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CITIES OF THE SEA: MARITIME TRADE AND THE ORIGIN OF PHILISTINE SETTLEMENT IN THE EARLY IRON AGE SOUTHERN LEVANT

Summary. *The question of the origins of the Philistines, who settled in the southern Levant in the early Iron Age (12th century BC) has long been the subject of debate. Traditionally, they have been understood to lie with the 'Sea Peoples,' raiders who were thought to have wreaked havoc in the eastern Mediterranean at this time. A new conceptualization of the 'Sea Peoples' phenomenon as the emergence of decentralized maritime trade leads to new questions regarding the settlements associated with it, namely those along the southern Levantine coastal plain and especially those considered 'Philistine.' It is the aim of this paper to reinterpret these sites in terms of their functional role within this decentralized network and it is suggested that they were established and maintained specifically for that purpose. Finally, the development of this network of interconnections is related to the parallel emergence of the Phoenicians and the Israelites in the eleventh and tenth centuries.*

For more than half a century debate has raged regarding the origin of the Philistines and the nature of their settlement in the southern Levant in the years following the end of the Bronze Age. A new book by T. and M. Dothan (1992), based largely on the recent excavations at Tel Miqne, has revived questions regarding their ethnicity, and a new series of papers have focused on when and how they settled (Finkelstein 1995; Mazar 1997). Theories explaining the appearance of Philistine material culture, primarily the distinctive 'Philistine Bichrome Ware,' in early Iron Age (12th–11th cent. BC) contexts, have ranged from describing a

wave of immigration from the Mycenaean heartland (T. Dothan 1982; T. Dothan and M. Dothan 1992) to interpreting it as representing new material used by the indigenous socio-economic group (Bunimovitz 1990). While the direct link assumed by the former thesis is unlikely, the latter is undermined by the archaeological evidence from the excavations at Tel Miqne-Ekron and elsewhere in Philistia, which suggest that the processes occurring in that area in the early Iron Age, indicated by the differences in material culture and the exclusively urban nature of the settlements, are quite distinct from the rest of the southern

Levant (T. Dothan 1989; 1995; Stager 1995; Killebrew in press).

Literary evidence has long pointed scholars to find the origins of the Philistines in the 'Sea Peoples' mentioned in Egyptian inscriptions, largely due to the correlation between one of the 'Sea Peoples,' the *peleset*, named in the reliefs of Ramesses III's temple at Medinet Habu, with the 'Philistines' (T. Dothan 1982: 5–13). The 'Sea Peoples' themselves have been held responsible for the destruction of such disparate Late Bronze Age areas as Mycenaean Greece (Baumbach 1983; Vermeule 1960), Thrace (cf. Özdoğan 1985: 538), Cyprus (Dikaios 1971: 529), and the Levant (T. Dothan 1982; 1989). For many of these regions, however, there is no evidence to support such a theory (Muhly 1984), and the hypothesis for the eastern Mediterranean of a foreign invasion based on the appearance of the so-called Mycenaean IIIC: 1b pottery, seen as diagnostic of an intrusive Aegean population, has recently come under attack as the pottery has been shown to have as many local Levantine and Cypriot parallels as Mycenaean ones (Kling 1989). But while the 'Sea Peoples' as a whole may be a somewhat ephemeral phenomenon archaeologically, the appearance of the Philistines in the southern Levantine coastal plain is becoming more real archaeologically as more data come to light. This, coupled with the fact that other sites in the southern Levant are often interpreted in terms of 'Sea Peoples' occupation, has led to a renewed interest in identifying and understanding who the Philistines were.

More recently, the 'Sea Peoples' phenomenon itself has been reinterpreted as representing an emerging socio-economic group with mercantile interests rather than a new population element in the eastern Mediterranean (Sherratt in press). This hypothesis, put forward by Susan Sherratt,

is the most compelling conceptualization of the nature of the 'Sea Peoples' to date. She sees the 'Sea Peoples' not as an intrusive ethnic group in the eastern Mediterranean, but as a name that arose from Egyptian propaganda to explain what was probably the emergence of powerful freelance sea merchants in the Late Bronze Age. The mercantile ambitions of these 'institutionalised "Sea Peoples"' would have 'generated their own culture and cultural activities' (Sherratt in press; following Artzy 1997), therefore making them seem culturally or ethnically unified to more centralized powers like the Hittites and Egypt, who may have felt threatened by them.[1] Evidence suggests that the commercial 'hub' of these maritime activities was Cyprus, with these merchants engaging in a 'long-term marketing strategy' to dominate trade in the eastern Mediterranean (Sherratt 1994). In addition to their own products, they are most likely responsible for the trade in Mycenaean goods to the Levant, and in the thirteenth century BC probably began their own production of 'Mycenaean' pottery (Muhly 1996; Sherratt and Sherratt 1991), which was either a result of the dwindling supply exported from the troubled Mycenaean palatial centers (Muhly 1996) or, conversely, a contributing factor to the Mycenaeans' demise (because they undermined the Mycenaean export market) (S. Sherratt personal communication).

While the 'hub' of the maritime activities associated with the 'Sea Peoples' may in fact have been Cyprus, it is clear that these traders were, as Sherratt (in press) puts it, 'a pretty cosmopolitan bunch'; and attempts to determine the port-of-origin of the Gelidonya and Uluburun ships (Muhly *et al.* 1977; Bass 1991), among more recent discussions, has convincingly shown that these merchants were from all over the eastern Mediterranean

(Knapp and Cherry 1994; Knapp 1997). The concept of the 'Sea Peoples' has its roots mainly in the evidence from the Egyptian inscription of Ramesses III's temple at Medinet Habu, which describes enemy groups (the Peleset, Tjekker, Sheklesh, Denyen and Weshesh) as 'making a conspiracy in their islands.' While written as an historical document, 'as a historical record it is meagre' (Sandars 1978: 120), and the 'ethnic' identification of various groups may not have a basis in any historical reality, but rather may be the result of an Egyptian need to explain their appearance in terms compatible with their own world view. The vague geographic location in the text need not imply the great distance of a 'Sea Peoples' homeland, but may instead indicate the decentralized nature of this maritime phenomenon — probably a difficult concept for centralized states such as Egypt to understand. Certainly the emergence of a powerful decentralized system would act to undermine the authority of the relatively centralized powers of the Late Bronze Age Mediterranean. In fact, it is more likely that

> 'what we see represented in conventional rhetoric by the Egyptian state at Medinet Habu as a purely military menace cloaks a perceptian of a far deeper and more long term danger: an insidious economic and political threat to the very basis of that theocratic state itself' (Sherratt in press).

