LANCES AND JAVELINS IN ADMINISTRATIVE UGARITIC TEXTS

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RESUMEN - ABSTRACT

El principal objetivo del artículo es el de analizar los distintos términos ugaríticos utilizados para hacer referencia a lanzas y jabalinas. En los textos administrativos de Ugarit se menciona la existencia de diferentes tipos de lanzas, como parte del armamento ofensivo de los soldados. Además, esos mismos textos hacen referencia también al uso de proyectiles por parte del ejército ugarítico, un tipo de arma que algunos autores han interpretado como jabalinas.

The main purpose of this paper is to analyse the various Ugaritic terms used to refer to lances and javelins. The data contained in the Ugaritic adminitrative texts point to the existence of different types of lances, part of the soldier's offensive armament. Moreover, those very texts also attest the use of projectiles by the Ugaritic army, a type of weapon which some authors regard as javelines.

PALABRAS CLAVE - KEYWORDS

Ugarit – lanzas – jabalinas.

Ugarit – lances – javelins.

INTRODUCTION

There is a wide consensus in accepting the secondary role played by the Ugaritic army in the Late Bronze Age international context (Liverani 1979: 1311, 1341, Bordreuil 1999, del Olmo 2002: 256 Vidal 2005. Instead, Vita 1995: 15). In spite of this, various references to the Ugaritic army, as well as to the weapons that constituted the Ugaritic soldier's panoply are mentioned in the Ras Shamra archives. Such references attest the importance of lances, which stand out as one of main weapons in the offensive armament used by the Ugaritic army.

The relevance of such weapon is also reflected in the symbolic sphere. Thus, both iconography and literary texts show that the lance, symbol of lightning, was the weapon *par excellence* of god Baal, the main deity in the Ugaritic pantheon (del Olmo 1992).

The aim of this paper is to critically analyse the different terms that, according to various authors, are somehow related to lances. Attention shall also be payed to javelines, a weapon similar in appearance to the lance but different in size and in the way it is used (lance = shock weapon; javelin = throwing weapon). Besides examining the etymology of the various terms connected to lances and javelins, as well as the textual context where references appear, we intend to correlate the data obtained from texts with those archaeological data from Ras Shamra that are dated between 14th-12th B.C.E., i.e. the time span covered by the Ugaritic archives.

1. LANCES IN UGARITIC TEXTS

1.1. *mrḥ*

It appears certain that the Ugaritic term *mrḥ* meant 'lance, spear'[1], for it is attested with this very meaning both in Egyptian (*mur ḥ a*), and, with metathesis, in various Semitic languages (hbr. *rmḥ* ; aram. *rmḥ* ; ar. *rumḥ* and eth. *ramḥ* ; see *DULAT* p. 574).

As well as in literary or cultic texts[2], the term *mrḥ* often appears in administrative documents, always in a warlike context: the military recruitment of shepherds (RS 19.49 = KTU 4.624; see Heltzer 1982: 68, 110; Vita 1995: 140, 153)[3], weapon lists (RS 15.83 = KTU 4.169: 9; RS 19.174B = KTU 4.670: 5').

The only problem is posed by the appearance of the term *mrḥ* in RS 18.110 (= KTU 4.385): 7. According to Stieglitz, for whom the text consists of a list of equipment belonging to a physician, the term *mrḥ* here has the more specific meaning 'lancet' (Stieglitz 1981: 52). Contrarily, Marcus held the *mrḥ* here to be the tool of a jeweller (Marcus 1975: 93), while Heltzer pointed to the possibility of it being the tool of a cosmetic maker (Heltzer 1978: 27). More recently, Watson (Watson 2002: 924) has proposed that such term in this text could be referring to a type of garment (Akk. *murhu*; see *CAD* M/2 p. 219 and *AHw* p. 676).

In spite of the variety of translations, the proposals just mentioned coincide in questioning the possibility that *mrḥ* ought in this case to be translated simply as 'lance'. However, in most cases the objections to this translation are based on the nature granted to the text (physician's equipment, jeweller's tools), something very difficult to determine due to the lexicografic difficulties posed by RS 18.110[4]. But if, as we believe, this text consists of a list of personal belongings, without it being possible or necessary to define the profession of their owner, then there can be no objection to two lances figuring among those belongings.

