

How in Ancient Times They Sacrificed People:
Human Immolation in the Eastern Mediterranean Basin
with Special Emphasis on Ancient Israel and the Near East

by

Jason R. Tatlock

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Doctoral Committee:

Associate Professor Brian B. Schmidt, Chair
Professor Gary Beckman
Associate Professor Gabriele Boccaccini
Associate Professor Yaron Z. Eliav
Associate Professor Philip C. Schmitz, Eastern Michigan University

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To Krista for all the sacrifices

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Chapter 1

Methodological Considerations

1.1. Definition

Human sacrifice is not only the destruction¹ of an individual² in an act directed towards a divinity or immaterial entity, but it is more specifically a slaying³ done with the direct intent of affecting the suprahuman realm.⁴ The motivation for such a slaying is either disjunctive or conjunctive;⁵ that is, one sacrifices in order to connect to immaterial entities/powers or disconnect from them.⁶ This is not to say that human immolation does not affect intrahuman affairs; rather, it is to suggest that its focus extends beyond human-to-human relations. The following chart illustrates these concepts as well as the notion that human sacrifice is a type of ritual killing.⁷ However, a ritual killing is only a human

¹ Sacrifice entails destruction, whereas offering involves presentation (cf. van Baal 1976: 161; Woodward 2000: 219-20).

² The individuals chosen for sacrifice often come from marginalized social groups, such as criminals, prisoners of war, the impaired, children, foreigners, slaves, and in some cases, women (cf. Girard 1977: 12-13; Tylor 1913: 403; Westermarck 1912: 466-67; Green 2001: 25-8).

³ Since one can slay oneself, this definition is also applicable to self-inflicted human immolations.

⁴ Suprahuman (or parahuman) indicates that the focus of human sacrifice moves beyond the intrahuman affairs of living individuals.

⁵ On this point, this dissertation is following Beattie's identification of the four main categories of sacrifice, which was simplified into two categories, conjunction and disjunction, by Green (2001: 33-34). Beattie specifically stated (1980: 38-39):

- 1) Sacrifice to obtain or maintain closer contact with God or with other individual spirits.
- 2) Sacrifice to achieve some degree of separation from such spirits.
- 3) Sacrifice to acquire for the sacrificer (or for the person sacrificed for) an increase, or input, of non-personalized 'power'.
- 4) Sacrifice to achieve separation from, or the removal of, such diffuse force or power.

⁶ At times, this disconnection can take the form of the redirection of harmful forces, as is embodied by scapegoat rituals.

⁷ Ritual killings are slayings specifically "performed in a particular situation or on a particular occasion (a religious ceremony, a funeral, before battle, etc.) in a prescribed, stereotyped manner, with a communicative function of some kind...But not every ritual killing is a sacrifice" (Hughes 1991: 3).

sacrifice when it can be demonstrated that the slaying was done in relation to the suprahuman realm.⁸ The very purpose of human immolation, therefore, dictates that the killing must be accomplished in some prescribed and stereotyped fashion in order to bring about such an effect. By consequence, there are no human immolations that are non-ritual killings (*contra* Davies 1981: 15).

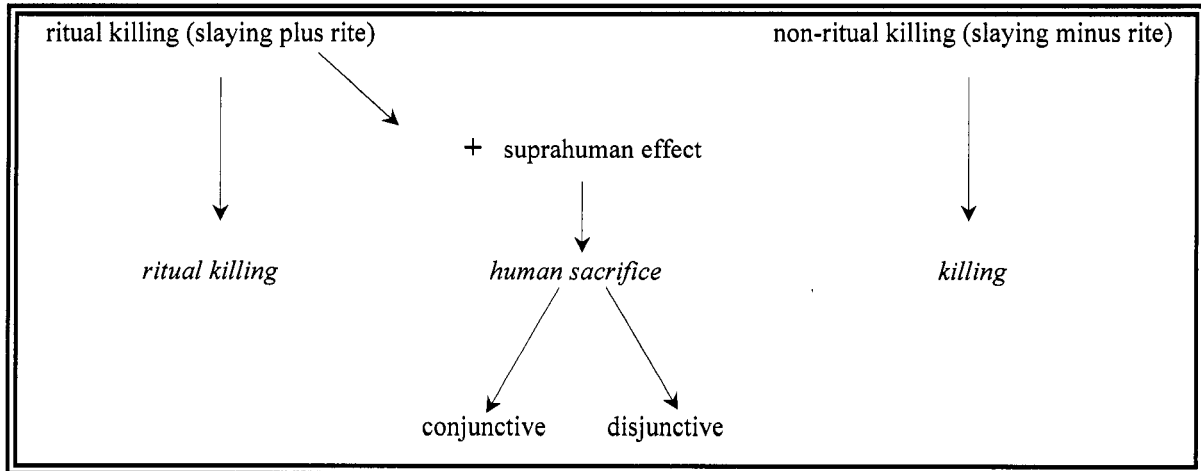


Figure 1.1. Definition

This definition seeks to elucidate the one element that distinguishes human sacrifice from other types of slayings and it attempts to avoid the pitfall of overemphasizing any particular function of sacrifice. Certainly, there are cases where a human sacrifice might endeavor to propitiate a deity, avert disaster, rectify the effects of contamination, or redirect harmful forces, but none of these intentions is applicable to every instance of human immolation. The particular goal of any given sacrifice is culturally specific, which is why it is important to contextualize human sacrifice within

⁸ An example of a ritual killing that is not human sacrifice is the execution of criminals in contemporary America. While there are similarities between human sacrifice and modern-day execution in the United States in terms of ritual procedures (see Smith 2000), the focus of American capital punishment, at least from a secular perspective, is on rectifying a situation at the intrahuman level. There are, however, instances where criminal executions are immolations, e.g., when the killings are motivated by the need to restore order in the suprahuman realm. This issue will be treated more fully when we turn our attention to the ancient world. In antiquity there was no clear separation between church and state. Hence, killing a criminal had both secular and religious consequences (cf. Davies 1981: 16).

its social milieu. Once a sacrifice is understood in terms of its cultural environment it might then be possible to draw parallels to the practice of sacrifice elsewhere. The rest of this chapter is an excursus that will not only facilitate an understanding of how human sacrifice functions in various societies but also validate the viability of the proposed definition.

1.2. Non-Mediterranean Examples

1.2.1. Mesoamerica

Aztec human sacrifice was, according to Harner (1977), the direct result of an ecological crisis in the Valley of Mexico.⁹ That is to say, there existed by the Aztec era (early-fifteenth to early-sixteenth centuries CE)¹⁰ (1) a shortage of wild game; (2) an inadequate utilization of domesticated herbivores in the food system; and (3) a large population. These factors intermingled to create a protein shortage in the Aztec diet. As a result, the Aztecs mobilized their large military force in order to provide human victims, whose flesh would help meet the protein deficiency.¹¹ Garn and Block showed, however, that human flesh would make a relatively meager contribution towards the fulfillment of protein requirements in a regular diet. A man weighing 50 kg, for instance, would possibly provide 4-4.5 kg of protein, which would meet the protein requirements of 60 adults weighing in at 60 kg each for one day. If one were to assume that a single human victim were only available once per week, the 60 individuals would only receive around 9 g of protein a day, which could be considered a supplement but not a sufficient

⁹ On the parallels between Aztec human sacrifice and capital punishment in the United States, see Purdum and Paredes (1989).

¹⁰ On the dates of the empire, consult Smith and Berdan (1992: 354).

¹¹ For an adherent to this view, see Harris (1977).

quantity—a 60 kg human needs 60 g of protein a day. Should the 60 adults dine on a lower number than one person per week, the protein amount would not be of much benefit (Garn and Block 1970: 106). Garn suggested, moreover, that a ten-person hunting party on a four-day expedition would expend ca. 160,000 kilocalories and it would cost another 300,000 kilocalories to fatten up a victim over a period of 100 days. Yet the 50 kg prisoner would only provide, at best, 120,000 kilocalories at the end of the fattening process or about 80,000 kilocalories if consumed right away after capture. The overall caloric debt, therefore, would total around “80, 000 kilocalories just for the hunting and a cumulative debt of nearly 340, 000 kilocalories after 100 days of fattening” (Garn 1979: 903). Thus, cannibalism as a source of protein would not be worth the expense (Garn 1979: 902-03).

Conrad and Demarest similarly rejected the notion that Aztec cannibalism was motivated by a protein deficiency,¹² yet they did focus upon one aspect also treated by Harner—human sacrifice as the driving force behind Aztec militarism. Specifically, the transformation of Aztec religion into an imperial cult by new leaders in the fifteenth century had a major effect upon the practice of human sacrifice: it was imperative for the Aztecs to fight, gain prisoners, and sacrifice them in order to rejuvenate the sun. This new cosmological perspective rapidly increased the practice of human sacrifice to the point where some individual rites involved thousands or tens of thousands of victims. As for the economic and political implications of the imperial cult, the need to sate the divine appetite with human flesh mobilized the populace on behalf of the empire, which in turn, led to the expansion of the empire; and as the kingdom enlarged, more tribute was

¹² Others have also rejected the nutritional explanation of Aztec cannibalism (Ortiz de Montellano 1978; Petrinovich 2000).

exploited from subjugated peoples. The individual could advance socially, moreover, by the capture and presentation of prisoners, and attain immortality if he died in combat (Conrad and Demarest 1984: 28-52, 167-70).

Graulich advanced a similar view, proposing that the need to provide human sacrifices for the purpose of restoring the vitality of the sun was likely devised in order to justify the Aztec war machine.¹³ It was a manipulation of Aztec myth and though it became a common theme in human immolation, it was only secondary to the more fundamental notion of sacrifice as expiation to facilitate a good afterlife, as is illustrated by the Aztec myth about the creation of the sun and the moon. In that myth, the sun and the moon were created because two fallen gods were transformed into the moon and the sun through their self-sacrifice by fire. Through this act, they atoned for their iniquities and thereby regained positions in the heavens. Humans, too, can gain an afterlife among the heavenly beings by vicariously dying through human victims (Graulich 2000).

A further theory which analyzed the religious and martial purposes behind the Aztec cult of human sacrifice is found in the work of Carrasco. He essentially applied Smith's model of the perfect hunt—that is, ceremonial hunts are performed in a controlled, ritualized environment wherein all the proper actions that should be associated with hunts can be performed correctly (Smith 1982: 64)—to the Aztec practice of sacrificing prisoners of war and servants during the Feast of the Flaying of Men, thereby suggesting that the Aztec ritual was the perfect battle, an idealized enactment of how warfare should be exercised. What is particularly indicative that this ceremony was regarded as the perfect battle is that the prisoners were flayed subsequent to their

¹³ Soustelle, conversely, saw Aztec warfare as motivated to a large extent by religiosity rather than the other way around (1962: 97-102).

immolation; their skins then became the costumes for persons who paraded around the city of Tenochtitlan and performed simulated warfare or received presents from the city's residents. In addition, the blood of the victims was carried throughout the town. These rituals, as well as the other rites connected to the festival, transported the essence of warfare into the confines of the city, where the battle was undertaken in a controlled environment (Carrasco 1995).

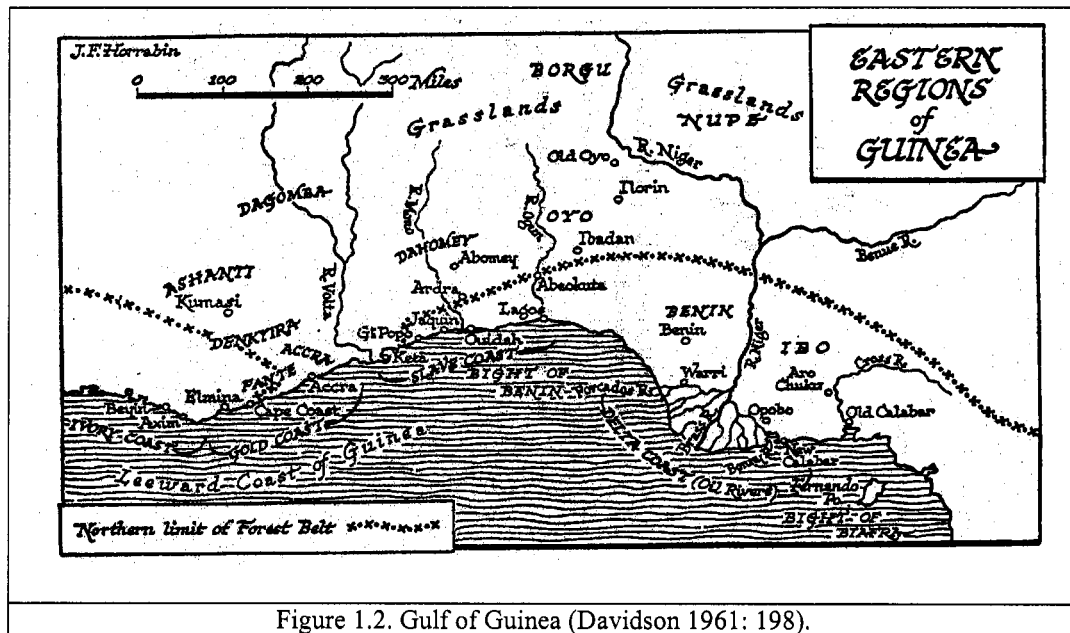


Figure 1.2. Gulf of Guinea (Davidson 1961: 198).

1.2.2. Africa

One caveat is in order prior to presenting an overview of the practice of human immolation in western Africa: while archaeological data confirms the existence of human sacrifice in African burial remains, much of the information provided below is based upon the observations of foreign travelers, which were derived from their own eyewitness experiences or from what they were told by indigenous informants. Thus, the following is more an overview of the European understanding of African immolation than it is purely an autochthonous account. Although several foreign tales of human sacrifice have

been deemed hyperbolic, they still seem to retain a kernel of truth, as Law observed concerning those who opposed the abolishment of slavery, one of whom, Norris, will be encountered below: “Exaggerations, and even gross exaggerations, there undoubtedly were, but most of what the Ant-Abolitionists (*sic*) said of Dahomey had at least some foundation in reality. The Anti-Abolitionists certainly exaggerated, for example, the scale of human sacrifice in Dahomey, but it is clear that Dahomey did practise such sacrifices on a scale unusual in Africa” (Law 1986: 250-51; cf. 247-54). With an air of caution, then, let us begin our treatment of African human immolation.

The northern coastline of the Gulf of Guinea in western Africa was a major center for the trans-Atlantic slave trade (fig. 1.2). Slavery, according to some proponents of the practice, was a gift, a chance for the native African to be redeemed from the threatening environment of the Dark Continent. While this might sound diabolical to the reader, certain Europeans did view slavery as an advantageous alternative to human sacrifice (Postlethwayt 1746: 4-5, emphasis original):

Besides, the *Negroe-Princes in Africa*, 'tis well known, are in perpetual War with each other; and since before they had this Method of disposing of their Prisoners of War to Christian Merchants, they were wont not only to be applied to inhuman Sacrifices, but to extream Torture and Barbarity, their Transplantation must certainly be a Melioration of their Condition; provided living in a civilized Christian Country, is better than living among Savages: Nay, if Life be preferable to Torment and cruel Death, their State cannot, with any Colour of Reason, be presumed to be worsted.

Writing in the same era, Norris likewise opined that the majority of African slaves were criminals or prisoners of war who would most likely have been killed if it were not for the slave trade. Hence, “the house of bondage, strictly speaking, may be called a land of freedom to them” (Norris 1789: 160). Later, when the British were dismantling the slave trade, a British official commented, “That, as our efforts to abolish the slave export trade

are successful, these horrors [i.e., human sacrifice] will greatly increase, there is no room to doubt” (Burton 1864: 235).

Despite the rhetoric, these authors raise an issue that is addressed by several other authors and is fundamental to our discussion of human immolation, that is, the chief victims of African sacrifice were marginalized individuals: slaves, prisoners of war, and criminals.¹⁴ Such victims were primarily sacrificed during funerary rites, a type of immolation which had already piqued the interest of foreigners several centuries prior to the zenith of the trans-Atlantic slave trade. The Arab scholar Al-Bakrī, who lived in Spain during the eleventh century CE (Levtzion and Hopkins 2000: 22), described attendant burial in Ghāna as follows (Levtzion and Hopkins 2000: 80-81, emphasis theirs):¹⁵

When their king dies they construct over the place where his tomb will be an enormous dome of *sāj* wood. Then they bring him on a bed covered with a few carpets and cushions and place him beside the dome. At his side they place his ornaments, his weapons, and the vessels from which he used to eat and drink, filled with various kinds of food and beverages. They place there too the men who used to serve his meals. They close the door of the dome and cover it with mats and furnishings. Then the people assemble, who heap earth upon it until it becomes like a big hillock and dig a ditch around it until the mound can be reached at only one place.

Some five hundred years later, in 1539, three Catholic missionaries were fearful that the king of Benin would immolate them “should his fetish tell him to do so” (Ryder 1961: 259); a more detailed account of the practice of human sacrifice in Benin was written around the same time by a Portuguese sailor (Hodgkin 1960: 101):

Among others, there is in the kingdom of Benin an ancient custom, observed to the present day, that when the king dies, the people all assemble in a large field, in the centre of which is a very deep well, wider at the bottom than at the mouth. They cast the body of the dead king into this well, and all his friends and servants gather round, and those who are judged to have been most dear to and favoured by the king (this includes not a few, as all are anxious for the honour) voluntarily go down to keep him company. When they have done so, the people place a great stone over the mouth of the well, and remain by it day and night. On the second day, a few

¹⁴ Some of the victims of funerary sacrifice were family members but more frequently slaves or prisoners of war were immolated.

¹⁵ Other Arab treatments of African attendant sacrifice are found in Levtzion and Hopkins (2000: 213, 281).

deputies remove the stone, and ask those below what they know, and if any of them have already gone to serve the king; and the reply is, No. On the third day, the same question is asked, and someone then replies that so-and-so, mentioning a name, has been the first to go, and so-and-so the second. It is considered highly praiseworthy to be the first, and he is spoken of with the greatest admiration by all the people, and considered happy and blessed. After four or five days all these unfortunate people die.

Archaeological research conducted in 1962 and 1963 discovered what appears to be such a burial. Connah's excavations in Benin City, Nigeria, located a 52-ft-deep cistern, shaped like a well and utilized for the mass burial of some 41 persons (likely women around 20 years old) in the thirteenth century. Their bones were found at a depth of approximately 40 ft and they were interred with cloth, glass and agate beads, segments of wood, 3 bronze rings, and 48 bronze bracelets, none of which encircled bones. Above this 4 ft section of human remains, a 9 ft locus of silt was discernable. Here an additional skull was found, a single bronze bracelet (similar in appearance to one of the other 48 bracelets), and pieces of worked wood. The 20 feet of silt, which sealed in these remains, contained few material artifacts. Then, during the final filling in of the cistern, a significant amount of ivory was placed therein, suggesting to the excavator that the importance of the cistern had not been forgotten. Connah concluded that he had unearthed the bones of sacrificial victims (Connah 1975: 35, 61-67; 249).¹⁶ An additional Nigerian site, Igbo-Ukwu, yielded the approximately 1,000-year-old burial remains of six individuals. The excavation report indicates that after the chief tomb occupant was buried in a seated position with a rich array of metallic objects, beads, and ivory, the tomb chamber was covered with a wooden roof and the other individuals were interred on top of the chamber, after which time the burial pit was covered with dirt. While the excavator implied that the uppermost persons were sacrificed slaves (Shaw

¹⁶ Cf. the similar opinion espoused by Ryder (1969: 188 n.2).

1970: 262, 65, 68-70), Isichei was more forthright in describing the data as descriptive of the practice of human immolation (Isichei 1978: 469; 1973: 57; cf. Law 1985: 62).

The people of Asante (or Ashanti) also practiced attendant sacrifice, as witnessed by a member of the British Company of Merchants Trading to West Africa delegation of 1817,¹⁷ T. E. Bowdich: “The King, Quatchie Quofie, and Odumata each sacrificed a young girl directly [when] the deceased had breathed her last, that she might not want for attendants until the greater sacrifice was made” (Bowdich 1819: 283). The greater sacrifice consisted of at least thirteen individuals, whose deaths were described in the following details (Bowdich 1819: 287):

The executioners wrangled and struggled for the office, and the indifference with which the first poor creature looked on, in the torture he was from the knife passed through his cheeks, was remarkable: the nearest executioner snatched the sword from the others, the right hand of the victim was then lopped off, he was thrown down, and his head was sawed rather than cut off; it was cruelly prolonged, I will not say wilfully. Twelve more were dragged forward, but we forced our way through the crowd, and retired to our quarters. Other sacrifices, principally female, were made in the bush where the body was buried. It is usual to ‘wet the grave’ with the blood of a freeman of respectability. All the retainers of the family being present, and the heads of all the victims deposited in the bottom of the grave...

The graves of deceased kings continued to be watered with the blood of sacrificial victims by the Asante long after a monarch’s death (Bowdich 1819: 289). A neighboring kingdom, Dahomey, performed a similar rite wherein a monarch would immolate humans at the burial site of each of his predecessors. According to Burton, a British official sent to Dahomey in the 1860’s, this watering was done in order to gain the assistance of dead kings in fighting the kingdom’s enemies. Similarly, a deceased monarch might be informed of new developments by dispatching a human victim as a messenger.¹⁸ Additionally, several victims were reserved for sacrifice during the Annual Customs, at which time the spilling of further blood expanded a dead king’s retinue. The sacrifices

¹⁷ Turdoff (1962: 399-400).

¹⁸ On the use of a sacrificial victim as a messenger among the Yoruba, see Idowu (1962: 119).

during the Annual Customs not only presented new attendants to a departed king but they also provided the opportunity to fulfill judicial obligations. The Annual Customs was the only event set aside for executing criminals. Indeed, in response to Burton's plea during one of the Annual Customs that animals be used instead of human victims, he was informed that the sacrifices would only include the most heinous felons and prisoners of war (Burton 1864: 200-15, 232-35, 308-13).

Here we encounter a fascinating correspondence between capital punishment and human sacrifice. In fact, the European sources tend to describe the execution of criminals as a sacrificial rite. Yet, regarding the kingdom of Asante in particular, Wilkes, building upon the analysis of Collins, saw in the European accounts a gross misunderstanding of the penal structure: what the Europeans generally perceived as human sacrifice should be primarily understood as criminal execution. Both scholars surmised that the slaying of the criminals was saved for major public events, such as festivals or the funerals of dignitaries, in order to have a large audience witness the slaying of malefactors; this, in turn, would serve as a social deterrent to future criminal behavior (Collins 1962: 121-22; Wilks 1975: 592-95).¹⁹ The weakness of this position is twofold: in Asante, Benin, and Dahomey (1) sacrificed individuals were not always criminals (some, for instance, were prisoners of war) and (2) their deaths often served non-judicial purposes, such as the induction of the deceased into the retinue of a dead individual (Law 1985: 60). One strength of their perspective, nonetheless, is the emphasis placed upon the social effect of public punishment, as was noted by the king of Asante, himself, "If I were to abolish human sacrifices, I should deprive myself of one of the most effectual means of keeping the people in subjection" (Freeman 1844: 164). Indeed, one need not separate human

¹⁹ Lewin also accepted this position (1978: 63).

sacrifice from capital punishment in order to achieve such a goal. Human sacrifice and capital punishment can intersect in a single slaying, that is, by sacrificing a criminal.²⁰ The intersection between human immolation and state interests in western Africa also existed in the sphere of warfare. Taking the kingdom of Dahomey as an example, it is clear that the need for slaves and human victims motivated the movement of imperial forces (cf. Ronen 1975: 22; Burton 1864: 260).

1.2.3. Indonesia

Reports have circulated over the course of the last century about various people groups living on the islands of Indonesia who have been debilitated by panic scares concerning the existence of nefarious individuals who prowl the nights looking for unsuspecting victims to sacrifice and utilize in construction ventures, particularly endeavors sponsored by outsiders: the government or foreigners. The underlying belief is that the sacrifices will ensure the structural integrity of the building projects (Haddon 1901: 338-40; Drake 1989; Erb 1991; Forth 1991; Barnes 1993; Tsing 1993: 85-91). This writer is less concerned with the factuality of the rumored events than with the ideas embodied by the stories, especially the belief in the necessity and efficacy of the immolations. For the people of Borneo, for instance, the plausibility of these rumors has been enhanced by the fact that construction sacrifice has had a long history on the island (Drake 1989: 273-74). In the course of their research in Borneo, Hose and McDougall were informed of the following (1912: 105-06 and n. 1):

In building a new house it is customary among almost all these tribes to put a fowl into the hole dug to receive the first of the piles that are to support the house, and to allow the end of the pile to

²⁰ Williams explicitly stated such an opinion concerning the role of human sacrifice and capital punishment in Asante (1988: 434-35). On the judicial role of human sacrifice in Benin, see Home 1982: 1.

fall upon the fowl so as to kill it. The Kenyahs admit that formerly a girl was usually killed in this way, and there is reason to believe that in all cases a human victim was formerly the rule, and that the fowl is a substitute merely...Now that the sacrifice of human victims is forbidden, Kenyahs and Klemantans sometimes carve a human figure upon the first of the main piles of a new house to be put into the ground.

Informants in northern Borneo similarly explained to Metcalf “that formerly when the main post of a large mausoleum (*lijèng*) was ready to be erected, a slave would be placed in the hole, bound hand and foot. As the post was hauled into an upright position its weight crushed the victim to death. The sacrifice ensured peace for the occupant of the mausoleum and sturdiness for the structure.” Metcalf went on to provide confirmation of this understanding inasmuch as human remains were revealed when the base of an old mausoleum became exposed by erosion (Metcalf 1991: 129). Additionally, the remains of supposed sacrificial victims, slain as construction sacrifices, were unearthed elsewhere in Indonesia; namely, at the Prambanan and Sojiwan temple structures as well as an enclosure in Banda Aceh (Wessing and Jordaan 1997: 117-18; Jordaan and Wessing 1996; Wessing 1991).

Further examples of construction sacrifice are known elsewhere in Southeast Asia. Moore excavated the remains of a person buried in what appears to be a kneeling position at the site of Ban Takhong in northern Thailand. While she signified that the body presents “evidence of an unknown set of ceremonial beliefs” (1992: 41)—this type of burial is unheard of in Thailand—it is worthy of note that oral tradition suggests that “the spirit of the land” (a snake) resides in the moats encircling the site (Moore 1992: 41-42). A possible explanation of this tradition is that the entombed individual was immolated during the construction of the site’s water system in order to protect the site (Wessing and Jordaan 1997: 117). According to Yoe, protective spirits were obtained for the city of Mandalay, Myanmar (Burma) during its construction, which began in 1858.

Specifically, “When the foundations of the city wall were laid, fifty-two persons of both sexes, and of various age and rank, were consigned to a living tomb. Three were buried under each of the twelve city gates, one at each of the four corners, one under each of the palace gates, and at the corners of the timber stockade, and four under the throne itself” (1909: 482).²¹ Wessing and Jordaan described this type of construction sacrifice as intent on animating the structure for the purpose of protection,²² which is in contrast to immolations focused on appeasing the supernatural beings disturbed by a project. Animation sacrifices may have the additional benefit of providing a conduit to the world of the supernatural, that is, if the spirit of the victim who animates the structure is benevolent. In such a case the spirit might be called upon for assistance (1997: 104-11).

A few additional words are in order regarding one aspect of the panic scares; that is, certain of the rumors describe headhunting as the primary means of obtaining the needed sacrificial component, a head, which would then be buried at the construction site (Forth 1991: 259). There is historical precedent for this type of practice in Indonesia. On the Mentawai islands, for example, the need to obtain a head for the production of a communal lodging was one of the motivating factors for warfare (Loeb 1989: 172). Headhunting, consequently, should be considered a sacrificial act,²³ at least among societies which perceive this type of warfare as a necessary means of affecting the suprahuman realm. In the words of Downs, for example, “one is justified in considering head-hunting as it is practised by the Toraja [of Indonesia] as a ritual participated in by the whole community for the primary purpose of ensuring health and fertility in the

²¹ For more on the protective spirits in Burmese thought, see Spiro (1978: 104-07).

²² Eliade similarly likened a structure built via the means of a construction sacrifice to the “‘new body’ for the victim’s soul” (1982: 9).

²³ Rosaldo (1987: 242-43) essentially equated headhunting with sacrifice.

widest sense of the word” (Downs 1955: 124). According to Metcalf, in northern Borneo (Malaysia/Indonesia) the Berawan occasionally undertook headhunting expeditions in order to placate the malevolent spirit of the recently deceased and the Kayan did so as a means of providing attendants for a departed leader (Metcalf 1991: 130).

1.2.4. Europe

The European phenomenon of bog bodies presents a fascinating corpus of data related to the archaeology of human sacrifice inasmuch as the bog bodies are in an excellent state of preservation²⁴ because they were immersed in peat moss swamps.²⁵ As with other burials known to us from archaeological research, the cause of death is difficult to establish. Hence, scholars seek to locate tertiary evidence supportive of their suppositions, especially narrative traditions. The ensuing discussion is an overview of how various individuals have attempted to interpret the bog bodies in light of the inherent problems.

One of the most famous bog bodies from Britain, Lindow Man, was excavated in association with the local police department—the remains, it was thought, might represent modern criminal activity (Turner 1986a). Tests using an accelerator radiocarbon dating system indicated, however, that the man lived in the Roman era, although an earlier (Iron Age) date was not entirely ruled out (Gowlett, Gillespie, Hall, and Hedges 1986: 24). Ross, who suggested that the Lindow Man died a threefold sacrificial death, connected his slaying to Celtic and European traditions. In such

²⁴ Tierney provided an excellent overview on another form of human sacrifice which led to the preservation of the victim in a mummified state, that is, the Inca practice of sacrificing individuals at high altitudes (Tierney 1989: 24ff.; cf. Schuster 1999).

²⁵ For a scientific analysis of the preserving qualities of peat bogs, see Painter (1995).

customs the victim died via stabbing, burning, and drowning or a variant combination of garroting,²⁶ cutting, and drowning. The remains of Lindow Man showed signs of the latter sequence.²⁷ What is more, his stomach contents contained burnt bread and mistletoe, which, for Ross, are suggestive of the ritualistic nature of Lindow Man's death; that is, burnt bread seems to have been used by the Celts as part of a sacrificial rite—the individual who received the blackened portion of bread was designated as the sacrificial victim. As for the mistletoe, it was viewed by the Celts as sacred and, therefore, could have been used to increase the potency of Lindow Man's death (Ross 1986). Magilton, moreover, noted that Lindow Man's death could have been a case of human sacrifice or capital punishment. The Celts are reputed to have immolated criminals as sacrificial victims. In support of this conclusion, Magilton utilized the works of Caesar, Strabo, and Diodorus of Sicily (Magilton 1995). Caesar and Diodorus of Sicily had the following to say, albeit with a certain degree of negativity.²⁸

The whole of the Gallic nation is much given to religious practices. For this reason those who are afflicted with serious illnesses and those who are involved in battles and danger either offer human sacrifice or vow that they will do so, and employ the druids to manage these sacrifices. For they believe that unless one human life is offered for another the power and presence of the immortal gods cannot be propitiated. They also hold state sacrifices of a similar kind. Some of them use huge images of the gods, and fill their limbs, which are woven from wicker, with living people. When these images are set on fire the people inside are engulfed in flames and killed. They believe that the gods are more pleased by such punishment when it is inflicted upon those who are caught engaged in theft or robbery or other crimes; but if there is a lack of people of this kind, they will even stoop to punishing the guiltless (Caesar, *The Gallic War* 6.16, Hammond 1996: 127-28).

And in pursuance of their savage ways they manifest an outlandish impiety also with respect to their sacrifices; for their criminals they keep prisoner for five years and then impale in honour of the gods, dedicating them together with many other offerings of first-fruits and constructing pyres

²⁶ A limited number of bog bodies, like Lindow Man, show signs of neck injuries; at times, various types of nooses made from materials such as fabric, leather, wood, and animal sinew, have been found still attached to the bodies (Green 2001: 122-25; Briggs 1995: 177-78).

²⁷ Lindow Man may have suffered a different form of the threefold death since he also sustained lethal blows on the back of the head; thus, he was clubbed, garroted, and slashed across the throat before being drowned (Green 2001: 124; Magilton 1995: 184).

²⁸ Magilton's reference to Strabo, which should read *Geography* 4.4.5, not 4.5., is similar to Caesar's account but lacks any details concerning criminals. Thus, it is not reproduced here.

of great size. Captives also are used by them as victims for their sacrifices in honour of the gods. Certain of them likewise slay, together with the human beings, such animals as are taken in war, or burn them or do away with them in some other vengeful fashion (*Diodorus of Sicily* 5.32, Oldfather 1939: 183).

What is particularly intriguing in Caesar's account is that criminals were seen as especially efficacious sacrificial victims, being more desirable to the deities than innocent individuals. In both narratives, moreover, human immolation was a means of capital punishment. Thus, one need not view judicial and religious slayings as always being accomplished in distinct contexts.

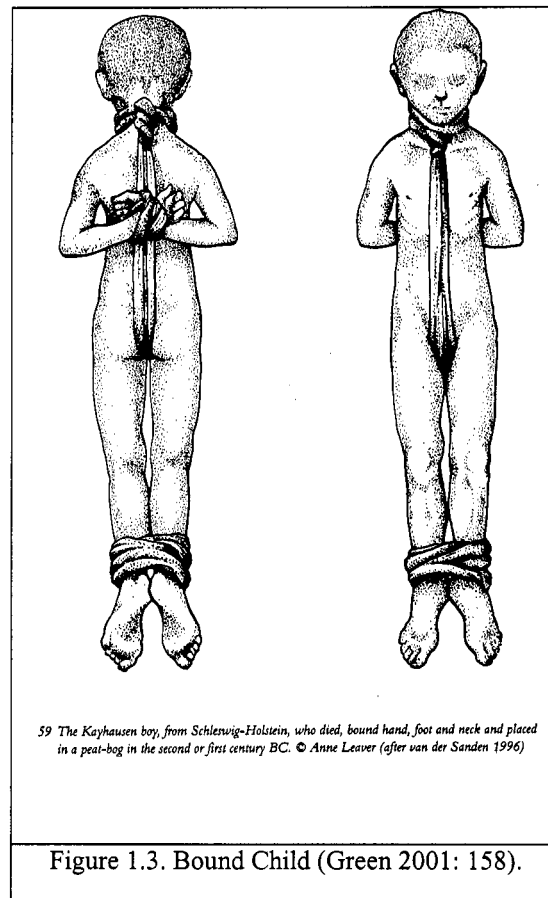
While Glob admitted that certain of the bog bodies likely met death through accidentally wandering into marshes or by the hands of murderers who buried their victims' corpses away from prying eyes, he maintained the perspective that the vast majority were fatalities of human sacrifice. This deduction is based chiefly upon the writings of Tacitus (Glob 1970: 144 ff).²⁹ Two passages from Tacitus' works are principally relevant to the discussion of bog bodies; the first relates to Germany and the second to Britain:

Tradition has it that the Semnonnes are the most ancient and noble of the Suebi...At an appointed time, all the peoples of the same blood, represented by embassies, come together into a forest hallowed by the auguries of their ancestors and by ancient awe and, with the slaying of a human being in a public sacrifice, they celebrate the dread beginnings of barbarian ritual. There is another display of reverence for the grove: no one enters it unless he has been bound by a cord, as a token of his inferiority and a display of the divinity's power (*Germania* 39, Benario 1991: 83).

The enemy lined the shore: a dense host of armed men, interspersed with women clothed in black, like the Furies, with their hair hanging down, and holding torches in their hands. Round these were the Druids, uttering dire curses, and stretching out their hands towards heaven. These strange sights terrified our soldiers. They stood motionless, as if paralysed, offering their bodies to the blows. At last, encouraged by the General, and exhorting each other not to quail before a rabble of female fanatics, they advanced their standards, bore down all resistance, and enveloped the enemy in their own flames. Suetonius imposed a garrison upon the conquered, and cut down the groves devoted to their cruel superstitions: for it was part of their religion to spill the blood of captives on their altars, and to inquire of the Gods by means of human entrails (*Annales* 14: 30, Ramsay 1909).

²⁹ See Green (2001: 84-85; 111-16) for an additional treatment of Tacitus and human sacrifice.

Tacitus also presented other examples that could provide different reasons for bog body deaths: traitors were hanged and disgraced warriors, on occasion, committed suicide (*Germania* 12; 6). Despite these alternatives, Green recommended, “there are



sufficiently curious, idiosyncratic features associated with many aquatic deposits of human remains to allow us at least to consider the presence of ritual action,” such as the young ages of certain garrotted victims (see fig. 1.3) and the fact that multiple individuals exhibited deformities or diseases, both of which may have been influential in their identification for sacrifice (Green 2001: 122). Both Green and Glob pointed to the importance of the stomach contents of a few of the bog bodies, as was noted above about Lindow Man, which may be indicative of the ingestion of ceremonial meals prior to

death. Perhaps the Tollund, Grauballe, and Borre Fen men ate a sacred meal comprised of multiple types of seeds and grains prior to their sacrifice (Glob 1970: 32-33, 56-57, 91, 163; cf. Green 2001: 124-25). Glob connected the contents of the meals to fertility and springtime, stating: “It consisted of an abundance of just those grains and flower seeds which were to be made to germinate, grow and ripen by the goddess’s journey through the spring landscape” (Glob 1970: 163).

Turner listed certain peculiar characteristics of some bog bodies from England and Wales that are possibly illustrative of human sacrifice. There are approximately twenty probable instances, fewer than 25% of the total number of bog bodies as of 1993, divisible into two groups: those who were beheaded³⁰ and those who were seemingly placed in the bogs naked.³¹ The bodies were also discovered in a seated position or face down, positions not typical of burials (Turner 1993: 15). To these one may add a few other intriguing cases. A young female from Windeby was placed in a peat bog naked, with partially shaved head, blindfolded eyes, and an ox-hide band encircling her neck (Glob 1970: 110-15, 153; cf. Green 2001: 122). The Tollund Man was also discovered naked—as was the Grauballe Man—with the exception of an animal-skin hat and belt as well as a cord around his neck (Glob 1970: 20, 41).

Taylor perceived the bog bodies as victims of ritual killing, rather than of sacrifice. His reason for such a distinction is related to his understanding of peat moss bogs as liminal places of interment wherein the bodies of unsavory individuals, who were unfit to continue in the land of the living and were unsuitable for the hereafter, were

³⁰ Such as bodies from Lindow Moss, Red Moss, Pilling and Gifron, Dolfawr Fair, and Worsley Moss. For alternative explanations, see Briggs (1995: 178).

³¹ Specifically, the victims from the region of the Isle of Axholme and Whixall Moss. The exceptions are one individual wearing shoes and another wearing an apron.

buried in a perpetual state of preservation. Their social misdeeds required that they be removed from society but they could not be sacrificed because the gods would not want such unpleasant offerings. Taylor contended, furthermore, that had the bodies been buried normally, the souls of the departed would have gone on to the realm of the dead, thereby limiting the length of their punishment; and if appropriate burial were not achieved, their souls would have haunted the land of the living. Neither choice was acceptable; thus, their bodies and souls were trapped in the liminal state of the bog. As for the use of multiple methods of killing, it was done to disorient the soul long enough to complete the process of slaying and interment in the bog. The facial appearance of the victims was not commonly disturbed by the killers, which together with the preservation produced by the bog, allowed the soul to recognize its host body and remain connected to it (Taylor 2002: 163-69).

It seems that many of the individuals buried in the bogs were ritually slain, as is indicated by such things as stomach contents, naked bodies, head-shaving, and multiple forms of death (garroting, cutting, drowning), but the extent to which their deaths may be considered cases of human sacrifice is still a matter of much controversy since the archaeological record can only go so far in determining the causes of their deaths. There does appear, nonetheless, more circumstantial support in favor of a sacrificial, rather than solely judicial, explanation for the data, particularly concerning those who were slain at a very young age, an age that would not correspond easily to Taylor's theory that the bog bodies belonged to wanton criminals. The texts referenced in this section, moreover, illustrate that criminals were fit (if not preferred) for sacrifice among certain European communities. Thus, a number of the adult burials could represent the graves of criminals

who were sacrificed. This is, however, speculative for two reasons: (1) it is unclear if the sacrificial victims described in the written sources actually correspond to bog bodies and (2) the sources themselves should only be taken as secondary evidence in light of their predominantly outside perspectives. In general, foreign accounts of human immolation should be relegated to the level of tertiary support because they may not always represent sacrificial slayings exactly as the practitioners would. This is not an outright rejection of foreign immolation narratives but it is a word of caution concerning their straightforward adoption in reconstructing historical realities. For the purposes of this exploratory excursus into perceptions of human sacrifice, the written accounts are beneficial since they illustrate that the authors, if no one else, viewed sacrifice and capital punishment as potential complimentary trajectories.

1.2.5. China

The most frequently discussed method of human sacrifice in ancient China is the immolation of multiple attendants at the burials of dignitaries (cf. Chang 1963: 143; Eberhard 1969: 19; Fitzgerald 1976: 53; Ching 1993: 37; Shelach 1996). According to de Groot, the earliest reference in Chinese documents to this practice, *Historical Records* 5.1.8, testifies that in the year 677 BCE, sixty-six individuals were forced to leave the realm of the living and enter into the afterlife at the burial of a leader named Wu. In fact, the document also states that this was the first occurrence of such an act, although, in de Groot's eyes, one need not take the reference literally; instead the phrase likely means that Wu was the initial member of his dynasty to perform attendant sacrifice or that Wu was the first to have so many immolated at his burial. Wu's nephew, Muh, was also

buried with sacrificed attendants (de Groot 1894: 721-22). There is, moreover, an intriguing text dealing with Muh's burial. Namely, *The She King* 1.11.6 (Legge 1991: 198-99):³²

They flit about, the yellow birds,
And rest upon the jujube trees.
Who followed duke Muh [to the grave]?
Tsze-keu Yen-seih.
And this Yen-seih
Was a man above a hundred.
When he came to the grave,
He looked terrified and trembled.
Thou azure Heaven there!
Thou art destroying our good men.
Could he have been redeemed,
We should have given a hundred lives for him.

The poetic discourse continues by essentially repeating these same lines two more times and with each sequence a different name is given. Thus, we read of the deaths of Chung-hang and K'ëen-hoo in addition to Yen-seih. A justification for burying attendants is found in the *Than Kung*, a two-volume work dealing with mourning rituals, which is part of a larger work, the *Li Chi*, whose final form dates to the second century CE but contains materials from Before the Common Era (Legge 1967: 2-3, 17-18). The relevant text is as follows (*Than Kung* 2.2.15, Legge 1967: 181-82):

Khăn-3ze-kü having died in Wei, his wife and the principal officer of the family consulted together about burying some living persons (to follow him). When they had decided to do so, (his brother), Khăn 3ze-khang arrived, and they informed him about their plan, saying, 'When the master was ill, (he was far away) and there was no provision for his nourishment in the lower world; let us bury some persons alive (to supply it).' 3ze-khang said, 'To bury living persons (for the sake of the dead) is contrary to what is proper. Nevertheless, in the event of his being ill, and requiring to be nourished, who are so fit for that purpose as his wife and steward? If the thing can be done without, I wish it to be so. If it cannot be done without, I wish you two to be the parties for it.' On this the proposal was not carried into effect.

Despite the negative view on the practice of human sacrifice expressed in this passage, it nonetheless illustrates the belief attached to the rite that the sacrificial victims would accompany the deceased into the afterlife and provide necessary services therein.

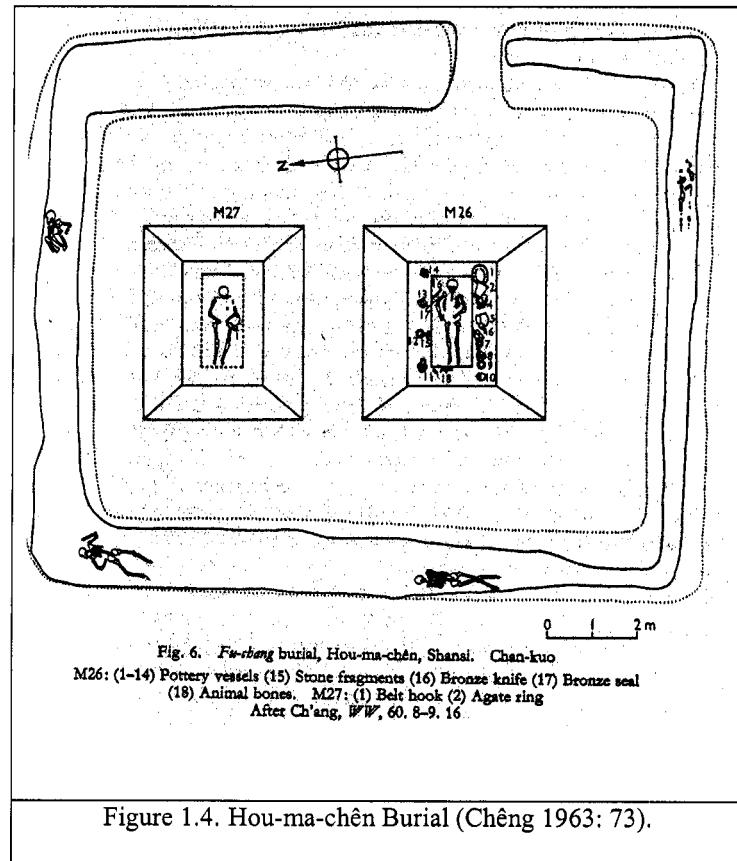
³² Cf. discussion in de Groot (1894: 722) and Ching (1993: 37-38).

The Shang Dynasty (ca. sixteenth to eleventh centuries BCE) is the most important kingdom related to the treatment of human sacrifice and burial practices in ancient China because of the large number of victims interred with the deceased members of royalty³³—notice the early date of this practice as opposed to the date of 677 BCE given above. Excavations at the capital city of Yin, adjacent to modern-day Anyang, have unearthed a plethora of artifacts and skeletal remains among the tomb deposits of the Shang Dynasty. The tomb of Fu Hao, for example, provided the relics of some 16 sacrificed children, women, and men and it would seem that, at the very least, two of them were slain prior to burial. Slaves were frequently chosen as victims for such interments and were decapitated prior to burial or entombed while still alive (Qian 1981a: 9, 12-13; 1981b: 63).

Human sacrifice in the form of attendant burial continued in the Chou period (twelfth to third centuries BCE) but in a more limited sense. Near the sites of K'ê-shêng-chuang and Chang-chia-p'o, for example, nine tombs were excavated that contained the remains of human victims—each of these tombs had one to four immolated humans interred therein. Four victims were also discovered in burial complexes at Shan-piao-chên and Hou-ma-chên. And three victims were buried within a tomb at Han-tan. The body positions of the victims at the latter two burials are particularly interesting: one of the humans sacrificed at Han-tan was located with its hands covering its face, its legs bent, and mouth agape. The four bodies at Hou-ma-chên were found in twisted poses, which Tê-K'un Chêng considered indicative of a skirmish prior to death. Hence, one

³³ Human sacrifice within the Shang Dynasty was not limited to the burial of attendants. Eberhard suggested that human victims were slain for the sake of the earth's fertility. Indeed, many of the victims were POWs and Eberhard speculated that warfare was often conducted in order to provide human victims (Eberhard 1969: 23; cf. also Shelach 1996; and for a brief note on Shang construction burials, see Eliade 1982: 9).

could identify them as sacrificed individuals. By contrast, the persons not viewed as sacrificial victims at these last two locales were buried in a prone position with legs stretched out (fig. 1.4 shows the difference) (Chêng 1963: xix-xxxii, 46-47, 57-59, 72-73, 78-29, 131-32).³⁴



In many areas, substitutes made out of straw or wood eventually came to take the place of human victims by the last days of the Chou dynasty (Fitzgerald 1976: 53). In fact, ceramic and wooden figurines were extensively used as surrogates in the subsequent Qin and Han Dynasties. An example of each will suffice: (1) near the end of the third century BCE, the First Emperor of Qin had buried, in addition to numerous of his concubines, 6,000 terracotta warriors arrayed for battle in his extensive burial complex;

³⁴ Also see Chang (1963: 178, 215) on Chou burial of human sacrificial victims.

and (2) wooden figurines (servants, musicians, and dancers) were discovered in the deposits of the Mawangdui burials from the time of the Western Han Dynasty (late third century BCE to early first century CE) (Qian 1981b: 63; 1981c; 1981d).

1.2.6. India

The practice of burning a widow on the funeral pyre of her husband, commonly known as *sati* in reference to the widow or in regards to the act itself, is an engrossing topic for a number of reasons.³⁵ It is not only fascinating in light of the fact that the victim is glorified to a greater extent than most other victims of funerary human sacrifice—the widow is deified through the act of self-sacrifice—but, more importantly for our purposes, since the sacrifice and veneration of a *sati* is an extremely controversial issue in present-day India. The death of Roop Kanwar in 1987 was the catalyst to a reassessment of a centuries-old debate concerning the religious and moral justification of *sati*. While *sati* has technically been illegal since the passing of a law by the British in 1829, it was not until after Roop Kanwar's death that the Indian government created its own legislation aimed at the cessation of *sati* sacrifice as well as *sati* worship: abettors of *sati* could face the death penalty or life in prison and those venerating the act could be imprisoned up to seven years and be fined between \$400 and \$2,400. At this time, the government also intended to destroy temples associated with the worship of *sati* (Gopalakrishnan 1987). It should come as no surprise that not all Indians have readily accepted the interference of the government in religious affairs, especially those endorsing *sati*. Paradoxically, one *sati* opponent only supported administrative action

³⁵ *Sati* immolation was performed as recently as March 2004, as reported by *The Times of India* (March 19, 2004, online version accessed on February 1, 2005 at: <http://timesofindia.indiatimes.com/cms.dll/html/uncomp/articleshow/569301.cms>).

against what she described as criminal behavior (i.e., religiously motivated violence or the forceful acceptance of destructive traditions) but not against benign beliefs. Moreover, according to this antagonist, temples venerating *sati*, contrary to the fear of feminists that *sati* worship leads to an increase in *sati* sacrifice, should be allowed to remain for two reasons: (1) *sati* sacrifice is not endemic in areas where *sati* veneration is practiced and (2) the restriction of *sati* worship could lead to further religious sanctions in India (Kishwar 2000).

The irony of Kishwar's sentiments were apparently lost on her for she proposed governmental intrusion only in religious matters that she deemed objectionable. This has been the lot for human sacrifice in the modern (or post-modern) world inasmuch as its spiritual justification has been rendered obsolete by humanitarian concerns. The following quote, taken from *India Abroad*, illustrates the pressures which human immolation has encountered when facing the apprehensions of the "civilized" world (Raman 1988: 17):³⁶

Our current concern should be not so much with whether sati is part of Hinduism as with its unfortunate and undeniable occurrence in Hindu society.

In this context it is important to remember the two sides of the fact that Hinduism is among the great religious tradition (*sic*) of humankind: On the one hand, in it have evolved many profound insight (*sic*), ennobling thoughts, and spiritually elevating principles; as also magnificent architecture, glorious music and colorful festivals.

On the other hand, there have also arisen in the Hindu world (as in other great religious traditions) some ideas that need to be discarded, some beliefs that need to be corrected, and some practices that need to be condemned from more enlightened perspectives.

Not all the apologetics in the world can erase the fact that very often in Hindu society (as elsewhere) women have been subjugated, treated shabbily and considered as inferior beings. Sati is merely one of its more atrocious and vicious expressions. Many in the course of India's long history have condemned it: Banabhatta, Akbar, Guru Amar Das, and Ram Mohun Roy, to mention but a few.

³⁶ Some have considered *sati* an archaic rite (Verma 1997) or an uncivilized practice (Daiya 1988).

We must resist the temptation to explain away such evils or pretend they have nothing to do with (former) Hindu world views. It is not through computers and more television sets that we will enter the modern age, but through a bold vision that will not hesitate to condemn and correct sectarian hatreds, social injustices, and dark-age superstitions without being defensive about their religious associations, while still retaining the many grand and glorious elements in our traditions.

For Raman, therefore, one should not abandon *sati* sacrifice based upon religious ideals but on the basis of a current view of morality. While Raman acknowledged that some, not all, sacrosanct Hindu texts support *sati*, sacred literature is essentially irrelevant to the thrust of the argument.³⁷ One finds this perspective expressed elsewhere: “However, whether *sati* and other reprehensible practices have scriptural sanction or not, is besides (*sic*) the point. The issue at stake is one of human dignity and the freedom to live as one chooses” (*The Illustrated Weekly of India* May 1, 1988: 26). For others, however, Hindu writings serve a more central role in the debate over *sati* immolation. Two religious leaders have come to the fore in this regard following the death of Roop Kanwar. In the perspective of Niranjana Dev Teerth, “The Vedas, all the *Smritis*, the *Dharam Sindhu*, *Likhit Sindhu*, etc, all detail the factors that justify *sati*,” whereas in the view of Swami Agnivesh, “one will have to distinguish between the spurious scriptures and the correct scriptures...it is the four Vedas alone, the *samhitas*, that can be regarded as divine knowledge and have authority. All the rest, the Upanishads, the *smritis*, Brahmin *granth*, are acceptable only so far as they conform to the Vedas...according to the Vedas, *sati* is absolutely unthinkable.”³⁸

Agnivesh’s view corresponds to a pervasive academic perspective that Vedic literature does not prescribe *sati* immolation (Saxena 1975: 59; Ray 1985: 2; Sharma

³⁷ *Trial by Fire: A Report on Roop Kanwar’s Death* (Women and Media Committee 1987) suggested that *sati* should be condemned on humanitarian grounds regardless of any religious justifications for the practice.

³⁸ These quotes were taken from interviews with Niranjana Dev Teerth and Swami Agnivesh published in *The Illustrated Weekly of India* (May 1, 1988: 27, 32).

1988: 38; Gaur 1989: 45; Singh 1989: 14; Narasimhan 1990: 13-14). Yet, given the fact that later texts support *sati*, how might one explain the change in Hinduism? In this sense, *sati* opponents, such as Agnivesh, see in *sati* the degeneration of Hindu society from former ideals. Accordingly, with a measure of vehemence,³⁹ Gaur stated (1989: 43):

In the quagmire of widespread superstition and ignorance, wild and poisonous weeds of dogmatic belief were being grown by the priests, the so called custodians of the gates of heaven, who could issue a pass-port to it to the most degenerate of men but not to a women (*sic*) unless she mounted the burning pyre of her deceased husband. Such was the tyranny (*sic*) of the social degeneration and the pitiable plight of women in India during the middle ages.

Narasimhan similarly described *sati* as developing out of the deterioration of the position of women in Indian society and classified it as religiously sanctioned murder (Narasimhan 1990: 27). To be sure, one frequently encounters references to murder in *sati* discussions (Vyas in Chhaya 1988; Upreti and Upreti 1991: vi). One, in particular, a report by the Women and Media Committee of the Bombay Union of Journalists (1987) regarding the death of Roop Kanwar, which concluded that she was murdered, observed that a woman truly doesn't commit *sati* voluntarily, even if she thinks she is acting independently, since such a woman is basically acting out a role prescribed by an oppressive society.

This brief foray into the world of the *sati* has been a profitable exploration of how human sacrifice can be a debated issue within a religious tradition. We have seen that some turn to sacrosanct literature in order to support their respective views, while others disregard these texts in favor of what they consider to be more progressive morals. In the end, however, it is really a matter of perspective: a single slaying can be viewed as either a dignified sacrifice or a debased murder. Like beauty, it is all in the eye of the beholder.

³⁹ For additional hostility, see Saxena (1975: viii).

1.3. Conclusion

But what have we beheld in this chapter? We have seen that the desired results of human sacrifice are multifaceted and dependent upon the cultural traditions of the societies conducting the immolations, be they sacrifices performed in order to rejuvenate the sun, provide a better afterlife for the deceased, or bolster construction projects. Any given immolation can have additional intentions going beyond purely religious concerns. Hence, human sacrifice can be an effective means of social control as expressed through warfare and jurisprudence: populaces have been subjugated in the name of sacrifice and criminals have been dispatched by the technique of public immolation. Of course, conquest and justice also stand at the center of other forms of slaying that have no connection to sacrifice. The difference between sacrifice and killing is related to the associations attached to a slaying and that is why this chapter has proposed a definition of human sacrifice that reduces it to its lowest common denominator: *human immolation is a slaying done with the direct intent of affecting the suprahuman realm of immaterial entities.*

An additional issue thus far encountered but only briefly discussed is the matter of assessing the nature of our sources, especially those originating from outsiders and antagonists. This is truly a fundamental dilemma to the historian and is especially problematic when dealing with such an emotionally charged matter as human sacrifice. An all-too-common propagandistic device has been to accuse individuals of performing human immolation in order to denigrate them. This has been a tool utilized in the ancient world and is still present today, as the headhunting and sacrifice rumors appearing in

Indonesia over the course of the last century testify. Fear of others and the sheer terror of human immolation are part of the motivation for assuming the moral depravity of social groups other than one's own. Indeed, religious intolerance and ethical repugnance are often at the core of human immolation descriptions. This is not only the case in ancient texts but also in modern analyses. The *sati* discussions illustrate the latter perfectly. Here, we have become acquainted with a real practice, verifiable by eyewitness accounts and still performed today, yet it has been vehemently denied legitimacy by its antagonists. One such detractor from India expressed the following (Saxena 1975: viii):

The third Chapter deals with the custom of Sati the subject of which is now so old that it has fairly become new. Every one possessed of the most cursory acquaintance with the History of Rajasthan must have heard of it. It had its rude beginnings in selfishness, was supported by falsehood and ended in cruelty, so much so that among the higher classes it was considered to be an indication that the widow was wanting in affection, if she attempted to evade the funeral pyre.

As for a foreign perspective on *sati*, the then British ambassador to the United States, James Bryce, stated (1907: 21):

We, also, ladies and gentlemen, make no difference in any of our colonies as regards religion. At one time some little pressure was exerted to favor Christianity, but such a line of policy was abandoned. It was perceived that it is not by force that Christianity ought to be spread, and it was felt to be a breach of the principle of absolute religious equality. To bring pressure to bear on the part of the government in its support would not really benefit religion. Accordingly, we observe a strict religious neutrality, and do not interfere in any way with the exercise of any native religion, so long as the practices of that religion are not inconsistent with humanity and the fundamental principles of morality. Of course, when that is the case it becomes necessary to interfere. In India, for instance, there was a custom that the Hindoo widow should burn herself upon the funeral pyre of her husband. This was very common and though not absolutely dictated by the doctrine, it was considered a highly meritorious act, and the English, when they first went to India, were usually told that the widows themselves like it. That argument, however, did not prevent our putting an end to it, and this practice of suttee has been entirely forbidden in India. We do not even allow it in any of the states under our protection, and the enlightened intelligence of the Hindoos has long approved of its being stopped.

Are we to reject outright the credibility of these sources *merely* because of the negative views espoused against human immolation? Certainly not, although there might be other issues that render such sources problematic, e.g., blatant exaggerations (cf. 1.2.2.). When apparent, we must recognize the presence of rhetoric. We can also seek to understand the

underlying presuppositions upon which a given work is founded. The words of the British ambassador, for example, reflect at least three basic presumptions: (1) “enlightened intelligence” realizes the errors of human immolation, (2) human sacrifice is immoral according to Bryce’s (and Britain’s) western and apparently Christian informed ideals,⁴⁰ and (3) depraved acts must be outlawed by force. In light of our examination of *sati* in India, we can accept Bryce’s basic portrayal that this form of immolation existed in India during the era of British hegemony but we should also bear in mind that Bryce’s perspective on the ethics of *sati* is founded upon a worldview that paradoxically tends to reject all forms of human immolation other than the one which stands at the core of the Christian tradition.

From the standpoint of the historian, a scholar’s own personal views on the morality of human immolation should not interfere with an attempt to reconstruct past practices and beliefs. Yet this is precisely what has happened, especially in the realm of ancient Israelite studies. As will be discussed in chapter four, some individuals have literally demonized human sacrifice, while others have denied the legitimacy of its performance within Yahwism because of preconceived ideas that human immolation arises out of human depravity. One need not agree with the piety involved in human sacrifice to recognize its validity for ancient people groups. It is quite another thing, however, if past societies *internally* debated the legality of immolating humans. Such a dispute is exemplified by the current contentions over *sati* in India.

⁴⁰ Bryce’s upbringing within a Christian milieu is briefly discussed by Robbins (1972: 39).

Chapter 2

The Mediterranean Context

2.1. Greek Sphere of Influence

2.1.1. Written Sources

Human victims in Greek religion are primarily an ideal construct of the imagination...In Greek imagination, where human sacrifice was more common, the ideal human victims were children or foreigners, in other words social groups which were dispensable and unprotected by the law. They were usually made to die in the public interest, to save the fathers and mothers who controlled and perpetuated the polis society...Greek authors credited the mythical period or the remote past more readily with the practice of human sacrifice than their own contemporaries or immediate ancestors. On the whole, however, they preferred to look for human sacrifice among the 'barbarians' rather than the Greeks (Henrichs 1981: 232-33).

This quote encapsulates very well the portrayal of human immolation in Greek literature:

(1) it is primarily a practice of the remote past or of contemporary foreigners; (2) the victims are mainly from marginalized groups (children, foreigners, and, one should add, women); and (3) the sacrifices frequently focus on averting disaster (disjunctive sacrifice). The writings of Herodotus will be useful as a point of departure for illustrating these three issues.

2.1.1.1. Prisoners of War

In the fourth book of Herodotus' *Histories*, one finds a discussion of the manner in which foreigners sacrificed prisoners of war. The description brings to mind our discussion in chapter one (1.2.3.) concerning headhunting and construction sacrifice (*Histories* 4.103, Carter 1958: 266):

The first of these, the Tauri, have these customs. They sacrifice to the Maiden all shipwrecked men and such of the Greeks as they capture in raids; and they do it in this way. After the opening rites, they club the victim on the head, then, as some say, throw the body over the cliff on which

the temple stands and mount the head on a pole; others agree as to the head, but say that the body is buried in the earth and not thrown over the cliff. The Tauri themselves say that the deity to whom they sacrifice is Iphigenia, the daughter of Agamemnon. When they take prisoners in war, they cut off their heads, and every man takes a head home and mounts it on a tall pole high above his house, generally over the chimney. These, they say, are put there as guardians of the house. It is a people that lives by plunder and war.⁴¹

One similarly finds in this book the description of a Scythian⁴² practice wherein one out of every one hundred prisoners of war was customarily sacrificed to Ares in an elaborate rite, beginning and ending with a libation. A libation of wine was poured over a victim, whose throat was then cut and whose blood was thereafter collected in a container and carried to the top of an altar of wood; there, it was spilled as a libation on the cultic image of Ares, a sword. Simultaneously, the victim's arm was removed from the torso and thrown into the air (*Histories* 4.62). Sacrifice by means of slashing also made its way into Herodotus' works in reference to a Persian practice, i.e., members of Xerxes' fleet captured a Greek scouting ship and sacrificed the most handsome prisoner at the front of the boat by slitting his throat. In this case, it was done as a thanksgiving sacrifice (*Histories* 7.180).

2.1.1.2. *Pharmakoi*

Concerning human immolation in Greece itself Herodotus referenced the city of Alus as having a local tradition of sacrificing "the descendants of Cytissorus son of Phrixus, because, when the Achaeans sought to make Athamas the scapegoat for the country, in accordance with the oracle, and were going to sacrifice him, this Cytissorus came from Aea in Colchis and rescued him, and in so doing brought the wrath of the god

⁴¹ The Tauri or Taurians come from the Crimean region. Their so-called Maiden is identified in this passage as Iphigenia but in the work of Euripides, the goddess is comparable to the Greek Artemis. Artemis' likely association with the Taurians is evinced by one of her Greek epithets meaning "bull-hunting" (Tauropolos), which is very similar in sound to the name of the Taurians (Hall 1999: xvi-xvii; cf. Manning 1920: 40, 54-55).

⁴² Like the Taurians, the Scythians were centralized in modern-day Ukraine (Pope 2000; Cf. a treatment of their empire in Phillips 1972).

on his own progeny” (*Histories* 7.197, Carter 1958: 476). While this passage does not deal with the *pharmakos* [or scapegoat ritual] per se (Hughes 1991: 232, n. 81), the description is in line with the Greek concept of the *pharmakos* rite as portrayed in other texts, which is likely the reason why O’Connor-Visser did include the story in her list of passages related to *pharmakoi* (1987: 218). In terms of pragmatics, the *pharmakos* rite was a practice wherein an individual absorbed the ills of society and by being driven away from the populace or even slaughtered he (rarely, she)⁴³ removed social violence or anxiety and replaced it with societal harmony (Girard 1977: 93-96; cf. Burkert 1979: 64-67). In fact, the Greeks themselves labeled it an act of purification or *katharsis* (Burkert 1979: 65). There is some debate, however, concerning the manner in which the *pharmakos* rite achieved this catharsis. While it has been considered an act of human immolation, the death of the *pharmakos* was not always a requirement in the extant literature. It would seem that the idea of immolating the *pharmakos* was mainly a product of later perceptions regarding the rite, whereas the early writings do not portray the death of the victim (Hughes 1991: 164-65). An example of an early non-sacrificial description of a *pharmakos* rite is the fourth-century BCE speech ascribed to Lysias (Lysias 6.53, Hughes 1991: 151):

Therefore we should think that by punishing and ridding ourselves of Andocides we are cleansing the city and freeing it from pollution and sending away a *pharmakos* and freeing ourselves from a sinner, as this man is all of these in one.

