THE ASSYRIAN EMPIRE AND PHOENICIA'S CULTURAL RESISTANCE

Hélène Sader*

Abstract: The paper discusses and compares the influence of Egyptian and Assyrian culture, mainly religion, on Phoenician religious beliefs and material culture. It presents abundant textual and archaeological evidence from Phoenicia to show the influence of Egypt and the absence of cultural influence from Assyria in Phoenicia. The paper tries to explain this situation by arguing that people adopt traits of other cultures if the latter are perceived as superior to their own, as a source of prestige for the ruling class who is the first to adopt these foreign traditions. Elite emulation may be the reason behind cultural transfer between a prestigious core and a peripheral state. Having established that elite emulation plays an important role the paper asks why did the Phoenician elite simply ignore the Assyrian prestige markers since Assyria was also a powerful empire who served as a model for several north Syrian kings. The paper attempts to answer this question arguing that the idea of power and prestige borrowed from the Egyptians was too anchored in Phoenician tradition and formed a barrier against the emulation of Assyrian symbols of power by the Phoenician elite and that coercion, which characterized Assyrian-Phoenician relations was another main reason that led the Phoenicians to reject Assyrian traditions.

Keywords: Phoenicia; Assyria; Egypt; Religion; Cultural Transfer.

In the first centuries of the 1st millennium BCE Phoenicia was torn politically and militarily between Egypt and the Neo-Assyrian empire. With the former Phoenicia had millennia long relations while direct contacts with the latter were initiated much later and lasted some three centuries.

The main purpose of this paper is to investigate the influence these two empires had on Phoenician culture in general and Phoenician religion in particular. The discussed evidence will lead to the conclusion that there is no detectable Assyrian influence on Phoenicia's material culture and religion. The paper will conclude by attempting some explanation of this situation.

1. Phoenicia and Egypt

Contacts between Egypt and the Levantine coast are attested since the 3th millennium BCE in both the written and the archaeological records.[1] They were uninterrupted for more than four millennia. The peak of these relations was reached in the 2nd millennium BCE as attested by the wealth of Egyptian and Egyptianizing artifacts found in Middle and Late Bronze Age sites.

* American University of Beirut; hsader@aub.edu.lb.

1 Scandone-Matthiae 1994.

Abundant evidence came from Byblos,[2] Sidon,[3] Tell el-Burak on the coast,[4] Tell Hizzin,[5] and Kamid el-Loz, ancient Kumidi, the capital of the Egyptian province of Upe, in the Biqā',[6] to mention only the most important sites. Worthy of mention is the pseudo-hieroglyphic script developed in Byblos in the 2nd millennium BCE,[7] a script using pictographic signs comparable but not identical to the Egyptian hieroglyphs. It shows the extent of Egyptian cultural influence on Phoenicia.

In the Phoenician period these contacts continued in spite of the constant threat from the Neo-Assyrian army. The Egyptians made several military incursions to try and restore their hegemony in the Levant and counter Assyrian presence. Abibaal and Elibaal, the 10th c. BCE Phoenician kings of Byblos wrote their royal inscriptions on imported or offered statues of Sheshonk I and Osorkon I respectively.[8] The Phoenician kings seem to have remained loyal to their former Egyptian overlords and in the 7th c. BCE the Sidonian king, Abdimilkutti,[9] is represented with Taharqa of Egypt on two stelae of Esarhaddon of Assyria from Senjirli[10] and Til Barsip.[11] Esarhaddon's stelae from Tell Halaf and Nahr el Kalb commemorate the defeat of both kings.[12] Egyptian influence continued well beyond the fall of Assyria and regained its importance under the Persian empire and persisted even through the Hellenistic period.

All through these centuries, the Phoenicians adopted in their pantheon several Egyptian gods as attested in Phoenician onomastics. Phoenician personal names with Egyptian divine names such as Amon, Ptah, Osiris, Horus and Isis betray this assimilation.[13] According to E. Lipiński, the process of formation of certain Phoenician divine figures such as Hathor, Shadrapha, and Ṣid was influenced by Egyptian deities.[14] This author dedicates a whole chapter to deal with Phoenician deities of Egyptian origin.[15] This adoption of Egyptian gods and beliefs is attested also by the large number of scarabs, figurines, and amulets representing Egyptian gods or apotropaic symbols which were found in Phoenician sites of the motherland. The most popular is Bes, an Egyptian god of fertility, also closely related to the afterlife, that became prominent in the popular religion of the Phoenicians.[16] Astarte of Byblos was represented as the Egyptian Hathor as attested

2 Jidejian 1971, figs. 75-115.

3 Selected bibliography: Doumet-Serhal 2006, pp. 35-39; Bader 2003; Forstner-Müller – Kopetsky – Doumet-Serhal 2006; Doumet-Serhal 2013, pp. 31-45.

4 Kamlah – Sader 2010a and 2010b; Sader 2015.

5 Genz – Sader 2010.

6 Hachmann 1983 and 1989.

7 Sznycer 1994.

8 Dussaud 1924, pl. XLII; Dussaud 1925, pl. XXV.

9 Leichty 2011, 1: ii 65-82.

10 Wartke 2005, fig. 60.

11 Thureau-Dangin – Dunand 1936, pp. 151-152.

12 Wartke 2005, fig. 60; Roche 2009, figs. 3-5. It is surprising to find that the Phoenician king represented with Taharqa is the king of Sidon although it is nowhere mentioned that Sidon and Egypt were allies and were defeated during the same battle. On the other hand, the Phoenician king who is said to be the ally of Taharqa is *Ba'lu*, the king of Tyre (Leichty 2011, p. 60, 6'-9a') and not *Abdi-Milkūti* of Sidon. Furthermore, the campaign against Sidon was in 677 BCE during Esarhaddon's third campaign whereas the campaign against Egypt took place during the tenth campaign of Esarhaddon. If *Abdi-Milkūti* was executed very quickly as the annals say, he could not have survived to be captured together with Taharqa. There are two possible explanations for this situation: either the stelae symbolically represent the capture of the two main opponents and represent the two main victories of Assyria in the west, or the scribe has confused *Ba'lu* of Tyre with *Abdi-Milkūti* of Sidon.

