

STUDIA ANTIQUA

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STUDIA ANTIQUA

A STUDENT JOURNAL FOR THE STUDY OF THE ANCIENT WORLD

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ABBREVIATIONS

All abbreviations are taken from *The SBL Handbook of Style*, 8.4.

AASF	<i>Annales Academiae scientiarum fennicae</i>
AB	Anchor Bible
ABD	<i>Anchor Bible Dictionary</i> . Edited by D. N. Freedman. 6 vols. New York, 1992.
AJP	<i>American Journal of Philology</i>
AOAT	Alter Orient und Altes Testament
ArOr	<i>Archiv Orientalní</i>
BA	<i>Biblical Archaeologist</i>
BBR	<i>Bulletin for Biblical Research</i>
BDAG	Bauer, W., F. W. Danker, W. F. Arndt, and F. W. Gingrich. <i>Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament and Other Early Christian Literature</i> . 3rd ed. Chicago, 1999.
BDB	Brown, F., S. R. Driver, and C. A. Briggs. <i>A Hebrew and English Lexicon of the Old Testament</i> . Oxford, 1907.
BMes	<i>Bibliotheca mesopotamica</i>
BSac	<i>Bibliotheca sacra</i>
BSC	Bible Student's Commentary
BT	<i>The Bible Translator</i>
BTB	<i>Biblical Theology Bulletin</i>
BZAW	Beihefte zur Zeitschrift für die alttestamentliche Wissenschaft

CBQ	<i>Catholic Biblical Quarterly</i>
CDME	<i>A Concise Dictionary of Middle Egyptian</i> . Edited by R. O. Faulkner. Oxford, 1962.
COS	<i>The Context of Scripture</i> . Edited by W. W. Hallo. 3 vols. Leiden, 1997–.
DDD	<i>Dictionary of Deities and Demons in the Bible</i> . Edited by K. van der Toorn, B. Becking, and P. W. van der Horst. Leiden, 1995.
DJD	Discoveries in the Judean Desert
EBib	Etudes bibliques
EDNT	<i>Exegetical Dictionary of the New Testament</i> . Edited by H. Balz, G. Schneider. Grand Rapids, 1990–93.
EgT	<i>Eglise et théologie</i>
ExpTim	<i>Expository Times</i>
HBC	<i>Harper's Biblical Commentary</i> . Edited by J. L. Mays et al. San Francisco, 1988.
HTR	<i>Harvard Theological Review</i>
HTS	Harvard Theological Studies
IB	<i>Interpreter's Bible</i> . Edited by G. A. Buttrick et al. 12 vols. New York, 1951–57.
ICC	International Critical Commentary
IDB	<i>The Interpreter's Dictionary of the Bible</i> . Edited by G. A. Buttrick. 4 vols. Nashville, 1962.
Int	<i>Interpretation</i>
IOS	<i>Israel Oriental Studies</i>
JAC	Jahrbuch für Antike und Christentum
JAOS	<i>Journal of the American Oriental Society</i>
JBL	<i>Journal of Biblical Literature</i>
JCS	<i>Journal of Cuneiform Studies</i>
JFSR	<i>Journal of Feminist Studies in Religion</i>
JHS	<i>Journal of Hellenic Studies</i>
JNES	<i>Journal of Near Eastern Studies</i>
JQR	<i>Jewish Quarterly Review</i>
JRS	<i>Journal of Roman Studies</i>
JSNT	<i>Journal for the Study of the New Testament</i>

vi ABBREVIATIONS

JSOT	<i>Journal for the Study of the Old Testament</i>
JSOTSup	Journal for the Study of the Old Testament: Supplement Series
LCL	Loeb Classical Library
LSJ	Liddell, H. G., R. Scott, H. S. Jones, <i>A Greek-English Lexicon</i> . 9th ed. with revised supplement. Oxford, 1996.
<i>MDB</i>	<i>Mercer Dictionary of the Bible</i> . Edited by W. E. Mills. Macon, 1990.
<i>NewDocs</i>	<i>New Documents Illustrating Early Christianity</i> . Edited by G. H. R. Horsley and S. Llewelyn. North Ryde, N. S.W., 1981–.
<i>NIB</i>	<i>The New Interpreter's Bible</i>
NICNT	New International Commentary on the New Testament
NIGTC	New International Greek Testament Commentary
<i>NovT</i>	<i>Novum Testamentum</i>
<i>NTS</i>	<i>New Testament Studies</i>
OTS	Old Testament Studies
<i>OtSt</i>	<i>Oudtestamentische Studiën</i>
SHANE	Studies in the History of the Ancient Near East
SP	Sacra pagina
<i>TDNT</i>	<i>Theological Dictionary of the New Testament</i> . Edited by G. Kittel and G. Friedrich. Translated by G. W. Bromiley. 10 vols. Grand Rapids, 1964–76.
<i>TynBul</i>	<i>Tyndale Bulletin</i>
VC	<i>Vigiliae christianae</i>
VT	<i>Vetus Testamentum</i>
WBC	Word Biblical Commentary
<i>ZAW</i>	<i>Zeitschrift für die alttestamentliche Wissenschaft</i>
<i>ZDPV</i>	<i>Zeitschrift des deutschen Palästina-Vereins</i>

EGYPT, ISRAEL, AND THE LEVANT: THE MERNEPTAH STELE'S ROLE IN SHAPING HISTORICAL NARRATIVES

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Quincy Adams is earning a BA in Ancient Near Eastern Studies with an emphasis in the Hebrew Bible at Brigham Young University. He plans to pursue a graduate degree in biblical studies or a related field after graduating in December 2027.

Abstract: This paper investigates the Merneptah Stele, an exceptional artifact from the reign of Pharaoh Merneptah during Egypt's New Kingdom, to reassess the stele's role in understanding early Israelite identity. The Merneptah Stele is among the earliest known references to "Israel," and consequently has sparked discussion among scholars regarding this early group's socio-political and cultural status during the late Bronze Age. By examining the stele in conjunction with the inscriptions of the Cour de la Cachette in the Great Hypostyle Hall at Karnak, this study situates the Merneptah Stele within the broader historical and cultural framework of the New Kingdom to explore how these inscriptions reflect Egyptian foreign policy and military campaigns, offering valuable insights into Egypt's interactions with neighboring regions, especially the Levant, during this period. As a result, this study shows how the Merneptah Stele serves as a historical record and a propagandist tool to enhance the persona of Merneptah as Pharaoh.

INTRODUCTION

The Merneptah Stele was discovered in 1896 by Sir Flinders Petrie in the ancient city of Thebes, in Merneptah's funerary temple at Gurnah, and has been an artifact subject to intense scholarly scrutiny for over a century.¹ From the moment of its discovery, Petrie recognized that the stele would be monumental, accurately predicting that the stele would be one of the most famous and debated artifacts from his distinguished career in Egyptology.² Originally

1. Frank J. Yurco, "Merenptah's Canaanite Campaign," *Journal of the American Research Center in Egypt* 23 (1986): 190.

2. Flinders Petrie, *Seventy Years in Archeology* (Henry Holt and Company Inc, 1932), 172. Upon its discovery, Flinders Petrie exclaimed "won't the reverends

from the reign of Pharaoh Merneptah, during Egypt's New Kingdom (c. 1213–1203 B.C.), the stele is an account of Merneptah's military victories over Egypt's enemies. The stele is a literary masterpiece intended to commemorate the transcendent greatness of Merneptah through a retelling of Merneptah's military might and, thereby, legitimize his rule.³ Perhaps the most famous significance of the Merneptah Stele lies in its reference to the socio-political entity "Israel," recognized as one of the earliest extra-biblical mentions of the group central to the narrative of the Hebrew Bible.⁴ This single mention of the name "Israel" has been the root of scholarly discussion for over a century, with a variety of implications for the origin of Israelite identity. However diverse these arguments may be, the purpose of this paper is to launch a comparative study of the Merneptah Stele alongside the Cour de la Cachette in the Great Hypostyle Hall at Karnak in order to investigate what these inscriptions contribute to our understanding of Egyptian foreign policy and how this affects our understanding of early Israelite identity.

ISRAELITE IDENTITY

The defeat of the Hyksos and the Kerma Kingdom in the early New Kingdom ushered in a golden age in Egypt that was characterized by their military dominance and the revitalization of the kingship.⁵ Under Ramses II, the kingdom excelled and prospered through a peace treaty with the Hittites following the Battle of Kadesh, securing their borders in the Levant. However, in the aftermath of Ramses' death, several previously subdued groups in the Levant rose up in rebellion against Egypt. Ramses' son and successor, Merneptah, thus campaigned throughout the Levant to solidify his power and rule by re-subduing those peoples. The Merneptah Stele provides an account of his campaign and the peace brokered with the surrounding regions. The stele reads as follows:

The princes, prostrated, say 'Shalom';

None raises his head among the Nine Bows.

be pleased."

3. I. Hjelm and T. L. Thompson, "The Victory Song of Merneptah, Israel and the People of Palestine," *Journal for the Study of the Old Testament* 27.1 (2002): 6.

4. Peter van der Veen, Christoffer Theis, and Manfred Görg, "Israel in Canaan (Long) before Pharaoh Merneptah? A Fresh Look at Berlin Statue Pedestal Relief 21687," *Journal of Ancient Egyptian Interconnections* 2.4 (2011). Some scholars have argued that the Berlin Pedestal Relief 21687 may contain an earlier reference to Israel than the Merneptah Stele, based on a reinterpretation of the inscription's damaged place names.

5. Kathryn A Bard, *An Introduction to the Archaeology of Ancient Egypt 2nd Edition*. (Wiley Blackwell, 2015), 226–227.

Now that Tehenu has come to ruin, Hatti is pacified.

Canaan has been plundered into every sort of woe. Ashkelon has been overcome.

Gezer has been captured.

Yeno'am was made non-existent.

Israel is laid waste (and) his seed is not.

Hurru has become a widow because of Egypt.

All lands have united themselves in peace.

Anyone who was restless, he has been subdued by the King of Upper and Lower Egypt, Ba-en-Re-mery-Amun, son of Re, Mer-en-Ptah Hotep-her-Ma'at, granted life like Re, daily.⁶

In consequence of the mention of Israel on the stele, much academic discussion has revolved around the phrase "Israel is laid waste his seed is not." What exactly do Merneptah's scribes mean when they say Israel's "seed is not"? Is the translation "Israel" accurate? Primary among theories that strive to resolve questions about the nature and location of the "Israel" in the Merneptah Stele are comparisons of the name "Israel" to other city-states named on the stele. Importantly, the determinatives for the entities of Ashkelon, Gezer, and Yeno'am have identical signs consisting of the throw-stick (the sign for a foreign people) with a seated man and woman (the sign for a group of people, both male and female) and sign for a foreign land.⁷ However, while the signs which follow "Israel" are identical to the other entities, the determinative for foreign land is missing. Consequently, this suggests that Israel was a subsistence-based ethnic group living off the land in the region of Canaan.

HIS SEED IS NO MORE

A serious study of the phrase, "Israel is laid waste his seed is no more," demands an investigation of the term "seed." Some scholars contend that *prt* may refer to seed in the sense of posterity. Anson Rainey, for example, draws on

6. Frank J. Yurco, "3,200 Year Old Picture of Israelites Found in Egypt," *Biblical Archeology Review* 16.5 (1990): 20–38.

7. Dermot A. Nestor, *Cognitive Perspectives on Israelite Identity*, (T&T Clark International, 2010), 179. The sign used is representative of hills, leading many scholars to understand it to refer to hill country. However, because Ashkelon, Gezer, and Yeno'am are not located in the hill country of the southern Levant, some scholars prefer to read the sign here simply denoting a foreign land.

similar expressions in Egyptian war inscriptions, such as Ramses III's speech before Amon following the Libyan campaign.⁸

I have thrown down the transgressors of my border, prostrate in their places, their runners pinioned and slaughtered in my grasp; I have overthrown the land of Temeh, their seed is not; as for the Mashawasha, they are in travail in terror of me.⁹

In this context, the use of *pṛt* clearly refers to descendants, not crops, as there is no mention of agricultural devastation. Instead, the text emphasizes the utter defeat and terror of enemy peoples.

While this argument intensifies Merneptah's claim that he has utterly destroyed his enemies, it is difficult to reconcile this with the immense historical and literary evidence pointing to Israel's continued existence in Canaan. If Israel's posterity had truly been extinguished, such a lasting presence would be unexplainable. Rather than a literal reading of Merneptah's inscription a more nuanced interpretation, considering Merneptah's need to solidify his reign, offers a more plausible explanation for the phrase "Israel is laid waste their seed are not." In his original translation of the stele, Spiegelberg interpreted *pṛt* as "crops". Taking this into account, the stele could read, "The people of Israel is laid waste, — their crops are not" therefore suggesting that Israel itself was not destroyed, just their food supply.¹⁰

In broader Near Eastern contexts, the tactic of targeting an enemy's agricultural production is a common theme throughout the region. An inscription from the Second Libyan War describes the results of the Meshwesh (chief) attack on Tenhenu towns and land. Before the Meshwesh was noticed, he advanced with his entire people, bringing his land along, and fell upon the Tehenu, leaving them with ashes, devastating their towns ensuring their seed (*pṛt*) was not.¹¹ Similar to the Merneptah Stele, the verb preceding *pṛt* suggests that the devastation extended to the agricultural foundation of these societies, with references to the destruction of fields and harvests.¹² The desecration of

8. Anson F. Rainey, "Israel in Merneptah's Inscriptions and Reliefs," *Israel Exploration Journal* 51.1, (2001).

9. William F. Edgerton, John A. Wilson, *Historical Records of Ramses III: The Texts in Medinet Habu*, (University of Chicago Press, 1936), 18.

10. Flinders Petrie, Wilhelm Spiegelberg, *Six Temples at Thebes*, (London: Quaritch, 1896), 28.

11. William F. Edgerton, John A. Wilson, *Historical Records of Ramses III: The Texts in Medinet Habu*, 76.

12. Michael G. Hasel, *Merneptah's Inscription and Reliefs and the Origin of Israel*. Edited by Beth Alpert Nakhai. *The Annual of the American Schools of Oriental Research, The Near East in the Southwest: Essays in Honor of William G. Dever*, 58 (2003), 24.

a community's agricultural land would severely weaken any defensive action made, proving to be an acute strategy on the part of the aggressor.

Moreover, Assyrian and Hittite sources confirm the historical theme of destroying agricultural produce as a tactic in ancient Near Eastern warfare. In Sargon II's account of the conquest of Ulha, he describes how his Assyrian warriors marched into the city and destroyed their harvest.

His great trees, the adornment of his palace, I cut down like millet (?), and I destroyed the city of his glory, and his province I brought to shame. The Trunks of all those trees which I had cut down I gathered together, heaped them in a pile and burned them with fire. Their abundant crops, which (in) garden and marsh (?) were immeasurable, I tore up by the root and did not leave an ear (by which) to remember the destruction.¹³

Similarly, in the Hittite record of the *Ten-Year Annals of Muršili II*, Muršili explains that, because the Nuhašše men are hostile, he gave his troops the order to destroy Nuhašše's harvest and besiege them.¹⁴ These two accounts confirm the idea that Merneptah's forces came through and destroyed the grain of the Israelites. This is important because it highlights the theme of destroying a people's food source and offers insight into New Kingdom military tactics. Both Egyptian and non-Egyptian sources complement the inscriptions on the Merneptah Stele and offer insight into why Merneptah's scribes wrote, "Israel is laid waste his seed is not." Consequently, this contributes to the understanding that the stele does not describe how Israel was wiped out, but how their food supply was devastated.

LITERARY ANALYSIS

Accordingly, investigating the Merneptah Stele's literary structure is crucial in understanding the historical context in which it emerged. Michael Hasel has made significant contributions in the discussion of the stele by examining and cataloging the various interpretations of the text's structure.¹⁵ Building on this foundation, Hasel has proposed his framework, emphasizing the parallelism of the geopolitical entities listed in the text. Analyzing the stele, Hasel argues that the text supports a progression from entities on the edges of Egyptian control towards entities closer in proximity to the Egyptian

13. Daniel D. Luckbill, *Ancient Records of Assyria and Babylonia: Historical Records of Assyria From Sargon to the End*, (University of Chicago Press, 1927), 88.

14. Richard H. Beal, *The Ten Year Annals of Great King Muršili II of Hatti*, in *The Context of Scripture. Vol. 2: Monumental Inscriptions from the Biblical World*, eds. W. W. Hallo and K. L. Younger Jr, (Leiden: Brill, 2000), 89.

15. Michael G. Hasel, "Israel in the Merneptah Stela," *Bulletin of the American Schools of Oriental Research* 296 (1994): 54.

homeland.¹⁶ Tehenu and Hatti are located on the western- and northernmost extremes of Egyptian domination, with Canaan and Hurru close to Egypt's center of power. Likewise, the hymn's structure also emphasizes a shift in dominance, moving from powerful socio-political entities to weaker ones, which culminate at the center of the hymn with the city-states.¹⁷ Consequently, this structure points to the idea that Israel is a weaker socio-political entity in Canaan.

Additionally, Pharaoh Merneptah details how he vanquished the Libyans to the West and subdued his foes in the Levant to the East, thus uniting all lands in peace. This not functions as a historical account of Egypt's recent military victory but also extols the greatness of Merneptah and thereby legitimizes his rule.¹⁸ The text depicts the king in mythic proportions as he maintains *ma'at* (order). Importantly, this depiction matches the contemporary royal ideology of the Pharaoh as the guardian of the universe who upholds cosmic order amid the competing forces of nature. Similarly, contemporary accounts describe Merneptah like the god Re who has been given Egypt to rule and is the protector of oppressed lands.¹⁹ Significantly, this theme of the Pharaoh as the patron for Egypt and all oppressed lands is repeated throughout the ancient record and matches the ideology apparent in the Merneptah Stele.

Moreover, the ideology present in the stele suggests that the inscription serves as a propagandistic tool to reaffirm Merneptah's reign. Subsequently, this suggests that the stele skews the historical narrative to build up the kingdom of Egypt. Certain realities will be lost to fulfill Merneptah's design to build up his image as patron of Egypt. Consequently, raising the question of whether the Merneptah Stele can be taken as historical.

Thus, debate has arisen regarding the mythical nature of Merneptah's victories, with some arguing the mention of Israel in the stele is a mere eponym and cannot be taken as historical.²⁰ However, this argument lacks basis when compared to the other entities listed on the stele.²¹ Are Gezer, Ashkelon, or Yeno'am to be dismissed as mere metaphors as well? The archaeological record

16. Hasel, "Israel in the Merneptah Stela," 51.

17. Hasel, "Israel in the Merneptah Stela," 51.

18. I. Hjelm, T.L. Thompson, "The Victory Song of Merneptah, Israel and the People of Palestine," 6.

19. James H. Breasted, *Ancient Records*, (University of Chicago Press, 1906).

20. I. Hjelm, T.L. Thompson, "The Victory Song of Merneptah, Israel and the People of Palestine," These two scholars are the main proponents of this argument.

21. Richard S Hess, Gerald A. Klingbeil, Paul J. Ray, eds. *Critical Issues in Early Israelite History*, 59.

strongly suggests that the mention of Israel must be taken as historical.²² To dismiss Israel as simply an eponym would negate the historicity of all the other entities on the stele. Furthermore, it must have existed for the scribes to know to use it as a metaphor; the comparison with other entities only works if there was something real to base it on—otherwise, the assumption would be that Merneptah invented a name that just so happens to match a group known to have inhabited the region.

A COMPARATIVE ANALYSIS WITH THE COUR DE CACHETTE

Due to the nature of these arguments, it is equally important to examine the archeological record to determine the historicity of the Merneptah Stele. A series of battle reliefs in the temple of Karnak have played a key role in understanding the historicity of this artifact. In the court between the Hypostyle Hall and the 7th Pylon of Thutmose lies the Cour de Cachette, which includes four battle scenes depicting the binding of prisoners, the marching of those prisoners back to Egypt, the presentation of prisoners to Amun, and a variety of triumphal victories over Egypt's enemies.²³ As a result of the importance of the Temple of Amun at Karnak during the New Kingdom, later Pharaohs frequently altered or repurposed earlier inscriptions to legitimize their own reigns. One common practice was the usurpation of cartouches—the oval-shaped name rings used to identify the Pharaoh in reliefs and inscriptions. In this process, a successor would shave down or score the surface of the original inscription, sometimes applying plaster, and then recut the area to insert their own name, effectively claiming credit for the depicted achievements. These changes were not always seamless and, in many cases, remnants of the original names remain visible beneath the alterations. Importantly, these usurped cartouches contain the key to understanding which king commissioned these reliefs, therefore contributing to the Merneptah Stele's credibility.

Notably, two scenes suggest that these reliefs have been altered. The first scene depicts the king standing among his prisoners and smiting a Canaanite. While the name of Sety II in the cartouche is clear, two older names are carved more deeply into the stele, and thus only partially preserved: Amenmesse

22. Steven Ortiz, Samuel Wollf, "Pharaoh's Fury: Merneptah's Destruction of Gezer," *Biblical Archeology Review* 48. (2022). The archaeology of Gezer in this period, as well as Ashkelon and Jaffa, would indicate that these places are not metaphors.

23. Frank Yurco was the first to propose that the Cour de Cachette contained the battle scenes described in the Merneptah Stele. While later research has proven that Yurco was inaccurate in some of his proposals, his epigraphic work is invaluable in examining the stele as a historical record.

and Merneptah.²⁴ Additionally, the cartouche next to the scene of Prince Khaemwaset holding horses back shows signs of change, too. Like the first cartouche, the name of Sety II is present but with traces of Amenmesse's and Merneptah's names carved deeper into its surface.²⁵ These alterations point to the fact that originally Merneptah commissioned these reliefs with later Pharaohs coming through and adapting them to fit their needs. Importantly, this suggests that the battle scenes illustrate Merneptah's military expedition into the Levant, thus supporting the fact that the Merneptah Stele accurately depicts historical events.

Furthermore, by attributing these reliefs to Merneptah, it is necessary to examine the scenes themselves and discern their relationship to the closing lines of the Merneptah Stele. In the scene depicting the Pharaoh attacking a group of Canaanites, the determinative used for the Canaanites indicates they are a people without a specific city state. This hieroglyph features a seated man and woman with three strokes, meaning plural, combined with the figure of a throw stick, showing that the group is non-Egyptian. Accordingly, the absence of the determination of a city-state suggests that this group could claim no specific land. This is important because it is the same hieroglyphic determinative used on the Merneptah Stele to describe Israel, a foreign group of people without a designated city-state. The correlation between these two entities, both signified as groups without a city-state, is remarkable. Subsequently, the scenes on the Cour de Cachette point to the realization that Israel was a subsistence-based community, without any specific ties to a homeland. Indeed, this suggests that the mention of Israel on the Merneptah Stele likewise has a basis in the historical record during Egypt's New Kingdom.