While it is possible that some military confrontations may have taken place, there is no reason to believe that they were with specific migrating ethnic groups, and occurred at a single 'event' in time.

It is not the aim of this paper, however, to analyse the historicity of the Medinet Habu inscription. The purpose here is to investigate how the reinterpretation of the 'Sea Peoples' as a socio-economic 'phenomenon' rather than a discrete ethnic group affects our understanding of the Philistines, who have been considered a group of 'Sea Peoples' that settled in the southern Levant during the early Iron Age. To this end, it is necessary to examine those settlements traditionally connected with the 'Sea Peoples,' and to ask, if they are indeed part of this phenomenon, how exactly they are connected to it, and why those sites were chosen.

While numerous early Iron Age sites along the Levantine coast have been interpreted as part of the 'Sea Peoples' phenomenon, the best evidence comes from the southern coastal plain with the cities of the Philistines. If, as the archaeological evidence from Tel Miqne and elsewhere in Philistia suggests, there is some new population element in the southern Levant at the beginning of the twelfth century BC, the question of their origins inevitably arises. While a direct link with Mycenaean Greece is improbable (T. Dothan 1982), as was mentioned above, so is a purely local development (Bunimovitz 1990). The answer, it seems, may lie somewhere in between these two extremes. Geographically, in between the Aegean and the Levant lies Cyprus, seen by some as the answer to this perplexing problem (Sherratt in press; Killebrew in press). Moreover, while Bunimovitz's (1990) 'local' hypothesis may not be able to withstand the archaeological evidence of new and distinct styles of settlement, ceramic forms and decoration, and foodways — indicated by the appearance of new cooking pot forms (Killebrew in press) and faunal remains, namely pig (Hesse 1990) — it should not be totally disregarded. Even the excavators of Philistine sites have noted the swift acculturation of 'Philistines' into local southern-Levantine ('Cannaanite') culture over their first hundred years in the region (T. Dothan 1989; Stager 1995), a point

Bunimovitz (Bunimovitz and Yasur-Landau 1996) emphasises, while conceding that initial Philistine settlement does appear distinct. If we follow Susan Sherratt and agree that the 'Sea Peoples' represent the socio-economic phenomenon of an emerging decentralized maritime trade network, whose participants were probably from many different regions rather than a people of a single regional origin, we might consider that the Philistine settlements (and those sites thought to be part of the 'Sea Peoples' interaction sphere) in the early twelfth century BC were driven by these same mercantile activities, and were established primarily to maintain the trade network that had grown during the Late Bronze Age.[2] Especially if the Late Bronze Age network was threatened with imminent collapse, as the major powers became unstable (perhaps partially due to the merchants' growing ability to move goods independently of the established 'palatial' networks), it would make sense that the traders would turn to creating their own 'colonies' to ensure the continuation of this network (cf. Sherratt and Sherratt 1991). If this is the case, one might expect that the new 'Sea Peoples' settlements would be in locations strategic to the maintenance of the trade network, rather than simply at major strongholds where a large indigenous population, as well as the Egyptians, would have to be confronted. In addition, the material culture of these sites would primarily reflect mercantile activities, rather than being simply 'cultural' indicators, and in any event would reflect the multi-cultural traditions of those involved in the maritime trade network.

To examine this hypothesis more closely, it is necessary to review the latest data available from the Philistine sites and the major sites outside Philistia proper which have been traditionally discussed in terms of the 'Sea Peoples' (Figure 1 and Table 1). As most of these sites are currently being excavated, much new information is coming to light each year. Our knowledge of these sites now greatly exceeds that available when the English version of Trude Dothan's *The Philistines and their Material Culture* was published in 1982, and consequently it is no surprise that our interpretation of these events is in need of a revision. In the following section, the sequences and material culture from each excavated Philistine site will be discussed, as well as those sites in the southern Levant which also are thought to have been part of the 'Sea Peoples' interaction sphere, whether due to the material culture found there or literary references. These sites can be arranged according to three geographical zones: (1) Philistia proper, where the sites of Ashdod, Tel Miqne-Ekron, and Ashkelon have been thoroughly excavated; (2) the central coast, in which lie the sites of Akko, Tell Abu Hawam, Tell Keisan, Tel Nami, and Dor, all of which participated in Late Bronze Age maritime trade; (3) the Philistine periphery, which includes sites like Tel Qasile in the north, to Gezer, Tel Sera', Tel Haror, and Tel el-Far'ah (S) among other further south. The present hypothesis will be assessed in terms of the archaeological evidence available for each region, and a revised interpretation of the 'Philistine' and other 'Sea Peoples' sites in the southern Levant will be proposed.

