

124. 2000-1200, Ras Shamra

ReGenesis is the first open-access encyclopedia to
liberate pre-colonial research
to its rightful 3,000,000 BCE origins
- and -
liberate female spirituality.
(RGS.)

* * *

Ras Shamra Tablets.

Divine Canaanite myths about father god El
and his consort Lady Athirat,
the *Ugaritic* version of Hebrew Asherah.
(ATLM: 8.)

Lady Asherah.

Additional titles include,
Lady Asherah of the Sea
plus *rbt ym* that translates,
'lady who walks on the sea.'
(HG: 37; ATLM: 8.)

Old Asherah Epithet.

Tanit is old epithet of Asherah
that means 'Lady of the Sea'
in Ugarit texts.
(MOO: 378; CMWE: 29-33.)

Asherah, Astarte, and Anat.

Many epigraphic and literary texts, in fact, point to
conflations of the three principal Canaanite goddesses,
Asherah, Astarte, and Anat,
as early as the time of the Ugaritic tablets.
(MOO: 378.)

Canaanite Israel.

Israel was essentially Canaanite ...
[and] we now know that the
religious landscape of Israel included
one or more Canaanite goddesses.
(HAP: 22-23.)

The ancient site of Ras Shamra at Ugarit is located in Northern Syria on the Palestinian coast just south of the Orontes River. From 2000-1200 BCE, Ugarit was a flourishing center including a shipping port that had access to the entire Mediterranean. Although the surrounding area impacted its culture, the primary influence was from the seafaring culture of ancient Byblos. (AGL: 176.)

In 1929, a major archaeological discovery was made at Ras Shamra that included: cuneiform tablets; 2 tripartite temples very similar to Solomon's temple in Jerusalem; a tremendous library that yielded a trilingual wordlist affording unprecedented new translations; plus numerous artifacts including female goddess figures. (AGL: 176.) This unique archaeological discovery contained divine Canaanite myths documenting El as chief father god and his divine consort, Athirat, the Ugaritic name for Hebrew Asherah. (ATLM: 8.)

In "The Persistence of Canaanite Religion," Robert Oden speaks to the significance of the Ras Shamra texts.

Among this century's archaeological surprises, few have generated as much scholarly enthusiasm as the discovery of mythological texts from Ugarit (modern Ras Shamra) in Syria. Nor has any discovery surpassed the texts' impact upon the study of the clash of religions in Canaan and Israel (TPCR: 31).

This documentation of El and his divine consort Athirat/Asherah, dating from an epoch much earlier than the biblical period, says that it is "most likely that these two deities as a pair continued within the cult [culture] for many centuries" and therefore bear witness to the "worship of Asherah during the period between the Ugaritic texts and the beginning of the Iron Age." (COA: 11.) The Ras Shamra cuneiform tablets "definitely established the identity of a goddess Asherah." (COA: 7.) In summary, Frank Cross adds that this powerful deity was the primary wife (consort/mother goddess/Hieros Gamos?) * of El, creatress of the creatures, and creatress of the gods. (CMWE: 15, 32.) (AGL: 175-178; ATLM: 8; COA: 7-11; CMWE: 15, 32.)

* "Hieros Gamos: mother of the gods and as such is referred to as qnyt 'ilm 'the procreatress of the gods' (AH: 387)." (CTA 4.1.23, 4.III.26, 30, 32, 35.)

John Day adds that Asherah (Athirat) is the "single most important Northwest Semitic source about the goddess Asherah."

The Ugaritic texts from Ras Shamra on the Syrian coast, written in

alphabetic cuneiform, are our single most important Northwest Semitic source about the goddess Asherah. She is there referred to as 'atrt, which is generally vocalized as Athirat, and appears as the consort (Hieros Gamos?) of the supreme god El. As befits El's consort, she is sometimes called 'ilt (Elat), literally 'goddess' She is the mother of the gods and as such is referred to as qnyt 'ilm 'the procreatress of the gods.' Less well known is a fragmentary text that refers to 'um. 'il [m] 'the mother of the gods, which presumably also refers to Athirat. Athirat therefore shared at least to some extent in her consort El's work of creation. El is referred to as bny bnwt 'creator of creatures' in the Ugaritic texts and 'I qn 'rs 'El creator of the earth' in other texts. The gods are referred to on one occasion as sb 'm. bn. 'atrt 'the seventy sons of Athirat' (AH: 387).

