Ugarit: A Second-Millennium Kingdom on the Mediterranean Coast

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PHYSICAL ENVIRONMENT

If one draws a line straight east from the north-eastern tip of the island of Cyprus, it touches the Syrian coast at a point north of the city of Latakia. Approximately here one finds a large tell, measuring about 2,000 by 2,000 feet (600 by 600 meters), with the (Arabic) name Ras Shamra, "Fennel Mound." The tell lies a bit off the coast, about half a mile (almost one kilometer) to the east of a bay with the name Minat al-Bayda, "The White Harbor," so called after the white cliffs that line it. As the name indicates, it once served as a natural harbor, and remains of houses and installations have been found on the east side of the bay. It was here that the first archaeological discovery was made. In 1928 a farmer hit a slab of a big tomb and, after a brief survey by the Beirut Museum staff, the French excavator Claude Schaeffer started his work in 1929. Already during the first season it became apparent that the large tell east of the harbor contained the remains of an important city, the name of which remained to be uncovered. It took only a few years before it became clear that this city was to be identified with Ugarit, a name already familiar from the contemporary Amarna correspondence (see plan in "Art and Architecture in Canaan and Ancient Israel" in Part 10, Vol. IV.)

The city's location proved to be very profitable for its economy. It was surrounded by two small streams, which played a role in the city's defense and which provided drinking water. To the west was the harbor so important for the trade that brought the city wealth. To the east was a pass in the north–south mountain range through which the Syrian hinterland could easily be reached. Important also was the north–south route between Anatolia and Palestine/Egypt. Here, too, Ugarit played an important role both on land and at sea, thereby securing for itself a sizable profit in the lively trade in the Levant.

To the north of the city lay another large mountain range. The highest point measures approximately 1,800 meters (about 6,000 feet) and is called Jebel al-Aqra. Its name in antiquity was Sapanu, and according to the texts found at Ugarit the mountain played an important role in the local religion.

BRIEF DESCRIPTION OF THE CITY

During the more than sixty years of excavations at Ras Shamra, several soundings have been carried out. In some of these soundings virgin soil

THE SYRIAN COAST
IN THE
LATE BRONZE AGE
15th–12th Centuries BCE
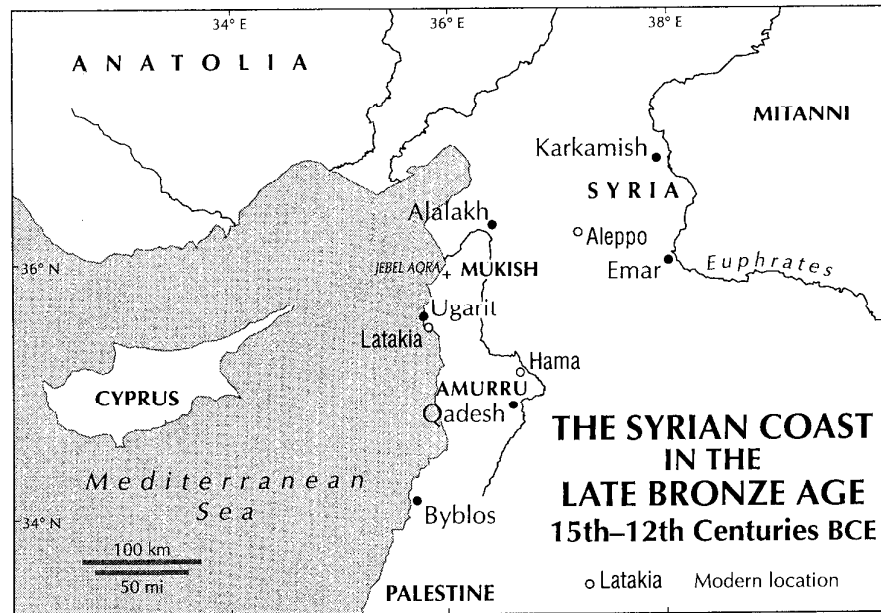
was reached. The remains that were uncovered in the lowest levels of the city show that the first settlers must have built their houses here about 6500 BCE, at a time before pottery was introduced. Ugarit is thus one of the oldest cities in the ancient Near East and, since its habitation lasted more or less unbroken until about 1200 BCE, it is also a city with one of the longest habitation records.

From the earliest levels to the last phase of the Late Bronze Age we have no written records from Ugarit. From documents found at Mari (modern Tell Hariri) on the Euphrates we know that the city had the same name in the Middle Bronze Age (2000–1600); for the period preceding this era the indications are much less clear. The only area that was continuously built upon during this long period of habitation was the "Acropolis" on the northeast of the tell. Unlike, for example, classical Athens where the Acropolis was built on a natural mound, the elevation of this area had simply risen faster than its surroundings because of continuous habitation, with new structures built on the flattened remains of older ones. The Middle Bronze Age is closely linked with the Late Bronze Age, for no clear break in cultural traditions of the area can be discerned. The local dynasty traced its origin to the beginning of the Middle Bronze Age, and

the two important temples on the Acropolis were probably already in use at that time. Also, tombs inside private houses show by their contents that many of them had been used during most of the second millennium.

