

LET'S DO THE TIME WARP AGAIN: MIGRATION PROCESSES AND THE ABSOLUTE CHRONOLOGY OF THE PHILISTINE SETTLEMENT

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Abstract

This paper argues that establishing the absolute chronology of the Philistine settlement without first understanding the complexity of the social processes involved in it leads to simplification of historical events, which in turn blurs and distorts any chronological conclusion.

Anthropological studies, as well as historical case studies are presented as a demonstration of the complexity of migration and colonization processes, often involving several groups migrating in different rhythms, resulting in different foundation dates of the sites they build in the target country. Egyptian sources as well as archaeological evidence from sites outside and in Philistia are used to unveil the heterogenic nature of the Philistine settlement, and its possible chronological implications.

1. FORWARD: "42" AND OTHER IRRELEVANT ANSWERS

In Douglas Adams' 1979 classic *The Hitchhiker's Guide to the Galaxy* some people faced a severe existentialist problem. In order to solve it, a huge computer was built, and it was asked to answer the question "of Life, the Universe, and Everything". It took the computer seven and a half million years to think about the question, and it finally gave the answer: "42". Do correct, yet incomprehensible answers to less than articulate questions occur only in science fiction books? How about a question such as: "What is the absolute date for the beginning of the settlement of the Philistines?"¹ Even if we reach a number, say after 1130 B.C. (as argued by FINKELSTEIN 1998, 144–145; 2000, 173; USSISHKIN 1998, 217) or at 1175 B.C. or slightly later (as argued by BIETAK 1991, 1993, 295; MAZAR 1997, 155–157, and STAGER 1995, 335–336) or early in the 12th century B.C. (as argued

by DOTHAN 1989, 8) what is the significance of this number?

In this paper, I shall argue that a major obstacle in understanding the chronology of the Philistine settlement is the view taken by most researchers, who see the Philistine settlement as a chronologically unified event, with a clear beginning and end, rather than a complex of migration processes, each with its own rhythm.

2. TEMPORAL AND CULTURAL VARIABILITY IN THE AEGEAN MIGRATION TO THE LEVANT

2.1. Migration as a complex process

Anthropological and sociological studies (e.g. ANTHONY 1990, 1997, 2000; BURMEISTER 2000) demonstrate that migration is not a sudden event of migrants pouring from their home countries to the new land. It is a prolonged process, in which information is gathered, sometimes using the services of scouts, guides or informants. Then, the initial migrants arrive, usually young men (LEONARD 1992, 23), who prepare the ground for the arrival of the rest of the family or for a larger kinship group (BOYD 1989). These events may ignite different processes such as chain migration (LEE 1966, 55), in which groups follow each other, leapfrogging-migrants who move from one destination to the other (ANTHONY 1990, 902–903) as well as return migration (ANTHONY 1990, 904) of people that chose not to stay in their new country. Seeing migration as a complex process comprised of different phases, each with its own temporal aspects opens the questions of the exact definition of the beginning point of migration, crucial to the question of Philistine chronology. Would it be the time when the first scout reaches his destination, or the arrival of the first small pioneer group, or the settlement of large family groups of migrants, following the pio-

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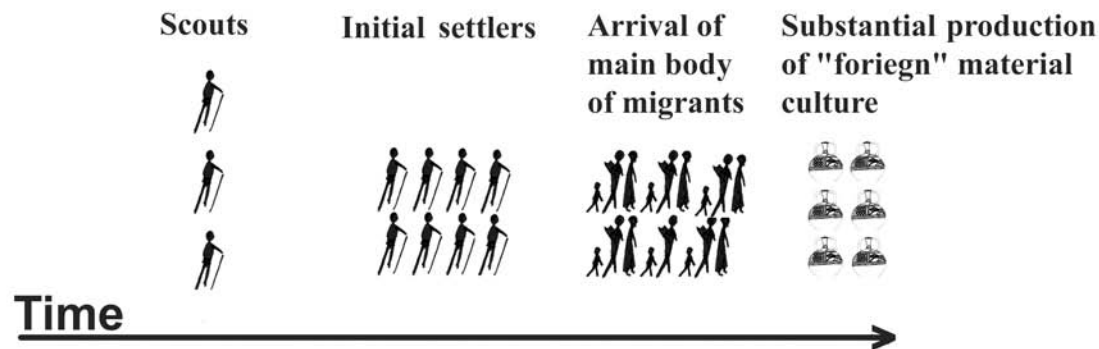


Fig. 1 Schematic pattern of migration for a single group

neer settlers? This question has serious bearing on our ability to identify the beginning of the Philistine migration: Are all these phases in migration processes archaeologically visible, or can we detect only the phase in which the settlers are already established and producing a conspicuous amount of their material culture? (Fig. 1).