1.2. Other possible terms for lances

Ugaritic administrative texts attest the existence of a specific type of lance named *arkd*. Thus in a list of archers (*bnš kld*) reference is made to a maker of *arkd*-lances and his appren-

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[1] The data obtained from Ugaritic texts are not sufficient to distinguish between lance and spear, thus the indiscriminate use of both terms.

[2] RS 2.09+ (= KTU 1.6): i 51; RS 3.325+ (= KTU 1.16): i 47, 51; RS 4.474 (= KTU 1.65): 12; RS 19.39 (= KTU 1.92): 7, 12.

[3] A similar instance of specific archer recruitment amongst sheperds is mentioned in the letter YOS 3, 44: 16-20, where the Neo-Babylonian king Nabonid orders a recruitment of archers provided exclusively by shepherds (Malbran-Labat 1982: 80, 242).

[4] See DULAT pp. 416, 592, 568 and 281 on the lexicographic problems posed by *ḫ ṯ r* (l. 2), *mš lt* and *mqḥ* (l. 3), and *drb* (l. 8).

tice (*bdy ḥrš arkd blšš lmd*)[5]. *DULAT* p. 103 translates the word *arkd* as 'name of a projectile; a type of projectile'. However, and by virtue of the parallel presented by the Akkadian word *ariktu* ('a kind of spear' *CAD* A/2 p. 267; 'eine Art Lanze(?)', *AHw* p. 68), it seems more correct to translate *arkd* in a more precise manner, as a specific type of lance or spear (Dietrich–Loretz 1978), without it being possible to detail its particular traits. The fact that *DULAT*, in spite of the Akkadian example, puts forward a more imprecise translation is probably due to the features of the text in which the term *arkd* appears. However, as might be observed in RS 19.49, it is not unusual for the Ugaritic administration to undertake the recruiting of archers among the members of different professional groups.

Some authors put forward the translation of the word *šbr* also as 'lance, spear' (Margalit 1989: 71, 75; Wyatt 2002: 372); *šbr* is a term mentioned only once in administrative texts, and in a broken context[6]. However, and again thanks to the parallel offered by the Akkadian *šibirru* ('a staff as an emblem of rule of gods and kings', *CAD* Š/2 p. 377; 'Hirtenstab, Szepter', *AHw* p. 1227), it seems clear that the correct translation would be 'stick, staff' and not 'lance' (Caquot 1989: 34 n. 62; *DULAT* p. 806)[7].

Once *šbr* ruled out, there remain two words connected to lances. The first of them, *mrḥ*, was probably the one used to refer generally to that weapon. The second one, *arkd*, would allude to a specific type of lance. The existence in administrative terminology of different words related to lances coincides with common administrative practices attested in other archives. In this sense, maybe the most meaningful example is that posed by the Mari archives, where allusions have been identified to four different types of lance: *šukurrum*, *imittum*, *zamrātum* and *nāzinum* (Durand 1998: 387ff.).

1.3. Archaeological data

In fact, and just as in Mari (see Montero–Vidal 2006), the different types of lance-heads recovered from the Late Bronze Age levels in Ras Shamra justify the use by the Ugaritic administration of different terms to allude to them.

The largest archaeological cluster of lance-heads from the Late Bronze Age in Ras Shamra was found in the house of the Great Priest (Schaeffer 1956: 251ff., figs. 224 and 225). Such lances were of the B3 ii kind, according to de Maigret's typology. It is a type of lance with a head characterized by its central ridge, and attached to the shaft by means of an open socket (de Maigret 1976: 118ff.). The lances found in other areas of the city in Late Bronze Age levels (Schaeffer 1956b: 279, pl X, fig. 241), as well as in the nearby site of Ras Ibn Hani (Bounni–Lagarce 1998: 69, fig. 141), share very similar features.

In spite of this typologic homogeneity, there are relevant variations among the lances in such meaningful parameters as blade length (from ca. 12 to 22 cm). It seems reasonable, therefore, to put forward the possibility that the Ugaritic administration used different words to refer to lances with differently sized blades.

