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See also Shamans.

LORINE M. GETZ

Ishtar and Anat

Anat is a major Northwest Semitic goddess in the pantheon of the ancient city of Ugarit in modern northern Syria. She is the sister of the fertility god Baal and daughter of the chief god El. Anat was worshiped widely across Mesopotamia and in Egypt as well as in Syria, Israel, and Anatolia. References to Anat in the literature of Mari and Ugarit date from as early as the second millennium B.C.E. In the Hebrew Bible she is never mentioned as a goddess, though her name occurs in the personal name of the Israelite judge Shamgar son of Anat (Judges 3:31) and in several place names.

Although the root meaning of her name is in dispute among scholars of Semitic languages, in Arabic the word connotes sexuality, force, violence, aggression, belligerency, obstinacy, and zealousness—characteristics of the Anat of myth and legend. She is often known

by the epithet *bilt 'nt*, "Nubile Anat," and sometimes as *ḫm 'nt*, "Womanly Anat." Renowned for her loveliness and grace, she is the epitome of beauty to whom women in Ugaritic legends are compared.

Anat takes an active role in the legends concerning her brother, Baal. A goddess of great courage and ferocity, she bathes her feet in the blood of those she has slain. When Mot, the god of the unsown wilderness, causes an extended drought by swallowing Baal, the god of fertility, Anat avenges her brother. She seizes Mot, cleaves him in two, winnows him, burns him, grinds him in a hand-mill, and sows him in the field where birds eat his remains. Her zealous actions appear to revivify her brother, whose return heralds renewed fertility.

Anat shares a dwelling with Asherah, who is a minor goddess of fertility in Ugaritic myth. Asherah is a consort of the chief god, El, and her most frequent epithets are *'atrt ym*, "Lady of the Sea," and *gnyt 'ilm*, "Creator of the Gods." Like Anat, Asherah is also associated with hunting and horses and with Baal in his adventures against his enemies. She intervenes in his battle against his mortal adversary Prince Yamm, and she also encourages El to permit Baal to build the palace he desires. Although she is a separate divinity in Ugaritic tradition, Asherah's identity is merged with Anat's in some Egyptian, Greek, and Roman accounts. In Egypt, Anat/Asherah is regarded as a major deity, a forceful goddess of war. Her name occurs as part of several Hyksos names, and some New Kingdom rulers were her devotees as well.

Anat, in her role as warrior and lover, is also identified with other divine figures in antiquity, most notably the classical goddess Athena. At least one equation of Anat with Athena occurs in a fourth-century B.C.E. inscription from Cyprus inscribed in both Phoenician and Greek. It is also possible that the goddess represented in Northwest Semitic art and statues as an armed, winged goddess is Anat. Athena is depicted in this way in classical mythology.

Like Anat and Asherah, Astarte of Ugarit, the Akkadian Ishtar, is a goddess of fertility and is also identified with war and sexuality. In some accounts, the distinctions among these three goddesses are obscured, and they are treated as a single divinity. Ashtoret, a plural feminine form of the Northwest Semitic name Ashtart/Astarte/Ashteret, is the generic term for "goddess" in the Hebrew Bible. The word is based on the Ugaritic goddess whose Biblical name is deliberately corrupted by vocalizing it using the vowels of the Hebrew word *boshet*, meaning "shame," as part of the Israelite condemnation of all pagan idolatry. In the Hebrew Bible, her worship is associated with the Phoenician city of

Sidon (1 Kings 11:5, 2 Kings 23:13). The monk Eusebius, who wrote in the fourth century C.E., equates a goddess known as Ashtarte with Aphrodite.

In both her Northwest Semitic and Mesopotamian guises, Astarte/Ishtar is a celestial divinity, often associated with the evening star. As Ishtar, she is the primary goddess of Mesopotamia and bears the epithet "Queen of Heaven." Like her Sumerian predecessor, Inanna, Ishtar is also identified with the planet Venus. Other goddesses were probably clustered into the mythic complex of Ishtar/Inanna. Ishtar has a reputation for passion, sexuality, and ambition. She has many consorts but is most closely associated with the shepherd Tammuz (Sumerian Dumuzi). The sacred marriage ritualized the relationship between Ishtar/Inanna and Tammuz/Dumuzi, expressed in the mating of a Mesopotamian king with a sacred prostitute to renew fertility of earth and herd.

In parallel Akkadian and Sumerian myths, Tammuz/Dumuzi is forced to spend half the year in the underworld as a substitute for Ishtar/Inanna, whose ill-advised descent into the nether regions threatens to end in disaster for both the goddess and for the fertility she governs. The annual cycle of agriculture is mirrored in these two myths, fertility returning when Tammuz/Dumuzi ascends from the underworld to mate with his consort goddess, and disappearing with him upon his descent during the second half of the year. In the Hebrew Bible, Israelite prophets specifically condemn rituals associated with Ishtar/Inanna and her consort. Families baking cakes for the Queen of Heaven (Jer. 7:18, 44:17-19, 25), and women weeping for Tammuz in the Temple courtyard (Ezek. 8:14) are Biblical reflections of the pervasive power of these myths.

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See also Inanna.

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Isis

The ancient Egyptian goddess Isis has a long history that developed from rather modest beginnings. Always a beneficent deity, her earliest attested appearances come with the Pyramid Texts beginning about 2350 B.C.E., in which she and her sister Nephthys play a major role in the rebirth and revival of the deceased king. Only a few of these texts depict her as the sister-wife of Osiris, sovereign of the realm of the dead, and mother of Horus, the royal god, roles for which she becomes extremely well known in later times.

Before the Pyramid Texts, several other goddesses played prominent roles, most notably Neith and Hathor. Neith, a creator deity, dates to earliest times, while Hathor rose to prominence in the middle of the third millennium. Both deities bore special relationships to the king and queen.

Over time, Isis, the daughter of the sky goddess Nut and the earth god Geb, born on the fourth epagomenal day of the year, who initially appeared virtually only in mortuary contexts, expanded her sphere of influence, due largely to her increasing prominence as mother of

Bronze statue of the goddess Isis nursing the Pharaoh, c. 350-600 C.E. (Gianni Dagli Orti/Corbis).

