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John Bodel and Saul M. Olyan, eds., *Household and Family Religion in Antiquity* (Malden: Wiley-Blackwell, 2008), 346 pp., $50.95 (paper).

This is the second volume in *The Ancient World: Comparative Histories* series in which the comparative approach is applied to the ancient world. Deriving from a conference held at Brown University in 2005, the book consists of fifteen chapters by different specialists on ancient religious practices in the Eastern and Central Mediterranean. Focusing upon domestic religion in second millennium West Asia (Mesopotamia, Emar, Nuzi, Ugarit), the first millennium Levant (Israel), pharaonic Egypt, classical Greece, and Rome, the book investigates day-to-day religious practices within the household, family, and domicile in contrast to state-sponsored civic temples. The chapters cover aspects such as the household's patron deities, numina associated with the house itself, ancestor cult, lifecycle rituals, and the locations where these activities occurred. Comparison between the regionally and chronologically distinct examples highlights common themes between cultures.

The book's editors introduce the subject, defining household and family religion as cultic activity performed by people who are biologically or maritally related, sometimes in conjunction with dependents such as slaves, who live in the same house or are otherwise under the authority of the head of the family. Stanley K. Stowers, in Chapter 2 "Theorizing the Religion of Ancient Households and Families," problematizes the categories of "family" and "household," comparing the nuclear family promoted by evolutionary psychologists with anthropological and ancient examples that differ greatly from that model. He suggests that in defining "household and family religion" place and residency ought to be weighted heavily, family should not be defined separately from household, and different ideologies of the family be taken into consideration.

In defining "religion" Stowers recommends that definitions be polytheistic rather than monotheistic in order to avoid essentialism. He reminds us that religion in antiquity was organized differently compared to Western modernity: rather than being an autonomous category, ancient religions were embedded within society and culture and were not separate from the economy or politics. The ancient

house was not a place of leisure after work, but a center of work and production, hence domestic religious activities were entangled with economic practices, the most important religious focus being the productivity and wealth-generating capacity of the land. Ancient household and family religion was concerned with local place in contrast to public state cult exemplified by the temple. Humble domestic religion can be difficult to identify archaeologically; household cult equipment often consisting of ordinary domestic vessels in contrast to temple paraphernalia which is more obvious, even spectacular. Likewise, temple architecture was extraordinary in contrast to the house which was ordinary.

In Chapter 3, "Family Religion in Second Millennium West Asia," Karel van der Toorn utilizes the evidence of cuneiform texts to explain how Mesopotamian family religion focussed upon devotion to both the family god and the ancestors. He then analyzes the sociology and psychology of Mesopotamian family religion from a contemporary western perspective. Chapter 4, "The Integration of Household and Community Religion in Ancient Syria" by Daniel E. Flemming, concerns Emar during the late first millennium, using cuneiform and architectural evidence to show how family cult practices were integrated within the religious practices of the larger community. In Chapter 5, "Family, Household and Local Religion at Late Bronze Age Ugarit," Theodore J. Lewis examines the Ugaritic pantheon, essentially a divine elite family that patronized Ugaritic royalty. He also looks at non-elite Ugaritic religion using interesting textual and material evidence, a particularly poignant example being terracotta imprints of children's feet made when they were sold into servitude to the chief diviner and scribe, Ba'al-malik. Although sold to pay off their parents' debts, the boys were trained as scribes and thus gained specialized skills within the elite religious sphere.

Rainer Albertz's contribution, Chapter 6, "Family Religion in Ancient Israel and its Surroundings," focuses upon the incorporation of aspects of family religion such as Passover ritual into official cult as part of the coalescence of monotheism and centralization of cultic praxis at Jerusalem by the late seventh century BCE. In Chapter 7, "Family Religion in Israel and the Wider Levant of the First Millennium BCE," Saul M. Olyan looks at Ammonite, Judean, and Israelite domestic cult, characterized by activities such as kindling lamps, performing libations, and making model shrines and cultic miniatures. While these practices occurred within the home, family

groups also interacted with the wider clan of which they were part at local sanctuaries, particularly during seasonal festivals involving animal sacrifice. Susan Ackerman focuses on women's religion as described in the biblical text in her contribution, Chapter 8, "Household Religion, Family Religion and Women's Religion in Ancient Israel." She also examines Israelite household space during the Iron Age period (ca. 1200–586 BCE), characterized by multi-building compounds with central courtyards that were inhabited by members of extended families including slaves and sojourners, and the cult areas associated with such structures. Rüdiger Schmitt focuses on south-western Israel in the Iron Age in Chapter 9, "Ashdod and the Material Remains of Domestic Cults in the Philistine Coastal Plain," in which cultic pottery and figurines from domestic architectural remains of the Philistines, an ethnic group originating in the Aegean, are examined.

