

EBLA TEXTS. The texts discovered at Ebla (Tell Mardikh in NW Syria), which constitute the largest single find of 3d millennium B.C. cuneiform texts so far recovered anywhere in the Near East. Estimates of the number of texts have varied widely and have not always taken into account the distinctions made by the excavators in describing the tablets. Alfonso Archi, epigrapher of the *Missione Archeologica Italiana in Syria*, has counted 1,757 tablets (defined as complete or nearly complete texts), 4,875 fragments (that is, incomplete pieces which may have up to ten columns of writing), and many thousands of chips (that is, small pieces having only a few lines or parts of lines) (Archi 1986c: 78). A single room in the palace, L. 2769, yielded more than 14,000 inventory numbers (Matthiae 1986: 56).

- A. Introduction
- B. Chronological Considerations
- C. Language of the Ebla Texts
- D. Problem of "Reading" the Eblaite Language
- E. Ebla and the Bible
- F. Administrative Texts
- G. Lexical Texts
- H. Literary Texts
- I. Letters and Diplomatic Texts
- J. Colophons
- K. Second Millennium Texts

A. Introduction

Although not mentioned in the Bible, Ebla has long been known from Mesopotamian cuneiform texts, especially those of the Dynasty of Akkad (RG 1: 37–38) and the Ur III period (Owen and Veenker 1987: 263–91) as a major Syrian city of the 3d millennium B.C. Since many important cities of that time in both Syria and Mesopotamia continued to be occupied for many centuries, Tell Mardikh presents a rare instance where substantial 3d millennium remains lie near the present surface of the mound (Biggs 1981: 132). This fact combines with the special circumstance of the destruction of the Ebla palace by a violent fire that may have helped to preserve some of the tablets by baking them. While accidental baking of the tablets is certainly possible, it is also likely that the large summary account tablets, the tablets of a distinctly diplomatic archival nature, and the large lexical tablets were baked intentionally and that the small daily account tablets—that would normally have been destroyed or recycled when their contents had been entered in the summary tablets—were unbaked at the time of the fire. The tablets were originally arranged on shelves (Matthiae 1981 unnumbered figs. following p. 80, etc.), which collapsed presumably at the time of the fire. There have been differences of opinion on the physical arrangement of the tablets on the shelves (Pettinato 1981a: 50, challenged by Matthiae 1986: 64), but Matthiae's opinion is upheld by Archi (1988e: 67–69), who has provided detailed drawings of the reconstructed shelves.

The other principal finds of comparable 3d millennium cuneiform texts were likewise made at sites that were largely unoccupied beyond the end of the 3d millennium B.C. Previous major finds were in Iraq at Fara (ancient Suruppak) in 1902–3 and at Abu Salabikh in 1963 and 1965. The Fara literary and lexical texts and the Abu

Salabikh texts are described in detail by Biggs (1974: 35–42). A few additional tablets have been found in subsequent excavations at Abu Salabikh (Biggs and Postgate 1978: 101–17). Recently, administrative documents similar to some of those found at Ebla have been discovered at the Syrian site of Mari as long ago as the 1930s, but have only recently been published (Charpin 1987: 65–127).

A considerable amount has been written concerning the relations between Ebla and Mari. The most extensive survey is found in Gelb (fc.), where he discusses such questions as the writing system and the language of Mari and Ebla and its relation to certain features of the Akkadian used in texts found at Kish, use of the decimal system at Ebla, Mari, and Abu Salabikh, systems of measures, the month names, and year dates. (See also Archi 1985b: 47–51; 1985c: 53–58; 1985d: 63–83; 1985f: 25–34; 1988c: nos. 1–17; Pettinato 1977: 20–28; 1980b: 231–45; Edzard 1981b: 89–97; Kienast 1980: 247–61; Pomponio 1983a: 191–203; Pinnock 1985: 85–92).

