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## BOOK REVIEWS

NICOLA LANERI, *From Ritual to God in the Ancient Near East. Tracing the Origins of Religion*, 2024. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, xiv + 251 pp., figures in text.\*

Identifying the *origins of religion* has been a goal pursued by countless scholars working in a variety of fields and using many different approaches (philosophers, theologians, historians, etc.), especially in the “heroic” era of religious studies. The Author of this volume has bravely taken up this enormous challenge, starting around 10,000 years ago and drawing on archaeological data from the ancient Near Eastern from the pre-Ceramic Neolithic onwards – sometimes supplemented by textual references – in the geographical area comprised between the eastern shores of the Mediterranean and the Tigris and Euphrates rivers. Convinced that «(...) a holistic approach to the transformation of religiosity among Near Eastern societies (...) starting from the earliest religious phenomena in the Levant and south-eastern Turkey during prehistoric times up until the beginning of Judaic monotheism» is currently unavailable (p. ix), Laneri aims to fill this gap. His work is divided into a *Preface*, an *Introduction (Interpreting religious materiality in the Ancient Near East*, pp. 1-20), and three parts (divided into several chapters), followed by *Conclusions*.

Noting «(...) the impossibility of separating the mental from the material dimension in interpreting the religious dimensions of ancient communities» (p. ix), the Author takes as his point of departure the famous monumental enclosures of Göbekli Tepe, “the first temples in history”, in south-eastern Turkey, to explore the earliest traces of religious practice in the ancient Near East, and the historical development of the ‘religious dimension’ in these societies. In particular, he seeks to identify «(...) those elements engraved in the material culture that can support the identification of different form of “religiosity” (e.g., animism, polytheism, monotheism) that clearly shaped the beliefs in supernatural beings in ancient Near Eastern societies» (*ibid.*). Consequently, he deems it necessary to redefine traditional classifications using archaeological contexts from which «(...) clear elements of religious practices (e.g. visual, architectural, sensorial, textual) were unearthed» (p. x). Laneri claims that this book is the first attempt «(...) to connect the different material traces of ancient religions (...) through an innovative theoretical lens in order to reconstruct a cognitive and sensorial perspective of the religious beliefs of ancient Near Eastern communities» (p. x), with implications that also affect our modern forms of religiosity.

The first chapter of Part I (1. *In the name of the spirits. Human and natural environments*) focuses on ancestor cult (*Materializing the human body – The cult of the ancestors among Ancient Near Eastern societies*, pp. 23-46).

As is well known, ancestors play a very important role in ancient societies. Ancestors are to be distinguished from the ordinary dead – an issue that is frequently ignored or underestimated – and are often at the centre of complex cultic systems with multiple implications at different levels, constituting elements of collective memory and social cohesion. The remains of human bodies (the classic example being skulls) are used and manipulated in a variety of ways; the deceased is attributed an agency physically embodied in his body,

\* English translation of the original Italian *Dal rituale a Dio nel Vicino Oriente antico. Tracciando le origini della religione*, Roma 2022.

in its entirety or in parts: thus, «(...) the fragmentation of the body served the purpose of embodying the memory of the dead among the living and strengthening the relationship between ancestors and the community of the living» (p. 29). The strengthening of community ties through forms of relationship between super-human forces and material elements was felt to be particularly necessary in the pre-Pottery Neolithic, a time of profound social change and new subsistence strategies. As far as Mesopotamia in later periods is concerned, archaeological and textual data testify to this phenomenon and document special ceremonies, including the custom of deifying deceased kings (Ur III, and also Ebla in Syria). It should not be forgotten, however, that in the Mesopotamian tradition there was an ambivalent attitude – of veneration but above all of fear – towards the spirits of the deceased (*etemmu*), who were potentially malevolent and to be feared (see e.g. B. Alster, ed., *Death in Mesopotamia*. XXVI Rencontre Assyriologique Internationale, Copenhagen 1980; G. Gnoli – J.-P. Vernant, eds., *La mort, les morts dans les sociétés anciennes*, Paris 2017<sup>2</sup>). It should be added that in the Syro-Palestinian context, studies have already shown a tendency as early as Late Bronze Age Ras Shamra-Ugarit to emphasise the benevolent aspect of the deceased much more than the fear of his/her actions and reactions (the role of the Rapiuma-Refaim: see e.g. H. Niehr, (2017) «Die *rapi'uma/rapha'im* als konstitutives Element der westsemitischen Königsideologie. Herkunft – Rezeptionsgeschichte – Ende», in L.C. Jonker *et al.*, eds., *Congress Volume Stellenbosch 2016*, Leiden/Boston 2017, pp. 143-178).

