

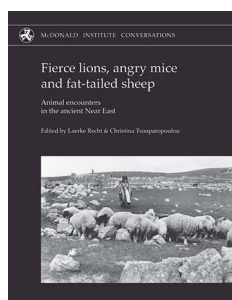
and interesting stories presented in a light, readable form, but brings nothing new for the more specialist reader.

MICHAL ERNÉE

Institute of Archaeology of the Czech Academy of Sciences  
Prague, Czech Republic  
✉ [erne@arup.cas.cz](mailto:erne@arup.cas.cz)

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LAERKE RECHT & CHRISTINA TSOUPAROPOULOU (ed.). 2021. *Fierce lions, angry mice and fat-tailed sheep: animal encounters in the ancient Near East*. Cambridge: McDonald Institute for Archaeological Research; 978-1-913344-05-4 eBook Open Access.



The present volume contributes in a consequential way to the prodigious growth in human-animal studies, with its focus on a time and place—the ancient Near East—that is gloriously rich in terms of human-animal relations. The goal of the volume is to move away from the dichotomy between humans and animals and to foreground their varied interactions in a shared environment, in which nonhuman animals are actors rather than acted upon.

Of the 23 contributions in the volume, the great majority—15—deal with Mesopotamia. Egypt, Syria-Palestine and Anatolia are the focus of two articles each, and a further contribution is surveying Semitic toponyms derived from animal names. The geographical imbalance perhaps owes to the volume's origins in a conference. The individual chapters utilise a wide range of approaches: faunal (Alhaique *et al.*, Kalaycı & Wainwright, Greenfield & Matney, Devillers, Greenfield *et al.*); textual (Verderame, Vilela, Mouton, Arbøll, Battini, Sövegjártó, Dirbas, Watanabe, Kozuh); iconographic (Devillers, Greet, Battini); anthropological (Goulder); or some combination of these (Fadum & Gruber, Erskine, Nett, Kozuh, Brachmańska, Popova & Quillien, Tsouparopoulou & Recht). Unsurprisingly, dogs receive the most attention, with at least eight chapters scrutinising their roles as companions, work animals, symbols and in ritual/religion. Equids and birds of various varieties are the subject of several chapters each. Temporally, the chapters address material ranging from prehistory through to the first millennium BC, with the majority of contributions based in the third and second millennia. These chapters are organised neatly into sections under the rubrics 'Animal agency and human-animal interactions', 'Animals in ritual and cult', 'Blurred lines: humans as animals, animals as humans', 'Managing animals', 'Animals in society and as a resource', 'Symbols of power: birds', and 'Companions and working animals: equids and dogs'.

While a few of the chapters parse the texts for evidence or present site-specific archaeological findings, others take more innovative approaches to investigating human-animal encounters.

Neil Erskine applies a Deleuzo-Guattarian framework to explore “how religious ideas associated with representations of animals encountered in cultic contexts informed later experiences with real animals” (p. 39), using the experiences of Assyrian traders with cattle, boars and eagles in second-millennium Anatolia as a case study. I am, however, sceptical of Erskine’s identification of the divine being Pannunta attested in a Hittite ritual with Benene, vizier of Samas (pp. 42–43).

Alice Mouton examines the phenomenon of ‘animal men’ in Hittite festival contexts, arguing for their association with ritual hunts and against their connection with totemism, observations also made in my 1989 PhD dissertation (Collins 1989: 300–16). Mouton’s detailed discussion provides welcome insights into an arcane practice.

Jill Goulder’s ethnographic approach to reconstructing the lives of donkeys in the ancient Near East stands out for many reasons, but the one I will mention here is her observation that the donkey is more closely associated with women, for a gender-minded view of human-animal relationships in the ancient Near East is sorely needed. As a side note, Goulder observes that donkeys in most cultures, ancient and modern, are rarely eaten (which partly accounts for their invisibility in the archaeological record); the following chapter on donkeys at Tell es-Sâfi/Gath, in contrast, points to evidence that the author’s claim indicates the consumption of donkeys at the site.

A couple of important themes surface in the volume. One is how remote the animal world is from our modern, Western experiences and how ill-equipped that leaves us to bring ancient human-animal relationships into focus. Laura Battini in particular emphasises that we are so far removed from the lives lived in the ancient Near East that we cannot apply our current views to interpreting ancient attitudes towards animals. Another theme is the problem of categories: real and imaginary; animate and inanimate; human and animal; domestic and wild. In this regard, the chapter by Michael Kozuh on ancient terminology for cattle deserves special mention.

Volumes of collected essays deriving from conferences are often uneven in quality. That is not the case here: all the chapters, diverse as they are, make important contributions. At the same time, owing to the eclectic nature of the contents, it must be said that the parts are more valuable than the whole. As a hybrid publication, available as an open access pdf as well as in print form, one need only collect those chapters of greatest interest for one’s own research. The absence of an index, which seems to be increasingly common with such hybrid volumes (presumably because pdfs are easily searched for keywords) is unfortunate. The facility to search a pdf does not, I would argue, obviate the need for a good index.

I would also be remiss if I did not note that additional editing and proofreading would have been helpful. For example, the pagination of all the frontmatter items in the table of contents is incorrect. Additionally, there are a handful of infelicities in the text. There is, I believe, a collective exhaustion in academic publishing regarding the editing of essay collections: who is responsible—the individual authors, the editors, the publisher? In the present case, greater care could have been taken. These shortcomings notwithstanding, the articles collectively showcase how effective innovative and interdisciplinary approaches can be to tackling

previously unanswerable questions about how animals impact human behaviour and their central role in shaping society.

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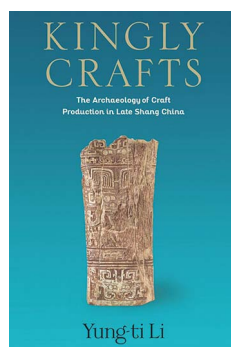
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BILLIE JEAN COLLINS  
Emory University, Atlanta, USA  
✉ [bcollin@emory.edu](mailto:bcollin@emory.edu)

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YUNG-TI LI. 2022. *Kingly crafts: the archaeology of craft production in late Shang China*. New York: Columbia University Press; 978-0-231-19204-0 hardback £50.



Over 80 years of systematic excavations at Anyang, the site of the last capital of China's late Shang period (c. 1250–1050 BC), have revealed magnificent and diverse material remains on a huge scale. The Shang's craft industries, which produced their stunning bronze, lithic and other artefacts, have, however, drawn relatively less attention in comparison with other areas of Shang archaeology. Li Yung-ti's new book, *Kingly crafts: the archaeology of craft production in late Shang China*, is a vital addition to this key period of early Chinese civilisation, and an important contribution to understanding the formation of urban landscapes at Anyang. Li combines culture-history and anthropological archaeology through a systematic analysis of archaeological finds housed in mainland China and Taiwan, drawing upon his years of work in key related organisations. The discussions understandably focus primarily on bronze and bone industries, driven by the availability of archaeological evidence, but also consider crafts of other materials.

Chapters 1 and 2 introduce the question of craft production and its study within Shang archaeology, defining the issues, the data and its constraints/biases. Li presents a chronological review of workshop excavations, valuably identifying the concentrations and contemporaneous operations of multiple craft workshops. He sets out three types of production contexts that he employs throughout the book—namely large-scale, artisan-centred and household. Chapter 3 presents bronze production as the first case study, synchronising archaeological evidence and research to date, particularly relating to section-mould casting technology. Through charting the stages, resources, facilities and skills involved in bronze casting,