

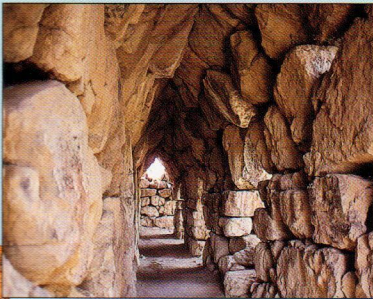
THINGS FALL APART

By around 1200BC, the world of the Mycenaeans was falling apart. Ancient Egyptian records show that, in the second half of the 13th century BC, there was a long run of poor harvests, food shortages and famine in the Mediterranean, which put the whole Mycenaean way of life under threat.

TROUBLED TIMES

During this difficult period, groups of starving Mycenaeans probably attacked each other's cities and villages to steal food and other goods. At around this time, many people built strong defensive walls around their cities, to protect themselves from raiders.

Thick stone walls at the Mycenaean fortress of Tiryns, built in the 11th century BC



THE SEA PEOPLES

In desperation, as their trade and economy disintegrated around them, some groups of Mycenaeans may have gone on raids overseas. This may have been the real cause of the Trojan War, described by Homer in his poem *The Iliad* (see pages 164-165).

Some Greeks may even have been driven away from their homes altogether. There are Egyptian reports of groups of people on the move in the eastern Mediterranean in 1190BC. Some were marching overland, while others set sail in a large fleet of battleships.

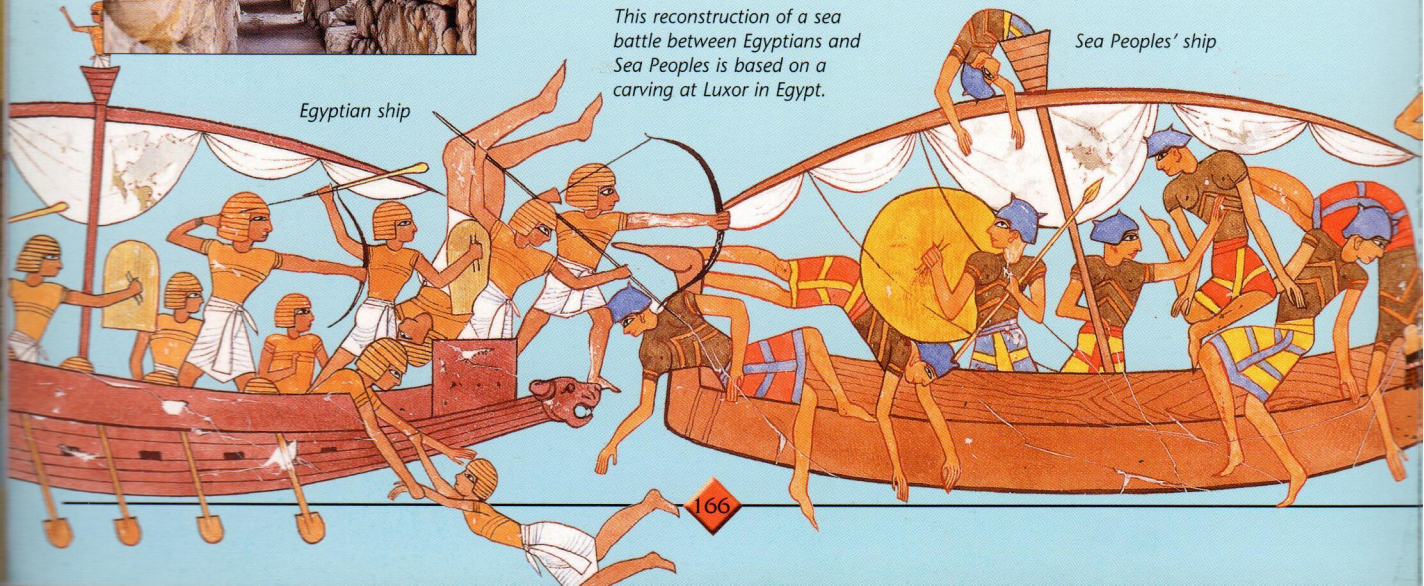
This reconstruction of a sea battle between Egyptians and Sea Peoples is based on a carving at Luxor in Egypt.



This portrait of one of the Sea Peoples was carved on a temple built by the Egyptian pharaoh Ramesses III.

The Egyptians named these migrants the 'Sea Peoples'. Experts don't know exactly who they were or where they were from, but it's possible that some of them may have been Mycenaean refugees.

As they advanced, the Sea Peoples' fleet seized the island of Cyprus. Meanwhile, on land, their army destroyed many cities, and overthrew the powerful Hittite empire in Asia Minor (Turkey).



Egyptian ship

Sea Peoples' ship