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## Cities Roaming Around, the Code of Movement A linguistic and iconographic survey\*

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### Abstract

Starting from an expression in Rib-addi's dossier (EA 106, 45-49), this paper deals with what M. Liverani called the "code of movement". This expressions refers to the metaphoric use of verbs of movement (such as "to enter" or "to return") applied to entities that are unable to move, such as cities or countries, in order to identify the shift from the sphere of influence from one political power to another. An analysis of some Egyptian propaganda reliefs shows that the origin of this "code" is a metaphor expressed first by iconography and then verbally. The possible role of Byblos in the diffusion of this Egyptian royal propaganda will then be discussed, adding a real Egyptian custom to the origin of the "code of movement".

### Keywords

Code of movement, metaphor, Amarna, Egyptian iconography.

In this survey we will try to interpret an apparently less important expression of a Rib-addi's letter to the pharaoh, which instead shares an important cultural background with the ancient Near East. The aim will not only be analytic but also synthetic and reconstructive, and to make this possible a multi-disciplinary approach will be needed. Our attention will be then focused on Rib-addi's rhetoric, though seen as the whole amount of communication expedients used by the sender to express the addressee his own comprehension and representation of the happenings and his own project concerning them<sup>1</sup>. Among the 382 tablets which today are part of the Amarna archive, Rib-addi's dossier represents an *unicum*. Such a homogeneous amount of information, which sometimes was just a nuisance for the pharaoh, represented, instead, a privileged field for chronological, historical<sup>2</sup> and morpho-syntactic<sup>3</sup> studies. These extremely sectorial interests did not avoid, though, a survey concerning the sender's personality<sup>4</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> BRYANT 1953: 403.

<sup>2</sup> KITCHEN 1962: 20-29; CAMPBELL 1964: 77-88; REDFORD 1967: 166-167; LIVERANI 1971; LIVERANI 1998: 166-239.

<sup>3</sup> MORAN 1950; YOUNGBLOOD 1962; GIANTO 1990.

<sup>4</sup> He is seen just as a talkative and obsessed person, sometimes his position is seen as the imitation of a prototype: LIVERANI 1974; MORAN 1985.

nor the ideological character of the letters in questions. Moreover, there has been a shift from the phase in which one could trust what the author said, to a different phase marked by a more critical approach. This change of the model – in all the sciences that share hermeneutic as a fundamental part – represents a new start for the study of every form of communication.

Furthermore, this article puts on trial what M. Liverani has called *code of movement*<sup>5</sup>, and it attempts to find the origin and the meaning of this code, even questioning some view expressed by M. Liverani himself. By code of movement, M. Liverani deals with verbs of movement applied to entities that cannot move, like cities or lands. In this code, “the political reading is [...] linked to the physical one, but [...] the individuation of a hidden political reading suggests that the constant use of verbs of movement and of stasis [...] is not simply an unavoidable consequence of the topic, but a real expression code”<sup>6</sup>. The application of the semantic sphere of movement to lands and cities becomes pretty common in the texts of the ancient Near East, in particular along the Syro-Palestinian corridor between Egypt and Hatti, in order to identify the shift from the sphere of influence of a certain power in favour of another, with no actual movement, according to M. Liverani. Here below some samples of texts from different origins:

- “I also brought the city of Qatna, together with its belongings and possessions, to Hatti [...] I plundered all of those lands in one year and brought them [literally: ‘I made them enter’] to Hatti”<sup>7</sup>;

- “The cities which the Philistines had taken from Israel were restored [*wišbnh*, literally: ‘came back’] to Israel, from Ekron to Gath, and Israel rescued their territory from the hand of the Philistines. There was peace also between Israel and the Amorites”<sup>8</sup>;

- “Kemosh made it [the land of Madaba] come back [*wyšbh*]”<sup>9</sup>.

Such a spreading of the code suggests a common ideology to this area. The condition of possibility of the code is that determined portions of the land – better specified through city lists in a culture that could not count on cartography – experienced different powers or they quit in order to become at last independent<sup>10</sup>.

<sup>5</sup> LIVERANI 1983; LIVERANI 2005: 277-280; LIVERANI 2008.

<sup>6</sup> LIVERANI 1983: 106. Moreover, “we should bear in mind that the terminology of ‘bringing out’ and ‘bringing back’, ‘sending out’ and ‘sending in’, the so-called ‘code of movement’ [...], had already been applied in the Late Bronze Age texts to indicate a shifting of sovereignty, without implying any physical displacement of the people concerned, but only a shift of the political border. [...] Egyptian texts also describe territorial conquest in terms of the capture of its population, even if in fact the submitted people remain in their place. This is an idiomatic use of the code of movement (go in/go out) to describe a change in political dependence” (LIVERANI 2005: 278).

<sup>7</sup> BECKMAN 1996: 39-40.

<sup>8</sup> 1 Sam 7,14 according to the *Revised Standard Version of the Bible*.

<sup>9</sup> For this reading of the Mesha stone (lines 8-9) with the verb *šwb*, and for the one possible of the fragmented line 33, see JACKSON 1989: 110; NICCACCI 1994: 228. W.F. Albright (ANET, 320) and W. Röllig (KAI 2.168) prefer to recognize the root *yšb*, assuming an error: *wyš[b] bh*. For the discussion about the unsuitability of this emendation even for space problems see MILLER 1969.