13 Benz 1972, pp. 269, 271-272, 317, 396.

14 Lipiński 1995, p. 321.

15 Lipiński 1995, Chapter XI.

16 For example, Mazar 2009-2010, figs. 34, 39, 44; Boschloos 2014; Pritchard 1988, figs. 17-18; Chéhab 1951-1952, p. 20; 1953-54, pls. VI and VII, 1, 3.

on the Yehumilk stela,[17] and in Wadi Ashour.[18] Most female terra cottas who are believed to represent Astarte, the main Phoenician goddess, wear an Egyptian wig. Architectural motifs were also adopted by the Phoenicians mainly for their religious buildings. The most widespread elements used to decorate the lintels of the shrines are the groove or so-called *gorge égyptienne*,[19] the winged solar disc, and the cobras commonly called *uraei*.[20] Last but not least is the Egyptian origin of the famous anthropoid sarcophagi, typical of Phoenician funerary art which imitate the Egyptian mummy-shaped coffins.[21] Examples of such sarcophagi were part of the booty brought back from Egypt, exhibited and used by the Sidonian kings. The first Egyptianizing anthropoids were progressively replaced by Hellenizing figures.

This religious influence of Egypt can still be traced in Philo of Byblos' *Phoenician History*[22] where the author says that he learned about the secrets of Phoenician religion from Sanchuniaton who quite carefully searched the works of Taautos, the Egyptian god Thot, Patron of the Scribes. This is a clear indication of the theological influence of Egypt on Phoenician religion.

To sum up, evidence for Egyptian influence on Phoenician religion is tremendous and Egyptian beliefs and practices became with time an inherent part of Phoenician religion.

2. Phoenicia and the neo-Assyrian Empire

What about the Neo-Assyrian empire? Were the Assyrians able to oust Egyptian gods and beliefs from the religious life of the Phoenicians? Or, at least, were some of their religious practices able to make their way into the religious life of the Phoenicians?

Direct Phoenician encounters with Assyria started in the 11th c. BCE. Information about these contacts is known to us almost exclusively from the annals of the Assyrian kings. The latter led repeated military campaigns against the Phoenician cities from the 11th until the end of the 7th c. BCE.[23] They exacted heavy tribute and took rich booty from them.

The oldest textual evidence for Phoenician-Assyrian encounters in Iron Age I is found in the 11th c. BCE annals of Tiglath-Pileser I (1114-1076 BCE). The Assyrian king says that he received the tribute of Arwad, Byblos, and Sidon.[24] After an interruption of almost two centuries, the contacts between Assyria and Phoenicia resumed in the 9th c. BCE under the reign of Ashurnasipal II (883-859 BCE) and Shalmaneser III (858-824 BCE). The latter was the first Assyrian king to reach the southern Phoenician shore not far from Tyre after his Damascus campaign. He left a stela at Mount *Ba'ali ra'asi* which he describes as being "opposite the land of Tyre" *ša pūt tamdi ša pūt ṣurru*.[25] *Ba'ali ra'asi* has not been identified with certainty and the erected stela has not been found.[26]

In the 8th c. BCE direct contacts between Assyrians and Phoenicians increased under the reigns of Adad-nērārī III, Tiglath-Pileser III, and Sargon II who subdued and turned the neighboring kingdoms of

17 Parrot – Chéhab – Moscati 1975, fig. 49.

18 Dunand – Duru 1962, p. 178 and pl. LXXV, 2.

19 See, for example, the *naos* of Amrit and the recently excavated temple of Tyre: Dunand – Saliby 1985, pl. XXXI, 2-3; Dunand – Duru; Badre 2015, figs. 10 and 13.

20 See, for example, the Burj el-Shemali shrine model in Sader 2005, fig. 106, 54.

21 Frede 2000; Lembke 2001.

22 Attridge – Oden 1981.

23 Grayson 1991; 1996; Tadmor 1994; Leichty 2011; Grayson – Novotny 2012.

24 Grayson 1991, A.O. 87.4, l.24-30.

25 Grayson 1996, A.O.102.8, l.21"-25".

26 Bagg 2007, p. 40.

Hamath, Damascus, and Israel into Assyrian provinces, thus surrounding Phoenicia with Assyrian presence. From intermittent visits Assyrian contacts with Phoenicia became more sustained. In spite of the fact that the Phoenician cities remained autonomous throughout the 8th c. BCE they were in close contact with the neighboring provinces, paid heavy tribute to the Assyrians, traded, and probably negotiated with them to keep access to their land routes. This autonomy did not last very long and the entire southern coast of Lebanon came under direct Assyrian occupation when Sennacherib conquered the cities of the unified kingdom of Tyre and Sidon in 701 BCE.[27] Permanent Assyrian settlement in southern Phoenicia was established when Esarhaddon (680-669 BCE) transformed the kingdom of Sidon into an Assyrian province called Kar Esarhaddon in 677 BCE. He says:

> «I gathered the kings of Hatti and the sea-coast, all of them, and had them build a city in another place, and I named it Kar-Esarhaddon. I settled in it people plundered by my bow from the eastern mountains and sea and I placed my official as governor over them».[28]