Green, building upon the conclusions provided by Hughes, went so far as to suggest that the “link between the scapegoat and human sacrifice occurs only in Graeco-Roman accounts of *pharmakos* rituals taking place in the Greek city of Massilia in southern Gaul,

⁴³ The application of the word *pharmakos* to a female victim is virtually nonexistent in classical literature. One reference, however, was made by Hesychius to a female *pharmakos* at Athens (Hughes 1991: 179; 246, n. 51; 251, n. 50).

where a poor citizen volunteered himself as a victim on behalf of the town” (Green 2001: 145). Hughes, conversely, was not so adamant that the death of the victim actually occurred at Massilia given that the two main accounts concerning the *pharmakos* at Massilia relate two divergent endings. According to *Servius on Virgil Aeneid* 3.57 (= Petronius fragment 1) and Lactantius Placidus, Commentary on Statius’ *Thebais* 10.793 (Hughes 1991: 158):

The term moreover is derived from a custom of the Gauls [*ex more Gallorum*]. For whenever the Massilians were suffering from pestilence one of the poor would offer himself to be fed [*alendus*] the entire year [*anno integro*] at public expense [*publicis sumptibus*] and on especially pure foods [*purioribus cibis*]. Later this man, decorated with branches and sacred vestments, was led around through the whole community [*per totam civitatem*] under curses, that the ills of the whole community fall on him, and so was he cast out. And this can be read in Petronius.

To purify the community with a human victim is a Gallic custom [*Gallicus mos*]. For someone of the most needy was enticed by rewards to sell himself for the purpose. And he was fed [*alabatur*] during the whole year [*anno toto*] at public expense [*publicis sumptibus*] on especially pure foods [*purioribus cibis*]; and finally on a specific and solemn day he was led through the whole community [*per totam civitatem*] out of the city beyond the boundaries, and he was killed with stones by the people.

Servius’ work dates to the late fourth century CE (Bloomfield 1941: 124) and Lactantius’ to the fifth or sixth century CE (Hughes 1991: 158) but the similarities in language between these two passages signify a common dependence upon the source cited by Servius, namely, Petronius (Hughes 1991: 158), who wrote during the first century CE (Abbott 1911: 257). It is extremely difficult to demonstrate conclusively which of the two accounts preserves the original culmination to the *pharmakos* rite at Masillia. Nevertheless, the tradition that *pharmakoi* were killed in order to purify the city is very late, thereby corresponding to Green’s deduction that the sacrifice of human scapegoats is a late development in the Greco-Roman sphere. According to her assessment, the transformation from releasing the scapegoat to killing the individual in association with a city in Gaul (Masillia) might have been a real practice brought about by the influences of

Gaulish human immolation or a literary fabrication meant to illustrate the barbarity of the people dwelling in the region (Green 2001: 145).

Regardless of the disparity between the early and late traditions concerning the death of the *pharmakos*, they do agree on the nature of the rite, that is, it functioned as an aversion ritual. Hence, one could summarize the custom as follows: the *pharmakos* was often from the lower echelons of society and was fed by the community until, either for the sake of a recurring festival, such as the Thargelia of Apollo,⁴⁴ or in response to a disease affecting the city, he was led around the city in order to absorb its pollution, after which time he was finally expelled from the community (early traditions) or killed (later accounts) (Burkert 1979: 65; Hughes 1991: 139-65; Green 2001: 144-45).

2.1.1.3. Female Sacrifice

According to Greek literature, there were other means of averting harm in addition to the *pharmakos* rite. In the *Histories*, Herodotus also recorded a mythic account told by Egyptian priests concerning Menelaus' trip to Memphis to regain Helen. Once he accomplished this objective, he was eager to leave but was impeded by a potent wind. Menelaus overcame this obstacle by immolating two Egyptian children and was therefore able to sail away to Libya (*Histories* 2.119). A similar situation is found in Aeschylus' tragedy *Agamemnon* but in this case Agamemnon sacrifices his own daughter, Iphigenia, rather than a foreigner, in order to remove the wind's oppression. The passages in question are *Agamemnon* 218-48 (Lloyd-Jones 1970: 28-30):

⁴⁴ The Thargelia was a two-day celebration on the sixth and seventh days of the month of Thargelion. A *pharmakos* rite took place on the first day as a means of cleansing the city and a first-fruits offering occurred on the second day in honor of Apollo (Bremmer 1983: 318-19; Hedrick 1988: 204-05).

Strophe 5

And when he had put on the yoke-strap of compulsion,
 his spirit's wind veering to an impious blast,
 impure, unholy, from that moment
 his mind changed to a temper of utter ruthlessness.
 For mortals are made reckless by the evil counsels
 of merciless Infatuation, beginner of disaster.
 And so he steeled himself to become the sacrificer
 of his daughter, to aid a war
 fought to avenge a woman's loss
 and to pay beforehand for his ships.

Antistrophe 5

And her prayers and cries of "Father!"
 and her maiden years they let go for nothing,
 those arbiters eager for battle;
 and her father told his servants after a prayer
 to lift her face downwards like a goat above the altar,
 as she fell about his robes to implore him with all her heart,
 and by gagging her lovely mouth
 to stifle a cry
 that would have brought a curse upon his house;
 using violence, and the bridle's stifling power.

Strophe 6

And with her robe of saffron dye streaming downwards
 she shot each of the sacrificers
 with a piteous dart from her eye,
 standing out as in a picture, wishing
 to address each by name, since often
 in her father's hospitable halls
 she had sung, and virginal with pure voice
 had lovingly honored the paean
 of felicity at the third libation
 of her loving father.

This tragic tale, dating to ca. 460 (Lloyd-Jones 1970: vi), was followed shortly thereafter by the work of Euripides (ca. 413 BCE) in which the writer returned to the sacrifice of Iphigenia. This time, however, she was given the opportunity to voice her opinion concerning the slaying (Vellacott 1984: 165). Thus, at the end of Euripides' *Iphigenia at Aulis* Agamemnon's daughter states: "O my father, here I am beside you. I gladly give my body for my fatherland and for the whole land of Greece. Lead me to the altar of the goddess, you Achaeans, and sacrifice me, if this is what the oracle demands. So far as it

depends on me, may you have success, may you win victory with your spears and come back to your fatherland” (1551-57, Morwood 1999: 130). Yet, just before the priest was able to administer the fatal blow Iphigenia disappeared and a deer appeared in her place as a substitute victim. We are told that Artemis did not want the blood of the noblewoman to desecrate her altar and that Iphigenia was taken away to join the gods. According to Euripides’ *Iphigenia among the Taurians*, Artemis transported her to the region of the Taurians to become a priestess for her and it was in this capacity that Iphigenia was to participate in the rite of sacrificing foreigners (25 ff.).⁴⁵

Human, mainly female, immolation is a common motif in the tragedies of Euripides. One encounters the following victims: Macaria in *Heracleidae*,⁴⁶ Polyxena in *Hecuba*, Erechtheus’ daughter in *Erechtheus*,⁴⁷ and Menoeceus in *Phoenissae*.⁴⁸ O’Connor-Visser’s analysis of these tragedies, including the above mentioned *Iphigenia in Aulis*, found that all of the accounts are unified in their depictions of human immolation: “a sacrifice takes place, which has been instigated by a superhuman demand, usually by way of an oracle or other divine agency and, in the case of the *Hecuba*, by the ghost of Achilles. Moreover through their sacrifice the victims serve some communal

⁴⁵ O’Byrhim has outlined the major differences between Euripides’ *Iphigenia among the Taurians* and the account given by Herodotus concerning human sacrifice in the same region (quoted above). He essentially argued that Euripides constructed his descriptions of Taurian sacrifice to correspond to Phoenician practices inasmuch as they had in common the burning of the victim’s body in a fiery chasm, blood sacrifice, an altar, and “mysticism” (O’Byrhim 2000: 33).

⁴⁶ Macaria, simply called the Maiden in the text (Kovacs 1995: 55), willingly offered herself for sacrifice in order to assist the city of Athens in gaining a military victory against an enemy army (*Heracleidae/Children of Heracles* 389-607).

⁴⁷ Erechtheus sacrificed his daughter upon the advice of the Oracle of Delphi in order to obtain a military victory (O’Connor-Visser 1987: 148).

⁴⁸ For the sake of a besieged city (Thebes), Menoeceus sacrificed himself on the city walls (*Phoenissae/The Phoenician Maidens* 911-14, 985-1018, 1090-92).

purpose: a dangerous situation is alleviated through their intermediacy” (O’Connor-Visser 1987: 1, emphasis hers).⁴⁹

2.1.1.4. Funerals

The sacrifice of Polyxena in *Hecuba* is particularly worthy of elaboration inasmuch as the story presents a prolonged treatment of the sacrifice, including a debate within the Greek army concerning whether or not Achilles’ request should be fulfilled. Early in the narrative one reads of Achilles’ desire to obtain “Polyxena as a special sacrifice for his tomb and a prize of honor” (*Hecuba* 40-41, Kovacs 1995: 403). This request resulted in a debate⁵⁰ among the Greeks which was only quelled by Odysseus’ suggestion that it would be better to honor Achilles than to spare the life of a slave. What is more, the sacrifice would be an act of gratitude directed towards those who died for their fellow countrymen (*Hecuba* 98-152). Later, at the death of Polyxena, we find the following speech by the son of Achilles, which further illustrates the purpose of the sacrifice (*Hecuba* 534-541, Kovacs 1995: 447):

Then he said, “Son of Peleus, my father, receive these libations, libations that charm the dead and summon them back up to the land of the living! Come and drink the blood of a maiden, dark and undiluted, which is the army’s gift and mine! Be propitious to us, grant us your leave to cast off the mooring cables from our sterns, and allow us all, journeying home in peace, to reach our native land!”

⁴⁹ The alleviation of distress is portrayed in Plutarch’s discussion of the Greek sacrifice of three Persians at Salamis. Plutarch wrote in a later era (first to second centuries CE) (Marr 1998: 1-2) than that of primary importance to our study but since the account relates information concerning the fifth century BCE, it has been referenced here (*Themistocles* 13). We should note as well that Plutarch’s source for the story was the work of a fourth century writer, Phaniass of Eresus (Marr 1998: 71). For a detailed discussion of the sacrifice, see Henrichs (1981: 208-24).

⁵⁰ In the passage Agamemnon did not wish to sacrifice Polyxena because of his concubine Cassandra (Foley 2001: 94, 283-85; O’Connor-Visser 1987: 52). Cassandra, whom we also know from Euripides’ *The Trojan Women*, is like Polyxena, Hecuba’s daughter (Oates and O’Neill 1938: 804, 956).

An additional account involving Achilles and funerary human sacrifice appears in Homer's *Iliad* (23.161-83, Reck 1994: 412-13):⁵¹

After king Agamemnon heard these words
 he sent the people away to their ships—
 but the mourners remained, heaped wood in piles
 till they made a pyre a hundred feet square,
 and sadly laid the dead body [i.e., Patroclus] on top.
 Then many an excellent sheep and ox
 were flayed and dressed before the funeral pyre.
 Achilles gathered fat from every one
 to cover the corpse, heaped skinned beasts nearby,
 laid jars of honey and oil on the bier,
 then put four glorious horses on that pyre,
 groaning and moaning loudly all the while.
 Nine dogs there were that fed from his table,
 and he slaughtered two of these for the pyre,
 next cut the throats of twelve noble Trojans
 with his sword—an evil business indeed—
 set the flames to flicker implacably
 and groaned and called his beloved comrade:
 “Rejoice, Patroclus, even in Hades!
 Now you have all I promised you before.
 Yes, here we’ve put those twelve noble Trojans
 to burn with you on the pyre—and Hector
 won’t be devoured by flames but by the dogs”

According to Mylonas, the death of the twelve Trojans fundamentally constituted an act of vengeance and not human immolation. Support for this conclusion, it was suggested, can be found in the *Iliad* itself, for it is here that one may note the common practice of exacting retribution from one’s enemies after the death of a relative or friend (*Iliad* 11.248 ff, 11.426 ff., 13.660 ff., and 14.476 ff.). What is more, Mylonas argued, one should not consider the twelve Trojans as functioning as Patroclus’ servants in Hades since Homer (ca. eighth century BCE) described life in Hades as devoid of desire or feelings. In such a state there would be no need for servants or friends.⁵² For Mylonas, nevertheless, funerary gifts could be enjoyed on the trip to Hades (cf. *Iliad* 13.414 ff.);⁵³

⁵¹ Cf. *Iliad* 21.17-33 for a description of the acquisition of the twelve Trojans.

⁵² On this possible date for Homer, see Chadwick (1976: xii).

⁵³ *Iliad* 13.410-16 states (trans. by Reck 1994: 240):
 ...struck

thus, the twelve Trojans were meant to accompany Patroclus on his journey to his final resting place (Mylonas 1948: 60-62). It must be noted, however, that the four examples listed by Mylonas from the *Iliad* regarding revenge do not portray the vengeance killings as acts performed outside of the perimeters of the battlefield. Yes, each case does reference revenge but the vengeance is extracted on the fields of war and not in a subsequent funerary rite. Achilles' actions are distinct in relation to the immediate context of the killings—Achilles removes the twelve Trojans from combat and slays them on the pyre. Moreover, according to Rohde, Homer's representation of the funeral of Patroclus is unique in comparison to the typical Homeric portrayal of the dead. Normally for Homer the departed soul entered a vacuous state but this is not true of Patroclus.

Rohde's commentary is worthy of reproduction (Rohde 1925: 13):

This sacrifice is inexplicable if the soul immediately upon its dissolution flutters away insensible, helpless and powerless, and therefore incapable of enjoying the offerings made to it. It is therefore not unnatural that a method of interpretation which isolates Homer as far as possible and adheres closely to his own fixed and determinate range of ideas, should attempt to deny the sacrificial character of the offerings made on this occasion. We may well ask, however, what else but a sacrifice, i.e. a repast offered in satisfaction of the needs of the person honoured (in this case the psyche), can be intended by this stream of blood about the corpse; this slaughtering and burning of cattle and sheep, horses and dogs, and finally of twelve Trojan prisoners on or at the funeral pyre? To explain it all as a mere performance of pious duties, as is often done in interpreting many of the gruesome pictures of Greek sacrificial ceremonies, is impossible here.

Rhode is certainly correct that Patroclus is meant to benefit from the killing of the Trojans but it is also undeniable that Achilles kills them in part as an act of vengeance. Mylonas is accurate in this regard, but does the presence of revenge preclude a slaying from having the additional function of a sacrifice? Hughes argued that sacrifice and vengeance slayings are separate categories. While he and I share similar conceptions

intrepid Hippasus' son Hypsenor
 over the liver and loosened his knees.
 Then lord Deiphobus boasted horribly:
 "So our Asius is avenged! I suppose
 he'll be glad as he goes through Hades' gates,
 since I sent a companion for the way!"

concerning the nature of human sacrifice, e.g., all ritual killings are not necessarily human sacrifices, he emphasized that slayings done at funerals were likely vengeance killings or ritual executions but not immolations. Human sacrifice is a phrase reserved by Hughes to indicate the slaying of humans in ways paralleled by typical animal immolations in Greek society. Vengeance killing supposedly does not find an analogy in animal sacrifice (Hughes 1991: 3-4, 8, 65-70, 192). This is, conversely, a problematic interpretation in two respects: (1) it is too restrictive a categorization upon human immolation to limit it to types that are paralleled by animal sacrifice but even if one wishes to do so, it should not be forgotten that the twelve Trojans join animals upon Patroclus' pyre (cf. above quote by Rhode); and (2) human sacrifice can have both intrahuman and suprahuman effects. Thus, the slaying of the twelve Trojans could fulfill both the role of a vengeance killing and a human immolation performed on behalf of a suprahuman being, Patroclus—a similar duality in function is found in the immolation of criminals, as discussed in chapter one. It would seem best, therefore, to interpret the funeral of Patroclus as portraying human sacrifice.⁵⁴

2.1.2. Material Culture

2.1.2.1. *Dromos* Burials

Karageorghis utilized the funeral of Patroclus in interpreting the archaeological remains excavated in 1962 at Salamis, Cyprus (Tomb 2).⁵⁵ There, Karageorghis discovered the skeleton of a human located approximately 2.5 m away from the opening

⁵⁴ Ekroth has recently interpreted Homer's description of Patroclus' funeral as a representation of human sacrifice (Ekroth 2002: 228, n. 65; cf. also Cueva 2001: 106-07).

⁵⁵ Among the scholars who use Patroclus' funeral in association with archaeological remains and human sacrifice, see Tsountas and Manatt (1897: 151) or Persson (1931: 69).

of the main burial chamber in the *dromos*⁵⁶ section of the tomb.⁵⁷ The earth surrounding the skeleton was of the same consistency as the dirt employed to fill in the *dromos* and, therefore, might indicate that the deposit of the body was contemporaneous with a burial in the main tomb chamber (ca. late seventh century BCE). Furthermore, the position of the hands, which were in close proximity to each other, point to the possibility that they were bound together. The excavator identified this supposedly “bound” individual as a sacrificed slave. Also of importance is the discovery of two horses in the *dromos* who were seemingly sacrificed with a chariot (Karageorghis 1967: 5, 9-11, 24, 121; 1982: 135), a point of further correspondence between Salamis Tomb 2 and the *Iliad*.

Salamis Tomb 83 (excavated in 1967) similarly yielded the remains of a buried human in the fill of the *dromos* outside of the main tomb chamber. Unfortunately, like the aforementioned tomb (Tomb 2), the main chamber was looted. In the process, the robbers disturbed the *dromos* burial in their attempt to reach the main chamber. Enough of the *dromos* burial was sufficiently intact, however, to demonstrate that the body had been interred in a wooden coffin and that the individual wore a bronze ring and grasped an egg, the shell of which was surprisingly preserved. Karageorghis again identified the skeleton as a sacrificed slave (Karageorghis 1970: 123-26, 208, 232). Yet, this burial is much more elaborate than most of the other “slave” burials that we will review in the ensuing treatment. Indeed, most interments interpreted as slave burials yielded few or no funerary objects.

⁵⁶ The basic layout of this style of tomb consists of two burial areas. The first room encountered when entering the tomb was the *dromos* section; the second room (or main chamber) was reached by traversing the *dromos*. Both sections were utilized for multiple burials over many years. Typically the *dromos* section was refilled with dirt following each burial in the main chamber; however, the *dromos* was not always fully excavated for burials in either room.

⁵⁷ The skeletal remains of another individual were unearthed as well but were disturbed by a farmer’s plow (Karageorghis 1967: 9).

An additional Cypriot burial, Tomb P. 74 at Lapithos (excavated in 1931), which dates to the Early Iron Age,⁵⁸ produced the remains of a skeleton buried under the rocks utilized to close the main tomb chamber. This individual was placed on a 14 cm deep earthen platform and a lone ceramic vessel was found at the upper left side of the body. The excavation report conveyed the opinion that since the arrangement of the body was unusual, it is suggestive of human sacrifice.⁵⁹ As a means of comparison to Tomb P. 74, Pieridou directed the reader's attention to Tomb 422 at Lapithos (Pieridou 1965: 75-76). There, the Swedish Cyprus Expedition, excavating in the area from 1927-31, located three skeletons, which were interred one on top of the other near the entrance of the *dromos* with two large stones covering them. A large stone (1.18 m long x .51 m wide x .34 m tall) with a hole in the middle and small troughs on its surface was also found nearby and was subsequently interpreted as the place of sacrifice where the blood of the victims flowed. The supposed recipient of the shed blood was an adult male buried in the main chamber at the same time that the sacrificial victims were interred in the *dromos*. These events date to the end of the Cypro-Geometric III era, which lasted from 850-750 BCE (Gjerstad 1934: 241-46).⁶⁰

The notion that sacrificed slaves were interred outside the main tomb chambers of their masters is also found in academic discussions of burials in Greece. In the *dromos* of Tomb VII at Prosymna, excavated in 1925, the skeleton of an adult was unearthed lying upon a series of stones near the door of the tomb chamber, approximately 2 m above the

⁵⁸ The Early Iron Age is otherwise known as the Geometric or Cypro-Geometric period (1050-750 BCE) (Karageorghis 1982: 6, 9).

⁵⁹ The bones of the last person buried in the main tomb chamber (there were four in total) were disarticulated, which leads one to wonder whether or not the last chamber burial was contemporaneous with the burial under the wall closing the chamber.

⁶⁰ For the dates of this period, consult Karageorghis (1982: 9).

floor of the *dromos*. There were no funerary objects with the skeleton but the sherds located near the body provided the excavator with a date of the Late Helladic III period (ca. twelfth to eleventh centuries BCE) for the burial.⁶¹ In seeking to present an interpretation of the remains, Blegen merely noted the possibility that this was a sacrificed servant or slave who may have been guarding the door of a master. Blegen directed the reader to the remains found in Tomb 15 at Mycenae by Tsountas and in a tomb at Argos by Vollgraff for further examples of such burials (Blegen 1937: 153, 156-57, 235-36). In a report on the excavations conducted from 1902 to 1904, Vollgraff similarly called the interment in front of the door of Tomb VI at Argos a case of human sacrifice and referenced the discoveries published by Tsountas (Vollgraff 1904: 370). As for Tsountas' excavation of Tomb 15 at Mycenae in the late nineteenth century, the results can be summarized as follows (Tsountas and Manatt 1897: 151-52):

...and not infrequently bodies are found buried in the passages of the chamber-tombs. Indeed, in one of these, six entire skeletons lay crosswise before the doorway at different depths. As indications go to show that all were buried at one time, we assume that they were slain on purpose to accompany their master to Hades, for it is certainly improbable that six slaves or captives—and such they must have been to be excluded from burial in the chamber—should have simultaneously met a natural death. The woman buried in the *dromos* of the Clytemnestra tomb must have been a slave, and one highly prized. For, while as a rule there are no offerings with the other bodies buried in these passages, this grave yielded two bronze mirrors...as well as several small ornaments of gold. This pit-grave, which is without either covering or revetment, is cut directly in the *dromos*-floor, showing that the work was done while the passageway was clear. Now we can hardly believe that the *dromos* was cleared merely for the burial of a slave, and so we infer that the woman's death was coincident with that of some one of the master's family.

This quote emphasizes the notion that sacrificed slaves or captives were the only individuals buried in the *dromos* section of tombs but one must exercise caution when attempting to interpret the remains of individuals buried in *dromoi* since such burials might represent non-sacrificial interments. Take, for instance, two chamber tombs from Asine unearthed during the Swedish excavations conducted at the site between 1922 and

⁶¹ On chronology, see Chadwick (1976: xii); Karageorghis (1982: 9).

1930. According to Persson, certain individuals buried in the *dromoi* of Chamber Tomb I:1 and Chamber Tomb II:1 were not sacrificed gatekeepers but deceased family members whose relatives did not wish to go to all the work of opening the tomb chambers by excavating the entire fill of the *dromoi* (Persson 1938a: 356). In other words, their burials were not contemporary with burials in the main tomb chambers. Such an understanding would explain the extravagant *dromos* burial of the woman in the Clytemnestra grave (*contra* Tsountas; cf. above quote) as well as the coffin burial in Salamis Tomb 83. What is more, some *dromoi* skeletal remains might represent individuals who were initially buried in main tomb chambers and then removed in order to accommodate new chamber burials (cf. Wace 1949: 15).

2.1.2.2. Additional Remains

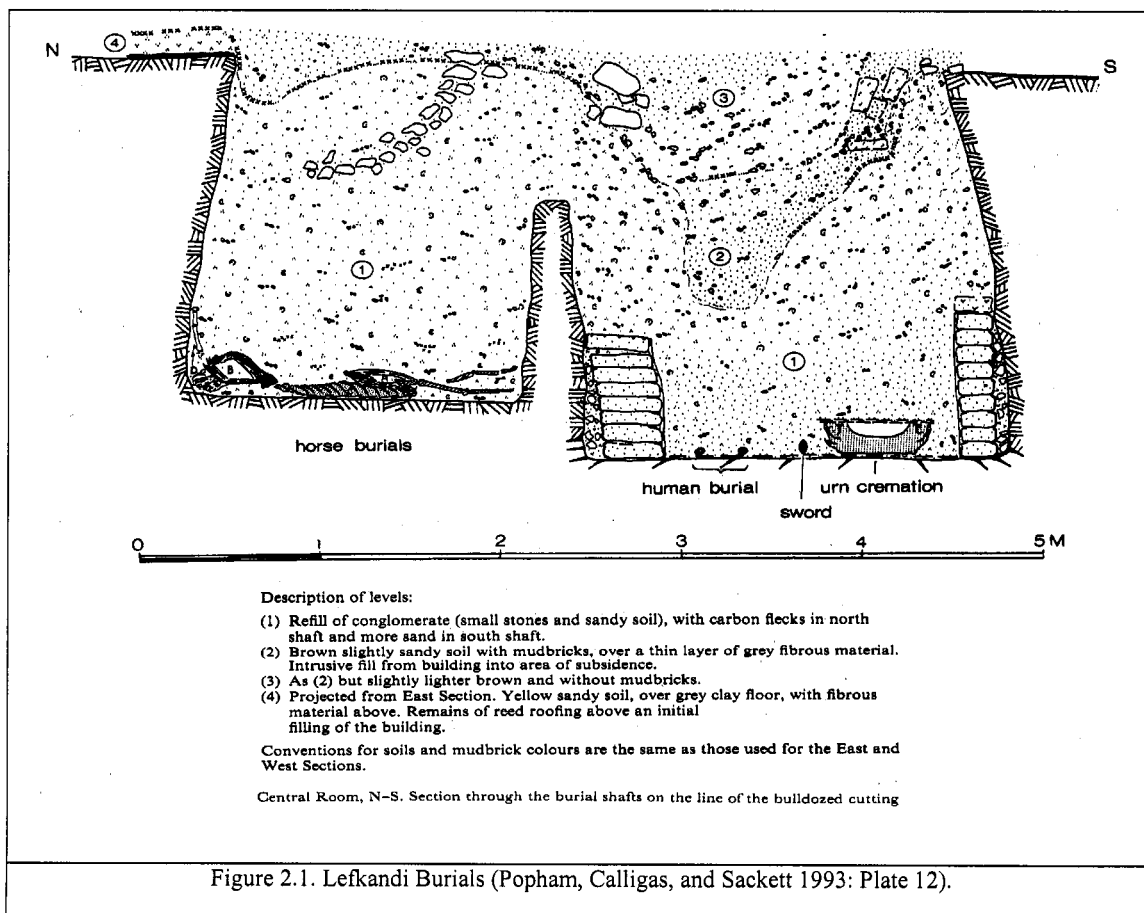


Figure 2.1. Lefkandi Burials (Popham, Calligas, and Sackett 1993: Plate 12).

In addition to the possible examples of human immolation in *dromoi*, consideration should be given to the burial of two individuals at Lefkandi, Greece.⁶² There, a ca. 1000 BCE tomb complex was excavated beginning in 1981. Under the surface of a building seemingly built to commemorate a hero, two burial shafts were discovered. The first contained the skeletons of four horses and the second, the bones of a woman, who was interred on her back with her hands and feet apparently crossed, as well as the cremated remains of an additional individual in a bronze urn. The funerary gifts were rather expensive: the woman was buried with various metal articles, such as faience and gold jewelry, gold breast discs, and an iron knife (located next to her head); and the urn was interred together with an iron sword, spearhead, and blade. Charred remnants indicative of a funerary pyre were also discovered near the shafts, lending further weight to the interpretation that an individual was cremated and buried along with “his consort and his horses” (Popham, Touloupa, and Sackett 1982: 173). There remains, however, some ambiguity regarding whether or not the burials of the two individuals were completed simultaneously. The fill covering the burial urn and the woman’s skeleton is consistent, thereby suggesting that they were buried at the same time; yet, a member of the excavation team offered the possibility that the burial shaft was covered with a wooden roof which would have assisted in clearing out the entirety of the shaft for a second human burial. Thus, either the urn and woman were interred together or one of the individuals was buried subsequently. The report apparently favored the former interpretation, as evinced by the comment: “However, the unexpected presence of the knife with the female burial, its placing near the head and the apparently crossed position

⁶² For the excavation reports, see Popham, Touloupa, and Sackett (1982) and Popham (1993a, 1993b).

of hands and feet, which might have been bound, leave open the possibility at least of suttee” (Popham 1993a: 21). As the attached diagram indicates (fig. 2.1), the burial shaft with the human remains was only partially separated by a short wall from the shaft containing the horse burials; and the lowest stratum of fill in both shafts was consistent enough to consider it a single locus (level 1 on the diagram), demonstrating that the horses were sacrificed at the time when the last human burial took place. If the deaths of the humans were not contemporaneous, and if the horses were sacrificed with the man, which was assumed by the excavators, then his burial would have taken place after the woman’s. The alternative seems much more probable: the horses were buried together with the simultaneous burial of both humans. It is unlikely that one human interment occurred, which was later followed by the total clearing out of the burial shaft to such an extent that no traces of the subsequent intrusion remained. The funerary sacrifice of horses and a human is paralleled by the *dromos* burial at Salamis (Tomb 2) and Homer’s *Iliad*.

A final example of a possible human sacrifice that comes to us via archaeological research was unearthed in the excavations at Anemospilia in Crete. Anemospilia was a Minoan site with an impressive sanctuary built ca. 1900 BCE that was occupied only for a single settlement phase before being destroyed by an earthquake,⁶³ a fact which was incorporated by the excavators into their interpretation of the human remains found within the western room and antechamber of the building. That is to say, of the four skeletons discovered, three showed signs of trauma inflicted by the collapsed roof of the building. The fourth person was supposedly sacrificed in order to avert the impending disaster of the earthquake. The bones of this individual, a male approximately 18 years

⁶³ On the dates of the occupation, see Sakellarakis and Sapouna-Sakellaraki (1997: 271-72 and 22, fig. 1).

old, were discovered on top of a rectangular structure in the western room, which may have been an altar. The body was placed on its right side. The contorted position of the body and the tightness of the jawbones were seen as possible indicators that the man was bound. The excavators further speculated that the two-toned color of the burnt bones of this individual resulted from the different levels of blood left in the body at the time of burning: the fire burned the body parts filled with blood (right side of the body) and turned the bones black, whereas the lack of blood in other portions (left side) of the body brought about the ashen color in the bones. A bronze spearhead was also found near the leg bones. Putting these details together, the excavators reconstructed the events as follows (Sakellarakis and Sapouna-Sakellarakis 1997: 307-08):

It would seem that the youth bound on top of the altar was killed by a blow to the extended jugular carotid in the left part of the neck. Any severance of the carotid, of course, produces the greatest loss of blood... The person who struck the victim at Anemospilia stood behind him and, depending on the height of the altar, would have bent or knelt down to administer the blow. He must have been right-handed and worked efficiently with two strikes. The first was from above and downwards while the second deposited the bronze weapon in the place where it was found during the excavations... the priest, killed near the altar [from the earthquake], would have stood in exactly the position of the person who made the sacrifice. The archaeological evidence indicates that the sacrifice had been made a little while prior to the destruction and that the victim had not been moved from the altar.

While this reconstruction is intriguing, it is far from certain, especially the idea that the difference in bone coloration indicates death by slashing just prior to the earthquake. Indeed, for Hughes, the ashen colored bones of the left side might have resulted from variations in the amount of heat which burned the various portions of the body. That is to say, the left side of the body could have been burned at a higher temperature than the right side and, therefore, resulted in a lighter color. Hughes suggested, moreover, that there is no evidence of blood levels making a difference in bone discoloration from fire (Hughes 1991: 17). The evidence, therefore, is too questionable to presume that a human immolation occurred.

2.1.3. Summation

The physical evidence for human immolation in the Greek sphere of influence is sparse and characteristically early. Indeed, the words of Mylonas are well founded and applicable not only to the Mycenaean realm but also to the Greek world in general: “At best we can only suppose that in very rare cases and for particular reasons a favorite slave or a captured enemy, a dog or a horse, was killed over the grave of the master. But the regular practice of human sacrifice seems to be foreign to the Mycenaean World” (Mylonas 1966: 117).⁶⁴ Hughes, for his part, noted the massive disparity between the numerous literary references to human sacrifice and the meager archaeological data indicative of ritual killing (Hughes 1991: 185-93).⁶⁵ Hence, as was expressed at the start of this chapter (Hughes 1991: 192-93):⁶⁶

...the curious and varied collection of texts studied here – in which human sacrifice, originally a significant symbol on the level of myth, becomes in turn a stirring subject for poets, playwrights, historians, and novelists, and then an object of much misunderstanding for writers of late antiquity – is more a testament to the capacity and breadth of the imagination of the Greeks than a documentary record of their practices.

The texts referenced in the foregoing treatment of Greek literature essentially portray the sacrifice of prisoners of war by non-Greeks (Herodotus), the immolation of a *pharmakos* (Lactantius Placidus), the sacrifice of women for the purpose of advantageous voyages and successful military encounters (Euripides; Aeschylus), and immolations in conjunction with funerals (Euripides; Homer). With the exceptions of the late (Byzantine era) *pharmakos* representation of sacrifice and Herodotus’ historical accounts, the

⁶⁴ Tsountas even came to doubt the validity of his own conclusions concerning human sacrifice (personal communication referenced by Mylonas 1966: 116).

⁶⁵ He was particularly skeptical that there exists any unequivocal material example of human immolation among the known remains from ancient Greece during the historical eras, though he was open to the possibility that human sacrifice might have occurred (Hughes 1991: 191-93).

⁶⁶ Cf. also the sentiments expressed by Bonnechere (1994: 311-12).

majority of the passages examined are mythic texts and dramatic tragedies. Their usefulness for reconstructing actual practices is, therefore, problematic unless clear archaeological parallels or outside textual support can be cited. As for Herodotus, there are two problems with his treatment of prisoner sacrifice: (1) he ascribes the practice to foreigners (Taurians, Scythians, and Persians), thereby limiting his data to the realm of tertiary evidence; and (2) he is not necessarily accurate in the information he provides, as Hughes stated (1991: 186):

We smile indulgently when the Father of History [Herodotus] asserts that in India the ants are bigger than foxes (Hdt. 3.102.2) and that Indian men have black semen (3.101.2). Should we be any more willing to believe when in this same passage he relates that the Padaei sacrifice and consume their elderly (3.99.2)? Or even when, closer to home, he describes human sacrifices performed at Alos in Thessaly (7.197...) [discussed above, 2.1.1.2.]?

Thus, the archaeological remains provide the clearest evidence of human immolation but even these are circumstantial and open to alternative interpretations. Despite these shortcomings, what can be said regarding the *dromoi* burials and human sacrifice? It would seem best to adopt the line of reasoning expressed in the analysis of Hughes. Human sacrifice is a viable interpretation of a *dromos* burial when it can be demonstrated that the interment was contemporaneous with the burial of an individual in the main tomb chamber. Salamis Tomb 2 fits this requirement, which, together with the horses sacrificed, makes a strong case for considering it an instance of human immolation. Lapithos Tomb 422, with its burial of three individuals, placed one on top of the other, also meets this standard. The other *dromoi* burials surveyed in this chapter (Argos Tomb VI, Prosymna Tomb VII, Mycenae Tomb 15, Lapithos Tomb P. 74, Salamis Tomb 83) do not clearly correspond to burials in the main tomb chambers and, therefore, cannot be regarded as definite instances of attendant burial. Mycenae Tomb 15 is, nonetheless, an

intriguing case given the number of skeletons buried in the *dromos* (cf. Hughes 1991: 34, 42, 48).

As for the excavated material from Lefkandi and Anemospilia, the interments at the former site were not located in a *dromos* but the same interpretive criterion utilized for the *dromoi* burials is applicable here as well: the presence of contemporaneous burials in a single tomb might signify immolation. At Lefkandi, Greece it is reasonable to conclude that a woman and horses were sacrificed in conjunction with the burial of a male hero. In this case, then, there is a parallel in Euripides' *Hecuba*, wherein Polyxena is sacrificed to the hero Achilles. Concerning the latter, the remains at Anemospilia are too inconclusive to suppose that a sacrifice took place at the time of the site's destruction by an earthquake.

2.2. Phoenician/Punic Realm

In the previous section on Greek human sacrifice it was shown that human immolation was primarily a figment of the Greek imagination and that Greek authors more readily admitted the existence of human sacrifice in the mythic past or in contemporary foreign societies than in their own culture and times. One group that certainly piqued the interest of the classical and patristic authors were the Phoenicians, a maritime people who expanded from their homeland on the Levantine coast to settle throughout the Mediterranean basin—the Phoenician settlements outside the Middle East can be subsumed under the epithet Punic (or later Neo-Punic during Rome's hegemony

over the Mediterranean region)⁶⁷ and the distinction between Phoenician and Punic data will be maintained in the subsequent sections. The issue that we must now face is whether or not these authors erroneously assumed the existence of human immolation among the Phoenicians and their Punic counterparts.

A brief survey of the classical and patristic authors who wrote about Phoenician and Punic human sacrifice from the fifth century BCE to the fifth century CE⁶⁸ reveals the following information:⁶⁹ (1) while certain passages explain that children were chiefly sacrificed to Saturn (Quintus Curtius, *History of Alexander* 4.3.23; St. Augustine, *De Civitate Dei* 7.19, 26) or Kronos (Pseudo-Plato, *Minos* 315e; Diodorus Siculus 13.86.3), (2) some texts do not designate the age of the victim (Sextus Empiricus, *Outlines of Pyrrhonism* 3.208, 221; Sophocles, *Andromeda* Fragment 122; Porphyry, *De Abstinencia*

⁶⁷ Neo-Punic was a form of Punic used during the Roman era. One characteristic of this newer form of Punic was that it was eventually written in the Latin script but the key distinction between the two was “the loss of the pharyngeal and laryngeal consonants and the coalescence of the sibilants (*z s ş s’*)” (Krahmalkov 2001: 14, cf. 18-19; see also Amadasi Guzzo 1997: 318).

⁶⁸ Most of the following dates were obtained through an online version of *The Oxford Classical Dictionary*. Edited by S. Hornblower and A. Spawforth. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2003. The web version was accessed via *Oxford Reference Online* on April 2 and 4, 2006 at www.oxfordreference.com.proxy.lib.umich.edu. The date for Sophocles was referenced in Rives (1995: 68) and Petersen (1904); the date for Pseudo-Plato in Hughes (1991: 97, 115-16); and Kleitarchos in Stager and Wolff (1984: 32):

Sophocles – fifth century BCE
 Pseudo-Plato – fourth century BCE
 Kleitarchos – third century BCE
 Dionysius of Halicarnassus – ca. first century BCE
 Diodorus Siculus – ca. first century BCE
 Silius Italicus – ca. 26-102 CE
 Plutarch – ca. 50-120 CE
 Quintus Curtius – ca. first or early second century CE
 Philo of Byblos – ca. 70-160 CE
 Sextus Empiricus – ca. late second century CE
 Porphyry – ca. 234-305 CE
 Eusebius – ca. 260-339 CE
 St. Augustine – 354-430 CE
 Orosius – ca. early fifth century CE

⁶⁹ Day has conveniently included translations of the chief references to Phoenician and Punic child sacrifice in an appendix to his study. All of the sources treated in the following discussion are found therein unless otherwise noted (Day 1989: 86-91).

2.56; Dionysius of Halicarnassus 1.38); (3) human immolation occurred during moments of crisis, such as war, famine, or pestilence (Philo of Byblos in Eusebius, *Praeparatio Evangelica* 1.10.45; Porphyry, *De Abstinencia* 2.56; Diodorus Siculus 20.14.4-7; Orosius, *Adversus Paganos* 4.6.3-5); and (4) there were at least two means by which the sacrifices were performed: by fire (Diodorus Siculus 20.14.4-7; Kleitarchos, Scholia on Plato's *Republic* 337a; Silius Italicus, *Punica* 4.765 ff.) or by slitting the throat (Plutarch, *De Superstitione* 13). One text in particular is worthy of quotation (Kleitarchos, Scholia on Plato's *Republic* 337a, Day 1989: 87):

‘Kleitarchos says the Phoenicians and especially the Carthaginians who honoured Kronos, whenever they wished to succeed in any great enterprise, would vow by one of their children if they achieved the things they longed for, to sacrifice him to the god. A bronze image of Kronos was set up among them, stretching out its cupped hands above a bronze cauldron, which would burn the child. As the flame of the burning child surrounded the body, the limbs would shrivel up and the mouth would appear to grin as if laughing, until it was shrunk enough to slip into the cauldron.’

Two potential points of correspondence between this quote and the material culture from the Punic world are: (1) burned child remains have been unearthed at several Punic sites, possibly indicating child immolation by fire, and (2) Punic inscriptions might signify that children were sacrificed after having been vowed. The interpretation of these two issues is, however, still a matter of much debate. According to Gras, Rouillard, and Teixidor, for example, the Punic child cemeteries should be seen primarily as the burial grounds for the interments of premature, miscarried, or malformed infants, who were likely cremated only after their natural deaths at an early age. As for the foreign texts describing such burials, the authors possibly misrepresented the cremations as human immolations because of their biases against the Punic people (Gras, Rouillard, and Teixidor 1991: 157, 172-73). One should definitely be cautious when utilizing the patristic and classical sources on Punic and Phoenician sacrifice given their late and/or foreign origins. While

there is a basic correspondence between their accounts and the inscriptional and archaeological data from the Punic realm, they should be used only as tertiary support with primacy given to the indigenous material and epigraphic data. Hence, it is important to ascertain the extent to which Punic and Phoenician inscriptional and archaeological remains evince the existence of infant sacrifice. We shall begin by focusing upon the Punic world prior to drawing upon the information from the Phoenician homeland. The two regions should be examined separately because of the clear dichotomy that exists between the evidence for child immolation in each area.

2.2.1. Punic Votive Inscriptions

KAI (Kanaanäische und aramäische Inschriften) 61 A

nšb mlk b 'l 'š šm nḥm lb 'l ḥmn 'dn k šm ' ql dbry

Stele of a *molk*-sacrifice consisting of a child, which Nahḥum⁷⁰ erected for Ba'al Ḥammon, the lord, because he listened to the sound of his speech.

KAI 61 B

nšb mlk 'mr 'š š[m 'r]š lb 'l [ḥmn] 'dn [k š]m ' ql [db]ry

Stele of a *molk*-sacrifice of a sheep, which ['Ar]is ere[cted] for Ba'al [Ḥammon], the lord, [because he li]stened to the sound of his [spee]ch.

Represented here are two of the earliest known references to the Northwest Semitic lexeme *mlk* in the Punic world. They are from Malta and date to the sixth century (Donner and Röllig 1964a: 76) or perhaps earlier to the late eighth/early seventh century BCE (Gras, Rouillard, and Teixidor 1991: 160).⁷¹ This term is significant for an analysis of Punic immolation because it occurs on a number of votive stelae found in infant

⁷⁰ The vocalizations used for the Punic names found in the inscriptions treated in this chapter are based upon the discussions in Krahmalkov's dictionary (2000), unless otherwise noted.

⁷¹ Two other early texts are CIS (*Corpus inscriptionum semiticarum*) 1.5684 (*mlkt b 'l*) and 5685 (*mlk b 'l*), which date to ca. 600 BCE (*ANET* 658). The inscriptions are from Carthage, as are all CIS inscriptions from CIS 1.166 to 6068 (Benz 1972: 50, n. 23; Donner and Röllig 1964b: 69). The texts were translated in *ANET* as: "A stela of *mlkt b 'l* made by Bodisi, the son of Melqartgadd, for the Lord Ba'al Hammon"; "A stela of *mlk b 'l* given by Magon, the son of Hanno, to Ba'al Hammon."

cemeteries throughout the Mediterranean basin. Scholars have come to identify the word as indicative of child sacrifice performed at sacred burial precincts (entitled “*tophets*” in academic literature). We shall discuss these so-called *tophets*⁷² shortly but first it will be helpful to examine the term *mlk* in greater detail. An accurate translation of the word in context was not achieved until the 1930’s, that is, not until after the treatment of five Latin stelae from N’gaous by Jeanne and Prosper Alquier in 1931. These stelae, either by image or textual reference, portray the provision of a sacrifice in the form of a sheep or ram in fulfillment of a vow; according to the inscriptions, the sacrificed animal served as a substitute for another life, as is evinced by such phrases as *agnum pro vikario* and *anima pro anima, sanguine pro sanguine, vita pro vita*. The principal deity in the texts is Saturn, the Latin equivalent of the Semitic god Baal Ḥammon in northern Africa. Of great significance is the fact that four of the texts present the terms *mor[c]homor*, *mochomor*, *molc[ho]mor*, and *[m]orcomor*. The Alquiers recognized that the word behind these variant forms was not Latin and suggested that it could be Libyc or Punic (Alquier 1931).⁷³ Chabot clarified this issue by correctly noting that the terms *mocomor*, *morchomor*, etc., are all likely derivatives of *molchomor*, a compound Semitic term joining the words *molch* and *omor*. *omor*, it was suggested, came from the root ‘-m-r, meaning sheep and *molch* from the root *m-l-k*, connoting the verbal notions to rule, to

⁷² The concept of a *tophet* is drawn from the biblical texts referring to the sacrifice of children in the Hinnom valley (2 Kgs 23:10; Jer 7:31). As such, it is clearly a loaded term implying a conceptual connection between ancient Israelite and Phoenician practices. This association has not yet been confirmed, nor has the connection between the Phoenician homeland and Punic infant sacrifices been firmly established. Concerning the use of the term *tophet*, this dissertation will reserve it for discussions of the biblical texts, where the term actually occurs.

⁷³ According to Carcopino, the contention of the Alquiers that the vows to Saturn were done for the goal of procuring good health did not go far enough in explaining the purpose of the oaths; rather, the vows were performed in order to save the lives of the individuals whom the deity wished dead. More specifically, sheep were given in fulfillment of the vows in order to rescue infants, not merely to obtain good health for them (Carcopino 1932; cf. also Marrou’s agreement 1933: 83).

advise, or (more questionably) to promise. Hence, for Chabot, *molchomor* (Punic *mlk 'mr*) represented in the votive texts a promise or the fulfillment of a promise ritually expressed in the form of a sheep (Chabot 1931). Eissfeldt essentially accepted and expanded upon Chabot's interpretation by incorporating into the discussion other references to *molk* in Punic texts. He entertained the possibility, for instance, that just as *molchomor* constitutes a promise/a sacrifice of a sheep, *mlk 'dm*, which is also attested on Punic stelae, could represent a promise/a sacrifice of a human; that is, a human sacrifice or alternatively the performance of a sacrifice by a commoner (i.e., a man, *'dm*) rather than a member of the priesthood or royal family (Eissfeldt 1935a: 12-21). Mosca later refined Eissfeldt's proposal by finding an apparent parallelism between *mlk 'mr*, *mlk 'dm*, and an additional phrase *mlk b 'l*, thereby adding to Eissfeldt's sacrifice of a sheep (*mlk 'mr*) and sacrifice of a lower-class individual (*mlk 'dm*), the notion of the sacrifice of an upper-class person (*mlk b 'l*). According to this hypothesis, *mlk 'dm* and *mlk b 'l* still refer to child sacrifice: *'dm* and *b 'l* indicate the social class to which the child and parent belong (Mosca 1975: 69-77; 271-74).

The primary value of Eissfeldt's study was his recognition of *molk* as a sacrificial term.⁷⁴ Indeed, as Day correctly noted (1989: 6), this understanding is confirmed by *KAI*

⁷⁴ In turning to those who opposed Eissfeldt's theory on Punic *mlk*, one may initially note that Buber's claim regarding West Semitic *mlk* as originally a divine epithet (Buber 1967: 93-98) was adopted by Weinfeld in his treatment of the Punic material. Hence, he suggested that the various combinations of *mlk* with other terms (*mlk b 'l*, *mlk 'mr*, *mlk 'dm*, etc.) illustrate personal names with theophoric elements or divine titles (Weinfeld 1972: 139). Charlier, too, perceived *mlk* as a divine title, specifically for Ba'al Ḥammon, and translated *mlk 'mr* as, "le Milk (le Roi, le Maître) a parlé, s'est manifesté" (Charlier 1953: 14-15; cf. 21). Buber similarly rendered *mlk 'mr* as: "the *malk* has spoken! That is he has pronounced and therefore brought it to reality that the offered sheep is functionally identical with the child which is owed to the god—that it 'is' the child; and the introduction of the cry into the sacrificial formula makes its continually effective, performs the substitution ('vicariate') anew" (Buber 1967: 178-79).

99 from Sousse/Hadrumetum (ca. first century BCE),⁷⁵ where *mlk* is clearly placed in apposition to *mtnt* (gift).⁷⁶ The tri-radical base *m-l-k*, however, should not be understood as derivative from Aramaic-Syriac *mlk*, signifying a promise (Chabot 1931; cf. Eissfeldt 1935a: 4), but as a word related to the causative or *yiphil* (=Hebrew *hiphil*) of *hlk* (to walk, go in the *qal*), meaning “(sacrificial) offering” (Février 1955a: 53). Von Soden recognized this connection early on and suggested that *mlk* could be analogous to *qorbān* (offering) and *’ōlā* (burnt sacrifice), both of which are sacrificial terms based upon verbs of motion (1936: 46).⁷⁷ That *hlk* can have sacrificial connotations is verified by *KAI* 26.2.19 (from Karatepe, eighth century BCE),⁷⁸ where *hlk* appears in the *yiphil* with *zbh* and means “to send a sacrifice” (cf. Alt 1949: 282-83; Lipiński 1992: 296).

Eissfeldt’s and Mosca’s assertions concerning the socio-economic distinctions embodied by *mlk ’dm* and *mlk b ’l* are questionable, however, in light of two issues. Firstly, as Charlier indicated (1955:31-32), El-Hofra/Constantine 29 (Neo-Punic) lists Ḥimilkot, the priest, as the one who fulfilled a vow by performing a *mlk ’dm*, not a *mlk b ’l* as would be needed to maintain the socio-economic distinction between a commoner (*’dm*) and an upper class individual (*b ’l*).⁷⁹ Secondly, if *mlk ’dm* and *mlk b ’l* truly represent such a dichotomy, then one would expect to find both terms utilized on the

⁷⁵ *KAI* 99 is an inscription written upon a stele that was discovered in the fourth stratum at Sousse; this stratum had ca. first century BCE remains (Cintas 1947: 36, 48).

⁷⁶ *l ’dn lb ’l mtnt mtnt ’ mlk b ’l ’š ndr ’zrb ’l bn b ’lḥn ’ bn b ’lytn ’š b ’m ’ytnm*

To the Lord Ba’al a gift, his gift, a *mol*k-sacrifice consisting of a child (*b-* preposition plus *’l* for child, see below), which ‘Azruba’al, son of Ba’alḥanno, son of Ba’alyaton, who is among the ’YTNM people, vowed.

⁷⁷ Hebrew *’ōlā* is a derivative of the root *’l-h*, which in the *qal* indicates “to go up” but *’ōlā* is often connected in Hebrew to the *hiphil* form of the verb, meaning “to cause a burnt-sacrifice to go up”. *qorbān* is related to the root *q-r-b*, which in the *qal* means “to draw near”; like *’ōlā*, *qorbān* appears in conjunction with the *hiphil* form of its related root, indicating “to cause an offering to be brought near” (see discussion in Brown, Driver, and Briggs 1952: 897-98).

⁷⁸ Donner and Röllig (1964a: 35).

⁷⁹ *l ’dn [lb ’l ḥmn ml]k ’dm bš’rm btm ’š ndr ḥmlkt ḥkhn bn ’bdmlqrt k šm ’ ql ’ brk’* – To the Lord [Ba’al Ḥammon a *mol*]k-sacrifice of a human, consisting of his own flesh, which Ḥimilkot, the priest, the son of ‘Abdmilqart, vowed because he listened to his voice; may he bless him.

stelae at such a major site as Carthage, where, according to Mosca, *mlk b 'l* and *mlk 'mr* appear but not *mlk 'dm* (1975: 85). It would seem that the Punic writers were articulating a different type of division than elite versus commoner; instead, they were distinguishing between a human sacrifice (*mlk b 'l* or *mlk 'dm*) and an animal immolation (*mlk 'mr*). In this sense, *mlk 'dm* would simply mean a *molk*-sacrifice of a human being. As for *mlk b 'l*, the best translation of the phrase was proposed by Cross: “a mulk-sacrifice consisting of an infant” (Cross 1994: 100). In his interpretation, *b 'l* is a combination of the preposition *b-* plus *'l* (child). In fact, *b-* is used in Punic to specify the particular type of sacrifice being performed, as is illustrated on the Marseilles Tariff (*KAI* 69): ox (*b 'lp*), calf (*b 'gl*), sheep (*b 'mr*), etc. One similarly finds *mlk* preceded by the preposition *b-* in texts from Calama (see below).⁸⁰ Furthermore, Cross’ new reading of *KAI* 163.3 (El-Hofra/Constantine, second century BCE),⁸¹ *'l trbt šqlt kbl l' bšmh š'rm* (“an infant, precious offspring, a gift to him consisting of a scion of his flesh [and blood]”), seemingly presents *'l* independent of *b-* in a sacrificial context (Cross 1994: 99-101). While this is an acceptable interpretation of *'l*, one cannot fully rule out the alternative that *'l* is here the preposition. This is true as well for *CIS* 1.198 (Carthage), where two divergent translations are possible:

lrbt ltnt pn b 'l wl 'dn lb 'l hmn 'š ndr mgn 'l 'dnb 'l nšb mlkt bmsrm

For the Lady Tanit, the one before Ba'al, and for the Lord Ba'al Ḥammon which Magon vowed, a child, 'Idniba'al; a stele of a *molk*-sacrifice in distress.⁸²

For the Lady Tanit, the one before Ba'al, and for the Lord Ba'al Ḥammon, which Magon vowed concerning/for 'Idniba'al; a stele of a *molk*-sacrifice in distress.

⁸⁰ As the texts from Calama show, one need not translate *b-* as “consisting of” in every sacrificial context. At times, “as” is a preferable translation. That prepositions have many possible meanings is a common feature of NW Semitic languages.

⁸¹ Donner and Röllig (1964a: 152).

⁸² This translation partially follows Krahmalkov (2000: 368).

One can at least eliminate the possibility that *'l* is analogous to Heb. *'ōlā* (burnt sacrifice) in that the Punic equivalent is *'lt* (cf. *KAI* 159.8).⁸³ Two inscriptions on ceramic jars may indicate that *'lt* was also used in Punic to signify human sacrifice, just as *'ōlā* does in the Hebrew Bible;⁸⁴ namely, a fifth century BCE burial urn from Memphis, Egypt and a fourth century BCE sherd belonging to a jar (urn?) from Idalion, Cyprus. The texts read (following Cross 1994: 93-101):

Memphis

'lt smh – burnt sacrifice of an offspring.

Idalion

[] *l bn rp[']* [] *'lt smh š n* - ... son of Rapa['], a burnt sacrifice of an offspring in year 50.

Returning to *KAI* 163.3 one finds an additional word, *s'rm*, which is important for an understanding of *mlk* inasmuch as one encounters the phrase *mlk bšr* (CIS 1.306; Carthage), *mlk 'dm bšrm btm* (El-Hofra/Constantine 30; Neo-Punic),⁸⁵ or a range of variants often lacking *mlk*, e.g., *bš'rm* by itself (CIS 1.5714; Carthage).⁸⁶ Interestingly, *bš'rm*, as well as its other forms, does not appear with *mlk 'mr*, which, according to Cross, substantiates his perspective that *bš'rm* connotes human sacrifice, specifically, a sacrifice ““(consisting of) his flesh (and blood)”” (Cross 1994: 100).⁸⁷ Similarly, the term *'zrm* or *'zrm 'š/'št* occurs with *mlk*, *mlk b 'l*, *mlk 'dm* or by itself as a description of a human victim. Unfortunately, the exact meaning of *'zrm* is difficult to deduce. It is clear, however, that *'š* (male) or *'št* (female) indicates the sex of the human victim

⁸³ *KAI* 159 is a Neo-Punic text from Henschir Medeina, Tunisia (Donner and Röllig 1964a: 148). It is translated as (following Krahmalkov 2000: 374):

'š h 'l' [l]' 'lt' wm[n]ht bmqdš - who performed [for] him his burnt sacrifice and an of[f]ering in the holy place.

⁸⁴ On *'ōlā* and human sacrifice, see 4.2.

⁸⁵ Charlier (1955: 32).

⁸⁶ Cf. Mosca (1975: 85-92).

⁸⁷ Here, Cross followed Février's interpretation of *bš'rm* as a combination of *b-* + *s'r* (flesh) + *-m* (3 ms suffix). See Cross (1994: 99-100) and Février (1955a: 54-55).

(Mosca 1975: 78-85; Krahmalkov 2000: 39-40).⁸⁸ Based upon a single Phoenician text, it is probable that *'zrm* refers to a premature or early death:

KAI 14.2-3 (=CIS 1.3; funerary inscription on a sarcophagus from Sidon, ca. early fifth century BCE).⁸⁹

dbr mlk 'šmn'zr mlk šdnm l'mr ngzlt bl 'ty bn msk ymm 'zrm ytm bn 'lmt <'nk>

Thus says King Esmunazor, king of the Sidonians: "I was torn away prior to my appointed time, a son of a few days old, one who died prematurely. <I was> fatherless, a widow's son."⁹⁰

In this passage, *'zrm* clearly relates to the concept of an undesirable and early death. It could be cognate with Arabic "zarama 'cut short, terminated' and zarima 'ceased, was checked;'" it is likewise possibly paralleled by Hebrew *z-r-m* in Psalm 90:5 (Driver 1968: 178),⁹¹ a passage describing the cutting short of human life as a result of divine wrath.

Having completed a brief discussion of the various sacrificial terms found on the Punic votive stelae, it will be beneficial to conclude this segment by presenting an additional example of each of the primary phrases related to Punic child sacrifice as a means of summarizing this dissertation's understanding of the terms:

KAI 98 (Sousse/Hadrumetum; ca. second to first centuries BCE)⁹² – *mlk b'l 'zrm*

l'dn lb'l ḥmn [nš]b mlk b'l 'zrm 'š ndr b'lšlk bn 'zrb'l bn mtr k šm' ql ybrk'

To the Lord Ba'al Ḥammon a [ste]le of a *mol*k-sacrifice consisting of a child, one who died prematurely, which Ba'alsillek, son of 'Azruba'al, son of MTR, vowed because he listened to his voice; may he bless him.

KAI 105 (El-Hofra/Constantine; ca. third to first centuries BCE)⁹³ – *mlk 'dm bš'rm btm*

l'dn lb'l ḥmn wlrbt ltnt p'n b'l ndr 'š ndr ḥmlkt bn b'šrt bn nbl mlk 'dm bš'rm btm k šm' ql' brky'

⁸⁸ Cf. Février's explanation of *'š* and *'št* as markers of the victim's sex. He did, however, take *'zrm* as possibly indicative of an animal victim, particularly a sheep (1955a: 61).

⁸⁹ *ANET* (662); Donner and Röllig (1964a: 19).

⁹⁰ This translation and the emendation to "<I was>" follow Krahmalkov (2000: 218-19), with the exception of *'zrm*, which he understood as a term referring to a sacrificial victim. While the word can refer to such a victim, it seems to relate specifically to a person who dies prematurely and perhaps not solely to a sacrificial victim.

⁹¹ Cf. discussion in Cooke (1903:33).

⁹² Donner and Röllig (1964a: 106).

⁹³ Donner and Röllig (1964a: 113).

To the Lord Ba'al Ḥammon and to the Lady Tanit, the one before Ba'al, in fulfillment of a vow which Himilkot, son of Bostart, son of Nabal, vowed, a *molk*-sacrifice of a human, consisting of his own⁹⁴ flesh, because they listened to his voice; may they bless him.

KAI 109 (same as above) – *mlk 'mr*

l'dn lb 'l ḥmn mlk 'mr ndr 'š ndr 'kbrt bt ...

To the Lord Ba'al Ḥammon a *molk*-sacrifice of a sheep in fulfillment of a vow which 'Akborot, the daughter of ..., vowed.

Calama 20 (Neo-Punic)⁹⁵ – *bmlk 'zrm h 'š*

l'dn b 'l ḥmn zbh rwm 'n' bmlk 'zrm h 'š wš 'm' 't qwl'

To the Lord Ba'al Ḥammon Romanus⁹⁶ sacrificed as a *molk*-sacrifice a male who died prematurely because he listened to his voice.

⁹⁴ *btm* is a form of the word *bt*, which is a variant of *bnt*. Both *bt* and *bnt* mean “own” or “same” (Krahmalkov 2000: 108-09, 129-31).

⁹⁵ The text is found in Chabot (1916: 501) but the above translation is mine. All the texts presented in Chabot (1916) are Neo-Punic.

⁹⁶ Chabot (1916: 501).

2.2.2. Material Remains

In addition to the *molks*, there are two possible artistic portrayals of Punic child sacrifice that have been noted by various scholars. The most famous of these is a stele from Carthage (ca. 400 BCE) depicting a child in the arm of an individual who is raising his other arm in salutation (fig. 2.2). Those seeing in this scene an illustration of human sacrifice suggest that the man is a priest in the act of offering the child (Picard 1964: 20, fig. 4; Kennedy 1981: 214); according to Schwartz's interpretation, the child is probably already dead (notice the inactive posture and features of the infant in contrast to the alert and moving man) and could be seen as representing the concept that a number of children were offered, not literally sacrificed, through cremation to Ba'al and Tanit after having died from natural causes (Schwartz 1993: 53-54).⁹⁷ The image is too ambiguous, however, to decide whether or not it portrays infant sacrifice. The second artistic representation (fig. 2.3) was found at Pozo Moro, Spain on a funerary tower (ca. 500 BCE). For some, the scene illustrates child sacrifice by sword at the hand of an individual (possibly a priest wearing an animal mask; far right of scene) and the

⁹⁷ Ribichini likewise discussed the offering of prematurely dead children at Punic infant cemeteries (1988: 123).

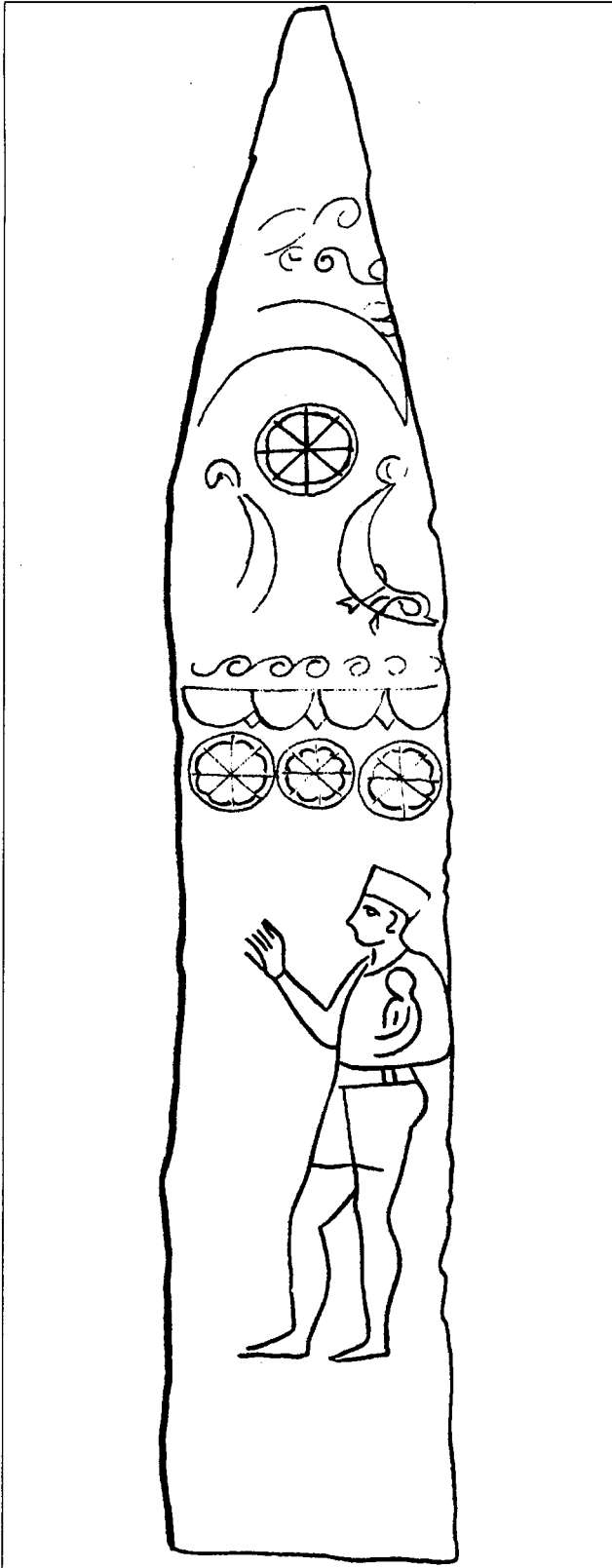


Figure 2.2. Stele from Carthage (Keel 1972: 213).

