

# 1. INTRODUCTION

*Lawrence E. Stager*

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SOCIAL ARCHAEOLOGISTS HAVE USUALLY shunned migration (and even diffusion) as an explanation of cultural change. This aversion is partly a response to an earlier generation of archaeologists who suffered from the “Tower of Babel” syndrome, in which cultural creations were thought to emanate from a single source and spread to the rest of an uncreative world. Quite often, this was accompanied by a naive belief that pots could be easily identified with people. This negative attitude toward migration and diffusion also springs partly from the premises of the once-named New Archaeology, now 50 years old and renamed Processual Archaeology. Under this pretentious rubric, the focus remains the same: internal developments, more often than external ones, were assumed to explain cultural change. For this cadre of archaeologists, all archaeology (like politics) is locally defined. These archaeologists take comfort in the assumption that explanations of cultural change reside within the confines of regional research, which, in turn, justifies their ignorance of the broader field of comparative archaeology. That this assumption is equally unwarranted should become clear from the case study that follows.

The Philistines, one contingent of a larger confederation known collectively as the “Sea Peoples,” provide a classic case of mass migration from their homeland and resettlement in new parts of the coastal Mediterranean. This movement is documented in various ways by several written sources, Akkadian, Ugaritic, Egyptian, and Hebrew; by Egyptian wall reliefs; and by archaeology. Beginning about 1185 B.C. and continuing for a generation or two, they left their homeland and resettled on the southeast coast of the Mediterranean, in a region that had been occupied by Amorites/Canaanites for several centuries. This began to change in the Late Bronze Age when New Kingdom Egyptians dominated Canaan until the Philistines arrived and carved out their heartland, pushing the Egyptians and their Canaanite subjects to the fringes of Philistine territory. According to the eighth- and seventh-century B.C. biblical prophets, the Philistines came from Caphtor, the Hebrew name for Crete (Amos 9:7 and Jer. 47:4). But their Mycenaean origins, some four centuries earlier, has only recently become clearer through the comparative archaeology of the eastern Mediterranean. The biblical and Assyrian sources indicate that the core of Philistine culture emanated from five major cities—the Philistine Pentapolis—located in the coastal plain of southern Canaan

(Josh. 13:2–3; see Tadmor 1966). For nearly 600 years, during most of the Iron Age, these five cities—Ashdod, Ashkelon, Ekron (Tel Miqne), Gaza, and Gath—formed the heartland of Philistia, or the biblical “land of the Philistines” (figure 1). Each city, as well as its territory, was ruled by a “lord” called *seren* in Hebrew (Josh. 13:3), perhaps a cognate of the Greek word *tyrannos* (compare English “tyrant”).

All five cities have been convincingly located: Ashdod, Ashkelon, Ekron, and Gath have been extensively excavated; Gaza, which lies under the modern city of the same name, has not. By identifying a coherent core of material culture in the heartland of Philistia and comparing it with other cultural cores of Canaan, it should be possible to differentiate this putative alien, or intrusive, culture and to establish its boundaries (for a masterful treatment of Philistine material culture, see T. Dothan 1982). To make a persuasive archaeological case for the mass migration of peoples from one homeland to another, certain criteria must be met (W. Adams 1968; Rouse 1958; 1965; Trigger 1968:40–41):

1. The intrusive culture must be distinguished from contemporary indigenous (or other foreign) cultures in the new area of settlement. Massive movements of a people should produce a “wave” of new settlements. If there is population replacement, or one group replacing another, the nature of that replacement should be clarified. For example, if the intrusive group launches an invasion, there should be synchronous discontinuities with past cultures in the zone of contention. This might appear as destruction and abandonment of some sites altogether (see below, Ugarit), destruction and resettlement of some sites by the new population (Ashdod, Ashkelon, Ekron, and Ras Ibn Hani), or settlements founded *de novo* in the initial or later stages of the intrusive culture (Tell Qasile).
2. The homeland of the migrating group must be located, its material culture identified, and temporal precedence of that culture demonstrated in its place of origin.
3. The route of migration must be traced and checked for its archaeological, historical, and geographical plausibility. If it was an overland route, spatial-temporal distribution of the material culture should indicate the path and direction of large-scale migrations. If migration was by sea, then it must be



Figure 1.1: Map of the Ashkelon Region in the Iron I showing sites which report substantial collections of Philistine Monochrome Pottery (brown dot). Map courtesy of Biblical Backgrounds

demonstrated that the immigrants had the requisite shipping technology and transport capacity for such maritime movements of people and belongings. The only terrestrial traces of such sea movements, if the immigrants were hostile, might be a series of coastal predations and destructions along the route and at successful beachheads.

Of the archaeological remains left by the Sea Peoples, their pottery, when properly understood, has a most expressive tale to tell about the origins of its makers, and about the events and processes by which they settled in new territories. The archaeology of the Philistines can be divided into three stages:

**Stage 1** (ca. 1180–1150 B.C.). The Philistines arrive en masse on the coast of southwest Canaan. They destroy many of the Late Bronze Age cities and supplant them with their own at the four corners of their newly conquered territory, which extends over some 1,000 sq km (386 sq mi). During Stage 1, the Philistines control a vital stretch of the coastal route which had usually

been dominated by the Egyptians and their Canaanite dependencies.<sup>1</sup>

**Stage 2** (ca. 1150–1050 B.C.). With the breakdown of Egyptian hegemony in Canaan after the death of Rameses III (1153 B.C.), the Philistines begin to expand in all directions beyond their original territory, north to what is now the Tel Aviv area, east into the foothills (Shephelah), and southeast into the Wadi Gaza and Beersheba basin. Their characteristic pottery is known as Philistine Bichrome Ware, which, like other items, shows signs of contact and acculturation with Canaanite traditions.

**Stage 3** (ca. 1050–950 B.C.). Through acculturation, Philistine painted pottery loses more and more of its distinctive Aegean characteristics. The forms become debased, but they are still recognizable. The once-complex geometrical compositions and graceful motifs of waterbirds and fishes of Stage 2 Bichrome Ware are reduced to simple spiral decorations (if any at all) painted over red slip, which is frequently burnished.

#### Stage 1: Arrival

The most ubiquitous and most distinctive element of Philistine culture, and a key in delineating the stages summarized above, is its pottery. The pottery associated with this stage of the Sea People's settlement is Phil III C or Philistine Monochrome.<sup>2</sup> Decorated wares are painted in a single color, usually black, with simple horizontal bands, spirals, streamers, loops, birds, and fish. Forms of this decorated pottery are mostly kraters, bell-shaped bowls (large and small), carinated bowls with strap handles, stirrup jars, and strainer jugs with strainer spouts. Plain wares of exotic type include a deep bowl, known as a *kalathos* in Greek, and a one-handed cooking jug. All of these pottery types, both plain and decorated, originated in the world of the Mycenaean Greeks (see T. and M. Dothan 1992; and T. Dothan 1994).

