

INTRODUCTION

The migration of the Sea Peoples, the Philistines among them, from the Aegean area to the Levant during the early twelfth century BCE is one of the most intriguing events in the history of the eastern Mediterranean. From a cultural point of view, it was a watershed process in which the movement of the populace connected East and West during the great divide between the collapse of the Late Bronze Age civilizations and the beginning of the era of nation-states in the Iron Age. As a product of the very beginning of the Dark Age of Greece, the migration illuminates the earliest efforts to reconstruct social structures in the Aegean after the fall of the Mycenaean palaces. In Cyprus, it contributed to further connect the island to the realm of Aegean culture, which would later lead to Hellenization. In the Levant, the migrants formed their own political communities, separate from both the Canaanite city-state system and the Egyptian empire. Establishing themselves along the coast, the Sea Peoples formed a long-standing cultural and political antithesis to the Israelites in the central hill country, destined to shape the history of the biblical world.

The study of the Philistine migration is also a methodological treasure trove from a point of view of both the archaeology and the anthropology of migration. During the late 1990s, the exponential rise in the theoretical examination of migration in archaeology created a plethora of methodological frameworks, as well as a need for well-documented case studies against which these frameworks could be tested. The extraordinarily rich archaeological data from twelfth-century-BCE sites in the Aegean, Anatolia, Cyprus, and the Levant, together with supporting literary evidence, make the Philistine migration one of the best-documented case studies of migration in the ancient world. The data enable us to investigate practically every aspect of the migrants' society, from political structures to perceptions of gender, and from subsistence economy to their ethnicity and intercultural relations between migrants and local populations.

UNCHARTED AREAS AND BLIND SPOTS IN THE ARCHAEOLOGY OF THE PHILISTINES

Any journey tracking the elusive Philistines should begin by becoming acquainted with and appreciating the areas that others have already explored. The infant years of the archaeology of the Philistines began in 1899, when two British archaeologists, Frederick Bliss and Robert A. S. Macalister, began digging at Tell es-Şafi, which they identified as biblical Gath, Goliath's hometown. They discovered a new pottery type – strainer jugs, stirrup jars, and bowls decorated with spirals and birds. F. B. Welch, a Mycenaean pottery expert who worked in the British excavations on Melos (T. Dothan 1982: 24, 94; Dothan and Dothan 1992: 32), cautiously interpreted these as suggesting “a probable northwestern origin of the Philistines.” The archaeological link between the Philistine and the Mycenaean cultures was made for the first time. This discovery fit very well with the earlier interpretations of the nineteenth-century Egyptologists François Chabas and Gaston Maspero concerning the land and sea invasion of Egypt by the Sea Peoples: the *Peleset* in the inscriptions of Ramses III had been equated in 1872 with the Aegean Pelasgians and the biblical Philistines. Macalister's 1913 book, *The Philistines: Their History and Civilization* (reprinted in 1965), is a synthetic work that well represents this early phase in research. Heavily text oriented, it combines Egyptian and biblical sources with the small amount of archaeological data then available from the Aegean and Philistia. Macalister's research questions, reflected in the table of contents, and his desire to build a comprehensive history of the Philistines, are relevant to this day. Chapter 1 is devoted to the origin of the Philistines. Chapter 2 relates to their history, from Wen-Amon to the wars with the Israelites and their subsequent decline. Chapter 3 is about the land of the Philistines and is concerned mainly with problems of historical geography. Chapter 4 treats the culture of the Philistines, dealing with language; military, political, and domestic organization; religion; and the Philistines' place in history and civilization.

After a century of archaeological research, the main questions remain much unchanged, and the twenty-first century begins with archaeologists doubting previous notions of dates, material culture, and ethnicity connected to the Philistine phenomenon. In regard to the origin of the Philistines, we are more or less in the same obscure situation we were in a century ago. Even more embarrassing is that precious little has been written on the Philistines as individuals – rather than as a cultural phenomenon or historical event – and even today, Macalister's statement holds true: “On the subject of family life among the Philistines nothing is known” (1965: 90). Has indeed so little changed?

