This famous scene from the north wall of Medinet Habu is often used to illustrate the Egyptian campaign against the Sea Peoples, in what has come to be known as the Battle of the Delta. Whilst accompanying hieroglyphs do not name Egypt's enemies, describing them simply as being from "northern countries", early scholars noted the similarities between the hairstyles and accessories worn by the combatants and other reliefs in which such groups are named.

The Sea Peoples are a purported seafaring confederation of groups known to have attacked Ancient Egypt prior to the Bronze Age Collapse. Following the creation of the concept in the 19th century it became one of the most famous chapters of Egyptian history, given its connection with, in the words of Wilhelm Max Müller: "the most important questions of ethnography and the primitive history of classic nations".

The various Sea Peoples have been proposed to have originated from either western Anatolia or from southern Europe. Although the archaeological inscriptions do not include reference to a migration, the Sea Peoples are conjectured to have sailed around the eastern Mediterranean and invaded Anatolia, Syria, Canaan, Cyprus, and Egypt toward the end of the Bronze Age.

French Egyptologist Emmanuel de Rougé first used the term peuples de la mer (literally "peoples of the sea") in 1855 in a description of reliefs on the Second Pylon at Medinet Habu documenting Year 8 of Ramesses III. Gaston Maspero, de Rougé's successor at the Collège de France, subsequently popularized the term "Sea Peoples"—and an associated migration-theory—in the late 19th century. Since the early 1990s, the theory has been brought into question by a number of scholars.

Hypotheses regarding the origin of the various groups identified as Sea Peoples remains the source of much speculation. These theories variously propose equating them with several Aegean tribes, raiders from central Europe, scattered soldiers who turned to piracy.
or who had become refugees, and links with natural disasters such as earthquakes or climatic shifts.[2][3]

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History of the concept[edit]
A partial description of the hieroglyphic text at Medinet Habu on the right tower of Second Pylon (left), and an illustration of the prisoners depicted at the base of the Fortified East Gate (right), were first provided by Jean-François Champollion following his 1828-29 travels to Egypt and published posthumously.[14] Although Champollion did not translate them, decades later the hieroglyphs labelled 4 to 8 (left) were identified as the Peleset, Tjeker, Shekelesh, Denyen and Weshesh, and prisoners 4 and 6 (right) identified as the Sherden and the Teresh.[15]

The concept of the Sea Peoples was first described by Emmanuel de Rougé in 1855, then curator of the Louvre, in his work Note on Some Hieroglyphic Texts Recently Published by Mr. Greene,[16] describing the battles of Ramesses III described on the Second Pylon at Medinet Habu, and based upon recent photographs of the temple by John Beasley Greene.[17][18][19] de Rougé noted that "in the crests of the conquered peoples the Sherden and the Teresh bear the designation of the 'peuples de la mer'", in a reference to the prisoners depicted at the base of the Fortified East Gate.[8] In 1867, de Rougé published his Excerpts of a mémoire on the attacks directed against Egypt by the peoples of the Mediterranean in the 14th century BCE, which focused primarily on the battles of Ramesses II and Merneptah, and which proposed translations for many of the geographic names included in the hieroglyphic inscriptions.[20][21] de Rougé later became chair of Egyptology at the Collège de France, and was succeeded by Gaston Maspero. Maspero built upon de Rougé's work, and published The Struggle of the Nations,[22] in which he described the theory of the seaborne migrations in detail in 1895-6 for a wider audience,[9] at a time when the idea of population migrations would have felt familiar to the general population.[23]

The theory was taken up by other scholars such as Eduard Meyer, and became the generally accepted theory amongst Egyptologists and orientalists.[9]

Since the early 1990s, the theory has been brought into question by a number of scholars.[1][2][10][11]

The historical narrative stems primarily from seven Ancient Egyptian sources,[24] and although in these inscriptions the designation "of the sea" does not appear in relation to all of these peoples,[11] the term “Sea Peoples” is commonly used to refer to the following nine peoples, in alphabetical order:[25][26]

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Egyptian name</th>
<th>Original identification</th>
<th>Other theories</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Denyen</td>
<td>d3jnJw</td>
<td>&quot;in their isles&quot;[27]</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ekwesh</td>
<td>jk3w3š3</td>
<td>&quot;of the countries of the sea&quot;</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>---------</td>
<td>---------</td>
<td>-------------------------------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lukka</td>
<td>row</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Peleset</td>
<td>prwšt</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Shekel</td>
<td>š3krš3</td>
<td>&quot;of the countries of the sea&quot;</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Shekels</td>
<td>š3rdn</td>
<td>&quot;of the countries of the sea&quot;</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sherden</td>
<td>š3rdn</td>
<td>&quot;of the countries of the sea&quot;</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Teresh</td>
<td>twrš3</td>
<td>&quot;of the sea&quot;</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tjeker</td>
<td>ṭ3k3r</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Weshešh</td>
<td>w3š3š3</td>
<td>&quot;of the sea&quot;</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Considere d to remain
Primary documentary records[edit]

Whilst the Medinet Habu inscriptions from which the Sea Peoples concept was first described remain the primary source and "the basis of virtually all significant discussions of them",[43] there are three primary narratives from Egyptian records which refer to more than one of the nine peoples, found in six sources. A seventh source referring to more than one of the nine peoples is a list (Onomasticon) of 610 entities, rather than a narrative:[24]

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Date</th>
<th>Narrative</th>
<th>Source(s)</th>
<th>Peoples named</th>
<th>Connection to the sea</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>c. 1210 BCE</td>
<td>Ramesses II narrative</td>
<td>Kadesh Inscriptions</td>
<td>Karkisha, Lukka, Sherden</td>
<td>none</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>c. 1200 BCE</td>
<td>Merneptah narrative</td>
<td>Great Karnak Inscription</td>
<td>Eqwesh, Lukka, Shekelesh, Sherden, Teresh</td>
<td>Eqwesh (of the countries of the sea)[30] possibly also Sherden and Shekleshe[37]</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Athribis Stele</td>
<td>Eqwesh, Shekelesh, Sherden, Teresh</td>
<td>Eqwesh (of the countries of the sea)[30][37]</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>c. 1150 BCE</td>
<td>Ramesses III narrative</td>
<td>Medinet Habu</td>
<td>Denyen, Peleset, Shekelesh, Sherden, Teresh, Tjekker, Weshesh</td>
<td>Teresh (of the sea), Sherden (of the sea)[38]</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Papyrus Harris I</td>
<td>Denyen, Peleset, Sherden, Tjekker, Weshesh</td>
<td>Denyen (in their isles), Weshesh (of the sea)[27]</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Records or possible records of sea peoples generally or in particular date to two campaigns of Ramesses II, a pharaoh of the militant 19th Dynasty: operations in or near the delta in Year 2 of his reign and the major confrontation with the Hittite Empire and allies at the Battle of Kadesh in his Year 5. The years of this long-lived pharaoh's reign are not known exactly, but they must have comprised nearly all of the first half of the 13th century BCE.\[46\]

In his Second Year, an attack of the Sherden, or Shardana, on the Nile Delta was repulsed and defeated by Ramesses, who captured some of the pirates. The event is recorded on Tanis Stele II.\[47\] An inscription by Ramesses II on the stela from Tanis which recorded the Sherden raiders' raid and subsequent capture speaks of the continuous threat they posed to Egypt's Mediterranean coasts:

"the unruly Sherden whom no one had ever known how to combat, they came boldly sailing in their warships from the midst of the sea, none being able to withstand them."\[48\]

The Sherden prisoners were subsequently incorporated into the Egyptian army for service on the Hittite frontier by Ramesses, and were involved as Egyptian soldiers in the Battle of Kadesh. Another stele usually cited in conjunction with this one is the "Aswan Stele" (there were other stelae at Aswan), which mentions the king's operations to defeat a number of peoples including those of the "Great Green (the Egyptian name for the Mediterranean)". It is plausible to assume that the Tanis and Aswan Stelae refer to the same event, in which case they reinforce each other.\[citation needed\]
The Battle of Kadesh was the outcome of a campaign against the Hittites and allies in the Levant in the pharaoh's Year 5. The imminent collision of the Egyptian and Hittite empires became obvious to both, and they both prepared campaigns against the strategic midpoint of Kadesh for the next year. Ramesses divided his Egyptian forces, which were then ambushed piecemeal by the Hittite army and nearly defeated. However, some Egyptian forces made it through to Kadesh, and the arrival of the last of the Egyptians provided enough military cover to allow the pharaoh to escape and his army to withdraw in defeat; leaving Kadesh in Hittite hands.\[49\]

