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Editor’s Introduction
By: Alex Joffe

Why the Philistines? What draws us to them?

The first explanation is Biblical. On the one hand, the Philistines were the Israelite’s most dangerous, and most colorful enemy. Samson and Delilah, David and Goliath, the death in battle of King Saul and his sons -- these and other episodes make the Philistines vivid in ways that other Israelite enemies are not.

On the other hand, Philistines are occasionally depicted as positive figures. Abimelech makes a covenant with Abraham. Achish, king of Gath, gives David and his men temporary refuge. Samson could marry a Philistine woman. Philistines are usually described as evil and loathsome, but these touches of ambiguity point to both the Philistines’ deeper role in the Biblical text and more complex ‘multicultural’ realities in the Land of Canaan. Without the Philistines the Bible would be inconceivable, and the Israelites, impossible.

The second explanation for our enduring interest is precisely that the Philistines straddle a line between the Bible and realia, that is to say, a tangible reality understood through archaeology. For one thing, the origins of the Philistines is a mystery the Bible does not resolve. Genesis 10:14 indicates Plishtim are ‘from’ Casluhim, a term associated with Egypt, but archaeological research going back to the 19th century CE builds a case that the Philistines were one of the ‘Sea Peoples’ who ultimately threatened Egypt during the 20th Dynasty, and who settled along the coast of the Southern Levant after 1200 BCE. The material culture of these ‘Sea Peoples’ points to Cyprus and the Aegean, and their journeys eastward were part of the much larger story of the Late Bronze Age world and its multiple unravelings.

Explanations that prevailed a generation or two ago saw the Philistines as a massive invading force, but today the picture is far more complex. Evidence suggests that they were migrants and mercenaries, pirates and traders, arriving in movements that took years if not generations, amidst local transformations that were sometimes catastrophic and other times barely noticeable. Perhaps the conflicting Biblical subtexts of Philistines, Israelites and others, at once living quietly and warring with another, was accurate after all.

The Bible and archaeology must be juxtaposed, but the archaeology alone raises issues of migration, acculturation, and assimilation -- processes that are detected, or even measured, by studies of pottery technology, foodways, iconography and architecture, and linguistics. Each of these topics is addressed by contributions to this e-book.

Archaeological research on the Philistines continues. Among the most interesting recent projects are studies of Philistine DNA from burials and of pollen from non-local plants brought to the Southern Levant by the Philistines. Research has also begun to suggest the involvement of Philistines, or related groups, in the politics of North Syrian city-states during the early Iron Age. We hope to present articles on these and other topics in future issues of ANE Today. The Philistines remain ever provocative, perhaps uniquely so.
CHAPTER ONE

Who are the Sea Peoples and what role did they play in the devastation of civilizations?
Who are the Sea Peoples and what role did they play in the devastation of civilizations?

By: Eric Cline

ANE Today’s premier ‘Ask a Near East Professional’ feature brought over 40 questions from readers. We’ve combined two, from Michael Ferris and Lloyd Dunaway, and put them to Professor Eric Cline, editor of our older sibling publication, BASOR:

Who are the Sea Peoples and what role did they play in the devastation of civilizations that occurred shortly after 1200 BCE?

The simple answer is that there is no simple answer. It remains an archaeological mystery that is the subject of much debate even today, more than 150 years after the discussions first began. But it’s a fascinating story with lots of twists and turns, right up to the present day.

It begins with the early French Egyptologist Gaston Maspero, who suggested in the 1860s and 1870s that a group of marauding invaders whom he called the Sea Peoples were responsible for bringing the Late Bronze Age to an end shortly after 1200 BCE. He based this on a number of Egyptian inscriptions, especially those on the walls of Medinet Habu, the mortuary temple of Ramses III, which is near the Valley of the Kings in Egypt.

Ramses III fighting the Sea Peoples at Medinet Habu. (Wikimedia Commons)
By about 1900, this hypothesis had become so solidified that Egyptologists and other archaeologists essentially took it as a fact, even though there was no real proof that's what had happened. At the time, even the mere existence of the Sea Peoples was only documented in the records left by Ramses III and by Merneptah, who ruled 30 years earlier. Each claimed to have fought against an invasion of these Sea Peoples. Merneptah said it happened in the fifth year of his reign, which would be about 1207 BCE, while Ramses III said he fought both a land and a naval battle against them in his eighth year, which would be about 1177 BCE.

In both cases the Egyptians won. Merneptah says that the invaders whom he defeated included the Shardana, Shekelesh, Lukka, Teresh, and Ekwesh, while Ramses III says that the invaders in his time were the Shardana, Shekelesh, Tjekker, Denyen, Weshesh, and Peleset. So, there were five groups the first time and six groups the second time, with two of the groups overlapping, for a total of nine groups.