Although the term "household religion" tends to be conspicuously absent from Egyptology as a result of domestic architecture not having been studied as intensively as state and funerary religion, Robert K. Ritner explains in Chapter 10, "Household Religion in Ancient Egypt," that archaeological and textual evidence shows Egyptian domestic religion to have involved veneration at household shrines, rites of passage, and the construction of magical charms to avert misfortunate and ensure health and fertility. In Chapter 11, "Household and Domestic Religion in Ancient Egypt," Barbara S. Lesko focuses on women's private religious activities such as the magical use of amulets and figurines as well as their participation in public cult, particularly that of non-elite women during the Old Kingdom as priestesses of Hathor in state temple cult.

Turning next to the Central Mediterranean, Chapter 12 "Household Religion in Ancient Greece" by Christopher A. Faraone describes Greek domestic cult as both a private and a communal affair. While screened from the public gaze, household religion was usually enacted by groups and conformed to a traditional form practiced by other households. Family religion was performed by the male head of the household on behalf of its inhabitants in a domestic version of state cult (which was undertaken by the leader of a city on behalf of its citizens) and concerned the protection of the house and its inhabitants. Women's domestic cult centered on rituals concerned with health and healing, marriage and death, and the exclusively female festival of the Adonia, all of which were conducted within the home. Still in ancient Greece, in Chapter 13, "Family

Matters: Domestic Religion in Classical Greece," Deborah Boedeker further explains that women's domestic religion centered on matters considered ritually polluting such as birth, sex and death which were excluded from official Greek sanctuaries. She also examines the domestic cult of Zeus in his manifestation as Ktesios ("of the Possessions"), Herkeios ("of the Courtyard"), Melichios ("Kindly"), and that of Hestia, goddess of the hearth.

The final contextual study, Chapter 14 "Cicero's Minerva, *Penates*, and the Mother of the *Lares*: An Outline of Roman Domestic Religion," by John Bodel focuses upon the worship of the Lares: generic, collective, portable household deities with a particular focus for slaves; and the Penates: personal, inherited, familial deities tied to a specific location. Roman *lararia* (domestic shrines) were located in various places throughout the house including the kitchen, dining room, bedrooms, corridors and the garden. In wealthy households entire rooms could be devoted to the household gods, containing in addition life-sized ancestor busts. The book concludes with Chapter 15, "Comparative Perspectives," in which the editors identify characteristics common to each of these cultures. These include the link between the social unit of the family and the physical space in which it dwelt; the contrast between meatless domestic offerings and the animal sacrifice characteristic of civic cult; the use of household religion as the model for public cult; and the incorporation of state deities into household worship. These and other examples suggest that diametrically opposed concepts such as public/private or official/personal are inappropriate to describe the realities of ancient cult which regularly transgressed such boundaries.

The book is of interest to contemporary Pagans and scholars of Pagan studies because of its focus upon the household. For urban Pagans, family groups, and solitary practitioners the house is generally the location of personal altars and private or small group ritual, in contrast to large Pagan festivals usually held outdoors with many attendants and more spectacular rituals. As well as providing inspiration regarding approaches to household religion, for scholars the studies in this book highlight how *different* ancient Pagan religions often were—from each other but more so from consciously constructed Pagan practices today. While the religions of ancient Egypt, Greece, and Rome may be somewhat familiar to contemporary Pagans, Mesopotamian and Levantine religious practices might be less so. This collection provides models for small scale, intimate domestic religious practice; food for thought and perhaps emulation

by both "hard" and "soft" contemporary polytheists. Particularly useful for Pagan reconstructionists with their interest in historically accurate ritual, this book will enhance personal practice and complement the group-oriented calendrical festivals of the ancient state.

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