

THE ORIGINS OF THE SEA PEOPLES

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Abstract

The Sea Peoples were a coalition of groups that led a major offensive against the Egyptians during the beginning of the 12th century BC. Ultimately, the Egyptian pharaoh, Ramesses III, was able to defeat the Sea Peoples and extend his frontiers. Around this time the Mycenaean and the Hittite civilizations collapsed. Many scholars have attributed these disasters with the Sea Peoples since they are thought to have been groups of nomadic people migrating through the Mediterranean. However, it is my theory that the Sea Peoples were a coalition consisting of the indigenous populations of Syria-Palestine led by the neo-Hittite states. The Hittite Empire had always been founded on a central region with a series of subjugated states on the outside. Hittite history was plagued with rebellions and I think it was one such rebellion that resulted in the abrupt collapse of the Hittite Empire. But what made this rebellion different than the rest? Tensions between Ahhiyawa and the Hittites were reaching their zenith at this time and it is possible that the Ahhiyawa instigated and supported this rebellion therefore, causing its success. Sites such as Carchemish prove that the neo-Hittite states were capable of enduring the collapse of the Hittite Empire. Without the Hittites to the north it was only a matter of time before the Egyptians exerted their influence to the north again. This occurred during the reign of Ramesses III when he seized Amurru (just south of the neo-Hittite regions) in year five of his reign. Within three years the Sea Peoples were marching south against Egypt. The lack of destruction in Syria-Palestine helps indicate that the Sea Peoples were not merely a marauding force but were driven by purpose. The majority of our direct evidence regarding the Sea Peoples comes from the mortuary temple Medinet Habu of Ramesses III. These inscriptions not only informed the world of the Sea Peoples existence upon their discovery but have also been the reason for numerous disagreements about their origins.

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THE ORIGINS OF THE SEA PEOPLES

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During the end of the 13th century BC and the beginning of the 12th century BC the eastern portion of the Mediterranean was experiencing far ranging disturbances throughout its lands. Small communities and vast empires alike trembled as these troubles passed through their territories. Some survived, and some perished, during these crisis years. To account for this turmoil historians in the Eastern Mediterranean have traditionally credited the elusive Sea Peoples. Studying ancient texts about the Sea Peoples or the conditions in the regions affected by them is the only way to better understand and gather information about them since they disappeared from the annals of history just as swiftly as they had come.

The Sea Peoples were a coalition of people and states, according to the inscriptions at the mortuary temple of Ramesses III at Medinet Habu. It must be taken into account, though, that the Sea Peoples consisted of diverse peoples with diverse cultures and styles. Therefore they did not always take action along side the other groups historians have deemed as Sea Peoples.

This paper is an attempt to explain who the Sea Peoples were, why they led campaigns as far south as Egypt, and why they succeeded in some of their goals and failed in others. The primary problems we face when trying to answer these questions is that the Sea Peoples left very little archaeological evidence behind as they swept through the Eastern Mediterranean. Without a significant amount of archaeological verification we have to turn our attention to the ancient records. These records, while helpful, also create complications in that they are not only biased but subject to interpretation. The difficulty of interpretation has proven to be the central issue in regards to the ancient

records. Despite the fact that these records list the actual Sea Peoples they do not go into detail on their origins nor are their names easily translatable to a suitable location.

The current proposal in regards to the origins of the Sea Peoples is that they were a migrating people. Due to the collapse of the Mycenaean civilization and Hittite Empire during this period, historians are inclined to believe that this was a period of anarchy when people were on the move. With this idea permeating current thinking most of the disputes arise about *where* these people were unsettled from. As early as the late 1800's historians have formulated theories about the origins of the Sea Peoples. Gaston Maspéro wrote in the *Histoire Ancienne des Peuples de L'orient* (1968 [1875]) that he believed the Sherden were people from Sardis in Anatolia and the Shekelesh to be from Sagalassus in Pisidia. H.R. Hall stated in his *The Oldest Civilization of Greece* (1901) that he thought the Danuna, Shekelesh, and Meshwesh were probably Cretans. To further spread out the hypothesis regarding the origins of the Sea Peoples G.A. Wainwright discussed in his *Journal of Egyptian Archaeology Article* (1914) that the only groups mentioned in both Hittite and Egyptian records were the Luka, Ahhiyawa, and the Turusha. From these groups he believed the Turusha were actually the Tyrsenoi/ Etruscans (see Nibbi, 1972: 5-9). Although all these theories, among others, are viable, they are a perfect example of the fact that the groups of the Sea Peoples can be placed all over the Mediterranean with no certainty.

After extensive research it is my unavoidable belief that the attack by the Sea Peoples on Egypt was a result of events that did not initially relate to the Egyptians. The Ahhiyawa had undertaken earlier attempts to undermine Hittite dominance in Anatolia as can be seen in the Tawagalawa Letter from the Hittite king to the king of Ahhiyawa. The

Hittite king, Hattusili III, was attempting to end the insurrections in the western states peacefully since his armies had failed in their attempts. Because the rebellious states had been supported or at least convinced by the Ahhiyawa king to rebel, it was the Ahhiyawa king whose aid in ending the conflict Hattusili III sought (Bryce, 2003: 65-66). It is my conviction that the Ahhiyawa are culturally linked to the Mycenaeans and this will be addressed later in the paper. The Mycenaeans realized that the only way to further their own interests in Anatolia was to cripple or severely weaken the Hittite Empire who had so far been able to keep them in check and confined to the west coast of Anatolia.

Presumably the interests of the Mycenaeans included increased trade and power from new settlements or subjugated cities. If the Mycenaean interests were indeed trade oriented, then the Amurru Treaty during the middle of the 13th century would have deeply impacted their relations with the Hittite king in a negative manner. The part of the Amurru Treaty that dealt with the Mycenaeans forbade Amurru from allowing the Mycenaean ships to send trade goods inland to the Assyrians, whom the Hittites considered their enemy. While the embargo on the Levantine coast must have been difficult to enforce it appears they were successful in ceasing Mycenaean trade in the Cilician ports. To hinder a trading people in such a fashion must have been considered hostile to the Mycenaeans (Mellink, 1981: 140 & 141). Fomenting conflict between the Hittite vassal states and their Hittite rulers would be the only sensible tactic for the Mycenaeans since they were not powerful enough to accomplish their goals on their own. These vassal states became the neo-Hittite states after the collapse of the Hittite Empire.

The neo-Hittite states were small principalities located in north Syria, Cilicia, and south-central Anatolia. The neo-Hittite states that could have participated in this venture

were Carchemish; Unqi-Pattin, which covered the Amuq plains and lower Orontes; Sam'al, located north of Unqi and south of Gurgum; Gurgum, which lay to the north of Sam'al and west of Kummuh. Furthermore, Kummuh was located east of Sam'al, north of Carchemish and south of Melid; Melid, north of Kummuh and positioned across the Euphrates from the border with Urartu; Cilicia, divided between Que and Hilakku; and Tabal was the common description for the south eastern portion of the Anatolian plateau which consisted of a number of smaller states (Kuhrt, 1995: 410-413). It is apparent that much of the southern periphery of the Hittite Empire maintained their stability and autonomy. The revolt was extremely successful to the point where it resulted in the collapse of the fragile Hittite Empire. The consequences of this achievement were immense and resulted in a domino effect. The cities and states that would have benefited from the disintegration of the Hittite Empire now sought to retain their independence from outside influence and domination. The other major superpower at this time that could have infringed upon their autonomy was Egypt.

Repeatedly the Egyptians had attempted to increase their territory and influence in Lebanon and Syria. Sety I and Ramesses II had both previously made an effort to this end which ultimately culminated in the Battle of Kadesh in Ramesses's II fifth year (Kuhrt, 1995: 207). With the Hittite Empire gone it was not a difficult conclusion that the Egyptians might once again press north as they had in the past and make the new states vassals much like the Hittites had. Due to the power vacuum in the north the neo-Hittite states thought their best chance at retaining what they had won from the Hittites was to advance upon Egypt. Whether they intended to inflict a decisive blow against the Egyptians or raid Egypt's northern cities and then come to terms to demonstrate their

power we will never know because in year eight of Ramesses's III reign he soundly defeated the coalition of Sea Peoples.

As the Sea Peoples coalition moved south it gathered allies. These allies could have been interested in loot or in throwing off Egyptian control. There are many instances where local rulers banded together in an effort to gain independence from Egyptian domination as well. For example, during the reign of Tuthmosis III 330 princes from the Retenu rallied together, each with his own army (Nibbi, 1979: 36). While they were defeated this does describe an entire region of local authorities willing to fight Egypt together for a common cause.