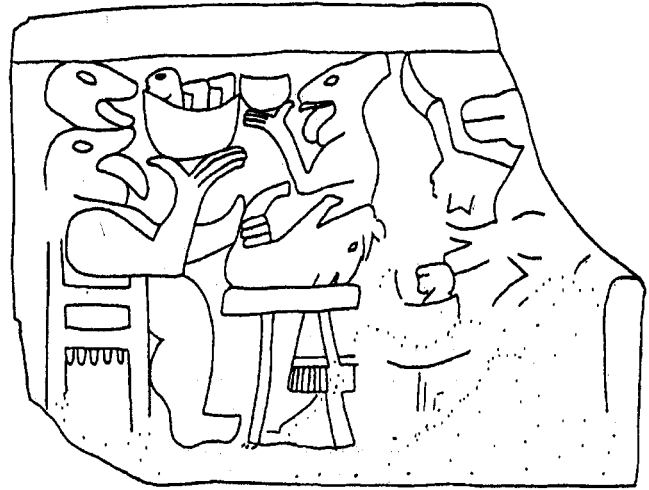


Figure 2.3. Pozo Moro Relief (drawing of Almagro-Gorbea 1983: Plate 23c in Brown 1991: 288).

consumption of an additional child by a two-headed deity (far left of scene).⁹⁸ The tower was constructed out of local stone but the artistic motifs and architectural style are Near Eastern (Neo-Hittite and Syro-Phoenician).⁹⁹ It has been assumed that the Phoenicians carried these Near Eastern elements to Pozo Moro and that the relief potentially corresponds to Punic infant immolation (Kennedy 1981; Heider 1985: 189-92).¹⁰⁰ The latter is a possibility but it lacks definitive confirmation—it is not even clear that the right side of the picture illustrates human sacrifice; the supposed blade is not necessarily a sword or knife. Despite the difficulties involved in interpreting the scene, O’Byrhim estimated that it embodies the Levantine practice of human sacrifice which was performed by officials wearing bull-masks and which was recounted by Ovid in regards to Cypriot human immolation. The turn of the Common Era mythological account reads (*Metamorphoses* 10, O’Byrhim 1999: 3):¹⁰¹

...if, by chance, you were to ask Amathus, rich in metals, whether she wished to produce the Propoetides, she would deny it just as she would deny that she wished to produce those whose foreheads once bristled with twin horns, which gave them the name *Cerastae*. Before their doors stood the altar of Jupiter Hospes. If some foreigner had seen it stained with blood, he would have thought that suckling calves and Amathusian sheep had been slaughtered there. A stranger had been slain! Offended by these illicit sacrifices, beneficent Venus herself was preparing to desert her cities and Ophiusion territory.

The Punic inscriptions stand in commemoration of the interments of cremated children and animals, some of whom were buried separately in funerary urns, while

⁹⁸ See O’Byrhim (1999: 13) and Kennedy (1981: 214).

⁹⁹ The Near Eastern aspects of the tower are enumerated by both Almagro-Gorbea (1980) and Kennedy (1981). In essence, “The architectural form of the funeral tower is well known in the Near East in the Achaemenid period in Persia and from Anatolia and Phoenicia. The lions at the base of the Pozo Moro tower recall the similar feature on the sarcophagus of Ahiaram at Byblos. A further affinity with north Syrian art is the use of a frieze of relief scenes to decorate the monument” (Kennedy 1981: 210).

¹⁰⁰ While Kennedy mentioned the presence of Phoenician influences upon the Pozo Moro tower, Heider was more explicit in identifying Punic immigrants and merchants as the ones who brought the Semitic ideas to Pozo Moro. It was the Punic cult of infant immolation which, for him, is likely represented in the scene (Heider 1985: 189-92).

¹⁰¹ On the date of the work, see the online version of the *Oxford Classical Dictionary* (cf. n. 68).

others were interred together. It is important to recognize, however, that clear connections between a specific urn and its corresponding epigraphic stele have not generally been identified (Gras, Rouillard, and Teixidor 1991: 173). Furthermore, certain stelae have been located apart from any attached cemeteries and multiple urns have been unearthed in strata predating the use of epigraphic stelae,¹⁰² The cemeteries wherein the burial urns were discovered were consistently constructed in a similar fashion throughout the Punic world, appearing from at least the eighth century BCE to the first century CE.¹⁰³ These cemeteries are mainly known from the western half of the Mediterranean basin [from Algeria (Cirta), Tunisia (Carthage, Sousse/Hadrumetum), Sicily (Motya), and Sardinia (Sulcis, Nora, Tharros, Bithia, Monte Sirai)],¹⁰⁴ but more are coming to light in the eastern part as well [from Cyprus (Amathus)]¹⁰⁵—of particular interest in the subsequent section of this chapter will be the Levantine cemeteries at Tyre and Achzib. In addition to the general characteristics of the Punic infant cemeteries enumerated thus far, one can succinctly describe them as open air precincts placed on the edges of Punic settlements and reserved predominantly for the

¹⁰² Inscriptions appear on Carthagian burial monuments in the Tanit II phase (ca. sixth to third centuries BCE) but non-epigraphic monuments were used during Tanit I (mid eighth to seventh centuries BCE; Stager and Wolff 1984: 35-38).

¹⁰³ Examples of the longevity of the Punic practice of utilizing infant cemeteries are found at Carthage, where an infant cemetery began in the eighth century and continued into the second century BCE (Stager 1980; 1982; Stager and Wolff 1984), and at nearby Sousse/Hadrumetum, where one existed from about the sixth century BCE to the first century CE (Foucher 1964: 33-39).

¹⁰⁴ Cf. Day (1989: 6); Markoe (2000: 215, n. 63); and Bellard (1992). Day's list of Punic infant cemeteries conveniently includes references to the excavation reports but does not mention the site of Bithia. For an overview of Bithia, see Tore (1992).

¹⁰⁵ Herscher provided the following summation of the "*tophet*" at Amathus (1998: 313): "One of the most important archaeological victims of hotel construction at Amathus is what appears to have been a Phoenician burial ground (or *tophet*) of the Cypro-Achaic period on the beach. By the time ancient remains were noticed (or reported), most of the site had been destroyed. A hasty salvage excavation by the Department of Antiquities recovered several hundred funerary urns with lids, which had been placed in rows in several layers. With them were the cremated remains of infants mixed with animal bones and small objects. The loss of full contextual information for this unique site is a tragedy for archaeology."

cremated remains of newly or prematurely born infants; rarely did the infants live beyond one year but some reached the age of four.¹⁰⁶ The osteological analysis of the burials at Carthage and Thorros have been particularly fundamental in the debate concerning the sacrificial nature of Punic infant cemeteries.

The best-known infant burial ground of the Punic world was discovered at ancient Carthage, modern-day Tunis. The cemetery began in the late eighth century and continued until the mid second century BCE, reaching its zenith, both in terms of its size as well as its burial density, in the fourth century. It has been estimated that some 20,000 interments took place over the course of a 200-year period (400-200 BCE); a figure based upon the concentration of burial urns discovered in the 1970's by the University of Chicago excavations multiplied by the probable size of the cemetery (ca. 54,000-64,000 ft²). Altogether Stager, who led the Chicago team, unearthed more than 400 urns that were either buried in individual pits or together with one or two more pots. According to the bone analysis done by Schwartz on 130 urns, there appears to have been a general trend toward an increased frequency of infant burials as time progressed; that is, during the seventh-sixth centuries 62.5% of the urns were used for human remains, 30% for animal, and 7.5% for both humans and animals; whereas in the later group, fourth century BCE, 88% of the urns were filled with human remains, 10% with animal, and 2% with human and animal. As for the ages of the cremated humans, the children were normally stillborn or newborn infants during the seventh-sixth centuries but typically one to three years of age in the fourth century. The animals (sheep or goats) in both phases were commonly young as well (Stager 1980; 1982; Stager and Wolff 1984). Based upon

¹⁰⁶ See the overviews of Punic infant cemeteries provided by Aubet (2001: 25-56); Gras, Rouillard, and Teixidor (1991: 150-52, 161-73); and Brown (1991: 16-18, 37-75).

further analysis, Schwartz was able to more accurately identify the age of the infants buried at Carthage (1993: 56):

Although there were few children above the age of four in my sample, metric and developmental criteria indicate that at least 90 percent of the sample is represented by individuals younger than six months of age, and, of these, at least half were late-third-trimester fetuses; adult tophet burials are so far unknown. Each category of animal and mixed human-animal interments represented only about 8 percent of the sample. Preliminary correlations of burial types with stratigraphy indicate that most of the animal burials occurred in the earlier phases of the tophet. This correlation can indicate two things: one, that human sacrifice eventually replaced animal sacrifice, or two, that, as population size increased over time, fetal-infant natural death rates increased. The latter would not be surprising.

The research conducted on the cremated remains from the site of Tharros has revealed that the Punic settlers in Sardinia buried their children and animals in a fashion similar to, but not identical with, the Carthaginian rite.¹⁰⁷ At Tharros the infants were almost all under six months old or newly born and an animal, frequently a lamb or a kid, was buried with the human remains in 35-40% of the cases. Animals, however, were not cremated and buried alone. Burnt portions of the pyres also made their way into the funerary urns, which, together with the bone analysis, assisted in providing the following reconstruction of the rite (Fedele 1983: 643, author's emphasis):

The pyre normally lay on the ground in the open and was lit on the ground. It consisted of grasses and fagots of lentisk. The flame could reach high temperatures but was irregular, << flagging >> so to speak, mobilized probably by the wind. The hilltop of Su Muru Mannu, where the sacrificial precinct is located, is normally very windy. The victim or the << victim complex >> (child and animal, including their possible ornaments) had the flesh on and probably remained still during the burning, as if they had been previously killed or subjected to narcosis. During the burning, pieces of olive wood pulled out from (nearby?) trees — *not* for instance firewood collected on the ground — were often thrown onto the blazing, smoking, aromatic pyre.

It is not readily apparent what criteria were utilized that allowed for the distinction between an individual who remained still and one who moved during the cremation process. Yet, based upon the burn patterns of the bones of a number of cremated children from Carthage and Sousse, it would seem that the infants were typically cremated while

¹⁰⁷ The study is based upon the excavations of the late 1970's. On the work done at Tharros, starting in the 70's, see *Rivista di studi fenici* 9: 29-119; 12: 47-101 (as cited by Brown 1991: 168, 307).

immobilized and lying with their backs upon the pyres. That is to say, the burn patterns illustrate that the right and left sides of the bodies were equally distant from the flames and that the bones at the back of the bodies were more resistant to cremation since their positioning on top of the pyres gave the flames less ventilation, thereby making it more difficult for the fires to consume that portion of the bodies. There is no evidence to suggest, however, whether the infants were alive or dead when cremated (Benichou-Safar 1988).

A number of scholars suppose that the majority of the children buried in Punic infant cemeteries died of natural causes prior to incineration inasmuch as these were, with few exceptions, the only burial places for infants at Punic settlements. Coupled with this supposition is the notion that infants were buried separately from adults because they had not yet been initiated into Punic society (Gras, Rouillard, Teixidor 1991; Aubet 2001: 250-54; Benichou-Safar 1982: 342-43).¹⁰⁸ With such an understanding, how might one interpret the epigraphic stelae in light of the bone analyses, which have shown that the infants were primarily premature or under the age of six months old? It has been suggested that the stelae might describe the offering of the stelae themselves, or the sacrifice of animals slain after the natural deaths of infants in order to ask for new children from Ba'al Hammon (Gras, Rouillard, and Teixidor 1991: 173). The latter

¹⁰⁸ Schaeffer was doubtful of the existence of infant sacrifice at Carthage, suggesting that the infant burials at Carthage were likely just that—the interments of children who died at a young age. Schaeffer went so far as to propose, “Quand on cherche des preuves épigraphiques et archéologiques irréfutables, l’hypothèse s’évanouit” (Schaeffer 1956: 67). As for Weinfeld, he was skeptical of the perception that Punic infant sacrifice was an institutionalized means of reverence. For him, Punic human immolation was the opposite, that is, it was intermittent and non-institutionalized, being performed in response to calamities such as war (Weinfeld 1972: 134, 136 n. 26). Cf. Ribichini (1988: 120-23) for a view similar to those expressed by Weinfeld and Schaeffer, i.e., Punic child immolation was rare and reserved for stressful moments. As for the infant cemeteries, Ribichini doubted that the *molk*-sacrifices consisted of human victims and emphasized the notion that the cemeteries functioned as burial places for infants who died prematurely of natural causes.

would account for *mlk 'mr* but would not adequately explain the uses of *mlk b 'l* and *mlk 'dm* on the stelae when correctly understood as references to human immolation.

A more accurate interpretation, which corresponds well to the stelae and the archaeological data, is that the Punic infant cemeteries received the cremated remains of sacrificed animals and infants as well as the calcined bones of infants who died of non-sacrificial causes (abortion, warfare, disease, malnutrition, etc.) at a young age. This raises the issue of whether or not it is plausible to conclude that some (not all) of those who died prematurely of natural causes were “sacrificed”. In other words, is it necessary to agree with Dearman that “the ritual incineration of a corpse at a tophet can be interpreted in sacrificial terms” (1996: 62)? Strictly speaking, no.¹⁰⁹ Sacrifice must entail the taking of life with the consequence of affecting the suprahuman realm. Yet, as opposed to a sacrifice by fire, an offering by fire does not involve slaughter; instead, it entails the destruction of a lifeless object and its transference to the heavens via smoke—such a notion is seen in the Biblical texts concerning burnt meal offerings (cf. Lev 2:9). It is in this more narrow sense, then, that a *mol*k-sacrifice of a dead infant could be considered an offering, but not a sacrifice per se. The Punic inscriptions themselves convey the concept of sending up an offering which consists of an infant who died prematurely. The texts from Calama, for instance, list *ns'* (to lift up) as a parallel to *zbh* (to sacrifice), thereby designating the specific action performed in the offering or sacrifice (cf. Calama 20 above):

¹⁰⁹ It is tempting to find in *zibhê mēîm* (Ps 106:28) a reference to sacrificing the dead but *mēîm* is likely a derogatory description of the deities who received the sacrifices, i.e., lifeless gods (see Schmidt 1994: 265-66). This understanding is consistent with the remainder of the poem given that deities are described therein in pejorative terms (Ps 106: 36, 38).

Calama 22 (Neo-Punic; Chabot 1916: 502-03, translation mine):

l'dn b'lmn n's' pntn' bn mgnm bmlk 'šrm¹¹⁰ 'št n's' wšm' qly

To the Lord Ba'al Ḥammon PNTN', son of Magonim, sent up as a *molk*-sacrifice a female who died prematurely. He sent (her) up because he (i.e., Ba'al) listened to his voice.

To speculate on the context of this offering and to summarize the nature of Punic infant sacrifice: PNTN' had previously undertaken an oath to perform a *molk*-sacrifice of a yet unborn infant if Ba'al Ḥammon would assist him in a particular enterprise. When Ba'al answered his request, PNTN' was obligated to fulfill the vow but the promised infant died before the sacrificial slaying could take place—perhaps the infant was stillborn. Nevertheless, the infant had been vowed and was, therefore, offered to Ba'al Ḥammon in the same manner as a living *molk*-sacrifice, including the erection of a stele. In this way, PNTN' was still able to meet the demands of his vow. That a vow was likely involved is supported by the Punic inscriptions, where *ndr* (to vow) frequently appears. These vows were directed to both Tanit and Ba'al Ḥammon. The fact that these deities are not generally known as “bloodthirsty gods” has been utilized to support the supposition that human immolation was probably not a common aspect of their cults (Ribichini 1988: 123). This is an inaccurate understanding of human sacrifice. A deity who accepts human victims need not be nefarious in nature nor be consumed with bloodlust. Human immolation is not the antithesis to a benevolent spirit but it is paradoxical. That is, one life might be preserved because another life is destroyed in an act of sacrifice.

¹¹⁰ Given that the sibilants coalesced in the Neo-Punic era, the presence of š instead of z is not problematic. What is more, even in earlier forms of Phoenician the letter š was utilized in script but it was pronounced with a simple s sound (cf. Krahmalkov 2001: 25-26 and above note). Hence, there does not exist such a dramatic distinction between 'šrm and 'zrm as would appear by comparing the written forms.

2.2.3. Phoenicia

It has long been assumed that the infant sacrifices discovered throughout the Punic world of the western Mediterranean basin derived from the religious customs performed in the Phoenician homeland of Syro-Palestine. To date, this conclusion has yet to be definitively confirmed. In fact, the cemeteries at two Levantine sites considered to be potential sacrificial graveyards (Tyre Al-Bass and Achziv) appear to have been adult cemeteries, not funerary precincts for sacrificed infants. In the early 1990's, for instance, information pertaining to illicitly excavated stelae and funerary urns from Tyre circulated throughout the scholarly community thanks to the work of Seeden (1991) and Sader (1991). It was then supposed that a sacrificial precinct had once existed at this key Phoenician locale. By the end of the twentieth century, legal excavations in the same area, known as Tyre Al-Bass, unearthed several cremated burials and a limited number of stone monuments still in their original Iron Age, primarily mid ninth to ca. late seventh centuries BCE, contexts. Two issues are especially worthy of consideration: (1) the stelae do not present any information concerning sacrifice and (2) the funerary urns did not contain infant remains, mainly those of juveniles and adults.¹¹¹ Infant cremation is thus far unknown among the extant Phoenician cemeteries (Aubert 2004a; 2004b; Trellisó 2004; Sader 2004; cf. Sader 1991). The Phoenician site of Achziv, which is located on the northern coast of modern-day Israel, is no exception (Smith et al. 1993: 62). There is, however, one reference to a *molk*-sacrifice from the southern Levant.

The only *molk*-sacrificial inscription from Syro-Palestine known to this writer comes from Nebi Yunis (RES 367), south of Tel Aviv, and dates to the third or second

¹¹¹ One fetus burial was identified, however (Trellisó 2004: 253).

century BCE (Delavault and Lemaire 1976: 569; Gianto 1987: 397). The beginning of the first two lines of column one reads (text and translation following Delavault and Lemaire 1976: 574-77 and Gianto 1987: 398-400):

[n]sb mlk
'š ndr wytn h 'rkt 'š 'bd' bn 'bd's l'dnm l'šmn [a list of contributors follows]

Stele of a *molk*-sacrifice which they vowed and they paid the arranged price, each one, 'Abdo son of 'Abdis [and the other individuals listed], to their lord, to 'Ešmun

It is certainly unfortunate that the type of *molk*-sacrifice is not enumerated; whether it was an animal or human victim is unknown. According to Gianto, the text shows signs of damage after *mlk* in line one; hence, a qualifying word might have been present originally (1987: 398-99).

2.2.4. Summation

The Punic texts examined above are predominately votive inscriptions on stelae going at least as far back as the sixth century BCE. The following key phrases are attested thereupon:

mlk 'mr – a *molk*-sacrifice of a sheep
mlk 'dm – a *molk*-sacrifice of a human
mlk b 'l – a *molk*-sacrifice consisting of a child
mlk 'zrm – a *molk*-sacrifice of one who died prematurely
mlk + bšrm btm – a *molk*-sacrifice of his own flesh

It is possible that each votive stele corresponds to at least one accompanying funerary urn, which might contain the cremated remains of no less than an animal, an infant, or a combination thereof. Regrettably the task of aligning specific stelae with particular burials has proven difficult. Indeed, the burial of cremated children in ceramic vessels even predates the use of epigraphic stelae. At one of the oldest known Punic burial precincts, Carthage, for instance, inscribed stelae do not appear until after the Tanit I

period (mid eighth to seventh centuries BCE). Not only is Carthage the quintessential Punic site but it is also located in the region of the Mediterranean that has most frequently yielded Punic child cemeteries. The majority of the now known infant burial precincts are from the western half of the Mediterranean but it is not readily apparent why this is so. Is it merely by chance that more have been found in the west than in the east or is this because child sacrifice was practiced less often the closer one gets to the Phoenician homeland? It is hoped that further excavations will help solve this conundrum in the decades to come. The current lack of definitive proof that the Phoenicians performed infant immolation in the Levant is certainly conspicuous. The stele from Nebi Yunis illustrates, however, that the Phoenicians of Syro-Palestine were aware of the notion of *molk*-sacrifice in some form but the direction of influence is not yet clear. That is to say, it is possible that *molk*-sacrifice originated from outside the Levant and was later introduced to the region, not necessarily the other way around as has been supposed. The Nebi Yunis text is, after all, a relatively late inscription in comparison to the long epigraphic tradition of the lexeme *mlk*. In light of the paucity of Levantine data indicative of child immolation, final judgment must be reserved for a later date.

2.3. Conclusion

Amongst us there is not a law prescribing human sacrifices: on the contrary, this would be abominable; whilst the Carthaginians perform such sacrifices as something sacred and lawful, and certain among them even go as far as sacrificing their own sons to Kronos [i.e., Baal Hammon],¹¹² as you too could have heard (Pseudo-Plato, *Minos* 315E, Day 1989: 87).

This fourth century BCE statement on Greek law comes from a dialogue “between Socrates and an unnamed companion. When Socrates argues that law is the discovery of reality, his interlocutor challenges this definition with an argument for cultural relativism. He points out that in their society human sacrifice is a terrible thing, but that among the Carthaginians it is both legal and holy” (Rives 1995: 69). The unnamed speaker succinctly encapsulates the essence of this chapter: the Greeks generally did not practice human sacrifice but the Phoenicians living outside the Levant did.¹¹³ While it is inadvisable to accept uncritically the classical and patristic sources (some of which are polemical works), there appears to be a basic correlation between their accounts of Punic child sacrifice and the archaeological and epigraphic data reviewed in the foregoing discussion. Certain of these authors were negative in their assessments. Hence, as was noted at the end of chapter one, we must be mindful of the presence of polemical discourse but we do not necessarily need to reject a source outright merely because of its existence. Caution, however, should be used when attempting to examine these narratives. At best, the classical and patristic sources can be used as secondary evidence for the practice of Punic human immolation.

¹¹² Baal Hammon was often identified as Kronos (Krahmalkov 2000: 113; Moscati 1999: 140-41).

¹¹³ Cf. the above discussion on the limited physical evidence for Greek human immolation (2.1.3).

Chapter 3

Ancient Near Eastern Cultures

The potential instances of ancient Near Eastern human sacrifice discussed in the following analysis come from a variety of sources: archaeological remains, artistic representations, and textual references. As with previous chapters, a regional approach will be utilized.

3.1. Mesopotamia

3.1.1. Burials

3.1.1.1. Attendant Sacrifice

Of the 1,850 tombs excavated at Ur from 1926-31 by Woolley, sixteen tomb complexes, which date to ca. 2600-2350 BCE (Early Dynastic III),¹¹⁴ are of particular importance to our investigation concerning the nature of Mesopotamian human sacrifice inasmuch as they yielded the remains of two dissimilar burial types: the inhumations of individuals positioned in places of primacy (the chief tomb occupants) and the burials of persons situated in positions of subservience (their attendants). According to Woolley, such a distinction was evinced by the fact that the principal tomb occupants, whom he identified as royals, were interred with the same kinds of funerary objects as those who were buried in the private tombs at Ur, whereas their attendants lacked such

¹¹⁴ On the date of these tombs as well as the general dates for the Royal Cemetery at Ur, see Pollock 1991: 171.

accompaniments. What is more, some of the attendants were buried together with the elements of their service, as he, himself, explained (Woolley 1934: 41):

Inside the chamber... we find the two or three personal servants whose attitude shows them to be in direct attendance on their masters or mistresses; they have little in the way of finery and must rank as mere domestics. The soldiers are on guard at the door, the grooms hold the heads of the animals, and the drivers are in or by the chariots; the musicians are alongside their instruments, the ladies of the *harim*, distinguished by their rich attire, are grouped together...

The number of attendants varied from tomb to tomb; some contained a relatively small number of victims, six, while others housed closer to eighty individuals. The majority of the victims were interred in what Woolley called “a ‘death-pit’, a sunken court open to the sky which might be part of the pit in which the chamber was constructed or might be contiguous to it” (1934: 33)—in some cases, they were also buried in the rooms near the principal burial chamber, within the burial shaft or, as was often the case, inside the main tomb chamber alongside the tomb’s primary occupant.

Woolley encountered criticisms early on. Smith, for instance, questioned the validity of his interpretation concerning the royal nature of the Ur graves, which is still a matter of contention,¹¹⁵ and tentatively opined that the tombs might have been related to a fertility cult intent on prolonging a monarch’s life through the sacred marriage of two deities. Such a rite was likely enacted by human characters, Smith argued, and was possibly illustrated by the remains unearthed in two tombs from Ur wherein the chief occupants—a male in one case and a female in the other—were surrounded by numerous sacrificed individuals. A significant motivation for Smith was the need to provide an alternative explanation for the burial of such vast amounts of costly objects in graves inasmuch as he could not accept the idea that the Sumerians would have interred their

¹¹⁵ If the principal occupants of the tombs were not members of royalty (cf. Gadd 1929: 34), perhaps it would be more accurate to describe them as members of the elite segment of Ur’s society (Pollock 1991: 177; Charvát 2002: 227-29), as the sheer wealth of the burial objects would seem to indicate.

possibility that a large palace retinue was buried with Gilgamesh—if so, we have here the first mention of human sacrifices of the type uncovered by Woolley in the Tombs of Ur—and that Gilgamesh performs the placation rites essential to their comfortable sojourn in the nether world” [*ANET (Ancient Near Eastern Texts)* 50; cf. Kramer 1963: 130]. The key difference between the remains at Ur and the Death of Gilgamesh, however, is that the Ur tombs do not evince familial sacrifice as much as they do servant immolation, particularly in light of the fact that no children were found among the Ur victims (cf. Jacobsen 1991: 185; Moorey 1977: 35).

Attendant sacrifice was also practiced at Kish. Watelin considered the instances of multiple burial which he excavated there (cemetery Y) to be cases of human immolation similar to those from Ur—note as well that the excavations at Kish (1925-1930) were contemporary with those at Ur and that the remains from cemetery Y slightly predate the Ur burials.¹¹⁸ For him, human immolation “was not a necessary liturgical rite but the continuance of a dignity; only the beings which the person had in his service, servants and soldiers, dancers, musicians, accompanied him in death” (Watelin 1934: 19). Hence, those who possessed affluence in their lives sought to continue their social standing in the afterlife by furnishing their tombs with the same luxuries enjoyed while living. His discussion on human sacrifice primarily centered on tombs which contained buried chariots—there were three such tombs in total (Y 357, Y 529, and Y 237). Unfortunately, Watelin only chose to elaborate on a limited number of tomb examples in his discourse. Consequently, there is a lack of information concerning the instances of human immolation that he found. He did, however, note that the victims of immolation

¹¹⁸ Cemetery Y at Kish dates to the Early Dynastic I and II periods, ca. 2900-2600 BCE (Pollock 1999: 207; cf. 1999: 2 and 1991: 171).

were not buried with funerary objects and he also described one tomb in particular: Y 237. It possessed the remains of a chariot and its team of four equines, including leather harnesses. The skeletons of no less than five humans were also found lying near the chariot, one of which was the body of the chief tomb occupant (Watelin 1934: 19-20, 30).

The extant physical evidence for attendant sacrifice among the inhabitants of ancient Mesopotamia is derived only from these two cemeteries, both of which date to the third millennium. While the remains from Ur are much more elaborate in terms of the number of victims as well as the tomb furnishings, the interments at Kish present a minor reflection of the immolations at Ur. At both sites, attendants were buried without significant funerary objects and were entombed together with the implements of their service. Thus, it is clear that their positions of servitude were to continue in the afterlife.

3.1.1.2. Child Burial

Child intramural and jar burials are known from Northern Syria and Iraq.¹¹⁹ The interment of young children in ceramic vessels and in the floors of buildings does not, however, necessarily relate to human immolation. The infant sacrifices from the Punic realm likely influenced a number of scholars in their analyses of child burials in Mesopotamia (and in Syro-Palestine, I might add), inasmuch as jar burials have often been identified as immolations. It is important to realize that the burial of children in ceramic vessels was a ubiquitous practice in the Near East and was often a typical method of non-sacrificial burial. In the region of Mesopotamia, in particular, children

¹¹⁹ Carter and Parker considered the practice of burying young children or infants in jars underneath the floors of houses significant enough to merit mention but owing to a lack of published material on this custom, they did not extensively delve into this subject in their treatment of burial practices in northern Syria and southern Turkey in the third millennium BCE (Carter and Parker 1995: 106).

and adults were buried in large numbers under the floors of private and public structures. Thus, one cannot simply assume the existence of immolation when encountering floor burials and ceramic interments. There are, conversely, two types of burials which raise suspicion and give reason to pause for further reflection: infant interments in or under the walls of buildings (built-in burials)¹²⁰ and child burials in rooms which have been identified as chapels or temples (in-floor sanctuary burials). The latter type is potentially significant because of the sacred status of the rooms in which the inhumations took place and the former, since it points to the premeditated nature of the child deaths. There are too many examples of built-in interments to suppose that the children simply died while a structure was under construction and were then utilized in the building project. Such a coincidence is possible if one were dealing with a limited number of instances but questionable in light of the wide array of examples (*contra* Ellis 1968: 38).

3.1.1.2.1. Built-In Burials

From the prehistoric era an infant ceramic burial was found at Yorgan Tepe (Nuzi) within the structure of a wall, which led Starr, the excavator from 1927-31, to characterize it as the predecessor to similar instances of infant sacrifice from the later Nuzi period (strata I-IV).¹²¹ The later cases were considered immolations since (1) the age of the infants was consistently younger than two months old, (2) there were too few infant burials to account for the totality of child fatalities at the city, and (3) infant burials were not found throughout the entire site—only a limited number of dwellings contained infant burials in such places as the floors or walls. Hence, jar burial, it was assumed,

¹²⁰ This phrase is taken from Ellis (1968: 35-38).

¹²¹ For the approximate strata dates and the identification of the Nuzi strata, see Eliot (1939: 507, n.1 and 520).

must have been reserved for special circumstances, possibly for the protection or blessing of the household and house (Starr 1939: 16, 349-57).¹²² As previously stated, however, jar burials are not in and of themselves indicative of human immolation, yet built-in burials potentially connote sacrifice. Three strata from Yorgan Tepe should be examined in order to better understand the nature of the built-in interments (cf. Eliot 1939: 510-11):

(1) The aforementioned prehistoric (Ubaid II era,¹²³ fifth millennium BCE)¹²⁴ burial at Yorgan Tepe consisted of an infant no older than two months. A small grave was constructed by placing this young child upon a portion of a ceramic vessel. Then, this simple burial was incorporated into the wall that rose above it. Remarkably, the wall was built in such a manner that its weight did not collapse the interment. At the final stage of the construction project, the edge of the sherd was concealed by applying plaster to the wall (Starr 1939: 16).

(2) Several built-in infant burials were unearthed in stratum II (mid second millennium BCE). In the southwestern portion of the site, a building, which appears to have been a domestic dwelling, contained the jar burial of an infant, who was less than a year old and was situated above the fragmented remains of an individual about fourteen years of age. These interments were placed in one of the two compartments separating two rooms (P37 and P470)—the two spaces were created by blocking the doorway between the rooms with a series of three walls, thereby indicating that the burials were secondary to the original construction of the building. Starr did not provide any

¹²² Infant ceramic burials dating to the prehistoric era and the Nuzi period were found at Kudish Şaghır, though the latter were interpreted as intrusive graves since no contemporary occupational strata were located. The excavator also described the latter as instances of human sacrifice (Starr 1939: 1, 9-11). For an additional example of this burial type, see the initial excavation of thirty-eight graves at Kish cemetery A, one of which was an infant ceramic burial. The graves were dated by Mackay and Lane to ca. 3000 BCE (Mackay 1925: 10, 13).

¹²³ Perkins (1949: table 1).

¹²⁴ Pollock (1999: 2).

compelling evidence to support his claim that room P470 was possibly a chapel; for all intents and purposes it appears to have been a storeroom (Starr 1939: 273-77). What is particularly important about these built-in burials is that they apparently occurred subsequently to the construction of the dwelling. As such, one should be hesitant in claiming that either burial was a foundation sacrifice. By contrast, two other built-in burials in stratum II were not augmentations but were utilized in the construction of the walls that formed an integral part of the structures of their respective buildings. The infant burials occurred in rooms (G24 and G13) near each other on the northwestern ridge but in separate buildings. G13 served as the entry-room to its building but the purpose of G24 is unknown. While both jar burials were positioned under the southwestern walls rising above them, the G13 burial was only partially covered by the wall. The built-in burials were paralleled by an additional infant burial in a vessel. This interment was found in room G24 and was contemporary with the room's built-in burial; yet, it was located in the floor beside a wall, not under it (Starr 1939: 226-29).

(3) The most elaborate example of the built-in burials at Yorgan Tepe comes from stratum III (mid third millennium BCE), room P400, in the southwestern part of the tell. The room itself contained the remains of three newborns in separate jars that were placed directly on the floor. A fourth pot was filled with the skeletons of eleven infants and was buried under the wall in the northern corner of the room. The purpose of the room was not ascertained, however, due to the lack of excavations in the adjacent rooms (Starr 1939: 267-77).

The initial excavations conducted at Tepe Gawra between 1927 and 1932¹²⁵ unearthed several examples of child burials from stratum VIII (late fourth millennium

¹²⁵ Cf. discussion by Tobler (1950: 1-2).

BCE).¹²⁶ The main necropolis was apparently located elsewhere since child interments were the only ones found for this stratum. The Western Temple was particularly connected to the stratum's mortuary practices. In the vicinity of the temple the poorly preserved remains of seven infants, approximately twelve to eighteen months old, were buried in loose graves (i.e., the children were not buried inside a durable protective casing such as a jar).¹²⁷ Their proximity to the temple caused the excavator to speculate as to whether or not the children were sacrificial victims but there is nothing about the burials to suppose that sacrifice was involved. Such is not the case, conversely, concerning an interment in the temple itself. Here, an infant was placed between two ceramic plates and was built into the construction of the southwestern wall at a point close to the structure's western corner (Speiser 1935: 22-27, 140-43). The archaeological report on the subsequent Tepe Gawra excavations from 1932-38 identifies a further built-in sacrifice in the remains of the Western Temple; that is, an infant was buried under the foundations at the front of the structure. Moreover, two infant interments were located in the foundations of the Eastern Temple of stratum VIII (one under its front corner and one seemingly associated with the temple podium) and one was situated below the rear wall of a room attached to the stratum IX temple. Like the Western Temple, an earlier temple (stratum XI) also had a number of graves (twenty-two to be exact) in its vicinity and contained two built-in burials: a child burial was uncovered under its northern corner and the tomb of a youth under its western. Eight children and one adult were also buried in

¹²⁶ The strata from Tepe Gawra mentioned by name in this section all date to what was identified as the Gawra era, with the exception of stratum XII, which is Ubaid II (Perkins 1949: table 1).

¹²⁷ Further excavations located an additional seven infant burials outside the Western Temple (Tobler 1950: 98-99).

the floors of this structure, a method of interment discovered in the aforementioned temples as well (Tobler 1950: 56-57, 67, 101).

The examples of built-in burial encountered thus far illustrate the antiquity of the practice in Mesopotamia; all the instances are quite early, with only a few cases from the second millennium BCE. It is, therefore, difficult to obtain a definite explanation concerning the primary purpose of interring children in the walls and foundations of private and public structures, especially given the lack of literary references to the practice.¹²⁸ What is clear, however, is that their utilization in construction projects indicates that they were killed with forethought. It is possible that this was done with the intention of protecting or consecrating the buildings. Apparently certain structures required several victims, if the temples at Tepe Gawra can be taken as indicative of this custom. But how should one account for the presence of in-floor burials alongside the built-in interments at Tepe Gawra and Yorgan Tepe? To answer this, we must first consider in-floor interments more fully.

3.1.1.2.2. In-Floor Sanctuary Burials

Beginning with the remains unearthed at Tall Chagar Bazar in 1935, our attention is immediately drawn to the graves of levels two and three (ca. mid to late third millennium BCE) for the reason that they contained a significantly high percentage of child burials (90% and 80%). The excavator, Mallowan,¹²⁹ suggested, therefore, that the dwellings under whose floors the children were laid to rest were mainly dedicated to child burial. While there is nothing of great significance in setting aside a room for infant

¹²⁸ Cf. discussion in Ellis (1968: 41-42).

¹²⁹ Chagar Bazar was excavated by Mallowan from 1935-37 (cf. Mallowan 1947: 1-2).

interment, room 3 of level 3 contained one element of special interest. In addition to having five buried infants under its floor, it was interpreted to be a shrine inasmuch as it had a niche in one wall that might have served as the place of an altar. According to Mallowan, the burials in this room are comparable to the remains from the Larsa period at Ur (ca. 2000 BCE), where infants were buried in jars in the floors of private sanctuaries (Mallowan 1936: 10, 15, 17-18).¹³⁰ Woolley showed that children were, in fact, interred in ceramic vessels placed underneath the floors of household chapels (or in close proximity to them) at Ur during the Larsa era.¹³¹ Adult burials were also discovered in the vicinity of the child graves, but the adults were commonly afforded interment within the family's subterranean tomb chamber instead of pots. Woolley, for his part, did not interpret these remains as instances of human sacrifice; instead, he cited the existence of a high mortality rate for children as a means of explaining the graves (Woolley 1955: 187-90). Regardless, the fact that the child burials were contiguous to adult burials in familial tombs suggests that the children were not sacrificial victims but were simply interred separately from adults.

As previously indicated, many Tepe Gawra temples yielded the remains of individuals buried in their floors and foundations. The initial excavations at the Eastern Temple of stratum VIII, for instance, found six such interments. The children buried therein were placed in the temple floor in an inconsistent manner: three were loose burials, i.e., simple dirt inhumations; one, a stone-lined cist grave; one, an infant jar burial in a grave lined with mud-bricks; and one, a mud-brick lined interment wherein

¹³⁰ Mallowan also noted the similarities between the Ur infant burials in private chapels and parallel interments at Tall Brak (Mallowan 1947: 70).

¹³¹ That these remains correspond to private chapels seems clear from the architectural elements contained therein: raised offering tables, fireplaces for incense, and brick altars (Woolley 1955: 188-89, cf. pl. 27).

burned bones were laid on reed matting (Speiser 1935: 141-43). Many other individuals, mainly children, were similarly buried at Tepe Gawra in both the secular structures and the religious buildings (cf. Tobler 1950: 123). The temple interments were described by the excavation report as sacrificial burials because they were found in religious edifices. Yet, the in-floor burials of the private houses were not similarly identified, despite the clear parallels between the interments in the private dwellings and those in the religious centers. These notions are borne out more fully in the following quotes (Tobler 1950: 124):

We are, as a result, confronted with the problem of finding a reason for the heavy concentrations of both tombs and graves around and underneath the Western Temple of Stratum VIII-C; the Strata IX, XI, and XI-A Temples; and the Eastern Shrine of XIII. The only probable answer is that those temples were the seats of chthonic deities who, as the heads of a cult of the underworld and the dead, demanded human sacrifice of their worshippers. To be sure, not all burials associated with temples contain sacrificial victims. Only those burials which were excavated from within temples can be so regarded. . . . In regard to the association of graves with secular buildings, this practice is apparently followed in all strata, but is particularly marked in Stratum XII, where almost every building had a burial, usually of an infant or child, beneath its floors or walls. Almost all large or important dwellings in other levels were so characterized..

As for the specific explanation concerning the purposes of the non-sacrificial intramural burials in stratum XII, Tobler opined (1950: 104):

Yet, while we may assume with some degree of assurance that the interments below the floors and walls¹³² of the temples of various levels represent sacrifices, we cannot regard burials under secular buildings in the same light. Almost all of the present Stratum XII burials must, therefore, reflect the high infant mortality rate which must have been characteristic of prehistoric times, rather than represent the victims of a deity requiring human sacrifice. . . .

The consistency between the private house in-floor burials and those found in the religious structures does not correspond to the two separate explanations given by Tobler: sacrifice vs. child mortality. Human immolation need not be limited to rites performed at religious buildings; it could occur at secular structures as well. Nevertheless, it is clear

¹³² Tobler's descriptions concerning the stratum XII burials located under walls lack substantive data (1950: 103-04). Thus, it is difficult to assess the nature of the burials. Other writers have encountered this problem as well (cf. Ellis 1968: 37).

that in-floor interment was a common means of dealing with the dead at Tepe Gawra. There is nothing which implicates the practice as being sacrificial in nature. For some unknown reason, the inhabitants buried their descendents in both the private and public buildings. It is possible that there were socio-economic criteria which caused certain children to be buried at home and others at sanctuaries (children of priests?).

It should be clear from the foregoing discussion that there is no compelling evidence to suggest that in-floor burials resulted from immolations simply because they were situated within sanctuaries. It is possible that some of the individuals were sacrificed but there is nothing evocative of this in the remains from Chagar Bazar, Ur, and Tepe Gawra. Yet, as was shown above, built-in burials are a different matter. How can the two exist in the same location? Simply put, the two are not mutually exclusive. Take Tepe Gawra, for instance. It is possible that the Western and Eastern Temples of stratum VIII, as well as the religious buildings of strata IX and XI, were initially consecrated by construction sacrifices (built-in burials) in order to prepare the buildings for future mortuary activities (in-floor burials).

3.1.2. Texts

The data thus far examined has concentrated upon Mesopotamian burial remains dating to the mid second millennium BCE and earlier, whereas the potential instances of human immolation now under consideration are known from the textual references of the first millennium BCE.

3.1.2.1. Child Burning

A small number of Neo-Assyrian texts, dating to the ninth to seventh centuries (Weinfeld 1972: 144), employ the Akkadian verbs *šarāpu* and, less frequently, *qahû* to indicate the type of action that should be taken against a person who breaches a contract or who effaces an inscription. Specifically, the person who reneges on a contract is subject to the following penalties:

he must eat one mina of plucked wool, drink [as much as] an *agannu*-bowl full of tanning fluid, burn (GIBÍL) [his] male [heir to Sîn], burn (*šarāpu*) his eldest daughter to Bēlet-šēri with 3 seahs of cedar, (and) repay 12 times the amount of the silver that he received to its owners. When he attempts his legal case, he shall not gain victory [K. 439 + 17997, lines 23'-29' (NALK 28; SAA 6.101; cf. AR 96a; ADD 474)].¹³³

he must eat one mina of plucked wool, drink as much as an *agannu*-bowl full <of tanning fluid>, burn (GIBÍL) his male heir to Sîn, burn (*šarāpu*) his eldest daughter to Bēlet-šēri (with) 2 seahs of cedar, (and) repay 10 times the amount of the silver that he received to its owners. When he attempts [his legal case], he shall not ga[in victory] [K. 1488, lines 19'-25' (NALK 35; SAA 6.102; cf. AR 163; ADD 436)].

[his eldest son a]t the sanctuary of [Adad he shall burn]; ten times [the silver] he must re[pay] to its owners. When he attempts his le[gal case], he shall not ga[in victory] [K. 3610 + 7330 + 13114, lines 1'-4' (NALK 41; AR 161; cf. ADD 575, 579, 805)].

he must deposit [x min]a of refined silver (and) one mina of refined gold into the lap of Ištar dwelling in Nineveh, devote a bow (and) a t[alent] of copper to Ninurta dwelling in Kalḫu, bu[rm] (*qa[lû*) his eldest son or elde[st] daughter with an *imēru*-load of sweet-smelling aromatics to Bēlet-šēri, (and) repay ten times the amount of s[ilver] to its owners. [When] he attempts his legal case, he shall not gain victory [K. 1492 + 1605, lines 23-32 (NALK 149; AR 158; cf. ADD 310)].

he must burn (GIBÍL) [his] eldest [son] [at the sanctuary of] Adad. [When he attem]pts [his legal case], he shall not gain victory [80-7-19, 135, lines 1'-3' (SAA 6.285; cf. AR 160; ADD 632)].

he must present one mina of silver (and) one mina of gold to Ninlil, bind two white horses at the feet of Aššur, burn (*šarāpu*) his eldest son at the sanctuary of Adad. When he attempts his illegal case,¹³⁴ he shall not gain victory [AO 2221, lines 15-19 (AR 41)].

he must deposit one mina of silver (and) one mina of gold into the lap of Ninurta dwelling in Kalḫu, bind four white horses at the [f]eet of Aššur, deliver four *ḫurbakkannu*-horses at the feet of Nergal, eat one mina of plucked wool, drink as much as an *agannu*-bowl of tanning fluid, [b]urn ((G)IBÍL) his eldest son before Sîn, (and) burn (*šarāpu*) his eldest daughter before Bēl[x]. Three seahs of cress shall be scattered for him from the ga[t]e [of] [Kalḫ]u up to the gate of the city of Aššur, (then) he must gath[er] (it) up using the tip of his tongue (and) fill up their measure. He

¹³³ The primarily abbreviations used in this section are NALK (*Neo-Assyrian Legal Documents in the Kouyunjik Collection of the British Museum*), AR (*Assyrische Rechtsurkunden*), ADD (*Assyrian Deeds and Documents*), SAA (*State Archives of Assyria*), CTN (*Cuneiform Texts from Nimrud*), and ABL (*Assyrian and Babylonian Letters Belonging to the Kouyunjik Collections of the British Museum*).

¹³⁴ For a discussion of *lā dēnišū*, see Postgate (1976: 20).

must hand over¹³⁵ seven male (and) seven female *āšipu*-specialists to Adad dwelling at Kurb[a]il, present seven male and seven female *kezru*-specialists to Ištar dwelling at Arbela, (and) repay 10 times the amount of silver to its owner. When he attempts his legal case, he shall not gain victory [ND 496, lines 19-34 (CTN 2.17)].

As for someone who effaces an inscription, two texts from Tell Halaf state:

let seven of his sons be burned (*šarāpu*) before Adad (and) let him relinquish¹³⁶ seven of his daughters to Ištar to be *harīmtu*-specialists (Meissner 1933: 72, lines 5-7; cf. Albright 1956: 81).

let [seven of his sons] be burned (*šarāpu*) before A[dad] (Meissner 1933: 75, lines 4-5; cf. Albright 1956: 82).

The most straightforward reading of the texts sees in them clear references to child sacrifice (cf. Smith 1975: 479). An alternative is to view the passages as portraying an act of dedication in which children were devoted to the service of a deity in a rite involving fire, such as the burning of aromatics (Weinfeld 1972: 144-46, following Deller 1965). Support for the latter position is supposedly found in the notion that the Assyrians did not practice blood immolations and burnt offerings; if so, the logic goes, they would not have sacrificed children (Weinfeld 1978: 413, building upon Oppenheim 1964: 192). This is an incorrect supposition given that there are references to animal sacrifices and burnt offerings in Assyrian literature (cf. ABL 361, 437, 722, 1202 in Parpola 1993: 139, 169, 288-91). Certainly, human sacrifice need not have animal parallels in order for the custom to exist in a particular environment but since analogous animal sacrifices can be cited, one simply cannot assume that shedding human blood for sacrificial purposes was inconceivable to the Assyrians, especially in light of references to the immolation of the substitute king in Assyrian documents (3.1.2.2.). By examining the use of the verbs *šarāpu* and *qalû* in the context of figurine burning, the following discussion will attempt

¹³⁵ On this verb (*u'-šar*), see Postgate (1973: 49 n. 30).

¹³⁶ On *lu-ra-me*, see CAD (*The Assyrian Dictionary of the Oriental Institute of the University of Chicago*) *ramû* A.6.

to substantiate the claim that the penalty clauses refer to burning an individual to death, i.e., sacrifice, not to passing a person through fire to consecrate them.

As in the contracts and inscriptions under discussion, *šarāpu* and *qalû* are essentially interchangeable in terms of denoting destruction by fire; that is, *šarāpu* and *qalû* appear in passages related to burning figurines, humans, towns, stelae, offerings, etc.¹³⁷ What is particularly significant for our purposes, however, are the references to the symbolic burning of humans, such as sorcerers, through setting a figurine ablaze before a deity. Burning human images in the presence of a deity is found in an incantation of the *Maqlû* genre published by Lambert; its date is unknown but is not earlier than ca. 1000 BCE (Lambert 1958: 288). The incantation and its associated rites are aimed at ridding an individual of the evil that has befallen him because of the actions of unknown sorcerers and enemies. The solution: create surrogate images of these people in the form of figurines constructed out of clay, fat, sesame-hulls, dough, wood, pitch, and wax, then burn them before Shamash (ritual portion, Lambert 1958: 296-97)—a god who plays a significant role in numerous texts wherein individuals seek to rid themselves of evil (cf. Oppenheim 1956: 297-307). An integral part of the incantation is to inform Shamash that “these are the ones; these are their figurines. Because they are not standing here, their images I burn (*qalû*) before your magnificent divinity” (lines 26-27). One could infer that had the attackers been at the victim’s disposal, they would have been burned before Shamash instead in order to break their hold over the victim. Indeed, when the victim later petitions for justice he not only requests that the sorceries of his attackers be turned back against them but also that Shamash should let the fire-god, Girra,

¹³⁷ Cf. CAD entries for specific textual references.

thoroughly destroy them with flames (lines 52-65).¹³⁸ The apotropaic purpose of burning objects, not figurines, before Shamash is seen also in a text connected to the substitute king ritual (to be discussed shortly; cf. Lambert 1957: 110, B 5-6); the specific notion of burning a figurine in the presence of a deity's magnificent divinity for the purpose of averting harm is found in an additional incantation studied by Lambert (1974: 281):

109 My god, great one, who grants life,
 110 Who gives judgements, whose command is not altered,
 111 ...you, my god, I have stood before you, I have sought you, my god, [I have bowed] beneath you.
 112 Accept my prayers, release my bond.
 113 Relax my banes, tear out the ... of my evil, drive away my trouble.
 114 Drive out from my body illness from known and unknown iniquity,
 115 The iniquity of my father, my grandfather, my mother, [my] grandmother,
 116 The iniquity of my elder brother and elder sister,
 117 The iniquity of clan, kith and kin,
 118 Which has come upon me because of the raging of the wrath of my god and goddess.
 119 Now I burn [*qalû*] their images before your great divinity.
 120 Release my bond, grant me reconciliation.

Not only do we have here the notion of removing divine wrath through burning but also the perspective that iniquity or culpability (*arnu*) was transferable if not appropriately addressed. Thus, the one wrongfully afflicted sets to flames the figurines of those who potentially committed the offense, thereby forcing the affliction onto the real culprit(s). This is similar to the purpose of burning the figurines of unknown sorcerers: the victim is afflicted and, in turn, asks that justice be served by placing the harm on the ones who instigated the problem.

Figurine imagery is specifically utilized in the penalty clauses of a treaty from the time of Esarhaddon (early seventh century BCE). The document lists the following two punishments for breaking the covenant:

May Girra, the one who provides sustenance for small (and) great alike, consume with fire (*qamû*) your name (and) your seed (SAA 2.6, lines 524-25).

¹³⁸ A passage from the *Maqlû* collection is very similar but the burning of the figurines and the desired roasting of the sorcerers is conveyed via the use of three verbs, all meaning to burn: *qalû*, *šarāpu*, and *qamû* (*Maqlû* IV. 132-38; cf. CAD *qalû* 2.a.).

As a figurine of wax is burned (*šarāpu*) with fire (and a figurine) of clay is dissolved in water, ([li]ke those) may your form be consumed (*qamū*) by divine fire (^dGirra); may (your form) be sunk in water (SAA 2.6, lines 608-10).¹³⁹

While the penalty of burning one's children to or before a deity does not necessarily reflect the use of figurine imagery as clearly as Esarhaddon's treaty, setting images to fire is the clearest analog to the penalty clauses in the contracts and inscriptions translated at the start of this section. Esarhaddon's treaty even provides a contemporary perspective on the desire that those who break an agreement be killed by fire, and not only the breakers of the treaty but also their descendants (lit. their seed). The contractual and inscriptional penalty clauses, however, do not demand the death of the perpetrator. Instead, he is primarily absolved of his culpability by paying a fine and slaying his children; sometimes he must also dedicate horses or humans to divine servitude or go through an ordeal such as drinking tanning fluid and picking up cress with his tongue. Admittedly, the penalties are extreme; therefore, it is arguable that the punishments were not enforced. Nevertheless, the purpose of the foregoing discussion has been to establish the probability that the language employed to describe the burning of children in fire denotes destruction by fire and not dedication to living servitude. Destroying a human by fire in the presence of/to a deity is an act of sacrifice and it is possible that the penalty clauses were influenced by actual human immolations. Hence, just as Esarhaddon's treaty imagery incorporated figurine burning into the penalty clauses, the contracts and inscriptions might have done the same with child sacrifice. Children might not have been immolated because some person broke a contract but the penalty imagery is certainly sacrificial.

¹³⁹ These lines introduce the parallel to burning figurines: their destruction by water. The ritual is attested in the Namburbi texts (cf. Caplice 1967: 1-8).

3.1.2.2. Substitute King

References in Mesopotamian literature to the substitute king, known in Akkadian as *šar puḫi*, mainly date from the Neo-Assyrian era and are principally located in the royal correspondence of this time (Bottéro 1992: 139; von Soden 1994: 194). Generally speaking, the substitute took on the office of the monarch for a period of one hundred days in order to spare the original king from some calamity foretold in an omen. Thus, through the substitute the harm was redirected and the king's life was saved (von Soden 1994: 193-94). The question immediately arises as to whether or not the substitute was killed at the end of the hundred days in order to fulfill the omen. The texts are somewhat ambiguous on this point since they essentially state a desire for the substitute to move on to his destiny: *ana šīmti lillik* (cf. Parpola 1993: texts 220, 221, 314). While *ana šīmti alāku* frequently connotes a natural death, Bottéro saw in the substitute king references the use of this phrase with the express meaning of taking the substitute's life.¹⁴⁰ This interpretation is based predominantly upon a text published by Lambert as well as *ABL* 437 (Bottéro 1992: 150-53). The relevant portions of Lambert's text are as follows (Lambert 1957: 109-10)—the first paragraph is from Column A of Lambert's translation and the second from Column B:

1. [.....] ..
2. [.....] design
3. [.....] you shall put [...] upon him
4. [.....].. you shall purge him and
5. [.....] you shall put his ... upon him
6. [...]. the man who was given as the king's substitute shall die and
7. [...] the bad omens will not affect that [ki]ng.
8. Things will go well with that [king] and his land will prosper.

¹⁴⁰ von Soden similarly opined that the substitution would only be efficacious through the death of the substitute—if the substitute did not die naturally within the appropriate amount of time, assistance would be given towards this end (von Soden 1994: 193-94).

1. [.....]....[.....]
2. [.....]. and so [you shall speak,]
3. <<Your [.....]. and your evils with [you]
4. Take down [.....]. to the Land of No Return>> — you shall speak before Šamaš and
5. You shall burn [with fire] before Šamaš his royal [thr]one, his royal table,
6. His royal weapon, his royal sceptre.
7. You shall bury their ashes at their head,
8. Then the purification of the land will be achieved, ditto the purification of the king will be achieved.

Lambert was correct in concluding that the substitute king is being addressed in lines 3-4 of Column B as the one who is to go down to the Land of No Return (Lambert 1957: 109). In fact, the passage is identical to incantation texts which involve figurines and Shamash. In one such incantation, the person afflicted by the contamination of dog urine is supposed to inform a dog figurine in the presence of Shamash that it is his/her substitute and that it carries the evil upon it. The figurine is later cast into the depths of a river so that it can carry the harm away (Caplice 1967: 1-8). Similarly, the substitute king is to bear to the netherworld the evil which is threatening the king. To do this, the substitute must die. His regalia and furniture must be destroyed as well since it is an extension of his kingship.

As for *ABL* 437, it reads (Parpola 1993: 288, emphasis original):

⁵[Damqī], the son of the prelate of Akka[d], who had ru[led] Assyria, Babylon(ia) [and] all the countries, [di]ed with his queen on the night of [the xth day as] a substitute for the king, my lord, [and for the sake of the li]fe of Šamaš-šumu-uki[n]. He went to his fate for their redemption.

¹³We prepared the burial chamber. He and his queen were decorated, treated, displayed, buried and wailed over. The burnt-offering was made, all portents were cancelled, and numerous apotropaic rituals, *Bīt rimki* and *Bīt salā' mē* ceremonies, exorcistic rites, penitential psalms and omen litanies were performed to perfection. The king, my lord, should know (this).

²²[I] have heard that before these ceremonies a prophetess had prophesied, saying to the son of the prelate, Damqī: “You will take over the kingship!” The prophetess had also said to him in the assembly of the country: “I have revealed the *polecāt*, the ... of my lord, and placed (him) in your hands.” These apotropaic rituals which were performed succeeded well indeed; the king, my lord, can be glad.

In light of the contemporaneous deaths of the substitute king and queen, it is clear that they were not granted the privilege of dying by natural causes. Hence, Bottéro is justified

in his interpretation of these two texts. The substitute king, and sometimes queen, were sacrificed in order to remove the threat against the throne. Von Soden was only partially correct, however, in describing the substitute king ritual as a “disguised human sacrifice” wherein people believed that they could redirect divine wrath by placing it upon an individual through substitution (von Soden 1994: 194). The identity of the substitute king might have been disguised but not the immolation itself. We shall return to the topic of the substitute king ritual in a treatment of the Hittite references to the rite. While the Hittites primarily did not immolate their scapegoats, there is at least one probable reference to a human substitute who was sacrificed.

3.1.2.3. Military Affairs

The sacrifice of captives is poorly attested in Mesopotamian literature and pictorial reliefs. There are, however, two instances worthy of consideration. The first example comes to us from the seventh century BCE: the sacrifice of Sennacherib’s slayers by his grandson Assurbanipal. The episode is recounted on the Rassam Cylinder (Luckenbill 1926-27: 304):

The chariots, coaches, palanquins, his concubines, the goods of his palace, they brought before me. As for those men (and) their vulgar mouths, who uttered vulgarity against Assur, my god, and plotted evil against me, the prince who fears him,—I slit their mouths (*v.*, tongues) and brought them low. The rest of the people, alive, by the colossi, between which they had cut down Sennacherib, the father of the father who begot me,—at that time, I cut down those people there, as an offering to his shade. Their dismembered bodies (*lit.*, flesh) I fed to the dogs, swine, wolves, and eagles, to the birds of heaven and the fish of the deep.

De Vaux argued that the passage should be taken figuratively: “the punishment of the murderers, executed in the very place where they have committed their crime, is compared to a funeral offering presented to the departed person” (1964: 56). He mentioned, furthermore, that the term for the sacrifice, *kispu*, commonly denotes a meal

offering to the deceased (1964: 56, n. 21). De Vaux is right: *kispu* does refer to food or drink offered in funerary contexts (cf. Black, George, and Postgate 2000: 161; and *kispu* in CAD); nevertheless, the language of the text suggests that a special type of *kispu* was given—Assurbanipal presented a human *kispu* for his departed grandfather, i.e., a human sacrifice. What is more, the next lines in the text show the suprahuman effect that resulted from the monarch's actions: Assurbanipal “quieted the hearts of the great gods” through slaying these individuals as well as the others who had rebelled against him with Shamash-shum-ukin (Luckenbill 1926-27: 304).

The second potential occurrence of captive immolation was proposed by Smith in reference to the wall reliefs from the N.W. Palace of Assurnasirpal at Nimrud (room B), which were originally excavated and published by Layard in the mid nineteenth century (Layard 1853: pl. 22 and 30).¹⁴¹ The key panels are the upper registers of B-6 and B-7 (fig. 3.1), post-battle scenes wherein four bound prisoners are presented to an individual standing under a canopy, two men clad in animal skins fight (or dance) with each other under the watchful eyes of a man who holds a spear, and two sets of soldiers hold decapitated heads while standing in the presence of musicians and fellow soldiers. In Smith's estimation the scenes represent the presentation of four prisoners to a priest at the opening of the canopy (whose office is indicated by the stole lying across his shoulder), a procession of prisoners to sacrifice (as illustrated by the men in the lion outfits), and their eventual immolation (evinced by the decapitated heads; Smith 1925: 91). This reconstruction is proven erroneous when the larger context of the two panels is examined. Following the upper registers from B-3 to B-7 (also shown on fig. 3.1), one can see a natural progression from the siege of a city and an accompanying battle (B-3 and B-4) to

¹⁴¹ For a popular account of his excavations, consult (Layard 1867).

a post-battle return (B-5 and B-6, right half) to camp (B-6, left half, and B-7). The decapitated heads would, therefore, correspond to the enemies who died in battle and whose headless corpses are shown in the battle and returning scenes (B-4 and B-5).

Concerning the remainder of the encampment activities, the presentation of prisoners to an official would have been a common post-battle practice; even accepting the assumption that the individual under the tent is a priest, the captives could be in the process of entering into servitude; and as for the men in lion skins, they are apparently Assyrian cultic functionaries (Ellis 1977).

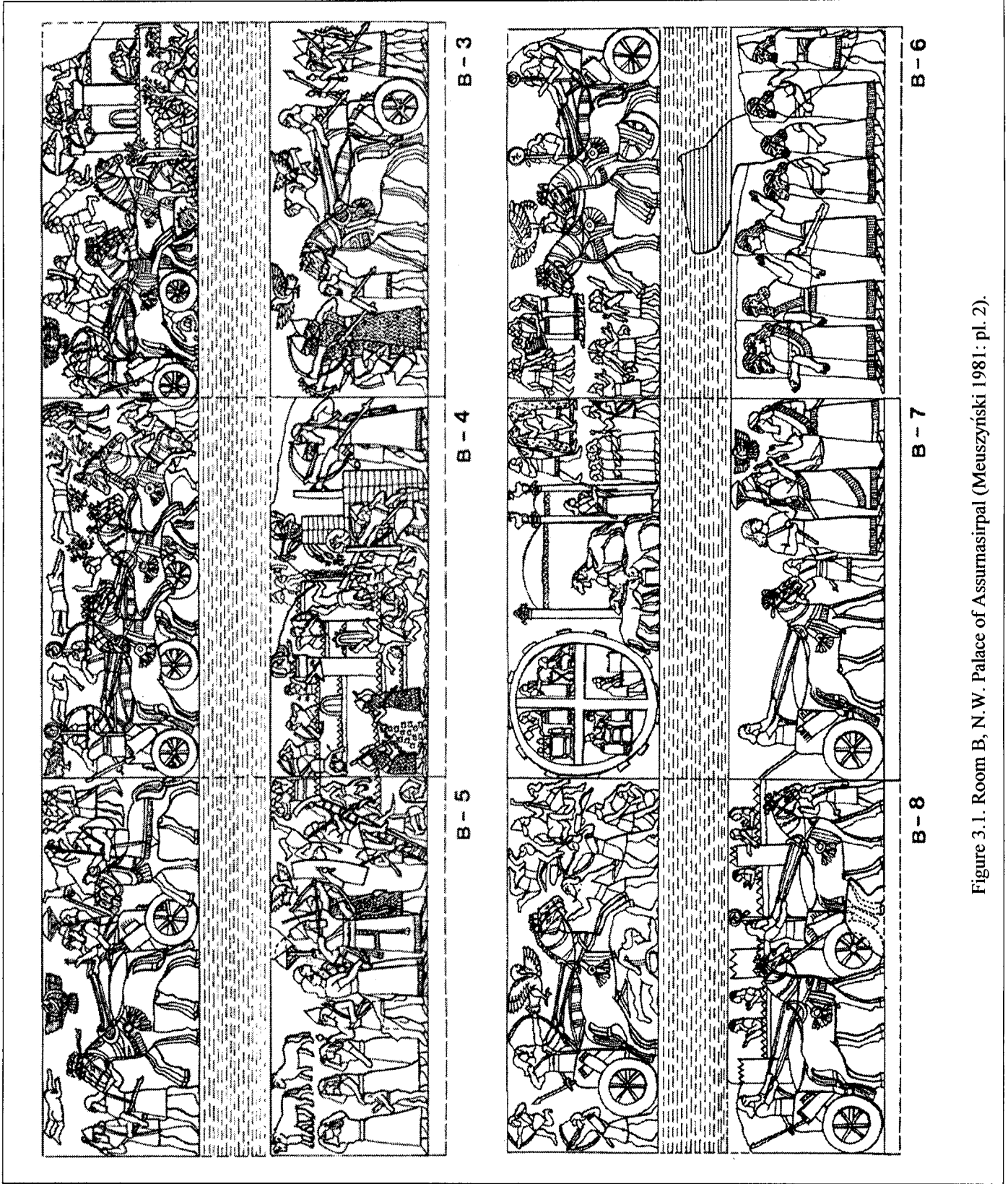


Figure 3.1. Room B, N.W. Palace of Assurnasirpal (Meuszynski 1981: pl. 2).

