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Book review:

Homan, Michael M. *To Your Tents, O Israel! The Terminology, Function, Form, and Symbolism of Tents in the Hebrew Bible and the Ancient Near East. Culture and History of the Ancient Near East, 12. Leiden: Brill, 2002.*

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While I have raised serious criticisms about the essay by Rößler-Köhler and I remain unconvinced of the proposed late date for P. Berlin 10477, the material presented by the primary author, Barbara Lüscher, makes this publication of particular value for anyone with interest in Late Period Books of the Dead.

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To Your Tents, O Israel! The Terminology, Function, Form, and Symbolism of Tents in the Hebrew Bible and the Ancient Near East. By MICHAEL M. HOMAN. *Culture and History of the Ancient Near East*, vol. 12. Pp. xxv + 229, plates. Leiden: BRILL, 2002. \$81.

It is an interesting paradox that some of the most commonplace items that appear in the Hebrew Bible are also some of the least studied. The tent is a perfect example. Though referenced countless times in the Bible, and even more often in extra-biblical sources, its multifarious uses, the nomenclature associated with it, and the archaeological data concerning tents remain neglected areas of study. Homan's work, therefore, offers a welcome corrective to this state of affairs.

Homan begins his study with an exhaustive examination of tent terminology in the Hebrew Bible. Here he unpacks the meanings of the words אהל "tent," סכה, "booth," and משכן "tabernacle," and investigates ten tent-related terms, as well as words for tent accessories and the verbs associated with these terms. One of the most significant aspects of this portion of his research is that it reveals the interchangeability of words for portable and permanent dwellings (e.g., בית for אהל and משכן), a fact for which Homan provides a socio-historical explanation—to wit, the gradual sedentarization of nomadic culture: "As pastoralists abandon transportable domiciles and settle in cities, domiciliary terms for portable and permanent architecture grow increasingly synonymous" (pp. 24–25). He also observes that tent structures often adjoin permanent structures, even in the modern Middle East, thus offering another possible explanation for the blending of these terms.

In the next two chapters, Homan examines the textual, archaeological, and anthropological data informing ancient Israel's tent-dwelling heritage. Lying at the heart of these chapters is an attempt to counter the minimalist argument that the tent-dwelling heritage is a fiction invented by Israelites who descended from urban Canaanite cultures. In the face of this claim, Homan argues that such a fiction is unlikely, given the Bible's extensive tent-related vocabulary, the interchangeability of the terms mentioned above, and the positive attitudes towards tents and nomadism reflected in the Bible. Moreover, while some scholars have pointed to similarities in the material cultures between the highland and lowland urban settlements as evidence for a common ancestry, anthropological research of nomadic peoples shows that "pastoral economies by nature accumulate artifacts from the towns with which they must trade for survival" (p. 47). Similarly, though some scholars have pointed to highland terrace farming as evidence for an urban ancestry, Homan argues that farming and pastoralism are not mutually exclusive activities in a pastoral economy (he notes, e.g., the Nabateans and their Edomite ancestors). Homan concludes this section of the book by turning to an Iron Age cemetery for nomads and a survey of twenty-four Iron Age sites found in the Jabal Hamrat Fidan region in Jordan—each of which corroborates Egyptian and biblical references to nomadic peoples in that region during the Iron Age.

Homan devotes the next four chapters to the various military, nuptial, and religious functions of tents as found in the Bible and other ancient Near Eastern sources (the latter two chapters focus exclusively on the Israelite tabernacle). These chapters are largely descriptive in nature, seeking to survey more than analyze, but they lend considerable weight to Homan's argument for the historicity of Israel's tent-dwelling heritage. Homan's two chapters on the Israelite tabernacle are especially informative. They provide an exhaustive history of comparative research on the topic and examine the architectural details of the tabernacle along with their previously suggested parallels, as well as the textual difficulties that beset such a study. They also suggest a new (and admittedly tentative) reconstruction

of the tabernacle, though this reconstruction differs in minute details only (e.g., how the sixth curtain of the tabernacle is folded). These chapters further reveal a great deal of evidence for Egyptian influence on the tabernacle, and by extension, on the early Israelite priesthood. Accompanying these chapters, indeed throughout the book, are many useful diagrams, figures, and plates.

