

Foreword

AN EVER-CHANGING WORLD: INTERCONNECTIONS IN THE ANCIENT NEAR EAST AND THE EASTERN MEDITERRANEAN (ca. 3500-300 BC)

Introdução

UM MUNDO EM CONSTANTE MUDANÇA: INTERCONEXÕES NO ANTIGO ORIENTE PRÓXIMO E NO MEDITERRÂNEO ORIENTAL (ca. 3500-300 a.C.)

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The Ancient Near East and the Eastern Mediterranean were geographical and sociopolitical scenarios with fluent and constant connectivity from the earliest times in history. Prestige goods and raw materials found their way from one side to another through extensive networks even before the emergence of the state in Egypt and Mesopotamia, integrating movements not only of goods but also of people, technologies, cultural practices, gods, languages, and ideas (Warburton, 2020a; Wilkinson et al., 2011). In this volume, we named them “interconnections” to precisely emphasize the relevance of exchange in the adoption, modification, or re-adaptation of foreign traces. The influence of incoming technologies and the shaping of identities in such a dynamic world, always moving, is also considered. Naturally, many diverse theoretical approaches were proposed over time to explain those interconnections, contributing to completing the never-ending panorama of relationships (e.g., Warburton, 2020b, pp. 1–21). At the same time, nowadays a comprehensive amount of evidence is usually considered in explaining those interconnections, mainly material remains, textual registers, and iconography.

Following a chronological order, this volume opens with a contribution by Jorge Cano Moreno, who articulates a perspective combining concepts from different disciplines such as art history and symbolic anthropology. The paper is entitled “Towards a New Methodology for the Study of Iconography on Seals from the Creten Neopalace

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Period (ca. 1700–1420 BC)”. An Approach from Art History and Symbolic Anthropology” (in Spanish). The author contends that the Minoan seals and sealings iconography is not a literal representation of reality—as it usually has been considered—but a complex system of representations mediated by different mechanisms of social adjustment. As the author emphasizes, literal interpretations of such iconography overshadow different intra-elite relationships.

"Literary Interconnections: Babylonian Texts in the Eastern Mediterranean and Adjacent Regions (ca. 1500–1200 BC)” (in Spanish) by Andrea Seri takes a close look at literary interconnectivity in the Late Bronze Age by examining educational tasks that demonstrate the knowledge of the Sumerian and Akkadian languages as well as the cuneiform script in various Ancient Near Eastern locations. Examining how their use spread beyond the Babylonian core to areas such as Anatolia, Syria, the Levant, and Egypt, the author provides evidence of local adaptations as well as the relevance of the texts chosen for transmitting the aforementioned script and languages.

Graciela Gestoso Singer proposes a different topic, entitled “Beyond Amarna: Exorcists without Borders in the Levant.” The author focuses on the mobility of specialized individuals (physicians, exorcists, omen experts) in the context of an epidemic crisis referred to in different sources (diplomatic correspondence, prayers, magic spells, medical texts). The Amarna Age is the temporal scenario selected to describe the role of exorcists who travelled between different courts of the time to perform their expert treatments and refer to the mobility of gods and goddesses in such a wide territorial scenario.

Cultural transfer in the Akkadian texts of Late Bronze Ugarit is the focus of Jana Mynářová’s contribution, entitled “Across Cultures, across Languages. Interconnectivity in the Late Bronze Age Ugarit”. The author examines the significance of recently formed centres in the ancient Near East's former periphery and how old and new elements have blended there. To emphasize this point, Mynářová considers the cuneiform script to be the primary means of transmitting cultural and literary traditions, focusing on a possible Ugaritism in a letter from the corpus of Amarna to underline the relevance of the cultural and linguistic context in which a letter was written.

To close the volume, Aren Maeir’s contribution, “Did Trade Stop in the Early Iron Age? The Evidence from Philistia and Beyond” is centred on the transition between the Late Bronze and the Iron Age, characterized by turmoil and usually qualified as “collapse.” The author's proposal emphasizes the continuity of international trade in Philistia and neighbouring regions, even though the amount and frequency of exchange decreased at that time.

These five papers cover a wide range of periods and geographical areas, which is only a sample of the complexity of the subject and far from representing what can be found in the Ancient Near East. However, they do show the variety of theoretical and empirical approaches that can be used to study interconnectivity. We are very grateful to the *Diacrítica* staff for the opportunity to put together these contributions, representing one of the largest and most intricate geographical mixes of cultures, languages, and gods. We hope this volume can stimulate the interest of many readers in this relevant subject.

Referências

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