

Chapter 5 Ugarit & Troy

The Problem of Ugarit

Two distinct peoples dominated the north-eastern Mediterranean coastline during the heyday of the Hittite Empire, that is, in the time interval from Suppiluliumas I to Suppiluliumas II. The northern and central coastal regions, those which lay east of the Orontes and the Lebanon range and ran roughly from Beirut to Simyra, were part of the state of Amurru, well known from the Amarna letters when it was dominated by a troublesome tyrant named Aziru. Further north, extending to the Anatolian coastline, thus bordering the Hittite kingdom itself, lay the state controlled by the port city of Ugarit.

Our interest in Ugarit in the next chapter is restricted to its final days in the middle of the 8th century. Here our attention remains focussed a century earlier.

In the last chapter, when we discussed at some length the infamous march by Shalmanezzer III (858-824 B.C.) across the Hatti lands of north Syria to the Mediterranean coast, whence he "washed his weapons in the sea", we omitted any reference to a potential problem for our thesis. In our revised history the incident took place in Shalmanezzer's initial year as king (858 B.C.) and was followed up by a second whirlwind tour of conquest, which again extended to the Mediterranean, in his 4th year (855 B.C.) In our revised history these dates correspond to the initial years of the reign of Mursilis. The city of Ugarit must have been a thriving metropolis at the time, yet Shalmanezzer makes no mention of its existence. The critic will surely ask why.

A closer look at the annals of Shalmanezzer provides the answer. In his initial tour of conquest Shalmanezzer's advance to the sea took him considerably to the south of Ugarit, where he apparently had no interest in engaging the peoples of the area in battle. The Assyrian king expressly states in his annals that the cities of the coast offered no

resistance. Consequently they were left to themselves and are not named in his records.

"I received tribute from the kings of the seashore. I marched straightaway unopposed ... throughout the wide seashore", i.e. along the coast. ANET 278

As the annals continue it is apparent that the Assyrian army at the time moved southward, away from Ugarit.

The situation was different in Shalmanezar's fourth year. This time several coastal cities resisted the advance of the Assyrian army and were brutalized in response. Again Ugarit is not mentioned by name, but this time its presence is confirmed, albeit obliquely. Explaining precisely how requires us to first produce, in summary form, a listing of the city's kings during the final century of its existence.

Kings of Ugarit

A listing of the known kings of Ugarit during the 9th/8th centuries will serve to support our revised chronology in three ways. On the one hand it will allow us to argue our claim that the city continued to thrive at least as late as the 4th year of Shalmanezar III, thus through the middle decades of the 9th century B.C. This fact, if it can be proved, contrasts markedly with the view of the traditional history in which Ugarit was destroyed by a combination of marauders and natural disaster very late in the 13th century B.C. The king list will also establish with some degree of certainty that the dates we have provided for Mursilis are accurate within a few years.

Finally, our analysis of the king list will serve to validate a proposal we made earlier to considerably reduce the reign lengths of the Hittite kings Mursilis and Muwatallis, what some might have considered at the time to be an arbitrary and self-serving adjustment to the historical record.

We begin with the latter issue. But first the king list.

Reign Lengths of the Kings of Ugarit

Following the accidental discovery of the site of Ugarit (Ras Shamra) early in the 20th century, multiple excavations provided a treasure trove of inscriptional material, much of it dating to the last century of the city's existence, the majority related to the final traumatic days before the city fell to the combined onslaught of invading "sea peoples" and catastrophic earthquakes. Synchronisms between Hittite and Ugaritic kings provided by these materials allow scholars to establish the order and a rough chronology of the terminal Ugaritic kings, from the days of Suppiluliumas I to the fall of Hatti in the time of Suppiluliumas II.

According to several documents retrieved from the "rubble" of the city, the destruction of Ugarit and the fall of Hattusas, the Hittite capital, must have occurred within months, if not days of each other, an event we date to the middle of the 8th century, and discuss at length in the next chapter. Our attention here is focussed on the middle of the ninth century, the time of a Ugaritic king named Niqmaddu and his sons Arhalbu and Niqmepa, who are clearly identified in the archives of Ugarit as contemporaries of Suppiluliumas I and his immediate descendants.

Since the traditional history dates Suppiluliumas I and his immediate offspring to the 14th century B.C., it is compelled to date Niqmaddu and his sons to that same time frame. We have previously listed the traditional dates for the Hittite kings. The table below adds the approximate dates assigned by the traditional history to the kings of Ugarit for the same time period. Comment follows.