Furthermore, it is implicitly assumed in the study of the Philistines that the three major excavated sites of Philistia, Ashdod, Ashkelon and Tel Mique/Ekron, were simultaneously settled by the same groups of people. This is of course the easiest solution, but is hardly the rule. Frequently, groups

of similar or different origins that settle in one geographical area, do not colonize simultaneously, but each settlement is founded on a different date. Can we, using only archaeological data, correctly solve the complex equation of migration processes that include more than one group, in more than one site? (Fig. 2).

Thus, for example, the early 17th century English settlement on the northeastern coast of America between New Haven and Portsmouth included eight settlements. The earliest in this group, Plymouth, was founded in 1620, and the latest, Newport, in 1639 (GILBERT 2003, 10; Fig. 3).

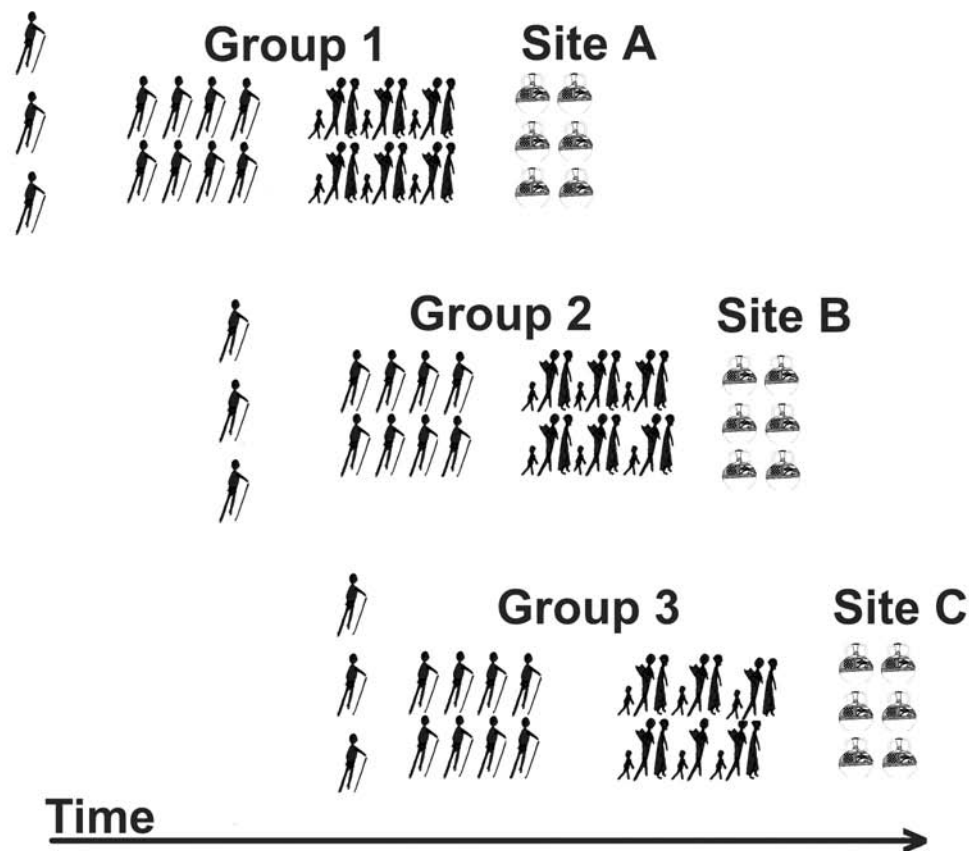


Fig. 2 Schematic pattern of several groups migrating into a single target country

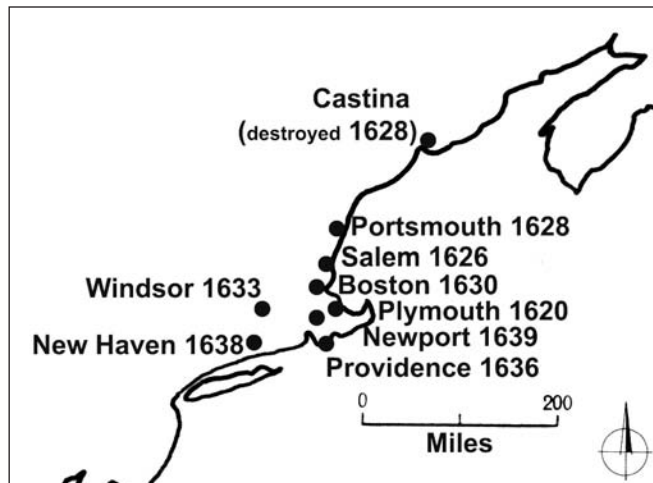


Fig. 3 British colonization in the Northeastern coast of America in the first half of the 17th century (data: GILBERT 1993, 10)