So, we know who the Sea Peoples are, but in name only. Where did they come from? And where did they go after they lost? Answering the second question is easier, if we believe the Egyptian records, because Ramses III says that he settled the survivors in his strongholds in Egypt. There are also indications that some settled in what is now Israel, for the Tale of Wenamun from a century or so later describes the site of Dor as being a Sikel (probably Shekelesh or Tjekker) city, and the Peleset are usually identified by scholars as the Philistines, whom the Bible tells us, and archaeology confirms, were also resident in what is now Israel.

As for where they came from, the early Egyptologists were split in their opinion as to whether the Sea Peoples had come from the west, i.e., Italy, Sicily, and Sardinia, and traveled east, or whether they were from the Eastern Mediterranean and had fled west after being defeated by the Egyptians. Even today we still play linguistic games
with the names of the individual groups whom the Egyptian pharaohs mentioned. Most (although not all) scholars would now argue that the Sea Peoples began their migration from the Western Mediterranean, and that there is a linguistic link between the Shardana and Sardinia as well as the Shekelesh and Sicily. However, when they headed east and overran various countries and areas, others joined in along the way, so that the Denyen and Ekwesh might be from the Aegean (Homer’s Danaans and Achaeans), the Lukka are almost certainly from Lycia in southwestern Turkey, and so on.

If that thinking is correct, then the two waves of Sea Peoples that crashed upon the shores of Egypt thirty years apart were composed of a motley crew from many different areas of both the western and eastern Mediterranean plus the Aegean and perhaps Cyprus as well. But all of that, plain and simple, is still just a hypothesis, for there are no other texts or even archaeological evidence at the moment to confirm the entire story.

What we have instead are bits and pieces of the puzzle, such as the fact that the Shardana (also called the Sherden) appear in Egyptian texts and inscriptions already a century or more earlier, fighting as mercenaries both for and against the Egyptian army. Individual texts from places such as Ugarit in north Syria report unnamed invaders and foreign ships, as well as famine in the Hittite lands. We also have sites destroyed during this time, but it’s not always clear who or what did it and why – perhaps foreign invaders; perhaps an uprising by the local populace; perhaps an earthquake. It can be difficult, and sometimes impossible, to tell what caused the destruction of a site, especially if no weapons (such as arrowheads, swords, or spear tips) or bodies are found in the rubble.

However, speaking of bodies, our most promising lead was just announced a few weeks ago, for a probable Philistine cemetery has been discovered at the site of Ashkelon in Israel. Hopefully various analyses can be conducted on the numerous skeletons that were recovered, including DNA that might allow us to figure out where the buried people came from and to whom they are related, and strontium isotope (from their teeth) that
could tell us where they grew up. But, the cemetery reportedly dates from at least a century after the initial invasions during the time of Merneptah and Ramses III, so these are not the remains of the original Sea Peoples, but rather their descendants who settled in the area. Thus, DNA analyses will probably tell us more about them than strontium isotope will, since it is probably a given that these burials are of people who grew up in the local area, even if their ancestors came from the Aegean or the Western Mediterranean.

As for what role the Sea Peoples actually played in the destruction of civilizations around 1200 BCE and shortly thereafter, I personally think that they have been set up as a scapegoat, because of the Egyptian inscriptions, and that they were as much victims as oppressors. I doubt that they were responsible for all of the destructions that we blame on them and I think that they are only one of the many factors that together contributed to a “perfect storm” that ended the Bronze Age. These stressors, as they are sometimes called, probably also included drought, famine, earthquakes, and possible internal rebellions in addition to external invaders, all of which combined to cause a systems collapse. However, since I have gone on too long already, I will just refer you to the opening and closing chapters of my recent book *1177 BC: The Year Civilization Collapsed* (Princeton University Press, 2014), where I go through some of these possibilities. I will warn you, though, that there is not yet a smoking gun, nor one single cause, that we can point to as responsible for the collapse of civilizations just after 1200 BCE. It remains one of the most interesting mysteries of ancient history.

*Eric Cline is Professor of Classics and Anthropology at The George Washington University.*
What language(s) did the Philistines speak?
What language(s) did the Philistines speak?

By: Brent Eric Davis

The Philistines play a prominent role in the Bible, and their antecedents, the Sea Peoples, remain a popular topic for scholars and the public alike. But what language did they speak?

The evidence for the language(s) spoken by the Philistines is not plentiful, but what we have is interesting, if still far from conclusive. Two types of evidence predominate: (1) inscriptions that may have been produced by Philistines, and (2) Philistine words and names borrowed into other languages of the region and imperfectly recorded in non-Philistine records.

In terms of the first type of evidence—inscriptions that may have been produced by the Philistines—some of the earliest examples still cannot be read, such the inscription in an unknown script on a fragment of an Iron Age I clay tablet from Aphek, or the inscription on an Iron Age I ostracon from Ashkelon (in what may be the Cypro-Minoan script, which remains undeciphered). Even if the identification of the latter script is correct, we can draw no conclusions about the language behind the inscription, as scripts can be used to write in different languages, just as the Roman alphabet is now used to write in many languages.