<sup>10</sup> According to M. Liverani this would be the case of Israel and of the use of the code of movement in the Exodus.

Our search will focus on EA 106, 45-49, with the attempt to reconstruct the images that our writer kept in mind and shared with his addressee. This is the text with our translation<sup>11</sup>:

ša-ni-tam / gáb-bi URU.KI.ḪÁ-ia ša i-qa-bi a-na pa-ni BE-ia / i-de be-li šum-ma ta-ru i-na UD.KÁM / pa-tá-ar ERÍN.MEŠ KI.KAL.KASKAL+x.BAD be-li[-i]a / na-ak-ru gáb-bu

“Moreover / all the cities I have told you about at the presence of my Lord, / he know whether they are back or not: on the day / when the troops left from my Lord’s field, / all of them are hostile”.

With a rhetoric expression, Rib-addi announces the cities will not come back<sup>12</sup>. But how can a city *come back*? The concept of *return* implies the one of movement. Now, many things can be said concerning a city but it cannot move. Clearly the expression can be considered as a metaphor and it is not so difficult to understand. A city *returns* when – after a defection – the legitimate governor takes the control back. Rib-addi’s position is even more explicit in saying that, as long as the Egyptian troops are present, all the cities obey, while, as soon as the troops get far, the cities stop obeying. The city has never moved from its location but it was out of the previous jurisdiction. Of course, it is clear that verbs such as *to enter*, *to exit* and *to return* can cover many semantic possibilities. This is a typical example of code of movement.

We have already classified this code along with the metaphor; so now we could wonder which is the *punctum comparationis*, i. e. the feature that allows us the functioning of the metaphor and, as a consequence, the genesis of the metaphor itself. This will be possible by turning to a peculiar Egyptian iconography (I) that leads us to a better comprehension of the code of movement itself and its position among the world of metaphor (II). We will consider also the role of the city of Byblos, the one that Rib-addi ruled, in the scattering of this code (III) in order to finally draw some general conclusions about it and about some other related forms (IV).

## I. The code of movement as iconography

The impact of Thutmosis III, and of the XVIII dynasty in general, on the ancient Near East was heavy, especially because of his seventeen military campaigns fought there, facing the accession of Mitanni in particular<sup>13</sup>. Of course, Thutmosis III was not the first to venture out to the Syro-Palestinian area: upfront the most ancient times this was an important interlocutor for trade but, only recently, for the Egyptian expansive aims too. Until the battle of Qadesh, however, the Egyptian incursions could not reach a lasting effect because, as the troops pulled out, Mitanni rapidly got back to its positions and its role as destabilizer of the interior of the already precarious Syro-Palestinian balances. After this event, the relationship between Egypt and Mitanni changed, and we

<sup>11</sup> The text is the one present in RAINEY 1996, II: 225.

<sup>12</sup> The following interpretation is not so convincing: “They returned (to rebellion) on the day of the departing of my lord’s field army” (RAINEY 1996, III: 65).

<sup>13</sup> For the reconstruction of this historical period see ALT 1959, III: 107-140; BUCCELLATI 1967; ALDRED 1970; BERNHARDT 1971; FRANDSEN 1979: 167-190; KEMP 1979; LECLANT 1980; LIVERANI 1987 and 1988: 541-576; KLENGEL 1992: 106-111.

can see there has been a series of marriages between the two dynasties, exchange of presents, ambassadors and letters, as the Amarna correspondence testifies.

In such a frame of campaigns and propaganda we can turn to a very common iconography of the Egyptian art, which the code of movement seems to be linked to. The reference concerns the processions of prisoners represented as human torsos surmounting ovals – often crenellated as city walls or perimeter fences – with foreign hieroglyphic toponyms inside (Fig. 1). The anthropomorphic part of those images is sometimes characterized by typed somatic features of the Egyptian iconography, that makes them recognizable as Asian with a pointed beard, Libyans or Negros with pulpy lips, earrings and curly hair. These figures are then tied to their hips or their elbows, to their wrists or later to their neck, and they are often driven by a divinity – directly or ideally – to a superior divinity or, as it often happens, to the pharaoh. The collection of these images can be found on wall representations, well visible, and often linked to another typical image, i.e. the one of the pharaoh beating the enemy or a group of enemies – this time fully portrayed.

Although this iconography can be dated back to the 1900 B.C.<sup>14</sup> until the Ptolemaic age<sup>15</sup>, there is no doubt about its fortune during the New Kingdom, in particular starting with Thutmosis III, nor about the fact that during the New Kingdom the image of the pharaoh who beats to the head his enemy was associated with these lists of anthropomorphic foreign toponyms. The debate of scholars concerning the comprehension of these lists is a controversy. It is clear that, except for the lists of Thutmosis III, for the following pharaohs, they contain information with little historical relevance since they include areas either not interested in the military campaign in question, or no more existing at that time<sup>16</sup>. As for the lists of Thutmosis III, not less problematic, a possible hypothesis is the one that interprets their origin as stages along the itineraries – above all military ones – to far lands, thus combining both military conquests and movements<sup>17</sup>. This interpretation explains the anachronisms of the lists, but also the presence of places of not precise nature, that would be better understood as natural entities, often from the hydrographic world, which in antiquity used to represent unavoidable points of reference along with artificial places<sup>18</sup>. It is clear, though, that the artificial place is the focus of these representations and that the city is the artificial place *par excellence*. This is the reason why our lists do not involve only urban centres, but the crenellated oval – shaped as city walls – becomes the symbol even for the natural elements. Iconography and etymology attest that the city walls ended to indicate *pars pro toto* the city, especially in a sort of funnel-shaped world<sup>19</sup>, characterized by the binomial centre-outskirts<sup>20</sup>, that produces a mental map with the city at its centre (with the main places of the political and religious power), surrounded by villages and then by a no man's land, which is a kind of non-place where everything is possible.

