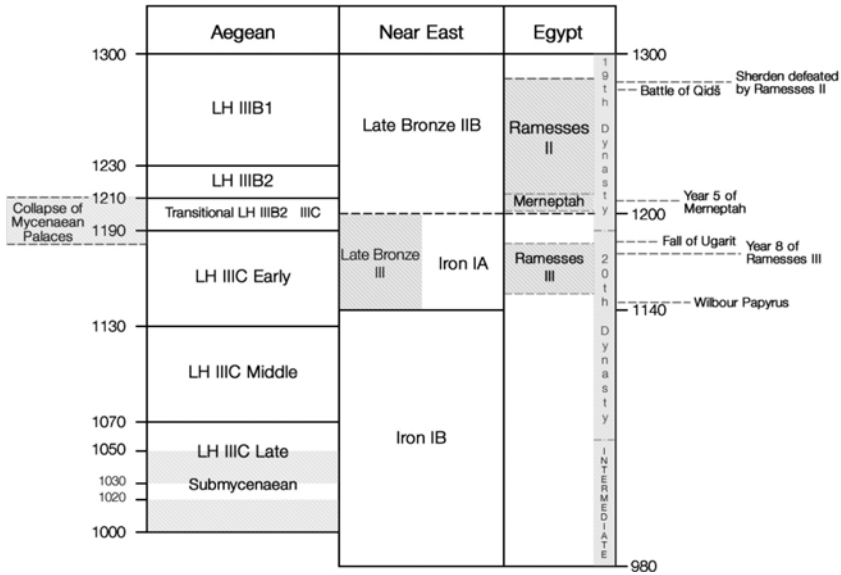
CHRONOLOGY

Before beginning a discussion of methodology, it is important to briefly ad-dress chronology, as it weighs heavily not only on the events and evidence discussed in this study, but also on the terms we use to describe them. The broad terms "Late Bronze Age" and "Early Iron Age" (or the synonymous "Iron I") are frequently used with respect to chronological horizons in the Near East (terms and concepts, incidentally, which we owe to the Greek poet Hesiod). Matters only become more complicated from there, beginning with the application of the term "Late Bronze III" to the period that has tradition-ally been called the Iron Age IA, in recognition of the continuity now recog-nized between the last years of the Late Bronze Age and the earliest years of the Iron Age I (Fig. 2.1).

There also exist frameworks of absolute chronology within which we can situate both long–term processes and specific events. Radiocarbon dating, dendrochronology, and other modern scientific methods are providing more date–related data points, and are becoming more useful as their strengths and weaknesses alike are better understood. However, synchronisms between re-cords of events in ancient Egypt, Assyria, and Babylonia have long allowed

Figure 2.1.   Comparative chronology of the Aegean, Near East, and Egypt
Illustration by the author.

chronologies to be drawn with remarkable specificity based on documentary evidence alone.

This situation, and the tension between a reliance on documentary evidence and other methods like scientific and ceramic analyses, is reflected in a characteristically entertaining paper by Egyptologist Kenneth Kitchen, which is titled "Egyptian and Related Chronologies—Look, No Sciences, No Pots!"[1] Though the quality of the available documentary evidence allows us to cite regnal dates for Egyptian pharaohs, and the years of events within their reigns, with high confidence, this study still includes a *circa* when citing regnal years to denote the level of uncertainty surrounding those dates (even though this can, in some cases, be as small as a decade or less). Relative chronology, on the other hand, can be more important than absolute chronology when it comes to joining events that took place across civilizations:

> The discovery of the absolute dates is not as important as the question of the relative chronology. For historical conclusions, moving an event a hundred years forward or back in time is not as important at our present level of knowledge as understanding its relevance to other events from approximately the same time.[2]

Of course, where absolute dates are largely nonexistent (in contrast to Egypt's well–documented history), relative dates are all we have. It is in these cases that objects like pots are necessary for developing chronologies. The Aegean is an example of the latter: given that we generally lack absolute

dates for the Minoan and Mycenaean periods, our chronology for the region is relative, and depends on pottery sequences. The Aegean Late Bronze Age (*circa* 1700–1100 BCE) is divided into the Late Minoan (LM) I, II, and III for Crete, and Late Helladic (LH) I, II, and III for the mainland, each of which is based in large part on changes in pottery forms and decoration. This ceramic sequence establishes a relative internal chronology whose periods are further divided based on seriation, with suggested chronologies that are best–guesses based on the estimated length of human generations or of the settlement phases at a given site.[3] Additionally, the terminology for these subdivisions is not always uniform: for example, Late Helladic IIIA (roughly the 14th century BCE) is divided into LH IIIA:1 and IIIA:2, while Late Helladic IIIC, the period following the collapse of the Mycenaean palaces (early 12th century to early 11th century BCE), is divided into LH IIIC Early, Middle, and Late (or Final), with LH IIIC Early and Middle each being divided into two further phases: 1 and 2, and Developed and Advanced, respectively. Regional differences in pottery forms and motifs further complicate efforts to impose an overarching chronological framework on the Aegean region.