THE ARCHAEOLOGY OF 'SEA PEOPLES' SETTLEMENTS IN THE SOUTHERN LEVANT

Zone 1: Philistia proper

Recent excavations at three of the five 'pentapolis' sites,[3] Ashdod, Tel Miqne-Ekron and Ashkelon, have provided much more comprehensive data relevant to the nature of
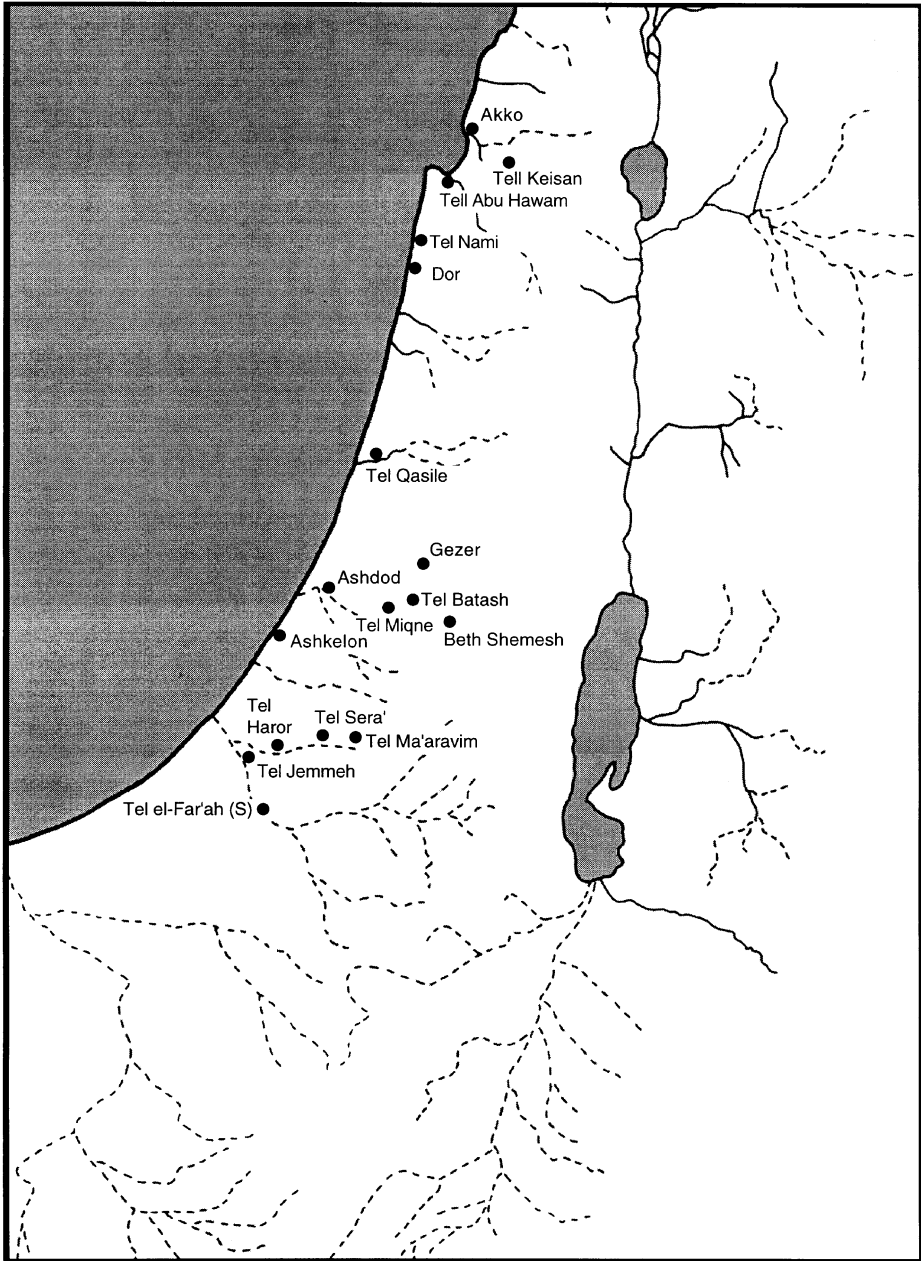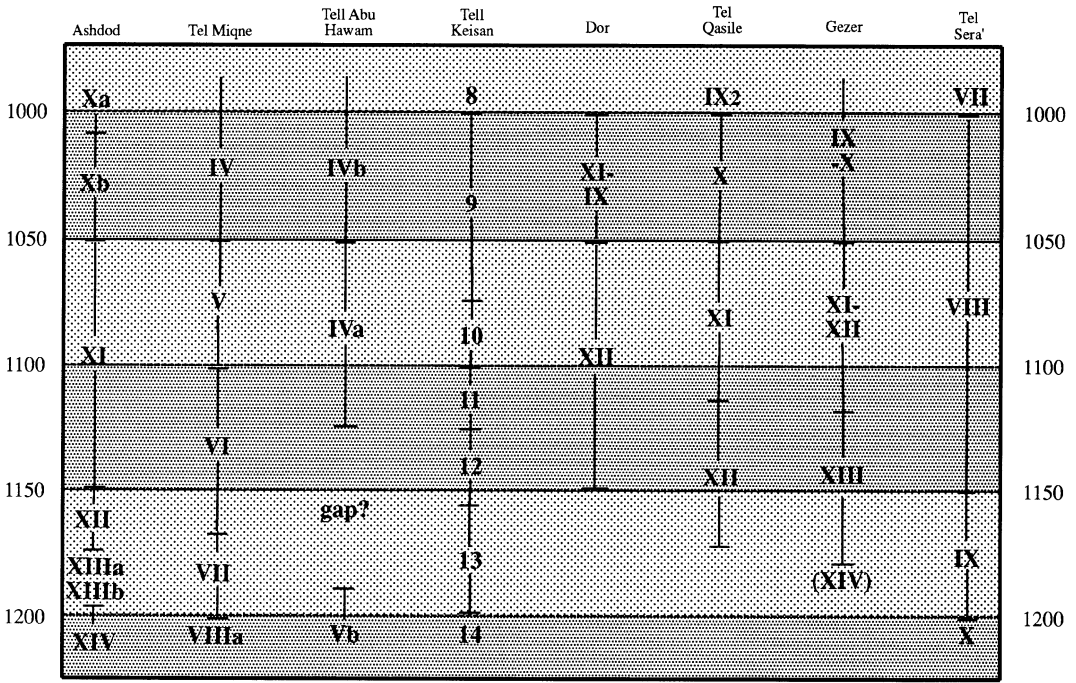
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Figure 1
'Sea Peoples'-related Settlements Discussed in the text

TABLE 1
Stratigraphical Sequences of Selected 'Sea Peoples'-related Sites

Date	Ashdod	Tel Miqne	Tell Abu Hawam	Tell Keisan	Dor	Tel Qasile	Gezer	Tel Sera'	Date
1000	Xa			8		IX2		VII	1000
	Xb	IV	IVb		XI-IX	X	IX-X		
1050				9					1050
		V				XI	XI-XII	VIII	
			IVa	10					
1100	XI				XII				1100
				11					
		VI		12					
1150	XII		gap?	12		XII	XIII		1150
	XIIIa	VII		13				IX	
	XIIIb						(XIV)		
1200	XIV	VIIIa	Vb	14				X	1200

Philistine settlement in the early years of the twelfth century BC and its development in subsequent phases than has been previously available. In all three cases, the local 'Canaanite' settlement during the Late Bronze Age was considerably smaller than that of the Iron I Philistine city, and it may be significant for the present thesis that the nature of Philistine settlement seems to be exclusively urban (Stager 1995).

Of the three 'pentapolis' sites to have been excavated recently, *Ashdod* is the only one which seems to have housed an Egyptian 'governor's residency' in the Late Bronze Age, and, along with Tel Mor nearby, may have been an Egyptian stronghold of the thirteenth century (M. Dothan 1993a, 96). As in many Late Bronze II sites, much imported Cypriot and Mycenaean pottery was found (M. Dothan 1993a, 96). Following the destruction level attributed to the 'Sea Peoples' and dated to the end of that century, a new settlement was established, reusing some of the LB II structures (M. Dothan 1989, 65). In this twelfth century 'Philistine' city were many pottery workshops (M. Dothan 1989, 65), and much of the assemblage was a locally-made imitation Mycenaean ware (Asaro *et al.* 1971),[4] although it should be noted that 'Canaanite' types also appeared in utilitarian forms (M. Dothan 1989, 66).

