

RECENSIONI E SCHEDE BIBLIOGRAFICHE

JANA MINÁROVÁ, *Language of Amarna – Language of Diplomacy. Perspectives on the Amarna Letters*, Czech Institute of Egyptology. Prague 2007, 287 pp.

The Amarna letters are counted among the most famous ancient Near Eastern epistolary corpora and have been studied extensively for more than 120 years. Surprisingly enough, the research has not yet resulted in any extensive epistolographic analysis of these letters. The medium size of the Amarna corpus cannot be an excuse for the lack of such an analysis since some smaller corpora (e.g. Ancient Hebrew letters) receive much epistolographic attention. The book by Mynárová is a remedy for this lack. A partial remedy, though.

Mynárová's book grew out of her doctoral dissertation at Charles University in Prague entitled "Greetings Formulae in Peripheral Akkadian" and defended in 2004. The title of the thesis also renders well the content of the book which is in fact devoted not to the Amarna letters as diplomacy correspondence in general but only to the typological analysis of the opening passages of the Amarna letters. Mynárová also dedicates a chapter to an overview of the letters from Syria and Canaan that do not belong to the Amarna corpus but, unfortunately, she does not correlate the data that emerge from all the analyzed sources. Thus, although she includes almost the entire extant correspondence from Syria and Canaan, her study is concentrated on the Amarna letters.

Chapter 1 offers a detailed account of the history of early explorations of Amarna and of the publication of the tablets. This chapter abounds with references to diaries and letters of the explorers and may serve as the reference to tracing the history of every single tablet. The reader will appreciate tables which correlate all numbers of the tablets and their publications. Different tablets will also accompany the reader throughout the entire book and offer quick and accessible presentation of the data. The author is to be sincerely congratulated for their compilation. Chapter 2 describes the region of Syria-Canaan and its linguistic situation with focus on Amarna Peripheral Akkadian. Chapter 3 is devoted to the general considerations on the format of the diplomatic letter in the region in the Late Bronze Age. Chapter 4 introduces the topic of the opening passages in the Amarna letters by putting them into the context of the epistolary formulas employed in Western Peripheral Akkadian. In her overview Mynárová includes the letters from Alalakh, Middle Euphrates valley (Azu, Ekalte, Emar), Taanach, Kumidi, Qatna, Ugarit and different sites in the Land of Israel. Chapters from 5 to 8 discuss the main topic of the book, which is the typological division of the opening passages of the Amarna letters. On the basis of the elements that form the opening passage, their number and sequence, Mynárová distinguishes 18 major types of the opening passages, 8 types of headings and 22 types of salutations. Chapter 9 is a small grammar that lists attestations of typical "Amarnian" forms in the discussed texts. The last chapter offers a comprehensive overview of the research. The book concludes with an appendix which contains transliterations and translations of all opening passages of the Amarna letters. It must be stressed that throughout the entire book Mynárová does a great job at gathering and presenting data. However, her analysis and conclusions are not always convincing.

Mynárová decided to follow the method and the terminology elaborated by Sally W. Ahl in her 1973 dissertation "Epistolary Texts from Ugarit." Without doubt Ahl's work is solid but the analysis of the Ugaritic epistolary corpus has been recently refined by Robert Hawley in his dissertation "Studies in Ugaritic Epistolography" submitted in 2003 to the Oriental Institute of the University of Chicago. Mynárová's work would benefit greatly from the use of theoretical categories elaborated by Hawley and his distinction between

standard and non-standard formulary. Since Hawley discusses the Amarna letters in detail, the reader should consult his dissertation for an alternative analysis.

In considering the identity of the scribes who wrote the Amarna letters Mynářová totally omits the Canaanite scribes. One should, however, consider seriously the presence of Canaanite scribes at the Egyptian court. As the author observes, it is reasonable that the majority of the scribes, especially highly-ranked ones, were Egyptian. On the other hand, it is equally probable that the Egyptians might have employed Canaanite scribes to deal with the local correspondence. This observation may explain the similarity between the epistolary formulas employed in the Amarna and Ugaritic corpora. Indeed, if we admit the presence of Canaanite scribes in Egypt, we may conclude that the shared formulary is due to that fact that the scribes working on the pharaonic court were schooled in Canaan and thus well-versed in Peripheral Akkadian tradition.

Unfortunately, the division of the opening passages into numerous types proposed by Mynářová is hardly persuasive. The existence of these types is dubious already for their statistical distribution. For instance, types 1 and 2 of the heading occur in 87 percent of all texts while types 4 and 5 are represented by one letter only. The weakness of Mynářová's typology lies deeper. Typological distinctions cannot be proposed only because of the presence or absence of a single element but rather must consider larger schemes and structures. The presence of an additional element in them can be regarded as an extension of a basic structure and not a new formula. Moreover, as Hawley's analysis shows, it can be useful to correlate formulas employed in the opening passages with the kind of relationship between the sender and the addressee. Regrettably, Mynářová relies on mechanic application of the principle that any surface change requires positing a new type of opening passage. Therefore, her analysis results in grouping the opening passages into identical classes instead of proposing basic schemes. In short, the main part of Mynářová's work demands a profound revision with a different methodological approach.