In the early stages of the study of the Ebla tablets, it was believed that the geographical names found in them indicated that Ebla was the capital of a major Near Eastern empire in the 3d millennium B.C. which included Akkad, Assyria, Byblos, and parts of Anatolia (Pettinato 1976a: 45–46), a fact that is reflected in the titles of books about Ebla (Matthiae 1977, revised English translation 1981; Pettinato 1979b and English translation 1981a). The identification of the Mesopotamian city of "Agade" turned out to be a mistaken reading (Matthiae 1978: 540–43), and the reading of the signs A-BAR-SAL₄ as Assur (Pettinato 1976a: 48) is considered by many scholars to be dubious as well (Sollberger 1980: 130–55; Biggs 1982: 17; Lambert 1987: 353–64), although it is still maintained by Pettinato (1986: 286–87). Byblos (the Gk designation of the city whose name is normally written in cuneiform as *Gub-la*) was thought (Pettinato 1981a: 209; 1983a: 107–18) to be found in the writing *du-lu* in the Ebla texts, but because *gub* has not yet been identified with certainty as a reading of the sign *du* in Ebla texts (Krebernik 1982: 185), this identification is generally abandoned (Archi 1987e: 15–16; Fronzaroli 1984–86: 141; Michalowski 1988: 100–1). There were certainly diplomatic and cultural ties between Ebla and Kish in northern Mesopotamia (Gelb 1981: 9–73; Biggs 1981: 131–33; Archi 1987a: 125–40; 1987c: 37–52), but Nippur and the cities of central Sumer are not yet found in the Ebla tablets. This seems all the more reason to doubt that Dilmun (Pettinato 1983b: 75–82; Stieglitz 1987: 43–46) is correctly identified in the Ebla texts (Michalowski 1988: 100–1).

Much has been made of the supposed occurrences of Canaan in the Ebla texts (Pettinato 1981a: 341 index s.v.), but it is not certain that the writings *Ga-na-na* and *Ga-nane* can be interpreted that way (Edzard 1981b: 95).

Whatever may have been the extent of the commercial relations of Ebla, the idea of an empire in a political sense is explicitly denied by Archi (1985a: 145) who points out that there were local rulers even at Hama only 90 km to the S and that the Eblaite territory to the W stopped at the mountains which delimit the Syrian coastal region. He believes that the kingdom of Ebla included the plain of Antioch, but that its N border was probably the foothills which now define the border between Syria and Turkey.

There is no mention of Egypt in the Ebla texts, but inscribed vases of the Egyptian pharaohs Cephren and Pepi I were found in Royal Palace G (Scandone Matthiae 1979: 33–43) as well as uninscribed Egyptian vases (Scandone Matthiae 1981: 99–127).

B. Chronological Considerations

The date of the Ebla archives has been discussed at great length, but without dwelling on the particulars here, it can be said that the excavator, Paolo Matthiae, now dates the Royal Palace, Area A, to the early Proto-Syrian period, ca. 2400–2250 B.C. (Matthiae 1985: 134–37). Alfonso Archi, the epigrapher of the expedition, dates the archives to approximately the middle of the 24th century B.C. (Archi 1985a: 140); that is, in Mesopotamian terminology, late Pre-Sargonic and the early part of the reign of Sargon of Akkad.

Since there are so far no 3d millennium B.C. royal inscriptions from Ebla, all chronological and genealogical information comes from the administrative documents, where it is only incidental to the purpose of the particular documents. The section “relative chronology” in Archi (1988a: 205–21) should especially be consulted in this regard. The best current estimate is that the Ebla archives cover thirty to forty years (Archi 1985a: 140; 1988a: 218).

The kings of Ebla are designated by the Sumerian title EN, corresponding to *malikum* in Eblaite (Pettinato 1981a: 74; Archi 1987c: 17–43). Pettinato (1981a: 69) gives the following as kings of Ebla: Igrīš-Halam, Irkab-Damu, Ar-Ennum, Ibrium, and Ibbi-Sipīš. Two of these names now require different readings: Ar-Ennum is to be read Arru-LUM (Archi 1988a: 208), and Ibbi-Sipīš is to be read Ibbi-zikir, as many scholars recognized early (Gelb 1977: 21; see now Archi 1988a: 208). Archi has demonstrated that the evidence that suggested that Ibrium and Ibbi-zikir were kings was misinterpreted and that in fact they were only high officials in the kingdom (Archi 1988a: 209–12, 219). The texts concerning offerings to dead kings (Archi 1986a: 213–17; 1988a: 212) provide a list of previous kings of the dynasty (that is, excluding the king who was ruling when the document was drawn up), while the title “king of Ebla” in the Ebla archives is attested for only two individuals: Igrīš-Halam and Irkab-Damu (Archi 1988a: 215).

