

The Hieros Gamos Part 1: Emergence of the Sacrificial Union

Dedicated to my beloved namesake Jane King without whom the Renewal might not be.

Paleolithic and Neolithic Love



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Homo sapiens, despite evolving some 100,000 years ago, spent some 70,000 years leaving only flaked tools with only minor changes of design. Although so-called “primitive” cultures are diverse and parallels, between modern gatherer-hunters and our ancestral origins remain speculative, among the very few primitive hunter-gatherers still existent, the !Kung of the Kalahari provide a somewhat unique perspective on our possible hunter-gatherer origins. Marjorie Shostak (1981) notes: “Here in a society of ancient traditions, men and women live together in a non-exploitative manner, displaying a striking equality between the sexes... Other contemporary gathering and hunting societies have a similar high level of equality - higher at least than that of most agricultural or herding societies. This observation has led to the suggestion

that the relations between the sexes that prevailed during the majority of human prehistory were comparable to those seen in the !Kung today.”

Nisa - (Shostak)

*When the gods gave people sex,
they gave us a wonderful thing.*

Sex is food:

*just as people cannot survive without eating,
hunger for sex can cause people to die.*

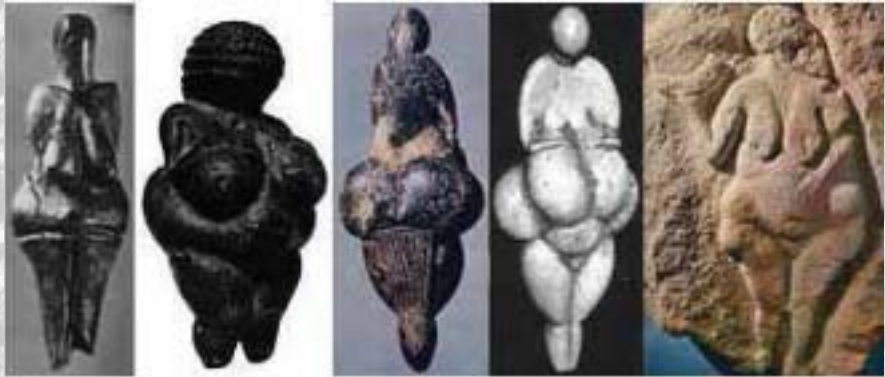
!Kung saying - Nisa.



About 35,000 years ago, there appears suddenly an explosion of representational art. It is as if the birth of culture has occurred from the primal continuum of the paleolithic. Prominent among these first and most artistic creations are diverse representations of the creatrix goddess of fertility, complemented by sculptures and wall paintings of animals and the hunt of a more shamanic content. The consistency and the careful beauty of these figurines is consistent with the worship of the female as generator of the continued line of living existence. While primitive men were wandering hunters who had to remain silent in the shamanic meditation of the hunt, the women were collecting and recognizing a wide variety of plants, talking more and socializing, forming the foundation skills that underpinned the birth of civilization. The myths of diverse tribal cultures hint at a previous era when women were the founding influence in this way.

Despite her manifold names and forms, the creatrix goddess is one goddess of all, who provides one world in a unified view of the life cycle. As the earth mother, she is ever closer than the remote sky father and nurtures all living things. However, in

the world view of the goddess, creation and destruction are integral components of the cyclic round from birth to death, from full season to lean season, represented in particular in the lunar phases which are coupled with the menstrual cycle, as illustrated in the Venus of Laussel. There is no division of the universe between good and evil, dark and light, as both are incorporated into the cosmic cycle in a state of timeless unity. With this interminable cycle comes a relentless, crushing reality, in which destructive nature of death is actively accentuated in acts of animal and particularly human sacrifice. Thus the triple goddess is a creature of three faces the nubile virgin lover, the sustaining mother of the harvest and the all-consuming crone of death.



The “venuses” of Dolni Vestonice, Willendorff, Lespugue (2), and Laussel date from inter-Gravitean Solutrean 20000-18000 B.C. Note the horn carried by the goddess of Laussel.

Although the spiritual quest also seeks answers to life after death and the illumination of the cosmic mind, it is in fertility that the true raw energy of spirituality reaches its zenith, and it is through fertility that each of us has come into being in a continuous line of evolution from the first life on earth, some 3,000 million years ago, to wonder at existence and ponder our fate, and it is in fertility that both our offspring and the environment in which we live will continue into the future. Fertility is thus also intimately connected with the continued survival of the people through seasonal changes and the quirks of fortune in the fertility of earth itself. Fertility thus delves into those far more ancient realities of the conscious universe that far pre-date the gods and goddesses of early human civilization. On a more sinister note, sexuality has been recognized from all quarters to be mystically connected to the origin of death, and thus responsible for death itself. Sex is thus steeped in sacrificial atonement in death.

These developments are paralleled in a significant way by the evolution of animal art associated also with shamanic identification with animal familiars as in the “sorcerer” on the right. These pictures illustrate the equally ancient case for nature shamanism of a different kind associated with the hunt and the psychic descent down the Axis Mundi to the roots of conscious existence, a journey of temporary death, or near death experience in which the shaman returns empowered as a medicine man and prophet.



Mammoth Vogelherd 32000 B.C. (Leakey 1994) Bison Lascaux early Magdalenian 15000-13000 B.C. (Powell) Sorcerer Middle Magdalenian 13000-11000 B.C. (Powell)

Of course sex is ultimately responsible for death, because in sexuality, biology has discovered a trade off. Sexuality has provided a tremendous new source of variation, which forever mixes the gene pool in new creative ways, making it possible for higher plants and animals to evolve. However, in sex came the death of the organism, because each individual contributes only half their genes to the offspring, which instead of being the phoenix clone of the parent, has only half the identity of each parent and is thus a new individual. As evolution of higher organisms proceeds there is an ever-diminishing capacity for the organism to regenerate from parts. It can no longer reproduce itself and with the passage of time falls to the very mutational changes that permitted its evolution into being. Upon the death of the organism, its unique identity is now lost into fragments in the gene pool. But this loss comes at great gain. It makes it possible for us to evolve further into being, through the altruistic sharing of genetic identities between male and female in partnership. By the sacrifice of eventual death, which we all face, we gain the privilege of living in this extraordinary universe, and sharing in the ongoing continuity of life. This is a quest whose consummation is a golden age of unforeseen splendour, if we do not destroy it through our own ignorance first.



Hieros gamos, c 10,000 BC Europe, Negev Desert (Campbell 1988, Avi-Yonah)

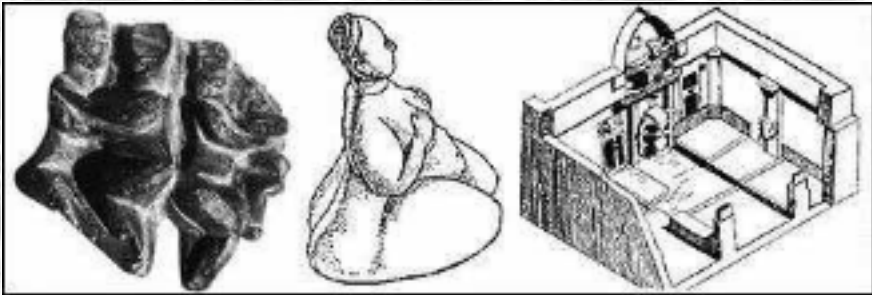
Old goddesses such as Anath fertilized themselves with the blood of men and bulls, Cybele is noted for her castrations and the ancient myth of human origin is from clay and menstrual blood. However the domestication and breeding of animals depends on an understanding of the complementary role of the sexes in reproduction. Nevertheless, the sexual behaviour of the herding animals came to have a huge impact on human culture and sexuality. It was abundantly clear

that the male was required only for the fleeting process of fertilization, while both birth and the long years of family-rearing depends centrally on motherhood.

