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Source: *Journal of Biblical Literature*, Vol. 20, No. 1 (1901), pp. 22-27

Published by: The Society of Biblical Literature

Stable URL: <http://www.jstor.org/stable/3268988>

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West Semitic Deities with Compound Names.

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AFTER the early Semitic tribal life with its henotheism began to give way before those political combinations which united several tribes under one government, two distinct movements in the evolution of Semitic deities are discernible. The first of these is a movement in the direction of the multiplicity of gods, in the course of which a deity, already known by several epithets, is differentiated in different places (or at times in the same place), into as many different deities as the original god had epithets. This movement is exemplified in the very early development of the gods of Babylonia, and in the development in South Arabia during the period covered by the early inscriptions from that country.

The second of these movements is a much later one, if not in time, at least in the sequence of human thought, and is a current running in the opposite direction to the one just mentioned. Intercourse resulting from political or commercial unity led to the recognition of a larger unity of life, and in obedience to this recognition the number of deities was reduced, usually by a fusing process. In its early stages this process was practical and not at all philosophical. It resulted from the union of tribes or cities and the consequent identification of their gods; but in its later stages it became, as I hope to show, more philosophical. This second movement is illustrated in its mild beginnings in the religion of Babylonia, as Jastrow has shown,¹ but it finds its completest expression for the Semitic field among peoples in Palestine, Phoenicia, and the Phoenician colonies. It is the purpose of the present paper to pass the instances of it in brief review.

1. Yahwe-Elohim.—Biblical criticism has made very clear to us the process by which this combination of divine names was devel-

¹ *Religion of Babylonia and Assyria*, chs. iii.-xiv.

oped. Yahwe, the name given to their god by one group or tribe of Hebrews, was constantly employed by certain writers when they wished to refer to the deity. Elohim, a name used in another group or tribe, had in like manner been employed by another group of writers. When a later generation combined the writings, both names were combined in certain passages in order to make it clear that the Yahwe there mentioned was the same as the Elohim which had preceded.² This result of Biblical criticism is recalled, not with the idea of offering anything new on this name, but as a standard of comparison for the other divine names which are regarded as compound.

2. Melek-Ashtart. — This supposed compound name of a divinity occurs in an inscription of two lines from Um-el-Awamid, the site of an ancient city, as yet unidentified, about midway between Tyre and Acco (*CIS.* p. 29). The inscription is published in the *Corpus*, as No. 8, and has already, largely on account of the peculiar combination *Melek-Ashtart*, given rise to an abundant literature.³ Most scholars have taken Melek-Ashtart as a peculiarly compounded deity, and have advanced more or less ingenious theories to account for her (or his) origin. The structure of the sentence in which the words occur is, however, difficult, and has caused no little trouble.

Levy long ago proposed to translate, "To the king of Ashtart, the god Hamman," etc., taking *Melek Ashtart* not as a compound name, but as a construct with a dependent genitive. He thought the words meant that Hamman was lord, or husband, of Ashtart. Such a usage of *melek* is, however, without parallel. If this were the construction of the sentence, Ashtart would have to be regarded as the name of a place. If only we had evidence from some other source that there was a place called Ashtart in this region, as there was east of the Jordan,⁴ I should regard it as most probable that the unknown city which in ancient times stood on the site of Um-el-Awamid was Ashtart; and that Hamman was called "king of Ashtart," as in Tyre Baal was called Melqart, or "king of the city." As no Egyptian or Assyrian source gives us, so far as I am aware, any evidence for the

² As the name Yahwe-Elohim stands in the Massoretic text it is made to appear as a post-exilian product, based on the union of the late P document with JED. The identification of Yahwe with Elohim was certainly made, however, at least by the time J and E were combined, about 650 B.C. If the compound name was not actually made at that time, the idea which it represents was complete.

³ See references in the *Corpus*.

⁴ Cf. Gen. 14⁵ Josh. 13⁸¹ and *KB.* Vol. V. Nos. 142¹⁰ and 237²¹, where it is mentioned in two of the El-Amarna letters.

existence of a town of this name in this region, we are shut up to the conclusion that it is the name of a compound deity.