As noted above, these periods and subphases are entirely relative—that is, their only intrinsic chronological value is in relation to each other.[4] We are only able to attach absolute dates (or, more correctly, date ranges) when these ceramics are found in contexts that are anchored through other sources. Generally, these contexts are datable Egyptian settings: for example, a Mycenaean pot that is found either alongside objects inscribed with pharaonic cartouches, or at securely datable sites like the 18th dynasty capital of Akhetaten (el–Amarna), whose brief occupation, spanning only the second half of the 14th century BCE, provides a temporal context for the ceramics found there. Other examples include the *terminus post quem* for the end of LH IIIB and the beginning of LH IIIC, which is anchored by the presence of LH IIIB:2 pottery in the destruction of the Syrian *emporion* of Ugarit, and a stirrup jar from Beth Shean that long served as the only anchor for the absolute dating of the LH IIIC Middle period.[5] Because of these limitations, references to dates in the Aegean in this study will necessarily reference pottery–based periodization, though they are presented in concert with absolute date ranges wherever possible. To this end, we are fortunate to be able to lean on the truly masterful work has been done on the classification, analysis, and chronology of Aegean ceramics from the Late Helladic and Submycenaean periods for several decades now, despite the aforementioned obstacles.[6]

TEXT, ILLUSTRATION, AND MATERIAL CULTURE

We return now to methodology. Very little ancient material is capable of speaking unadulterated truth to the modern scholar, however remarkably

complete and *in situ* a text, image, or material assemblage may be. Because of this, each class of evidence requires its own particular type of analysis and consideration. Though it may seem unrelated in what generally amounts to a discussion of *Archaeologia Homerica*, biblical archaeology is relevant to the present discussion because the study of the Sea Peoples has for so long fallen under this field, due to the prominence of the Philistines (whom we first encounter in the records of Ramesses III) in both the Hebrew Bible and the archaeology of the Levant. Homeric and biblical studies are also similar cases because of the judiciousness with which the textual evidence must be weighed against the material evidence, and they can inform each other in this process: for example, though archaeology has shifted away from the use of stylized ancient texts as "guidebooks" (as famously done by Heinrich Schliemann at Troy and by the 20th century "Bible–and–spade" archaeologists whose excavations dotted the landscape of Palestine), there has at times been a tendency to take other texts at face value—particularly day–books, annals, and various royal declarations—despite the knowledge that such writings were composed for propagandistic purposes far more than to serve our modern definition of "history."

The walls of Ramesses III's "mansion of a million years" at Medinet Habu, also referred to as his "mortuary temple," are an excellent example of this type of evidence, adorned as they are with grandiose recountings of his deeds and accomplishments. Some of these were likely plagiarized from his namesake, Ramesses the Great, and perhaps from Ramesses' successor Merneptah, while others—including battles in Nubia and against the Hittites, and perhaps one of his multiple Libyan campaigns—are unlikely to have taken place at all.[7] It is from several of these inscriptions and reliefs that we derive much of our knowledge of the Sea Peoples. This is a problematic situation, to be sure, when their purpose and dubious veracity are taken into account. Confronting this issue requires judiciousness, but there is, in the words of one scholar, "room for the baby and the bathwater, in selective use, in reconstructing the Bronze and Iron Age prehistories of the Levant. In the Aegean, a similar solution allows archaeologists and historians to apply Homeric testimony critically."[8] Similarly, in Egypt, the written evidence left by pharaohs whose primary goal was self–glorification (which could tend toward, in the words of Egyptologist Donald Redford, "jingoist doggerel, worthy of a 19th century music–hall"), must be critically considered and carefully applied.[9]

