

KÁROLI GÁSPÁR REFORMED UNIVERSITY
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Traces of the Relation of Israel and Egypt in the Old Testament

The Goddess Anath in Syria, Palestine and Egypt

Doctoral thesis

by

Ágnes Csabai

Supervisor

Prof. Dr. István Karasszon

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Introduction

The present dissertation on the goddess Anath is not a work of solely theological interest, rather, it can be considered as a specifically religious historical and exegetical study. One of my basic aims was to find related parallels in the literature and, in the broader sense, in the textual material of the Ancient Near Eastern region. By these means I intended to reveal philological relatedness—with specific focus on the Old Testament material. As a matter of fact, the mere correlations of the Ugaritic, Akkadian, and Hebrew expressions reflect that a given Ancient Near Eastern culture cannot be investigated as uprooted from its wider context. Also, we cannot neglect the general intellectual background of Biblical texts.

The goddess Anath has only a few mentions in the Bible (see below), actually, her character only came into focus after the discovery of the Elephantine papyri, and consequently, the decipherment of the Ugaritic cuneiform tablets. Can or should this process be separated from the contemporary evaluation of male/female (gender) roles and their relatedness in European thought?

Of course, to avoid misunderstanding, the present study does not aim to revive some kind of a cult of this goddess at all. Rather, it intends to shed light on the social concepts of gender roles in IInd millennium Levant—reflected, as it will be seen, by the gendered relations of the divine sphere.

Structure of the dissertation

At first, I would like to demonstrate the relevance of this topic on research historical grounds. Consequently, I will define the spatial and temporal dispersion of the related sources, with specific emphasis on the Ugaritic material—literary compositions, myths, and visual representations as well. Since our knowledge about the goddess is closely connected to cuneiform tablets, we

had very little information regarding her exact nature before the XXth century. How can we describe her original characteristics? Why didn't she own any known temples? Can this phenomenon be explained by a specific ritual which was not related to temple cult? Although the answers for such questions are far from clear-cut, upon comparing the multi-lingual textual sources with the iconographic material I intend to sketch a coherent picture on the goddess—just as on her role and influence in various Ancient Near Eastern cultures.

Anath in Ugaritic Mythology

As the so to say starting point of the cult of Anath, at first we should overview her Ugaritic representations. She is a protagonist in Ugaritic mythology, as the daughter of El and the lover of Baal – as it can be seen from her earliest mentions in IInd millennium Ugaritic myths. She is present in several narratives: In the cycle of Aqhat we see her as a warrior-goddess and hunter who desires the bow of Aqhat and makes efforts to get it. She asks the help of El, but in vain; then she hatches a plot and kills Aqhat. She is in this cycle the ‘young and beautiful girl Anath’.¹

In the cycle of Baal she is the Baal's beloved, she desires and supports him. Baal fights Yamm, the Sea god, and gets higher in the rank of gods. There is a banquet in his honour as high god, and with his consort, Anath, they are a new divine couple. This is a ritual investment of Baal's new status and marks a new world order. In another narrative Baal fights Moth² and Anath is his wife: ‘*nt 'st*. Baal takes the jar from Moth and drinks in order to rise from the dead and see his wife, Anath. As Baal does not have a temple, Anath asks El, and El gives his

¹ *KTU*² 1.17-19=RS 2. {004}, 3.340 and 3.325+ in: Watson & Wyatt, (1999), 199. *KTU*² 1.17 VI 25 – 38 G. del Olmo Lete, *Canaanite Religion, According to the Liturgical Texts of Ugarit*, (Winona Lake: Eisenbrauns, 2004), 332.

² *KTU*² 1.5-6 in: Watson/Wyatt (1999), 196.

consent to build a palace for Baal. Anath reports on this to his brother and beloved happily.³

In the hymn of Anath she is the goddess of mountain: *'nt ... st gr*.⁴ She kills peoples (more precisely: the enemies of Ugarit) and walks in blood up to the knees.⁵ Then she returns home, wipes the blood from his table and pours the oil of peace on it.⁶ She is depicted as protectress of people: *'nt ... ybmt limm*,⁷ and finally there is a praise of Anath: *wrgm l btl't 'nt* ('praise the virgin Anath').⁸ Here she is characterized as blood-thirsty and violent goddess: she fights, defeats enemies, kills everybody and takes a bath in blood.⁹ She is a virgin (*btl't*) and a lady (*blt*),¹⁰ and bears the title of *st*. The title of *btl't* (virgin) is difficult to understand as Anath would have later sexual intercourse with Baal.¹¹ The meaning of Ugaritic *btl't* is subtle and denotes a young woman¹², who is not yet married, viz. who still has not given birth to a boy. Alongside with being a *btl't*, Anath has got a strong sex-appeal. In the Ugaritic texts, the title of *'btl't nt* is used most frequently, but this subtle term cannot be rendered clearly with virgin: Anath often makes love with Baal, so the translation is more appropriately 'young girl'. *btl't 'nt* is the beloved of Baal, the god of fertility, she helps him and displays strength of youth – the attribute encompasses all this.¹³

'aht b'el (Baal's sister)¹⁴ is paralleled by *'ah 'nt* (Anath's brother) – this title of Anath shows us the role of the goddess within the pantheon of Ugarit. It is not

³ ³ *KTU*² 1.10 = RS 3.362+ in: Watson/Wyatt, (1999), 199.

