
Since last reporting in these pages, **Dennis Pardee** has been concentrating on the Ugaritic ritual texts. In 1988 he published a re-edition of nine texts characterized by a combination of mythological and practical aspects (*Les textes para-mythologiques de la 24^e campagne (1961)*, Ras Shamra Ougarit IV, Paris). There are approximately eighty texts, many fragmentary, of a more prosaic and practical nature. Most give an account of the offerings presented during a given cultic cycle, which range from a single day to portions of two months. They are of a very laconic nature, including the date of the offering (e.g., on the new moon), the type of offering (e.g., burnt offering), the content (e.g., a sheep), the number offered if more than one, and the deity receiving the offering. Not usually included is the identity of the offerer, relatively rarely is the sanctuary identified in which the offering took place, and nothing is ever said about the motivation of the offerer nor about the function of the offering. Preliminary versions of several of these texts have now been presented in the following forums: (1) RS 1.001 at the annual meeting of the Society of Biblical Literature in 1988, (2) RS 1.002 for the same group in 1989 and to appear in print in the Wolf Leslau *Festschrift*, (3) RS 1.003 in a seminar on translating the Ugaritic texts at the annual meeting of

the Society of Biblical Literature in 1990, (4) RS 1.005 in Leuven (Belgium) at a conference on "Ritual and Sacrifice in the Ancient Near East" and to be published in the acts of the conference. Several other texts have been studied in preliminary publications, some yet to appear.

This edition is part of a program fostered by the official excavators of the site of Ras Shamra, *La Mission Archéologique de Ras Shamra - Ougarit*, the intent of which is to republish all of the Ugaritic texts by broad categories of literary genre. The format is the same as that adopted for the *Textes para-mythologiques*: photograph, hand copy, epigraphic comments, and commentary, with an index/concordance of Ugaritic words. Collaborators are Pierre Bordreuil, epigrapher of the *Mission de Ras Shamra*, and Donna Freilich, a Ph.D. candidate in the Department of Near Eastern Languages and Civilizations, who under a grant from the National Endowment of the Humanities prepared initial studies of these texts as well as a card-file concordance of all words attested in them. An attempt is being made to include as broad a bibliographical coverage as possible. This involves chasing down, including, then verifying a great number of references. In this work Pardee is assisted by Gary Alan Long, also a Ph.D. candidate in the Department of Near Eastern Languages and Civilizations.

In joint authorship with Pierre Bordreuil, Pardee has published this year a brief two-line inscription in a previously unattested West Semitic dialect, dating palaeographically to ca. 500 B.C.: "Le papyrus du *marzeah*," *Semitica* 38 (*Hommages à Maurice Szymer* I; 1990), pp. 49-68. They interpreted the text as follows: "Thus have said (the) gods to Sara: For you the *marzeah*, the grindstones, and the house; Yisha must stay away (= Yisha must renounce his rights to them), and Milka is the guarantor (lit. the third [party])." Despite resemblances with well-known feminine names, all three names here are probably masculine. The text has already been a source of some controversy because its authenticity cannot be ascertained by physical analysis: Bordreuil and Pardee had at their disposal only photographs, the owner of the papyrus refusing to allow them access to the original. The document was first brought to Pardee's attention by Helene Kantor, then professor of archaeology in the Oriental Institute, and Pardee thereafter dealt with an intermediary in obtaining the photographs and measurements necessary for study and publication. In their article the authors give their reasons for believing the text to be authentic, while leaving the question open until physical analysis can decide the question. In a world of research where the scholars outnumber the inscriptions they study, this text, if authentic, is rather sensational, both by its content and by its form. The most sensational item under the heading content is the mention of a *marzeah*. This is a religio-social institution known from the Ugaritic texts (1400 B.C.) down to Semitic inscriptions of the Christian era. Its precise form and function are hotly debated, though the one constant at all periods is the consumption of wine at its meetings. The term can denote both the members as a group, or the place of meeting. It is the latter meaning that occurs in the papyrus, a meaning already clear from a Ugaritic contract whereby a party places a room of his house at the disposal of a *marzeah*-group of the city. On the level of broader interpretation, there is the whole religio-legal aspect of a decision regarding property rights

coming from a deity or group of deities (the form is *'lhn* 'gods'). As for the question of form, neither the script nor the language of the text is precisely like that of any previously known West Semitic language/dialect. The authors have concluded that the dialect is closely related to Moabite, but the gaps in our knowledge of the dialects of Transjordan in the first millennium B.C. are so great that this tentative conclusion may well be modified in time.