<sup>14</sup> SCHÄFER 1974: 156; JOHNSON 1992: 94-95.

<sup>15</sup> SHAW 1991: 12.

<sup>16</sup> A careful study of these phenomena has been made by SIMONS 1937.

<sup>17</sup> REDFORD 1992a: 55-74.

<sup>18</sup> REDFORD 1992b: 119.

<sup>19</sup> LIVERANI 1988: 32.

<sup>20</sup> XELLA 2000.

If predynastic palettes frequently use city walls to represent the city, we should turn to the famous Narmer palette (Fig. 2) to see one of the first representations of a land. On the left side, Narmer lifts up a weapon in order to beat the bowed enemy. Above the enemy, there is the hawk (Horo, the god of the actual king), that holds with his arm a rope linked to a head's nose, emerging from a rectangle with rounded off corners and with papyrus plants. The most common interpretation is that the god Horo, symbolizing the king, has defeated the inhabitants of the land where the papyrus grows, that is to say Lower Egypt. According to us, it concerns the first iconographic expression of the code of movement: a land is anthropomorphized and brought by the divinity to a new king. In this case Lower Egypt is led by Horo to the pharaoh Narmer. It is very important to note that the land symbol differs from the others in the same palette. In the lower part of the same side, for instance, right below the pharaoh's feet, we can see two defeated enemies with two symbols, and one of these can be identified as city walls. Once again we have a symbolic representation of an enemy outpost, right as in the same lower part of the front side of the palette, where the pharaoh's strength is symbolized by a bull that tramples the enemy and, with his horns, pulls down the walls of the town with a very important building inside. These symbolic scenes are differently represented in the upper part of this side, where the pharaoh is walking in a triumphant procession anticipated by other figures, while in front of him there are beheaded enemies. The importance of the Narmer palette is double for this research: on the one hand the pair of human being and city walls that melt in a single symbolism of the defeat of an enemy city – and so of a population; on the other hand, it is expressed the idea of *entrance* and *movement* of a land in the new economic and political system ruled by the pharaoh<sup>21</sup>.

It is interesting to analyse the later usage of such a standardized iconography. One of the examples comes from the XIX dynasty and is about the image of the land on which the papyrus grows. In the big hypostyle room in Karnak, on the internal façade of the southern wall, there is a representation of a chaotic group of ducks among the papyrus (Fig. 3). Chaos is dominated, though, by the fact that these animals are imprisoned in a net used by Ramses II and by the divinities Horo (on the left) and Khnum (on the right). These three characters are represented while they are hunting, which is a classical pattern in order to describe the preponderance of order on disorder. There is something more: besides connoting symbolically the land of papyrus with the inhabitants – animals this time – there is a connection between pharaoh's and divinity's doing, Horo first of all, in the image of *movement*, of *dragging away* a chaotic reality to the civilized Egyptian sphere, in order to explain a change of state, not a geopolitical but a sort of ontological one, like the one between order and disorder.

The second example comes from Karnak as well, more precisely from an image on the western side of the VI pylon and from those on the northern side and on the southern side of the VII pylon. In these representations at last the themes of the pharaoh who beats the enemy and the one of the long procession of human torsos with topographical indications find a combination. As for the previous scene in which the pharaoh beats his enemy, the only important difference is that the single enemy is here replaced by a numerous group of prisoners. Around this scene there are, then, the prisoners' processions. From the Narmer palette, for instance, it is clear that the oval

<sup>21</sup> For the concept of victory and war in the Egyptian ideology see GALÁN 1995.

iconography with the human torso is not the only way the foreign prisoners were represented, or the foreign places were connected in some way to the pharaonic authority. Most of the times there are scenes in which enemies lie dead, beheaded or attacked by animals, or in which some parts of their bodies – usually heads, hands or phalluses – are counted by scribes after the battle; other times there is the scene of the taxes from the conquered countries or of the war chest from these ones; other times there are long processions of human beings bonded to stumps, indicating they are war prisoners, cheap labour but also very important hostages<sup>22</sup>. These two latter typologies, during the XVIII dynasty, are often unified in the representation of a ceremony during which foreign peoples, from Asia and Africa but also coming from Egypt, bring their taxes to the pharaoh sitting on the throne: their toll involves clearly identifiable items typical of their lands. These scenes are positioned at different overlapped levels, the last of which represents prisoners – often from Syria or Nubia – meaning the total submission of those countries. The celebration message, in this case, aims to show Egypt as the leader of people and of countries, and the absolute centralist optic determines a generalization of different situations, presented as simultaneous ones, but hardly ascribable to a single recurring event, as it has been suggested<sup>23</sup>.