At home, Ramesses had his scribes formulate an official description, which has been called "the Bulletin" because it was widely published by inscription. Ten copies survive today on the temples at Abydos, Karnak, Luxor and Abu Simbel, with reliefs depicting the battle. The "Poem of Pentaur", describing the battle survived also.\[50\]

The poem relates that the previously captured Sherden were not only working for the Pharaoh, but were also formulating a plan of battle for him; i.e. it was their idea to divide Egyptian forces into four columns. There is no evidence of any collaboration with the Hittites or malicious intent on their part, and if Ramesses considered it, he never left any record of that consideration.\[citation needed]\[217\]

The poem lists the peoples which went to Kadesh as allies of the Hittites. Amongst them are some of the sea peoples spoken of in the Egyptian inscriptions previously mentioned, and many of the peoples who would later take part in the great migrations of the 12th century BCE (see Appendix A to the Battle of Kadesh).\[citation needed]\[37\]

Reign of Merneptah[edit]

"the foreign-peoples of the sea" (n3 š3s.wt n<.t> p3 ym) in line 52 of the Great Karnak Inscription[37] in hieroglyphs
The major event of the reign of the Pharaoh Merneptah (1213 BCE–1203 BCE), 4th king of the 19th Dynasty, was his battle against a confederacy termed "the Nine Bows" at Perire in the western delta in the 5th and 6th years of his reign. Depredations of this confederacy had been so severe that the region was "forsaken as pasturage for cattle, it was left waste from the time of the ancestors."[52]

The pharaoh's action against them is attested in a single narratives found in three sources. The most detailed source describing the battle is the Great Karnak Inscription, and two shorter versions of the same narrative are found in the "Athribis Stele" and the "Cairo Column"[53]. The "Cairo column" is a section of a granite column now in the Cairo Museum, which was first published by Maspero in 1881 with just two readable sentences - the first confirming the date of Year 5 and the second stating: "The wretched [chief] of Libya has
The "Athribis stela" is a granite stela found in Athribis and inscribed on both sides, which, like the Cairo column was first published by Maspero, two years later in 1883. [56] The Merneptah Stele from Thebes describes the reign of peace resulting from the victory, but does not include any reference to the Sea Peoples. [57]

The Nine Bows were acting under the leadership of the king of Libya and an associated near-concurrent revolt in Canaan involving Gaza, Ashkelon, Yenoam and the people of Israel. Exactly which peoples were consistently in the Nine Bows is not clear, but present at the battle were the Libyans, some neighboring Meshwesh, and possibly a separate revolt in the following year involving peoples from the eastern Mediterranean, including the Kheta (or Hittites), or Syrians, and (in the Israel Stele) for the first time in history, the Israelites. In addition to them, the first lines of the Karnak inscription include some sea peoples, [58] which must have arrived in the Western Delta or from Cyrene by ship:

[Beginning of the victory that his majesty achieved in the land of Libya] - i, Ekwesh, Teresh, Lukka, Sherden, Shekelesh, Northerners coming from all lands.

Later in the inscription Merneptah receives news of the attack:

... the third season, saying: 'The wretched, fallen chief of Libya, Meryey, son of Ded, has fallen upon the country of Tehenu with his bowmen – Sherden, Shekelesh, Ekwesh, Lukka, Teresh, Taking the best of every warrior and every man of war of his country. He has brought his wife and his children – leaders of the camp, and he has reached the western boundary in the fields of Perire' 

"His majesty was enraged at their report, like a lion," assembled his court and gave a rousing speech. Later, he dreamed he saw Ptah handing him a sword and saying, "Take thou (it) and banish thou the fearful heart from thee." When the bowmen went forth, says the inscription, "Amun was with them as a shield." After six hours, the surviving Nine Bows threw down their weapons, abandoned their baggage and dependents, and ran for their lives. Merneptah states that he defeated the invasion, killing 6,000 soldiers and taking 9,000 prisoners. To be sure of the numbers, among other things, he took the penises of all uncircumcised enemy dead and the hands of all the circumcised, from which history learns that the Ekwesh were circumcised, a fact causing some to doubt they were Greek. [citation needed]

Reign of Ramesses III[edit]

Further information: Battle of the Delta, Battle of Djahy, and Bronze Age collapse
Medinet Habu northeast outside wall, showing wide view and a close up sketch of the right hand side relief. Behind the king (out of scene) is a chariot, above which the text describes a battle in Year 8 as follows:

"Now the northern countries, which were in their isles, were quivering in their bodies. They penetrated the channels of the Nile mouths. Their nostrils have ceased (to function, so that) their desire is <to> breathe the breath. His majesty is gone forth like a whirlwind against them, fighting on the battle field like a runner. The dread of him and the terror of him have entered in their bodies; (they are) capsized and overwhelmed in their places. Their hearts are taken away; their soul is flown away. Their weapons are scattered in the sea. His arrow pierces him whom he has wished among them, while the fugitive is become one fallen into the water. His majesty is like an en-raged lion, attacking his assailant with his pawns; plundering on his right hand and powerful on his left hand, like Set[h] destroying the serpent ‘Evil of Character’. It is Amon-Re who has overthrown for him the lands and has crushed for him every land un- der his feet; King of Upper and Lower Egypt, Lord of the Two Lands: Usermare-Meriamon.59"

Medinet Habu Second Pylon, showing wide view and a close up sketch of the left hand side relief in which Amon, with Mut behind him, extends a sword to Rameses III who is leading three lines of prisoners. The text before the King includes the following:

Thou puttest great terror of me in the hearts of their chiefs; the fear and dread of me before them; that I may carry off their warriors (phrr), bound in my grasp, to lead them to thy ka, O my august father, - - - - - . Come, to [take] them, being: Peleset (Pw-r'-s'-t), Denyen (D'-y-n-yw-n'), Shekelesh (S'-k-rw-s). Thy strength it was which was before me, overthrowing their seed, - thy might, O lord of gods.60"

On the right hand side of the Pylon is the "Great Inscription on the Second Pylon", which includes the following text:
The foreign countries (ie. Sea Peoples) made a conspiracy in their islands, All at once the lands were removed and scattered in the fray. No land could stand before their arms: from Hatti, Qode, Carchemish, Arzawa and Alashiya, being cut off [ie. destroyed] at one time. A camp was set up in Amurru. They desolated its people, and its land was like that which has never come into being. They were coming forward toward Egypt, while the flame was prepared before them. Their confederation was the Peleset, Tjeker, Shekelesh, Denyen and Weshesh, lands united. They laid their hands upon the land as far as the circuit of the earth, their hearts confident and trusting: "Our plans will succeed!"

Ramesses III, the second king of the Egyptian 20th Dynasty, who reigned for most of the first half of the 12th century BCE, was forced to deal with a later wave of invasions of the Sea Peoples—the best-recorded of these in his eighth year. This was recorded in two long inscriptions from his Medinet Habu mortuary temple, which are physically separate and somewhat different from one another.

The fact that several civilizations collapsed around 1175 BCE, has led to the suggestion that the Sea Peoples may have been involved in the end of the Hittite, Mycenaean and Mitanni kingdoms. The American Hittitologist Gary Beckman writes, on page 23 of Akkadica 120 (2000):

A terminus ante quem for the destruction of the Hittite empire has been recognised in an inscription carved at Medinet Habu in Egypt in the eighth year of Ramesses III (1175 BCE). This text narrates a contemporary great movement of peoples in the eastern Mediterranean, as a result of which "the lands were removed and scattered to the fray. No land could stand before their arms, from Hatti, Kode, Carchemish, Arzawa, Alashiya on being cut off. [ie: cut down]"

Ramesses' comments about the scale of the Sea Peoples' onslaught in the eastern Mediterranean are confirmed by the destruction of the states of Hatti, Ugarit, Ashkelon and Hazor around this time. As the Hittitologist Trevor Bryce observes:

It should be stressed that the invasions were not merely military operations, but involved the movements of large populations, by land and sea, seeking new lands to settle.

This situation is confirmed by the Medinet Habu temple reliefs of Ramesses III which show that:

the Peleset and Tjeker warriors who fought in the land battle [against Ramesses III] are accompanied in the reliefs by women and children loaded in ox-carts.

The inscriptions of Ramesses III at his Medinet Habu mortuary temple in Thebes record three victorious campaigns against the Sea Peoples considered bona fide, in Years 5, 8 and 12, as well as three considered spurious, against the Nubians and Libyans in Year 5 and the Libyans with Asiatics in Year 11. During Year 8 some Hittites were operating with the Sea Peoples.