<sup>1</sup> These stages were first described in L. E. Stager, "The Impact of the Sea Peoples in Canaan (1185–1050 BCE)," in *The Archaeology of Society in the Holy Land*, ed. T. E. Levy (London: Leicester University Press: 1995), 332–48. This article represents a recapitulation of those ideas with only a few selected updates.

<sup>2</sup> In this volume, Philistine III C, Philistine Monochrome, and Philistine 1 will be used interchangeably. Each term emphasizes a different aspect of the assemblage. Within the broader Mediterranean, Phil III C and Cypriot III C are considered to be part of the stylistic development of the Late Helladic (hereafter LH) III tradition in the Argolid. Phil III C and Cypriot III C follow LH III A and LH III B and are contemporary with LH III C forms (see Mountjoy 2018: Table 66).

Whereas the LH IIIB pottery of the Late Bronze Age was imported into the Levant, all the Phil IIIC wares found in the Pentapolis in the early Iron Age were made locally (with the exception of a few imports of Cyp IIIC-style pottery at Ashkelon [Master, Mountjoy, and Mommsen 2015]). At Ras Ibn Hani in Syria and at Ekron, locally made Late Helladic IIIC-style pottery constitutes at least half of the repertoire (T. Dothan 1994; Lagarce and Lagarce 1988:143), at Ashdod about 30 percent (M. Dothan 1989; M. Dothan et al. 1967; 1971; 1982). Local Canaanite pottery, principally in the forms of storejars, juglets, bowls, lamps, and cooking pots, makes up the rest of the assemblage in the Pentapolis. When Phil IIIC (Stage 1) pottery from Ashdod and Ekron in Philistia or Cypriot IIIC pottery from Kition, Enkomi, and Palaeopaphos in Cyprus is tested by neutron activation, the results agree that it was made from the local clays (Asaro, Perlman, and Dothan 1971:175; Perlman, Asaro, and Friedman 1971). This locally manufactured pottery was not the product of a few Mycenaean potters or their workshops brought from abroad to meet indigenous demands for Mycenaean domestic and decorated wares, as the large quantities found at coastal sites from Tarsus to Ashkelon demonstrate.<sup>3</sup>

The appearance in quantity of LHIIC-style in Cyprus and the Levant heralds the arrival of the Sea Peoples, whose predations are recorded in the famous account of Ramesses III of 1175 B.C. It characterizes Stage 1 of the Philistine settlement in the southern coastal plain of Canaan. The hypothesis that Phil IIIC ware does not appear until after Ramesses III (Ussishkin 1985) would mean a 30-year hiatus between destruction and resettlement in Philistia, Syria, Cyprus, and elsewhere. It is highly unlikely that Philistia and that stretch of the Via Maris remained unoccupied during Ramesses III's long reign (1182–1151), especially since he invested the surrounding area. At Ashdod, Ashkelon, and Ekron, new settlements characterized by Phil IIIC pottery were built on the charred ruins of the previous Late Bronze Age II Canaanite, or Egypto-Canaanite, cities. These Philistine cities were much larger than those they replaced. The layout and organization of these new cities is far from clear; however, what is known about them suggests that their founders had a radically different concept of a city from that of the Canaanites. Philistine cities were also much larger than those they replaced. This new urban concept, and its impact on the landscape, is discussed below under the rubric “urban imposition.”

<sup>3</sup> See chapter 6.

## Absolute Chronology

Every Pentapolis site that has been excavated—Ashdod, Ashkelon, and Ekron—replicates the stratigraphically controlled ceramic sequence that begins with LH IIIB, followed by Phil IIIC/Philistine Monochrome, then a brief overlap of Philistine Monochrome and Philistine Bichrome, and finally Philistine Bichrome alone. This sequence can be dated precisely, because of the synchronisms that can be established with Egypt (for absolute dates, see Wentz and van Siclen 1976). However, these datable Egyptian objects must be used with discretion; usually they provide only a *terminus post* (not *ante*) *quem*.

LH IIIB pottery was once thought to terminate with Ramesses II (1279–1212), until a sword bearing the cartouche of his son Merenptah (1212–1202) was found in the final destruction of Ugarit, where LH IIIB was abundant. Two large Egyptian jars inscribed with the cartouches of Seti II (1199–1193) (Oren 1993c:1390), discovered in the fortress of Haruba in northeastern Sinai, and a faience vase with the cartouche of Tewosret (1193–1185), from Deir Alla in the central Jordan Valley, were found in contexts with LH IIIB pottery. The vase must date to ca. 1186–1185, since Tewosret became pharaoh only during the last two years of her reign.

The lower date for the final appearance of LH IIIB pottery was recently confirmed by another synchronism between Egypt and the Levant. Shortly before the final destruction of Ugarit, a Syrian named Baya or Bay, “chief of the bodyguard of pharaoh of Egypt,” sent a letter in Akkadian (RS 86.2230) to Ammurapi, the last king of Ugarit (Freu 1988; Hoffner 1992). Baya served under both Siptah (1193–1187/1194–1188) and Tewosret (1193–1185/1188–1186). His letter arrived at Ugarit while LH IIIB pottery was still in use. The story continues at nearby Ras Ibn Hani. There the Sea Peoples built over the charred ruins of the king's seaside palace, which contained LH IIIB ware. More than half of the ceramic yield from their new settlement was LH IIIC-style pottery (Lagarce 1982; Lagarce and Lagarce 1988), a proportion comparable to that of Stage 1 settlements in Philistia (see below). Thus, the final destruction of Ugarit, as well as many other coastal cities in the eastern Mediterranean, occurred only a decade or so before the summary of events recorded by Ramesses III (1182–1151/1184–1153) in his much-cited “War Against the Peoples of the Sea”:

Dateline: Year 8 under the Majesty of Ramesses III (1175 BC): . . . The foreign countries [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, Kode [Cilicia], Carchemish, Arzawa, and Alashiya [Cyprus] on, being cut off *at [one time]*. A camp [was set up] in one place in Amor [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 [of Sea Peoples] was the Philistines, Tjeker [=Sikils], Shekelesh, Denye(n), and Weshesh, lands united.<sup>4</sup>

### The Sea Route of Migration

The Sea Peoples established beachheads all along the shores of the eastern Mediterranean and on the coastlands of Cyprus. Their route can be traced by the synchronous destructions of Late Bronze Age coastal cities from Tarsus to Ashkelon. The same pattern of devastation can be observed for several of the coastal cities of Cyprus, which the raiders could have reached only by ship.

After the Sea Peoples' invasion of Cyprus, its name was changed from Alashiya to Yadanana, "the isle of the Danunians/Danaoi/Denyen." The renaming of whole territories after various groups of Sea Peoples provides another measure of their impact (Luckenbill 1914). The Philistines bequeathed their own name to Philistia (and later to all of Palestine). The Sikils, who settled at Dor, also sailed west and gave their name to Sicily, and the Sherden, who probably established a beachhead in Akko, gave theirs to Sardinia.

