

CANAAN AND THE AEGEAN SEA:

GRECO-PHOENICIAN ORIGINS REVIEWED

No problem is more crucial in the history of the Old World than that of the relationship between opposite shores of the Mediterranean. We should like to approach it from a particular though historically central viewpoint: namely, from the connection existing between Canaan and the Aegean basin, or, in other words, between a Semitic Orient or Levant which the Greeks called Phoenicia, and a Europe which was the Occident, the region of Sunset, to the Near-Eastern Semites.

We cannot hope to do justice to such a broad subject in its entirety. Therefore we will not deal here with the momentous encounter between the classical Hellenes and those Barbarians who spoke Phoenician or Hebrew (which is actually the same language); or vice versa, with the meeting of Hebrew and Gentile—the latter being the Hebrew's Barbarian. Instead we will restrict our discussion to the more remote background of this encounter and mainly to events which took place in the Bronze Age. This was the age which toward its end witnessed the legend-

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ary Trojan war, followed around 1200 B.C. by devastating raids by "Sea Peoples" in the Levant: Aegean tribes like the Philistines (or Pelasgians)¹ and the Tyrsenians (Tyrrhenians, later Etruscans),² or tribes from farther afield, such as the Sardinians³ and the Sicilians.⁴ These raids foreshadowed, for Greece herself, the Dorian invasion which put an end to Mycenaean civilization.

After seventy years of learned and often acrimonious debating, seldom free from bias, the time seems at hand for a more sober review. Indeed, discovery and research during the last few decades now provide us with rather abundant factual documentation in which we can find some trustworthy, objectively valid bearings.

Since the beginning of the present century, most scholars have shared the opinion according to which the Greeks—both Hellenes properly so called and their forerunners, the "Sons of Achaeans" of whom Homer sang—arose and developed quite separately from any Semites, even from the Western Semites. According to this view, these two major ethnic, linguistic, and cultural groups met and struggled at a fairly late stage in their history, that is, during the last pre-Christian millennium, prior to and especially after Alexander.

This was not at all the belief of the Ancients themselves. As early as the Book of Genesis ("Table of Nations," chapter x), we are told that Shem—the eponym or name-giving hero of the Semites, to whom all "Sons of Hebrews" lay claim—was also the elder brother of *Yaphet* (Japhet), father of *Yawan* (the Ionians and other Greek tribes). Such a kith and kin relationship between Mediterranean peoples, or at least between their heaven-born

¹ It now appears that the two names are basically identical, cf. W.F. Albright, *Archaeol. of Palestine*, 1960, p. 185.

² *Turusba* in Egyptian texts, probably also *Tiras* in the Bible (Genesis, x, 2); but it might already have been a group of such people settled in Italy. Cf. Jean Bérard, *Revue des Etudes Anciennes*, 1949, pp. 201 ss.

³ The identity of these *Sardi* (*Shardana* in Egyptian) seems well established; cf. W.F. Albright, "Some Oriental Glosses on the Homeric Problem," *Amer. Journ. of Archaeology*, 1950, p. 167, n. 18.

⁴ The *Siculi* (Sicels) seem to have left their mark in a toponym of the Palestinian south-country, which is often mentioned in the Bible: *Tsiqlag* or *Sigelag* in Hebrew, *Sekelak*, *Siceleg* in the Greek and Latin versions (cf. F.M. Abel, *Géogr. de la Palestine*, 1938, II, p. 465).

aristocracies, is indeed a basic tenet of that eponymic or ethnographic mythology whose fragments are found scattered throughout the more ancient, still "pagan" writings collected in the Bible. Its final editors, moved by the spirit of a Judaism which was henceforth to be monotheistic and exclusivist, never entirely managed to eliminate these traces of Hebrew paganism. However, they succeeded in depriving Canaan of its Semitic parentage—for reasons which have little in common with ethnography, but everything to do with theology. Nevertheless, even the rather orthodox Josephus still tries to ferret out the connections, real or imaginary, between Biblical history, Phoenician and Egyptian chronicles, and the myths of pre-Hellenic Greece.

As to the Hellenes prior to the ideologists who inspired Alexander's "crusade" (just like the Hebrews who antedated Ezra the scribe, Plato's contemporary and the true founder of Judaism), their ideas were eclectic and rather liberal with respect to past and present relations with foreigners, i.e. Barbarians. Nearly the entire literature of Greece until ca. 400 B.C. bears witness to the intercourse between civilized nations dwelling on both sides of the sea, an intercourse which took place despite commercial rivalries and political conflicts and despite differences in language. The two foremost historians of classical Greece, Herodotus and Thucydides, are quite explicit as to the presence of Phoenicians around the Aegean and as to their considerable influence both before and after the Trojan war. Moreover, Phoenicians or Sidonians were already familiar to the audience of *The Iliad* and *The Odyssey*.

From the renewal of ancient studies in the Renaissance, until the 19th century, hardly anybody questioned the validity of these traditional data. Quite to the contrary: there was rather a tendency to credit the Phoenicians (although there was very scant knowledge of them) with a well-nigh exclusive pioneering function as universal civilizers, even in places and epochs about which tradition said nothing at all.

An anti-Phoenician reaction against such exaggerated claims set in rather abruptly toward the end of the 19th century and went at once to the other extreme.⁵ The Humanities were to be

⁵ Especially after the paper by Julius Beloch, "Die Phoeniker am aegaeischen Meer," *Rheinisches Museum f. Philologie*, 1894, p. 111-132.

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cleansed of every Phoenician bias; influences from the Near East were to be rejected as the mere shimmering of an "Oriental mirage;" the purely European (or "Indo-European," or perhaps "Aryan") character of ancient Europe was to be fully restored. This curiously retrospective anti-Semitism was fed by current affairs; it was also the counterpart to oversimplified linguistic and anthropological theories current in a naive century which had not yet been trained in the racialist inhuman refinements of our own times.

In any case, the motive for this "Phoenicophobia" did not lie solely in a praiseworthy desire to test the traditions by methods of scientific criticism. Indeed, at the turn of the century, scientific integrity would have instead suggested a postponement of judgment. Too many items in the evidence were still missing, whatever the progress of Egyptology and Assyriology and despite the occasional diggings in the Aegean and the Levant. Interpreting the findings was no easy matter because of a dearth of comparative data and for lack of any reliable chronology. Nevertheless no one waited, and verdict was rendered: the Phoenicians were expelled from Europe some four millennia after the mythical advent in Crete of the Tyrian maid Europa, whose name is still attached to the continent.