Monumental architecture, with its particular symbolism, can also be a powerful means of reinforcing the bonds of a given community, as evidenced by the spectacular remains of Göbekli Tepe and, to a lesser extent, Karahan Tepe. Both can be interpreted as «(...) cosmic projections of habitual bodily memories» (p. 44). The materialisation of human remains for religious purposes would be part of a strategy aimed at linking all aspects of the cosmos, in which the “spiritualisation” of the deceased members of a community plays an important role. In this case, however, the reference to Ezekiel (37,12-14) does not seem to be in line with the argument being made, since the idea here, expressed in highly symbolic language, is the return to full life of an entire people after a suffering so terrible that it can be equated with actual death.

The second chapter of this part (*Sacred nature: deer, water, and the supernatural in Anatolia during the Bronze Age*, pp. 47-77) aims to offer «(...) a new understanding of the active role of natural elements in shaping the religiosity of ancient Near Eastern societies (...) and that highlight a combined effort to include the spirits of other-than-human beings recognizable in nature together with a traditional anthropomorphic representation of deities in framing their own form of religiosity» (p. 48). Concretely, «(...) the main focus (...) will be to investigate and interpret the role that cervids and water played in the practice of ceremonial and ritual activities as well as in the construction of religious beliefs among Bronze Age Anatolian societies» (*ibid.*). After a brief examination of the symbolic role of deer and water in this context, using a combined analysis of archaeological, iconographic, textual and faunal data, attention is turned to a specific case study: the site of Hirbemerdon Tepe (early 2nd mill. BCE in SE Turkey, along the upper Tigris Valley) and its ceremonial complex, where precisely deer and water are held to be ‘spiritual essences’ in a broader network of materialising religious beliefs.

The role of temple buildings in Mesopotamia between the 4th and the 1st mill. is the subject of Part II (*For the glory of the gods. Architecture, icons, and materials symbols for encountering the divine*).

The need to create places for contact and communication with superhuman beings (a term I personally prefer to “spirits”, p. 81), through prayer and collective ritual celebration, leads over time, starting at the end of the Neolithic period, to cultic architectural structures of increasing complexity, consistent with the growing economic and social complexity of the various communities (Chapter 3. *Constructing cosmoteism: temples, writing, and the creation of divine pantheons in Ancient Mesopotamia*, pp. 81-120). Gradually, the dwelling of the god no longer resembles a human house but takes on the dimensions of a temple building: as early as the 5th mill., the presence of larger buildings in a more complex urban fabric is noted in Mesopotamia and Iran, a phenomenon that is especially evident in Mesopotamia in the 3rd-2nd millennia. The Au-

