

Introduction

Welcome to the world of the Late Bronze Age in the Aegean and Eastern Mediterranean seas, and to one of history's greatest mysteries: what caused its sudden collapse more than three thousand years ago, just after 1200 BC?

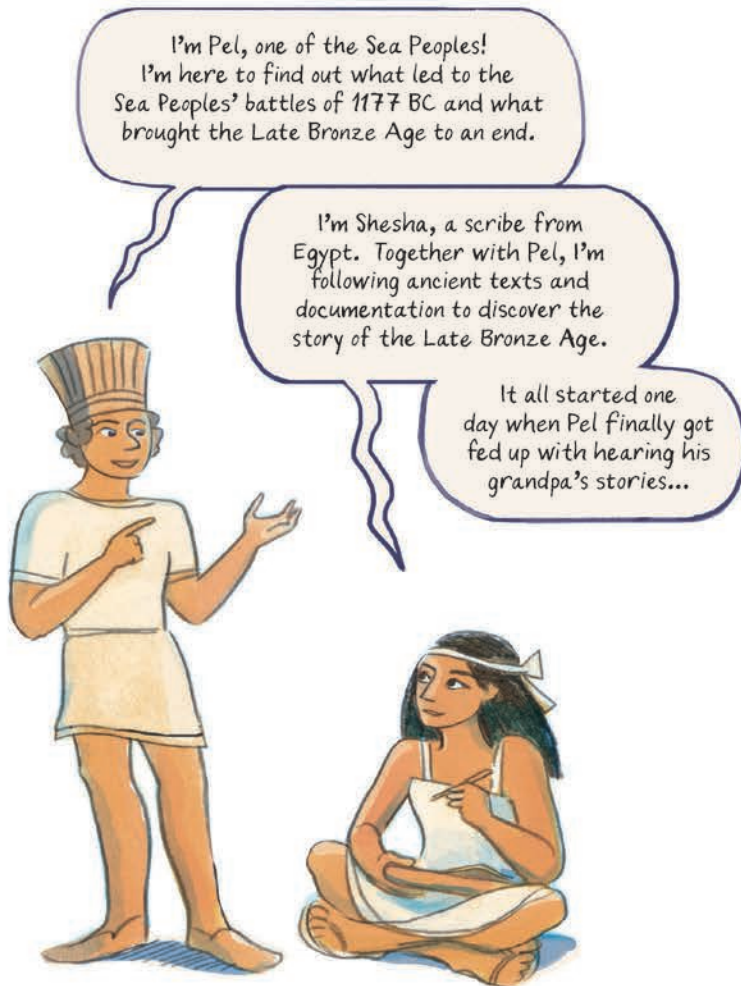
I'm Glynnis Fawkes, cartoonist and archaeological illustrator, here with Eric Cline, archaeologist and author.

It is our pleasure to present to you a graphic version of a book I wrote, 1177 BC.

Guided by two friends from that time period, Pel and Shesha, we will explore the history of that intertwined period and meet a variety of different people along the way, including Mycenaeans, Hittites, Egyptians, and Canaanites.

The two of us will provide some modern expertise as well, as we travel with you to figure out what happened back then and how it is relevant to us today.