CONCLUSION

The Merneptah Stele is a pivotal artifact for understanding the historical and cultural realities of Israel during the New Kingdom of Egypt. Analyzing the stele alongside the Cour de Cachette in the Great Hypostyle Hall at Karnak supports the authenticity of the Merneptah Stele as a historical source. Indeed, while the stele and the Cour de Cachette feature royal ideology intended to legitimize Merneptah's rule as Pharaoh and are propagandist in nature, the two artifacts complement each other. Propaganda is always based on reality in some way. While both artifacts may not be completely accurate according

24. Frank J Yurco, "Merenptah's Canaanite Campaign," *Journal of the American Research Center in Egypt* 23 (1986): 197. Yurco explains that "Merneptah's pre-nomen and nomen traces lie .9cm below the original surface on average, while those of Sety II range from .7 to .85 cm deep."

25. Frank J. Yurco, "Merenptah's Canaanite Campaign," 199.

to modern historical criteria, and both certainly exaggerate the greatness of Merneptah, nevertheless the Merneptah Stele and the Cour de Cacheet together portray Israel as a subsistence-based group without a defined city-state in the days of Merneptah.

GARDENS OF REBIRTH: FERTILITY AND THE AFTERLIFE IN THE GARDEN PAINTING FROM THE TOMB OF NEBAMUN

ALEETA DAY

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Abstract: One of the most important aspects of Egyptian art is the emphasis on the eternal and the afterlife. Aspects of real gardens in ancient Egypt as well as artistic depictions of them reflect these values through the cosmological symbolism of life-giving water and plants frequently cultivated in these gardens. These garden depictions were seen as a way to carry their current lifestyle into the afterlife with them. This paper will discuss the garden painting from the 18th Dynasty tomb of Nebamun located in the Theban necropolis. It will briefly discuss methods of Egyptian painting and the medium by which the garden scene was painted. It will also discuss how this depiction reflects religious and symbolic ideology of the time, including eternity and rebirth, as well as archaeological evidence of potential real mortuary horticulture in the area. The use of gardens in ancient Egyptian life will also be considered in order to provide further context to symbolic meanings. This paper will discuss past theories and assumptions on these topics by compiling and analyzing related articles and sources and will then expound on these ideas for future potential areas of study.

INTRODUCTION

Egyptian painting is one of the many genres of Egyptian art that exist in modern knowledge. Egyptians frequently painted their homes, palaces, and tombs with realistic and mythical scenes. For Egyptians, painting represented sacred and important values.¹ This was one of the reasons that paintings were popular within the tombs of the deceased. This essay will discuss a specific

1. Heinrich Neumayer and Margaret Shenfield, *Egyptian Painting* (Crown Publishers, Inc., 1963), 6.

tomb painting, the garden scene, from the tomb of Nebamun. The use of gardens in ancient Egyptian life will be considered in this paper in order to provide context to their symbolic meanings. The paper will also discuss these symbolic meanings, how this painting represents rebirth and fertility in the afterlife, as well as how this is manifest in the archaeological record. This will be done by analyzing the garden painting in conjunction with various primary sources, such as the *Coffin Texts* and the *Book of the Dead*, as well as supplementary scholarly articles.

This particular garden scene was originally located in the tomb of Nebamun in the Theban necropolis from around 1417–1379 B.C.² Inscriptions that remain indicate that he probably was a somewhat important official at the temple of Karnak.³ He counted and oversaw grain for the cult of Amun. As such, he would not have been in a very high social class, but power over an important food source would have given him significant practical influence in the region.⁴ This can be seen in the extravagance of the paintings that come from his tomb. Unfortunately, scholars no longer know where his tomb is. Many of the paintings that survive, which are currently kept in the British Museum, were cut from the walls by treasure-hunters in the early 19th century and they did not keep good records of the location.⁵ Any knowledge of Nebamun and his life is then solely based on the context of his tomb paintings and other belongings.

Egyptian paintings were painted using natural materials. The plaster used in this tomb was made of a mixture of mud and plant fibers, specifically wheat and barley straw, date palm fibers, among others, that would have been collected from the nearby riverbank.⁶ The pigments were mostly green frit for the bright greens that would have originally been seen in the painting, and Egyptian blue.⁷ Unfortunately, these pigments are the most likely to fade or lose pigment over time compared to other Egyptian pigments, resulting in the light colors that are seen in paintings today. This could potentially affect the viable color analyses and interpretations of the painting.

2. T.G.H. James, *Egyptian Painting and Drawing in the British Museum* (Harvard University Press, 1986), 26.

3. Richard Parkinson, *The Painted Tomb—Chapel of Nebamun: Masterpieces of Ancient Egyptian Art in the British Museum* (The British Museum Press, 2008), 39.

4. *Ibid.*, 40.

5. Parkinson, *The Painted Tomb—Chapel of Nebamun: Masterpieces of Ancient Egyptian Art in the British Museum*, 27.

6. Andrew Middleton and Ken Uprichard, *The Nebamun Wall Paintings: Conservation, Scientific Analysis and Display at the British Museum* (Archetype Publications Ltd., 2008), 26–27.

7. *Ibid.*, 33–34.

The garden painting from the tomb of Nebamun (see Figure 1) depicts a plentiful garden. In the center lies a pool, populated with geese, ducks, fish and lotus blossoms. In a border around this pool is a row of papyrus plants and red and white flowers, likely poppies and cornflowers.⁸ Trees, including sycamore fig trees, doum palms and date palms surround the pool on all sides. Many of these trees are laden with fruit. The artist who painted this put a lot of care into the differentiation of the trees; different shades of brown were used to specify different species of tree.⁹ In the upper right-hand corner of the fragment is a goddess emerging out of a tree offering food and drink to the owners of the tomb who are cut off by the fragment edge. On the left side of the fragment there are the remains of a larger sycamore fig tree that spans the height of the register. There is an inscription next to the tree as it speaks to Nebamun: “Words spoken by the Sycamore fig Nut to the lord of this garden, the Scribe and Grain-accountant of Amun” (see Figure 2).¹⁰

Gardens in ancient Egypt frequently invoked religious meaning. Gardens were heavily connected to the gods. Many of them included central pools that were viewed as representations of the primordial lake where life originally emerged.¹¹ Plants placed in gardens also represented religious ideas and popular deities. For example, common plants in Egyptian gardens were the sycamore fig tree, depicted as green and ovoid in the garden painting, and date palms, tall, sparse and laden with fruit in an alternating pattern. These two were associated with Hathor and the gods Ra and Min respectively.¹² Doum palms represent Thoth, tamarisk, shown in the painting in the lower left corner with birds nesting in the branches, invoke the god Osiris. Waterlily and papyrus are depicted interspersed between the waterfowl in the painting and surrounding the pool, and were associated with Hathor and Horus.¹³ Gardens were symbols of sacred growth and were inhabited by the gods; ‘heaven’ in the Egyptian afterlife was often depicted as a garden.¹⁴ This is seen in the *Coffin Texts* of the Middle Kingdom, which were spells and invocations that were buried with individuals to help them in the afterlife. In Spell 908: “May he

8. Parkinson, *The Painted Tomb–Chapel of Nebamun: Masterpieces of ancient Egyptian art in the British Museum*, 134.

9. Middleton and Uprichard, *The Nebamun Wall Paintings: Conservation, Scientific Analysis and Display at the British Museum*, 64.

10. Parkinson, *The Painted Tomb–Chapel of Nebamun: Masterpieces of Ancient Egyptian Art in the British Museum*, 136.

11. Alix Wilkinson, *The Garden in Ancient Egypt* (The Rubicon Press, 1998), 97.

12. *Ibid.*, 3.

13. *Ibid.*

14. *Ibid.*, 120.

[Ra] grant that N's tomb will benefit. The land will come to him... he will drink of the waters of his well, he will go down to his garden for what is given at his desire."¹⁵ In this excerpt, the garden represents the blessings that the deceased will receive in the afterlife. The garden embodies divine and eternal pleasure and comfort.¹⁶ These spiritual connotations and various symbolisms that evoked the gods within gardens would have been known to the ancient Egyptian viewer.

The most common interpretation of this painting and others like it are that it represents eternity. Plants and gardens are a symbol of life and the presence of their depiction in a tomb suggests the hope for life after death. In this painting, many of the plants associated with these ideas are present. Planted between the trees are mandrake bushes (see Figure 1). The fruits of the mandrake were frequently used as a metaphor for female breasts and sexual desire in Egyptian poetry, and, in connection, represented fertility and the rebirth of the deceased in funerary contexts.¹⁷ As discussed previously, tamarisks are associated with the god Osiris, the god of the Egyptian afterlife. Tamarisk wood was commonly used for coffins, likely forming a connection to Osiris through their relationship with death.¹⁸ According to the myth of Osiris, he was killed and then brought back to life by his wife Isis.¹⁹ In this way, Osiris is also an important representation of resurrection. The depiction of plants in this tomb painting that are connected to Osiris likely reflects Nebamun's hope for life after death and resurrection. It also creates a further connection with the tomb of Osiris itself.²⁰ The tomb of Osiris was frequently depicted as a chamber covered by a mound, which harbors various trees.²¹ The association of gardens and trees with a tomb clearly invokes the god Osiris.

Another important interpretation of the garden painting is related to the tree goddess in the upper right corner of the wall fragment (see Figure 3). She reaches out of the sycamore fig tree and offers food to the unseen people

15. R.O. Faulkner, *The Ancient Egyptian Coffin Texts: Volume III Spells 788–1185* (Aris and Phillips Ltd., 1977) 59.

16. Parkinson, *The Painted Tomb—Chapel of Nebamun: Masterpieces of Ancient Egyptian Art in the British Museum*, 136.

17. Emanuele Casini, "Rethinking the Multifaceted Aspects of Mandrake in Ancient Egypt," *Egitto e Vicino Oriente* 41 (2018): 110, <https://www.jstor.org/stable/26774454>.

18. Caroline Arbuckle MacLeod, "The Creation of a Third Intermediate Period Coffin: Coffin EX1997–24.4 in the Denver Museum of Nature & Science," in *The Egyptian Mummies and Coffins of the Denver Museum of Nature & Science: History, Technical Analysis, and Conservation*, ed. by Caroline Arbuckle MacLeod and Michele L. Koons (University Press of Colorado, 2021), 75. <http://www.jstor.org/stable/j.ctv1czc0jj.8>.

19. Plutarch, "Isis and Osiris," 46.

20. Wilkinson, *The Garden in Ancient Egypt*, 13.

21. *Ibid.*, 63.

to the right. She acts as a source of provisions, food and water, for the afterlife.²² Based on the inscription on the left side of the painting, the goddess is presumably Nut. Nut is the sky goddess, frequently depicted as the mother of gods, including Osiris, and is a patroness of rebirth.²³ It is understandable, then, that she would appear in a tomb. It is likely that Nebamun hoped her presence in the painting would facilitate resurrection and rebirth in his afterlife. Interestingly, though, the sycamore fig tree that the goddess emerges from is most commonly associated with the cow goddess Hathor, who is also considered to be a goddess of fertility, motherhood and protection.²⁴ She is frequently referred to as the “Lady of the Sycamore.”²⁵ She also was known as the “Queen of the West” and was charged with guarding the Theban necropolis where the tomb of Nebamun was most likely located.²⁶ Generally, she was seen as a protector of the dead, perhaps adding another aspect to the connection between Hathor and Nut.²⁷

Hathor was also heavily associated with gardens in the afterlife. In the *Coffin Texts*, Hathor is frequently mentioned. For example, Spell 696 says “it is Hathor who raises me... her hand is under the branches of the *itnws*-tree... vegetation is planted in this garden by this Horus... you shall plant trees in this garden of mine.”²⁸ Similar connections are drawn between Hathor and trees in the *Book of the Dead*: “I will have power and eat it under the branches of the tree of Hathor my mistress.”²⁹ These sources once again show a connection between gardens as a place of life and rebirth in the afterlife and Hathor, a goddess charged with fertility and motherhood.

Nut, taking on the attributes of Hathor, has more connections to the tree goddess and the land of the dead. This is evidenced in chapter 59 of the Egyptian *Book of the Dead*, a later funerary text contemporary with Nebamun:

22. Mohammed F. Azzazy and Azza Ezzat, “The sycamore in ancient Egypt: textual, iconographic and archaeopalynological thoughts,” in *Liber amicorum – speculum siderum: Nūt Astrophoros: Papers presented to Alicia Maravelia*, ed. Nadine Guilhou (Archaeopress Publishing, 2016), 213

23. Parkinson, *The Painted Tomb—Chapel of Nebamun: Masterpieces of ancient Egyptian art in the British Museum*, 135.

24. Wilkinson, *The Garden in Ancient Egypt*, 3.

25. Michael Shally-Jensen, *Critical Survey of Mythology and Folklore: Creation Myths* (Salem Press, 2023), 548.

26. Shally-Jensen, *Critical Survey of Mythology and Folklore: Creation Myths*, 548.

27. Richard H. Wilkinson, *The Complete Gods and Goddesses of Ancient Egypt* (Thames & Hudson, 2003), 143.

28. R.O. Faulkner, *The Ancient Egyptian Coffin Texts: Volume II Spells 355–787* (Aris and Phillips Ltd., 1977), 261.

29. Raymond Faulkner, *The Ancient Egyptian Book of the Dead* (Macmillan, 1985), 80.

“O you, sycamore of the sky, may there be given to me the air which is in it.”³⁰ She is thus more associated with this role of sustenance during the New Kingdom, compared to Hathor who shared similar associations during that time but was seemingly more predominant in the Middle Kingdom based on the *Coffin Texts*. Pairs of tree goddesses, usually on either side of the garden, represent the two ends of the horizon.³¹ This further lends itself to the interpretation that Nut is the tree goddess.

In Egyptian myth, Nut birthed Ra, the sun god, every day. He would then die in the west when the sun went down and then pass through Nut’s body and be rebirthed the next day.³² It is for this reason that the date palm, which is associated with Ra, symbolized triumph over death.³³ Following the example of Ra, Nut would rebirth the dead in the east, thus gaining the title of the protector of the dead.³⁴ In this interpretation, the small sycamore fig tree with the tree goddess on the right side of the painting, who presents food and drink to Nebamun and his wife, would represent the east horizon where they were reborn. The large sycamore fig tree on the left side of the garden would represent the west horizon, marking the two ends of Nut’s body.

This concept is further supported by the role of gardens in birth in general. Mortal women in Egypt and goddesses frequently had children in the shade of a garden.³⁵ For example, the goddess Isis gave birth to Horus and raised him in a papyrus thicket.³⁶ Papyrus itself had many connotations for rebirth. It generally represented the creation of the world, where land rose from the primordial swamp.³⁷ This was frequently mimicked in temple columns that were shaped like papyrus.³⁸ The presence of papyrus surrounding the sacred pool in the painting thus evokes imagery of creation and, in the context of a funerary scene, recreation into the next life. Lotus flowers, which bloom between the fish and the geese in the pool, were also symbols of rebirth. Lotus bouquets, as is depicted in the banquet and fowling paintings from Nebamun’s

30. Ibid, 68.

31. Nils Billing, “Writing an Image – The Formulation of the Tree Goddess Motif in the Book of the Dead, Ch. 59,” *Studien Zur Altägyptischen Kultur* 32 (2004): 40, <http://www.jstor.org/stable/25152905>.

32. Silvia Zago, “The Egyptian Conceptualization of the Otherworld”, *The Ancient Near East Today* 11, no. 8 (2023): 5, <https://www.asor.org/onetoday/2023/08/egyptian-conceptualization-otherworld>.

33. Wilkinson, *The Garden in Ancient Egypt*, 107.

34. Zago, “The Egyptian Conceptualization of the Otherworld”, 5.

35. Wilkinson, *The Garden in Ancient Egypt*, 128.

36. Geraldine Pinch, *Egyptian Myth: A Very Short Introduction* (Oxford University Press, 2004), 61.

37. Wilkinson, *The Garden in Ancient Egypt*, 120.

38. Ibid.

tomb (see Figure 4), were commonly associated with rejuvenation of the deceased's breath of life.³⁹ In this way, gardens had a significant connotation of birth and rebirth for ancient Egyptians.

Along with the idea of the rebirth of the dead, this symbolic meaning could promote the concept of continued fertility for the deceased in the afterlife. The specific fish that swim in the pool within this painting have been identified as tilapia.⁴⁰ In ancient Egypt, this was a popular fish with significant symbolism attached to it. Tilapia typically represented fertility and eternal life.⁴¹ This likely has a connection to the myth of Osiris. According to the historian Plutarch, he was dismembered and scattered.⁴² His wife, Isis, then collected all the pieces to bring him back to life. The only piece that was not found was the penis, which had been tossed into the Nile and swallowed by a fish.⁴³ Although, according to Plutarch, this is attributed to other species of fish, it is likely that in the context of this funerary scene, all fish bore this connotation. Undeniably, phalli were symbols of fertility and reproduction. This, in conjunction with the mythical role of fish, likely lends itself to the tilapia's meaning of fertility.

Similarly, geese in ancient Egypt were symbolic of fertility, reproductive power and rebirth.⁴⁴ They were also heavily associated with the god Amun, who was frequently viewed as a fertility god and primordial creator god in the New Kingdom.⁴⁵ This symbolism also makes sense when considering Nebamun's personal connection to Amun; his name translates to "My lord is Amun."⁴⁶ He, as an official overseer of grain, was also connected to the temple at Karnak, which was dedicated to Amun. It is also important to note that any

39. Mostafa Atallah et al., "Phyto-religious Symbolism in the Funerary Banquet Scene of the Tomb of Sennedjem (TT1) at Deir el-Medina," *Journal of the Faculty of Archaeology* 12, no. 25 (2022): 241, <https://doi.org/10.21608/jarch.2022.212068>.

40. Parkinson, *The Painted Tomb-Chapel of Nebamun: Masterpieces of Ancient Egyptian Art in the British Museum*, 134.

41. Alicja Jurgielewicz, "The Iconography of Fish in the Nagada Culture," *Ägypten und Levante / Egypt and the Levant* 30 (2020): 401, <https://www.jstor.org/stable/27045093>.

42. Plutarch, who was a Greek writer and historian, lived about 1500 years after the time of Nebamun. His writings, although well-known, might not fully represent Egyptian belief and mythology during the New Kingdom.

43. Plutarch, "Isis and Osiris," 47.

44. Patrick F. Houlihan, *The Birds of Ancient Egypt* (Aris & Phillips, 1986), 62.

45. Heike Owusu, *Egyptian Symbols* (Sterling Publishing Co., Inc, 2000), 53.

46. José Miguel Serrano Delgado, "One Man, Two Names," *Publikationen des Deutschen Archäologischen Instituts* 79 (2023): 278 from note 62, <https://doi.org/10.34780/0c85-8106>.

reference to Amun would have had connections to Ra as well, since a syncretization occurred between the two gods during this time period. These associations with Ra and his daily rebirth help to emphasize this theme of creation.

There is similar symbolic meaning in the flowers that are cultivated in this painting. Poppies and cornflowers were common flowers depicted in funerary garden scenes.⁴⁷ Although there is no direct explanation in ancient sources of their connection to these scenes, there is still some meaning attributed to these flowers that might shed some light on it.⁴⁸ Poppies in this context are not associated with narcotic opium; there is, in fact, no reliable evidence to suggest that the opium poppy was used during the New Kingdom.⁴⁹ The red poppies in the garden painting would have likely been more associated with aphrodisiac qualities; they were once again symbols of fertility.⁵⁰ Cornflowers might have been associated with fields that represented Osiris and annual renewal.⁵¹ They were also used to repel serpents which lends itself to a protective connotation in these funerary scenes.⁵²

In general, ancient Egyptian gardens carried a heavy romantic and sexual connotation in connection with fertility. Many Egyptian love poems from the New Kingdom used metaphors of gardens and also used it as a setting. One such example features a tree that speaks to the two lovers of the poem: "Come, and pass the time in the midst of thy maiden. The garden is in its day. There are bowers and shelters there for thee. My gardeners are glad and rejoice when they see thee... Come, and spend the day in merriment, and tomorrow, and the day after, three whole days, and sit in my shadow."⁵³ This romantic and sexual connotation that would have been known to ancient Egyptians suggests that the garden painting served as a means to evoke fertility and continued reproduction in the afterlife.

In this instance of tomb painting, the garden scene likely represented a fictional and mythical garden instead of a real one in Nebamun's life. Frequently, in paintings of real gardens, some kind of gardener or work is depicted. Their

47. Wilkinson, *The Garden in Ancient Egypt*, 103.

48. *Ibid.*, 108.

49. David J. Counsell, "Intoxicants in ancient Egypt? opium, nymphaea, coca and tobacco", in *Egyptian Mummies and Modern Science*, ed. by A. Rosalie David (Cambridge University Press, 2008), 198.

50. Ana Maria Rosso, "Poppy and Opium in Ancient Times: Remedy or Narcotic?" *Biomedicine International* 1, no 1 (2010): 84, <https://citeseerx.ist.psu.edu/document?repid=rep1&type=pdf&doi=e10894def25d2550efea2926f5509b9a95037252>.

51. Wilkinson, *The Garden in Ancient Egypt*, 108.

52. *Ibid.*

53. Adolf Erman, *Ancient Egyptian Poetry and Prose* (Dover Publications, 1995), 250–51.

absence in this painting suggests that it is not a real place; this garden does not need tending and perhaps stays perpetually blooming through mythical means.⁵⁴ It seems likely that this garden represents the afterlife, a garden in the next world where Nebamun and his wife are welcomed by a goddess.⁵⁵

As a way to bring the symbolism of gardens to life, there is archaeological evidence of gardens immediately surrounding many tomb chapels.⁵⁶ Gardens associated with funerary features have a long history in ancient Egypt. For example, the funerary temple of Mentuhotep II, from about 2000 B.C. (see Figure 5), has clear evidence of a mortuary garden. In the area in front of the structure, there are still clear pits and holes where trees were planted. In particular, it is believed that the trees that were once there were sycamore and tamarisk trees, heavily associated with Hathor and the afterlife as discussed.⁵⁷ Since Mentuhotep's time, mortuary gardens continued to be built. Moving into the New Kingdom, tomb gardens would have been very hard to maintain; they were considered a luxury for the wealthy and powerful.⁵⁸ It is possible, from what we know about the life of Nebamun, that he was able to afford such luxury, especially considering the abundance of high-quality paintings within his tomb. However, since the location of the tomb of Nebamun has been lost, there is no way for scholars and archaeologists to know for certain whether it was consistent with these findings.

Archaeological evidence suggests that private gardens, like the garden in this painting seems to be, most likely had wells instead of pools.⁵⁹ Depictions of gardens in paintings with pools were idealized versions. This once again lends itself to this painting's interpretation as a mystical garden in the afterlife. Although private gardens had wells, temple and chapel gardens did have pools, which were often places of offerings to the gods.⁶⁰ For example, the Karnak

54. Wilkinson, *The Garden in Ancient Egypt*, 105.

55. Parkinson, *The Painted Tomb-Chapel of Nebamun: Masterpieces of Ancient Egyptian Art in the British Museum*, 132.

56. Marlene Kristensen, "Illustration or Reality: How Should Depictions of Gardens in Ancient Egyptian Tomb Paintings be Perceived?," in *Current Research in Egyptology 2014*, ed. Massimiliano S. Pinarello, et al. (Oxbow Book, Limited, 2015), 237.

57. Patryk Chudzik, "A Unique Royal Mortuary Temple and Exceptional Private Complexes: The Architecture of the Nebhepetre Mentuhotep II Monument Reflected in the Funerary Structures of High Officials at Thebes," in *10. Ägyptologische Tempeltagung: Ägyptische Tempel zwischen Normierung und Individualität*, (Harrassowitz Verlag, 2016), 72.