Of course, there were scholars who raised their voices in protest against such a peculiar way of vindicating European pride and honor; but they were few, and got no real hearing. One should single out for mention Victor Bérard, the prominent and original interpreter of Homeric poems: all his life was a quest for a better understanding of this Bible of the Greeks, and therefore of the role played by the Phoenicians as the educators of early Greece.⁶ Bérard died just about the time that a new era of archeological and philological discovery was starting in the Levant and the Aegean area. He did not witness the deciphering of the Ugarit texts (by Charles Virolleaud and Edouard Dhorme in France, and Hans Bauer in Germany), which brought to light important fragments of Canaanite epics dating back to the Bronze Age, such as Bérard had actually postulated as necessarily existing as the common sources of both the Bible and Homer. For lack

⁶ V. Bérard, *La résurrection d'Homère*, 1930; *Les Phéniciens et l'«Odyssée»*, 1927, I-II.

of documents of this kind, Bérard's arguments had often been incomplete or even erroneous as to details. Yet his overall views were correct and justified, and his thesis is by now largely supported by the newly discovered data.

Those specialists who chose to ignore Bérard were quite wrong⁷ in their assessment of the nature of European civilization, which had always been complex and composite, in every respect, since its very beginnings. Mediterranean in the broadest sense, it was built up from the most varied components: no purity in it, either "Aryan" or "Semitic", and no preordained dominance of any "miracle"—Greek or Judaic—to play a unique, determinant part, exclusive of other factors.

We cannot sift out here the numberless items of evidence of every kind and provenance pertaining to Mediterranean or more specifically Aegean and Levantine origins. But we must say a few words about some of the major groups of texts and inscriptions discovered in ancient Canaan as well as in Greece, including Crete.

The Ugaritic texts,⁸ first of all: they were found in the course of French excavations at Ras Shamra, at the site of Bronze Age Ugarit, on the Syrian shore facing Cyprus, i.e., in the north of ancient Phoenicia. These excavations (under the direction of Claude Schaeffer) were started some ten years prior to World War II and have been resumed since the war.

The city of Ugarit, founded as a Phoenician settlement before the end of the third millennium, was laid waste by the "Sea Peoples" about 1200 B.C.; ultimately, the ruins were abandoned

⁷ "...The correct Phoenician approach of Bérard did not prevail against the wrong non-Semitic approach of Beloch. Bérard unfortunately did not know enough Semitics to maintain his essentially correct views with linguistic finesse. Like other people, scholars are likely to be more impressed with refined falsehood than with crude truth." These remarks by C.H. Gordon, *Journ. of Semitic Studies*, 1963, p. 76, n. 1, disregard the fact, however, that Beloch, while an outstanding Hellenist, had no knowledge whatsoever of Semitic languages, as he himself acknowledges.

⁸ The Ugaritic texts, notably those in cuneiform alphabet, have already given rise to a vast literature of interpretations, comments, etc, which we cannot review here even in the briefest way. Their first edition has been and still is the task of Charles Virolleaud (in the quarterly *Syria*, Paris, from 1929 on, as well as in the publications of the "Mission de Ras Shamra"). A good overall view can be gained from C.H. Gordon, *Ugaritic Literature*, Rome, 1949, and *Ugaritic Manual*, Rome, 1953.

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and the very name forgotten. The rich finds of material and artistic remains at Ras Shamra, and especially the written documents in all the principal tongues of the contemporary Orient, provide telling evidence, without any later admixture, of what had been the civilized life of Phoenicia in the Middle Bronze (21st-16th) and Late Bronze Ages (16th-13th centuries); that is, in the days of the Pharaonic Middle Kingdom (XIth-XIIth dynasties), in those of the Hyksos (the Asian, chiefly West-Semitic, invaders of Egypt, ca. 1730-1580), and lastly, at the time of the New Kingdom (XVIIIth dynasty of the Thutmoses, and XIXth of the first Ramses Pharaohs).

Here we see at first hand, and sometimes in detail, this fabled Canaanite or more generally West-Semitic world, such as it flourished several centuries prior to the kingdoms of Israel and Judah, and to the Ionia which was to produce Homer. By its oversea connections, it was a world adjacent to the sphere of Mycenaean Greece and of so-called Minoan Crete; and it partly antedated the first arrivals in the Aegean area of those Indo-European tribes who were to bestow their speech on the later Achaeans, Ionians, etc. Thus, we at last have concrete data at our disposal by which to assess the similarities between Biblical and Homeric cultures, to appreciate their common elements, and to determine the direction and succession of mutual borrowings from the very beginnings of history in the Bronze Age.

Nearly all the writings of Ugarit are in cuneiform signs on clay tablets, according to a Mesopotamian procedure which was widespread for a long time in Western Asia. Such material, happily for us, is not easily perishable, contrary to the papyrus and other "paper" substances more commonly used in those parts of Canaan where Egyptian influence was paramount. However, already by the middle of the second millennium, there had developed—at Ugarit and elsewhere⁹—a new cuneiform system, namely an alphabetic system: it was derived from a common Canaanite alphabet (either lapidary or cursive), invented perhaps as early as the 18th century. Yet even these "letters" were no

⁹ Ugarit had no monopoly on the cuneiform alphabet; a tablet in a quite similar though not identical script has been found as far south as the site of Bêt-Shemesh, near the common borders of the tribal territories of Judah and of Dan. Cf. the drawing in Albright (1960), *op. cit.*, fig. 24.

creation out of the void: they were rather a kind of stenography, a simplification in which one marked, in principle, only the consonants. Indeed, the alphabet was ultimately derived from a more complex syllabic script, in which differently vocalized consonants were symbolized by different signs.

The earliest among such syllabic scripts had been in use at Byblos,¹⁰ the metropolis of Lebanon (*Gubal* in Canaanite), from the latter half of the third and during the first third of the second millennium. It would seem that this script spread as far as the land of Moab, to the east of the Dead Sea, even prior to 2000 B.C.¹¹ Thus, writing was practiced throughout Canaan from the dawn of the Middle Bronze Age—not merely by means of the complicated, partly ideographic systems which had been borrowed from abroad (Egyptian hieroglyphics, Sumero-Akkadian cuneiforms), but also, and more and more widely so, by native and more progressive methods which were simpler and better suited for the language for which they had been devised: i.e. Phoenician, Canaanite, Hebrew, or West-Semitic (all such designations being linguistically near-synonyms).

In this respect, Canaan was more advanced than the Aegean area. It is significant, but hardly surprising, that according to Greek legends it was the Phoenicians who brought the art of using “letters” to Greece. Modern discoveries confirm this tradition, though not without reservations and modifications. Indeed, as we shall see, the borrowing actually took place twice (in accordance with the two main stages in the development of Phoenician writing), and each time with a delay of several hundred years: not merely during the early centuries of the last pre-Christian millennium, when the Phoenician alphabet was modified to suit the needs of Greek vocalism, but already by 1400 B.C., or slightly before then, when the Mycenaeans started writing for the first time in their own tongue, by means of a syllabic script (“Minoan linear B”): in fact, the latter had been used, at least in Crete (although in an earlier form, known as “linear A”), for rendering a variety of the Hebrew language.

