ONOMASTIC AND PALAEOGRAPHIC CONSIDERATIONS ON EARLY PHOENICIAN ARROW-HEADS

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During the last seventy years, 18 of at least 24 arrow-heads with short inscriptions in early Phoenician characters have been published. The existence of six additional pieces is reported, but they remain unpublished. In spite of the fact that in the last years more than one study about these objects and their inscriptions has been published demonstrating certain aspects of their relevance to our understanding of the development of the early Phoenician script, I will again discuss them shortly. The aim of my paper will be to show you that these little pieces with their very short inscriptions give us a limited but interesting view of the transitional phase of ethnic and cultural change taking place in Syria-Palestine from the end of the Late Bronze Age to the beginning of the Early Iron Age. The consequence of this development was the formation of a new cultural unit which we call the Phoenician. This, I think, makes it worth a further endeavour at explaining the arrow-heads here.

The provenance of most of these little objects is not known. The arrow-head, now in the Louvre, which Guignes and Roncevalle made known in 1921, is said to come from Roueisseh (Rwaisī near Sidon-Saidā). A hoard of arrow-heads, among them five with inscriptions, is reported to stem from el-Ḥaḍr near Bethlehem in Palestine ; another one has been found in the Beqâa-valley. All the other objects come from the antiquities market ; their exact provenance and their find conditions are unknown to us. But I am convinced by the arguments of T. Mitchell[1] that the indications of provenance in the inscriptions themselves, given as *nisbatun,* namely **sīdōnīyu** "Man from Sidon" (n° 7), **ʿakīyu** "Man from Akko" (n° 10) and **ʿaboniyu** "Man from ʿAbdon" = Ḥirbat ʿAbde near Akko (n° 9) together with the findspot Rwaisī point to the coastal region as their place of origin. The hoard from el-Ḥaḍr may have been transposed to this place in antiquity.

The typology of the inscriptions is quite simple. Normally, the word for arrow (**ḥṣ**) is written at the beginning, followed by a name, mostly accompanied by the patrinomic, for example Rwaisī (n° 10) : **ḥṣ ʾd ʾbn ʿky.**

Variants also occur :

a) the introductory **ḥṣ** "arrow" is not written, may be forgotten (n° 5)

b) the patrinomic is absent (nos 1-4.7.9.12.15.22?)

c) as a substitute for the patrinomic

1. a designation of origin in the form of a *nisbatun* : **ṣdny** (n° 7)

2. a title : **mlk 'mr** "King of Amurr" (n° 12)

3. an indication on a kind of dependence : **'s 'zb 'l** "the man of 'Oziba 'al" (n° 9), **'š 'bdy** "the man of 'Abdiya" (n° 15) may occur.

As a consequence of this typology, I am certain that the short inscriptions are owners-marks. But the purpose of these designations is doubtful. Three solutions have been proposed :

1. The inscription is to note the ownership of the arrow-head, so that it can be identified after a battle or jousting match, and then be given back to the owner. This assumes that metal was precious, and therefore the weapons would have been collected after a fight and reused. This solution is doubtful. Were this the case, it remains unexplained why only the arrow-heads bear such names, but not daggers or knives, and that this designatory custom is limited in time and space. We should except to find more such pieces scattered over centuries and in different regions because copper or bronze kept their value in the Iron Age.

2. The idea of Iwry[2] is to be mentioned, that they have been used in an act of belomancy, that means « an ancient practice of divination by shaking arrows in such a way that one would be singled out in the process ». This theory finds support in the Old Testament testimony by Ezekiel (21,26) in which the king of Babylon has to choose whether to attack Jerusalem or Rabbath Ammon and it is said of him that « to practice divination he shook in the arrows, he consulted in the Teraphin, he looked in the liver ». But – if this practice has been used some centuries earlier than the events described by the prophet – we should ask why further confirmation from younger arrow-heads is lacking.

3. The inscription is intended to give the name of a dedicant to a deity in a kind of sacrifice, that is, a votive inscription. This explanation can be supported by a series of tools and weapons used as dedications in the Ancient Near East from the 3rd Mill. onward[3] – and not only in Middle-Babylonian times as it is supposed by B. Sass in his last article[4].

They often bear inscriptions with the name of the dedicant and the god to whom the object has been offered. In spite of the fact that such tools have seldom been found in situ, e.g. in a sanctuary, it can be taken for granted that they were deposited near to the cella of the god. Also, the Old Testament parallels point to the practice in Palestine, occasionaly after a victory the weapons of a vanquished enemy were dedicated.