58. Maureen Carroll, *Earthy Paradises: Ancient Gardens in History and Archaeology* (Getty Publications, 2003), 72.

59. Kristensen, "Illustration or Reality: How Should Depictions of Gardens in Ancient Egyptian Tomb Paintings be Perceived?," 235.

60. *Ibid.*, 236.

temple, where Nebamun was employed, housed a large pool. It is possible this served as inspiration for the pool in his afterlife. Nebamun's tomb had an attached chapel that was likely the original location of the garden painting. This could possibly suggest that rather than having a physical garden outside the structure of the tomb, the garden painting reflects the need for a garden and pool in this sacred space, like at Karnak. The presence of this pool in the painting populated with ducks or geese and tilapia also poses the question of whether or not the pool's purpose was the cultivation of these sources of food for the afterlife. It could perhaps reflect the change to more practical uses of gardens in the New Kingdom for sustenance rather than purely ceremonial enjoyment.⁶¹

Unfortunately, many excavations are influenced by various biases, resulting in less data on the topic of funerary gardens. Botanical remains that might be found in a garden space do not preserve well, which skews the dataset. In many instances, the only archaeological evidence of gardens is tree-pits and occasional tree trunk remains.⁶² Impressions of plants previously planted are also sometimes found, corroborated by paintings of them such as in Nebamun's tomb.⁶³ In general, however, there is limited excavation and research on tomb gardens specifically. There is also an interest bias; many excavations are characterized by a lack of interest in botanical identification, limiting the knowledge on Egyptian gardens in the field.⁶⁴

In conclusion, the garden painting in the tomb of Nebamun has many symbolic meanings that would have been evident to the Egyptian people but not apparent to modern viewers. Many of the plants depicted in the painting are associated with gods like Osiris and Hathor or Nut, who are connected to the afterlife. These connections are strengthened through the interpretation of the tree goddess present in the painting, who most likely represents Nut and her role in rebirth. Other aspects of the painting, such as the wildlife, represent fertility in the afterlife. Archaeological evidence suggests that many tombs of the time had gardens surrounding them. Due to the lack of archaeological evidence for Nebamun's tomb, it is difficult to say definitively whether this held true in Nebamun's case. The painting inside the tomb potentially reflected

61. Patrick Bowe, "Garden Making in the Second Millennium BCE c 2000 BCE – c 1000 BCE," *Studies in the History of Gardens & Designed Landscapes* 38, no. 3 (2018): 237, <https://doi.org/10.1080/14601176.2018.1441660>.

62. Wilkinson, *The Garden in Ancient Egypt*, 121.

63. Alix Wilkinson, "Gardens in ancient Egypt: their locations and symbolism," *Journal of Garden History* 10, no. 4 (1990): 199, <https://doi.org/10.1080/01445170.1990.10408291>.

64. Kristensen, "Illustration or Reality: How Should Depictions of Gardens in Ancient Egyptian Tomb Paintings be Perceived?," 236.

the owner's priorities in representing a spiritual garden, rather than a physical one. Through the garden painting, one can see the things that ancient Egyptian people valued in their lives and the things that they hoped for in the afterlife, specifically rebirth and fertility.

FIGURES



Figure 1: *Garden painting, from the tomb of Nebamun, Thebes, 18th Dynasty.* © **The Trustees of the British Museum.** Shared under a Creative Commons Attribution-NonCommercial-ShareAlike 4.0 International (CC BY-NC-SA 4.0) licence.



Figures 2: *Reproduction of the garden painting including the missing hieroglyphs, from the tomb of Nebamun, Thebes, 18th Dynasty.* © **The Trustees of the British Museum.** Shared under a Creative Commons Attribution-NonCommercial-ShareAlike 4.0 International (CC BY-NC-SA 4.0) licence.



Museum. Figure 3: *Close-up of the tree goddess offering food and drink as well as plants and animals populating the pool, from the tomb of Nebamun, Thebes, 18th Dynasty.* © **The Trustees of the British Museum.** Shared under a Creative Commons Attribution-NonCommercial-ShareAlike 4.0 International (CC BY-NC-SA 4.0) licence.



Figures 4: *Close-up of Nebamun's wife with her lotus bouquet shown in the fowling painting, from the tomb of Nabamun, Thebes, 18th Dynasty.* © **The Trustees of the British Museum.** Shared under a Creative Commons Attribution-NonCommercial-ShareAlike 4.0 International (CC BY-NC-SA 4.0) licence.

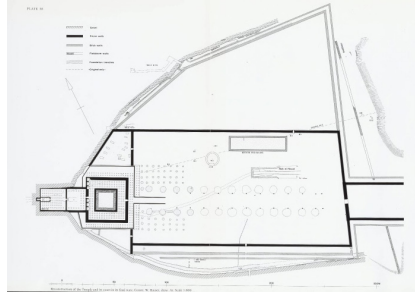


Figure 5: *The funerary temple of Mentuhotep II, Deir el-Bahri, Western Thebes, c. 2000 B.C., The tree pits are visible along either side of the walkway through the complex.* Drawing Credit: Dieter Arnold, *The Temple of Mentuhotep at Deir el-Bahari* (New York : Metropolitan Museum of Art, Egyptian Expedition, 1979), Pl. 38. Metropolitan Museum of Art Thomas J. Watson Library Digital Collections, www.metmuseum.org.

PERSPECTIVES ON COGNITIVE PSYCHOLOGY IN KTU 1.40: MORAL IMPLICATIONS AND PRESCRIBED EMOTIONAL RESPONSES TO FOSTER UNITY

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Abstract: This paper examines the Ugaritic ritual text KTU 1.40 through the framework of cognitive psychology to explore its moral implications and prescribed emotional responses. While earlier scholarship has debated whether this ritual carried moral weight, my analysis demonstrates that it prescribes the removal or amelioration of five moral emotions—disgust, fear, anger, empathy, and a sense of justice—to promote unity within the community of Ugarit. Building on Thomas Kazen’s approach and Gregorio del Olmo Lete’s translation, this study argues that the repeated structure and inclusive nature of KTU 1.40 reflect an intentional effort to bridge emotional divides among the many groups within Ugarit. The ritual’s focus on purification and collective participation indicates an effort to quiet feelings of disgust and fear toward those outside the community, while guiding emotions like anger toward empathy and a renewed commitment to justice. Through this process, the rite operated as more than an act of atonement; it became a communal expression aimed at restoring harmony and strengthening the unity of Ugarit’s people.

INTRODUCTION

The Ugaritic text KTU 1.40, discovered in 1929, has been the subject of exciting research regarding the possibility of another semitic ‘Day of Atonement’ ritual.¹ Purification sacrifices within this text, along with moral

1. This text is also referred to in a different classification as RS 1.002. Out of the hundreds of texts that were found at Ugarit, relatively few had any duplicates. The ritual

implications posed by several scholars, contribute to the possibility of another national ritual like that of Leviticus 16, but current scholarship remains inconclusive.² Although a comparison between this biblical text and KTU 1.40 is insightful, this article focuses on the unresolved potentiality of moral implications implicit in this Ugaritic text. To further understand the moral implications of KTU 1.40, recent scholarship has utilized some methods of the Cognitive Science of Religion (CSR), but analyses have been limited in this regard. Through the lens of cognitive psychology, my analysis demonstrates a unique approach to this ritual text to unveil how these moral implications do indeed exist by analyzing how five different emotions are either removed or ameliorated based on the prescriptive characteristics of this text and how they reinforce a sense of unity within Ugarit.

The prescriptive nature of this ritual is clear from the organization of the text into six repetitive sections, in which several different purification sacrifices involving rams and donkeys are performed on behalf of the men, the women, and the foreigners within the walls of Ugarit.³ Unfortunately, the first

text of KTU 1.40 is an exception to this rule, as it is one of the few texts that had multiple copies. Dennis Pardee explains that, “The relatively large number of texts reflecting what is basically the same rite is without parallel at Ugarit, while the spread of find-spots and of scribal hands (the texts were found in the so-called high Priest’s library in the acropolis, in the royal palace, and in the House of the Divination Priest on the south side of the tell) shows that the texts were not the product of a single school.” Dennis Pardee, *Ritual and Cult at Ugarit* (Atlanta, GA: Society of Biblical Literature, 2002), 78.; “[KTU 1.40] is one of the few texts that have been transmitted in multiple copies, a clear indication of the importance this liturgy had in the Ugaritic cult.” G. del Olmo Lete, *Canaanite Religion According to the Liturgical Texts of Ugarit*, (USA: Eisenbrauns, 2004), 144. For an extensive review of the research on KTU 1.40/RS 1.002, see Gregorio del Olmo Lete, *Canaanite Religion According to the Liturgical Texts of Ugarit: Second English Edition, thoroughly Revised and Enlarged*, trans. W. G. E. Watson, *Alter Orient und Altes Testament*, Band 408 (Göttingen: Hubert & Co., 2014), 115–116, n. 211.

2. Detailed arguments regarding key lexemes have powerful bearing on the translation of KTU 1.40, such as the Ugaritic word *np̄y*. Understanding this lexeme to mean “purification” or “atonement,” amongst its many different translations, will suffice for the purposes of this article. See Gregorio del Olmo Lete and Joaquín Sanmartín, *A Dictionary of the Ugaritic Language in the Alphabetic Tradition, Part Two [l–z]*, 2nd rev. ed. (Leiden; Boston: Brill, 2004), 638–639, sv. *np̄y*.; Wilfred G. E. Watson and Nicolas Wyatt, eds. *Handbook of Ugaritic Studies* (Leiden; Boston; Köln: Brill, 1999), 564, n. 104.; Johannes C. de Moor and Paul Sanders, “An Ugaritic Expiation Ritual and its Old Testament Parallels,” *UF* 23 (1991): 290.; Dennis Pardee, “The Structure of RS 1.002,” in *Semitic Studies in Honor of Wolf Leslau on the Occasion of his Eighty-Fifth Birthday November 14th, 1991*, Vol. 2 (Wiesbaden: Harrassowitz, 1991), 1191. For additional interpretations, see Nick Wyatt, *Religious Texts from Ugarit*, 2nd rev. ed. (London; New York: Sheffield Academic Press, 2002), 342, n. 2.

3. No specific time of year is mentioned within the text, likely due to the absence of a heading similar to those found with other texts, “so the absence of any indication of ‘time’ and ‘place’ of celebration, makes it impossible to insert it into the liturgical calendar. It is, therefore and ‘isolated’ text, which can only be evaluated from its ‘typology’ and notional

three sections of this ritual are ill preserved, along with the heading preceding the ritual text describing its overall use, including when it was to be performed during the liturgical year, despite the multiple extant copies of KTU 1.40.⁴ This lack of specific liturgical timing limits the usefulness of direct comparisons between this text and other ancient Near Eastern texts.⁵ However, analyzing this ritual's prescriptive nature through the lens of cognitive psychology sheds new light on how this ritual may have sought to remove certain emotional responses—such as disgust, fear, and anger—and to ameliorate others—such as empathy and a sense of justice—to promote unity within the diverse community associated with Ugarit. My analysis of these emotions will rely heavily on the 2014 version of Gregorio del Olmo Lete's translation because it includes a likely reconstruction of the ritual text that is missing from extant manuscripts.⁶ Although most of these moral emotions are not mentioned within the text, analyzing this ritual via Thomas Kazen's methodology allows for a reading that demonstrates how each of these five emotions are indeed associated with the text. My analysis begins with the emotion of Disgust, which is characterized by the association of several marginalized groups with the people of Ugarit. The removal of this emotion is one of the prescribed outcomes of this ritual to create a greater sense of national unity.⁷ Consistent emphasis of these foreign and marginalized groups presents an ingroup-outgroup dichotomy, a dichotomy which provides grounds to deal with the emotion of fear, particularly in context of Ugarit's political history. The next and last emotional response this ritual may be attempting to remove is anger, as sinning "by your anger" is one of the reasons that the people of Ugarit needed a purification offering in the first place. The final two emotions in this analysis—empathy and a sense of justice—are those emotions which are ameliorated by this ritual. Empathy is understood as a prescribed emotional response to past hardships when connecting with other groups, evident through phrases such as "those who oppress you," or "those who rob you" (See appendix A). This feeds into a sense of justice as an ameliorated emotional response, prescribed as a result

content, although it undoubtedly had a precise function in space and time in the cultic life of the city." Olmo Lete, *Canaanite Religion*, 151.; Pardee, *Ritual and Cult*, 79–80.

4. Andrew R. Burlingame, "Ugaritic Emotion Terms," in *The Routledge Handbook of Emotions in the Ancient Near East*, ed. Karen Sonik and Ulrike Steinert (London, UK: Routledge, 2022), 208.

5. Of these multiple copies, the five surviving texts include the "four regrettably broken (KTU 1.84; 1.121; 1.22; 1.54) and the comparatively complete (KTU 1.40)" Olmo Lete, *Canaanite Religion—Second*, 116.

6. Gregorio del Olmo Lete, *Canaanite Religion According to the Liturgical Texts of Ugarit: Second English Edition, thoroughly Revised and Enlarged*, trans. W. G. E. Watson, *Alter Orient und Altes Testament*, Band 408 (Göttingen: Hubert & Co., 2014), 115–120.

7. Pardee, *Ritual and Cult*, 77.

of this ritual being completed and thus atonement being proffered to purify the sons and daughters of Ugarit, further unifying the community inhabiting the city. Employing Kazen's methodology to this ancient text through the perspective of these emotions demonstrates that the text of KTU 1.40 prescribed the removal of disgust, fear, and anger and the amelioration of empathy and a sense of justice to unify the people of Ugarit when the ritual was performed on their behalf.⁸

LITERATURE REVIEW

The following two subsections are included in this literature review to provide additional context not only to the text of KTU 1.40, but also to introduce important backgrounds regarding morality and cognitive psychology in Ugaritic texts. This sets the stage for how my analysis resolves the debated moral implications of this text by focusing on the removal or amelioration of emotional responses prescribed by KTU 1.40.

Utilizing the cognitive psychology of religion as a methodology for understanding ancient religious texts has been explored extensively in more recent decades regarding the biblical text.⁹ Thomas Kazen's approach via this methodology, along with my approach in this analysis, is enriched by a brief discussion of human morality. Albert Bandura explains that modern scientific theories regarding the development of human morality involve stage by stage progress in moral understanding and conscious thought, adhering to

8. Thomas Kazen, *Emotions in Biblical Law: A Cognitive Science Approach* (Sheffield, UK: Sheffield Phoenix Press, 2011).

9. "Over the past twenty years, a number of influential theoretical approaches to religious ritual have emerged within CSR. Despite the different aims of these proposals, cognitive theories of ritual are usually informed by a broader goal of explicating (a) *why* humans perform ritual actions across cultures and throughout history and (b) the cognitive, and often by extension social, *effects* that certain ritual behaviors have upon participants." Brett E. Maiden, *Cognitive Science and Ancient Israelite Religion: New Perspectives on Texts, Artifacts, and Culture*, Society for Old Testament Study Monographs (Atlanta, GA: Cambridge University Press, 2020), 212.;

The contribution of over a dozen scholars in István Czachesz and Risto Uro's *Mind, Morality, and Magic: Cognitive Science Approaches in Biblical Studies* argue that this avenue of study provides an additional, novel method by which the biblical text can be examined to further understand the numerous factors that shaped it. Their analyses cover hundreds of topics, allowing for additional insights through relatively new methodologies. "The contributors to this volume argue that the cognitive science of religion (CSR) provides a new alternative for biblical scholars seeking fresh insights into ancient texts, and into the religious beliefs and practices that shaped those texts." István Czachesz and Risto Uro, eds., *Mind, Morality, and Magic: Cognitive Science Approaches in Biblical Studies* (New York: Taylor & Francis Group, 2014), 1, 314-316.; For additional examples, see Brett E. Maiden, *Cognitive Science and Ancient Israelite Religion: New Perspectives on Texts, Artifacts, and Culture*, Society for Old Testament Study Monographs (Atlanta, GA: Cambridge University Press, 2020).

hierarchical moral superiority, and biopsychosocial factors influencing moral judgment.¹⁰ Kazen agrees with this claim, suggesting that human morality is both innate and acquired.¹¹ Discovering this morality within ancient texts is possible by using moral emotions as effective tools to identify instances exhibiting morality.

These moral sense of justice acts as a hallmark of human morality, as it is characterized by the idea that certain experiences “have objective or intrinsic implications for justice, rights, harm, welfare, and the like.”¹² Each of these four moral emotions, along with anger, are involved in the prescriptive emotional response in the text of KTU 1.40

COGNITIVE PSYCHOLOGY IN UGARITIC TEXTS AND DEBATED MORAL IMPLICATIONS

Along with the biblical text, Ugaritic texts have also seen some attention in the way of cognitive psychology, but most of these analyses have involved the epic narratives and literature found at Ugarit. Few of these analyses focus on the ritual texts, although Andrew Burlingame’s work is a noteworthy example.¹³ His contributions examine instances of emotion within Ugaritic rituals, focusing on Ugaritic terms and their emotional connotations. However, his analysis does not emphasize or demonstrate moral implications, likely due to the fragmentary evidence of specific lexemes.¹⁴ Since 1929 when KTU 1.40

10. Albert Bandura, “Social Cognitive Theory of Moral Thought and Action,” in *Handbook of Moral Behavior and Development, Volume 1: Theory*, eds. William M. Kurtines and Jacob L. Gewirtz (Hillsdale, NJ: Lawrence Erlbaum Associates Inc., 1991), 45–104; Marcia Homiak, “Moral Character,” *The Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy* (Summer 2019 Edition), ed. Edward N. Zalta, <https://plato.stanford.edu/archives/sum2019/entries/moral-character/>.

11. “Taking various types of evidence from the fields of neurobiology as well as developmental psychology into account, we must conclude that human morality is both a rational and an emotional development, innate as well as acquired.” (Kazen, *Emotions in Biblical Law*, 16.)

12. Kazen, *Emotions in Biblical Law*, 22–23, 162.

13. Edward L. Greenstein, “The Role of the Reader in Ugaritic Narrative,” in *A Wise and Discerning Mind: Essays in Honor of Burke O. Long*, eds. Saul M. Olyan and Robert C. Culley (Providence, RI: Brown Judaic Studies, 2020), 148.; Julie B. Deluty, “Embodiment of Fear in Ugaritic and Semitic Literature: Re-examining the Social Dynamic,” *ARC* Vol. 40 (2012): 69–83.; Watson and Wyatt briefly comment on the topic in their analysis of KTU 1.40, suggesting that there is “a highly developed sense of the importance of people’s feelings” in relation to a likewise “highly developed ethical universe.” Watson and Wyatt, *Handbook of Ugaritic Studies*, 565–566.

14. Ritual texts are likely the third most common type of Ugaritic text to have been discovered, and although important, they do not add much to the conversation regarding emotions experienced and comprehended by the ancient people of Ugarit. “The nature of the Ugaritic corpus poses specific challenges to the sort of lexical work required for developing a view of Ugaritic emotion terms. While the corpus itself is sizeable, most

was discovered in the archives of the “Great Priest,” there has been debate over whether this ritual text contained any moral implications.¹⁵

In 1962, André Caquot claimed in his analysis of the text that there are innate religious and moral implications within this ritual, particularly in reference to its nature as an expiation text.¹⁶ Two decades later in 1980, Jean-Michel de Tarragon continued the debate and refuted Caquot’s claim, stating that there is not enough linguistic evidence in Ugaritic texts—let alone in KTU 1.40—to make assumptions about the moral nature of this ritual.¹⁷ In 2002, Dennis Pardee demonstrated how theological concerns exist within the text, but he did not explicitly suggest evidence for or against moral interpretations.¹⁸ On the other hand, between 1990 and 2004, several other scholars suggested in their respective analyses that there is clear evidence for moral meanings behind the text, including Wilfred G. E. Watson, Johannes C. de Moors, Paul

representations of emotions appear in the poetic narratives of the great mythological texts (Ba’lu, Kirta, and Aqhatu). There are important exceptions, which are treated below, but the circumscribed nature of the dataset means that many of the relevant lexemes either appear only once or twice (often in fragmentary or poorly understood passages) or appear multiple times but in highly stereotyped literary formulae that too often fail to provide the kinds of contextual clues needed to specify the emotional state in question.” Burlingame, “Ugaritic Emotion Terms,” 198–199.

The noun *ap* as it appears in KTU 1.40 provides an example of direct emotional attribution regarding the inhabitants of Ugarit. “In these cases, the ritual indicates a number of hypothetical causes for these deviations, and it is here that the text becomes relevant for present purposes. In lines 22, 31, and 39, the noun *ap* and the noun phrase *qsrt nps̄-* are cited as possible causes. In other words, this ritual text identifies anger and whatever state is intended by *qsrt nps̄* (on which see the next section) as things capable of leading an individual to “sin” or experience altered “beauty” and as requiring ritual remediation.” “A second case of indirect description involves forms of *√qsr*, ‘to be short,’ and the noun *npš*, ‘throat, esophagus; being, vitality.’ The text concerned is KTU 1.40:22, 31, 39 (= RS 1.002; *qsrt nps̄-* “shortness of *npš*”), discussed in the previous subsection (sub ‘Direct Attribution’ in the section ‘Anger and Hatred’).” Burlingame, “Ugaritic Emotion Terms,” 208–210.

15. Gregorio del Olmo Lete, *The Private Archives of Ugarit: A Functional Analysis* (Barcelona, ES: Institut del Pròxim Orient Antic (IPOA), Facultat de Filologia, Universitat de Barcelona, 2018).

16. “La conception du péché est avant tout religieuse : sous ses aspects « moraux » comme sous son aspect rituel, c’est une faute contre la divinité. Ce n’est probablement pas une vue très différente de celle des Mésopotamiens ; apparemment elle est plus profonde que celle des Arabes méridionaux telle que nous la font connaître les « inscriptions confessionnelles ». Il n’y a en tout cas pas de quoi surprendre un familier de l’Ancien Testament.» André Caquot, “Un sacrifice expiatoire à Ras-Shamra,” *Revue d’histoire et de philosophie religieuses*, 42e année n°2-3 (1962), 201-211.

17. “Celle d’A. Caquot, par bien des analyses, reste stimulante, même si on ne peut aller aussi loin que lui dans l’interprétation religieuse et morale du texte. Le vocabulaire du péché et surtout la « théologie » ugaritique en la matière sont trop peu attestés pour pouvoir conclure.» Jean-Michel de Tarragon, *Le Culte à Ugarit : D’après les textes de la pratique en cunéiformes alphabétiques* (Paris : Gabalda, 1980), 96.

18. Pardee, *Ritual and Cult*, 77–83.

Sanders, Gregorio del Olmo Lete, and Nick Wyatt.¹⁹ Aside from this more modern consensus, moral implications in KTU 1.40 seem to be unargued and unexplored besides statements suggesting that morality can or cannot be inferred. Examining this ritual text through the lens of cognitive psychology will demonstrate not only that these moral implications absolutely can be inferred, but that the text likely intended to either remove or ameliorate specific moral emotional responses in an attempt to foster unity when it was performed as a national ritual.