The inner west wall of the second court describes the invasion of Year 5. Only the Peleset and Tjeker are mentioned, but the list is lost in a lacuna. The attack was two-pronged, one by sea and one by land; that is, the Sea Peoples divided their forces. Ramsesses was waiting in the Nile mouths and trapped the enemy fleet there. The land forces were defeated separately.
The Sea Peoples did not learn any lessons from this defeat, as they repeated their mistake in Year 8 with a similar result. The campaign is recorded more extensively on the inner northwest panel of the first court. It is possible, but not generally believed, that the dates are only those of the inscriptions and both refer to the same campaign.

In Ramesses' Year 8, the Nine Bows appear again as a "conspiracy in their isles". This time, they are revealed unquestionably as Sea Peoples: the Peleset, Tjeker, Shekelesh, Denyen and Weshesh, which are classified as "foreign countries" in the inscription. They camped in Amor and sent a fleet to the Nile.

The pharaoh was once more waiting for them. He had built a fleet especially for the occasion, hid it in the Nile mouths and posted coast watchers. The enemy fleet was ambushed there, their ships overturned, and the men dragged up on shore and executed ad hoc.

The land army was also routed within Egyptian controlled territory. Additional information is given in the relief on the outer side of the east wall. This land battle occurred in the vicinity of Djahy against "the northern countries". When it was over, several chiefs were captive: of Hatti, Amor and Shasu among the "land peoples" and the Tjeker, "Sherden of the sea", "Teresh of the sea" and Peleset or Philistines (in whose name some have seen the ancient Greek name for sea people; Pelasgians).

The campaign of Year 12 is attested by the Südstele found on the south side of the temple. It mentions the Tjeker, Peleset, Denyen, Weshesh and Shekelesh.

Papyrus Harris I of the period, found behind the temple, suggests a wider campaign against the Sea Peoples but does not mention the date. In it, the persona of Ramses III says, "I slew the Denyen (D'-yn-yw-n) in their isles" and "burned" the Tjeker and Peleset, implying a maritime raid of his own. He also captured some Sherden and Weshesh "of the sea" and settled them in Egypt. As he is called the "Ruler of Nine Bows" in the relief of the east side, these events probably happened in Year 8; i.e. the Pharaoh would have used the victorious fleet for some punitive expeditions elsewhere in the Mediterranean.

The Rhetorical Stela to Ramesses III, Chapel C, Deir el-Medina records a similar narrative.

Onomasticon of Amenope

The Onomasticon of Amenope, or Amenemipit (amen-em-apt), gives a slight credence to the idea that the Ramesside kings settled the Sea Peoples in Canaan. Dated to about 1100 BCE, at the end of the 21st dynasty (which had numerous short-reigned pharaohs), this document simply lists names. After six place names, four of which were in Philistia, the scribe lists the Sherden (Line 268), the Tjeker (Line 269) and the Peleset (Line 270), who might be presumed to occupy those cities. The Story of Wenamun on a papyrus of the same cache also places the Tjeker in Dor at that time. The fact that the Biblical maritime Tribe of Dan was initially located between the Philistines and the Tjekker, has prompted some to suggest that they may originally have been Denyen. Sherden seem to have been settled around Megiddo and in the Jordan Valley, and Weshwesh (Biblical Asher) may have been settled further north.

Other documentary records

Early Amarna age
The Lukka, as well as the Sherden, also appear in the Amarna Letters (perhaps of Amenhotep III or his son Akhenaten) around the mid-14th century BCE. The letters at one point refer to a Sherden man as an apparent renegade mercenary,[69] and at another point to three Sherden who are slain by an Egyptian overseer.[70] The Danuna are mentioned in another letter[71] but only in a passing reference to the death of their king. The Lukka are being accused[72] of attacking the Egyptians in conjunction with the Alashiyans (Cypriotes), with the latter having stated that the Lukka were seizing their villages.

Carchemish[edit]

A few states, such as Byblos and Sidon, survived the Sea Peoples' migrations. Despite Ramesses III's pessimism, Carchemish also survived the Sea Peoples' onslaught. King Kuzi-Teshub I, who was the son of Talmi-Teshub—a direct contemporary of the last ruling Hittite king, Suppiluliuma II—is attested in power there.[73] Kuzi-Tesup and his successors ruled a mini-empire from Carchemish which stretched from "Southeast Asia Minor, North Syria ... [to] the west bend of the Euphrates"[74] from c. 1175 BCE to 990 BCE.

Byblos obelisk[edit]

The Obelisk temple, Byblos.

The earliest ethnic group[75] later considered among the Sea Peoples is believed to be attested in Egyptian hieroglyphics on the Byblos obelisk found in the Obelisk Temple at Byblos in modern-day Lebanon. The inscription mentions kwkwn son of rwqq- (or kukun son of luqq), transliterated as Kukunnis, son of Lukka, "the Lycian". The date is given variously as 2000 or 1700 BCE.

Letters at Ugarit[edit]

The ruins of Ugarit.
Some Sea Peoples appear in four letters found at Ugarit, the last three of which seem to foreshadow the destruction of the city around 1180 BCE. The letters are therefore dated to the early 12th century. The last king of Ugarit was Ammurapi (c. 1191–1182 BCE), who, throughout this correspondence, is quite a young man.

The earliest is letter RS 34.129, found on the south side of the city, from "the Great King", presumably Suppiluliuma II of the Hittites, to the prefect of the city. He says that he ordered the king of Ugarit to send him Ibnadushu for questioning, but the king was too immature to respond. He therefore wants the prefect to send the man, whom he promises to return.

What this language implies about the relationship of the Hittite empire to Ugarit is a matter for interpretation. Ibnadushu had been kidnapped by and had resided among a people of Shikala, probably the Shekelesh, "who lived on ships." The letter is generally interpreted as an interest in military intelligence by the king. [77]

The last three letters, RS L 1, RS 20.238 and RS 20.18, are a set from the Rap'anu Archive between a slightly older Ammurapi, now handling his own affairs, and Eshuwara, the grand supervisor of Alasiya. Evidently, Ammurapi had informed Eshuwara, that an enemy fleet of 20 ships had been spotted at sea.

Eshuwara wrote back and inquired about the location of Ammurapi's own forces. Eshuwara also noted that he would like to know where the enemy fleet of 20 ships are now located. [78] Unfortunately for both Ugarit and Alasiya, neither kingdom was able to fend off the Sea People's onslaught, and both were ultimately destroyed. A letter by Amurapi (RS 18.147) to the king of Alasiya—which was in fact a response to an appeal for assistance by the latter—has been found by archaeologists. In it, Ammurapi describes the desperate plight facing Ugarit:

My father, behold, the enemy's ships came (here); my cities(?) were burned, and they did evil things in my country. Does not my father know that all my troops and chariots(?) are in the Land of Hatti, and all my ships are in the Land of Lukka? ... Thus, the country is abandoned to itself. May my father know it: the seven ships of the enemy that came here inflicted much damage upon us. [79]

Ammurapi, in turn, appealed for aid from the viceroy of Carchemish—a state which actually survived the Sea People's onslaught—but its viceroy could only offer some words of advice for Ammurapi:

As for what you [Ammurapi] have written to me: 'Ships of the enemy have been seen at sea!' Well, you must remain firm. Indeed for your part, where are your troops, your chariots stationed? Are they not stationed near you? No? Behind the enemy, who press upon you? Surround your towns with ramparts. Have your troops and chariots enter there, and await the enemy with great resolution!" [80]

Hypotheses about identity [edit]

A number of hypotheses concerning the identities and motives of the Sea Peoples described in the records have been formulated. They are not necessarily alternative or contradictory hypotheses about the sea peoples; any or all might be mainly or partly true.

Regional migration historical context [edit]

See also: Bronze Age collapse
The **Linear B Tablets** of **Pylos** in the **Late Bronze Age** in the **Aegean** demonstrate increased slave raiding and the spread of mercenaries and migratory peoples and their subsequent resettlement. Despite this, the actual identity of the Sea Peoples has remained enigmatic and modern scholars have only the scattered records of ancient civilizations and archaeological analysis to inform them. Evidence shows that the identities and motives of these peoples were known to the Egyptians. In fact, many had sought employment with the Egyptians or were in a diplomatic relationship for a few centuries before the Late **Bronze Age Collapse**. For example, select groups, or members of groups, of the Sea People, such as the Sherden or **Shardana**, were used as mercenaries by Egyptian Pharaohs such as **Ramesses II**.

Prior to the **3rd Intermediate Period of Egypt** from the (15th century BCE), names of semitic-speaking pastoral **cattle nomadic** peoples of the **Levant** appear, replacing previous Egyptian concern with the **Hurrianised 'prw** ("Apiru or **Habiru"). These were called the $3sw (Shasu), meaning "those who move on foot". e.g. the **Shasu of Yhw** [81] **Sandars** uses the analogous name "land peoples." Contemporary Assyrian records refer to them as **Ahhlamu** or Wanderers. [82] They were not part of the Egyptian list of Sea Peoples, and were later referred to as **Aramaeans**.

