



The Venus of Laussel holds up a moon horn with 13 notches.
 Pregnant goddess and horned bulls of Catal Huyuk
 The Golden calf on a lyre burial chamber Ur (Campbell 1987, Mellaart, Eban).

The Origin of Sin and the Queen of Heaven

*Dedicated to my namesake and alter-ego Christine
 "If it were not for you this work would have been a place of poverty"*

*The moon is rightly believed to be the star of the spirit
 that saturates the earth and fills bodies by its approach
 and empties them by its departure
 the blood even of humans increases and diminishes with its light
 and leaves and herbage are sensitive to it
 the same force penetrating into all things.
 Pliny. (Allegro 1970 70).*

Introduction

It is difficult for people living in the shadow of the patriarchal monotheistic heritage to understand how the paternal creator god we associate with the Jewish, Christian, and Islamic religions has evolved naturally from more ancient traditions in polytheism. The tendency is to perceive polytheistic deities as debased objects of idol worship, either empty of real content because they are false man-made gods, as mere projections of human personality, or at best representing only one aspect of primitive nature such as fertility, or astral bodies such as the moon or sun. In fact the converse is the case. Yahweh is a tribal patron form of a more ancient cosmic deity, who only regains a semblance of his original cosmic nature in the Christian form many centuries later, although now without his divine consort, and their sacred garden of immortality.

In the Judeo-Christian tradition, there is a particular tendency to see the aniconic aspect of Yahweh as intrinsically superior to the idolised deities of polytheism, and to infer that this "true" God of his people has appeared paradoxically as a revealed "God of History", first to Abraham in the starlight and later to Moses out of a cloudy pillar. Despite clearly manifesting in Yahweh as a tribal patron god, rather than a cosmic god of all and only later being vested by pre-exilic Jewish culture

with strict monotheistic attributes, this deity finally appears as a cosmic deity in the Christian and Islamic form with the full dimensions of an aniconic, monotheistic, cosmic, paternal creator deity - the "one true God of all", who has revealed his nature in ever deeper stages to his followers.

This description is patently incorrect. It is calculated to reinforce the unquestioned acceptance of the patriarchal creator deity, despite his mottled history, and mask the evolutionary nature of all deities as projections of conscious awareness and human culture. Long before Yahweh made his dubious entry onto the stage of history as a jealous patron deity, ancient astral deities had already encompassed the major advances later seen in the Christian idea of the supreme creator god, who is both the god of reality and the god of the mind.

In rediscovering the underlying nature of this "God behind God" and his complementary relationship with the Goddess, with whom he is inextricably fused in deep union, just as Shiva and Shakti, we will not only discover our true origins of deity in the joyful marriage of complements - male and female mind and body, but also our much more ancient roots in the links between the conscious mind and the immortal unfolding of fertility which were already discovered 20,000 years ago with the first developments of human culture. In a real sense these ancient traditions, far from being more primitive, capture in archetypal form realities towards which our modern scientific society is only now converging after a long period of imbalance and confusion.

In finding our true cultural roots of deity, we can finally come to a position in which we can discover in a vastly older tradition the continuity of vision that will sustain us in a closed but living ecosystem in which we have unparalleled powers of stewardship of nature.



El - the kind old fatherly God of Canaan, archetypal of the fatherly aspect of the Christian trinity is horned (Willis).

Ancient Roots of the Moon God

Briffault notes that the Moon as a deity is in its ancient form male, the male nature complementing the natural moon-related cycle of female fertility. This can be appreciated when we consider that a common thread runs from the ancient Venus of Laussel dating from around 18,000 - 20,000 BC, with her 13 notched upheld moon horn, representing the lunar months, through Catal Huyuk with the horned Bulls and pregnant fertility goddesses, to the golden calves of Ur and of Israel and the bull-horned El of Canaan, who although no longer specifically a Moon God retains his ancient fertility symbol. the human menstrual cycle.

The association of the Bull's horns with fertility expresses in one image the virility of the bull and the moon-driven rebirth of human fertility in the blood flow of the menses. This association has also become cyclically steeped in the blood of sacri-

fice, for it was perceived that out of blood came new life. In this parallel truth of the fertilized soil came endless cycles of animal and human sacrifice to the fertility goddess so that the harvest would spring forth anew and nourish the agricultural peoples. The moon deity, as a waxing and waning god. This causes the moon to be associated both with the dead and the underworld and with immortal life. It also became associated with the agricultural sacrificial cycle and the resurrection on the third day of the new moon.

The period in which the Moon completes an orbit around the Earth and returns to the same position in the sky--the sidereal month - is 27 days, 7 h, 43 min. Because the Earth is moving in its orbit around the Sun in the same direction as the Moon, the time needed to return to the same phase--the synodic month - is longer: 29 days, 12 h, 44 min. This period is the time interval that, for example, elapses between two successive full moons, a period that was known within a second even in ancient times (Grollier). The natural period of the human menstrual cycle is about 28 days, the nominal month we still use of four seven day weeks. 13 such 28 day months constitute just one day short of a year, however they lose synch with the moon, as the number of synodic lunar months is 12.38 per year, enough for 13 notches, but not for 13 revolutions. A transition thus occurred in history from a 13 month year to a 12 month year and 13 became the unlucky number.

Something of the idea of how fundamental the moon deity is to our cultural evolution can be understood from the fact that 'men' - the moon is the source of both 'menses' - the blood flow of human fertility and 'mens' - the mind. The association between moon and mind thus extends from the fringes of lunacy across the entire mental realm. The moon is thus specifically associated with both fertility and the mind itself. You could say the ancient moon god was both the god of the cosmic mind and the cause of menstruation - the source of conception! His widespread name Sin means God of Wisdom. The collection of the major heavenly bodies , the houses of the moon, around the seven names of the week is also a lunar-centred description, emphasizing the central role played by the moon among the astronomical bodies.



The Sleeping Gypsy - Henri Rousseau

"But while the moon, as 'the real husband of all women', is thought of as a male, it is at the same time associated with the functions, not of men, but of women. It is the source not only of their reproductive powers but all their other powers, especially their magic powers. Furthermore the moon stands in primitive thought for perpetual renewal, immortality, eternity"

(Briffault v2 583). The moon is the real measure of time. Its three days of darkness is the origin of myths of descent and resurrection in the new moon on the third day. "In primitive thought the eternal time-creating nature of the moon imparts to it an inexorable character, setting it above all other powers" (ibid). The resurrecting

moon has an inextricable link with the serpent which sheds its skin. So intimate is this association that ... wherever we find the serpent, ... we may expect to find a lunar cult . This link is accentuated by the idea that menstruation is caused by union between a woman and a serpent. The great leviathan of the deeps is also naturally the moon tide.

"The moon is the regulator and cause of menstruation, which is frequently regarded as being the result of actual intercourse between the moon and women. ... The dangerous character ascribed to women is also attributed to that celestial body which is everywhere associated with women, the moon."Belief that the moon, or moonlight can precipitate conception is culturally widespread." (Briffault v2 585).

The moon deity thus combines an astral cosmic and mental aspect with the the core principles of female fertility in a way in which the genders form a natural and meaningful complement. It is simplistic to attempt to identify the Moon God as being merely the God of the Moon, because his aspects extend into the core aspects of meaning and being.

In Anatolia and Northern Aegean the son of the Great Mother is Men, common to all Indo European languages. That in fact, and not Selene is the proper Greek term for the moon and as in all other languages it is masculine. ... In spite of the general feminization of the moon in Hellenic mythology, the primitive mystics and Homer alike refer to the moon as masculine Men. He is associated with Anaitis the moon goddess represented by Hekate, Artemis and Diana (Briffault v3 120)

Just as the fertility Goddess is one although she has many names, the Moon God comes in a variety of names which span many cultures, Nanna of the Sumerians patron of Ur, Yerah of Ugarit, Sin patron of Harran, Kusu of the Hurrians, Ilumquh of the Sabeans of Yemen, Soma of the Indo-Aryans, Yaho and many others. Although he was the patron deity of two specific cities of the Sumerian empire, Ur in the South and Harran in the far North, his worship is astral and cross-cultural.



