Recent archaeological discoveries have encouraged scholars to reinvestigate the Israelite religion. In this book, Judith Hadley uses these discoveries, alongside biblical material and non-biblical inscriptions, to examine the evidence for the worship of Asherah as the partner of God in the Bible. By investigating the Khirbet el-Qom and Kuntillet ‘Ajrud inscriptions, for example, where the phrase ‘Yahweh (and) his asherah’ is frequently in evidence, the author asks what the ancient Israelites meant by this, how they construed the relationship between Yahweh and Asherah, and whether in fact the term referred to an object of worship rather than to a goddess. The iconography of Asherah is also discussed, alongside female figurines from the Bronze and Iron Ages thought to represent her. As well as exploring the etymology and origins of Asherah, the author evaluates more recent scholarship to substantiate her conclusions. This is a detailed and brilliant study which promises to make a significant contribution to the ongoing debate about the exact nature of Asherah and her significance in pre-exilic Israel and Judah.

Judith M. Hadley is Associate Professor of Hebrew Bible and Archaeology, in the Theology and Religious Studies Department, Villanova University.
A series list is shown at the back of the book
The Cult of Asherah in Ancient Israel and Judah

Evidence for a Hebrew Goddess

JUDITH M. HADLEY

Villanova University
The cult of Asherah in ancient Israel and Judah: evidence for a Hebrew Goddess
Judith M. Hadley
Frontmatter

© Faculty of Oriental Studies, University of Cambridge, 2000

This book is in copyright. Subject to statutory exception and to the provisions of relevant collective licensing agreements, no reproduction of any part may take place without the written permission of Cambridge University Press.

First published 2000

Typeset in Monotype Times New Roman 10/12 pt in QuarkXPress

A catalogue record for this book is available from the British Library

Library of Congress cataloguing-in-publication data

Hadley, Judith M.
The cult of Asherah in ancient Israel and Judah: evidence for a Hebrew Goddess / Judith M. Hadley. p. cm.
Includes bibliographical references.
ISBN 0 521 66235 4 (hardback)
1. Asherah (Semitic deity) 2. Bible. O.T. – Criticism, interpretation, etc. 3. Middle East – Antiquities. I. Title.
ISBN 0 521 66235 4 hardback

Transferred to digital printing 2003
Dedicated to my parents,
Ruth R. and John B. Hadley
I sometimes dig up amulets
And figurines most lewd,
For those prehistoric days
They were extremely rude!
And that's the way we take our fun,
'Tis not the way of wealth.
But archaeologists live long
And have the rudest health.

Dame Agatha Christie Mallowan

Come, Tell Me How You Live
CONTENTS

List of figures  x
Acknowledgements  xi
List of abbreviations  xiii

Introduction 1

I An introduction to asherah 4
A Who or what is asherah? 4
  1. Asherah as merely an object  4
  2. Asherah as both a goddess and her image  7
B A brief survey of previous research 11
  1. W. L. Reed  12
  2. T. Yamashita  13
  3. T. A. Holland  15
  4. A. L. Perlman  16
  5. J. R. Engle  19
  6. U. Winter  21
  7. S. M. Olyan  23
  8. R. J. Petey  25
  9. W. A. Maier III  27
  10. S. Schroer  28
  11. S. A. Wiggins  30
  12. R. Hunziker-Rodewald  32
  13. C. Frevel  33
C Final remarks  37

II The goddess Athirat 38
A Athirat in the Ugaritic literature 38
  1. Baal's house  39
  2. The Keret epic  41
B The origin and etymology of Athirat 43
  1. Possible origin of the goddess  43
  2. Etymology  49
3  
A  General introduction 54
B The deuteronomic influence 55
C Asherim and Josiah’s reform 57
D The use of the definite article with asherah 59
E Passages which may mention the goddess 63
   1. Judges iii 7 63
   2. I Kings xv 13 and II Chronicles xv 16 64
   3. I Kings xviii 19 66
   4. II Kings xxi 7 68
   5. II Kings xxiii 4–7 71
F Two passages which may allude to the goddess 75
   1. Hosea xiv 9 (Eng. 8) 75
   2. Amos viii 14 77
G Conclusion 77

