

Uluburun Shipwreck

Source: Wikipedia with a minimal personal twist.

The Uluburun Shipwreck is a Late Bronze Age shipwreck dated to the late 14th century BC (1400 - 1300 BC), discovered in 1982 close to the east shore of Uluburun (Grand Cape), Turkey, in the Mediterranean Sea, just 50 meters off the shore facing the later Canaanite (Phoenician as per the later Greek appellation) city Finike that will be established almost thousand years later, in 450 BC. The wreck lay between 44 and 52 meters deep, with artifacts down to 61 meters deep.

Eleven consecutive campaigns of three to four months' duration took place from 1984 to 1994 totaling 22,413 dives, revealing one of the most spectacular Late Bronze Age assemblages to have emerged from the Mediterranean Sea.

The direction of the ship was westward, heading to mainland Greece as per most speculations in 2003 and 2013. Her length was 18 meters and width 10 meters and height 8 meters.

The ship was between 15 and 16 meters long. It was constructed by the shell-first method, with mortise-and-tenon joints similar to those of the Graeco-Roman ships of later centuries.

The ship is either Mycenaean (vulgarly “Greek” of before 1100 BC) or Canaanite (Phoenician as per the later Greek appellation). It is said that ingots point to a “Greek” origin, whereas ties to the Baltic, Africa, and Uzbekistan, as well as similarities with Egyptian Amarna findings and the 149 Canaanite pistachio jars and the Canaanite jewelry, and the westward direction of the ship, added to all that the earliest glass known _ which is considered to be Canaanite and Egyptian, all point to Canaanite origin. Either way all what you will read is fabulous: the world was also somehow “small” since back then!

The ship was built with planks and keel (bottom-most longitudinal structural element) of Lebanese cedar and oak tenons. The ship carried 24 stone anchors. The stone is of a type almost completely unknown in the Aegean, but is often built into the temples of Canaan / Aram and on Cyprus.

The origins of the objects aboard the ship range geographically from northern Europe to Africa, as far west as Sicily and Sardinia, and as far east as Mesopotamia. They appear to be the products of nine or ten cultures, and include a unique gold scarab engraved with Nefertiti’s name found aboard the ship.

The Uluburun ship's cargo consisted mostly of raw materials that were trade items, which before the ship's discovery were known primarily from ancient texts or Egyptian tomb paintings. The cargo matches many of the royal gifts listed in the Amarna letters found at El-Amarna, Egypt.

Lead-isotope analysis indicates that most or all of the copper is sourced in Cyprus.

Copper and tin ingots

Raw copper cargo totaling ten tons, consisting of a total of 354 ingots.

121 copper bun and oval ingots.

Approximately one ton of tin (when alloyed with the copper would make about 11 tons of bronze).

In 2022, one third of the tin was found to come from the Mušiston mine in Uzbekistan. The other share likely came from the Kestel Mine in Turkey's Taurus Mountains.

Canaanite jars and Pistacia resin

At least 149 Canaanite jars (widely found in Greece, Cyprus, Canaan, and Egypt): one jar filled with glass beads, many filled with olives, but the majority contained a substance known as Pistacia (terebinth) resin, an ancient type of turpentine, called “Butm” in Canaanite and later in Arabic, which reminds us of the Lebanese village of “hart al - Butm” (lit. neighborhood of the butm) nowadays within the Hadat municipality in Lebanese caza of Baabda. Recent clay fabric analyses of Canaanite jar sherds from the 18th Dynasty (~ 1330 BC) site of Tel el Amarna have produced a specific clay fabric designation, and it is seemingly the same as that from the Uluburun shipwreck, of a type that is exclusively associated in Amarna with transporting Pistacia resin.

Glass ingots

Approximately 175 glass ingots of cobalt blue, turquoise, and lavender were found (earliest intact glass ingots known). Chemical composition of cobalt blue glass ingots matches those of contemporary Egyptian core-formed vessels and Mycenaean pendant beads, which suggests a common source.

Miscellaneous cargo

Logs of blackwood from Africa (referred to as ebony by the Egyptians). Of note, the word “ebony” is of Canaanite origin, “hbn”).

Ivory in the form of whole and partial hippopotamus and elephant tusks.

More than a dozen hippopotamus teeth.

Tortoise carapaces (upper shells).

Murex opercula (possible ingredient for incense).

Ostrich eggshells.

Cypriot pottery.

Cypriot oil lamps.

Bronze and copper vessels (four faience drinking cups shaped as rams’ heads and one shaped as a woman's head).

Two duck-shaped ivory cosmetics boxes.

Ivory cosmetics or unguent spoon.

Trumpet.

More than two dozen sea-shell rings.

Beads of amber (Baltic origin, meaning the Baltic sea).

Agate (a kind of marble).

Carnelian (a kind of gem).

Quartz.

Faience (glazed ceramic ware)

Jewelry, gold, and silver

Collection of usable and scrap gold and silver Canaanite jewelry: among the 37 gold pieces are: pectorals, medallions, pendants, beads, a small ring ingot, and an assortment of fragments.

Biconical chalice (كأس مثل كأس قربان) (largest gold object from wreck).

Egyptian objects of gold, electrum (a natural or artificial alloy of gold with at least 20 per cent of silver, used for jewellery), silver, and steatite (soap stone).

Gold scarab inscribed with the name of Nefertiti.

Bronze female figurine (head, neck, hands, and feet covered in sheet gold).

Weapons and tools

Arrowheads.

Spearheads.

Maces (scepters صولجان).

Daggers (خنجر).

Lugged shaft-hole axe.

A single armor scale of Near Eastern type.

Four swords (Canaanite, Mycenaean, and Etruscan types).

Large number of tools: sickles (منجل), awls (مخارز), drill bits (a cutting tool used in a drill to remove material to create holes), a saw (منشار), a pair of tongs (an instrument with two movable arms that are joined at one end, used for picking), chisels (أزاميل), a ploughshare (سكة), whetstones (a fine-grained stone used for sharpening cutting tools), and adzes (قدوم).

Axes, of which a ceremonial axe made of green volcanic stone that originates from Bulgaria.

A small (9.5 x 6.2 cm) folding boxwood writing-tablet was found with partially extant ivory hinges. It likely would have had wax writing surfaces.

Pan-balance weights

19 zoomorphic (having or representing animal forms or gods of animal form) weights (Uluburun weight assemblage is one of the largest and most complete groups of contemporaneous Late Bronze Age weights).

120 geometric-shaped weights.

Edibles

Almonds

Pine nuts

Figs

Olives

Grapes

Safflower (an orange-flowered thistle-like Eurasian plant with seeds that yield an edible oil and petals that were formerly used to produce a red or yellow dye)

Black cumin (Canaanite word, kmn)

Sumac

Coriander

Pomegranates

A few grains of charred Wheat and Barley.