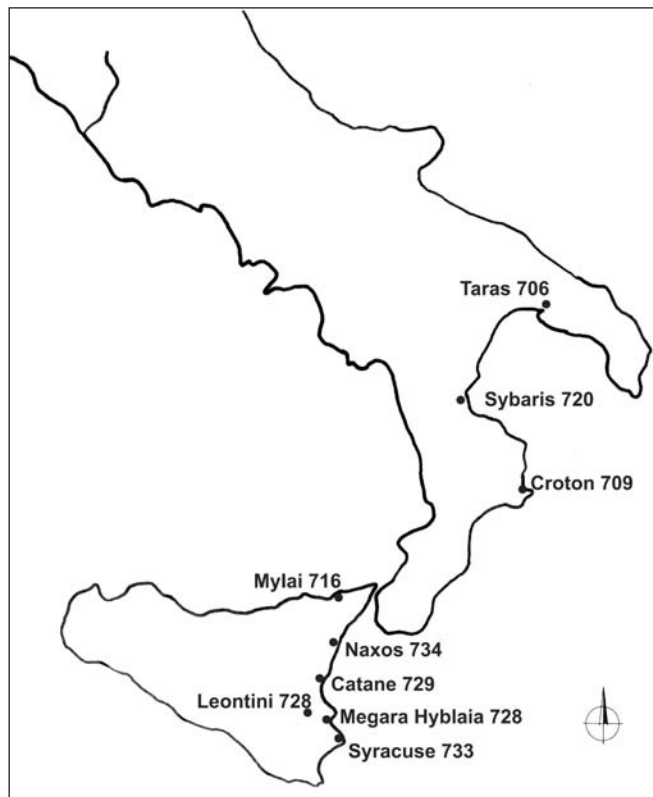


Fig. 4 Greek Colonization in South Italy and Sicily in the second half of the 8th century B.C. (data: GRAHAM 1982, 160–162)

A most illuminating example of the problem of temporal variation in migration is the complex migration events known as the Greek colonization to southern Italy and Sicily (Fig. 4). We know from literary sources that each of the foundations at the last third of the 8th century B.C. was conducted by colonists originating at different city states, and that each settlement was established on a different date:² from Naxos, settled according to tradition by the Chalkidians in 734 (GRAHAM 1982: 161; MALKIN 1987, 175), to Taras, settled by Spartans in 706 B.C. (GRAHAM 1982: 162). Would it be possible to determine such accurate data on the chronology and the origin of the migrants based on archaeological evidence? The answer is probably negative. Even in the cases when the literary date agrees with the date of the earliest Greek pottery at the site,³ it may prove impossible to differentiate between pottery made in Greece in 734 B.C., the date for the foundation of Naxos, and that made in 716 B.C., the date of the foundation of Mylai. Furthermore, the correct identification of origin of the settlers within Greece according to pottery found at the earliest levels of the sites is also an incredibly unsafe affair. Would it be fair to assume that without the literary evidence, some scholars would interpret all foundations of the late 8th century as contemporary, mass migration, similar to that of the Philistines?

2.2. Evidence for complexity from Egyptian sources

The Medinet Habu inscriptions give us invaluable information concerning the activities of the “Sea Peoples” before their defeat in the supposedly decisive battles of year 8 of Ramses III. Its “historical background” displays a temporal depth that indicates that the arrival of the “Sea Peoples” at Egypt was not a single, sudden event of mass migration, but a prolonged process, much more reminiscent of the complexity of a migration stream with its different phases:

a. In the opening scene the “Sea Peoples” are at their home, making plans: “The foreign lands made conspiracy in their islands” (PEDEN 1994, 29; REDFORD 2000, 12). These islands are by all likelihood located in the Aegean Sea, the closest islands to

² Other foundations are, Syracuse, settled by Corinthians in 733 B.C., Catane in 729 B.C. by the Chalkidians, Leontini in 728 by the Chalkidians, Megara Hyblaia by the Megarians in 728, Sybaris in 720 by the Achaeans, Mylai in 716 by Zanclean, and Croton in 709 B.C. by Achaeans (GRAHAM 1982, 160–162; MALKIN 1987, 176, 179)

³ Thus, for example, is the opposite case of Metapontum, with an Eusebian foundation date of 773/2 and an archaeological date of c. 650 or even later (MALKIN 1987, 181; CARTER 1993, 354–355)

Egypt. These were not Cyprus and Crete, since the latter is named elsewhere in earlier Egyptian records (CLINE 1994, 34 fig. 7), and Cyprus is mentioned by the name Alashiya in the year 8 inscription.⁴

b. Then, they set on the route to the east: “No one could stand their arms, from Hatti, Kode, Carchemish, Arzawa, and Alashiya...” (PEDEN 1994, 29).

