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ASTROLOGY
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THE RIVER JORDAN



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Forty-Second International Conference



RELIGIOUS OFFERINGS AND SACRIFICES
IN THE ANCIENT NEAR EAST

The Oriental Institute
Oxford University
20-23 July 2015

ARAM Society for Syro-Mesopotamian Studies
Thirty-Ninth International Conference



ASTROLOGY IN THE ANCIENT NEAR EAST

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Forty-First International Conference



THE RIVER JORDAN

The Oriental Institute
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EQUID AND DOG BURIALS IN THE RITUAL LANDSCAPE OF BRONZE AGE SYRIA AND MESOPOTAMIA

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Abstract

Equid and dog interments are a distinctive feature of the ritual landscape in Bronze Age Syria and Mesopotamia. Their ritual associations are the main topic of this paper. Another objective is to distinguish between complete animal burials and depositions of selected bones in order to understand the implications that these variations may involve. In the Early Bronze Age, animals occurred in elite burials and in contexts associated with public rituals related to the closure of official buildings or contacting with the netherworld. In the Middle Bronze Age, the context shifted toward the private sphere and the same set of animals was found in important family burials. Both animals had a special, although different place in official rituals. Neither of them was intended for consumption, but they were often deliberately killed on the occasion. Equids were represented by different taxa and were of various age. A characteristic feature of the sacrificial dogs is their recurrent young age. While equids have an attested role as status markers and were used as sacrifices for the supernatural, dogs, puppies in particular, seem to have represented merely a component of purgatory rituals. Equid and dog sacrifices did not represent a standard ritual set, but they occurred together in official ceremonies associated with ending. Such shared burials disappeared after the Middle Bronze Age. However, discrete equid or dog burials were continued. The latter were often associated with the cult of healing deities. Apart from complete equid and dog offerings, there were also depositions of selected bones. These were often accompanied by remains of other animals. Their meaning should be interpreted differently than that of complete animal burials. The various age and species of the offered animals resulted rather from their specific role in rituals, perhaps requiring a variety of animals, both wild and domestic.

Interments of equids and dogs together were intriguingly frequent in the ritual context of Bronze Age Syria and Mesopotamia in the 3rd and 2nd millennium BC, suggesting a distinctive ritual habit. This paper discusses the possibility that a ritual “link” existed between these animals.

At least several such joint burials were discovered on sites in the Upper Khabur and Upper Euphrates valley. Discrete equid and dog burials are known as well, mostly from Mesopotamia (Fig. 1, 2). The discrete equid burials from an extensive region of the Near East have been published extensively Greenfield *et al.* 2012; Wygnańska 2012; Way 2011, Weber 2008; Klenck 2002, Holladay 1997, Oren 1997, Wapnisch 1997, van den Brink 1982, Stiebing 1971, Zarins 1986, Bietak 1981, Albright and Dumond 1934), but little attention has been paid so far to the dog remains from ceremonial context and their meaning (Way 2011, p. 21-2; Klenck 2002, p. 84-87, Çakırlar *et al.* 2014). The main focus of this study will be the joint occurrence of the two species in ceremonial contexts (omitting the mundane) and the question how their association could be understood in terms of a special place in official rituals.

Secondly, the nature of the deposited animal remains will be put to analysis, whether complete or fragmentary, highlighting the implications that such variation may involve for their meaning. There is often no differentiation of the meaning between the two forms, both being treated simply as burials, that is, “animal sacrifice”. However, the many variations of deposition that may be observed in the archaeological record clearly indicate a varied role.

MATERIAL AND METHODS

The cases of shared equid-dog deposition considered in this paper originate from stratified archaeological layers of Bronze Age date on sites from Syria and Iraq, as well as the site of Tell Haror in Israel which supplies important comparative material (Table 1, 2). The time span covers the Early and Middle Bronze Age, that is, the 3rd and the first half of the 2nd millennium BC: from the first known equid burials to their disappearance in the Late Bronze Age. Information from cuneiform texts mentioning dog and equid sacrifices will be introduced to supplement the archaeological data.

Several important publications in recent years have discussed the role of equids in Near Eastern Bronze Age society, Way's comprehensive publication (2011) being a summary of the research to date. The approach proposed in this paper, however, was inspired by Paula Wapnisch's earlier article (1997), in which she analysed the 2nd millennium BC equid burials from Palestine, Egypt, Mesopotamia and Greece, paying attention to whether the interments were complete or partial, and what was the specific deposition contexts. Wapnisch distinguished various kinds: foundation deposits, remains of ritual meals to propitiate the gods, ritual burials in temples, funerary offerings for the afterlife, thereby denying a single meaning for the equid burials. She confirmed, however, the evidently special role of equids in the ritual reality of Amorite culture (Wapnisch 1997, p. 359). The present article follows this line of reasoning, discussing both complete, articulated animal burials and fragmented skeletons appearing in ritual contexts in terms of the following factors which are of importance for understanding the meaning of such depositions: 1) species and age of the deposited animals; 2) cause of death: whether natural or intentionally slaughtered, and in the latter case, the nature of the traces left on the bones; and 3) the consumption aspect, meaning was the meat meant for human consumption, then tasty cuts of young animals would be expected, either as provisions for the deceased or as a gift for the supernatural powers. The other factor in need of consideration for the purpose of the presentation herewith is the setting and distribution of the animal remains, whether in a grave or in other kinds of ceremonial structures, this bearing significantly on an interpretation of their definite role.

The objectives as presented here are clear enough, but the examination of the evidence was hindered frequently by the vagueness and incomplete character of the published data. By way of example, the identification to the species level in the case of equids is seldom specific, whether horse, onager or donkey, and particular bones of the skeleton deposited in a ceremonial context are often not identified in detail. Even the location of animal remains is rarely elucidated in explicit terms.

ANIMAL BURIALS – SACRIFICES AND POST-MORTEM RITUAL DEPOSITIONS

The title of this paper refers to animal 'burial' which is a very general term that does not explain the detailed circumstances and purpose of the deposition act: whether the animal remains were buried as a dedication, offering or sacrifice. Most of the animals discussed here were intentionally killed on the occasion, that is, they were sacrificed. Not all of them however, because we cannot be so sure with regards to fragmentary carcasses. For example, an animal died naturally could have been buried, too, or as in Umm el-Marra, fragments originating from the skinning of an animal were deposited as a representation of the complete creature (see below). Even if the animals had not been sacrificed, but parts of them had been treated as a dedication.

DEDICATION, OFFERING, SACRIFICE

In his discussion of the evidence for 'sacrifice' in the archaeological record, Glenn Schwartz (2012, pp. 1-32) defined sacrifice as a religious activity demanding various forms of ritual killing, where 'religious' concerns interaction with the supernatural powers (Renfrew 2007, pp. 112-3; Schwartz 2012, pp. 1-3). Schwartz's assumption is that a recognisable sacrifice is the one found in a context devoted to the religious/cultic, i.e., involving interaction with the supernatural powers. Bones found in a cultic context might be interpreted either as an offering to the gods, the remains of consumption by people residing in a sacred space, or meat remains for both divine and human consumption.

Following Schwartz (2012), a sacrifice may entail killing of a living thing, offering of its life energy to the supernatural world, and the acquisition of benefit to the sacrificer through the consumption of some parts of the offering. Consumption, however, is not ever-present as may be evidenced by deliberate killing and burying of complete equids without consuming any part, and so, sacrifice defined more broadly as ritualized action involving destruction and offering to the supernatural entities is more fitting here.¹ Just as sacrifice is a broad term in itself, so are the explanations of the reasons behind it. One of the most obvious reasons is ‘giving to receive’ (a blessing, restoration of order, reversal of bad fate, etc.), but it also may be a communication or communion with the divine without expecting instant reward (Schwartz 2012, p. 6). Sacrifice without offering is equally possible when, for example, an animal is killed and buried as a foundation deposit to provide a connection to the supernatural and by the same, to protect the construction (Schwartz 2012, pp. 6–7).

