

SEA PEOPLES

Destruction of the Ancient World
Amid Climate Change

by

Sanford Holst

Approx. 80,000 words

Nonfiction—History

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Overview

The Sea Peoples are surprisingly popular today due to the mysterious manner in which they destroyed almost all the ancient societies that existed before the Classical Age. Evidence of this attraction is seen in the 2014 book *1177 BC: The Year Civilization Collapsed* by Eric H. Cline, which continues to sell briskly despite having several serious shortcomings.

SEA PEOPLES is an attention-getting new book which makes these people newsworthy by showing how they were severely impacted by climate change. This is an issue roiling people all around the world today. *SEA PEOPLES* deeply explores these real-life disasters which took place when climate change struck in antiquity, and uncovers the painful social upheaval it caused.

Sanford Holst is uniquely qualified to address the elusive Sea Peoples and shed light on the fascinating experiences of these individuals who changed the course of civilization. His previous book on the Phoenicians—who lived during that same period of time—has already attracted a strong and durable audience. Holst has now completed the research necessary to do that again with the Sea Peoples.

Since *SEA PEOPLES* has the same core audience as Holst's *Phoenician Secrets*, he will actively reach out to those readers to launch and sustain this new book. In addition, his network of history-themed websites will present its 500,000 readers-per-year with attractive Sea Peoples material, ads and links motivating them to buy this new book.

In *SEA PEOPLES* Holst takes deep looks into the identity and society of these intriguing people, including the droughts that uprooted their lives. Then he tracks their battles and their connection to the men who fought in the Trojan War, as well as to the other dominant leaders of those days. After the Sea Peoples' devastating attacks we see how they cleared the way for the remarkable rise of Classical Greece, Carthage and Rome.

About the Author

Sanford Holst is the historian known for his books about intriguing people and events across Europe and the Middle East—especially the ancient Mediterranean world. He is recognized due to his appearances in the BBC series *Ancient Worlds* and other media. The academic papers he has presented at universities in the USA and overseas are the seeds which have grown into his popular books on turning points in history.

His *Phoenician Secrets* accomplished what many researchers of ancient history said was not possible—to collect and write a complete history of the secretive Phoenician people. This book has been Amazon's bestselling work on the Phoenicians from the time the first edition was published in 2005 up to the present day. The impact of this work resulted in his being elected to the prestigious Royal Historical Society in England.

Holst also wrote *Sworn in Secret*, the definitive exploration of connections between the Knights Templar and Freemasonry. This work moved past the surrounding myths and stories through the use of extensive research. It produced a satisfying and complete telling of the relationship between these two secretive societies, along with the epic events in which they participated.

In researching his books Holst has explored archives and sites from Scotland to Lebanon and from Egypt to Morocco, benefitting from the work of many local experts.

Comparable Titles

The most comparable current title is Eric H. Cline’s *1177 BC: The Year Civilization Collapsed* which was published in 2014 by Princeton University Press. That author is an archaeologist and wrote a compendium of facts, mostly archaeological, about that period of time. It is relatively short at 179 pages of text and 62 pages of back-matter. One reviewer complained of “bait and switch” because there are only five chapters in this book, and the first three are consumed with the years before the Sea Peoples appeared. Only two chapters deal with the Sea Peoples themselves. Much more is known about the Sea Peoples and the consequences of their destructive actions than is found in this book. Cline has written books on many subjects—which suggests the Sea Peoples were not an area of his expertise, and would explain why he was more knowledgeable about the earlier time period. Even so, the Sea Peoples are so intriguing to history readers that this book continues to sell quite well.

The other comparable current title is *Sea Peoples of the Bronze Age Mediterranean* written by Raffaele D’Amato and Andrea Salimbeti, along with illustrator Giuseppe Rava. It was published in 2015 by Osprey Publishing. At only 64 pages, this book is filled with military-oriented illustrations. It is a boutique book enjoying only modest sales.

An older comparable title deserves mention because it was so excellent in its day. *The Sea Peoples: Warriors of the Ancient Mediterranean* by Nancy K. Sandars was published in 1978 by Thames & Hudson. This was not only a very satisfying read but was widely cited at the time. Unfortunately it is now hopelessly out of date due to the many revelatory discoveries that have taken place since then. Sandars was 101 years old when she passed away in 2015, so there is no chance of an updated edition.

In the area of climate change there are a number of strongly-selling books due to the public's avid level of interest. While these books provide many projections as to what might happen in the future, there is so much uncertainty that opinions vary widely. Now *SEA PEOPLES* changes the discussion by showing actual events in history where we graphically see entire countries being destroyed as a result. This opens a new area in the climate change debates.

