

Dennis Pardee

Since last reporting in these pages, **Dennis Pardee** has shepherded his edition of the Ugaritic ritual texts through various stages of camera-ready copy proofing and has just completed what should be the last preliminary printout. The text is now in the hands of the copy editor (Éditions Recherche sur les Civilisations, Paris) and further corrections, it is hoped, will be minor. Closely linked with this project in subject matter was a series of seven articles on various Ugaritic deities with Biblical connections, real or imagined, that have appeared in the *Dictionary of Deities and Demons in the Bible* (Leiden: Brill, 1995).

Another project that came to completion is the *Encyclopedia of Near Eastern Archaeology*, to appear in late 1996 published by Oxford University Press, for which Pardee served as editor in matters of writing, languages, and inscriptions. His role was to ensure that such material received a fair share of attention in the encyclopedia and that the various linguistic artifacts were properly described for an audience whose expertise is not primarily linguistic or philological. The interested reader will find articles on writing and writing techniques, detailed but not overly technical descriptions of the various languages attested in the Near East from Sumerian to Arabic, a long overview of the inscriptional material, as well as brief descriptions of the primary corpora, and thumbnail sketches of some of the individual inscriptions to which reference is often made in the literature.

A Guggenheim Fellowship in 1995/96 provided additional research time to make a good start on the next major publication of Ugaritic texts according to literary genre, that of the epistolary documents. As of this writing there are 112 known letters in the Ugaritic language, all written in the Ugaritic alphabetic script on clay tablets in various stages of preservation, from complete to tiny fragments with only a few signs. In the later stages of preparing the volume on the ritual texts, Pardee was able to devote some of his time in Syria to copying the epistolary texts and he thus has a good head start in the epigraphic aspect of the study, with about half of the texts copied in detail. When working on a given corpus, the writing of the commentaries always gets off to a slow start while one gets one's bearings. In the case of the letters, it is particularly necessary to understand and describe properly the formulae so characteristic of this type of document, such as address, greetings, the writer's report on his own situation, all expressed in terms appropriate for a correspondent who could be socially superior to, inferior to, or the equal of the writer, or who could be a member of his family.

RESEARCH

The most exciting development in Ugaritic studies in recent years has been the discovery of a new archive at Ras Shamra by the Mission Archéologique Française de Ras Shamra-Ougarit, for which Pardee serves as one of the epigraphers. In fact, the discoveries go back over two decades but it has only become apparent in recent years how important they are. In the late 1960s a reinforced concrete bunker was set into the mound of Ras Shamra by the Syrian military, and in 1973 the find of a tablet in the pile of dirt thrown aside when the installation was made led to that dirt being sifted and to the ensuing discovery of over a hundred tablets and fragments, in various states of preservation. This group of texts was finally published in 1991 by the members of the current epigraphic team as *Une archive au sud de la ville* (Ras Shamra-Ougarit VII; Paris: Éditions Recherche sur les Civilisations). Meanwhile the Mission received permission to remove the bunker and excavate the area. The first campaign was in 1986 and has continued in even-numbered years, with significant tablet finds in every campaign except 1990. The major discovery of texts occurred in 1994, when some 400 tablets and fragments were unearthed, many tumbling down from a niche in one of the ground-floor walls. About sixty of these texts are in Ugaritic, the rest in Akkadian.

In 1993 Pierre Bordreuil and Pardee announced at a conference in Paris that they believed they had identified the owner of the house in which the tablets had been discovered (see *Le pays d'Ougarit autour de 1200 av. J.-C.* [Ras Shamra-Ougarit XI; Paris: Éditions Recherche sur les Civilisations, 1995], pp. 31–32). The identification was based on the appearance of the name Urtenu on two Ugaritic texts of very different genres: one was a letter written by a certain Azzi-iltu to his father [U]rtenu and to his mother, with a second letter on the back of the tablet addressed to his sister; the second was an incantation against serpents, scorpions, and sorcerers prepared specifically for Urtenu. It appeared to Bordreuil and Pardee that the presence in a house of two such personal documents—in addition to several Akkadian texts containing the same name—constituted an indication that the man named Urtenu had lived in that house towards the end of its existence. Further evidence in favor of the hypothesis has come from the tablets discovered in 1994, because at least four other letters addressed to Urtenu are among these texts. As long ago as 1982, Daniel Arnaud, one of the Akkadian epigraphers of the Mission, proposed that a man named Urtenu who appeared in Akkadian texts from the bunker site was a high official in the queen's household (*Syria* 59, p. 106). That the Urtenu of the Akkadian and Ugaritic texts was the same person is indicated by the fact that they both had a son named Azzi-iltu (RS 34.134, RS 92.2005) and the identification of Urtenu as a major figure in the queen's entourage is now supported by the fact that two of the letters discovered in 1994 (and written in Ugaritic) are addressed by the queen to Urtenu.

Some of the most important texts from this archive are:

- the only known royal funerary ritual in the Ugaritic language (RS 34.126);
- a letter from the king (of Ugarit) to his mother regarding the daughter of the king of Amurru (RS 34.124);
- the first example from Ugarit of an abecedarium written in the order of the South Arabian alphabet (RS 88.2215); the only previously known example of such a text was discovered in 1933 at Beth Shemesh in Palestine and was only recently identified as an abecedarium;

— the first true bilingual in Ugaritic and Akkadian: an administrative text written on one side in Ugaritic, on the other in Akkadian (RS 94.2519);

— two letters from Merneptah, king of Egypt in the late thirteenth century, in Akkadian (the first was reported on by Sylvie Lackenbacher in *Le pays d'Ougarit autour de 1200*, pp. 77–83 [complete reference above], the second has appeared among the 1994 texts).

A few extra words on two of the new texts: in 1992 a fragment of a previously unknown mythological text was discovered (RS 92.2016), which bore the colophon of the most famous of Ugaritic scribes, Ilimilku, responsible for several of the best known Ugaritic myths, texts that were unearthed decades ago. Someone by the name of Ilimilku also added his own letter to the back of one of the queen's letters to Urtenu mentioned above (RS 94.2406). Though it is impossible to be certain whether the letter writer was the same person as the scribe (the letter writer only identified himself by name, so none of the scribe's usual titles is present), that is certainly a possibility, because to be allowed to add his own letter to a royal letter he must necessarily have been an important personage, perhaps the queen's scribe at the moment when this letter was written. On the basis of these and other data, Bordreuil, Anne-Sophie Dalix (one of Bordreuil's students), and Pardee have begun to think that the famous scribe might have lived at the end of the thirteenth century, shortly before the fall of Ugarit, rather than early in that century as has previously been thought. If such were to prove to be the case, it would make a major contribution to the argument that most of the Ugaritic texts that have been preserved date from the last decades of the life of the city (1225–1185 B.C. in round figures), rather than being evenly spread over the two centuries in which the script was in use. Attempts that have been made to identify a late form of the Ugaritic language, in use shortly before the fall of the city, would thus be invalidated, because most of the Ugaritic we know would be late Ugaritic.

By the time this report appears, the 1996 campaign will have been completed; past successes give hope for new discoveries of similar importance.
