Athirat, Asherah, Ashratu,
A Reassessment According to the Textual Sources

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Doctor of Philosophy
University of Edinburgh
1992
ABSTRACT

Title: Athirat, Asherah, Ashratu, A Reassessment According to the Textual Sources
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Degree: Doctor of Philosophy Date: 1992

This dissertation was undertaken partially in response to previous studies on the goddess Asherah. These studies have tended to gather together information from the various cultures in which 'Asherah' appears, and the information is generally presented as a portrait of the goddess. This dissertation approaches the problem from a different perspective. The primary issue addressed is: did the goddess 'Asherah' develop in the same way in all the cultures in which she appears? In order to answer this question, this study considers the evidence as contained in the written records of the first two millennia B.C.E.

The mythology preserved in the tablets written by Elimelek in ancient Ugarit is the primary source of information on the goddess Athirat. After considering this mythology, it should be possible to examine Athirat's role in other mythologies, and to attempt to distil her essential characteristics and nature.

Within the Ugaritic mythology of Elimelek, she appears most active in the 'Palace of Baal' episode in the Baal Cycle. In this culture Athirat appears primarily in relationship to other gods. She is the consort of El, the head of the pantheon. In the Elimelek tablets her title is \( rb\ t\ ab\ rt\ ym \). This title indicates an unspecified relationship with the sea. She is the mother of the gods but does not, however, appear as an amorphous 'mother goddess'. Her role as a mother is limited to divine children and royal children. She appears to be the \( rab\ itu \), the 'queen mother'. Although Athirat is associated with the head of the pantheon, she maintains a connection with mortal women. This may account for her emblem, which is a spindle.

In the Ugaritic tablets without a colophon by Elimelek, Athirat also appears. She is mentioned in the myth Shachar and Shalim, in text 114, and in ritual texts. Her small role in these texts adds no substantial characteristics to what may be discerned in the Elimelek tablets.

A goddess Asherah may appear in the Old Testament. Certain passages seem to require a goddess interpretation for the word \( asherah \). In other texts \( asherah \) designates a cultic object. If Asherah does appear as a goddess in the Old Testament, her characteristics are difficult to discern. She does not, however, appear as the consort of Baal or as a fertility goddess.

Ashratu appears in Mesopotamian sources. The information within these texts are our oldest records of the goddess, and point to her Amorite origins. She is the consort of Amurr and she is connected with the steppe. That she had a temple and active cultus is amply attested in the materials. Ashratu is also attested in a Hittite version of a Canaanite myth. She is known from a number of Epigraphic South Arabian inscriptions. These inscriptions may point to a solar nature in that culture.

The Khirbet el-Qôm and Kuntillet 'Ajrûd inscriptions may refer to a goddess Asherah, but more likely they denote a cultic object. Their interpretation is uncertain since they cannot be explained adequately with our present knowledge of Hebrew grammar.

Conclusions are drawn on the basis of the information available from these individual cultures, each within its own context.
To Kay
Acknowledgements

My first debt of gratitude belongs to my wife, Kay Stephenson. Not only did she put aside her own academic ambitions so that I could pursue mine, she enthusiastically agreed to move abroad for these three years after only four months of marriage. She has supported me financially and intellectually during the course of my work, listened whilst I rambled on about my dissertation, and even proofread the manuscript. Her help in translating French materials made a difficult task enjoyable. It is to her that I dedicate this work; my debt to her is greater than I am able to reflect here.

I wish to acknowledge the guidance of Prof. J. C. L. Gibson and Dr. N. Wyatt throughout my studies at Edinburgh. Their accessibility and hospitality have been exemplary. The library staff of New College Library were always friendly and in many cases went beyond the call of duty to locate obscure sources for me.

Further notes of thanks are due to Dr. T. Watkins of the Archaeology Department for sparing some of his time to teach several of us the basics of Akkadian. Also concerning the Mesopotamian material I would have suffered from lack of information were it not for the kindly assistance of Dr. S. Dalley of Oxford and Prof. W. G. Lambert of Birmingham. They both have supplied me with materials and information. Prof. Lambert read a rough draft of my Mesopotamian material and made many sharp and helpful criticisms.

My thanks also to Dr. S. B. Parker of Boston University for supplying offprints and his willingness to share some ideas with me. Dr. Mayer Gruber of Ben-Gurion University has been most generous in the exchange of information and friendship. To Dr. J. Hadley, who sent me a source which was otherwise unavailable, and to the many scholars who kindly sent me offprints, I give my thanks. The late Dr. Harrell Beck of Boston University provided the impetus to begin this study. To my colleague Jeffery Lloyd I owe thanks for many hours of stimulating discussion. Many debts of gratitude are due for the hospitality which he and his wife Carolyn extended to Kay and me as strangers in a strange land.

I also acknowledge those institutions and individuals who made it possible to study at Edinburgh by their financial assistance. Edinburgh University offered a postgraduate studentship which supported me for three years. The Overseas Research Student Scheme Awards Committee likewise provided the extra funding needed for being an overseas student. Boston University School of Theology provided the Edmund M. Beebe, William Jackson and Anna Worden Lowstuter, and Frank D. Howard fellowships which covered various expenses throughout my work. The generous assistance of Mrs. Lillian Shinkle has been offered throughout my academic life; I offer her a word of special thanks. To my parents my thanks for supporting me all along, and to my wife's parents my gratitude for their support and their willingness to take care of matters in America whilst we were abroad.

Finally to the many people whose hospitality helped us get to Edinburgh, my profound gratitude. We can only hope to repay that debt in kind to future travellers.

I composed the thesis here presented. The Hebrew Text upon which the translations are based is that of Biblia Hebraica Stuttgartensia. Ugaritic texts are cited according to the numbering of KTU, unless no such numbering is yet available. All translations, unless otherwise noted, are my own.
All that was common-place -- all that belonged to the every-day world -- was melted away and obliterated in those dreams of imagination, which only remembered with advantage the points of grace and dignity that distinguished Flora from the generality of her sex, not the particulars which she held in common with them. Edward was, in short, in the fair way of creating a goddess out of a high-spirited, accomplished, and beautiful young woman...

- Sir Walter Scott, Waverley
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Chapter One
Preliminary Considerations and Review of Previous Scholarship

1.A. Introduction

An examination of recent literature on ancient Near Eastern religion reveals a plethora of dissertations, books and articles pertaining to Asherah. In the light of this recent proliferation of secondary material, the writing of another dissertation concerning Asherah appears to require some justification. Much of the recently discovered archaeological material has already been discussed in great detail. Textual references from Ugarit, Mesopotamia and the various epigraphic sources have already been added to the Old Testament material on Asherah. In many of the recent works, we are presented with a large, and still expanding, portrait of the goddess. Her commonly accepted iconographic features add even further detail to this picture.\(^1\) To all appearances, Asherah is the most fully documented goddess in West Semitic pantheons: is another dissertation on her necessary? I think it is, but I believe such a dissertation must look at the issue from firmly set parameters.

As the title of this dissertation implies, the following is a reassessment of the ancient Near Eastern textual materials concerning the goddess, or goddesses, Athirat, Asherah and Ashratu. In order to emphasize the different cultures in which these goddesses appear, I shall use the form of her name as it is found in the relevant sources in the respective sections. Most recent scholarly studies have presupposed that the same

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\(^1\)I have considered some of these iconographic associations in 'The Myth of Asherah: Lion Lady and Serpent Goddess', a paper to be presented to the 1992 Society of Biblical Literature Annual Meeting, San Francisco; now forthcoming in V.

goddess was delineated in the various texts from different cultures in the ancient Near East. The link connecting chronological and geographical distances is the common name 'Asherah', often noted as also occurring in the forms 'Athirat' and 'Ashratu'. Fairly early in the history of the study of this character, however, K.-H. Bernhardt expressed doubts that Ugaritic Athirat and Old Testament Asherah had anything at all in common:

\[
\text{dann wäre dazu zu bemerken, daß eine Verwandlung der älteren Meerengöttin Ascherat in die jüngere Baumgöttin Aschera niemals stattgefunden hat. Die beiden Göttinnen haben nichts miteinander zu tun.}^2
\]

His early study of the issue provides a question to be kept in mind throughout this dissertation: is Asherah to be identified as the same goddess in all of the cultures in which she appears?

Most scholars since Bernhardt, however, have not been detained by doubts of Asherah's identification with Athirat, and on the whole I agree with them. Too much caution would stifle any hopes of discerning the nature of this fascinating goddess. What I am presenting here is a contextual approach which relies heavily upon the Ugaritic material, but which also seeks evidence for common characteristics between this goddess and those of the same name in different cultures. At the outset it must be emphasized that, outside of Ugarit, the information pertaining to Athirat is scanty. A goddess with the name Ashratu appears in ancient Mesopotamian sources beginning in the Old Babylonian period (references begin in the early centuries of the second millennium). References continue into the time of the realm of Qataban (one of the four ancient South Arabian regions united in the fourth century C.E.). If a goddess of the same nature

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and character is present in the 'Asherahs' of other cultures, this should become evident when she is viewed in the light of Ugaritic Athirat.

As assumed in past scholarship, the common name of 'Asherah' provides a link between these various figures. Since Mesopotamian Ashratu appears to be a West Semitic goddess in origin, there is no reason to doubt that she developed from the same original character as Athirat. The Old Testament refers to a cultic object (and possibly a goddess) called the asherah. The proximity in geographical space and in time\(^3\) between the end of the Ugaritic civilisation and the early Old Testament literature allows for a possible connection here as well. The question is: did these deities develop in the same manner? To date, we possess no written mythology from the Amorites in West Semitic regions which refers to Athirat. We may attempt to discern the original characteristics of this goddess, but without the written evidence from the earliest sources, our proposals must remain hypothetical. What we may observe, however, is how she developed in each of the cultures where she appears. Past studies have attempted to gather the diverse evidence and produce a larger picture of the goddess. I am approaching the issue from a different perspective. 'Asherah' developed differently in different cultures. By observing her characteristics in each context, we may be able to determine her essential nature.

I.B. Method

I begin from the assumption that the primary locus of information pertaining to the character of Athirat is the corpus of Ugaritic tablets. Chapters two and three of this dissertation are based on a thorough examination of the Ugaritic material which refers to Athirat. Chapter two will determine the essential nature and characteristics of Athirat by a close examination of the mythological texts of Elimelek. In order to facilitate a more complete understanding of the Ugaritic materials, chapter three will take into consideration the tablets not ascribed to Elimelek, including mythological-ritual texts, fragments and lists. These chapters are followed by investigations of other written sources which refer to Asherah, Ashratu, Asherfu, and Asherat, in the Old Testament, Mesopotamian, Hittite and inscriptive sources respectively. In these chapters I shall attempt to discern the character and nature of the goddesses mentioned, according to the individual sources. The Old Testament contains the word הָרְשָׁנָה forty times. In chapter four, I shall examine each reference separately, considering textual difficulties and re-examining the deuteronomistic impact on these verses. The question of the existence of a goddess Asherah in the Old Testament will be addressed. Primarily the Old Testament speaks of a cultic object, which I shall designate as 'the asherah'.

4When I vocalise proper names in the Ugaritic chapters I shall follow the vocalisations as found in J. C. L. Gibson's CML², unless otherwise noted.
5Even within these categories the name of the goddess is found with variant spellings; this is true of the Old Testament, Mesopotamian and Hittite references, on which see below.
6The works of T. Yamashita (The Goddess Ashera, Ph. D. dissertation, Yale University, 1963) and S. M. Olyan (Asherah and the Cult of Yahweh in Israel (SBLMS 34), Atlanta, 1988) stress the deuteronomistic influence on all of the Old Testament references.
The references to a goddess (designated as 'Asherah') are not straightforward, but they appear nevertheless. Chapter five is concerned with further textual references to goddesses with names that are possible equivalents to Athirat according to normal phonetic rules. These include a summary of published Sumerian and Akkadian documents which refer to Ashratu, a brief exploration of the Hittite version of the Canaanite Elkuniša myth, and a reconsideration of the epigraphic South Arabian materials. In each of these sections the question of the goddess's relationship to Ugaritic Athirat will be explored. Chapter six considers the remaining ancient Near Eastern epigraphic references to Asherat. I have intentionally left the Khirbet el-Qôm and Kuntillet Ajrûd inscriptions until the other substantial sources concerning the goddess have been considered. The primary reason for this organisation is the ambiguity of these and the other published inscriptions. In most cases it is debatable whether or not a goddess is intended in these inscriptions. When this process of contextual examination is completed, we shall be better able to observe the similarities and differences between these goddesses.

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7 The studies of each of the cultures represented in chapter five have occupied many scholars for many years, thus a full sketch of any of them is beyond the scope of this study. Although the material concerning Mesopotamian Ashratu, 'Hittite' Asherṭu and South Arabian Athirat is sparse, I believe it is necessary to explore it for a more complete record of the goddesses under study. Lacking specialisation in these disciplines, I have relied more heavily upon the opinions of recognised specialists in these fields in chapter five.

8 In the section on the Hittite version of this myth, I will vocalise the proper names as found in H. A. Hoffner's 'The Elkuniša Myth Reconsidered' RHA 76 (1965): 5-16.
1.C. The Primacy of the Ugaritic Information on Athirat

Since the discovery of Ugarit, many diverse interpretations of the mythological tablets found there have appeared. In some attempts to explain the stories, the nature and character of mythology have been overlooked. The various interpretations are perhaps encouraged by the fragmented state of many of the texts, which may support more than one theory. Some attempts at mythological interpretations reveal that Ugaritic characters are at times understood as if they were the amplification of the worst aspects of human nature. These difficulties are perhaps the result of a basic misunderstanding of mythology. An examination of the Ugaritic mythology reveals characters with various consistent traits which distinguish them from other characters. It is the nature of myths to convey messages through stories. Strict adherence to logical story lines throughout the corpus is not a criterion of the medium of mythology. There are indeed characters with recognisable attributes, but there are also scenarios between myths which may contradict each other. Mythology does not disparage such inconsistencies; the avoidance of them is a modern problem. When a twentieth century reader attempts to force the texts into a consistent story line, he or she is following the method of a modern historian or novelist, not that of an ancient storyteller. A reasoned approach to ancient religious texts, however, may avoid uncharacteristic, and perhaps uncharitable, interpretations of their mythology.

Much damage has been done in the past by gathering small pieces of information from various myths in different cultures, and putting them together to clarify an ambiguous mythological situation. The elements of genre and context are violated by such methods. In order to determine the meaning of a myth, we need first to determine the contexts in which we shall search for evidence. In the case of Athirat, it is essential to realise that the primary source of information concerning her nature and character is the mythology of Ugarit. Only in Ugarit does Athirat appear as an active character in a large body of ancient literature. All other sources provide fragmentary information which needs to be considered in the light of the Ugaritic material.

Initially I shall examine the role of Athirat in the myths in which she participates. Even among these passages, we should not expect to find strict, cross-mythical continuity. My first basic division of the Ugaritic texts will be the myths written by Elimelek. Even within the context of the Elimelek's Ugaritic mythology, it is necessary to determine smaller contexts. Within the Elimelek material, Athirat's primary activity occurs in the Baal Cycle (*KTU* 1.1-6). She also plays a significant role in the story of Keret (*KTU* 1.14-16). She does not appear in Aqhat. In the myths not written by Elimelek, her name is mentioned in Shachar and Shalim (*KTU* 1.23). These smaller units will be individually considered in the course of this investigation.

Of primary importance will be Athirat's character within the story lines of the individual myths. The name of a particular deity must have carried some connotations of the character of that specific divinity to an ancient listener. My method of isolating the various mythological

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10This idea also applies to the iconography of various deities, as noted by R. D. Barnett, 'The object of priests and kings must surely have been to ensure that the
stories from each other should facilitate the determination of some of the essential characteristics of Athirat. Once the essential characteristics of Athirat have been distilled from each of the myths in which she appears, it may then be possible to determine which elements of her divine nature cohere throughout.

My study also works with another presupposition: namely, that it is more important to discern the ideology of mythological texts than to attempt to uncover their logic. In this sense it may be possible to find a 'theology' in the ancient mythological texts.11

Mythology tends to reflect aspects of reality. Is the reality behind the myth political reality, or an aspect of nature, or even the essence of an abstract idea? These are the kinds of question which reflect the nature of ancient Near Eastern myths. Although the answers to such questions are often beyond our grasp, they emphasize that a proper starting point requires the asking of the right questions. Right questions are those which take the nature of mythology into account. By way of example, a common hypothesis reflecting an un-mythological question is that Athirat and El lived apart because of El's alleged impotence.12 If the texts required this interpretation it presumably would have had some importance for

better educated worshipper would usually recognise the gods whom they were worshipping: and this could only be by their dress and appearance, (indicating sex, age and status), insignia and emblems (indicating powers and function) - much as European mediaeval art does for the Christian saints.' (The Earliest Representation of 'Anath' El 14 (H. L. Ginsberg Volume, 1978): 28*.)


Ugaritic religion. Instead, if we trace the individual elements which are used to support this hypothesis to their origins, the actual nature of the mythology appears. The evidence comes from three separate aspects of Ugaritic myths: 1) El lives at 'the source of the rivers, in the midst of the confluence of the two deeps' (KTU 1.4.IV.21-22) whilst Athirat does not, 2) El lives so far from Athirat that she must ride an ass a considerable distance to see him (KTU 1.4.IV.1-19), and 3) that in text 23 two women supposedly participate in a ritual to overcome El's alleged impotence. When these three separate elements are added together they produce the wrong kind of question (does Athirat live apart from El on account of his impotence?). Considered individually in the context of their mythological episodes they may be appropriately analysed as follows: 1) El lives at 'the source of the rivers, in the midst of the confluence of the two deeps' as a sign of his primordial nature. This is an essential characteristic of the head of the pantheon: he is from the most ancient times; 2) Athirat rides a donkey as a sign of her status; Anat, when she accompanies Athirat, walks. El's distance is characteristic of his greatness; 3) The interpretation of the scenario on the reverse of Shachar and Shalim is not certain. It is not even certain that El is impotent, as both women in the text are impregnated by him (KTU 1.23.51-52). Surely the correct method to interpret these scenes is to observe them in their own contexts. When such factors are analysed with an awareness of the ideology rather than a modern logic, they may be properly interpreted.

The essential nature of the characters will appear when these two principles are observed. The context and the ideology provide a reliable indication of the character and nature of the mythological figures.
1.D. Review of the State of Scholarship

Much has been written on many aspects of the subject of 'Asherah'. The first study after the discovery of Ugarit was a monograph written by W. Reed. Reed's monograph was a revision of his 1942 dissertation, and its main area of concern was to determine the characteristics of the asherah in the Old Testament. The next major study to appear was that of T. Yamashita. Yamashita explored further the Ugaritic texts, as well as providing thorough chapters on the Mesopotamian and other extrabiblical evidence.

During the 1970's, a number of substantial works began to appear which delved into the questions of 'Asherah'. Many of the volumes were at least partially triggered by the discovery of the Kuntillet ‘Ajrûd inscriptions by Z. Meshel in 1975-76. The voluminous 1977 dissertation by M. B. Brink, written more than a decade after that of Yamashita, was solely concerned with the Ugaritic material pertaining to Athirat and Aṯhtar. A. L. Perlman's dissertation was completed in the following year and also focused on the Ugaritic material concerning Athirat and Aṯhtar. Her work, however, also included substantial conclusions concerning the asherah in the Old Testament. The following year a dissertation was completed by J. R. Engle. Engle's primary concern was to determine the

14 The Goddess Asherah.
15 A Philological Study of Texts in Connection with Aṯtar and Aṯirat.
relationship of pillar figurines to the asherah mentioned in the Old Testament, although he also considered the extrabiblical materials.

The 1980's witnessed an even further increase in the secondary literature on the subject. W. A. Maier's 1984 dissertation on Asherah was later published as a monograph. Rather than re-examine the issue of the asherah in the Old Testament, Maier explored the Ugaritic materials as well as various sources on other goddesses considered to be equivalents of Asherah in the ancient Near East. His work also took into account various iconographic representations and epithets believed to have been associated with her. The following year S. M. Olyan completed his dissertation; and his chapter on Asherah was subsequently published as a monograph. Olyan's primary concern was with the Old Testament understanding of Asherah in the light of its Canaanite background. A dissertation by R. J. Pettey appeared in the same year as that of Olyan. Pettey was primarily concerned with determining a basic formula for the Old Testament references to Asherah, although he did include notes about other ancient Near Eastern sources. His dissertation has been recently published as a monograph. W. Louie was the next scholar to produce a dissertation on Asherah. In it he set out to determine the meaning of the word 'asherah', which took him through an overview of the Old Testament, rabbinic, epigraphic and literary sources. Louie also took an interest in the origin and role of Asherah in the various sources. In 1989

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19 Asherah and the Cult of Yahweh.
V. L. Piper submitted a dissertation on the phenomenon of tree worship. Her thesis draws on information concerning Asherah, but only minimally touches upon ancient Near Eastern materials. J. M. Hadley has recently added a dissertation on the subject of Asherah to the increasing list of studies. Hadley's dissertation gives an informed review of the Old Testament references, but her forte is her thorough study of the Khirbet el-Qôm and Kuntillet 'Ajrûd inscriptions.

In the current decade, M. S. Smith's *The Early History of God* has been published. In this book, Smith considers the question of Asherah with a specific interest in Old Testament and Canaanite religion. Although his work is not completely dedicated to the problem of Asherah, it must be considered as an important resource and, therefore, it will be reviewed as well.

The most up-to-date dissertation available on the material with which I am concerned is that of Hadley. In her first chapter Hadley offers a critical review of the works by Reed, Yamashita, Perlman, Engle, Olyan, Pettay, and Maier listed above. A further critical review of these works here would be largely repetitious; therefore, I shall focus my following remarks on the studies not considered by Hadley.

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26 Hadley, *Yahweh's Asherah*: 24-55. Hadley also discusses the iconographic studies of Holland, Winter and Schroer (on which see below).
The earliest work to be reviewed here, Brink's 1977 University of Stellenbosch D. Litt. thesis, is a large work of 916 pages. The sheer volume of this work alone demands attention, and I shall begin my review of the relevant material with an examination of his approach to the Ugaritic material on Athirat.

Initially it must be noted that, because of the date of Brink's thesis, the valuable tools of Gibson's *CML* and G. del Olmo Lete's *MLC* were not available to him. At the outset, Brink declares that context will be the determining factor in his translation of the Ugaritic texts. Since his work deals specifically with the goddesses Athtart and Athirat, he undertakes to translate all texts with any mention of these two goddesses. Unfortunately, his arrangement of the texts seems to follow no set order, often jumping from a coherent unit (such as the Baal Cycle) to various fragmented texts, and back again. One major weakness of his approach is that his translations seem to be based not so much on the context as on the opinions of other scholars. His method of presenting a transliteration of the text, followed by his own translation, is given little credence when, for the justification of his translation, he refers almost exclusively to the opinions of other scholars and gives no philological explanation as to why one translation is better than any other. Initially, he explores each passage word by word until enough of the vocabulary is present to hone down the amount of space spent on each pericope. This adds much material to his thesis which is not entirely relevant. The results of his method are

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27 *Philological Study: 8.*
often confusing translations which make little sense. By way of example, his translation of *KTU* 1.114.14-23 reads:

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El sits near A̱tirat.
El sits in his community house.
El drinks wine until he is sated, sweet wine until he is drunk
El goes to his house, he enters the court.
He is supported by (a)brother(s), ðknm and Ŝnm
and they approach stinker with horns on top and a rear which (he) pollutes/contaminates with excrement
and urine.
El, the god, falls like those who are made to descend in the netherworld.
Anat and Aṭṭart stay prone with malicious intent.28
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In addition to the difficulty in translating in run-on sentences which barely hint at parallelism, Brink introduces a confused theme based on a questionable translation, to which he returns for conclusions (namely, Anat and Aṭṭart staying prone, with malicious intent). If more attention had been paid to the context of the poem, Anat and Aṭṭart would not have been left lying on the ground planning evil - a conclusion not supported by the remainder of the text (which Brink does not translate).

Based on his interpretation of ḫtrt ŭm, Brink supposes that Aṭṭirat was originally a primordial sea dragon.29 Although there is no evidence that Aṭṭirat had dragon-like characteristics, he maintains his view and thus translates *KTU* 1.4.IV.23-26 as:

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She flooded a life-giving power on El and he entered
The place of separation of the king, Father of the two.
At El's feet she did homage and fell down
She bowed down and honoured him.30
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28 *Philological Study*: 231-232.
29 *Philological Study*: 314.
30 *Philological Study*: 362.
Brink suggests that the 'possibility that the flooding of Aṯirat (through her breasts? as may be derived of šd. šd in CTA 23,13...)' was an ancient way of understanding the tides.31 He bases further conclusions on this interpretation of Athirat flooding El by her breasts, although he argues some pages earlier that šd must be translated 'field' because Ugaritic already has the use of dd for 'breast'. As his interpretations continue, he paints a picture of Athirat as a goddess of extraordinary sexual prowess, thus causing rivalry between El and Baal for her favours. The difficulty with his translations, besides their awkward nature, is that they seem to be slanted towards his theories about the text, rather than his theories being substantiated by the texts. For example, to sustain his conclusion that Athirat is the true head of the pantheon,32 he interprets the giving of the gifts made by Kothar-and-Khasis in KTU 1.4.1.23-43 as indicating that Athirat occupies the 'position of El', thus:

The dais, throne and especially the footstool, (as is shown from the episode with Aṯar,) the canopy and resting-place all point to reverence for Aṯirat and new power for the goddess. She is endowed with the position of El. The serpents show recognition of her fecundity...The vase probably depicts her 'new' position in which it is shown that the wild bulls are at her (sexual) mercy.33

He does not explain how it is in the power of Kothar-and-Khasis to endow whomever he may choose with the position of El, simply by forging gifts for them.

31Philological Study: 379.
32Philological Study: 825-826.
33Philological Study: 282.
After 725 pages of this analysis, Brink moves on to draw up a chart, based on the technique of Van Zijl's book, *A Study of Texts in Connection with Baal in the Ugaritic Epics*. Brink, to determine the character and role of the two goddesses, analyses the texts which he translated according to genre (myth, saga, god lists, rituals, incantations, offering lists, and profane texts), depending upon whether the goddess in question appears alone or with one of her epithets. These he places on a chart according to the following categories for the verbs: military, fighting, movement, speech and senses, moods, theophany, royal, banquet, weather and seasons, building activities, legal, curse themes, sexual intercourse, mortuary rites, mental activities, acts of direct influence on persons, sacrifice, cultic, and childbearing. All of these elements are then divided according to whether they are first, second or third person. The results reflect the ideas presented in his translations of the texts. Thus he finds that Baal is associated with weather more than any other god, and that Athirat is the most sexually active of the set Athtart, Athirat and Baal.\(^{34}\) His chart leads him to conclude that:

Baal features with verbs 171 times, Aittart 46 times and Aitirat 73 times. From this one may deduce that Athirat was nearly twice as active as Aittart, especially in the earlier stages of the UT myths, but not nearly as active as Baal, especially in the later stages.\(^{35}\)

The difficulties with this kind of interpretation are legion. First of all, it assumes that we have a representative portion of the activities of all the gods in all the texts of Ugarit, found and not found. The vicissitudes of archaeology are a witness against this assumption. This method also

\(^{34}\) *Philological Study*: 750-762.

\(^{35}\) *Philological Study*: 763.
betrays a confusion between grammatical phenomena (verbs and the action they may indicate) and mythological elements (what the gods may be doing in lacunae or even in the minds of the hearers who knew the 'whole story', as it were). Given the circumstances, we should be cautious about using superlatives or about interpreting statistics too literally. Such a method could possibly demonstrate that in the surviving texts Baal appears as a very active deity, but we cannot say that he is the most active. This is one of the limitations of our research given the nature of the texts. Finally, this method illustrates a literalistic approach to the texts which cannot be supported in the light of the ideology of the texts. Baal is active in the Baal Cycle, but he barely appears in Keret or Aqhat. Rather than draw sharp lines of distinction between myth and legend, or any other category, each myth should be analysed according to its context.

Brink's dissertation does a service in drawing together many fragmented texts which mention Athtart and Athirat with those more well known. His conclusions seem to dominate his research and translations, however, and they must be approached with caution.
Louie's 1988 Th. D. thesis attempts to take a broad view of the materials pertaining to Asherah. After a brief review of previous scholarship, Louie justifies his study by noting that the sources which he reviewed were biased by their supposition that all Old Testament references to Asherah are 'deuteronomic'. Thus he writes, 'There is a need for a study that presupposes the historicity of the OT...Furthermore, the role of Asherah in the idolatrous system of the OT needs to be evaluated in the light of the above findings.'

He begins his study by examining the 'meaning of Asherah'. His first chapter is dedicated to exploring the non-goddess interpretations which include a cultic object, a wooden cultic object, an image and a shrine. In his second chapter Louie considers the goddess interpretations, and here he observes various cognate names for Asherah throughout the ancient Near East. This leads him to a summary of the characteristics of Asherah 'as a supreme goddess' and 'as a fertility goddess' at Ugarit and in the Bible. Louie's next chapter looks at the origin of Asherah and her worship, particularly her worship in the Bible. His final chapter is dedicated to the role of Asherah in the Bible. Although Louie comes to no firm conclusion on whether Asherah was considered to be the spouse of Yahweh, he does remain convinced that Asherah, Anat and Athtart eventually merged into one goddess. In keeping with his presupposition of the historicity of the Old Testament account, Louie understands all mentions of Asherah as violations of the original Israelite monotheism.

36 Meaning, Characteristics and Role of Asherah: 5.
Louie's study provides a valuable overview of the material which mentions Asherah; however, it is not without difficulties. Louie does not violate his stated attempt to understand the biblical material as historically accurate. Unfortunately, this leads to a compilation of evidence from all the biblical sources with no regard for text-critical studies. In discussing Deut. 12.3 he writes:

Moses told the Israelites to destroy all the places where the nations served their gods as well as the idolatrous objects that are in them. One of these items is Asherim [*sic*] which Moses commanded them to burn.37

This approach, although internally consistent, enters into no dialogue with the text-critical understanding of the materials. In this way all previous scholarship on the understanding of Old Testament Asherah is effectively ignored.

Another difficulty results from Louie’s use of sources which pre-date the discovery of Ugarit. In treating the subject of Asherah in the Old Testament, he utilises commentaries which could not have been aware of Ugarit. This in and of itself is not a faulty method; however, Louie places these works in his text without noting that the Ugaritic discoveries may have modified the views of the authors. By way of example, in his discussion on 2 Kgs. 21.3 // 2 Chron. 33.3, after discussing the interpretations of Montgomery (1951) and Robinson (1976), Louie introduces the interpretation of Curtis and Madsen (1910). Not surprisingly, Curtis and Madsen 'suggest a symbolic post representing the goddess Astarte'.38 This method does not allow Curtis and Madsen the benefit of the doubt concerning the nature of the asherah in the light of

38 *Meaning, Characteristics and Role of Asherah*: 32, n. 2.
Ugarit. Louie also fails to distinguish extrabiblical material on the basis of its date. All sources are compared as if no time had separated them (an exception being his discussion of the origin of Asherah).

In general, Louie does not enter into discussion on points raised by previous scholars. He does not question the alleged merger of Asherah with Athtart and Anat, nor does he question the assumptions of Asherah's character as a 'supreme goddess' and a 'fertility goddess'. This lack of critical inquiry renders Louie unable to move beyond a recitation of previous opinions and the addition of his own. This having been noted, Louie's compilation of extrabiblical sources is the strong point of his work. His dissertation is a useful resource for finding some less obvious references to Asherah.

I.D.iii. V. L. Piper

Piper's dissertation, although not specifically a study of Asherah, contains some information on the goddess in the context of tree worship. Initially Piper considers modern scholarship on sacred trees; unfortunately none of her modern sources post-date the Second World War.39 Her discussion ranges over most of the world, and includes ancient Near Eastern information as well as myths from Scandinavia and Uganda. She ends her introduction by noting that tree worship is indicative of the takeover of goddess worship by male gods. Tree worship is all that remains as evidence of the former goddess worship. In her second chapter Piper sets out to demonstrate that the sacred tree represented the goddess in earlier forms of religion. She notes that figurines of women (which she

understands as goddesses) date to the paleolithic era. After establishing the antiquity of goddess worship, Piper utilises various sources from ancient Greece, Sumer and Egypt to prove that goddesses were associated with trees.

Piper's third chapter forms the main part of her thesis on the uprooting of traditional interpretation. She begins with a consideration of symbolism in the creation story where, she notes, audiences would have understood the tree of life as Asherah. She then discusses tree worship in the Abraham cycle. She cites R. Graves as noting that groves of terebinth were associated with Asherah, and she cites S. Teubal's suggestion that Isaac was divinely conceived in a hieros gamos in the shrine of terebinths at Mamre. Piper next considers the tree symbolism in other ancient Near Eastern cultures, and finally moves on to explore Asherah. She notes that Asherah caused trouble for traditional interpretation because she was Yahweh's consort. Citing various anthropological scholars, Piper demonstrates Asherah's associations with palm trees, pillars, and the sea, and shows her characteristics as progenitress of the gods and as a neolithic goddess. Briefly considering Lemaire's translation of the Khirbet el-Qôm and Kuntillet 'Ajrûd inscriptions, she finds evidence of Asherah's status as Yahweh's consort. She concludes:

This investigation has attempted to utilize just such a broad cultural perspective. As a product of this project, the ethnocentric bias of scholarly and traditional interpretation became apparent. And these culturally biased perspectives produced arid interpretation. By respecting cultural integrity, insofar as it is knowable, interpretation can
replenish an arid environment with the revitalizing energy of very ancient roots.\textsuperscript{42}

Piper's dissertation suffers from attempting to cover too wide an area of investigation. Although her primary area of interest appears to be the Abraham cycle, she spends much of her investigation in pursuit of evidence in cultures far removed from that of the Old Testament. She dwells on Taliesin's 'Battle of Trees' and the Irish Tree Alphabet at length.\textsuperscript{43} As with Louie's dissertation, Piper does not discuss the opinions of other scholars, and she seldom expresses her own. The true weakness of this study appears in its bibliography. Although the dissertation was not completed until 1989, Piper does not appear to have been aware of the recent major works on Asherah or Old Testament studies in general.\textsuperscript{44} Piper's work gives the impression that the conclusions were drawn from anthropological arguments without a thorough consideration of more recent biblical scholarship.

I.D.iv. J. M. Hadley

Hadley's dissertation gives a full investigation of the Levantine material concerning Asherah. She begins with an informed discussion on issues pertaining to Asherah and presents a critical review of the previous scholarship. Although Hadley does not translate the relevant Ugaritic texts, she provides an overview of the Ugaritic information on Athirat. She also briefly considers the origin and etymology of Athirat. In her chapter on the biblical references, Hadley begins with a breakdown of the

\textsuperscript{42}Uprooting Traditional Interpretation: 144.
\textsuperscript{43}Uprooting Traditional Interpretation: 29-45.
\textsuperscript{44}She does not cite Maier, Olyan, Reed or even Cross.
distribution of the term, and discusses the verbs used in conjunction with the asherah. She discusses the deuteronomistic influence on the asherah passages in the Old Testament and this leads her to ask questions about the dating of the deuteronomistic source. This is followed by a consideration of Josiah's reform. Observing the affixes which occur with asherah in the Old Testament as well as its use with the definite article, she proposes the theory that:

what may be happening is that the term 'asherah' is in the process of losing its identification with the goddess, and becoming merely the wooden object. While Asherah was still worshipped as a goddess during the monarchy period, perhaps by the time of dtr himself, and certainly the Chronicler, the term had ceased to be used with any knowledge of the goddess whom it had originally represented, and from which it received its name.45

She then discusses the passages which may refer to the goddess in the Old Testament and finally concludes that the goddess Asherah may have degenerated into a mere cultic object.

It is here that the forte of Hadley's dissertation appears. Her investigation of the Khirbet el-Qôm and Kuntillet 'Ajrûd inscriptions is the most thorough to date.46 Having observed the Khirbet el-Qôm inscription personally, she presents a review of past attempts at its decipherment and offers an explanation for its grammatical conundrums. Hadley also explores the issues of and difficulties with the Kuntillet 'Ajrûd inscriptions. Further, she provides a critique of the assumed connection between the drawings on pithos A and its inscription. Her next chapter surveys the archaeological finds from Lachish, Pella and Taanach which

45Yahweh's Asherah: 92.
may pertain to Asherah. A brief consideration of female figurines precedes her conclusions.

Hadley's dissertation is undoubtedly a substantial work in the field of studies on Asherah. The main weakness that appears in her treatment is that she does not attempt to re-examine the Ugaritic materials on Athirat. Hadley's method of utilising the Elkuniša myth to explain the relationship between Athirat and Baal should also signal caution. Other than a brief consideration of the importance of the Ugaritic texts, she limits herself to Palestinian texts and finds. This scope adequately accounts for the evidence which is relevant to the inscriptions which form the primary area of her study.

1.D.v. M. S. Smith

Smith's copiously annotated study of the religion of early Israel is presented within the framework of 'convergence' and 'differentiation' with Canaanite religion. In this context, Smith discusses various deities in Israel at the time of the judges, and provides individual chapters on Yahweh and Baal and Yahweh and Asherah. It is with the latter chapter that this study takes its interest. Smith begins this chapter by considering the asherah in Israel and the distinction between the feminine singular 'asherah' and the masculine plural 'asherim'. Noting that the 'asherah was a wooden object symbolizing a tree', Smith reviews arguments concerning the morphology of the cultic object. In his discussion of the inscriptions from Kuntillet Ajrud he decides against disregarding the

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47 *Yahweh's Asherah*: 113.
48 *Early History*: xxiii-xxiv.
49 *Early History*: 81.
grammatical rule and reading 'ṣrth as a proper name (see below). This leads to the central question of the chapter: is Asherah an Israelite goddess?

In the course of his investigation of this question, Smith discounts the biblical references adduced to support a goddess interpretation of 'asherah' in the Old Testament. Noting the possible exception of 1 Kgs. 18.19, Smith states 'The other biblical references used to support this reconstruction are susceptible to other interpretations, which would vitiate the view of Asherah as a goddess'. This conclusion leads to the questions of the historical development of this situation and why the deuteronomists so strongly condemned the asherah as a cultic object. Noting the speculative nature of his answers, Smith suggests that the asherah symbol may have outlived recollection of Asherah as a goddess. It may have been rejected because of secondary associations with Athtart, or because of associations of the asherah with healing and fertility. This situation supposes that Asherah did not continue as the goddess represented by the cultic symbol bearing her name.

Smith then discusses various associations of the imagery of Asherah, including the figure of Wisdom, Wellhausen's emendation of Hos. 14.9, the Song of Songs, and Jer. 2.27 in comparison with Deut. 32.18. The chapter ends with an excursus on gender language used in connection with Yahweh.

The main strength of Smith's study is his close attention to the limitations of our knowledge of Asherah, particularly outside of Ugarit. He demonstrates that the 'majority view' of Asherah as a goddess in Israel is problematic. The difficulty with his approach is the speculative nature

\[50\] Early History: 93.
\[51\] Early History: 94.
\[52\] Early History: 89-94.
of his solutions to the problems that his proposed absence of Asherah in the Old Testament raises. After demonstrating that the Old Testament references are uncertain in their evidence for a goddess Asherah, he suggests that the asherah may have been a representation of Athtart.\textsuperscript{53} The difficulty with the explanation is that confusion between Asherah and Athtart is supported by only a minimum of evidence.\textsuperscript{54} Smith writes:

There is other negative evidence that might support the reconstruction that Asherah was not a goddess in Israel; this sort of evidence is, however, based on the argument from silence, and it has merit only in conjunction with the positive evidence presented above.\textsuperscript{55}

The evidence to which he refers, however, is also based on 'negative evidence', namely, that the Old Testament does not attest the existence of Asherah. Since the cultic object bears the name of a goddess, positive evidence needs to be provided that the asherah was to be associated with some other goddess.

This brief consideration of recent scholarship on the questions surrounding the character of Athirat demonstrates that questions still remain. With the many recent books, dissertations and articles considered, we have much assistance in dealing with the question of Athirat's position at Ugarit. My approach will be based on a contextual consideration of the primary source material. My working presupposition is that the Ugaritic tablets provide our most complete record of the nature and character of Athirat.

\textsuperscript{53} Early History: 89, 92-93. This idea was also suggested by W. R. Smith, Lectures on the Religion of the Semites, new edition, London, 1894: 189, n. 1.
\textsuperscript{54} Judg. 3.7 may point to a late confusion of the two.
\textsuperscript{55} Early History: 93.
I.E. Iconography

A note must be included on the issue of the iconography of Athirat. In this study I limit myself to the textual resources concerning Athirat. The reason for not exploring the iconography stems from two basic considerations. The first is the uncertainty involved in iconographic representations of goddesses. No female figurine or relief has come to light which has been explicitly identified by an inscription to be Athirat. Some of the images used in considerations of Athirat's iconography may represent her; however, my intention here is to begin from what may be known with a measure of certainty concerning the goddess. This information is gleaned from written records which explicitly name her.

My second reason is pragmatic. Many studies on the interpretation of ancient Near Eastern iconography have already discussed the
associations of Athirat. This field itself requires a full-length study, and space does not permit such an exercise here.

In the following chapter I shall approach the references to Athirat in the Elimelek material; first in the Keret texts, followed by those in the Baal Cycle. It is here that the most sustained image of the goddess is presented.

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57 I offer some preliminary remarks on the difficulties of such iconographic associations in 'The Myth of Asherah: Lion Lady and Serpent Goddess'.
Chapter Two
Athirat in the Elimelek Tablets of Ugarit

2.A. Keret (KTU 1.14-1.16)

The interpretation of Keret is a matter of debate. The basic story line appears to be simple; however, breaks in the text, particularly within and at the end of text 15, leave room for considerable doubt about details. Within this context, although the role of Athirat is small in the preserved columns, it forms a coherent picture in which her role is seen to be quite important.\(^1\) As Parker has demonstrated, the recognition of the genre of a text is essential to understanding it.\(^2\) This is a principle which assists in determining the ideology of the myths with which we are dealing. Context and genre are essential elements to our understanding of a text. This provides a further reason for not lumping all Ugaritic texts together and drawing out a composite picture of Athirat's activities. What is important is her character. From the various separate myths, we can perhaps piece together the common characteristics of Athirat, and thus derive an accurate portrait. The Keret story may well be considered a myth,\(^3\) yet it does display a more obviously earthly colour than does the Baal Cycle. This has led many scholars to attempt to find a definition other than 'myth' for Keret. The activity of the gods in Keret is a mythological feature; however many scholars find the designation 'epic' less objectionable. This

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\(^1\) A. Merrill, "The House of Keret, a study of the Keret Legend" SEÀ 33 (1968): 10


divergent labelling is not necessary if we keep the genre and context of the myth in mind as we examine it.

Athirat first appears in the narrative as Keret was making his way to Udm, according to the instruction of El (KTU 1.14.IV.31-43). The text reads:

\[tlkn\ 32\ ym\ .w\ \ln\ .\]
\[ahr\ 33\ šp\ šm\ .b\ \ul\]
\[34\ ym[g\y\.]\ l\ qds\ 35\ a\ [r].\sr\]
\[w\ l\ it\ 36\ šd\ [y]\ nm\ .\]
\[lm\ 37\ yd\ r[.]\ krt.\ \l\ \‘\ 38\ itt.\]

they went a day, and a second, after sunset\[^4\] the third (day)
he came to the sanctuary of Athirat of the two Tyres,
\[^5\] even to (the sanctuary of) the goddess of the Sidonians,
there noble Keret vowed a gift.\[^7\]

\[^4\]See the discussion of J. C. de Moor and K. Spronk, 'Problematical Passages in the Legend of Kir’u (I) UF 14 (1982): 165. They present convincing arguments for the interpretation of 'sunset' over 'sunrise' for špšm.

\[^5\]There is some dispute about the correctness of Tyre as the place name here indicated. M. Astour ('Place Names' in Ras Shamra Parallels II, 1975: 251f.) has argued for a possible North Mesopotamian location. I prefer to see Tyre and Sidon mentioned here, especially as Athirat appears to be a West Semitic goddess (see below, on the Mesopotamian material). Gray had proposed 'Atherat of Deposits / Goddess of Oracles' (‘Texts from Ras Shamra’ in Documents from Old Testament Times (edited by D. Winton Thomas), London, 1958: 119) but later changed his mind to that of Tyre and Sidon (The Krt Text in the Literature of Ras Shamra, second edition, Leiden, 1964: 16, 55). De Moor also reads Tyre and Sidon (Anthology of Religious Texts from Ugarit, vol. 1, (hereafter ARTU), Leiden, 1987: 200), as do del Olmo Lete (Mitos y Leyendas de Canaan, (hereafter MLC), Madrid, 1981: 298), Gordon ('Poetic Legends and Myths from Ugarit' Berytus 25 (1977; hereafter PLMU): 44), and Gibson (CM L\[^2\]: 87). As far as the structure of the couplet is concerned, I take srm to be a dual, reflecting Tyre as a 'twin city' (de Moor and Spronk, 'Problematical Passages': 170, and Gibson, CM L\[^2\]: 87). Gibson understands the dual srm as referring to the island and mainland sections of Tyre. šdymn can be understood as a gentilic.

\[^6\]The lamèd requires an object. Since the sanctuary is mentioned in line 34, it should be taken as doing double duty for this, its parallel line.

\[^7\]The context of this passage, as Parker ('Some Methodological Principles': 24-28) has demonstrated, requires that itt is to be understood as the object of ntr, with the initial aleph as a case of ditography. Parker shows that the correct genre of lines 38-43 to be that of the vow formula. By comparative evidence in ancient Near Eastern vows, the actual vow begins with the divine name, here Athirat in line 38. See also his further discussion of the vow formulae in The Pre-Biblical Narrative Tradition (SBL Resources for Biblical Study 24), Atlanta, 1989: 70-87. I understand 'there noble Keret vowed a gift' (lines 36-38) as a monocolon, followed by the bicolon invoking Athirat. The difficulty with this interpretation is the lack of a convincing etymology for itt. My translation of these lines is therefore tentative.
The genre of Keret seems to be that of an epic tale centred on questions surrounding the institution of kingship. More specifically, the genre seems to be a study in response to the social dangers incurred when a dynasty ends (that is, when there is no heir to the throne). In order to secure further the continuity of his dynasty, Keret interrupts his journey to acquire a wife in order to make a vow to Athirat. El had not commanded him to do this. Besides the retaliation of Athirat later in the myth when Keret's vow to her is unfulfilled (see below), perhaps a message about obedience is included. In the larger context of the epic, Keret added a precautionary vow to Athirat to the instructions of El, and in the final analysis, he is brought back to the crisis with which the story begins (see below). The interests of the same genre continue with the issue of the implications of a king's illness (and possible death). When Keret finally recovers, the monarchical problem of an heir apparent being cursed comes to the fore. Within this genre, how are we to understand Keret's vow? If a question of obedience is present, this should become clear as our exploration unfolds.

8First person singular shaphel form of 'rb, 'cause to enter', or 'introduce' (Gibson, CML2: 87).
9Understanding the initial w, as an error for k, a difference of only one wedge, since silver is the required word-pair component for gold (line 44).
Perhaps the best way to understand this incident and its place in the text is to recognise that it is an account of an unfulfilled vow. S. Parker proposed in 1977 that Keret consists of three separate episodes (Keret's loss of his family and acquisition of another, an account of his illness, and the usurpation narrative). What is of special interest to this investigation is the suggested second story, namely, that of a man who is ill and who is then healed. The vow enters into the plot during this episode. Albright recognised the section 14.IV.38-43 as a vow, but he did not enter into a prolonged discussion of it. In a more recent discussion, Parker has drawn out some comparisons between the vow in Keret and other ancient Near Eastern vows. Besides a simple recognition that the actual occurrence of Athirat in this pericope is in the context of a vow, what possible understanding can be gleaned from this fact? The answer lies within the context of the whole of the myth. For this, we should first examine Parker's study more closely.

Using exegetical techniques often applied to Old Testament research, Parker explores the text of Keret from a literary angle. In the course of his study, he notes that the action of Keret's family being eliminated, his supplication, the vision of El, and the restoration of his fortune form a traditional ancient Near Eastern story line (designated as 'A'). In so doing, Parker utilises both external literary and internal textual evidence which form a solid case. Parker also examines the illness episode (designated 'B'), and then explores the implications of the usurpation story.

11S. B. Parker, 'The Historical Composition of KRT and the Cult of El' ZAW 89 (1977): 161-175. This argument was followed by that for a possible historical setting for the Keret epic by N. Wyatt, 'A Suggested Historical Context for the Keret Story' UF 15 (1983): 316-318.
12Parker, 'Historical Composition of KRT': 167-170.
14Parker, The Pre-Biblical Narrative Tradition: 70-87.
15Parker, 'Historical Composition of KRT': 163-167.
('C'), which was apparently added on to the cycle of the family restoration and illness narrative. The question of the important addition of the vow to the first (A) story of Keret's loss of family and restoration is of special interest to this study.

Keret is presented as seeking an heir for his throne, and although El provided for him the details of his journey, the story was lengthened by the addition of Keret's vow to Athirat. Ginsberg notes that this initial vow to Athirat is for securing a wife, and not progeny, a distinction which pales when placed next to the fact that a wife was indeed needed to produce an heir. In other words, Keret's vow to Athirat was a vow used to secure the production of children. In Keret's dream (14.1 and II), it was El who came to him, and instructed him in how to procure progeny. Keret asked for children (1.4), El instructed him on how to secure a wife, and with a wife would come a family (III.48-9). Thus, when Keret paused to make a vow to Athirat, he was doing so with the knowledge that El had already provided instructions to this end. This fact lends credence to the idea that the vow episode was later added to the action of the story which otherwise follows the epic repetition of El's command. Without the benefit of Parker's article, Merrill also noted the importance of Keret's stop at Athirat's sanctuary:

Because of the introduction of the vow to Asherah on the way to 'Udm, in the parallel version to the dream, we are now suddenly confronted with the understanding that the vow has apparently not been fulfilled. So the wrath of Asherah becomes the basis for the addition of the other 'narratives' which are woven around the central concern for the 'house of Keret' and find their sub-themes in the three areas of fertility, salubrity, and sovereignty. Further the wrath of Asherah, expressed in a 'curse-motif', helps to frame this

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16 'Historical Composition of KRT': 169-170.
17 H. Ginsberg, The Legend of King Keret, a Canaanite Epic of the Bronze Age (BASORSS 2-3), New Haven, 1946: 41.
additional material for it concludes with a 'curse' - the curse of Yšb by Keret.¹⁸

Parker, asking why the vow episode was inserted, concurs with Merrill that it is necessary for the later narrative, but adds that it is 'insignificant for the present part.'¹⁹ This is because, according to Parker's analysis, the sickness episode required the vow as a foreshadowing of the actual illness.

It may seem excessive to spend much time on the actual structure of the story of Keret, when the role of Athirat is our central concern. The establishment of the context, however, is very important in understanding her role, both here and elsewhere. In the analyses of Merrill and Parker, we can see that the interpretation of Keret's vow holds an essential place in the narrative. What does this tell us about Athirat? It seems to demonstrate that she was influential in the context of the bearing of royal children. Although the Myth of Keret does indeed form a thematic unity,²⁰ the addition of the B section would have served to emphasize this particular aspect of Athirat. This characteristic of Athirat's concern with royal children will reappear in the examination of the remaining Ugaritic texts where she also has a role.