Several decades after Macalister, Albright (1932) and Alt (1944) formed the basic historical paradigm for the settlement of the Philistines, which many

use to this day. Taking at face value the words of Ramses III and his successors (recorded in Medinet Habu and the Great Papyrus Harris), they argued that the Sea Peoples were defeated by the Egyptians in Year 8 of Ramses III, then settled as vassals in Egyptian strongholds (which Albright and Alt interpreted as the Egyptian centers in southern Canaan). After a short time, they assert, the Sea Peoples broke free of the Egyptian yoke and formed their own political system.

The last three decades of the twentieth century were, undoubtedly, the golden age of the archaeological investigation of the Philistines, owing much to the personal commitment and charisma of Trude Dothan. In the period between the mid-1960s and the mid-1980s, the available archaeological database grew immensely because of new excavations in Israel's coastal plain. However, the methodological scheme used during those years for the identification of migration by material culture traits was not fundamentally different from that used by Macalister: decorated fineware pottery was still the main criterion for identifying the Philistines, and changes in pottery were perceived as indicators of changes in ethnos.¹ Dothan's book *The Philistines and Their Material Culture*, published in Hebrew in 1967, was the first fully archaeological investigation of the material culture remains attributed to the Philistines. It presented a clear argument supporting the "ethnic" connotation of the Philistine Bichrome pottery assigned to the Philistines. Close parallels between the shapes and designs of this pottery and Aegean Mycenaean IIC: 1b pottery was, to Dothan's mind, proof of Aegean migration to the Levant (1967: 71). The anthropoid coffins found at Lachish and Beth Shean were presented as another "ethnic demarcator" of the Philistines (1967: 211–46). During the same years, Moshe Dothan conducted excavations at Ashdod, the first Pentapolis site to be extensively excavated using modern methods. A new type of pottery, locally made Mycenaean IIC: 1b with Aegean types and decoration, was found to precede the Philistine Bichrome pottery. Moshe Dothan equated these two pottery types with two different groups of people and introduced the "two waves approach": a first wave of settlement of Aegean Sea Peoples in the days of Merneptah was followed by a settlement of the Philistines in the days of Ramses III (M. Dothan 1972: 5–6). Shortly after these excavations, the renewed excavations by Amihai Mazar at Tell Qasile in 1971–4 (Mazar 1980; 1985a) uncovered a settlement, dubbed "Philistine," that was founded in the Philistine Bichrome phase. A series of overlapping temples with rich finds of cult vessels urged Mazar to formulate a detailed discussion of the Philistine cult, concentrating mainly on the origin of the "Philistine" cultic architecture – whether local or Aegean.

¹ Other items of Aegean derivation, or of presumed Aegean derivation, were also interpreted in these years as further evidence of Aegean migration, leading to the 1980s approach of using a checklist of traits to identify the inhabitants of a specific site as Philistines.

Nancy Sandars's 1978 book, *The Sea Peoples*, put the Philistines within a much wider spectrum of interrelated historical phenomena. It was extremely successful in providing a wide Mediterranean scope for the examination of the phenomenon of the Sea Peoples, combining literary sources and archaeological finds in a complex and colorful reconstruction of the thirteenth and twelfth centuries BCE in the eastern Mediterranean. Four years later it was followed by a revised English edition of Trude Dothan's book, in which – drawing mainly on results of the Ashdod excavations – further traits of Aegean origin were compiled, to be associated with the migration of the Philistines (1982: 40–1). Among them are the following:

- * Locally made Mycenaean IIC: 1b pottery (dubbed “Monochrome”) and the later Philistine Bichrome pottery
- * Seals, including one possibly with Cypro-Minoan script from Ashdod
- * “Ashdoda” figurines – identified by Trude Dothan as a local version of the Mycenaean Mother Goddess figurines