The majority of inscriptions that come from Philistine sites, though, are written in variants of the Semitic alphabet, beginning in late Iron Age I or early IIA (ca. 1000 BCE). Many of these inscriptions contain words that are almost certainly personal names. Some of these names are Semitic, while many are clearly not. But the fact that vowels are not expressed in the Semitic alphabet means that the original pronunciations of the non-Semitic names remain unknown, making it very difficult to identify which language(s) these names might be reflecting.
Scholars have offered several suggestions, some Indo-European, including Greek, Anatolian languages including Lydian, Luvian, and even Old Iranian, and some not (for example Kassite, which may be related to Hurrian and Urartian), but we so far have no convincing proof for any of these suggestions.

Meanwhile, whenever these inscriptions contain intelligible phrases or sentences, the language being written is a local Semitic one; thus, if the Philistines did originally speak one or more non-Semitic languages, these do not appear to have survived past Iron Age I, and we have no examples of them in a script that can actually be read.

In terms of the second type of evidence—Philistine words and names recorded in non-Philistine records, including the Bible—the situation more or less parallels that of inscriptions. Some names are Semitic (e.g., *Ahimelech, Dagon*) while others are not (e.g., *Goliath, Achish*). There are also some non-Semitic terms, such as the title *seren* for a Philistine leader. In some cases, we can tentatively cross-correlate some of these names and terms with known inscriptions. For example:

- The Philistine royal name *'kyš* in a dedicatory inscription from a temple at Ekron can be connected to the Philistine royal names *Ikausu* in the Assyrian annals, and *Achish* in the biblical texts; the excavators suggest an original pronunciation *Ikayus*, and connect this name to the Greek word *akhaios*, meaning *Achaean* (i.e., “Greek”).

- The apparent names *'lwt* and *wlt* on an ostracon from Gath (Tell es-Safi) might have an Anatolian pedigree (compare Lydian *Aluattes*, Carian *W/uliat*); one or the other may be related to the name *Goliath*.

- The title *trn* on an ostracon from Ashkelon is probably to be identified with the Philistine title *seren*; although this title has been connected to the Greek title *tyrannos*, the most likely scenario is that both the Philistine and the Greek terms are borrowings of the Luvian royal title *tarwanis*.
There are two striking things about these connections: (1) they point backwards to several different cultures, not just one, and (2) the majority of non-Semitic Philistine names in the inscriptions do not appear to be from any of these cultures (i.e., they appear neither Greek nor Anatolian), and thus seem likely to be from some other culture(s) entirely. Interestingly, this indication that Philistine names and terms had their origins in many different cultures is paralleled by recent archaeology at Philistine sites, which has been showing that the formation of the Philistines was a much more complex and multicultural process than the traditional view of the Philistines as a homogenous bloc of migrants from the Aegean.

So then what language(s) did the Philistines speak? At the moment, the answer is: they spoke a local Semitic language from about the 10th c. onwards, but before that, we simply don’t know; the evidence is still far from clear. For the time being, the wisest course of action is to avoid jumping to conclusions about the nature of early Philistine language(s) until we have much more data than we do now.

_Brent Eric Davis is a Lecturer at the University of Melbourne._

For more information, see:

CHAPTER THREE

Early Philistine Religion in Text and Archaeology
Early Philistine Religion in Text and Archaeology

By: Jeffrey P. Emanuel

Even casual readers of the Hebrew Bible are familiar with the Philistines, portrayed as the Israelites’ perpetual antagonists from the time of the Judges to the postexilic period, when Zechariah prophesied an end to the “pride of the Philistines” (Zech. 9:6). Mentioned nearly 300 times in the Bible, the Philistines are accused of virtually every quality, trait, and action that Israelites found unsettlingly or abhorrent, including paganism, idol worship, lack of circumcision, and consuming unclean animals.

Some of accusations were true; others almost certainly were not. But the Bible’s demonization was so thorough that “Philistine” is still used to this day to refer to an uncultured individual or population. But how well does the Bible’s depiction dovetail with historical and archaeological evidence? The answer begins by considering Philistine religion, as described in the Bible and understood from excavations of four of their major cities, with an emphasis on the critical period of the Early Iron Age (roughly 1200-1000 BCE).

The transition from the Late Bronze Age to the Early Iron Age after 1200 BCE was a time of major changes around the Eastern Mediterranean. The Mycenaean palaces and Hittite empire collapsed, major cities like Ugarit, a key port on the coast of Syria, were destroyed, migratory peoples were on the move, and Egypt began its decline from the unified New Kingdom into the fragmented Third Intermediate Period, when it would be ruled by dynasties from Libya and Nubia.

The Philistines, like the Israelites of biblical narrative, were among the groups on the move, arriving in Canaan in the late second millennium BCE and establishing their “pentapolis,” or five major cities of Ashdod, Ashkelon, Gaza, Ekron, and Gath (Josh. 13:2-3).