thor's focus is therefore on how «(...) the visibility of religious architecture served the purpose of stimulates the senses of ancient Mesopotamian communities with a specific attention dedicated to the use of terraces for creating high temples» (ziggurats) (p. 84). This "vertical" architecture allows for a strong link with the celestial figures of the pantheon (not coincidentally called "stars", DINGIR [reviewer's note]). The use and design of cult buildings now reflect a different relationship with the deities. The need emerges for a stronger centralised authority and for more direct links with the "other dimension". In what follows, various examples are given of what Laneri calls the "entanglement between temple and religiosity", perhaps meaning by "religiosity" (a rather vague term) the type and spirit of ceremonial practices that the sacred buildings, in which the already familiar idea of the tripartite plan reaches its climax, must have accommodated – with particular attention paid to the sacred precincts dedicated to An and Inanna at Uruk in the 4th millennium. At this point, the Author proposes a consideration that deserves brief comment (p. 96), namely that by the end of the 4th millennium «(...) religious beliefs and practices in Mesopotamia are clearly entangled with politics and economics. *Starting from this historical moment* [italics mine], it becomes clear that these three dimensions (religious, political, and economic) cannot be easily separated from each other and that the possibility of distinguishing secular and religious perspectives in the life of Near Eastern premodern society becomes a very complex exercise for interested scholars». Let me note here that the difficulties Laneri points out are not only manifest in a particular period or historical phase, but whenever and wherever societies other than our own are approached. The three "dimensions" he lists are exclusively our own conceptual categories, and in any other type of society they will find no easy correspondence. Their inapplicability – except on a strictly heuristic level – must lead the historian of any tendency (and the archaeologist cannot but be a historian) to be cautious and, whatever her/his methods and evidence, to pursue the goal of reconstructing the conceptual emic categories of the societies he/she studies, not to verify whether ours fit. It should be noted in passing that, forced to make use of our categories of "religious", "political", and "economic", we must ask ourselves, for example, whether the people involved in the Sumerian temple administration are officials/employees with religious connotations or not. It is clear to us that an employee of the Vatican administration is a secular official, but in the Mesopotamian case this distinction works poorly, unless one decides a priori that "religious" can only be applied to those directly engaged in cultic activity. But again, to take another example, is the person involved in the killing of animal victims in a sacrificial context a cultic worker (a "sacred butcher") or an ordinary butcher called into service? The same is true, on a different scale, of the king, usually referred to as a «priest-king»: but what seems to us to be a "mixture" of functions is the cultural formulation that this society gives to the royal institution, to which our conceptual categories are, of course, foreign.

During the 3rd mill., the highly visible terraced temple marks a new form of connection between the human and superhuman dimensions, acting as a visual statement of divine power, including the sovereign. This type of religious architecture is also a powerful means of linking the celestial world to the Netherworld, and provides an ideal setting for grand celebrations such as the New Year. The temple is now more than ever the focal point of local communities and also acts as an administrative centre. It is important to make it clear here that it is not the new architecture with its visibility that creates the new powers, but it is itself the "product" that symbolically expresses, legitimises, and reinforces these powers, in a game of references that already begins at the ideological level. From the 2nd mill. onwards, the rise of the Amorite dynasties led not only to a restructuring of the pantheon (the use of the word "syncretism" must be subject to caution here), but also to a socio-political transformation and a new vision «(...) clearly embedded in the urban planning of Mesopotamian cities, with the emergence of large palaces embellished with lavish decorations (...) as well as with new religious architecture» (p. 105). The written sources essentially confirm this reading of the cult buildings, testifying to a cosmology articulated vertically in (six) levels, of which the temple is the exemplification, and confirm that the Sumerian pantheon – as is the norm for this ideological superstructure – mirrors the contemporary social organisation and is formed on the model of the extended family.

Part 4 (*Imagining the divine. Consecrating and venerating cultic images in the Ancient Near East*, pp. 121-162) explores the importance of the materiality of (what is believed to be) the divine essence in anthropomorphic statues (*salmu*) and other forms of visual representation, focusing in particular on how divine and other images were perceived by devotees as the actual physical presence of the super-human essence or power. Laneri rightly notes here that in ancient societies the distinction between the representation and the essence of the divine embodied in sacred images was ‘incredibly’ difficult to disentangle. However, this does not only apply to ancient societies, but also to modern cultic contexts: for example, the veneration and respect for statues of saints, even in their materiality, or, to take the most prominent example, for the sacramental host that is believed to “truly” contain the body of Christ.