Contradicting such an explanation is the fact that sometimes more than one arrow-head with the same personal name – but with differing spellings – have been found. The duplicates may indicate that in this case one man made an exeptionally rich offering, or that he dedicated more than one arrow-head commemorating a special and vigorous action on the part of the deity, or for a manifold help in wartime.

I shall ignore the fact that none of the objects found up to now shows an explicit dedication to a deity. I think that different religious traditions led to different types of dedication – with or without invoking the divine powers. In addition to these considerations the objects are of interest with respect to their inscriptions in a double manner. They contain an extremely unusual onomasticon, and are mostly written in rather archaic characters. Let us look at the onomasticon first :

Twenty-four personal-names can be registered. Some of them are well known and have counterparts in other Phoenician and Punic inscriptions such as : Adoni-ba'al "My

Lord is Ba'al" (n° 13), 'Azar-ba'al "Ba'al helped" (n° 13) and 'Oz-ba'al "Strength is Ba
'al" (n° 9)[5]. I suppose that it is not by chance that these names occur in the arrow-heads
which are late in origin. In addition six other names have parallels in inscriptions outsi-
de the corpus of arrow-heads, but they are not frequent :

Ado (n° 10, in n° 19 too??), a hypochoristic, is now known from four inscriptions[6].
Ger-Ba'al "the client of Ba'al" (n° 7) is also known from four further inscriptions[7]. cAbdi
(n° 15), a hypochoristic of a name of the type "servant (*cbd*) of the god..." and Rapā' "the
healer (is god x)" (n° 6) is known from a single Punic inscription, too[8]. The name *'dnšc*
Adonišuca "my Lord is salvation" (n° 22) has a single Phoenician counterpart in a stamp-
seal, dated in the middle of the 8th century B.C.[9] Podī "solved, liberated" (n° 21) is
known from many punic inscriptions and is present in Hebrew and Ugaritic, too[10]. – *Qry*
(n° 21) is unexplained but known from a Hebrew ostracon[11]. – Also Ba'ala (n° 19) is
known from the Samaria-ostraca[12]. The rest presents a real surprise. 13 names are to be
found which are hapax-legomena with respect to the traditional phoenician onomasticon.
That means that two of them have more than one reference on arrow-heads, but 9 names
are to be found only once in this group of objects.

Three of them are constructed on a well known scheme :

1. *zkr-b'l* (n° 11 [restored] and 12) "Remembering of Ba'al" occurs in this type of
writing in this context only. The younger Phoenician-Punic writing *skr-b'l* (with same-
kh as the initial letter) occurs in three Punic inscriptions in a fourth one the shortened
form *skr* is to be found[13]. However, for our considerations the fact is worth noting that
this early orthography (Zayin instead of Samekh) is present in the dialect of Ya'udi until
the ninth century but is not preserved in Phoenician. It furthermore is worth noting that
names such as *zakiru, zukuri(ya), dkr(y)* are common in Amorite[14], but are also to be
found in Ugarit and Alalah. It is an old and widespread name-type[15].

2. *'bdlb't* (there are 5 examples of this name, each with a different orthography) is a
type of name which is extremely frequent : the noun *'bd* "servant" in construct with the
name of a god or goddess. The same name can be found in Ugaritic as *'bdlbit*[16]. The ele-
ment *lb't* is to be defined as the word for "lioness", Akkadian *labbatu,* Hebr. *leba'a*. For
this element is to compare Labiya in Ugarit and Labāya in Amarna-letters[17]. It may the-
refore hint at a cult of a lion goddess in Syria-Palestine unknown in later periods, i.e.
during the Iron Age. As a consequence, this theophorous element of names is lacking in
the classical Phoenico-Punic onomasticon.

If names such as *lbt* or *lby* occur in Punic and Neo-Punic inscriptions[18], they are
derived from the ethnic designation *lby* "Libyan" and should not be confused with a lion
goddess.

3. *bn'nt* (n° 11 [with emendation] and n° 5 [with haplography of the word *bn*])
belongs to a group of names which are compositions of *bn* "son" and a theophorous ele-
ment as *bnb'l, bnšmš bnršp*, etc., which is not common but present in the Phoenico-
punic onomasticon[19]. It should be mentioned that this name has an exact parallel in
Ugaritic but not in Amarna[20].

Three other names should also be compared one with the other.

4. *yṭl* (n° 20) according to A. Lemaire[21] is derived from the root *nṭl* "to raise",
which is well known in Akkadian as *naṭālu* "to raise the eyes, to look". Despite the fact
that no West-Semitic name deriving from this root is known, the Akkadian parallels
– always in the precative – *ilum-lītul* "the god shall look (on him)" may point in this

direction. Because the precative in Phoenician uses the imperfect-forms we may speculate that a root **yṭl** existed alongside **nṭl** in comparison to **ytn** alongside **ntn.**

5. **yḥš** (n° 6) is a hapax legomenon in Phoenician, too. Its derivation from **ḥwš** "to hasten" is possible, the Ugaritic parallel **ya-ḥuš-šu** also seems striking[22], but the exact meaning is not clear to me. "May (the god) hasten (to help in labour pains)" is a possible explanation.

