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CRETAN LIE AND HISTORICAL TRUTH: EXAMINING ODYSSEUS' RAID ON EGYPT IN ITS LATE BRONZE AGE CONTEXT*

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Though Odysseus' tales to Eumaios and Aninoos in *Odyssey* 14.199–359 and 17.417–44, respectively, are presented as fictional tales within Homer's larger myth, *some elements have striking analogs in Late Bronze–Early Iron Age reality. This article examines these portions of the hero's false ainoi* within their fictive context for the purpose of identifying and evaluating those elements. Particular focus is given to Odysseus' declaration that he led nine successful maritime raids prior to the Trojan War; to his twice–described ill–fated assault on Egypt; and to his claim not only to have been spared in the wake of that Egyptian raid, but to have spent a subsequent seven years in the land of the pharaohs, during which he gathered great wealth. Through a comparative examination of literary and archaeological evidence from the Late Bronze–Early Iron transition in the Eastern Mediterranean, it is shown that these aspects of Odysseus' stories are not only reflective of the historical reality surrounding the time in which the epic is set, but that Odysseus' fictive experience is remarkably similar to that of one specific member of the 'Sea Peoples' groups best known from 19th and 20th dynasty Egyptian records: the 'Sherden of the Sea.'

It has been noted previously – albeit infrequently – that Odysseus' fictional raids on coastal settlements in general, and on Egypt in particular, seem to echo events mentioned in texts dating to the end of the Late Bronze Age[1] in the Aegean and Eastern Mediterranean.[2] Though it has been called a "masterpiece of mythmaking,"[3] the "Cretan Lie" of *Odyssey* 14.199–359, and the retelling of a

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* It is with great pleasure that I dedicate this paper to a great mentor, friend, and colleague in Gregory Nagy, on the joyous occasion of his seventieth birthday.

[1] For chronology, see Table 1.

[2] E.g. Ormerod (1924) 88–92; Sherratt (1990) 819-20; Wood (1998) 223; Yurco (1999) 876–9; Jackson (2002) 64–7; Louden (2006) 278. The time period(s) reflected in, and the development of, Homer's epics, of course, have been widely discussed and debated; e.g., *inter alia*, Finley (1957); Blegen (1962); Gray (1968); Snodgrass (1974); Dickinson (1986); Morris (1986); Wood (1998); Nagy (2010).

[3] "As a master of the *ainos*, Odysseus keeps on adapting his identity by making his *noos* fit the *noos* of the many different characters he encounters…and the multiple *ainoi* of Odysseus can thus be adapted to the master myth of the *Odyssey*"; Nagy (2013)

portion of this *ainos* to Antinoos in *Od.* 17.431–41, is not a "true" story even within the poetic framework of the epic.[4] However, as will be demonstrated here, while "at any given moment historical myth functions as a cultural artifact representative of the period in which it circulates rather than the one which it purports to describe,"[5] epic and oral tradition can transmit a measure of historical truth within the received fiction – or, in the case of Odysseus' false *ainoi*, the fictions within the fiction.[6]

Three of the many narrative strains embedded within the many–sided man's *ainos* are of particular note here: Odysseus' declaration that he led nine successful maritime raids prior to the Trojan War; his twice–described, ill–fated assault on Egypt; and his claim not only of having been spared following that raid, but of having spent a subsequent seven years in the land of the pharaohs, during which he gathered great wealth. This article explores these elements of Odysseus' story within their fictive Late Bronze–Early Iron Age context for the purpose of demonstrating not only that they are reflective of historical reality in the time at which the epic is set, but that the experiences Odysseus describes are remarkably analogous to the experiences of one specific member of the 'Sea Peoples' groups known from 19th and 20th dynasty Egyptian records, the so–called "*Šrdn* ['*Sherden*'] of the sea" (pictured in figs. 1-2).[7]

Seaborne Threats and Refuge Settlements

Seaborne threats to coastal polities were present in the Aegean and eastern Mediterranean long before the end of the 13th century BC. Like all sailing in the ancient Mediterranean, piracy was a seasonal pursuit, and in many cases the same

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10§45; cf. Nagy (2009) 80; also Schmoll (1990) 67, who notes that "Odysseus is the only Homeric hero who is renowned for lying."

[4] See Reece (1994) for a convincing argument that a pre–Homeric version (or versions) of the *Odyssey* may have included a more central role for Crete within the epic, as well as Haft (1984) and Perlman (1992) for commentary on the nature and detail of Homer's references to Crete during the Late Bronze Age.

[5] Finkelberg (2005) 10.

[6] E.g. Morris (2003) 8; Finkelberg (n.4); Morris and Laffineur (2007); also Halbwachs (1950); Parry (1953–1979); Lord (1960; 1991); Vansina (1965) and (1985); Dickinson (n.2); Tonkin (1992); Assmann (1992); Goody (2000); see further below.

[7] *Šrdn* (also *šꜣrdꜣnꜣ* or *šꜣrdynꜣ*) is commonly glossed "Sherden," "Shardana" or "Sherdanu" (the former will be followed here). For a more comprehensive biographical sketch of this group, see Cavilier (2005), Emanuel (2013), and Wachsmann (2013).

groups seem to have partaken in it on an annual basis.[8] Two texts in particular which will be discussed more fully below, a Hittite document (CTH 27) and a letter from the Amarna archives (EA 38), speak of "often raiding the land of Alašiya [Cyprus] and taking captives" and of sea raiders who "year by year seize villages," respectively. Additionally, the Tanis II rhetorical stela of Ramesses II, also discussed in greater detail below, refers to the piratical *Sherden* as those "whom none could ever fight against" – a reference which likely means that they, too, had been raiding coastal settlements for several years prior to that point. Given the seasonality of shipping and Odysseus' claim of raiding as an occupation that made him very wealthy, it seems likely that his claim of nine successful conquests is in fact a veiled reference to raids that were regularly carried out over the course of multiple years – perhaps even as many as nine (Hom. *Od.* 14.229–33):

> πρὶν μὲν γὰρ Τροίης ἐπιβήμεναι υἷας Ἀχαιῶν
> εἰνάκις ἀνδράσιν ἦρξα καὶ ὠκυπόροισι νέεσσιν
> ἄνδρας ἐς ἀλλοδαπούς, καί μοι μάλα τύγχανε πολλά.
> τῶν ἐξαιρεύμην μενοεικέα, πολλὰ δ᾽ ὀπίσσω
> λάγχανον

> For before the sons of the Achaeans set foot on the land of Troy, I had nine times led warriors and swift–faring ships against foreign folk, and great spoil had ever fallen to my hands. Of this I would choose what pleased my mind, and much I afterwards obtained by lot.[9]

Evidence from several sources suggests that seaborne threats increased in number and severity as the age of Bronze gave way to that of Iron.[10] In the Aegean and the East Aegean–West Anatolian Interface,[11] scenes of naval warfare

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[8] See Wachsmann (1998) 320 for an interesting comparison of seasonal piracy in the ancient Mediterranean and seasonal Viking raids two millennia later.

[9] All translations of *Odyssey* are from Murray (1919), unless otherwise indicated.

[10] *Inter alia*, Baruffi (1998) 10–13, 188; Hurwit (1985) 49; Nowicki (1996) 285; Wachsmann (n.8) 320–21. Singer (1983) 217 has suggested that the threat during the Late Bronze–Early Iron transition remained the same in nature as it had during the preceding Late Bronze Age, but "the scale of [seaborne] movement" changed, as did "the ability of the established powers to cope with the problem."

[11] This area (henceforth "Interface") "forms as an entity between the Mycenaean islands of the central Aegean and the Anatolian hinterland with Troy at its northern extremity and Rhodes at its southern one"; Mountjoy (1998) 33, 38 fig. 1, 52 fig. 9. This is seen in particular in the ceramics of the "East Aegean *Koinè*," which developed in the LH IIIB and flourished in LH IIIC Early and Middle (but which appears to have excluded Rhodes); Mountjoy (n.11) esp. 51–63; also Mountjoy (2013).

appear for the first time on Mycenaean pottery in Transitional Late Helladic (LH) IIIB–IIIC or LH IIIC Early (Figs. 3–5),[12] while Linear B tablets from the last days of Pylos appear to communicate an effort to coordinate a large–scale defensive action or evacuation in response to a heightened threat from the coast.[13] Three well–known sets of tablets, commonly grouped together, are relevant here. The first, known as the *o–ka* tablets, list the disposition of military personnel – both "watchers" and *e–qe–ta* (= ἡπέτας) – assigned to the task of "guarding the coastal areas," perhaps in the city's waning days.[14] The second relevant record is comprised of three texts (PY An 610, An 1, and An 724) commonly grouped

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[12] Representations of "feather–hatted" (in Cypriot and Egyptian iconography) or "hedgehog–helmeted" (in painted decoration from the Aegean and Interface) warriors also appear, seemingly *ex nihilo*, in martial scenes (including naval combat) across the Aegean and Eastern Mediterranean beginning ca. 1200 BC, with the ship–borne warriors on the Transitional LH IIIB–IIIC Early krater from Bademgediği Tepe perhaps being the earliest representation; *inter alia*, Tsountas (1896) pl. 1; Epigraphic Survey (1930) pls. 19, 33–4, 37–9, 41–4, 46; Furumark (1941) 240–1, 452–3, fig. 26; Vermeule and Karageorghis (1982) 130–2, 143, 160–1, 222–3, pls. XI.42–3, XI.45–7, XI.49, XI.51, XI.56–7, XI.64–64.1, XII.32–3; Dothan (1982) 275–7 figs. 11–14; Sandars (1985) 35; Crouwel (1991) figs. 7a–b; Dakaronia (1996) 171 fig.9; Dakaronia and Mpougia (1999) 23; Mountjoy (1999) 1106–7, (2005) 424 and (2011) 484; Yasur–Landau (2010a) 482; but on the possibility of an earlier representation from Mycenae (a lone fragmentary image which, if accurately identified, would predate all other known examples from this center by a century), see Furumark (n.11) 448 n.1 and Vermeule and Karageorghis (n.12) 90, 132, 211, pl. IX.8.