Let us go back once more to the Ugaritic texts. The most

¹⁰ First, very tentative and debatable decipherment by E. Dhorme, *Syria*, XXV (1946-48), pp. 1-35.

¹¹ Stele of *Baluaḥ*; cf. Albright (1960), *op. cit.*, pp. 186-187.

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interesting group among these, from our standpoint, consists of extensive fragments of epic poems. These are written in a somewhat peculiar Canaanite dialect, which must have already had an archaic flavor by the time (early 14th century) that the writings now in our possession were being edited locally, apparently from some pre-existent sources. Actually, Ugarit is never mentioned in this body of sagas: its first collection must have taken place further south, a few centuries earlier. However it be, the background of the sagas includes all of Canaan, indeed all the Levantine coastland between the "Arid South" (*Negeb*) and the mountain of the "North," towards the Amanus and Taurus ranges, where the Phoenician Olympus was located and the gods of storm and rain had their seat. Places, cities, tribes, as well as heroes, both human and divine, bear Hebrew names which are nearly always those that are to be found much later in the Bible.

These epics, the common inheritance of a land of Phoenicia far more extensive and ancient than had been commonly assumed, belong for the most part to three cycles, the very titles of which are highly revealing:

1) the saga of *Baal*, the divine Lord and "Master;" a brother—quite literally so—of the *Yabwe* (Jehovah) of Israel:¹² like the latter, he is a "Rider of the Clouds," and yet a dying god, periodically reborn, according to the tides of time and the seasons of nature;

2) the saga of *Kerêt*, king of the Sidonians; his momentous journey toward the *Negeb* is strangely reminiscent of the patriarchal adventures in the Book of Genesis;¹³ moreover, his name is also a Biblical eponym, that of Southern clans and districts of the *Kerêti* ("Cretans" if one prefers a Greek form, though their speech is West-Semitic, Hebrew);

3) lastly, the saga of *Aqbat* son of king *Dan'el*: such figures are none other than the eponymic and somewhat totemic heroes of a subdivision of the Levites: the "Sons of *Qebat*" in the Bible, closely connected with the tribe of *Dan*—the latter meaning

¹² Cf. René Dussaud, "Yahwé, fils de El," *Syria*, 1957, pp. 232-242.

¹³ See R. Dussaud, *Les découvertes de Ras Shamra (Ugarit) et l'Ancien Testament*, 2nd ed., 1941; and more recently Cyrus H. Gordon, *Before the Bible: The Common Background of Greek and Hebrew Civilizations*, 1962.

a “Judge” and being also a chthonian “Serpent.”¹⁴ These kingly half-deities are in charge of the *laws* of the commonwealth, but their function is also to supervise *agriculture*, in conformity with a notion about an inter-relationship between justice and crop-yield which also prevailed in archaic Greece. Ultimately, the Levites and Danites were to join the league of Israel (the Greeks would have called it an amphictyony). Moreover, the Levites were to assume in it the function of a clerical and priestly caste. A thousand years earlier, we already find them at the very core of Canaanite cults and traditions.

In reading these epics, one almost has the impression of listening to Homer in the Phoenician tongue, or to a Deborah whose speech had turned Ionian. One is at once in the isle of Tyre and in fabled Argos, at the sources of Jordan as well as of Scamander. Half-humanized gods, who still embody the powers of nature and who, like nature, are blissfully amoral, burst at all times on the scene of a heroic tragi-comedy where the protagonists are mortal, yet of more than human stature. The style, the mannerisms, the set patterns of expression (such as the parallelism or contrasted balance of poetic phrases), as well as the prosody itself—all this conforms strictly to the rules that prevail later in Biblical poetry. As to the dialect, it differs from classical Hebrew about as much, or as little, as Homeric language differs from that of Alexandrian literature. Even from the formal standpoint, we are already in the realm of the hexameter (not quantitative, of course, nor syllabic, but “tonic” here, i.e., based on stress intensity): three feet, the caesura in the middle, and three feet again.¹⁵ This will remain the major rhythm of solemn poetry with the Hebrews, and it will be the paramount meter of Greek and then Latin epic style, with its last metamorphosis as the French “alexandrin.”

Here we are, no doubt, in Europe, or at least at the home of that Cretan Europa who was a sister of Tyrian Cadmos. In a France which knew next to nothing of archeology but was

¹⁴ Cf. Genesis, XLIX, 16-17: Dan is at once a “judge” and a “serpent.”

¹⁵ Even Victor Bérard, *Ithaque et la Grèce des Achéens*, 1927, p. 14, attributed the creation of the hexameter to some mysterious “blending of Achaean and Aegean spirits” (“la rencontre des deux génies achéen et égéen...”), without mentioning here the Phoenicians. He knew nothing of Biblical prosody, which might have suggested to him some more ancient parallels.

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nurtured solely on the classics, Racine could still perceive the close kinship existing between Athaliah, half-Tyrian queen of Jerusalem, and a Phaedra of Phoenician descent, whom Theseus had carried to Athens. However,

...*Tout a changé de face*
Depuis que sur ces bords les dieux ont envoyé
La fille de Minos et de Pasiphaë.
(... Everything has changed face
Since to these shores the gods have sent
The daughter of Minos and Pasiphaë.)

(Racine, *Phèdre*, Act I, scène 1)

Let us, then, follow this thread of Ariadne, which should guide us from Phoenicia to Crete, and hence to pre-Hellenic Greece; and let us mention here too some of the remarkable discoveries made in recent years through philological research.

The deciphering (by Michael Ventris and John Chadwick)¹⁶ of the syllabic script known as “linear B” may be said to vindicate the fables, particularly the legend of Theseus. The clay tablets inscribed in linear B were found in Crete on a single site, that of Cnossos (the city of the Minotaur—half-man half-bull, the offspring of Pasiphaë), at the very end of the epoch of greatest prosperity of its Minoan palace, i.e., slightly prior to 1400 B.C. However, very similar tablets have been excavated throughout Mycenaean Greece, in Mycenae itself, at Pylos, and elsewhere. They are more recent than those of Crete, and were no longer in use after the 12th century and the Dark Age that started with the coming of the Dorians. All these inscriptions in linear B are in a single language, a very archaic dialect of Greek, labeled “Mycenaean” by its discoverers.

Thus the Achaeans did write, even before the Trojan war, as early as the days of the Atridae. True, their script was perhaps used only for bookkeeping and other records of a merely practical kind in temples and palaces, rather than for any literary purposes. Yet the tablets mention many gods and men by name, and the phrasing is undoubtedly Greek. There are also quite a number of words borrowed from foreign tongues, and many

¹⁶ J. Chadwick, *The Decipherment of Linear B*, 2nd ed., 1960.

proper nouns coming from the Orient, notably terms which are West-Semitic.¹⁷ Quite obviously, the Phoenicians were already there.

