

tums, verglichen auch mit dem Vorbild dieser Fiktion in der eigentlichen Makkabäerzeit. In 2.3 „Jüdische und alexandrinische Sensibilitäten“ (106–117) kommen zunächst als neue Größe die Römer mit ins Spiel, zunächst bei einer Verletzung des ägyptischen Tierkults durch einen römischen Soldaten ca. 60 v. Chr. Daneben stellt Sch. einen Aufruhr um Agrippa I. im Jahre 38 n. Chr., über den wir vor allem durch Philo informiert sind. Beide Beispiele zeigen, dass das Nebeneinander der unterschiedlichen Gruppierungen nicht immer spannungsfrei gewesen ist. Als Einzelperson vereint Philo (2.4: 117–126) alle drei Richtungen: Jude, Alexandriner und Römer. Besonderen Wert legt Sch. auf letzteres. Vielleicht hätte er noch herausstellen können, dass Philo auch die Feindbilder der Römer übernimmt: die Parther im Osten und die Germanen im Westen² in all ihrer „Gottlosigkeit“ als die den Frieden des Reiches bedrohenden Mächte, und er hätte wohl auch stärker das enorme Vertrauen in Caligula hervorheben können, dessen Feldzug am Niederrhein immerhin von den Gebeten der alexandrinischen Juden begleitet wurde (*leg.* 356). Stärker noch als Philo selber tritt als handelnde Einzelperson sein Neffe Tiberius Julius Alexander hervor (2.5: 126–139). Seine Karriere im römischen Militär- und Verwaltungsdienst brachte ihn bis in die Funktion des Präfekten der Provinz Ägypten unter Nero und Vespasian, also des obersten Vertreters der kaiserlichen Macht dort, gleichrangig den Prokonsuln senatorischer Provinzen. Auch an der Belagerung Jerusalems im Jüdischen Krieg war er u. a. beteiligt. Sch. vermeidet dabei, den in der Literatur sonst durchaus üblichen Begriff des „Apostaten“ auf ihn anzuwenden, da der für diese Zeit noch anachronistisch sei.

Kapitel 3 (140–181) beschreibt die demgegenüber folgende „Verschlechterung der rechtlichen Verhältnisse in römischer Zeit“, beginnend mit dem Abschnitt 3.1 (140–153) zum „Bürgerrecht der jüdischen Bevölkerung“, ausgehend von einem Strabo-Zitat³, nach dem die Juden einen großen Teil der Stadt bewohnt haben unter einem eigenen Ethnarchen wie eine eigene *politeia*, was Sch. teilweise bestätigt sieht aufgrund neuer Textfunde. Nach der römischen Eroberung Ägyptens freilich fallen jedenfalls in der Provinz die Juden unter die Einwohner, die die Kopfsteuer (*laographia*) zu leisten hatten (3.2: 154–165), ob auch in Alexandrien, lässt Sch. offen. Deutlicher sind die Verhältnisse bei der Judensteuer nach dem Jüdischen Krieg, die die Abgabe an den Jerusalemer Tempel ablöst. „Das Reskript des Claudius“ (3.3: 165–175), erhalten auf einem als Text 6 wiedergegebenen Papyrus aus dem Jahr 41 n. Chr., hält die latenten, unter

Caligula auch offenen Konflikte in Alexandrien in der Schwebel, anders als Josephus diese Zeit darstellt (3.4: 175–181).

Das alles treibt hin auf das 4. Kapitel: Die „Vernichtung der jüdischen Gemeinde“ (182–210). Bei Josephus (4.1: 182–192) wie auch bei Philo (4.2: 192–200) zeigen sich die wachsenden Spannungen vieler Art bis hin zur Zerstörung von Synagogen. Unter Trajan schließlich (4.3: 200–210) kommt es dann im Jahre 117 n. Chr. zur Vernichtung des Judentums in Ägypten infolge von Aufständen in der Kyrenaika und Ägypten. Die Hauptquelle dafür ist zwar der christliche Historiker Euseb⁴; hinzu kommen aber ein paar ergänzende Papyri.

Im fünften Kapitel „Rückblick“ (211–230) behandelt Sch. zunächst (5.1: 211–220) die antijüdische Polemik speziell in den *Acta Alexandrinorum* und stellt dann generell (5.2: 220–230) die Frage nach ihren Ursachen auf ethnischer, religiöser, sozialer wie politischer Ebene.

Es folgt 6. ein höchst verdienstvoller Textteil (231–255) mit sechs Papyri und zwei Inschriften, jeweils zweisprachig dargeboten und mit kurzen Einleitungen und Anmerkungen versehen. Es handelt sich um mehr oder weniger bekannte Dokumente, die die literarischen Quellen ergänzen. Das Literaturverzeichnis (7: 256–274) bietet sehr umfassend die relevante Sekundärliteratur.

Insgesamt ein verlässlich gearbeitetes und in seiner Durchführung überzeugendes Buch, das viele Anstöße zu weiterer Arbeit gibt. Mich selbst hat am meisten beschäftigt, welche grundsätzliche Bedeutung die Epochenbegrenzung „117. n. Chr.“ besitzt: „Ab dem Jahr 117 n. Chr. sind für die folgenden 220 Jahre nur noch ganz vereinzelt papyrologische Zeugnisse über die Juden in Ägypten vorhanden“ (201)⁵. Das ist sicher kein neues Ergebnis, ist aber in seinen Konsequenzen für das Verständnis des frühen Christentums im Ägypten des 2. und 3. Jh.s einschließlich der Gnosis kaum bedacht; auf der anderen Seite ist es eben nicht dieses Judentum griechischer Sprache, dem die Zukunft gehört, sondern die rabbinische Sammlung der aramäischen und hebräischen Überlieferung.

