great cultic and cultural importance such as the one before us. Second, the book does not meet the expectations raised by the term "taboo" in its title. Neither the quoted Hittite documents nor the presentation of the topic that mainly discusses the expression *natta āra* (not particularly a "taboo"; see my remarks above under "Pp. 26 f.") justifies this. The "taboo" concept among the Hittites will require further studies covering broader aspects based on more numerous sources that carefully examine the enormous numbers of legal documents, administrative texts, rituals, and oracular reports of religious offenses. It must be kept in mind that there are many other written sources of different kinds that are also relevant for understanding the Hittite concept of "taboo" that do not use the expression *natta / UL āra,* one meaning of which therefore may require more attention from scholars drawing general conclusions. For example, one of the strongest Hittite taboos apparently was the sacrilege of purity of the Hittite king caused by undesirable materials coming in contact with his sacred body as a result of human failure. This is narrated in some archaic instructional documents in an anecdotal and somewhat enigmatic manner, as can be seen in KBo 3.34 i 1–2, where a pebble is found in the king's *tunink*(*a*)-bread (see my dissertation "Muršili I.—Eine historische Studie," p. 117), and in KUB 13.3 iii 24–25, where a hair appears in the king's washbasin (see J. Friedrich, *Mitteilungen der Altorientalischen Gesellschaft* 4 [1928–29]: 46 ff., with the discussion on this "taboo" on pp. 56 ff.). Not surprisingly, the persons responsible for these mishaps were later punished by death.

OĞUZ SOYSAL

The University of Chicago

Das syro-hethitische Grabdenkmal: Untersuchungen zur Entstehung einer neuen Bildgattung in der Eisenzeit im nordsyrisch-südostanatolischen Raum. By DOMINIK BONATZ. Mainz: Philipp von Zabern, 2000. Pp. vi + 232 + 43 figs. + 23 pls.

Iron Age bas-reliefs, statues, and steles from southern Anatolia and northern Syria form a major corpus of Near Eastern art that spurred on early excavations at Zinjirli, Carchemish, Tell Halaf, and other sites and that has also led to numerous art-historical studies. Bonatz's volume on the *Grabdenkmäler* of Syria and Anatolia from that period is an important contribution not only to such works, but also to a topic that is at last assuming a proper prominence in ancient Near Eastern studies. Long of interest because of the wealth of objects often associated with burials, death is now understood as a complex social phenomenon imbued with political implications. Bonatz enters this discussion of death by analyzing the meaning of the Iron Age occurrence of *Grabdenkmäler,* decorated and/or inscribed grave-markers,[1] and firmly places the art-historical analysis of individual decorative elements (and inscriptions) in a broader socio-symbolic context. He undertakes an impressive survey of both the relevant theoretical and physical material in developing his proposal that *Grabdenkmäler* are complex expressions of identity and as such serve certain social, cultural, and political functions.

We would summarize Bonatz's argument as follows: the widespread use of *Grabdenkmäler* in the Iron Age, their nature, and their location are all indicative of key aspects of social and political identity in this period. Unlike the previous period, where iconography was structured around ideas of deities and representations of religious beliefs, these steles are marked by designs and inscriptions that Bonatz understands as portraits of the deceased and of their survivors, who record their pious acts in erecting the *Grabdenkmäler.* In the dining scenes that are so prominent on these markers, funerary meals do not portray gods of destiny with the deceased as some have argued, nor are they merely records of a completed act; rather, they are a locus of communication between the living and dead in which, and at which, the dead are simultaneously invoked and provided for and where their power is present (pp. 156–57, 181). The *Grabdenkmal* is the liminal point between the world of the living and the world of the dead—a separation that is spatial rather than temporal, for the dead and the living exist side by side in the latter terms—re-

[1] To be distinguished from *Grabmal,* the undecorated and uninscribed grave-marker (p. 120).

flected in the meal scene itself. The survivor is on one side of the table, the deceased on the other.