Certainly, if, among other things, Theseus brought back from the Cnossian Labyrinth, a system of writing, he did not invent it. Indeed, linear B is but a Greek modification of an earlier Cretan script, namely linear A. The latter was older and much more widespread within Crete itself. Roughly speaking, it was used there between 1800 and 1400 B.C.—that is, exactly within the period of arrival and preponderance in the West of those Easterners whom Greek myths describe as Europa and Cadmos, Danaos brother of Aegyptos, etc.

“Linear A” had resisted all attempts at interpretation by means of Indo-European languages. Therefore a Semitist, C.H. Gordon, well-versed in Ugaritic philology, tried to use a Semitic key. At first he thought that these tablets were written in some mixed brand of commercial international Akkadian,¹⁸ but soon he noticed that the dialect was actually an excellent Hebrew of Bronze Age vintage.¹⁹ By 1962 he was able to unravel some quite coherent phrases and analyze details of grammar, vocabulary and phonetics which are peculiar to “Phoenician” alone, i.e., to those West-Semitic dialects that were spoken on the shores of the Mediterranean.²⁰

If therefore, in the mid-second millennium, there dwelt in Crete an entire population which was writing “Minoan” Phoe-

¹⁷ Two examples will suffice: it had been suspected for a long time that the Greek terms for “gold” (*chrysòs*) and for a “shirt” (*chitôn*) were Semitic borrowings. Now these two words have been found in “Mycenaean” (M. Ventris and J. Chadwick, *Documents in Mycenaean Greek*, 1956), written in linear B, with the syllabic spelling *ku-ru-so(-s)* and *ki-to(-n)*. These are obviously *kharû(t)s* and *K.T.N* (*ketônēt*, *kutônēt* in the feminine), which are specifically West-Semitic terms, attested to also at Ugarit.

¹⁸ C.H. Gordon, “Minoan Linear A,” *Journ. of Near Eastern Studies*, 1958, pp. 245-255.

¹⁹ C.H. Gordon, “Minoica,” *ibid.*, 1962, pp. 207-210.

²⁰ In 1965, Gordon was able to announce that the syllabic script (“linear A,” then “linear B”) had developed, according to the principle of “acrophony,” from hieroglyphic signs which were in use down to the 18th century approximately. Thus, the sign for the syllable *tu* represents an “apple” or some similar fruit. Now the only language of the Middle Bronze Age in which the name of the apple starts with this syllable is indeed Canaanite, especially Ugaritic: *tuppûb’* (*Scientific American*, as reported in *UNESCO Features*).

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nician (as its decipherer chose to call it), one could well wonder about any epigraphic traces of their speech surviving into the next or last pre-Christian millennium, i.e., into a period when Greco-Phoenician alphabets were extensively used within the Aegean area. That was the second question which Gordon asked himself. Now it so happens that the existence in Eastern Crete of some fragments of "Eteocretan" inscriptions dating from between the 7th and the 3rd centuries B.C. was known for a long time. They seemed quite mysterious: written in an alphabet which hardly differed from that of the Greek-speaking islanders, they were nevertheless un-understandable. That is precisely why they had been attributed to the Eteocretans, i.e., the "true" Cretans, those that had preceded the Greeks: the *Odyssey* (xix, 175-177) mentions such native Cretans among the motley tribes inhabiting the island in the days of old. But if one examines the inscriptions, as Gordon did,²¹ in the light of Phoenician, their mystery vanishes. They are written in some kind of provincial, rather degenerate Hebrew, which the descendants of the "true" Cretans were still speaking, or at least writing, even as late as the Hellenistic epoch. That is not very surprising; there are many examples of such survivals all around the Mediterranean.

To sum up: the concrete philological data which we possess today quite definitely support the Greek traditions of the presence of Phoenicians on and around the Aegean Sea, prior to, during, and after the heroic ages of Greece.

Let us now turn to archeology. At the time when excavations were being resumed at Ras Shamra on the site of Ugarit, Claude Schaeffer (1948-1949) stated his overall views on discoveries in protohistoric Western Asia while also examining their bearing on a still prehistoric Europe. Among other findings, he concluded that the fully developed bronze industry which started at about 1800 B.C. in the region between the Adriatic Sea, Bohemia and Alsace, was a result of direct importation from the Levant. It was not a slow, gradual, intercontinental diffusion through Anatolia and the Balkans, but a clear-cut case of migration by sea, bringing in some bronze-working clans who were prospecting for copper and no doubt also for tin; their harbors of departure

²¹ C.H. Gordon, "Eteocretan," *Journ. of Near Eastern Studies*, 1962, pp. 211-214; *id.*, "The Dreros Bilingual," *Journ. of Semitic Studies*, 1963, pp. 76-78.

must have included Byblos and Ugarit, where a bronze industry identical to that of Central Europe in both its methods and products was already fully developed by 2000 B.C.²² Schaeffer's very precise arguments were accepted by such a specialist of European prehistory as V. Gordon Childe.²³ This was tantamount to a restatement of the Phoenician thesis, though only from the angle of archeology.

The Levantine seafarers of the late third or early second millennium were not much concerned with the continental districts of Greece, a rather poor and backward country where the infiltration of Indo-European speakers was just starting. But these seafarers were indeed interested in the islands and coastlands on the copper and tin route. Any ancient sea-lane from Phoenicia to the Adriatic necessarily stretched along Cyprus toward the eastern tip of Crete and thence to the isle of Cythera (the westernmost among the Aegean islands). The fact is that in all these places a Levantine influence may be traced archeologically, quite clearly so, from a more or less early period in the Bronze Age. Here too, archeology bears out ancient tradition.

Herodotus (I, 105) says that Phoenicians from Ascalon spread the worship and built the oldest temples of their "Aphrodite Urania" not merely in Cyprus, "according to the reports of the Cypriots" themselves, but as far away as Cythera. Ascalon-Cyprus-Cythera: these storied names are enough to evoke the world of this Levantine deity (more maritime, indeed, than celestial), and the sea-journeys of her worshippers from the borders of Egypt to the uncharted gulfs of Sunset, in the period around 2000 B.C. Moreover, the mother-goddess of Canaan, *Asherat* (eponym of the tribe of *Asher*, which was a Tyrian, later also an Israelite tribe), already bears the title of "Paramount Lady of the Sea" in the Ugaritic epics. In Cythera itself, material proof has been found of early imports from the Levant: a stone vessel inscribed in Egyptian hieroglyphics from a temple of the Sun dating back to the beginnings of the Fifth Pharaonic dynasty (25th century); a votive inscription in Akkadian cuneiforms with a prayer for the

²² Claude Schaeffer, *Ugaritica*, II, 1949, pp. 115-116, 119-120.

