

Reviews

Gregorio del Olmo Lete, *The private archives of Ugarit. A functional analysis* (Barcino Monographica Orientalia 11; Institut del Pròxim Orient Antic, Edicions de la Universitat de Barcelona 2018, pp. 177, ISBN 978-84-9168-194-6).

Previously, the author has not only consulted Ugaritic tablets in museums in Syria but was also the Director of the *Misión Arqueológica de la Universidad de Barcelona en Siria* for the excavations at Tell Qara Qūzāq (1989–1991). Not only does he have first hand experience in the field, then, but needless to say, he is the author of several monographs and numerous articles on Ugaritic, so that he is eminently qualified to write this book. It begins with a general survey of the archives found in Ugarit, accompanied by a topographic map of tell Ras Shamra (p. 12). Then come individual chapters on each of these archives, belonging to the High Priest, Agaptharru (or Binu Agaptharri), Urtēnu, Rapānu, the Scholar (“le Lettré”) and Rashap’abu respectively, as well as those in the “House with literary tablets”, and in various parts of the palace and elsewhere. Other private archives studied were found in the royal palaces in Ugarit and in Ras Ibn Hani, located to the north of the city. There follow a bibliography and a list of the abbreviations used. However, there is no general index.

From these archives, we can determine, to some extent, to whom they belonged and the purpose of each. The author provides a detailed analysis of the contents of each archive and the building in which it was found. Using such data, the function of that archive and some idea of the character of the house and its owner are described. For example, the “House of Urtēnu” contained many letters and administrative texts, so he must have been “a Plenipotentiary of the Kingdom of Ugarit” (p. 62), besides being a master scribe, while a medical-magical text indicates that he could also perform magic. Unfortunately, many of the texts found in the various archives have not yet been published, so that any description of them remains incomplete. This applies especially to the Ras Ibn Hani archive, which, incidentally “is a reduced model of an official and of a private archive as well” (p. 122), combining both functions.

Appendix I: “Archaeological Register of the Ras Shamra Mission”, lists the campaigns at Ugarit and the areas that were excavated in each campaign.

Appendix II lists the unpublished syllabic texts from the “House of Rapānu”. Appendix III is a close reading of KTU 1.114, a text related to the Ugaritian *mrzḥ* (Hebrew *marzeah*), which is a funerary feast, complete with a full discussion, including philological notes and a translation (reprinted from *Aula Orientalis* vol. 33, 2015, pp. 221–241). There are also plates of this tablet and of the famous mug depicting a banqueting scene, as well as a plan of the “Magician’s House” where the tablet was found. This particular text was included to illustrate the obsession that the Ugaritians apparently had with writing, recording everything and storing documents.

There are quite a few misprints, none of any significance, while several abbreviations, such as “camp.” for “campaign/campagne”, “cun.” for “cuneiform” and “frag.” for “fragment(ary)” are not listed, but are transparent enough. This book complements and supplements previous work on the private archives of Ugarit by D. Arnaud, P. Bordreuil, D. Pardee, C.F.-A. Schaeffer, and others, especially by W. van Soldt, presenting the material available so far in a handy volume, complete with maps, illustrations and several tables. It is both a readable introduction to the topic, explaining why these archives were set up, and a useful reference work.

Wilfred G.E. Watson