



**Review of: Peter M. Fischer and Teresa Bürge (eds)
2017. Sea Peoples Up-to-Date. New Research on
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13th-11th Centuries BCE (Proceedings of the
ESF Workshop held at the Austrian Academy of
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Peter M. Fischer and Teresa Bürge (eds.). *Sea Peoples Up-to-Date. New Research on Transformations in the Eastern Mediterranean in the 13th-11th Centuries BCE* (Proceedings of the ESF-Workshop held at the Austrian Academy of Sciences, Vienna, 3-4 November 2014). Denkschriften der Gesamtakademie 81; Contributions to the Chronology of the Eastern Mediterranean 35. pp. 412, figs. 92. 2017. Wien: Verlag der Österreichischen Akademie der Wissenschaften. ISBN 978-3-7001-7963-4 paperback €149; e-publication €109.

This volume is the outcome of an international workshop held at the Austrian Academy of Sciences in Vienna in November 2014. Since the first use of the term “Sea Peoples” («Peuples de la Mer») in 1867 by French Egyptologist Emmanuel de Rougé,¹ the topic has not lost its popularity, with plenty of attention in recent years, including now published workshops at Louvain-la-Neuve (in 2014)² and Warsaw (in 2016).³ The present volume wanted to go beyond the information provided by the texts and aimed at presenting new archaeological data and their analysis, covering a wider geographical region and implying a more holistic approach than ever before. As the subtitle indicates, the specific aim of the volume is to study the various political, economic, social and cultural transformations in the Eastern Mediterranean from the 13th to 11th centuries BC⁴ that can be connected to the Sea Peoples phenomenon.

At the outset, the editors Peter M. Fischer and Teresa Bürge are to be commended for finding such a large panel of experts with such a wide interest and expertise, thus highlighting the strong multi- and inter-disciplinary nature of the workshop and the publication. The twenty-one contributions have been organised into five thematic sections (Overviews: From Italy to the Levant; Climate and Radiocarbon; Theoretical Approaches on Destruction, Migration and Transformation Culture; Case Studies: Cyprus, Cilicia and the Levant; Material Studies). The volume opens with two welcome introductions that aptly set the scene. The first is by **Reinhard Jung** (pp. 23-42) who, in a masterly fashion, provides an overview that is useful for both the expert and the novice. Starting with a history of research of the Sea Peoples phenomenon, he also discusses the geographical problems of their ethnonyms, accepting only that of the *Lukka*=Lycia as certain and two others (*Aqajawaša*=somewhere in the Aegean world?; *Denyen*=Mycenaean Greece or Cilicia?) as possible. He next turns to various classes of material remains that in his view allow a connection with migrating peoples, including various Aegean types of pottery – especially kitchen vessels (cooking jugs and amphora), handmade and burnished pottery of Italian type – as well as offensive weapons.⁵ This also involves the “double-headed bird boat” which Jung, in contrast to earlier studies that attributed an Aegean connection,⁶ links with Italy. The question is, however, how far we can interpret such evidence before falling into the ‘pots equal people’ trap. An example: while it can be assumed that peoples of foreign origin probably preserved some of their consumption habits in their new habitats, to connect the consumption of pork by Philistine communities, rarely attested before in Canaanite settlements, as a practice initially introduced by settlers from Cyprus and the Aegean,⁷ although attractive, lacks definite proof of causality. The second part of his paper summarizes the state of research on the Sea Peoples phenomenon in various Mediterranean regions. He highlights a lack of knowledge in some areas. For example, there is very little archaeological evidence for Lycia, the probable “land of the *Lukka*”, and most information comes

¹ Rougé (de) 1867:36.

² Driessen 2018.

³ Niesiolowski-Spanò and Węcowski 2018.

⁴ i.e. Late Bronze Age / Early Iron Age transition. In the following pages, abbreviated as Late Bronze Age = LBA / Early Iron Age = EIA.

⁵ See also Mehofer and Jung this volume.

⁶ Like M. Weede and others who believe that they were Helladic ships. See, recently, Emanuel 2014.

