

Asherah and her Trace

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Abstract

This paper focuses on finding similarities between Jewish and Korean female deities. The basic assumption is that Asherah is a Jewish fertility goddess and a Korean counterpart of this deity is Samsun Halmuny. The first similarity between two deities is that they are not official or national religious rites like Judaism or Buddhism. In other words, they belong to nonconventional religious rituals. The second similarity between two deities is that they are visible entities while YHWH is invisible deity. The third similarity between them is that they mirror their milieu or *Leben in Sitzen*. That is, they reflect their social or cultural environment. These three similarities demonstrate the correlation between human lives and religion and reveal an important truth: Religion cannot exist without humans and vice versa.

Key words: Asherah, Samshin Halmuny, fertility goddess,

1. Introduction

This paper was triggered by Underwood who stated that Asherah, Jewish goddess, had found in Korean nonconventional religion. His statement was so impressive that this author could not ignore the possible connection between ancient Israel and ancient Korean. If the connection does indeed exist, an important question arises. Can the notion of a universal goddess be extended to a common entity if a Jewish-styled goddess exists in two distinct, geographically separated cultures, i.e. ancient Korean and ancient Israel?

With this difficult question, this paper begins with the details of Asherah's representations in the second chapter. Asherah's trace in Korean culture will be examined in the third chapter. Some similarities that comprise both Jewish and Korean religious phenomena will be proposed in the fourth chapter. A conclusion will be given in the fifth chapter.

2. Asherah

When Zilpah delivered her second son in Gen. 30:13, Leah exclaimed, “*shr.*” This word implies the existence of Asherah because Asher is the masculine counterpart of Asherah.¹ Hebrew incantation text, which dates to 7th century BCE, confirms the fact that Asherah was the goddess who helped the women in childbirth.²

In Old Testament, Asherah appears 40 times.³ It represents three different objects: a sacred tree, a pole, and the cult goddess.⁴ Asherah is embodied differently with the changes of the times. During the Patriarchic period, Asherah might be hidden under tree worship. While en-route from Haran to Canaan, Abraham traveled to “the site of the great tree of Moreh at Shechem”(Gen. 12:6). Abraham pitched his tent and built an altar to YHWH “near the great trees of Mamre at Hebron” (Gen. 13:18). Gen. 14:13 also tells that Abraham lived “near the great trees of Mamre.” YHWH appeared to Abraham “near the great trees of Mamre” (Gen. 18:1). After making a treaty with neighboring nations, Abraham “planted a tamarisk tree in Beersheba and there he called upon the name of the Lord, the Eternal God” (Gen. 21:23). Joshua laid the book of God under the oak near the holy place of the Lord (Josh. 24:26).⁵ During the period of Judges, in the Gideon’s narrative, the angel of YHWH waited for Gideon under the oak. Asherah was a paired goddess of Baal.⁶ Asherah, however, became a paired goddess of YHWH during the period of Divided Kingdom.⁷

¹ C.F. Burney, *Israel’s Settlement in Canaan: The Biblical Tradition and its Historical Background* (London: Oxford University Press, 1917), 55. Although he proposed that this term be translated as ‘with (the help of) Asher,’ the most Bible versions do not seem to adopt his proposal. Leah’s words are translated like these: “Happy am I!” (RSV), “How happy I am!” (NIV), “I am happy” (NKJV), “What blessedness!” (NJB); W. L. Reed, *The Asherah in the Old Testament* (Fort Worth: Texas Christian University Press, 1949), 81.

² Raphael Patai, “The Goddess Asherah,” *Journal of Near Eastern Studies* 24 no. 1-1 (Ja-Apr 1965): 40; See Asherah (figure 1) dated from 13th century B.C.E. She prepares herself for the delivery of twins [<http://www.imj.org.il/imagines/galleries/viewItemE.asp?case=2&itemNum=198014>].

³ John R. Kohlenberger III and James A. Swason, *The Hebrew English Concordance to the Old Testaments with the New International Version* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan Publishing House), 906, 1998.

⁴ m, ‘Abod. Zar. 3:7; Ruth Hestrin, “Understanding Asherah,” *Biblical Archaeology Review* 17 (S-O 1991), 50; M. S. Smith states that the Mishnaic text includes Asherah as representations of a tree and a wood pole due to the Hellenistic influence, although the Bible represents Asherah as an object of cult [Mark S. Smith, *The Early History of God: Yahweh and the Other Deities in Ancient Israel*, 2nd ed. (Dearborn: Dove, 2002), 112].