²³ V. Gordon Childe, *New Light on the Most Ancient East*, latest revised edition, 1953, p. 242.

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life of a Mesopotamian king of “Amorite,” i.e., of West-Semitic origin (18th century B.C.).²⁴

The progress of comparative archeology and chronology, both in Crete and the Levant, has recently led to some further findings. Thus, R.W. Hutchinson, collaborator of Sir Arthur Evans in his excavations at Cnossos, has now discovered that the celebrated frescoes in the Minoan palace (the legendary Labyrinth which was also the lair of the Minotaur) are not an unprecedented miracle suddenly produced in a spontaneous burst of native “European” genius, but quite to the contrary are the result of Oriental colonization.²⁵ This palace, with its frescoes, its pillars, its entire architecture, dating from ca. 1600 B.C. in its fully developed state, was actually built and decorated by craftsmen schooled in the traditions of the Near East. Painters and architects—as asserted now also by Sir Leonard Woolley²⁶ (veteran excavator of Sumerian Ur)—were inspired by older masterpieces from the Levantine motherland, such as the palace of Alalakh on the lower Orontes (excavated by Woolley), and the grander palace discovered by André Parrot at Mari, on the middle Euphrates (18th century).

Furthermore, do the writings in “linear A” not tell us that these Minoan builders spoke Phoenician? Indeed, all this is not unlike the story, told after their own fashion, by the Greek myths: the Minos dynasty sprang from a Tyrian Europa, who was carried to Crete on the back of a bull-god, some 400 years before the Trojan war. On the strength of his thorough, especially toponymical researches, Victor Bérard had concluded that these legends were much more than mere fiction. But until lately, it was fashionable to disregard all such findings.

Written sources of the Bronze Age, which are by now known in considerable detail for several places in the Levant such as Mari, Alalakh, and especially Ugarit bring us additional information of

²⁴ The latest translation is by E.F. Weidner, “The Inscription from Kythera,” *Journ. of Hellenic Studies*, 1939, pp. 137-138. The king, Narām-Sin, son of Ibiq-Adad, king of Eshnunna, also reigned over the city of Assur and entered Syria. Moreover, Cythera is quite certainly a West-Semitic name, signifying “the island of the Crown or Tiara” (*K.T.R.*, which should be vocalized here *Kutara*). Bérard, *Les Phéniciens*, I, pp. 207-208, had already proved it conclusively, by the method of toponymical “doublets.”

²⁵ R.W. Hutchinson, *Prehistoric Crete*, 1962, pp. 178-179.

²⁶ L. Woolley, *A Forgotten Kingdom*, 1953, pp. 74-75.

the same kind. The Biblical *Kaphtor* (i.e. Crete with its dependencies) appears from the 18th century on as a mart and storehouse of Near-Eastern trade in the West.²⁷ The kings of Mari import its produce, merchant-adventurers from Ugarit send their sailing ships to the great island.²⁸ Phoenicians are so firmly settled there that they transplant to Crete some of their major deities: “Kaphtor” is now the “throne” of their “sitting in state” in the words of the Ugaritic poet. The poems of Ugarit even sing a prototype of that Cretan Zeus who was to ravish Europa on the Tyrian shore: like the latter, he is already a “Father Bull-God” (actually the paramount godhead, *El* in Hebrew), a none-too-faithful spouse to the Lady of the Sea, a sire of heroes and “seducer of women” on the coasts of the Mediterranean.

Minoan Crete was to reach the peak of its glory at the end of the Middle Bronze or the very beginning of the Late Bronze Age, before the middle of the second millennium. Here was the main fountainhead of Mycenaean culture, which developed in Greece during the Late Bronze Age and was to overshadow Crete itself in the days of the Achaeans (between the 15th and the 13th centuries). All authorities agree on that point. On the other hand, the products of Minoan, and ultimately of Mycenaean, arts were highly appreciated in Egypt and much in vogue in the Levant from the time of the Minos dynasty to that of the Atridae. At Ugarit, Cnossos, Mycenae, or elsewhere, it is often quite difficult to tell the styles apart and disentangle the mutual influences. Indeed, Minoan and Mycenaean art is something fundamentally composite and Orientalizing. In the last two or three centuries of the Bronze Age, Mycenaean ceramic ware found a mass market in the Levant itself. But the importers—and often the exporters too, settled at the Aegean centers of production—were “Phoenicians,” or at least people of West-Semitic speech and culture for the most part.

One should add that none of the older myths claimed that

²⁷ The land of *Kaptara* and its products: see Georges Dossin, “Les archives économiques du palais de Mari,” *Syria*, 1939, p. 111 ss.

²⁸ An example of such merchant-adventurers in Ugarit, who imported directly from Kaphtor (*Kapturi* in the genitive, with vocalization conforming to Canaanite, properly speaking) is provided by the archives of the royal palace at Ugarit in the Late Bronze Age (cf. *Le Palais Royal d'Ugarit*, III, pub. “Mission de Ras Shamra,” 1955, p. 107).

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any Greeks had ever established themselves in the Levant prior to the days of the Trojan war, although many tales were told about earlier pirates and adventurers skimming the various parts of the common sea. Contemporary Oriental texts confirm this negative evidence of Greek legend. Late in its history, the Anatolian empire of the Hittites had to deal with some Achaeans who were already settling in the neighborhood of Carian Miletus (in a future Ionia), at about 1300 B.C. Achaeans and “Danaans” are mentioned among the raiding Sea Peoples whom Pharaoh repelled around the year 1200. Yet contrary to other invaders such as the Philistines, none of the Greeks gained any foothold in Canaan. The first Achaean colonization in Cyprus is likewise fairly late, and goes back to the very end of the Bronze Age at the earliest.²⁹ During this entire age (as well as during the following few centuries, in the Early Iron period), no Greek elements are detectable among the vast collection of place names, or tribal, personal and divine appellations which were current in the Levant (including Cyprus, at least such as we know it in the second millennium). Most of these names by far are West-Semitic, i.e., “Phoenician” within the Greek meaning of the term. This does not signify, of course, that the Levant was uniform as to race, onomastic features, or even language; but it does mean that no Greek component figured as yet in the Levantine compound.

Achaean society at the summit of its power, under the hegemony of the Atridae (14th-13th centuries), certainly did not extend beyond the basin of the Aegean Sea. True, it had freed itself from any foreign overlordship, Minoan or Phoenician (two designations which at that time must have been nearly synonymous). The Achaeans, no doubt, were already squeezing out the Levantine “thalassocrats,” forcing these former rulers of the sea to look for new outlets further west.³⁰ But it would be quite wrong to assume, as some misguided scholars do, that the Achaeans were then also colonizing Syria. The hypothesis, which flies in the face

²⁹ S.A. Immerwahr, “Mycenaean Trade and Colonization,” *Archaeology*, 1960, no. 1, p. 12; complemented by the remarks of M. Astour, *Hellenosemitica*, Leiden, 1965, pp. 350-351, n. 6.

