

Dennis Pardee

Since last reporting in these pages — yes, it has been a while — **Dennis Pardee**'s edition of the Ugaritic ritual texts has appeared in two fascicles with a total of 1,307 pages (*Les textes rituels* [Ras Shamra-Ougarit 12; Paris: Éditions Recherche sur les Civilisations, 2000]) as has a much briefer overview intended for non-specialists (*Ritual and Cult at Ugarit* [Writings from the Ancient World Series 10; Atlanta: Society of Biblical Literature, 2002]).

The excavation at Ras-Shamra (ancient Ugarit) of a building that has come to be known as the House of Urtenou was completed in 2002 and it has proven to be the richest source of inscribed tablets from that site after the Royal Palace, excavated in the middle of the last century. Some six hundred tablets and fragments were discovered in this house, of which about a fifth were in Ugaritic, the local language, the rest for the most part in Akkadian. The tablets from 1986 to 1992 were published in 2001 (*Études ougaritiques. I. Travaux 1985–1995* [Ras Shamra-Ougarit 14; Paris: Éditions Recherche sur les Civilisations]); Pardee with his French colleague Pierre Bordreuil signed the edition of twenty-one texts while another, a mythological fragment, appeared under the names of A. Caquot and A.-S. Dalix. Another eighty-seven texts were unearthed in the excavations of 1994–2002; the manuscript of their edition, again signed by Bordreuil and Pardee, with the collaboration of Robert Hawley for the epistolary texts, has been submitted for publication.

Bordreuil and Pardee have also been responsible for a *Manuel d'ougaritique* (Paris: Geuthner) that appeared in 2004; an English edition is virtually complete. Both the French and the English editions are intended as a general introduction to the language, literature, and epigraphy of the Ugaritic alphabetic texts. They include a selection of fifty-five texts, covering all the major literary genres attested at Ugarit, from mythological texts to scribal exercises, and each text appears in several forms: transliteration, translation, vocalized version, hand copy, and high-resolution photograph (in the French edition, the copies were provided in both printed and electronic form, the photographs in electronic form alone). The grammar is succinct and the commentary on the texts is limited to a few brief notes, hence only those with a background in Semitics can be expected to learn Ugaritic from it without the aid of a tutor.

Pardee has also been drafted into the project of editing the Ugaritic texts discovered at the neighboring site of Ras Ibn Hani between 1977 and 2002; preliminary editions by P. Bordreuil and A. Caquot have appeared of some of these, but a comprehensive edition including copies and photographs is needed. Over one hundred and fifty Ugaritic tablets and fragments were discovered at this site, mostly of an administrative nature, including several letters, though with some interesting religious texts as well. Presently, all the texts have been copied and photographed and the time-consuming job of preparing the copies for publication is advancing well. The commentary is about one-third complete; the hope is to have the project wrapped up within two years at the most.

Producing the *Manuel* required Pardee to do new copies of several of the mythological texts excavated for the most part during the first years of the excavation of Ras Shamra (1929–1939) and he decided to follow up on this partial coverage by doing complete copies of all three of the major mythological “cycles” that go by the names of their principal protagonists, Baal (six tablets), Kirta (three tablets), and Aqhat (also three tablets). His work on tablets from earlier excavations in the museums of the Louvre, Damascus, and Aleppo has thus focused primarily on these texts (the project is nearing completion) and on the previously inaugurated project of re-editing the Ugaritic administrative texts. A series of preliminary articles in each of these areas has appeared and more are in press or in preparation.

One of the most interesting results of the re-copying of the mythological texts has been the joining of two fragments of the Baal cycle. The problem has been that all the tablets of the

cycle are more or less fragmentary and their arrangement according to the original narratological sequence has thus been a matter of much discussion over the past eighty years. Pardee has established that a small fragment (RS 3.364) of which the place in the Baal stories was uncertain once belonged to the tablet that the majority of scholars have identified as the third of the principal tablets of the six-tablet cycle. What might appear superficially to be a minor join has in fact far-reaching implications because it confirms the placement of the tablet in question before the tablet conventionally identified as the fourth and thus resolves a long-standing controversy on this point. Though the new join does not fill the gap between the third and fourth tablets (the small fragment fits at the beginning of the last column of the text on the larger fragment), the presence in the new composite text of a few rare terms that re-appear near the beginning of the text on the fourth tablet leave no real doubt as to the proper sequencing of these tablets. The full details of this join will appear in an article that has been submitted to a festschrift in honor of one of our former Oriental Institute colleagues.

The study of the Ugaritic texts from Ras Ibn Hani has led to another striking discovery. One of the most interesting texts from that site is a new song to the goddess Astarte (*‘Attartu* in Ugaritic). A preliminary presentation of the text, RIH 98/02, will appear in the acts of a conference celebrating the 75th anniversary of the discovery of Ugarit (*Ugarit at Seventy-Five*, to be published by Eisenbrauns). Shortly after completing the copy and preliminary analysis of this tablet, Pardee, while working in the museum in Damascus, happened across a tablet excavated in 1955 at Ras Shamra (RS 19.039) and was struck by the physical similarity between the two tablets, both exhibiting an extreme “cushion” form, very thick in the middle and rounded at the edges and the corners. It was too late in that year’s program to take up the detailed study of RS 19.039, but he returned to it in 2006 and is currently in the process of writing up his report comparing the two tablets. A series of epigraphic and paleographic features leave little doubt that the two tablets, both of which deal with the goddess Astarte, were the work of one and the same scribe — the first clear example of texts from the hand of a single scribe occurring at both sites. This case is decided by an important number of rarely attested characteristics shared by the two tablets; it may be hoped that future paleographic research will make it possible for such identifications to be established on the basis of a greater number of less striking points of similarity.