⁵ Joan E. Taylor, “The Asherah, the Menorah and the Sacred Tree,” *Journal for the Study of the Old Testament* no. 66 (Je. 1995): 35.

⁶ According to Ugaritic mythology that dated from the 14th century B.C.E., Asherah was a chief Canaanite goddess. She was wife of the chief God, El. When her son Baal wanted to obtain permission from El, Asherah intercedes with El. After the Canaanite Conquest, the Israelites began to be assimilated into Canaanite cult [Patai (1965): 38-39]; M. S. Smith assumes that Israelite culture overlapped with Canaanite culture [Smith (2002), 6]

Menasseh the 14th king of Judah made an Asherah on high places (2 Kings 21: 3) and put the Asherah in Lord's temple (2 Kings 21:7).

Asherah's three representations are mixed in English Bible versions. Let us look at the word Asherah, which appears in Exodus 34:13 for the first time in the Old Testament. Some modern translations, such as Contemporary English Version, Good News Bible, Amplified Bible and God's Word Translation, translate Asherah as a goddess. Some old versions, such as Douay Rheim and King James and its revised versions, translate Asherah as groves. Some moderate translations, such as Common English Bible Holman Christian Standard Bible, Lexham English Bible, and The Message translate Asherah as sacred or fertility poles.

As shown above, Asherah was always interpreted as one of three entities, so it is necessary to examine the three representations separately.

2.1. Asherah as Sacred Tree⁸

In Ex.34:13, Deut. 12:3⁹, 16:21, Judg. 6:25, and 1 Kings 14:15, Asherahs are associated with a sacred living tree.¹⁰ The verbs that were used with Asherah are *nt'* (to plant) in Deut. 16:21¹¹ and *krt* (to cut) in Judg. 6:25.¹² They indicate that Asherah is a living tree. In addition, the fact that Asherah takes the definite article (2 Kings 18:4; 2 Kings 13:6) shows that it is a common noun.¹³

There is also archaeological evidence. On the shoulder of Lachish ewer (Figure 4), which dates to

⁷ See Cult Stand (Figure 2) and Asherah (Figure 3). The former dated from 12th-10th century B.C.E. The cult stand referred to incense burners. At the bottom, we can see female deities [http://cojs.org/cojswiki/Cult_Stand%2C_12th-10th_century_BCE]; The latter dated from 10th-7th century B.C.E. Asherah "stands as the naked female" with two lions [http://cojs.org/cojswiki/Asherah%2C_10th-7th_century_BCE]

⁸ L. Yarden connects a sacred tree with Menorah, but he does not assume any connections between Menorah and Asherah. The style of Israel's sacred tree comes from a combined image of an almond tree and burning bush [L. Yarden, *The Tree of Light: A Study of the Menorah* (Ithaca, New York: Cornell University Press, 1971), 40]; E. R. Goodenough admits the similarity of form between the menorah and the tree in Lachish ewer, but he does not mention any relationship with Asherah [Edwin R. Goodenough, *Jewish Symbols in the Greco-Roman Period IV*, vol. 4 *Symbols from Jewish Cult*, Bollingon Series 37 (New York: Patheon, 1954), 73].

⁹ In Deut. 12:2-3 and Jer. 17:2, the spreading tree and Asherah pole are described as different entities.

¹⁰ m. Appendix I.4; Living trees, such as grapevines, pomegranates, walnuts, myrtle, and willows, are examples of the Asherah [John Day, "Aherah in the Hebrew Bible," *Journal of Biblical Literature* 105, No.3 (Sep 1986): 397.

¹¹ Andre Lemaire, "Who or What was Yaweh's Asherah: New Inscriptions Reopen Debate About Meaning of Asherah," *Biblical Archaeology Review* 10 no. 6 (N-D, 1984): 50.

¹² Ruth Hestrin, Ruth. "Understanding Asherah." *Biblical Archaeology Review* 17 (S-O 1991): 50.

¹³ Lemaire (1984): 50; According to J. M. Hadley, 9 times out of 40 occurrences, Asherah appears without the definite article or a pronominal suffix [Judith M. Hadley, *The Cult of Asherah in Ancient Israel and Judah: Evidence for a Hebrew Goddess* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2000), 59.

about 1220 BCE, there are a stylized tree and two ibexes.¹⁴ Lachish goblet (Figure 5) has drawings of ibexes and public triangles, which is another way to represent Asherah.¹⁵ Kuntillet 'Ajurd pithos (Figure 6) that dates to the late 10th century BCE also has a tree and two ibexes.¹⁶ Thus, these three artifacts support the hypothesis that Asherahs were represented as living trees.