⁷ See also Faust 2018.

from cuneiform and hieroglyphic sources.⁸ It is in this regard, that the ongoing *Çaltılar Archaeological Project* is promising since the hill had been occupied over a long period spanning the Bronze Age – Iron Age⁹ and is located inland from the coast where the Kumluca,¹⁰ Ulu Burun and Cape Gelidonya wrecks were found. A second introduction, by **Malcolm H. Wiener** (pp. 43-74) carefully reviews the evidence for potential causes of collapse at the end of the Bronze Age, usually including climate change, drought, famine, earthquakes and epidemics. While showing great expertise of textual and archaeological sources, he also seems to disagree with Jung in certain details. Hence, Wiener seems to accept the *Shardana*=Sardinians, underlining the interactions between the island and the Italian peninsula on the one hand, and the Aegean-Cypriot area on the other. He also follows Molloy in arguing that “mercenaries were among the new arrivals in Greece in the late LHIIIB and LHIIIC” (p. 55), given the new military assemblages and cooking wares. Wiener also uses textual data (Linear B) and material remains to suggest that preparations (construction of defensive walls, weapons production, etc.) were being made to protect against enemy attacks. The detailed overview describing traces of destruction and abandonment which span the 14th to the 12th century BC would have benefitted from a site map, however. He also presents a very useful summary of the evidence of re-occupation during LH IIIC in each of the Aegean regions after the collapse and convincingly points at the central role Cyprus played in this process, as a “node of exchange networks and movement of settlers” (p. 60). Finally, Wiener lists all the arguments in favour of a predominant position of Mycenae in the LBA Aegean as the capital of an empire,¹¹ a position also defended by Kelder, Eder and Jung,¹² but each for different reasons. Wiener’s paper can be regarded in connection with that by **Helene Whittaker** (pp. 75-84) who also concentrates on the Greek mainland, arguing for a chaotic situation in the aftermath of the collapse for each palace individually and seeing the breakdown “in terms of discrete and unconnected episodes of destruction in different parts of the Greek mainland rather than of a sudden unitary catastrophe” (p. 75). Here too an interpretative map distinguishing the localised events would have been welcome. Whittaker advances the hypothesis that the Sea Peoples, although responsible for the destructions, did not settle on the Greek mainland, hence coming close to hypotheses already expressed by Yasur-Landau.¹³ To some extent, however, her review would have been more optimally placed in the “Case Studies” section of the volume.

The second section, “Climate and radiocarbon”, comprises two papers by authors who did not actually participate in the workshop. **David Kaniewski** and **Elise Van Campo** (pp. 85-94) discuss both marine and terrestrial data from the Mediterranean and Levant that hint at a period of decreasing humidity during the LBA and EIA, generally referred to as the 3200 calBP event. Again the absence of an explanatory map can be deplored. A main conclusion is that “there are no detailed paleoclimate records from Greece showing unambiguous climate information during the crisis years” (p. 90). **Sturt W. Manning, Catherine Kearns and Brita Lorentzen**’s paper (pp. 95-112) discusses how a plateau in the calibration curve explains why the radiocarbon resolution around 1200 BC remains poor. Nevertheless, Bayesian chronological modelling (with a well-defined sequence of radiocarbon dates that can be placed in the calibration curve), does provide a time frame with dates ranging from c. 1220 to 1110 BC. Manning *et al.* tend to agree with the conventional absolute chronology, where Late Cypriot IIC starts in the late 14th century BC, ending early in the 12th century when some major coastal sites were abandoned. What is clear from these papers is that the Sea Peoples phenomenon was a long term process stretching over almost a century rather than a short-time event.

The third section (“Theoretical approaches to Destruction, Migration and Transformation of Culture”) starts off with a paper by **Jesse Michael Millek** (pp. 113-140) on the LBA/EIA transition in the Southern Levant. First, the author reviews some hypotheses on the possible causes of such destruction and associated phenomena (earthquakes, crisis architecture and termination rituals, natural and

⁸ Gander 2010.