3.1.3. Glyptic Art

The possible seal depictions of human sacrifice received the attention of several scholars during the nineteenth (Ménant 1887; Ward 1889) and twentieth centuries (Dussaud 1953: 94; Frankfort 1939: 246; Green 1975: 27-43). Unfortunately, many of the potential representations of immolation are ambiguous and open to a variety of interpretations. The evidence from seal impressions is perhaps the most inconclusive set of data covered in this dissertation—seals will again come under discussion in the following two sections of this chapter (3.2. *Anatolia* and 3.3. *Egypt*). The greatest obstacle to deciphering the concepts portrayed in glyptic art is the identification of the participants in the supposed sacrificial scenes. This is particularly true of seals that depict the typical ancient Near Eastern motif of the smiting individual, a classic stereotype for conquest and victory. There are two key groups in this genre which should be examined.

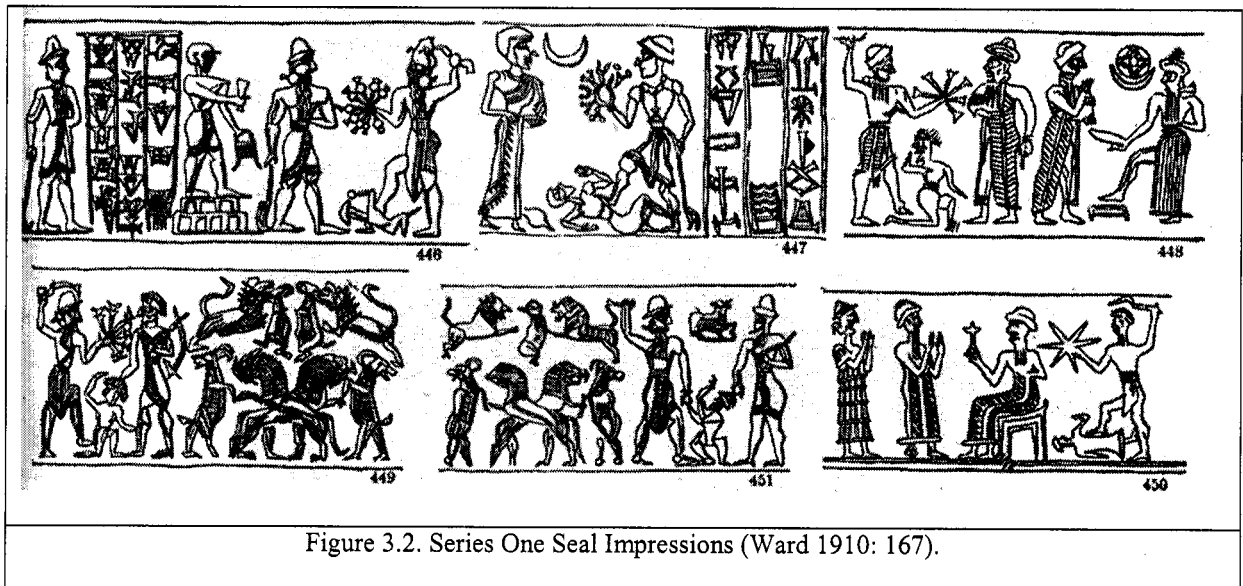


Figure 3.2. Series One Seal Impressions (Ward 1910: 167).

The first series (fig. 3.2) was extensively treated by Ménant (1887) and Ward (1889). The group dates to the Old Babylonian era, early second millennium BCE

(Green 1975: 28-34; Frankfort 1939: pl. XXVIII; Porada 1948: 39-62, especially p. 47)¹⁴²

and may be described as follows (Ward 1889: 41-42):

We have, then, the characteristic figure of a personage, generally short-skirted, with a weapon generally held over his head, sometimes threatening a naked man, sometimes leading a dragon or a bull by a thong, in one case (though here he wears a long skirt) with three victims of his fury before him, whom he has hurled to the earth; sometimes represented alone, that is, unrelated to other figures on the cylinder; sometimes carrying in his other hand before him a cluster of radiating objects, and sometimes an emblem with two, three, or four zigzagging forks. The naked cowering figure appears not only before him, but also alone, and before a lion or a composite monster with mouth open to devour him. In one case, he is before a lion, and the hand over his head holds a shield; and in one case, in which he is threatened by the usual god, or "pontiff," his head is held by a second figure carrying a bow. In yet another case, he is attacked in front by the god and behind by the composite monster.

At the beginning of the quote, Ward described the smiting individual as a personage but by its end, his supposition shone forth in that he called the attacker a god. This is the crux of the matter: it is unclear as to which characters are deities and which are humans in these scenes. One cannot simply identify the various individuals based upon the differences in headdress. While a horned miter was mainly reserved for deities, a turban (or cap) was used for both divinities and human rulers during this era (Frankfort 1939: 158; Porada 1948: 52, 61; cf. Ward 1889: 40). In the scenes before us (fig. 3.2), the smiting figure often wears a turban and sometimes the victim does as well; hence, either individual could be a god or a human king. When an individual is in attendance at the slaying, he or she is adorned in a horned hat or a turban. The scenes are, therefore, complicated by a lack of clearly defined role indicators. Despite this difficulty, it is possible to construct a plausible argument in favor of viewing the scenes as primarily depicting a smiting deity, particularly Shamash. That is to say, Amurru and Shamash were the two deities most often portrayed with turbans at this time (Frankfort 1939: 166-67) and the latter is specifically referenced on one of the seals of our genre (Frankfort 1939: 167 and pl. XXVIII g); furthermore, a sun-god was frequently depicted in the

¹⁴² For the dates of the Old Babylonian and Akkad eras (mentioned below), see Bottéro (2001: 268).

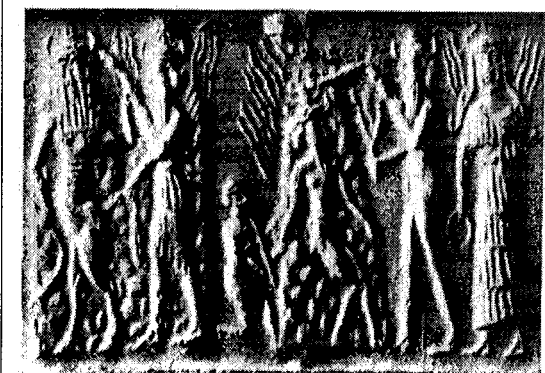
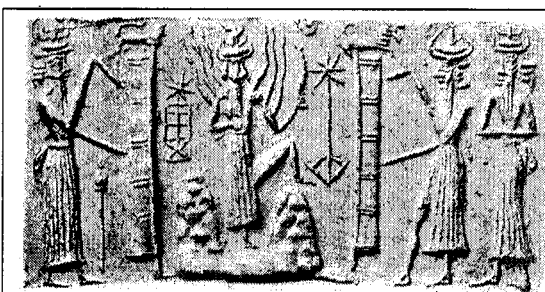
position of smiting an enemy in a series of seals from the Akkad period, 2330-2100 BCE, which is admittedly earlier than the current period under discussion but, nonetheless, establishes a precedent. This series of Akkad seals forms our second group (figs. 3.3-3.8).



Figure 3.3. Series Two Seal Impression A (Ward 1910: 53).



Figure 3.6. Series Two Seal Impression D (Ward 1910: 56).



Figures 3.4. and 3.5. Series Two Seal Impressions B, C (Frankfort 1939: pl. XVIII a, j).



Figure 3.7. Series Two Seal Impression E (Ward 1910: 53).



Figure 3.8. Series Two Seal Impression F (Frankfort 1939: pl. XVIII h).

The first of our scenes from the Akkad era (fig. 3.3) portrays an individual in the act of killing another on top of a mountain (Ward 1910: 53). Further scrutiny of seals from this period illustrates that a sun-god was associated with mountains (figs. 3.4 and 3.5) and is even shown smiting enemies (fig. 3.6). The two motifs are found together on numerous seals discussed by Ward (1910: 53-58). One such example (fig. 3.7) was not provided with a definite date by him but it mirrors one from the Akkad period, which lacks a mountain (fig. 3.8). One can speak with greater certainty concerning this second group, therefore, than with our first group in claiming that a sun-god, such as Shamash, is depicted here as the one doing the smiting.

Given the probability that both groups of seals portray a deity in the act of slaying an individual, it is unfeasible to claim that they depict human immolation. Even if one were to accept the notion that certain of the seals in the first group represent a human ruler smiting another human in the presence of a deity (cf. Ward 1889: 42), this could be understood as a stereotypical portrayal of military prowess. In the ancient Near East, victory on the battlefield was perceived as resulting from divine support. Thus, a deity's presence would be justified in a scene depicting victory (cf. the smiting ruler motif, 3.3.2). In such a case, the deity need not be the recipient of sacrifice, unless, of course, warfare was seen by a particular culture as an act of immolation, as it was among the ancient Israelites (4.1.1) and the Moabites (3.4.3.2).

3.1.4. Summation

There is a striking dichotomy between the two kinds of sources which evince human immolation in Mesopotamia: physical remains and literary descriptions—the pictorial representations treated above did not prove to be as valuable in this regard. The archaeological data primarily date to the periods before the middle of the second millennium BCE, whereas the textual references chiefly come from the Neo-Assyrian era of the first millennium. Thus, one should not view Mesopotamian human sacrifice as a homogenous practice. From the prehistoric era to the second millennium, the immolation of humans is evident in the burials of adults as attendant immolations (Ur; Kish) and children as built-in sacrifices (Yorgan Tepe; Tepe Gawra) but much later in the first millennium human sacrifice was associated with averting evil (substitute king) and exercising capital punishment (child burning, *kispu*). The penalty clauses that call for the burning of children in Neo-Assyrian contracts and inscriptions employ sacrificial imagery but might not have been enforced.

3.2. Anatolia

One is hard pressed to find clear examples of human immolation from ancient Anatolia. Despite the evidence for a construction sacrifice of a child in a pre-Hittite level at Hattusha,¹⁴³ the few extant textual references that will be examined in the following sections are from the Hittites themselves, who flourished in Anatolia during the second

¹⁴³ In 1964 Neve discovered at Büyükkale the remains of a four-year-old child in the wall of a structure at stratum Va (Neve 1966: 29; Kümmel 1967: 164). Stratum Va dates to the early second millennium (Bittel 1970: ix, 28, 35-36).

millennium BCE.¹⁴⁴ In addition, Hittite or Syro-Hittite seal impressions that possibly portray sacrifice will be scrutinized.

3.2.1. Texts

3.2.1.1. Substitute King

The substitute king ritual is also known from Hittite literature. The rite essentially fulfilled the same function in Mesopotamia and Anatolia. *KUB (Keilschrifturkunden aus Boghazköi)* 9.13 + 24.5 is particularly important inasmuch as it provides an overview of the purpose of the rite as well as a representation of some figures that could serve as royal substitutes.¹⁴⁵ Thus, in response to an omen forecasting the monarch's death, the king could present to the gods animal and human surrogates in the hope that their deaths would be accepted in place of his own. The translation given below illustrates the role played by the human substitute in particular (*ANET* 355):

He [brings a healthy prisoner to the *sanctuary*]. They anoint the prisoner with the fine oil of kingship, (20) and [he speaks] as follows: "This man (is) the king. To him [have I given] a royal name. Him have I clad [in the vestments] of kingship. Him have I crowned with the diadem. Remember ye this: That evil omen [signifies] short years (and) short days. Pursue ye this substitute!" The one shekel of silver, the one shekel of gold, the one mina of copper, (25) the one mina of tin, the one mina of iron, the one mina of *lead*, all this is *removed* from his [body]. The one healthy prisoner is released, and he has him taken back to his country. The king submits to the *waving ceremony*, and afterward the king goes to bathe.

According to Gurney, this is the only example which plainly conveys the outcome of the rite for the human substitute (Gurney 1977: 57). Yet, a male prisoner is similarly released after becoming the substitute king in *KBo (Keilschrifttexte aus Boghazköi)* 15.1 i

¹⁴⁴ On the history of the Hittites, see the recent survey in Gorny (2000). Cf. chronology in Bittel (1970: ix).

¹⁴⁵ The Hittite term for substitute is *tarpalli*, which is analogous to Akkadian *dinānu* or *pūhu* (Vieyra 1939: 134; cf. Kümmel 1967: 19-20). The Hittite texts also use *nakkušši* in substitute rituals. For Gurney, this term should more strictly connote the idea of a carrier, i.e., one who carries away harm, whereas *tarpalli* formerly indicates a substitute that was sacrificed on behalf of the offerer. The two terms, however, were not always utilized according to such differences in meaning (Gurney 1977: 52-58).

1-ii 4.¹⁴⁶ A woman, in addition to a man, is also employed as a substitute for the king in the latter text, which is a result of the uncertainty of the situation. If a male deity is behind the portended adversity, it is hoped that the male substitute will appease him. The opposite is true for a female deity and the female substitute. In this way, the monarch would be able to cover the spectrum of potential antagonists.

Kümmel reconstructed a portion of another passage wherein a captive serves as a royal substitute, but in this case, the substitute possibly dies on the seventh day of his reign (*KBo* 15.2+; Kümmel 1967: 62-63, 93-94; cf. Haas 2003: 543-44). Gurney followed Kümmel's suggestion by stating, "the single sign that is preserved can hardly be anything but the beginning of the word for 'he dies'" (Gurney 1977: 58). The main portions of the text read (Gurney 1977: 57-58):¹⁴⁷

Then they construct in a separate place a hut and in it a wooden effigy with eyes of gold and ear-rings of gold. They dress it in royal robes and a spare set of robes is laid aside for it [there follows a list of garments, etc.]. They set up 2 tables, right and left, and 7 loaves on the table, right and left. They set 7 loaves twice daily for it and daily they sacrifice a sheep for it; the king eats some (of it) daily and they bring food daily to the effigy. But when they bring it, no one sees it; they cover it over and so place it before the effigy.

Then the king says: 'This is the living supernal substitute for me, and this effigy is the infernal substitute for me. If you, heavenly gods, have afflicted me with evil or shortened my days, months, or years, this living substitute man shall stand in my place; mark him well, O heavenly gods. But if the Sun-goddess of the Underworld and the infernal gods have afflicted me, then this effigy shall stand in my place; mark it well, O infernal gods.' The king sits down.

Then they bring the prisoner in. ...He says to the king: 'Leave the palace!' The king answers: 'I will go.' ...When he has uttered these words, he goes down from the palace and no one speaks his name any more....If anyone comes up into the city, people do not say 'The city in which the real king is'—not so (but) 'The city in which the new king is, that is where the king is.' And the king kneels daily before the Sun-god of heaven in the early morning and prays: 'Sun-god of heaven, my lord, what have I done? Thou hast taken the throne away from me and given it to another....Thou has summoned me to the shades. But I have appeared before thee, Sun-god of heaven. Release me from the realm of the shades.'

Then they perform the royal ritual for the new king. They serve him with food and drink, his bed is placed in the bedroom, the chamberlains watch over him at night, ...he sits down in the place where the true king sits. But on the seventh day—

¹⁴⁶ For translations, see Kümmel (1967: 111-15); Collins (1997).

¹⁴⁷ The colophon to the text conveys the following: "If death is predicted for the king, whether he sees it in a dream or it is made known to him by divination from the entrails or by augury, or if some omen of death occurs in front of him, this is the ritual for it" (Gurney 1977: 57).

Kümmel's reconstructed ending of the quote, "He di[es (?)] on the seventh day" (Kümmel 1967: 63)—in place of Gurney's "But on the seventh day"—is potentially problematic in light of the other references to the rite cited above since they present the substitute king as carrying the harm away from the king by leaving the area *alive*. Hence, if one were to accept Kümmel's reconstruction, as Gurney has done, this passage would be anomalous by portraying the sacrifice of the substitute king.

3.2.1.2. Military Affairs

Human sacrifice, it has been proposed, is evident in Hittite texts which deal with military affairs (Moyer 1983: 33, n. 53). *KUB* 17.28 (and possibly 17.17)¹⁴⁸ was taken by Masson as an example of human sacrifice in light of its description concerning the splitting in two of a man, as well as a goat, dog and pig, as part of a purification rite for the Hittite army (Masson 1950).¹⁴⁹ Following the work done by Kümmel (1967: 151), Sasson translated a passage from *KUB* 17.28 as (Sasson 1976: 205):

When the army is defeated by an enemy, then the following sacrifice is prepared "behind" the river; "behind" the river, a man, a kid, a puppy-dog, and a suckling pig are cut in half. One half is placed on one side, the (other) half on the other. Before it, one makes a door out of *ḫatalkenas* wood and pull (*sic*) over it a cord(?). Then one lights a fire before the door on one side, and also on the other side one lights a fire. The troops go through the middle. But as soon as it [the troops] reaches the bank of the river, one sprinkle (*sic*) water on them. Afterwards one goes through the field-ritual as is the custom of doing the field-ritual.

Apparently while campaigning, the Hittite army also had recourse to cook a person in a pot. Unfortunately, the purpose of the killing and cooking is unclear due to the fragmentary nature of the text (*KBo* 15.4). Kümmel suggested that it deals with ritual

¹⁴⁸ The text is very fragmented, making it impossible to ascertain its exact meaning. One point of correspondence to *KUB* 17.28 is seen at the end of the fragment where reference is made to a prisoner, a dog, and a pig (cf. Kümmel 1967: 152-53).

¹⁴⁹ On *KUB* 17.28 see also Haas (2003: 546).

killing, but one simply cannot be certain based upon the limited information preserved (Kümmel 1967: 156; cf. Wilhelm 1993: 61).

3.2.2. Glyptic Art

A series of seals, which date to ca. 1500 BCE and appear to be Syro-Hittite in design, was identified by Ward as depicting an altar shaped like a bull with flames rising from its back (fig. 3.9). He conjectured, moreover, that three of the seals might portray child sacrifice (fig. 3.9, nos. 966, 968, 969). He was greatly influenced by the rabbinic notion that children were burned in an image of *Mōlek* that was part human, part calf and had outstretched arms, but he was hesitant in ascribing certainty to his suppositions regarding human immolation and these seals (Ward 1910: 307-10). Of the three designated seals supposedly showing children in the vicinity of bull “altars”,¹⁵⁰ number 966 is the only one upon which a small human figure can be clearly seen. Such an image is paralleled by a scorpion on number 965, a lion on number 967, and a goat (?) on number 970. The latter would seem to have been a more typical sacrificial victim than the other two creatures but it is not even clear from these images that any of the beings were intended for sacrifice.

¹⁵⁰ The use of quotation marks is appropriate given the uncertainty of Ward’s interpretation. Their utilization is influenced by their appearance in Canby (1989: 113).

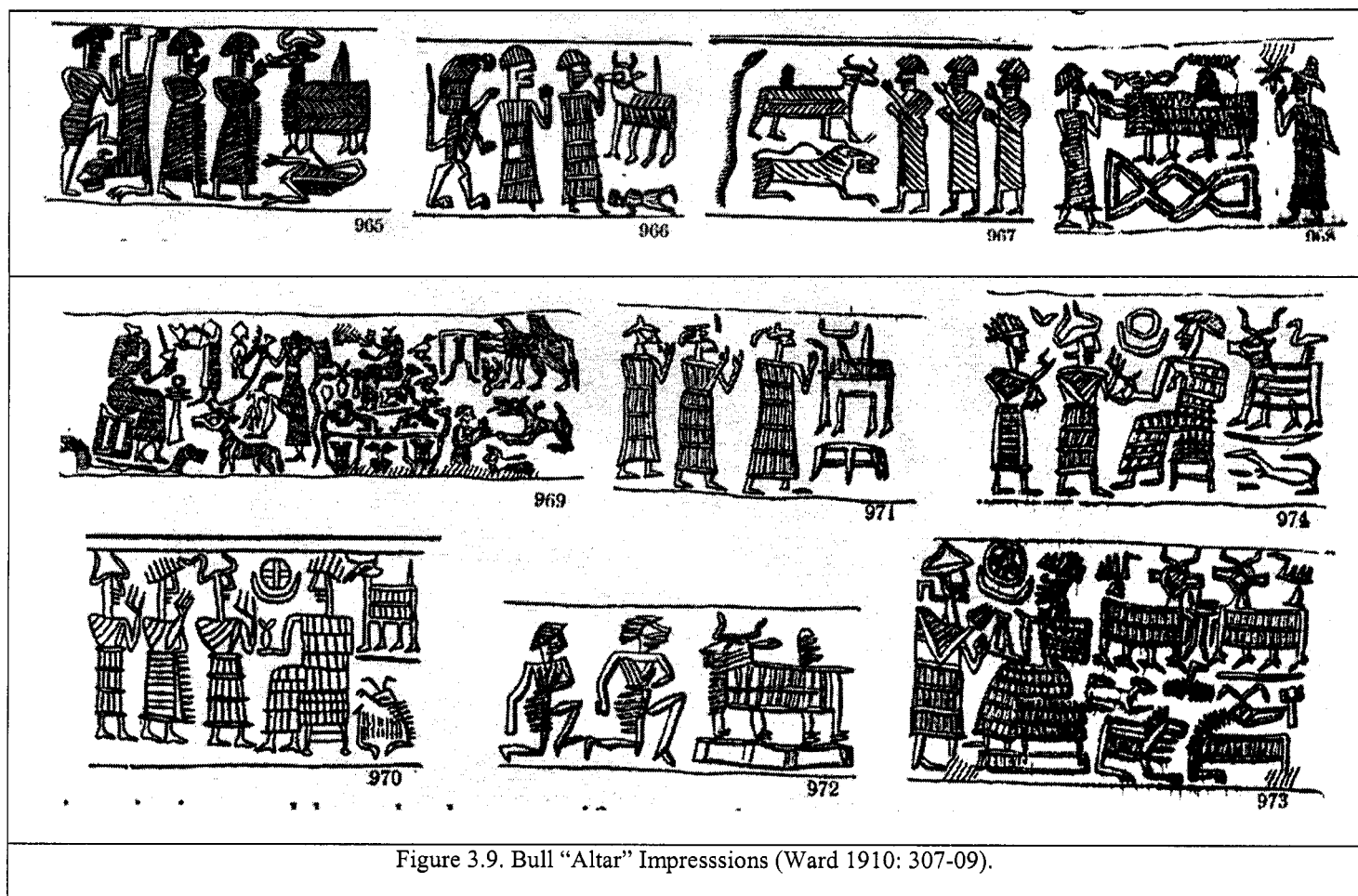


Figure 3.9. Bull "Altar" Impressions (Ward 1910: 307-09).

One seal of this genre, however, is quite suggestive of animal sacrifice (fig. 3.10). In this example, two individuals face the bull "altar" and one is positioned below it. The latter is in the process of slaying a beast, apparently for sacrifice. The other living creatures located under the bull "altars" on the various seals could be interpreted tentatively in a similar light. If so, the small human lying below the "altar" in fig. 3.9 (#966) might represent a sacrificial victim. Yet, it could signify a worshipful act of prostration in which the individual is bowing down before the image of a deity represented as a bull. Such an interpretation is bolstered by the awareness that the bull was used in Hittite art to signify the weather-god (cf. Canby 1989: 118; Macqueen 1986: 145, fig. 136).

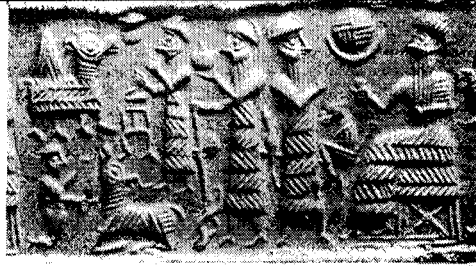


Figure 3.10. Bull “Altar” Impression (Frankfort 1939: pl. XL).

Another potential example of human sacrifice is the Tyszkiewicz Seal (fig. 3.11). Its imagery is characteristically Hittite and its provenance is probably fourteenth century BCE Anatolia (Frankfort 1939: 284-88). While it is possible to interpret the burning of the individual lying on a pyre or altar as human sacrifice (cf. Deedes 1935: 202-204), this is questionable. The seal is currently housed in the Boston Museum of Fine Arts, whose online catalogue described the imagery as follows:

Mythological scenes between bands of spiral ornament. An enthroned god sits amidst various cult objects before a mountain in which a human figure is buried under the god's throne, perhaps a representation of the Underworld. Five deities approach him, one with two faces. On the right [located on the left side of fig. 3.11 below] another god slays a fallen enemy, while two others burn the two-faced god on a flaming pyre. Underneath the pyre is again a buried body.¹⁵¹

¹⁵¹ <http://www.mfa.org/collections/>, accessed on April 10, 2006.



Figure 3.11. Tyszkiewicz Seal (Dussaud 1953: 93).

3.2.3. Summation

Instances of human sacrifice from the Hittite sphere of influence are practically nonexistent, with only a few exceptions. It seems to have occurred in relation to purifying the army after defeat and some have suggested that sacrifice appears on one seal from Anatolia (fig. 3.11) and on the Syro-Hittite seals with bull “altars” (fig. 3.9); however, the bull “altars” could be zoomorphic representations of a deity and the Tyszkiewicz Seal could portray, like the Mesopotamian glyptic art examined above, the slaying of a god. The Hittite substitute king ritual is similar in its intents and purposes to that described in the Neo-Assyrian literature, with the exclusion of the closing of the rite. In the Assyrian texts, the substitute removes the threat by carrying the evil to the netherworld and in the Hittite literature, the substitute does so by taking it away from the immediate vicinity of the king while still alive, that is, with the exception of one passage (*KBo* 15.2+). Given the limited evidence evocative of human immolation, perhaps the majority of the Hittites would have agreed with the writer of *KBo* 12.62 (lines 13’-15’) that such a thing was unknown (Wilhelm 1993: 61).

3.3. Egypt

3.3.1. Attendant Sacrifice

Human immolation in the form of attendant burial is known primarily from the tombs of the Egyptian First Dynasty (ca. 3000-2890 BCE),¹⁵² particularly those at the cemetery of Abydos. The custom did not continue, however, into the subsequent Old Kingdom period (Mertz 1964: 46-7; Wilkinson 1999: 227; cf. Shaw and Nicholson 1995: 134). Hoffman attempted to explain the impetus for the cessation of the practice as follows (Hoffman 1979: 279):

It was a symbol of the transitional process from prehistory to history, from small-scale chiefdom to a unified, totalitarian state. It was an aberration of power at a time when power was becoming the game everyone played. As such, it quickly fell into disuse once the rules of the game were firmly established after the passing of Khasekhemui and the Second Dynasty around 2700 B.C.

It is feasible to assume that the wide-scale practice of attendant sacrifice in early monarchies was a byproduct of the attempt to establish rule over subjected people since, as Hoffman noted just prior to this quote, attendant sacrifice is characteristic of other early kingdoms in China (Shang Dynasty) and Mesopotamia (Ur), both of which have been treated in previous sections. There is, therefore, a clear correspondence between dynastic emergence and attendant immolation.

Petrie, who excavated at Abydos starting in the winter of 1899-1900 (Petrie 1900: 1; 1901: 3), unearthed a number of subsidiary graves constructed in close proximity to the royal tomb chambers. Specifically, “Each royal tomb is a large square pit, lined with brickwork. Close around it, on its own level, or higher up, are small chambers in rows, in which were buried the domestics of the king” (Petrie 1900: 4). Petrie explicitly regarded the deaths of the “domestics” buried in the Tomb of King Qa‘a as related to human

¹⁵² Following Shaw (2000: 480).

sacrifice. He did so because the subsidiary graves were clearly contemporary with Qa'a's burial, as evinced by the fact that much of the tomb structure was constructed with bricks that had not yet fully dried, causing certain walls to collapse. In the case of two graves (nos. 2 and 5), for instance, parts of a ruined wall fell against the objects placed in each tomb, indicating that the burials occurred just after the wall was manufactured. Petrie suggested, therefore, that the victims were killed at the king's funeral prior to the construction of the royal tomb (Petrie 1900: 14). Reisner did much to advance the study of the subsidiary burials at Abydos from the First Dynasty, as well as a contemporary tomb complex at Giza, by formulating a four-fold classification system of the remains (Reisner 1936: 75):

- a. The subsidiary graves are independent graves arranged in serried lines on one side or in front of the royal tomb: Cemetery B in front of the tomb of Narmer (cf. cemetery of Cheops at Giza).
- b. The subsidiary graves are in seven or eight groups (complexes) around the main tomb (especially to the north). The inner groups or rows are at a distance from the main tomb: [the tombs of] Zer and Zet.
- c. The subsidiary graves are set in a hollow rectangle around the main tomb; at a distance similar to inner rows of Zer and Zet: Merneith, Wedymuw, and Az-ib (irregular rectangle) (valley shrines of Zer, Zet, Merneith, and Giza V).
- d. The subsidiary graves are set in a hollow rectangle in contact with the substructure of the main tomb: Semerkhet and Qay-'a.

Similar to Petrie's analysis, Reisner's treatment showed that the fourth group provided clear indications of human sacrifice inasmuch as the subsidiary graves were attached to the main tomb chambers and contained remains contemporary with those housed therein.¹⁵³ What is more, the subsidiary graves attached to the tombs of Semerkhet (sixty-eight subsidiary burials) and Qa'a (Reisner's Qay-'a; twenty-six subsidiary burials)¹⁵⁴ were covered by the same superstructure which entombed the main chamber, thereby providing further confirmation that attendants were sacrificed and buried along

¹⁵³ For a similar perspective on the sacrificial nature of the subsidiary tombs of the First Dynasty, consult Emery (1961: 62, 66, 71, 73, 81, 130-31).

¹⁵⁴ On the number of subsidiary graves at Abydos, see Table XII in Hoffman (1979: 276), which is a convenient summation of Reisner's findings (cf. Hoffman 1979: 279).

with the two kings (Reisner 1936: 108-21).¹⁵⁵ Additional excavations at Abydos, which began in 1977, discovered evidence of attendant sacrifice at the tomb of Aha, an early ruler of the First Dynasty. The subsidiary burials connected to this tomb consisted of thirty-three males approximately twenty years old, none of whom exceeded the age of twenty-five, signifying that their deaths were deliberate in conjunction with Aha's burial (Dreyer 1993: 10-12; cf. Spencer 1993: 79).¹⁵⁶ Thus, from the early First Dynasty (Aha) to its end (Qa'a), attendant sacrifice was practiced.

Subsequent to the First Dynasty, various methods were employed in order to provide for the dead without necessitating servant immolation. Thus, by the Third Dynasty (2686-2613 BCE),¹⁵⁷ sacrificed attendants were replaced by servitude scenes on tomb walls. Stone servant statuettes (known as tomb models) then emerged in the Fourth to Sixth Dynasties (2613-2181 BCE) and were followed by wooden examples from the Sixth to Twelfth Dynasties (2345-1773 BCE). Their role was eventually usurped by the *shabti* (alternatively, *shawabti* or *ushebti*), a mummiform statuette which came into existence ca. 2100 BCE and continued for approximately 2000 years (Taylor 2001: 98-135). The *shabti*, like the other methods enumerated here, replaced the requirement to sacrifice attendants in order to help address the needs of the tomb occupants in the afterlife. One wish that the main tomb occupants felt was especially important was their

¹⁵⁵ Reisner opined, moreover, that attendant sacrifice likely occurred at certain of the tombs located outside of the fourth category. The tomb of Djer (Reisner's Zer), for example, yielded the mummified and adorned arm of an individual whom he interpreted as the queen, demonstrating that she was buried alongside her husband at his death (Reisner 1936: 108-121; on the four golden and bejeweled bracelets which adorned the arm, see Petrie 1901: 16-17). This interpretation is very problematic and cannot be substantiated. Mertz suggested that the arm could have been the possession of the queen or the king (Mertz 1964: 46). Unfortunately, the arm is now gone (Bard 2000: 72), rendering further inquiry impossible. That the remainder of the body was not discovered is possibly a result of looting or due to the reuse of the tomb in antiquity for the worship of Osiris (cf. Mertz 1964: 46; Bard 2000: 72; Spencer 1993: 80).

¹⁵⁶ The number of males was provided by Bard (2000: 71).

¹⁵⁷ Dynastic dates following Shaw (2000: 480).

desire to avoid the agricultural labors that awaited them. If not for the *shabti* figurines, the occupants would be forced to spend the entirety of their existence in the hereafter tilling earth in the Fields of Reeds. To ensure that the *shabti* statues would be accepted as adequate substitutes in this manual enterprise, the figurines were frequently inscribed with the name of the tomb occupants as well as a text that announced their agreement to work on behalf of the dead individuals (David 1982: 112).

At the time that the *shabti* fulfilled the obligations of servitude in Egyptian mortuary rites, actual attendant immolations were performed in the region immediately south of Egypt. Here, a series of large tumuli of the mid second millennium BCE were discovered in an expansive cemetery near the Nubian city of Kerma. The remains were excavated under Reisner's direction commencing in 1913. It is believed that the three sizable tumuli in the Eastern Cemetery (K X, IV, III), which averaged some ten feet high by a diameter of ca. 300 feet, once contained the relics of Nubian royalty.¹⁵⁸ These tumuli, though extensively plundered, yielded an array of expensive burial objects: granite, wooden and faience boat models, vessels of faience, statues, and, in one case, a bed of quartzite.¹⁵⁹ Their layout, a long central corridor with one or two main tomb chambers at the center, mud-brick walls, and size also indicate the wealth of the individuals interred therein. As for sacrificed attendants, the tumuli contained the skeletons of numerous persons in the central corridors, ranging from approximately 45

¹⁵⁸ As Hoffman indicated, Reisner's identification of the chief tomb occupants as Egyptian officials of the Twelfth Dynasty was subsequently reassessed; the buried bodies are now regarded as Nubians (Hoffman 1979: 261; cf. Reisner 1923: 116-21). This is of no great surprise since Reisner, himself, was struck by the non-Egyptian nature of certain aspects of the tombs, such as the common utilization of beds at Kerma as the final place of repose for main tomb occupants (Reisner 1923: 76).

¹⁵⁹ An additional large tumulus (K XVI) yielded similar remains but the construction was slightly different: instead of a central corridor it contained a series of burial chambers; its general size was smaller than the other three as well (cf. Reisner 1923: 137; 389-437).

victims in tomb K III to 95 in tomb K IV to 322 in tomb K X.¹⁶⁰ The sacrificial nature of these remains is evinced by the inferior burial positions in which the victims were found in relation to the assumed arrangements of the chief tomb occupants and by the irregular burial postures of the attendants. In other words, the victims were found on the floors of the tumuli, not on beds, which would have been reserved for the main tomb occupants, and they were not characteristically arranged in the traditional burial position found elsewhere in the area—the typical pose for arranged interments consisted of placing the corpse on its right side with its right hand under the head and left hand at the elbow of the right arm; as for the head, it oriented the body toward the east. By contrast, the attendants were discovered in a variety of postures, which lacked any consistent pattern. The situation was mirrored on a smaller scale elsewhere in the Eastern Cemetery both by the subsidiary graves, which were dug into the fill of the tumuli, as well as by some of the independent graves. While these graves often housed one main tomb occupant, who was normally posed in the above-mentioned burial posture and was placed on a bed surrounded by burial furnishings, the remainder of the floor

was taken up by other human bodies, ranging from one to twelve or more in number, and the bodies of one to six rams. The positions of these human bodies did not follow strictly any one rule; the majority were on the right side; of these again a majority lay with the head east; but almost every possible position occurred. The extent of the contraction varied quite as much – from the half extended position of the chief body to the tightest possible doubling up. Some even were on the back and some on the stomach. The hands were usually over the face or at the throat, sometimes twisted together, sometimes clutching the hair. In only a few cases was a person seen who lay in the attitude of the chief person, but in a number of cases a modification of that attitude was seen. These extra bodies I call sacrifices (Reisner 1923: 66).

Such irregular burial postures led Reisner to suggest that the sacrificial victims were interred alive in both the large tumuli and the smaller graves. This would certainly

¹⁶⁰ Other tumuli similarly yielded sacrificial victims but generally in lesser numbers: approximately thirty in K XVI, forty-two in K XVIII, and twelve in K XX (Reisner 1923: 69).

account for the range of positions encountered (Reisner 1923: 9-13, 61-79, 135-254, 272-437).¹⁶¹ Apparently, the victims died of suffocation.

As with any case of attendant sacrifice, it is important to establish the contemporaneous nature of the burials of the main tomb occupants and their retainers. It is clear that the subsidiary graves attached to the tombs of Qa'a and Semerkhet at Abydos contained individuals who died near the deaths of each monarch inasmuch as the subsidiary graves and the main tomb chambers were covered by the same superstructure. The large tumuli at Kerma likewise yielded evidence that the persons interred in the main corridors were entombed along with the chief tomb occupants, as shown by the fact that they were buried when the tumuli were filled with dirt. Had they been later inhumations, they would have intruded into the fill of the tumuli like the subsidiary graves. On a smaller scale, these subsidiary graves also evinced signs of attendant sacrifice; here, too, the sacrificial victims were buried together with the main occupants.

3.3.2. Military Affairs

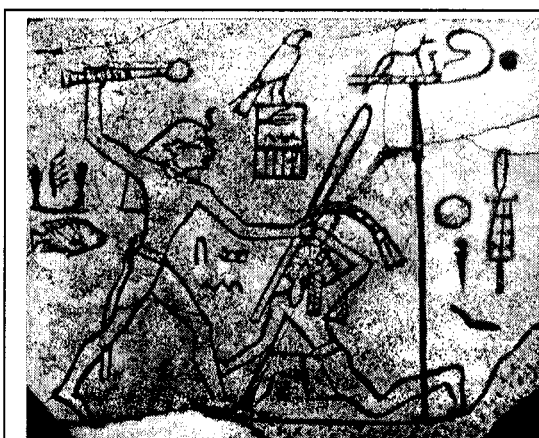


Figure 3.12. Ivory Label of King Den (Spencer 1993: 87, fig. 67).

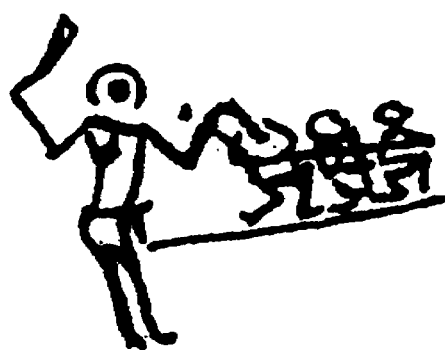


Figure 3.13. Tomb 100 from Hierakonpolis (Quibell and Green 1902: pl. 75).

¹⁶¹ In addition to Reisner's excavation report, other studies provided valuable information for this brief discussion of the Kerma burials (Kendall 1997: 53-73; O'Connor 1993: 51-55; Hoffman 1979: 261-62).

The ever-present image of an Egyptian king in the act of smiting a vanquished foe while in the presence of a deity contains all the requisite elements of human immolation (slayer, victim, and deity), but does the motif correspond to an actual practice of sacrifice or is it primarily a stereotypical portrayal of monarchical conquest and power? The following discussion will illustrate the ways in which scholars have sought to address these issues.¹⁶² It will conclude with a discussion of my own perspective on the imagery, which is that the smiting ruler motif does not portray an act of sacrifice; rather, it represents a stereotypical view that victory on the battlefield is contingent upon divine favor. This is not to say, however, that prisoners of war were not utilized in Egyptian sacrificial rites. There is evidence for prisoner sacrifice that is not directly related to the smiting ruler motif but this material will be addressed primarily in subsequent sections.

Certain early writers analyzed the motif in a very straightforward fashion. Budge, for example, concluded with a great deal of confidence that the smiting ruler motif does represent real human sacrifice to a deity, an act which would have accompanied almost every Egyptian military expedition.¹⁶³ As proof of the sacrificial nature of such slayings, Budge cited the image found on an ivory discovered at Abydos (fig. 3.12), wherein Den of the First Egyptian Dynasty (ca. early third millennium BCE) is about to kill a prisoner of war before the standard of a deity (Budge 1911: 197).¹⁶⁴ By itself, Den's image cannot prove the existence of post-war prisoner immolation, since the presence of a deity in a smiting scene need not indicate sacrifice; on the contrary, it could show that military

¹⁶² For an extensive treatment of the motif, see Hall (1986).

¹⁶³ Wiedemann, too, suggested that the smiting pharaoh depictions signified actual sacrifices performed in gratitude to divine assistance provided upon the battlefield. Given that all war was linked to the realm of the divine according to the Egyptian perspective, the taking of human life was just one element of the dedication of spoils gained through warfare (Wiedemann 1897: 203-4).

¹⁶⁴ See also Lefébure (1900: 130) who was more reserved in his assessment than Budge.

victory is contingent upon divine support. The existence of this ivory does illustrate, however, the antiquity of the motif. In fact, the portrayal of a smiting ruler predates the First Dynasty. Its earliest known depiction in the form of a relief or wall painting comes from a royal grave at Hierakonpolis (tomb 100; fig. 3.13), dating to the Gerzean period of the predynastic era (ca. 3400-3200 BCE); the tradition continued from this early point down to, at least, the first century CE, when emperor Titus was depicted in the position of the triumphant pharaoh at Esna. In addition to wall reliefs and ivory works, the theme of the smiting ruler is conveyed as well by means of the palette (Ritner 1993: 113-16),¹⁶⁵ chief of which is the Palette of Narmer from Hierakonpolis, which illustrates Narmer in the act of slaying his foe before the deity Horus (fig. 3.14). According to Ritner (1993: 115):

The king's sacrifice of the kneeling captive, like the palette which records it, is offered to the god not to commemorate the conquest, but to perpetuate it. Rendered tangible and permanent in stone, the image was designed not simply to reflect, but to create reality, guaranteeing by "sympathetic magic" the victory of the state and the gods. So pervasive was this image to become, that the exterior walls of virtually every Egyptian temple were provided with a rendition of the scene, which rapidly acquired more of a ritual than an historical validity.

¹⁶⁵ In the words of Schulman, this motif is "found on a plethora of different kinds of lesser objects, royal and non-royal alike, ranging from scarabs, pectorals, and other types of jewelry, to weapons, artists' sketches, and stelae" (Schulman 1988: 8). For an additional palette illustrating the striking pharaoh, see Emery (1961: 60).

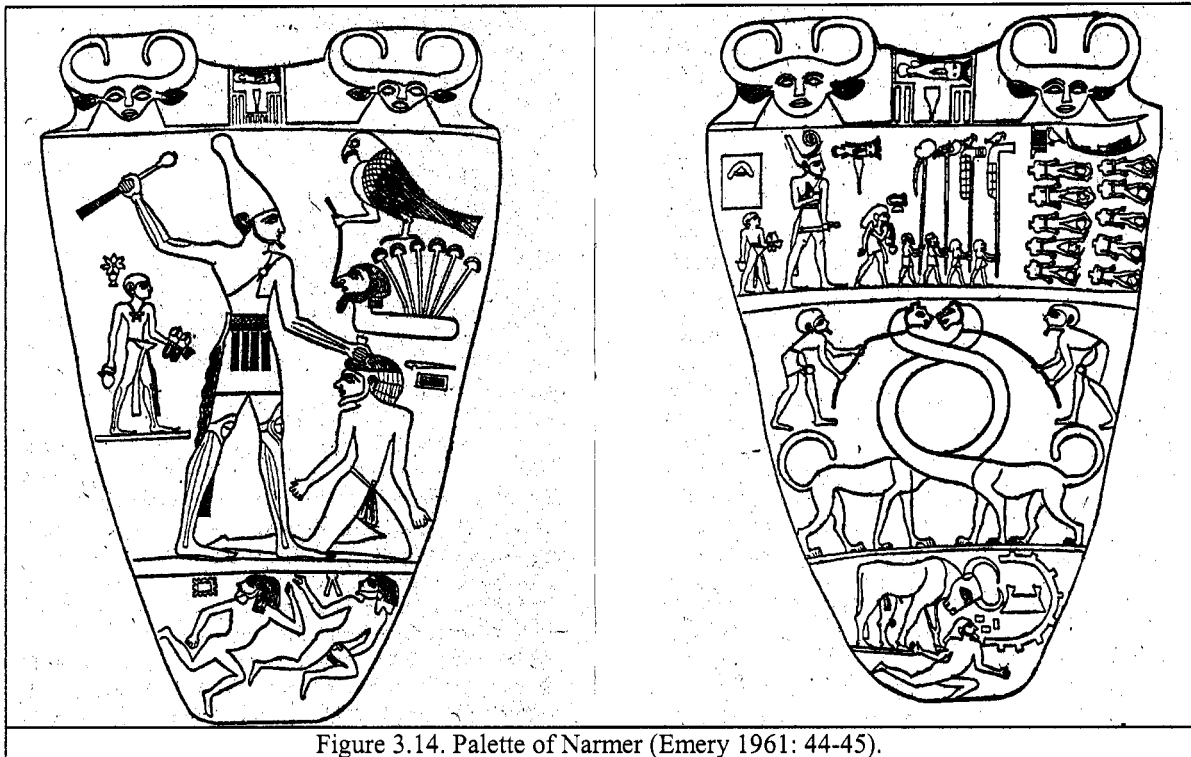


Figure 3.14. Palette of Narmer (Emery 1961: 44-45).

Schulman similarly perceived the image of the smiting pharaoh on private stelae as originating from an historical reality. Like Budge, he understood the scene as indicative of a pharaonic sacrifice in relation to a military operation; that is, the immolation was performed at the culmination of a battle as an act of thanksgiving to the gods. To support this perspective, he utilized the non-smiting scenes on two private stelae (figs. 3.15 and 3.16), which portray religious ceremonies within the confines of temple complexes and apparently depict the dedicators of the stelae in attendance at the rites, to create an analogy with the stelae of the smiting ruler. Thus, just as the non-sacrificial stelae appear to portray real events that were viewed by the stelae dedicators, the stelae with the smiting pharaoh, temple imagery, and dedicators (fig. 3.19) must also be founded upon concrete practices observed by the dedicators (Schulman 1988: 39-52, 193-94).

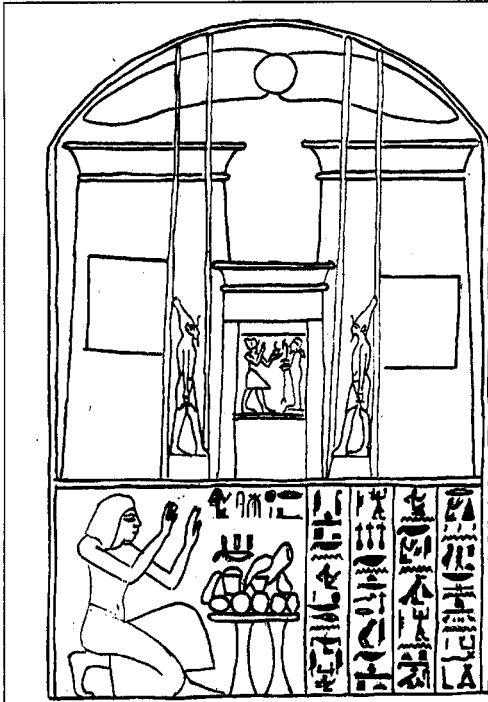
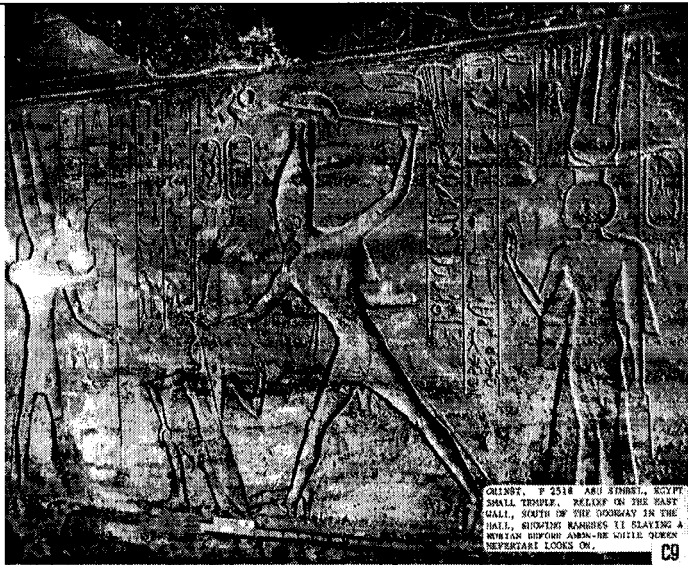


Figure 3.15. Cairo 16/3/25/12 (Schulman 1988: fig. 20).

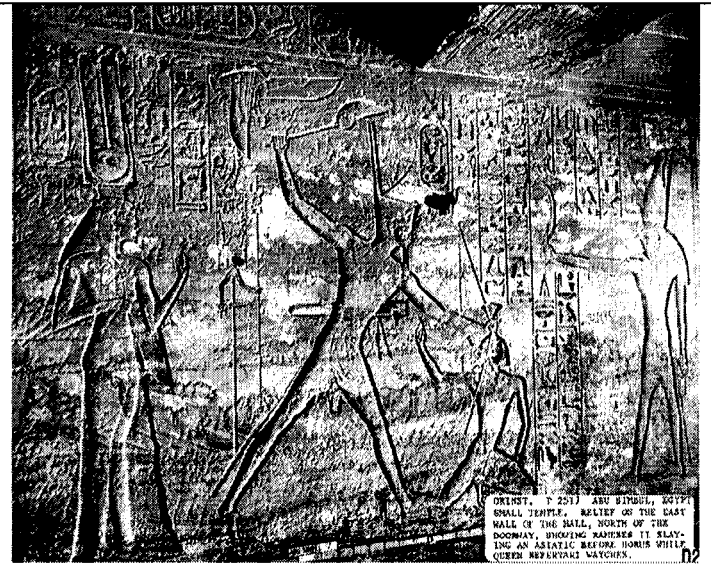


Figure 3.16. Berlin 23077 (Schulman 1988: fig. 21).



ORIENT. 1 2518 ABU SIMBEL, EGYPT
SMALL TEMPLE, RELIEF ON THE EAST
WALL, SOUTH OF THE DOORWAY IN THE
HALL, SHOWING RAMSES II SLAYING A
LION WITH HIS BOW AND ARROW. QUEEN
NEFERTARI WATCHES.

(The Oriental Institute of the University of Chicago; http://www.oi.uchicago.edu/OI/MUS/PA/EGYPT/BEES/IMAGES/ABU_SIMBEL/12C9_72dpi.html)



ORIENT. 1 2517 ABU SIMBEL, EGYPT
SMALL TEMPLE, RELIEF ON THE EAST
WALL OF THE HALL, NORTH OF THE
DOORWAY, SHOWING RAMSES II SLAY-
ING AN ASIATIC BEFORE HORUS WHILE
QUEEN NEFERTARI WATCHES.

(The Oriental Institute of the University of Chicago; http://www.oi.uchicago.edu/OI/MUS/PA/EGYPT/BEES/IMAGES/ABU_SIMBEL/12D2_72dpi.html)

Figure 3.17. Ramesses II at Abu Simbel.

Green, conversely, was not convinced that this type of standardized victory scene was indicative of a customary practice of post-battle prisoner sacrifice, though he was open to the possibility that it might have happened intermittently. For him, the existence of actual human immolation is more likely to be found in unconventional representations, such as two scenes from Abu Simbel wherein Rameses II slays a foreign prisoner in front of Amun-Ra in one relief and before Ra-Harmachis (Horus) in the other (fig. 3.17).¹⁶⁶ These scenes were viewed as distinctive because topographical lists of vanquished foes are absent; yet, they are, according to Green, a standard element of Rameses' other conquest reliefs (Green 1975: 122-133). Still, a more unique occurrence mentioned by Green is the sacrifice of seven enemy princes before Amun in the days of Amenhotep II (mid fifteenth century BCE).¹⁶⁷ The incident is recounted on the Amada and Elephantine Stelae (Green 1975: 125-128), images of which are not reproduced here. Breasted translated the relevant portion of the text as follows (1906: 313):

When his majesty returned with joy of heart to his father, Amon, he slew with his own weapon the seven princes, who had been in the district of Tikhxi (*Ty-ḥ-sy*), and had been placed head downward at the prow of his majesty's barge... One hanged the six men of those fallen ones before the wall of Thebes; those hands likewise. Then the other fallen one was taken up-river to Nubia and hanged ^{on} the wall of Napata (*Npt*), in order to cause to be manifest the victories of his majesty...

While Lefébure and Breasted saw this episode as a reference to human sacrifice in the presence of a god (Lefébure 1900: 129; Breasted 1906: 313, n. a), Wilson's translation places the killing prior to Amenhotep's return, thereby removing Amun from the scene of slaughter: "His majesty returned in joy of heart to his father Amon, when he had slain with his own mace the seven princes who had been in the district of Takhshi, who had been put upside down at the prow of his majesty's falcon-boat, of which the name is 'Aa-

¹⁶⁶ Horus was known by various epithets, such as Harmachis, "Horus in the Horizon" (cf. Meltzer 2001: 120).

¹⁶⁷ Chronology taken from Aharoni, Avi-Yonah, Rainey, and Safrai (1993: 202).

khepru-Re, the Establisher of the Two Lands.’ Then six men of these enemies were hanged on the face of the wall of Thebes, and the hands as well” (*ANET* 248). Schulman accepted the perspective that the killings seem to have taken place outside of Egypt (Schulman 1988: 46). Green, on the contrary, followed Breasted (and Peihl) in supposing that the sacrifices probably took place during the coronation of Amenhotep II since the *Biography of Amenemheb* apparently makes reference to the decapitation of certain leaders at that ceremony. Hence, the unnamed chiefs could be interpreted as the seven princes from Tikhsi (Green 1975: 127-128, 132; cf. Breasted 1906: 319, n. b). The text states (Breasted 1906: 319):

When the morning brightened, the sun arose, and the heavens shone, King Okheprure, Son of Re, Amenhotep (II), given life, was established upon the throne of his father, he assumed the royal titulary. He 𓂏 all, he mingled with 𓂏 in 𓂏 , the Red Land; he cut off the heads of their chiefs. Diademed as Horus, son of Isis, [he] took 𓂏 the Kenemetyew (*Knm tyw*), every land, bowed down because of his fame; with their tribute upon their backs, [that he might grant] to them the breath of life.

Despite the fact that Schulman did not accept the perspective that Amenhotep brought back the seven princes of Tikhsi alive, he did suggest that there is sufficient evidence to support the notion that the Egyptians did, at times, transport living captives to Egypt where they were ritually slain. There is, for instance, a depiction from Karnak showing a Syrian ruler suspended in a cage on an Egyptian vessel (fig. 3.18).¹⁶⁸ The stele of the fourth year of Merneptah (end of thirteenth century BCE) also describes the bringing back of prisoners to Egypt, where they were killed (Schulman 1988: 89-92, n. 121, 123). The following quote specifies that Libyans were executed by impalement (?) near Memphis and Mazoi were burned by fire at an unnamed locale in Egypt (Youseff 1964: 276):

¹⁶⁸ Cf. Mohammad (1959: pl. 1).

[Then] the strong army of his Majesty overthrew the vile leaders of the Libyans. None survived of the people of the Libyans (5) ... all in their land ... in hundreds of thousands, tens of thousands; the rest were crucified (lit. placed) on the tops of trees at the south of the city of Memphis persecuted. Everything was brought to Egypt safe (6) all the chiefs of the lands were routed by the spirits of his Majesty... The Mazoi were brought to Egypt, fire was thrown at their multitudes (8) before their relatives; the rest had both hands cut off for their crimes; others had the ears and the eyes pulled out, taken to Ethiopia, they were made in a heap in their towns. (9). Never did Ethiopia repeat a revolt for ever, they being miserable.

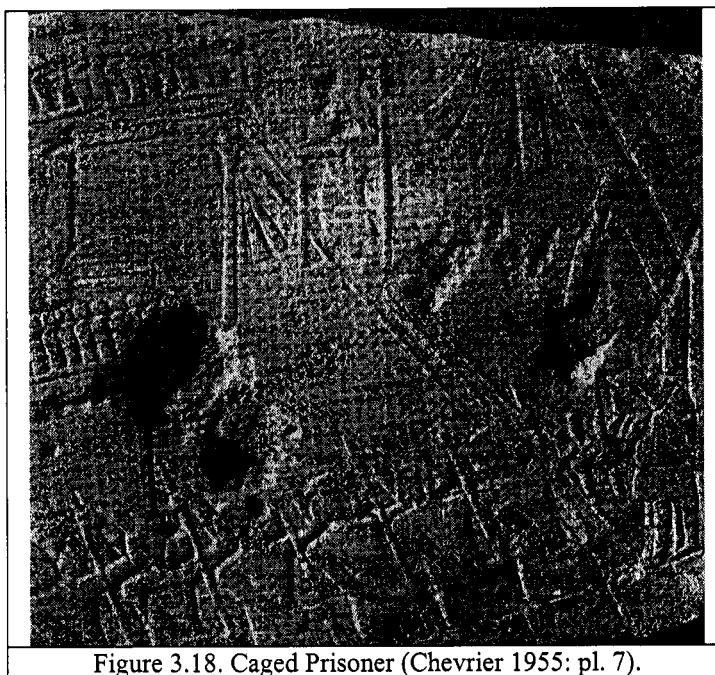


Figure 3.18. Caged Prisoner (Chevrier 1955: pl. 7).

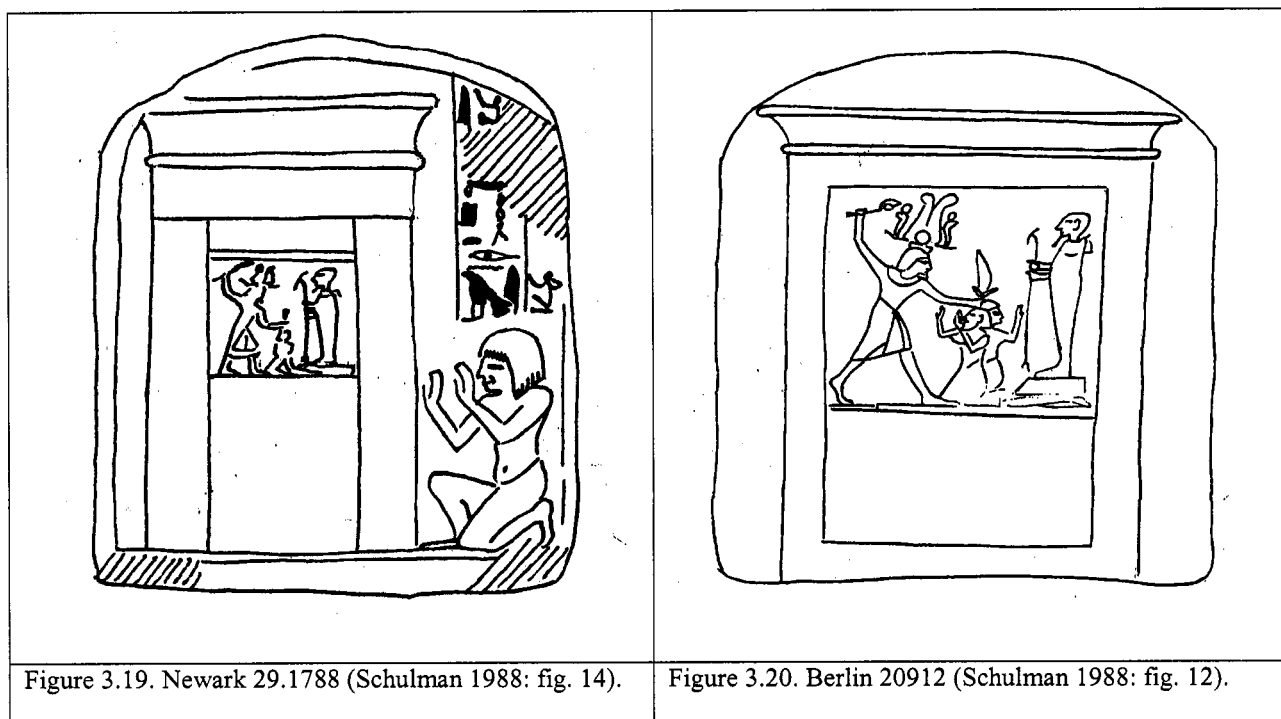


Figure 3.19. Newark 29.1788 (Schulman 1988: fig. 14).

Figure 3.20. Berlin 20912 (Schulman 1988: fig. 12).

Despite the attempts of the various scholars represented in the foregoing paragraphs, no concrete evidence was presented here that could confirm unequivocally the notion that the smiting ruler motif relates to actual immolations. The translation of the Amada and Elephantine Stelae is problematic and open to two divergent interpretations as to when the seven princes were killed; also, there is no clear correlation between the seven princes and the decapitated chiefs in the *Biography of Amenemheb*. What is sure, however, is that prisoners of war were sometimes brought back to Egypt alive, as shown on the relief from Karnak (fig. 3.18) and mentioned in the stele of Merneptah's fourth year. The latter also indicates that prisoners were executed in Egypt. Establishing that captives were killed in Egypt does not go far enough, however, in proving that the smiting ruler motif evinces post-war human immolation. Indeed, despite the possibility that Amenhotep might have decapitated chiefs at his ascension, the passage relates to a coronation and, therefore, it does not correspond directly to the smiting ruler motif. The remainder of the evidence surveyed is equally problematic in terms of providing clear evidence for a sacrificial interpretation of the smiting ruler motif. It is as plausible that the private stelae reproduce stereotypical temple scenes as it is that they depict actual sacrifices; in fact, several of the stelae portray the image of the smiting ruler as if it were carved on a temple wall (cf. figs. 3.19 and 3.20). As for the scenes of Rameses II at Abu Simbel, the absence of topographical lists is not necessarily significant since the carvings could be emphasizing the pharaoh's military prowess without extensively listing his exploits.

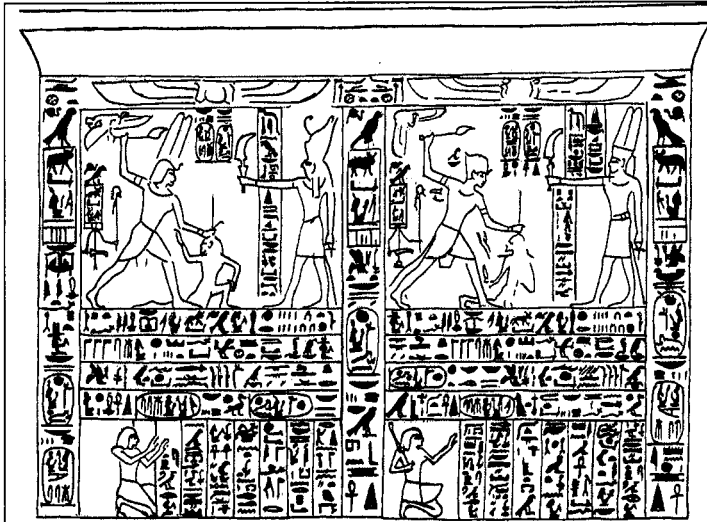


Figure 3.21. Abu Simbel 24 (Schulman 1988: fig. 18).

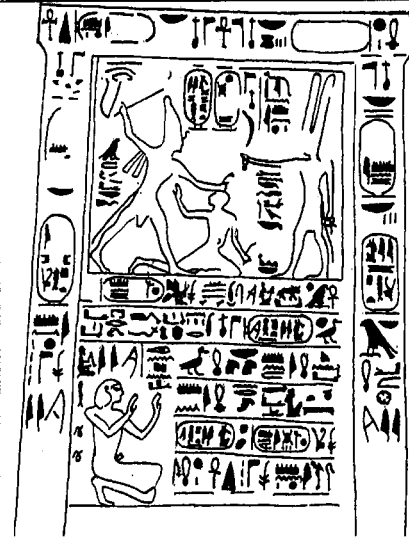


Figure 3.22. Abu Simbel 22 (Schulman 1988: fig. 19).



Figure 3.23. Merneptah at Karnak (Kitchen and Gaballa 1969: pl. VIII).