The Late Bronze Age city, especially its final phase, will be the main subject of this description for two reasons. First, it is the most extensively excavated level, being the top level in almost every part of the tell. Second, written records, our most important source of information for Ugaritic society, were found only at this level.
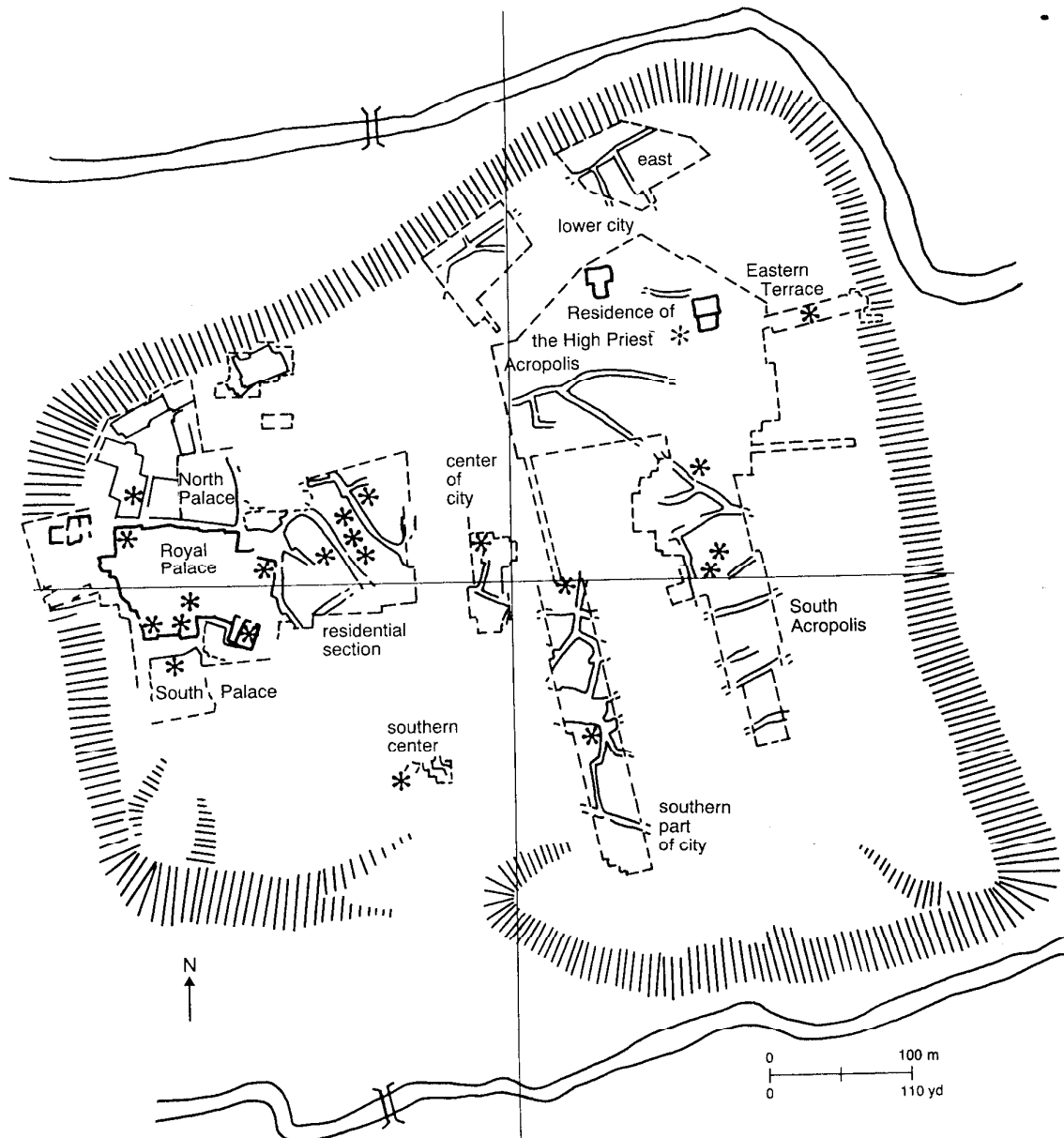
A brief description should facilitate the orientation of the reader (see plan). Tell Ras Shamra is roughly trapezoid in form. Nearing the end of the twentieth century, approximately 30 percent of the city had been excavated, and we can distinguish two important neighborhoods. The first one is on the western half of the tell and contains most of the public buildings in Ugarit, three royal residences, including the big palace, and houses of high officials. The second one lies on the so-called Acropolis and comprises the important temples of Baal and of his father Dagan (biblical Dagon), the residence of the high priest, and, more to the south, another building whose inhabitant probably had a cultic function.

