

Comparative
mythology. ugaritic
myths of anat and
baal critical essay



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Ugaritic myths of Anat and Baal have been discussed in a number of texts, one of them being Ras Sharma, which is considered a vibrant and dynamic prehistoric Semitic divinity. In particular, goddess Anat is of interest to many scholars wishing to explore the relationship between humanity and the supernatural world in the ancient culture.

Based on this, a number of studies focus on explaining the character of the goddess, as some scholars are interested in understanding her role in the ancient society. Scholars utilize varied methodologies in comprehending the myths of Ugaritic implying that these methodologies play a critical role in the understanding of human relations in various perspectives (Gibson & Driver 2004, p. 112).

Neal is one of the scholars who have engaged in extensive research to unearth the nature and functions of Anat in the ancient Canaanite religion. Neal examines the available mythological texts to establish the role of Anat and Baal in the traditional religions of Egypt. It is established that Anat occurs in a number of forms in Ugaritic, Hebrew, Akkadian, and Egyptian communities, but the meaning seems to be the same.

Studies show that Anat was the goddess of productiveness, sexual adoration, hunting, and warfare. This paper specifically talks about the Ugaritic myths of Anat and Baal, with particular emphasis on the personality of Anat and her nature pertaining to the relationship with Baal. Finally, the paper discusses some of the ways through which myths that involve Anat and Baal can perhaps be interpreted (Cornelius 2004, p. 45).

As already mentioned in the introduction section, a number of scholars, including Neal, utilize mythological texts to describe the nature of Anat and Baal. Such scholars employ a comparative analysis whereby various religious goddesses are contrasted to Anat and Baal to offer a comprehensive debate on the prehistoric concepts, particularly regarding the nature of gods and goddesses.

Through this, scholars develop a hypothesis of personality that is effectively employed in developing a feminist perspective that breaks from the old system, which only favoured Goddess. One of the basic features of Anat is that she bases her origin on the tablets excavated at Ras Sharma that was centred at the ancient Ugarit society. These texts existed during the Late Bronze Age, which were later destroyed in c. 1200.

Even though the texts were destroyed, they had been inscribed on the clay tablets meaning that they could not easily be damaged (Kapelrud 1969, p. 23). The languages used in the writing of the tests include syllabic cuneiform writing of Akkadian, as well as the alphabetic cuneiform writing of the native language of Ugaritic, which was an early West Semitic language.

Anat is mainly known from the Para legendary, formal procedure, and sacrificial texts, particularly from the mythical texts. The Baal Cycle and the Aghat are the most known legendary texts that present Anat as the most feared goddess. Apart from being an influential figure in ancient Canaanite religion, Anat was also considered powerful in other religions, such as Egyptian deity (Day 2000, p. 10).

An examination of various texts and the works of scholars reveal that Anat was a famous goddess of fertility and war, which made her popular among the Canaanites in the archaic times.

She was a cherished god among the Eastern Mediterranean coast populace, as her pious belief stretched over several communities t in the mid 3rd millennium. In this regard, it is concluded that Anat had a huge following owing to the fact that she had a number of capabilities, among them controlling reproduction in the society. The major religious centre of the community was at Ugarit, yet she was well known in the place.

This proves that she controlled every aspect of life in the community. Many writers of the Ugarit literature incorporated her mythical elements into religious writings (Moor 1987, p. 67). History shows that, by the end of the middle Kingdom in Egypt, the power of Anat rose to a higher status, particularly in the lower Egyptian villages, which were ruled by the Hyksos family.

In the capital of Zoan, all sanctuaries and deities were committed to her implying that she had a considerable command over religious and social life. Under the Egyptian King referred to as Ramses II, the popularity of Anat was in a different status since her prestige reached its peak. The King made her his personal security guard in major battles, as it was believed that she controlled warfare.