Homan's final chapter returns readers to the biblical idiom referenced in the title of his book "To your tents, O Israel!" As he points out, such a usage, when placed in the mouths of urban-dwelling Israelites, is problematic, especially if one questions the historicity of Israel's tent-dwelling heritage. Here Homan compares Ugaritic and Egyptian texts that use similar idioms for disbanding divine assemblies. Though the Ugaritic, Egyptian, and Israelite societies were primarily urban when these texts were composed, each claimed a tent-dwelling heritage. Moreover, these comparative texts also show a remarkable correspondence in that, like the Israelite usage, they reveal a protocol in which lower-ranking figures disband before higher-ranking ones. Thus Homan concludes that the expression "To your tents, O Israel," is an idiom for assembly disbandment and "a survival from a nomadic, egalitarian past, a verbal fossil still remembered" (p. 192).

This well-researched work provides a great deal of evidence for the historicity of the tent-dwelling heritage of (at least some portion of) ancient Israel. Minimalist claims to the contrary will now need to consider this evidence as well when attempting to reconstruct Israelite history based on a common urban and Canaanite ancestry.

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The Puṣpasūtra: A Prātiśākhya of the Sāmaveda. Translated by G. H. TARLEKAR. 2 volumes. Kalāmūlaśāstra Series, vol. 33. New Delhi: INDIRA GANDHI NATIONAL CENTRE FOR THE ARTS; Delhi: MOTILAL BANARSIDASS. 2001. Pp. xxxii + 725. Rs 1550.

The *Puṣpasūtra* (PS) is the major phonetic treatise belonging to the Kauthuma-Rāṇāyaniya branch of the *Sāmaveda*.¹ It owes its existence to the obsession of the ancient sāmavedic seers with the distinction between *prakṛti* and *vikṛti*—between the basic form of the chants (*sāmans*) as they appear in the first two chantbooks (*gānas*), the Grāmageyagāna ("Village Chantbook") and Āraṇyakagāna ("Forest Chantbook"), and the derivative form made manifest in the Ūhagāna ("Chantbook of Modified [Melodies]") and the Ūhyagāna ("Chantbook of Modified, Secret [Melodies]"), "ūhya" being a compression of an original "ūharahasya." The Grāmageyagāna and Āraṇyakagāna are called collectively the Pūrvagāna ("First Chantbook") or Prakṛtigāna ("Principal Chantbook"), the Ūha- and Ūhya-gānas the Uttara-gāna ("Subsequent Chantbook").

Not only does the Uttara-gāna present selected Pūrvagāna chants in altered form, its organization is completely different from that of the Grāmageyagāna and Āraṇyakagāna. The arrangement of the Uttara-gāna is according to the mandates of the vedic Soma rituals. Thus the Ūha- and Ūhya-gānas are each divided into seven sections in order to comply with rituals of varying duration: *daśarātra*, *saṃvatsara*, *ekāha*, *ahina*, *sattra*, *prāyaścitta*, and *kṣudra*.

The source verses on which the chants of the four *gānas* are based form the *ārcika* ("collection of *rc*"). Reflecting the twofold division of the *gānas* into *pūrva* ("first") and *uttara* ("subsequent"), the *ārcika* too is binary in shape. The Pūrvārcika gives texts for the chants of the Grāmageyagāna and, to some extent, the Āraṇyakagāna (many chants of this *gāna* draw their texts from the Āraṇyakaśaṃhitā, which is attached to the end of the Pūrvārcika). The verses of the Uttara-ārcika, on the other hand, are arranged ordinarily in groups of three (*trca*) or two (*pragātha*). When sung as *sāman*, the *pragātha* is normally changed into a *trca* by an overlapping process. Usually the first verse of a *trca* is traceable

1. The other principal *prātiśākhyas* are the *Ṛktantra*, the *Sāmatantra*, and the *Akṣaratantra*.