As a direct result of the Egyptian victory against the Sea Peoples the Egyptians were able to expand their boundaries north. There is extensive archaeological evidence for an Egyptian presence at such as the sites of Beth-Shan, Lachish, Tell esh Sharia, and Megiddo. On the other hand there is little archaeological evidence for an Egyptian presence in Syria at this time except for a fragmentary statue from Byblos inscribed with the Horus name of Ramesses III (Weinstein, 1992: 142-43). This shows the Egyptian presence might have extended as far north as Byblos but with the lack of evidence it appears they were only able to extend their presence as far as Palestine. The fact that Ramesses III did not extend his boundaries farther north could show he suffered heavy casualties or the more likely possibility that he did not have the manpower due to the assimilation of the Sea Peoples. After the land and sea battles Ramesses III used many of the Sea Peoples, who were now his prisoners, as garrison units on his frontier in Palestine. It would have taken much of the resources of Ramesses III to secure the allocations of the Sea Peoples. While the coalition of the Sea Peoples may have been defeated, it was

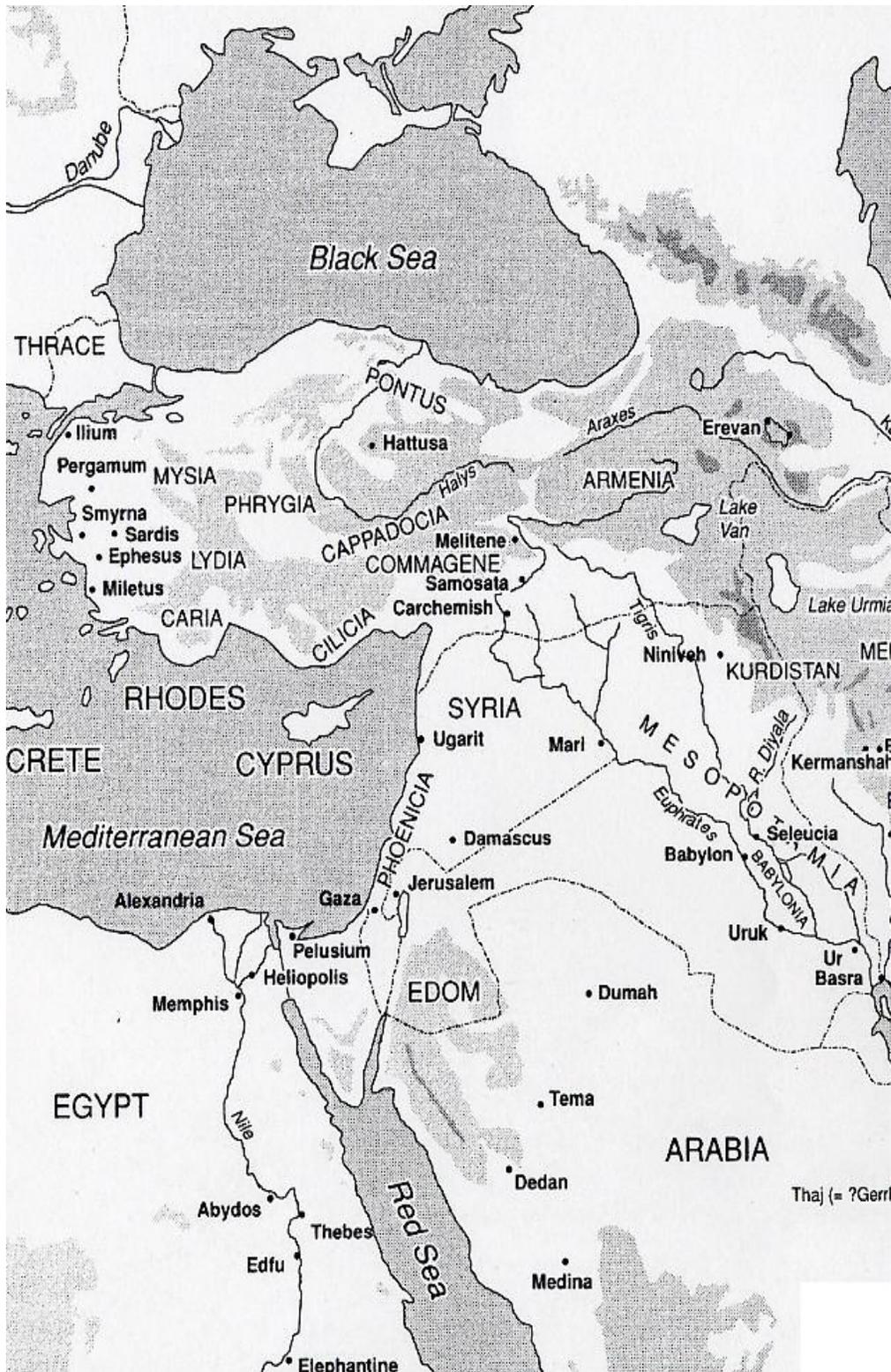
successful with regard to its original purpose of safeguarding the autonomy of the neo-Hittite states. Egypt was not powerful enough to interfere effectively with their politics or autonomy.

It should not be overlooked that Ramesses claims that “I have taken away their lands, their frontiers being added to mine” (Nibbi, 1979: 44). To be able to add the frontiers of the Sea Peoples to Egypt’s they must have been regions and people bordering or in the vicinity of Egypt’s frontiers. Also, it can be assumed that the lands Ramesses III conquered after the land and sea battles with the Sea Peoples were the lands of those who had attempted to desecrate his own and since he apparently expanded his frontiers all the way up the coast of Palestine it would appear that most of this region had risen up against Egypt. It can therefore only be deduced that the Sea Peoples were the local Syrian and Palestinian people aided by the neo-Hittite states.

There is a large number of theories surrounding the origins of the Sea Peoples. Some of these theories resemble the one above and some bear no resemblance whatsoever. The original and popular theory concerning the Sea Peoples was that they were a migration attempting to find a land to settle in. This belief is derived from the inscriptions at Medinet Habu. In these inscriptions the Sea Peoples are depicted with their women and children in ox-pulled carts (Sanders, 1985: 120). Historians have interpreted this to mean that they were not merely an army of plunderers but more precisely an invasion of displaced people. The reason this theory is commonly accepted is because during this time of unrest and turmoil it is simple to imagine a large number of peoples roaming the lands, especially with the inscriptions at Medinet Habu apparently collaborating this story. However, the majority of discussion surrounding the Sea

Peoples deals with their origins and their names. The names and locations of the Sea Peoples are hotly debated due to their brief presence in history, and this consequently limits the availability of historical sources. Without these additional sources it is difficult to place the Sea Peoples absolutely and not merely circumstantially.

This Thesis is structured into three chapters and a conclusion. The first chapter presents the presence of the Ahhiyawa in eastern Anatolia and their influence in the southern portion as the catalyst for the destruction of the Hittite Empire. The second chapter principally deals with the emerging states after the collapse of the Hittites and their reasoning for launching an attack on Egypt. The third chapter contains the actions in Palestine as these newly emerged states move south against Egypt. Throughout this paper I will refer to these newly emerged states that gained autonomy after the Hittite collapse as the “neo-Hittite states.” Also the use of the term Ahhiyawa will be employed as I look at them from Hittite texts and as a political region on the eastern coast of Anatolia. All references to the Mycenaeans will apply to them as a people and a culture and not as a unified political construct.



(Kuhrt, 1995: 2)

Chapter I. Ahhiyawa and their influence on the Hittites.

The term “Ahhiyawa” has proven to be very elusive and debatable since its discovery in the Hittite archives. Even though scholars now tend to accept the connection linking the Ahhiyawa and the Mycenaeans, the actual relationship between the two is problematic. Before their discovery within the Hittite archives, there was little trace of their culture or territory. The location of their territory is particularly problematic. If rooted in mainland Greece the Ahhiyawa would have had their own distinct culture and boundaries. The other likely location in which the Ahhiyawa resided is the southwest coastal regions of Asia Minor. Such a locale would not have hindered their connection with the Mycenaeans. The territory of Ahhiyawa likely began either as an assortment of trading posts or as colonized lands obtained through military ventures. While the Ahhiyawa are considered Mycenaean the extent that they are connected is highly debatable.

In 1924 Emil Forrer published his belief that he had found the Homeric Greeks in the Hittite archives. He claimed that the land of the Ahhiyawa was Greece and then went on to claim that numerous personal names could be translated from them. These claims quickly fell prey to Hittitologists such as Friedrich and Goetze who rejected the whole theory since it was based on conjecture (Güterbock, 1983: 133). Regardless, the seeds of the idea that the Ahhiyawa were Mycenaeans had been planted.

For the purposes of this paper it is my belief that the land of Ahhiyawa is located on the southwest coast of Asia Minor. Furthermore, I will accept that the Ahhiyawa were Mycenaean in culture and heritage so as to not deviate from the main subject of the Thesis. This point will be emphasized in this chapter. Many factors strongly indicate the

possibility that the Ahhiyawa resided in southwestern Asia Minor. Over the years archaeologists have found extensive amounts of Mycenaean and Minoan artifacts in these regions. Another point worth mentioning is the Hittite documents that mention Ahhiyawa can be interpreted as placing it in this region. Also, the shipwreck Ulu Burun off the coast of southern Turkey indicates Mycenaean interests to the east. These reasons not only persuade me that the region of southwest Asia Minor is where the land of Ahhiyawa was but also that it had a heavy Minoan and Mycenaean presence.

Archaeology has uncovered a prolific number of sites yielding Mycenaean artifacts since the early twentieth century (Güterbock, 1983: 133). To a great extent the artifacts that allow us to distinguish this connection are architecture, metal work, and pottery. These are all created out of material that is, to some degree, able to resist the advances of time.

The expansion of the Minoans into the Aegean islands and the southeast region of Asia Minor was very extensive. Minoan artifacts have been unearthed from the eastern Peloponnesian land mass all the way to Rhodes and Samos. During the middle of the later part of the Middle Bronze Age there was a cultural shift followed by urbanization, population, and wealth which is probably a result of Minoan expansion into the region. Furthermore there are remains at many of these sites of Mycenaean who had taken over control after the Minoan influence diminished. The Mycenaean pottery at the third level at Miletus is similar in many ways with the pottery of Ialysos and Kos which are islands in the south Aegean. These finds are further illustrated by the LH IIIC Kos-Miletus style. These types of craters are also found at Astypalaea, Iasos, and Ugarit (Melas, 1988: 113-118). According to Cynthia Shelmerdine, recent estimates for the dates of LH IIIC

pottery fall between 1190-1065 BC (Shelmerdine, 2001: 332). If these dates are correct then they put the Mycenaean's in this region during the time of the incursions of the Sea Peoples and possibly afterwards, showing their continued interest in this region.