C. Language of the Ebla Texts

Although written in the cuneiform writing system of Sumer, the ancient language of Ebla is beyond doubt Semitic, but its position within the Semitic family of languages remains in dispute. Pettinato (*RLA* 5: 12 and elsewhere) considers it Old Canaanite, but based partly on mistaken assumptions such as the supposed occurrences of *ik-tūb*, “he wrote” (Pettinato 1981a: 56). The signs in question are now to be interpreted as GÁL-TAK_x, a Sumerogram for an accounting term (Alberti 1984: 65–74).

Gelb (1977: 28) concluded that Eblaite (or Eblaic or Eblaitic as others prefer to designate the language) is most closely related to Old Akkadian and Amorite. On the other hand, Sollberger (1986: 1) goes further than Gelb in insisting that it is Akkadian (his italics), while another scholar identifies it as a dialect of Akkadian (Dombrowski 1988: 211–35). It should be borne in mind that different

scholars attribute differing importance to such matters as vocabulary, verbal system, pronominal system, phonology, and syntax. It should also be remembered that most of the analysis of the Eblaite language is not based on connected texts but rather on interpretation of the personal names (Krebernik 1988a; Archi 1988a: 205–306). The highly formalized administrative documents yield little information that would be of real significance in analyzing the language of the Ebla texts. On the other hand, most of the so-called historical texts with their syllabically written passages remain unpublished. A plausible reason for this is that texts written syllabically in the Eblaite language are extraordinarily difficult to interpret given the ambiguities of the script and the inadequate fashion in which the Sumerian writing system was adapted for writing a Semitic language (Krecher 1987: 177–97; Michalowski 1988: 100; for a nontechnical discussion, see Biggs 1982: 14–15, 22). Nevertheless, it is hoped that the “historical” texts will eventually provide the best examples of connected passages in the Eblaite language. The few literary texts found at Ebla are unlikely to be of much help.

D. Problem of “Reading” the Eblaite Language

It is now generally agreed that most of the Ebla texts were intended to be *read* in Eblaite. The fact that they are written with an overwhelming number of Sumerograms (including entire verbal forms in Sumerian, all surely to be pronounced using their Eblaite equivalents) has sometimes led to the mistaken opinion that the texts were largely in Sumerian. In many instances the only evidence for the underlying Eblaite language is an occasional preposition or conjunction.

The handwriting of the Ebla cuneiform texts demonstrates a distinctive regional style immediately recognizable as different from any cuneiform writing known from Mesopotamia (for the question of regional cuneiform handwriting styles in general, see Biggs 1973: 39–46). Yet most signs are sufficiently similar to their Mesopotamian equivalents that scholars who can read the 3d millennium B.C. Mesopotamian signs rarely misidentify Ebla signs. Nevertheless, there are some notable divergences (Krecher 1987: 177–97).

A more serious problem than the identification of signs has been establishing the correct syllabic readings of signs. It is well known that many Sumerian cuneiform signs have two or more possible readings. Normally one would, at least at a preliminary stage, assume a reading in an Ebla text corresponding to the most common Mesopotamian values. Yet, a number of common signs have readings that are not immediately obvious. A prime example is the sign EN. As a logogram, EN stands for the Eblaite word for “king.” It has a syllabic value *en* (as in the personal name En-na-il), but it is used more commonly with the reading *ru*₁₂ (Krebernik 1982: 186; Civil 1984a: 78). An example is the reading of the “royal” name *Arennum, which has now been revised to Ar-*ru*₁₂-LUM (where even the last syllable is of uncertain reading—*lum*, *núm*, *gúm*, and *hum* are theoretically possible) (Archi 1988a: 208).

The possible readings of the sign N₁ have been the subject of a great deal of controversy, principally because some scholars have believed in a reading *ya* and held open a possibility that the syllable was an abbreviation of Yahweh.