Four candidates for Soma: *Amanita muscaria*, *Psilocybe* sp., *Peganum harmala*, Cannabis (Schultes & Hofmann 1979)

Soma and the Indo-Aryan Origins

The association between the mind and the moon is very ancient and also lies at the source of Indo-Aryan myth. In the Hymn of Man, the primordial Adam is sacrificed to become the diversity of the world. Although the sun is his eye, it is the moon who is his mind.(O'Flaherty 29)

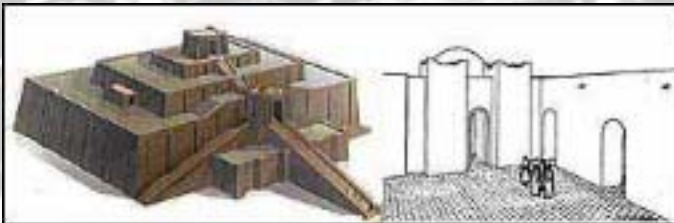
Both the Persian and Indian sources of the Indo-Aryan tradition speak of an ancient visionary drink of a ruddy complexion, pressed from a plant or fungus. Soma is at once the source of immortal knowledge and the Moon God of the Indo-Aryan mind, as portrayed in the Hymn of Man. The similarity of the eternally reproducing fruit is notable and suggests the two themes could have had a common origin. Although many plants from Cannabis through to a penetrating case for Peganum harmala (Rudgley 43), both of which are psychoactive, have been suggested, two fungi, Amanita muscaria and Psilocybe species have also been considered to be Soma. The presence of mushroom icons in both the Konja plain and Europe lends support for early use in Europe as is the case in America. Psilocybe species in particular have been discovered across the entire spread of temperate lands believed to be the origin of the Indo-Aryans (Stamets 64).

Soma had the first claim to all women. They only came afterwards into the possession of men (Briffault v3 239). Soma, like other Moon Gods is regarded as the sacred bull which is sacrificed. "The killing of Soma ... symbolizes the pressing of the sacred plant Soma, which causes rain, and consequently the growth of plants; Soma is the elixir of life, which after dropping to earth as rain, mounts to the moon and is drunk out of the moon by the gods, who use the moon as a cup. The animal representing the moon is the bull." (Briffault v3 130) Mithra's murder of the bull is pre-Zarathustrian myth. Ahriman replaced him in Zoroastrian times (Gershevitch 62).

"Much controversy surrounds Zarathustra's attitude towards the drink haoma. In a somewhat unclear passage, he condemns "the piss of this drunkenness" (Yasna 48:10) in connection with the karapans and the misrule. Indra is a deva demonized in the Vendidad. But the central ritual, the yasna, is essentially a haoma sacrifice." (Malandra 15)

*"We have drunk the Soma,
we are become Immortals,
We arrived at the light,
we have found the Gods" (Wasson 1972).*

Soma is the 'body' of the sacrament. The soma is the corpus.



The Ziggurat of Nannar and the Temple of Ningal (Internet, Woolley 1954 201)

Nannar and Ningal: The Moon Deities of Ur

The Moon God has always been complemented by a feminine counterpart. Nanna loved his consort the moon goddess Ningal. "Nanna fell in love with Ningal and she with him. It was from this joyful and impetuous union that Inanna, the morning and evening star and Utu the Sun God were born." (Wolkenstein and Kramer 141).

Nanna was worshipped in the ziggurat of Ur. There was also a smaller temple for

Ningal the moon goddess. Nanna was worshipped both by a High Priestess and priests. Great Kings throughout history from Sargon 2600 BC to Nabonidus 550 BC had their daughters officiate as high-priestess of Nanna at Ur. The tradition begins with the first dynasties of Ur around 3400 BC and continued through to the fall of Ur around the time of Nabonidus, a period of some 3000 years. As we shall see this tradition continued for another 1700 years at Harraan and still underlies the Islam of today.

It is clear that Ur-Nammu the founder of the great Third Dynasty of Ur had a female familiar spirit or shekina, which is shown in the stele below in which the King offers libations to the Tree of Life, before both Nanna and Ningal, to preserve the fertility of the garden, and that this was a central ritual in founding the great ziggurat of Ur. Ur-nammu saved the garden of fertility.

*For Nannar, his King Ur-Nammu
the mighty man, king of Ur, Sumer and Akkad
who built the temple of Nannar ...
he saved the plants of the garden ...
once lodged as a king should be
Nannar will guarantee the earth's increase.*



Ur-Nammu with Shekina (female spirit) offers libations to the Tree of Life to both the Moon Goddess Ningal and the Moon God Nannar (Woolley 1954 pl 22).

In the fragmentary registers on the reverse of the stone [Stele of Ur-Nammu] we have a scene of sacrifice in which a priest cuts open the prostrate body of a bull so as to read the omens on its liver; and a scene of sacrifice in which it is possible that the king himself is figured as a god. ... Ur-Nammu was deified after death if not in his lifetime." (Woolley 1954 159).

"At no time in its long history was the city of Ur so important as in the days of the third dynasty, about 2300 - 2180 BC, when it was the capital of the Sumerian empire. The founder of the dynasty was Ur-Nammu, and he founded a royal house of which four generations after him were to sit on the throne; he was a great conqueror and a great ruler, famous for his justice and his good works, whose dominions extended from the Persian Gulf to the Mediterranean." (Woolley 1938 80.)

Sin or Nannar " is described as a young bull (the strong bull of heaven) perfect in every part: his beard is said to be of lapis lazuli (cf Mesopotamian men): his orb is a giant self-propagating fruit. The god's horns are taken to be a reference to the crescent moon, although they are also sometimes regarded as the boat in which he

skims through the midst of the heavens." An exorcist priest or ashipu joined in prayer and incantation when Sin was attacked and oppressed by demons during an eclipse. (Contenau 248, 292)

*Father Nannar, lord, moon-god, prince of the gods,
 Father Nannar, lord of Uru, prince of the gods.
 Lord, thy deity fills the far-off heavens,
 like the vast sea, with reverential fear! ...
 Father, begetter of gods and men,
 who establishest for them dwellings
 and institutest for them that which is good. ...
 Chief, mighty, whose heart is great,
 god whom no one can name, ...
 In heaven, who is supreme ?
 As for thee, it is thou alone who art supreme! ...
 As for thee, thy decree is made known upon earth,
 and the spirits of the abyss kiss the dust!
 As for thee, thy decree blows above like the wind,
 and stall and pasture become fertile!
 As for thee, thy decree is accomplished upon earth below,
 and the grass and green things grow! ...
 As for thee, thy decree has called into being equity and justice,
 and the peoples have promulgated thy law! ...
 O Lord, mighty in heaven, sovereign upon earth,
 among the gods thy brothers, thou hast no rival!"
 (Dawn Civ 654)*

Controversy continues over the status of the Royal Tombs of Ur, which are famous for the fact that, like several other ancient cultures, whole courts were buried with great ceremony on the death of the sacred king. Although it is suggested that these Kings and Queens may have been sacrificed priests in fertility rites, the magnificence and extensive nature of the tombs suggest they reflect a royal suttee rite, in which the whole court departed with their deified king to accompany him on his astral journey. This is consistent with the prominence of the Moon God in worship of departed ancestors.

The early archaeological remains at Ur indicate a very prominent early flood. In the King list the kings reigned before the flood for a millennium. Then the flood came [before 3200 BC.] Afterwards kingship was sent down from on high. There was a dynasty at Kish, one at Erech and then the first Dynasty at Ur.