Following Sandars's and Dothan's studies, the Philistine–Sea Peoples phenomenon in the southern Levantine coast was compared to other cases in the eastern Mediterranean in which “intrusive” Aegean material culture was identified as indicating migration. Mazar (1985b; 1988; 1991) compared the material culture evidence for the Philistine–Sea Peoples migration to the Levant to that of the Achaean migration to Cyprus in the twelfth century BCE. He concluded that both phenomena relate to the same migration events, and that Cyprus was a bridgehead on the route of the migrants to the Levant. Aegean migration was also identified at Ras Ibn Hani, the port of Ugarit, on the evidence of locally made Mycenaean IIC: 1b pottery (Lagarce and Lagarce 1988).

Challenges to the existing methodology rose soon after, when the first cracks appeared in the concept of pots equal people. It was argued that the locally made Mycenaean IIC (Monochrome) pottery was the prototype of the later Philistine Bichrome pottery rather than representing another, earlier ethnic group (Mazar 1985b: 106; Singer 1988). Further attacks were launched by Bunimovitz (1990), who questioned the value of the Philistine Bichrome pottery as an ethnic demarcator. In the same years, Singer (1992; 1993; 1994) explored aspects little tended to by most archaeologists: the political organization of the Philistines, phases in Philistine settlement as evidenced by settlement patterns, and various aspects of Philistine deities and cult.

Just as the results of the Ashdod excavations were the source of many advances in the 1970s and early 1980s, knowledge and ideas about the Philistines were heavily influenced in the late 1980s and 1990s by the excavations begun in 1984 at Tel Miqne (identified as the Pentapolis site of Ekron), directed by Trude Dothan and Seymour Gitin. The finds provided additional material culture traits for the “Aegean checklist,” such as Aegean-type cooking jugs and coarseware and unique pottery kilns, as well as much data on Aegean

pottery and architectural features (mainly Aegean-style hearths; Stager 1995: 347). Furthermore, the Tel Miqne/Ekron excavations opened the way for studies on behavioral aspects of the Philistine migration, such as changes in animal husbandry and economy (Hesse 1986; 1990). Other important results came from the excavation of Ashkelon by Lawrence E. Stager, begun in 1985.

The middle and late 1990s saw the appearance of new methodological approaches, putting more emphasis on aspects of human activity than on objects. The checklist approach, which focuses on material culture traits to identify migration, has been gradually modified by a focus on behavioral patterns (which reflect a change in way of life, ideology, and economy) for the same purpose. New topics investigated have included the importance of ancient foodways to the study of ancient ethnicity (Killebrew 1992; Yasur-Landau 1992), details of pottery production (Killebrew 1996; 1998b), and aspects of gender (Sweeney and Yasur-Landau 1999). An important development has been the application of archaeological, anthropological, and sociological-methodological approaches to ancient and modern migrations to understanding change in material culture assemblages in Philistia, mainly for the archaeological identification of migration and acculturation processes (Stager 1995: 333–4; Stone 1995; Bunimovitz and Yasur-Landau 1996: 89–91). Attention has been given also to other neglected aspects of migration, such as demography. The postulated number of migrants ranged from a massive migration of twenty-five thousand people (Stager 1995) to a humble movement of a few thousands (Finkelstein 1996; 1998). At the same time, more traditional topics were hotly contested, especially the chronology for the arrival of the migrants. Dothan (1989), Mazar (1985b), and Stager (1995) supported a date during the reign of Ramses III for the settlement of the Philistines in connection to his campaigns against the Sea Peoples, while Finkelstein (1995; 1998) and Ussishkin (1998) argued for a lower chronology for the beginning of the Philistine settlement, much later than the days of Ramses III, and probably after Ramses VI, postdating the end of Egyptian control in the south of Canaan.