Following the destruction of the large Middle Bronze Age city, the Late Bronze Age settlement at *Tel Miqne* consisted of a mere ten acres in the area of the upper tell (T. Dothan 1995, 42; Gittlin 1992), although the high number of objects imported from

the Aegean, Cyprus and Egypt suggested to the excavator that the settlement 'was engaged in extensive trading' (T. Dothan 1995, 42). In the beginning of the twelfth century, a new city was built, attributed by the excavator to the *peleset* Sea Peoples, or the Philistines, covering an area of 50 acres across the upper and lower tells (T. Dothan 1995, 42). The pottery assemblage of this period is almost entirely the imitation Mycenaean ware and new undecorated forms (Killebrew in press), although, as is the case at Ashdod, some local Late Bronze Age ('Canaanite') forms continue to appear, such as storage jars, juglets, bowls and cooking pots (T. Dothan 1995, 46). Another prominent feature of the new Iron I city is the large number of pottery installations, the appearance of which most likely corresponds to the production of the imitation Mycenaean ware (Killebrew 1996).

Although the Late Bronze Age at *Ashkelon* has not yet been excavated in large exposures, the excavator does say that the settlement was 'much smaller' then than in the Iron I period (Stager 1995, 345). In the levels corresponding to the new city, which probably extended 50–60 ha in size, monumental architecture, as well as an abundance of imitation Mycenaean and Philistine ware was uncovered (Stager 1993, 107). The excavator thinks he has also identified evidence of a textile industry that is unlike local Levantine traditions, but has parallels on contemporary or earlier sites on Cyprus (Stager 1993, 107; 1995, 346).

All three sites seem to parallel each other in their development during the Iron Age I. In later stages, imitation Mycenaean wares are replaced by 'Philistine Bichrome Ware,' long argued by T. Dothan to be their direct descendant (T. Dothan 1982; 1989). As the period continues, however, the Philistine settlements seem to undergo a process of

'acculturation,' so that by the end of the eleventh century, 'Philistine' culture ceases to exist as an entity unique and separate within the southern Levant (T. Dothan 1989; 1995; Stager 1995; Bunimovitz and Yasur-Landau 1996). The swiftness of this process has interesting ramifications for the present argument and will be discussed below.

Zone 2: the central coast

In the area of the Akko plain, north and west of the Bay of Akko, a few large lowland urban centers which existed in the Late Bronze and early Iron Ages are relevant to our discussion here. The material from *Akko* that has been published to date, although unclear, indicates that a small Late Bronze Age II settlement continued to thrive, following the apparent abandonment of the large fortress of the fourteenth century (M. Dothan 1993b, 21). Imported Mycenaean and Cypriot wares are plentiful in the ceramic assemblage, and were replaced by locally-made imitation Mycenaean wares in the early Iron Age, which the excavator says bear a closer resemblance to Cypriot examples than those from Ashdod (M. Dothan 1989, 60). Also notable is the appearance of potter's workshops in early Iron Age contexts (M. Dothan 1989, 60), which again are probably related to the production of imitation Mycenaean wares.

While there seems to be a gap in occupation during the twelfth century at the port city of *Tell Abu Hawam*, located on the southern side of the Bay of Akko, it emerges as an important coastal center in the eleventh century (Balensi 1985; Balensi and Herrera 1985) at a time when Akko seems to be experiencing a period of decline or even abandonment (M. Dothan 1976, 20, 23; 1993b). Traces of material from the Late Bronze/Iron I horizon have been found,

containing imported Cypriot and Aegean pottery (Balensi *et al*. 1993, 13), although this level's relation to the following one is not easy to assess. In this eleventh century level, there appears Philistine-related pottery as well as Phoenician wares, and it is probable that the city was walled at this time (Balensi and Herrera 1985). The site's growth during the same period as Akko's apparent decline may indicate that it replaced the latter as the major port for the region.

Following a clear destruction layer representing the end of the Late Bronze Age at the inland site of *Tell Keisan*, a new settlement containing Philistine wares is built (Humbert 1981, 388–9). Interestingly, a stirrup jar, of LH IIIC: 1 type, found in a pre-destruction (end of the thirteenth century) context (Balensi 1981), was analyzed by Neutron Activation Analysis and found to have probably originated in Kouklia on Cyprus (Humbert 1993, 864). This suggests that these Mycenaean-imitations were traded before the end of the Bronze Age, and do not necessarily reflect the settlement of a discrete 'Sea Peoples' ethnic group. As at Abu Hawam, the eleventh century at Keisan seems to be a time of prosperity, with the building of well-planned domestic structures, and the appearance of Phoenician pottery, with some Philistine examples as well (Humbert 1981, 389), suggesting a process that is intrinsically linked to the 'Sea Peoples' settlements in Philistia and along the coast (see discussion below).

The Late Bronze Age settlement of *Tel Nami*, located along the Carmel coast, is relevant here, despite that fact that it does not seem to continue into the Iron Age (Artzy 1995). The LB II material uncovered at the site consists of local wares as well as numerous imports from the Aegean, Cyprus, northern Syria and Egypt (Artzy 1995). Moreover, the excavator remarks that the

necropolis of Nami East shows 'an amalgamation of burial practices' (Artzy 1995: 25), which may confirm its 'international' nature. The great amount of wealth accumulated at Nami at this time has lead the excavator to suggest that 'the geopolitical peculiarities of this period' allowed the site to become the point of intersection between the specialized trade of incense from the desert in the east and the Mediterranean maritime interaction sphere (Artzy 1994: 139; 1995; cf. Sherratt and Sherratt 1991).

Further down the Carmel coast is *Dor*, a port city located about 20 km south of Tel Abu Hawam and the Bay of Akko, and about 5 km south of Tel Nami. Recent excavations have only uncovered material from the earliest Iron Age I levels, but preliminary studies of the Late Bronze Age pottery found in fill deposits shows that 'the number of imported vases found here was larger than that of the local ware' (Stern 1995, 82). The settlement of the early Iron Age I is also not well known yet, but the succeeding levels of the eleventh century seem to indicate the rebuilding of the city (Stern 1993). While Stern concludes that the occupants of Dor in the second half of the eleventh century are Phoenician, he understands the earlier level as being the major city of the Tjekker (Shkl) Sea Peoples (Stern 1990; 1993; Stern in Wolff 1994, 493), based primarily on the evidence from the Wenamun text (cf. Goedicke 1975), which tells the story of an emissary from Egypt who, when visiting Dor, is taken to meet a Tjekker 'prince.' The majority of the pottery from this stratum, however, consists of a group of jars which continues from the Late Canaanite tradition, about which Stern (1993, 328) wrote 'there is nothing in them to indicate that a new people had arrived at Dor.' In fact, only one vessel seems at all a possible link to the Sea

Peoples, and its parallels to Phoenicia are equal if not stronger (cf. especially Biran 1989; Stern 1993, 333 n. 10). Otherwise, 'no pottery connected with the Sea Peoples has been discovered so far among the ruins of this stratum' (Stern 1990; 1995, 82). The only such finds have been from the surface and not *in situ* (Stern 1990, 29). What this means in terms of the 'Sea Peoples' phenomenon will be discussed below. In the following levels, dating to the eleventh century, numerous examples of Phoenician Bichrome ware and imported Cypriot pottery, known elsewhere from Phoenicia and Phoenician-related sites on Cyprus, have been uncovered, indicating the site's role in the renewed (or continuing) maritime trade of the early Iron Age (Gilboa 1989; Stern 1993; 1995).