This episode leads to the further activity of Athirat in the myth of Keret. KTU 1.15.III.25-30 states:

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w tḥs s.a[rt26n]drh. and Athirat remembered his vow,²¹
wilt.[ ] and the goddess [ ]
27w ṭšu.gh.w[tsh] and she lifted her voice and [called out]
```
Look, I beg you, has Keret then changed [his] vow? I will break...

Unfortunately, text 15 is not well preserved, and column III breaks off just as Athirat was beginning to speak. What we can infer from the context is that, if we accept that the vow pronounced by Keret was an addition to the text, then this short section is also a part of an inserted story. This pericope would seem to fit in Parker's scheme as part of Keret B. What follows is an account of Keret's illness, which is generally supposed to be the punishment of Athirat for Keret's failure to fulfil his promise. In the light of the following factors, however, perhaps we ought to see Keret's sickness as an instrumental punishment used in order to lead to the ironic coup de grâce of Athirat - the cursing of Keret's heir, the very reason for his initial request, by the king himself. The illness should be considered as part of the punishment of Athirat, coming as it does so shortly after her remembrance of the unfulfilled vow. The further element of the curse on Yaššib, however, should be seen in the light of a more complete understanding of the punishment.

The first factor which would make it unlikely that the illness itself was the final punishment of Athirat, is that in 16.V, El himself takes the responsibility for curing Keret of his illness. This in itself does not negate the possibility that Athirat had instituted the sickness, but it does limit its punitive effect. If the illness is her final punishment, she has been

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22 Perhaps the lacuna contained an apppellative for Keret, but as the text is broken, I would not venture to guess what it might have been.
23 This is understanding as a G, third person singular, cognate with Hebrew śnh, root I (BDB: 1039b), 'to change'.
24 Taking apr to be from the root pwr, 'to break', with Gibson, CML²: 156.
overruled by El, the king of the gods. If, on the other hand, the cursing of Yāṣṣib is the ultimate end of Athirat's punishment, Keret is left without an heir, the breaking of Athirat's end of the bargain in 14.IV.

Another factor which would seem to indicate that the cursing of Yāṣṣib is part of Athirat's punishment, is that her role is concerned with the progeny of the king. This is supported by the fact that Yāṣṣib is described as the one sucking the milk of Athirat in 15.II.26. Thus KTU 1.15.II.26-28 reads:

26ynq. ḫlb .a[ŋ]\textasciitilde{Ir} 
27mšn d.btl.t.[f nt] 
28mšn q[ ] 

he [Yāṣṣib] will suck the milk of Athirat, 
drain the breasts of the virgin [Anat] 

\textit{Yāṣṣib} is the gift of Athirat to Keret, and Keret's illness does not remove the benefit of his vow, for he now has a beneficiary. Keret's cursing of his firstborn, Yāṣṣib, is tantamount to putting him back in the same position he found himself in at the beginning of the myth.\textit{26} His hope for a successor is lost. His first choice, the son blessed by the nursing of Athirat, is cursed. Although different words are used in the curses of Athirat (15.III.30) and Keret (16.VI.55-56), the action in both is described as 'breaking' (\textit{apr} in 15.III.30, \textit{ytbr} in 16.VI.55-56). Who or what does Athirat threaten to break? De Moor and Spronk have noted that \textit{pr} is the word

\textit{25}F. Løkkegaard (\textit{The Canaanite Divine Wetnurses} SiTh 10 (1956): 60-61) argues that the characters of Ahatart (whom he equates with Athirat) and Anat would make poor wetnurses. He instead proposes to emend \textit{aŋr} to \textit{kŋr}, 'the Kotharat', and to fill the lacuna with Miqat (one of the Kotharat) instead of Anat. Unfortunately, the photograph in \textit{CTA2} is hopelessly illegible at this point (plate XXII). The difficulty is compounded by the fact that \textit{mšnq 'wetnurse(s)'} does not occur elsewhere in the mythological tablets, and therefore we have no other referent. Despite Løkkegaard's objection, \textit{btlt} is the usual epithet for Anat, and we nowhere find Anat paralleled by the Kotharat. N. Wyatt (\textit{The Stela of the Seated God from Ugarit} UF 15 (1983): 273) suggests that Shapash should fill the lacuna. His comparative evidence is compelling; however, there is no evidence that Shapash was ever given the title \textit{btlt}.

\textit{26}I am indebted to Dr. N. Wyatt for this suggestion.
used specifically for the breaking of treaties and vows.\textsuperscript{27} Thus we may have a glimpse of the fury of Athirat realised, in the retributive withdrawal of her side of the vow, since Keret did not keep his part.

Does this analysis not provide difficulty for an acceptance of Parker's division of the text into three historical sources? I would understand the addition of the vow to Keret A as a skilfully placed episode which foreshadows Keret B.\textsuperscript{28} Keret B in turn was the necessary bridge for the cursing of Yaşşib in Keret C. The sickness of Keret provided the opportunity to introduce the usurpation attempt of Yaşşib, and finally to his cursing by Keret. Parker sees 15.III.16 ('I will give the youngest of them first-born status') as the only line anticipatory to section C.\textsuperscript{29}

Following Parker's general division of the text I would argue, however, that Athirat's curse also anticipates a further punishment following the illness of Keret. This analysis points to a carefully constructed whole which incorporates three familiar themes from the ancient Near East. Keret's illness, even in the light of the structure of the epic as we now have it, would not seem to be the end of the story. The dénouement of Athirat cancelling her portion of the vow should result in the cancelling of Keret's request, and that request was not for long life, but for an heir to his throne. If Athirat's curse is to have any effect, it cannot stop with the death of Keret alone: it must touch his heirs.

These three pericopes contain the only references to Athirat in the story of Keret. Despite de Moor's reconstruction of \textit{KTU} 1.16.V.6-9 as:

\begin{itemize}
\item \textsuperscript{27} 'Problematical Passages': 177.
\item \textsuperscript{28} Parker ('Historical Composition of KRT': 169) notes that Keret B was 'rather neatly grafted onto A'.
\item \textsuperscript{29} 'Historical Composition of KRT': 169.
\end{itemize}
we need not see another reference to Athirat here. The context of these lines is the search for a cure for Keret. Why should someone be discussing with Athirat 'twice her weight in silver' and 'thrice her weight in gold' at this point? This portion of the tablet is damaged, and other scholars have translated the lines without finding the reference to Athirat in them. It would seem that perhaps we would find here a reference to someone attempting to cure Keret by doing something two, then three times (so Gibson). With such a fragmentary section we do not have enough context to offer a meaningful translation. Any suggestions for the translation of this text must remain tentative.

The summary of our investigation into the character of Athirat in Keret is that she is associated with the procuring of a royal heir. It is specifically Athirat who was implored, although El appeared to Keret in a dream and gave him the instructions which he needed to attain an heir. It may be that Elimelek knew of a shrine of Athirat in the region of the setting of his story. However, it is more likely that he chose Athirat as his character because the issue involved was that of royal childbearing. This aspect of Athirat's character will show up elsewhere in the Ugaritic texts. She is (apparently) paired with Anat in 1.15.II.26-27 as a wetnurse of the gods. The Myth of Keret informs us that the character of Athirat is that of a goddess who could be approached with the request for a royal heir.

30 'Problematical Passages': 189.
31 The lines in question follow approximately thirty mostly or completely missing lines. What follows is apparently El's search for a god to cure Keret's illness.
In the surviving Ugaritic myths, Athirat appears most active in the Baal Cycle. Her role comes to the fore in two particular instances: when Baal requests a palace, and when he has died and a new monarch of the gods is needed. She is described essentially in terms of her dealings with her consort El. This leads to the obvious question of the role of women in the ancient world, as well as to the question of what phenomenon Athirat 'represents'. Both of these questions will be addressed in the course of this exploration. In keeping with the stated method of using sound exegetical principles with the text, a pericope must be established. In this matter I follow the direction of J. C. L. Gibson in dividing the Baal Cycle into: Baal and Yam (KTU 1.1-2), the Palace of Baal (KTU 1.3-4), and Baal and Mot (KTU 1.5-6). These divisions provide a useful outline for study of the myth; within these episodes we may reasonably assume some continuity of theme and story line. All three stories revolve round the exploits of Baal, his striving to achieve and maintain kingship among the gods. It would also seem that these three episodes form a coherent 'cycle', and the cycle ends with text 6, as indicated by the extended colophon at the end of the tablet. Athirat's role in the cycle, although limited, demonstrates the important

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33 In respect to our contexts, see especially P. A. H. de Boer, Fatherhood and Motherhood in Israelite and Judean Piety, Leiden, 1974; and A. van Selms, Marriage and Family Life in Ugaritic Literature (POS 1), London, 1954.

34 CLM2: 2-19.

35 These divisions do not strictly delimit where in the story Yam and Mot appear. Mot's name, for example, makes an appearance in the final column of text 4, and Yam's name also appears after he has been vanquished, in text 4. A coherence of all three episodes thus does pervade the texts.
role which she played in the Ugaritic pantheon. This will become apparent as we examine the texts.

To divide the texts further into columns and lines for separate examination will be necessary throughout this chapter. I will delimit smaller units as I come to them. Since the issue of the order of the tablets is far larger than the scope of a study of just one character who appears only occasionally, I shall simply follow the KTU and CTA order of 1-6.\textsuperscript{36} Although a variant order has been proposed,\textsuperscript{37} such an order should not affect my conclusions, unless so noted. With these preliminary notes, we move on to the texts themselves.

2.B.i. Baal and Yam

In the section 'Baal and Yam', Athirat seems to appear once, under the general title ilt 'Goddess'. This appearance is actually in the middle of the difficult text KTU 1.1.IV. Despite the fragmentary nature of this text, we stand to learn quite a bit about the Baal Cycle from it. In the smaller context of 'Baal and Yam', it may be the only place where we can discover anything about Athirat (if she does indeed appear here). As her epithet rbt atrt ym seems to include some aspect of the sea, we might be able to discern some relationship between Athirat and Yam in this text concerned with Yam's 'coronation'. Thus it behooves us to look at column IV in its entirety.\textsuperscript{38}

\[
[ ] \text{m.} $s/yt/pr[ ] [ ]$
\]

\textsuperscript{37}de Moor, \textit{ARTU}: 1-108.
\textsuperscript{38}Due to the great amount of missing material, instead of arranging this passage according to stichometry, I have presented it according to the line numbers of KTU.
I understand the initial section of this passage to be an invocation, or perhaps an invitation of the gods, both near and far, to the event about to be celebrated. The context seems to support this reconstruction, although it must necessarily remain hypothetical. Many scholars restore q ['rbm] in the lacuna, thus rendering 'to those near by' and the following line, as a merismus, including all those near, far, and inbetween. CML²: 39; MLC: 158. Compare the use of fat/near as a word pair, W. G. E. Watson 'Some Additional Word Pairs' in Ascribe to the Lord: Biblical and Other Studies in Memory of Peter C. Craigie (JSOTS 67), L. Eslinger and G. Taylor, eds., Sheffield, 1988: 189.

I restore ptr, as cognate with the Hebrew ptr, 'separate, remove, set free' (BDB: 809b).

This is to understand 'llmn as being from the root 'll. The form ta 'allālim, meaning 'wanton, caprice' occurs in Isa. 3.4; 66.4.

I take ḫbl as cognate with the Akkadian ḫbadum, 'to commit a misdeed, harm'. The choice of this word is not arbitrary; indeed, the context is broken and uncertain, but it seems that the 'shame of caprice' is mentioned in line 5, and an act of corruption does parallel this.

Suggestion was made in an Ugaritic class that krpn may be related to the modern English word 'carafe'. Upon checking the etymology of carafe in the Oxford English Dictionary, I found two possibilities offered: Arabic ghara'afah and Persian qará'abah. As the word is apparently Semitic, although the actual form of a carafe may be a modern phenomenon, I believe the use of the word is not inappropriate in this instance. I would like to acknowledge the astute observation on the part of Mrs. C. Butler at this point.

The bicolon, literally 'he gave a cup in hand, a carafe into both hands' is also found at KTU 1.3.1.10. The rendering into English is awkward as the subject of the giving is unknown.

This is to understand mll as cognate with Hebrew ml, 'to rub, scrape'. The form mēlīṣṭ occurs in Deut. 23.26 meaning 'ear of wheat'. Caquot, Sznyecer, and Herdner (TO : 308, note j) point to the Mishnaic Hebrew word of the same meaning.

De Moor (ARTU: 25) suggests 'gravel', probably on the basis of Hebrew ḥsès, which can have that connotation. I take ḥṣ as cognate with the Semitic root (BDB: 300b) ḥws II, meaning 'bound, sewn together', or 'compressed'. Thus 'sheaves' would provide a fitting parallel to 'wheat' in the same line. Although the readings 'wheat' and 'sheaves' are both hypothetical, they do (despite any seasonal implications which
they sojourn\textsuperscript{47} with El, his son to the bull\[ ]
and the Benevolent\textsuperscript{48} El the Compassionate
spoke[ ]
'the name of my son is Yaw, o Goddess\textsuperscript{49}[ ]
even proclaim a name for Yam' [And Goddess\textsuperscript{50}]
and ]
answered, 'For our sustenance\textsuperscript{51}[ ]
you have indeed proclaimed him lord[ ]
I, Benevolent El [the Compassionate ]
on the hands, I have proclaimed [ ]
your name is beloved of El[ ]
my house of silver which[ ]
from (?) the hand of Mighty Baal[ ]
as they who spurn[ ]
drive him out from the s[eat of his kingship
from the rest on the throne of ]
of his dominion[ ]
And if then . . . [ ]
he will smite you like[ ]
El, . . . sacrifice[ ]

could be read into such a context) have the connotations of being 'gathered in', just as
the guests are apparently being gathered in to the event which the text describes.
\textsuperscript{47}Perhaps tgr is related to the Hebrew gw r, 'to sojourn'; this would continue the
description of the assembling of the gods described in the previous lines.
\textsuperscript{48}This is de Moor's rendering of ltpn, ARTU: throughout.
\textsuperscript{49}N. Wyatt ('"Jedidiah" and Cognate Forms as a Title of Royal Legitimatation' Biblica 66
(1985): 121) offers the possibility 'The name of my son is Lord of the god[s', supposing
ilm rather than \textit{ilt}. This difference in interpretation points to the difficulties of
dealing with such a fragmentary text. The photograph in CTA 2 is not clear at this point. I have viewed Dr. Wyatt's close-up slide of this section of text one. The slide clearly shows \textit{b}, which may either be \textit{i} or the first stroke of \textit{m}. This line is the crux
for Athirat's possible mention in Baal and Yam. See the following discussion.
\textsuperscript{50}Gibson (CML\textsuperscript{2}: 39) restores .wilt.w in the lacuna, de Moor (ARTU: 25) supplies 'Lady
Athiratu'. Whichever restoration is chosen, the context may allow such an
interpretation. I have followed Gibson's restoration, although its use for the following
discussion is minimal. It would be too tenuous to supply the missing subjects,
although \textit{bnh}, 'her sons' is a common element to follow \textit{airt}, but perhaps not \textit{ilt}. In any
case, the following verb seems to indicate that a plural subject is understood. I shall
draw no conclusions on the basis of this hypothetical restoration.
\textsuperscript{51}With Gibson (CML\textsuperscript{2}: 39), who cites Arabic \textit{zānā} as cognate; see also N. Wyatt,
"Jedidiah": 121.
\textsuperscript{52}Restored (as in KTU) on the basis of 3.IV.2-3.
he proclaimed [his] son to the gods.
Slaughter cattle, also fell sheep.
bulls and [fatted rams, yearling calves]
lambs [strangle and kids]

At the outset it must be said that any hypotheses based on this text must remain tentative. The information contained in this broken column may confirm some of the characteristics of Athirat which appear elsewhere in the Baal Cycle; however, of this we cannot be certain. My reason for exploring this text is this: it has been suggested that ilt, elsewhere an epithet of Athirat, occurs here. If it does, then the text may be compared to other references to Athirat.

This scene appears to portray an important event, with the first lines being an invitation (or perhaps an invocation?) to the gods. De Moor understands the opening of this text as being a complaint of Athirat to El. This suggestion is difficult to substantiate, but as Athirat may be present we should not rule out the possibility that she may be speaking as the text begins. If Athirat is indeed present at this event, de Moor can do no more than appeal to plausibility on the point of who is speaking. I do not have any suggestion for the speaker at the broken beginning of this section.

The event portrayed occurs, it would seem from line 6, in 'the house of your lord'. Both Gibson and Wyatt suggest that the lord here referred to is Yam; de Moor suggests Baal and therefore places this tablet after text

53 With Coogan (Stories from Ancient Canaan, Philadelphia, 1978 [hereafter cited as SAC]: 104), who follows Driver (CML: 77) who takes qms from the same root in Hebrew 'to grasp' (CML: 144).
54 ARTU: 24.
55 Gibson, CML2: 39; Wyatt, ('Jedidiah': 121) suggests that 'lord' in this passage is part of Yam's fivefold titulary.
3.56 I see no reason to change the order of the tablets on the basis of *b'lk*
'your lord' alone. Throughout the Baal Cycle various gods are given, or
seize for themselves, dominion over the others.57 The understanding of
the sequence of events in ordering the tablets 1-6 need not be rearranged
on the broken context of text 1. If the ceremony portrayed here is the
renaming (or coronation) of Yam, it would be reasonable to suppose that he
is the lord indicated.

Phrases with the nuance of corruption (lines 5 and 8) remain
enigmatic, but the point seems to be that the gods are being gathered
together, like wheat or sheaves (line 11). What follows appears to be a
renaming of Yam, or perhaps his coronation.

A crucial point for the discussion of Athirat in the text is the
understanding of lines 14 and 15: *šm.bny.yw.ilt [  /wp 'r.šm.ym.* Gibson
reads them as "the name of my son is Yaw, o Elat [and ] / so do you
proclaim a (new) name for Yam"", thus it is rendered as a phrase addressed
to Elat.58 This implies that Athirat is being given an active role in the
renaming of Yam. Driver suggests "The name of my son is Yaw god.../And
he did proclaim the name of Yaw [to be Yaw]." 59 El is on such an approach

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56 ARTU: 25 for his reading Baal; the arrangement of the texts is evident in his table of
contents and his remarks at the beginning of each tablet.
57 For example, Yam (text 2), Baal (throughout), Mot (texts 5 and 6), Athtar (text 6). I
raise this point without wishing to enter the debate of the position of El in the
pantheon, versus that of Baal. Kapelrud (Baal in the Ras Shamra Texts, Copenhagen,
1952: 73-109); Pope (El in the Ugaritic Texts (SVT 2), Leiden, 1955, and The Status of
El at Ugarit UF 19 (1987): throughout); and Oldenburg (The Conflict Between El and
Ba 'al : 70-155, and throughout) have argued strongly for a conflict between the two
deities, whilst Gibson (The Theology of the Ugaritic Baal Cycle: 206-210); C. E.
L'Heureux, Rank Among the Canaanite Gods, El, Ba 'al , and the Repha 'im (HSM 21),
Missoula, 1979: 18-49; and Olyan, Asherah and the Cult of Yahweh : 38-61 soundly
refute this view. This is evident in the Baal Cycle: it is necessary for Baal to have El's
permission to build his palace (texts 3-4); that El invites Athirat to name a successor
to Baal (text 6); and that Mot surrenders his struggle with Baal because of El's threat
to uproot his dominion (6.VI).
58 CML 2: 39.
59 CML: 75.
tautologically proclaiming Yaw's name to be Yaw, and the Goddess is absent.
Gordon likewise supposes the absence of the Goddess, and adds the \textit{il} (t.) to
the name Yaw, thus: 'The name of my son is Yaw-El(at)?[ ] /And he
proclaims the name of \textit{Yamm} [ ]'.\textsuperscript{60} Both Driver and Gordon understand
the lines as referring to El, and do not see a goddess present at all. De Moor
stresses the presence of Athirat, but translates the lines as "'My son [shall
not be called] by the name of Yawwu, o goddess, [but Yammu shall be his
name]' So he proclaimed the name of Yammu.'\textsuperscript{61} The question is
therefore, who is declaring the name of Yam? It is also important to ask
what evidence we have for Athirat being present at all. Del Olmo Lete
understands this perplexing passage as saying '["De seguro proclamaré] el
nombre de mi hijo \textit{Yawu} ; / diosa, [su nombre es: 'Amado de \textit{Il}u ''.] /Y
proclamó el nombre de \textit{Yammu} '.\textsuperscript{62} This translation assumes the presence
of a goddess. Caquot, Sznycer, and Herdner translate the troublesome lines
as "'Le nom de mon fils (est) Yaw, /Elat [ ] et proclamez le nom de Yam
[ ]''\textsuperscript{63} They understand that a goddess Elat is present, and she is asked to
name Yaw in line 15 (they translate \textit{p < r} as an imperative). It is obvious
that no consensus has been reached on this difficult passage. In
attempting to divide the passage into poetic cola, one is met by the
difficulty of half lines being preserved: this makes any reconstruction of
the versification tenuous. The question becomes one of understanding the
verb and the appearance of \textit{ilt} at the end of the existing line. The form of
\textit{p < r} allows for its interpretation as either an imperative, or as a third
person masculine singular form of the suffixing conjugation. Either, as

\textsuperscript{60PLMU : 88.}
\textsuperscript{61ARTU : 25.}
\textsuperscript{62MLC : 159.}
\textsuperscript{63TO : 309-310.}
demonstrated by the examples above, makes sense of the text. Are there any factors to help determine what is meant?

Since Yam is generally construed as a masculine deity,\textsuperscript{64} it would seem that Gordon's rendering of Yaw-El(at) is unlikely. We have no reason to suspect that Yam would be named 'Yaw-Goddess'. Line 15 could read, however, 'And he proclaims the name of Yamm' (with Gordon). Driver's explanation is possible, but it does multiply the number of 'Yaw's in the text, followed by the giving of a new name. Should El be stressing the old name of Yaw more than the new one to be assigned?

I have closely examined the photograph of this section of the tablet by N. Wyatt.\textsuperscript{65} The photograph clearly shows the broken end of the tablet in line 14. It is possible that the first stroke of a m is intended here, but the line breaks off just at the end of the horizontal wedge. Thus, the tablet would be able to support either reading. I would simply note here that Caquot, Szyncer, and Herdner, Gibson, del Olmo Lete, and de Moor read the word represented at the end of line 14 as ilt. I shall now consider what information the text would provide, if the word in question were to be read as ilt. Any conclusions are tentative, and I shall use them only for the purposes of comparison with the attributes of Athirat as more solidly supported elsewhere in the Baal Cycle.

Although we may read ilt at the broken end of line 14, this suggestion does not clarify what is happening in the story. Is Athirat being asked to rename Yaw (Gibson), or is El simply addressing an unspecified goddess (del Olmo Lete)? The interpretation depends on the understanding of the verb p \textsuperscript{4}r in line 15. The usual narrative 'tense' in

\textsuperscript{64}The finite verbs used of Yam in 2.IV are masculine.

\textsuperscript{65}I am indebted to Dr. Wyatt for offering me the use of his close-up slides of the tablets.
Ugaritic mythology seems to be the 'prefixing conjugation' (roughly similar to the Hebrew imperfect). We should note that both prefixing and suffixing conjugations are used with this verb in the following lines. We could appeal to another factor which supports the presence of a group of deities in the form of $t\!<\!nyn$ 'they answered' in line 16. In the paradigms given by Gordon, this form could be interpreted in a number of ways.

The prefixed $t$ and suffixed $n$ could point to a second or third person dual form of either gender, as well as a second or third person plural of either gender. The verb could even be a third feminine singular with an energetic $n$, or a second person singular of either gender. This practically rules out only third masculine singulars and first person verbs. The appeal to context depends on who is present, thus causing circular arguments. The verb form, therefore, does not necessarily indicate the presence of a goddess, nor does it demonstrate any role which a goddess may be playing in the text.

It may seem that I have spent an excessive amount of time on an obscure text. A point of interest is the possibility that Athirat may be mentioned here together with Yam. Her title $rbd agt$ $ym$ has attracted much speculation. Without entering into the question of etymology here, we must note that to explore the evidence for Athirat being associated with Yam or with the sea we must pause wherever we may possibly find such evidence. Athirat and Yam appear to be mentioned together in the context of $KTU$ 1.4.II. Again the text is broken, but we may,

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66 The prefixing conjugation $tp\!<\!r$ occurs in line 17, the suffixing conjugation $p\!<\!rt$ occurs in line 19. Both have been partially restored.
67 $UT$: 154.
68 I shall address this issue in my conclusions, after the relevant material has been examined.
by examining the pieces, be able to distil some information on this relationship indicated in Athirat's epithet.

The obvious event being portrayed in 1.IV is the renaming of Yam. His titles zbl and tpt are an indication of some kind of sovereignty. It is also apparent from KTU 1.2.III (also badly broken) that Yam has been chosen for some special purpose by El, a purpose which includes having a palace built. For Baal, the building of a palace is a sign of his kingship among the gods. It would therefore seem reasonable to suppose that this is also the case for Yam. I have noted that Athirat may be present, but this is a point which I cannot consider proven.

Why might Athirat have been present in this text? Firstly, because she is the mother of Yam (as she is the mother of all the gods), she would naturally appear in a ceremony (?) honouring her son. Secondly, El may have asked Athirat to proclaim a new name for Yam, indicating that she may have had an important role in the scene.⁶⁹ Here, El asking Athirat to rename Yam, would perhaps anticipate his later request of her to name a successor to Baal (6.1). The evidence in the latter passage points to this as a functional role of Athirat, although its specific nature cannot be declared with any certainty here. Gordon has suggested that Ugaritic rbt should be understood as the 'queen mother', and therefore, the one supposed to name the successor to the throne.⁷⁰ Although this theory would provide some answers to the situation as it is presented in KTU 1.1.IV, we cannot be certain of it in this context. I shall consider further the office of the rabttu below. The fragmentary state of this text only allows us to determine that

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⁶⁹ The phenomenon of renaming a person (here a divinity) at a new stage of life is familiar from the Old Testament. One need only recall the accounts of Abraham and Sarah (Gen. 17), and Jacob (Gen. 32.28), or even the New Testament account of Simon Peter (Matt.16.18) to consider its prevalence.

⁷⁰ C. Gordon, 'Ugaritic rbt /rabitu ' in Ascribe to the Lord: 127-132.
Athirat may have been present, and that her word may have been requested by El. Also, we must note, if this reconstruction of the scenario is correct, that Athirat declined the offer to rename her son, and the honour is given to El. This could reflect a formality of court life at Ugarit, but we have no records to substantiate this idea. It is interesting to note that, if the texts do follow in their commonly assigned order, this could be the first mention of Athirat we have in the Baal Cycle, and consequently it would come before the title *r̥bt aṯr̥t ʾyṯ* is used of her.

Perhaps as an accident of the state of the texts, this is the only instance in our sub-division of Baal and Yam where Athirat may appear. We may learn from it that she is given a special status in the renaming of Yam, possibly reflecting her status as queen mother. Also of interest in this instance is that if Athirat is mentioned, it is in association with El, not on her own. This pattern is reflected elsewhere in the Baal Cycle, as we shall see.\[71\]

71 The assumption is made that Elat is an epithet for Athirat. Her name appears in parallel with this title in *KTU* 1.14.IV.34-36, and as the consort of the head of the pantheon, the title 'Goddess' is just as appropriate for her in this mythological cycle as 'El' is for her consort.
2.B.ii. The Palace of Baal

In the 'Palace of Baal' section of the Baal Cycle, Athirat appears in a larger role. Her name appears in formulaic expressions, and as a character she appears in active situations. The first mention of her in the surviving texts is in KTU 1.3.1.15. The text is in a good state of preservation here, but the content is open to interpretation. The scene is that of a banquet, apparently celebrating Baal's victory over Yam, as it occurs shortly after their combat scene. Lines 10-17 read:

10 ytn. ks. bdh  he put a cup into his hand,
11 krpn. b  klat. ydh  a carafe in both of his hands,
12 bk  rb.  ᵃᶻᵐ.  a great jar mighty to behold,
ridn  13 mt.  ᵃˡˡᵐ.  a tankard⁷² of the men of heaven,
ks. qds  14 l ᵃᵖ hnh. ᵃˡᵗ.  a cup of holiness (which) no woman could see,
krpn  15 l ᵃⁿ. ᵃˡᵗ.  a carafe (which) Athirat might not regard.
alp  16 ᵃˡᵏ. ᵃʸȟ.  b  ᵃᵐʳ  A thousand jars he took from the wine vat,⁷³
17 rbt.  ᵃᵐšk.  b  ᵃᵐˢḥ  a myriad he mixed in his mixture.

The story of a divine banquet is being told, and the particular vessel from which Baal is drinking is described with considerable mythological detail. As in the Norse tales of Thor who could drink great quantities of mead, Baal is pictured here drinking an enormous amount of wine. The tantalising reference to a woman (ᵃˡᵗ) in line 14 is paralleled by ᵃˡᵗ in line

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⁷² The word ridn is uncertain, but the parallelism seems to demand a general synonym for cup (ks), carafe (krpn), and 'jar' (? (bk). In this context, a tankard, as a large drinking vessel, would be suitable.
⁷³ I have followed the suggestion of N. Wyatt for ᵃᵐʳ = 'wine vat' here, on the basis of context.
15. The difficulty is to interpret what this reference means. If administrative records point to a patriarchal society, then we may assume that women were excluded from certain events, but why from a victory feast? The goddesses are clearly present at the meeting of the gods when Yam's embassy arrives (2.1), since Anat and Athtar prevent Baal's harming of the messengers. When celebrating the building of his palace, Baal invites the gods and goddesses (ilht) to a feast (4.VI.45-54). Why, then, is it mentioned that no woman could see the cup from which Baal is portrayed as drinking in text 3.I? Why is 'woman' paralleled by Athirat? The question of why no woman could see the cup is lost to us in the lack of our knowledge of Ugaritian social customs, but a hint may exist in 4.III.17-22 (see below). As the text stands, however, the l's in lines 14-15 could be asseverative as well as negative particles. The cup may have been one which 'women indeed saw', and which 'Athirat indeed regarded'. This difference in perspective still does not illuminate the social situation in which women are referred to in relation to goblets.

One factor is conspicuous; airt is the 'B word' paralleled with att as the 'A word'. In the light of this, the translation of the airt as Athirat could be questioned. Margalit has recently argued that the word airt here does not refer to the goddess but is a generic word for 'woman'. He bases his hypothesis on the parallelism, concerning which he argues, 'Nowhere in Ugaritic poetry does the divine name airt stand as a B-word parallel to an epithet'. I would suggest, however, that att is not to be understood as an epithet here. Also, Margalit cannot provide any evidence for an Ugaritic common noun airt meaning 'woman' except this instance. Indeed, this

74 Indeed, Gibson (CML2: 46) translates the word as 'goddess', suggesting that it is a generic term. Driver (CML: 83) generalises even further to 'deity'.
76 'Meaning and Significance of Asherah': 273.
meaning is not attested in any Semitic language which knows of a goddess by this name. I suggest that the question should be 'why is Athirat placed in parallelism with the word for woman?' (See also the discussion on 4.III.17-22, below.)

As to the reason that 'woman' and Athirat are used in parallelism, we also may be able to venture a hypothesis. Since Athirat is later portrayed with a spindle (see below), the internal evidence supports her association with human women. Although she is the great goddess, she does seem to share some of the traits of an earthly woman. This aspect will appear again in the Baal Cycle. When the evidence for Athirat's activity being that of mortal women is considered (4.II), the use of her name as a parallel for 'woman' should not be supposed to be impossible. Indeed, Athirat seems to have a special significance as the 'womanly' goddess in the texts as we have them. Anat's role encompasses the violent aspect of goddesses, whereas Athirat seems to embody the more maternal aspect. As a generalisation, this observation cannot be strictly applied, but it does seem to support the reading 'Athirat' (in conjunction with evidence presented below) in 3.I.15.

Athirat's name next occurs in 3.IV.48-52 (largely reconstructed on the basis of parallel texts throughout the 'Palace of Baal' section). The section under consideration is either partially or wholly repeated in KTU 1.3.V.3-4, 35-44; 1.4.I.4-18; 1.4.IV.47-57; 1.4.IV.62-V.1. The passage deals with Baal's plea for a house, and since it occurs in relatively complete form at 3.V.35-44, I shall use that particular text as my pericope for translation.

35 any.l yṣḥ.šr il.abh. Groaning indeed he calls out to Bull El his father,
il 36 mlk.d yknnh. El the king who begot77 him,

77 The root kwn, which seems to lie behind the Ugaritic yknnh, besides the notion of 'founding', or 'establishing', may also connote 'making' in the po'tel, even in the
Parts of this pericope are repeated to the extent that they may be regarded as formulas. In the context of the poetry, however, this repetition should not be considered unusual. We do stand to gain some knowledge of Athirat from it, as her name appears three times within it. The first observation to be made is that the text supports an alternative interpretation. Since the expected preposition / is absent before the objects of Baal’s supplication, it could be assumed that the gods are the ones speaking. Thus de Moor’s rendering:

The Bull Ilu, his father, groaned (and) cried out,
Ilu, the King who had created him,

context of making a person in the womb (BDB: 466b, cf. Job 31.15, Ps. 119.73). Thus we could perhaps render the phrase as ‘the king who begot him’. This would seem to be the line of understanding which Gordon takes (PLMU: 89).

78 Taken as aryh on the basis of the parallel passages. Since ḥ (ະ) and y (胬) are very similar in cuneiform, this reconstruction is plausible. The difficulty with this is the translation of this word. Gibson (CML: 142) has suggested a possible cognate in the Egyptian ḫr, ‘companion’. Aistleitner (WUS: 35) has essentially the same translation, based on Arabic ḡara. In any case, the parallelism gives a clear enough meaning in this context.

79 Understanding Ugaritic ḥr as cognate with Hebrew ḥr I ‘enclosure, court’ (BDB: 346b). Another possibility is a relationship to ḥdr, ‘chamber, room’ (BDB: 293b).

Athiratu and her sons cried out,  
the Goddess and the troop of her kin.  

The verb šwh, however, is commonly found with and without the preposition l. The only method of deciding between the two interpretations is according to context. It would be reasonable to suppose that since the message is given to Anat, Athirat, and El, all included among the suppliants, they are actually being addressed by Baal’s prayer rather than pleading for him. Indeed, to whom would El cry out if Baal had no house, as he is the chief god? The most obvious answer to this reasoning is that the language is stereotypical poetic language. As the initial occurrence of the lines in question seems to be presented by Baal to Anat (as indicated by the feminine singular wt ‘n in 3.IV.47) it has the flavour of a supplication on the part of Baal. It is to the gods that Baal appeals for a house, and he cannot build it until he has the permission of El. Given the fact that the language is poetic, and thus allows for repetitions of prayers even in the mouths of the ones being prayed to, what is being sought ultimately is the permission of El. Since El is primary in the list of those being invoked, it can be understood that Baal is praying to the other gods. The complaint is, after all, Baal’s.

It is important to note that Athirat appears in parallel to El, thus demonstrating their similar roles as the parents of the gods. Athirat is here pictured in her role as mother of the gods, and the second mention of her name is precisely in that setting. She and her children are being approached for the sake of Baal. We should note that atrt occurs in parallel with ilt here, thus demonstrating her connection with this title. Neither ilt nor rbt seem to be unique titles of Athirat, as they can be found in

81ARTU: 18.  
82I am indebted to Prof. J. C. L. Gibson for pointing this out to me.
connection with other goddesses in other contexts. Ilit, however, in connection with El, or in parallelism with atrt, does seem to indicate Athirat, as it does here and possibly in 1.IV.14.

Further, it is possible to discern that Athirat has a dwelling. This point should not be pressed too far. The point of this poetic expression (hyperbole?) is that all of the gods have dwellings, except Baal and thus his daughters. The passage does not state that El and Athirat live apart, and the parallelism of their names would rather indicate the opposite. The residence of El and Athirat is also the residence of Baal and his daughters; that is to say, the main point is especially emphasized: Baal has no house.

Van Selms approaches the issues of family arrangements at Ugarit, and he begins with this assumption: 'We suppose that the life of gods and mythical heroes as depicted in the epical texts is on the whole a reflection of human life as known to the poets of Ugarit.'

That the gods' lives contained elements of human life seems unquestionable, but to assume the lives in detail are such a reflection is dubious. An important lesson is presented by this scenario. The concern of myth is not to reflect accurately human realities - this could be done in secular texts. The myth makes a point. Here we are simply informed that Baal's daughters lived with El and Athirat, just as he himself did, as a circumstance which called for his own palace to be built. We should not read too much of everyday life into this. What can be distilled about Athirat? The most obvious information is that Athirat is considered a mother to Baal and his daughters. This is important to note, as it calls into question the assumption that the enmity between Athirat and Baal in other mythologies (as in the Elkuniša myth) carried directly

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83 Marriage and Family Life: 10.
84 For instance, Baal, as cited at KTU 1.3.1.10-17, is drinking myriads of draughts of wine, and Kothar-and-Khasis builds a mansion for Baal by burning it for seven days (4.VI.22-35).
through to Ugarit. The 'family life' of the gods is not as much the emphasis of the myths, as is the outcome of their actions.

One proper question applied to such a text as this, which is repeated several times, is: in what contexts within the story does it occur? Another valid question is: does this affect its form at all? To answer the first question, the statement of Baal's lament is found on the lips of Baal (3.IV.47-53), Anat (3.V.35-44), and Athirat (4.IV.47-57). Since all three deities use the same formulation, even when they are included in the number of those petitioned by Baal, their words may be regarded as a standard formula. The actual context suggests that these words are ultimately a message to be presented in the hearing of El. They appear as a form of lament. In each case where the message of lament is uttered, it is in the form of an appeal for help; Baal requires a house to establish his kingship, but he does not have the sanction of El to build one. The plea is presented to Anat, who is supplicated in the 'third class' of gods, 'the children of Athirat'. Thus, the primary position in his standard lament is filled by the appeal to El himself. Ultimately, it is El who must give the order to have the house built. This is demonstrated by the texts regarding the palace of Yam in KTU 1.2.III.7-11, as well as being supported by 2.III.18-20, regarding Athtar's lack of a house. What is important in the context of this study is that Athirat's intervention is needed to win the approval of El. Thus, in Baal's lament, the second deity to whom he appealed was Athirat. The very fact that Baal and Anat had to approach Athirat on the matter demonstrates that Anat's forceful appeal to El was not granted. As stated above, Anat is classed in

85 I see no need to rearrange the tablets in order to form a coherent seasonal pattern, as with de Moor, The Seasonal Pattern in the Ugaritic Myth of Ba'ilu (AOAT 16), Kevelaer and Neukirchen-Vluyn, 1971: 39-42. His suggestion that El could not resist the forceful approach of Anat is to betray a misunderstanding of the mythology. Surely a system of mythological thinking which could allow Baal to come back after having died could also permit El to deny the desire of an irate Anat.
the tertiary division of gods, that of the children of Athirat. Thus, in the
course of the circulation of his supplication, the words of Baal are
presented, in reverse order, to the gods to whom he must appeal. Initially
he gives his lament to Anat. Then, in ascending rank, he cries to Athirat
(the 'second class', outranking Anat), and finally, via Athirat, to El (the
'first class', the god whose permission is required). A subtle, literary
chiasmus is evident in this arrangement of Baal's lament, and in the order
of the gods to whom he makes it.

The point to grasp here for the study of Athirat in the Baal Cycle is
that she is the means by which to reach El. Anat burst directly into El's
dwelling to make her demand (3.V), but did not achieve her goal. Athirat,
approaching her consort respectfully (see below), has success.

The next text with importance for our study is KTU 1.3.VI.9-11. The
context seems to point to Baal sending a message to Kothar-and-Khasis,
interestingly enough, via Athirat's messenger(s) and not his usual
messenger(s) Gupn-and-Ugar. The text reads:

...šmšr 10 l dgy.a'rt
11 mg.l qds.amr 87

Go, O Qodesh-and-Amrur

This passage introduces the character of the 'fisherman of Athirat',
Qodesh-and-Amrur. Some scholars have argued that Athirat's epithet of rbt a'rt ym
should be understood in the sense of her association with the 'day',
that is, as a sun goddess.88 I have suggested above that she may have had a

86 Following Gibson's rendering (CML2: 152) based on the Akkadian cognate
mutaššuru. Other suggestions, 'proceed' (Gordon, PLMU: 84) and 'cleave the skies' (de
Moor, ARTU: 19), suggest the same kind of action; the context seems to demand this.
87 The name here appears without the 'which normally links this binomial together.
See, for instance, 4.IV.13.
88 Usually on the basis of South Arabian evidence, for example, D. Nielsen, Ras Samra
Mythologie und Biblische Theologie (Abhandlungen für die Kunde des Morgenlandes
special connection with Yam, the god of the sea. Although her servant
being a fisherman does not, prima facie, rule out the possibility that
Athirat could have been associated with the sun at Ugarit, it does require
some explanation if that is the case. The fact remains that Athirat does
maintain a marine connection through her fisherman, and his character
must be discussed in this context.

De Moor suggested that the important Amorite god Amurru had been
demoted to the position of Athirat's servant in the person of Qidsu wa-
Amurru (his vocalisation).89 Perlman, in her dissertation on the goddesses
Ahtart and Athirat,90 took up the discussion of the nature and possible
origin of Qodesh-and-Amrur. She writes:

Athirat's other helper (or is dgy an epitheton?), while possibly
"Holy-and-Exalted," is more likely the name of the god Amurru
compounded with his epithet qds, "holy." This god was no
costal deity; he belonged in the Syrian steppe, probably
riding a donkey. It appears quite likely that our Athirat was
Amurru's consort transplanted to the Western coast.91

Although Perlman does not press her point, the suggestion on the
nature of Qodesh-and-Amrur should be considered seriously. The
reconstructions of de Moor and Perlman appear to be given strength from
the fact that Ashratu was known as the consort of the god Amurru in
Mesopotamia.92 When we see the two together in the Baal Cycle, two
questions arise: 1) do these two deities naturally go together, or 2) is it

89 Seasonal Pattern: 52.
90 A. L. Perlman, Asherah and Astarte in the Old Testament and Ugaritic Literature,
91 Perlman, Asherah and Astarte: 83.
simply a matter of coincidence that two sets of deities with the same names appear in two separate mythological spheres? Attractive as Perlman’s hypothesis is, it does come as the result of crossing cultural gaps. The material available on Amurru comes from Mesopotamia. The binomial element \textit{qds} does not appear to have been applied to Amurru in Mesopotamia, and he does not otherwise occur in the Ugaritic mythological texts. Where the place name Amurru occurs (4.1.41, see below), it is spelled \textit{amr}, rather than \textit{amrr}, as here. In order to weigh the evidence properly a study of Amurru in the Amorite material would be required. Such an exploration is beyond the scope of this dissertation; however, I shall discuss the relationship of Ashratu and Amurru in my chapter on the Mesopotamian material.

We can perhaps discover something about Athirat by the fact that her messenger(s) is being sent on a mission by Baal. Such a scenario would seem to suggest that somewhere before 3.VI Athirat had sent some message to Baal. Otherwise we would have difficulty in trying to determine why Baal is using her messenger(s) rather than his own. If this reconstruction were to prove tenable, I would further suggest that Athirat’s postulated message to Baal did not require an immediate reply, thus there is time for the messenger(s) to be sent to Kothar-and-Khasis in order to attain gifts to present to Athirat. Perhaps it is because a gift is being ordered for Athirat that Qodesh-and-Amrur was sent. Certainty is not possible on this matter.


Following the instructions given to Qodesh-and-Amrur, tablet three breaks off. When tablet four becomes legible, the message of Baal is being delivered to Kothar-and-Khasis. The lament of Baal is repeated (again to a god of the third stratum, one of the 'children of Athirat', thus keeping within the scheme presented above), and instructions are given concerning gifts for Athirat. 4.I.20-22 reads:

\[
\begin{align*}
20 & \text{argmk. ñskn.m} & \text{I say to you, make ready,}^95 \\
21 & \text{mgn.rbt.amt ym} & \text{a gift}^96 \text{ for Lady Athirat of the Sea,} \\
22 & \text{mgz.qnyt.ilm} & \text{a present}^97 \text{ for the Bearer of the gods.}
\end{align*}
\]

Baal wished to seal his petition with a gift. This does not demonstrate that Athirat in the Baal Cycle is corrupt, accepting bribes for illicit activities. It would rather seem, from her reaction at the approach of Baal and Anat (see below), that she is innately afraid of the pair. The gift takes the edge off of her fear, as it also does in KTU 1.4.I1.21-26.

Immediately following Baal's request for a gift for Athirat, Kothar-and-Khasis is portrayed as producing a wealth of presents.\(^98\) This list finishes with an unusual tricolon (4.I.41-43) which reads:

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\(^{95}\) Causative form of skn, 'to prepare', cognate with the Akkadian sakānu.

\(^{96}\) This is to see Ugaritic mgn as cognate with Hebrew magan, 'to deliver up, give'. In this case, it must be taken as a substantive, therefore rendering 'a gift'.

\(^{97}\) This word is most difficult. Obviously, by parallelism mgz must approximate to 'gift' of line 21. Gibson (CML\(^2\): 151) suggests a root gazy, but does not offer a cognate. Maier ('Aserah: Extrabiblical Evidence: 6) also presents the same root, but translates on the basis of context. Del Olmo Lete (MLC: 193) does not offer a cognate. Caquot, Szmyier, and Herdner (TO: 194, n. d) draw attention to the Arabic gada, 'to dim, obscure', and tagada, 'to close the eyes', intending to demonstrate its force as a bribe. De Moor (ARTU: 45) and Gordon (PLMU: 89) render the noun as 'bribe'; Gordon adding in a footnote, that Nothing pejorative is intended by the word "bribe". Although the context denotes such a sense for the present, I find the word 'bribe' a little too strong for the integrity of the characters. 'Present' suggests the winning of favour without implying corruption. See especially T.C. de Moor, 'Ugaritic Sem - Never A Behold' VBE (1967): 202, n. 6.