[13] Chadwick (1976) 141; Palmer (1980) 143–67; Popham (1994) 287–8; Dickinson (2006) 43, 46, 55; Tartaron (2013) 64–5. Consensus about the nature (and even the existence) of the "crisis" reflected by the Pylian tablets is elusive. As Palaima (1995) 625 has noted, "the evidence is ambiguous," and we do not know if the measures recorded in these tablets were "standard operating procedure…in the Late Bronze Age or extraordinary adjustments to emergency conditions"; also Hooker (1982) 209–17; Shelmerdine (1997) 583. However, Shelmerdine (1999) 405–10 later approached a middle ground on the issue by positing that what has been painted as a 'crisis' in the past may instead be better categorized as a "general climate of wariness in the weeks immediately preceding the destruction," which came about as a result of "a very human threat." Wachsmann (1999) has suggested that the Rower Tablets may show preparation for an organized evacuation by the Pylian palatial elite as their situation became precarious late in the LH IIIB (in this vein, see Schilardi (1992) for possible evidence of a short-lived attempt by mainland elites to recreate the collapsed palatial system in the Cyclades).

[14] Deger–Jalkotzy (1978) 14; Hooker (1987) 264.

together and referred to as "rower tablets" for their references to *e–re–ta* (= ἐρέται) 'rowers' being called up to man what was most likely a fleet of galleys (see below).[15] The third, a single tablet (Jn 829), records the collection of bronze from Pylian temples for the purpose of forging "points for spears and javelins" – another martial reference, and a further suggestion of increased military readiness in response to an increasing coastal threat.

Further evidence for a growing threat from the sea at this time can be seen in settlement changes and destructions around the Aegean and eastern Mediterranean, including at Odysseus' fictive home port of Crete, which had been a key node in the international network that characterized the Late Bronze Age in the Eastern Mediterranean.[16] Settlements across Crete appear to have been abandoned or destroyed at the end of the Late Minoan (LM) IIIB,[17] while new sites with larger, more concentrated populations were founded in defensible areas of the island, both inland and on coastal hilltops.[18] The inland refuge settlements seem to have been a reaction to a new, or more serious, threat from the sea.[19] The coastal hilltop settlements, on the other hand, were primarily founded on rocky promontories overlooking the water. These not only provided

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[15] Palmer (n.13) 143–4; Palaima (1991) 286; Wachsmann (n.8) 159–61; Tartaron (n.13) 64–5.

[16] Kanta (1980) 30; Andreadaki–Vlasaki (1991) 405; Rehak and Younger (1998) 166–8. Because the boom–footed squaresail that was characteristic of sailing vessels prior to the LH IIIB–IIIC transition could not be effectively sailed into the wind (see below), merchantmen in the LBA Eastern Mediterranean were largely forced to sail in a counterclockwise circuit, with ships departing Kommos on the southern coast of Crete sailing south to Marsa Matruh (Cline (1994) 254; Lambrou–Phillipson (1999) 11; White (1999) 564–7, (2002) 24) or the Ramesside fortress site of Zawiyet Umm el–Rakham (Snape (2000) 18; Thomas (2003) 528) on the Marmarican coast before proceeding eastward to Egypt; Vercoutter (1956) 419–22; Bass (1987) 697–9; Pulak (1988) 36–7; Lambrou–Phillipson (n. 16) 14. However, a direct ("blue water") route from the southern coast of Crete to Egypt, aided by the Etesian winds, may have been used with some frequency from the 15th c. BC; Wachsmann (n.8) 298; Mark (2000) 148; and especially Lambrou–Phillipson (n. 16). The four–day sailing period recounted in *Odyssey* from Crete to Egypt is identical to that reported by Strabo (10.4.5), which suggests that this route and its duration were common long before the Classical period; Mark (n.16) 148–9.

[17] Contemporaneous with the end of LH IIIB.

[18] Nowicki (1987) 217; also (2001) 25–36, (2002) 154 and (2011).

[19] Nowicki (n.18) 37; also (1994) 268, (2000) 257–63; Desborough (1973) 62–9; Watrous (1975) 326; Rehak and Younger (n.16) 167; Haggis and Nowicki (1993).

for early warnings of approaching ships, but they may have been used as bases for seaborne raiding of exactly the type claimed by Odysseus.[20]

Crew Size and Ship Capacity

The number of vessels outfitted by Odysseus may seem like a rather ineffective "fleet" at first blush (Hom. *Od.* 14.248):

ἐννέα νῆας στεῖλα, θοῶς δ᾽ ἐσαγείρ ε το λαός.

Nine ships I fitted out, and the host gathered speedily.

However, it is important to consider the type and potential capacity of the hero's ships. It is around this time that new maritime technology appears to have been introduced in the Aegean (Figs. 3–8). The Mycenaean ascendancy in the LH IIIA–B[21] saw the introduction of the Helladic oared galley,[22] a long, narrow, light vessel propelled primarily by rowers and designed specifically for speed, which

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[20] Nowicki (n.10) 285, (2001) 29–30. Similar sites in the Cyclades may have been used as bases for piracy, as well as possible refuge sites for palatial officials fleeing the mainland (Schilardi (n.13); Karageorghis (2001) 5), while the promontory site of Maa–*Paleokastro* on western Cyprus provides an example of a site that was home to multiple short–lived but highly–defensible settlements of Aegean–Anatolian nature in the years surrounding and immediately following 1200 BC, which offered both a clear view of and easy access to the sea; Symons (1987) 71–2; Karageorghis (1982) 721–2; (1983) 924; (1984) 944–6; (1985) 932; (1986) 850; (1992) 80; (2001) 1; Karageorghis and Demas (1988) 264, 488; Yasur–Landau (n.12) esp. 143–151, 190. Relatedly, cf. Catling (1995) and (1996) 645–9 and Muhly (2003) 24–5, 31 for views of the Subminoan burials at Knossos (tombs 186, 200–202) as returning heroes or "warrior princes" who lay claim to power in the newly post–palatial world.

[21] 14th–late 13th c. BC; Mountjoy (n.11) 46 table 1.

[22] Wedde (1999) 468 has placed the galley's development as early as the LH IIIA (14th c.; Mountjoy (n.11) 46 table 1), though he admittedly bases this on an "assum[ption] that the pictorial evidence post–dates the actual invention by some time," wherein the value of "some time" is arbitrary. Though the chronology posited for the beginning of galley development may be high based on present evidence, Wedde (n. 22) 465 (correctly, in the opinion of the present author) views the Mycenaean galley as representing "a break with the preceding development" typified by Minoan sailing vessels, including the craft depicted on the Akrotiri Miniature Wall Painting (Wedde's "Type IV" (n 22) 465, pl. LXXXVII), and calls its introduction "a strategic inflection point in ship architecture." The first depictions of the vessel type that is most relevant to this discussion, Wedde's "Type V," appear late in the LH IIIB; Wedde (n. 22) 466–467, pl. LXXXVIII.

was "best suited for raiding, piracy, and sea–based warfare,"[23] and whose invention has been called "the single most significant advance in the weaponry of the Bronze Age Eastern Mediterranean."[24] Sometime around the LH IIB–IIIC transition, this vessel began to be outfitted with the brailed rig and loose–footed sail (Figs. 2-3).[25] This was a technological revolution in Mediterranean seafaring,[26] as, to this point, sailing craft had relied on large square sails held fast by upper and lower yards.[27] While clearly an advantage over oared propulsion alone, this boom–footed squaresail's use was limited almost entirely to downwind travel.[28] The manipulation of the sail made possible by the addition of brails and removal of the lower yard (boom), on the other hand, allowed for much greater maneuverability, as well as the ability to sail much closer to the wind.[29] Thus,

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[23] Wedde (n.22) 470; also Tartaron (n.13) 63–4. Wedde (n.22) 465 notes that "the history of the galley is the struggle to place as many rowers as possible into as small a hull as practical." This is the opposite principle of that governing merchantmen, on which rowers "are unpractical because crew and equipment occupy space at the expense of cargo"; Georgiou (1991); on the size of Bronze Age merchant ships, see now Monroe (2007).

[24] Wedde (n.22) 465.