The king went ahead to name his daughter Bin-Anat meaning the beloved daughter of Anat. Since it was believed that Anat had extra-ordinary powers in matters related to reproduction, war, and harvest, the town of Zoan was <https://assignbuster.com/comparative-mythology-ugaritic-myths-of-anat-and-baal-critical-essay/>

expanded and the sanctuary of Anat was renamed as the City of Ramses. At the temple of Yahu, meaning the temple of Yahweh, Anat was worshiped as one of the goddesses in charge of fertility and warfare.

In other places, such as Syria and Lebanon, the presence of Anat was heavily felt and it is believed to have persisted to the time when Christianity was introduced in the society. In this regard, it is factual that the teachings of Anat contributed heavily to the development of the modern religion, such as Christianity.

Even though modern religion dominated the Egyptian society just after the Egyptian period, the worship of Anat was still popular among the populace. In the sixth century, some of the few temples in operation in Egypt still worshiped Anat. In the revival of neo-pagan religion, the power of Anat is felt since believers of this faith practice cultural beliefs that are consistent to the teachings of Anat.

Apart from being respected as the goddess of war, Anat could be described as a just and compassionate supernatural being that controls gorgeousness, sexuality, and fecundity in farm produce, flora and fauna, and human beings. Anat ensured that all enemies of Baal were destroyed to pave way for the leadership of the kingdom and allow the king to exercise his duties without any difficulty.

From the epithets applied to her, it is concluded that she was somehow inconsistent and multifaceted as far as her behaviour was concerned. Even though she was respected as the mother of the nation owing to the fact that she offered protection during the times of war, her sexual behaviour was

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implacable. Virginity or maiden was a valued and respected principle in the Ugarit society, but she seemed not to value this basic principle.

In fact, some locals referred to her as wanton, a term that was mainly used to refer to the behaviour related to putative lust for sexual contact among women.

Some of her strengths included being in a position to save life, advising women adequately on how to become responsible mothers and daughters, and being capable of bringing new life to the earth. However, she had some weaknesses, including being the destroyer of the earth, life, and being an adolescent for several years, meaning she had unending sexual desires with various men.

Ugaritic texts show that Anat was the daughter of El. Additionally, she was a sister and a companion of Baal implying that she had the responsibility of guiding the Baal whenever challenges presented themselves. From various texts, it might be concluded that Anat was one of the Rachmay, which were the two house cleaners in charge of offering care to the gods that controlled rituals in the society.

The early writings suggest that Anat was a twin sister to Myrrh, even though their characters differed significantly. She could easily intervene in other people's affairs to bring about peace and tranquillity in society. For instance, she played the role of the mediator in the conflict between Baal and Yam-Nahar. She was quick to intervene to save Baal and the locals by slaughtering the Yam prophets.

She refused to engage in celebrations after the defeat of the Yam prophets, but instead proceeded to deal with the notorious warriors that posed serious security threats to the locals in the neighbouring villages. While in the two local villages, she murdered the neighbours without fear meaning that she was merciless to anyone who threatened the existence of the Baal and the locals who worshiped him.

At a higher level, she pleaded with the state to allow the construction of the palace for the Baal. She had unusual powers owing to the fact that she was able to take revenge for the death of Baal.

Even though Baal died a natural death, she was able to hunt down death, slash, winnow, crush, and bun it in the same way a bad grain is destroyed. As early mentioned, the deity in charge of fecundity was much loved in the Zoan town whereby she was considered the descendant of Ra.

In the Phoenician iconography, Anat was understood to be an eccentric with embellished sexual features and coiffure that would be compared to that of Hathor. Her secret animal was a lion, which was always with her wherever she went. From the analysis, it is evident that Anat was a respected goddess, as well as a feared woman since she had extra-ordinary features that differentiated her from other women.

Others viewed her as a dangerous woman who never respected the sanctity of life to an extent of practicing prostitution, as she did not have a designated husband (Mettinger 2001, p. 31). On one hand, Anat symbolized happiness while on the other hand she was an impediment to life, as she

could destroy it at anytime, as long as an individual threatened the existence of Baal.