The sequence of beachheads followed by Stage 1 settlements is remarkably similar whether in Cyprus or the Levant. Although not all Cypriot archaeologists agree, there seems to be a series of synchronous destructions throughout coastal Cyprus, which brought several Late Bronze Age coastal cities, such as Enkomi, Hala Sultan Tekke, Kition, and Maa-Palaeokastro, to a fiery end in the early twelfth century B.C. (Yannai 1983; Karageorghis 1992; 1982). New cities, with Cypriot IIIC pottery, were built over the ruins of Late Bronze Age cities, many of which had received the last of the Greek imported pottery known as LH IIIB. On the coastal promontories, the newcomers built fortified strongholds, such as Maa and Pyla. Farther inland, the Sea Peoples founded new settlements, such as Sinda and Athienou, over the ruins of Late Cypriot IIB cities.

Cypriot archaeologists invoke the Achaeans or Danaoi of Homeric epic as the agents of culture change in Cyprus (Karageorghis 1992); in the Levant, the same

change is ascribed to the Sea Peoples. Both agents participated in the same "event" recorded by Ramesses III and should probably be related to the same confederacy of Sea Peoples, or Mycenaean Greeks, who invaded the coastlands and the island of Alashiya (Cyprus) ca. 1185–1175 (A. Mazar 1988).

Correspondence between the king of Cyprus and the king of Ugarit can be correlated with the archaeology of destruction to provide vivid details of the Sea Peoples' onslaught. The capital of a Syrian coastal kingdom under the suzerainty of the Hittites, Ugarit had more than 150 villages in its hinterland and a population of 25,000, nearly the same as that of Philistia during Stage 1. Its king also controlled a nearby port and had a seaside palace at Ras Ibn Hani.

During the final days of Ugarit, letters (in Akkadian cuneiform) exchanged between its king, Ammurapi, and the king of Cyprus show the desperation of the situation and the threat from the sea. The Cypriot king writes condescendingly to Ammurapi:

. . . What have you written to me "enemy shipping has been sighted at sea"? Well now, even if it is true that enemy ships have been sighted, be firm. Indeed then, what of your troops, your chariots, where are they stationed? Are they stationed close at hand or are they not? Fortify your towns, bring the troops and the chariots into them, and wait for the enemy with firm feet.<sup>5</sup>

Ammurapi replies with irony and defeat:

. . . My father, the enemy ships are already here, they have set fire to my towns and have done very great damage in the country. My father, did you not know that all my troops were stationed in the Hittite country, and that all my ships are still stationed in Lycia and have not yet returned? So that the country is abandoned to itself. . . . Consider this my father, there are seven enemy ships that have come and done very great damage.<sup>6</sup>

An earlier text explains to whom the marauding ships belong. The Hittite king writes (also in Akkadian) to a veteran official of Ammurapi about hostage taking:

From the Sun, the Great King, to the Prefect: Now, with you, the king, your master, is young. He does not know anything. I gave orders to him regarding Lanadusu, who was taken captive by the Sikalaytl, who live on ships. Now, I have sent to you Nisahili, he is an administrative official with me, with instructions.

<sup>4</sup> Wilson 1969:262

<sup>5</sup> Sandars 1978:142–43.

<sup>6</sup> *Ibid.*, 143.

Now, you (are to) send Lanadusu, whom the Sikalaytl captured, here to me. I will ask him about the matter of the Sikila and, afterwards, he can return to Ugarit.<sup>7</sup>

The Sikils, “who live on ships,” were sea raiders and traders who terrorized the coastal waters of Ugarit before it fell to them sometime ca. 1187–1185, not long before the events recorded by Ramesses III in his “War Against the Peoples of the Sea,” where the Sikils (Tjeker) are also mentioned as part of the Sea Peoples’ confederation.

In the Egyptian reliefs of the naval battle, the Sea Peoples’ ships are oared galleys with single sails and with finials in the shape of waterbirds at prow and stern. These depictions of Sea Peoples’ ships bear a remarkable resemblance to the “bird-boat” painted on a krater from Tiryns, providing yet another clue to their origin in the Aegean world.

The Sikils then sailed down the coast and landed at Dor, identified as a city of the Sikils in the eleventh-century Egyptian Report of Wenamun (Wilson 1969; B. Mazar 1992:26, n. 11). There they destroyed the Late Bronze Age Canaanite city and built a new and much larger city on its ruins. During Stage 1, the Sikils fortified Dor with walled ramparts and glacis (Stern 1992) and built a fine harbor of ashlar blocks for their ships (Raban 1987). All of this evidence—the beachheads, the coastal pattern of destruction (followed in many cases by new cities with LH IIIC-style pottery), references to living on ships, and illustrations of their craft—leaves no doubt that the Sea Peoples, including the Philistines, had the necessary maritime technology and transport capacity to effect a major migration and invasion by sea (see above, criterion 3).

#### The Battle between Ramesses III and the Sea Peoples

From Egyptian texts and the wall reliefs of Ramesses III at Medinet Habu, the following scenario of the battle and its aftermath has achieved near canonical status. According to this reconstruction, the Sea Peoples came to the Levant by land and by sea. The reliefs depict whole families trekking overland in ox-drawn carts and warriors riding in horse-drawn chariots as they engage the Egyptians in a land battle, somewhere on the northern borders of Canaan or even farther north in Amurru. A flotilla of their ships even penetrated the Nile Delta before Ramesses III repelled them. After his victory over the Sea Peoples, Ramesses III engaged troops of the defeated Sea Peoples as mercenaries for his garrisons in Canaan and Nubia, and reasserted Egyptian sovereignty

over southern Canaan. Egypt once again controlled the vital military and commercial highway successively known as the Ways of Horus, the Way of the Land of the Philistines (Exod. 13:17), and the Way of the Sea (Isa. 9:1) (Albright 1932b; 1975; Alt 1944; Singer 1985; 1988; 1994; T. Dothan 1982).

This scenario has been successfully challenged by Egyptologists such as Stadelmann, Helck, and Bietak (1993:292–94). On the wall reliefs of Ramesses III, there is only one departure scene prior to the land battle, and then only one victory celebration following the sea battle. From this, Bietak concludes that “both encounters occurred in close proximity, one after the other, most probably near the mouth of the easternmost branch of the Nile.” Thus, the Sea Peoples were threatening the Egyptians, not in distant Amurru, but at the very entrance to Egypt. If the Philistines had already established themselves in southern Canaan before the battle recorded in 1175 B.C., the chariotry and ox carts involved in the battle for the Egyptian Delta could have been supplied from their base in southern Canaan. These terrestrial vehicles would not, then, provide evidence for a long overland trek of Sea Peoples via Anatolia into the Levant, as usually supposed. Their migration was by sea.<sup>8</sup>

The assault on Egypt was the culmination of a years-long process that saw the Sea Peoples move against Cyprus (beginning in 1185 B.C.), Ugarit and Amurru (1187–1185 B.C.), and thence down the coast from Dor to what would soon become the Pentapolis. When the Philistines and their allies launched their 1175 B.C. assault on Ramesses III’s Egypt, they would have done so from the closest of their holdings at the time: southern Canaan, including Ashkelon itself, where the arrival of the Philistines, and the appearance of Phil IIIC, should be dated to the early days of Ramesses III’s reign. Indeed, at Ashkelon, a Ramesses III scarab was found on the first Phil IIIC (Phase 20B) floor, sealing the Late Bronze Age city (including a partially built Egyptian fortress) and providing a clear *terminus post quem* for the Philistine arrival sometime following Ramesses’s accession in 1184/1182 and before 1175 B.C. The seaport at Ashkelon—which also held a commanding position on the Way of Horus,

<sup>7</sup> RS 34.129, translated by Gregory Mobley.