Even when they left local kings ruling in other Phoenician cities, the Assyrians closely controlled their economy as attested by the treaty between *Baalu* of Tyre and Esarhaddon,[29] and by the conflict that arose between the Arwadian king *Iakinilu* and Ashurbanipal regarding taxation of boats and merchandise.[30]

To sum up, the Phoenician cities were in contact with the Assyrians for at least 300 years. Phoenicians were deported to Assyria and Assyrian colonists were probably brought to administer the newly founded province of Kar Esarhaddon. Evidence for these contacts is abundant in Assyria and attested not only on royal monuments such as the gates of Balawat and the Sennacherib and Sargon II's reliefs but also in the storage rooms of the Assyrian palaces where large numbers of Phoenician ivories as well as metal bowls were discovered together with other Levantine artifacts.[31]

However, in spite of these repeated contacts and the foundation of a new province on Phoenician territory, there is hardly any trace of Assyrian presence in Phoenicia. No major Assyrian influence on its material culture and religion can be detected. By opposition to Palestine where, according to Stern, «Assyrian domination …and its administrative system left rich and important traces in the archaeological record of the country…»,[32] and where «the Assyrians' impact on every aspect of Palestine's culture may be regarded as revolutionary»,[33] the Phoenician settlements along the Lebanese coast have not yet yielded evidence for such an impact on the local Phoenician culture. With the exception of the Assyrian royal stelae carved on the left bank of Nahr el Kalb, north of Beirut,[34] there is hardly any evidence in Phoenicia for relations with Assyria. Had it not been for Neo-Assyrian records and for Phoenician finds in Assyria, there would be hardly any trace of this long lasting connection. In all the publications dealing with Phoenicia the relations with Assyria are restricted to the military campaigns mentioned in the Assyrian royal annals and the scanty information gleaned from Assyrian administrative or economic documents, but none of them discusses the impact of Assyria on Phoenicia's culture and religion.

27 Grayson – Novotny 2012, p. 15, iii 1-4.

28 Leichty 2011, p. 2, i 14-37.

29 Borger 1956, pp. 107-109; Borger 1982-85, pp. 158-159.

30 Briquel – Chatonnet 1997, p. 65.

31 Barnett 1975; Herrmann – Laidlaw 2008; Markoe 2000, p. 148 and fig. 55.

32 Stern 2001, p. 14.

33 Stern 2001, p. 19.

34 Roche 2009.

3. The Textual Evidence

This situation raises the following issue: why did Assyria leave no cultural impact on Phoenicia, at least no obvious or detectable one? To my knowledge this issue has not been raised before and it is only legitimate to give it some attention. Looking at the Phoenician written record, all the texts from the motherland do not contain any information or even a hint relating to Assyria and they do not mention any Assyrian deity, cult, or ritual. Phoenician onomastics do not betray any example of a name formed with that of an Assyrian god or goddess. E. Lipiński mentions the name of three Phoenicians called *Abdisamsi* in Neo-Assyrian documents and assumes a cult of the god Shamash in Tyre.[35] The same theophorous name appears in the two Phoenician inscriptions from the Sidonian temple of Eshmun.

Notwithstanding this evidence, the worship of the Sun god, cannot be ascribed to Neo-Assyrian influence since this deity was worshipped in the Levant long before the Iron Age as attested in the Ugaritic texts. On the other hand, the cult of the Egyptian Sun god Amon was widespread in Phoenicia and is more likely to be at the origin of the Sun god cult.

To sum up, the available textual evidence seems to suggest that no Assyrian god made his way to the official Phoenician pantheon, not even to the popular and personal religion and superstitions of the Phoenicians. It is noteworthy that all recent works on Phoenician religion namely Lipínski's *Dieux et déesses de l'univers phénicien et punique* and Herbert Niehr and Corinne Bonnet's *La religion des Phéniciens et des Araméens*, to name only these two exhaustive studies, do not mention any influence or borrowing from Assyrian religion while Egyptian and Greek influence is abundantly attested and discussed. One could argue that this may be due to the scarce corpus of written records from Phoenicia and that new discoveries may totally change one day our perception of this problem.

4. The archaeological evidence

Often when the written record is meagre or silent, one turns to the archaeological record to fill the gaps and set the record straight. A survey of the archaeological evidence from the Lebanese coast, the hard core of the Phoenician motherland, will either confirm or deny Assyrian influence on the daily life and beliefs of the Phoenicians.

The first area to turn to is obviously the territory of ancient Sidon that in 677 BCE was transformed into an Assyrian province by Esarhaddon. This territory included the area extending from Beirut in the north to the Qasimiye River in the south. So if we proceed from North to South the first excavated site to look at is Beirut.

The Beirut excavations have exposed substantial areas of the Iron Age city but have not yielded any Assyrian pottery and no small find that bears the imprint of the Assyrian empire, at least not one is known from the published material.[36] The Phoenician cemetery of Khalde was excavated in the 1960's and 122 tombs were published.[37] The published assemblages do not betray any Assyrian import nor is there evidence for a funerary ritual or object that could be linked to Assyria.

After 20 years of excavations at Sidon's College site, not one Assyrian sherd or religious artifact has been published. Temples from the Iron Age were found on that site but while several Egyptian objects used in rituals and religious ceremonies were retrieved,[38] nothing that could betray Assyrian influence was found.

