New Evidence on the Last Days of Ugarit*

MICHAEL C. ASTOUR

In the thirteenth century b.c., Ugarit was a populous and prosperous city, one of the largest and richest capitals of the ancient Near East. The felicitous policy of one of its earlier kings, Niqmäd II, who had joined the Hittite alliance and recognized the overlordship of the great king of Hatti, brought about a considerable territorial increase of the Ugaritic domain at the expense of the vanquished Mukish. Niqmäd’s successors remained loyal to the great Anatolian power. As attested in the records of Ramses II and confirmed by a recently discovered war report from a Ugaritic commander, the army of Ugarit played an important role in the Hittite-Egyptian war that culminated in the battle of Qadesh in 1299.\(^3\) Soon afterward, the two rival empires peacefully settled their conflict and agreed on spheres of domination. Ugarit easily took advantage of the long period of relative peace in the last century of the Bronze Age in Syria.

The kingdom of Ugarit possessed many prerequisites for an extraordinary economic upsurge: a vast, fertile, and thickly settled territory producing grain, oil, wine, wool, flax, and valuable kinds of lumber; a long sea-coast with at least three ports,\(^8\) not counting the harbor of Ugarit itself; and a most advantageous geographical situation at the commercial crossroads of the ancient world. Ugarit was a thriving industrial center, manufacturing and exporting fabrics and garments of wool and linen, which were dyed in various shades of expensive purple, as well as in more popularly priced madder;\(^9\) its artists excelled in producing ornamented vessels of bronze and gold; and its swordsmiths supplied Egypt with long bronze swords inscribed with the cartouches of the reigning Pharaoh.\(^6\) Ugaritic merchant ships carried the highly valued Mycenaean ceramics from Kaphtor to their home city,\(^6\) and made it possible to distribute them all over Syria. They traveled all along the shore, visiting the cities of Phoenixia, Palestine, and Egypt,\(^7\) as well as the neighboring island of Alashia-Cyprus. On land, Ugaritic caravans reached the heart of Anatolia.\(^8\) Large groups of merchants from Egypt, Assyria, Alashia, the Cilician city of Ura, Beirut, Ashdod, and other places came to Ugarit, or established emporia and enclaves there. The enormous dimensions of the Ugaritic royal palace bear witness to the vast resources of the kingdom.\(^9\)

High material prosperity was paralleled by a remarkably flourishing cultural life. In addition to the unique lot of West Semitic literary texts dating from the Amarna Age, unearthed during the first campaigns at Ras Shamra, more recent excavations of this seemingly inexhaustible site have revealed a great number of new religious and mythological tablets in the Ugaritic language. Even from the scanty information disclosed so far by Virolleaud, Nougayrol, and Schaeffer, it appears that the publication of these texts will open a new chapter in the study of Ugaritic literature. According to the latest discoveries, not only palaces and temples, but even private houses contained collections of literary, scholarly, and lexicographical tablets in Ugaritic, Akkadian, and occasionally in Hurrian.\(^10\) National and ethnic problems evidently did not trouble Ugarit. Its West Semitic and Hurrian inhabitants were completely integrated within the realm’s social structure. The felicitous feature of polytheistic religions—their aptitude for syncretism and absorption—precluded any religious discord. Canaanite, Sumerio-Akkadian, and Hurrian deities figure peacefully together on lists of offerings.

\(^*\) This paper was read at the Mediterranean Studies Colloquium, Brandeis University, on December 10, 1963.


\(^3\) Atalig (Virolleaud, PRU V, No. 56 = RS 18:119: 1-2); Gib‘ala (PRU IV, RS 17:335:19, mod. Djebeleh), and Himmilli “in the midst of the sea” (RS 13:62:25; 20:13, unpublished, see CRAI [1957] 77), that is, on the Pigeon Island north of Ugarit.

\(^4\) On the latter, cf. PRU V, No. 51 (RS 19:56): 5-6: ts.n, mat. khd. rwt, where rwt is Heb. pa‘awwā, Arab. jwaww “dyer’s madder,” followed by ts.m. prwm “five hundred (units) of linen.”