The current top-selling books on climate change include:

The Uninhabitable Earth: Life After Warming by David Wallace-Wells (Tim Duggan Books/Crown Publishing, 2019).

This Changes Everything: Capitalism vs. the Climate by Naomi Klein (Simon & Schuster, 2014).

The Thinking Person's Guide to Climate Change by Robert Henson (American Meteorological Society, 2nd edition 2019).

The Politically Incorrect Guide to Climate Change by Marc Morano (Regnery Publishing, 2018).

Climate Change: What Everyone Needs to Know by Joseph Romm (Oxford University Press, 2nd edition 2018).

Drawdown: The Most Comprehensive Plan Ever Proposed to Reverse Global Warming by Paul Hawken, editor (Penguin Books, 2017).

The new *SEA PEOPLES* book does not supplant any of the above books—it simply swims beside them through these book-buying-rich waters. In a similar manner *The Sixth Extinction: An Unnatural History* by Elizabeth Kolbert (Henry Holt, 2014) took a longer view of the extinction of species and was a *New York Times* bestseller.

Marketing and Promotion

Activating the built-in network of history buffs who helped propel *Phoenician Secrets* will generate a firm base of good reviews and sales.

This begins with the author’s high-traffic collection of history websites, which have top rankings on Google for key search-words related to his books. Ads and links for buying *SEA PEOPLES* will be spread across all of these sites. In addition, a new website dedicated to Sea Peoples will be established this same way to attract high visibility on search engines. To see this today, go to Google and type in “Phoenician colonies.” The author’s flagship website, www.phoenician.org, comes up as the #1 listing. Type in “Phoenician academic papers.” Also #1. Many other searches related to the Phoenicians (their boats, alphabet, cedar, etc.) find the author’s web pages listed in the top four results.

The visitors to these high-ranking web pages on the Sea Peoples will be rewarded with pieces of good information from the author’s research, and attractive pictures. Each page will also contain highly visible promotional material for the *SEA PEOPLES* book, along with links to Amazon, Barnes & Noble, etc., so the book can be easily purchased.

Another marketing effort will reach out to members of the Lebanese-American community, since the earlier book and *SEA PEOPLES* both explore critical moments in the lives of their Phoenician ancestors. Holst is actively involved in meetings with people in this network, including many community influencers.

Even before the launch date, review copies will be delivered to social influencers involved with climate change. This will include people as diverse as Naomi Klein, Michael Bloomberg, Greta Thunberg, Gavin Newsom, Michelle Rodriguez, Mike Hudema, Al Gore, Anne Hidalgo, Elon Musk, Heidi Cullen, Leonardo DiCaprio, Catherine McKenna, George Monbiot and Annie Leonard. Follow-up activities will take place as appropriate.

Sanford Holst is active in:

- The online history community – 500,000 readers each year
- The Lebanese American community – 3 million members
- The Climate Reality Project – 945,000 members/followers
- Facebook “History of the Ancient World” – 468,000 followers
- Goodreads “Ancient-history” shelf – 102,000 readers

The author will be accepting return-invitations to speaking engagements, podcasts and other media outlets at which his *SEA PEOPLES* book will be publicized.

The following themes are among the hot button topics to be presented to interviewers and media for discussion.

-- The actual impact of **climate change** has happened several times in history, and was particularly spectacular with the Sea Peoples—launching them on their disruptive attacks and causing widespread social upheaval.

-- Dealing with heavy **migration and immigration** is not something new—in fact disasters have occurred in the past when these pressures were not relieved and the dam burst. This happened with the Sea Peoples in the Mediterranean area and nations literally collapsed. But some nations did not fall at that time, so there are good ways to handle these dire situations.

-- The original source of **conflicts in the Middle East** is now clearer than ever before and ripe for discussion. Also worth considering are past actions which helped to mitigate those confrontations.

-- It is time to take a closer look at the historical basis for competing claims by **Palestinians and Israelis** for the land they both see as their birthright.

Discussions are under way to produce a series of You Tube videos, ten minutes in length, which involve the Sea Peoples from many different directions. The first videos to be produced would

be: Climate Change in Antiquity...Trojan War Heritage...Last Days of the Mycenaeans...Who Were the Sea Peoples?... and Origin of the Palestinians. Additional videos would be created based upon feedback obtained from the first ones produced. All of the videos would contain a direct referral to this *SEA PEOPLES* book.

