

## Moulding the past: ancient facts, modern ideas

### **Description**

The aim of this course is to explore how the implementation of different ideas, concepts, methodologies, and techniques changes the interpretation of specific events in the past. To this end, the course will focus on a case study, namely the so-called “Sea Peoples”. This topic has been chosen because it is a clear meeting point between various disciplines and it is hoped that it will engage the different student profiles at OIKOS.

The first modern reference to the Sea Peoples is said to have been made by Emmanuel de Rougé in 1855 (*Notice de quelques textes hiéroglyphiques récemment publiés par M. Greene*, Paris, E. Thunot, p. 14). Since then, the Sea Peoples have played a key role in modern narratives of the end of the Late Bronze Age in the Near East. However, the picture we have of them has not remained static. Over the years, modern scholars have defined them in a variety of ways, assigning them a more or less relevant role in what is generally portrayed as the collapse of the political system that characterised the Age of Amarna. Based on both the primary sources (written texts, archaeology, and iconography) and modern research on them, the course will focus on how the modern interpretation of this phenomenon has evolved over the last 170 years, following the development of the disciplines involved.

Throughout the course, students will gain an in-depth knowledge of the phenomenon of the Sea Peoples and the scholarship focusing on them, emphasizing that the past is neither static nor immutable. As one of the most debated phenomena in Ancient Near Eastern history, the Sea Peoples are an excellent example to discuss how the constant intrusion of modern scholarship shapes a past that is in constant evolution, following the development of ideologies, values, and techniques of modern societies. This topic includes issues that are very relevant today, such as migration, drought, and climate change. The course is therefore also an invitation to think about our present and future as a global society.

### **Course objectives**

By the end of this course, participants will: (1) be familiar with the main methodological debates in

Ancient Near Eastern Studies; (2) have gained an understanding of the phenomenon of the Sea Peoples, both of the ancient sources and the modern interpretations of them; and (3) be able to critically assess methods, theories, and ideas applied to the study of ancient societies.