The Philistines are synonymous with the Peleset, one of the groups who appear in Egyptian records as invaders by land and sea at the end of the Late Bronze Age.
Egypt’s interactions with these “Sea Peoples” are vividly depicted on the walls at Medinet Habu, the mortuary temple of the pharaoh Ramesses III, who ruled ca. 1185 to 1153 BCE. Two imposing reliefs show battles on land and at sea between Egyptian forces and various groups of “Sea Peoples.” The sea battle, perhaps the first ever depicted, is notable for its portrayal of Sea Peoples vessels as Mycenaean-style galleys, and for the appearance of new maritime technology (loose-footed sail, brailed rig, and crow’s nest) on both sides’ ships. The land battle depicts ox-carts, women, and children alongside the invading warriors, suggesting a migratory movement, which is in keeping with the archaeological understanding of the Philistines as immigrants to the southern Levant. Medinet Habu also provides the first documentary evidence for the Philistines as a group, who are mentioned in three separate inscriptions.

Not long after these events, they seem to have settled on the southern coastal plain of Canaan, founding their pentapolis and living in what archaeologist Lawrence Stager, the excavator of Ashkelon, described as “a diverse community of warriors, farmers, sailors, merchants, rulers, shamans, priests, artisans, and architects.” Four of the five major Philistine cities have been excavated, with only Gaza remaining inaccessible under the heavily populated modern city. There are enough differences between each to suggest that the people we refer to with the term “Philistines” were by not culturally homogenous. But similarities create a template of Aegean and Cypriot (“Cypro-Aegean”) traits for Philistine sites, and for some customs and material culture. This includes cult-related objects and architecture.

Biblical Views
The biblical description of Philistine religion seems straightforward. Their chief god in the Early Iron Age was Dagon, and his sacrificial cult was practiced at temples in at least two Philistine cities, Gaza and Ashdod. The former was home to the last act of Samson, who brought down the building by collapsing its supporting pillars (Judg.
16:26-30), while the latter was home to a battle between the captured Ark of the Covenant and the divine image of Dagon (1 Sam. 5:1-8). The Philistines were also credited with worshiping “Ashtaroth” (I Sam. 31:10), while later, in the 9th century BCE, a divinatory cult of Ba’al-Zebub was present at Ekron (2 Kings 1:2-16).

Digging into the biblical narrative both raises new questions and shines a light on the Bible’s pejorative discussion of Philistine culture, including religious practices. Ba’al-Zebub (“lord of flies”), for example, is almost certainly a corruption of Ba’al-Zebul (“Ba’al the prince”). Dagon, on the other hand, despite being presented as a deity exclusively associated with the Philistines, has no place in a southern Canaanite pantheon – let alone in one maintained by Cypro-Aegean immigrants.

Dagon, in his linguistically earlier form Dagan, was an established deity in Syria and Mesopotamia by the late third millennium BCE. By the Late Bronze Age, his influence had spread as far west as Ugarit, where he was an equivalent of El, father of Ba’al. However, by the later years of the second millennium BCE his influence had waned significantly, and there is no clear evidence outside the Bible to connect Dagon to the southern Levant at all!

The Bible credits the Philistines with worshiping the god Ba’al, though this West Semitic deity far predates their arrival on the southern coastal plain of Canaan, as can be seen in this Late Bronze Age relief from Ugarit.
gested the Philistines encountered Dagan along their route to the southern Levant and integrated him into their pantheon as an equivalent of the Great Mother Goddess, perhaps Cretan Rhea or Anatolian Kybele, whose gender they altered to conform to this new identity. While there is still no material or written extrabiblical evidence for Dagon’s presence in Canaan, Singer’s theory may be supported by the recent discovery of an Early Iron Age kingdom of Palistin centered on Tell Ta’yinat in the Plain of Antioch. If this polity and its people are associated with the Philistines, then we have a possible connection between Dagan’s Bronze Age territory and the southern coastal plain. However, until extrabiblical evidence is found for the presence of Dagon in Philistine cult, this hypothesis remains untested.

The Bible itself displays confusion about the Philistine pantheon. Judges 10:6, for example, reads, “The Israelites again did what was offensive to the LORD. They served the Baalim and the Ashtaroth...and the gods of the Philistines.” This verse, an extended version of a common Deuteronomistic theme of forsaking Yahweh and falling into worship of the Canaanite deities Ba’al, Asherah, and Astarte (Judg. 2:11–13, 3:7, 8:33; 1 Sam. 12:10), can be read as evidence that “the Baalim and the Ashtaroth” were associated with Canaanites but not with Philistines, whose gods were separate and distinctive from their contemporaries.

Just who these “gods of the Philistines” were, into whose worship the Israelites strayed, is never made clear, despite specific references to Dagon in other Deuteronomistic narratives. However, a Philistine connection to Ashtaroth is specifically mentioned in 1 Sam. 31:10, as Saul’s weapons were placed in this temple after his death. Thus the Bible depicts the West Semitic pantheon, and Canaanite religion as a whole, as being as attractive to Philistines as it was to the continually relapsing Israelites.