c. They stop and set camp in Amurru, just outside the scope of Egyptian political domination, before the encounter with the Egyptians. “An encampment was [estab]lished in one place in Amor and they desolated its people and its land as though they had never come into being” (PEDEN 1994, 29). It is suggested that during this stage, which could have lasted for several years, some of the migrants married local, Syrian women, and had children, all of which are shown in depictions of the land battle (SWEENEY and YASUR-LANDAU 1999). The notion of a long stay in Amurru is supported by the proposed time gap of ten to fifteen years between the destruction date of Ugarit (1190–1185 B.C. SINGER 1999, 729; YON 1992, 119–120), probably contemporary with that of Amurru (KLENGEL 1992, 164–165), and the 8th year of Ramses III (ca. 1175 B.C.).⁵

Besides the clear temporal depth given by the “historical background”, it is likely that several encounters with the “Sea Peoples” have been summarized into two decisive battles. Their description can be found in lines 51–59 in the inscription of year 5 (the first Libyan war), presumably connected to the events of year 8 (PEDEN 1994, 7): “The northern hill countries shook in their bodies, namely the *Peleset* and the *Tjek[er]*.... they were *thr*-soldiers⁶ on land and another (unit) was on the sea” (PEDEN 1994, 17). Only the repulsion of the maritime invaders is recalled clearly in the inscription (“Those who came forward together on their sea, their seed is not”. CIFOLA (1991, 54–55) offers a convincing explanation for the fact that there is no stated location or time given to the land or sea battles: The land battle was not a single event but rather a telescoping of a series of relatively

small-scale hostile encounters between the “Sea Peoples” and Egyptian forces.

One should not rule out the possibility that the sea battle, too, was not a single event of hostile maritime activity (presumably in year 8) but the “total impression” of many similar interactions, most likely continuous maritime raids of the type that plagued Ugarit before its demise. Supportive evidence may come from the depiction of soldiers with feathered hats at the service of the Egyptians in the campaign of year 5 against the Libyans (SANDARS 1978, 118 fig. 74). If this relief is not copied from earlier ones,⁷ then, as argued already by BIETAK (1993, 299), people wearing the feathered hats had already reached Egypt as prisoners and/or as mercenaries before year 5 of Ramses III. These could not have been prisoners of the Libyan campaigns of Merneptah, who were by that time too aged for battle.

How long did this process, so laconically described by Ramses III continued? If Ugarit and Hatti were both destroyed sometime between 1195 and 1185, it would not be inconceivable to speak of a migration stream, made of different groups of people coming from various origins, and lasting 10 to 20 years before 1175. It must be emphasized that the 1175 is only the date in which the Egyptians stopped the migrants at the Delta. But how long before this date had they been in Palestine, and how long after this date did they continue to arrive? The Egyptian sources have little to say, perhaps since Egyptian grip on Palestine severely deteriorated after Ramses III. The mention in Papyrus Harris “I slew the Denyen in their Islands” (PEDEN 1994, 215), if not an empty boast, may reflect an event later during the reign of Ramses III, indicating the continuation of the conflict. Much clearer evidence comes from the Onomasticon of Amenope (below), not meant for regal propaganda, which mentions the Philistines, the Sikel and the Sherden together with Gaza, Ashkelon and Ashdod, and thus gives a terminus post quem of ca. 1100 for the Aegean settlement at least in the coastal parts of Philistia. The entire duration of the events connect-

⁴ Although the Egyptian term translated as “islands” may not have an absolute geographical accuracy (cf. SINGER 1988, 239 note 4), REDFORD (2000, 12) notes that the Egyptians could and did distinguish linguistically between “maritime littoral” and “islands.” According to Redford by the term “islands” the Egyptians referred to “Crete and the Aegean Archipelago.” Cf. BRUG 1985, 20, noting that the Egyptian term “Haunebut” (*h3w-nbwt*, “islanders”) was used to describe “Greeks” in Ptolemaic bilingual texts.

⁵ According to VON BECKERATH (1997, 108, 190), Ramses III ascended the throne in 1183/1182, thus making his 8th year 1175. KITCHEN (1987, 52), however, dates the beginning of the rule to 1184.

⁶ Probably meaning “select or veteran soldiers” (DREWS 1993, 171–152).

⁷ Such as the Libyan campaign of Merneptah, where feathered-hat soldiers are shown fighting *against* the Egyptian army.

ed with the settlement of the Philistines is at least of several decades in length: between 10–20 years before 1175 for the very beginning of the movements of the first groups of migrant out of their homes, and any amount of time between the latter date and 1100 for the last groups to arrive at Philistia.

3. THE AEGEAN/PHILISTINE MIGRATION AND THE END OF THE EGYPTIAN DOMINATION IN CANAAN

3.1. Chronology without a swift collapse

At the apparent absence of conclusive chronological data from Philistia itself,⁸ most scholars made a clear connection between dates available from the Egyptian strongholds in Canaan to the process of settlement. All scholars maintained that the mass settlement of the Philistines could not have gone unnoticed by the Egyptians. As a result, two schools have formed: one, arguing that the Philistine settlement followed the end of Egyptian administration; the second arguing for a peaceful or tense coexistence at least for some time.