Islamistik/Semitistik

Garbini, Giovanni: *Introduzione all'epigrafia semitica*. Brescia: Paideia Editrice, 2006. 415 S. 28 Ab = Studi sul Vicino Oriente antico. 49,70 €. ISBN 88.394.0716.2. – Bespr. von Giovanni Mazzini, Pisa.

This book sets itself the objective of systematically illustrating the whole of Semitic epigraphic documents

² Vgl. *de somn.* II 117–122. Die deutsche Standardübersetzung (Die Werke Philos von Alexandrien, 6. Teil, hg. von I. Heinemann und M. Adler, 245f.) lässt den Teil über die Germanen aus, was nicht auf die Textüberlieferung, sondern nur auf das Erscheinungsjahr 1938 (Jüdischer Buchverlag Stefan Münz, Breslau) zurückzuführen ist; vgl. meinen Aufsatz: *The Godlessness of Germans Living by the Sea according to Philo of Alexandria*, in: *The Future of Early Christianity* (FS H. Koester), hg. von B. Pearson, 1991, S. 57–63.

³ Überliefert freilich nur bei Josephus, *antiqu.* XIV 117.

⁴ Der Begriff „Kuriosum“, den Sch. 230 in diesem Zusammenhang verwendet, ist freilich unangemessen.

⁵ Dieser Sachverhalt wird leider verunklart, wenn Sch. am Ende desselben Kapitels schreibt: „Es dauerte bis weit in das 3. Jh. n. Chr., bis sich die jüdische Bevölkerung in Alexandrien und Ägypten langsam zu regenerieren begann“ (210). In einer E-mail vom 8. 12. 2006 hat er dies aber als Druckfehler korrigiert zu 4. Jh. (entsprechend 117 + 200 Jahre des vorigen Zitats) statt 3.

tion. Comprehensively, it covers the documented material from the Syro-palestinian area (chapters 4–7), the Arabian peninsula (chapters 8–11) and Ethiopia (chapter 12). Apart from some still obscure 2nd millennium documents, (the syllabic inscriptions from Byblos and the Protosinaïtic inscriptions etc., chapter 4), particular attention is focussed on the material attested since the beginning of the 1st millennium.

Analysis is detailed and the book is praiseworthy in how it presents the several texts with a graphic reproduction of the originals along with their translations.

The book sets out to provide the non-specialist reader with an introduction to a vast and variegated documentation. This means that the many thorny and controversial issues in Semitic epigraphy that the book explores had to be treated in a very general fashion.

Needless to say, this comprehensive and hand-book style of work is always welcome, especially in Italian scholarly circles because it fills a significant gap. We must, therefore, be grateful to such an outstanding scholar as Professor Giovanni Garbini, who has taken on such a difficult enterprise.

However, some expectations are not fulfilled. Indeed, Garbini's illustration of a series of points that the reviewer deems essential when studying Semitic epigraphic documentation, is frequently very questionable and disappointing.

The first concerns the definition of an epigraphic document.

However popular it may set out to be, a book about epigraphic documents must provide the reader with a clear idea of what is usually meant by "epigraphic document" in the ancient Near East. According to Garbini, Semitic epigraphy deals with Semitic cultures, the literary corpora of which are unknown (pg. 19); the only written documents which have survived are the inscriptions, therefore only epigraphic languages are to be taken into consideration (pg. 21). Furthermore, Garbini occasionally points out that the issue of textual typology is not suited to this level of book (pg. 91).

The statement indicates that we are dealing exclusively with "inscriptions", without describing what they actually are; on the other hand, the statement is also misleading for it implies that those inscriptions are not part of the unknown literary corpus of the civilization concerned. Furthermore, the observation that analysing the textual typology is superfluous is not justified because of the readership the book is aimed at (if anything, the contrary would be true).

It should be borne in mind that epigraphic documents cannot be adequately evaluated without taking into account its specific literary system. The literacy of an epigraphic document is deeply rooted in its essential purpose which, substantially, lies within the principle of a written text meant to last for ever. This inevitably means that the epigraphic document must have a specific support, which is basically stone. This, in turn, also explains the persistent tendency to frame the epigraphic document within the monumental context particularly suited to this principle of permanency, restricting the

number of motifs and recipients which may be recorded. Accordingly, one may speak of prefixed and rather well identifiable "textual genres" which Garbini ought to have analysed carefully. Only in this sense is the author's correct definition of the term "epigraphic languages" suitable. It defines the process of selection of the linguistic and stylistic features which can be specifically adopted for the motifs and the recipients which characteristically appear on the epigraphic document, as is particularly evident within a text linguistic approach.¹

As a consequence, the epigraphic document must be considered a part of the literary system of a civilization. The lack of the rest of this system makes it much more difficult to analyse the epigraphic document, but it should not be used as definition of it.

This general remark, moreover, leads us to a further reflection on the selection of the material treated in the book. The inclusion of the Elephantine papyri as well as of the ancient South Arabian sticks and palm-leaf stalks is debatable, for these documents do not have the features of epigraphic documents. By contrast, the Mesopotamian *kudurru*, for example, does possess more of these features and could have been taken into consideration.²

A second aspect which should be emphasised here is the presentation of the ancient South Arabian material. About half of the book is dedicated to this, showing that some historical importance is at last being given to the civilization of ancient South Arabia, an area of the Near East usually badly underestimated when not completely neglected in current scholarly debate. Unfortunately, this section of the book gives the impression of being sadly lacking because since the corpus of epigraphic material from ancient South Arabia has become today so huge and diversified it can be hardly summarised in fewer than two hundred pages.

