

the *bīt immeri* and the *bīt alpi*, he does not mention the connection to the provisioning of manpower for various temple projects, which is one of the reference points for the *bīt alpi* in letters. This does not touch directly on the main topic of the book, but would add to the picture of the inner structures of the fattening stable. Kozuh's treatment of YOS 3, 56 (p. 222 n. 26, 272–73, probably based on Ebeling 1930–34: 48–49) does not necessarily require the emendation he suggests for l. 7 (*ta-áš-pur¹-ra*), since the form could be taken as written on the tablet, *ta-áš-šap-ra*, a written variant of *tašappar* instead of *tašpur* used anomalously in a positive main clause in letters, with the present tense emphasizing repeated action. I agree with the suggestion for l. 9, though I would transcribe the verbal form as *ta-ka-áš-da¹(T:GA)* instead of “-*da* (?)”. The sender is the *qīpu* of the Ebabbar of Larsa, Nādin-aḫi (Beaulieu 1991: 77), the recipient probably Nādin, the temple scribe, which dates this letter to the period from 12 Nbn until before the accession of Cambyses.

Though one might not agree with all his findings, Michael Kozuh raises numerous interesting issues in his discussion of the Eanna's sacrificial economy. This book presents a number of newly published texts and many references to further material, and is likely to infuse the discussion of the complicated issue of livestock management in the Eanna with new vigor.

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Ritual Employs of Birds in Ancient Syria-Palestine. By GIUSEPPE MINUNNO. *Alter Orient und Altes Testament*, vol. 402. Münster: UGARIT-VERLAG, 2013. Pp. 165. €64.

This concise monograph, based on the author's doctoral dissertation defended at the University “La Sapienza” of Rome, presents an investigation of the role played by birds in the rituals conducted in Syria-Palestine over the course of two millennia, from the end of the third millennium BC to the conquest of Alexander in 332 BC.

Minunno begins the introductory chapter by outlining the geographical area he has investigated in his study. He argues that the pre-classical regions of Syria and Palestine are characterized by “substantial homogeneity and continuity of development” (p. 9). He extends his area of interest by also incorporating Punic documentation of Northern Africa because of its clear cultural connections with Phoenician culture, which flourished along the Mediterranean coast of the Levant. Furthermore, in an attempt to avoid dealing with the modern misconceptions associated with the terms “religion” and “magic,” Minunno defines “ritual use” in this work as referring to any use of birds in either cultic (in which a supernatural being is involved) or independent (such as purification rites) ritual activities.

In order to gather insight into the involvement of birds in these ceremonies, Minunno focuses his attention almost exclusively on the extant textual material, complementing his findings, whenever possible, with data from zooarchaeological analyses conducted at the relevant sites and with the representation of birds involved in rituals or shown in the company of deities on contemporary seals. Minunno rightly warns the reader that it is often impossible to establish ritual procedures accurately or to ascertain the exact role of the birds mentioned in texts because of the terse and fragmentary nature

of the material, notoriously difficult to fully comprehend. He therefore only proposes cautiously formulated hypotheses.

The book is divided into six major sections for the most part organized geographically, starting with the northeastern site of Emar in chapter II. To ascertain the role of birds in the rituals performed in this city, Minunno mainly consults texts dated from the Late Bronze Age (fourteenth–thirteenth centuries), when the site was an important trade center incorporated into the Hittite Empire. Of special relevance to this study are the cuneiform tablets recovered in Temple M1. Features of the Emariote culture and religion were strongly influenced by the indigenous Syrian tradition. However, because of the city's inclusion in the Hittite sphere of influence, some rituals with Hittite and Hurrian characteristics can also be identified as being practiced there.

Minunno claims that the two traditions remain distinct and that no assimilation can be readily identified. Birds are present in a few rituals belonging to the Syrian tradition. Minunno discusses in particular the involvement of birds in the installation ceremonies of the NIN.DINGIR and *maš'artu*-priestess, as well as in the course of the *Zukru* and *Kissu* festivals. Special emphasis is also placed on the rituals connected with the month of *Abi*, during which sixty-one birds (31 TU.MUŠEN, 29 MUŠEN *hurri*, 1 MUŠEN) are mentioned as used for ritual purposes. It transpires that these rituals are connected with the funerary realm. Some of these birds were destined to be offered to an *abi*, whose exact identification has yet to be unanimously agreed upon. According to Minunno, it appears to be an installation adopted from the Hurrian tradition of southern Anatolia devoted to the celebration of chthonic rituals, possibly of ancestral cults. The rites belonging more specifically to the Hittite and Hurrian traditions differ from Syrian rituals in their use of birds in the burnt offering called *ambašši*.

Minunno then directs his attention further west in chapter III and attempts to evaluate the relevance of birds in the rites and ceremonies performed at the harbor site of Ugarit. The author presents an in-depth discussion of two groups of texts—on the one hand texts concerned with ritual practices and on the other hand mythological literary texts. After a discussion of the vocabulary specific to the Ugaritic ritual system (*dbḥ*, *šlmn*, *šrp*, *šnpt*, *ī'*), Minunno lists the many birds cited in the relevant ritual texts (*ʿsr*, *ynt*, *ynt qrt*, *tr*, *uz*).

The Ugaritic material is noteworthy for the challenges it presents. The large majority of the texts have survived only as fragments and debates continue as to the exact reading and interpretation of these documents. Nevertheless, Minunno proceeds to review a collection of fragmentary ritual texts in which birds are mentioned. Based on his analysis of the material, he proposes that birds should be considered of minor ritual importance in Ugarit, representing only 3% of the offerings identified in the entire corpus of ritual texts. Minunno concludes this review of the Ugaritic evidence by saying that birds were only offered—alongside more prestigious goods—when the recipient was of chthonic nature. They were, however, absent from the offering lists compiled for the main gods of the Ugaritic pantheon. Rather than assigning a lower value to bird offerings, Minunno rather believes that birds served a specific role which tied them to the underworld.

