

CHAPTER 7. INTRODUCTION TO PART II

7.1. Significance of the topic

Bringing down the Hittite empire and dealing Egypt a blow from which it never recovered, the Sea Peoples' episode at the end of the Bronze Age was crucial for a shift of the economic and political centre of gravity of the Mediterranean world away from the Levant and towards Greece, Africa Minor, and Italy. Soon this shift was to give rise to the splendors of archaic and classical Greece developing into Hellenism, Carthage, Etruscan civilization, Rome, the Roman empire, early Christianity, and, in the long run, the emergence the modern western European civilization, dominated by speakers of Indo-European languages, but greatly influenced by a Levantine religion (Judaism). For better or worse, the Sea Peoples' episode was one of the few major turning points in world history, comparable to the period of the great migrations which led to the collapse of the Roman empire, or the rise and early spread of Islam.

7.2. The argument in Part II

With the help of modern anthropological theories about ethnicity, I seek, in the present study, to determine whether the enigmatic Sea Peoples were merely a bunch of pirates or whether they constituted a set of coherent ethnic entities, temporarily making common cause in pursuit of the riches of, and hence a better life in, the Near East.

Of vital importance to this endeavour is the question of the homelands of the various groups which make up the Sea Peoples. In order to tackle this problem, an interdisciplinary protohistorical method has been applied, which makes full use of the available archaeological, historical, and linguistic data as provided by Egyptian, Levantine, Anatolian, Aegean, and central Mediterranean sources.

As such, the work aspires at an *historical synthesis*, in which the Masperonian thesis of a homeland for the Sea Peoples in Asia Minor and the Aegean is balanced with the opinion of others who rather attribute such a role to the islands of Sardinia and Sicily and the Italian peninsula in the central Mediterranean. It will be shown that both the 'Anatolian thesis' and the 'central Mediterranean antithesis' are partly valid, and that some of the groups of the Sea Peoples originated from Anatolia and the Aegean, whereas others rather came from the central Mediterranean region. It will further be argued that the 'prime mover', which set into motion the

whole process leading to the upheavals of the Sea peoples, is formed by the truly massive migration of bearers of the central European Urnfield culture into the Italian peninsula c. 1200 BC.

Building upon over a century of scholarly Sea Peoples' research, and offering a combination of various specialist (and therefore often relatively inaccessible) approaches from a variety of disciplines, this study will offer the reader synthetic perspectives onto a crucial period of human history.

7.3. Acknowledgments for Part II

The work I have been engaged with let us say about the last eight years could not have been accomplished without the help of good friends and colleagues.

First of all, my sincere feelings of gratitude are due to my supervisor Wim van Binsbergen, who initiated the project, arranged a stipendium to work it out granted by the Erasmus University, and, in addition to stimulating supervision, provided a theoretical framework on ethnicity suitable for the analysis of the Mediterranean in the Late Bronze Age. He also undertook the complex task of formatting our joint book, for which I wish to thank him specifically.

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7.4. Note on the transcription in Part II, especially of proper names

In the transcription of proper names, I have in most instances preferred one closest to the Greek original: thus Akhaians, Herakles, Herodotos, Homeros, Korinthos, etc. – accepting that as a result, orthographic divergences may occur between my text and that of my co-author Wim van Binsbergen; such divergences will be resolved in our Index of Proper Names. Encouraged by the German saying that ‘Jeder Konzequenz

führt zum Teufel’, however, I have not aimed at being entirely systematic in this respect, since I found it hard to transform the current English forms of Cilicia, Crete, Crimea, Cyclades, Mycenae, Thucydides, Tiryns, Troy, Tyre, etc. into less familiar ones closer to the Greek original. The same license has been adopted with respect to the ending of the ethnonyms, now using the Greek one, as with Danaoi and Teukroi, then using the English one, as with Pelasgians. When originating from a Latin source, the Latin forms of the proper names are preferred, as in the section on the Aeneas’ saga. As far as possible, I have preferred to use (in general discussions outside the context of my presentation of original texts) the simple *s* instead of the cumbersome *sh* for the transcription of the sibilant *š* in Hittite personal names and Philistine place names, thus Ḫattusilis, Suppiluliumas and Askelon, Asdod. However, for the sake of clarity *sh* is maintained for Eshtaol, Kadesh, and Laish as well as for the ethnonyms of the Sea Peoples from the Egyptian sources, hence Ekwesh, Teresh, etc.