6. A similar type of name construction is **yt'** (n° 8)[23], but the explanation of this name is more difficult. A name element **jata-/jati-** exists in Amorite[24], but the explanation of this element is doubtful, and it is only certain that it is not a verbal form. I suppose that a shortened form of a name with the element **yatar** "leave over, remain", well known from the amorite onomasticon and from Ugarit and Alalah[25], too, is to be found here.

7. Easy is the explanation of **ymn** (n° 15) which has striking parallels in amorite **yamina** "south" or "right", par ex. **mārū-yamīna** in Mari, and which also can be found in Alalakh as **Yaman,** in Ugarit as **Yamuna**[26] and compare **bin-yamīn** in Hebrew. But Phoenician parallels can not be offered at the present time.

8. Among the remaining names is **'ky** (n° 10), a *nisbatun* of the well known city-name 'Akko. The bearer of this name is characterized as a man coming from this Phoenician harbor town. The name can also be found in Ugaritic and has one reference in Punic[27].

9. The same explanation can be given for **'bdny** (n° 9) "The man from 'Abdon"[28], but no Phoenician or Punic reference is known. But the name-type is very common.

10. **zm'** (n° 8) is eventually a derivation of the root **zmm,** and may be compared with the Amorite **zmm** or **zm'**[29] and the Hebrew name **zimmā**[30].

11. Further on the name **'nt** (n° 5) – if not to be ammended to **bn'nt** – is an abbreviated form of a name with the theophorous element 'Anat, the well known goddess of Ugarit who is also present in the Phoenician pantheon. Her name occurs also in Phoenician and – in the form **'nt** – in Punic names[31], but not very often. Abbreviated as well is the name *ba'al'* (n° 19).

12. Finally we have the name **mhrn** (n° 20), not represented in the remaining Phoenician and Punic inscriptions but of a well known type, a *qatlān*-form of a root **mhr,** as a noun used with the meaning "servant, soldier". We know of compositions such as **mhrb'l** not only from Phoenician, but also from Ugaritic sources[32].

13. Without explanation it seems to me to be the name **qry** (n° 21), but a *nisbatun* (in connection with *qr(t)*?) is possible, too. A Phoenician counterpart is unknown to me.

If we take all these various names into consideration, it seems evident that the onomasticon of the arrow-heads differs remarkably from the onomasticon of the "classical" Phoenician inscriptions. A considerable number of the names have no counterpart in the inscriptions from the tenth/ninth century B.C. on. On the other hand, those names show some pecularities which are known from Amorite, Ugaritic and Amarna name types. This all indicates an early stage of the cultural and linguistic development in Phoenicia, not yet represented by longer inscriptions.

The script of the arrow-heads is likewise archaic. It has been studied at least by B. Sass, who stresses the fact that some of the crude writings "may be the result of the scribes lack of skill"[33]. On the other hand, he concludes with regard to the el-Hadr arrow-heads that they are "still preserving a few archaic elements, in particular the direc-

tion of writing of the letters, and to a lesser extent, the forms of some of the letters"[34]. So it is remarkable that these texts show a vertical direction of writing, which is extinct in younger inscriptions.

The shape of certain letters, especially ṣ, changes in a remarkable way. The distinct form of this letter which has analogies in later texts, too, can at first be found on the Rapa-arrow-head (n° 6), but the letter y is not yet in the upright position on this object as on the Ahirōm-sarcophagus. But one of the arrow-heads, that of Azarbaal (n° 13), is written in a script which is close to this famous tenth-century inscription, and is therefore nearly contemporaneous. Therefore, it is of special significance that the personal names of this arrow-head – 'Azar-ba'al and 'Adonī-ba'al – belong to the typical Phoenician onomasticon.

To sum up : the arrow-heads have been inscribed in an early type of the Phoenician script, and they demonstrate that in this period, i.e. the 11th century B.C., the demographic change that eliminated the older stage took place. This old Canaanite stage, represented by Amorite and Ugaritic name-types, was replaced by a new, uniform Canaanite-Phoenician onomasticon which only seldom used such once common "archaic" name-types. Therefore, the arrow-heads allow a very limited but, in my opinion, typical insight into the formation of the Iron-Age population of the coastal regions of the Levant. And this is in favor of my view expressed in an article about "The origin of the Phoenicians" some years ago[35].