Some people, such as the **Lukka**, were included in both categories of land and sea people.

**Philistine hypothesis**[edit]

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**Philistine Bichrome pottery**, theorized to be of Sea Peoples origin.

*Main article: Philistines*

The archaeological evidence from the southern coastal plain of ancient **Palestine**, termed **Philistia** in the **Hebrew Bible**, indicates a disruption[83] of the **Canaanite** culture that existed during the **Late Bronze Age** and its replacement (with some integration) by a culture with a possibly foreign (mainly **Aegean** origin. This includes distinct pottery, which at first belongs to the **Mycenaean IIIC** tradition (albeit of local manufacture) and gradually transforms into a uniquely Philistine pottery. Mazar says;[84]

... in Philistia, the producers of Mycenaean IIIC pottery must be identified as the Philistines. The logical conclusion, therefore, is that the Philistines were a group of Mycenaean Greeks who immigrated to the east ... Within several decades ... a new **bichrome style, known as the "Philistine"**, appeared in Philistia ...  

Sandars, however, does not take this point of view, but says;[85]

... it would be less misleading to call this 'Philistine pottery' 'Sea Peoples' pottery or 'foreign' pottery, without commitment to any particular group.
Artifacts of the Philistine culture are found at numerous sites, in particular in the excavations of the five main cities of the Philistines: the Pentapolis of Ashkelon, Ashdod, Ekron, Gath, and Gaza. Some scholars (e.g. S. Sherratt, Drews, etc.) have challenged the theory that the Philistine culture is an immigrant culture, claiming instead that they are an in situ development of the Canaanite culture, but others argue for the immigrant hypothesis; for example, T. Dothan and Barako.

Trude and Moshe Dothan, suggests that the later Philistine settlements in the Levant were unoccupied for nearly 30 years between their destruction and resettlement by the Philistines, whose Helladic IIICb pottery also shows Egyptian influences.[86]

Minoan hypothesis [edit]

Two of the peoples who settled in the Levant had traditions that may connect them to Crete: the Tjeker and the Peleset. The Tjeker may have left Crete to settle in Anatolia, and left there to settle Dor.[87] According to the Old Testament[88] the Israelite God brought the Philistines out of Caphtor. The mainstream of Biblical and classical scholarship accepts Caphtor to refer to Crete, but there are alternative minority theories.[89] Crete at the time was populated by peoples speaking many languages, among which were Mycenaean Greek and Eteocretan, the descendant of the language of the Minoans. It is possible, but by no means certain, that these two peoples spoke Eteocretan.

Recent examinations of the eruption of the Santorini volcano suggest that it occurred very close (estimated between 1660 and 1613 BCE) to the first appearances of the Sea People in Egypt.[90] The eruption and its aftermath (fires, tsunami, weather changes and famines) would have had wide-ranging effects across the Mediterranean, the Levant and particularly Greece, and could have provided the impetus for invasions of other regions of the Mediterranean.

For more details on this topic, see Caphtor.

Greek migrational hypothesis [edit]

Main article: Mycenaean Greece

The identifications of Denyen with the Greek Danaans and Ekwesh with the Greek Achaeans are long-standing issues in Bronze Age scholarship, whether Greek, Hittite or Biblical, especially as they lived "in the isles". Michael Wood described the hypothetical role of the Greeks (who have already been proposed as the identity of the Philistines above):[91]

However the Achaean identification of the Ekwesh is considered problematic as this group was clearly described as circumcised by the Egyptians, and according to Manuel Robbins: "Hardly anyone thinks that the Greeks of the Bronze Age were circumcised ..."[92]

... were the sea peoples ... in part actually composed of Mycenaean Greeks – rootless migrants, warrior bands and condottieri on the move ...? Certainly there seem to be suggestive parallels between the war gear and helmets of the Greeks ... and those of the Sea Peoples ...

Wood would also include the Sherden and Shekelesh, pointing out that "there were migrations of Greek-speaking peoples to the same place [Sardinia and Sicily] at this time." He is careful to point out that the Greeks would have been only one element among many that comprised the sea peoples. Furthermore, the proportion of Greeks must have been relatively small. His major hypothesis,[91] is that the Trojan War was fought against Troy VI
and that Troy VIIa, the candidate of Carl Blegen, and that Troy was sacked by those now identified as Greek Sea Peoples.

He suggests that Odysseus' assumed identity as a wandering Cretan coming home from the Trojan War, who fights in Egypt and serves there after being captured, remembers the campaign of Year 8 of Ramses III, described above. He points out also that places destroyed on Cyprus at the time (such as Kition) were rebuilt by a new Greek-speaking population.

Aeneas flees burning Troy carrying his father Anchises and leading his son Ascanius by the hand. Woodcut by Ludolph Büsinck.

**Trojan hypothesis**[edit]

Main article: Troy

The possibility that the Teresh were connected on the one hand with the Tyrrhenians, believed to be an Etruscan-related culture, and on the other with Taruisa, a Hittite name possibly referring to Troy, had been considered by the ancient Romans. The Roman poet Virgil refers to this belief when he depicts Aeneas as escaping the fall of Troy by coming to Latium to found a line descending to Romulus, first king of Rome. Considering that Anatolian connections have been identified for other Sea Peoples, such as the Tjeker and the Lukka, Eberhard Zangger puts together an Anatolian hypothesis.

**Mycenaean warfare hypothesis**[edit]

See also: Achaeans (Homer) and Mycenaean Greece

This theory suggests that the Sea Peoples were populations from the city states of the Greek Mycenaean civilization, who destroyed each other in a disastrous series of conflicts lasting several decades. There would have been few or no external invaders and just a few excursions outside the Greek-speaking part of the Aegean civilization.

Archaeological evidence indicates that many fortified sites of the Greek domain were destroyed in the late 13th and early 12th century BCE, which was understood in the mid-20th century to have been simultaneous or nearly so and was attributed to the Dorian Invasion championed by Carl Blegen of the University of Cincinnati. He believed
Mycenaean Pylos was burned during an amphibious raid by warriors from the north (Dorians).

Subsequent critical analysis focused on the fact that the destructions were not simultaneous and that all the evidence of Dorians comes from later times. John Chadwick championed a Sea Peoples hypothesis,[97] which asserted that, since the Pylians had retreated to the northeast, the attack must have come from the southwest, the Sea Peoples being, in his view, the most likely candidates. He suggests that they were based in Anatolia and, although doubting that the Mycenaeans would have called themselves "Achaeans", speculates that "... it is very tempting to bring them into connexion." He does not assign a Greek identity to all of the Sea Peoples.

Considering the turbulence between and within the great families of the Mycenaean city-states in Greek mythology, the hypothesis that the Mycenaeans destroyed themselves is long-standing[98] and finds support by the ancient Greek historian Thucydides, who theorized:

For in early times the Hellenes and the barbarians of the coast and islands ... were tempted to turn to piracy, under the conduct of their most powerful men ... [T]hey would fall upon a town unprotected by walls ... and would plunder it ... no disgrace being yet attached to such an achievement, but even some glory.[99]

Although some advocates of the Philistine or Greek migration hypotheses identify all the Mycenaeans or Sea Peoples as ethnically Greek, John Chadwick (founder, with Michael Ventris, of Linear B studies) adopts instead the multiple ethnicity view.

**Italian peoples hypotheses[edit]**

See also: Nuragic civilization

![Map of Invasions and migrations c. 1200 BC](https://example.com/map.png)

Invasions, population movements and destruction during the collapse of the Bronze Age, c. 1200 BCE

Theories of the possible connections between the Sherden to Sardinia, Shekelesh to Sicily, and Teresh to Tyrhenians, even though long-standing, are based on onomastic similarities.[100]

In Sardinia archeological remains suggest the presence of Sea people. Some archeologists believe that the Sherden are identifiable with the Nuragic Sardinians.[40]
The Nuragic bronze statuettes, a great collection of Nuragic sculptures, includes a great number of horned helmet warriors wearing a skirt similar to those of the Sherden and a round shield, although they had been dated for a long time to the 10th or 9th century BCE, recent discoveries suggest that their production started around the 13th century BCE. Swords identical to those of the Sherden have been found in Sardinia, dating back to 1650 BCE.

Plutarch spoke of raids by Sardinians against the island of Crete, in the same period in which the Sea People invaded Egypt,[101] and Nuragic ceramics have been found at Tiryns, Kommos,[102] Kokkinokremnos[103] and in Sicily, at Lipari[104] and the Agrigento area, along the sea route linking western to eastern Mediterranean.

Bronze model of nuraghe. 10th century BC.