This is particularly true seeing that in addition to the emergence of new archaeological data, the last decades have seen a substantial increase in written documentation to a degree incomparable to almost every other area of the Near East. The author seems unaware of this, so his general description leads the non-specialist reader to think that ancient South Arabian documentation is to some extent comparable to that of the Syrian and Palestinian areas, which is not the case at all. In this regard suffice it to cite an observation by W. W. Müller according to whom in relation to "textkorpora antiker Sprachen (. . .) unter den semitischen Sprachen nach dem Akkadischen und dem Hebräischen das Altsüdarabische den dritten Rang einnimmt".³

¹ Lastly see Shade A., A Text Linguistic Approach to the Syntax and Style of the Phoenician Inscription of Azatiwada, JSS 50/1, 2005, 35–58.

² See the recent discussion in Brinkman J. A., Babylonian Royal Land Grants, Memorials of Financial Interests, and Invocation of the Divine, JESHO 49/1, 2006, 1–47.

³ Müller W. W., Review of Stein, 2003 (see footnote 5), WdO 35, 2005, 247–251, esp. 247.

Some more detailed remarks are in order to make the inadequacy of this section of the book clear. In the case of Sabaic (for Qatabanic and Minaic see below) there are two aspects among the many that stand out in particular.

First, the author makes no mention of the substantial progress made in recent years in reconstructing the grammar. The non-specialist reader is led to believe that Sabaic is a scantily and poorly attested language, the major morpho-syntactic and lexical features of which are unknown just as it seems from the texts selected (mostly archaic and brief dedicatory texts). The author seems to undervalue the significance of the great amount of grammatical research carried out by Nebes⁴ over the last twenty years as well as the crucial and very recent work by Stein,⁵ neither of which is mentioned. Despite this personal stance on Garbini's part, Sabaic today shows its precise and quite clear linguistic system, which will certainly contribute to enriching the general panorama of Near Eastern studies.

Second, the author makes no mention of the large and very interesting Sabaic legal documentation, a source of primary linguistic and historical importance. Although these documents are still almost completely unknown to wider scholarly debate (noteworthy is its exclusion from the last comprehensive study on the subject published by Westbrook in 2003), a tradition peculiar to ancient South Arabian studies had already contributed re-evaluating them. This tradition was begun by Rhodokanakis' brilliant research work, which was carried forward by W. W. Müller in the prestigious series *Texte aus der Umwelt des Alten Testaments*, up to the new one published by Nebes in 2004. The Sabaic legal documentation (but also Qatabanic and Minaic) covers an ample range of juridical matters such as royal land grants, penal law, regulation of economic administrative and religious issues and records of private transactions. A detailed description of this material would have enabled the non-specialist reader to discover an unexpectedly high degree of social and political development reached by the Sabaeans, and more in general, ancient South Arabian civilization. The administration of the state was structured and based on a very complicated and articulated legal system which still has to be fully explored. The law played such a profound role in this society that it was intensively written on records for display within monumental contexts in a fashion unique in the Near East which somewhat adumbrated the classical world.

In the reviewer's opinion, having ignored all this is one of the book's most significant and dangerous faults because it leads the reader astray.

A third point to be discussed regards the treatment of the texts, which, we have said, are many. Here Garbini falls into the trap of presenting his personal opinions in the guise of facts. This is perfectly acceptable within the framework of a specialised scholarly debate, but very dangerous when aimed at the non-specialist reader. It would have been better to indicate where controversy and uncertainty lay and offer tentative solutions.

In the following pages some of the texts presented by Garbini have been selected and analysed in detail.

The Gezer Calendar

In his presentation of the tablet known as the "Gezer Calendar", Garbini focuses on the morpheme *-w* of the term *yrhw* in line 1 (twice), and lines 2 and 6, suggesting it be taken as an archaic relict of pl. cs., not attested in the Canaanite languages of the 1st millennium. On this assumption he proposes a translation of the tablet that renders the forms *yrhw* as a plural: "mesi" (months).

This point, in appearance a mere academic detail, has an essential bearing on the interpretation of the document as a whole and must be further discussed.

Indeed, the structure and the content of the document, which relates to actual agricultural activities within an annual cycle, has led scholars to view it as a sort of "calendar". The crucial point in this interpretation is whether or not the text expresses twelve months as would be expected in connection with a full annual calendar. If the form *yrhw* is taken as a dual, a complete calendar of twelve months would be obtained, whereas a plural would run counter to reconstructing an annual cycle making the hypothesis of a calendar incompatible. Garbini makes little attempt to tackle the substantive issue involved, namely the textual typology that the document belongs to, but merely hints at some undefined "cultura contadina" (country culture) that it describes. However, even disregarding this issue, Garbini's argument is also debatable on a purely linguistic level. The usually accepted dating of this text to the end of the 10th century would lead us to expect an *-ū* ending for the cs. pl. which in actual fact is unattested elsewhere.⁶ Moreover, the *w* reflecting the supposed *ū*, would imply a *mater lectionis* which is unusual within the local writing tradition at such an early date.⁷

A much more appropriate approach would be to take the *w* as a consonant and to view the form *yrhw* as a dual. This interpretation has recently been defended quite convincingly by Sivan⁸ who in particular emphasises that "the form *yrhw* should be interpreted as a

⁴ Among the many see Nebes N., *Stand und Aufgaben einer Grammatik des Altsüdarabischen*, in: Stiegner R. G. (Hrsg.), *Aktualisierte Beiträge zum 1. Internationalen Symposium Südarabien interdisziplinär an der Universität Graz mit kurzen Einführungen zu Spach- und Kulturgeschichte*, Graz, 1997, 111–131.

⁵ Stein P., *Untersuchungen zur Phonologie und Morphologie des Sabäischen*, EFAH 3, Rahden/Westf., 2003.

⁶ Renz J., *Die althebräischen Inschriften. Teil I. Text und Kommentar*, in: Renz J. – Röllig W., *Handbuch der althebräischen Epigraphik*, Darmstadt, 1995, esp. 33.