Iconography is another category of evidence that must be approached and interpreted with the greatest of care, always keeping in mind that that which is seen is not the thing itself, but at best only a *representation* of the original. While we should not expect artistic representations to be exact replicas of

their subjects, we should also remember to avoid the temptation to judge the artist's skill based on what we believe we know about how that subject should appear. This is particularly true when it comes to seafaring: as has been noted in the past, "there has been a strong and persistent tendency in dealing with the iconography of ancient ships to start with an idea of what things ought to look like and then to treat the ancient pictures as evidence on which to assess the skill of ancient artists."[10] Nautical archaeologist Shelley Wachsmann, an authority on seafaring and ship iconography from the Bronze Age Mediterranean, has pointed out the relevance of a work by Belgian painter René Magritte to the mindset one must bring to the study and interpretation of iconography, writing that:

> It is worth reflecting on the meaning behind the iconic image of a smoker's pipe under which the phrase '*Ceci n'est une pipe.*' …Of course, Magritte is correct. We do not see an actual smoker's pipe but rather an image of one. To put it another way, *a representation of an object is not the object itself.* …we must keep this concept firmly in mind.[11]

Countless factors can influence visual representations: the artist's intended audience or audiences, the media utilized for the representation, the shared visual language of artist and beholder, and countless other points along a virtually unlimited spectrum. For example, it might not be necessary for a vase painter or graffiti artist's ship or sail to be perfect (or even plausibly functional) if the audience for which the image is intended can translate the artist's visual shorthand into the object it is meant to represent. However, an artist's potential knowledge of their subject is important to consider when seeking to extract fine details about ship construction from a pictorial representation. As archaeologist Caroline Sauvage has noted:

> Les représentations iconographiques soulèvent la question de leur exactitude et de la possibilité de restituer un type d'objet à partir d'un dessin. À priori, un graffito doit pouvoir nous livrer plus d'informations et être plus proche de la réalité qu'une representation artistique, les artistes n'étant pas toujours complètement familiers avec le milieu marin. D'un autre côté, les marins qui ont dû graver ces navires n'étaient pas forcement dotés d'un immense talent artistique et certaines « œuvres » sont donc fort difficiles à comprendre et a interpréter du fait de leur caractère schématique et épuré.[12]

Further, as we shall see below in representations of peoples and ships alike, the artistic styles of differing cultures and the limitations of different media must be taken into account when interpreting an image or drawing connections between images of similar appearance. For these reasons and more, it is important to

avoid the temptation to take images at face value. This also holds true for lin-
guistic interpretations, as I shall touch on more briefly below with regard to the
Sea Peoples and longstanding assumptions about their relationships and points
of origin.

Material Culture and the Sea Peoples

The third category of evidence considered here is material culture, which is
both the bailiwick of the archaeologist and fodder for intense disagreements,
given how dependent interpretations are on what is axiomatically a partial
and highly fragmentary picture. The search for, and study of, the Sea Peoples
can serve as an instructive example about the double–edged sword that mate-
rial remains can be, even when they seem to appear in relatively complete
form. At the same time, it can also provide the basis for a discussion early in
this study about the relevance to Homer's *Odyssey* and the Aegean world of
this phenomenon and its heterogeneous, shifting coalitions, which may ap-
pear on the surface to be largely Near Eastern in orientation.

The 'Philistine Paradigm′

The best known of the Sea Peoples are the *Pršt* 'Pelešet,' better known in mod-
ern translation as the *Philistines*. However, this group's prominence is not the
result of a sustained presence in Egyptian or other Near Eastern records from
the Late Bronze Age. In fact, aside from the texts, inscriptions, and reliefs of a
single pharaoh, Ramesses III (1183–1152 BCE), they are almost entirely un-
known to written history prior to the first millennium BCE, appearing only in
the *Onomasticon of Amenope*, an Egyptian catalog of toponyms and *ethnika* in
Palestine which dates to around 1100 BCE.[13] Instead, the Philistines' notoriety is
the result of two key factors. The first is their identification with one of the most
frequently mentioned—and, as the chief antagonist of the early Israelites, most
vilified—peoples of the Hebrew Bible, while the second is the bright light that
archaeology has been able to shine on their material culture, particularly in the
southern Levant. Thanks to the extensive excavations that have been carried out
at Ashkelon, Ashdod, Tel Miqne–Ekron and Tell es-Safi–Gath, the
cities that, along with Gaza, made up the Philistine "pentapolis" on the
southern coastal plain of Canaan, scholars have been able to identify
key aspects of the Philistines' mixed material culture, and to trace
their both their arrival and their interactions and negotiations with
the indigenous Canaanites and others in the region.

