

Marc Abou-Abdallah, *L'histoire du royaume de Byblos à l'âge du Fer 1080–333* (Studia Phoenicia XXII; OLA 274), Peeters, Leuven-Paris-Bristol Ct 2018, LXIII+350 pp.

The book under review has been prepared by the Author during his studies in Paris at the *Institut d'études sémitiques* and in the *École des langues et des civilisations d'Orient ancien*. The general introduction situates Byblos in its geographical context, political as well as economic (pp. XIX–LXIII), distinguishing the cities, the countryside, and the mountains. Excellent colour maps and photographs illustrate this introduction, as well as the properly historical study. The latter is divided in four parts. Part I presents Byblos as an independent State in the years 1080–880 B.C. (pp. 5–106). Part II deals with the Neo-Assyrian period, 880–610 B.C. (pp. 109–177), and Part III examines the short Neo-Babylonian period, 610–539 B.C. (pp. 181–213). The time of the Persian Achaemenid rule in the Near East, from 539 to 333 B.C., is the topic of Part IV (pp. 217–304). All the chapters are illustrated by colour photographs, also the inscriptions and the coins.

In Part I, the Author deals first with the important Wenamon's report of events, dated by him in 1075 B.C., and with the two bronze arrows engraved with the name of Zakarbaal or with the title "king of Amurru", both dating probably from the 11th century B.C. (pp. 5–29). The second chapter analyzes, palaeographically and grammatically, the [Pul]sibaal's / [Pil]sibaal's inscription on the sarcophagus of Ahirom and the spatula of Azorbaal, both dated by the Author in the 10th century B.C. (pp. 31–57). The inscription of Yehimilk, king of Byblos, is carefully examined in the following chapter (pp. 59–72) and dated in the first half of the 10th century B.C. The inscription of Abibaal, engraved on a statue of Shoshenq I, is analyzed in the next chapter (pp. 73–86), showing that palaeography confirms its historical dating at the time of Shoshenq I's reign (943–922/1 B.C. according to more recent studies). The political and religious implications of such a gift of a pharaoh to the king of Byblos seems to show that Byblos was an independent kingdom. The following chapter deals with Elibaal's inscription, engraved on a bust of pharaoh Osorkon I (922/1–888/7 B.C.). This was most likely done when the king of Byblos had received the bust as a present of the recently enthroned pharaoh (pp. 87–93). The last chapter of Part I deals with the inscription of king Šipiṭbaal I (pp. 95–106). The Author's careful palaeographic analysis reaches the convincing conclusion that the inscription was engraved towards the end of the 10th century or in the early 9th century B.C., what historical studies seem to confirm.

Part II deals first with the period characterized by the passage from independence to Neo-Assyrian domination, i.e. ca. 883–744 B.C. (pp. 113–141). The study is mainly

based, as expected, on the Assyrian inscriptions of Assurnasirpal II (883–859 B.C.), of Shalmaneser III (858–824 B.C.), of Shamshi-Adad V (823–811 B.C.), and of Adad-nirari III (810–783 B.C.). A special attention is paid to the battle of Qarqar in 853 B.C., the reports of which offer an exceptional view of the political situation of the Levant in the mid-9th century B.C. (pp. 125–135). Despite the Neo-Assyrian domination, Byblos enjoyed a certain autonomy between 744 and 610 B.C., as shown by the Author in the second chapter of Part II (pp. 143–177), dealing with the campaigns of Tiglath-pileser III (744–727 B.C.), of Shalmaneser V (726–722 B.C.), of Sargon II (721–705 B.C.), of Sennacherib (704–681 B.C.), of Esarhaddon (680–699 B.C.), and of Assurbanipal (668–627 B.C.). A special attention is given to Šipitbaal II, king of Byblos at the time of Tiglath-pileser III, to Urumilk, king of Byblos at the time of Sennacherib, and to Milki-yasap, king of Byblos at the time of Esarhaddon, all recorded in Assyrian annals.