[25] This system consisted of lines attached to the bottom of a sail and run vertically through rings (also called "fairleads," possibly Homeric κάλοι, cf. Hom. *Od.* 5.260, 12.318) sewn into the front of the sail. From there, they were run over the yard and to the stern. Using this system, sails could be easily raised, lowered, and otherwise manipulated in a manner similar to a set of Venetian blinds; cf. Roberts (1991) pls. XVIIa, XIX–XX; Wachsmann (n.8) 251; Mark (n.16) 130 fig. 5.8; on brailed sails in *Odyssey*, see, e.g., Monro (1886) 547; Seymour (1914) 314 n.1; Mark (n.16) esp. 138.

[26] The loose–footed sail would become a mainstay of eastern Mediterranean sailing vessels for the next two millennia; Roberts (n.25) 59.

[27] The yards that secured the square sail at top and bottom are referred to as a "yard" and a "boom," respectively; hence the term "boom–footed squaresail." At least 33 representations of vessels with boom–footed squaresails are known from the Bronze Age Aegean, including the Akrotiri Miniature Fresco craft; Wedde (2000) 80–5, nos. 616–7.

[28] The windward sailing limit of vessels outfitted with the boom–footed squaresail was between four and seven points into the wind (hence the counterclockwise circuit evidently travelled by Eastern Mediterranean merchantmen, noted above); Sølver (1936) 460; Casson (1971) 273–4; but see Georgiou (n. 23).

[29] Roberts (n.25) 57–9; (1995) 314; Wedde (n.27) 90; Emanuel (forthcoming B). Additionally, Monroe (1990) 87 noted that another advantage of the loose–footed sail was that "warriors would not be obstructed by [the lower yard] as they moved about the decks, throwing spears, shooting arrows, etc."

once outfitted with the brailed rig, the Helladic oared galley became an ideal vessel for rapid travel and lightning–fast raids on coastal settlements. As Roberts characterized it:

> In the beginning the brailable square sail allowed hull forms quite unsuited to propulsion by sail of the Thera–type[30] the opportunity to extend their cruising range due to the lightness of gear and ease of control. Skills learnt in handling the rig coupled with improvements in gear and fittings enabled effective courses to be sailed in a wide range of directions other than before the wind. The ability to conserve the strength of the rowing crew [and the ability to sail in most directions economically with small crews, given a slant of wind] opened greater horizons to military adventurers.[31]

Further, painted pottery provides evidence for the use of *pentekonters*, or galleys rowed by fifty men (twenty–five on each side), as early as LH IIIB–C.[32] A LH IIIC pyxis from Tholos Tomb 1 at Tragana (near Pylos) features a ship with twenty–four vertical stanchions,[33] thereby separating the rowers' gallery into twenty–five sections (Fig. 6). A LM IIIB larnax from Gazi on Crete features a large ship with what appears to be twenty–seven stanchions, which could signify a ship crewed by even more than fifty men (Fig. 7) – though, as the "horizontal ladder" motif used to represent rowers' galleries on Late Helladic ship depictions also seems to have served to address a certain *horror vacui* on the part of Mycenaean artists,[34] it seems more likely that the Gazi painter intended to portray a *pentekonter* than a ship with fifty–four oarsmen.[35] 'Kynos A,' one of several ship representations found at Pyrgos Livanaton (Homeric Kynos, north of modern Livanates),[36] features 19 oars and schematically–rendered rowers (Fig. 3, right). This vessel may also have been intended as a *pentekonter* that the artist was forced to abbreviate due to space constraints.[37]

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[30] The traditional boom–footed squaresail (see above).

[31] Roberts (n.25) 59.

[32] Barako 2001: 134

[33] Stanchions supported the superstructure and partial decking on galleys, while also serving to divide the rower's gallery in ship representations.

[34] Cf. Wachsmann (n.8) figs. 7.7, 7.27, 7.30–31.

[35] Wachsmann (n.8) 138.

[36] Hom. *Il.* 2.531; Finkelberg (2010) 449.

[37] Wachsmann (n.8) 132.

The *Odyssey* itself attests to vessels crewed by fifty men, with one being attributed specifically to the Phaeacians (Hom. *Od.* 8.48–54):[38]

> κούρω δὲ κρινθέντε δύω καὶ πεντήκοντα
> βήτην, ὡς ἐκέλευσ᾽, ἐπὶ θῖν᾽ ἁλὸς ἀτρυγέτοιο.
> αὐτὰρ ἐπεί ῥ᾽ ἐπὶ νῆα κατήλυθον ἠδὲ θάλασσαν,
> νῆα μὲν οἵ γε μέλαιναν ἁλὸς βένθοσδε ἔρυσσαν,
> ἐν δ᾽ ἱστόν τ᾽ ἐτίθεντο καὶ ἱστία νηὶ μελαίνῃ,
> ἠρτύναντο δ᾽ ἐρετμὰ τροποῖς ἐν δερματίνοισι,
> πάντα κατὰ μοῖραν, ἀνά θ᾽ ἱστία λευκὰ πέτασσαν.

> And chosen youths, two and fifty,[39] went, as he bade, to the shore of the unresting sea. And when they had come down to the ship and to the sea, they drew the black ship down to the deep water, and placed the mast and sail in the black ship, and fitted the oars in the leathern thole–straps, all in due order, and spread the white sail.

A recently–republished model of a Helladic oared galley from Tomb 611 at Gurob in Middle Egypt may provide further evidence both for the use of *pentekonters* in the years surrounding the Late Bronze–Early Iron transition,[40] and for the employment of the Helladic oared galley by *Sherden* sailors.[41] Like the vessels shown on LH IIIB and IIIC pottery, the model features stanchions and a stempost decorated with what may be an upturned bird's head.[42] The ship–cart

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[38] Additionally, in the *Iliad* Philoloctes is said to have led a fleet of seven *pentekonters*, and Achilles fifty; Hom. *Il.* 2.719, 16.169-170. See Kamarinou (2002) for a brief argument in support of Homeric ship descriptions as reflective of LH IIIC iconographic representations.

[39] Most likely fifty rowers, a coxswain, and one additional officer or crewmember.

[40] Radiocarbon dating of the Gurob ship–cart model returned a 2σ calibrated age range of 1256 to 1054 BC; Prior (2013) 241.

[41] Wachsmann (n.7); see also below. That the ship model was a cult vessel is suggested by its wheeled cart, as well as its hole for a *pavois*, to which bars were attached for priestly porters to shoulder as they carried a cultic ship over land.

[42] Compare to the stemposts on the ships in Figs. 2–6; also cf. Wachsmann (n.7) 78–80 for further discussion, with additional references. For a questioning of Aegean stempost decoration as bird head representations, see Wedde (2001), Yasur–Landau (2010b) and Emanuel (forthcoming A), and for a note on the possible inaccuracy of the "double bird head" motif, see Artzy (2001; 2003). Also present is a bow projection at the junction of stempost and keel, shown on some depictions of Late Helladic ships,

model was painted with a base layer of white, over which black (covering the bottom half of the hull) and red (a stripe of which appears just below the caprail and above the oarports) were added.[43] This preserved polychrome schema not only makes the model unique among known representations of Helladic ships,[44] but it aligns with Homer's description of the Achaeans' ships as μέλας 'black' and of Odysseus' ships specifically as μιλτοπάρῃος 'red–cheeked.'[45] The phrase μέλαινα ναῦς 'black ship' is a common epithet in Homer, appearing 81 times in *Iliad* and *Odyssey* combined.[46] This reference alludes to the coating of hull planking with dark pitch or asphalt, a practice which, though known from at least the Bronze Age,[47] is seen in physical representation for the first time on the Gurob ship–cart model.[48] Flanking the model, between the pitch–covered hull and "red cheeks," are rows of black dots, interpreted by Wachsmann as oarports, whose number and spacing make it probable that the vessel after which the model was patterned was also manned by fifty rowers (Fig. 8).

Crews of roughly this size may also be attested in the aforementioned "rower tablets" from Pylos. Tablet An 610 records approximately 600 oarsmen, while An

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which would become a standard feature of oared galleys in the Iron Age (see further below).

[43] Davis (2013) 219; Siddall (2013) 243. In all, seven pigments were detected on the ship–cart model; Siddall (2013) Table 1.

[44] Davis (n.43) 219.

[45] Odysseus' ships are also referred to as φοινικοπάρῃος 'purple–cheeked,' but most noteworthy is the fact that *only* Odysseus' ships are identified by the "red–" and "purple–cheeked" epithets.

[46] Hom. *Il.* 1.141, 300, 329, 433, 485; 2.170, 358, 524, 534, 545, 556, 568, 630, 644, 652, 710, 737, 747, 759; 5.550, 700; 8.222, 528; 9.235, 654; 10.74; 11.5, 824, 828; 12.126; 13.267; 15.387, 423; 16.304; 17.383, 639; 19.331; 24.780; *Od.* 2.430; 3.61, 360, 365, 423; 4.646, 731, 781; 6.268; 8.34, 51, 52, 445; 9.322; 10.95, 169, 244, 272, 332, 502, 571; 11.3, 58; 12.186, 264, 276, 418; 13.425; 14.308; 15.218, 258, 269, 416, 503; 16.325, 348, 359; 17.249; 18.84; 21.39, 307; 23.320; 24.152.