4  
A Background 84
B Author’s transcription and translation 86
   1. Word dividers 86
   2. Line 1 87
   3. Line 2 89
   4. Line 3 90
   5. Line 4 100
   6. Lines 5 and 6 101
   7. The hand 102
C Final observations 104

5  
A The nature of the site 106
B The inscriptions 120
   1. Inscription no. 1 121
   2. Inscription no. 2 125
   3. Inscription no. 3 129
   4. Inscription on plaster 130
C The drawings 136
   1. The ‘Bes’ figures 137
   2. The lyre player 144
D Concluding remarks 152

6 Other related finds 156
A The finds from Lachish 156
   1. The Late Bronze Age ewer 156
   2. Other finds 161
Contents

B The Pella cult stands 165
C The Taanach cult stands 169
1. ‘Lapp’s’ stand 169
2. ‘Sellin’s’ stand 176
D The Ekron inscription 179
E The Jerusalem pomegranate 184
F Conclusions 187

7 Female figurines 188
A Plaque figurines 188
1. ‘Concubine’ figurines 189
2. ‘Goddess’ figurines 191
B Pillar figurines 196

8 Conclusion 206

Bibliography 210
Index of biblical passages 235
Index of extra-biblical references 239
Index of modern authors 241
General index 245
FIGURES

1 Khirbet el-Qom inscription no. 3  page 85
2 Plan of Kuntillet ‘Ajrud showing the surviving buildings and where the pithoi were discovered 107
3 Pithos A: the two Bes figures and the lyre player 115
4 Pithos A: a close-up view of the two Bes figures and the lyre player 116
5 Pithos A: the stylized tree flanked by two caprids, with a striding lion beneath 117
6 Pithos B: general view, showing the procession of worshippers 118
7 Pithos B: general view, including the procession of worshippers and several animal motifs 119
8 The Late Bronze Age ewer from Lachish 157
9 The Lachish gold plaque 162
10 Pella cultic stand with incised tree design 166
11 Pella cultic stand with ornamental façade 167
12 Pella cultic stand with ornamental façade after restoration 168
13 Taanach cultic stand discovered by Lapp 170
14 Taanach cultic stand discovered by Sellin 177
This book is a revision and updating of my dissertation, *Yahweh’s Asherah in the Light of Recent Discovery*, which was submitted for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy at Cambridge University. Earlier, shorter versions of chapters 4 and 5 have been published in *Vetus Testamentum* (Hadley 1987a and Hadley 1987b) and *Palestine Exploration Quarterly* (Hadley 1993). I wish to thank Dr F. Th. Dijkema, the Oriental Editor at E. J. Brill, and Dr G. I. Davies, the Editor of *Palestine Exploration Quarterly*, for permission to include expanded, revised versions of them here.