Apart from these two important concentra-

tions, we find numerous private houses in other parts of the city. Here lived mainly artisans like gold- and silversmiths, but also officials, one of whom, at least, had a school where future scribes were trained.

UGARIT AS TRADE CENTER

The city's favorable location made it one of the most important trade centers of the ancient Near East. As indicated above, Ugarit was on the

east
lower city
Eastern Terrace
Residence of the High Priest
Acropolis
center of city
North Palace
Royal Palace
residential section
South Palace
South Acropolis
southern center
southern part of city
N

0   100 m
0   110 yd

Plan of Tell Ras Shamra near Latakia, showing the excavated areas (1929–1989) and the principal sites where inscriptions were discovered. The site was discovered by a farmer in 1928. ADAPTED FROM P. BORDREUIL AND D. PARDEE, *LA TROUVAILLE ÉPIGRAPHIQUE DE L'OUGARIT* (1989)

crossroads of an east–west (Cyprus–Syria) and a north–south (Egypt–Anatolia) route. Numerous references in texts and material finds from the tell bear witness to this trade. The texts show that ships sailed to Cyprus, Cilicia, the coast of the Levant as far as Egypt (Arvad, Byblos, Tyre, Jaffa, and Ashdod are mentioned), and some ships even went to Crete. (See also "Island Cultures" in Part 6, Vol. III.) The comprehensive terminology that was used for various types of ships testifies to the importance of seafaring for Ugarit. Also mentioned are caravans that traveled to Anatolia in the north and Egypt in the south. Other texts provide references to cities in Syria, for example Karkamish (Carchemish) and Emar (modern Tell Meskene) on the Euphrates. That trade did not always proceed undisturbed is shown by the many legal texts in which the king of Karkamish (who exercised power over Syria) tried to satisfy damage claims filed by merchants robbed en route or by the families of merchants killed during an attack by highwaymen. For example, in one text the king issues a demand after such an incident: "Your three robbers are not in Araniya. Why are they not handed over to me? Just as my servants have handed over a robber to the inhabitants of Araniya, you too, who know about it, must hand over these robbers." (See "Karkamish and Karatepe" later in this volume.)

The material culture of Ugarit is equally expressive. Numerous pieces of pottery have come to light, much of it was imported from, for example, Cyprus. Also Mycenaean pottery, very prestigious in this period, was found in great numbers. Other products obtained by trade were metals like copper (from Cyprus) and tin (probably from Iran), precious stones, glass, and more. Of local make and exported was purple, for which we know the local terminology.

The trade over sea was, of course, not without dangers, and from the texts we learn of accidents in which ships were wrecked. Many stone anchors dedicated to the god Baal and found near his temple bear witness to seamen's gratitude after a safe homecoming. Agents of Ugarit were probably stationed in foreign ports, just as agents from Cyprus, for example, were stationed in Ugarit. Several tablets with a script familiar from Cyprus were uncovered in the city. That Egyptians, Hittites, and Hurrians (the last category could be native; see below) were also living in Ugarit is shown by inscribed objects and tablets in their respective languages.

THE CITY'S INHABITANTS

To estimate how many people lived in Ugarit, one could make a count of the number of houses excavated and, by estimation, as yet unexcavated. The number of houses must have been close to 1,000. If one assumes, as was done by the historian Mario Liverani, that in each house we would find approximately six to eight residents, the total number must have been between 6,000 and 8,000 for the whole city on the tell. From the palace administration we know of about 150 towns and villages belonging to the territory of Ugarit. Using information from Alalakh (modern Tell Atchana), where we have more data, Liverani estimates that the average number of inhabitants in these towns was about 150. Thus, we would have had 20,000 to 25,000 people in the countryside and a total of between 25,000 and 35,000 for the whole city-state, 25 percent of whom lived inside the city. Compare with these figures the modern province of Latakia (roughly the size of Ugarit's territory), in which at the time of the 1967 census 400,000 people lived, of which less than 25 percent (90,000) lived in Latakia itself.

The texts provide information about the cultural background of Ugarit's inhabitants, their names, and their language. The language indigenous to Ugarit was a branch of West Semitic cognate to the Hebrew of the Bible; we call it Ugaritic. It used an alphabet of thirty signs and, like the Mesopotamian cuneiform script, it was written with a reed stylus on clay (see below and discussion in "Semitic Languages" in Part 9, Vol. IV). Most persons mentioned in the texts bear West Semitic (Ugaritic) names.