Zone 3: The Philistine periphery

The site of *Tel Qasile*, located on the northern edge of modern-day Tel-Aviv, has been extensively excavated and published, and seems to represent an Iron Age I Philistine settlement outside Philistia proper (Mazar 1980; 1985b). The site seems to have been founded in the twelfth century by the Philistines during the time of their 'expansion' into the peripheral regions of Philistia (T. Dothan, 1982; 1989; Mazar 1994), with rebuilding and refurbishment of the site continuing through the eleventh century until its destruction and new layout in the beginning of the tenth century BC (Mazar 1980, 46–7). The earliest levels contain early examples of 'Philistine Bichrome Ware' but none of the imitation Mycenaean ware elsewhere referred to as Mycenaean IIIC: 1b. The pottery from the later Iron Age I level (of the eleventh century) reveals a mixture of Phoenician and Philistine painted traditions in local

forms (Mazar 1985b, 83–4, 123–4), possibly reflecting the 'homogenization' of Philistine culture that occurs during the latter half of the eleventh century (T. Dothan 1989, 11–12).

A number of large tell sites have been excavated in the Shephelah, and their Iron Age I levels traditionally attest to their connections to both the Philistines in the west and local groups that continue Late Bronze Age traditions. At *Gezer*, after a short gap or ephemeral phase following the destruction/abandonment of the Late Bronze Age city, the site was reoccupied during the first half of the twelfth century, with architecture and material culture assemblages that continued Late Bronze Age traditions (Dever 198: 87; Dever *et al.* 1974, 54). While this level contained a small amount of Philistine bichrome pottery, its more significant presence in the following levels, along with the new architectural elements (Dever *et al.* 1974, 55), suggested to the excavator that the site was not within the Philistine sphere of influence until the last quarter of the twelfth century. Two large well-constructed houses on the 'acropolis' area during this period led the excavator to conclude that there was a rising Philistine elite at the site (Dever 1986, 116), although the continuation of local Late Bronze Age pottery forms (Dever *et al.* 1974, 56) should remind us that the appearance of Philistine material does not have to indicate the presence of 'Philistines' (cf. Kramer 1977). In the second half of that century, the site seems to have been abandoned and resettled with a 'squatter' or 'ephemeral' occupation that is characterized as 'post-Philistine' and 'pre-Solomonic,' as it contains no Philistine pottery (Dever *et al.* 1970, 59–61) and pre-dates the appearance of burnished, red-slipped pottery characteristic of the following 'Solomonic' stratum (Dever 1986, 126; Holladay 1990).[5]

The last Late Bronze Age Canaanite occupants at *Tel Batash* seem to have abandoned the site peacefully at the beginning of the twelfth century BC, as there are no signs of a destruction at that time (Kelm and Mazar 1982, 14–15). While new architectural elements as well as Philistine pottery appear in the Iron Age I (stratum V), the continuation of some structures and local pottery forms from the Late Bronze Age led the excavator to suggest that the population was mainly Canaanite, and was ruled by a Philistine elite (Kelm and Mazar 1982, 17–19; 1985, 101; 1995, 102). Just to the south, the Iron Age I stratum at *Beth Shemesh* follows the widespread destruction of a Late Bronze Age Canaanite city (Grant and Wright 1939: 11). That occupation, characterized by simply-built houses, furnaces for metalworking, and a large amount of Philistine pottery seems to have been destroyed and then abandoned for a short time (Grant and Wright 1939; Bunimovitz and Lederman 1993, 253). When the site was resettled at the beginning of the tenth century, it followed a systematic plan with the houses built around the edge of the site, abutting the casemate wall (Grant and Wright 1939, 71). It was also noted that while the metallurgy industry continued, the oil and wine industries seem to have gained prominence in this period (Grant and Wright 1939, 75–7).

In the northern Negev, around the periphery of Philistia, the sites that have been excavated all have strong links to that region and are traditionally discussed in terms of the Philistine cultural expansion during the late twelfth and eleventh centuries BC. The earliest Iron Age Level at *Tel Sera'* follows the last Egyptian occupation at the site, which was characterized by a so-called 'governor's residency' (Oren 1993b). Philistine pottery did not appear at the site

until the late twelfth century, when it appears along with the earliest phases of houses belonging to the 'four-room' type, according to the excavator (Oren 1982, 163). These houses continue into the following stratum, which follows without a break, and are joined by the first examples of hand-burnished pottery (Oren 1982, 161–2). The simultaneous appearance of Philistine ware and 'four-room' houses led the excavator to conclude that 'this class of domestic architecture at Tel Sera'' should be considered part of the architectural tradition of the Philistine settlers in the western Negev' (Oren 1993b, 1331).[6]

Two settlements in the vicinity of Tel Sera' have similar, if less clear, sequences. The Iron Age I at *Tel Ma'aravim* is divided into two phases, the first of which dates to the thirteenth century and contains a typical Late Bronze Age courtyard house (Oren and Mazar 1974). After a gap in the sequence, a level dating to the eleventh century was uncovered, and although the architecture was fragmentary, the pottery assemblage was found to contain both Philistine and red-slipped hand-burnished types. At the site of *Tel Haror*, the early Iron Age sequence is clearly seen in area B, where an early twelfth century, 'pre-Philistine' stratum is succeeded by three phases containing well-planned buildings, silos, and Philistine pottery (Oren 1993a, 582). At the end of the eleventh/beginning of the tenth century, the settlement is walled, and Cypro-Phoenician and red-slipped hand-burnished wares appear.