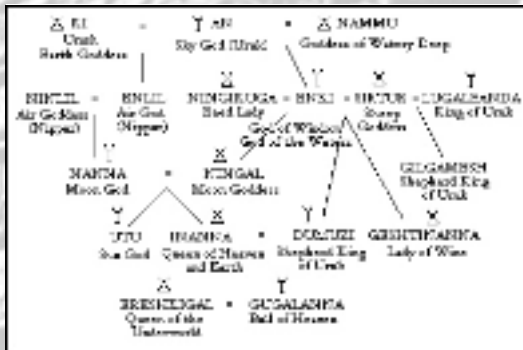
Nannar with the 'three muses' and Eternally Fruiting Orb - Ur-Nammu (Maspero 655)

"Nabonidus (555-538 BC), last of the Babylonian kings appointed his daughter high priestess of the moon god at Ur, and the king states that in so-doing, he was following a precedent set by Kudur-Mabug, one of the Larsa kings who had reigned some 1500 years before - about 2000 B.C. Sargon (2630 - 2575 BC) had done the same, and the limestone slab of the period of Entemena... carries the precedent further back still : all through history such importance was attached to the great temple of Nannar the Moon-god at Ur ... that the reigning king, though a foreigner, might hold it worth his while to send his daughter as High Priestess there; in one case at least a king's son was High Priest of the Moon-goddess." (Woolley 1954 216)

Nannar "was thought to have arisen from a god of nomads and a protector of cattle, related to the masculine cult of the moon god in early Arabia. His daughter Ishtar in time overshadowed all other female deities, as did her counterpart Isis in Egypt. As father, or source, of the Goddess, it is fitting that Sin wears head gear suggestive of a mushroom. No other deity in the Babylonian pantheon has this headgear ... which is an identifier for the god." (McKenna 114) Contentau suggestively describes Sin's characteristic orb as an "eternal self-reproducing fruit", which is also identifiable with the regenerating moon.

Ningal, who in Akkadian texts is referred to as "the Mother of the Great Gods" was also Moon Goddess. Her temple was second in importance only to the of Sin. Her temple was likewise rebuilt many times. Ishme-Dagan's daughter Enannatum, high priestess of Nannar rebuilt the entire mud brick temple of burned brick (Woolley 1954, 166). Ningal laments the destruction of Ur in her lament:

*I mourned the Day of the Storm, fated for me
My burden predestined for me as a goddess
The cause of my tears
I could not flee the cruel violence of that day
Its fury was greater than all the joys of my life
The land of Ur is filled with sorrow
Should I scream for the life of my calf,
Cry out for its release?
When the storm subsided, the city lay in ruins
The Temple of Nannar lay in ruins
Where crowds once celebrated festivals
Bodies lay in every street (Matthews and Benjamin 169).*



The Sumerian form of the Genealogy of the Deities (Wolkenstein).



Babylonian deities surmounted by Sin, surrounded by Shamash and Ishtar and ascended by Nabu the wise serpent (Contineau 261).

King Naram-sin is horned as a god in victory (Mellenkoff).

The Chaldean Astrologers of Babylon

In early Babylonia the moon-cult was the national religion: the name Chaldeans means 'moon-worshippers'. (Briffault v3 79) In the bible Ur is referred to as Ur of the Chaldees.

In the Babylonian cosmology Sin, Shamash and Ishtar formed the second trinity of deities. The first trinity of gods were also absorbed into the lunar cycle becoming phases of the moon, thus giving the moon a supreme role as the connecting principle between the

deities and mankind. "The moon is during the period of his visibility, in the first five days, the god Anu ; from the sixth to the tenth day, the god Ea from the eleventh to the fifteenth day, the god En-Lil" (Briffault v3 85). This trinity was also adopted by the Assyrians and the Hurrians alongside their patron deities.

Sin (Nannar) as father of both the Sun (Utu or Shamash) and of Inanna (Ishtar) the Queen of Heaven was the central astral deity. The sun was generally a subservient deity, despite being officially recognised during the time of Hammurabi, being identified with, the hot, burning, sterile season (Briffault v3 85). This astral scheme extended to the seven "planets" of the lunar week, and the twelve signs of the zodiac, the 'girdle of Ishtar', representing the months. It is from this heritage that astronomy and astrology for which the Chaldeans became renowned developed.

The name Sin is the Semitic form of Sumerian Enzu meaning lord of knowledge. The Mesopotamians ascribed very great importance to him. It was he who governed the passing of the months through his waxing and waning. ... The unvarying lunar cycle gave Sin a special connection with order and wisdom and with immortality. The number seven is lunar in origin and is applied to the seven days of creation, the seven levels of hell and the seven great planets, Moon, Sun, Mercury, Venus, Mars, Jupiter and Saturn.

#The Babylonian lunar calendar was said to be invented by Nabu-Rimmani (Walker 646). Nabu is the god of writing, who bears the tablets of the gods and is identifiable with Mercury. Rimmon the pomegranite is a symbol of the enclosed fruit of the Yoni, thus also representing phallic male fertility (Walker 805). Nabu is also the wise serpent (Graves 470), the soothsayer and prophet, who knew and foresaw everything and was willing to give advice on any subject. The inventor of tablets and writing (Maspero 670). The features of Sin as moon god and Lord of Wisdom naturally complement those of Nabu and they come to have a close relationship, personified in Egypt in one god, Thoth.

Yerah - The Moon God of Canaan

The theme of love between the Moon God and his consort appears in Canaan in the form of Yerah and Nikkal and their marriage ceremony, echoing with fertility. When advised to court Baal's sister by Nikkal's father the Summer King, Yerah insists on his love and rejoins "Nay but let Nikkal answer" (Gray).



Temple of the Moon God Hazor Palestine (Gray)

*The Moon, the Luminary of Heaven sends
To Hrbh, the Summer's King;
Give Nikkal; the Moon will pay the brideprice-,
Let the Fruitful One enter his house,
And I will give her brideprice to her father,
A thousand pieces of silver, yea ten thousand of gold;
I will send gems of lapis lazuli;
I will make her fallow field into a vineyard,
The fallow fields of her love into orchards.
These overtures are met with becoming reluctance:
Then replied Hrbh, the Summer's King:
Gracious One among the Gods,
Affiance thyself to Baal,
Wed the Plump Maiden, Daughter of Mist
I will introduce thee to her father Baal ...
Nay but let Nikkal answer me,
Then afterwards make me thy son, in law.
The Moon paid the brideprice for Nikkal,
Her father set the beam of the balances,
Her mother set the pan of the balances (Gray 113)*

Sin and Ishtar: Rumbings of Descent

The relationship between the Moon God and his daughter Inanna of the Sumerians, Ishtar of Babylon, Athirat of Canaan, al-Uzza of Arabia, Hathor of Egypt and Hekate of Greece is complex and holds the key to the gender difficulties that have accompanied the emergence of the monotheism of Yahweh, the downfall from Eden and ultimately the patriarchal tradition of Judaism, Christianity and Islam. Inanna, or Ishtar, although she is Queen of Heaven arose out of the sea as did Aphrodite the

Canaanite Athirat and Mari the Goddess of the Sea from Cyprus, Crete and Syria, identifiable with Anath, so Sin is also in this sense God the father of the 'virgin' Mary.

Of course father and daughter indicate that an evolution took place in which the daughter underwent a resurgence, just as with El and Ba'al in Canaan. Nannar appears very early in the history of Ur, consistent with an origin as a nomadic God of the Shepherd Kings who formed a cultural complementation to the planter Queens in the emergence of the Sumerian civilization. Although associated with ancestor worship and sacred tombs, the courtship of Nannar and Ningal is not characterised by seasonal male human sacrifice. Subsequently this position shifted back towards sacrifice of the agrarian Fertility Goddess, who was originally a chthonic deity of the earth and underworld. With the rise of Uruk Inanna (Ishtar) wrested the seven or sacred power objects and began the descent of the seasonal sacrifice and resurrection of Dumuzi (Tammuz). In this respect, she becomes the goddess making her journey from heaven to earth and finally to the realms of death - the almighty woman of the three spheres.