In addition to those focused activities, all the usual promotional activities will be performed by the author, including social media, book signings, other speaking engagements, etc.

Detailed Table of Contents

Chapter One

A brief **introduction** is followed by a deeply-moving account of tragedy in the middle of the Sea Peoples attacks. The king of Ugarit on the coast of Syria wrote an agonizing letter to his counterpart at Cyprus telling how his land had been raided and brutalized. His actual words are presented, showing the wealth of information available and the shocking impact of what was happening. The disastrous effect of climate change on these people, and its potential effect on us today, is put into clear perspective. The remainder of this chapter presents some of the most intriguing people and events explored in this book, with areas of controversy and drama brought to the fore.

SECTION I: WE WHO ARE ABOUT TO DIE SALUTE YOU

Chapter Two

The Mediterranean world is seen as it existed before the actions by the Sea Peoples. Powerful nations competed daily for wealth and influence. Then a series of droughts caused widespread

suffering in the poorer corners of this world. [Note: This is followed by a chapter on each of the major societies to be destroyed or dramatically changed by the coming attacks. That allows the reader to enjoy the full context of the rapid-fire attacks as they happen.]

Chapter Three

The **Mycenaeans** of ancient Greece are shown in their palaces surrounded by great artworks and the wealth brought by extensive trade. But they also enjoyed fighting battles with each other and with outsiders, leading up to the Trojan War.

Chapter Four

The **Phoenicians** of Lebanon plied their sea trade as they had done for many years, but were being squeezed by the powerful Mycenaean sea traders. They were also caught between Egyptian armies from the south and Hittite armies from the north, both of which threatened to take over the rich Phoenician trade. The Lebanese traders' days appeared to be numbered.

Chapter Five

The **Hittites** of Anatolia—modern day Turkey—had an empire in the eastern part of that vast peninsula and were rapidly expanding. A military-minded society, they constantly defended themselves from incursions by rural people from Western Anatolia, and from tribes in the Black Sea area on their northern border. Even the Mycenaeans made irritating raids from the west. But the Hittites' attention was on the south, where they desired Lebanon and more of Syria.

Chapter Six

The rural **people of Western Anatolia** and the fringes of the **Black Sea** led a hardscrabble existence, without great cities or wealth-producing trade. Their wealthy Mycenaean neighbors to the west and prosperous Hittites to the east were able to handle the good years and bad years, but for these rural people their farmlands were dry and life was becoming more difficult.

Chapter Seven

The **Egyptians** had emerged from a time of chaos and now had a flourishing series of New Kingdom dynasties. They had conquered what is today known as Israel and Lebanon, but so far had given the Phoenicians almost complete freedom in exchange for rich annual tribute. They maintained a strong, land-based army to fight Libyans to the west of Egypt, Nubians to the south, and the Hittites as well as others to the far north.

SECTION II: THE DESTRUCTION

Chapter Eight

Sea Peoples joined with the Libyans to make their first attack on Egypt in 1208 BC. These battles were fought over the fertile farmlands at the mouth of the Nile River. Egyptian king Merneptah documented his victory on a commemorative stele which gave the first description of the Sea Peoples.

Chapter Nine

The **Trojan War** took place, with the Mycenaeans conducting a ten-year siege of Troy. Lands ruled by the city of Troy held control of the Dardanelles waterway connecting the Black Sea to

the Aegean Sea, giving it a position of power. The Mycenaeans drained their own cities of their best soldiers to obtain this great victory. The fall of Troy seriously impacted the Sea Peoples.

Chapter Ten

Shortly after their victory at Troy, the major **Mycenaean cities** and their palaces were destroyed by attacks from the sea. At one time this loss was blamed on a “Dorian invasion” but it is now widely agreed that was not the case. Ships belonging to Sea Peoples were active in the Aegean Sea, Mycenaean trade collapsed and its society teetered on the brink.

Chapter Eleven

The **Hittite empire** was weakened by Sea Peoples attacking at its seaports along the Mediterranean Sea. Then in 1180 BC its capital city was overrun by hordes of people moving by land. The leading Hittite cities were destroyed and not rebuilt.

Chapter Twelve

The hordes of people who had swept over the Hittite lands then continued south into **Canaan**. But they stayed to the east of the Phoenician cities and left them untouched. This has become one of the most intriguing mysteries of that time. The mass of migrating people destroyed all the other cities they encountered in Syria and Israel.