The material evidence for early Philistine cult is less straightforward than the Bible’s description. It consists primarily of handmade figurines and other Aegean–Canaanite style items such as lion-headed cups and incised scapulae in the Cypriot tradition, as well as a small number of altars and buildings. Figurines, the most common Iron I find, are divided into two types: “Philistine Psi” and “Ashdoda.” As archaeologist Michael Press,
an authority on Philistine figurines, has noted, both represent females, and are frequently decorated in geometric fashion similar to Philistine ceramics, whose form and decoration is derived from Aegean and Cypriot styles. The former takes its name from the figurine’s form (upraised arms give the appearance of the Greek letter Psi) and seems to be a direct continuation of the Mycenaean Psi.

Ashdoda, on the other hand, is uniquely Philistine. Named for the city of Ashdod, where the most complete example has been found, this figurine represents a seated woman, featuring a polos headdress and appliqued breasts, whose body has been fused with her chair. As Press has shown, both experienced a surge in popularity in the 11th century; however, the Mycenaean-derived Philistine Psi is found in 12th century contexts, while the uniquely-Philistine Ashdoda, with its combination of Aegean and Cypriot elements, does not appear before around 1100 BCE. Both forms went out of use by the end of the beginning of the first millennium. Ashdoda in particular has been seen as evidence that the Philistines worshiped a Great Mother Goddess, but since most Ashdoda figurines – including the complete example – have been found in pits and rubble piles, rather than on floors or identifiable contexts, Ashdoda’s nature, like her cult, remains unclear.

Above: Tell Qasile temple showing twin pillars.

Right: According to Judges 16:26-30, the final act of the Hebrew judge Samson was to collapse the pillars of the Temple of Dagon at Gaza, killing himself and over three thousand Philistines who were inside or gathered on its rooftop.
Few Early Iron Age Philistine temples have been found. However, a temple with two pillars, similar to that described in the Samson saga (although not large enough to hold 3,000 people on its roof!), was found at Tell Qasile, a city likely founded by the Philistines in the late 12th century. A slightly smaller structure, used from the 12th century into the early Iron II, was found at Gath (modern Tell es-Safi), suggesting that the two-column design was a regular feature of Philistine cultic architecture. At Ashkelon, a lime-plastered, four-horned installation in the center of a multi-roomed structure may be a Philistine horned altar. At Ashdod, a large building whose wide central hall featured two columns and an Aegean-style hearth is either a cultic structure or an upscale private dwelling. Just south of this was another building with a unique apsidal southern end that has been connected to the cult of Ashdoda because of its proximity the complete figurine’s findspot.

Our difficulty interpreting the archaeological evidence is compounded by the question of just how representative they are of Early Iron Age Philistine cult. A similar situation is found in one of the Philistines’ possible points of origin: Mycenaean Greece. Archaeological picture from the Aegean –primarily iconography and figurines – suggests a small, exclusively-female Mycenaean pantheon, possibly dominated by the Great Mother Goddess, much like our current picture of the Philistines’ Ashdoda-centric cult. But the Mycenaean evidence contains something absent from early Philistine culture: Linear B texts from Mycenaean Greece and Crete, which meticulously record the palaces’ involvement in Bronze Age cult. They reveal dozens of deities, including familiar names like Zeus, Hera, Poseidon, Dionysos, and more. The records from Knossos, for example, include at least 34 male and female deities. The mixed pantheon in the written evidence directly contradicts the all-female terracotta figurines and other iconography that make up our archaeological evidence.

The Mycenaean, Bronze Age forerunners of the Archaic and Classical Greeks, used a syllabic script called Linear B to keep official records, including records of production and offerings to gods and goddesses. This tablet, discovered by Sir Arthur Evans at the Mycenaean center at Knossos on Crete and called FP 13, mentions the gods in general, a goddess named “Pipituna,” and the “Priestess of the Winds.”
Without texts to complement archaeological evidence, a great deal about Philistine religion will remain unknown. Identifying the deity represented by Ashdoda, and its implications both for the Philistine cult of Dagon and for the reconstruction of the early Philistine pantheon as a whole, all the more problematic.

**Conclusion**

The biblical writers can name the Philistines’ chief deity, but uninscribed material remains cannot. Further, the human element in narrative – innate biases, ulterior motives, and purposes that may have been clear to the intended audience but are lost on us – can make it unreliable as a source of information about a specific culture. This is doubly true when, like the Bible’s portrayal of the Philistines, such descriptions are dripping with polemic.

Of course, “archaeological silence” is not firm ground from which to make an argument. Without contemporary written evidence we will continue to have significant gaps in our understanding of early Philistine cult. Hopefully, in the not too distant future, new evidence will help remedy that situation.

*Jeffrey P. Emanuel is CHS Fellow in Aegean Archaeology & Prehistory and Associate Director of Academic Technology at Harvard University.*

**For further Reading**


CHAPTER FOUR

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Philistine Pottery in the Core and Periphery
The Philistines settled in the southern coastal plain of Israel, in the area that later came to be known as Philistia, in the first half of the 12th century BCE. The predominant theory regards the Philistines as immigrants from the greater Aegean world. They settled among the local Canaanite population at sites such as Ashkelon, Ashdod, Gaza, Tel Miqne-Ekron, and Tell es-Safi/Gath. Because of the dominant Philistine culture that developed at these settlements, these sites have come to be known as the Philistine Pentapolis.