For a recommended summary of the Davidic through First and Second Temple historical transitions: 1000-600, Davidic Kingship, Solomon, Philistines, and Temple Transitions. (RGS.) (RGS.)

Further research on Solomon's Temple: 2000, Asherah; 2000-1200, Ras Shamra; 1000-600, Davidic Kingship, Solomon, Philistines, and Temple Transitions; 970, First Temple, Menorah, and Weavings; 586, Destruction of the First Temple, Jerusalem Exile; and 538 BCE –70 CE, Second Temple Period. (RGS.)

Further Asherah research: 2000, Bethel, Almond City, and Asherah; 2000, Asherah; 1500, Lachish Ewer, Triangle, and Menorah; 970, First Temple, Menorah, and Weavings; 900, Taanach, Canaanite Libation Stand; 800-700, Kuntillet Ajrud and Khirbet El-Qom; and 600-398, Astarte/Anat/Ashtaroht/Asherah/Ishtar and Yahweh, Egypt. (RGS.)

Further Ras Shamra research: 2000, Asherah. (RGS.)

Further bibliographical research:

Cohen, Daniel. "Asherah: Hidden Goddess of the Bible." Ed. Patricia Monaghan. *Goddesses in World Culture*. Vol. 2. Santa Barbara, CA: Praeger, 2011. 39-54. (AHD.)

Cross, Frank Moore. *Canaanite Myth and Hebrew Epic: Essays in the History of the Religion of Israel*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1973. (CMWE.)

Day, John. "Asherah in the Hebrew Bible and Northwest Semitic Literature." *Journal of Biblical Literature* 105.3 (Sep. 1986): 385-408. (AH: 387.)

Hadley, Judith M. *The Cult of Asherah in Ancient Israel and Judah: Evidence for a Hebrew Goddess*. New York, NY: Cambridge University Press, 2000. (COA.)

Handy, K. Lowell. *Among the Host of Heaven: The Syro-Palestinian Pantheon as Bureaucracy*. Winona Lake, IN: Eisenbrauns, 1994. (AHH.)

Lewis, Theodore J. "Divine Images and Aniconism in Ancient Israel."

- Journal of the American Oriental Society* 18.1 (Jan.-Mar. 1998): 36-53.
(DIAAI.)
- Petty, Richard J. *Asherah: Goddess of Israel*. New York, NY: Peter Lang, 1990. (AGL.)
- Smith, Mark S. *The Early History of God: Yahweh and the Other Deities in Ancient Israel*. Dearborn, MI: William B. Eerdmans, 2002. (EHG.)
- Wanlass, Ramona. "The Goddess, Syncretism, and Patriarchy: Evolution and Extinction of the Goddess during the Creation of Patriarchy in Ancient Israel." *Women in Judaism: A Multidisciplinary Journal* 8.2 (Winter 2011): 1-16. (GSP.)
- Wiggins, Steve A. *A Reassessment of Asherah: A Study According to the Textual Sources of the First Two Millennia B.C.E.* Neukirchener Verlag Neukirchen-Vluyn, Germany: Verlag, Butzon, and Bercker Kevelaer, 1993. 191. (ROA.)

IMAGE: MAP: RAS SHAMRA, UGARIT.

PHOTO: © GSA. DESCRIPTION: MAP OF RAS SHAMRA LOCATED AT UGARIT IN NORTHERN SYRIA ON THE PALESTINIAN COAST JUST SOUTH OF THE ORONTES RIVER.

SLIDE LOCATION MAPS, SHEET 1, ROW 4, SLEVE 5, SLIDE #5, BCE.

IT_MAP_S1_R4_SL5_S5.jpg

SHOT ON LOCATION: BRITISH MUSEUM: LONDON, ENGLAND.

NOTE 1: FIELDWORK 1998.

IMAGE: WAR GODDESS ASTARTE: RAS SHAMRA, UGARIT (NORTHERN SYRIA).