³⁰ Ancient authors report that the Phoenicians had explored the Western Mediterranean and entered the Atlantic Ocean well before the end of the second millennium. Utica, which antedated Carthage in Tunisia, and *Gadir* (the “enclosure,” or “fortified settlement” in Canaanite, modern Cadiz), were founded, accord-

of all the known facts, really has no other purpose but to explain away the numerous Oriental borrowings of the Greeks, while denying any Phoenician influence in Greece, such influence being abhorrent to the extreme advocates of Philhellenism.³¹

Quite recently (1965), a Semitist who is also a Hellenist, Michael Astour, has provided further detailed evidence on the Greco-Phoenician relationship in the Bronze Age.³² His painstaking studies go back to the roots of V. Bérard's researches, but now with the help of all the documentation which was not yet available to the latter. The role of this pioneer and the merits of his thesis are at last admitted. He was right in believing that between the start and the middle of the second millennium, the Aegean area was really colonized by a Phoenician Levant of very mixed race but predominantly of West-Semitic speech, which was sending out toward the "Isles of the Sea" its pirates and merchants, its princes and artisans, with all the myths and ideas, cults and deities of Canaan, as well as of Sumero-Akkadian Mesopotamia, and even of Pharaonic Egypt.

Here we would like to sort out only two threads in this labyrinthian tangle, by dwelling on the question of Danaos, of his Danaans and Danaids, and then adding a few words on the myth of Cadmos and Europa.

As Thucydides had already remarked (I, 3), there were as yet no Hellenes and no Barbarians in the time of Homer. In the days of the poet, the Hellenes were but an insignificant tribe of Phtiotis (in Thessaly). The *Iliad* and *Odyssey* sing of a people who are

ing to such reports, by the year 1100, if not earlier. See, for instance, the references collected in Bérard, *Ithaque*, p. 47. There is no reason to doubt it. Certain ivories of Phoenician workmanship in the tombs of Carmona (Guadalquivir valley) are closely related to those of the pre-Israelite treasure at Megiddo in Canaan, dating back to the end of the Bronze Age; cf. Albright (1950), *op. cit.*, p. 176. Nevertheless, Albright himself imagines this vast colonization to have taken place within a short span of time in the 10th century (under Hiram and Solomon), which seems highly unlikely.

³¹ Such an attitude is evident even in recent books, like that of John Boardman, *The Greeks Overseas*, 1964, dealing with the Iron Age. While recognizing on almost every page the innumerable borrowings by archaic Greece, notably Phoenician borrowings, or through Phoenician middlemen, Boardman would like to assume that they are due essentially to some very early Greek colonization of the Levant's shores, which is completely at variance with all factual data.

³² Michael C. Astour, *Hellenosemitica: An Ethnic and Cultural Study in West Semitic Impact on Mycenaean Greece*, Leiden, 1965.

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interchangeably called Danaans or Argives or Achaeans. What is the meaning of these? Achaeans is a genuinely Greek, though comparatively late, designation of such Greek tribes, and it is solely by this name that the Hittites knew them, toward the end of the Bronze Age. Argives is also a Greek appellation, but a politico-geographical one: these are the people of Argos, a term applying not only to the city and to its district (Argolis), but to the entire peninsula which was to become the Peloponnesus (the "Isle of Pelops," father of Atreus, and an Anatolian by origin).

But who are the Danaans? According to legend, they are a pre-Achaean, actually a pre-Greek clan, which had come from across the sea, from the borders of Asia and Africa, with its eponym hero Danaos. His brothers, cousins and closest of kin are indeed, all of them, eponyms: of Libya, of Egypt (Aegyptus), of Phoenicia (Phoenix), even of Cilicia (symbolized anachronistically by Cilix). Among these heroes, there are two Tyrian figures, Cadmos and Europa, whose names convey in Greek disguise two Hebrew words standing for Sunrise and Sunset. In fact, all the coastlands opposite the Aegean Sea are enumerated here, from the outskirts of the Sahara to the ranges of Lebanon, Amanus and Taurus.

Danaos, his daughter (or daughters), his entire clan and descendants—the Danaë, Danaids and Danaans—settled in Argos, and planted there a knowledge of irrigation and proper agricultural rites (the *Thesmophoria* of Demeter): indeed, all the laws and culture of the commonwealth. The chronographers of the Hellenistic period were to date the arrival of Danaos some 300 years prior to the Trojan war (i.e., in the 16th century B.C.). Their estimate, based on a succession of legendary generations with an arbitrary average lifespan, is guesswork more than chronology, but it is no less credible for all that.

However, this was not the first inroad by Semites in Argolis. According to Herodotus (I, 1), the history of Greece actually started a few centuries earlier, when Phoenicians were already visiting Argos as traders, with merchandise from Egypt and Assyria; they were also pirates: they carried off Iô, daughter of Inachos, and brought her to Egypt. This is a humanized re-interpretation, a pseudo-rationalistic one—in the manner of Euhemerus and of the Bible's editors and commentators—which

vulgarizes these *dramatis personae*, who were really gods and symbols rather than historical figures. In fact, Inachos was not merely the king but also the main river of Argolis; and Iô was a celestial moon-like Heifer, worshipped there in pre-Achaean times. However it may be, according to certain legends, the wandering Iô—in her exile between Egypt and Byblos—bore a son named Epaphos, who was to reign on the Nile and produce the lineage to which Danaos himself belonged.

Epaphos is not a Greek name. As proved by Jean Bérard (the son of V. Bérard),³³ it was the imperial title of some of the West-Semitic Pharaohs among the Hyksos of the 17th century—Apôphis in Manetho's lists, *Apâp* in old Canaanite: "He who embraces, encompasses (the lands)."³⁴ But it indicates once more that the legendary chronology is not completely unreliable. (Let us note in parenthesis: even before the end of Antiquity, certain Greek, Judaic, and Egyptian writers had been impressed by the similarities between Biblical and pre-Hellenic myths of the "descents" into and "returns" from Egypt, and had sought their connection with the historic saga of the Hyksos. However, all such *nostoi*, all the nostalgia for a fatherland repeatedly lost and found again—a theme common to the history and literature of both Hebrews and Greeks—is really a subject far too ample for treatment here.)