Chapter Thirteen

The ultimate Sea Peoples battles occurred in **Egypt** during 1177 BC. Pharaoh Ramses III sent part of his army northward to stop the advancing hordes of people at Gaza, on the Egyptian-

Israeli border. After turning them back, he let them keep the lands they had taken, and made no move to regain his previous holdings in Israel and Lebanon. A separate attack by the Sea Peoples was turned back at the mouth of the Nile. With this, the fighting came to an end. Now the entire Mediterranean region faced a new world of disorder.

SECTION III: THE AFTERMATH

Chapter Fourteen

What happened to the Sea Peoples? Some of the biggest controversies about the Sea Peoples concerned where they came from and where they went. With all the evidence that is now available, the answers have become much clearer. There were multiple tribal groups involved, so there are multiple answers, with people settling everywhere from Palestine in the East to Sardinia in the West. Each of these groups and their settlements are seen in detail.

Chapter Fifteen

What happened to the Mycenaeans? We are able to follow the fall of their homeland into the Greek Dark Age, along with evidence concerning migrations by some of their population to Cyprus and Palestine.

Chapter Sixteen

What happened to the Phoenicians? With their cities untouched by the Sea Peoples, the Phoenicians began expanding their sea trade without opposition across the Mediterranean. Their good relationships with the Sea Peoples made them strong trading partners at each place the Sea

Peoples settled. Phoenician colonies were established all around the Mediterranean Sea and even on the Atlantic coasts of Spain and Morocco.

Chapter Seventeen

What happened to the Hittite empire? It was totally crushed, with only a small rump group left on the borderland between modern-day Turkey and Syria. Eventually, even that small group passed into the pages of history.

Chapter Eighteen

What happened to Egypt? The Egyptian kings prospered for a time and engaged in lavish tomb-building projects. But the loss of land to the Sea Peoples and the disruption of trade routes eventually caused economic difficulties, throwing their society into chaos and revolt. That led to the end of the New Kingdom in 1069 BC.

SECTION IV: FROM DARKNESS TO LIGHT

Chapter Nineteen

The **Sea Peoples** in their various locations had small differences of culture as a result of coming from different tribes. But they shared an overall distaste for cities and higher culture, preferring rustic, rural life. This was true all across Palestine, Sicily and Sardinia. Cyprus was a special case in that the rustic Sea Peoples were soon overwhelmed by cultured Mycenaean migrants who came later—which caused the island to be split between those two cultures. Israel was another special case, where King David conquered extensive lands for the Jewish people around 1010 BC. This gave strong roots to these people who had roamed the land for hundreds of years.

Jewish culture was clearly distinct from the Sea-Peoples-influenced culture of the people around them.

Chapter Twenty

The **Greeks** began to emerge from their Dark Age around 800 BC, with small city-states being revived on both sides of the Aegean Sea. Seeking to restore the trade that had fueled them before, Greek colonies were created in many places, including at Syracuse on the island of Sicily in 733 BC. With this new-found prosperity came the ability to support their fine arts again.

Chapter Twenty One

The **Phoenicians** added one more colony to their widespread holdings in 814 BC, and that was Carthage. This settlement in North Africa—at present day Tunisia—was destined to grow into the largest of all the Phoenician cities. It also would take a leading role among the Phoenician colonies in the Western Mediterranean. By 550 BC, Carthage was strong enough to take its armies to Sicily and support the local descendants of the Sea Peoples in their fight against the Greek cities which were now firmly established on the eastern side of the island.

Chapter Twenty Two

The city of **Rome** came into existence around 750 BC and came under the influence of Etruscan kings. But then they set themselves free and formed the Roman Republic in 509 BC. That same year, the Romans signed a treaty with Carthage to secure a share of the trade in their region. This brought them early wealth to fuel military conquests. Strangely enough, the treaty prohibited Rome from trading with the Sea Peoples homelands in Sicily and Sardinia.

SECTION V: THE GOLDEN AGE

Chapter Twenty Three

Classical Greece experienced its golden age up to the year 300 BC, with magnificent temples such as the Parthenon sponsored by Pericles, transcendent philosophy such as the thoughts of Socrates, moments of military glory at Marathon and Thermopylae, uncanny oracles such as the one at Delphi, and monumental gold-and-ivory statues by Phidias in Athens and Olympia. Two homes of the Sea Peoples—at Cyprus and Sicily—figured prominently in the great events of those days.

Chapter Twenty Four

Classical Rome grew in power during the Punic Wars with the Phoenicians, which ended in 146 BC with the destruction of Carthage and the capture of its colonies. Rome's Macedonian Wars in the Greek world also ended with Roman victory in 146 BC. This gave rise to the Roman Empire which included all the lands of the Sea Peoples, Phoenicians and Greeks.