⁴ Text:II:5 in: Virolleaud, Ch.: *La Déesse Anat*, (Service des Antiquites Bibliotheque Archeologique et Historique, Tome: XXVIII, Paris, Librairie Orientaliste Paul Geuthner, 1938), 22.

⁵ *KTU*² 1.3 ii 14 in: Wyatt, N.: *Religious texts from Ugarit: the words of Ilmilku and his colleagues* (The Biblical Seminar 53, Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press 2002), 74.

⁶ Text:II:17-23 Virolleaud, 1938, 20. *KTU*² 1.3 ii 32 in: Wyatt, (2002), 74.

⁷ Text II:33 Virolleaud, 1938, 25. *KTU*² 1.13 = RS 1.006 in: Watson & Wyatt, (1999), 200.

⁸ Text:III:8 Virolleaud, 1938, 31. *KTU*² 1.13 Wyatt, (2002), 169.

⁹ *KTU*² 1.7 R 10 in: Wyatt, (2002), 149; Text II: 17, Virolleaud, (1938), 45.

¹⁰ It is not excluded that the use of these two words is a pun.

¹¹ See the texts in *KTU*² 1.10-1.11 = *Loves* II-III, and *KTU*² 1.13 = *Myth and Ritual* IV.

¹² Holladay, (1991), 52.

¹³ *Ibid.* 175.

¹⁴ *KTU*² 1:10 II 16, 20 = *UT* 76:2:16, 20; *KTU*² 1:10 III 10 = *UT* 76:3:11.

always clear if the titles *'ah* and *'aht* denote blood relationship or simply a partnership. Consequently, *'aht b^{cl}* could be rendered as ‘beloved’ or ‘partner’ of Baal, instead of Baal’s sister. The next title, *rhm 'nt*, refers to *rhm* (womb) which is equivalent to ‘young girl’. Similarly, the title of *'nt ybmt limm* is frequent in the Ugaritic texts: ‘the young widow of peoples’. – The role of Anath in the Ugaritic myths is often independent, but it is supplemented by divine appearances and titles which result in complex portrait – all this testifies to her importance within the Ugaritic pantheon.¹⁵

Many aspects of the goddess can be perceived in the Ugaritic myths: the violent, the virgin Anath, fertility and love. Most interesting is, however, her relation to Baal, which basically characterizes the goddess also: the relation of Anath to other gods and goddesses results from her relation to Baal. She and Baal fight together Yamm, the Sea god; she takes vengeance on Moth, or she proceeds to El on account of Baal. In the cycle of Baal, she is almost the female part of the storm god. Though Anath is in love with Baal, she is not the goddess of love: her real character can be seen in fight.

Anath in the Old Testament

In the Hebrew Bible, her name occurs in compounds: more specifically, in toponyms and personal names. However, even these locals can be of interest for us since they may have been originated from the name of the goddess—and as such, can be related to her cult.

Anathoth occurs as toponym and personal name as well. Beth-Anath occurs twice, in Josh 19:38 and Judges 1:33.

It is of high importance that this town is listed in the inscription of Sethi I in Karnak, on the wall of the temple of Amon, among the cities of Asia. Shamgar

¹⁵ Walls, (1998), 112.

ben-Anath occurs in Judges 3:31 and 5:6 – but this name is difficult to explain (some theories are being discussed in the thesis).

Although unlike Asherah, Anath does not occur in herself in the Biblical text, as other researchers already assumed, her name may appear if we split or interpret certain expressions in a somewhat different way. Moreover, we should also note those passages in which only the titles of the foreign goddesses appear, such as Jer 7:18, and 44:17 („the queen of Heaven/the Sky”).¹⁶ It seems that the audience of Jeremiah was much more familiar with this title than with the names of Anath, Asherah or Ashtarte. This matter leads us to the excursus in which I discuss two representations of Anath from Elephantine on which, in turn, the names AnatYahu and AnatBethel appear. However, this happens considerably late: in the Vth century B.C.E. AnatYahu: papyrus C 44, and AnatBethel: C3.15.

Anath in Egypt

Excursus: Cultural transfer between Syria, Palestine, and Egypt before the Iron Age

The Egyptian Sources

There is no doubt that we should treat her Egyptian manifestations somewhat cautiously, since her role in the pantheon is only secondary, and the origins of her cult can be traced back to Syria. Therefore in these cases we should shed light upon the roots and mechanisms of a complex motif-system, taking, at the

¹⁶ „Largely on the basis of Ugaritic and Egyptian evidence that Anat was referred to as the Mistress of the Heavens and like titles (see above), several scholars have suggested that the Queen of Heaven referred to in Jer 7: 18 and 44: 17 is Anat. The issue of the Queen of Heaven's identity has been treated recently and in depth by Olyan, S. (1988: 161-174) and Ackerman, S. (1992:535). Although they do not reach the same conclusion, their arguments militate against seeing Anat as Jeremiah's Queen of Heaven.” See: *DDD*, (1999), 42.

same time, the hieroglyphic orthography, the language, and the possible non-Egyptian elements into consideration. It is very likely that the veneration of Anath was spread in Egypt during the New Empire, especially in the royal court and among the elite.