But a sizable portion of the population clearly belongs, at least judging from the names, to another language group, the Hurrians. Hurrian was spoken and written in a large area in northern Mesopotamia, especially in the kingdom of Mitanni. (See "The Kingdom of Mitanni in Second-Millennium Upper Mesopotamia" in Part 5, Vol. II.) Hurrian names are also very prominent in

the city of Alalakh, not far to the north of Ugarit. It is unclear, however, whether persons with Hurrian personal names can always be assumed to have spoken the Hurrian language. This was probably not the case. Hurrian and Ugaritic names occurred side by side even in the same family, and Hurrian was never used in everyday records. It only occurs in a few letters written outside the city and a number of cultic texts. All one can say is that Hurrian was certainly understood in Ugarit. How many people spoke it as their first language remains obscure. Probably, names in that age suffered frequently the same fate as those carried by us: in many cases their meaning had become obscure, and the choice of a name was not always dictated by the first language of the parents.

RELATIONS WITH FOREIGN POWERS

The importance of Ugarit on the international political level is evident from the many documents dealing with international relations found in one of the palace archives. Ugarit's strength was, as we have seen, its trade and the wealth acquired from it. In comparison, its military capacity was negligible and sometimes, therefore, the Hittite overlord demanded payment in lieu of the commitment of troops.

Until the last phase of the Late Bronze Age (about 1330), Ugarit belonged to the Egyptian sphere of influence, as demonstrated by a few letters from early Ugaritic kings found in Akhenaten's palace at al-Amarna (Akhetaten). Then a shift in political balance took place that brought Ugarit into the Hittite camp. The Hittite presence in Syria begins with the raids of the Hittite king Shuppiluliuma I. The king who was responsible for the change in political allegiance was Niqmaddu II. At an early stage of his campaign, the Hittite king offered him vassalage and he readily accepted. When thereupon Ugarit was threatened by its neighbors Mukish and Nukhasshe, the Hittites were only too happy to come to the rescue, and the relationship was sealed with a formal treaty. Thereby the extent of the city-state was established; also the size of the tribute to be paid was set. The treaty held until

Niqmaddu's death, when a general revolt broke out in Syria. When the revolt was finally quelled by Shuppiluliuma's son Murshili (Mursilis) II, he placed Niqmepa, a son of Niqmaddu, on the throne. The ruling king, Arkhalba, also a son of Niqmaddu, was deposed by the Hittite king. A new treaty was drawn up, which in a slightly different form held until the end of Ugarit's existence. During this period the kings of Karkamish, descendants of Shuppiluliuma himself, exercised power over the whole of Syria. The Hittite king usually stepped in when the integrity of the empire was threatened or when there were problems with local dynasties.

To illustrate the last point, the case of the divorce of King Ammishtamru II, grandson of Niqmaddu, may be mentioned. This episode is set in the middle of the thirteenth century, and it gives us a rare insight into the private affairs of a local dynast. King Ammishtamru was married to the sister of another Syrian ruler, Shaushgamuwa of Amurru. Many such marriages took place in the ancient Near East, both between local rulers and between the Hittite king's daughters and his vassals. This way strong ties were built between local dynasts and their overlord. At a certain moment Ammishtamru's wife commited what is called a "grave sin." The nature of this sin remains obscure, unfortunately. The woman was then expelled and sent back to her own country and placed in the custody of her brother(s). Nevertheless, the son she bore to Ammishtamru could still be his successor if he did not follow his mother (although the eventual successor, Ibiranu, was probably another son). It was further stipulated that she should take with her everything she brought to Ugarit but that she was to leave behind everything she had acquired there. Ammishtamru promised to raise no further claims against her. After some time, for reasons unknown to us, Ammishtamru decided that the treatment he gave her was not severe enough. He demanded that the woman be brought back to him and even sent troops to collect her. After some pressure (probably by the Hittite king), the king of Amurru gave in and, after the woman had been brought back to Ugarit, Ammishtamru handed her over to be executed. The affair was finally sealed by a verdict of the Hittite king Tudkhaliya IV. Two letters from Shaushgamuwa to Ammishtamru,

presented here in chronological order, illustrate this process. The first letter was written some time after the deposed queen had been sent back to Amurru:

> And concerning the case of your wife, this woman has sinned against you in the past and has even said nasty things against me, and on your behalf I have written to the king of Karkamish. I brought that woman here and did not send her again over there but placed her with her brothers.

The second letter was written just before she was about to be returned to Ugarit for her final punishment:

> The daughter of the Great Lady [mother or step-mother of Shaushgamuwa], your wife, who committed such a grave sin against you, how much longer do I still have to guard that wrongdoer? Take the daughter of the Great Lady, that wrongdoer, and do with her as you please. If you want, kill her or throw her into the sea. Do with the daughter of the Great Lady as you see fit.

