ENCOUNTERS WITH ANCIENT EGYPT

Mysterious Lands

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THE MYSTERY OF THE 'SEA PEOPLES'

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Introduction

For some historians, the story of the Sea Peoples is a dramatic one. In this version of their story, the Sea Peoples came sweeping across the Mediterranean ca. 1200 BC, wreaking havoc and creating chaos, leaving smoking ruins and destroyed cities in their wake. To them is attributed the collapse of the Hittite empire, the downfall of Cyprus, the destruction of Syro-Palestinian and Canaanite petty kingdoms, and perhaps even the demise of the Mycenaeans and the Minoans (Figure 7:1). In this version, in effect, the Sea Peoples are held responsible for the very collapse of Bronze Age civilization in the Aegean and eastern Mediterranean and for bringing on a centuries-long Dark Ages that followed.

This dramatic historical account, based almost entirely on a handful of Egyptian inscriptions, provides an explanation for major change in the archaeological record, where Bronze Age is followed by Early Iron Age, amid a series of massive shifts in centres of political power and major upheavals in a series of key Late Bronze Age centres of population. Yet, in the archaeological record, in the ceramic traditions and architecture of the various civilizations around the eastern Mediterranean, the Sea Peoples remain curiously difficult to identify. As a result, the Sea Peoples continue to perplex and mystify historians and archaeologists of the ancient Mediterranean. Inscriptions celebrating Egyptian kingship in the 13th and especially 12th centuries BC present them as a major and aggressive force in the eastern Mediterranean, upon which they had an impact that to some scholars seems catastrophic. Yet even in this apparently detailed written record, the Sea Peoples, on present evidence, seem to come suddenly from nowhere, cause widespread disruption, take on some of the greatest powers of the region, and equally abruptly disappear from history, save for one or two historic peoples of later times (e.g. Redford 1992: 289-294).

Texts produced for Merenptah and Ramesses III, and large-scale scenes carved on the latter's mortuary temple at Medinet Habu in West Thebes, are the principal sources of information about the Sea Peoples (for these and other texts, see Appendix, pp. 135-138). At the heart of the Sea Peoples mystery is a short text inscribed on the walls of the mortuary temple of pharaoh Ramesses III (ca. 1187-1156 BC). It is laconic but explicit, and awe-inspiring in its implications:

Figure 7:1   Map of the eastern Mediterranean.

The foreign countries 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 on, being cut off *at [one time].* A camp [was set up] in one place in Amor. 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 Philistines, Tjekeru, Shekelesh, Denye(n), and Weshesh, lands united. They laid their hands upon the lands as far as the circuit of the earth, their hearts confident and trusting: 'Our plans will succeed!'

(Wilson 1969: 262)

In hieroglyphs, this passage occupies less than three vertical columns of text, but it has generated an enormous amount of scholarly literature and public speculation since it was first published in 1844 (e.g. Oren 2000). The Sea Peoples, as modern historians call them, are the "foreign countries ... in their islands" referred to above, and have long provoked scholarly debate because the most fundamental questions about them still have no definitive answers.

The Egyptian sources provide the names of at least nine Sea Peoples. With these names the problems of the historian begin, for the Egyptian scripts record only consonants, whereas the contemporary cuneiform scripts of Mesopotamia record syllables; from the start, it is difficult to be sure that a name in one script corresponds to a name in another. An additional problem is the lack of a sign regularly denoting the sound T in the hieroglyphic script; various solutions were possible, such as 'n'+'r', or a single 'r', but there are often uncertainties in reading, particularly for foreign names. New Kingdom writing introduces a selection of signs in combinations that appear to echo the syllabic structure of cuneiform, but there remains extensive debate over the vocalization of each name. Here we follow Redford (1992: 251, 248 n. 34, 251, 252, 476, 483, 485, 488); an exception is Lukki, for which see Gardiner (1947: 314, 316). The nine names attested are, in the text of Ramesses III (above), the Peleset, Tjekru, Shekelesh, Danuna or Da'anu, and Washosh, and, in other sources, the Eqwosh, Lukki, Shardana and Teresh. Given the problems in reconstructing the vowels between the consonants in the Egyptian writings, it is not surprising that these names usually have not been identified yet with specific regions, whether those from which the Sea Peoples originated, or those in which they resettled themselves after the events described during the reign of Ramesses III. The Sea Peoples are bound to remain elusive, as long as they exist only as names rendered in Egyptian scripts. Identifications with names in other scripts and languages may help, though they grow more speculative the greater the gap in time; without corroboration in the material unearthed in secure archaeological contexts, it is difficult to know whether a name is even intended to denote a separable 'people' rather than a less distinct part of a larger movement (Kuhrt 1995). The questions remain: who is giving which names, and on what grounds, to whom in this Egyptian reflection of history? Equally mysterious are the cultures and organizations of the Sea Peoples, and the degree of their diversify when at least nine different 'ethnic' names were involved. Although the Sea Peoples are depicted in Egyptian art, and perhaps appear in sources from various parts of the Levant and the Aegean, and although Egyptian texts provide some glimpses of the Sea Peoples' political and military structure, and of their material culture, all in all the data remain meagre.

Perhaps most important of all - because it implies so much about the capabilities and nature of the Sea Peoples - is that, according to the most dramatic reading of the Egyptian writings, they created an aggressive coalition so powerful and effective that it brought about the collapse of some of the most powerful contemporary kingdoms in the Levant and they even aimed to invade Egypt itself.

The extant list of states unable to resist the Sea Peoples appears to include the names of cities and empires regardless of scale, and securely located place names as well as more problematic ones (Figure 7:1 above). Some authors, such as Redford (1992: 251, 473, 480, 484), have ventured the identification of geographical and 'ethnic' locations: Khatte was the imperial state of the Hittites, which had dominated much of Anatolia and Syria but was perhaps weakening at this time. Arzawa and Qode would be large polities on the south Anatolian coast, with Qode extending further. Carchemish lay in modern Syria, while Alashiya probably represented all or much of the large island of Cyprus. Finally, the region in which the Sea Peoples set up their camp and which was devastated as a result was Amor, generally identified as the better attested Amurru (Redford 1992: 474), an extensive coastal region straddling modern Syria and Lebanon. Moreover, not only did the Sea Peoples advance on Egypt, by land and sea, but, in the reign of Ramesses III, the Egyptians had to fight two great battles to halt the onslaught. According to the inscriptions and depictions in the temple to his cult at Medinet Habu, one took place, on land, in Djahy (roughly, modern Israel and Palestine); the other in what the Egyptians call 'the mouths of the river', by which term some area along Egypt's Mediterranean coast is apparently meant.

Recent scholars have drawn very different opinions from the same basic data. Redford (2000: 13) and many others concluded that both battles actually took place, and Redford even hypothesizes where: the land and sea battles may have taken place within sight of each other just beyond the mouth of the Pelusiac branch (Redford 2000: 13) of the Nile. Drews (2000) accepts the sea or river mouth battle, but doubts that the land battle occurred. Cifola (1988) suggests that there were no large-scale battles, but instead many lesser conflicts between Egypt and the Sea Peoples extending over a long period of time, conflicts which the Egyptian sources misleadingly telescope together. And, in any event - whatever the specific details of the Sea Peoples' invasion of the eastern Mediterranean might have been - it still remains to be shown that, as Redford (1992: 243-244) argues, "the movement of the Sea Peoples ... changed the face of the ancient world more than any other single event before the time of Alexander the Great".

Various Sea Peoples interacted with Egypt and other lands 26 years before Ramesses III clashed with the Sea Peoples in his eighth regnal year (ca. 1180 BC). Monumental inscriptions from the reign of King Merenptah record that in his fifth regnal year (ca. 1209 BC) Egypt's western Delta was invaded by a Libu (Libyan) army, which had originated in, probably, the then Libyan homeland of Cyrenaica (O'Connor 1990: 37-38; Snape Chapter 6, this volume). The Libyan forces were accompanied by contingents of Sea Peoples, namely the Eqwosh, Teresh, Lukki, Shardana and Shekelesh, as allies or mercenaries; the combined attack by Libyans and Sea Peoples was defeated (Breasted [1906] 2001:238-264; Iskander 2002). This prelude to the struggles under Ramesses III broadens the timeframe and number of 'peoples' involved, but leaves the principal questions unsolved: namely who the Sea Peoples were, where they had come from, and where they finally settled.

Unified society or ad-hoc alliance?

The primary Egyptian sources on the Sea Peoples date to the reigns of Merenptah and Ramesses III, and include a wall inscription, a stela and two inscribed columns, all celebrating King Merenptah's victory over the Libyans and the Sea Peoples. The wall inscription occurs at Karnak temple (Breasted [1906] 2001, 3:241-252); the stela is from Kom el Ahmar or ancient Athribis (Breasted [1906] 2001, 3:253-256); one column is in Cairo Museum (Breasted [1906] 2001, 3: 252-253; Edel 1961: 101-103); and the other is at Heliopolis (Bakry 1973). The Ramesses III sources comprise a series of large scenes along the external north face of his mortuary temple at Medinet Habu (western Thebes) and with a long text accompanying a scene on the west wall of that temple's first court *(Medinet Habu I* 1930: pls. 29-44,46). In addition, Ramesses' defeat of the Sea Peoples is briefly described in P. Harris, a document actually prepared during his successor's reign (Breasted [1906] 2001, 4: 201). Other textual references to the Sea Peoples are provided in the Appendix.

Together, the texts of Merenptah and Ramesses III provide all known names for specific Sea Peoples, but the overlap between the two seems limited. The inscriptions from the reign of Merenptah refer to the Eqwosh, Teresh, Lukki, Shardana and Shekelesh; Ramesses Ill's list comprises Shekelesh, Peleset, Tjekru, Danuna and Washosh (cf. Breasted [1906] 2001, 3: 239-256 with Edgerton and Wilson 1936: 30, 35, 45, 47-48, 53, 130-131). P. Harris provides an almost identical list to that of Medinet Habu (Breasted [1906] 2001, 4: 201) but substitutes Shardana for Shekelesh, and, being less close in time to the actual events, may offer a less accurate record. In addition, Sandars (1985: 112) notes that although the Teresh are not listed at Medinet Habu by Ramesses III as part of the Sea Peoples whom he defeated, a captive chief of the Teresh is shown among his prisoners in the pictorial reliefs there, and that a later stela of Ramesses III mentions the Teresh in the same breath as the Peleset.