Methodology

Within ancient ritual texts, there is little evidence of which issues are of moral concern and which issues are of purely ritual concern. In fact, Kazen has argued “a clear dividing line between ritual and moral issues, between purity and morality, is not supported by ancient comparative textual evidence.” It would be more surprising if this was the case, as the purpose of ritual texts was not to delineate between which issues were morally based and which issues were ritually based.²⁰ The evidence for such a sense of morality through prescribed emotional responses will not be found through textual, form, or source criticism; an approach through the perspectives of cognitive psychology and literary criticism will be required. Analyzing the text of KTU 1.40 through the lens of moral emotions provides a framework to apply this cognitive psychology directly to this ancient text, demonstrating the prescribed responses implicit in the text when the ritual was performed for the ancient people of Ugarit.

According to Kazen, there are four different families of emotions: (1) other-condemning, (2) self-conscious, (3) other-suffering, and (4) other-praising. The first family of emotions includes feelings such as anger, contempt,

19. “While it is difficult to extract a detailed moral theology from this material, it certainly exhibits a moral dimension of some significance, and a powerful sense of the necessary cohesion of society, while recognizing the centrifugal pressures and tensions arising from the relations between subgroups.” Watson and Wyatt, *Handbook of Ugaritic Studies*, 565.; “The Ugaritic parallel of KTU 1.40 demonstrates that comparing the moral level of one’s own people with the behavior of foreigners was not as unique as we may think. The inhabitants of Ugarit were also supposed to live according to a higher moral code than other people and could be rebuked for imitating them.” Moor and Sanders, “Ugaritic Expiation Ritual,” 297.; “The wording of the motive for the atonement/purification looks like a ‘list of sins’ that need to be ‘blown away.’ The idea of sin is clear in *hta* and there is no reason at all to doubt the validity of the moral meaning of that root in Ugaritic...” Olmo Lete, *Canaanite Religion*, 156.; Wyatt, *Religious Texts from Ugarit*, 342.

20. “The conclusion is fully in line with observations from developmental psychology and modern cross-cultural anthropological studies.” Kazen, *Emotions in Biblical Law*, 13.

and disgust; second, feelings such as guilt, embarrassment, shame, and pride; third, empathy and sympathy; and fourth, gratitude, elevation, and awe. Each of these respective families of emotion include emotions that could be considered moral. As Kazen specifically uses the moral emotions of disgust, fear, empathy, and a sense of justice in his approach to the ancient biblical text, the same emotions will be focused on here to analyze the ancient Ugaritic text of KTU 1.40.²¹ Burlingame's work on anger will likewise be incorporated.²² These moral emotions are not fully separate from each other and will overlap regarding the textual material used to discuss them, which is largely due to the repetitive nature of this Ugaritic text. However, each of these moral emotions are prescribed by the text as part of the intended emotional response of removal or amelioration when the ritual was likely performed for the people of Ugarit.

The moral emotion of **disgust** is associated with nine separate triggers and typically appears in relation to substances entering, touching, and leaving the body.²³ Dealing with the feelings of disgust created by these triggers involves removing, rejecting, or regulating that which was objectionable. As these triggers are not present in this Ugaritic text when compared to the biblical text, the portion of this analysis dealing with disgust will focus on how the people of Ugarit dealt with the aftereffects of this emotion rather than its various triggers. The second moral emotion of **fear** "is one of the primary emotions associated with morality and manifests itself as a sudden response to direct stimuli."²⁴ It provides a way of delineating between an in-group and an out-group, such as those who belong in the community of Ugarit and those who are considered foreigners. This not only protects against threats both real and assumed, but also against the transmission of disease throughout the community as "fear of the supernatural, of divine beings or of demons, was a natural part of life in the ancient world."²⁵

21. Kazen, *Emotions in Biblical Law*, 32–33.

22. Burlingame, "Ugaritic Emotion Terms." 197–227.

23. Kazen summarizes the perspectives of scholars Rozin, Haidt, and McCauley by stating that "Disgust triggers can be defined as relating to nine different areas: 'food, body products, animals, sexual behaviors, contact with death or corpses, violations of the exterior envelope of the body (including gore and deformity), poor hygiene, interpersonal contamination (contact with unsavory human beings), and certain moral offenses.'" Kazen, *Emotions in Biblical Law*, 35.

24. Kazen, *Emotions in Biblical Law*, 42–43.

25. "Fear of the supernatural, of divine beings or of demons, was a natural part of life in the ancient world. Such fear carries traits of all four analytical categories previously mentioned in chapter 4. Death, injury, or illness was often ascribed to invisible causes, such as the influence of personal spirits or demons, regardless of whether visible causes were available in addition. *Fears of death and disease* are thus blended with *interpersonal fear*.

The third emotion, **anger**, is explicitly mentioned in the text of this ritual. Like the emotion of fear, the moral emotion of anger is understood by Kazen to be one of the primary emotion associated with morality, often occurring in response to unexpected stimuli.²⁶ This emotion is often an outcome of perceived injustice, and if not dealt with, can develop into unhealthy resentment.²⁷ Dealing with anger to promote unity within the community and likely to avoid further altercations, mistakes, or sins is one of the prescribed emotional responses inherent in of KTU 1.40.²⁸ Next is the moral emotion of **empathy**. The existence of empathy demonstrates a clear and direct manifestation of human morality, supporting the idea that empathy is indeed a moral emotion and that those displaying this type of emotion have morals of their own.²⁹ Kazen explains that as “Biology and culture, emotion and cognition, experience and deduction work together,” the interplay between these factors can be tracked through ancient texts, exposing how these ancient cultures and ancient peoples felt about empathy.³⁰ This analysis will take a simpler approach, examining the previous hardships or experiences between groups of people to demonstrate how moral empathy was an ameliorated emotional response in the text of KTU 1.40.

Lastly, we have a **sense of justice or unfairness** as a moral emotion, which can be understood as “an emotional capacity with roots in the biological, evolutionary history of the human being, which requires an equilibrium and strives for an emotional homeostasis.”³¹ Of the many behaviors that stem from this emotion, reconciliatory action on both community and individual scales are key characteristics of the existence of this emotion. Some of these behaviors imply a “non-aggressive future behavior, thus facilitating mutually

Fear of demons is akin to *animal fear*, since demons are envisaged as non-human, or ‘post-human’ beings, and often take on animal traits. Like some of the real or imagined animals threatening human beings, demons are often associated with *open places*, deserts, waters, and foreign areas, which are unsafe and in which it is difficult to seek refuge quickly or to protect oneself.” Author’s italics. Kazen, *Emotions in Biblical Law*, 129–130.

26. Kazen, *Emotions in Biblical Law*, 18, 32, 42.

27. It can further lead to “unhappiness, continual irritability, and psychological compromise, including anxiety and depression.” Robert D. Enright and Jacqueline Y. Song, “The Development of Forgiveness,” in *The Oxford Handbook of Moral Emotion: An Interdisciplinary Perspective* (New York, NY: Oxford University Press, 2020), 408–409.

28. Enright and Song’s analysis suggests that remedy to anger is forgiveness. This practice cannot remove what injustices were performed between the offender and the victim, but it can help individuals deal with the effects of anger left to rot. Enright and Song, “Development of Forgiveness,” 408–409.

29. “Empathy is a crucial emotion in the manifestation of human prosocial behavior, i.e., what we would call human morality.” Kazen, *Emotions in Biblical Law*, 112.

30. Kazen, *Emotions in Biblical Law*, 41.

31. Kazen, *Emotions in Biblical Law*, 162.

advantageous post-conflict interactions.”³² The latter-most point is a crucial aspect of rituals in the ancient near east, particularly when seeking to restore a ritual relationship with a deity or simply seeking to appease a deity, either outcome resulting in more unity. By highlighting evidence of disgust, separation of ingroups and outgroups as led by fear, dealing with anger in KTU 1.40, examples of empathy, and how a sense of justice leads to reconciliation, this analysis will demonstrate how each of these moral emotions make up the prescribed responses to this ritual to create a greater sense of unity at Ugarit.

DISGUST AS A MORAL EMOTION

In Kazen’s analysis of the Pentateuch, there are nine different triggers for the moral emotion of disgust.³³ As KTU 1.40 is but a single text from Ugaritic literature, one would not expect to find all these triggers present in the text itself. Amongst these triggers, very few if any are present in the text. This moral emotion is not plainly evident through these triggers as in the biblical text, but it is evident through the efforts of the people of Ugarit to deal with the aftereffect of these triggers through the rejection, regulation, or removal of things considered to be objectionable.³⁴ In the text of KTU 1.40, only the first and third methods—specifically rejection and removal—are extant to deal with what this ritual text considers to be objectionable.

The idea of removing that which is objectionable as a method to deal with the moral emotion of disgust is inferred by reviewing the text in lines 19–21, 28–30, and 36–38 (see Appendix A). These repetitive sections mention several different groups by name, specifically the Qatians, the Didmians, the Hurrians, the Hittites, the Cypriot, the *gbr*, those who rob or oppress the people of Ugarit, and the *qrzbl*, suggesting that each group is in some way associated with the city or the people of Ugarit.³⁵ These groups are seemingly included in the purification offerings performed in this ritual, as the sacrifices are performed on behalf of the sons of Ugarit,

32. Kazen, *Emotions in Biblical Law*, 45.

33. Kazen, *Emotions in Biblical Law*, 35.

34. Kazen argues that several strategies “may be conceived of for dealing with the objectionable: *rejection, regulation, and removal*.” Examples may include rejecting those with skin ailments from within the camp or city, determining what things will defile through contact via various laws and regulations, and removing sins from the people or removing evidence of impurity from within the camp of Israel. The removal of sins on the Day of Atonement, according to Kazen, is “reminiscent of the cleansing of a leper.” To combat these feelings of disgust or to be rid of what caused the trigger, the strategies of removal, rejection, and regulation were utilized in Kazen’s analysis of the biblical text. Kazen, *Emotions in Biblical Law*, 89–91, 94.

35. The words *gbr* and *qrzbl* are left undefined in the four different translations of the text I consulted in creating my analysis, so I have likewise left them undefined in my article. See appendix A for textual examples.

the daughters of Ugarit, and the foreigners or guests within the walls of Ugarit, as seen in lines 9, 18, 26, 35 (See Appendix A). As purification offerings were meant to remove ritual uncleanness, these offerings inherently removed something considered to be objectionable. Removing this objectionable state of being ritually unclean for all nine groups rather than just natives of Ugarit is a key characteristic of how this ritual handled the moral emotion of disgust in a way that unified the multicultural community of Ugarit.

Becoming ritually unclean via sinning or other ritually impure acts was likely the primary reason that the people of Ugarit offered purification sacrifices on behalf of their culturally diverse community. Whether this sinful behavior was in ritual practice or in the mundane acts of daily life is unclear. Lines 11, 19, 28, and 36 all introduce these repetitive pericopes with terms such as “whether you have sinned” or “whether your dignity has been sullied according to the customs of” these nine different groups, demonstrating the inclusive nature of this ritual (see Appendix A). Watson and Wyatt argue that “the personal involvement of groups in society, rather than any impersonal system of pollution...points to a moral rather than a purely ritual basis for sin.”³⁶ This moral basis for removing sin presents a moral prerogative rather than just a ritual practice. If this ritual indeed viewed sinning as being morally objectionable, this would further emphasize the need to remove these sins and their effects from the people within the walls of Ugarit, which is a characteristic behavior of dealing with the moral emotion of disgust.³⁷ The idea that the people of Ugarit needed to deal with this moral emotion suggests it was a part of their everyday life. Prescribing how to deal with this emotion on a community-wide scale was one of the key roles that this ritual text fulfilled as a ritual of “national unity.”³⁸

FEAR AS A MORAL EMOTION

The existence of a culturally included group (the men and women of Ugarit and their guests) and an excluded group (composed of the nine specifically mentioned groups in the previous section) demonstrates how the removal of fear was a prescribed emotional response of this ritual text to create greater unity rather than

36. “The personal involvement of groups in society, rather than any impersonal system of pollution, such as [one] obtains in Leviticus, points to a moral rather than a purely ritual basis for sin.” Watson and Wyatt, *Handbook of Ugaritic Studies*, 566.

37. Kazen’s analysis of the Pentateuch demonstrates how the physical removal of objectionable objects, items, or things is another way by which societies dealt with the moral emotion of disgust. Although this is very evident in the biblical text, there is nothing within KTU 1.40 that mentions a physical removal, which is why it is not discussed here.

38. Pardee, *Ritual and Cult*, 77.

division within the walls of Ugarit. Kazen emphasizes that “rules dealing with in-group-outgroup relationships and the treatment of foreigners often show signs of being shaped by emotional fear. This is sometimes reinforced by emotional disgust, but in other contexts mitigated by empathy.”³⁹ This ritual text’s ingroup-outgroup dichotomy can be understood from the following repeated sections: lines 19–21, 28–30, 36–38 and Olmo Lete’s reconstructed lines of 11–13 (see Appendix A). These outgroups or marginalized groups include the nine previously mentioned in the section on disgust (the Qatians, the Didmians, the Hurrians, the Hittites, the Cypriot, the *gbr*, those who rob the people of Ugarit, those who oppress the same, and the *qrzbl*.)⁴⁰ Several of these marginalized groups were likely considered to be outgroups because of their tense political or trade relationships with Ugarit. After all, the city was indeed well-connected in the ancient world due to its location at a crossroads of major trading routes. Thus, due to Ugarit’s prime real estate, controlling the city was of the utmost economic importance.⁴¹

This economic allure likely contributed to Ugarit’s complicated political history. The city changed hands multiple times as a vassal state over the course of its existence, being subservient to both Egypt and the kingdom of Hatti, the latter being one of the nine specifically mentioned outgroups. Regarding the political situation of Ugarit, “no administrative and legal documents pre-dating the Hittite period so far have been discovered at Ugarit,” limiting studies in political interactions with the city before their Hittite vassalage (for that reason, only two of the mentioned outgroups are focused on in this section).⁴² As a vassal to the Hittites, it makes sense the people of Ugarit would have experienced unfavorable emotions towards their overlords, particularly fear of retribution if they failed to meet certain tribute requirements.⁴³ This moral emotion firmly places the kingdom of Hatti in the outgroup category. Another of these groups, the Cypriots, were likewise in a tense political situation in relation to Ugarit. Towards the end of its life, Ugarit corresponded with Cyprus in what sounds like a vassal relationship, or at least a

39. Kazen, *Emotions in Biblical Law*, 116

40. Although two of these groups do not currently have convincing translations—*gbr* and *qrzbl*—they were significant enough to be repeatedly mentioned within the text of KTU 1.40, so they are included here.

41. Soldt, “Ugarit as a Hittite Vassal State,” 199.

42. Van Soldt argues that there is also clear evidence of Hurrian influence, which could have been due to a previous, unknown Hurrian vassalage or simply by trade connection with the Hurrian people. Soldt, “Ugarit as a Hittite Vassal State,” 199, 205.

43. Toward the end of Ugarit’s existence, there are records of the Hittites demanding tribute of Ugarit in the form of grain. This became especially evident with the publication of RSO 23. Yoram Cohen and Eduardo Torrecilla, “Grain Tribute in Hittite Syria and the Fall of Ugarit,” *BASOR* 389 (May 2023): 66–70.

relationship in which Ugarit was inferior in status to Cyprus.⁴⁴ If this was indeed a vassalage, then this would suggest that a vassal and suzerain relationship with Cyprus took place in Ugarit's history, along with Egypt and the kingdom of Hatti. This places Cyprus not only in their own category as shown through repeated mentions in lines 12, 23, 29, and 37, but also in the category of potential oppressors alongside the Hittites (see Appendix A). Each of these categories firmly present the Cypriots as part of the marginalized outgroup, individuals towards whom the people of Ugarit likely had mixed emotions, including fear. Furthermore, fear of the unknown or at least of the unfamiliar could have bred division between the rest of the seven associated marginalized groups and the people of Ugarit. The ritual seemingly tries to smooth over difficult emotions such as disgust and fear to limit such divisions. As a possible attempt to quell this fear and reinforce unity within the greater community, these groups are included as beneficiaries of the purification offerings within the ritual text, a phenomenon that would likely not be seen if this ritual intended to sow dissent, distrust, or division between the sons and daughters of Ugarit and the guest or foreigners within the walls of the city. Removing this fear or at least mitigating its potency would likely have resulted in a more unified multicultural community at Ugarit.

Out of the five emotions focused on in this analysis, anger is the only one that is explicitly mentioned in the ritual text.

One of the purposes of this ritual text may have been to remove behaviors or soothe over emotions that exacerbated the overall unity of the city. Because the sins of the people of Ugarit and the other nine mentioned groups were repeatedly associated with anger, this text may have prescribed that this emotion be dealt with by removing it. Just as ritual impurity is looked down on and removed for all the nine previously mentioned marginalized groups to further strengthen a sense of unity within the community.

EMPATHY AS A MORAL EMOTION

As stated in the methodology section, one strategy to discern the existence of the moral emotion of empathy is by looking at the history of interactions between groups, in this case the people of Ugarit and the marginalized outgroups.⁴⁵ The key lines in KTU 1.40 from which the existence of this moral

44. The well-known text of RS 20.238 demonstrates this idea of vassalage or inferiority via Ugarit's use of language such as "my father" when addressing the king of Cyprus. Bretschneider, Driessen, and Kanta, "Cyprus and Ugarit," 3.

45. "To find *explicit* expression of empathy behind legal provisions, we have to look at rules dealing with ingroup-outgroup relationships and the treatment of peripheral or exposed categories of people. These are rules that can be understood to appeal to the empathic capacity of the addressees of the legal collections under discussion." As this KTU

emotion can be inferred are lines 13, 18, 21, 30, 36, and 38 (see Appendix A). Half of these lines repeat the instances of the oppressors and robbers as marginalized outgroups while the other half mention the sons and daughters of Ugarit and their guests. Incredibly, because the lines referring to “those that oppress you” and “those that rob you” are part of the repeatedly mentioned nine marginalized groups, they are likewise part of the so-called ‘guest list’ of people or communities associated with Ugarit (See Appendix A). Despite warranting delineating terms such as “oppress” and “rob” in the way that these groups are likely interacting with the community of Ugarit; they are *still* included in the purification offerings prescribed in this ritual.⁴⁶ If this is indeed the correct way to translate lines 13, 21, 30, and 38, then this would suggest that this ritual prescribes the amelioration of empathy to promote unity by further smoothing over tensions within the community at Ugarit. However, scholarly translations disagree as to the nature of these groups as contained in lines 13, 21, 30, and 38. Both Pardee and Wyatt translate these not to mean “those who rob you” or “those who oppress you,” but rather as “your oppressed ones” and “your poor” or “impoverished ones.”⁴⁷ This creates an altogether different meaning for these two of nine marginalized groups, suggesting that those who oppress or rob are not included as beneficiaries of this offering. Rather, those who have been victims of oppression or of poverty are now the subjects of these two groups and thus are not only beneficiaries of the purification offerings included in this ritual, but also the beneficiaries of the prescribed moral emotion of empathy. These two other translations present an even better idea of how empathy would have been understood in context of this ritual by including less fortunate groups.⁴⁸

It is plausible that the foreigners and guests who were within the walls of Ugarit at the time of this purification sacrifice were part of these less-fortunate groups. Being an economic hub of trade, it is very likely that traveling

1.40 is primarily a ritual text rather than a legal text, dealings with outgroups will not be explicitly mentioned, but the strategy of exploring the treatment of foreigners still proves useful when analyzing the text in a greater context. Kazen, *Emotions in Biblical Law*, 96.

46. This creates an even greater sense of empathetic inclusion of the foreigner than the biblical text. The “integrated out-group,” as Kazen calls it in terms of the biblical text, involves the *ger* or the *gerim* that are among the people of Israel, who have been accepted into their community and abide by social and religious norms. Empathy is extended to this group, but not those who are further separated from Israel, the *goyim* (peoples). These are still shunned, outcast, and even killed. Kazen, *Emotions in Biblical Law*, 111.

47. Watson and Wyatt, *Handbook of Ugaritic Studies*, 565; Pardee, *Ritual and Cult*, 81–83.

48. “Empathy is rooted in immediate affective responses based on self and on concern for close kin, but extends to underprivileged and outsiders, as it is triggered on various levels.” Kazen, *Emotions in Biblical Law*, 113.

merchants within the walls of Ugarit selling their wares used slaves to transport said wares. Even though slavery was viewed very differently in the ancient world in comparison to modern-day, it is not unlikely that slaves were viewed as those considered to be less fortunate. These merchants and unpaid workers may have been included as beneficiaries of this purification offering for the city of Ugarit, considered by the people to be guests or foreigners.

However, when this sacrificial ritual took place would have had crucial bearing as to who was within the boundaries of the city. Due to damages to the textual remnants of KTU 1.40 and other surviving copies, the exact time that this ritual took place during the calendar year is unknown.⁴⁹ Although this could be an issue regarding which foreigners and guests were within the walls of Ugarit, the existence of Ugarit as a crucial trade center largely negates this problem, as trade would have likely been an ongoing process within the city. Visiting dignitaries from powerful states, including the state to which Ugarit was a vassal, could have been considered as part of the guests or foreigners who received the benefits of this purification ritual. While this may be the case, this does not rule out the existence of visiting merchants or slaves being included in this ritual. These behaviors to include the foreigners and guests in this purification rite could also be viewed as a failsafe to avoid the wrath of their respective deity, which would demonstrate a lack of empathy rather than evidence for how the people of Ugarit may have experienced this moral emotion. But it would likewise demonstrate the existence of fear as a moral emotion to prescribe and prohibit certain behaviors to achieve or avoid specific outcomes, such as appeasing their deity rather than angering their deity due to impurities among the people—visitors included. In either case, moral emotions are part of this specific behavior exhibited by the people of Ugarit, further supporting the idea that these emotions were prescribed responses to promote unity within the likely diverse local community when performing the ritual text of KTU 1.40.

A SENSE OF JUSTICE AS A MORAL EMOTION

Along with empathy, this last emotion, a sense of Justice, was likely ameliorated to increase the feelings of unity withing the city of Ugarit. It can be understood as “an emotional capacity with roots in the biological, evolutionary history of the human being, which requires an equilibrium and strives for an emotional homeostasis.” When this equilibrium is offset by emotions that could be considered negative—such as fear, which leads to anger, and anger

49. Olmo Lete, *Canaanite Religion*, 151.; Pardee, *Ritual and Cult*, 79.

which leads to hate—additional actions are necessary to return to a state of emotional equilibrium.⁵⁰ This need for emotional equilibrium creates this sense of justice, particularly when the equilibrium is disturbed, giving way to feelings of injustice or unfairness. It is the idea of creating a sort of society-wide emotional homeostasis by which Kazen approaches the biblical text, and by which this analysis approaches KTU 1.40.⁵¹

The repetitive nature of KTU 1.40 in which justification or purification offerings are made in lines 9, 18, 26, and 35 demonstrates the attempts of the people of Ugarit to appease their deity and reach an emotional equilibrium (see Appendix A). These offerings of rams or donkeys are given to the Ugaritic deity in all six sections of this ritual, serving as a means to justify, purify, or atone for the sins of the people.⁵² Kazen explains that these, “are not [to be] understood as full restitution or payment for wrongs against the deity, but as ritualized appeasement behaviors.” These included “mitigating tokens of reconciliation” and “appealing to the offended party for emotional acceptance and acknowledgment, thus restoring a fictive balance.”⁵³ As this offering was likely intended to make expiation for the people, it would be considered both just and fair that in return for making this offering, they would receive the ritual result of expiation from their respective deities. This expectation of a certain outcome based on specific ritual action is how this moral emotion, a sense of justice, is a prescribed emotional response throughout this text. Furthermore, because all nine marginalized groups mentioned in this text were included in receiving this justice, this ritual likely served as a means to unify the community of Ugarit.