41¢ 99. il.dqt.k amr a divine bowl whose handle\textsuperscript{100} (was shaped) as (in) Amurru,\textsuperscript{101}
42sknt .k hwt.yman appearing\textsuperscript{102} like the beasts\textsuperscript{103} of Yman, in which were wild oxen by myriads.
43dbh. rumm. l rbbt

The translation of this tricolon presents several difficulties and therefore remains tentative. However, for the present study I would indicate the possible reference to Amurru in line 41, denoting the style of the bowl. This passage is followed by a double line in the text, which indicates the intended end of the episode. The possible mention of Amurru in line 41 may point to the land of Athirat's origin. The 'bowl' is the climax of the list of presents, and it is described in detail. It would be fitting (although I cannot insist that this interpretation is the correct one) if the pièce de résistance of Baal's gifts were a reminder of Athirat's 'homeland'.\textsuperscript{104}

We next find Baal and Anat approaching Athirat whilst she was engaged in an enigmatic activity. KTU 1.4.II.2-11 reads:

\textsuperscript{99}Correcting KTU's error s c.
\textsuperscript{100}I understand dqt to be the relative d added to the noun qt, 'handle' (see J. A. Emerton, 'Ugaritic Notes' JTS 16 (N.S., 1965): 440-441 for discussion and cognates). See also Gibson, CML\textsuperscript{2}: 56 and TO : 196. If dqt were to be taken as an adjective, its form would appear to be feminine. As s c is masculine, this seems unlikely. I am indebted to Prof. J. C. L. Gibson for drawing my attention to this discrepancy.
\textsuperscript{101}Or 'lamb', depending on which word of the next line is taken to be in parallel with it.
\textsuperscript{102}Gordon maintains the view of Ginsberg and Gaster (as cited in TO :197, n. s) that sknt should be translated 'stele' (PLMU: 90). This would be an unlikely conclusion to a list essentially composed of furniture. Caquot, Sznyyer, and Herdner tentatively suggest '(et) la base au pays de Yman' (TO : 197). Gibson and de Moor take the approach of supposing sknt to be taken as 'appearance' and 'shaped' respectively (CML\textsuperscript{2}: 56, and ARTU: 46). Gibson notes that sknt is literally 'image' (56, n. 7), and del Olmo Lede offers the noun 'forma' (MLC: 595). I understand sknt as a participle modifying qt, 'handle'.
\textsuperscript{103}See Emerton, 'Ugaritic Notes': 439; hwt may be cognate with Hebrew hyh, 'living thing, animal' (BDB: 312b).
\textsuperscript{104}For more on Amurru, see below in the chapter on Akkadian material.
The actual activity represented here has been variously explained. Caquot, Sznycer, and Herdner apparently suppose Athirat to be frightened

\[\text{21} \text{ ab n} \] to the stone [ ]

\[\text{3} \text{ ahdt.plk h[.b ydh]} \] She grasped her spindle [in her hand,]

\[\text{4} \text{ plk.t} \text{ 'lt.b ym nh} \] her spindle whorl\(^{105}\) in her right hand.\(^{106}\)

\[\text{5} \text{ npynh.mks. b\text{\textvisiblespace}r} h \] Her garment of covering\(^{107}\) she let loose,\(^{108}\)

\[\text{6} \text{ tm 'mdh.b ym.} \] she carried\(^{109}\) her clothes into the sea,

\[\text{ln 7 npynh.b nhrm} \] her two garments into the river.

\[\text{8} \text{ stt.hptr.l i\textvisiblespace}t \] She placed a cauldron on the fire,\(^{109}\)

\[\text{9} \text{ hbrtl zr.phm m} \] a pot on top of the coals.

\[\text{10} \text{ tp.tr.il.dpid} \] She fluttered her eyelids\(^{110}\) (at) Bull El the Compassionate

\[\text{11} \text{ tg'zy.bny.bnwt} \] she winked\(^{111}\) (at) the Creator of Creatures.

\(^{105}\)This meaning requires reading q\textit{lt} rather than t\textit{lt} in line 4. For this interpretation see B. Margalit, A Matter of >Life< and >Death<, a Study of the Baal-Mot Epic (CTA 4-5-6) (AOAT 206), Kevelaer and Neukirchen-Vluyn, 1980: 28-29. His suggestions will be discussed in the text.

\(^{106}\)W. G. E. Watson ('Strophic Chiasmus in Ugaritic Poetry' \textit{UF} 15 (1983): 261) understands this couplet as an example of partial chiasmus: She grasped her spindle in her hand, (her) spindle she lifted up in her right hand.

\(^{107}\)The root of mks would seem to be ksy, of which mks is a participial form. ksy would be cognate with Hebrew k\textit{sh}, 'to cover', which occurs in the form m\textit{kasseh} in Lev. 9.19 and in Isa. 23.18 it actually denotes fine clothing. It is in parallel with mdh, 'her clothing' in line 6.

\(^{108}\)Coogan's rendering 'she tore off the garment which covered her flesh' (\textit{SAC}: 97) may seem rather forced, especially when his verb 'tore' has to be supplied by parallelism with a hypothetical definition. His understanding of what is actually happening, however, may very well be correct. I shall discuss this possibility below.

\(^{109}\)Many commentators suggest that Athirat carried her clothes into the sea, interpreting the text as a laundering episode. For a cognate Gibson (\textit{CML} 2: 152) turns to Arabic \textit{mata} ‘a, 'carried off'. Aisleitner puts forward the same cognate, with the same meaning (\textit{WUS}: 199), as does del Olmo Lete (\textit{MLC}: 586). I concur with the laundering interpretation, although I believe the text supports flirtatious undertones.

\(^{110}\)This word presents a difficulty, both in meaning and in interpretation. Clearly the action is directed to El, but his presence would make the scenario of Athirat's trip to his abode redundant. It seems that the root is 'wp, 'to fly', which Gibson (\textit{CML} 2: 154) further qualifies as an L stem, meaning to 'flutter the eyelids'.

\(^{111}\)As a parallel to 'she fluttered her eyelids', g\textit{zy} would seem to have some ocular connotation as well. The Hebrew root 'ph (\textit{BDB}: 781a) would be consonantally sound, and the meaning appears to be 'shut the eyes', therefore, in this context, 'wink'.

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the point of incontinence at Baal and Anat's approach.\textsuperscript{112} Maier supposes that Athirat is praying to El.\textsuperscript{113} Gibson suggests that Athirat is about her 'woman's work' by the sea shore.\textsuperscript{114} De Moor also sees this as evidence that she is doing her spinning and laundering by the sea.\textsuperscript{115} The text supports the activities of laundering; however, the mention of winking and fluttering eyelids would appear to suggest that something more than spinning or washing is being done, at least in Athirat's mind. The difficulties when approaching what an ancient character is supposed to be thinking are legion. No hard evidence can be adduced by asking the writer, and the text is an enigma at this point. This stated, we may be able to glean some information from the text itself.

The first point I would like to make is that this episode is similar to the sea shore episode in text 23. Perhaps the first similarity to notice between \textit{KTU} 1.4.II.2-11 and 1.23 is that both take place by the sea. This is stated in \textit{KTU} 1.23.30, on the reverse of text 23. The next point of similarity is that mention is made of something (a 'cauldron' in the case of 4.II, and a 'bird' in the case of 23) placed on the fire//coals. We are made aware that text 23 has sexual overtones by the euphemistic kissing and embracing, with pregnancy resulting (lines 49-51, 55-56). Finally, both texts contain mention of some 'symbol' of the deity involved. Athirat is portrayed with her spindle, and El, in text 23, is portrayed as having a 'sceptre', \(\gamma\). El’s sceptre in this text is a euphemism for phallus, as is indicated by the juxtaposition of the two women calling out that El's sceptre has been lowered (23.46-48), with El's subsequent impregnation of the women (48-51). I shall be dealing more fully with text 23 in the next chapter, but I

\textsuperscript{112}TO: 197-198.
\textsuperscript{113}\textit{Aserah: Extrabiblical Evidence}: 33.
\textsuperscript{114}CML\textsuperscript{2}: 10.
\textsuperscript{115}\textit{ARTU}: 47, notes 207 and 208.
would put forward these similarities to help make sense of the present text. It must be admitted that KTU 1.23 is not an Elimelek tablet, and that utilising an episode from that tablet to enlighten one in the Baal Cycle is to be done with caution. It is probable, however, that certain motifs were known by different Ugaritic mythological writers, and that some overlapping may have occurred.

A consideration of the spindle of Athirat may also enlighten the issue. Here the justification of translating t’lt as 'whorl' (following the suggestion of Margalit) should be discussed. In his interpretation, three reasons exist for favouring the reading q as opposed to t’ (the wedges for either reading are very similar, t’ = $\ldots \ldots \ldots$, q = $\ldots \ldots \ldots$): 1) it causes alliteration, 2) qlt occurs in parallelism with p [lk] in 4.III.15, and 3) qlt provides a suitable interpretation. Of these three reasons, the second and third seem to carry the most weight. The characteristic of alliteration may indeed occur in Ugaritic poetry, but it should not be decisive for supplying a textual variant. It is better to recognise alliteration where it occurs rather than make it a criterion for possible textual emendations. The second reason, that qlt appears in parallelism with *plk in 4.III.15, deserves some attention. I will discuss the incident in column III below; however, initially I should state that the context of the occurrence seems to be a feast which has caused Baal distress. Immediately following the suggested restoration of 'spindle' and the reading 'whorl', Baal delineates three types of feasts which he hates. The one matter which all three have in common is their sexual immorality (on which see below). The trouble with this interpretation for Margalit's argument is that he misconstrues the role of the spindle by the sea in 4.II.3-11:

Even those who have realized that the text depicts Asherah laundering, preface the latter activity with some spinning-by-the-sea. There is in fact no basis for this assumption. The spindle, though designed primarily for spinning or winding wool and flax, could be - and was - put to other uses as well...of particular significance here - as a weapon wielded by a rebuffed Asherah. In the text at hand it should be understood as serving as a bat to beat laundry.118

Even if a spindle could be used as a 'bat', this interpretation does not help explain the winking at El which Asherah seems to be doing whilst at her work. A further consideration is that Margalit's suggestion that the spindle could be used as a weapon of Athirat is derived from a troublesome borrowing from the Elkunirša myth, to be discussed below. The interpretation of the spindle has other nuances to be considered.

The spindle has been considered by some scholars as Athirat's symbol of sovereignty. This, at first consideration, seems unlikely. The spindle was an emblem of an everyday woman's work, hardly the sceptre of a queenly figure.119 Even El, the head of the pantheon is not pictured with a symbol of his authority, other than perhaps his 'beard' in KTU 1.4.V.4., or his 'sceptre' in text 23. In fact, traditional regalia seem to be strangely absent from the supreme heads of the Ugaritic pantheon, as presented in the texts. They are present, apparently, in KTU 1.23.8-9.120

\[ mt.wšr.yt.bdh.ḥt.tlkdḥ \]
\[ Ḫt.ulmn.yzbrnn.zbrmgpn \]

Mt-w-Šr sat, in his hand a sceptre of bereavement, in his hand a sceptre of widowhood

Apart from the difficulties in understanding text 23 as a whole (see below) the first several lines contain many allusions for which we have no

118 Matter of Life and Death: 28.
119 I am not suggesting that Ugaritic queens did not practise spinning and weaving, but simply that it was a common practice of women.
120 The word Ḫt is used here, with the general meaning of 'stick, sceptre'.
certainty of interpretation. In this perplexing context, I have no suggestions with which to venture to understand the meaning of these lines. However, the 'royal emblems' are present, in the hands of a deity (?). The sceptre (ḥt) also appears in the context of Athtar's subterfuge (2.III, ḫt occurs in line 18), and of Mot's attempt at usurpation of Baal's position(6.VI.1-30). Both of these occurrences are uttered from the mouth of Shapash, warning the respective deities that El will not support them, and indeed, he will 'break the sceptre of your rule' (lytbr. ḫt.ml ptk). Other mentions of ḫt can be translated by 'stick' or 'wand', not as royal symbols.¹²¹ The point of this digression is that El appears without symbols of royalty, and Athirat, other than perhaps her spindle, does likewise. Their authority is inherent; and as the texts indicate, respect is shown to them.¹²² This, together with the pedestrian nature of spindle and whorl, should suggest that, since we have an alternative solution for the word ṭtlt, the spindle is not specifically a symbol of authority. For its nature we must look to the character of Athirat.

If the spindle is not a royal symbol, it is indeed a woman's utensil. Athirat shares some qualities of human women, as shown by the parallelism of her name with the common word for 'woman' in 3.1.14-15 (see above). The question arises: what aspect of an everyday woman's life is being shared by Athirat in her use of the spindle? The solution could be

¹²¹ Other than text 23 and the instances discussed in the text, ḫt occurs as a noun in 19.I.14; 95.3; and 114.I.8.
¹²² One may object that Yam's messengers do not bow to the assembly of the gods, presided over by El. This bicolon in KTU 1.2.1.31 is ambiguous. It begins with a l which could be either a negation or an asseverative. I would understand it as the latter. To argue for insubordination on such a text is tenuous. The other objection that might be raised is Anat's violent approach to El, and her demands (3.V.27-32) indicate disrespect. In keeping with the understanding of the texts presented here, namely, that 'character' is the overwhelming trait of the story, as opposed to a strictly coherent story line, I would suggest that the threats of Anat are a reflection of her characterisation, not of general disrespect for El.
as simple as her being the goddess of weaving, but for this we have no textual support. We should not wander too far from what the text allows us to suggest. The allusion to spinning utensils implied in the use of the symbol may connote sexual activity rather than the actual task of spinning. The text does support this interpretation in light of the winking and fluttering of eyelids at El (whether or not he is actually present). The purpose of this 'eyeing' can hardly be other than seduction. The shape of a spindle would be as suggestive as to evoke associations as a phallic symbol. Without venturing too far into an anthropological realm of interpretation, I would suggest that the character of Athirat, as presented in the texts as the consort of El, allows this interpretation. We must keep in mind the character of Athirat which we have been able to distil to this point (i.e., as a 'consort'), as well as interpreting what the text actually states. The interpretation of the spindle and whorl with this association will recur shortly (see below).

At this occurrence of Athirat in the Baal Cycle, we again find her associated with, by proximity, the sea. I have noted above that in light of Athirat's epithet, \textit{rbt atrt ym}, we should especially note passages where she is associated with the sea. Here, I believe, the text supports Athirat contemplating sexual activity with El by the sea as she is laundering her clothes. I do not think that this presses the text too far - the other interpretations which have been presented also leave many questions unanswered. Admittedly, the text is fragmentary as this scene begins, and dogmatism must be avoided. Such sexual interests of Athirat do seem to be supported by \textit{KTU} 1.4.III.10-22.
KTU 1.4.II.12 - 21 narrates the interruption of Athirat's 'eyeing' El.

Her sudden mood change is described in what is a stereotyped response to bad news.123 The text reads:

\[
\begin{align*}
12b \text{ nsi. 'nh} & \quad \text{with the lifting\textsuperscript{4} her eyes} \\
\text{w tphn 13 hlk.b 'l} & \quad \text{she saw the approach\textsuperscript{124} of Baal,} \\
\text{at\textsuperscript{6} t 'n} & \quad \text{Athirat\textsuperscript{125} indeed perceived\textsuperscript{126} the approach of Virgin Anat,} \\
\text{hlk.btl} 15 \text{ c't} & \quad \text{the swift arrival of Ybmt [Limm],}\textsuperscript{127} \\
\text{tdrq.ybmt} 16 \text{[limm]} & \quad \text{at this (her) feet [stamped,} \\
\text{b'h.p 'nm} 17[ttt] & \quad \text{beh} \text{ ind (her)} \text{ loins [broke,} \\
\text{b']dn.ksl} 18[ttbr] & \quad \text{on top} \text{ her [face sweated,}\textsuperscript{128} \\
\text{' ln.p} \text{ nh.t d[c]} & \quad \text{[the joints of] her [loins convulsed,}
\end{align*}
\]

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124 hlk here should be understood as an infinitive absolute, standing as a substantive.
125 KTU and most commentators take this word to be a mispelling of ayri; the context would certainly support this. Although the issue of the confusion between Athirat and Athtar has been fuelled by this error, the argument has several difficulties to which to answer. First of all, Athtar begins with an ayin, and Athirat with an aleph; this word begins with an aleph. Secondly, Athtar does not appear in text 4, thirdly, Athtar appears in parallel with Anat in texts 2 and 114, but Athirat and Athtar do not occur in parallel. In the general course of the argument for the (con)fusion of Athirat and Athtar, Old Testament evidence is usually presented. The difficulties of Judg. 7.5 will be discussed below, along with the inconsistency of supposing that Baal and Asherah had become consorts by the Iron Age (see below).
126 The word order in this passage is difficult. In order to make sense of the verse structure, I would understand the first four lines of this pericope to be a bicolon followed by a tricolon. Line 13 places 'Athirat' [corrected] as the subject, at the first position in the first line of the tricolon; this emphasizes Athirat as the subject. The k of kn 'n has an asseverative force; thus the word order builds excitement, until after the tricolon the standard reaction to bad news is portrayed.
127 The difficulties in construing this epithet of Anat are many. Gibson (CML\textsuperscript{2}: 56) proposes 'sister-in-law of peoples'; Maier ('Aserah: Extrabiblical Evidence: 8) concurs. Coogan (SAC: 98) reads 'the Mistress of the Peoples'; Gordon (PLMU: 91) has tentatively, 'the Progenitress of Heroes'. Del Olmo Leite (MLC: 195) translates 'Pretendida de los pueblos'; Caquot, Szynce, and Herdner (TO: 198) decline to translate it. De Moor (ARTU: 47) proposes 'the Wanton Widow of the Nations'. In a private communication, N. Wyatt has suggested that the epithet might be understood as 'beloved of Limm', 'Limm' being another name for the storm god. Whatever approach is taken, we are left without certainty as to its precise meaning.
128 Following Gibson (CML\textsuperscript{2}: 148), with the Arabic cognate wada 'a, 'flowed' and the Ethiopic waza 'a 'sweated'. 
When Athirat spies the approach of Baal and Anat, her response is one of fear or rage. It is for this reason that Baal had had Kothar-and-Khasis prepare gifts for Athirat. This normal response is not characteristic of Athirat alone; neither is the offering of gifts limited to Athirat. It would seem that certain stock reactions and phrases are consistently used throughout the corpus of the Elimelek tablets. The reaction to bad news is found also in Aqhat (19.II.45-49), and the offering of gold and silver in response to ill feelings is witnessed in Keret (14.II.52-53).

It would appear that Baal anticipated Athirat’s frightened reaction, and brought gifts to soothe her worries. We shall return to the reason for her adverse reaction below, but already the hints are given in lines 21-26.

20 $\text{ans}^\text{dt.}$ $\text{z} \text{r}[\text{h}]$ \text{those of [her] back became weak.}$
21 $\text{r}^\text{su} \text{gh} \text{w} \text{ts} \text{h}$ . . \text{she lifted up her voice and cried.}$

129 I understand $\text{dt}$ as a relative pronoun, referring back to ‘joints’ $\text{pnt}$, which does ‘double duty’. I take $\text{ans}$ to be cognate with Hebrew $^\text{tn}_\text{s}$, ‘to be weak’ (BDB: 60b).

130 Although the text is broken, enough of the original words remain to allow Daniel’s reaction to be restored.

131 Since about 7 lines of El’s speech are missing (KTU: page 38), and since Keret responds with the question of ‘what do I (need of) silver and gold?’ (restored on the basis of parallels throughout the text), it would seem that El has offered this to him in response to his weeping.

132 I understand $\text{z}l$ as being from the root $\text{zll}$, in Hebrew $\text{zll}$, meaning ‘shadow, covering, tingle, quiver’. Although the general sense of the word is obvious enough, the exact term with which to translate it is difficult to narrow down from this sphere of meaning. Gordon (PLMU: 91), Coogan (SAC: 98), and de Moor (ARTU: 48) take the line that $\text{z}l$ describes a quality of the silver, whereas Gibson (CML 2: 57) understands it as a covering. In light of the fact that no silver ‘covering’ is mentioned in the listing of the gifts at 4.1.29-43, I would press the meaning to mean ‘plating’ as may be implied from some of the uncertain metallurgical terms in that pericope.
The question which immediately presents itself is: what does Athirat mean by her query as to who the intended victims of Baal and Anat’s violence are to be? This could be interpreted as the fear of the mother of the gods for the safety of her children at the approach of the storm; an earthly concern transferred to the divine realm. While this possibility cannot be ruled out, the hopes of finding a mythological solution in the texts themselves would prevent a simple acceptance of this answer. The problem is that the only account that we have in the Baal Cycle of Baal specifically smiting the children of Athirat in general is 6.V.1-4, which occurs after the present scene. Another solution is possible. We are here concerned with an incident which occurs following the defeat of Yam by Baal. We have seen above that Athirat is in some way closely associated with the sea (ym). Could it be that she fears for the safety of her offspring in the light of the battle between the ‘beloved of El’, Yam, and Baal? The text itself would support this interpretation.¹³² The mood of Athirat again takes a sudden change as she spies the presents being brought by Baal and Anat (lines 26-29). This does not reflect an aspect of corruption in Athirat; as noted above, it is merely a reaction of relief that her fears were unfounded.

As the text continues, Athirat instructs her servant to throw a net into the sea. *KTU* 1.4.II.29-36 reads:

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¹³² This is suggested already by de Moor (*ARTU*: 48, n. 212).
Moreover to her squire\textsuperscript{133} indeed [she called]

\begin{verbatim}
29. \ldots gm.l gmh. k[t\textsuperscript{ish}]
30'n.mk\textsuperscript{134}r. ap t[t] 'See the cunning work, moreso[
31dg.y.rbt.at r[t.ym] O Fisherman of Lady Athir[at of the Sea]
32q.h.rtf.bdk t[t] Take a net\textsuperscript{135} in your hand[.]
33rbt. 'lyd m[ ] A great one upon both hands[ ]\textsuperscript{136}
34b mdd'il.y[m ] Into\textsuperscript{137} the beloved of El, Ya[m]
35b ym il.d[ ] Into the divine Yam, who[ ]
36hr.il.y[m ] the divine [r]uler\textsuperscript{138} of the s[ea]
\end{verbatim}

Following this episode, the text becomes too fragmentary to reconstruct, to the end of the column. This leaves us with the perplexing task of deciphering what is happening in this section. Gordon supposes that a banquet is perhaps being arranged.\textsuperscript{139} De Moor, in keeping with his seasonal presuppositions, determines that this passage indicates the reopening of the fishing season, in March, and that Athirat is treating her guests to seafood.\textsuperscript{140} Either of these interpretations is defensible; the fisherman is casting his net into the sea, and the text is too broken to determine much more. Although these two suggestions appear to be straightforward, they do not address the issue of why the sea here is called

\begin{footnotesize}
\textsuperscript{133}I am aware that this use of a feudal term is anachronistic; however, the proposed translations of 'page' or 'lad' lack the sense of status to be associated with a divine being.
\textsuperscript{134}This form is a hapax. The root would seem to be \textit{ktr}, 'clever, skilful'. The preformative \textit{m} would seem to indicate a participial form; therefore, I have rendered it as 'cunning work'. See also \textit{TO}: 199, n. n.
\textsuperscript{135}We have an excellent cognate in the Hebrew \textit{re\text{\char135}et}, 'net' (BDB: 440a). This would be an appropriate command for a deity whose epithet is 'Fisherman'.
\textsuperscript{136}The poetic structure of this pericope seems to require that a verb be supplied for this lacuna. This would make sense of the following line as well. I could speculate as to what the verb might be, but no matter what the exact word, the context indicates clearly enough that a net is being cast.
\textsuperscript{137}The net is being placed, or thrown into the sea. In order to demonstrate that this is not just an ordinary fishing expedition, the text states that this is the 'beloved of El' Sea - that is, Yam, the \textit{mdd.il}.
\textsuperscript{138}This is to restore a \textit{n} before \textit{hr}, the common epithet of Yam.
\textsuperscript{139}PLMU: 91.
\textsuperscript{140}Seasonal Pattern: 144, and \textit{ARTU}: 48, n.214.
\end{footnotesize}
mdd il, 'the beloved of El'. Since, with Gibson, I suppose Yam to be an ever-present threat, I would see here an allusion to his (Yam's) having to be restrained at the approach of Baal. Baal was his natural enemy; Athirat has some measure of control over the sea. Thus when Athirat perceives that Baal's mission is peaceful, she orders his old (and continuing) rival to be held back by a net. I would not suggest 'borrowing' in any direct sense here; however, in Enuma Elish, Marduk restrains Tiamat with a net, and in Ezekiel 32 Yahweh metaphorically nets the Pharaoh as a sea monster. It would appear that the motif of netting the sea monster may have been widespread in the ancient Near East. This may be a further indication of Athirat's relationship with the sea.

Following her instructions to her servant, the text breaks off. It would seem, however, when the text does resume at column III, that Anat is speaking to Baal before their actual arrival in the presence of Athirat. Her speech is fragmented, but we can begin to make sense of Baal's answer, especially in the light of parallel passages within the myth. KTU 1.4.III.10-22 reads:

10 y [t]b. aliyn.b t'l
Mighty Baal replied,
11 y t'dd.rkb.'rpt
the Rider of the Clouds responded:
12 [ql(?)].ydd.w yqlṣn
'The beloved[ ] and mocked me.

142See already TO (199, n. o): 'Ou faut-il entendre qu'Athirat, gagnée à la cause de Ba'al, est disposée à prendre son parti dans la lutte qui l'oppose au dieu de la mer (b-y'm aux lignes 34 et 35 pourrait se traduire «contre Yam»)?'
143M. B. Brink (A Philological Study of Texts in Connection with Atart and Atirat in the Ugaritic Language, D. Litt. dissertation, University of Stellenbosch, 1977: 63, 314-322) proceeds far beyond the evidence when he begins to argue that Athirat and Yam are to be identified. They certainly may be associated, but we have no evidence, textual or otherwise, to support the contention that the two merged into a single deity.
144In the AB Cycle, ydd and mdd both appear to mean 'the beloved', usually in the context of the fuller title -dd il, 'the beloved of El'. The two deities to whom these titles are applied are Yam and Mot. Since the cycle has already dealt with the case of
he arose and spat on me, in the midst of the assembly of the gods. The sp[indle] was placed on my table, the whorl into the cup from which I drank.

[ ] two sacrifices Baal hates, three the Rider of the Clouds, a sacrifice of shame, and a sacrifice of fornication, and a sacrifice of the seduction of maidens,

for in them shame is seen, and in them is the seduction of maidens.

Several issues pertinent to our subject arise from this short discourse. The first issue is perhaps the identification of the 'beloved' of my translation. Although 'beloved' is known to be a title of either Yam or Mot, two separate words are employed: ydd and mdd. Yam is normally referred to as mdd, but in the broken context of 4.VI.12, only the -dd remains. The ydd form is generally applied to Mot, although he is once referred to as mdd as well (KTU 1.4.VIII.23). Some evidence is available to suggest that ydd here might refer to Yam. When giving instructions not to have a window installed in his palace, Baal gives the following reason to Kothar-and-Khasis, (4.VI.12-13):

Yam, and the story of Mot is yet to come, it seems reasonable to suppose that Yam is being indicated by this word. Further support is forthcoming.

145 The root of this form would seem to be qls. TO (176, n. s) suggests an Arabic cognate qalasa, 'être en émoi'. Gibson (CML2: 157) suggests a Hebrew cognate qilles, meaning 'despised' or 'abased'. The actual form of the verb is a third masculine singular, with a third person masculine suffix.

146 Restored following Margalit, Matter of Life and Death: 37. See pages 41-42 for a detailed defence of this restoration.

147 This is an obvious case of dittography, and should be disregarded in translation.
[dd.il.ym] [lest(?)] the beloved of El, Yam
[qlsn.w pim] [?] mock me and spit on me.

The same two verbs (qlṣn and wpṯ) are also used in this passage, along with the -dd of 'beloved', to be understood as the title of Yam here. If we have a parallel account of Yam spitting at Baal, as well as an account of his mockery, the possibility emerges that Yam could indeed be the culprit of 4.III.12-14. It is also possible that 'mocking' and 'spitting' are standard terms of contempt, in which case the 'beloved' in our text cannot be named with certainty. I propose no myth to explain the situation being presented in this scene. In order to translate the passage adequately, we should hope for context to be our guide. As the immediate context is unclear, I would suggest recourse to other similar contexts within the same mythological cycle. In doing so, we find Baal fearing an affront by Yam spitting at him in 4.VI.12-13, and we see Athirat pictured with a spindle and whorl in 4.II.3-4. The spitting and the spindle appear to recur in this passage. We are also aware that Athirat and the sea seem to be linked in some respect. We do not possess the broken section of Anat's speech to Baal at the beginning of column III; neither do we possess the broken end of column II. I am not suggesting anything to fill this lacuna; rather I am pleading for our ignorance of what belongs in it. Baal seems to be responding to a speech by Anat, the contents of which we do not know. In my attempt to make some sense of the context, I find some of the explanations of Margalit148 at this point fitting in this context.

We do know that Baal enumerates the three kinds of sacrifice which are abhorrent to him, a feast of shame (ḥlt), a feast of fornication (dnt), and a feast where maidens are seduced (tḥmtmmt amḥt). These three

148Matter of Life and Death: 36-44.
types of sacrifice have the common element of sexual impurity. The description of these feasts follows immediately after the enigmatic incident involving a table and cup, a spindle and whorl. There is no room for dogmatism here, but it might be reasonably suggested that the presence of Athirat’s emblems at Baal’s place at a banquet also suggested sexual impurity. The case, however, seems to be overstated by Margalit:

... it is the depth of understanding which this restoration imparts to the overall passage that clinches the case beyond any reasonable doubt. That the latter half of our passage has orgiastic overtones is self-evident, as is the role of the spindle as a female and phallic sexual symbol. But more important still is the association of Asherah simultaneously with both the spindle and sexual activity.\footnote{Margalit then cites the Elkunirša myth as evidence. As we have seen, this kind of direct borrowing across cultural boundaries does not offer us valid evidence. We would need to know the context of the myth contained in the Hittite Elkunirša fragment. We may, however, take Margalit’s point that the feasts hated by Baal do indicate sexual promiscuity, and that the spindle seems to be symbolic in this situation.}

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Taken together with KTU 1.4.II.3-11, a coherent picture begins to emerge. Athirat is pictured by the sea shore, washing her clothes and holding her spindle, as she makes eyes at El. As Baal and Anat approach Athirat, they are discussing a sacrifice at which Baal was dishonoured, and seeing a spindle on the table caused him distress. It would seem from this much of the Baal Cycle, that Athirat was considered to be a sexually active goddess. The broken beginning of 4.III.12 does not permit us to declare with certainty which character is to be understood by ydd. If it is Yam, this scene may point to a connection between Athirat and Yam.

\footnote{\textit{Matter of Life and Death}: 41-42, emphasis in the original.}
Thereafter Mighty Baal arrived, Virgin Anat arrived, they petitioned Lady Athirat of the Sea, they gave presents to the Bearer of the Gods, And Lady Athirat of the Sea answered, 'Why do you petition Lady Athirat of the Sea, (why) do you give presents to the Bearer of the Gods? Have you petitioned Bull El the Compassionate, or have you given presents to the Creator of Creatures? And Virgin Anat answered, 'We would petition. . . Lady Athirat of the Sea, [give] presents to the Bearer of the Gods, [then] we shall petition him.

Athirat asks the obvious question: why petition her when it was El's permission that was needed? It was in the light of Anat's unsuccessful attempt at coercing El that this approach to Athirat was made. Baal and Anat realised that it is only through Athirat that El's permission could be

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150 Understanding mgn as cognate with Arabic majana (Gibson, CML2: 150), 'importuned'.
151 See page 60, note 97.
152 The structure of Athirat's answer indicates that a question would be an appropriate way to translate, thus del Olmo Lete (MLC: 198), Gibson (CML2: 58), Caquot, Sznyerc, and Herdner (TO: 201-202), Gordon (PLMU: 92), and de Moor (ARTU: 50).
153 I understand hwt as an object pronoun, used here instead of a suffixed pronoun.
gained. Perhaps Anat’s reply was only a matter of formality; we cannot know for certain. This text again points to the nature of Athirat as having its most important aspect in relationship to El. El is not easily persuaded: his mind could be changed; but only with the influence of Athirat.

The next three lines of text are broken, reading ‘Mighty Baal’, ‘Lady Athirat of the Sea’ and ‘Virgin Anat’, respectively. Thereafter follows the description of a feast of the gods, in stereotyped verse. This is the end of the column as we have it. When column four becomes legible, Athirat is preparing for her journey to bring Baal’s petition to El.

KTU 1.4.IV.1-19 is as follows:

1\[l\] r[il. ] [Bull [El ]
[rtb] 2a r[t.y.m. ] [Lady] Athir[at of the Sea,]
[3m \.1 qdš] 3w a m[r] [‘Hear o Qodesh-] and-Amr[ur]
[ ] 4\[g\]r t.y m [Lady] Athirat of the Sea,
[mdl.\[e\] r] [saddle155 the ass,]
5 smd.phl. [harness156 the donkey,
š[t.gpnmd.\[dt\] 6ksp. pl[ace on guide ropes which] are silver,

155On the matter of whether or not saddles were in use in the Bronze Age, and descriptions of the various animal trappings used, see R. Good, ‘Some Ugaritic Terms Relating to Draught and Riding Animals’ UF 16 (1984): 77-81, and W. G. E. Watson, ‘Unravelling Ugaritic MDL ’ SEL3 (1986): 73-78. Lexicographically and historically, the question is a difficult one. Good (80) admits that saddles were in use in the Bronze Age, but he doubts the proposed etymology of mdl. His own etymology (cognate with Aramaic dalal ‘to lead’) also cannot be considered proven. Arguing against the saddle interpretation he writes ‘Even the goddess Astarte rode without saddle, and this makes it seem highly improbable that, to cite a pertinent Ugaritic example, the goddess Asherah should have her mount equipped with a saddle’ (80). Athirat is, however, portrayed with quite fashionable trappings - gold and silver. Perhaps Watson’s etymology (Akkadian muddul, ‘elastic strip’) is more likely, but I see no need to discount the possibility of a saddle being used when they were in fact known in the Late Bronze Age. See, for example, M. Littauer and J. Crouwel, Wheeled Vehicles and Ridden Animals in the Ancient Near East (Handbuch der Orientalistik), Leiden, 1979: especially pages 65-66 and figure 38.
Once the decision had been made to visit El, Athirat ordered Qodesh-and-Amrur to prepare her beasts of burden. Ass-riding was a common method of transport, although it has been debated whether or not a saddle was being described here.\textsuperscript{160} Littauer and Crouwel note in their monograph on the subject that: 'In the Sinai graffiti the riders - Asiatic chiefs - also wear long robes and are apparently seated sideways, their...
asses being led (by a line attached to a nose ring) by attendants on foot.\textsuperscript{161} This matches the picture with which we seem to be presented in this text. Gibson notes that the donkey was not specifically the mount of royalty,\textsuperscript{162} but our attention is drawn to the portrayal of Anat as walking while Athirat rode. The text itself gives us no grounds to determine why this difference in modes of transport is mentioned, other than the fact that Athirat is the matron and Anat her offspring. We can draw no firm conclusions from it.\textsuperscript{163}

The matter of whether Anat is pictured as accompanying Athirat or not is still debated. Maier sees Anat and Baal as departing to Sapon together, while Athirat rides on to El's abode.\textsuperscript{164} The trouble with this interpretation is that when Athirat does acquire the permission she sought, it is Anat who is aware of this news before Baal (4.V.20-27). Anat does, in fact, break the happy news to Baal. I would see in this scenario a case for supposing that Anat is present with Athirat as she journeys to El. On the other hand, it could be argued that Anat is not in the scene when Athirat actually visits El. In spite of this valid point, Anat is on hand to receive the news and to give it to Baal. These issues are perhaps modern concerns, and not matters over which an Ugaritian would brood. The text is our guide, and although I have made my preference known in my translation, the ambiguity of the wording makes certainty impossible.

Perhaps the only specific information afforded us about Athirat in this passage is that she alone, of the deities in the Baal Cycle, is portrayed as riding a donkey. The significance of this to her character is lost to us.

\textsuperscript{161}\textit{Wheeled Vehicles and Riding Animals}: 66.
\textsuperscript{162}\textit{CML}: 59, n. 1.
\textsuperscript{163}For a brief discussion see M. S. Smith, 'Divine Travel as a Token of Divine Rank' \textit{UF} 16 (1984): 359.
\textsuperscript{164}\textit{Aserah: Extrabiblical Evidence}: 14.
Then indeed she set her face towards El, at the source of the rivers, in the midst of the confluence of the two deeps.

She uncovered the tent of El, and she entered the room of the King, Father of Years, at the feet of El she bowed down and fell, she prostrated herself and she honoured him.

Behold, El indeed saw her,

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165 'Rivers' could be either dual or plural here. Coogan (SAC: 99), Gordon (PLMU: 93), de Moor (ARTU: 52), del Olmo Lete (MLC: 200), and Maier ('Ašerah: Extrabiblical Evidence: 14) all read 'two rivers'. Gibson (CML2: 59) and Caquot, Szynker and Herdner (TO: 204) read an unspecified number of rivers. The primary reason for seeing this form as a dual is that the parallel line does indeed mention the 'two deeps'. Cosmologically speaking, it would perhaps be arguable that there are four rivers (as suggested in a private communication by Dr. N. Wyatt). In either case, the point being made by the text is that El dwells where the rivers originate.

166 Third feminine singular verb of the prefixing conjugation. The root is gly, cognate with the Hebrew root glh, 'to uncover, remove' (BDB: 162b)

167 R. Clifford ('The Tent of El and the Israelite Tent of Meeting' CBQ 33 (1971): 221-222) argues for the translation of dd as 'tent'. He admits that 'there is no extra-Ugaritic evidence for dd as "tent"', but, he suggests, 'the intra-Ugaritic evidence is strong.' (222, n. 4). Del Olmo Lete, on the other hand, notes that 'the specific meaning of "tent, pavilion" cannot be justified etymologically, although it has in its favor the semantic parallelism with qrs lahl; in this sense ar. ḏada offers some support, but turns out to be semantically risky and imprecise' ('Notes on Ugaritic Semantics IV' UF 10 (1978): 43). He proposes a cognate in the Hebrew zdh of the Siloam tunnel inscription (44). He does admit that his cognate is hapax, and although his etymology does bring into question any easy acceptance of ḏdd being understood as 'tent', the verb gly does have an evident cognate in Hebrew glh (see previous note). Clifford's argument is supported by the apparent parallelism between dd and ahl in KTU 1.19.IV. 51-52. On the basis of context, and in consideration of the verb, I would tentatively retain the translation 'tent'.

168 This meaning is much disputed. snh, 'year' in Hebrew, occurs in both masculine and feminine forms in the plural (BDB: 1040a). Many scholars still hold to this interpretation as a befitting title for the creator of the gods. See de Moor (ARTU: 16), Caquot, Szynker, and Herdner (TO: 204), Gibson (CML2: 59), Coogan (SAC: 99), and del Olmo Lete (MLC: 200). See also Smith, The Early History of God: 32, n. 46.

This encounter between El and Athirat has spawned a great deal of speculation. Some scholars appear to read modern concerns into the study of the marital relationship between the gods El and Athirat in the Ugaritic myths. Nowhere in the texts, as we have them, do we find the poet attempting to demonstrate the character of a marital relationship for its own sake. The point of this passage is not to describe the family life of El in the sense of a marriage in which he lives separately from his spouse ('montfrei' marriage) as put forth by Brink, following van Selms. Brink explains the situation thus:

The relationship of Athirat and El appears to be 'montfrei' since the husband has no legal powers over his wife. On this evidence

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171 The original bk is recognised as a scribal error for b ks, thus KTU: 17.
172 The cognate roots of this verb would seem to be the Akkadian hasasu, Arabic hassa, and Ethiopic hafa:s; (Gibson, *CML* 2: 147, del Olmo Lete, *MLC*: 552, Aistleitner, *WUS*: 114-115). The sense of arousal is rather straightforward. El seems to be guessing at why his spouse may have come, thus 'tempt' is an appropriately suggestive translation.
Van Selms (1954, p.65) would have it that the poets wish to convey that the period of sexual intercourse between the father god and mother god is past, something which occurred before the beginning of the present era in which a multitude of younger gods cavort around the place.174

The main difficulty with such an approach is that it does not consider the plot of the myth, nor the character of mythology in general. Athirat has just been solicited for bearing Baal's petition to El. In order to emphasize the extreme remoteness and holiness of El, a long journey is described by the poet. El is so holy that even Athirat has to journey far to see him. It is an indication of El's rank, not of his marital status, that Athirat bows before him.175 Surely the intention of the poet is to demonstrate the extreme sanctity of El, no matter who may be calling. It is exactly the opposite that the poet wishes to express when he portrays Anat as bursting in and making her demand to El with threats (3.V). As we have noted above, the text itself demonstrates that this method is futile.176

This informs us about Athirat as well. She is a most welcome guest in the remote abode of El, and she pleases him. This is important to the plot of the story, since her aim is to acquire permission for a house to be built for Baal. This request on behalf of Baal may also point to her role as queen mother. The method of achieving her goal is to please El. We know from the remainder of text four that her mission was a success.

The poet next moves directly to the point of Athirat's visit. Thus we read in *KTU* 1.4.IV.40-47:

40w t 'n.rht.atrt ym
41thmk.il. hkm.

And Lady Athirat of the Sea answered, 'Your decree El, is wise.'

175 Dr. N. Wyatt has drawn my attention to the similarity between this passage and 1 Kgs. 1.16 where Bathsheba bows before David.
Hereafter follows a repetition of the formula we explored above. The startling juxtaposition of Baal's position as the king of the gods and his lack of a house is the mainstay of this appeal. After Anat's brash approach to El, she also used this reasoning (3.V.29-44). It would be unwise in the light of the stereotyped nature of this speech, to attempt to discern any specific characteristic of Athirat. She simply affirms her support of Baal's kingship, perhaps as a reflection of her supportive role as rabttu.

Following the repetition of Baal's lament, El responds to the plea (KTU 1.4.IV.58-V.1).

58w y 'n lîpн.il.dpi d And Benevolent El the Compassionate answered,
59 p 'bd.an. 'nn.atr t 'So, a servant am I, a lackey of Athirat?180

177 The personal pronoun of thmk 'your decree' should be understood as doing 'double duty' here.
178 Apparently kl with the first person dual suffix -ny (UT: 37) and n energetic 'both of us', see Gibson (CML2: 60).
179 Watson also cites this couplet as an example of partial chiasmus ('Strophic Chiasmus': 261).
180 The root of 'nn has prompted suggestions of several cognates. Del Olmo Lete (MLC: 602) presents several possibilities, Arabic 'anna, Hebrew 'ânâ, Arabic 'awwana, and Hebrew 'onâ. The meanings of these possible cognates would seem to find support in the 'bd in the first half of each line. The difficulty is to determine what exactly the poetic structure is - is it line 59 paralleled with line 60, or is it 59a paralleled by 59b, and 60a paralleled by 60b? Clearly the sense is that El is questioning who is to build this house.
84 p bd.ank.a ḫd.u 1 and so, a servant am I, to grasp\textsuperscript{181} a trowel\textsuperscript{182}.

61 km.amt.al tt.tlb n 62l bnt. or is Athirat a slavegirl who makes bricks?

ybn.bt.l b < l 1 km.ilm. Let a house be built for Baal like the gods,

w ḥzr.k bn.ahr Let even a court like the children of Athirat.

The sentiments expressed by El in this passage are by no means certain; perhaps he is being ironic, perhaps irritated, perhaps teasing. Nevertheless he approves of Athirat's request without any argument (although perhaps reluctantly as lines 59-61 may indicate). This may support the theory of Athirat's function in the role of the rabītu. El grants her request for Baal's palace; the palace is a symbol of Baal's kingship. It is the role of the rabītu to ensure that the king's office is secured. The status of Athirat as rabītu appears again further along in the Baal Cycle.

Athirat then rejoices (KTU 1.4.V.2-19), for her part in the task at hand is complete: she has obtained the permission of El.

2w t 'n.rbt.ahr.t.ym And Lady Athirat of the Sea answered,

3 rbt.ilm.l ḥkmt 'You are great, O El, indeed you are wise,

4 sbt.ṭqnk.l tsrk the greyness of your beard indeed instructs you,

5 ḥwnt.dt.l irtk [the compassion?] which is in your breast\textsuperscript{183} (indeed instructs you).

\textsuperscript{181} Understanding \textit{ahd} as cognate with Hebrew \textit{ahz}, 'to take, seize' (BDB: 28a).

\textsuperscript{182}\textit{ult} is apparently a metal implement of some kind, as it appears in KTU 4.390, a list of metal implements.

\textsuperscript{183} These words have been variously translated. De Moor reads them as, 'Surely the greyness of your old age is wisdom,/ surely the compassion which is in your breast instructs you?' (ARTU: 54). Gordon (PLMU: 95) and Gibson (CM 2: 60) take irtk to be 'your breast', but they do not translate the entire line. \textit{TO} (207) offers, 'Tu \textit{fais sortir } de ta poitrine \textit{une voix douce }'. N. Wyatt (in a private communication) has suggested 'You are great, O El! / The greyness of your beard does indeed make you wise; / the compassion which comes from your breast does indeed instruct you.' I offer the translation above on the understanding that the verb \textit{lsrk} does double duty.
Now is even the time\(^{184}\) of his rain, let Baal appoint the time\(^{185}\) of gushing in flood,\(^{186}\) and let him give his voice from the clouds, let him loose to the earth (his) lightnings. Is the house of cedars? He will complete it.\(^{188}\) Or is the house of bricks? He will construct it.\(^{189}\) Indeed let it be told to Mighty Baal: 'Call a caravan\(^{191}\) into your mansion, wares\(^{192}\) into the midst of your palace,

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\(^{184}\) The root of 'dn would seem to be 'dd, which occurs in Hebrew as 'd. The n should be considered energetic. The basic meaning of 'dd appears to be some aspect of time reckoning, thus I have translated it simply as 'time'.

\(^{185}\) Reading r (BB1) for KTU 's k (B1*-). See note 187.

\(^{186}\) As in the previous line, 'dn would mean 'time'. Here it follows a jussive form of a verb of the same root, and together they may be understood as 'let . . . appoint a time'.

\(^{187}\) The final two words of line 7 are difficult, and although context does provide enough evidence for a general, weather-related phenomenon, it does not give us an exact answer. Scholars are divided on the meaning, Gibson (CML\(^2\): 60) and de Moor (ARTU: 54) read a reference to a barque of snow. Gordon suggests a ship on the ocean (PLMU: 95). I have followed the suggestion of Caquot, Szynceer, and Herdner (TO: 207), who explain CTA 's (and KTU 's) jkt as \(\text{irt}\) (note t) and gl\(\text{i}\) as 'flood' as it appears in parallel with \(\text{thm}\) in PRU 5.1, line 5 (= KTU 1.92.5). I have examined the photographs in CTA volume 2, but this particular section on both pictures is indistinct. In the line drawing, the k is shaded, and a r would be a reasonable suggestion, all the more so as it provides a good parallel to the previous line.