This male role is accentuated in herding animals such as the bull, but even in human populations to this day with nominal nuclear family units, the Y chromo-

some shows little genetic variation because some males fertilize a disproportionate portion of females. Although the great goddess is also prominent among the mammoth hunters, the development of agriculture and its complementation by herding appears to have led to a cosmic struggle for power between the sexes which is only now coming to a resolution.

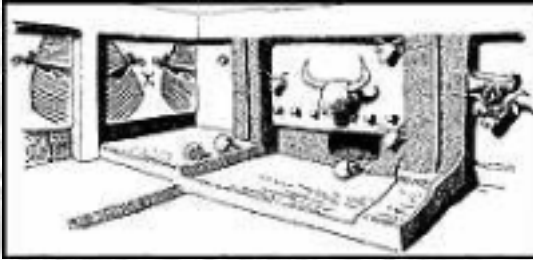
Of course, once the patriarchal attitude began to hold sway, the lack of a visible ovum led to a belief that the woman was a mere receptacle for growing the man's seed, as in the Aristotelian view of biology and in Mary's 'virgin birth' of Jesus from God alone. It is only with the discovery of the ovum in 1827 that the genetic role of the female in reproduction has become confirmed (Ranke-Heinmann 1992 43). This makes it natural in a way to think of Eve as coming out of the rib of Adam. However it is also clear that many offspring resemble both parents, or at least frequently resemble the mother as much as the father, so the credibility of historical patriarchal propaganda of the Aristotelian view that woman was a mere receptacle for male seed should be taken with substantial reservation. It is after all quite clear that the Jews, perhaps the archetype of all patriarchal traditions always traced Jewish descent through the mother (p 486), something which is meaningless if she contributes no transferable genetic identity to her offspring.



Hieros gamos, creatrix goddess, shrine with bulls heads and pregnant Goddess.
Catal Huyuk Anatolia 7,500 B.C. - 5,500 B.C. goddess (Melaart).

Catal Huyuk 6,500 B.C. illustrates the transition from hunter-gatherer society to agricultural centers in which trade (e.g. in obsidian) and the complementation between male pursuits of hunting, herding and animal husbandry and the planting, harvesting and seed selection of the agricultural domain of the women. The environmental confluence of natural grain-producing areas with pasture and forest made certain areas of the Near East, as exemplified by old Jericho circa 10,000 B.C. and Catal Huyuk, provided an ideal backdrop for this complementation. The central place of the generative goddess and the counterpoint between the horned male bull and the pregnant goddess is again reflected in the hieros gamos, sacred marriage, or ritual consummation, clearly portrayed as being consequentially linked to birth.

There are some skulls present in the temples, and death vultures are depicted pecking headless men. The central and sacred place of the woman's family bed in house design contrasts with the variable and satellite position of the male sleeping arrangements and burial places.



Temple with bulls heads, skulls and vultures picking headless men (Melaart).

A recent study (New Scientist 18 Jan 97 p9) even suggests that the association of women's breasts with weasel skulls, fox teeth, boar tusks and vulture beaks and the vultures picking at headless corpses in the temples, the

scattered skulls with marks of beheading after death, indicate a "safety valve" to release the new tensions of urban living "to vent frustration of living at close quarters through symbolic ritual killings". however a definitive interpretation may never be arrived at.



Scenes from the courtship of Inanna and Dumuzi (Wolkenstein and Kramer)

The hieros gamos of Inanna and Dumuzi.

Inanna, whom we may also identify with Ishtar, Ashtoreth, Aphrodite, Astarte, to a certain extent Asherah, and Eostre, Ostara, the sea goddess Mari, or Miriam and many others, is the evening star, the Sumerian Queen of Heaven. She was the creatrix, the mother of all men. She was Queen of Heaven astronomically as well as theologically. She 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. Her journey to the earth and then to the underworld cements relationship between the shepherd kings and hieratic planter queens which formed the basis of the flowering of the cities of Sumer from 3500 B.C., the centre of catalysis of successive civilizations to the present day.

Several authors, including Elinor Gadon, Riane Eisler and William Irwin Thompson (163) comment that the Sumerian era now represents the fall of the Great Goddess to the phallic onslaught of the male Godhead represented by the trinity An, Enki and Nannar who may have been introduced by the first Indo-Aryan incursions, and that the order of reproductive power has changed to that of erotic power to become the Goddess of live and battle and of the seasonal abundance and regress. Although male gods, such as Enki certainly have entered the pantheon, the

young Goddess is nevertheless mighty and resurgent with her youthful power:

*“Proud Queen of the Earth Gods, Supreme Among the Heaven Gods,
Loud Thundering Storm, you pour your rain over all the lands and all the people.
You make the heavens tremble and the earth quake.
Great Priestess, who can soothe your troubled heart?”*

*You flash like lightning over the highlands; you throw your firebrands across the earth.
Your deafening command, whistling like the South Wind, splits apart great mountains.
You trample the disobedient like a wild bull; heaven and earth tremble.
Holy Priestess, who can soothe your troubled heart?”*

*Your frightful cry descending from the heavens devours its victims.
Your quivering hand causes the midday heat to hover over the sea.
Your nighttime stalking of the heavens chills the land with its dark breeze.
Holy Inanna, the river banks overflow with the flood-waves of your heart....”*
(Wolkenstein and Kramer 95)

The seasonal cycle of the goddess is represented unabated in the passage from new life in the burgeoning fertility period and death in the lean season. The first phase is the ritual marriage of Inanna to the shepherd king Dumuzi in the hieros gamos, the high point of the Sumerian sacred cycle. Dumuzi (the Shepherd King) is actually mentioned as the fifth king on the king lists of Sumer. He is also referred to as Dumuzi-Absu of the abyss, god of freshets and running waters. He is also the heavenly shepherd of the stars.

*O Wanderer, Wanderer, my brother Wanderer,
In the fields of Arallu, Wanderer, my brother Wanderer.
(Briffault v3 95)*

Dumuzi at first has to persuade Inanna to marry a shepherd king. She is also encouraged by her mother Ningal, the Moon Goddess of Ur and consort of the Moon God Nannar. The encounter then runs hot with the young Inanna's passion for young shepherd king Dumuzi and their consummation, and with the echoing fullness of pastoral fecundity. It is the very love song of creation, which fills the earth with the burgeoning splendour of life as poetically translated by Diane Wolkenstein:

*“Inanna opened the door for him.
Inside the house she shone before him
Like the light of the moon.
Dumuzi looked at her joyously.
He pressed his neck close against hers. He kissed her.*

Inanna spoke:

*“What I tell you, Let the singer weave into song.
What I tell you, Let it flow from ear to mouth,
Let it pass from old to young:
My vulva, the horn,
The Boat of Heaven,
Is full of eagerness like the young moon.
My untilled land lies fallow.
As for me, Inanna,
Who will plow my vulva?
Who will plow my high field?
Who will plow my wet ground?...”*

Dumuzi replied:

*“Great Lady, the king will plow your vulva.
I Dumuzi the King, will plow your vulva.”*

Inanna:

*“Then plow my vulva, man of my heart!
Plow my vulva!”*

*At the king's lap stood the rising cedar.
Plants grew high by their side.
Grains grew high by their side.
Gardens flourished luxuriantly....*

*“O Lady, your breast is your field.
Inanna, your breast is your field.
Your broad field pours out plants.
Your broad field pours out grain.
Water flows from on high for your servant.
Bread flows from on high for your servant.
Pour it out for me, Inanna.
I will drink all you offer.”*

Inanna sang:

*“Make your milk sweet and thick, my bridegroom.
My shepherd, I will drink your fresh milk.
Wild bull, Dumuzi, make your milk sweet and thick.
I will drink your fresh milk....*

Dumuzi spoke:

*“My sister, I would go with you to my garden.
Inanna, I would go with you to my garden.
I would go with you to my orchard.
I would go with you to my apple tree.
There I would plant the sweet, honey-covered seed.”*

Inanna spoke:

*“He brought me into his garden.
My brother, Dumuzi, brought me into his garden.
I strolled with him among the standing trees,
I stood with him among the fallen trees,
By an apple tree I knelt as is proper....
Before my lord Dumuzi,
I poured out plants from my womb.
I placed plants before him,
I poured out plants before him.
I placed grain before him,
I poured out grain before him.
I poured out grain from my womb.”*

Inanna sang:

*“Last night as I, the queen, was shining bright,
Last night as I, the Queen of Heaven, was shining bright,
As I was shining bright and dancing,
Singing praises at the coming of the night-
He met me - he met me!
My lord Dumuzi met me.
He put his hand into my hand.
He pressed his neck close against mine.
My high priest is ready for the holy loins.
My lord Dumuzi is ready for the holy loins.*

*The plants and herbs in his field are ripe.
O Dumuzi! Your fullness is my delight!” ...
“Let the bed that rejoices the heart be prepared!
Let the bed that sweetens the loins be prepared!...
He put his hand in her hand.
He put his hand to her heart.*

*Sweet is the sleep of hand-to-hand.
Sweeter still the sleep of heart-to-heart.*

Inanna spoke:

*“I bathed for the wild bull,
I bathed for the shepherd Dumuzi,
I perfumed my sides with ointment,
I coated my mouth with sweet-smelling amber,
I painted my eyes with kohl.
He shaped my loins with his fair hands,
The shepherd Dumuzi filled my lap with cream and milk,
He stroked my pubic hair,
He watered my womb.
He laid his hands on my holy vulva,
He smoothed my black boat with cream,
He quickened my narrow boat with milk,
He caressed me on the bed.*

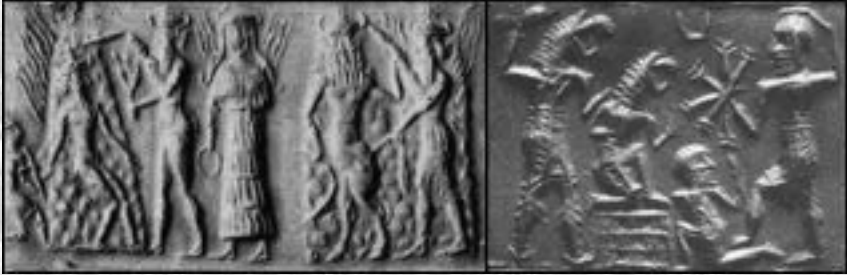
*Now I will caress my high priest on the bed,
I will caress the faithful shepherd Dumuzi,
I will caress his loins, the shepherdship of the land,
I will decree a sweet fate for him.”
The Queen of Heaven,*

*The heroic woman, greater than her mother,
Who was presented to me by Enki,
Inanna, the First Daughter of the Moon,
Decreed the fate of Dumuzi:
In battle, I am your leader,
In combat I am your armor-bearer,
In the assembly I am your advocate,
On the campaign I am your inspiration....
In all ways you are fit.
May your heart enjoy long days....*

*As the farmer, let him make the fields fertile,
As the shepherd, let him make the sheepfolds multiply,
Under his reign let there be vegetation,
Under his reign let there be rich grain.*

*The king went with lifted head to the holy loins.
He went with lifted head to the loins of Inanna.
He went to the queen with lifted head.
He opened wide his arms to the holy priestess of heaven....
My blossom-bearer in the apple orchard,
My bearer of fruit in the apple orchard,...
My fearless one, My holy statue,...
How sweet was your allure....”
(Wolkenstein and Kramer 30)*

The onset of the lean season after the harvest, however brings out the fierce dark side of the goddess of death and destruction. It is celebrated by the entry of Inanna to the underworld, where she dances the dance of the seven veils as her worldly attire and then her life is reduced to nought. Inanna decides to experience the dark side her elder sister Ereshkigal knows as Queen of the Underworld in the death rites of the Sacred Bull of Heaven, Gugalanna, thus disguising her formal purpose of discovery in the formal act of witnessing the death rites of another.



The descent of the seven veils, the curse of Dumuzi (Wolkenstein and Kramer 57, 72).

Restored with the bread and waters of life (p 731), she returns from the underworld, accompanied by seven *galla*, demons of the underworld, who must have a mortal in compensation, she fixes the eye of death on her absent-minded partner who is engrossed in affairs of state, and he is chased by the demons of hell, losing his possessions, his genitals and his life. Inanna afterwards laments her actions and searches for him and ensures his resurrection so that he can be brought back for six months of the year to ensure the fertility of both the womb and the soil. Seasonal male sacrifice of the “king” reverberates through the goddesses from Greece to India and over much of Africa including Cybele, Hecate and Kali. In the Sumerian view, the purpose of human life was merely to provide sustenance for the deities.

*“From the Great Above she opened her ear to the Great Below.
From the Great Above the goddess opened her ear to the Great Below.
From the Great Above Inanna opened her ear to the Great Below.
My Lady abandoned heaven and earth to descend to the underworld.
Inanna abandoned heaven and earth to descend to the underworld.
She abandoned her office of holy priestess to descend to the underworld....*

*If I do not return,
Set up a lament for me by the ruins.
Beat the drum for me in the assembly places.
Circle the houses of the gods.
Tear at your eyes, at your mouth, at your thighs....
Go to Eridu, to the temple of Enki.
Weep before Father Enki.
Father Enki, the God of Wisdom, knows the food of life,
He knows the water of life; He knows the secrets.
Surely he will not let me die.”...
(Wolkenstein and Kramer 52)*

When Inanna arrived at the outer gates of the underworld, She knocked loudly. She cried out in a fierce voice:

*“Open the door, gatekeeper! Open the door, Neti!
I alone would enter!” ...
When she entered the first gate,
the shugurra, the crown of the steppe was removed.
When she entered the second gate,
From her neck the small lapis beads were removed.
When she entered the third gate,
From her breast the double strand of beads was removed.
When she entered the fourth gate,
From her chest the breastplate called “Come, man, come!” was removed.*

*When she entered the fifth gate,
From her wrist the gold ring was removed.
When she entered the sixth gate,
From her hand the lapis measuring rod and line was removed.
When she entered the seventh gate,
From her body the royal robe was removed....*

*Naked and bowed low, Inanna entered the throne room.
Ereshkigal rose from her throne.
Inanna started toward the throne.
The Annuna, the judges of the underworld, surrounded her.
They passed judgment against her.
Then Ereshkigal fastened on Inanna the eye of death.
She spoke against her the word of wrath.
She uttered against her the cry of guilt.
She struck her.
Inanna was turned into a corpse,
A piece of rotting meat,
And was hung from a hook on the wall....*