On Karnak pylons the aim is much less narrative compared to all these possibilities. The scene is repeated three times although it represents always the results of the first Thutmosis III's campaign to Asia. The first and third copies present 119 topographical indications – so 119 human torsos. The second list, instead, contains 248 places names, most of which have been lost, in northern Syria, although our geographic knowledge of the region is too poor in order to identify many of them. The importance of Karnak pylons is represented by the relation between image and written text. In fact, these scenes are surmounted by an inscription. The one of the first copy says<sup>24</sup>:

“List of the countries of Upper Retenu which his majesty shut up in the city of Megiddo (*My-k-ty*) the wretched, whose children his majesty brought as living prisoners to the city of Suhen-em-Opet<sup>25</sup>, on his first victorious campaign, according to the command of his father Amon, who led him to excellent ways».

The inscription of the third copy is identical to this one the place where prisoners are led is different explained, and so it becomes:

“[...] To the city of Thebes, in order to fill the storehouse<sup>26</sup> of his father Amon, [preside over] Karnak”.

<sup>22</sup> For a detailed study on the way of presentation of defeated enemies see ANTHES 1930.

<sup>23</sup> PEYRONEL 2008: 144-147 with bibliography.

<sup>24</sup> BREASTED 1906, II: 170-171.

<sup>25</sup> This word means “Castle (or Prison) in Thebes”, a place of confinement or dwelling for the foreign princes residing in Thebes as hostages. Even in the inscriptions about the sixth campaign there are some references to them: “Behold, the children of the chiefs (and) their brothers were brought to be in stronghold in Egypt. Now, whosoever died among these chiefs, his majesty would cause his son to stand in his place. List of the children of chiefs brought in this year: [x +]2 persons; 181 slaves, male and female; 188 horses; 40 chariots, wrought with gold and silver (and) painted” (BREASTED 1906, II: 198).

<sup>26</sup> This sentence is often repeated, for example see Amenhotep III stone: «Its storehouse is filled with male and female slaves, with children of the princes of all the countries of the captivity of his majesty. Its storehouses contain all good things, whose number is not known. It is surrounded with settlements

Very much different, instead, is the inscription of the second copy:

“All inaccessible lands of the marshes of Asia<sup>27</sup>, which his majesty brought as living captives [...] they had never been trodden by the other kings, beside his majesty”.

What seems striking is the difference of the nature of the involved entities. The first two inscriptions refer to the physical movement of people – an attested procedure – while the last one is uniquely about geographic – not personal – entities.

## II. The code of movement as metaphor

Karnak inscriptions present, then, a considerable semantic shift. It refers first to the sons of the enemy countries, then to the enemy lands, and both the categories are considered by the majesty of the pharaoh as living prisoners. But, while the sons of the enemy countries *are* living prisoners, the enemy lands *are like* living prisoners. Starting from a real point of reference as war prisoners or hostages, the second inscription focuses on the places of origin that are *linguistically and iconographically* treated exactly as prisoners or hostages. It is the use of the same iconography of the anthropomorphic toponym to sanction at a linguistic level the passage from the similitude (lands are similar to living prisoners) to the metaphor (lands are living prisoners, and as such they act like human beings). In this case, iconography seems to create the conditions for a linguistic confusion that is accepted by the language and that is classified in the wide universe of the metaphor, even if someone could talk about a particular case of synecdoche.

An important aspect of the linguistic expertise is what we can call the *metaphoric competence*, i.e. the ability native speakers have to get and produce metaphors. Let us clarify that we are talking about the use of the word *metaphor* broadly speaking, meaning the whole figurative language from the single word used to speak figuratively to the most broadly extended forms under the name of *idiomatic expressions*, *ways of saying* and *proverbs*. This linguistic dimension is important not only in a quantitative sense – for it is a general and massive phenomenon – but also in a qualitative sense because metaphors bring culture and as such are idiosyncratic: in spite of the similarities there are never correspondences between two languages. Metaphors are not isolated, casual and independent phenomena and exclusive products of the individual creativity. On the contrary, they form groups, families: we can surely say they are structured in real systems<sup>28</sup>. We have already understood that the metaphor we are talking about is an anthropomorphic one. How can we define anthropomorphic metaphors? In a very general way, we can say that these are metaphors where human actions and features are transferred to non-human entities, that is to say items: inanimate objects or abstract entities. When we have recurs to expressions like “the face of the moon” or “at the foot of the mountain” we attribute to natural elements human beings’ features; we talk about them as they had a body, as they were persons. The original metaphor of the system is something like *things are human beings*, or *things are persons*. Hundreds of metaphors orbit around this matrix, some of those already in

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of Syrians, colonized with children of princes, its cattle are like the sand of the shore, they make up millions» (BREASTED 1906, II: 356-357).

<sup>27</sup> See also the interesting *Hymn of victory* in BREASTED 1906, II: 263-266.

<sup>28</sup> LAKOFF – JOHNSON 1980.



use, and some others new, others not pronounced yet. These metaphors can be divided into three groups: the first is the one regarding parts of the body; the second comprises attributes of human beings expressed mainly by adjectives; the third is the one of human activities and functions. We are then interested in the last one, in which there is the metaphoric projection from *human* to *non-human* concerning specifically human activities or functions, both at a purely biological or physical level (as *to be born*, *to die*, *to eat*, *to drink*, *to sleep*, *to walk*, *to grow old* and so on) and at a psychological level (as *to talk*, *to whisper*, *to shout*, *to smile*, *to caress* and so on). When these verbs refer to *things*, these are humanized, or better *personified*. We have to note that in everyday language, unlike other special languages such as the poetic ones, the phenomenon of personification happens in an unconscious way (it is common to say that the city *sleeps* at night and *wakes up* in the morning). Even the code of movement is involved in this system.

