

## UGARIT AND CAPHTOR

Throughout the second millennium B. C., but especially during its latter half, the islands and coastal mainland of the East Mediterranean shared a large cultural common denominator. The focal point of the unifying forces was Crete together with culturally related Aegean areas. I use the term «Caphtor» to embrace the various districts where Minoan-Mycenaean civilization was nurtured.

The consonantal skeleton of «Caphtor» is *kft*. It occurs in the well-known Egyptian *kftw* «Caphtor», attested since the 18th Dynasty; though as a divine name in combination with «Horus» (*hr-kft*), it goes back to the Middle Kingdom.<sup>1</sup> In Hebrew, «Caph-tor» is the name of the homeland of the Philistines (Amos 9:7, etc.). The overlapping, and even interchangeability, of «Philistines» with «Cretans» (Ezekiel 25:16) or with «Caphtorians» (Deuteronomy 2:23; Amos 9:7, etc.) show that it is a mistake to insist on too much finesse in distinguishing these names in Hebrew usage.

The epigraphical discoveries at Ugarit<sup>2</sup> from the Amarna Age have yielded further evidence on Caphtor. In the following discussion, it is necessary to bear in mind that in Ugaritic, as in Hebrew, the letter *p* covers not only the occlusive *p*, but (e. g., when necessity arose, as in the case of foreign words) also the fricative *f*.

The Ugaritic god of arts and crafts, resembling Hephaestus, is called *Ktr* and *Hss*. As is appropriate for such a god, his workshop was located in the artistic land of Caphtor, occurring in two forms so as to suit the technical requirements of parallelistic poetry. The one form is *kp̄tr*, exactly as in Hebrew; the other form is *hk̄pt*. Thus the base is *KPT*, to which either *h-* is prefixed (*h-KPT*) or *-r* is suffixed (*KPT-r*). In passing we may note that the variant

---

<sup>1</sup> The earliest occurrences of Egyptian words are indicated in A. Erman and H. Grapow, *Wörterbuch der ägyptischen Sprache*.

<sup>2</sup> See my *Ugaritic Handbook: Grammar, Texts in Transliteration, Glossary*, Rome 1947, and *Ugaritic Literature: A Comprehensive Translation*, Rome 1949. All the Ugaritic words in this article can be found with a documented discussion in the glossary of the *Handbook*.

*ḥqkpt* occurs once for *ḥkpt*. The double writing of the palatal stop (-*qk-*) is due to the fact that Caphtorian *k* was not quite the same as Semitic *k*, but between Semitic *k* and *q*. Thus the Philistine word for «helmet» appears in Hebrew now as *kôvāc* (written *kwb<sup>c</sup>*) and now as *qôbāc* (written *qwb<sup>c</sup>*).<sup>1</sup>

The Cretan affinities of «Caphtor» are borne out by the description of Ktr-and-Hss at work in his atelier, where he fashions an Idaean footstool: *hdm̄ id̄*<sup>2</sup> (text 51:1:35) «a footstool of Ida.» This word for «footstool» occurs in Hebrew as *h<sup>a</sup>dōm* and in Egyptian as *hdmw*. That it is a loan from Caphtorian is brought out by the facts that it does not occur before the 18th Dynasty in Egypt, and that it is not Semitic (being absent from Akkadian, Arabic and Ethiopic: that is, from all the Semitic languages removed from the East Mediterranean in antiquity).<sup>3</sup> In all probability *id̄* refers to Mount Ida in Crete, though we should note that «Ida» is also found in Asia Minor; cf. the Mount Ida overlooking Troy (mentioned often in the Iliad). Indeed it is likely that the name «Ida» was brought to Crete by immigrants from Asia Minor.

Another Caphtorian word found at Ugarit is *srn*, occurring in text 60:10. This text is not Semitic; and the unidentified encircled letter in lines 14, 22, 30, and 36 is reminiscent of Linear B.<sup>4</sup> The primary meaning of *srn* may well have been «axle» as in the loanword *surnā* in Syriac and in Hebrew *sarnê n<sup>e</sup>ḥōšet* (1 Kings 7:30) «copper axles». However, it is best known from its secondary meaning «tyrant, king» as applied to the rulers of the cities in the Philistine Pentapolis (1 Samuel 6:16-18). The development from «axle» to an important personage is paralleled by the development from «wheel» to an important personage; thus Hebrew *'ōfan* «wheel»

<sup>1</sup> *Ugaritic Manual* (Rome, in press) § 5.34; 1 Samuel 17:5, 38.