[47] References to the use of pitch or asphalt to seal wooden ships can be seen in such diverse ancient examples as the instructions for building Noah's Ark (Gen. 6:14) and the much more chronologically relevant letter (KUB III 82) from Ramesses II to the Hittite king Ḫattušili II (mid–13th c. BC), in which the pharaoh apparently writes that he is sending a pair of ships to the Hittite king so that his shipwrights can "draw a copy" of it for the purpose of building a replica, which they are instructed to coat with asphalt so the vessel will remain seaworthy; cf. Edel (1994) H4, 283–5; Emanuel (n.29); also Casson (n.28) 211–2; Kurt (1979) 33; Steffy (1994) 277.

[48] Davis (n.43) 220.

1 lists thirty rowers who are being summoned to man a single ship, a *triakonter*. If the ships crewed by the men of An 610 were *pentekonters*, the 600–man force would be enough to man only twelve ships. Even if they were *triakonters*, like the vessel crewed by the An 1 rowers, there would only be enough to fully man twenty ships. Whether the ships sailed on Odysseus' Egyptian raid were in fact fifty–oared *pentekonters* or thirty–oared *triakonters*, his nine vessels may well have carried between 360 and 450 combatants. This force would certainly have been both large enough to carry out a raid on a coastal settlement and small enough to be highly vulnerable to encounters with organized military units (as seen in Hom. *Od.* 14.262–72, quoted below).

Two late 13th–early 12th c. texts from Ugarit attest to the panic small numbers of ships could create in the inhabitants of coastal targets. The first, RS 20.238, is addressed from King Ammurapi of Ugarit to the King of Alašiya (Cyprus):[49]

> "My father, now the ships of the enemy have been coming. They have been setting fire to my cities and have done harm to the land. Doesn't my father know that all of my infantry and [chariotry] are stationed in Ḫatti, and that all of my ships are stationed in the land of Lukka? They haven't arrived back yet, so the land is thus prostrate. May my father be aware of this matter. *Now the seven ships of the enemy which have been coming have done harm to us.* Now if other ships of the enemy turn up, send me a report somehow(?) so that I will know."

The second, RS 20.18, is addressed from the prefect of Alašiya to King Ammurapi:[50]

> "But now, *(the) twenty enemy ships* – even before they would reach the mountain (shore) – have not stayed around but have quickly moved on, and where they have pitched camp we do not know. I am writing you to inform and protect you. Be aware!"

The Need for Speed (and Stealth)

The combination of small raiding parties and heavily militarized targets (with Egypt serving as an excellent example of the latter) meant that success in piratical endeavors was dependent on a combination of speed, stealth, and – above all – the avoidance of conflict with professional soldiers.[51] As Oliver Dickinson has noted, "raiders and pirates in the Aegean and

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[49] Beckman (1994a) 27.

[50] Hoftijzer and Van Soldt (1998) 343.

[51] Ormerod (1924) 31; Wachsmann (n.8) 320.

elsewhere…historically tended to operate in relatively small groups, whose basic tactic would be fast sweeps to gather up what could be easily taken, whether human captives, livestock, or portable loot."[52] Both of Odysseus' tales illustrate the catastrophe that could result from contact with regular troops (Hom. *Od.* 14.262–72 and 17.431–41):

> οἱ δ᾽ ὕβρει εἴξαντες, ἐπισπόμενοι μένεϊ σφῷ,
> αἶψα μάλ᾽ Αἰγυπτίων ἀνδρῶν περικαλλέας ἀγροὺς
> πόρθεον, ἐκ δὲ γυναῖκας ἄγον καὶ νήπια τέκνα,
> αὐτούς τ᾽ ἔκτεινον· τάχα δ᾽ ἐς πόλιν ἵκετ᾽ ἀϋτή.
> οἱ δὲ βοῆς ἀΐοντες ἅμ᾽ ἠοῖ φαινομένηφιν
> ἦλθον· πλῆτο δὲ πᾶν πεδίον πεζῶν τε καὶ ἵππων
> χαλκοῦ τε στεροπῆς· ἐν δὲ Ζεὺς τερπικέραυνος
> φύζαν ἐμοῖς ἑτάροισι κακὴν βάλεν, οὐδέ τις ἔτλη
> μεῖναι ἐναντίβιον· περὶ γὰρ κακὰ πάντοθεν ἔστη.
> ἔνθ᾽ ἡμέων πολλοὺς μὲν ἀπέκτανον ὀξέϊ χαλκῷ,
> τοὺς δ᾽ ἄναγον ζωούς, σφίσιν ἐργάζεσθαι ἀνάγκη.

> But my comrades, yielding to wantonness, and led on by their own might, straightway set about wasting the fair fields of the men of Egypt; and they carried off the women and little children, and slew the men; and the cry came quickly to the city. Then, hearing the shouting, the people came forth at break of day, and the whole plain was filled with footmen, and chariots and the flashing of bronze. But Zeus who hurls the thunderbolt cast an evil panic upon my comrades, and none had the courage to hold his ground and face the foe; for evil surrounded us on every side. So then they slew many of us with the sharp bronze, and others they led up to their city alive, to work for them perforce.

Thus, both success in piratical endeavors and the very survival of raiding parties required not only the adoption of new sailing technology, but also the development of tactics that could satisfy such a life–and–death need for stealth and celerity. Georgiou has declared, not without reason, that "the island and coastal populations of the Aegean, the pirates, the raiders and the traders were surely the most innovative and experimental boat designers"[53] One such tactic

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[52] Dickinson (n.13) 48.

[53] Georgiou (2012) 527, though this description should not be limited geographically to the Aegean alone; see, e.g., Artzy (1997, 1998). The attribution that can be given the 'Sea Peoples' for the development, adoption, and transference of new maritime technologies was explored in "Egypt, the 'Sea Peoples,' and the Brailed

was the deliberate beaching of vessels, which allowed attackers to disembark and conduct their raid as quickly as possible. The fastest way to land, and disembark from, a vessel is to row it bow first directly up onto the beach. The aforementioned keel extensions seen on some depictions of Helladic oared galleys, on the Sea Peoples vessels in the naval battle at Medinet Habu (Fig. 2), and on the Gurob ship–cart model may have served as beaching aids, allowing raiders' ships to sail more easily up onto land for the purpose of facilitating a rapid disembarkation.[54] Such a technique is described elsewhere in Odyssey, when the Phaeacians, returning Odysseus to Ithaca, beach their vessel for the purpose of quickly offloading their human cargo (Hom. *Od.* 13.113–5)*:*

> ἔνθ᾽ οἵ γ᾽ εἰσέλασαν, πρὶν εἰδότες. ἡ μὲν ἔπειτα
> ἠπείρῳ ἐπέκελσεν, ὅσον τ᾽ ἐπὶ ἥμισυ πάσης,
> σπερχομένη· τοῖον γὰρ ἐπείγετο χέρσ᾽ ἐρετάων

> The ship, hard–driven, ran up onto the beach for as much as
> half her length, such was the force the hands of the oarsmen
> gave her.[55]

A Growing Threat in the Eastern Mediterranean

Traces of the sea raiders referenced in the aforementioned texts from the last days of Ugarit can be found in several other Late Bronze Age literary sources, as well. In both Amarna Letters[18] and Hittite documents, they can be found intercepting ships at sea (e.g. EA 105, 114), conducting blockades (e.g. EA 126), and carrying out coastal raids (e.g. CTH 147:181; EA 38).[56] The Hittites in particular, who were not historically inclined toward maritime affairs, seem to have been forced to look to the sea with more interest in the waning years of the Late Bronze Age, possibly as a result of the threat posed by an increase in coastal raiding. These raiders may be associated with (or seen as a precursor to) the 'Sea Peoples' of Ramesside Egyptian fame. These heterogeneous, shifting coalitions of

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Sail: Technological Transference in the Early Ramesside Period?," a paper presented at the 2012 annual meeting of the American Schools of Oriental Research in Chicago, Illinois. For an expanded analysis, see Emanuel (n.29).

[54] Kirk (1949) 125–7; Wachsmann (n.7) 70; Wedde (n.22) 469. The prominence of these extensions, which also appear at the waterline in Late Helladic depictions (Fig. 2, right), and which would become a standard feature of oared galleys in the Iron Age, serve as the delineating feature between Wedde's Type V and Type VI galleys; Wedde (n.22) 467.

[55] Trans. Lattimore (1965).

[56] On the *miši* people in the Amarna Letters, see especially Linder (1973).

foreigners, whose name comes from the Egyptian Pharaoh Merneptah's (1213–1202 BC) Great Karnak Inscription (ca. 1207 BC) and from the writings of French Egyptologist Gaston Maspero,[57] included the *Sherden* among their various members.[58]

Two texts especially stand out in this regard. In the first, RS 34.129, the Hittite king writes to the prefect of Ugarit about the *Šikala* "who live on ships," and requests that a Ugaritian who had been taken captive by them be sent to Ḫattuša so that the king can question him about this people and their homeland:[59]

> "…I, His Majesty, had issued him an order concerning Ibnadušu, whom the people from *Šikala*[60] – who live on ships – had abducted.
>
> Herewith I send Nirga'ili, who is *kartappu* with me, to you. And you, send Ibnadušu, whom the people from *Šikala* had abducted, to me. I will question him about the land *Šikala*,[61] and afterwards he may leave for Ugarit again."