\(^5\) Schaeffer, Ugaritica III, 169-177.

\(^6\) PRU IV, RS 16:238, on a ship of a rich Ugaritic merchant returning from mkn Kaptu-ni.

\(^7\) E.g. PRU V, RS 18:31.

\(^8\) PRU IV, RS 17:59, 17:385.

\(^9\) Schaeffer, CRAI (1955) 251.

Most, if not all, of the newly discovered texts belong to the late thirteenth century. Ugaritic intellectuals proudly looked back at the century-old history of their city, and one of them inscribed the reverse side of a mythological text with a list of all the Ugaritic kings going back to the early second millennium.\(^{11}\) The last entry, judging by the context, was the name of Ammurapi (mrü-rı)—and he actually was to be the last king of Ugarit. It was under this Ammurapi that the city of Ugarit was so completely destroyed that it was never rebuilt, but was abandoned and forgotten for more than thirty-one centuries. It is common doctrine that any civilization must pass through the stages of rise, crest, and decline, before suffering its ultimate fall; but such a scheme does not apply to Ugarit. No decay whatsoever, either material or spiritual, can be observed in Ugarit on the eve of its destruction. The city fell at the height of its vitality, suddenly, as the result of a terrible catastrophe—the more terrible because it was not a natural disaster, but was wrought by human hands, the more colossal because Ugarit shared its doom with Hattushash, Tarsus, Carchemish, Alalah, Qatna, Qadesh, Hazor, Lachish, and many other ancient cities. Stratigraphical data prove that the Late Bronze Age in Syria and Anatolia came to an end in a single historical catastrophe, and the identity of its authors is established by the records of Pharaoh Ramses III. We still follow the lead of his Medinet Habu inscriptions\(^{12}\) in calling these invaders the Peoples of the Sea. They include this highly relevant passage:

"The foreign countries made a conspiracy in their islands. Removed and scattered in the fray were the lands at one time. No land could stand before their arms from Hatti, Qadi, Carchemish, Arzawa, and Alashia on, (but they were) cut off at [one time]. A camp was set up in one place in Amuru. They desolated its people, and its land was like that which has never come into being. They were coming, while the flame was prepared before them, forward toward Egypt. Their confederation was the Purata, Tjikara, Shakurasha, Danuna, and Washasha lands united. They laid their hands upon the lands to the (very) circuit of the earth, their hearts confident and trusting: ‘Our plans will succeed!’\(^{13}\)

This text still remains the only consistent narrative about the events of that stormy time, but it is no longer the sole piece of contemporary written evidence. The excavations at Ras Shamra have revealed documents in Akkadian and Ugaritic which belong to the very last years of Ugarit’s existence. The alphabetic texts of the 18th and 19th campaigns are published by Ch. Virolleaud in *Le palais royal d’Ugarit*, volume V, recently published (1965).\(^{14}\) The ones most relevant to our inquiry belong to the lot found in an oven for baking tablets—the first implement of this kind ever discovered. All the tablets of this lot are incoming letters. How did they get into the oven? We are obviously not dealing with originals, but with locally made Ugaritic translations, similar to those discovered earlier.\(^{15}\) Two letters written by Ugaritic officers may be the originals, delivered unbaked and put into the oven for better preservation. The royal chancellery, it is quite clear, continued its routine work, even though the dispatches from the war front were alarming. The very fact that the palace employees had no time to take these tablets from the oven to the archives is eloquent testimony to the suddenness of the final catastrophe. The letter PRU V, No. 114 (RS 19.11), and two letters from the 16th campaign, RS 16.402 and 16.379, published in *PRU II* as Nos. 12 and 13 respectively, probably refer to the same events.