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[5] RS 17.141 (= KTU 4.277): 9.
[6] RS 18.509 (= KTU 4.574): 7.
[7] On the other hand, according to Sanmartín the word *ktġd* mentioned in RS 2.[08]+ (= KTU 1.4): vii 41 also referred to a type of lance (Sanmartín 1978). However see now *DULAT* p. 317f.

2. IS THERE AN UGARITIC WORD FOR JAVELIN?

In the administrative text RS 16.02 (= KTU 4.204) the word *srdnn* figures nine times:

1.	iḫyn . uṯpt . ḥẓm	PN: quiver for arrows;
2.	anšrm . uṯpt . ḥẓm	PN: quiver for arrows
3.	w uṯpt . srdnnm	and quiver for *s.*
4.	awpn . uṯpt . ḥẓm	PN: quiver for arrows
5.	w uṯpt . srdnnm	and quiver for *s.*
6.	rpan . uṯpt . srdnnm	PN: quiver for *s.*
7.	šbᶜm . uṯpt . srdnnm	PN: quiver for *s.*
8.	bn . aǵli . uṯpt . srdnnm	PN: quiver for *s.*
9.	asrn . uṯpt . srdnnm	PN: quiver for *s.*
10.	bn qṣn . uṯpt . srdnnm	PN: quiver for *s.*
11.	yly . uṯpt . srdnnm	PN: quiver for *s.*
12.	artṯb . uṯpt . srdnnm	PN: quiver for *s.*

Due to etymological difficulties posed by the word *srdnn* (see *DULAT*, p. 770), and to the fact that it is only mentioned in RS 16.02, the possible translations proposed to date are only based on the contents of RS 16.02. Thus, Gordon opted to tranlate it as 'spear' and define it as a type of weapon transported in quivers and typical of the war chariot (Gordon 1965: nº 1795)[8].

Later Vita, recalling an earlier proposal by Liverani (Liverani 1979: 1341), has refined this possibility, translating *srdnn* as 'javelin'. The reasons put forward by Vita in order to defend his proposal are: (1) the translation 'lance/spear' is not appropiate due to the existence of a word with that same meaning (*mrḥ*); (2) the javelin was a well attested weapon related to the war chariot during the Late Bronze Age, when it was transported in quivers (see Yadin 1963: 10); (3) the finding of metal heads, which might be interpreted as javelin-heads, in Ras Shamra; (4) the representation in an Ugaritic seal, RS 9.77, of a war chariot where the conductor carries with his left hand an object that could be interpreted as a javelin (Vita 1995: 69f., 125f.).

However, none of these reasons leds us firmly to accept the translation 'javelin' for *srdnn*. As we have seen in section 1, different words referring to different types of lances existed not only in Ugarit but also, for example, in Mari. Therefore the existence of the word *mrḥ* does not necessarily rule out the possibility that *srdnn* could allude to some type of lance, as Gordon put forward. Regarding archaeological evidence, Vita points to the possibility noted by Chavane that some of the metal heads found in Ras Shamra between 1978 and 1984 in the area of the site known as 'Centre de la ville' were really javelin heads (Chavane 1987: 357; see also Drews 1993: 185). Earlier, de Maigret had already suggested that those elliptical tanged heads, with a median length between 11 and 19 cm (type A 7, according to de Maigret's typology 1976: 86ff.), found, among others, in Late Bronze Age levels in Ras Shamra, could be qualified as javelin-heads. Moreover, the possible existence of archaeological and iconographic evidence could attest the use of javelins by the Ugaritic army, but this does not imply at all that *srdnn* has to be the Ugaritic word used to name them.

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[8] The expression *uṯpt srdnnm* was not very plausibly interpreted as a special type of quiver characteristic of the šerdana (Heltzer 1982: 127 n. 127).