An additional perspective of a sense of justice is evidence of removal and reconciliation within the ritual text. Although atonement sacrifices were not considered to be a payment for the sins of a people, as stated above, they still serve to repair the relationship between two parties, which is a form of reconciliation. This reconciliation is only possible through the removal of sin to leave purity in its place. Eberhart explains that “Sin and impurity necessitate forgiveness, purification, and appeasement; the acknowledgement of states difference [between an impure body and a deity] requires a token of

50. Kazen, *Emotions in Biblical Law*, 162.

51. This feeling of unfairness and fairness is not unique to human experience, but is found in the animal kingdom as well, whether demonstrated by tendencies toward revenge or retribution, or by tendencies toward peace and reconciliation. Kazen, *Emotions in Biblical Law*, 142.

52. The translations of Wyatt, Pardee, Olmo Lete, and Sanders differ on how they translate the verb *np̄y*, hence the reference to purify, atone for, or justify the people. For an in-depth summary of how this term has been translated, see footnote no.2 of this article.

53. Kazen, *Emotions in Biblical Law*, 163–164.

homage. The result is ‘atonement’ which denotes a critical positive development in the relationship.”⁵⁴ It is abundantly clear from the text of KTU 1.40 that in response to the sins committed by the people of Ugarit, an atonement, purification, rectitude, or justification sacrifice needs to be made on behalf of the people. Such an offering serves as the medium to reestablish emotional equilibrium among the people of Ugarit and between them and their deity. Performing this ritual thus feeds this sense of justice not only between the deity and the community, but throughout the community of Ugarit as well. Such an outcome likely promoted a greater sense of unity as every group within the city was able to participate in this renewed feeling of justice.

CONCLUSION

Employing Thomas Kazen’s methodology to KTU 1.40 allows for a careful reading of the text through the lens of cognitive psychology. This demonstrates how the ritual likely intended to unify the multicultural community within the walls of Ugarit by addressing five moral emotions in the following ways: removing the emotional effects of disgust, fear, and anger, and ameliorating the emotions of empathy and a sense of justice. Such a reading establishes the deep moral implications of this ritual, despite some disagreement among scholars. Furthermore, this reading of KTU 1.40 suggests that the people of Ugarit experienced multiple moral emotions in their day-to-day lives as part of their interactions with foreigners, guests, marginalized outgroups, and with deities via this purification ritual. Feeling each of these moral emotions was not simply a matter of happenstance but was likely directly associated with the prescribed emotional responses inherent in this ritual text to create a more unified Ugarit. Such a perspective provides even more insight into the moral emotional power that this text wielded when performed on behalf of this diverse community.

54. Christian A. Eberhart, “To Atone or Not to Atone: Remarks on the Day of Atonement Rituals According to Leviticus 16 and the Meaning of Atonement” in *Sacrifice, Cult, and Atonement in Early Judaism and Christianity: Constituents and Critique*, ed. Christian A. Eberhart and Henrietta L. Wiley (Atlanta, GA: SBL Press, 2017), 216–217.

APPENDIX A – KTU 1.40 IN TRANSLATION⁵⁵

9 [--"Offer, yes, one ram of Justification]
 [Of justification, sons of Ugarit"]
10 [may (it be) atonement of. . .] and atonement [of. . .]
 [and atonement of. . . and atonement of. . .]
11 [and atonement] of Ugarit [and atonement of..
 [whether you have sinned]
 [according to the custom of / what betrays the Qatian),
 [according to the custom of/what betrays the Didmian (?)],
12 [according to the custom of / what betrays the Hurrian),
 [according to the custom of / what betrays the Hittite],
 [according to the custom of / what betrays the Cypriot],
 [according to the custom of/ what betrays of the *gbr*],
13 [according to the custom of/ what betray your robbers],
 [according to the custom of/what betray your oppressors),
 [or according to the custom of/ what betrays the *qrzbl*];
14 [or whether you have sinned]
 [by your anger],
 [by your faintheartedness/impatience,
15 [or for the transgressions you have committed];
 [or whether you have sinned]
 [in connection with the sacrifices]
 [and in connection with the offerings."]
 [-"Behold the sacrifice we sacrifice],
16 [this is the offering we offer],
 [this is the victim we immolate!]
 May it rise to the father of the gods],
17 [may it rise to the family of the gods],
 [to the assembly of the gods]
 [to *tkam wšnm*!]
 Behold the ram!"
18 [-"Offer, yes, one ram of justification,
 may [(it be) atonement] of the guests [of the walls of Ugarit],
19 [and atonement of. . . and atonement of. . .]
 whether you have [sinned]

55. This translation is taken directly from pages 116-120 in Gregorio del Olmo Lete's *Canaanite Religion According to the Liturgical Texts of Ugarit: Second English Edition, thoroughly Revised and Enlarged*, trans. W. G. E. Watson, *Alter Orient und Altes Testament*, Band 408 (Göttingen: Hubert & Co., 2014).

[according to the custom of / what betrays the Qatian],
20 according to the custom of / what betrays the Didmian (?),
 accord[ing to the custom of/ what betrays the Hurrian].
 accord[ing to the custom of/ what betrays the Hittite],
 according to the custom of/what betrays [the Cypriot],
 [according to the custom of/ what betrays] the *gbr*,
21 according to the custom of/what betray your robbers,
 according to the custom of/what betray your op[ressors].
 according to the custom of/what betrays the *q[rzbl]*;
22 or whether you have sinned
 by your anger,
 by [your] faintheartedness/impatience,
23 [or for the transgression] you have committed;
 or whether you have sinned
 in connection with the sacrifices
 and in connection with the offerings.”
 “Be[hold the sacrifice we sacrifice],
24 this is the offering we offer,
 this is the victim we immolate!
 May it rise [to the father of the gods].
25 may it rise to the family of the gods,
 to the assembly of [the gods],
 [to *tknm ws/nm!*
 Behold the ram!”
26 “Offer, yes, a donkey of justification,
 of justification, sons of Ugarit,
 and [may it be atonement of . . . and atonement] of Ugarit
27 and atonement of *ymán* and atonement of *rmt*
28 and atonement of [---] and atonement of *Niqmaddu*;
 whether your dignity has been sullied
 according to the custom of/ what betrays the Qa[tian].
 [according to the custom of what betrays the Didm]ian (?),
29 according to the custom of/ what betrays the Hurrian,
 according to the custom of / what betrays the Hittite,
 according to the custom of/ what betrays the Cypriot,
 according to the custom of/ what betrays *gbr*],
30 according to the custom of/ what betray your robbers,
 according to the custom of/ what betray your oppressors,

according to the custom of / what betrays the *qrzbl*;
or whether your dignity has been sullied

31 by your anger,
by your faintheartedness/impatience,
or for the transgressions you have committed;
32 or whether your dignity has been sullied
in connection with the sacrifices
and in connection with the offerings.”

- “Behold the sacrifice we sacrifice,
this is the offering we offer,

33 this is the victim we immolate!
May it rise to the father of the gods,
34 may it rise to the family of the gods,
<to the assembly of the gods,>

to *tkam wšnm!!*

Behold the donkey!”

35 -And again to the recitation: <”Offer, yes, a donkey> of justification,
of justification, daughters of Ugarit,

36 may (it be) atonement of the guests of the walls of Ugarit,
and atonement of the “wife”;

whether your dignity has been sullied

according to the custom of / what betrays the Qatian,

37 according to the custom of/ what betrays the Didmian (?),

according to the custom of/what betrays the Hurrian,

according to the custom of/ what betrays the Hittite,

according to the custom of/ what betrays the Cypriot,

38 according to the custom of/ what betrays *gbr*,

according to the custom of/ what betray your robbers,

according to the custom of/ what betray your oppressors,

according to the custom of/ what betrays the *qrzbl*;

39 or whether your dignity has been sullied

by your anger,

[by your faint]heartedness/[im]patience,

40 or by the transgressions you have committed;

or whether [your digni]ty has been sullied

[in connection with the sacrifices]

and in connection with the offerings”.

41 “Behold the sacrifice we sacrifice,

this is the offering we [offer],
[this is the victim we immolate!]
May it rise to the father of the gods,
42 may it rise to the family of the gods],
to the assembly of the gods,
43 to *tknm*[*wšnm*]! Behold the donkey!”

PHEONIX IMAGERY IN EARLY CHRISTIAN ART

ANNIE SPACH

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Abstract: In Early Christianity, often Christians used popular symbols that would point back to greater truths taught in their new faith. This paper discusses how early Christians followed his council through the use of the imperial representation of the phoenix rather than the common representation, highlighting their belief in resurrection, the majesty of Christ and their hope for eternal life given to all believers, while also speaking to a greater tradition outside of Christianity. The continued use of the phoenix as a symbol of resurrection, renewal, immortality and eternal life in the paradise of God is discussed, as well as the change over time as the type of phoenix portrayed was not changed but the central theme shifted to emphasize majesty of Jesus Christ in connection to the majesty of the Imperial court. The paper contends that while the use of the phoenix changed, the imperial portrayal of the phoenix was maintained across Late Antiquity.

INTRODUCTION

As Christianity blossomed in a world ripe with symbols, early Christians grappled with how to utilize their familiar culture without appearing pagan. Clement of Alexandria, in his work *Paedagogus*, faced this issue head on by encouraging Christians to use symbols common to their surrounding culture, while also emphasizing that they should be symbols that point to a great truth about their faith in Christ.

“And let our seals be either a dove, or a fish, or a ship scudding before the wind, or a musical lyre, which Polycrates used, or a ship’s anchor, which Seleucus got engraved as a device; and if there be one fishing, he will

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remember the apostle, and the children drawn out of the water. For we are not to delineate the faces of idols, we who are prohibited to cleave to them; nor a sword, nor a bow, following as we do, peace; nor drinking-cups, being temperate” Clement, *Paedagogus (The Teacher)* 3.59.2–3.60.1.

It may seem shocking for us to believe that a religion based so wholly on a rejection of paganism would be comfortable using symbols from that very tradition. However, as shown from the Clement quote above, throughout the beginnings of Christian art that Early Christians did not view utilizing cultural symbols of the time as something contrary to their beliefs. Origen argued “that similar to the Israelites who on their way out of Egypt by the command of God captured the gold and silver jewels of the Egyptians and robbed their clothes in order to decorate the Holy of Holies, thus honouring God, so shall the Christians use the treasures of paganism.”¹

Through the use of the imperial representation of the phoenix rather than the common representation, early Christians were able to highlight their belief in resurrection, the majesty of Christ and their hope for eternal life given to all believers, while speaking to a greater tradition outside of Christianity. The use of phoenix symbolism was present in Christian art from its earliest extant, and the way in which it was presented did not vary significantly over the first 400 years of Christianity. The phoenix always stood as a symbol of resurrection, renewal, immortality and eternal life in the paradise of God. However, to whom the phoenix was referring changed over time as the majesty of Jesus Christ, in connection to the majesty of the Imperial court, was emphasized.

CURRENT ARGUMENTS OF THE PHOENIX

The current study of the phoenix symbol in Early Christian art focuses on its origins, particularly with its connection to Egyptian, Greek and Roman art.² I will continue in this fashion providing my own overview of the use of phoenix imagery throughout time. Scholarship has also focused on the connection of the phoenix found in the scriptures, particularly with the con-

1. Origen. *Epistle to Gregory Thaumaturgus*, in *Ante-Nicene Fathers*, Vol. 4, ed. Alexander Roberts and James Donaldson, trans. S.D.F. Salmond (Peabody, MA: Hendrickson, 1994), 383–94. See also Anders Klostergaard Petersen, “Between Old and New: The Problem of Acculturation Illustrated by the Early Christian Use of the Phoenix Motif,” *Jerusalem, Alexandria, Rome*. (Brill: 2003), 160.

2. See John Spencer Hill, “The Phoenix,” *Religion & Literature* 16, no. 2 (1984): 61–66, <http://www.jstor.org/stable/40059246>; and Mary Francis McDonald, “Phoenix Redivivus,” *Phoenix* 14, no. 4 (1960): 187–206, <https://doi.org/10.2307/1085860>; Douglas J. McMillan, “The Phoenix in the Western World from Herodotus to Shakespeare,” *The D.H. Lawrence Review* 5, no. 3 (1972): 238–67, <http://www.jstor.org/stable/44233403>.

nection of palms (phoinix) in Greek.³ In their recent article, Mária Kardis and Dominika Tlučková write of this connection and how it further leads to the appearance of the phoenix symbol in the infamous catacomb of Priscilla, pointing to a belief in resurrection and eternal life, symbolism tied also to the palm tree.⁴ J. Kaluzny follows this line of logic as well in his 2020 article titled “Phoenix and *Delphinus Salvator*: The History of the Forgotten Images of Early Christian Iconography” in which he argues, “the symbol of the phoenix was associated with the resurrection, understood as rebirth through the waters of a holy baptism. In the Christological sense, the image of a phoenix symbolized the resurrected Christ.”⁵ Kalzuny continues this logic of the resurrection and universal savior, calling upon further Greek and Roman imagery utilized in Early Christian Art along with the phoenix to show Christ as the *Delphinus Salvator*.⁶ This article will continue in light of these arguments, emphasizing the history of the usage of the phoenix prior to its adoption by Early Christians and acknowledging its connection to the resurrection. However, rather than the phoenix being simply being a symbol for just resurrection, I will argue that through the phoenix always stood as a symbol of resurrection, renewal, immortality and eternal life in the paradise of God, through its adherence to the greater Roman/Greek tradition of the benu bird adapted from Egyptian culture.

THE ORIGIN OF THE PHOENIX

In order to understand where an early Christian interpretation of the phoenix comes from, it must be contrasted to the Roman interpretation. The phoenix was a growing and popular symbol in Roman culture at the time, deriving from the expanse of the Roman and Greek empires into Egyptian culture.

The myth of the phoenix originated in the cross-over of Egypt and Arabia. Following the Hellenistic and subsequent Roman expansion into the Near East, Greek and Roman authors wrote extensively on this foreign bird. Herodotus, a Greek writer, wrote down the myth of the phoenix, saying:

Another bird also is sacred; it is called the phoenix. I myself have never seen it, but only pictures of it; for the bird comes but seldom into Egypt, once in five hundred years, as the people of Heliopolis say. It is said that the phoenix comes when his father dies. If the picture truly shows his size and

3. For a more in depth analysis, see pg. 9.

4. Mária Kardis and Dominika Tlučková, “The Symbol of the Phoenix in the Catacombs of Priscilla in Rome and Its Transformation in Early Christianity,” *The Biblical Annals* 12, no. 1 (2022): 65–88, <https://doi.org/10.31743/biban.12903>.

5. J. C. Kałużny, “Phoenix and *Delphinus Salvator*: The History of the Forgotten Images of Early Christian Iconography,” *Perspectives on Culture* 3, no. 30 (2020):15.

6. Kalzuny, “Phoenix and *Delphinus Salvator*,” 17–23.

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appearance, his plumage is partly golden and partly red. He is most like an eagle in shape and bigness. The Egyptians tell a tale of this bird's devices which I do not believe. He comes, they say, from Arabia bringing his father to the Sun's temple enclosed in myrrh, and there buries him. His manner of bringing is this: first he moulds an egg of myrrh as heavy as he can carry, and when he has proved its weight by lifting it, he then hollows out the egg and puts his father in it, covering over with more myrrh the hollow in which the body lies; so the egg being with his father in it of the same weight as before, the phoenix, after enclosing him, carries him to the temple of the Sun in Egypt. Such is the tale of what is done by this bird.⁷

While many writers wrote on the phoenix, the basic elements of the phoenix story were always the same. Truly, there was only one myth of the phoenix.⁸ The bird would fly to Heliopolis, bring an egg of myrrh and bury his father in the ashes, from which a new phoenix would appear. This bird was, at the time, not viewed as a mythical creature, but a real animal which performed this continuous cycle of renewed life. Commentators emphasized early the connection between this creature and its triumph over the state of death—particularly pertinent for an ancient society where death was so prominent. This expression can be shown by the Roman writer Claudian's (c. 370–404 CE) laude to the phoenix, as he wrote,

Happy bird, heir to thine own self! Death which proves our undoing restores thy strength. Thine ashes give thee life and though thou perish not thine old age dies. Thou hast beheld all that has been, hast witnessed the passing of the ages. Thou knowest when it was that the waves of the sea rose and o'erflawed the rocks, what year it was that Phaëthon's error devoted to the flames. Yet did no destruction overwhelm thee; sole survivor thou livest to see the earth subdued; against thee the Fates gather not up their threads, powerless to do thee harm.⁹

This concept of the phoenix clearly fascinated and excited Greek and Roman writers as they wrote of its seemingly immortal status. A “living” creature that was the closest to eternal life as had ever been chronicled launched the phoenix's fame.

Roman culture's depiction of the phoenix can be classified into two separate groups: imperial and royal depictions and the more common depictions. Though they pulled on the same story and legend, the portrayal of the phoenix

7. Herodotus. *Histories*. 2.73, trans. A. D. Godley, (Loeb: London and New York, 1921), 359–361.

8. Petersen, “Between Old and New,” 157.

9. Claudian, *The Phoenix*, trans. Maurice Platnauer, vol. II, ed. E. Capps, T.E. Page, W.H.D. Rouse (London: William Heinemann; New York: G.P. Putman's Sons, 2016), 231.

changed from group to group, probably due to the message that was to be conveyed through its presentation.

IMPERIAL DEPICTION OF THE PHOENIX

The rise of fame of the phoenix, especially tied to the idea of eternal life, had especially pertinent meaning to the growing Roman empire, particularly for its ruler. If a bird could live for 500 years and then be reborn in the ashes, how long then would a king who was chosen of the gods, strong and intelligent live? The phoenix thus became a symbol for the immortal and eternal reign of the king.

The imperial phoenix referred back to countless elements found in the legend of the phoenix. Due to the phoenix's connection to the city of Heliopolis (named after the sun god) and also the sun's symbol of both renewal and immortality, the imperial phoenix was depicted as a "long legged bird with a radiate nimbus," also known as the *benu* or heron—which was the holy bird of the phoenix's origin city.¹⁰ An example of this can be found on an Aureus gold coin made in 188 CE during the rule of Hadrian (see fig. 1). The long legs of the *benu* create a straight line of sight leading to the head, pointing up to the sky. The head is surrounded by a crown-like halo with multiple lines coming from the center of the head, forcing the bird to appear that it has a sun on its head or rather that the bird's head is the sun. This bird is standing on a mound, perhaps indicating the whole Roman empire over which the emperor rules.

Other imperial coins can be found that also employ this concept of the heron-like long legged creature with a solar-like halo, looking up at the sky and standing on some sort of object. The object on which the bird is perched changes and can present certain images. For example, in one coin found at the British museum, the phoenix is pitched on what appears to be a palm tree branch, which symbolism will be discussed in more detail below (fig. 2). One of the most common perches of the phoenix was that of myrrh, pointing back to the original story told by Herodotus of the "egg of myrrh" in which the phoenix's father would be reborn.

This myrrh can also be seen as a symbolism for the phoenix's ability to heal. Claudian wrote, "Hence she heaps together cinnamon and the odour of the far-scented amomum, and balsams with mixed leaves. Neither the twig of the mild cassia nor of the fragrant acanthus is absent, nor the tears and rich

10. Joseph Nigg, "Transformations of the Phoenix: from the Church Fathers to the Bestiaries." *Ikon. Journal of Iconographic Studies* 2 (2009): 95; see also Jessie J. Poesch, "THE PHOENIX PORTRAYED." *The D.H. Lawrence Review* 5, no. 3 (1972): 200–237.

drop of frankincense. To these she adds tender ears of flourishing spikenard, and joins the too pleasing pastures of myrrh.”¹¹

Following Julius Caesar’s (46–44 BCE) self–deification, the immortality of the emperor needed to be greatly emphasized. The phoenix served as a symbol representing this ideology. One side of a Rome minted aureus made between 119–123 CE shows the emperor Hadrian holding a ball, which can be interpreted as the globe (representing universal rule of his empire) or the ball of myrrh discussed above. A phoenix is perched on the globe. The phoenix is less detailed than previous examples, however the long legs and head pointed up to the heavens indicate that it is the same symbol used previously. Hadrian is depicted as a God, with long robes exposing his chest, his right hand raised above his head as a show of strength with his left hand holding the phoenix and the globe. Once again, the phoenix motif is being used in a very public way to demonstrate the hope for the longevity of the emperor’s rule as well as his connection to the gods. With the use of coins, the propagandic reminder of the eternal rule of both the Empire and its leader was spread across the empire.

THE TAVERN PHOENIX—A “COMMON” DEPICTION OF THE PHOENIX

While imperial presentations of the phoenix seem to align directly with the legends and myths presented by ancient authors, more common depictions stray from this stringent pattern.

An example of this more “common” portrayal of the phoenix is shown in a fresco painting found in Pompeii (fig. 3) Following Herodotus’ description, the phoenix is painted with a mix of red and golden feathers. The shape of the phoenix itself is more reminiscent of a chicken, with plumage coming directly down the neck, short, stubby legs and a fatter, rounder shape to the body. This is found on a sign for the *Caupona* (or tavern) of Euxinus, alongside two peacocks. An inscription written under the phoenix reads: *Phoenix Felix Et Tu*, meaning (The) Phoenix is lucky and so (may) you (be!), which is thought to be the slogan of the tavern.¹² Here, the phoenix is associated with luck (or happiness, as *Felix* can also mean happy). Interestingly, the painting is surrounded by an electoral programmata, or a political advertisement for a particular candidate. The term *phoenix felix* could possibly be used here as a pun for the candidate, following the many puns and play on words motifs

11. Claudian, *The Phoenix*, 266–71.

12. Kristina Milnor, *Graffiti and the Literary Landscape in Roman Pompeii*, vol. 1st ed., (Oxford, United Kingdom: OUP Oxford, 2014), 81.

often found in funerary inscriptions.¹³ The connection to funerary puns is the only real connection of this piece to any concept of death or immortality (except perhaps the immortality one may feel while being inebriated!). The phoenix itself is being used as a motif for happiness and luck—messages that certainly would attract a frequenter of a tavern. The bright colors of red and gold were perhaps also used to draw in customers. However, besides the colors mentioned by Herodotus, the tavern phoenix does not include any elements from the myth mentioned by the Greek scholars. There is no direct reference to the Sun, Heliopolis, myrrh, eggs or ashes. Frankly, if the inscription had not been included, it would be difficult to identify this bird as a phoenix at all. Nevertheless, this depiction provides insight to the different styles and depictions of the phoenix in late antiquity, as well as its many uses.