<sup>2</sup> So, correctly, in Virolleaud's autograph, though it has generally been emended to *il̄* by others.

<sup>3</sup> This method should be applied also to other words. For example, when non-Semitic words with Greek analogues occur in *early* Hebrew (well before the Hellenistic Age), we may suspect a Caphtorian source. Cf. Heb. *maššā* «unleavened bread» with *μάζα* «barley bread», and Heb. *mām* «blemish» with *μῶμος* «blame.» Particularly appropriate are words relating to craftsmanship and war; thus Heb. *meḫērā* (Genesis 49:5) = *μάχαιρα* «sword» (my student J. Kaster called my attention to this word).

<sup>4</sup> Curves are alien to the cuneiform script, as used in Mesopotamia and Ugarit.

designates also an angel in the hierarchy. Apparently the state was pictured as a chariot, which depended on the strength of its axles and wheels.

In Ugarit, both *srn* and *bn srn* «Son of Srn» occur as personal names. That their literal meanings are «King» and «Son of the King» is suggested by the occurrence of the Semitic personal names *mlk* and *bn mlk* meaning «King» and «Son of the King». The only other example of *srn* in Ugarit is in the combination *yn srnm*, in a context where «wine of kings» makes excellent sense.

The strong Caphtorian element in Ugarit was closely related to the Philistines along the southern coast of Palestine. That *srn* is found in both the Bible and Ugaritic suggests that the Caphtorian settlers in both localities spoke the same language.<sup>1</sup> That the Philistines were warlike (instead of peaceful like the pre-Greek Eteocretans) points to their Greek blood. We now know that Linear B is Greek and was in use at Knossos round about 1400 B. C.<sup>2</sup> Since the Ugaritic tablets date mostly from the early part of the 14th century B. C., it is not unlikely that the Caphtorian colony there included Greek-speaking settlers closely akin to the Philistines. In any event, the linguistic proximity of the Caphtorians of Ugarit to those of Philistia is hinted by the existence of *srn* in both communities, regardless of whether *srn* is cognate with Greek *τύραννος*.

The close affiliations of the Caphtorians in Ugarit and Philistia are also evident from the Ugaritic Legend of King Krēt. This king bears the name of the eponymous ancestor of the Cretans, appearing in the consonantal text of Zephaniah 2:6.<sup>3</sup> The Legend of Krēt is of paramount importance for Minoan studies not only because of the Cretan name of its hero, but more especially because of its central position in East Mediterranean literature. It is an «Iliad» in miniature to the extent that King Krēt (like King Menelaus) loses his

<sup>1</sup> For the diversity of speech on Crete, cf. *Odyssey* 19: 172-177, according to which the inhabitants include Achaeans, Eteocretans, Cydonians, Dorians and Pelasgians. The number of the Cretan cities is here given as ninety. It is interesting to note that also in the Ugaritic text 51:VII:12 the cliché of «ninety cities» appears.

<sup>2</sup> See M. Ventris and J. Chadwick, *Journal of Hellenic Studies*, LXXIII (1953), pp. 84-103, and *Antiquity*, XXVII (1953), pp. 196-206.