   The latter is a great leap forward of sorts in the study of the Philistines in
particular and the Sea Peoples in general. These groups had long been
viewed as the very embodiment of Homer's "sackers of cities" (the epithet
πτολιπόρθιος is specifically attached to Odysseus at *Odyssey* ix 504), razing

empires to the ground all around the Eastern Mediterranean and building anew on their ashes.[14] In the words of Ramesses III, "No land could stand before their arms, from Hatti, Kode, Karkemiš, Arzawa, and Alašiya on…"[15] Over the last few years, though, a more nuanced approach to migration studies, transculturalism, and ethnic negotiation has developed, which has helped to demonstrate the inaccuracy of this view—as has an increased willingness to recognize the significant quantities of Canaanite material culture that continue to be found at pentapolis sites following the Philistines' arrival.[16]

Study of the pentapolis sites in the southern coastal plain of Canaan has allowed scholars to reconstruct a general set of traits that can be identified as "Philistine," although recent field work at Gath in particular has demonstrated that the former understanding of these traits as a relatively easily–identifiable "package" or "template," a view that stemmed from a culture–historical approach to Levantine archaeology, was—like the idea of the Sea Peoples as unstoppable marauders—an oversimplification.[17] Despite this evidence, though, the idea of the Philistines and other Sea Peoples as immigrants has had its detractors, with some arguing that these bearers of mixed material culture were natives of the Levant who have simply been misunderstood by modern scholars. Historian Robert Drews, for example, declared the Philistines to be "one of the Iron Age names for people who in the Late Bronze Age would most often have been called 'Canaanites,'" and argued that "no Canaanite nation vanished, and no Philistine nation suddenly appeared. It was only the names that changed."[18] This extreme view was meet with an equally forceful response by Kitchen, who wrote that:

> [T]he suggestion, occasionally made, that [the Sea Peoples, Philistines in particular] had been native to Canaan from old is nonsense, contradicting both the clear statement of…firsthand texts and the evidence of these peoples' material culture…Such a suggestion owes everything to the sociological/anthropological idiot dogma that nobody in antiquity ever migrated anywhere (especially in any quantity), in the teeth of abundant evidence to the contrary at all periods in recorded human history. It owes nothing to the facts of the case.[19]

Just how the "facts of the case" can prove (or at least support) a general population shift, and the presence of 'Sea Peoples' in particular, has been the subject of increasing study in recent years, with Philistine material culture continuing to play a key role.[20] One of the key markers of an intrusive presence is "deep change," or the appearance in a material assemblage of objects associated with individuals' or groups' private identity, as opposed to their public one(s).[21] This means domestic aspects of material culture, such as evidence for foodways, can serve as a key identifier of ethnic intrusion. Philistine material culture features several transcultural components, both public

and private, which indicate Aegean, Cypriot, and Anatolian affinities. These include architectural modifications; the appearance in domestic contexts of rolled, unbaked clay loomweights ("spool weights") and round and keyhole hearths; and changes in foodways, including table and cooking wares like Aegean–style one–handled cooking jugs, and an increase in consumption of beef and especially pork, which was a far greater share of the Mycenaean diet than that of Late Bronze Age inhabitants of the Levant. While the presence of any of these items at a site does not automatically make that site Philistine, when taken in aggregate they serve to generally highlight that which sets Philistia apart from its neighbors in the region. Furthermore, many of these traits seem representative of the "deep change" we would expect to see if witnessing immigration or a migration, rather than, for example, a relatively static population which is turning out imitative ceramics in an effort to replace a lost source of valuable imports.[22]

On the Issue of 'Pots and People'

Unfortunately, the clarity that archaeology has brought to many aspects of Philistine culture does not currently extend to *any* other Sea Peoples. The so–called "Philistine template" has not been found in nearly so complete a fashion anywhere outside the relatively contained area of the southern coastal plain of Canaan. Further, no set of material traits has been found to date that can be inarguably associated with any non–Philistine Sea Peoples group. This has unfortunately led to strong assumptions being made—in the absence of convincing evidence—about the origin, nature, and ethnicity of the Philistines' fellow–travelers among the Sea Peoples coalitions. This can perhaps be seen most clearly in the interpretation of so–called "Mycenaean (Myc) IIIC" pottery, an object class that has been associated more than any other single trait with the Philistines through the years—and, by extension, with the entire Sea Peoples phenomenon. This ceramic style has been referred to by many names over the years: Myc. IIIC:1b, Myc. IIIC:1, Myc. IIIC, Sea Peoples Monochrome, Philistine 1, White Painted Wheelmade III ware, etc. All of these terms refer to a ware which was manufactured locally (in the Levant and on Cyprus) in the tradition of Late Helladic IIIC pottery from the early 12th century Aegean.

