

Orazio Monti

LE LINÉAIRE A ET LE DISQUE DE PHAISTOS

Au Prof. Yves Duhoux

1. Introduction et points de méthode

Dans cette étude nous comparons 7 signes (parmi les 9 signes les plus fréquents) du Disque de Phaistos avec 7 signes (dont 6 se trouvent parmi les 7 signes les plus fréquents) du Linéaire A selon les caractéristiques suivantes:

- a) alternance avec un autre signe (ou d'autres signes) à l'initiale ou en finale de mots
- b) fonction de "préfixe", "suffixe" ou "infixe" (entre guillemets, car ces termes ne préjugent pas de la fonction effective de ces "affixes" ou "infixes"; les "affixes" ont été déterminés, sauf le "suffixe" AB24 (v. § 4.4), selon les critères indiqués dans Duhoux 1983: 37–38)
- c) fréquences (initiale, médiane, finale, totale).

Il faut remarquer que **b** est une conséquence de **a** uniquement dans le cas où l'alternance de deux signes est attestée avec plusieurs "radicaux" différents.

En outre, il est clair que les caractéristiques **c** sont moins stables que celles de **a** et **b**: il faudra en tenir compte.

Cette comparaison et la méthode employée sont justifiées par les faits suivants:

- le Disque a été trouvé à quelques centimètres de la tablette linéaire A PH 1, dans un contexte indiquant la période de c. –1850 à c. –1600 (v. Duhoux 1977: 12–14)
- les écritures du Disque et du Linéaire A sont *structurellement* identiques: le Linéaire A est un syllabaire à syllabes ouvertes comme l'est, très probablement, l'écriture du Disque; en outre, ces deux écritures séparent régulièrement les mots (à l'exception de quelques textes linéaires A en *scriptio continua*) et ne notent pas d'éventuelles consonnes finales de mots (v. Duhoux 1976 et 1978: 67–70)

marks, hitherto unrecorded, were noted on site at Megiddo in 1996 by the author, a member of the Megiddo Expedition of Tel Aviv University.

The Use of Masons' Marks Throughout Time

Masons' marks in the form of letters, numbers and various symbols occur on ancient, medieval and later constructions in Asia and Europe. There are many, sometimes fantastic, hypotheses as to their use; Sakellarakis (1967:277) and Hood (1987) have argued that these masons' marks served as religious or magical alphabetic signs. In ancient Israel scribes used ciphers or wrote number words in full (Millard 1995:194). It would follow that these Israelite masons' marks must have been some sort of cipher or alphabetical mark.

An in-depth study of the ancient material was called for by Nylander (1974:216), and this is presently being done by Hitchcock (forthcoming 2002) who proposes that the accurate documentation of masons' marks might be used to identify and compare particular building and masonry traditions, and enhance comparative studies with related linear scripts.

The earliest examples of masons' marks occur in Middle Minoan I to Late Minoan I Crete (Evely 1993:217), where they are a typical feature of palace architecture (Palyvou 1999:611–612). They also appear on Thera, where more than eighty masons' marks have been found, mainly in the largest most elaborate building, Xeste 4 (*ibid.*).

Mobile Craftsmen

Lack of skilled workers could have been overcome by employing foreign craftsmen (Nylander 1965:52). During the Middle Bronze Age, masons from Mari were sent to neighbouring provinces. In the Late Bronze Age, masons from the Hittite empire were sent to Ramesside Egypt (*ibid.*) while Minoan artisans traveled and worked along the coast of the Levant (Niemeier 1991:199). In Achaemenian Persia, Carian and other foreign craftsmen were employed as builders (Zaccagnini 1983:262–263).

90f). Thirty-six marks came to light at Megiddo by the Oriental Institute of Chicago during the years 1925–1939 (Megiddo I: Figs. 16:20, 26:25; 32). At Samaria another ten marks were found by the Joint Expedition during the years 1931–1933 (Samaria III: 34–35, fig. A). Investigations by the Hebrew University under Yadin at Megiddo in 1965 revealed a single mark (Yadin 1970:92, fig. 17). Megiddo I:13 fig. 16; 20 fig. 26; 25 fig. 32.

In the 9th century Israelite kingdom the newly founded Omride dynasty had no heritage of creating monumental art and architecture. It seems that these marks belonged to a distinctive work force – skilled craftsmen who left them behind as a tantalizing clue to their identity.