Chapter Twenty Five

The final touch. With all these unique and memorable events in front of us we see how the catastrophes caused by droughts and the displaced Sea Peoples unwittingly plowed under the old civilizations of the Mediterranean area and left a fresh, fertile field on which the golden ages of Greece and Rome could rise and flourish. During this time some massive changes occurred. For example, if the syllable-writing of the Mycenaeans had not perished with them, would the way have been open for use of a simple alphabet—which made it possible for many more people to

write? If the alphabet had arrived later, or not at all, what would have happened to the Classical philosophies, dramatic plays, histories and literature that came down to us? It is hard to imagine what our world would have been like without those gifts and many others from Greek and Roman times.

Sample Chapter

Chapter Eighteen appears on the following pages.

Chapter Eighteen

Egypt in the After-Glow of Victory

As we have seen, fierce attacks by the drought-stricken Sea Peoples were turned back by powerful Egyptian armies in two major confrontations. The pharaoh known as Merneptah accomplished the first of those victories in 1208 BC, and Ramses III added the final triumph in 1177 BC.^{1,2} So naturally one would assume the ultimate victory allowed King Ramses to bask in the glory, prestige and captured wealth traditionally won by such an accomplishment. And at first he seems to have done so, ordering massive public works projects to be built along with a luxurious burial temple for himself.³ But then strange things began to happen.

Only three years after the Sea Peoples were turned away, Libyan tribes plunged into Egypt from the west and pushed as far forward as the Nile Delta before being beaten back. Ramses' capable ancestors had extended Egyptian territory in all directions, which was a great accomplishment in their day. But it also meant Ramses was now opposed by hostile neighbors on every side. That unfortunate situation imposed the cost of maintaining armies and conducting ongoing campaigns. Since these battles were defensive and brought Egypt no additional territory, there was no lucrative booty to offset the considerable expenses of these military operations.

Even worse, the Sea Peoples had imposed a serious loss on the Egyptians. This has rarely been acknowledged despite its impact being clearly seen. The rich lands of Canaan which are today called Israel, Lebanon and parts of Syria had been stripped away from Egyptian control by the hordes of Sea Peoples.⁴ Many of those people had marched south in vast numbers alongside ox-carts loaded with their families and possessions.⁵ They overwhelmed the small populations



Fig. 52 The Sea Peoples, as recorded at Medinet Habu.

they encountered and took whatever property they wanted.⁶ The loss of tribute from those lands—and especially from the prosperous Phoenicians of Lebanon—immediately began to shrink the revenue flowing into the Egyptian treasury. Yet the lavish public works across Egypt continued.

To appreciate the enormity of the pharaoh's power at this moment in time, consider that Egypt was the most populous country in the Eastern Mediterranean. And it had been so for a long time. Several thousand years earlier the lush, green plains of Northern Africa had turned into deserts, driving people from all those lands to the Nile River. This exceedingly long valley never ran out of water. And it had annual flooding which covered the farmlands on both sides of the river with fresh, fertile soil. It was a tremendous bread basket, and its population multiplied. This brought massive wealth to the king who stood at the apex of power in Egypt. So while the king of another land might build a single monumental building or temple in his lifetime, the pharaoh's power let him do far more.

At the famed Karnak temple precinct near the city of Luxor—which the Greeks knew as Thebes—Ramses III built the magnificent Temple of Khonsu. It stood about 200 feet long and 90 feet wide, almost the size of the Parthenon in Athens.⁷ The temple was built with massive columns and stood 45 feet high, encompassing rooms dedicated to worship and riverboat shrines for the gods Amun, Mut and Khonsu.

But that was only the beginning. The *Great Harris Papyrus* described many other temple endowments made by Ramses all across Egypt, including buildings at Memphis, Pi-Ramesses, Athribis, Hermopolis, This, Abydos, Coptos and El Kab.

But his most monumental project would be the grand mortuary temple where he planned to be buried and have his name perpetuated for eternity. This vast edifice was called Medinet

Habu and it was largest in the whole Luxor region, being eclipsed only by the extensive Karnak complex which was built by many kings. Medinet Habu stood just across the river from Luxor.

To build this magnificent monument Ramses appropriated a small chapel built by Queen Hatshepsut and King Thutmose III on that site. He then merged it into a large collection of new colonnades, rooms and courtyards which were ultimately surrounded by a thick defensive structure on all sides. Altogether his temple complex was about twice the size of the Acropolis in Athens. Inside this ongoing maze of architecture was about 75,000 square feet of decorated walls.

