

## ABSTRACT

The presented dissertation attempts to cover some aspects of the extensive topic of religion at Ugarit, an ancient site on the Syrian Mediterranean coast at the very end of the Late Bronze Age (late 14<sup>th</sup> to early 12<sup>th</sup> century BC). Religion is explored here in relation to everyday, social, and political life. It is based on the assumption that religion is not merely a matter of theological concepts and mythological narratives but is, first and foremost, a way of living in the world. Religion does not exist as a distinctly separate sphere of life but runs through the whole spectrum of human existence in different forms and with varying intensity. The present work discusses this broadly defined topic from several very different perspectives.

After the first introductory chapter comes the second part, in which religion is set in the broader context of the surrounding world. The surrounding landscape, mountains, rivers, seas, forests, skies, mineral resources, etc., have a considerable, though not straightforward, influence on lived religion. Social and historical contexts are also considered as essential factors.

In the third chapter, the thesis focuses on one of the central concepts of religious life in Ugarit: divinity. Here, the ways in which divinity manifests itself in the available sources are explored. The conceptualisation of divinity is shown to be highly problematic and dependent on the contexts in which it occurs. Different types of sources – from rituals to myths to lexical lists to letters to administrative texts – always show a different side of the divine.

The fourth chapter deals with the issue of written sources. The scholarly preference for written material often fails to recognise that written sources are also material in nature and that their meaning is not exhausted by their content. The chapter deals with a statistical analysis of individual Ugaritic "archives" that reveal an interconnected network of centres of religious life manifested in written sources. The various languages and scripts attested in Ugarit are analysed in relation to religion. The materiality of the written sources is related to their power to manipulate reality, largely regardless of their content. The relationship of the written sources to the assumed illiterate majority of society is also briefly discussed.

In the following section, religion is examined from the perspective of the environment, particularly the city's architecture. The temples on the city acropolis and the shrines spread out in the urban built environment are examined. Attention is also given to residential architecture and how religion may have been present in it. The city's whole space is then considered as an environment in which various forms of religious life took place.

The extensive sixth chapter focuses on several narrower areas where religion was present in various forms. Firstly, the ways in which religion is manifested in onomastics are addressed, particularly by exploring the use of theophoric elements in anthroponyms and toponyms or the proper names of priests. Still, the wider symbolic significance of proper names is also considered. The next section focuses on the connection between cult activities and social life – in particular, which population groups participated in running the earthly life of the deities and in what ways. The question of public and private participation in religious activities is also addressed. The third section of chapter six is devoted to divination, especially as a practical way of living in the world. The fourth section discusses the administrative-economic dimension of religious activities more broadly. The care of deities was economically very demanding and required the broader participation of the whole society. Ritual texts are discussed here primarily as administrative documents, which in their structure are in many ways similar to ordinary economic activities. Part five examines the role of

religion in legal documents. For example, how and when deities were needed to guarantee made agreements. The penultimate section focuses on interpersonal communication as manifested in letters. Religion and symbolic communication are shown here as essential to letter-writing activities. In addition, various religious activities are occasionally addressed in the letters. The letters also show the religious dimension of political communication, illustrated by the example of the divine character of the Egyptian and Hittite rulers. The final section of chapter six deals with seals, which are not seen only as the iconographic representation of deities and religious activities but also as an important means of visual symbolic communication. A brief discussion of royal seals prefaces the last chapter.

The seventh chapter focuses on the relationship between politics and religion, showing them as interrelated spheres. It is divided into four narrower units. First, the participation of the monarch and the palace institution in cultural activities is discussed. These activities were largely directed from clergy institutions outside the palace itself. The second part deals with divinatory practices and their relationship to the royal palace. The third and most extensive part discusses the complex issue of political ideology and its relationship to Ugaritic narratives from the theoretical perspective of social myths. The discussion focuses mainly on the royal epics of Aqhat and Kirta. Their potential role in political propaganda is set in a broader social, religious, political, and historical context. The final section of the dissertation focuses on the issue of the divine character of deceased rulers.

## KEY WORDS

Ugarit; religions of the ancient Near East; religions of ancient Syria; divinity; lived religion; religion and law; economics of religion; divination; seals; temples; onomastics; correspondence; cult; material religion; social myth; religion and politics