



THIASOS

RIVISTA DI ARCHEOLOGIA E ARCHITETTURA ANTICA

2023, n. 12

Direttore: Giorgio Rocco (Politecnico di Bari, Dipartimento di Scienze dell'Ingegneria Civile e dell'Architettura; Presidente CSSAr Centro di Studi per la Storia dell'Architettura, Roma)

Comitato editoriale: Monica Livadiotti, Editor in Chief (Politecnico di Bari, Dipartimento di Scienze dell'Ingegneria Civile e dell'Architettura), Roberta Belli (Politecnico di Bari, Dipartimento di Scienze dell'Ingegneria Civile e dell'Architettura), Luigi M. Calì (Università degli Studi di Catania, Dipartimento di Scienze Umanistiche), Maria Antonietta Rizzo (Università di Macerata, Dipartimento di Lettere e Filosofia), Giorgio Ortolani (Università di Roma Tre, Dipartimento di Architettura); Fani Mallouchou-Tufano (Technical University of Crete, School of Architecture; Committee for the Conservation of the Acropolis Monuments – ESMA); Gilberto Montali (Università di Palermo, Dipartimento di Culture e Società)

Redazione tecnica: Davide Falco (Politecnico di Bari, Dipartimento di Scienze dell'Ingegneria Civile e dell'Architettura), Antonello Fino (Politecnico di Bari, Dipartimento di Scienze dell'Ingegneria Civile e dell'Architettura), Gian Michele Gerogiannis (Università degli Studi di Catania, Dipartimento di Scienze Umanistiche), Chiara Giatti ("Sapienza" Università di Roma, Dipartimento di Scienze dell'Antichità), Antonella Lepone ("Sapienza" Università di Roma, Dipartimento di Scienze dell'Antichità), Giuseppe Mazzilli (Università di Macerata, Dipartimento di Studi Umanistici), Luciano Piepoli (Università di Bari, Dipartimento di Ricerca e Innovazione Umanistica), Valeria Parisi (Università della Campania Luigi Vanvitelli), Konstantinos Sarantidis (Ministero della Cultura Ellenico), Rita Sassu (Unitelma, "Sapienza" Università di Roma).

Comitato scientifico: Isabella Baldini (Università degli Studi di Bologna "Alma Mater Studiorum, Dipartimento di Archeologia), Dimitri Bosnakis (Università di Creta, Dipartimento di Storia e Archeologia), Ortwin Dally (Deutsches Archäologisches Institut, Leitender Direktor der Abteilung Rom), Vassiliki Eleftheriou (Director of the Acropolis Restoration Service YSMA), Diego Elia (Università degli Studi di Torino, Dipartimento di Scienze Antropologiche, Archeologiche e Storico Territoriali), Elena Ghisellini (Università di Roma Tor Vergata, Dipartimento di Antichità e Tradizione Classica), Kerstin Höghammar (professore emerito Uppsala University, Svezia), François Lefèvre (Université Paris-Sorbonne, Lettres et Civilizations), Marc Mayer Olivé (Universitat de Barcelona, Departamento de Filología Latina), Marina Micozzi (Università degli Studi della Tuscia, Viterbo, Dipartimento di Scienze dei Beni Culturali), Massimo Nafissi (Università degli Studi di Perugia, Dipartimento di Scienze Storiche sezione Scienze Storiche dell'Antichità), Massimo Osanna (Università degli studi di Napoli Federico II, Direttore generale Soprintendenza Pompei), Domenico Palombi ("Sapienza" Università di Roma, Dipartimento di Scienze dell'Antichità), Chiara Portale (Università degli Studi di Palermo, Dipartimento di Beni Culturali sezione archeologica), Elena Santagati (Università degli Studi di Messina, Dipartimento di Civiltà Antiche e Moderne), Piero Cimbolli Spagnesi ("Sapienza" Università di Roma, Dipartimento di Storia dell'Architettura, Restauro e Conservazione dei Beni Architettonici), Thomas Schäfer (Universität Tübingen, Instituts für Klassische Archäologie), Pavlos Triantaphyllidis (Director of the Ephorate of Antiquities of Lesbos, Lemnos and Samos, Greece), Nikolaos Tsoniotis (Ephorate of Antiquities of Athens, Greece)

Eleonora PAPPALARDO, *From the things to the images. The representation of the tree in ancient times*

Il contenuto risponde alle norme della legislazione italiana in materia di proprietà intellettuale ed è di proprietà esclusiva dell'Editore ed è soggetta a copyright.

Le opere che figurano nel sito possono essere consultate e riprodotte su supporto cartaceo o elettronico con la riserva che l'uso sia strettamente personale, sia scientifico che didattico, escludendo qualsiasi uso di tipo commerciale.

La riproduzione e la citazione dovranno obbligatoriamente menzionare l'editore, il nome della rivista, l'autore e il riferimento al documento. Qualsiasi altro tipo di riproduzione è vietato, salvo accordi preliminari con l'Editore.

Edizioni Quasar di Severino Tognon s.r.l., via Ajaccio 41-43, 00198 Roma (Italia)
<http://www.edizioniquasar.it/>

ISSN 2279-7297

Tutti i diritti riservati

Come citare l'articolo:

E. PAPPALARDO, *From the things to the images. The representation of the tree in ancient times*
Thiasos 12, 2023, pp. 3-19

Gli articoli pubblicati nella Rivista sono sottoposti a referee nel sistema a doppio cieco.



FROM THE THINGS TO THE IMAGES.

THE REPRESENTATION OF THE TREE IN ANCIENT TIMES

Eleonora Pappalardo*

Key words: Sacred tree, Assyria, Crete, *Asherah*, *Bamah*

Parole chiave: albero sacro, Assiria, Creta, *Asherah*, *Bamah*

Abstract:

In this article it will be attempted to carry a cross-cut analysis on the sacred tree symbol in the ancient world. In particular, Near East and Aegean will be investigated and compared, trying to provide more than an answer to the possible meaning that the sacred tree had, involving archaeological attestations, literary sources and images. The research starts from the Assyrian orthostats where sacred tree is associated with the king or sacred creatures, and ends in Iron Age Crete where, already in the second half of IX cent., the tree is variously represented on bronze artefacts and pottery. For each investigated area, it will be tried to associate evidence provided by images with the archaeological record where hypothetical association asherah/bamah can be plausibly recognized.

In questo articolo si cercherà di effettuare un'analisi interdisciplinare del simbolo dell'albero sacro nel mondo antico. In particolare, verranno indagati e confrontati il Vicino Oriente e l'Egeo, cercando di fornire più di una risposta al possibile significato che l'albero sacro rivestiva, prendendo in considerazione attestazioni archeologiche, fonti letterarie e iconografiche. La ricerca parte dagli ortostati assiri, dove l'albero sacro è associato al re o a creature sacre, e si conclude nella Creta dell'età del ferro, dove, già nella seconda metà del IX secolo, l'albero è variamente rappresentato su manufatti in bronzo e ceramica. Per ogni area indagata, si cercherà di associare le evidenze fornite dalle immagini con la documentazione archeologica laddove l'ipotetica associazione asherah/bamah possa essere plausibilmente riconosciuta.

“Mesopotamian art historians are like forest rangers;
they spend much of their professional lives surrounded by trees”¹

The sacred tree can reasonably be considered as one of the most recurrent iconographic patterns in ancient cultures aesthetics, from East to West, largely employed as element of the landscape and object of worship as well². It is, usually, supposed to indicate palm tree, pine or cedar and, in any cases, its composition is enriched with lotus blossoms or pomegranates, or provided with palmettes³.

In ancient Near Eastern art (Assyrian in particular), stylized trees are drawn in composite form, arranged in several sections of trunk from which spiral branches protrude. This latter version decorates a wide series of objects variously spread through the Mediterranean, in particular in Iron Age, being evidently appreciated for ivory and bronze decoration⁴ (figs. 1-2). This peculiar tree, diffused in several variations, but characterized by recurrent features, became one of the most common motifs of Assyrian art on cylinder and stamp seals, on ivories, on jewellery, and on the orthostates of Assyrian royal palaces.

* Università degli Studi di Catania - Dipartimento di Scienze della Formazione: eleonora.pappalardo@unict.it

¹ PORTER 2003, p. 21.

² See KOUROU 2001 for analysis. EVANS 1901; DANTHINE 1937; YARDEN 1972; COOK 1978; PARPOLA 1993.

³ BAUKS 2012, p. 270.

⁴ Stylized trees are largely used for decorating ivory plaques and panels. Numerous examples come from Nimrud, studied and pub-

lished since 1986 by Georgina Herrmann (HERRMANN 1986, pl. 41, 209). The tree is usually formed by two or three sections of branches and volutes. Sinuous stems usually rise from the link between the trunk and the branches (PAPPALARDO 2006, pls. 1-2). For what concerns bronzes, *phialai*, *paterae* and shields from the I millennium Mediterranean show a large repertoire of sacred tree and plants borrowed from the eastern art. For a synthesis of the patterns see MARKOE 1985; PAPPALARDO 2002.



Fig. 2. Ivory panel from Nimrud (after HERRMANN 1917).

Fig. 1. Ivory panel from Nimrud (after OATES, OATES 2001).