Aegean–Style Pottery: Imports and Imitations

In order to place this ware in its proper context, it is important to briefly review the role of Late Helladic pottery in the Eastern Mediterranean at the end of the Bronze Age, as well as the nature of the ceramic repertoire in the Late Bronze Age Levant. Mycenaean society reached its high point during the 14th and first

part of the 13th centuries BC (LH IIIA:2 and IIIB:1), both domestically and in terms of international trade and influence. During this period, the Greek main-land was the destination of more Near Eastern goods, including royal objects from Egypt and Mesopotamia, than it had been previously.[23] However, the most visible marker of Mycenaean Greece's foreign influence was its exported pot-tery, which expanded to such a degree that Late Helladic ceramics figuratively blanketed the eastern and central Mediterranean in late 14th and 13th centuries BCE. Late Helladic IIIA and IIIB wares have been found at more than 350 sites, from Sardinia and Malta in the central Mediterranean, to Kilise Tepe in Anatolia, to Pyla–*Kokkinokremos* on Cyprus, to Qidš and Karkemiš in Syria, to el–Amarna in Egypt.[24] Petrographic studies conducted on ceramics from the Levant have found that almost the entire corpus of Mycenaean exports came from the northern Argolid, particularly the Berbati Valley.[25]

Aegean–style pottery had been produced as early as the 13th century (Late Helladic IIIB) on Cyprus and elsewhere in the Eastern Mediterranean, per-haps as a form of import substitution conducted by enterprising potters and traders who sought to profit from the demand for Mycenaean vessels or their contents.[26] However, at the end of the 13th century, after a slow ebb several decades in length, imports from the Greek mainland stopped altogether and Myc IIIC replaced imported Aegean pottery almost wholesale across the region, from Syria and southern Anatolia southward.[27] From the Middle Bronze Age to the end of the Late Bronze Age chronologically, and from the northern Levant to the south geographically, the pottery of this region is striking in its homogeneity and continuity—a fact that makes the advent of local pottery production in the Aegean style especially noteworthy.[28] This change is particularly marked in the initial layers of Philistine occupation in the southern Levant, where the material record shows both the appearance of these ceramics at the beginning of the 12th century alongside the many other attributes of Philistine material culture discussed above, and the development of this pottery type from a Monochrome phase into the Philistine Bichrome style that became the hallmark of this culture's golden age in the Iron Age Ib (late 12th through 11th centuries).[29] It was the identification of this pot-tery with Mycenaean styles in the first half of the 20th century CE that was largely for the initial association of the Philistines with the ancient Greeks, an association which has stuck—for better and worse—ever since.[30]

Forcing the Sea Peoples into a Ceramic Mold

Unfortunately, the clear association of Myc IIIC pottery and other Cypro–Aegean attributes with the Philistines ultimately led to the assumption that these ceramics, and to a lesser degree other Cypro–Aegean traits, would serve as an "X marking the spot" where other Sea Peoples groups lived, encamped,

or settled. This point of view is perhaps best summarized in archaeologist Ayelet Gilboa's description of the first Iron I excavations at Dor, a city in central Israel that has traditionally been associated with a group of Sea Peoples known as the *Sikil* or *Tjekker* because of a reference in the early 11th century Egyptian text *The Tale of Wen–Amon* ("I reached Dor, a town of the Sikils, and Beder, its prince, had fifty loaves of bread, one jug of wine, and one leg of beef brought to me"):[31]

> My uneasiness with this model started to develop following the excavations at Dor, the Šikila town according to Wenamun. In the mid–1980s, when [excavation director] Ephraim Stern first reached the Early Iron Age levels there, bets were laid. What would the Šikila material culture look like? Jokingly someone said that Šikila pottery would be something akin to that of Philistia—but painted in purple and yellow. This was the sort of expectation, to find something analogous to Philistia, but slightly different, as befits another Sea People. It seems that this is still what some scholars expect to be uncovered along the southern Levantine coast north of Philistia, something similar, but with a different ethnic tinge.
>
>   The finds at Dor, however, have not lived up to expectations, and the ʿwestern association' of the Šikila has turned out to be elusive. Though a few artifacts do find corollaries in Philistia, like a lion headed cup, incised scapulae and bi-metallic knives, the broader picture is different. At Dor, in the earliest Iron Age phases, there are no ʿwestern' architectural traits.[32]