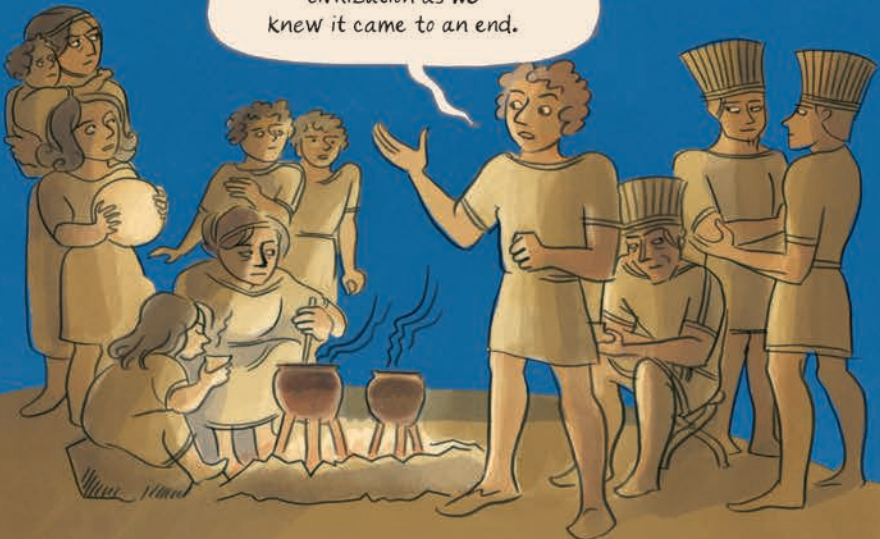
PROLOGUE



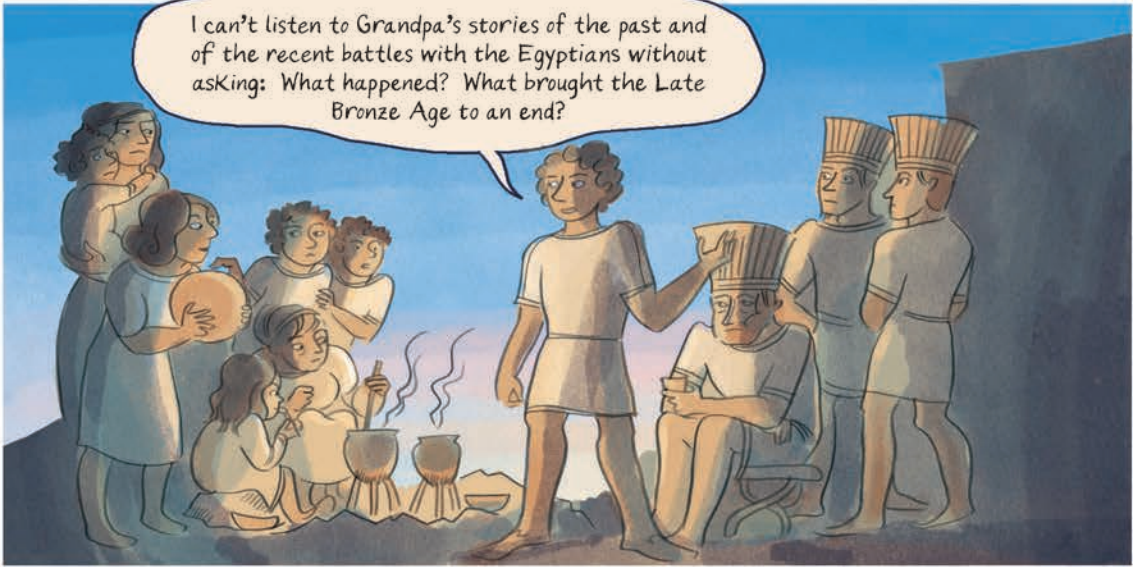


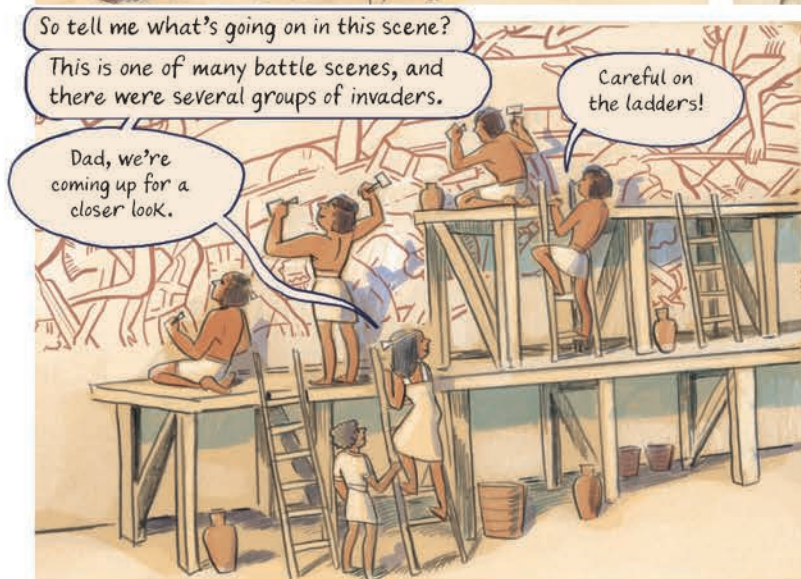
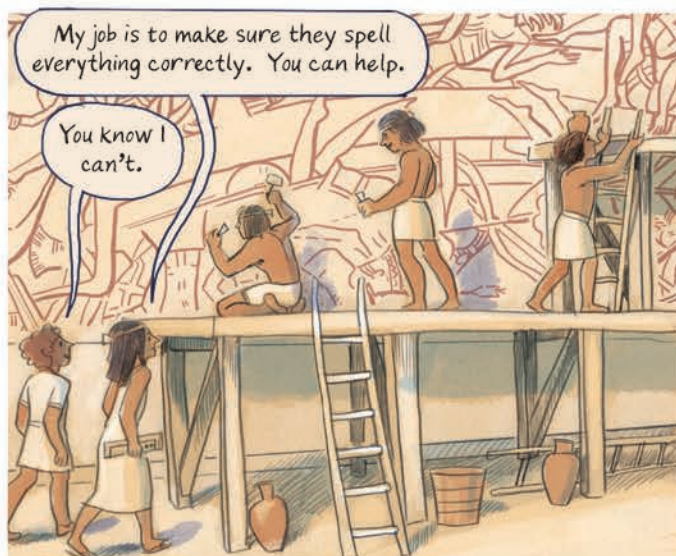
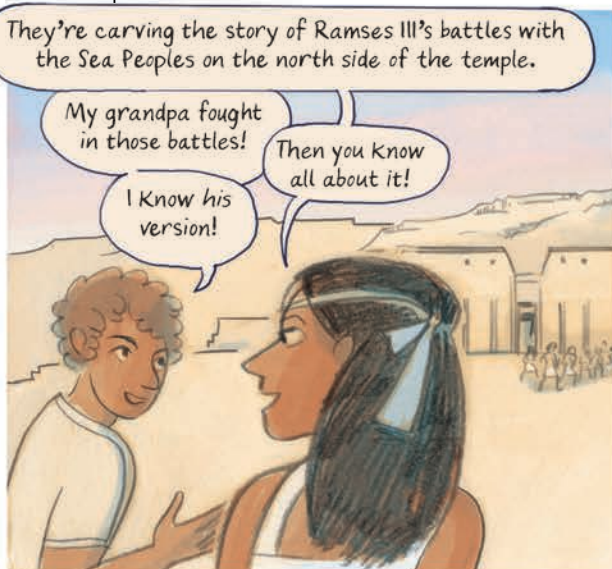


Across the countries of the Eastern Mediterranean swept a wave of destructions! The great powers of the Late Bronze Age— the Hittites, Mycenaeans, Canaanites, Cypriots, and others— have all fallen and civilization as we knew it came to an end.











This kid seems to know an awful lot about the Sea Peoples!

Maybe he can tell us where they came from?