The *Šikala* have been connected to two groups of Sea Peoples from the records of Merneptah and Ramesses III: the *Škrš* (= *šá–ka–lú–ša* 'Shekelesh')[62] and the *Škl* (= *ši–ka–ar* 'Sikil' or 'Tjeker').[63] The *Shekelesh* appear alongside the *Sherden* in the aforementioned Great Karnak Inscription and the Athribis Stela, two accounts of Merneptah's battle against an invading coalition of Libyans and Sea Peoples. The *Shekelesh* also appear in Ramesses III's records at Medinet Habu, while the *Sherden* seem to be mentioned in their place in Ramesses' posthumous Great Harris Papyrus. The *Sikil/Tjeker*, on the other hand, are included in both of Ramesses III's major accounts.

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[57] Maspero (1881).

[58] Great Karnak Inscription (5th year of Merneptah): Sherden, Lukka, Shekelesh, Ekwesh (= Ahhiyawa/ Ἀχαιοι?), Teresh; Year 8 inscription at Medinet Habu (constructed in the 12th year of Ramesses III): Shelekesh, Peleset (=Philistines), Sikil (=Tjeker), Denyen (= Δαναοι?), Weshesh; Papyrus Harris I (posthumous record of Ramesses III): Sherden, Peleset (=Philistines), Sikil (=Tjeker), Denyen, Weshesh.

[59] Trans. Hoftijzer and van Soldt (n.50) 343.

[60] LÚ.MEŠ KUR.URU.*Ši–ka–la–iu–ú*.

[61] KUR.URU *Ši–ki–la*.

[62] Lehmann (1979); Yon (1992) 116; Redford (2006) 11.

[63] Wachsmann (1982) 297; (n. 8) 359 n.10; Stager (1991) 19 n.23. Rainey (1982) 134 argues for 'Sikil' on the basis of Assyrian dialectical features in RS 34.129, while Redford (n.61) argues for 'Tjeker' on the grounds of Egyptian orthography.

The second text, attributed to the last Hittite king, Šuppiluliuma II (ca. 1207–1178 BC), mentions a series of three naval skirmishes against the "ships of Alašiya," followed by a land battle, presumably against the same people he had fought at sea (KBo XII 38):[64]

> "The ships of Alašiya met me in the sea three times for battle, and I smote them; and I seized the ships and set fire to them in the sea.
>
> But when I arrived on dry land(?), the enemies from Alašiya came in multitude against me for battle. I [fought] them, and [……] me [……]..."

The latter is reminiscent of Ramesses III's (1183–1152 BC) claims to have fought land and sea battles against migratory Sea Peoples, which would have taken place during this same chronological timeframe. Though almost always ascribed to Ramesses III's eighth year (1175 BC), these migratory land and sea invasions were important enough to be mentioned in no less than five inscriptions at the pharaoh's mortuary temple at Medinet Habu: the Great Inscriptions of Years 5 and 8, the text accompanying the naval battle relief, the South Rhetorical Stela of Year 12, and the "celebration of victory over the Sea Peoples." A particularly relevant portion of Ramesses III's Great Inscription of Year 8 reads:[65]

> "Those who reached my frontier [on land], their seed is not, their heart and their soul are finished forever and ever. Those who came forward together on the sea, the full flame was in front of them at the river–mouths, while a stockade of lances surrounded them on the shore. They were dragged in, enclosed, and prostrated on the beach, killed, and made into heaps from tail to head. Their ships and their goods were as if fallen into the water"

This similarity in chronology and narrative raises the question of whether Šuppiluliuma was facing repeated waves of raiders or migrant warriors, while clearly reinforcing the aforementioned threat felt from the previously distant Mediterranean coast during the Hittite Empire's last days. Rather than belonging to the Alašiyan state, it is likely that the vessels against which Šuppiluliuma fought were called "ships of Alašiya" because they had either sailed eastward via, or launched from a captured portion of, Cyprus.[66] While the island had long been a

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[64] Güterbock (1967) 78.

[65] Wilson (1974) 262–3.

[66] *Contra* Linder (n. 56) 319.

target of seaborne raids,[67] textual evidence also supports the use of Cyprus as a base for launching raids against coastal polities in the eastern Mediterranean in the Late Bronze Age,[68] much as Odysseus claims to have done from Crete in his tale to Eumaios.

Pylos, Aḫḫiyawa, and the *ra–wi–ja–ja*

ἐκ πόλιος δ᾽ ἀλόχους καὶ κτήματα πολλὰ λαβόντες
δασσάμεθ᾽, ὡς μή τίς μοι ἀτεμβόμενος κίοι ἴσης.

There I sacked the city and slew the men; and from the city
we took their wives and great store of treasure…[69]

ἐμὲ δ᾽ ὠνητὴ τέκε μήτηρ
παλλακίς

a bought woman, a concubine,
was my mother.[70]

References in Hittite texts to an entity called *Aḫḫiyawa* frequently mention both raids and captives (the NAM.RA^meš), and thus may serve as evidence for Aegean seafarers obtaining slaves and other booty through such means.[71] Though a full discussion of Aḫḫiyawa's identity and location is beyond the scope of the present study, it is worthwhile to note that theories about this entity's location within the world of the Aegean and the Interface have ranged from Troy in the north[72] to Rhodes in the south.[73] Others have placed Aḫḫiyawa everywhere from the Greek mainland, including Mycenae and Boeotian Thebes,[74] to Cilicia, Crete, and Cyprus,[75] to Thrace.[76] Though consensus is unlikely in the foreseeable future,

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[67] E.g. CTH 27, dating from the 15th–14th c. BC, which speaks of "often" raiding the land of Alašiya and taking (most likely civilian) captives (see below).

[68] E.g. RS 20.18 and EA 38, although in the latter the King of Alašiya is quick to protest that the raiders did not stage from an area under his control. See also the brief discussion of Maa–*Paleokastro* above.

[69] Hom. *Od.* 9.41–2.

[70] Hom. *Od.* 14.202–3; trans. Lattimore (1965).

[71] *Cf.* Hom. *Od.* 14.229–32 mentioned above; also Bryce (1992) 126–7. For Aḫḫiyawa = Ἀχαιοι, see especially Finkelberg (1988).

[72] Zangger (1995).

[73] Mountjoy (n.11).

[74] Forrer (1924); Güterbock (1984) 121; Redford (1992) 242–3; Podany (2010) 262; Tartaron (n.13) 63.

[75] Niemeier (2011) 18.

==this term has most commonly been accepted as referring to territory within the Interface, if not to Mycenae proper==

Further, though it is mentioned in twenty–five Hittite texts between the 15th and 13th centuries BC, Aḫḫiyawa's place within the geopolitics of the Late Bronze Age is only slightly less uncertain than its geographic location. This status is exacerbated by a late 13th c. suzerain treaty between King Tudhaliya IV of Ḫatti and King Šaušgamuwa of Amurru (CTH 105), in which the Hittite king declares:[77]

> And the kings who (are) of equal rank with me, the King of Egypt, the King of Karadunia (=Kassite Babylonia), the King of Assyria, ~~the King of Aḫḫiyawa~~, if the king of Egypt is a friend of My Sun, let him also be a friend to you, if he is an enemy of My Sun, let him be your enemy also…

As noted in the excerpt above, the name Aḫḫiyawa was erased shortly after the document's writing, perhaps by the original scribe.[78] Prior to the Šaušgamuwa treaty, Tudhaliya IV's predecessor Ḫattušili III had directly addressed the ruler of Aḫḫiyawa as an equal in a mid–13th century document erroneously referred to as the "Tawagalawa letter" (CTH 181 = KUB 14.3), which refers to a conflict between Aḫḫiyawa and Ḫatti that seems to have centered on Troy.[79] This seems to support the fluid nature of Late Bronze Age geopolitics, particularly on the periphery of the great empires of the age (Egypt, Babylonia, Ḫatti, and Assyria – the latter of which, in turn, had supplanted Mittani as a Near Eastern power by the mid–13th c.),[80] while also pointing to the changes that were beginning to take place in the region as the end of the Bronze Age approached.[81]

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[76] Mellaart (1982) 375; Easton (1984) 33–5; for a further history and archaeological assessment of theories put forth to date regarding Aḫḫiyawa's placement, see Niemeier (1998) 20–3, with references.

[77] Bryce (1998) 343.

[78] Beckman (1996) 118 n.23; *cf.* Bryce (n.77) 343–4; Van de Mieroop (2009) 102, 263 n.2; Podany (n.74) 262.

[79] "[I]n that matter of Wiluša [= Ιλιος = Troy] over which we were at enmity…we have made peace"; Hoffner (2009) 311; also Singer (n.10); Güterbock (n.74) 120; Bryce (n.77) 323; Baruffi (n.10) 120 n.16.

[80] Van de Mieroop (n.78) 34–5; Podany (n.74) 303.