\(^{188}\) The lines 10 and 11 throw off the pattern formed by the preceding lines, and seem to indicate that no matter what type of house he desires, Baal will be able to accomplish his wish. The form yklnh is from the root \(\text{yil}\), in the prefixing conjugation with a third masculine singular suffix. The pattern is repeated in line 11 as well.

\(^{189}\) The root 'ms appears to be used in a building context in Neh. 4.11 (so Gibson, CML\(^2\): 154). Although the final radical in BHS is s, there is textual support for the reading of s. Gibson also provides Arabic \(\text{gammasa}\) 'set in cement' as a possible cognate.

\(^{190}\) I follow KTU in correcting bhm\(\text{k}\) to bht\(\text{k}\) on the basis of parallel passages.

\(^{191}\) A possible cognate may be found in the Akkadian \(\text{harranu}\), 'road, path'. The context does seem to dictate that it is the goods of a 'caravan' that are being summoned.

\(^{192}\) Hebrew has \(\text{yizzabon}\), 'wares' which may be a cognate.
Athirat first praises the wisdom of El, then she utters what appears to be a blessing on the building of Baal's house. We should not read too much into this episode. Athirat was approached to obtain permission for Baal to build a house. The appropriate channel for acquiring the approval of El was through her. Athirat's rejoicing at the end of her mission does not spell out any specific details about her character; rather, it marks the successful end of her journey.

After the building of Baal's palace was completed, Baal invited the gods to a feast. In describing the guests, two collective epithets are used: 'his kinfolk' (a [r]h, KTU 1.4.VI.44) and 'the seventy children of Athirat' (šb 'm bn atr, line 46). This juxtaposition demonstrates that strict, logical family trees which exclude Baal from the number of Athirat's children are a misunderstanding of the mythological nature of the text. The seventy children of Athirat are the gods. This collective epithet points out that Athirat was considered to be the mother of the gods. This is the final mention of Athirat in the 'Palace of Baal' section of the Baal Cycle. Her role

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193 The root of tblk is ybl 'to bear'. This is a jussive form with a second person singular suffix attached.
194 No consensus has been reached on the interpretation of this line. I have chosen to follow Gibson (CML 2; 61) and del Olmo Lete (MLC: 203), as their translations fit the context well.
195 As opposed to Maier, ('Aserah: Extrabiblical Evidence: 36, where he suggests that 'Athirat's sons, here also called the brothers of Ba'el, are not actually his physical brothers (brothers via adoption?)'). The point of the text is to convey the message that Baal is among the number of the gods, the bn atr, not to trace his lineage. See also N. Wyatt, 'The Relationship of the Deities Dagan and Hadad' UF 12 (1980): 375-379 for an explanation of Baal's epithet bn dgn.
as queen mother appears to be emphasized throughout the episode, in her support of the king of the gods. Athirat is demonstrated to be most important in her relationship to El, and also important in relationship to the other gods who are her progeny.

Thus far we have been able to discern from the Baal Cycle that Athirat was cast in the role of mother of the gods, and that she had some special relationship with the sea. She appears to be especially concerned with the reigning king among her children. Her 'definition' would seem to emerge from relationships, a trait which will further appear as we explore the final section of the Cycle, 'Baal and Mot'.
2.B.iii. Baal and Mot

Athirat appears only in text 6 of this final section of the Cycle. During what remains of the negotiations between Baal and Mot, she does not appear. This could be by accident of the state of the texts. Both texts 5 and 6 are badly broken. When Athirat does appear in KTU 1.6.1.39-55, it is in relation to first Baal, then El. The text reads (Anat is speaking as the translation begins):

39...tšmh ht 40atrt.w.bnh. 'Now Athirat and her sons will rejoice,' the Goddess and the company of her kin, for dead is Mighty Baal, for perished is the Prince, Lord of the Earth.'

ilt.w šb 41rt.aryk.
k mt.aliyn 42b 'l.
k hľq.xbl.b 'l 43 arš.

'El cried aloud,

gm.ysh il

44l rbt.at rt ym. ūm <

45l rbt.a ū[1] ym.
tn 46 ahd.b.b nk.amlnk

give one of your sons and I will make him king.'

And Lady Athirat of the Sea answered,

47w t 'n.rbt.at rt ym

48bl.nlmk.yd 'yl ūn

49w y 'n. ltpn.il dpi 50d.

And Benevolent El the Compassionate answered,

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197The primary radical has shifted to š from ś in Hebrew. The Arabic cognate retains the ś (del Olmo Lete, MLC: 629).
198An Akkadian cognate for hľq is kalāqu, so Gibson (CML2: 147) and del Olmo Lete (MLC: 552).
199bl in Hebrew is clearly a negative adverb (BDB: 115). In order to accommodate it within the translation, I have followed de Moor (ARTU: 85) in rendering this monocolon as a query.
200Caquot, Szynecer, and Herdner (TO: 256, n. h) cite various attempts at translating the difficult yllh. They provide an Arabic cognate lakīna 'être intelligent'. The same cognate is offered by Gibson (CML2: 150) and del Olmo Lete (MLC: 571).
Here we see Athirat in her position of authority as queen mother. When news of Baal's death is brought, it is she who nominates his successor. This pericope begins with the puzzling statement of Anat that Athirat should rejoice that Baal is dead (lines 39-43). Maier suggests that Athirat may be exalting in her opportunity to put forward one of her sons to accept the kingship.206 His point should not be dismissed, as it offers an alternative to one that assumes that hatred between Athirat and Baal is

201 *anm* would seem to be cognate with Hebrew *‘on*, ‘vigour, wealth’ (BDB: 20a), so Gibson (*CML*²: 75), de Moor (*ARTU*: 85) and del Olmo Lete (*MLC*: 225).

202 *KTU* calls the reading *yrz* into question, and proposes a possible *yrq*. The photograph in *CTA* 2 is unclear at this point, and with both possibilities open, one must chose from context. The point which the text seems to be making is that an intellectual who is not physically fit cannot fill Baal's place.

203 Following Gibson (*CML*²: 154), I would take *‘db* to be cognate with the Hebrew *‘zb* ‘to loose’, in this case ‘to release’, thus BDB: 736b.

204 This word appears to have an Egyptian cognate *mrh*. For the suggestion of the apparent metathesis in Hebrew, see Gordon (*UT*: 437-438) and the reference he makes there.

205 This word is difficult. The root appears to be either *mss*, del Olmo Lete (*MLC*: 580) or *kms* (with an Akkadian cognate *kamassu* ‘to kneel’ (*CML*²: 149)). I take this to be a verbal form, perhaps a Gt stem of the latter root. Although the exact form is unknown, this connotation seems to fit the context well, as the comparison is being made between the physical ability of Baal and of his proposed replacement (see note 202). Gibson (*CML*²: 75) and Watson (*Parallels to Some Passages*: 399), following *TO*, read *k.msm*. This understanding suggests that Athirat's proposed king could not cause a rainstorm at the opportune moment. I have followed the stichometry of N. Wyatt, private communication.

206 *Ašerah: Extrabiblical Evidence*: 36.
portrayed in the texts. Could it not be that Athirat does rejoice in her chance to display her authority? We have seen all along that Athirat is portrayed in relationship to other gods, and this is also true in this instance. Here Athirat is responsible for suggesting who the new king will be, as she perhaps was asked to proclaim a name for Yam, and as she supported Baal's kingship in his request for a palace.

This scenario represents the suggestion made by Gordon, mentioned above; namely, that Athirat, as rabitu, was the 'queen mother', one of whose functions was to name the successor to the throne.\(^{207}\) Since the evidence comes from the text itself at this point, perhaps we should examine Gordon's suggestions and weigh them in light of the evidence.

Rbt (vocalised by Gordon as rabitu) seems to indicate an office of considerable standing. In a recent article Gordon has noticed the lack of an appropriate translation for rabitu.\(^{208}\) Gordon's first piece of evidence for this office from the Ugaritic texts is that in the divorce documentation of King Amištamru II. Amištamru's wife Piddu left him and created a crisis for the royal household in Ugarit. It was her son Utrisharruma who was to be the royal heir, and the title of rabitu was indeed applied to her.\(^{209}\) One of the Ugaritic divorce documents, in Akkadian, after settling the matter of Utrisharruma's position as heir-apparent, contains the following provision:

And in the course of time the daughter of Bentešina [Piddu] with regard to her sons, her daughters and her sons-in-law (?) shall raise no claim: they belong to Ammistemru, king of Ugarit. If she raises a claim this tablet he will produce against her. [Yaron's translation].\(^{210}\)

\(^{207}\) 'Ugaritic rbt ': 130.

\(^{208}\) 'Ugaritic rbt ': 127.

\(^{209}\) See also R. Yaron 'A Royal Divorce at Ugarit' Orientalia 32 (N.S., 1963): 21-31.

\(^{210}\) 'Royal Divorce' : 23.
Much care is taken to lay claim to the children of Amištamru's estranged wife. This would seem to support Gordon's suggestion that it was the rabitu who was the mother to the heir-apparent.

Gordon next draws out the evidence from our present text. He notes that Athirat is asked to provide one of her sons to replace Baal, and that El rejects her first suggestion. He then states:

It is to be noted that the successor to the throne must be a son of the Rabitu (= Asherah), subject to the approval of the Rabitu's royal husband who has advisory and veto power as to which one of her sons shall rule.211

Gordon also presents details of the royal households of Israel and Judah.212 Although his approach cuts across cultures, it should be considered that the genres are all 'royal' and the cultures are linked in some respects. Although the evidence from the reign of Amištamru is taken from Akkadian legal documents, it is probable that the situation presented in the Ugaritic mythology reflects such a cultural reality. El is presented as king in the mythological texts, and Athirat is his consort. She does in KTU 1.6.1.39-55 suggest one of her offspring as the new king, at the request of El. It might be objected that since the gods collectively are her offspring, no matter who she might nominate would of necessity be her son. I would argue that this insists on too much of a modern rationalisation of the story for the study of an ancient mythology. Athirat has the title of

211 'Ugaritic rbt': 130.
rabitu, and in the light of the meaning of this title we would expect her to be the one to nominate the next king, no matter if all the candidates are her children. What is important is that the gods carry out their roles in the myth. In the light of the evidence presented by Gordon, and in consideration of what this text tells us, I am inclined to see the rbt of Athirat's title as indicating her role as the 'queen mother' of Ugaritic mythology in the Baal Cycle.

I have suggested above that Maier's reason for the rejoicing of Athirat at Baal's death (that she now has the opportunity to exercise her role as queen mother) was to be considered plausible. Other scholars have suggested that her rejoicing is the result of her being affronted by Baal as presented in the Hittite Elkunirša myth.²¹³ Such a solution requires stepping outside the narrative as we have it in the Baal Cycle to complete it by another narrative. It also borrows a theme from a myth found within another cultural context (Hittite). This deductive method cannot be used to establish a coherent story line when a specific incident is being explored. The reasons for Athirat's exultation should be found in the Baal Cycle, or left open to question. I believe that Maier's suggestion does find support in the text itself. Another possible reason for the rejoicing of Athirat would recall the reason for her fearful reaction at the approach of Baal and Anat. Could it be that she still resents the harm brought onto Yam by Baal? The text does not state this explicitly, but we may infer it from the contexts in which Athirat is portrayed as distressed at Baal's arrival, and in her title which also connects her with the sea.²¹⁴

²¹³Olyan, Asherah and the Cult of Yahweh: 46.
²¹⁴See N. Wyatt 'Who killed the dragon?' AuOr 5 (1987): 185-198 for the suggestion that Athirat was involved in the overcoming of the sea.
The final mention of Athirat in the Baal Cycle is again in regard to her role as the mother of the gods. In a broken context, after the resuscitation of Baal, a curious incident is recounted in which he is portrayed as smiting the children of Athirat (bn atrt).KTU 1.6.V.1-6 reads:

1 yihd.b 'l.bn.atr t
Baal seized the children of Athirat.

2 rbm.ymh s.b ktp
he smote the great ones with a broad-sword.

3 dkym. ymh s.b sm d
he smote the crushers of Yam with an axe.

4 ̄ 5 gr m.ym$ ̄ l ar$ the small ones he dragged to the ground.

5 p(?) y[ ] l ksi.mlk h
Then (?) Baal [ascended] to the throne of his kingship.

6[ .] l kh.l.drk th
[ ] to the seat of his dominion.

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215 See the discussion of this word in the section on KTU 1.4.IV.58-V.1, above.
216 I follow Gibson (CML2: 149) in his choice of English words, but I would suggest the Hebrew ktp (BDB: 509a) as a cognate. R. Good, in his article 'Some Ugaritic Terms Relating to Draught and Riding Animals' notes that in order to understand the development of the parallel word in this passage (smdi), its original meaning of 'shoulder' must be brought to light (page 79). The development would then be from 'shoulder' to 'shoulder blade' to 'weapon shaped like a shoulder blade' (79). This deduction provides, along with the cognate given by Gibson (Arabic katifu), useful information as to the nature of the weapon.

217 The interpretation of this word is most difficult, as it can support many translations. I have taken it to be from the root dky, in Hebrew dkh, 'to crush' (BDB: 194a). I understand it to be in the construct state. It is also possible that there may be a reference to Yam here as well; on this see the text.

218 So Good, 'Draught and Riding Animals': 79.

219 sg rm seems to be cognate to Hebrew ̄ r 'small, insignificant' (BDB: 858b-859a)

220 Although the sense of ymh is obviously one of combat, an exact word is open to question. Virolleaud mentions the possibility of m$ h being m$ s having been changed by metathesis (Un Poème Phénicien de Ras-Shamra, la Lutte de Mô, Fil de Dieux, et d'aléien, Fils de Baal' Syria 12 (1931): 223. The word m$ h, however, does occur with violent connotations elsewhere (for example KTU 1.3.V.1) and the cognate proposed by Gibson (Arabic masaha, CML2: 151) makes sense in this context.

221 Although the word is missing in the text, the sense is clear enough from context. Other suggestions would be 'returned' or 'sat' or the like.
That this passage presents difficulties to the translator is evident in the many different interpretations which it has generated. Gibson translates:

Baal seized the sons of Athirat
he smote the great ones with the broad-sword,
he smote the 'pounders' of the sea with the mace,
he dragged the yellow ones of Mot to the ground.\textsuperscript{222}

whilst Gordon offers:

Baal seizes the son of Asherah
The great\textit{ one} he smites with a weapon
The tyrant he smites with a stick.
Mot is\textit{ vanquished}
\textit{Trampled} to earth.\textsuperscript{223}

and de Moor suggests:

Ba\textsuperscript{c} lu will seize the sons of Athiratu.
The big ones he will slay with an axe-blade,
those who are like Yammu he will slay with an axe,
the small ones he will pull to the ground.\textsuperscript{224}

These samples will serve to demonstrate the range of interpretation in recent scholarship. This passage seems to say that Baal is smiting someone. The difficulty is to determine who is being attacked. The inclusion of the \textit{rbm} 'great ones' in line 2 and the \textit{sg rm} 'small ones' in line 4 appear to be a merismus. Yet the various translations seem to indicate a lack of consensus even on this point. The issue is further confused by the range of possible translations for the letters \textit{dkym} in line 3. The text may support a mention of the god Yam at this point. Scholars have long

\textsuperscript{222}\textit{CML}\textsuperscript{2}: 79.
\textsuperscript{223}\textit{PLMU}: 115.
\textsuperscript{224}\textit{ARTU}: 94.
recognised the similarities between this passage and Psalm 93.225 Dahood, in the light of this similarity, would understand rbm and dkym as 'plurals of majesty serving as epithets of Baal.'226 P. van Zijl, on the other hand, would leave the questioned words untranslated, content with the knowledge that they are epithets.227 Our understanding of Athirat's association with the sea in her title rbt atrt ym would demand our attention when any possible clue is offered by the texts themselves. As this text does seem to offer clues, we should pay close attention to it.

Our first line of inquiry should be, why Baal is smiting the children of Athirat. We do know that Athirat was frightened at the approach of Baal and Anat in KTU 1.4.II.12-21, and that she was expected to rejoice at the news of Baal's demise in 6.I.39-43. I have argued that this was in response to Baal's slaying of Yam, as well as (in the latter case) her opportunity to exercise her personal function as rabitu. Here we are presented with a text which follows more than half a column of missing information. Column IV, immediately preceding this passage, is broken off, and the second half of column V is missing as well. Within this isolated context, there appears to be a mention of either Yam or of some beings (?) related to the sea (line 3). The list of the smitten person(s) is headed by the category bn atrt.228

226 Psalms II: 341.
228 See the informative article by F. C. Fensham 'The Numeral Seventy in the Old Testament and the Family of Jerubbaal, Ahab, Panammuwa and Athirat' PEQ 109 (1977): 113-115. His remarks about the slaying of the seventy sons show affinity with the episode here presented:

It is thus clear from the examples from Shechem, Samaria and Samat that the princes of the royal house were called 'seventy sons' or 'seventy brothers'. It is also clear that only one of them could somehow lay claim to the throne of his father or his brother. With a coup it is very important for the rebel to kill these princes and to destroy any possible legitimate claim
As Gordon's translation demonstrates, this could be construed as a singular, 'the son of Athirat'. It could also be considered a plural construct, 'the sons (children) of Athirat' rbm 'the great ones' appears to be in parallel with bn atrt, but it could also be construed as a singular (thus Dahood and Gordon). Line 3 has a possible reference to Yam, dkym. The dk has been understood as 'those like' Yam taking the d as a relative pronoun and the k as a preposition.229 It has also been explained as the waves of the sea,230 and as an epithet which links the children of Athirat to their mother.231 It could also be construed as a title of Mot,232 or of Baal,233 or of those being attacked.234 Grammatically, most of these suggestions could be supported. Our recourse to context is of no avail because of its broken state. I would therefore suggest that we appeal to the fact that Athirat is known to have associations with the sea. I would understand 'the crushers of Yam' to be associates of the sea god, as the children of Athirat. Athirat is portrayed as the mother of the gods, and 'the crushers of Yam' appear in parallel with the bn atrt as well as the 'great ones' and 'small ones'. Perhaps in these broken contexts the answer lies as to why Athirat is associated with the sea, but certainty at this stage is impossible.

With this passage our information on Athirat in the Baal Cycle comes to a close. The section 'Baal and Mot' confirms that Athirat is the

to the throne. Certain circumstantial similarities between the events at Shechem and Sam'âl are evident. In both cases the killing was done from the inner-circle of the seventy. In the case of Sam'âl it was done by a son of Baršur and at Ophrah by a son of Jerubbaal.

(Numeral Seventy: 115.)

229De Moor, ARTU: 94; del Olmo Lete, MLC: 231.
230Caquot, Szyncey and Herdner, TO: 265; Coogan, SAC: 114.
231Gibson, CML2: 79, n. 2.
232Gordon, PLMU: 155.
233Dahood, Psalms II: 341.
mother of the gods, 'the seventy sons of Athirat'. She is also the rabītu, and thus has the power to suggest the candidate for kingship when the position is vacant. In the light of this consideration of Athirat's character and role in the Baal Cycle, it is now possible to draw some conclusions.
2.C. Conclusions

In this chapter I have examined the Ugaritic evidence concerning Athirat in the texts written by Elimelek. I have attempted to address the concern about the role of women as 'embodied' in Athirat, and such an attempt has shown that, if women were the 'role models' for the primary goddess, they were essentially seen as being in relationship with their husbands and children. Many scholars cast Athirat in the role of the 'mother-goddess'. Athirat does not appear as the amorphous mother-goddess in the sense described by James:

From the foregoing survey of the Goddess cult in its many forms, phases and manifestations the life-producing Mother as the personification of fecundity stands out clearly as the central figure. Behind her lay the mystery of birth and generation in the abstract, at first in the human and animal world with which Palaeolithic Man was mainly concerned in his struggle for existence and survival; then, when food-gathering gave place to food-production, in the vegetable kingdom where Mother-earth became the womb in which the crops were sown, and from which they were brought forth in due season. With the establishment of husbandry and the domestication of flocks and herds, however, the function of the male in the process of generation became more apparent and vital as the physiological facts concerning paternity were more clearly understood and recognized. Then the Mother-goddess was assigned a male partner, either in the capacity of her son and lover, or of brother and husband. Nevertheless, although he was the begetter of life he occupied a subordinate position to her, being in fact a secondary figure in the cultus.235

Perhaps the most common description given of Athirat or 'Asherah' is that of the mother goddess. This modern epithet is often found in discussions of the goddess,236 but it must be qualified. The Ugaritic evidence from

236 See Maier, 'Ašerah: Extrabiblical Evidence: 193; W. Louie, The Meaning, Characteristics and Role of Asherah in Old Testament Idolatry in Light of Extra-
Elimelek's work does point to a maternal aspect of Athirat, but in relation to two specific sets of offspring: the gods and royal children. Athirat does not appear to be connected with a fertility cult in Keret or the Baal Cycle; the mythology recorded by Elimelek does not connect her with agriculture or husbandry. She is the 'Bearer of the gods' (*KTU* 1.4.1.22), and Yaḥṣib, the royal heir, will suck her milk (15.11.26). She is not generalised into a mother-goddess in an anthropological sense.237

Athirat's actions are primarily presented in her status of having important relationships among the pantheon: she is consort to El, the mother of the gods, and the *rabītu*. As queen mother Athirat named the heir to the throne, and appears to have supported the reigning king. Although Athirat moved in royal circles, the texts portray her as sharing some characteristics with earthly women. She is pictured with a spindle, the pedestrian utensil of a housewife (4.II.3). Her name occurs in parallel with the word 'woman' (3.I.14-15).

We have also noted that the Baal Cycle demonstrates by its repeated usage of the title *rbt aṯr ṣm*, and by the circumstances in which Athirat appears by the sea side or in association with Yam, that she is related in a special way to the sea (Yam?). The precise nature of this special

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relationship cannot be gathered from the texts as they are, but we are able to determine with certainty that some relationship does exist.

Any hints of sexual activity connected with Athirat point to her status as the consort of El. She is not pictured as the lover or consort of Baal. She is the proper means by which to approach El, and she is able to change his mind. These are the characteristics of Athirat as portrayed in the Elimelek tablets. An examination of the remaining Ugaritic references to Athirat may add to our knowledge of her nature.
Having considered the mythological texts of Elimelek, I shall now move to examine the Ugaritic texts which do not fit into his mythological cycles, but which mention Athirat. Although an examination of these smaller texts certainly has a place in a study of Athirat, a question concerning method is raised. I now propose to deal with small, sometimes isolated sections, and up to this point I have been 'contextualising' the information about Athirat into groups which have formed somewhat coherent units, such as 'Keret' and the 'Baal Cycle' of Ugaritic mythology. Can this method be carried over into a study of loosely related texts? What is the 'glue' which holds together small mythological fragments?

It must be admitted at the outset that our knowledge of Athirat's character will not, perhaps, be vastly increased by a collective dossier of coherent facts by examining these small texts. In fact, the information which we stand to glean from such an exploration is small compared with that which we found in the ordered cycles of Elimelek. The value of such a study as this lies principally in the ability which such divergent texts have to confirm or deny characteristics which we have already stated for the Ugaritic 'Elimelek' understanding of Athirat. Such texts as offering-lists also provide a glimpse into the cultic life which mythological texts do not always offer.

Included among these smaller texts is the relatively complete Shachar and Shalim (text 23). Since this is the largest text which will occupy our attention in this chapter, it will be dealt with at the outset. We shall then move on to other brief or isolated mythological texts.
After the fragments I shall discuss the texts which appear to have
ritual connections: offering-lists, god-lists, and ritual calendars.
Comparisons of such texts with each other demonstrate interesting
variations. Although they do not allow us to conclude that sequentially
mentioned deities are related as consorts or families, their ordering of the
deities appears to be significant. Taken together such texts form a loosely
connected genre which provides a context from which to glean cultic
information. Studies\(^1\) have been carried out concerning the ritual texts,
and these presentations remain useful for such an investigation.

3.A. Shachar and Shalim and Mythological Fragments

3.A.i. Shachar and Shalim (\textit{KTU 1.23})\(^2\)

\textit{KTU} 1.23 is a most difficult fusion of myth and ritual. The difficulty
is, in the words of Driver, that 'the connexion between the poetical pieces
and the directions is not always clear'\(^3\). The obverse of the tablet deals with
what seem to be rubrics interspersed with mythological allusions. Athirat

\(^1\)Notably J. C. de Moor, 'The Semitic Pantheon of Ugarit' \textit{UF} 2 (1970): 187-228; J.
Healey, 'The Akkadian "Pantheon" List from Ugarit' \textit{SEL} 2 (1985): 115-125, and also
'The "Pantheon" of Ugarit: Further Notes' \textit{SEL} 5 (1988): 103-111. See the summary of
such lists in W. A. Maier, \textit{Aṣerah: Extrabiblical Evidence} (HSM 37), Atlanta, 1986:
38-44.

\(^2\)For a study of a possible origin see: B. Cutler and J. Macdonald, 'On the Origin of the
Ugaritic Text \textit{KTU} 1.23' \textit{UF} 14 (1982): 33-50, and for general interpretation, E.
Lipiński, 'Fertility in Ancient Ugarit' in \textit{Archaeology and Fertility Cult in the
Ancient Mediterranean}, Papers Presented at the First International Conference on
Archaeology of the Ancient Mediterranean, the University of Malta, 2-5 September
1985, A. Bonanno, ed., Amsterdam, 1986: 207-216; M. Pope, 'Ups and Downs in El's
Amours' \textit{UF} 11 (Schaeffer Festschrift 1979): 701-708; S. Segert, 'An Ugaritic Text
Related to the Fertility Cult (\textit{KTU} 1.23)' in \textit{Archaeology and Fertility Cult: 217-224};
D. Tsumura, 'A Problem of Myth and Ritual Relationship - CTA 23 (UT 52): 56-57

\(^3\)CML: 22.
is mentioned several times, and therefore this section deserves our attention. The reverse of the tablet bears a narrative of the begetting of Shachar and Shalim by El. I will first explore the obverse, then discuss the relevance of the reverse for our investigation.

The first seven lines of the text seem to be an introduction, beginning with 'I proclaim the gracious gods' (iqra.ilm.n ١ [mm]), and ending with a benediction to the king and his retinue. The following lines are set off by a line drawn across the tablet, and they tell of someone called mt wsr; but we cannot be detained with the identity of this character here.4 What we can glean from this section of the text, however, is that it is concerned, in some sense, with 'fertility' themes. This is hinted at by the references to mt wsr being harvested (?) like vines (lines 9-11). I mention this aspect since it may allow us a perspective from which to begin to consider the mythological part of the text. A rubric follows (line 12), which calls for a sevenfold repetition.

Lines 13 through 15 are set off by lines across the tablet. They read:

13 w.ׇd.ׇd.ilm. And the field5 is the field of the gods,
ׇd.ʿātr.w rhm <y> the field of Athirat and Rahma<y>
14'lišt. šb ʿd.gz rm g. upon the fire seven times a hero with voice.6

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4 For a discussion of this character, see N. Wyatt, 'The Identity of Mt wšr ' UF 9 (1977): 379-381, and the references therein.

5 Driver (CML: 121) suggested 'effluence' as a translation for šd, based on the Syriac šgayâ, 'discharge'(148). T. Gaster has suggested (Thespis, Ritual, Myth and Drama in the Ancient Near East, New York, 1950: 225, 242) that šd might be understood as 'breasts' as šd could be substituted for the usual Ugaritic lā, 'breast'. This idea finds support in the fact that both ḥd and šd are substituted for lā with the meaning of 'breast' in text 23 itself (Gordon, UT: 501), and all four words begin with either a sibilant or a dental, and end with dalit. The fact that šd has no direct West Semitic attestation as 'breast', however, calls for caution in consideration of this hypothetical definition.

6 This line is exceptionally difficult. After closely examining the photograph in CTA 2, I have determined that the word concerned is written dgʾrm. In the context, this is
fine coriander in milk, mint in butter, and upon the flame seven times indeed the essence of incense

These lines are notoriously difficult, and any reconstructions remain hypothetical. Although most of the words can be determined on the basis of cognates, they do not seem to fit together coherently. This may simply be the result of their being part of a ritual text, which, although meaningful to the initiated Ugaritian, remains opaque to us. I would suggest that since they contain a mention of Athirat and Rahmay, these lines concern themselves mainly with some aspect of the goddesses, involving a concoction to be placed on a fire. What aspect they reveal we are unable to determine. For our study, we would take interest in the mention of Athirat in line 13. The context is far too terse to inform us greatly about her nature. We may deduce that she is associated with a 'field' and with a goddess called Rahmay. The divine 'fields' which are mentioned in line 13 again seem to point to fertility-related issues, but in what context we cannot say. Since this section, like several others on the face of the tablet, is scored off by lines, they would appear not to form a continuous very difficult to understand. Since the list seems to indicate items to be placed upon a fire, and since dgm, 'incense' appears twice in line 15, I would propose a possible emendment of sb 'd. gzm to sb 'd. gzm as z (♀) and l (♂) are very similar in shape, and misplaced word dividers are not unknown in Ugaritic. I would then suggest that the rm might be an imperative form of rmh (in Hebrew, 'to shoot, cast', BDB: 941a) 'cast incense'. The difficulty with this suggestion is that it leaves the gimel following gzm unaccounted for. I would recommend emendation as a final course of action, particularly with such a difficult text. My tentative reading, however, does seem to bring some order into the chaos, without disturbing the integrity of the text too much.

7 I take agn to be an Indo-European loan word for 'fire' (Gordon, UT: 351).
8 dm would seem to be an emphatic particle here, as sb alone could have the connotation of 'seven times' (see previous line, and CML2: 144, 158).
9 Literally, 'incense of incense'; I understand this to point to the basic quality of incense, its 'essence'.

narrative with the lines before or after. The next line, however, does make a reference to hunting (\textit{wtsd}) which was presumably carried out in 'fields'.

The identity of Rahmay has been much discussed by scholars, many of whom understand her to be a form of Anat\textsuperscript{10} Another line of interpretation is to take Rahmay as an epithet of Athirat, as do Gordon and \textit{TO}.\textsuperscript{11} This issue is of much interest to our study of Athirat, but the text does not easily provide an answer; thus it is a matter of interpretation. Nowhere else in our Ugaritic mythological texts do we see a double name of Athirat-Rahmay, nor can it be said to refer explicitly to Anat.

The following three lines, 16-18, are damaged, but seem to contain a reference to the goddess(es) again.

\begin{verbatim}
16tlkm.\textit{thmy.w t\textit{s} d [ ]} Rahmay went out and hunted[ ]
17thgrn.\textit{g zr.n 'm.[ ]} they girded on, the pleasant hero[ ]
18w\textit{sm.\textit{rbm.y r[ ]} and the name entered . . [ ]}
\end{verbatim}

Since Rahmay is mentioned in line 16, and since line 17 begins with what may be a feminine plural verb, we may speculate that Athirat was in parallel with her in the missing part of line 16.\textsuperscript{12} As such a conjecture cannot be textually supported, I shall only mention it as a possibility.

The next certain mention of Athirat comes in the refrain at lines 23 - 27, which are also set off by a line before and after them.

\begin{verbatim}
23\textit{iqr an.i bn.n 'm m} I call on the gracious gods,
[.ag\textit{zrym.bn} y m [the ones dividing\textsuperscript{13} the sons of] the sea,
\end{verbatim}

\textsuperscript{10}Driver, \textit{CML}: 121; Gaster, \textit{Thespis} : 225, 242; de Moor, \textit{ARTU}: 120; Gibson, \textit{CML\textsuperscript{2}}: 157; and del Olmo Lete, \textit{MLC}: 623.
\textsuperscript{11}Gordon, \textit{PLMU}: 60 reads this as a double name, Asherah-and-Rahm, and Caquot, Sznycer and Herdner (\textit{TO}: 371, note m) suggest she is 'un doublent d'\textit{Athirat}'.
\textsuperscript{12}This was also tentatively restored by \textit{TO}: 371, as well as by del Olmo Lete \textit{MLC}: 442.
\textsuperscript{13}The lacuna is restored on the basis of lines 58 - 59. As \textit{agzrym} may be construed as a dual, I would read it as such, thus removing the difficulty of two mentions of the
Again we are faced with problems of interpretation. The identity of the gracious gods is not clearly revealed, although it is of interest that they are associated with both Athirat (whose nipples they suck) and the sea (whose sons (?) they divide). We have noted in the previous chapter that Athirat is associated with the sea, but the exact relationship is not specified. Once again, although this time beyond the mythological cycles of Elimelek, we see a tangential relationship of Athirat and the sea - those who suckle at her breasts divide (?) the sons of the sea.

Also from this section we note that Athirat is here mentioned, not with Anat, but with Shapash. The reference to a numbering of branches in line 25 may point to an agricultural concern for the text. A maternal aspect also seems to be demonstrated by the mention of the suckling at Athirat's breasts. Her previously noted role as the mother of the gods in the Elimelek cycles also seems to be reinforced here.

This passage is immediately followed by a partial repetition of line 13, restored as:

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sea in the line. The word agzrym itself is interesting. N. Wyatt (private communication) has pointed out that a form of this verb in Hebrew occurs in parallel with 'kl in Isa. 9.19 (Eng. 20); thus allowing for the suggestion of 'devourers'.

14msprt appears to be a feminine participle of spr, 'to count'; dltm could be from dstt, 'branch' (BDB: 194b). In a context of fields and vines in the text as a whole, it would make sense to have a line stating that the sun was numbering the fruits of (the land ?).
Does this have anything to do with the preceding fertility motifs of suckling and branches? The difficulty of relating the refrains and other scored-off pieces of the texts adds to the interpretative troubles. The following line, 29, is too damaged to translate, but it does not appear to be the same line which follows line 13, as the legible letters are the wrong ones.

This brings us to the end of the obverse. The texts with which we have been concerned are marked by their difficulty. Alternative translations and interpretations may be supported for the lines which I have translated; however, I believe that my translations reflect the basic nature of the text. Concerning Athirat we have been able to see that certain aspects of her character delineated by Elimelek may have carried through to other Ugaritic myths. She apparently retains some relationship to the sea, as well as retaining maternal features (lines 23-24). Now we must consider whether the reverse of the tablet concerns Athirat, or simply unnamed women.

The difficulties in understanding the relationship between the two sides of this tablet are pronounced. The text of the reverse is in relatively good condition, and the repetitiveness assists in filling in the gaps. The narrative relates how El, seeing two women (mštʿltm in lines 31, 35, 36 and also atlml in lines 39, 42, 43, 46, 48), subsequently seduces them. They conceive and give birth to first, Shachar and Shalim, and then to the gracious gods. The first interpretative difficulty encountered is that the women are nowhere named. The only goddess named in the narrative part of the tablet is Shapash in line 54:
Raise, prepare for Shapash the Lady and the established stars [ ]

Apparently an offering is being presented to Shapash, presumably for the birth of Dawn and Dusk. The title rbt, discussed in the previous chapter, is used for Athirat in the Elimelek cycle, but we must be cautious about suggesting that it would necessarily refer to her here. Elimelek gives us no grounds for supposing that Athirat is a solar deity. Likewise, Athirat is not given the title rbt in text 23, and when the title is given to her in the Baal Cycle, it is in the fuller form rbt aprt ym. We cannot equate the two goddesses on the basis of this title, especially when the forms of the two myths involved are so different.

In any case, it does not seem that Shapash is considered to be the mother of the gods in the narrative. She does, however, appear to be credited with some kind of thanks for their birth. She is mentioned with the 'established stars', placing her in the heavens, where Shachar and Shalim (probably the two phases of Venus as morning and evening star) are located. We should expect no less of a sun goddess. The meaning of line 54 is not altogether clear, and the following lines do not dissipate the obscurity, for they are a repetition of the account of El impregnating the women.

Are these two women in the narrative section the goddesses mentioned on the obverse? Many scholars answer this question in the affirmative. One of the first difficulties with this interpretation is the identity of Rahmay - is she a double of Athirat, or is she Anat or another goddess? Does she count as one of the women (she is treated as an individual in line 16), or is she to be considered one with Athirat? Shapash also appears to be mentioned on the obverse (line 25); is she one of the two women? If Rahmay is Anat, then the mention of Shapash increases the
goddesses mentioned to three. The problem becomes more acute in that the
gracious gods are said to suck the breasts of 'the Lady' (št) in line 61 (and
perhaps also 59). This title appears in Aqhat as a title of Anat, but any of
the goddesses could conceivably be called 'the lady'.

In the light of the general difficulty in interpreting this text, and
the profusion of titles and names of goddesses, it cannot be stated with
certainty that the two women are Athirat and Rahmay. The birth of two
sets of children does seem to indicate a fertility aspect to the reverse of the
text, but that does not necessitate the presence of Athirat. In consideration
of these problems, I believe we should suffice with what we have gleaned
about Athirat above: she is portrayed as related to the sea (indirectly) and
she is related to the maternal aspect of fertility in some respect. To suggest
any more is to go beyond the present evidence.

3.A.ii. \textit{K TU 1.8}

\textit{K TU} 1.8 is apparently either column number II or V of a six column
tablet, according to Dietrich, Loretz and Sanmartin. In content, it
appears to be part of a recension of the Baal Cycle. This small fragment
contains some 17 lines which juxtapose small sections gleaned from a myth
similar to tablet \textit{K TU} 1.4. The first two lines nearly repeat 4.1.21-22, which
are Baal's instructions to Kothar-and-Khasis to make a gift for Athirat. The
lines in text 8 read:

\begin{verbatim}
1 ik.mgn.rbt.a 1r1 2[y]m.(?) a gift for Lady Athirat of the Sea,
mgz.qny.t.lim a present for the Bearer of the Gods.
\end{verbatim}

\footnote{See \textit{K TU} page 30, note 1 on text 8.}
\footnote{The corresponding text in 1.4.1.20-22 has \textit{m} preceding \textit{mgn}. With the broken
context, I can make no sense of \textit{ik} here.}
The text next moves on to Baal's request for a house in lines 3-5 and thereafter to the enigmatic statement of Baal to his servants in 4.VII.54f. This would appear to be a summary of some of the main elements of the Palace of Baal episode. For our present concern, it does mention Athirat, but unfortunately it does not add anything to our observations about her characteristics.

3.A.iii. KTU 1.1217

This text is most difficult to translate. This is in part due to its unfortunate break which leaves us without the very top of the tablet and without the second half of much of column II. Briefly summarised, the text tells of the birth of the 'devourers' (\textit{qqm}) by Dmgy, the handmaid of Athirat (\textit{amt aqrt}). Baal spies and 'covets' (\textit{hm}d) the creatures. After pursuing them, Baal has a fall, later apparently to be found by his siblings. The text, as we have it, thus ends. De Moor, who supposes the text to have been written by an inexperienced scribe, concurs with many scholars that the text may well have ended at the close of column II. The reverse of the tablet is blank, which supports this. Gordon simply notes that double lines at this point indicate that the scene has ended.

Our concern is what we may learn about Athirat from this broken tablet. Athirat plays no direct part in what is left of the myth; it is her

\footnote{17For studies of this text, see A. Kapelrud, 'Baal and the Devourers' \textit{Ug} 6 (1969): 319-332; J. Gray, 'The Hunting of Ba'\textael: Fratricide and Atonement in the Mythology of Ras Shamra' \textit{JNES} 10 (1951): 146-155; and N. Wyatt, 'Atonement Theology in Ugarit and Israel' \textit{UF} 8 (1976): 415-430.}
\footnote{18KTU 1.12.1.16-17.}
\footnote{19See Gordon, PLMU: 121.}
\footnote{20\textit{ARTU}: 128, see also Gray 'The Hunting of Ba'\textael': 152, Wyatt, 'Atonement Theology': 415.}
\footnote{21PLMU: 125.}
handmaid (along with Tlsh, the handmaid of Yarikh) who bears one of the 'devourers'. This indirect parallelism between Yarikh and Athirat is unique in the Ugaritic corpus, and it occurs in an obscure myth. Gray attempts to understand the role of the goddess by stating 'We take 'amt in apposition to 'afrt and in construct relationship to yrh, the Moon-god or El'.\(^{22}\) He further suggests, 'El himself is probably the Moon-god and Aṯirat his consort'.\(^{23}\) Gray understands the point of the text to be the consideration of fratricide and the punishment of the blood-guiltiness of Baal. Kapelrud does not take great pains to identify the handmaids, but he does offer an alternative interpretation. He supposes that the devourers are locusts, impregnated by Baal, which increase and cause famines.\(^{24}\) Brink does not draw any explicit relationship between the handmaids and Athirat, but he argues that the purpose of the text is to demonstrate the positive relationship between Athirat and Baal.\(^{25}\) Wyatt argues that this text deals with the same fight between Baal and Mot presented in text 6.\(^{26}\)

As to the identity of the handmaids, Wyatt contends that:

The two mothers-to-be, called 'Tlš the handmaid of Yarihu' (i 14f.) and 'Dmgy the handmaid of Aṯirat' (i 16f.) or perhaps better 'the handmaid Aṯirat', are to be understood as the wives of El. They call El 'our father', as we have seen, and El's wives in CTA 23 do the same (i 33, ii 9). In that text the wives are Aṯirat and ṭḥmy, the latter probably to be understood not as 'Anat (which would make nonsense of the mythological structure of the episode) but as Ṣapš, the sun-goddess, ultimately to be identified with Aṯirat, herself an ancient sun-goddess.\(^{27}\)

\(^{22}\)Gray, 'The Hunting of Baʿal': 146, note 8.
\(^{24}\)Kapelrud, 'Baal and the Devourers': 222-225.
\(^{26}\)Wyatt, 'Atonement Theology': 420.
\(^{27}\)Wyatt, 'Atonement Theology': 417.
The suggestions presented above are worth considering, but the text itself, as we have it, does not state that Athirat is indeed one of the mothers. The myth, even if contained on only two columns, is too badly broken to determine its genre with certainty (although the falling and rescue of Baal may indicate a possible rebirth).\textsuperscript{28} I suggest that all we can learn about Athirat in this context is that she is indirectly associated with childbirth. Her handmaid is sent to the desert to bear a child. This maternal aspect accords with what we know of her through the myths of Elimelek, but to state much more about her in this context goes beyond the available evidence.

3.A.iv. \textit{KTU 1.114}

This intriguing text has been interpreted in several ways by many scholars. The mythological tale of a divine feast is followed by a blank space on the tablet, then a rubric appears, perhaps for curing a hangover. The interest which this text has for our present study is that some scholars have suggested that Athirat appears in it, in a mere mention. Other scholars have supposed that the text supports some other interpretation. The relevant lines are 14 - 16, which are somewhat damaged:

\begin{verbatim}
14b il.\textit{lab}g c\textit{r}.
yt\textit{b. il.w} 115a tr[t .]
il.\textit{yl. b}b mrz\textit{h}h
16y št.\textit{yl}n. ’d šb c.
t\textit{r}. ’d škr 29
\end{verbatim}

to El his father he gave rebuke, El sat and (?) Athirat (?), El sat in his marzeah, he drank wine until satisfied, new wine until drunk.

\textsuperscript{28}This has been tentatively suggested in my article 'Old Testament Dagan in the Light of Ugarit', forthcoming in \textit{VT}.

\textsuperscript{29}I have, for the sake of convenience, followed the text as presented by \textit{KTU}.
The difficulty with this section of the text is that the damaged portions obscure the parallelism. Supposing that \textit{ylb il} in line 14 begins a bicolon, paralleled by a similar \textit{il ylb} in line 15, it might be proposed that \textit{at} [ ] should be parallel with \textit{mrzh}.\textsuperscript{30} The restoration to \textit{at} is conjectural, and many scholars have suggested alternative readings for this word and for other uncertain letters in lines 14-15. De Moor had originally accepted this restoration and read lines 14-15 as:

(but) Ilu and the sons of \textit{Atirat} remained seated,  
Ilu remained seated among his \textit{mrzh}-guests.\textsuperscript{31}

He later decided that the reading should follow Virolleaud's original reading in \textit{Ugaritica V}, which he restored as \textit{kb `aśk [rr]}.

\begin{quote}
Ilu is sitting as if he is on the henbane drug,  
Ilu is sitting with his society.\textsuperscript{32}
\end{quote}

This proposal, however, has not found a wide following. Rainey dismissed the reconstruction of \textit{at}: 'The awkward expression, \textit{bal[rr]} (Virolleaud followed by Loewenstamm) does not commend itself. In any event the passage is not crucial for the main line of thought in the text'.\textsuperscript{33} Although Rainey is correct in pointing out that the line is not crucial for understanding the text, our concern is to discover if Athirat is mentioned.

Pope reconstructs lines 14-15 as:

\begin{quote}
\textit{b il abh.g `r,ll ylb.il.[b(?)]} El his father he chided. El sat [in]
\end{quote}

\textsuperscript{30}For a discussion of the \textit{mrzh} as an institution see J. C. Greenfield 'The \textit{marzeah} as a Social Institution' \textit{AAASH} 22 (1974): 451-455.
\textsuperscript{32}J. C. de Moor, 'Henbane and KTU 1.114' \textit{UF} 16 (1984): 355-356.
Pope further comments: 'There is no objection to El sitting with his sometime consort and mother of his numerous progeny, but she is not mentioned elsewhere in the text and the parallelism suggests a place rather than a person.' The objection to Athirat not being mentioned elsewhere could be countered by the fact that Ṭkmn-and-Šnm is only mentioned once in the text, and that Ḥby also appears just once. The issue of the parallelism is the crux, but the broken end of line 14 seems to preclude any certainty. Xella follows Pope's reconstruction.

Margalit, basing his arguments on his stichometry and alliteration, reconstructs the passage thus:

```
ytb.il. [w]?  l ayr [h.]  (But) El was presiding in [his] thiasus,
il.ytb.bmrzh h  El was presiding in his "symposium." 37
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However, even with his elaborate criteria for understanding the metre and phonetic structure of the passage, Margalit is forced to rely on scribal error to account for the troublesome lacuna at the end of line 14.38

Cathcart and Watson do find a mention of Athirat in the text, proposing:

```
bil[.]  abh.g'r.  He reproves his father El.
ytb.il.kb[n]/at[rt]  El continues to sit like a s[on of Athi]rat,
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35 Pope, 'Divine Banquet': 190.
38 Margalit, 'Ugaritic Feast': 104-105.
They do not comment further on the mention of Athirat.

The possible reference to Athirat in this passage must remain just that. The lacuna at the end of line 14 does not permit any reconstruction with certainty, despite the many attempts at a solution. Studies which point to parallelism are likewise based on assumptions about the missing characters at the end of the line. For the purposes of this study it is sufficient to state that some scholars consider Athirat to be mentioned in this text, but it is in a context which would add very little to our understanding of her character.

3. A. v. RIH 78/20

One final text must be considered under our consideration of mythological mentions of Athirat. One of the texts found at Ras Ibn Hani in 1978 is a well-preserved tablet that mentions Athirat. Bordreuil and Caquot classify the text as 'mythologique', de Moor and Avishur both consider it an incantation, and Saracino suggests that it is a cure for impotence. More recently Caquot has labelled the text an 'exorcisme'
after the initial word $ydy$. That the text involves some kind of 'driving out' is apparent from the use of $ydy$, but the object being driven is still debated. Our concern is why Athirat is named in a text for expelling a malady or spirit. We are not assisted by knowing what the nature of the exorcised entity is.

The reference to Athirat occurs in line 16. The two previous lines appear to be a bicolon, as do lines 16 and 17. The difficulty comes in that the beginning of 17 is broken, and thus we are not able to determine the parallelism of the bicolon.

16 $hn.\text{bnps.} a\text{grt.rb}.t.bl$ behold from the throat of Lady Athirat, from(?)
17 $xx}rk.\text{lgtm.itbnnk}$ [ ] ? . . . I perceive you$^{45}$

The obvious difficulty is the broken context. Avishur does not attempt a translation of these two lines, content to recognise the words 'the Lady Ashera'.$^{46}$ De Moor understands 16-18 as two bicola:

$$\begin{align*}
\text{lo, in the soul of Athiratu, the Lady,} \\
\text{in the heart of your [ ] may you be moulded!} \\
\text{Let me observe you intently [ ]} \\
\text{and certainly do not enter!} \quad \text{47}
\end{align*}$$

Caquot translates:

Voici, dans la gorge de la Dame Athirat

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$^{45}$The form $\text{itbnnk}$ appears to be a $\text{tL}$ form, according to Gordon's paradigms (*UT*: 155). I follow Bordreuil and Caquot ('Les textes en cunéiformes alphabétiques': 349) in understanding the root for $\text{bnn}$ in Hebrew $\text{bym}$, which appears in the form of $\text{yebône nehû}$ in Deut. 32.10 (BDB: 107a).

$^{46}$'The Ghost-Expelling Incantation': 16.

$^{47}$'Incantation against Evil Spirits': 430.
Caquot and Bordreuil suggest that Athirat is present here in the role of the 'patronne de la mer'; however her maritime role is not obvious. In this fragment we have Athirat mentioned in connection with some kind of exorcism. Her exact role, and thus any information on her character, is, at present, lost to us.

3.B. Texts associated with Ritual

3.B.i. KTU 1.39

This text is an offering-list, wherein Athirat, mentioned in line 6, is given a sheep. The arrangement of gods is most interesting. Initially El is mentioned in the first two lines, where he is presented with two ewes, a dove, two kidneys, a liver of a bullock, and a sheep. Line 3, although obscure, mentions Tkmn-and-Šnm, and line 4 names Resheph. Next Baal is mentioned as receiving a sheep, then Athirat followed by Tkmn-and-Šnm. Line 7 enumerates like offerings for Anat and Resheph, and mentions the family of El (dr il) and the assembly of Baal (p[ḥ]r b c).

The fact that Athirat follows Baal in this list speaks nothing of the alleged mythological association of the two. An offering list would be inclined to show the objects of personal devotion rather than to sketch
mythological scenarios. What is interesting about this particular listing is that it places a relatively infrequently mentioned Tkmn- and Šnm twice in the first six lines. This double-god\(^{52}\) appears in KTU 1.114, which may also mention Athirat. In this text he (they) is (are) presented as helping the drunken El reach his house. Resheph is also mentioned twice, but the major mythological figures of Baal, Athirat, and Anat appear only once. This should caution against using offering lists to explain mythological scenarios. We do have here, however, evidence that Athirat was worshipped in the cult of Ugarit, as well as being portrayed in the mythology.

3.B.ii. **KTU 1.41 and 1.87**

This ritual text is similar to text 1.39,\(^{53}\) and is partially restored on the basis of text 1.87,\(^{54}\) of which it seems to be a duplicate. Athirat is mentioned twice in preserved lines, and once in a restoration (line 35). Her first mention is in line 15 (1.87.16), amid the same order of deities presented in text 39. Even with the assistance of text 87, the proposed second mention of Athirat in line 35 (1.87.38) is not certain. Dietrich, Loretz and Sanmartín leave the section concerned untranscribed (or restored), and Xella does not read Athirat there.\(^ {55}\) De Tarragon proposes to restore lines 34-36 as:

\[
\ldots \text{une génisse pour [Ba'\text{"}al]} \\
\text{d'Ou[ga]rit; un mouton pour le di[eu]-père, [ Athirat;]}\]

\(^{52}\)Possibly to be identified with the divine pair Shukamuna and Shumaliya (N. Wyatt, *The Story of Dinah and Shechem* UF 22 (1990): 446-447).

\(^{53}\)TO2: 135, concerning 1.39 'Le texte 1.41 en est très proche (anssi que 1.87)'.

\(^{54}\)TO2: 152; Xella, *Testi Rituali*: 63, 74.

\(^{55}\)Dietrich, Loretz and Sanmartín, 'Texteinheiten in RS 1.2': 144, and also in KTU, page 75; Xella, *Testi Rituali*: 60, 62.
De Moor argues for a seasonal interpretation relating to the New Year festival for this text. His lines 35 and following read:

a ram for Ba'lu of Ugarit,
a ram for Il'ibu,
[ ] for Ilu,
a ram for Athiratu
and two birds for Ri'thu.

The letters remaining in this broken section are, on the basis of 1.87, read as ...rt by KTU. This combination certainly would support the name Athirat, but of this we cannot be certain. If Athirat is mentioned here, we have her name presented among a differing list of gods than that presented above. Her name does appear in line 40, but again the context is difficult. De Tarragon reads lines 38-41 as:

Au cinquième (jour), [(au) temple de El, un sicle d'ar-
[gent] (en) hommage, et un sacrifice-db[h ]
[pour] Athirat; des oiseaux [pour inš des dieux.]
[On re]vient (à) l'autel de Ba'tal: une génis[se pour Ba'tal;]

De Moor renders them as:

On the fifth:
One full shekel of silver for the House of Ilu
and sacrifice like [     ].
[     ] for Athiratu,
two birds for the Most Amiable of the gods.
Repeat: 'Altar of Ba'lu.'

Maier simply translates the relevant line:

56 TO2: 157.
57 ARTU: 157-158.
58 ARTU: 163.
59 TO2: 157.
60 ARTU: 163-164.
Aṭīrat; birds for the ʾins of the gods.  

The deities mentioned in this list vary in order and in who is included. Athirat is clearly mentioned following the house of El (restored on the basis of 1.87), and immediately preceding the ins ilm. De Moor's rendering seems to be based on root II of ʾns 'be inclined to, friendly, social' in BDB. This root does support other connotations such as 'to be weak', 'to be soft', and in the Old Testament in general it seems to be a description of the human condition. In any case, for our consideration the question should be asked: is ins ilm intended to be parallel to Athirat? As the ritual texts, such as these, were probably not intended for recitation as much as to preserve priestly ritual, we should not expect them to be poetic in the same sense as the narrative poems of Elimelek, or the mythological fragments. An examination of the list under discussion also gives us no grounds for considering a parallelistic structure as opposed to a simple enumeration. As noted above, the order of the deities, which inevitably varies between individual lists, and even between sections within a single list, cannot inform us as to the mythological relationships between the gods. What this text does seem to indicate is that Athirat had a thriving cult at Ugarit, and she was considered worthy of offerings.

3.B.iii. KTU 1.46 and 1.65

Text 1.46 has caused much speculation about the relationship between Baal and Athirat, since they are mentioned as the joint recipients

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61 Maier, ʾAṣerah: Extrabiblical Evidence: 40.
62 BDB: 60 b.
63 BDB: 60-61.
of a bullock in line 8. This is an example of the result of gathering information about 'Asherah' from divergent sources taken from varying genres and piecing together a larger picture of the goddess. This method may have been useful in the earlier days of Ugaritic studies in order to appreciate the scope of a deity's importance. Now that several years of this practice have transpired, we must examine the evidence within its own context to test the general theories which have grown out of this method. I have noted above that offering lists are notorious for spawning speculation about mythological relationships, although this was not their intended purpose. If we were to interpret modern religious dedications in such a way, many commentators would be hard-pressed to explain such church names as 'St. Paul's and St. George's' or 'St. Andrew's and St. George's'. If two gods are offered a sheep together it does not indicate that a consort relationship exists between them. Such dedications may exhibit nothing more than an indication of when a particular 'feast day' fell, or they may be simply a measure of popular piety: a worshipper may have offered a bullock to both Baal and Athirat because of a vow. In our present state of uncertainty of cultic practice at Ugarit, we have no basis to connect these god lists with our mythological episodes. In the light of the present discussion, KTU 1.65 should also be mentioned. Line 5 of this text reads il w aṯr, which immediately follows trmn w šnm. This text alone would not allow us to determine that El and Athirat were consorts. Their names are connected by w; this is not necessarily a sign of a consort relationship.


The deity referred to here may be tknm w šnm, known from other texts. In consideration of the fact that trmn occurs in other lists as well, we should not discount the possibility that this deity is intended here. The difference between the names in cuneiform only involves two wedges: \( r = (\text{ canada }) \) and \( k = (\text{ canada }) \).
since it is known from the names of double-gods such as Kothar-and-Khasis and Qodesh-and-Amrur. Without the mythological texts to support this relationship, we would not be able to assert the consortship of El and Athirat from the god-lists. The same is true of Baal and Athirat in text 46. Placing them together as consorts strains the evidence, and elsewhere in this same text (46.6) we have a reference to Athirat in a straightforward list with other deities. Line 6 allocates a sheep to El (partially reconstructed), Baal, Athirat and Yam, respectively. Line 3, following a lacuna, records a sheep for El, Baal and Dagon, in that order. Rank would seem to be more the concern than consort relations. Extreme caution must be exercised when one attempts to make mythological assumptions on the basis of ritual lists.

3.B.iv. *KTU* 1.49

This tiny fragment is another offering list which names Athirat, albeit in a partially reconstructed context. She apparently follows El (also partially reconstructed) and preceeds Pidray (likewise reconstructed) and Ahtart. Each deity is offered a gift, but what is important for our study is the order of the gods mentioned. The mention of Pidray is unusual, and if such lists betrayed mythological episodes, we should be at a loss to explain it here. The order of names in offering lists, as this example demonstrates, varies by factors beyond our knowledge.

3.B.v. *KTU* 1.112

This text is another offering list. Athirat appears on the reverse, in line 24, as the recipient of two sheep. Her name occurs in a list of deities
and their offerings on the preserved portion of the text. She follows El, Baal Zephon, and the Baal of Ugarit, each of whom receives one sheep. This may indicate a high status for Athirat in the devotional life of Ugarit, but we cannot decide this certainly on the basis of just one such tablet. Our recovered tablets contain the names of many gods in several orders, and the deities receive different offerings in different contexts. It is interesting to note here, however, that Baalat appears to be mentioned separately in line 4 of the obverse of this text. Baalat is often considered as an epithet of Athirat, but such an offering text as this may indicate that she had a separate cult at Ugarit.

3.B.vi. *KTU* 1.47, 1.118 and 1.148

This god list is of special interest because it exists in both Ugaritic and Akkadian recensions. RS 20.24 provides Akkadian forms of the Ugaritic names in texts 1.47 and 1.118, and text 1.148 is an offering-list which largely follows the order of these two lists. Athirat appears in line 19, paralleled by *Aṣratum* in RS 20.24, and she is offered a sheep in text 148. There has been speculation about this list as well, since so many major figures appear so far down the list. Although such a list, appearing as it does in two languages, appears to have a 'canonical' aspect about it, we must remember that it is only one of a large number of god lists found at Ugarit. It should also be noted that 148 varies the order of some of the divinities; for example, Ušḫry and Athtart change places, and Utbt drops out following Yam in 148. Extreme caution should be shown before declaring any one list

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66 I am indebted to N. Wyatt for pointing this fact out to me.
67 The reference to Athirat is completely missing in *KTU* 1.47; however, on the basis of the preserved sections of this list it has been linked to the other two texts.
as more indicative of Ugaritic religion than any of the others. In this particular list, Athirat follows $grm\ w\ [smt] \ and\ proceeds\ Anat. \ A\ further varied order is thus added to our list.

3.C. Conclusions

This chapter has taken into account the references to Athirat outside of the Elimelek corpus. Although most of the texts are either ritual texts or fragmentary, they do offer support to certain of Athirat's characteristics observed in the Elimelek tablets. In KTU 1.23 Athirat once again appears to possess a maternal aspect. Since she gives suck to mythological creatures there, this may well be a reflection on her role as the mother of the gods. Other characteristics of Athirat do not appear to be evoked in these tablets. The ritual texts demonstrate that Athirat was actively worshipped in the cult of Ugarit. It is important that the order of deities in these lists not be forced into mythological hypotheses. As offering-lists, they simply tell us about the cultic life of the city. This is an area in which more study is necessary.

With these characteristics of Athirat in mind, we are now ready to examine the evidence of the Old Testament concerning Asherah.
Chapter Four
Old Testament Asherah

4. Preliminary Considerations

In chapters two and three of this study, I have examined the solid information concerning the character of the goddess Athirat in the Ugaritic material. Since Ugarit is the locus of the most abundant information on her character, it must be used as a touchstone for other ancient Near Eastern references to goddesses of the same name. The questions to be put forth in this chapter are 'Is there an Old Testament goddess Asherah? If so, is she to be identified with the goddess Athirat as established by Ugaritic materials?' Although many scholars dealing with the issue of the asherah in the Old Testament admit the presence of a goddess there, dissenting voices are still to be heard.\(^1\) I shall not assume that she is present unless the evidence so indicates.

A word concerning terminology is necessary. Since הָרְשָׁא in the Old Testament may refer to a cultic object, or perhaps to a goddess, I shall differentiate between these two usages by capitalising the name of the goddess. The cultic object will not be italicised, except where it represents a strict transliteration. Where the context is ambiguous, I shall use הָרְשָׁא.

Upon examining the contemporary studies on Asherah, one discovers that many attempts at a text-critical approach to the Old Testament references are to be found. The monograph of W. Reed carefully considers which verbs are used with the asherah and which cultic objects

are mentioned in the same verses with it. The dissertations of J. Engle, A. Perlman and R. Petey compare the cultic objects mentioned or attempt to discern a formula which the Old Testament utilizes concerning the ashera. T. Yamashita, following the Old Testament work of Reed, demonstrated a deuteronomistic source for many Old Testament ashera references. Although the information gathered from such investigations is helpful, the usefulness of a textual investigation into each of the forty verses where a form of the word הַשְּרָשָׁה appears will still be most instructive.

In the Old Testament הַשְּרָשָׁה is found in deuteronomistic sources (in deuteronomistic passages of the Pentateuch and the Deuteronomistic History), in the chroniclers' account of Israelite history, and in the prophetic books. In this dissertation I shall examine each of these three categories in turn. I shall examine the deuteronomistic background of many of the Old Testament references to הַשְּרָשָׁה and shall attempt to determine if the textual history of the verses yields any information on the goddess Asherah. A thorough investigation into the nature of the deuteronomistic redactors of the Pentateuch and Deuteronomistic History is beyond the scope of this dissertation. It must suffice to say that the deuteronomists have been widely recognized in their editorial work on passages dealing with cultic matters in the Old Testament.

2W. Reed, *The Asherah in the Old Testament*, Fort Worth, 1949, chapters III, IV, and V.
5Exod. 34.13 is possibly an exception to this category. See below.
Is it possible to determine if Old Testament writers or redactors knew of Asherah as a goddess? Text-critical principles may be used to enlighten the issue, although they cannot finally demonstrate if a goddess was recognised. In this chapter I shall note the textual difficulties as they appear. If these difficulties perhaps indicate that the writer or redactor knew of Asherah, I shall note this point. My principle concern, however, will not be to determine the date or authorship of the various passages discussed; neither shall I attempt to determine the overall form of the asherah as a cultic object. As will be shown, this cultic object is generally conceived of as a wooden object, and therefore the assistance of archaeology in this situation is extremely limited. The texts themselves tell us little about its actual shape. Instances where the texts give us insight into possible forms of the asherahs will be noted. Each verse's contribution in this respect will also be considered in its own context. An insistence on a consistent form of the asherah in each verse, imposed from a modern perspective, should be avoided. In this chapter, however, my primary objective is to determine what, if anything, the texts themselves tell us about the nature and character of Asherah.

Many scholars have followed on the groundwork laid out by Yamashita, which argues for the deuteronomistic nature of the references to אֵשֶׁרֶת in the Old Testament. This interpretation does account for many of the אֵשֶׁרֶת references; nevertheless a difference is discernible between earlier and later texts. I shall look closely at the language of each verse or pericope concerning either the cultic object or the goddess. This exercise...
will reveal some interesting tendencies to be found in the Masoretic Text, and perhaps will shed some light on deuteronomistic theology. This is an area in which new information may be gleaned for discussions of Asherah.

Concerning matters of method: conclusions drawn from our study of Athirat should not be initially incorporated into the Old Testament understanding of Asherah. It is necessary first to test the Old Testament materials to determine what they tell us about Asherah. I shall limit the textual study to what the texts themselves will support. After a thorough examination of the evidence, I shall attempt to determine if the nature and character of Old Testament Asherah coincide with Ugaritic Athirat. A method which I shall avoid is that of using tentative support from the Old Testament to give credence to composite theories based on several sources of information. An example of this kind of theory is one which states that the Old Testament views Asherah and Baal as consorts. This theory is built upon the assumption that Ugaritic El was eventually supplanted by Baal, who subsequently seized his spouse. The Old Testament cultic sites are adduced as evidence. Ultimately the basis of this presupposition of the consort relationship between Asherah and Baal in the Old Testament is based on two faulty pillars. The first is that deities mentioned together in the Old Testament are necessarily consorts (a matter I have discussed in an Ugaritic context above). This assumption is often further qualified to include only those deities mentioned together at a shrine; thus, when the asherah (as a cultic object) is mentioned together with the baal, it is supposed that they are consorts. Notwithstanding the vexed issue of who is

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8 See also the discussion by S. M. Olyan, Asherah and the Cult of Yahweh (SBLMS 34), Atlanta, 1988: 38-61.
meant by the baal, this hypothesis does not account for the references to
asherahs at 'high places'. The asherahs are also referred to in some
verses together with altars, pillars and images. The text does not indicate
to whom these other cultic objects were dedicated. Who was the deity of the
ארה (Exod. 34.13)? To whom was the האלה (Deut. 7.5) dedicated? Indeed,
was the האלה dedicated to Asherah? The MT does not directly answer
any of these questions; indeed, it is not concerned to give a full outline of
'pagan' religion. The texts are polemical, arguing that the very presence
of these 'foreign' objects is offensive to Yahweh. Unless we are willing to
assume (as the logic behind pairing together deities mentioned at the same
shrine would oblige us to do) that we have a complex consort arrangement
of unknown gods and goddesses at every shrine, some of which (according
to Deut. 16.21) contained Yahwistic altars, we cannot hold to this
presupposition. Further, an examination of the Old Testament evidence
reveals that the baal, asherahs and all the hosts of heaven are referred to
at the same shrines (2 Kgs 17.16; 21.3; 23.4; 2 Chron. 33.3). Scholars have
not proposed that the 'hosts of heaven', whoever they may be, should be
considered in any kind of consort relationship with either Baal or Asherah,
or both.

11Peettey, Asherah, Goddess of Israel: 53.
12For alternative views see J. C. de Moor, ' Executors ' TDOT, vol. 1: 441; M. S. Smith, The Early History of God, Yahweh and the Other Deities in Ancient Israel, San Francisco, 1990: 94. I shall return to this question at the end of the chapter.
13See also Provan, Hezekiah: 60-65.
The second faulty pillar upon which this kind of theory rests is that it assumes information from various ancient Near Eastern cultures can simply be amalgamated to produce a fuller understanding of ancient Near Eastern religion. This method is not inherently faulty; however, it can be utilised only after each separate context is examined. Otherwise two half-understandings from different cultures do not always add up to a whole understanding in general. Such methods have led to the commonly supposed associations of Asherah with snakes and lions. We have not found these associations at Ugarit, and we shall note that the Old Testament does not support these associations either.

The Old Testament material has not provided clear-cut solutions to the question of Asherah. That and some kind of tree and/or wooden cultic object are related is obvious, but this relationship is not clearly spelled out. When all the material has been presented we are still left without clear indications as to how Asherah influenced Israelite religion, if at all. This is complicated by the general lack of knowledge about the Israelite temple cult, given the sketchy nature of the Old Testament


material. Attempts at understanding the texts have led scholars to such divergent conclusions as (to demonstrate the extremes) that the evidence supports an essentially monotheistic Israel,\(^\text{16}\) and that Asherah was none other than the consort of Yahweh.\(^\text{17}\) In addition to the forty occurrences of הָאָשְרָה in the MT, many scholars have suggested that certain texts be emended to refer to the goddess Asherah, or simply refer to her in a disguised form.\(^\text{18}\) I shall not look at these verses in the course of this study. My purpose is to find out what the MT tells us about the goddess: any information gathered from an emended text or an implied reference could be tentative evidence at best.

With forty occurrences in the Old Testament, הָאָשְרָה would seem not to be an excessively rare word. By examining the various usages, each in its own context, as astutely suggested by Margalit,\(^\text{19}\) we are able to weigh the evidence from different sources. Old Testament הָאָשְרָה certainly points to a cultic object, one which is referred to in the plural by both the masculine and feminine genders. In deuteronomistic literature, the הָאָשְרָה are referred to as the asherot (הָאָשְרָה, Judg. 3.7)\(^\text{20}\) and the asherim


\(^{19}\)According to the apparatus in *BHS*, two Hebrew manuscripts and two versions (the Syriac and the Vulgate) read תַאְשְרָה rather than תָאֶשְרָה. This would seem to indicate
This in itself is instructive. Does it perhaps indicate a point in time when the original meaning of אִשְׂרָאֵל had been forgotten? To suppose that deuteronomistic scribes had forgotten that a feminine singular noun normally forms a feminine plural strikes me as incredible. Perhaps 'asherim', as a collective for cultic objects, was given a masculine ending; but why this distortion when the feminine plural form could have been used? It would seem that 'asherim' is a denuded form of the goddess's name. In other words, the title was probably not transferred from the cultic object to a goddess, as we know of an earlier Ugaritic goddess bearing a phonetically comparable name. There may be a touch of irony in this use of a masculine plural for a feminine noun. The distribution of these masculine plural forms may display a propensity towards deuteronomistic polemic from after the time of Josiah, as will be considered more thoroughly below.

The references to the asherah in the Old Testament are mostly found in the historical books, particularly those of the Deuteronomistic History. This concentration of occurrences should tell us something about the asherah. It indicates that the deuteronomists were perhaps more concerned about the אִשְׂרָאֵל issue than the prophets, who were generally

confusion on the part of the translators: a textual error; most of the Hebrew manuscripts retain the 'asherah, see below.


22 The complete listing of the occurrences is as follows: Exod. 34.13; Deut. 7.5; 12.3; 16.21; Judg. 3.7; 6.25, 26, 28, 30; 1 Kgs. 14.15, 23; 15.13; 16.33; 18.19; 2 Kgs. 13.6; 17.10, 16; 18.4; 21.3, 7; 23.4, 6, 7, 14, 15; 2 Chron. 14.2 (3); 15.16; 17.6; 19.3; 24.18; 31.1; 33.3, 19; 34.3, 4, 7; Isa. 17.8; 27.9; Jer. 17.2; Mic. 5.13(14).

23 Thus M. Weinfeld (Deuteronomy and the Deuteronomic School, Oxford, 1972: 3, 320) includes the phrase 'to worship the Baal/Baalim and the Asharoth/Asheroth' among those which characterise deuteronomistic theology.
silent on the subject (see below). The majority of the deuteronomistic passages concerned with הַרְשָׁה attempt to explain the anger of Yahweh with Israel and Judah, or to commend the reform movements of righteous kings. Yahweh is angry because the kings and people associate wooden cultic objects\textsuperscript{24} of some kind with their altars. Again, this tells us something, albeit rather tersely, of the cult during the monarchy. The people were in the practice (if we take the historical books as reflecting actual cultic practice) of associating asherahs with cultic sites.

The passages in the historical books follow a familiar pattern of condemning the people for making (םֶשֶׁך)\textsuperscript{25}, or planting (םֶשֶׁך),\textsuperscript{26} asherahs, or tell of their hewing down (םַּהֲרִ),\textsuperscript{27} and burning (םִשֶּך)\textsuperscript{28} the asherahs. This terminology obliges one to see some wooden object being recognised as an asherah.\textsuperscript{29} Reed argues for an image of the goddess Asherah rather than for a pillar or tree.\textsuperscript{30} Although he provides evidence to support his supposition, the Old Testament does not insist upon a single type of object as an asherah (see below).\textsuperscript{31} To argue for a living or stylised tree may be a worthwhile exercise;\textsuperscript{32} however, the issue cannot be resolved by the texts. If each verse is considered on the basis of its internal evidence, several possible forms may be suggested for the asherahs. We cannot unreservedly gather all Old Testament information about הַרְשָׁה without first considering each mention of asherah in its own context.

\begin{itemize}
\item \textsuperscript{24}W. L. Reed, \textit{Asherah in the Old Testament}: throughout.
\item \textsuperscript{25}2 Kgs. 17.16.
\item \textsuperscript{26}Deut. 16.21.
\item \textsuperscript{27}Deut. 7.5.
\item \textsuperscript{28}2 Kgs. 23.15.
\item \textsuperscript{29}R. Patai, \textit{The Goddess Asherah}: 37-39.
\item \textsuperscript{30}\textit{Asherah in the Old Testament}: 42.
\item \textsuperscript{31}Olyan \textit{(Asherah and the Cult of Yahweh}: 5) has shown that such attempts to declare the asherah an image or a tree miss the point of the discussion. See also Pettay, \textit{Asherah, Goddess of Israel}: 89.
\item \textsuperscript{32}Day, \textit{Asherah in the Hebrew Bible}: 404; Emerton, \textit{New Light}: 19.
\end{itemize}
In the majority of cases הָרַשָׁ נ appears in formulas which became indicative of the deuteronomists' polemic against הָרַשָׁ נ-sanctuaries and other foreign intrusions. Holladay has convincingly argued that the formula 'on every high hill and under every green tree' originated in Hos. 4.13:34

On the tops of the mountains they sacrifice, and upon the hills they make offerings smoke, under oak, and poplar and terebinth that are good for shade, thus your daughters commit fornication, your daughters-in-law commit adultery.

This formula is of special interest in this study because the word הָרַשָׁ נ appears in association with it in 1 Kgs. 14.23; 2 Kgs. 17.10; and Jer. 17.2. הָרַשָׁ נ, however, does not appear with this formula in the book of Hosea. Perhaps at the time of Hosea (who frequently condemned worship of the baal) the הָרַשָׁ נ was not considered a particular threat.

Clearly what is needed is a contextual examination of the texts which mention הָרַשָׁ נ. I shall therefore explore the passages referring to הָרַשָׁ נ in the MT in the order of their occurrence within the categories of the Pentateuch, the Deuteronomistic History, Chronicles and the Prophets. In the course of this study, some significant points will appear.

33 W. B. Barrick, 'On the "Removal of the 'High-Places'": 257-259.
4.A. The Pentateuch

4.A.i. Exodus 34.13

Exod. 34.13 is the first reference to the asherahs. The verse reads, 'Indeed their altars you will pull down, and their pillars you will shatter, and his asherahs (יִשְׁפָּךְ נַפְשֵׁךְ) you will cut down.' This verse is found in the context of instructions to be carried out once the promised land is reached. Scholarly opinion on the composition of Exod. 34 varies widely. Verse 13 is part of a particularly difficult section of this chapter.35 Noth observed:

There are additions in vv. 11b-13 in deuteronomistic language, in which the people are addressed partly in the singular and partly in the plural; they introduce the warning, frequent in Deuteronomy and the deuteronomistic writings, against the inhabitants of the land which is to be taken in possession and against their cultic institutions.36

His observations are relevant to this study in that he notes the deuteronomistic element present in these verses and that he also notes that the people are addressed in both the singular and the plural. Verse 13 also refers to the cultic objects of the inhabitants of the land with both plural and singular possessives. The asherahs, however, are the only elements assigned a singular possessive. The verse is otherwise well balanced - their detestable things and their fate, their detestable things and their fate, but then, his detestable things and their fate. Commentators often note the deuteronomistic character of the verse, but do not discuss the textual problem.37 Durham notes, 'the source criticism of Exod 34: 10-28, beyond broad designations, is very subjective and therefore of somewhat arbitrary

conclusions'. The suggested deuteronomistic origin of this verse is not certain, although the verse addresses issues of concern to the deuteronomists.

The LXX, Syriac, one Hebrew manuscript and two Targums correct the imbalance of the possessives to 'their asherahs', but the MT of BHS retains it, perhaps as the lectio difficilior. Even if we were to emend the text, we would still need to ask ourselves, why in some important manuscripts does this verse mention his asherahs, and who is the 'he' being mentioned? A possibility is that the writer had someone in mind as having asherahs. As cultic objects, perhaps asherahs were envisaged as being possessed by Yahweh; however, the antecedents to the other cultic objects in this verse are the Canaanites. Another option is that the text has been corrupted in the process of textual transmission. Intentional distortion of the meaning of the verse does not appear to be present. Could it be that the writer or editor had a purpose in singling out the asherahs? They are referred to here in the masculine plural, perhaps indicating that a writer wished to dissociate them from Asherah.

4.A.ii. Deuteronomy 7.5

The next instance of קִנָּה in the MT is in Deut. 7.5. The text states 'But thus you will do to them; their altars you will pull down, and their...

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40 Olyan, Asherah and the Cult of Yahweh: 18.
42 M. Barker (The Older Testament, London, 1987: 142-154) seems to overstate the case for such intentional distortion.
pillars you will shatter, and their asherahs (יַלְתִי נְשָׁה) you will hew down and their images you will burn with fire.' This verse also falls within the context of instructions of how to deal with the inhabitants of the promised land, and it is very similar to Exod. 34.13. To avoid the danger of infiltration by the Canaanite cult, the Israelites are commanded to rid the land of their (the Canaanites') asherahs. Of interest to us here is the fact that 'asherahs' is given the unusual plene spelling, whilst the possessive suffix is spelled defectively. This verse demonstrates no knowledge of 'Asherah' as a personal name. We would perhaps expect מֶלֶת נְשָׁה here, the spelling attested in Deut. 12.3. Of the forty occurrences of מֶלֶת נְשָׁה in the MT, only three are spelled plene, and the other two occurrences appear in exilic or post-exilic additions.

Mayes recognised the divided nature of the pericope of Deut. 7.1-26, and this text bears a distinct similarity to Exod. 34.13. If this verse came from the same hand as Exod. 34.13 with its textual difficulty, perhaps we have evidence indicating a period when the origin of the term מֶלֶת נְשָׁה had caused the word to be distorted from a recognisable form of the name Asherah. Up to this point the Pentateuch does not refer to the goddess.

4.A.iii. Deuteronomy 12.3

Deut. 12.3 occurs in the context of instructions for the centralisation of the cult of Yahweh in Jerusalem. Unlike straight narrative style, this

44 These are 2 Kgs. 17.16 and Mic. 5.13 (Eng. 14). For the exilic date of 2 Kgs. 17.16 see I. Provan, Hezekiah: 70-73. For the late date of Mic. 5.3 see below, 'The Prophetic References'. The dating of this text, however, is extremely difficult.
45 Deuteronomy: 181.
verse consists of a polysyndetic structure that follows the pattern: verb, object: verb, object: object, verb: object, verb: verb, object:

And you will pull down their altars, and you will shatter their pillars, and their asherahs you will burn with fire, and the images of their gods you will hew down, and do away with their name from that place.

The chiastic structure in this presentation of the cultic objects and their fates is poetic. This verse does not appear to be corrupt, but the LXX leaves out the mention of the asherahs and the 'images of their gods' referred to in this verse. Since the Hebrew manuscripts retain these two items, however, we should also retain them rather than emend the text. Verses 4-5 appear to be a later addition (along with 7-15, and 25-26) to the 'basic text'. As Pettey has noted, this verse stands at the head of the 'great legal section of Deuteronomy, delineated by von Rad as 12:2 - 26:15'. The verse also immediately follows a 'high mountain, hills, and every green tree' formula. This poetic destruction formula at such an important place in the text is like a refrain which appears in modified form in other narratives concerning Israel's sin.

Of particular interest in Deut. 12.3 is that the MT lists the asherahs before the 'images of their gods'. If the verse is reckoned as poetry, as I have suggested above, the asherahs and the 'images of their gods' are in parallel. This may be an allusion in the text to the morphology of the asherahs in this verse, and it is given support in that the images are to be hewn down (PLICIT), a verb also used in relation to the asherahs in Deut. 7.5.

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47 Mayes, *Deuteronomy*: 181-182.
48 *Asherah, Goddess of Israel*: 91.
49 Holladay, "On Every High Hill": 170-176.
I would suggest that the asherahs here are counted among the images of the foreign gods, but I would also hasten to add that we cannot suppose that every reference to the asherah in the Old Testament necessarily indicates an image. Each verse must be considered in its context. The masculine plural form of 'their asherahs' (יִשְׁתַּלְעָם) occurs in this verse with the plane and defective spellings of Deut. 7.5 reversed.

4.A.iv. Deuteronomy 16.21

Deut. 16.21 has provoked much discussion on the morphology of asherahs: 'You will not plant for yourself an asherah, any tree beside the altar of Yahweh your God which you will make for yourself.' To begin with, asherah here is simply הָרֶשֶׁת, with neither article nor suffix. This is the only place in the Old Testament where asherah is mentioned as being planted, לֹא. The asherah is also mentioned alongside 'any tree'. The structure of this verse is peculiar. The asherah in apposition to any tree (יָעַל) may be an asyndetic construction, serving to heighten the intensity of the latter phrase, 'You will not plant for yourself an asherah, any tree...'. In such a case a tree next to an altar would be considered just as offensive as an asherah. The word asherah is certainly in apposition to 'any tree', and as the pointing shows, it is not in the construct state. This verse, as opposed to the suggestion implied from the last verse, would seem to indicate that the asherah could simply be a tree. The traditional suggestion that יָעַל is a gloss would also point to the understanding of the asherah as a tree.

50 I am indebted to Mr. D. Dawson for offering me this suggestion.
In the present state of text criticism, this verse is considered to be pre-deuteronomic by some scholars. Unlike the previous three verses already explored, the asherah here is not referred to in the masculine plural. This may simply be because the author chose to utilise a singular noun, or it may be that since it is in an earlier verse, the writer understood the meaning of ֶֽרֶשׁ, and only condemned it in the context of a Yahwistic shrine. Asherahs and trees are associated explicitly with the altar of Yahweh in this verse. This does not indicate a consort relationship between the deities being revered, as argued above. The use of asherahs was apparently not considered offensive to all Yahwists earlier than the reign of Josiah. The difficulty for the deuteronomist is clearly that a tree planted beside the altar of Yahweh implies something offensive. The tree in the ancient Near East has many associations. The story of the two trees in J's account of the Eden narrative in Gen. 3 demonstrates that trees in themselves were not considered an offense to Yahweh. Why then, in the pre-deuteronomic Deut. 16.21, are trees a threat? The associations with Canaanite religion appear to have influenced this perspective. The answer, I believe, may be that this verse was written by an author who, aware of the meaning of the asherah (namely that it was named after and therefore represented a Canaanite goddess), did not condemn cultic trees implicitly, but insisted that they should not be connected with Yahwistic altars.

This verse is the final reference to the asherah in the Pentateuch.
To this point no verses have mentioned the goddess Asherah; therefore
they allow us to state nothing of her character in the Old Testament.
4.B. The Deuteronomistic History: Judges

4.B.i. Judges 3.7

Judg. 3.7 reads, 'And the children of Israel did evil in the eyes of Yahweh and they forgot Yahweh their God, and they served the baals and the asherahs'. In this reference the text has moved from prohibition to description. An explanation is being proffered for the fall of the nation; the people are being reminded of their sinful beginnings. Of special interest to us is the fact that here the asherahs are rendered by the feminine plural, נַעֵרָה. In the majority of cases employing the plural of asherah, asherim is utilised. נַעֵרָה occurs in only two other instances in the MT, both in the later text of 2 Chron. Also of interest is that are also mentioned in this verse. Since the baal(s) and the ashtarot (נֵעֲרָת) are mentioned together in the other deuteronomistic passages of Judg. 2.13, 10.6, 1 Sam. 7.4, and 12.10, and since two Hebrew manuscripts, as well as the Syriac and the Vulgate versions read נַעְרָה in this verse, it seems likely that a confusion exists here.56 This verse is often considered to be a deuteronomistic addition. If this is so, we once again find an unclear understanding of the 'asherah' in the deuteronomistic sources. I concur, however, with the scholars who understand this reference to be to Astarte rather than Asherah. In any case, if the asherahs were intended by the author, this does not place Asherah in a consort relationship with Baal as suggested by some scholars (see above).57 The plurals would appear to indicate that classes of deities were being served; not an individual god and goddess.

56 Hadley, Yahweh's Asherah: 93-94; Olyan, Asherah and the Cult of Yahweh:10, n. 28.
57 Petey, Asherah, Goddess of Israel: 98.
The next occurrences of references to the asherah are in the story of Gideon. Besides being an intriguing story, the text is difficult, raising many queries from the reader. Here the altar of the baal is mentioned alongside the asherah, in this case also a cultic object. Even without determining whom 'the baal' is meant to indicate, it is obvious that no personal relationship between deities is occupying this writer. He is simply recounting the cultic trappings owned by Joash which his son Gideon destroyed. Judg. 6. 25-30 reads:

It happened that night that Yahweh said to him 'Take the bullock of the cattle which is your father's, and the bullock of seven years [the wording is awkward in Hebrew, causing GK to declare the verse corrupt on two grammatical points and you will break down the altar of the baal which is your father's and the asherah which is next to it you will cut down. (26) And you will build an altar to Yahweh your God at the summit of this place of refuge (or fortress) in an orderly way [again the text is difficult] and you will take the second bullock and you will offer a holocaust on the wood of the asherah which you cut down.' (27) And Gideon took ten men from his servants and he did just as Yahweh his God spoke, but it happened that as he feared the house of his father and the men of the city to do it by day, he did it at night. (28) The men of the city arose early and behold, torn down was the altar of the baal and the asherah which was next to it was cut down and the second bull had been offered upon the altar which had been built. (29) And they said, man to his companion, 'Who did this deed?', and they inquired and sought and they said 'Gideon son of Joash did this deed.' (30) And the men of the city said to Joash 'Bring out your son and he will die because he pulled down the altar of the baal and because he cut down the asherah which was next to it.'

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58 See Pettey, Asherah, Goddess of Israel: 99.
59 In §§ 126 w and 128 c.
The primary concern of the story of Gideon is not to explain the tenets of the cults which he defiled, nor is it to illuminate consort relationships of deities at the same shrine. The point does seem to be to explain the renaming of Gideon to Jerubbaal. The text of this deuteronomistic pericope is corrupt. The grammar of verse 25 is difficult, especially concerning the bullocks. In the initial command to Gideon, Yahweh orders him to take a sacrificial bullock (seven years old) as well as a working animal to pull apart the altar, and here the text is corrupt. Consulting the commentaries, Moore states that the phrases about the bulls in v. 25 are meaningless and grammatically impossible collocations of words. Boling notes the difficulty but offers no comment on a solution other than trying to make sense of the text as it stands. Soggin, however, draws attention to some interesting points. He notes that is utilised here rather than the more common . He also indicates that also frequently represents a sacrificial animal.

Further he notes that a parallel with 1 Kgs. 18 may be present, a text which tells of the sacrifice of two bulls on Mount Carmel in the Elijah-versus-the-prophets-of-the-baal story. This connection may be more significant than it seems at first, since that chapter also contains a disputed mention of the prophets of the asherah. When he comes to make a decision, however, even Soggin must state 'The text remains a typical crux and at present its reconstruction is impossible'. This corruption may simply be accounted

61 Although Auld dates this narrative as a late story ('Gideon': 263), the theme of destroying the cultic objects certainly reflects deuteronomistic theology.
65 Judges: 124.
for by textual transmission. However, we have also noted confusion in verses concerning cultic matters in the deuteronomistic texts above. Were the deuteronomists unaware of the significance of the cultic details of the story? Did they understand the context, but not render it clearly?

The next point of interest comes in v. 26. When Gideon is commanded to build an altar to Yahweh, he is told to do so 'on top of this fortress in an orderly way (יהוה). What is the fortress to which this verse refers? There is no previous mention of a fortress, merely a cultic location in Ophrah being under the care of Gideon's father. Temples, as the dwelling places of deities, may have been considered as fortified locations, but this pericope does not describe the structure in detail. That reference is being made to a fairly developed cult may be indicated by the expression 'the men of the city arose early' (v. 28). We encounter this idea of early awaking in the story of Dagon at Ashdod in 1 Sam. 5.1-5. In fact, the same word is used by the writer of the story of Dagon, (□ fa). R. de Vaux has argued that the cultus had the responsibility of awaking the deity in the morning. Furthermore, this again points to the story of Elijah on Mount Carmel. His taunting includes a reference to the waking of the baal of the prophets (1 Kgs. 18.27). I should also note in this context, that Ps. 44.24 (Eng. 23) contains a cry for God to awake. If the Psalms were indeed the liturgical song book of the temple, we might expect to find cultic references therein. Could it be that the language of this verse retains the introduction to a cultic ceremony? Although this involves speculation,

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66Soggin, Judges: 124.
outside evidence suggests that this was a prevalent practice in the ancient Near East. De Vaux cites the Talmud as stating that this cultic act of calling out to awaken the deity continued in Judah until the time of John Hyrcanus. 69 Considering the fragmentary cultic evidence present in Judg. 6.25-30, I would suggest that the text only tells us enough to cause us to wonder whether an instance of a cultus not fully explained by the later redactors of the passage is present.

A further point of contact with the two bulls may be represented in this passage. The episode of Jeroboam I's reform in the north narrates his making of two golden calves (I Kgs. 12.28) which were placed in cultic locations. 70 In this story we again have a cultic setting, with the presence of two, albeit molten metal, bovines. The stories are too dissimilar to suggest any exact duplications of ideas, but they perhaps indicate a common stratum of cultic life. With the corrupt state of the text in Judges, however, certain conclusions are impossible.

Thus the story of Gideon, often overlooked in studies of the asherah, is instructive. It points to a time in the mind of the redactor when, from a deuteronomistic perspective, the people of the unconfederated tribes considered the worship of foreign gods to be normal. Gideon appears as the innovator and were it not for an ironically Yahwistic argument by Joash (v. 31 - if the baal is a god he will defend himself), he would have been executed for his Yahwistic enthusiasm. The identities of the deities mentioned in this pericope concerning the worship of foreign gods are not explicit: the asherah is beside an altar of an unidentified baal. This narrative continues to support the hypothesis that deuteronomistic texts,

69 ‘Les prophètes de Baal’: 493.
perhaps purposefully, do not clarify the cultic implications in verses where asherahs are mentioned. The references to the asherah in Judges, however, do not present Asherah as a goddess.
4.C. The Deuteronomistic History: Kings

The books of Kings contain several references to הָרְשָׁעַ. When we explore the books of Kings we find a general correlation between the masculine plural references to the asherim and the הָרְשָׁעַ-sanctuary passages which are distinguished as later additions by Provan. Provan's theory, that much of 1 Kgs. 3 - 2 Kgs. 15 corresponds well with a Hezekian theme (excluding later deuteronomistic insertions) written at the time of Josiah, drew my attention to the distribution of variant spellings of the asherahs as cultic objects. Concerning the הָרְשָׁעַ-formulae in Kings, Provan notes:

If it is now no longer acceptable simply to assume that one author is responsible for most of the formulae, then the question arises as to whether variations within these with regard to the view taken of the הָרְשָׁעַ are also best understood as the result of redactional activity.

Might this statement also apply to the הָרְשָׁעַ references? Although Provan's study only tangentially concerns הָרְשָׁעַ, it is illuminating to compare his results with the references to the asherim in Kings. I have suggested above that polemical deuteronomistic passages appear to distort the name of the asherah as a cultic object, as indicated by their use of the masculine plural in reference to it. The pre-exilic references to הָרְשָׁעַ which broadly fit into Provan's proposed 'first edition' of Kings utilise the singular form of 'asherah'. This could be accounted for by arguing that the author had only a single asherah in mind, and therefore used the feminine singular form. This may be the case. It is of interest, however,

71 See Provan, Hezekiah: 57-90 for the details of his redactional history of the various passages which mention the asherahs.
72 Hezekiah: 74.
73 1 Kgs. 14.15 may be an exception to this statement, see below.
that the later, exilic additions to the texts dealing with the נבובב-sanctuaries often refer to the plurals of these cultic objects in the masculine form 'asherim'. The correspondences are not exact, but close enough to attract our interest. The distinction between pre-exilic and exilic verses is not always clearly delineated, but at least a double, if not a triple redaction does appear to fit the evidence\textsuperscript{74} of the verses which mention נבובב.

Many commentators on the books of Kings maintain a Josian date for the 'first edition'.\textsuperscript{75} This is also of interest in consideration of the asherahs. Until the time of Josiah they were not implicitly condemned (see on Deut. 16.21 above). This pattern parallels, to some extent, Provan's idea that some נבובב were worse than others: after Josiah's reign the נבובב and asherahs were all considered as aberrations.

4.C.i. 1 Kings 14.15

The first reference is in 1 Kgs. 14.15:

Yahweh will smite Israel, as a reed in the water he will waver, and he will root out Israel from upon this good land which he gave to their fathers and he will scatter them beyond the river because they made their asherahs, provoking Yahweh to anger.

The context of this verse is the condemnation being delivered to Jeroboam by Ahijah on account of Israel's sins. The specific offence mentioned in this verse is that Israel had made asherim.\textsuperscript{76} In the

\textsuperscript{74} See R. D. Nelson, \textit{The Double Redaction of the Deuteronomistic History} (JSOTS 18), Sheffield, 1981, throughout.

\textsuperscript{75} See, for example, G. H. Jones, \textit{1 and 2 Kings} (NCBC), Grand Rapids and London, 1984, especially his review of the previous scholarship on the subject. See also Pettit, \textit{Asherah, Goddess of Israel}: 108-109.

\textsuperscript{76} I do not wish to bring comparative evidence into this study prematurely; however, in this verse a literary parallel with Ugarit may be present. The context tells us that the above verse is spoken by the aged prophet Ahijah on the occasion of the sickness of
following verse 'the sins of Jeroboam' are mentioned, and verse 9 charges him with making other gods and molten images. This verse appears to date from after the northern exile on the basis of the specific reference to Israel being 'scattered beyond the river' וֹרֵם מִשְׁבָּר לְנָחָר. Although this verse is not necessarily exilic, the masculine plural form of asherim is used here. This form appears to be an exception to my hypothesis that only late deuteronomistic references use the masculine plural asherim; however, this verse does exhibit some polemical deuteronomistic traits. One such trait is the censure of the king for the cultic aberrations of Israel.

The editor, whilst drawing no explicit connection between the cultic objects and the foreign goddess, obviously considers the asherahs to be implicitly offensive to Yahweh. This condemnation of cultic objects outside of Jerusalem also corresponds to deuteronomistic theology. Whether this verse is late or not, it does oppose the construction of asherim. The text, however, does not provide any information on the nature or character of Asherah.

Abijah, Jeroboam's son. Note that the son of Jeroboam has a good Yahwistic name. This story is similar to, but not exactly dependent upon, the story of Keret (KTU 1.14 - 16). In the case of Keret, the question is, why is the king (or in the case of Abijah, the king's son, heir to the throne) ill? What will happen to the people if the king or king elect dies? We know that Keret was ill because he neglected to fulfil a vow - a vow to Athirat (KTU 1.14.IV.34-43). Abijah is being punished, according to Abijah, because of the sin of Jeroboam, namely, the making of asherim. In a possible antithesis, the royal family is being plagued on account of Athirat in the case of Keret, for not fulfilling his vow to her, and on account of the asherim in the case of Jeroboam. The result in both cases is essentially the same. Keret recovers but curses his son and heir (KTU 1.16.VI.54-58), and in the Jeroboam story, his son dies as his wife steps over the threshold (1 Kgs. 14.17). No strong case can be made for this connection; however, the phonetic correlation of the names Athirat and 'Asherah' draws the episode of Keret to our attention.

78Reed, The Asherah in the Old Testament : 60; Pettey, Asherah. Goddess of Israel: 111.
4.C.ii. 1 Kings 14.23

The next occurrence is in 1 Kgs. 14.23, one of the passages utilising the Hosea formula mentioned above. The verse reads: 'They even built for themselves high places and pillars and asherahs upon every high hill and under every luxuriant tree'. This verse is dependent upon Hosea 4.13, as demonstrated by Holladay. This םַעְרֶש -sanctuary reference interrupts 'the perfectly consistent picture' of the הַעְנָש formulae in 1 Kgs. 3 - 2 Kgs. 15, according to Provan. In this case, Rehoboam is being condemned as was Jeroboam earlier in the same chapter. The writer is drawing to the reader's attention the fact that both Israel and Judah were guilty of the offence to Yahweh by building such cultic sites. The perspective is exilic, explaining that the sins of Judah were present at the very beginning of the divided monarchy. The asherahs are designated by the masculine plural form. Once again, a later editor appears to disguise the origin of the word רָשָׁו.

4.C.iii. 1 Kings 15.13 // 2 Chronicles 15.16

1 Kgs. 15.13 is parallel with 2 Chron. 15.16, and their comparison raises some interesting issues. 1 Kgs. 15.13 reads:

And also Maakah his mother he removed from being queen mother (מֶלֶתֶר מָקָּה) because she made a horrid thing for the asherah(ךְָנַח הַשֶּׁרֶא); and Asa cut down her horrid thing and burned it in the valley of Qidron.

79 "On Every High Hill": 170-176.
80 Hezekiah: 75.
2 Chron. 15.16 reads:

And also Maakah mother of Asa the king removed from being queen mother because she made for Asherah (אשֶרֶתָה) a horrid thing; Asa cut down her horrid thing and pulverised and burned it in the valley of Qidron.

These two verses are very similar. The differences, however, lead to a question about the use of the definite article with a proper noun. In 1 Kgs. 15.13, Maakah made a horrid thing for the asherah; the vowel under the lamed is a qames, indicating that the noun is definite. In 2 Chron. 15.16, similar wording occurs, but the Masoretes pointed this with a patah under the lamed. This is standard indefinite construction when the prefix comes before a ַHatpatah. Thus, in parallel cases, we apparently have the name of the goddess Asherah occurring with and without the article. Another possibility is that the reference in 1 Kgs. 15.13 was intended to indicate the cultic object, the asherah. When the chronicler utilised this passage, he understood the אשֶרֶתָה to be a divine name.

Many scholars have noted the possibility (or certainty) that the goddess is intended in these verses. The definite article in the reference to 'the asherah' in 1 Kgs. 15.13 may perhaps be understood in the sense of the אשֶרֶתָה being an example of 'whole classes ...restricted (simply by usage) to particular individuals'. In other words, a prominent asherah may have assumed a particular status as 'the Asherah'. In any case the use

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81 See GK §§ 125d, 126e; Lemaire, 'Who or What was Yahweh's Asherah?': 47.
83 GK § 126e.
of the definite article does not preclude the possibility of a proper name in all cases. Some scholars have recently argued that the goddess Asherah does not occur in the text of the Old Testament. In these two verses the later, Masoretic pointing is the crux. A case may be made for either the goddess or the cultic object on the basis of the unpointed text הַרֹשֶׁל. The pointed text of Chronicles is unambiguous about it; a horrid thing was being made for Asherah. The chronicler, who quoted this verse almost directly, appears to have understood Asherah as a proper name, according to the Masoretes. Since the definiteness of הַרֹשֶׁל is ultimately a matter of pointing, dogmatism on the presence of Asherah must be avoided.

In both verses, we have an interesting grammatical construction in the second halves of the verses. Asa cut down her horrid thing (כָּלַל לַּעֲלֹם); the mappiq indicates the consonantal value of the he: her horrid thing. The nearest available feminine antecedent to the 'her' is not Maakah, but Asherah. If the image belongs to Asherah, it would appear that the goddess is being designated. If הַרֹשֶׁל is not a goddess the writer could also have intended for Maakah to be the antecedent. Either case may be argued.

The texts thus far may be used to support three possible manifestations of הַרֹשֶׁל: as an image, as a tree, and as a goddess. This text manifests an association between the asherah/Asherah and the queen mother. This association will be considered more fully below.

84GK § 125d. Scholars have long assumed 'Baal' in the Old Testament to be a proper name, even when it has the article, as a glance at the commentaries will demonstrate. See the discussion on this topic in J. Hadley, Yahweh's Asherah: 92.
85Lipinski, 'The Goddess Aširat': 116, Lemaire, 'Who or What was Yahweh's Asherah?': 46-47.
86Jones, 1 and 2 Kings: 283-284.
4.C.iv. 1 Kings 16.33

The next reference is 1 Kgs. 16.33. 'And Ahab made the asherah, and Ahab increased the acts to provoke Yahweh the God of Israel more than those before him.' With this passing mention of the asherah, we should note that among all the sins for which Ahab was infamous, the erecting of an altar for the baal (v. 32) and the making of the asherah, are singled out as the ones which particularly provoked Yahweh. Although this passage obviously reflects the deuteronomistic bias against foreign cultic objects, it does not appear to be exilic. This passage would likely have been composed after the fall of the northern kingdom, perhaps during the reign of Josiah. The asherah is here construed as singular; the definite article indicates that a specific asherah is being considered.

4.C.v. 1 Kings 18.19

The story of Elijah on Mount Carmel contains perhaps a second reference to Asherah. Although the four hundred prophets of Asherah in 1 Kgs. 18.19 are normally considered a gloss, we should consider the state of this verse on its own merits. In 1 Kgs. 18.19, Elijah is speaking: "'Now send, gather to me all Israel to Mount Carmel and the four hundred fifty prophets of the baal and the four hundred prophets of the asherah who eat at Jezebel's table'". The standard argument is that the prophets of the asherah

are nowhere else mentioned in the story, and therefore, either they were approved of by Elijah\(^8^9\) (hardly probable in this context!) or they were a gloss on the 450 prophets of the baal.\(^9^0\) The fact that four hundred prophets of Asherah are mentioned against four hundred and fifty prophets of the baal could provide evidence that the writer had two distinct groups in mind. With different numbers, the likelihood that the two groups were confused or simply doublets is minimal. Also in favour of including the prophets of the asherah is the fact that the asherahs and other cultic implements, including altars of the baal, are often mentioned in the same verses.\(^9^1\) Reed points out that in the LXX the prophets of Asherah are mentioned again in v. 22 and suggests that they could just as likely have been 'accidentally lost' in the MT of v. 22 as they could have been a later addition to v. 19.\(^9^2\) Although Jones' commentary appears to confuse Asherah and Astarte, he does note the transitional nature of this verse, and argues that these prophets should not be deleted.\(^9^3\) Hadley further notes, 'If it is an addition, it is interesting that the Baal and the Asherah are singular, against the natural tendency of the later redactors to use the plural'.\(^9^4\) Many exilic verses mentioning נַחֲלָה do indeed utilise the masculine plural. Lipiński's criterion for deleting the prophets of the asherah from the verse seems to be that it militates against the view that Asherah does not appear in the Old Testament.\(^9^5\) Olyan's only argument

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\(^{(9^0)}\) Lipiński's statement that 'all critical commentators agree that the words "the 400 prophets of Asherah" are interpolated' (Syro-Palestinian Iconography: 91, note 14) is exaggerated. The commentaries of Gray and Jones, for example, do not insist on this interpretation.
\(^{(9^2)}\) Reed, The Asherah in the Old Testament: 55.
\(^{(9^3)}\) And 2 Kings: 317.
\(^{(9^4)}\) Yahweh's Asherah: 97.
\(^{(9^5)}\) 'Goddess Aṯirat': 114, 'Syro-Palestinian Iconography': 91.
against including them is that they appear no more in the story.\textsuperscript{96} The evidence to support leaving the asherah's prophets intact appears to be just as strong as that for deleting them as a gloss.

Within the actual verse itself, we find many items worthy of comment. Primarily, we have the baal (ìmôn) and the asherah (نمיא), but also the Carmel (תלמר). If the argument is put forth that the article interferes with interpreting proper nouns, we have a difficulty. In this verse, with three possibly proper names, each of them has the article. If Carmel is being referred to, could not Asherah be intended as well? If so, in this verse, we have the prophets, not of the cultic object asherah, but of the goddess Asherah. Carmel, as a place name, occurs with and without the article in the MT. Even if the choice of whether or not to include it was arbitrary on the part of the writer, its presence in this verse should not be used as evidence against the goddess in the Old Testament. As Hadley has further pointed out, the one Old Testament occurrence of the Mesopotamian divine name Tammuz (Ezek. 8.14) spells the proper name with the definite article.\textsuperscript{97} Context also appears to demand the presence a deity. The problem of the identity of the baal has been discussed by many scholars, and I have nothing to contribute to this discussion. Jones appropriately states that, 'Obviously an exact identification of the Carmel deity is by now impossible'.\textsuperscript{98} The reasons for removing the prophets of the asherah are not compelling. We must simply note here the connection with the legend of Gideon, namely, the two bulls, and the cultic settings of the verses. Thus in two cases in the Deuteronomistic History, נשים may be interpreted as a goddess. This verse does not appear to be late.