"[Sin's] supreme character passed in later times to his female counterpart, who finally replaced him. When the female aspect of the lunar deity came to displace the male, the wife of the moon-god became identified with the moon itself, while the goddess Ishtar maintained her association with the planet Venus. This identification is symbolically represented by the lunar crescent, enclosing the star within its horns, which is still the crest of Islam" (Briffault v3 78).

This identification of Ishtar with the moon and the evening star throws an interesting light on the origin of goddesses. It ... derives from the common idea, ... that the morning and evening stars are the two wives of the moon. When the morning and evening star came to be identified they became in Ishtar her two complementary aspects: love in the evening and death in the morning (Briffault v3 82).

The relationship between the male and female counterpart of the moon was, however, variable. Ishtar is sometimes the daughter of the moon god. Sometimes he is her son and male avatar. In one liturgy, Tammuz is expressly addressed as the moon-god. Ishtar was horned, and was brought up out of the foam by water-gods, like Aphrodite, thus explaining her close connection with Mari, goddess of the sea. The votaries of Harran, despite worshipping the Queen of Heaven alongside the Moon God had a pertinent saying: 'if they were to honour the moon as a female they would become subject to their women' (Briffault v2 596).

This diverging relationship between the Moon God and the Fertility Goddess becomes pivotal in understanding the breakdown in relations between Yahweh and his Asherah later in Old Testament times. The Fall from Eden is specifically associated with the sacrificial cycle of Inanna and Dumuzi. Dumuzi becomes the dying Adam, doomed to mortality by the original sin of Eve, in accepting the advice of the Serpent and eating the Fruit. This re-fomented the link between male death and sex, the original sin of Eve, human sacrifice, which reverberated in the vulnerable line of patriarchal inheritance. In the above cylinder seal we see the four key components of the Eden myth, Dumuzi and the Horned Inanna, the serpent and the seven-limbed Tree of Life from which the Menorah is derived, both reflected in the seven days of the lunar week and the seven levels of the descent. The three days of the descent also represent the three days between the old and new moon. Sin him-

self is the chythonic 'green one' (Briffault v3 90) and is threatened by the seven devils of the underworld (Green T 196).



The 'Temptation Seal' Akkadian circa 2200 BC (Wolkenstein and Kramer 3)
It is difficult to decide whether this is Sin (Naramsin) and Ningal (consort) performing the rite of the sacred tree as did Ur Nammu or whether it is Inanna and Dumuzzi.
The seven branched tree echoes the menorah, the serpent Nabu.

While the story of Nannar and Ningal is the story of continuing love and marriage unto death, the descent instead elaborates male mortality in the face of the sexual fertility rites and sacrificial cycle of the Goddess. Neither Nannar nor the Egyptian Moon God Thoth approved of the descent. Nannar would not help his daughter. Thoth would not weep for Osiris. A close link is thus made between the sexual rites, male mortality and the reaction of the jealous male Godhead - banishment from the garden of fertility. Having become a root myth in the Old Testament world view, the downfall became portrayed in the apocalyptic vision many centuries later as a theme to be finally undone by the Son of Man in ushering in the Kingdom of Immortality by undoing the mortal sin of Eve. There is thus a close and intimate link between the sacrifice of Dumuzi by Inanna and the crucifixion of Jesus of Mary.

Arab Gold Necklace with Crescent and Lamb's Head
(Zehren 345)

The God of the Semites

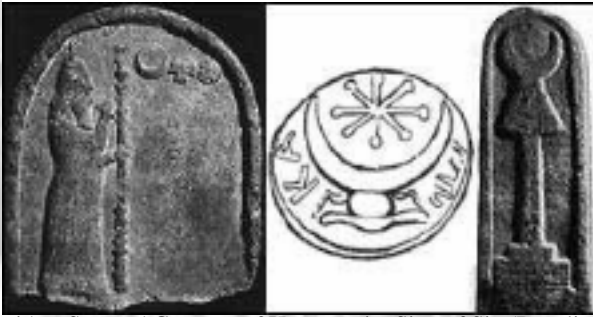
The moon was from earliest times the foundation of all theological development among the whole Semitic race, even after the Semites had become agriculturists. Moses Maimonides expressed this by saying that moon-worship was the religion of Adam; and the crescent is still the badge of Islam, as it was once the emblem of Israel. Arab women even now insist that the moon is the parent of mankind. Herodotus said "Arabs have no other divinities than Dionysius and Urania" (Ishtar or Aphrodite), both lunar deities". (Briffault v3 78)



The cult of the moon-god Sinn is found in every Semitic land, and he was 'the father of the great gods, the Lord of Heaven' - the sun-god being merely an attendant deity.

Numerous ancient Arabian inscriptions show the moon-deity as the most prominent object of cult everywhere, whether in the Hadramaut, Kataban or Afinaean kingdoms. (Briffault v3 79)

"In the faith of ancient Arabia," remarks Prince Teano, 'in the cult of the, moon, regarded as supreme male deity, conceived as a cause to which all worship refers, there lies manifestly the germ of monotheism, although only the Jews first, in Judaism and in Christianity, and Muhammad afterwards in Islam, attained to a clear enunciation of the monotheistic formula'. There are abundant indications," observes again Prince Teano, 'which seem to demonstrate that the Jehovah of the Hebrews and the Allah of Islam are merely transformations of the primitive lunar deity of Arabia' " (Briffault v3 106). Genesis 9:26 specifically concedes the god of Noah is the God of Shem - i.e. the universal god of the Semites and therefore Sin.



Stele of Nabonidus, Star and Crescent of Harran coin, Sign of Sin (Beaulieu, Segal 1963)

Harran, City of the Moon God

At the Northernmost end of the Sumerian empire the city of Harran likewise had the Moon Deity as patron God, under the name of Sin. From about 2000 BC to 1200 AD Harran continued an evolving tradition of Moon God worship. Harran is the place of Abraham's family and ancestors and the centre of many of the early events of genesis, including the naming of Israel. As described by Ezekiel 27:23, Harran along with Sheba and other cities were traders 'in blue clothes and brodered work, in chests of rich apparel , bound with cords and made of cedar.'

The status of Sin was so great that from 1900 BC to 900 BC his name is witness to the forging of international treaties as the guarantor of the word of kings. The temple was resotred by Shalmanester of Assyria in the 9th century BC, and again by Asshurbanipal. About 550 BC, Nabonidus the last king of Babylon, who originated from Harran, rebuilt the temple of the Moon God, directed by a dream. His mother was high priestess at Harran and his daughter at Ur. Ironically his devotion to the Moon God caused a rift between him and his people and contributed to his defeat by the Persians. The worship of the Moon God at Harran evolved with the centuries. It included E-hul-hul, the Temple of Rejoicing, and a set of temples of distinctive shape and colour dedicated to each of the seven planets as emissaries of the cosmic deity. Many of the descriptions of Harran through Christian and Moslem eyes include exaggerated tales of sacrifice which are probably not factual. It was said by one writer that they sacrificed a different character or type of human to each planet.

A garlanded black bull was however sacrificed in public ceremony, as the bull was at Ur, and Moslem sources refer to seasonal weeping for Ta'uz at Harran, and up to the 10th century among bedouin in the desert.

After the conquests of Alexander, Harran came to be a centre of intellectual and religious activity which continued into the Christian era. The form of the worship evolved into a philosophical tradition centred around Hermes Trismegistus - Hermes thrice-great who knows the past, present and future.

The Hermetic view is one in which god is conceived both as idea and as embodied world: he is the supra-individual source of a particular world-experience and world-configuration. The experience of the world in this manner is open to the possibility of a transcendent guide ... who is also able to provide impressions to consciousness that are palpable and manifest and in no way contradict the observations and conclusions of natural science, yet extend beyond the idea that "man stands in the world alone endowed only with consciousness that is exclusively restricted to the ability to receive scientifically-evaluated sense impressions". The Hermetic aspect is thoroughly empirical, and it remains within the realm of natural experiences of the world, ... the accidental falling into your lap - how could these be merely psychic realities? They are the world and they are one world - the one Hermes opens to us (Kerenyi 3, 46).