PHOTO GSA DESCRIPTION: IVORY LID OF WAR GODDESS ASTARTE WITH BOAR'S TUSK HELMET AND FLUTED MINOAN-TYPE SKIRT. TWO GOATS STAND ON EITHER SIDE OF ASTARTE FEEDING ON EARS OF CORN FROM HER HANDS. IVORY LID IS FROM RAS SHAMRA (UGARIT) NORTHERN COAST OF SYRIA (MODERN MINET EL-BEIDA.)

SLIDE LOCATION NEAR EAST, SHEET 12, ROW 1, SLEEVE 5, SLIDE #61, BCE.

CU_NEA_S12_R1_SL5_S61.jpg

LOCATION: RAS SHAMRA, UGARIT (NORTHERN SYRIA).

NOTE 1: (DG: 171, 112.)

NOTE 2: FIELDWORK PROJECT.

PHOTO NOTE: © BIBLICAL ARCHAEOLOGY SOCIETY (1989).

PHOTO NOTE: ILLUSTRATION ENHANCEMENT, CHRISI KARVONIDES' TEAM.

IMAGE: DARK MOTHER GODDESSES (ASTARTE?) WITH HORNED HEADDRESS: NAHARIYA, CANAANITE.

IMAGE GSA DESCRIPTION: CANAANITE GODDESSES (ASTARTE?) FROM NAHARIYA INC. HORNED HEADDRESS AND HIGH PEAKED CAP, BRONZE CAST OR GOLD MOLD. SLIDE LOCATION BIB ARCH, SHEET 1, ROW 2, SLEEVE 2, SLIDE #5, 2000-1500 BCE.

CO_BAR_S1_R2_SL2_S5.jpg CO_BAR_S1_R2_SL2_S5_ILL.jpg

LOCATION: NAHARIYA, CANAANITE.

NOTE 1: FIELDWORK PROJECT.

PHOTO NOTE: © BIBLICAL ARCHAEOLOGY SOCIETY (1989).

PHOTO NOTE: ILLUSTRATION ENHANCEMENT, CHRISI KARVONIDES' TEAM.

IMAGE: INANNA (OR ASHERAH?) PRESENTING HER BREASTS: ANCIENT IRAN.

PHOTO: © GSA. DESCRIPTION: INANNA (OR ASHERAH?) HOLDING HER BREASTS.

SLIDE LOCATION NEAR EAST, SHEET 12, ROW 2, SLEEVE 3, SLIDE #31, BCE.

CU_NEA_S12_R2_SL3_S31.jpg

SHOT ON LOCATION: BRITISH MUSEUM: LONDON, ENGLAND.

NOTE 1: DURING IRON AGE II, ASHERAH PRESENTING HER BREASTS WAS WELL KNOWN. (GAT: 42-44; RGS). (THIS WAS ALSO TRUE OF GODDESS PINIKIR/KIRIRISHA.) (WA: 222.)

NOTE 2:

ASHERAH'S ICONOGRAPHY IS ALL FORMS OF THE TREE MANIFESTED IN RITUAL GROVES, TREES, MAY POLES, TEMPLE PILLARS, PRIMEVAL FORESTS, AND GODDESS PILLAR FIGURES WITH FULL NOURISHING BREASTS (AMST: 42-44; AH: 398; COA; APL; RGS).

NOTE 3: "IN THE IMAGERY ASSOCIATED WITH MOTHER GODDESS, THE REPRESENTATION OF BREASTS AND WOMB IS 'A FORM OF DIVINE EPIPHANY' (SGE: 30, n. 60; TGM: 128)."

NOTE 4: FOR FURTHER ASHERAH IMAGES SEE, (HG: PLATES 1, 5, 6 AND 7.)

NOTE 5: OTHER IMAGE POSSIBILITY IS WISDOM GODDESS PINIKIR/KIRIRISHA (WA: 222; RGS).

NOTE 6: FIELDWORK PROJECT 2002.

IMAGE: INANNA/ISHTAR/ANAHITA WITH THEIR HANDS RAISED TO THEIR BREASTS: SUSAN, SUMERIA.

