

chapter. The book will undoubtedly become a valuable resource in this regard. What is not clear to me is the book's ultimate contribution to the debate over the nature of ancient Near Eastern law. There is the school of thought that sees a great deal of continuity between the different legal systems throughout the ancient Near East and that speaks of a common legal culture in the region. Then there is the perspective that recognizes much less continuity and sees significant variation from region to region and time period to time period. Gross' claim of a discrete Aramaic legal tradition might appear to favor the latter view. From my perspective, however, the evidence that Gross has assembled demonstrates substantial continuity at what can be called the macro level (the level of legal ideas), even though differences appear at what is a much more micro level (the level of specific terminology). If there is sufficient evidence for us to speak of an Aramaic legal tradition (by "Aramaic legal tradition" I would mean a set of legal conventions practiced by societies that recorded their legal texts in the Aramaic language), I do not see any reason to discount the "continuity school," given how closely connected this tradition is to others (e.g., cuneiform, biblical) as Gross' analysis has amply demonstrated.

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The Politics of Dead Kings. Forschungen zum Alten Testament 2. Reihe, vol. 48. By MATTHEW J. SURIANO. Tübingen: MOHR SIEBECK, 2010. Pp. xvi + 203. €54.

This is a revised version of a dissertation supervised by W. M. Schniedewind at the University of California, Los Angeles. It takes up the old discussion about the precise meaning and background of the customary epilogue in the books of Kings at the end of a Judahite or Israelite king's life with the reference to his death ("and he lay with his fathers"), a notice of burial in the royal tombs, and the introduction of his successor. Suriano suggests that it is possible to shed new light on its interpretation by placing it in the socio-political context of death in the ancient Near East during the Iron Age. This would show that the primary function of the funerary rituals and royal tombs mentioned in these epilogues was to deal with the political problems which could be posed by a king's death and to ensure the dynastic succession. In this respect there would have been no basic difference between Israel and other cultures in the ancient Near East in this period. Within the narrative in the book of Kings the formulaic epilogues also serve the literary purpose of expressing the uninterrupted succession of the Davidic dynasty in contrast to the many usually short-lived dynasties in Israel.

In the first chapter Suriano makes a number of methodological observations explaining the need for a socio-political approach, in which he combines an anthropological approach with a syntactic, an archaeological, and a religio-historical approach. In his study this leads to positive results. One could question, however, whether all the evidence really points in the same direction. The assumption of a political role for venerated royal ancestors may have been too dominant in this research, leading to circular reasoning. The author wants to avoid academic speculation, but in regard to some well-known difficult issues like the discussions about deuteronomistic redactions or the cult of the dead he may have exchanged speculation for harmonization.

All the same, this study offers a good survey and evaluation of the relevant primary and secondary sources. In the second and fourth chapters Suriano offers a detailed discussion of the phrase "to lie with the fathers" and related expressions. He convincingly argues that it should be read within the framework of the secured inheritance. But he seems to overstate his case when he indicates that the passage in Judges 2:10 with the hybrid form "(after that whole generation had been) gathered to their fathers" would also signify in the first place that the Israelites had been able to take possession of their inheritance and that this "marks an important transition point in the Deuteronomistic History" (p. 49). Both statements, however, are more questionable than Suriano indicates and would at least deserve more discussion.

In chapters three and five Suriano discusses the funerary rites, including the archaeological evidence concerning royal tombs in Israel and the neighboring cultures. With regard to the latter he pays much attention to the evidence of intramural burials in Ugarit and especially to the intriguing recent finds

in Qatna with clear indications of a cult of the dead. He also refers to the custom of desecrating royal tombs as attested in many Assyrian texts and also found in the Old Testament, especially in the eradication of the house of Saul. The archaeological evidence from Jerusalem and Samaria is scarce. Suriano discusses the “archaeological quest for the tomb of David” at length, only to conclude that discussion of its location and that of the later royal tombs in the Garden of Uzza “will never move beyond speculation” (p. 111). Nevertheless he thinks it safe to conclude that throughout the ancient Near East it was customary that royal tombs be located within the city and contain the collective remains of the dead kings. He assumes that there was no basic difference between the way kings were buried in Jerusalem and the way it was done in Qatna. We know too little of the Israelite tombs, and the differences with Qatna in space and time are too large, to speak of this kind of parallel here.

Although Suriano is of the opinion that for his study “it is unnecessary to engage in academic speculation regarding the existence of royal ancestor-veneration or worship” (p. 7), one could ask whether it is indeed possible to separate this from his view of the royal tomb as a symbol of the ancient roots of the ongoing dynasty.

Of course, Suriano has no problem in chapter six in relating the notice of the successor, the final element of the epilogues, to his theory. He makes interesting remarks in this connection about the relation with the Ugaritic ritual text KTU 1.161, which also combines references to the deceased king, his predecessors, and his successor. Again, the parallel is more problematic than presented here. One should be careful in closely relating texts of such very different genres to each other. The connection via the preposition *l* is problematic.

In chapter seven Suriano discusses the references to the Rephaim in the Old Testament, in texts from Ugarit, and in the Phoenician text on the sarcophagus of Ehumunazor, king of Sidon (KAI 14). The Rephaim are not mentioned in the epilogues in the books of Kings. Suriano brings them in because in his opinion they represent a concept of ancestry that can be found throughout the ancient Near East. In his opinion the Rephaim must be seen as “the key to understanding the underlying concept of royal ancestors found in the ‘fathers’ claimed by Israelite kings” (p. 150). The problem that in the Old Testament the Rephaim are portrayed negatively, either as hostile epic warriors or as weak spirits of the dead, is explained by Suriano as caused by the wish “to undermine a politically potent element that was otherwise embraced in Ugaritic tradition” (p. 160). He finds this explicitly expressed in Isaiah 14 and Ezekiel 32. This does not explain, however, why this concept of ancestry was used without problem in the deuteronomistic accounts of the kings and their dynasties. This can be seen as a strong argument against the assumed association of the epilogues in the books of Kings and the concept of the Rephaim.

When describing the place of the concept of ancestral identity within the books of Kings, Suriano suggests a relation with different deuteronomistic redactions. The idea of the primacy of the Davidic dynasty over the Israelite dynasties would have had its place within the period of the divided monarchy or shortly after the fall of the northern kingdom. The idea of the continuation of the divinely sanctioned dynasty would have become important again after the exile. This would explain some of the inconsistencies in the epilogues. Suriano does not work out this literary-critical theory in detail, but there is reason to doubt whether his views can be fitted convincingly into the complicated discussions about the deuteronomistic history as simply as he suggests. As in other cases noted above, it can be concluded that Suriano certainly has a point in reading the death notices of the kings against the background of the threatened continuity of the dynasty. He seems, however, to have been too positive about the possibilities of using this as an overall concept to bring together all kinds of different literary, archaeological, and historical elements.

This well-edited book is concluded by a lengthy bibliography and useful indices of texts and authors.

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