2.2. Asherah as Wooden Poles

Asherah poles were the objects that were standing with Massebah in front of the early Israelite shrines. The Asherahs (wooden poles) represented a female deity, the Massebahs (stone pillars) represented a male deity.¹⁷

In the northern kingdom of Israel, Ahab (869-850 BCE)¹⁸ made an Asherah pole and his action provoked God's anger (1 Kings 16:33). In Judah, Asa (913-873 BCE)¹⁹ disposed his grandmother because she made a repulsive Asherah pole (1 Kings 15:13). These Bible passages indicate that the Asherah poles are more than simple idols.²⁰ They are connected with fertility cults, which were condemned by Deuteronomistic historians.

2.3. Asherah as the Cult Object

In Genesis 38: 21-22, the word, "shrine prostitute" occurs three times. The Hebrew word for this term is *kedeshah*,²¹ which "is derived from the word for "holy" or "consecrate" and *kedeshah* refers to a temple or cult prostitute."²² More specifically, *kedeshah* is a priestess in both the Baal and Asherah cults.²³ Asherahs, however, are different from Ashetroreths.

¹⁴ Hestrin (1991), 52.

¹⁵ *Ibid.*, 53.

¹⁶ *Ibid.*, 57-8.

¹⁷ Walter Harrelson, *From Fertility Cult to Worship* (Garden City, New York: Doubleday & Company, Inc., 1969), 54.

¹⁸ Mark S. Smith, "God Male and Female in the Old Testament: Yaweh and His "asherah,"" *Theological Studies* vol. 48, no. 2 (June, 1987): 335.

¹⁹ *Ibid.*, 336.

²⁰ Patai (1965): 45.

²¹ *Kedeshah* means female prostitutes, but *kedesh* refers to male prostitute. 1 King 14:24 mentions the latter.

²² W. D. Reybun and E. M. Fry, *Genesis* (New York: United Bible Societies, 1997), 882-3; N. M. Sarna, *The JPS Torah Commentary: Genesis*, (Philadelphia: The Jewish Publication Society, 1989), 269.

²³ O.J. Baab, "Prostitution," in *The Interpreter's Dictionary of the Bible*, eds. George Arthur Buttrick, Thomas Samuel Kepler, John Knox, Herbert Gordon May, Samuel Terrien, Emory Stevens Bucke (Nashville: Abingdon Press 1962), 933.

2.3.1 Ashtroreths

In Judg. 3:7, 1 Kings 18:19, and 2 Kings 23:4, Baal is associated with Asherah²⁴, but in Judges 2:13, 1 Samuel 7:4, 12:10, the Baals are associated with Ashtroreths. In a word, Asherahs and Ashtroreths are not identical deities.²⁵

In 2 Kings 23, the temple of Ashtroreth of the Sidonians was outside the temple of the Asherah.²⁶ Thus, Josiah first removed from the temple of the Lord the articles that belong to Baal and Asherah (2 Kings 23: 4-5), desecrated the high place for Ashtroreth (2 Kings 23: 13), and cut down the Asherah poles (2 Kings 23:14).

2.3.2. Fertility Cult

The characteristic features of fertility cult were sacral sexual intercourse, self-laceration, and child-sacrifice.²⁷ The basic belief of this cult was that the procreation of nature was controlled by the relationship of gods. Cult devotees had sexual intercourse with cult prostitutes in order to stimulate gods who give fertility. If men, animal, and land are sterile, the cult devotees can restore the fertility by having sexual activity with prostitutes.²⁸

Wine and songs lead cult worshippers into ecstatic frenzy and make them lacerate their bodies. An extreme laceration is self-emasculatation.²⁹ In 1 Kings 18:28 the Baal prophets shouted and slashed themselves with swords.³⁰

Child sacrifice was rooted in the Punic religion. Carthaginians, who migrated from Phoenicia in the 9th and 8th centuries BCE, practiced human sacrifice until the fall of Carthage. Phoenicians also practiced child sacrifice until Phoenicia was absorbed into Assyria. The child sacrifice did not disappear until the 3rd

²⁴ Lemaire states that “all the references to Asherah in association with Baal are relatively late – that is, beginning in the late eighth century B.C.” [Lemaire (1984): 50].