Two other sites in the Philistine periphery have been excavated, using methods representing two ends of a methodological tradition: *Tell el-Far'ah (S)*, comprehensively dug by Petrie in two seasons, 1927 and 1929, and *Tell Jemmeh*, also dug by Petrie in the '20s, and more recently the subject of a long-term 'total-retrieval'

excavation directed by Gus Van Beek (1989). At the former site, Tell el-Far'ah (S), a large 'Egyptian governor's' residence, containing Philistine pottery, was built during the twelfth century (Petrie 1930, 17–18). The lack of 'late' Philistine pottery in the building led the excavator to suggest that the building was destroyed sometime in the early eleventh century at the latest (MacDonald *et al*. 1932, 29–30), though the stratigraphy here is problematic. The building level following the destruction is characterized by a 'confused' plan, which is then replaced by a new, regular layout in the tenth century (Petrie 1930, 19). The graves from Cemetery 500 also date from the Iron Age I and many of them contain Philistine pottery as well (MacDonald *et al*. 1932). The Iron Age I levels at Tell Jemmeh also indicate a strong Philistine presence at that site, although the lack of published reports does not permit a thorough analysis of its stratigraphy. Worth special mention, however, is the discovery of a potter's kiln and workshop area dating to the Philistine period (the twelfth century), which was destroyed and replaced by an as yet unclear occupation level (Van Beek 1993, 669–70).

FROM 'SEA PEOPLES' TO LAND-PEOPLES

During most of the Late Bronze Age, the southern Levant seems to have consisted of a network of loosely-related, semi-autonomous city-states under the nominal jurisdiction of New Kingdom Egypt (Bunimovitz 1995). Along the coast, as the case seems to be on Cyprus (Knapp 1996, 63ff.), urban trading 'nodes' prospered as the maritime exchange network in the Mediterranean grew in size and intensity. Sites like Tel Nami probably accumulated their wealth because of its place within this network (Artzy 1995), and much the same can be hypothesized for other major

coastal sites. The evidence from Cyrpus is very important here: during the latter half of the Late Bronze Age (13th century), decentralized polities emerged which operated independently of the established 'palatial' system that existed within and among the major powers of the eastern Mediterranean (Knapp 1996, 68; Sherratt in press). The fact that this development may in part result from Cyprus' being a coastal culture, separated from the centralized land-based superpowers (Sherratt in press), suggests that coastal sites in the southern Levant may have also been able to emerge independent of the inland 'palatial' system during the Late Bronze Age and early Iron Age (cf. Revere 1957). It should come as no surprise, then, that many of the sites that are thought to have been settled by the 'Sea Peoples' in the early Iron Age are either near or at these Late Bronze Age coastal trading posts. Texts from thirteenth century Ugarit, which was undoubtedly a major entrepôt at that time (Knapp and Cherry 1994, 135–7), mention people from Akko, Ashdod, and Ashkelon, suggesting that it probably had maritime relations with these three cities (M. Dothan 1989, 60). If indeed the 'Sea Peoples' represent an economic phenomenon of an emerging merchant class, which is the suggestion of Susan Sherratt pursued here, it would make sense that these merchants would try to stabilize their threatened network by settling in the very cities that acted as trading 'gateways'. The archaeological evidence can support this: at many of the 'Sea Peoples'-related settlements discussed above, the previous Late Bronze Age levels contained great quantities of imported goods, especially Aegean and Cypriot ceramics, indicating that the 'Sea Peoples' specifically wished to maintain those sites which had served well the trade network during the earlier period; evidence at

these sites of continued involvement in maritime trade during the early Iron Age (Sherratt in press) suggests that they fulfilled that purpose. The appearance of potters' workshops at most of the sites goes further to support the hypothesis that the settlers in the early Iron Age Levant are the very same merchants, based in Cyprus, who marketed the authentic, and eventually their own imitations of, Mycenaean wares throughout the eastern Mediterranean (Sherratt in press).

If such merchants were establishing these sites to maintain the trade network within which they had thrived during the Late Bronze Age, one may wonder why there is no apparent 'Sea Peoples' settlement outside the southern Levant, and further, why some of the major Philistine sites are inland, rather than directly on the coast. Leaving aside the specific socio-political situation of other regions for discussion elsewhere, it is suggested here that those merchants who wanted to maintain their livelihood would not try to sustain the entire trade network, but only that part *from which they directly benefited*. The sheer volume of Mycenaean and Cypriot pottery which has been found in the southern Levant attests to the market that existed there for such items (see most recently Leonard 1994),[7] so it is natural to expect that those who were able to imitate it with such aplomb would move to maintain that part of the market which they could best exploit. Once in the same land as their buyers, the need to be exclusively maritime diminishes. The desire to link their network to that of emerging Arabian trade (Finkelstein 1988a; Artzy 1994) may also have precipitated a move to establish inland centers.[8]

This 'market-oriented' settlement may also serve to explain the correlation between the 'Sea Peoples' and the metalworking industry in the early Iron Age southern Levant, which

until recently has been mostly an argument of cultural diffusionism (Pritchard 1968; Tubb 1988, *contra* Negbi 1991), probably based on the Biblical tradition that the Philistines kept all knowledge of metallurgy to themselves, away from the Israelites.[9] The important role that metals played in the economy of Cyprus has been well-documented (Muhly *et al.* 1982; Muhly 1991; Knapp and Cherry 1994), and the metallurgical innovations coming from the island may have been the driving force behind the commercial strategy of its merchant class (Sherratt 1994; in press; Muhly 1996) — the same merchant class who are collectively known as the 'Sea Peoples' when they settle in the southern Levant.

The peculiarities of the 'Philistine/Sea Peoples' settlement pattern make sense when seen in this light. One of the factors that has always distinguished these sites from local 'Canaanite/Israelite' sites is their exclusively urban nature (Stager 1995). Setting aside the problems with drawing ethnic lines along socio-political ones (London 1989), making such a distinction is feasible if these sites were not the product of a mass migration but rather set up as tools for trade. The fact that the 'Philistine' cities were not established with a supportive agricultural hinterland should have indicated that these urban dwellers were probably importing foodstuffs, and in any event were wealthy enough by some other means to survive without one under their immediate control. Many of the sites where 'Philistine' material was found in lesser quantities have been regarded by some as being Canaanite, but ruled by a Philistine elite (e.g. Gezer [Dever 1986, 116], Tel Batash [Kelm and Mazar 1985, 101], Dor [Stern 1993], Megiddo [Kempinski 1989, 83; Mazar 1994, 42; cf. also Raban 1991]). If we understand the 'Sea Peoples' in terms of the continuity of a trade network into the Iron

Age, along with its associated goods (i.e. Cypriot and imitation Mycenaean wares, and metal items), then what Bunimovitz (1990) suggested about the 'Philistines' may be applicable after all. At the aforementioned sites where a few examples of 'Sea Peoples'-related material culture has been found, it is not so much that a 'Philistine elite' is there, but that the local elite may be using this pottery as a prestige marker, much like they used imported Cypriot and Aegean wares before the end of the Bronze Age.[10]