\textsuperscript{96}Asherah and the Cult of Yahweh: 8.
\textsuperscript{97}Yahweh's Asherah: 116.
\textsuperscript{98}1 and 2 Kings: 316.
The asherah is next mentioned in 2 Kgs. 13.6: 'Indeed they did not cease from the sins of the house of Jeroboam with which he caused Israel to sin, he walked in it; and still the asherah stood in Samaria'. This verse is fraught with textual difficulties. First, we should note that the sins of the house of Jeroboam are made into a singular by Codex Alexandrinus. If this emendation were to be accepted, then we would have the making of the asherah singled out as the most offensive act which the king committed. Since the Hebrew and other versions do not insist on this, however, we should retain the MT; also, the MT's use of the plural makes perfect sense here. The next observation is that רפנן, the hiphil perfect of ראנה, is misspelled here. BDB notes that many manuscripts correct this error. This verse also seems to contain later intrusions. Next, the syntax of the phrase 'ashi été bërê yisraôl ba'al m'dôrî is difficult; it would seem to indicate a singular sin, rather than the 'sins' previously mentioned. Several versions, the LXX (except Vaticanus), the Vulgate, the Syriac, and Targum Onkelos, correct מ' to a plural. All of this documentary correction demonstrates that many of the ancient translators recognised the difficulties with this verse. I have no solution to offer to the textual problems, but I would note that the presence of the asherah in Samaria is considered a paramount sin. This verse appears to be an instance of a later addition which retains the singular. Even the later editors, who tended to disguise the meaning of asherahs with a masculine plural, would have recourse to the singular if only one specific object were being discussed.

99 Jones, 1 and 2 Kings: 497-500.
4.C.vii. 2 Kings 17.10

2 Kgs. 17.10, like 1 Kgs. 14.23, incorporates the Hosea formula. 'And they set up for themselves pillars and asherahs on every high hill and under every luxuriant tree.' The article is not used with the asherahs in this verse, and the form is again the masculine plural. The textual transmission of 2 Kgs. 17 is complex. V. 10 is a later addition which again supports the hypothesis that it was the later redactors who misconstrued the asherahs in the masculine plural.

4.C.viii. 2 Kings 17.16

Some commentators would suggest that 2 Kgs. 17.16, a further list of crimes against Yahweh, is from yet a later redactor. Vv. 16-17 explain the fall of Israel narrated in the next verse:

And they left all the commandments of Yahweh their God, and they made for themselves a molten image, two calves, and they made an asherah and they did obeisance to all the hosts of heaven and they served the baals. And they made their sons and daughters pass through the fire and they practised divination and they observed signs and sold themselves to do evil in the eyes of Yahweh to provoke him.

Asherah in this verse occurs without the article, and without any suffix. It is spelled plene, as in Deut. 7.5. The mention of two calves in v. 16 attracts our attention in the light of the two bulls of the Gideon story and the two bulls of the Mount Carmel episode. We cannot be detained by the

101Provan, Hezekiah: 70-73; Jones, 1 & 2 Kings: 542-543.
102Jones, 1 and 2 Kings: 543.
question of whom the calves are meant to represent. It is important, however, to note that the two bovines occur in cultic contexts, often in passages which mention an asherah. This does not indicate a particular relationship between bulls and Asherah, but allows us to support the cultic nature of the deuteronomistic Gideon story (see above).

4.C.ix. 2 Kings 18.4

The next passage mentioning the asherah is 2 Kgs. 18.4, in Hezekiah's reform.

He removed the high places and shattered the pillars and cut down the asherah and crushed the serpent of bronze which Moses made, for until those days the children of Israel were offering incense to it, and he called it Nehushtan.

Hezekiah's reform demonstrates the trappings which the cult of Jerusalem had accrued. This text recalls the standard equipment, the מזבח-sanctuaries, the pillars, the asherah (in this case, the asherah, singular, with the article), followed by the mention of Nehushtan, the bronze serpent. A particular asherah is being referred to in this verse, thus the singular form is utilised. The verse does not appear to be late.

Many commentators have been tempted to associate the bronze serpent and the asherah (and therefore Asherah) in this verse. The evidence adduced to support this claim is tenuous. The argument is based on the supposed association of Asherah with the 'fertility cult' and with serpents. Nowhere in the Old Testament do we have evidence that Asherah

105 Gray, I & II Kings: 608; Jones, I and 2 Kings: 562; Olyan, Asherah and the Cult of Yahweh: 70; Pettey, Asherah, Goddess of Israel: 130.
was associated with serpents. This evidence is also absent at Ugarit. The evidence presented by Olyan is based on Cross's analysis of Phoenician Tanit's identification with Asherah. This identification is based on two uncertain associations: 1) the association of the epithets of Tanit as 'the one of the serpent' with 'the one of the lion' (assumed to be an epithet of Asherah, see below), and 2) the closeness of Tanit's epithet 'the one of the serpent (or dragon)' with Asherah's (allegedly) full epithet at Ugarit, 'the Lady who treads on the Sea (-dragon)'. The difficulties with these identifications are legion. First, although Tanit may be construed as 'the one of the serpent', this puts us no closer to an identification with Asherah, who is not elsewhere identified with serpents. Second, the 'one of the lion' does not necessarily indicate Asherah either. We have no evidence that she was associated with lions in the Old Testament, or, more importantly, at Ugarit. Cross initially made the 'lion lady' identification with Anat. Further, the identifications gleaned by this method cross many cultural boundaries and many years. There is not sufficient evidence, furthermore, to complete the meaning of Athirat's epithet at Ugarit as 'the Lady who treads on the Sea(-dragon)'. Ugarit knows of no myths in which Athirat treads a sea-dragon, and the interpretation of her name, as from the

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106 F. M. Cross, *Canaanite Myth and Hebrew Epic*: 32-33. Likewise, the evidence for associating Asherah and Tanit given by Maier ('Asherah: Extrabiblical Evidence: 99) is built on that given by Cross in *Canaanite Myth* and the identification with Qudshu (see below). R. A. Oden (*Studies in Lucian's De Syria Dea* (HSM 15), Missoula, Montana, 1977: 92-93) also bases his identification of the two on Cross's work, as well as the associations with the sea and motherhood. Motherhood is not a surprising attribute for most goddesses, and even in the Ugaritic texts, the sea is not the domain of Athirat alone, for Yam is the god of the sea. J. B. Carter (*The Masks of Ortheia* AJA 91 (1987): 378) only cites 'some degree of variation and syncretism' for the association of Tanit and Asherah.


verb 'to tread' is far from certain.\textsuperscript{109} Appeals to the title \textit{di b'tn} in the Proto-Sinaitic inscriptions do not strengthen the case, as their interpretation is still debated.\textsuperscript{110} The connections with 'Qudshu' likewise suffer on the basis of no substantial evidence. We possess no texts or iconographic representations which suggest that Asherah was identified with 'Qudshu' in the ancient Near East.\textsuperscript{111} Without evidence for Asherah's association with snakes, her connection with Nehushtan is tenuous at best.

A consideration of the grammar of 2 Kgs. 18.4 reveals that 푃.rename and 푃.rename should be, according to the general formation of Hebrew prose narrative, imperfects. For 푃.rename the LXX, Syriac, Vulgate, Targums, and one Hebrew manuscript read 푃.rename. These two difficulties do not necessarily point to a late date for this passage. The feminine plural of the asherah in the variants would appear to be a later understanding. The MT should be retained, although the verbs throughout this verse are unusual.

4.C.x. 2 Kings 21.3

Manasseh is the next king accused of making the asherah. 2 Kgs. 21.3 reads:

And he turned and he built the high places which his father Hezekiah destroyed and he erected the altars to the baal, and he made an asherah just as Ahab king of Israel made and they bowed to all the hosts of heaven and he served them.


\textsuperscript{110} For Albright's rendering see \textit{The Proto-Sinaitic Inscriptions and their Decipherment} (Harvard Theological Studies 22), Cambridge, Massachusetts, 1969.

\textsuperscript{111} Yamashita, \textit{The Goddess Asherah}: 116-122, Wiggins, 'The Myth of Asherah'.
In view of the grammar, the only difficulty is that בֵּית נָשָּׁה is a masculine plural form where we would expect a singular. The rendering 'he made an asherah, and they bowed down to all the hosts of heaven and he served them' seems unlikely. Either the verb should be singular, meaning that Manasseh was bowing to the hosts, or the remaining verbs should be plural, indicating the collective sin of Israel. Although this verse probably comes from a later redactor of Kings, the form of asherah is the 'pure' form, with no article and no suffix.\(^{112}\) This perhaps points to an even later time when the original meaning of כֹּל נָשָּׁה was forgotten, or else it had ceased to be a threat,\(^{113}\) or perhaps the writer had one specific asherah in mind.

4.C.xi. 2 Kings 21.7

And he put the image of the asherah which he made in the house of which Yahweh said to David and to Solomon his son 'In this house and in Jerusalem which I chose from all the tribes of Israel will I place my name forever.'

This verse contains the third possible deuteronomistic reference to the goddess Asherah in the Old Testament. The verse clearly states that Manasseh placed an image of the asherah (בֵּית נָשָּׁה) in the temple.\(^{114}\) The definite article does not necessarily preclude a proper name, as argued above. It has been widely noted that the chronicler's parallel to this verse reads מִסְגַּל דַּמִּית (2 Chron. 33.7).\(^{115}\) This additional perspective is of little assistance, however, as the meaning of מִסְגַּל is not clear.

\(^{112}\) Hadley, *Yahweh's Asherah*: 88.
\(^{113}\) Hadley, *Yahweh's Asherah*: 92.
We may also have here further evidence that an asherah was an image of the goddess. This suggested identification holds true only for this verse, however; as Deut. 16.21 indicates, it may also have been a tree. This verse may witness to an introduction of a cult of Asherah in the Jerusalem temple. The details provided, however, do not permit a firm conclusion to this effect.

The final five references to הָרֶשֶׁה in the Deuteronomistic history appear in the reform of Josiah.
4.D. Josiah's Reform: 2 Kings 23.4-15

2 Kgs. 23.4-15 reads:

And the king ordered Hilkiah the high priest and the priests of the second order and the watchers of the threshold to bring out from the temple of Yahweh all the vessels made for the baal and all the hosts of heaven and burn them outside of Jerusalem in the field of Qidron and he carried their dust to Bethel. (5) And he removed the priests to the idols who inclined the kings of Judah to burn incense at the high places in the cities of Judah and the surroundings of Jerusalem and the ones burning incense to the baal, to the sun and the moon and to the constellations and to all the hosts of heaven. (6) And taking the asherah from the house of Yahweh to outside Jerusalem to the Valley of Qidron he burned it in the Valley of Qidron and he pulverised it to dust and he flung its dust on the graves of the sons of the people. (7) And he pulled down the shrines of the qedeshim which were in the house of Yahweh where the women were weaving shrines for the asherah there. (8) And he brought in all the priests from the cities of Judah and he defiled the high places in which the priests from Geba to Beer-Sheba burned incense, and he pulled down the high places of the gates which were at the entrance to the gate of Joshua, the ruler of the city, which are upon one's left at the gate of the city. (9) Indeed, the priests of the high places did not go up to the altar of the Lord in Jerusalem, except they did eat unleavened bread among their brothers. (10) And he defiled the Tophet which is in the valley of Ben-Hinnom so that a man could not cause his son or daughter to pass through the fire for Molek.\(^{116}\) (11) And he removed the horses which the kings of Judah had given to the sun from the entrance of the house of Yahweh, to the halls of Nathan-Melek the eunuch, which is among the colonnades, and the chariots of the sun he burned with fire. (12) And the altars upon the roof chamber which Ahaz, king of Judah had made and the altars which Manasseh made in the two courts of the house of Yahweh, the king pulled down, and he ran from there and flung their dust on the valley of Qidron. (13) And the altars which were outside Jerusalem, which were south of the Mount of Destruction, which Solomon king of Israel built to Ashtoret the detestation of the Sidonians, and to Chemosh the detestation of Moab, and to Milcom, the abomination of the sons of Ammon, the king defiled. (14) And he shattered the pillars and cut down the asherahs and filled their places with bones of men. (15) Indeed, the altar which is in Bethel, the high place which Jeroboam the son of Nebat made which caused Israel to sin, even that altar and high place he tore

down and he burned the high place and pulverised to dust and burned asherah.

In zeal for a reformed cult of Yahweh, Josiah attacked not only the elements he considered offensive in the temple cult, but also the items throughout the land which were considered as stumbling blocks, even the asherah and high place in Bethel. In association with יָרָשָׁא, five separate 'abominations' are mentioned. First, in v. 4 are the vessels for יָרָשָׁא; in v. 6 it is the temple asherah itself; in v. 7 it is the shrines being woven for יָרָשָׁא; in v. 14 it is the asherahs in the countryside; and in v. 15 it is יָרָשָׁא of Bethel. Each of these elements will be discussed separately. The redactional development of this passage would seem to be comprised of at least two stages. 117 According to Jones, v. 14, the only verse utilising the masculine plural of יָרָשָׁא in this pericope, is from an editor later than the prophetic Deuteronomist, DtrP. 118

Initially it should be noted that with the exception of v. 14, all the references to יָרָשָׁא are in the singular. As indicated above, the singular references may be utilised to express the presence of one asherah as cultic object, or perhaps to express the personal name of the goddess. That a goddess is intended in at least part of this pericope may be indicated in that she had offerings presented to her. This may be surmised from the mention of the vessels, חֲלֵם הַנְּשָׁיו לָבֵן לַאֲשֵׁרָה, in the temple in v. 4. Both names are prefixed with prepositions, thus the presence of the article before both is only a matter of pointing. Although the definite article does not necessarily preclude the mention of a divine name (see above), there is no decisive textual way of determining whether cultic images or actual deities are being mentioned here. I have noted above

117 Jones, 1 and 2 Kings: 605, 616-617; Koch, 'Aschera als Himmelskönigin': 103-105.
118 Jones, 1 and 2 Kings: 617.
three other deuteronomistic verses which possibly refer to the goddess; likewise she may be intended in this verse.

V. 4c is often considered to be a later addition because of the reference to Bethel; however, this interpretation does not affect the present study.

Following the removal of the vessels, the asherah, יָּשְׁרָהֵל, was removed from the temple (v. 6). This asherah may have been the one placed in the temple by Manasseh. Manasseh is the first southern king explicitly said to have put an asherah in the temple (2 Kgs. 21.7). The singular reading יָּבָּק, 'grave' of the sons of the people, should be corrected to the plural, as with most of the versions.

When the asherah itself had been removed, Josiah next moved to evict the women who were weaving בִּטְיוֹת for יָּשְׁרָהֵל (v. 7). I have translated this word as 'shrines'. Since the meaning of בִּטְיוֹת is normally 'houses', which does not seem to fit here, a widely considered alternative 'clothes' is often advocated. The suggestion that the 'weaving of battim may be a euphemism for sexual intercourse' is completely without textual support. I would suggest that the MT reading be retained, with the understanding that the 'houses' being woven for יָּשְׁרָהֵל designate shrines in which the asherahs would have stood. That many cultic sites existed for worship involving asherahs is sufficiently demonstrated by the texts themselves. That such cultic areas were enshrined in some kind of tent is possible. The bedouin of today still weave tents of goat's hair. Some of

119 See Olyan, *Asherah and the Cult of Yahweh*: 9. Although Olyan is partially correct in stating that 'Aside from the time of cultic reforms under Asa, Hezekiah and Josiah, the asherah seems to have played a role in the cult of Yahweh, in the Jerusalem temple and at various other sanctuaries, as it did in the north', we have no evidence that the asherah stood in the Jerusalem temple until the time of Manasseh.

120 R. Patai, 'Goddess Asherah': 50; Gray, I & II Kings: 668; Jones, 1 and 2 Kings: 619.

121 De Moor, *אִשְׁרָהאָל*: 441; see also Petey, *Asherah, Goddess of Israel*: 138-139.

the Psalms (61.5 (Eng. 4); 78.60; 15.1; 27.5-6) picture Yahweh as living in a
tent. This being the case, it should not be unlikely that the gods were
worshipped in tents. The Israelite desert tradition is even centred on the
יָהוֹ אֵל חָוֵד מֹעֵר where the ark is housed: the tent, the dwelling place, of Yahweh
among his people. Perhaps such a cultic tradition is referred to in this
verse.

The identity of the בּוֹשֵׂי in v. 7 is still a matter of debate. Although
many commentators suppose the qedeshim to be male cultic prostitutes, as
Gruber has pointed out, this interpretation is not certain.\textsuperscript{123} He suggests
that they be understood as cultic functionaries. Certainly the mention of
the asherah in this verse does not suggest any sexual activities on the part
of the qedeshim; the function of Asherah as a 'fertility goddess' in the Old
Testament is not attested (see below).

The asherah in v. 7 is preceded by a prepositional prefix, and the
definiteness assigned to the noun is the suggestion of the Masoretes. If
either a cultic object or a goddess (and thus perhaps an image of the
goddess) is understood in this verse, a shrine might have been utilised in
its worship.

The next reference to הָרֶשֶׁא during Josiah's reform is in v. 14. The
asherahs, masculine plural, were removed. As mentioned above, this verse
appears to be later than the other asherah (singular) references in this
chapter. The use of the piel perfect with the waw-consecutive is one

\textsuperscript{123} M. Gruber, 'בּוֹשֵׂי מִגָּז מַלֵּכֶים וּמֶפְּלֵגָה אֱלֹהֵי יָהוֹאשָׁר', \textit{Tarbi' 52} (1983): 167-176. His
argument is summarised in English in 'Hebrew qedešah and her Canaanite and
Akkadian Cognates' \textit{UF} 18 (1986): 133, n. 1.
indication of this lateness. The other verbs in the verse are imperfects with the waw-consecutive.

In v. 15 the final reference, the asherah of Bethel was destroyed by Josiah. The mention of Bethel may mark this verse as a latter addition as well. A specific, and therefore singular, asherah is mentioned. The wording of v. 15 is emphatic: 'the altar which is in Bethel, the high place which Jeroboam son of Nebat made which caused Israel to sin, even that altar and high place he tore down and he burned the high place and he pulverised to dust and burned asherah'. The deuteronomists were intent on making the point that Josiah attempted to eradicate completely the cult of the asherah. In v. 15 asherah appears in its 'pure' form, without the article and without any suffix. Since a definite asherah is being referred to, we would expect the definite article here. Perhaps the deuteronomist deliberately used the unaugmented form, indicating that the goddess herself, symbolised by the cultic object, was finally destroyed. This is the final mention of הтоп in the Deuteronomistic History.

4.E. Summary of the Deuteronomistic References

I shall now summarise what we have learned of Asherah from the deuteronomistic sections of the Pentateuch and Deuteronomistic History. We have seen that the deuteronomists refer to the cultic object in both the feminine singular and masculine plural forms. The distribution of these forms appears to concur with a 'double redaction' of the deuteronomistic writings, in which pre-exilic references to the asherah largely utilise the

124Jones, 1 and 2 Kings: 617.
125On the verb forms in this pericope see Koch, 'Aschera als Himmelskönigin': 103-104. Koch suggests that layers of tradition may account for the differing verb tenses (which appear at the beginnings and endings of sub-sections in the pericope).
feminine singular. The exilic references, except when referring to a single, specific asherah, generally utilise the masculine plural. This perhaps points to an 'ironic' masking of the goddess's name, by which the cultic object was called. Such distortion coincides well with the deuteronomistic theology concerning foreign deities, namely, that they are not deities at all.

We have noticed that as cultic objects, some textual support may be found for morphologies both of a tree and of an image. If a specific verse does not allude to the morphology of the object, we cannot dogmatically state that it is one or the other. We have also noted that there is no certain reference to the goddess Asherah in the deuteronomistic writings. Since prefixed prepositions hide the article in an unpointed text, and since the definite article does not preclude the possibility of a proper noun in all cases, there is ambiguity. The three (or five) possible references to the goddess would tell us little of her character. They do not, however, support the alleged associations of Asherah with a 'fertility cult', serpents, lions, or the sea. The asherah may have some connection with bulls, but this may simply be a matter of the cultic settings in which the object is found. The asherah may have been associated with the queen mother. We shall now turn to the remaining Old Testament references in an attempt to discern if a goddess Asherah is indicated.
4.F. The Chronicler's References

The references to הַנְשָׁא in the book of 2 Chronicles do not all correspond to those of its Vorlage. The spelling of the word הַנְשָׁא as a cultic object is irregular. Both the masculine and feminine plural forms are employed. C. Frevel, in extending a proposal put forward by J. P. Weinberg, argues that the chronicler deliberately masked any references to the asherah which would admit to the presence of a goddess. He presents evidence from various aspects of the parallels with Kings and internal evidence from 2 Chronicles to demonstrate that the chronicler attempted to hide mentions of הַנְשָׁא which specifically refer to the goddess. This can be seen in the chronicler's consistent use of the plural when referring to הַנְשָׁא. 2 Chronicles parallels three of the deuteronomistic references which possibly name the goddess Asherah. All three verses in Chronicles display difficulties with הַנְשָׁא, as will be discussed below. Perhaps evidence for an intentional attempt to hide the goddess will be seen, but we should bear in mind that the phenomena observed by Frevel may have resulted from the chronicler's genuine forgetting of the reasons for the past difficulties caused by הַנְשָׁא. To the references to הַנְשָׁא in 2 Chronicles we will now turn our attention.

126 'Die Elimination der Göttin', throughout. The reference to Weinberg is his.
127 The four Deuteronomistic references are 1 Kgs. 15.13; 18.19; 2 Kgs. 21.7; 23.4. The reference to Asherah in 1 Kgs. 18.19 is not dealt with by the chronicler, as he does not concern himself with the history of the northern kingdom. This supports Hadley's argument that 'perhaps by the time of dr himself, and certainly the Chronicler, the term had ceased to be used with any knowledge of the goddess whom it had originally represented' (Yahweh’s Asherah: 92).
4.F.1. 2 Chronicles 14.2 (Eng. 3)

The first instance concerns the righteousness of Asa. In 14.2 (Eng. 3) he is portrayed as reforming the cult in Judah: 'He turned from the foreign altars and the high places, and he shattered the pillars and hewed down the asherahs'. The asherahs here, as we would expect in a late text, are construed as masculine plurals and bear the definite article. There appears to be no knowledge of Asherah as the name of a goddess.

Williamson writes concerning Asa's reform in 2 Chronicles:

The Chronicler's account of the opening years of Asa's reign largely represents his own expansion of 1 Kg. 15:11-12. The description there, however, of 'the male cult prostitutes' and 'all the idols that his fathers made' did not accord well with his presentation of the previous reigns; consequently he has made Asa's reform much more 'Deuteronomic', thus anticipating the reforms of Hezekiah and Josiah, and suggesting that the abuses rectified were not wholly pagan, but rather 'internal' Israelite practices.128

This description of the chronicler's account could also be construed as evidence for a deliberate hiding of other foreign elements in the cult of Judah, or conversely, a genuinely forgotten situation. This particular reference does not have a parallel in Kings, so the question needs to be asked: why, if a deliberate hiding is taking place, does the chronicler add this extra-Kings mention of asherahs?

The reference in 2 Chron. 15.16 has been discussed with its parallel in 1 Kgs. 15.13. Since, however, this is the chronicler's only mention of הָרְשָׁא which arguably refers to the goddess, I will consider Frevel's understanding of the verse here. First, he notes three variations from the Kings account in 2 Chron. 15.16.

1. Die Pendenskonstruktion wird aufgelöst. 2. Die Glieder der unklaren Verbindung werden umgedreht: Anstatt מִפְּלָצָה לָא שָׁרָה now מִפְּלָצָה לָא שָׁרָה. 3. Die Vernichtungsnotiz wird durch הָרְשָׁה erweitert und so verschärft.¹²⁹

He suggests that these differences are intended to confine the meaning of הָרְשָׁא to a cultic object.¹³⁰ Frevel acknowledges that although this one instance of the singular does not fit the plural usage elsewhere, it should not be considered as a contradiction to the goddess-elimination Tendenz of the chronicler.¹³¹ Frevel's observations are cogent. The name of Asherah here and in the parallel passage in 1 Kgs. 15.13 can only be supported on the basis of context and pointing. If the context is ambivalent, as it is in both of these instances, either case may be argued. Frevel's understanding does account for the differences in wording between 2 Chron. 15.16 and 1

¹²⁹ Frevel, 'Die Elimination der Göttin': 266. (I translate this as: '1. The pendens construction was dropped. 2. The terms of the unclear connection were reversed: instead of מִפְּלָצָה לָא שָׁרָה now מִפְּלָצָה לָא שָׁרָה. 3. The destruction account was expanded by הָרְשָׁה and thus sharpened'.)
¹³⁰ Die Elimination der Göttin': 267.
¹³¹ Die Elimination der Göttin': 267.
Kgs. 15.13; however, it may also be accounted for on the basis of the meaning of the word "חֲרֶנֶךְ" confusing the chronicler.\textsuperscript{132}

4.F.iii. 2 Chronicles 17.6

Jehoshaphat is described in 2 Chron. 17.6 as destroying asherahs.

'He was lofty in his heart in the ways of Yahweh and he also removed the high places and the asherahs from Judah.' This reference reverts to the masculine plural form with the definite article for the asherahs. Once again we should note that this passage has no Vorlage in Kings which mentions asherahs. This may suggest that the asherahs had lost some of their potential threat, and had become simply cultic objects to be removed in the interests of orthodoxy, in the eyes of the chronicler.

4.F.iv. 2 Chronicles 19.3

Jehoshaphat was further commended in 2 Chron. 19.3: 'Certainly good matters are found with you because you burned the asherahs from the land setting your heart to seek God.' In this verse the asherahs are designated in feminine plural form, with the definite article (ץ הָעֲשָרָה). This prompts the question: had the threat of asherahs become a matter of past, pre-exilic days, which was no longer understood? I have argued above that the masculine plural form was applied to the feminine asherah in an attempt to disguise ironically the name of the goddess. Here the feminine plural appears, as if no difficulty attended it. We should also note

\textsuperscript{132}Hadley notes: 'The parallel account in II Chron. xv 16 mentions asherah in the singular, against all other places where the Chronicler uses the plural. It is also indefinite, but the article in both verses is only a matter of pointing. It may be that the Chronicler did not fully understand this text' (Yahweh's Asherah: 96).
the curious use of the definite article with elohim for 'God' (יהוה) in this verse. The picture is one of a chronicler who did not view the asherahs as remaining a threat to the restored nation, but who wished to remind the people of the causes of their exile.

4.F.v. 2 Chronicles 24.18

Joash is brought into the asherah controversy in 2 Chron. 24.18. 'And they forsook the house of Yahweh the God of their fathers, and they served the asherahs and the idols and it happened that wrath was upon Judah and Jerusalem because of this offence.' The masculine plural and definite article are used to designate the asherahs in this verse. This is the third of the chronicler's accounts of the asherahs with no parallel in Kings. In the eyes of the chronicler, the asherahs persistently stood in Judah and were only removed by the great reformer kings. Otherwise they were stumbling blocks which were left standing despite the anger of Yahweh.

4.F.vi. 2 Chronicles 31.1

2 Chron. 31.1 concerns the reform of Hezekiah.

As they finished all this, all of Israel found in the cities of Judah went out and they shattered the pillars and hewed down the asherahs and they pulled down the high places and altars in all of Judah and Benjamin, Ephraim, and Manasseh to completion, and the sons of Israel returned to their cities, each man to his possession.

We cannot be detained here by the question of the historicity of the reform of Hezekiah. The reference to the asherahs is once again in the

133 The issue is dealt with in an essay by A. C. Welch, The Work of the Chronicler, Its Purpose and Date (Schweich Lectures 1938), London, 1939: 97-121. For the direction
masculine plural. This verse very roughly parallels 2 Kgs. 18.4 with the removal of the high places, pillars, and asherah(s) mentioned in each case. In 2 Kings, however, asherah is given in the singular form. The use of the masculine plural here could be understood as evidence for either intentional avoidance of the singular (thus evoking memories of the goddess), or as evidence that the actual connotations of the asherah had been forgotten.

4.F.vii. 2 Chronicles 33.3

2 Chron. 33.3 parallels 2 Kgs. 21.3. 'He turned and he built the high places which Hezekiah his father had torn down, and he built altars to the baals and he made asherahs and bowed to all the hosts of heaven and served them.' The sin of Manasseh is described in similar terms to that of the chronicler's Vorlage, except that the asherah, which was feminine singular in 2 Kgs. 21.3, appears here as the feminine plural. The use of the plural 'to accentuate Manasseh's apostasy' does not readily account for this subtle difference. To the chronicler asherah without an article and without a plural rendering in 2 Kgs. 21.3 was perhaps confusing. Rather than assign a feminine singular a masculine plural as the deuteronomists had normally done, the chronicler rendered the form in the more natural feminine plural. Once again the evidence points to a misunderstanding as to the original problematic associations of the asherahs.


134 Williamson, 1 and 2 Chronicles: 390.
The next occurrence of asherahs, in 33.19, employs the masculine plural. 'And his prayer and the supplication by him, and all his sins and treachery and the places in which he built high places and he erected the asherahs and the images before his humbling, behold they are written in the words of Hoza.' This verse does not appear in the Vorlage, as Manasseh is not recorded as repenting by the deuteronomists. It is curious that when no deuteronomistic Vorlage exists (as far as we know), the chronicler utilised the masculine plural shortly after the feminine plural for the same cultic objects. Perhaps when faced with a feminine singular in v. 3, the chronicler assumed a feminine plural, whereas in 19 he reverted to a formulaic condemnation of making asherim. The other instance of the feminine plural in 19.3, however, has no Vorlage in Kings. I would see this as evidence of confusion over what exactly asherahs were meant to signify when they had been a problem before the exile.

Before leaving the reign of Manasseh, we should consider one instance in which Chronicles differs in the choice of words for the asherah in its Vorlage. In 2 Chron. 33.7 we read that Manasseh placed the image of the idol, המלך, in the temple. In the parallel verse in 2 Kgs. 21.7, one of the possible deuteronomistic references to the goddess Asherah, we read המלך ויבשורה. For Frevel, this is prime evidence that the chronicler consciously sought to eliminate the goddess. The chronicler even chose an obscure word as the substitute for הַשֵּׁרַה. Either the chronicler deliberately hid the word הַשֵּׁרַה, or he had a different account.

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135 See Dohmen, 'Heißt בִּנְל "Bild, Statue"?': 263-266.
in front of him, or he was unclear as to how Manasseh could have made an image of a cultic object and chose to emend the text.

4.F.ix. 2 Chronicles 34.3, 4 and 7

The final three uses of בְּרָשִׁית in 2 Chronicles occur in the shortened account of Josiah's reform. 2 Chron. 34.3, 4, and 7 read:

And at eight years he ruled, and when he was still a lad he began to seek the God of David his father; in his twelfth year he began to purify Judah and Jerusalem from the high places and the asherahs and the images and molten images. [4] And they tore down before him the altars of the baals and the incense altars which were over above them and he hewed off the asherahs and the images and the molten images and he shattered and pulverised and scattered them on the face of the graves of the ones sacrificing to them. [7] And he tore down the altars and the asherahs and the images he crushed to dust, and he hewed down all the incense altars in all the land of Israel and he returned to Jerusalem.

All three mentions of the asherahs are in the masculine plural with the definite article. Of special interest is that whereas 2 Kgs. 23 has five references to asherah-related phenomena, 2 Chron. 34 only lists three. This fact again illustrates the difficulties the chronicler had with the connotations of asherah, as the two references which he left out could be interpreted as indicating the goddess. The vessels for the asherah in 2 Kgs. 23.4 perhaps demonstrate that the pre-exilic deuteronomist knew of the goddess Asherah. The chronicler does not mention them. In 2 Kgs. 23.7, where women were weaving shrines for the asherah, בְּרָשִׁית appears without a plural ending. This too is missing from the chronicler's account. Frevel utilises this information as evidence for his hypothesis. The information presented in the book of Chronicles allows itself to be

137 'Die Elimination der Göttin': 265-266.
interpreted in that way. I suggest that the chronicler had lost sight of the
difficulties which had attended reference to the asherahs in the pre-exilic
times. Confronted with asherim as a plural for a cultic object, he utilised it
himself, but not consistently. In the absence of asherim in his Vorlage, he
twice utilised the more normal feminine plural. In any case, he did not
mention the goddess Asherah, except perhaps in 2 Chron. 15.16. What
emerges from all of this is that a confused image of Ḫ is present in 2
Chronicles. The evidence is not enough to allow us to determine any
attributes of the goddess, unless it points to a time when the goddess was no
longer remembered. This is what we might expect from a post-exilic
explanation of the fall of Israel.
4.G. The Prophetic References

The prophetic references to the asherah number only four. They are Isa. 17.8; 27.9; Jer. 17.2 and Mic. 5.13 (Eng. 14). It would seem that none of these references can actually be attributed to the prophets themselves in whose books they appear (see below). The question of why the prophets did not condemn the asherah (cultic object or goddess) has often been raised, but any speculation is ultimately an argument from silence. No adequate solution appears to be in sight.

4.G.i. Isaiah 17.8

The first reference is Isa. 17.8. 'He will not gaze upon {the altars} the work of his hand, and he will not look upon what his fingers made {even the asherahs and incense altars}.' This passage comes within the wider category of the oracles against the foreign nations. Within this oracle against Damascus in Isa. 17, vv. 7-8 fit only with difficulty. Many commentators, and also BHS, point to the difficulty with 'the altars' and 'the asherahs and incense altars' in v. 8,\(^{138}\) with some suggestion that they should be omitted. The grammatical form of the asherahs is the masculine plural with the definite article. The previous considerations of the masculine plural form supports the suggestion that the asherahs (and

therefore possibly the other cultic objects in this verse) are perhaps later additions to a text which might otherwise be an Isaianic prophecy. Clements argues that vv. 7-9 are entirely later additions, and if we understand the message of the verses to be advocating that 'Jerusalem alone was claimed as the sole authorised place of sacrificial worship' the text gains a deuteronomistic flavour. The reference to the desolation of the land in v. 9 does at least point to the exilic period for the origin of this addition.

4.G.ii. Isaiah 27.9

The next mention of the asherahs comes in the Apocalypse of Isaiah (chapters 24-27). Virtually no critical commentators attribute this section to Isaiah himself, with many judging it to be post-exilic. Isa. 27.9 reads, 'Therefore, in this will the transgression of Jacob be atoned for, and this all the fruit of the removal of his sin, in his making all the stones of the altar like pulverised limestone, and they will not raise asherahs and incense altars'. Even among the apocalyptic chapters of Isaiah, this pericope is difficult. Watts dates it to the exile, and Clements to the hellenistic era. The punishment of Leviathan introduces Isa. 27 and continuing, the oracle expresses Yahweh's care for Israel. V. 9 appears to provide the conditions of Israel's repentance, already fulfilled by the exile. The

139 Clements, Isaiah I-39: 159.
140 Gray, Isaiah I-XXXIX: 301.
141 See O. Kaiser, (Isaiah 13-39: ix) who vies for a date between the 'second half of the fourth century and the first third of the second century BC'. Young (Book of Isaiah) and Oswalt (Book of Isaiah), however, do represent the opposite opinion.
143 Watts, Isaiah I-33: 310; Clements, Isaiah I-39: 221.
144 Watts, however, construes the opening lines of v. 9 as a question; Therefore, by this will the guilt of Jacob be expiated? And (is) this all the fruit of the removing of this sin? (Isaiah 1-33 : 346) and indeed, the entire pericope as a dialogue.
asherahs are once again construed by the fixed masculine plural form of the later editors. Once again, Clements notes the tendency towards considering Jerusalem as the only legitimate cultic site in this verse.\textsuperscript{145} This, in turn, appears to indicate the work of the deuteronomistic theologians.

4.G.iii. Jeremiah 17.2

Jer. 17.2 makes use of the formula initiated by Hosea:\textsuperscript{146} 'As their children remember their altars and their asherahs under every luxuriant tree upon the high hills'. The text of Jeremiah has long been noted for its difficulty. Although chapter 17 may be considered as originating from Jeremiah,\textsuperscript{147} vv. 1-4 present special difficulties. First of all, they are omitted by the LXX, although this may be due to haplography.\textsuperscript{148} If the verses are retained, v. 2, or at least the mentions of the asherahs and altars, appears to be a later addition to the text.\textsuperscript{149} A suffixed form of the masculine plural of asherahs appears in v. 2, and once again, this would fit the exilic usage of this form cited above.

\textsuperscript{145}Isaiah 1-39: 222.
\textsuperscript{146}W. Holladay, "On Every High Hill".
\textsuperscript{147}J. Bright, Jeremiah, Introduction, Translation, and Notes (AB), Garden City, New York, 1965: 119.
Mic. 5.13 (Eng. 14) simply reads: 'I will root out your asherahs from your midst, and I will destroy your cities'. Once again, the text which concerns us can be dated only with difficulty, if at all. There is no scholarly consensus on the extent of the additions to the oracles of Micah, but many commentators consider 5.13 (14) to be late. The argument is usually based on a change of the reasons for and basis of the punishment decreed by Yahweh. The grammatical form of 'your asherahs' is suffixed masculine plural, which we have noted in exilic texts. It is spelled plene ("ח"ר ק), as in Deut. 7.5, and 2 Kgs. 17.16. The parallelism of asherahs with cities is unexpected. Many commentators resort to emendation. Wolff proposes to emend 'your asherahs' to 'your enemies', whilst other commentators would emend 'your cities' to 'your idols' and others attempt to explain the combination as it stands. If we realise that Yahweh is intending the same fate for the two objects mentioned, namely, their destruction, then we should assume that some similarity exists between the objects. At first, we should have difficulty discovering anything that cities should have in common with asherahs. To state that they are both 'idolatrous' begs the question. That they were common institutions in the life of the people may be a solution. Yahweh was


angered by the everyday structures of society, their cities, and their asherahs. Mays understands 'asherahs' and 'cities' to represent the cultic and military aspects which are condemned in 5.9-14 (Eng. 10-15).\(^{154}\) I suggest that this is as acceptable a solution as an emendation would be.

One further possibility should be considered here. The verb used to describe the destruction of the asherahs is הָרְסַ, 'to root or pluck out'. Although the verb may be used figuratively elsewhere,\(^ {155}\) it may be understood in its basic sense here. Although argumentation from verbal forms does not supply indisputable evidence, this verse may represent the asherahs as trees. As with Deut. 16.21, this cannot be defended dogmatically, but it appears to be the basic meaning of the poetic denunciation.

The goddess Asherah is thus not mentioned in the prophetic books. The cultic object, referred to four times in the masculine plural form, is evident in later additions. It appears, therefore, that the asherahs were not of particular concern to the prophets.

4.H. Rabbinic Sources

For the sake of completeness, a brief consideration of Rabbinic sources must be included. The Mishnah refers to the asherah in four chapters,\(^{156}\) one in the tractate 'Orlah ('the fruit of young trees')\(^ {157}\), one

\(^{154}\)Micah: 127.


\(^{156}\)Louie, Meaning, Characteristics and Role of Asherah: 16.

in Sukkah,\textsuperscript{158} one in 'Abodah Zarah ('idolatry'),\textsuperscript{159} and one in Me'ilotah ('sacrilege').\textsuperscript{160} The asherah is discussed in the corresponding sections of the Gemara of the Babylonian Talmud for Sukkah,\textsuperscript{161} 'Abodah Zarah,\textsuperscript{162} and Me'ilotah.\textsuperscript{163} In addition, the asherah is also mentioned in the Gemara of Pesahim.\textsuperscript{164} Without going into the details of the Rabbinic discussions, it may be stated that the asherah is understood to be a tree. The traditions recorded in 'Orlah, Sukkah, Pesahim, and Me'ilotah are all concerned with the use of items associated with trees which were asherahs. 'Abodah Zarah enters into discussion on what an asherah is, and the Mishnah states:

Three kinds of Asherah are to be distinguished: if a tree was planted from the first for idolatry, it is forbidden; if it was chopped and trimmed for idolatry and it sprouted afresh, one only need take away what has sprouted afresh; but if a gentile did set up an idol beneath it and then desecrate it, the tree is permitted. What is an Asherah? Any tree under which is an idol. R. Simeon says: Any tree which is worshipped.\textsuperscript{165}

The discussion which attends these statements in the Talmud confirms the understanding of the asherah as a tree.

\textsuperscript{158}3:1-5.
\textsuperscript{159}5:1-10.
\textsuperscript{160}3:8.

\textsuperscript{165}Abodah Zarah, 3:7 in The Mishnah, (Danby's translation): 441.
4.I. Conclusions

In this chapter I have examined all forty references to הָרְשָׁה in the Old Testament. In the deuteronomistic literature, הָרְשָׁה appears as a cultic object which in some cases seems to have been an actual tree, and in other cases an image. Still other cases could possibly refer to some other cultic object. This indicates that the insistence on one kind of object as an asherah may be a modern qualification being read into the actual text. Perhaps at different times and places asherahs, as cultic objects, were found in different forms. A pattern may be discerned which indicates that exilic texts edited by the deuteronomists refer to the asherahs in the masculine plural form. This, I believe, points to an ironic masking of the name of the cultic object which originated from the name of a goddess. Most of the texts in which the masculine plural appears have been determined to be exilic by Old Testament scholars, based on factors outside of the scope of this dissertation.

I have noted that in three (or five) instances in the deuteronomistic literature, הָרְשָׁה perhaps refers to a goddess. If the goddess does appear in these texts, they do not tell us much about her nature or character. Grammatically or contextually, it may be argued that Asherah does or does not appear in the Old Testament. In verses with a prefixed preposition, context is our guide. Unfortunately, the context in these verses is open to either interpretation.

Negatively, it may be said that the Old Testament does not lend support to the conception of Asherah as a 'mother-goddess'. This characteristic is built up from outside sources. Neither does Asherah appear in a role as a 'fertility goddess', as far as the texts will allow us to
determine. 166 Nowhere is it stated that the veneration of Asherah had any relationship to fertility, either agricultural or human. 167

The relationship between trees and Asherah appears to be present, but its precise nuances cannot be determined with any certainty. This relationship depends on Asherah being the deity to whom the asherah was dedicated. The question of whether or not this reflects the actual situation has recently been raised. 168 The existence of a goddess with the name Athirat at Ugarit supports the idea that the cultic emblem was dedicated to Asherah; however, the absence of an explicit reference to Asherah in the Old Testament invites scepticism. This point stands to indicate the ambiguity of the Old Testament evidence.

One association, however, which appears both in the Ugaritic literature and the Old Testament is the relationship of Athirat and the asherah/Asherah with the role of the gebir or rabitu. The 'queen mother' apparently determined the heir to the throne (and was the mother of that heir). 169 Athirat appears to have functioned in this role in Ugaritic mythology. The Old Testament connection appears more vague, but is still present. Maakah, Asa’s mother, made a horrid thing for the asherah/Asherah. Was this because of her role as the queen mother? Once again, the texts do not provide explicit answers, but the possibility remains for this connection between the two. The arguments of Bernhardt are not

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167 The assertion that Asherah assisted in childbirth (R. Patai, Goddess Asherah: 41) is speculative and requires an unwarranted textual emendation.
to be ignored. Much time and space do separate Ugarit from ancient Israel. The characteristics of biblical Asherah, if she appears as a goddess, are not pronounced. The grammatical ambiguity of the verses which may mention Asherah render definite conclusions impossible.

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Chapter Five

Mesopotamian, Hittite and South Arabian Evidence

In the previous chapters, material which deals with Athirat or Asherah has been contextualised into units which do not place undue demands across genres or different textual categories. When abundant evidence for the character of a deity is extant, as at Ugarit, and possibly within the Old Testament as well, the task is not to attempt to combine that which does not belong together. We cannot, for example, take all the evidence available for Athirat/Asherah, ignoring cultural and textual boundaries, to present a composite figure, then claim that this generic character fully represents the goddess. At the outset, a similar caution must be utilised for the Mesopotamian, 'Hittite', and Old South Arabian texts about to be examined. To assert that fragments spread over centuries and scattered across hundreds of miles can begin to furnish us with a picture of a single goddess 'Asherah' would demand far more than the texts will allow. I shall examine each instance of Ashratu/Athirat separately and within its own context.

The syllabic nature of the Akkadian and Hittite texts lends itself to variant spellings of the name which is generally considered to be equivalent to Athirat. In the course of this study I shall examine the names spelled as Ashratu(m), Ashirtu, Ashrat, and Ashiratum, which are possible equivalents of Athirat by normal phonetic rules. Initially I shall present the Mesopotamian evidence for a goddess of the same name as Ugaritic Athirat. When referring to this goddess, I shall use the name Ashratu, unless a specific reference cites a variant form. I shall then look briefly at the Elkunirša myth, which, although written in Hittite, seems to be Canaanite in origin. A short examination of Epigraphic South Arabian
evidence will then follow. At the outset it is important to note that although these sources do mention a goddess bearing the same name as Ugaritic Athirat, they are not major sources for adding to our understanding of the character of the goddess as a whole. We should expect that each occurrence of Ashratu/Athirat in a different cultural context will certainly display cultural idiosyncrasies. They may indeed confirm what we have been able to determine safely above, but when such smaller sources of information contradict the sound evidence we must interpret the material accordingly.

5.A. Sumero-Akkadian Evidence

What I hope to accomplish with the Sumerian and Akkadian source material is the determination of the characteristics of Ashratu insofar as the texts themselves will allow. Initially this was simply a compilation of references to Ashratu in Mesopotamian source material. Many of the past studies on 'Asherah' have made use of the Mesopotamian material concerning Ashratu; however, just as 'Asherah studies' are advancing, so are Mesopotamian studies. Each field is becoming specialised to a point that dialogue between them is required to present the evidence clearly. Various publications of the same source materials are cited in different sources on 'Asherah' creating a labyrinth from which only the specialist may hope to

emerge. Even Oppenheim warned of the difficulties of attempting to reconstruct a Mesopotamian religion:

It is extremely difficult to penetrate to the individuality of the divine figures. The Sumerian custom of speaking of the deity as the lord or lady of the city rather than of mentioning it by name (only rarely was such an individualization of the city's patron and ruler admitted) presents a serious obstacle. The formalization of the god-man attitude and the narrow range of the hymnical terminology which favored an extensive interchange of epithets among deities, blurs still more the individuality of all but the most outstanding and characteristic divine figures.²

In the light of these difficulties, my work in this section will rely heavily upon the advice of specialists in Mesopotamian studies.³ I have attempted to collate the references to Ashratu as cited in past studies of the goddess and to draw some preliminary conclusions. This exercise necessitates the citation of outdated sources on Mesopotamian studies and the consideration of the suggestions of past studies on the goddess. It is hoped that this synthesis of disparate sources will not further confuse the issue, but will provide an outline from which further work may be done.

Assyriologists have long recognised that Ashratu is known as the spouse of Amurru in the Mesopotamian material.⁴ This relationship points

²L. Oppenheim, *Ancient Mesopotamia. Portrait of a Dead Civilization*, Chicago, 1977: 194. Even Oppenheim's observation on the 'most outstanding and characteristic divine figures' meets with difficulties. Lambert has noted that the original characteristics of the more important of the gods are confused by their usurpation of the attributes of other gods (private communication 15 February 1992), thus adding to the general difficulty of this exercise.

³For information throughout this section I am indebted to helpful private communications from Prof. W. G. Lambert of Birmingham University and Dr. S. Dalley of the Oriental Institute of Oxford University. They helped make some sense of the many diverse sources which I had located, and also drew my attention to the more updated versions and editions. I will draw attention to the information which they have generously supplied; however, the interpretation of the material and any mistakes are my own.

to Ashratu's Amorite origins. It is from this context that the goddess must be explored.\(^5\) I am not beginning from the assumption that the Akkadian Ashratu is the same mythological character as Ugaritic Athirat. Since Mesopotamian Ashratu was understood to be an Amorite deity, a connection between Ashratu's and Athirat's origin appears to be virtually certain. Being transferred to a different culture, however, would have led to some adaptation of the goddess to her new culture. This should stand as a caution not to apply specific details of Ashratu's characteristics as they developed in Mesopotamia to Athirat simply because the earliest records attest to the former.\(^6\) When dealing with the complex Akkadian evidence we must let the texts and contexts inform us of Ashratu's character and nature. I hope that by the end of this exploration, some preliminary hypotheses may be adduced as to the characteristics of the figure Ashratu as she developed in Mesopotamia.

A word should be added about my use of the terms 'Mesopotamian' and 'Akkadian'. Mesopotamia, the land 'between the rivers', originally referred to the region of the rivers Tigris and Euphrates. It was approximately comprised of what is now the territory of Iraq. This area was divided into the nations of Babylonia in the south and Assyria in the north.

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\(^5\) I wish to thank Prof. Lambert for drawing my attention to this essential point.

\(^6\) This is a difficulty found in Yamashita's study. He states that:
   
   It is apparent that the position of the goddess Asherah is that of *kallatu* in the Old Babylonian pantheon, because Amurru is the son of the heaven-god, and the goddess Asherah, having come from another land to be his bride, eventually takes the position of the 'crown princess'. In the Ugaritic text II AB I 15-16, IV-V 53-54, Asherah is in parallel with the perfect daughter-in-law... The same epithet is attributed to the Sumero-Akkadian and Ugaritic Asherah. (The Goddess Asherah: 13-14.)

This analysis assumes a parallel development between Athirat and Ashratu, without offering further textual support.
The language of these states was Akkadian. The Sumerian culture preceded the Babylonian culture in the south of Mesopotamia. I shall be using 'Akkadian' to designate the various dialects of the written scripts of Babylonian and Assyrian nations. Akkadian is attested from about the middle of the third millennium B.C.E. and although it overlaps with the Sumerian language, it superseded it in many respects. Ashratu is mentioned in both Sumerian and Akkadian sources. She is referred to in materials from the extremities of the empires, as well as in the oldest cities within them.

In this area of study caution is required. Too much caution would eliminate our investigation altogether; yet research unaware of this necessary reminder runs the risk of assuming far too much.\footnote{For a reasoned approach to this problem see W. G. Lambert, 'The Historical Development of the Mesopotamian Pantheon: A Study in Sophisticated Polytheism' in \textit{Unity and Diversity. Essays in the History, Literature, and Religion of the Ancient Near East} (The Johns Hopkins Near Eastern Studies), H. Goedicke and J. J. M. Roberts, eds. Baltimore, 1975: 191-200.}

In the course of this study, I shall attempt to keep the difficulties in the forefront, but not to stifle what may be gleaned from extant sources concerning Ashratu.

Initially it should be noted that in the major collections of divine names and epithets from the early part of this century, namely the studies of Deimel\footnote{A. Deimel, \textit{Pantheon Babylonicum. Nomina Deorum e Textibus Cuneiformibus Excerpta et Ordine Alphabetico} (Scriptal Pontificii Instituti Biblici) Rome, 1914; see also the second edition in \textit{Sumerisches Lexikon}, part 4/1, Rome, 1950.} and Tallqvist,\footnote{K. Tallqvist, \textit{Akkadische Göttereipitheta, mit einem Götterverzeichnis und einer Liste der prädikativen Elemente der sumerischen Götternamen} (Studia Orientalia Edidit Societas Orientalis Fennica VII), Helsinki, 1938: see especially pages 26, 60, 111, 252, 265, and 318.} Ashratu does find a mention. Roberts, although he does mention Ashratu in a footnote, does not count her among the
members of the 'earliest Semitic pantheon', as she does not appear to be 'attested in Mesopotamia before Ur III'.

5.A.i. Sumerian Votive Inscription

One of the most important sources for discovering the attributes and epithets of Ashratu is an inscribed limestone slab from the reign of Hammurabi (B. M. 22,454). This slab contains a Sumerian votive inscription accompanied by a bas-relief of Hammurabi. The provenance is uncertain, but many scholars favour Sippar. Hammurabi's dates are c.1792-1750 B.C.E., according to the middle chronology of his reign. These dates provide a terminus ad quem for the inscription. Translations of this text are available in King, Sollberger and Kupper, Yamashita, and most recently in Frayne. This inscription has been the subject of much discussion for many decades. The translation here presented is that of Frayne, with discussion following. Transcriptions of the Sumerian are also found in King, Yamashita, and Frayne.

1-10) For [the goddess Aš]ratum, daughter-in-law of the god An, the one suitable for ladyship, lady of voluptuousness and

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11 L. King, Letters and Inscriptions of Hammurabi (Luzac's Semitic Text and Translation Series 8) vol. 3, London, 1900: 159 (King's number 66).
14 D. Frayne, Old Babylonian Period (2003-1595 B.C.) (Royal Inscriptions of Mesopotamia, Early Periods 4), Toronto, 1990: 359-360. I am indebted to Prof. Lambert for directing me to this source.
happiness, tenderly cared for in the mountain, lady with patient mercy, who prays reverently for her spouse, his lady, 11-13) for the life of Hammur-ri, king of the Amorites, 14-20) Itur-āṣd[um], chief of the [S]iakkatu canal (district), son of Suba-īl[ān], the servant who reverences her, set up as a wonder a protective genius befitting her divinity, in her beloved residence.16

This particular inscription was the basis for Yamashita's study of Mesopotamian Ashratu,17 and indeed, it may be the most important source of information on her found in Mesopotamia. I shall summarise Yamashita's conclusions, then reassess the inscription itself to determine what it may add to our knowledge of Ashratu. Yamashita summarised the information in four points:

1. Asherah is the 'lady of the mountain'.
2. She is the daughter-in-law of the heaven-god.
3. She has the same epithet as Ishtar.
4. She is an Amorite deity.18

If the characteristics listed by Yamashita are indeed correct, they would point to substantial differences between the development of this goddess and the Ugaritic Athirat. Before any certain statement can be made, however, the epithets contained in this inscription must be considered.

Primarily I shall discuss Yamashita's third point: Ashratu has the same epithet as Ishtar. This, he believes, points to a confusion of the two goddesses. The epithet in question is nin ša-lá-sū, which he translates as 'the merciful lady' (Frayne's 'lady with patient mercy'). Although this epithet is also applied to Ishtar, it does not give explicit evidence of any

16Frayne, Old Babylonian Period: 359-360.
confusion between Ashratu and Ishtar as Yamashita suggests. The epithet is also applied to Marduk, Ninurta, Nergal, and Sin; and in view of its wide usage, it should not be considered as indicative of confusion. Yamashita supplements this title with evidence from the epithet bêlit šeri, also applied to both Ishtar and Ashratu. This epithet, however, has specific associations for Ashratu as the spouse of Amurru, as I shall discuss below. It is of interest, however, that this epithet has been taken to suggest underworldly connotations for Ashratu. It also appears that 'Ashrat of Esagila' and Ishtar were identified in a late mystical text (see below). Caution, however, is necessary. As Oppenheim has noted, the sharing of epithets is a common feature of different deities in Mesopotamian religion, and not necessarily a sign of confusion. Yamashita's third piece of evidence for the confusion of Ashratu and Ishtar is the theophoric names in El-Amarna letters 61-65, although he does note that this does not prove that any confusion necessarily existed between the two. In the light of the fact that epithets are often shared by Mesopotamian deities, the sharing of two titles by Ashratu and Ishtar occasions no surprise. The major gods of the Mesopotamian pantheon collected many epithets, and Ishtar is a major deity. I simply note here that Yamashita suggests an identification of the two. We must now turn to the epithets as found in the inscription.

The first title of Ashratu to appear in this inscription names her as the daughter-in-law of the heaven-god, An. There has been a dispute over

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23 *Ancient Mesopotamia*: 194.
the correct translation of the phrase behind this epithet. King, Sollberger
and Kupper, read *é-gi₄-a-an-na* as 'bride of An'. Lambert, Frayne and
Dalley translate it as 'daughter-in-law of An'. The correct understanding
of this phrase is important for determining how the Mesopotamian world
understood Ashratu. Mesopotamian Ashratu is normally considered to be
the consort of Amurru. Is she here the *bride* or the *daughter-in-law* of
An? The answer to this question lies in the interpretation of *é-gi₄-a* (= *kallatum*), a term which may denote 'daughter-in-law' or 'bride'. The
resolution of the difficulty may be that *kallatum* is used in the sense of
'daughter-in-law, i.e. bride chosen by father of groom'; thus in both
translations the daughter-in-law connotation is primary. This term is
generally used as 'daughter-in-law' in connection with goddesses. In the
light of this information and of the consideration of the relationship of
Ashratu and Amurru as consorts, this phrase should be understood as
'daughter-in-law'.

The second epithet applied to Ashratu in this inscription is 'the one
suitable for ladyship'. We should probably not read too much into this
title, as it would be an appropriate expression of respect for any goddess.

The epithet 'lady of voluptuousness and happiness' (line 4) may
point to an erotic aspect of the goddess. Although Athirat appears to be of a
sexually active nature in the Ugaritic Baal Cycle, this does not indicate that
she was considered to be an erotic figure there. The phrase *hi-li* (luxury,
voluptuousness) also appears in connection with Ashratu in the series Tintir = Bābilu (see below).

Lines 5-6 read 'tenderly cared for in the mountain'.\(^{31}\) Sollberger and Kupper render it as 's’occupent tendrement de la montagne'.\(^{32}\) This phrase does indicate a connection with a mountain, as noted by Yamashita.\(^{33}\) This connection with 'the mountain' also appears in Amurru's epithet \(\text{be} \, \text{šadī}, \) 'lord of the mountain'.\(^{34}\) This common association with the mountain supports the consort relationship of Amurru and Ashratu. The phrase probably refers to Ashratu's being looked after by Amurru.\(^{35}\) Her further characterisation as the 'lady with patient mercy, who prays reverently for her spouse' could simply be understood as underscoring Ashratu's divine qualities and faithfulness.

An interesting aspect of this inscription is the dedication of a 'protective genius' (\(\text{dā} \, \text{lamma}\)) for Ashratu. Frayne considers the possibility that this limestone slab may have been 'a fragment of a \(\text{lamassu}\) figure'.\(^{36}\)

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\(^{31}\) Frayne, \textit{Old Babylonian Period}: 359.  
\(^{32}\) \textit{Inscriptions royales}: 219.  
\(^{33}\) The Goddess Asherah: 8-11.  
\(^{34}\) Deimel, \textit{Pantheon Babylonicum}: 177; Tallqvist, \textit{Akkadische Götterepitheta}: 251. See G. Reisner, \textit{Sumerisch-Babylonische Hymnen nach Thontafeln Griechischer Zeit} (Mittheilungen aus den Orientalischen Sammlungen X), Berlin, 1896: 139, lines 141-144.  
\(^{35}\) This aspect was pointed out by Lambert, private communication of 15 February 1992.  
\(^{36}\) Frayne, \textit{Old Babylonian Period}: 359.
5.A.ii. God Lists

Ashratu appears, to my knowledge, in three of the main god lists which have survived from Mesopotamia.\(^{37}\) The names in these lists are arranged according to various theological or lexical criteria.\(^{38}\)

5.A.ii.a. AN = Anum

The largest god list known from ancient Mesopotamia is AN = Anum (also cited as AN= (ilu) Anum). This list is based on predecessors from the Old Babylonian period; however, it has been much reworked during the course of its transmission. We are able to determine that Ashratu entered the tradition in post-Old Babylonian times. The format of this list is double column, with the second column offering further information on the deity list in the first. Parts of AN = Anum are known in several recensions. The hand copies of King in CT 24 and 25\(^{39}\) were based on the tablets in the British Museum which were known to him. Zimmern published a study of this list in preparation for an edition\(^{40}\). This list is analytically arranged according to seniority in the pantheon of the particular deity, who is followed by his or her family or courtiers.\(^{41}\) Ashratu does occur in this list as the spouse of Amurru. Unfortunately her list of names is not very