*Then, after three days and three nights, Inanna had not returned,
Ninshubur set up a lament for her by the ruins.
She beat the drum for her in the assembly places.
(Wolkenstein and Kramer 52)*

Neither Enlil nor Inanna's father Nannar, the Moon God of Ur, will help her because she has craved the below, and because those who choose the underworld do not return. Ninshubur succeeds in getting Enki to secure her release:

*Inanna was about to ascend from the underworld
When the Annuna, the judges of the underworld, seized her. They said:
"No one ascends from the underworld unmarked.
If Inanna wishes to return from the underworld,
She must provide someone in her place." ...*

*As Inanna ascended from the underworld,
The galla, the demons of the underworld, clung to her side.
The galla were demons who know no food, who know no drink,
Who eat no offerings, who drink no libations,
Who accept no gifts.
They enjoy no lovemaking-
They have no sweet children to kiss.
They tear the wife from the husband's arms,
They tear the child from the father's knees,
They steal the bride from her marriage home....*

*The galla said: "Walk on, Inanna,
We will take Ninshubur in your place."
Inanna cried: "No! Ninshubur is my constant support....
"Walk on to your city, Inanna, We will take Shara in your place."
Inanna cried: "No! Not Shara! He is my son who sings hymns to me....
"Walk on to your city, Inanna, We will take Lulal in your place."
"Not Lulal! He is my son. He is a leader among men....
"Walk on to your city, Inanna.
We will go with you to the big apple tree in Uruk."
In Uruk, by the big apple tree,*

*Dumuzi, the husband of Inanna, was dressed in his shining me-garments.
He sat on his magnificent throne; (he did not move).
The galla seized him by his thighs.
They poured milk out of his seven churns.*

*They broke the reed pipe which the shepherd was playing.
Inanna fastened on Dumuzi the eye of death.
She spoke against him the word of wrath.
She uttered against him the cry of guilt:
"Take him! Take Dumuzi away!"*

*The galla, who know no food, who know no drink,
Who eat no offerings, who drink no libations,
Who accept no gifts, seized Dumuzi.
They made him stand up; they made him sit down.
They beat the husband of Inanna.
They gashed him with axes."
(Wolkenstein and Kramer 71)*

There follows a famous episode: the lament of Dumuzi - the lament for all lost life:

*At his vanishing away she lifts up a lament, "Oh my child!"
At his vanishing away she lifts up a lament, "My Damu!"
At his vanishing away she lifts up a lament, "My enchanter and priest!"
Like the lament that a house lifts up for its master,
Like the lament that a city lifts up for its lord,
Her lament is the lament for a herb that grows not in the bed.
Her lament is the lament for the corn that grows not in the ear.
Her chamber is a possession that brings not forth a possession.
A weary woman, a weary child forespent.
Her lament is for a great river where no willow grows.
Her lament is for a field where wheat and herbs grow not.
Her lament is for a lifeless pool with no fish.
Her lament is for a thicket with no reeds.
Her lament is for a wood with no tamarisks.
For a wilderness with no Cypresses.
For a garden without honey or wine.
For meadows with no pasture.
For a palace where long life is gone.
(Frazer v4/1 10)*

Inanna and Dumuzi's sister Geshtinanna go searching to the edges of the steppe for Dumuzi. Dumuzi is finally given a partial reprieve, of tragic irony for his sacred kings. He is allowed back in the full season, while his sister Geshtinanna, playing a role like unto Persephone, takes his place. This means that Dumuzi's death and resurrection become instituted ritual - as the renowned "women weeping for Tamuz" in the Old Testament, as well as those of Ta'uz at Harran make clear. They weep and lament. The king dies. They grind his bones in the mill and scatter them to the winds. People beat their breasts and searched for the dead and resurrected God among the straw as far away as Samarkand (Briffault v3/100).

The Dilemma of the Messiahs

Such a viewpoint still arises in its essence from a great Mother Goddess, the personification of all the reproductive energies of nature, and associated with her a series of lovers, each the divine bridegroom, a mortal yet resurrected god, with whom she mated year by year, their sexual consummation expressed physically between priestess and priest-king, and that of their worshippers at the sanctuary ensuring the fruitfulness of the ground and the increase of man and beast (Frazer 1890 v5/ 39). Such an idea of deity is consistent with an inheritance down the female line in which kings held power only by virtue of their association with a continuing female line, which is thus immortal both by childbirth and by genealogy, while the male remains transient and mortal likewise on both counts Tradi-

tions of transient sacred kingships interrupted by human sacrifice are an expression of this motif.

The same dying male vegetation god theme is common to Tammuz, Osiris, Adonis, Attis, Shiva and even Dionysus, who from very early times have been worshipped in magical rites designed to ensure the clement passage of the seasons, the return of fertilizing rains, and the verdant growth of spring. In their death and resurrection was believed to be the mystic catharsis for the decay and revival of the life and fertility upon which food and the welfare of whole societies depended.

Osiris is either shut in his coffin or felled by the river and drowned. Adonis is gored, Attis is persuaded to castrate himself and bleeds to death, Dionysus is torn to pieces and Virbus is dragged to his death. Frequently this death is precipitated by the conflict between the twin aspects of the goddess of life and death, sometimes in the form of a jealousy or slight. Thus Hippolytus offends Aphrodite by his faith towards Artemis and Adonis lover of Aphrodite offends Artemis. The rites of Tammuz and Dionysus, who later evolved in myth into a paternal deity, both appear to have originated from exclusive womens' mystery cults (Briffault v3 105).

The flesh of Mot was similarly torn asunder in Canaanite myth once every seven years in a way which is closely linked to the crucifixion. Anath calls to Shapash the sun goddess for the victor Ba'al to kill Mot and relieve the lean season. Ba'al smites the sons of Athirat.

*In the seventh year, then lo! Mot son of El
lifted up his voice unto the victor Ba'al and cried:
By reason of thee I have suffered shame,
by reason of thee I have suffered disgrace.
I have suffered winnowing by the sieve,
I have suffered with the sword and
burning by fire by reason of thee.
Grinding between two millstones.
I have suffered sowing on the day,
by reason of thee. (Driver 113)*

All the grain gods were ritually ground up. Osiris was scattered over all Egypt. The lament is not just the lament for the dying Autumn but it is the lament of the grinding of the corn of the reaper.

*They wasted o'er a scorching flame
The marrow of his bones;
But a miller us'd him worst of all -
For he crushed him between two stones. - Robert Burns*

The sacrificial cycle caused some heroic kings in history to refuse the advances of the Goddess. In Babylonian myth, Gilgamesh, the hero who helped Inanna cut down the Hulluppu tree is tempted by Ishtar (Inanna). She offers Gilgamesh her hand in marriage. In refusing the marriage, Gilgamesh repels Ishtar's offer with a mix of contempt and apprehension:

“Tammuz, the spouse of thy youth, thou hast condemned him to weep from year to year. Allala the spotted sparrow hawk, thou lovest him, afterwards thou didst strike him and break his wing: he continues in the wood and cries ‘O my wings!’ Thou didst afterwards love a lion of mature strength, and didst then cause him to be rent by blows, seven at a time. Thou lovest also a stallion magnificent in battle; thou didst devote him to death by the goad and the whip; thou didst compel him to gal-

lop for ten leagues, thou didst devote him to exhaustion and thirst. Thou didst love Ishullanu thy fathers gardener, who ceaselessly brought thee presents of fruit and decorated every day thy table... thou didst strike him, thou didst transform him into a dwarf.... Thou lovest me now, afterwards thou wilt strike me as thou didst these". (The Dawn of Civilization 580)



.The new King dispatches the old in the presence of the Goddess Sumer 2300 BC (Campbell 1962)

He subsequently has to protect Uruk from the vengeful ravages of the Bull of Heaven she sends in vengeance. This myth was enacted in Babylon annually, but the Temples of Ishtar remained. Women had rights of divorce and had to prostitute themselves in

the temple once during their lives.