In this article it will be attempted to carry a cross-cut analysis on the sacred tree symbol in the ancient world, by trying to combine archaeological record with images and literary sources.

One of the most famous examples of Assyrian sacred tree representation, is the one we encounter behind Assurnasirpal II's throne in his throne-room at Nimrud⁵, resembling a palmette on a pole, surrounded by a ruff of other palmettes, organized in a sort of festoon (fig. 3). On either side of the plant-like object, humans and genies are anointing. This treelike object is depicted numerous times at Nimrud⁶ and has a whole family of close relatives that appear throughout Assyrian art in a variety of other media, as said above, from cylinder seals to jewellery and depicted textiles, so that it is easy to assume that it was a symbol of exceptional significance to the Assyrians⁷.

Just its composite structure, in which different sections are assembled, ending with various flowers and fruits, brought some scholar to interpret the tree's meaning as a mystical diagram representing the nature of the cosmos, of the gods and of the ideal man, in the Assyrian case, understood to be the king⁸.

The symbolic value of such representations is quite evident, whereas it seems to be complex to carry the exact reconstruction of its real significance, in particular if one would to establish the identity of a precise deity to be associated with the plant.

In general, stylized trees are supposed to be symbol of fertility⁹, reference to the king's role and power¹⁰, often emphasized by the presence of the winged sun disc symbolizing the deity of the kingdom, and finally, in several cases,

⁵ LAYARD 1894, pp. 133-134.

⁶ According to Stearns, the tree is represented quite 139 times in the Palace (STEARNS 1973, pp. 67-78); more recently, Russell calculated 190 depicted trees in the same building (RUSSELL 1998, p. 689).

⁷ GOVINO 2007, p. 1.

⁸ PARPOLA 1993.

⁹ This, in particular, for what concerns representations on Egyptian objects, showing a goddess standing on a lion and holding a snake and one or two plant stalks in her hands (see the stele in KEEL 1992, fig. 11). According to Julian Reade it represents "in some way the fertility of the earth, more especially the land of Ashur". READE 1983, p. 27.

¹⁰ BAUKS 2012, p. 275.



Fig. 3. Nimrud. Throne-room. Relief behind the Assurnasirpal throne (after BUDGE 1914).



Fig. 4. Ur-Nammu stele (after LEGRAIN 1933).

it is supposed to be used as marker of a holy place: *You shall surely destroy all the places where the nations whom you shall dispossess served their gods, on the high mountains and on the hills and under every green tree. You shall tear down their altars and dash in pieces their pillars (bamah) and burn their Asherim (sacred poles) with fire.*

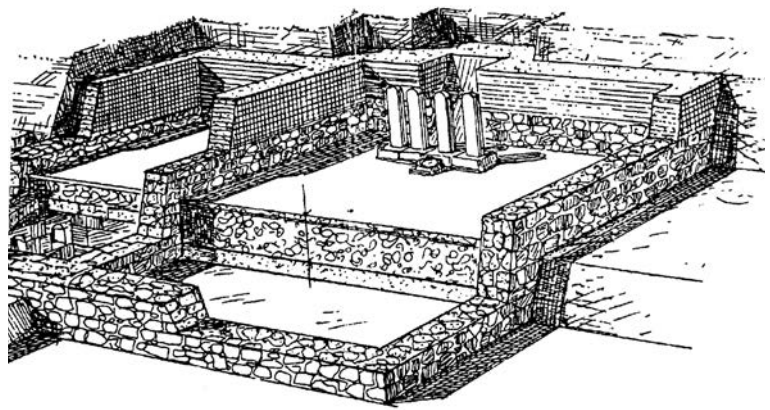
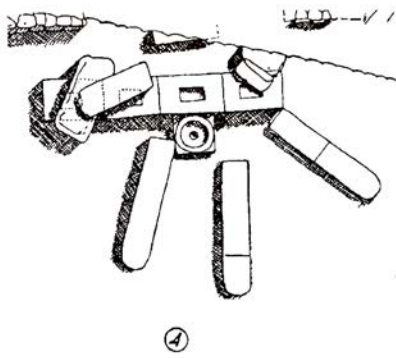
Deuteronomion 12:2-3

Starting from the III millennium BC, the tree forms the focus of several representations in Mesopotamian art, having a cosmic and symbolic meaning¹¹: it appears near the king or the god in order to emphasize their cosmic power and ability to create order in the world and, at the same time, it forms the object to which the cult is devoted.

One of the most famous examples of these first schemes is provided by the Ur stele of the third millennium, where the king (Ur Nammu) is represented worshipping both gods, Enki and Ninmakh, seated behind a pointed tree laying on a stand (fig. 4).

It is quite evident as in this case the tree is assumed to represent a symbol to be connected to worship and cosmic domain. The plant rests on an hourglass support, maybe an altar, and seems to form the link between the king and the god.

¹¹ ATAÇ 2018. See also, OSBORNE 2018.



Figs. 5-6. Altin Tepe. Open Sanctuary (after PAPPALARDO 2002).

Being the representation of the tree largely spread in Mediterranean regions already from Bronze Age, I will focus on those trees associated with basements or altars, for which it can be plausibly assumed a sacred value. On this respect, I would attempt, for the first time, investigating different domains in which association tree/altar is attested: figurative, literary and archaeological, trying to trace a “fil rouge” through the ages and cultural areas.

As known, in fact, the sacred tree, viewed as cosmic element, symbolic expression of the eternal life cycle, often associated with pillars or *stelai*, was worshipped in different cultures of the ancient world. The plant, not only was present in the iconographic repertoire of several Mediterranean regions, but it must be concretely worshipped in sacred places.

Usually resting upon a pedestal, a vase or, in general, a basement which emphasized its symbolic and sacred value, in Eastern art the sacred tree is spread according to two different models of representation, forming in both cases the focal element: the sacred plant is always at the centre of the scene, flanked in one case by human figures, in the other by animals or fantastic creatures. In the first scheme, the figures usually hold a ritual object in their hand, with which they perform a religious action (a libation on the sacred tree); the sun, the moon and other cosmic elements often complete the scene. In the second scheme, sphynxes or antithetic griffins gaze at the plant, maybe outlining its link with the nature and cosmic order.

The Archaeological evidence

The association of tree and altar, or basement, upon or behind which the plant rests, is of a probable Canaanite origin, being the tree associated with the *asherah* and the altar with the *bamah*. Originally, the term *bamah* was to be referred to a high place, like a hill; then, in the Holy Bible, the same term was used in order to indicate an altar or platform for the cult and, sometimes, more generally, the whole structure housing it (a shrine or temple).

Two elements, furthermore, can be associated with the *bamah*: 1- the *asherah*, that is the tree, often to be interpreted as symbol of the goddess, was lacking branches, having the shape of a wooden column; 2- the *massebah*, which sometime was formed by a stone pillar or a *stand*, represented, instead, the local male deity.

Although the passage from figures to object, in the case of sacred tree, could seem to be quite impossible, cause no ancient tree can be observed in present days, nevertheless, by combining Near Eastern tradition with Minoan and Iron Age Aegean iconography, some interesting suggestion can emerge.

The first case one could investigate as trees' transfiguration in archaeological ground, can be formed by the *stelai*. In general, one of the most famous examples of use of large *stelai* is provided by the Urartian region, as in the open shrine at Altin Tepe¹² (figs. 5-6). Investigated by the Turkish archaeological expedition since 1956, it was part of an articulated monumental complex consisting in a sacred area built in relation with the nearby necropolis, dating back between VIII and VII cent. BC¹³.

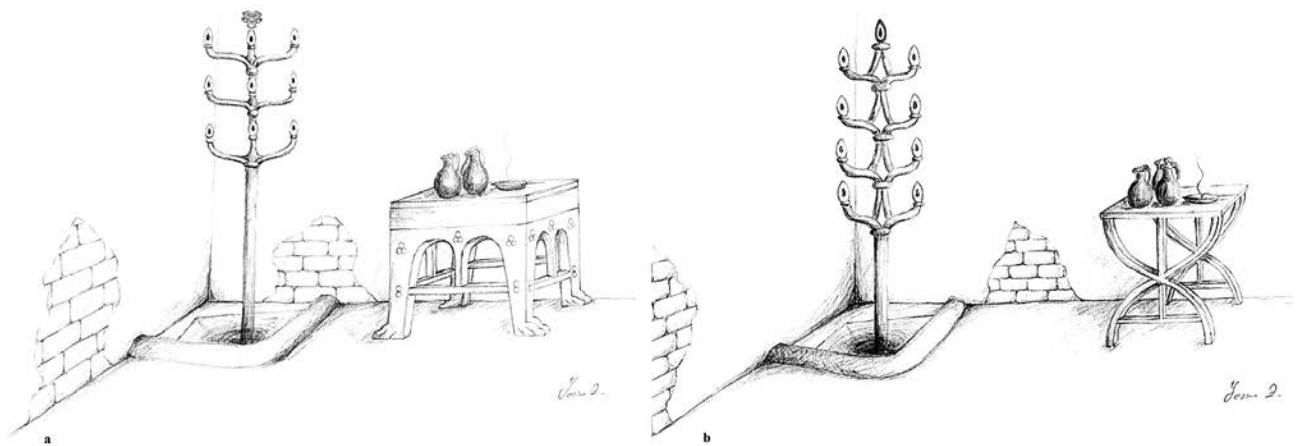
¹² SHAW 1989, fig. 13.