In the series of the Egyptian inscriptions, besides the metaphoric words typical of the code of movement (*to bring*, *to enter*) more or less attested, the equivocal use of iconography is well attested. In fact, there is a mix of codes – linguistic and graphic signs – with different criteria. This is the reason why we think that the code of movement has not just a linguistic and unconscious origin, like many other metaphors. If the linguistic aspect has just been explored, we have now to consider how the two codes can find an integration in those wall representations<sup>29</sup>. The anthropomorphism of land in the Narmer palette seems to have left something important. The iconography of the toponym surmounted by a human torso has many meanings in its hybrid nature: the human torso symbolizes a personal entity while the toponym indicates its geographical collocation, two incommensurable levels.

Combining, then, images with inscriptions means combining symbols with metaphors in order to represent the same reality, the first concerning the iconographic group, the second the linguistic one. It would be natural to think about the inscriptions as if they were real captions. The written and the visible source transmit the same content of propaganda, every one according to the laws of its own code. According to different laws, though, even communication will change. To illustrate a text means to explore the semantic field through images, and it is like commenting an image. So, the pharaonic reliefs represent a symbol (that resumes the architectonic and human element, and the toponym of the city, bringing back its complex *status*) in a narration with images in a specific composition (the one typical of the pharaoh's victory, of the predominance of order on chaos, made of typical scenes and proportions well established). The metonymic shift of the second Karnak inscription (from people to lands) was already part of the images. Moreover, both the reliefs of the tombs with some toll scenes we have already talked about, and the other inscriptions mentioned before, show that, in the Egyptian captivity, there were realities of foreign settlements, including cattle and other goods. If this interpretation is correct, we can imagine that a microcosm reflecting the origins of the pharaoh's hostages was recreated in Egypt, and the iconographic metaphor in question would be an hyperbole rather than an actual metaphor. By deporting an important hostage together with other elements of the same culture and population, the pharaoh wants to recreate somehow in the inside of his land

<sup>29</sup> About the relationship between text and archaeology or between text and image see, in their methodological sections, FINKELSTEIN 2010; OGGIANO – XELLA 2009.

the conquered far city. As we can see, the iconography is deeply rooted in a well consolidated procedure and it represents, with its laws, a phenomenon which is half real and half ideological and propagandistic.

### III. The code of movement moves

If the roots of the linguistic phenomenon we have already classified as code of movement are Egyptian, the texts we have quoted above are enough to witness its circulation even beyond the Nile Valley. The Egyptian mental isolation, as a consequence of the geographic one, is a very limited concept, contradicted by elements such as the circulating material culture and ideology<sup>30</sup>. Concepts as ethnocentrism and isolation cannot be approachable at all. As a matter of fact, only a population able to confront itself with another will develop a marked ethnocentrism. This is the case of Egypt but also of Mesopotamic populations for whom a certain geographic isolation has exacerbated ethnocentric pretensions.

The interest by cultural *élites* of Syria and Palestine towards Egyptian culture and their attempts to reproduce it shows that trade activity between these two areas was articulated – as usual – with an exchange of goods and ideas<sup>31</sup>. The example of Byblos is the case of a society particularly permeable to culture – or ideology – of Egypt, since the fourth millennium B.C., and Byblos' kings, native of course, used to represent themselves as high social standing Egyptian nobles, and their main dignitaries used to raise monuments in the city temples for the king's health, using Egyptian language<sup>32</sup>. This representation can be seen in many ways: iconographically, linguistically and mentally. Thus, a constant and important employment of Egyptian elements is recorded in the royal culture, to consider Byblos princes as "little pharaohs" with a court of functionaries and artisans who knew at least at a basic level the language, the techniques but also the Egyptian culture; when they were not from Egypt. The Egyptian influence not only influenced the royal court but also common people, at least as a matter of vogue. After the period from the eighteenth to the fifteenth century B.C., with no Egyptian presence in Byblos, is worth of note its return with Thutmosis III. This return brought a change: during the first phase, Egypt had commercial relationships based in few cities with Asian populations, among which Byblos used to have a privileged position but, after the second Intermediate period and after the fall of Hyksos, Egyptian foreign politics changed very much. In fact, the territorial conquest meant a levelling among many towns, and Byblos lost its privileges and was overshadowed by Sumura, one of the main towns of Egypt in the area of Amurru. The equal relationship with the pharaoh's court in the mental representation of Byblos' governors had to face the reality of submission, where the taxes took the place of the exchange of presents. The rest of the history shows that Byblos' princes had to accept that they were no more pharaoh's privileged sons. At the end of the Late Bronze Age and at the beginning of the Iron Age, the city was more independent and much more aware of its Asian nature while Egypt was weakening even more, with a regularization of the relationships between Byblos and Egypt, from being a peculiar centre of cultural

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<sup>30</sup> SCHNEIDER 2003 and 2010.

<sup>31</sup> BRYAN 1996; HIGGINBOTHAM 1996.

<sup>32</sup> SCANDONE 1994; HELCK 1994, both with bibliography.

melting and Egyptian iconographic and religious elements spreading in the Syrian culture, to a Phoenician town like the others, perhaps richer in different traditions.