Would the connection between the migration of the Aegeans/Philistines and the end of the Egyptian administration hold water if we gave up the pre-conception of mass, simultaneous migration, for more complex processes, involving different groups settling over an extended period of time? For those who favor the low chronology, the immediate uncomfortable outcome is that without a fast, well coordinated attack by the migrants, there is no possibility to reconstruct a swift end for the Egyptian administration, which can be used, via evidence in Egyptian centers in Canaan, for the absolute dating of the Philistine settlement. For those who argue for coexistence, or at least temporal overlap, between the beginning of the Philistine settlement and the end of Egyptian administration, the result is an inability to fix a clear date for the beginning of the Philistine settlement. However, as it will be demonstrated below, even if the reconstruction of a gradual, continuous migration is not accepted, it is possible to point out that the chronological evidence from the Egyptian centers in Palestine does not give any direct indication for the chronology of the Philistine settlement:

Beth Shean and Megiddo. Ussishkin argued, relat-

ing to the land movements of the “Sea Peoples”, that “such hordes must have come from the north by using a cardinal land route, and therefore had to pass Megiddo and the Naḥal ‘Iron gorge before heading south (USSISHKIN 1998, 216). If so, Megiddo could have held back the “Sea Peoples” to the days of Ramses VI, whose statue base, (found in a less than reliable context; BREASTED 1948, 135 note 1; WEINSTEIN 1992, 147), is presumed to date the end of stratum VII, and to give a *terminus post quem* for the Philistine incursion (FINKELSTEIN 1996b; USSISHKIN 1998; see however MAZAR 1997; YASUR-LANDAU 2003). However, small and even large groups of migrants could also bypass Megiddo altogether by using two major alternative roads that avoid the center of the Jazreel Valley, and later cross the Carmel Ridge: a northern one ending by Yokne‘am, and a southern one, ending by Jenin, and then going west through Emek Dothan and Naḥal Hedera (DORSEY 1991, 79 map 3; USSISHKIN 1998, 215–216). A third possible route, less convenient for travel, yet entirely unguarded, was along the coast.

Beth Shean, although strategically located, is not a necessary pass for travelers coming into Palestine from the north, and therefore its role in holding back land movements of the “Sea Peoples” is minimal. Consequently, the vast body of datable *Egyptiaca* and accompanying LHIIIC (or rather Cypriot-made “Mycenaean IIIC:1b”) pottery (JAMES 1966, fig. 94: 4; HANKEY 1966; HANKEY 1967, 127–128; WARREN and HANKEY 1989, 164–165; MAZAR 1993, 216; LEONARD 1994, 72 no. 979; YASUR-LANDAU 2003) are of no direct chronological value for the settlement of the Philistines.

Lachish. The lack of locally made, “monochrome” LHIIIC pottery in Lachish, which yielded good Egyptian datable material is another cornerstone in the chronology of the beginning of the Philistine settlement presented by USSISHKIN (1998, 217) and FINKELSTEIN (1995, 230–231). The lack of such pottery is shown as *positive* evidence that the Philistine settlement did not occur in nearby Philistia before the reign of Ramses III or even Ramses IV, whose scarab (KRAUSS 1994) was found in the lower city of Lachish (and indeed not before Ramses VI, according to the Megiddo evidence). However, not every

⁸ Important moves in the chronology of Philistia have been conducted by DOTHAN (1989) and BIETAK (1993) with comparative stratigraphic charts which included also Egyptian finds. However, it may be argued by those who favor the

lower chronology that all 20th-dynasty scarabs found in Philistia in contexts containing Aegean-style “monochrome” and “bichrome” pottery originated in fact in earlier strata.

absence of imported pottery has a chronological implication:

a. Both Lachish and Beth Shean have evidence for both Ramses III and Ramses IV names. The absence of *imported* LHIIIC pottery from Lachish (LEONARD 1994, 207), which is found in Beth Shean, does not mean, of course, that Lachish was destroyed earlier than Beth Shean. This absence is only connected to the fact that LHIIIC imported pottery is found only as south as the northern valleys, probably due to trade routes. Thus, imported LHIIIC pottery cannot give a direct date for the beginning of the Aegean settlement in Philistia. Trade routes are not the only explanation for the absence of imported pottery types. Imported LHIIIC is found in Tel Keisan and in Beth Shean, yet not in Megiddo (YASUR-LANDAU 2003), which is on the route between them. Still, FINKELSTEIN (1996b) sets the date of the destruction of Beth Shean stratum VI according to the statue base of Ramses VI found at Megiddo.

b. BUNIMOVITZ and FAUST (2001) argued that the small Aegean-style serving vessels and cooking wares, produced in Philistia, often of unattractive appearance and poor firing, were of no interest to the Egyptian garrisons who maintained their own foodways and cultural preferences. Their argument may be a very convincing theory for two additional reasons:

- Locally made (“monochrome”) LHIIIC pottery was also not found at Beth Shemesh, less than half the distance between Tel Migne/Ekron and Lachish. Since there seems to be a continuation of habitation at the site from the Late Bronze Age to the early Iron Age, the reason for the absence is not temporal in nature.