¹³ ÖZGÜÇ 1966, pp. 73-74.

Fig. 7. Stamp seal from Toprakh Kale (after PAPPALARDO 2002).



Fig. 8. Ayanis (Urtu). Ceremonial Aisle. Reconstruction of a “artificial sacred tree” (after BATMAZ 2013, permission of the author).



Focal element of the cult was four monumental *stelai* fixed in stone basements, placed in front of a niche excavated in the north-eastern wall of the precinct. The stone basements, found *in situ*, had identical dimensions (1.00x0.70 m) and, in the center, they presented a rectangular hole (0.40x0.20 m) which formed the inlay for the tenons protruding from the bottom of the *stelai*. In front of the second stele, a circular concave altar was lying, inside which a circular hole of a 0.14 m diameter was carved. It was, maybe, the inlay for a wooden post (according to a common practice in ancient Near East).

Stelai with altar were evidently forming the cult object of the whole area, being worshipped during religious ceremonies performed in relation with the close necropolis and, then, associated with a cult of the death. Recently, Urartu provided a further evidence concerning the use of fixing *stelai* or pillars into inlays carved into the stone.

During the investigations carried out in Armenia in 2001 near the village of Sarukhan, on a foothill close to the Hellenistic fortress at Tsaghkavank, some cavities and natural cuts in the rock have been found, evidently modelled by human hand. On one of these, just in the slope hill where the fortress rose, there is a recessed of the same kind of the one at Altin Tepe¹⁴, probably aimed to house a stele or pillar with a tenon at the base.

On the figurative domain, an interesting evidence for a stele/pillar cult in Urartian area is the representation on a stamp seal from Toprak Kale¹⁵ (fig. 7): a worshipper is standing in front of a stylized tree placed on a pedestal, with a long and tiny trunk from which spiral branches rise hanging downwards, while in the upper part ovoid flowers protrude. In the ground, near the tree, a jug is represented, with the mouth pointing toward the tree. Behind the tree, there's an altar on which three *stelai* rest, high about $\frac{3}{4}$ of the human figure, rounded at the top. Finally, behind, a tiny and elongated object represents, probably, a tree spear-shaped, similar to a cypress.

A quite recent and interesting case of admixture between artistic and archaeological evidence is provided by the cult of the god Haldi in the Ayanis Fortress near Van¹⁶. The rests of drop-shaped stones found at the corner of

¹⁴ BISCIONE, PARMEGIANI, 2001, p. 309, fig. 9.

¹⁵ LEHMANN-HAUPT 1931, p. 549; PIOTROVSKIY 1996, p. 329, fig. 73.

¹⁶ ÇILINGIROĞLU 2001; BATMAZ 2013.



Fig. 9. Bulla from Ayanis (after BATMAZ 2013, permission of the author).



Fig. 10. Detail of the Idaean Cave cymbal n. 74 (after SAKELLARAKIS 2013).

burned wooden beams were found²¹. At the south of the same platform there was a threshold maybe to be referred to a close building, through which, evidently, the passage to the square was guaranteed.

the Ceremonial Aisle are interpreted as buds hanging from an “artificial” sacred tree, in the form of a wooden stick¹⁷; in association, jugs, a bronze lamp and a bronze vessel were found (fig. 8). According to Batmaz, in this case the sacred tree had the function of intermediary for the renewal of life in a cosmic sense, by symbolizing the renewal of the world. It embodied a sense of sacred powers in being vertical and developed, in growing, and losing its leaves and then regenerating them.

The astonishing discovery of Ayanis, remind us the peculiar kind of bud in the form of a drop, or almond, so spread in 1st millennium Eastern iconography. There are several examples of tree’s representation, in fact, where this kind of inflorescences protrude from the branches. Several examples from Urartian area include an ivory plaque from Altin Tepe and a bulla from Ayanis¹⁸ (fig. 9). This kind of shape seems to be more frequent in Anatolian area than in Assyria, where the drop-shaped buds are frequently used in composite tree’s representations, together with other, more usual, inflorescences (palmettes, lily, lotus etc.). In the meantime, nevertheless, the Urartian theme is attested in Iron Age Crete, as the focus element just hanging over the head of the “master of bull” in the n.74 cymbal from the Idaean Cave (fig. 10).

An interesting archaeological counterpart for the figured seals is represented by the Qatna (Mishrife) shrine, in central Syria, where a 9 m² precinct internally divided into two further smallest quadrangular spaces, has been found¹⁹ (figs. 11-12). One of the minor spaces embraced three small stone stelai, fixed on an embankment (*massebah shrine*), the other, instead, housed a large tree trunk (*asherah shrine*). The major precinct, probably, had the function of a courtyard, where a large circular granite base was destined to be filled of liquids for libations.

Evidence for tree cult associated with basement/ altar is even attested in Northern Syria. Destroyed in 720 BC by the Assyrian power under Sargon II, ancient Hama was site of an important royal palace²⁰. At the north of the main façade, inside a square, two low stone platforms were found, covered by ashes. Close to the northern one, a basalt tripod was lying, close to the southern one, two figured plaques with Ishtar representation along with a large assemblage of pottery and

¹⁷ “A considerable number of such wooden remains were present, in fact, immediately to the east of the chalk-stone socket; among these were several larger pieces of wood resembling branches. This could indicate that the drop-shaped stones were mounted on a stick which represented the trunk of a sacred tree”. BATMAZ 2013, pp. 70-71. We must thank the colleague, Atilla Batmaz, for the per-

mission to use the images above.

¹⁸ ÖZGÜÇ 1969, p. 56, fig. 57, pl. L. Both already quoted by Batmaz (2013), figs. 13-14.

¹⁹ COMTE DU MESNIL 1935, pp. 97-111, tavv. XXVIII-XXXIII.

²⁰ RIIS 1958.

²¹ RIIS 1958, pp. 231-232, fig. 308.

At the East of the southern platform, finally, at the same distance occurring between that and the threshold, a low, circular, limestone basement was found, carrying inside a round hole²². Doubtless, a post or a wooden pillar was inset inside: “but as it had no counterpart, there seems to be no reason whatever to believe that the post or column supported any wind-screen or penthouse in front of the door.... On the contrary, the two Astarte figurines, the grey ashes of the two platforms, the tripod on the northern one, the longitudinal axis uniting the annexe, the southern platform and the base suggest that here we have to do with a cult place, where the *platforms functioned as hearth-altars like the Greek “escharai”, and where a sacred tree, an asherah or similar divine symbol in the shape of a column, was placed in the central cavity of the round base* (added emphasis)”²³.

The area housing the altars and the circular basement had to be a small, private open shrine, probably attended by court functionaries and families which lived in the nearby of the palace. The whole complex can be dated in the second half of IX cent. BC, immediately subsequent the first palace’s construction²⁴.

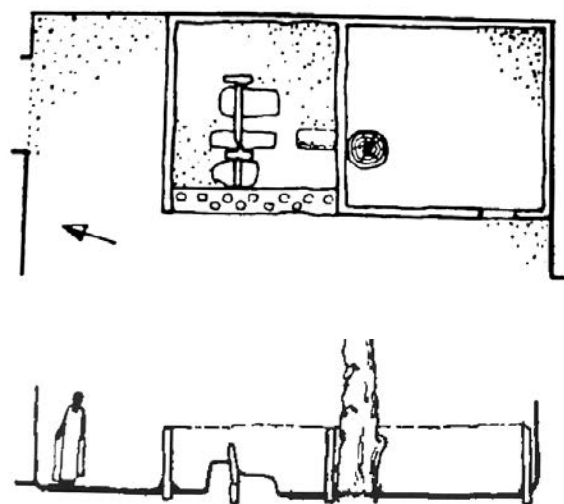
Starting from the above examples, we could state that in Near Eastern domain, in particular in Anatolian area, two different cases can be recognized in which the altar (*bamah*) clearly appears together with the tree (*ashera*), this last, sometimes, coinciding with the *massebah* (betil), sometimes separated from this: 1- the tree is inlaid in a hole carved in the altar, in the shape of a plant in the figured representation, as a wooden post in archaeological contexts (at Sarukhan, Urartu, the recessed in the rock, at Hama, in Northern Syria, the circular altar with hole). 2- the tree rests near an altar which is surmounted by stelai or pillars (seal from Toprak Khale, precinct at Qatna and Kommos tripillar Shrine²⁵).

The Literary Evidence

For what concerns use of literary sources in order to reconstruct meaning and diffusion of trees and wooden posts at the East of the Mediterranean, Nadav Na’Aman provided interesting evidence for a tree/wooden pillar cult in Iron Age Tyre and Sidon, basing on the letter ND 2686 of the archive of Neo-Assyrian tablets of the time of Tiglat-pileser II and Sargon II, discovered at Nimrud in 1852²⁶. The observations started by an analysis carried out by Oppenheim on the same letter²⁷ and focused on the word *equ* interpreted as a pillar-like object and to be connected with the term *bīt ēqi*, to be referred to the sacred place where the *equ* was set up²⁸. In the lines 6-16 you can read: “In the palace of/n[ea]r the New Town, Hiram has cut down the *ēqu* of the house of his gods, which is opposite Sidon, saying: «I will move it to Tyre». I sent and stopped him. The *ēqu* which he cut is constricted? at the foot of the [...] mountain”²⁹.