Bonatz would argue that these multiple levels of meaning of the grave-markers, and indeed of the dead, are peculiar to Syro-Hittite culture, for although honoring the dead was also important in earlier Syro-Mesopotamian society, what this meant and the society it reflected were different in some significant respects. Here a critical question emerges: what was the origin and development of the distinctive Syro-Hittite *Grabdenkmäler?*

There are, according to Bonatz, two streams of cultural tradition indigenous to the region from which the *Grabdenkmäler* might have stemmed—that of the Hurrians, Hittites, and Luwians, on the one hand, and, on the other, of the Amorites, Ahlamu, and Arameans—and there are possible external influences from Egyptians and Phoenicians as well. The continuity of Bronze Age cultures was disrupted at the time of the "Dark Ages" (ca. twelfth century B.C.), however, throwing into doubt Syro-Hittite connections with preceding groups such as the Amorites of the early second millennium. In Syro-Mesopotamia among both newly sedentary Amorite society and nomadic Amorite groups *kispum* rites for the cult of the ancestors were performed, for example, at Mari by Samsi-Addu and by Ammisaduqa at Babylon. At these major urban centers sedentary Amorites retained the memory of their nomadic past in performing the cult of the ancestors. Much later the same phenomenon may be observed at Ugarit in the funerary rites for Niqmadu III when Ditanu the nomadic patriarch is evoked (p. 163). These rituals demonstrate that the cult of the ancestor was important for framing and establishing the collective identities in dynastic and familial terms for both urban and nomadic Amorite culture. Similarly, the Arameans later authenticated a reemerging city-state culture by invoking the memory of their ancestral patriarchs. Bonatz believes that while sedentary society was seriously damaged during the Dark Ages, "nomadic" tribal culture was less affected. It was the nomads who provided the connecting cultural link between the Bronze Age and the newly emerging Syro-Hittite states of the Iron Age, presumably carrying with them the cult of the ancestors (p. 170) from its Amorite roots.

The development of the argument, however, is not particularly easy to follow through the organization of the book. After a brief introduction (in chap. 1), Bonatz embarks on a discussion of theory and method (in chap. 2). From the approach of communications theory, Bonatz goes beyond stylistic analyses of art forms and art-historical hermeneutics to phenomenological description and from there to iconographic and iconologic analyses, hence the titles of chaps. 3, 4, and 5 respectively: "Phänomenologische Betrachtung," "Ikonographische Betrachtung," "Ikonologische Betrachtung."

"Phänomenologische Betrachtung," chap. 3, is essentially a descriptive catalogue in which the *Grabdenkmäler* with pictorial representation are classified according to whether they feature standing or sitting figures (forty-three illustrations are inserted in the text and at the back of the book there are twenty-three photo plates of decorated flat steles and statues in the round). Bonatz recognizes eleven subtypes of figured steles, tracing the history of the various decorative motifs as far back as the Early Bronze Age, paying special attention to the dining scenes that are so prominent in the Syro-Hittite material of the Iron Age.

In chap. 4, "Ikonographische Betrachtung," after Bonatz analyzes inscriptions found on *Grabdenkmäler* and interprets the symbolism of many recurring pictorial elements, he raises the question: what is a *Grabdenkmal*? Borrowing from studies of medieval Europe, he distinguishes between the unmarked "themeless" grave-marker (*Grabmal*) and the one that expresses pictorially and textually a theme about the deceased. As such, this type of grave-marker, the *Grabdenkmal* is a historical *memoria.* Often it is not associated with the actual corpse but, in Europe, is located in churches and cloisters where observances for the *memoria* are assured. In the same way, the Syro-Hittite grave-marker serves two functions, commemorative and cultic. The one looks back to remember the dead, the individual's life and personality, while the other looks forward—securing the deceased's memory in posterity through the continuing enactment of ritual. Bonatz examines neighboring regions (Egypt, Greece, Syria, Anatolia, and Mesopotamia) and other time periods (the Bronze Age and later the Persian and Roman eras) for comparable mortuary traditions. After a thorough review, he concludes that in Mesopotamia and

Syria before the Iron Age statues in the round and iconic steles were only rarely associated with funerary/mortuary practices such as cults of the dead or ancestor cults (*Toten- und Ahnenkultes*).

