
Juan-Pablo Vita
posthume d’A. Caquot « Du dieu guerrier au roi messie » (p. 327-332), un exemple de fine érudition au service de l’histoire des religions.

Enfin, dans l’ultime section, on saluera l’effort accompli par G. Del Olmo Lete pour affronter à nouveau la difficile question de la longue durée, par le biais des continuités et ruptures dans les mouvements ethniques entre âge du Bronze et âge du Fer en Syrie-Palestine (p. 341-350). Ce thème est aussi au cœur du texte de M. H. Fantar sur les rapports entre Ougarit et le monde phénico-punique (p. 367-374).

Les auteurs des contributions qui ne sont pas explicitement mentionnées voudront bien m’en excuser. Rendre compte de mélange est toujours un exercice aussi périlleux que les organiser ! Ceux-ci ont le mérite d’une réelle cohérence autour de l’œuvre de P. Bordreuil dont on espère vivement qu’elle va se poursuivre ad multos annos !

Corinne Bonnet


This book is the product of the revision of the Doctoral Dissertation defended by the author in 2005 at the University of Pennsylvania. The introductory chapter presents the main objectives of the project: “this examination shall focus on ... exchange relationships ... More generally, this study seeks to examine economic modalities at Ugarit ... Economic modalities ... are understood here as the emergent structures of the social economy at Ugarit” (p. 1-2). The author next underlines what he considers to be the main differences between this work and previous research by other scholars also regarding economy in Ugarit: “What makes this project distinct from other attempts is that it embraces the variability of data. Through a Network-based model, the Ugaritic economy shall be viewed as an adaptive nonlinear system, with numerous and ever-changing possibilities. This perspective should allow economic life to be explored, at the same time avoiding monolithic conclusions or static structuralist or functionalist characterizations” (p. 3). The process to be used shall be as follows: “Each economic situation and type of evidence shall be viewed separately and analyzed with the conceptual tool appropriate for the form of the evidence” (p. 4), also taking into account the archaeological context where the analyzed documents were found. Pages 34-37 explore more deeply the concept of “Network-Based Model”. The introduction ends with a brief summary of each chapter and a “Note on Abbreviations” 1.

The first chapter (p. 8-37) intends to place the Network-based model within the context of the formalist-substantivist debate, paying special attention to the work of authors such as M. Weber, Th. Veblen, K. Polanyi or M. Liverani amongst others. The author finally claims that “Theory in this work shall be oriented towards creating questions and observations by using a variety of theoretical frameworks and many different kinds of data”.

The second chapter (p. 38-87) is devoted to “Previous Studies of the Ugaritic Economy”. It is an important chapter where the author provides a thorough history of research work, studying and adequately criticising the significant previous studies, which are classed into five categories: “Feudal Models” (J. Gray, G. Boyer, A. Rainey, G. Miller), “Marxist Models” (M. Heltzer, M. Liverani, J.-Á. Zamora, Cl. Libolt, I. M. Rowe 2), “Entrepreneurial Models” (M. Astour, R. Stieglitz, Br. Widbin, Chr. Monroe 3, M. Feldman), “Managerial and Administrative Approaches to the Economy” (W. Whitt, J.-Á. Zamora) and “Patrimonial Models” (J.-Cl. Courtois, J.-P. Vita, L. Stager, D. Schloen). The chapter also includes at the beginning a brief presentation of the excavations of Minet el-Beida and Ras ibn Hani; in this latter case it would also have been necessary to mention the main synthesis works carried out by the researchers: J. Lagarce and É. Lagarce, “Ras Ibn Hani au Bronze Récent. Recherches et réflexions en cours”, in M. Yon, M. Sznycer and P. Bordreuil (eds.), Le

1. In this “Note on Abbreviations” (as well as in the general bibliography, p. 405) D. Pardee is considered the author of the work Manuel d’Ougaritique, Paris 2004. The authors of this manual are, however, P. Bordreuil and D. Pardee. The work has been recently published in English: P. BORDREUIL and D. PARDEE, A Manual of Ugaritic, Winona Lake, 2009.