Schwartz lists the various kinds of remains found in cultic context, without taking into consideration the fact that sacrifice represents only one of the possible ritual actions that produce offerings in the form of animal (or human) remains. A more general term, ‘dedication’, which covers both sacrifice and offering that does not require killing, is more useful for the purpose of this paper.

Robin Osborne refers more broadly to dedicated depositions of various objects (animal and human sacrifices including) without tackling the sacrifice topic. He defines it as an exchange of material objects for supernatural reaction (2004, p. 2). As Osborne claims, there is no single agreed term for objects intentionally deposited to establish an exchange with transcendent powers. Depending on the context, they are referred to as dedications, offerings, votive hoards, or simply ‘deposits’. Osborn’s interpretation makes room for an animal offering that does not involve concurrent killing: ‘dedication’ emphasises the importance of the objects as a gift, identifies the recipient as transcendent and offers some permanence to the gift; ‘offering’ focuses on the act of giving and suggests the perishability of an offered object; ‘votive’ refers to a connection between the object and a prior vow or prayer; ‘hoard’ draws attention only to a quantity of similar items being found together, and makes no connection to any particular action and the same refers to a ‘deposit’ that denotes, generally, an action of depositing, as in ‘foundation deposit’ (Osborne 2004, p.5). Concluding, general terms such as ‘dedication’ and ‘offering’ are the most adequate to define the Bronze Age ritual equid and dog burials without deciding *a priori* whether they were sacrificed or not.

IDENTIFYING AN OFFERING IN ARCHAEOLOGICAL RECORD

The assumption is that when an animal is deliberately killed with a ritual purpose in mind, one could expect restricted age, sex, species and choice of body parts deposited in a ceremonial context, as opposed to generalized animal refuse. Ritual animal killing may be revealed by selective young age of remains evidenced in a restricted site area (Hesse, Wapnish and Greer 2012, pp. 224-5). Occasionally, a tendency to choose a specific gender may occur, as in case of the 3rd millennium BC Umm el-Marra burials, where male equids were preferred for the ceremonial interments. Furthermore, domesticates have been observed to hold preference over wild animals as far as offerings are concerned (Osborne 2004, p.5). The Bible and Classical texts demonstrate beyond doubt that only certain animal body parts were reserved for the divine world, therefore the recovery of repeated examples of specific animal parts would be indicative of an offering (Schwartz 2012, p. 11). By the same, the animal remains of commonplace consumption should tend to be fragmentary bones found in domestic or refuse context; they should represent a wider range of species, ages, sexes, and body elements than those from a sacrifice (Schwartz 2012, p. 12). Significantly, non-consumption animals, such as equids and dogs, may also appear beyond a cultic context, had they died of natural causes or been killed for reasons other than ritual; these are expected to be found mostly as complete skeletons buried in middens or on the streets. The present research disregards such contexts, focusing instead on those that are evidently of a ritual nature, either associated with public ceremonies displayed in prominent places, or funerary activities undertaken in

¹ Destruction is also not obligatory in sacrifice (Schwartz 2012, p. 5); this article, however, focuses on animal sacrifices involving killing.

or on graves. Most of the above assumptions, although helpful, might also be misleading. As will be exemplified in the following paragraphs, there are no consistent patterns in the kind of bones found in ritual contexts. Remains from non-intentional killing do not necessarily represent expected age and sex restriction. Even with just the two species under consideration, there is no uniformity in ritual treatment.

EQUID AND DOG SYMBOLISM

The economic value of equids, mainly domestic asses, in early 3rd millennium BC Mesopotamia and the southern Levant is well confirmed, the animals being used as draft and riding animals as well as beasts of burden (Greenfield *et al.* 2012; Way 2011, p. 97; Milevski 2009). The riding animals, *kunga*-hybrids (onager x donkey hybrids) in particular, were clearly associated with high status, even with royalty, and they were sometimes buried with members of the elite (Way 2011, p. 100; Weber 2008, pp. 514-16. Postgate 1986, Zarins 1986). Some Considerations on the Funnels from Tell Afis. *Ash-Sharq - Bulletin of the Ancient Near East* 1, pp. 18–21 ular, were clearly associated with high status, even with royalty, and they were sometimes buried with members of the elite (Way 2011, p. 100; Weber 2008, pp. 514-16, Postgate 1986, Zarins 1986). The ritual significance of equids is attested mostly for the 2nd millennium BC; they were sacrificed, for example, as a symbolic act in peace treaties in Mari during the MBA (Way 2011, pp. 75-82, 88-91, 99-102; Finet 1993) and offered at the funeral of the god Ba'alu in Late Bronze Age Ugarit (Way 2011, pp. 40-48 for the text and a discussion).

Dog status compared to the equids is inferior. Not only there is no association with high social rank in Mesopotamian written sources or iconography (Way 2011, pp. 21-23; Klenck 2002, p. 86), but it is considered in many cultures as unclean (e.g. by Israelites: Klenck 2002, p. 85). The term used for a puppy in Mari peace treaty texts is *mērānu(m)*. It occurs in other cuneiform sources associated with helplessness (*I seized him by his hair like a puppy*), vigour and vitality (*I run after you (...) like young dog*) and being immature (*he grown up in my palace like a young dog*) (CAD, Civil 1977, pp. 105-6). Examination of data from various historical cultures reveals that dogs were appreciated as guardians (Watanabe 2002: 119–20) and as favourite and loyal pets; they were believed to be endowed with healing properties due to observation of the curative effect of their licking of wounds and were associated with healing deities (Klenck 2002, pp. 72-3; Watanabe 2002, pp. 119-20; Fuhr 1977, pp. 135-145; Livingstone 1988). Dog figurines were buried below the floors and in entrances to dwellings to ward off demons (Scurlock 2002b, p. 364).

Dogs, mainly puppies, were also recurrently considered to have attributes making them suitable for ritual use (Way 2011, p. 73, 79; Wilkens 2002), and they were often and cross-culturally associated with chthonic deities as well as with purification and prevention rituals (Klenck 2002, p. 85; Collins 1990, pp. 211-26; Kelly-Buccellati 2002, p. 139; Snyder and Moore 2006, p. ix, for cross-cultural references). In ancient Greece and Italy, dogs were sacrificed as offerings for the chthonic deities during purification rites and sacrificed in compensatory rites during a closure ceremony of important structures (de Grossi Mazzorin and Minniti 2006, pp. 62-5). Moreover, as dogs were believed to have special healing properties, puppies were particularly often used to cure illness by mere contact, after which the animals were killed and buried. Additionally, the practice of dismembering dogs and burying select parts is also attested for ancient Greece and Rome (De Grossi Mazzorin and Minniti, p. 64).

Dogs in Mesopotamian as well as Hittite magical texts were evidently not intended as an object of dedication for deities. They were rather used as a ritual tool necessary to perform a rite of purification. Scurlock points out that animals, such as dogs, pigs and frogs, were preferred in magical rituals (e.g. as substitutes for absorbing evil), as opposed to sheep used as a sacrificial animal for deities (2002b: 386). Also in the Hittite rituals, although dogs played an important role, they were neither used as dedications nor associated with temple food or equipment (Collins 1990, p. 225).

Moreover, neither equids nor dogs were generally intended for ritual consumption. In the cuneiform sources, equids were killed but not eaten, contrary to other draft animals, such as cattle (Greenfield *et al.* 2012, p. 25; Scurlock 2002a, p. 392).² If we go by the texts, equids were consumed rarely and only in

² Scurlock (2002, p. 392) points out that during the annual donkey sacrifice in Mari, a donkey was killed (*dāku*), not offered

extreme circumstances, for example, during a famine. In the archaeological record, there is evidence of wild species being hunted and eaten at Early Bronze I and Late Bronze Tel Halif in Israel (Zeder 1998, p. 112). There is no mention of eating dogs although they were killed, dismembered and offered in specific rituals. To sum up, it is intriguing to have in the same ritual context remains of both species but with differentiated significance.