The unexpected end of the Neo-Assyrian Empire is followed by the Neo-Babylonian State of the years 610–539 B.C. It is examined in Part III, dealing first with the reign of Nebuchadnezzar II (604–562 B.C.), whose campaigns are never directed against Byblos, but they invite to examine the economic situation of the surrounding areas. Short presentations of the situation of Byblos are sufficient for the following decennia of the 6th century B.C.

Part IV deals with Byblos in the Persian period. As expected, attention is paid first to the incomplete Phoenician inscription of Šipitbaal III, whom palaeography dates in the late 6th or the early 5th centuries B.C. A foreign governor of Byblos is mentioned in a cuneiform inscription from the reign of Darius I (522–486 B.C.), recording the tribute he was paying. The next chapter deals with Urumilk, known from the Phoenician inscription of his grandson Yeḥawmilk. He was king of Byblos *ca.* 480 B.C., while his grandson and successor Yeḥawmilk was ruling in the mid-5th century. A philological and palaeographic commentary of the inscription is provided by the Author. The third chapter of Part IV deals with the incomplete funerary inscription of a king whose name is lost. According to the Author, palaeography suggests dating it towards the end of the 5th century B.C.

The topic of the next chapter are the coins of the Byblian king Elpaal, whom the Author dates also from the end of the 5th century B.C. The appearance of a Byblian coinage is the occasion of discussing the economic situation and the international relations of Byblos also with Greece and with Egypt (pp. 261–269). The next chapter is based on the study of the coins of Azibaal, as well as on the Phoenician inscription on the coffin of the king's mother Batnoam. The palaeographic and historical study of these sources suggests a date in the first quarter of the 4th century B.C. Coinage provides the basis also for the chapter dealing with king Addirmilk or Urimilk, who ruled after Azimilk. Since the name *'rmlk* of the grandfather of Yeḥawmilk was written without *wāw* in the Persian period, the reviewer is inclined to read *'drmlk*, not *'wrmlk*. The last chapter of Part IV deals with king *'yn'l*, known from his coinage and from Arrian's *Anabasis* II, 20, 1, which calls him *'Ενυλοϛ*. There is no reason why one should doubt about the latter's identification with *'yn'l*, but the Greek transcription shows a contraction *'y > 'ē* and a pronunciation *'Ēnil* instead of *'Aynel*.

A short conclusion (pp. 305–308) precedes the list of abbreviations (pp. 309–313) and the bibliography (pp. 315–350). There are no indices of personal names, toponyms or quoted inscriptions. Abou-Abdallah's research is based on written sources with very rare allusions to archaeological findings, which would have offered a wider support to historical commentaries. Author's attention is mainly focused on the Phoenician inscriptions, provided with an excellent grammatical and palaeographic study, offering each time a comparative table of the single characters. Besides, some cuneiform inscriptions are carefully transliterated before being commented. Instead, the reviewer did not notice any reference to biblical texts recording Solomon's use of Byblian artisans for the construction of the Temple of Jerusalem (I Kings 5, 32; Ezechiel 27, 9). True, these notices lack any firm historical background, just as placing Byblos in the "promised land" (Joshua 13, 5) or listing the city among the enemies of Israel (Psalm 83, 8). The Greek use of the name of Byblos to designate the papyrus, like in Aeschylus' (525/4–456 B.C.) *Supplices* 761, and the papyrus roll or book, like in Herodotus' *History* II, 100, may have been recorded in one of the sections dealing with international cultural relations in the Persian period. Greek βύβλος corresponds to Egyptian *dm'*, but it abridges a Phoenician qualification "papyrus (sheet/roll) from Byblos" (**gm'*? *Gbl*), showing that Byblos was the usual transit harbour in the early period.

The book under review is undoubtedly an important study in the field of Phoenician epigraphy in general and a useful work for scholars dealing with the ancient history of Byblos, which for centuries was the main political centre of Phoenicia.

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