But, it may be asked, is the deity really compounded of two? May not Ashtart be a goddess worshipped in Melek's temple⁵? Professor Moore has already suggested that this is the starting-point of this combination, and there is abundant analogy to show that he is right. As he has pointed out, the Ashtart in the Ma'sub inscription,⁶ who was worshipped in the *ashera* of the god Hamman, represents an earlier stage of the same process. The two deities were really kindred in their origin, were associated together in the worship of the people, till, in obedience to the movement of thought outlined above, the two were welded into one. The inscription from Um-el-Awamid represents a much later stage of thought than the formation of the name Yahwe-Elohim, for it was apparently not political fusion but a more abstract process of thought which welded these two closely associated gods of opposite sex into one. Nevertheless, the inscription represents an early stage of the fusion, since the two names, the masculine and the feminine, are still employed to designate the one deity, which is demonstrated to be one by the fact that another epithet of the masculine portion, Hamman, is applied to the whole combination.

3. Eshmun-Ashtart. — Parallel to Melek-Ashtart is the Eshmun-Ashtart, of whom Abd-Melqart is said, in a votive inscription from North Africa, to have been a priest (*CIS.* No. 245). As I am pointing out elsewhere,⁷ Eshmun and Ashtart were as closely related as Baal or Melek and Ashtart. They were evidently worshipped in the same temple and, under influences similar to those prevailing at Um-el-Awamid, were fused. If it be objected that in this case the fusion is not so evident, since it may be that the conjunction was omitted between the names, so that "Eshmun-Ashtart" is written for "Eshmun and Ashtart"; it may be answered, that in the first line of this short inscription (it comprises only four lines) Tanith and Baal Hamman are distinguished by the conjunction, so that the probability is that it is not forgotten here.

4. Eshmun-Melqart. — Several inscriptions from Cyprus (*CIS.* Nos. 16, 23, 24, 25, 26, 27, 28) show that there by similar forces the gods Eshmun and Melqart were similarly fused. Melqart was

⁵ Cf. Moore's article "Chemosh," *Encyclopaedia Biblica*, col. 737 n.

⁶ Cf. Georg Hoffmann, *Ueber einige Phoen. Inschr.* p. 20.

⁷ See "The Genesis of the God Eshmun," in *JAOS.* Vol. XXI.

the epithet of the Baal of Tyre, and so constantly used that it became his proper name. It signified "king of the city"; and, of course, if there had not been such constant relations between Tyre and Cyprus, it would be conceivable that it might be an epithet of Eshmun which grew up in Cyprus. The comparatively late date of these inscriptions, the proximity of Tyre, and the constant communication between the two render this view untenable. Baal and Eshmun were as closely akin as Ashtart and Eshmun⁸; Melqart was a Baal, and the fusion was a natural result of the tendency of the thought of the times.

5. Askun-Adar. — Another possible example of a compound deity is found in a Phoenician inscription from Athens (*CIS.* No. 118), where, if the two parts are really divine names, they are perhaps neither of them Phoenician. Askun, or Sakun, is a deity corresponding to the Greek Hermes; it may be an epithet of some Semitic deity, but is probably a foreign god (cf. *CIS.* No. 112), Adar being the Assyrian god. It is a moot point, however, whether *adar* is not here an epithet, meaning strong. (Cf. *CIS.* p. 145, and Bloch's *Phoen. Glossar*, p. 14.)

6. An extreme instance of the tendency to the fusion of deities in the later time is found in an inscription published by Lidzbarski in his *Ephemeris für semitische Epigraphik*, p. 67, which comes from the mountain wall near the hamlet of Karaburna or Karaburnar, and which Lidzbarski assigns to the second century B.C. It describes the marriage of the god Bel to the Persian religion or Dîn Mazdaiasniš, as it is called. This marriage, of course, does not represent the fusing of the two into one deity, but if two such unrelated faiths could be fused by marriage, what might not be done with closely related deities?

7. Ashtar-Chemosh. — One other divine name remains to be considered, which I have purposely left to the end, Ashtar-Chemosh (Mesha's Insc. l. 17). Baethgen,⁹ Driver,¹⁰ Moore,¹¹ and Peake¹² hold that it is not a compound name, but that it is a reference to the Ashtart or Astarte who was worshipped in the shrine of Chemosh. It may seem presumptuous to venture to differ from a group of

⁸ See the paper cited in note ⁶.