Table 11: Traditional History Dates for the Kings of Ugarit
During the Time of the Hittite Empire

Hittite kings	Traditional Dates	Kings of Ugarit	Traditional dates.
Suppiluliumas I	1375-1335	Amishtamru I	c. 1360
Arnuwandas III	1335-1334	Niqmaddu II	1360-1330
Mursilis II	1334-1306	Arhalbu	1330-1324
Muwatalis	1306-1282	Niqmepa	1324-1265
Urhi-Teshub (Mursilis III)	1282-1275	Amishtamru II	1265-1240
Hattusilis III	1275-1250	Ibiranu	1240-?
Tudhaliyas IV	1250-1220	Niqmaddu III	?-1225
Arnuwandas IV	1220-1200	Amurappi	1225-1180
Suppiluliumas II	?	"	

The dates assigned to the kings of Ugarit vary considerably from scholar to scholar, depending in part on the dates assigned to their Hittite contemporaries. However, several aspects of the chronology are invariable and need to be highlighted.

While the length of the reign of the king known as Niqmaddu II is unknown, two aspects of his tenure in office are generally accepted. His reign overlapped to a large extent the end of the reign of Suppiluliumas I, with whom he is known to have entered into a treaty relationship. The document describing Hittite suzerainty over Niqmaddu's realm is extant. It is also generally agreed that his reign extended into the early years of Mursilis II, ending around the 4th or 5th year of this Hittite king.

There is also general agreement that Niqmaddu II was succeeded by two sons, Arhalbu and Niqmepa. The first son ruled for less than a decade, his reign ending mysteriously as the young king, foreseeing his end, bequeathed his wife to his younger brother Niqmepa. Perhaps he was dying of the plague which at the time ravaged the Hittite kingdom of

Mursilis. His brother was more fortunate. Not only did he live to rule a normal span of years, but enjoyed a prolonged reign of almost 60 years, an abnormal longevity to say the least. And therein lies a problem.

The extended reign of Niqmepa is the stuff of legends. Documents confirm that his rule overlapped the reigns of Mursilis, Muwatallis, Urhi Teshub and Hattusilis. And all this after he succeeded not his father, but his brother! A cursory glance at the table above suggests that the combined reigns of Niqmaddu II and sons lasted for 95 years. Remarkable if true! Amazingly, scholars do not seem to have a problem with the suggestion. In her *Cambridge Ancient History* article on "Ugarit" Margaret Drower merely cites the data and moves on.

After a long reign of perhaps more than sixty years, as the vassal of four successive Hittite sovereigns, Neqmepa was succeeded, about 1265 B.C. by his son Ammishtamru, the second of the name. CAH II.2 p. 141

But the difficulty with the chronology does not end here. Drower goes on immediately to document the reign of Niqmepa's son Amishtamru II.

Although he must have been a middle-aged man at the time of his accession, it would appear that the affairs of the state were managed for a short time by the dowager queen Akhat-milki, the daughter of King DU-Tessub of Amurru. (p. 141)

Drower is mistaken. There is really only one way to interpret the documents which form the basis for her otherwise innocuous statement. Amishtamru was not, as stated, "a middle-aged man at the time of his accession". He was clearly not old enough to reign when his father died, and the kingdom was for a time ruled in his stead by his mother. But interpreting the evidence in this most straightforward way would only serve to compound the chronological difficulty. It is already necessary to assume that Niqmepa (who was already an adult close to thirty years old when he inherited the throne from his brother) was well over ninety when his reign ended. The suggestion that he fathered a child by his Amorite wife only a decade or so before his death only serves to exacerbate the problem. While not impossible, the scenario is unlikely. We believe that a faulty chronology is the likely cause of the problem.

In the revised history the situation improves considerably. With the reigns of Mursilis and Muwatallis overlapping and considerably reduced in length in the revised history (as we argued in the last chapter), the reign length of Niqmepa can be reduced to about half the traditional value. The dates in the table below, although approximations only, are probably accurate to within five years.

Table 11: Revised History Dates for the Kings of Ugarit During the Time of the Hittite Empire

Hittite kings	Revised Dates	Kings of Ugarit	Revised Dates.
Suppiluliumas I	908-858	Amishtamru I	
Arnuwandas III	858-857	Niqmaddu II	883-855
Mursilis II	857-836	Arhalbu	855-848
Muwatallis	846-832	Niqmepa	848-815
Urhi-Teshub (Mursilis III)	832-825	Amishtamru II	815-790
Hattusilis III	825-800	Ibiranu	790-?
Tudhaliyas IV	800-775	Niqmaddu III	?-775
Arnuwandas IV	775-765	Amurappi	775-760
Suppiluliumas II	765-760		

The Expulsion of Niqmaddu II.