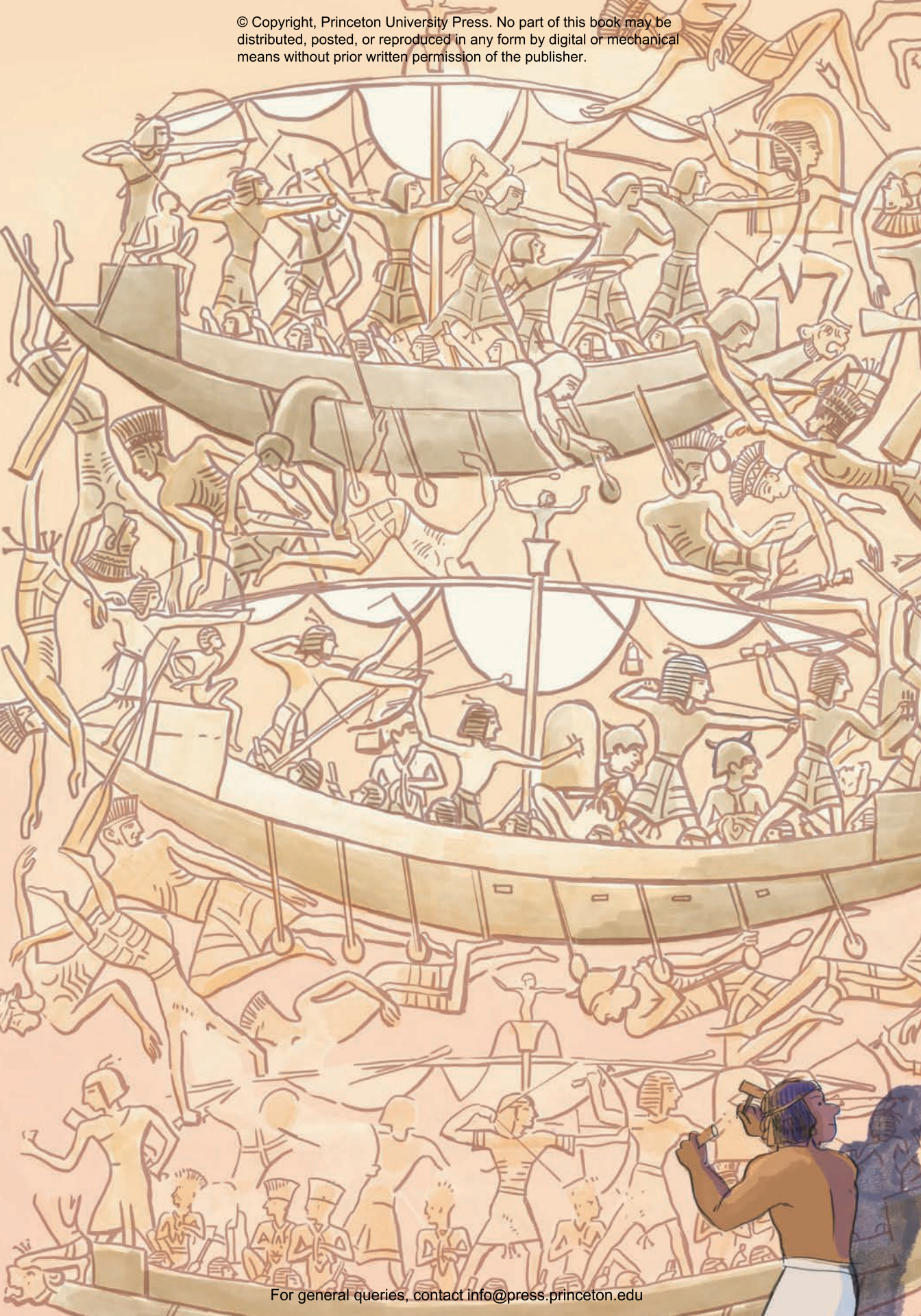
And why they went out of their way to attack!



I heard they could be from as far away as Sicily, Sardinia, the Aegean, Western Anatolia, and Cyprus—

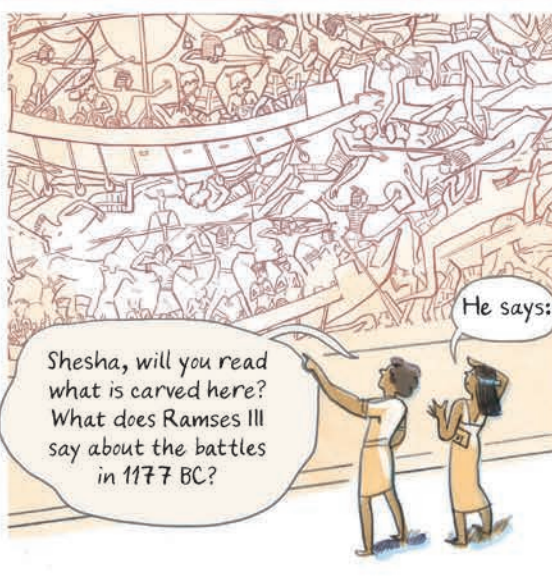
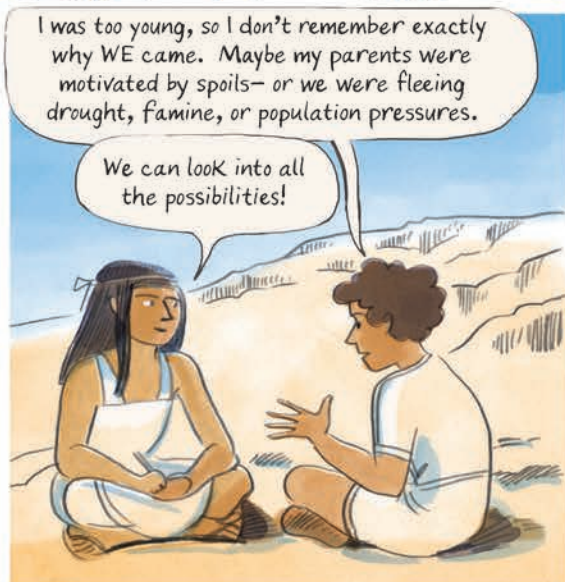
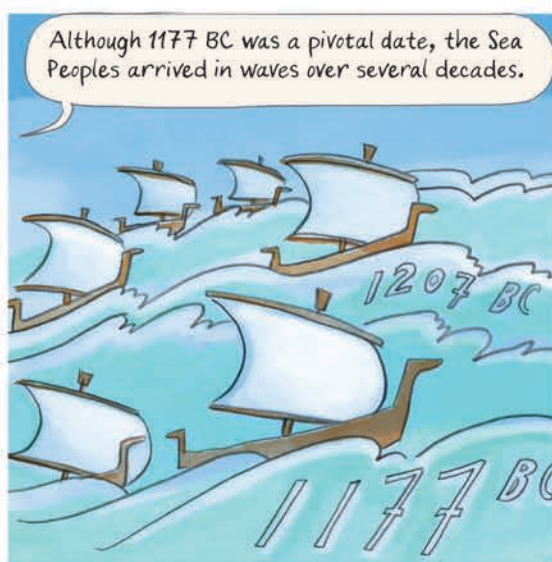
But no one place has been identified as their home.