35 Lipiński 1995, pp. 264-265.

36 Badre 1997; Finkbeiner – Sader 1997; Finkbeiner 2001-2002; Karam 1997; Curvers 2001-2002; Curvers – Stuart 2005.

37 Saidah 1966; Mura 2017.

38 Bader 2003; Doumet-Serhal 2006 and 2013; Forstner-Müller – Kopetsky – Doumet-Serhal 2006.

Tell el-Burak, located 9km south of Sidon, has yielded important remains from the late 8th and 7th c. BCE which correspond to the climax of Assyrian presence in Phoenicia as well as the period during which Sidon was an Assyrian province. It has been argued that Tell el-Burak may have been the site of the Assyrian province city of Kar-Esarhaddon for several reasons: The recent archaeological excavations at Tell el-Burak have shown that the site was settled for the first time towards the end of the 8th c. BCE and that a major and well planned building operation took place in the early 7th c. BCE, which corresponds to the creation of the province of Kar-Esarhaddon.[39] The buildings exposed from this period are not domestic in character because of the absence of installations such as *tannurs*, silos, bins, or fireplaces and therefore seem to have had an administrative rather than a residential character. In addition, the late 8th/7th c. settlement of Tell el-Burak is restricted to a very small area on the western slope of the mound containing mainly two buildings which may have served as a new administrative center dedicated to Assyrian administration. Finally, Tell el-Burak is close to the capital Sidon and could fit the location of Kar-Esarhaddon as described in Esarhaddon's annals.[40] There is however a major objection to this identification: there is no trace of Assyrian occupation on the site. Of the thousands Iron Age II sherds collected in 2014 and 2015 dating to the 8th and 7th c. BCE, no Assyrian sherd was identified in the preliminary screening of the material.[41] None of the retrieved small finds comes from Assyria or is an imitation of an Assyrian artifact. The only exception may be a cylinder seal which, according to J. Kamlah, shows strong affinities to Neo-Assyrian motifs.[42] The hunting scene it represents can be paralleled to that involving hunting scenes, the sacred tree, and monsters in the Neo-Assyrian glyptics.

Furthermore, a cultic installation consisting of a standing stone and a small hewn stone within a circular enclosure was exposed at Tell el-Burak.[43] It is similar to other installations from the southern Levant and does not betray any foreign influence. The presence of a figurine fragment of Egyptian manufacture within the enclosure area as well as the discovery of two small Bes figures speak for Egyptian rather than Assyrian affinities.

The same observation can be made for the site of Sarepta located 5 km south of Tell el-Burak. The site was traditionally part of the territory of Sidon but was cut off and annexed to the kingdom of Tyre by Sennacherib in 701 BCE. Sarepta yielded substantial remains from the 9th to the 7th c. BCE but no small find that could be labelled as Assyrian or that displayed Assyrian influence.[44] In the 8th-7th c. shrine that was excavated only Egyptian or Egyptianizing objects were found next to local figurines.[45]

To sum up: in all the above-mentioned sites which were included in the Assyrian province of Kar-Esarhaddon no Assyrian objects could be detected. This absence is counterbalanced by a wealth of Egyptian finds: amulets, figurines, and scarabs used in religious ceremonies.

Another Phoenician city often mentioned in the Assyrian annals is the city of Tyre whose king Baalu had to sign a treaty with Esarhaddon to regulate the city's trade. The recently excavated Tyrian cemetery of al-Baṣṣ which was the cemetery of the people of the island of Tyre from the 11th c. BCE until the Roman period yielded the same results as the cities of the Sidonian territory.[46] More than 300 tombs were exposed and to my knowledge no links with Assyrian funerary traditions and no objects of Assyrian inspiration were

39 Kamlah – Sader – Schmitt 2016a.

40 Sader 1997; Bagg 2007, pp. 135-136.

41 Kamlah – Sader – Schmitt 2016a.

42 Kamlah 2007, p. 558.

43 Kamlah – Sader – Schmitt 2016b.

44 Pritchard 1988.

45 Pritchard 1975, pp. 13-40 and figs. 41-46.

46 Aubet 2004; Aubet – Núñez – Trellisó 2014.

observed in the published material. In Akhziv a site that belonged to the territory of Phoenician Tyre, there is abundant evidence for Egyptian amulets and scarabs from the cemeteries but not one artifact from Assyria.[47] Finally, in the sounding undertaken by Patricia Bikai no traces of Assyrian pottery or finds were detected.[48]

In Tell Arqa the destruction of the Iron Age II temple was ascribed by the excavators to Tiglath Pileser III who annexed the city to the province of Simyra.[49] From the layers on top of the destroyed temple no trace of Assyrian wares was detected in the archaeological record.

5. Conclusion

The above observations raise the following issue. How to explain that a culture, in our case the Phoenician, can be strongly attracted to Egyptian culture and remain impervious to Assyrian culture with which it was in close contact for centuries? There is no straightforward and easy answer to this question. I will present as a conclusion some preliminary remarks which may contribute to initiate a discussion on the issue.

It may be suggested that the main reason for cultural influence lies in the perception people have of the influencing culture. The latter has to positively impress and seduce the people who come into contact with it to induce them to adopt some of its ways. People can be impressed if they consider a culture to be superior to their own in its various aspects: political power, technological achievements, religious ideology, monumental architecture, and art. It has to have an added value in the eyes of those who copy or imitate it. One important added value is prestige as well as international and local recognition. The phenomenon known as elite emulation, «a theory that holds that the peripheries of prestigious cultures sometimes derive a legitimating function from the core culture», may lead to an understanding of the phenomenon. «Features of the "great civilization" are adopted and adapted by local elites and their communities to provide an iconography of power which transfers some of the prestige of the distant center to the local rulers» .[50] This seems to correspond to the case of Phoenicia and Egypt. To imitate Egyptian royal ways added to the prestige of the Phoenician royal families since the Middle Bronze Age when the kings of Byblos represented themselves wearing the same emblems as the Egyptian pharaoh. The latter was considered to be a symbol of power and wealth and the monumentality of Egyptian buildings reflected his might. The divine powers supporting and protecting Egypt and granting its prosperity became also highly respected. So cultural influence was exercised first at the level of the ruling class. This is not surprising since it is at this level that contacts first occurred through messengers, gifts, or trade contacts. Only when foreign ways were adopted by the royal family did they begin to creep slowly into the life of the aristocracy who lived in close relation to the royal circle. It is with time and by emulation that it reached the people who started imitating and producing all the objects that were popular among the rich and ended up adopting them. Irene Winter agrees that «…the power base of the elite within the home society is increased thereby strengthening the existing social hierarchy while at the same time manipulating the local population by allowing them to identify with the added prestige of the elite and vicariously share in the glory».[51]