NOTES

1. MITCHELL : 1985, 145.

2. IWRY : 1961, 27 ff.

3. See for example D. COQUERRILAT : «Notes pour servir à l'histoire des masses d'armes», *Revue d'Assyriologie* 45 (1951) 21-24.

4. SASS : 1989, 349 ff.

5. Cf. BENZ : 1972, 56 ff. 167 ff. 165 ; JONGELING : 1983, 147, 196.

6. BENZ : 1972, 55. If the form 'd' (n°19) belongs to the same name-type is highly questionable. For Ugaritic 'ad'(y) cf. UT 314 (= KTU 4.86), 14 ; PRU 5,79 (= KTU 4.347), 10 and see GRÖNDAHL : 1967, 50 f. 142.

7. BENZ : 1972, 103.

8. 'bdy CIS 6028,1 and rp' CIS 2566,4, cf. BENZ : 1972, 154, 179, cf. 232 f.

9. RES 1239 = BORDEUIL, P. : *Catalogue des sceaux ouest-sémitiques inscrits*, n° 5, (Paris 1986), see BENZ : 1972, 261. 327.423. For the very frequent name-element šua' ya'šu' s. FABRY, H.J. : Theolog. W. zum Alten Testament Bd.3, 1982, Sp.1035 ff.

10. BENZ : 1972, 175 ; SIVAN : 1984, 257.

11. KAI 190,3 vom Ofel.

12. Samaria-ostraca nos 1,7 ; 3,3 ; 27,3 ; 28,3 ; 31,3, cf. MITCHELL : 1985, 142f. and see b'ly in Ugaritic and Phoenician inscriptions.

13. skrb'l CIS 1218. 1354,2. 2871,4 ; skr CIS 3751, 4 cf. BENZ : 1972, 147.

14. HUFFMON : 1965, 187 ; GELB : 1980, 350.

15. MARAGTEN : 1988, 160 with references.

16. UT 321 (= KTU 4,63) III 38, cf. GRÖNDAHL : 1967, 154.

17. PRU 6,79,3. - EA 245,6,43 ; 246 rev.6 ; 250,14, cf. BENZ :1972, 337 ; SIVAN : 1984, 240.

18. BENZ : 1972, 133.

19. ID. : 1972, 89. 55, cf. 287f.

20. Cf. bn'nt in UT 1043 (= KTU 4,320) 4 and 1061 (= KTU 4,307) 6, but bn'n in UT 64 (= KTU 4.33) 32 and 1046 (= KTU 4.232) 47, cf. GRÖNDAHL : 1967, 110.

21. LEMAIRE, A. : 1989, 54.

22. PRU 3, p.160, cf. GRÖNDAHL : 1967, 138 ; MARTIN : 1962, 185 ; CROSS : 1967, 20 note 87.

23. The reading follows SASS : 1988, 81 ; it is palaeographically well founded ; but LIPINSKY-GUBEL : 1986, 152 prefers the reading *ytg*.

24. GELB : 1980, 278 f.

25. HUFFMAN : 1965, 217 f.

26. GELB : 1980, 273 ; Alalah *ya-ma-an* WO 5, 1969, 63 ; *yamuna*, etc., cf. GRÖNDAHL : 1967, 144, but see SIVAN : 1988, 287 with a derivation from *yammu-* « sea ».

27. UT 321 (= KTU 4.63) III 37, cf. GRÖNDAHL, 1967, 108. 377 ; CIS 6066,1, cf. BENZ : 1972, 171.

28. MITCHELL : 1985, 145.

29. GELB : 1980, 371.

30. 1. CHRON 6,5.27 ; 2. CHRON 29,12, cf. M. NOTH : *Die israelitischen Personennamen im Rahmen der gemein-semitischen Namengebung* (Stuttgart 1928) 39. 176 (n°437).

31. *'nt* CIS 4976,1, cf. BENZ : 1972, 233f. 382.

32. Phoenician, cf. *mhr-bᶜl, mhr-yt[n]* etc., BENZ : 1972, 340f. ; SIVAN : 1984, 264. For Amorite and Ugaritic references of HUFFMON : 1965, 229f. ; GELB, 1980, 320 ; GRÖNDAHL : 1967, 156.

33. SASS : 1988, 149.

34. SASS : 1988, 148.

35. RÖLLIG W. : "On the Origin of the Phoenicians", *Berytus* 31 (1983), 79-93, in particular p. 84ff.

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THE ARROW-HEADS AND THEIR INSCRIPTIONS

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3. El Hadr III. Amman, Archaeological Museum. Nr. J 5137
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