<sup>3</sup> The Hebrew is to be translated thus: «The coastal stretch, even the meadows of Krēt, shall become shepherds and sheepfolds.» This means that fertile Philistia is to be transformed into a wilderness fit only for grazing.

beautiful wife Hurray (cf. Helen) so that he must gather a great army and march to Odom (cf. Troy) where she is being withheld from him. As in the Iliad, the hero gets his wife back. The resemblances in detail are too numerous to be repeated here.<sup>1</sup> Suffice it to say that they are both (i) general and (ii) specific in character, and to give a sample illustration of each type. (i) A general parallel is the mingling of men and gods. Krēt himself is a divine king; and the head of the pantheon attends Krēt's wedding to Hurray. In the Iliad there is many a divine or semidivine hero; and the gods gave mortal Peleus wedding gifts upon his marriage to the divine Thetis.<sup>2</sup> (ii) A specific parallel is the offer of lavish gifts (short of the heroine herself) to induce the invading army to leave the beleaguered city (of Odom or Troy); these offers are turned down by Krēt<sup>3</sup> outside of Odom, and by the Achaeans outside of Troy.<sup>4</sup> This confirms the Minoan-Mycenaean origin of early Greek civilization. But the matter does not stop here. The tie-in between the Bible and Ugarit is due not only to the common Semitic bonds, but also in great measure to the Caphtorian settlers who contributed so much to Ugarit and Israel. The city of Odom in the Legend of Krēt can hardly be dissociated from the land of Edom in southern Palestine.<sup>5</sup> The route of Krēt's seven-day march to Odom is via southern Phoenicia (the text mentions Tyre and Sidon), which he reaches on the third day. To be sure, Krēt's capital is not Ugarit, but Hbr. Howerer, Krēt's tribe is called T<sup>c</sup>,<sup>6</sup> which was prominent at Ugarit where the tablets

<sup>1</sup> See my «Notes on the Legend of Keret», *Journal of Near Eastern Studies*, XI (1952), pp. 212-213.

<sup>2</sup> Iliad 18:84-85.

<sup>3</sup> Ugaritic text Krt:282-300.

<sup>4</sup> Iliad 7:348-364, 385-397, 400-411.

<sup>5</sup> French scholars, notably C. Virolleaud and R. Dussaud, have maintained this identity from the start. The vocalic discrepancy between «Odom» and «Edom» is due to Ugaritic vowel harmony (*Ugaritic Manual* § 5.18). It is interesting to compare «Edom» with 'Ιδομ- in the name of the Cretan hero 'Ιδομνεύς of the Iliad, though the identification is not a certainty.

<sup>6</sup> Since Ugaritic *t* appears in Hebrew as š, there is no phonetic objection to identifying *t*<sup>c</sup> with *š*<sup>uac</sup> in the names *yehô-š*<sup>uac</sup> «Joshua» (= «Jesus»), *malkî-š*<sup>uac</sup> (1 Chronicles 8:33) a son of Saul, *'elî-š*<sup>uac</sup> (1 Chronicles 14:5) a son of David, and *bat-š*<sup>uac</sup> (1 Chronicles 3:5) the mother of King Solomon. These names make their appearance in the Philistine period and since *š*<sup>uac</sup> has no Semitic etymology, it may well be Caphtorian. Indeed *yehô-š*<sup>uac</sup> is a syncretistic name (for the type, see *Ugaritic Manual* § 8.54) whereby Yahwe is identified

were written. Indeed, the Ugaritic King Nqmd, who paid tribute to the Hittite monarch Shuppiluliuma (1395-1355 B. C.), and who sponsored the writing of some of the literary tablets found at Ugarit, is a member of the T<sup>c</sup> tribe. It therefore seems likely that Nqmd belonged to the dynasty of Krēt, and hence Hbr might be in the vicinity of Ugarit. In any case, the area of Tyre and Sidon is suitable as the midway stop en route from Ugarit to Edom. To be sure, we must make allowances for poetic license in the use of numerals. Thus the march is seven-days long (and not six or eight days) because seven is the favorite number for measuring time by days. Yet the use of such numerals, though schematized, need not be fantastic, because they would then spoil the story for listeners who knew the reasonable time-limits for traveling from Hbr to Odom.

That the King of Odom bears the non-Semitic name of Pbl suggests the possibility that he too may have been of Caphtorian extraction. The name of his daughter Hurray is Semitic (the root *hrr* meaning «free», and *-ay* being a feminine suffix) pointing to the Semitization of the Caphtorian settlers in Canaan.