⁷ See Tropper J., *Nominativ Dual *yarihau im Gezer Kalendar*, ZAH 6, 1993, 228–231, who also discusses all the other proposals offered in detail.

⁸ Sivan D., *The Gezer Calendar and the Northwest Semitic Linguistics*, IEJ 48/1–2, 1998, 101–105.

noun with an anticipatory pronominal suffix attached",⁹ such as /*yarhêw*/ (< *yarhêu* < *yarhayu* < *yarhay-hu*) or /*yarhâw*/ (< *yarhâu* < *yarhayu* < *yarhayhu*).¹⁰ Analogously, the null forms *yrh*, occurring in lines 3, 4, 5 and 7, can be taken as a singular with the same pronoun attached, such as *yarhô* (< *yarhaw* < *yarhau* < *yarhahu*). Similarly to other scholars, Sivan draws attention to this syntactical use of the "anticipatory" pronoun with enforcing function which occurs quite frequently in Phoenician and Hebrew.¹¹ In this regard there is a striking ancient South Arabian parallel, that some scholars have occasionally singled out, in the use of the expression "its month" (*wrb-s*/*wrb-hw*), which is frequently attested in dating formularies. Thus, the translation proposed here of both *yrhw* and *yrh* as "the two months of it / the month of it" respectively seems more suited than Garbini's.

As noted above, the twelve-month sequence ensuing from this translation would mean that the document was meant as a calendar. This endows the Gezer Calendar with particular significance for it appears to be the only available document from 10th century Palestine which provides some information on literary genres and cultural patterns.

Unfortunately the complete lack of other parallel documents as well as the real uncertainties in interpretation make it very unwise to hazard any hard and fast hypothesis on the origin and purpose of the Gezer Calendar. Although tentative, the idea of it being an almanac of what agricultural activities are to be performed within one seasonal cycle might indeed be appropriate. If the observations made by several scholars on some traditional and poetic features of the text are true, it would be reasonable to perceive some religious-magical purpose in the Gezer Calendar rather than an administrative or practical one.¹² Bearing this in mind, the hypothesis of a scribal exercise, which has also been put forward by some scholars is not to be completely ruled out. It is well known that "scribal exercises" were considered a literary genre in the ancient Near East with sources usually found in "traditional" literary material.

The Samaria ostraka

Garbini affirms that the language used in the ostraka from Samaria was Phoenician. This assumption is based substantially on two data, namely the occurrence in them of the forms *št* "year" and *yn* "wine", which is typical of Phoenician, and on the presence of seals bearing Phoenician iconographic motifs. Garbini's argument

is unconvincing and thus this issue calls for further examination.

First and foremost, the approach of mixing linguistic and iconographic data is very risky. If the two forms *št* and *yn* mentioned seem to indicate a Phoenician influence on the language, the presence of Phoenician iconographic motifs should not be considered conclusive evidence for this. Without pursuing the evaluation of the variegated corpus of seals from Palestine, most of the iconographic motifs which characterize seals from Israel are common to the entire area including the Northern kingdom of Damascus and the Southern one of Moab. On the other hand, the fragments of ivory artefacts found in Samaria have many similarities not only with Phoenician art but also with the Syrian tradition from the Luvio-Aramaic centres.

Secondly, while it is quite clear in strictly linguistic terms that the *št* form is typical of Phoenician, it should be not forgotten that the same *št* form occurs in the Mesha stele too (lines 2, 4). Furthermore, the essential aspect is that the form *št* seems to reside in a secondary post-tonic vowel syncope, such as /*šanat*/ > /*šant*/, hence the progressive assimilation *nt* > *tt* (/*šant*/ > /*šat*/). On this premise, therefore, due account must be given to this syncope being able to be traced back to the 2nd millennium both in the Northern and in the Southern Levantine areas. Indeed, there is a *ša-an-tu₄* form meaning "year" (corresponding to the alphabetic *šnt*) in the bilingual text RS 20.198 A+B from Ugarit (in the North), and a similar form dating from the Late Bronze Age also appears to be attested in a recently published fragment from Ashkelon (in the South). The latter is a cuneiform lexical text with a column containing terms in a Canaanite dialect, in line 7 of which the *š|a-an-ti* form can be read, although the sign for *an* is slightly damaged. According to Huehnergard and van Soldt,¹³ the editors of the fragment, this term could be interpreted as /*šantū*/ meaning "year".

Consequently, the *št* form attested in Phoenician, in the Samaria ostraka and the Mesha stele, should be interpreted as the direct development of a specific innovation which had already occurred in the 2nd millennium, the progressive assimilation *nt* > *tt* being a quite usual tendency of all Canaanite languages (for the lack of this phenomenon specifically in the forms from Ugarit and Ashkelon, see Tropper¹⁴). In this perspective the *št* form in the Samaria ostraka could reflect a more archaic and geographically more widespread phenomenon characteristic of a part of the Canaanite linguistic area, rather than evidence of the use of the Phoenician language in Samaria.

Bearing this data in mind, there is a document of some importance among records from Samaria which is not mentioned by Garbini, namely the small fragment of a

⁹ Sivan D., op.cit., esp. 105.

¹⁰ This reconstruction was already suggested by Renz J., op.cit., esp. 32–33.

¹¹ For the alternative interpretation of *yrhw* as a simple dual see Tropper J., op.cit.

¹² See in general in Young I., The Style of the Gezer Calendar and Some "Archaic Biblical Hebrew" Passages, VT 42/3, 1992, 362–375.

¹³ Huehnergard J. – van Soldt W., A Cuneiform Lexical Text form Ashkelon with a Canaanite Column, IEJ 49/3–4, 1999, 184–192, esp. 191–192.