<sup>8</sup> Manfred Bietak, “The Sea Peoples and the End of the Egyptian Administration in Canaan,” in *Biblical Archaeology Today, 1990: Proceedings of the Second International Congress on Biblical Archaeology*, ed. A. Biran and J. Aviram (Jerusalem: Israel Exploration Society, 1993), 292–306, is a superb study of the Sea Peoples, emphasizing their large-scale seaborne migrations to and early bridgeheads in Canaan and delineating material cultural boundaries between Philistine and Egypto-Canaanite territories; see also Rainer Stadelmann, “Die Abwehr der Seevölker unter Ramses III,” *Saeculum* 19 (1968):156–71.

the coastal road linking southern Canaan to Egypt—was thus the ideal bridgehead from which to coordinate the two-pronged assault depicted at Medinet Habu.

The location of the resulting battle, on the southern end of the Horus Way, has now been identified by Egyptologist James Hoffmeier and geologist Steve Moshier: an ancient lagoon that opened to the Mediterranean and was fed by two tributaries of the Nile, including the ancient Pelusiatic branch (Moshier 2014; Hoffmeier and Moshier 2006), situated two kilometers east of Tell el-Borg (the Dwelling of the Lion/Ramesses) and the nearby site of Hebua I (Tjaru), which were part of a string of forts guarding the northeastern approach to the Nile Delta (Hoffmeier 2014:326–29). Ramesses III's account claims that the Philistines entered at the "river mouths," and excavations at el-Borg revealed a Twentieth Dynasty fort with inscriptions bearing the name of Ramesses III that was forcibly destroyed and burned by what could only have been a substantial attacking force like the combined army and armada of the Sea Peoples—and not a marauding bedouin band. Hoffmeier has convincingly argued that the Tell el-Borg destruction represents the westernmost point of penetration by the Sea Peoples before they were repulsed by their Egyptian adversaries.

While the Philistines and their allies did not succeed in their attempt to seize the strategic lagoon at the border of the Nile Delta, their bold offensive did result in a strategic standstill with Ramesses's Egypt. This allowed the Philistines to retain their newly acquired southern Canaanite holdings, waiting out the remaining Egyptian forces at sites like Lachish and Tell esh-Shari'a until they were able to take control of the entire region in the second half of the eleventh century B.C.

#### Territories and Boundaries of the Sea Peoples' Settlement

Further proof for the supposed Egyptian dominance over Canaan and the subjugation of the Sea Peoples was gleaned from Papyrus Harris I, lxxvi 6–10 (Wilson 1969:262):

I slew the Denyen in their islands, while the Tjeker [=Sikils] and the Philistines were made ashes. The Sherden and the Weshesh of the Sea were made nonexistent, captured all together and brought in captivity to Egypt like the sands of the shore. I settled them in strongholds, bound in my name [i.e., branded with the name of pharaoh]. Their military classes were as numerous as hundred-thousands. I assigned portions for them all with clothing and provisions from the

treasuries and granaries every year.

However, it is not clear from this text whether any of the Sea Peoples taken as prisoners of war were garrisoned in Egyptian fortresses in Canaan (Bietak 1993:300). The hypothesis that Ramesses III reestablished Egyptian control over Canaan and used Philistine mercenaries in his garrisons there was apparently bolstered by the evidence of the clay anthropoid coffins found at such Egyptian strongholds as Beth Shean, Tell el-Far'ah (South), and Lachish (Albright 1932a; 1975:509; T. Dothan 1957; 1982; G. E. Wright 1966). At Tell el-Far'ah (South), in Cemetery 500, large bench tombs with anthropoid clay sarcophagi, Egyptian artifacts, and Philistine Bichrome pottery led the excavator, Sir Flinders Petrie, to conclude that these were the sepulchers of the "five lords [*seranim*] of the Philistines." Other scholars proposed Cypriot and Aegean prototypes for the style of the bench tombs themselves (Walbaum 1966; cf. Stieberg 1970). One of the clay coffin lids from Beth Shean bore the design of a "feathered" head-dress, which was compared with those worn by the Philistines, Denyen, and Sikils depicted on the wall reliefs of Medinet Habu.<sup>9</sup>

The theory that Iron Age I anthropoid coffins were used to bury Sea Peoples mercenaries was dealt a decisive blow by the 1970s excavations at the cemetery of Deir el-Balah, southwest of Gaza, which uncovered dozens more of these clay coffins dating to the Late Bronze Age, a century or two before the Sea Peoples had arrived en masse in Canaan.<sup>10</sup>

From the Middle Kingdom to the Roman period, anthropoid clay coffins were used to bury Egyptians, both at home and abroad. There is no reason to make the early Iron Age I exemplars exceptions to this practice (Kuchman 1977/78). The ideal for Egyptians living abroad was to be buried back in Egypt. However, with the expansion of the New Kingdom empire, more Egyptian troops were stationed abroad, in both Canaan and Nubia, and it became impractical to return every Egyptian corpse to the homeland. Egyptians who had to forgo this ideal practice could at least be buried abroad in suitable containers, such as anthropoid clay coffins.

Further support for interpreting the anthropoid clay coffins as Egyptian comes from an inscribed sarcophagus found in Tomb 570 at Lachish. Beside the Egyptian deities Isis and Nephthys depicted on the coffin is an inscription that has been variously labeled Egyptian pseudo-hieroglyphs or Philistine gibberish (G. Wright

<sup>9</sup> T. Dothan (1957; 1982) thought the Beth Shean coffins contained Philistines; Oren (1973), Denyen or Danunians.

<sup>10</sup> For a different interpretation, see T. Dothan 1979:98–104.

1966; T. Dothan 1957; 1982; Weinstein 1992). But this interpretation of the text is unwarranted. As Sir Alan Gardiner recognized in the original publication (Tufnell et al. 1958:pl. 46), the Lachish coffin text reads as a perfectly good Egyptian funerary inscription: “Thou givest water [a traditional mortuary offering] (of the) West [the region of the dead] to the majesty (of) thy [. . .].”<sup>11</sup>

Thus, the most parsimonious hypothesis is to conclude that anthropoid sarcophagi found in Canaan in the Late Bronze and the Iron I periods belonged to Egyptians stationed there, and they have nothing to do with Sea Peoples and their burial customs. When properly attributed, the coffins become important artifacts in determining cultural and political boundaries between Philistia and Canaanite territory under Egyptian hegemony.