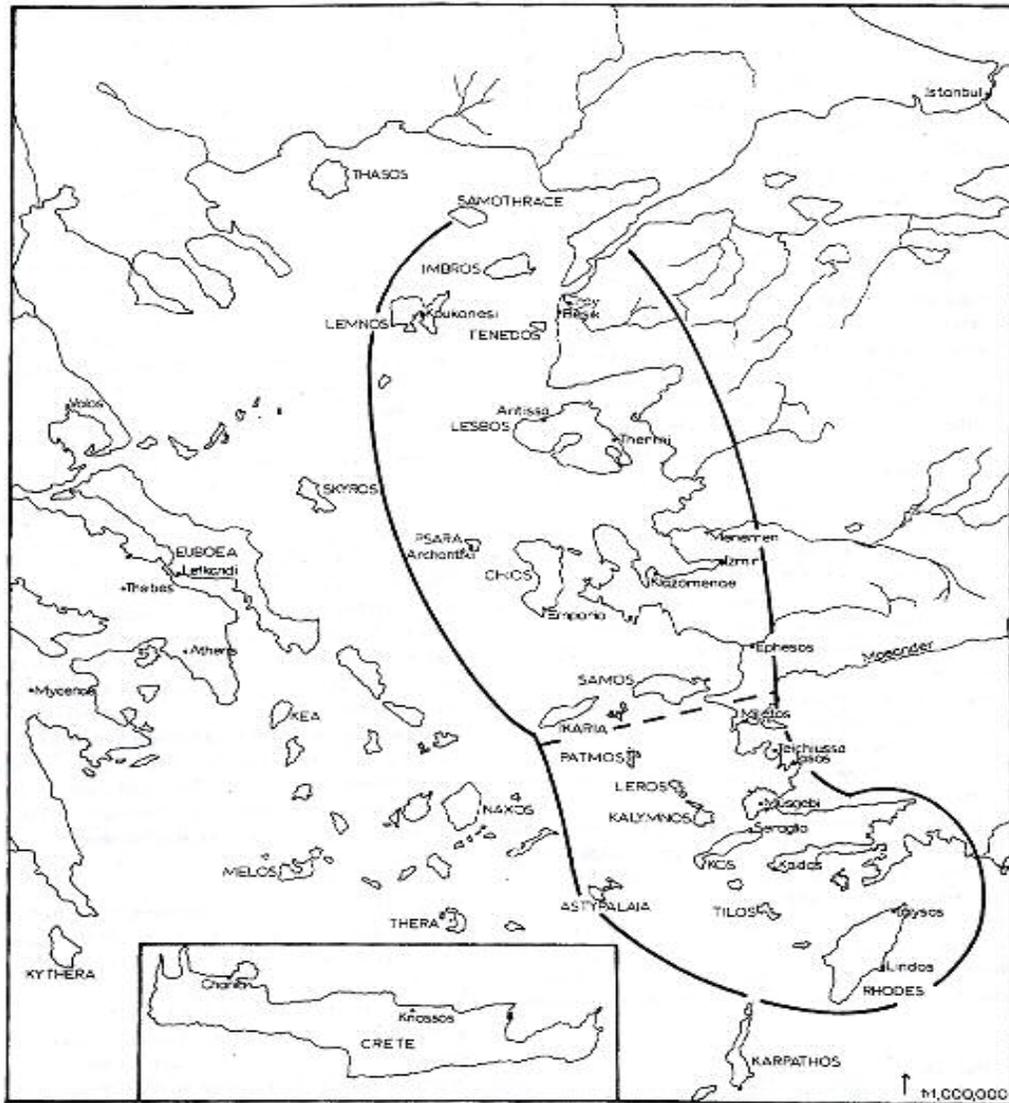


Fig 1. The Interface: LH IIIA2-III B. Upper and Central Interface: largely Anatolian wares; Lower Interface: higher proportion of Mycenaean pottery

(Mountjoy, 1998: 38)

Other sites have shown probable connections with Mycenaean influence.

Mycenaean vases found at Ephesus resemble pottery from the Dodecanese and especially from Ialysos. Also there is a pottery correlation between Symrna and Rhodes.

Interestingly enough a tholos thomb (a Mycenaean type of tomb) at Kolophon contained a bronze knife identical to another one from Ialysos. Another link is an octopus stirrup jar from Pitane very much like two stirrup jars from Kalymnos (Melas, 1988: 113). The pottery found in the western portions of Asia Minor also illustrates Mycenaean influence. Mycenaean pottery from LH IIIA2 exhibits east Aegean forms and decorative motifs. These pottery types are a combination of Mycenaean, Minoan, and Anatolian influence (Mountjoy, 1998: 37). All these examples are confirmation of Mycenaean interaction and the diffusion of their culture in this region during the time of the Sea Peoples and before.

Alongside the archaeological evidence that implicates the southwest region of Asia Minor for the location of the land of the Ahhiyawa is the textual evidence. These texts include the Indictment of Madduwattas, The Millawanda Letter, the Treaty of Amurru, and the Tawagalawas Text. These texts are all of Hittite origins and each can further indicate the location of Ahhiyawa.

The oldest source is the Indictment of Madduwatta. This text was written by a Hittite king who did not name himself. Fortunately, the Hittite king referred to both his father's and his own reign and from this Goetze was able to identify both of them as Arnuwandas I and his father, Tudhaliyas II. When these rulers were identified the relative date for the text could be identified, through the chronology, as approximately 1450-1430 BC. The text itself is an account of the plight of Madduwattas. At the start of the text Madduwattas has been driven from his country, which is never given, by Attarissiyas. It is noted in the text that Attarissiyas is a man of Ahhiya. Ahhiya is the shortened version of Ahhiyawa also mentioned in an oracle text from this same period

which specifies that Ahhiyawa is an enemy (Güterbock, 1983: 133 & 134). While this is not conclusive proof that Ahhiyawa was located in southwest Asia Minor it cannot be discounted. At the moment it is sufficient to point out that Madduwattas is not represented as a vassal of the Hittite king yet. With the location of the Hittite Empire it is reasonable to assume that the only region Madduwattas could have come from was the one that was not yet dominated by a strong central power, that region being western Asia Minor. Also it is enough to mention that he was attacked and successfully driven out of his territory by a known outside aggressor. Madduwattas was the only small ruler expelled from his territory by Attarissiyas mentioned in the text. This indicates familiarity and military strength that could most easily be expedited by a local authority instead of a foreign aggressor who would have conquered a larger swath of territory.

From this point Madduwattas fled to the Hittite king, Tudhaliyas II, for protection. This protection was needed due to the fact that Attarissiyas had been pursuing him. It is interesting that Attarissiyas had thought it important enough to track Madduwattas down. Two possible reasons are that either Attarissiyas feared Madduwattas returning and gaining power or that the conflict bore a personal note. Regardless, Tudhaliyas II gave Madduwattas Mt. Zippasla and made him a Hittite vassal. While in this new position he launched an unsuccessful attack against Arzawa. The country of Arzawa was enemies with the Hittites at this time (Güterbock, 1983: 134). Arzawa is thought to be located in the central eastern part of Asia Minor so for Madduwattas to be able to gain from this expedition he would have to have had resided in this same region on the fringes of the Hittite Empire.

Even though Madduwattas was consistently losing his quarrels the Hittite king still supported him and made sure he kept his territory. This is further seen when Attarissiyas returned seeking to kill Madduwattas. In response the Hittite king sent a general to assist him in repulsing the attack. The general was able to drive back Attarissiyas who had brought 100 chariots with him (Güterbock, 1983: 134). This part of the text reinforces the idea that the conflict between Madduwattas and Attarissiyas was personal. Madduwattas was no longer a threat to Attarissiyas and his conquered territory since he had been given new territory by the Hittite King. Also it is worth noting that Attarissiyas brought with him 100 chariots. For him to be able to muster that kind of military force, especially chariots which required horses, Ahhiyawa probably was located locally and was a land based power.

Moreover, the connection of Ahhiyawa and the southwest region of Asia Minor continues throughout the text. Immediately after the Hittite general's engagement with Attarissiyas a town called Talawa began hostilities with the Hittites. Talawa is considered by most scholars to be the city of Tlos in Lycia whose Lycian name was Tlawa (Güterbock, 1983: 134). While this part of the text has no direct bearing on Attarissiyas it does give more weight to the already ample proof that Ahhiyawa was located in the southwest region of Asia Minor. This is evident because the Hittite general was already operating in the area against Attarissiyas who was freely able to move his troops in the area without hindrance. Since the Hittite general was able to respond to the insurrection he therefore must have been operating in the general region. This places Ahhiyawa near the region of Lycia.

The Tawagalawas Text further demonstrates the role the Ahhiyawa played in Asia Minor. This text was written by an unknown Hittite king and deals principally with a series of events in relation to an individual named Piyamaradus. Within this text it is clearly shown that the Ahhiyawa not only resided in Asia Minor but also their status in the political hierarchy there.

The name of this text is derived, not from the main subject of the tablet but from the subject of the first few sections. In this way the text became known as the Tawagalawas and not the Piyamaradus Text. Regrettably, the text is not complete due to certain parts being unreadable. Due to this many questions have arisen about the text. According to Sturtevant the text deals with the return of Piyamaradus to Ahhiyawa (Sturtevant, 1928: 3). Güterbock, on the other hand, has drawn different conclusions altogether about the content of the text. He has determined that the text contains one story with two elements (Güterbock, 1983: 136-137).

The first part of Güterbock's understanding of the text, which I used since his interpretation is the most comprehensive, is in regards to Tawagalawas and the Hittite king. The exact nature of the position of Tawagalawas is debatable but it is probable that he was close to the king of Ahhiyawa. According to the text the town of Attarimma was destroyed by an unstated people. In response to this assault on their territory the Lukka sought the aid of both the Hittite king and Tawagalawas. In return each of them gathered their forces and approached the Lukka territory. As the Hittite king neared the road station of Sallapa he received a message from Tawagalawas asking to become his vassal. The Hittite king immediately sent a high official to Tawagalawas. When the high official reached Tawagalawas he apparently somehow took offense and demanded the title of

kingship on the spot, of where it is not sure (Güterbock, 1983: 136). It is unclear why a notable man of Ahhiyawa would request such a thing from the Hittite king. It is possible that this request for kingship is due to the fear Tawagalawas had that the Hittite king was coming to attack him and he feared that he could not win against the forces of the Hittite king. In that light his request to become a vassal was a defensive measure and would also explain his hesitancy to follow through. If this is the case then this text has so far shown that Tawagalawas is considered strong enough and willing to come to the aid of the Lukka against manageable foes. Also, this shows he does not want open conflict with the Hittites which shows his and Ahhiyawa's relative position of power in Asia Minor at this time.