The self-name of the Etruscans, Rasna, does not lend itself to the Tyrrhenian derivation, although it has been suggested that this was itself derived from an earlier form TRasna. The Etruscan civilization has been studied, and the language partly deciphered. It has variants and representatives in Aegean inscriptions, but these may well be from travellers or colonists of Etruscans during their seafaring period before Rome destroyed their power.[105]

Archaeology is equally enigmatic. About all that can be said for certain is that Mycenaean III C pottery was widespread around the Mediterranean in areas associated with Sea Peoples and its introduction at various places, including Sardinia, is often associated with cultural change, violent or gradual. These circumstances appear to be enough for archaeological theorizers. The prevalent speculation is that the Sherden and Shekelesh brought those names with them to Sardinia and Sicily, "perhaps not operating from those great islands but moving toward them."[106]

Anatolian famine hypothesis[edit]

A famous passage from Herodotus[107] portrays the wandering and migration of Lydians from Anatolia because of famine:[108]

In the days of Atys, the son of Manes, there was a great scarcity through the whole land of Lydia ... So the king determined to divide the nation in half ... the one to stay, the other to leave the land. ... the emigrants should have his son Tyrrhenus for their leader ... they
went down to Smyrna, and built themselves ships ... after sailing past many countries they came to Umbria ... and called themselves ... Tyrrenians.

Tablet RS 18.38 from Ugarit also mentions grain to the Hittites, suggesting a long period of famine, connected further, in the full theory, to drought.[109] Barry Weiss, [110] using the Palmer Drought Index for 35 Greek, Turkish, and Middle Eastern weather stations, showed that a drought of the kinds that persisted from January 1972 would have affected all of the sites associated with the Late Bronze Age collapse. Drought could have easily precipitated or hastened socio-economic problems and led to wars. More recently, Brian Fagan has shown how mid-winter storms from the Atlantic were diverted to travel north of the Pyrenees and the Alps, bringing wetter conditions to Central Europe, but drought to the Eastern Mediterranean.[111] More recent paleoclimatological research has also shown climatic disruption and increasing aridity in the Eastern Mediterranean, associated with the North Atlantic Oscillation at this time (See Bronze Age Collapse).

Invader hypothesis[edit]

The term 'invasion' is used generally in the literature concerning the period to mean the documented attacks, implying that the aggressors were external to the eastern Mediterranean, though often hypothesized to be from the wider Aegean world. An origin outside the Aegean also has been proposed, as in this example by Michael Grant: "There was a gigantic series of migratory waves, extending all the way from the Danube valley to the plains of China."[112]

Such a comprehensive movement is associated with more than one people or culture; instead, it was a "disturbance," according to Finley:[113]

A large-scale movement of people is indicated ... the original centre of disturbance was in the Carpatho-Danubian region of Europe. ... It appears ... to have been ... pushing in different directions at different times.

If different times are allowed on the Danube, they are not in the Aegean: "all this destruction must be dated to the same period about 1200."[113]

The following movements are associated and compressed by Finley into the 1200 BCE window: the hypothetical Dorian Invasion, the attacks of the Sea Peoples, the formation of Philistine kingdoms in the Levant and the fall of the Hittite Empire.

Robert Drews presents a map showing the destruction sites of 47 fortified major settlements, which he terms "Major Sites Destroyed in the Catastrophe". [114] They are concentrated in the Levant, with some in Greece and Anatolia.

See also[edit]

* Hyksos

Notes[edit]

1. ^ Jump up to:a b c d Killebrew 2013, p. 2. Quote: "First coined in 1881 by the French Egyptologist G. Maspero (1896), the somewhat misleading term "Sea Peoples" encompasses the ethnonyms Lukka, Sherden, Shekelesh, Teresh, Eqwesh, Denyen, Sikil / Tjekker, Weshesh, and Peleset (Philistines). [Footnote: The modern term "Sea Peoples" refers to peoples that appear in several New Kingdom Egyptian texts as originating from
"islands" (tables 1–2; Adams and Cohen, this volume; see, e.g., Drews 1993, 57 for a summary). The use of quotation marks in association with the term "Sea Peoples" in our title is intended to draw attention to the problematic nature of this commonly used term. It is noteworthy that the designation "of the sea" appears only in relation to the Sherden, Shekelesh, and Eqwe. Subsequently, this term was applied somewhat indiscriminately to several additional ethnonyms, including the Philistines, who are portrayed in their earliest appearance as invaders from the north during the reigns of Merenptah and Ramesses III (see, e.g., Sandars 1978; Redford 1992, 243, n. 14; for a recent review of the primary and secondary literature, see Woudhuizen 2006). Hencefore the term Sea Peoples will appear without quotation marks.

2. Jump up to: Drews 1995, pp. 48–61: "The thesis that a great "migration of the Sea Peoples" occurred ca. 1200 B.C. is supposedly based on Egyptian inscriptions, one from the reign of Mernephtah and another from the reign of Ramesses III. Yet in the inscriptions themselves such a migration nowhere appears. After reviewing what the Egyptian texts have to say about 'the sea peoples', one Egyptologist (Wolfgang Helck) recently remarked that although some things are unclear, "eins ist aber sicher: Nach den ägyptischen Texten haben wir es nicht mit einer 'Völkerwanderung' zu tun." Thus the migration hypothesis is based not on the inscriptions themselves but on their interpretation."

3. Jump up to: Müller 1888, p. 147: "In Egyptian history there is hardly any incident of so great an interest as the invasion of Egypt by the Mediterranean peoples, the facts of which are connected with the most important questions of ethnography and the primitive history of classic nations."

4. Jump up to: Hall 1922.


8. Jump up to: de Rougé 1855, p. 14: [Original French]: "On a depuis longtemps rapproché ces Kefa, avec vraisemblance, des Caphtorim de la Bible, au quels Gesenius, avec la plupart des interprètes, assigne pour résidence les îles de Crete ou de Chypre. Les habitants de l'île de Chypre durent nécessairement prendre parti dans cette guerre; peut-être les Kefas étaient-ils alors les alliés de l'Egypte. En tout cas, notre inscription ne détaille pas les noms de ces peuples, venus des îles de la Méditerranée. Champollion a fait remarquer que les T'akkari [qu'il nomme Fekkaros; voyez l'appendice à la suite de cette notice] et les Schartana, étaient reconnaissables, dans les vaisseaux ennemis, à leurs coiffures singulières. De plus, dans les écussons des peuples vaincus, les Schartana et les Touirasch portent la désignation de peuples de la mer. Il est donc probable qu'ils appartiennent à ces nations venues des îles ou des côtes de l'Archipel. Les Rabou sont encore reconnaissables parmi les prisonniers. [Translation]: "For a long time Kefa has been identified, with verisimilitude, with Caphtorim of the Bible, to whom Gesenius, along with most interpreters, assigns as a residence the islands of Crete or Cyprus. The people of Cyprus had certainly to take sides in this war; perhaps they were then the allies of Egypt. In any case, our entry does not detail the names of these people, from the islands of the Mediterranean. Champollion noted that Takkari [which he names Fekkaros; see appendix at the following entry] and Schartana, were recognizable, in enemy ships, with unique hairstyles. In addition, in the crests of the conquered peoples, the Schartana and the Touirasch bear the designation of the peoples of the sea. It is therefore likely that they belong to these nations..."
from islands or coasts of the archipelago. The Rabou are still recognizable among the prisoners."

9. ^ Jump up to: a b c Drews 1992: "In fact, this migration of the Sea Peoples is not to be found in Egyptian inscriptions, but was launched by Gaston Maspero in 1873 [footnote: In the Revue Critique d'Histoire et de Litterature 1873, pp. 85–6]. Although Maspero's proposal initially seemed unlikely, it gained credibility with the publication of the Lemnos stele. In 1895, in his popular Histoire ancienne des peuples de l'orient classique [footnote; Vol. II (Paris:1895), translated into English as The Struggle of the Nations (ed. A. H. Sayce, tr. M. L. McClure, New York: 1896)], Maspero fully elaborated his scenario of "the migration of the Sea Peoples". Adopted by Eduard Meyer for the second edition of his Geschichtes Altertums, the theory won general acceptance among Egyptologists and orientalists."