Archaeological excavations at four of the Pentapolis sites have been undertaken in recent years, and with the publication of their reports, a wealth of new information is now available for further scholarship. As such, the past decade or so has seen a vast resurgence in interest in Philistine studies. Although some of these studies have touched upon the interactions between the new settlers and the local population within Philistia, few have focused on the cultural connections between the Philistines and their Canaanite and Israelite neighbors living in the Philistine periphery.

My research investigates the production and consumption of Philistine ceramics in the southern Levant during the Iron Age I period (12th – 11th centuries BCE) by focusing on the interconnections between the Philistines and their neighbors through an analysis of their decorated pottery. Philistine decorated pottery is one of the most ubiquitous and distinctive features of their material culture. In addition to its appearance at all sites within Philistia proper, it is also found at Canaanite and Israelite settlements located to its east, particularly at Gezer and Beth Shemesh. Since Philistine pottery is so prominent at the majority of sites in the region, it can serve as a clear indicator of Philistine relations with their neighbors. Moreover, adjacent non-Philistine settlements have yielded some locally produced examples of Philistine-style pottery, with certain features of Philistine ceramic shapes and decorations appearing on non-Philistine vessels. Overall, we see that Philistine pottery was highly movable and was commonly traded between sites, not only for its contents, as in the case of storage vessels, but also for its intrinsic value, as most of it was elegantly shaped and lavishly decorated. In this way, ideas and fashions relating to pottery styles were disseminated and often emulated. Therefore, Philistine pottery found outside Philistia apparently had a different significance than in the core region. As such, pottery on both sides of the cultural border are significant in my investigation.
Since the archaeological evidence for the physical remains of production centers of Philistine decorated pottery is surprisingly meager in the earliest period of Philistine settlement (Philistine 1). Therefore, my research focuses on provenance studies and stylistic analyses of the second phase of Philistine pottery development (Philistine 2), a phase of predominantly bichrome ware, which is found throughout Philistia and in the Philistine periphery. Provenance studies indicate that the Philistine core, that is, the Pentapolis sites as well as Tell Qasile, were producing Philistine decorated pottery for their own consumption, as well as importing Philistine 2 ware from other Pentapolis sites. Sites in the periphery, such as Tell Aitun and Beth Shemesh, appear to have been importing Philistine pottery from a coastal clay source, likely Ashdod, as well as an inland clay source comparable to outcrops from the Miqne region. Additionally, it appears that Gezer was not only producing its own Philistine-style pottery but importing it as well. Thus, a complex picture of inter-site trade in Philistine decorated pottery in both the core and the periphery emerges.

Stylistic analyses of Philistine 2 Ware from Tell es-Safi indicate that a workshop existed at the site. The local elegant style is characterized by particular motifs outlined in black that are executed in stable and even strokes…these are perhaps even attributable to the same artistic hand. Additionally, peculiar elements incorporated into figural motifs on Philistine pottery from Gezer can also be found on vessels from Ashdod and appear to be mainly limited to these two sites. This stylistic anomaly may indicate a connection between an artist or atelier at these sites.

The iconographic data from preliminary stylistic analyses are supported by the provenance studies and seem to indicate that workshops of Philistine decorated pottery existed at core Philistine sites such as Tell es-Safi, Ashdod, and Tel Miqne and that sites in the periphery, such as Gezer, were possibly producing, as well as importing, Philistine pottery for their own consumption. The continued study of Philistine decorated pottery and the anticipated publication of the material from sites such as Ashkelon and Beth Shemesh may support my preliminary findings.
CHAPTER FIVE

Pirates in Fact and Fiction
Pirates in Fact and Fiction

By: Louise A. Hitchcock

When we think of pirates, we think of eye patches, peg legs, and hook hands; the Jolly Roger, drunkenness, wenches, good times, and buried treasure in the form of gold, pearls, and jewels. In researching historical piracy to develop an anthropological model to further develop our understanding the Sea Peoples as pirates, we are struck by several things. Firstly, there are behavioral patterns among pirates that cross-cut time, space, and culture. Secondly, our ideas about pirates as shaped in the mass media do not present an accurate picture of early modern or of ancient piracy, but like all stereotypes, they do contain a kernel of truth. A more realistic account of how pirates might behave is to be found in the film *Master and Commander* rather than in the *Pirates of the Caribbean* movies.

Piracy was an attractive alternative to serving in a legal maritime role such as the Royal Navy in the 18th century. In the navy, seamen were treated little better than slaves, sometimes spending years on board a ship outfitted with minimum numbers of personnel, who were provided minimal rations in exchange for maximum labor. It’s difficult to regard ancient times as being much better.