(with obvious religious-historical implications) in such names as En-na-ni, Iš-má-ni, and mi-kà-ni (Müller 1981: 70–92 and references cited there). A reading *i* (standard in Mesopotamia) has never been in doubt, and a reading *bu* is also certain (Krebernik 1982: 198; Civil 1984a: 77–78). A reading of ni as *ni* is apparently rare (Krebernik 1982: 198–99; Krecher 1988: 175) in the Ebla texts. In the case of the supposed Ya as a divine name, the solution seems now to come not from any syllabic reading of the sign ni, but from the Ebla treatment of consonants in a closed syllable, here specifically the consonant *l* (Archi 1986b: 246; 1988a: 263; Müller 1988: 72–73). The evidence is overwhelming that *l* is often not expressed in the writing at the beginning or end of a syllable. Thus *i* can be simply a short writing for *il*. It seems likely that *i* for *il* in personal names (where *il* is a very common element) is especially frequent, because the sign ni (i.e., *i*) is very simple (4 easy stylus strokes) whereas *il* is a complicated sign (usually made up of 15 or more wedges at various angles).

A number of further examples of syllabic values at Ebla that might be unexpected could be given, but only two additional examples will be provided to illustrate the extent of the ambiguities and the degree of caution that is needed. It appears that the common sign ni does not have a value *ri* in Ebla texts, but only *dall/tall/ral*, which is especially clear in words beginning with a *ta*-preformative (Krebernik 1982: 200) and in feminine personal names (Fronzaroli 1987b: 63–73). The sign bu represents not only the syllable *bu* (more often expressed by *bù*) but also *bu* (based on Sum gid).

While this is not a place for detailed discussion of the Eblaite writing system or of phonology, an additional feature should be mentioned: the problem of *l* and *r*. It has long been recognized that *l* can occur (at the beginning of a word, the beginning of a syllable, or the end of a syllable) where *r* would be expected (Archi 1980: 85, 87; Krecher 1984: 150; Müller 1988: 72). The contrary (use of a syllable with *r* where *l* is expected) is apparently not attested (Müller 1988: 72).

Some specific examples of potential ambiguities have been given here, but it should be stressed again that the Sumerian writing system was not well adapted to write a Semitic language with consonants that do not occur in Sumerian. It appears that the script, as adapted for use at Ebla, made no distinction, or at least no clear distinction, between different kinds of stops and the various sibilants (Krecher 1988: 175).

E. Ebla and the Bible

Soon after the discovery of the Ebla tablets, speculation arose concerning possible relationships to the OT (Pettinato 1976a: 48–50; 1980c: 49–72; Freedman 1978: 143–64; 1982: 309–35). The principal advocate of the theory that the Ebla tablets were of direct relevance for the study of the OT was the late Mitchell Dahood (1982: 1–24; 1984: 439–70; for additional references, see Baldacci and Pomponio 1987: 455 index ad Dahood). A famous example of Dahood's work is a text of which he confidently "translated" what he believed to be a proverb written in Canaanite but which turned out to be a text listing Sumerian terms for cuts of meat. Most of his other attempts at elucidating

texts from Ebla or texts in the Bible based on his interpretation of Ebla vocabulary cannot be as decisively rejected, but scholars who are knowledgeable about the cuneiform writing of the 3d millennium B.C. tend to be very dubious about his theories. The issue now seems to be principally one of historical interest when looking back upon the development of a new field of Near Eastern studies. Jonas Greenfield (1988: 94), referring to article of Dahood, neatly reflects the scholarly consensus when he writes, "Suffice it to say that Ebla has no bearing on the prophets, minor or major."

F. Administrative Texts

Approximately 80 percent of the 3d millennium B.C. tablets found at Ebla are administrative (Archi 1985a: 140). Many of these tablets may not be from archives in the technical sense of a collection or repository of records no longer in use, but rather are preserved for their historical value (Veenhof 1986: 7). However, it seems useful to follow the usual practice in Assyriology and to utilize the term "archive" to include texts stored or found together or which originated in the same administrative context (see detailed discussion in Veenhof 1986: 1–36). Although the term "library" has been used occasionally to refer to the tablets found at Ebla, the term "archives" has been used more generally.

The archives provide documentation for the activities of the various administrative sectors of the Ebla kingdom such as food supplies for the palace and its dependents (Archi 1982: 173–88; 1988b: 25–29; Milano 1987: 519–50), agricultural production and animal husbandry (Archi 1982: 175–76; 1984c: 45–81; Gelb 1986: 157–67; Milano 1984a; Renger 1987: 293–311), transactions in precious metals (Archi 1985f: 25–34; 1988c; Waetzoldt 1981: 363–78), and, with a vast documentation, the textile industry (Edzard 1981a; Biga and Milano 1984; Zaccagnini 1984: 189–204; Ribichini and Xella 1985; Sollberger 1986; Archi 1988c).