The only exception to this rule are dogs associated with Mesopotamian healing goddesses. The ordinary dog was not welcome in any Mesopotamian temple save for the shrines of the healing goddesses, Gula in particular, where even stray dogs could be buried (Scurlock 2002b: 369). Cuneiform texts associated with the worship of healing goddesses as well as finds from the Gula temple in Isin indicate that dogs were indeed objects of cult and were protagonists in cultic happenings (Livingstone 1988).

EQUID AND DOG BURIALS IN EARLY BRONZE AGE IN SYRIA

Equid and dog burials were first attested in official, ceremonial and funerary contexts in Syria in the mid-3rd millennium BC. The two species were found buried together in a ‘Ceremonial Burial Complex’ in Umm el-Marra and in a ‘closure deposit’ in Tell Brak, as well as in a ritual structure in Tell Mozan (Fig.1, Tab.1).

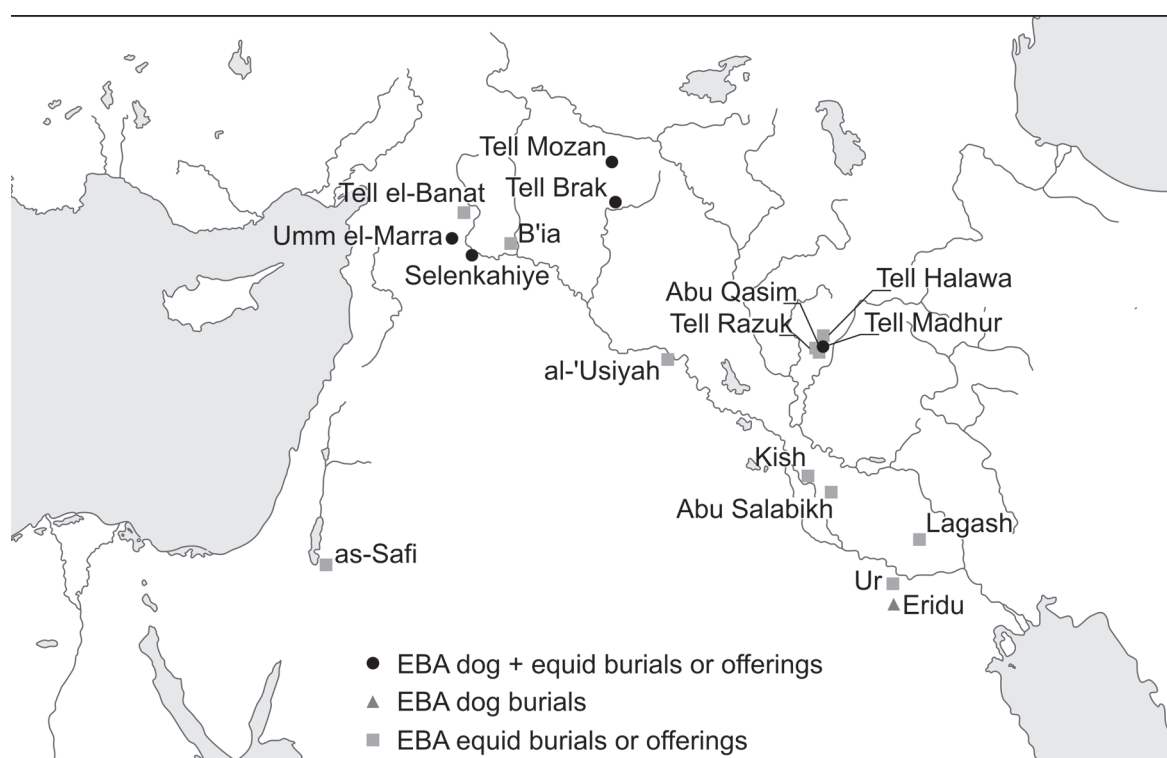


Fig. 1. Distribution of Early Bronze Age equid and dog burials and offerings, discrete equid or dog burials in the Near East (based on Way 2011, Zarins 1986, Greenfield *et al.* 2012). Drawing: Szymon Maślak.

At Umm el-Marra in Western Syria, nine monumental ‘royal’ tombs with human burials and additional installations yielding equid and puppy burials from 2500–2200 BC were found in the centre of the settlement. The ‘royal’ tombs yielded luxury goods and animal bones identified as goat, cattle, adult dogs (not puppies) and various types of fowl (Weber 2008, p. 499). Some of the animals were interred complete: young sheep, goat, duck, geese. The old dogs, cattle, and sheep, were butchered and only certain parts were placed in the tombs. At the centre of these tombs were five separate mud-brick

structures, built consecutively, holding skeletons of 26 male equids and the skulls and bones of at least five more, but no human burials. The equids were identified as donkey and, tentatively, as a *kunga* hybrid. Additionally, there were three pit-like structures with equids lying on their sides and one pit containing only equine hind extremities. The greater proportion of these animals were killed at young and prime ages, and buried in groups of four. Some of the equids were buried in standing position and must have been killed on the spot. Several others had died of old age, however, and were laid on their sides. Moreover, one of the installations yielded only select bones of old equids — skulls and extremities (podials, metapodials, phalanges) (Fig. 2). These parts were identified as remains of skinning processes and they are considered waste generated from the leather-working industry (Weber 2008, p. 167). They may be treated as a *pars pro toto* representation of a complete animal, meaning another equid burial.

In some of the installations, puppies and infants were buried alongside equids (they followed equid burials to be more exact). Complete and fragmentary skeletal remains were both found: Installation B contained six articulated puppy skeletons, two equids and an equid skull found together with a nearly complete skeleton of a stillborn human infant, whereas Installation C yielded another complete young dog and two equids together with three human infants. Three other installations contained equids and infants only, and no dog remains. The installations were situated in the vicinity of the elite monumental tombs and it is probable that at least some of the animals were killed and interred at the same time as elite humans. Burying the equids, puppies and infants was not a single act, but it was repeated whenever new structures were raised.

Equids from the installations were *kunga* hybrids of various age. They were found in ceremonial context and separated from the elite human tombs, thus they are not candidates for subservient animal burials ('retainer burials') (Schwartz 2012, pp. 9-13), but represent separate intentional burials. Donkeys and *kunga* hybrids in particular were highly valued and associated with royalty, so their burials were apparently associated with the high social status of the nearby human burials (Weber 2008, pp. 159-62).

According to Weber's interpretation (2012), they even might have been treated as equal to human elite burials. It is interesting to note among the equids from the installations young individuals that were slaughtered most probably intentionally (their bones bore no trace of inflicted violence, but their young age suggests that they were rather sacrificed) and individuals buried following death of natural causes. One of the possible explanations of burying the already deceased (and even dismembered) animals was that their royal status was worthy of a 'royal' burial after natural death (Weber 2012). It may be concluded that both sacrifices and dedications of animal remains took place in the installations, and it was the species that was significant and not the fact that an animal life was offered on the occasion. It is also significant that puppies as well as infant burials were added to the equids, making clear that the latter were the principal occupants of the graves. While equids were of various age, the dog sacrifice was deliberately of young individuals, so the age of the killed dogs must have been of relevance for the ritual. The presence of equids, symbols of royalty in the vicinity of 'royal' burials, was a means of legitimising authority and power. According to Weber (2012), the animals were offered in order to open "a line of communication" with the gods, possibly to ensure their goodwill in the ritual of succession.