During Stage 1, the Philistines carved out a major piece of territory for themselves in southern Canaan at the expense of the Canaanites and their overlords, the Egyptians. The boundaries of this territory can be plotted by identifying settlements whose ceramic repertoire has more than 25 percent Phil IIIIC pottery.<sup>12</sup> Within this rectangular coastal strip, about 20 km (12 mi) wide and 50 km (31 mi) long and with an area of 1,000 sq km (386 sq mi), the Philistines located their five major cities at key positions along the perimeter. In contrast to the Egyptians, the Philistines did not dominate their new territory by establishing military garrisons in the midst of Canaanite population centers (cf. Brug 1985). Rather, the Philistines completely destroyed the Egypto-Canaanite centers before building their new cities on the smoldering ruins of the old ones. This wholesale takeover must have resulted in the death or displacement of much of the Late Bronze Age population.

In the northwest corner of their new territory, the Philistines burned to the ground the large Egyptian fortress at Tel Mor and the neighboring city of Ashdod (Str. XIV). Over the ruins of Ashdod, they built a new city (Str. XIIIIB) of eight hectares or more.<sup>13</sup> Ashdod XIIIIB produced large amounts of Phil IIIIC. To counter this new Philistine city of Ashdod, the Egyptians rebuilt, on a smaller scale, the fortress at Tel Mor, where Egyptian pottery was abundant (M. Dothan 1993b).

Farther inland, some 20 km (12 mi) to the east, was the small Canaanite city of Ekron (Tel Mique), about four hectares (10 acres) in area. The Philistines burned it,

too, and over its ruins raised a city five times larger than its predecessor. Their new city (Str. VII) was protected by massive mudbrick fortifications from without and organized on a grand scale from within (see below). Ekron VII yielded large quantities of Phil IIIIC. Northeast of Ekron was Gezer, a major Canaanite city from which some of the Amarna letters had been sent. The Canaanite city (Str. XV) was destroyed by fire at the end of the Late Bronze Age, either by the Philistines or by Merenptah. Whatever the case, Gezer (Str. XIV), with no evidence of Phil IIIIC, was rebuilt during the reign of Ramesses III as an Egypto-Canaanite counterforce to Ekron. A faience vase bearing cartouches with that pharaoh’s name is associated with this level of occupation, but there is no Phil IIIIC pottery. A small percentage of Philistine Bichrome pottery appears later, during Stage 2.

The Late Bronze Age city of Ashkelon, on the Mediterranean coast between Ashdod and Gaza, was also destroyed, either by Merenptah or (more likely) by the Philistines. Egyptian policy was to garrison and control, not eradicate, the Canaanite population. There, the Philistines built their main seaport, which during Stage 1 must have extended along the coast for almost a kilometer (more than half a mile) and occupied an area of 50 to 60 ha (125–150 ac). Phil IIIIC was found in fills sealed by the earliest Philistine rampart on the north and in occupational layers 900 meters to the south (in Grid 50 and in Phythian-Adams’s trench). Later, in the early Iron II period, the preexisting arc of earthen ramparts was fortified at the northern crest by two large mudbrick towers linked by a mudbrick curtain wall. Opposite Ashkelon, ca. 30 km to the east, Ramesses III established another Egyptian control center at Lachish (City VI). Hardly a trace of Philistine Bichrome pottery has been found there, but archaeologists have uncovered an Egyptian-inspired temple, hieratic bowl inscriptions recording taxes paid to the Egyptians, a large bronze gate-fitting inscribed with the name of Ramesses III, and two anthropoid coffins, all attesting to the presence of an Egyptian garrison.

Philistia’s eastern boundary during Stage 1 was a 50-kilometer (31-mile) line from Ekron in the north to Tel Haror in the south, some 20 kilometers (12 miles) inland from Gaza. At Haror, the Philistines devastated the Late Bronze Age city, and both Egyptian and LH IIIIB pottery were found in the destruction debris. As at the Pentapolis sites, a new Philistine settlement, characterized by Phil IIIIC, rose above the ruins of the former Egypto-Canaanite center. In a subsequent phase, when both Monochrome and Bichrome pottery were in use, 25 percent of the pottery discarded in refuse pits was Philistine decorated wares (Oren 1993a). Just across the border opposite Haror was another Egyptian

<sup>11</sup> Egyptologists Klaus Baer and Edward Wente independently translated the Lachish coffin text just as Gardiner had read it.

<sup>12</sup> For the method and a superb synthesis of the sources, see Bietak 1993.

<sup>13</sup> Cf. M. Dothan 1989; 1993a; M. Dothan and Porath 1993, where Ashdod XIIIIB is attributed to an “early wave” of Sea Peoples, not the Philistines.



center at Tell esh-Shari'a (Tel Sera). There, in Str. IX, a large Egyptian administrative building or governor's residency (Building 906) (Oren 1984), several hieratic bowl inscriptions (Goldwasser 1984), and Egyptian pottery attest to Ramesses III's containment policy.

During Stage 2, the Egyptians abandoned Shari'a, and it became a Philistine city (Str. VIII), probably to be identified with biblical Ziklag (Oren 1993b). According to 1 Samuel 27:1–7, Ziklag was subject to Achish, ruler of Gath, who gave this country town to his sometime servant David and his band of six hundred men in exchange for their loyalty.

Regardless of the identification, it seems clear that Haror was inside and Shari'a was outside Philistine territory during Stage 1, but both were within the Philistine domain during Stage 2.

In the southwest corner of Philistia lay Gaza, a major outpost and caravan city of the Egyptians, presumably taken over by the Philistines during Stage 1. Unfortunately, excavations at Gaza have been limited, and they have revealed little or nothing of the character of the Egyptian and Philistine cities. However, it seems unlikely that Philistia extended south of the Wadi Gaza, or Nahal Besor, during Stage 1. This wadi probably is to be identified with the "Brook of Egypt," which divided Canaan from Egypt (Singer 1994 and citations; cf. Josh. 13:3). To protect his northern frontier, Ramesses III built a formidable fortress and residency at Tell el-Far'ah (South) (Oren 1984; T. Dothan 1982). This fortified center must have remained in Egyptian hands throughout much of the Ramesside era, well into Stage 2, as the sequence of tombs with anthropoid clay coffins, Egyptian artifacts, and Philistine Bichrome pottery attest.

The contrast is thus sharply delineated between the territory controlled by the Egyptians under Ramesses III and that of the Philistine Pentapolis, the latter characterized by the presence of Phil III C pottery and by the absence of Egyptian monuments, buildings, and artifacts. A new and formidable foreign power, the Philistines had carved out an independent territory right up to the Egyptian frontier. All Ramesses attempted to contain them, a policy that continued until his death in 1153/1151.