Orphic traditions were also popular. Harran remained solidly pagan when Edessa and other centres fell to monotheism, largely because of the unified devotion of its people to the astral deity.

Sin's powers of illumination, are revealed in his title 'the lamp of heaven and earth'. ... Illumination is not only the physical light of the moon, but also revealing the will of the gods, enlightenment, especially through oracles. In a Assyrian prayer ... in an eclipse, Sin is beseeched to give the oracle of the gods. As such, Sin becomes the Lord of Knowledge, the tablet on which Nabu, the scribe of the gods, ... writes the divine decrees. ... Because of this overlap of functions as a giver of oracles, Nabu was closely associated with Sin. His name appears as an element in the names of many neo-Babylonian kings from Nebuchadnezzar to Nabonidus. ... The stele of Nabonidus depicts the royal sceptre topped with a wedge symbol commonly associated with Nabu; He is the inventor of writing, the divine scribe, and the patron of all the rational arts. He is the transmitter of the decrees of the gods to mankind, the possessor of the tablets of destiny which fix the length of human life, and the giver of oracles that reveal the cosmic order of existence, and thus he serves as a link between the divine and human worlds. It was Nabu as scribe who recorded the destiny of the coming year at the aki'tu festival (Green T 33). [Nabu] came to be linked with those deities in other religious systems whose chief function was as bestowers of a revealed wisdom: the Greek Hermes, the Egyptian Thoth and the Persian Hoshang, as well as Apollo and Orpheus in the Hellenistic and early Christian periods, Enoch or Idris later under Islam (Green T 71).

"Constructed from the complex functions and nature of the Egyptian Thoth, and drawing upon the similar roles of Hermes, Nebo, Sin and other deities whose spheres of power encompassed the revelation of hidden wisdom, Hermes Trismegistus [Hermes, who knows the past, present and future] was the inspiration for, ... a vast body of literature. Treatises of philosophical and scientific revelation about the nature of the cosmos, and handbooks of practical magic, with recipes for draw-

ing down the power of the planets and the stars, curing illness, making talismans and amulets. [He] was the source of all knowledge previously known only to the gods: the explicator of the stars, the sacred healer, the master alchemist" (ibid 85).



Hermes staff, the Caduceus (Britannica), the entwined serpents of healing of the medical profession, is homologous with Moses staff and brazen serpent (Glueck).

"Although ... Hermeticism does not begin to emerge ... until the late Hellenistic period, its origins are to be found in ... the ancient magical and religious traditions of Egypt and Mesopotamia; the quest of Greek science for the cosmic glue; the religious philosophy of Pythagoras and his disciples, of Plato and his successors, and of the Stoic doctrines of fate and universal sympatheia; the rites of the mystery cults of Asia Minor and beyond; the astral and planetary worship of the Semites that found a home in both Greek philosophy and the westernized cult of Mithra, as well as the dualism of Persian Zoroastrianism; and finally, the figure of the savior-mesiah that emerged within Hellenistic Judaism" (Green T 85).

"The mystical powers of Hermes exerted themselves far beyond the pagan world of late antiquity, transmuting medieval Christian and Islamic understanding of the relationship between rational knowledge and revelation. As the Greek messenger of the gods who became the conductor of the souls of the dead to the underworld, the playful child-like spirit of fertility who became the companion of triple-faced Hecate and a patron of the magical arts, Hermes had been identified by the Greeks from Herodotus on with the Egyptian god Thoth, whom Plato in the Phaedrus had credited with being the inventor of the alphabet and the art of memory. Thoth was the master of wisdom, made manifest in the moon, the divine scribe, "the tongue of ptah," who recorded the judgments of the dead; and he thus finds his Mesopotamian counterpart in both the moon god Sin, and Nebo" (Green T 85). Hermes shares with Thoth an ancient ithyphallic fertility nature complementary to the Great Goddess.



Harran female dress was essentially unchanged from 4 th cent to the 19 th (Segal 1963).
 Temple and relief figure with frock coat - Sumatar Harabesi.
 The statues show inscriptions to Sin.

An epitaph at neighbouring Edessa reads "Pleasant is the resting place of Shalman son of Kawab (star). They have answered thee and called thee, and thou hast answered them whom thou hast touched. Thou hast seen the height and the depth, the distant and the near, the hidden and the evident. And they - they know well the usefulness of thy reckonings."

In 363 the Emperor Julian stopped at Harran and took the oracle of the Moon God before being defeated in battle against the Persians. This story was expanded later to the effect that he had sacrificed the High Priestess, hung her by her hair and read her liver for an omen (Green T 51). In 545 the Bedouin Mundhir fighting for the Persians sacrificed his enemies son to Uzzai (Venus). Fearful tales also were told that they had sacrificed 400 virgins seized from Emesa and sacrificed them to the Goddess. It is unclear what credence to place in such Christian war stories, as mass female sacrifice is most unusual (Segal 145).

Ahmed ibn al-Tayyib noted "A single power, single and eternal was the primal cause of the universe. He is beyond the worship of men; and he has delegated the administration of the universe to the planets who proclaim his supremacy. He has sent prophets, Arani Agathodaemon (Seth and Orpheus) and Hermes (Idris and Enoch) to guide mankind. Sabian views on the nature of deity, natural phenomena and dreams were similar to Aristotle (Segal 1963 211). They did not accept the idea of a human prophet who could mediate between mankind and the supreme deity.

#They celebrated a calendar of festivals and mystery cults to which only initiates were allowed access. "According to the Catalog, at the time that they celebrate the birthday of the Moon and the mystery to the North in Il Kanun, the Harranians burn rods of pine (al-dadhi') for the gods and the goddesses. Both the pine tree and cone are, of course, symbols of eternal life, and appear in the cults of Mithra, Attis and Dionysus, among others, as the embodiment of the prize of immortality." In some of these later cults there was a Mithraic or Zoroastrian influence apparent, in which the worship of the sun in the "Mystery of the North" (Shamal) occurred at the same time as the Birth of the Moon was celebrated elsewhere at Harran (Green T 192).

Shamal may also have been a lord of the djinn. There is a reference in the Mysteries of the North to the Lord of Time. Time as Greek Chronos or Persian Zurvan can be equated with Nergal the Lord of the Underworld. Dionysus has similarly been equated with Hades. There is a compelling logic to worshipping time, for it is in time that all opportunities arise and all disasters befall. It is thus to time that we should turn to deal with the things that matter and the things which threaten. By contrast the eternal deity of heaven is lost in an unchanging constancy. In this sense, evil is entropy, the Lord of the Second Law.

The Harranians were not circumcised, avoided contagion, washed with soda, and believed procreation was the purpose of marriage. Close-relative marriages were forbidden, they were not polygamous and divorce was granted only after clear evidence of shameful behaviour. Women enjoyed equality under the law and appear prominently in archaeological records. They had a characteristic costume. The women wore high hats, the men frock coats and long hair. They had similar slaughter rituals to Islam, but were very selective in their foods, rejecting camels, dogs, pigs, chickens, fish, garlic, beans, brassicas and lentils on medical grounds. They liked wine and made wine a part of their religious life, in wine-pressing and lunar offerings.

The awe of Abraham gave Harran a special status among Christians and Moslems alike. When the Islamic conquests flowed north, Harran diplomatically surrendered without hostility and paradoxically became unique as the only pagans who were accepted by the new faith. Muhammad had, in developing Islam, reached back to the religion of Abraham whom he called a hanif - a worshipper of the true god before the time of monotheism. He also reserved a special place for the Sabians as people of the book along with the Christians and the Jews.

Sura 2.62: "Surely those who believe, and those who are Jews, and the Christians, and the Sabians, whoever believes in Allah and the Last day and does good, they shall have their reward from their Lord, and there is no fear for them, nor shall they grieve."