The history of Ugarit under discussion relates to our thesis in yet another way, previously mentioned. In both the traditional and revised histories there is consensus that the reign of Niqmaddu II ended in a bizarre fashion sometime early in the reign of Mursilis II. The two historical schemes differ only in the absolute dates assigned to the incident, and thus in the interpretation of the relevant data. Since much of the discussion which follows is not original to this author, and is borrowed

from the earlier revisionist work of Immanuel Velikovsky, we use that author's words to introduce the relevant documents.

In the fifth chapter of his *Ages in Chaos* Velikovsky describes an inscription found in the ruins of Ugarit which he relates to the time of the final destruction of the city.

The excavator of Ras Shamra found that the city had been destroyed by violence and had not been rebuilt. Buildings were demolished; the library burned and its walls fell on the tablets and crushed many of them. The last king whose name is mentioned on the documents that survived the fire is Nikmed. There was also found a proclamation which states that the city was captured and Nikmed and all the foreigners were expelled. *Ages in Chaos* 219-220

We are extremely interested in the proclamation referred to by Velikovsky, but before we describe its contents we should set the record straight regarding its context as interpreted by the famed revisionist. By this stage in his revision Velikovsky has already made two serious errors regarding a king named Niqmed (Niqmaddu). In the first place he wrongly assumes that the Nikmed whose name is mentioned on many documents which survived the destructive fire, who must therefore be Niqmaddu III of the king list provided above, was the last king to govern the city before its final destruction. Other documents clearly demonstrate that this dubious honor belongs to Ammurapi, the son of Niqmaddu III. Secondly, Velikovsky assumes, incorrectly as it turns out, that the proclamation inscription he proceeds to describe belonged to this same Niqmaddu III. We argue instead that it was inscribed in the last days of Niqmaddu II and was subsequently preserved in the city archives. Having voiced our objection we allow Velikovsky to continue.

The proclamation found in Ras Shamra is directly related to the upheaval in the life of the city. Some invading king decreed that "the Jaman [Ionians], the people of Didyme, the Khar [Carians], the Cypriotes, all foreigners, together with the king Nikmed" were to be expelled from Ugarit, "all those who pillage you, all those who oppress you, all those who ruin you." *Ages in Chaos* 221

[Velikovsky is here quoting a document translated by the Hittite linguistic pioneers Hrozny ("Les Ioniens a Ras-Shamra," *Archiv Orientalni*, IV (1932), 171) and Dhorme (*Revue Biblique* XL (1931) 37-39)]

The proclamation referred to was apparently addressed to the Phoenician element of the city's population in the standard Ugaritic of the day

(cuneiform Semitic), and was authored by some unknown invading monarch. Hrozný, who first translated the document, expressed the opinion that the king who erected the inscription was perhaps Babylonian, this based on several hints in the text. He also expressed remorse that the opening lines of the text were missing, a sentiment echoed by Velikovsky.

The opening portion of the proclamation is missing; this is regrettable because it might have revealed the name of the king who expelled Nikmed. Who was the king who conquered Ugarit, burned it, expelled its population, and caused King Nikmed to flee? *Ages in Chaos* 221

Velikovsky promises to identify the king in a later chapter. We follow his identification with interest. As it turns out, he is correct. But unfortunately for Velikovsky, who continues throughout to identify the Niqmed in the proclamation as Niqmaddu III, and steadfastly maintains the belief that this same Niqmed ruled during the last days of Ugarit's history, the chronology which he proposes must be rejected.

In the revised history there can be no doubt as to the identity of the king who deposed Niqmaddu II. According to the revised dates for the Ugaritic kings proposed earlier, Niqmaddu II yielded the kingship to his son 'Arhalbu around the year 855 B.C. Those dates were not created ad hoc in order to provide the synchronism we now propose. They are simply the traditional dates of the Ugaritic kings relative to the dates of the Hittite Empire kings as revised earlier. It is therefore most significant that Niqmaddu's reign ended around the 4th year of Shalmanezzer III, the precise date when, according to Shalmanezzer's annals, the Assyrian king invaded Ugaritic territory for the second time. Even if we had no further evidence to support our contention, we would strenuously argue on the basis of this chronology that Shalmanezzer III must be the conqueror of Ugarit and thus the foreigner who deposed king Niqmaddu II. But further evidence does exist. Again we listen again to Velikovsky, who first proposed the identification under discussion and found reference to Niqmaddu in the Assyrian annals.