EARLY CHRISTIANS VIEWS ON THE PHOENIX

As Christianity grew in the beginning centuries CE, early Christian writers used the symbol of the phoenix in a similar manner to Greek and Roman writers. As the ancients believed that the phoenix was not mythical but was rather an factual bird from Arabia, the Early Christian Fathers used the phoenix as “proof” for the resurrection. The histories of Herodotus and other Greeks were used as factual writings rather than legends. As such, they included not only the motif of the phoenix in their writings generally, but used specific examples of the phoenix to expand on the legend for it to prove the more “unbelievable” parts of their faith. For example, Clement of Alexandria, in his *First Epistle to the Corinthians*, wrote down the legend of the phoenix, including the city of Heliopolis as the place of the renewal of the phoenix. However, he further expands the story in order to connect the story of the phoenix taking its life back up to itself to point back to the resurrection of Jesus Christ: “Do we then deem it any great and wonderful thing for the Maker of all things to raise up again those that have piously served Him in the assurance of a good faith, when even by a bird He shows us the mightiness of His power to fulfil His promise?”¹⁴ In Tertullian’s *On the Resurrection of the Flesh*, he follows this similar pattern, writing,

If, however, all nature but faintly figures our resurrection; if creation affords no sign precisely like it, inasmuch as its several phenomena can hardly be said to die so much as to come to an end, nor again be deemed to be re-animated, but only re-formed; then take a most complete and unassailable

13. Milnor, *Graffiti and the Literary Landscape in Roman Pompeii*, 82.

14. Clement, *Letter to the Corinthians*, trans. John Keith, in *Ante-Nicene Fathers*, ed. Allan Menzies, vol. 9 (Buffalo, NY: Christian Literature Publishing Co., 1896), chapter 26. Revised and edited for New Advent by Kevin Knight.

symbol of our hope, for it shall be an animated being, and subject alike to life and death. I refer to the bird which is peculiar to the East, famous for its singularity, marvelous from its posthumous life, which renews its life in a voluntary death; its dying day is its birthday, for on it it departs and returns; once more a phoenix where just now there was none; once more himself, but just now out of existence; another, yet the same. What can be more express and more significant for our subject; or to what other thing can such a phenomenon bear witness? But must men die once for all, while birds in Arabia are sure of a resurrection?¹⁵

Ambrose, the Bishop of Milan and mentor of Augustine compares the phoenix as a direct comparison for Jesus Christ:

By the very act of his resurrection the phoenix furnishes us a lesson by setting before us the very emblems of our own resurrection without the aid of precedent or of reason. We accept the fact that birds exist for the sake of man. The contrary is not true: that man exists for the sake of birds. We have here an example of the loving care which the Author and Creator of the birds has for His own saints. These He does not allow to perish, just as He does not permit in the case of one sole bird when He willed that the phoenix should rise again, born of his own seed. Who, then, announces to him the day of his death, so that he makes for himself a casket, fills it with goodly aromas, and then enters it to die there where pleasant perfumes succeed in crowding out the foul odor of death?...Like the good phoenix, he entered his casket, filling it with the sweet aroma of martyrdom.¹⁶

The reality of the phoenix, to the Early Christian fathers, was ample evidence for the resurrection of Jesus. However, it was important for Christianity not only to have its proof in the world surrounding them, but also proof of their belief within their own scriptures, especially as they used the same scriptures as the Jews. Jews and Christians saw the phoenix within the context of the Hebrew Bible. This is accredited to certain translations found in the Septuagint. As mentioned above, in Greek, the word for palm tree (phoenix) is very close to the word phoenix. The *Benu* bird (Egyptian) on which the phoenix was based and the palm tree were later connected, with Greco-Romans calling their date palm a *Phoenix dactylifera* due to their belief in its ability to come to life again.¹⁷ This is probably why imperial phoenixes were seen to

15. Tertullian, *On the Resurrection of the Flesh*, trans. Peter Holmes, in *Ante-Nicene Fathers*, eds. Alexander Roberts, James Donaldson, and A. Cleveland Coxe, vol. 3. (Buffalo, NY: Christian Literature Publishing Co., 1885). Revised and edited for New Advent by Kevin Knight.

16. *Saint Ambrose: Hexameron, Paradise And Cain And Abel*, trans. John J. Salvage, (New York: Fathers of the Church, Inc., 1961), 219–220.

17. Mary Francis McDonald, "Phoenix Redivivus." *Phoenix* 14, no. 4 (1960): 197.

be on palm trees.¹⁸ The phoenix was especially important for these Christian writers, rather than Jews, as certain translations could be retranslated in order to accommodate this new symbolism of immortality and the resurrection. For example, Christian and Jewish practice of the time was taking the translation of Job 29:18, which is that “I shall multiply my days like the palm tree (phoenix)” and putting it as “I shall multiply my days like the phoenix”¹⁹. Some modern translations, just as the NRSVUE, still follow this translation today.²⁰ In Psalms 92, it originally says, “The righteous flourish like the palm tree and grow like a cedar in Lebanon” (Psalms 92:12). Tertullian (155–240 CE) follows the palm tree to phoenix shift, writing, “God even in His own Scripture says: *“The righteous shall flourish like the phoenix; that is, shall flourish or revive, from death, from the grave — to teach you to believe that a bodily substance may be recovered even from the fire.”*²¹ Early Christian writers thus “changed” or rather interpreted certain scriptures in order to fit the growing popularity of the phoenix and their belief in the reality of its resurrection and immortality, in order to read Christ into the Hebrew Bible. They continued to use other scriptures and their connection to the phoenix to further their apologetic view of resurrection:

Clement wrote “For [the Scripture] says in a certain place, *You shall raise me up, and I shall confess unto You; and again, I laid me down, and slept; I awoke, because You are with me; and again, Job says, You shall raise up this flesh of mine, which has suffered all these things.* (Job 19:25–26).²²” They also used New Testament passages to connect back to the phoenix. “Our Lord has declared that we are *better than many sparrows*: Matthew 10:33 well, if not better than many a phoenix too, it were no great thing.”²³

Clearly, the Early Christian Fathers saw the phoenix as an important symbol, especially for apologetic means. The Early Christian authors addressed and engaged in the legend of the phoenix and placed it into Christianity and the Hebrew Bible through means of resurrection and believed that the phoenix was an actual Arabian bird. However, none of them provides a physical

18. Douglas J. McMillan, “The Phoenix in the Western world from Herodotus to Shakespeare.” *The D.H. Lawrence Review* 5, no. 3 (1972): 251.

19. McDonald, “Phoenix Redivivus,” 190–193; Roelof Van den Broek, *The Myth of the Phoenix: According to Classical and Early Christian Traditions*, trans. I. Seeger (Leiden: E.J. Brill, 1971).

20. <https://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=Job%2029&version=NRSVUE>

21. Tertullian, *On the Resurrection of the Flesh*, chapter 13.

22. Clement, *Letter to the Corinthians*, chapter 26.

23. Tertullian, *On the Resurrection of the Flesh*

description of exactly how the phoenix itself should be represented.²⁴ We then have to examine the art itself in order to discover what and if there is a pattern for how early Christian's depicted the phoenix.

EARLY CHRISTIANS DEPICTION OF PHOENIX IN ART

One of the first examples of the phoenix symbol being used in Early Christian art is found on a fresco in the Catacomb of Priscilla (2nd–4th century, fig. 4). Though severely damaged fresco, the elements of the phoenix are strikingly clear and are those found more in imperial art rather than the tavern phoenix in Pompeii. For example, the spike surrounded sun-halo found in imperial art is clearly around the head. Although the legs cannot be seen, the flames surrounding the legs are very tall, suggesting that the bird has skinny, tall, heron-type legs. The fire might be indicative of the story of Pentecost found in Acts 2, where the Holy Spirit came down as fire from heaven. Combining the symbolism of the Holy Spirit with that of the phoenix may be the concept of new birth, harkening back to the commandment of Christ that “no one can enter the kingdom of God without being born of water and Spirit” (John 3:5) and John the Baptist’s pronouncement that “He (meaning Jesus) will baptize you with the Holy Spirit and fire” (Matthew 3:11).

On a different side of the same catacomb is another damaged fresco of a phoenix (fig. 5). The damage is mostly to the flames around the legs, thus the figure of the bird is more clear than the previous fresco. While it too contains the fire around the legs not found in Roman *compranda*, the skinny heron legs are more clearly emerging from them, calling back to the *benu* bird we saw on the imperial coins. The sun-halo is painted yellow, highlighting its connection to the solar beginnings of the phoenix. Both phoenixes are depicted alone, with no older symbol adjacent to them. Thus, the phoenix served as a solitary symbol, representative of the deceased’s hope for resurrection or a reminder of the resurrection and immortality of Jesus Christ as described in the narratives of the Early Christian Fathers.

Having this on the wall of the catacomb could have pointed to the belief of the resurrection to come through the rebirth of the Spirit so that the deceased would be able to “enter the kingdom of God.” Returning back to the quote from Clement at the beginning, Christians choosing to decorate their catacomb would have seen the phoenix, a popular symbol at the time, as a common symbol that could be used to teach a greater principle of their faith. Though not specifically mentioned by Clement, the phoenix would have

24. Nigg, “Transformations of the Phoenix,” 95.

helped those who would have heard the Early Christian Fathers' writings as representing and pointing to their hope for resurrection and rebirth in Christ.

As Christianity expanded in the 4th and 5th centuries due to the conversion of Constantine and the making of Christianity as the official religion of the empire. The location of the phoenix changed, but its portrayal stayed fairly consistent. Phoenixes were found mostly in the apses of churches. A fragment of a mosaic in Old Saint Peter's in Rome shows a gold and red colored phoenix with the long heron-like legs found in the Catacomb of Priscilla (fig. 6). Its head is crowned with a 14 rayed sun halo. Unlike the catacombs, there is no indication of fire or the phoenix being burned. It also is not perched on any object, diverging from the imperial depictions on coins. However, it still contains the clear elements and references back to the imperial image of the phoenix. Whether it was next to any other objects or symbols is unknown due to it being a fragment of a larger mosaic, but it seems to have been depicted solitary, much like the earlier catacomb frescoes.

A later 6th century apse mosaic with a typical depiction found in SS. Cosma e Damiano in Rome that also includes a phoenix (fig. 7). This is uniquely one of the only images of the phoenix with other symbols, other than the tavern sign from Pompeii. Here rather than being a solitary symbol, the phoenix plays a part in a greater narrative. The mosaic a typical *traditio legis* or "giving of the law" scene where Jesus, wearing a robe with purple *clavi*, holding a scroll in his left hand and lifting up his right hand, descends from heaven and appears to Peter (right) and Paul (left), both of whom are wearing white robes with purple *clavi*. There are four more figures, two with each apostle, presenting gifts to Christ in his descent. Christ is surrounded by rainbow cloud-like objects in the heavens and on either side of him are two palm trees, the left one containing the phoenix. This phoenix follows the same pattern established in the early Christian depictions: long skinny heron-like legs, head toward the sky, red and gold colored with a rayed sun halo behind its head. This particular phoenix is even more similar to the imperial representations of the phoenix as it is perched in the date palm tree. As mentioned previously, this is due to the Greek's naming the date palm tree after the phoenix due to their belief that both things were able to renew their own lives. The phoenix here is probably serving multiple purposes in the overall narrative of this mosaic. Its proximity to the resurrected Christ still allows the theme of resurrection and eternal life to be a part of the narrative. However, because it is close to Christ rather than in a catacomb setting, this theme of Christ's own immortality is emphasized. Due to the bird's connection to imperial art rather than the more common depictions, the phoenix serves as a symbol for Christ's reign as the eternal

emperor and king, one who was truly a Son of God and would reign forever. Placing the phoenix in the idyllic setting on top of the palm tree surrounded by a surreal heaven landscape places it in a paradiscal setting, pointing to the celestial glory of God which the resurrected Christ has received. Additionally, the other characters in the scene—Peter, Paul and the four offerers, may serve as the receivers of the divine gift of immortality and resurrection represented by both the palm trees and the phoenix. Christ's raised hand is not only an indication of speaking and blessing, but may also point to the phoenix adjacent to it, symbolizing the blessing which He is invoking upon those present in the scene.

What may have sparked such a change in narrative from a solitary bird up in flames to a perched bird among other symbols? Certainly, it could be simply a re emphasis on the resurrection of Jesus Christ clearly set out earlier by Christian writers such as Clement and Tertullian. However, it is not unlikely that the change came as the dynamics of Christianity in general changed. Due to Constantine's conversion to Christianity and its subsequent official status as the religion of the Roman Empire, the sure number of and the status of Christians skyrocketed. Symbols were used not only for church decoration and proclamation of faith, but also as a representation of the empire and the emperor in general. In San Vitale, Justinaian and Theodora are wearing purple robes and bringing offerings to Christ with other worshippers, much like the image found in Cosma and Domiano. This came in order to establish their own identity as pious rulers of the Christian empire in favor of God. Perhaps then the phoenix in the apse at Santa Cosma e Damiano is serving a similar purpose. Much like the phoenix symbol on coins used by Hadrian in order to propagate his "immortal reign", the phoenix symbol used in apses of Churches established not only the immortal reign of Jesus Christ as King of heaven and the Earth, but also of the Roman Empire as the extension of that, with the emperor serving as his representative on the Earth. For this reason, we cannot see the phoenix as a static image throughout all of the Christianity, but instead as a symbol that was used in various ways in order to serve different purposes for diverse audiences.

CONCLUSION

Following the Greek and Roman world's expansion into the Egyptian world, its symbol of immortality, healing and renewal, the phoenix, exploded in popularity. It was used by a wide variety of people in the Roman world, from the everyday tavern owner in order to portray a certain culture about their business to the Emperor propagating his eternal power and wish for an

enduring reign. It was from this world that Christianity was born and was adapting its own symbols.

The early Christian fathers saw the existence of the phoenix, with its ability to renew its own life, as proof for the reality of Jesus Christ's resurrection. Thus, the phoenix became a prolific symbol used in both their writings and in Early Christian art. It began within the catacombs as the phoenix stood as a reminder of the hope of the resurrection and eternal life for the deceased. Interestingly, Christian catacombs depict the phoenix in an imperial way, diverging from the "common" motif that the phoenix was presented. The phoenix traveled alongside the growth of Christianity, making its way into the apses of many cathedrals. The imperial phoenix continued to be used as the common motif portrayed in these settings. The real change then was not the way in which the phoenix was portrayed, but to whom the phoenix symbol was referring. Rather than just being simply for the deceased worshipper, the phoenix stood as a symbol not only of the hope of eternal life for the worshippers, but for Jesus Christ and his eternal reign as King of heaven. This change occurred as Christianity became the official religion of the Roman Empire, suggesting that, just like was done previously, the emperor was using the symbol of the phoenix's immortality, as well as Jesus' immortality, to connect to the immortality and eternal reign of his empire.

FIGURES



Fig.1. Photo from the British Museum: <https://www.bmimages.com/preview.asp?image=00535894001>



Fig.2 Photo from the British Museum: https://www.britishmuseum.org/collection/object/C_1846-0910-148

Fig. 3 Photo from: [https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Phoenix_tavern_sign_\(51358014564\).jpg](https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Phoenix_tavern_sign_(51358014564).jpg)

Fig. 4, Photo from: Kardis, Mária & Tlučková, Dominika. (2022). The Symbol of the Phoenix in the Catacombs of Priscilla in Rome and Its Transformation in Early Christianity. *The Biblical Annals*. 12. 65–88. 10.31743/biban.12903.

Fig. 5 Photo from:

Kardis, Mária & Tlučková, Dominika. (2022). The Symbol of the Phoenix in the Catacombs of Priscilla in Rome and Its Transformation in Early Christianity. *The Biblical Annals*. 12. 65–88. 10.31743/biban.12903.

Fig. 6. Photo by Christopher Siwicki: <https://www.artandobject.com/news/romes-missing-medieval-past>)

Fig. 7. Photo from: <https://www.liturgicalartsjournal.com/2023/07/a-closer-look-at-apsidal-mosaic-of.html>)

CONFIDENCE IN THE POMPEIAN FULLO

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Abstract: Many scholars have discussed a curious graffito parodying the *Aeneid* found outside of a Pompeian *fullonica*, but few have taken into account its visual and written context. I synthesize previous scholarship and consider additional neighboring graffiti and visual elements in order to more thoroughly reconstruct the ideas conveyed about fullers in this space. The outer wall celebrates fullers in cultural, social, and fulling matters, thus bolstering their community's confidence in them.

INTRODUCTION

On the right-most, street-facing pillars of Pompeian Regio IX, Insula XIII (Figures 1, 2) lay a graffito which has captured scholars' interests: "I sing of fullers and the owl, not arms and the man"¹ (Figure 7). Some scholars have discussed the graffito within the context of the Virgilian tradition² and others within the context of fullers,³ but few have thoroughly analyzed the graffito

1. *CIL* IV.9131. See footnote 21 for diplomatic transcription and edition.

2. Sander M. Goldberg, *Constructing Literature in the Roman Republic*. 1. publ. ed. Cambridge [u.a.]: Cambridge Univ. Press, 2005, 20–1; Kristina Milnor, "Literary Literacy in Roman Pompeii: The Case of Vergil's *Aeneid*." In *Ancient Literacies: The Culture of Reading in Greece and Rome*, 2011, 299–304; Kristina Milnor, *Graffiti and the Literary Landscape in Roman Pompeii*. 1. ed. ed. Oxford [u.a.]: Oxford Univ. Press, 2014, 248–52.

3. Walter O. Moeller, *The Wool Trade of Ancient Pompeii*. Leiden: Brill, 1976, 89–90; Miko Flohr, *The World of the Fullo: Work, Economy, and Society in Roman Italy*. Oxford Studies on the Roman Economy. 1st ed. Oxford: OUP Oxford, 2013, 338.

within the context of the building's other graffiti and artwork.⁴ This paper focuses on the literary and aesthetic microclimate of the individual *fullonica* in order to reconstruct what the shop's exterior communicated about *fullones*.⁵ Ultimately, the inscriptions and frescoes on this wall express positivity about the fullers by highlighting their proficiencies in cultural, political, and fulling matters.

The approach of this paper is informed by several assumptions dependent on the state of the field and previous scholarship, such as: graffiti are in conversation with each other,⁶ an observer is an active spectator,⁷ and understanding individual social networks enables us to understand larger communities.⁸ This paper's argument is especially influenced by Miko Flohr's book, *The World of the Fullo*, which synthesized archaeological and literary data on fullers to reconstruct what their lives looked like and, most importantly, combated the widely accepted view that they were looked down on more than other tradesmen.⁹ It is noteworthy that book reviews accept Flohr's argument that the stigma around fullers came from being working class, rather than a particular disgust of their dirty labor.¹⁰ Rather, they criticize his attempts to generalize fullers' experiences.¹¹ This paper will be able to avoid the pitfall of general-

4. The scholars who have most thoroughly summarized and treated the wall are Flohr and Milnor. I am greatly indebted to Milnor who was the first scholar to examine the graffiti alongside its wall's additional graffiti, political *programma*, and frescoes collectively. Although I examine a few elements she neglected, I imitate her understanding of how graffiti can play off each other.

5. Despite attempting to be more thorough than previous scholarship, this paper only analyzes a fraction of the total 31 graffiti across the *fullonica*'s exterior because most are unrelated to fullers, e.g., a death notice or isolated scrawled names. There are a few graffiti that are related to fullers but are relegated to footnotes or brief mention because they expand but do not contradict the examples analyzed here.

6. Keegan, for example, describes patches of graffiti as "discursive environments." See Peter Keegan, "Graffiti as Monumenta and Verba: Marking Territories, Creating Discourse in Roman Pompeii." In *Inscriptions in the Private Sphere in the Greco-Roman World*. 1st ed. Vol. 7, 248–64. Boston: BRILL, 2015, 248.

7. Barbara Kellum, "The Spectacle of the Street." *Studies in the History of Art* 56, (1999), esp. 283, 291.

8. Flohr, *The World of the Fullo*, 244, 352–3. See also his Introduction and Epilogue.

9. See especially Flohr, *The World of the Fullo*, 322–46.

10. Margaret L. Lard, review of *The World of the Fullo: Work, Economy, and Society in Roman Italy*, by Miko Flohr. *Phoenix* 68, no. 3 (2014): 380; Kelly Olson, "The Material World of the Roman Fullo," review of *The World of the Fullo: Work, Economy, and Society in Roman Italy*. Miko Flohr. *Journal of Roman Archaeology* 27, (2014): 598.

11. For example, Laird, review of *The World of the Fullo* (by Flohr), 379–80, and Jesper Carlsen, "The Roman Fuller," review of *The World of the Fullo*,

ity through its arguments focused on the evidence and contextualization of a single site. This *fullonica* will be shown to be an excellent example of Flohr's claim that *fullones* are, in fact, respected and well represented in Pompeii. He describes,

having your clothes fulled necessarily involved a certain amount of trust: customers would not lightly bring their clothes to a *fullo* unless they were confident they would get their clothes back without problems and that the treatment would have had the desired effect: clothes were important and highly valuable personal possessions.¹²

This paper interprets the shop wall as an indirect response to people's concerns about trusting fullers. Although we do not know the original graffiti authors or their intent, we assume that the fullers were engaging with the comments and art on the wall by either creating it or, at the very least, not destroying it. This paper will explore the connections a spectator would make¹³ in order to understand what the fullers are potentially communicating about themselves.

PHYSICAL DESCRIPTION

Regio IX, Insula XIII has six entrances facing the street, with entrances 1–3 placed close together, about 20 feet of distance, and then 4–6 (Figure 1). These entrances each represent separate living spaces or *tabernae* that may or may not have been interconnected. Despite the lack of excavation inside, the outside remains inform us that the space from 4 to 6 was a *fullonica*.¹⁴ The frescoes and graffiti have long been worn away and must be reconstructed from the original excavators' notes¹⁵ and later pictures in which wear is al-

532, criticize his argument that larger fulleries are much more industrial and impersonal than smaller *tabernae*. Laird also critiques Flohr's lack of distinction between the experiences of supervisors and the common workers.

12. Flohr, *The World of the Fullo*, 317. See also 327.

13. I am inspired by the spectator phenomenon described by Kellum, "The Spectacle of the Street," 292: "the words and images in the street demanded participation in public and urban discourse by talking back, making connections, construing-or willfully misconstruing-what one saw."

14. For the drain indicative of fuller activity, see Flohr, *The World of the Fullo*, 223–4. For the abundance of fuller-related graffiti, see Flohr, *The World of the Fullo*, 26. *Tabernae* were shops in a building that could be rented individually. It is possible, then, that 4–6 belonged to separate owners and businesses. However, it is unlikely since the outside wall decorations are uninterrupted from 4 to 6 (Figure 2) and there are no claims of ownership or discussions of non-fuller occupations. Note that (at least) seven graffiti were found on the left of entrance 4, one to the right of entrance 6, and about seventeen in between these and entrance 5. Since this is where the drain and main graffiti cluster are, it seems the action of the *fullonica* was centered around entrance 5.