The letter is signed by Qurdi-Ashur-lāmur, governor of the province of Smirra, who has in charge as supervisor of the cost of Lebanon. The full scenario emerging by the letter, as reconstructed by Na’Aman, can be summarized as follows: Hiram (king of Tyre) wanted to transfer a sacred tree (*ēqu*) from a temple placed somewhere near Sidon to another housed in his capital. The cutting of the tree, nevertheless, was seen as a sacrilege act and, then, was prevented by the inhabitants of Sidon. This event reached the Assyrian governor Qurdi-Ashur-lāmur, who sent soon a messenger to the court of Tyre. Finally, Hiram was forced to return the sacred object to the Sidonian temple.

Leaving aside the question concerning the location of the temple mentioned in the letter, what is significant in this context is the nature of the *ēqu*, interpreted as a sacred pillar and often host in a *bīt ēqi*, viewed as an inner room, a shrine of a goddess where the post was erected³⁰.



Figs. 11-12. Mishrife Qatna open sanctuary. Reconstruction (after PAPPALARDO 2002).

²² RIIS 1958 p. 212, figs. 216, 232.

²³ RIIS 1970, p. 150.

²⁴ *Ibidem*.

²⁵ See PAPPALARDO 2003.

²⁶ NA'AMAN 2006. On the review of the text see also SAGGS 1955, pp. 130-131.

²⁷ OPPENHAIM 1965-66, p. 256.

²⁸ For the completely explained reasons bearing Oppenheim and Na’Aman as well to this reconstruction see NA'AMAN 2006, 39; OPPENHAIM 1965-66, p. 256.

²⁹ NA'AMAN 2006, p. 39.

³⁰ Beyond NA'AMAN 2006, p. 43, see CAD E, pp. 243-244, with ear-

In Assyria, *ēqu* and *bīt ēqi* were supposed to be located in the city, differently from the countries outside the borders of Assyrian realm where the term was applied to external cult places. Another interesting feature is given by the presence of a spring in the inscription of Assurnasirpal, and was also inferred for the cult site near Sidon³¹.

A further intriguing observation for our purpose concerns the use of the verb *nakāsu* to indicate the action of cutting, to be referred to the *equ*, implying its wooden nature and, then, finding abundant comparisons with the sacred pillars attested in Israel and Judah, and coinciding just with the biblical *Asherah*.

The analysis of NaʿAman allows to plausibly reconstruct a cult of sacred trees in Sidon and Tyre and it could reasonably be assumed that this wasn't too different from the one performed in Israel and Judah, where the trees, or the wooden posts used as their symbolic allusion, represented the gods or goddesses to whose worship was devoted. The author, furthermore, on the base of the olive tree cult attested in Roman period in Tyre for the cult of Melkart, wonder if the *ēqu* referred to in the ND 2686 letter for being transferred to Tyre could be just an olive tree.

The sacred trees and the tree-like wooden statues which embodied the goddess *Asherah* in the temples and high places of Israel and Judah were called by the name of the goddess which they were assumed to represent. But we don't have proof that the same habitus was performed in Iron Age Phoenicia.

The study conducted by Maria Giovino in 2008, consisting in the survey of the studies concerning sacred tree representation in Assyrian domain, provides a very fruitful tool for investigating relationships between images and objects in the case at issue. The focus of the research is the dual interpretation of the plants, variously shaped, adorning Assyrian reliefs and a largest bulk of objects, comprising seals, ivories and stones, where a composite tree is depicted. The question is: is that tree, the representation of a real tree or the one of an object with the shape of a tree?

The theory that the 'tree' is not a real tree or a trees' conventionalized depiction, but, rather, it is a representation of a constructed object which found a counterpart in the reality as effective cult object, started to develop in the second half of '800.

Since the times of the discovery of Nimrud, Henry Layard associated the spectacular images of sacred tree in Assyrian art with the Bible; in particular, the famous scene in which the tree is flanked by winged bird-headed figures, where linked with the words of the prophet Ezekiel exiled in Assyria³² whose vision at the beginning of his book seems to have been inspired by what he saw in captivity. The correspondence between the Assyrian sacred tree and sacred texts, nevertheless, was soon discussed by other authors, as George Rawlinson and Archibald Henry Sayce. This latter, in particular, basing on the word *kiškānu*, associated the Assyrian sacred tree with the Genesis tree of life.

The question of whether the *kiškānu* should or should not be identified with the tree of life, and indeed what the word should be taken to mean, has a long and complex history that continues to the present days³³. Already Rawlinson did not interpret the sacred tree as a conventionalized representation of a palm, but, along the lines of the *asherah* of the Phoenicians referred to in the Old Testament, it's understood by him to be a wooden cult object³⁴ constructed of treelike elements.

This idea, that images of the Assyrian sacred tree could represent a constructed cult object, had been in circulation from the beginning of discussions concerning its meaning. Fergusson, in particular, identified it just as the *asherah*, the object so frequently mentioned in the Bible as the Grove or Groves which the Israelites are so frequently accused of worshipping³⁵: "in reality not a tree at all, nor even meant ... to represent one, but ... the emblem of some deity, or, at all events, an object of worship, but certainly not a mere vegetable production as had hitherto been supposed".

François Lenormant also maintained that the sacred tree did not represent an actual tree, but rather a kind of "May-pole"³⁶.

The constructed cult object theory seeks to demonstrate that the sacred tree is a discrete symbol representing a divinity in aniconic form, but, in the meantime, it's representing an actual object.

In an old article on gestures of worship in Mesopotamian art, Langdon included two Neo-Assyrian seals depicting a worshipper before an "arch-and-net"-type of sacred tree. Collon has described this type of scheme of representation as "the arch-and-net tree"³⁷, "[The arch-and-net tree] is a Sargonid development of the Ashurnasirpal-type tree ... It consists of a central trunk within an arch, the two being linked by a network of zigzag or cross-hatched lines".

lier literature; *AHW*, p. 232. OPPENHEIM 1965-66, pp. 256-257; SCHRAMM 1973, p. 72; PONGRATZ-LEISTEN 1992, p. 340.

³¹ NAʿAMAN 2006, p. 43.

³² Ezekiel 1.1-3 tells us he was exiled somewhere on Babylonian territory, 'It was the thirtieth year in the fourth month on the fifth of the month, as I was among the exiles by the Chebar canal, that the heavens opened and I saw a divine vision. On the fifth of the month that was the fifth year of King Jehoiachin's exile-it happened that the word of YHWH came to the priest Ezekiel son of Buzi in the land of

the Chaldeans by the Chebar canal, and the hand of YHWH came upon him there.'

³³ GIOVINO 2008, p. 19.

³⁴ RAWLINSON 1864, pp. 236-238.

³⁵ FERGUSSON 1985, p. 294.

³⁶ LENORMANT 1880-84, p. 78. See the analysis in GIOVINO 2006, p. 23.

³⁷ COLLON 2001, p. 83. See, before, LANGDON 1919, pp. 539-540.

On these seals, a winged disk floats just above the sacred tree, and the worshipper at left, who stands before the two symbols, raises up his arms, palms open, towards the disk. Langdon saw that worshippers used the same gesture of worship before the sacred tree and disk that they used before other symbolic and human versions of the gods.

Smith maintained that the tree represents an actual tree trunk decorated with metal bands and fillets of fresh greenery. He also suggested that it represents an *asherah* (or a “May-pole”) and a djed pillar. Smith’s interpretations of the sacred tree were based on cuneiform texts from the Neo-Assyrian and Neo-Babylonian periods, and therefore his ideas constituted one of the first attempts to match images of the tree with texts written around the same time that the images were created. The scholar did not describe the tree as “conventionalized” or “stylized”; he simply referred to it as a cedar tree with metal attachments and also decorated with boughs and twigs. Smith’s idea, that the sacred tree represents a “bedecked” living tree/bare trunk around which metal bands and fresh fillets of greenery were placed according to rites performed during the New Year, placed him closer to those who thought the tree represents a real tree that symbolizes fertility than to those who thought it represents a decorated pole-like object. However, his emphasis on the metal band decoration vividly recalls Riegl’s ideas, who we know endorsed the constructed object theory.

In emphasizing the linked meanings between cult object and cult place that he found inherent in the terms *asherah/asirtu*, Pering tried to argue that the sacred tree represents, in concrete form, the place linking heaven and earth. Pering further identified this “Mittelpunkt” as the navel of the earth, what the ancient Greeks had referred to as the omphalos, or sacred stone representing the centre of the earth³⁸.

The Objects

What is particularly significant in our issue, is that mid-nineteenth-century European excavations in Iraq first brought to light the remains of artificial tree parts. Victor Place’s, in particular, during the excavations at the Neo-Assyrian royal city of Khorsabad, brought to light large pieces of bronze sheathing embossed with the design of palm tree trunk scales or imbrications³⁹. These lasts had once been nailed to a shaft of cedar that measured 9 m in length and 5 m in diameter; another cedar shaft measuring relatively the same thickness and length was found nearby.