PHOTO: © GSA. DESCRIPTION: STANDING INANNA/ISHTAR/ANAHITA HOLDING HER BREASTS, SUSAN, SUMERIA. TERRA COTTA.

SLIDE LOCATION NEAR EAST, SHEET 5, ROW 2, SLEEVE 4, SLIDE #31E, MID-SECOND MILLENNIUM BCE.

CU_NEA_S5_R2_SL4_S31E.jpg

SHOT ON LOCATION: MUSÉE DU LOUVRE: PARIS, FRANCE.

NOTE 1: "FEMALE CLAY FIGURES WITH THEIR HANDS RAISED TO THEIR BREAST RESEMBLE IDOLS [ICONS] OF THE MOTHER GODDESS WHICH WERE LATER WIDELY DISSEMINATED IN THE NEAR EAST (ROTGG: 23)."

NOTE 2: FIELDWORK PROJECT 1980-1989.

IMAGE: INANNA/ISHTAR/ANAHITA AT THE ACROPOLIS: SUSAN, SW IRAN.

PHOTO: © GSA. DESCRIPTION: TERRA COTTA ICON OF STANDING GODDESS HOLDING HER BREASTS INC. INANNA/ISHTAR/ANAHITA, SUSAN ACROPOLIS IN SW IRAN.

SLIDE LOCATION NEAR EAST, SHEET 6, ROW 2, SLEEVE 3, SLIDE #32E, MID-SECOND MILLENNIUM BCE.

CU_NEA_S6_R2_SL3_S32E.jpg

SHOT ON LOCATION: MUSÉE DU LOUVRE: PARIS, FRANCE.

NOTE 1: "THE PATRON DEITY OF THE EYE TEMPLE COMPLEX WAS ISHTAR [OR ESH-TAR], PREVIOUSLY KNOWN AS INANNA (TEG: 25; RGS)." (SOURCE: RGS.)

NOTE 2: "FEMALE CLAY FIGURES WITH THEIR HANDS RAISED TO THEIR BREAST RESEMBLE IDOLS [ICONS] OF THE MOTHER GODDESS WHICH WERE LATER WIDELY DISSEMINATED IN THE NEAR EAST (ROTGG: 23)."

NOTE 3: FIELDWORK PROJECT 1980-1989.

IMAGE: INANNA/ISHTAR/ANAHITA: SUSAN ACROPOLIS, SW IRAN.

PHOTO: © GSA. DESCRIPTION: INANNA'S SUMERIAN TEMPLE LEVEL 7A AT NIPPUR, BABYLONIA JUST BELOW BABYLON (IRAQ).

SLIDE LOCATION NEAR EAST, SHEET 6, ROW 4, SLEEVE 4, SLIDE #15, EARLY DYNASTIC IIIb PERIOD.

CU_NEA_S6_R4_SL4_S15.jpg

SHOT ON LOCATION: METROPOLITAN MUSEUM OF ART: NEW YORK, NY.

NOTE 1: "MESOPOTAMIAN MOON (LUNAR) RELIGION AT MAMRE INCLUDED ASHERAH AS MOON AND TREE GODDESS OF THE MOTHERS (RGS)."

NOTE 2: "DURING THE OLD BABYLONIAN AKKADIAN PERIOD, c. 1800-1700 BCE, RELIGIOUS RESIDENCES FOR CLOISTERED PRIESTESSES INCLUDED NIPPUR AND SIPPAR IN MESOPOTAMIA (RGS)."

NOTE 3: FIELDWORK PROJECT 2002.

IMAGE: INANNA'S TEMPLE: URUK, BABYLON.

PHOTO: © GSA. DESCRIPTION: INANNA'S TEMPLE, URUK.

SLIDE LOCATION NEAR EAST, SHEET 7, ROW 3, SLEEVE 3, SLIDE #10, BCE.

CU_NEA_S7_R3_SL3_S10.jpg

SHOT ON LOCATION: BRITISH MUSEUM: LONDON, ENGLAND.

NOTE 1: URUK, INANNA'S SACRED CENTER, WAS THE LOCATION OF THESE FIRST SUMERIAN WRITTEN TABLETS, DATING c. 3100. (POTW: 22; RGS.)

NOTE 2: FIELDWORK PROJECT 2002.