The later 1990s were also the first time in which the paradigm of Aegean migration, which united most scholars dealing with the Philistines, was seriously challenged. Sherratt (1992; 1998; followed by Bauer 1998) suggested, for the first time, an elegant nonmigrationist explanation for the Aegean cultural traits found on Cyprus and in Philistia, preferring a process of cultural diffusion and elite emulation connected with the early post-Bronze Age trade. Another challenge to the idea of Aegean migration was raised by Killebrew (1998a: 393–7, 401–2; 2000; 2006: 231), who supports the idea of migration that originates from Cyprus and/or Cilicia rather than from the Aegean proper. Even the ethnic composition of the people of Philistia was contested: they were mostly Aegean (e.g., Stager 1995); a mixture of Canaanites, Syrians, and Aegeans (Sweeney and Yasur-Landau 1999); Canaanite (Drews 2000); or a cosmopolitan mixture of people from the eastern Mediterranean (Sherratt 1998).

It is astounding that this very active discussion of key questions relating to the Philistine migration took place in a reality in which very little published data existed on the stratigraphy, architecture, and pottery typology of the first Philistine levels. Before 2004, of the vast areas excavated at Ashdod, Ashkelon, and Tel Miqne/Ekron, only two excavation areas were published with early-twelfth-century strata: Area G in Ashdod (Dothan and Porath 1993) and Field X at Tel Miqne/Ekron (Bierling 1998). This situation has improved considerably in recent years, first with a masterly typological discussion of locally made Mycenaean IIIC pottery (Dothan and Zukerman 2004) and then with the final publication of Field INE at Tel Miqne/Ekron (Meehl, Dothan, and Gitin 2006) and Area H at Ashdod (Dothan and Ben-Shlomo 2005). At the same time, the important results of the Ashkelon excavations began to emerge (Master 2005; Cross and Stager 2006). An influx of dissertations dealing with various aspects of the Philistine and Sea Peoples problems also adds a wealth of yet unpublished material (Mazow 2005; Ben-Shlomo 2006a; Birney 2007; Press 2007).

Despite the many advances in available archaeological data and theoretical approaches made in the past years, the last attempt of a synthetic study placing the Philistine migration within a wider spectrum of interrelated historical phenomena was Nancy Sandars's 1978 book, *The Sea Peoples*, whereas the last synthesis of material from the southern Levant was the 1982 English edition of Dothan's *The Philistines and Their Material Culture*. Apart from the lack of final publication of some key sites, partially remedied only recently, the main reason for this situation may be blind spots and uncharted territories, which blur our vision and present serious difficulties to compiling such a study.

The first blind spot is the need to encompass both the Aegean and the Levant of the twelfth century BCE. With Susan Sherratt and Penelope Mountjoy being the most conspicuous exceptions, few of those who have interpreted interconnections between the Levant and the Aegean have taken the pains to examine in any depth the vast LH/LMIIIC assemblages available.

The second blind spot concerns the use of methodology for the archaeological identification of interregional interactions, including migration. Some important methodological tools have been developed in the past decade in world archaeology, yet they, as well as an overwhelmingly rich sociological and anthropological literature on migration, have usually not been used in any comprehensive manner by archaeologists dealing with the so-called Philistine problem. Every paradigm that is based on a reconstruction of Aegean migration and does not employ methodological tools to construct sound archaeological proof of migration will be vulnerable to virtually any antimigrationist challenge.

As for uncharted territories, those lie in virtually all topics connected to the migration of the Philistines. The political and economic causalities for their migration have never been thoroughly studied or examined in the context of the Aegean postpalatial society. Very little has been written on the migrants'

organizational abilities and the routes they may have taken from the Aegean to the Levant. While material culture in Philistia has been amply discussed, it was usually to support chronological, typological, and technological arguments – seldom to re-create the society. There is no study dealing with questions of status and social hierarchy in the society of Philistia. Nothing has been written on its ideology and power. Very little exists on aspects of its subsistence and ancient economy, and almost nothing exists on daily life, women, and gender. The Philistines have been reduced to a list of cultural traits rather than being thought of as a living society.

THE AIM OF THE PRESENT STUDY

It may now be possible to illuminate sections of these blind spots and uncharted territories in an attempt to create an archaeological narrative of the migration of the Sea Peoples.