De Mecquenem recovered a variety of large bronze leaves, in considerable numbers, from the large foundation deposit on the Acropolis. The smallest of these, which may perhaps be a sepal pierced at its end, measures 5 cm long⁴⁰. In general, during this archaeological campaign, several pieces of tree’s branches and leaves were found, in various material, and approximately twenty spikes representing reeds or palm fronds whose ends were pierced by two holes were recovered, ranging in size from 40 to 50 cm long⁴¹.

The costume of placing artificial trees or treelike poles at temple entrances (such as at the Sin temple at Khorsabad), or across the facade of a temple (such as at the Inshushinak temple at Susa), appears to have had a history extending from the third millennium BC in Mesopotamia. In meantime, furthermore, the idea of decorating columns with a design of palm imbrications had been devised even earlier at Uruk⁴².

Whatever we do not have enough archaeological evidence to reconstruct an entire artificial tree (composed of, e.g., crown, trunk, leaves), the evidence of entire trees fashioned in metal appears in several texts, and these texts provide a description of the types of artificial trees known partially from the excavations at Khorsabad and Susa⁴³. A 30-cm-high, four-sided prism lists the kings of Larsa over the space of its four sides (from Naplanum, 2025 BC to Samsu-iluna, 1749 BC)⁴⁴. During Gungunum’s reign, the prism records that he presented two bronze palm trees as an offering to the temple of Samas⁴⁵. Gungunum’s offering of bronze trees to the temple of Samas recalls the Susa deposit of bronze branches and leaves and the shared associations there among royalty, temple offerings and artificial trees.

Significant is the reference to seven gilded palm trees standing twelve feet high drawn on carts in a civic parade that took place in Alexandria during the reign of Ptolemy II *Philadelphus* (c. 284-246 BC)⁴⁶. The author recording the event described the gilded palm trees as appearing together with cult objects and ritual objects, that is, empty chryselephantine thrones, *thymiateria*, altars, *escharai* and enormous gold Delphic tripods. Because the palms appeared together with these objects, scholars have thought that the palms must also represent a category of objects sacred to a god and were likely offered to that god following the parade. Maybe, we could find in this Hellenistic reference, a paral-

³⁸ See PERING 1932-33, pp. 288-289.

³⁹ LOUD 1936, p. 98.

⁴⁰ DE MORGAN *et al.* 1905, fig. 77.

⁴¹ For a synthesis see GIOVINO 2008, p. 180.

⁴² GIOVINO 2008, p. 188.

⁴³ *Ibidem*, p. 187.

⁴⁴ THUREAU-DANGIN 1918, pp. 4, 10.

⁴⁵ Barrelet discussed this text as evidence for the production of artificial trees (*arbres fictifs*) in BARRELET 1950, p. 26.

⁴⁶ The event was recorded by Kallixeinos of Rhodes (c. 221 BC). For a translation of and commentary on Kallixeinos’ text, see RICE 1983, esp. pp. 22-23, lines 241-42 (section 202C), for the description of

lel for Gungunum's trees: in this case, the Gungunum's bronze palm trees, like those of Ptolemy II *Philadelphus*, would represent the symbol of a god presented in a temple belonging to the same or another god.

Both texts, the Old Babylonian and Hellenistic one, testify that artificial trees could be regarded as sacred objects.

According to a cult object explanation, the Assyrian sacred tree would have been made of separate parts like those produced for an artificial tree, such as wood encased by metal, leaves and the connecting elements (i.e., 'bands'), perhaps also made of metal.

The question would be: were artificial trees sacred in themselves, or were they thought sacred insofar as they referred to a deity?

The Images

In LBA Cyprus, the association of the tree with the altar is not so far common. Nevertheless, the tree cult is continuously attested at the rural sanctuaries, where probably the Eastern notion of *asherah* survives through the Bronze Age⁴⁷.

In the Aegean, instead, representations of sacred tree can be dated already in the early II millennium⁴⁸. It is quite always associated with the nature Goddess of Minoan world, often in scenes of dances and processions⁴⁹; sometimes, the tree is linked with the altar, as attested by images on rings and seals. These scenes, quite common in glyptic, seem to evoke a purely local tradition, having nothing to do with the Mesopotamian ones, in which the human figure is usually a god or the monarch. In the meantime, it is possible that cosmic elements, as sun, moon and stars which often complete this kind of scene even in Aegean area, borrow from Near East.

From an archaeological point of view, the tree cult could be attested in Crete in ancient times, MM I, according to an intriguing interpretation given of the *kulure* in the Minoan palaces⁵⁰.

On the base of the scene represented on the Sacred Grove and Dance Fresco, it has been advanced the hypothesis, already formulated by Preziosi⁵¹, according to which the so-called *kulurai*, the large circular wells excavated in the western courtyards of the palaces, previously interpreted as barns, were destined to house large trees connected with cults. This suggestive hypothesis should be corroborated by the presence near the *kulurai* of routes, often edged by benches, along which religious ceremonies had to be performed, possibly connected with the celebration of fertility and nature.

Several other evidences of tree cults in Minoan-Mycenaean world are attested, often borrowing from Near East and readapting to local traditions and rituals. An example, is the well-known golden ring from Mycenae, on which a tree is placed on some sort of movable altar. On a ring from Mochlos it is clearly represented the transport of the whole complex (tree and altar) by boat, according to an iconographic scheme borrowed from Egypt.

But what tree? In Bronze Age Aegean, the tree most frequently represented is the palm, in a very stylised version, according to an iconographic tradition that, as we've seen, was already attested in Mesopotamia. The palm tree, in fact, can be easily supposed to be borrowed from the East, as for what concerns Bronze Age examples, as for the Iron Age ones.

In comparison with the other Aegean regions, Crete maintains a form of cult of the Great Goddess after the end of the Bronze Age. As stated by Nota Kourou "the aniconic art of the Dark Ages has created a long hiatus in terms of artistic documentation", for what concerns either the cult of the nature Goddess and the one of the tree as well⁵².

From the VIII cent. BC, in Near East, a third type of representation becomes frequent: a human figure rising from a tree. The scene is commonly explained with the birth of Horus and is attested on Phoenician ivories in particular. Mycenaean counterpart of this pattern can be identified in the famous gold pin from Mycenae representing a female majestic figure, raising her hands to large and flowering branches just springing from her head. In this case is quite evident the identification of two distinct elements: goddess and tree. The pin from Mycenae shows us concretely the general conception of the goddess-tree relationship. Palm's branches raise directly from the goddess' head, forming an unique element with the figure (fig. 13). In meantime, the feature of the skirt, decorated with bossed squares, fairly

the artificial palm trees. In his commentary on this section (p. 120), Rice noted, "The size of all these objects suggests they were drawn on carts like the ritual objects of Dionysus [listed in the previous section] 201E Kallixenos mentions that these figures are gilded, probably bronze, wood, or terracotta covered in gold". GIOVINO 2008, n. 507.

⁴⁷ KOUROU 2001, p. 40. For the tree cult in Cypriot sanctuaries see

WRIGHT 1992, pp. 269 ss.

⁴⁸ BETANCOURT 1985, pp. 94-96.

⁴⁹ DEMAKOPOULOU 1996, p. 49 n. 16-17, p. 93 n. 15.

⁵⁰ CARINCI 2001, pp. 43-60.

⁵¹ PREZIOSI 1983, p. 85, note 130; CARINCI 2001, p. 51.

⁵² KOUROU 2001, p. 41.



Fig. 13. Golden pin-head from Mycaenae (after KOUROU 2001).



Fig. 14. Neck of amphora from Kition (Cypriot Geometric III/II).



Fig. 15. Straight-sided pithos from Knossos (after COLDSTREAM, CATLING 1996).

recalls the scaled palm's trunk. The pin reasonably testifies the sacred value of the tree, on one hand, and the identification of the plant with a female goddess.

In geometric Cyprus, the iconographic subject consisting in the association tree/altar (*bamah*) seems quite rare, although the impressive representation on a white painted II neck amphora from Kition exactly reproduce the concept above briefly described: a palm tree rests on a square altar and a new element, a bird, lies on a tiny branch directly emerging from the table.

Nevertheless, the assumption that in Iron Age figurative repertoire the tree assumes a quite exclusive decorative function, lacking a specific meaning, should be abandoned.

It is commonly accepted the idea according to which in the aniconic Aegean art post-Dark Age, the sacred tree reappears, as cult object and iconographic pattern as well, under the influence of the contemporaneous Eastern cultures⁵³. Starting from VIII century, the tree is attested in continental Late Geometric pottery, whereas in Crete, already starting from the second half of IX cent., it forms one of the most recurrent elements in protogeometric B pottery decoration⁵⁴, mostly attested in the class of straight-sided pithoi, largely used as cinerary urns in several Cretan cemeteries. In particular, the specimens found in the necropolis of Knossos and Prinias seem to be characterized by a peculiar predilection for the motif of the tree, employed as decorative element, along with other features borrowed by the nature's repertoire, or as main subject of the representation. Just the recurrence of the tree within the Protogeomet-

⁵³ BURKERT 1992, p. 19.

⁵⁴ See the well-known straight-sided pithos from the North Cemetery of Knossos, in which the Iron Age Nature Goddess is repre-

sented under the handles: COLDSTREAM, CATLING 1996, p. 226, pl. 242, n. 144; p. 155, pl. 155, fig. 109, n. 114; p. 283, pl. 212, n. 11.