¹⁴ Tropper J., Ugaritische Grammatik, AOAT 273, Münster, 2000, esp. 145–148.

stele Sam(8): 14. On this fragment the only surviving term is a šr form, which Renz interprets¹⁵ as the well-known relative pronoun of Classical Hebrew. If this is true, it might prove that the language of Samaria was quite similar to Hebrew, the relative šr being an exclusive trait of the latter.

In my opinion, the available written documentation from Samaria is so scanty that it is preferable to leave the question open, also because even the hypothesis of a Northern dialectal variant of Hebrew, which has been suggested several times for Samaria, does not appear to be conclusive.¹⁶

Despite this, the ostraka can be considered a historical source of primary significance; a point which, in my view, should have been given much greater emphasis by Garbini. The destruction of the kingdom of Samaria by Assyria cancelled almost every material trace of it which makes the ostraka one of the very few relicts that give us a glimpse into some aspects of this civilization. Since the ostraka appear to be the administrative receipts of the shipment of large quantity of oil (šmn rḥš , probably "refined oil") and of wine (yn yšn , probably "old wine") to the central storehouse of the Samaria palace, there emerges a political reality of a strong centralized royal power with close control over some of the natural products from the countryside of its kingdom. The case of the "refined oil" is outstanding for it can be linked to a tradition dating back to the 3rd and 2nd millennia, which in turn points to patterns of an economic system peculiar to this area. It goes without saying how significant was the ideological connotation involved in the use of oil within precise ritual contexts.

The Arslan Tash Tablets

Garbini does not contemplate the Arslan Tash tablets in his book. According to the author these tablets "sono false" and are mentioned as such at the end of a bibliographic review (pg. 96). The argument for this assumption is based solely on one article by Teixidor of 1983.

It is widely known that the Arslan Tash tablets are documents of extraordinary interest for their strikingly unusual linguistic and iconographic features. They have, therefore, been the subject of debate and some scholars have thrown serious doubts on their authenticity.

In 1992 Teixidor's article was discussed in detail by van Dijk¹⁷ who argued convincingly against the majority of Teixidor's reasonings and which thus invalidates them as an exclusive basis for alleging forgery.

By contrast, some recent studies have contributed to singling out some specific traits of the tablets which give substantial weight to their authenticity.

Pardee has thoroughly analysed the tablets and has noted a very striking philological parallel between the expression $\text{bt } \text{b}^{\text{b}} \text{bl } \text{tb}^{\text{n}}$, occurring in AT 1 5–6 and the similar $\text{bt } \text{ub}^{\text{u}} \text{al } \text{tb}^{\text{i}}$, attested in the Ugaritic ritual text KTU 169, 18.¹⁸ Moreover, he also points out that in the Arslan Tash tablets, mention is made of the god *Hwrn*, along with the allusion to his wives and his magical power, which are religious features specific to the Ugaritic ritual text KTU 1.100 (note the use of the root *mlḥš* hinting at the magical sphere in Ug. and the parallel one *lḥšt* in AT).¹⁹ This leads to the conclusion that if it were a forgery, it would have had to have been produced by a very expert philologist with knowledge of these two Ugaritic texts. This, however, is ruled out because, as Pardee notes, the Ugaritic texts were discovered in 1978 and 1961 respectively while the Arslan Tash tablets had already been purchased by Mesnil du Buisson in 1933.

The comparison with Ugaritic traditions, therefore, seems to have contributed significantly to the evaluation of the documents and it has been also applied to the analysis of their quite obscure content.

The tablets seem to allude to mythical episodes which Zamora reasonably linked to the Ugaritic myth of the combat between Baal and some demoniac deities, reported in KTU 1.12.²⁰ The mythical pattern common to the Ugaritic text and the Arslan Tash tablets appear also to share some precise textual features; noticeable is the name *šyy* which is interpreted by Zamora²¹ as the counterpart of the god *šy* in the Ugaritic text mentioned above, both characteristic of the desert.

Allusion to mythical episodes seems to suit the content of the tablets and their function as amulets against evil power, in which archetypal myths are evoked in order that the amulets themselves gain power. This would make the tablets the continuation of a ritual textual tradition deeply rooted in the area since the Ebla documentation.

Although satisfactory understanding of several philological and cultural aspects of the Arslan Tash tablets still eludes scholars, Pardee's observation still holds true: "la mise à l'écart de textes d'Arslan Tash reflète une tendance regrettable qui se manifeste depuis quelques années à déclarer faux les objets qui ne cadrent pas avec les notions préconçues de classement, tendance qui s'étend jusqu'à des objets trouvés en fouilles régulières, comme la stèle de Tel Dan".²²

The parallelism with the Tel Dan inscription evoked by Pardee, seems particularly apt to this discussion since, similarly to the Arslan Tash tablets, Garbini considers it fake too, without, however, substantiating his opinion (the inscription is listed within a bibliographical review

¹⁵ Renz J., *op.cit.*, esp. 135.

¹⁶ Briquel-Chatonnet F., *Hébreu du Nord et Phénicien: Etude comparée de deux dialectes cananéens*, OLP 23, 1992, 89–126.

¹⁷ Van Dijk J., *The Authenticity of the Arslan Tash Amulets*, Iraq 54, 1992, 65–68.

¹⁸ Pardee D., *Les documents d'Arslan Tash: authentiques ou faux?*, Syria 75, 1998, 15–54, esp. 36.

¹⁹ Pardee D., *op.cit.*, esp. 36.

²⁰ Zamora J.-A., *Textos mágicos y trasfondo mitológico: Arslan Tash*, SEL 20, 2003, 9–23.

²¹ Zamora J.-A., *op.cit.*, esp. 16.