THE CITY ADMINISTRATION

The city was administered by a corps of officials headed by the king. The king himself ruled as an absolute monarch over his state; however, his jurisdiction over foreign policy was seriously curtailed by the treaty imposed on him by the Hittites. He was, for example, unable to choose his allies. In case of war his resources—either troops, ships, or funds, or a combination of these—were at the disposal of the Hittite king.

The Kings of Ugarit

- Ammishtamru I (?–?)
- Niqmaddu II (?–1315)
- Arkhalba (1315–1313)
- Niqmepa (1313–ca.1263)
- Ammishtamru II (ca.1263–ca.1220)
- Ibirānu (ca.1220–ca.1210)
- Niqmaddu III (ca.1210–ca.1195)
- Ammurapi (ca.1195–ca.1175)

For the dates, see van Soldt, *Studies in the Akkadian of Ugarit*, chapter 1.

Like his subordinates the king could have more than one wife. The most important one was always the mother of the crown prince. The title "queen" could be carried by only one woman and, since wives usually survived their husband-kings, it was normally the mother of the king who bore this title. The wife of the ruling monarch was simply called "wife," and some royal spouses never acquired the title "queen." The same practice is found at the Hittite court. Queen mothers could become very powerful and, as in Hittite history (Pudukhepa), a few were very prominent, for example, Akhatmilku and Tharyelli. We possess a few letters from the king to his mother, the queen, which he wrote when he was on a diplomatic mission.

The king apparently chose his successor from among his sons. This successor acquired a special title, in Ugaritic *uṯriyannu,* "crown prince." Nevertheless, the king's choice had to be submitted for approval to the Hittite king, and in one case the candidate was rejected. The crown prince commanded his own regiment (of which the members are called *mur'u*), a prerogative only shared by the king himself and the city's prefect. We are not very well informed about the other members of the royal family, brothers, sisters, uncles, aunts, and so on of the king. They sometimes figure in contracts in which they acquired real estate. Sometimes, as in the case of the brothers of Niqmaddu's grandson Ammishtamru, they were involved in activities against the king and were subsequently expelled from the country.

After the king the most important figure was the prefect, *sākinu* in Ugaritic. From what we can gather from the texts, it is clear that he served as the king's right hand and was responsible for the day-to-day management of the city-state. In that capacity he wrote letters to prefects of other cities and was involved in political, juridical, and economic affairs. His position is probably comparable to that of the vizier at the court of the caliph. In one instance (King Ammurapi) the Hittite king addresses the prefect rather than his king "since he is still young and inexperienced."

Directly under the prefect we find the overseers of the various sectors of administration. Thus, there was a temple overseer, an overseer of the harbor, and every "guild" had its own foreman. We encounter an overseer of the sea-

men, a high priest, an overseer of the artisans, and others. The towns and villages were administered by a village overseer or prefect, serving as mayor. The population itself was divided into two main groups, the "men of the king" and the free citizens, groups that will be discussed below.

Important, if not indispensable for the administration of the city, were the people who wrote the records, namely, the scribes. These scribes worked in one of the many archives which have been unearthed over the past sixty years. They were probably not attached for their whole life to one particular archive. In some cases we find one scribe's name on tablets from different archives. The scribes and their training are discussed below.

The five archives in the palace were organized roughly according to subject matter. Three of them were almost purely administrative in character. There are lists of persons who either received rations or paid taxes, lists of field owners, and so on. These lists are usually quite laconic; frequently we do not even know what kind of administrative transaction is meant. Sometimes we find captions like "list," "balance," "provisions," "food rations," followed by the persons to whom they apply. The other two archives contained documents of an entirely different nature. The so-called central archive was the storage place for all texts that regulated the transfer of land inside the city-state (see below). The so-called southern archive contained all documents pertaining to Ugarit's relations with foreign powers. There we find the treaties with the Hittite kings and the many arbitrations of the king of Carchemish in inter-Syrian disputes.

The organization of an archive was simple and efficient (see also "Archives and Libraries" in Part 9, Vol. IV.) It was located in a special wing of the palace and comprised a number of rooms, one of which was the secretariat. The latter is sometimes identifiable by the material remains. In a few cases bronze styli, with which the script was impressed on the clay were retrieved. The secretariat was normally located on the ground floor next to a court, and the scribes could work either in this room or in the adjacent court. Because light was necessary to write the tablets, scribes probably worked normally in the court. Next to the secretariat there usually was a stair-

case that gave access to an upper floor, where texts could be filed. The best example of this organization is the already-mentioned central archive. On the ground floor, in a room next to a large court, a few legal texts were found that were dated to a relatively late king. A few meters up, however, the soil contained a big cluster of texts with names of kings older than the ones on the ground. Most probably, these texts had fallen from the upper story where they had been filed away for future reference.