Fig. 16. Straight-sided pithos from Prinias (photo by the author).

Fig. 17. Straight-sided pithos from Prinias (drawing Orazio Pulvirenti).



ric B Knossian pottery brought to the identification of a precise hand in pottery painting, attributed to the so-called “Tree Painter”⁵⁵. What is significant in the case of the Knossos production, is the presence, on a pithos in particular, of isolated trees, resting on a triangular basement, covering the whole surface of the vase and separated by vertical ribs (fig. 15).

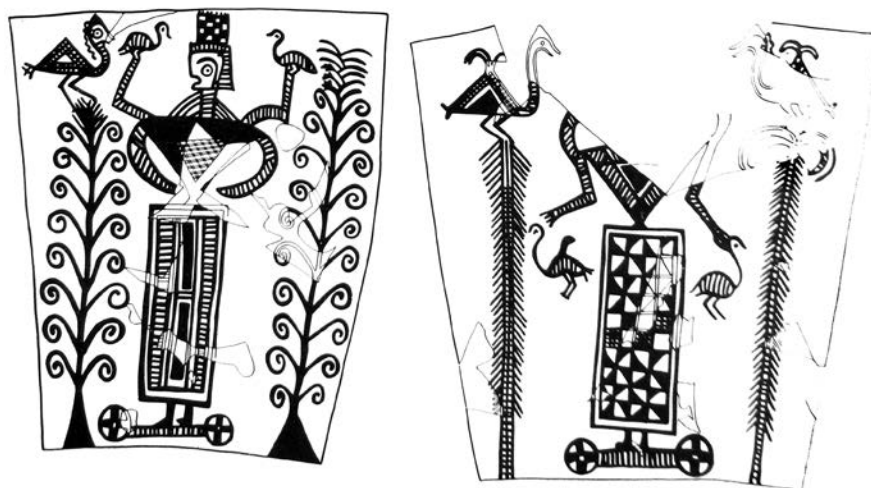
The recent analysis carried out on the contemporaneous straight-sided pithoi from the necropolis of Siderospilia in Prinias, confirmed the importance of the motive of the tree and, furthermore, provided another important example of decoration exclusively made of rows of tree, covering the whole surface of the vase (fig. 16).

If one would try to analyze the recurrence of the motive on this pottery, it is possible to reconstruct four different scenarios: 1 – isolated trees decorating the vase, as main subject of the representation; 2– trees employed to fill empty spaces already occupied by other subjects (fig. 17); 3 – trees associated with birds; 4 – trees associated with the nature Goddess.

From a formal and stylistic point of view, the tree adopted in PGB pottery is quite different from the prototype borrowed from the East, formed by assembled different sections of trunk and characterized by spiral and complex branches enriched with leaves and flowers (this kind of tree, nevertheless, is largely used in the decoration of contemporary Cretan bronze-works and will be spread in Orientalizing pottery). The type used in PGB pottery decoration is quite simple and linear: a tiny trunk, formed by one or two vertical lines, and lateral spiral branches. At Knossos, the majority of the examples rest on solid triangles, at Prinias, instead, the trunk ends suddenly, almost cut in the bottom. In the higher part of the tree, usually, there are small leaves or stylized buds and, some time, a bird resting on it.

⁵⁵ PAPPALARDO 2019; 2021.

Fig. 18. Nature Goddess painted under a straight-sided pithos from Knossos (after COLDSTREAM, CATLING 1996).



As said above, on one of the most famous pithoi of this series, from the North Cemetery of Knossos, the scene is formed by a goddess with long skirt, upraised arms with birds, and two trees at the sides (fig. 18).

Although stylistically and formally the figures are strongly different, it is quite interesting the analogy of the subjects and of the reciprocal association between PGB pithoi and Minoan – Mycenaean repertoire. In the vase from Knossos the scene is repeated on both side, but with slight difference: on side A, the birds are resting on flourishing trees, and the goddess holds other two of them on raised arms; on side B, the birds are flying away from the arms down of the goddess, and the trees' branches look like dry. Looking at the Knossos scenes, it seems to recognize an explicit allusion to the nature cycle, focused on the alternating seasons, and to this generic meaning one could reconstruct the value of the tree in these representations.

What is intriguing, anyway, is that in Iron Age Crete pillars cults seems to be attested.

In a work published in 2003, I hypothetically suggested that the tripillar-shrine of Kommos⁵⁶ wasn't just the attestation of a Phoenician cult in Crete, but, likewise, an aniconic cult object whose nature was completely consistent with the general context of the site in VIII cent.⁵⁷ In that occasion I interpreted the almost enigmatic "wooden circle" (viewed by Shaw as a wooden bowl or a pillar with structural functions) placed just behind the three small pillars and the slab they were inlaid in, as a wooden post. The mean we attributed to this object was that of an artificial tree, whose association with pillars and altar (the slab) found comparisons in the archaeological evidence above summarized.

Furthermore, the new excavations carried out on the patela of Prinias, starting from 2003, as known, brought to light an almost analogue assemblage formed by three pillars slightly different in sizes associated with slabs, probably functioning as altar or *trapezai*⁵⁸.

In both cases, then, Kommos and Prinias, we would have to do with association altar (basement) and pillar, according to an use already attested in Phoenician domain and, partially, in Mesopotamian and Urartian⁵⁹. The case of Kommos, in particular, would represent a cult composition (*asherah*, *bama* and wooden pole) according to a scheme recorded by ancient sources in Near East.

In meantime, images of trees widely diffused in Iron Age Crete suggest a sudden re-birth of the motive after Dark Age. The simultaneous appearance of the tree, isolated, as focus of the images, or inserted in complex scenes, could testify that in the Aegean, as in Near East, a scared tree cult was concretely performed.

Conclusions

The images, alone, don't exist. They, as well as material culture, invest the aesthetic field with those contextual elements typical of archaeology, and take on those characteristic of the record that allow us to observe them in a "contextual" sense: they are excavated within layers of earth which give them a depositional appearance, and placed within a stratigraphic and chronological grid. However, it must be added, figured objects, in addition of being placed in a

⁵⁶ SHAW 1980; 1981; 1982; 1984; 1986; 1989; BOARDMAN 1990, pp. 169-190; MERSEREAU 1991, pp. 296-297; MORRIS 1992, pp. 155-156.

⁵⁷ PAPPALARDO 2002.

⁵⁸ PALERMO *et al.* 2012; PALERMO *et al.* 2008; PALERMO 2011; PAPPALARDO 2017; PAPPALARDO 2022.

⁵⁹ WEST 1997, p. 34.

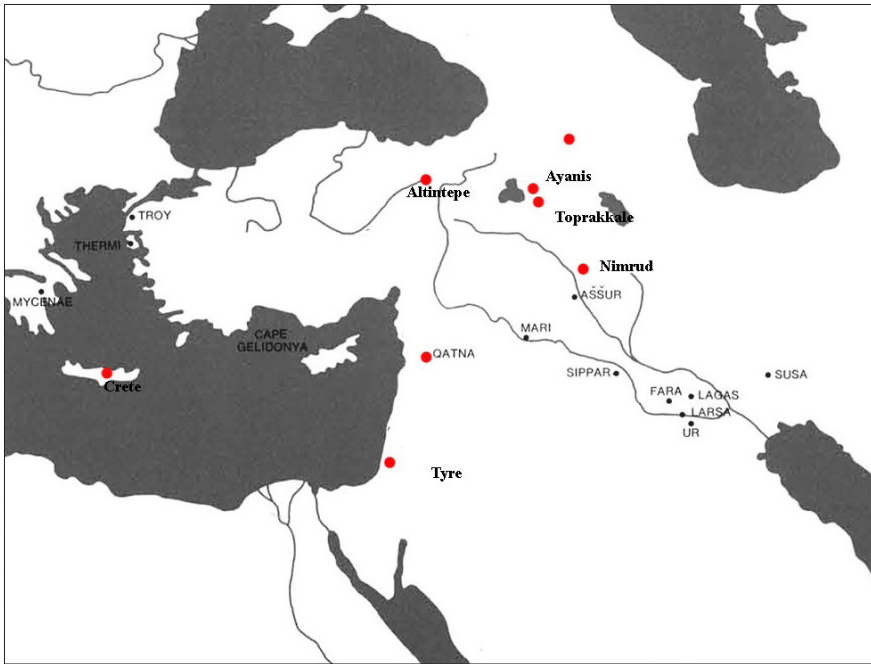


Fig. 19. Ancient Mediterranean and Near East Map (by the Author).

context, are parts of assemblages. They are interrelated, or aggregated with the reference strata. Images on objects can be considered as a socially generated phenomenon linked with human-object interaction rather than a static “epiphenomenal idea existing beyond the object” itself⁶⁰.

The case of the tree’s representation is quite exemplificative for it is attested through the ages and it crosses boundaries (fig. 19).

In the case of the tree’s representation on Cretan objects, it is even more difficult to catch an absolute meaning, because “meanings are in constant flux”⁶¹. Object’s meaning must be viewed as the combination of several and different properties, whose value shifts through the ages and different contexts, depending mostly on human-objects engagements. That is to say, can an object carry an absolute value (and, then, an objective meaning) in contexts far one from another? Meanings derive from relationships between a material object and cultural practices⁶². Of course, aesthetics values vary from culture to culture, and their effect may be construed within a different theory of being⁶³.