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\(^{37}\)I do not include epithets in the following exploration unless they are explicitly connected with Ashratu in the lists.

\(^{38}\)For a synopsis of the major lists see W. G. Lambert 'Götterlisten' in RLA 3 (1957-1971): 473-479.

\(^{39}\)L. W. King, Cuneiform Texts from Babylonian Tablets in the British Museum, parts XXIV and XXV, London, 1908 and 1909.


\(^{41}\)Lambert 'Götterlisten.': 475.
helpful, as they are obscure. The relevant section is Tablet VI, lines 251 to 265, which contains the following Semitic epithets of Ashratu: da-ba, da-ba-ba, da-na-tum, da-ba-tum, da-ku-pi-tum, da-li-la-tum, and de-kur-ritum. Given the obscure nature of some of these names, they add little to our present knowledge of the goddess Ashratu, other than confirming her place in the pantheon as the spouse of Amurru. The final epithet cited, however, is of some interest. 'Ekurrutum is a feminine adjectival form from Ekurrur "temple" or "netherworld". This is of interest in that Tallqvist associated Ashratu with the realm of the dead by her epithet belit seri.

5.A.ii.b. The Weidner List

Besides the well known god list AN = Anum, Schroeder published 'a new type of god list from Assur' in 1921. Schroeder divided the five fragments from Assur which comprise this list into three categories, depending on how much remained of the original text. Although partially reconstructed on the basis of an El-Amarna fragment, Ashratum appeared in his list. Weidner worked further on this text, expanding the number of member fragments to eight. His work pushes the date for the origin of this list back to Old Babylonian times.

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42 Lambert, private communication, 26 May 1991.
43 These first two names are not certainly Semitic.
44 I am indebted to Prof. Lambert for providing me with this information in his letter of 26 May 1991.
45 Lambert, private communication, 26 May 1991.
46 Tallqvist, Sumerisch-akkadische Namen der Totenwelt: 17-22. This idea is also reflected in Langdon, Babylonian Liturgies: 129, n. 5.
47 This is the name provided for this list by Lambert ('Götterlisten': 474).
49 Schroeder, 'Götterlistentypus': 126-127.
50 Schroeder, 'Götterlistentypus': 133, 135.
52 Weidner, 'Götterlisten': 2-7.
fragments come is now completely preserved and has been published by A. Cavigneaux.\textsuperscript{53} The context would seem to indicate that at the time of Ur III Ashratu was considered to be the spouse of Amurru. The context, according to Cavigneaux's ordering is:

\begin{align*}
187 & \text{d} \text{mar.dú} & \text{Amurru} \\
188 & \text{d} \text{AN.mar.dú} & \text{Amurru} \\
189 & \text{d} \text{aš-ra-tum} & \text{Ašratu}\textsuperscript{54}
\end{align*}

This list is known in several recensions. A late Babylonian edition from Kish was published by van der Meer.\textsuperscript{55} Nougayrol published recensions found at Ugarit (RS 20.175 and 20.121).\textsuperscript{56} Besides informing us of the association of Ashratu with Amurru, these god-lists serve to demonstrate how widely known this particular alternate list to AN = Anum was. It was known in at least Kish, Babylon,\textsuperscript{57} Sippar, Assur, Ugarit and El Amarna.\textsuperscript{58} The Mesopotamian lists range from the Old to Late Babylonian periods, whilst the text from Ugarit dates from the Late Bronze Age, the destruction of Ugarit being its \textit{terminus ad quem}. In relation to the Ugaritic understanding of Athirat, it should be pointed out that the scribes of Ugarit had in their possession this list (to them foreign) which denotes Ashratu as the spouse of Amurru. We are at a loss to know if they

\textsuperscript{53}A. Cavigneaux, \textit{Textes scolaires du temple de Nabû ša ḫārē} (Texts from Babylon 1), Baghdad, 1981.
\textsuperscript{54}Cavigneaux, \textit{Textes scolaires}: 94, the transcription of the names is according to the rendering of Lambert, private communications.
\textsuperscript{55}P. E. van der Meer, \textit{Syllabaries A, B\textsuperscript{1} and B with Miscellaneous Lexicographical Texts from the Herbert Weld Collection} (Oxford Editions of Cuneiform Texts 4), Oxford, 1938: 58 (no. 143).
\textsuperscript{56}J. Nougayrol, 'Textes suméro-accadiens des archives et bibliothèques privées d'Ugarit' \textit{Ug} 5 (1968): 54, 220.
\textsuperscript{57}Cavigneaux points to Babylon as the source of this list.
\textsuperscript{58}Lambert has informed me of the Sippar and El-Amarna lists; however, I do not have access to any actual editions of the texts.
considered this unusual in the light of her Ugaritic association as the spouse of El. Perhaps the equation of Ashratu with Athirat was not made by these scribes, or perhaps they equated Amurru with El. Unfortunately, we have no documentation to assist us on this matter.

5.A.ii.c. Nippur God List (CBS 13889)

Among the oldest sources for referring to Mesopotamian Ashratu is a god list from Nippur, published by Chiera in 1929. In Chiera's text number 122 Rev., Col. V, (text 124 Rev. line 21 seems to be a duplicate list) line 17 reads: \textit{dāš-ra-tum}. This text dates from the early centuries of the second millennium B.C.E. Chiera suggested that in regard to this text some added information may be gleaned:

Of special importance in this respect is No. 122, Col. VII. The scribe had already written down all the names of gods preceded by the determinative. In this last column he lists the foreign gods, without determinative. Among these foreigners we find the well-known Ea and Ishtar.

As Lambert has pointed out, however, the deities in this list are not all foreign, as Chiera had supposed. The context of Ashratu's place in the list is unfortunately not too helpful, as she appears near the end in a disorderly section. The reconstructed sequence reads:

\begin{center}
\begin{tabular}{ll}
\textit{dimin.bi} & The Seven (Pleiades) \\
\textit{dāš-ra-tum} & Ašratum
\end{tabular}
\end{center}

\begin{footnotes}
\item[59] E. Chiera, \textit{Sumerian Lexical Texts from the Temple School of Nippur} (OIP XI), Chicago, 1929: 63. This is the list with which C.-F. Jean was concerned in his article 'Noms divins sumériens listes des élèves-scribes de Nippur' \textit{RA} 28 (1931): 179-194.
\item[60] Chiera, \textit{Sumerian Lexical Texts}: 1-2.
\item[61] Private communication 15 February 1992.
\end{footnotes}
Such a text naming Ashratu indicates that the priests of Nippur, by their possession of this list, did know of her. The text does not add any characteristics to our understanding of the goddess, or any details indicating from whence she came.

5.A.iii. The Series Tintir = Bābīlu

From the ancient series Tintir = Bābīlu comes a mention of Ashratu. A recension of this list (K. 3089) was published as early as 1900 by Pinches. Unger provided a study of this series, as did van der Meer.

Line 17 of Tintir = Bābīlu IV reads:

\[ \text{ē.hi.li.kalam.mā = blt dāš-ra-tum} \]

Lambert translates this as 'House of the luxury of the land = temple of Ašratum'. Although there is not much that we can gather from this brief mention, it is clear that Ashratu was a possessor of a temple in Babylon itself, and therefore she presumably had an active cult there. Clay published a calendar which specifies the offerings and rites for Babylonian temples for the months of Marchesan, Kislev, and Tebet. In his transcription we find dAš-ra-tum E-hi-li-kalam-ma, that is, the same

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63Quoted Prof. Lambert's letter, March 1991.
66Private communication, March 1991.
formula in the previous Tintir = Bābilu listing. These two pieces of
evidence permit us only the privilege of knowing that Ashratu's temple
took part in the rites carried out in the general inventory of Babylonian
temples and that her temple was known as 'the house of the luxury of the
land'. It is also of interest that the Sumerian term ḫi.li used in this
expression is the same term used to describe Ashratu as a 'lady of
voluptuousness' (ḫi.li) in the Sumerian votive inscription discussed in
5.A.i. above.

5.A.iv. Cylinder Seals

Sayce published an Old Babylonian cylinder seal which pairs
Ashratu with the god Rammanum. The name Rammanum on this seal is
translated as 'rumbler' and is elsewhere explicitly identified with
Amurru. From the reign of Rîm-Sin of Larsa (c. 1822-1763) we possess
four administrative documents, the seals of which bear the name daemon.
This evidence testifies to the fact that she was known in the early
second millennium at Larsa. The spelling of her name as 'Ashiratum' also
points to her West Semitic origins. Since 'Akkadian does not tolerate 3 short
vowels separated by single consonants this name would not appear to be
East Semitic in origin. With the dropping of the middle i, the name

69Editions of these two quotations may also be found in E. Unger, Babylon: 230, 260-
261.
70See also E. Unger, 'Babylon' in RLA 1: 351.
71A. Sayce, 'Babylonian Cylinders in the Hermitage of St. Petersburg' ZA 6 (1891):
161.
72W. G. Lambert, 'Near Eastern Seals in the Gulbenkian Museum of Oriental Art,
University of Durham' Iraq 41 (1979): 13; W. A. Maier, 'Aserah : Extrabiblical
Evidence: 204, note 6.
73D. E. Faust, Contracts from Larsa Dated in the Reign of Rîm Sin (YBT VIII), New
Haven, 1941: no. 19, seal, no. 31, seal, no. 45, seal, and no. 72, seal. I am grateful to S.
Dalley, private communication, 5 May 1991, for pointing out this reference to me.
becomes the more common form of 'Ashratu'. The Old Babylonian period also coincides with the beginnings of the Amorite influence in the regions of Sumer and Akkad, thus further supporting Ashratu's West Semitic origins.\(^7^5\)

The index of S. Feigin's *Legal and Administrative Texts of the Reign of Samsu-Iluna* refers to two further documents bearing seals with the name \(dA\text{"}\text{"}s-ra-tum.\(^7^6\) In fact, neither seal clearly reads 'Ashratum', and there is some doubt that she is mentioned in them at all.\(^7^7\) In this same collection of texts, a gudu\(_4\)-priest of Ashratu is mentioned, testifying to an active cult for her at this period (c. 1749-1712) in the First Dynasty of Babylon.\(^7^8\) Other cylinder seals, to which I have no access, also refer to Amurru and Ashratu.\(^7^9\) These references add little to our knowledge of Ashratu's character, but they do point to her Amorite origins and indicate various times when she was known.

5.A.v. Ritual Texts

Ashratu appears in at least three ritual texts. One is a ritual of the Seleucid period in Uruk, translated by Thureau-Dangin. The others are ritual texts from the same period published by Reisner. These texts display

\(^{7^5}\) I thank Prof. Lambert for explaining this connection to me, private communication, 15 February 1992.

\(^{7^6}\) S. I. Feigin, *Legal and Administrative Texts of the Reign of Samsu-Iluna* (YBT XII), New Haven, 1979: 62, the seals are on documents 402 and 462.

\(^{7^7}\) Lambert (private communication, 15 February 1992) has demonstrated the difficulties of both impressions to me.


\(^{7^9}\) These sources were drawn to my attention by Lambert, private communication of 15 February 1992.
specialised ritual arrangements which may add to our knowledge of Ashratu at this period.

5. A. v. a. The Uruk Temple Ritual

Thureau-Dangin published ritual texts of the temple of Anu in Uruk from six tablets. He divided these rituals into four chapters:

1. The daily sacrifices of the temple of Anu
2. The new year festival at Uruk
3. The festival of Ishtar
4. A nocturnal ceremony in the temple of Anu

The references to Ashrat occur in the tablets describing the new year festival. The text concerned (VAT 7849) deals with the *akītu* of the month Nisan. Although the text was found in Assur, Thureau-Dangin notes that it probably originated at Warka. These detailed instructions mention Ashrat three times in a list of other deities in the procession of Anu. The first reference in this text is column I, line 15. Ashrat occurs in the following list of deities: Bēlit-ilē, Šala, the daughters of Anu, Aya, Gula, Ningēš-gal, Ama-sag-nu-du, Šarrat-nun-na, Ašrat, and Šarrat-šamē. The next reference to her is column II, line 6. Here Ashrat occurs in the same list of deities with the exception of Gula, who is replaced by the names Meme and Bau. The final reference in column III line 25 maintains the order of deities in column II line 6, with Nin-si-an-na replacing Bēlit-ilē. These references to Ashrat in the rituals of the temple of Anu at Uruk simply

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81 *Rituels accadiens*: 61.
82 *Rituels accadiens*: 99.
83 *Rituels accadiens*: 100, 104.
84 *Rituels accadiens*: 101, 105.
85 *Rituels accadiens*: 102, 106.
point to the fact that she held a place in the pantheon there and was active in the cult of Anu. Her place in a formulaic listing of other deities informs us little of her character.

5.A.v.b. The Reisner Texts

Text IV of the appendix of G. Reisner's *Sumerisch-babylonische Hymnen nach Thontafeln griechischer Zeit* dates from the Arsacid period (from the second century B.C.E. into the Common Era). This text is a bilingual hymn giving Akkadian equivalents to Sumerian deities. Among the deities listed is Ashratu. Although the colophon is missing, the text is dated by comparison with similar hymns.

Lines 141-144 of text IV read in both Sumerian and Akkadian:

Amurru, who is lord of the mountain.  
Ashratu, the lady of the steppe.

This text equates Gubbarra with Ashratu, as do Reisner's text No. 50 (VAT 415) and a late mystical text (see below). Furthermore, the epithet *bêliti seri* is also applied to *dgu-bar-ra*, spouse of *dmar-dû* in this text. The title *bêliti seri*, 'lady of the steppe', has led to various considerations of Ashratu's characteristics.

Lambert suggests that the epithets here again demonstrate that Amurru and Ashratu were consorts. The title 'lord of the mountain' (*bêl*...
Šadi) is applied to Amurru. A. Heidel suggested in 1949 that the Akkadian word šadu also had connotations of 'steppe' or 'open country'. This meaning is also accepted by CAD. Thus Ashratu and Amurru have similar epithets which relate them to the steppe-land.

This title of Ashratu was used by Tallqvist to associate her with the underworld. He notes that 'steppe' is a common designation for the realm of the dead and that the application of this title to Ashratu indicates her association with the netherworld. This association of the steppe and the realm of the dead has much to commend it. However, as it is not the primary meaning of the term šeru, we must not assume that Ashratu was necessarily associated with the underworld on the basis of this epithet.

5.A.vi. Mystical Text (B.M. 34035)

A late mystical text (B.M. 34035) was originally published as planetary tablet Sp. I. 131, by Epping and Strassmaier. It dates from 138 B.C.E. and was found in Borsippa. Epping and Strassmaier had classified this tablet as an astronomical work. A. Livingstone, however, has demonstrated that this text is actually a 'mystical explanatory work'. The key to understanding the information provided in such texts is to understand how Mesopotamian scholars understood their mystical scholarship. Livingstone

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91 A Special Usage of the Akkadian Term šadu 'JNES 8 (1949): 233-235.
93 I am indebted to Prof. Lambert for informing me of this association.
95 CAD vol. 16, S, šeru : 138-150.
has explored the various methods which composed this intellectual tradition.

It was usual for almost every type of information to be summarized and recorded by listing pairs of associated items, arranged in columns. This technique acquired specialised conventions appropriate to the particular subject matter involved. The principle of expressing information by simple juxtaposition is so universal in the literature that it is sometimes necessary to raise the question of the extent to which the actual thinking of the ancient scholars was influenced by this aspect of their practical methodology.98

This mystical text falls into Livingstone's category of philological associations.99 On what seems to be a superficial level to modern scholars, the writers of this tablet demonstrated the relationship between Ashrat and Gubarra. I will follow the transcription and translation of Livingstone's study here. Lines 8-13 read as follows:

gú.bar.ra: \( \text{daš-rat} : \text{gú: ki-šá-du: bar: za-a-ri} \)
\( \text{daš-rat šá ĕ-zi-da šabitu (maš.dà) šú-ú u kišád-su zi-i-ri daš-rat šá ĕ-sag-il} \)
\( \text{dšar-ra-hi-tu 4: d inanna} : \text{št-i : šá-ra-hi-i-tú : \( \text{daš-rat a-hi-i-tu 4} \)
mul-tu u mu-šá-lu šá ina qate II. šú kak-ku sak-ku šu-ú muš-šu-lu šá múładda eš.bar pu-ru-us-su-ú : eš: še-la-ša-a 4: bar: meš-li ulta (ta) ud.15.kam \( \text{dšar-rat LÁ-ma purussē (eš.bar) i-šak-kan} \)

Gubarra: Ašrat. gú: neck. bar: to hate. Ašrat of Ezida is a gazelle, and she is shunned. Ašrat of Esagila is Šarrāḥtu, Inanna. Šarrāḥtu (the proud one) is Ašrat the foreigner (ašrat aḫītu)
The comb and mirror in her hands - it is obtuse and obscure - is a representation of the corpse star.
eš.bar: decision. eš: 30. bar: half.

98 Livingstone, Mystical and Mythological Explanatory Works: 2.
It is from the 15th day that the divine queen... and makes the decisions.\textsuperscript{100}

Such a late text can tell us little about the character of Ashratu as it had been in the earlier periods. By the time this text was written, Ashrat (Ashratu) had become associated with the Sumerian goddess Gubarra, and thus shared her epithets. This text also makes an identification of Ashrat of Esagila with Inanna (Ishtar). This identification is not supported for earlier attestations of Ashratu in Mesopotamian texts; the common epithet cited by Yamashita does not point to an identification of the characters at that early period.\textsuperscript{101} In the course of the development of her character, however, she was identified with Ishtar by the second century B.C.E. Since the mystical nature of the identifications here presented is not fully understood, we must be careful when building upon them. In consideration of the epithet ekurṟtum in the god list AN = Anum, the association of Ashrat here with the 'corpse star' may provide slight support for an underworldly connection for Ashratu.

\textsuperscript{100}Livingstone, Mystical and Mythological Explanatory Works: 61. 
\textsuperscript{101}See the discussion under section 5.A.1. Sumerian Votive Inscription.
5.A.vii. Theophoric Names

Thureau-Dangin published two separate contracts on which the personal name *Ashratum-ummi*, 'Ashratum is my mother', appears.\footnote{F. Thureau-Dangin, *Lettres et contrats de l'époque de la première dynastie babylonienne* (Musée du Louvre - Département des Antiquités Orientales [Textes Cunéiformes 1]), Paris, 1910: numbers 89, line 7; 98, line 8; and 99, line 8. Number 99 is the envelope for number 98.} Both of these contracts date from the reign of Hammurabi. They testify to the use of Ashratu's name in a theophoric personal name, but only tell us that the parents of this individual apparently worshipped her.

I also include the Tell El-Amarna letters which mention Abdi-Ashirta in this chapter since they were written in Akkadian, although the subject matter actually concerns Egypt and Amurru. The El-Amarna tablets provide little further information concerning Ashratu. Some 52 tablets from El-Amarna contain the name of a prince of Amurru called Abdi-Ashirta, 'servant of Ashirta'.\footnote{For editions of the El-Amarna correspondence see H. Winckler, 'Die Thontafeln von Tell-El-Amarna' in *Sammlung von assyrischen und babylonischen Texten im Umschrift und Übersetzung* (Keilinschriftliche Bibliothek V), E. Schrader, ed., Berlin, 1896; J. A. Knudtzon, *Die El-Amarna-Tafeln* (Reihenfolge des Erscheinens der Vorderasiatischen Bibliothek 2), 2 vols., Leipzig, 1915; S. A. B. Mercer, *The Tell El-Amarna Tablets*, 2 vols., Toronto, 1939; and W. L. Moran, in collaboration with V. Haas and G. Wilhelm, *Les lettres d'El-Amarna* (Littératures Anciennes du Proche-Orient 13), Paris, 1987.} His name occurs some 92 times, and it is spelled variously as *abdi-aš-ši-ir-ta*, *abdi-aš-ši-ir-ti(te)*, *abdi-aš-ra-tum*, *abdi-ilu aš-ra-tum*, *abdi-aš-ra-ti*, *abdi-ilu aš-ra-ti*, *abdi-aš-ra-ta*, *abdi-aš-ta-ti*, *abdu-ilu aštarti*, *ad-ra-aštarti*.* Some of the differences in spelling can be accounted for by the vicissitudes of the syllabic Akkadian script; however, when the name occurs as Abdu-Ashtarti, a certain confusion appears to be present. Was the goddess Ashratu confused with

\[abdi-as-ta-ti, abdu-ilu aštarti, ad-ra-aštarti.\]
the goddess Athtart by the dictator of the letter, or the scribe? Considering
the contemporaneity of the El-Amarna tablets with Ugarit, it would appear
unlikely that an Amorite prince would have confused these two goddesses,
since Athirat and Athtart were clearly distinguished at Ugarit. Since there
are no Egyptian records directly naming the goddess Ashratu (or Athirat),
it is perhaps possible that the distinction of the two was unknown in Egypt.
Whatever the reason for this confusion of names, we are given no
information on the character of the goddess Ashratu, other than the fact
that her name was utilised as the theophoric element in the personal name
of an Amorite prince.

5.A.viii. The Marriage of Martu

A text published by E. Chiera in 1924 is concerned with the story of
the Marriage of Martu.105 'Martu' is the Sumerian form of 'Amurru', the
consort of Ashratu. Although this text does not directly mention Ashratu, it
has long been considered to refer to her in the spouse of Martu.106 S.
Kramer summarised the story in his Sumerian Mythology,107 but did not
name Martu's spouse as Ashratu. The story relates how Martu came to be
married. Observing that all his friends had wives, Martu asked his mother
to arrange for him to have one as well. She agreed to do this after he built
a temple. Martu built the temple and was given the hand of his bride.

105 Sumerian Religious Texts (Crozer Theological Seminary Babylonian Publications
1), Upland, Pennsylvania, 1924: 14-23.
107 Sumerian Mythology, a Study of Spiritual and Literary Achievement in the Third
Millennium B.C. (Memoirs of the American Philosophical Society 21), Philadelphia,
Kramer has recently published this myth as well. According to Kramer, the bride is called d. ad-ni-ki-šar. In AN = Anum VI 261, among the epithets of Amurru's spouse is the name d.ad-NIGni-ki-šaršar. In this same list Ashratu is named as the spouse of Amurru, thus equating the two goddesses. By deduction, therefore, we find a reference to Ashratu in this text. Unfortunately, although this text confirms Ashratu's status as the spouse of Amurru, it does not add any further information to our understanding of her character.

5.A.ix. The Taanach Letter

One further piece of evidence must be included under the heading of Sumero-Akkadian sources, although the tablet in question was actually found in the Palestinian tell Taanach. Among the materials discovered at Taanach was a tablet written in Akkadian cuneiform which mentions Ashratu. Although this text is frequently cited in studies on Asherah, it informs us little of her nature or character. After many years of the acceptance of Hrozný's rendering of the phrase u-ba-an ũngA-ši-rat (lines 20-21) as 'der Finger der Aširat' by many scholars, Albright demonstrated that the reading should be understood as u-ma(!)-an schläge-A-ši-rat. He translated this phrase as 'a wizard of Asherah', and has been...

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108 Prof. Lambert has informed me of this publication, which is unavailable to me: S. N. Kramer, 'The Marriage of Martu' in Bar-Ilan Studies in Assyriology dedicated to Pinhas Arizt, Bar-Ilan, 1990: 12-27.
110 I am indebted to Prof. Lambert for pointing this connection out to me.
111 E. Sellin, Tell Ta'annek (Denkschriften der Kaiserlichen Akademie der Wissenschaften in Wien, Philosophisch-Historische Klasse L), Vienna, 1904. The letter (number 1) was transliterated and translated by F. Hrozný in 'Keilschrifttexte aus Ta'annek' in the same volume, pages 113-114.
112 'Keilschrifttexte': 114.
subsequently followed by many scholars concerned with this text. This letter is addressed to a certain Rewašša, and after the greeting reads:

Further, and if there is a wizard of Asherah, let him tell our fortunes, and let me hear quickly (?); and the (oracular) sign and interpretation send to me.\textsuperscript{115}

This letter dates from the Amarna period, and appears to suggest that Ashirat had a diviner in Taanach. The Ashirat mentioned in this text occurs in the northern part of Palestine during the period in which Ugarit was flourishing. There is no reason to doubt that Athirat is the goddess intended here; her name is spelled according to a standard Akkadian transliteration of the Ugaritic spelling. This letter indicates that Ashirat was known in Palestine at an early period.

\textbf{5.A.x. Conclusions from the Sumero-Akkadian Materials}

The Mesopotamian materials mentioning Ashratu are our earliest sources concerning this goddess. These sources indicate that Ashratu was understood to be an Amorite goddess and the consort of Amurru. Her appearance in the Mesopotamian sources from the Old Babylonian period coincides with the influx of Amorite elements in the area of southern Mesopotamia. Since Ugaritic Athirat appears in a kingdom neighbouring Amurru during the lifetime of the Akkadian-speaking empires, there is no reason to doubt that they were the same character in origin. In each culture, however, the goddess developed to meet the requirements of the individual culture.

\textsuperscript{114}‘Prince of Taanach’: 18.
\textsuperscript{115}Following the translation of Albright, ‘Prince of Taanach’: 18.
Mesopotamian Ashratu is characterised primarily by her relationship with Amurru. This is demonstrated in the god lists, cylinder seals and in the Sumerian votive inscription from the reign of Hammurabi. The Sumerian inscription is perhaps the most informative piece of information on the goddess. It allows us to conclude that Ashratu was considered to be the daughter-in-law of An; however, the significance of this relationship is lost to us. Her erotic nature may be emphasized in the phrase 'lady of voluptuousness and happiness' (line 4). She is associated with a mountain, and this is probably an indication of her connection with Amurru.

The god lists confirm Ashratu's status as the consort of Amurru. AN = Anum provides further Semitic epithets for Ashratu; however, the significance of many of them is lost to us. The title ekurritum is connected with either 'temple' or 'netherworld', and the latter interpretation may be supported by her epithet be'tit seri. The series Tintir = Babiliu connects Ashratu with the 'luxury of the land' and attests to her having a temple in Babylon.

The ritual texts, theophoric names and Taanach letter do little more than attest to the presence of Ashratu in their various locations. The late mystical text from Borsippa demonstrates a connection between Ashrat of Esagila and Ishtar in the second century. How early this association developed we cannot state with certainty. This text may also point to a connection of Ashratu with the realm of the dead.

Although Athirat and Ashratu most likely share a common origin, differences in development have occurred. Athirat of Ugarit is associated especially with the sea, as demonstrated above. Mesopotamian Ashratu appears to have developed a connection with the plain and mountain. We have no evidence that she was connected to the sea. An original
association with the steppe may appear in Athirat's riding of a donkey in
*KTU* 1.4.IV; however, this may be simply a sign of her status.

In the existing Ugaritic tablets, we have no indication that Athirat
was associated with the prosperity of the land in particular, nor does
Athirat appear to have underworldly associations. These observations
point to the differences in the development of the goddess in these two
cultures.

One common original characteristic may be present in her status as
the consort of a major god. Although Amurru was not a major
Mesopotamian deity, he was perceived to be the national god of the region
of the Amorites (the west?). Ashratu appears to retain the status of a
consort of an important god.
5.B. The Hittite Evidence: The Myth of Elkunirša

Since H. Otten's study of the myth now known as the 'Myth of Elkunirša' was published in 1953, scholars dealing with the figure of Athirat/Asherah have taken an active interest in it. The story is contained on four small fragments and it is generally reconstructed along the following lines:

Ashertu has attempted to seduce the Storm God (generally assumed to be Baal). The Storm God refuses her advances and reports the matter to Elkunirša, the spouse of Ashertu. Elkunirša hears the report of the Storm God and instructs him to sleep with Ashertu and humiliate her. The Storm God does so, informing Ashertu that he has slain 77/88 of her children. She grieves for seven years. The other episode is generally added after this, although the order of the fragments is not certain. This additional fragment relates how Elkunirša and Ashertu plot against the Storm God, but the Storm God is assisted by Ishtar, who listens like a bird on the wall in Elkunirša's bed chamber.

What is immediately striking, upon the realisation that the Hittite scholars show considerable caution with this text, is how readily it is used to support theories about Ugaritic Athirat. In the initial translations of this fragmentary text many key words had been designated as uncertain. Besides the difficulties of applying a text from a different cultural context...
directly to the mythology of Athirat, we are here faced with a text which
does not provide us with a certain reading.

Although the text displays the characteristics of a Canaanite myth,
we must keep in mind the cultural contexts of both Boghazköy and Ugarit.
They indeed influenced each other, but they were not identical. With this
in mind, we must consider the identifications of the characters in these
mythological fragments with their assumed Ugaritic counterparts.

Elkunirša (\textit{el-ku-ni-i̇r-ša}) has been generally assumed to be a
rendering of the Semitic \textit{\textbf{q}n(y)\textbf{r}s}, 'El creator of the earth'.\textsuperscript{119} The
difficulties with this association have not yet been resolved. Otten
displayed caution with it:

\begin{quote}
Will man auf eine Deutung des Gottesnamens \textit{Elkunirša} nicht
bewußt verzichten, so darf man auf das Götterparr Ascherat-El
in den Mythen aus Ugarit verweisen, so daß der Versuch einer
Gleichsetzung mit \textit{\textbf{q}n\textbf{r}s} sowohl aus sachlichen wie
sprachlichen Gründen durchaus gewagt werden muß.\textsuperscript{120}
\end{quote}

Goetze, in his translation in \textit{ANET} notes, 'This has been explained as
Canaanite \textit{q\textbf{n}e\textbf{r}s} "(El), creator of the earth"; but there are still some
details connected with this identification that are not yet clear'. \textsuperscript{121}
Specifically, the difficulties of explaining away the supposed shift from
\textit{\textbf{s}a\textbf{d}e} to \textit{\textbf{sh}in} remain an obstacle to this identification.\textsuperscript{122}
Although the
name certainly appears to be Semitic, a certain etymology is beyond our
ability at this point. The identification of Elkunirša with El is also partially
based on his status as the spouse of Ashertu, just as Ugaritic El is the spouse

\textsuperscript{119}See, for example M. Pope 'El' in Pope and H. Röllig, 'Syrien' in \textit{Wörterbuch der
Mythologie}, ed. H. W. Haussig, Stuttgart, 1965: 280; and W. A. Maier, \textit{\textbf{A}serah :
Extrabiblical Evidence}: 34.
\textsuperscript{120}H. Otten, 'Kanaanäischer Mythus': 138.
\textsuperscript{121}A. Goetze, 'El, Ashertu and the Storm-god' in \textit{ANET Supplement}, Princeton, 1969:
(519), n. 1.
\textsuperscript{122}See I. Gelb \textit{The Early History of the West Semitic Peoples} \textit{JCS} 15 (1961): 43.
of Athirat. We cannot rule out the possibility that Elkunirsa was a form of El, but it should be kept in mind that this association is not certain. In the light of these circumstances we should next examine the connection of Ashertu with Athirat.

The name of Elkunirsa’s spouse in these fragments varies from place to place. The Hittite spelling is ḍa-še-er-du-uš. The use of ‘Akkadianised’ forms would seem to be an indicator of the borrowed nature of the myth. It is curious, however, that the writer used varying forms of a single character’s name; this may also point to the borrowing of the myth. The only certain source of information we have on the character of Athirat is the corpus of Elimelek cycles from Ugarit. Does the ‘Asherdush’ of the Hittite version match the Ugaritic model? A possible interpretation of KTU 1.4.III.10-22 (see above) may tentatively support a desire of Athirat for Baal; however, this interpretation of a damaged section of the text must remain tentative. Ashertu’s plotting against the Storm God could be reflected in Anat’s cry in KTU 1.6.1.39-42:

Now Athirat and her sons will rejoice,  
the Goddess and the company of her kin,  
for dead is Mighty Baal. . .

Again the connection is circumstantial, although what we know of Athirat’s character may support such a relationship. The mourning of Ashertu in this text should be considered a standard reaction to any mythological character robbed of his or her progeny. In name Ashertu may match Athirat, and other indicators may point to an overlapping of their characters as well.

The Storm God has been associated with Baal. This connection is problematic for Ugaritic connections. Baal is never pictured as sleeping with Athirat in the Ugaritic corpus. Both the Storm God of this text and Baal
are associated with violent weather, but many storm gods are known from
the ancient Near East, sometimes existing side by side.\textsuperscript{123} The Storm God in
the Hittite myth is not named. If the writer intended to convey an Ugaritic
tale, why did he not utilise the name or title of one of the chief characters?

The association of the Ishtar of the Elkunirša Myth with Anat (as
many scholars suppose) is even more problematic. The name that appears
in the text is written as an ideogram $\ddot{I} ST A R$.\textsuperscript{124} The connection with Anat
is based on the speculation of the apparently Canaanite origin of the text,
and the assumption that all the characters match Ugaritic ones. The
Canaanite origin of this myth, however, has not been identified overtly as a
scenario from Ugarit where Anat plays a major role.

In conclusion, we have seen that the characters of Elkunirša and
Ashertu may be connected with El and Athirat of the Ugaritic Elimelek
corpus. The cases for associating Baal and the Storm God or Anat and Ishtar
are on less firm ground. This myth may indeed be a borrowed Canaanite
story, but in the process of translation and transformation to another
cultural context, we cannot assume that it remained unchanged. For our
purposes, we can state that Ashertu would seem to fit the character of
Athirat, but we should not use this fragmentary myth to build a
hypothetical scenario to explain difficulties in the Ugaritic mythology.
The remark of Otten concerning the Canaanite origin of this text should be
kept in mind, 'In Form und Aufbau stimmt die Erzählung mit den sonstigen
Mythen aus Boğazköy weitgehend überein.'\textsuperscript{125}

\textsuperscript{123}This is the case, for example, in Mari: G. Dossin, 'Le panthéon de Mari' in Studia
Dagon' RHR 138 (1950): 129-144 where the storm god characteristics of Itour-Mêr are
discussed.
\textsuperscript{124}See Otten, 'Kanaanäischer Mythus': 142, and Goetze, 'El, Ashertu and the Storm-
god': (519) note 5.
\textsuperscript{125}H. Otten, 'Kanaanäischer Mythus': 135.
A further area which is relevant to our study of Athirat is that of Pre-Islamic South Arabia. The initial difficulty of a character study involving Old South Arabian Athirat is the scarcity of material sources. All that we know of the religion of this area has been gleaned from monumental inscriptions dating roughly from the middle of the first millennium B.C.E. to the middle of the first millennium C.E. Although these inscriptions, given their often dedicatory nature, bear directly upon the religious life of the people, they do not inform us much about the character of this individual goddess.

In the early scholarship concerning South Arabian religion, an all-pervasive astral triad was used to make sense of the confusing profusion of divine names and bi-names. This triad was thought to consist of a lunar father-god, a solar mother-goddess, and a Venus-god son; a scheme in which Athirat was generally conceived of as a solar deity. According to the secondary literature such a triad is undoubtedly extant, although no agreement has been reached as to which of the many secondary deities belong to it. Athirat is seldom attested, but when she does appear it is sometimes in association with a major deity. The primary deities of the triad are generally understood to be the major god of the individual state and his consort, with Athtar nearly always as the Venus-son. In order to

begin to make sense of the many divine names, a short exploration of the political constitution of ancient South Arabia is necessary.

This region, located at the south-western corner of the Arabian peninsula, consisted of various co-existing nations in the first millennium. The four major states, prior to their unification under the nation Himyar in the fourth century C.E. were Ma'in, Saba, Qataban and Hadramawt. These realms left inscriptions of enough variation to justify their division into the Sabaean, Minaean, Qatabanian and Hadrami dialects. In the light of these political divisions, the more recent scholarship on South Arabia tends to discuss 'national deities' rather than attempting to fit all divinities into one of the characters of the stellar triad.

Most of the inscriptional material belongs to the region of Saba. The inscriptions mentioning Athirat, however, generally occur in the realm of Qataban. The relevant texts are RES 856; 2886; 3306 A; 3534 B; 3534 bis; 3550; 3689; 3691; 3692; 3902, pl. xiii, fig. 5; 4203 (?); 4274; and 4330. Also of interest is an inscription on an alabaster plaque published

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131 J. Ryckmans, 'Le panthéon de l'Arabie du Sud': throughout; J. Ryckmans 'Die altsüdarabische Religion' in Jemen, W. Daum, ed., Innsbruck and Frankfurt, 1988: 111-115. Even in his review of the research on the pantheon in 1947 A. Jamme was able to review and criticise this exclusive view ('Le panthéon Sud-Arab préislamique d'après les sources épigraphiques' Le Muséon 60: 57-60. G. Ryckmans noted in 1951 (Les religions arabes préislamiques (Bibliothèque du Muséon 26), Louvain: 41) 'L'hypothèse de la triade primitive exclusive de tout autre élément divin est loin d'être vérifiée.'
by A. Jamme (Jamme 852), which mentions Athirat. Two or three North Arabian theophoric names may also point to the presence of Athirat. We shall examine each of these inscriptions in turn to learn what may be discerned concerning Athirat's character, and to attempt to discover if a solar nature of Athirat can be defended.

5.C.i. **RES 856**

Text 856 is a votive inscription on stone in the Qatabanian dialect. The four lines of the inscription are translated by Halévy:

1. 'A] bd > ål Ma< adite de Ha-
2. ufa< m et Ben-Hadrm
3. a voué à Athrat
4. neuf jeunes chameilles, pour le salut. . . (?)  

This inscription seems to indicate that Athirat was known as a goddess in Qataban, although Maier calls this assumption into question. He notes that several of the inscriptions are ambiguous, possibly referring to an 'structure'.

As will be demonstrated further below, Athirat appears in some inscriptions with other divinities: this indicates that she was known as a deity. Although the vexed issue of how we are to decide

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136 I will follow the transliteration of Biella, **Dictionary**: throughout, with the following exception; I substitute h for her x. The pronunciation of the sibilants of Old South Arabian are still uncertain; A. F. L. Beeston, 'Vorislamische Inschriften': 103.
137 As cited in **RES II**: 231-232.
138 Aserah : **Extrabiblical Evidence**: 200-201.
between the goddess and a structure here remains, we stand to gain little from resolving it. If the goddess Athirat is intended, the dedication of nine young she-camels to her tells us little about her nature or character.

5.C.ii. RES 2886

This inscription is in the Minaean dialect, and consists of four lines with a mention of 'trt apparently as a substantive in the construct state.139 The inscription appears to be a decree of Ḫufnum Ṣadiq, king of Maʾ in (line 1). Following his personal introduction, the inscription reads:

3 d(s)c d ṭ l. k ṭ y. ṭ trt [.] św c nyhn.w
4 ṭwl. ft. ṭ ḥdl. ṭ ṭwl

By way of translation, Halevy offers 'selon . . . . . . . . les deux prêtres, et. . .'140 leaving ṭtrt untranslated. Perhaps ṭtrt is best understood as a 'sanctuary' in this context, a meaning which is attested for this word in Phoenician.141 'The sanctuary of the two priests' would also be a reasonable translation. This inscription does not attest to either the name or character of the goddess.

139 RES V: 216-217.
140 As cited in RES V: 217.
This inscription also occurs in Minaean, although it displays some peculiarity for that dialect. The text is divided into two columns, of which the right-hand side is the better preserved. The inscription apparently involves instructions for a hieros gamos, involving Athtar and ʾnt (ḥy), 'women'. The mention of ʾtr  is incorporated in the phrase ʾu-ʾtr  'the one of ʾtr ' apparently in the context of a month name. Lines 7-8 read:

7 . .  bn. bt. lgzz. dn. fthn. ywmnt. fthn. wmtbn. sdt. t  n. d.  CAUSED.  
8 rt. ḍkbrh. hwf ḍ l. ḍwkl. qdmn. kbrs. . .

This is translated by Rhodokanakis, '. .  sowohl was er (vorher) verkündet hat (davon) als auch das in diesem Erlasse Festgesetzte. Das Datum dieses Erlasses und dieses Reskriptes in der 6 Dü-3TRat des Kabirats des HUF3L, Sippe UKL, in seinem 1 Kabirat; . . ' What we are able to learn about Athirat from this inscription is limited. It does appear that a month was called 'that of Athirat'; and there appears to be South Arabian evidence for months being named after gods for which festivals were held. Maier believes that a divine name here is not certain. It

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142 Especially in its usage of enclitics, see Beeston, Descriptive Grammar: 66-67.  
143 J. Ryckmans, 'Le panthéon de l'Arabie du Sud': 161.  
145 As cited in RES VI: 87-88.  
146 Beeston, Calendars and Dating: 15; E. Lipiński, 'The Goddess Ajirat': 102.  
147 Aserah : Extrabiblical Evidence:201, although the reference to Torrey noted in his footnote (p. 206, n. 27) is based on a footnote in a privately published volume, and is beyond my verification.
is conceivable that the month could be 'that of the sanctuary' or perhaps 'that (of the region) of Athirat'; however, months named after divinities are not uncommon in ancient South Arabia.\textsuperscript{148} It is of interest that whilst in Ma\textsuperscript{c} in a month named for Athirat is attested, no such month name has appeared for Qataban. This may be the result of the accidents of archaeology, but what we learn from this inscription is that Athirat was known and worshipped in this region. Little detail about the nature or character of Old South Arabian Athirat is given here.

5.C.iv. \textit{RE'S} 3534 B and \textit{RE'S} 3550

Inscription 3534 B is in the Qatabanian dialect and treats the restoration of the temple of Wadd and Athirat.

\[\ldots \text{wkl. mhlk. wḥṭn. byt. wdm. w} \ \text{ṯrt. wṃḥṭn. mḥnk}\]

'. . . and all the fulfilment\textsuperscript{149} and he restored the temple of Wadd and Athirat and the Makhtān of the king'

Similarly \textit{RE'S} 3550 treats the restoration of the temple of these two gods by Yaḍa\textsuperscript{c} 'ab Dhū-Bayyim (line 1):

\[\ldots \text{brm. wḥrb. wbny. wḥḥṭ. byt. wdm. w} \ \text{ṯrt. wṃḥṭn. . . (line 4)}\]

\textsuperscript{148}Beeston, \textit{Calendars and Dating}: 15.

\textsuperscript{149}\textit{RES VI}: 192, \textit{mḥlk} is defined by its Arabic cognate.
Brm and Hrb. And he [Yadaš ab Dhû-Bayyim] built and restored the temple of Wadd and Athirat and the Makhtân.

These inscriptions have led scholars to believe that Athirat and Wadd were considered to be consorts. Once again we are confronted with the question: are deities worshipped together necessarily consorts? We have not found this necessarily to be the case in other ancient Near Eastern religions. The information from ancient South Arabia is scarce and does not permit firm conclusions. On the other hand, it is not unusual that the gods should appear with consorts. This issue is of particular importance as Wadd, with whom Athirat is here mentioned, is a moon deity. This has been the basis of the claims that Athirat is a solar goddess. The statement by RÉS that Athirat is a ‘divinité solaire qatabanite, épouse de Wadd’ is based on the work of Nielsen, who advocated the inclusiveness of the astral triad. Now that this triad is no longer considered to be all-embracing, the uncertainty about the character of such a scarcely attested deity as Athirat becomes prominent. We have found in our investigations above that deities mentioned together at one cultic site need not have been considered to be consorts. This ambiguity remains in Old South Arabian studies. Athirat may have been considered to be the spouse of Wadd; however, their mere mention together at a temple does not prove this.

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150 The form is a causative with the normal Qatabanian prefix s - (Beeston, Descriptive Grammar: 19); the root is therefore hdi, ‘renew, repair, make newly’ (Biella, Dictionary: 167).
152 RÉS VI: 192.
153 The exception to this caution is the Mesopotamian god lists, which are known to have been deliberately arranged according to divine family relationships - see above.
This small part of a Qatabanian inscription contains a dedication to Athirat. The inscription reads:

\[ \ldots n. \text{dh}wln. \text{hr. sqny} \text{.?trt} \ldots \]

This is translated in RES as \( \ldots n, \text{de Khaulān-Ḥūr(?) a dédié à } \text{'Athirat. } \ldots \)\(^{154}\)

Other than demonstrating that Athirat (or a sanctuary) received dedications, this inscription does not add to our knowledge of the goddess.

5.C.vi. \( \text{RES 3689} \)

This Qatabanian text deals with the taxation of the harvest. In line 5 reference is made to the offerings for 'Amm and Athirat:

\[ \ldots l^c \text{sm. wdm. wbnt. m. w%Sftm. (l^c)m. w } \text{?trt} \ldots \]

This is translated by Rhodokanakis as 'davon als gesetzmaßige Abgabe zu leisten "das nicht-obligatorische Opfer" und "das Geschenk" und "das Gelübde" für (den Gott) eAmm und die (Göttin) ?TRT'.\(^{155}\)

This text appears to place Athirat and 'Amm together in the same way she was placed together with Wadd in RES 3534 B and 3550. This and similar inscriptions (see below) have led some scholars to see Athirat as the

\(^{154}\text{RES VI: 192.} \)

\(^{155}\text{N. Rhodokanakis, Katabanische Texte zur Bodenwirtschaft (Sitzungsberichte Akademie der Wissenschaften in Wien, Philosophisch-historische Klasse 194:2) vol. 1, Vienna, 1919: 58.} \)
consort of the moon god 'Amm. 'Amm was the national god of Qataban.\textsuperscript{156} Although it is conceivable that such a scarcely attested goddess could have been perceived as the consort of two major gods, it is equally likely that she could have been worshipped with them without being their consort. Another possibility is that Wadd and 'Amm are two manifestations of the moon god, as worshipped in different regions. The implications of these scenarios will be discussed in the conclusions.

5.C.vii. \textit{RE'S} 3691 and \textit{RE'S} 3692

These Qatabanian inscriptions concern the same subject matter as \textit{RE'S} 3689 using similar terminology. Lines 4 - 5 of inscription 3691 and line 3 of inscription 3692 contain the following:

\ldots l\textsuperscript{c} sm. wdm. wbntm. wsftm. l\textsuperscript{c} m. w \textsuperscript{2} trt\ldots

translated by Rhodokanakis in the same way as the preceding inscription.\textsuperscript{157} It adds nothing new to our discussion of Athirat.

5.C.viii. \textit{RE'S} 3902, pl. xiii, fig. 5, 1

This inscription is taken from the base of a statuette, and is cited by a reference number of a photograph album of a private collection in which it appears. The inscription is broken and it is in the Qatabanian dialect.

$sq) ny. \textsuperscript{2} trt$

\textsuperscript{156} M. Höfner, 'Die vorislamischen Religionen Arabiens': 282.
\textsuperscript{157} Rhodokanakis, \textit{Katabanische Texte}: 122, 130-131.
This is translated in RES as

\[ \ldots \text{a con] sacré à Ḥarthrat} \]
\[ \ldots à Haribut... \]
\[ \ldots leur fondement et... \]

Once again we are left without much additional information concerning Athirat. She appears to have had a statuette dedicated to her, but this does not inform us about her character or nature.

5.C.ix. RES 4203

This Sabaean (!) inscription\(^\text{159}\) is part of a single mutilated line consisting of two words:

\[ \text{ṭrt. bhṭnyhn} \]

Perhaps this is to be translated 'to Athirat two votive objects'.\(^\text{160}\) This witnesses to Athirat's presence, but nothing more. This inscription is unusually found in the Sabaean dialect; it is the only known reference to Athirat in that language.

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\(^{158}\) RES VI: 372.

\(^{159}\) RES VII: 138.

\(^{160}\) The ending of -nyhn is a Minaean emphatic dual (Beeston, Descriptive Grammar: 32-33). The root bht , means, as an adjective 'pure', and as a noun 'unit of weight' and 'votive object' (Biella, Dictionary: 40).
5.C.x.  *RES* 4274

*RES* 4274 is another Qatabanian dedicatory inscription to Athirat. The two-line inscription reads:

\[ \ldots n. \text{dh} \text{whln. hr. sqny. t} \text{trt b} \text{m h} \text{rms. ysl. bht m} \]

*RES* translates as follows:

\[ \ldots \text{ân, de Khawlân-Hûr a dédié à } \text{Athirat dans] son [tem] ple de Yasil une offrande pure.} \]

Once again, this inscription attests to Athirat's presence, but informs us little about her character or nature.

5.C.xi.  *RES* 4330

This Qatabanian inscription concerns the establishment of a well by Nb\text{t} \text{c} m (line 1), l \text{dr} s dtr c t. wd trt 'for his land "that of Dr \text{c} t" and "that of Athirat"' (line 2). Such usages of the relative pronoun with a proper name to designate an area are common in Old South Arabian. What is of interest to us is that Athirat is here cited as the 'matron' of a region of Qataban. This appears to indicate that she was a relatively important figure, but it does not inform us concerning her character.

\[ 161 \text{*RES VII: 175.} \]
Whilst excavating the city of Hajar Bin Ḥumeid in what was formerly Qataban, the archaeologists found an alabaster plaque containing an eleven-line inscription. The inscription deals with the installation of priests, including 'procurators of Athirat':

1 \( wd < l. \ wyṣrm. \ bnw. > b \> ns. \ bnw. \ mgḥmm. \ šḥrw \)
2 \( 'm. \ ry < n. \ wsḥṣr. > ḥṣmy. \ nbθ < m. \ wḥy < m. \ w \)
3 \( ssḥr. \ yṣrm. \ bnḥw. \ sḥḥm. \ wṣdq. \ w > bnm. \ q \)
4 \( zṛw. > ħr. \ wṣqṣr. \ wd > l. \ bnyhw. < sḥm. \ wkl \)
5 \( ybm. \ wbny. \ ḥḥy < m. \ wnbθ < m. \ w < mkrb. \ qṣrw. > \)
6 \( ħr. \ wwd > l. \ wyṣrm. \ wṣḥḥm. \ wṣdq. \ rbyw. > \)
7 \( ħr. \ b > sḥr. \ wrṣw. \ ṭḥṣ. \ ḥḥḥλb. \ wd > l. \ wṣḥḥm \)
8 \( sqnyw. < m. \ ry < n. \ mṣnḥn. \ wkl. \ sḥr < s. \ bn. \ fr [č] \)
9 \( fr < w. \ l < m. \ rṭdw. < m. > w1 [ dṣm. \ bn. \ m č] \)
10 \( ndsm. \ b < ḥr. \ wb. < m. \ wb. < m. [ ry < n. \ wsḥṭm. w ] \)
11 \( b < ḥr. \ w ḥḥṭy. t \ wd [č m . . . ] \)

Jamme translates this as follows:

1 Wadd il and Yaṣrum, sons of Ab anas, of [the family of] Maghūmum, priests
2 of ‘Amm Ray’sān; --and [Wadd il] has made priests the two brothers of both of them, Nabāt ‘amm and Laḥay‘amm, and
3 Yaṣrum has made priests his sons Ṣabhūm and Ṣaduqūm and Ṣabnum, --pro-
4 curators of Ṣāṭirat, --and Wadd il has made procurators his two sons Ṣāḥbūm and Kula-
5 ybum and the two sons of Laḥay‘amm, Nabāt ‘amm and
6 ‘Amnakarīb, [as] procurators of ṢA-
7 Ṣirat, and Wadd il and Yaṣrum and Ṣabhum and Ṣaduqum [being] administrators of ṢA-
7 ṭirat in ʔAsḥar, and [Wadd ʔ il] the priest of [the temple] Rabiš, which Wadd ʔ il and Ṣabḥum have cleared,
8 have dedicated to ʿAmm Rayʾān this inscription and all his due from the first-fruits]
9 [that] they have collected for ʿAmm. They have entrusted to the care of ʿAmm Rayʾān [their] children [against any who would with]
10 stand them. By ʿAṭtar and by ʿAmm [Rayʾān and Ṣaḥarum and]
11 by ʾAṭirat and the gods of reconciliation.

Here we find reference to 'procurators' qṭr w and rby w (both construct plurals) of Athirat. It appears that Athirat is named in the third place of the closing invocation. Although the 'Rayʾān' of ʿAmm Rayʾān and Ṣaḥarum' are reconstructed because of a break in the lower left-hand corner of the plaque, we do know that Athirat is the final deity properly named. This may be of importance as in Old South Arabian inscriptions it is generally the sun goddess who is cited in last place when the triad is named. Unfortunately the text is broken just as the invocation begins, and does not allow us to declare with certainty that the astral triad is being invoked. This inscription does witness to a substantial cult of the goddess, perhaps indicating that her relatively scarce mention in the epigraphic sources may be due to the accidents of archaeological discovery.

162 A. Jamme, 'Qatabanian Dedicatory Inscription': 97.
163 Jamme, 'Qatabanian Dedicatory Inscription': 97-98.
5.C.xiii. Theophoric Names

According to E. Lipiński's study on Athirat, he states that the worship of the goddess is attested 'by two or three Thamudic personal names'. The names to which he refers are: Bi-'Afirat, I ur-'Akirat, and perhaps M ctr. The first name was published in A. van den Branden's Inscriptions thamoudéennes, the second in his Histoire de Thamoud. G. Ryckmans, in Les noms propres sud-sémitiques, notes the divine name Athirat, but does not count the names presented above among the proper names. The elements of the first name could be construed as b irt, from the verb b r, followed by a personal name tr. Ryckmans does not list the element ur in his enumeration, nor does he list ur-'Ajitrat as a proper name. The third name, M ctr, lacks a final t, and thus is probably not to be understood as referring to Athirat.

Thus two North Arabian proper names may contain the theophoric element Athirat, although this is not certain. In any case, the most we could gain from such references is a witness to Athirat in the northern kingdoms of the Arabian peninsula.

165 'The Goddess A’tirat': 101.
166 'The Goddess A’tirat': 101, n. 3.
168 (Publications de l'Université Libanaise, section des études historiques VI), Beyrouth, 1960: 94.
169 (Bibliothèque du Muséon 2), vol. 1, Leuven, 1934: 7.
170 Noms propres: 50, 283.
The consensus among scholars of Epigraphic South Arabian religion still appears to support the concept of an astral triad, although its all-pervasive nature has largely been rejected. Modern scholarship tends to see national deities and minor divinities present in all of the regions. Within this civilisation, inscriptions in three of the four major dialects witness to the presence of a goddess Athirat. She is paired with two lunar gods, although her consort status with either is not certain.

If Athirat is to be considered the consort of Wadd or 'Amm, this would be another instance of a goddess bearing this name occupying the position of the spouse of a prominent god. Although such a scenario may be likely, the question arises whether being the consort of a moon god requires Athirat to be a solar goddess. Without strict adherence to the old triad hypothesis, this does not appear to be a necessary interpretation. Jamme 852 could circumstantially support the solar interpretation by the apparent place of Athirat in the closing invocation; however, the broken state of the plaque prevents this from being certain. These inscriptions do not give us enough information about Athirat to affirm that she has solar characteristics, although this remains a possibility.
5.D. Conclusions to the Chapter

The earliest references to Ashratu come from Mesopotamian sources. In origin the Mesopotamian Ashratu is likely the same figure as Ugaritic Athirat. In each separate culture, however, the goddess developed characteristics to find a place in the pantheon. Unfortunately, we are left with few sources of information on the Mesopotamian goddess. Primarily we have been able to confirm that she is the consort of Amurru; as such she is related to a mountain, or the mountain. She also appears to have been considered a voluptuous character, but this term is also used to designate the luxury of the land in the name of her temple in Babylon. That she had an active cult is amply attested by god lists and ritual texts. Her epithet *beššēt šērt* connects her with the steppe, and is probably a further indication of her origin. This title may have underworldly connections, and this may be reflected in the epithet *ekurrītu*. *Ekurrītu*, however, may equally be connected with the word for 'temple'.

The Hittite myth of Elkunirsa mentions Ashratu. She appears to have a common origin with Ugaritic Athirat in this culture as well. The myth as we have it appears to have been borrowed from a Canaanite source, but it is too brief to provide much information on Ashratu's nature or character.

The South Arabian materials witness to the presence of Athirat. This goddess was mentioned with Wadd and ‘Amm, two ancient moon gods. Although we cannot be certain that she was related to them as a consort, this juxtaposition may point to her having developed solar characteristics in this region. The South Arabian Athirat is far-removed from the Ugaritic Athirat in time and distance. The cultures which knew of her adapted her to meet their needs. The area between these realms, the lands of Israel and
Judah, may have known of the goddess as well, thus a connection is possible. What may be said with certainty is that each culture that knew of Athirat/Ashratu perceived her according to their own situation. In the cultures where she appears she is understood to be related to an important deity, often a head of the local pantheon.
Perhaps the most controversial pieces of evidence in the recent discussions concerning Asherah are the inscriptions from Khirbet el-Qôm and Kuntillet 'Ajrûd.¹ Here, if the goddess is mentioned, she is cited alongside Yahweh in a blessing formula written in Hebrew of the first quarter of the first millennium B.C.E.² Unfortunately, there are difficulties with the inscriptions from both sites; in the case of Khirbet el-Qôm the stone is badly scratched,³ and in the case of Kuntillet 'Ajrûd, complete editions and photographs of the inscriptions are yet to be published, and their interpretation is complicated by the drawings on the pithoi. Moreover, the inscriptions present difficulties in relation to accepted grammatical standards of classical Hebrew. These inscriptions have often been used as evidence that Asherah was considered to be the consort of Yahweh in the pre-exilic period; however, this hypothesis is still hotly debated. The studies of J. M. Hadley have carefully considered the nature

¹When citing Hebrew inscriptions in this chapter I shall utilise the numeration of G. I. Davies, Ancient Hebrew Inscriptions, Corpus and Concordance, assisted by M. N. A. Bockmuehl, D. R. de Lacy and A. J. Poulter, Cambridge, 1991. There has been no previously published systematic numbering of the Kuntillet 'Ajrûd inscriptions. For other inscriptions I will give the numeration of both Gibson's TSSI and Donner and Röllig's KAI. (When citing Gibson, TSSI will be followed by the appropriate volume number. To cite his inscription numbers I shall use the form TSSI 2, no. 30. To cite his page numbers I shall use the form TSSI 2: 148. When citing Donner and Röllig, KAI followed simply by a number will indicate the inscription number. KAI followed by a number, colon and another number (KAI 2: 278) will indicate the volume and page numbers.)


³Even if the proposed tree of B. Margalit ('Some Observations on the Inscription and Drawing from Khirbet el-Qôm' VT 39 (1989): 371-378) is present, the surface of the stone, as seen from the photographs, is badly scratched; Dever, 'Iron Age Epigraphic Material': 159.
and interpretation of these inscriptions and are a most valuable resource for this evidence.\textsuperscript{4} Further studies have also appeared since her dissertation, which may also aid our understanding. In this chapter I shall re-examine these inscriptions in their separate contexts to attempt to determine what they tell us about the goddess Asherah. I shall also deal with some recently discovered inscriptions from Tel Miqne which mention Asherah,\textsuperscript{5} as well as an Aramaic inscription which appears to refer to her. In this chapter I shall also briefly consider the Phoenician evidence for the goddess Asherah. Included will be a discussion of the proposed reference to Asherah in the Phoenician inscription in Aramaic script from Arslan Tash in northern Syria, and an examination of inscriptions mentioning $afrt$ as sanctuaries, one of which mentions an $afrt$ of Ashtart. Finally, I shall examine two Aramaic inscriptions which may shed some light on this subject.

6.A. Khirbet el-Qôm

Tomb inscription 3 from Khirbet el-Qôm (Davies's number 25.003) was found shortly after having been robbed from Tomb II of that site and was subsequently published by W. Dever.\textsuperscript{6} On paleographic grounds, the inscription was dated to about the middle of the eighth century B.C.E. Dever translated it, very tentatively, as:

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\textsuperscript{6}'Iron Age Epigraphic Material': 146, 158-168.
Belonging to Uriyahu. Be careful of his inscription!
Blessed be Uriyahu by Yahweh.
And cursed shall be the hand of whoever (defaces it)!
(Written by) Oniyahu.

Seven years following its publication the inscription was examined in an article by A. Lemaire, who found a mention of asherah in it. Although Dever himself later wrote that he had thought of reading the inscription with Asherah mentioned, he has not yet retranslated the Khirbet el-Qôm inscription to reflect this. This reference to Asherah/asherah was reinforced by similar inscriptions found at Kuntillet 'Ajrûd by Z. Meshel, and many scholars soon joined the debate over the meaning of these inscriptions.

Despite the enthusiasm for this debate, a clear reading for the Khirbet el-Qôm inscription has yet to appear. The soft rock surface on which the inscription was engraved was apparently striated before the inscription was written, the letters were carved with varying degrees of pressure, and some were inscribed more than once, causing several ghost letters. A thorough review of the previous scholarship on this inscription is presented by Hadley. I shall therefore present the previous arguments considered by Hadley only when they contribute to

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7 'Iron Age Epigraphic Material': 159.
10 Z. Meshel, 'Kuntillet 'Ajrud An Israelite Religious Center': throughout.
11 Z. Zevit, 'The Khirbet el-Qôm Inscription Mentioning a Goddess' BASOR 255 (1984): 39. Margalit, however, upon his examination of the stone, concluded that some of the striations were carved after the inscription ('Some Observations': 376, n. 2).
12 Yahweh’s Asherah: 121-142.
difficulties which still remain in the interpretation of the text. Hadley's own reading of the text is based on her personal examination of the inscription. Her reading is:

1. $^3$ryhw. h 'sr. ktbh
2. brk. $^3$ryhw. lyhwh
3. wms$r$y$h l$^3$srth hwš ‹ lh
4. l$^3$nyhw
5. l$^3$srth
6. wl $^3$[rth

Uriyahu the rich wrote it.
Blessed be Uriyahu by Yahweh
For from his enemies by his (YHWH's) asherah he (YHWH) has saved him.
by Oniyahu
and by his asherah
his a[she]rah

As may be gleaned from Hadley's prolonged discussion of this inscription, many difficulties remain. Unfortunately I have not been able to examine this inscription personally; however, my scrutiny of the published photographs independently produced the same letters as read by Hadley for lines 1 - 4. The translation of lines 2 and 3 is the crux, and it is still in question. Hadley explains the difficulties in these lines as the result of 'an idiom similar to hendiadys', thus: 'if we treat these two lines as a verbal hendiadys (or at least a "compound linguistic stereotype" which has been broken up), they can be translated "Blessed be Uriyahu by Yahweh (and) by his asherah, for from his enemies he has saved him"'. The text, however, reads wms$r$y$h before l$^3$srth hwš ‹ lh, with the conjunctive waw attached not to 'his asherah' but to m$s$y$h. One of the persistent difficulties in dealing with this text is the supposition that the l$^3$srth is an agent of

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$^{13}$Translation in 'The Khirbet el-Qom Inscription': 51, with her most likely renderings of the inscription in Yahweh's Asherah: 139.

$^{14}$Yahweh's Asherah: 133, 134.
blessing or salvation. This difficulty was also noticed by B. Margalit
(commenting on the interpretation of Miller\textsuperscript{15}):

Miller, pp. 361 ff., who, while conceding that Lemaire's
emendation makes for a 'smoother' reading (n. 15), objects,
that 'even if there is a displacement... we have two
essentially poetic lines creating a psalm of thanksgiving'.
Notwithstanding the qualification 'essentially', this statement
begs the notoriously moot question of criteria for determining
poetry from prose \textit{sic} in ancient Hebrew literature, and is
further totally dependent on one's understanding of the term...
\(l^2 srth\). But Miller chooses to avoid this question (n. 18), as
does Hadley when she labels the phrase 'a verbal
juxtaposition... a "paired set"'. The fact remains that in
Ugaritic literature, for example, one never finds Baal-Anat or
El-Asherah used in synonymous parallelism. 'Fixed pairs' tend
to be either verbal synonyms or two parts which together
make up one whole.\textsuperscript{16}

Margalit himself offers a poetic explanation which calls for
hypothetical missing words, and leaves the troublesome \(l^2 srth\) out of the
'upper' inscription:

1. \(\^ryhw. \ h ^{sr}. \ ktbh\) Ur(i)yahu the rich composed it:
2. \(brk. ^{ryhw. \ lyhwh. <ky. \ hsl \ (h)w. \ m \ (kp.) ^{ybyh}\) 'Blessed is Ur(i)yahu unto YHWH-
   < For he rescued him from (the hands of)
   his enemies >,
3. \(wmsryh \ [...] \ hw^3 \ ^{<l}h\) And from his foes [...] he saved him.'\textsuperscript{17}

He believes, however, that \(l^2 srth\) does belong in the 'lower' inscription, to
be translated as 'his consort':

Lower \(=\) lines 5 and 6
\(\{lyhwh.\} \ wi ^{<s >} \ rth\) \(\text{[(Dedicated) to YHWH] and to his consort}