3. In the meantime, Monroe’s Doctoral Dissertation mentioned in p. 63 of the book has been published as Ch. MOUNTFORT MONROE, Scales of Fate. Trade, Tradition, and Transformation in the Eastern Mediterranean ca. 1350-1175 BCE (AOAT, 357), Münster, 2009.
The third chapter is focused on “The Language of the Ugaritic Economy” (p. 88-133). The author reviews and studies certain categories of words and concepts which he considers key to the understanding of the Ugaritic economy. The material is grouped into three categories: “Terminology of Social Designations” (bnš, bnš mlk, bd, b’t, n’re, adrt, ḫb/hpt, ‘ṣr), “Terminology of Occupational Designations” (skn, msrm, bdl, mkr, mḏkṣn, md, m’re, ‘ṣr, ḥṣ, ṣḥ, ngh, snm, ḫ, ḫns, ḫntm, ṭmn, ṭmḥ, cultic officials) and “Land-Holding and Obligations” (ṭlk/pkl, ṭnt, ṭbldy/updt, ṭbdnt, ṭnt, ḫgrn, ntbt).

The fourth chapter, “The Form and Function of Ugaritic Economic Texts” (p. 134-181), analyzes the Ugaritic economic documents: “The purpose of this chapter is to illuminate those situations that led to the creation of a tablet, thereby not only understanding the tablets themselves but also to be clear about when a tablet (as evidence for economic activity) could be expected to be found” (p. 136). “The goal of this chapter is to look at the genre of texts, here understood as involving both the form of the text and the situation of the text’s composition/use” (p. 137). The categories of texts are as follows: Records of People (personal names, occupational categories, census lists), Records of Place (simple lists, lists with unexplained numbers, information about fields, information about the circulation of goods, information about agricultural equipment), Records of Commodities (wine, olives, oil, precious metals, salt, textiles, wood), Records of Equipment (agricultural equipment, transportation equipment, military equipment), Records of Land (field transfers, ṭbldy fields, ṭnt records). The author mentions (cf. p. 135) the classification of the Ugaritic administration texts made in 1991 by P. Bordreuil and D. Pardee: “lists”, “official acts” and “business documents”; within the context of this chapter it would also have been necessary to mention and discuss the classification proposed by J. Sanmartín, “Wirtschaft und Handel in Ugarit: Kulturgrammatische Aspekte”, in Dietrich, M., Loretz, K. (eds.), Ugarit. Ein ostmediterranes Kulturzentrum im Alten Orient. Ergebnisse und Perspektiven der Forschung. Band 1. Ugarit und seine altorientalische Umwelt (ALASP, 7), Münster, 1995, (p. 131-158): “Listen”, “Rechnungen und buchhalterische Aufzeichnungen”, “Protokolle”.

The next chapters delve into the content of the administration texts and also incorporate into the debate the data yielded by archaeology. Chapter five, “Economic Modalities at Ugarit: The Evidence from the Tablets” (p. 182-221), is an attempt to identify the individuals and groups who take part in Ugarit’s economy. Relevant persons in Ugaritic society, such as Yabninu or Urtenu, the presence of foreigners in Ugaritic society, the staff working in temples, etc. Next follows a review of the types of economic actions involving real estate, obligations owed to Royal Authority, involving cultic obligations, debt and credit, redistribution, trade or sales, requests, the types of goods used in transactions are briefly studied (silver and other precious metals, food, textiles, vehicles, military equipment, agricultural equipment, private property, etc.), as well as the places where this economic activity took place (the palace, individuals within the palace administration, etc.). The author concludes that “given the richness of the textual corpus, one could have expected a more complete view” of the Ugaritic economy, and it must be concluded that “only limited types of economic activities resulted in the production of a textual record” (p. 221). Chapter six tries to go beyond the data provided by the texts: “The Archival Context of the Tablets: The Elite Architectural Complexes at Ugarit” (p. 222-264), where the archaeological contexts of the main archives found in the tell Ras Shamra-Ugarit are reviewed also with the purpose “to explore elite zones of the tell in general” (p. 264). Chapter seven goes one step further in the analysis of the information of an archaeological nature: “The Material Remains of the Ugaritic Economy” (p. 265-308) presents the available natural resources in the city of Ugarit and its environs, the available economic infrastructure (roads, ports, etc.), the domestic structures and household assemblages, the industrial evidence (agriculture in the city, urban olive oil production, household construction, etc.), and prestige goods. The next chapter, “Economics Beyond the City” (p. 309-336) opens up the viewpoint of the economic movement beyond the city of Ugarit, bearing in mind, therefore, the relations between the city and the rest of the towns in the kingdom of Ugarit and between the latter and other States of the Late Bronze Age, including the great powers of the time (Hatti, Egypt, etc.). The chapter ends with a brief sketch of three of the main actors in the Ugaritic economy: the Queen, Yabninu and Urtenu. Finally chapter nine is devoted to “Conclusions: A Network-based model of Economic Modalities” (p. 337-381, the summary-chart presented by the author in p. 353 is particularly noteworthy: “A Network-based model (NBM) of Ugaritic Exchange Relationships”).

