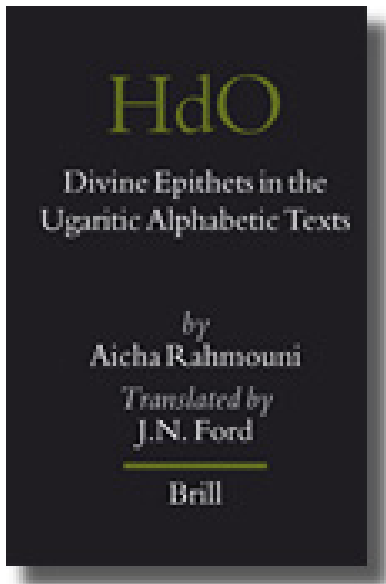


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Rahmouni, Aicha

Divine Epithets in the Ugaritic Alphabetic Texts

Translated by J. N. Ford

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When Knut Tallqvist composed his *Akkadische Gotterepitheta* in 1938, Akkadian had been deciphered for approximately eighty years. Tallqvist had a varied basis upon which to build his work, with a rich tradition consisting of hundreds of Akkadian prayers, rituals, laws, myths, and dedicatory inscriptions. Some eighty years after the first Ugaritic tablets were unearthed from Ras Shamra, Aicha Rahmouni has attempted a similar feat in *Divine Epithets in the Ugaritic Alphabetic Texts*. Her work endeavors to compile a list of every epithet in published texts and to provide an Ugaritic counterpart to Tallqvist's classic work.

Rahmouni's work is based on her 2001 Ben-Gurion University of the Negev doctoral thesis "Kinnuye Ha-Elim Ba-Teqstim Ha-Ugaritiyyim." The thesis was supervised by Chaim Cohen and Daniel Sivan; the present study has been translated by James Nathan Ford, who has also augmented discussions on rare occasion in editorial notes. The publication of the study in Brill's Handbook of Oriental Studies series puts it in the company of titles such as Daniel Sivan's *A Grammar of the Ugaritic Language* and Gregorio del Olmo Lete and Joaquín Sanmartín's *A Dictionary of the Ugaritic Language in the Alphabetic Tradition*. Rahmouni's work is not eclipsed by these other titles but takes its place as an important additional resource on Ugaritic studies.

Divine Epithets contains 112 epithets culled from the currently known corpus of Ugaritic alphabetic texts. Except for three (epithets 19, 100, and 102), Rahmouni's compilation is entirely from Ugaritic narrative poetry (i.e., myths, epics, and para-mythological texts). The introduction contains a detailed description of her methodology and the criteria used to decide what constitutes an epithet. Rahmouni only includes epithets that (1) express a trait of a deity or demon, (2) refer to a single divine rather than a group or council, (3) have an understandable god or demon as referent in context, and (4) do not consist of geographical locations (e.g. *b'l gbl* "Ba'lu of Byblos"). Such criteria lead to the exclusion of epithets such as *ršp bbt* (CAT 1.91:15), where she interprets *bbt* as the city Bibita. They also explain why the epithet *'um pḥl* "mother of the stallion" in CAT 1.100 does not appear in her study, while *'um nšrm* "mother of raptors" in CAT 1.19:III:29 does. The referent of the former is *pḥlt* "mare," a common noun; while the referent of the latter is *šml*, which seems to be functioning as a proper name in this context. Obviously, Rahmouni has not been able to provide an individual rationale for each epithet included (or excluded) in this study, but her criteria have been applied consistently throughout.

For each epithet addressed in the study, Rahmouni provides a translation of the pertinent passage, poetic parallels to the epithet in Ugaritic literature and a detailed discussion of the epithet. This discussion includes the epithet's context, translation difficulties, parallel epithets in Akkadian, Hebrew, and Arabic, as well as personal names in Ugaritic that contain the epithet as an element. The discussion of each epithet also includes detailed philological, lexicographical, and text-critical notes, since the nature of Ugaritic studies at present often requires scholars to defend not only their choice of translation but sometimes the very words appearing on the tables. As such, *Divine Epithets* provides a treasure trove of information on numerous issues, not just the epithets upon which it is centered.

While the bibliography in this work is compendious and immense scholarly research is evident on every page, the study is not simply a recitation of established opinion. Several epithets in the study challenge previous scholarship. One example is the epithet of Pidrayu *bt 'ar* (epithet 37), which Rahmouni translates as "disperser of light" rather than the more conventional "daughter of dew." Her discussion provides persuasive evidence why the more conventional rendering of *'ar* as "dew" in this context is inappropriate and should be abandoned. Similarly, Rahmouni's analysis of *d't* as "expert (in magic)" is quite strong. She translates this epithet of Kôtaru-wa-Ḥasīsu (epithet 58) and Ḥôranu (epithet 90) based on the use of the Akkadian semantic equivalent *mūdû*, which has the explicit implication of magical knowledge and is used in epithets for Mesopotamian gods of magic (e.g., Ea, Marduk, and Asallu i). However, other novel translations are less compelling. For example, Rahmouni translates *mlk* as "(divine) patron" in two epithets for the god Ḥbḥb (epithets 76 and 77). Her argument for this translation is based on a

supposed semantic equivalency with Akkadian *šarru* (cf. *CAD* Š/2 s.v. *šarru*, 1m9). Yet, the actual examples of this use in Akkadian literature do not easily support her interpretation and are more easily translated as “king” in those contexts. The conventional translation of Ugaritic *mlk* as “king” is still preferable. Regardless of one’s perspective on these and other translation issues, they showcase the fact that the work is no mere compilation of previous opinions but contains a dynamic interaction with the material.

Unfortunately, Rahmouni’s conclusions prove to be anticlimactic. She begins her epilogue stating that “Ugaritic divine epithets reflect the basic religious concept of Ugaritic society and help us to determine the role and position of the various gods in the Ugaritic pantheon” (331). This is an overstatement at best. As noted above, Ugaritic narrative poetry provides all but three of the 112 epithets in this study. The vast majority of these are found in the three large texts of Kirta (*CAT* 1.14–16), Aqhatu (*CAT* 1.17–19) and the Ba’lu Cycle (*CAT* 1.1–6)—with the last providing the most. Such an uneven distribution makes any conclusions in regard to Ugaritic religion tendentious by its very nature. Rahmouni breaks the epithets into six categories: (1) royal status; (2) family status; (3) emotional and material qualities; (4) physical qualities; (5) professional experience and (6) partnership or ownership. The categories provide useful paradigms for examining the religious consciousness of Ugarit, but she is hampered by the nature of the material. Ugaritic provides a paucity of material for a study of epithets when compared with the rich and varied material that Tallqvist had at his disposal when composing his list of Akkadian epithets. A study such as this can provide one piece of the puzzle but must be combined with material found in ritual texts and god lists, if an accurate picture of Ugaritic religion is to emerge.

Rahmouni’s study is well organized and argued. It provides an excellent resource not only on the epithets addressed but also on larger issues concerning the texts in which those epithets occur. Used judiciously with other data informing our understanding of Ugaritic religion, it will undoubtedly serve as a standard reference for years to come.