

Dennis Pardee

Since last reporting in these pages, **Dennis Pardee** has for the first time become a productive member of one of the Oriental Institute's own projects — his principal area of research being texts from Ras Shamra, a Syro-French excavation. The text of the inscribed stela dating to the eighth century BC discovered during the Oriental Institute expedition to Zincirli was entrusted to him for publication, and the article appeared in late 2009 (“A New Aramaic Inscription from Zincirli,” *Bulletin of the American Schools of Oriental Research* 356: 51–71). The text is important for multiple reasons (religious, historical, social, etc.). Pardee chose to concentrate on the linguistic, identifying the language as a previously unattested dialect of Aramaic situated typologically between the “Samalian” inscriptions left by two kings of the city at the nearby cult site of Gercin and the more-or-less standard Old Aramaic adopted by King Barrakib, plausibly for political reasons in the age of Assyrian hegemony.

An English version of the *Manuel d'ougaritique* (published in 2004 and co-authored with P. Bordreuil) also appeared late in 2009. It contains a brief introduction to the history and culture of ancient Ugarit, a *précis* of Ugaritic grammar, and, like the French version, fifty-five Ugaritic texts representing all the major literary genres, from mythological to school texts. The authors consider this selection of texts to be the principal novelty of the manual, because they are presented in the following forms: new color photographs, new hand copies, transliterations into Roman script, and translation with brief notes. All words represented in the texts are listed in a glossary. The editor, Eisenbrauns, decided to publish this *Manual of Ugaritic* simultaneously in

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print and electronic versions; the electronic version features hypertext passage from photograph to copy to transliteration/translation.

The discovery of the scribe Thabilu has also continued apace. In his last report, Pardee described the similarities between a text discovered in 1955 at Ras Shamra (RS 19.039) and one discovered forty-three years later at the nearby site of Ras Ibn Hani (RIH 98/02). The text from Ras Shamra bears what Pardee considers to be the “signature” of the scribe (literally, “of Thabilu”), while the identification of that scribe with the text from Ras Ibn Hani is based on palaeographic features. The claim for identity has appeared as “Deux tablettes ougaritiques de la main d’un même scribe, trouvées sur deux sites distincts: RS 19.039 et RIH 98/02” in the new journal coming out of Paris, *Semitica et Classica* 1 (2008): 9–38. While wrapping up loose ends in the study of the Ugaritic texts kept in the Louvre, Pardee moved from the larger and better-preserved mythological texts inscribed by the famous scribe Ilimilku to a series of smaller fragments in different hands. In the process, he became convinced that two of these fragments were also inscribed by Thabilu and that one of these also bears the scribe’s signature, an identification previously recognized only by the great Otto Eissfeldt. The reading on the tablet RS 5.229 is ambiguous because only the last sign of the name is well preserved, but the restoration is epigraphically unexceptional, and the scribal hand matches that of the two tablets studied earlier. The other fragment, RS 5.559, even more poorly preserved, bears a sign form absolutely typical of Thabilu and is thus added to this scribe’s *œuvre* for palaeographic reasons. The study of these two fragments will appear under the title “RS 5.229: Restitution d’une nouvelle signature du scribe *Thabilu*.” Several scholars had remarked the palaeographic similarity between some of these texts and one of the more famous texts — more famous because better preserved — the text that goes under the name of “The Marriage of Nikkal” according to which the West Semitic lunar god Yarihu takes in marriage the Mesopotamian lunar goddess Nikkal. This tablet bears the excavation number RS 5.194, having been discovered very near to the two fragmentary texts just discussed. The palaeographic similarities and the proximity of findspot led Pardee to undertake a full epigraphic study of RS 5.194, and he has concluded that Thabilu is in all likelihood the author of this text as well — though the text bears none of the forms most typical of that scribe, the general *ductus* of the hand is identical to Thabilu’s (this study is to appear under the title “RS 5.194 (CTA 24): Nouvelle étude épigraphique suivie de remarques philologiques et littéraires” in *Semitica et Classica* as a follow-up to the first article). The likely existence of three texts from the same area set down by the same scribe led former University of Chicago student Robert Hawley (now with the Centre National de la Recherche Scientifique in Paris) to study the three texts from that same area that are in the Akkadian language but Ugaritic script, and the one in Ugaritic script that bears texts in both Akkadian and Ugaritic. There are good palaeographic reasons to identify these texts also as from the hand of Thabilu, and the same might be said of some of the Hurrian texts in Ugaritic script from that area of the mound. Because the text from Ras Ibn Hani should date to some years before those signed by Ilimilku, it appears plausible that Thabilu was Ilimilku’s senior, by as much as half a century or as little as a decade in the time span 1250 to 1200 BC, depending on when the career of each began and ended. Thabilu’s work was typically set down on single tablets, while Ilimilku inscribed large multi-columned tablets that fit into series (at least six for the Baal story, three for Kirta, and three for Aqhat). All but one of Ilimilku’s tablets were discovered on the Acropolis of Ras Shamra, while the findspots of Thabilu’s works are more diverse: the neighboring site of Ras Ibn Hani, the royal palace at Ugarit, and the area on the west side of the Acropolis that was excavated during the fifth campaign in 1933. It appears likely that Thabilu inscribed texts in Ugaritic, Akkadian, and Hurrian, but all in Ugaritic script. It is debated whether the Ilimilku who signed several Ugaritic tablets

may be identified with one of the scribes by the same name known to have worked in Akkadian, but if the identification of Thabilu as the scribe of these multiple documents is correct, then this scribe was not only bilingual but also “biscrptal,” for his Akkadian works would all be in the syllabic cuneiform script that was at home in Mesopotamia. It would also appear that Thabilu’s interests were broader: he inscribed not only Akkadian and Hurrian religious texts, but also mythological, lyric, and divinatory texts in Ugaritic.