We know several inscriptions from the times of Sethi I and Ramesses II which mention Anath. There is a hieratic ostrakon¹⁷ in the collection of Michaelidis which contains administrative information and is directed to Pharaoh. Also the mythological role of Anath is important: she is mentioned in the history of Horus and Seth. *Chester-Beatty VII* is a hieratic papyrus¹⁸ found in Deir el-Medine and comes from the time of Ramesses II. The papyrus in hieratic language testifies to the sexual character of Anath. Also the iconography of Anath is dealt with in the thesis.

Anath in Palestine is being tackled with in two chapters: first, Anath in Beth-Shean, second, the goddess Hanat. In Beth-Shean there was an Egyptian garrison, and in the Egyptian inscriptions of the stele Anath is mentioned.

The name of Anath might be connected etymologically with Hanat – a goddess of the people of Hanu, which is mentioned in the archives of Mari. This people was part of the Amorite population, perhaps of North-West Semitic origin.

The last chapter tackles the afterlife of the goddess Anath. In general terms we may state that she was victim of the syncretism of the huge melting pot of the Roman Empire when different gods and goddesses of the Ancient Near East were identified with those of the Greek and Roman religion.

Conclusions

It is beyond doubt that the most detailed material related to the goddess Anath comes from Ugarit, and it is also well-documented that she was the

¹⁷ Grdseloff, (1942), 35 – 39.

¹⁸ Gardiner, A. H. *Egyptian Hieratic Texts*, (Lepzig, 1911), 61–62.

female mate of Baal in local mythology. Their relationship is tackled with in *KTU*² 1.6 which also illustrate their love: Anath desires Baal, sexually as well. It is then logical that Anath is presented as a young, attractive woman, and her power is shown in fight and war, too. It is rather illogical that this young woman is depicted as a widow, but in view of the death of Baal this adjective expresses her attachment to him even in death. In Ugarit there was no temple of Anath, which can only be interpreted that she had a firm place in the temple of Baal. The violent character of Anath is not simply a part of the fight of Baal against Moth and Yamm, for fertility and the revival of vegetation. Anath likes fighting, and indeed, she fights against mankind, too; what is more, she is a bloodthirsty and cruel goddess, as is shown in *KTU*² 1.3 II. It is not excluded that the Ugaritic myth preserved some elements of an ancient portrait of Anath, otherwise the goddess would fight only under the auspices of Baal, as his loving consort. Further documents to be discovered should prove the provenance of the Ugaritic goddess, but her relationship with Baal certainly reshaped her previous portrait.

– In Palestine, Anath was less wide-spread than Baal, but in similar manner we see her in some local traditions, i.e., in connection with several places. Anathoth and Anath-Beth-El are certainly the onomatological documents of her local veneration. In Ugarit it was clear that the couple Anath and Baal are in analogy to El and Athiratu, but in Palestine we have to take into consideration that Anath and Athiratu merged. Geographically, one may think that the Egyptian reception of Anath was mediated by Palestine – but this is by far not sure! There is no doubt that Asiatic people brought the goddess to Egypt (just like the veneration of Baal is to be found in Migdol!), but the Egyptian portrait of Anath reflects the goddess of war and not the goddess of fertility. Iconographic evidences suggest that Anath came to Egypt during the time of the Hyksos rule, but with certainty we can only state that her veneration is attested under Ramesses II. This Pharaoh

was called ‘Anatophile’,¹⁹ no doubt in view of the help of the goddess in war! Interesting as it is, the Egyptian portrait of Anath shows continuity with the Ugaritic (or pre-Ugaritic) goddess, and the Palestine conception of Anath is put into parenthesis. It is uncertain that Seth and Anath had a sexual intercourse, nevertheless we may surmise that the sexual attractiveness of the goddess was known in Egypt as well. However, complemented with various textual and visual sources from Palestine and Egypt, the portrait of the goddess can be sketched in a more detailed way. All at once, this picture may also reflect the relative equivalence of male and female roles in the religious concepts of the Levant from (at least) the middle of the IInd millennium. In experiencing transcendence, there was no androcentrism: we may testify to the presence of the female attractiveness, sexual power, and the transcendence of procreation which exceeds the power of individuals. However, this is not meant as to lowering women to the realm of animals; on the contrary, it is construed as elevation to divinity. This general rule, however, does not discard the special character of a person: in the personal portrait of the goddess cruelty, violence and love are included as well. The consequences of such conclusions for modern day social-psychological investigation well exceeds the limits of the present study – however, it may demonstrate that the study of Ancient Near Eastern religions can be fruitful from such a viewpoint as well.

¹⁹ Ramesses II names himself ‘the lover of Anath’, see Cornelius (2004), 85.