15. See *CIL* IV.9111–41, 7963; M Della Corte, "Case ed abitanti di Pompei." 3a ed. / curata da Pietro Soprano ed. Naples: Faustino Fiorentino; 1965;

ready visible (Figures 2, 4, 6). The top few feet from 4 to 6 were covered in a colorful checkerboard pattern (Figure 3). The lengths below were covered in red plaster which had recently been whitewashed (Figures 4, 6). The graffiti scratched into the wall would have caused the red to show through.¹⁶ At the bottom of the checkerboard pattern and to the sides of entrance 5 were two frescoes, both a little less than two feet by two feet (Figure 5). To the right was a fresco of Aeneas, Anchises, and Ascanius. To the left was a fresco of Romulus with spoils. Under this painting, there was a painted three-line political *programma* (Figure 6). These *programmata* were a common type of stylized, commissioned political ad. The excavator Della Corte noted that the letters of this political notice were of especially fine quality.¹⁷ The first line of the political ad was around 4 inches, the second around 2 inches, and the third around 1.5 inches.¹⁸ The other graffiti were much smaller, non-commissioned writing placed below, in between, and to the sides of this ad. For example, “I sing of fullers and the owl...” is approximately 0.15 inches tall (its serif ‘f’ and ‘q’ are about 0.5 inches), placed below the *programma*’s 3rd line. Because of the graffiti’s small size, the main audience was probably composed of those who worked and lived in this shop,¹⁹ as well as clients who regularly dropped off their clothing.²⁰ Thus, the wall’s graffiti would have mainly spoken to the community closest to the fullers: the workers themselves and their customers. These, and other random passersby, would have much more easily picked up on the references we painstakingly reconstruct below.

POETRY: LITERARY AND CULTURAL PROFICIENCY

The wall exhibits both a knowledge of and a proficiency in responding to Roman poetry. Virgil’s national epic begins, *Arma virumque cano...* (“I sing of arms and the man...”). The wall instead reads, *Fullones ululamque cano non*

“Notizie degli scavi di antichità: 1913,” 1913.

16. “Notizie degli scavi di antichità,” 1913, 143; *CIL* IV.9111–9141 (esp. 9123, 9124).

17. *CIL* IV.7963; “Notizie degli scavi di antichità,” 1913, 143.

18. The notations in the *CIL* concerning size for several of these graffiti were extremely confusing, offering only an unexplained ratio next to the reproduced graffiti. After calculating relative distances from pictures, comparing sizes to sparse claims in other scholarship, and using common sense, the best solution was found to be to take the ratio as the ratio of size of reproduction on the page to actual size of graffiti on the wall (e.g., *CIL* IV.9131 on the page would be $\frac{2}{3}$ of its size on the wall). The sizes of *CIL* IV.9123 and IV.9131 are based on these calculations.

19. Flohr, *The World of the Fullo*, 339–40.

20. I am surprised Flohr does not mention clients as spectators since he took several opportunities to discuss clients’ potential closeness to fullers in small shops such as this one. See Flohr, *The World of the Fullo*, 72–3, 317–8.

arma virumq(ue) (“I sing of fullers and the owl, not arms and the man”; Figure 7).²¹ This is a cheeky thing to say, especially directly below and across from the frescoes of the founding heroes Aeneas and Romulus (Figure 4). Like its source, the graffito is in dactylic hexameter: FUL•LON•ES • ul•ul•AM•que • ca•NO|| •NON • AR•ma • vir•UM•que. In this way, the anonymous author competes with epic poetry using its own rules. As is common in dactylic hexameter, it has a caesura in the 3rd foot. This further rhythmically emphasizes the contrast: “I sing of fullers and the owl, *not* arms and the man.” The graffito not only puts the everyday and the epic onto the same stage²² but heartily implies that the mundane is more worth singing about. The graffito is aware of Virgil and the Roman tradition but argues that it is better because of its subject matter.

The anonymous wall-scribblers also showcase a proficiency with Pompeian poetry. Above the Virgilian parody and below the 3rd-line of the political *programma*, the wall reads, *Quisquis amat valeat, pereat* (“Whoever loves, let him be well, let him die...”).²³ This is a shortened quotation of a poem with multiple versions scattered throughout Pompeii almost exclusively.²⁴ One longer version reads: “Whoever loves, let him be well. / Whoever is not able to love, let him die. / Whoever forbids loving, let him die twice over.”²⁵ This poem is not from any canonical author, so it is either from missing material or a popular street poem. Either way, Milnor argues that both *arma virumque* and *quisquis amat* pull from a canon familiar to Pompeians to show off “literary literacy.”²⁶ The Virgilian parody taught us that fullers prize their mundane context over the heroic works of the Roman elite. The citation of a distinctly Pompeian poem further emphasizes the fullers’ connection to the people of their city. The use of the common, playful saying exhibits how the

21. *CIL* IV.9131

FULLONESULULAMQUECANONONARMAVIRUMQ

Note that the author left a hanging “q” to imply the last “-que.”

All transcriptions, editions, and translations are mine unless otherwise noted. Diplomatic transcriptions are supplied in footnotes but editions are used in-text. The EDCS and *CIL* were used as references.

22. Compare Kellum, “The Spectacle of the Street,” 290.

23. *CIL* IV.9130

QUISQUISAMATVALEATPEREAT

The letters are approximately 0.1 to 0.6 inches tall. No known transcription problems. Punctuation based on the sense of *CIL* IV.4091.

24. Milnor, “Literary Literacy in Roman Pompeii,” 302. An EDCS search for graffiti containing both *amat* and *valeat* reveals eight occurrences in Pompeii and only one in Rome, dated about 20 years after Vesuvius’ eruption.

25. *CIL* IV.4091. Edition according to EDCS: (*Quis*)*quis amat valeat pereat qui / nescit amare bis tanto pereat / quisquis amare vetat.*

26. Milnor, “Literary Literacy in Roman Pompeii,” 302–3.

fullers thought similarly to those in their community. The wall writers were conversant in their cultural context, both that of the Pompeian streets and revered Roman literature.

A third poetic graffito is also impressive in its letters, theme, and meter. Situated to the left of entrance 4, it is located just a few feet away from the main graffiti cluster but still engraved in the white-washed plaster and lying below the variegated pattern of the shop. Someone taking a moment to observe the main cluster would have easily discovered it and compared it with the others. It reads: *Nihil durare potest tempore perpetuo / Cum bene Sol nituit redditur Oceano / Decrescit Phoebae quae modo plena fuit / Venerum feritas saepe fit aura l(e)vis* (“Nothing can endure forever. / When the Sun has shone well, it is returned to the Ocean. / The Moon wanes, which was just now full. / The ferocity of love often becomes a light breeze.”; Figure 8).²⁷ Excusing its last line, the letters are well-formed and consistent in size.²⁸ The theme of the poem, inevitable change, is thought-provoking and not unworthy of a recognized author. Its messaging is further emphasized via metrical choices. The poem is in dactylic pentameter: NI•hil • dur•AR•e • pot•EST || • TEMP•or•e • PER•pet•u•O / CUM • be•ne • SOL • nit•u•IT || • REDD•it•ur • O•ce•an•O / DEC•RESC•IT • pho•ë•BE || • QUAE • mo•do • PLE•na • fu•IT / VEN•E•RUM • fer•i•TAS || • SAE•pe • fit • AU•ra • le•VIS. Note how the caesura cuts the separate states of nature from each other. On the left side of the poem, the sun shines, the moon wanes, and love is fierce. On the right side, the sun falls, the moon is full, and love is a light breeze. The overarching rhythm also simulates inevitable change. The first two lines contain all dactyls, rhythmically imitating a consistent pattern like the cycles of nature it discusses, similar to lapping waves. But,

27. *CIL* IV.9123

NIHILDURAREPOTESTTEMPOREPERPETUO
CUMBENESOLNITUITREDDITUROCEANO
DECRESKITPHOEBEQUAEMODOPLENAFUIT
VENERUMFERITASSAEPEFITAU[RAL.]VIS

Its letters are approximately 0.2 inches tall.

28. The “e”s elsewhere in the graffiti have one vertical and three horizontal lines. However, the 2nd “e” in *venerum* is written (as is common in graffiti) with two vertical lines. Perhaps because of this, Housman and Vogliano changed *venerum* (“of love”) to *ventorum* (“of winds”), which contrasts it well with the vocabulary choice of *aura* (“breeze”) later in the sentence. However, there is no indication from the marks recorded that those letters were present. The last word’s letters are even more unconnected than the others in this piece. The first letter, although perhaps less extended than we would like, is an “l” and the ending is “-vis.” With a knowledge of Latin vocabulary, the vertical line in the middle must be some remnant of an “e.” A close analysis should be done by a graffiti expert to determine whether this line was written by another hand or perhaps partially worn away when recorded.

just as the poem warns, this undulating pattern experiences change. The third and fourth lines use a standard substitution of a spondee for a dactyl in the first foot. It should also be noted that the third line can be scanned two ways. If “oe” is a diphthong, it has spondees in the first two feet (DEC•RESC•IT • PHOE•BE). If the diphthong is broken up into two separate vowels, the second foot is a dactyl (DEC•RESC•IT • pho•ë•BE). In the second case, this line introduces a diaeresis, a metrical choice which highly revered poets use, such as Horace.²⁹ This would be an impressive choice for a wall poet to copy. Between the abundance of poetry and its level of skill, it would be clear to an observer that there was something intriguing about the *fullones* who worked within and what they understood about themselves.

THE OWL: SOCIAL AND POLITICAL PROFICIENCY

The Virgilian parody sings of the fuller *and* the owl. Flohr summarizes that the owl had become a symbol which “tied the *fullones* together socially.”³⁰ There is a consistent depiction of owls alongside fullers exhibited throughout Pompeii in art and graffiti.³¹ For example, in Regio V, Insula 2, a *fullo* named Crescens covered the pillars of a peristyle with his name thirteen times, often extending greetings to others.³² Two out of the three times he mentions other fullers, he also mentions owls. He writes, “Crescens sings to fullers and the owl” and “Crescens greets the fullers and their owl.”³³ He includes a drawing of an owl with both comments (e.g., Figure 9).

It is clear that the owl is a symbol of the fullers’ social identity, but the reason why is more ambiguous. As the fullers’ patron goddess is Minerva, it could be a simple allusion to their worship of her. However, the question quickly becomes more mysterious than that.³⁴ In a curious fragment of his *Menippean Satires*, Varro describes an evil daimon which men “fear worse

29. For example, compare Horace’s use of SIL•va•ë in *Odes* 1.23 and *Epodes* 13.2.

30. Flohr, *The World of the Fullo*, 341.

31. For more images and discussion of frescoes, see Flohr, *The World of the Fullo*, 338–45.

32. *CIL* IV.4100, 4102–4, 4106–7, 4109, 4112–3, 4115, 4117–8, 4120.

33. Respectively, transcriptions according to EDCS:

CIL IV.4112: *Cresce(n)s fullonibus / ullulaq(u)e canont*

CIL IV.4118: *Cresce(n)s fullonibus et ululae suae sal(utem)*

There might be several ways to construe the cases (e.g., “Crescens sings *with* the fullers and the owl”), but it does not impact the fact that fullers and owls are connected.

34. M. Langer, “Antike Graffitizeichnungen: Motive, Gestaltung und Bedeutung.” Ph.D. diss., Wiesbaden: L. Reichert: 2001, 66; Moeller, *The Wool Trade of Ancient Pompeii*, 89–90; Milnor, “Literary Literacy in Roman Pompeii,” 300.

than the fuller fears the owl” (*quod eum peius formidant quam fullo ululam*).³⁵ Some have argued that this “fear” is religious awe linked to Minerva, but the verb translated as “fear,” *formidare*, does not have a religious connotation.³⁶ Likewise, the owl is not feared “more” than the spirit, rather it is feared “worse” or “more badly” (*peius*). However, explanations why fullers are terrified of owls quickly start to get zany. The word *fullo* can also mean scarab, so some have suggested it was a play on the idea that beetles would have been afraid of being eaten by owls.³⁷ Adrian Turnebus, an author in the 1500s, suggested that owls were a harbinger of death that caused people to wear black and soiled clothing, which would keep the fullers out of work.³⁸ Compared to these, Courtney’s explanation that fullers were afraid of owls pooping on their clothing is very sane.³⁹ This bizarre comment leaves us wondering if we are missing an essential piece of the puzzle in understanding the community of *fullones*.

However, we do know our particular wall is in conversation with and proud of Varro’s colloquial saying because of its political ad. The endorser of the political *programma* is one Marcus Fabius Ululitremulus. His unique last name, “Ululitremulus,” means “owl-trembling” or “owl-fearing.” Moeller points out that including his cognomen demonstrates Fabius was proud of whatever idea Varro’s comment was referencing⁴⁰—a noteworthy argument to make before Flohr had more extensively argued about fullers being perceived positively. Pompeian fullers proudly mixed their social identity with politics. Flohr notes that *fullones* are represented in more political ads than any other group, especially considering the smaller percentage of fullers compared to other professions in the city.⁴¹ In addition to the official political ad discussed above, this wall includes three graffiti where *fullones* ask for your vote.⁴² It was unnecessary to include one’s occupation in political *programmata* so it seems an endorser would only include it if it was advantageous for himself. Flohr

35. Varro, *Fragmenta*, 539.2.

36. Edward Courtney, *Musa Lapidaria*. Atlanta, Ga: Scholars Press, 1995, 280–1. Courtney argues that the verb does not have this semantic range although its noun equivalent does. L&S provides no definitions related to awe or reverence (although they do include *vereor* in a list of synonyms, which certainly has this connotation).

37. Moeller, *The Wool Trade of Ancient Pompeii*, 89; Martin Langer, “Antike Graffitizeichnungen,” 66.

38. Moeller, *The Wool Trade of Ancient Pompeii*, 90.

39. Courtney, *Musa Lapidaria*, 281.

40. Moeller, *The Wool Trade of Ancient Pompeii*, 89. Also note that the wall is not afraid to call attention to the fullers generally. For example, *CIL* IV.9125 is simply a collection of the word ‘*fullones*’ in 3 different sizes.

41. Flohr, *The World of the Fullo*, 337.

42. *CIL* IV.9128, 9129. Some of the letter forms and word meanings of these graffiti are difficult to parse but they clearly fit the political ad formulae.

argues that Pompeian fullers “had a certain amount of social capital which was linked to their occupational identity and could serve as a credible argument in the rhetoric of electioneering.”⁴³ When Fabius Ululitremulus includes his referential name, he not only argues via his own merit but the merit of the fullers as a group. The fullers’ influence is perhaps overstated (especially when discussing a regular *fullo*),⁴⁴ but clearly their association was cohesive enough to express common opinions and seek out similar goals.

The political and cultural elements of the wall often complement each other. In addition to using their occupation as social credit, the fullers argue for political choices via clever cultural references. Milnor notes that the candidate endorsed in Ululitremulus’ political program, a Cuspius Pansa, is endorsed with poetic references throughout the city.⁴⁵ The type of educated image the fullers are attempting to create may be part of what links them to him.⁴⁶ Several scholars have also noted that the frescoes of Aeneas and Romulus replicate the statues in the forum of Augustus (Figures 4, 5).⁴⁷ Milnor argues that the graffito which sings of fullers and the owl, not arms and the man creates “the visual competition between the programma and the painting—between, that is, the formal decorative element represented by the Trojan group and the much more informal and ‘popular’ advertisement embodied in the election notice.”⁴⁸ Once again, the graffito establishes a competition between the grand and the mundane, but this time in the political realm. When the graffito emphasizes that the fuller and the owl are more worth singing about, it is claiming that the fuller Ululitremulus and his coworkers, linked by the symbol of the owl, can make a difference in politics.

THE CHECKERBOARD: FULLING PROFICIENCY

If the people who work inside a building are clever and well-connected, it easily follows that their aptitude should spill over into their profession. This assumption is nursed by the multicolored checkerboard pattern which acts as symbolic evidence about what fullers can accomplish. Colorful clothing in

43. Flohr, *The World of the Fullo*, 337–8. See also 73–4.

44. Laird, review of *The World of the Fullo* (by Flohr), 380, and Carlsen, review of *The World of the Fullo* (by Flohr), “The Roman Fuller,” 532, argue that a common fuller would not have been the one achieving political office or even endorsing political propaganda.

45. Milnor, “Literary Literacy in Roman Pompeii,” 301 n. 32.

46. See also Milnor, “Literary Literacy in Roman Pompeii,” 294–7.

47. Milnor, *Graffiti and the Literary Landscape in Roman Pompeii*, 238; Goldberg, *Constructing Literature in the Roman Republic*, 20–1. Kellum, “The Spectacle of the Street,” 290, also noticed this, but she connected the imitation first to the main patroness in the city, who herself was imitating Augustus’ forum.

48. Milnor, “Literary Literacy in Roman Pompeii,” 301.

frescoes was something spectators were accustomed to analyze as significant.⁴⁹ Furthermore, it was commonly depicted alongside *fullones*.⁵⁰ When an observer saw colors surrounding an environment full of references to fullers, they were likely reminded of the other depictions of fullers working on clothing they had seen. Flohr describes that a fuller's job was to make clothing clean and vibrant.⁵¹ The checkerboard pattern above the graffiti was free from writing, contrasting white with the other variegated squares (Figure 3). Hence, the wall could be described as clean and vibrant: the exact outcomes customers hoped for in their clothing. The wall, then, asserts a claim about what the fullers can do. The dramatic paint job works just like the graffiti to draw positive attention to the fullers and their profession.

CONCLUSION

The graffiti which sings of fullers and the owl is a key to unlocking layers of meaning in this literary and visual microclimate. From top to bottom, this wall openly celebrates and explores the experiences of fullers in Roman Pompeii, claiming it is worth singing about. Although it seems too bold to assume these clever graffiti are conscious marketing propaganda, the *fullonica* certainly reads, "We're proud of ourselves!" and, close behind, "You should be too!" The fullers walking past the doorway would have developed a stronger sense of shared identity and the customers would have felt assured that they were in the hands of competent men. Although these graffiti might just be clever or impressive comments in isolation, together they tell a story about a group of fullers who are worth your notice. Their intelligence and unity may have inspired an ancient Pompeian to think: "I'm proud that this is where I do my laundry."

49. Kellum, "The Spectacle of the Street," 288–90

50. Flohr, *The World of the Fullo*, 61.

51. Flohr, *The World of the Fullo*, 57–64.

FIGURES

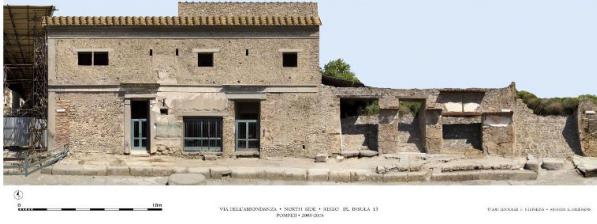


Figure 1: Regio IX, Insula XIII in 2005-6, by Jennifer F. Stephens and Arthur E. Stephens, www.pompeiperspectives.org



Figure 2: Regio IX, Insula XIII at an unknown time, <https://ancientrome.ru/art/artworken/img.htm?id=9304>.



Figure 3: Reconstruction photographed at “A Day in Pompeii” exhibition at Melbourne Museum, September 2009, www.pompeiperspectives.org (edited).



Figure 4: Entrances 4-5, photograph courtesy of Parco Archeologico di Pompei, www.pompeii Perspectives.org.



Figure 5: Romulus and Aeneas frescoes above entrances 4-5, copies by A. Sanarica, www.pompeii Perspectives.org.

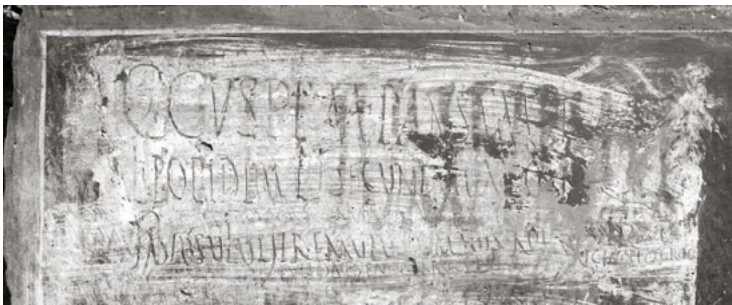


Figure 6: Text on entrance 4, <https://ancientrome.ru/art/artworken/img.htm?id=9310>.

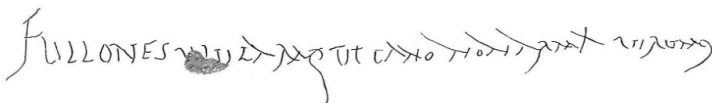


Figure 7: CIL IV,9131, <https://ancientrome.ru/art/artworken/img.htm?id=9311>.

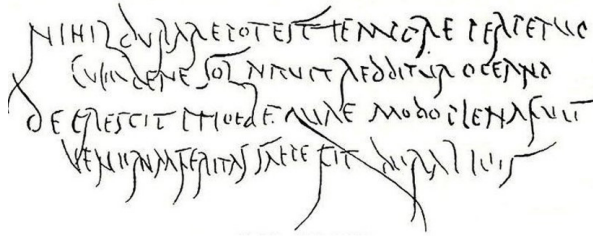


Figure 8: CIL IV.9123, EDCS.



Figure 9: Illustration found next to CIL IV.4118, <https://thepetrifiedmuse.blog>.

BOOK REVIEWS

MAGNESS, JODI, *Ancient Synagogues in Palestine: A Re-Evaluation Nearly a Century after Sukenik's Schweich Lectures*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2024. Hardcover. \$100.00. ISBN: 9780197267653.

Synagogue studies in the holy land have been ongoing for a little over a century, beginning with early 20th-century surveys by German scholars Heinrich Kohl and Carl Watzinger. During that time, theories about their dating and chronology of construction have become cemented in scholarly discourse, shaping how archaeologists and historians interpret Jewish life in antiquity. Jodi Magness's *Ancient Synagogues in Palestine* challenges the traditional chronology of the construction of synagogues in Palestine. Beginning with Eleazer Sukenik—a pioneering Israeli archeologist operating in the early twentieth century—archaeologists chronologically dated synagogues in Palestine based on architectural types. Sukenik proposed two main kinds of synagogues dating to distinct periods. The Galilean-type synagogue typically featured a basilica-style (large rectangular) worship hall, stone columns dividing the interior, a lack of interior decor, benches along the walls, and a triple-entranced facade facing Jerusalem. Because it stylistically resembled Roman monumental public architecture, used for temples, of the second to third century CE, they were dated to that time by Kohl and Watzinger, and Sukenik reaffirmed this dating. The Byzantine-type synagogue typically had a rectangular hall, interior decor, iconography, and an apse (curved recess) for the Torah shrine. The style was similar to Byzantine Christian churches, with colorful mosaic floors featuring Jewish and even occasional pagan imagery. Due to the resemblance to Byzantine churches, those synagogues were dated to the fifth to sixth centuries by Sukenik. Michael Avi-Yonah, an Israeli archeologist from Hebrew

University, built on Sukenik's work by proposing a Transitional-type synagogue dated to the fourth to fifth centuries CE. The Transitional-type featured a mix of features of Galilean and Byzantine-type synagogues. This creates an almost evolutionary development of synagogues from the second to the sixth centuries and served as a basic assumption in synagogue studies since the mid-twentieth century. But Jodi Magness challenges this traditional model.