Chap. 5, the "Ikonologische Betrachtung," is the heart of this work. While in the Bronze Age deities were themselves inherent in cult statues and stele (as indicated by various terms used in Akkadian and Hittite), the difference between that period and the Iron Age was considerable, for now the image on the *Grabdenkmal* becomes an actual representation of the deceased person—in other words, a portrait. Bonatz brings forward here some important ideas not generally treated in mortuary studies in ancient Near Eastern contexts, suggesting that as "self-thematization" the *Grabdenkmal* is an expression of the personal identity of the deceased. One must distinguish, Bonatz says, between individual and personal identity, i.e., the distinctive traits and features of a human being that cannot be known or understood outside of that individual in contrast to socially defined characteristics of his/her personality (p. 159). It should be noted that self-thematization is an important concept in communicative theory and as such is a highly loaded term.

At the same time as establishing the identity of the deceased, Bonatz argues, the *Grabdenkmal* also expresses and shapes on more than one level the collective identity of groups associated with him/her. Sometimes these groups were clans or tribes, but most often the *Grabdenkmal* was a marker of family identity, for the family was the core group that maintained the cults of the dead and the ancestors. For the first time there are a number of *Grabdenkmäler* for women, but rather than indicative of any change in the status or other social roles of women that might be assumed with this emphasis on the family, Bonatz argues that inscriptions suggest they are in fact a glorification of the male survivor who erected the stele that is accomplished through these representations of women.

Moreover, family groups that expressed their identity through mortuary markers contributed to the sociocultural identity of the Syro-Hittite state; thus the state was interested in preserving this expression of the family. This is because persons portrayed in the grave-markers belonged to the upper class, the royal family co-opting this expression of group identity into its dynastic cult of ancestors to strengthen its own position and the power of the state. It is an important point because Bonatz claims that the ruler thereby established his self-understanding and self-thematization through such use of grave-markers (p. 159). Due to this larger role in the constitution of social identity, the *Grabdenkmäler* sometimes transcended "the boundaries of communicative memory," becoming the site of ritual action for the larger community identity (p. 162).

The preceding bare-bones synopsis is in danger of being a caricature of Bonatz's rich and nuanced study, which warrants more detailed examination than is possible here. Furthermore, we have concentrated on his discussion of first-millennium Syro-Hittite connections with second-millennium Syro-Mesopotamia necessarily to the exclusion of his wider references to Hittite, Egyptian, and Phoenician relationships, for this is the material with which we are most familiar. We believe that it is through work such as Bonatz's that a deeper understanding of the past may be attained. While we agree with many of Bonatz's premises and find his arguments insightful, his analysis is in the end constrained by various assumptions and loose definitions of key terms (such as cult, family, tribe, and state) that should be questioned rather than presumed.

ANNE PORTER and THOMAS MCCLELLAN

Bucksport, Maine

Religion in Ancient Mesopotamia. By JEAN BOTTÉRO. Translated by TERESA LAVENDER FAGAN. Chicago and London: The University of Chicago Press, 2001. Pp. xi + 246. $30 (cloth).

This perceptive study of ancient Mesopotamian religion by the great French Assyriologist Jean Bottéro was originally published in French under the title *La plus vieille religion en Mésopotamie* (Paris, 1998), a book that significantly revised and expanded his earlier study, *La religion babylonienne* (Paris, 1952); this volume makes the revised edition available at last in English, in a translation by Teresa Lavender Fagan. As charming as it is erudite, the volume will be a pleasure for the students and nonprofessional readers for