In contrast, life aboard pirate ships was a bit easier. As pirate groups attracted more followers, the ships would be outfitted with larger crews so that labor would be minimized, and profits were maximized for all through a practice of egalitarian sharing. Only specialized personnel such as doctors might receive extra shares of goods. Thus, pirates were generally better fed than legal seamen. Gold and jewels were of little intrinsic value to pirates and were only of value insomuch as they might be exchanged for food and grog. Indeed, in the Odyssey, feasting was second only to fighting as an activity (see figure). We have similarly argued that Aegean style drinking ware and feasting, along with particular types of fearsome horned or feathered headgear, were used to create social cohesion among the multi-ethnic and entangled Sea People.

Mycenaean style Philistine Deep Bowl from Tell es-Safi/Gath.
The infamous Jolly Roger was a feature with a variety of designs that characterized 18th-century pirate identity. In fact, piracy might be seen as a unique ship-borne culture that formed a kind of melting pot for many ethnicities and religions. For example, the Barbary pirates included English Christians, who assumed Muslim names and took on a mixture of dress types. It has been suggested that the Cilician pirates had multiple origins, but took on the label ‘Cilician’ as a marker of identity.

The Sea Peoples seem to fit this pattern. There is some evidence from Late Bronze Age texts of individuals running away to join Sea Peoples groups, who may have formed a kind of tribal culture, not as kin-groups but as self-governing and self-supporting structures and identities, hunter-gathers of the sea. Historically, slaves have also been forced to join pirate groups, as well as being favorite prizes of pirates. In this light the archaeological research that is beginning to hint at subtle material differences between different Sea Peoples groups like the Tjekker and the Sikel may be detecting cultural entanglements that had both voluntary and coercive origins.

Perhaps the stereotype about piracy that is most faithful to the truth is the preference for island hideaways, “cosmopolitan rendezvous” points. Certain geographical features lent themselves to piracy including promontories to spot prey, river valleys from which to conduct ambushes, choke points that spread out groups of ships making them more vulnerable to the hit and run tactics of pirates, and hidden bays for undertaking refuge and ship repairs. Coastal settlements are also frequent targets for pirates, sometimes with heavy fortifications or evidence of burning and abandonment.
Although less common, there is a growing body of evidence that indicates the participation of women in piratical and seafaring activity. This includes female pirates of the 18th century who took on the male dress when they engaged in piracy, women fighting alongside men in the royal navy, and warrior graves of female Vikings. This has led us to suggest that women may have fought alongside the infamous Sea Peoples.

Finally, not all of our findings were applicable to understanding piracy in the prehistoric era, as piracy also had unique practices throughout time and space. One such finding that is unusual, though not useful for our research was learning the extraordinary distances both Mediterranean and Caribbean pirates would travel to provision themselves in the Galápagos Islands. One main reason for this was the Galápagos tortoises, which not only provided a great deal of nutritional value but which could be kept alive for long amounts of time without food or water simply by storing them on ships on their backs. While this is certainly cruel and inhumane by today’s standards, we must recognize life for seafarers and pirates was cruel and inhumane as well.

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CHAPTER SIX

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Hogging the Attention: Cuisine and Culture in Ancient Israel
The Iron Age of Ancient Israel (1200 – 586 BCE) includes the rise and decline of two well known cultural groups. The interactions between Israel and their nemesis the Philistines are described in the Old Testament that emphasized the differences between their cultures, heritage, and general ways of life. One of those distinctions was the observance of consumption taboos; Israelites did not eat pork products whereas the Philistines had no such dietary restriction. Thus, pork consumption has long been thought to be a hallmark of Philistine culture while pig avoidance a practice consistent with Israelite identity. Evidence unearthed at some archaeological excavations has been cited in support this simple dichotomy. But what is the nature of this evidence? And do such data represent an accurate and reliable marker for a group’s ethnicity? And finally, are there other ways in which this evidence can be interpreted?

As archaeology gradually matured as a scientific discipline, methods advanced toward new techniques to investigate the ancient past. One of these approaches, known as zooarchaeology, centered on the study of animal remains from archaeological sites. Zooarchaeologists examine bones and teeth and, if the remains are well preserved, can identify the species of animal to which they belong. Zooarchaeologists are therefore uniquely qualified to discuss diet and general animal exploitation.

Zooarchaeological evidence demonstrates that Philistines raised more pigs (Sus scrofa), than Israelites who seemed to have comparatively little interest in hog management. Pigs from some Philistine sites make up as much as 20-30% of the animals used. In contrast, contemporary sites occupied
by non-Philistines mainly include other common domesticated stock such as sheep, goats, and cattle and many failed to produce even a single pig bone or tooth amongst the thousands of animal remains. These discoveries have been and continue to be accepted by many scholars as ironclad and irrefutable confirmation of the biblical narrative, that a presence of pig equals Philistine culture while an absence of pig reflects Israelite society. This argument even seems to gain momentum if one considers the zooarchaeological data from the preceding Bronze Age. Pigs were exploited during this earlier phase but typically on a much smaller scale. Although it is certainly possible that these culinary pursuits aligned with ethnic preferences, let us consider Philistine and Israelite spheres more closely.