Byblos' role must have been fundamental, then, in the transmission of the Egyptian religious iconographic heritage, above all concerning the royal environment, to the Syrian world since the second half of the third millennium. The extent of its spreading can be felt particularly when we look at the figurative heritage of the Syrian cylindrical glyptic of the first half of the second millennium<sup>33</sup>, but we can say that the whole Byblos and Phoenician artistic production in general was heavily influenced by the Egyptian one<sup>34</sup>. This can be particularly seen in sculpture, from relief, jewels, scarabs and amulets, from metal art and above all from ivory<sup>35</sup>. We have to consider that the features of the Egyptian iconographic tradition were employed and revised, so they could be charged with new or renewed meanings. As time goes by, we see a progressive improvement of the imported model, with different features from the original but comprehensible in the new market. The phenomenon of foreign appropriation gives way to questions of methodological nature. It presents at least two moments: the acquisition of a model and the serial reproduction. As for the first moment, it is clear that it meant a selection inside of a wide set of artistic expressions; as for the second, it is good to wonder in which part of the ideological apparatus at the back of the original model was comprehensible, how much of this part could be shared, how much of it could be communicated. Both the situations can find only partial answers. We should not take into account extreme positions of a total interchangeability between exporting context and importing context, as the one of a nominalistic incomprehensibility between them. Intermediate undertones can be recognized, instead, by a selection of material according to palatine tastes, i.e. according to the needs of its propaganda, and a growing serial production of stereotyped iconography drawn from local *ateliers* with a sort of emotional disengagement<sup>36</sup>.

#### IV. The code of movement between reality and propaganda

In his epistolary, Rib-addi used the code of movement, the origin of which has been identified in a particular Egyptian iconography. The relationships between Egypt and Byblos allow to understand the deep interconnection between the two cultures, while movements of populations between the two places attest the mutual knowledge. We cannot then exclude that the vehicle of such a code was the Egyptian world, in which the code of movement had the chance to develop both iconographically and linguistically. We are not surprised by the fact that there is just one proof in the unfortunately incomplete Amarna epistolary, because the topic of defeat and victory is not so usual in this epistolary. At least, it is not represented in such terms but through other phraseologies. One of these is attested even in our passage, through the expression “na-ak-ru gáb-bu”, indicating the hostility. The other phraseology is more complex from a morpho-syntactic point of view. It is an idiomatic expression appearing ca. twenty times, above all in Rib-addi's letters, and it is formed by the N form of the verb

<sup>33</sup> SCANDONE 1987.

<sup>34</sup> For some information about the Phoenician iconography see CIAFALONI 1992 and 1995.

<sup>35</sup> An exhaustive report with stylistic considerations can be found in BONDÌ *et alii* 2009: 293-378.

<sup>36</sup> Such an idea is presented by WINTER 1976 and 1981.

*epēšu*<sup>37</sup>: *nēnpušu ana* + common noun/proper noun. This construction differs from the standard Akkadian language and, as such, is highlighted in dictionaries<sup>38</sup>, but it does not seem to be influenced by the north-western Semitic language. The value and meaning of this expression are so important because they are connected to the GAZ or SA.GAZ signs, commonly understood as ‘Apiru’<sup>39</sup>. So, the translation was immediate and with J. A. Knudtzon<sup>40</sup> (“sich anschliessen”) was attested by the values of “being on somebody’s side”, “aligning oneself with somebody”, “joining”<sup>41</sup>. E. F. Campbell<sup>42</sup> and G. E. Mendenhall<sup>43</sup> suggested to intend the expression *nēnpušu ana* with the meaning of “becoming”, but it was M. Liverani<sup>44</sup> who gave a linguistic basis for this translation. He reckons it is a loan translation from the Egyptian language where the verb *iri* “to do” (corresponding to the Akkadian *epēšu*), followed by the preposition *m* (corresponding here to *ana*), would mean “to make something or somebody become”, “to transform”, while in the passive *irw m* (corresponding to *nēnpušu ana*) would mean “to be made of/transformed in” and so “to become”<sup>45</sup>. The fact that this expression is not only connected to the ‘Apiru’ but also to other people like ‘Abdi-Ashirta (EA 79,42), Aziru’s son (EA 138,45.93) or more often the pharaoh (EA 70,29; 76,42; 129,80; 362,63)<sup>46</sup>, forcing to shift from the meaning of “to become” to “to become of”, induced W. L. Moran<sup>47</sup> to criticize this thesis, accepting the old suggestions. He shows that the nuance “to become (an ally)” would be a corollary of the active use of the verb *epēšu* with the noun “city” as object, that traditionally gets the meaning of “to gain the control over”. This can be seen not only in some Mari’s texts<sup>48</sup> but also in the Amarna *corpus* itself (EA 79,24; 174,22; 176,17; 179,17; 363,19). In particular, a passage as EA 148,45 shows that this shift occurs in a very pacific way, just through the king’s desertion. So, besides the classical meaning of “to conquer a city”, we should complete this expression with a nuance of general acquisition (as the expression “to make money” = “to earn”). In this sense, “to create” a city or a land – together with its population – would end up to indicate an annexation or some kind of control on those geo political entities.

Furthermore, the code of movement and these other expressions show that land and cities, both of them geopolitical realities, are used in connection with active (*târu*) or medium verbs (*epēšu*) always keeping some *analogatum princeps* as their citizens. Many different uses treat geopolitical entities like personal subjects. We have then to face something that differs from a typical Mesopotamian conception. In this land, and

<sup>37</sup> LIVERANI 1979; MORAN 1987a; RAINEY 1996, II: 123-126, 333-337.