Sura 2.135: "And they say: Be Jews or Christians, you will be on the right course. Say: Nay! (we follow) the religion of Ibrahim, the Hanif, and he was not one of the polytheists."

The Moon worshippers of Harran came to inherit both these titles and to retain much of their identity after the Muslim conquest. A Christian story relates they they adopted these titles as a legal defence against being executed as pagans, after the Moslem general came through telling them they could convert to Islam or a path of the book by the time he came back or all be slaughtered. Some converted and some lamented but a few took a very powerful lawyer and claimed the Qur'anic heritage: "The Harrians possessed a sacred book called the book of of the hanpe or Haniphites. True the book was concerned ... with ritual and not with ethics or law, and the prophets were legendary rather than human, but the Harranians satisfied the conditions required by Islam for recognition as a tolerated community".

The term Sabian, which is believed to be Syriac (rather than referring to the Sabeans or Shebans of Yemen who were also Moon God worshippers) may originate from the Soba, the Syriac-speaking pagan Semites of Northern Mesopotamia, who in Sin trended towards a single supreme godhead (even if not exclusive) and an afterlife and had similar practices to the Moslems. "Hanif is in some measure a synonym of Sabian.; the latter is a member of this religious community, the former the professed beliefs of this community" (Segal 1963 214).

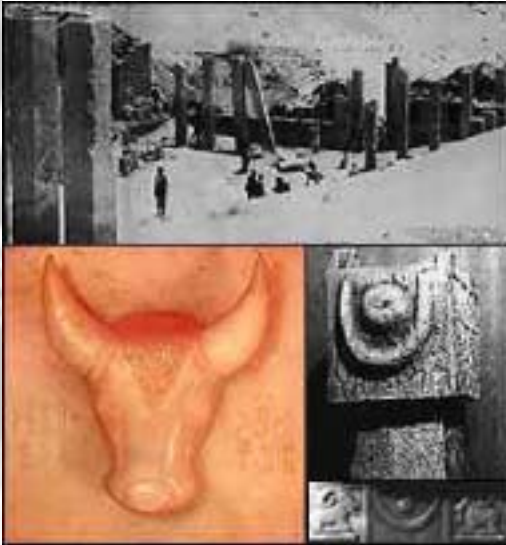


(a) Tel Halaf 5 th to 4 th millennium BC, near Harran, at the source of the Charbur, Euphrates. 2 Kings 17:6 "they carried Israel away into Assyria and placed them in Halah and in Habor" (Zehren 154) (b) Centre of Topkapi coat of Arms, Turkey

The Harranians were centrally placed to impart the intellectual advances of Egyptian and Greek civilization to the Islamic world and became famous astronomers, alchemists and physicians at the court of the Caliph. Sabian beliefs also found their

way into esoteric teachings of Islam. "There is much in the developed Shi'ite position in general, and among the Isma'ilis in particular, that is sympathetic to the Hermetic doctrine..." including the prophesy of the Mahdi (Green T 169). Harran was abruptly erased from history in the 12th century AD by the Mongol conquests.

Another group called the Subbha, (baptisers), Mandaeans (gnostics) or Nazarens were also identified as the Sabians. They claim to be followers of John the Baptist, who migrated to Harran and adopted some Harranian practices, later moving to the southern marshes of the Tigris and Euphrates. They believe the upper world is ruled by the Great King of Light the great life. Inferior to him are beneficent and demonic spirits. The earth was created out of black waters. The light-giving powers seek to direct humans to good actions, while the spirit of physical life and the planets incite them to error through false religions such as Judaism, Christianity and Islam. Their gnostic emphasis would tend to support the idea that Christian gnosticism was also the inner path of Jesus teachings.



Temple of 'Ilumquh at Marib Yemen, Sabean Moon Bull, Incense Holder Aksum, Moon and Orb of Venus, [bottom] Sabean wall frieze (Doe).

'Ilumquh of the Sabeans

Sheba is the Hebrew spelling of Saba, the name of an ancient southwest Arabian kingdom roughly corresponding to the modern territory of Yemen, originally settled by Semites from western or central Arabia during the middle of the 2nd millennium BC. Excavations at Ma'rib, its capital, during the 20th century have revealed an imposing temple to the moon god.

"The South Arabians before Islam were polytheists and revered a large number of deities.

Most of these were astral in concept but the significance of only a few is known. It was essentially a planetary system in which the moon as a masculine deity prevailed. This, combined with the use of a star calendar by the agriculturists of certain parts, particularly in the Hadramaut, indicates that there was an early reverence for the night sky. Amongst the South Arabians the worship of the moon continued, and it is almost certain that their religious calendar was also lunar and that their years were calculated by the position of the moon. The national god of each of the kingdoms or states was the Moon-god known by various names: 'Ilumquh by the Sabaeans, 'Amm and 'Anbay by the Qatabanians, Wadd (love) by the Minaeans, and Sin by the Hadramis". The term 'God is Love' is characteristic of Wadd (Briffault 3/85). 'the Merciful' ascribed to Allah is also South Arabian (Pritchard).

The sun-goddess was the moon's consort; she was perhaps best known in South

Arabia as Dhat Hamym, 'she who sends forth strong rays of benevolence'. Another dominant deity was the male god known as Athtar corresponding to Phoenician Astarte (Doe 25). Pritchard (61) claims their pantheon included the moon god Sin etc., Shams (Shamash) and Athtar or Astarte as in the Semitic trinity, however it would appear that the sun was female as the Canaanite Shapash who figures in Ugarit myth alongside Athtar (Driver 110). The earliest temple known is the Mahram Bilqis or Harem of the Queen of Sheba, previously called the Awwam the temple of the Moon God Ilumquh which dates from around 700 BC, although its lower levels may be substantially older. Sabean moon worship extended through a long period of time to around 400 AD when it was overtaken by resurgent Judaism and Christianity around a century before Muhammad.

From the 4th century AD, Christian bishops made notable conversions of the Kings of Himyar, Aksum and of Ethiopia generally. Narjan, an ancient pagan pilgrimage spot in a fertile valley on the trade route became a Christian stronghold. Medina became a centre of Jewish influence. Christianity and Judaism entered into competition in Arabia, encouraged by the Persians. In 522, King Dhu Nawas Yusaf "Lord of Curls" became the last elected Himyar king, descendent of a Jewish hero, who made war on the Christians. He offered the citizens of Naryan the choice of Jewry or death. When they refused he burned them all in a great trench. Afterwards Narjan as named "the trench". In response the Ethiopians overcame them and Abraha made San'a a Christian pilgrimage point which rivalled Mecca. This led to an expeditionary force of Christians to try to destroy the Ka'aba. In turn Persia invaded and for a short time the country became a Persian satrapy. This confused situation in the period of *jahiliyah* laid the seeds for the emergence of Islam.

Bilqis was the Queen of the Sabeans in Solomon's time. Pre-Islamic poetry describes Solomon as a king of universal kingdom of men, djinn and winds etc. nine angels stand before him. He built the castle al-Ablaq near Taima.

"The great civilization of South Arabia was little known to the Arabs of Muhammad's time [although] any of the Arab tribes of Muhammad's day still had a tradition that they had lived in South Arabia before taking to the desert when the old civilization declined." Some tribes retained a memory of being settled there before conditions worsened, apparently connected with the Marib dam bursting and a return to nomadic life. Restorations were known to have been carried out in 450 and 542 which puts a final date on the demise (Pritchard 1974 88).

Sura 34:15: "Certainly there was a sign for Saba in their abode; two gardens on the right and the left; eat of the sustenance of your Lord and give thanks to Him: a good land and a Forgiving Lord! But they turned aside, so We sent upon them a torrent of which the rush could not be withstood, and in place of their two gardens We gave to them two gardens yielding bitter fruit and (growing) tamarisk and a few lote-trees."