The Sea Peoples appeared prominently on those engraved stone walls and columns because Ramses III gained much of his reputation for military prowess from having defeated these fierce adversaries. The men of each tribe among the Sea Peoples were shown with their identifiable battle gear, clothing, physical features and other distinguishing characteristics. The hieroglyphics beside these hewn images gave the name of their tribe and the details of how they were subdued by the pharaoh and his armies. Many of the intricate details we know about the Sea Peoples come from these inscriptions.

So it is immediately evident that a vast amount of wealth was being spent in Egypt. It was not only going to military defense but to these lavish public projects which helped elevate the name and reputation of King Ramses. But it was wealth his land could ill afford.

The loss of tribute and trade caused by the Sea Peoples began to have a disastrous effect. The pharaoh's reserves were spread so thinly that he was actually confronted by the first recorded labor strike in history.

The master craftsmen responsible for building Ramses' luxurious temples and furnishing them with colossal statues and fine engravings were no longer being fully paid or fed as they had



Fig. 53 Ramses III being crowned.

been promised. So they stopped work.⁸ The projects being raised by these men had national visibility, so this was a huge blow to the king's public image. His administrators were ordered to scramble and find the wherewithal to compensate these men, so the matter was eventually resolved.

But this public incident put a bright spotlight on the Egyptian people's unrest and their dissatisfaction with what was happening to the average person's quality of life. The country was struggling.

Even so, the workers' strike was just a slap on the wrist compared to what came next. One of Ramses' wives and a swath of influential government officials began actively conspiring to kill the king and put the woman's son on the throne. This plot became known as the Harem Conspiracy.⁹

Ramses' primary wife, Tyti, had given him a son and the boy was favored by his father to succeed him on the throne. But a secondary wife named Tiye had also given him a son, albeit younger, and wanted her own boy to be king. There was nothing unusual about that—it must have happened more than a thousand times in history. But the strange part was how many government officials were willing to join in this rebellion against the leader of their country. We know many details about this sordid affair and the people who were involved because it was fully recorded on an exceptionally long roll of papyrus known as the Judicial Papyrus of Turin.¹⁰

The most surprising aspect of this conspiracy was that it actually succeeded—to an extent. King Ramses III had his throat cut by the conspirators while he was at Medinet Habu attending a festival.

But the elder son escaped. And he quickly convened a court of law against the rebels. The papyrus spells out the fate of the 32 men and 6 women involved in the plot, many of whom

accepted the chance to commit suicide rather than receive other punishments, including death. In a strange development, a young man who died at that time was buried with Ramses in his funeral chamber. Since the younger man was mummified in a way that suggested punishment, it is believed that he was the rebel son, and died by suicide or poison.

This striking down of the living pharaoh came to epitomize the free-fall into chaos which characterized the king's short line of successors. Their lack of funds and apparent lack of military ability made this a slippery slope.

Ramses IV ignored all the danger signs around him and immediately launched several great public projects of his own.¹¹ Among them was a massive addition to his father's Temple of Khonsu and the laying of a foundation for his own mortuary temple. But he seems to have died before his burial place was completed, having ruled Egypt for only six and a half years.

His successor, Ramses V, was king for only four years.¹² During that brief time a major financial scandal broke out involving the priesthood. This was important because the Wilbour Papyrus showed most of Egypt's land in those days was owned by priests of the Amun temples. These were the same people who controlled the country's finances. The pharaohs were rapidly losing control.

Ramses VI ruled for eight years, in a manner of speaking.¹³ Without any military achievements or other accomplishments, his major activity seems to have been taking over works by earlier kings and carving his name onto them, then claiming the monuments and buildings were built by his order.

The reign of Ramses VII was only seven years.¹⁴ Not much is known about his rule except that grain prices soared to new heights and the country's turmoil continued to grow.