If elite emulation is the reason behind cultural transfer between a prestigious core and a peripheral state why did the Phoenician elite simply ignore the Assyrian prestige markers since Assyria was also a powerful empire who served as a model for several north Syrian kings who took pride in imitating Assyrian

47 Mazar 2009-2010.

48 Bikai 1978.

49 Chaaya 2000.

50 Higginbotham 2000, p. 6.

51 Winter 1977, p. 381.

ways? Indeed, while in Syria Kilamuwa, the Aramaean king of Samal, and Adad Yt'i, the king of Guzana and Sikani, dressed themselves like the Assyrian officials and used the symbols of Assyrian gods on their stelae, the Phoenicians remained faithful to their Egyptian models.[52]

It is difficult to elaborate hypotheses in the absence of enough evidence to substantiate them. The archaeological research in Lebanon was lagging behind for many years due to insecurity and, later, to administrative difficulties. But in the last two decades substantial progress was made and the state of the archaeological evidence is improving with new excavations of coastal sites. One has also to take into account the fact that a large number of salvage excavations took place all over Lebanon mainly in Beirut and the South but their results were never published. Finally, one has to mention that the city of Kar-Esarhaddon has not been located with certainty and perhaps its discovery will change the current situation.

Notwithstanding these difficulties and these reservations, it is obvious that the available evidence speaks against Assyrian influence on Phoenician culture and religion. In the author's opinion the idea of power and prestige borrowed from the Egyptians was too anchored in Phoenician tradition and formed a barrier against the emulation of Assyrian symbols of power by the Phoenician elite. Assyrian presence in Phoenicia was very occasional at the beginning and lasted only for the period of a military campaign. Often the Assyrians received the tribute of the Phoenician cities without having to approach them and defeat them in combat. The Phoenicians often preferred to pay the requested tribute before the arrival of the Assyrian army to avoid the destruction of their settlements. After their incursions and the collection of the tribute, the Assyrian army left the country and the only thing they left behind was probably the hatred and the curse of the local people against them and their gods.

Another factor that may have led to this situation is probably the fact that Assyrian religious texts were not accessible to the Phoenician educated and priestly class because the cuneiform script was not familiar anymore to the Phoenicians who had adopted the linear alphabet. On the other hand the Akkadian language was not anymore the *lingua franca* of the Near East as it used to be in the Late Bronze Age and was being replaced progressively by Aramaic.

Furthermore, Assyria and Egypt were declared enemies, the Phoenicians probably sided with Egypt as attested by the alliance between Taharqa and Ba'lu of Tyre and refused to be incorporated into the Assyrian cultural sphere.

Another important reason may be that the Assyrian encounters with the Phoenicians were based first and foremost on coercion which probably generated rejection for anything that was Assyrian. Destroying cities and exacting heavy tribute did not make Assyria and its gods attractive to the Phoenicians. The latter may have opposed cultural resistance to the Assyrians by refusing to adopt Assyrian ways and by keeping their religious beliefs intact and free of any Assyrian influence.

By contrast, the relationship between Phoenicia and Egypt was not based always on coercion but both countries developed economic ties and peaceful trade relations which made cultural interaction possible over the years. Egyptian religious traditions exercised an attraction over the Phoenicians and progressively infiltrated their religious world to the extent that they became part of their religious consciousness and their world view. What made their impact so lasting is that they were known to and adopted by the common people: they became part of the popular and not only the official Phoenician religion.

The idea that coercion may have been the reason behind Phoenician cultural resistance finds support in the fact that the Phoenicians did not resist Persian culture and religion because at the beginning they had peaceful and friendly relations with the occupants whom they helped in their armed conflicts. The presence of the Persians in Phoenicia was shorter than that of the Assyrians but their impact has been certainly stronger. Another example is the relation that the Phoenicians developed with Greece and which was based

52 Wartke 2005, fig. 39; Abou Assaf – Bordreuil – Millard 1982, pls. I and II.

on peaceful trade relations. As early as the 5th c. BCE, while Phoenicia was still under Persian rule, Greek influence on Phoenician culture started to leave its marks and progressively competed with the long lasting Egyptian influence. Greek influence is tangible not only on the material culture of Phoenicia as attested in the imports of Athenian ceramics, for example, but also on Phoenician religion and art. A striking example is the famous 4th c. BCE Eshmun tribune where Greek mythological scenes are represented.[53] It testifies to the knowledge and appreciation the Phoenicians had of these religious symbols. The beautiful Hellenizing anthropoid sarcophagi as well as the sarcophagi unearthed in the royal necropolis of Ayaa, all denote an increasing liking for Greek culture.[54] Strato I, king of Sidon, was declared in an Athenian decree found on the Athenian acropolis a lover of Greek culture.[55] The Greeks went even further than the Egyptians in their influence on Phoenician culture by transmitting their language to the Phoenician cities who used it for several centuries, a major cultural transfer that the Egyptians did not achieve.