Any way, it must be kept in mind that the concept of “origin” of an object, linked with its perception as “foreign”, forms just a partial value of the object itself: something foreign can be no longer considered foreign being incorporated into new identity and meaning⁶⁴.

Iron Age Aegean is lacking textual evidences, but the few examples provided for IX/VIII cent. Crete seem to authorize us to try a partial reconstruction of a behavior.

The tree was worshipped since Bronze Age and associated with the Nature Goddess. In Iron Age, the tree is variously represented on artefacts and pottery. This last, in particular, since the second half of IX cent., is mostly used as cinerary urns, in context, maybe, associated with female burials⁶⁵. In meantime, more than one site seems to provide suggestion for a tree cult, in the form of wooden posts or pillars. These lasts, in particular, often associated with slabs recalling the Eastern concept of *bama*.

Every object found into a precise archaeological context should be approached being considered within specific and defined social practices in which it participates. According to this process, then, things acquire value not just on the base of their provenance, but on that of their “acts of consumption”⁶⁶. That is to say, emphasis should regard how foreign objects and/or iconographies were taken up, conceived, used in their new environments and, mostly, how they may have influenced new practices and behaviours, sometime strongly conditioning ancient performances⁶⁷.

Something foreign is no longer considered foreign in Iron Age Crete, being incorporated into new identity and meaning⁶⁸, and becoming part of a complex and new behaviour in which the object acts according to an original Cretan way.

⁶⁰ FELDMAN 2014, p. 337; OSBORNE, TANNER 2007, p. 9.

⁶¹ FELDMAN 2014, p. 339.

⁶² VAN WIJNGAARDEN 2000.

⁶³ LAYTON 1981, pp. 11-19; see also LAYTON 2003, p. 449.

⁶⁴ FELDMAN 2014, p. 339; PANAGIOTOPOULOS 2012.

⁶⁵ PAPPALARDO 2019.

⁶⁶ FELDMAN 2016.

⁶⁷ PAPPALARDO 2018.

⁶⁸ FELDMAN 2014, p. 339; PANAGIOTOPOULOS 2012.

Bibliography

- ATAÇ 2018 = ATAÇ M.A., *Art and Immortality in the Ancient Near East*, Cambridge 2018.
- BARRELET 1950 = BARRELET M.T., *Une peinture de la cour 106 du palais de Mari*, in *Studia mariana*, Leiden 1950, pp. 9-35.
- BATMAZ 2013 = BATMAZ A., *A New Ceremonial Practice at Ayanis Fortress: The Urtian Sacred Tree Ritual on the Eastern Shore of Lake Van*, in *JNES* 72, 2013, pp. 65-83.
- BAUKS 2012 = BAUKS M., *Sacred Trees in the Garden of Eden and Their Ancient Near Eastern Precursors*, in *Journal of Ancient Judaism* 3, 2012, pp. 267-301.
- BETANCOURT 1985 = BETANCOURT PH., *The History of Minoan Pottery*, Princeton 1985.
- BISCIONE, PARMEGIANI 2001 = BISCIONE R., PARMEGIANI N., *Archaeological Researches in Armenia, 9th-31 July 2001*, in *SMEA* XLIII/2, 2001, pp. 306-314.
- BOARDMAN 1990 = BOARDMAN J., *Al Mina and History*, in *OJA* 9, 1990, pp. 169-190.
- BUDGE 1914 = BUDGE E.A., *Assyrian Sculptures in the British Museum: Reign of Ashur-Nasir-Pal, 885-860 B.C.*, London 1914.
- BURKERT 1992 = BURKERT W., *The Orientalizing Revolution*, Cambridge 1992.
- CARINCI 2001 = CARINCI F., *Per una diversa interpretazione delle kulure nei cortili occidentali dei palazzi minoici*, in *Creta Antica* II, 2001, pp. 43-60.
- ÇILINGIROĞLU 2001 = ÇILINGIROĞLU A., *Temple Area*, in ÇILINGIROĞLU A., SALVINI M. (eds.), *Ayanis I. Ten Years' Excavations at Rusabinili Eiduru-kai 1989-1998*, Roma 2001.
- COLDSTREAM, CATLING 1996 = COLDSTREAM J.N., CATLING H.W., *Knossos. North Cemetery. Early Greek Tombs*, London 1996.
- COLLON 2001 = COLLON D., *Catalogue of the Western Asiatic Seals in the British Museum. Cylinder Seals 5. Neo-Assyrian and Neo-Babylonian Periods*, London 2001.
- COMTE DU MESNIL 1935 = COMTE DU MESNIL, *Le site archéologique de Mishrife-Qatna*, Paris 1935.
- COOK 1978 = COOK R., *The Tree of Life: Image for the Cosmos*, London 1978.
- DANTHINE 1937 = DANTHINE H., *Le palmier-dattier et les arbres sacrés dans l'iconographie de l'Asie Occidentale ancienne*, Paris 1937.
- DEMAKOPOULOU 1996 = DEMAKOPOULOU K., *The Aidonia Treasure*, Athens 1996.
- DE MORGAN *et alii* 1905 = DE MORGAN J., JEQUIER G., DE MECQUENEM R., HAUSOULLIER B., GRAADT VAN ROGGEN D.L., *Délégation en Perse, Mémoires 7. Recherches Archéologiques, 2e série*, Paris 1905.
- ELIOPOULOS 1998 = ELIOPOULOS T., *A Preliminary Report on the Discovery of a Temple Complex of the Dark Ages at Kephala Vasilikis*, in KARAGEORGHIS V., STAMPOLIDIS N. (eds.), *Eastern Mediterranean. Cyprus-Dodecanese-Crete 16th- 6th cent. B.C.*, Athens 1998, pp. 301-313.
- EVANS 1901 = EVANS A., *Mycenaean Tree and Pillar Cult*, in *JHS* 21, 1901, pp. 99-204.
- FELDMAN 2014 = FELDMAN M.-H., *Beyond Iconography: Meaning-Making in Late Bronze Age Eastern Mediterranean Visual and material Culture*, in KNAPP A.-B., VAN DOMMELEN P. (eds.), *The Cambridge Prehistory of the Bronze and Iron Age Mediterranean*, Cambridge 2014, pp. 337-351.
- FELDMAN 2016 = FELDMAN M.-H., *Consuming the East: Near Eastern Luxury Goods in Orientalizing Contexts*, in ARUZ J., SEIMOUR M., *Assyria to Iberia: Art and Culture in Iron Age*, The Metropolitan Museum of Art Symposia, New York 2016, pp. 227-233.
- FERGUSON 1985 = FERGUSON J., *The Palaces of Nineveh and Persepolis Restored. An Essay on ancient Assyrian and Persian Architecture*, London 1985.
- GIOVINO 2008 = GIOVINO M., *The Assyrian Sacred Tree: A History of Interpretations*, OBO 230, Fribourg 2008.
- HASTINGS 2010 = HASTINGS J., *Encyclopaedia of Religion and Ethics*, vol 8, New York 2010.
- HERRMANN 2017 = HERRMANN G., *Ancient Ivory: Masterpieces of the Assyrian Empire*, London 2017.
- KEEL 1992 = KEEL O., *Schlangendarstellungen aus Palästina/Syrien*, in KEEL O. (ed.) *Das Recht der Bilder gesehen zu werden: Drei Fallstudien zur Methode der Interpretation altorientalischer Bilder*, OBO 122, Fribourg 1992.
- KOUROU 2001 = KOUROU N., *The Sacred Tree in Greek Art. Mycenaean versus Near Eastern Traditions*, in *La questione delle influenze vicino-orientali sulla religione greca. Atti del Colloquio Internazionale, Roma 20-22 maggio 1991*, Roma 2001, pp. 31-54.