At this point, we may consider to another word, *nṯq*, attested both in literary and administrative texts from Ugarit[9]. Such a word is translated as 'barb' by Vita (1995: 52, 70; 1999: 496; see also Sanmartín 1989: 344f. and *DULAT* p. 654, 'missiles, projectile, dart(?)'). Vita's reasoning behind this proposal is based, among other things, on the fact that in the text RS 15.83 (= KTU 4.169) the word *nṯq* figures connected to arrows:

1.	arbᶜm . qšt .	Forty bows,
2.	alp . ḥẓm . w alp	one thousand arrows and one thousand
3.	nṯq . ṯn . qlᶜm	*n*., two shields

It is difficult to understand, therefore, why Vita does not also define *srdnn* as a type of dart or barb, when, as we have seen, the only text where it can be found also displays a close connection with arrows. In fact, there is no objective reason, neither philological nor contextual, favouring the distinction *srdnn* = javelin and *nṯq* = barb, and not, for example, the reverse. According to the available data, and given their connection to arrows, we can only note that *srdnn* and *nṯq* might have been two types of projectiles, maybe two different kind of darts. Along these lines Egyptian texts from the 13th century BCE attest the use of tassel-stabilized darts, smaller than javelin, carried on chariots, probably kept in quivers, and used by crews when the range was too close for a bow (Bonnet 1926: 105f.; Drews 1993: 184).

According to some authors, another word related to javelins is *grgr* (Sanmartín 1980: 336; *DULAT* p. 308), a word only attested in RS 3.325+ (= KTU 1.16): i 48:

46.	ᶜapʾnk . ǵzr . ilḥʾuʾ	Thereupon, the hero Ilhu
47.	[m]ʾrʾḥh . yiḫd . b ʿyʾd	took his lance in his hand,
48.	[g]ʾrʾgrh . bm . ymn	his *g*. in (his) right hand.

Here also there is no consensus on the translation either, due to the uncertain etymology of *grgr*, to the fact that it is a word elsewhere unattested in Ugaritic, and to the fragmentary state in which it appears, generally restored as [g]ʾrʾgrh (Pardee 1997: 340 n. 80). Thus, for example, Wyatt observes that, according to the context, the meaning of *grgr* must be parallel to that of *mrḥ* , and so puts forward as a translation the sequence spear (*mrḥ*) / lance (*grgr*) (Wyatt 2002: 227 n. 230). Certainly Wyatt's proposal improves the translation put forward by *DULAT*, because it keeps a true semantic parallel between both terms. The parallel disappears if we translate, as *DULAT* suggests (see also del Olmo 1998: 197), *grgr* as javelin, a kind of weapon that, as we pointed out, has a different function from the lance, although their shapes are similar. In any case, the fact that *grgr* figures in RS 3.325+ is irrelevant for our study, since it is a word only attested in one literary text of foreign origin, the legend of Keret (Pardee 1997: 333; del Olmo 1998: 174). The fact that it never appears in administrative texts leads us to reject the connection of the word *grgr* with the panoply of the Ugaritic soldier.

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[9] RS 2.08+ (= KTU 1.4): vii 39; RS 15.83 (= KTU 4.169): 3.

3. MAKERS OF BRONZE LANCES AND LANCE-BEARERS

The supply by the Ugaritic administration of copper, tin, wool, garments and oil destined to the professional group of the *sbrdnm* is attested in two administrative texts, RS 18.24 (= KTU 4.337): 1 and RS 18.42 (= KTU 4.352): 6[10]. On the basis of the information provided by RS 18.24 (supply of amounts of copper and tin), Zaccagnini has very plausibly proposed that such professinal group consists of 'bronze-smiths' (Zaccagnini 1970: 315ff.; see also Heltzer 1982: 41, 94 and Tropper 2000: 103). According to Sanmartín, however, the *sbrdnm* were 'makers of bronze spears', a group that was also mentioned, according to this very author, in two syllabic texts[11] as lú.meš zag.lu(-*ti*) (Sanmartín 1995: 184; *DULAT* p. 752f.). However, as Huehnergard points out, to suggest that lú.meš zag.lu(-*ti*) is an abbreviattion for lú.meš<SIMUG> zag.lu(-*ti*) (ZABAR) (see Dietrich–Loretz 1977: 335) 'seems rather too artful' (Huehnergard 1989: 67 n. 135). Here it seems better to understand lú.meš zag.lu(-*ti*) as 'lance/spear-bearers', a specific type of soldier characterized for having the lance as his main weapon (Huehnergard 1989: 67, 332; Vita 1995: 152f.; Lackenbacher 2002: 238 n. 813)[12].