Elevated pig consumption coincides with the early stages of the Philistines’ appearance in the region during the 12th and 11th century BCE. Approximately 50 years later, in the mid-11th century BCE, pigs were not used as often, a decline which continues into the 10th century BCE. In fact, the scale of Philistine swine operations never returns to that of original levels; as time progressed the Philistine diet actually trended away from pig use. By the latter stages of Philistine occupation in the 7th century BCE, pig remains comprise less than 5% of the animals used, a rate comparable to contemporary non-Philistine communities. Therefore, swine popularity amongst the Philistines was restricted to a specific period of time, lasting approximately a century.

If pigs were a staple of Philistine culture, one would expect their use to be more widespread across time. But the highest period of heightened pig exploitation occurs with the arrival of the Philistines into the southern Levant from a distant land, suggested by many scholars to be somewhere in the Aegean world. As a new emigrant population, the Philistines faced challenges typical of initial settlement. Pig husbandry would be a good strategy for new settlers, allowing them to quickly establish their animal resource base. This is not only because sows (female pigs) birth large litters of piglets, but because the pig’s omnivorous diet efficiently converts a wide range of edible materials into exploitable pork products.

But what accounts for the decline in hog production and consumption? Two suggestions can be offered. One is that the initial advantage gained by pig raising was eventually lost when immigrant economies stabilized, during which time pigs were gradually and systematically replaced by animals capable of producing secondary products, for example dairy products, sheep wool, goat hair, and cattle traction. Another reason for the decline in
pig use may relate to the Philistines' exposure to local cultures and their willingness to incorporate some of these foreign cultural elements into their own society. This process is evident in several categories of the Philistine material culture such as pottery, writing systems, figurines, architecture, and even jewelry. It is possible that cultural interaction with foreign groups eventually led to an adjustment in the Philistine animal economy.

The abundance of pigs varies within and between Philistine sites. In some large Philistine cities and towns pork consumption was not evenly represented throughout the architectural units. Thus, pigs appear intended for specific members of the community with perhaps a connection to social rank. Recent work has also demonstrated that pigs are rare at Philistine villages but more common in Philistine cities. This spatial variation in Philistine pig use between urban centers and rural areas makes an ethnic linkage more problematic.

In contrast, pigs are either present in very low numbers or are completely absent at Israelite sites occupied during the United Monarchy of the early Iron Age and later Iron Age sites of the Divided Monarchy. But there are reasons for the absence or lack of hogs that may be unrelated to ethnicity. For example, if a group lived in a particularly hot and dry region, pigs would not be the animal of choice because their physiology does not allow them to thrive in such conditions. Pig avoidance may also relate to concerns involving hygiene. If, as some scholars believe, the Israelites were once nomadic pastoralists, their cultural origins may explain why pigs were not used in later periods.
Non-sedentary mobile groups moving from place to place with the seasonal availability of water and pasture tend not to raise pigs since they are more difficult to handle than other herd animals such as sheep, goats, or cattle. Thus, pig avoidance may represent an echo of the Israelites’ former existence before their communities became more sedentary. We may also consider the relationship between animal management and local political hierarchical arrangements. Since pigs yield few secondary products compared to other barnyard stock, their production is often discouraged by powerful external administrations that demand receipt of taxes and tribute. This is especially true when such debts are paid with pork, their primary product.

One of the goals of Iron Age research in the southern Levant is understanding cultural identities based on material remains, and extent to which archaeologists may identify a particular site with the Philistines, Israelites, Canaanites, Egyptians, Phoenicians, or others. Acknowledging the difficulty in this, some have proposed that consumption taboos involving pork represents one of the main indicators of ethnic Philistine identity. Despite a range of other factors that must be considered, as outlined above, many still cling steadfast to this argument.

Unfortunately we have no way of knowing just how early Israelite food taboos were institutionalized and became part of their cultural identity. Some curious finds that complicate an easy view of Israelite food taboos are also worthy of mention. A skeleton of a nearly intact adult pig was found at Hazor, a city in the northern Kingdom of Israel. Although the catfish (Clarias gariepinus) is known at Judean Iron Age sites such as Lachish and the City of David in Jerusalem, it would normally be regarded as non-kosher because it does not possess scales.

The occasional presence of non-kosher species in Israelite contexts could reflect the gradual definition of consumption taboos. However, these discoveries may instead reflect varying adherence to cultural ideals, with some more relaxed in their observances and others were more strict, and perhaps even people somewhere in the middle. Since variations in observances of kosher laws are also evident in the modern era, it may be more realistic to consider whether similar sentiments were also practiced in antiquity. Pigs may thus remind us of the complexity of human nature and why archaeology has so much to contribute to the thoughtful study of what makes different cultures unique.
Alex Joffe is the editor of the *Ancient Near East Today*. The publication features contributions from diverse academics, a forum featuring debates of current developments from the field, and links to news and resources. The ANE Today covers the entire Near East, and each issue presents discussions ranging from the state of biblical archaeology to archaeology after the Arab Spring.

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