The Akkadian letters of the 20th campaign are to be published by Nougayrol in *Ugaritica* V. Part of them are known from the expositions and partial translations in this scholar’s report to the French Academy of Inscriptions.\(^{16}\) For this preliminary survey we must satisfy ourselves with the published glimpses of information. The letter RS 20021, sent by the Hittite court to a late thirteenth-century Ugaritic king (whose name, unfortunately, has not been preserved), is highly significant for our understanding of Ugarit’s international role in the last years of its existence. Although the king of Ugarit (according to the Hittite dignitary) was solemnly relieved of every “service,” he is neverthe-

---

14. I owe my acquaintance with the proofs of this volume to the kindness of Professor C. H. Gordon, and the permission to use them for the present paper, to that of Professor Ch. Virolleaud.
15. E.g. Shuppiluliuma’s letter to Nigmad II (UM 118).
less obliged occasionally to “listen and execute” what he is told—but he has not been doing this, and the situation must change. (We thus learn that by the end of the thirteenth century Ugarit was only nominally a vassal of Hatti.) Now the king of Hatti demands that the king of Ugarit furnish a ship and crew to transport 2,000 measures of grain from the neighboring Mukish to the Hittite port of Ura (in Western Cilicia), and the author of the letter repeats several times that this is a matter of life or death, let the king of Ugarit not linger! It is known that during a severe famine in the Hatti-land, Pharaoh Merneptah sent ships with grain.37 Was this letter connected with the same distress, or was it a later one? Another detail is very interesting: the letter specifies that a single large ship would be sufficient, and that such a vessel would be able to transport the entire load in one, or at most, two trips. As remarked by Nougayrol,18 the cargo was evidently counted in the regular unit of grain measure, kor, each kor containing 300 qa, or approximately 300 liters. Thus the ship’s total capacity was about 6,000 hectoliters, or 450 metric tons, an unexpectedly high, but by no means improbable, figure.

Alashia (Cyprus) was another country which Ugarit supplied with food, but from Ugarit’s own resources. Nougayrol’s forthcoming publication includes a letter from the king of Alashia to Ammurapi, king of Ugarit (No. 23 = RSL 1), and the latter’s answer to it (No. 24 = RS 20.238). The king of Ugarit styles the king of Alashia “my father,” a very unusual formula in correspondence between kings of equal rank, since Ugarit was in no way subject to Alashia—both kingdoms were, at least formally, vassals of Hatti.19 Could it be that the king of Alashia was Ammurapi’s maternal uncle or grandfather? Now, one of the tablets from the oven (PRU V, No. 61 = RS 18.147) is the Ugaritic translation of a letter from a certain Pgn who addresses the king of Ugarit, i.e. Ammurapi, “my son.” This concurrence of terminology makes it possible to suppose that Pgn is the very same king of Alashia whom Ammurapi calls “my father.” The essential part of Pgn’s letter, after the standard introductory formulas, runs as follows:

\[
\begin{align*}
\textit{ky. lik. bny} & \text{ (to) } \textit{lst. akl. "my midy w ghny}\text{20} \\
\textit{w. bny. hnkt} & \text{ Since my son sent me} \\
\textit{yškn [.] anyt} & \text{ a tablet of food,21} \\
\textit{ym. yšrr?} & \text{ there is plenty and abundance with me,} \\
\textit{w. ak[1? \ldots \ldots \ldots]} & \text{ and let my son in the same way} \\
[\ldots] \text{[.] \ldots \ldots \ldots} & \text{ equip a sea-ship,} \\
[\ldots] \text{[.] \ldots \ldots \ldots} & \text{ strengthen (?) (it)} \\
\end{align*}
\]

However, Ammurapi’s answer to the king of Alashia deals with much more alarming events. “My father,” writes Ammurapi, “behold, the enemy’s ships came (here); my cities (?) were burned, and they did evil things in my country. Does not my father know that all my troops and chariots (?) are in the Hittite country, and all my ships are in the land of Lycia? . . . Thus, the country is abandoned to itself. May my father know it: the seven ships of the enemy that came here inflicted much damage upon us.” He asks the king of Alashia to inform him if other ships of the enemy were noticed.