An instructive example of how the administration worked is provided by a large tablet that stipulates who should pay how much of the tribute imposed by the Hittite king. As mentioned above, the Hittites imposed a tribute on their vassals, and Ugarit was no exception. This tribute normally consisted of gold, silver, and purple-dyed cloth. The treaties stipulate exactly who gets what, and beneficiaries include members of the Hittite royal family and high officials. In order to make this text usable for the native administrators, the scribes first translated the treaty into Ugaritic. As was to be expected, this translation was not kept with the original (Akkadian) text in the southern archive, but moved to one of the local administrative archives, in this case the western archive. As a second step a list was made of all taxable entities in the Ugaritic kingdom, the guilds and the towns. In a long list written in Ugaritic we find first all the towns and villages and then the guilds, each followed by the amount of silver to be paid. The heading of the text reads "Document concerning the tribute of His Majesty (the Hittite king)." The numbers differ for each entry. Apparently, the towns and guilds were taxed according to a certain scale, the principle of which still eludes us. (For further discussion see "Royal Ideology and State Administration in Hittite Anatolia" in Part 4, Vol. I.)

UGARITIC SOCIETY

The structure of Ugarit's society seems to have been—at least according to the texts—a rather simple one. The texts allow us to distinguish two main groups: (1) the people employed by the palace ("people of the king") and (2) the

free citizens ("sons of Ugarit"). This bipartite division is apparent everywhere in the palace administration, which always distinguished between the guilds in the service of the palace on the one hand, and the free citizens in the towns and villages on the other. The guilds were made up of specialized craftsmen like gold- and silversmiths, scribes, soldiers, priests, house builders, boat makers, cartwrights, or bow makers, and were mainly concentrated in the city of Ugarit itself. The population in the towns and villages apparently represented the nonspecialized segment of society; most of them worked as farmers and herders. The "people of the king" were economically dependent on the palace, which provided them with rations or land or both. The free citizens were not dependent in this respect.

There was no hierarchical order between these two groups. Some kind of order probably did exist inside each group. Especially among the "people of the king" a hierarchical system seems to have been operative. For almost every guild there were pupils, craftsmen, and overseers. Among the military existed a system of ranks. Knowledge was handed down to pupils, as in more modern times. One of these "guilds," the scribes, is discussed in more detail below.

Regarding the free citizens our information is much more scanty. The position of a father within a family was probably very strong. He could have more than one wife, and these wives had different legal status in case of inheritance by their respective children. In many cases a second or third wife was probably a former slave girl, a practice also encountered, for example, in the Hebrew Bible (Hagar). A reason for having a second wife could be childlessness of the first wife, a problem that could also be solved by adoption.

In principle, no more than two generations lived in one house. As soon as a son got married he moved elsewhere. An earlier tribal organization had apparently disappeared from everyday life and what remained was probably just a historical vestige which, for example, is reflected in a prayer to the royal ancestors.

The villages were the producers of foodstuffs and supported the palace economy on which the king and his "people" depended. Different forms of taxation were used to acquire the necessary materials. For agricultural products a system of tithing was used, but taxes were sometimes also paid in cash, for example, tax levied on pasturing. Members of the village population were recruited for service in the Ugaritic army or as workmen. The palace provided "services" such as military protection and possibly (limited) irrigation works.

Among these "services" one could also include the many cultic duties performed by the king. He took part in many rituals, which usually contained prescriptions for a period of a month and stipulated what had to be done on a particular day. The queen also took part in these rituals and ceremonies, as is clear from remarks in administrative lists, for example, "Wine used for the queen's offering on the field that was sowed."

In the texts we find two areas in which agriculture and herding were possible. These areas are called the "dry fields" *(eqlāt ṣa'i)* and the "fields with springs" *(eqlāt napkīma)*. The first could not be irrigated; the second could. Irrigation, however, was not indispensable; the climate in the coastal plain is sufficiently humid to do without it. The main difference lies in the staples that were grown in these two areas. Agriculture and the cultivation of olives was done on the dry fields, whereas vegetables were grown on the fields with springs. A few rivers supplied additional water. The most important ones were the Nakhra(ya), which ran along the city, and the Raḥbanu, probably to be identified with the Nahr al-Kabir.