Theseus similarly rejects Ariadne, resulting in the death of his father because he forgets to remove the black sails signalling his own death on his return to Athens, and also the downfall of the Cretan Goddess, despite becoming the celestial betrothed of none less than Dionysus. Greek myth reverberates with the overthrow of the Goddess from her earlier position of relative power.

The king was either regularly sacrificed after a fixed term of say seven years, or might live on as long as his fertility lasted, as in Israel with David. The sacred king of Nemi lived only so long as no other male could take him immortal combat, upon snapping the sacred branch. Barbara Walker points notes that Kingship throughout Mesopotamia was realized only through hieros-gamos with the earthly representative of the Goddess. "The length of a king's reign was often predetermined, because people thought the Goddess needed the refreshment of a new lover at stated intervals." "Ashurbanipal said he ruled by the grace of Ishtar." "The goddess queen's choice largely depended on the candidate's sex-appeal. If she tired of the king's lovemaking, he could be deposed or killed, for the queen's sexual acceptance of him determined the fertility of the land. In many early societies the old king was killed by a new king, usually called a "son" although he was no blood relative." "Hence the unbroken chain of Oedipal murders..." "Kings of Thebes and Canaan ruled for seven years." "Kings of Zimbabwe were strangled by their wives every four years until 1810 AD. Sacrifice of Kings extended from Africa to Greece and Early Rome." One then has a new perspective on the deaths of Herod's sons.

Barbara Walker (877) perceptively comments: "Human or animal, the sacrificial victims of ancient cultures were almost invariably male. Worshipers of Shiva sacrificed only male animals; the god himself ordered that female animals must never be slain.' Males were expendable, for there were always too many for a proper breeding stock. The same was true even of human sacrifices, which were men, not women. "The fertility of a group is determined by the number of its adult women,

rather than by its adult men.” Therefore male blood only was poured out on the earliest altars, in imitation of the female blood that gave “life.” That is why totemic animal-ancestors were more often paternal than maternal. The animal’s blood and flesh, ingested by women, was thought to beget human offspring; and the rule was “Whatever is killed becomes father.” The victim was also god, and king.”

Diana’s king of the grove at Nemi: “A candidate for the priesthood could only succeed to office by slaying the priest, and having slain him, he retained office till he was himself slain by a stronger or a craftier.... For year in year out, in summer and winter, ill fair weather and in foul, he had to keep his lonely watch, and whenever he snatched a troubled slumber it was at the peril of his life. The least relaxation of his vigilance, the smallest abatement of his strength of limb or skill of fence, put him in jeopardy grey hairs might seal his death-warrant” (Frazer 1890 v1a 1).



As time went by, ritual substitutes were used who became king for a day and were then sacrificed, as was the case in Babylon. “Amazonian Sacae or Scythians founded the Sacaea festivals of Babylon, where condemned criminals died as sacrificial surrogates for the king, to mitigate the earlier custom of king-killing. The chosen victim was a sacred king, identified with the real king in every possible way. He wore the king’s robes, sat on the king’s throne, lay with the royal concubines, wielded the scepter. After five days he was stripped, scourged, then hanged or impaled “between heaven and earth,” in a prototype of the crucifixion ceremony later extended to sacred kings of the Jews. The object of scourging and piercing was to make the pseudo-king shed tears and blood for fertility magic.’ Babylonian scriptures said, “if the king does not weep when struck, the omen is bad for the year.” The king or pseudo-king “became God” as soon as he was dead. He ascended into heaven and united himself with the Heavenly Father, i.e., the original totem father, or first victim... When ritual murder of kings or human king-surrogates came to be considered crude and uncivilized, then animal victims took their place.... The Jews retained a custom of human sacrifice, for special occasions, longer than any other people in the sphere of influence of the Roman empire. Out of this tradition arose the figure of the dying Christos in Jerusalem.” (Walker 877)

Adonai the Lord

Adonis the Semitic god whose name was simply Lord, just as Yahweh was referred to as Adonai - Lord, was originally represented as Tammuz of Babylon and Dumuzi of Sumeria, who appears as Damuzi, a king of Eridu who reigned for 100 years (Briffault v3 99), then as the youthful shepherd king who is the lover of the Inanna, Queen of Heaven, a divine icon of the mortal sacred king who was the

temporary consort of the Goddess. As we see from the descent of Inanna, Dumuzi was doomed to spend part of the year in the underworld as the dying god, doomed by the Goddess, “A tamarisk that in the garden has drunk no water... A willow whose roots were torn up”, who later regenerates to become again the adolescent lover, symbolic of male fertility in the spring season. He is Dumuzi of the abyss, “true son of the seep water” (Frazer 1890 v5/ 246), the god of freshets and running water that drives all vegetative life.

Ezekiel 8:14 “Then he brought me to the door of the gate of the LORD's house which was toward the north; and, behold, there sat women weeping for Tammuz.”

His death was annually mourned to the shrill music of flutes, by men and women in the month of Tammuz. Dirges were chanted over an effigy of the dead god, which was washed with pure water, anointed with oil, and clad in a red robe, suffused with incense to wake him from the sleep of death.



The Birth of Adonis from a Myrrh Tree
(Cook)

The Greeks speak a similar story of the God Adonis they adopted from the Semites around the 8th century BC. As a child beloved of Aphrodite, he was given to the charge of Persephone in a chest. But when Persephone opened the box and saw his beauty, she would not release him. Finally Zeus mediated his return to Aphrodite for part of the year. In myth he was killed by a wild boar (Frazer 1890 5/11).

The cult of Adonis was localized in Syria at Byblos and at Paphos on Cyprus. Both were great seats of the worship of Aphrodite as Astarte or in her sea aspect as Mari. Byblos has a history dating back as far as 3000 BC. The rites of Adonis were celebrated in the court of her temple surmounted by a great conical obelisk symbolic of the Goddess. The whole city was sacred to him and the river bore his name. There was a sacred grove and temple to the Goddess in the vale of Adonis at the source of the river, surmounted by a stature in which he awaits the attack of a bear and beside him Aphrodite sits in sorrow, just as he was wounded to death in the mountains and mourned annually while his red anemone bloomed in the cedars and the river ran red to the sea (Frazer 1890 v5/30). This is the beauti-

ful and in essence tragic theme of the marriage of the flower queen and Salmaah the summer king (Graves 1948 261) in the Song of Songs (p 193).

At the festivals of Adonis in Western Asia and the Greek Islands, the death of the god was annually mourned with bitter wailing, chiefly by women; images of him, dressed to resemble corpses, were carried out as to burial and then thrown in the sea or into springs. His revival was sometimes celebrated next day. At Alexandria images of Aphrodite and Adonis were displayed on two couches; beside them were wet ripe fruits of all kinds, cakes, potted plants and green vines twined with anise. The marriage of the lovers was celebrated one day and the next women attired as mourners with streaming hair and bared breasts, bore the image of the dead Adonis to the sea-shore and committed it to the waves, singing that he would come back again. At Byblos he was mourned in the vernal discolouration of the river Adonis with red earth washed from his mythical goring on Mt. Lebanon to shrill wailing of the flute and weeping lamentation and beating of the breast. The next day was believed to come to life again and ascend to heaven in the presence of his worshippers. The anemone whose name is derived from Naaman - darling, which celebrates his blood, blooms in Syria about Easter (Frazer 1890 v5/224-6). Spring and summer, not autumn, are the seasons for his festivals and likewise for the barley and wheat harvests in the Near East.