Sura 27:15-44 relates many of the episodes already found for example in the Targum Shenai (p 207), a further indication of the familiarity Muhammad had with details of Jewish literature outside the Pentateuch. Rather than Bilqis being portrayed as a demon, Solomon is portrayed as a great man of God and master of the Djinn to whom Bilqis submits in acknowledgment of al-Llah. The story of the Hoopoe is told. The people of Sheba are said to be sun-worshippers. Her throne is disguised and placed before her as a test. She says "It is like it" evasively. As she walks on to the palace: 44 "She thought it a pool and uncovered her legs. Solomon

said 'It is a place paved with glass.' She said 'I have wronged myself to God, Lord of the worlds, with Solomon I make submission.'"

Al-Lat, al-Uzza and Duchares: Deities of Nabatea

A second prominent Arab culture had sprung up from Southern Sinai around 600 BC and from around 400 BC in the land of the Edomites in Jordan. The Nabateans had a close relationship with the Edomites as they each claim a female line of descent from Ishmael, through Bashemath one of the three wives of Esau and her sister Nabaioth respectively (Browning 32), conditions favourable to integration. This also gave the Edomites descent from Isaac through Esau. The son of Esau and Bashemath was Ruel the Midianite father in Law of Moses.



Moon and Sun deities surmounted by the Eagle. Al-Uzza as Moon Goddess commands the Zodiac surmounted by the moon and carrying a moon staff from Khirbet Tannur (p 498). The temple of Manatu at Petra. Dionysian tragic mask with dolphins (Dhu Shara). Grape freeze (centre). Aretas IV and Shaqilat II (Glueck).

The Nabateans migrated from Arabia as shepherds and caravan traders who benefited from horse breeding and settled adaptably to form rich irrigated productive land with a prominent trade, centered on the previously unpopulated area round Petra - 'A rose red city half as old as time'. During the time of Jesus, Nabatea was an independent Kingdom with influence spreading to Damascus. Herod was involved in hostilities with Aretas IV the King of Nabatea because Herodias displaced Aretas's daughter as Herod's wife. Although they were annexed by the Romans they continued to be a significant Arab power to the time of Muhammad.

Herodotus says of the Arabs: "They deem no other to be gods save Dionysus and Heavenly Aphrodite ... they call Dionysus Orotalt and Aphrodite Alilat" (Negev 101). In Sumeria Allatu or 'goddess' is an epithet of Ereshkigal the chthonic goddess of the underworld. Like El and al-Llah which simply means god, al-Lat 'god-

dess' could be identified with many female deities, and indeed Allat is identified with Aphrodite-Venus (Negev 112). It is said that when Allat became the goddess of the Nabateans, she became al-Uzza the 'mighty one' as she evolved from a local deity of small rural shrines into a patron of an expanding culture (Browning 47). Al-Uzza is also referred to in connection with the Bedouins at Harran (Green T 62).

Nabatean inscriptions in Sinai and other places display widespread references to names including Allah, El and Allat (god and goddess), with regional references to al-Uzza, Ba'al and Manutu (Manat) (Negev 11). Allat is also found in Sinai in South Arabian language. Allah occurs particularly as Garm- 'allahi - god decided (Greek Garamelos) and Aush-allahi - 'gods covenant' (Greek Ausallos). We find both Shalm-lahi 'Allah is peace' and Shalm-allat, 'the peace of the goddess'. We also find Amat-allahi 'she-servant of god' and Halaf-llahi 'the successor of Allah'.

Horned stele with Qos-allah, Seal attributed to Edomite Qaush, Djin block (Glueck, Browning).



A stele is dedicated to Qos-allah 'Qos is Allah' or 'Qos the

god', by Qosmilk (melech - king) is found at Petra (Glueck 516). Qos is identifiable with Kaush (Qaush) the God of the older Edomites. The stele is horned and the a seal from Edomite Tawilan near Petra identified with Kaush displays a star and crescent (Browning 28), both consistent with a moon diety. It is conceivable the latter could have resulted from trade with Harran (Bartlett 194). There is continuing debate about the nature of Qos (qaus - bow) who has been identified both with a hunting bow (hunting god) and a rainbow (weather god) although the crescent above is also a bow. There is no reference to Qos in the Old Testament, but Seir is one of the domains of Yahweh, suggesting a close relationship. His attributes in inscriptions include knowing, striking down, giving and light (Bartlett203). Attempts have been made to also explain the existence of this scarab in the light of trade with Harran for which evidence has been found in cuneiform tablets (Bartlett 194).

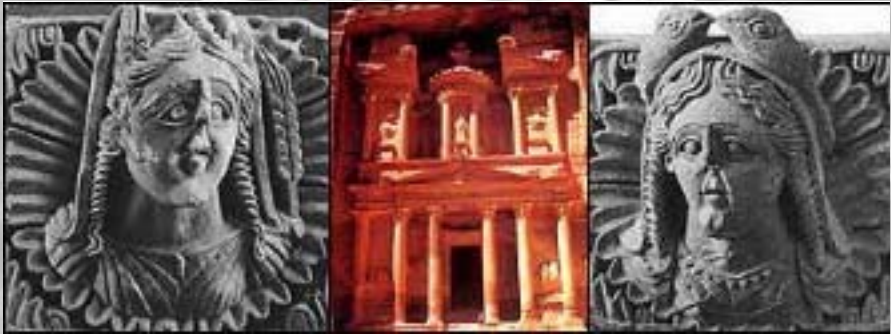
The Nabateans had two principal gods in their pantheon, and a whole range of djinns, personal gods and spirits similar to angels. These deities were Dhu Shara, or Duchares and al-Uzza. Duchares means Lord of Shera (Seir), a local mountain and thunder god who was worshipped at a rock high place as a block of stone frequently squared, just as Hermes was the four-square god. Suidas in the tenth century AD described it as a 'cubic' black stone of dimension 4x2x1 (Browning 44). All the deities male and female were represented as stones or god-blocks.

Just how ancient all these deities are can be gleaned from Genesis: Before Abram becomes Abraham we find "And in the fourteenth year came Chedorlaomer ... and

smote the Rephaims in Ashtoreth Karnaim, ... And the Horites in their mount Seir, unto Elparan, which is by the wilderness. And they returned, and came to Enmishpat, which is Kadesh” (Gen 14:5). When Abram was just a ‘kid’ the lord of Seir, like El Shaddai and Ashtoreth and Qadesh the epithet for Hathor were ubiquitous. Seir is mentioned in Egyptian inscriptions of 1400BC (p 470) alongside Yhw..

“Before Abraham was, I am” (John 8:58).

Duchares was a Zeus-like mountain deity of Jebel Shara, with associations with sacred kingship whose rites took a prominent place in the scheme of worship. Notably King Obodas became Zeus Oboda (Negev 111). He is described on a dam inscription as ‘Dushara the god of Gaia’ (Negev 107). He was celebrated as a god of immortality celebrated by a Dionysian tragic mask of death, in which its wearer became united with him, thus escaping the limitations of the mortal span (Glueck 242). He is surrounded by dolphins as was Dionysus.



The treasury at Petra. Al-Uzza as grain goddess and as Mari the sea goddess crowned by dolphins. (Glueck, Browning)

Al-Uzza was a deity of springs and water, as befits a fertility goddess, and as such she would have been revered in Petra with particular devotion” (Browning 47). Manathu (the Manat of Islam) was the patron goddess of Petra, being Fortuna having a similar role to Semitic God (Browning 48). As Moon Goddess Tyche she was also Fortune holding a cornucopia of overflowing fruit.