In chapter IV, “Other Bronze Age Sites,” Minunno succinctly alludes to the limited involvement of birds in the practices recorded at Ebla, Mari, and Alalakh. The concept of birds used for divination purposes is briefly introduced, since birds known as MUŠEN *hurri* were sacrificed in Mari and their entrails examined, a practice possibly borrowed from Mesopotamia. At the site of Alalakh, located in the Amuq river valley in Turkey and part of the Hittite empire during the Late Bronze Age, birds are more frequently used in funerary rituals. Minunno also proposes that they may have played a role in the local cult of the goddess Ishtar.

Chapter V is dedicated to the sacrificial practices documented in the Old Testament, most specifically as described in Lev. 1–7, 17–26 and Deut. 12, 18. Minunno starts this section by reviewing the different categories of offerings which are part of the Hebrew sacrificial system. Among all these practices, birds only feature in the *ʿōlāh*, often translated as “holocaust,” as well as in the *ʾāšām* and *ḥaṭṭāʾt*, both considered to be purification rituals. It transpires that birds, especially domestic birds such as doves, are of special significance in purification ceremonies and thus play a significant cathartic role in Hebrew culture. To illustrate this particular role of birds, Minunno focuses his attention on a ceremony known to have been performed when a case of leprosy was identified in a community. In this ritual,

two birds were selected, each serving a specific function and ultimately removing the impurity caused by leprosy from the community via their sacrifice and release of the birds in the wild.

In chapter VI, Minunno assesses how birds featured in both Phoenician and Punic rituals, whose performance is recorded on texts dated to the third century BC. Minunno first explores the relevance of birds in Punic rituals by analyzing the inscriptions known as Tariffs carved on Punic temples. These texts carefully record the payments made to priests and the nature of the sacrificial offerings. Two such inscriptions are of special interest: the Tariffs of Marseille (CIS I, 165) and of Carthage (CIS I, 167 + 3915 + 3916 + 3917). According to these Tariffs, birds were sometimes used for *šlm kll*-offerings, but were reserved almost exclusively for *šsp*- and *hzt*-offerings, which may relate to purification and divinatory practices.

Minunno then turns his attention to literary and archaeological sources to explore further the role of birds in Phoenician rituals. The mythology of Melqart, tutelary god of the city of Tyre, is of special relevance to this study since, according to the *interpretatio graeca*, it is by means of incinerated quails that the Libyan Iolaus raised Melqart from the dead, after the hero had been killed by Typhon. Minunno ends this mythological exploration by alluding to the connection of the Phoenician god of healing, Eshmun, with birds and children. Clay figurines of birds alone or in the company of children have been uncovered at the sanctuaries dedicated to Eshmun, such as that of Bostan eš-Šeikh, near Sidon.

The final chapter of this study is dedicated to the use of birds in Hittite and Hurrian rituals, a theme the author chose to cover at the end of the book, since this area is located outside of the geographical limits outlined in the introduction. In spite of this geographical expansion, this chapter would have been welcome earlier in the monograph, both for chronological consistency and because of the strong Hittite and Hurrian influences attested in the rituals celebrated in Late Bronze Age city-states such as Emar and Alalakh discussed in chapters II and IV. Just as it has been observed in the textual record of Syria-Palestine, birds in Hittite texts frequently feature in chthonic and cathartic rituals, as illustrated in the elaborate Hittite Royal Funerary Ritual recorded in CTH 450. In this document, birds are sent out at various stages of the ritual to track down the spiritual component of the dead king, which needed to return to the corpse in order to complete the funeral. CTH 457 further reports that *lahanza*-birds were sent to the sea, whereas *huwala*-birds were sent to the rivers. Birds were also often incorporated into purification rituals, in which the birds had to be burnt. Minunno established that the birds, via their sacrifice, were sent to the underworld, taking with them the impurities which had defiled the earth.

One important ritual role of birds only briefly alluded to in chapter IV is their utilization in divinatory practices. Most probably of Anatolian origin, as suggested by Minunno, the practice of ornithomancy was widespread in the Hittite kingdom. The flight and cries of birds were observed, along with their physical and behavioral peculiarities, in the hope of obtaining insight into the future.

Minunno should be congratulated for tackling a difficult set of fragmentary texts, as he has aimed to identify the specific roles birds may have served in the rituals performed in the various city-states of Syria-Palestine during the Late Bronze and Iron Age. In particular Minunno strives to identify trends and their spread throughout this region. The collection of texts he has gathered in this study represent a valuable resource for a more in-depth analysis of the specific role of birds in the rituals performed in each of the cultures addressed in turn in this book. Furthermore, this monograph is a welcome resource for scholars eager to better evaluate how ancient Near Eastern cultures were affected by the presence of birds in their midst and how they incorporated them in the rituals governing people's daily lives.

The strong focus on the written record and the frequent discussions of the challenges encountered with this fragmentary textual material make this study a tool mostly relevant to philologists grappling with the intricacies of the various Semitic languages discussed. On the other hand, scholars of ancient religions and social history can greatly benefit from the rich and informative footnotes and the comprehensive bibliography. As a final note, because the study covers a wide geographical and chronological range, a glossary of important sacrificial terms, a map clearly indicating the regions and sites discussed, and a recapitulative list of the birds encountered in each culture would have been beneficial for better understanding and appreciation of this study.