Although it played an important role in the case of Egypt, the time factor is not necessarily required for cultural interaction. What makes people receptive to new ideas are peaceful ties which result often in an osmosis between two cultures. In other words, the absence of coercion and friendly relations seem to have been a condition *sine qua non* for cultural interaction. The Assyrians failed in both: they used coercion and even their trade relations were forced upon the Phoenicians.

This Phoenician resistance towards Assyrian culture is indeed puzzling even more so if we compare it to the situation in Palestine. At Dor, which is not so far from Akhziv, evidence for Assyrian influence is quite substantial. A new gate with Assyrian attributes was built after the transformation of the city into an Assyrian province. Assyrian tableware became abundant as well as some Assyrian-type glyptic.[56] In Megiddo Stratum III the city was rebuilt after an Assyrian town plan and its domestic buildings followed the plans of Assyrian houses.[57] The transformation of Dor and Megiddo into Assyrian provinces translated effectively in a very strong "Assyrianization" of these cities. The abundance of Assyrian material in Palestine versus its total absence at the Phoenician sites is striking since both countries suffered from Assyrian conquests and were under Assyrian dominion, both had a strong millennia long relation with Egypt but one was receptive to Assyrian culture and the other was not.

There is of course no satisfactory explanation to the discussed issue. It is not easy to follow the process of adoption of cultural features step by step and to understand how people integrated various aspects of it. The analysis of the process described by Christophe Ulf involving producers, transmitters, and recipients of a culture as well as the circumstances in which the transfer took place is a very complex process not easy to disentangle and to follow in the absence of sufficient textual and archaeological evidence.[58] A better understanding of this phenomenon and how it operated in Phoenicia may be the key for understanding Phoenician choices.

53 *Liban* 1998, p. 138.

54 Hamdy Bey – Reinach 1892.

55 Elayi 2013, p. 279.

56 Stern 2001, pp. 17, 36.

57 Stern 2001, p. 20 and fig. I,11.

58 Ulf 2009.

References

Abou Assaf – Bordreuil – Millard 1982 = A. Abou Assaf – P. Bordreuil – A. Millard, *La statue de Tell Fekherye et son inscription bilingue assyro-araméenne*, Paris 1982.

Attridge – Oden 1981= H.W. Attridge – R.A. Oden Jr., *Philo of Byblos, the Phoenician History: Introduction, Critical Text, Translation, Notes*, Washington 1981.

Aubet 2004 = M.E. Aubet (ed.), *The Phoenician Cemetery of Tyre-Al Bass Excavations 1997-1999*, Beirut 2004 («BAAL Hors-Série», 1).

Aubet – Núñez – Trellisó 2014 = M.E. Aubet – F.J. Núñez – L. Trellisó (eds.), *The Phoenician Cemetery of Tyre Al-Bass II. Archaeological Excavations 2002-2005*, Beirut 2014 («BAAL Hors-Série», 9, 1-2).

Bader 2003 = B. Bader, *The Egyptian Jars from Sidon in their Egyptian Context*, in «Archaeology & History in the Lebanon» 18, 2003, pp. 31-37.

Badre 1997 = L. Badre, *BEY 003. Preliminary Report Excavations of the American University of Beirut Museum 1993-1996. Report from the Excavations in the City Center of Beirut under Rehabilitation from the Early 1990's*, in «BAAL» 2, 1997, pp. 6-94.

Badre 2015 = L. Badre, *A Phoenician Sanctuary in Tyre*, in A.M. Afeiche (ed.), *Cult and Ritual on the Levantine Coast and Its Impact on the Eastern Mediterranean Realm. Proceedings of the International Symposium* (Beirut 2012), Beirut 2015 («BAAL Hors-Série», 10), pp. 59-82.

Bagg 2007 = A. Bagg, *Die Orts- und Gewässernamen der neuassyrischen Zeit. Teil I: Die Levante*, Wiesbaden 2007 («RGTC», 7/1).

Barnett 1975 = R.D. Barnett, *A Catalogue of the Nimrud Ivories*, London 1975.

Benz 1972 = F.L. Benz, *Personal Names in the Phoenician and Punic Inscriptions*, Rome 1972.

Bikai 1978 = P.M. *The Pottery of Tyre*, Warminster 1978.

Borger 1956 = R. *Die Inschriften Asarhaddons Königs von Assyrien,* Graz 1956 («AfO Beiheft», 9).

Borger 1982-1985 = R. Borger, *Der Vertrag Asarhaddons mit Baal von Tyros*, in *Texte aus der Umwelt des Alten Testaments. Band 1. Rechts- und Wirtschaftsurkunden historisch-chronologische Texte*, Gütersloh 1982-1985, pp. 158-159.

Boschloos 2014 = V. Boschloos, *Scarabs and Seals from the 2002-2005 Seasons at al-Baṣṣ*, in M.E. Aubet - F.J. Nuñez - L. Trellisó, *The Phoenician Cemetery of Tyre el-Bass II. Archaeological Excavations 2002-2005*, Beirut 2014 («BAAL Hors-série», IX.1), pp. 381-404.

Briquel-Chatonnet 1997 = F. Briquel-Chatonnet, *Arwad et l'empire* assyrien, in B. Pongratz-Leisten – H. Kühne – P. Xella (ed.), Ana shadî Labnani lū allik. *Beiträge zur altorientalischen und mittlemeerischen Kulturen. Festschrift für Wolfgang Röllig*, Neukirchen-Vluyn 1997, pp. 57-68.