In Merenptah's texts, the Shardana, Shekelesh and Eqwosh are described as "foreign lands of the sea" (Breasted [1906] 2001, 3:249,255). The Teresh and Lukki are listed alongside the others, and all five are described collectively as northerners who came from every land (Breasted [1906] 2001, 3: 241); since the relevant texts are very fragmentary, the Teresh and Lukki too may have been identified as "of the sea". The texts of Ramesses HI specifically identify all five peoples named as foreign countries (who) made a conspiracy in their isles (Edgerton and Wilson 1936: 53) and elsewhere refer to them generally as the northern countries who were in their isles (Edgerton and Wilson 1936: 41) and as the countries who came from their land in the isles in the midst of the sea (Edgerton and Wilson 1936:42). The translation of the relevant word *(iw)* as isle or island is accepted by most Egyptologists (Faulkner 1999,12; Gardiner 1947:281; Lesko and Lesko 1982: 21). P. Harris also refers to the Danuna "in their isles", and the Shardana (= Shekelesh?) and Washosh "of the sea" (Breasted [1906] 2001,4: 201).

The Lukki

The Lukki (Egyptian LA) are well known from numerous additional inscriptions, Hittite as well as Egyptian; possibly because they were notorious pirates. Most scholars see the Lukki as originating in Anatolia. Although there is some discussion as to where exactly in Anatolia they came from, most agree that it was probably south-

western Anatolia, in the area later known as Lycia and Caria. They are believed to have raided Cyprus upon occasion, as recorded in the Amarna Letters of the mid-14th century BC, and to have fought on the side of the Hittites against the Egyptians at the Battle of Kadesh ca. 1286 BC (Warburton 2003).

Very unfortunately, evidence for the Lukki in Anatolia is purely textual; no cultural remains have yet been definitely identified as being able to identify such a 'Lukki group' (Bryce 1979,1986:1-41,1992: 55-57; Sandars 1985: 37,107).

The Shardana

The Shardana (Egyptian *šrdn)* appear already in the Amarna Letters of the mid-14th century BC, where they are found serving as part of an Egyptian garrison at Byblos (Moran 1992: 201-202). They were mercenaries and, as such, fought both for and against Egypt in various conflicts during the latter part of the Late Bronze Age. Sandars (1985: 50, 106) notes in particular a fragmentary inscription of Ramesses II from Tanis which reads: "Shardana, rebellious of heart... [and their] battleships in the midst of the sea" and which claims that Ramesses "destroyed [the] warriors of the Great Green [i.e. the Mediterranean], and lower Egypt spends the night sleeping peacefully" (Gardiner 1947, 1: 195). None of the texts give a homeland for the Shardana. In the Egyptian pictorial reliefs, they are shown wearing horned helmets and frequently carrying round shields, but these facts are of little help in ascertaining their origin (Sandars 1985: 106-107). From the similarity between the words 'Shardana' and 'Sardinia', scholars frequently suggest that the Shardana came from there. On the other hand, it is equally possible that this group eventually settled in Sardinia after their defeat at the hands of the Egyptians and only then gave their name to this island, as Maspero and others have suggested (see detailed discussion of the various hypotheses in Drews 1992: 21-22, 1993: 53-61). For the time being such equations between similar-sounding names must be treated with the greatest caution in the absence of any corroboratory evidence.

In P. Harris, the deceased Ramesses III declares that the Shardana (and the Washosh) were brought as captives to Egypt, that he "settled them in strongholds bound in my name", and that he "taxed them all, in clothing and grain from the storehouses and granaries each year" (or that he 'supplied them with clothing and grain', following the interpretation by Grandet 1994,2:243 n. 920) (after Breasted [1906] 2001, 4: 201; Sandars 1985: 133). This would seem to indicate that the Shardana had been settled somewhere close enough to be taxed or supplied every year, and so an area no further away than Canaan. This location may be further substantiated by the Onomasticon of Amenemope, a composition dating to ca. 1100 BC, which lists the Shardana among the Sea Peoples who were settled on the coast there (Gardiner 1947, 1: 194-199; Knapp 1992:124; Sandars 1985:133). If this is the case, then perhaps the Shardana came originally from Sardinia and were eventually settled in coastal Canaan. However, the Shardana are listed - in P. Wilbour - as living in Middle Egypt during the time of Ramesses V, which would suggest that at least some of them were settled in Egypt (Leahy 2001: 259). It is also significant that the Shardana are the only foreign people mentioned among the subjects of the deceased king Ramesses III, in his address to his subjects in P. Harris, where they are listed among the military contingents (column 75, line 1; Grandet 1994,1: 335).

Scholars often call attention to the ruins found on the island of Sardinia - in particular the Bronze Age circular stone structures known as *nuraghi* whose function is still debated - and hypothesize about their relationship to the Shardana (e.g. Knapp 1992: 119-122, 124-125; Vagnetti 2000). Most recently, Zertal (2001) claims that Iron Age El-Ahwat in Israel has stone architectural features which appear similar to those found on Sardinia. He hypothesizes that El-Ahwat may have been one of the villages / towns/cities established by the Shardana when they were settled in Canaan by the Egyptians. So far, however, there is no identifiable Shardana pottery found at this or any other site in the region, and the interpretation of the architecture at El-Ahwat remains open to question.

The Teresh

The Teresh (Egyptian *Trš)* do not feature in Egyptian texts before the time of Merenptah, when they appear in both his Great Karnak Inscription and on the Athribis (Kom el Ahmar) stela. It has been suggested that the Taruisha mentioned in Hittite texts and probably located in north-western Anatolia (i.e. Troy) are to be linked with the Teresh, but this is highly speculative. Other suggestions link the Teresh with the Greek Tyrsenoi and the Tyrrhenians of central western Anatolia mentioned much later by Herodotus. Herodotus claimed that the Tyrrhenians migrated from central western Anatolia to central Italy, where they found later fame as the Etruscans (Drews 1992; Sandars 1985: 111-112). On the Teresh, it has recently been proposed (Drews 2000: 177) that they are to be identified with Tyrsenia, said to be the original Greek name for Italy. This still leaves unanswered the question of whether the Teresh would have come from Italy or would have gone there after being defeated by the Egyptians. It remains difficult to assess such connections, given the gap of centuries between alleged event and written source. The link seems possible, if still speculative, only in conjunction with the other alleged western Mediterranean associations of Sea Peoples (see above, on the Shardana, and below on the Shekelesh).

Amidst all these hypotheses, the reality remains that there is no archaeological evidence to support any of the above identifications, and there are, as yet, no archaeological remains which can be shown to be distinctively Tereshian.

The Shekelesh

The Shekelesh (Egyptian *škš)* may be the "Sikilayu who live in ships" mentioned in a letter sent by the Hittite king to the last king of Ugarit. In Egyptian texts, the Shekelesh first appear in Merenptah's Sea Peoples inscriptions (Drews 2000: 178-180; Sandars 1985: 112). Based on the similarity between the words 'Shekelesh' and 'Sicily' - but without any supportive archaeological evidence - scholars have frequently suggested that the Shekelesh came from the island of Sicily. However, linguistically speaking, it is equally possible that this group settled in Sicily only after their defeat at the hands of the Egyptians and only then gave their name to this island. As Sandars (1985:112—113) notes, the colonizing Greeks of the eighth century BC found people known as the Sikels already living on this island whom they believed had migrated to the island from southern Italy after the Trojan War. Instead of migrating to the island from

southern Italy, however, they may have come all the way across from the final battlegrounds in the Egyptian Delta.

It is still quite conceivable that there was in fact no connection at all between the Shekelesh and Sicily. Very unfortunately, as a result of the paucity of reliable archaeological evidence, the significance for so-called Sikil remains - including pottery and incised cow scapulas possibly used for divination and/or musical instruments (Stern 1994, 1998, 2000) - at a number of sites located south of Mount Carmel in modern Israel, remains unclear, with detailed parallels not specified.

Other sites on the Carmel coast which have yielded possible Sikil remains include Tel Zeror and Ein Hagit, as well as the famous engravings of ships found on the rocks of the Carmel ridge, which could be representations of the ships of the Sea Peoples (Raban and Stieglitz 1991: 37-38,41-12).

The Eqwosh/Akawasha

The Eqwosh (Egyptian 3*kws;* also called the Akawasha) are a little-known group who are mentioned only in Merenptah's Sea Peoples inscriptions. It has often been claimed that the Eqwosh might be the Egyptian attempt to reproduce the word *Achaioi* - that is to say, the Achaeans, i.e. Homer's Mycenaeans, coming from mainland Greece, Crete, and the Cycladic islands of the Bronze Age Aegean (see Drews 2000: 181-182). A possible linguistic link with the Ahhiyawa mentioned in Hittite texts has also been suggested, but the identification of Ahhiyawa with the Achaeans/Mycenaeans is itself a hotly contested matter (Niemeier 1998).

As for most of the other Sea Peoples, there are no distinctive archaeological remains attributable specifically to the Eqwosh or Akawasha.

The Tjekru

The Tjekru (Egyptian *Tkr)* are elusive in Egyptian and other texts prior to the time of Ramesses III, but are found later in the story of Wenamun, details of which may date to ca. 1100 BC (Loprieno Chapter 3, this volume; Pritchard 1969: 25-29). As Sandars (1985: 158,170) has noted, the Tjekru have long been suggested to have connections with the Teucri of the Troad, and with the Greek Teucer, the legendary founder of Salamis in Cyprus after the Trojan War, but this does not help in determining their origins, for the chronology of these connections is unclear, if the connections really did indeed exist at all.

The Onomasticon of Amenemope, perhaps composed ca. 1100 BC, provides a nugget of information by listing the Tjekru in between the Shardana and the Philistines. If the details found in the story of Wenamun and the Onomasticon of Amenemope are correct, then perhaps the Tjekru eventually settled (or were forcibly settled) on the coast of Canaan near the Sharon Plain following their defeat by Ramesses III. Indeed, one potentially revealing line in the story of Wenamun describes his travails in a harbour town in Syria-Palestine, beginning: "I reached Dor, a town of the Tjekru..." (Dothan 1982:4-5; Gardiner 1947:199-200; Niemeier 1998:47; Pritchard

1969: 26). Dor is precisely the coastal town where Stern excavated remains that he interpreted as material culture of the 'Sea Peoples' (see above, under Shekelesh). Stern refers to the Sea Peoples at Dor as Sikils rather than Tjekru, suggesting that the final letter should be vocalized as an T rather than as an V - i.e. that the name should be seen as *Tjekel* rather than *Tjekru* - this providing a linguistic connection to Sicily and the Sikels. *Tjekel* would then be an alternate name for the Shekelesh. Indeed, it has been suggested that the Shekelesh of Merenptah's inscriptions and the *Tjekel* of Ramesses Ill's inscriptions form one and the same group, just as Merenptah's Eqwosh and Ramesses Ill's Danuna may be two names for the same group (Drews 2000: 78-180, citing earlier bibliography including Edel 1984). If this is correct, then Sicily may have been the original source of, and coastal Canaan a final destination for, the Tjekru/Tjekel/Shekelesh/Sikels. However, the names Tjeker and Shekelesh appear side by side, for example in the Ramesses III inscription quoted above, and this may be thought to negate attempts to equate the two. Nevertheless, the identification of Dor as a Tjeker town in the 'Tale of Wenamun' - i.e. after the end of the New Kingdom/Bronze Age - provides one answer to the question of where at least some of the Sea Peoples settled (and compare the case of the Peleset, below).