I also wish to acknowledge my debt to several colleagues who have provided valuable assistance along the way. I extend my deepest gratitude to the supervisor of my dissertation, Professor J. A. Emerton of Cambridge University, who has been a constant help in every stage of this work. I also wish to thank Dr G. I. Davies of Cambridge and Dr G. J. Cowling of Macquarie University, Sydney, who read parts of this work in draft and made many helpful suggestions. Thanks are also due to Professor Kevin J. Cathcart of University College Dublin, Dr John Day of Oxford University, Professor Othmar Keel of the University of Fribourg and Dr Christian Frewel of Bonn for their constructive criticism. I am also grateful to Dr Michael Kertesz, Dr Sheena Radford, Dr Paul Sensky and Dr Rosalind Slatter, all of Cambridge University, for their help in the production of this work in its PhD dissertation stage. Dr Lori Rowlett of the University of Wisconsin Eau Claire and Dr Gaile Pohlhaus, Dr Elaine Bosowski, Ms Ann Marie Paul, Mr Chad Richardson and Ms Randall Rolfe, all of Villanova University, deserve thanks for their help in providing assistance in the final stages of production and in reading the manuscript in its present form as a book. I also wish to thank the staff of the following libraries for their kind assistance: Cambridge University Library; Divinity and Oriental Studies Faculty Libraries, Cambridge; Tyndale House, Cambridge; Ecole Biblique, Jerusalem; Villanova University Library; Bryn Mawr Archaeology Library; and the University of Pennsylvania Library. I am also grateful to my colleagues at St John’s College and the Divinity and Oriental Studies Faculties in Cambridge for their valuable support, both for financial assistance through scholarships and travel grants while at Cambridge, and for providing an amiable atmosphere in which to...
work and exchange ideas. I also deeply appreciate the assistance, moral support, and extreme patience and understanding that my colleagues at Villanova and other friends have shown me throughout my labours. Others who have provided specific help will be noted in the relevant places. However, I take full responsibility for any errors that may be contained herein.

Finally, I wish to thank Dr Gordon Johnson and all the people at Cambridge University Press for their patience and diligence in making this book a reality. And last but never least, I owe a debt which I could not even begin to repay to my parents, who have cheerfully and selflessly supported me every inch of the way, across five continents, and to whom this book is lovingly dedicated.
# Abbreviations

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Abbreviation</th>
<th>Description</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>AASOR</td>
<td>Annual of the American Schools of Oriental Research (New Haven, Conn.)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>AB</td>
<td>Anchor Bible (Garden City, NY)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ADAJ</td>
<td>Annual of the Department of Antiquities of Jordan (Amman)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>AFO</td>
<td>Archiv für Orientforschung (Graz)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>AHw</td>
<td>W. von Soden Akkadisches Handwörterbuch (Wiesbaden, 1958–81)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>AION</td>
<td>Annali dell’Istituto Orientale di Napoli (Naples)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>AJA</td>
<td>American Journal of Archaeology (Cambridge, Mass.)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>AJBA</td>
<td>Australian Journal of Biblical Archaeology (Sydney)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>AJSL</td>
<td>American Journal of Semitic Languages and Literatures (Chicago)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>AntOr</td>
<td>Analecta Orientalia (Rome)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>AOAT</td>
<td>Alter Orient und Altes Testament (Kevelaer and Neukirchen-Vluyn)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>AOS</td>
<td>American Oriental Series (New Haven, Conn.)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ASOR</td>
<td>American Schools of Oriental Research</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ATD</td>
<td>Das Alte Testament Deutsch (Göttingen)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>BA</td>
<td>Biblical Archaeologist (Baltimore)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>BAH</td>
<td>Bibliothèque Archéologique et Historique (Paris)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>BAR</td>
<td>Biblical Archaeology Review (Washington)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>BASOR</td>
<td>Bulletin of the American Schools of Oriental Research (Winona Lake, Ind.)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>BB</td>
<td>Biblisches Beiträge (Fribourg)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
xiv List of abbreviations