Chaaya 2000 = A. Chaaya, *L'évolution et le changement culturel à Tell ᶜArqa après l'invasion de Tiglath-Pileser III (Niveaux 10-9)*, in P. Matthiae – A. Enea – L. Peyronel – F. Pinnock (edd.), *Proceedings of the 1st International Congress on the Archaeology of the Ancient Near East,* Rome, May 18th-23rd 1998, I, Rome 2000, pp. 213-219.

Chéhab 1951-1952 = M. Chéhab, *Les terre cuites de Kharayeb. Texte*, in «BMB» 10, Paris 1951-1952.

Chéhab 1953-1954 = M. Chéhab, *Les terre cuites de Kharayeb. Planches*, in «BMB» 11, Paris 1953-1954.

Curvers 2001-2002 = H. Curvers, *The Lower Town of Beirut (1200-300 BC). A Preliminary Synthesis*, in «ARAM »13-14, 2001-2002, pp. 51-72.

Curvers – Stuart 2005 = H. Curvers – B. Stuart, *The BCD Archaeology Project, 2000-2006*, in «BAAL» 9, 2005, pp. 189-222.

Doumet-Serhal 2006 = C. Doumet-Serhal, *Sidon: Mediterranean Contacts in the Early and Middle Bronze Age, Preliminary Report*, in «Archaeology & History in Lebanon» 24, 2006, pp. 34-47.

Doumet-Serhal 2013 = C. Doumet-Serhal, *Sidon. Fifteen Years of Excavations*, Beirut 2013.

Dunand – Duru = M. Dunand – R. Duru, *Oumm El-'Amed. Une ville de l'époque hellénistique aux échelles de Tyr*, Paris 1962.

Dunand – Saliby 1985 = M. Dunand – N. Saliby, *Le temple d'Amrith dans la Pérée d'Aradus*, Paris 1985.

Dussaud 1924 = R. Dussaud, *Les inscriptions phéniciennes du tombeau d'Ahiram, roi de Byblos*, in «Syria» 5, 1924, pp. 135-157.

Dussaud 1925 = R. Dussaud, *Dédicace d'une statue d'Osorkon I par Eliba'al, roi de Byblos*, in «Syria» 6, 1925, pp. 101-117.

Elayi 2013 = J. Elayi, *Histoire de la Phénicie*, Paris 2013.
Finkbeiner 2001-2002 = U. Finkbeiner, *BEY 020. The Iron Age Fortification*, in «ARAM»13-14, 2001-2002, pp. 27-36.
Finkbeiner – Sader 1997 = U. Finkbeiner – H. Sader, BEY 020. *Preliminary Report on the 1995 Excavations*, in «BAAL» 2, 1997, pp. 114-166.
Forstner-Müller – Kopetsky – Doumet-Serhal 2006 = I. Forstner-Müller – K. Kopetsky – C. Doumet-Serhal, *Egyptian Pottery from the Late 12th and Early 13th Dynasty from Sidon*, in «Archaeology & History in Lebanon» 24, pp. 52-59.
Frede 2000 = S. Frede, *Die phönizischen anthropoiden Sarkophage*. *Vol. 1*, Mainz 2000.
Genz – Sader 2010 = H. Genz – H. Sader, *Tell Hizzin: Digging up New Material from an Old Excavation,* in «BAAL», 12, 2010, pp. 183-202.
Grayson 1991 = A.K. Grayson, *Assyrian Rulers of the Early First Millennium BC. Vol. I (1114-859),* Toronto-Buffalo-London 1991 («RINAP», 2).
Grayson 1996 = A.K. Grayson, *Assyrian Rulers of the Early First Millennium BC. Vol. II (858-745),* Toronto-Buffalo-London 1996 («RINAP», 3).
Grayson – Novotny 2012 = A.K. Grayson – J. Novotny, *The Royal Inscriptions of Sennacherib, King of Assyria (704-681 BC). Part 1*, Winona Lake 2012 («RINAP», 3/1).
Hachmann 1983 = R. Hachmann, *Frühe Phöniker im Libanon: 20 Jahre deutsche Ausgrabungen in Kamid el-Loz,* Mainz 1983.
Hachmann 1989 = R. Hachmann, *Kamid el-Loz 1963-1981 (German Excavations in Lebanon)*, in «Berytus» 37, 1989, pp. 11-179.
Hamdy Bey – Reinach 1892 = O. Hamdy Bey – T. Reinach, *Une nécropole royale à Sidon*, Istanbul 1892 (Reprinted 1987).
Herrmann – Laidlaw 2008 = G. Herrmann – S. Laidlaw, *Ivories from the North West Palace (1845-1992*), London 2008.
Higginbotham 2000 = C.R. Higginbotham, *Egyptianization and Elite Emulation in Ramesside Palestine. Governance and Accomodation on the Imperial Periphery*, Leiden-Boston-Köln 2000.
Jidejian 1971 = N. Jidejian, *Byblos through the Ages*, Beirut 1971.
Kamlah 2007 = J. Kamlah, *Sakraler Baum und mythische Jagd. Zur Ikonographischen Verbindung zweier mythologischer Motive auf einem eisenzeitlichen Rollsiegel aus Phönizien*, in «Baghdader Mitteilungen» 37, 2007, pp. 549-564.
Kamlah – Sader 2010a = J. Kamlah – H. Sader, *Deutsch-libanesische Ausgrabungen auf Tell el-Burak südlich von Sidon. Vorbericht nach Abschluss der siebten Kampagne 2010*, in «ZDPV» 126, 2010, pp. 93-115.
Kamlah – Sader 2010b = J. Kamlah – H. Sader, *Tell el-Burak: A New Middle Bronze Age Site from Lebanon*, in «Near East Archaeology» 73, 2010, pp. 130-141.
Kamlah – Sader – Schmitt 2016a = J. Kamlah – H. Sader – A. Schmitt, *The Tell el-Burak Archaeological Project: Preliminary Report on the 2011, 2013, and 2014 Seasons in Area 3*, in «BAAL» 16, 2016, pp. 79-130.
Kamlah – Sader – Schmitt 2016b = J. Kamlah – H. Sader – A. Schmitt, *A Cultic Installation with a Standing Stone from the Phoenician Settlement at Tell el-Burak*, in «Berytus» 55, 2016, pp. 135-168.
Karam 1997 = N. Karam, *Bey 013 rapport préliminaire*, in «BAAL» 2, 1997, pp. 95-113.
Leichty 2011 = E. Leichty, *The Royal Inscriptions of Esarhaddon, King of Assyria (680-669 BC)*, Winona Lake 2011.
Lembke 2001 = K. Lembke, *Phönizische anthropoide Sarkophage*, Mainz 2001.
Liban 1998 = *Liban, l'autre rive. Catalogue de l'exposition présentée à l'Institut du Monde Arabe du 27 octobre 1998 au 2 mai 1999*, Paris 1998.
Lipínski 1995 = E. Lipínski , *Dieux et déesses de l'univers phénicien et punique*, Leuven 1995.
Markoe 2000 = G. Markoe, *Phoenicians*, London 2000.
Mazar 2009-2010 = E. Mazar, *The Northern Cemetery of Akhziv (10th-6th Centuries BCE). The Tophet Site. The Sam Turner Expedition Final Report of the Excavations 1992-2004*, Barcelona 2009-2010 («CuadAMed», 19-20).
Mura 2017 = B. Mura, *La necropoli fenicia di Khaldé (Beirut, Libano): analisi della documentazione inedita degli scavi di Roger Saidah. Campagne del 1961 e 1962*. PhD Dissertation, Barcelona, Universitat Pompeu Fabra 2017.
Parrot – Chéhab – Moscati 1975 = A. Parrot – M. Chéhab – S. Moscati, *Les Phéniciens, l'expansion phénicienne, Carthage*, Paris 1975.
Pritchard 1975 = J.B. Pritchard, *Sarepta. A Preliminary Report on the Iron Age. Excavations of the University Museum of the University of Pennsylvania 1970-1972*, Philadelphia 1975.
Pritchard 1988 = J.B. Pritchard, *Sarepta IV. The Objects from Area II, X*, Beirut 1988.

