The Place of Origin of the Enemy

The association of the so-called “Sea Peoples” of the Egyptian records we have passed in review with peoples of classical reference on the northern shores of the Mediterranean has a long history, going back to the early nineteenth century. Most of the comparanda derives from the epic cycle of the Άχαιῶν νόστοι and from foundation legends. While many of these traditions are to be found in notices no earlier than the first century BC, the very nature of the adumbrated narratives (folk legends) and lyric pieces points to remembered, communal identification, and therefore origin stories of long standing. In view of the consistency and integrity of the evidence of Ramesside date, there is every reason to construe these classical traditions as genuine, and having their roots in historic fact (Hammond, 1975; Redford 1992, 250–54; Finkelberg 2005; Greaves 2011, 508–9).

The above optimistic view does not ignore the difficulties. For one thing, in identifying place of origin of individual Sea Peoples, how can we eliminate the uncertainty as to whether a like-sounding toponym represents place of origin, ultimate settlement, or a transitory tarrying place? Again: a second uncertainty manifests itself in the assumption that the rules which governed the transliteration of Semitic words into Egyptian script also applied to Indo-European words (Schneider 2004). A third difficulty, tiresome to deal with because of its egregiousness, has been introduced into the quest for origins by a set of unfounded assumptions: that the Peleset and Tjeker were not new to the Middle East, that they had occupied coastal cities in Palestine before year 8, and that they had been taken on by the Egyptians as mercenaries (Albright 1973; Drews 1993).

1. The Lukka

First identified with the Lycians by E. de Rougé nearly a century and a half ago, the Lukka have been convincingly located in Caria (Bryce 1974),

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1 For convenience the following review will include, not only the enemies of Ramesses III in year 8, but also those mentioned under Ramesses II and Merenptah.

Lycaonia (Laroche 1976), and south central Anatolia west of Pamphylia (Heinhold-Krahmer 1983). Their language, such as it is known, places them in close proximity to Luwian (Woodhuizen 1992, 143; Yakubovich 2011, 535). Their presence in the Levant has been claimed to date from the Middle Bronze Age (cf. Dunand 1950–1958, pl. 32:2, p. 878 no. 16980; Astour 1959), though the interpretation of names remains speculative. They seem to appear as li-qi in Linear C texts from Cyprus (Woodhuizen 1992, 110).

The proclivities of the Lukka people for sea-raiding and piracy were well known in antiquity (Strabo xiv.3.3). This undoubtedly accounts for their scattered geographical associations (Crete: Herod. i.173; Cyprus: EA 38). The Lukka territory had been the scene of fighting during the time of the freebooter Tawagalawas (Bryce 1999, 321) and Piyamaradus (Bryce 1992, 125–26). Perhaps more significantly, in the great revolt against Tudkhaliyas IV, the Lukka are the first people mentioned in the list of twenty-two “Assuwan” allies (KUB XXIII, 11+12: 13ff.; Huxley 1968, 33–34).3

In general see Bryce 1995.

2. The Shardana4

Although in contrast to the Lukka the Shardana are represented graphically as well as by textual reference, identification and location are a trifle more difficult. The distinctive ball and horns of the helmet (Sandars 1985, 109, 125, and passim) has long since pointed to northern-western Asia Minor (Gardiner 1947, I, 199*; Herod. vii.76). The name itself suggests a connection with Mount Σαρδήνη overlooking Cyme near the coast (Strabo xiii.626) and the Σαρδιανὸν Πεδίον near Sardis (Guido 1964, 189–90; Greenwalt 2011, 1113, fig. 52.1).5 Such a location would place this ethnic group within the penumbra of Assuwa with which Egypt had long been in contact.6 The much-bruited associations of the Shardana with Sardinia, though supported by the similarity of personal accoutrements (e.g. helmets, R. du Mesnil de Buisson 1973, 233 fig. 123; Balmuth 1987, 225–45), is better explained on the basis of the ultimate settlement of

3 On Assuwa, see Redford 2003, 250–52.
4 In general see Loretz 1995; Cavillier 2005.
6 It is tempting to postulate a connection with the PN Sarpedon: Apollodorus iii.2.1; Diodorus v.79.3; cf. Cape Sarpedon in Cilicia: Pliny Nat. Hist. v.2.92.