The population in the countryside was concentrated in villages and farms. In the texts we regularly find the following description: "Land of A, with its stronghold, its vineyard, its olive grove, with everything that belongs to it, in X." The stronghold probably was a building that served as a residence or a storage facility. In short, the texts refer to large tracts of land on which various foodstuffs were grown and which included a number of buildings and installations for the processing of various products. Similar farms were regularly handed over by the king to some of his officials, sometimes after the previous owner had died without an heir. In other cases a whole village was donated with the obligation for the beneficiary to rebuild and repopulate. Apparently, the palace sometimes took action when villages became depopulated. The

records that contain these transactions were kept in the central palace archive and could be checked for verification.

THE SCRIBES OF UGARIT

This section will discuss the "guild" best known to historians, that of the scribes. The reason that they are better known than members of other professions is simply that they wrote the texts and signed them with their names and profession. The choice to become a scribe—as with most of the other professions—was generally not made by the student. Usually a profession stayed within one family for a long time, and the scribe's was no exception. In a good many cases a scribe would write his name at the end of a text and add the name of his father. The father, in turn, was usually known as a scribe during an earlier generation (under a previous king). Of course, outsiders—particularly sons of (high) officials—could probably also become scribes, but who exactly were eligible and who were not we do not know. A scribe could have functions other than just his professional duties, and in some cases we find that a scribe of advanced age could serve in a diplomatic mission. Moreover, some persons combined different professions; for example, the scribe Attenu not only had his own school, but also served as high priest and called himself a diviner. (See "The Scribes and Scholars of Ancient Mesopotamia" in Part 9, Vol. IV.)

The training of student scribes took many years. Their education took place not in the royal palace but with private teachers all over the city. We now know of at least four such schools in which students wrote practice texts that they signed with their names and the names of their teachers. As already stated, these teachers could combine their tutorship with other activities.

The curriculum used to train scribes vastly differed according to language and script. As said earlier, the language spoken by the inhabitants of Ugarit was a West Semitic dialect for which an alphabet was used. (For further discussion see "Semitic Languages" in Part 9, Vol. IV.) For most of their documents, however, the scribes used not their own language and script

but the more prestigious Akkadian, which served as the international language during this period. Ugaritic and Akkadian are both Semitic languages, and they share many words and grammatical forms. Unlike Ugaritic, however, Akkadian was written with a cuneiform script that was essentially a combination of word signs and syllable signs. As a consequence, the number of signs was far larger than the thirty Ugaritic alphabetic signs. The script used for Akkadian counted no fewer than six hundred signs which had to be learned by the aspirant scribes. Since these signs could be used as word signs, long lists had to be memorized to learn the various meanings that one sign could have. All of this teaching material was imported with this script from Mesopotamia and was copied down by the students.

Before going into this study material in more detail, a few words about the teachers will be useful. Unfortunately, we do not know whence exactly the scribes and their teachers acquired this material. The teachers all bore indigenous names, and nothing points to a direct borrowing from Mesopotamia. Nevertheless, the mistakes made in the practice texts were probably partly handed down by teachers from outside Ugarit. Since these mistakes show a certain pattern and, although these teachers probably lived before the oldest preserved documents were drawn up, we may venture that some of them came from the Hurrian-speaking country of Mitanni. That would explain why a number of texts have Hurrian translations. Some of them may also have come from the Hittite capital, Khattusha (modern Boğazköy), as demonstrated by a literary text with a Hittite translation. (See "The Amarna Letters from Canaan" in Part 9, Vol. IV.)

As can be expected, the study material was accomplished in a rising order of difficulty. First, the student studied a list of syllabic signs organized by pronunciation (for example, tu-ta-ti, mu-ma-mi), then he would learn a simple list of word signs with their pronunciations and meanings. The next step was a combination of lists organized as a systematic dictionary—such as all divine names, all wooden objects, all professions—which were put together and memorized with their translations. The final step was the most difficult: lists of word signs that were combined into longer words having their own meanings. The last series of words comprised

word-sign combinations of which the pronunciation was different from the pronunciations of the individual signs. At first, students would write small excerpts of these long lists with special columns for pronunciation and translation. The next step was the full text with translations and, when a scribe had memorized the latter, just the list of signs. The final stage was probably when nothing had to be written anymore; the scribe knew the text by heart. (See "Ancient Mesopotamiah Lexicography" in Part 9, Vol. IV.)

