

Mediterranean Seafaring

Ulu Burun Shipwreck



LBA Shipwrecks

- Several LBA shipwrecks identified in eastern Mediterranean:
 - Gelidonya
 - Ulu Burun
 - Point Iria
- Insight into mechanics of trade:
 - Trade routes
 - Commodities
 - Ports of call
- Interpretations:
 - Identity of traders
 - Analogy with Amarna letters



Ulu Burun

- Excavated between 1984 & 1994
- One of the wealthiest, largest & most diverse assemblages of LBA items
- The shipwreck lay on a steep rocky slope at a depth of 44-52m, with artefacts scattered down to 61m
- Dated to **1306 BC**: dendrochronology
- Ship's cargo:
 - Mainly raw materials
 - Some manufactured goods



Ulu Burun

- What was the nature of the shipment?
 - Palace trade?
 - Private mercantile trade?
 - Is there any evidence to support notion of “tramping”?



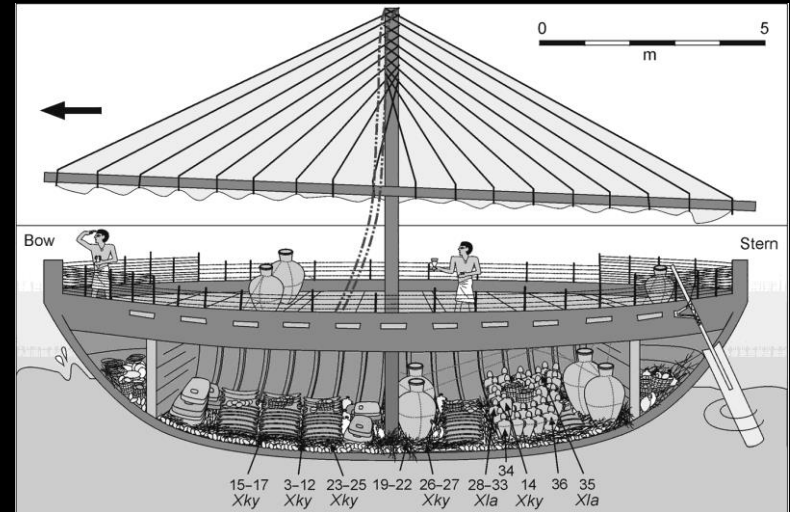
Ulu Burun

- Monroe (2010) attempts to place a value in Ugaritic shekels on the cargo & the ship itself:
 - Estimated at around 12000 shekels & very possibly more
- What evidence & theories should we use to interpret this material?



Ulu Burun

- Heterogeneous contents
 - What was the origin of the ship?
 - Where was it going?
- "...enriches our knowledge of an opulent trading network without unambiguously proving who carried the goods, or what their motives were" (Monroe 2010: 19)



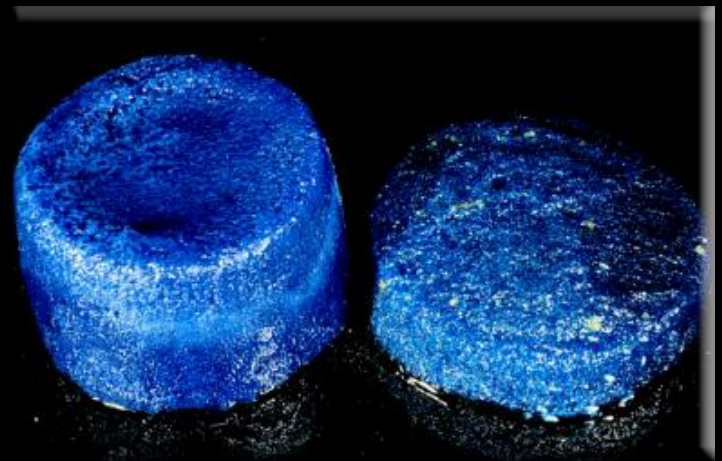
Cargo: Raw Materials

- Metals trade
- 10 tons of **Cypriot** copper:
 - 354 flat oxhide ingots
 - c.120 discoid bun or plano-convex ingots
- 1 ton of tin ingots (bun & oxhide)
- Amarna letters suggests palatial/elite control of metals trade
- “I herewith send to you 500 talents of copper” (*Amarna Letters* 35.10)



Cargo: Luxury Raw Materials

- Glass ingots:
 - Mentioned in Ugaritic texts & Amarna archives
 - Moulds found at Amarna
 - Chemical analyses: same as glass used to make Mycenaean beads & Egyptian vases
- Corresponds to peak of glass production in Greece (LH IIIA-B):
 - Relief beads made in attached workshops



Cargo: Luxury Raw Materials

- Logs of Egyptian ebony (*Dalbergia melanoxylon*)
- Logs of cedar
- Ivory: elephant tusks & more than a dozen hippopotamus teeth
- Murex seashells
- Modified tortoise carapaces
- Ostrich eggshells



Cargo: Organics

- 149 Canaanite jars: traded for contents
- Approximately 1 ton of terebinth resin
- Ceremonial use in Egypt
 - Burnt by pharaoh in ceremonies
 - Funerary use
 - Perfumed oils



Cargo: Organics

- Cypriot pithoi
- Contained pottery & beads
- Also foodstuffs:
 - Olives
 - Pomegranates (perfume & medicinal)
 - Figs & grapes
 - Wine
 - Safflower
 - Coriander seeds (condiment & perfume)
- Trade or consumption by crew?



Luxury Crafted Objects

“And now my brother is going to see the things that I have dispatched to my brother”(Amarna Letters: 24 III 61-3)



Scrap Metal

- Gold:
 - Canaanite jewellery
 - Egyptian objects
- Bronzes
 - Weapons, working tools & scrap
 - Tools: a mixture of Canaanite, Egyptian, Mycenaean



Pottery

- Cypriot pottery: largest group of manufactured goods :
 - Nine pithoi
 - Fine ware: 351 vessels
- Intended as cargo for exchange (unused)



Extra-Mediterranean Trade

- Links with continental Europe
 - Stone mace-heads from the Balkans
 - Amber beads from the Baltic
- Reaching Mediterranean trade routes via Mycenaean Greece & north-east Anatolia?



Objects With Biography

- Mesopotamian cylinder seals:
haematite & quartz
 - Some in circulation since MBA
- Appropriate trinkets for gifting
- Acquire histories as they move around the Near East / East Mediterranean:
 - Association with individuals of renown
 - Power of exotic imagery (distance used to construct ideologies)



Personal Objects

- Agate & faience beads (found in Canaanite amphorae)
- How much is official cargo or sailor trade?
- Sailors' possessions?
- Lead net & line sinkers, netting needles, fishhooks, a harpoon & a bronze trident
- Canaanite statuette – protective deity?



Personal Objects

- Small number of Mycenaean vessels & Canaanite lamps
- Pulak Aegean objects = Mycenaean crewmembers
 - Pairs of objects: two Mycenaean officials responsible for accompanying cargo back to the Aegean
- “This conspicuous pairing argues against assuming that these objects were randomly picked up as trinkets or bric-a-brac” (Bachhuber 2006: 352)



Objects Used in Trade

- Record of transactions: 2 wooden writing boards (diptychs)
- Series of weights: Near Eastern weight system



Summary

- Shipwreck dating to late 14th century BC (late 18th Dynasty)
- Cargo is primarily Levantine & Cypriot
- Origin of crew?
- Where did the voyage begin?
- Where was the intended recipient of the cargo?
- Was the cargo, or some of it, royal?
- Was this a private merchant enterprise?
- How does it help us with our interpretation of LBA maritime trading activities?