The Danuna

It has long been suggested that the Danuna (Egyptian *Dnjn)* are to be equated with the land of Danuna. If so, then they - or rather their land - are mentioned in Hittite letters and in the Amarna Letters as being located in south-eastern Turkey in the Adana region of Cilicia, to the north of the city of Ugarit (Moran 1992: 238-239). It has also been frequently suggested that the Danuna should be equated with Homer's Danaans or Danaoi, his alternate name for the Achaeans. Currently, nothing is agreed, although those who equate the Danuna with the Danaans/Danaoi suggest that they would have come from the Aegean region, while those who equate them with the land of Danuna suggest that they would have either come from, or settled in, the coastal region of south-eastern Turkey or northern Syria.

Most recently, Drews has noted the similarity between the *Dnjn* of the Sea Peoples inscriptions and the *ti-ni-li* (vocalized as *Tanaja)* of the earlier eighteenth Dynasty inscriptions, primarily of Tuthmosis III and Amenophis III. Tanaja has been identified as the expression in Egyptian texts for the Mycenaeans of Bronze Age mainland Greece. He suggests that Danuna and Tanaja are two words for the same place and people and that the Danuna should be equated with Homer's Danaans/Danaoi rather than with the Hittite land of Danuna. He also observes that the Danuna (= Tanaja/Danaoi?) of Ramesses Ill's Sea Peoples inscriptions have apparently taken the place of the earlier Eqwosh (= Achaoi/Achaeans?) of Merenptah's Sea Peoples inscriptions (Drews 2000: 181-182). It is possible that the Danuna had an Aegean origin, with a final settlement in the coastal region of south-eastern Turkey (i.e. the area of Adana in Cilicia).

Another suggestion relates the Danuna to the biblical tribe of Dan, which would suggest that Sea Peoples also ultimately re-settled or were settled by the Egyptians in Canaan. If so, some of the archaeological remains uncovered by the excavations at the site of Tell Dan in northern Israel may be pertinent (Machinist 2000: 67; Raban and Stieglitz 1991: 41; Sandars 1985:162-164; Yadin 1968: 9-23).

The Peleset

The Peleset (Egyptian *Prst/Plst)* are almost universally identified with the Philistines of the Bible (Drews 1998: 50-61; Machinist 2000; Sandars 1985: 164-166). The Peleset first appear in Egyptian texts under Ramesses III. There is no indication as to their origin, although they were 'islanders' (see above). Suggestions have ranged from Crete to Arzawa in Anatolia to Canaan, but there is as yet no clear evidence to resolve the question (Drews 1993:54-72,1998: 53-57; Niemeier 1998: 47).

However, if the Peleset really are synonymous with the Philistines, then we know where they ended up - for the Bible talks at great length about the Philistine cities in Canaan. We know this from other sources as well; for instance, the Onomasticon of Amenemope, perhaps composed ca. 1100 BC, lists the Peleset among the defeated Sea Peoples who re-settled or were settled by the Egyptians on the coast of Canaan (Drews 1998: 50; Gardiner 1947: 200-205; Knapp 1992: 124). In addition, the archaeological remains of the Philistines are numerous, primarily pottery, but also including full-blown architecture and other material goods from sites such as Tell Qasile, Tell Miqne/Ekron, Ashdod, and Ashkelon in Israel. Perhaps most significant in this context is the identification of so-called Mycenaean Late Helladic IIIC: lb Aegean-inspired pottery which seems to be locally made in Syro-Palestine - and the question arises as to whether Philistine pottery can be described as a degenerate form of Mycenaean pottery and used to support a hypothesis that at least some of the Philistines originated in the Aegean (Brug 1985; Dothan 1982,1995,1998,2000; Dothan and Dothan 1992; Finkelstein 2000; Killebrew 2000; Kling 2000; Mazar 2000; Oren 2000). As Killebrew (1998:166) notes:

> Thus, in my opinion, the appearance of large quantities of Aegean-inspired locally-produced Mycenaean IIIC: lb and its related wares at a number of sites in Syria-Palestine is a classic case study in material culture of the incursion of new peoples settling at several centers on the southern coastal plain of Canaan at the close of the Bronze Age. Though the material culture has its tradition in the Aegean, these peoples, termed Philistines in the biblical account, probably originated on Cyprus, Rhodes, and/or in southern Anatolia.

The Washosh

In contrast to the Peleset/Philistines, "of the shadowy Washosh", Sandars (1985:158) once said, "virtually nothing is known, unless they had any connection with the 'Wilusa' (Wilusiya) of Hittite writings, that may have lain in south-western Anatolia, or with 'Ilios' (Troy) in the north-west". We may know nothing about the origins of the Washosh, but we can make an educated guess as to where some ended up. In P. Harris, Ramesses III says that the Washosh (and the Shardana) were "brought as captives to Egypt", that he "settled them in strongholds bound in my name", and that he "taxed them all, in clothing and grain from the store-houses and granaries each year" (Breasted [1906] 2001,4: 201; for a recent alternative interpretation as 'supplied' rather than 'taxed', see above under Shardana). This would seem to indicate that at least some of the Washosh had been settled in Egypt itself. However, there is as yet no identifiable archaeological material which can be associated with them.

The Sea Peoples in general

According to the Egyptian sources, the Shekelesh, Peleset, Tjekru, Danuna and Washosh were all islanders, each living on land entirely surrounded by water, and the Shardana and Eqwosh occupied territories which, at the least, had a coast fronting the sea. The status of the Teresh and Lukki, in these regards, remains uncertain, although it is generally accepted that the Lukki are to be associated with the south-western coast of Anatolia, as the area is later known as Lycia. Moreover, again according to the Egyptian texts, the specific Sea Peoples were all northerners relative to Egypt, while those named in Ramesses Ill's texts apparently originated west of central Anatolia and Cilicia, to judge from the geographical sequence of the kingdoms which they attacked.

From this we must infer that the five Sea Peoples who collaborated in the Libyan attack on Merenptah's Egypt must have sailed to Libya to do so, because the invasion originated in the Libyan homeland - in all probability Cyrenaica (O'Connor 1990:37-38). The Sea Peoples in question could not have traversed the Egyptian Delta and the land route (controlled by Egyptian fortresses) to Cyrenaica. As for the rather different set of Sea Peoples involved in the invasion of Egypt in the time of Ramesses III, the Egyptian texts state they came by sea (Edgerton and Wilson 1936: 30, 55) but also, more surprisingly, by land (Edgerton and Wilson 1936: 30, 55). Moreover, the contingent moving by land was apparently a very big one, for Ramesses seems to have organized a large military force to deal with it (Edgerton and Wilson 1936: 35-39) and earlier the Sea Peoples had set up a substantial camp, "in one place" (Edgerton and Wilson 1936: 53), from which base they supposedly devastated the entire and extensive land of Amor or Amurru.

The Sea Peoples' advance by land may have been due to two factors, insofar as the Egyptian evidence is concerned. First, unlike the Sea Peoples involved in invading Merenptah's Egypt, those identified under Ramesses III were accompanied by women and children and presumably possessions, conveyed in heavy-looking wooden carts drawn by slow- moving zebu-oxen, a piece of pictorial evidence omitted from the accompanying inscriptions *(Medinet Habu* I: pl. 32; but see now also discussion *contra* in Drews 2000). Apparently, the vessels of the Sea Peoples were not suitable for these purposes. Second, while the polities attacked by the Sea Peoples all had shipping, capable to some degree of opposing the seaborne advance of the former, they also had extensive inland territories more effectively overcome or reduced by forces moving by land.

Since the land contingent was organized specifically by peoples all identified as "islanders", a very considerable organizational effort is implied. Indeed, there is archaeological evidence for destructions at numerous sites - both inland and coastal - in the Aegean, Anatolia, Cyprus, and Syria-Palestine, all occurring within a 50-year period from ca. 1225-1175 BC. The question which has been debated for the past century or more is whether the Sea Peoples caused all of these destructions or if, in fact, they are even all related - various alternate theories proposed during the past century have included earthquakes, drought, famine, internal rebellions, and systems-collapse (Drews 1993; Nur and Cline 2000; Stiebing 2001; also Betancourt

2000; Sandars 1985:83). However, that the Sea Peoples' route to Egypt went via Ugarit in North Syria seems beyond question, if a letter found at that site is any indication:

> Say to the king of Alashiya [Cyprus], my father: Thus says the king of Ugarit, your son: My father, now the ships of the enemy have been coming. They have been setting fire to my cities and have done harm to the land. Doesn't my father know that all of my infantry and [chariotry] are stationed in Khatte, and that all of my ships are stationed in the land of Lukki? They haven't arrived back yet, so the land is thus prostrate. May my father be aware of this matter. Now the seven ships of the enemy which have been coming have done harm to us. Now if other ships of the enemy turn up, send me a report somehow(?) so that I will know.

<div align="right">(RS 20.238 - Ugaritica 5.24 (trans. Beckman 1996: 7);
Sandars 1985:142-143; Schaeffer 1968: 87-89)</div>

However, the Egyptian sources also raise some significant geographical issues. First, why are the two lists of Sea Peoples (Merenptah's and Ramesses III's) so different in composition? This raises the possibility that the two sets of peoples were geographically remote from each other, e.g. perhaps along the eastern and western sides of the Aegean respectively, or perhaps in one case west of the Aegean altogether. The two sets have in common only the Shekelesh for certain, though possibly also the Shardana and the Teresh. Possibly, quite different factors were at work, involving political and other relations amongst the various Sea Peoples rather than their geographical disposition. However, given our still very imperfect understanding of the Sea Peoples, any reasonable possibility suggested by the Egyptian sources needs to be kept in play until definitive evidence to the contrary emerges.

In some instances the Egyptian sources display a selectivity that may be significant, but whether in relationship to the Sea Peoples themselves, or to specific compositional needs (written or pictorial) is debatable. For example, two of Merenptah's documents highlight only one of the several Sea Peoples accompanying the Libyans, noting that the Libyan leader mobilized the Shekelesh and "every foreign country involved" (Edel 1961; also Bakry 1973), i.e. the other Sea Peoples mentioned on the other stelae of Merenptah. Presumably, the compression was for reasons of space, but it is not known why the Shekelesh were chosen as the specific representative of the entire group. Only the Shekelesh may have been involved in both of the initiatives against Egypt: perhaps there was something especially distinctive about them.

A similar kind of selectivity is seen in the texts of Ramesses III. The full list of the relevant Sea Peoples is provided only twice, and in different texts (Edgerton and Wilson 1936: 53, 131); all five are (except for perhaps substituting Shardana for Shekelesh) also listed in P. Harris (Breasted [1906] 2001, 4: 201). Elsewhere in the Medinet Habu texts, when limited space or a desired compositional emphasis required that not all the Sea Peoples be listed, it is typically the Tjekru and the Peleset who are named.