How, then, should the image of the smiting ruler be understood? In my estimation, the answer lies in examining a key element of the motif that was not discussed above¹⁶⁹ but which is elucidated by the inscriptions attached to several of the images: the presentation of the sword of victory.¹⁷⁰ Viewing figures 3.17, 3.21, 3.22, and 3.23, it is clear that a fuller form of the smiting ruler motif goes beyond the mere representation of a king in the act of slaying his enemies in the presence of a god; rather, the scenes show a deity in the process of giving the sword of victory to a king. Hence, the motif does not seem to illustrate an act of sacrifice in which a deity is a recipient of a post-war slaying; instead, a deity is shown as the one who enables military success. The texts connected to the reliefs of Rameses II (cf. Kitchen and Gaballa 1969: pl. VII a) and Merneptah (fig. 3.23) illustrate this point—both monarchs ruled in the thirteenth century BCE and Merneptah continued his reign into the early twelfth century BCE.¹⁷¹ Thus, in addition to depicting the pharaoh in the act of smiting his enemies, Amun-Ra extends a sword toward each king and states (Kitchen and Gaballa 1969: 23, 27; headings added):¹⁷²

Rameses II Relief

[Words uttered by Amen-rē', foremost in Karnak: "My beloved son of my body [Lord of the Two Lands, Usimarē' Setepenrē', who overth]rjows his enemies. I have brought for thee [all foreign lands which had] attacked [thy] boundari[es] –."

"Take to thyself the sword, O victorious king. Thy mace has smitten the Nine Bows, Thou cuttest off the heads of the disaffec[ted], thy foe[s falling] (each) at his moment. I provide thy might, I create the fear of thee in every foreign land, dread of thee in the hearts of their chiefs. I set thy boundaries wherever thou didst wish, thine arm not being opposed."

¹⁶⁹ Schulman did, however, discuss the presence of the sword on certain reliefs (cf. 1988: 60-62).

¹⁷⁰ The "sword of victory" is the term employed by Kitchen and Gaballa (1969: 23). According to Yoyotte, the *hps*-sword is that "which the gods solemnly gave to the king as a magical pledge of victory" (1959: 299).

¹⁷¹ Following Aharoni, Avi-Yonah, Rainey, and Safrai (1993: 202).

¹⁷² Cf. the victory speeches on the stelae represented by figures 3.21-3.22 (Schulman 1988: 34-39).

Merneptah Relief

Words uttered by Amen-rē', lord of the Thrones of the Two Lands: "Come in peace my son, strong with the sword [Baenrē'Meriamun], desirable in thy coming. Thou hast trodden upon the foreign lands. Thou hast smitten..., thou hast trampled the Nubians. Thou hast cut off (?) every foreign land which the sun disk illumines and which has attacked thy boundary..."

"Take to thyself the sword, O victorious king, holy of epiphanies, powerful of strength, strong-armed, who overthrows his enemies. I have brought for thee all foreign lands which have attacked thy boundary; <thou hast> seized [every land] at its south, and <hast> sealed it upon its north."

The smiting ruler motif, therefore, is a stereotypical depiction of monarchical conquest.

When deities are in attendance, they are there to acknowledge the role of the gods as the ones who provide victory but they are not present as the recipients of human immolation.

That the motif is first and foremost a matter of conquest (versus sacrifice) is further supported by the appearance of smiting rulers in the midst of battle scenes, such as Rameses II and Thutmose IV in figures 3.24 and 3.25.

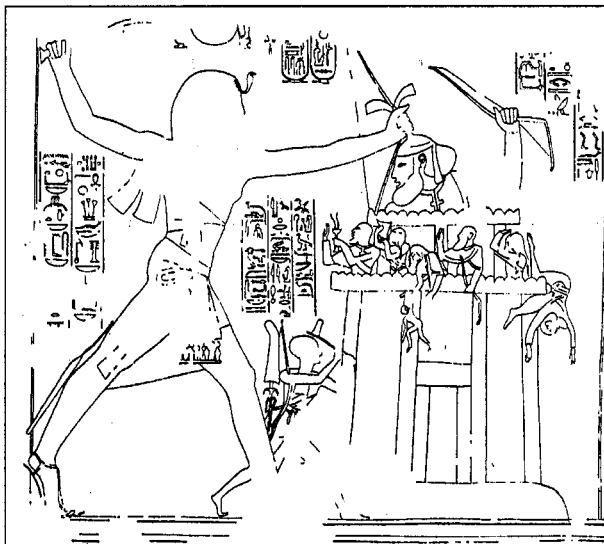


Figure 3.24. Rameses II from Beit el-Wali (Keel 1975: 421).

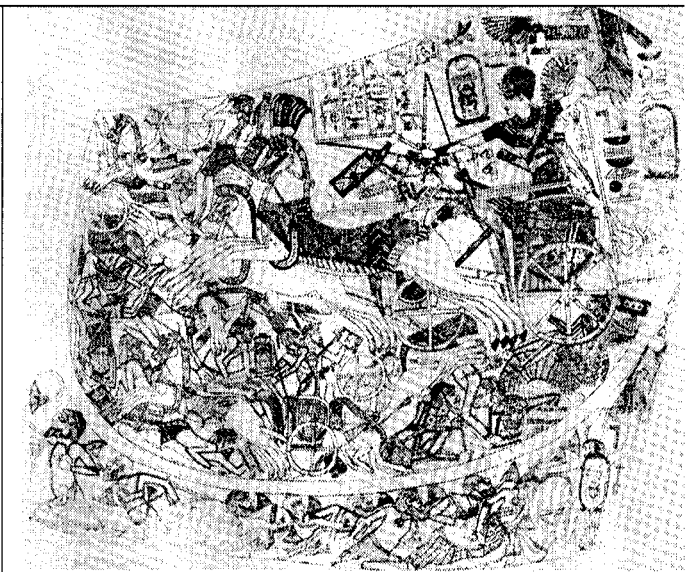


Figure 3.25. Thutmose IV, Egyptian Museum CG 46097 (Hal 1986: fig. 32).

Despite arguing against a sacrificial interpretation of the smiting ruler motif, there is data indicative of prisoner of war immolation. Reference has already been made to the decapitation of chiefs as part of Amenhotep II's coronation ceremony, but the following

section on Egyptian festivals will address the matter of prisoner of war sacrifice more fully.

3.3.3. Festivals

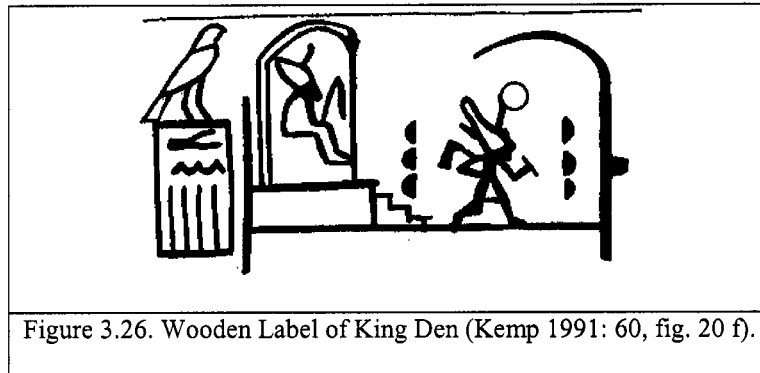


Figure 3.26. Wooden Label of King Den (Kemp 1991: 60, fig. 20 f).

3.3.3.1. The Sed (or Jubilee) Celebration

In probably the oldest religious feast of which any trace has been preserved in Egypt, known as the “Heb-Sed” or “Sed-Feast,” the king assumed the costume and insignia of Osiris, and undoubtedly impersonated him. The significance of this feast is, however, entirely obscure as yet. The most surprising misunderstandings have gained currency concerning it, and the use of it for far-reaching conclusions before the surviving materials have all been put together is premature (Breasted 1912: 39).

Breasted’s caution is well founded; a great deal of ambiguity still envelops the *Sed* festival (cf. Wilkinson 1999: 212). Attempts have been made, however, to ferret out the details of the rite by careful examination of the textual and pictorial representations of it (Frankfort 1948: 79-88; Uphill 1961; 1965; Galán 2000). Despite the likelihood that the festival was not always practiced in an identical fashion accompanied by the same set of meanings in every era that it was performed, there are two themes which particularly epitomize the ceremony as it was practiced over time: (1) the portrayal of the king enthroned on a dais as the ruler of Upper and Lower Egypt while wearing a tightly-fitted robe and (2) the depiction of the king running around cairns as a sign of his claim upon

his territory (Kemp 1991: 59-61, plus figures). Both elements are shown on a wooden label of Den (fig. 3.26; ca. early third millennium BCE). Of the two elements, it is the first feature which is especially important for our purposes given that the enthroned king appears to be dressed as Osiris. These associations have fostered the perspective that the king was sacrificed in the early stages of the development of the *Sed* festival (Petrie 1924: 16-17, emphasis his; Cf. Petrie 1909: 8):

From very early times the king was regarded as of divine destination at his death, if not of divine origin. The ceremony of his deification took place when he “went to Osiris” and was identified with Osiris. This seems to have been at the festival known as the *sed-heb* or “festival of ending.” The earliest scene of it shows the king dressed in the close-fitting long garment like Osiris, holding the flail and crook of Osiris, seated in a high shrine approached by steps. Before him are captives dancing in an enclosure. This is of Narmer-Mena [cf. fig. 3.27]. A little later, king Den is shown on the same high throne, and another crowned king is performing the ritual dance before him, which belongs to the coronation ceremonies. In the earlier scene is a woman seated in a covered litter. The apparent interpretation of it is that the king was deified as Osiris, and the successor married the heiress, was crowned, and performed the ritual dances. The tightly clad Osiride figures of the king are associated with *Sed*-festivals throughout history. The *ending* was that of the king’s life; in African custom the kings were killed after a term of years, as in Ethiopia and now further south...then in historic times this was commuted to the Osirification of the king at the appointment of his successor, while he lived on to his natural death, as the living Osiris.

Despite the lack of an explicit reference to human sacrifice in this quote, it is implied elsewhere in Petrie’s writings.¹⁷³ His analysis of the *Sed* festival was followed by Murray, who viewed the Osirification of the king and the presence of a god of death (shown by the standard with the jackal figure; cf. fig. 3.27)¹⁷⁴ as indicative of “the sacrifice of the king as the incarnate deity of fertility” when the ceremony was originally performed (Murray 1914: 21). Murray also viewed the *Sed* festival itself as the eventual substitute for the actual sacrifice of the king, whereas Wainwright discussed a divergent type of potential replacement, that of human substitution. He specifically suggested that

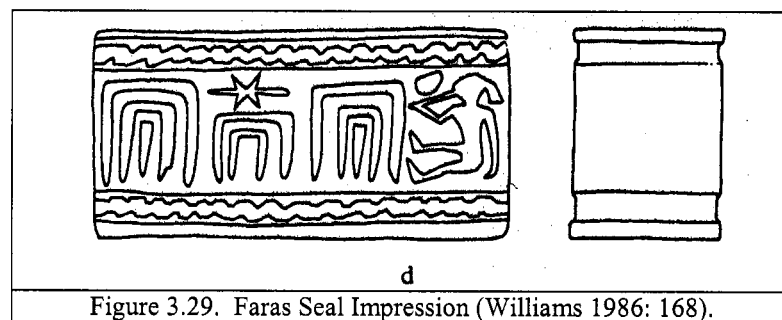
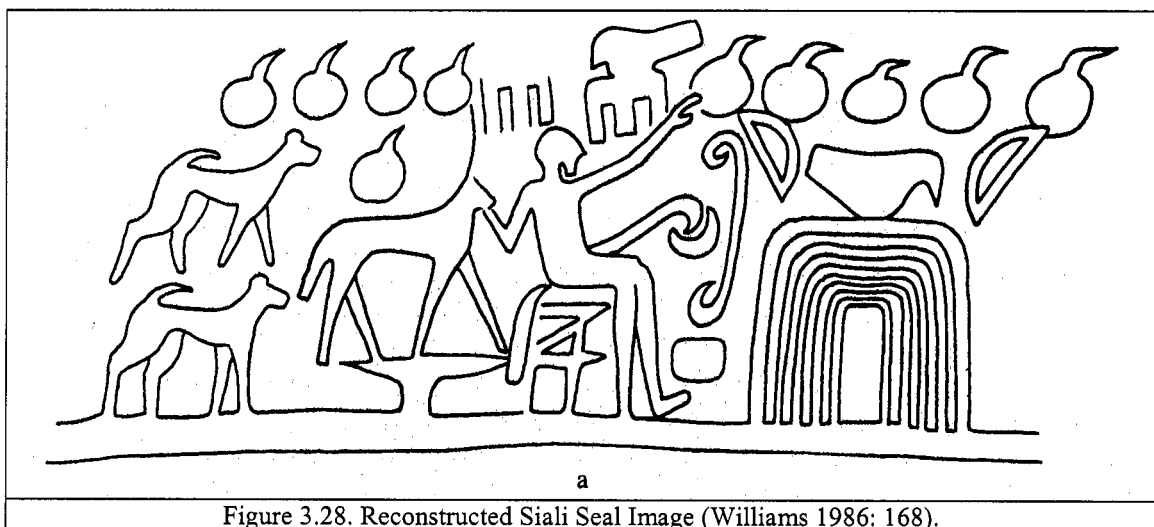
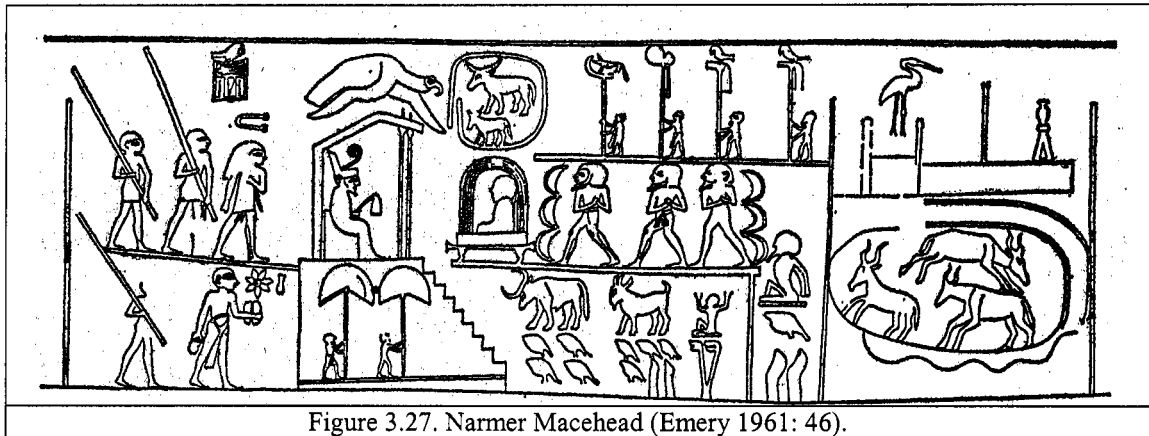
¹⁷³ “In the savage age of prehistoric times, the Egyptians, like many other African and Indian peoples, killed their priest-king at stated intervals, in order that the ruler should, with unimpaired life and health, be enabled to maintain the kingdom in its highest condition” (Petrie 1906: 185).

¹⁷⁴ The image of a jackal situated on a standard represented Wepwawet, whose moniker “means ‘the opener of the ways’ and refers to his role in leading the deceased through the paths of the underworld;” during the Middle Kingdom era, the standard was used in Osiris’ processions (Houser-Wegner 2001: 497).

prisoners of war might have served as sacrificial substitutes for the king at the *Sed* festival, a possibility based upon the appearance of monarchical victory scenes in the vicinity of images depicting *Sed* ceremonies, such as Merneptah in the image of the smiting ruler (Wainwright 1938: 60-61, 89).¹⁷⁵

Whereas Wainwright only mentioned the possibility of human immolation at the *Sed* festival, Williams and Logan opined that sacrifice is definitely depicted in *Sed* scenes, particularly on the Narmer Macehead (fig. 3.27) and on the Siali seal (fig. 3.28). Concerning the former, the supposed sacrificial victim is the cloaked individual on the canopied conveyance, identified elsewhere as the royal heiress (Murray 1914: 20; cf. Millet 1990: 56) or possibly a seated deity (Kemp 1991: 60, fig. 20). As for the latter, the *Sed* motif is illustrated on the Siali seal by the two crescents (or cairns) located at the top of the building on both sides of the falcon. The seated individual was interpreted as a victim of immolation whose blood is shown flowing into a vessel. Williams and Logan also offered that the Faras seal (fig. 3.29) depicts a similar sacrificial scene but they did not explicitly connect it to the *Sed* festival (Williams and Logan 1987: 271-72). It should be noted, conversely, that in a previous work Williams was not adamant about the interpretation that the two seals represent bleeding persons. The head wound on the Faras seal could alternatively be understood as part of the figure's hairdo and the flowing blood on the Siali seal might be a flail resting upon the man's lap. This is what otherwise looks like a phallus since Williams suggested that the man wore a tail which went out along the backside of the chair (Williams 1986: 167-71).

¹⁷⁵ For the image, see Petrie (1909: pl. XXI).



Is there any substance to the claims that human immolation occurred during *Sed* festivals, either in terms of the sacrifice of the king or in regards to the immolation of prisoners? No. The pictorial evidence of prisoner immolation and the *Sed* festival does

not support the conclusions espoused by Williams and Logan. The Siali seal evinces no clear signs of immolation—it is not even apparent that the seated individual is bleeding (the same holds true for the Faras seal as well); and the Narmer Macehead likewise presents no indications of sacrifice. The seated figure is possibly the statue of a deity (deities were known to be in attendance at *Sed* festivals; cf. Kemp 1991: 59-61; Uphill 1965: 372-73) or even a female child from the royal household (members of the royal house are often depicted at ceremonies in which the king participates; Millet 1990: 56). Williams and Logan likely viewed this figure as a sacrificial victim given that they interpreted similarly illustrated persons as prisoners destined for immolation in non-*Sed* scenes, such as the imagery on the Scorpion Macehead (fig. 3.30, left-hand side). Their proof for the sacrifice of such prisoners is that the individuals do not appear in

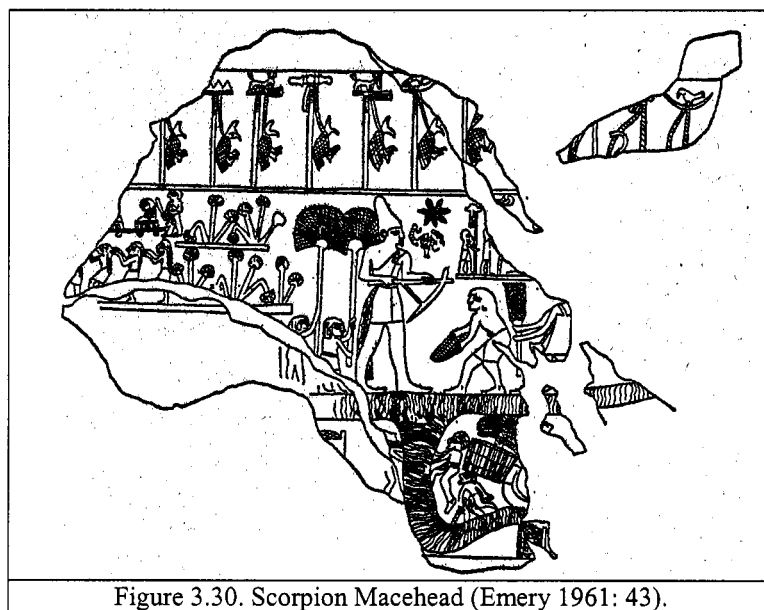


Figure 3.30. Scorpion Macehead (Emery 1961: 43).

subsequent scenes (Williams and Logan 1987: 265, 271). This is an argument from silence and, therefore, unsubstantiated. As for the notion that the early kings of Egypt were sacrificed, it is equally a matter of speculation and may have resulted from previous

misconceptions concerning the barbarity of “primitive” humanity. Thus, in Emery’s estimation (1961: 108):

It would appear probable that in primitive times, when the king showed signs of failing powers, he was forcibly removed by death. But this was in the dim and distant past, and by the time of the Unification, priestly magic had replaced barbaric custom and instead of violent replacement, the king’s vigour was revived by the mysterious ceremonies of the Sed festival.

There are two additional influences which fostered the interpretation that the king was killed in association with the *Sed* festival: the myth of Osiris and Frazerian mythology. Osiris was known as the ruler of the netherworld and the one who once ruled Egypt as a divine king. While reigning on earth, he was murdered by his brother, Seth, and was resurrected by his wife, Isis, but only after he had been dismembered and strewn across Egypt (Ray 2001: 153-56; Taylor 2001: 25-27). It is no wonder, then, that the image of the king dressed like Osiris at the *Sed* festival would induce the sentiments that he was sacrificed. What is more, much was made of Osiris’ connections to fertility, as seen above in our discussion of Murray, who proposed that the king of Egypt was immolated as the embodiment of the god of fertility (1914). This is textbook Frazer. In fact, Murray was greatly influenced by Frazer’s treatment on king killing, as was Petrie (1906: 181-82), and presented an argument very much in line with Frazerian methodology (Murray 1914: 18; cf. 1914: 23):

Dr. Frazer deduced the practice of killing the king from literary sources, from legend, and from ceremonial survivals; a theory not at first received by all, but triumphantly confirmed in the end by Dr. Seligmann’s discoveries among the Shilluks of the Nile Valley. In the same way we may follow the “converging lines of evidence” in ancient Egypt, and possess our souls in patience till the final confirmatory proof is found.

Such proof has yet to be established.

3.3.3.2. The Unification of Upper and Lower Egypt

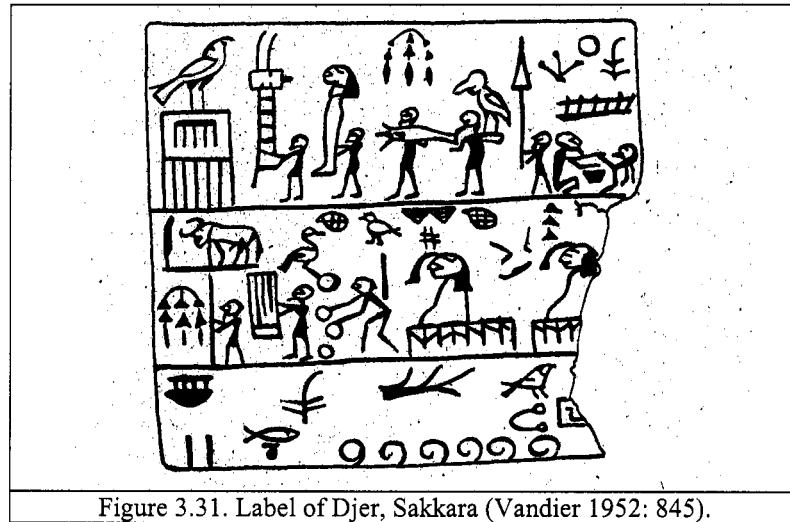


Figure 3.31. Label of Djer, Sakkara (Vandier 1952: 845).

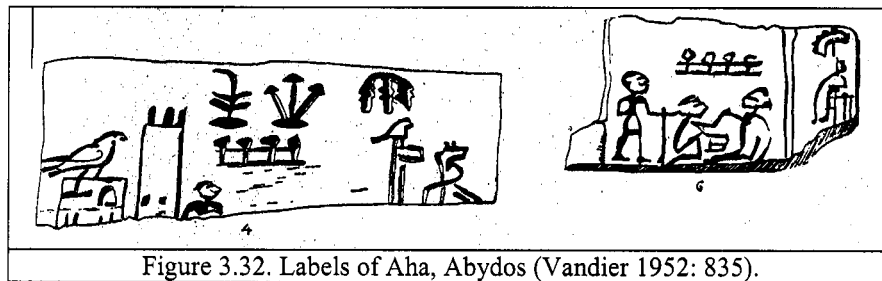


Figure 3.32. Labels of Aha, Abydos (Vandier 1952: 835).

The labels shown directly above (fig. 3.32) were discovered during the course of Petrie's excavations at Abydos and were regarded by him as potentially portraying human sacrifice. Carved on a segment of ebony, belonging to Aha of the First Dynasty (ca. early third millennium BCE), one finds the upper portion of a scene (fig. 3.32.4) whose lower portion is probably represented on another fragment (fig. 3.32.6). The lower portion is particularly important since it reveals a figure standing before a seated individual who seems to be in the act of killing a bound captive by plunging a knife into his chest. Petrie went on to opine that the scene is illustrative of immolating captives at imperial funerals (Petrie 1901: 4, 20, pl. III: 4, 6; cf. 1924: 35). A similar but more

elaborate scene is found on a wooden label discovered at Sakkara, also dating to the First Dynasty but to the reign of Djer (fig. 3.31). Emery considered it an apparent representation of human immolation at a festival (Emery 1961: 59, fig. 21). According to Vandier, the scenes on both the labels of Aha and Djer represent the same ceremony—possibly a human sacrifice as part of a rite commemorating the unification of Lower and Upper Egypt. This is indicated by the signs appearing above the sacrifice on the labels of both kings (Vandier 1952: 846). In light of these signs, which can be rendered as “receiving (or taking) from the south and north” (Emery 1938: 36),¹⁷⁶ Vandier’s interpretation is probable. Unfortunately, little is known about the ceremony of the unification of Upper and Lower Egypt (Wilkinson 1999: 210). It would seem, however, that human sacrifice played a part in the ceremonies.¹⁷⁷

3.3.4. Execration Texts

Ritner characterized the excavations at Mirgissa, which began in 1962 (Vila 1963: 135), as yielding “the first indisputable evidence for the practice of human sacrifice in classical ancient Egypt” (Ritner 1993: 162-63). Vila, a member of the excavation team at this site near the second cataract of the Nile in the Sudan, expressed similar sentiments in

¹⁷⁶ In Petrie’s estimation, the signs mean: “receiving (captives) of the south and north” (1901: 20).

¹⁷⁷ Logan, too, viewed these two scenes as representations of human sacrifice; but, as the argument goes, not only are they connected to the unification of Upper and Lower Egypt, they are also related to the creation of cultic objects—the labels of Aha present the *jmy-wt* fetish and the label of Djer shows a procession of people carrying (from right to left) a spear, bird, catfish, mummiform statuette, and flaming altar (?) before the *serekh* name of the ruler. Early depictions indicate that the *jmy-wt* fetish was made by attaching intestines and, sometimes, organs to a pole. The original meaning of *jmy-wt* might have been “that which is inside,” i.e., a reference to the use of such materials (Logan 1990: 66-69). In general, Logan described the role of the fetish as follows (Logan 1990: 69):

(1) the fetish is never held but planted, therefore it is a standard; (2) it commemorated the king’s appearance in public, probably as a protective emblem; (3) it was “fashioned” to commemorate the opening or dedication of an important building; (4) it was involved in ritual killings when “Upper and Lower Egypt were received”; and (5) it was already present in the Predynastic period in association with important buildings and kingship.

describing the remains as undoubtedly indicative of human immolation. Specifically, a large portion of a human skull, along with a flint knife, broken vessel, and inscribed sherds, was discovered nearly five meters away from a substantial deposit of Egyptian execration texts, dating to the Middle Kingdom period,¹⁷⁸ ca. Twelfth Dynasty¹⁷⁹ (1985-1773 BCE).¹⁸⁰ The general vicinity also yielded inscribed prisoner figurines and a buried skeleton minus the head. The whole area, then, was understood by Vila as being the place of a religious ceremony wherein a prisoner was sacrificed and protective texts were broken. That the prisoner was alive at the rite is indicated, according to Vila, by the disarticulated position of the nearby skeleton; that is to say, the victim's body must have been haphazardly thrown into the grave soon after the ceremony and prior to the onset of rigor mortis (Vila 1973; 1963).

Given the context in which the severed skull and corpse were located, it is evident that human immolation occurred.¹⁸¹ It was apparently performed in order to ensure, like the accompanying execration texts,¹⁸² that Egypt would be victorious against the threats of her enemies. For the Egyptians living in the southern fortress at Mirgissa, Nubia

¹⁷⁸ Cf. Posener (1966: 279) whose study was utilized by Vila.

¹⁷⁹ Cf. Ritner (1997: 50).

¹⁸⁰ Shaw (2000: 480).

¹⁸¹ As a minor point of parallel, note the presence of a skull in the wall of the temple of Augustus at Meroe. According to Shinnie and Bradley: "It is impossible to determine with which stage in the building's history the skull was associated; if not intrusive it may have been the head of a sacrificed prisoner, perhaps built into the wall in symbolic parallel to the Augustus [bronze] head buried outside the threshold" (1981: 167). Ascertaining the purpose of the skull is, therefore, difficult but the presence of bound prisoners in the scenes depicted on the wall in which the skull was inserted make Shinnie and Bradley's interpretation all the more intriguing.

¹⁸² While the Egyptian execration texts do not convey specific curses, the typical practice of breaking the figurine or vessel upon which the names of specific foes were written was intended to bring about the similar destruction of the entities threatening Egypt, be they other Egyptians, Nubians, Asiatics, Libyans, or even various types of evil (Ritner 1997: 50-52).

would have been of great concern. Thus, it is not coincidental that the victim of immolation was Nubian (cf. Vila 1973: 633-38; Ritner 1993: 136-80).¹⁸³

3.3.5. Criminal Burning

According to Willems, in certain circumstances criminals were executed in cultic contexts, thereby making their deaths more than merely punitive in purpose but sacrificial in intent. That their deaths took place in religious settings is indicated by references to criminals being set ablaze upon the altars of temples—three examples of which are a text of the Twenty-Sixth Dynasty (664-525 BCE)¹⁸⁴ from the John Rylands Demotic Papyri, Papyrus no. 9, that describes such a potential punishment at the sanctuary of Heracleopolis;¹⁸⁵ the Chronicle of Prince Osorkon from the Twenty-Second Dynasty (ca. ninth century BCE);¹⁸⁶ and an inscription by Senusret I (Sesostris I) of the Twelfth Dynasty (early second millennium BCE) from the Tôd temple.¹⁸⁷ While an additional inscription from the Middle Kingdom era does not explicitly mention an altar as the place of burning, the stele upon which the text was written may have originally stood near the

¹⁸³ Ritner's study (1993: 136-80) is a thorough examination of execration texts and the significance of the various rites which accompanied them at Mirgissa.

¹⁸⁴ Shaw (2000: 482).

¹⁸⁵ Willems' English translation reads: "he is destined to the knife of *Hnbw* who is in Naref (...), his members are a burnt-offering (*h'.w=f m sbi n sq. t*), he being destined to the brazier of Osiris (*iw=f n 'h n Wsir*)" (Willems 1990: 42-3; following Sottas' *La Préservation de la propriété funéraire*, 1913: 156).

¹⁸⁶ "(35) Thereupon [the governor of] Upper Egypt said, 'Go and bring to me every (case of) transgression against him and the records of the ancestors....the Eye of Rē'. Then the prisoners were brought to him at [once] like a bundle of pinioned ones (?). Then he struck them down for him, causing [them] to be (36) carried like goats the night of the feast of the Evening Sacrifice in which braziers are kindled....like braziers (at the feast) of the Going forth of Sothis. Everyone was burned with fire in the place of [his] crime....Thebes" (Caminos 1958: 155). The text is ca. late ninth century BCE (Caminos 1958: 1-2, 17, 124-25).

¹⁸⁷ "The enemies on the terrace [of the temple] have been placed on the brazier (*hr.yw m hty. w di. w m 'h*); it (also) meant the flame for the one for whom they acted (*tk3 pw n iri. n=sn n=f*), after I had ... him for it (... *n=i sw r=s*); it was the capturing fire in which they burned (?) (*h.t pw šdi. t wbd <.t>. n=sn im (?)*)" (Willems 1990: 41).

brick altar found close by; that is, the Stele of Sarenput I from the Hekaib chapel.¹⁸⁸ In addition to using the location wherein the rites were performed, Willems utilized two further points to bolster the argument that several texts threaten the immolation of criminals in relation to the desecration of temples, monuments (stelae), and graves: (1) the offenders were perceived as rebelling against the order of the heavenly realm (Maat) and (2) their punishments were described with words used to connote the sacrifice of animals, such as the threat in Mo‘alla, inscription 8 (First Intermediate Period; late third millennium BCE),¹⁸⁹ to the cutting off of the arm of an offender (*shì ḥpš*), which is thus far only attested in rituals to mean the removal of an animal’s foreleg.¹⁹⁰ The punishment of the desecrators could include death as well as religious and social exile in the form of losing possessions, political positions, personal identities, and proper burials. What is more, the deities might not receive the violators’ offerings and punishment could also be extracted from their offspring (Willems 1990).

Willems’ basic premise concerning sacrificial burning as a means of execution is sound but the article is not devoid of difficulties. First of all, a number of the texts which he cited do not explicitly mention a temple altar as the location of burning and might instead connote non-sacrificial execution (cf. Willems 1990: 37, 40)—such a form of capital punishment is mentioned in a mid second millennium BCE legendary text, *King*

¹⁸⁸ “As for any governor, any *wab*-priest, any *ka*-priest, any scribe or any nobleman who will take it [the offering] away from my statue, his arm will be cut off (...) like (that of) the above ox, and his neck will be severed (?...) like (that of) a bird; his position will no longer exist; the position of his son will no longer exist; his house in the Nubian nome will no longer exist; his tomb in the necropolis will no longer exist; and his god will not accept his white bread. He is destined to the fire, and his children to the flame, his corpse being destined to ‘smelling the earth’ (...). I shall be against him as a crocodile in the water, as a snake on the earth and as an enemy in the necropolis!” (Willems 1990: 34).

¹⁸⁹ The period lasted from 2160-2055 BCE (Shaw 2000: 480).

¹⁹⁰ According to Willems, an additional reference to the punishment of a criminal in phraseology similar to animal sacrifice is Stele Cairo CG 1651: “Further, as regards the one who will commit unjust acts against this stela, he is judged, and his neck is cut off (*iw shì.tw tz=f*) like a bird(’s)” (Willems 1990: 35; cf. 36).

Cheops and the Magicians, which describes burning as a form of execution without providing any connotations of immolation; in this instance, the slaying takes place in a field (see Simpson, Faulkner, and Wente 1973: 15, 18). Secondly, the certainty of other supposed sacrificial texts provided by Willems is also suspect. Mo'alla 8, for instance, could indicate mutilation (the loss of an arm) as the penalty for disturbing a tomb rather than signify death. In fact, Willems once understood the text in this way (1990: 33-34). While at first glance a third area of difficulty would be the disparate dates of the data employed in support of the perspective that certain crimes resulted in burning on temple altars, it does seem that the tradition, if not actual practice, was long-lived. Even in Ptolemaic Egypt (late first millennium BCE), the concept survived: both a demotic text from Saqqara and the *Instruction of Ankhsheshonq* relate that criminals were subjected to death by means of the brazier (lit. *p3 'h*; Leahy 1984: 200 and n. 20). Like Willems, Leahy recognized the sacrificial connotations associated with such a brazier but he did not develop the idea to any great extent (Leahy 1984: 202). In addition to the aforementioned altar from Hekaib, it is possible that two later altars were utilized as sacrificial braziers: one was discovered at Edfu and the other at Tôd (Willems 1990: 43). The Edfu altar (end of Ptolemaic period or Roman era) is indicative of immolation in light of the reliefs adorning its sides; that is, naked youths are shown in the presence of individuals who appear to be priests. In one scene, in particular, a priestly figure brandishes a knife while an additional person holds a bound youth. The human sacrificial scenes are paralleled on the altar by images of animal sacrifice and other offering motifs (Weigall 1907: 44-46; Yoyotte 1980-81: 37-38). The similarly shaped altar from Tôd (dating to the time of Ptolemy IV) contains an inscription regarding the vanquishing of

mythological foes, which is apparently “a subject very common in ritual texts referring to sacrifices” (Willems 1990: 43; cf. Bisson de la Roque 1941: 36-42; Yoyotte 1980-81: 38). Of the two, the Edfu altar is a more convincing candidate for having been used for sacrifice given its various depictions of immolation.

3.3.6. Summation

Attendant Sacrifice – The Kerma (mid second millennium BCE) and Abydos (ca. early third millennium BCE) burials are the final instances of attendant sacrifice which will be addressed in this dissertation. There is a great deal of correspondence between these remains and those previously discussed, particularly in regard to the custom of immolating several individuals at the burials of social elites, a practice which sought to transfer the societal hierarchy extant in the land of the living into the realm of the dead (cf. sections 1.2.5. and 3.1.1.1.). It, like other forms of human sacrifice, is susceptible to the economics of substitution, particularly in the form of figurines (as found in Egypt and China). It is easy to recognize the reason why this type of immolation requires surrogate victims which replicate human physiology, as opposed to animal substitutes, who can replace the victims in other forms of human sacrifice. It is not simply a life-force or blood that is required—these can be provided by an animal victim—instead, it is the human capacity to perform tasks (to farm, cook, serve, etc.) that is needed.

Military Affairs – The ubiquitous image of the smiting ruler was employed throughout Egyptian history as the stereotypical representation of monarchical military prowess. In many of the depictions, the king’s actions are performed in the presence of a deity, but as was argued based upon the fuller portrayals of this scene, the focus is not

upon the deity as a recipient of immolation; rather, the divinity is portrayed as the one who enables the conquest. Warfare in Egypt, like in the other regions of the Near East, was a matter which required divine support; victory was contingent upon the gods. Out of gratitude for divine assistance, the pharaoh could be expected to offer a portion of the spoils of war to the benevolent deity; the implication is that failure to do so might limit future assistance. For instance, Seti I did so after his campaign against Hatti (*ANET* 255):

[Presentation of] tribute by the good god to his father Amon-Re, Lord of the [Thrones] of [the Two Lands, at] his return from the country of Hatti, having annihilated the rebellious countries and crushed the Asiatics in their places...The great princes of the wretched Retenu, whom his majesty carried off by his victories from the country of Hatti, to fill the workhouse of his father Amon-Re, Lord of the Thrones of the Two Lands, according as he had given valor against the south and victory against the north...

Here, it is clear that in addition to booty, prisoners were transported back to Egypt and forced into slavery as an additional form of tribute. Previously, it was shown that captives were executed in Egypt (Stele of Merneptah's fourth year) but, as far as this writer has been able to ascertain, there is no unequivocal evidence to suggest that the smiting ruler motif represents actual sacrifices performed as post-war thanksgivings to the gods. There is, however, a limited amount of data suggestive of prisoner of war immolation in other contexts (see below on Festivals and Execration Texts). That prisoners were not extensively used in sacrificial rites is somewhat surprising given their susceptibility to the machinations of their captors. In fact, prisoners of war are one of the most vulnerable types of victims which we have encountered in this dissertation, such as among the inhabitants of Meso-America and the west coast of Africa (section 1.2.).

Festivals – Turn of the twentieth century scholarship was fixated on the idea that kings were frequently immolated in many disparate cultural contexts, thanks in no small part to Frazer's *The Golden Bough*. Similarly, it was believed that the kings of Egypt were once sacrificed either in association with the *Sed* festival, a ceremony which

focused on rejuvenating the king, or before it was established. Some proposed that the *Sed* festival removed the need to sacrifice the monarch, while others opined that prisoners of war were possibly immolated during the *Sed* festival in the king's stead. There does not appear to be any definitive proof that the king or prisoners were ever immolated during the festivities. The supposed pictorial representations of sacrificial victims at *Sed* festivals, the Siali seal (predynastic era)¹⁹¹ and the Narmer macehead (ca. early third millennium BCE),¹⁹² can easily be interpreted as non-sacrificial scenes. The images of the Unification of Upper and Lower Egypt from the First Dynasty (ca. early third millennium BCE), conversely, do evince immolation. The seated, bound individuals on the labels of Aha and Djer served some unknown function in the ceremony in which the king received Upper and Lower Egypt. The victims could have been prisoners of war or criminals. Unfortunately, little is known about the ceremony.

Execration Texts – The purpose of Egyptian execration texts (written on bowls or figurines) was to neutralize the potential threat posed by Egypt's enemies. The individuals charged with defending Egypt from a southern attack would have been concerned primarily with Nubia. Hence, at the fortress of Mirgissa in the early second millennium BCE a Nubian prisoner was decapitated in order to enhance the strength of the execrations. Apparently the sacrifice emulated what the Egyptians hoped would happen to the Nubians on the battlefield.

Criminal Burning – Certain crimes, such as the desecration of stelae, tombs, and temples, could result in capital punishment by means of fire. Several texts refer to the place of burning as a temple brazier—the texts discussed above mainly date from the

¹⁹¹ Williams (1986: 169-171).

¹⁹² Kemp (1991: 60, fig. 20) dates it to the First Dynasty.

second to first millennia BCE. Such a specification indicates that the crimes moved beyond human offense. Indeed, according to Willems (see 3.3.5), crimes of desecration were acts of rebellion against the divine order of things (Maat) and, as echoed by Leahy (1984: 201), rebellious practices were met by the penalty of fire. Fire was likely utilized to punish those who committed grievous acts in order to destroy the criminal's remains, thereby making it impossible for him to exist in the afterlife (Leahy 1984: 201).

Earlier in this chapter (section 3.1.2.1.) we noted the use of fire as a punishment for breaking an oath, but in those instances from the Neo-Assyrian era, the transgressor was not threatened with sacrificial burning; instead, the lives of his children were. In a later treatment of ancient Israelite practices (chapter 4), we shall return to the topic of execution by fire. There it will be shown that sacrificing criminals was done in order to remove certain types of impurity. Willems' examination of Egyptian criminal sacrifice also touched upon the issue of purity, for not only did the study describe the criminal activities as acts of desecration but it also noted the following (1990: 52):

For the Egyptians, the crime obviously had a moral aspect that was intimately related to mythology. By his acts, the violator revealed himself as a manifestation of Seth or Apophis, the embodiments of disorder. The criminal was thus placed on the same level as the animals slaughtered in temple or funerary cults to symbolize the defeat of evil forces. When viewed from this angle, the punishment was not simply a matter of revenge, although that must often also have been involved. It was rather a method to counter cosmic disorder, that is, to safeguard society at large from pollutive elements.

3.4. The Wider Syro-Palestinian Orbit

3.4.1. Ugarit

According to Margalit, Mesha's sacrifice of his son as a burnt sacrifice (*'ōlā*) upon the walls of Kir-Hareseth while facing an Israelite-Judean-Edomite onslaught (2 Kgs 3:27) was not an isolated event in the history of the ancient Near East.¹⁹³ Other individuals similarly sacrificed children when faced with the siege of their cities (Margalit 1986: 62-63, 76). His basis for such a conclusion is the interpretation of a single text from Ugarit [*RS (Ras Shamra) 24.266; KTU (Die keilalphabetischen Texte aus Ugarit) 1.119*]. His argument, moreover, rests upon a single damaged word in line 31'. The relevant passage is as follows (transliteration from Pardee 2000: 662; translation mine):¹⁹⁴

26') k gr 'z . ṭḡr'rk̄m . ṣq'rd	(26) When a mighty one assails your gate,
27') ḥmytk̄m . 'n'k̄m . l ḥb'ṣl tšūn	a warrior (27) your walls,
28') y b'ṣl'm f. -- . tldy 'z l ṣlḡm	your eyes you shall elevate unto Ba'lu:
29') y . qrd [l] ḥmytny . ḥbr y	(28) "O Ba'lu, [if] ¹⁹⁵ you will force the mighty one away
30') b'ṣl . n'š'qdš . mqr b'ṣl	from our ga(29)te,
31') nmlū [. -]kr b'ṣl . nš[q]dš	the warrior [from] ¹⁹⁶ our walls;
32') ḥtp b'ṣl [.] ṣn'mlū . 'šr't . ḥb'ṣl [.] ṣn'[ṣ]	a bull, O (30) Ba'lu, we shall set apart;
33') šr . qdš b'ṣl . ṣn'ṣl . ntbt b[...]	a vow, O Ba'lu, (31) we shall carry out;
34') ntlk . w š[m' . b]ṣl . ṣl ṣ . -lḥ--l[...]	[a first]born/[ma]le, O Ba'lu, we shall set [ap]art;
35') ṣyldy . 'z l ṭḡrk̄m . qrd	(32) a ḥtp-sacrifice, O Ba'lu, we shall carry out; ¹⁹⁷
36') l ḥmytk̄m [.]	a libation, O Ba'lu, we [shall] (33) pour out; ¹⁹⁸
	unto the holy place of Ba'lu we shall ascend;
	upon the trail of the tem[ple of Ba'lu] ¹⁹⁹ (34) we shall
	stride."
	Thus, [Ba]lu has paid attention to [your] supplication. ²⁰⁰
	(35) He shall force the mighty one away from [yo]ur gate,
	[the warrior] (36) from your walls...

¹⁹³ Spalinger's analysis (discussed below) shows that Margalit was not the first to make such a claim. Spalinger's comments on 2 Kgs 3 can be found on page 52 of his study (1977-78).

¹⁹⁴ Cf. Herdner (1972); Saracino (1983); Miller (1988); de Tarragon (1989: 206-211); del Olmo Lete (1989); Avishur (1994: 253-276).

¹⁹⁵ For the possibility of *h/im*, see Pardee (2000: 664, 682).

¹⁹⁶ Reconstruction in *KTU* and Pardee (2000: 662).

The third element of the promised sacrifices to Ba‘lu (line 31¹) is uncertain, as de Tarragon noted: “on hésitait entre *[b]kr* <<premier-né>> et *[d]kr*, <<mâle>> (1989: 210, n. 203).²⁰¹ It should come as no surprise that Margalit opted for the first choice (the immolation of a firstborn), which is analogous to Mesha’s sacrifice of his *beḳōr* in 2 Kgs 3:27 (Margalit 1986: 76, n. 2). Herdner proposed this reading early on but was of the opinion that the writing of *bkr* does not distinguish between a human and an animal victim. Nevertheless, she decided that human sacrifice was the most likely option since a specific animal could have been indicated (Herdner 1972: 697). Pardee, however, disagreed with Herdner in view of the fact that the species of animal is not always identified in Ugaritic texts—words like *dbḥ* (sacrifice) and *ṣ’in* (sheep/goats) could simply refer to sacrificial victims (Pardee 2000: 683).²⁰² Hence, even if one were to accept Herdner’s and Margalit’s reading of *[b]kr*, it is still ambiguous as to the type of firstborn, be it human or animal, that the text has in mind.²⁰³ This would also be true if *[d]kr* were the accepted reconstruction: a male animal or a male human could be the

¹⁹⁷ Avishur understood *ḥtp* as cognate with Akkadian *ḥitpum* (“a type of sacrifice, usually of livestock”) and *ml’* as similar to Akkadian *malūm* (“pay, give”) (Avishur 1994: 261); *contra* Margalit, who proposed that *ḥtp* was a scribal error for *ḥtk* (descendent) (Margalit 1986: 76, n. 3). Spalinger suggested that *ḥtp* may be related to Egyptian *ḥtpw/ḥtp*, meaning offering or food offering (Spalinger 1977-78: 55). According to Pardee, the purpose of a *ḥtp*-offering is unknown (2002: 269). Avishur’s suggestion that *ḥtp* is related to Akkadian *ḥitpum* is made all the more intriguing when it is realized that the verbal form related to *ḥitpum* (*ḥatāpum*) appears in one passage as a reference to human sacrifice: “I (Ishtar) slaughtered [*aḥ-ta-ti-ip*] your enemies, I filled the river with their blood” (CAD, vol. 6, p. 149). The passage is from J. Craig’s *Assyrian and Babylonian Religious Texts* 1.23.ii.22.

¹⁹⁸ Following Miller (1988: 142, 147).

¹⁹⁹ *b[ṭ . b’l]* is the commonly accepted reconstruction (see *KTU*, Herdner 1972: 694; del Olmo Lete 1989: 34; Saracino 1983: 264).

²⁰⁰ *KTU* reads line 34¹ as: *ntlk . w šm ‘[. b] ṯ . l . ṣlt[km]*. Cf. discussion in Pardee (2000: 684-5).

²⁰¹ The editors of *KTU* were so convinced that the appropriate reading was *dkr* that they provided no commentary for this interpretation, nor did they place brackets around the *d*. Xella has been one of the most recognized proponents of the reconstruction of *[d]kr* (1978: 134; see also Saracino 1983: 264; Miller 1988: 147; del Olmo Lete 1989: 34; de Tarragon 1989: 210, who accept such a reading).

²⁰² In his 2002 work, Pardee simply suggested the restoration of *[b]kr* and noted: “If the restoration is correct, the reference is probably to a firstborn animal sacrifice” (2002: 268).

²⁰³ Avishur recommended the latter (1989: 261).

intended victim. One could conjecture, together with Sasson, that *[b/d]kr* represents an animal since *ibr* (bull) and *[]kr* are parallel statements, which is signified by the repeated use of the verbs “we shall set apart//we shall carry out” in lines 29^b-32^a (Sasson 1987: 60);²⁰⁴ but the parallelism would not be lost even if *[]kr* were a human victim because two different sacrifices could still stand in parallel statements, just as *vow* and *htp*-sacrifice are apparently distinct but occur in alternating lines.

It should be noted as well that Spalinger listed *KTU 1.119* in support of his proposal that certain Egyptian reliefs depict infant sacrifice by the inhabitants of Syro-Palestine when faced with siege (cf. Derchain 1970; Keel 1975; Heider 1985: 146; Hoffmeir 1987; Barrick 1992; Mettinger 1994). The images studied by Spalinger that portray child immolation date to the reigns of Rameses II, Merneptah, and Rameses III (thirteenth to twelfth centuries BCE). While the names of the besieged towns are not always evident, Ashkelon (southern Cisjordan) and Tunip (a site possibly located near the Orontes river, southeast of Ugarit)²⁰⁵ are specified, which potentially illustrates the pervasiveness of the practice throughout Syro-Palestine.²⁰⁶ Concerning this practice, Spalinger provided the following six conclusions (Spalinger 1977-78: 54):

(1) Ba'al is invoked; (2) there is the sacrifice of infants; (3) the act occurs under duress—i.e., the city besieged; (4) on one occasion a bag of flour is brought for the ritual; (5) incense braziers are present on all occasions; and (6) the heaven, and not the Pharaoh, is invoked. This is evident not only explicitly from the short inscription at Beit el-Wali but also in the positions of the arms of the Canaanite participants themselves.

²⁰⁴ The parallelism would be:

a bull, O (30') Ba'lu, we shall set apart;
 a vow, O Ba'lu, (31') we shall carry out;
 [a first]born/[ma]le (animal), O Ba'lu, we shall set [ap]art;
 (32') a *htp*-sacrifice, O Ba'lu, we shall carry out;

²⁰⁵ Possibly Tell Asharneh, northwest of Hama (so Goren, Finkelstein, and Na'aman 2002: 196, 198-202).

²⁰⁶ On the sites mentioned and the specific pharaohs associated with the reliefs, see also Derchain (1970: 351, n. 2 and 3).

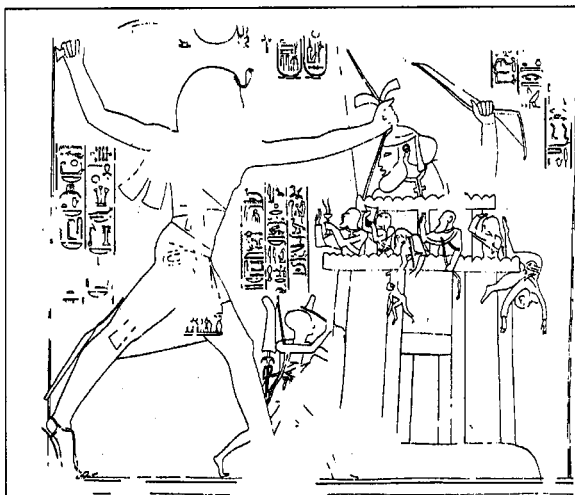


Figure 3.33. Conquest by Rameses II from Beit el-Wali (Keel 1975: 421).



Figure 3.34. Siege by Rameses II at Ashkelon from Karnak (Derchain 1970: 352)

The Beit el-Wali inscription reads (Spalinger 1977-78: 51):

Said by the vile prince in extolling the Lord of the Two Lands: “(I) believe that there is no other like Ba‘al, (and) the Ruler is his true son forever.”

This statement of capitulation by the “vile prince” signifies the importance of Ba‘al to the individuals who sacrificed their children and it is probable that he was the recipient of the immolations. That the children were sacrificed and not lowered for the purpose of fleeing is apparent from the fact that the Egyptians typically portrayed would-be escapees as being let down by ropes (Derchain 1970: 353).

In sum, the Egyptian reliefs and *KTU* 1.119 have several correlations: (1) the images of human sacrifice and the Ugaritic corpus are contemporary; (2) *KTU* 1.119 and the Beit el-Wali inscription indicate Ba‘al’s association with the respective rites; (3) both texts illustrate the concept that certain inhabitants of Syro-Palestine resorted to sacrifice when faced with the threat of enemy forces against their cities,²⁰⁷ and (4), a fact not

²⁰⁷ One could also note the reference in *KRT* wherein sacrifices were performed upon the walls of a city prior to a military encounter (Derchain 1970: 355, n. 3), namely, *KRT* 1.74-79 (translation mine):

emphasized by Spalinger, one of the sites mentioned by name in the Egyptian reliefs, Tunip, appears to have been located in northwest Syria, which would make it within Ugarit's cultural ambit. These points of correspondence potentially favor the identification of the victim in *KTU* 1.119 with a human firstborn or male.

As for the text that sparked this discussion of Ugaritic and Egyptian data, 2 Kgs 3 appears to preserve the Late Bronze/Early Iron Age Syro-Palestinian tradition of child sacrifice in the face of siege. It must be noted, however, that the biblical passage is part of the Deuteronomistic History, whose final form does not predate the sixth century BCE. Hence, there is a large gap in time, approximately six centuries, between the Egyptian and Ugaritic material and the narrative of Mesha's burnt-sacrifice. What is more, this same corpus seems to retain the memory of another form of human immolation for which we do not have unequivocal evidence after the Middle Bronze Age, namely, built-in sacrifice. We shall now turn to the archaeological data indicative of such a practice.

3.4.2. Cisjordan

The interment of children in ceramic vessels has been the focal point of academic discourse concerning the existence of human sacrifice as represented by the material remains of ancient Palestine. This was particularly true of scholarship at the turn of the twentieth century, the era in which the scientific excavation of Syro-Palestinian tells was

Ascend to the top of the [to]wer,
 Mount the shoulder of the wal[1];
 Raise your hands to the heavens,
 Sacrifice (*dbh*) to Bull, your father, Ilu;
 Cause Ba'lu to descend by your sacrifice (*bdbhk*),
 The Son of Dagan via your sacrificial animal (*bmşdk*).

just beginning.²⁰⁸ Certain scholars writing at that time were inclined to equate jar burials with child sacrifice, especially in regard to the material unearthed at Gezer, Taanach, and, to a lesser extent, Megiddo (Gray 1909: 432-37; Macalister 1903a: 32-35).²⁰⁹ Previously we noted that such a tendency was also prevalent among Mesopotamian archaeologists in the early 1900's. As proposed in that section of this chapter (3.1.1.2), infant jar burials, whether connected to sanctuaries or not, are not in and of themselves evocative of immolation. Built-in burials, however, likely signify sacrifice, given that they point to the premeditation of the slayings. Possible examples of built-in sacrifice have been unearthed at the following sites in Cisjordan:

(1) According to Macalister's final excavation report on his work at Gezer (conducted in the years 1902-1905 and 1907-1909), foundation sacrifices occurred throughout the entire "Semitic" era and then more infrequently in the "Hellenistic" period. Although the majority of these burials consisted of infant or child jar interments, adult burials were also unearthed. Unfortunately, Macalister did not draw a clear distinction between in-floor burials and built-in interments in suggesting that he had found evidence of foundation sacrifice. Thus, at least two of the supposed sacrificial victims were buried in the floors of structures, not in their foundations or walls; particularly an adult male in the floor of building II a 28 and an adult female in the corner

²⁰⁸ See the discussions of infant jar burial in Gray (1909: 432-37); Macalister (1908: 863); Driver (1909: 67-73); Vincent (1907: 188-204); Luckenbill (1910a: 300-01).

²⁰⁹ While jar burial was not the only factor leading these two scholars to the conclusion that the infants were sacrificed, it was a vital part of their arguments. The place of burial was also important. Indeed, the supposed association of the interments with the cultic site at Gezer, which contained a series of monumental stones, was a key aspect in the analysis provided for the burials. Macalister even went so far as to suggest that further excavations at Taanach would reveal that the infant jar burials there were placed near a sanctuary as at Gezer (Macalister 1903a: 34; Gray 1909: 434). This dissertation's contention that sanctuary burials do not automatically indicate sacrificial remains would be redundant at this point in light of the reinterpretation of the Gezer material. The infant ceramic interments predate the initial construction of the cultic site in the Middle Bronze IIC era (Dever 1993: 501; cf. also the discussion and references in Green 1975: 154-55).

of structure II 3 A. Nevertheless, two clear instances of built-in sacrifice are discernable in Macalister's publication: an infant jar burial was placed beneath a wall in building II 21 B and three adults were buried under a wall in structure III 30. The latter is particularly intriguing because of the arrangement of the three individuals: an adult male and an adult of indeterminate sex were interred next to each other, with the torso of a person (approximately 18 years old) positioned above them (Macalister 1912: 426-33). The exact timeframe in which the built-in sacrifices took place at Gezer is unknown due to the nature of Macalister's presentation of the data, as the later excavators of Gezer stated: "The plans are very poor, inaccurate and without elevations, with the result that one cannot be confident of the date assigned to a single building or wall published. It is indeed fortunate that the excavator [i.e., Macalister] was unable to fulfill his ambition to dig every square foot of the tell" (Dever, Lance, and Wright 1970: 2).

(2) Among the many graves unearthed by Schumacher in his work at Megiddo from 1903 to 1905, three are of primary importance to the treatment of built-in burials inasmuch as each interment appears to have coincided with the construction of the so-called Nordburg, which was inaugurated in the Middle Bronze II era (early second millennium BCE).²¹⁰ Two of these graves consisted of child jar burials: one in the lower portion of the Nordburg's defensive trench on the structure's western side and one in the foundation of a wall on its eastern side. The third example is a ca. fifteen-year-old young woman buried in an interior wall of the structure (Schumacher 1908: 41, 44-45, 54-55).

(3) In a brief encyclopedia entry, a member of the 1960's Taanach excavation team wrote: "Below the floors and in the walls of Middle Bronze Age rooms sixty-four burials were found, of which about 90 percent were of children entombed in storage jars"

²¹⁰ Chronology according to Aharoni (1993: 1004).

(Glock 1993: 1432). The expedition director, Lapp, described the interments as “subfloor burials,” which primarily occurred in the Middle Bronze IIC, though a few examples date to the initial phase of the Late Bronze Age. Based upon Lapp’s limited overview of the remains, only one of the sixty-four burials can be tentatively regarded as a built-in interment; that is, a female adult was placed in a cist grave that shared a common wall with the foundation of a residence (Lapp 1969: 27-30; 1967a: 13). Additionally, Lapp suggested that the burial of an adolescent girl in the area of the cultic structure during the building’s later phase (ninth to eighth centuries BCE)²¹¹ might have been a foundation sacrifice. She was positioned above a wall from an earlier phase of the building and her burial was partially disturbed by what were likely stone robbers. Lapp was of the opinion that the interment was possibly incorporated into the foundations of the later phase of the building; this is despite any clear evidence for such an interpretation. Hence, this writer is not confident of Lapp’s reconstruction of the burial at the cultic site (Lapp 1967b: 17-18; cf. 1964: 27, n. 40).

(4) The excavations at Tel Dothan, which began in 1953, located the remains of a one- to two-year-old child from the Middle Bronze IIB period²¹² buried beneath a wall, which Free correctly understood as suggestive of a built-in sacrifice since the child was not interred under the floor of the building but below the construction’s structure (Free 1953: 18).

(5) Kenyon’s work at Jericho from 1952-56 discovered one instance of a built-in sacrifice. An infant was buried in a cist grave in the foundations of a building from the Intermediate Bronze Age (late third millennium BCE). The exact purpose of the

²¹¹ This is the building in whose vicinity the Taanach cultic stands were found (Rast 1994: 356).

²¹² For the specific Middle Bronze period represented at the tell, see Ussishkin (1993).

structure was not apparent to Kenyon, but she did suggest that it was probably a religious center in light of the infant burial and three other constructions that might have served cultic functions. That is, two large mud-brick blocks (.5 m tall x 1 m x .75 m), one of which had a cup incorporated into it as a foundation deposit, could have been utilized as altars and a large storage bin (1 m in diameter by a height of .75 m) may have been employed as an offering receptacle. Parallels for the altars and storage bin were found at Megiddo and Lachish, respectively (Kenyon 1957: 19, 193-94; 1965: 153-54).

(6,7) In order to illustrate the “moral depravity” of the Negev inhabitants, Glueck wrote in reference to the Chalcolithic era (late fifth to late fourth millennia BCE): “Even more revealing is the skeleton of a newborn babe found under a fireplace at Tell Abu Matar and of a child buried as a foundation offering under a stone wall there, and of an infant stuffed into a jar that had been placed under a threshold at Teleilat Ghassul” (Glueck 1959: 61). Tell Abu Matar is located in the vicinity of Beer Sheba and is a fascinating representation of Chalcolithic culture inasmuch as the inhabitants utilized a series of subterranean caverns carved out of the earth.²¹³ The excavations performed from 1952-54 did locate burials that could correspond to Glueck’s interpretation; i.e., an infant was discovered under a layer of charcoal and ash at the bottom of a pit and in two separate cases a child was uncovered below a pile of stones that were arranged to create a circular structure; the stone surfaces apparently served as foundations for habitations (Perrot 1955a: 25; 1955b: 76-77; 1955c: 173, 189; 1963: 373). Of these three examples, the latter two are the most indicative of immolation, that is, if the stone constructions were used as building platforms. The supposition concerning the infant buried below a

²¹³ Perrot viewed the caverns as dwelling places, whereas Gilead suggested that they were storage rooms (Gilead 1987).

fireplace is plausible but questionable. Indeed, it is a misconception to describe the charcoal and limited ashes as representative of a “fireplace” because this implies an established structure. To be fair, the evidence suggests that a single fire was lit above the infant burial and this could have been part of a non-sacrificial funerary rite. As for Teleilat Ghassul, a site in the Jordan Valley, the closest correlation to Glueck’s statement that this writer could find was a suggestion presented by Mallon in the excavation report dedicated to the 1929-1932 seasons at the locale. Therein it was surmised that a six- to seven-year-old child had been immolated and then buried in a ceramic vessel at the base of a wall. This deduction was contingent upon the medical analysis of the child’s skull, which was the only portion of the skeleton unearthed. In light of the fact that the skull evinced damage to its left side and was missing the occipital bone, it was determined that the child had died due to a blow to the head (Mallon 1934: 48-50).

The excavations at these seven sites have elucidated a number of human, mainly child or infant, sacrifices: two built-in burials at Gezer, three at Megiddo, one at Taanach, one at Dothan, one at Jericho, two at Abu Matar, and one at Teleilat Ghassul. These instances essentially represent the Chalcolithic, Intermediate Bronze, and Middle Bronze eras, ca. late fifth to early second millennia BCE.

3.4.3. Transjordan

3.4.3.1. Amman Airport

A structure from the Late Bronze Age (mid second millennium BCE) was discovered by happenstance in 1955 within the confines of the Amman airport during the course of a building project carried out by the R.A.F. The excavations conducted shortly

thereafter unearthed an approximately 15 x 15 m² building whose stone-built walls were 2 m in width.²¹⁴ Harding supposed that the structure was a temple complex, a conclusion which was apparently based upon the layout of the building as well as the plethora of objects located therein, especially the numerous metallic artifacts, such as bronze weapons and pieces of gold leaf. One may also observe that the complex was isolated from any attached occupational remains (Harding 1958: 10-12).²¹⁵ Harding's interpretation of the site as a temple structure was given further support by Wright's work of 1966 in which it was proposed that the complex's layout was similar to the square floor plans of other constructions, such as the much later Nabatean temples from the region of Hauran (ca. first to second centuries CE) and the more contemporary building from Mt. Gerizim (ca. 1600 BCE),²¹⁶ which has been interpreted as a cultic site or villa (Wright 1966).²¹⁷ A subsequent excavation team headed by Hennessy, which reexamined the remains of the Amman structure in 1966, found validity in Wright's comparisons and accepted Harding's conclusion that the building was a temple. What is perhaps most indicative of the cultic function of the complex, according to Hennessy, is the large number of bones, which were often burnt and originated from humans and animals, discovered within the building as well as the evidence of numerous small fires. Taken together, the fires, skeletal remains, and the deposit of costly objects (like those mentioned by Harding) were seen as illustrative of the performance of sacrifices and offerings during the construction and use of the building. Additionally, two large rocks

²¹⁴ On these dimensions in contrast to those reported by Harding, see Hennessy (1966a, 1966b).

²¹⁵ A later excavation confirmed that the closest and possibly contemporary occupational remains were located about 300 m away, an arguably short distance (Hennessy 1966a: 358-59).

²¹⁶ Consult Ottosson's (1980: 101-104) view that the buildings at Mt. Gerizim, the Amman airport, and Hazor constitute a type of square temple, the *Quadratbau*, which later became prominent in the first century CE.