10. ^ Jump up to: a b Silberman 1998, p. 272: "As E.S. Sherratt has pointed out in an enlightening study of the interplay of ideology and literary strata in the formation of the Homeric epics (1990), phases of active narrative or descriptive invention closely correspond to periods of rapid social and political change. Sherratt notes that one of the characteristic manifestations of this process - in which emerging elites seek to legitimate their power - is "the transformation of an existing oral epic tradition in order to dress it in more recognizably modern garb" (l990: 821). Can we not see in the history of the archaeology of the Sea Peoples a similar process of literary reformulation, in which old components are reinterpreted and reassembled to tell a new tale? Narrative presupposes that both storyteller and audience share a single perspective, and therein may lie the connection between the intellectual and ideological dimensions of archaeology. To generalize beyond specific, highly localized data, archaeologists must utilize familiar conceptual frameworks and it is from the political and social ideologies of every generation that larger speculations about the historical role of the Sea Peoples have always been drawn. As many papers in this conference have suggested, traditional interpretive structures are in the process of reconsideration and renovation. That is why I believe it essential that we reflect on our current Sea Peoples stories - and see if we cannot detect the subtle yet lingering impact upon them of some timeworn Victorian narratives."

11. ^ Jump up to: a b c Vandersleyen 1985, p. 53: "However, of the nine peoples concerned by these wars, only four were actually defined as coming "from w3d-wr" or "from p3 ym". Furthermore, these expressions seem to be linked more often to vegetation and sweet water than to sea waiter, and it seems clear that the term "Sea Peoples" has to be abandoned. Some will object to this, basing themselves on the expression "iww hryw-ib w3d-wr", usually translated by "islands situated in the middle of the sea", where some of the Sea Peoples are said to have come from. Indeed, it is this expression which supported the persistent idea that the "Sea Peoples" came from the Aegean islands or at least from an East-Mediterranean island. Now, these terms are misleading, not only because w3d-wr and p3 ym, quite likely, do not designate "the sea" here, but also because the term iw itself does not always mean "island"; it can also be used to indicate other kinds of territories not necessarily maritime ones. The argument based on these alleged "sea islands" is thus groundless... To conclude. the Philistines came neither from Crete nor from the Aegean islands or coasts, but probably from the southern coast of Asia Minor or from Syria."

12. Jump up ^ Sea Peoples, ancient.eu Joshua J. Mark: "Their origin and identity has been suggested (and debated) to be Etruscan/Trojan to Italian, Philistine, Mycenaean and even Minoan but, as no accounts discovered thus far shed any more light on the question than what is presently known, any such claims must remain mere conjecture."
13. **Jump up[^1]** Who Were the Sea People?, Eberhard Zangger, pp. 20–31 of the May/June 1995 print edition of *Saudi Aramco World*: "very few—if any—archeologists would consider the Sea People to have been identified."

14. **Jump up[^2]** See also the sketches provided later in Champollion, Monuments: from the left side of the Second Pylon: Plate CCVIII, and from the base of the right hand side of the Fortified East Gate Plate CCIII.

15. **Jump up[^3]** Compare with the hieroglyphs provided by Woudhuizen 2006, p. 36.

16. **Jump up[^4]** de Rougé 1855.

17. **Jump up[^5]** de Rougé 1855, p. 1.

18. **Jump up[^6]** Greene 1855, p. 4: [Original French]: "Les notices et la XVIII° lettre de Champollion donnent un résumé très-complet et très-fidèle des campagnes de Ramsès III (son Ramsès Meiamoun), surtout de celle représentée sur le mur du nord, où se trouve le célèbre bas-relief d'un combat naval dans lequel les vaisseaux ennemis sont acculés au rivage par la flotte égyptienne, et en même temps écrasés par l'armée de terre qui les presse de l'autre côté. Champollion a reconnu que, parmi les ennemis de Ramsès, se trouvaient des peuples nouveaux, appartenant à la race blanche, et désignés sous le nom de Tamhou. Il n'a copié que la première ligne de la grande inscription du pylône, où se trouve indiquée une date de la neuvième année du roi, et il a signalé l'importance de ce texte, qui contient plusieurs noms de peuples....

Après avoir reçu ce juste tribut de louanges, le roi commence enfin son discours à la ligne treizième. Il recommande à tous ses sujets d'être attentifs à ses paroles, et leur indique les sentiments qui doivent les diriger dans la vie; puis, il se vante de ses exploits, dont il rapporte cependant la gloire à son père, le dieu Ammon, qui lui a donné toutes les conquêtes. Après une tête de colonne qui malheureusement a beaucoup souffert, vient un des passages les plus importants de notre texte, dans lequel le roi énumère les ennemis qu'il a vaincus, en commençant par les Chéta, les Ati, les Karkamasch, les Aratou, les Arasa; puis, après une courte interruption: leur camp ensemble dans le pays d' Amaour, j'ai détruit ces peuples et leur pays comme s'ils n'avaient jamais existé. On voit que ces différents peuples, ennemis ordinaires des rois d'Égypte dans leurs campagnes d'Asie antérieures à celles de Ramsès III, sont réunis dans un seul groupe. A la colonne suivante, nous trouvons un second groupe formé des peuples désignés par Champollion comme ayant joué un rôle important dans la campagne pendant laquelle s'est livré le combat naval; ce sont les Poursata, les Takkara, les Shakarsha, les Taamou et les Ouaschascha. On voit que les Sharetana manquent seuls à cette énumération.

[Translation]: "The notices and the XVIII° letter of Champollion provide a complete and faithful summary of the campaigns of Ramses III (his Ramses Ammon), especially that represented on the north wall, containing the famous bas-relief of a naval battle where the enemy ships are driven to shore by the Egyptian fleet, and simultaneously crushed by the army, which the press on the other side. Champollion recognized that among the enemies of Ramses, there were a new people, belonging to the white race, and designated as the Tamhou. He copied the first line of the large inscription of the pylon, with a date he specified in the ninth year of the reign, and he noted the importance of this text, which contains several names of people.... After receiving this just tribute of praise, the King finally begins his speech to the thirteenth line. It recommends to all his subjects to pay attention to his words, and shows their feelings that must lead them in life; then he boasts of his exploits, he brings glory to his father, the god Ammon, who gave him all the conquests. After a column header which
unfortunately suffered a lot, is one of the most important parts of our text, in which the king lists the enemies he has overcome, beginning with the Cheta, the Ati, the Karkamasch the Aratou, the Arasa; then, after a short break: at their camp in the country of Amaour, I destroyed the people and their country as if they had never existed. We see that these different peoples, common enemies of Egypt in their Asian campaigns before those of Ramses III, are gathered in one group. In the next column, we find a second group formed of people considered by Champollion to have played an important role in the campaign with the naval combat ships; it is the Poursata, the Takkara, the Shakarsha, the Taamou, and Ouaschascha. We see that the only missing Sharetana to this list.

19. Jump up^ Greene’s documentary photographs are held at the Musee d'Orsay, for example: Médinet-Habou, Temple funéraire de Ramsès III, muraille du nord (5); inventory number: PHO 1986 131 40.

20. Jump up^ de Rougé 1867.


23. Jump up^ Silberman 1998, p. 270: "The English translation of Maspero's résumé of ethnic movement entitled The Struggle of the Nations (Maspero 1896) must surely have evoked meaningful associations at a time when competition for territory and economic advantage among European Powers was at a fever pitch (Hobsbawm 1987)."


26. Jump up^ A convenient table of Sea Peoples in hieroglyphics, transliteration and English is given in Woudhuizen 2006, who developed it from works of Kitchen cited there.

27. Jump up to: Breasted (1906), Vol IV, §403 / p.201: "in their isles" and "of the sea"


30. Jump up to: Breasted (1906), Vol III, §588 / p.248 and §601 / p.255: "of the countries of the sea". Breasted wrote in a footnote regarding this designation "It is noticeable that this designation, both here and in the Athribis Stela (1. 13), is inserted only after the Ekwesh. In the Athribis Stela Ekwesh is cut off by a numeral from the preceding, showing that the designation there belongs only to them."

31. Jump up to: Drews 1995, p. 54: "Already in the 1840s Egyptologists had debated the identity of the "northerners, coming from all lands," who assisted the Libyan King Meryre in his attack upon Merneptah. Some scholars believed that Meryre's auxiliaries were merely his neighbors on the Libyan coast, while others identified them as Indo-Europeans from north of the Caucasus. It was one of Maspero's most illustrious predecessors, Emmanuel de Rougé, who proposed that the names reflected the lands of the northern Mediterranean: the Lukka, Ekwesh, Tursha, Shekelesh, and Shardana were men from Lydia, Achaea, Tyrsenia (western Italy), Sicily, and Sardinia." De Rougé and others regarded Meryre's auxiliaries-these "peuples de la mer Méditerranée"- as mercenary bands, since the Sardinians, at least, were known to have served as mercenaries already in the early years of Ramesses the Great. Thus the only "migration" that the Karnak Inscription seemed to suggest was an attempted encroachment by Libyans upon neighboring territory."