<sup>38</sup> CAD, E: 235: AHw: 229.

<sup>39</sup> BOTTÉRO 1954; GREENBERG 1955.

<sup>40</sup> KNUDTZON 1907.

<sup>41</sup> See how MORAN 1987b and 1992 translated.

<sup>42</sup> CAMPBELL 1960: 14-15; CAMPBELL 1964: 86.

<sup>43</sup> MENDENHALL 1962: 71-73, 78; MENDENHALL 1973: 130. See also RAINEY 1973: 250-251.

<sup>44</sup> LIVERANI 1974: 180; LIVERANI 1979: 70-77.

<sup>45</sup> PINTORE 1972; DONADONI 1980; LIVERANI 1980.

<sup>46</sup> Besides these examples, there are at least other seven with pronominal suffixes.

<sup>47</sup> MORAN 1987a.

<sup>48</sup> Quoted by MORAN 1987a: 211.

in all the cultures influenced by it<sup>49</sup>, we can find the typical representation of the defeat of a population through the transfer of the protector divinity of the defeated in the winning capital, at the presence of the winning protector god<sup>50</sup> (Fig. 4). Even in this culture the code of movement is well attested but it seems to have a different origin from the one of the shores of the Mediterranean sea, because the accent falls on goods – *in primis* on the statues of the divinity – that *enter* the winning country. We have seen instead that the first conception of the Egyptian world is linked to people and – by analogy with them – only later – to geopolitical realities as a whole.

There is no need to excessively underline the difference between the acceptance that we could call western and oriental one, but we have to consider that the subtle symbolic thought of the early Egypt was the first laboratory where the political propaganda created – iconographically in first place and then linguistically too – what is called code of movement. It is not surprising that this code, expression of the Egyptian expansionism, was known and accepted even by Byblos kings who have then introduced it, perhaps for the first time, in the Syro-Palestinian reality. Also in ethnolinguistic studies, the concept of linguistic and cultural predominance of an *élite* is guaranteed, and the path of this code, then, becomes independent compared to the original pharaonic power to the extent that the people of Israel will use this code against Egypt with the exodus form, used to represent their *escape* from there.

Starting from the Egyptian iconography to end with the Syro-Palestinian text, we can note a huge *movement* of lands and cities. The same Amarna *corpus*, to which we have often made reference to interpret the ‘Apiru as disordered social class who used to roam around bringing chaos, shows a minimum movement referred to them: the activity involves lands, and *to be* or *to become* or *to join* what is classified as ‘Apiru means only to shirk the authority of local power and also the pharaonic one<sup>51</sup>. This switch of the attention from the ‘Apiru to geopolitical entities should lead to a renewed comprehension of concepts such as *land borders* or *land property*.

This view gives new vigour to the intuition of M. Liverani about the code of movement, provided that one recognizes more reality and less ideology in it than M. Liverani did. Combining the iconography with the reports of actual prisoners and hostages brought to Egypt during the pharaonic campaigns, we should have a less static comprehension of the code of movement itself. It is to say that even if M. Liverani minted the code of movement, he contended that it is just a product of political propaganda with no movement at all at his origin<sup>52</sup>. Our research, instead, shows that this propaganda should be combined with a more literal sense and some movements of people. Thus, the Syro-Palestinian context shows extremely permeable features between cultures, in particular for those superior *élites*, to the extent that it is possible to find the origins of many phenomena and then follow their development and spreading. The case of the code of movement shows that, starting from a military practice, an ideology was elaborated first iconographically and soon also linguistically. The spreading of Egyptian art and the attendance of the pharaonic court by local aristocracy, such as the Byblos one,

<sup>49</sup> As in the case of the biblical one in the passage of Ez 11.

<sup>50</sup> COGAN 1974: 22-41.

<sup>51</sup> CAMPBELL 1960: 15.

<sup>52</sup> See note n. 1.

permitted the exportation of artistic and ideological models outside the homeland, starting assimilation, adaptation and new reading phenomena. The coexistence of many codes (linguistic as the Egyptian, Canaanite and Akkadian but also iconographic) and their overlapping make difficult the access to the mental universe behind them. Yet, the reading of Rib-addi's passage has shown how it is possible to find some stages of the ideas path, considering the writer as a producer of a synthesis of the cultural system and of some of its dynamic. The written text is considered as a mirror – surely deformed – of reality in which it was produced, going back to materiality of its speech. Thus, Rib-addi was speaking the same language of the pharaoh: not the Egyptian language, nor the Canaanite nor the Akkadian as free language, but the language of ideology, in this case expressed by the code of movement.

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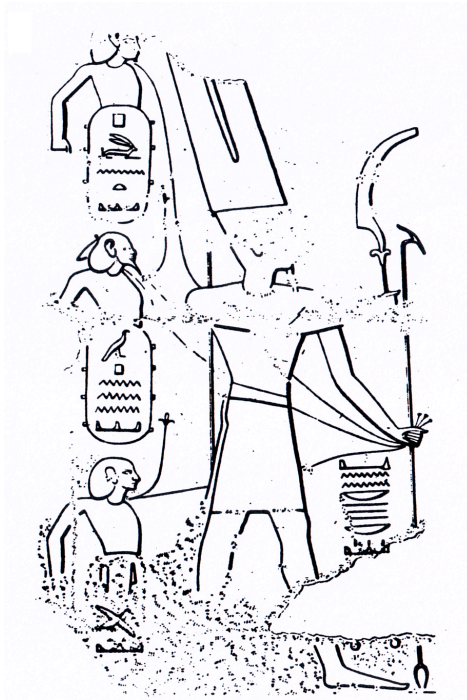