For example, in a scene showing prisoners from a fifth year campaign against Libyans and from the 8th year conflict with the Sea Peoples being presented to Amun-Ra, the compositional structure allowed only two registers. One appropriately depicts Libu, but the other (Figure 7:2) only the great fallen ones of Tjekru, as if they are more

significant than the other Sea Peoples, or - perhaps the same thing - can stand for all the others (Edgerton and Wilson 1936:44-46). Moreover, in a text primarily describing the 5th year Libyan campaign, the essentials of conflict with the Sea Peoples are reported laconically, but while the northern countries are specified, only the Tjekru and Peleset are named, as if the two are more significant than the others (Edgerton and Wilson 1936: 30).

The Peleset are singled out in other ways. In an elaborate depiction of arms being issued, for both the 5th year (Libyan) and 8th year (Sea Peoples) campaigns, Tjemehu (an archaic term for Libya) stands for the former, and the Peleset for the latter, as if somehow representative of the entire confederation of Sea Peoples (Edgerton and Wilson 1936:35). Moreover, in the especially important and large-scale representation of the king presenting Sea Peoples prisoners to Amun-Ra (west wall, first court) the text epitomizes his defeat of the Sea Peoples by referring only to the Peleset, Danuna and Shekelesh, while the three registers of prisoners are labelled, from top to bottom, as leaders of every country (i.e. implicitly, all the Sea Peoples?), the Danuna and the Peleset (Edgerton and Wilson 1936: 47-48). Finally, the Peleset are once described as "hidden in their towns" (Egyptian *dmiw;* Edgerton and Wilson 1936: 35).[1] Towns are not otherwise associated with Sea Peoples in Egyptian sources.

Much of the information concerning the Tjekru and the Peleset may be due to variations in usage, or misused conventional terms. However, given the paucity of
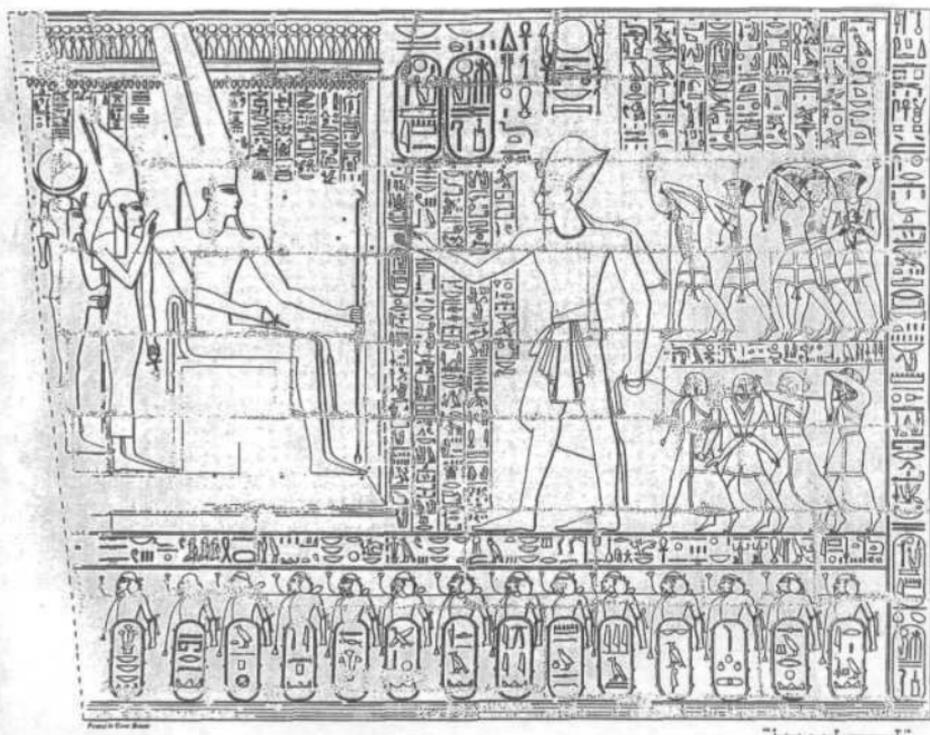

Figure 7:2 The presentation of Tjekru Sea Peoples and Libyan prisoners to the god Amun-Ra; Medinet Habu (Oriental Institute, Chicago).

evidence about Sea Peoples the possibility that more was implied should not be overlooked.

Finally, the historicity of the textual records, both of Merenptah and Ramesses III, is an important issue. First, are the historical records of Ramesses Ill's reign, as displayed at Medinet Habu, actually those of Merenptah, copied from his nearby, and now largely destroyed, mortuary temple? The case has been made (Lesko 1992), but is not supported by most scholars. In any event, it would simply push the question of the historicity of the texts about the Sea Peoples back into an earlier reign, without changing the essentials.

The second, more important point is the common suggestion that the demands of temple symbolism, royal ideology and, more crudely, propaganda mean that the records of Ramesses III are not to be taken at face value. On the same grounds, the historical narratives describing Merenptah's contacts with Libyans and Sea Peoples should be equally suspect. An extreme example of this scepticism is provided by Cifola (1988), who argued that the Sea Peoples in Ramesses Ill's time were not a coherent body, or a confederation; and that the process of their migration into the eastern Mediterranean was not unitary, but involved different groups at different times. This resulted in many small-scale clashes between Egyptians and Sea Peoples, which the Egyptians transformed into two great, but nonexistent, battles in the Medinet Habu records.

However, the explicit Egyptian statements must be accepted at face value, at least for now. Under Merenptah, some Sea Peoples joined Libyans in a substantial, if abortive invasion of the western Egyptian Delta. Relatively soon after, another group of Sea Peoples created an effective combined military and migratory force that moved along the southern coast of Anatolia, and then down along the Levantine coast, and coastal lands. The Egyptian sources appear to claim that the kingdoms encountered *en route* were unable to resist; and the process was relatively rapid, even if it involved a few years, rather than a few months. Finally, the Sea Peoples offered a very substantial threat to Egypt and, as the attack on the Nile mouths indicates, intended to penetrate and settle in Egypt. The Egyptians successfully prevented this, but did settle their many Sea Peoples prisoners in royal strongholds in Egypt and perhaps elsewhere (Breasted [1906] 2001:201), in part as a military resource. In fact, at Medinet Habu, Sea Peoples are shown fighting on the Egyptian side in the battles against the Libyans, Nubians (Figure 7:3) and others, although in theory these events sometimes antedate the eighth year victories.

For example, Sea Peoples with feathered headdresses appear fighting on the Egyptians' side against Nubians *(Medinet Habu* I: pl. 8) and, with horned helmets, in attacks on two cities in the Levant *(Medinet Habu* II: pls. 88, 94). All these events are undated, and may be unhistorical, included in the decorative programme to fill out its cosmographic coverage. However, in the Egyptian campaign against Libyans in the fifth regnal year of Ramesses III (i.e. three years before the conflict with the Sea Peoples), several relevant scenes show Sea Peoples in both feathered headdresses and horned helmets fighting on the side of the Egyptians *(Medinet Habu* I: pls. 17,18,19, 24). This could have been anachronism, since the scenes were probably designed and carved after the eighth regnal year; or the Egyptian army might have included Sea Peoples before Ramesses Ill's conflict with the Sea Peoples. They could have been
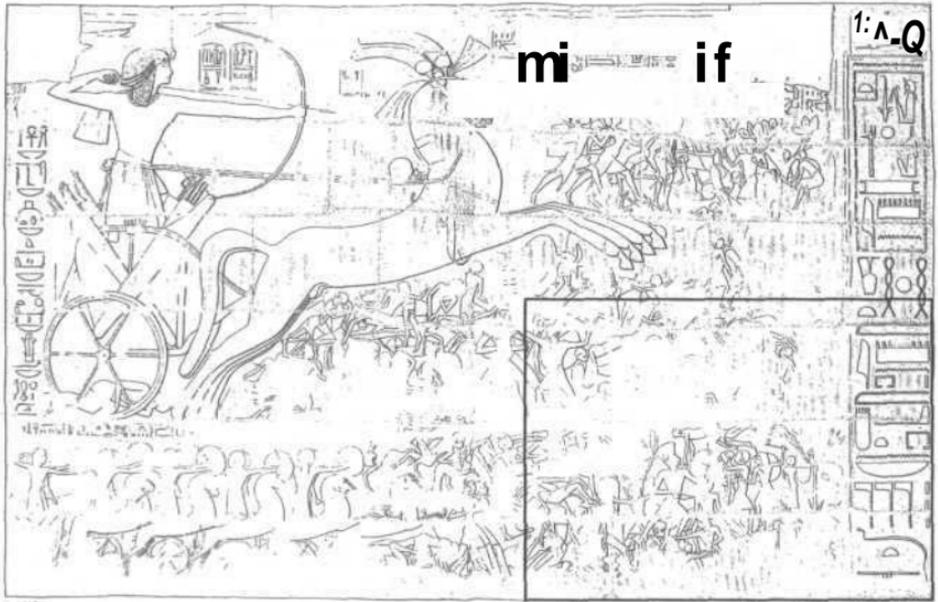
Figure 7:3 Ramesses III slaughtering Nubians; Sea Peoples are included in the Egyptian army. Lower right detail shown below; Medinet Habu (Oriental Institute, Chicago).

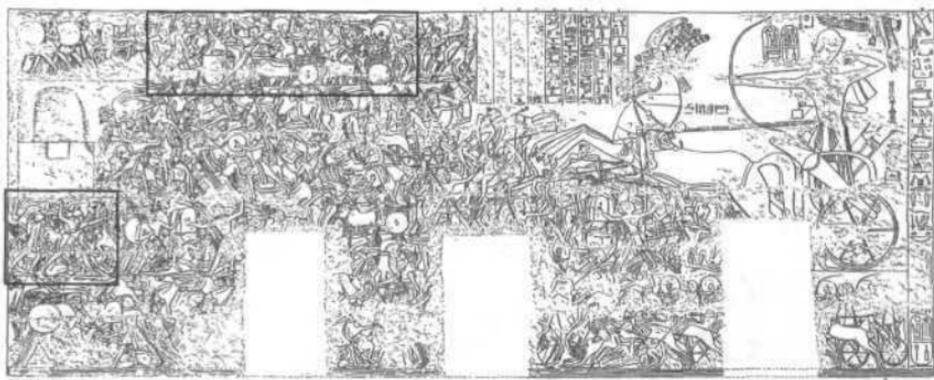Sea Peoples employed in the Egyptian army.

former prisoners of war of King Merenptah captured only 11 years before. This likelihood is reinforced by the fact that Ramesses Ill's battles with the Sea Peoples themselves included Sea Peoples (horned helmets only) fighting on the Egyptian side *(Medinet Habu* I: pls. 30, 35, 32)! Finally, in the battle against Libyans in the eleventh regnal year of Ramesses III, Sea Peoples, wearing both feathered headdresses and horned helmets, join the Egyptians in the conflict *(Medinet Habu* II: pl. 71).