The tablets recording these administrative activities were stored in several different rooms of the palace (see Archi 1985a: 140–41 for a brief summary and 1986c: 72–86 for a detailed discussion of the particular archives).

Some of the tablets are dated, but the sequence within an archive can usually be determined best by internal evidence, principally by prosopography, since the order of the Ebla year names is not yet known (Archi 1986c: 72; see also Pomponio 1987a: 249–62 and Mander 1987: 395–407). Even prosopography is of limited use, however, because a number of persons bore similar names and patronymics are rarely given. No documents so far discovered bear seal impressions, though seals were in use for other purposes (Mazzoni 1984: 18–45).

G. Lexical Texts

Word lists (or lexical texts as they are usually called by Assyriologists) form the backbone of the Mesopotamian scribal tradition from near the beginning of writing in the early 3d millennium B.C. through the 2d and 1st millennia B.C. with bilingual vocabularies (usually Sumerian and Akkadian but, depending on the area, including Hittite and other languages), ending with Greek transcriptions of the Sumerian entries. The texts of interest to us here are

those of the 3d millennium B.C. (see especially Westenholz 1985: 294–98). Such lists of words are mostly thematic, and consist almost entirely of nouns. It is copies of such texts which make up the most important component of the lexical texts from Ebla (Pettinato 1981a: 46–47, 237–38; Biggs 1981: 129–32). Some of these texts are descended from the lexical traditions of early 3d millennium B.C. Uruk (Nissen 1981: 99–108). The best known of these is Early Dynastic (ED) Lu A (Civil 1969: 4–12; Arcari 1982), a list of occupations already ancient by the time of the Ebla tablets. Its archaic nature is indicated by the inclusion of cuneiform signs unknown except in copies of this list. Another list of occupations, ED Lu E, probably composed closer to the middle of the 3d millennium B.C., occurs at Abu Salabikh (Biggs 1974: nos. 54–60, edited in Civil 1969: 16–21, with corrections in Biggs 1974: 82), Kish, and Ebla (Pettinato 1976b: 169–78). An unrelated text of similar date, now known from Abu Salabikh and Ebla, was first published as a “Names and Professions List” (Biggs 1974 nos. 61–81 and edition pp. 62–71; Ebla version Archi 1981a: 177–204; 1984d: 171–74; cf. Biggs 1988: 91–96).

There is a list of geographical names first found at Abu Salabikh (Biggs 1974 nos. 91–111 and edition pp. 71–78), of which a version was also found at Ebla (Pettinato 1978a: 50–73; 1981b: 217–41; Pomponio 1983b: 285–88). A proposal to find Palestinian place names in this list (Shea 1983: 589–612) is generally rejected by scholars (Greenfield 1988: 94). See Steinkeller (1986: 31–40) for some specific identifications; he categorically rejects a proposal to see in the writing *U₉-ga-ra-ad* the name of the city of Ugarit, a conclusion also reached by Fronzaroli (1984–86: 145). The consensus now is that many of the place names are to be located generally in N Babylonia and the Trans-Tigris area and thus are not to be sought either in S Mesopotamia (not explicitly proposed by any scholar) or in the Syrian area (Pettinato 1976a: 52). Most scholars who have considered the question apparently agree with Biggs (1980: 84–85; 1981: 130–31) in rejecting a Syrian origin for the composition (Civil 1984c: 290; Steinkeller 1986: 31–32).

Other traditional Sumerian lexical texts found at Ebla include lists of birds (Pettinato 1978b: 165–78; 1981b: nos. 39–42 and pp. 105–23; Civil 1982: 17–22), fishes (Pettinato 1981b: 91–104), and practical repertoires of words needed in writing everyday documents commonly known as “Practical Vocabularies” (Civil 1987a: 132–33).

Besides the numerous examples of Sumerian word lists directly related to those from Mesopotamia, Ebla has provided others so far unknown from elsewhere (Civil 1984a: 77). The most important of these texts is the Ebla Vocabulary published by Pettinato (1982: 115–343). It consists in most cases of a list of Sumerian words to which an Eblaite translation has been added. This list consists of nearly 1,500 lines and is known almost in its entirety from numerous exemplars (Archi 1980: 81–89; Fales 1984: 173–87). There is also the Ebla “Syllabary” (Pettinato 1981b: 51–52), which is more precisely a sign list with sign names (Civil 1984a: 77; Archi 1987d: 91–113).