The Affinity of the Masons' Marks

One of the excavators of Samaria, Sukenik, noted that some of the marks resemble ancient Hebrew (Samaria III:34). In addition several of the marks can be matched with one or another of the Aegean scripts, while some are specific to only one. A possible and logical solution for the origin of these masons' marks is Phoenicia, but there are too many variants for the marks to have originated from the Phoenician alphabet, and no masons' marks have been found in that region. Another plausible origin is Cyprus, where fourteen masons' marks from diverse periods have been recorded (Hitchcock 2000). Some of the masons' marks do resemble certain letters used in the Eteo-Cypriote and Classical Cypriote alphabets; however, these alphabets do not emerge until the 7th century BCE⁷ (Knapp and Marchant 1982:22).

After scrutinizing the many ancient alphabets,⁸ it appears that the closest match for the masons' marks is with the Carian alphabet. Eighteen of the twenty Israelite masons' marks appear in the established Carian alphabet and two match Carian quarry marks (Gosline 1992). See Figure 1.

If they are indeed related to the Carian alphabet, then the inexplicable occurrence of these marks in the Northern Kingdom of Israel in the 9th century BCE must be examined cautiously, for they appear some two hundred years before the first attested use of the Carian alphabet, and some five hundred years before the Carian inscriptions in mainland Caria. Despite this, and inspired by the words of Ray (1982a:77), I feel that I have no choice but to risk the consequences and present the following scenario.

⁷ Apart from five Cypriote syllabic signs on an obelos from Tomb 49 at Palaepaphos-Skales dated to the 11th c. BCE (Maier and Karageorghis 1984:133–134).

⁸ In my quest I have been helped by a number of experts in this field whom I would like to thank for their input and support; M. Finkelberg, K. A. J. Massey, K. Massey-Gillespie, and V. Ševoroškin.
















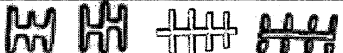


The Israelite Masons' Marks ¹	Carian ² sign no.	Megiddo nos. of examples
	5	1
	6	1
	7	2
	variant of 8	1
	10	3
	variants of 11 or 36	3
		
	15 ³	-
	17	5
	18	-
	19	3
	21	8
	27	-
	28 ³	6
	32	2
	38 and variants of 38	7
	variants of 41	6
		
	48	-

Fig. 1

¹ The examples shown are as depicted by the excavators.
² Only examples that also appear in the Israelite corpus are shown.
³ Unique to Carian.

<i>Samaria nos. of examples</i>	<i>Elephan- tine²</i>	<i>Pasa- gardae²</i>	<i>Sardis²</i>	<i>Labran- da²</i>	<i>Cretan² similarities</i>
1	√	√	-	-	
1	√	√	-	-	
2	√	√	√	√	= <i>eta</i>
-	√	√	-	-	
-	√	√	√	√	
-	√	√	√	-	= <i>snake</i>
1	√	-	-	-	
-	√	√	-	-	
1	√	√	√	-	
1	√	√	-	-	
6	√	√	√	-	= <i>cross</i>
1	√	√	-	-	= <i>square</i>
1	√	-	-	-	
1	√	√	-	-	= <i>trident</i>
1	-	√	-	-	
-	-	-	√	-	
1	-	-	-	-	

The Carian Alphabet

Some three hundred Carian inscriptions have been recorded (Ševoroškin 1994:131); most were written in the 7th through to the 4th centuries BCE (Ševoroškin 1991/92:117). However, Ray (1988: 150) noted that the Carians left more of their language in Egypt than in Caria, and that the Egyptian inscriptions may be two or three centuries older than those of Asia Minor. The Carian language is affiliated with the Anatolian (Hittite-Luwian) language, but the alphabet is possibly a different matter, and it is the alphabet that must be examined.

According to Ševoroškin, “the Carian alphabet (more precisely: local alphabets) is of paramount importance as far as the origin of writing is concerned. Carian letters are very archaic; Carian inscriptions bear clear evidence of an underlying Semitic way of writing. It seems, the Carians borrowed their writing directly from Semites, from some archaic Semitic writing system: Carian letters bear undeniable resemblance not only to the North but also to the South Semitic writing” (Ševoroškin 1991/92:117, 135).

Therefore I suggest that the Israelite masons’ marks can tentatively be regarded as an early variant of the Carian alphabet. The Carian alphabet consists of some forty-eight letters, though it is likely that only twenty-five letters were actually used at any one time or in any one place (Ray 1987:99; 1990:56). In addition, there are at least five localized Carian alphabets, and many variants within Caria itself (Ray 1982a:78). The Egyptian Carian alphabet also varies due to a chronological or regional rationale (Ray 1982b: 181). Therefore the Israelite masons’ marks, if an early variant of the Carian alphabet, would also exhibit chronological or regional variation.