²⁵ Day (1986), 398; W. L. Reed, “Aherah,” in *The Interpreter's Dictionary of the Bible*, eds. George Arthur Buttrick, Thomas Samuel Kepler, John Knox, Herbert Gordon May, Samuel Terrien, Emory Stevens Bucke, (Nashville: Abingdon Press 1962), 251.

²⁶ Reed (1949), 14.

²⁷ M. H. Pope, “Fertility Cults,” in *The Interpreter's Dictionary of the Bible*, eds. George Arthur buttrick, Thomas Samuel Kepler, John Knox, Herbert Gordon May, Samuel Terrien, Emory Stevens Bucke, (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1962), 265.

²⁸ Beatrice Allard Brooks, “Fertility Cult Functionaries in the Old Testament,” *Journal of Biblical Literature* 60 no. 3 (1994): 243.

²⁹ Pope (1962), 265.

³⁰ This Bible verse does not mention Asherah, but Asherah and Baal are related to the fertility cult. Thus, these activities in 1 King 18:28 describe the usual customs of the fertility cult.

century CE.³¹ In 2 Kings 21:6, Manasseh (696-641 BCE) sacrificed his own son in fire.

Some conservative scholars insist that Ashrahs were idols that symbolized trees or wooden poles, but some open-minded scholars admit that Asherah was the Jewish goddess and was worshipped by Jewish people. This paper ascribes to the second view, regarding Asherah as the Jewish fertility goddess. The next step is to pursue the trace of Asherah in Korean culture.

3. Asherah's Trace in Korean Culture

Underwood wrote about religions of old Korea and stated that Jewish religious objects such as, high places, pillars, and Asherah, were discovered in a distant, unexpected place, that is, on the roadside of Korea.

The Sunghwang Dang, or Mountain Pass Gods. Wherever a road went over a mountain pass in the old days, there was a little shrine by the roadside, usually with an old gnarled, twisted tree beside it and a pile of pebbles, and quite commonly also with some of the Point General wooden pillars. The Jews used to worship pillar gods, and they called them "Ashera." The Koreans and Japanese used to make much of them."³²

According to the above quotation, there is a similarity between Jewish Asherah and Korean Mountain Pass Gods. He assumed that Asherah was a tree, so he identified the old tree in Sunghwang Dang with Asherah. With regard to Underwood statements, there might be two stands. One is to ignore them because comparing Jewish and Korean deities and shrines may comprise synchronic and diachronic fallacies. The other is to adopt them as hypotheses and to explore some universal variables that are hidden under similar religious objects, activities, or customs.

In the introduction of his book, *Balder the Beautiful*, Frazer assumes that human cultures in different religions are accomplished by mutual borrowings. Distinguishing one culture from others is "a task of extreme difficulty and delicacy" that needs a lot of effort and time.³³

³¹ William Foxwell Albright, *Archaeology and the Religion of Israel*, 4th ed. (Baltimore: John Hopkins Press, 1956), 93.

³² Horace Grant Underwood, *The Religions of Eastern Asia* (New York: The Macmillan Company, 1910), 200.

³³ J.G. Frazer, *Golden Bough: A Study in Magic and Religion, Part VII Balder the Beautiful* Vol. I (London: Macmillan and Co., Limited, 1913), vii.

An example of the mutual borrowings may be the fire festivals of Europe: Lenten fires, the Easter fires, Midsummer fires, Autumn fires, Halloween's fires, and Midwinter fires. We cannot maintain that some are religious and others are pagan because all fire festivals mingled with Christianity and pagan elements. For example, Europeans kindled bonfire on the first Sunday of Lent (the Lenten Fires) and lighted a holy new fire on Easter (the Easter Fires). East Fire festivals were also celebrated by farmers who had believed that the fire fertilized the field and protected their houses. Midsummer fire festivals were celebrated for St. John the Baptist, but they were connected to summer solstice. Halloween was celebrated on the eve of Feast of All Souls Day, marking the beginning of November, which was important season for the herdsmen who had to drive cattle into safe stall.³⁴

These fire festivals are not limited only to Europe. Jewish people have had the fire festival called Hanukka or the feast of Dedication. The main ritual of this feast is to illuminate the temple and every house.³⁵ Frazer mentioned "eating cold food" celebrated with the beginning of April. For three days, people extinguished fires for "the solemn renewal of the fire."³⁶ Korean custom still celebrates the spring festival, "Hanshik," when buds bloom and seeds are planted. This spring festival, however, is not a major festival today. According to Frazer, the underlying belief of these festivals is that fires fertilize plants, animals, and human beings.