The motif of the king losing his well-born wife and having to regain her is found also in the Bible. David weds the princess Michal, but she is taken away from him so that he must later get her back.<sup>1</sup> Thus the legend of the Cretan hero Krēt is the connecting link between Greek and Hebrew epic. No matter how different Homer and the Hebrew «Epic of Kings»<sup>2</sup> may be in spirit, they draw on the same epic repertoire for content. Since the Linear B texts are so far limited to administrative and economic documents, we do not yet have the literary or historic texts from Crete itself to provide us with the bridge between the epics of Hellas and Israel. But Ugarit has given us the next best thing and the importance of Ugarit is that it shows unmistakably the kinship between Homer and the Bible.

---

with an apparently Caphtorian deity *Šûac* (<*Tûc*). This would explain why the pagan *bat-šûac* is elsewhere changed to the innocuous *bat-šebac* «Bathsheba». However, proof for *t<sup>c</sup>* = *šûac* requires more evidence from syllabic texts.

<sup>1</sup> 2 Samuel 3:14.

<sup>2</sup> See my *Introduction to Old Testament Times*, Ventnor, N. J., 1953, pp. 294-295. The biblical author cites his poetic sources; cf. especially the excerpts from The Book of Jashar (Joshua 10:12-13; 2 Samuel 1:17-24), which are replete with Homeric and Ugaritic parallels.

This fits in exactly with what we know of history. Just as the Mycenaean offshoot of Caphtor was the basic civilizing factor of Achaean Greece, so too was the Philistine offshoot of Caphtor the basic civilizing factor of nascent Israel. Israel became a nation during the last two centuries of the second millennium B. C. at a time when Egypt, Mesopotamia and Anatolia were too weak to influence Palestine, and when Israel's great cultured neighbors (albeit often hostile) were the Philistines. Archaeologists have known this for a long time.<sup>1</sup> But the same is evident from history and literature.<sup>2</sup> The Hebrew account from Abraham through David's reign is based on East Mediterranean epic sources, just as Homer's epics are. Both are due to the Caphtorian impact.

It has long been known that the pattern of Minos as the giver of divine law (obtained according to some traditions on a mountain<sup>3</sup>) has been followed by Moses, who got the Law from God on Mount Sinai, to lay down therewith the foundations of society. What has not been noted is that the second greatest figure in Minoan tradition, namely Daedalus, has his counterpart in Moses's master-craftsman Bezalel. And to dispel any doubt that the skeptical reader may have, the creations of Bezalel include *kaftôrîm* «caphtors»,<sup>4</sup> bearing the name of the homeland of early Israel's major source of cultural inspiration.

The period of Caphtorian influence on Israel stops rather abruptly with the end of David's reign. For example, long hair in the Cretan manner is the style in the time of Deborah (Judges 5:2),<sup>5</sup> Samson (Judges 16:19) and David's son Absalom (2 Samuel 14:26; 18:9). This is also frequent in the Iliad (e. g., «the long-haired Achaeans»). But after the Davidic period it is never mentioned again. This time-limit for the East Mediterranean parallels in

<sup>1</sup> Thus R. A. S. Macalister, *The Philistines: Their History and Civilization*, London, 1914.

<sup>2</sup> This has become clear from the Ugaritic parallels. For the bibliography and evaluation of the subject prior to the impact of Ugaritic, see the excellent article of W. Baumgartner, «Israelitisch-griechische Sagenbeziehungen», *Schweiz. Archiv f. Volkskunde*, XLI (1944), pp. 1-29.

<sup>3</sup> See J. Baikie, *The Sea-Kings of Crete*, London, 3rd ed., 1920, p. 136.

<sup>4</sup> Exodus 37:1, 19-22.

<sup>5</sup> With the meaning of the root *prc* in in this verse, cf. Numbers 6:5, Deuteronomy 32:42, and Ezekiel 44:20.

the Bible is borne out by many scores of illustrations that I have assembled for a future publication.

This article aims at showing that Caphtor is the principal source of inspiration for early Greek and Hebrew culture: the two fountainheads of our heritage. It therefore follows that, in the years ahead, the field covered by «Minos» is destined to be the cornerstone of the study of the origin of Western Civilization.

CYRUS H. GORDON

*Philadelphia, Pa.*