She builds her case by prioritizing stratigraphic evidence, meaning materials found in a sealed context. So, rather than asking what architectural features look older, she examines the types of coins or the types of pottery present under the floor. In archeology, the latest dating remains found under sealed conditions set a *terminus post quem*, or the earliest possible date for a site. Magness uses that rule to establish the dating of the synagogues rather than style. She redates excavations such as the Khibet Wadi Hamam and the white limestone synagogue at Capernaum using this method, challenging scholars who argue that later dating remains are intrusions to maintain the traditional chronology. She also reassesses textual sources that have been used to argue for earlier dates but were being taken out of context and, in some cases, are not as reliable as previously thought. The resulting research she does allows us to sketch a more complex picture of Jewish life during Byzantine rule by seeing that the different styles of synagogues are contemporary and during the rabbinic period by showing that we either have not discovered synagogues from that time or can not distinguish them from other buildings.

Chapter one is a history of the field as well as a great overview of the types of synagogues in Palestine. To start, Magness explains that pre-70 CE synagogues are not really distinguishable from other buildings in the area, and a synagogue could mean a gathering of people for worship just as much as a physical location. Then, she provides detailed descriptions and images of the three types of post-70 CE synagogues discussed earlier: Galilean, Transition, and Byzantine-type. Magness notes that Khol and Watzinger measured drawings and did systematic surveys, but they had scarce excavations and normalized using style as a stand-in for dating over archeological remains. That precedent came to be used by Sukenik and other pioneering Israeli archeologists to not only establish the date of the synagogues but to create a narrative of a period of normative rabbinic rule following the destruction of the temple and Bar Kokhba revolt.

Chapter two focuses on the historiography of the synagogues. Magness traces the scholarship from early German surveys through Sukenik and Michael Avi-Yonah to demonstrate how the traditional chronology of synagogues was developed and show how those scholars built their theories

by expanding on untested and outdated ideas about dating ancient architecture. Magness emphasized that the typologies were not developed in an ideological vacuum. Zionist claims of continuous Jewish flourishing in the land informed Sukenik and Avi-Yonah's dating. In referring to "Zionism", Magness is referring to the early 20th-century movement to establish a Jewish homeland in Palestine, which shaped Sukenik's intellectual world. Sukenik worked for Hebrew University in its formative years. His dating of the Galilean synagogues helped promote a narrative of Jewish flourishing following the Bar Kokhba revolt during the time central texts to Judaism were being compiled, followed by an oppressive Christian rule. The traditional synagogue dating also helped Zionist claims by giving them a visual link to Jewish presence and cultural vitality in the land. This narrative would influence what evidence is accepted in dating the synagogues by leading to the rejection of materials that contradict the traditional dating as intrusive, even if they came from sealed contexts. Magness demonstrates how intellectual and political concerns can make outdated models the standard after their evidentiary base has weakened.

Chapter three critically examines the archeological report from the excavation of Khirbet Wadi Haman, a site recently used to argue anew for the traditional second to third-century dating of Galilean-type synagogues. The excavator, Uzi Leibner, identified two synagogues, with one, Synagogue II, built on top of the other, Synagogue I. He dates Synagogue I to the second to third centuries and Synagogue II to the early fourth century, with both being decommissioned after an earthquake in 363 CE. Leibner's dating relied on a large amount of second to third-century pottery but dismissed later material as intrusive. Magness re-examines Leibner's reports and argues that mid-4th-century potsherds, Byzantine cooking pots, Byzantine coins in the floor, and an oil lamp in the alley are not intrusive material but establish the terminus post quem to the 5th century. By establishing the later dating of these synagogues, Magness undercuts the site's use as evidence for an early dating of Galilean-type synagogues. She also points out that ignoring late material because it does not fit the expected dating creates a circular argument and is methodologically incorrect.

Chapter four examines the white limestone synagogue at Capernaum, celebrated as the prime example of a Galilean-type synagogue. Scholars, Benjamin Arubas and Rina Talgam, argue that the limestone synagogue is on top of a basalt foundation belonging to a third-century synagogue, and was rebuilt after the 363 CE earthquake. They argue the synagogue survived because both Jewish and Christian pilgrims traveled there, as is evidenced in late antique texts, and that Jewish-Christians, referred to as minim, worshipped

there, as referenced in the Rabbinic commentary *Qoheloth Rabbah*. Magness challenges Arubas and Talgam's work on textual and archaeological grounds. The textual sources are not that reliable for dating this synagogue. Christian pilgrimage stories often claim to go places where they may not have actually gone, and the ones cited by Arubas and Talgam lack credible evidence that they went to Capernaum and saw this synagogue or an earlier synagogue constructed there. Minim could refer to any kind of heretic, even pagans, so it does not really imply a Jewish-Christian presence. The evidence against Aruba's and Talgam's dating is found beneath the floor, where coins from the fifth century and pottery dating to the early sixth century were found, demonstrating the limestone synagogue was constructed in the Byzantine period, showing this site can not be evidence of the traditional dating of Galilean-type synagogues. Also, the basalt foundation of the synagogue is thought to be the foundation of an earlier synagogue identified as a place where Jesus taught. Magness, referencing BYU archaeologist Matthew Grey, shows that the basalt foundation did not have a synagogue built on it before the white limestone synagogue, and post-dates the first century, indicating that this site is not a place where Jesus taught.

Ancient Synagogues in Palestine does more than just revise architectural dates. It demonstrates that archeological evidence is not always interpreted directly and, at times, must be reexamined, especially when archeology could push back against established historical narratives. By dismantling the traditional dating of synagogues, a more complex picture emerges: One where synagogues were constructed under Christian rule, despite Byzantine law prohibiting their construction. One where drastically different synagogue styles coexisted. The contrast is stark when observing that Byzantine synagogues have more iconography than Galilean synagogues, which shows a diversity of Jewish thought during the Byzantine period, when we would have assumed that rabbinic thought dominated. This book is not an introduction to synagogue studies, and Magness is technical in her presentation. So the book is designed for more advanced students and scholars of ancient synagogues. But if students do choose to read this book, it provides an example of applying archaeological methodology. It shows how political and intellectual climates can shape the interpretation of archaeology and how to navigate this reality responsibly. In an era when archaeology and other fields are often asked to

serve ideology, Magness's work shows that the past, when critically examined, can be both more complex and more interesting than the stories we inherit.

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MAEIR, AREN, SHIRA ALBAZ, AND ANGELIKA BERLEJUNG, eds. *Urbanism in the Iron Age Levant and Beyond*. Orientalische Religionen in der Antike 51. Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2025. Hardcover. \$197.16. ISBN: 978-3-16-164199-2.

Urbanism in the Iron Age Levant and Beyond, edited by Aren Maeir, Shira Albaz, and Angelika Berlejung, contributes to the study of the history and creation of settlements in the Levant and other locations, such as Europe and Mesopotamia, during the Iron Age. The chapters in this book are a collection of presentations given at a 2022 conference at Bar-Ilan University on urbanism during the Iron Age that employed archaeological and textual methods to analyze urbanism through a variety of theoretical lenses. The book is divided into three parts that address the topic of Iron Age urbanism in the northern and southern Levant as well as urbanism in other regions and cultures. The chapters contain up-to-date information, reassess or challenge some ideas and theories, and suggest further studies on the topic.

The following articles address urbanism in the northern Levant during the Iron Age, ranging from about 1200 to 586 BCE. Dominik Bonatz suggests that the Assyrian conquest did not change much with regards to everyday life. He also suggests that, based on archaeological data, the fall of the Assyrian empire is what ended Iron Age urbanism. Herbert Niehr looks at the features of the fortress of Karatepe-Aslantas and discusses the features in connection to urban planning of the area. Mirko Novak analyzes Luwo-Aramaean urbanism in the Iron Age and compares it to the culture of the elite. Alexander E. Sollee focuses on 10th to 7th century Tell Halaf. He separates out different levels of urbanization. Using these levels, he discusses changes and variations in establishment and culture.

The next few articles address urbanism in the southern Levant around 1200 to 586 BCE. Shay Bar and Erin Hall provide updates of the excavations of Tel Esur (Tel el-Asawir). After reports were published on the excavation, an area of the site known as Area D East was uncovered. This chapter reports on the data and interpretations of Area D East. Bar and Hall describe some

of the findings, including structures and pottery, and suggest how these findings contribute to an understanding of the development and transitions of the settlement. They suggest that the new data shows that Tel Esur contradicts typical characteristics of nearby urban areas: the small site shows administrative presence, something that is not typical to other sites of similar sizes. Angelika Berlejung's chapter suggests that city walls played a major role in social and religious life, and she uses passages and stories from the Hebrew Bible to support her argument. She reviews the physical and symbolic aspects of city gates and relates those aspects to city walls. One element she addresses is the use of the city wall in dividing spaces of order and chaos. Jeffrey R. Chadwick reviews reports of the 1964–66 American Expedition to Hebron. Some of the excavation reports remained unpublished. He contributes his report as part of a preliminary report series on Early/Middle/Late Bronze Age Hebron. Discovered at the site were tombs, burial artifacts, different types of houses, pottery, destruction layers, and city walls, towers, and gates. Chadwick discusses these finds. He estimates that the site was originally constructed during EBIII and destroyed around 588 BCE. Chadwick's review is a significant contribution, and he refutes some incorrect interpretations of and claims about Hebron from the excavation data. Most of these were correcting incorrect dating of walls. Judith E. Filitz suggests a connection between cities and pilgrimage in the Hebrew Bible. She analyzes divine processions in specific and explains how cities contribute to the effectiveness of the processions. She also looks at variations of these practices over time, including changes in perceptions of God and the ability to move. Gunnar Lehmann addresses the idea that southern Levantine cities from the second and first millennium were small in contrast to neighboring regions arguing that cities of similar sized can be found outside the southern Levant. He also discusses the difficulties of using specific criteria to define and categorize cities but does suggest a few similarities. He also reviews changes in structure, the history of development, and ideas of rule and hierarchy in two types of southern Levantine cities: city-states and village-towns. Yigal Levin analyzes how the post-exilic geography of the authors of Chronicles influences their pre-exilic geographic depictions of Jerusalem. He looks at uses of different words as well as various names for Jerusalem throughout the text. He also uses archaeological and topographical comparisons in addition to comparisons to other biblical texts to support his argument. He also suggests that the authors of Chronicles may have had some propagandistic motives in their geographic depictions of Jerusalem. The topic of Oded Lipschits's chapter is a comparison between administration inside and outside of Jerusalem and how the administrative structure allowed the

kingdom of Judah to continue after Assyrian rule. He analyzes archaeological finds from the Armon ha-Natziv – Ramat Rahel ridge to understand the history of the kingdom during Assyrian rule and details the history of the three sites. By doing this, he attempts to reconstruct the administrative structure of the sites. Aren M. Maeir discusses urbanism in Iron Age Philistia. He reviews features of various sites and questions whether or not they should be classified as urban sites. He describes features of settlements based off archaeological data and proposes timelines of the locations. His article provides two major contributions to the field. First, Maeir addresses the complexity of defining urbanism, reminding readers of the nuances of defining and categorizing modern and ancient cities. Second, he discusses changes in size and occupation of some Iron Age Philistine sites such as Gath, Ekron, Ashdod, and Ashkelon as well as other sites like Tell Qasile, Tel Batash, Tel Hesi, Khirbet Qeiyafa, Azekah, etc. He suggests which sites should be classified as urban societies and which should not. These definitions and categorizations open paths for future research. Emanuel Pfoh discusses his research analyzing causes leading to state formation. He also provides flexible models of socio-political structure. Daniel Pioske hypothesizes how the ruins of earlier settlements influenced biblical authors. He specifically looks at biblical passages regarding rebuilding ruins. Itzick Shai analyzes data from Tel Burna. Using this archaeological data, he suggests changes in the kingdom of Judah related to political structure. Yifat Thareani looks at changes in material culture to understand assimilation after the Assyrian conquest. She determines that locals experienced and embraced cultural assimilation after the wars. She also discusses the autonomy of states in the newly-expanded Assyrian empire based on a lack of literary sources. Like Aren M. Maeir, Wolfgang Zwickel reminds researchers that modern definitions of urbanization do not work for defining and categorizing Iron Age settlements. He analyzes trade patterns and communication between settlements and how that influences definitions of urbanism during this time.

The remaining articles address urbanism outside the Iron Age Levant. Joachim Bretschneider discusses the excavation of Pyla-Kokkinokremos. He reports on and analyzes the history and timeline of the occupation of the settlement. Andrew T. Creekmore III looks at the location of Kurd Qaburstan. He lays out some planning principles of Early Bronze Age Mesopotamian cities. He also identifies features of Kurd Qaburstan. Using the planning principles and the features of the settlement, he makes comparisons and provides questions for future research. Jan Driessen addresses the hypothesis that Minoan street systems and urbanism came about only because of practicality. He disagrees with this hypothesis and contributes his own hypothesis that Minoan

settlements developed over time into urban centers. Manuel Fernandez-Gotz contributes an article analyzing European urbanism. While there are significant differences between urbanism in the Levant and Europe, his article is significant because he compares various points, phases, and characteristics comparable to those of Levantine urban settlements. He discusses phases of Iron Age urbanization along with archaeological discoveries and characteristics identified from the archaeological data. The final chapter in the book is an article by Shigeo Yamada. Yamada looks at the settlement of Dur-Sarrukin and analyzes possible political and religious purposes of the orientation, construction, planning, and other elements of the settlement.

Having read each article, I will provide my own assessment of specific articles as well as the book in general. The article by Bar and Hall contributes new archaeological data that may improve understanding the classifications and characteristics of urban areas. Berlejung's article contributes to ongoing discourse and adds new ideas of the relation of city walls to YHWH. One weakness of Filitz's argument that she explains is that there is not much biblical text to support her argument, so she uses extrabiblical texts. These extrabiblical texts may not accurately portray connections between cities and pilgrimage in the Hebrew Bible. A weakness in Thareani's argument is that, with a lack of literary sources, she guesses on the autonomy of sites when there is a possibility that literary sources existed but were lost. Creekmore's article contributes to the field by providing questions for future researchers to delve into using his analysis as a basis for their research. Driessen's article contributes to the field because he provides an new hypothesis and point of view that can be researched further.

Urbanism in the Iron Age Levant and Beyond contains significant information for researchers looking for up-to-date information in the field of urbanism. Most of the articles in the book are well written and easy to follow. The arguments are clearly stated. Each chapter contains a strong bibliography for researchers looking for additional resources. The book provides in depth articles for those looking for information on Iron Age Levantine urbanism. For those interested in diving deeper into elements of urbanism that have yet

to be addressed, many of the contributors provide questions and topics for future research. This book is a helpful resource for individuals researching urbanism.

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HALLMANN, ALEKSANDRA, *Ancient Egyptian Clothing: Studies in Late Period Private Representations*. Harvard Egyptological Studies 20.1. Leiden: Brill, 2024. Hardcover. \$275.00. ISBN: 978-90-04-50130-0.

In this book, Aleksandra Hallmann focuses on Late Egyptian clothing during the Late Period as represented in depictions of persons without royal iconography. This first volume contains descriptions of the clothing along with her analyses and conclusions. The second volume contains images of objects and drawings to clarify and provide reference for the clothing discussed in the first volume. The book is divided into five main chapters with a sixth consisting of tables giving the different objects analyzed in her study. In this study, Hallmann focuses on revealing the various ways Egyptian clothing appeared during the Late Period, creating a typology for Late Period clothing (1). This makes it a useful resource for Late Period Egyptian clothing.

Chapters 1 and 2 of the work serve as an introduction to the study in which Hallmann defines her study and presents some of the challenges involved in her approach. She explains her intent to study the representation of individuals in non-royal clothing during the Late Period, after which she addresses some difficulties met with in her approach. She defines the Late Period within her study beginning in the Kushite Dynasty and ending with the conquest of Alexander the Great, creating a range from about 750–332 CE. She then goes through the various types of sources used in her study, including two-dimensional representations such as depictions on tomb walls and stelae and three-dimensional representations in the form of statues. Physical remains, though rare and difficult to identify with certainty, are included whenever possible. Chapter 1 concludes with a discussion of methods used in the study, which makes use of a combination of methods from the study of material culture as well as art history.

Chapter 2 builds on the methodological discussion begun in chapter 1, focusing specifically on Egyptian garments and the challenges associated with studying them in the multifaceted manner employed in this work.

Hallmann provides a brief overview of the defining aspects of Egyptian garments. After this, she builds on chapter 1, elaborating on the methodology of analyzing Egyptian garments from art. She discusses the difficulty of connecting represented garments to real garments, acknowledging the issue of whether or not garments represented in art corresponded to garments an individual would wear in reality. One difficulty introduced in this chapter is the concept of a single piece of cloth having multiple uses. This insight is used throughout the work when dealing with issues of identifying the ancient names of garments. She also discusses difficulties related to the representations of garments in Egyptian art in both two and three dimensions. Finally, she deals with the question of foreign influence in Egyptian art and concludes that native Egyptians did not portray themselves in, nor adapt, foreign clothing (89).

Chapters 3 and 4 represent the bulk of the study, dealing with male and female garments respectively. Chapter 3 is by far the largest, taking up 344 pages whereas chapter 4, dealing with subject matter with fewer attestations, receives 53 pages. Throughout chapter 3 and chapter 4, Hallmann presents her typology of Late Period Egyptian garments. For each type of garment, she first introduces a broad category of garments, then moves through subtypes within the category, discussing defining features of each type of garment, on which her typology is based. When introducing categories of Egyptian garments, she not only includes the names she uses to refer to them in her typology, but also discusses other names used to refer to the garments as seen in the literature since there is no consistent terminology used for many of the garments. This allows a reader to identify the particular garments discussed in other works with those in her typology. In addition to modern terms used to refer to garments, she also discusses possibilities for the ancient terminology used. Often, she presents suggestions that have been made, but she leaves the question open due to the lack of evidence available. She also diachronically traces the development of the garments discussed, if possible, and discusses how each garment may have been worn. With each type of garment, Hallmann cites a representative example along with additional attestations of the garment. Further, a table is included with each subsection of garments showing the various combinations of clothing it is depicted with.

The first type of garment dealt with in chapter 3 is the kilt, which she divides into six different types: the short kilt, the long kilt, the high-waisted kilt, the sash kilt, the slanted kilt, and the shendjyt (98). She also discusses loincloths and hip-cloths in conjunction with kilts. One significant contribution made in her discussion comes through her observation of many examples

of Late Period depictions of viziers. She claims that rather than a high-waisted kilt with a sash-cord both being the indicators of a vizier, it is only the sash-cord that provides the indication that an individual is a vizier (183–84). Another significant contribution is her discussion of what has been labeled the “Persian dress,” which she argues is not a result of Persian influence. She cites a statue of Darius I depicting figures from various nations, who she claims are intended to be identified by their dress, which shows the Egyptian in what has been labeled the “Persian dress.” She suggests that this shows that this style of dress was Egyptian rather than Persian (218). She also points to significant differences between what Persians are known to have worn and the Egyptian costume. Next, sashes are discussed. Then, she discusses tunics and the single-strap undergarment. After this, she discusses pelt vestments, including a brief discussion of its symbolism (346–49). Within her study of the pelt vestment, Hallmann determined that in the sources she examined, the recipients of cult are only represented in one kind of pelt vestment (399). She ends her discussion of male clothing with shawls and cloaks. Interestingly, she concludes that there are two distinct styles of shawl, one for Upper Egypt and another for Lower Egypt (433–34). Additionally, Hallmann addresses the knotted cloak, which she claims is one of the few pieces of foreign clothing depicted in Egyptian art, being Kushite. However, she also suggests that native Egyptians were never shown wearing it and that it signifies the Kushite ethnicity of the person wearing it (434–35).

In chapter 4, Hallmann identifies four types of female clothing: two types of wraparound dress with some subcategories, the bead-net dress, and the tunic (437). After identifying the types of clothing shown on women, Hallmann begins the chapter with a brief discussion dealing with the difficulties of interpreting female clothing as well as the attestations of women in Late Period Egyptian art. She then moves into her presentation of the typology, beginning with dresses. She observes in her conclusion that while female clothing may not be shown with the same variety male clothing exhibits, it is usually shown in art with greater complexity (486). She also concludes that the clothing women were depicted in was dependent on the role women were filling in the depiction rather than the social position of the individual (487).

In chapter 5, Hallmann presents the conclusions of her study as a whole. She presents her work as “a comprehensive study of clothing in Late Period Egypt,” (490) providing insight into the differences between depictions of garments and excavated garments, the nomenclature of garments, and an analysis of Egyptian clothing in the Late Period including diachronic analyses, comparison of examples from two and three-dimensional sources, the

contexts in which garments were depicted, and the roles of the people who wore them. Finally, she proposes that the typology presented in the work could be used in further study and classification.

In the back of the book, Hallmann includes tables showing each object she analyzed, with its location and, where applicable, museum number, date, provenance, and references to publications. She also includes a breakdown of her typology of Late Period clothing. An appendix containing information about the timeline of Ancient Egypt is also included, including date ranges for the Predynastic Period through the Roman Period, but focusing on the Late Period. The kings of the late period are included, organized by dynasty, with their nomen and prenomen, date range for their reigns, as well as the names and ranges of service for the God's wives of Amun during their reigns. A bibliography, general index, chronological index, index of ancient personal names, index of Late Period Egyptian names, index of titles and epithets, and an index of museum and archive numbers are included. The index of Late Period Egyptian names includes the Egyptian transliteration of the names, by which it is organized, as well as a conventional rendering of the name. The index of titles and epithets includes both the transliteration and a translation but is organized by the translation.

This work represents a significant undertaking. Hallmann carefully considers and builds upon the work of other scholars throughout the work, placing them in dialogue in such a way that the development of the conversation as well as the relevant issues are clear (35–36; 154). Her methodology was careful, a great example being her decision to examine the artifacts used in the study in person whenever possible to allow for the greatest possible attention to detail (41) and her consideration of two and three-dimensional representations in addition to excavated textiles to construct the most comprehensive view of a particular item of clothing. Additionally, her methods for dating, giving priority first to inscriptions and genealogies, followed by style and iconography, represent the careful methodology applied (220). One assumption that she acknowledges is that if clothing looks similar in both two and three dimensions, the artist had intended to show the same type of clothing (2). When discussing possibilities of foreign influence as well as comparative examples, her use of propinquity is careful (121). Overall, Hallmann is very careful not to make assumptions not justified by her evidence, as shown in numerous examples throughout her study (47–49; 55; 191; 213). She is careful not to make a firm argument when there is a lack of evidence, the arguments she does advance are convincing (218–19).

This review cannot be considered complete since the second volume containing the plates accompanying the study was not provided. While this book is seemingly organized with the purpose of being referenced for its typology, one difficulty in this application is locating specific garments within the work. This problem could be resolved if the table of contents went one layer deeper in the typology or if page numbers were given in the summary of the typology provided in the back of the book. Another difficulty in referencing the typology in this work frequently is the quality of the binding, which would not hold up well if the work was being frequently referenced. While this work seems to be organized with the referencing of its typology in mind, it also contains sections that refer to concepts presented earlier in the typology, which would be expected if the work was intended to be read through rather than referenced for a specific section. However, if this were the purpose, the work becomes very repetitive and could be better organized to avoid this repetition. Overall, this book is useful in organizing and understanding clothing in the Late Period and I would suggest it as a useful resource for research related to Egyptian clothing.

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