- Throughout the 13th century B.C., Canaanite taste for Aegean imported ware was mainly for containers such as stirrup jars and piriform jars, which contained perfumed oils, rather than to Aegean serving wares (LEONARD 1981, 94–96; STEEL 2002, 31; KILBREW 1998b, 160). After the fall of the Mycenaean palatial system the demand for Aegean-style *containers* continued in Egyptian garrisons, as manifested in the find of imported LHIIIC stirrup jars in Beth Shean, and the local imitations of stirrup jars in cemetery 900 at Tel el-Far‘ah (BRAUNSTEIN 1998, 262).

3.2 Evidence for direct contacts between Egyptians and Aegean/Philistine migrants

It is much beyond the scope of this paper to reconstruct the entire range of interactions between the Egyptians and the Philistines/Aegeans, not to mention its chronological framework. It should be, however, noted that there is evidence for complex and continuous contacts before, during, and after the set-

tlement in Philistia, casting heavy doubts on any reconstruction that suggest the Philistines as the cause for the end of Egyptian administration in Canaan.

- The first recorded meeting between the Egyptians and people identical or similar to the Philistines are the “feathered hat” mercenaries seen in the Libyan campaign of Merneptah (DREWS 1993, 54; CIFOLA 1994, 3–4). These, or others involved in piracy and mercenary activities may have been the informants for the migrants that followed.

- There is *direct* evidence for the presence of Aegean migrants in Egyptian garrisons in Canaan. The “feathered hat” people are depicted on scarabs from Beth Shean (ROWE 1940, pl. XXXIX:10; JAMES 1966, fig. 117:4; pl. 6.2:1) and Tel Far‘a (s) (MACDONALD, STARKEY and HARDING 1932, pl. LV:252; NOORT 1994, 140–141; KEEL and UEHLINGER 1998, 112; Pl. 6.2:3). The depiction of what appears to be Philistine (or other “Sea Peoples”) on an Egyptian object and in Egyptian posture, as well as the possible depiction of “feathered hat” on at least one of the sarcophagi in Beth Shean (ROWE 1930: 39, pls. 37–40; WRIGHT 1959; DOTHAN 1982, 274 note #21), demonstrate a prolonged acculturation process of such people during their time in the Egyptian service, possibly well into the 12th century B.C.

- Contemporary with the presence of these mercenaries, started the process of movements and settlement, accompanied by clashes with the Egyptians, starting perhaps immediately after the destruction of Ugarit, certainly after the 5th or 8th year of Ramses III (above), and continuing perhaps to the end of the 12th century, when the picture given by the Onomasticon of Ameope (below) gives a picture of a Sea Peoples settled along almost the entire coast of Canaan.

- Even during the late 12th century and the 11th century the contact with Egypt continued, and evidence for Egyptian material culture in southern Palestine had led WEINSTEIN (1998, 191) to argue that “...Philistia evidently became both a market for Egyptian trade goods and an intermediary through which Egypt maintained trade relations with other areas of Palestine”. The Egyptians were well aware of the situation in Canaan after the end of their administration, as reflected in the Onomasticon of Amenope (GARDINER 1947: 190–191; DOTHAN 1982, 3–4; SINGER 1993, 296; STAGER 1995, 336). Among the traits of post-empire Egyptian influence was the adoption of an Egyptian form, the jug, into the “Philistine bichrome” repertoire (DOTHAN 1982, 172–185), as well as the incorporation of the Egyptian

lotus motif into the same repertoire. In addition, Egyptian pottery and other objects appear in sites in Philistia in 11th-century contexts (MAZAR 1985, 56; WEINSTEIN 1998, 19–192), indicating that the end of the Egyptian Empire in the Levant did not stop the commercial and possibly other interactions between Egypt and Philistia.

