

Freydank has offered his readers a meticulous study, whether or not one agrees with all of his conclusions. It will be indispensable for further research on Middle Assyrian chronology.

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ILAN PELED:

*Masculinities and Third Gender. The Origins and Nature of an Institutionalized Gender Otherness in the Ancient Near East.*

(Alter Orient und Altes Testament 435.) 333 pp. Münster: Ugarit-Verlag, 2016. €109. ISBN 978 3 86835 195 8.

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Interest in gender studies has undergone a notable expansion in recent decades, and the arena of ancient Near Eastern studies is no exception to this general rule. Nevertheless, the vast majority of the research in this field has focused on women; it has equated women with gender, rather than acknowledging that women's studies are just one branch among other possible developments in gender studies. A monograph whose title announces that "masculinities", "third gender" and "gender otherness" are the subjects it will examine is, without doubt, a welcome contribution to gender studies in general and to ancient Near Eastern studies in particular. The author, Ilan Peled, who has published a revised version of his PhD dissertation, is to be congratulated for his courageous choice of research topic and for his thorough treatment of both the primary sources and the secondary literature.

The volume comprises five chapters preceded by an introduction and followed by a summary and conclusions section. The first chapter presents a selection of texts. Chapters 2–5 are devoted to the analysis of mainly Sumerian and Akkadian terms identified and labelled by Peled as "third gender figures", i.e. *gala/kalû*, *kulu'u*, *assimmu*, *kurgarrû*, *lû-sag/ša rēši*, *girseqû*, *tiru/tîru*, SAG-UR-SAG, *pi-li-pi-li/pilpilû*, *sinnišānu*, *nāš pilaqqi* and *parû*. In his analysis of each term Peled offers a state-of-the-art of the research together with a selection of texts, in transliteration and in English translation. In doing so – that is, by confronting primary sources with hypotheses proposed in the secondary literature, rather than privileging the purely philological debate – the author aims to assess the plausibility of certain arguments, giving at the same time his own interpretations and tentative translations in order to provide a clearer explanation of how gender is constructed and shaped through these figures. As a result, this monograph offers a useful selection of primary sources presented in an accessible way to both Assyriologists and to non-specialists interested in the field (p. 25). The work is a welcome contribution and is likely to facilitate a fruitful (and very necessary) multidisciplinary debate. The author states that he "saw no point in reinventing the philological wheel" (p. 15). In other words, care in the treatment of primary sources does not necessarily mean offering completely new translations; all too often, an overemphasis on philological aspects can detract from the analysis and interpretation, but this is certainly not a criticism that can be levelled at Peled's book.

Indeed, in the introduction the author declares that his aim is "to present a lexical study with a limited degree of interpretation" (p. 18). However, I would say that it is impossible to limit the degree of interpretation, especially in a research topic like this one, where fundamental choices such as the use of the label "third gender" and the selection of the above-mentioned terms as subjects for inquiry already involve a

considerable degree of interpretation and a theoretical approach far removed from the positivist ones that are still frequently encountered in Assyriological studies. Despite the author's comment, this volume does offer an interpretation and critical analysis of secondary literature, and indeed this is one of its strengths.

A second strength is the explicit focus on gender relations and on the construction of gender roles and identities. Rather than centring on an allegedly fixed and essentialized masculinity as opposed to femininity, the author presents an array of possible masculinities and boldly discusses the adequacy of terms such as eunuch, hermaphrodite, transvestite and other terms that are far too often used uncritically in the secondary literature. However, the author does not seem to nuance femininities to the same extent: he uses a less complex and more fixed ideal femininity to analyse what he describes as "third gender figures" or figures that do not fit in the hegemonic masculinity construct. As an example he describes activities such as dancing, singing or lamenting as "typically feminine behavioral patterns" (p. 19; cf. pp. 251 and 281).

A third strength of the volume is the way it evidences the confusion regarding the use of certain terms and concepts in the secondary literature. The author shows how questionable are some of the matchings defended by previous scholars, such as that of eunuch with homosexual (see for instance p. 239 and ff.) or the confusion between gender identity, sexuality and professional occupation in the discussion of the interpretation of certain terms – although it has to be acknowledged that this confusion is often fuelled by the primary sources and, consequently, is not easy to avoid when scrutinizing them.

It is also interesting – though admittedly, questionable in some cases – to see how certain terms and concepts are defined and applied in the monograph itself. One example is the proposed matching of castration with lack of procreation (see for instance p. 203 and ff. and p. 252). Another is the way the label "ambiguity" is applied, linked as it is throughout the volume (see for instance p. 135) to homoeroticism, to castration, or to what may be termed as a sort of "male femininity" (mirroring the title of Judith Halberstam's essay, *Female Masculinity*, published in 1998) and the "male effeminacy" defined by Peled himself on p. 146. Though one may agree that all these issues and features move away from the ones that shape hegemonic masculinity, the possibility that they shape "ambiguity" as well needs to be examined in more depth.

In any case, the fact that the author uses several labels and several modern categories of analysis which are problematic should not be taken as a flaw. On the contrary, it should be seen as an indication of the complexity of the research topic and indeed of Peled's courage in putting all this on the table. For this reason, we can only thank the author for a work which will fuel further research and much-needed debate in ancient Near Eastern studies and in the humanities in a broad sense.

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ANNICK PAYNE and JORIT WINTJES:

*Lords of Asia Minor: An Introduction to the Lydians.*

(PHILIPPIKA. Altertumswissenschaftliche Abhandlungen /

Contributions to the Study of Ancient World Cultures.) x, 145 pp.

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The slim paperback under review is an introduction to the study of the Lydians, who inhabited in the first millennium BC the central part of western Anatolia. The history