We are in the presence of the first stage of the Sea Peoples’ invasion. The main forces of the enemy are still in the Aegean, but their intentions are known, and the king of Ugarit, instead of passively waiting for their arrival, attempts to oppose their offensive at its very start. His entire fleet sails westward to Lycia to defend the passage from the Aegean to the Mediterranean main, while all of his landtroops join the Hittite army in an effort to stop the aggression in the western marches of the empire. Meanwhile, small flotillas of the invaders take advantage of the situation to attack the unprotected coast of the Ugaritic kingdom. A letter to the king of Ugarit from Eshuwar, Grand Supervisor of Alashia (Nougayrol’s No. 22 = RS 20.18), states that some of the king’s subjects, who

37 Breasted, AR III, §518.
38 CRL III (1960) 165.
39 Amuwandal III claimed that Alashia was under Hittite royal overlordship, but this claim was not universally recognized (cf. A. Goetze, Madduwattal, §35*). Under his brother and successor Shuppiluliuma II, however, Alashia was actually conquered by Hatti and became a tributary, as shown by the recently discovered Boghazköy tablet KBo XII 38, obverse I (Heinrich Otten, “Neue Quellen zum Ausklang des Hethitischen Reiches,” MDOG 94 [1963] 135).
20 We believe that bhn is to be understood as an abstract in -dn of the Heb. root ’db II, whence ’db “thick, dense,” Arab. ǧabaṭ “thickness, density.”
21 Compare Bottéro, ARM VII, 228, n, 2, where the expression la šašiš šašiš tum-pa-am is explained as a check upon whose receipt one talent of silver should be paid to the bearer. Similarly, lst akl might have been a document to the effect that food should be delivered to the addressee.
stopped at Alashia with their ships, surrendered a flotilla to the enemy.

How large was the Ugaritic navy in those fateful days? A letter from the oven (PRU V, No. 62 = RS 18.148) was written to the king by one Ydn, who called himself ngr hstkh “the guardian of thy life” and ’bd mlk “king’s servant.” He urges the king: škn hmms l m(rijk) any “equip a hundred and fifty ships.”22 This would clearly be a reinforcement of the existing navy. A hundred and fifty ships is a very considerable number. According to Herodotus (8.1.14), the entire fleet of the Greek coalition which met the Persian invasion in 480 B.C. numbered 324 triremes and 9 fifty-oar ships, of which 200 triremes were provided by the Athenians. The Ugaritic ships of the thirteenth century should, of course, be compared with the earlier type of Greek war vessels, the penteconters or fifty-oar ships, rather than the later triremes. The strongest Greek sea-power of the sixth century was Samos, whose tyrant Polycrates “had a fleet of a hundred penteconters, and bowmen to the number of a thousand. Herewith he plundered all, without distinction of friend or foe... He captured many of the islands, and several towns upon the mainland” (Herodotus 3:39, Rawlinson’s translation). If we turn farther back, to the age when the Iliad was being composed, we find in the Catalogue of the Ships that the largest imaginable naval contingent from a single state was the hundred ships from Mycenae (Iliad 2.576). Accordingly, the seaforces of Ugarit were superior to the naval resources of any state in pre-classical Greece.23

One of the tablets from the oven (PRU V, No. 65 = RS 18.75) shows that the Syrian rulers were hastily concluding treaties of mutual assistance. We do not know who was the other party to the treaty because the obverse of the tablet is virtually obliterated, but the reverse reads as follows:

\[
\text{inm. } \textit{bnk } \textit{hwt} \quad \ldots \text{when thy servant delivered (?) }
\]
\[
\text{[y?]rš. } \textit{my.}
\]
\[
\text{mmn. } \textit{iršk.}
\]

What is thy desire

22 In line 6, ’prm are mentioned outside any context. If the word is really to be read in this way (the ayin in these texts is very similar to a gimmel, so that it may have been gphrm, trees for ship construction), it possibly refers not to the Habiru, but to “naval crews”—Egyptian ’pr. It may be noted that another word from Ugaritic naval terminology, br, is of Egyptian origin (UM §20.351).

