The Late Bronze Age shipwrecks of Uluburun and Cape Gelidonya
Uluburun (ca. 1300 BCE)

Cape Gelidonya (ca. 1200 BCE)

Uluburun (ca. 1300 BCE)
Trajectory of the Uluburun ship

19 Aegean Stirrup Jars

Uluburun shipwreck

149 Canaanite jars

9 Cypriot pithoi
“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 Letters 24 Ill 61-3.)

Desirable objects and materials recovered from the Uluburun shipwreck (similar objects and materials listed in gift giving inventories): this is a directional cargo
‘I herewith send to you 500 talents of copper.’ (Amarna Letters 35.10)

Copper oxhide ingot recovered from the Uluburun shipwreck

Roughly 325 talents of copper recovered, likely part of the directional cargo

10 tons of copper and one ton of tin recovered from the Uluburun shipwreck
10:1 copper to tin ratio was the norm for bronze in the Bronze Age
Hundreds of Cypriot bowls and lamps packed in these large Cypriot pithoi (a ‘tramping’ cargo)
Different kinds of destinations for the cargo of the Uluburun ship (directional on the left and tramping on the right)
Some thoughts on the people on board the Uluburun ship, and a few of their shipboard activities
How to distinguish cargo from personal effects or objects of shipboard use
Syro-Palestinian and Cypriot objects that may have seen use, or were intended to be used on board
Objects that had definitely seen use on the journey

Cypriot manufactured wall bracket and lamp showing evidence for burning

fastened to the mast?
Drinking straw (as seen in Egyptian representations, a drinking Syrian)

Some time for leisure

Knucklebones (astragali)

Trumpet and finger cymbal (Syro-Palestinian)
Objects of Aegean manufacture that may have seen shipboard use, or had been intended for shipboard use:

- Drinking service
- Spear points (x22)
- Razors (x3)
- Knives (x3)
- Swords (x2)
- Seals (x2)
Uluburun (ca. 1300 BCE)

X Cape Gelidonya
X Uluburun (ca. 1200 BCE)
X Uluburun (ca. 1300 BCE)
Dating Cape Gelidonya:
Radiocarbon dating on organics and relative dating on pottery = ca. 1200 BCE

Again, Aegean pottery (Mycenaean stirrup jars) useful for dating the shipwreck
All that remains of the ship (!): a single tenon (with a peg hole)

Dimensions of the wreck site: 10 meters (length) 3-4 meters (breadth)  
**the ship was probably smaller than Uluburun = 15:5 m**
The cargo of Cape Gelidonya: in some respects similar, but also very different

Less than 1 ton of metal, including baskets of scrap metal and small quantities of tin—and very few ceramic storage/transport containers, and no high prestige ‘luxury’ objects and materials

X Cape Gelidonya (ca. 1200 BCE)
Baskets of scrap metal and tools for metal working, including a swage (a kind of mould) stone hammers and anvils (this kind of thing is not observed on Uluburun)

swage

The last voyage of the Cape Gelidonya ship
Weights and seals, all broadly of Syro-Palestinian origin and found near to one another.

Cape Gelidonya (ca. 1200 BCE)

Above, Egyptianizing scarab of Syro-Palestinian manufacture; Below, cylinder seal of the same regional origin.
Additional things that saw shipboard use: a lamp (of Syro-Palestinian origin) and stone anchors (similar to the kinds used on the Uluburun ship).
The interpretive significance of the Cape Gelidonya shipwreck (when it was published in 1967)

**Distribution of exported Aegean ceramics (1400-1200 BCE)

Before Cape Gelidonya it was widely believed that the Minoans and Mycenaeans were the dominant traders in the Late Bronze Age eastern Mediterranean
Cape Gelidonya revealed for the first time the shipment of a bulk cargo, including metal which is very elusive in the ‘terrestrial’ archaeological record, and vital to Bronze Age societies and economies.
And the Cape Gelidonya shipwreck contrasts in compelling ways with the Uluburun shipwreck (though only a century apart, and sailing the same trajectory).