His link with vegetations is clear from his birth in a Myrrh tree, myrrh being traditionally used as incense at the festival, his descent to the underworld for a third of the year and the offerings of fruit, and plants in his festivals, the grinding of his bones and their scattering to the winds, as Mot in Canaan and Ta'uz at Harran (Briffault v3 101) and his revival as reaped and sprouting grain, and in the gardens of Adonis, baskets or pots filled with earth in which wheat, barley, lettuces, fennel and various kinds of flowers were sown and tended for eight days, chiefly or exclusively by women. These shot up rapidly only to wilt and be flung at the end of eight days with his images into the water, thus also invoking the fertilizing rains. (Frazer 1890 v5/236).

Byblos was ruled by sacred kings whose names such as that of Yehaw-melech or Yaveh-melech bear the same title melech king. The first name is also suggestive of Yahweh (Frazer 1890 v5/16).

Kings of Byblos and Tyre were often also priests of Astarte (Frazer 1890 v5 26), who were required to celebrate the hieros gamos with the Goddess to ensure the fertility of the land and flocks and verdant weather free of plague and pestilence (Frazer 1890 v5 28).

There is evidence of various forms of sacrifice associated with the dying and resurrected god. Melcarth of Tyre, identified by the Greeks with Hercules, was annually burned as an effigy, and originally in human sacrifice, on a great pyre and believed to ascend to heaven in a cloud and real of thunder, to be revived by a sacrificed quail (Frazer 1890 v5 111) in the "Feast of the Resurrection" and is the source of the Phoenix (Briffault v3 103).

It is said in Ezekiel that the king of Tyre impersonated the god and that he walked on hot coals as a substitute for his own immolation: 28:2 "Son of man, say unto the prince of Tyrus... and thou hast said, I am a God, I sit in the seat of God, in the midst of the seas; yet thou art a man, and not God, though thou set thine heart as

the heart of God:... Thou art the anointed cherub that covereth; and I have set thee so: thou wast upon the holy mountain of God; thou hast walked up and down in the midst of the stones of fire.” It is possible that when all went well in the commonwealth, the children doomed to the furnace of Molech may also have been spared (Frazer 1890 v5 115).

Sacrificial immolation was a fate also shared by the Talmudic Abraham. In Thrace, Dionysus was similarly immolated in a great flame which presaged the quality of the coming harvest. In Florence a Christian fireworks festival on the Saturday before Easter is commemorated in the same way (Briffault v3 104).

Carthage also records the immolation of the goddess queen Dido on such a pyre (p 492), which appears to have become the traditional site of later child sacrifice, in which boys were rolled into a flaming pit (Frazer 1890 5/114 Smith 1888 374,377). Although this is much rarer than male sacrifice, it is recorded at Hierapolis, and in the legend of the death of Astarte at Aphaca that the goddess cast herself as a star falling into the water at the annual feast. Aphrodite likewise was said to cast herself from a promontory after the death of Adonis (Smith 1888 375).

Across the Mediterranean the mountains of Cyprus can be seen distant from the shore, one days sail, and at Paphos was another seat of worship of Astarte and Adonis. The coinage shows doves with shrines showing pillars with horns, the cone and a star and crescent symbolic of the Queen of Heaven. The sanctuary is of great antiquity and may run back to the original Great Goddess. Holy stones were still anointed at the turn of the century in the name of the “Maid of Bethlehem”, sometimes still referred to as Aphrodite, to remove the curse of barrenness or increase the virility (Frazer 1890 v5 36).

Cuttings for the Dead

“Every fourteen days we make a sacrifice of our hair and then sweep the clippings together” A Carthusian monk (Ranke-Heinmann 1992 294).

The cult of Astarte and Adonis took place under the auspices of the god of the new moon. It included the building of a Temple of Astarte, a procession through the streets of the city, singing and lighting a fire for the Queen of Heaven, sacrifice, baking bread for Astarte and cakes for the participants of the festival, shaving and the construction of pillars for Adonis. It was familiar to Jeremiah in Jerusalem (7:17). The children collected wood, their fathers lit the fire for Astarte, the women made bread for the Queen of Heaven, they burned incense and offered libations, and they offered sacrifice and cut their hair in mourning. The ritual coincided with astral and seasonal phenomena and its purpose was to celebrate the simple satisfactions of life and to appease the power of evil and death.

These strands of hair he trimmed as he entreated Astarte. Tamassos presented himself and made a complete offering, “May this rouse the weepers to look for their beloved”. This passage is reminiscent of the Song of Songs and the offering of hair in fulfillment of the Nazirite vow, but its association with mourning for the dead was expressly forbidden by the Deuteronomic historian. The cult of Astarte included a complex of rites in which the dead were honoured to invoke the expectation of enduring life in succeeding generations. (Peckam) Similar rites were performed at Mari the sea-worshipping city on the Euphrates (Malamat).

The followers of Astarte have always been noted for their ceremonies for the dead and for the dying and resurrecting god of fertility, in which the hair was cut off. "At Byblos people shaved their heads in the annual mourning for Adonis. Women who refused to sacrifice their hair had to give themselves up to strangers on a certain day of the festival, and the money which they earned was devoted to the Goddess. This custom may have been the mitigation of an older rule which at Byblos as elsewhere formerly compelled every woman without exception to sacrifice her virtue in the service of religion." (Frazer v4 38). This substitution of hair applied also to the ritual prostitution required of each woman before marriage. "At later times at Byblos, it was the custom to be able to commute the period of ritual prostitution required by the Goddess by the cutting off of her hair, as is done at the present day by Catholic nuns when becoming mystically married to the divine bridegroom". (Briffault v3 220)

Mary Magdalen Cutting off her Hair - Livre de la Passion 14th cent

"In ancient Israel mourners were accustomed to testify their sorrow for the death of friends by cutting their own bodies and shearing part of their hair so as to make bald patches on their heads." (Frazer Folk v1 270) "Both the great and small shall die in this land: they shall not be buried, neither shall men lament for them, nor cut themselves nor make themselves bald for them." (Jer 16:6) Amos (8:10) likewise noted "I shall turn you feasts into mourning... and baldness upon every head". Micah goes further "Make thee bald, poll thee for the children of thy delight, enlarge thy baldness as an eagle." "Yet in time these observances, long practised without offense by the Israelites came to be viewed as barbarous or heathenish" so that in Deuteronomy 14:1 we find "Ye shall not cut yourselves not make any baldness between your eyes for the dead". This is later repeated in Leviticus 19:27, and picturesquely in 21:1-5 it is attributed to Moses himself "And the Lord said to Moses... they shall not make baldness on their head, neither shall they shave off the corner of their beard, nor make any cuttings in their flesh".