[81] As has been noted, the geopolitical world of Homer's epics – particularly the *Iliad* – is in many ways much more reflective of this period, with its tension between the Hittite empire on the eastern side of the Aegean and the Hellenic (Aḫḫiyawan)

A representative example of the aforementioned references to raiding is also the earliest mention of Aḫḫiyawa in the Hittite records: the so–called Indictment of Madduwatta (CTH 27 = KBo 14.1), which refers to frequent Aḫḫiyawan raids on Cyprus:[82]

> "His Majesty said as follows [about the land of Alašiya]: 'Because [the land] of Alašiya belongs to My Majesty, [and the people of Alašiya] pay [me tribute – why have you continually raided it?' But] Madduwatta said as follows: '[When Attarissiya and] the ruler [of Piggaya] were raiding the land of Alašiya, I often raided it too."

The Linear B tablets may provide a glimpse of the results of such raids. Women from Lemnos (*ra–mi–ni–ja = Lâmniai*), Chios (*ki–si–wi–ja = Kswiai*), Miletos (*mi–ra–ti–ja = Milatiai*), Knidos (*ki–ni–di–ja = Knidiai*), Halikarnassos (*ze–pu₂–ra₃ = Dzephurrai*), and Asia (*a–*64–ja = Aswiai*) are all represented in the Pylian archives, where they appear among those listed as dependents of the palace, receiving rations from the state.[83] Meanwhile, people referred to as *ra–wi–ja–ja* (= *lâwiai*) 'women taken as booty' or 'captives' also appear in multiple Pylian tablets (PY Aa 807, Ab 596, and Ad 686), though unfortunately no mention is made of their homeland(s).[84]

As might be expected, such a theme appears repeatedly in Homer. Consider, for example, Hom. *Od.* 9.41–2 (cited above), as well as *Il.* 20.193 (ληϊάδας δὲ γυναῖκας ἐλεύθερον ἦμαρ ἀπούρας / ἦγον). More relevantly, consider *Od.* 14.202–3 (ἐμὲ δ᾽ ὠνητὴ τέκε / μήτηρ παλλακίς; also cited above) from the Cretan Lie itself, wherein Odysseus claims to be the son of a woman who was purchased as a

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coalition to the west, than of the first millennium BC; see, most recently, Singer (2013) 24–5. This is highlighted in particular by the aforementioned reference to Troy as an object of contention between Ḫatti and Aḫḫiyawa in CTH 181 – not to mention the subsequent (13th c.) CTH 76's mention of *Alaksandu* as king of Wiluša; Güterbock (n.72) 120; Beckman (n.78) 82–7; Bryce (n.77) esp. 244–5, 326–60.

[82] Beckman (n.78) 151. The Indictment of Madduwatta dates to LH IIIA1 or IIIA2 Early (ca. 1400–1360 BC; Mountjoy (n.10) 46–7).

[83] Bryce (n.77) 62; Morris (n.6) 7; Michailidou and Voutsa (2005) 19; Yasur–Landau (n.12a) 40.

[84] Chadwick (1988) 80, 83; Bryce (n.77) 62; Ergin (2007) 273; cf. also Efkleidou (2002). Morris (n.6) 7 writes, "rather than the romantic recovery of native women like Helen, the enslavement of fresh laborers (as Cassandra and other Trojan women became the prize of Greek warriors in the epic tradition) was a serious objective"; Aesch. *Ag.* 782; also, *inter alia*, Hom. *Il.* 1.184; 2.226; 9.125–40, 270–85, 477; 16.830–33; 19.295–302; *Od.* 4.259–64; 7.103–6; 9.41–2; 11.400–403.

slave. How the hero's fictional mother was acquired is not mentioned, but the apparent precedent in Hittite and Linear B texts for Mycenaeans taking female captives certainly raises the possibility that she came to Crete via a similar seaborne raid.

Αἴγυπτόνδε

αὐτὰρ ἔπειτα
Αἴγυπτόνδε με θυμὸς ἀνώγει ναυτίλλεσθαι,
νῆας ἐὺ στείλαντα σὺν ἀντιθέοις ἑτάροισιν.

And then to Egypt did my spirit bid me voyage with my godlike comrades, when I had fitted out my ships with care.[85]

'ἀλλὰ Ζεὺς ἀλάπαξε Κρονίων – ἤθελε γάρ που –
ὅς μ᾽ ἅμα ληϊστῆρσι πολυπλάγκτοισιν ἀνῆκεν
Αἴγυπτόνδ᾽ ἰέναι, δολιχὴν ὁδόν, ὄφρ᾽ ἀπολοίμην.
στῆσα δ᾽ ἐν Αἰγύπτῳ ποταμῷ νέας ἀμφιελίσσας.

But Zeus, son of Cronos, brought all to naught – so, I ween, was his good pleasure – who sent me forth with roaming pirates to go to Egypt, a far voyage, that I might meet my ruin; and in the river Aegyptus I moored my curved ships.[86]

The polities of the Aegean, Anatolia, and the Levantine coast were not the only victims of seaborne attackers during the Late Bronze Age and in the years surrounding the Late Bronze–Iron I transition. Evidence from the mid–14th c. BC onward shows that the land of the pharaohs bore no special immunity to maritime marauding, either. The historical precedents for Odysseus' raid on Egypt can be seen both *directly*, in accounts of coastal attacks, and *indirectly*, in records of defensive measures taken to combat such assaults. An example of the latter can be seen in an inscription of Amenhotep son of Hapu, a public official under Amenhotep III (1388–1351 BC), which refers to the need to secure the Nile Delta against a seaborne threat:[87]

"I placed troops at the heads of the way(s) to turn back the foreigners in their places. The two regions were surrounded with a

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[85] Hom. *Od.* 14.245–7.

[86] Hom. *Od.* 17.424–7.

[87] Helck (1958) 1821.13f. The stationing of marines at the "river–mouths" reinforces the vulnerability of raiding parties to encounters with organized military forces (discussed above).

watch scouting for the Sand–rangers. *I did likewise at the heads of the river–mouths, which were closed under my troops except to the troops of royal marines.*"

Additionally, in a letter to Akhenaten (1351–1334 BC) from the el–Amarna archive, the King of Alašiya responds to an accusation of Cypriot involvement in a raid on Egypt by recounting annual raids carried out by "men of Lukki" against his own villages (EA 38):[88]

"Why, my brother, do you say such a thing to me, "Does my brother not know this?" As far as I am concerned, I have done nothing of the sort. Indeed, *men of Lukki, year by year, seize villages in my own country*."

"He Has Destroyed the Warriors of the Great Green…"

Further evidence for such threats can be found in the formulaic Aswan stela of Ramesses II's (1279–1213 BC) second year, in which he claims among other conquests to have "destroyed the warriors of the Great Green (Sea)," so that Lower Egypt can "spend the night sleeping peacefully."[89]

The Egyptians first give a specific name to these troublesome sea raiders in the aforementioned Tanis II rhetorical stela, one of twelve "triumph–hymn" stelae originally erected at Ramesses II's capital of Pi–Ramesse and later transshipped to the eastern Delta city of Tanis.[90] The stela tells of the "*Sherden…*whom none could withstand" who "sailed in warships from the midst of the Sea," and claims the pharaoh defeated and imprisoned them:[91]

"(As for) the Sherden of rebellious mind, whom none could ever fight against, who came bold–[hearted, they sailed in], in warships from the midst of the Sea, those whom none could withstand;

[He plundered them by the victories of his valiant arm, they being carried off to Egypt] – (even by) King of S & N Egypt, Usimare Setepenre, Son of Re, Ramesses II, given life like Re."

This recalls the catastrophe that befell Odysseus' raiding party at the hands of the pharaoh's soldiers, cited in part above (*Od.* 14.268–84):

ἐν δὲ Ζεὺς τερπικέραυνος

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[88] Moran (1992)111.

[89] de Rougé (1877) 253.8; Kitchen (1996) 182.

[90] Yoyotte (1949) 58; Kitchen (1999) 173 and (2004) 264.

[91] Kitchen (n.87) 120.

φύζαν ἐμοῖσ' ἑτάροισι κακὴν βάλεν, οὐδέ τις ἔτλη
μεῖναι ἐναντίβιον · περὶ γὰρ κακὰ πάντοθεν ἔστη.
ἔνθ' ἡμέων πολλοὺς μὲν ἀπέκτανον ὀζέϊ χαλκῷ,
τοὺς δ' ἄναγον ζωούς, σφίσιν ἐργάζεσθαι ἀνάγκη.
αὐτὰρ ἐμοὶ Ζεὺς αὐτὸς ἐνὶ φρεσὶν ὧδε νόημα
ποίησ' · ὡς ὄφελον θανέειν καὶ πότμον ἐπισπεῖν
αὐτοῦ ἐν Αἰγύπτῳ · ἔτι γάρ νύ με πῆμ' ὑπέδεκτο ·
αὐτίκ' ἀπὸ κρατὸς κυνέην εὔτυκτον ἔθηκα
καὶ σάκος ὤμοιϊν, δόρυ δ' ἔκβαλον ἔκτοσε χειρός ·
αὐτὰρ ἐγὼ βασιλῆος ἐναντίον ἤλυθον ἵππων
καὶ κύσα γούναθ' ἑλών · ὁ δ' ἐρύσατο καί μ' ἐλέησεν,
ἐς δίφρον δέ μ' ἕσας ἄγεν οἴκαδε δάκρυ χέοντα.
ἦ μέν μοι μάλα πολλοὶ ἐπήϊσσον μελίῃσιν,
ἱέμενοι κτεῖναι – δὴ γὰρ κεχολώατο λίην–
ἀλλ' ἀπὸ κεῖνος ἔρυκε, Διὸς δ' ὠπίζετο μῆνιν
ξεινίου, ὅς τε μάλιστα νεμεσσᾶται κακὰ ἔργα.