²² Pardee D., *op.cit.*, esp. 42.

at pg. 119 with the following note: "non è stata presa in considerazione perché falsa"; one of by Garbini's own articles from 1994 is quoted in support of this). Without going into the detail of another important text which has been subjected to scrutiny by several scholars, suffice it to say that an entire book²³ has been recently dedicated to the inscription; and even if Garbini were in complete disagreement with the new assessment of the text presented in the book, he would have done well to discuss or at least mention it.

The market stele of Timna^c

On pg. 315, Garbini illustrates a Qatabanic legal text (without mentioning its editorial details), and defines it as a "codice commerciale" stating merely that it is engraved on three faces of a stele. Furthermore, in fig. 142, he gives a translation of a few lines of this text alongside a reproduction of the original.

The reader would probably be surprised to learn that the text Garbini presents in this way is the inscription CSAI I, 205A, B, C=R 4337A, B, C, one of the most significant records of ancient South Arabian legal documentation. Indeed, the inscription contains the rules governing the economic transactions within the kingdom of Qataban. Since this typology of legal document is very rare (see some Sabaic parallels: R 3910 and C 291), the juridical rules underlying the economic dynamics in ancient South Arabia are almost unknown. This, in turn, makes this inscription of crucial historical significance.

The definition "codice commerciale" proposed by Garbini is misleading because the term *code* in the juridical terminology of the Near Eastern law is applied to comprehensive collections of diverse rules, mostly of a speculative nature. It is easy to see that this inscription is, instead, a royal edict the main purpose of which is to provide general provisions regulating the practical functioning of the market.²⁴

This edict reflects a historical moment in which the kings of Timna^c supported by the tribe of Qataban, were particularly strong and had created a centralized state; the importance that trade had in the history of ancient South Arabia required its control by the royal authority jointly with Qataban. The part of text (lines 7–10) proposed by Garbini with the translation following is clear proof of this:

*k-dm mn ms²yṯ Tmn^c w-Brm s²yṯm w-y^crb 'd Tmn^c
w-ḥḏr b-S²mr w-²ṯrm Qṭbn b-ms²ṯm*

"... che chiunque sia un commerciante di Timna e dintorni, il commerciante venga a Timna ed eserciti il commercio nella zona consentita; che Qataban abbia il

controllo dell'attività commerciale ...". (... that whoever be a trader of Timna and outskirts, the trader come to Timna and conduct his trade in the authorised area; let Qataban have the control of trading activity ...).

This first provision of the edict establishes that any trading activity must be carried out within the capital of the kingdom of Qataban which holds authority on that activity.

Unfortunately Garbini omits that this interpretation is the new one offered recently by Avanzini in her comprehensive edition of the Qatabanic documentation:²⁵ "that is he who is a trader of Timna^c and of *Brm* in (any kind of) goods must come in Timna^c and open a shop in *S²mr*, given that Qataban has authority over the merchandise".²⁶ This new reading of the text can be considered a significant step forward in the correct understanding of a most difficult legal document which has divided scholars over the years.

Garbini does not seem to be aware that this provision is crucial for the comprehension of the rest of the text; indeed Beeston interpreted the two key expressions *y^crb* and *w-²ṯrm Qṭbn*: "must pay the market-tax" and "and one who travels to Qataban with merchandise" respectively, but the sense of the text remained unclear.

Recent archaeological discoveries all around the area in which the stele is still located seem to provide conclusive evidence towards solving this issue. Excavation has brought a large, enclosed square to light in which several storehouses appear to have openings that only give on to the inner part of it. This means that the provision requires the trader to enter (*y^crb*) Timna^c, particularly the enclosed market, identified with *S²mr* several times in the text, where all trading activity was concentrated. Accordingly, the expression *w-²ṯrm Qṭbn* alludes to the privilege accorded to Qataban, the most important tribe of the kingdom, in trading in the market; note that the edict was issued jointly by the king and Qataban (line 2–3).

Moreover, in adopting this interpretation, Garbini seems to have misunderstood the syntactical function of the expression *w-²ṯrm Qṭbn*. According to him, this clause depends on the conjunction *k-dm* ("that, that is, namely") and opens a new independent clause "(...) in the area allowed; let Qataban have the control (...)". This leads to the interpretation that the edict itself grants control of trade to Qataban which is not possible syntactically, for the expression *w-²ṯrm Qṭbn* cannot open any new independent clause. By contrast, the mimation in the term *ṯr* clearly indicates that it introduces a subordinate clause with a temporal-causative connotation enforced by a *w-* used as the so-called *wāw ḥāliyya* in the Arabic grammar tradition. This interpretation, as suggested by Avanzini ("given that Qataban has authority over the merchandise"), implies that Qataban has

²³ Athas G., *The Tel Dan Inscription. A Reappraisal and a New Interpretation*, JSOTS 360, Sheffield, 2003.

²⁴ See in general Westbrook R., *Cuneiform Law Codes and the Origins of Legislation*, ZA 9, 1986, 210–222, for the definition of code and the difference in relation to the edict.

²⁵ Avanzini A., *Corpus of South Arabian Inscriptions I–III. Qatabanic, Marginal Qatabanic, Awsanite Inscriptions*, Pisa, 2004, esp. 285–286.

²⁶ Avanzini A., *op.cit.*, esp. 285.

authority over trade (and only reaffirmed) in the edict and not granted by any other power; this detail has a substantial bearing in the historical meaning of the document.

It is noticeable, too, that there are inconsistencies in Garbini's translation which make the text even less clear. The place name *Brm* is rendered "dintorni" (outskirts) while it indicates the lower section of the wādī Bayhān where Timna' lies; there is no reason to change *Brm* into "dintorni". The expression *b-S²mr* is rendered "nella zona consentita" (in the authorised area) while the name *S²mr* indicates the market of Timna'; hence it cannot be omitted in the translation since it is a substantial clue to understanding the edict, as mentioned above.