We do know WHEN they attacked. It was during the eighth year of Ramses III's reign...





The year was
1177 BC.



“THE FOREIGN COUNTRIES MADE A CONSPIRACY IN THEIR ISLANDS... NO LAND COULD STAND BEFORE THEIR ARMS,

FROM KHATTI, QODE, CARCHEMISH, ARZAWA, AND ALASHIYA ON, BEING CUT OFF AT ONE TIME.

A CAMP WAS SET UP AT AMURRU. THEY DESOLATED ITS PEOPLE, AND ITS LAND WAS LIKE THAT WHICH HAD NEVER COME INTO BEING.

Arzawa was in Hittite lands.

The places Ramses III mentions are all known.

Khatti is the land of the Hittites.

Qode is probably located in what is now SE Turkey.

Carchemish is a well-known archaeological site.

THEY WERE COMING FORWARD TOWARDS EGYPT WHILE THE FLAME WAS BEING PREPARED FOR THEM.

THEIR CONFEDERATION WAS THE PELESET, TJEKKER, SHEKELESH, DANUNA, AND WESHESH LANDS UNITED.

THEY LAID THEIR HANDS UPON THE LANDS AS FAR AS THE CIRCUIT OF THE EARTH, THEIR HEARTS CONFIDENT AND TRUSTING.”

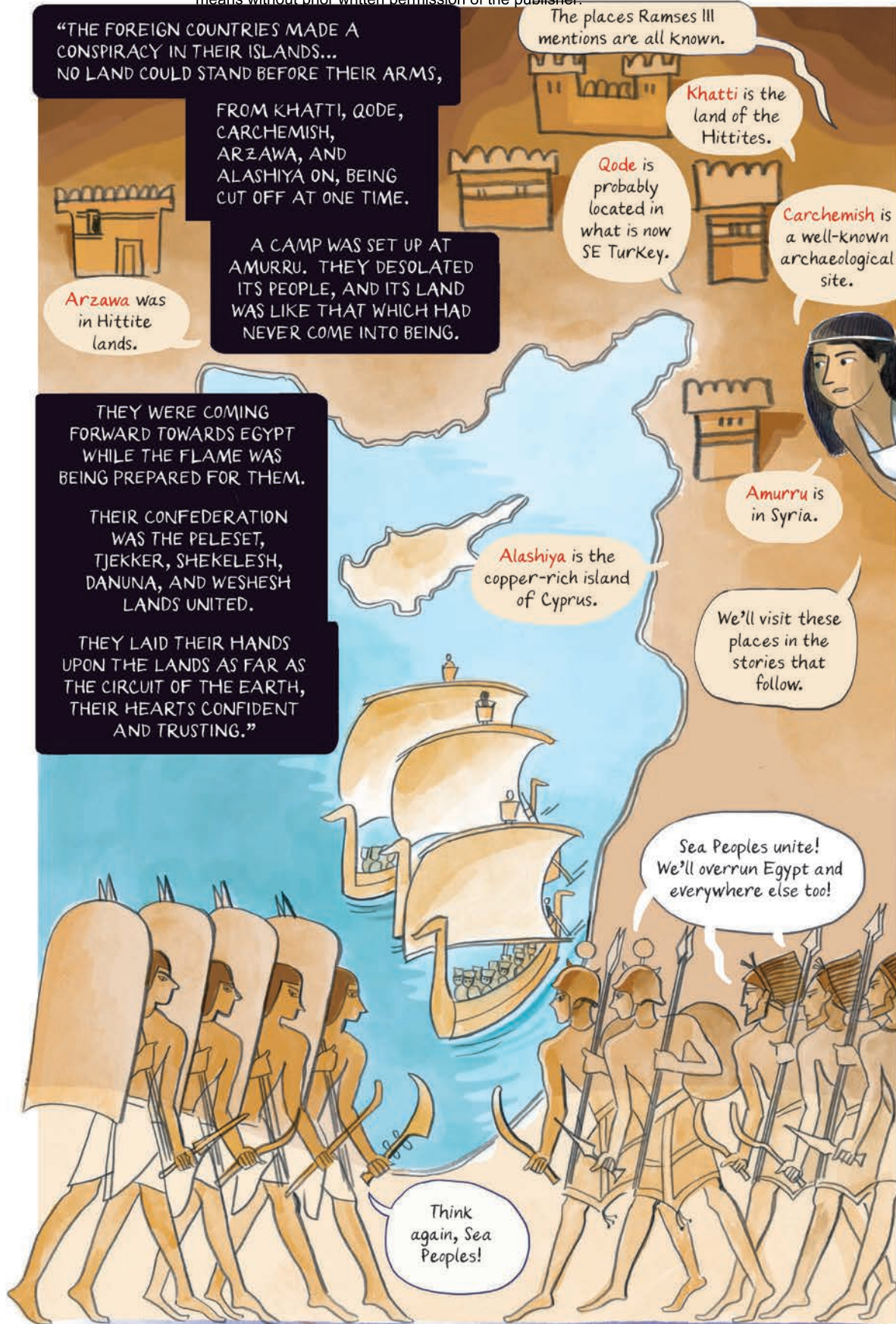
Amurru is in Syria.

Alashiya is the copper-rich island of Cyprus.

We'll visit these places in the stories that follow.

Sea Peoples unite! We'll overrun Egypt and everywhere else too!

Think again, Sea Peoples!



The six groups who made up the Sea Peoples during the 1177 BC invasion— including the five mentioned in the Medinet Habu inscription and the Shardana who are mentioned in another inscription—

are far more shadowy than the lands they overran.