There were some differences in the types of offerings between the 'royal' tombs and the installations, suggesting a complex meaning of the rituals. For example, there were differences in the assortment of animal remains: equids and puppies were found in the installations, whereas in the 'royal' tombs there was a whole range of animals, both domesticated and wild, of different age and gender, both attractive and hardly preferential for consumption. Skeletons were both complete (young individuals) and fragmentary (older ones, including dog remains, among others). Both sacrifices and offerings of selected animals were present. This wide range of differentiated offerings represented sets of "ingredients" relevant for performing complex rites. We can only assume that the rites included not only feasting and provisions, but also ritual activities not associated with consumption. Sacrificing puppies brings to mind propitiatory rituals or an attempt to contact chthonic deities which could have been part of a 'royal' funeral.

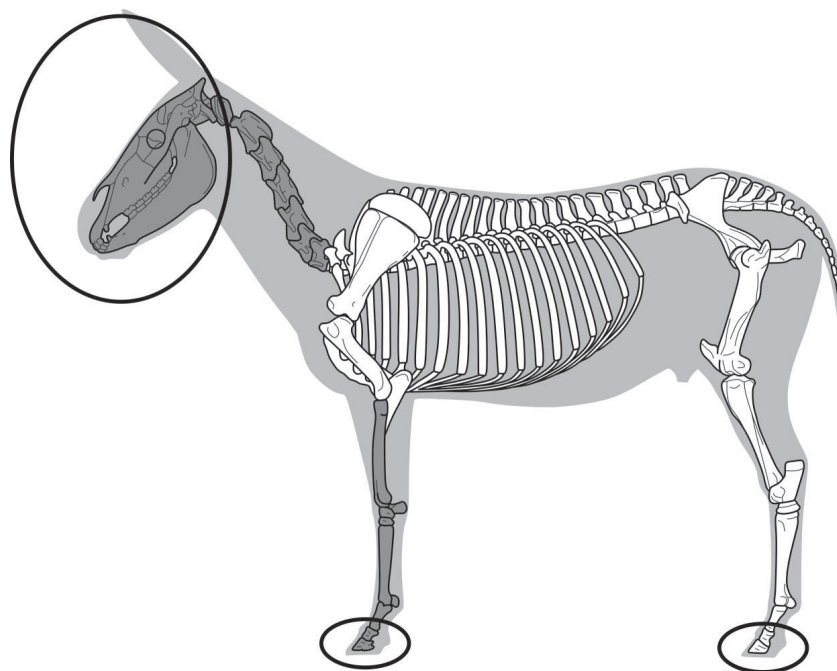


Fig. 2. Schematic drawing of equid bones found most often in Early Bronze Age ritual contexts (marked in dark grey and with ellipses). Drawing: Marek Puzzkarski.

At Tell Brak in north-eastern Syria, eight donkeys (*Equus asinus*) and a dog identified as a Persian Greyhound or Saluki were buried in a ceremonial closure layer dated to 2250 BC (Oates *et al.* 2001, pp. 41 ff., 48 ff., 53; Clutton-Brock 2001, pp. 327-38). The burials – one shared donkey/dog burial and seven discrete donkey burials were associated with a ritual filling of an abandoned complex of monumental buildings comprising a temple. These burials were deposited in different areas of the complex, but they seem to be associated with a building identified as the temple of Shamagan (Shakkan), god of steppe animals, including donkeys. The shared dog and donkey burial was found in one spot within this area. The dog was laid on its side with legs stretched; it was an adult male individual. The donkey, an adult female individual, was lying on its left side, near the dog. Both animals were killed deliberately. The donkey (as well as the other donkeys buried in this layer, see below in this text for further comments) was not privileged in its lifetime, but was used as a pack or riding animal (Clutton-Brock 2001, p. 338). Still, it must have been an animal of high prestige and hence its use in an official closing ritual. The donkey and dog burial was accompanied by a deposition of disarticulated parts of other animals: sheep, goat, pig, cattle and crane. Similarly as at Umm el-Marra, they might represent a variety of ritual ingredients, including complete and partial remains, of both domesticated and wild species.

The third EBA non-funerary context concerns a find from Tell Mozan (ancient Urkesh). Over a thousand animal bones were retrieved from a monumental underground structure located next to the Akkadian-period palace used between 2300–2100 BC. Most of the bones belonged to piglets and young and very young dogs; these were accompanied by the bones of 60 ovids and caprines, and 20 donkeys. The structure from Tell Mozan is interpreted as ^d*ābi*, a place of ceremonial contact with the netherworld (Kelly-Buccellati 2002). The puppy and piglet remains found within a huge semicircular pit were represented by complete skeletons and selected parts and constituted the majority of animal remains. According to the excavators, the piglets and the puppies were most probably killed on the spot and thrown into the structure. The donkeys and other animals were much fewer and represented mostly by selected bones; they would have been complementary offerings in this case. Assuming the meaning of this structure is understood correctly, then the puppies and piglets were sacrificed to the chthonic deities, possibly in the course of purification or propitiatory rites, and offered together with other animal parts.

Significantly, both puppies and piglets are strongly associated with Hittite purgatory rituals of a later period (Collins 1990), although the animals were almost always severed in half according to the texts, while there is no evidence for such treatment at Tell Mozan. These offerings were not a single act in Tell Mozan, but were regularly repeated and the bones were deposited in several thick layers inside the structure.

Other examples of equid and dog burials from the 3rd millennium BC are confined to a clearly elite funerary context (Fig. 1, Tab. 1). One case (a donkey and a puppy) is known from Tell Madhur, northern Iraq (Zarins 1986, pp. 172-3, Killick and Roaf 1979, p. 537, 540). The other is actually a bovid-and-puppy burial found in Selenkahiye, Syria; here the bovids were buried as a yoked pair of draft animals and hence, their function was equivalent to that of the equids (van Loon 1979, pp. 105-6). Equids in funerary context, again, mark the high social position of the deceased. Recurrent puppy sacrifices may again be assumed as an element of the propitiatory or purification character of funeral rites.

A review of the data from Umm el-Marra, Tell Brak and Tell Mozan yields the following characteristic of the equids present in these burials: either donkeys or kunga-hybrids; young and/or mature individuals; complete skeletons or skeletal fragments; individuals killed deliberately or buried after natural death; accompanied sometimes by vessels and selected bones of other species. The dog burials were represented by: predominantly complete articulated skeletons; young or very young individuals; individuals killed deliberately on the occasion (whenever information has been provided). The young age of an animal did not seem to play an important role, if selected bones were deposited as an offering.

At the three described sites, the equid and dog offerings constituted part of the rituals performed in exceptional, official situations that marked either the death of a leader or the end of a sacral complex, or a desire to contact the supernatural. These rituals demanded performing extraordinary ceremonies involving animal sacrifices and offerings. Equids had the most essential significance for the performed rituals and were associated, as esteemed animals, with the high status and extraordinary relevance of the events that took place in the Umm el-Marra sacrificial complex and at Tell Brak, in the temple area. Generally, it seems that age and sex, and even the species of the equids was of no significance, although the male gender of the equids must have been a deliberate choice for the Umm el-Marra people. The dogs, however, appeared only occasionally at both sites. It should be emphasised that unlike the equids, all the puppies were sacrificed. There is nothing to indicate that the animals were treated as a symbol of high social standing (save perhaps the adult saluki dog from Tell Brak, which is an appreciated breed even today and may have been associated importantly with the closure event). The traditional role of a dog as guardian does not make much sense because of the recurring young age of the individuals. Besides, nothing in the location of the dog remains is indicative of their involvement as guardians. While equid remains are often accompanied by additional animal bones (cattle, sheep, goat, fowl), the puppies occurred most often with piglets and in one case, exceptionally, with infant burials. Parallel finds from other regions and periods suggest that puppy sacrifices might have been a component of propitiatory or purification rituals performed on very official occasions in 3rd millennium BC Syria. They accompanied equids only as an addition. At Tell Mozan, however, the character of the ritual was different: puppies and piglets, and not equids, apparently played a major role in the rite. Other animals represented in the deposit only by skeletal fragments were rather complementary offerings made for deities during the same rites.

