

Abstract

The purpose of the present thesis is to analyse a particular ritual treatment, the so-called mouth-washing, appearing in diverse rituals of ancient Mesopotamia and its implications for the status of the ritual object treated in this way. Instead of generalizing the function of this element as known from the eponymous Mouth washing ritual for induction of cult images, this thesis considers its employment in all its attested occurrences. The author assumes a strongly metaphorical character of mouth-washing and analyses the concept of purity underlying it. Its shifting significance in different rituals is observed and a typology of these is outlined.

A following case study is devoted to the Ritual for covering a kettledrum. A close examination of the sources reveals a possible development of the tradition as well as the ritual's interconnectedness with the Mouth washing ritual. This relation is treated as a case of *interrituality*, a concept introduced by Burkhard Gladigow. The divine status of the kettledrum is achieved through the ritual for its covering which intentionally employs elements used in the ritual induction of cult images. A special emphasis laid on the kettledrum's status in Seleucid Uruk corresponds with wider socio-historical changes. Methodologically, the offered interpretation rests on the performative approach to rituals which underlines their dynamic nature and their relation to society.

A discussion of Mesopotamian concepts of the divine and of divine representations forms a frame for analysing the relation between the ritual treatment and the status of the ritual object. The observed interritality points to a similarity, but not to identity of the kettledrum's induction and the ritual for divine images. Therefore, the kettledrum is a different kind of divine representation without being necessarily related to any anthropomorphic deity.