CHAPTER THREE

THE WRITTEN SOURCES

1 The Syllabic Akkadian Texts

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1.1 Introduction

The most surprising discovery made by the late C.F.A. Schaeffer during his first campaign at Tell Ras Shamra was undoubtedly the group of tablets written in an unknown cuneiform script. This discovery attracted so much attention that the decipherment of the script was accomplished in less than a year. Overshadowed by the tablets in the new (alphabetic) script was the find of a number of texts written in a script already well-known to the excavators, the Mesopotamian (syllabic) cuneiform script. The first campaign yielded only a handful of these texts but during the years to come, and especially after the discovery of the royal palace, many syllabic texts came to light. Not all of these were written in the languages of Mesopotamia, Sumerian and Akkadian. A number of tablets had been drawn up in Hurrian and in Hittite. However, the number of tablets in Sumerian and Akkadian (the latter is by far the most important) is very large indeed and new ones are being discovered regularly.

In this chapter of the handbook I shall study the syllabic Akkadian texts found at Ugarit by looking at their archaeological context and

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1 Schaeffer 1929, 295; Virolleaud 1929.
3 Virolleaud 1929, 304–5 and Pl. LXXVI–LXXVII. For a complete list of the tablets found during the first campaign, see Bordreuil – Pardee 1989, 16–23; van Soldt 1991a, 532–5.
4 Sumerian is only attested in schooltexts: lexical, literary and religious texts copied by apprentice scribes, see below.
6 Laroche, Ugaritica 5, 769–79.
7 See, for example, Bordreuil – Pardee 1995a; Dietrich – Loretz 1994b; Yon 1995; Bordreuil – Malbran-Labat 1995.
their general contents. A study of the former involves a survey of the various archives where the texts have been discovered, a study of the latter will encompass such varied aspects as the genres found in the texts, their distribution over the archives, the education of the scribes, and a short description of the characteristics of their Akkadian. Naturally, in discussing the archives and genres I cannot avoid mentioning the alphabetic texts as well. The focus, however, will be on the syllabic texts.

1.2 The archives

In contrast to many other excavators, Schaeffer at least attempted to keep a record of every individual object which he found during his excavations. He did so by assigning topographical points (*points topographiques*, hence p.t.) which were written on a label attached to the object and entered in a plan of the excavated area. Moreover, he kept a notebook in which every object was described and listed with its p.t. and the depth at which it had been found. A combination of the plan and the elevation of the finds spot (deduced from the depths and an elevation plan of 1928, before the excavations had begun) would give—at least in principle—the correct finds spot.\(^8\)

First I shall discuss the archives found in the royal palace, then we shall take a look at the ones found in private houses. In order to save space I shall refer to the pertinent chapters in *van Soldt 1991a*, where all the previous literature can be found. New publications are added wherever necessary.

1.2.1 The palace archives

The Western Archive\(^9\) was located in rooms 3, 4 and 5 near the main entrance\(^10\) and contained almost only administrative texts, mainly

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\(^8\) There are, however, many problems with the way the excavator kept his record. During the first nine campaigns new p.t.s. were given for every new pit that was opened. This led to duplicate numbers with the threat of confusion. Therefore, a unified system was set up in 1938 which also covered previous seasons (*van Soldt 1991a*, 673–4; the new p.t.s. are sometimes provided by Bordreuil – Pardee 1989, 16–50). However, the multitude of p.t.s. given in the record for a single tablet from the house of the High Priest (1929–1934) makes any attempt to locate them hazardous.

\(^9\) *van Soldt 1991a*, 49–60.

\(^10\) See the plans in Margueron 1995a, 194–5.