These lines are intended to give an idea of the abundance of data, material and ideas presented by...
the author regarding the Ugaritic economy. It is, without a doubt, a great methodological effort and a truly admirable synthesis which enables readers to see the Ugaritic economy in motion (always, of course, from the theoretical and methodological viewpoint chosen by the author). This work can be very useful not only to specialists in Ugarit and in general in the Late Bronze Age Syria, but also to specialists in other areas, cultures and periods of the Ancient Near East as well as to historians of the economic history of the pre-classical Ancient World in general. This work will contribute to adding the data provided by Ugarit (both textual and archaeological) to the economic history of the Ancient World, taking it outside the limited circle of Ugarit specialists. The author should be congratulated for this effort.

But reading this work must not give non-Ugarit specialists the wrong impression that the economic and administration data provided by the Ugaritic tablets or our global understanding of the Ugaritic economy are already trouble-free. The author is well aware of all the work which is yet to be done when he states that “This study leaves room for further study on the topic of Ugaritic economic modalities and the methodology for studying ancient economies in general” (p. 381). The excavations in Ras Shama-Ugarit continue to yield new texts, and several hundred documents are yet to be edited. On the other hand, all the edited administration texts, in particular those written in the Ugaritic language, must be (they are already being) carefully collated, since available editions suffer from numerous errors of reading which inevitably lead scholars to incorrect interpretations. The enormous amount of detail problems (lexicographic, understanding the structure of the texts, the very function of the texts) which are yet to be resolved must not be overlooked. It is equally necessary to make good use of the existing bibliography regarding the subject. These are some small examples, practically taken at random, of the former. The author analyzes the important term mryn (p. 102-105), concluding that “This study shall assume that the maryannu were an elevated social group, who typically offered their pilku as chariot based military service”. He makes correct use of the data regarding this category provided by the Syrian texts of the town of Alalah (based on the studies conducted by E. von Dassow), but in order to have a better understanding of the nature of this category in Syria, text RE 66 from Emar should also be taken into account (G. Beckman, Texts from the Vicinity of Emar in the Collection of Jonathan Rosen, Padova, 1996, p. 85-86): it shows that women also could, in some Syrian societies, have the category of maryannu. In his discussion of the term ḫpḫt (p. 99-100), the author does not take into consideration the Ugaritic letter RS 34.124 (in P. Bordreuil, ed., Une bibliothèque au sud de la ville (RSO, VII), Paris, 1991, p. 142-114, nº 88), which seems to show that the term refers to a type of soldier. Also within the framework of the emphasis made by the author on the use of texts in the Ugaritic language (cf. for instance p. 6: “as these words and texts [= those written in Ugaritic language] have been relatively neglected in comparison with the syllabic texts”), the current debate on the true linguistic nature of the administrative texts written syllabically in Ugarit should also be considered (see regarding this Fl. Malbran-Labat, “Langues et écritures à Ugarit”, Semitica 49, 1999, p. 65-101, and now also C. Roche, “Classification de l’utilisation du cunéiforme mésopotamien dans les textes ugaritiques”, in R. D. Biggs, J. Myers, M. T. Roth, eds., Proceedings of the 51st Rencontre Assyriologique Internationale, Held at the Oriental Institute of the University of Chicago, July 18–22, 2005, Chicago, 2008, p. 155-170). The list of detailed observations regarding the terms and topics dealt with in this work could become very extensive.

Suffice it to say, therefore, that our knowledge of Ugaritic economy in all its facets is still far from satisfactory, although works such as McGeough’s are a considerable contribution to the matter. It is very likely that the author may deal with some of those pending issues in a future work, since this book is conceived as the first of a two-volume work: “The second volume, titled Ugaritic Economic texts, will present translations and commentaries of the alphabetic Ugaritic economic texts ... The second volume will also discuss in more detail some of the syntactical/grammatical, lexicographical, and interpretative problems with reading alphabetic economic texts” (p. 7; cf. also p. 89: “Discussion of prepositions and measurement terminology will be presented in volume 2”).

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