Of course, the strategic placement of statues in Mesopotamian temples (cella) allowed for a direct connection between the human and divine dimensions, made more manifest by stelae and other monuments placed in significant cultic contexts. With the establishment of the Akkadian dynasty (2350-2200) founded by Sargon, a national pantheon is created, the special role of Ishtar emerges, and the deification of the king takes place, with Naram-Sin being the first to place DINGIR before his name. New iconographic patterns are established in which royal power is dominant, without the divine presence in anthropomorphised form. The king is in a horizontal relationship of direct communication with the god, whose will he coordinates and enforces. With the advent of the Amorites in Babylon, the separation between royal and divine rule finally seems to come to an end (early 2nd mill., see e.g. the Hammurabi stela). The deified king is now present in the cosmological domain and has the same dimensions as the god. The cosmos is also perceived as inhabited by negative forces, variously named and depicted, against which the gods fight: monstrous and hybrid figures, some of which also have protective functions. The 1st mill. is a period of reformulation of the visual hierarchies in the representation of the divine world, which slowly moves away from its traditional anthropomorphic style, now often replaced by symbolic elements connecting the divine and human domains. The king and the high priest are at the centre of the organisation of the world. The royal image is now surrounded by a special power, reminiscent of the *melammu* emanating from the divine image.

To sum up, from the end of the 3rd mill. onwards, the ideology of kingship provides for a greater centrality of the royal figure in divine depictions. In the 1st mill., with the Assyrians and Babylonians, the imperial ideology is underpinned by a stronger conception of human kingship, the earthly counterpart of celestial kingship, in which the anthropomorphism of the divine images gradually tends to give way to their symbols.

Chapter five (*One god in one temple: religious aniconism and the rise of monotheism in the Southern Levant during the first millennium BCE*, pp. 165-203) attempts to show «(...) how the rise of monotheism in the Levant during the first millennium BCE can be related to a transformation in the materiality of religion in this area through the affirmation of an aniconic approach to believing in one god rooted in the ban on divine images as affirmed in the Hebrew Bible» (p. 166).

Beyond the biblical text, archaeology can help to give a more complex picture of the phenomenon. On the one hand, it contradicts the biblical narrative of the events, but on the other hand, various documents confirm certain general historical aspects, such as the mention of Israel on the stela of Merenptah and the existence of a “house of David”, while the stela of Mesha king of Moab – written in Moabite and not Phoenician! – provides a parallel and opposite version of the conflict with Israel (which is far more historically reliable and has extraordinary theological implications). Historically, Yahweh was originally no different from the other major deities of the “nation-states” that emerged during the Iron Age in the Syro-Palestinian area, which was on the whole fairly well preserved from the otherwise ruinous passage of the “Sea Peoples”. Indeed, with the demise of the traditional hegemonic powers (Egyptians, Hittites), the political model of the city-state on a territorial basis is flanked by that of the nation-state, which brings to the fore the Aramaic and neo-Hittite states, those of the Palestinian area (Israel and Judah) and Transjordan (Ammon, Moab, Edom).

Ethnic states with a national configuration possess a social structure that is ideally modelled on that of the tribe. New values emerge: national identity is paramount, based on the belief in a common descent from an eponymous ancestor, and the common worship of an archaic clan/tribal god figure, the national god. The god of Israel is one of these and must fight – even taking the field almost “physically” – against the gods of other nations, who are considered less powerful than him, but whose existence is not denied. Monotheism in the strict sense is known to be a phenomenon associated with the exilic and post-exilic periods. An early henotheistic or monolatric cult – more on a theoretical and elite level than a popular one – gradually took on the characteristics of an exclusive monotheism, with implications for the concept of the deity residing in a temple and the ways in which it was represented.