As already indicated in the previous section, Anat was the goddess of fertility, warfare, and reproduction. Baal was the god of water meaning that he controlled rain, all forms of storms, and rivers in the society. Canaanite religion believed that Baal was the heavenly semen that simply fell from paradise. Since the earth represents a woman, the semen penetrated to form life.

Without the power of the Baal, the earth could not have raised any life meaning that Baal existed to sustain life on earth. In other words, there could be no life without Baal since the earth was barren. Baal would produce water at will since he existed in vapour form. Baal could send clouds and thunderstorms to show his presence while at the same time allowing rain during certain seasons to encourage life on earth.

Baal was directly related to Anat, with some texts suggesting that they were a couple. Asherah was the goddess in charge of life meaning that all forms of life originated from her. The goddess complimented the role of Baal. Asherah was the mother of all animals and plants on earth, including human beings.

Surprisingly, Sherah gave birth to Anat, which was a goddess in charge of fertility and warfare. The three prophets were connected in a way that they worked as a single family. Anat provided security to the kingdom while Baal controlled life through provision of water and other important facilities necessary for the survival of animals and plants.

Asherah could simply produce new life through fragmentation of her body meaning that Anat was part of her body. Baal had a number of enemies, including Mot, which was the god in charge death and nature.

The god of death and nature could destroy everything at will, including the most feared gods, such as Baal. However, it had no power to destroy the goddess of war, which was Anat. When the goddess of death destroyed the god of life, Baal, Anat was so much annoyed to an extent of taking revenge against her fellow god.

Anat played the roles of a woman, but she was so courageous to protect members of her family, including Baal. Anat controlled matters related to the household fiercely to an extent of sacrificing her own life to fight enemies in the neighbouring villages. Without Anat, it would be difficult for Baal to give life, despite the fact that he had powers to do so.

All enemies of Baal could be destroyed mercilessly and Anat could use their heads and hands and decorate herself. The prehistoric texts suggest that Anat was a loving mother since she loved members of her family, including Baal, who was considered the head of the family. Even though she loved Baal as a member of the family, she could easily bully men, but only if such bullying brought success to the family.

One of the texts commented that Anat's heart would yearn for love the way the heart of an antelope longs for its flatter. She was quick to take revenge on anyone who misbehaved with the family. When Mot killed Baal, she was destroyed in the same way a bad grain is destroyed with fire.

The best way to undertake studies involving Baal and Anat is to employ the comparative analysis whereby the works of various scholars and analysts are contracted and evaluated. For instance, the ideas of Walls could be compared to the works of Neal on the goddess Anat in Ugaritic Myth.

While Walls was mainly concerned with the violent character and sovereignty of Anat, Neal undertook a comprehensive study to establish her role, including taking care of Baal, in the kingdom. Through comparative analysis of various works of scholars, a viable framework for the cultural study of myth is achieved.

For instance, it is concluded that the pantheons were mainly structured in a way that favoured human family and societal systems. Through a comparative study, it is established that many cultures never appreciated the contributions of women in matters related to religion, governance, and social relationships.

On the contrary, women were relegated to the domain of the home and their major role was to define and regulate the feminine behaviours and attitudes.

Since myths are complex to interpret, the use of texts and stories would be the perfect way to understand them. For instance, it is not clear whether Anat was Baal's wife or sister since she is frequently referred to as sister-wife, something that can not actually happen in reality. It would be confusing to refer to somebody's sister as a wife.

The study of myths is a complex activity that entails the application of various styles. Some of the methods that can be applied in understanding

myths include the use of texts and comparison of various texts from the original sources. Anat had strange qualities that changed the perception of the entire public on the role of women in society.

Members of the public in the traditional society knew that women had a special role of serving the family and taking good care of the family.

However, Anat proved everybody wrong since she was the goddess of fertility and warfare. It is clear that she provided security to her husband Baal and even went a notch higher to revenge his death when he was later killed. Anat and Baal shared a mutual relationship owing to the fact that they came from the same person, Asherah.

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