They left no inscriptions of their own, and are therefore known almost entirely from Egyptian texts.

We didn't write— all our stories, up in smoke!



Luckily, the Egyptians recorded battles in great detail.

And there is also archaeological evidence for destructions at this time.



The archaeological record shows that outside of Egypt, almost all of the other powers thriving during the second millennium BC...



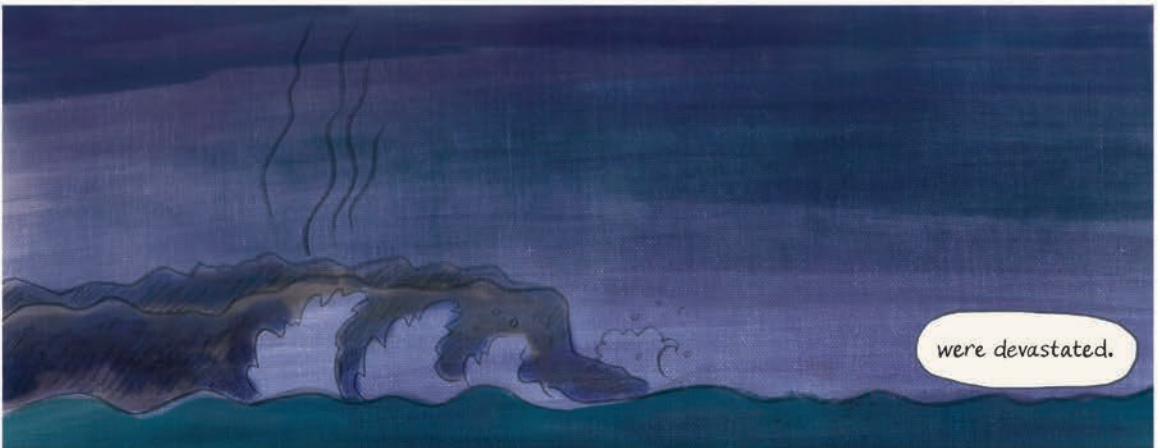
from the Aegean, Anatolia, Canaan, and Mesopotamia...



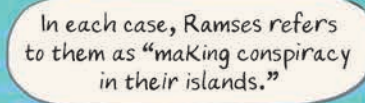
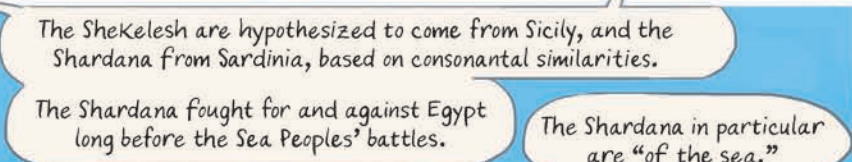
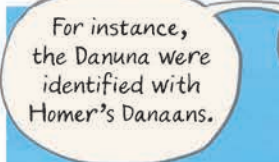
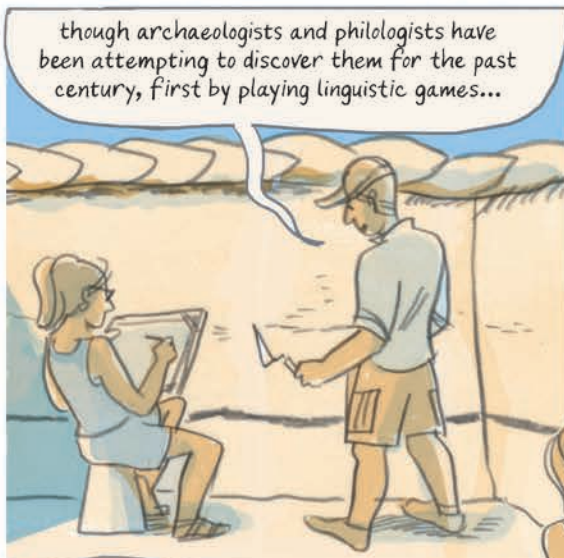
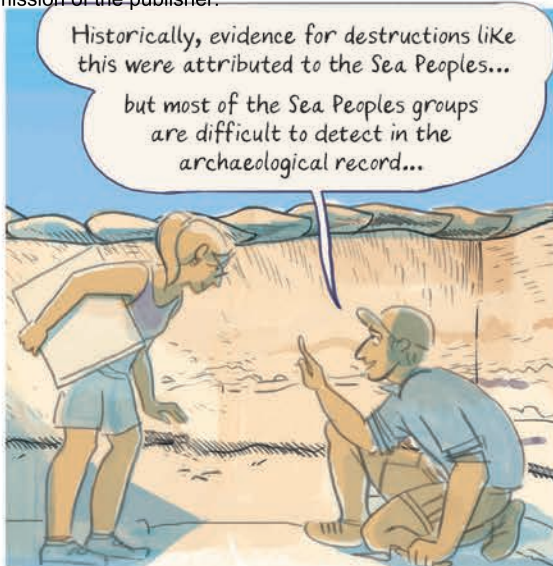
powerful civilizations of the Eastern Mediterranean...