With regard to terminology, the author declares (p. 173) that he does not wish to enter into the “theological” debate on the use of monotheism, henotheism, and monolatry for the rise of the cult of Yahweh in ancient Israel, as in the question of the polytheistic or monotheistic perspective of the Bible. However, these are eminently historical-religious issues, and indeed Laneri cannot avoid using such terms, both before and after, in a book that avowedly sets itself certain goals. As is well known, the history of religions shows that we are dealing with *tendential definitions*: polytheisms can provide for devotional preferences that in fact restrict worship to a few, if not unique, figures, whereas monotheisms such as Christian Catholicism open up to the cult of entities that are, if not all fully divine, certainly super-human, such as angels and saints.

In what follows, Laneri «(...) investigates the reasons behind such a transformation and seeks to understand how individuals who had been strictly linked to a sense of material religion (and to an immanent vision of the divine presence in the earthly world) were brought into a more transcendent relationship with the numinous through which the word of God became more important than the divine things» (p. 174). With the biblical prohibition of images, linked to the ancient cultic tradition of ‘standing stones’, the question of iconism/aniconism necessarily arises, a question that perhaps would have benefited from the contribution of Brian R. Doak (*Phoenician Aniconism in Its Mediterranean and Ancient Near Eastern Contexts*. Atlanta 2015), especially in the case of the Phoenicians, whose polytheism is not only expressed iconically on a figurative level. Even in Mesopotamia, on the other hand, from the mid-2nd to the 1st mill., there is a transformation in the visual conception of divinity, with a preference for symbolic rather than anthropomorphic representational language, especially in the 8th-7th cent., with a «(...) shift towards the worship of symbols» (p. 189). The extent to which this “dematerialisation” testifies to a progressive transcendence of divine power is debatable, as is the broader question of whether it connects to the alleged (and now rather discredited) Axial Age postulated by Karl Jaspers. The leap to monotheism and aniconism is far from immediate, as hints of a possible iconic (even theriomorphic) depiction of Yahweh or the presence of a consort at his side (Kuntillet ‘Ajrud) suggest. However, a new vision is emerging, in a context always open to various influences, but increasingly independent of the material presence of the divine among men, which is a very strong identity factor in the continuation of Jewish history. According to Laneri, the passage from polytheism to monotheism leads «(...) to an inner religious introspection linked to the word and a different relationship with the divine world» (p. 195); it is «(...) a lengthy process of becoming aware of the individual as an entity belonging to a community that no longer needs magical-religious trappings (which are votive objects) to activate the relationship with God and instead bases this relationship on introspection and verbal communication with the only god, Yahweh» (*ibid.*). In any event, it should be borne in mind that *magical-religious trappings* do not disappear entirely in the ancient Hebrew religion and can be found even today: «Jewish culture is rich in symbols represented by specific objects, images, stones, numbers, colours and more», states the portal of the National Museum of Italian Judaism and the Shoah (<https://meis.museum/cultura-ebraica/oggetti-simboli/>) (accessed online on 27 January 2025).

This is not to deny, of course, that ancient Israel moved away from the custom of materialising the divine presence in objects and architectural structures, and banned anthropomorphism. The new concept of

the One God would presuppose transcendence (or, paradoxically, total immanence; good old pantheism!), as opposed to the immanence that generally characterises polytheism; but historical transformations of religious systems are never entirely radical, and not a few passages in the Old Testament document how much the figure of Yahweh is still bound to forms and behaviours derived from the surrounding cultural milieu.

In any case, particularly with the dramatic events of exile and return, the material relationship with the 'numinous' is transformed into a new perspective: anthropomorphism was first replaced by the symbolic value of the divine (throne, bull) and finally «(...) by the combined materiality of the architecture of only one temple constructed in Jerusalem and one voice that is inscribed in the Torah of Moses physically housed in the Ark of Covenant located in the Tabernacle» (p. 197).