\textsuperscript{15}P. D. Miller, "Psalms and Inscriptions" in \textit{Congress Volume: Vienna 1980 (SVT 32)},
\textsuperscript{16}'Some Observations': 377, n. 11.
\textsuperscript{17}'Some Observations': 373.
It is unfortunate that photographs of the actual place from which this inscription was taken were not published in Dever’s initial report; however, Dever did state: ‘A recess in the east pillar revealed where Inscription 3 had recently been removed; the lateral dimensions and the smoothly dressed sides of the inscription fit this hole perfectly’ \(^1\). \(^2\) It would not appear that much room remained on the pillar for additional words or letters as required by Margalit’s reconstruction. Also, Margalit separates the ‘upper’ and ‘lower’ inscriptions (lines 1-4 and 5-6, respectively), and he states that the lower inscription ought to be treated separately from the upper one. Yet when he translates the lower inscription, he inserts \(l y \text{hw}h\) in order that Yahweh may be paired with \(l ^\prime s r th\), ‘his consort’. All of this epigraphic emendation leads to considerable doubt concerning this interpretation.

W. Shea, following on the work of Hadley, has suggested a different interpretation, whilst accepting all of the letters presented above (except \(\text{thrt}\) he reads the \(\text{ayin}\) of line one as a second \(\text{aleph}\)). \(^1\) Taking the inscribed, downward-facing hand as integral to the understanding of the writing, Shea translates:

1. Uriyahu was the one who wrote it.
2. Blessed be Uriyahu by Yahweh,
3. And his Egyptian (servant) by his asherah, and here is his handprint:
4. (hand in sunk relief) for Oniyahu.
5. By his asherah
6. And by his a.erah\(^2\)

\(^1\) ‘Iron Age Epigraphic Material’: 146.
\(^2\) ‘The Khirbet el-Qom Tomb Inscription Again’ \(VT\) 40 (1990): 110.
\(^2\) ‘The Khirbet el-Qom Tomb Inscription’: 110.
Shea understands the awkwardly placed mṣryḥ as the usual Hebrew word for 'Egypt' with a gentilic ending and a pronominal suffix. He is not troubled by the Yahwistic name of the Egyptian servant of Uriyahu, Oniyahu. Shea's solution has the advantage of explaining the troublesome location of the word wmsryḥ immediately following lyhwḥ, which separates it from ṣrth (this unusual word order led Lemaire to suppose that in the darkness of the cave, the engraver mistakenly transposed the words wmsryḥ and ṣrth). His solution also frees Yahweh from the 'his asherah' since the asherah refers to Oniyahu's dedicatory object. He takes the root of wsclḥ as ścl 'the palm or hollow of the hand'; and thus explains the hand carved in the rock beneath line 3.

Shea's interpretation, however, presents other difficulties. First of all, the reference to 'his Egyptian' is awkward, prompting Shea to add the unwritten word 'servant'. Furthermore, the evidence that he gives for an Egyptian bearing a Yahwistic name fails to provide any other cases of that phenomenon. He cites Jews bearing Babylonian theophoric names, Egyptian slaves bearing Semitic names, and some Asiatic slaves with Egyptian names. He does not, however, provide another example of an Egyptian bearing a Yahwistic theophoric name. Another difficulty is the unanswered question of why a foreign slave is worshipping an asherah which his (Yahwistic) master mentions in the inscription. Finally, Shea's translation of wsclḥ as 'and here is his handprint' stretches too far the root meaning of ścl, which is 'hollowness', not 'hand'.

21 The Khirbet el-Qom Tomb Inscription: 113-114.
22 A. Lemaire, 'Who or What was Yahweh's Asherah?' BAR 10 (1984): 44.
23 The Khirbet el-Qom Tomb Inscription: 114.
24 BDB: 1043.
M. O'Connor, following the transcription and translation of Zevit, attempts to explain the inscription on poetic grounds. Lines 2 and 3, he suggests, are 'an independent verbal clause with a vocative, specifically a double-clause line with three constituents' and 'a double-clause line of four constituents', respectively. In support of his analysis of line 2 he cites fourteen examples of Hebrew poetic lines which have the same syntactic elements in three units, although the order of the units varies. The second line of verse (line 3) he notes as being 'a less common sort' and he produces seven examples of this type with four units; again, the order of the units varies. The advantage of O'Connor's interpretation is that it accepts the text without emendation, and his examples from other Hebrew poetic verse illustrate his point well.

There are, however, difficulties in O'Connor's approach as well. He accepts Zevit's explanation of $\text{I}^\text{r} \text{s} \text{r} \text{h}$ as a divine name with a 'double feminization'. This form of the name, however, is still open to Hadley's criticism of Zevit's suggestion, namely: 'Whereas his examples are all perfectly justified in themselves, there is no evidence for this double feminine on a personal name, as distinct from a place name. Rather, these should probably be taken as instances of an old ending of direction or intention, now used for the sake of poetical emphasis (GK §90 g)'. Also, O'Connor's explanation relies on the assumption that a vocative lamed does exist in Hebrew. This assertion is still disputed, and it would be best not to utilise it to explain an unclear inscription until we are certain that it was a part of recognised Hebrew usage.

26 'The Poetic Inscription': 225 and 227.
27 'The Khirbet el-Qôm Inscription': 45.
R. Hess has recently entered the debate on the question. His translation of the inscription combines the Egyptian theory of Shea and the Asherata explanation of Zevit. He translates lines 2 and 3 as: 'Blessed be Uriyahu by Yahweh, and his Egyptian by Asherata. He has delivered him...'

As noted above, Shea's hypothesis does not sufficiently account for the difficulties in the reading 'his Egyptian', and Hess's translation is also open to the same criticism. Whilst accepting Zevit's vocalisation of Asherata, Hess adds support for this vocalisation from the El-Amarna letters which preserve 'an "a" vowel between the final two consonants'. He further argues:

The objection that there are not examples of this double feminization in feminine personal names in Biblical Hebrew is not decisive. After all, this is not a feminine personal name but rather a feminine divine name, something which is extremely rare in Hebrew texts. It is likely that this ending may preserve an ancient spelling of the name of the goddess, perhaps simply a 'frozen form' of a name.

The fact remains, however, that nowhere outside the inscriptions bearing this proposed emended spelling does this spelling of the name actually occur. Where the Old Testament speaks of the goddess, the name is spelled נוֹטָנָה. At Ugarit, the spelling ends in -t, not -tah (as there is no feminine form -ah in Ugaritic). The name found in the newly discovered Tel Miqne inscriptions is simply צַרִי. If Asherata is a frozen form, why is it not consistently found?

30 'Yahweh and His Asherah?': 24.
31 'Yahweh and His Asherah?': 14.
32 'Yahweh and His Asherah?': 14.
33 C. Gordon, UT: 52-53.
34 'Cultic Inscriptions': 232.
This short exploration of the solutions offered for this troublesome inscription since Hadley's study highlights Margalit's point that 'no truly satisfactory sense can be made of the Upper Inscription precisely as it stands'.\textsuperscript{35} I have no alternative translation to offer. Perhaps a solution would be to surrender the standard assumption that Yahweh had an asherah/Asherah. Textually considered, only the Kuntillet 'Ajrūd inscription holds these two deities together, and the understanding of that inscription (although written more clearly than that of Khirbet el-Qôm) is not perfect. Perhaps we should seek a different understanding of the word(s) I'\textsuperscript{3}šrīth which fits what we know of Hebrew grammar and syntax. It may also be that the third line of the inscription actually reads differently than it has been transcribed. Until more certain sense can be made of this inscription, it should not be used to provide evidence that Yahweh had a consort in Judah.

6.B. Kuntillet 'Ajrūd

Several inscriptions were found at Kuntillet 'Ajrūd (modern Horvat Teiman) in the Sinai, by Z. Meshel in the course of his excavations in 1975-1976.\textsuperscript{36} Apparently this remote site was used as a stop-over or caravanserai, for the benefit of those on journeys through the Sinai desert. The assertion that the site was a sanctuary is still questioned, and Hadley's arguments against such a conclusion are cogent.\textsuperscript{37} Several inscribed objects were found at the site, among them the pieces of two large pithoi, or storage jars, on which had been painted graffiti. Among the inscriptions

\textsuperscript{35}'Some Observations': 372.
\textsuperscript{36}'Kuntillet 'Ajrûd: Israelite Religious Center': throughout.
\textsuperscript{37}Hadley, \textit{Yahweh's Asherah}: 145-147, 201.
are several blessings. Since these inscriptions appear to reinforce the blessing formula of 'I bless you by Yahweh... and his asherah' proposed for the Khirbet el-Qôm inscription, many scholars have debated their significance. Once again, Hadley's examination contains a thorough consideration of earlier discussion on these inscriptions. I shall cite these sources only when they may shed light on our understanding of the inscription.

Meshel originally read inscription 8.017, from pithos A, as: 'X said to Y and to Z and to Yo'asah and ... [May you be blessed] by the Lord who guards us and his asherah [cella, divine representation or the like].

Later, however, Meshel published the inscriptions of Kuntillet ʿAjrûd with Asherah tentatively represented as a divine name, and exploring the possibility that šmrn could be read as 'Samaria'.

Hadley reads inscription 8.017 as: 'X says: say to Yehalel and to Yo'asah and [to Z]: I bless you by Yahweh of Samaria and by his asherah'. Unfortunately I have not been able to examine the Kuntillet ʿAjrûd inscriptions personally. I have scrutinised the photographs of the published portion of inscription 8.017, and my examination found no

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39 Yahweh's Asherah: 143-201.
40 I am here following Davies's numbering system, Ancient Hebrew Inscriptions: 81.
41 Kuntillet ʿAjrud An Israeliite Religious Center: 52.
42 'Did Yahweh have a Consort? ': 30-32. His reading of 'Samaria' followed Gilula's article 'Yahweh's Asherah: 129-137.
43 Hadley 'Some Drawings and Inscriptions': 182; see also Yahweh's Asherah: 160.
inconsistencies with Hadley's rendering: \textit{mr. ...h...k. mr. lyhl wlyw 'shh. w... brkt. tkm. lyhwh. šmrn. wll Šdrth.} Hadley discusses the reconstructions proposed for the lacunae and the implications of the phrase 'Yahweh of Samaria', and particularly the relevance this phrase has for the hypothetically Canaanite nature of the city. She concludes that 'asherah' in this inscription most likely refers to a wooden cultic object.

Inscription 8.021, from pithos B, is longer and also mentions Šdrth with Yahweh:

\textit{mr ?mryw ?mr dny hšlm. t brktk. lyhwh tmn wll Šdrth. ybrk. wyšmrk wyhy 'm. \[n]y...k}

Hadley translates this as:

'Amaryau says: say to my lord: Is it well with you? I bless you by Yahweh of Teman and by his asherah. May he bless you and keep you and be with my lord...'

She discusses the construction hšlm. Š and the implications of the phrase 'Yahweh of Teman'. She also considers a third inscription (8.022), which does not mention Šdrth, before debating the significance of the drawings on pithos A.

Since Hadley's work, Margalit has published a substantial article which deals with the Kuntillet 'Ajrûd inscriptions. His hypothesis is that the inscription on pithos A cannot be understood without a consideration of the drawing which partially overlaps it. Although my approach to the

\textsuperscript{44}Hadley, \textit{Yahweh’s Asherah}: 160. I have omitted her reconstruction.

\textsuperscript{45}Yahweh’s Asherah: 160-164.

\textsuperscript{46}Yahweh’s Asherah: 165.

\textsuperscript{47}Yahweh’s Asherah: 165.

\textsuperscript{48}Yahweh’s Asherah: 165-170.

\textsuperscript{49}Yahweh’s Asherah: 171-173.

\textsuperscript{50}B. Margalit, 'The Meaning and Significance of Asherah' \textit{VT} 40 (1990): 274-278.
study of Asherah is primarily based on the textual sources, Margalit’s discussion requires a brief look at the iconographic material at this site. Margalit states that he does not intend to argue here the merits of these conclusions [that the drawings illustrate the inscription] which serve as [his] point of departure. The difficulty with this assertion is that perhaps the largest obstacle to a clear understanding of the inscription concerned is its relationship to the drawing.

The primary study concerning the iconography of Kuntillet Ajrūd, including the figures below inscription 8.017, is the article by P. Beck. Her detailed study came to the conclusion that the inscription overlapping the headdress of the left hand figure was written after the middle and left characters were drawn (see figure 1). She concludes that the figures and the drawing are probably unrelated. The inscription concerned was painted on the pithos ‘using the incised shoulder lines as guidelines’, and in as far as I can determine from the published photographs and drawings, the inscription consists of two lines, the bottom of which overlaps the headdress of the left hand figure. Since a photograph of the full inscription has not yet been published, it is impossible to tell if the blessing was separated into two lines on account of space.

A fact that is sometimes overlooked when dealing with these drawings is that they are not high art. The analyses frequently argue for

51 'Meaning and Significance': 273.
52 'The Drawings from Horvat Teiman (Kuntillet Ajrūd)' Tel Aviv 9 (1982): 3-68.
53 'The Drawings from Horvat Teiman': 46.
54 'The Drawings from Horvat Teiman': 46.
55 'The Drawings from Horvat Teiman': 45.
Figure 1.
Inscription and Drawing from Pithos A
Kuntillet Ajrud
(after Z. Meshel, Expedition 20 (1978): 53)
an amount of detail for which the drawings are insufficient. They are, on the whole, crudely executed and lacking in artistic detail. Given the images as they are, the centre and left hand figures can safely be understood as Bes-figures, as the careful analyses of Beck and Hadley demonstrate. No other figure suggested can account for the characteristic headdress, tail (or phallus) projecting between the legs, and the posture; all of which are reminiscent of Bes. The lyre player may or may not be related to the overlapping Bes-figures. With these preliminary remarks in mind, we now turn to Margalit's hypothesis.

Margalit translates the two inscriptions discussed above as '... I have blessed you to [= "in the name of"] YHWH-of-Samaria and to his 3 ŠRH' and 'I have blessed thee to YHWH-of-Teman and to his 3 ŠRH. May he bless and keep thee and may he be with my lo[r]d.' He argues that only a divine persona can be the agent of blessing intended by the phrase brk l-, and then discusses the grammatical difficulties. Margalit insists that the etymology of 3 srh as 'follow behind (in someone's footsteps)' and therefore as denoting 'wife, consort', is necessary to understand this scene correctly. This is graphically represented, he suggests, by the fact that the Bes-figures (whom he takes to be Yahweh (left) and Asherah (right))

57 For example, W. G. Dever (‘Asherah, Consort of Yahweh?’: 23) argues that the polka dots on the right hand figure (whom he takes to be Asherah) represent 'a long wig or coiffure of tightly-twisted curls and ringlets'. This same artistic device of polka dots, he argues, may have been used to represent a figure who 'is bare-breasted but wears a long, thick tufted woolen skirt and similar shaw'. The drawing does not admit of much detail; and as Hadley has shown, it is not certain that this figure is even a female (Yahweh's Asherah: 186-192).
59 The Meaning and Significance of Asherah': 275.
60 The Meaning and Significance of Asherah': 276.
61 The Meaning and Significance of Asherah': 277-284.
overlap, indicating that Asherah is 'following behind' Yahweh.\textsuperscript{62} Margalit has even discerned what he believes the artist intended to be Yahweh's footprint, into which Asherah is about to step.\textsuperscript{63}

There are difficulties with this general interpretation as well as with the particular details of it. First of all, Margalit is unable to produce a Hebrew nominal form \textit{šr}h which means 'wife' or 'consort'. His evidence from the Ugaritic texts (\textit{KTU} 1.3.1.10-15) leaves itself open to differing interpretations (see above, chapter two), and this one instance of an Ugaritic word should not be counted as decisive for several Hebrew inscriptions or Hebrew lexicography in general. The Semitic root \textit{šr} does not occur with the basic meaning of 'wife, consort' unless it does so in the character of Asherah. To use 'Asherah' as evidence for this etymology is to beg the question.

Another difficulty lies in Margalit's interpretation of the drawings. He argues against the Bes interpretation of the centre and left hand figures on the grounds that they are bovine rather than leonine. The painted figures are not sufficiently detailed to decide the issue, although I see nothing in their appearance which contradicts leonine attributes. It must also be noted that nowhere does Asherah have bovine characteristics. We have not observed any connection with cows in the Ugaritic texts, nor in the Old Testament, nor in the Akkadian and South Arabian material. El's familiar epithet at Ugarit (\textit{tr il}, 'Bull El') is to be taken metaphorically rather than literally, and thus provides no evidence for bovine characteristics of Asherah.\textsuperscript{64} Since we have no other iconographic

\textsuperscript{62}The Meaning and Significance of Asherah': 277.
\textsuperscript{63}'Some Observations on the Inscription': 378, n. 18.
\textsuperscript{64}El, unlike Zeus in Greek mythology, does not appear to act in the form of a bull in any of the Ugaritic texts as we have them. It is not acceptable to argue the case from the perspective of Baal's occasional appearance as a bull, as Baal is never pictured as Athirat's consort.
material (outside of the proposed interpretation of this inscription) that can certainly be interpreted as representing Yahweh, the assertion that he should appear in bovine form is without evidence.

On the larger issue of the relationship of this drawing to inscription 8.017, the following observations must be taken into consideration. Beck points out that the drawing under discussion has another inscription beside it and one below it as well. Are these inscriptions also to be taken as commentary on the drawing? This issue has not been addressed by those who wish to see such a connection for inscription 8.017. Secondly, if there are other inscriptions which mention Yahweh and his asherah, why are they not illustrated as well? This question may raise a moot point, but it serves to show that until all the inscriptions of the pithos are considered in relationship to the various drawings, no firm conclusion may be reached. The publications do not give a proper perspective when they do not show the location of the other inscriptions; generally, the published photographs show the three figures and part of the overlapping inscription. Finally, the inscriptions contain grammatical difficulties; thus we must be careful not to use one of several obscure drawings to 'clarify' a perplexing inscription.

Without the drawing to associate with the inscription, Margalit's main piece of evidence remains unsubstantiated.

J. Tigay, in a brief article, has recently argued for the cultic object interpretation of ʿṣērth at Kuntillet ʿAjrūd. He cites the Tannaitic sources

65 'The Drawings from Horvat Teiman', 45.
66 This may partially be the result of the method in which the inscription and drawing have been published to date. Generally the photographs (as reflected in figure 1) detail the Bes figures overlapped by part of inscription 1. As far as I am aware, the photographs of the other inscriptions on pithos A have not yet been published.
as recording that the altar was addressed during Sukkoth in the second
temple period with the calls 'Praise to you, O Altar' and 'To Yah and to you, O
Altar!' Tigay notes that these cultic sayings occasioned surprise then,
much as the ‘Ajrūd inscriptions do now. He argues that this parallel
demonstrates that blessings can be sought by invoking cultic objects, thus
there is no need to see a goddess in the Kuntillet ‘Ajrūd blessings.68

Tigay's evidence does point to a personified cultic object being
addressed and praised by worshippers, but it does not parallel the actual
blessing by a cultic object at Kuntillet ‘Ajrūd. It should also be noted that
the parallel cited by Tigay is considerably later than the ‘Ajrūd
inscriptions; nevertheless, his evidence for a personified cultic object
associated with Yahweh is of interest for these inscriptions.

R. Hess has also addressed the inscriptions from Kuntillet ‘Ajrūd.69
As noted under the discussion of the Khirbet el-Qôm inscription, Hess opts
for the 'double feminization' interpretation of the goddess's name in these
inscriptions.70 He observes the difficulties in understanding a cultic
object being in parallel with the divine name Yahweh, noting 'that it would
upset the symmetry of ideas such as might be expected in prayers and
blessings'. 71 This leads to Hess's support of the double feminization as the
best option. In this he finds support from the Tel Miqne inscription (see
below). He cautiously translates the inscriptions as 'I bless you by Yahweh
of Samaria and by Asherata' and 'I bless you by Yahweh of Teman and by
Asherata'.72

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68 'Second Temple Parallel': 218.
69 'Yahweh and His Asherah? ': 11-23.
70 'Yahweh and His Asherah? ': 16.
71 'Yahweh and His Asherah? ': 19.
72 'Yahweh and His Asherah? ': 21.
Hess does add evidence to the 'double feminization' interpretation of the inscriptions; however, this rendering is open to the criticisms of Tigay and Hadley. Hess adds the support of the Tel Miqne inscription which mentions lʾšr̂t, 'to/for Asherata', noting that the lack of a final he can be accounted for on the basis of variant spellings in Hebrew. The difficulty remains, however, in that no personal or divine names are attested with this 'double feminization'. The inscription from Tel Miqne rather indicates that the divine name consist only of ʾšr̂t, and the form attested in the Old Testament is ʾšrh. A number of scholars are now turning to the double-feminine-ending theory to account for the grammatical difficulties in these inscriptions and the one from Khirbet el-Qôm. The problem with this solution is that it suffers the same weakness as the pronominal suffix on a personal name does - neither construction is attested in the Hebrew of the Old Testament.

Another recent attempt to break the inscriptional deadlock is presented by O. Loretz. On the basis of Wellhausen's well-known reconstruction of Hos. 14.9 as:

Was hat Ephraim noch mit den Götzen?
ich bin seine Anath und seine Aschera,
ich bin ihm wie eine grüne Cypresse,
bei mir findet sich seine Frucht.

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73 Tigay, You Shall Have No Other Gods: 29-30; Hadley, Yahweh's Asherah: 136.
74 Yahweh and His Asherah? : 19.
75 Prof. J. C. L. Gibson has indicated to me that the Tel Miqne inscription simply may be the older spelling of the name with the archaic feminine ending found in Ugaritic, Phoenician and occasionally in Hebrew.
Loretz finds a parallel to the use of a pronominal suffix on the divine names Anat and Asherah. He notes that Wellhausen’s hypothesis has not found a wide following; nevertheless it explains the verse better than other interpretations on ‘kolometrisch’ grounds. If Wellhausen’s proposal were to be accepted, then the objection to a divine name with a suffix holds no weight.

Loretz’s argumentation is well-established; given the premise that Hos. 14.9 reads ‘his Anat and his Asherah’, there is no trouble in seeing the expression ‘Yahweh and his Asherah’ at Kuntillet ‘Ajrūd. The difficulty is that the reconstruction of Hos. 14.9 is debated, and no consensus has been reached. Also, a grammatical rule should not be based on an emendation. Even if Asherah were mentioned in Hos. 14.9, this would not provide direct evidence that she was to be connected with Yahweh, which the evidence at Kuntillet ‘Ajrūd would seem to do.

These inscriptions present us with ambiguities of translation. The actual expression of ‘Yahweh of GN’ is unparalleled in Hebrew, and at Kuntillet ‘Ajrūd the blessings which mention l’s̄rth always add a geographical name after ‘Yahweh’. Meshel’s most complete publication of the Kuntillet ‘Ajrūd inscriptions (found in Israel Museum Catalogue 175) records inscriptions found at this site which mention Yahweh but do not have a geographical name following his name. Meshel cites the inscription (8.011) engraved on a large stone bowl: l‘bdyw bn‘dnh brk h‘lyhw ‘(Belonging) to Obadyau son of Adnah, may he be blessed by

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77 'Anat-Aschera (Hos 14,9): 61.
78 'Anat-Aschera (Hos 14,9): 59.
80 Kuntillet ‘Ajrud: The Inscriptions (this catalogue has no page numbers). See also Davies, Ancient Hebrew Inscriptions: 80-81.
Yahwe(h)'s Asherah: 171.


Hadley, Yahweh's Asherah: 162-163.


BDB: 412b.
bless'.  

Several points in his study are of interest to our investigation. The first item of interest concerns the agents of blessings. Margalit has suggested that only divine personae are invoked in the blessing formula \textit{brk} \textit{rk}.  

Although not necessarily employing this formula, Mitchell's study refers to non-divine agents of blessing such as Abraham (Gen. 12.2), the ark of the covenant (2 Sam. 6.11), and the loins of the needy (Job 31.20).  

As he notes, there is no question but that God is the source of the blessings, but in various circumstances even inanimate objects may be used as agents of blessing. Mitchell also delineates the various uses of blessings in his chapter, 'Man blessing man'. Some of these uses are priestly blessings, prayers for blessings, greetings and farewells, and thanksgiving benedictions. He establishes that \textit{brk} can be used to indicate greetings of the pious or those who wish to appear pious. In these instances, 'greetings and farewells are social customs that usually have little religious value'. Comparable modern customs may be the use of the phrase 'good-bye' or saying 'God bless you' following a sneeze. These phrases invoke the language of divine blessing, but they have become simple social conventions. The question of importance here is: into which category of blessing do the Kuntillet 'Ajrūd inscriptions fit? Are they indicative of a religious society at the site which included priests? Are they thanksgiving benedictions for a safe journey? Are they merely greetings? The difficulty is that a context is required to differentiate between these various forms of blessing. The Old Testament, which Mitchell utilises as the

\begin{itemize}
\item 87 C. W. Mitchell, \textit{The Meaning of \textit{brk} 'to Bless' in the Old Testament} (SBLDS 95), Atlanta, 1987.
\item 88 \textit{The Meaning and Significance of Asherah': 276.}
\item 89 \textit{The Meaning of \textit{brk}: 30, 76, 115.}
\item 90 \textit{The Meaning of \textit{brk}: 106-110.}
\item 91 \textit{The Meaning of \textit{brk}: 106-107.}
\item 92 Derived from Middle English 'God be with ye'.
\end{itemize}
basis for his study, often provides the vital clues. At Kuntillet ‘Ajrūd, we are left with only the inscriptions and artifacts to help us to determine their meaning. Since Mitchell has demonstrated these various usages of brk formulae, caution must be employed if we are seeking what these inscriptions tell us about ancient Israelite religion. If they are mere greetings, they may imply no more about the religion of Israel than 'God bless you' does about the religion of Britain; namely they merely cite to whom the people appealed for blessings. If lʾšrth in these inscriptions refers to a cultic object or a shrine, we may be able to infer that priests and cultic practices attended it, but it offers no details about the character of the religion.

A third point raised by Mitchell which is of interest to this study is that bdরk and ʿašrē are synonymous. Koch noted this point whilst discussing the presence of Asherah in the Old Testament:

Bemerkenswert an den Stellen ist die Anbindung an das Verb brk in drei Fällen. Da der Segen im Alten Testament mit einer durch ʿašrē eingeleiteten Seligpreisung in Beziehung steht, legt sich nahe, daß die Israeliten ʿašērā mit diesem Lexem 'volksetymologisch' zusammengerbracht haben, ʿašērā also als eine Art 'Kraft zur Glückseligkeit' angesehen haben.

The noun ʿašērā occurs only in plural or suffixed forms in the Old Testament. The gender of the noun appears to be masculine, thus eliminating the possibility that lʾašrth of the ‘Ajrūd and el-Qōm inscriptions is a form of this word. Since all of these inscriptions employ the use of the word brk, it may be considered a possibility that ʾašrth refers to a cultic object admitting of a word play with the synonymous brk.

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95 BDB: 80-81.
The inscriptions from Kuntillet ‘Ajrûd provide the discussion of Asherah with evidence dating from the monarchic period. If asherah in these inscriptions represents a goddess, then we have a grammatical difficulty with the pronominal suffix appended to her name. If šrth refers to a cultic object, the parallelism strikes us as unusual. The dilemma is demonstrated by the difference in opinion by two opposing schools of thought. Both have considered the Kuntillet ‘Ajrûd inscriptions and come to differing conclusions. J. Emerton’s position demonstrates one school’s thought: 'the use of a suffix with a personal name is not in accordance with Hebrew idiom as far as we know it, and it is unwise to interpret the newly-found inscriptions in such a way unless there is no satisfactory alternative'.

Hess concurs; 'No one denies that exceptions to any grammatical rule can appear, but the best interpretation should be the one which follows the conventions of the language in which the text is written with a minimum of departures'.

D. N. Freedman, representing the other school, suggests: 'I believe the way to approach a strange grammatical construction is not by invoking a rule that somebody invented in the nineteenth century that says it is impossible but rather by investigating the possible reasons for such an unusual arrangement'.

This view is put even more strongly by Loretz, 'Eine Berufung auf eine hebräische Syntax der zensurierten biblischen Texte dürfte kaum der richtige Ansatzpunkt für die Klärung dieser Frage sein'.

Our knowledge of classical Hebrew comes primarily from the corpus of the Old Testament itself. The possibilities of adding to this knowledge are slim if we do not admit the

96 'New Light on Israelite Religion': 14-15.
97 'Yahweh and His Asherah?': 16.
99 'Anat-Ascherah (Hos 14,9)’: 61.
understanding gained from inscriptions, which we have in autograph form, dating from the time when the original documents from the Old Testament were being written. Even GK relies on the Moabite Stone and other extra-biblical sources to explain what occurs in Hebrew.

Our interpretation of these inscriptions should rely on their context, but it is lacking. Considering Tigay's second temple parallel, and Mitchell's indication that the ark of the covenant could be used as an agent of blessing, we should consider the possibility of asherah in these inscriptions as referring to a cultic object. Neither the altar nor the ark were invoked for blessings, but the altar was praised and the ark dispensed God's blessings. These hints may provide a clue as to the meaning of these blessings. In any case, we gain little in our understanding of Asherah's character in the present state of scholarship concerning the Kuntillet 'Ajrud inscriptions.

6.C. Tel Miqne

Some recently unearthed inscriptions from Tel Miqne (Ekron) have added further textual material to the discussion of Asherah. According to the preliminary reports, fifteen inscriptions have been found, some of which mention 'Asherat'. The published photograph to which I have access clearly reads $l^\prime srt$. This inscription attests to the presence of a goddess Asherat in Ekron of the seventh century. The language of the inscriptions is not yet precisely known, although they may be read with a

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\[100\] 'Cultic Inscriptions': 232; S. Gitin, 'Ekron of the Philistines Part II: Olive-Oil Suppliers to the World' BAR 16 (1990): 59, n. 18.

\[101\] W. F. Albright Institute, 'Cultic Inscriptions': 232. Also, S. B. Parker, in a private communication of 31 January 1992, comments on seeing a slide of one of these inscriptions: 'It was plain and unambiguous: $qds^\prime l^\prime srt.$'
minimum of difficulty.\textsuperscript{102} Was Asherat worshipped in one of the Philistine capitals? The published information is too scanty to provide much information at this point, but further research of the materials may prove to be of importance.\textsuperscript{103}

6.D. Arslan Tash (\textit{TSSI} 3, no. 23 = \textit{KAI} 27)

The plaque bearing an inscription in Phoenician found at Arslan Tash\textsuperscript{104} has been used to support a reference to Asherah at that site. The small plaque appears to be a seventh century apotropaic device against night demons. The plaque portrays a sphinx and a she-wolf on the obverse, and a warrior pictured in Assyrian style on the reverse. The inscription was engraved round the figures, and separate inscriptions were engraved on the actual figures themselves. Both the language and

\begin{footnotesize}
\begin{enumerate}
\item 102 W. F. Albright Institute, 'Cultic Inscriptions': 232.
\item 103 This find is also of interest to the Kuntillet ‘Ajrûd inscriptions. Some of the clay of which ‘Ajrûd pottery was made may have come from the Tel Mique or Ashdod areas (J. Gurneweg, I. Perlman and Z. Meshel, The Origin of the Pottery of Kuntillet ‘Ajrûd’ \textit{IEJ} 35 (1985): 280). The composition of the clay of the pithoi with the inscriptions and their typology show their provenance to have been Jerusalem (pages 272, 275). What is of interest is that the pottery possibly indicates a connection between Tel Mique and Kuntillet ‘Ajrûd. To assume a direct connection would be premature, as the history of the pots from the southern coastal region is unknown prior to their resting place at Kuntillet ‘Ajrûd. The common use of the word ‘\textit{šrt} at both locations should be noted.
\end{enumerate}
\end{footnotesize}
translation of the inscription are difficult, and I shall not attempt a full translation here.

Lines 1-8 of the inscription name the offensive demons and pronounce that they are not to enter where the protector enters; on this point there is a consensus. The proposed reading of 'Asherah' appears in line 10, as the maker of a covenant. In line 14 Baal is mentioned, and Horon in line 16. The question which concerns us is whether or not Asherah is actually mentioned.

Albright was the first to suggest that Asher(at?) was to be read for 3šr in line 10. He read lines 8-11 as:

\[
\begin{align*}
...k (k?) & \quad \ldots (for?) \\
rt.in.3lt & \quad \text{the goddess of eternity, Asher(at?)} \\
\lmlm 3šr (t?) & \quad \text{hath made a covenant with us, hath made a covenant with us,} \\
lwkl bn 3lm & \quad \text{and (so have?) all the gods}^{105}
\end{align*}
\]

He explained that the final 3 of Asherat must have dropped out 'because of the proximity of other sequences of the letters 3-t'.\(^{106}\) The identity with Asherah was based on his reading 'the goddess of eternity', who was the wife of El, the 'father of years'.

Although explaining 3šr in a different way, F. M. Cross and R. Saley followed Albright's suggestion of considering Asherah as the goddess invoked.\(^{107}\) Reading the same consonants as Albright they translated the lines as:

The Eternal One has made a covenant with us,

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\(^{105}\) 'An Amaraean Magical Text': 8.
\(^{106}\) 'An Amaraean Magical Text': 8, n. 16.
\(^{107}\) 'Phoenician Incantations on a Plaque': 44-45.
Asherah has made (a pact) with us,
And all the sons of El.¹⁰⁸

They explained the form ᵁˢʳ as an unusual spelling for ²Aiširo, stating 'Usually the form in Phoenician is ²Aiširt'.¹⁰⁹ This is an interesting assertion since Asherah's name is otherwise unattested in Phoenician inscriptions.¹¹⁰ They are followed in reading Asherah here by Maier.¹¹¹ The reading Asherah, however, is not universally accepted. Z. Zevit has offered cogent reasons for not accepting the reference to Asherah. He notes that as Arslan Tash was an Assyrian administrative centre at the period of the inscription, the invocation of Assur is not unusual. Furthermore, there are linguistic reasons for not reading Asherah:

In the dialect of this inscription, final at did not become a as in Hebrew. Thus, Phoenician ᵁlt, 'covenant', may be contrasted to its Hebrew etymological equivalent ᵁlh (= ᵁlā < ²³³dlar). Under these circumstances, the Phoenician equivalent of the name which occurs in Hebrew orthography as ᵁšrh (= ᵁašārd) should have appeared as ᵁšrt, as Albright realized when he suggested the emendment of the inscription.¹¹²

S. Sperling also reads the text as it stands and notes that Assur here is to be explained as the displacer of an originally Phoenician god. He notes that Assur displaced Marduk in the Assyrian version of Enuma Elish.¹¹³ H. Donner and W. Röllig, although noting the unusual reference to Assur, also find difficulties with the rendering ᵁšrt.¹¹⁴ J. C. L. Gibson also reads Assur

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¹⁰⁸ 'Phoenician Incantations on a Plaque': 45.
¹⁰⁹ 'Phoenician Incantations on a Plaque': 45, n. 17.
¹¹⁰ Gibson, TSSI 3: 85.
¹¹² 'A Phoenician Inscription': 115.
¹¹³ 'An Arslan Tash Incantation': 7.
¹¹⁴ KAI 2: 45.
here, and understands the reference as 'an act of deference towards the Assyrian imperial power'.

I believe that we stand on more solid ground without emendation of the text as it stands. The only way to see Asherah here is to posit a scribal error. In an area strongly influenced by Assyrian rule, it is certainly not unexpected that Aššur, the Assyrian national god, should be invoked. As the theology of that period reflected in the Moabite stone appears to indicate, the god of the victorious army was the victorious god. If Aššur had overcome the local gods of Arslan Tash, surely he could have been invoked against night demons.

6.E. Phoenician Inscriptions Mentioning šršt

Without the evidence of the Arslan Tash inscription, the goddess Asherah is not attested to date in any Phoenician inscriptions. The word šršt does, however, occur in Phoenician with the meaning of 'shrine' or 'sanctuary'. The first such reference is in the Umm El-'Amed inscription (number iv: also known as the Mašûb inscription = TSSI 3, no. 31 = KAI 19). This inscription was engraved on a stone plaque and dates from 222 B.C.E. It was purchased at Mašûb, although it was originally from Umm El-'Amed. Line 4 of the inscription reads: l šršt b šršt 3 l ḫmn 'to Ashtart in the shrine of El ḫmn'. A divine name for šršt in this context would be

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115 TSSI 3: 85.
117 Gibson, TSSI 3: 118.
meaningless. This inscription simply commemorates the addition of a portico to the shrine (ʿšrt) which was dedicated to El Hmn.\(^{118}\)

A second example of this usage of ʿšrt occurs in an inscription published by M. Dothan in 1985.\(^{119}\) This inscription was written in ink on a discarded pottery sherd and it dates to the Persian period: 'the fifth century B.C.E., more specifically to the first half of that century and probably to its early part'.\(^{120}\) The subject matter apparently concerns gifts to be given to the overseer of a shrine (ʿšrt). Lines 1-2 of this seven-line inscription read:

\[
\begin{align*}
\text{bdt lbn hrs ʿa ytn ʿgn k} & \quad \text{By order: to the guild of (metal?) artisans; they shall give a valuable basin} \\
\text{bd lsḥ l ṣr ṣ ʿl ʿšrt ʿlnm} & \quad \text{to ʿlsḥ, the overseer of the shrine(s); (likewise they shall give) metal cups (golden?)}\(^{121}\)
\end{align*}
\]

P. K. McCarter has demonstrated by comparison with Hebrew titles that the office mentioned here is that of an overseer of the shrine.\(^{122}\) Since the objects listed appear to have been intended for use in a shrine or sanctuary, there is no reason to call this interpretation into question.

One final Phoenician inscription should be considered in this section. The Pyrgi inscription (TSSI 3, no. 42 = KAI 277) was found in Italy and consists of a 'bilingual'\(^{123}\) Phoenician-Etruscan dedication written on

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\(^{119}\) A Phoenician Inscription from 'Akko' IEJ 35 (1985): 81-94.

\(^{120}\) Dothan, 'Phoenician Inscription': 92.

\(^{121}\) The transcription and translation are those of Dothan, 'Phoenician Inscription': 83.

\(^{122}\) 'Aspects of the Religion': 145. See also Dothan, 'Phoenician Inscription': 85.

\(^{123}\) Gibson (TSSI 3: 151) observes that from the rendering of the only partially understood Etruscan texts, the three leaves are not exact translations of each other. I use 'bilingual' here in the sense of literally 'written in two languages'. 
gold lamina. It dates from the fourth to the fifth centuries B.C.E. The inscription is a dedication of a holy place (ʾšr qdš) to Ashtart. Lines 1-3 read:

\[
\begin{align*}
\text{trbt} & \text{ l ʾšrt ʾšr qdš} & \text{To Lady Ashtart this holy place (is dedicated)}^{124} \\
\text{ʾz } & \text{ ʾš p ĵl w ʾš ytn} & \text{which was made and which was given (by)} \\
\text{tbry } & \text{ ṭwns mlk. . . } & \text{Tbry ṭ Wlns, king . . .}
\end{align*}
\]

In both TSSI\textsuperscript{125} and KAI\textsuperscript{126} it is noted that the Etruscan version names Ashtart as Unialastres 'Juno-Ashtart'. That a place is being referred to in this inscription is witnessed by the use of the verbs p ĵl 'to do, make'\textsuperscript{127} in line 2, and bntw 'I built it' or 'he built it' (from bny 'to build')\textsuperscript{128} in lines 5-6.

We have evidence, therefore, that ʾšr (t) denotes 'shrine' in Phoenician.

6.F. Tema (TSSI 2, no. 30 = KAI 228)

An Aramaic inscription from Tema also contains a proposed reference to Asherah.\textsuperscript{129} This inscription was found on a stele in 1880, and dates from the mid-fifth century B.C.E.\textsuperscript{130} The subject matter concerns the establishment of a new cult under the supervision of a priest named Šlmšzb. The gods of relevant places are cited in lines 2-3 and 16 as Šlm of

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\begin{itemize}
\item \textsuperscript{124}Following the suggested meaning of Donner and Röllig, KAI 2: 331.
\item \textsuperscript{125}Vol. 3: 154.
\item \textsuperscript{126}Vol. 2: 331.
\item \textsuperscript{127}Tomback, \textit{Comparative Semitic Lexicon} : 267.
\item \textsuperscript{128}Tomback, \textit{Comparative Semitic Lexicon} : 49.
\item \textsuperscript{129}E. Lipiński, 'The Goddess Aṯrat in Ancient Arabia, in Babylon, and in Ugarit' \textit{OLP} 3 (1972): 101; Louie, \textit{The Meaning, Characteristics and Role of Asherah}: 89-91.
\item \textsuperscript{130}Gibson, \textit{TSSI} 2: 148; KAI 2: 278.
\end{itemize}
Mhrm, Šngl, and 'šyr'. The spelling of the name of the third deity led to the hypothesis that Asherah was intended here, and this was supported by the plene spelling of her name in the Old Testament. In both occurrences of the name, however, Gibson has indicated that the r is an uncertain letter.

S. Dalley has recently studied the nature of the god Salmu mentioned in this inscription. According to a new stele discovered at Tema, the names of the main deities listed are Šngl and 'šym'. She cites the evidence of the epigrapher A. Livingstone, who worked at the dig. Livingstone notes:

'It can be seen from photographs of the previously discovered Taima stele... that the fourth letter in the name previously transliterated 'šyr is badly damaged. The present text mentions a deity 'šym with all letters clear, and it is certain that 'šyr in the previously known text should be corrected to 'šym.'

If this new information is taken into account, then Asherah does not appear in this inscription.

6.G. Sefire I,B

One final Aramaic inscription should be considered here. The inscription entitled Sefire I is engraved on a stele, the pieces of which

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131 Gibson, TSSI 2: 150; KA I 2: 278.
132 TSSI 2: 149.
133 S. Dalley, 'The God Salmu and the Winged Disk' Iraq 48 (1986): 85-101. I am grateful to Dr. Dalley for providing me with an offprint of this article, and thus drawing my attention to this reference.
134 'The God Salmu': 85-86. For further discussion see also B. Aggoula, 'Studia Aramaica II' Syria 62 (1985): 61-76, especially page 70.
136 'Taima: Recent Soundings': 111.
were acquired in Sefire. The stele is dated to the middle of the eighth century B.C.E., and it is inscribed on three sides. The text concerns a treaty between Bar-Ga'yā, king of Katk and Mati'-El, king of Arpad. The inscription is of interest to us as it attests to an Aramaic use of šrt as 'sanctuary'. Side B extols the firmness of the treaty between the gods of the cities. Unfortunately this face of the stele is damaged. Line 11 reads: '[All the gods will guard the house of Gus and its people with their sanctuaries (šrthm)].' This meaning of 'shrine' for šrt thus occurs in Phoenician and Aramaic. This meaning is also attested in Akkadian.

6.H. Conclusions

We have seen that in the inscriptions from Arslan Tash (TSSI 3, no. 23 = KAI 27) and Tema (TSSI 2, no. 30 = KAI 228) there is no reason to find reference to Asherah. The interpretation of the name šr as Assur corresponds to what we know to have been the situation of Arslan Tash in the seventh century; also we have no other attested forms of the name Asherah without a feminine ending. At Tema new evidence has demonstrated that the divine name there is spelled šym, and there is no reference to Asherah.

The inscriptions from Khirbet el-Qôm and Kuntillet Ājrūd pose a dilemma. In the light of the Kuntillet Ājrūd inscriptions, the reading of the tomb inscription from Khirbet el-Qôm may be seen to refer to Yahweh and his asherah, but we cannot declare this with certainty. The inscription

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137 See Gibson, TSSI 2: 18-27 for information on the Sefire inscriptions.
138 Translation of E. Lipiński, Studies in Aramaic Inscriptions and Onomastics I (Orientalia Lovaniensia Analecta 1), Leuven, 1975: 51. KAI 222 marks the r and the h of šrthm as uncertain.
139 For the Akkadian evidence see CAD A, vol. 1, part 2.
from Khirbet el-Qôm is damaged, and its reconstructed message must remain hypothetical.

The inscriptions from Kuntillet 'Ajrûd are perplexing. The inscriptions appear to read clearly 'I bless you by Yahweh of Samaria and by his asherah' and 'I bless you by Yahweh of Teman and by his asherah'. Classical Hebrew grammar, as we know it, does not allow a pronomial suffix to be appended to a proper noun. Is the reluctance to modify our understanding of Hebrew based on the implications of these inscriptions, or are the grammatical rules of Hebrew well enough established to insist that another interpretation be found? Does the nature of blessings allow for a cultic object to be invoked? The issue of the category of blessings must also enter the question. What kind of blessing is intended by the phrase *brk lyhwh*? This must be taken into account before considering the 'Ajrûd evidence as formative for our knowledge of Israelite religion. If the graffiti are priestly blessings they indicate a special importance for the site where they were found. If they are merely greetings, then their religious value may have been overestimated. I suggest that further study is needed. Other epigraphic sources need to be explored before Asherah's role (or presence) in the epigraphic material can be clarified.
In this study I have examined the primary source materials concerning Athirat in the first two millennia B.C.E. Her name occurs in several cultural spheres within the ancient Near East. My approach has been to consider the goddess within the separate cultural contexts within which she appears. Since Athirat appears most clearly in the Ugaritic tablets, I understand this to be the primary locus of our information about her. In the course of this study it has become obvious that in different cultural contexts, the goddess developed features appropriate to her role in the 'receptor culture'. My method of considering the references separately was partially in response to the past studies on 'Asherah'. The method of understanding this goddess has frequently been to gather the information from diverse sources and to compile it into a dossier on Asherah. This was a necessary step to initiate studies on the goddess. I believe it is now time to consider the pieces of the puzzle individually, and to see if they actually fit together.

After 'Asherah studies' had progressed a few decades following the discovery of Ugarit, K.-H. Bernhardt cautioned:

Wir haben jedenfalls im phönikisch-kanaanäischen Raum mit einer Fülle von lokalen Göttersystemen und entsprechenden Variationen in den Mythen zu rechnen - eine Fülle, die ungefähr dem politischen Bild der Zersplitterung in zahlreiche Stadtstaaten entsprochen haben mag. Man könnte nun einwenden, daß bei Göttern gleichen Namens und gleicher Funktion an verschiedenen Kultorten die Unterschiede so erheblich nicht gewesen sein können.¹

It is in the spirit of this caution that I have proceeded. Unlike Bernhardt, however, I do not believe that it is possible to separate completely the references to Athirat and Asherah. The various 'Asherah' figures appear to have a common origin, and it is within their different cultural developments that we begin to observe the distinctions. With the distinction of individual states of the ancient Near East in mind, I have explored the information concerning Athirat.

The Ugaritic mythological tablets of Elimelek are the most important source for gleaning an understanding of the nature and character of Athirat. The conclusions drawn from this cultural sphere permit the comparison of the nature and character of other ancient Near Eastern goddesses sharing Athirat's name. The Ugaritic texts portray Athirat as the mother of the gods and as the wet nurse of royal heirs. These two functions appear to be aspects of her role as the *rabtītu*, the 'queen mother' who is responsible for bearing and designating the heir to the throne. In the case of Keret's son Yaṣṣib, where Athirat is not the actual mother to the heir, she legitimates the heir by suckling him. In the Ugaritic myths, Athirat's character reflects facets of earthly women's lives. In this aspect her name occurs in parallelism with *att*, 'woman'.

Athirat's status is evident in her relationship with other gods. She is the consort of El, the head of the pantheon. The gods are her children, and they must entreat her for the sanction of El. Athirat is related in some way to the sea, as is evident from her title *rbit atrt ym*. The precise nature of this relationship is not detailed by the texts as we have them. Yam is the 'sea god' of Ugarit, thus his domain is probably not encroached upon by that of Athirat.

These are the characteristics of Athirat as presented by the Ugaritic mythological texts. The ritual texts examined in chapter three appear to
confirm the maternal aspects of Athirat; however, they do not add further characteristics to this picture.

In the Old Testament grammatical difficulties attend nearly every reference to נָרָשָׁה. These difficulties appear in the form of the word נָרָשָׁה itself, as well as in the wording of many of the verses. Despite these difficulties, the context of some of the verses requires the interpretation of נָרָשָׁה as a goddess. In general, the references to נָרָשָׁה occur in verses which display deuteronomistic influence. The association of Maakah with Asherah/the asherah in 1 Kgs. 15.13 // 2 Chron. 15.16 may reflect a vestige of Athirat’s role as the rabitu (= gebirah).

The Old Testament material also raises the question of the relationship of the goddess Asherah to the cultic object asherah. I do not concur with Olyan that ‘naming the cult symbol of the deity is synonymous with naming the deity herself’. The texts are not explicit about the connection between the cultic objects and the deities. To me it seems unlikely that no connection existed between Asherah and the asherah. It may be that the cultic object outlived the memory of the goddess in ancient Israel. We cannot be certain about the nature of the relationship between the asherah and Asherah, but such a relationship is most probable.

To understand the Mesopotamian evidence concerning Ashratu properly, it is necessary to consider her as the spouse of Amurruru. Ashratu’s relationship to Amurruru points to her West Semitic origin. If she was a West Semitic deity, there appears to be no reason to doubt her identity with Athirat. In the course of time in a different culture, however, she developed attributes which do not appear in her character at Ugarit. The

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2S. M. Olyan, Asherah and the Cult of Yahweh in Israel (SBLMS 34), Atlanta, 1988: 32.
epithets attested in the Sumerian votive inscription dedicated to Ashratu from the reign of Hammurabi (B.M. 22,454) are primarily indications of her relationship to Amurru. This relationship is also reflected in the god lists, cylinder seals and ritual texts. The other Mesopotamian evidence points to Ashratu's association with a mountain, and also with the steppe. Both of these associations are shared with Amurru. There are hints of a possible connection between Ashratu and the underworld in her title 'Lady of the Steppe' and in a late mystical text. There are no explicit sources concerning this association.

It is generally conceded that the Hittite myth of Elkunirša is of Canaanite origin. This myth in which Ashertu plays a role has often been used to fill gaps in our knowledge of the mythology of Ugarit. Even information from myths from the same region cannot be indiscriminately shared between mythological cycles. Although this myth may be Canaanite, it may have been modified as it was transplanted to a different culture and translated into a different language. The character of Ashertu may correspond to Athirat, although the scarcity of information contained in the fragments does not provide much material for comparison.

The witness of the epigraphic South Arabian inscriptions may indicate that in that society Athirat had solar connections. When she appears mentioned with a god, it is generally with the chief deity of a region. In a broad sense, this corresponds to her role as the consort of El, the chief god of Ugarit. Given the nature of the information, little can be inferred of her characteristics.

śrth occurs in Hebrew inscriptions from Kuntillet ‘Ajrūd and perhaps from Khirbet el-Qôm. Grammatical difficulties with the translation of these inscriptions as well as with the pronominal suffix of śrth cause uncertainty as to their implications. The suffix precludes the
mention of a proper name, although this is disputed. Until the difficulties of translation and interpretation are illuminated by further discovery, the use of these inscriptions for understanding ancient Israelite religion may be asserted only cautiously. The goddess Athirat/Asherah is unattested in Phoenician inscriptions, and appears to be absent from the corpus of Aramaic inscriptions prior to the Common Era.

What has this study provided for the understanding of Athirat? I have not attempted to eradicate what previous studies suggested concerning the goddess; rather, I have reassessed the evidence on a basic level. This reassessment has demonstrated that Athirat's characteristics, as demonstrated at Ugarit, do not preclude the presence of this same goddess in other cultures. In other cultures where she appears vividly enough to glimpse her nature, she appears to have been adapted to the situation of the receptor culture. In Mesopotamia she was considered the spouse of the westerner-god, Amurru. In South Arabia she was apparently associated with the sun. These characteristics are not evident at Ugarit.

A common feature of Athirat, however, does appear in the various cultures in which she is found. I have noted that at Ugarit Athirat is primarily considered in relationship to other deities. This appears clearly in her relationship with El; as his consort she may approach him with requests. In the other cultures where she appears, this characteristic remains intact. In Mesopotamia Amurru was not the highest god. He was, however, considered to be the chief god of the Amorites, and Ashratu was his spouse. In South Arabia, when Athirat is mentioned with another deity it is generally the national god of the kingdom. If Asherah was intended in the Kuntillet 'Ajrûd inscriptions, she may have been associated with Yahweh. Her relationship to the chief deity appears to be a constant character trait.
Having considered the nature and characteristics of Athirat, we may briefly consider the question of the etymology of her name.

**Etymology**

The question of the etymology of the name Athirat is a vexed one. Albright’s suggestion of 'Athiratu-yammi’ as 'She who Walks on the Sea' has gained a wide following. The primary difficulty with this interpretation is that the name Ashratu occurs in Mesopotamia half a millennium before the Ugaritic formula. If 'Athiratu-yammi’ was the original form, the absence of the second element of this epithet must be explained. Margalit has recently argued that \( \text{af}\text{rt}\) may be 'contextually determined as meaning “wife, consort”’. This interpretation falters on the linguistic basis that no Semitic nominal form attests this meaning for this word. A number of other suggestions have been offered based on the various roots of \( \text{aʃ-r-h/t} \) in Semitic languages.

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One suggestion which has been offered to which neither of the above criticisms apply is an earlier proposal by Albright.9 In 1925 he suggested the meaning of 'holy place, sanctuary'. As Day has emphasized, there is Phoenician,10 Akkadian,11 Aramaic,12 and Ugaritic13 evidence for the root *tr meaning 'place'.14 The deification of places is known elsewhere in the ancient Near East.15 To me this seems a likely etymology. Unless more direct evidence appears, however, the precise etymology of the divine name Athirat remains speculative.

The nature and character of Athirat as presented at Ugarit is our primary source for further study of the goddess. Although I have not considered iconographic representations of Athirat, such images may nevertheless have existed. Considering the importance of Athirat at Ugarit we should expect some iconographic representations to appear there. When the textual materials have been explored we may begin to seek iconographic representations of Athirat. These images, however, should be consistent with what we know of Athirat from the texts. The texts must also be our touchstone for any proposed further associations of Athirat.

This dissertation is not intended to be the final word on Athirat. Indeed, one of its main purposes has been to caution against theories which

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13 Day cites the Ugaritic usage of *atr* meaning 'place', see Gibson, *CML* 2: 142.
14 'Asherah in the Hebrew Bible': 388.
15 A divine name such as Bethel provides a good parallel; more generally, names such as Amurru ('west'), and Yam ('sea') demonstrate that places could achieve divine status. See also McCarter 'Aspects of the Religion': 147-149.
assert too much based on speculation. The rate at which new resources are appearing indicates that studies of goddesses have much to anticipate. I have reassessed the texts of the first two millennia B.C.E. to determine what they tell us about Athirat. Her nature and characteristics as revealed in these texts are our guidelines for further study of this fascinating goddess in antiquity.
List of Abbreviations

AAAS = Les annales archéologiques arabes syriennes (Damascus)
AAASH = Acta Antiqua Academiae Scientiarum Hungaricae (Budapest)
AB = Anchor Bible
ABS = Archaeology and Biblical Studies (ASOR and SBL series)
AfK = Archiv für Keilschriftforschung (later AfO)
AfO = Archiv für Orientforschung (Horn, Austria, formerly AfK)
AHw = Akkadische Handwörterbuch (W. von Soden, editor)
AJA = American Journal of Archaeology (Boston)
AJBA = Australian Journal of Archaeology (Sydney)
AJSL = American Journal of Semitic Languages and Literature (later JNES)
AnOr = Analecta Orientalia (Roma)
ANEPE = Ancient Near East in Pictures (J. Pritchard, editor)
ANET = Ancient Near Eastern Texts (J. Pritchard, editor)
AOAT = Alter Orient und Altes Testament (Kevelaer and Neukirchen-Vluyn)
AOS = American Oriental Series (New Haven)
ArOr = Archiv Orientalis (Prague)
ARTU = An Anthology of Religious Texts from Ugarit (J. C. de Moor)
ASORDS = American Schools of Oriental Research Dissertation Series
AuOr = Aula Orientalis (Barcelona)
BAIAS = Bulletin of the Anglo-Israel Archaeological Society
BA = Biblical Archaeologist (Baltimore)
BAR = Biblical Archaeology Review (Washington, D. C.)
BASOR = Bulletin of American Schools of Oriental Research (Philadelphia)
BASORSS = Bulletin of American Schools of Oriental Research Supplementary Studies
BDB = F. Brown, S. Driver, C. Briggs, A Hebrew and English Lexicon
BibOr = Biblica et Orientalia (Roma)
BHH = Biblisch-Historische Handwörterbuch (B. Reicke and L. Rost, editors)
BHS = Biblia Hebraica Stuttgartensia
BKAT = Biblischer Kommentar Altes Testament (Neukirchen-Vluyn)
B.M. = British Museum
BN = Biblische Notizen (Bamburg)
BSOAS = Bulletin of the School of Oriental and African Studies (London)
BZ = Biblische Zeitschrift (Paderborn)
BZAW = Beihefte zur Zeitschrift für die Alttestamentliche Wissenschaft (Berlin)
CAD = Chicago Assyrian Dictionary (I. Gelb, et. al., eds.)
CBQ = Catholic Bible Quarterly (Washington, D. C.)
CBQMS = Catholic Bible Quarterly Monograph Series (Washington, D. C.)
CML = Canaanite Myths and Legends (G. R. Driver, editor)
CML 2 = Canaanite Myths and Legends, second edition (J. C. L. Gibson, editor)
CT = Cuneiform Texts from Babylonian Tablets in the British Museum
CTA = Corpus tablettes en cuneiformes alphabetiques (A. Herdner, editor)
EI = Eretz Israel (Jerusalem)
ET = Expository Times (Edinburgh)
ETR = Etudes théologiques et religieuses
ETSMS = Evangelical Theological Society Monograph Series
GK = Gesenius-Kautzsch, Hebrew Grammar
HAR = Hebrew Annual Review
HR = History of Religions
HS = Hebrew Studies (Madison, WI)
HSM = Harvard Semitic Monographs (Harvard)
HSS = Harvard Semitic Studies (Harvard)
HTR = Harvard Theological Review (Harvard)
HTS = Harvard Theological Studies (Harvard)
HUCA = Hebrew Union College Annual (Cincinnati)
ICC = International Critical Commentary (Edinburgh)
IDB = Interpreter's Dictionary of the Bible (G. A. Buttrick, editor)
IEJ = Israel Exploration Journal (Jerusalem)
IMJ = Israel Museum Journal (Jerusalem)
JAOS = Journal of the American Oriental Society (New Haven)
JBL = Journal of Biblical Literature (Atlanta)
JCS = Journal of Cuneiform Studies (Baltimore)
JEA = Journal of Egyptian Archaeology
JFSR = Journal of Feminist Studies in Religion (Atlanta)
JNES = Journal of Near Eastern Studies (Chicago, formerly AJSL)
JNSL = Journal of Northwest Semitic Languages (Stellenbosch)
JQR = Jewish Quarterly Review (Philadelphia)
JRAS = Journal of the Royal Asiatic Society (London)
JSOT = Journal for the Study of the Old Testament (Sheffield)
JSOTS = Journal for the Study of the Old Testament Supplements Series  
(Sheffield)
JSS = Journal of Semitic Studies (Manchester)
JTS = Journal of Theological Studies (Oxford)
KAI = Kanaanäische und Aramäische Inschriften (H. Donner and W. Röllig, 
editors)
KTU = Die Keilalphabetischen Texte aus Ugarit (M. Dietrich, O. Loretz and J. 
Samartin, editors)
LXX = Septuagint
MANE = Monographs on the Ancient Near East (Leiden)
MIO = Mitteilungen des Instituts für Orientforschung (Berlin)
MLC = Mitos y Leyendas de Canaan (G. del Olmo Lete)
MT = Masoretic Text
MUSJ = Mélanges de l’Université St. Joseph (Beyrouth)
NCBC = New Century Bible Commentary
NIC = New International Commentary
OBO = Orbis Biblicus et Orientalis (Göttingen and Freiburg)
OIP = Oriental Institute Publications (University of Chicago)
OLP = Orientalia Lovaniensia Periodica (Leuven)
OTL = Old Testament Library
OTS = Oudtestamentische Studien (Leiden)
PEQ = Palestine Exploration Quarterly (London, Jerusalem)
PIBI = Proceedings of the Irish Biblical Institute
PLMU = Poetic Legends and Myths from Ugarit (C. Gordon)
PSBA = Proceedings of the Society of Biblical Archaeology (London)
QDAP = Quarterly of the Department of Antiquities in Palestine
RA = Revue d’Assyriologie et d’Archéologie Orientale  
(Nendeln/Liechtenstein)
RB = Revue Biblique (Paris)
RÉS = Répertoire d’épigraphie sémitique (8 volumes, Paris)
RHA = Revue Hittite et Asianque
RHR = Revue de l’histoire des religions (Paris)
RIH = Ras Ibn Hani
RSO = Rivista degli Studi Orientali (Rome)
RSP = Ras Shamra Parallels (L. Fisher and S. Rummel, editors)
SBL = Society of Biblical Literature (Atlanta)
SBLDS = Society of Biblical Literature Dissertation Series
SBLMS = Society of Biblical Literature Monograph Series
SBLRBBS = Society of Biblical Literature Resources for Biblical Study
SEÅ = Svensk Exegetisk Årsbok (Lund)
SEL = Studi Epigrafici e Linguistic (Verona)
SJOT = Scandinavian Journal of the Old Testament (Aarhus, Denmark)
SOTSMS = Society of Old Testament Study Monograph Series
SR = Studies in Religion = Sciences Religieuses
SSR = Studi Storico Religiosi
StTh = Studia Theologica (Copenhagen)
SVT = Supplements to Vetus Testamentum (Leiden)
TDOT = Theological Dictionary of the Old Testament (G. Botterweck and H.
Ringgren, editors)
ThSt = Theological Studies (Baltimore)
TO = Textes ougaritiques (A. Caquot, M. Sznyer, and A. Herdner, editors)
TO2 = Textes ougaritiques, vol. 2 (A. Caquot, J.-M. de Tarragon, and J.-L.
Cunchillos, editors)
TSSI = Textbook of Syrian Semitic Inscriptions (J. C. L. Gibson, 3 vols.)
TWAT = Theologisches Wörterbuch zum Alten Testament (Stuttgart)
TZ = Theologische Zeitschrift (Basel)
UBL = Ugaritisch-Biblische Literatur (München)
UF = Ugarit Forschungen (Neukirchen-Vluyn)
Ug = Ugaritica (Paris)
UUÅ = Uppsala Universitets Årsskrift (Uppsala)
UL = Ugaritic Literature (C. Gordon)
UT = Ugaritic Textbook (C. Gordon)
VAT = Tablets in the collection of the Staatliche Museen, Berlin
VT = Vetus Testamentum (Leiden)
WBC = Word Bible Commentary (Waco)
WUS = Wörterbuch der ugaritischen Sprache (J. Aistleitner, editor)
YBT = Yale Oriental Series Babylonian Texts (New Haven)
YOS = Yale Oriental Series Researches (New Haven)
ZA = Zeitschrift für Assyriologie (Weimar, formerly ZK, Leipzig)
ZAW = Zeitschrift für die Altestamentliche Wissenschaft (Berlin & NY)
ZDMG = Zeitschrift der Deutschen Morgenländischen Gesellschaft
(Wiesbaden)
ZDPV = Zeitschrift des Deutschen Palästina-Vereins (Leipzig)
ZK = Zeitschrift für Keilschriftforschung und verwendte Gebeite (later ZA)
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