In Djahy, however, Egypt - while victorious in battle - was less successful in stemming or controlling Sea Peoples' settlement in the area. No surviving record after Ramesses III refers to the Danuna, Shekelesh or Washosh (this last people in fact is attested only at Medinet Habu) but the case is quite different as regards Tjekru and Peleset. After Ramesses III, Egypt's domination of the area now occupied by Lebanon and Israel seems to have gradually but unceasingly contracted (Weinstein 1981: 22-23) while the demographic and cultural composition of the region changed considerably. Sea Peoples were part of this change. As discussed above, an Egyptian text of ca. 1100 BC, less than a century after Ramesses Ill's victory, shows that Shardana, Tjekru and Peleset were settled in the coastal regions of Canaan (Redford 1992: 292). The Peleset went on to become the Philistine kingdoms of the Bible (Redford 1992:298 ff), and a fictional, but historically based description of an Egyptian envoy's adventures in ca. 1082 BC reveals that Dor (on the coast of modern Israel) was a Tjekru town (see above, Tjekru). We no clear indication as to where the defeated remnants of the Eqwosh, Danuna, Teresh, Washosh, and the Lukki settled, but the Lukki may well have simply made their way back home to south-western Anatolia, while the Danuna may conceivably have settled in the biblical area of Dan - what is now northern Israel.

Pictures worth a thousand words?

So far, this discussion has been based mainly on Egyptian textual sources: but at Medinet Habu these are complemented by a rich pictorial record concerning the Sea Peoples.

The pictorial record (Figure 7:4) comprises several large-scale scenes (complemented by relatively short texts) extending along the external face of the north side of the mortuary temple of Ramesses III. Usually, the scenes are demarcated from each other by vertical dividers of text. The subject matter comprises, from west to east, the equipping of the Egyptian army; its march to or into Djahy; the land battle against the Sea Peoples; a royal lion hunt; the battle against the Sea Peoples' ships in the river mouths; and - in this one instance not divided off from the preceding scene - the

Figure 7:4 Diagrammatic representation of the scenes relevant to the Sea Peoples on the north external wall of the temple of Medinet Habu.

Figure 7:5 The land battle against the Sea Peoples; Medinet Habu. Note the ox-carts in the upper register, and Sea Peoples fighting on the Egyptian side, centre left, detail of both shown below (Oriental Institute, Chicago).

Ox-carts of the Sea Peoples.

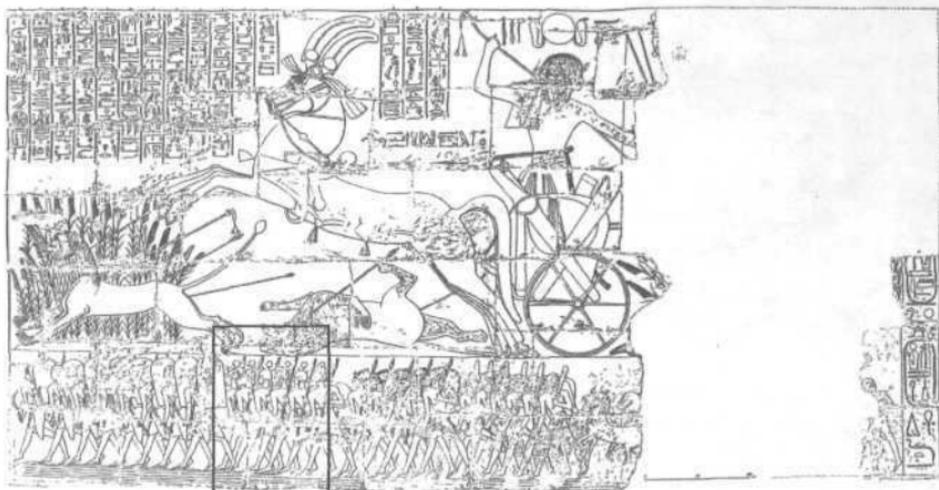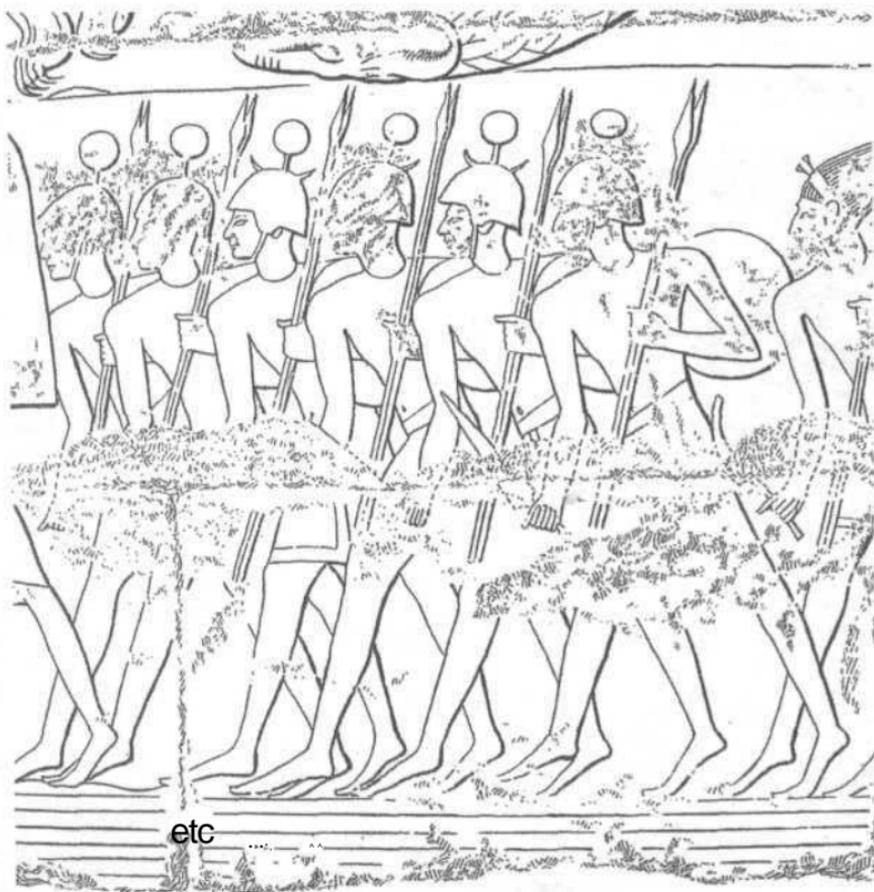Sea Peoples employed in the Egyptian army.

Figure 7:6 The lion hunt of Ramesses III; Medinet Habu. Below: the second contingent of troops from the left are Sea Peoples, detail shown below (Oriental Institute, Chicago).

etc

Sea Peoples employed in the hunt.
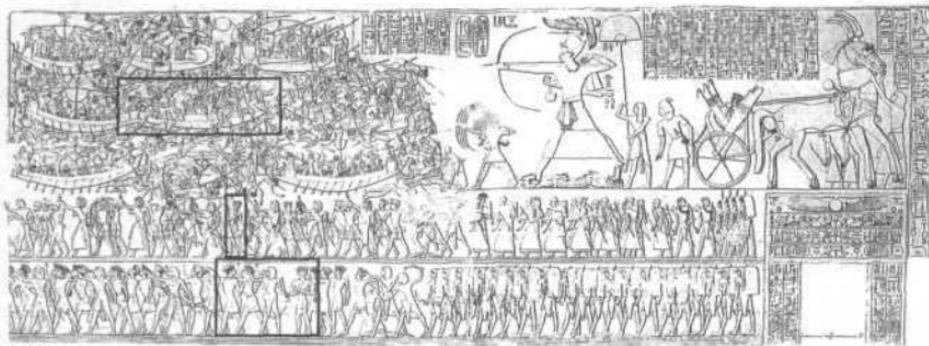
Figure 7:7 The battle of the river mouths against the Sea Peoples; Medinet Habu. Note the distinctive Sea Peoples' ships, with a bird head at either end; and an apparent Sea Peoples 'leader', details shown below (Oriental Institute, Chicago).

Sea Peoples' ship.
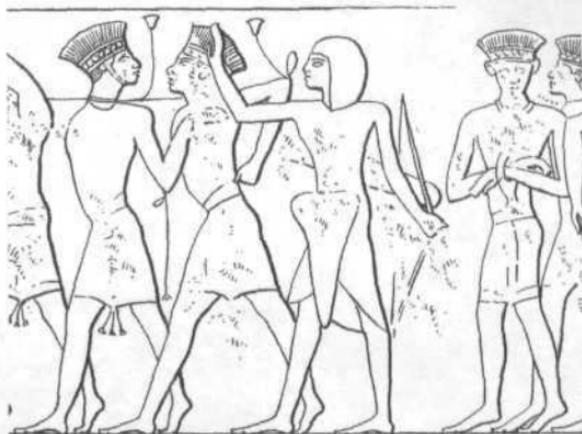
Sea Peoples' leader.

Heraldic group and Sea Peoples' leader (?).
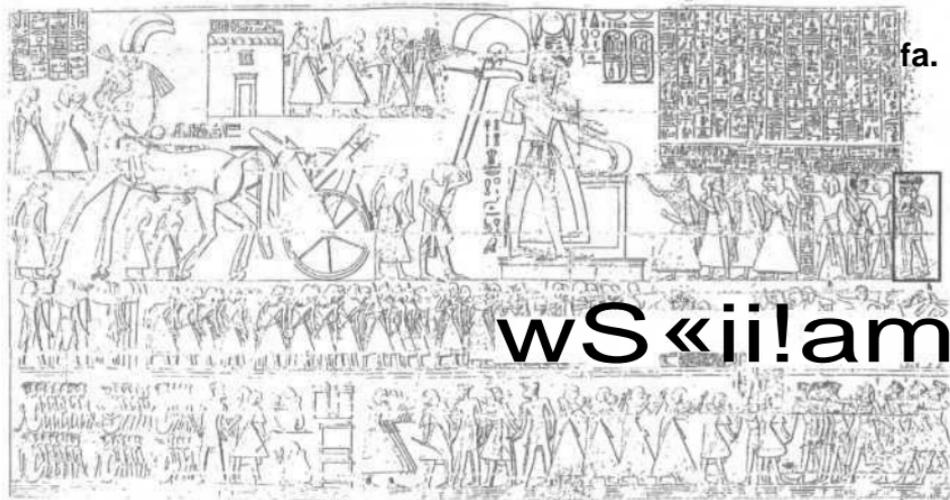
Figure 7:8 The celebration of victory over the Sea Peoples (Oriental Institute, Chicago). Right: detail of a single manacled Sea Peoples individual, perhaps a/the leader; Medinet Habu.

celebration of victory, with emphasis upon the water battle (Figures 7:5-7:8). Finally, a last scene shows the king presenting Sea Peoples prisoners and Libyans to Amun-Ra (for the entire sequence see *Medinet Habu* I: pls. 29-13), the Libyans referring back to scenes depicting the 5th year conflict with Libyans, scenes which precede those dealing with the Sea Peoples and run along the west (north half) and north (western segment) external wall faces.