²¹⁷ For the cultic view, see Campbell and Wright (1969); Ottosson (1980: 101-104); on the domestic function of the remains, consult Albright (1963: 36).

situated one on top of the other within an interior room were interpreted as the elements of an altar; it, too, showed signs of burning on its surface (Hennessy 1966a, 1966b).²¹⁸

In 1970 Hennessy further advanced the position that human sacrifice was performed at the Amman airport structure, a conclusion based predominantly upon a few facts and some “coincidences,” as he called them. The facts are that (1) an onyx cylinder seal with a cuneiform inscription from the Kassite period found at the site describes the owner, *Amat-banītu*, as the daughter of a mourning rite specialist (a *sappittu*),²¹⁹ and (2) the frequently charred bone pieces, which were examined in 1969 and numbered in the thousands, came almost entirely (90 percent) from children. As for the coincidences, which were already noted by Tournay (1967: 253), Hennessy was intrigued by the correspondence between the seal’s discovery at a site in close proximity to the biblical region of Gilead, which relates to another happenstance inasmuch as Judg 11:40 portrays an annual mourning rite resulting from the human sacrifice of Jephthah’s daughter by fire in response to a military encounter between the people of Gilead and the Ammonites. To conclude his work, Hennessy expressed the view that his excavations provided nearly indisputable verification of the human immolations denounced by the biblical writers (Hennessy 1970). Ottosson, too, suspected that the Amman airport site might have been a temple wherein child sacrifice and mourning rituals were performed but this treatment need not be discussed in great detail since it mainly reiterated the conclusions previously proposed (Ottosson 1980: 101-104).

Herr, who performed a salvage excavation at the Amman airport site in 1976, offered an alternative explanation as to why so many human skeletal remains were

²¹⁸ Herr suggested that the stones might have been utilized as an incense altar (Herr 1983b: 28).

²¹⁹ For this reading, see Tournay (1967: 250-52).

unearthed in the area, that is, the site served as a crematorium and mortuary complex.²²⁰ Herr's work, which mainly focused on an additional area north of the main building, discovered roughly 1,000 human bone fragments, all of which were charred and almost exclusively from adults. He assumed, therefore, that cremation was a better explanation than human immolation inasmuch as children were supposedly the chief victims of human sacrifice in Syro-Palestine, not adults. He noted, furthermore, that the ceramic assemblage at the site was typical of burial deposits, lacking, for instance, domestic vessels in the form of cooking pots and storage pithoi. The majority of the bones from Herr's excavation were found in association with a large pile of stones (approximately 4 m square), which showed signs of conflagration; it was, consequently, described as likely a funerary pyre (Herr 1976; 1983a; 1983b). One should not be overwhelmed, however, by the large quantity of bone fragments discovered by Herr. Indeed, the excavation's analysis of the 1,000 + fragments was only able to determine that the bones came from at the very least two or perchance three persons—possibly a forty plus year old woman, a late teenage male, and perhaps a child, though the latter material could also have been the remains of a sheep or goat (Little 1983: 49-50).

Soon after Herr's publication, Hennessy returned to the topic of human sacrifice at the Amman airport structure. In this later work, he proposed that the seemingly significant number of bone fragments that he had excavated probably came from an insignificantly low number of people: approximately six; and he suggested that the age of the individuals was unknown, which was a departure from his previous proposal that the

²²⁰ Cf. Fritz (1971) and Herr's acceptance of his basic tenet that the Amman Airport site was not a temple, agreeing, for instance, with Fritz's deductions that square temples are atypical of second and third millennia BCE Palestine and that the objects found in the building are also uncharacteristic of temple material culture. Herr, however, rejected Fritz's interpretation of the site as a tower since the remains do not correspond to a domestic structure (Herr 1983b: 27).

cremated persons were children. Despite the modifications, he still maintained the theory that the temple was most likely employed in sacrificial rites involving humans. Four issues were particularly important to Hennessy in support of this assumption: (1) human sacrifice was known in the area;²²¹ (2) the cremated bones showed signs of discoloration like the sacrificed remains from Crete (discussed above in section 2.1.2.2); (3) the low number of burned individuals points to the specialized nature of the site, as does the presence of foreign imports (like ceramics), some of which came from the Aegean (the region of Crete); and (4) the discovery of weapons in the temple structure, as well as a dagger or lance-head on the pyre, indicates that violence might have been key to the rites performed at the site (Hennessy 1985).

In response to Hennessy's position, the evidence from Crete concerning bone discoloration as illustrative of blood loss is highly suspect. Bone discoloration is likely dependent upon variations in the temperatures to which the bones were exposed. Regarding the presence of imported objects and weaponry, such items are commonly found among non-sacrificial burial remains. In fact, Herr's reconstruction of the site's purpose is as tenable as Hennessy's. One cannot exclude the possibility that the site was a funerary complex where individuals were cremated and not immolated. Hennessy himself admitted that the building "was either a mortuary temple or a temple associated with human sacrifice" (1985: 99). Unfortunately, this is the most conclusive that one can be in seeking to describe the function of the site.

²²¹ Here he cited Green's work on human immolation in the Near East without providing explicit examples. He also discussed Jephthah's daughter and Mesha's sacrifice of his son as indicative of a tradition of immolation in Transjordan (Hennessy 1985: 101-103).

3.4.3.2. Moabite Stone/Mesha Stele

The ninth century BCE Moabite Stone or Mesha Stele is a testament to the common perspective shared by the Moabites and the Israelites in terms of religion and warfare, for not only do the biblical passages and this inscription portray military defeat as a direct result of divine wrath, an issue to which we will return in chapter four (4.2.3.), but they both illustrate that killing one's enemies on the battlefield was an act of immolation. Compare, for instance, the following passages:

Moabite Stone, lines 10-18²²²

The men of Gad lived in the land of Ataroth from time immemorial and the king of Israel constructed Ataroth for them. I battled (*'lthm*) against the city and captured it. I killed (*'hrg*) all the peo[ple] [from] the city as an intoxication (*ryt*) for Chemosh and for Moab. Then I returned from there the *'r'l dwdh*²²³ and I d[ra]gged it before Chemosh at Kerioth. I settled in it the men of Sharon and the me[n] of Maharith. Thereupon Chemosh commanded me: "Go, capture Nebo from Israel." Thus, I went at night and battled (*'lthm*) against it from the break of dawn until midday. I captured it and I killed (*'hrg*) everyone, seven thousand m[e]n, [young male]s, women, [young female]s, and females of childbearing age; because to Ashtar Chemosh I had dedicated it unto *hērem* (*hhrmth*). Then I took away from there t[he ves]sels belonging to Yahweh and I dragged them before Chemosh.

Isa 34:5-7

For it is intoxicated (*riwwēā*),
 My sword in the heavens;
 Upon Edom it has descended,
 And so has my *hērem* on the people for judgment.
 The sword of Yahweh is full of blood,
 It has made itself obese from fat,
 From the blood of rams and male goats,
 From the fat of rams' kidneys;
 For a sacrifice (*zēbah*) to Yahweh in Bosrah,
 And a great slaughter (*tebah*) in the land of Edom.
 Oxen have descended with them,

²²² This translation was composed in consultation with the works of Albright (*ANET* 320) and Gibson (1971: 71-83).

²²³ *'r'l dwdh* is very problematic. Andersen and Albright rendered the phrase "Arel (?), its chief (?)" and "Arel (or Oriel), its chieftain," respectively (Andersen 1966: 90; Albright in *ANET* 320). Although "chief" was no longer a plausible translation based solely upon an understanding of Akk. *dāwīdum* in the Mari documents—the reading was debunked by Tadmor (1958: 129-131)—Lipinsky still maintained that *dwd* (the attached *h* being a pronominal suffix) could be representative of a political office by seeing in the word a reference to David. Here, his name would function as "an antonomasia used to express the general idea of an Israelite chief and hero" (1971: 333). Others have suggested that *dwd* is a reference to a deity named Dod (Ahlström 1982: 14) or an epithet for Yahweh (Müller 1985: 648, n. 13 a). Yahweh's connection to such an epithet has been claimed for Isa 5:1, Amos 8:14, with emendation, and 2 Chr 20:37, with emendation (Müller 1985: 648, n. 13 a; cf. Lemche and Thompson 1994: 13-15). Gibson translated the words as "the lion figure of David" (1971: 76) and Smelik sided with the alternative "the fire-hearth of his *uncle*" (1991: 33, emphasis original).

And bulls with the mighty;
 Their land has become intoxicated from blood,
 And their dust has been made obese from fat.

The most important parallel between these texts is the use of the roots *ḥ-r-m* (to dedicate unto *ḥērem*-sacrifice) and *r-w-h* (to become intoxicated) in the context of warfare.

Ample space will be given to understanding the biblical concept of *ḥērem* in the subsequent chapter (4.1.1.) but for now it will be useful to note in passing that Isa 34 literally portrays martial conflict in terms of a sacrifice to Yahweh (*zeḇaḥ*). As for the Mesha Stele, the entire passage is permeated with sacrificial imagery: the spoils of war are presented to Chemosh, all the inhabitants of Ataroth are killed for Chemosh's intoxication (and Moab's as well), and the entire population of Nebo is slain as an act of dedication to Ashtar Chemosh. Slaying individuals as an act of dedication and killing people for divine satisfaction can hardly be anything other than immolation.

3.4.4. Summation

The brevity of this chapter segment reflects the paucity of the extant evidence of human immolation in the material remains of Syro-Palestine. The situation is even worse with regard to the Bronze and Iron Age textual sources, that is, excluding the biblical texts, which will be covered in the next chapter. The one possible reference to human sacrifice from Ugarit is problematic but can reasonably be reconstructed as indicative of human immolation in light of the contemporary Egyptian reliefs. The Moabite Stone/Mesha Stele presents a clear reference to *ḥērem*-dedication on the battlefield and the term is paralleled in the text by a word for intoxication (*ryt*), both of which signify that the slayings were acts of sacrifice. Because the amount of data derived from archaeological research is limited, the sparse physical evidence for human sacrifice is

extremely valuable. The clearest examples of immolation come in the form of built-in sacrifices from the Chalcolithic, Intermediate Bronze, and Middle Bronze periods. It is possible that several other sacrificial victims have been excavated, such as at the Amman Airport or at the Taanach cultic structure, but it is very difficult to distinguish human sacrifice from other types of slayings or from natural death. It is best to err on the side of caution rather than to suppose that sacrifice occurred when several plausible explanations exist.

3.5. Conclusion

This chapter has surveyed several potential instances of human immolation from the ancient Near East, ranging from prehistoric times to the late first millennium BCE. Burial sacrifice, either in the form of attendant sacrifice or built-in immolation, was characteristically early in Egypt, Mesopotamia, Nubia, and Syro-Palestine, going back to at least the fifth millennium BCE and apparently ending by about the middle of the second millennium BCE. The purpose of attendant sacrifice was to transfer the social hierarchy from one realm of existence to the next, particularly for the benefit of social elites; but the goals of built-in immolation have proven more elusive to detect, which is likely a result of the early (and often prehistoric) nature of the remains, i.e., there is a general lack of supportive documentation from textual sources. Thus, we shall have recourse to return to this issue in the final conclusion of the dissertation. At that time, we will compare the southeast Asian (1.2.3.) examples of built-in sacrifice to those from the Near East in order to speculate about the potential objectives of incorporating human victims into construction projects.

By their very nature the textual references to human immolation in the second and first millennia BCE are easier to interpret than the material remains, though they are not without their difficulties. Thematically the texts predominantly cover matters related to justice, substitution, and warfare:

As for justice, the Egyptian materials indicate that criminals were burned on temple altars because of acts of desecration and the Neo-Assyrian data describe both the burning of children as a penalty for breaking a contract and the slaying of murderers as a funerary offering.

Concerning substitution, the Hittite and Neo-Assyrian substitute king ritual was a practice that sought to redirect anticipated harm away from the real king and onto his surrogate. The sacrifice of the substitute king is most clearly seen in the Neo-Assyrian material but there exists one likely occurrence of his immolation in the Hittite literature.

Regarding warfare, the execration texts at Mirgissa were discovered together with the remains of a sacrificed Nubian, an immolation which probably attempted to bring about the demise of Egypt's southern neighbors by ritually destroying one of them in conjunction with the breaking of inscribed objects. The Egyptians also preserved by means of inscriptions and reliefs some examples of how their enemies attempted to bring about Egypt's military ruin through human sacrifice. That is to say, the inhabitants of Syro-Palestine intended to survive Egyptian besiegement by sacrificing their children. The Moab Stone/Mesha Stele illustrates, moreover, that one group of Syro-Palestinians viewed military conquest as a sacrificial act (*hrm* and *ryt*).

In the following chapter on the ancient Israelites, it will be shown that they, too, understood the sacrificial underpinnings of battle. In fact, the Hebrew Bible not only

contains passages that relate to *ḥērem*-sacrifice but it also retains the memory of earlier forms of human sacrifice for which we do not have clear evidence after the Bronze Age: built-in sacrifice and immolation in the face of besiegement. There are, however, many more examples of human sacrifice in the pages of the biblical texts than these three.

Chapter 4

Ancient Israelite Traditions

This chapter is organized according to the key sacrificial terms utilized in the corpus of ancient Jewish literature that was eventually canonized as the Hebrew Bible, writings which were, according to ancient Jewish tradition, reflective of the pre-Hellenistic Jewish religious world and which for purposes of modern historical investigation remain pertinent to the specific practice of human sacrifice for that same early period: *ḥērem* (dedication), *bā'ar* (to burn/eradicate), *kāp̄ar* (to cover/atone), *'ōlā* (burnt-sacrifice), *sārap̄* (to burn), *he'ēb̄ir* (to cause to pass over), and *nātan* (to give). Several additional words will be encountered in conjunction with those listed here as we seek to ascertain the extent to which various biblical authors accepted the legitimacy of sacrificing humans. While formatting this chapter according to biblical terminology provides a simple structure to the narrative, it is not without its shortcomings, especially in terms of the disjointed manner in which certain of the topics will be addressed. Organizing the chapter according to a topical analysis would have had the same effect but on the way in which the terms were discussed. As a compromise, a brief overview of the key trajectories of this chapter will ensue as a means of orienting the reader prior to beginning an in-depth examination into the specific sacrificial terms.

The examples of human sacrifice treated in the following analysis may be divided into two broad categories: the immolation of guilty apostates and foreigners and the sacrifice of innocent Israelite heirs. The latter group is by far the most widely discussed type of biblical human sacrifice in academic discourse. Here, one meets the terms *'ōlā* (burnt-sacrifice), *sārap̄* (to burn), *he'ēb̄ir* (to cause to pass over), and *nātan* (to

give) and comes into contact with the deities Yahweh, Ba'al, Mōlek, and various unnamed divinities. Despite the relatively small number of references to the *mōlek* in the Hebrew Scriptures, the term has unjustifiably dominated attempts to understand Israelite human immolation. It should be afforded a much smaller role given the likelihood that the term is a rhetorical device meant to distance Yahweh from Israelite heir immolation in the post-586 BCE period of religious change. That many of Yahweh's worshipers once accepted the legitimacy of heir immolation is evinced, among other things, by Yahweh's associations with the *tōpēt* cult in Isa 30, Yahweh's approval of Jephthah's sacrifice of his daughter in Judg 11, and Yahweh's admission that he once demanded the sacrifice of the firstborn Israelites in Ezek 20. The near sacrifice of Isaac in Gen 22 epitomizes the history of Israelite heir immolation: it was once demanded by the God of Israel but it was later replaced by animal substitution. The reasons for this transition are, unfortunately, unknown.

It was particularly during the exilic/post-exilic period that the other category of human sacrifice treated here served to help demarcate the boundaries of the re-emergent Israelite community by establishing a methodology for dealing with spiritual apostates and offensive foreigners. That is to say, human sacrifice in the form of capital punishment, described as *hērem* (dedication), *bā'ar* (to burn/eradicate), *kāpār* (to cover/atone), and *sārap* (to burn), helped establish the legal standards which governed Israelite society. Those who failed to abide by the precepts set forth in various legislative texts were identified as worthy of sacrifice in order to maintain the purity of the Israelite community and their land. This class of sacrifice will be the more difficult of the two categories for the reader to accept because the terms are not generally recognized in

scholarship as sacrificial in connotation. Yet, they have been identified as indicative of human immolation in light of the basic premise of this entire dissertation: *human sacrifice is not only the destruction of an individual in an act directed towards a divinity or immaterial entity, but it is more specifically a slaying done with the direct intent of affecting the suprahuman realm.* Whether or not one agrees with this definition will determine the extent to which the chapter's conclusions will be accepted.

4.1. *ḥērem*, *bā'ar*, and *kāpār*

4.1.1. *ḥērem*

Biblical *ḥērem* is best known from its appearance in texts concerned with warfare.²²⁴ Therein, it frequently entails the systematic destruction of a group of people (adults and children) and, at times, their possessions by the army of Yahweh (Num 21:2,3; Josh 2:10; 6:21);²²⁵ thus, the concept of *utter destruction* is the prominent translation found in the *RSV*. Yet, as Yerkes noted, such a translation deviates from the true essence of *ḥērem*.²²⁶ Surely, warfare conducted under the banner of *ḥērem* necessitated the complete annihilation of Israel's foes but this is only one aspect of what the term represents. A clearer perception of *ḥērem* can be gleaned from the biblical passages that lack allusions to battle.²²⁷ Hence, to perform *ḥērem* was to devote entirely something or some being to Yahweh, as the following texts illustrate:

²²⁴ For a comprehensive treatment of biblical *ḥērem*, see Brekelmans (1971); Lohfink (1977; 1986); and Stern (1991). On the differences between Brekelmans and Lohfink, consult Lust (1989: 277-79).

²²⁵ Certain objects could be spared from destruction and given to Yahweh, such as precious metals (Josh 6:19; cf. Malamat 1967: 41).

²²⁶ Yerkes suggested that *ḥērem* denotes devotion (1952: 65-66; 222-23, n. 29-31).

²²⁷ For a brief overview of scholarly discussion on *ḥērem* in the context of war versus *ḥērem* off the battlefield, see Milgrom (2001: 2391-93).

Lev. 27:26-29 (Priestly Corpus)²²⁸

Yet, the firstborn which is born first belongs to Yahweh among beasts; a man shall not set it apart; whether cattle or sheep, it belongs to Yahweh. If it is among the unclean beasts he shall ransom (*ūpāda*) (it) at your arranged price and he shall add a fifth to it; but if it is not redeemed (*yiggā'ēl*), then it will be sold at your arranged price. However, everything dedicated (*ḥērem*) that a man dedicates (*yahārīm*) to Yahweh from among everything that he owns, be it human or beast or field belonging to him, shall not be sold nor redeemed (*yiggā'ēl*); every dedicated thing (*ḥērem*) is especially set apart (*qōdes̄ qādāsīm*); it belongs to Yahweh. Every dedicated being (*ḥērem*) who has been dedicated (*yohōram*) from among humanity shall not be ransomed (*yippādē*); he will certainly be executed.

Num 18:14 (Priestly Corpus)²²⁹

Everything dedicated (*ḥērem*) in Israel will belong to you [to Aaron and his descendents].

Ezek 44:29

The grain-offering, the sin-offering, and the guilt-offering they will eat and everything dedicated (*ḥērem*) in Israel will belong to them [to the priests].

Here, it is clear that *ḥērem* primarily connotes dedication. This is evinced by the qualification in Lev 27 that those things under *ḥērem* were set apart (*qōdes̄ qādāsīm*) to Yahweh. Certainly, if priests, the earthly custodians of Yahweh's possessions, could take ownership of that which was dedicated to Yahweh, not everything consecrated was intended for destruction. As far as living beings were concerned, however, the act of dedication was to end ultimately in the individual's death (Lev. 27:29; cf. Deut 20).²³⁰ Thus, the *ḥērem* of an inanimate object should be understood as an offering to a deity, which may or may not result in the object's destruction,²³¹ whereas the *ḥērem* of a living being should be viewed as a sacrifice.²³² The demarcation between the two types of

²²⁸ The book of Leviticus is written from the Priestly perspective (see Soggin 1989: 161; Levine 1989: xxviii).

²²⁹ Cf. Van Seters (1999: 206-09) on Num 18, the function of the Priestly Code, and the Priestly writer.

²³⁰ Deut 20:16-17, a passage on the rules of warfare, states: "Just from among the cities of these people which Yahweh, your God, is giving to you as an inheritance, you can not allow any breathing thing to live; indeed, you shall fully dedicate them (*hahārēm + tahārīmēm*): the Hittite, Amorite, Canaanite, Perizzite, Hivite, and Jebusite, just as Yahweh, your God, has ordered you."

²³¹ Objects dedicated in the fulfillment of *ḥērem* could be devoted to Yahweh's sanctuary (Josh 6:19) or destroyed (Deut 13:17). The extent to which objects were destroyed or devoted depends upon the particular *ḥērem* pronounced in the various passages.

²³² According to Weinfeld, *ḥērem*-warfare should be viewed as human sacrifice but in the sense of an infrequent practice rather than an established institution (Weinfeld 1972: 134). Recently, Collins described *ḥērem* as human immolation as well (2004: 13-17).

ḥērem-dedications is expressed in the war narratives as well. For example, Josh 6:17-19 and 21 state:

“The city [Jericho] shall be dedicated (*ḥērem*); it and everything in it shall be Yahweh’s possession; just Rahab, the prostitute, shall live as well as everyone with her in the house for the reason that she concealed the messengers whom we sent forth. Only, you shall show restraint regarding that which is dedicated (*min ḥahḥērem*), lest you perform the dedication (*taḥārīmū*) but take from that which is dedicated (*min ḥahḥērem*); and thereby place the camp of Israel under dedication (*lēḥērem*) and cause it problems. Everything silver and gold, as well as the vessels of bronze or iron shall be set apart (*qōḏeš*) for Yahweh; they shall be brought into the treasury of Yahweh”... They dedicated (*wayyahārīmū*) by sword’s edge all who were in the city from man to woman, youth to elder, bovine to sheep to ass.

Failure to fulfill the obligations of *ḥērem* could potentially result in serious consequences, as Josh 6-7 goes on to record. There, one reads of the breaking of the *ḥērem* by Achan—he took from the objects devoted to Yahweh and buried them in his tent. This resulted in the people of Ai defeating the Israelites not merely because Yahweh was angry (*ḥārā ‘ap/ḥārōn ‘ap*; Josh 7:1, 26) with his people over the actions of Achan but because the Israelites had become dedicated as *ḥērem* themselves (Josh 7:12; 6:18; cf. Deut 7:26). The metaphysical properties of the *ḥērem* were transferred to the entire Israelite camp, not just Achan, inasmuch as they did not perform the dedication of Jericho appropriately.²³³ To be released from the *ḥērem*, it was necessary for the children of Israel to complete the *ḥērem* on Jericho by removing the dedicated objects from their midst (Josh 7:12-13). Once the Israelites discovered that Achan was the perpetrator, they took the items dedicated to Yahweh from under Achan’s tent, presented them to Yahweh, and then proceeded with the stoning and burning of Achan and his household.

Subsequently, the Israelites were victorious again. It is essential to keep in mind that the

²³³ An additional Deuteronomistic text dealing with the matter of unresolved *ḥērem* is 1 Kgs 20, a story about Ahab’s failure to fulfill the *ḥērem* pronounced against Ben-hadad and his army. Instead of slaying Ben-hadad in the midst of a campaign, Ahab grants him clemency and enters into a covenant with him. The result, according to Yahweh: “For the reason that you have sent away the man dedicated to me (*‘iṣ ḥermī*), your life-force (*népēs*) shall take the place of his life-force (*népēs*) and your people shall take the place of his people” (1 Kgs 20:42b). Again, the transference of the metaphysical properties of unfulfilled *ḥērem* is encountered.

death of Achan and his family (including his children) is not a case of *ḥērem*-dedication; the requirements of the *ḥērem* pronounced against Jericho were fulfilled once the dedicated objects were poured out before Yahweh (Josh 7:23). Achan and his household were executed because Achan's actions were an offense against Yahweh's covenant and were seen as lewd/disgraceful (Josh 7:15).²³⁴ The word utilized to denote the latter is *neḥālā*, which appears in an additional Deuteronomistic text to describe the misdeeds of a woman who engages in illicit intercourse (Deut 22:20-21). Like Achan, she was to be removed from the Israelite community via public execution in the form of stoning. Her death would literally burn up the evil/calamity (*ūḇi 'artā ḥārā'*) from among Israel. The implications for Achan's death are the same.

An additional portrayal of the penalty meted out for not upholding the *ḥērem* is found in 1 Sam 15. Here, Saul lost Yahweh's blessing upon his kingship as a result of not following the prescriptions of *ḥērem* exactly. He was to dedicate to Yahweh *on the battlefield* everything belonging to the Amalekites with specific instructions "not to spare them but to kill everyone from man to woman, **child to infant**, cattle to sheep, camel to donkey" (1 Sam 15:3). Yet, Saul and those with him brought back to Gilgal Agag, the Amalekite ruler, as well as the finest of the belongings of the Amalekites. The remainder of the worthless things and the other Amalekites they did destroy. When Samuel arrived

²³⁴ Kaminsky reached dissimilar conclusions in his discussion of Josh 7, particularly regarding the role of *ḥērem* in Achan's death, that is to say, Achan and his family were executed because the properties of the objects placed under the *ḥērem* transferred to Achan through his theft. Hence, he, his loved ones, and property were destroyed because of their contamination (Kaminsky 1995: 345; cf. discussions in Greenberg 1976: 31; Jackson 1972: 61-62; Phillips 1970: 40; Porter 1965: 371-72).

on the scene he reprimanded Saul and “hacked (?)²³⁵ Agag to pieces in the presence of Yahweh at Gilgal” (1 Sam 15:33b) in order to complete the *ḥērem*.

Despite the differences in the penalties imposed upon Achan and Saul in each story,²³⁶ both accounts share a common perspective on the need to fully abide by the laws of *ḥērem*-warfare, even if it necessitated a delayed conclusion to the *ḥērem* by finishing the dedication subsequent to battle. Thus, the objects stolen by Achan were eventually presented to Yahweh (Josh 7:23) and Agag was killed, as de Vaux intimated, for the purpose of fulfilling the *ḥērem* commanded against the Amalekites (1 Sam 15:3). Nevertheless, according to him, Agag’s death was not an instance of human sacrifice inasmuch as the “execution of prisoners of war cannot be looked upon as a sacrifice: it is the carrying out of a *ḥērem* or anathema which is a principle of the holy war even if the execution is done ‘before Yahweh’” (de Vaux 1964: 64; cf. Thompson 1963: 111, n. 1; Noort 2002: 13). Green, too, dismissed the significance of the phrase *lip̄nē* Yahweh (in the presence of/before Yahweh) and interpreted Agag’s slaying as simply the implementation of the *ḥērem* against the Amalekites (Green 1975: 164).²³⁷ Surely, Agag’s death was determined by the laws of *ḥērem* but we must not disregard the

²³⁵ Unfortunately, this is the only occurrence of the enigmatic root *š-s-p* in biblical Hebrew. The word certainly indicates that Samuel killed Agag in light of the statement in vs. 33 that Agag’s mother will become childless.

²³⁶ It is arguable that the divergent penalties are a result of two distinct kinds of failure. Achan forfeited his life because he overtly disregarded the *ḥērem* and had no intention of fulfilling it. Yet, in Saul’s case, the people sought to complete the *ḥērem*-sacrifice by bringing back animals to Gilgal in order to perform immolations of the finest of the *ḥērem* entities, first-fruit sacrifices, so the speak (cf. *rē(‘)šū* in 1 Sam 15:21). For the Deuteronomists, the Saul episode might have served as an excellent educational opportunity to teach the reader that *ḥērem*-sacrifice during warfare should be fulfilled while on campaign.

²³⁷ To his credit, however, Green did consider Agag a sacrificial victim given that his slaying was a ritualized killing dictated by *ḥērem*—*ḥērem*, for him, was “a ritual execution before the god” (Green 1975: 164). Green, moreover, viewed ritualized killings as human immolations (Green 1975: 17, 168), but the presence of ritualized actions is not a sufficient criterion for deducing the existence of human sacrifice inasmuch as all ritualized killings do not attempt to affect the suprahuman realm (cf. chapter one). Therefore, while I might agree with Green’s basic supposition to see in Agag’s death the presence of human immolation, I do so for divergent reasons.

location of its fulfillment: Yahweh's presence. Killing Agag before Yahweh only solidifies the notion that *ḥērem* was a sacrificial act. What is more, it is precisely *lipnē* Yahweh that the objects of *ḥērem* stolen by Achan were poured out (Josh 7:23). In both instances, then, the Deuteronomistic traditions suggest that (1) *ḥērem*-dedication in the context of warfare should be fully accomplished during the military campaign commanded by Yahweh, that (2) failure to implement the *ḥērem* exactly would result in severe consequences, and that (3) the *ḥērem* could be completed subsequent to battle at a Yahwistic cultic site. The latter, however, was meant to be a fail-safe should someone fall short of carrying out the instructions of a specific *ḥērem*.

That *ḥērem* was an act of sacrifice is further illustrated by a passage from the book of Isaiah:

Isa 34:5-7

For it is intoxicated (*riwwēṭā*),
 My sword in the heavens;
 Upon Edom it has descended,
 And so has my *ḥērem* on the people for judgment.
 The sword of Yahweh is full of blood,
 It has made itself obese from fat,
 From the blood of rams and male goats,
 From the fat of rams' kidneys;
 For a sacrifice (*zeḥaḥ*) to Yahweh in Boṣrah,
 And a great slaughter (*teḥaḥ*) in the land of Edom.
 Oxen have descended with them,
 And bulls with the mighty;
 Their land has become intoxicated from blood,
 And their dust has been made obese from fat.

This is perhaps the most explicit reference to *ḥērem*-warfare as immolation: the slaying of humans and animals in the context of Yahweh's *ḥērem* is clearly described as a sacrifice of unspecified type (*zeḥaḥ*) to him. The text, moreover, expresses that *ḥērem* was an act of judgment²³⁸ and according to Deut 7:1-11 and 20:16-18, killing individuals

²³⁸ For additional references to *ḥērem* as an act of judgment, see Ezr 10:8 and Jer 25:9.

under the banner of *ḥērem* was a method of keeping the nation of Israel pure,²³⁹ that is, untainted by the apostasies of the inhabitants of Canaan. 1 Sam 15:18 even specifies that Saul was to “dedicate by *ḥērem* the sinners (*hahḥaṭṭā’îm*), that is, the Amalekites.” Ex 22:19 [Eng 22:20], part of the Covenant Code and connected to the Yahwist in its current form,²⁴⁰ similarly suggests that *ḥērem* was an important means of ridding the Israelite community of those individuals deemed “heretical”, even if the person were among the descendents of Jacob: “The one who sacrifices to the deities but not to Yahweh alone, must be dedicated by *ḥērem* (*yohōrām*).” The entirety of Deut 13 is likewise devoted to the topic of eradicating those Israelites who seek to lead others astray in going after other deities. The slaying of an inappropriate seer, for instance, is described as an attempt to burn up/eradicate the evil/calamity (*ûbi’artā hārā’*) from among Israel (Deut 13:6 [13:5]). More important to our current discussion, though, is the use of *ḥērem* to achieve the same result in the event that an entire city follows after other deities:

Deut 13:16-17 [Eng 13:15-16]

You shall thoroughly strike (*hakkē takkē*) the residents of that city by the edge of the sword; dedicate (*hahārēm*) it, all who are in it, and its livestock by the edge of the sword. All its plunder you shall gather to the midst of its plaza and you shall burn with fire (*wēs’arqītā ḥā’ēs*) the city and all its plunder, a complete-sacrifice to Yahweh (*kālîl layhwāh*), your god; it will be a perpetual ruin; it will not be built again.

kālîl layhwāh (a complete-sacrifice to Yahweh) only appears elsewhere in the Hebrew Bible in 1 Sam 7:9, where it is placed in apposition to the burnt-sacrifice (‘*ōlā*) of a lamb, thereby indicating that *kālîl* and ‘*ōlā* are synonymous sacrificial terms.²⁴¹ The use of *kālîl* to modify *ḥērem* in Deut 13:17 provides additional support for the notion that *ḥērem* denotes immolation. Niditch described this verse as “the most literal reference to the ban

²³⁹ Deut 7:6 explicitly discusses Israel’s holy stature (*qāḏōš*) in the midst of a passage devoted to a description of eradicating illicit cultic practices as well as the individuals (the inhabitants of Canaan) who perform them. Cf. Deut 7:2 for the reference to *ḥērem*.

²⁴⁰ See the treatment of the Covenant Code below.

²⁴¹ Following Brown, Driver, and Briggs (1952: 483).

as sacrifice” (1993: 63).²⁴² Nelson, conversely, espoused the opinion that the presence of *kālîl* in Deut 13:17 and *zēbah* in Isa 34:5-7 (discussed above) should be taken metaphorically and not as signifying the sacrificial connotations of *ḥērem*. For him, moreover:

ḥerem was not sacrifice. It involved no altar and no shrine. The foundational notion in sacrifice is a transfer in ownership from human possession to divine possession. But for the animals and humans involved, *ḥerem* entailed no transfer to the heavenly world by means of burning. What was *ḥerem* was killed or destroyed in order to render it unusable to humans, not to transfer its ownership. Burning was used only for inanimate items, and again only in order to make them unavailable for human use. The logic of *ḥerem* meant that no sacrificial transfer could be conceived of, because anything in the *ḥerem* state was already in the possession of Yahweh as spoil of war or by some other means. To sacrifice *ḥerem* would be to try to derive a human benefit from it. This is the (*sic*) precisely the problem behind Saul’s lapse in 1 Sam 15. The people had spared for sacrifice what was already explicitly in the *ḥerem* state... One cannot sacrifice to Yahweh what is already his (Nelson 1997: 47-48).

In summary, *ḥerem* may be defined a (*sic*) “the state of inalienable Yahweh ownership” and “an entity in the state of inalienable Yahweh ownership”. The verb signifies “to transfer an entity into the *ḥerem* state” and “to deal with an entity in a way required by its *ḥerem* state”, usually by killing or destroying it (Nelson 1997: 44-45).

The primary difficulty with Nelson’s approach is the attempt to create too fine a distinction between the roles of sacrifice and *ḥērem*, leading him to a contradiction in logic, for, on the one hand, the performance of sacrifice was described in the above quote as primarily “a transfer in ownership from human possession to divine possession”; whereas, on the other, the act of *ḥērem* was defined, in part, as “to transfer an entity into the *ḥerem* state,” that is, “the state of inalienable Yahweh ownership.” To phrase it more succinctly, Nelson classified the verbal notion of *ḥērem* as the transference of some entity into Yahweh ownership, which is exactly the quintessence of sacrifice according to his perspective. Although one need not limit sacrifice to the transference of a victim to

²⁴² My own perception of *ḥērem* had been formed for some time prior to turning to Niditch’s work on Israelite war narratives. By happenstance, there is a fundamental correspondence between our two perspectives concerning the sacrificial function of biblical *ḥērem* (Niditch 1993: 28-55). We primarily differ, however, on what Niditch described as the non-sacrificial understanding of *ḥērem* (the so-called “ban as God’s justice” view) introduced into the Hebrew Bible by the Deuteronomists (Niditch 1993: 49, 56-77). *ḥērem* as justice and *ḥērem* as immolation are not contradictory trajectories, as Niditch supposed; rather, *ḥērem* functions in the biblical texts as a sacrifice or offering performed for the express purpose of judging unlawful practices.

divine ownership (nor further confine sacrifice to a process of burning),²⁴³ *ḥērem* did involve the notion of dedicating individuals, objects, and animals to Yahweh. This is one of the closest points of correspondence between our two views; yet, according to my own perception, *ḥērem* was more of a process than Nelson allowed. Whereas he suggested that individuals must be killed in order to render them unusable for human exploitation, given that they had already been transferred to Yahweh's ownership, I would counter that they must be killed in order to complete the process of dedication to Yahweh. Thus, one encounters in martial contexts the notion that the Israelites performed the *ḥērem* by means of the edge of the sword (Deut 13:16 [15], Josh 6:21, 1 Sam 15:8). Furthermore, while it is unnecessary to restrict immolation solely to the accomplishment of a slaying upon an altar or at a shrine (cf. Deut 21:1-9), 1 Sam 15:33 and Josh 7:23 do locate the observance of *ḥērem* at Yahwistic cultic sites.

At its core, therefore, *ḥērem*-dedication is presented in the Hebrew Bible as a sacrifice (living beings) or an offering (objects) performed in judgment of spiritual offenses, but it is particularly the Deuteronomists who viewed *ḥērem*-sacrifice as a necessary means of eradicating those individuals, as well as their abominations,²⁴⁴ who threatened the purity of the Israelite community. Sacrifice as a form of capital punishment appears in several additional passages, primarily in regards to the killing of adults.

²⁴³ Burning was certainly an important feature of the Israelite cult; it even appears in the context of the practice of *ḥērem* (cf. Deut 13:17; Josh 6:24; 11:11), but fire was not the sole means by which Israelite immolations were conducted. Deut 21:1-9, for example, portrays the sacrifice of a heifer for the purpose of atoning for innocent blood. Nothing involving fire is mentioned here.

²⁴⁴ On the need to perform *ḥērem* in the face of abominations, see Deut 20:16-18; 13:13-19; 7:22-26.

4.1.2. *bā'ar* and *kāpār*

The quintessential biblical concept of capital punishment is laid out in Ex 21:12ff. and Lev 24:17ff. with the establishment of the principle of equal retribution for harm inflicted against humans, i.e., a life-force for a life-force, an eye for an eye, etc., whereas in Gen 9:6 we read that “the one who pours out the blood of a human, will by a human have his blood poured out because in the image of Elohim he fashioned humankind.” Still, Num 35:29-34 (Priestly corpus)²⁴⁵ gives yet another justification for the need to execute a murderer: the blood of the victim has the potential to pollute the land²⁴⁶ which the Israelites and Yahweh were to inhabit; this contamination could only be removed by the blood of the murderer. While Deut 19 ends with a reference to the principle of an eye for an eye, the core of the chapter parallels the content of Num 35 in terms of its focus on cities of refuge and the need to nullify the effects of shed blood. Thus, in its treatment concerning the execution of those who spill innocent blood, the chapter states that the Israelites must “eradicate (lit. burn up; *ūbī'artā*) the innocent blood (*dam hannāqī*) from Israel [by killing the murderer] in order that it would be good” for them (Deut 19:13). Should the murderer be unknown, Deut 21:1-9 suggests that freedom from the consequences of spilling innocent blood could be achieved through the slaying of a heifer and the washing of hands by the elders of the city closest to the killing. The language utilized for the extraction of the contamination caused by murder in both Num 35:33 and Deut 21:8, *kāpār* (lit. to cover), is similarly used elsewhere in the Hebrew Bible, most notably in terms of the atonement of sin [cf. Num 15:22-31 (also Priestly);²⁴⁷ 1 Sam 3:14

²⁴⁵ Num 35 is typically recognized as part of the Priestly corpus (see discussions in Davies 1995: 353; Soggin 1989:161).

²⁴⁶ Cf. Ps 106:38 and child sacrifice.

²⁴⁷ See Davies (1995: 149).

(Deuteronomistic)]. In short, the primary focus of capital punishment as presented in Numbers 35 and Deuteronomy 19 and 21 is on rectifying a situation at the suprahuman level (i.e., removing contamination), whereas the references to equal retribution for harm done against others (a life-force for a life-force) as portrayed in Deut 19 and Lev 24:17ff (Priestly) are chiefly concerned with the intrahuman consequences of murder (i.e., avenging the loss of life). Given the appearance of both the intrahuman effects and the suprahuman consequences of capital punishment in the Priestly and Deuteronomistic collections, capital punishment for these authors served to correct the problems at both levels.

2 Sam 21 provides a narrative account of the concepts thus far explored.²⁴⁸ Here, we come across the story of David's attempt to rectify (*kāpār*, lit. to atone for) the situation brought about by his predecessor: a famine ravaged David's kingdom because Saul had inappropriately spilled the blood of the Gibeonites. Upon discovering that this was the impetus for the famine, David consulted with the Gibeonites in an attempt to ascertain a solution to the problem. The Gibeonites then informed David that they wished to kill seven of Saul's descendents at his former town, Gibeah. David acquiesced and allowed the Gibeonites to execute these men by disarticulation before (*lipnê*) Yahweh (2 Sam 21:9). The verb *yāqa'* (to disarticulate/detach) appears twice in this passage in the *hiphil* (to cause disarticulation/detachment);²⁴⁹ the first occurrence is in verse 6, where the Gibeonites asked David to grant them the seven descendents so that

²⁴⁸ An alternative perspective was advanced by Greenberg; that is, Saul's actions were viewed as wrong since he went against an oath undertaken in the name of Yahweh (Josh 9:18-19); therefore, this situation was not merely a simple case of criminal justice (Greenberg 1976: 31).

²⁴⁹ Following de Vaux, who opted to read the *hiphil* in a similar fashion to the *qal*, which is seen in Gen 32:26 [Eng 32:25] where it describes Jacob's hip as becoming dislocated, by translating it as to dismember or dislocate (de Vaux 1964: 62 and n. 48).

they might *yāqa* ‘ them to (*l*-) Yahweh. Here, the preposition *l*- is present instead of the *lip̄nē* in vs. 9 when the slaying was performed. The *hiphil* of *yāqa* ‘ plus the preposition *l*- is also found in Num 25:4, currently part of a Priestly narrative;²⁵⁰ in this case the anger of Yahweh was provoked by the Israelites prostituting themselves after the Moabites and their deity, Baal-Peor. Yahweh specifically commanded Moses to “seize all the leaders (lit. heads)²⁵¹ of the people and execute them by disarticulation unto (*l*-) Yahweh in front of the sun²⁵² in order that the heat of the anger (*ḥārōn ’ap̄*) of Yahweh might turn back from Israel.” Hence, when this verb appears in the *hiphil* it is always accompanied by *l*- or *lip̄nē* Yahweh, thereby indicating that the *hiphil* of *yāqa* ‘ is a sacrificial term denoting a form of execution performed in Yahweh’s presence or, literally, to him. Indeed, it was in the presence (*lip̄nē*) of Yahweh that Samuel sacrificed Agag in fulfillment of the *ḥērem* against the Amalekites (1 Sam 15:33). The implication is that sacrificing an individual in the presence of Yahweh was an act performed at a Yahwistic sanctuary or in front of a mobile representation of him such as the Ark of the Covenant.

Unexpectedly, as Num 25 continues, it is not the sacrifice of the apostate Baal-Peor worshippers that turns aside Yahweh’s anger (the passage does not even state that

²⁵⁰ The verses in Num 25 that are important to our current study have been interpreted as comprising two distinct compositional units: 25:1-5 and 25:6-18. The latter is regarded as the work of the Priestly writer (Davies 1995: 284). The second of the two stories was also assigned by Snaith to P, but the first narrative was attributed to the Yahwist and the Elohist (1962: 265). That the Yahwist was responsible for one story and the Priestly author the other was espoused by Hackett as well (1987: 126-27, 135 n. 9). As Noth indicated, 25:1-5 is not a self-contained unit and 25:6ff is built upon what transpires in 25:1-5. It would be difficult, then, to speak of an independent Yahwist narrative (Noth 1968: 195-96). It is possible to read Num 25:1-18 as a cohesive unit (Milgrom 1989: 476), perhaps a collection of divergent sources by a single writer. Given the feasibility that the bulk of Num 25:1-18 is connected to the Priestly traditions, it is acceptable to take (at least, tentatively) all the verses as an integral part of the Priestly narrative while keeping in mind the possibility that a Priestly writer might have incorporated a Yahwist narrative into the current version of Num 25.

²⁵¹ Or, as Green translated, “take all the heads of the people and *hōqa* ‘ them to Yahweh” (1975: 165).

²⁵² “before the sun” might mean that the action should take place in public; the concept of public exposure is in view when the phrase appears in 2 Sam 12:12 (Friedman 2001: 512-13). Cf. the *NASB*’s rendering: “in broad daylight”.

the apostates were killed); instead, it is the zealousness of Phinehas that accomplishes this end. When Phinehas killed an Israelite man having sex with a Midianite woman (the very image of physical and spiritual harlotry), we are told that a plague, which had caused 24,000 deaths, came to an end. Yahweh then stated that Phinehas' deeds removed his anger (*hēmā*) from wiping out the Israelites. What is more, the text states that Phinehas literally "atoned (*yeḱappēr*) for the sons of Israel" (Num 25: 13) by slaying the two individuals. Since their deaths brought about suprahuman responses (atonement, cessation of a plague, removal of divine anger), the man and woman should be considered sacrificial victims.

The post-exilic²⁵³ story of Jonah should also be read in a similar light given that the (attempted) slaying of Jonah placates Yahweh's anger. In the early stages of the account, the sailors sought to determine the person responsible for the terrible storm that threatened to tear their ship apart and once it was discovered that Jonah had caused the problem by fleeing from Yahweh's presence, they pressed Jonah for a solution to the calamity, just as David had done with the Gibeonites. Jonah responded that they should lift him up and cast him into the sea and the storm would cease (Jon 1:12). There is here a play on words in the response of Jonah since *tūl* (to throw) is used throughout chapter 1 in verses 4, 5, 12, and 15. While this wordplay was discussed by Limburg as one of the rhetorical devices of the author (Limburg 1993: 48), Good went further to suggest that *tūl* might have been repeated in the narrative as a means of portraying sympathetic magic; that is, just as Yahweh threw the storm upon the sea, Jonah being thrown by the sailors

²⁵³ The Aramaisms in the book signify the late date for the composition of the book (Soggin 1989: 416). One such example is *ṭa'am* (decree) in Jon 3:7 (see Brown, Drivers, Briggs 1952: 381). On the difficulties of dating Jonah, consult Sasson as well (1990).

could counter the calamitous storm (Good 1965: 45),²⁵⁴ this notion found approval by Freedman (communicated by Sasson 1990: 125) but it does not capture the thrust of the narrative. Rather, the passage embodies the biblical motif that Yahweh's anger could be appeased by means of sacrificial punishment. Jonah was guilty and deserved to die. The audience would have recognized this. Indeed, from their point-of-view Jonah did die in order to stop the storm. The sailors believed that their actions would bring about his death since they prayed to Yahweh for absolution just in case Jonah was innocent: "do not count against us innocent blood (*dām nāqī'*)"; Jon 1:14). The sacrifice worked and the sea became calm.²⁵⁵ Though Yahweh had different plans for Jonah than to let him drown, the audience would not find this out until chapter 2. Hence, one could call Jonah's death an attempted sacrifice at sea. It is definitely portrayed as more substantial than what Simon called "passive suicide" (Simon 1999: 13).

Continuing along these lines, Deut 22:20-21 has already been noted for its portrayal of the need to kill a sexual deviant in order to burn up/eradicate the evil (*ūḥi 'artā hārā'*) from the midst of the Israelite community. This is a common theme in the Deuteronomistic texts, not only concerning those engaging in unlawful sexual intercourse (Deut 22:22, 24; Judg 20:13) but also regarding those who disobey legal decisions (Deut 17:12), rebel against parents (Deut 21:21), kidnap a fellow Israelite (Deut

²⁵⁴ According to Sasson, the sailors threw their cargo *to* the sea in verse 5 as a means of placating it and not merely for lightening the ship; an assumption based upon the use of *tūl* with the preposition *'el*, which he took as indicating intent, instead of *'al*, which shows direction (Sasson 1990: 93-94). Tribble presented a similar understanding of this verse since *lēhāqēl* (to lighten) does not have a clear object. The closest antecedent is the sea; thus, the sailors tried to lighten up the sea through offering their possessions to it (Tribble 1994: 136). Bolin, conversely, rejected Sasson's perspective given that *tūl* plus *'el* only occurs in Jon 1 and since it can be demonstrated from the nautical story of Achilles Tatius that an attempt was made to lighten a ship even after praying to deities (Bolin 1997: 80). On Mediterranean maritime rituals practiced at sea, consult Brody (1998: 81-83). He provided a few brief references to possible instances of human immolation and sailing from the Punic world.

²⁵⁵ As Sasson opined, although the sea is personified in this passage, the narrative clearly shows that Yahweh is in control of the storm (Sasson 1990: 137).

24:7), or worship other deities (Deut 13:6; 17:7). Slaying spiritual apostates reappears at the climax of the Deuteronomistic History concerning the Josianic reforms.²⁵⁶ Here, we find one of the most straightforward references to human sacrifice as an acceptable practice within Deuteronomistic Yahwism. This is perhaps the reason why so many translations gloss over the actual wording of the passage by replacing the word “sacrifice” with a less distressing word like “slaughter” or “slay” (cf. *NASB, KJV, RSV*, etc.). The verse in question is 2 Kgs 23:20 (cf. 1 Kgs 13:2): “He [Josiah] sacrificed (*wayyizbah*)²⁵⁷ all the priests of the high places who were there on the altars and he burned (*wayyisrōp*) human bones on them; afterwards he went back to Jerusalem.” Despite these actions to purify his kingdom and Josiah’s other reforms, such as eradicating (*bi’ēr*) idolatry (2 Kgs 23:24), the kingdom of Judah did not survive due to Yahweh’s continued anger regarding the misdeeds of Manasseh (2 Kgs 23:26-27). After all, it was Manasseh, a notorious child immolator (2 Kgs 21:6), who had spilled much innocent blood in Jerusalem (2 Kgs 24:3-4).

²⁵⁶ My attention was first drawn to Josiah’s sacrificial actions by a discussion in Gras, Rouillard and Teixidor (1991).

²⁵⁷ This verb also appears in a reference to human immolation in Hosea 13:2. Here, in a passage concerning the idolatrous practices of Ephraim (i.e., the northern kingdom), reference is made to the sacrificers of men (m. pl. participle of *zbh* in construct with *’ādām*, objective genitive). While a straightforward reading of this phrase is best (i.e., that it indicates human immolation; cf. Wolff 1974: 219, 225; Andersen and Freedman 1980: 624, 632), one notes a hesitancy by some to acknowledge this as indicative of human sacrifice (cf. de Vaux 1964: 68). The JPS’ *Tanakh*, for instance, translates: “Yet for these they appoint men to sacrifice”; and notes: “*Meaning of Heb. uncertain*” (emphasis theirs). See Isa 66:3 for a similar reference to adult sacrifice within the confines of idolatry (cf. Sasson 1976; de Vaux 1964: 69, both of whom accepted this as a passage about human immolation).

4.1.3. Summation

A brief examination of the words *ḥērem*, *bā'ar* and *kāp̄ar* has illustrated that while several biblical authors sought to persuade the descendants of Jacob to cease sacrificing their heirs (cf. 4.2.), several passages, especially from the Deuteronomistic and Priestly traditions (both are post-586 BCE), actually promote the concept that “heretics” (sinful Israelites) and “heathens” (immoral foreigners), both adults and children, merited sacrificial punishment in order to purify the Israelite community, as well as their land, and to uphold the holiness of Yahweh. Several types of individuals are specifically singled out as meriting death, particularly sexual deviants, spiritual adulterers, and murderers. The method of sacrifice took many forms in the narratives: *ḥērem*-dedication, burning, stoning, disarticulation, drowning, spearing, and in one passage, literally death on an altar (2 Kgs 23). Lev 20 is the perfect combination of the issues treated in this dissertation chapter. Therein, we read of the apostate *mōteḳ* follower (1-5), the one who curses his parents (9), those who practice various forms of illicit sex (10-21), and more. The pervasive theme throughout Lev 20 is that such people should typically die in order to uphold the standard of holiness to which Yahweh has called his people. What is more, failure to maintain the appropriate level of sanctity would result in the land of Canaan vomiting out the Israelites (Lev 20:22). The message is clear: deviants must be killed in order to maintain divine blessing; in other words, human slayings must be performed in order to bring about a positive suprahuman response.

4.2. *'ōlâ*

Several potential cases of child²⁵⁸ sacrifice (Gen 22, Judg 11, 2 Kgs 3, and Jer 19) are described in the biblical texts as *'ōlōt* (burnt-sacrifices), a word which frequently appears in the singular or plural to denote the sacrifice of animals as well (cf. Gen 8:20; Num 15:8; 1 Sam 6:14). *'ōlâ* is a well-established sacrificial term which symbolizes the ascension of the sacrificial victim into the heavens via the actual smoke of the fire—the concept of ascension is beautifully portrayed in Judg 13:15-23, wherein the angel of Yahweh goes up to the heavens by means of the flames of an *'ōlâ*. In this passage, the animal and grain burnt-sacrifice is performed as an acknowledgment of Yahweh's promised provision of a son. Elsewhere, we see that *'ōlōt* are primarily carried out to atone for impurity, to entreat Yahweh, and to fulfill vows. These separate categories are not mutually exclusive, however:

Entreaty1 Sam 7:3-10

Samuel declared to the entire house of Israel, saying, "If you return to Yahweh with all your hearts, remove the foreign deities from your midst as well as the Ashtarot, set your hearts firmly to Yahweh and serve him alone, then he will snatch you up from the hand of the Philistines." Thus, the Israelites removed the Baalim and the Ashtarot and served Yahweh alone. Samuel then stated, "Gather together all Israel to Mizpah so that I might pray on your behalf to Yahweh." Hence, they were gathered together to Mizpah; they drew water and poured (it) out as a libation before Yahweh and fasted that day; then they said there, "We have performed iniquity against Yahweh." So, Samuel judged the Israelites at Mizpah. As soon as the Philistines heard that the Israelites had assembled at Mizpah, the Philistine leaders went up to Israel; but as soon as the Israelites heard, they became afraid from before the Philistines. Then the Israelites spoke to Samuel, "Do not be silent concerning us in crying out to Yahweh, our god, so that he might deliver us from the hand of the Philistines." Thereafter Samuel took one nursing lamb and sent it up as a burnt-sacrifice (*'ōlâ*), that is, a complete-sacrifice (*kalîl*)²⁵⁹ to Yahweh and Samuel cried out to Yahweh on Israel's behalf; thus, Yahweh answered him. As Samuel was sending up the burnt-sacrifice (*hā'ōlâ*), the Philistines approached to battle against Israel; however, Yahweh caused it to thunder with a great noise on that day against the Philistines and he disoriented them; hence, they were stricken before Israel.

²⁵⁸ While "children" are often described as the victims of immolation, the focus is upon the victim's relationship to his/her parents and the exact age is not generally identified in the biblical texts. It is possible that child immolation could even refer to sons and daughters who are technically beyond their childhood years, as Andersen and Freedman have intimated (2000: 532-33).

²⁵⁹ Following Brown, Driver, Briggs (1952: 483); cf. discussion above concerning Deut 13:17 and *hērem*.

1 Sam 13:12

Then I thought, “Now the Philistines will come down to me at Gilgal but the face of Yahweh I have not entreated”; thus, I composed myself and I sent up the burnt-sacrifice (*hā’ōlā*).

2 Sam 24:17,25

David said to Yahweh at the moment he noticed the envoy who was smiting the people, “I sinned and I performed iniquity but these are sheep—what did they do? May your hand be against me and against the house of my father”...David erected an altar to Yahweh there and sent up burnt-sacrifices (*’ōlōy*) and well-being offerings; therefore, Yahweh was supplicated concerning the land and the plague was restrained from against Israel.

VowsLev 22:18-19

Talk to Aaron, his sons, and all the Israelites and tell them, “Any person from the house of Israel or from the sojourners in Israel who brings near his offering (*qorbānō*) for each of their vows or their free-will offerings, which they bring near to Yahweh for a burnt-sacrifice (*lě’ōlā*), for your approval, must be a perfect male among cattle, sheep, or goats.”

Num 15:3 (cf. vs. 8)

and you perform a fire sacrifice (*’iššē*) to Yahweh, whether a burnt-sacrifice (*’ōlā*) or a sacrifice (*zēbah*), to complete an extraordinary vow or as a voluntary offering or as part of your appointed festivities in order to make a pleasing aroma to Yahweh from the cattle or the flock,

Ps 66:13-15

I will come to your temple with burnt-sacrifices (*bē’ōlōy*),
 I will complete to you my vows;
 That which my lips stated,
 And my mouth declared in the midst of my distress;
 Burnt-sacrifices (*’ōlōy*) of fatlings I will send up to you,
 With the burning of rams;
 I will do to cattle *likewise*,
 With goats.

Atonement and PurityLev 12:6-8

At the fulfillment of the days of her purification for a son or a daughter, she shall bring a year-old male lamb for a burnt-sacrifice (*lě’ōlā*) and a young dove or turtle-dove for a sin sacrifice to the opening of the Tent of Meeting to the priest. He shall bring it near before Yahweh and perform the atonement (*wēkipper*) on her behalf and she will be purified from the flow of her blood; this is the teaching concerning the one who gives birth to the male or female. Yet, if she lacks the means to obtain a lamb, she shall take two turtle-doves or two young doves, one for a burnt-sacrifice (*lě’ōlā*) and one for a sin sacrifice, and the priest shall perform the atonement (*wēkipper*) on her behalf, then she will be pure.

Num 6:8-11

All the days of his Nazirite vow, he shall be set apart to Yahweh. Yet, in the event that someone dies unexpectedly in his vicinity, his Nazirite head shall become unclean and he shall shave his head on the day of his purification, that is, on the seventh day he shall shave it. Later, on the eighth day he shall bring two turtle-doves or two young doves to the priest to the opening of the

Tent of Meeting. The priest shall perform the one as a sin sacrifice and the other as a burnt-sacrifice (*lě'ōlā*), he shall perform atonement (*wēkipper*) on his behalf from the sin he committed concerning the life-force (*hannāpēs*; i.e., the one who dies unexpectedly), and he shall set apart his head on that day (in other words, return to his Nazirite vow and grow out his hair).

Job 1:4-5

His sons consistently went around feasting at the house of each one according to his time and they would send for and call their three sisters to eat and drink with them. It would happen that when the days of each feast would come to a close, Job would send (for them) and sanctify them; he would get up early in the morning and send up burnt-sacrifices (*'ōlōt*) corresponding to their total number inasmuch as Job thought, "Maybe my children have acted sinfully and cursed²⁶⁰ Elohim in their hearts." Job would do thusly all the time.

Keeping in mind the various ways in which animal burnt-sacrifices are presented in these texts, let us turn our attention to the three primary passages in which the immolation (or proposed immolation) of a firstborn child as an *'ōlā* appears in the Hebrew Bible: Gen 22, Judg 11, and 2 Kgs 3.

4.2.1. Genesis 22

Gen 22:1-14

After these things, the following occurred: Elohim tested Abraham and said to him, "Abraham?" and he responded, "Here I am." Then he said, "Take your only son, whom you adore, namely, Isaac, you, yourself, travel to the land of Moriah, and send him up there as a burnt-sacrifice (*lě'ōlā*) upon one of the mountains which I will indicate to you." Abraham woke up early in the morning, saddled his ass, brought two of his young men along with him as well as Isaac, his son; then he split the wood of the burnt-sacrifice (*'ōlā*), got up, and traveled to the place where Elohim indicated to him. On the third day, Abraham looked up and saw the place from afar. Abraham told his young men, "Remain here with the ass but allow me and the boy to go over there, bow down in worship, and come back to you." Abraham grabbed the wood of the burnt-sacrifice (*hā'ōlā*) and placed it on Isaac, his son; he also took in his hand the fire and the knife; and the two of them went together. Isaac said to Abraham, his father, "My father?" and he responded, "Yes, my son." Then he said, "Here are the fire and the wood, but where is the sheep for a burnt-sacrifice (*lě'ōlā*)?" Abraham replied, "Elohim will see to the sheep himself for a burnt-sacrifice (*lě'ōlā*), my son." So, they both went on together. When they came to the place where Elohim had indicated, Abraham erected the altar there, laid out the wood, tied up Isaac, his son, and put him on the altar on top of the wood. Thereupon, Abraham reached out his hand and grabbed the knife in order to slaughter (*lišhōt*) his son. Just then, the envoy of Yahweh called out to him from the heavens and said, "Abraham, Abraham!" and he responded, "Yes." He continued, "Do not reach out your hand to the boy and do not do anything to him because I now know that you are reverent of Elohim and you did not withhold your only son from me." Abraham looked up and noticed that in the background a ram was entrapped in the bushes by its horns; thus, Abraham went, seized the ram, and sent it up as a burnt-sacrifice (*lě'ōlā*) in place of his son.

²⁶⁰ This verse literally states that the children might have "blessed Elohim." Contextually, the verb *bēraḵ* appears to have a negative force in this verse as well as in Job 1:11 and 2:9.

Abraham named that place Yahweh regards, which is still called that today on the mountain where Yahweh is regarded.

Mosca considered this story as most likely the first etiological rationalization for replacing the sacrifice of the firstborn child with a substitute (1975: 237, 270, n. 242). De Vaux did not view Gen 22 in this light; instead, the narrative was perceived as presenting an unusual test that does not seek to justify a particular form of cultic worship, though the episode does indirectly show that the God of Israel did not desire human sacrifice at all (1964: 66-67). Similarly, for Berquist, Yahweh never wanted Isaac to be sacrificed. Abraham misunderstood the test. Rather than attempting to immolate Isaac, Abraham should have argued with the deity in order to save his son's life just as he had done on behalf of the Sodomites. Yahweh, moreover, never insisted on child immolation in any circumstance, so it was argued, given that, "There is no anger within God that demands a destructive response or that seeks the death of any person, innocent or guilty" (Berquist 1994: 128). Likewise, for Kaiser, Gen 22 is only a test of Abraham, not a divine sanction to murder Isaac as a sacrifice. Had the God of Israel demanded such a thing, it would have been against his holy character. After all, so the argument goes, the teachings of the law were antithetical to human immolation and even denounced sacrifices to *mōteḳ* (Lev 18:21; 20:2; Kaiser 1983: 262-64). Continuing along these lines, Agus, who viewed the text as portraying a trial of Abraham's strength, stated (1988: 2-3):

It would be trivial to suppose that we are being told how Israel, in its "spiritual infancy," came to the realization that human sacrifice is abhorrent. Rather, we must see the command to sacrifice Isaac in a cultural-religious thought-context, where the religiosity of human sacrifice is so far removed from expectability that the listener is no longer concerned with the theological polemic against it...It has nothing to do with the pagan custom of child-sacrifice (which is man's passionate participation in the brutal fertility of nature, a fertility in which life and death, giving up and gaining, dance back and forth in the single purpose of struggling through to the survival dictated by that very brutality), and it is the deaf listener to biblical tradition who hears that dissonant chord in the straightforward story.

The essence of Abraham's test, therefore, has been crucial to a number of interpretations of this passage. At stake here is whether or not the demand to sacrifice Isaac was truly as exceptional in ancient Yahwism as scholars such as de Vaux and Agus would have us believe, as well as whether or not the command was as contrary to the ways of Yahweh as Berquist and Kaiser would have us accept. To ascertain the validity of such assertions, Gen 22 must be situated within the context of other narratives related to human immolation and the worship of Yahweh. If, as has already been argued at the start of this chapter and as will continue to be contended in the pages to come, the sacrifice of children and adults was recognized in some Yahwistic circles as legitimate, Yahweh's demand for Isaac's immolation was neither extraordinary nor contrary to his ways. If, moreover, there is an exceptional component to Gen 22, it is perhaps the notion of animal substitution, not heir immolation. Mosca it would seem was correct in supposing that Gen 22 attempts to justify the replacement of human victims with animal substitutes.

Prior to contextualizing Gen 22 within the broader biblical framework, it is important for the reader to observe that several of the academic works devoted to our topic of enquiry begin with the basic presupposition that human sacrifice is and was a debased, immoral custom. Certainly, a negative understanding of the practice is evident in several of the works thus far encountered. Berquist and Kaiser, for instance, described it as murder (Berquist 1994: 113-4; Kaiser 1983: 262) and de Vaux understood the practice as typical of immoral and depraved social groups (1964:52). Spiegel, Gray, and Glueck likewise categorized the cessation of human immolation in Canaan as a moral progression (Spiegel 1993: 63-65, 77; Gray 1909: 433; and Glueck 1959: 61). Recently, De Vries even called it a demonic component of religiosity in his treatment of the

Hebrew Bible and human immolation (2004: 121). Such rhetoric is nothing new—we shall see that certain biblical writers expressed their own hostilities towards human sacrifice among the ancient Israelites—but a pejorative perspective is a poor place from which to begin any academic inquiry. We cannot hold the peoples of the past to any personal or current standards of morality, nor can we expect there to be an exact correlation between our ethical ideals and theirs. It really should not matter for the purposes of scholarship if the notion of human immolation repulses us or offends our sensibilities. Yet, far too often repugnance towards human sacrifice has clouded judgment and muddied the waters of scholarly discourse. Thus, the reader is encouraged to recognize the potential piety expressed when societies kill individuals with the direct intent of affecting the suprahuman realm. Such piety is evinced in the following narrative concerning the burnt-sacrifice of Jephthah's daughter.