[Translation]: "To my knowledge, the earlist scholars who explicitly proposed the identification of Pourousta with the Philistines are William Osburn Jr., *Ancient Egypt, Her Testimony to the Truth of the Bible*..., London, 1846. p.99. 107. 137. and Edward Hincks, *An Attempt to Ascertain the Number, Names, and Powers, of the Letters of the Alphabet Egyptian Hieroglyphic gold Ancient*, Dublin, 1847, p.47"

34. Jump up^ Vandersleyen 1985, pp. 39–41: [original French]: "Quand Champollion visita Médinet Habou en juin 1829, il vit ces scénes, lut le nom des Pourosato, sans y reconnaître les Philistins; plus tard, dans son Dictionnaire égyptien et dans sa Grammaire égyptienne, il transcrivit le même nom Polosté ou Pholosté, mais contrairement à ce qu'affirmait Brugsch en 1858 et tous les auteurs postérieurs, Champollion n'a nulle part écrit que ces Pholosté étaient les Philistins de la Bible." [Translation]: "When Champollion visited Medinet Habu in June 1829, he experienced these scenes, reading the name of Pourosato, without recognizing the Philistines; Later, in his "Dictionnaire égyptien" and its "Grammaire égyptienne", he transcribed the same name Polosté or Pholosté, but contrary to the assertion by Brugsch in 1858 and subsequent authors, Champollion has nowhere written that these Pholosté were the Philistines of the Bible."

Dothan and Dothan wrote of the initial identification (Dothan 1992, pp. 22–23): "It was not, however, until the spring of 1829, almost a year after they had arrived in Egypt, that Champollion and his entourage were finally ready to tackle the antiquities of Thebes... The chaotic tangle of ships and sailors, which Denon assumed was a panicked flight into the Indus, was actually a detailed portrayal of a battle at the mouth of the Nile. Because the events of the reign of Ramesses III were unknown from other, the context of this particular war remained a mystery. On his return to Paris, Champollion puzzled over the identity of the various enemies shown in the scene. Since each of them had been carefully labeled with a hieroglyphic inscription, he hoped to match the names with those of ancient tribes and peoples mentioned in Greek and Hebrew texts. Unfortunately, Champollion died in 1832 before he could complete the work, but he did have success with one of the names. [...] proved to be none other than the biblical Philistines." Dothan and Dothan's description was incorrect in stating that the naval battle scene (Champollion, Monuments, Plate CCXXII) "carefully labeled with a hieroglyphic inscription" each of the combatants, and Champollion's posthumously published manuscript notes contained only one short paragraph on the naval scene with only the "Fekkaro" and "Schaïratana" identified (Champollion, Monuments, page 368). Dothan and Dothan's following paragraph "Dr. Greene's Unexpected Discovery" incorrectly confused John Beasley Greene with John Baker Stafford Greene. Champollion did not make a connection to the
Philistines in his published work, and Greene did not refer to such a connection in his 1855 work which commented on Champollion (Greene 1855, p. 4)


36. Jump up^ Who Were the Phoenicians?, Nissim Raphael Ganor, 2009, (also [1]), page 111, Quote: "Today it is generally accepted (in accordance with the theory of Maspero) that we are dealing here with different nations which migrated from the region of Crete or Asia Minor, and tried to infiltrate into Egypt. Repulsed by the Egyptians, the Philistines (P. R. S. T.) settled in the coastal area of Canaan, while the Tyrsenes, Sardanes, and others migrated to Italy, Sardinia and other places. In 1747 Fourmont tried to prove that the name "Philestine" was an erroneous form of the Greek "Pelasgi". His theory was accepted by Chabas, Hitzig and others who enlarged upon it. Maspero stated in this context: "The name 'Pilishti' by itself suggests a foreign origin or long migrations and recalls that of the Pelasgi." The equation Plishti–Pelasgi is based solely on a supposedly phonetic similarity."

37. ^ Jump up to: a b c d e Gardiner 1947, p. 196 (Vol. 1), in his commentary on the Onomasticon of Amenope, No. 268, "Srdn", wrote: "The records of Meneptah are much more explicit: the great Karnak inscription described how the Ekwesh, Tursha, Lukki, Sherden and Sheklesh (L.1) had been incited against Egypt by the prince of the Libu (Libyans); in L.52 the Sherden, Sheklesh and Ekwesh are collectively described as

![Image](image1)

38. (var. 

![Image](image2)

39. )

40. "the foreign lands (var. 'foreigners') of the sea"

Note: Gardiner’s reference to the alternative ("var.") writing ‘foreigners’ referred to Gustave Lefebvre's Stèle de l'an V de Ménéptah, ASAE 27, 1927, p.23, line 13, describing the Athribis Stele.

41. ^ Jump up to: a b c Breasted (1906), Vol IV, §129 / p.75: "of the sea"


44. Jump up^ O'Connor & Cline 2003, p. 113.

46. Jump up^ Oren 2000, p. 85: "Thus far, rather meager documentation is available. What I shall do for the remainder of this essay is to focus on what is in fact our primary source on the Sea Peoples, the basis of virtually all significant discussions of them, including many efforts to identify the Sea Peoples with archaeologically known cultures or groups in the Mediterranean and beyond. This source is the corpus of scenes and texts relevant to the Sea Peoples displayed on the walls of the mortuary temple of Ramesses III at western Thebes. Although it has been much discussed, this corpus has often led scholars to different and contradictory conclusions, and will always probably be subject to debate because of certain ambiguities inherent in the material."

47. Jump up^ Breasted (1906), Vol III, §593 / p.252: "in their isles" and "of the sea"

48. Jump up^ Per Killebrew 2013, pp 2–5, these are: Stele of Padjesef, Tanis Stele, Papyrus Anastasi I, Papyrus Anastasi II, Stele of Setemhebu, Papyrus Amiens, Papyrus Wilbour, Adoption Papyrus, Papyrus Moscow 169, Papyrus BM 10326, Papyrus Turin 2026, Papyrus BM 10375, Donation Stele

49. Jump up^ Uncertainty of the dates is not a case of no evidence but of selecting among several possible dates. The articles in Wikipedia on related topics use one set of dates by convention but these and all dates based on them are not the only possible. A summary of the date question is given in Hasel, Ch. 2, p. 151, which is available as a summary on Google Books.

50. Jump up^ Find this and other documents quoted in the Shardana article by Megaera Lorenz at the Penn State site. This is an earlier version of her article, which gives a quote from Kitchen not found in the External Links site below. Breasted Volume III, Article 491, p.210, which can be found on Google books, gives quite a different translation of the passage. Unfortunately, large parts of the text are missing and must be restored, but both versions agree on the Sherden and the warships.


52. Jump up^ Grimal, pp.250–253

53. Jump up^ The poem appears in inscriptional form but the scribe, pntAwrt, was not the author, who remains unknown. The scribe copied the poem onto Papyrus in the time of Merneptah and copies of that found their way into Papyrus Sallier III currently located in the British Museum. The details are stated in The Battle of Kadesh on the site of the American Research Center in Egypt of Northern California. Both the inscription and the poem are published in "Egyptian Accounts of the Battle of Kadesh" on the Pharaonic Egypt site.

54. Jump up^ J. von Beckerath, p.190. Like those of Ramses II, these dates are not certain. Von Beckerath's dates, adopted by Wikipedia, are relatively late; for example, Sanders, Ch. 5, p. 105, sets the Battle of Perire at April 15, 1220.

55. Jump up^ The Great Karnak Inscription.

56. Jump up^ All three inscriptions are stated in Breasted, V. 3, "Reign of Menneptah", pp. 238 ff., Articles 569 ff., downloadable from Google Books.

57. Jump up^ Breasted, volume 3. §595, page 252


62. Jump up^ Translation by Egerton and Wilson, 1936, plates 37-39, lines 8-23. Also found in Breasted, 1906, volume 4, p.44, §75

63. Jump up^ Breasted, 1906, volume 4, p.48, §81


65. Jump up^ Oren 2000, p. 86: "One consists of a string of large scale scenes, complemented with relatively brief texts, extending in a narrative sequence along part of the north facade of the temple, which it shares with part of a similar narrative treatment of Ramesses III's Year 5 campaign against the Libyans. This latter sequence originates however on the west, or rear wall of the temple. The other, physically quite separate composition relating to the Sea Peoples is displayed across the external (eastern) face of the great pylon which separates the first court of the temple from the second. On the pylon’s southern wing is a large-scale scene - occupying most of the facade - showing Ramesses III leading three lines of captive Sea Peoples to Amun-Re, lord of Thebes (and of the empire), and his consort Mut. Displayed on the equivalent space of the north wing is a long text, without pictorial embellishment, which is a verbal statement by Ramesses III describing at length his victory over the Sea Peoples, and the extraordinary beneficence of Amun-Re thus displayed, to “the entire land gathered together”. In fact, this apparent simplicity - two separate and somewhat different compositions relevant to the Sea Peoples-belies the actual complexity of the compositional relationship between the two Sea Peoples compositions on the one hand, and their joint relationship to the entire compositional scheme or "program" of the entire temple on the other. Any effort to understand the historical significance of the Sea Peoples’ records at Medinet Habu must take this compositional dimension into account, as well as the conceptual dimensional, the relationship of the general composition scheme or program to the functions and meanings of the temple, as understood by the Egyptians."