This helps illustrate a downside of the detailed picture that literature and archaeology alike have painted of the Philistines. It can also serve as a representative example of the tendency, at the extreme, to project the greater evidence for one "culture" or group onto others for whom no such evidence exists. In the case of the present example, because we lack a remotely comparable level of information about their fellow Sea Peoples, the template of Myc IIIC pottery and other attributes of Philistine material culture has necessarily been extended to those who appear alongside them in the Egyptian sources, despite there not always being a clear reason to associate these traits with other Sea Peoples.

While ceramic evidence is a major factor in archaeology, we must be vigilant when it comes to remembering and applying the axiom that *pots do not equal people*. To this end, it is important to bear two points in mind:

1. The identification of one group's material culture does not itself necessitate an association between that culture and every other group with which that they have come into contact or been otherwise connected.
2. The presence of pottery at a site does not prove the presence of traders or settlers from that pottery's point of origin—nor does it prove the presence

of traders or settlers from the point of origin of the *style* in which it is
formed and decorated.

Portable objects in particular, like pottery, can be relocated with rela-
tive ease. This means that any single pot's find site may be many times
removed from its point of origin or from its original owner. Likewise, as
we have just noted, wares can be (and frequently were) produced in imita-
tion of originals. This can be seen in particular with the Mycenaean–style
ceramics from Cyprus and in the Levant, which were manufactured in
increasing numbers as the Bronze Age transitioned into the Age of Iron.
Because of this, it has been rightly argued that pottery could be seen as one
of the least diagnostic markers of these outsiders if they were engaged in
anything other than ceramic production or wholesale resettlement: "pottery
can all but be excluded from the assessment…because there is no good
reason why Sea Peoples serving with the Egyptians in Canaan should have
included potters; certainly if their role was primarily military…[They]
would surely have adopted whatever pots came to hand—Egyptian in
Egypt, or Canaanite in Canaan."[33]

Chasing the 'Sea Peoples' with Incomplete Evidence

Ultimately, we must face a difficult truth: no effective material culture
template has been established for any non–Philistine Sea People because
in large part *we do not know with any real degree of accuracy where they
settled*, particularly outside of Egypt, and because *we would not know what
to look for if we did*. As nature abhors a vacuum, so scholarship abhors
an absence of both evidence and answers. Thus, the Cypro–Aegean Phi-
listine Paradigm, with its emphasis on Mycenaean derivative pottery, has
largely—and naturally—filled this void to date. The geographic discussion,
on the other hand, has been driven by a juxtaposition of the aforementioned
Onomasticon of Amenope and Tale of Wen–Amon, Egyptian texts that
date near to the turn of the first millennium BCE. The latter, a literary
work whose historicity should be taken with a grain of salt, recounts the
misfortunes experienced by an Egyptian priest on his way to Byblos, on
the Phoenician coast, to purchase wood for the sacred bark of Amun.[34]
As we saw above, this text refers to Dor, on the central coast of Israel,
as a city of the Sikil. The Onomasticon of Amenope, on the other
hand, is not a literary text, but a catalog of places and peoples, a portion of
which is presented in Table 2.1.

As we can see, the Onomasticon of Amenope names three Sea Peoples—the
Sherden (268), Sikils (269), and Peleset (270)—as well as Ashkelon (262),

Table 2.1. Partial List of Names and Toponyms from the Onomasticon of Amenope[1]

259. *N'ryn* (Unknown)	270. Prst (Peleset/Philistines)
260. Nhryn (Nahrin)	271. Ḥrm (Khurma?)
261. [Lost]	272. [Lost]
262. 'Isḳrûn (Ashkelon)	273. [Lost]
263. 'Isdd (Ashdod)	274. Mki (Meki)
264. Gdt (Gaza)	275. Dwí (Djui)
265. 'Isr (Assyria or Asher?)	276. H̱3(í)w–nbw(t) ('Mediterranean Islanders' or 'Islands')
266. Sbry (Shubaru or Sbír?)	277. Iḳd (Iḳed)
267. [Lost]	278. Nḥ… (Neḥ…)
268. Šrdn (Sherden)	279. [Lost]
269. Tkr (Tjekker/Sikil)	280. Srk (Serek or Seriqqa?)