There is another genre of lexical text that should be mentioned in this context, notable for its absence at Ebla: lists of deities (see also PANTHEONS, MESOPOTAMIAN). The lack of godlists among the lexical texts at

Ebla may be accidental, of course. In the absence of such texts, however, the pantheon of Ebla has been reconstructed mainly on the basis of offering lists (Pettinato 1979d). The repertory of deities in the personal names is a somewhat less reliable criterion for establishing the Ebla pantheon since some of the divine names occur in the names of individuals from other areas (Archi 1984a: 225–56; 1985c: 53–58). Deities occurring in the literary texts, notably the incantations and Edzard (1984 no. 6), should be excluded from consideration in reconstructing the pantheon since the texts clearly did not originate at Ebla.

H. Literary Texts

Compared to Fara and Abu Salabikh, Ebla has yielded very few literary texts (Biggs 1981: 124–29), even fewer than initial descriptions indicated. The principal group of literary texts (in the widest sense) consists of incantations (Mander 1979: 335–39; Pettinato 1979a: 329–51; Krebernik 1984; Edzard 1984: 32). Of the other literary texts, a major example is Edzard’s (1984 no. 6), which has been recognized as being a duplicate of a text from Abu Salabikh (Biggs 1974 no. 326, 342; Biga apud Edzard 1984: 30). The two versions studied together allow a better understanding of a number of passages than does either version alone. Both versions include a number of Sumerograms, but there are enough Semitic words (including pronominal suffixes) to indicate that the text is written in a Semitic language. Because the Abu Salabikh version is presumably earlier than that from Ebla, there is no reason to suggest that the language is the Semitic language of Ebla (Michalowski 1987: 171).

The supposed Creation of the World story found among the literary texts of Ebla (Pettinato 1979b: 278; 1980c: 59–67; 1980d: 46–47) has attracted a certain amount of interest. The composition, consisting of three exercise tablets, is also published by Edzard (1984 nos. 24–26 and pls. 40, 41, 53). The text is more convincingly interpreted by Civil (1984a: 80–81 and nos. 9–10) as a list of Sumerian personal names beginning with LUGAL, followed by two lines of literary quotations (Hruška 1985: 289–90).

One of the tablets originally identified as a proverb (Pettinato 1979c: 174 no. 1833; also published by Edzard 1984 no. 23) was “translated” by M. Dahood (1978: 93), who asserted that “The proverb appears to be pure Canaanite, containing not a word of Sumerian”:

Donate without measure,
Donate without weighing;
Make presents without measure,
Make presents without weighing.

The text has subsequently been identified (Civil 1984b: 161–63) as an exercise tablet containing syllabic Sumerian words for cuts of meat, corresponding to the standard Sumerian of Ebla Word List D (Pettinato 1981b: 172, lines 50–53).

I. Letters and Diplomatic Texts

The letters and diplomatic records found among the Ebla archives are potentially among the most interesting and important, though formidable obstacles remain before they can be understood. These texts, with very few

exceptions, are unpublished. To judge from the published examples, these texts are more likely to be written syllabically, that is, with few Sumerograms that would give modern scholars major clues to their contents. However, these published examples are fraught with difficulties which provide the basis for differing interpretations. One example is the so-called treaty tablet (Pettinato 1986: 389–95; Sollberger 1980: 130–55; Lambert 1987: 353–64 and references cited there). Doubts about reading “Assur” in this text have already been mentioned. A further example of disagreements concerning interpretation is Pettinato’s belief that a certain sequence of signs is to be interpreted as Tudia, the first king in the Assyrian King List (Pettinato 1986: 287–88). The same signs have been interpreted as a form of the Sum verb È, “to go out, to send out” (Biggs 1980: 81–82; Sollberger 1980: 131). Nothing more can be said concerning those texts until they are published.