SITE	LOCATION	EQUID BONES	DOG BONES	OTHER BONES	REFERENCE
Umm El-Marra (Syria)	Installation B	2 articulated complete male equid skeletons; Buried in a standing position; Skull of a juvenile equid.	3 complete puppy skeletons	Human infant bones	Weber 2008
Umm El-Marra (Syria)	Installation C	2 articulated male equid skeletons (skulls and pelvises missing); Buried in a standing position.	Complete skeleton of an adult dog; Buried between the equids.		Weber 2008
Tell Brak (Syria)	Fill of a temple complex area	Complete articulated skeleton of an adult female donkey; Buried on its left side.	Complete skeleton of an adult male Persian Greyhound dog; Buried on its side.	Disarticulated fragments of sheep, goat, pig, cattle and crane bones.	Oates <i>et al.</i> 2001 Clutton-Brock 2001
Tell Mozan (Syria)	Ritual structure	20 equid fragments, disarticulated.	Puppies (all kinds of the bones); Complete skeletons and disarticulated fragments.	Piglets: complete skeletons and disarticulated fragments; Fragments of 60 individuals of sheep and goat.	Kelly-Buccellati 2002
Tell Madhur (Iraq)	Elite burial	2 complete articulated donkey skeletons; Buried as if yoked.	Neonate puppy complete skeleton buried between the equids.	-	Killick and Roaf 1979
Selenkahiye (Iraq)	Elite burial	2 complete articulated bovid (!) skeletons; Buried as if yoked.	Complete puppy skeleton buried between the bovids.	-	Van Loon 1979

Tab. 1. The third millennium shared equid and dog burials from Syria and Mesopotamia.

OTHER DISCRETE EQUID AND DOG BURIALS FROM THE 3RD MILLENNIUM BC

Numerous single equid burials from the later part of the 3rd millennium BC were found in Syria and Iraq, both in ceremonial and in elite funerary context and they will be reviewed here for the sake of comparison. Seven discrete donkey burials were ritually buried in the already mentioned closure layer of the temple complex in Area FS (the same one that contained the donkey and the saluki-dog burial). Together with decapitated human individuals buried there, the animals were included in a specific ceremony (Oates *et al.* 2001, pp. 343-50). In Tell Banat in Syria, the articulated bones of numerous donkeys were found in the foundations of a funerary mound, the White Monument, where they were buried and probably re-interred together with the humans and marked the highest social position of the deceased. The equid bones found below a public building within the settlement in Tell Banat were interpreted as a ritual foundation deposit (Way 2011, p. 136, Porter 2002, p. 21). Added to this list of discrete equid burials are numerous examples from elite funerary contexts from Syria and Iraq (Way 2011, pp. 103 ff.).

Just a single complete dog burial inside a pit grave (grave 11) dated to the second half of the 3rd millennium BC is known from Tell Mozan in Syria (Wissing in press, p. 123, Tab. 14). To sum up, equid and dog burials appeared in Syria and Mesopotamia for the first time in the second half of the 3rd millennium BC and are confined to an elite or public realm. It should be pointed out here that discrete equid burials were much more frequently practiced at this time in the entire area and shared equid/ dog burials turn out to be relatively rare and known mostly from the territory of Syria.

EQUIDS AND DOGS IN RITUAL CONTEXT IN THE MIDDLE BRONZE AGE

In the first half of the second millennium BC, the custom of shared equid and dog burials became uncommon and shifted to the private sphere (Tab. 2). This particular set of animals was found in distinguished, but ordinary burials. To the author's knowledge, there are dog/equid burials at only two sites in Syria: Tell Mozan/Urkish and Tell Arbid, both located in the Upper Khabur basin (Fig. 3).

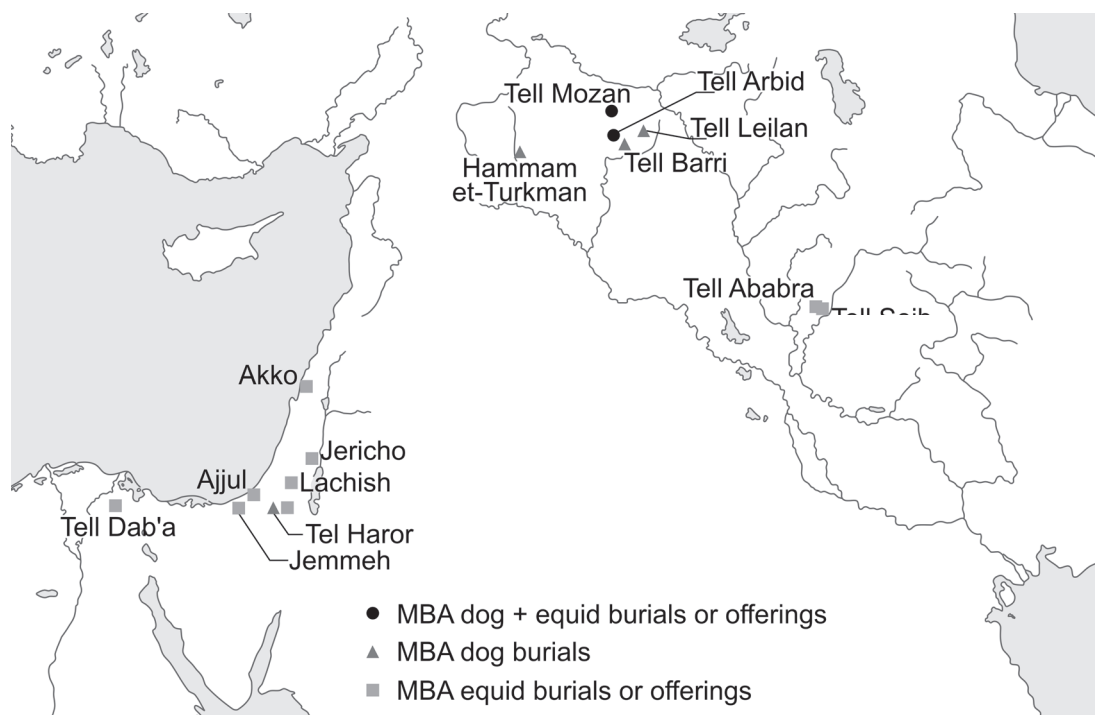


Fig. 3. Distribution of Middle Bronze Age equid and dog burials and offerings, discrete equid or dog burials in the Near East (based on Way 2011, Wygnańska 2012, Zarins 1986). Drawing: Szymon Maślak.

A young dog was buried in the shaft of a chamber tomb containing a secondary burial of four human individuals at Tell Arbid (Fig. 4) (Piątkowska-Małecka and Wygnańska 2006). The dog had been laid on its left side with legs stretched and head turned unnaturally to the south, suggesting that its neck had been broken. Additionally, a complete disarticulated skeleton of a mature female equid, possibly an onager, was found in a shallow pit in front of the shaft. Both animals were evidently deposited as accompanying internments in this possible family burial. Apart from the burials, an animal offering — the selected bones of an equid, sheep, goat, pig and cattle — were found in the shaft of this tomb; most of the remains represented parts attractive from a consumption point of view, originating from young animals. The equid was represented by foot bones and vertebrae of a mature donkey (Wygnańska, Małecka). A further adult dog was found in the shaft of another chamber tomb (grave G7/37/62) at this site, in exactly the same location and position as the dog from tomb G8/9, however, with its head placed anatomically (Koliński 2009, p. 2). Moreover, a single donkey skull was deposited upon the roof of a cist grave but no dog bones were found there (G1/P/ 37/63-2010) (Rafał Koliński and Joanna Mardas, personal communication).