The other relevant scene occurs on the west wall (south half) of the first court, and depicts Sea Peoples' prisoners presented to Amun-Ra *(Medinet Habu* I: pl. 44). It is balanced on the north half by the long text describing the conflict and its causes (Edgerton and Wilson 1936: 49-58). It should be noted that the temple proper begins at this point, with a pylon and a second court; the first court and its pylon are, functionally, an add-on.

The texts relevant to Sea Peoples at Medinet Habu contain a core of historical actuality (see above) and this should be true of the scenes as well. However, the ways in which actuality is presented in both contexts are powerfully shaped by two factors. First is the cosmography and symbolism of the Egyptian temple in the New Kingdom and later times (Baines 1995; Finnestad 1997). In the New Kingdom temples, scenes of victory over foreign foes were typically rendered, in emblematic or more realistic form, on the entrance pylon and other exterior faces around the temple. One reason for this was that victory was a boon from the deities, hence appropriately depicted on the temples built by the king as thanks offerings for this and more. These scenes also recorded, almost like a symbolically rendered legal document, the transfer of prisoners and booty to the temple's estates.

Moreover, each temple was also a miniaturization of cosmos, depicting in architecture and scene heaven, earth and netherworld. This situation was due in part to cosmos' equation with perfect beauty, a quality thus imparted to the temple as well; but also to the fact that temple rituals and festivals, while varied in content, were patterned after myths describing the creation and continual re-creation of cosmos and hence appropriately played out in an architectural rendering *of* cosmos.

Hence there are cosmographic reasons for the peripheral location of scenes concerning the Egyptian king's defeating and dominating foreign foes. From a terrestrial perspective, the foreign lands fringed and surrounded Egypt, a perfect social order equated with the perfection of the temple. From a pan-cosmic perspective, the scenes had another significance. Cosmos was surrounded by limitless formlessness which had a dynamic negative force, called Isfet (Assmann 1989: 55-88). Isfet was the source of cosmos' actualized life, but of its very nature also ceaselessly but vainly sought to destroy cosmos, and especially the solar cycle whereby the sun god brought life and repeated renewals to cosmos. Thus, by analogy, the triumph of pharaoh on earth equates with the deities' defence of cosmos, and the king's foreign foes are equivalent to the demons and monsters who vainly attack cosmic order. The relationship is quite explicit: Ramesses III for example, in defeating foreign foes is identified with the god Seth who "rages, overthrowing the enemy in front of the sun bark" which carries the sun god around cosmos (Edgerton and Wilson 1936:38,42,47, 57). Such scenes also had the positive power of actually repelling real supernatural danger which attempted to penetrate any temple, destroy its cult and thus contribute to the collapse of the cosmos (Essche-Merchez 1994).

The second factor shaping the treatment of historical actuality at Medinet Habu is the fact that not only the long rhetorical text (west wall, first court) but also the externally located scenes (and their textual complements) each constitute a "King's Novel" *(Königsnovelle),* a genre with its own particular rules and practices. Loprieno has shown that this genre incorporates a great variety of literary forms, and that all are structured around a common theme, the king fulfilling "at the same time all roles of societal representation; he is the *image,* the *trace* and the *symbol* of the country's cohesion" (Loprieno 1996b: 277). As image, the king stands for Egypt as a whole; as trace, his existence is causally tied to Egypt's well-being; and as symbol, "he is theologically equated to entire spheres of the Egyptian conception of the world" (Loprieno 1996b: 277-278), and thus can be identified with some or all deities, or with the powerful forces and beings of nature. Narrative in the King's Novel therefore emphasizes the king's function in the "interface between the divine plan and human condition" (Loprieno 1996b: 281).

These are the conceptual contexts which must be taken into account when we try to understand what the scenes (and texts) at Medinet Habu tell us about the Sea Peoples. The four relevant scenes are those depicting the land battle (Figure 7:5 above); the lion hunt (Figure 7:6 above); the battle of the river mouths (Figure *7:7* above); and the celebration of victory following the latter (Figure 7:8 above). These scenes are represented diagrammatically, in their sequence on the wall, in Figure 7:4 above (see also Essche-Merchez 1992).

That the scenes (and those preceding them, i.e. equipping the army, and the march to Djahy) comprise a largely pictorial King's Novel is evident from the narrative sequence in which the king is visually and verbally (in the accompanying short texts) extremely prominent. In each of the four scenes the king, his chariot and his magnificent horses - all on a superhuman scale, as compared to all the other participants in each scene - occupy much of the visual field; on average, 34 per cent in the two battle scenes, and about 63 per cent in the other two.

The accompanying texts (and, in much expanded form, the long text on the west wall of the first court) make it clear that as image, the king is identified as the embodiment of Egypt; and that as trace, he is the recipient of the powers transferred to him especially by Amun-Ra, but also other deities, thus ensuring Egypt's victories. Finally, as symbol, Ramesses III is identified with a number of deities, which vary appropriately according to context. For example, when a scene is focused more on Egypt and the king's benevolent roles *vis à vis* Egypt, Ramesses is typically identified with Ra, the epitome of rulership (e.g. in the equipping scene, and the celebration of victory), but in the battle scenes the king is equated with the aggressive god Seth, who defends the solar bark against monstrous attackers (compare Edgerton and Wilson 1936: 35,38-39,42,48). Ramesses is also identified with powerful natural forces - the whirlwind, and lions, wild bulls and falcons (Edgerton and Wilson 1936:36-37,39,41, 43). Above all, the king is a flame, or an all-consuming heat, in fact the embodiment of the solar orb itself, and its fiercely protective uraei (Edgerton and Wilson 1936:37,39, 40). This point is rendered pictorially as well; when the king is not in battle (in the equipping, march and celebration scenes) the sundisk and its two uraei float over his head. They do not in the battle scenes, because the king there is totally identified with the solar orb and radiates intense and burning power.

At the same time as the scenes form a King's Novel, they also, from the perspective of temple cosmography and symbolism, represent Egypt and the foreign lands around it, which are totally crushed when they attack or resist Egypt; and, at another level, the sun god (embodied in the king) triumphantly traversing the solar path around cosmos while his demonic enemies (here represented by foreign foes) are overthrown.

The imagery of the Sea Peoples is therefore manipulated so as to service these two conflated forms, namely the King's Novel and cosmographic symbolism. In the two battle scenes significant vertical axes - the central and sub-central (one-quarter) ones - of each scene are subtly manipulated so the king and his environs are visually presented as epitomizing order and power, while the defeated enemy represent chaotic, orderless forces reduced to impotence and death by the exercise of that power and order; literally, in these scenes, order *(Maat)* confronts chaos *(Isfet)*. Thus, in the land battle scene (Figure 7:5 above; see also Figure 7:4) the royal (western) half comprises a highly symmetrical arrangement of king, chariot and horses around the sub-central axis, while the foreigners (eastern) half is filled with a disorderly melee of panic-stricken Sea Peoples fleeing, being slaughtered or surrendering at the onset of pharaoh and his army. In the scene of battle in the river mouths (Figure *7:7* above), the king is allocated a western half (approximately) in which he, on foot, and his horses and chariot, are posed symmetrically around the sub-central axis. The other, eastern (approximate) half shows Sea Peoples' ships attacked by Egyptian ships (Nelson 1943); the former are being grappled, and literally overturned, the lowest placed being completely capsized. As for the Sea Peoples themselves many have tumbled into the water, to be killed as they try to get ashore, while others, taken prisoner, are packed, manacled, into Egyptian vessels. The conceptual contexts described above explain the highly unrealistic nature of these scenes. There is no *real* battle: the enemy collapse immediately before pharaoh, just as demons collapse before the sun god's defenders (Groenewegen-Frankfort 1987:138-189; on New Kingdom battle scenes in general see Heinz 2001).

As for the Sea Peoples, they also verbally (in the texts) fulfil the roles assigned them by context. More by implication than explicitly, they are bulls killed by a lion (the king), bulls gored by a greater bull (the king) and small birds ripped apart by a falcon (the king). Moreover, if the king is Seth, then the Sea Peoples by implication are demons, and like such demons they are butchered and reduced to ash by solar fire, i.e. the destructive solar heat radiating from the king.

Elsewhere in the scenes, Sea Peoples are emblematic of these themes in other ways. Thus, under the river mouth battle representation (Figure *7-1* above), two registers - one above the other - showing Sea Peoples prisoners being led off both feed into the two registers below the celebration of victory scene (Figure 7:8 above). The upper register in the river mouth battle scene represents Sea Peoples captured at the river mouths battle, and they run on to form part of the celebration of victory scene, in which these prisoners, and a pile of severed hands representing the slaughtered Sea Peoples, are presented to pharaoh. The lower register under the river mouths battle seems to represent Sea Peoples captives in general (i.e. the products of both battles) and runs on below the celebration of victory scene, where the prisoners are shown being branded and then registered for service within Egyptian institutions, temple

estates surely (given the context) but also perhaps royal strongholds. Thus, in the celebration of victory scene, Sea Peoples prisoners, now arranged in orderly rows and integrated into Egyptian society (at an appropriately subordinate level), form part of a larger icon celebrating the societal and cosmic order embodied in the king. Again, central and sub-central vertical axes are manipulated so as to create a highly symmetrical image representative of that order. On either side of the central axis are two symmetrically opposed groups: the king (on foot, at a podium) receiving his chief officials and important Sea Peoples prisoners (west) and the royal chariot and horses (east). The notion of order dominating disorder (here, the Sea Peoples) is represented in more subtle ways as well.

On the west sub-central (one-quarter) vertical axis is a vizier or chief minister, the highest ranking officer of government hence representative of order, while below on the same axis order dominates chaos in the form of severed hands counted by an official, or chaos is transmuted into order when, further below, and still on this axis, an official brands a prisoner. Moreover, at the top of the east sub-central vertical axis stands an emblem of royal power, a migdol or fortified tower, while at its bottom Egyptian officials grasp Sea Peoples prisoners who are being registered, a further example of disorder transmuted into order.

The Egyptians seem to have admired, as well as been enraged and frightened by, the invading barbarians. The evidence for this is partly negative: in the Medinet Habu texts the metaphors and imagery applied to Sea Peoples are few, whereas the treatment of Libyan foes is much more explicitly derogatory (Edgerton and Wilson 1936: 7-34, 60-94). More powerful however is the significance of the lion hunt scene (Figure 7:6 above; see also Figure 7:4 above). Whether this event, shown between the land battle and that of the river mouths, actually happened is unknown, but its symbolic significance *vis à vis* the Sea Peoples is substantial (Essche-Merchez 1992: 224-225). Compositionally, the lion hunt scene is presented as part, and even the central part, of the Sea Peoples scenes. It is literally one of them, but also has strongly emphasized centrality. First, it literally occupies the spatial centre of the series of Sea Peoples scenes, from equipping to celebration scene. Second, compositionally the lion hunt emphasizes the king's centrality in a unique way, as compared to the other Sea Peoples scenes. In the latter, the emblematic, highly symmetrical representation of royal power (king, chariot, horses) is always placed to one side of each scene's visual field. In the lion hunt scene, however, the entire visual field is occupied by the royal component, arranged symmetrically around the central, rather than a sub-central, axis. Finally, the lion hunt is rendered in a mannered style, which further contrasts with the other scenes, and again emphasizes the lion hunt's compositional, and implicitly ideological, centrality.