The array of interaction between Egyptians and Aegean/Philistines was probably never limited to the hostilities reflected by the Merneptah's and Ramses III's documents. Rather, it is very plausible that at any given time between the very end of the 13th to the beginning of the 11th century B.C. Aegean/Philistines were involved in piracy and served as mercenaries against the Egyptians, serving in the Egyptian garrisons in Canaan and elsewhere, settling in smaller and larger numbers in southern Palestine, as well as involved in trade with the Egyptians. Egyptian objects could have reached Philistia and other parts of Canaan regardless of the state of Egyptian domination in Canaan (with the sole exception of objects directly connected with Egyptian administration, as hieratic inscriptions). Thus, for example, it is impossible to discredit the chronological value of 20th-dynasty scarabs found within settlement contexts yielding evidence for the settlement of the Philistines, such as the Ashdod Ramses III scarab (DOTHAN 1989, 7–8; BIETAK 1991, 43; 1993, 294 fig. 2; BRANDL 1993, 138–139; yet not mentioned in FINKELSTEIN 1995, 1998, 2000) or the recently identified Ramses IV scarab of the same site (BEN SHLOMO 2003, 89–90). Furthermore, the different mechanisms of contact could well account for any 20th-dynasty object which has reached other parts of Palestine, without any connection to the end of Egyptian administration, such as the all important Ramses VI statue base from Megiddo.

4. VARIABILITY IN THE ARCHAEOLOGICAL EVIDENCE FROM PHILISTIA

Does the archaeological picture from Philistia reflect a simultaneous, violent conquest by a large mass of migrants in a short time? DOTHAN (1989) and STAGER (1995), supporting a script very close to that written by Ramses III, used destruction levels in

Ashdod, Ashkelon and Tel Mique/Ekron to argue for a swift and violent conquest. But does the archaeological evidence from Philistia necessarily point to such reconstruction?

a. The circumstances of settlement are not identical in all the sites, and evidence for a violent conquest are inconclusive, to say the least. The Canaanite town of Tel Mique Ekron was completely burnt (DOTHAN 1998, 150–151), yet evidence from field I (KILLBREW 1998a, 381–382) may indicate that the Canaanite settlement of stratum VIII continued for some time after the destruction of stratum IX, *before* the appearance of Aegean material culture in stratum VII. Traces of fire do not appear in all the areas excavated in Ashdod. The only evidence for a violent destruction is a thick ash layer reported from a rather small area inside Area A (DOTHAN 1971, 25; 1993a, 96). Most importantly, it is not reported from area G, the location of the 13th century B.C. “Governor Residence” (DOTHAN and PORATH 1993, 47). In Ashkelon the migrants may have found an almost empty site: The burnt layer found by Pythian-Adams (PYTHIAN-ADAMS 1921; FINKELSTEIN 1996a, 107) can also be attributed to the destruction by Merneptah. In addition, the number of migrants settling the sites varied much: While the entire 20 ha. of Tel Mique Ekron was settled from the very beginning of the settlement process, much smaller areas have been settled in Ashdod and Ashkelon: In Ashkelon, Stager argues that the site in the 12th century consisted of 50–60 ha. (STAGER 1995, 342). This argument for a radical change in the area occupied, with similarity to Tel Mique/Ekron, has not yet been proved by showing any 12th-century occupation outside the area of the Late Bronze Age strata on the smaller mound.⁹ It may well be that the size of the earliest Aegean settlement was not much larger than its Canaanite predecessor, suggested by FINKELSTEIN (1996a) to be a smaller “E” size settlement (5.1–10 ha.). In Ashdod, the city spread outside the acropolis only in the 11th century (DOTHAN 1993a, 98),¹⁰ being of similar size in the 12th century as it was at the end of the Late Bronze Age, also assigned by FINKELSTEIN (1996a, 239) to his category “E”.

b. The settlements differ in aspects of material

⁹ Even if the fortification, dated to the beginning of Iron II (STAGER 1993, 342), will be proved to be of a “late 12th century” date, as suggested earlier by Stager (*ibid.*, 107), the entire area within the huge circumference of walls may not have been densely inhabited.

¹⁰ Although evidence for stratum XIII and XII pottery was found in a pit in area C1. This pit contain also later material which gives the date for their period of use (DOTHAN 1971, figs. 101–102).

culture. These differences, although minute, may have much significance, since they have survived powerful assimilation mechanisms, which exist within every migrant society.¹¹

– Pottery iconography (YASUR-LANDAU 2003): The pictorial style LHIIIC pottery from Tel Mique/Ekron and Ashdod contains fish and bird images.¹² Human figures, which were not found in Ashdod and Tel Mique/Ekron, do appear in the pictorial repertoire of Ashkelon both in the “monochrome” and the “bichrome” style (STAGER 1998, fig. on p. 157, p. 164 fig. a; WACHSMANN 2000, 134 fig. 6.29).

– The settlements differ in aspects of ritual activity: Wide shouldered, long necked “Ashdoda”-style figurines are quite common in Ashdod (DOTHAN 1982, 234–249; YASUR-LANDAU 2001), and also found in Ashkelon, yet they are absent from Tel Mique/Ekron, which however produced other types of figurines, more similar to the “mourner” types (DOTHAN 1998, 155; DOTHAN and GITIN 1993, 1053, DOTHAN 1995, 48, 50, fig. 3.12; GUNNEWEG, DOTHAN, PERLMAN and GITIN 1986: 5, fig. 1: 14). On the other hand, incised cow scapulae were found in Tel Mique/Ekron (DOTHAN and GITIN 1993, 1053; HESSE 1986, 25 fig. 4), but not yet reported from Ashdod and Ashkelon.