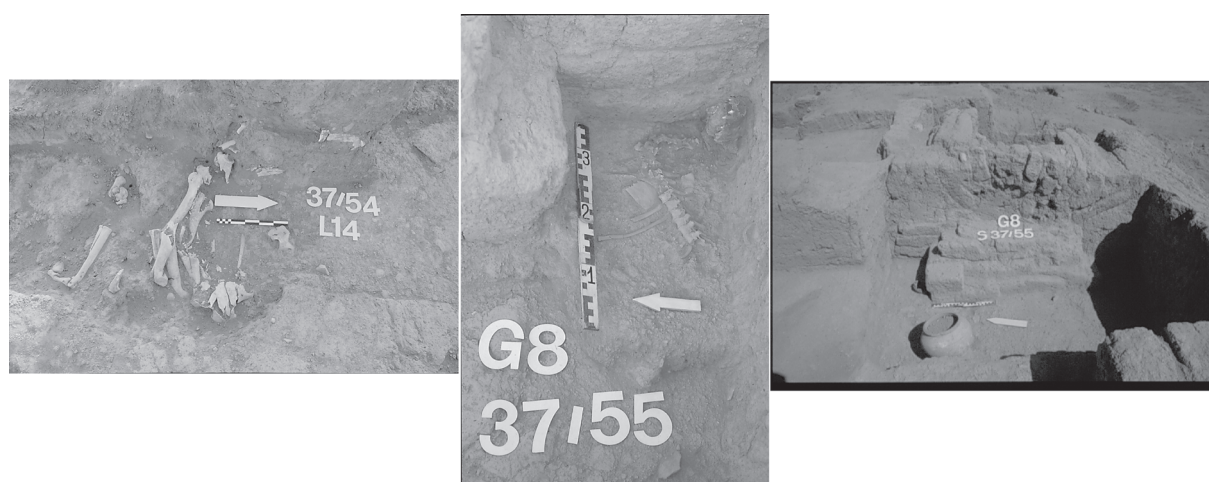


Fig. 4. From left, disarticulated secondary burial of an equid skeleton (in a pit next to the tomb), articulated dog burial from a grave shaft and a Middle Bronze Age vaulted tomb G8/9 with shaft (view from the shaft) from Tell Arbid, Syria.

Photo: Andrzej Reiche.

Select bones of a donkey and a dog were found in two graves from Tell Mozan (Table 2, Fig. 5, 6). In one of the vaulted chamber tombs (tomb 4), foot bones and teeth of a donkey as well as foot bones, teeth and cervical vertebrae of a dog were deposited in a chamber together with some fallow deer and cattle bones, while a few equid leg bones together with cattle, sheep/goat and pig bones were found in the shaft of this tomb (Wissing in press, pp. 122-25, Tab. 14). The tomb was presumably a family burial. In another grave (pit burial, grave 30) dated to the 3rd/2nd millennium BC (Old Jezirah V), a few unspecified bones of an equid and a dog were deposited in the grave together with goat/sheep and pig bones. The animal remains from both graves were interpreted as an offering for the deceased due to their location in the grave. At the same site, a female donkey was deposited in front of the entrance to the family chamber tomb, in a very similar way as at Tell Arbid, but no dog burial was found (Wissing in press, p. 125; Dohmann-Pfälzner and Pfälzner 2001, pp. 129-133).

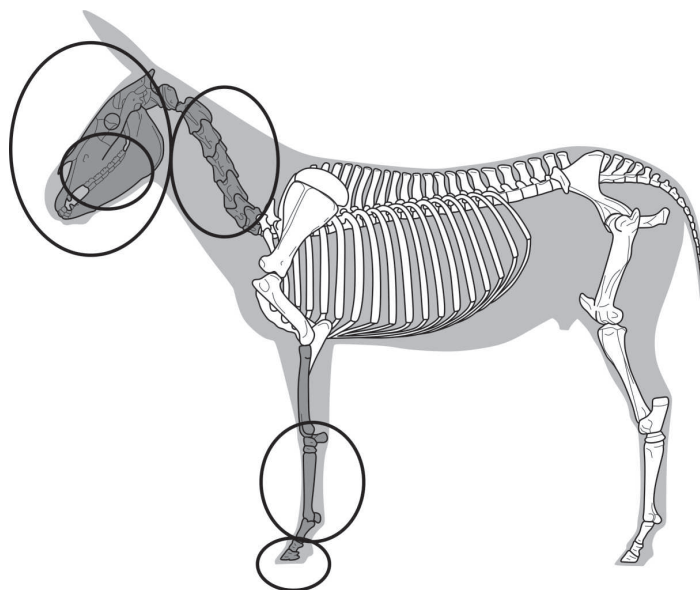


Fig. 5. Schematic drawing of equid bones from offerings in Middle Bronze Age funeral contexts (marked in dark grey and with ellipses). Drawing: Marek Puskarski.

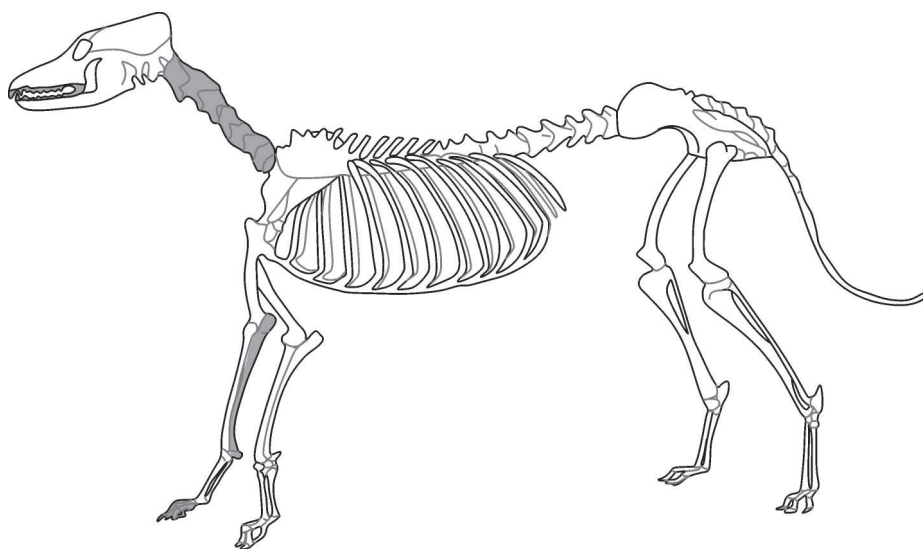


Fig. 6. Schematic drawing of dog bones from offerings found in Early and Middle Bronze Age ritual contexts (marked with dark grey). Drawing: Marek Puskarski.

SITE	GRAVE	EQUID BONES	DOG BONES	OTHER BONES	REFERENCE
TELL AR-BID	G8/9-S-37/55 - 2001 Chamber tomb with shaft	Complete disarticulated skeleton (a few bones missing) of onager (adult female) in a pit next to the grave shaft.	Complete articulated young dog skeleton in a grave shaft.	Sheep and goat bones – all parts of skeleton with predominance of ribs and vertebrae in a chamber.	Piątkowska-Małecka and Wygnańska 2006, 2011
				Goat, sheep, pig (skull fragment, tooth, tibia), cattle (foot bones, carpals), equid (vertebra, carpal, phalanges) in the grave shaft. Small ruminants most abundant with trunk parts prevailing.	
TELL AR-BID	G7/37/62 Chamber tomb with shaft	-	Complete articulated skeleton in a grave shaft.		Koliński 2009
TELL AR-BID	G 1 / P / 37/63 - 2010 Cist grave with mud brick roof	Donkey skull Found on a roof of the grave.			Koliński and Mardas (personal communication)
TELL MOZAN	Grave 4 Chamber tomb with shaft	Equid (foot bones and teeth) in the chamber.	Dog (foot bones, teeth, vertebra) in the chamber.	Fallow deer (mandible, teeth), cattle (phalanges, skull fragment) in a chamber.	Wissing (in press)
		Phalanges, metatarsus in a grave shaft.		Cattle (skull, ulna, rib), sheep/goat (abundant bones), pig (foot bones, teeth) in a shaft.	
TELL MOZAN	Grave 30 (pit)	A few unspecified bones in the grave.	A few unspecified bones in the grave.	Goat/ sheep, pig (unspecified bones) in the grave.	Wissing (in press)
TELL MOZAN	Grave 37 Chamber tomb with shaft	Female adult donkey burial in a grave shaft.	-	-	Dohmann-Pfälzner and Pfälzner 2001

Tab. 2. The second millennium shared equid and dog burials from Syria and Mesopotamia.