This paper adopts the second view and examines Underwood's statement by comparing High Places with Sungwhang Dang and Asherah as a fertility goddess with Samsun Halmuny.

3.1 Wely, High Places, and Sunghwang Dang

Underwood mentioned: "A picture of an Arab "Wely" shrine shown in Macalister's Century of Excavation in Palestine(p. 272) might well be taken for a photograph from Korea."³⁷ This statement indicated that "Wely" was similar to Sunghwang Dang.

Macalister referred to Wely as a shrine and a deity. The Wely as a shrine (Figure 7) was reminiscent of Sunghwang Dang in the wilderness. Wely as a deity denoted a local god that was different from a universal deity, Allah. The Moabite people thought that wely was "capricious and easily offended, but Allah

³⁴ *Ibid.*, 106-219.

³⁵ People think that Hanukka originated from the fall of the temple in 168 BC, but Montgomery insisted that it originated from the dedications of the temples that Solomon, Jeroboam, and Nehemiah had built[James A. Montgomery, "The Dedication Feast in the Old Testament," *Journal of Biblical Literature*, Vol. 29, No. 1(1910), 29,32].

³⁶ Frazer, *Part VII Balder the Beautiful Vol. I*, 137.

³⁷ Underwood (1910), 200.

was “merciful and compassionate.” Thus, farmers served Wely to not provoke Wely’s arbitrary wrath.³⁸

The Jewish Wely must have been high places. In Kings and Chronicles, the high places³⁹ were hills or higher places that were furnished with a shrine for YHWH, trees, pillars, and Asherah. These places were completely destroyed by Josiah the 16th king of Judah.

According to Macalister, there were two kinds of high places: one is far from human residence and the other within city. In high places, there were a tree with colorful rags, pillar stones, a wooden post carved like a human, a well for purification and libations, and a tumulus of an honorable man. The dead man’s spirit lingered in the sanctuary.⁴⁰ The descriptions of high places are similar to Sunghwang Dang. Like Asherah’s shrine, Sunghwang Dang is located on hills or higher places with trees.⁴¹ Sunghwang Dang had been imported from Tang Dynasty during Shilla,⁴² so there were Sunghwang temples in Goryeo.⁴³ Worshipping a god at Sunghwang had originated from a national ritual, but it was reduced to ordinary people’s belief during Lee Dynasty when Sunghwang Dang was forced to shut down.⁴⁴

Underwood connected the high place to Sunghwang Dang, but he did not identify Asherah with Jangseung. In and around the High Place at Gezer,⁴⁵ both phallic emblems⁴⁶ and naked female plaques were found in abundance. The latter was called “the Oriental mother-goddess”.⁴⁷ Macalister did not refer to the mother-goddess as Asherah, but he demonstrated that the Jews served a goddess until Exile. In Korean culture, the counterpart of Asherah seems to be Samsun Halmuny.

³⁸ R.A.S. Macalister, *A Century of Excavation in Palestine* (London: The Religious Tract Society, 1925), 274.

³⁹ See (Figure 8) for the general view of high place [Ze’ev Meshel, “Kuntillet ‘Ajrud: An Israelite Religious Center in Northern Sinai,” *Expedition* (Summer 1978): 51]

⁴⁰ Macalister (1925), 271-2.

⁴¹ Seong-mi Rho, “An Investigation of Tradition for Sacrificial Rites of Seonghwangdang in Masan,” 『문학과 언어』 (제 30집, 2008.5): 110; These trees are usually *kalopanax pictus*.

⁴² *Ibid.*, 108; Jang-Sik Jang, “Seonghwangdang on the Gunjabong hill from Different Discourse in Oral Tradition,” 『한국민속학』 40 (2004.12): 446.

⁴³ *Ibid.*, 107-8; 양언석, “고성군 성황당에 나타난 성의식 고찰,” 『강원민속학』 제 19집 (2005): 311.

⁴⁴ Rho (2008): 108-9.

⁴⁵ The remains in Gaza dated from the Neolithic age to the time of Maccabees (Macalister, 65p.) The time of Maccabees refers to 2 BCE.