Another point which requires a comment is the author's proposal that the opening passages were composed with the help of "guidebooks", that is, special tablets that contained the fundamental diplomatic formulas. Although the existence of such "guidebooks" is possible, one should not overlook the role of schools and traditional scribal training. The writing of the letter is a rudimentary skill that every scribe had to master already at the beginning of his cuneiform curriculum. At this stage of education a future scribe had to learn the basic format of the opening passage while the diplomatic formulas might have been taught to the scribes that were preparing for a career in the royal administration. A look at the Old Babylonian letter writing exercises helps one to understand a certain creativity of the Amarna scribes in composing the opening passages. Indeed, the future scribes of the Old Babylonian period were taught to employ a wide range of constructions even in the formulas at the beginning of the letters. The Amarna scribes would have had similar skills; hence, while composing a letter, they would rely on their education and experience more than on "guidebooks."

The opening passages employ a variety of titles and appellatives applied both to the sender and the addressee. For instance, kings of great powers (Egypt, Babylonia) refer to themselves as "brothers" or occasionally "fathers" while Levantine kinglets writing to suzerains call themselves "dogs" or "the dust at the feet of the king." These titles and appellatives are interesting not only for the conceptual world that they reflect but also for their double dynamic. Indeed, calling somebody "a father" is at the same time the recognition of his superior status and a reminder of his obligation to protect "a son." Regrettably, Mynářová concentrates on listing the titles and so their metaphoric dimension and dynamic receives only a short treatment.

Finally, although the survey of the grammar of the opening passages is comprehensive, the interpretation of the grammatical phenomena is sometimes unsatisfactory. For example, one can remain really baffled at reading that "both in the learned and to a great extent fixed

opening passages, the Akkadian verbal form *iprus* ('preterite'), primarily expressing the past tense, has developed into a present-future tense. This phenomenon can be easily identified especially in the Amarna prostration formulae cf. 'I fall', 'I (verily) prostrate'. Nevertheless, the same temporal meaning can also be identified in the attested examples of the Akkadian perfect tense" (p. 179). The reader confused by Mynárová's lack of precision needs to refer for this particular use of verbs to D. Pardee and R. M. Whiting, "Aspects of Epistolary Verbal Usage in Ugaritic and Akkadian," *Bulletin of the School of Oriental and African Studies*, 50, 1987, pp. 1-31 and especially to the critical observations in F. W. Dobbs-Allsopp, "(More) On Performatives in Semitic," *Zeitschrift für Althebraistik* 17-20, 2004-2007, pp. 36-81.

To sum up, although some of Mynárová's conclusions are discussible, she is to be warmly congratulated for providing the scholarly community with a comprehensive and updated treatment of the opening passages in the Western Peripheral Akkadian letters. This book is going to serve to the scholars who work on Akkadian epistolography as an excellent databank.

KRYSTOF J. BARANOWSKI

AHMED FERJAOUI (éd.), avec la participation de JACQUES ALEXANDROPOULOS – HATEM BEDOUI – LUILLA CAMPISI – CARLA DEL VAIS – ELISABETTA GAUDINA – TAREK OUESLATI – PASQUALE FRANCESCO RUIU - GIOVANE (sic!) TORE, *Le sanctuaire de Henchir el-Hami. De Ba'al Hammon au Saturne Africain 1^{er} s. av. J.-C. – IV^e s. ap. J.-C.* Tunis 2007. Institut National du Patrimoine. 2 tavv. f.t. 474 pp.

Il volume presenta i risultati dello scavo dell'area sacra di Henchir el-Hami da parte di A. Ferjaoui con la collaborazione di specialisti nello studio del materiale e dei resti osteologici. La prima parte (capp. 1-7) è un "étude d'ensemble" con la presentazione del sito, dell'area sacra (il *tophet* e il tempio), la ricostruzione dei culti praticati e dei fedeli coinvolti. La seconda parte (capp. 8-26) è invece uno studio del materiale restituito dallo scavo: le stele (A. Ferjaoui); le urne votive (A. Ferjaoui, G. Tore); la ceramica comune (E. Gaudina, C. Del Vais); la ceramica africana da cucina (L. Campisi); la ceramica "a pareti sottili" e affini (L. Campisi); la ceramica sigillata (L. Campisi); le lucerne (C. Del Vais); il contesto votivo dall'area del tempio (C. Del Vais); gli unguentari (P. F. Ruiiu); le monete (J. Alexandropoulos, A. Ferjaoui) e i resti osteologici (H. Bédoui, T. Ouslati).

Il sito di Henchir el-Hami si trova nella regione di Sidi Bourouis, tra la piana orientale della Ghorfa a nord e il Jbel Massouge a sud, e si estende per circa venti ettari. In particolare l'area sacra, ad un centinaio di metri a sud-est del sito, è stata individuata con prospezioni archeologiche nel 1990 e divenuta oggetto di scavi sistematici dal 1992-1994. L'indagine ha interessato una superficie di circa 45x30 m e ha portato all'individuazione del *tophet* e del successivo santuario di Saturno: il primo è un'area di forma rettangolare, priva di *temenos*, delimitata a est, sud e ovest dall'affioramento della roccia naturale; il secondo è un edificio a più vani che si installa nella parte più settentrionale del pianoro, probabilmente in seguito all'asportazione dei depositi votivi precedenti.

L'organizzazione spaziale del *tophet* è caratterizzata dalla presenza nel settore centrale di *ex-voto* più monumentali, allineati in senso nord-sud, ed in quello orientale di una zona di libagioni e di un luogo di combustione. Il primo settore restituisce, infatti, pietre sistemate di piatto nel terreno, con incavi usati per alloggiare le stele e piccole cavità emisferiche