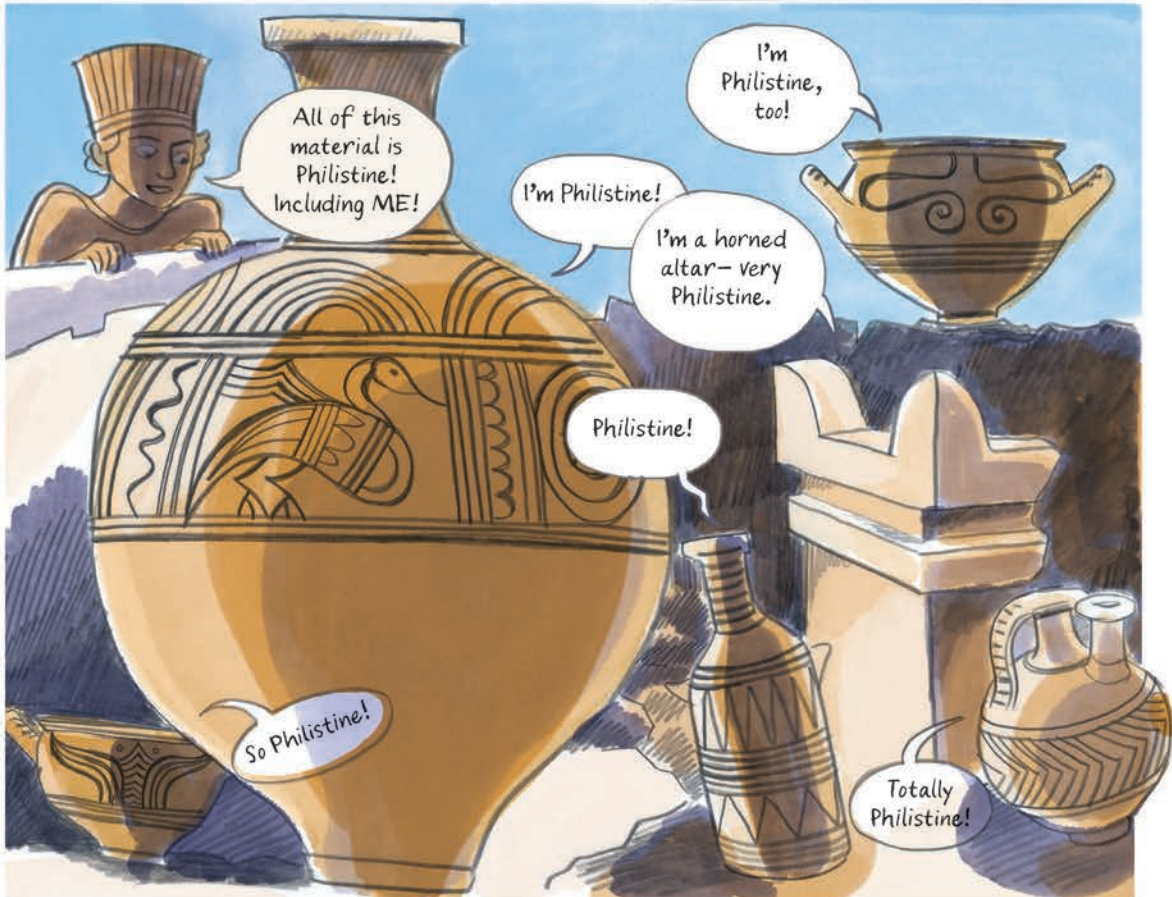
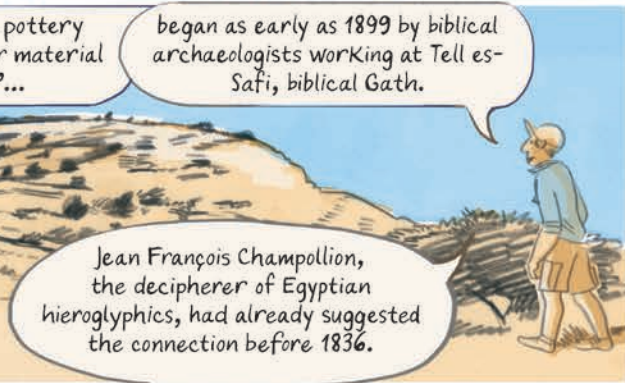
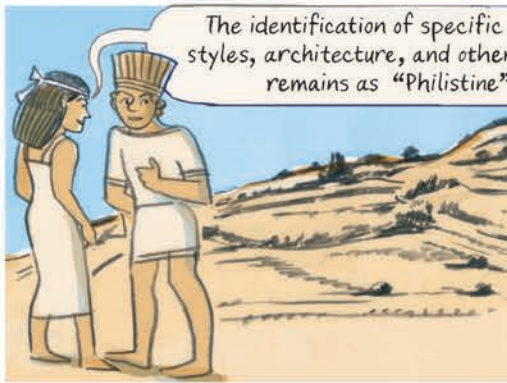
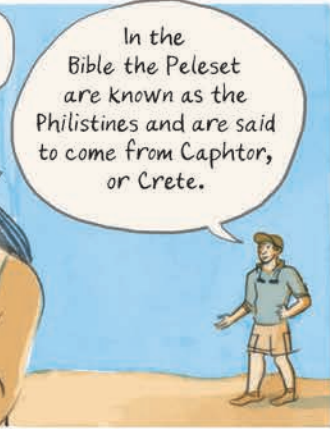
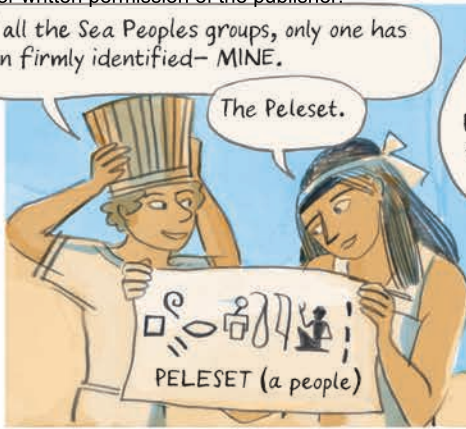


either immediately, or within less than a century...



were devastated.