In terms of compositional position and content, the lion hunt scene equates with the defeats of the Sea Peoples on either side, a notion further supported by the associated text, which opens: "The lions are in travail and flee to their land" (Edgerton and Wilson 1936: 39-40), while generally they are described in the same terms as defeated human foes. However, the lion was symbolically of high value to the Egyptians (in the lion hunt text the king himself, as elsewhere, is described as "The lion, lord of victory" - Edgerton and Wilson 1936: 39), indicating that the Sea Peoples were considered worthy opponents. Other hunting scenes at Medinet Habu indicate

a hierarchy of foreign foes with Levantines equated with wild bulls, rated lower than lions, and the nomadic Libyans - more risibly - with desert animals such as gazelle, wild asses and even hares (O'Connor 2000:95).

Elsewhere, more historically specific information about the Sea Peoples is provided, albeit subordinated to the larger aims described above. Especially interesting is the appearance of the Sea Peoples warriors. Although five specific Sea Peoples are identified as comprising the invaders, in the land battle scene (and the representations of Sea Peoples prisoners in various scenes) all the soldiers wear identical costumes, specifically a helmet or headdress resembling feathers and a distinctive type of kilt. Apart from their capacity for uniting into a confederation, this is the principal indication in the Egyptian sources that the Sea Peoples (at least, those represented at Medinet Habu) shared to a significant degree a common culture. If Sea Peoples' costume varied significantly from one people to another the Egyptians were likely to have indicated that fact, a supposition made likely by the unique treatment of Sea Peoples' costumes in the battle in the river mouths scene (Figure *7'H* above).

Here, *two* types of Sea Peoples costume are carefully distinguished (Stadelmann 1984). Some of the Sea Peoples' ships are manned exclusively by men wearing the costume described above, others exclusively by men with a similar kilt but wearing round, smooth profile helmets, each with a pair of projecting horns. In the horizontal register below, Sea Peoples prisoners of both iconographic types are mingled together, but in the actual battle scene they operate quite separately from each other. The implication is clear: one or more of the Sea Peoples was costumed differently from one or more of the remainder, and thus there was a considerable difference in material culture within the Sea Peoples. Moreover, those wearing horned helmets associate solely with sea travel in the Medinet Habu scenes - yet a further example of differentiation.

Unfortunately, comparative evidence is insufficient to equate specific peoples with specific costumes. Many scholars identify the wearing of horned helmets with the Shardana (see Edgerton and Wilson 1936: 36 n. 39a), but at Medinet Habu there is no indication that Shardana were involved in the Sea Peoples invasion. P. Harris does indicate this, but is a less significant source, and omits the Shekelesh, a further indication of unreliability.

The Sea Peoples as a whole are also characterized by a type of ox-drawn cart, unique amongst Egyptian representations (land battle only: Figure 7:5 above) and a distinctive type of ship, with 'bird heads' at the prow and stern (battle of the river mouths; Figure *7:7)*. These ships were powered only by sail, not by oarsmen, conspicuous on the Egyptian ships in the river mouths battle scene. As an example of how ideological needs can influence historical conclusions, Wachsmann (2000: 105-115) has interpreted the depiction of a capsized Sea Peoples ship as showing that such ships had rowers guards, and hence *were* rowed. However, it seems more likely that the ship is shown breaking up (its sail also has a huge hole torn in it) and the 'rowers shield' is more probably a plank separating from the vessel's body (O'Connor 2000: 99).

The success of the Sea Peoples' invasion before encountering Egyptian forces suggests that they were militarily effective on land and sea, and that they may well

have had some form of centralized leadership *(contra* the arguments in Cifola 1988; or the example of the Vikings?). Neither of those characteristics are highlighted in the Medinet Habu scenes, which of their very nature must show the Sea Peoples as totally disorganized and bereft of leadership, and thus fully equivalent to the malevolent yet chaotic force of Isfet, which is continually reduced to impotence by the overwhelming power of cosmic and societal order, as manifest in the triumphant Egyptian king. Moreover, the leaders of Egypt's foreign foes are typically (but not always; see Edgerton and Wilson 1936:60-68) minimized or overlooked in such scenes in general, because the enemy, if chaotic, should be leaderless; and actual leaders should not be given visual or verbal prominence because as embodiments of leadership their role in opposing pharaoh, the ultimate embodiment of leadership, is considered, by definition, to be so despicable.

This said, it can be observed that in the Medinet Habu scenes clues as to these aspects of the Sea Peoples are provided, within the interstices of the larger, ideologically driven compositions. For example, the land battle scene does provide indications of Sea Peoples' military capacities (Figure 7:5 above). It reveals that the Sea Peoples deployed chariotry as well as infantry (with no indication of the former in the texts) and the Sea Peoples warriors fleeing the carnage in the upper and lower right hand corners do so in good order, perhaps reflective of the military discipline of Sea Peoples warriors as a whole. Visually, the river mouths battle scene does not provide such indications of the Sea Peoples' military effectiveness at sea; here, the described Egyptian preparations are a more significant indication of the Sea Peoples' anticipated strength - the king states: "I caused the Nile mouth to be prepared like a strong wall with warships, galleys and coasters" (Edgerton and Wilson 1936: 54), while a "stockade of lances" surrounded the Sea Peoples along the shore (Edgerton and Wilson 1936: 55).

Finally, even the issue of Sea Peoples' leadership is raised, in a subtle and understated way - making use of the sub-central vertical axes, the compositional roles of which have been discussed above. In the river mouths battle scene (Figure *7:7* above) the western sub-central axis is marked by a unique heraldic arrangement of two Sea Peoples prisoners in the lowest horizontal register: they confront each other in a way not seen elsewhere in the Medinet Habu scenes. Immediately above them, on the same sub-central axis, is a rare representation of a Sea Peoples prisoner, not cruelly bound at the elbows (the usual situation in presentation scenes) but wearing the less agonizing manacles, in the form of a lion emblematic of Egyptian royal power. This same figure recurs to the right or east of the heraldic figures in the register below (which depicts a different, later stage in the experiences of the prisoners) and yet again in the presentation of high ranking prisoners to the king in the celebration of victory scene (Figure 7:8 above). In all three cases the circumstances indicate that the same individual is being represented and subtly indicated as the ultimate leader of the Sea Peoples' invasion (O'Connor 2000:99). Ideologically, he may be present as a foil to the opposing, and by definition unique, ultimate leader on the Egyptian side: pharaoh himself. In reality Sea Peoples' leadership may have been complex: a possible indication of centrality is provided here, generated but perhaps also distorted by the compositional and ideological needs of the Medinet Habu scenes.

Summary and conclusion

It could very well be argued from the above review of the available evidence that it is the very complexity of the Sea Peoples themselves which constitutes the chief difficulty in reconstructing the details of their culture(s), let alone their origins. Alternatively, some would argue that this is not the case at all, rather that the available textual evidence almost always derives from - and represents - exclusively Egyptian perceptions (in both text and depiction), as well as interests. It is even possible to argue that a unified 'Sea Peoples' never did exist but were merely a useful Egyptian construct which could often act as an 'explanation' for a host of varied incidents: on this view, a varied set of peoples would have been artificially grouped together by the Egyptians under the rubric of 'foreigners from the sea' (Breasted [1906] 2001: 255).

However, even the available textual and representational evidence can appear puzzling in their own right. It is not only that virtually all the available evidence for names of places and rulers are Egyptian, but also that - for instance - texts of King Ramesses III (1187-1156 BC) describe the Sea Peoples invading the eastern Mediterranean and, on the most dramatic reading of the sources, bringing an end to long-standing polities there until meeting defeat at the hands of the Egyptians. Yet, while such Egyptian texts identify five peoples as involved, the accompanying representational scenes seemingly represent only two.

But, in truth, it is likely to be the un-thought-out nature of the methodologies that have been applied to the 'mystery' of the Sea Peoples which lies behind the current exceedingly unsatisfactory nature of our understanding of the relevant events. It has to be admitted that two centuries of research and a spate of recent volumes about the Sea Peoples[2] have left us with much circumstantial evidence and many circular arguments. In all these cases, scholars have used all sorts of evidence coming from all kinds of chronological periods in their attempts to trace the Sea Peoples. It is clear that a rigorous set of methodological principles needs to be formulated to tackle the available, varied, and necessarily partial evidence accessible for study. Such principles are available in the disciplines of archaeology and historical text criticism. For example, standard historiographical practice would require of the historian that the sources are weighted according to context and date. At the simplest level, where there is, for example, a Hittite document discussing the Lukki, which can be considered both contemporary and relevant, it should be assigned a higher priority than, for instance, a later document concerned with the foundation of Salamis on Cyprus, and so on. Above all, the archaeological evidence, the material evidence for peoples in each region, must provide the framework for discussion. Some historians (e.g. Kuhrt 1995: 392) would reject outright almost all of the naming equations that are such a prominent feature of most discussions of the Sea Peoples.

Therefore, at least of equal importance is to decide the relative weight to be given in interpretation and analysis to texts when they are accompanied by archaeological information, *vis à vis* when texts exist in isolation, as the only available evidence. Given the inevitable and long-accepted bias involved in the creation of all written sources, the importance of any archaeological supporting evidence to identify, and thereby access, the possible activities of different Sea Peoples cannot be overstressed (Kuhrt 1995:386). Indeed, it seems difficult, if not inherently impossible, to critically assess the

claims for naming correlations (between Egyptian term and alleged place name) on the basis of linguistics, without supporting archaeological evidence to determine what was actually going on on the ground in terms of changes in population and/or changes in material culture.

Of course, the nature and dependability of any such archaeological evidence will be very variable, and must be assessed and evaluated in its own right; nevertheless, the potential evidence to be derived from pottery and other dateable artefacts - quite apart from human skeletal material - cannot be overestimated. To be plain, it seems unlikely that it will really prove possible to 'make sense' of the Egyptian record of the Sea Peoples before it becomes possible to isolate relevant material culture of the peoples concerned, and to be able to relate it to the archaeological evidence of the activities of the 'Mycenaeans' or other Mediterranean people. Archaeological evidence must be deemed to be the primary source material for an understanding of cultural and population change and movements at the end of the Late Bronze Age (ca. 1250-1000 BC) of the region. Currently, convincing association between archaeological and textual evidence is often impossible.