But Zeus who hurls the thunderbolt cast an evil panic upon my comrades, and none had the courage to hold his ground and face the foe; for evil surrounded us on every side. So then they slew many of us with the sharp bronze, and others they led up to their city alive, to work for them perforce. But in my heart Zeus himself put this thought—I would that I had rather died and met my fate there in Egypt, for still was sorrow to give me welcome. Straightway I put off from my head my well–wrought helmet, and the shield from off my shoulders, and let the spear fall from my hand, and went toward the chariot horses of the king. I clasped, and kissed his knees, and he delivered me, and took pity on me, and, setting me in his chariot, took me weeping to his home. Verily full many rushed upon me with their ashen spears, eager to slay me, for they were exceeding angry. But he warded them off, and had regard for the wrath of Zeus, the stranger's god, who above all others hath indignation at evil deeds.

Life, Prosperity and Health in the Land of the Pharaohs

ἔνθα μὲν ἑπτάετες μένον αὐτόθι, πολλὰ δ' ἄγειρα
χρήματ' ἀν' Αἰγυπτίους ἄνδρας · δίδοσαν γὰρ ἅπαντες.

> There then I stayed seven years, and much wealth did I gather among the Egyptians, for all men gave me gifts.[92]

The Tanis II rhetorical stela marks the first of many Ramesside claims to have defeated and captured named maritime foes.[93] Despite Ramesses II's typical bombast, though, not all of those *Sherden* who were "carried off to Egypt" languished in prison or spent the rest of their days serving the state as slave laborers, as the survivors of Odysseus' fictional raiding party were said to have done. Rather, like Odysseus himself, they appear to have been welcomed into Egypt and allowed to profit from the employment of their unique skills, which were utilized in the direct service of the pharaoh. Already in the fifth year of Ramesses II's reign, for example, *Sherden* appear as members of the Pharaonic bodyguard at the battle of Qidš (1275 BC) against the Hittite forces of Muwatallis II[94] – surely a place of high honor among soldiers, as well as one requiring great trust.

The place of honor afforded those *Sherden* who gave allegiance to Egypt can be seen in §75 of the Great Harris Papyrus, wherein Ramesses III addresses "the officials and leaders of the land, the infantry, the chariotry, the *Sherden*, the many bowmen, and all the souls of Egypt."[95] Whatever their military role by this point, it is noteworthy that *Sherden* is the only *ethnikon* employed in the pharaoh's address to his people, the rest of whom are grouped solely by rank, title, and occupation.

Like the Odysseus of the Cretan Lie, the importance of the *Sherden* within Egyptian military and society also earned them significant material benefits. This can be seen in particular in the Wilbour Papyrus, a land registry from the reign of Ramesses V covering portions of the Fayum region of Middle Egypt, including Gurob.[96] Among those listed in this text as land owners and occupiers are 109

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[92] Hom. *Od*. 14.285–6.

[93] As partially noted above, various Sea Peoples groups, including *Sherden*, are claimed by name as victims and captives by Ramesses II in the Tanis II rhetorical stela and the Poem recounting his "victory" at Qidš; by Merneptah in the Great Karnak Inscription and Papyrus Anastasi II, as well as on the Aswan Stela, Cairo Column, Heliopolis Victory Column; and by Ramesses III in three of the five inscriptions at Medinet Habu that reference the Sea Peoples invasions, on the front pavilion wall at Medinet Habu, in the Great Harris Papyrus, and on a stela at Deir el–Medineh; *inter alia*, Emanuel (2013); Adams and Cohen (2013).

[94] Breasted (1906b) 2–3; Spalinger (2005) 256; Hasel (1996) 420.

[95] Wilson (n.65) 260.

[96] Gardiner (1941) 40; Faulkner (1953) 44–5. If the Gurob ship–cart model belonged to one of these *Sherden* or their descendant, as Wachsmann (n.7) 206 has proposed, then members of this group may have been sailing Helladic oared galleys

Sherden, "standard–bearers of the *Sherden*," and "retainers of the *Sherden*." Of the 59 plots assigned to *Sherden* in the Wilbour Papyrus, 42 are five *arourae* in size[97] – an allocation commensurate with priests, standard bearers, stablemasters, and others of similarly high rank rather than with soldiers, who were generally allotted three *arourae*.[98] Further, the wealth bestowed on the pharaoh's *Sherden* in the form of land was not limited to a temporary inhabitation of this key Middle Egyptian oasis. Rather, their significant contributions were repaid with an equally significant reward: land they could pass down through the generations.[99]

It would be far from surprising if *Sherden* fighters, like Odysseus, also accumulated significant material wealth in addition to land. Papyrus Anastasi I, a text from the 19th and 20th dynasties that discusses proper preparation and provisioning for a mission to Canaan, lists 520 *Sherden* among a mixed force of 5,000 soldiers. This suggests that, by midway through Ramesses II's reign, they had already become a standard component of Egypt's northern expeditionary forces. With regular exposure to warfare most likely came regular opportunities for plunder,[100] which could be both taken individually and divided among the conquering forces after a successful siege or battle – much in the way that *Sherden* pirates and Odysseus' raiding crews likely divided the booty after their own successful raids (Hom. *Od.* 14.232–4):

> τῶν ἐξαιρεύμην μενοεικέα, πολλὰ δ᾽ ὀπίσσω
> λάγχανον· αἶψα δὲ οἶκος ὀφέλλετο, καί ῥα ἔπειτα
> δεινός τ᾽ αἰδοῖός τε μετὰ Κρήτεσσι τετύγμην.

> Of this I would choose what pleased my mind, and much I afterwards obtained by lot. Thus my house straightway grew rich, and thereafter I became one feared and honored among the Cretans.

Rather than being a benefit of Egyptian generosity, then, it seems likely that the wealth Odysseus characterizes as being amassed via gifts from the Egyptians (δίδοσαν γὰρ ἅπαντες; *Od.* 14.286, cited above) was likewise gained through a

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as they plundered the coasts of the eastern Mediterranean – a fact that would tie them even more closely to the culture that spawned Homer's *Odyssey*.

[97] One *aroura* is 100 square cubits (approximately 2/3 of an acre).

[98] Katary (1989) 49.

[99] E.g. §§59.27.19, and 150.59.9, and 150.59.25, which refer to land belonging to deceased *Sherden* being "cultivated by the hand of [their] children."

[100] Lorton (1974) esp. 56, 61–2; Hasel (n.94) 187, 251, 362.

division of plunder from further raids in which he was a (now–legitimate) participant.

Conclusion

The "master myth" of the *Odyssey* is a tapestry woven from many fascinating micronarratives, each of which has its own individual grounding (or lack thereof) in historical truth. Though the stories considered here – those told by Odysseus to Eumaios and Antinoos, respectively – are portrayed as fiction within the Homeric macronarrative, several of their elements have precedent in archaeological and literary records dating to the Late Bronze Age and the Late Bronze–Iron I transition (LH IIIB–IIIC). This is not to say that the Homeric epics in their current (or classical) form were composed in, or are entirely reflective of, this period.[101] However, a later date of composition and the reflection of geography and events that fit accurately in an earlier age (in this case, in the fictive period of the epic's setting) are not mutually exclusive realities. As Itamar Singer has recently written:

> To be sure, [Homer's epics] had to be revised and adapted to contemporary needs, but its basic features had been remembered and kept alive in all probability *without* any written transmission. In evaluating the historicity of a story, a distinction should be made between its main structure and its secondary details. In other words, even if Odysseus's boar–tusk helmet were proven to be late, there would still remain the general situation described by Homer, which fits much better the Mycenaean age than his own times.[102]

Further, Odysseus' fictitious experiences have a remarkable analogue in a very real and very specific group of sea raiders, the "*Sherden of the Sea,*" who set upon Egypt in their ships around the same time Odysseus claims to have carried out his ill–fated raid. This people is of uncertain origin, but there is evidence to connect them to polychromatic, fifty–oared galleys of the type described by Homer – in one case, in terms reserved specifically for Odysseus' ships – and seen on Late Helladic pottery. Further, their story is extraordinarily similar to the tales that make up Odysseus' Cretan Lie and the portion that is retold to Antinoos: years of successful maritime raiding, an ill–fated attempt on the Nile Delta, and a

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[101] Whatever the date of "Homer," countless elements of both *Iliad* and *Odyssey* are clearly anachronistic in their fictive setting, or are wholly appropriate to various periods within the first millennium BC; see, *inter alia*, Dickinson (n.2); Sherratt (n.2); Burkert (1992); Kullmann (1995); Nagy (n.2); West (2011).