In the *Conclusions* (pp. 204-216), the Author summarises the main points of his discussion, rightly stating at the outset that «the entanglement between material culture and the divine is a unique kind of relationship for both ancient and modern societies» (p. 204). As we can all attest, symbolic references to a universe conceived as sacred have not completely disappeared. Earlier, for the peoples of the Ancient Near East, the belief system was conceived as a multifaceted immanent presence of spiritual beings in the earthly world; it was translated materially through the use of a complex symbolic language that combined iconographic, textual, and architectural elements to make divine power tangible. Divine material symbols were created as a reference to the interaction between human beings and their natural environment, where "spirits" were believed to dwell. This world view changed in the southern Levant, especially during the 6th cent. BCE, when the voice of God became more important than his representation, which was no longer needed. At the end of a long journey, monotheism favoured interiorisation and finally established that the word of God was more effective than man-made objects.

Through his research, Laneri makes a considerable effort in his bold attempt to align himself with the material study of religions (an approach pioneered by Richard Morgan). The breadth of his subject matter and reflections in this volume serve as a stimulus for various methodological comments and terminological discussions – particularly from the perspective of the history of religions in general – by a reviewer specialising in ancient Near Eastern religions.

In tracing the origins of the phenomenon of "religion", Laneri does not provide a definition, not even a working one, of it, taking it for granted that it is a manifestation/dimension that can be clearly identified in ancient Near Eastern societies. This creates difficulties, however, because religion in our sense is not a conceptual category that can be identified in the societies under consideration. The Author's use of the term "numinous" leads one to believe that he implicitly shares the phenomenological approach (Rudolph Otto and others), and implies the irrational experience of an invisible and powerful presence, at once terrifying and attractive (the so-called 'sacred'), which would be the source of every "religious" attitude of humanity. Such an experience would underlie human efforts to identify and "personalise" extra- and super-human cosmic agents, elevating them to objects of veneration. However, this hypothetical afflatus attributed to human beings can and must be the subject of strictly historical investigation: it is the tendency of our species to identify one or more supernatural foundations/agencies for phenomena and events of all kinds, the causes of which are not understood. All of this is by no means exclusive to what we call "religion", or religious faith, since it is the same effort to elaborate a cosmological theory that every society makes – including our own: we call it science – according to its cultural tools and the era in which it lives. As far as the ancient Near East is concerned, the Mesopotamians, like other ancient peoples, had their world view, which did not distinguish between the religious, economic, and political spheres as we do. Instead of a codified and identifiable "religion", they had complex traditions characterised by their own conceptual categories and implying a cosmological vision in which domains we call religious, political, economic, and so on were articulated differently. Hence the difficulties encountered by the author on several occasions (see e.g. p. 96) and noted above. From the point of view of research strategies, it seems much more fruitful to speak of "cult", as many

archaeologists have pointed out, highlighting the difficulty of identifying the “religious beliefs”. “Cult” is a term that, among other things, has the virtue of fully embracing materiality; we can define it as the complex system of active relationships – involving activities, ideologies, conduct – between the human and super-human realms. In other words, it is a particular system of worship expressed in ceremonial acts directed towards specified figures or objects.

Note again how even the use of categories such as sacred/profane (but also nature/culture) poses no small difficulties, as Laneri himself admits in one case: «(...) it is important to highlight the difficulty (and almost impossibility) of distinguishing the sacred from the profane domains that appear to be part of Western categorizations» (p. 44). It is a pity that the attention to terminology is not always so high in the course of his analysis. Again, with regard to historical-religious terminology, typologies such as spiritualism, animism, and totemism and the very use of these terms are now obsolete: if used, they must be fully justified.