J. Colophons

The literary and lexical texts from the 3d millennium B.C. are often accompanied by a colophon (see in general Biggs 1974: 33–35). Such colophons usually include the name of the scribe who copied the tablet (most often indicated by *dub mu-sar*, “wrote the tablet”). Some of the names could also be those of other scribes or scholars who were involved in the production of earlier copies or who participated in some other way in the preparation of the tablet or its text (Mander 1984: 345–57). A surprising feature of the Abu Salabikh colophons was that approximately half the names in the colophons were Semitic rather than Sumerian (Biggs 1967: 55–66; 1974: 33–35; 1988: 89–98). Some of the Ebla literary and lexical texts bear colophons similar to those found at Abu Salabikh (Pettinato 1981a: 231–32; Mander 1984: 357–61). It is even possible that one of the best attested scribes (Lugal-kisal-si) from Abu Salabikh is also attested in a colophon on a text from Ebla (Pettinato 1981b: xxvii, no. 88). If this is correct, it may indicate a direct manuscript connection between the scholars at Abu Salabikh and at Ebla.

K. Second Millennium Texts

While the finds in the 3d millennium B.C. Palace G at Ebla have attracted the most attention, substantial finds of 2d millennium B.C. materials have been made, including part of an inscribed statue that first suggested that the site of Tell Mardikh was ancient Ebla (Pettinato 1970: 73–76; Lambert 1981: 95–96). A letter written in Babylonian, probably from a private archive but found out of context, was discovered some years ago (Kupper 1980: 49–51); publication of further OB documents by Kupper is expected. Among the finds from a grave was a silver vessel with a cuneiform inscription. Excavations of Mardikh IIIB (ca. 1800–1600 B.C.) are continuing (Matthiae 1985: 138; 1988: 34–43), so perhaps more 2d millennium textual material will eventually be found.

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- ROBERT D. BIGGS
- EBRON (PLACE)** [Heb *‘ebrôn*]. A town in the territory of Asher (Josh 19:28). Assuming confusion between the Hebrew letters *bet* and *reš*, the MT form here is likely a misspelling of the place name ABDON.
- ECBATANA (PLACE)** [Aram *‘ahmētā*]. Place located in the Zagros mountains of NW Iran between Tehran and Baghdad which was the capital of the Median Empire (Ezra 6:2). The name derives from an Old Persian expression (*hagmatāna*; Gk *ekbatana*) meaning "gathering place." At the foot of Mt. Orontes, this city provided a cool summer retreat for the later Persian kings, subsequent to its capture by Cyrus from Astyages in the 6th century. Herodotus (1.98)—although some would dispute the accuracy of his statement—attributes its foundation to Deioces (died ca. 656 B.C.) and provides a description of its seven concentric walls of fortification. Ecbatana may have been one of the "towns of the Medes" to which Israelites were exiled by the Assyrians (2 Kgs 17:6).
- Ezra 6:2 contains the only mention of this city in the OT. When Darius was searching for a record which would confirm Cyrus' decree (de Vaux *BANE*, 63–96) about the restoration of Jerusalem and its Temple, he could find nothing in the Babylonian archives. However, when the search was extended to the citadel of Ecbatana, a scroll was discovered and the claim of the Judeans substantiated (cf. 1 Esdr 6:23). This detail indicates the importance of Ecbatana as a government center, particularly for the Persian Empire.
- Ecbatana figures in three apocryphal books—Tobit, Judith, and 2 Maccabees. In the book of Tobit (3:7; 6:5, 9; 7:1; 14:12, 14) Ecbatana is the home of Raguel, Tobit's brother. Tobias, the son of Tobit, stops at this city while on his way to collect money from Gabael, who lives in Rages, Media. During his stay in Ecbatana Tobias marries Sarah, the daughter of Raguel. Apart from indicating that Jews had dispersed as far as Ecbatana, little additional information about the city is provided.
- Ecbatana is mentioned in Judith 1:1, 2, 14 as the headquarters of King Arphaxad, "who reigned over the Medes in Ecbatana." Nebuchadnezzar destroys Arphaxad's army in battle and spoils Ecbatana before turning his attention to the region of Judea, which had refused to assist him in his fight with Arphaxad. The major preoccupation of the author of Judith is with the awesome fortifications of Ecbatana, which rival those of Babylon.
- According to 2 Macc 9:3, Antiochus IV died in the vicinity of Ecbatana. After his unsuccessful attempt to loot the treasures of Persepolis (9:1–2) and subsequent ignominious retreat, Antiochus received news of the defeat of Nicanor and Timotheus and their respective armies at the hands of the Judean rebels. This occurred "near Ecbatana." No other source links Ecbatana with Antiochus IV's