### Economy

Their new home in southern Canaan provided the Philistines with the natural and cultural resources to become a formidable maritime and agrarian power. The sea offered fishing and shipping, and to its east lay rich agricultural lands suitable for growing grains, olives, and grapes. This region lacked timber and mineral resources, but even early in Stage 1, the Philistines were importing both.

The Philistines also brought changes to the region's animal husbandry. Like their Canaanite and Israelite neighbors, the Philistines kept flocks of sheep and goats as well as cattle. To these they added a specialization in hogs.<sup>14</sup> In the highland villages of the Iron I period, the bones of pigs are rare or completely absent, but in Philistia they constitute a significant proportion of excavated faunal remains: at Ashkelon they make up a maximum of 14 percent of the faunal assemblage (in Phase 18; see chapter 34), at Ekron 18 percent, and at Timnah (Tel Batash) 8 percent. There can be little doubt that these differences in pig production and consumption have more to do with culture than ecology. The Mycenaeans and later Greeks had a positive attitude toward swine and a preference for pork in the diet. The Philistines brought that preference with them to Canaan in the twelfth century. Probably at that time, during the biblical "Period of Judges," the pork taboo developed among the Israelites, as they forged their identity partly in contrast to their Philistine neighbors. Thus, during Iron Age I, the pig became a distinctive cultural marker, just as circumcision was, between Philistine and Israelite.

Not only did the Philistines control a vital stretch of the coastal road, but they and other Sea Peoples also soon took over the sea-lanes. The eleventh-century Report of Wenamun makes it clear that the Sea Peoples and the Phoenicians, not the Egyptians, commanded the ports and sea-lanes of the eastern Mediterranean at that time (Wilson 1969:25–29; B. Mazar 1986:65–68). After some stability had returned to the eastern Mediterranean, the Sea Peoples once again became traders rather than raiders. Shortly after landing, the Sikils constructed the harbor at Dor. By the eleventh century, trade with Cyprus was bustling, and Ashkelon was again a busy port, exporting grain, wine, and oil from Philistia to other parts of the Mediterranean.

From Ashdod to Gaza, the coast of Philistia was ideal for the cultivation of grapes. Wine production reached its peak during the Byzantine era, when the wines of Ashkelon and Gaza were known throughout the world (Johnson and Stager 1994). The sandy soils and warm, sunny climate produced many good wines, from the light and palatable varieties from Ashkelon to the heavier ones from Gaza. In seventh-century B.C. Ashkelon, a royal winery, with pressing rooms alternating with storerooms inside a very large ashlar building,

<sup>14</sup> Brian Hesse, "Animal Use at Tel Mique-Ekron in the Bronze Age and Iron Age," *BASOR* 264 (1986):17–27; Brian Hesse and Paula Wapnish, "Can Pig Remains be Used for Ethnic Diagnosis in the Ancient Near East?" in *The Archaeology of Israel: Constructing the Past, Interpreting the Present*, ed. N. A. Silberman and D. Small, JSOT Supplement Series 237, (Sheffield: Sheffield Academic, 1997), 238–70.



occupied the same central area where a major public building had stood in Iron Age I.

In modern idiom, the term “Philistine” means an uncouth person, interested in material comfort rather than art and ideas. Archaeologists may inadvertently have assimilated this notion in their terminology: one of the most common Philistine ceramic forms is a jug with a strainer spout, usually called a “beer-jug.” However, the ecology of Philistia is better suited for grape-growing than for cultivating barley. Moreover, the repertoire of Philistine decorated pottery, both Phil IIC and Bichrome, indicates that wine rather than beer was the beverage of choice. Kraters were popular among the Mycenaeans. The introduction of the krater, a mixing bowl, to the Levant also marked the introduction of the Greek (not Semitic) custom of mixing water with wine. The abundance of Iron Age I kraters in Philistia compared with other parts of Canaan suggests that it remained predominately a Greek drinking habit during that period. Large bell-shaped bowls for serving wine and small bell-shaped bowls or cups (Greek *skyphoi*) for drinking it were the two most popular forms of decorated Philistine pottery. The strainer jug, *né* “beer-jug,” completes the wine service. It served as a carafe with a built-in sieve for straining out the lees and other impurities (Eisenstein 1905). Egyptians and many others served their wine into drinking bowls or cups. According to the Talmud, linen cloth was used to strain out finer impurities. Together, these vessels constituted the wine service that graced many a Philistine table and symposium (cf. Samson’s wedding feast in Judg. 14:10–20) during the twelfth and eleventh centuries B.C. In addition, they attest to the importance of viticulture and wine production during that era.

The inner coastal zone of Philistia, with its large rolling fields and deep, fertile soils, was best suited to cereal and olive cultivation. Oil produced here supplied not only Philistia but also other parts of the Levant, especially the perennial and enormous Egyptian market. Ekron was the undisputed oil capital of the country, if not the world, in the seventh century B.C. (Gitin 1990). The outer belt of Ekron, just inside the fortifications, was lined with more than 100 olive oil factories. The coast and interior of Philistia formed complementary zones for the production of two of the most important cash crops of the Levant: olive oil and wine.

#### Urban Imposition

The “sackers of cities” from the Aegean, as Homer referred to the Sea Peoples, were also great builders of cities. In Philistia, as elsewhere, they imposed a full-blown urban tradition on the landscape, quite different from the Canaanite patterns that preceded them. It is the

scope and effects of their “urban imposition” that provide additional reasons for thinking that the Philistines were not a small military elite who garrisoned the indigenous population, but, rather, a large and diverse group of settlers who transplanted many aspects of their old way of life and culture to a new locale.

The overview of the Pentapolis has shown that soon after the arrival of the first generation of new immigrants, the Philistines successfully sited their five major cities, taking maximum advantage of their military, economic, and political potential. From a closer look at the excavations at Ashkelon, Ashdod, and especially Ekron, it will also become clear that the Philistines brought with them templates of city planning and concepts of urban organization that the peoples of Canaan had not experienced before. In addition, the Philistines brought with them a whole range of human resources and institutions to realize such organization. Behind the archaeological residues of the Pentapolis, one can detect, however faintly, the activities of a diverse community of warriors, farmers, sailors, merchants, rulers, shamans, priests, artisans, and architects.

#### Ashkelon

Over the ruins of a much smaller Late Bronze Age city rose the Philistine metropolis, between 50–60 ha in size, with perhaps as many as 10,000–12,000 inhabitants. However, it appears that in the center of the Philistine city, there was a dramatic change in activities after the destruction that separated the Late Bronze Age from the Iron Age. Where outdoor courtyards, grain silos, bread ovens, and human burials had been in the Late Bronze Age, stood a major public building in the early Iron Age I. This building, situated in the heart of the city, was remodeled several times during its use in the Philistine Monochrome and Bichrome pottery periods. In its second phase, the building had large stone column drums, probably bearing wooden pillars, similar to palaces and temples at Ekron, Ashdod (see below), and Tell Qasile (Str. X, Temple 131; A. Mazar 1980:pl. 3).