– Additional, less secure differentiation exists in the absence of seals or sealings from all sites but Ashdod (DOTHAN 1982: 41, pl. 6; DOTHAN and DOTHAN 1992: 167, pl. 11; DOTHAN and PORATH 1993: 81, fig. 36:9; KEEL 1994: 22–23; 1997: 672–673 no. 27; pl. 8.4: 1, *ibid.*: 82, fig. 38:2).

Recent advances in the relative and absolute chronology of LHIIIC pottery (e.g. D’AGATA 2003; DEGER-JALKOTZY 2003; GAUB 2003; IAKOVIDIS 2003; RUTTER 2002; forthcoming; YASUR-LANDAU 2003; FRENCH in this volume; MOUNTJOY in this volume) give reason to optimism that once the material from Philistia will be fully accessible, it will provide additional important chronological data. With a final publication of the stratigraphic and ceramic sequences in all the excavated area at Tel Mique/Ekron, Ashdod,

and Ashkelon, it will be possible to establish the temporal relations between the appearances of earliest Aegean-style pottery in these sites, i.e. their relative “foundation dates”.

However, even the preliminary observations stated above demonstrate not only a variability in the circumstances of settlement, but perhaps more importantly, a regional differentiation between the sites in Philistia in pictorial iconography and ritual costumes, which are closely connected to notions of ideology and self identity. This variability brings forth the possibility that we witness here a model of colonization similar to that seen in South Italy and Sicily: not a single event of settlement, but rather separate processes of settlement for each site. Ashdod, Ashkelon, and Tel Mique/Ekron were settled in different circumstances, by Aegean migrants perhaps arriving from close, but different places of origin.

5. CONCLUSIONS

In this paper I have tried to demonstrate that the road for constructing a definite absolute chronology for the settlement of the Philistines may be much longer and complex than previously assumed:

1. It was suggested that the desire to reach a clear-cut date for the beginning of the Philistine settlement may stand in contrast to the actual complex nature of migration processes as known from anthropological and historical case studies. Accordingly, virtually every piece of evidence we possess, from Egyptian records to inter-site variability in material culture remains from Philistia, argues against a simplistic historical reconstruction of mass, swift invasion and settlement that would allow a single date, either “high” or “low” for the beginning of the Philistine settlement. Rather, the Philistine settlement was likely to be a series of migration processes occurring throughout most of the 12th century B.C.

2. The abandonment of the “mass invasion/migration” reconstruction pulls the plug on any attempt to connect chronologically between the demise of Egyptian domination in the northern valleys and Shephela and the beginning of Philistine settlement

¹¹ One such mechanism is the “principle of first effective settlement”, in which new arrivals will try to assimilate to the first founders, which have already adapted to the social, economic, and environmental conditions in the new land, and have managed to consolidate their community (ANTHONY 2000; CHEEK 1998: 153).

¹² e.g. Ashdod: DOTHAN and PORATH 1993, fig. 15:11, fig. 16:19; fig. 17:10; other examples of pictorial pottery: STAGER 1995, fig. 3:30, 31. Tel Mique/Ekron stratum VII (phase 9a, yet note that there are none from phases 9c and 9b: KILLEBREW 1998a, fig. 7:15 and probably 13. Other examples of pictorial pottery: STAGER 1995, fig. 3:22, 23. DOTHAN 2000, 154 fig. 7.7: 8.

in the southern coastal plain. Without hordes from the north, ravaging Megiddo and Beth Shean in a single sweep, it is impossible to use these sites' Egyptian objects in any relation with the Philistines. The contrary may be correct. Imported LHIIIC pottery from Beth Shean may be contemporary, or even later, than the beginning of the Philistine settlement in Philistia (YASUR-LANDAU 2003). Similarly, commercial and cultural reasons, rather than chronological, may account for the absence of LHIIIC pottery, either locally made or imported from Lachish.

3. An often neglected aspect with direct relation to chronology is the fact that migration is only one within the plethora of interactions between Egyptians and the Philistines and other "Sea Peoples"

from the late 13th century B.C. to the early 11th. Other interactions, some occurring simultaneously with migration processes, included maritime raids on Egypt and the Levantine coast, "Sea Peoples" mercenaries fighting in the service as well as against the Egyptians, and various trade enterprises. Those left without doubt much evidence in the excavation record, in the form of Egyptian imports (as scarabs), evidence for Aegeans in Egyptian strongholds, and evidence for Egyptian influence on Philistine material culture. All this evidence has no direct connection with the date of the Philistine migration and settlement, and is therefore the source of a strong chronological "background noise", which blurs the more faint chronological clues (such as local LHIIIC pottery styles) from the sites in Philistia.

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