[102] Singer (n.79) 25; cf. Vermeule (1964) x.

subsequent sojourn in Egypt, during which they were valued as a part of society and made prosperous for their efforts. The two stories diverge as Odysseus' seven year stay in Egypt draws to a close: while the *nostos* that makes up the *Odyssey*'s macronarrative dictated that its hero move on, those *Sherden* who settled in Egypt were able to create a new home for themselves in the land of the pharaohs, complete with wives, children, and land they could pass down through generations.

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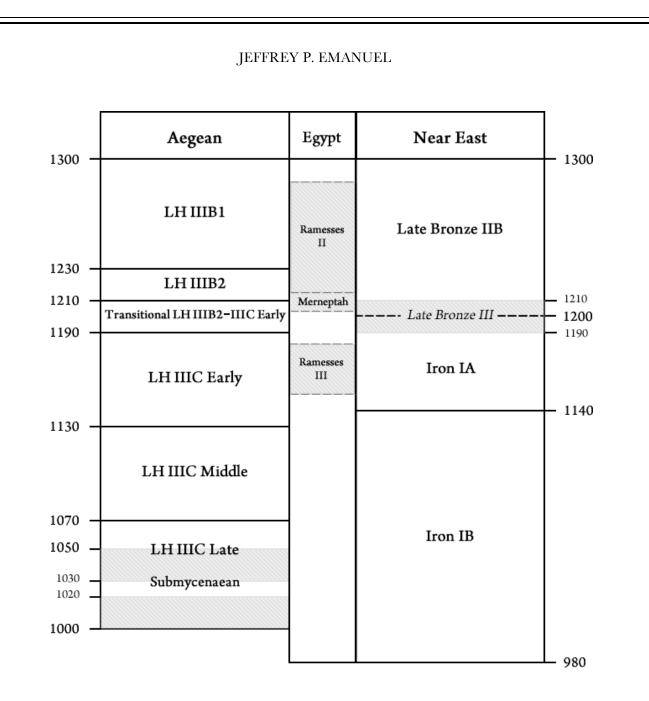
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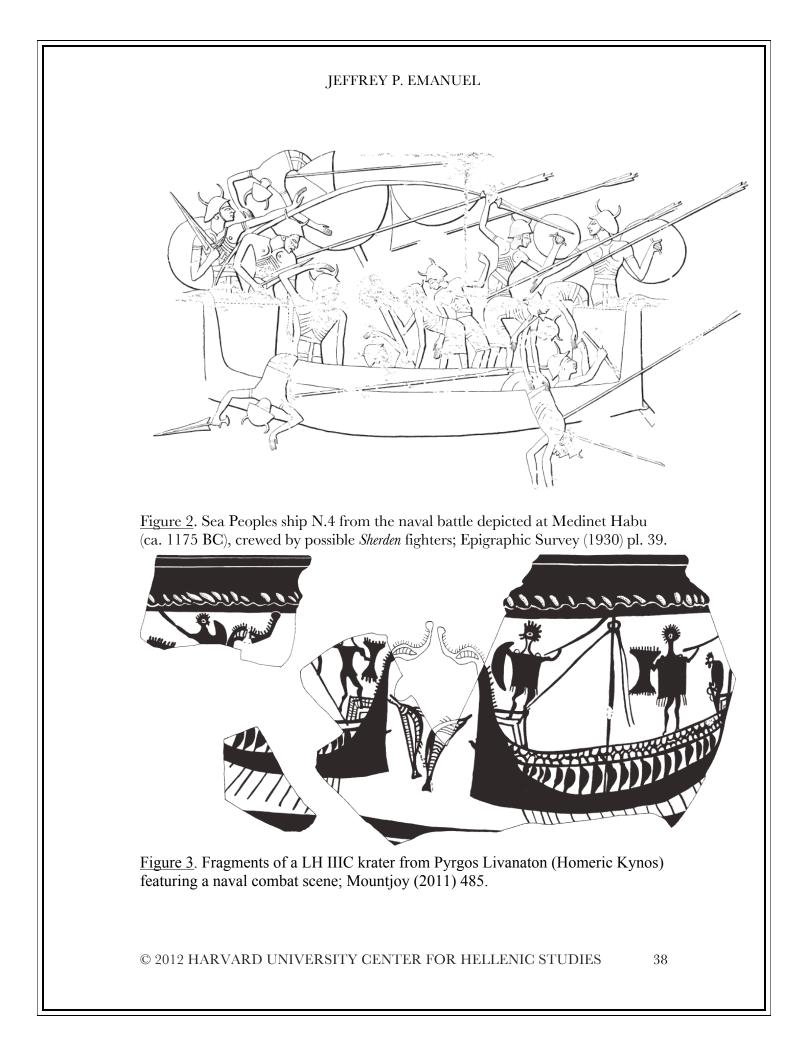|	Aegean	Egypt	Near East	
1300				1300
	LH IIIB1	Ramesses II	Late Bronze IIB	
1230	LH IIIB2			
1210		Merneptah		1210
	Transitional LH IIIB2–IIIC Early		Late Bronze III	1200
1190				1190
	LH IIIC Early	Ramesses III	Iron IA	
				1140
1130				
	LH IIIC Middle		Iron IB	
1070				
1050	LH IIIC Late			
1030	Submycenaean			
1020				
1000				
				980

Table 1. Comparative chronology of the Late Helladic IIIB–C and Submycenaean periods in the Aegean and the Late Bronze IIB–Early Iron Ages in the Near East, with the reigns of relevant Pharaohs included; after Mountjoy (1998) table 1, Mazar (1990) table 2, (2005) table 2.1, and Kitchen (2000); "Late Bronze III" after Artzy (2013) 332. All dates BC.
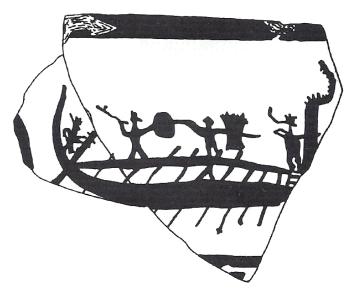
Figure 1. Captioned image of a captured Sherden "prince," from an uncontextualized row of foreign captives on the front pavilion wall of Ramesses III's mortuary temple at Medinet Habu (first half of the 12th c. BC). The image is captioned *š3rd3n3 n p3 ym* '*Sherden* of the Sea'; after Epigraphic Survey (1970) pl. 600b.

Figure 2. Sea Peoples ship N.4 from the naval battle depicted at Medinet Habu (ca. 1175 BC), crewed by possible *Sherden* fighters; Epigraphic Survey (1930) pl. 39.

Figure 3. Fragments of a LH IIIC krater from Pyrgos Livanaton (Homeric Kynos) featuring a naval combat scene; Mountjoy (2011) 485.

Figure 4. Fragments of a locally–made, Transitional LH IIIB–IIIC Early or LH IIIC Early krater from Bademgediği Tepe featuring a naval combat scene; Mountjoy (2011) 486.

Figure 5. Fragment of a LH IIIC krater from Pyrgos Livanaton (Homeric Kynos) featuring a naval combat scene; Wedde (2000) no. 6002.
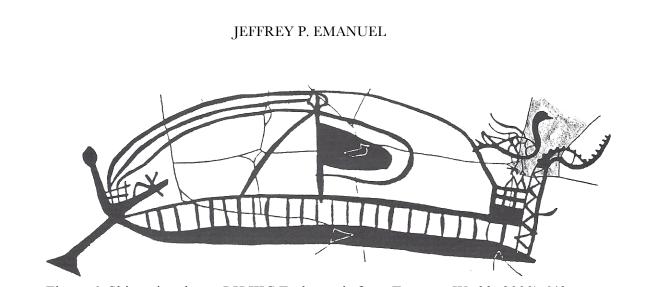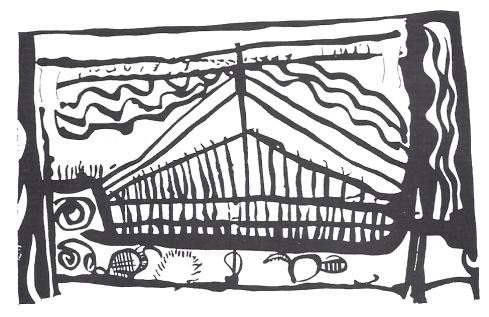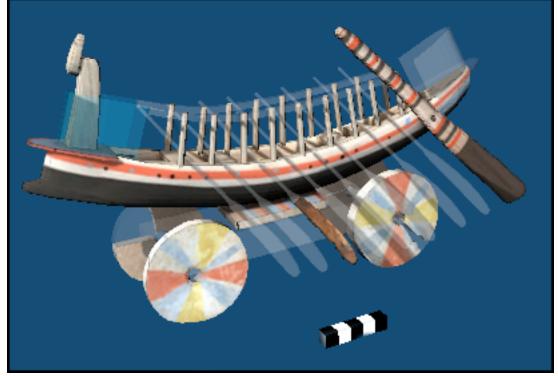
Figure 6. Ship painted on a LH IIIC Early pyxis from Tragana; Wedde 2000) 643.

Figure 7. Ship depicted on the side of a Late Minoan IIIB larnax from Gazi; Wedde (2000) 608.

Figure 8. (a) Model of a Helladic oared galley from a tomb in Gurob, Middle Egypt. (b) 3D reconstruction of the Gurob ship–cart model. (© Institute for the Visualization of History, Inc.)