⁴⁶ According to Choi, Samshin originates from kam or sam in Altai, which means shamans. Samshin is relevant to ancestors of Dankyun who is called a founding father of ancient Korean. That is, Sanshin refers to Whanin, Whanwung, Dankyun. [최광식, “삼신할머니의 기원과 성격,” 『여성문제연구』 (Vol 11, 1982): 52].

⁴⁷ Macalister (1925), 278-9.

3.2 Samshin Halmuny

Samshin Halmuny (grandmother spirit) was a household goddess⁴⁸ who played a unique role in pregnancy and delivery. According to Guillemoze, each family has its own Samshin Halmuny. People believe that a couple can have a baby through Samshun Halmuny's intervention. After a child is born, family regularly pray to Samshin Halmuny for the child. Samshin Halmuny helps the child grow healthy.⁴⁹ It is said that Samshin Halmuny in a house competes with another Samshin Halmuny in another house, so they sometimes fight each other when a pregnant woman borrows rice or soy sauce from another pregnant woman.⁵⁰ Samshin Halmuny seems to be very jealous, but like Asherah, Samshin Halmuny can qualify as the goddess who is in charge of procreation.

With the development of science and medicine, the being of Samshin Halmuny gradually disappeared, even from rural areas, although she has survived in narratives. Cha collected narratives of Korean goddesses based on oral myths. Samshin Halmuny's narratives were about suffering women who lived in the patriarchal society.⁵¹

Like Samshin Halmuny, Asherah seemed to be popular and loved by the people. Why? Kim suggested that the female goddess during Iron Age II (1000-550 BCE) comforted both the women who were harassed by excessive patriarchal control and low-class people who were exploited by immoderate monarchic power.⁵² Chang proposed that the female pillar-figures during the Iron Age (1000-586 BCE) were household gods that protect all members of family from evil spirits.⁵³

4. Similarities between Two Deities

The first similarity between two deities is that they are not official or national religious rites like Judaism or Buddhism. That is, they belonged to nonconventional religious rituals. As Frazer suggested, they have

⁴⁸ In Genesis 31:19, Rachel had stolen her father's household gods when she left her father.

⁴⁹ A. Guillemoze, "삼신할머니-동해안의 한 어촌에서의 신앙과 무가를 중심으로," 『문화인류학』 (7집, 1975.12): 28-31.

⁵⁰ Guillemoze (1975): 23.

⁵¹ Samsun Halmyny's narrative was about a woman who was raped, became pregnant, was expelled from house, but she delivered children and raise them [차옥승, "한국 여신신화와 여성 정체성," 『종교연구』 (Vol 45, 2006): 7].

⁵² 김은규, "구약 야훼의 배우자이자 민중종교로서 '아세라'(Asherah) 여신(女神)," 『종교연구』 (제 51집, 2008): 75-82.

⁵³ 장대규, "고대 이스라엘 "진흙 여인상"의 기둥에 관한 연구: 구마적/주술적 기능을 중심으로," 『서양교대사연구』 (Vol. 22, 2008): 8, 30-31.

marks of primitive rituals.⁵⁴ First, there were no specific priests who were in charge of the rituals. Asherah had priests once during Ahab's reign, but she did not have any priests in Southern Judah. Even when Asherah was put in the YHWH's temple, her presence was ignored. She was a supplementary goddess to YHWH. In Kings and Chronicles, the main role of the priests was to offer sacrifices to YHWH. Samshin Halmuny had never had her priests. If Samshin Halmuny had had her subordinate priests, they would have been anonymous women. Second, there are no special places for rituals. Asherah's shrines were placed on high hills, but YHWH's temple was built only in Jerusalem. Samshin Halmuny was worshiped in every house, so she did not have any specific shrines. Third, their attributes are not individual but generic. In Kings and Chronicles, YHWH was described as the entity that had many personal attributes. Asherah did not have personal attributes, but she had only her obvious ritual functions. The origin of the term Samsun Halmuny was controversial, but it was evident that Samsun Halmuny was not a proper name. Fourth, the rituals are magical.

Before discussing the correlation between these rituals and magic, we need to examine what magic is. Lucian Levey-Bruhl mentioned the reason why human beings could not give up magic. Humans wished that their lives went smoothly, but their dream was never fulfilled. Their lives were full of unexpected, complicated, and incomprehensible challenges, which forced humans to assume "the manifestation of a mystic power" within themselves and social groups.⁵⁵

Eddington tries to contrast physics with magic. Eddington assumes two worlds: A, an actual world and B, a world which might have been.⁵⁶ Montague calls the latter a possible world.⁵⁷ The difference between physics and magic is in how the physical rules apply. In physics, physical rules cannot satisfy all actual and possible worlds, so there are always exceptions. In magic, however, physical rules can be applied to all actual and possible worlds without exception. Physical rules can be altered according to human desires or cravings.