It might well be that Danaos sailed toward Argolis in sequel to the downfall of the Hyksos, in the early 16th century; or, as the myth would have it, because of his conflict with Aegyptos, a brother but a foe. In any case, the presence of such Egypto-Semites in the Aegean basin within the Late Bronze Age now seems quite certain: it is evidenced by proper nouns or designations of origin such as Danaos,³⁵ Aegyptos,³⁶ (or even its specifically Semitic equivalent, "the Misrite"),³⁷ written in linear B script.

³³ Jean Bérard, "Les Hyksos et la légende d'Io," *Syria*, 1952, p. 35.

³⁴ Concerning the Canaanite etymology of Epaphos-Apôphis, see Astour, *op. cit.*, p. 94, n. 4.

³⁵ Or even "Danaïos" (spelled syllabically *da-na-yo*), which seems a more "Phoenician" variant, at Cnossos; cf. Astour, *op. cit.*, p. 341.

³⁶ Aegyptos, or *Aikupitiyo(s)* in "Mycenaean;" this is a borrowing, through Canaanite, of an Egyptian name for the city of Memphis or its temple: *H'e(t) - Ka - Ptab'*, "the Castle of Bull-god Ptah." Cf. Astour, *op. cit.*, p. 81, and *ibid.*, n. 6.

³⁷ *Misarayo(s)* in "Mycenaean," *ibid.*, p. 81.

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The “Phoenicians,” so called, are present too: that is, the records mention purple-dyed fabrics which even then were a trade-secret of theirs, and bore their name, just as in classical times. As to the inscriptions in linear A, of much earlier date, these mention such names as David (in the sense of “war lord”), or as Dagôn (the great Canaanite god of “cereals” and “fishes,” whom the Philistines were later to worship). C.H. Gordon may even have discovered the very name of Minos in its West-Semitic form, attested to also at Alalakh and Ugarit.³⁸

Evidently, having succeeded to the Phoenicians in Argos and Crete, the Achaeans had also inherited some of the Phoenician terminology and onomastic features; and ultimately these Greeks applied to themselves the proud title of Danaans. Moreover, Homer was not the first to make literary use of it as a near-synonym of Achaeans: at about 1200 B.C., the scribes of Pharaoh were using the term in precisely this sense.

M. Astour has shown conclusively³⁹ that *Dan-aw-os* and the *Dan-aw-oi* of archaic Greek (with a suffix of belonging, *-aw-*, such as it was before the disappearance of “digamma” *F*, i.e., of semivowel *w*) are precise equivalents of the Danites or “men of Dan” in Hebrew. (In the consonantal alphabet, this was spelled *DN.Y*, *DN.NY* in the singular, with a suffix of kinship or belonging, of both.) Moreover, the Greek Danaos re-evokes in all his main traits the eponymic hero *Dan’el* (“Judge-god”). The latter appears in the Ugaritic saga as the king of a very ancient Canaanite tribe, settled since the third millennium on the southern shores of Phoenicia, part of which was to be known as “Palestine” much later, after 1200 B.C., as a consequence of Philistine conquest.

Dan’el, like Danaos, and the former’s daughter, like the daughters of the latter, are lawgivers as well as agents of agricultural fertility. The daughter of Dan’el is described as a “Sichemite”: this is a pun (a traditional one at Ugarit and also in the

³⁸ Cf. for instance C.H. Gordon, *Journal of Near Eastern Studies*, 1962, p. 209: written in syllabic “A” as *Mi-na-ne* (with “mute e” in final position), but *Mi-na-an* in Akkadian cuneiforms at Alalakh, and *M.N.N.* in cuneiform alphabet at Ugarit.

³⁹ Astour, *op. cit.*, pp. 51-53.

Book of Genesis)⁴⁰ alluding to the watering jug on her “Shoulder” and to the famous city of Sichem (“Shoulder” or “Asses’ back”), the totem and clan of which was indeed “the Ass.” This wise and active girl is already a Danaid, well-versed in *Thesmophoria*, “drawing at the source,” “carrying the water,” spreading the dew of heaven on the fields, and “knowing the progress of the stars.” Symbols and terminology, all are in agreement: one also expects to hear of a blood-stained marriage, with the murder of the bridegroom. The episode is not mentioned in the extant, very fragmentary Ugaritic texts, but it is easily reconstructed if one compares the theme of the Danites of Canaan with the very old Biblical myth of Sichem (Genesis, chapter xxxiv). There, a female representative of the tribe of Dan—namely *Dinab* (“Judgment, Law”)—plays with her brothers a role which will be that of the Danaids in Greek tragedy.⁴¹

Traditions were no doubt evolving in various directions, on both sides of the Mediterranean, but they still bore some resemblance. A hundred years prior to the *Suppliants* of Aeschylus, the prophet-scribe and Levite Ezekiel (xxvii, 3; cf. xiv, 14, 20; read *Dan’el*, *sic*, not “Daniel”) was still able to rebuke sharply the king of Tyre by a mere laconic allusion—understood at once by any audience—to the drama of Dan’el, which was parallel to that of Danaos. Obviously, it was still common knowledge among the Judaeans, as among all other “Phoenicians.”⁴²

Furthermore, the oldest texts of the Bible—notably the epic song about Deborah (now chapter v in the *Book of Judges*), the composition and archaic dialect of which go back to the end of the Bronze Age—describe the men of Dan as a seafaring tribe, like the Tyro-Israelite tribe of Asher. Not fully incorporated in

⁴⁰ Genesis, XLVIII, 22, in fact contains a pun on “Sichem” and the “Shoulder,” but it is not understandable from the too-literal translation in the Septuaginta and is lost altogether in all other versions. However, it was well-known to the epic poets of Ugarit: cf. the “Rephaim” (tablet III Rp B, line 5), where the punning words apply to the city of Sichem and to its eponymic hero (cf. *Syria*, 1941, pp. 16-17 and 19; the editor, Ch. Virolleaud, has understood the name, but not the allusion, and he failed to make the obvious comparison with the words attributed to Jacob in the Book of Genesis).

⁴¹ Astour, *op. cit.*, p. 75.

⁴² Cf. Shalom Spiegel, *Noah, Danel, and Job... Canaanite Relics in the Legends of the Jews*, in *L. Ginzberg Jubilee Volume*, New York, 1945, pp. 307 ss.

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the new league of Israel, these Danites “keep to the ships” (Judges, V, 17), no doubt because of their oversea interests, which are already threatened by the gathering storm of Philistine invasion. In earlier days, the powerful tribe of Dan had spread far and wide. It conquered a second inheritance for itself at the sources of Jordan. There, its Levitic priests, known as “Sons of Moses,” went on with the worship of a Golden Calf—an offspring of the Lord and of a beautiful Heifer—quite worthy of Îô, of Pasiphaë, of the Minotaur. This myth already formed a crucial episode in the Ugaritic saga of Baal:⁴³ the horned beast, or ambivalent hero born of these divine dallings, was known there by a name which is quite similar to that of the mythical lawgiver Moses.