In the section "End of Ugarit," in Chapter V, we asked, Who was the invader? We quoted also a proclamation found in Ras Shamra-Ugarit in which the invading king decreed that "the Jaman [Ionians], the people of Didyme, the Khar [Carians], the Cypriotes, all foreigners, together with the king Nikmed," should be expelled from Ugarit. The opening portion of the proclamation, which

might have revealed the name of the king who expelled Nikmed, is missing. Some intimation has been found that Nikmed was expelled by the Babylonians This suggestion is not far from the truth, since Babylon was incorporated by Shalmaneser into his empire.

We are curious to know whether Shalmaneser left any written record of his conquest of Ugarit. And in fact we find the following entry twice repeated in his annals: "Year four: To the cities of Nikdime [and] Nikdiera I drew near. They became frightened at my mighty, awe-inspiring weapons and my grim warfare, [and] cast themselves upon the sea in wicker[?] boats ---, I followed after them in boats of ----, fought a great battle on the sea, defeated them, and with their blood I dyed the sea like wool. [Luckenbill, Records of Assyria, Sec 609]" *Ages in Chaos* 309

In spite of many mistaken notions regarding the historical positioning of Ugarit in his revised history of the ancient near east, Velikovsky is in this respect to be credited with a profound insight. The city of Nikdime in the Assyrian records must, in context, refer to a coastal city in the vicinity of Ugarit. The year is 855 B.C., the 4th year of Shalmaneser III. According to our revised history it is also the year the reign of king Niqmed II ended at the hands of an invader. The proclamation found in the ruins of Ugarit maintains that king Niqmaddu was deposed by an invading king who had some east Semitic (Babylonian) affinities. Shalmaneser III was king of Assyria and Babylon. Let the reader decide what should be made of this sequence of "coincident" facts.

We should not be confused by the inversion of two elements in the names Nikmed (Niqmaddu) and Nikdime. As Velikovsky correctly argues:

The city of Nikdime appears to be the city of Nikmed. Cities were named in honor of their kings, and in this case it is put clearly, "of Nikdime." The translator of this record also explained the words "city of Nikdime" by a gloss; "personal name." The inversion of two consonants, especially in personal names of foreign origin, is very common among oriental peoples. *Ages in Chaos* 309

We leave the matter there and move to the 8th century.

The Emergence of Troy

Shalmanezer III (858-824 B.C.) warred with Syria for much of his reign. As late as his 18th year (841/40 B.C.) he fought against Hazael of Syria, who several years earlier had succeeded Ben-Hadad of Damascus as the major domo of the southern Syrian confederacy. This would be his final razzia through Syria, though his reign continued for another fifteen years. One of the reasons for this abrupt end to hostilities was a growing insurgency within Assyria itself, civil conflict which continued through the reigns of Shalmanezer's successors well into the 8th century. Some of this conflict we documented in the last chapter. Assyria would not reemerge as a factor in Syrian politics until the second half of the 8th century with the arrival of the military genius of Tiglath Pilezer III.

A second reason for Assyrian isolation from Syria during and following the terminal years of Shalmanezer III was the reassertion of Egyptian power in the Levant under Ramses II (840-774 B.C.), this and a continued, if not heightened, Hittite influence in the region under a succession of powerful kings, in particular Hattusilis III (825-800) and Tudhaliyas IV (800-775). During this time Hatti and Egypt vied for control of Syria to the exclusion of the Assyrians. By this time also other peoples had entered the picture, two of particular interest to this revision.

If our revised history is correct, and the Hittite king Tudhaliyas IV lived in the early decades of the 8th century, not in the late 13th century where he is positioned by the traditional history, then we are compelled to argue that this same time frame witnessed the emergence on the historical scene of two peoples of great significance for our revision. On the western Anatolian coast the Trojans are mentioned for the first time in Hittite documents contemporary with Tudhaliyas IV, appearing first as allies, then as adversaries of the Hittites. Across the Aegean the Achaeans (Mycenaeans) emerge simultaneously, again as both friend and foe of the Hittites. We are clearly within the Mycenaean age, nearing the time of the mammoth conflict between the Achaeans and Trojans, the Trojan war of Homeric legend. All this, of course, if our revised chronology is accurate.