The Minaic inscription Shaqab 19

On pg. 290 (fig. 129) Garbini presents a part of the inscription Shaqab 19 with the reproduction of the original. However, he does not illustrate the historical and philological significance of the text, nor does he mention the editorial details. A short introductory explanation would have been in order.

Indeed, it should be remembered that this inscription belongs to the expiatory genre, typical of ancient South Arabia. Usually this textual typology belongs to the private sphere and reports the act of expiation demanded for infractions of a moral and religious character committed by individuals.

Strikingly, this inscription is the public confession of a king (of *Ytl*); the offence seems to have seriously compromised the political and social dynamics of a whole community which makes the document highly significant historically and deserving of special attention.

Garbini offers a very bizarre translation of lines 9–14 as follows:

w-bhn f' s' mbr wqr dhh Ytl d-rtd'Plt M'n w-Ytl bn s'kd hwr dhn

"e per il fatto che furono distrutte le dighe di pietra dell'oasi di Yathil che (il re) aveva posto sotto la protezione degli dei di Main e di Yathil contro chiunque devastasse l'oasi".

(and because the stone dams of the oasis of Yathil were destroyed that (the king) had put under the protection of the gods of Main and of Yathil against anyone who should devastate the oasis).

This interpretation of the passage is incorrect both philologically and lexically. The term *mbr* is a well-known ancient South Arabian juridical idiom designating the edict (usually the royal one) and is never attested with the meaning of a dam. Although etymologically connected with the stone, the form *wqr* is clearly attested as a technical root in juridical language, designating the edict and the act of promulgating it; note in Minaic the verb form *wqr* in MAFRAY-Darb aṣ-Ṣabī 18, 4, the nominal form *wqr* in M 337=R 3403, 1 and the striking parallel in Sabaic *b-hg wqr w-mbr hbr* occurring in C 601=R 2726, 14. The form *s'kd* cannot be taken as pronominal for it is a conjunction peculiar to Minaic

introducing the subordinate clause. The verb form *hwr* is never attested with the meaning "to devastate" but indicates the precise act of colonising an area by royal command. The correct rendering of the passage should rather be as follows:

"and because the king transgressed the edict issued for the oasis of *Ytl* which had been put under the protection of the gods of *M'n* and *Ytl* so that the oasis should not be colonised". This rendering is in line with Beeston's,²⁷ who, in 1953, first offered a brilliant interpretation and a very convincing reconstruction of the general meaning of this text.

Unfortunately Garbini seems to have neglected this conclusive study and in so doing completely invalidates the historical significance of this document.

Indeed, according to Beeston's analysis the text reports the king's violation of an official document which had accorded the privilege to the local religious authority to administer the arable land near the town. This document prohibited the exploitation by commoners of the territory around *Ytl* for profane purposes. The fact that the offence requires a public confession by so major a political figure as the king points to the great power held by the religious authorities in the general political sphere. Needless to say, this document also provides us with crucial information on the actual power wielded by the priestly class within the society of ancient South Arabia.

The "Leah" bilingual inscription

This document is a grave inscription written in Aramaic-Hebraic and Sabaic. It was published in 2003 by Naveh and has been the subject of a careful analysis by Nebe and Sima.²⁸ It goes without saying how significant such a document can be since up to now it has practically no parallel (another case is a small fragment of a Nabataean-Sabaic bilingual inscription from Ṣirwāḥ presented by Nebe at the Seminar for Arabian Studies 2004).

Garbini excludes this text from his book but mentions it in a bibliographic review as a forgery, a stance based on three arguments. First, because its provenience is unknown; secondly because the stone was broken when it was inscribed. If these are criteria for evaluating the authenticity of an epigraphic document, then a great deal of other documentation usually accepted by scholars (including Garbini) must also be considered fake.

In particular the third argument requires special attention for it is to be quite astonishing. Garbini states: "la scarsa verosimiglianza linguistica della versione sabaica (più breve di quella aramaica) che riflette la poca

²⁷ See in detail the whole question in Gnoli G., *Inventario delle iscrizioni sudarabiche*. Tomo 2. Shaqab al-Manassa, Parigi - Roma, 1993, esp. 104–105.

²⁸ Nebe G. W. - Sima A., *Die aramäisch/hebräisch - sabaäische Grabinschrift der Lea*, *AAE* 15/1, 2005, 76–83.

conoscenza che oggi abbiamo di questa lingua" (the scanty linguistic similarity with the Sabaic version (shorter than the Aramaic one) which reflects how little we know this language today). It is worth mentioning that the detailed analysis of the Sabaic part of the text by Sima proves the exact opposite. Indeed there are several convincing and sound philological data which also enable the scholar to conclude that "steht sein Formular als Ganzes doch in der sabäischen Tradition zweiteiliger Grabstelen (. . .). Es zeigt sich also, daß die sabäische Version ein subtiles Zusammenspiel von altsüdarabischem Formular und aram./hebr. Formelgut bietet, das wohl treffend die Situation des Judentums im spätantiken Jemen charakterisiert"²⁹.

Indeed, it is the great competence of several scholars (e. g. Sima) in Sabaic, as well as the availability today of a vast documentation in this language, which have led to an appreciation of the linguistic and historical significance of such a "subtiles Zusammenspiel".

In conclusion, the specialist will find this book contains many of the highly personal opinions of the author which have remained unchanged and well-known over the years, while the book leads the non-specialist to dangerous ground by providing opinions in the guise of definite certainties.

Savage-Smith, Emilie: *A Descriptive Catalogue of Oriental Manuscripts at St John's College Oxford. With Contributions by Geert Jan van Gelder* [u. a.]. Oxford: Oxford University Press 2005. XIX, 155 S. m. Abb. 8° Lw. 60,00 £. ISBN 0-19-920195-1. Besprochen von Reinhard Weipert, München.