Fig. 1 – Amon leads the defeated cities (from SCHÄFER 1974: fig. 143)

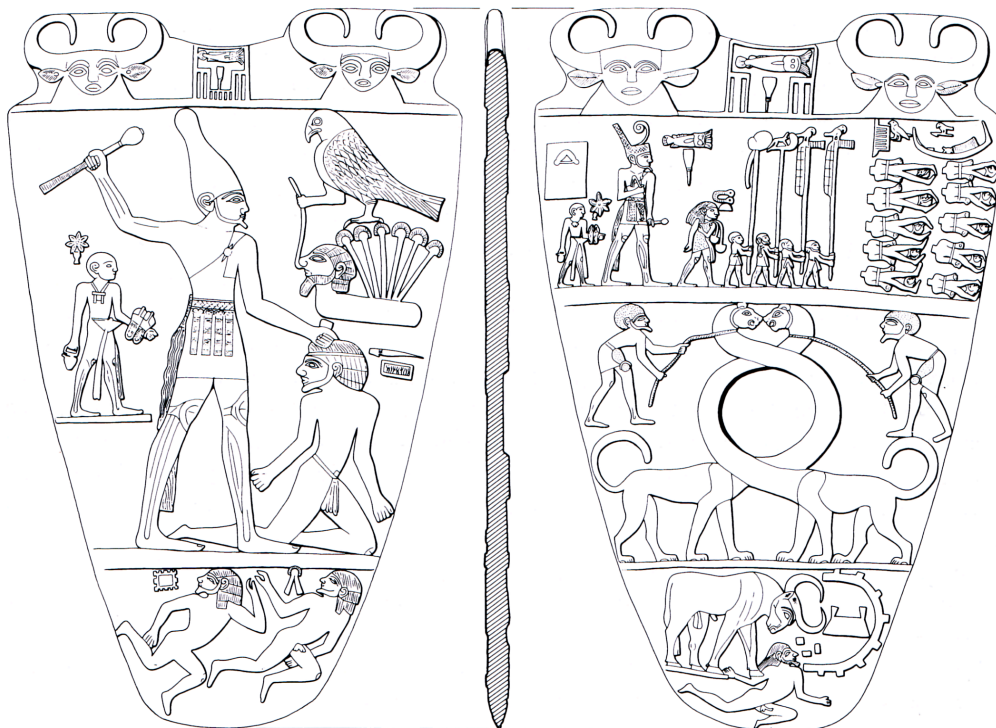


Fig. 2 – Narmer palette (from KEMP 1989: fig. 12)

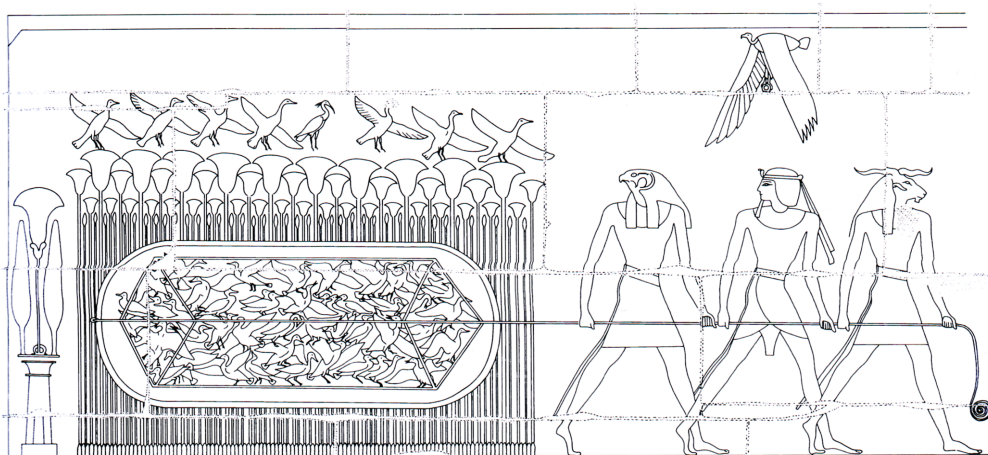


Fig. 3 – Ramses II and divinities hunting (from KEMP 1989: fig. 15)

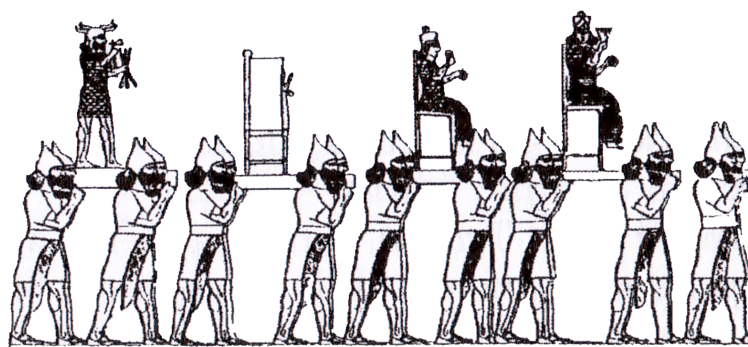


Fig. 4 – Assyrian soldiers carrying divinities from Gaza (from LAYARD 1849-1853: tav. 65)