Weaving industries were often associated with administrative and religious centers. At Ashkelon, more than 150 cylinders of unfired clay, slightly pinched in the middle, were found lying on the superimposed floors of two successive public buildings, some still aligned along the walls as if they had been dropped from vertical weaving looms (see chapter 19). The floors themselves had concentrations of textile fibers (Lass 1994). Common Levantine pyramidal loom weights have perforated tops, but these were unpierced and were probably spools around which thread was wound and hung from the loom. Similar clay cylinders have been found at Ekron and Ashdod, on Cyprus in temple precincts at

Enkomi and Kition (the Sea Peoples' emporia there), on the Mycenaean mainland, on Thera (in the Cyclades), and in Crete. At Ashkelon, Ekron, and Ashdod, these spool weights are found in abundance in Stages 1 and 2. They were made from the local clays, but the Aegean parallels further indicate the origin of the new immigrants.<sup>15</sup>

#### Ashdod

Urban imposition at Ashdod took a dramatic form in the well-planned, eight-hectare city built over the charred ruins of the earlier Egypto-Canaanite center. Just inside the demolished north gate, with a doorjamb bearing the title of a high Egyptian official—"Fanbearer (on) the right hand of the king"—a large governmental palace was completely destroyed (Ashdod, Area G) and over its ruins the Philistines built an artisans' quarter, including a potter's workshop (Room 4106, Str. XIIIb; M. Dothan and Porath 1993) containing stacks of local Phil III C bowls and cups as well as Aegean-style cooking jugs (M. Dothan and Porath 1993:fig. 15:1, 5).

In the western quarter of the city, (a wide street separated two building complexes, one being a sizable public building (17 x 13 m), the other, a large hall with two stone column drums and an adjoining small apsidal shrine. Near the shrine was a female figurine built into a couch or throne. Nicknamed "Ashdoda" by the excavator, M. Dothan, this anonymous goddess also appears at Ashkelon, Ekron, and Tell Qasile, where a small fragment may indicate that she is nursing a baby, in the tradition of Mycenaean mother goddess figurines (A. Mazar 1988:259, fig. 2, and 260).

#### Ekron

The best example of urban imposition comes from another Pentapolis city, Ekron. There, the Tel Miqne-Ekron Excavations revealed for the first time the broad outlines of the use of space within a major Philistine city (T. Dothan and Gitin 1993; T. Dothan 1990; 1992; 1994).

Over the ashes of the Late Bronze Age city was built a much larger Philistine one, about 20 ha (50 ac) in size, with perhaps 5,000 inhabitants. Even during Stage 1 at Ekron, there are signs of urban planning: industry was located along the perimeter of the city, just inside its fortification walls. Next were houses for ordinary citizens, and in the center of the site were public buildings, including a palace-temple complex, which was rebuilt several times in the more than two centuries of its use.

This mudbrick building had white plastered floors and walls. In the long, pillared main hall of this complex was a large, circular sunken hearth. Such hearths are characteristic of Mycenaean palaces, and the same feature is found at several sites in Cyprus during Stage 1, as well as at Tell Qasile. This feature is not known in the Levant, but has a long history in the public and domestic architecture of the Aegean, Cypriot, and Anatolian worlds.

The hearth is the central feature in Mycenaean palaces at Pylos, Mycenae, and Tiryns, where they are up to four meters in diameter. There, the hearth was the focus of the civic and religious center, where these two aspects of society were often housed under the same roof. In later Greek religion, the hearth-goddess Hestia played a prominent role in both domestic and public spheres.

Hearths of many shapes and sizes—square, rectangular, circular, and keyhole types—occur for the first time at Sea Peoples' centers in Cyprus during Stage 1, e.g., in large rooms at Maa and Enkomi as well as in the temple precinct at Kition (Karageorghis 1982; 1992; A. Mazar 1988; T. Dothan 1994).

By the mid-twelfth century, the Philistines had expanded north and founded Tell Qasile on virgin soil. There, in the earliest stratum, they built a large hall with an adjoining sanctuary. In the center of the hall, the focus of the precinct, was a raised keyhole-shaped hearth (A. Mazar 1988).

During Stage 2 of the public building at Ekron, three rooms opened onto the hall with the hearth. In the northernmost room, dozens of spool weights were found, suggesting that it was used for weaving, perhaps by religious functionaries who were making vestments for the statue of the great Mycenaean mother-goddess. (An analogy, perhaps, is the notice in 2 Kings 23:7 of women weaving garments for Asherah in the precincts of the Jerusalem Temple.)

A plastered platform, perhaps an altar, stood in the middle room, identifying it as the primary place of worship. Nearby was an ivory handle of a knife for sacrifice, identical to the complete example in the southernmost room. Bimetallic knives (iron blades with bronze rivets) are also a rarity in the Levant, but more common in Aegean (and Cypriot) contexts. In the same middle room—the focus of the cult—were found three bronze wheels with eight spokes in each—once part of a mobile cult stand, again with parallels in Cyprus and in the Jerusalem Temple (i.e., the *mēkōnōt* of 1 Kings 7:27). In the third room, next to another small platform or altar, archaeologists found a complete bimetallic knife.

At Ekron, the hierarchy of space and planning, of architecture and artifact, are very much in harmony with that of the Aegean world. Ekron represents the full ex-

<sup>15</sup> Stager, *Ashkelon Discovered*, 15, originally published as "When Canaanites and Philistines Ruled Ashkelon," 37.

pression of urban imposition as these concepts and features were transplanted to the Semitic world.

As urbanism dissolved in Greece and Anatolia, some members of Aegean society transplanted their urban life and values to a new but similar setting, along the coast of the eastern Mediterranean and Cyprus. The “event,” sketched above as a mass migration of Sea Peoples during the decade 1185–1175 B.C. and following, would appear to be an epiphenomenon: to paraphrase F. Braudel, mere “crests of Sea Peoples’ foam, which the tides of history carry on their strong backs.” However, this “event” was much more than that. It was dialectically engaged and embedded in much longer durations, or time dimensions, which both gave rise to the event and succeeded it. Its source lies somewhere in the failure of those highly articulated, finely tuned, hierarchical polities and economies of the Aegean and Anatolia, known as the “palace economy.” As two of the great empires of the period—the Hittites and the Ahhiyawans (Achaean) or the Trojans and the Greeks (to use epic language)—collapsed at their palatial centers, many different kinds of centrifugal forces were released, which had a multiplier, or ripple, effect.

Within the Mycenaean and Hittite worlds, there was an internal process of fragmentation and ruralization (the archaeologist’s “Dark Age”), which, in turn, triggered mass migrations to the coastlands of the Levant and Cyprus. The ripple effect caused by the dislocation of large segments of the donor society and their peopling of the already crowded coastlands sent repercussions into the interior of Canaan as well.