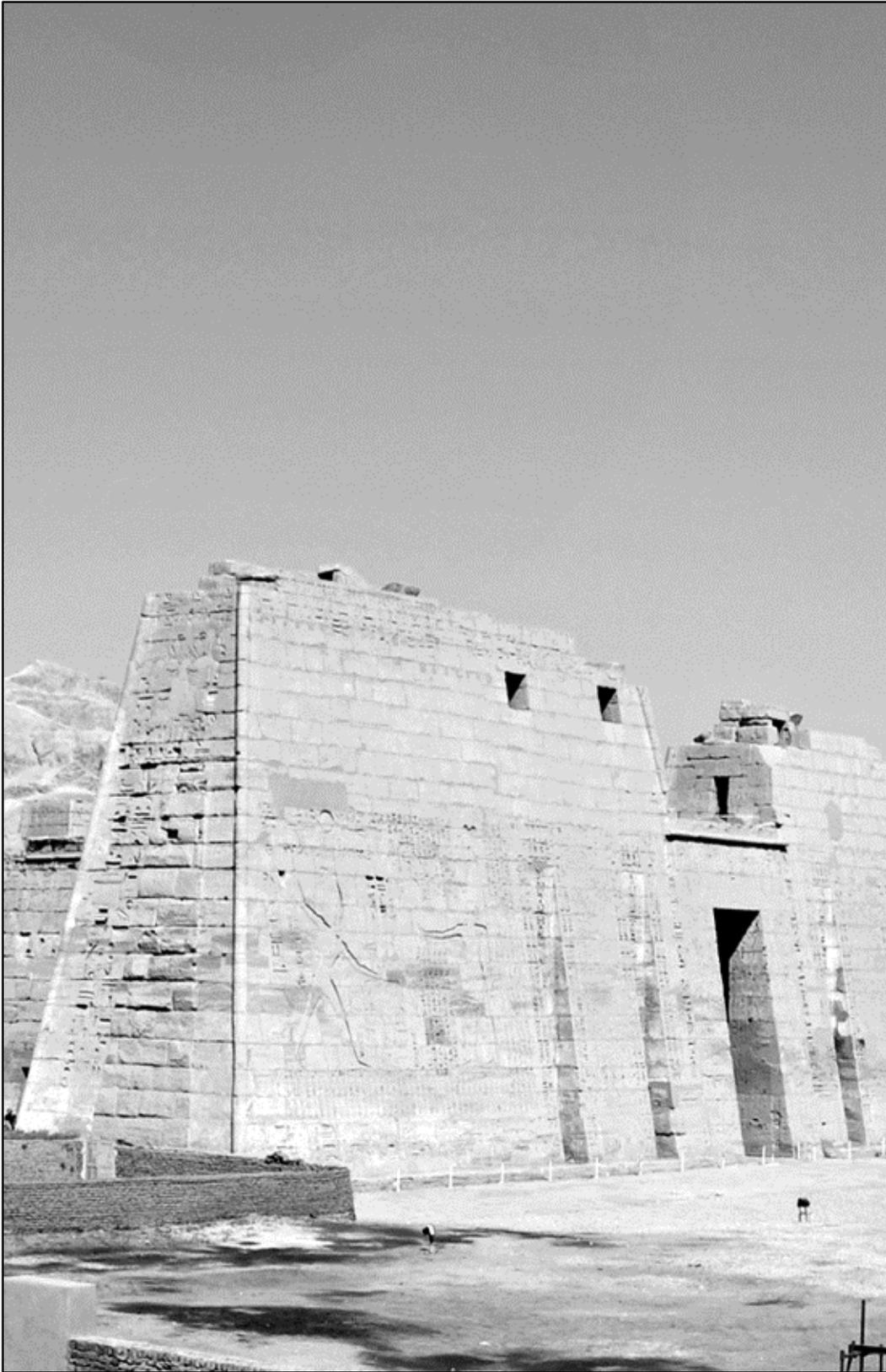


Fig. 54 Entrance to the Temple of Medinet Habu.

King Ramses VIII ruled for only one year and died in obscurity.¹⁵

Ramses IX served as pharaoh for 18 years, but other than that did little to arrest the decline of his country.¹⁶ This was evidenced by the stunning series of grave robberies that broke out during his tenure, with some the king's relatives being among the victims. This flagrant act of disrespect showed the thieves felt free to do what would have been unthinkable in the times when kings had a firmer grip on the land.

His successor, Ramses X, ruled for four years.¹⁷ Inscriptions suggest his country lost the last of whatever authority it once had over Nubian lands to the south of Egypt.

The final king of the twentieth dynasty was Ramses XI who held his office for 29 years.¹⁸ But he was not known to have done much with that authority. Given the raids and instability in the middle of the country, this last king arranged to be buried in the North, possibly near Memphis. That proved to be significant, because the accepted rule of law seemed to be that whoever buried the pharaoh became his successor. In this case the governor of the North, a man named Smendes, buried the king. So Smendes claimed the kingship. But he had no control at all over the South, where the High Priest of Amun established de facto rulership from Luxor.