Frazer defined magic as a spurious system of natural law, a fallacious guide of conduct, a false science, and an abortive art. Two working principles of magic are similarity and contact.⁵⁸

⁵⁴ Frazer, *Golden Bough: A Study in Magic and Religion Part V. Spirit of the Corn and of the Wild Vol. I.* (London: MacMillan and Co., Ltd, 1912). 169.

⁵⁵ Lucian Levey-Bruhl, *Primitive Mentality*, trans. Lilian A. Clare (London: George Allen & Unwin Ltd., 1923), 43.

⁵⁶ Arthur S. Eddington, "The Domain of Physical Science," in *Science, Religion and Reality*. Ed. Joseph Needham (New York: The Macmillan Company, 1925), 209.

⁵⁷ David R. Dowty, *Word Meaning and Montague Grammar* (Mass., U.S.A: Reidel Publishing Company, 1979), 102-3.

⁵⁸ James George Frazer, *Golden Bough: A Study in Magic and Religion Part I The Magic Art and the Evolution of Kings Vol I* (London: Macmillan and Co., Ltd., 1920), 53; Magic is divided into two categories: theoretical and practical magic. The former is called as a pseudo-science and the latter as a pseudo-art. The latter is again subcategorized as positive magic (sorcery) and negative magic (taboo)[*Ibid.*,

In the light of magic, Jewish Asherah and Korean Samsun Halmuny are sympathetic magic. When humans look at a tree, they believe that the tree looks like a mediator that connects the earth and the heaven. This kind of analogy extends to women who conceive babies and raise them. Humans have believed that women, not men, are associated with fertility. Jewish and Korean people worshiped female goddesses to promote the procreation of humans, animals, and plants.

The second similarity between two deities is that they are visible entities. YHWH is invisible deity. The ways to truth, such as Awakening, Conversion, or Do, are indiscernible. Human beings prefer visible or discernible objects to invisible almighty deities. Like the Jewish people, the natives of South Africa complained, "If Morime (God) is absolutely invisible, how can a reasonable being worship a hidden thing?"⁵⁹ Psychologically speaking, objects really exist only when human mind recognize them.⁶⁰ In physics, the human mind also plays a critical role. Among the actual worlds that meet physical rules, only some of them are considered valid only when they are guaranteed by the human mind. Eddington said: "In a world without consciousness there is no meaning in this flux."⁶¹ Thus, cult objects or religious rituals result from the human mind. In turn, the human mind is attracted to perceptible deities.

The third similarity between them is that they mirror their milieu or *Leben in Sitzen*. Asherah and Samshin Halmuny reflect their social or cultural environment. It was evident that Asherah was associated with agricultural feasts, which was the reason why Asherah could survive until Exile although Asherah was severely criticized by Deuteronomists.

Three major Jewish feasts are the Feast of Unleavened Bread (Exodus 34:18), the Feast of Weeks, and the Feast of Ingathering (Exodus 34:22). At first glance, the first feast was related to Jewish history. The Israelites tried to remember the Exodus from Egypt by eating bread that had no yeast. The second and the third were associated with agriculture. They celebrated the Feast of Weeks and the Feast of Ingathering to share the joy of the harvest within communities. Let us examine these feasts in detail.

Three major feasts subsequently obtained other names: The Feast of Unleavened Bread was named as the Feast of Passover; the Feast of Week as Pentecost; the Feast of Ingathering as the Feast of Booths or Feast of Tabernacles.⁶² In fact, all these feasts are interwoven with religious rituals and agricultural activities, such as tilling the fields, sowing seeds, and harvesting grains and grapes as follows.

113].

⁵⁹ Lucian Levy-Bruhl (1923), 23.

⁶⁰ John Omen, "The Sphere of Religion," in *Science, Religion and Reality*. Ed. Joseph Needham (New York: The Macmillan Company, 1925), 274; Lucian Levy-Bruhl (1923), 59.

⁶¹ Eddington (1925), 211.

⁶² The minor feasts are the Feast of Purim and the Feast of Dedication. [Walter C. Kaiser, Jr., *A History of Israel: From the Bronze Age through the Jewish Wars* (Nashville, Tennessee: Broadman & Holman Publishers, 1998), 498].