23 Ugaritic ships must certainly have formed the bulk of the Hittite fleet which, according to a record of the last Hittite king, d ḥst. w. ank
\[
\text{ašn. l. } \textit{ihy}
\]
\[
\text{w. ap. ank. mmn}
\]
\[
\text{[hiroj]t. w. ẓhy}
\]

(20) [y’]msn. ẓmn
\[
\text{w.[u?]hy. al ybrn}
\]

which thou lackest
—I will provide for my brother, and I too, whatever I [a]ck—my brother will load it there.

And let my brother not squander it!

Ammurapi addresses the king of Alashia as “my father.” He would hardly have written in a tone of equality to his northeastern neighbor, the Hittite dynasty of Carchemish. It is, therefore, possible that the other party in this agreement was his southern neighbor, the king of Amurru.

Another tablet from the oven (PRU V, No. 60 = RS 18.38) is the Ugaritic translation of a letter written to Ammurapi by “The Sun, thy lord,” that is, by the king of Hatti. ’m ṭš kil midm ṭlm “with The Sun, everything is very well,” announces the standard introductory formula which is bitterly contradicted by what is said in the latter part of the letter:

\[
\text{(31) ib. } \textit{lm. a[... ] y}
\]
\[
\text{the enemy [advances] against us}
\]
\[
\text{(32) w. spr. in [...] } \text{[dm]
\text{and there is no number [...] .}
\]
\[
\text{(33) sprn. thr [......]
\text{our number is pure(?)
\text{[ ]
\text{whatever is available, look for it}
\text{(34) atr. it. } \textit{bqt}
\text{and send it to me.}
\text{(35) w. } \textit{štn. ly}
\text{This the king of Ugarit did, for the Ugaritic army fought in the Anatolian theater of war, as we know from the letter to the king of Alashia quoted above.}

Another letter from the oven (PRU V, No. 63 = RS 18.40) is a dispatch from the Ugaritic commander on the northern front whose name was Shiptibiaal:

\[
\text{l. mlk. } b'[l]y
\text{To the kind, my l[or]rd,}
\text{r } g m
\text{say:}
\[
\text{Shuppiluliuma II, thrice defeated enemy ships coming from Alashia (KBo XII 36, reverse III, transliteration and translation by Heinrich Otten, MDQG 94 (1963) 20f). The only way to make this record consistent with the contemporary Ugaritic data presenting Alashia as an ally of Ugarit (and, accordingly, of Hatti), is to accept Otten’s view that the ships in question belonged not to the kingdom of Alashia but to the Peoples of the Sea who had temporarily taken hold of the island.}

24 inm is probably Akkadian enuma.
NEW EVIDENCE ON THE LAST DAYS OF UGARIT 257

thm tpb[’] [’]bd[?] Message of Shiptibaal
thy s’erv[a][n].

(5) [l.p]’n. b’ly [b’]d. b’[d] To the feet of my lord
seven times (and) seven
times from afar I fall.

[mr] hqtm Thy servant in
qlt bdk. b. Lawasanda

lwsnd [y]b’sr. fortified [his] positions
‘m[.]mlk with the king.
w. ht And behold,
mlk. syr25 the king retreated,
(10) ns. w. tm faked, and there
ydbh he sacrificed
mlg ml[k?] (rest incomprehensible)

w. m[?]d[ ] (2/y)