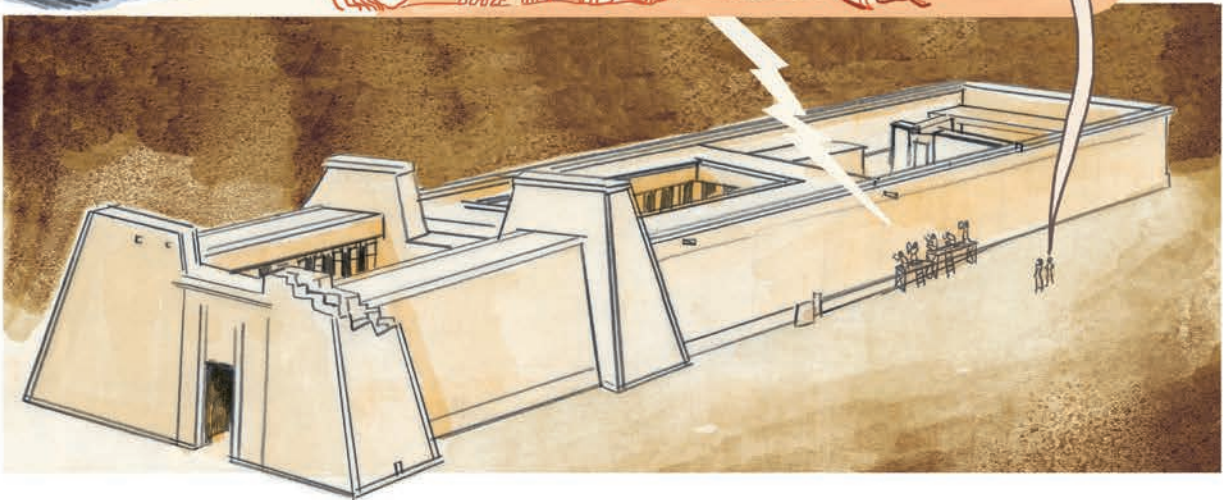




Back to the reliefs at Medinet Habu! Even though scholars do not know precisely the motivations of the invaders...

the scenes carved on the temple walls provide detailed information— the names and faces of the Sea Peoples.

This information was copied and studied by Egyptologists at the Institute for the Study of Ancient Cultures (ISAC), formerly the Oriental Institute, at the University of Chicago since the 1920s.





Epigraphic surveys conducted all over Egypt have recorded inscriptions left by pharaohs on their temples and palaces.

My colleagues and I are making painstaking copies of the hieroglyphics and complex battle scenes.

Who minds standing on a ladder all day in the sun? Not I!

Nor the Egyptians who carved all this to begin with!

ISAC published transcriptions of Medinet Habu in volumes from the 1930s to the 1950s—a valuable resource for scholars.

Without these transcriptions, the information of the temple would be lost to erosion and other damage, and would therefore be undecipherable to future generations.

For example, in creating this book!

My grandpa told us about fighting on both land and sea.

The reliefs at Medinet Habu show these battles—they probably took place in the Nile delta or nearby.

Does Ramses mention a surprise attack?

He sure does! His inscription reports the results:



“THOSE WHO REACHED MY FRONTIER, THEIR SEED IS NOT, THEIR HEART AND 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, TAIL TO HEAD.

THEIR SHIPS AND GOODS WERE AS IF FALLEN INTO THE WATER.

I HAVE MADE THE LANDS TURN BACK FROM EVEN MENTIONING EGYPT:

FOR WHEN THEY PRONOUNCE MY NAME IN THEIR LAND, THEY ARE BURNED UP.”

Ramses continues, in a document known as the Papyrus Harris, again naming his defeated enemies:

"I OVERTHREW THOSE WHO INVADED THEM FROM THEIR LANDS. I SLEW THE DANUNA [WHO WERE] IN THEIR ISLANDS, THE TJEKKER AND THE PELESET WERE MADE ASHES.



THE SHARDANA AND WESHESH OF THE SEA, THEY WERE MADE AS THOSE THAT EXIST NOT, TAKEN CAPTIVE AT ONE TIME, BROUGHT AS CAPTIVES TO EGYPT LIKE THE SAND OF THE SHORE.

I SETTLED THEM IN STRONGHOLDS BOUND IN MY NAME.

NUMEROUS WERE THEIR CLASSES LIKE HUNDRED-THOUSANDS.

I TAXED THEM ALL, IN CLOTHING AND GRAIN FROM STOREHOUSES AND GRANARIES EACH YEAR."



Battles are over!
Let's play!

Now we have a place to live!

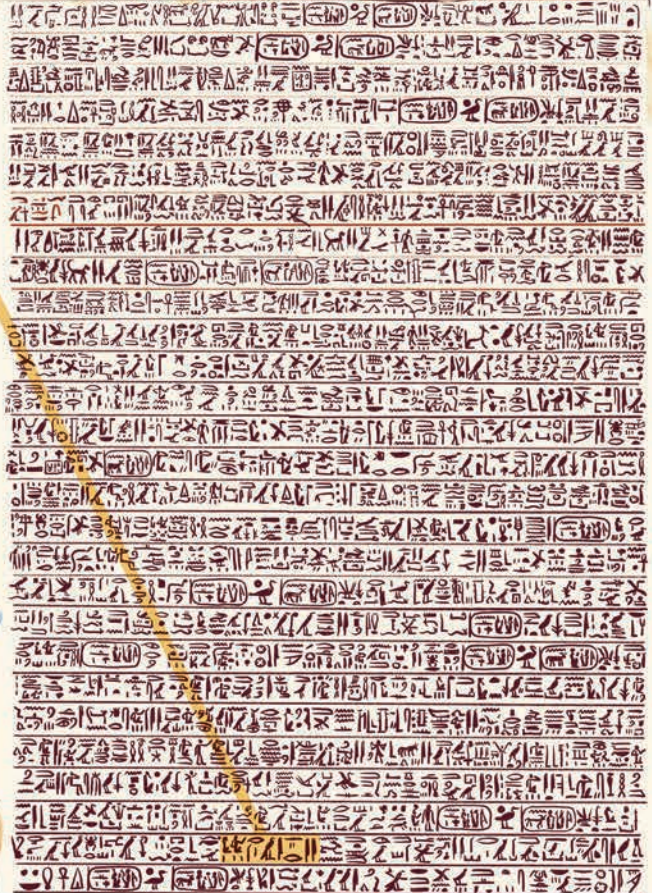
Yes, but the taxes!

Well, it's home!



This was not the first time the Egyptians fought against a collective force of "Sea Peoples." Thirty years earlier, in 1207, during Merneptah's reign, a similar coalition of groups attacked Egypt.

Merneptah is best known as the Egyptian pharaoh who first uses the term "Israel" in an inscription dating to the same year, 1207 BC.