The second part of the story involves a new character by the name of Piyamaradus. Despite the reluctance of Tawagalawas to accept the vassalage he had requested, the Hittite king was still in contact with him on another matter of importance. It seems that the Hittite king had sent a letter to Millawanda with a two fold purpose. The letter was meant to inform the king of Ahhiyawa of the continuous raids that Piyamaradus had been launching and at the same time summon Piyamaradus to the Hittite king (Güterbock, 1983: 137). From this portion of the second part of the text we are able to discern some relevant information. Primarily we are able to locate the king of Ahhiyawa's territory at Millawanda. This was probably his seat of power since this is where the letter was sent to contact him. Another significant point we can see is that the Hittite king recognized the status of Ahhiyawa in the political scene by sending a letter ahead of himself and his men. This act of diplomacy instead of any aggression against the entire region in general

proves that the Hittite king also did not want to come into open conflict with the king of Ahhiyawa as well.

The Tawagalawas Text concludes with Piyamaradus having set sail on a boat before the Hittite king reached Millawanda. There also appears to be negotiations on Piyamaradus presenting himself to the Hittite king at this time but the text does not tell us of the outcome of these negotiations. At various times scholars have used this text to either place Ahhiyawa in either Asia Minor or over the Aegean Sea. The advocates for placing Ahhiyawa in Asia Minor have used the reference of the Hittite charioteer who is to stay in Piyamaradus's place to ensure safe passage while he is away with the Hittite king. Since the Hittite is a charioteer they conclude that Ahhiyawa must be in Asia Minor. The advocates of placing Ahhiyawa across the Aegean Sea fixate on Piyamaradus leaving on a boat. These scholars have concluded that if a boat is required to retrieve Piyamaradus then he must be across the Sea. I, however, do not agree with either side's argument. First of all I do not think the charioteer need be representative of an Asia Minor based Ahhiyawa. The charioteer is a status position and could easily be used in that manner. Also the use of a boat does not imply that Ahhiyawa was located over the sea. The boat could just have easily traveled to a nearby island or along the coast. The use of the boat only further proves that Ahhiyawa was a coastal region.

Another important text that describes the interactions between the Ahhiyawa and the Hittite Empire and their vassals is the Treaty of Amurru. Amurru, unlike the other sites mentioned by the Indictment of Madduwatta, is located on the coast of Syria and not in southern Asia Minor. The fact that this Treaty has a passage specifically dealing with the Ahhiyawa demonstrates the extent the Ahhiyawa were interacting within the region.

The Treaty of Amurru itself is a Hittite text by the king Tudhaliyas IV. This text itemizes the rulers the Hittite king considers his equals. Among them are the rulers of Egypt, Babylon, Assyria, and an Ahhiyawa that is erased from the tablet. The reason for the erasure of Ahhiyawa from this tablet is unknown and is inconsequential for this paper. The part of the passage relevant to the Ahhiyawa is dealt in restrictions placed upon Amurru. At this time, as the text mentions, Assyria is the enemy of the Hittites. In response to this conflict Tudhaliyas IV has told Amurru not to allow any merchant access to Assyria through their territory. The text goes on to specify that not even a ship of Ahhiyawa's merchandise may be unloaded in Amurru that is destined to go to Assyria (Güterbock, 1983: 136). The Ahhiyawa must have been accomplished merchants to be specifically mentioned in this embargo in a land so far away from their suspected homeland. Also it is interesting to note that the reign of Tudhaliyas IV is believed to be approximately between 1245 BC and 1209 BC and it was shortly after this, with a few quick successive kings, that the Hittite Empire ceased to exist as a political entity. Was the specific mention of the Ahhiyawa in the Treaty of Amurru a sign that relations between the two powers were deteriorating? Could it be that this restriction on Ahhiyawa mercantile interests and possibly other factors that we are unaware of sparked conflict between the two?

The brief Millawanda Letter is also believed to be from the time of Tudhaliyas IV. This text helps illustrate the tensions between the Hittites and the Ahhiyawa during this time period. The brevity of this Letter assists to obscure the importance of it. The text principally handles information regarding the Hittite king and a vassal of his taking away territory from Millawanda (Güterbock, 1983: 137). Millawanda, of course, is another

name for Miletos which we have already established as the main residence of the Ahhiyawa king. This series of events during the time of Tudhaliyas IV is evidence of further tensions between the two and the need for the Ahhiyawa to find a suitable solution.

Chapter II. The Hittites and the Neo Hittites.

During the period of the Late Bronze Age, Asia Minor was the location of various small kingdoms and one great empire. These small kingdoms were the numerous components that made up the Hittite Empire. The Hittite Empire spanned from western portions of Asia Minor, throughout Syria, and eastward into Asia. There is very little evidence in regards to the origins of the Hittite Empire. From the end of the time period when the Assyrian trading settlements were active and the Hittites appeared as a powerful state ca 1650 BC there is scarce information (Kuhrt, 1995: 225).

The sources we have portray the Hittites as a militaristic people with deeply rooted religious and ceremonial beliefs. Their capital city was first Kanesh and then later Hattusa, located in north central Asia Minor above the Halys River. Much of the time of the Hittite king was spent, when not on campaign to conquer new territory or re-secure previous loyalties from vassal states, touring domains conducting ceremonies and attending religious festivals (Kuhrt, 1995: 225-229).

Hittite chronology is traditionally broken up into three distinct phases. The first phase is designated as the Old Kingdom which dates from 1650 BC – 1500 BC. The second phase is designated the Middle Kingdom which dates from 1500 BC – ca 1420 BC. The last phase is designated the Empire period which dates from ca 1420 BC – 1200 BC (Kuhrt, 1995: 229-231). These are the phases of Hittite history that I will be using throughout this paper.

The Hittite Empire is crucial to the understanding of the Sea Peoples due to the fact that I believe the Sea Peoples origins lie within the southern periphery of Asia Minor. The history of the Hittites sheds light upon the integrity of the empire and interests of the

vassal states within it. Along with the occurrences within Hittite history, other external and possibly technological factors could have contributed to the events of the 12th century BC could have accumulated in the destruction of the Hittite Empire. Regrettably, the availability of information pertinent to this topic is quite limited.

Only a cursory understanding of Hittite history is necessary for the purposes of this research paper. Throughout their extensive history the Hittites ruled a multicultural empire based in Asia Minor. To accomplish this feat the Hittites possessed the basic attributes of being a militaristic and expansionistic people. This way of life is evident early on in their founding myths. According to the Hittite founding myth an obscure King called Labarnas, later to be known as Hattusilis, conquered his enemies and established the Hittite capital at Hattusus. For the duration of Hittite rule they followed this model and were constantly increasing their territory. Labarnas's successor campaigned widely and successfully. It is during his reign that we see outside forces pose a threat to the Hittites. This threat was the Hurrians who invaded and occupied Cilicia during the reign of Hantilis. This and other problems during the reign of Hantilis weakened the Hittite state to the point where it went into a recession that we know as the Middle Kingdom (Landon, 2005).

The Middle Kingdom consists of numerous rulers for whom there is scanty evidence. Due to the lack of information during this period the chronology is constantly shifting as new information becomes available. Also the dates that certain kings ruled are unknown to us. This period during the weakened Hittite state consists largely of internal problems, insurrections, intrigues, and assassinations. The increased power of the Assyrians in northern Syria and Cilicia developed at this time. Near the end of the

Middle Kingdom Tudhaliyas II (1450-1420 BC) initiated the resurgence of Hittite activity in Asia Minor. He conquered Arzawa and Assuwa, destroyed Aleppo, defeated the Mitanni in the east, and assimilated Kizzawanda (Cilicia during the Hurrian dynasty) into the Hittite state. However, the Kaska started harassing his northern borders at this time which he and his predecessors were never able to resolve efficiently. The last ruler of this period, Arnuwandas I, was beset by attacks on all his frontiers. His rule saw the destruction of Hattusus and Arzawa establishing its own independence (Landon, 2005).

The Empire period saw the rejuvenation of the Hittite state and the creation of its empire. This period is very well documented and dated compared to the other periods. Suppiluliumas I, an early ruler, expanded the Hittite Empire farther than it had previously ever gone. He re-established Hattusas and engaged in two wars with Mitanni resulting in the sack of their capital and the conquest of Syria. These achievements earned him a reputation envied by his successors. His death heralded an increase in both the Kaska problem and Egyptian pressure in Syria. Muwattallis II marched south to confront Seti I and his army near Kadesh but conflict was averted. Despite this the Hittites again had to assemble an army to confront Ramesses II at Kadesh. The Egyptians claim victory at this battle but it is clear that the Hittites remained in control of the region which indicates that the Hittites may have won the battle. The early years of the 13th century not only dealt with aggression from the Egyptians but internal rivalry and the diffusion of power. Muwattallis II had established his son Hattusilis III at Tarhuntassa as a Great King, like the king of Carcamesh, second only to the Great King of Hatti. Eventually Hattusilis III usurped his brother after several years of strife. After a quarter century of peace the Hittite Empire was confronted with multiple problems at the end of the 13th century. The

Assyrians were causing problems on their borders and numerous uprisings flared up. Much of the time of the last few Hittite kings was spent trying to quell these problems. Not much is known about the end of the Hittites since the collapse was sudden and conclusive ca 1200 BC (Landon, 2005).