Also important should be the comparative analysis of the later archaeological evidence for another 'great cultural upheaval' in the Mediterranean, the Greek and Phoenician colonizations from the eighth century BC onwards. It will be instructive to see whether the archaeological distribution on the ground will reveal a different pattern between the two alleged 'invasions' of the area. Currently, the existence and distribution of the 'degraded Mycenaean' pottery is the best evidence of what may have been happening in the earlier of the two periods.

Meanwhile, however, we find ourselves still asking the most basic of questions about the Sea Peoples. They remain a mystery, because the sources for their existence and impact are confined to a large extent to the ancient Egyptian expression of the world in writing and art. Until more archaeological evidence emerges to correct that imbalance, the Sea Peoples seem destined to epitomize a classic disjunction between archaeological and historical accounts of the past. Few other peoples present such a stimulating challenge.

Notes

1   *dmiw* can be just the point where the boat touches the land *(dtniw* = "touch").
2   Other recent publications include Dothan 1982; Dothan and Dothan 1992; Drews 1993; Gitin *et al.* 1998; Leahy 2001; Nibbi 1975; Oren 2000; Sandars 1985; Ward and Joukowsky 1992; Zangger 1994, 1995. On the ships of Medinet Habu, see Artzy 1997; Raban and Stieglitz 1991; Wachsmann 1981, 1982, 1997, 1998, 2000.

Appendix: some translations of relevant inscriptions concerning the Sea Peoples

Merenptah: Year 5

Great Karnak Inscription:

[Beginning of the victory that his majesty achieved in the land of Libya] Eqwosh, Teresh, Lukki, Shardana, Shekelesh, Northerners coming from all lands.

... the third season, saying: The wretched, fallen chief of Libya ... has fallen upon the country of Tehenu with his bowmen - Shardana, Shekelesh, Eqwosh, Lukki, Teresh, taking the best of every warrior and every man of war of his country ...

List of the captives carried off from this land of Libya and the countries which he brought with him...

Sherden, Shekelesh, Eqwosh of the countries of the sea, who had no foreskins:

Shekelesh 222 men

Making 250 hands

Teresh 742 men

Making 790 hands

Shardana - -

[Making] —

[Ek]wosh who had no foreskins, slain,

whose hands were carried off, (for) they

had no [foreskins] —

Shekelesh and Teresh who came as enemies of Libya - -

— Kehek, and Libyans, carried off as living prisoners 218 men

(after Breasted [1906] 2001,3: 241,243,249)

The Cairo Column: Year 5, second month of the third season (tenth month):

One came to say to his majesty: "The wretched [chief] of Libya has invaded [with] -, being men and women, Shekelesh and every foreign country —."

(after Breasted [1906] 2001,3:253)

The Heliopolis Text: Year 5, second month of the third season (tenth month):

One came to say to his majesty: "The wretched chief of Libya has invaded and the land of Libya, being men and women, Shekelesh and every foreign country, which is with him, to violate the borders of Egypt."

(after Edel 1961; see Bakry 1973)

The Athribis Stela:

... Eqwosh [of] the countries of the sea, whom had brought the wretched [fallen chief of Libya, whose] hands [were carried off]   2,201 [+x] men

Shekelesh	200 men
Teresh	722[+x]men
- - Libya, and Shardana, slain	- m e n

(after Breasted [1906] 2001,3: 255)

Ramesses III: Year 8

Text inscribed in interior courtyard at Medinet Habu:

Year 8 under the majesty of (Ramesses III)... The foreign countries 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 Khatte, Qode, Carchemish, Arzawa, and Alashiya on, being cut off at [one time]. A camp [was set up] in one place in Amor. 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 Philistines, Tjekru, Shekelesh, Denye(n), and Washosh, lands united. They laid their hands upon the lands as far as the circuit of the earth, their hearts confident and trusting: 'Our plans will succeed!'

Now the heart of this god, the Lord of the Gods, was prepared and ready to ensnare them like birds ... I organized my frontier in Djahy, prepared before them: princes, commanders of garrisons, and maryanuu. I have the river-mouths prepared like a strong wall, with warships, galleys and coasters, (fully) equipped, for they were manned completely from bow to stern with valiant warriors carrying their weapons. The troops consisted of every picked man of Egypt. They were like lions roaring upon the mountain tops. The chariotry consisted of runners, of picked men, of every good and capable chariot-warrior. The horses were quivering in every part of their bodies, prepared to crush the foreign countries under their hoofs. I was the valiant Montu, standing fast at their head, so that they might gaze upon the capturing of my hands.

Those who reached my frontier, their seed is not, their heart and soul are finished forever and ever. Those who came forward together on the sea, the full flame was in front of them at the river-mouths, while a stockade of lances surrounded them on the shore. They were dragged in, enclosed, and prostrated on the beach, killed, and made into heaps from tail to head. Their ships and their goods were as if fallen into the water.

I have made the lands turn back from (even) mentioning Egypt: for when they pronounce my name in their land, then they are burned up. Since I sat upon the throne of Har-akhti and the Great-of-Magic was fixed upon my head like Ra, 1 have not let foreign countries behold the frontier of Egypt, to boast thereof to the Nine Bows.

(after Edgerton and Wilson 1936: pl. 46, lines 1,16-25;
revised trans., Wilson 1969: 262-263)

Inscription in interior courtyard at Medinet Habu labelled "The Inscription of the Year 5" (but most probably recording events from the Year 8):

The northern countries quivered in their bodies, the Peleset, Tjek[er and ...]. They cut off their (own) land, and were coming, their soul finished. They were teher warriors on land: another (group) was on the sea. Those who came on [land were overthrown and killed... 1.

Amon-Ra was after them, destroying them. Those who entered the river-mouths were like birds ensnared in the net... Their leaders were carried off and slain. They were cast down and pinioned ...

(after Edgerton and Wilson 1936: pls.. 27-28, lines 51-56;
revised translation following Wilson 1969: 263)

Text *(Medinet Habu* I: pl. 14) inscribed at Medinet Habu, accompanying a scene of a naval battle with vessels of both Egyptians and Sea Peoples, and the pharaoh and his infantry fighting from the shore:

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 battlefield like a runner. The dread of him and the terror of him have entered into 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 enraged lion, attacking his assailant with his paws: plundering on his right hand and powerful on his left hand, like Set destroying the serpent Evil of Character. It is Amun-Ra who has overthrown for him the lands and has crushed for him every land under his feet: King of Upper and Lower Egypt, Lord of the Two Lands: Usermare-Meriamon.

(after Edgerton and Wilson 1936: pls. 37-39, lines 8-23)

Text *(Medinet Habu* I: pl. 15) inscribed at Medinet Habu:

Spoken by his majesty to the royal princes, the officials, the royal chamberlains, and the charioteers: See ye the great strength of my father Amun-Ra! As for the countries who came from their land in the isles in the midst of the sea, as they were (coming) forward toward Egypt, their hearts relying on their hands, a net was prepared for them, to ensnare them. They that entered into the Nile mouths were caught, fallen into the midst of it, pinioned in their places, butchered, and their bodies hacked up. I have caused that you see my strength, which was in that which my arm has done, while I was alone. My arrow hit the mark without fail, while my arms and my hand were steadfast. I was like a falcon in the midst of small fowl, for my talon did not fail upon their heads. Amun-Ra was on my right and on my left, and the awe of him and the terror of him were in my person. Rejoice ye, for that which I commanded is come to pass, and my counsels and my plans are perfected. Amun-Ra repels my foe and gives to me every land in my grasp.

(after Edgerton and Wilson 1936: pl. 42, lines 1-13)

Year 12: A stela at Medinet Habu to the south of the main gateway, on the face of the first pylon, begins with the phrase "Year 12 under the majesty of Horus", and includes the following brief statement:

I overthrew the Tjek[er], the land of Pele[set], the Danuna, the [W]eshesh, and the Shekelesh; I destroyed the breath of the Mesh[wesh], —, Sebet, —, devastated in their (own) land. I am fine of plan and excellent of——.

(after Edgerton and Wilson 1936: pl. 107, lines 7-9)

P. Harris:

I extended all the boundaries of Egypt. I overthrew those who invaded them from their lands. I slew the Danuna [who are] in their isles, the Tjekru and the Peleset were made ashes. The Shardana and the Washosh of the sea, they were made as those that exist not, taken captive at one time, brought as captives to Egypt, like the sand of the shore. I settled them in strongholds bound in my name. Numerous were their classes like hundred-thousands. I taxed them all, in clothing and grain from the store-houses and granaries each year ... I made the infantry and chariotry to dwell (at home) in my time; the Shardana and Kehek were in their towns, lying the [length] of their backs; they had no fear, (for) there was no enemy from Kush (nor) foe from Syria. Their bows and their weapons reposed in their magazines, while they were satisfied and drunk with joy. Their wives were with them, their children at their side; they looked not behind them, (but) their hearts were confident, (for) I was with them as the defense and protection of their limbs. I sustained alive the whole land, whether foreigners, (common) folk, citizens, or people, male or female.

(after Breasted [1906] 2001,4: 201; Sandars 1985:133)

Onomasticon of Amenemope:

(268) *Sherden;* (269) *Tjekker;* (270) *Peleset*

(Gardiner 1947:194-205)

Ugarit Letters: Letter from the king of Alashiya (Cyprus) to Hammurabi, king of Ugarit (RSL1; *Ugaritica* 5.23):

Thus says the king (of Alashiya): say to Ammurapi, king of Ugarit: May you be well, and may the gods protect you in well-being! Concerning that which you wrote (me): "Enemy ships have been sighted at sea" - if it is true that ships have been sighted, then make yourself very strong. Now where are your infantry and [your] chariotry stationed? Are they not stationed with you? No? Who is sending you after(?) the enemy? Surround your cities with walls. Bring (your) infantry and chariotry into (them). Be on the lookout for the enemy and make yourself very strong.

(after Beckman 1996: 27; Sandars 1985:142-143; Schaeffer 1968: 85-86)

Letter from Hammurabi, king of Ugarit, to the king of Alashiya (Cyprus) (RS 20.238; *Ugaritica* 5.24):

Say to the king of Alashiya, my father: Thus says the king of Ugarit, your son:

I fall at the feet of my father. May my father be well! May your palaces, your wives, your infantry, and everything which belongs to the king of Alashiya, my father, be very, very well!

My father, now the ships of the enemy have been coming. They have been setting fire to my cities and have done harm to the land. Doesn't my father know that all of my infantry and [chariotry] are stationed in Khatte, and that all of my ships are stationed in the land of Lukki? They have not arrived back yet, so the land is thus prostrate. May my father be aware of this matter. Now the seven ships of the enemy which have been coming have done harm to us. Now if other ships of the enemy turn up, send me a report somehow (?) so that I will know.

(after Beckman 1996: 27; Sandars 1985:142-143; Schaeffer 1968: 87-89)