W. Robertson Smith notes furthermore "Among the Hebrews and the Arabs, and indeed among many other peoples both ancient and modern, the laceration of the flesh in mourning is associated with the practice of shaving the head or cutting off part of the hair and depositing it on the tomb or funeral pyre." (Smith 323) Among the Arabs this rite was exclusive to women who wrapped it in a cloth stained with their own blood, having scratched their cheeks and upper parts. The Hebrews by contrast shaved the front part of the head only. "Now among the Semites and other ancient peoples the hair-offering is common, not only in mourning but in the worship of the gods, and the ritual in the two cases are so exactly similar that we cannot doubt that a single principle was involved in both.... Arab women laid their hair

in the tomb of the dead [wrapped in blood scratched from their face and breasts” (Frazer OT 4/273), young men and maidens in Syria cut off their flowing tresses and deposited them in caskets of gold in the temples. The Hebrews shaved the fore part of their head in mourning; the Arabs of Herodotus habitually adopted the like tonsure of their god Orotal [Du Sara].

Mary Magdalen was reputed to have long tresses which she is likewise described as cutting in mourning. According to the Jewish midrash, Jesus mother's name was Mary M'gadd'la -the hairdresser, an unclean profession. Cuttings from dead people were often made into wigs by unscrupulous hairdressers.

Adonai Mashach of Yahweh

Briffault (v3 110) notes the tension between Yahweh-Adonai and the Adonai who was Lord consort of the Canaanite Astarte. As the Hebrew shepherds settled in the lands around Canaan, they found their own race and their own religion modified by the effects of agricultural civilization. Their lunar deity was now eclipsed, taking a subservient role to the Queen of Heaven in the land of milk and honey - an abomination to their more conservative elements.

It is notable that David, who donned the crown of Milcom God of the Ammonites chose the ancient city of Salem as his royal capital, stands as a sacred king in this ancient tradition. In life the Hebrew king was regularly addressed as Adoni-hammelech “My Lord the King” and after death he was lamented with cries of Hoi! ahi! Hoi Adon! “Alas my brother! Alas Lord!” “These exclamations of grief for the death of a king of Judah were we can hardly doubt, the very same cries which the weeping women of Jerusalem uttered in the north porch of the Temple for the dead Lord Tammuz.” (Frazer 1890 v5 20) Although Adon simply means Lord secular or religious, it is nevertheless true that Jewish Kings were sacred sons of God, embodying Yahweh on earth. Their throne, and the anointing with oil as which was believed to impart holy spirit,

The significance of the king as sacred is stressed in David's cutting of Saul's garment 1 Sam 24:5: “And it came to pass that David's heart smote him, because he had cut off Saul's skirt. And he said unto his men, The LORD forbid that I should do this thing unto my master, the LORD's anointed [Adoni Messiah Yahweh].”

The term Molech, the deity associated in the old testament with child sacrifice in Israel 2 Kings 23:10 “And he defiled Topheth... that no man might make his son or his daughter to pass through the fire to Molech”, is simply an intonation of ‘king’ suggesting that such sacrifices were to renew the vitality of a sacred king, whose responsibility it was to maintain fertility and clement weather as well as the strength and welfare of his subjects. Such child sacrifices were slain before they were burned Ezek 16:21 “That thou hast slain my children, and delivered them to cause them to pass through the fire for them?”

Isaiah records that this was a pyre to the king in the name of Yahweh 30:33 “For Tophet is ordained of old; yea, for the king it is prepared; he hath made it deep and large: the pile thereof is fire and much wood; the breath of the LORD, like a stream of brimstone, doth kindle it.” “However the Hebrews did not burn their dead except in rare circumstances” (Smith 1888 372).

The kings of Damascus, Moab and Israel all adopted sacred kingship in various

forms. The ancient Canaanite kings Adoni-bezek and Adoni-zedek clearly had names identifiable with Adonis as Lord. The latter is identifiable with Melchizedek the 'king of righteousness' of Salem of Genesis 14:18. Such ancient kingship rites would link to Ezekiel's reference to Tammuz.

The Kings of Israel were also accountable for pestilence and famine. When the rains failed David as king upon an oracle sacrificed seven of Saul's offspring (p 628) to the barley harvest (2 Sam 21:1). In a very specific sense the king was the son of God who was promised a perpetual throne for his germ line: 1 Chron 17:11 "And it shall come to pass, when thy days be expired that thou must go to be with thy fathers, that I will raise up thy seed after thee, which shall be of thy sons; and I will establish his kingdom. He shall build me an house, and I will establish his throne for ever. I will be his father, and he shall be my son:"

The Anathema of the Holy Whore

Matt 21:28 "Verily I say unto you, That the publicans and the harlots go into the kingdom of God before you."

Canaanite Anath was accursed by Abba the Father because she was the Goddess who called for the destruction of El's son Mot, the Lord of Death, who cried to his Father in vain, as Ba'al replaced him to become the verdant season. Anath was a consort of Yahweh at Elephantine as late as the 5th century BC (p 491).

As with many other parts of Western Asia, women were required before marriage to prostitute themselves to strangers at the sanctuary. "It was a law of the Amorites that she who was about to marry should sit in fornication seven days by the gate." - (Testaments of the Twelve Patriarchs). At Byblos people shaved their heads in mourning for Adonis. Women who refused had to give themselves up to a stranger on a certain day and give the proceeds to the Goddess. Matrons as well as maids testified their devotion to in the same manner (Frazer 1890 v5 37) to cure barrenness or to propitiate the Goddess and win her favour. Such prostitution involved no stigma in later marriage. Frazer (Frazer 1890 v5 79) suggests that the term 'son of God', which still exists to this century in association with the hajira, can be traced to the divine offspring of such sacred unions, which extended to many deities including the divine physician Aesculapius through whose serpent barren women were believed to conceive in his sanctuary (Frazer 1890 v5 80). Augustus was born in this way (Ranke-Heinmann 1992 24). This title is however also shared by Israeli kings.

Hosea speaks similarly that young married women prostituted themselves at sanctuaries on the hilltops under the oaks and terebinths Hosea 4:13 "They sacrifice upon the tops of the mountains, and burn incense upon the hills, under oaks and poplars and elms, because the shadow thereof is good: therefore your daughters shall commit whoredom, and your spouses shall commit adultery".

Hosea's dilemma (p 494) goes to the heart of the biological reality of the conflict between Yahweh and the Queen of Heaven. Sacred prostitution had a chaotic effect on paternal inheritance lines, but kept maternal lines intact (p 485). It also furthered to link women in a matriarchal bond of independence from their partners. The patriarchs no longer know whether children of their wives are their own, and can never really know where the germ line has gone. Hence the fire and brimstone rhetoric from the Father God. Walker (820) notes: "Such laws were supposed to

appease the Goddess, who disapproved of monogamy in the era when there was no formal marriage and children didn't know their fathers."

Sacred women were associated with the temple who wove hangings for the asherah, the poles standing beside the altar as embodiments of Astarte until the time of Josiah 2 Kings 23:7 "And he brake down the houses of the sodomites, that were by the house of the LORD, where the women wove hangings for the grove." The term sodomites is usually taken to refer also to 'sacred men', but Walker (822) claims the original meaning of sodomite was a holy harlot - a bride of God, which she also suggests were set apart to give birth to Sons of God, prophets or sometimes sacrificial victims.

The Holy Harlot was also a Virgin because she remained unmarried. Ishtar-Asherah-Mari-Anath was both the Great Whore and the Great Virgin Mother (Walker 822). Mary Magdalen was the penitent Holy Whore and Mary Mother of James and Joses and Jesus was the Virgin. Ishtar the Great Whore of Babylon announced "A prostitute compassionate am I" (Walker 820).