BN Biblische Notizen (Bamberg)
CAD A. L. Oppenheim (ed.) The Assyrian Dictionary of the Oriental Institute of the University of Chicago (Chicago, 1956–)
CBOTS Coniectanea Biblica Old Testament Series (Lund and Uppsala)
CBQ Catholic Biblical Quarterly (Washington)
CBQ(MS) Catholic Biblical Quarterly (Monograph Series) (Washington)
CTA A. Herdner, Corpus des tablettes en cunéiformes alphabétiques découvertes à Ras Shamra-Ugarit de 1929 à 1939, MRS 10 (Paris, 1963)
DDD K. van der Toorn, B. Becking, and P. W. van der Horst (eds.) Dictionary of Deities and Demons in the Bible (Leiden, 1995)
DISO C.-F. Jean and J. Hoftijzer, Dictionnaire des inscriptions sémitiques de l’ouest (Leiden, 1965)
EAEHL Encyclopedia of Archaeological Excavations in the Holy Land (Jerusalem)
EB Encyclopaedia Biblica (Jerusalem or London)
E-I Eretz-Israel (Jerusalem)
EJ Encyclopaedia Judaica (Jerusalem)
HSM Harvard Semitic Monographs (Missoula, Mont. and Atlanta)
HSS Harvard Semitic Studies (Atlanta)
HUCA Hebrew Union College Annual (Cincinnati)
ICC International Critical Commentary (Edinburgh)
IDB Interpreter’s Dictionary of the Bible (New York and Nashville)
IEJ Israel Exploration Journal (Jerusalem)
IMC Israel Museum Catalogue (Jerusalem)
JANES Journal of the Ancient Near Eastern Society of Columbia University (New York)
JAOS(S) Journal of the American Oriental Society Supplement (Baltimore)
JBL Journal of Biblical Literature (Philadelphia, Atlanta and Chico, Calif.)
JNES Journal of Near Eastern Studies (Chicago)
JQR Jewish Quarterly Review (Philadelphia)
JSOT(SS) Journal for the Study of the Old Testament Supplement Series (Sheffield)
JTS Journal of Theological Studies (Oxford)
KAI H. Donner and W. Röllig, Kanaanäische und aramäische Inschriften 1–3 (2nd edn, Wiesbaden, 1962–4)
### List of abbreviations

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Abbreviation</th>
<th>Description</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>MB</td>
<td><em>Le Monde de la Bible</em> (Paris)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>MDOG</td>
<td><em>Mitteilungen der Deutschen Orientalistischen Gesellschaft</em> (Berlin)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>MIO</td>
<td><em>Mitteilungen des Instituts für Orientforschung</em> (Berlin)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>MRS</td>
<td><em>Publications de la Mission de Ras Shamra</em> (Paris)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>NS</td>
<td><em>Novum Series, Nova Series</em></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>NTOA</td>
<td><em>Novum Testamentum et Orbis Antiquus</em> (Fribourg and Göttingen)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>OA</td>
<td><em>Oriens Antiquus</em> (Rome)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>OBO</td>
<td>Orbis Biblicus et Orientalis (Fribourg and Göttingen)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>OIP</td>
<td>Oriental Institute Publications (Chicago)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>OLP</td>
<td><em>Oriantia Lovaniensia Periodica</em> (Leuven)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Or</td>
<td><em>Oriantia</em> (Rome)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>OTL</td>
<td>Old Testament Library (London, Philadelphia and Louisville)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>PEF</td>
<td><em>Palestine Exploration Fund</em> (London)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>PEQ</td>
<td><em>Palestine Exploration Quarterly</em> (London)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>RB</td>
<td><em>Revue Biblique</em> (Paris)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SBL(MS)</td>
<td>Society of Biblical Literature (Monograph Series)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SEL</td>
<td><em>Studi epigrafici e linguistici</em> (Verona)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SO</td>
<td><em>Studia Orientalia</em> (Helsinki)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SVT</td>
<td>Supplements to Vetus Testamentum (Leiden)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>TA</td>
<td><em>Tel Aviv</em> (Ramat Aviv)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>TDOT</td>
<td><em>Theological Dictionary of the Old Testament</em> (Grand Rapids)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>TWAT</td>
<td><em>Theologisches Wörterbuch zum Alten Testament</em> (Stuttgart)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>UF</td>
<td><em>Ugarit-Forschungen</em> (Kevelaer and Neukirchen-Vluyn)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>VT</td>
<td><em>Vetus Testamentum</em> (Leiden)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ZAH</td>
<td>Zeitschrift für Althebraistik (Berlin)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ZAW</td>
<td>Zeitschrift für die alttestamentliche Wissenschaft (Berlin)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ZDPV</td>
<td>Zeitschrift des Deutschen Palästina-Vereins (Leipzig)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>