The clue to the meaning of the letter is the word in line 10, lwsnd, unexplained by the publisher. This is the name of a city in the land of Kizzuwatna which the Hittites called Lawasantiya and which, according to the Hittite story of the siege of Urshu under Hattushilish I, lay between the Antitaurus and the upper Euphrates, that is, far in the east of the Hittite Empire.26 Many centuries later, in the Annals of Shalmaneser III, the same name appears as 81Lusanda, but this city was clearly situated in Eastern Cilicia, not far from Mount Amaran.27 It does not seem possible that the two documents refer to one and the same city, although the name is certainly the same in both cases. It was probably transferred to the Cilician city during the brief period of Kizzuwatnâ’s rule in Eastern Cilicia. In the Ugaritic letter, Lawasanda is rather the Cilician city of this name. Therefore, Viroleaud’s restoration of line 11—[w.] b sr—“and in Tyre”—is eliminated, and the missing first letter should be restored as y, giving [y]b’sr “he fortified.” The king referred to by Shiptibaal could only be the king of Hatti himself. Thus, the united armies of Hatti and Ugarit retreated all the way to the Syrian border. All of Anatolia had already been lost long ago to the Amaran. The name of this mountain appears in a lengthy letter (PRU II, No. 12 = RS 16.402) written by Ewir-Sharruma (lwr-twm28) to his “Lady” (adyt), who apparently was the mother of the Ugaritic king. The first part of the letter is very badly damaged, but line 10 is clear enough: [p. hnl. ib. d. b. mg’h “and, behold, the enemy who is in

(15) . . . . . w. ap. ank and I, too,
(16) . . . . . l. gr. amn to Mount Amaran
(17) . . . . . ktt. hnl. ib . . . . . . behold, the enemy
destroyed

Ewir-Sharruma worries about the two thousand horses (alpm ḫswm) which the king entrusted to him. He would be glad to deliver them to whomsoever the king would send for that purpose. Two thousand horses is a very impressive number, corresponding to a thousand chariots. In the Amarna Age, the forces of the small city-kings of Phoenicia and Palestine were rarely larger than thirty or fifty chariots. Only much later, in the ninth century B.C., could the more important rulers of Syria muster greater numbers of chariots and cavalrymen. In 853, Ben-Hadad of Damascus mustered 1,200 chariots and 1,200 horsemen in the battle of Qarqar, while Iruhelen of Hamath commanded only 700 chariots and 700 horsemen, and the strongest contingent of chariots, 2,000 of them, was provided by Ahab of Israel.29

Ewir-Sharruma wrote to the “Lady,” because the king of Ugarit was also absent from his capital: he was moving somewhere ( . . . . l. hnl. mlk. l. 8), he spent the night somewhere (l. yb. mlk. l. 14). Ewir-Sharruma’s letter is tragic:

(27) w. hnl. ibm. ḫsq ly and, behold, the enemies
press me,
(28) p. l. ḥnt. ḥty but I shall not leave my
wife (and)
(29) n’ry. ḫl. ḫn. ib my children . . . before the
enemy.

The most important thing we learn from this letter is that the enemy had already crossed the Amaran and was now in Mukish—immediately north of Ugarit. The only enemy to whom this could possibly refer is the Peoples of the Sea. We

25 syr, from the root sdr “retreat, turn away.”
26 See references in my Hellenosemitica (E. J. Brill, 1965)
27 Fuad Safar, “A Further Text of Shalmaneser III from
Assur” Sumer 7 (1951) 12, iv:22-34.
28 Actually written lwr-twm, a mistake caused by the close
similarity of the signs w and r in Ugaritic script.
29 The identity of Mq’h with Mqšl, Mqšlî, Mqšl was first recognized in JNES 22 (1963) 237.
30 Shalmaneser III’s Monolith Inscription, year 6; translation ANET 278f.
do not know of any other invasion of Mukish by forces hostile to Ugarit. The offensive of Shuppiluliuma against Mukish in 1366 was made in concert with the Ugaritic king Niqmadda. The Egyptians and the Assyrians never reached as far to the northwest as Mukish in their wars against Hatti. 

PRU II, No. 13 = RS 16.379 is a letter of a Ugaritic king l. mkt. u[gm jy “to the Queen, my mother,” who is undoubtedly identical with the “Lady” (adt) of Ewir-Sharruma’s letter since both letters were found in the Central Archives, at the same depth. Evidently at the head of an army detachment far from the capital, the king writes to his mother after the usual greetings:

(16) w hm. ht And if the Hittites
(17) l. w. likt mount, I will send a mes-
(18) ’mk. w. hm to thee, and if
(19) l. l. w. lakm. they do not mount, I will certainly send
(20) ilak. w. ar. a message. And thou,
(21) umy. al. tdi. (!) my mother, be not afraid31
(22) w. ap. mdkm and do not put
(23) b. lbk. al. worries into thy
(24) tlt heart.