Klein, aber fein, könnte man diesen schönen Katalog nennen, in dem 26 orientalische Handschriften mit 41 Werken oder Texten minutiös beschrieben werden. Das Kernstück der Sammlung (Nr. 1–21) bilden einige interessante arabische Texte zur Astronomie und Mathematik, darunter die älteste Handschrift von al-A^crağ an-Nīsābūrīs Kommentar zur *Taḍkira fī 'ilm al-hai'a* von Naṣīraddīn aṭ-Ṭūsī, der Rest dagegen, bestehend aus den *Maqāmāt* des Ḥarīrī, dem *Ṣaḥīḥ* des Buḥārī, einigen Koranexemplaren, dem Psalter usw., bietet vom Inhalt her nichts Neues. Im Anschluß an diesen von Savage-Smith verfaßten Teil beschreiben Peter E. Pormann zwei hebräische Handschriften (4 Bücher des AT auf Latein und Hebräisch sowie die Kopie einer ebenfalls zweisprachigen Urkunde aus dem 13. Jh.) und eine syrische Hs. (enthält das anonyme „Buch der Ursache der Ursachen“, vgl. A. Baumstark: *Geschichte der syrischen Literatur*. Bonn 1922, 280f.), Tim Stanley einen türkischen Brief aus dem 17. Jh., Edward Ullendorf zwei Ge'ez-Texte (einer enthält die 32 Wunder Jesu Christi) und Samira Sheikh einen Navigationstext in Gujarati aus dem späten 17. oder frühen 18. Jh., der eine Küstenkarte von Gujarat und eine Liste von Häfen beinhaltet. Den krö-

nenden Abschluß des Werkes bildet der Aufsatz „Incidental Arabic Poetry“ von Geert Jan van Gelder, in dem er nicht zum Text gehörige Verse oder kurze Gedichte, die sich an Rändern oder auf leeren Seiten mancher Handschriften finden, aufführt, übersetzt und kommentiert.

Dank der ausgezeichneten Sachkenntnisse der Mitarbeiter und ihrer sorgfältigen und akribischen Arbeitsweise ist hier ein mustergültiges Werk geschaffen worden, das sich besonders durch seine Fülle an Details auszeichnet. Neben Titel und Autor wird der Inhalt ausführlich beschrieben; es folgen Verweise auf weiterführende Literatur bzw. Ausgaben des Textes und Angaben zu: Zahl der Folien, Incipit und Explizit, Maße der Hs., Schriftart und Größe, Farbe, Dicke und Lichtdurchlässigkeit (!) des Papiers, Randglossen, Besitzervermerke, zur Art des Einbands und Erwerbungs-geschichte, kurz, es bleiben keine Fragen offen, nicht zuletzt auch dank der beigegebenen hervorragenden 21 Farb- und 13 Schwarzweißabbildungen, die zeigen, daß bei diesem Katalog an nichts gespart wurde.

Bei der Lektüre sind mir folgende kleinere Versehen aufgefallen: Lies S. V: agreed statt agree, S. 3: 1186/1772 statt 1186/1722, S. 5: 'urūd statt 'uruḍ, S. 6: Lies Muḥammad ibn Abī al-Qāsim, . . . Abū 'Amr al-Andalusī al-Wādī'āshī statt Muḥammad ibn Qāsim . . . al-Wadiyāshī [or al-Wādiyāshī], zur Person s. GAL S II 1023 Nr. 69. Der Name findet sich auf S. 44f. in der korrekten Form, dagegen ist dort die Kunya Abū 'Umar in Abū 'Amr zu verbessern und die Bemerkung auf S. 44, es handele sich hierbei um seinen Sohn, zu streichen. Lies S. 32 und 154: Ibn al-Muḥallabī statt Ibn al-Muḥallabī, S. 59: Ṭal'at statt Ṭa'lat, S. 60: Künste statt Kunste und al-Khizānah statt al-Khazānah, S. 108: Shawwāl statt Shawāl, S. 111: d-'ellat statt d'ellat, S. 132: wa-bahrāmū statt wa-bahrāmā, S. 133: 1299/1882 statt 1299/1822. S. 136: Die Vermutung, mit al-ḥamāmah könne in diesem Zusammenhang Penis gemeint sein, ist zutreffend; mir ist diese Bedeutung aus Dialekten Libanons und Syriens bekannt, vgl. A. Barthélemy: *Dictionnaire Arabe-Français*. Paris 1935, S. 179; sie ist auch z. B. für maltesisch hmejma belegt, vgl. Joseph Aquilina: *Maltese-English Dictionary*. Valletta 1987, I 491. Zu Nr. VIII vgl. die ähnlichen Verse bei b. Aidamur: ad-Durr al-farīd wa-bait al-qaṣīd. Frankfurt 1988, III 190,6: ṭalāṭun laisa bihā štirākū ■ al-muṣṭu wa-l-mir'ātu wa-s-siwākū. Lies S. 142 in Gedicht Nr. XVIII in den Konditionalsätzen der Verse 1–3 nicht die 1., sondern immer die 2. Person; Beweis hierfür ist V. 4: wa-'in tujālis. . . wa-'in tujānib-humū.

Einziger Wermutstropfen ist der hohe Preis von umgerechnet 90 Euro für 41 Handschriften, deren literaturwissenschaftlicher Wert sich in ganz engen Grenzen hält. Sicherlich ist hier l'art pour l'art betrieben worden, aber es ist dennoch schön zu sehen, daß in Zeiten, in denen finanzielle Zwangsvorgaben den Freiraum des Forschers oft genug beschneiden, noch Werke wie dieses entstehen können, in dem man sich einzig und allein der wissenschaftlichen Perfektion verpflichtet gefühlt hat.

²⁹ Nebe G. W. – Sima A., op.cit, esp. 80.