1. Gardiner 1947 171*–209*

Ashdod (263), and Gaza (264), three cities on the southern coastal plain of Canaan that have long been identified with the Sea Peoples in general, and the Philistines in particular. North–to–south directionality has been read into this portion of the Onomasticon, despite clear issues, the most glaring of which may be the fact that the three Philistine cities in the document—from the north, Ashdod, Ashkelon, and Gaza—are not listed in proper geographic order. When read in conjunction with Wen–Amon's identification of Dor with the Sikils, the Onomasticon has been—and, unfortunately, still continues to be—used to place the Philistines in southern Canaan, the Sikils at Dor, and the Sherden at a site (or sites) to the north of these. The latter are most commonly associated with Akko and Tell Keisan on the Carmel coast, though other suggestions have been made, including the site of el–Ahwat on the Nahal Iron in central Israel, where the excavator suggested there is architectural evidence for a settlement of *nuraghe*–building Sardinians who were stationed in Canaan as pharaonic mercenaries.[35]

As we have seen, though, the Onomasticon is both filled with lacunae and lacking a single, clearly directional reading, and thus it could just as easily be assigning the Sherden to Ashkelon, the Sikils to Ashdod, and the Philistines to Gaza as anything else. In fact, given the absence of Akko and Dor from Amenope's list of toponyms, such a reading may even be more likely than the traditional interpretation of this text. Either way, it is clear that any attempt to use this text as more than a *terminus ante quem* for the presence of these groups in Canaan—let alone as a map of Sea Peoples settlements—is a risky endeavor at best. Assumptions of foreign origin can also be tenuous at best. For example, after several years of field work and analysis at Dor, excavators Ayelet Gilboa and Ilan Sharon have concluded that this site was not home to any influx of foreigners at the end of the Bronze Age, but instead that the Sikils should actually be seen as having been synonymous with the Phoenicians and their coast.[36]

However, as will be demonstrated in more detail later, there may be good reasons to associate certain non–Philistine Sea Peoples with at least some aspects of Aegean culture, chief among which are their ships. This includes one of the main objects of this study, the *Š3rd3n3 (*the Egyptian terms *Š3rd3n3, Šrdn, and Š3rdyn3* are also glossed 'Shardana' and 'Sherdanu,' though the more common 'Sherden' is followed here). However, subtler clues about these non–Philistine groups have all too often fallen victim to what may be called, without too much exaggeration, the Tyranny of the Philistine Paradigm. In light of this fact, it bears repeating that the only secure evidence we currently possess for Sherden inhabitation from the 12th century BCE onward places them not in the Levant, the Aegean, or the Central Mediterranean—all areas with which they have been associated—but *in Egypt*. While we know very little about their origins or other aspects of their culture, both texts and iconography paint a clear picture of their martial affinities, and of involvement by at least some in the battles of Ramesses II and III. These "Sherden of the Strongholds" or "Sherden of the Great Fortresses," as those in the Pharaoh's service are frequently referred to, appear in Ramesses II's depictions of the Battle of Qidš (and perhaps of the storming of Dapur in Syro–Palestine, as well), and they appear throughout the campaigns recorded at Medinet Habu.[37]

Before we move on, it is important to offer one more methodological note. Even speaking of these "groups" as such carries with it its own inherent, culture–historical baggage: namely, the connotation that the Sherden or any other "Sea People" was a *monolithic group* of *uniform origin and ethnicity*, which participated *in its entirety* in the events with which they are associated, and that its members moved and settled *as a single unit*, in a single location or area. I wish to make abundantly clear that, while frequent references are made to "the Sherden" and to other "groups" in this study, uniformity in composition, geography, or movement is neither assumed nor implied. Where possible, ethnicity is treated in the mode of social anthropologist Fredrik Barth, who defined it in part as self–identification in relation to others.[38] However, among the evidence at hand, self–identification is a very rare occurrence. Because of this, group references are largely governed by, and directed at, elements of these "groups" which are, in turn, so defined and identified by the Egyptian, Hittite, and Ugaritic sources on which we are dependent. As we shall see, some of these terms may be derived from toponymic associations, some may accurately represent the ethnicity of those to whom they refer, and some may be designations assigned to truly heterogeneous coalitions out of simple expedience by our primary sources.[39]