

this respect, with the presence of sculptural fragments relating to male anthropomorphic figures, interpreted by the authors as part of a narrative aimed at the «autorepresentación de un determinado linaje» (p. 323).

From the above observations, which have provided only the briefest outline of the book, it will perhaps be clear that the volume is a very rich resource. Respecting in good part the premises and the intentions of the editors, the theme – *trabajo sagrado* – is analysed in many of its aspects and from perspectives that highlight its great complexity, starting with the question of what could and should in fact be understood as “sacred work” or, perhaps more correctly, as “consecrated work”. From the studies included in the volume there certainly emerges a multifaceted picture, in which the various components of sanctuary life – from the space chosen for the sacred places to their architecture, from the employees to the visitors, from the rituals to the divine characters – are understood in their connection with the economic and work activities carried out both inside the sanctuaries and outside them, both *in* and *for* the cult places. Beyond the boundaries of the individual contributions, some of which seem to adhere more closely than others to the themes and aims of the volume (as usual for miscellaneous works such as this), the wider merit of the book is that it portrays the sanctuary dimension and all its protagonists as dynamic and vivid, undoubtedly fundamental to individuals and the community alike and fully embedded in the organization of settlements and territories as a primary component of everyday social life; consequently, the volume could be conceived as, among other things, a useful tool for scholars and students who are being introduced to this subject area. For these reasons, it might be worthwhile also to consider preparing a sort of “Part 2” volume: it would perhaps widen the range of comparison to include other peoples and a far more extensive Mediterranean context, and focus also on cultural interrelations, so as to further enrich the documentary framework and offer an even broader basis for constructive scientific debate.

GIUSEPPE GARBATI
ISPC – CNR, Rome
giuseppe.garbati@cnr.it

B. D’ANDREA, *Bambini nel “limbo”. Dati e proposte interpretative sui tofet fenici e punici*, Roma 2018 («Collection de l’École Française de Rome», 552), École Française de Rome, 170 pp., BW plates 31 pp., with introduction by M. Gras.

The *tophet* precinct is one of the most studied and fiercely debated components of Phoenician-Punic civilization, yet it remains poorly understood. The literary sources are often tendentious, the archaeological remains poorly recorded, and the epigraphic texts terse and formulaic. D’Andrea’s work seeks to make the most of this limited evidence, arguing that infants in the precinct lie in interpretive “limbo,” a term chosen to describe that place of uncertainty between competing explanations of sacrificial infanticide, ritual killing and natural mortality (pp. 1-3, 127-130).

The volume under review is the second derived from the author’s doctoral research at the Sapienza Università di Roma (p. xiii). The first volume¹ described excavations at so-called *tophet* sanctuaries in North Africa, both those dedicated to Ba’al and Tinnit and those later dedicated to Saturn and *Juno Caelestis*. This second volume summarizes the ancient evidence and modern interpretations of such precincts. Although we

¹ D’Andrea 2014.

focus here on the second volume, we start with the first² because it provides an extensive bibliography and sets the archaeological context upon which the second builds.

In both volumes, the author focuses on seemingly incontestable details – *e.g.* site topography, descriptions of material remains, tables of iconographic variation, commonly cited ancient sources, etc. The strength of both volumes lies in the accuracy of these detailed narrative catalogs. To evaluate the first volume, I compared the sites selected by the author to my own maps of *tophet* sites, to find spots of inscriptions, and to the later Saturn/*Caelestis* sanctuaries listed by Leglay,³ whose topographic organizational scheme the author generally follows. The author seems to have relied upon original site reports (or *editio princeps* for inscriptions), thus he avoids repeating the errors of Leglay (*e.g.* R'çass near Mornag) and of Jongeling and Kerr (*e.g.* Arg el-Ghazouni in Algeria, etc.).⁴ He provides detailed site plans (*e.g.* Cirta, *Hadrumetum*, *Leptis*) and overlays them on his GoogleEarth maps, a quite helpful contribution, although not all of the maps are easy to read.

His choice of organizing data in a detailed gazetteer, however, tends toward pure description and thus lacks thematic coherence. How are similarities and differences between sites significant? Why organize these sites regionally, unless the clustered sites somehow meaningfully relate to each other (*e.g.* within the *pagus Thuscae*)? Why not organize chronologically, which would trace continuity and change over time? Finally, and most critically, how do the sites in this gazetteer meet the definition of *tophet* precincts, particularly later sites dedicated to Saturn and *Caelestis*?

These same issues plague the volume under review – in addition to a continued cautious focus on secure details, he eliminates certain other possibilities and provides some hypotheses («qualche punto fermo... escludere alcune opzioni, proporre delle ipotesi», p. 1) – but the details included do not resolve a research question, those excluded have little reason given for their omission, and the hypotheses presented are summarized from the works of others. For example, while the previous volume built upon Leglay, this volume builds upon Bénichou-Safar,⁵ organized by class of evidence and then by a chronological survey of scholarship.