(Table 1) Jewish Feasts⁶³

Pesach (spring) Barely Harvest Planting vines	The Feast of Passover (Pesach), The Feast of Unleavened Bread (Hag HaMatzah) The Feasts of First Frutis (Bikkurim)
Shavuout (summer) Wheat Harvest Grapes Harvest	The Feast of Weeks (Shavuot) Pentecost
Sukkot (fall) Tilling, sowing wheat and barley	The Feast of Trumpet (Yom Teruah) The Feasts of Atonement (Yom Kippur) The Feast of Tabernacles (Sukkot)

As shown in Table (1), the Feast of Unleavened, memorial feast for Exodus, was connected with barely Harvest and vine planting during spring. The Feast of Weeks was for wheat and grape harvests during summer. In time, it was linked to one of religious feast, Pentecost. The feast of Ingathering was for tilling and sowing wheat and barley during fall. This feast was also associated with a religious feast, the Feast of Atonement.

Mishnah described Jewish young women and men, who wear white garment and danced in the vineyards. These dances were considered sacred, so they were regularly observed during annual major feasts. Jewish young men and women danced “around the sacred stones or cult object.”⁶⁴ Morgenstern did not identify what the sacred stones and cult object were. As explained in 1.2, however, the sacred stones represent a male deity and cult object represent a female deity, that is, Asherah poles.

These three similarities demonstrate the correlation between human lives and religion and reveal an important truth: Religion cannot exist without humans and vice versa.

5. Conclusion

Comparing an ancient Jewish goddess with Korean goddess was not easy, because it was not familiar theme. However, the paper tries to collect some similarities between two deities. The first similarity between them was that they were not conventional religious objects. The second similarity is that they were invisible

⁶³ M.M. Ninan, *Lord's Appointed Festivals* (San Jose: Global Publishers, n.d.), 24, 26.

⁶⁴ Julian Morgenstern, “Two Ancient Israelite Agricultural Festivals, *The Jewish Quarterly Review*, New Series, Vol 8. No. 1 (Jul., 1917): 31, 36.

deities although Jewish religious tradition maintains an invisible God. The third similarity is that they reflect their “Leben in Sitzen,” i.e. “sociological setting.” These three similarities reveal that human religion reflect human lives and therefore, sustain symbiotic relationships.

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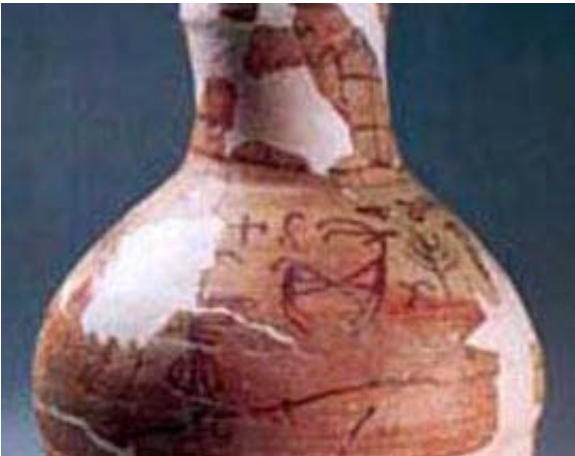
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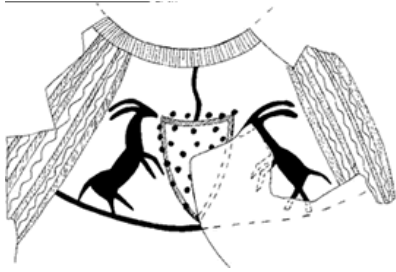
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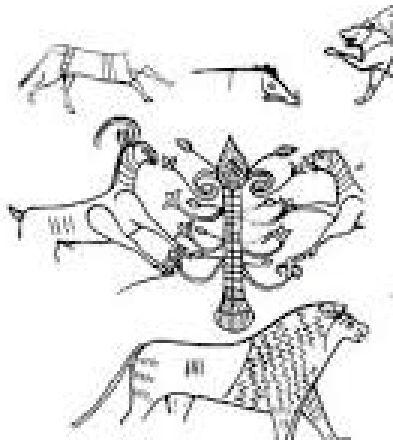
(Figure 4)



(Figure 5)



(Figure 6)



(Figure 7)



(Figure 8)

