Setting the scene: seafaring at the dawn of a cosmopolitan Mediterranean
The Late Bronze Age ca. 1700-1200 BCE
The eastern Mediterranean world stage during the Late Bronze Age (arrows show the most important arteries of communication)
The Geo-Political Scene: a clash of imperial interests: Egyptians and the Hittites (the Battle of Kadesh, ca. 1274 BCE)

Painted relief scene from the tomb of Ramesses II (Karnak, Egypt) showing Ramesses II vanquishing the Hittites (he didn’t really vanquish the Hittites)
Political tensions caused by the clash of the superpowers is manifest also in the Amanra correspondence (from an archive of diplomatic letters discovered in Amarna, Egypt)
Reconstruction of the city of Amarna in Egypt, with the palace of Akhenaton (the location of the Amarna archives)
Political tensions caused by clash of the superpowers is manifest also in the Amanra correspondence (from an archive of diplomatic letters discovered in Amarna, Egypt)

Amarna Tablet (ca. 1330 BCE)
Distinguishing tribute from gift giving in Bronze Age political economies

Tribute: exchange of things in a relationship of inequality

Gift giving: exchange of things in a relationship of equality
  **cycles of reciprocity**
  **the accumulation of prestige through the giving of gifts**

Egyptian tomb of Nebamun (Amenhotep II, 1427-1400 BCE)
‘And now my brother is going to see the things that I have dispatched to my brother. Thus I will dispatch to my brother [gifts].’ (Amarna Letter 24.3)

A typical Amarna gift inventory:

- 16 sets of gold and genuine lapis lazuli earrings
- Necklace of 37 genuine lapis lazuli stones
- 1 ointment receptacle overlaid with gold and lapis lazuli
- 1 washbasin in gold (123 shekels in weight)
- 1 bunch of grapes of gold (100 shekels in weight)
- 1 aurochs horn rhyton, overlaid with gold
- 40 garments of many coloured cloth
Regional extent of the Amarna correspondence (and the tribute and gift exchanges recorded in these letters)

Most of the letters relate to this region.

Syrians in an Egyptian tribute scene

Syrian merchant ships anchored at an Egyptian port (Tomb of Kenamun, Amenhotep III, ca. 1386-1350 BCE)
Egyptian tomb of Nebamun (Amenhotep II, 1427-1400 BCE): A seated Syrian in a ‘tribute’ scene

Gift or tribute? How is this ‘vassal’ being received?
Boats and ships were used to deliver gifts in the Amarna correspondence and other texts from the same period.

Amarna gift exchange correspondence between the kings of Alashiya (Cyprus) and Egypt.
The Aegean region was excluded from the Amarna correspondence (not one mention of an Aegean place). So how do the Aegean kingdoms and societies fit in the picture?
Mari archives of Zimri-Lim: A Caphtorite (Cretan) arrives to Ugarit to purchase tin (ca. 1770 BCE): (the transaction was mediated by a translator)
Tin from the east: Mari as a critical node of metals circulation into the Mediterranean basin
Minoan inspired fresco from Tell el-Dab'a/Avaris, Egypt—Early 18th Dynasty ca. 1550-1500 B.C.

Minoan inspired frescoes and painted plaster floors decorating palace walls and floors across the eastern Mediterranean.
Keftiu (Minoan) emissaries represented in the tomb of Rekhmire offering gifts—(Thebes, Egypt)

--18th Dynasty—Thutmose III-Amenhotep II—ca. 1479-1401 B.C.
Crisis in the Aegean and the ascendancy of Greek mainland polities and culture (enter the Mycenaeans—ca. 1390 BCE)
Lion’s gate, Mycenae

Throne room of the Palace of Nestor, Pylos
The ‘Mycenaean’ Aegean was excluded from the Amarna correspondence (ca. 1330 BC) and Aegean people from this period are not represented in Egyptian tombs.
A humbler representation of Aegean culture in the Mediterranean: distribution of exported Aegean ceramics (1400-1200 BCE)
Friday: a closer look at the ships of the Syrians, and finally to some shipwrecks.
...and then a closer look at the ships of the Minoans and Mycenaean