The author of Revelation had other ideas. He clearly saw in her the sacrifice of Christ: 17:4 "And the woman was arrayed in purple and scarlet colour, and decked with gold and precious stones and pearls, having a golden cup in her hand full of abominations and filthiness of her fornication: And upon her forehead was a name written, MYSTERY, BABYLON THE GREAT, THE MOTHER OF HARLOTS AND ABOMINATIONS OF THE EARTH." And I saw the woman drunken with the blood of the saints, and with the blood of the martyrs of Jesus: and when I saw her, I wondered with great admiration." Unique in the Bible for capitalization.

Temple prostitutes were also healers, sorceresses, prophetesses and seers. Zonah in Hebrew means both prostitute and prophetess. The major temples of Aphrodite has several thousand apiece. (Walker 820).

Time itself is a sacred whore. The hour comes from houri Gk. horae, Pers. houri, who kept the hours of the night by dances - the "ladies of the hour".

In a sense Maya or illusion is the same sacred whore of the physical world complete with its law of entropy. However, this whore is our very own life-blood.

Even as late as Augustine we hear "It is better that women should picke wool or spinne upon the Sabbaoth day, than they should dance impudently and filthily all day long upon the daye of the full moon".

Haman the Lord of Death of Esther

Esther is a fictitious literary account written anonymously by someone living probably in Susa around 250-180 BC of a threat of genocide to the Jewish population of the Persian empire. The names Esther and Mordecai are thinly disguised references to Ishtar and Marduk the patron god of Babylon who slays the chaos mother monster Tiamat. The entire episode is a portrayal of the Babylonian rite of Sacaea in terms of an allegory of Jewish history. In it God is not mentioned. It is as if the omission is a profound silence. Something omnipresent but forbidden to be spoken. By contrast Esther and Mordecai become "very nearly God's redemptive action incarnate" (Miles 361). The effects of even handling the book became later an issue of debate (Fox R 110).

After a seven day festival, King Ahasuerus of Persia, calls on his chamberlain, who has made a feast for the women to dance the descent 1:11 “To bring Vashti the queen before the king with the crown royal, to shew the people and the princes her beauty: for she was fair to look on. But the queen Vashti refused to come at the king’s commandment”. The princes consider the matter a contempt “For this deed of the queen shall come abroad unto all women, so that they shall despise their husbands in their eyes”.

The most beautiful maids of the realm are brought to Shushan his capital. Esther pleases him most and becomes his queen. Mordecai, her cousin, who has recently saved the king from an assassination plot by telling Esther, declines to bow to Haman the new Prime Minister “He explained to them that he was a Jew”.

Now comes the lot that will cause Purim to precede the Passover: 3:7 “In the first month, that is, the month Nisan, in the twelfth year of king Ahasuerus, they cast Pur, that is, the lot, before Haman.”

Haman now offers silver to the king to issue an edict to destroy the Jews. Mordecai and the Jews tear their garments and don sackcloth and ashes in mourning the crisis. There is however no call to God. When Esther fears to enter the court unsummoned, a capital offense unless the king holds out the golden sceptre, Mordecai says “Think not with thyself that thou shalt escape in the king’s house, more than all the Jews.... and who knoweth whether thou art come to the kingdom for such a time as this?” inferring the synchronous reason for her position is to save the Jews.

Esther commands Mordecai to fast three days and does likewise “I also and my maidens will fast likewise; and so will I go in unto the king, which is not according to the law: and if I perish, I perish.” Now on the third day, Esther put on her royal apparel, and stood in the inner court and when the king saw Esther, she obtained favour in his sight: and the king held out to Esther the golden sceptre and touched the top.”

Now comes the quote which will echo down to John the Baptist 5:3: “Then said the king unto her, What wilt thou, queen Esther? and what is thy request? it shall be even given thee to the half of the kingdom.” - a ritual acclamation to the Queen of Heaven on the third day after the descent, to avoid the mistake of Dumuzi’s forgetfulness. The queen then claims Haman 5:4: “And Esther answered, If it seem good unto the king, let the king and Haman come this day unto the banquet that I have prepared for him.” At the banquet she says she will give her decision at the second banquet on the morrow with Haman and the king.

Haman is at first delighted, but when Mordecai again does not bow, “Zeresh his wife and all his friends [say], Let a gallows be made of fifty cubits high, and to morrow speak thou unto the king that Mordecai may be hanged thereon.” But in the night the king discovers Mordecai has saved his life and not been rewarded. Haman appears and the king asks “what should be done to whom the man the king delighteth to honour?” Haman thinking it is himself says to bring the king’s royal apparel, his horse and crown and lead the man in glory through the streets.

The king now says to give this favour to Mordecai. Haman immediately knows he is doomed and covers his head and goes to his house in mourning. He is then summoned to the second banquet where Esther reveals his plot of genocide 7:6: “The adversary and enemy is this wicked Haman.” Haman now pleads for his life to

Esther, but ends caught in fatal consummation as the king returns from the garden: "Haman was fallen upon the bed whereon Esther was. Then said the king, Will he force the queen also before me in the house? As the word went out of king's mouth, they covered Haman's face." Haman is then hanged on the gallows he has prepared.

Worse is yet to come, because the king orders a reverse warrant to allow the Jews to commit retributive genocide "to destroy, to slay and to cause to perish, all the power of the people and province that would assault them, both little ones and women, and to take the spoil of them for a prey". "Thus the Jews smote all their enemies with the stroke of the sword, and slaughter, and destruction, and did what they would unto those that hated them.", but did not take the spoil. When they slaughter 500 in Shushan, Esther asks the King for more and to hang Haman's ten sons who have been slaughtered on the gallows. In all 5000 people are killed.

9:26 "Wherefore they called these days Purim after the name of Pur." The March feast of Purim on the 14th of Adar became a kind of Bacchanal at which there was drinking, farcical theatre and the effigy of Haman was hanged on the gallows - a notable source of consternation to early Christians and a precursor to the passover.

Ta'uz of Islam

Although Ur and Harran were key centres of the Moon God Nannar or Sin, in later times al-Uzza a form of Inanna became rescendent. Moslem sources refer to ubiquitous seasonal weeping for Ta'uz at Harran and throughout Mesopotamia, and up to the 10th century among bedouin in the desert (Green 152,8). The rites to mourn Hussain, the martyred son of Ali and Fatima are similarly celebrated by great weeping mourning, the devout muslim striking his head to express his grief so the blood runs, after which the representations of the tomb, 'ta'ziya' or lamentations, a possible corruption of Ta'uz, are deposited in special cemeteries, or like the effigies of Tammuz, thrown into a body of water (Briffault 3/97,8).

The True Christs of Malabar

"The most vivid example on record of an 'immolation' of the sacred king is probably that in Duarte Barbosa's Description of the Coasts of East Africa and Malabar in the Beginning of the Sixteenth Century. The god-king of the south Indian province of Quilacare in Malabar (an area having a strongly matriarchal tradition to this day) had to sacrifice himself at the end of the length of time required by the planet Jupiter for a circuit of the zodiac and return to its moment of retrograde motion in the sign of Cancer-which is to say, twelve years. When his time came, the king had a wooden scaffolding constructed and spread over with hangings of silk. And when he had ritually bathed in a tank, with great ceremonies and to the sound of music, he proceeded to the temple, where he paid worship to the divinity. Then he mounted the scaffolding and, before the people, took some very sharp knives and began to cut off parts of his body - nose, ears, lips, and all his members, and as much of his flesh as he was able - throwing them away and round about, until so much of his blood was spilled that he began to faint, whereupon he slit his throat." (Campbell 1959 165).