The vast developments in the archaeology of the Philistines in the past decade (in terms of both methodology and the availability of more databases), as well as the challenges to the paradigm of Aegean migration to the Levant, call for a reevaluation of the entire array of interregional interactions between the Aegean and the Levant in the twelfth century BCE. Similar developments in the archaeology of Cyprus and the Aegean area at the close of the Bronze Age provide not only stimulus but also much data for the conducting of such work.^{2,3}

This book aims to demonstrate that the migration of groups of Aegean settlers among the Aegean areas, Anatolia, Cyprus, and the Levant was one of the most important forms of interaction in the first half of twelfth century, side by side with other forms of interaction, such as trade and raiding. The Philistines settling in the southern Levant are but the southernmost manifestation of a vast array of migration phenomena that took place through both land and sea, starting at the Aegean world during the twelfth century. Along these routes, migrants, whose number, relative power, and perhaps even origin within the Aegean differed from one place of settlement to the other, had, nevertheless, a profound effect on almost every aspect of behavioral patterns in their new homes.

Pursuing this aim leads to two interrelated foci of interest. One, with wider geographic and diachronic scope (Chapters 2–5), will follow the connection between social structures and processes in the Aegean area and changes in

² In this work, *Aegean* is defined as the area that can be considered in very general terms as the Mycenaean world of the thirteenth century BCE: mainland Greece up to Thessaly, the Cyclades, Crete, the Dodecanese, and western Anatolia.

³ *Levant* is defined here as the area from the Syrian coast to the north and the Nile Delta to the south, including mainly the coastal zones and lower areas to the east of those zones.

interregional interaction patterns, among them migration during the thirteenth and twelfth centuries BCE. Further insights into the nature of twelfth-century interaction will be gained through the examination of sites along land and sea routes from the Aegean to the Levant. Thus, Chapter 2 deals with aspects of social complexity, rulership, and interregional interaction in the thirteenth-century Aegean. It explores the types of state-orchestrated as well as private interactions that took place and examines whether maritime migration was one of them. Chapter 3 surveys the level of social complexity and political integration after the fall of the Mycenaean palaces. Chapter 4 examines the maritime abilities achieved in the twelfth century, as well as various aspects of land and sea travel, to establish which types of interregional interaction were possible in the twelfth century. Chapter 5 follows the sea and land routes from the Aegean to the Levant in the twelfth century. A combination of archaeological evidence from sites along these routes, as well as Hittite, Ugaritic, and Egyptian literary sources, is assessed to define the nature of interaction of these areas with the Aegean world.

A second focus will be on Philistia proper (Chapters 6–8). First, the criteria of deep changes of behavioral patterns will be used for the identification of an Aegean migration in the twelfth century against the background of thirteenth-century Canaanite culture and its interaction with the Aegean world. Then, a portrait of the migrants' society will be drawn, based on various aspects of society in Philistia from the level of the individual to the level of the settlement. Thus, Chapter 6 is devoted to the situation in Canaan in the thirteenth and early twelfth centuries BCE, and to Canaan's interactions with the Aegean world prior to the fall of Ugarit and Year 8 of Ramses III. Special attention is given to the possibility of Aegean presence in Late Bronze Age Canaan. Chapter 7 examines all available material culture assemblages from Ashdod, Ashkelon, and Tel Miqne/Ekron and establishes the argument for the Aegean migration as the most plausible explanation for the changes in these assemblages. Chapter 8 deals with the various social and political aspects of the Aegean migration, including duration of contact, number of arrivals, social stratification, occupation, and questions of gender and intermarriage.

Finally, Chapter 9 presents my conclusions, an archaeological narrative reconstructing the Aegean migration to the Levant. Although this volume will not be the final word on these topics, I hope that it will serve to launch a new round of discussion, thus leading to advancement in an overall understanding of the Philistines.