As one may learn from the evidence collected and commented on in Astour’s book, the Danites played an outstanding part in the affairs of the Eastern Mediterranean, even prior to the mid-second millennium. In a region which a thousand years later was to be called Cilicia, they colonized the rich coastal plain around Adana (a town that was to preserve throughout history its West-Semitic appellation: “the Lord’s” own city).⁴⁴ Here the men of Dan founded a kingdom bearing the same name as the realm of the Danaans in Argolis, but (unlike the latter) having no Greek features at all. It was undoubtedly by this route, along the coasts and islands skirting the south of Anatolia, and particularly through Rhodes—their first station in the Archipelago (according to Rhodian chronicles)—that these folk of Dan’el-Danaos entered the Aegean Sea. But the old country whence they had sprung was indeed located between Phoenicia and Egypt, in full accord with the legend.

Such are the precise data of comparative archeology and philology. One should not disregard them. *Timeo Danaos* is a Roman

⁴³ This episode was called by Ch. Virolleaud “Anat and the Heifer” (*Anat et la Génisse*), *Syria*, 1936, pp. 150-173. Cf. R. Dussaud, “Cultes cananéens aux sources du Jourdain,” *Syria*, 1936, pp. 283-295; Astour, *op. cit.*, *passim*, concerning the relationship between the Biblical “Moses” and the Ugaritic *M. Sh*.

⁴⁴ Stephanus Byzantius still knew that Adana had been founded by a god “Adanos” (cf. Roscher, *Lex. d. griech. und römisch. Mythol.*, *sub voce*). This is obviously a variant of Greco-Phoenician *Adonis* and of Judaic *Adonay*. The termination in *-ân* rather than in *-ôn* points to the early age of the tradition; cf. *Dagôn*, more anciently *Dagân*.

dictum, like *delenda Carthago*, not the concept of a Hellene or a European. It no longer seems possible to reject the ancient and modern interpretation of the myth of Cadmos and Europa, of an Eastern brother seeking a sister who is the very embodiment of the West.

It is quite certain that Cadmos is a rendering of an old Canaanite term: *qadm-*, *qedem* in classical Hebrew, “that which is in front,” the Levant, the Orient for a people who took their bearings from the rising sun. The word is quite commonly used in Biblical and Ugaritic writings to designate the districts, mountains, and people “in front,” i.e., “to the east” of the Mediterranean coastland of Canaan. In the Bible, the Dead Sea is a “Cadmean Lake” (*qadmônî*). As early as 2000 B.C., the Egyptians knew full well that to the east of Byblos or of Lebanon there stretched a “Land of Cadmos” (*Q.D.M.*—a faithful transcription of the West-Semitic term).⁴⁵

One may therefore trust the Greeks when they tell us that the Cadmaeans were Levantines, or more exactly, Tyrians. Arriving even earlier than the Danaans, they had settled in Boeotia and founded Thebes, the citadel of which bore their name, “Cadmaea.” Quite recently, in 1963-1964, excavations were at last resumed in a palace of “Mycenaean” date within this Cadmaea, and the finds have been spectacular. About the year 1300, when linear B script was already in use at Thebes, its rulers were still fond of the relics, traditions and writings of the Orient. A collector’s treasury, in those days of the waning Bronze Age, included a great many imported cylinder-seals, some of them with lengthy cuneiform inscriptions. These seals, which were also copied by the Thebans themselves, had come from the Levant (Syria and Mesopotamia), and they dated back to every period from the 23rd to the 14th century. Indeed, Cadmos had been there, and had stopped in Boeotia for a long time.⁴⁶

The land of Sunrise has for its counterpart the land of Sunset: the twin notions are related but mutually exclusive; they pursue

⁴⁵ The “Tale of Sinuhe,” the action of which belongs to the very beginning of the 20th century B.C.; the earliest manuscripts of this Egyptian “novel” go back to the year 1800 at the least (cf. James B. Pritchard, *The Ancient Near East*, 1958, pp. 5, 7).

⁴⁶ Summary and bibliography in Astour, *op. cit.*, pp. 387-388.

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each other all the time, though the twain never meet. The meaning of the fable of Cadmos and Europa is obvious.⁴⁷ “Europe” is a Greek pun on the West-Semitic “setting” of the sun—*'erob^h* or *'arob^h* (in which the initial is a laryngeal “spirit,” not marked in Greek but favoring a shift toward “epsilon;” while the final *b^h* tends to become spirantized, and this is sometimes rendered in old Greek by a “pi” instead of a “bêta”). The Greeks, who were often the rivals of the Semites but always remained their neighbors, were not unaware of such niceties. They knew full well that Europa meant the Occident in that other tongue of civilization which was to them Barbarian and yet, at times, also divine. In classical Hebrew, *'ereb^h* means “evening” or “sunset,” and with a locative prefix—“the West,” *ma'arab^h*. With a strengthening of the laryngeal, the same term exists in Arabic: *al-gharb*, the *Maghreb*; and Algarve in Portugal is still today the point of Andalusia farthest West.

To comprehend one must compare. In the days of classical Hellenism, on those southern shores of Crete to which “Father Bull-God” carried Europa after taking her away from the Tyrians, certain coins of Phaestos and Gortyna showed the fair image of the Phoenician maid, sometimes with a bull or a bull’s head next to her, but always sitting by a willow tree. Why a willow? Hellenists would hardly be in a position to answer, for it happens to be a Hebrew play of words. Indeed, already in the Bible, the “willow” is *'arab^ha(b)*, written in consonantal spelling *'RBH*—exactly like a “Europa” in the feminine. In their plural form, “willows” and “evenings” are strictly homonymous: *'arab^him*. Thus, we are dealing here with a kind of hieroglyph, a heraldic pun.⁴⁸ But to understand it, one should have a somewhat amphibious, Greco-Phoenician upbringing.

In closing this all-too-simplified review, we would not want anybody to think that we are in favor of exchanging Philhellenism for some opposing bias, either pan-Semitic, pan-Babylonian, or otherwise Sumeromaniac. The Greeks, and therefore Europe,

⁴⁷ Astour, *op. cit.*, *passim*, reviews several Ugaritic variants of such fable.

⁴⁸ Cf. R.W. Hutchinson, *op. cit.*, pp. 212-213, “Europa.” There were those who tried to find a way out by means of the Greek word *rhops* for “willow;” that is one more pun, a modern one, not etymologically defensible.

owed much to the “Phoenicians.” That is true; but they did not owe them everything. One should not be misled by any mirage, be it Oriental or Occidental. History proceeds under all skies, of sunrise and of sunset, around the seven seas, everywhere upon Adam’s earth. But that is quite another story, encompassing a far wider horizon.