The settlement process for highland Israel began a generation or two before the Sea Peoples arrived on the coast. That arrival would necessarily have swelled the highland polity of early Israel as the indigenous Canaanite population found itself squeezed out of the plains. The displacement and migration of the tribe of Dan from the coast to the north is symptomatic of the ripple effects of the Sea Peoples’ settlement.

### *Stage 2: Expansion*

Demographic changes, including population increase, help to explain the expansionist policies of the Philistines a few decades after their arrival. Archaeological surveys of Philistia have revealed few Iron Age settlements in the countryside. During Stage 1, most of the Philistines, including farmers and herders, lived in the five major cities (A. Mazar 1988:253). Because of that demographic concentration, it is possible to make a fairly reliable population estimate for the period 1175–1150 B.C. The total occupied area of the Pentapolis was at least 100 ha (250 ac), with a total population of about 25,000. To attain this initial population so soon after ar-

rival, boatload after boatload of Philistines, along with their families, livestock, and belongings, must have arrived in southern Canaan during Stage 1. By the beginning of Stage 2, natural growth had more than doubled the Philistine population, enabling their expansion in all directions. By the second half of the eleventh century B.C., in Stage 3, they were a menace even to the Israelites living in the highlands to the east.

The second stage of Philistine settlement is signaled by the rise of Bichrome pottery. This distinctive ware, painted with red and black decoration, represents a regional style that developed after the Philistines had lived in Canaan for a generation or two (A. Mazar 1985; Stager 1985a; 1991; Singer 1985). To the basic Phil IIIIC forms already in their repertoire, the Philistines added others from Canaan and Cyprus (see T. Dothan 1982:ch. 3), as well as decorative motifs from Egypt. Bichrome technique had been known in Canaan since the Late Bronze Age I. A variant of the Bichrome tradition developed in Phoenicia and in Palestine (e.g., at Ashkelon) in the Late Bronze Age II, and was later absorbed into the Philistine repertoire.

Philistine Bichrome Ware was once considered the hallmark of the first Philistines to reach the Levant, early in the reign of Ramesses III (T. Dothan 1982; Brug 1985). An earlier contingent of Sea Peoples fought with the Libyans against the Egyptian pharaoh Merenptah (1212–1202), but the Philistines were not among them. This pre-Philistine group, or “first wave” of Sea Peoples, supposedly brought the Phil IIIIC potting traditions to the shores of Canaan, where they founded the first cities on exactly the same sites later identified with the Philistine Pentapolis (M. Dothan 1989; 1993a; T. Dothan 1989; T. and M. Dothan 1992). It seems highly unlikely that the pre-Philistine group with Monochrome pottery was displaced by the later Philistine group with Bichrome pottery at each of the Pentapolis sites.

The battle reliefs of Merenptah make it clear that Ashkelon, seaport of the Pentapolis, was inhabited by Canaanites, not Sea Peoples, during that pharaoh’s reign (Stager, 1985b; 1991; Yurco 1986). The simplest explanation is that the confederation of Sea Peoples, including the Philistines, mentioned in texts and depicted in reliefs of Ramesses III were the bearers of Late Helladic IIIIC pottery traditions, which they continued to follow when they settled in Canaan. The stylistic development from simple Monochrome to more elaborate Bichrome represents changes in the potting tradition of the Philistines two or three generations after their arrival in southern Canaan. The eclectic style of Bichrome pottery resulted not from a period of peregrinations about the Mediterranean during the decades between Merenptah and Ramesses III, but from a process of Philistine acculturation involving the adaptation and absorption of



many traditions found among the various peoples living in Canaan. This acculturation process continued among the Philistines throughout their nearly 600-year history in Palestine (Stone 1993; Gitin 1992).

As one moves from core to periphery in the decades following Stage 1, the material culture of the Philistines shows evidence of spatial and temporal “distancing” from the original templates and concepts. Failure to understand this acculturation process has led to the inclusion of questionable items in the Philistine corpus of material culture remains (for example, the anthropoid coffins), or worse, to a denial of a distinct core of Philistine cultural remains, just two or three generations after their arrival in Canaan, at the beginning of Stage 2, ca. 1150 B.C. (Bunimovitz 1990).

### *Stage 3: The End of the Iron Age I*

This process of acculturation in the material repertoire does not, however, signal assimilation or loss of ethnic identity among the Philistines. As a polity, they are never stronger. During the latter half of the eleventh century B.C., their expansion into the highlands triggers numerous conflicts and outright war with the tribes of Israel. Philistine military advances into the Israelite highlands are so successful, and the crisis among the Israelites so great, that the latter demand the new institution of kingship.

After the investiture of the successful warlord David as king over a fragile, yet united, kingdom, the tide of battle eventually turns against the Philistines. By 975 B.C., David and his armies push the Philistines back into the coastal territory controlled by the Pentapolis, finally completing the Israelite “conquest” of Canaan.

### *Summary*

The settlement of the Sea Peoples along the coastlands of Cyprus and of the Levant meets the criteria for a mass migration of peoples from the Aegean to their new homelands ca. 1185–1175 B.C. The Philistines settling in southern Canaan provide a vivid case study of this process and an explanation of the cultural changes that affected the region during the twelfth century B.C.

1. During Stage 1 of settlement, the Philistines destroyed indigenous cities and supplanted them with their own at the four corners of the territory they conquered.

2. The material culture boundaries of this territory were established by the presence of new and much larger settlements, in which locally made Mycenaean pottery predominated. Along with this potting tradition there were other new elements brought or borrowed from Aegean Late Bronze Age culture: architectural traditions focusing on the hearth, craft traditions utilizing spool weights for weaving, culinary preferences for pork, drinking preferences for wine mixed with water, and religious rituals featuring female figurines of the mother-goddess type. Outside the heartland controlled by the Philistine Pentapolis, Late Bronze Age, Egypto-Canaanite cultural patterns persisted well into the twelfth century, in settlements with predominantly Canaanite populations garrisoned by Egyptian military and administrative personnel.

3. All of the elements of the intrusive culture could be traced back to the Aegean area, where they flourished in the Late Bronze Age on the Mycenaean mainland and in Mycenaean cultural provinces. The migrating groups must have originated somewhere within these Mycenaean milieus.

4. The path of destruction along coastal Cilicia, Cyprus, Syria, and Canaan suggests that most of the new immigrants came by ship from “their islands,” as recorded in the Eighth Year Inscription of Ramesses III from Medinet Habu. There, he also depicted the Sea Peoples and some of the ships they used for battle and transport. Their “bird-boats” resembled those of the Mycenaean.

5. During Stage 2, with the breakdown of Egyptian hegemony in Canaan, the Philistines began to expand in all directions beyond their original territory. Already by 1150 B.C., their pottery and other items of their material culture show signs of acculturation, even though their sense of ethnic identity remained secure for at least another half millennium.