⁹ Cf. Hodos 2015.

¹⁰ Cf. Öviz 2019.

¹¹ *Contra*: e.g. Zurbach 2019: 143-146 who argues a more nuanced position.

¹² Kelder 2010; Eder and Jung 2015.

¹³ Yasur-Landau 2010.

accidental fires) before dwelling on intentional human destruction in the framework of warfare. His approach may be compared with that by Igor Kreimerman¹⁴ but they arrive at different conclusions. In particular, Millek argues that there is no direct archaeological evidence to assume that 16 Canaanite sites allegedly destroyed by the “Sea Peoples” were indeed so. He stresses a continuity of local ceramic traditions with potentially some “peaceful intrusion” of “*Philistine*” or “Sea Peoples” material culture (such as LHIIIC:1b or Philistine Bichrome pottery) into a “Canaanite” site during the EIA. Against the flow of recent overviews on the end of LBA in the Southern Levant, his minimalist stance should be highlighted. At the end of his paper, he also deliberates on: “how to describe” and “how to interpret” a destruction layer, a substantial crucial point for a field archaeologist. In a broader way, and taking into account some fifty sites in the Southern Levant, such a question is also discussed in his recently published PhD dissertation¹⁵. His paper should be considered with the two following ones. **Assaf Yasur-Landau** (pp. 141-148) plots some of the theoretical concepts of intercultural contact (*hybridization*, *creolization* and *entanglement*) that have been applied to the study of Philistines. However, a recontextualization of these concepts – created for different spaces and times (such as the “middle ground” between Indians and European colonizers in the Great Lakes region)¹⁶ – would allow for a better understanding of the significance of these denominations.¹⁷ As Yasur-Landau points out, the use of the concept of *connectivity*¹⁸ may present a useful avenue of research for the coming years. Likewise, the excavators of Tell es-Safi/Gath, **Aren M. Maeir** and **Louise A. Hitchcock** (pp. 149-162), reflect on the complex processes that led to the development of Philistine culture and its gradual entanglement with the other material cultures of the region (Israelite / Judahite and Canaanite). The question of the ethnicity of these different communities cohabiting in the Southern Levant is particularly discussed, beyond the simplistic stance of compartmentalizing cultural identities. In the final chapter of this section, **Lorenz Rahmstorf** (pp. 163-173) compares the migration processes of the Sea Peoples with that of Anglo-Saxons immigrating from north-western Germany and Denmark to England in the 5th and 6th centuries AD. By taking into account archaeological data, written sources and a variety of scientific analyses (strontium isotope and DNA studies)¹⁹, his study clearly confirms the usefulness of comparative research that focuses on common phenomena and problems of migration processes.

The core of the volume consists of a series of Eastern Mediterranean case studies concentrates on the Eastern Mediterranean. Hence, **Peter M. Fischer** (pp. 177-206) focuses on the new evidence from seven seasons of excavations (2010– 2016) at Hala Sultan Tekke,²⁰ on Stratum 2, dated to c. 1200 BC (transition LC II/IIIA), and Stratum 1, dated to c. 1150 BC (transition LC IIIA1/2), including domestic and industrial structures. He underlines the presence of numerous clay sling bullets found in the destruction layer (Stratum 2) of several districts of the “port city”, which probably suggests a phase of warfare before the abandonment of the settlement. According to Fischer, the remainder of the population either joined the Sea Peoples who attacked Egypt or migrated to the Southern Levant to settle there. A useful review of phases of destruction, rebuilding and abandonment of various sites on the island is furthermore given but again a map is absent. **Artemis Georgiou** (pp. 207-227) also deals with Cyprus but her approach is quite different and usefully illustrated by photographs and maps. Focusing on the Paphos region,²¹ she contrasts the unprecedented flourishing of Palaeopaphos during the 12th century BC with the breakdown of other well-established urban centres on Cyprus such as Alassa, Kalavassos and Maroni. The construction of the “island’s first truly monumental structure” (Sanctuary I) at Palaeopaphos is emphasized as is the appearance of individual shaft graves, interpreted as the burials of migrants. During this troubled period, two short-lived settlements (Maa-Palaeokastro and Pyla-Kokkinokremos) are founded. The former is considered as the new commercial harbour of the Paphos polity. The following papers discuss Anatolia and the Levant. Hence, **Gunnar**

¹⁴ Kreimerman 2017.

