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Michael B. Hundley. *Gods in Dwellings: Temples and Divine Presence in the Ancient Near East*. Vol. 3 of *Writings from the Ancient World Supplement Series*. Atlanta: Society of Biblical Literature, 2013, pp. 452. \$78.95 (Hardcover) ISBN 978-1-58983-920-5. \$58.95 (Paperback) ISBN 978-1-58983-918-2.

The ways and means by which deities were represented – both in physical form via cult statues and in the more nebulous sense of their own position within a culture's world view – stand as some of the most complicated aspects of the study of religion in the ancient Near East. The different cultures of this period, including those of the ancient Mediterranean, were home to their own complicated pantheons, each hosting a large number of greater and lesser deities. While these cultures each had their own native religious systems, there were undeniable areas of connection, if not outright influence and borrowing (or occasional theft, in the case of divine statues), between these chronologically and geographically contiguous areas of the ancient world. With that in mind, the comparative perspective has an ever-present and increasing appeal as an angle of analysis in scholarship that addresses these issues. Michael B. Hundley's *Gods in Dwellings: Temples and Divine Presence in the Ancient Near East* follows this comparative angle, focusing on four central areas in the ancient Near East: Egypt, Mesopotamia, Hittite Anatolia, and Syro-Palestine. Although Biblical material is referenced occasionally as a point of further comparison to these four areas, it is used sparingly, and direct analysis of the Biblical sources is avoided. This avoidance is not a result of the author's oversight or neglect but rather by deliberate design: as Hundley's first book, *Keeping Heaven on Earth: Safeguarding the Divine Presence in the Priestly Tabernacle* (Tübingen, 2011) was centered on such concepts, the author has chosen to avoid material that he covered more extensively in his earlier work.

Hundley has divided his work into two major sections. The first is concerned with the physical; namely, an analysis of the temples themselves that were characteristic to each of these four areas. The second section is less concerned with the material, and centres on the representation and role of the deity within the temple context, as well as the cultic rites intended to sustain it, in each of the four key areas under review. The section on

temples, focusing on their structure, layout, and function benefits from a strong grounding in archaeological evidence that is well introduced and fully integrated into the main body of the work. Because Hundley has approached this topic from the comparative perspective, he has also clearly assigned himself the task of ensuring that his arguments and analysis are useful to those coming from any one of the four areas under survey, as well as those more interested in religious studies or comparative religion in general. In this regard, though the book serves well as a general scholarly overview, it seems particularly suited as a potential undergraduate introduction to many of these areas and the questions they pose. This tone is a difficult balance to strike, much less maintain successfully, as Hundley has done. The initial section in particular features Hundley's extensive use of supporting media: maps of temple layouts, photographs of relevant statues, and so on. Though the visual component can overwhelm the page layout in particular areas, it is by and large a well-placed addition to Hundley's own analysis, and helps rather than hinders the work.

Hundley identifies a number of driving questions for the second section of his work, to be applied to each of his four topical areas of focus. Generally, these issues concern the nature and form of the gods, including their own perceived state and relationship with cult statues (151). Those statues required upkeep and maintenance, protocol embedded within the day-to-day cultic functioning of the temples. As such, he directs his attention towards the practical questions underscoring the use of divine statues, such as the rituals required to install such statues and then maintain them, as well as the divine consumption of human offerings set before them within the temple. Each of the topical sub-sections within this second half of the work addresses these questions in the same general order, each section closing with a discussion of the relationship between the statue and the deity inhabiting it, and the rituals required for the purification, activation, and upkeep of the statues themselves, such as the ritual of the mouth-washing (*mīs pī*) in Mesopotamia (239 ff.) or the opening of the mouth ritual (*wpt-r3* or *wn-r3*) in Egypt (168 ff.) In the later sections, Hundley builds upon the material he has already discussed to compare the areas more directly to each other.

There are several points in this second section where Hundley's analysis – particularly the points of comparison – while interesting, come across as something of a logistical leap. The most notable of these is the brief discussion on string theory and quantum physics (141-42). While his underlying point that the potentially higher (and thus "fourth dimensional") qualities of a deity could be seen as inexpressible within the normal Mesopotamian daily context is certainly sound, one must sift through the imagery itself to reach it, rather than being aided directly by the analogy. In a different vein, there are several places in this second section of the work where Hundley raises an interesting avenue for potential comparison or further analysis but then does not explore it as fully as one might wish. I will reference one particular example, which occurs in his discussion of the importance of the role and place of the heart within statues in Egypt. Although he stresses the importance of the heart in divine statues, he glosses over slightly the very significant role played by the heart within the broader religious context of ancient Egypt, including human mummification and burial, where it was left within the body of the deceased (181). Similarly, while Hundley cites *Enuma Elish* as an example of the creation of humanity in the image of the divine (from the slain body of Qingu, in this particular case) in the sub-section on Mesopotamia, he neglects more opportune examples from Mesopotamian literature, such as the creation of man in *Atrahasis* (224), which would have more easily facilitated further discussion. While there is hardly space to engage with the minutiae of every question raised in a work this broad in scope, such significant points do deserve more space than they are allowed.

Perhaps the best closing words on *Gods in Dwellings* come from the author himself: Hundley concludes the book with a discussion of the underlying aims in his comparative synthesis, hoping that by presenting these connected but quite distinct areas together, the work will, "rather than serving as the last word...serve as the impetus for further discussion" (374). Although there are certainly – and perhaps inevitably – particular points within each of the work's sub-sections where Hundley's arguments would have been better served by greater depth, the aim and wide arc of the book works against, to a degree, such levels of fine detail. If the book is instead judged by Hundley's own stated aims, we may consider them achieved. Hundley has straddled a difficult line in

balancing enough foregrounding material to each of the different sections to make them useful to the inevitable non-specialist in one or more of the areas under discussion, while also striving to keep his analysis useful for said specialists. As such, for those interested in the arguments of each particular area under study, as well as scholars concerned with the broader issues raised by the arguments of comparative religion as a whole, Hundley's book should prove to be a valuable resource, and, as the author intended, serve well to foster and encourage further discussion.