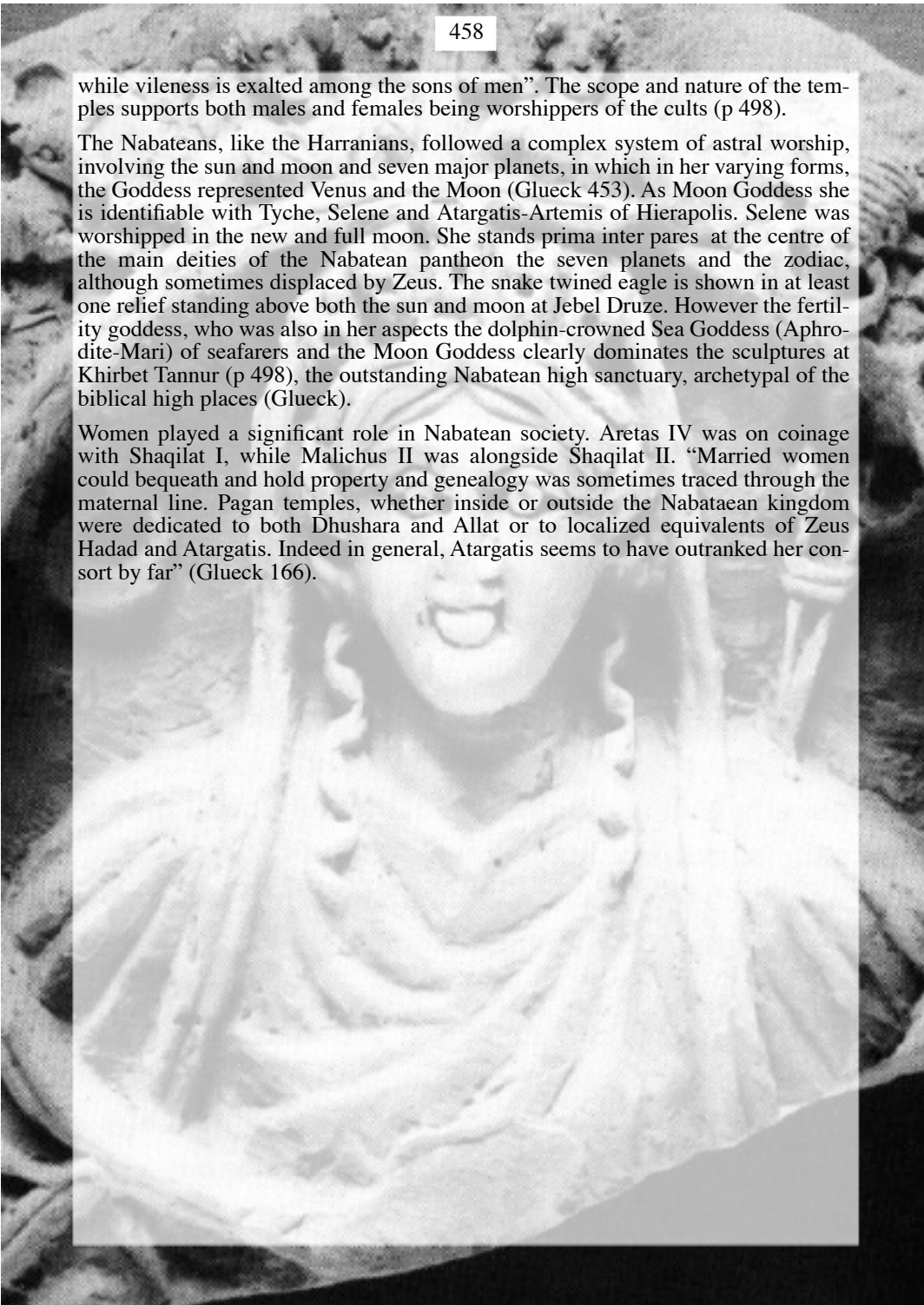
The Nabateans originally were tent-dwelling shepherds renowned, like their fellow tribe the Rechabites, for eschewing houses, planted crops or wine, in their case on penalty of death (Negev 101), a sentiment shared by Muhammad, who looked with contempt upon the Kuryshites and Ansari “for they employ themselves with sowing seeds” ... “The divine glory is among the shepherds, vanity and impudence among the agricultural peoples” (Briffault 3/111).

However agricultural settlement brought changes and the Greek period produced a hybrid culture. Al-Uzza became identified with Atargatis-Aphrodite and Duchares with Dionysus. Freezes including grape vines are prominent, consistent with Dionysian rites, which Browning (47) concedes may have become the “pornographic pop concerts which came to debase the once-glorious cult of Dionysos.” Glueck (166) is even more forthright: “Rich food in plenty and strong wine without stint helped bring the deities and their worshippers into fervid relationship. Bar-Hebraeus quoted Psalm 12:8 of Nabatean women “the wicked walk on every side

while vileness is exalted among the sons of men". The scope and nature of the temples supports both males and females being worshippers of the cults (p 498).

The Nabateans, like the Harranians, followed a complex system of astral worship, involving the sun and moon and seven major planets, in which in her varying forms, the Goddess represented Venus and the Moon (Glueck 453). As Moon Goddess she is identifiable with Tyche, Selene and Atargatis-Artemis of Hierapolis. Selene was worshipped in the new and full moon. She stands *prima inter pares* at the centre of the main deities of the Nabatean pantheon the seven planets and the zodiac, although sometimes displaced by Zeus. The snake twined eagle is shown in at least one relief standing above both the sun and moon at Jebel Druze. However the fertility goddess, who was also in her aspects the dolphin-crowned Sea Goddess (Aphrodite-Mari) of seafarers and the Moon Goddess clearly dominates the sculptures at Khirbet Tannur (p 498), the outstanding Nabatean high sanctuary, archetypal of the biblical high places (Glueck).

Women played a significant role in Nabatean society. Aretas IV was on coinage with Shaqilat I, while Malichus II was alongside Shaqilat II. "Married women could bequeath and hold property and genealogy was sometimes traced through the maternal line. Pagan temples, whether inside or outside the Nabataean kingdom were dedicated to both Dhushara and Allat or to localized equivalents of Zeus Hadad and Atargatis. Indeed in general, Atargatis seems to have outranked her consort by far" (Glueck 166).





Asherah and El: Founding Canaanite deities permeating the Old Testament (Gray, Willis). Asherah, the Semitic name of the Great Goddess, whose origin differs from Astarte, was “in wisdom the Mistress of the Gods”, called by the Sumerians Ashnan “the strength of all things”, a “kindly and beautiful maiden.” The Canaanites called her “She who gives birth to the Gods” and as the “Lady who traverses the Sea” she is Goddess of both the Sea and Moon (Walker 66). In the Old Testament she is identified with her sacred groves. Horned El is likewise the beneficent “Ancient of Days” founding progenitor God castrated by warlike Ba’al.

The ‘Elohim and Ancient Near Eastern Tradition

The ‘Elohim and the Blessing of Jacob

Before the time of the Exodus, the deities were worshipped collectively as the Elohim, the many forms of ‘deity’. El meaning simply ‘god’ is also identifiable with the kind old grandfather god of Canaan, who is horned like the Moon God Sin but expresses also the primal male fertility characteristics of ithyphallic gods Nabu and Hermes. As heavenly scribe, these are both also bearers of the covenant. El’s many forms include El-shaddai - Almighty, the Lord of the Mountains; Bethel ‘the house of god’ is mentioned in Jeremiah 48:13 as a god. Baityl, like El is one of the four founding Canaanite deities (Kraeling 88); El-Elyon - god the most high. El is the oldest of the Canaanite Gods. He had two wives whom he met over the sea, Athirat (Asherah) and Anath. He is the ‘ancient of days’ the archetype of the woolly-headed beneficent patriarch of Daniel. Later he is emasculated by the verdant warrior fertility God Ba’al and Athirat’s children are destroyed by Anath as Ba’al’s consort.

The Elohim included two forms of the Goddess as shown in the blessing of Jacob of the twelve tribes (Gen 49), probably the oldest passage in the Bible (Freedman 1987 322). This specifically blesses Joseph. Emphasis on the eternal is characteristic of the moon deity of immortality.

“Even by the god of thy father who shall help thee, and by the Almighty (El -shaddai), who shall bless thee with the blessings of heaven above (Sin astral deity), blessings of the deep that lies under (primal chaos Tiamat Leviathan), blessings of the breast and womb (Asherah - the creatrix of living things) prevailing from the everlasting mountains to the eternal hills.