The first part of the volume treats the direct evidence (§1.1-5), *i.e.* chronology and typology of sites, urns, and stelae with their inscriptions. Building upon the first volume, he categorizes certain sites that meet three primary criteria as having an open-air precinct, having urns interred with cremated remains of infants and/or juvenile ovicaprids, and having stelae used as markers. Others meet secondary criteria as well, *i.e.* circuit wall, elevated position, aisles, etc. There are useful descriptive lists of sites meeting these criteria in table format, but the summaries are necessarily brief thus lack sufficient explanation. The same pattern holds for the analysis of material artifacts – detailed defining characteristics (*e.g.* percentage of various animal bones, a selection of stelae forms, a sample of formulaic inscriptional terms), all in brief summary. Beyond lists of characteristics, outlining similarities and differences, the author provides little about how and why these select criteria are significant, how they explain the way that Phoenician-Punic sites (8th-2nd BCE) relate to each other, nor how these relate to their Neo-Punic successors (post-2nd BCE). How do the rare and enigmatic inscriptional terms work within the formulaic system? How do iconographic stelae relate to those with inscriptions?

The author then treats the indirect evidence (§2.1-3), namely later Saturn sanctuaries, and the ancient biblical and classical sources. For the Roman sanctuaries he summarizes Leglay, as in the first volume, maintaining that the sites must have some continuity with their predecessors since they share iconography and sometime occupy the same sites, but he classifies them as secondary since they normally lack urn deposits.

2 D'Andrea 2014.

3 Leglay 1961-1966; Leglay 1966.

4 Jongeling – Kerr 2005.

5 *E.g.* Bénichou-Safar 2004.

He does describe certain exceptions, *e.g.* the open-air sanctuary at Lambafundi, where iconographic stelae relate to two urns with cremated infant remains (pp. 35-36). He summarizes Leglay's account, then claims that this pair may have been initiates and that they died of natural causes, but without providing support for either point. This site seems to have similarities with others (*e.g.* Hr. el-Hami), but it is discussed alone. For the biblical and classical texts, he provides representative samples, focusing on key terms, with expanded treatment in an appendix. He concludes that the literary descriptions have little relation to the reality of the votive ritual, except for that of Tertullian, again without expanding upon his claim (p. 43). The author then provides two comparative, panoramic views of archaeological and textual evidence for human sacrifice and infant burial (or both) across the entire Mediterranean (§2.4-5).

In the second half of the text, the author surveys the «proposte interpretative» of the volume's title. He begins with a history of scholarship, providing very brief summaries of «certezze e ipotesi» in chronological order, from rabbinic literature to early excavations and debates, listed with little clarification or distinction between certainty and conjecture (§3.1-3). He gives just a paragraph to Eissfeldt (1935) but provides little explication (p. 62), although he does recognize a paradigm shift through his section subdivision. More recent debates he sorts into two categories, either supporting an interpretation as human sacrifice or an interpretation as infant burial (§3.4-5). These brief lists are accurate, but the mode of organization so separates data from interpretation that reintegration can be difficult. Only with foreknowledge (and with aid of his helpful index), can one combine the description of Phoenician inscriptions (pp. 29-33), with those in Latin (pp. 36-37), in order to understand how Eissfeldt could have used inscriptions from N'gaous to reinterpret biblical references to Molech (pp. 39-40).

Rather than organization by topic, where one might follow the development of shared theses over time (*e.g.* burial hypothesis from Schaeffer 1956, to Leglay 1966, to Bénichou-Safar 1981), throughout this section the author prefers a rough chronological order, within broad categories of sacrifice or burial, which fragments arguments into lists of he says/she says summaries. The key to interpreting these precincts remains osteological analysis, but the central debate between Schwartz *et al.* (2010; 2012; 2017) and Smith *et al.* (2011; 2013) exists in summary without analysis (*e.g.* methods of determining infant skeletal age), and not set side-by-side but at a distance (pp. 86, 94). In this case, one leaves with no understanding of how two scientific teams interpreting the same bones could have come to such diverse conclusions.

The section on the *status quaestionis* again cautiously lists data and prior interpretations (§3.4), again with rare or absent explanations. The analysis of the *tophet* demands specialist knowledge about a range of varied disciplines – from classical philology to biblical philology and Northwest Semitic epigraphy, to ancient history, to archaeology and osteology, to the history of religions, and so on – a range that makes holistic interpretation difficult. Such an analysis has not been attempted here. Despite the fragmented organizational method throughout, one can follow pertinent disciplinary arguments in overview. No original analyses appear for any of the given specialties – no novel interpretations, no new material artifacts, no new inscriptions, and little indication of what has been learned through hands-on study of the artifacts or sites themselves – just summaries of previous scholarship. Discipline-specific analyses (*i.e.* iconographic or typological configurations) are not related to those of other disciplines, nor to any overall thesis. When reporting on recent finds from key sites, namely infant burials from Hr. Medina (Althiburos) and Hr. el-Hami, he repeats the excavators' findings (cf. pp. 101-102, 107-108) without explaining how they came to their conclusions. For example, the author had earlier reported two contentious conclusions – that the infants died naturally and that they were suitable votive offerings (pp. 87-88) – but at no point do we find support for these claims. Nor do we find a clear explanation of how infant burials in these Roman sanctuaries relate to their Phoenician predecessors.