The Swiss linguist Emil Forrer was the first to observe, early in the last century, in the newly discovered archives of the Hittites, not only

references to place names such as Taruwissa (Troy), Achiyawa (Achaea), and Wilusiya (Ilios), but also instances of the personal name Alaksandus (Alexander-Paris) and the Hittite equivalents of Atreus, Eteocles, and Andreus. Since the days of those initial observations, contested at the time, scholars have been increasingly accepting, albeit at times reluctantly, of the fact that the Trojans (and Mycenaeans) belong in the same chronological time frame as the late Empire Hittites. The evidence compels us to reach that same conclusion. But for the revised history the time frame is the early 8th century, not the late 13th. Our chronological positioning of Tudhaliyas IV in the early 8th century is an inevitable consequence of the entire argument of the first two books, and the earlier chapters of the present book of our historical revision. We have no choice in the matter. We are obliged to date the Mycenaeans and Trojans in the same 8th century context as Tudhaliyas. It follows that all of the evidence, both literary and archaeological, that supports an early 8th century rather than a late 13th century date for the Trojans and the Achaeans, must be viewed as supportive argument for our thesis. And the evidence is widespread and compelling.

We do not have to go far afield to argue that the Trojans and the Trojan war belong in the first half of the 8th century. The belief that the Mycenaean age celebrated by Homer immediately preceded the late 8th century classical Greek period was the prevailing view among scholars of the early 19th century, before the Mycenaean age was unceremoniously thrust hundreds of years back in time by Egyptian scholars. This opinion held regardless of whether or not the Trojan war was considered fact or fiction. It was based on two separate strands of evidence, namely 1) the massive amount of archaeological and cultural evidence which shows clearly that the classical Greek period which began in the late 8th century follows the Mycenaean age without interruption; and 2) the incontrovertible evidence from documentary sources, primarily but not exclusively the literature related to the Trojan war, that the story of the conflict between the Mycenaeans and Trojans was composed late in the 8th century, and if so, then the events which gave rise to the epic narrative must be recent. Volumes of literature have been devoted to both themes over the past centuries, and the argument continues.

Several times already we have made reference to the first of these lines of reasoning. We have argued that the so-called "dark ages" of Greece were created by sleight of hand when scholars, based exclusively on a faulty Egyptian chronology, mistakenly moved the Mycenaean age backward 450 years, creating an artificial historical vacuum which has subsequently wrought havoc with the archaeological and cultural historical records of all countries whose past intertwined with that of Egypt. Archaeology argues strongly that the Mycenaean age ended around the middle of the 8th century. Volumes could be written in defense of that claim.

The documentary problem is no less acute. When Homer and other authors of the late 8th century mythologized events related to the Trojan/Achaean conflict which had taken place only decades earlier, they inevitably left a datable cultural footprint in the language they used and the events and artifacts they described. Scholars have always been all but unanimous in arguing that the final editing of the Iliad and the other literature related to the Trojan war is late, arguably composed in the late 8th century. Common sense dictates that the events described therein antedate the composition of the story by decades, not centuries. It was only when the Mycenaean age was moved from the 8th century to the 13th century that scholars were compelled to invent a literary "dark age" to mirror the artificial gap that had been created in the archaeological record. Thus the invention of a fictional 450 year long period of time during which the story of the Trojan war was transmitted "orally", embellished all the while by an accumulation of "anachronistic" material, until finally being fixed in its present form in the late 8th century. We will waste no time discussing the flaws in this "oral tradition" thesis. Let the reader browse the literature on the subject to see if it makes any sense.

We leave the matter there. Sufficient to note that when the revised history places the Trojans and the Trojan war in the 8th century it does not encounter evidence to the contrary, but rather a mass of supportive linguistic and archaeological data, and this for an understandable reason. It is merely returning the Mycenaean and the Trojans to their former and rightful place in history.

We make but a single exception to our decision to bypass the archaeological/cultural/literary evidence supportive of our dating of the Trojan war - namely, the excavation record of Troy itself.

The Ruins of Troy

The reader interested in the "dark age gap" in the archaeological record within the Greek world is referred once again to the excellent compendium on the subject in the recently published *Centuries of Darkness* authored by a group of Cambridge scholars. In particular the third chapter - "Beware of Greeks Bearing Gifts" - and the fourth chapter - "The Dark Age Mysteries of Greece" - of this excellent work are strongly recommended reading. We use the words of the authors Peter James et. al. from this source to draw attention to the central problem at Troy, a problem related to the consensus view of scholars that Homer's Troy must be identified with either strata VI or VIIa of the excavated city site.