The summary of the culture of the Hittites and their history is necessary due to the insufficient amount of information available in regards to the neo-Hittite states. Following the collapse of the Hittite Empire numerous small kingdoms arose to replace it. As can be seen from other examples throughout history the region experienced a so-called “Dark Age” where written records detailing events became scarce. A well documented example of this was the collapse of the Roman Empire and the rise of petty kingdoms that followed. Another contributing factor other than the scarcity of written records that makes this period and region difficult to examine is the current archaeological state. There has been little archaeological work and study done on these developing states until their emergence in the 11th century. Much of the information and thoughts regarding this issue are gleaned from indirect sources.

The neo-Hittite states were a group of small kingdoms that arose after the collapse of the Hittite Empire. This term is applied specifically to the kingdoms in north Syria, Cilicia, and the south central region of Asia Minor. Since they were all formerly a part of the Hittite Empire they shared many linguistic and cultural similarities. The neo-Hittite states were Carchemish; Unqi-Pattin, which covered the Amuq plains and lower Orontes; Sam'al, located north of Unqi and south of Gurgum; Gurgum, which lay to the north of Sam'al and west of Kummuh; Kummuh, located east of Sam'al, north of Carchemish and south of Melid; Melid, north of Kummuh and positioned across the Euphrates from the

border with Urartu; Cilicia, divided between Que and Hilakku; and Tabal. It is worth noting that all the neo-Hittite states were situated along major routes and controlled focal points for trade such as ports, passes, and river crossings (Kuhrt, 1995: 410-416). This indicates that the wealthier and more urban areas continued to exist with significant influence after the collapse.

Data regarding the neo-Hittite states is strongest at the site of Carchemish which was ruled by a royal family member as a Viceroy over the Syrian vassal states. Regrettably, little is known about the Iron Age I (Schwartz, 2003: 363 & 366). It seems that the kingdom of Carchemish survived the disintegration of the Hittite Empire and the upheavals of the 12th century intact and unharmed. Carchemish survived for several more generations until it too broke up into various smaller kingdoms. A royal seal impression found in 1985 at Lidar Höyük proves that the royal line continued after the disturbances. The seal informs us that Talmi-Tesub, the contemporary of Suppiluliuma II who was the last documented king of the Hittite Empire, was succeeded by his son Kuzi-Tesub. It is interesting to note that Kuzi-Tesub claimed to be the 'Great King' which suggests that the royal authority in Hattusas had ended. Inscriptions from Arslantepe mention the names of two grandsons of Kuzi-Tesub who ruled the smaller kingdom of Melid. This further extends the longevity of the kingdom of Carchemish after the fall of the Hittite Empire (Bryce, 1998: 384). These inscriptions prove that the kingdom of Carchemish survived the era of the Sea Peoples intact. Without further archaeological evidence it can only be presumed that the other neo-Hittite states were capable of surviving as well.

The fact that these particular regions seemed to remain unaffected gives weight to my theory and discredits the nomadic warrior theory. My theory employs the neo-Hittite states as the main instigators and members of the Sea Peoples. Most other theories commonly attribute the Sea Peoples as a nomadic migration of people who left a trail of devastation in their path. If nomadic or migrating people had been responsible for the destruction of the Hittite Empire how come these coastal regions they would have had to pass through on their way south were left unmolested? Important centers such as these would not have succumbed without resistance. Also there is no sign in the culture or language to signify a new presence either settling in the regions or assuming control over them since the Hittite culture remained dominant.

The most puzzling aspect of the nomadic or migrating people theory is whether they capable of destroying the Hittite Empire as a political entity. Hattusus had been razed to the ground before and the Empire had been invaded but at no point did the integrity of the Empire cease to exist. Since there is no evidence that nomadic or migrating groups settled in or controlled these regions then it must be assumed that they would have had to continue on their way south towards Egypt for this theory to have any validity. If this is the case then why were the neo-Hittite states left intact? If the Sea People were merely passing through then how could they have destroyed the political system of a state they had no interest in? For these reasons the nomadic or migrating theory can not be correct.

However, there is another way to explain the circumstances and results in the neo-Hittite states. The neo-Hittite states could have been left prosperous and unmolested because there were no foreign invaders. An invading foreign power or migrating people

passing through these regions should have treated them in the same aggressive manner as they did sites like Hattusas. The only other logical choice available is that the neo-Hittites were the original aggressors against the Hittites. The Hittite Empire had always been a fragile collection of subordinate states resisting Hittite domination whenever the opportunity presented itself. These states collaborating with each other could have upset the delicate balance of Hittite power. This could explain the sudden collapse since there is no mention of an enemy attack before the end. Also this could explain the survival of the neo-Hittite states.

The Hittite Empire had always been plagued by internal strife and rebellion, each leading into the other. It is my theory that one such rebellion was the cause of the Hittite's destruction. The exact events surrounding the rebellion are unknown. A well planned and sudden strike at the Hittites, however, could have possibly left the Empire in such a state where it disintegrated into small kingdoms if it lost crucial battles. The lack of information for these regions compelled me to use other documented regions as an example for rebellions and the aspiration for them in periphery regions.

A well documented rebellion took place during Mursili II's seventh year, ca. 1323 BC, in the land of the Nuhasi people. According to the Detailed Annals for Mursili II's reign his brother Sarri-Kusuh, the Viceroy of Carchemish, failed in his duty to bring a prisoner to Hattusas. Not only did he fail in this duty but he also released him back to his family. Consequently the prisoner, who was a man of Nuhasi, was able to engage in conspiratorial activities again. This was not a small act of disobedience by Sarri-Kusuh since a broad rebellion broke out. The actions of Sarri-Kusuh are perplexing to some degree. Up to this point he had steadfastly supported the Hittite administration since he

was a member of the royal family as well. What makes the situation difficult to grasp is that Mursili II sent his general Kantuzili afterwards to join with Sarri-Kusuh in putting the rebellion down (Bryce, 1988: 21-22). Why did Sarri-Kusuh ignore Mursili II's order and then support him later? Could it be that he was hoping to be able to break away from Hittite authority and had misjudged the rebellions strength? If this had been the case then maybe his own resources would not have been sufficient for the task and he thought it prudent to remain loyal to Mursili II. It might even be that the text was translated incorrectly. While Sarri-Kusuh's motives are debatable they are also not our primary concern. The most important information this document has so far shown is that rebellions were still a problem only a few generations before the Hittite collapse.

The rebellion was significant enough to rouse international interests. At this time Mursili II received word that an Egyptian force was marching to the region supposedly to support the rebellion. This prompted him to finally take action. At this time he sent Kantuzili to join military forces with Sarri- Kusuh. However, the Egyptian forces were defeated before they reached the rebellious Nuhasi. Eventually the rebellion was put down with the additional aid of the Ugaritic king (Bryce, 1988: 25-28). Since the rebellion required not only the Viceroy of Carchemish and the Hittite commander but also the support of the Ugaritic king it is possible that rebellions were a sizable threat to Hittite integrity.

Internal strife and rebellions were not the only predicaments the Hittites were confronted with, especially during the later stages of their rule. It is apparent from excavations at modern day Bogazkoy, Hattusas, that the Hittite Empire had entered a period of decline. The archaeological evidence shows that the grand temples erected or

enhanced by Tuthaliya IV had been reduced to serving as houses, workshops, and storage buildings. This once sacred city had fallen from grace and become a mundane settlement (Neve, 1987: 181). This state of affairs resulted in the failure of the Hittite Empire ca 1200 BC.

The date of 1200 BC is commonly used as reference point for the end of the Hittite Empire because at this time Hattusas was razed to the ground and the Hittite records fall silent. It is known that the last Hittite king, Suppiluliuma II, ascended the throne ca 1210/ 1205 BC but we do not know when his reign ended. Unfortunately, the final records at this time only give details regarding Suppiluliuma's victory at sea near the coast of Cyprus. The last records do not inform us of the date nor do any other contemporary records detail an exact date for the fall of the Hittite Empire. For this reason the date of 1200 BC is commonly used despite the inherent deficiencies (Kuhrt, 1995: 265).

The rebellions, decline, and fragile nature of the Hittite state were factors that greatly attributed to the collapse. However, the collapse was very sudden. The Hittite Empire had always been beset with external difficulties, like the Kaska or the Egyptians, who encroached upon or raided their frontiers. Also the weathered Hittite Empire had experienced numerous rebellions from peripheral regions like the land of the Nuhasi that had threatened its strength and stability. Why after all this time would the Hittites fall victim to these obstacles? Could it be that the decline of their civilization was responsible for their inability to cope? While the vassal states of the Hittite Empire were capable of taking advantage of the weakening Hittite political integrity there are other factors that could have been responsible as well during this transition period. The use of

iron could have been one such factor. The transition between the end of the Bronze Age and the beginning of the Iron Age transpired around the 12th century. It was my hypothesis that the use of iron by one side in a conflict would have given them a decisive advantage. This advantage would have been responsible for the sudden collapse of the Hittite Empire. The disturbances that rippled through the ancient world also would have been attributed to the use of iron spreading.

There are only a few artifacts of iron that remain from the ancient world. Iron corrodes and deteriorates effortlessly. Much of the iron we do find from the Bronze Age is meteoric iron. Which was of a far superior quality than anything ancient smiths in the eastern Mediterranean could create. Asia Minor and Egypt have the greatest amount of iron artifacts. This is in part due to the extensive iron deposits throughout Asia Minor. Hittite smelting techniques were a chaotic affair. This can be surmised from the piece of speiss from Bogazkoy. The smelter used an arsenopyrite ore which produced a metallic iron. This metallic iron probably could not have been forged and was discarded. This shows that they almost certainly had to use a trial and error method in creating usable iron (Muhly, 1985: 68-71 & 79).