The final section, on the meaning of infant cinerary urn burials (§3.5), the author collates and summarizes previous sections. He provides a list of options, from infants as objects of ritual killing, as votive

offerings themselves, and as intercessors of the vow, without explaining how each would function. In conclusion, he admits to finding little clarity about the ritual, about the content of vows, about seasonal timing, and thus cannot offer an «interpretazione semplicistica e monolitica» (p. 127). Yet he also fails to offer any sort of complex or nuanced holistic interpretation. In order to resolve this unsatisfactory impasse, and exit “limbo,” he appeals for better excavation and for more complete publication, both of which have been largely absent for the past century of investigation. In truth, we have had very little hope of placing artifacts into precise stratigraphic relationship to others. Nevertheless, there should be some rank or order in this conclusion, some good reasons for giving priority to one interpretation over others, but we find none. Instead, this mass of data, however well-sorted, remains disconnected and incoherent.

Overall the text is geared to generally inform those from individual specialties about the range of work from other disciplines and, by simply providing data, the author succeeds. The detailed plans and key selections of text and artifacts give a reliable sense of the range of evidence. If ever a digital edition were to appear, the volume would have even greater utility as fully searchable, allowing data to be matched in other combinations. A digital format would also allow the helpful GoogleEarth maps to be viewed in closer detail. In any case, specialists may find this volume a useful research tool.

REFERENCES

- Bénichou-Safar 1981 = H. Bénichou-Safar, *À propos des ossements humains du tophet de Carthage*, in «RStFen» 9, 1981, pp. 5-9.
- Bénichou-Safar 2004 = H. Bénichou-Safar, *Le tophet de Salammbô à Carthage: Essai de reconstitution*, Rome 2004 («Collection de l'École Française de Rome», 342).
- D'Andrea 2014 = B. D'Andrea, *I tofet del Nord Africa dall'età arcaica all'età romana, VIII sec. a.C.-II sec. d.C.*, Roma 2014 («Collezione di Studi Fenici», 45).
- Eissfeldt 1935 = O. Eissfeldt, *Molk als Opferbegriff im Punischen und Hebräischen und das Ende des Gottes Moloch*, Halle 1935 («Beiträge zur Religionsgeschichte des Altertums», 3).
- Jongelin – Kerr 2005 = K. Jongeling – R.M. Kerr, *Late Punic Epigraphy: An Introduction to the Study of Neo-Punic and Latino-Punic Inscriptions*, Tübingen 2005.
- Leglay 1961-1966 = M. Leglay, *Saturne Africain: Monuments*, I-II, Paris 1961-1966.
- Leglay 1966 = M. Leglay, *Saturne Africain: Histoire*, Paris 1966 («Bibliothèque des Écoles françaises d'Athènes et de Rome», 205).
- Schaeffer 1956 = C.F.A. Schaeffer, in «CRAI» ser. 4, 1956, p. 67.
- Schwartz *et al.* 2010 = J.H. Schwartz – F. Houghton – R. Macchiarelli – L. Bondioli, *Skeletal Remains from Punic Carthage Do Not Support Systematic Sacrifice of Infants*, in «PLoS ONE» 5, 2010: e9177. <https://doi.org/10.1371/journal.pone.0009177>.
- Schwartz *et al.* 2012 = J.H. Schwartz – F. Houghton – R. Macchiarelli – L. Bondioli, *Bones, Teeth and Estimating Age of Perinates: Carthaginian Infant Sacrifice Revisited*, in «Antiquity» 86, 2012, pp. 738-745.
- Schwartz *et al.* 2017 = J.H. Schwartz – F. Houghton – R. Macchiarelli – L. Bondioli, *Two Tales of One City: Data, Inference and Carthaginian Infant Sacrifice*, in «Antiquity» 91, 2017, pp. 442-454.
- Smith *et al.* 2011 = P. Smith – G. Avishai – J.A. Greene – L.E. Stager, *Aging Cremated Infants: The Problem of Sacrifice at the Tophet of Carthage*, in «Antiquity» 85, 2011, pp. 859-875.
- Smith *et al.* 2013 = P. Smith – G. Avishai – J.A. Greene – L.E. Stager, *Age Estimations Attest to Infant Sacrifice at the Carthage Tophet*, in «Antiquity» 87, 2013, pp. 1191-1207.

BRIEN GARNAND
Howard University, Washington DC
bgarnand@gmail.com