Another characteristic that has been noted about the 'Philistine' settlement in the southern Levant is its swift acculturation into the region, so that by the end of the eleventh century, 'Philistine' sites are barely distinguishable from 'Canaanite/Israelite' ones (T. Dothan 1982, 296; 1989; Stager 1995). While it is not easy to switch our understanding of the term 'Sea Peoples' from representing a discrete ethnic group on one hand to representing a socio-economic phenomenon on the other, understanding the latter interpretation is vital if we are to discuss questions of 'origins' in any meaningful way. While Sherratt (in press) may have remarked that the 'hub' of the 'Sea Peoples' activities probably lay in Cyprus, these peoples cannot and should not simply be called 'Cypriots' (lest we lead to the mistaken conclusion of a 'wave' of Cypriot migrations). As a merchant class, they by no means represented *all* Cypriots, and Cypriots certainly did not represent *all* 'Sea Peoples.' As mentioned above, the ethnicity of maritime merchants has long been discussed, and it seems more likely that people from almost every region of the eastern Mediterranean took part in this mercantile (non-territorial) network (Muhly et al. 1977; Bass 1991). This being the case, it is likely that some of the 'Sea Peoples' who established trading posts on the southern

Levantine coast were not 'foreigners' at all to the region. Thus the appearance of 'local' utilitarian forms at these sites (M. Dothan 1989, 66; T. Dothan 1995, 46), in addition to the new ones (Killebrew in press), should not come as any surprise.[11] Furthermore, there is no reason to believe that the city would have been exclusively populated by the merchants. Where a mercantile centre exists, it seems reasonable to expect that people looking for opportunity would establish themselves. In this way, the 'acculturation of the Philistines' was more likely caused by others moving into the city, then by 'Philistine' expansion to the periphery and the 'spatial and temporal ''distancing'' from the original templates and concepts' (Stager 1995: 335).

Recent excavations at Dor (Stern 1993; 1995), combined with discoveries from other coastal sites like Tel Qasile (Mazar 1985b, 84) and ones in the northern Negev, like Tel Haror (Oren 1993a, 583), have suggested to some that the Phoenicians are responsible for having revived a local exchange network between Cyprus and the Levant and down the Levantine coast as early as the eleventh century (Stern 1993; 1995; Mazar 1994). It is being suggested here that a 'revival' was unnecessary, as the 'Sea Peoples' and their 'settlement' in the southern Levant should be understood as the continuation (diminished in geographical size and intensity) of the maritime trade network of the Late Bronze Age. While the nature of the Phoenicians as a socio-cultural group is difficult to identify without further excavation of the northern 'homeland' sites like Sidon and Tyre, and without an analysis of the interrelationship among the regions in question, it might be possible to view the 'settlement of the Sea Peoples/Philistines' and the 'emergence of the Phoenician trade network' as essentially two parts of a single process — that of the transformation of the maritime exchange

network of the Late Bronze Age and its reorganization as a decentralized one in the Iron Age.

Evidence from early Iron Age sites suggests that the Phoenicians may in part be a product of this transformed network. Pottery identified as 'Phoenician' or 'Cypro-Phoenician' appears in eleventh-century contexts at the coastal sites of Tell Abu Hawam, Tell Keisan, and Dor — all of which are interpreted as having strong links to the 'Sea Peoples,' as discussed above. The same occurs in the later Iron I levels at the 'Philistine' settlements of Tel Qasile and Tel Haror (which Stager [1995, 343] identifies as the 'pentapolis' site of Gath), and Mazar (1994, 44) suggests a direct link between the pottery decorated with a drab red slip and black stripes that appears at Tel Qasile, Ashdod and Tel Miqne with black-on-red Cypro-Phoenician pottery. If we consider that the Phoenicians emerge as maritime traders in the eleventh century, and the 'Sea Peoples/Philistines' are the same in the twelfth century — taken together with the archaeological evidence that some of the earliest examples of Phoenician or Cypro-Phoenician pottery in the Levant appear at sites that are either 'Philistine' or related to the 'Sea Peoples' — we may reasonably conclude that they are both functioning within the same structure of inter-connections.[12] We might even suggest that the class of mercantile societies which included the 'Sea Peoples' also comprised 'Land Peoples' who worked at maintaining the overland trade routes across the Levant and the Arabian desert (Finkelstein 1988a; Artzy 1994). The appearance of Philistine, Phoenician and Midianite wares all at Tel Masos (Fritz 1981, 65–6) may indicate that sites in the northern Negev served this very function. The emergence of new overland desert trade routes linking Arabia to the

Mediterranean may also explain why the Philistine sites appear where they do, and it is possible that desert traders also played an active role in the founding of these new decentralized trading posts.[13]

Finally, the emergence of red-slipped burnished pottery, regarded as the hallmark of the Israelite ceramic tradition in the Iron Age II, may also be linked to this trade network in the Iron Age I, as the first appearance of red-slipped pottery (unburnished or irregularly hand-burnished) seems to be at sites along the trade route discussed above.[14] Early examples appear at Tel Qasile (Mazar 1985b, 83–4, 123–4) and nearby Tel Gerisa (Herzog 1993, 484) on the coast, and in the Shephelah and northern Negev at Tel Sera' (Oren 1982, 161–2), Tel Ma'aravim (Oren and Mazar 1974), Tel Haror (Oren 1993, 583), and Tel Be'ersheva (Herzog 1984, 43). If and how this pottery type is related to the Phoenician red-slipped burnished tradition mentioned by Mazar (1994, 44) is a separate question; what is important here is that it appears at these sites first and may be linked to the trade in painted ceramics or even pots made in imitation of metal wares (Holladay 1990, 43, 47 and n. 16). In his recent discussion of the rise of the United Monarchy of Israel in the Iron Age II, Holladay (1995, 383–6) suggests that the emergence of an Arabian trade route in the eleventh century may have contributed to the economic prospects of those living in the northern Negev and the hill country. But whereas Holladay's argument is limited to suggesting its importance during the Iron Age II, *after* the formation of the nation-state, it seems more likely that its existence, along with the rest of the trade network discussed here, acted as a factor which itself contributed to the rise of the Monarchy.[15] With a trade network operating to the north, west, and south of the Central Hills and the Galilee, it is not

surprising that a unified state arose in those areas to exploit the economic possibilities that such an exchange system must have offered.

Thus it is proposed here that, rather than already defined ethnic groups manifesting territorial behavior, such entities arose from the structure of interconnections and their operation within that structure. The emergence of decentralized maritime trading activities in the early Iron Age became collectively known as the 'Sea Peoples' and those who participated in this network became grouped as such by outsiders because of their perceived collective behavior. In this way, too, those who became known as 'Israelites' were likely to have been grouped together because of their location and role within the maritime and overland interaction spheres (Wengrow 1996). Whether, in that specific case, the impetus to political unification came from uniting against Egypt (Wengrow 1996, 323) or from wanting to take advantage of economic opportunities, as suggested here (cf. Holladay 1995), it should be understood that structures of interconnections themselves often engender new socio-political entities, rather than arise through the interaction of preexisting ones.