OTHER DISCRETE DOG BURIALS FROM THE MIDDLE BRONZE AGE

Several discrete equid and dog burials are known. Single equid interments continued to be a relatively frequent phenomenon in the early 2nd millennium BC in Levant.³ The buried equids were mainly domestic asses (*equus asinus*) of various age. They were killed deliberately or interred after natural death, buried either as complete skeletons or as selected parts. These equid burials were connected with private burials, often multiple family interments in vaulted mud-brick chambers, and they seem to signal important family members, but not strictly a high ranking elite. During the Middle Bronze Age equid burials were also interred as foundation deposits in non-monumental domestic buildings at Umm el-Marra and at Tell Bi'a.

Equid burials in private funerary contexts of the beginning of the 2nd millennium BC are evidenced over a vast territory of northern Syria, the southern Levant and in Hyksos Tell el-Dab'a in Egypt. It was probably associated with a West Semitic (Amorite) milieu during the first half of the 2nd millennium BC (Greenfield *et al.* 2012; Wygnańska 2012).

The dogs, predominantly young individuals, were found in the private graves dated to the final 3rd and early 2nd millennium BC in Syria and Mesopotamia. They were either complete, articulated skeletons or skulls, found either within the grave or outside the proper grave pit. At Tell Hammam et-Turkman, Syria a young dog and a pig were buried in a pit next to a pit grave with an interment of two adults and a child (van Loon and Meijer 1989/90, pp. 254-5). At Tell Leilan (Weiss *et al.* 1990 p. 555) and Tell Barri, the young dogs' remains were deposited behind the head or next to the deceased; in Tell Barri a small dog skull and neck still wearing a silver dog collar were found (Pecorella 1999, pp. 15-20).

TEL HAROR EQUID AND DOG BURIALS

The most suggestive parallel for interpreting the Bronze Age phenomenon from Syria comes from Tel Haror in Israel where various combinations of dog and equid burials from the early 2nd millennium BC were found in a cultic context in Area K (Way 2011: 129-131; Klenck 2002: 31 ff., Fig. 2.4; Katz 2000, pp. 43-61, 240-42, 273-75). In the initial phase of occupation in this area, the temple was erected as well as a chamber tomb with two (presumably) intact donkey skeletons, but without human remains, buried in the courtyard of the temple. In the mixed fill above the burial, a total of 70 disarticulated bones of donkeys were found along with fragments of gazelle, pig, sheep and cattle. According to Klenck (2002), the equid bones from the fill above the tomb were not subjected to food preparation processing and they probably came from animals that died naturally or were killed but not butchered; they might have been placed as a part of an unspecified funerary ritual. Starting with the same phase as the donkey burial, a series of pits were dug within the enclosed sacred area; these contained numerous puppy and corvid (crows and ravens) burials, as well as some caprovine bones (Klenck 2002, pp. 67-72). The dogs' skeletons originating from earlier layers were articulated, complete or nearly complete, while those coming from later layers were fully disarticulated and mostly incomplete. Both puppies and birds seemed to have been interred intentionally. Significantly, puppy skeletons from the earliest level had broken necks, which was the cause of their death. Such practices may be mirrored in the Bible where the neck-breaking of a dog (Isa 66:3) is mentioned as a non-Israelite (Canaanite?) ritual (Klenck 2002, p. 71). Although there were no traces on the bones from the above described dog burial from MBA Tell Arbid in Syria, its unnaturally positioned head might suggest a similar ritual. The interpretation of puppy burials from Tel Haror imply an association with the healing cult, based on the fact that the burials were located in a temple area; they were sometimes accompanied by votive figurines and find parallels in written sources from Mesopotamia (Klenck 2002, p. 72-3). It was also inferred that the equid burial, disposed in an elaborate tomb located in the temple courtyard, as well as the continued effort to monumentalize it in the precinct, played a central role for the cult celebrated at Tel Haror (Oren 1997, p. 265). The sacrificed dogs and birds from the temple area were treated with noticeably less care

³ Discrete equid burial associated with private burial and dated to the first half of the 2nd millennium BC was found in Tell Ababra, Iraq (Piesl 1984). Other examples originate from Levantine area and from Tell el-Dab'a in Egypt (Way 2011, pp. 103 ff.).

(Way 2011: 132). They seem to accompany the equid burial as additional ritual ‘ingredients’ of the rites performed there, presumably offerings made to a healing deity. Significantly, Klenck (2002) noticed the proportional predominance of canids, carvids and caprovines over equids and cattle from the temenos area, as compared to other areas of the site, which is in accordance with the preferences for ritual animals in Mesopotamian magical texts (Scurlock 2002b: 386). For example, the use of animals as substitutes for absorbing evil is distinguished from sacrificial animals to the gods in many ways, according to the cuneiform texts. Scurlock points out that beside some formal (and archeologically undistinguishable) differences, there is a preference for goats over sheep and the use of animals, such as pigs, dogs, and frogs, that are never or very rarely sacrificed (2002b, p. 386).

EQUIDS/ DOGS IN THE MIDDLE BRONZE AGE: RECAPITULATION

Summing up the information on the shared equid and dog burials from the Middle Bronze Age, one notes that the two species occurred together only three times in a funerary context in Syria, once as an accompanying burial and in two other cases as a non-consumption choice of animal parts. Concerning dogs, young age was apparently not an important issue in depositions of parts (wherever data are available). Dogs were found either next to human remains or buried in the dromos of a chamber tomb, directly next to the chamber entrance. As for equids, they were prevalently donkeys, of various age, apparently occurring mostly as complete skeletons. They were often found deposited in separate pits in front of a grave, in the dromos leading to the chamber tomb or in a vertical shaft above the human remains. Separate dog or equid burials were much more frequent: the discrete dog burials occurred in six cases, while eight graves contained nothing but equids.

The archaeological evidence indicates that equids did not represent a standard ritual set in this period. These two species were listed together, at least once, in a contemporary ritual context in peace treatises from Mari in the 18th century BC. While these famous texts are very often mentioned in context of the significant role of the ass, not much attention has been paid to the fact that two other animals are mentioned regularly in the treaties: (*mērānum*) a puppy and a goat (*hazzum*) (Durand 1997, pp. 443-47). It has been taken rather for granted that when an Amorite clan leader suggested to an official of the king of Mari a puppy and a goat as an offering to seal a peace treaty, it was taken as a kind of *faux pas* and since such a set of animals was recognized by the official as undignified, he requested that a “jackass – the offspring of jenny” to be killed to seal the pact. “To kill a jackass” (*ha-a-ri-im qa-tā-li-im*) is equivalent “to making a covenant/ treaty” (Dossin 1938, p. 108). It has been suggested that the “puppy and goat” represented the sacrifice of people of lesser status, whereas a donkey was reserved for the great king (king of Mari). This is probably true, although this particular pair of animals, i.e., puppy and goat, is repeated in at least three versions of the Mari peace treaty text (ARM 2.37, A.2226, A.1056) and it seems to represent a standard formula. Offering a puppy and a goat by the lower ranking rulers and their subsequent rejection by a representative of the king of Mari may have reflected a kind of a ceremonial “bargaining” that always involved all three listed species. So possibly, although not directly related religiously, the dog and equid burials occurred in similar ritual circumstances during MBA as mentioned in the peace treaties.