The Iron Letter is a text that also allows us to see the inherent problems the ancient world smiths had with the smelting of iron. This text details the problems a storehouse was having with its iron ore. They discovered most of it was of too low quality and were having to smelt more iron ore. This letter shows that the Hittites lacked sufficient knowledge of ores to regularly create iron (Muhly, 1985: 79).

Even with these factors iron was inferior to bronze to begin with. Bronze's physical properties made it tougher, harder, and a better-quality cutting edge than that of

iron. Also bronze did not deteriorate like iron did. The ancient smiths clearly did not have the techniques yet to make iron into a metal better than bronze. Due to this lack of knowledge, iron was used for common tools mostly during this period (Muhly, 1985: 68-89). My hypothesis of iron playing a role in the sudden collapse of the Hittite Empire seems incorrect. Iron was not smelted tough enough or in regular use as a military weapon at this time. Therefore iron could not have been a viable factor to help explain the suddenness of the collapse of the Hittite Empire.

Chapter III. The Sea Peoples.

The term “Sea Peoples” is a nineteenth century construction. In 1881 an article by Gaston Maspéro collectively referred to the attackers on Egypt during the reign of Ramesses III as “peuples de la mer.” Maspéro had good reason to refer to them in this way. Some of the Egyptian texts referred to them as being “of the ym.” Ym is a Semitic word introduced in Egypt during the reign of the Hyksos. While the exact meaning is questionable it does refer to stretches of water (Nibbi, 1975: 3). From the moment this article was published the groups that attacked Egypt were commonly referred to as the Sea Peoples.

The neo-Hittite states after successfully shaking off the burden of vassalage to the Hittite Empire realized their precarious situation when Ramesses III conquered Amurru in year three of his reign. Without the Hittite Empire in the north to balance out the other major powers of the day there was an apparent power vacuum in their region. This coalition of the neo-Hittite states decided mobilization of their military forces was paramount to their continued autonomy. Syria and the southern coast of Asia Minor were always valued for their natural resources. Timber especially was a precious resource particularly to a country like Egypt that lacked timber (Dever, 1992: 105). Timber has been a decisive factor for Egypt throughout its history as a reason for its continued attempts to conquer or influence the region. This is why the neo-Hittite states would have felt it necessary to lead an army toward Egypt while their coalition was still united under a common goal of independence.

There are several distinguishable phases of Egyptian involvement on the coast of the eastern Mediterranean as far as northern Syria. Some of these phases were incredibly

destructive. As early as the 16th century the Egyptian pharaohs were increasing their strength and pushing northwards. Pharaoh Amose I was the first in a series of pharaohs that pushed out the Hyksos rulers of Egypt and pursued them northward. Evidence from scarabs indicates that several princes related to the Hyksos had power centers located in Palestine. To eradicate this threat the Egyptian rulers pushed farther and farther north through Syria until they reached the Mitanni frontier. This phase of Egyptian involvement in Syria-Palestine led to no significant territorial gain. The primary aim of these campaigns was to utterly destroy their enemies and their capabilities to ensure Egypt's security. This can be seen from the lack of archaeological evidence for Egyptian occupation and for the destruction of numerous sites (Kuhrt, 1995: 320).

Tuthmosis III altered this policy of devastation during his reign from 1469- 1403 BC. During this period Egypt established authority over these areas, creating a border between themselves and the Hurrians. To assert his control over Syria-Palestine Tuthmosis III was forced to lead more campaigns. However, these campaigns were meant to conquer these areas and not destroy them, leaving them useless to the Egyptians. The most detailed campaign describes Tuthmosis III reaching Megiddo where he was confronted by a coalition of princes. It is interesting to note that many princes of this coalition were from considerably farther north and they were lead by the prince of Kadesh (Kuhrt, 1995: 320-322). This act of temporary unification to confront a common threat proves to me that even at this time the Syro-Palestinian people desired to halt the Egyptian advance significantly enough to unite. Also the princes of the north fighting that far south show their own foresight in how these events could affect their own interests and their willingness to face this reality.

Further examples of Egyptian interests and expansion into the Syria-Palestine region can be seen during the reigns of Sety I (1305- 1290 BC) and Ramesses II (1290-1224 BC). Sety I led an army into Syria until he reached Kadesh. Here he was confronted by a Hittite army. At this time battle was averted and the Egyptians withdrew from the field. Ramesses II, however, also led an army in his fifth regnal year. As it came to pass for Sety I, Ramesses II was also confronted by a Hittite force, led by Muwatalli II, on the outskirts of Kadesh (Kuhrt, 1995: 207).

This battle decisively established the long disputed borders between the two empires even if the Egyptians claimed otherwise. The Egyptians approached Kadesh confident that the Hittite force was still a far off threat. However, Ramesses II had been given false information from captives and the Hittite force lay hidden behind Kadesh. Since Ramesses II did not realize this threat his forces were spread out. Immediately the Hittites attacked the Egyptians and soundly defeated them. Only the arrival of one of the divisions of Ramesses II saved him from capture or death. As a result of this battle the Egyptians withdrew to Egypt and the Hittites remained in control of Kadesh and also exerted control over Amurru and Upe. While both sides claim victory it is clear from this that the Hittites won the battle (Santosuosso, 1996: 430-446).

The conflict finally ended with the peace treaty between Ramesses II and Hattusili III ca. 1275 BC. This treaty officially recognized peace between the two powers in the form that they would not trespass on the territories of each other, come to the aid of each other, and to extradite desirable people (Dollinger, 2003). This treaty solidified the borders between the two powers and allowed them to address other pressing issues, ending conflict between the Egyptians and Syrians for the time being.

The treaty between the Hittites and Egyptians lasted until the collapse of the Hittite Empire. Without the Hittites the treaty was nullified and Egypt was again able to resume its own interests to the north. Since Egypt was bound by the treaty between them and the Hittite Empire it is reasonable to assume that the Hittite Empire collapsed between 1200 BC and 1179 BC. This conjecture is based on two assumptions: one, the Egyptians remained loyal to the treaty and, two, the Egyptian conquest of Amurru in year five of Ramesses III reign (1179 BC) which indicates that they were no longer bound by the treaty. The conquest of Amurru by Ramesses III so soon after the fall of the Hittite Empire further illustrates the interest the Egyptians had in this region. Amurru was traditionally a center for rebellious activities against Egypt (Nibbi, 1975: 67). Therefore, this entire region would have had to be pacified in order to push further north. This fact must not have been overlooked by the neo-Hittite states since three years later after the conquest by Ramesses III Amurru was re-taken by the Sea Peoples as they marched south to Egypt. For the neo-Hittite states, the expansionistic policies of Egypt would have foreshadowed a troublesome future, the anticipation of which would have demanded pre-emptive action be taken.

The people of the Palestinian coast, the Syrians, and the neo-Hittites all had excellent reasons to detest Egyptian authority. Whereas the Hittites ruled vassal states in a loose fashion, the Egyptians did not. The Egyptians incorporated conquered regions into their administration and ruled them as such. According to Dever numerous scholars like Weinstein, Ahituv, and Na'aman have shown that Egyptian rule was very burdensome. The Egyptian overlords extracted heavy tributes in the form of commodities. Another adversity to the people of these regions was the *corvée* system.

This system used massive amounts of forced labor to build public projects that usually did not benefit the indigenous peoples (Dever, 1992: 105). It is evident both that the Egyptians had a history of attempting to control these areas and the hardships they imposed when they succeeded were considerable. These reasons would have made it desirable and possible for these cities and states to unite to expel the Egyptians and strike back at them.

The peoples of Syria-Palestine were not the only people to have suffered under the oppression of foreigners. The Egyptians themselves had been dominated by foreigners called the Hyksos for 150 years. From 1720 BC through 1570 BC the Hyksos ruled an increasingly hostile Egypt (Jones, 1975; 8). While the Hyksos's origins are unknown their names appear to be derived from semitic. Amelia Kuhrt mentions that they retreated to Palestine when they were pushed out of Egypt because they had power centers there. Following the Hyksos expulsion the Egyptians pursued them north and devastated lands far to the north (Kuhrt, 1995: 173-176). This time period unquestionably left an imprint on the Egyptians that would affect their politics for centuries. Hyksos rule over the Egyptians substantiates the train of thought that the Egyptians wanted to control Syria-Palestine not only for their natural resources but also as a buffer between themselves and any foreign incursions.

Prior to the large attack the Sea Peoples launched against Egypt during the reign of Ramesses III, various groups of them had already showed activity in the eastern Mediterranean worthy of mention by Egyptian scribes. The first recorded activity of one of the established groups of the Sea Peoples was by the Lukka in the Tell el-Amarna Letters. In this letter the King of Alasia, present day Cyprus, was complaining about the

constant raids the Lukka were conducting on his territories. These raids were an annual occurrence so it is apparent that the Lukka at least had a general region they resided in and this region was most likely on the coast near Cyprus. In another correspondence in the Tell el-Amarna Letters, Rib-Addi complains that an individual sent some men to kill the Sherden, who were most likely the Egyptian guards, in his town (Macalister, 1914: 19-24). These are a few examples of the groups universally referred to as Sea Peoples active in the eastern Mediterranean. What is important about these texts is the time period they are placed in. The Tell el-Amarna Letters are from 14th century BC. This illustrates their presence two hundred years before the great land and sea battles during the reign of Ramesses III. Since this is the case it can only be presumed that at least part of the Sea Peoples were local groups and not nomadic or part of a migration.

There are a large number of groups of people that can be labeled Sea Peoples. For the purposes of this paper I will concentrate on the groups that are most relevant, specifically the groups that made an appearance at the time of Ramesses II. The groups that comprise the Sea Peoples are the Sherden, Lukka, Derden, Masha, Pitasha, Arawanna, Karkisha, Ekwesh, Teresh, Shekelesh, Peleset, Denyen, Weshesh, and the Tjekker (Macalister, 1914: 24). Some of these groups have received more attention and have been deemed more important than others. This is because there is more information available for them and their activities are slightly better well known. For instance, the Peleset have undergone more study and speculation than all the others.