4.2.2. Vows

4.2.2.1. Judges 11

Judg 11:29-40

The spirit of Yahweh was upon Jephthah, thus he passed through Gilead and Manasseh; then he passed along to Mizpeh Gilead and from Mizpeh Gilead, he passed along to the Ammonites. Then Jephthah vowed to Yahweh, saying, "If you certainly give the Ammonites into my hand, then it will happen that the one who goes out, that is, will go out from the doors of my house to meet me at my return in peace from the Ammonites, shall belong to Yahweh and I will send that one (*lit.* him) up as a burnt-sacrifice ('*ōlā*)."

When Jephthah passed over to the Ammonites to do battle against them, Yahweh gave them into his hand. Therefore, he slew them from Aroer until you come to Minnith, twenty cities, and unto Abel Keramim, an extremely severe slaughter; hence, the Ammonites were humbled from before the Israelites.

Subsequently, Jephthah came to Mizpah to his house and (he saw that) his daughter was coming out to meet him with tambourines and dances; now she was an only (child); he did not have besides her, a son or a daughter. At the time he noticed her, he ripped his clothes and said, "Oh no, my daughter, you have caused me to bow very low and you have joined my disturbers given that I opened my mouth to Yahweh and I cannot return (my words)." She responded to him, "My father, you have opened your mouth to Yahweh; do to me just as that which went forth from your mouth, after which Yahweh has accomplished for you vengeance upon your enemies, the Ammonites." Moreover, she stated to her father, "Allow this thing to be done to me: leave me alone for two months so that I might travel around upon the mountains and cry on behalf of my

virginity,²⁶¹ I and my female friends.” Then he said, “Depart,” and he sent her away for two months; she went with her friends and wept for her virginity upon the mountains. Then at the end of the two months, she returned to her father and he performed to her his vow which he had vowed; but she never knew a man sexually and the event became memorialized in Israel. From year to year the daughters of Israel would go to lament (?)²⁶² for the daughter of Jephthah, the Gileadite, four days during the year.

At the beginning of the story, Jephthah, the son of a prostitute, was asked by his relatives, the Gileadites, to fight the Ammonites on their behalf and to rule over them following his hoped for victory. Our translation picks up the narrative at the very point in which the spirit of Yahweh descended upon the warrior-judge. Soon thereafter Jephthah called upon Yahweh to grant him the triumph by means of a vow, which specified that he would sacrifice as an *’ōlā* the one who goes forth from his home to meet him when he returns from battle. The question immediately arises as to the physical makeup of the vowed sacrifice: human or animal. The academic opinions have varied. For Levenson, Jephthah anticipated the immolation of an animal (Levenson 1993: 24). Boling held a similar conviction and founded his conclusion upon the kind of dwelling prevalent in the area of Canaan in which the Israelites supposedly lived in the Iron Age I (the timeframe of the story). That is to say, the “four-room” house style would have made it possible for animals and humans to dwell side-by-side in a single home (Boling 1975: 208-209 and illustration 8). Yet, for Thompson it is possible that an animal could have potentially lived within the house of an Israelite and utilized the same doorway as a human but it is doubtful that one would have expected an animal to come out of the house and greet Jephthah (Thompson 1963: 90). Marcus likewise offered that such phraseology seems odd for beasts in Hebrew. In fact, the phrase *yāšā’() liqrā’()t* (to go forth to meet) is solely reserved in the Bible for references to human beings (cf. 1 Sam 18:6), as are the

²⁶¹ While there is some debate concerning the meaning of *bēṭūlīm* (cf. discussion in Marcus 1986: 31), Marcus was correct in pointing out that it clearly means virginity in Deut 22:14-17 (1986: 61, n. 46).

²⁶² The meaning of *leṭannōt* is uncertain (cf. Brown, Driver, Briggs 1952: 1072).

expressions *hayyōšē*(') and *'āšer yēšē*(') (the one who goes forth; cf. Num 22:11; Gen 15:4; Marcus 1986: 13, 58 n. 1; see also Keil and Delitzsch 1866-91: 278).²⁶³ Thus, a human victim appears to have been identified in the vow²⁶⁴ and this was precisely what happened following the battle—Jephthah's daughter came out to meet him and, therefore, was sacrificed, as is explicitly stated in Judg 11:39: "Then at the end of the two months, she returned to her father and he performed to her his vow which he had vowed; but she never knew a man (sexually) and the event became memorialized in Israel."

Academic opinions have also varied concerning the perspective of the author in Judg 11, particularly regarding whether or not the writer viewed the event as legitimate within Yahwism. For Klein, the immolation "seems to have been exceptional. It was not condoned and was altogether unsuitable as an offering to Yahweh, who had tested Abraham's faith with the demand of the sacrifice of his son Isaac (Gen. 22.2), only to *halt* the human sacrifice and *substitute* an animal offering" (Klein 1988: 91, emphasis hers; cf. Boling 1975: 209). Hackett, however, insisted that this text is "one of the few instances of child sacrifice that is patently condoned in the Bible...[it] is considered sad by the narrator, but not immoral and, interestingly, not even non-Yahwistic. It was to Yahweh, after all, that the vow was made" (Hackett 1987: 131). Yet, for de Vaux, the redactor of the passage was merely apathetic to Jephthah's deeds; de Vaux, like Klein, considered the sacrifice an unusual episode inasmuch as the immolation was memorialized by yearly festivities. Therefore, for him, the story of Jephthah should not

²⁶³ One might also note the parallels which Bal brought forth between Jephthah's vow and Caleb's promise that he will grant his daughter, Achsah, to the one who conquers Kiriath-Sepher in Judg 1:11-13; Yahweh similarly deserved Jephthah's daughter in fulfillment of conquering the Ammonites, so it was argued. Bal, therefore, understood the object of the vow to be a human and, more specifically, Jephthah's daughter (Bal 1990: 20).

²⁶⁴ Cf. Leslie (1936: 110).

be recognized as verifying a normative Israelite custom of human sacrifice (de Vaux 1964: 65-66). Recently, Noort similarly argued that the sacrifice was exceptional and atypical of Israelite practice. Unfortunately, he did not elaborate on why this interpretation is justified. Apparently, it was viewed as unique because of what transpired after the vow (2002: 13). Again, we encounter the notion that a particular human sacrifice was supposedly exceptional and, thus, not indicative of a regular Yahwistic custom. If, however, there is a unique element to this story, it is that a firstborn *girl* was sacrificed (cf. section 4.3.3.). The concept of human immolation is not necessarily exceptional in and of itself.

Jephthah's oath has often been described as "rash" (Marcus 1986: 50; 54-55); the implication is that a good Yahwist would not have vowed to sacrifice a human had he/she thought through the consequences. Indeed, Telushkin not only called Jephthah rash and foolish but also a murderer given that he should not have fulfilled a vow which went against the teachings of the Torah (1997: 176-78, 483-84). Perhaps it is Jephthah's distress upon seeing his daughter which encourages the view that his vow was made in haste. Yet, despite the fact that this warrior-judge is clearly frustrated over his daughter's actions, which could potentially lend support to the common interpretation that Judg 11 portrays an inappropriate event, it should be remembered that Jephthah made his vow only after Yahweh's spirit had come upon him. He was, therefore, acting under Yahweh's empowerment when he uttered the oath. As for Jephthah's frustration, the despair he experiences is apparently not over having to immolate a human; rather, Jephthah is distraught because he must sacrifice his own daughter. The notion of vowing to perform human sacrifice if Yahweh provides military victory is found elsewhere in the

Bible: “Then Israel vowed to Yahweh, saying, ‘If you certainly give this people into our hand, then we shall dedicate their cities by *hērem*.’ Yahweh listened to Israel’s voice and gave the Canaanites (into their hand); accordingly, they dedicated them and their cities by *hērem* and named the place *Hormah*” (Num 21:2-3). The protasis of the vow is nearly identical to the one pronounced by Jephthah but the apodosis is different in terms of the type of human immolation performed: human sacrifice via *hērem*-warfare versus by *’ōlā*. It can be inferred from Num 21 and Judg 11 that Yahweh approved of the intended sacrifices inasmuch as the authors did not criticize the vows and because Yahweh fulfilled his end of the bargain by providing victory.

In contrast to the conclusions reached here, the references to the virginity of Jephthah’s daughter have fostered the perspective that she was not sacrificed but devoted to a life of celibacy. The phrase “but she never knew a man (sexually)” in vs. 39 can be taken as a clause of circumstance, describing the daughter’s state at the time of her sacrifice (so Moore 1895: 302); alternatively, it can be understood as a clause of result, indicating the consequence of the vow. The latter interpretation would require a different translation than that adopted above: “and, therefore, she never knew a man sexually.” Wood is an excellent representative of those scholars who would agree with such a translation and who would argue that Jephthah’s daughter was devoted to serve Yahweh at his tabernacle.²⁶⁵ He essentially provided seven arguments in favor of this view: (1) women were known to have served at Yahweh’s sanctuary (1 Sam 2:22; Ex 38:8);²⁶⁶ (2)

²⁶⁵ For a comprehensive treatment on the history of scholarship and Judg 11, see Marcus (1986). Note as well the number of similarities between Wood’s assessment and that provided 100 years earlier by Keil and Delitzsch (1866-91: 280-84).

²⁶⁶ “The tasks such women could have performed would have been numerous, including cooking meals, making and mending garments, washing clothes, and keeping the general area clean” (Wood 1975: 288); apparently, these were such tasks “which women could do better than men” (Wood 1975: 293).

human immolation was illicit in Yahwism according to the law of Moses (Deut 12:31 and 18:10; Lev 18:21 and 20:2-5) and as evinced by the practices of the Israelites, who did not perform human sacrifice until the time of the late Judean monarchy (2 Kgs 16:3 and 21:6); (3) as a person who sought to serve Yahweh appropriately, Jephthah would not have sacrificed his daughter because Yahweh would have disapproved of the illicit action; (4) Jephthah was not a rash person but was emotionally stable, implying that he thoughtfully considered his vow; (5) given that sacrificing his daughter would have been illegal, Jephthah would have been opposed by his fellow Israelites in his attempt to immolate her; (6) the daughter's desire to mourn her virginity is only conceivable if she were about to become a celibate not a sacrificial victim; and (7) human immolation is not explicitly stated at the point in the narrative when the vow was fulfilled. How, then, did Wood explain the use of *'ôlâ* and its cognate verb *he'êlâ* in Judg 11:31 when the vow was proposed? He assumed that the verb and noun do not actually signify death; rather, that an entity is "being given up to God." Jephthah, then, "would cause whatever first met him to 'go up' to God in the manner set forth in that chapter [Lev 27]" (Wood 1975: 294). Using a passage concerning the devotion of people, animals, and property to Yahweh as his basis (Lev 27, especially 27:1-25), Wood reconstructed Jephthah's intentions as follows: "If this [the being who meets him] should prove to be an animal suitable for sacrifice, then it would indeed be sacrificed; if it should be one not suitable, then it would be sold. If it should be a human, then it would be redeemed for the appropriate, estimated price, or else, in the case of a woman such as his daughter, she would be devoted to the sanctuary for perpetual service" (Wood 1975: 294). Beyond the serious complications involved in assuming that Jephthah (or, rather, the author of Judg

11) was cognizant of Lev 27, as Wood has done (cf. 1975: 293), there is the additional problem that Wood supposes that Lev 27:1-25 is dealing with lifelong devotion to sanctuary service for nowhere in this passage is such dedication explicitly expressed; moreover, the narrative does not distinguish between ransoming males and devoting females to divine servitude; and the text does not even bring up the notion of celibacy. Lev 27 should not be used as the basis for an interpretation of Judg 11. Yet, this is not the most significant of the difficulties in Wood's analysis, as will be explicated below.

In response to Wood's principal arguments in favor of the celibacy explanation, it should be initially noted that the concepts that women served at Yahweh's sanctuary in some capacity (1) and that Jephthah thoughtfully phrased his vow (4) do not conflict with a sacrificial interpretation of the passage. However, the other points of contention do not intersect with the view that Jephthah immolated his daughter; that is, if one accepts them as valid, which I do not. The heart of Wood's perspective is that all forms of human immolation were illicit within Yahwism (2); therefore, Jephthah would not have sacrificed his daughter (3) and had he attempted to do so, his fellow Israelites would have stopped him (5). The latter point is extraneous since it not only assumes that all the Israelites viewed human sacrifice as illegal but it also supposes that they would have taken action to oppose Jephthah. The other two, conversely, are more important inasmuch as Judg 11 does portray Jephthah as performing a vow which is in line with Yahweh's desires: Jephthah makes the vow after Yahweh's spirit came upon him and Yahweh shows his approval by giving Jephthah victory. Thus, if Yahweh disapproved of human sacrifice, Jephthah's daughter must not have been sacrificed. Conversely, if certain forms of human immolation were, at least for the author of Judg 11, acceptable to

Yahweh, then it is best to follow a literal reading of the narrative and to conclude that the daughter was sacrificed. Throughout this study of biblical sacrifice, several examples are brought forth in order to illustrate that human immolation was accepted by several biblical authors, but one key example will be cited here in order to demonstrate the point. Given that the story of Jephthah appears within the Deuteronomistic corpus it is only fitting, therefore, to return to 2 Kgs 23:20: “He [Josiah] sacrificed (*wayyizbah*) all the priests of the high places who were there on the altars and he burned (*wayyisrōp*) human bones on them; afterwards he went back to Jerusalem.” In the Deuteronomistic tradition, Josiah is the epitome of a perfect Yahwist. Hence, one cannot follow Wood’s assertion that all forms of human sacrifice were illegitimate. The Deuteronomists even accepted the efficacy of a child burnt-sacrifice (*’ōlā*) performed by a foreigner (2 Kgs 3:27, see below).

As for Wood’s statement that mourning one’s virginity is only intelligible in the context of Jephthah’s daughter becoming celibate (6), the opposite is just as likely. Had Jephthah intended to dedicate her to a life of celibacy, would she not have had the remainder of her life to bemoan her virginity? Concerning the observation that human sacrifice is not explicitly mentioned when the vow is fulfilled (7), this can be explained as an ellipsis, which causes one to return to the actual words of the vow in order to understand the nature of its fulfillment. The vow expressly states that the one who greets Jephthah will be an *’ōlā*, a burnt-sacrifice. Wood must adequately explain the presence of this noun and its accompanying verbal form to maintain his perspective. Even Marcus, who viewed the narrative as most likely a passage about celibacy, noted that those who take *’ōlā* literally can possibly make a stronger case for their interpretation than those

who understand the word figuratively because, for instance, “nowhere else in the Hebrew Bible is *’ōlah* used figuratively,²⁶⁷ especially in the other two cases involving human beings in Genesis 22 and 2 Kings 3” (Marcus 1986: 26). The onus, then, was on Wood to find a text which supported his alternative understanding of *’ōlâ*, but he failed to do so.²⁶⁸ One of the issues which helped tip the balance towards a non-sacrificial interpretation of Judg 11 for Marcus, was the notion that had Jephthah sacrificed his daughter some calamity would have befallen him on par with what resulted in similar stories from the classical world and the biblical realm; and since nothing catastrophic is reported as having happened to him, Jephthah apparently did not burn his daughter as an *’ōlâ*. The biblical parallel which supposedly supports this notion is the story of Mesha’s sacrifice of his son as an *’ōlâ* in 2 Kgs 3 (Marcus 1986: 42, 51-52). Mesha’s immolation will be covered shortly; yet, it should be observed at this juncture that the sacrifice brought about *positive* results for Mesha in that the Israelites withdrew from battle after having been affected by the great wrath which resulted from his sacrifice. Jephthah, too, benefited on the battlefield from his sacrifice, albeit prior to the actual immolation because Yahweh granted him success in anticipation of the *’ōlâ* to come.

²⁶⁷ Here, Marcus followed E. Mader’s *Die Menschenopfer der alten Hebräer und der benachbarten Völker* (1909: 155) and E. Dell’Oca’s work in *Revista Biblica* 26 (1964: 168-69).

²⁶⁸ Others who have also interpreted *’ōlâ* in a figurative sense acknowledged that biblical parallels cannot be cited (Keil and Delitzsch 1866-91: 284).

4.2.2.2. 1 Samuel 14

Unlike Jephthah's vow, which is arguably not presented as reckless at all, Saul's oath in 1 Sam 14 is literally described as distressing by the narrator. The key verses in the passage are as follows:

1 Sam 14:23-30, 36-45

Yahweh delivered Israel on that day and the battle continued on to Beth Aven. The men of Israel were oppressed on that day because Saul made the people take an oath, saying, "May the man be cursed who eats food prior to the evening and (before) I have been avenged of my enemies." Therefore, all the people did not even taste food. All the land came across the honeycomb and there was honey right on the ground.²⁶⁹ When the people came across the honeycomb, (they saw) there was a trail of honey but none reached out and put his hand to his mouth due to the fact that the people were afraid of the oath. Jonathan, however, had not heard that his father made the people swear an oath; thus, he stretched out the end of the staff, which was in his hand, and dipped it in the comb of honey and returned his hand to his mouth. As a result, his eyes became bright. Then one from among the people responded, "Your father made the people undertake an oath, saying, 'May the man be cursed who eats food today.' Hence, the people are weak (from hunger)." Thereupon Jonathan stated, "My father has disturbed the land. Take note that my eyes have become bright because I tasted this little amount of honey. Moreover, if only the people had consumed some food today from the plunder of their enemies which they came across but now the slaughter among the Philistines is insignificant."...Saul stated, "Let us descend after the Philistines at night that we might plunder among them until dawn and so that we would not leave among them a single man." Then they said, "Do everything that is good in your eyes." But the priest said, "Let us draw near here to Elohim." Thus, Saul asked Elohim, "Shall I descend after the Philistines? Will you give them into the hand of Israel?" Yet, he did not reply to him on that day. Thereafter, Saul commanded, "Draw near here all the leaders of the people and find out and ascertain by what means this sin came about today. As Yahweh, the deliverer of Israel, lives that even if (the sin) is upon Jonathan, my son, he shall certainly die." But there was no one from among all the people who would answer him. So, he said to all Israel, "You shall cross over to one (area) and Jonathan, my son, and I shall cross over to another (area)." The people responded to Saul, "Do what is good in your eyes." Saul said to Yahweh, the god of Israel, "Provide the truth"; and Jonathan and Saul were caught but the people were released. Saul commanded, "Throw (the lot) between me and Jonathan, my son"; and Jonathan was caught. Saul then said to Jonathan, "Tell me what you did." Consequently, Jonathan told him, "I tasted with the end of the staff which was in my hand a little bit of honey—it is I who must die." Saul stated, "Thus may Elohim do and more so except you certainly die, Jonathan." Yet, the people said to Saul, "Shall Jonathan die, the one who accomplished this magnificent deliverance in Israel? May it not be, as Yahweh lives, if a hair of his head falls to the ground because with Elohim he worked this day." Thus, the people ransomed (*wayyip̄dū*) Jonathan and he did not die.

Despite the fact that the author of the narrative calls the oath oppressive and Jonathan describes it as disturbing, the potency of the oath is never in question. Jonathan might not have known about the oath but it applied to the entire army so much so that by

²⁶⁹ This sentence is problematic but is translated literally.

breaking it, Jonathan's actions not only made him impure but also caused the army to cease from battle. That is to say, Saul wished to continue the pursuit of the Philistines but Yahweh would not respond to his request for guidance because sin existed within the Israelite forces. Saul then sought to eliminate the iniquity by killing the perpetrator, even though it happened to have been his son. Jonathan also recognized this necessity and submitted to his own execution, a death that should be viewed as a human sacrifice given that the killing was intended to eradicate impurity with the implication that the army could continue fighting the Philistines under Yahweh's renewed blessing. The people interfered with the atonement process and redeemed Jonathan's life. At the end of the episode, as the passage continues, Saul did not descend against the Philistines; instead, he withdrew from the battlefield. Thus, it is Jonathan's act not Saul's oath, which, contrary to what Jonathan had said, ultimately limited the extent to which Israel defeated Philistia (cf. the similar problems encountered by the Israelites due to the Achan affair in Josh 6-7; discussed above).

The sacrificial interpretation presented here is solidified by the word chosen by the writer to describe the actions of the people in ransoming Jonathan's life. The verb *pādā* means "to ransom" an individual from such things as harm (Ps 25:22) or servitude (Ex 21:8) but it is also a technical term denoting a transaction in which payment or substitution is made in order to save the life of a firstborn human or animal destined for sacrifice (Ex 13:13,15; 34:20; Num 18:15). Because Jonathan was Saul's firstborn male offspring, *pādā* probably connotes more than the concept of merely rescuing Jonathan from death. Unfortunately, the specific manner in which the people performed the ransoming is not clarified in 1 Sam 14.

4.2.2.3. Joshua 6 and 1 Kings 16

Saul's oath is reminiscent of the one pronounced by Joshua in Josh 6:26 following the conquest of Jericho: "Joshua forced (them) to undertake an oath at that moment, saying, 'May the man be cursed before Yahweh who rises up and rebuilds this city, Jericho. With his firstborn, he shall establish its foundation (*bibkōrō yēyassēdennā*) and with his youngest, he shall erect (*ūbiṣ'irō yaṣṣīb*) its gates.'" According to 1 Kgs 16:34, this curse was fulfilled during the reign of Ahab: "In his days, Hiel, from Bethel, rebuilt Jericho. With Abiram, his firstborn, he established its foundation (*ba'ābīrām bekōrō yissēdāh*) and with Segub, his youngest, he erected its gates (*ūbiṣgūb ṣē'irō hiṣṣīb*) in accordance with the word of Yahweh which he pronounced by the hand of Joshua, the son of Nun." In a matter-of-fact fashion, Leslie had this to say about Hiel's actions in the context of other Israelite practices (1936: 161-62):

Human sacrifice was practiced in the ninth century B.C., as shown by Hiel of Bethel, who, at his rebuilding of Jericho, offered up his oldest and his youngest sons as foundation sacrifices (1 Kings 16. 34). And when the eighth-century prophets began to prophesy, while it was most likely an exceptional practice, nevertheless, child sacrifice existed in Israel. It was practiced by the Israelites in Hosea's day (Hosea 13. 2), and Ahaz of Judah in the eighth century B.C. sacrificed his own son (2 Kings 16. 3).

These indications confirm the conclusion that so far as the public worship of Israel was concerned, by the middle of the eighth century it had become largely Canaanite worship. Israel had practically lost its theocratic mission and had become 'like all the nations' (1 Samuel 8. 20), her Yahweh worship being scarcely distinguishable from the fertility cults of the Baalim. Only through such an approach to the era of the literary prophets are we in position to realize how desperate was Israel's need for the penetrating, decisive, and clarifying work of the towering spiritual teachers of the eighth century B.C.

Leslie's perspective is clearly in line with the recurrent theme that human sacrifice was atypical of true Yahwism and it also follows an additional academic trend to see in Israelite human sacrifice outside influences. There has existed for some time now the basic premise that the Israelites would only have immolated humans because of foreign pressures. De Vaux, for instance, chose to treat Josh 6 and 1 Kgs 16 in a section on

Phoenician human immolation. He opined that if 1 Kgs actually refers to foundation sacrifices, then a Phoenician impetus could be behind the immolations; the Phoenicians, he offered, exerted a major influence upon Israel during Ahab's reign. Alternatively, according to de Vaux, Hiel's children might have perished when Jericho was rebuilt and their deaths were subsequently connected to an earlier curse pronounced by Joshua (de Vaux 1964: 61).²⁷⁰ Gray, too, essentially put forward the two alternatives listed by de Vaux (foundation sacrifices vs. natural deaths) but he even went so far as to say that "Hiel of Bethel might have volunteered to make this sacrifice, or he may have been some backward person or political suspect who was compelled to make this sacrifice to popular superstition" (Gray 1970: 370-71). Gray's assumption that the immolation was performed out of "popular superstition" is problematic but not as troubling as the perception that Hiel might have sacrificed his children because he was mentally deficient.

Mauchline also listed both interpretations and referenced foundation sacrifices from Gezer and Taanach as providing supportive evidence for the practice (Mauchline 1962: 345). As was presented in chapter three, however, the immolation of individuals during building projects is attested in the early periods of Syro-Palestinian history and there is no conclusive material support to suggest that such sacrifices were actually performed after the Middle Bronze Age. Thus, there is as of yet no definitive archaeological proof that the Iron Age Israelites practiced human foundation sacrifices. In fact, at this time there does not exist any clear physical evidence for any Israelite form of human immolation.²⁷¹ For now, we are limited to literary analyses. We should note as

²⁷⁰ For a recent proponent of a non-sacrificial interpretation of 1 Kgs 16:34, see Noort, who proposed that Hiel's children died accidentally (2002: 13).

²⁷¹ The Moabite Stone/Mesha Stele does at least provide extrabiblical evidence for the practice of *hérem*-sacrifice in Iron Age Syro-Palestine.

well that the supposed Phoenician influence on Israelite human sacrifice is not borne out in the material remains. Human immolation has yet to be substantiated in the finds from the Phoenician homeland. The connection between Punic *molk*-sacrifices and Phoenician child immolations awaits confirmation.

Whereas the *b*- prepositions attached to the phrases *ba'ābīrām bēkōrō yissēdāh* and *ūbīsġūb se'irō hiṣṣīb* were translated as “with” in my translations above, de Vaux rendered them as “at the price of” (de Vaux 1964: 61).²⁷² The latter interprets the *b*- as the *beth pretii* used in Hebrew to denote the cost of something acquired,²⁷³ thereby conforming to the perspective that Hiel’s children died of natural causes (so Gray 1970: 370)—alternatively, the *beth pretii* could still represent that Hiel paid for the rebuilding of Jericho by sacrificing his children. The *beth pretii* is clearly attested earlier in 1 Kgs 16, namely, verse 24a: “He purchased Mt. Samaria from Shemer at the price of two silver talents (*bēkikkērayim kāsep*).” With a verb of acquisition, the *beth pretii* makes perfect sense; however, with a verb of building, a *beth* of material is better.²⁷⁴ The end of Isa 54:11 illustrates this point: “I will establish your foundation with sapphires (*wīsadīk bassappīrīm*).” Thus, like Josh 6:26 and 1 Kgs 16:34, *y-s-d* plus *b*- can specify the type of material used in the foundation project. Hence, Joshua’s curse and its fulfillment are most likely references to the foundation sacrifices of two children.

4.2.3. 2 Kings 3

In our discussion of Jephthah’s burnt-sacrifice, reference was made to Mesha’s actions on the walls of Kir-Hareseth, which were described by Marcus as bringing about

²⁷² Cf. Keil’s similar translation of the *b*- prepositions in Josh 6:26 (1857: 173).

²⁷³ For a discussion of the *beth pretii* in biblical Hebrew, see Waltke and O’Connor 1990: 197.

²⁷⁴ Cf. the treatment of *b*- in the source listed in the previous footnote as well as 1 Kgs 6:15 cited therein.

an adverse effect. The text was briefly treated in chapter three within the context of the Syro-Palestinian evidence for child immolation as a response to besiegement. Now, however, we must situate the episode within the framework of the biblical texts. The key verses read:

2 Kgs 3:25-27

The cities, they demolished and (in) every good portion of land, each one threw his stone in order to fill it up; every spring of water, they stopped up and every good tree, they cut down until there was left (only) the stones on Kir-Hareseth; then the slingers surrounded and attacked it. When the king of Moab noticed that the battle was too strong for him, he took to himself 700 men who wielded the sword to cut through to the king of Edom but they were unable to do so. Thereupon he took his son, the firstborn who would reign in his stead, and sent him up as a burnt-sacrifice (*'ōlā*) on the wall; hence, a great wrath (*qēšep̄*) came against Israel and they went away from against him and returned to the land.

From the Israelite perspective, everything had been progressing exactly as Yahweh had promised via the prophet Elisha (2 Kgs 3:14-19); that is, they were victorious up to the point when Mesha sacrificed his son as a burnt-sacrifice. The *'ōlā* clearly achieved its purpose for the resulting wrath, or *qēšep̄*, was so oppressive that the Israelites fled from the battlefield. The nature of this great wrath is the most complicated component of the passage inasmuch as it is not specifically associated with a particular deity and there are few details presented about it in the text. Hence, to help clarify the narrative, several similar references to *qēšep̄* should be consulted:

Num 1:53

The Levites shall camp around the Tabernacle of the Testimony so that there will not be wrath (*qēšep̄*) against the congregation of the sons of Israel; the Levites shall protect the service of the Tabernacle of the Testimony.

Josh 9:19-20

Then all the leaders addressed the entire congregation, "We swore an oath to them [the Gibeonites] by Yahweh, the god of Israel, and now we cannot strike against them. This is what we shall do to them and let them live so that there will not be against us wrath (*qēšep̄*) on account of the oath which we swore to them."

Josh 22:20

Did not Achan, the son of Zerah, act treacherously in regards to the *hērem*-dedication so that there was wrath (*qāšep̄*) against the entire congregation of Israel and did he, a single man, not die in his iniquity?

2 Chron 24:18

They abandoned the temple of Yahweh, the god of their fathers, and served the Asherim and the cultic images so that there was wrath (*qēšep̄*) against Judah and Jerusalem because of this their guilt.

It is clear from these references that *qēšep̄* was an act of divine indignation which would come upon the Israelites when they failed to uphold Yahweh's commands.²⁷⁵ Thus, the term frequently denotes divine judgment due to impropriety. Yet, according to 2 Kgs 3, the Israelites (specifically the combined forces of Israel, Judah, and Edom) were following the instructions of Yahweh and there are no indications that Yahweh was upset with them. Given that Mesha most likely sacrificed his son to his own god, the Moabite deity Chemosh, it is probable that the great wrath is not Yahweh's but Chemosh's. The writers of the Deuteronomistic History elsewhere recognize Chemosh's power to act on behalf of his people (Judg 11:24).²⁷⁶

According to the Deuteronomistic worldview, what would be the purpose of performing an *'ōlā* in the midst of warfare? The fundamental rationale would be to obtain divine favor for a military engagement, just as Jephthah had done when he undertook his vow to offer an *'ōlā*, but there are passages within the Deuteronomistic corpus wherein the underlying principle is much more complex. 1 Sam 7:3-10, cited at the start of this section (4.2.), is an excellent portrayal of *'ōlā* and combat as understood

²⁷⁵ While *qēšep̄* primarily indicates divine wrath, the verbal forms of the root can denote human anger as well (cf. Gen 40:2).

²⁷⁶ Chemosh is associated with the Ammonites in Judg 11 but he is generally connected to the Moabites in the biblical texts (1 Kgs 11:7, 33). The Moabite Stone/Mesha Stele provides independent confirmation that Chemosh was recognized as the deity of the Moabites (cf. the discussion to come shortly).

from the Israelite perspective. Instead of a single battle, as in 2 Kgs 3, the context of the narrative is a series of Philistine-Israelite conflicts. Just prior to 1 Sam 7, the Israelites had regained the Ark of the Covenant, which had been lost to the Philistines in an earlier encounter. Thus, the Israelites, like Mesha, were failing in their martial struggles. The reason for this lack of success, according to 1 Sam 7, was that the Israelites had sinned against Yahweh. He allowed them to be defeated and it was only after they had rededicated themselves to following after him that Samuel entreated Yahweh on their behalf by means of a burnt-sacrifice. Subsequently, Yahweh fought for Israel by disorienting the Philistines with a *great noise*;²⁷⁷ therefore, the Israelites defeated the Philistines that day. The *'ōlā* in this passage performs a similar function to those offered by David in 2 Sam 24:17 (also translated in 4.2.), that is, the *'ōlōt* are part of the process of entreaty in which individuals seek to atone for their sins in order to gain Yahweh's blessings so that he would refrain from afflicting them. The writers of the Deuteronomistic History may also have had such a meaning in mind when they described the way in which Mesha averted total defeat by sacrificing a human *'ōlā* on the walls of Kir-Hareseth. The Moabites, themselves, would have viewed military defeat as a result of Chemosh's anger. The Moabite Stone/Mesha Stele confirms that the Moabite perspective on warfare was analogous to Israel's, for not only does the stele describe Moabite warfare as an act of *hērem*²⁷⁸ but, more importantly for our current discussion, it suggests that Israel's dominance over Moab was a result of Chemosh's anger, literally "because Chemosh was furious (*y'np*) with his land" (line 5).²⁷⁹

²⁷⁷ Great noise parallels great wrath, both of which result from *'ōlōt*.

²⁷⁸ See chapter 3, section 4 for an analysis of this inscription.

²⁷⁹ Smelik's analysis of the inscription highlights the similarities between it and the biblical texts. An interesting discussion of divine anger is also found therein (1991: 29-50).

Coincidentally, the interpretation of Mesha's sacrifice offered here²⁸⁰ is quite similar, though not identical, to that proposed by G.B. Gray in the early part of the twentieth century (1925: 86-7):²⁸¹

The sacrifice in this case is a Moabite sacrifice, but the interpreter is a Hebrew interpreter... The general principle of sacrifice follows clearly from the theory of this particular sacrifice which is in no way obscure, and is this: Chemosh, the god of Moab, was angry with Moab, and in his anger had allowed her people to be reduced to the last extremities; at this point the King of Moab propitiates the anger of Chemosh by offering up to him his eldest son; the anger of Chemosh is by this sacrifice deflected from Moab and poured out on Israel, who in consequence retire in all haste from the sphere of Chemosh's influence.

The matter-of-factness and insouciance of this story would by itself indicate that the Hebrew narrator did not look upon the incident as in any sense unique; he was familiar with human sacrifice and with the propitiatory aim of such sacrifice.

By contrast, and it should come as no great surprise, de Vaux opined that Mesha's sacrifice was not only shocking but exceptional as well (1961: 442). Likewise, according to De Vries, the wrath (*qéšep̄*) in the narrative probably indicates that the Israelites "were enraged by the king's reverting to the old-fashioned and primitive ritual of child sacrifice in order to persuade the gods to undo Israel, so they considered that the king was not playing fair in invoking this unusual manipulation of the gods, and out of fear that he now had the upper hand they went home in a rage" (2004: 105). Margalit, too, did not accept the notion that *qéšep̄* refers to Chemosh's wrath; rather, it signifies "the psychological breakdown or trauma" experienced by the Israelites after having viewed the rarely practiced rite of sacrificing a child when under siege (1986: 63). Unger, furthermore, assessed the situation as follows (Unger 1981: 500):

Mesha took his firstborn son, who would have been king in his place. Following the sheer brutality of paganism, he offered him up as a sacrifice on the wall.

This was a clear-cut, vivid demonstration to God's people of how utterly abominable heathen religion was to God... This abominably shocking act, performed before the eyes of all the army,

²⁸⁰ I wish to acknowledge Professor Schmidt's suggestion that I consider the possibility that 2 Kgs 3:27 may relate to the issue of purity.

²⁸¹ Also by coincidence, J. Gray utilized the Mesha Stele in his examination of 2 Kgs 3, noting, as I did, that military defeat from the Moabite perspective was due to Chemosh's anger. His conclusions concerning Mesha's actions are similar to G.B. Gray's as well (J. Gray 1970: 490-91). Noort likewise espoused the view that *qéšep̄* refers to Chemosh's wrath (2002: 13).

aroused such terrible indignation in the people of God (cf. Lev. 18:21; 20:3) that, in utter revulsion the kings broke off the siege and returned to their land. The question may well be asked, though, Why, if Israel was so deeply moved in this case, was she not jolted out of her foolish infatuation with idolatry? Idolatry is backed by demon delusion and demon power and is not easily thrown off (1 Cor. 10:20; Rev. 9:20-21).

Elsewhere, Unger espoused similar rhetoric in describing the demonic underpinnings of human immolation (Unger 1981: 170, 519; cf. 168, 527), which only emphasizes a major deficiency in his study: that is, Unger assumed that the ancient Israelites were as repulsed by the act of human sacrifice as he was.²⁸² As for the other treatments examined here in which *qéšep̄* was taken as a reference to Israel's wrath, they are problematic due to their supposition that the Israelites were unaccustomed to human immolation. In fact, it is difficult to accept the notion that hardened warriors would have suffered a mental breakdown because their enemy decided to sacrifice a single individual or even that they were so enraged by human sacrifice that they left the battlefield altogether, particularly when they were winning the war. That a change occurred at the suprahuman level as a result of Mesha's immolation is much more in line with the Deuteronomistic perspective on sacrifice, deities, and war. Jephthah, after all, defeated the Ammonites because of the promise of a human *'ōlā*.

4.2.4. Summation

The most shocking aspect of this whole saga is what it reveals about the depraved level of Israelite morality at the time. One of the Torah's earliest teachings is that God abhors human sacrifice (Genesis, chapter 22), a point it repeatedly makes (Leviticus 18:21, 20:1-5; Deuteronomy 12:31, 18:10). Yet Jephthah and his fellow Israelites seem to think that an immoral vow takes precedence over innocent blood... That Jephthah's fellow citizens allow him to sacrifice his daughter reflects almost as poorly on them as on him. To claim to believe in the God of the Torah, while simultaneously practicing human sacrifice, is absurd, akin to starting an organization composed of "Meat Eaters for Vegetarianism" (Telushkin 1997: 177).

²⁸² There is also no explicit indication in 2 Kgs 3:27 that the *qéšep̄* was related to revulsion. This is purely an assumption and Unger did not sufficiently make a case for connecting *qéšep̄* to such an idea.

Telushkin's comments regarding Jephthah's immoral immolation provide a fitting end to this segment of the chapter for not only do they reflect a common contention that human sacrifice is characteristic of utter depravity but they also illustrate the need to situate such chapters as Gen 22 and Judg 11 within the context of the entire biblical portrayal of human immolation. Doing such a study allows one to address the fundamental issue of whether or not all forms of human sacrifice were denounced by the biblical authors. Telushkin made the assumption that the Torah's denunciation of the types of human immolation condemned in Lev 18:21 and 20:1-5, as well as Deut 12:31 and 18:10, evince a total rejection of human sacrifice in any situation (cf. Wood 1975: 288-89)—he also supposed that Gen 22 portrays child sacrifice as abhorrent, which is not borne out in the text inasmuch as the chapter does not explicitly condemn the rite; rather, it transforms the rite by animal substitution. Moreover, the sacrifices criticized in these passages from Leviticus and Deuteronomy are those performed unto *mōlek* and those done in imitation of Canaanite practices.²⁸³ These chapters do not exclude the possibility that the writers accepted other kinds of human immolation. It is also important to keep in mind that Yahwism was not a homogenous entity. There were always competing voices among the ancient Israelites (even within the canonical books) concerning the appropriate ways in which this deity should be worshipped. Hence, certain followers of Yahweh condemned the practices that others endorsed.

'ōlā is only one of several biblical expressions utilized to reference human sacrifice by fire. The next two sections will treat the additional Hebrew terms denoting such immolations: *sārap*, *he'ēbîr*, and *nāṭan*.

²⁸³ Cf. Hackett's similar conclusions regarding Deut 12 and 18 (1987: 132).

4.3. *sārap̄*, *he'ēb̄îr*, and *nātan*.4.3.1. *sārap̄*

Simply put, the Hebrew verb *sārap̄* means “to burn” and is frequently qualified by the prepositional phrase *bā'ēš*, “with/by means of/in the fire” (cf. Ex 29:34). Because of the ubiquitous nature of this verb, we shall focus on its occurrence in passages related to the burning of humans. Our attention is first drawn to the use of *sārap̄* as a means of capital punishment in Gen 38:24 (a text which formed part of the Yahwistic corpus).²⁸⁴ Here, Judah issues judgment upon Tamar for becoming pregnant as a result of unlawful sexual relations²⁸⁵ by demanding, “Bring her forth so that she may be burned.” Taken in isolation, it is not readily apparent why burning was commanded as the means of punishment; however, according to the book of Leviticus, burning those who commit sexual impropriety was one means of removing the contamination brought about by unsanctioned intercourse—stoning was an alternative method for eliminating such pollution (cf. Deut 22:21). Lev 21, a passage regarding priestly purity, explains that the priests of Yahweh were prohibited from marrying a woman who had engaged in illicit sex because it would pollute them (Lev 21:7). But the passage does not stop there. It goes on to state (vs. 9) that if a priest’s daughter should have unlawful intercourse, she would not only defile herself but also her father and would, therefore, necessitate her own death by fire (*bā'ēš tīsśāreḇ*). Lev 20:14, an additional Priestly text (as is the entire book of Leviticus), illustrates, moreover, the desired result of killing sexual deviants by means of fire: “Concerning a man who takes a woman and her mother, it is wickedness. All of

²⁸⁴ See Van Seters (1999: 61, 133-34).

²⁸⁵ The verbal form of *z-n-h* is often taken as “to prostitute” but the sense of the verb can connote the general idea of engaging in prohibited intercourse (cf. Deut 22:21).

them shall be burned with fire (*bā'ēš yisrēpū*) so that wickedness will not be in your midst.”

It is in a similar light that we should view the Achan affair of Josh 7. In this instance, however, the situation is more complex than the examples cited above inasmuch as here, it is not only a matter of removing the contamination of iniquity but it is also an issue of eliminating the effects of the *ḥērem* that had been pronounced against Jericho. *ḥērem*-warfare, as we have seen, is presented in the Hebrew Bible as a means of cleansing the land of Canaan by destroying the local inhabitants, who practiced abominations and who might have tempted the Israelites to follow their customs as well (Deut 20:15-18). As for Achan, by stealing objects that were devoted (*ḥērem*) unto Yahweh, he had caused the Israelites to become dedicated by *ḥērem* themselves (Josh 6:17-19; 7:11-12), which resulted in Yahweh allowing their defeat at the hands of their enemies. Thus, to rectify the situation and to turn away the anger (*ḥārôn 'ap*) of Yahweh, the stolen objects were removed from Achan's tent and presented to Yahweh, then Achan, together with his family and belongings were destroyed with stones and fire (*s'ārap + bā'ēš*; Josh 7:22-26).²⁸⁶

These few examples are merely a small representation of the issue of capital punishment in the biblical texts (cf. section 4.1) but they speak to the broader matter of execution as a means of eliminating impurity. Murder, for instance, also required the execution of the killer, given that his blood was the only element which could counter the pollution brought about by shedding innocent blood (Num 35:29-34; Deut 19:11-13); that is, unless the murderer were unknown. In such an eventuality, the sacrifice of a heifer

²⁸⁶ Note the strange sequence in vs. 25b: “all Israel stoned him with a stone, they burned them with fire (*s'ārap + bā'ēš*), and stoned them with stones.”

would make a sufficient substitution (Deut 21:1-9). Given the potential polluting effects of spilling innocent blood, it should come as no great surprise that certain biblical authors denounced child sacrifice by pointing out that the children were innocent victims. Thus, Ps 106:37-38 read:

They sacrificed (*wayyizbeḥû*) their sons and their daughters to the *šēḏîm*.²⁸⁷
They poured out innocent blood (*dām nāqî*), the blood of their sons and daughters whom they sacrificed (*zibbeḥû*) to the cultic images of Canaan. Hence, the land was defiled with blood.

The verb used to convey the notion of sacrifice in these verses is *zābah*, but there are a few instances wherein one finds the verb *sārap* instead. In Deut 12:31, the Canaanite practice of burning children in the fire (*yisrēpû bā'ēs*) to their deities is presented as an abomination to Yahweh. The Sepharvites living in the former kingdom of Israel are described as burning (*sōrēpîm + bā'ēs*) their sons to Adrammelek and Anammelek (2 Kgs 17:31). The Judeans are castigated by Yahweh for burning their sons and daughters in the fire (*lisrōp + bā'ēs*) at the *tōpēt* in the Hinnom Valley (Jer 7:31), and they are again criticized for their actions at the *tōpēt* in that they burned their sons as burnt-sacrifices to Ba'al (*lisrōp + bā'ēs 'ōlōt labbā'al*; Jer 19:4-6). Note, in particular, that in this passage the Judeans are also accused of spilling innocent blood (*dām nāqî*; cf. Jer 7:6) in the area, which likely refers to child sacrifice. This text is important, furthermore, in that it provides a qualification of the phrase “to burn in the fire” by means of the word *'ōlōt* (burnt-sacrifices), thereby indicating that burning children with fire was an act of sacrifice, not a rite of dedication in which children were given over to a life of religious service. Here, the verb is *sārap* (to burn), but a sacrificial interpretation of the parallel verbs *he'ēḥîr* (to cause to pass over) and *nātan* (to give) holds true as well, both of which

²⁸⁷ Sacrificing to *šēḏîm* also occurs in Deut 32:17. Hackett's proposal that these two passages reflect a cult of child sacrifice to Šadday deities in Transjordan, which is also possibly mentioned on the damaged, fragmentary texts from Deir 'Alla (Hackett 1987), was recently revived by Stavrakopoulou (2004: 264-82).

will be discussed in the subsequent section. Weinfeld has been the primary proponent of the view that *he'ēbîr* and *nātan* denote living dedication rather than sacrifice (Weinfeld 1972; 1978; followed more recently by Albertz 1994: 190-93).²⁸⁸ Much of his theory is dependent upon an interpretation of Neo-Assyrian references to burning children, which suggests that the children were dedicated to religious service and not immolated. However, as was previously argued in this dissertation (section 3.1.2.1), the language of the Neo-Assyrian contracts most likely indicates literal burning, i.e., sacrifice, even if the penalty clauses were never enforced.

4.3.2. *he'ēbîr* and *nātan*

4.3.2.1. *mōlek* and *tōpēt*

If *sārap* denotes sacrifice in reference to burning children, we must pause to consider whether or not the same can be said regarding the verb *he'ēbîr* (to cause to pass over), which is frequently accompanied by *bā'ēš* as well. There are several instances wherein the *hiphil* of *'ābar* (“to pass” in the *qal*) does signify child immolation. One of the best examples is Jer 32:35 inasmuch as it is a direct parallel to Jer 7:31 and Jer 19:5. In this case, however, *lisrōp* is replaced by *lēha'ābîr* to describe what the Judeans were doing to their children in the Hinnom Valley, that is, they were causing their children to pass over in the fire as *'ōlōt*. Jer 32:35 specifically describes the recipient of the sacrifices as the *mōlek* (*lammōlek*), despite suggesting that the actions were centered in the high places belonging to Ba'al.²⁸⁹ Who or what was this *mōlek*?

²⁸⁸ Weinfeld's chief antagonist was M. Smith (1975).

²⁸⁹ Dearman argued for the identification of *mōlek* with Ba'al Ḥammon, noting that *mōlek* is equated with *ba'al* in Jer 32:35. In such a case, *mōlek* would be an appellative meaning king, just as *ba'al* meant lord in certain instances. Dearman also made an important observation by showing that Yahweh was, himself,

Two approaches on the matter of *mōleḵ* are: (1) Yahweh was the *mōleḵ*; or (2) Yahweh was the recipient of *mōleḵ*-sacrifices. The logic of the first is that either Yahweh was amalgamated with a Syro-Palestinian deity whose name contained the consonants *m-l-k* (Leslie 1936: 217), or Yahweh was known by the epithet *mōleḵ*, thereby denoting his role as the leading deity/divine ruler of Israel (Buber 1967: 94-99, 111-119, 180). The reasoning of the second perspective is that *mōleḵ* was a sacrificial term like Punic *molk*, and, thus, neither a divine name nor an epithet in its original usage in the Bible (Eissfeldt 1935a, b; followed by Mosca 1975: 233, 273; Ackerman 1992: 137; Smelik 1995: 141). Note the phrase “in its original usage in the Bible”; the point is, some scholars have perceived a development in the term from its representation of a sacrifice to a reference to a deity (or idol as Smelik and Mosca have called it). Smelik understood the transformation as taking place in the Persian era when an attempt was made to disguise the fact that children had previously been sacrificed to Yahweh (Smelik 1995: 141).²⁹⁰ A variant view, which saw the possible existence of both a *mōleḵ* sacrificial term (cf. Lev 18:21; 20:2-5) and a divine name or epithet (Molek or Ba‘al Melek) in the biblical texts (cf. Isa 8:21; 57:9; Amos 5:26; and Zeph 1:5-8), was proposed by Edelman (1987: 730-31). A third and more recent alternative (3) is that Yahweh was not directly associated with the cult of *mōleḵ* but his devotees were, that is, they not only worshipped Yahweh but they also performed sacrifices to a deity named *Mōleḵ* (Day 1989: 69; Heider 1999: 584). Still a fourth (4) possibility is that *mōleḵ* was a creation meant to discredit the sacrifice of children to Yahweh. The proposal was at least raised by Schmidt (2000; cf. 1994: 184; 258, n. 534). To ascertain Yahweh’s involvement in child sacrifice and the

known as king (*meleḵ*) and lord (*ba‘al*) in Hos 2:18 [Eng 16] and Isa 6:5 respectively (Dearman 1992; cf. Dearman 1996: 66-68, where his proposal was discussed but in a less conclusive manner).

²⁹⁰Cf. Mosca (1975: 240) for a summation of his view on the threefold development of the word.

mōlek cult, it will be necessary to continue our textual analysis. Let us begin by returning to Jer 32.

The connection between Ba'al and *mōlek* in Jer 32:35 is not necessarily a contradiction. *mōlek* could be a pejorative epithet for Ba'al in which the vowels for shame (*bōšēf*) were inserted into the word for king (*mēlek*)²⁹¹—this may be a *double entendre* denouncing the Judean monarchy as well, given that the Deuteronomistic authors often portrayed the kings of Judah as the key practitioners of child immolation. Such rhetoric is seen elsewhere in Jeremiah and in the Hebrew Bible where *bōšēf* takes the place of Ba'al.²⁹² Jer 11:13, for instance, states: “For just as the number of your cities, are your deities, Judah, and just as the number of the streets of Jerusalem, you have established altars to the Shameful One (*labbōšēf*), altars to burn (*lēqatṭēr*) unto Ba'al.” Note as well the clear reference to human sacrifice in Jer 3:24: “The Shameful One (*habbōšēf*) consumed (*'ākelā*) the produce of our fathers since the time of our youth, as well as their sheep and cattle, their sons and daughters.” One would be justified in pointing out that when Ba'al's name is distorted by *bōšēf*, the entire word replaces the name, not just its vowels, as in the proposed reconstruction of *mōlek*. Yet, the explanation of *mōlek* as a *double entendre* provides a reasonable rationale for the preservation of the original radicals *m-l-k*. That *mōlek* is not a sacrificial term, like Punic *molk*, but a divine epithet is evinced by the nature of the polemics leveled against the *mōlek* cult, particularly the concept of prostituting after *mōlek* (Lev 20:5; *liznōt 'ahāre hammōlek*), which is a grammatical construction primarily reserved to describe the

²⁹¹ According to Day, who followed the lead of Geiger of the nineteenth century, *mōlek* is a distorted form of *mēlek* (or the participle *mōlēk*) based upon the word for shame, *bōšēf* (Day 1989: 56-58, 84). Such a view has not, however, been accepted by all (Mosca 1975: 122-28 and Heider 1995: 131).

²⁹² The most famous instances are the names of Saul's descendents, i.e., Eshba'al (1 Chr 8:33) vs. Ishbosheth (2 Sam 2:10).

worship of deities other than Yahweh (Ex 34:12-16; Ezek 6:8-10; 20:30).²⁹³ The presence of the definite article, i.e., *hammōlek*, indicates that even if *mōlek* were used as the proper name of a deity, it is based upon a title like the name of the well-known deity Ba'al (lord, ruler), which can also occur in Hebrew with the article, i.e., *habba'al* (cf. Judg 6:25; Jer 32:35). An original spelling of *mōlek* replaced with the vowels of *bōšet*, therefore, is the most likely explanation of *mōlek*: the shameful king.

According to 2 Kgs 23:10, Josiah “made the *tōpēt* unclean, which is in the Ben Hinnom Valley, so that a person could not cause his son or his daughter to pass over in the fire to *mōlek* (*lēha'ābîr + bā'ēš lammōlek*).” There are additional passages which associate child sacrifice with Jerusalem and its kings by utilizing *he'ēbîr* but do not identify the divine recipients. Ahaz, for instance, “caused his son to pass over in the fire (*he'ēbîr bā'ēš*) like the abominations of the nations whom Yahweh dispossessed from before the children of Israel” (2 Kgs 16:3); and Manasseh is similarly portrayed in 2 Kgs 21:6 and 2 Chr 33:6—the latter specifically places the sacrifices in the Hinnom Valley.

It is probably not a coincidence that *tōpēt* is spelled with the same vocalization as *bōšet* (cf. Schmitz 1992), given its associations with the *mōlek* cult; an alternative and possibly original spelling of *tōpēt* is the *topē* of Isa 30:33:

For since yesterday *topē* has been prepared,
 Also it has been established for the king (*lammōlek*),
 Made deep (and) wide.
 Its pile (consisting of) flames and wood has increased.
 The breath of Yahweh is like a torrent of brimstone,
 It burns it up.

If *topē* is the original spelling of *tōpēt* rather than *tōpēt* plus the 3rd person masculine singular suffix *-h*,²⁹⁴ it is possible that the passage preserves the original spelling of *mōlek*

²⁹³ Cf. Day (1989: 82); Heider (1985: 233-45; 1999: 583); Schmidt (2000).

²⁹⁴ See Mosca's translation below as well as Blenkinsopp's (2000: 422-23).

as well: *melek*. Should this supposition be correct, the verse provides an additional candidate for *mōlek*, namely, Yahweh. Yahweh, after all, is the one who exhales fire at the end of the verse and, therefore, oversees the activities at the locale. An additional option would be to see *melek* as a reference to the king of Assyria, whose country is the object of the prophetic discourse;²⁹⁵ or, it is also possible that *melek* refers to a *m-l-k* deity who is not Yahweh but somehow joined to his cult. What is clear, however, is that Yahweh is unmistakably associated with the *top̄tē/top̄et̄* in this verse. Smith, moreover, recently described Isa 30:27-33 “as the best evidence for the early practice of child sacrifice in Israel” and that it is indicative of Yahweh’s sponsorship of the Jerusalem *tōp̄et̄* (Smith 2002: 172; cf. Schmidt 1994: 183). In Mosca’s study of this passage, it was similarly concluded: “The rite of the Jerusalem Topheth—though in hindsight viewed first as unorthodox (Dtr) and finally as idolatrous (Jeremiah and Ezekiel)—was, in fact, part of the official Yahwistic cultus” (Mosca 1975: 212).²⁹⁶ In addition, it should be observed, together with Day (1989: 17), that the fiery imagery utilized in Isa 30:27-33 further supports the notion that causing one’s offspring to pass through the fire to *mōlek* is indicative of sacrifice, not dedication to divine service inasmuch as Assyria’s destruction by fire is clearly described in the text.²⁹⁷

²⁹⁵ That the *tōp̄et̄* was prepared for the king of Assyria was a proposal raised by Heider (1985: 322-23; in contrast to Day 1989: 17, n. 6).

²⁹⁶ Mosca rendered verse 33 as follows (Mosca 1975: 202):

For his Topheth has long been prepared,
He himself is installed as a *mōlek*(-victim).
(Yahweh) has made its fire-pit deep and wide,
With fire and wood in abundance.

The breath of Yahweh,
Like a torrent of sulphur,
Sets it ablaze!

²⁹⁷ Cf. Irwin’s similar comments concerning the *mōlek* imagery in Ezek 38-39 (1995:110-11).

Yahweh's identification with the *melek* of Isa 30:33 is bolstered by the frequent references to Yahweh as king throughout the book of Isaiah (6:5; 33:22; 41:21; 43:15; 44:6; cf. 24:23 for the verbal form *mālak*). Isaiah 57, conversely, potentially substantiates the perspective that Yahweh was distinct from the *melek* associated with Israelite human sacrifice. Yahweh condemns his people in this chapter for performing illicit deeds, such as slaughtering (*šāḥaṭ*) children in the valleys (57:5) and traveling to the king (*lammēlek*) while carrying oil (57:9). Day suggested that not only is this king the divinity known as *Mōlek* but also that this text confirms that *Mōlek* was a deity of the netherworld, given that the king of vs. 9 is located in Sheol (1989: 50-52). Other scholars have since followed the proposal that *Mōlek* is identified here (Zevit 2001: 530). Schmidt noted, moreover, that the author of this passage clearly creates a distinction between *Mōlek* and Yahweh given that vs. 11 portrays the Israelites as having performed child sacrifice without having acknowledged Yahweh in the process: “whom did you dread and fear so that you lied and did not remember me [Yahweh]?” (Schmidt 1994: 259; cf. n. 538). The implication is that they feared *Mōlek* instead. Yet, despite the likelihood that Yahweh is not the king in Isa 57, this does not preclude his identification as such in Isa 30, given that the two chapters most likely date to different eras.²⁹⁸ Such a

²⁹⁸ While the dating of Isaiah is highly speculative, it has been generally accepted that “chapters 1-39 are linked to Isaiah of the eighth century B.C.E. in the context of the Assyrian Empire between 742 and 701. Chapters 40-55 are commonly dated to 540, just at the moment when the rising Persian Empire displaced the brutal and hated domination of Babylon. And chapters 56-66 are dated later, perhaps 520, when Jews who had returned from exile went about the critical and difficult task of reshaping the community of faith after its long, exilic jeopardy” (Brueggemann 1998: 3; cf. an alternative view in Miscal 1993: 11). Chapters 24-27 have also been viewed as an additional division of the book, which might date to the Persian or Hellenistic eras in light of their theology of angels and resurrection (see discussions in Soggin 1989: 299, 309; Sawyer 1993: 84; for an earlier date, consult Zevit 2001: 514, 519 n. 24). Miscal, moreover, is essentially correct when he stated: “We have too little independent information about pre- or postexilic Israel to reconstruct a historical setting or process of writing except in the most general respects” (1993: 11). Indeed, given our current state of knowledge that literacy in Judah only reached high levels starting in the eighth century BCE, at the earliest (cf. Barkay 1992: 349-351; Mazar 1990: 515; Finkelstein and Silberman 2001: 281, 284; Na’aman 1997: 75; Jamieson-Drake 1991: 147; 216), one is hesitant to

conclusion coincides with the basic premise of this dissertation chapter that child immolation was once widely accepted as a licit Yahwistic deed during the pre-exilic era but was later viewed as inappropriate. Isa 34 (also pre-exilic and earlier than ch. 57) solidifies the perspective that Yahweh had once received human victims:

Isa 34:1-10

Come near nations to listen,
 And peoples pay attention;
 The land will listen and its fullness,
 The world and its entire offspring.
 For the wrath (*qéšep*) of Yahweh is against all the nations,
 And burning anger (*hēmā*) against their entire host;
 He has dedicated them to the *hērem*,
 Given them to the slaughter (*lattāḇah*).
 Their slain are caste down,
 And concerning their corpses, their stink ascends,
 And the mountains are melted from their blood.
 The entire host of heaven is rotten,
 And the heavens are rolled like the scroll;
 Their entire host withers,
 As when a leaf withers from a vine,
 And as that which withers from a fig tree.
 For it is intoxicated (*riwwēṭā*),
 My sword in the heavens;
 Upon Edom it has descended,
 And so has my *hērem* on the people for judgment.
 The sword of Yahweh is full of blood,
 It has made itself obese from fat,
 From the blood of rams and male goats,
 From the fat of rams' kidneys;
 For a sacrifice (*zeḇah*) to Yahweh in Boṣrah,
 And a great slaughter (*teḇah*) in the land of Edom.
 Oxen have descended with them,
 And bulls with the mighty;
 Their land has become intoxicated from blood,
 And their dust has been made obese from fat.
 For this is a day of vengeance for Yahweh,
 A year of retribution for the case of Zion.
 Its streams have been turned to tar,
 Its dust to brimstone;
 And its land to burning tar.
 By night and day, it will not be extinguished,
 Forever its smoke will ascend;
 From generation to generation it will be desolate,
 For an eternity no one will pass through it.

ascribe such a massive work as Isa 1-39 (excluding 24-27) to the eighth century. This does not, however, rule out a pre-exilic date for these chapters. It is just to suggest that it is difficult to specify a date beyond the late pre-exilic period.

Here, as in chapter 30, Yahweh's divine judgment is described with imagery that is loaded with fiery language and sacrificial terminology to such an extent that the slaying of the Edomites, as well as their animals, is literally called an immolation (*zeḇāh*)—*ḥērem* is used as well. Hence, both chapters illustrate the notion that Yahweh approved of human sacrifice in war contexts. A passage from Ezekiel should be read in a similar light.²⁹⁹

Ezek 39:17-20

Now you, son of man, thus says my lord, Yahweh, "Speak to the birds, every winged creature, and to every animal of the field, 'Be assembled and come, be gathered from all around to my sacrifice (*zibḥî*) which I am sacrificing (*zōḇē(a)ḥ*) for you, an immense immolation (*zeḇāh*) on the mountains of Israel that you might consume flesh and drink blood. The flesh of warriors you shall consume and the blood of the princes of the land, you shall drink; rams, male lambs and male goats, bulls, the fatlings of Bashan altogether. You will consume fat until you are sated and drink blood until you are drunk, from my sacrifice (*mizzibḥî*) which I will have immolated (*zāḇāḥî*) for you. You will be sated at my table (from) horse and chariot, warrior and every man of war,' declares my lord, Yahweh."

Irwin identified language within Ezek 38-39 which, like Isa 30 and Jer 7, is indicative of *mōleḵ* imagery, such as the appearance of the rarely used word "brimstone" (*gopṛîṭ*) in Ezek 38:22 and Isa 30:33 (one should add Isa 34:9 as well) to describe the nature of Yahweh's judgment. Of particular significance is Irwin's proposal that Gog's burial place in the Valley of *hā'ōḇērîm* (the individuals who pass over; Ezek 39:11)³⁰⁰ is a specific allusion to causing one's offspring to pass over (*he'ēbîr*) to *mōleḵ*. Hence, so it has been argued, *hā'ōḇēr* might have been the sacrificial term utilized in ancient Israel to

²⁹⁹ There is at the minimum one clear reference to *ḥērem* in Ezek 44:29 but not in a war narrative. Given Ezekiel's use of sacrificial imagery to discuss divine judgment (chapter 38-39), one would expect more examples of *ḥērem*-dedication in the book. It might actually occur in Ezek 32:3 as a *double entendre* meaning both a net and a type of human sacrifice. The verse is part of an oracle against the Egyptians and it is arguable that Yahweh's judgment upon them is described with sacrificial imagery as well. Ezek 32:3 reads: "Thus says my lord, Yahweh, 'I will spread upon you my net (*risî*) with an assembly of many peoples and they shall send you up in my net.'" The final phrase *wēhe'ēlūḵā beḥermî* can also be translated: "They will send you up (as a burnt-sacrifice) by means of my *ḥērem*."

³⁰⁰ Irwin identified this valley as the Jezreel (1995: 101-03, and n. 32). Concerning the Hinnom Valley, he stated: "While the prophet alludes to the Hinnom Valley it is clear that the sacrifice he envisions requires a valley of larger size. Thus the Jezreel valley is used by the prophet to represent a Hinnom Valley of *eschatological* proportions" (Irwin 1995: 102; emphasis his). Even so, one should not too quickly dismiss the Hinnom Valley as a candidate.

denote a victim who was made to pass over. Irwin went to great lengths to counter the hypothetical objection that a scholar might raise concerning the unlikelihood that a Yahwistic prophet would portray Yahweh's immolation by using *mōlek* imagery. Irwin essentially argued against such a view by suggesting that Yahweh might be the one who prepares the sacrifice outlined in Ezek 39:17-20 but the actual elements of the sacrifice are non-Yahwistic.³⁰¹ Taken to its logical conclusion, then, Irwin was intimating that a Yahwistic prophet would feel justified in representing Yahweh as a participant in a sacrificial ceremony devoted to a different deity (Irwin 1995). But is such a conclusion really much different from the objection brought forth by the hypothetical protestor? I think not. A much simpler solution is to recognize the probability that *mōlek* (rather, *melek*) and Yahweh were originally the same deity.³⁰² The book of Ezekiel does not specifically denounce the *mōlek* cult. In fact, as will be shown below, Ezekiel actually supports the notion that Yahweh had demanded human immolation in the form of child sacrifice. Thus, Ezekiel appears to represent a branch of Yahwism which had not yet attempted to denounce human sacrifice at the *top̄tē/tōp̄et* as non-Yahwistic by naming the recipient the *mōlek*. This is in contrast to the Deuteronomistic and Priestly works in which *mōlek* plays an important role. It should be noted as well that Yahweh is identified in Ezekiel as the one who will rule over his people as king (*'emlōk*; Ezek 20:33) and whose throne is located in Jerusalem (Ezek 43:7).

³⁰¹ Irwin cited three points in favor of this conclusion (1995: 107-09): (1) the phrase "an immense immolation" (vs. 17) is only found elsewhere in the Bible to refer to sacrifices devoted to Ba'al (2 Kgs 10:19) and to Dagon (Judg 16:23); (2) the consumption of the blood and the fat taken from a sacrifice (cf. vs. 19) was atypical of Israelite customs; and (3) overindulging at a sacrificial feast (cf. vs. 19) is known from the Ugaritic traditions (RS 24.258).