- LANGDON 1919 = LANGDON S., *Gesture in Sumerian and Babylonian Prayer. A Study in Babylonian and Assyrian Archaeology*, in *Journal of the Royal Asiatic Society* 51, 1919, pp. 539-540.
- LAYARD 1894 = LAYARD A.H., *Nineveh and its Remains*, vol. 1, London 1894.
- LAYTON 1981 = LAYTON R., *The Anthropology of Art*, Granada 1981.
- LAYTON 2003 = LAYTON R., *Art and Agency: A Reassessment*, in *The Journal of the Royal Anthropological Institute of Great Britain and Ireland*, 9.3, 2003, pp. 447-463.
- LEGRAIN 1933 = LEGRAIN L., *Restauration de la stèle d'UrUr-Nammu*, in *Revue d'Assyriologie et d'archéologie orientale*, 30.3, 1933, pp. 111-115.
- LEHMANN-HAUPT 1931 = LEHMANN-HAUPT C.F., *Armenien einst und jetzt*, II, 2, Berlin 1931.
- LENORMANT 1980-84 = LENORMANT F., *Les origines de l'histoire d'après la Bible et les traditions des peuples orientaux*, Paris 1980-84.
- LOUD 1936 = LOUD G., *Khorsabad. Part I. Excavations in the Palace and at a City Gate*, Chicago 1936.
- MERSEREAU 1991 = MERSEREAU R., *Prehistoric Architectural Models from the Aegean*, Ann Arbor 1991, pp. 296-297.
- MORRIS 1992 = MORRIS S., *Daidalos and the Origins of Greek Art*, Princeton 1992, pp. 155-156.
- NA'AMAN 2006 = NA'AMAN N., *On Temples and Sacred Trees in Tyre and Sidon in the Late Eighth Century BCE*, in *Rivista di Studi fenici* 34.1, 2006, pp. 39-48.
- OPPENHEIM 1965-66 = OPPENHEIM A. L., *Analysis of an Assyrian Ritual (KAR 139)*, in *History of Religion* 5, 1965-66, pp. 250-265.
- OSBORNE 2018 = OSBORNE W., *Trees and Kings. A comparative Analysis of Tree imagery in Israel's Prophetic Tradition and the Ancient Near East*, Pennsylvania 2018.
- OSBORNE, TANNER 2007 = OSBORNE R., TANNER J., *Introduction: Art and Agency and Art History*, in OSBORNE R., TANNER J. (eds.), *Art's Agency and Art History*, Oxford 2007, pp. 1-27.
- ÖZGÜÇ 1966 = ÖZGÜÇ T., *Altintepe I*, Ankara 1966.
- PALERMO 2011 = PALERMO, D., *L'attività della Missione Archeologica dell'Università di Catania a Priniàs fra il 2002 e il 2006*, in ANΔΡΕΑΔΑΚΗ-ΒΛΑΖΑΚΗ Μ., ΠΑΠΑΔΟΠΟΥΛΟΥ Ε. (επιμ.), *Πεπραγμένα του Ι' Διεθνούς Κρητολογικού Συνεδρίου (Χανιά, 1-8 Οκτωβρίου 2006)*, Α4. Χανιά: Φιλολογικός Σύλλογος «Ο Χρυσόστομος», pp. 233-244.
- PALERMO et al. 2008 = PALERMO D., PAUTASSO A., GIGLI PATANÈ R., *Lo scavo del 2007 sulla Patela di Priniàs. Relazione preliminare*, in *Creta Antica* 9, 2008, pp. 179-207.
- PALERMO et al. 2012 = PALERMO D., PAUTASSO A., RIZZA S., MASALA S., GIGLI PATANE, R., PERNA K., BIONDI G., *Lo scavo del 2005 sulla Patela di Priniàs. Relazione preliminare*, in *Creta Antica* 8, 2012, pp. 265-313.
- PANAGIOTOPOULOS 2012 = PANAGIOTOPOULOS A., *Encountering the foreign: Deconstructing Alterity in the Archaeologies of Bronze Age Mediterranean*, in MARAN J., STOCKHAMMER B. (eds.), *Materiality and Social Practice: Transformative Capacities of Intercultural Encounters*, Oxford 2012, pp. 51-60.
- PAPPALARDO 2002 = PAPPALARDO E., *Il "tripillar Shrine" di Kommos: alcune considerazioni*, in *Creta Antica* III, 2002, pp. 263-272.
- PAPPALARDO 2006 = PAPPALARDO E., *Avori dagli scavi italiani di Forte Salmanasser (Nimrud). Elementi vegetali, figure umane, leoni*, in *Mesopotamia* XVI, 2006, pp. 57-153.
- PAPPALARDO 2017 = PAPPALARDO E., *Ceramica proveniente dal saggio A/B all'interno del vano VD*, in *ASAtene* 95, 2017, pp. 462-469.
- PAPPALARDO 2018 = PAPPALARDO E., *Art and Agency. Meaning-making in Iron Age Mediterranean*, in *Creta Antica* XIX, 2018, pp. 13-2.
- PAPPALARDO 2019 = PAPPALARDO E., *Urne figurate da Priniàs. Il Protogeometrico B tra Dark Age e Alto Arcaismo*, in *ASAtene* 97, 2019, pp. 183-204.
- PAPPALARDO 2021 = PAPPALARDO E., *POSTYT. Pottery styles in transition in Iron Age Crete*, in *Athens Journal of Mediterranean Studies* 8.1, January 2021, pp. 11-28.
- PAPPALARDO 2022 = PAPPALARDO E., in PAUTASSO A., RIZZA S., PAPPALARDO E., HEIN A., BIONDI G., GIGLI PATANÈ R., PERNA K., GUARNERA V., *Priniàs. Scavi e ricerche nel 2021*, in *ASAtene* 99.2, 2022, pp. 15-30.
- PARPOLA 1993 = PARPOLA S., *The Assyrian Tree of Life: Tracing the Origins of Jewish Monotheism and Greek Philosophy*, in *JNES* 52, 1993, pp. 161-208.
- PERING 1932-33 = PERING B., *Die geflügelte Scheibe in Assyrien. Eine religionsgeschichtliche Untersuchung*, in *Archiv für Orientforschung* 8, 1932-33, pp. 281-296.

- PIOTROVSKIJ 1996 = PIOTROVSKIJ B.B., *Il regno di Van*, Roma 1996.
- PONGRATZ-LEISTEN 1992 = PONGRATZ-LEISTEN B., *Mesopotamische Standarten in literarischen Zeugnissen*, in *Baghdader Mitteilungen* 23, 1992, pp. 299-340.
- PORTER 2003 = PORTER B., *Trees, Kings, and Politics: Studies in Assyrian Iconography*, OBO 197, Zurich 2003.
- PREZIOSI 1983 = PREZIOSI D., *Minoan Architectural Design*, Berlin-Amsterdam 1983.
- RAWLINSON 1864 = RAWLINSON H. C., *The Five Great Monarchies of the Ancient Eastern World; or, The History, Geography, and Antiquities of Chaldea, Assyria, Babylon, Media, and Persia, collected and illustrated from Ancient and Modern Sources*, vol. II, London 1864.
- RAWLINSON 1847 = RAWLINSON H. C., *The Persian Cuneiform Inscription at Behistun, Decyphered and Translated; with a Memoir on Cuneiform Inscriptions*, in *Journal of the Royal Asiatic Society of Great Britain and Ireland* 10, 1st ser., 1847, pp. 1-349.
- READE 1983 = READE J.E., *Assyrian Sculpture*, London 1983.
- RICE 1983 = RICE E.E., *The Grand Procession of Ptolemy Philadelphus*, Oxford 1983.
- RIIS 1958 = RIIS P.J., *Hama. Fouilles et recherches de la Fondation Carlsberg II*, Copenhagen 1958.
- RIIS 1970 = RIIS P.J., *Sukas I. The North-East Sanctuary and the First Settling of Greeks in Syria and Palestine*, Copenhagen 1970.
- RUSSELL 1998 = RUSSELL J. M., *The Program of Assurnasirpal II at Nimrud: Issues in the Research and Presentation of Assyrian Art*, in *American Journal of Archaeology* 102, 1998, pp. 655-715.
- SAGGS 1955 = SAGGS H.W.F., *The Nimrud Letters, 1952 – Part II*, in *Iraq* 17, 1955, pp. 126-154.
- SCHRAMM 1973 = SCHRAMM W., *Einleitung in die assyrischen Königsinschriften. Zweiter Teil. 934-722 v. Chr. (Handbuch der Orientalistik)*, Leiden 1973.
- SHAW 1980 = SHAW J.W., *Excavations at Kommos (Crete) during 1979*, in *Hesperia* 49, 1980, pp. 207-250.
- SHAW 1981 = SHAW J.W., *Excavations at Kommos (Crete) during 1980*, in *Hesperia* 50, 1981, pp. 211-251.
- SHAW 1982 = SHAW J.W., *Excavations at Kommos (Crete) during 1981*, in *Hesperia* 51, 1982, pp. 164-195.
- SHAW 1984 = SHAW J.W., *Excavations at Kommos (Crete) during 1982-83*, in *Hesperia* 53, 1984, pp. 251-287.
- SHAW 1986 = SHAW J.W., *Excavations at Kommos (Crete) during 1984-86*, in *Hesperia* 55, 1986, pp. 219-269.
- SHAW 1989 = SHAW J.W., *Phoenicians in Southern Crete*, in *AJA* 93, 1989, pp. 165-183.
- STEARNS 1973 = STEARNS J. B., *Reliefs from the Palace of Ashurnasirpal II* (Archiv für Orientforschung 15), Graz 1973.
- THUREAU-DANGIN 1918 = THUREAU-DANGIN F., *La chronologie de la dynastie de Larsa*, in *Revue d'assyriologie et d'archéologie orientale* 15, 1918, pp. 1-57.
- VAN WIJNGAARDEN 2000 = VAN WIJNGAARDEN G., *The Cultural Significance of Mycenaean Pictorial Kraters*, in *Pharos* 8, 2000, pp. 75-95.
- WEST 1997 = WEST M.L., *The East Face of Helicon*, Oxford 1997.
- WRIGHT 1992 = WRIGHT G.R., *The Cypriot Rural Sanctuary*, in IOANNIDES G.C. (ed.), *Studies in Honour of Vassos Karageorgis*, Nicosia 1992, pp. 269-283.
- YARDEN 1972 = YARDEN L., *The Tree of Light: a Study of the Menorah. The Seven Branched Lampstead*, Uppsala 1972.