One of the many reasons the various groups of the Sea Peoples have remained so enigmatic through the test of time is that they have only appeared a few times in the historical records. It is very important to remember that the Sea Peoples consisted of

various small groups and did not always act together or fight for the same side. The various groups making up the Sea Peoples made their first major appearance during the reign of Ramesses II.

In Ramesses II's fifth regnal year he led an army up to Kadesh against the Hittite king Muwatalli II. It is here that the groups consisting of the Sea Peoples make their first major impression on history. Kadesh was the first large scale battle to ever be recorded in detail. These details have been gleaned from the walls at the Temple of Luxor. At Kadesh the Sherden fought alongside Ramesses II against the Hittites as mercenary soldiers. Fighting alongside Muwatalli II against the Egyptians were the Lukka, Derden, Masha, Pitasha, Arawanna, and the Karkisha, who were probably the people of Carchemish (Dothan, 1992: 209). It is clear that the Hittites had either more control over the groups of Sea Peoples or better access to them for them to have such an advantage over the Egyptians. The number of Sea Peoples groups aiding the Hittites subtly demonstrates to me that the groups fighting at this battle resided primarily in Syria and other Hittite dominated regions. This is especially apparent if you notice that none of these groups, except for the Lukka and Sherden, are ever mentioned by Egyptian scribes again. Furthermore, the Lukka and Sherden are only mentioned again because they participated in the second major military action by the various groups of the Sea Peoples.

The second appearance by the groups of the Sea Peoples is radically dissimilar from the earlier emergences on the eastern coast of the Mediterranean. This incident occurred during the reign of Merneptah, the son of Ramesses II (Dothan, 1992: 209). There are four different inscriptions we can rely on for information regarding this incident. These inscriptions include the Karnak document, Athribis Stela, fragments

from the Cairo Column from the Hymn of Victory, and the Israel Stela. We can be absolutely certain that all four inscriptions refer to the same event since all four carry the same definitive date (Nibbi, 1972: 60).

At this time Merneptah was faced with a Libyan incursion into the Delta on his western frontier. To complicate matters the Libyans were allied with five groups of the Sea Peoples. These groups were the Sherden, Lukka, Ekwesh, Teresh, and Shekelesh. From the inscriptions we can gather that the Libyans and these groups of the Sea Peoples had penetrated into Egypt before Merneptah could muster his forces to confront them. After a day of fighting the Libyans and various Sea Peoples groups were decisively defeated. So completely defeated were Egypt's enemies that the Egyptians were able to capture all their possessions they had brought along. The Egyptians must have felt they had done rather well this time since they went into some detail describing their prizes (Nibbi, 1972: 60-61). The inscriptions make it apparent that this time the Sherden were now fighting on the side of the Libyans in this conflict. The Sherden could not have resided too distant from Egypt if they were constantly participating in Egyptian affairs. Also the Lukka appearance during this attack can be attributed to their documented naval skills.

What makes this incident between the numerous groups of the Sea Peoples and Egypt so different from previous encounters is the organization and choice of tactics by the groups of the Sea Peoples. Instead of serving under the Hittites they independently ally themselves to a foreign power, presumably for their own gain. Another difference is that these groups were the aggressors and were not on the defensive. These inscriptions

have subtly imparted important changes in the activities by the various groups of the Sea Peoples.

The inscriptions also imply the origins of the groups consisting of the Sea Peoples. While they do corroborate each other extensively, their differences provide proof even more vital to us reaching our goal. In three of the inscriptions these groups are described as northerners. This clearly indicates that the regions the groups of the Sea Peoples originated from was the north. However, the Israel Stela describes the allies of the Libyans differently. Here they are said to be the princes who say shalam, the Nine Bows, Ashkelon, Gezer, Yanoam, Israel, and Hurru. The word shalam is a common Semitic greeting and seen elsewhere in Egyptian hieroglyphs to portray Asiatics (Nibbi, 1972: 60-62).

The Israel Stela descriptions apparently give us another perspective on the attackers allied to the Libyans. This description, though, is just more detailed than the rest. All the enemies listed above in the Israel Stela are located in the north and could easily be generalized as northerners like in the other inscriptions. Then deductively the names of the groups of the Sea Peoples and the specific mention of these locations could in fact be the same people and lands merely illustrated differently. This could be the case since all the inscriptions are referring to the same event. Then the groups within the Sea Peoples in this attack would have come from these places in the north. This problem of identification could have come about due to differing regional terms and culture.

The third and most significant event recorded dealing with the groups of the Sea Peoples occurred during the reign of Ramesses III ca 1170 BC. Described in great detail at Ramesses's mortuary temple of Medinet Habu is the documentation of a massive

attack against the borders of Egypt. In the inscriptions it is stated that the coalition that made up this force was primarily comprised of the Peleset, Tjekker, Denyen, and the Weshesh. It was only after a fierce land and sea battle that Ramesses III claimed to have restored peace and order to Egypt (Nibbi, 1972: 39-40).

For the neo-Hittite states to launch an attack against Egypt they would need to acquire a few more advantages in their favor. This would be necessary since the advantages they would have employed against the Hittites would not be available against the Egyptians. One essential factor would have been to increase their resources such as their manpower. To increase their manpower and be allowed to reach Egypt without hindrance, the support of the locals would be necessary which would be another vital factor. The harsh treatment by the Egyptians of these native peoples made the attempts by the neo-Hittites to persuade the locals to attack the Egyptians unproblematic. This was where the most dangerous weapon the neo-Hittites had, propaganda, came into play. This is clearly evident by the groups of the Sea Peoples residing in Amurru before they continued down the coast to Egypt.

Traditionally Amurru was an important center for anti-Egyptian rebellions. In year five of Ramesses III's reign he defeated and subjugated the state of Amurru. In turn the various group within Sea Peoples seized Amurru back from Egypt in year eight. The mention of Amurru in both year five and year eight inscriptions signifies the importance that Amurru held. To this end it can be presumed that the seizure of Amurru was in actuality liberation by rebel forces and also a symbolic strike against Egyptian control and oppression (Nibbi, 1972: 42). The fact that the inscriptions do not mention the

collection of the Sea Peoples setting up camp anywhere other than Amurru further proves the importance of the region that early in the campaign.

The Syro-Palestinian regions had demonstrated throughout history that the peoples inhabiting these areas were capable of banding together against a common foe. To reiterate, Tuthmosis III claims that during his reign 330 Asiatic princes united against Egypt with each leading his own army (Nibbi, 1972: 36). With this in perspective it is not difficult to imagine the Asiatics seizing another opportunity to throw off the Egyptian yoke.

The inscriptions on the walls of the Medinet Habu temple clearly illustrate the success the group of the Sea Peoples had in gaining the assistance. The often quoted line “They came with fire prepared before them, forward to Egypt” is woefully given little attention (Breasted, 2001:37-39: sections 64-66). This line is obviously a metaphor since it is doubtful that fire was arranged for them as they proceeded toward Egypt. My interpretation of this linguistic metaphor is that as the various groups of the Sea Peoples advanced southward numerous cities and states made preparations to support them in whatever capacity they were able too as the groups of the Sea Peoples drew near. Also “fire” might represent rebellion as the local rulers raising armies to join the Sea Peoples which is exactly what the Sea Peoples would have *strongly* requested as they moved southward.

These actions from the Syro-Palestinian peoples can be deduced from the line as well. The line noticeably mentions that the fire was “prepared *before* them.” This would imply that another party was active in these regions at this time. The only other people in these regions capable of affecting the region to any significant degree would have been

the local populations. These people, as already stated, would have reacted violently in favor of the group within the Sea Peoples coalition.

While the interpretation of this line is debatable there is another component of the inscriptions that implies the involvement of the Syro-Palestinian people. From the temple of Medinet Habu there is a section that says, "I have taken away their lands, their frontiers being added to mine." Ramesses III states that he prepared for the group of the Sea Peoples in the land of Djahi (Nibbi, 1972: 43-44). Djahi is the Egyptian term for the area from the Sinai Peninsula up to the Phoenician city-states (Dothan, 1982: 3). This location of Djahi effectively eliminates the Libyans and their lands as being participants in the various groups consisting of the Sea Peoples invasion during the reign of Ramesses III.

Without the Libyans the only possible lands Ramesses III could have possibly integrated into his own would have been that of the Asiatics. These lands are the only territories that were within his reach. He could not have joined their frontiers to his own if they were not immediately attached to his frontiers. Moreover, Ramesses III goes on to mention that they were forced to leave their settlements and towns (Nibbi, 1972: 44). This section of the inscription further discredits the nomadic or migration invasion theory. How could these people have fled from their homes if they were not sedentary people to begin with?

The archaeological evidence supports the presupposition that the Syro-Palestinian people were absorbed by the advance of the groups consisting of the Sea Peoples. The degree of the destruction caused by these groups in the Levant has been much exaggerated. This situation is a result of scholars commonly using sites such as Ugarit as

a reference (Muhly, 1985: 14). There are also other sites that are attributed to the destructive tendencies of these groups. Sites such as Ashkelon, Tell Jerishe, and Dor have also been viewed as examples of the destructive nature of the groups of the Sea Peoples (Dever, 1992: 103).