It's the earliest occurrence of the name "Israel" outside of the Bible... and it's written with the sign that indicates a people rather than a place.

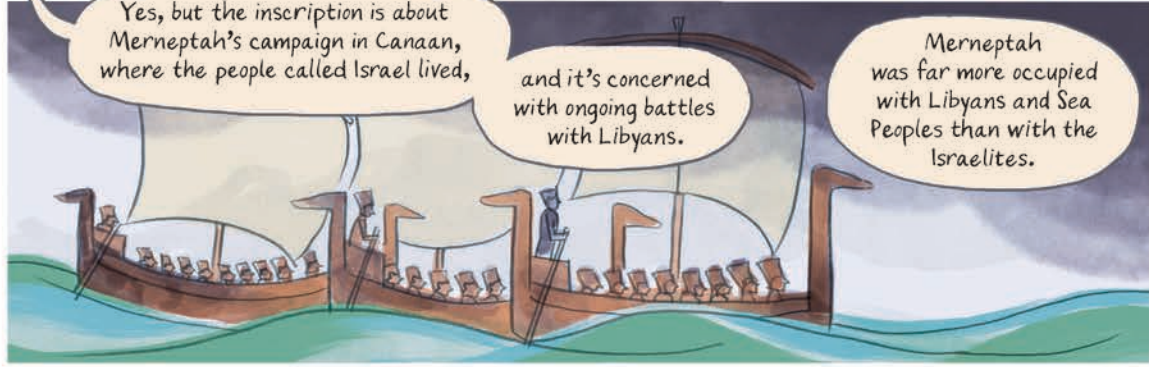
Israelites were fighting Egyptians, too?



Yes, but the inscription is about Merneptah's campaign in Canaan, where the people called Israel lived,

and it's concerned with ongoing battles with Libyans.

Merneptah was far more occupied with Libyans and Sea Peoples than with the Israelites.



In another example, in a text found at Heliopolis dated to Year 5 of Merneptah's reign:



"THE WRETCHED CHIEF OF LIBYA HAS INVADED [WITH SHEKELESH] AND EVERY FOREIGN COUNTRY WHICH IS WITH HIM, TO VIOLATE THE BORDERS OF EGYPT."

A longer inscription found at Karnak (modern Luxor) provides details about this earlier wave of incursions:

"[BEGINNING OF THE VICTORY THAT HIS MAJESTY ACHIEVED IN THE LAND OF LIBYA] EQWESH, TERESH, LUKKA, SHARDANA, SHEKELESH, NORTHERNERS COMING FROM ALL LANDS... THE THIRD SEASON, SAYING:

THE WRETCHED FALLEN CHIEF OF LIBYA... HAS FALLEN UPON THE COUNTRY OF TEHENU WITH HIS BOWMEN—

SHARDANA, SHEKELESH, LUKKA, TERESH, TAKING THE BEST OF EVERY WARRIOR AND EVERY MAN OF WAR OF HIS COUNTRY..."

These scribes kept track of every detail!

It's the whole job!



The inscription from Karnak includes a list of captives carried off from Libya, and the other peoples he brought with him.

Not only names, but numbers.

“SHERDEN, SHEKELESH, EQWESH OF THE COUNTRIES OF THE SEA, WHO HAD NO FORESKINS,

SHEKELESH 222 MEN MAKING 250 HANDS
TERESH 742 MEN MAKING 790 HANDS.
SHARDANA-[MAKING]-

[EQ]WESH WHO HAD NO FORESKINS, SLAIN, WHOSE HANDS WERE CARRIED OFF...

SHEKELESH AND TERESH WHO CAME AS ENEMIES OF LIBYA-
KEHEK AND LIBYANS, CARRIED OFF AS LIVING PRISONERS 218 MEN.”

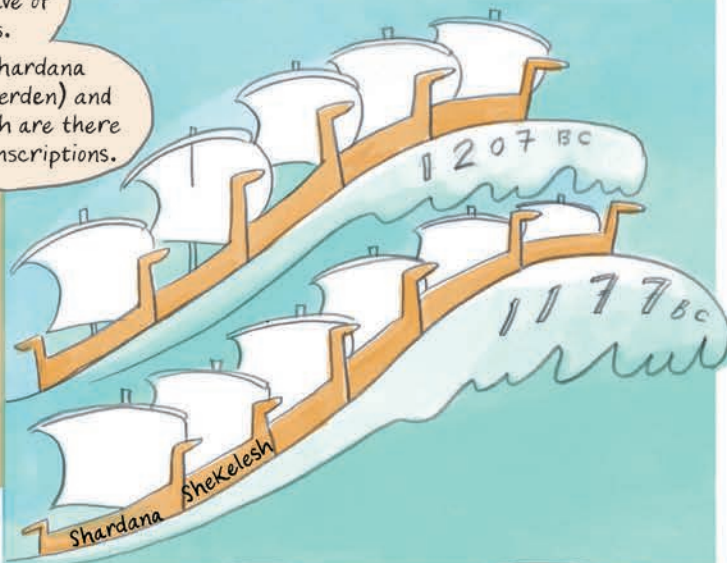


I hate to ask, but, why hands?

I'll explain on the next page.

Five groups made up this earlier wave of Sea Peoples.

The Shardana (aka Sherden) and Shekelesh are there in both inscriptions.



Yes, and they and the Eqwesh are specifically identified as “countries of the Sea.”

Hey, Shardana, are you up for a sea invasion?

Count us in, Shekelesh!

Us Eqwesh, too!

And so all five groups are together described as “NORTHERNERS FROM ALL LANDS.”

Because except for Nubia and Libya, every other country known to New Kingdom Egypt is to the north!



Some scholars have suggested that the Eqwesh are the same as Homer's Achaeans, that is, Mycenaeans from mainland Greece.

The Eqwesh may be identified with (or replaced by) the Danuna or Danaans in the later Sea Peoples' battles in 1177 BC, as Ramses described at Medinet Habu.