The sack of Troy by the Greeks under the command of Agamemnon, King of Mycenae, has launched a thousand articles. The search for the city of Homer's *Iliad* will certainly continue to fascinate archaeologists for years to come. Schliemann correctly identified the massive mound of Hissarlik as the site of Troy, but which of the superimposed cities he found should be associated with the time of the Trojan war remains unclear. The rival candidates are currently the cities of Troy VI and VIIa. While the earlier city and its magnificent defensive walls provide a better match with Homer's account, it was apparently destroyed by an earthquake and predates the high point of Mycenaean power in the 13th century BC. The latter city was burnt down but its poor remains fail to measure up to the description of the mighty city of Priam given in the *Iliad*. (CD 60)

We should note at the outset that strata VI, VIIa and VIIb of ancient Troy are all clearly dated by archaeologists within the Mycenaean period, though the duration of occupation in the respective periods is open to question. It is entirely possible that only a few years separate the destructions by earthquake and by fire of levels VI and VIIa. The question as to which level corresponds to the occupation and conclusion of the Trojan war is a difficult one to answer, since the argument in part involves the reliability of the authors of the epic literature, and we simply do not know what literary license should be accorded them. All we can

glean from the facts at hand are that the combined ravages of earthquake and war contributed to the demise of the glory that was Troy. We will see this same duality - earthquake and war - occurring at other sites around this same time period. The two phenomenon invariably occur in sequence and, as we will argue later, are probably related. It is always the same - physical calamity (earthquake) followed by warfare and fiery destruction.

The real stratigraphic problem at Troy is not whether level VI or VIIa is the occupation level of the besieged city of Priam and Paris, rather it is whether these Mycenaean strata belong to the 13th or the 8th centuries. We let Peter James continue:

This problem aside, the site presents other difficulties that are just as challenging. Despite numerous excavations, no strata have yet been discovered representing the period between Troy VIIb, usually linked with 12-century Mycenaean imports (LHIIIC), and the beginning of Troy VIII, dated by Archaic Greek imports to 700 B.C. The classical scholar Deny Page remarked on the strange gap which results from this chronology:

There is nothing at Troy to fill this huge lacuna. For 2000 years men had left traces of their living there; some chapters were brief and obscure, but there was never yet a chapter left wholly blank. Now at last there is silence, profound and prolonged for 400 years; we are asked, surely not in vain, to believe that Troy lay 'virtually unoccupied' for this long period of time. (CD 61)

The problem does not end there. It is not simply a matter of explaining why a classical Greek site of the late 8th century (level VIII) lies immediately above a Mycenaean site of the 13th century (level VIIb). Rather it is a matter of explaining the apparent *continuity* which exists between the levels VIIb and VIII, this on the assumption that a 400 year hiatus has occurred in the occupation of the two levels. Again we let Peter James explain:

Yet despite the apparent lapse of several centuries, there is every indication of continuity between Troy VIIb and VIII. The excavator, Carl Blegen, could detect no sign of a break in occupation. Furthermore, the local pottery of Troy VIII was the same distinctive, lustrous grey ware used during Troy VIIb. He therefore supposed that the inhabitants of Troy VIIb abandoned it for a nearby refuge, where they continued to produce this 'Grey Minyan' pottery for 400 years before returning Despite twenty-five years of further research in the area, no sign of Blegen's hypothetical refuge site has ever been uncovered. (CD 61-62)

There is, of course, no need to reconcile the disparate evidence at the site. None exists. With the Mycenaean age move forward into the 9th/8th centuries a plausible explanation for the respective strata is readily at hand. Level VI at Troy most likely represents Priam's city prior to a destructive earthquake which levelled much of its defensive fortifications around the year 765 B.C. Level VIIa is the occupation level of the surviving Trojans through the duration of the Trojan war, roughly spanning the years 765-755 B.C. The Trojan war (and thus level VIIa) ended with the burning of the city. Level VIIb was occupied by the survivors of the war, a mixture of Mycenaean Greeks and Trojan peasantry. It apparently lasted through the balance of the 8th century. Level VIII followed without temporal interruption. There is no 400 year gap in the stratigraphy of Troy. It is not the archaeological record which is inconclusive. At fault is the errant chronology which guides the interpretation of the data.

If we are correct in our appraisal of the situation there may well have been a cause and effect relationship at Troy between the destruction by earthquake and the destruction by fire. We surmise that it was the earthquake destruction and the resulting weakening of the defensive fortifications of the city, not the abduction of Helen of Troy by Agamemnon of Mycenae, that provided the motivation for the Greek assault on the city of Troy.

But what caused the earthquake?