Vita also defends the existence of a specific corps of lance bearers, the 'king's lancers' (*mrḥy mlk*), mentioned in two ritual texts: RS 24.247+ (= KTU 1.103): 7, 47' and RS 24.302 (= KTU 1.140): 9'(?)[13] (Vita 1995: 154ff.). In order to support his proposal Vita puts forward both philological arguments and arguments based on the existence of similar corps in Emar and Hatti.

Concerning the philological arguments, Vita suggests *mrḥy* is a word formed by *mrḥ* ('lance') + -*y*, which according to him is the Ugaritic suffix to build names of professions[14]. Therefore *mrḥy* would be the plural noun in construct form, 'lancers'. Moreover, Vita follows, in a context characterized by enemies, fights and destruction such as the one described by RS 24.247+, the allusion to a corps in the army closely related to king's safety seems logical.

According to Vita, the coherence of the proposal is reinforced by the existence of 'king's lancers' in other kingdoms. Thus the existence of a royal guard composed by various types of soldiers armed with lances that received names such as 'men of the golden lance', 'men of the heavy lance', etc. (see Beal 1992: 212ff.) is attested in Hatti. The 'king's brothers (i.e. certain palace officials) who bear the bronze *imittu*-lance before the king' (lú.meš *ah-hi-a ša* lugal-*ri ša* zag zabar *a-na muh-hi* lu.<gal>-*ri na-šu*) are mentioned in a text of Emar (Emar VI 17: 4-5) (see also Durand 1989: 175; Adamthwaite 2001: 108ff.; Vita 2002: 125f.).

However, in spite of these reasonings it does not seem very appropiate to interpret the *mrḥy mlk* as a part of the Ugaritic royal guard on the basis of the only attestation in the Ugaritic teratological omen texts. A very similar situation to the one posed by the word *grgr* is reproduced here. Beyond Vita's interpretation of the expression *mrḥy mlk*, the supposed mention of an armed corps in a divinatory text reflecting an older Akkadian tradition (Pardee 1986; del Olmo 1992b: 237) can not be held as a proof of its actual existence within the kingdom of Ugarit. Moreover, and following most authors, we believe it is better to understand *mrḥy mlk* simply as 'the lances of the king' (Dietrich–Loretz 1990: 93, 101; del Olmo 1992b: 237, 240) [15].

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[10] Van Soldt suggests the restitution of sb[rdnm in RS 17.318B (= KTU 6.26) (van Soldt 1989: 379 n. 27).

[11] RS 15.Y (= PRU 3, 78): 11f, 16, RS 16.257+ (= PRU 3 199): r. ii 1.

[12] However, see Arnaud 1999: 301: 'fondeurs'.

[13] Broken context: mr ̣h ͏ʳyʹ [   ].

[14] It seems more likely that –*y* works in this context as a *mater lectionis* (Tropper 1994: 459; 2000: 52).

[15] Pardee proposes to translate *mrḥy mlk* as 'the weapon of the king', on the basis of the cognate expression in the Akkadian series *šumma izbu*: giš .tukul lugal (Pardee 1986: 125, 2000: 547, 554, 764, 2002: 139f)

CONCLUSIONS

As we have seen, the Ugaritic administration commonly referred to lances using the general word *mrḥ*. However, the mentioning of a specific type of lance, *arkd*-lance, leads us to consider the possibilty that this administration also distinguished between different types of lances. According to the archaeological data, it is possible to ascertain that the distinction was based on the different weight and size of the head-lances manufactured in the various metallurgic workshops in the kingdom.

The javelin, the other weapon we have studied in this paper, poses more problems. From an archaeological point of view various authors have ascertained the existence of what could be javelin heads, but these are not clearly attested in the written sources. There are two terms, *srdnn* and *nṯq*, that according to the context in which they are mentioned, it may refer to two types of throwing weapons (missiles, projectiles, barbs, darts, javelins). However, we have not been able to find any valid criterion by which to distinguish the specific type of weapon to which each term refers.

Finally, two syllabic texts attest the existence of a corps of lance-bearers in the Ugaritic army. Contrarily, the possibility that the word *sbrdn* referred to a professional group specialized in manufacturing bronze lances probably ought to be ruled out. Moreover, philological and historic-literary reasons lead us to reject the possibility that the expression *mrḥy mlk* refers to a corps of lance-bearers specifically connected to the king.

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