Once a student had mastered these practice texts he could move on to the next phase, the copying of literary texts. In these texts he could practice his acquired skills by writing words in context. The literary texts were very difficult by nature, and from the material available to us we have to conclude that the Ugaritic students did not do terribly well. Their copies are full of mistakes and misreadings and in many cases, the scribe probably had no idea what he was writing. Nevertheless, these copies are useful to us, for some of the texts they copied are as yet not known or only insufficiently known from Mesopotamia itself. There are, however, many parallels with neighboring cities as Emar and Alalakh and the more distant Khattusha. Among these texts there are several that contain incantations against all sorts of evils. One tablet has a collection of such incantations directed against the female demon Lamashtu, who was thought to snatch newborn babies from the laps of their mothers. Another text gives instructions on how to ward off several diseases. But there are also texts that can be classified as Wisdom literature, like the teachings of a father to his son, or the poem of the righteous sufferer, who prays to his god for deliverance from evil. There are the instructions given to a messenger by a man called Luninurta, who wants to send greetings to his mother. He describes to the messenger how he can recognize his mother ("If you do not know my mother I will give you a sign"), and the description is reminiscent of the Song of Songs. And there is the ballad of the heroes of ancient times, which was probably nothing more than a drinking song for those seeking to forget their troubles. Finally, there is a brief account of the flood—a theme that played such an important role in the literature of Mesopotamia.

The scribe who had finished his study was usually employed by the palace or one of the (high) officials in the city. An example is Nakheshishalmu, who says that he is the scribe of Yabnishapshu, the chief administrator. As indicated above, scribes could climb up the hierarchical ladder and become high officials themselves.

The other script current in Ugarit, the thirty-letter alphabet, was rather easy to learn. All the student had to do was to learn the alphabet and to write a few practice texts. Thus, we find a number of abecedaries (ordered lists of the characters of the alphabet) and various kinds of exercises, such as lists of names, exercise letters, and even a piece of a literary text in Ugaritic. That the last one was combined on one tablet with an Akkadian practice text shows that the two scripts were studied side by side. Most of the important Ugaritic myths and other literary texts were written by the scribe Ilimalku in the house of the high priest Attenu. They include the *Cycle of Baal*, the *Epic of Keret (Kirta)* and the *Epic of Aqhat*, as well as others. On some of these texts we find a colophon in which Ilimalku states that he is still a student, which leads to the assumption that Ilimalku wrote these texts at least partly as an assignment under the tutorship of his teacher. The same Ilimalku is possibly the scribe who some time later wrote contracts in Akkadian for the overseer of the harbor, Rashap'abu. (See "Myth and Mythmaking in Canaan and Ancient Israel" in Part 8, Vol. III, and "The Literatures of Canaan, Ancient Israel, and Phoenicia" in Part 9, Vol. IV.)

THE DESTRUCTION OF UGARIT

After the reign of Niqmaddu II, and especially after the brief rule of his son Arkhalba, the stability in Syria guaranteed the prosperity of Ugarit through trade. After the peace treaty between the old enemies Egypt and Khatti, large numbers of Egyptian goods once more found their way to the city. Many alabaster vases with cartouches of Ramesses II (1279–1213 BCE, for example, bear witness to this rise in activity. This relatively peaceful period lasted more than a hundred years but came to an abrupt end at

the beginning of the twelfth century. At that time the arrival of new waves of immigrants in the west sparked off a migration of groups of people(s) which also made itself felt in the eastern Mediterranean. Immigration (indirectly) caused the destruction of the Hittite Empire and meant sudden annihilation for most of the coastal cities. The ensuing destruction can be easily recognized in Ugarit by many traces of fire, large numbers of arrowheads, hastily buried objects, and the like. Moreover, in the ruins of one of the houses (that of the official Rap'ānu) a few letters were found that give a vivid account of the threat posed by the newcomers. These new waves of immigrants probably came by land and sea, but in Ugarit it was mainly the threat from the sea which posed problems. The following passages illustrate this state of affairs:

> Thus says the king (of Cyprus), speak to Ammurapi king of Ugarit as follows: May you be well, may the gods keep you in good health. Because of what you wrote to me, that they have spotted ships at sea, if they really have spotted ships be prepared for the worst! Where are your troops and your chariots? Are they not with you? If not, who will deliver you from the enemy? Surround your cities! Let troops and chariots go inside and wait for the enemy at full strength. (*Ugaritica*, V, no. 23)

> Speak to the king of Cyprus, my father, thus says the king (Ammurapi) of Ugarit, your son: . . . My father, behold, enemy ships are coming and they set my ships ablaze (and) they have done unseemly things to the country. My father apparently does not know that all troops of my father's overlord (probably the Hittite king) are stationed in Khatti and that all my ships are in Lycia. They have not yet arrived and the country lies undefended. May my father be aware of this! Now seven ships have landed and they have done disgraceful things to us. If there are any other enemy ships send me word, I want to be kept informed. (*Ugaritica*, V, no. 24)

The destruction of Ugarit left the city uninhabited for many centuries. Only in Hellenistic times and, on an even more modest scale, in Roman times were houses erected again on the tell. The city, however, had by then lost the memory of its former name and was called in Greek Leukos Limēn, "White Harbor," an ex-

pression that lives to this day in the Arabic name for the bay, Minet al-Bayda.

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