The Santorini Explosion

When we assign tentative dates of 765 B.C. and 755 B.C. to the destructions by earthquake and fire of Troy VI and VIIa we are admittedly only guessing. The fact that the names of the participants in the Trojan war occur in documents from the time of Tudhalias IV suggests only that this reign immediately preceded the great war. The determination made by the latest excavators of Troy, that level VIII dates from late in the 8th century, provides a *terminus ad quem* for that same war, supported by the fact that the Homeric age which postdates the war is reasonably securely situated in that same late 8th century time

frame. Having said that, we are certain that the dates are accurate within five years. Our confidence is undergirded by evidence from elsewhere in the Near Eastern world, where these same two elements, destruction by earthquake and fire, occur in near succession in roughly the same time frame. It is imperative that we examine each occurrence of these tandem destructions as they occur elsewhere in contiguous cultures in the same time frame - Hattusas, Ugarit, Syria, Assyria, Israel and Egypt. It is the combined weight of evidence from each of these locations that suggests they are part of a common phenomenon. The task will be assigned to our concluding chapter. But before we begin we should state explicitly what we are looking for.

The fact that a series of natural disasters followed by attacks by marauding warfaring peoples occur in the same time frame in geographically remote regions of the Near East suggests both a common cause for the natural disasters and a similar cause and effect relationship between the disasters and the ensuing mass migration of warfaring peoples. Whether we are talking about the marauding hordes who dealt the final blows to Ugarit, the rebels who plagued Syria in the days of the prophet Amos, or the sea peoples who invaded Egypt for the first time under the successors of Ramses II, we are dealing with the same phenomenon. All of these "migrations" took place in conjunction with a series of widespread natural disasters, which suggests that the participants were opportunists, taking advantage of a devastation first wrought by nature. The natural disaster precipitated the warfare. We cannot prove this to be the case, but the assumption is reasonable.

A second conclusion can be reached from the material we are about to examine. If we are correct that the natural disasters occurred in the identical time frame in regions separated by many hundreds of miles, then the common cause must have been some catastrophic event - and if localized (a reasonable assumption) then it must have been centered in the Mediterranean, perhaps on or near the island of Crete. How else can we explain the facts, soon to be presented, that its effects reached as far south and east as Lybia and Sicily/Sardinia (from which rebels were driven to invade Egypt) and as far north and east as Hattusas and Assyria (where ash blocked out the sun for months). Countries bordering on the eastern Mediterranean and the Aegean, i.e. Achaea, Troy, Ugarit, Syria, Israel,

Egypt, Lybia, Sicily, were all either recipients of or participants in the resulting widespread aggression of warfaring peoples.

While the cause of these widespread natural disasters must ultimately remain undetermined - since we have no certain proof of either its nature or its location - we venture to propose one possible, if not probable source, needless to say one fraught with controversy. Tentatively we suggest that the culprit we seek was the volcanic island of Santorini, known also as Thera, supposedly destroyed in an eruption of unprecedented intensity sometime in the middle of the second millenium B.C. It should not surprise the reader of this revision that we claim that the dating for the explosive extinction of this volcanic isle needs to be moved forward in time hundreds of years, along with the Egyptian 18th dynasty which preceded it in time. That the explosive destruction of Santorini should still dated as late as the mid-8th century is perhaps surprising, but not beyond reason. A brief history of the island is in order before we proceed.

The Eruption of Thera

The island known as Santorini lies approximately 75 miles (125 km) north of Crete. According to the traditional history it was an important constituent of the Cretan Minoan confederacy until that civilization ended, supposedly in the early part of the 15th century B.C., at a time when Egypt was ruled by its 18th dynasty. The island, known also by the name Thera, was volcanic, its central peak rising to a height of around 5000 feet (1600 m) According to prevailing scholarly opinion a series of eruptions, culminating in a cataclysmic explosion, destroyed a major part of the island around the year 1470 B.C. The explosion not only destroyed a major part of the island, including much of the Minoan population both there and on Crete, but so weakened the Minoan civilization that it soon succumbed to an invasion of Mycenaean Greeks and vanished from history.

The final volcanic eruption of Thera is the stuff of legends. The explosion has been favorably compared to that of Krakotoa, east of Java in 1883 of the present era. That recent massive upheaval send giant tidal

waves throughout the south pacific and filled the atmosphere with ash that spread throughout the world, influencing climate for generations. Santorini, according to the experts, "was about 4 times larger than Krakotoa, and probably at least twice as violent. The fury of Santorini's final explosion is inferred from geologic core samples, from comparison to the detailed observations made on Krakotoa in 1883, and from the simultaneous obliteration of almost all Minoan settlements." One internet source summarizes the event as follows:

In summer, circa 1470 BC, Santorini exploded. Volcanic ash filled the sky, blotted out the sun, and triggered hail and lightning. *A heavy layer of volcanic ash rained down over the Aegean*, covering islands and crops. *Earthquakes shook the land*, and stone structures fell from the motion. When the enormous magma chamber at Santorini finally collapsed to form the existing caldera, enormous tsunamis (tidal waves) spread outward in all directions. The coastal villages of Crete were flooded and destroyed. The only major Minoan structure surviving the *waves and earthquakes* was the palace at Knossos, far enough inland to escape the tidal waves. But in the days that followed, volcanic ash covered some settlements, and defoliated the island. Buildings were completely covered in volcanic ash by the cataclysmic explosion. In famine from the ash, with the bulk of their civilization washed away, the remaining Minoans were overrun by Mycaeneans from Greece, and Knossos finally fell. www.angelfire.com/hi/alhawk/atlanthira.html (italics added)

What was left in the aftermath of the great explosion was the jagged edge of the once proud and majestic volcano, the central caldera now covered by the Aegean sea, the rim less than a third the height of the original peak. A quick glimpse of the site immediately raises a question: What must have been the effects on contiguous areas of the ancient near east, indeed on the world, as this mountain turned to ash polluted the atmosphere and obliterated the sun for days and weeks or even months and years following? The event must have had severe consequences beyond those already noted for the Minoan and Mycenaean civilizations. But when precisely did this monumental event take place?

In spite of multiple claims to the contrary, it is not known when the Minoan civilization ended, nor precisely when the Mycenaean civilization began, even within the chronological schema proposed by the traditional history. Certainly the archaeological results from excavations on Crete provide no definitive answer. Santorini adds little to the overall picture. From excavations at Acrotiri, a Minoan center of population on

the rim of Santorini, artifacts linked to the Egyptian 18th dynasty have been found, as they have also on Crete. But that only proves that the destruction at Acrotiri, and the demise of the Minoan civilization, postdates the beginning of the 18th dynasty, and for the revised history that implies that the date of the Santorini eruption must lie after the beginning of the first millennium B.C. If it is dated early in the 10th century, where we have positioned the beginning of the 18th dynasty, then we can cease regarding the Santorini eruption as the cause of the natural disasters that jarred the Mediterranean world in the 8th century B.C. Even if that should be the case, all is not lost, since our discussion has focussed attention on what we believe was the ultimate cause of the 8th century phenomenon. We would simply have to focus our attention elsewhere in the Mediterranean world for a gigantic volcanic eruption of comparable size.

Having said that, we protest strongly that we are not compelled to date the end of the Minoan civilization during the early 18th dynasty, nor are we obliged to accept the claim that the massive eruption that destroyed Santorini actually caused the end of the Minoan civilization. There is absolutely no evidence that either statement is true. It should be noted in this regard that seismic activity at Santorini did not cease with the massive upheaval which destroyed much of the island mountain. Other eruptions have taken place well into modern times. Nor was the massive upheaval the first eruption at the site. Even the experts claim that the inhabitants of the volcanic island were well aware of the vagaries of their mountain and that it had been violently active for decades before the great explosion. Many inhabitants had vacated the cities before the massive eruption occurred. The volcano may well have had violent and destructive phases over the previous several hundred years. It is entirely possible that the experts have misconstrued the evidence, and that the massive upheaval of which we have been speaking followed the destruction of Acrotiri (the result of an eruption of lesser intensity) by upwards of two hundred years. It simply does not follow that all of the cities excavated from the rubble of the island were destroyed at the same time. The matter needs further looking into, but not at this time by this author. Such an investigation lies far beyond the purview of this historical reconstruction.

We continue to believe that subsequent research will support our initial suggestion that Santorini was the epicenter and ultimate cause of the events we now set about to describe.

We also assume throughout the following discussion that the Thera volcano was active decades before its violent eruption around the year 765 B.C., causing widespread alarm and destruction in countries bordering on the the Mediterranean. The prophets in Israel warned the population of impending doom in the days immediately preceding the great upheaval. Merenptah in Egypt sent famine relief to Hatti as its climate apparently changed and crops failed. Fear gripped the near eastern world. Then came the explosion to end all explosions.

We believe that the earthquake which destroyed Troy VI was a side effect of the great Santorini eruption, though it may well have been triggered by an earlier outburst. If so, then the eruption must also have wrought havoc on the eastern shores of Mycenae, destroying crops and property, disrupting social stability, and precipitating aggressive military action, such as that directed against Troy. It remains to be seen whether the eruption that destroyed Acrotiri and other Minoan cities and the military action that wiped out the remnants of Minoan civilization (assuming the historicity of that event) belong to this same time period or resulted from an earlier phase of volcanic activity at Santorini. In 765 B.C. we are barely 100 years removed from the end of the 18th dynasty. The end of the Minoan culture must be located sometime in this relatively narrow temporal space. More than that we cannot say.

It is time to look elsewhere for corroborative evidence.