

Dennis Pardee

Since last reporting in these pages two years ago **Dennis Pardee** has completed his edition of the Ugaritic ritual texts, the final count being eighty-two, discovered in campaigns ranging from the first, in 1929, to the last, in 1992. In addition to the basics of an edition (photograph, hand copy, transliteration, translation, commentary) this publication will include extensive appendices and indices. Though the texts are so few and in such a generally dilapidated state that precise statistics are impossible, the appendices outline whatever data is extractable from the texts on divinities, offerings, and sacred times and places. The data do seem sufficient to show, for example, that livestock was offered much more extensively than precious metals (the ratio is roughly 25:1) and that the Ugaritians preferred eating their sacrifices over burning them totally to the gods (there the ratio is roughly 5:1). Of the livestock, nearly three males were offered for every female, plausibly in keeping with reproductive reality.

Included in the total are several texts on the fringes of ritual, having to do with extispicy and other forms of divination and with magic. In the former category are several clay models of sheep livers, as well as a lung model, bearing very brief inscriptions having to do with the circumstances of the consultation. For example: "(This liver is) for Agapharri when he was about to procure the lad of the Alashian." The case apparently is that of a Ugaritian who was about to procure a servant or a slave presently somehow under the control of a Cypriot (= Alashia). To buy or not to buy? A specialist in liver models from the ancient Near East, J.-W. Meyer, has studied the non-linguistic marks on the livers and is able in some cases to say whether the consultation gave a positive or a negative reply. In the present case, according to Meyer, the response was positive.

As an example of the incantatory *genre* may be cited the most recently discovered text, RS 1992.2014, a fifteen-line text dealing with sorcerers who would attack by means of snakes and scorpions. This text exhibits a feature previously unattested in Ugaritic incantations: the name of the beneficiary is indicated, a certain Urtenu. This datum has been particularly important, for along with this incantation was found a letter addressed to the same person. As in previous years Akkadian documents addressed to the very same person were discovered in the same location, it now seems clear that the archive in question belonged to Urtenu. All these texts come from a single place on the mound of Ras Shamra, one that has a rather checkered history. In the 1960s the Syrian army constructed a bunker on this spot and in 1973 the mound of earth cast aside from the bunker emplacement was sifted because a tablet had been found there by a local. That sifting resulted in the find of about a hundred tablets, all of which have recently been published (*Une bibliothèque au sud de la ville* [Paris, 1991], the Akkadian texts by D. Arnaud, B. André-Salvini, S. Lackenbacher, and F. Malbran-Labat, the Ugaritic texts by P. Bordreuil and D. Pardee). In 1986 the *Mission de Ras-Shamra* received permission to remove the bunker and excavate the area. In four campaigns since that date, another fifty or so tablets have been found, some in Akkadian, some in Ugaritic. Among them is even a text signed by the scribe Ilimilku, who inscribed several of the mythological texts discovered in the 1920s and 1930s that did much to make the fame of Ugarit. These texts are scheduled to be published

soon by the team mentioned above, with the help of André Caquot, professor at the Collège de France for the new mythological text.

In addition to his teaching responsibilities in the Department of Near Eastern Languages and Civilizations, Pardee taught at the École Pratique des Hautes Études, Section des Sciences Religieuses, in November 1992. The place seemed ideal to present some of the most typical and/or interesting of the ritual texts, for Charles Vrololeaud, one of the original decipherers of the Ugaritic language and Ugaritic epigrapher for the *Mission de Ras Shamra* for many years, had taught at the École Pratique, which is housed in the Sorbonne. Indeed, the very first text discovered, which bears the excavation number RS 1.1, and which had to have played an important role in the decipherment of the language, is one of the most important of the ritual texts. In addition to these classes, which were primarily philological in nature, Pardee gave a single lecture in the Section des Sciences Historiques of the École Pratique on “Ugaritic Science and Mesopotamia.” The “science” in question is that of the thirteenth century B.C., which was largely of a divinatory nature, but which did include a form of empiricism in the hippiatric texts (those that deal with the care of sick horses). The range of Ugaritic texts can be described as infinitesimal compared with the thousands of Akkadian documents: besides the hippiatric texts (four exemplars of a single text type), there is one text dealing with omens based on malformed animal fetuses, one of the same type dealing with human births, one lunar omen text (discovered at the neighboring site of Ras Ibn Hani), and, perhaps, one dream omen text and one text referring to an astronomical observation. Because of this relative dearth, and because the Ugaritic types usually correspond to well-known Akkadian types, it has been generally assumed that Ugaritic “science” was borrowed directly from Mesopotamia and that the texts were translated from Akkadian. Without denying this claim, Pardee observed that (1) the Ugaritic versions are written in the purest Ugaritic, with virtually no Akkadian loan-words, (2) in no case has an Akkadian original been found for any of the Ugaritic versions, and (3) the hippiatric texts as a separate sub-*genre* may be original at Ugarit (the best-attested examples of Akkadian hippiatric texts are embedded in longer texts dealing with human medicine). He concluded that the Ugaritic scientific tradition must at the very least go back several centuries and that it may go back to the high Amorite period (early second millennium) when questions of “origin,” east or west, may not have been so sharply defined as in later centuries.

A find from towards the end of that high Amorite period inspired a joint article that Pardee wrote with his colleague P. Bordreuil. Among the texts from Mari is one in which the weather god of Aleppo (^dIM *bēl Ḥalab*) claims through a “prophet” to have given to the king of Mari “the arms with which he did battle against the Sea.” J.-M. Durand published this text in the most recent issue of the annual *MARI* with an accompanying study of the Ugaritic texts dealing with Baal’s battle with the Sea (*Yammu*) by Bordreuil and Pardee. Though the Akkadian text is extremely brief and allusive, it does appear to establish the existence already in the eighteenth century B.C. of the Baal-Sea myth that was previously known only from Ilimilku’s version, inscribed some four hundred years later in the city of Ugarit. Allusions in the Hebrew Bible to the same myth have been ferreted out over the years by various scholars.

In June 1993 Pardee spent two weeks in Damascus doing the last collations of the ritual tablets, some remaining work on copying the Ugaritic texts from recent campaigns, and began doing the copies for his next major project, the Ugaritic epistolary texts.