So one hundred years after the last battle against the Sea People, the New Kingdom period of Egypt was dead. And the land had fallen into chaos. This once-powerful country would remain splintered into many spheres of influence—and in some periods be ruled by foreigners from outside its borders—for the next four hundred years.

So we see the rosy, traditional picture of “Great Egyptian Victory over the Sea Peoples” did not reveal the whole story. It was certainly true that the victory by Ramses III in 1177 BC

would be his moment of greatest glory. He said as much by making it the centerpiece of his magnificent displays adorning the temple of Medinet Habu.

But those same Sea Peoples had stripped away the lands of Canaan which previously paid rich tribute to him. And that loss was undoubtedly the largest black mark on his reign. For a man skilled at warfare, the desire to march forth and recover those lands must have been an ache inside him which he could never satisfy. The weakness of his treasury, the need to repel armed incursions from other neighbors, and the growing sense of unrest and rebellion within his domain seemed to stymie any attempt to mount such a campaign. And all of his successors were far less able to make any such effort.

Yet perhaps that was just as well. Because if an Egyptian leader had somehow been able to reverse the Sea Peoples' gains in Canaan, it could have destroyed many of the benefits later generations were about to receive from the changes made by these unruly people.

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Annotations for this chapter

- ¹ Barnett, R. D. “The Sea Peoples” *Cambridge Ancient History* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1975), Vol. II, Part 2, p. 366.
- ² The Egyptian king-name Ramses is also spelled as Rameses or Ramesses in various sources.
- ³ Breasted, James Henry *Ancient records of Egypt: historical documents from the earliest times to the Persian conquest* (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1906), pp. 1-456.
- ⁴ Sandars, Nancy K. *The Sea Peoples: Warriors of the Ancient Mediterranean* (London: Thames & Hudson, 1978). Sandars and others refer to the invaders as the “Land and Sea Peoples” because so many of them arrived from neighboring lands by foot.
- ⁵ Cifola, Barbara “Ramses III and the Sea Peoples: A Structural Analysis of the Medinet Habu Inscriptions” *Orientalia* (Rome: Gregorian Biblical Press, 1988), Vol. 57, No. 3, pp. 275-306.
- ⁶ It was not unusual in antiquity for public monuments and records to exaggerate the deeds of kings and generals, and the Egyptians were no exception. For example, in the battle against the Sea Peoples, Egyptian inscriptions claimed the pharaoh was “a far-striding hero, conscious of his might, valiant to lead his army in the day of battle” regardless of whether he set foot on the battlefield. Those same inscriptions claimed that the victorious pharaoh settled groups of the Sea Peoples in his lands above Gaza. In reality, the Sea Peoples had taken that land by force. The pharaoh seems to have simply acknowledged that reality and let the territory go. Egypt exercised no visible rule over those lands thereafter.
- ⁷ *Ramesses III Temple*, UCLA Digital Karnak Project, <http://dlib.etc.ucla.edu/projects/Karnak/feature/RamessesIIITemple> (retrieved 9/17/19).
- ⁸ Edgerton, William F. “The Strikes in Ramses III's Twenty-Ninth Year” *JNES* 10, No. 3 (July 1951), pp. 137-145.
- ⁹ Redford, Susan *The Harem Conspiracy* (Ithaca, NY: Northern Illinois Press, 2002).
- ¹⁰ This papyrus now resides in the Museo Egizio in Turin, Italy, from which it received its name.
- ¹¹ Peden, A. J. *The Reign of Ramesses IV* (Aris & Phillips Ltd, 1994).
- ¹² Clayton, Peter *Chronology of the Pharaohs* (London: Thames & Hudson, 1994), p.168.
- ¹³ Amer, Amin A. M. A. “Reflections on the reign of Ramesses VI” *The Journal of Egyptian Archaeology* (1985), 71: 66–70.
- ¹⁴ Shaw, Ian, ed. *The Oxford History of Ancient Egypt*. (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2000). p. 481.
- ¹⁵ Grimal, Nicolas *A History of Ancient Egypt* (Blackwell Books, 1992), pp.288-289.
- ¹⁶ Rice, Michael *Who's Who in Ancient Egypt*, (Oxford: Routledge, 2001), p.147.
- ¹⁷ Clayton, Peter *Chronology of the Pharaohs* (London: Thames & Hudson, 2006), p.167.
- ¹⁸ Dodson, Aidan and Dyan Hilton *The Complete Royal Families of Ancient Egypt* (London: Thames & Hudson, 2004), p.191.