Carians as Stonemasons

The Persepolis Treasury Tablets specifically mentioned the Carians as being stonemasons (Hallock 1960:99, Cameron 1965). In the Treasury at Persepolis there are one hundred and eighty-one masons’ marks (Nylander 1965:54, n. 34). At Pasargadae there are two hundred and thirty-one Carian alphabetic marks (Gosline 1998:60). Some seventy-five masons’ marks, consisting of ten basic signs, appear on the earliest stonework in Apadana at Susa. These ten basic signs have parallels amongst the thirty basic signs used at Persepolis and were attributed to Anatolian workmen by Nylander (1974:216–7; 1975:322–3). Although the masons’ marks differ from sculptors’

marks, both have affinities with the Lydian, Aramaic or South Arabian alphabets (Roaf 1983:92-93).

The "Lydian Wall" at Sardis has masons' marks from the Carian, Lydian and Phrygian alphabets (Gusmani 1988:33), while Gosline (1998:59) cites the use there of sixty-nine Carian alphabetic masons' marks. Excavations at Carian Labranda revealed seven masons' marks incised on limestone ashlar (Säflund 1953). Carian alphabetic marks have also been found engraved in stone quarries in Egypt. At Elephantine, four hundred and twenty-eight alphabetic marks have been recognised by Gosline (1992; 1998:60).

The Recurring Use of Comparable Marks

Some of the masons' marks reappear over a long period and can be seen on Israelite, Southwest Anatolian, Egyptian and Persian stone and quarry work (see table). Therefore the use of "Carian-related alphabetic marks" as masons' marks throughout time may point to an enduring vocational rather than an ethnic link. A vocational link may explain the evolution of the Carian alphabet and its eventual application to the Carian language.

A "Sea People" from Caria?

Although the evidence presented here relates to Iron Age II Israel, a possible link with the region of Caria in Iron Age I may also exist; namely, the Kar-ki-sa⁹, or Qarqisha¹⁰, or Qayqisha¹¹ "Sea People" from the southwest corner of Asia Minor (identified with Caria). The Weshesh or Washosh¹², from an island off the coast of Caria, were part of a Carian-based coalition that took part in the invasion of Year 8 of Ramses III¹³ (Redford 1993:252-256). A link with the Hurrian-Luwian language group, to which the later Carian language belongs, may be reflected in the Bible in the use of the names *phicol*, a personal name, and *ziklag*, a place name (Ray 1986:357-359; 1988:100-101). In addition, biblical tradition suggests that the

⁹ Hittite sources.

¹⁰ Ramses II period sources.

¹¹ At the time of Ramses III they formed an alliance against him together with the Libyans and the Saii (Redford 1993:244, note 19).

¹² The Washosh together with the Sherden are the only two groups to be specifically called "of the Sea" in Papyrus Harris 76.7.

¹³ The Carians arrived in Egypt well before the Achaemenid period, as shown by the archaic forms of Egyptian words preserved in Carian. And, many started as employees of the Pharaoh in the 1st millennium (Ray 1998:127, 131).

Cherethites or *kereti/keretim* were Cretans and that they were the forerunners of the biblical Carites or *kari* (Greenfield 1962:557), and attempts have been made to associate the Carites or *kari* with the Carians (Cogan and Tadmor 1988:126).

Conclusions

Now, with the realization that 9th century BCE Israelite ashlar masonry has masons' marks using an early variant of the Carian alphabet, the question must be raised – how to explain the use of these marks in the northern Kingdom of Israel?

The following hypotheses are presented for consideration:

1) The craftsmen who used these alphabetic marks were originally associated with one or more of the "Sea Peoples".

2) These craftsmen were either originally hired, or were subjected to servitude as stonemasons. The use of prisoners of war as construction workers by the Omrides has been proposed by Na'aman (1997:123). While in Moab, Israelite prisoners of war were the construction workers for King Mesha (*ibid.*; Ahlstrom 1982:15), and prisoners were also used by the Assyrians for their building projects (Zaccagnini 1983:260).

Even if these hypotheses are not accepted, the masons' marks are still tangible evidence for the existence of a group of skilled foreign craftsmen working in the Northern Kingdom of Israel in the 9th century BCE¹⁴.

The significance of these masons' marks demands further investigation.

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¹⁴ For complementary evidence see Franklin (forthcoming (c)).

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