DOG SACRIFICE IN A RITUAL CONTEXT IN THE ANCIENT NEAR EAST DURING LATER PERIODS

Curiously, no equid or dog burials are known from Late Bronze Age Syria and Mesopotamia, it may be because we do not know much about cemeteries and burials of this period or there might have been a ritual change despite the continuation in settlement. Moreover, donkeys appear to have lost some of their economic and consequently also ritual value after the Middle Bronze Age, having been replaced by horses. The shared equid/ dog burials did not appear also in the southern Levant, however the discrete burials were frequently evidenced after the Middle Bronze Age (Way 2011, pp. 116 ff.).

The donkey was listed as a sacrificial animal in the Late Bronze Age mythological texts from Ugarit, where 80 donkeys (together with many buffalos, oxen, sheep, deer, and mountain-goats) were sacrificed by the mourning Anatu on the occasion of the death of Ba’lu (*KTU 1.6 I:28; 1.40:26,34,43; 1.119:16;*

Way 2011, pp. 40-48). The symbolic role of donkeys is still echoed in the Bible (Way 2011, pp. 160 ff.), although it seems that donkeys were no longer used as sacrificial animals.

Discrete dog burials, however, tend to be widely attested in later periods. Complete skeleton burials of dogs, Persian hounds in particular, were typical of the second half of the 1st millennium BC on the Levantine coast, in the area between Beirut and Ashkelon (Çakırlar *et al.* 2013). They were associated probably with Phoenician healing rituals.

The dogs were found either in groups, separate pits, fill of a water reservoir or room, and at least once a puppy was found in a funerary context. In 5th century BC Ashkelon, over 1000 dog burials, young and mature individuals, complete and partial skeletons, were found in a quarter of streets surrounding monumental and regular buildings (Stager 1991; Wapnisch and Hesse 1993). The same context was given for finds from Mesopotamia. The temple area of the goddess Gula in Isin yielded 33 dog burials (puppies and adults, complete skeletons and select bones) from the 1st millennium BC (Livingstone 1988). They probably present the only clearly comprehensible context for the dog burials. Gula was a healing goddess and the dog was her attribute.

CONCLUSIONS

It is evident from archaeological and textual evidence that dogs appeared occasionally in connection with equids in a ritual context in the later 3rd and in the early 2nd millennium BC. They were more frequent in Syria than in Mesopotamia, which may reflect a characteristic feature of the Syrian ritual landscape. The shared dog and equid burials from the 3rd millennium BC are attested in elite funerary contexts and were associated with official closure ceremonies, always related to death and ending events. In the course of the 2nd millennium BC, the phenomenon shifted from an official to a private sphere, but most of the characteristic features were maintained. The association of puppy sacrifices with healing rituals was postulated in the case of Tell Haror, Israel.

Equids were represented by different taxa and were of various age, while a characteristic, though not obligatory feature of the sacrificial dogs was their young age. Puppies were always killed intentionally, while equids were sometimes buried after a natural death. Neither dog nor equid skeletons bear traces of butchery or heat treatment, and they were not intended for consumption. Both animals had a special, although diverse place in these official rituals. While it is generally agreed that equids were recognized as status markers, there is no such suggestion with regard to interpreting dogs in this way. The recurring young age of the dogs and their position in the graves do not indicate that they were buried as favourite pets or guardians. It is also difficult to imagine that depositing a dog in a funerary context resulted from healing rituals, if the result of this practice was negative. We may however, consider purification or propitiatory rituals performed on the occasion of an important funeral or closure event. Interpretation of a puppy sacrifice as part of a ritual performed to contact chthonic deities seems in place. It is in keeping with later 2nd millennium BC traditions known from Hittite ritual texts.

Although both equids and dogs were used as offerings in ending ceremonies, there is no explicit evidence that they presented a standard combined ritual set (equids as well as canids were buried separately more often than together). Equids (sacrificed or died naturally) were an extraordinary dedication for deities, marking the exceptional importance of the event. Puppies were a ritual ingredient necessary for contacting and satisfying the supernatural, likely chthonic powers, an action which accompanied elite individual or equid burials. Also, other animals, such as piglets, young goats, cattle or foal sacrifices occurred sometimes together with the puppies and most probably fulfilled the same role. It should be emphasised that puppy sacrifices were especially often accompanied by piglets or pigs and there was an evident association between the two species. Their frequent co-occurrence in ritual texts is indicative of a similar ritual function. Their lives were sacrificed to conduct the rite, but whether the animals themselves were actually offered to the gods, is not clear. A characteristic and recurrent feature of these sacrificial animals was their young age. Equid burial and ritual acts involving puppies and/or other young species sacrifice resulted from an amplified intensity of the rites and their ending character.

Such complex sacrificial action was associated with official ceremonies in the 3rd millennium BC, and with the elevated social position of the deceased in the 2nd millennium BC.

Depositions of select equid and dog bones are attested in the same kinds of contexts. In some cases, they were accompanied by remains of various other species, including goats, sheep, cattle, pig and, more rarely birds. The young age of the animals was not of crucial importance in the case of fragmentary depositions. There is no unequivocal evidence that they always represented post-consumption remains (although some of them certainly did), especially when old individuals or species non-attractive for consumption were involved. Sometimes only non-attractive animal parts were deposited, rather not representing any offering. Whenever the details of the animals were published, it becomes clear that they are repeatedly represented by foot bones, a skull or teeth and vertebrae (Fig. 3, 5, 6, Tab.1, 2). This might be due to the state of preservation, although it seems rather doubtful that always similar parts were preserved. One of the possible explanations is that it was the result of deliberate ritual practice. For example, it was observed that an offering burned by a Bedouin in modern day Israel was burned so thoroughly that the only remains left after the process were crania, phalanges and metapodials – bones known also from the archaeological context (Klenck 2002, p. 54).

Cuneiform texts also offer an explanation as to why in some cases only animal parts and somewhat astonishingly, only unattractive parts were found. Numerous cuneiform magical texts point out that sometimes only selected animal parts were used in rituals and buried in the ground or in the grave to obtain specific effects (Scurlock 2002b, pp. 374-75). An interesting example of burying parts of an animal to ward off an evil spirit comes from a Neo-Assyrian ritual (Ebeling 1931: no. 19). As one of the ritual components, an adult male goat was killed. Most of it was cooked and left to the steppe to attract a malevolent being, and only the forelegs were buried separately in the pit. The greedy spirit was expected to eat the cooked meat and to search for the remaining parts of the animal buried in the pit. And this caught the spirit in a trap, buried in a pit with his legs detached, tied together and sitting on him. It may be just one of the possible explanations why leg fragments or vertebrae were put in the grave. Various age and species of the offered animals might have resulted from their specific role in the ritual, perhaps requiring a variety of animals: domestic ones, dog included, and representation of wild ones. Still, it is difficult to reconstruct how the animals were practically used in the rites. Were they killed, portioned, cooked, and consumed beforehand and only some non-attractive parts were symbolically deposited in the ground? Or, perhaps, the animals were slaughtered, butchered and immediately deposited in a ritual locus or in a grave in the course of a ceremony.

The phenomenon of equid/dog burials disappears after the Middle Bronze Age from Syria and Mesopotamia, although the prominent role of the donkey as a sacrificial animal is still evidenced in the written sources. The practice of discrete-dog or equid burials is, however, widely attested also in later periods over a widespread area. The dog burials from Mesopotamia derive mostly from the contexts associated with healing deities. The meaning of such burials seems to shift from their earlier role.

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*Abbreviations**ARM Archives royales de Mari**CAD Assyrian Dictionary of the Oriental Institute of the University of Chicago**KTU Die keilalphabetischen Texte aus Ugarit* (Dietrich et al. 1976)

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