It is undoubtedly true that Ugarit at the end of the Late Bronze Age was experiencing difficulties. While it was a major economic power its military abilities were pitiful. At the beginning of the 12th century Ugarit was under pressure from an invader from the seas. Unfortunately, Ugarit's limited amount of troops was in the country of Hatti, their boats were in Lycia and their allies were not able to come to their aid. The attack that came from the sea was too much for Ugarit to withstand. At this time Ugarit was destroyed and never repopulated. Many scholars have attributed Ugarit's demise to the actions of the marauding groups of the Sea Peoples during this period. The destruction of Ugarit might be attributed to the separate actions of only one group of the Sea Peoples. However, raiding during this time period was not uncommon and Ugarit in its weakened state could have easily succumbed to enemy forces. At this time there is currently not an exact date offered for the destruction of Ugarit. What is known is that the kingdom of Ugarit was destroyed before or during the collapse of the Hittite Empire. This is evident from a letter that the king of Ugarit sent to the Hittites and their allies in response from a threat from the sea (Yon, 1992: 113-119). Since the Hittites had to exist as a viable political entity for this letter to have a purpose, the fall of Ugarit can only be placed prior to the collapse of the Hittite Empire. With this in mind Ugarit does not have to be included in the destructions wrought by the various groups of the Sea Peoples.

The groups within the Sea Peoples were not the only aggressive force. Egypt itself had proven its desire to expand northward which it undoubtedly did after the decisive defeat of these groups. This did not last long, however, since Ramesses III was succeeded by a series of inept rulers. In the inscriptions at the temple of Medinet Habu are proof that Ramesses III could have been responsible for the destruction of these sites. The inscription states:

“(As for the) foreign (countries)... destruction to their towns, devastated at one time; their trees and their people are become ashes. They take council with their hearts:
“Wither shall we go?” (Nibbi, 1972: 44).

If scholars come to accept that the majority of these groups were natives of the Syria-Palestinian regions then the destructiveness of the assaults by the groups within the Sea Peoples would be greatly minimized. Ramesses III never claimed any of these areas were victimized by the various groups of the Sea Peoples. However, he does take responsibility for the destruction of the towns of his vanquished enemy. It is my conviction that since the group of the Sea Peoples consisted of local populations that most of the destruction in Syria and Palestine is a result of the retaliations and conquests of Ramesses III.

The three aforementioned sites of Ashkelon, Tell Jerishe, and Dor can be interpreted in a number of ways. Both Ashkelon and Dor show signs of destruction at the end of the Bronze Age and were resettled in the early Iron Age. The single factor all three sites share is that they contain remnants or variations of Philistine pottery (Dothan, 1982: 35, 36, & 67-69). This can be interpreted that the various groups within the Sea

Peoples destroyed them on their way to Egypt. There is another interpretation, however, that is just as plausible and agrees with my theory on the events at this time. After Ramesses III defeated the group of the Sea Peoples he placed them on his frontiers as garrisons. This would explain the Philistine and Tjekker presence at these sites.

It has always been difficult to uncover the locations that the group of the Sea Peoples originated from. Since their discovery in the Egyptian inscriptions, the origin of the various groups of the Sea Peoples have confounded scholars. This concept is exquisitely expressed by Alessandra Nibbi when she says, “that *most* of the names of the many Egyptian lists of enemies can not be identified” (Nibbi, 1972: 43). There are rare exceptions, though, that can be identified. Among the Sea Peoples the group that has had the most success at being identified is the Peleset. While the majority of the other groups of the Sea Peoples seemed to have disappeared from historical view the Peleset did not (Kuhrt, 1995: 394). The reliefs at the temple Medinet Habu portrayed in great detail the Pelesets appearance, armor, clothes, weapons, and ships. This detail has allowed scholars to identify Peleset with a group from the Bible. It is now commonly accepted that the Peleset are indeed the Philistines. The Philistines came to reside in the region just north of Egypt that eventually took on their name and became Palestine (Dothan, 1992: 22).

There are numerous other examples from the inscriptions and reliefs that indicate the Syro-Palestinian people were heavily involved in the attacks. The use of the term “Baal” in the inscriptions promotes this idea. After Ramesses III defeats the groups consisting of the Sea Peoples they are quoted as saying he is like their deity Baal. This particular deity was worshipped throughout the northern regions, such as Palestine (Nibbi, 1975: 64-65).

The reliefs themselves are of continued importance since they depict Asiatic characteristics. The pictorial record of the temple Medinet Habu portrays the groups of the Sea Peoples movement toward Egypt as slow moving. The various groups had families that were being pulled on ox-carts. Research done by Dr. Y Yadin has shown that the ox-carts depicted in the Egyptian reliefs are identical to those still in use in Asia Minor and the Near East. This demonstrates the ox-carts local origins. Of course the groups of Sea Peoples movement southward would not have to be quick if they were trying to gather forces as they advanced toward Egypt. Furthermore, it was common practice of Near Eastern princes to take their families along with them on the occasions they went to deliver tribute to the Egyptian Pharaohs. Syria-Palestine was also known to have raised large numbers of oxen exactly like the ones in the reliefs (Nibbi, 1975: 112-114).



From the tomb of Menkheperasonb (N. de G. Davies), this scene shows Asiatics bringing tribute, including children, as is often shown in the eighteenth dynasty tombs.

(Nibbi, 1975: 113)

When looked at properly the inscriptions prove that the groups of the Sea Peoples proceeded from the north because this was where they originated. The inscriptions from the Medinet Habu temple clearly illustrate that these groups took their time traveling toward Egypt. Furthermore, they describe the attackers as being sedentary people since their frontiers were added to those of Egypt after their defeat. With this in mind the archaeological evidence supports these views. Unfortunately, drawing conclusions from excavations can be questionable without written records. Also the reliefs from the Medinet Habu temple depict the attackers culturally as the people residing north of Egypt. When approached from a new perspective without outside bias the information points to the theory I have stated.

Conclusion

Occurrences in history are a product of multiple factors instead of any single one. The attacks by the various groups of the Sea Peoples on Egypt during the reign of Ramesses III are no different. Many factors contributed to the eventual decline and collapse of the Hittite Empire. The collapse of the Hittite Empire was the decisive factor for the coalition termed the “Sea Peoples” to launch a pre-emptive assault against Egypt to protect their own autonomy. Even though this campaign against the Egyptians may seem as though it failed, the neo-Hittite states still seemed to have achieved their objectives. Egyptian power and influence did not extend farther than Byblos. This is evident from archaeological evidence which shows a fragmentary statue of Horus at Byblos with the name of Ramesses III inscribed on it (Weinstein, 1992: 143). Since no other Egyptian remains have been found farther north than Byblos, the presence of the Egyptians did not extend farther north. Despite the defeat the neo-Hittites secured their independence. This paper has demonstrated the origins and factors regarding the groups consisting of the Sea Peoples within three chapters.

In the first chapter I demonstrated that Ahhiyawa was a strong enough political entity to affect the Hittite state. To accomplish this reasonably proved that Ahhiyawa was located in Asia Minor. This was accomplished using the same texts that also helped describe the role of Ahhiyawa in Asia Minor in relation to the other states. The texts

such as the Indictment of Madduwattas, the Treaty of Amurru, the Millawanda Letter, and the Tawagalawas Text all assisted in illustrating my point that Ahhiyawa was located in Asia Minor. The tension between the Hittites and Ahhiyawa can be gleaned from the Treaty of Amurru and the Millawanda Letter. Both these documents describe the increasing pressure the Hittites were applying against Ahhiyawa during the reign of Tudhaliyas IV. Many problems such as rebellions had beset the Hittite Empire in the past. For the neo-Hittite states to be capable of taking advantage of the weakened Hittite state and breaking away a new factor was necessary. The new factor that enabled the neo-Hittite states to succeed was Ahhiyawa. Ahhiyawa was a strong enough state not to be incorporated into the Hittite Empire and also had the motive to impair the Hittites who had been damaging their interests and diminishing their frontiers.

The second chapter dealt primarily with the Hittite state and the neo-Hittites. To understand the cause for the disturbances during the 12th century the study of the Hittites and their history was necessary. Rebellions, especially along the periphery of the empire, were a constant problem for the Hittites. The Nuhasi rebellion during the reign of Mursili II reveals that only a hundred years before its collapse the Hittite Empire was still not secure and stable. This rebellion also exhibits the unreliability of Carchemish. Carchemish was the seat of Hittite power in Syria but became one of the leading neo-Hittite states after its fall. Carchemish is an excellent example of a neo-Hittite state that continued politically for a time after the disintegration of the Hittite Empire. The points illustrated in this chapter make it clear that the Hittite state was always under constant pressure from external and internal threats. The survival of Carchemish as a neo-Hittite state shows that regions within the Hittite Empire were capable of functioning

independently without the Hittite administration from Hattusas. The rebellions in these regions and the ability to operate independently show that the neo-Hittite states could have existed soon after the collapse of the Hittite Empire. Also these regions repeatedly proved that they desired autonomy and were willing to fight for it.

The groups of the Sea Peoples as mentioned by Egyptian sources and archaeological evidence were the focus of the third chapter. The Medinet Habu temple of Ramesses III was the main source for inscriptions regarding the various groups making up the Sea Peoples coalition. When the inscriptions are looked at correctly they clearly indicate who the groups of the Sea Peoples were even if their exact names and locations are not. Various cultural references like the families traveling with them and their use of the word “Baal” point to their origins being Semitic and therefore north of Egypt. The inscriptions described them as northerners and they should be viewed in this light. The “northerners” had very good reasons to resist Egyptian domination. Egypt had always ruled the Syria-Palestine regions harshly, exacting tributes, resources, and manpower. Without the Hittite Empire to the north to counter-balance Egyptian interests in these regions the Egyptians would probably have extended their control past their previous frontiers. Following Egyptian precedence the local populations were correct to expect harsh Egyptian interference. For these reasons the “northerners” such as the Syro-Palestinian people and the neo-Hittites would want to secure their autonomy.

The origins of the groups within the Sea Peoples are the regions north of Egypt which is evident from Egyptian inscriptions and reliefs. Carchemish proves that the neo-Hittite states were capable of still functioning after the collapse of the Hittite Empire. The documented treatment of the Syria-Palestine regions by their Egyptian overlords

gives credibility for the resulting actions of the local populations. Furthermore, the history of these regions shows that they wanted autonomy and were capable of banding together against a common foe.

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