Laneri is an archaeologist and therefore uses a method and evidence that do not necessarily coincide with those of the historian of religions. Both archaeology and the history of religions are historical disciplines with an interpretative vocation. The former necessarily privileges material culture, the latter generally privileges other (verbal) evidence (written and oral), but neither should not be limited to this: it is the duty of the historian to consider all kinds of evidence, precisely because of the need for comprehensive interpretation that is at the root of his or her approach. Archaeology and the history of religions have their own interpretative paths, with clearly different starting points, and make use of distinctive methods and techniques. What they have in common is the circumstance that, at a certain point in their ideal journey, they find themselves obliged to integrate the rest of the documentation, to metabolise it, so to speak, if they want to go as far as possible in their analysis. This will be the time to trust specialists with different skills from one's own, to take into consideration the results of their research, to pass on each other's insights. In other words, each scholar must recognise his or her own limitations objectively. In this regard, a couple of studies in Italian that are missing from the final bibliography of the volume can be cited here: M. Rocchi – P. Xella, eds., *Archeologia e religione*, Roma 2005; I. Baglioni, ed., *Storia delle religioni e archeologia. Discipline a confronto*, Roma 2000).

To conclude these remarks and move on to the historical level, it is clear that any change in forms of worship and belief systems cannot be assessed in terms of progress or regression: for millennia polytheism has been the most suitable “religious” form (see above!) for a large number of societies of a certain type (although it has survived, albeit as a minority, to the present day). The monotheisms sprung from the Jewish tradition (the so-called religions of the book) have a wider audience nowadays, but new cases are appearing on the horizon that may even lead to an overcoming of the traditional relationship between man and god. And it is also important to remember that, as cultural anthropology teaches us, “magic is the religion” of others and different acts of worship, but of the same nature, are considered idolatrous and false when practised by others who “do not know the true god”.

All in all, this is a courageous, even daring book, with clear limitations due to the vast scope of the chosen topic and the author's lack of familiarity with the history of religions and Near Eastern philology. It is a research that can be re-proposed with methodological adjustments and deepened with more circumscribed objectives in terms of spatial and chronological dimensions.

Further comments and main errata corrigie.

In general, there are often inconsistencies in the transcription of Sumerian and Akkadian terms. According to current Assyriological conventions, logograms must be written in round, spaced, or capital letters (DIN-GIR, d i n g i r); furthermore, it is correct to write é-sag-íla (=transliteration) or, if desired, Esagila (=transcription), likewise for é-temen-an-ki or Etemenanki, but not somewhere in between; there is erroneous confusion between /s/ and /š/ in Akkadian words: in transliteration, š (sin) and š (shin) are interchangeable, but not s (samekh) and š (shin); the rendering of š (shin) oscillates between š and /sh/. Akkadian terms are

usually rendered in italics; the letter /ḥ/ can be rendered with /h/ in transliterations from Akkadian, but not with /kh/. In addition, the main Sumerian term for «temple» is /é/; ēš (or ēš₂) means «rope», the exact term for «shrine» is ēš (or ēš₃) (see p. 96).

- p. 13: long-durée > longue-durée;
- p. 28: therfore > therefore;
- p. 37: the figure quoted is not 1.3 but 1.4;
- p. 89 and elsewhere: mittelsat > probably “Mittelsaal”;
- pp. 153, 156: Green and Black > Black and Green (correct sequence p. 157);
- p. 161: to emphasis > to emphasize;
- p. 168: Ashtoret is the Masoretic vocalisation that applies the vowels of «abomination» (bōšet) to the name of the goddess, which should be quoted as Astarte (more common, according to the Greek) or Ashtart, more correct, which must have been the original spelling;
- p. 170: the language of the Mesha stela is Moabite, not Phoenician;
- p. 170: according to the Ugaritic texts, Baal is the son of Dagan, not of El;
- p. 180: Palestinan > Palestinian;
- p. 199: Kuntillet Ajarud > Kuntillet ‘Ajrud;
- p. 205: Riceour > Ricoeur.

In the *References*:

- Ambasciano 2014 and Rydring 2011 are missing;
- Puglisi (Caratelli) > Pugliese (Caratelli);
- In the title of Börker-Klähn, J. (1982) “Und” and “Vergleichbare” go in lower case;
- Keel’s name is O. (= Othmar), not K.;
- Pfalzner > Pfälzner.

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