Roche 2009 = C. Roche, *Les reliefs assyriens de Nahr el-Kalb*, in «BAAL Hors-Série» 5, 2009, pp. 241-254.
Sader 1997 = H. Sader, *Tell el Burak: an Unidentified City of Phoenician Sidon*, in B. Pongratz-Leisten – H. Kühne – P. Xella (edd.), Ana shadî Labnani lū allik. *Beiträge zur altorientalischen und mittlemeerischen Kulturen. Festschrift für Wolfgang Röllig*, Neukirchen-Vluyn 1997, pp. 363-377.
Sader 2005 = H. Sader, *Iron Age Funerary Stelae from Lebanon*, Barcelona 2005 («Cuadernos de Arqueología Mediterránea», 11).
Sader 2015 = H. Sader, *Intertwined History: Lebanon's Role in the Transmission of Egyptian Culture to Inland Syria in the Middle Bronze Age*, in P. Pfälzner – M. al-Maqdissi (edd.), *Qatna and the Networks of Bronze Age Globalism. Proceedings of an International Conference in Stuttgart and Tübingen in October 2009*, Wiesbaden 2015, pp. 117-126.
Saidah 1966 = R. Saidah, *Fouilles de Khaldé. Rapport préliminaire sur la première et la deuxième campagne (1961-1962)*, in «BMB» 19, 1966, pp. 51-90.
Scandone-Matthiae 1994 = G. Scandone-Matthiae, *La cultura egiziana a Biblo attraverso le testimonianze materiali*, in E. Acquaro – F. Mazza – S. Ribichini – G. Scandone – P. Xella (edd.), *Biblo. Una città e la sua cultura*, Roma 1994, pp. 37-48.
Stern 2001 = E. Stern, *Archaeology of the Land of the Bible Volume II: The Assyrian, Babylonian, and Persian Periods (732-332 BCE.)*, New York-London-Toronto-Sydney-Auckland 2001.
Sznycer 1994 = M. Sznycer, *Les inscriptions "pseudo-hiéroglyphiques" de Byblos*, in E. Acquaro – F. Mazza – S. Ribichini – G. Scandone – P. Xella (edd.), *Biblo. Una città e la sua cultura*, Roma 1994, pp. 167-178.
Tadmor 1994 = H. Tadmor, *The Inscriptions of Tiglath-Pileser III, King of Assyria. Critical Edition, with Introductions, Translations and Commentary*, Jerusalem 1994.
Thureau-Dangin – Dunand 1936 = F. Thureau-Dangin – M. Dunand, *Til Barsip*, Paris 1936.
Ulf 2009 = C. Ulf, *Rethinking Cultural Contact*, in «AncWestEast» 8, 2009, pp. 81-132.
Wartke 2005 = R.B. Wartke, *Sam'al. Ein aramäischer Stadtstaat des 10. bis 8. Jhs.v.Chr. und die Geschichte seiner Erforschung*, Mainz 2005.
Winter 1977 = I.J. Winter, *Perspective on the "Local Style" of Hasanlu IV B. A Study in Receptivity*, in L.D. Levine – T.C. Young Jr. (edd.), *Mountains and Lowlands: Essays in the Archaeology of Greater Mesopotamia,* Malibu 1977 («BiMes», 7), pp. 371-386.