³⁰² In a footnote, Irwin did acknowledge the possibility that *mōlek* and Yahweh were identical (1995: 93-94, n. 3).

Returning to the verse which began our digression into the books of Isaiah and Ezekiel, the *lēha 'ābîr + lammōlek* of 2 Kgs 23:10 likewise appears in Lev 18:21 but in the form of an injunction: “You shall not give (*lō(') ʾittēn*) some of your seed to cause (it) to pass over to *mōlek*; thus, you shall not pollute the name of your god. I am Yahweh.” At first glance, this seems an odd context to treat child sacrifice, that is, in a text devoted to the topic of sexual purity. This has likely led some to see *mōlek* worship as an act of sexual impropriety instead of human immolation.³⁰³ The passage, however, is not solely concerned with the act of sex itself; rather, it is also interested in the product of the intercourse: children. In other words, Lev 18:19-23 is literally about what one does with one’s seed. Note as well that whereas the sexual acts denounced in these verses mainly focus on the defilement of the sexual deviants, causing one’s seed to pass over to *mōlek* pollutes Yahweh’s name. This is because spiritual apostasy has often been described in the Hebrew Bible in terms of sexual impropriety (cf. Ezek 23 below; and especially Hosea 4). Hence, just as the Israelites could corrupt themselves by having illicit intercourse, they could also pollute their spiritual husband, Yahweh, by serving other deities. This is borne out more fully in Lev 20:1-5. Here, giving (*nāʾan*) one’s seed to *mōlek* is portrayed as inappropriate spiritual intercourse (lit. prostituting after *mōlek*), something which defiles Yahweh’s name and sanctuary.³⁰⁴ What is more, the illicit act

³⁰³ See Weinfeld’s treatment concerning the rabbinical traditions on *mōlek* (cf. also Snaith 1966), which tended to interpret the *mōlek* cult as indicative of idolatry; thus, one did not sacrifice a child but granted it to an idolatrous priest or had a child with a female gentile (Weinfeld 1972: 142-44). This perspective is not too greatly removed from Weinfeld’s own theory of *mōlek* worship, that is, it was an act of dedication, not sacrifice.

³⁰⁴ At least two possible explanations can be posited for the portrayal of *mōlek* as a deity other than Yahweh in Leviticus: (1) the Priestly writers utilized the same interpretive strategy as the Deuteronomists in seeking to distance Yahweh from the sacrifice of Israelite heirs or (2) the Deuteronomists had done such a good job in creating such a dichotomy that Yahweh’s connections to *mōlek* no longer existed by the era of the Priestly authors.

requires the execution of the apostate by stoning, the main alternative to burning a transgressor in order to remove contamination. The verses read:

Lev 20:1-5

Then Yahweh spoke to Moses, saying: “To the sons of Israel you will say, ‘Any man from the sons of Israel or from the sojourner(s) who live in Israel who gives (*yittēn*) from his offspring to *mōlek*, shall certainly be executed; the people of the land shall stone him with stone(s). I, myself, will set my face against that man and I will cut him from the midst of his people given that from his offspring he gave (*nātan*) to *mōlek* in order to defile my sanctuary and to pollute my holy name. However, if the people of the land intentionally cover their eyes from noticing that man when he gives (*bēittō*) from his offspring to *mōlek* so as to not execute him, then I will set my face against that man and against his family and I will cut him and everyone who prostitutes after him in order to prostitute after *mōlek* from the midst of their people.’”

Lev 20:1-5 lacks any reference to *he ‘ēbîr* but lists *nātan* instead, which might be an abbreviated form of *he ‘ēbîr + nātan* (cf. Ezek 16 below). While *nātan* can refer to the dedication of priests (Num 18:6; 1 Sam 1:11) or the process of performing an offering (Num 15:21) or sacrifice (Lev 22:22), the latter is better suited for this passage inasmuch as the apostate *mōlek* worshipper is the one singled out at the start as deserving death, not his children. Yahweh only calls for the punishment of his family or clan should the death sentence not be carried out by those who witness this act of adultery. In other words, by not killing the apostate, the family would be equally culpable because their lack of action would be taken as passive endorsement of the sacrifice. Furthermore, if the passage were about the dedication of individuals to serve in some *mōlek* priesthood, then why were the new devotees not identified as worthy of execution together with the apostate at the beginning of the text?

4.3.2.2. Micah

The book of Micah utilizes the verb *nātan* as well when it questions the necessity of performing child sacrifice to Yahweh (Mic 6:6-8):

With what shall I draw near to Yahweh,
 When I bow down before the God on high?
 Shall I approach him with burnt-sacrifices,
 With year old calves?
 Shall Yahweh be pleased with more than a thousand rams,
 With ten thousand streams of oil?
 Shall I give (*ha'ettēn*) my firstborn (as a sacrifice) for my transgression,
 The fruit of my loins (as a sacrifice) for the iniquity of my life-force?
 Let it be declared to you, O man, what is appropriate,
 And what Yahweh seeks from you:
 Only to practice justice,
 To love loyalty,
 And to live in humility with your God.

Upon first reading these verses, one might view them as rejecting the sacrificial system,³⁰⁵ while emphasizing the necessity to live appropriately in Yahweh's eyes, especially by practicing social justice, a key focus of the book. Similarly, an additional prophetic passage appears at first glance to advocate such sentiments:

Jer 7:21-23

Thus states Yahweh of Hosts, the god of Israel, "Add your burnt-sacrifices onto your sacrifices and consume (the) flesh; for I did not inform your fathers, nor command them, on the day they were brought out of the land of Egypt regarding issues of burnt-sacrifice and sacrifice. However, this thing I did command them, saying, 'Listen to my voice that I might be your deity and that you might be my people; also that you should walk in every way that I command you so that it will go well for you.'"

Closer examination of the context of these verses reveals, however, that Jer 7 is not denouncing the sacrificial system but complimenting it with the notion of the necessity of obeying Yahweh's moral regulations. It essentially contends that worshipping at Yahweh's temple is worthless unless it is genuinely expressive of compliance in other areas of life (Jer 7:1-11). The notion that sacrifice is expressive of obedience is illustrated in Jer 17:24-26:

³⁰⁵ Mays described the response in verse 6:8 as "a polemic against sacrifice" (1976: 137).

It will occur that if you fully listen to me, declares Yahweh, to not bring a load through the gates of this city on the Sabbath day and to set apart as holy the Sabbath day so as to not do on it any work, then there will enter through the gates of this city kings and princes sitting on the throne of David (and) riding on the chariot and the horses, they and their princes (as well as) the men of Judah and the inhabitants of Jerusalem; and this city will remain forever. And there will come from the cities of Judah, the vicinity of Jerusalem, the land of Benjamin, the lowlands, the hill country, and the Negev those bringing a burnt-sacrifice, a sacrifice, a grain offering, and incense as well as those bringing a thanksgiving offering to the temple of Yahweh.

The concept that righteous living is more important than mere sacrifice is promoted elsewhere in the prophetic corpus (Isa 1:10-17; Hos 6:6; cf. 1 Sam 15:22). It is crucial to realize that these texts draw upon legitimate sacrifices when presenting their claim that it is more vital to walk in accordance with Yahweh's urgings than merely to offer empty sacrifices. Hence, it is arguable that the book of Micah attempts, like the other prophetic works cited here, not only to build a case for virtuous living by referring to actual sacrifices and offerings but also to encourage the awareness that sacrifices are only effective if backed up by morality. The message, therefore, is that even if all the sacrifices and libations listed in Mic 6:6-8 were performed, they would not sufficiently quell Yahweh's anger. The tone is similar to Jer 7:21-23: you can keep piling up sacrifices but in and of themselves, they will do you no good; to the contrary, it is obedience which forms the basis of divine approval.

The large quantity of animals and oil listed in Mic 6:6-8 is clearly hyperbolic; thus, the reference to child sacrifice could be an exaggeration as well.³⁰⁶ Several scholars have suggested such an interpretation in light of their supposition that human sacrifice was an illicit practice in Yahwism (Sweeney 2000: 400; Mays 1976: 140; Wolff 1990: 178-79). Yet, what if the exaggeration were not in terms of the sacrificial victim but in regards to the purpose of the sacrifice, i.e., using the sacrifice of a firstborn (or, any child:

³⁰⁶ The alternative is to read Mic 6:6-8 as building to a climax of the most valuable type of sacrifice: firstborn immolation (so Mosca 1975: 225; Andersen and Freedman 2000: 538).

“the fruit of my loins”) for the purpose of atonement? This is certainly possible given that the other victims listed in the passage are typical sacrificial objects and, therefore, not embellishments, even though the number of victims is exaggerated. Unfortunately, our knowledge is limited concerning the purpose of sacrificing the firstborn child within Yahwism. Mesha’s probable sacrifice to Chemosh could be taken as atonement but this is only a matter of speculation. Abraham’s near immolation of Isaac is explained as a test and Jephthah’s sacrifice of his daughter was performed in fulfillment of a vow sworn in the context of war. Hiel, furthermore, sacrificed his firstborn son, as well as his youngest, as a foundation sacrifice. Consulting the passages in which the sacrifice of the firstborn is commanded in the legal portions of the Pentateuch might help clarify the underlying rationale for sacrificing firstborn children to Yahweh.

4.3.2.3. Legislative Texts

Like Mic 6:7, the verb *nātan* is used when the God of Israel demands that the Israelites give their firstborn males to him (Ex 22:28-29 [Eng 29-30]):

Your produce and your wine you shall not delay; the firstborn of your sons you shall grant to me (*titten li*). Thus, you shall do for your cattle (and) sheep: for seven days the (young) will be with its mother, on the eighth day you shall grant it to me (*tittēno li*).

This is a fascinating passage in light of the fact that herein one finds a rare reference to a command by Israel’s deity asking for the sacrifice of a firstborn male but which lacks a ransom clause (cf. Ezek 20:26).³⁰⁷ An additional text is Ex 13:2;³⁰⁸ in this case, however, a ransom clause is presented later in the passage (13:12-15). Beginning with Ex 13:12-

³⁰⁷ The lack of ransom clauses in both Ex 22:28-29 and Ezek 20:26 was noted by Schmidt (1994: 183, n. 208).

³⁰⁸ “Set apart for me [Yahweh] (*qaddes li*) every firstborn, i.e., the one that opens every womb, among the sons of Israel, among humankind and beast, it is my possession.”

15, therefore, the primary texts referring to the redemption of the firstborn³⁰⁹ are as follows:

Ex 13:12-15

Then you shall cause to pass over (*ha'āḥartā*) to Yahweh every firstborn; every firstborn of the offspring of a beast which belongs to you, the males shall be Yahweh's. Yet, every firstborn of a donkey you shall ransom (*tip̄dē*) by means of a sheep; although if you do not ransom (*tip̄dē*) (it), then you shall snap its neck; every human firstborn among your sons, you shall ransom (*tip̄dē*). Hence, it shall be when your son asks you in the future, "Why?", you will tell him, "With a strong hand Yahweh caused us to go out from Egypt, from a house of servitude. Because Pharaoh was hard set against sending us away, Yahweh took the life of every firstborn in the land of Egypt from human firstborn to animal firstborn; that is why I sacrifice (*zōḥē(a)h*) to Yahweh all the firstborn males but all the firstborn of my sons, I ransom (*'ep̄dē*)."

Ex 34:18-20

The Festival of Unleavened Bread you shall keep, seven days you shall consume unleavened bread which I commanded you for the appointed time, the month of Aviv, because during the month of Aviv, you went forth from Egypt. Every firstborn is my [Yahweh's] possession as well as every male³¹⁰ of your herd, the firstborn of cattle and sheep. Every firstborn of a donkey you shall ransom (*tip̄dē*) by means of a sheep, although if you do not ransom (*tip̄dē*) (it), then you shall snap its neck; every firstborn of your sons you shall ransom (*tip̄dē*), but they shall not be present before me with nothing (i.e., they must bring a substitute sacrifice).

Num 18:14-17

Everything dedicated (*ḥērem*) in Israel shall belong to you [to Aaron and his descendents]. Every firstborn of all flesh, which is brought near to Yahweh, among humankind or beast shall belong to you. Yet, you shall definitely ransom (*pādō tip̄dē*) the firstborn of humankind and the firstborn of unclean beasts you shall ransom (*tip̄dē*) as well. You shall pay (*tip̄dē*) its ransom from a newborn (on up) at your arranged price, five shekels of silver at the tabernacle/temple shekel-it is twenty *gērā*. Nevertheless, the firstborn of a head of cattle or the firstborn of a sheep or the firstborn of a goat you shall not ransom (*tip̄dē*)—they are set apart (*qōḏes*); their blood you shall sprinkle upon the altar and their fat you shall burn as incense with fire as a pleasing aroma to Yahweh.

The following passage from Leviticus discusses the regulations established for ransoming firstborn beasts as well as beings dedicated by *ḥērem*:

Lev. 27:26-29

Yet, the firstborn which is born first belongs to Yahweh among beasts; a man shall not set it apart; whether cattle or sheep, it belongs to Yahweh. If it is among the unclean beasts he shall ransom (*ūpādā*) (it) at your arranged price and he shall add a fifth to it; but if it is not redeemed (*yiggā'ēl*), then it will be sold at your arranged price. However, everything dedicated (*ḥērem*) that a man dedicates (*yaḥārīm*) to Yahweh from among everything that he owns, be it human or beast or field belonging to him, shall not be sold nor redeemed (*yiggā'ēl*); every dedicated thing (*ḥērem*) is especially set apart (*qōḏes qādāsīm*); it belongs to Yahweh. Every dedicated being (*ḥērem*) who has been dedicated (*yohōram*) from among humanity shall not be ransomed (*yippādē*); he will certainly be executed.

³⁰⁹ Firstborn is represented in Hebrew by *péter rehem* (the offspring who literally opens the womb) and *beḳōr* (firstborn).

³¹⁰ This strange *niphal* form of *zākar* (to remember) should be amended to *zākār* (male) plus the definite article, which merely requires the substitution of *hē* for *tāw* (see Brown, Driver, and Briggs 1952: 270).

To these, should be added the treatment in Numbers concerning the role played by the Levites as the surrogate firstborns for the other children of Israel:

Num 8:14-21 (cf. Num 3:11-13, 40-51)

“You shall separate the Levites from the midst of the sons of Israel; thus, the Levites will belong to me. Thereafter the Levites shall come to serve the Tent of Meeting; you shall purify them and you shall wave them as a wave-offering because they have certainly been given to me (*nēṭunîm nēṭunîm*) from the midst of the sons of Israel; in place of that which opens every womb, the firstborn of all³¹¹ from the sons of Israel I have taken them for my own. For all the firstborn among the sons of Israel, among humans and animals, belong to me; on the day I smote every firstborn in the land of Egypt, I set them apart for myself. Now I will take the Levites in place of all the firstborn among the sons of Israel that I might give (*wā’ettēnā*) the Levites, who were given (*nēṭunîm*), to Aaron and to his sons from the midst of the sons of Israel to perform the duty of the sons of Israel at the Tent of Meeting and to atone (*lēkappēr*) for the sons of Israel so that there might not be among the sons of Israel a plague when the sons of Israel approach the sanctuary.” Thus, Moses, Aaron, and the entire congregation of the sons of Israel did to the Levites according to all which Yahweh commanded Moses regarding the Levites. Indeed, the sons of Israel did thusly to them. Then the Levites purified themselves and washed their clothes; Aaron waved them as a wave-offering before Yahweh and Aaron atoned for them in order to purify them.

The justification for Yahweh’s claim on the firstborn among humans and animals is presented in these texts as related to the events of the Passover at which time Yahweh killed the firstborn beasts and children of Egypt (Ex 13; 34; Num 8). Regrettably the one legislative passage which lacks a ransom clause, Ex 22, does not describe the purpose of the sacrifice. Perhaps the text does not specify the type of sacrifice for which firstborns could qualify because they could serve as the victims for any immolation.³¹² In Exodus 13, a generic verb denoting sacrifice is utilized in the father’s explanation to his child as to why he sacrifices (*zōbē(a)h*) firstborn animals. The point of the speech is that the animal sacrifices were meant to commemorate the slaying of the Egyptian firstborn animals by Yahweh; based upon the logic of the passage, the sacrifice of firstborn Israelite children would have served a similar purpose had a law of ransoming them not

³¹¹ The Hebrew is problematic here. Among other things, the more common masculine word *péter* appears here in the feminine, its only occurrence in the Bible. *bēkōr*, however, which is in apposition to it, is in the masculine.

³¹² According to Lev 22:27, eight days old was the minimum age for an animal victim who could be sacrificed by fire (*lēqorban ’iššē*).

been in place. As for Num 18, the animals not ransomed were to be immolated for the purpose of sprinkling their blood on Yahweh's altar and for burning their fat as a pleasing aroma to him; such sacrifices are described with very similar language in Lev 17:5-6 as peace-sacrifices (*zibhê šelāmîm*). Num 8 specifies that the Levites were to be the replacements for the firstborn Israelites. As their surrogates, the Levites were to be dedicated to the service of the tabernacle. It is interesting to note that one of their primary responsibilities, as enumerated by the passage, was to atone for the sins of Israel. It would be too great a stretch, however, to suppose from this one text that sacrificed firstborn children would have commonly fulfilled a similar purpose, particularly since this passage indicates that the Israelite firstborn children would have served at the tabernacle had the Levites not taken their place. This text, then, in contrast to the other passages cited above, does not support the concept that the firstborn children would have been sacrificed had a system of redemption not been in place.

The legislative material encountered here essentially signifies that firstborn animals (and by analogy, firstborn humans) could be sacrificed in commemoration of Passover, as peace-sacrifices, or for any purpose—that is, if Ex 22 should be read in this fashion. Unexpectedly, none of the firstborn sacrifices represented in these passages is called an *'ōlā*. Yet, *'ōlōi* are the best known cases of human firstborn immolation in the Hebrew Bible. What is more, the quintessential example of a ransomed firstborn child is Isaac in the current version³¹³ of Gen 22 and he was scheduled to be a burnt-sacrifice. Not only does this narrative exemplify the issue of sacrificial substitution but it also illustrates the intention of Yahweh's demand on the firstborn: without ransom, the

³¹³ The shift in name from Elohim to Yahweh at the climax of the sacrifice narrative (vs. 11) causes one to wonder whether or not Abraham sacrificed Isaac in an alternative (possibly older) version of the story.

firstborn child was destined for sacrifice. Gen 22, therefore, is best understood as the embodiment in narrative form of the legislation discussed elsewhere in the Pentateuch that Yahweh had the right to demand the sacrifice of firstborn humans but had established a method of substitution. Yet, Abraham's willingness to obey the command indicates that, for the author (Yahwist), child sacrifice was once acceptable in Israelite religion but was unnecessary in a later period.

The current form of Gen 22 is associated with the Yahwist (Van Seters 1999: 129, 138; cf. Speiser 1964: 161-66),³¹⁴ who presumably wrote in the 6th century following the work of the Deuteronomists; the Priestly corpus was apparently composed later during the Persian era (Van Seters 1999: 78; 183). As for the key legislative passages concerning the sacrifice of the firstborn, scholars have supposed that Ex 22:28-29 (part of the Covenant Code)³¹⁵ was the earliest—or, at least, an early³¹⁶—biblical passage about the law of the firstborn (Mosca 1975: 237) and that the law was subsequently changed to include clauses concerning the ransoming of the firstborn, such as in Ex 34:19-20 (part of the Yahwist's work) and Ex 13:2, 12-13, and 15 (part of the Priestly work) (Day 1989: 66). By contrast, rather than viewing the redemption of the firstborn as a secondary development, some have supposed that ransoming was always implicit in Ex 22:28-29. According to Van Seters: "Since the whole law in Exod 22:28b-29 [29b-30] seems to presuppose both Deuteronomy and the Holiness Code of Lev 22:27 and also borrows the wording of Exod 13:11-16 and 34:20, the requirement about giving the firstborn sons to

³¹⁴ Von Rad attributed the narrative to the Elohist (1961: 233), yet the existence of the Elohist is no longer certain (cf. discussion in Van Seters 1999: 74-79; but see also Soggin 1989: 118-20).

³¹⁵ Ex 22:28-29 is generally recognized as a component of the so-called Covenant Code (de Vaux 1964: 70), spanning from at least Ex 20:22 to 23:33 (Soggin 1989: 167). Van Seters assigned the code to the work of the Yahwist (1999: 199; 2003: 172-75).

³¹⁶ De Vaux viewed it as the earliest legislative passage, although it was slightly preceded by Ex 34:19-20 (de Vaux 1964: 70-71; cf. Leslie 1936: 160-61).

Yahweh is a statement of principle that presupposes the qualifications of the other laws in J” (2003: 152). Thus, for Van Seters, it presupposes the qualification of redeeming the firstborn humans (2003: 152-53). Mosca followed de Vaux’s reasoning that it is unlikely that there ever existed anywhere “a constant general law, compelling the suppression of the first-born, who are the hope of the race” (de Vaux 1964: 71). Mosca, therefore, assumed that the redemption of the firstborn had to have been present at the initial stage of the development of the law of the firstborn, even though Ex 22 does not contain such a condition (Mosca 1975: 237).³¹⁷ But this is to argue from silence and the alternative is still possible: Ex 22:28-29, despite its current placement in the Yahwist’s corpus, might preserve an Israelite tradition in which the god of Israel commanded the sacrifice of the firstborn sons. Had the redemption of the sons been intended in the passage, the writer could have easily provided a ransom clause. Ezek 20:26 supports the notion that there was a tradition which had called for the general sacrifice of firstborn Israelite males but which was eventually viewed as unnecessary (cf. translation below).

What, then, can be said about Micah 6 in light of the purpose of child sacrifice as represented in the legislative texts? Sacrificing a firstborn child in order to atone for sin is difficult to demonstrate from the Hebrew Bible. Nevertheless, the lack of conformity within the legal corpus concerning the function of firstborn immolation suggests that a firstborn could serve as the sacrificial victim in various circumstances. Perhaps this is also the reason why the immolations of firstborn children as *‘ōlōt* do not seek to achieve a single objective. Thus, by questioning whether or not a firstborn child would sufficiently atone for sin, the book of Micah is not rejecting child sacrifice as illicit; rather, it implies that it is unusual as a means of obtaining atonement, as are streams of oil and over one

³¹⁷ Noort expressed similar sentiments to those of de Vaux and Mosca (Noort 2002: 9).

thousand rams. It is important to note that despite the likelihood that the current form of Micah does not antedate the exilic era,³¹⁸ Sweeney interpreted Mic 6 as reflecting the historical setting of the Assyrian besiegement of Jerusalem in 701 B.C.E., stating: “Micah, after all, is a refugee from the Shephelah who apparently was forced to seek shelter in Jerusalem from the Assyrian invaders. This chapter appears to reflect his perspectives on the causes of the disaster and the attempts by the people to appeal to YHWH for help” (Sweeney 2000: 395). While he did not present any substantial evidence to indicate that the chapter must date to this specific setting³¹⁹ and we should keep in mind that the passage could reflect a Judean crisis prompted by the Babylonians, it is an intriguing suggestion, especially given 2 Kgs 3:27 and its probable portrayal of the attempt to atone for sin via human sacrifice when faced with besiegement. Sweeney, conversely, did not make the connection between 2 Kgs 3 and Mic 6:7 in this regard due to his perspective that the latter is hyperbolic, which was informed by his view that human immolation was illegal among the ancient Israelites (Sweeney 2000: 400).

³¹⁸ Given that Mic 4:10 mentions the Judean exile to Babylon, the version of Micah which has been handed down to us probably does not date to the pre-exilic era, despite the plausibility of an eighth century date of the prophet bearing that name (Sweeney 2000: 342; Soggin 1989: 319-21; cf. discussion in Shaw 2000).

³¹⁹ Sweeney primarily argued for the eighth century reality behind this chapter by noting that it is probable that the individuals (Moses, Miriam, Aaron, Ahab, Baalam) mentioned in Mic 6:4-5, 16 were already known in the Hebrew literary traditions extant by the late eighth century, i.e., J’s contribution to the Torah and a Hezekian version of the Deuteronomistic History. Such an early date for both works, however, is far from certain. Sweeney also referenced the likelihood that the Temple cult, which is a key component in chapter 6, would have been important to the Judeans in the face of a national crisis such as Sennacherib’s invasion (Sweeney 2000: 394-95). It would, however, have been essential during a later crisis as well.

4.3.2.4. Ezekiel

The book of Ezekiel, a post-586 BCE work,³²⁰ solidifies the notion that causing one's children to pass over to a deity (*he'ēbîr*, or *he'ēbîr + nātan*)³²¹ was a matter of immolation, even when lacking the prepositional phrase *bā'ēs*:

Ezek 16:20-21 (cf. vs. 36)³²²

You [Jerusalem] took your sons and daughters whom you bore to me and you sacrificed (*wattizbāhîm*) them to them [the male cultic images of vs. 17]³²³ to consume (*le'ēkōl*). Is it the most insignificant of your whoring? You even slaughtered (*wattishāṭî*) my sons; you gave them away by causing them to pass over (*wattittēnîm bēha'ābîr*) to them.

Ezek 20:25-31

I also gave them statutes that were not good and customs in which they could not live. I made them unclean by their gifts in causing every firstborn to pass over (*bēha'ābîr*) so that I could decimate them/make them infertile (*'āsimmēm*), so that they would know that I am Yahweh.

Therefore, speak to the house of Israel, son of man, and say to them, “Thus says the lord, Yahweh, ‘Still in this regard your fathers blasphemed me by acting utterly unfaithfully towards me. That is to say, I brought them to the land which I lifted up my hand to give to them but they regarded every tall hill and every luscious tree; and they sacrificed there, their sacrifices; presented there, the aggravation of their offering; set up there, the scent of their soothing (sacrifices); and poured out there, their libations. I said to them, ‘What is (this) high place which you have entered into there?’ Therefore, it has been called Bamah until this day.” For this reason, speak to the house of Israel, “Thus says the lord, Yahweh, ‘In the way of your fathers, have you become unclean and after their abominable idols, have you whored? (Indeed), in lifting up your gifts by causing your sons to pass over in the fire (*bēha'ābîr + bā'ēs*), you have become unclean by all your idols until today. Will I allow you to consult me, house of Israel? As I live,’ declares the lord, Yahweh, ‘I will not allow you to consult me.’”

The verbs *zābah* (sacrifice), *šahaṭ* (slaughter), and *šāmēm* (decimate, make infertile)³²⁴ are utilized in the above texts in conjunction with *he'ēbîr* and *nātan*, thereby showing

³²⁰ According to the introduction to the book, the prophet ministered during the latter days of the Judean monarchy, beginning his prophetic career in the early sixth century (Ezek 1:1-3). Ezek 29:17 suggests that the prophet was active until 571 BCE (Soggin 1989: 356). Hence, a traditional date for Ezekiel's prophetic activities is 593-571 BCE (Zevit 2001: 555; Greenberg 1983: 12; Sawyer 1993: 105; cf. Eichrodt 1970: 1). The composition of the book, therefore, is at least exilic if not post-exilic.

³²¹ The divine recipients of sacrificed children who are made to pass over are so indicated by the use of the preposition *l-*, as in Ezek 16:21, Lev 18:21, and Ex 13:12.

³²² Ezek 16 refers to the recipients of human immolation in generic terms throughout the passage.

³²³ Following the JPS' *Tanakh* (1985), which provided a more idiomatic translation: “You even took the sons and daughters that you bore to Me and sacrificed them to those [images] as food—as if your harlotries were not enough, you slaughtered My children and presented them as offerings to them!”

³²⁴ The concept of infertility and the root *š-m-m* is seen in Ezek 36:34-36. Both to decimate and to make infertile fit the context of Ezek 20:26. The author may have had both concepts in mind: Yahweh decimates them with the result that the Israelites are infertile after having lost their children through sacrifice.

that passing children through the fire denotes death.³²⁵ What is more, these two passages are illuminating because of their emphasis upon Yahweh's endorsement of sacrificing firstborn males. While Ezek 20 might present Yahweh as "remorseful" concerning the bad ordinances he had prescribed, it admits that he had ordained the rite of child sacrifice, which is in contrast to his outright denials in Jeremiah (7:31; 19:5; 32:35). It then goes on to say that child immolation was misappropriated by the Israelites and directed towards other deities, resulting in the defilement of Israel. It is this misappropriation which is particularly denounced by Ezekiel: they slaughtered *Yahweh's sons* to other deities, the very children destined to be sacrificed to him (Ezek 16). These notions are again spelled out in Ezek 23:37-39:

For they [Samaria and Jerusalem] were adulterous and had blood on their hands; with their idols they committed adultery and also their sons, whom they bore unto me, they caused to pass over (*he'ēbīrū*) to them for food (*lē'oklâ*). Still this they did to me: they made my sanctuary unclean on that day and polluted my Sabbaths; that is, after they slaughtered (*ūbēšāhāṭām*) their sons to their idols, they came to my sanctuary on that day in order to defile it. Thus they did in the midst of my temple.

Again, we encounter the connection between shedding innocent blood, contamination, and child sacrifice as well as the notion that individuals who sacrificed children also worshipped Yahweh.

4.3.3. Summation

It has thus far been argued that *sārāp*, *he'ēbīr*, and *nātan* are frequently found in passages which describe the sacrifice of children to unidentified deities, as well as to Ba'al, to Yahweh, and to the *mōteq*. These texts also show a strong emphasis on distancing Yahwism from child sacrifice either by means of Yahweh's denials/regrets (Jeremiah vs. Ezekiel) or by suggesting that Yahweh wanted the Israelites to ransom their

³²⁵ Cf. Ex 13:12-15. There, *zābah* is synonymous with *he'ēbīr* as well.

children (Gen 22 and those texts with ransom clauses). An additional stratagem employed by several biblical authors was to identify the recipient of child sacrifice near Jerusalem as the *mōlek*; there are five passages wherein this term definitely appears (Lev 18:21; 20:1-5; 1 Kgs 11:7; 2 Kgs 23:10; Jer 32:35; all post-586 BCE texts)³²⁶ and it may also occur in its original form, *melek*, in several others (Isa 57 and 30). While there is evidence to suggest that deities with a name consisting of the radicals *m-l-k* existed in the Levant,³²⁷ there is no substantial proof to suggest that *mōlek* was anything other than a bastardized form of an epithet for a better known god, such as Ba'al or even Yahweh, for that matter. Furthermore, there does not appear to be any clear evidence outside the biblical material that any *m-l-k* deity received human sacrificial victims (Schmidt 1994: 184, 258, n. 534; cf. 100).³²⁸ In light of the attempt by the biblical writers to distance Yahwism from heir immolation, one could make a strong case that *mōlek* was actually a distortion of the title for the true *melek* of Israel, Yahweh. Regarding Jer 32 and its identification of *mōlek* with Ba'al, it is possible that this, too, was a purposeful misrepresentation in order to further argue that Yahweh, who was also called the *ba'al* of

³²⁶ The two passages from Leviticus' Holiness Code (Lev 17-26) are from the Priestly corpus (Ackerman 1992: 117; Van Seters 1999: 202-05); the entire book has been viewed as originating from the Priestly perspective (Soggin 1989: 161; Levine 1989: xxviii). As stated above, this dissertation is following Van Seters' contention and the now standard perspective that the Priestly writer does not antedate the fall of Jerusalem in the sixth century. The Deuteronomistic History is at the earliest an exilic work inasmuch as the destruction of Jerusalem is reported in the corpus. The same holds true for the book of Jeremiah.

³²⁷ In support of this notion, *m-l-k* clearly appears as a divinity at Ugarit in RS 24.244 (line 41) and 24.251 (line 17') (cf. Astour 1968; Heider 1985: 115-16; Day 1989: 47) and *ma-lik* occurs in Akkadian, where he is synonymous with a netherworld deity, Nergal (Day 1989: 47-49). To these one might add the references to *ma-lik*, *milku/i*, and *mlk* in personal names from Ebla, Ugarit, and Mari (see Heider 1985: 408-19, in particular) but in certain cases the names could be read as containing an epithet for a monarch (Heider 1985: 103) or a deity, i.e., not necessarily a divine personal name (Day 1989: 47-48). However, a clear connection between these *m-l-k* deities and biblical *mōlek* has, to my knowledge, not yet been convincingly articulated.

³²⁸ See also the more recent discussion by Smith on *m-l-k* at Ugarit and the lack of data connecting the word to child sacrifice (2002: 179).

Israel,³²⁹ had no part in the *top̄tē/tōp̄et* and its child immolations.³³⁰ Isa 30 suggests the contrary, however, as does Ezek 38-39. Ezekiel is an important book in light of its acceptance of Yahweh's involvement in human sacrifice at the *top̄tē/tōp̄et* and its admission of Yahweh's previous participation in Israelite heir immolation. Yet, the prophetic discourse does not build a case against heir sacrifice by referring to the *mōlek*, which is strange given the term's emphasis in the essentially contemporary Deuteronomistic and Priestly traditions. One gains the impression from Ezekiel that the *mōlek* was nonexistent, which may not be far from the truth.

According to Day, the primary issues which rule out Yahweh's equation with *mōlek* are: (1) the *mōlek* cult took place in the Hinnom Valley and not in Yahweh's temple; and (2) *mōlek* was a god of the netherworld, which Yahweh typically was not. What is more, he argued, *mōlek* sacrifices cannot be equated with the immolation of firstborn children to Yahweh inasmuch as (3) the former consisted of male and female sacrificial victims, whereas the latter only had male victims; and (4) children besides the firstborn were not sacrificed to Yahweh, yet children in general were immolated in the *mōlek* cult (Day 2000: 215-16; cf. 1989: 67-71, 85).

In response to each of these points, it should be noted that (1) not only does Isa 30 associate Yahweh with the place of sacrifice in the Hinnom Valley, the *top̄tē/tōp̄et*, but the attempt to limit Yahweh's cultic activities to the Temple Mount "proper" is to a certain extent a reiteration of the biblical rhetoric that there was only one legitimate place

³²⁹ The use of the root *b-ʿl* to describe Yahweh is found in Isa 54:5; Jer 3:14; 31:32; and Hos 2:18 [Eng 2:16].

³³⁰ A similar strategy might have been employed in naming *mōlek* an Ammonite deity in 1 Kgs 11:7. The alternative is to view this as an error for Milcom (thus Day 1989: 32, 74).

to worship Yahweh.³³¹ That (2) Yahweh was not *typically* connected to the netherworld does not preclude his associations with it altogether. Yahweh's ability to affect Sheol or those therein is seen in various passages (1 Sam 2:6; Jon 2:3); Deut 32:22 is particularly poignant in this regard given its fiery and possibly sacrificial imagery: "For a flame is sparked in my [Yahweh's] anger and it burns as far as the depths of Sheol; it consumes land and its produce and it scorches the foundations of mountains."

As for the sacrifice of the firstborn Israelites, (3) the biblical texts do characteristically describe the victims of the *mōleḱ* cult as males and females but customarily limit the immolation of firstborn children in Yahweh's cult to males. However, Judg 11 does portray the sacrifice of a firstborn (lit. only) daughter. Even if one were to reject this passage as unrelated to firstborn immolation and state that it is merely a coincidence that Jephthah's daughter was a firstborn child, then it would counter Day's other point (4) that only firstborn children were sacrificed to Yahweh. What is more, there are several biblical examples of child sacrifice within Yahwism that go well beyond the immolation of firstborn sons. For instance, not only did we encounter a reference to Hiel's foundation sacrifice of his youngest son, but we covered two additional types of immolation: *ḥērem*-dedication and capital punishment. Both acts are types of sacrifice that consist of adult and child victims.

³³¹ The Josianic reforms, for instance, focus on eradicating peripheral cultic sites, such as the *top̄tē/tōp̄eṯ* (2 Kgs 23).

4.4. Conclusion

The focus of the above analysis has been to situate child sacrifice within the broader framework of the biblical perspective on human immolation. This approach has not attempted to reiterate the plethora of proposals that have been advanced over the course of the last hundred years in academic discourse; rather, it has endeavored to provide a fresh examination of the texts in light of the basic premise advanced at the start of this dissertation that human immolation is any slaying done in order to affect the suprahuman realm. Hence, several examples have been located which traditionally have not been identified as instances of human immolation. One advantage of this technique is that it has enabled the detection of an overarching principle which is embodied by several of the biblical texts concerned with adult and child sacrifice. That is, human sacrifice in the Hebrew Bible chiefly revolves around the issue of purity, either in terms of cleansing the Israelite community or the land of Canaan by the immolation of “heathens” (outsiders) and “heretics” (insiders) or in regard to the contamination which results from the sacrifice of innocent blood. The writers of the Deuteronomistic History, for instance, were not against all forms of child sacrifice: foreign children were viewed as appropriate victims, whereas Israelite sons and daughters were not normally seen in this light. The chief passages in this corpus which do not denounce the immolation of Israelite heirs are Judg 11, Josh 6 (with 1 Kgs 16), Josh 7, and Deut 13:13-19, 21:18-21. The latter suggests that a rebellious child should be killed in order to burn up/eradicate the evil from among the Israelites and the deaths of Achan and his family members (lit. his sons and his daughters) in Josh 7 fulfill a similar purpose, as does the slaying of the apostate city dwellers, including their children, in Deut 13. The sacrifice of Jephthah’s daughter (Judg

11) might not have been viewed as negative for two reasons. The first is that the immolation was possibly utilized in order to illustrate the type of practice that was performed in Israel in an earlier era, a period in which people did what was appropriate in their own eyes and what they thought was acceptable in Yahwism. In a sense, then, the Deuteronomistic History might be acknowledging what is clear from other texts; that is, innocent Israelite children were once sacrificed to Yahweh. Alternatively, the second is that the corpus might have recognized the legitimacy of Jephthah's actions because they were performed in the context of warfare, which as we have seen, was an appropriate milieu for the practice of child immolation. The effectiveness of child sacrifice in the midst of warfare is also contained in the Deuteronomistic account of Mesha's sacrifice in 2 Kgs 3. Concerning Hiel's sacrifice, his actions were viewed as the result of a curse uttered by Yahweh through the mediation of Joshua, which also occurred during a military campaign. The city of Jericho was to have been dedicated by *hérem* unto Yahweh. Thus, it is possible that in the mind of the author Hiel's sacrifice of his two children was a consequence of *hérem* transference.

In general, however, the Deuteronomists were arguing that the sacrifice of innocent Israelite heirs was not truly Yahwistic; it was one factor which led to the exile, and, therefore, should no longer be performed post-586 BCE. The roughly contemporary books of Jeremiah and Ezekiel reflect similar sentiments; the one, by its denials that Yahweh ever approved of the rite of burning children and the other by its portrayal of Yahweh's regrets for having once ordained it in the first place. In fact, even Jeremiah's denials imply that some Israelites thought that it was Yahwistic; otherwise, why would Yahweh need to deny its legitimacy? The rejection of innocent Israelite heir immolation

as an acceptable Yahwistic observance can also be inferred from the Pentateuchal texts with ransom clauses. Thus, these texts correspond to the post-monarchical worldview, as does Gen 22 with its anecdotal depiction that Yahweh had the right to require the blood of Israelite children but preferred the blood of animals instead.³³²

It would seem that ca. 586 BCE was the watershed moment in the history of innocent heir immolation in Yahwism. The texts consistently point to the post-monarchical era as the timeframe for the attempt to distance Yahwism from non-judicial or warfare related child sacrifice—that is why Ex 22:28-29, which lacks a ransom clause, likely preserves a pre-exilic tradition. Several strategies were utilized in this regard: Yahweh never endorsed the practice (Jeremiah), he regretted it (Ezekiel), he preferred animal immolation (Pentateuchal ransom clauses, Gen 22), or most poignantly, he was not the recipient (Deuteronomistic History, Jeremiah, Ezekiel, Leviticus, Psalm 106). According to the latter texts, the true recipients were generic idols, unnamed deities, Ba'al (*a.k.a.* the Shameful One) and the *mōleḱ*. What came to be known as sacrifices to the *mōleḱ* in Jerusalem were apparently performed unto Yahweh as the *meleḱ* in the pre-exilic period; yet, they were no longer regarded as proper in the post-monarchical era.³³³ Yahweh's association with the *top̄tē/tōp̄et* and its sacrificial cult is clear from the pre-exilic portions of Isaiah (chapters 30 and 34) and the later passages from Ezekiel. The recurrence of *top̄tē/tōp̄et* imagery in the context of Yahwistic wars done as acts of judgment might signify that heir immolations performed at this locale in Jerusalem were

³³² The data examined in this study essentially conform to the proposal advanced by Van Seters that the non-Deuteronomistic texts in the Pentateuch do not predate the Deuteronomistic History. See his recent work of 2003 and his earlier study of 1983; a convenient synopsis is found in 1999: 77-79.

³³³ One should note, however, that my understanding of *mōleḱ* is fundamentally distinct from Buber's given that author's perspective that the *mōleḱ* cult was a degeneration of true Yahwism (Buber 1967: 112-116, 180). According to my viewpoint, what was later called the *mōleḱ* cult was originally appropriate in Yahwism.

related to justice and atonement. Perhaps this is why heir immolation was often described as shedding innocent blood—from the standpoint of the practitioners, pure sacrifices were needed to atone for sin; but from the Deuteronomistic perspective, human sacrifice should be reserved primarily for guilty individuals, whose impurities could be removed from the Israelite community by capital punishment in the form of sacrifice (cf. e.g, 2 Kgs 23:20).³³⁴

Human immolation in the form of warfare and jurisprudence may have been important to Israelite society in the mid to late sixth century given its fundamental purpose to eradicate those individuals who did not accept the same forms of Yahwistic worship found in such works as the Priestly and Deuteronomistic collections. Such types of sacrifice essentially functioned to demarcate the boundaries of the struggling exilic/post-exilic community as it attempted to answer the question, Who are the true followers of Yahweh?³³⁵ It should be observed, however, that by the time of the composition of the book of Ezra (ca. late Persian/early Hellenistic era),³³⁶ *ḥērem* as a form of punishment was still important but semantically distinct from earlier perceptions. Ezra 10:8 indicates that an apostate Israelite should have his possessions dedicated by *ḥērem* but no mention of his immolation is present. Instead, the individual was to have been excommunicated from the religious community in Jerusalem. The roughly contemporary work of Chronicles,³³⁷ nevertheless, retains the memory of *ḥērem* as a military technique (1 Chr 4:41; 2 Chr 20:23; 32:14).

³³⁴ I wish to acknowledge Prof. Schmidt's suggestion to see in references to innocent heirs the significance of pure sacrificial victims from the viewpoint of the practitioners.

³³⁵ Thus, I would agree with the statements presented by Römer in regards to the role of *ḥērem* in the Persian era (1999).

³³⁶ See Eskenazi (2000: 449) and Knoppers (2003: 116, n. 155).

³³⁷ Consult Knoppers (2003: 101-117).

Chapter 5

Concluding Summations

5.1. Methodological Considerations

Human sacrifice is not only the destruction of an individual in an act directed towards a divinity or immaterial entity, but it is more specifically a slaying done with the direct intent of affecting the suprahuman realm.

Chapter one was an exploration of the very notion of human sacrifice as well as a brief foray into its practice outside the Mediterranean Basin. The definition proposed at the start of the dissertation proved to be a valuable guide for subsequent discussions for not only does it acknowledge the role of divinities in sacrificial acts but it also recognizes the function of immaterial entities in such affairs. At its basic level, then, human sacrifice is a slaying focused on affecting the suprahuman realm. Funerary human sacrifice illustrates that immolations can be accomplished as acts seeking primarily to effect individuals who are not divine (unless, of course, the immolations are performed on behalf of deified humans such as the pharaohs) but who, nevertheless, inhabit the suprahuman realm of the dead. This is not to exclude the intrahuman sphere from the discussion of human sacrifice; rather, it is to emphasize the key element that distinguishes immolation from other forms of slaying. The interplay between these two realms is exemplified by the previously cited quote ascribed to the king of Asante in which he stated: “‘If I were to abolish human sacrifices, I should deprive myself of one of the most effectual means of keeping the people in subjection’” (Freeman 1844: 164).

Our study of African human sacrifice during the days of the transatlantic slave trade provided valuable insights into the concept of criminal immolation; our overview of the academic attempts to understand the bog body phenomenon was also useful in this regard inasmuch as both discussions showed that criminals could serve as sacrificial victims. Criminal immolation can either impact the suprahuman realm just as other types of immolation or it can affect this sphere in its own distinct manner. An example of a lawbreaker fulfilling the same role as another victim would be the African practice of sacrificing criminals for the purpose of adding new attendants to the retinue of deceased kings (non-criminals functioned in the same way), whereas an instance in which a criminal is the only human who can function as the appropriate victim would be the biblical concept of sacrificing a murderer in order to nullify the effects of spilled blood.

The African material was also useful given its portrayal of the relationship between warfare and human sacrifice, a notion also discussed in reference to the Aztecs (and encountered throughout the remainder of the dissertation). In both contexts, the need to obtain human victims was a significant impetus for military combat. The Aztec war machine was driven by the need to rejuvenate the sun, while the African forces were motivated by the desire to provide, among other things, attendants for the deceased. As for the intrahuman stimuli for the very same campaigns, the Aztecs were in the business of empire building and the Africans were entrenched in the slave industry.

In addition to Africa, funerary sacrifice was seen elsewhere in chapter one. Chinese attendant immolation was primarily a practice of the second and first millennia BCE, especially during the age of the Shang Dynasty (ca. sixteen to eleventh centuries BCE), but was later superseded by figurine substitution. This evinces a significant

change in the Chinese perception of human sacrifice for no longer was a living victim needed; instead, a less expensive surrogate was used. The other form of funerary human sacrifice treated in chapter one, *sati*, has likewise experienced modifications with the passage of time. There now exists the notion of a living *sati*, a woman who attempts to immolate herself on her husband's pyre but is hindered from fulfilling her objective by such entities as the police.³³⁸ A key impetus for revision was the sacrifice of Roop Kanwar in 1987. Not only did this young woman's self-immolation spark civil debate but it also fostered internal religious deliberations regarding the extent to which sacred literature authorizes the practice, with the result that both sides of the conflict have cited scriptural support for their respective perspectives. One of the individuals we encountered suggested that it really does not matter that Hinduism has endorsed such an "unenlightened" practice. What is important, it was argued, is that Hinduism discards the rite in the face of modern, more progressive standards. For our purposes, this internal Hindu struggle over human sacrifice was beneficial in showing that what was once accepted in a religion may be rejected by some as illegitimate in later times.

One final point of summation is in order concerning the first chapter, that is, the southeast Asian practice of construction sacrifice provides a model for speculating about construction sacrifice as performed in the ancient Near East. What, then, were the essential aspects of this form of Asian immolation? As previously noted, Wessing and Jordaan (1997: 104-11) described two kinds of construction immolations: one which seeks to appease a supernatural entity disturbed by a building project and one which attempts to animate a structure to provide protection and to establish a conduit to the

³³⁸ One such living *sati* is Jaswant Kanwat Chandrawat (see the 2002 report by the BBC at http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/south_asia/2183188.stm, which was accessed on April 17, 2006).

realm of the supernatural. The notion of animation is similar to Eliade's deduction that construction sacrifice relates to the transference of a victim's soul into a new body, the building (1982:9). The intimacy between the sacrificial victim and the construction for which he/she is immolated is evinced by the incorporation of the victim into the actual structure of the building; hence, the term built-in sacrifice. The two become inseparable for as long as the edifice survives.

5.2. The Mediterranean Context

Most of the evidence for human sacrifice in the Greek sphere of influence corresponds to data obtained by means of tomb excavations. As was proposed in chapter two, one can plausibly deduce the existence of human immolation in situations where it can be demonstrated that an individual was buried in the *dromos* section of a tomb when another person was buried in the main tomb chamber. Salamis Tomb 2 (ca. late seventh century BCE) and Lapithos Tomb 422 (ca. mid eighth century BCE) appear to meet this criterion but the other *dromoi* burials from Argos Tomb VI, Prosymna Tomb VII, Mycenae Tomb 15, Lapithos Tomb P. 74, and Salamis Tomb 83 cannot be confidently related to burials in the primary tomb chambers. Mycenae Tomb 15, nevertheless, is intriguing in light of the six individuals buried near the doorway in the *dromos* section.

While not a *dromos* burial, it appears that a woman and four horses were sacrificed at the interment of a male hero at Lefkandi, Greece inasmuch as it seems that all the beings were buried at the same time, ca. 1000 BCE. This instance is paralleled by Euripides' *Hecuba*, in which Polyxena is sacrificed to the hero Achilles, and by Homer's *Iliad*, wherein Achilles immolates twelve Trojans and four horses (as well as other

animals) on the funerary pyre of Patroclus. Given that Achilles slays the Trojans for the sake of a dead and, therefore, suprahuman being, the twelve should be considered sacrificial victims.

Other literary references to human sacrifice in the extant Greek literature, though numerous, are more difficult to substantiate archaeologically. Hence, it has been proposed that human immolation was more a result of the Greek imagination than a testament to its actual practice in Greece. Classicists are correct in their reticence in view of the fact that the presence of a particular practice in media does not mean that it was really performed. It must be admitted, however, that there is at least a limited correlation between the literary references to human sacrifice and what excavations in the Greek sphere of influence have thus far verified. What is more, Greek literature evinces a basic correspondence between certain of its portrayals of foreign human immolation and what is known from the regions so depicted, e.g., the Punic realm.

The immolation of women was a favorite theme of Greek writers. The examples cited in chapter two came from the dramas of Euripides and Aeschylus, in which female victims were sacrificed in order to secure advantageous voyages as well as successful military engagements. The sacrifice of Iphigenia has been of interest to biblicalists because of the similarities between it and the sacrifice of Jephthah's daughter in Judg 11 (cf. Marcus 1986: 42-43). In Römer's estimation, the author who composed the story of Jephthah's sacrifice was aware of Euripides' writings on Iphigenia; he noted the following points of comparison (Römer 1998: 35):

According to *Iphigenia in Tauris* (18-23), King Agamemnon had vowed to sacrifice to the goddess the loveliest offspring the year would give birth to and it turned out to be Iphigenia. As for Jephthah, his vow is connected with a military crisis. And both military leaders are depicted in a certain ambiguity. Both feel sorry for themselves and almost blame their daughters, who come

running to greet them, for having to sacrifice them. In Euripides as in Judges 11, the 'real hero' is the maiden, since she accepts voluntarily to be sacrificed and she pushes her father to do so.

In addition to supposing that the biblical writer depended upon the tragedies of Euripides, Römer proposed that the biblical narrative was a late addition to the Deuteronomistic History, a supplement which sought to criticize Deuteronomistic theology. Much of Römer's assessment is built upon the presupposition that all types of human sacrifice were antithetical to the Deuteronomistic perspective. There are several quotes that portray this viewpoint:

But should we also blame the Deuteronomists (Dtrs) for having transmitted the story in Judg. 11.29-40 where a seemingly impetuous and cruel Jephthah is going to kill his only and unnamed daughter to accomplish a vow made to YHWH who appears to be as cruel as Jephthah (Römer 1998: 27)?

Jephthah belongs to the happy few that are chosen to represent YHWH's intervention during the time of the Judges. Would this have been possible after the story of his daughter's sacrifice?... a promise of human sacrifice would be no other than a transgression of Deuteronomic Law (cf. Deut. 12.29-31; 18.10) (Römer 1998: 30).

According to the Dtrs, the worst thing Israel's and Judah's rulers did was to 'make children pass through the fire' (2 Kgs 16.3; 17.17; 21.6) and it was Josiah, the Dtr's favorite, who brought this abomination to an end (2 Kgs 23.10). It is therefore hard to believe that in the Dtr edition of Deuteronomy to 2 Kings a divinely inspired saviour should have something to do with human sacrifice (Römer 1998: 31).

Not only is Römer's treatment of the Deuteronomistic view on human sacrifice problematic in light of Josiah's participation in sacrificing the priests of the high places (2 Kgs 23:20), but it is also questionable because he collapses all forms of human sacrifice mentioned in the Bible into the types prohibited by such texts as Deut 12:29-31 and 18:10, which is a common misconception in biblical studies (cf. 4.2.4). These passages do not forbid all types of human sacrifice; rather, they denounce what is portrayed as Canaanite child immolation. As for the similarities between the stories written by Euripides and Judg 11:29-40, it is feasible that the biblical writer and the Greek playwright drew upon similar eastern Mediterranean traditions in constructing their

accounts and that one author was not dependent upon the other. This appears to have been the case elsewhere in the Deuteronomistic History and in Euripides' works. Both 2 Kgs 3 and *The Phoenissae/The Phoenician Maidens* (911-14, 985-1018, 1090-92) by Euripides portray child sacrifice on top of city walls in the face of besiegement. Mesha sacrifices his son to save Kir-Hareseth and Creon is told that he must immolate his son Menoeceus for the sake of Thebes. Menoeceus, however, carries out the sacrifice himself and the city is thereby delivered. There is no need to posit a Deuteronomistic dependence upon Euripides in light of the Syro-Palestinian tradition of immolating children on city walls in the midst of warfare. Euripides apparently knew of this practice as well.

Greek literature also evinces a basic correspondence between its accounts of Punic child immolation and the archaeological and inscriptional sources from the Punic world. The Punic funerary inscriptions from at least the sixth century BCE on utilize the following terms to denote child and animal sacrifice:

mlk 'mr – a *molk*-sacrifice of a sheep
mlk 'dm – a *molk*-sacrifice of a human
mlk b 'l – a *molk*-sacrifice consisting of a child
mlk 'zrm – a *molk*-sacrifice of one who died prematurely
mlk + bšrm btm – a *molk*-sacrifice of his own flesh

Connected to the stelae are the cremated remains of animals and children, who were placed in ceramic urns and buried in funerary precincts. Punic burial areas are known from Algeria (Cirta), Tunisia (Carthage, Sousse/Hadrumetum), Sicily (Motya), Sardinia (Sulcis, Nora, Tharros, Bithia, Monte Sirai), and Cyprus (Amathus). The Tunisian sites are a testament to the longevity of the employment of child cemeteries: the burials at Carthage go back to the eighth century BCE, while the interments at nearby Sousse/Hadrumetum continued into the first century CE. By contrast, the Phoenician

homeland has yet to yield definitive proof that analogous child sacrifices were performed there.

5.3. Ancient Near Eastern Cultures

5.3.1. Mesopotamia

While Phoenicia is located in the Near East, it was covered in chapter two due to its possible associations with the Punic material. The general survey of human immolation in the ancient Near East was reserved for chapter three, starting with Mesopotamia. The literary attestations of human sacrifice in that region primarily derive from the Neo-Assyrian (first millennium BCE) references to substituting kings, burning children, and slaying murderers. Murderer immolation is described in only one passage, wherein Assurbanipal slays those who killed his grandfather, Sennacherib, as a funerary offering (*kispum*) to him. An additional form of capital punishment is found in several texts that suggest if one reneges on a contract or defaces an inscription, he must sacrifice his children by fire. As was argued in chapter three, despite the probability that the penalties were not actually enforced, the language employed is certainly sacrificial and destruction by fire is the intended meaning. It is possible that the penalties were based upon real practices. Support for such a statement can be found in the analogy provided by figurine burning. That is, a treaty of Esarhaddon incorporates the practice into its penalty clauses to suggest that the one who breaks the treaty be destroyed by fire. Fire also appears in association with the substitute king ritual in which the substitute's regalia are to be burned and he is to be killed in order to remove a threat against the real king and his kingdom.

By contrast, the archaeological evidence indicative of human sacrifice is much earlier than the aforementioned literary references, dating from the mid second millennium and earlier. The excavations at Ur and Kish revealed attendant sacrifice in the third millennium BCE and those conducted at Yorgan Tepe and Tepe Gawra discovered built-in child sacrifices, ranging from at least the fifth millennium to the second millennium BCE. There are not to my knowledge any literary references to built-in human sacrifice in Mesopotamian literature. Thus, one might *speculate*, based upon an analogy with the examples from Asia examined in chapter one, that child sacrifice occurred in conjunction with construction projects in order to animate the structures by a process of transference, a procedure by which the buildings became the new bodies for the sacrificial victims. The goal of such transference might have been to ensure the strength of the building, thereby protecting its structural integrity. There might also have been the additional benefit of sacrificial victims becoming conduits to the supernatural world.

5.3.2. Anatolia

It would seem that the Hittites, prominent in second millennium BCE Anatolia, rarely practiced human sacrifice. There are at least two exceptions, however: the substitute king ritual and the ritual concerning the purification of the army after defeat. As in the Assyrian texts, the role of the substitute king was to participate in the removal of that which threatened the king. This was primarily done by releasing a prisoner to return home, but in one passage it appears that the substitute king was killed. Concerning the purification of the army, this was accomplished by immolating a dog, a pig, a goat,

and a man and dividing their corpses into two piles. The troops would then walk between the sacrifices before being sprinkled with water.

5.3.3. Egypt

Egyptian human immolation is primarily evident in the material remains, pictorial reliefs, and texts of the early third to second millennia BCE, though it is also attested in the first millennium BCE. Attendant sacrifice was practiced in Egypt during early dynastic times around the beginning of the third millennium BCE and in Nubia during the mid second millennium BCE. Also at the start of dynastic rule, the festival commemorating the Unification of Upper and Lower Egypt apparently employed prisoner sacrifice, as did the later execration rites performed at Mirgissa and the coronation of Amenhotep II, which date to the early and mid second millennium BCE, respectively. The ubiquitous smiting ruler motif, however, does not seem to correspond to specific post-war prisoner sacrifices; instead, it is a representation of monarchical conquest achieved through divine support. The examples of burning criminals upon temple altars that were covered in the above analysis essentially date from the second to first millennia BCE. This form of capital punishment was a sacrificial act performed in response to crimes of desecration; it attempted to rid society of impurity.

5.3.4. Syro-Palestine

It is thanks to several Egyptian reliefs from the thirteenth to twelfth centuries BCE that the Syro-Palestinian rite of sacrificing children on city walls in response to impending military defeat has received independent confirmation. For some time now,

the ritual has been known from the biblical portrayal of Mesha's burnt-sacrifice in 2 Kgs 3:27. The procedure is also attested at Ugarit either in the form of animal sacrifice or human immolation. While both options are acceptable, one can make a case for the latter given that the Egyptian reliefs are contemporary with the Ugaritic corpus and because one of the reliefs depicts child sacrifice at the city of Tunip, which was possibly located within Ugarit's cultural sphere. Mesha is also connected to another form of sacrifice conducted within the context of warfare, namely, the sacrifice of one's enemies on the battlefield. The Moabite Stone/Mesha Stele of the ninth century BCE describes Mesha's complete annihilation of the Israelites living at Ataroth and Nebo as an act of intoxication (*ryt*) for Chemosh and as a deed of dedication (*hrm*) to Ashtar Chemosh.

Built-in sacrifice, primarily of children, is evinced by the material remains at several sites within the current borders of Israel/Palestine or just across the Jordanian border near the Dead Sea. At least two built-in burials were found at Gezer, three at Megiddo, one at Taanach, one at Dothan, one at Jericho, two at Abu Matar, and one at Teleilat Ghassul (in Jordan), covering a spectrum of time from the Chalcolithic to Middle Bronze eras (ca. late fifth to early second millennia BCE). This time frame is very similar to that of the built-in sacrifices known from Mesopotamia. Here as well, we are left to speculate about the function of the practice. The indigenous references in Josh 6 and 1 Kgs 16 retain the memory of sacrificing children in association with construction projects but they do not adequately explain the fundamental rationale for the rite other than present it as a curse upon the one who rebuilds the city of Jericho. It is possible that the sacrifice of Hiel's children was required because Jericho had been dedicated unto *hērem*.

5.4. Ancient Israelite Traditions

Human sacrifice, as portrayed by the writers of the Hebrew Bible, was primarily related to a desire to maintain the purity of the Israelite community, their land, and the name of their deity, Yahweh. Failure to uphold particular standards of morality would result, so it was argued, in the loss of Yahweh's blessings, especially his blessing in the form of allowing the Israelites to dwell in the Promised Land. In the Deuteronomistic interpretation of Israelite history, one of the key factors which led to the Assyrian and Babylonian exiles of the late eighth and early sixth centuries BCE was the sacrifice of innocent Israelite heirs. The writers of the Deuteronomistic History, Jeremiah, and Leviticus particularly denounced the form of child sacrifice practiced at the Jerusalem *top̄tē/top̄et* either by directly naming this locale or mentioning its patron deity, the *mōlek*, although in one case, Ba'al is the deity associated with the sanctuary. Judging from the pre-exilic portions of Isaiah, however, this location was not always viewed as antithetical to the ways of Yahweh, for Yahweh himself is described as participating in a sacrificial rite of fire at the *top̄tē* (cf. Ezekiel's later use of the imagery as well). *top̄tē* is possibly the original spelling of *tōp̄et*, that is, before it was changed by inserting the vowels of the word for shame, *bōšēt*, into it. In the same way, the divine epithet *mōlek* might be a revised form of the title *melek* (king), thereby creating a word meaning "the shameful king". This, then, would contrast the shameful king with the true king of Israel, Yahweh.

Yahweh's association with heir immolation is reflected not only in the aforementioned section of Isaiah but also in the book of Ezekiel, where Yahweh explicitly regrets having once commanded the Israelites to sacrifice their firstborn sons to

him. At least one passage in Exodus likewise presents a divine demand that such an immolation occur, but the other Pentateuchal references to Yahweh's call for the sacrifice of the firstborn Israelite males qualify the demand with a ransom clause, which alleviates the need to carry out the immolation. The near sacrifice of Isaac and the substitution of a ram in Genesis is essentially a narrative example of these legislative passages. Gen 22 also epitomizes the transition which took place in Yahwism in the post-monarchical era: innocent heir immolation was once commanded and carried out but was later rejected as adverse to Yahweh's intentions. This is not to imply that all the followers of Yahweh argued for the discontinuation of heir immolation, but it is to state that the biblical authors writing on the subject of child sacrifice tended to argue against its continued observance.

As for post-586 BCE passages that call for Israelite child sacrifice, they frequently do so on the grounds that the children are implicated in some misdeed, such as sexual impropriety, spiritual apostasy, or parental disrespect. These notions are found in the Deuteronomistic corpus and to a lesser extent in the Priestly writings; however, both traditions focus more on the need to maintain Israelite purity by eradicating adult malefactors than on ridding the community of child reprobates.³³⁹ Thus, one encounters such passages as the story of Phinehas' ability to turn aside Yahweh's anger and to atone for the Israelites by spearing to death an Israelite man and a Midianite woman who are engaged in sexual congress; or the references to the requirement to sacrifice a murderer in

³³⁹ Several factors justify the use of the term "reprobate" to describe the biblical perspective on certain child sacrificial victims. The biblical authors do not normally emphasize the age of children in sacrificial narratives; instead, they focus on the parent-child relationship, i.e., firstborn, son, or daughter could refer to children of all ages. Indeed, some of the reprobate children are clearly old enough to make their own moral decisions. The Deuteronomistic History and the Priestly corpus, for example, describe the need to kill a daughter who engages in unlawful intercourse (Lev 21:9) and to slay a son who disobeys his parents (Deut 21:18-21). Additionally, certain children are implicated by the misdeeds of their parents (Deut 13:13-19).

order to remove the pollution caused by shedding innocent blood. The Deuteronomistic acceptance of human immolation as a form of capital punishment is illustrated particularly well by the story of Josiah's sacrifice of inappropriate priests in 2 Kgs 23.

In addition to the need to cleanse the Israelite people or their land by immolating those Israelites viewed as inappropriate, the biblical authors emphasized the Israelite obligation to eradicate outsiders who threatened to pollute the community; *ḥērem*-sacrifice was the means by which this was to be accomplished. The local inhabitants of Canaan were the primary victims of this type of immolation in the biblical war narratives, especially those found in the Deuteronomistic History. Therein, we read of the dedication of adults, children, and animals unto Yahweh by *ḥērem*-warfare. These texts also depict the importance of following the specific requirements of a *ḥērem* pronounced against a particular social group. For instance, by stealing from the objects dedicated unto Yahweh, Achan brought the Israelites under the *ḥērem*, which resulted in a military defeat at Ai. Saul's negligence in completing the *ḥērem* against the Amalekites while on a military expedition led to the end of his dynasty.

In short, the biblical portrayal of human sacrifice corresponds to the immolation of "heathens" (outsiders), "heretics" (insiders), and heirs in accordance with the overarching principle of purity. The historical development of this perspective is not so easily simplified but the post-586 BCE authors signify that child sacrifice was a matter of much debate following the destruction of the Jerusalem temple. The issue was still important well into the post-exilic era, as evinced by the denunciations of Judean child immolation in 2 Chr 28:3 and 33:6.

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