1

THE ARCHAEOLOGICAL IDENTIFICATION
OF MIGRATION AND OTHER RANGES OF
INTERREGIONAL INTERACTIONS

Those who settle on foreign shores will either found their own independent settlement, or infiltrate among the local population; and they will either bring their own wives, or marry indigenous women in their new homes. Between these two pairs of alternatives there can, of course, be many intermediate situations.

– Coldstream, “Mixed Marriages at the Frontiers of the Early Greek World,” 1993

ESTABLISHING THE COURSE OF INQUIRY

The great methodological advances in the archaeological identification of ancient migration conducted in the 1990s (e.g., Burmeister 2000; Anthony 1990; 1997; 2000) were achieved by implementing insights gathered from anthropological and historical case studies. The use of explicit and sound methodology to study migration effectively ended the dislike that, in the 1980s, many “new” archaeologists felt for migrationist explanations, which many archaeologists had used until then as magical, catchall explanations for material cultural change.

The theoretical advances in the study of migration have greatly benefited, and still do, from studies of historical archaeology (e.g., Cheek 1998; Deetz 1996; Diehl, Waters, and Thiel 1998). Such studies are an excellent source of specific insights and theoretical approaches for any research dealing with migration. Because this field was practically born in the New World, much of it deals with different aspects of migration and settlement in the Americas and elsewhere. It is therefore traditionally theoretically sensitive to questions of colonial interaction and migration, and it is usually supplemented by much better literary sources than are any of the cases of ancient colonization.

Although Near Eastern archaeologists are often accused of not incorporating theoretical advances into their work, many archaeologists working on the Philistine problem swiftly and amply acknowledged advances in the theory of migration (e.g., Stager 1995; Barako 2000; Gilboa 2005; Killebrew 2006; Ben-Shlomo 2006a; Mazow 2005).

Before we embark on this journey, we must put forward an explicit methodological framework that will enable us not only to identify migration but also to place it in the context of other forms or ranges of interregional interactions, such as trade and raids, all known to have co-occurred in the twelfth century BCE.

All events are unique, and irreproducible; however, all events are part of the vast continuum of interregional interaction, taken here to broadly mean any form of contact between different regions and/or cultures. This continuum may be arbitrarily divided up into three rather flexible and interconnected ranges of interactions sharing a common trait: migration, trade, and raids and conquest (Fig. 1.1).

Stein (2005: 13–14) stresses the importance of the ranges of trade and emulation in the archaeological identification of colonization: “Trade, emulation, and the presence of trade colonies should leave different archaeological signatures. If interaction is limited to trade without the presence of foreign enclave, then we would expect to see only portable trade items in the local settlement.” The picture becomes more complex when, as it often happens in the Mediterranean, various ranges of interaction co-occur in the same regions, sometimes at the same location. Thus, for example, the reality of the late eighth and early seventh centuries BCE, the era of Greek colonization, included various ranges of interaction: not only settlement of Greeks in the central Mediterranean, but also trading ventures of Greeks to various parts of the Mediterranean and wars among different Greek populations. Similarly, Phoenician contacts with native populations in Spain and Sardinia were not limited to colonial domination; they included complex trade contacts and other interactions, thus resulting in a blurred distinction between locals and migrants, a practice that Dommelen (2005) terms *hybrid*.

Furthermore, when a nonmigrationist explanation for a change in material culture is promoted, such as Sherratt’s (1998) trade-based explanation for the production of Aegean-style pottery in twelfth-century Cyprus and the Levant (see the Introduction to this volume), it simply cannot be properly addressed with a methodology that aims to study migration alone. The archaeological model applied to such material culture assemblages needs not only to identify migration but also to correctly differentiate it from other ranges of interaction, in which migration is seen as a mere range of events within the much broader continuum of interregional interaction. To my mind, identifying migration in archaeology by using a model that deals only with migration turns a blind eye to the complexity and variability of human interaction.

DESCRIBING INTERACTIONS AND THE PARAMETERS OF INTERACTION

As stated, every interregional interaction is unique, a composite of extraordinary and irreproducible circumstances. How, then, can we formulate a