¹⁵ Millek 2019.

¹⁶ Cf. White 1991.

¹⁷ E.g. Bats 2017.

¹⁸ Since the fundamental work of Horden and Purcell 2000.

¹⁹ For Philistia, see recently Feldman *et al.* 2019.

²⁰ See the recent work of Fischer 2019.

²¹ Georgiou 2012.

Lehmann (pp. 229-255) defines the latest LBA phase in the 12th century BC as (Cilician) Late Bronze Age III, the period following the collapse of the Hittite empire. Focusing on the recent excavations at Kinet Höyük, Lehmann argues for a slow decline of the local LBA culture intimately connected with an increased Cypriot and Aegean influence. Rather than an incursion by the Sea Peoples, the final destruction of the site is blamed either on an earthquake or a violent attack. J.D. Hawkins's reading of a recently discovered inscription in the temple of the Storm God in Aleppo (Syria) is discussed by **Diederik J.W. Meijer** (pp. 257-262), concentrating on two rulers, both named Taita, with the ethnicons *Palistin* and *Walistin*.²² Concerning the question of the potential connection between the northern polity of "Palistin" and the Philistines of the southern Levant, Meijer stresses the difficulty of recognizing "what is Philistine", developing his point on ethnicity and material culture²³. After considering the textual and material evidence, he concludes that Philistine presence in the Amuq region is "archaeologically invisible" (p. 261). The claim, by the author, that the Peleset were already known from the records of Ramesses II and Merneptah (p. 258) is erroneous since it is only during the reign of Ramesses III that they were mentioned as well as in the *Onomasticon of Amenope*.²⁴ Meijer's paper has in the meantime been superseded by more recent discussions.²⁵ **Francisco J. Nuñez** (pp. 263-283), co-director of the excavations at Tyre, provides a critical analysis of available data on the Northern and Central Levant. His critical approach is particularly instructive, highlighting the importance currently given to stratigraphic facts and the presence of foreign elements in local material culture. Perhaps he insists a little too much on the homogeneity of Levantine material culture during the LBA (p. 266), in contrast to its diversity in the Iron Age.²⁶ Moreover, when he quotes some written sources, it would also have been opportune to cite editions of hieroglyphic texts directly²⁷ instead of citations without references. Nuñez argues that the newcomers (if they belonged to the Sea Peoples) did not cause all the destructions identified in the Levant²⁸ and stresses the absence of destructions in the central region. This, together with the strong continuity in material culture during the LBA / EIA transition, are used to argue that the North Canaanite / Phoenician cities of the central Levant remained untouched, allowing Phoenician cities to consolidate their positions, once freed from Egyptian hegemony. In a joint paper, **Ayelet Gilboa and Ilan Sharon** (pp. 285-298) argue that the Canaanite Carmel Coast region in Northern Israel should be considered as forming part of the 'Phoenician' cultural sphere usually limited to the Southern Lebanon in the EIA. Using both cultural-stylistic and petrographic data from ceramic evidence, the excavators of Tel Dor highlight the place this port town occupied in inter-regional exchanges with Cyprus and Egypt after the LBA collapse and its function as a hub during the EIA. By reassessing the *Report of Wenamun*, which refers to Dor's inhabitants as *Tjeker/Skl*, the authors argue that this a geographical term referring to the Carmel coast region (as a coterminous of EIA 'Phoenicians') However, the Wenamun account should be used cautiously: it's more a work of literature than an historical document²⁹. They also argue that "the confluence of evidence (transformation from commercial town to administrative centre, the virtual end of overseas contacts and the 'Israelisation' of the ceramic repertoire)" around the mid-9th century BC "is best explained by a takeover of the Carmel and Sharon regions by the Northern Israelite Kingdom" (p. 293). This would also explain, for the cities of the southern Lebanon, the rise of a "Phoenician thalassocracy". **Teresa Bürge** (pp. 299-327) highlights the high degree of continuity from the Late Bronze to Iron Age at Tell Abu el-Kharaz in the Central Jordan Valley, despite an occupational lacuna between 1300 and 1100 BC. Her study focuses on a large storage compound constructed against the city wall that dates to phase IX (c. 1100 BC) and consists of 21 rooms.³⁰ Her ceramic analysis shows the coexistence of both local traditions and innovations that appear to have an Aegean and Cypriote connection. Some of the radical changes in cooking and dietary habits as well as in the use of foreign-type loom-weights are interpreted as suggestive of a limited migration of Eastern Mediterranean