66. Jump up^ Beckman cites the first few lines of the inscription located on the NW panel of the 1st court of the temple. This extensive inscription is stated in full in English in the Woudhuizen 2006, pp. 43–56, which also contains a diagram of the locations of the many inscriptions pertaining to the reign of Ramses III on the walls of temple at Medinet Habu.

67. Jump up to: Bryce, p.371

68. Jump up^ Woudhuizen 2006, pp. 43–56 quotes the inscriptions in English.

69. Jump up^ This passage in the papyrus is often cited as evidence that the Egyptians settled the Philistines in Philistia. The passage however only mentions the Sherden and Weshesh; i.e. does not mention the Peleset and Tjeker, and nowhere implies that the scribe meant Egyptian possessions in the Levant.

70. Jump up^ Bernard Bruyère, Mert Seger à Deir el Médineh, 1929, pages 32–37

71. Jump up^ Redford, P. 292. A number of copies or partial copies exist, the best being the Golenischeff Papyrus, or Papyrus Moscow 169, located in the Pushkin Museum of Fine Arts in Moscow (refer to Onomasticon of Amenemipet at the Archaeowiki site). In it the author is stated to be Amenemope, son of Amenemope.

72. Jump up^ Letter EA 81

73. Jump up^ Letters EA 122, 123, which are duplicates. See the paper on this topic published by Megaera Lorenz, The Amarna Letters at the Penn State site.

74. Jump up^ EA 151
75. Jump up^ EA 38
76. Jump up^ Kitchen, pp. 99 & 140
77. Jump up^ Kitchen, pp.99–100
78. Jump up^ See also Woudhuizen 2006, particularly his Concluding Remarks on pages 117-121, for a fuller consideration of the meaning of ethnicity.
80. Jump up^ The texts of the letters are transliterated and translated in Woudhuizen 2006, pp. 43–56 and also are mentioned and hypotheses are given about them in Sandars, p. 142 following.
81. Jump up^ The sequence, only recently completed, appears in Woudhuizen 2006, pp. 43–56, along with the news that the famous oven, still reported at many sites and in many books, in which the second letter was hypothetically being baked at the destruction of the city, was not an oven, the city was not destroyed at that time, and a third letter existed.
82. Jump up^ Jean Nougayrol et al. (1968) Ugaritica V: 87–90 no.24
83. Jump up^ RSL I = Nougayril et al., (1968) 86–86, no.23
85. Jump up^ Page 53
86. Jump up^ Reford p. 292
87. Jump up^ Ch. 8, subsection entitled "The Initial Settlement of the Sea Peoples."
88. Jump up^ Ch. 7
90. Jump up^ See under Tjeker.
91. Jump up^ Amos 9,7; argument reviewed by Sandars in Ch. 7.
92. Jump up^ One is cited under Caphtor.
94. Jump up to: a & Ch. 7, "The Peoples of the Sea."
97. Jump up^ Sandars Ch. 5.
98. Jump up^ Wood Ch. 6.
99. Jump up^ Eberhard Zangger in the Aramco article available on-line and referenced under External links below.
100. Jump up^ Chadwick, p. 178.
102. Jump up^ The History of the Peloponnesian War, Chapter I, Section 5.
103. Jump up^ Vagnetti, 2000, p.319: "Furthermore, if we examine the main (or only) connection of the Sherden (Srdn), Shekelesh (Sirs), and Tursha (Trs) with the
Central Mediterranean, namely the similarity of those names with Sardinia, Sicily and Tyrrenian area, we find further difficulties. First, that Greek sources are agreed that the original name of the island was Ichnussa (RE, IA.2:2482-84 [1920] s.v. Sardinia; Nicosia 1981:423-26). From other sources we learn that the "Sikeloi" were not the original inhabitants of Sicily, but migrated there from peninsular Italy (RE, IIA.2:2482-91 [1920] s.v. Sikelia), while the Etruscans called themselves "Rasenna" (RE, IA.1:253-54 [1914], s.v. Rasennas). Thus the combination of the archaeological evidence with the traditions of the place-name makes it difficult to conclude that Sherden, Shekelesh and Tursha, were of western origin."

104. Jump up^ Paola Ruggeri - Talos, l'automa bronzo contro i Sardi: le relazioni più antiche tra Creta e la Sardegna
105. Jump up^ Ceramiche. Storia, linguaggio e prospettive in Sardegna - pg.34
106. Jump up^ Gale, N.H. 2011. ‘Source of the Lead Metal used to make a Repair Clamp on a Nuragic Vase recently excavated at Pyla-Kokkinokremos on Cyprus’. In V. Karageorghis and O. Kouka (eds.), On Cooking Pots, Drinking Cups, Loomweights and Ethnicity in Bronze Age Cyprus and Neighbouring Regions, Nicosia.
108. Jump up^ Drews, 1995, p.59
110. Jump up^ 1.94
112. Jump up^ Wood p. 221 summarizes that a general climatological crisis in the Black Sea and Danubian regions as known through pollen analysis and dendrochronology existed about 1200 BCE and could have caused migration from the north.
116. ^ Jump up to: & b Finley, page 58.

Sources[edit]

Primary sources: Early publications of the theory[edit]

- **de Rougé, Emmanuel** (1855), *Notice de Quelques Textes Hiéroglyphiques Récemment Publiés par M. Greene* [Note on Some Hieroglyphic Texts Recently Published by Mr. Greene] (in French), E. Thunot
• Brugsch, Heinrich Karl (1858). Geographische Inschriften altägyptischer Denkmäler [Geographical inscriptions of ancient Egyptian monuments] (in German): Volume 1, Volume 2, Volume 3


Secondary sources [edit]


Chapter 16: Vagnetti, Lucia  (2000), Western Mediterranean overview: Peninsular Italy, Sicily and Sardinia at the time of the Sea peoples


External links[edit]

Wikimedia Commons has media related to *Sea Peoples*.

- Philistine Kin Found in Early Israel, Adam Zertal, BAR 28:03, May/Jun 2002.
- *The Sea Peoples and the Philistines*: a course at Penn State
- *Egyptians, Canaanites, and Philistines in the Period of the Emergence of Early Israel*, paper by Itamar Singer at the UCLA Near Eastern Languages & Culture site
- "Who Were the Sea People?", article by Eberhard Zangger in *Saudi Aramco World*, Volume 46, Number 3, May/June 1995
- *PlosOne* dating the Sea People destruction of the Levant to 1192–90 BCE
- *The Origins of the Sea Peoples*, undergraduate paper by Joseph Morris published by Florida State University Classic Department
- *The Sea Peoples and Annales: A Contextual Study of the Late Bronze Age*, Master's Thesis of Daniel Jacobus Krüger, published at the University of South Africa site
- "The Greek Age of Bronze", Archaeological web site related to Greek Bronze Age and Sea Peoples weaponry and warfare

**Ancient Syria** and **Mesopotamia**

Syria
Northern Mesopotamia
Southern Mesopotamia
c. 3500–2350 BCE
*Martu*
*Subartu*
Sumerian city-states
c. 2350–2200 BCE
*Akkadian Empire*
c. 2200–2100 BCE
*Gutians*
c. 2100–2000 BCE
*Third Dynasty of Ur* (Sumerian Renaissance)
c. 2000–1800 BCE
*Mari* and other Amorite city-states
Old Assyrian Empire (Northern Akkadians)
Isin/Larsa and other Amorite city-states

Old Hittite Kingdom

Old Babylonian Empire (Southern Akkadians)
c. 1800–1600 BCE

Mitanni (Hurrians)
Karduniaš (Kassites)
c. 1400–1200 BCE
New Hittite Kingdom

Middle Assyrian Empire

c. 1200–1150 BCE

Bronze Age collapse ("Sea Peoples")
Arameans

c. 1150–911 BCE
Phoenicia
Syro-Hittite states
Aram-
Damascus
Arameans
Middle Babylonia (Isin II)
Chal
de-
ans
911–729 BCE

Neo-Assyrian Empire

729–609 BCE

626–539 BCE
Neo-Babylonian Empire (Chaldeans)

539–331 BCE
Achaemenid Empire (Persians)

336–301 BCE
Macedonian Empire (Ancient Greeks)

311–129 BCE
Seleucid Empire