⁹ *Beiträge zur semitischen Religionsgeschichte*, p. 14.

¹⁰ "Ashtoreth," in *Hastings' Dictionary of the Bible*, p. 171 a.

¹¹ "Chemosh," in *Encyc. Bib.*

¹² "Chemosh," in *Hastings' Dictionary of the Bible*.

authorities which contains, as this group does, three of the foremost Old Testament scholars of the world. I am constrained to do so, however, for the following reasons:

1. All the parallels urged by these scholars are much later. They represent movements of thought influenced by Persian or by Greek ideas. The combination Ashtar-Chemosh is much nearer both in time and place to Yahwe-Elohim, and is more likely to be parallel to it than to any other instance.

2. Ashtar in the inscription of Mesha lacks the feminine termination, and must therefore be considered a god and not a goddess. True, in primitive Semitic the name designated a goddess without the feminine ending; it is also true that in Babylonia and Assyria it continued to do so down to the latest times; but wherever the name has been found among the southern Semites it designates an actual or nascent god, and wherever it is found among the western Semites designating a goddess, it has the feminine ending. It is safe to conclude, therefore, since Moab was so closely connected with the rest of the west Semitic world, that the name without the feminine termination would in that country designate a god.

To break the force of this consideration one of two things must be clearly proven: either that the feminine ending was added to the name by the rest of the western Semites after the days of Mesha, or that its form in his inscription is due to Babylonian influence. The biblical and Phoenician material which contains the name is of course all later than Mesha, but it occurs as the name of a place twice in the El-Amarna letters (cf. *KB*. V. Nos. 142¹⁰ and 237²¹), and in both cases refers to the well-known city only a little way north of Moab called in the Old Testament Ashtoreth-Karnaim.¹³ It is clear from this fact that the western Semitic feeling had attached the feminine termination to the name of the goddess almost at the very borders of Moab by the fourteenth century B.C. So far as I can see, the only reason for suspecting Babylonian influence in Moab is the fact that Mount Nebo and a city Nebo bear the name of a Babylonian god. But even if that name be a survival from the previous Babylonian occupation, we know no reason for supposing that Babylonian influence so affected Moab that her people in consequence continued to call their goddess Ashtar for six hundred years after their nearest neighbors on the north had begun to call her Ashtart.

¹³ For the identification of the localities mentioned in these two letters cf. Sayce, *Patriarchal Palestine*, pp. 133 ff. and 152 ff.

3. Mesha equates Ashtar-Chemosh with Chemosh. He says (l. 14 ff.) : "And Chemosh said to me, 'go and take Nebo against Israel,' and I went by night and fought against it from break of dawn till noon, and I took it and killed all of them, seven thousand men and boys, and the women and girls and slave-girls, for I had made them *harim* to Ashtar-Chemosh." Now it seems clear that the king would devote his victims to the god who sent him forth to battle, — the god who held, as the inscription shows throughout, a similar relation to Moab to that held by Yahweh to Israel. At the end of the inscription Chemosh appears again. Ashtar-Chemosh cannot, therefore, be different even in part from Chemosh. If, under the circumstances, he had desired to associate a goddess with Chemosh, he would hardly have placed her before him. The compound divine names into which Ashtar enters invariably place her last.

It is here that the analogy of the name Yahwe-Elohim comes to our aid. Ashtar had in Moab, like Athtar in South Arabia, become a god.¹⁴ He was probably in the early days worshipped in Moab under this name at some particular shrine or shrines. At another, the same, or a kindred, deity was worshipped under the name Chemosh. By the time of Mesha the two had been identified as one god, as Yahwe-Elohim was in Israel. Perhaps Ashtar and Chemosh were the tutelary divinities of two tribes which were united in the nation Moab. Of this we cannot speak, as data are entirely wanting, but the genesis of the compound name would seem to be most reasonably explained by some such process.

It appears from this examination that the union of Yahwe and Elohim and of Ashtar and Chemosh, the two instances which clearly occurred before the influx of Persian and Greek thought into the west Semitic region, was probably due to different causes from those which produced the other instances of fusion. The former were produced by political union, while the latter were produced by more abstract processes of thought. The one class, therefore, cannot legitimately be used in explanation of the development of the other.

¹⁴ Cf. *Hebraica*, Vol. X. pp. 52 ff. and 204.