²² *Contra* Adams and Cohen 2013:662, n. 19.

²³ See also Maeir and Hitchcock this volume.

²⁴ Adams and Cohen 2013:662-664.

²⁵ He neglects the majority of recent literature on the topic. Also, see Janeway 2017 focusing on Tell Tayinat.

²⁶ Steiner and Killebrew 2014:497-594.

²⁷ E.g. for the *Papyrus Harris I*, see Grandet 1994.

²⁸ For a similar approach concerning the southern Levant, see Millek this volume.

²⁹ Cf. the cautionary position of Adams and Cohen 2013:661, n. 16.

³⁰ These are the first results of her unpublished PhD dissertation (Bürge 2016).

individuals (perhaps the offspring of original Sea Peoples or Philistines) to the Jezreel Valley. The section finishes with an attempt to propose a new historical reconstruction for the area north of Ekron during the LBA/EIA transition by **Wolfgang Zwickel** (pp. 329-352). Despite some factual errors (as the reference to *Papyrus Harris 500* [BM 10600] on p. 333 instead of *Papyrus Harris I* [BM 9999]),³¹ bibliographical omissions (such as E. Morris' study)³² and outdated information on Tell Keilah³³ (referred to as "Kegila", a site under excavation since 2014),³⁴ there are some interesting suggestions. The destruction of the Egyptian fortress and administrative centre at Jaffa c. 1150 BC put an end to the Egyptian hegemony over the southern Levant and provided the opportunity, Zwickel argues, for the Sea Peoples to construct the Pentapolis of the Philistine confederacy in the coastal region. Gezer, Kegila and Beth-Shemesh, located in the Western Highlands, remained independent Canaanite city-states until at least the late 11th century BC before joining the Judahite kingdom. His reconstruction of the historical developments is heavily dependent on Biblical sources (stressed explicitly on p. 343) and should be handled with the necessary caution. Finally, Zwickel argues that the coastal region between Ekron and Tell Qasile was occupied by a Sea Peoples group, between the Philistine Pentapolis (in the south) and the Tjekker a Dor (in the north). Following the written (Biblical) tradition, he argues that this group founded new cities. Reviving the hypothesis of a linguistic parallel between the Sea Peoples' group of the *Dananu/Denyen* and the biblical Danites, he adds some fresh support to the old theory which maintained a Cilician origin for this group.³⁵