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NOTES

1 'Ethnicity' is a problematic term to use, and much recent literature has been devoted to the subject of how, or whether, it can be detected archaeologically (e.g. Shennan 1989). With regard to the present paper, I only use the word in terms of previous scholarship and its attempts (wrongly, I believe) to determine the nature of the 'Sea Peoples' and 'Philistines' as a single cultural and ethnic entity distinct from the indigenous 'Canaanite' population of the Levant, based on the textual sources.

2 The term '''Sea Peoples'' settlement' as used in this paper refers to a site that has been traditionally interpreted as such based on both material and literary evidence. It is not meant to suggest a settlement of a specific group, as it is being argued here that the 'Sea Peoples' concept itself does not represent a specific group, but rather the emergence of decentralized trading.

3 Tell es-Safi, identified as Biblical Gath (Rainey 1975), has not been excavated since the turn of this century (Bliss and Macalister 1902, 38–43) (a new expedition is currently underway under the direction of A. Maier and A. Boaz), and in any case, its identification as Gath is disputed by some (Stager 1995). Gaza, which lies beneath the modern city, is currently being excavated by J.-B. Humbert.

4 This were, known as Mycenaean IIIC: 1b in the Levant and Mycenaean IIIC: 1b or White Painted Wheelmade III in Cyprus, is distinctive as a locally-made imitation of the Mycenaean wares that were imported to the eastern Mediterranean during the Late Bronze II period. In the present paper, I shall try to avoid these terms because of their problematic nature (Kling 1989; Killebrew in press), and instead just refer to them as [locally-made] imitation Mycenaean ware, when the appropriate provenience studies have been carried out.

5 cf. note 14 (below).

6 The problem with any ethnic attribution of the 'four-room' house aside (cf. London 1989), nowhere else are its origins attributed to the Philistines. It is clearly a product of indigenous development: no such buildings are found at the urban Philistine sites in Philistia proper, and the excavator himself uses as comparanda bulding techniques at the sites of Hazor, Megiddo, Samaria, Gezer and Ramat Rahel (Oren 1982, 162), none of which are Philistine sites.

7 Although our data is undoubtedly lacking due to the

intensity of excavation in modern-day Israel, compared with its relative scarcity in Lebanon, it is consistent because the possibility that there was much Aegean material imported to the Lebanese coast is balanced by the equally-great possibility that that area was settled by 'Sea Peoples' in the early Iron Age. Indeed, the early Iron Age levels at Ras Ibn Hani on the Syrian coast contained Mycenaean IIIC: 1 and Philistine Bichrome pottery, leading the excavator to suggest that the population was different from that of the Late Bronze Age (Bounni *et al*. 1979, 257). The line of argument pursued in this paper for the southern Levantine sites may just as easily be applied to Ras Ibn Hani, as well as to the Mycenaean IIIC material from Cilicia, although the latter has already been interpreted in a way compatible with the present framework (Sherratt and Crouwel 1987).

8   Although there seems to be little evidence found so far that the Philistine cities were harbor sites, there is no indication that they did not serve such a function. First, one of the coastal sites, Gaza, has hardly been explored; second, while today only Ashkelon is located directly on the coast, the possibility that the coastline has changed in the past four thousand years should not be forgotten; finally, the two coastal sites that have been excavated — Ashkelon and Ashdod — are both considered to have been involved in maritime trade by their excavators (Dothan 1993a, 93; Stager 1995t, 342).

9   cf. I Samuel 13, 19.

10   When excavators find LH IIIA/B and White Slip or Base Ring I/II in Late Bronze Age levels along the Levantine coast, they do not conclude that Mycenaeans or even Cypriots lived there, let alone were a ruling elite. But since they do not consider the possibility that trade could have continued during the Iron Age I, they are bound to conclude that new pottery must indicate a new population element.

11   In addition, Mazar (1985a, 98 n. 9) noted that Philistine pottery comprises only 18% of the Iron Age I assemblage from Tel Qasile, and although he is right in saying that this statistic should not be used to argue that Philistines were not at the site, neither does it indicate that the site was populated by a single 'Philistine' ethnic group.

12   While it is clear that the Phoenicians represent the revival (or continuation) in the Iron Age of the Late Bronze Age 'Canaanite' settlement system of the Levant (Mazar 1994; Kantzios 1995), the maritime mercantile focus of the Phoenician cities may have developed as a result of the emergence of decentralized maritime trading in the Late Bronze Age. The close connection between Phoenicia and Cyprus during the

Iron Age (Bikai 1994) further indicates this, since Cyprus played a central role in the establishment of this decentralized network.

13   A comparable process seems to have taken place along the coast of the Persian Gulf in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries AD when the arrival of European merchants and their establishment of new maritime trade routes prompted members of local tribes to 'flock to the coast to establish trading, fishing, and pearl diving centres' (Khuri 1980, 18). Decentralized trading centres flourished in this region following the collapse of Portuguese hegemony in the early seventeenth century, and until the British subjugated much of the area in the early nineteenth century. And throughout these centuries, 'when no superpower was dominant, each tribe or segment of tribe assumed independence' (Khuri 1980, 23). I would like to thank Dr Fredrik T. Hiebert for bringing this book to my attention.

14   Holladay (1990) has argued that the chronology of this pottery needs to be revised, based on the assumption that archaeological resolution is coarser than the time it takes for this pottery type to spread throughout the region. One cannot ignore, however, the possibility of regional variations, and it is not impossible that this pottery does indeed appear in some regions before others. It is clear that the appearance of red-slipped burnished pottery in strata IX–VIII at Beersheva (eleventh century) must be dated that early, based on the Philistine material found in the same stratified context (Herzog 1984, 43), rather than being down-dated over century as Holladay (1990, 52, table 2) suggests. Similarly, Tel Qasile stratum X seems well-dated to the late eleventh century (Mazar 1985b, 83), although the appearance of red-slipped burnished pottery makes Holladay (1990, 55–7) date it to the end of the tenth. Rather than assuming this type's simultaneous appearance throughout the southern Levant, it seems more likely that it appeared earlier along the coastal plain, and that Finkelstein (1988b, 322) is correct in his observation that it is more rare in the inland, hilly regions.

15   Here, Holladay may be unfortunately restricted by his revised chronology (see note 14 above), which he uses in his (1995) assessment of the Iron II.

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