The king apparently occupied a position on some heights, perhaps in the mountains of Amanus, and hoped that the arrival of Hittite troops might strengthen his resistance. Nothing, however, could change the situation. A brief letter to a certain Žrdn (or perhaps Žrdn) by one who calls the addressee “my lord” (PRU V, No. 114 = RS 19.11) does not belong to the lot found in the oven, but it sheds light on the fate of the Ugaritic territory in those days:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>l. ž(?)r̄dn</th>
<th>To Ž(?)r̄dn, l̄. b’ly. r̄gm</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>bn. ūr̄nk. m̄gy</td>
<td>thy messenger arrived.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ħrd. w. šl nw</td>
<td>The degraded one32</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>qr.’(?).</td>
<td>and the low one34</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>akl̄n. b. gr̄nt</td>
<td>Our food in the threshing</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>floors</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

31 Virolleaud emends thus from tdi. in the tablet, and explains by Heb. zbl II.
32 ’mk = Arab. habata “to lower, to diminish” (Virolleaud).
33 ħrd is connected by Virolleaud with the Ugaritic noun ūr̄nk that may mean “treasury,” thence his translation: “The poor one became rich.” We would think of Heb. ħarada “to be shy.”
34 ūr is derived by Virolleaud from Heb. š’ld, Ugar. šl “to be peaceful”: “and the wise one is miserable.” We would
35 l. b’r is sacked (or: burned),36 and also the vineyards
are destroyed.
36 This report may well refer to one of the earlier plundering incursions of enemy’s ships, similar to the one described in the letter to the king of Alashia quoted above. If, however, we multiply it by several hundred, we get an image of what happened to the entire territory of the kingdom after its navy and army were defeated in a long campaign, and the defenseless country was overrun by the Peoples of the Sea. The inhabitants of the capital were either massacred or they fled, never to return. Many houses were not even burned or violently destroyed, but were abandoned by their tenants and fell into decay.37 Some of the destroyed cities—as Tarsus or Carchemish—were rebuilt after the invasion, others were not. Ugarit was among the latter.

This report may well refer to one of the earlier plundering incursions of enemy’s ships, similar to the one described in the letter to the king of Alashia quoted above. If, however, we multiply it by several hundred, we get an image of what happened to the entire territory of the kingdom after its navy and army were defeated in a long campaign, and the defenseless country was overrun by the Peoples of the Sea. The inhabitants of the capital were either massacred or they fled, never to return. Many houses were not even burned or violently destroyed, but were abandoned by their tenants and fell into decay.37 Some of the destroyed cities—as Tarsus or Carchemish—were rebuilt after the invasion, others were not. Ugarit was among the latter.

The data of the Ugaritic texts bearing on the invasion of the Peoples of the Sea are scarce; in particular, we could wish that they contained the ethnic names of these peoples spelled in the Ugaritic alphabet, contributing to a better identification of their Egyptian transcriptions.88 But, despite this scarcity of data, the texts are very significant. From them we learn about the earlier phases of the great invasion, before the invaders clashed with the Egyptians and were repelled. Not unimportant cause of this defeat were the Sea Peoples’ previous losses in the fight against the retreating, but still resisting, armies of Hatti and Ugarit. As Pushkin said about the invasion of Spain by the Moors: “The Goths fell not without glory: valiantly did they fight.” In these letters, written in the fire and tension of the events, we feel the breath of immediacy, and our impression from reading them is similar to that which we gain from reading the Lachish ostraca from the final days of Judah’s resistance to Nebuchadnezzar.

BRANDEIS UNIVERSITY

think of Heb. š’ld “lowest hem of a garb,” Arab. sawila “to hang down loose.”