The last section, "Material Studies", offers a series of fresh analyses on pottery, metal and other objects, either imported or locally-produced during this period. Hence, with her well known expertise, **Penelope A. Mountjoy** (pp. 355-378) offers her view about the Sea People phenomenon from a ceramic perspective. A number of motifs (like the quirks, loops, tassels) on Philistine pottery from Ekron, Ashkelon and Ashdod³⁶ is said to derive from Cyprus and in particular from Enkomi. Other motifs, as the double-stemmed spirals, however, have an East Aegean / West Anatolian origin while a mainland Greek origin is attributed to the antithetic spiral. A special Cretan connection is highlighted by several motifs such as the floating semi-circles, thread chevrons, birds with almond body, etc. Some shapes too like the basin ("kalathos"), the tray and the shallow angular bowl that are found in Philistine sites are said to derive from respectively Anatolia, the Aegean or Cyprus. All this evidence combined makes her suggest an East Aegean / West Anatolian origin of at least some of the migrating groups. NAA analysis, moreover, showed a clear connection between some of the Cypriot harbours as that at Kition – Hala Sultan Tekke and the Levant, suggestive either for trade or for population movements. **Philipp W. Stockhammer** (pp. 379-388) focuses on shallow open bowls and Simple Style stirrup jars to argue that different actors used Aegean-pottery shapes for diverse practices during the late 13th and early 12th century BC in the Southern Levant. The Philistine feasting dishes of Aegean type should be understood as the product of transcultural entanglement, in others words "the translation of Canaanite practices into the stylistic vocabulary of Aegean-type pottery" (p. 384). Stockhammer claims that these different groups of actors had complex relationships with the Aegean and Cyprus, but remain misunderstood beyond the use of common expressions as "Sea Peoples" and "Philistines" in scholarship. In an important paper that highlights the role played by Italian military innovations in the technological development of Aegean' weaponry, the origin of some bronzes objects such the Naue II swords is discussed by **Mathias Mehofer** and **Reinhard Jung** (pp. 389-400). They see them as belonging to a metallurgical *koinè* (so-called "Urnfield bronzes") that existed during the later 13th and 12th century BC. Using XRF and lead isotope analyses, they were able to demonstrate a northern Italian origin of some of the bronzes found in the Aegean alongside the local production by Aegean smiths of Italian type bronzes with locally available copper (from Cyprus) during the LH IIIC period. **Gert Jan van Wijngaarden** (pp. 401-412) finally uses ivory objects as an example to reconsider the presence of exotica in Mediterranean archaeological contexts. He argues

³¹ Cf. annotated edition of Grandet 1994.

³² Morris 2005.

³³ Cf. Na'aman 2010.

³⁴ Cf. Blétry *et al.* 2018.

³⁵ *Contra*: e.g. Grandet 2017:184-185.

³⁶ For a detailed study, see now: Mountjoy 2018.

that the change of international contacts at the end of the LBA was accompanied by a significant shift in the value system and the social practices related to the consumption of exotica. Whereas exotica were considered agents of a distant world during the LBA, this notion no longer applies afterwards. While in Italy finished ivory objects were originally imported, they are now made locally from imported raw materials. On the Greek mainland, one notices an obvious decrease of imports and locally-produced ivory objects after the fall of the Mycenaean palaces. All exotica in the LH IIIC Aegean are antiques and their age seems to have become the primary characteristic for their social role. However, these developments in Italy and the Aegean are both seen as the result of a same mechanism: a shift in the social role of exotic artefacts.

Despite a few shortcomings in some of the individual papers, the volume offers plenty of new thoughts and perspectives on the Sea Peoples phenomenon, both with regional/specialised analyses and with comprehensive overviews. It is somewhat to be regretted that Manfred Bietak, although present at the workshop, did not contribute a paper on Egypt. A specific chapter on the historiography of Sea Peoples research would also have been welcome in addition of the extensive introduction by Burge & Fischer as well as a discussion on the North Sinai.³⁷ The absence of an index of toponyms and ethnonyms (a recurrent problem of the CCEM collection) would also have improved the user-friendliness of the volume. However, the importance given to data provided by recent excavations in combination with new analyses of older excavation material and archives is undoubtedly the strongest point of this collection of papers. All in all, they considerably improve our understanding of the “Sea Peoples” phenomenon, beyond the textual evidence. There is a final reason why this volume should not lack from libraries dealing with the LBA / EIA transition in the Mediterranean world and that is its relevance for present-day history. At the time of writing these few paragraphs, the world has been in the grip of a pandemic outbreak (Covid-19) with an impact on society, unprecedented since WWII. Warfare, climate change, migratory flows and related political crises are all happening within a “*temps long*” that is just as complex and dramatically similar to the collapse of the flourishing ancient civilizations in the 12th century BC and, consequently, gives us much to think about for the coming decades.

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³⁷ Cf. Hoffmeier 2018 about Sea Peoples’ battle against Ramesses III.

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